November 2024

GA2

Strategic Masterplan
Part 2: Design Framework

ICENI PROJECTS ON BEHALF OF PICTURE ESTATE LIMITED

Contents

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The Vision

1. The Vision

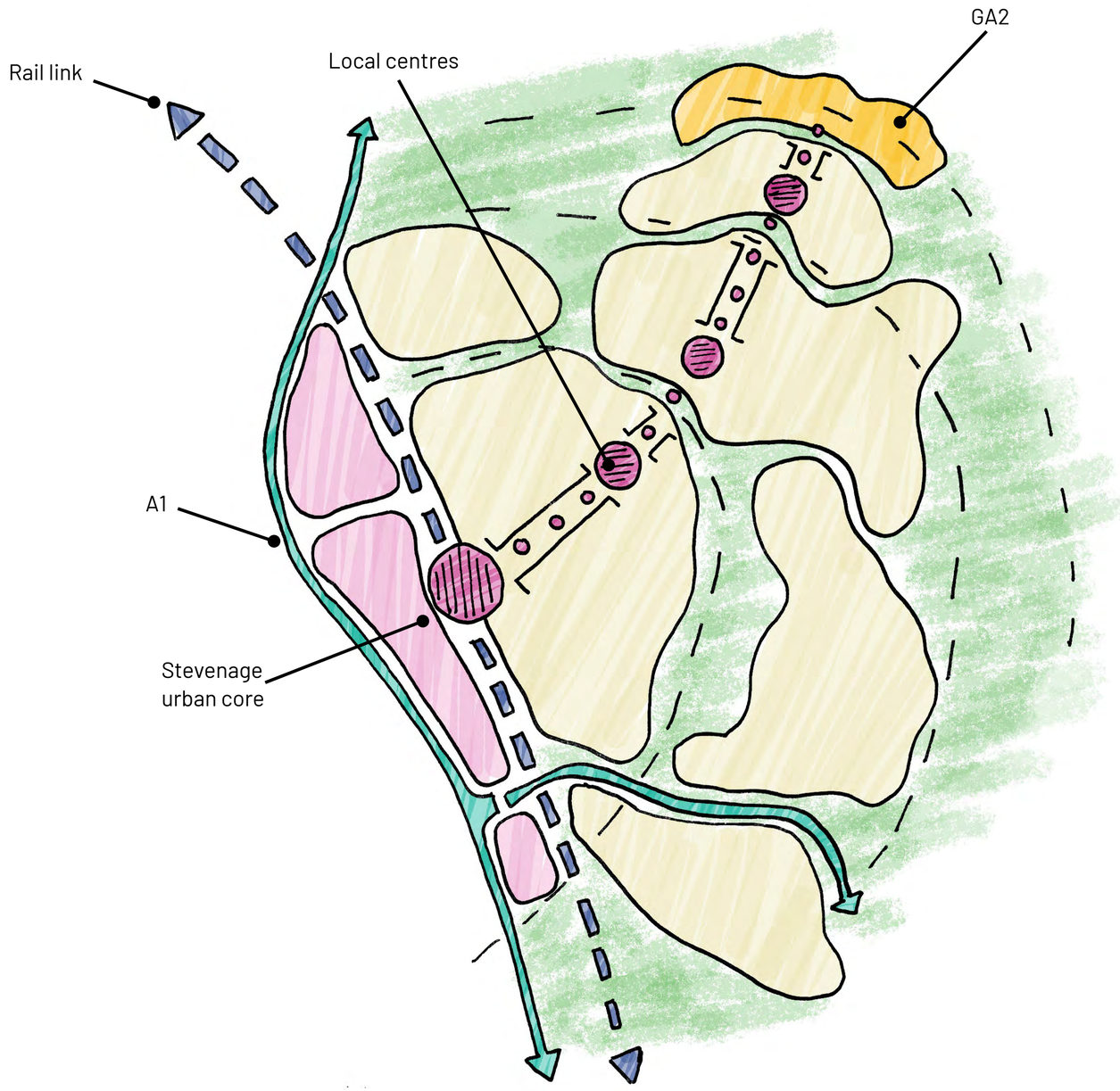
STRATEGIC VISION

1.1 The proposed development of GA2 should deliver a rural-edge neighbourhood that provides an attractive edge to the built settlement, whilst also forming a gateway to the countryside. Development should enhance the existing access and connections to the wider network of footpaths and public rights of way.

1.2 GA2 should also continue the settlement form and character of Stevenage and Great Ashby, and its well-connected network of neighbourhoods at St Nicholas and Bedwell, providing easy access to Stevenage town centre's services and railway station.

1.3 This neighbourhood should its own individual character and identity, whilst forming part of the larger settlement. GA2 should offer village living, with the convenience of easy links and access to the wide range of services within Stevenage.

1.4 Active travel, including walking and cycling, and public transport, should be prioritised within the design of any proposed development, in order to provide the key links between GA2 and the wider surrounding neighbourhoods.



▲ Figure 1.1 - The development will continue the settlement form of Stevenage and Great Ashby, forming a further key neighbourhood with its own character, set within the woodland

1. The Vision

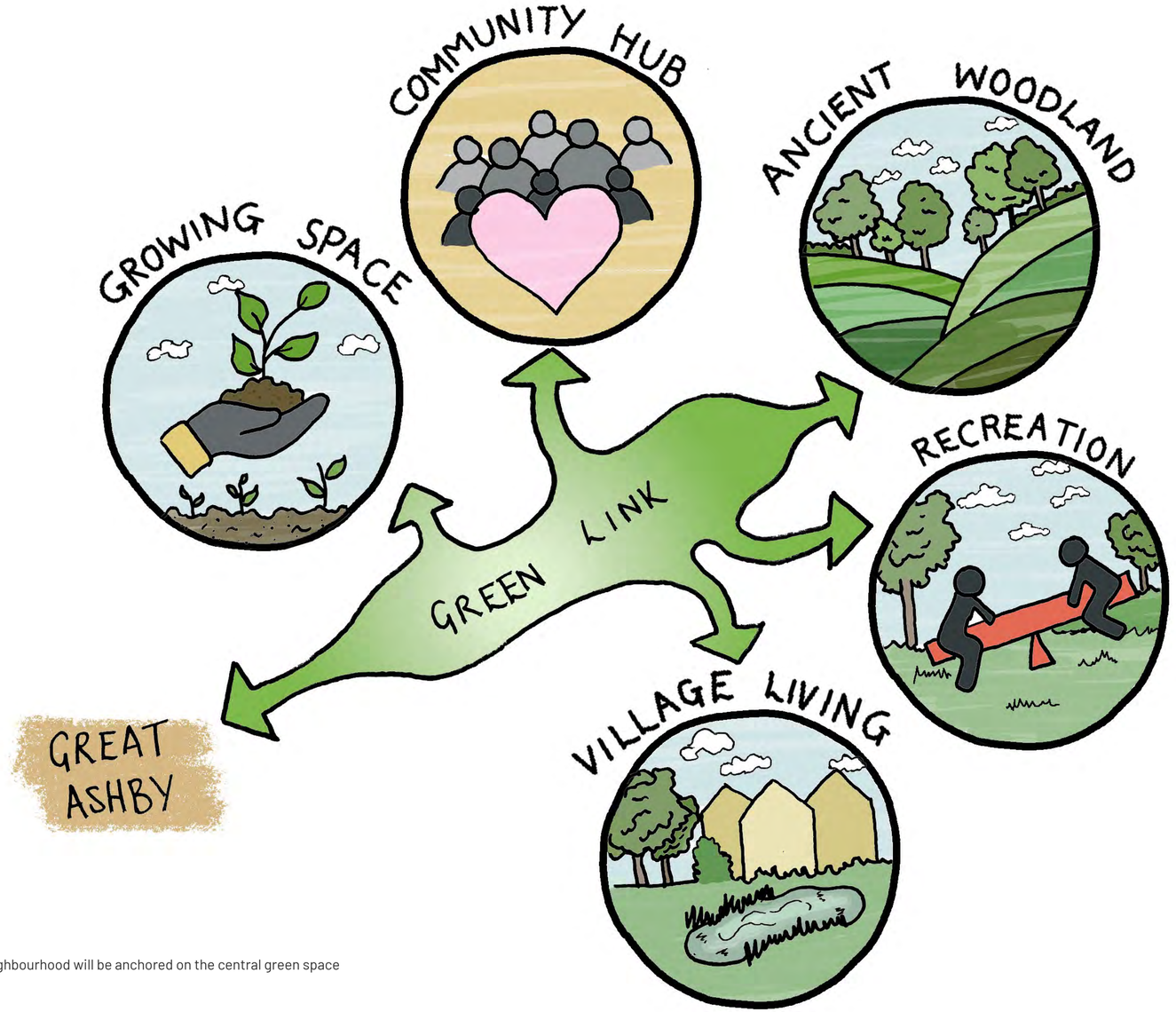
VISION FOR GA2

1.5 GA2 should be a landscape-led development, designed around a central green space that could offer enhanced connections between Great Ashby and the open countryside. This could be achieved through a series of activated open spaces that have distinctive characteristics defined by their surrounding landscape features and uses.

1.6 Proposals should deliver a range of dwellings and family homes set within attractive green landscapes and among Ancient Woodland. The Hub of the community should be formed around a new primary school, a community facility, and allotments, attractively located next to the open space at Dell Spring.

1.7 The Community Hub and Central Green Space should be connected by green corridors, with further green corridors leading to the various housing areas. All homes should be within a 5 minute walk of public open spaces.

1.8 GA2 should be a neighbourhood where nature and green spaces sit side by side with the new homes, allowing residents the convenience of proximity to services, whilst also offering the attractiveness of the surrounding countryside and open spaces.



▲ Figure 1.2- The neighbourhood will be anchored on the central green space

2

Key Principles

2. Key Principles

INTRODUCTION

2.1 The identified opportunities and influences, alongside the initial consultation with the Council, as well as good design and sustainability principles, have informed the development of a suite of key principles, which will inform future development proposals for GA2.

2.2 This section sets out these key principles and how they should be followed as part of any future design work in delivering the vision for GA2, as set out in Section 1.

KEY PRINCIPLES

Retention and Enhancement of Landscape Features

2.3 The existing woodland, trees and hedgerows will form the framework for the Site, within which a new 'place' will be created. This should be anchored on the open space created within the pylon corridor and can form the central spine of the development. The removal of areas of low quality woodland under the pylons is necessary, in order to create a suitable access to the Site.

2.4 The larger, good quality trees should be retained wherever possible. Some minor sections of hedgerow will likely require removal in order to facilitate movement between the various fields within the Site. Any development proposals should incorporate large new areas of on and off-site native planting to mitigate against any proposed losses.

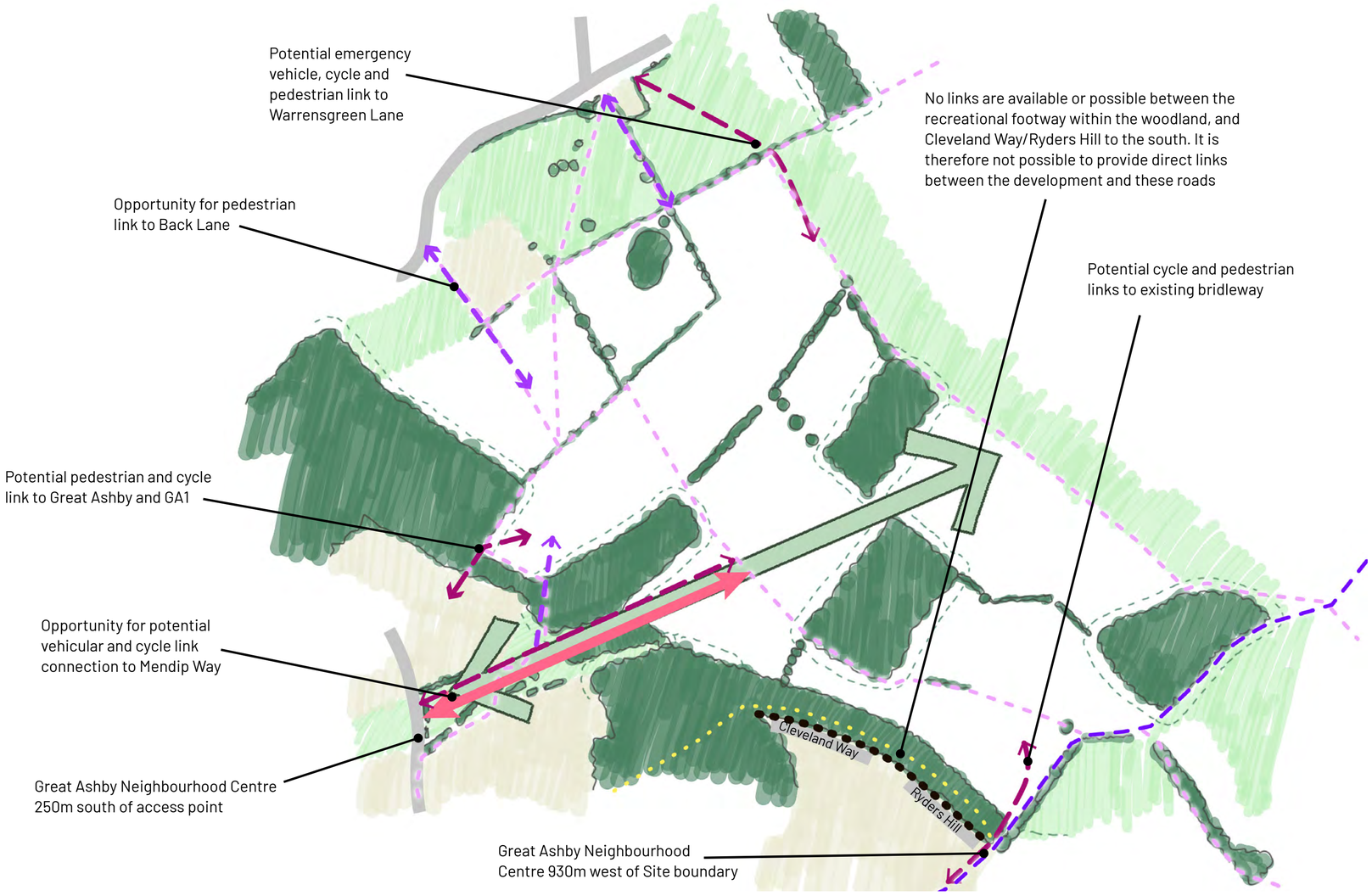
2.5 The various pockets of Ancient Woodland across the Site must be retained with a minimum 15m offset from the woodland, which could be landscaped to enhance the quality and diversity of these woodland areas. New planting should be incorporated along the north eastern boundary, to create a clear edge to the settlement, and an appropriate transition to the adjoining countryside.

▲ Figure 2.1 - Retention and enhancement of landscape features

2. Key Principles

Integration with Great Ashby and GA1

2.6 As part of a sustainable movement network, pedestrian and cycle links should be created between the new and existing areas of Great Ashby. This would facilitate movement for new and existing residents to the proposed school and multi-use centre that would form part of development proposals, as well as providing easy access to the Great Ashby neighbourhood centre and the facilities within it. This approach would also encourage new and existing residents to mix, and for the new development to become a natural part of the wider Great Ashby community. This would include upgrading the existing public footpath to Merrick Close, to become a footpath and cycleway, which would also serve as an active travel route to GA1.



▲ Figure 2.2 - A vehicular link, as well as pedestrian and cycle links will be created to access Great Ashby

2. Key Principles

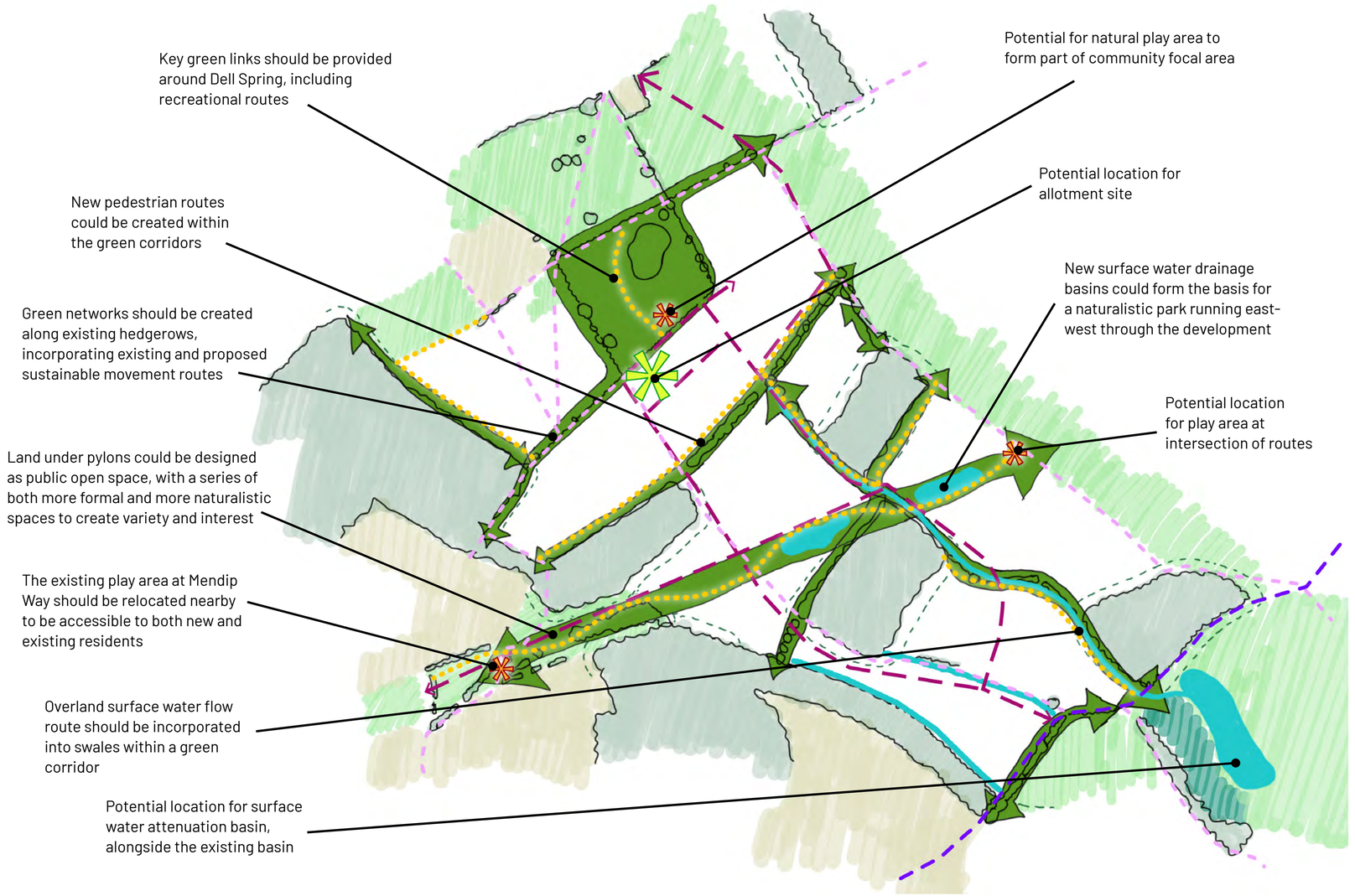
Connected Green and Blue Infrastructure Network

2.7 The existing landscape framework should form the core of a connected network of green open spaces. Within these open spaces and corridors, any proposed surface water drainage features should also be located alongside pedestrian and cycle routes. These corridors would connect the various parts of the development, facilitating easy walking and cycling routes located within green spaces. New planting will also be incorporated into these corridors, to benefit ecology and wildlife and create an attractive environment, ensuring a well-connected network of habitats as well as movement routes for wildlife.

2.8 The central part of the Site lies under an overhead electricity line, and would form a key part of this green network. A new community park could be created here, alongside new drainage features to manage the surface water runoff from the surrounding development.

Recreation and Play

2.9 The proposed new neighbourhood should offer a range of outdoor recreational areas, for both passive and active recreation. New recreational walking and cycling routes should be incorporated within the development, and equipped children's play areas should be located within easy reach of the new homes. An area for allotments should also be provided, to enhance the range of recreational options available for residents and visitors to the Site. New, more formal areas of park should be created, as well as areas which are more natural in character.



▲ Figure 2.3 - The Green and Blue Infrastructure Network will include a range of recreational opportunities

2. Key Principles

Social Infrastructure

2.10 To ensure the proposed new community have the facilities and services they require on a day to day basis within easy reach, development proposals should include a site for a new primary school, as well as land reserved for educational uses. It is expected that a primary school would be delivered relatively early in the development phases, with further adjoining land to be reserved for future potential educational uses at a later stage.

2.11 The proposals should also include a site for a mixed-use community building. This could take the form of a Community facility, which could be multi-use, potentially providing for indoor sports and recreational uses such as badminton / squash courts, dance classes/studio, yoga etc as well as meeting spaces, childcare facilities, performance spaces, and co-working areas. The building could also include a café, or even a small community shop. This building should be located close to the primary school, to create a Community Hub, or focus for the neighbourhood, around which daily life could be centred. Should it prove feasible, the building could also be designed and used as a doctor's surgery / healthcare facility.

Housing Variety

2.12 While the proposals are at an early stage, development should include a range of house types, sizes and tenures, to ensure a varied and integrated community, with a choice of dwellings to suit. The development should include flats, as well as starter and family homes. A proportion of the dwellings will be Lifetime Standard Homes, to allow people of various ages and abilities to live in the area.

▲ Figure 2.4 - A variety of house types, as well as community facilities will be included within the development

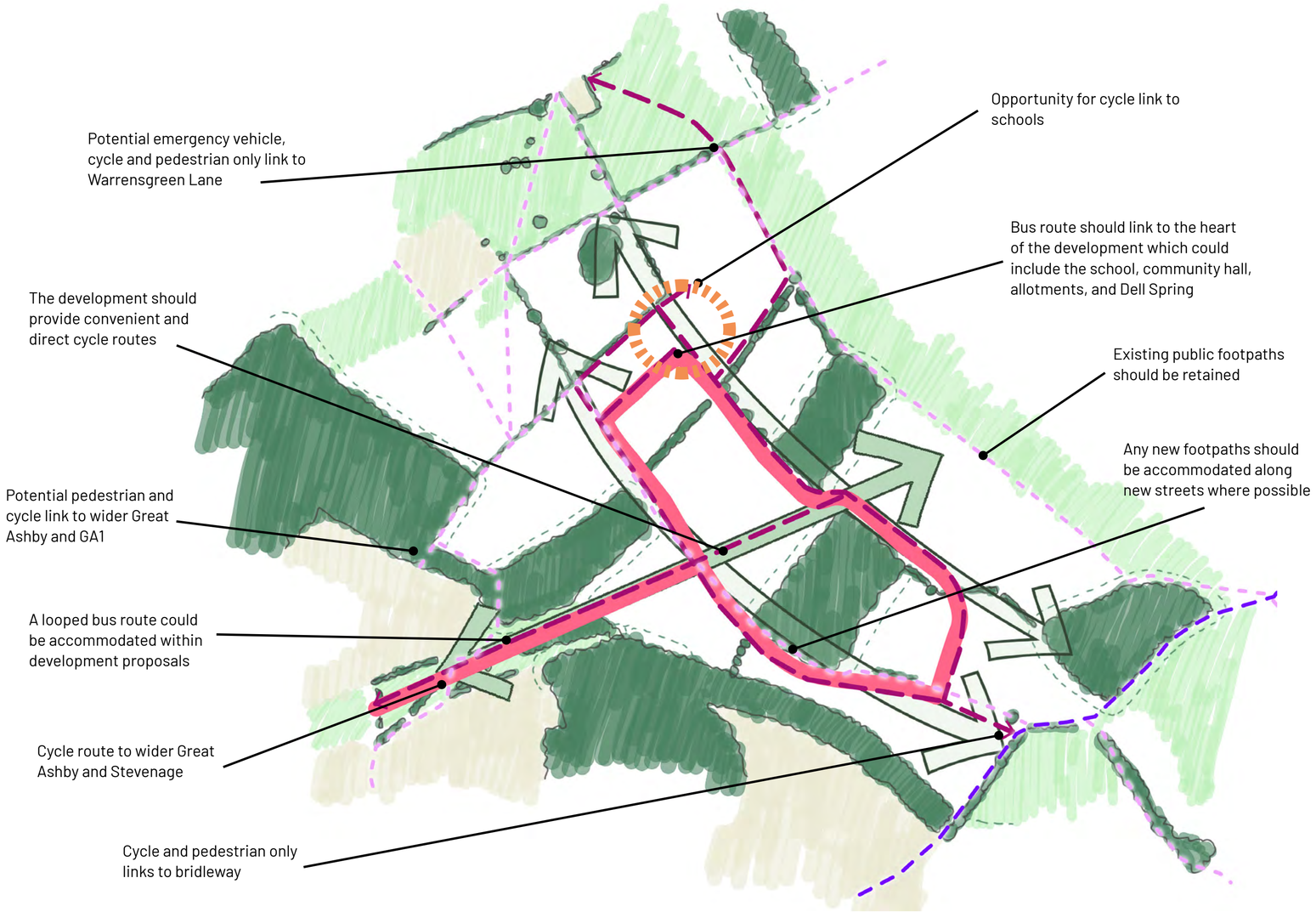
2. Key Principles

Sustainable Movement Network

2.13 The development should be designed to prioritise pedestrians, cyclists and public transport, with vehicles accommodated alongside these. To that end, a series of cycle routes and links should be designed into the layout, which will lead to the areas people want to go. These should be safe, overlooked, and direct.

2.14 Pedestrian links should also be provided through the Site linking to the adjoining areas. Where possible, new footways should be provided alongside new roads within the development, with smaller streets and lanes designed to be shared by pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles, with pedestrians given priority.

2.15 A bus route could be incorporated within the development, which could lead through the Site to and from the Great Ashby neighbourhood centre and beyond. The bus route would form the main movement route within the development, and all the new homes will be within easy access of this main street. Bus stops should be located within three key areas in the development, to ensure that the new homes are within a short walk of the bus stops. The bus route should provide direct access to the heart of the development where the school, Community Facility, allotments and Dell Spring would be located, emphasising this area as the heart of the development.



▲ Figure 2.5 - Sustainable movement principles

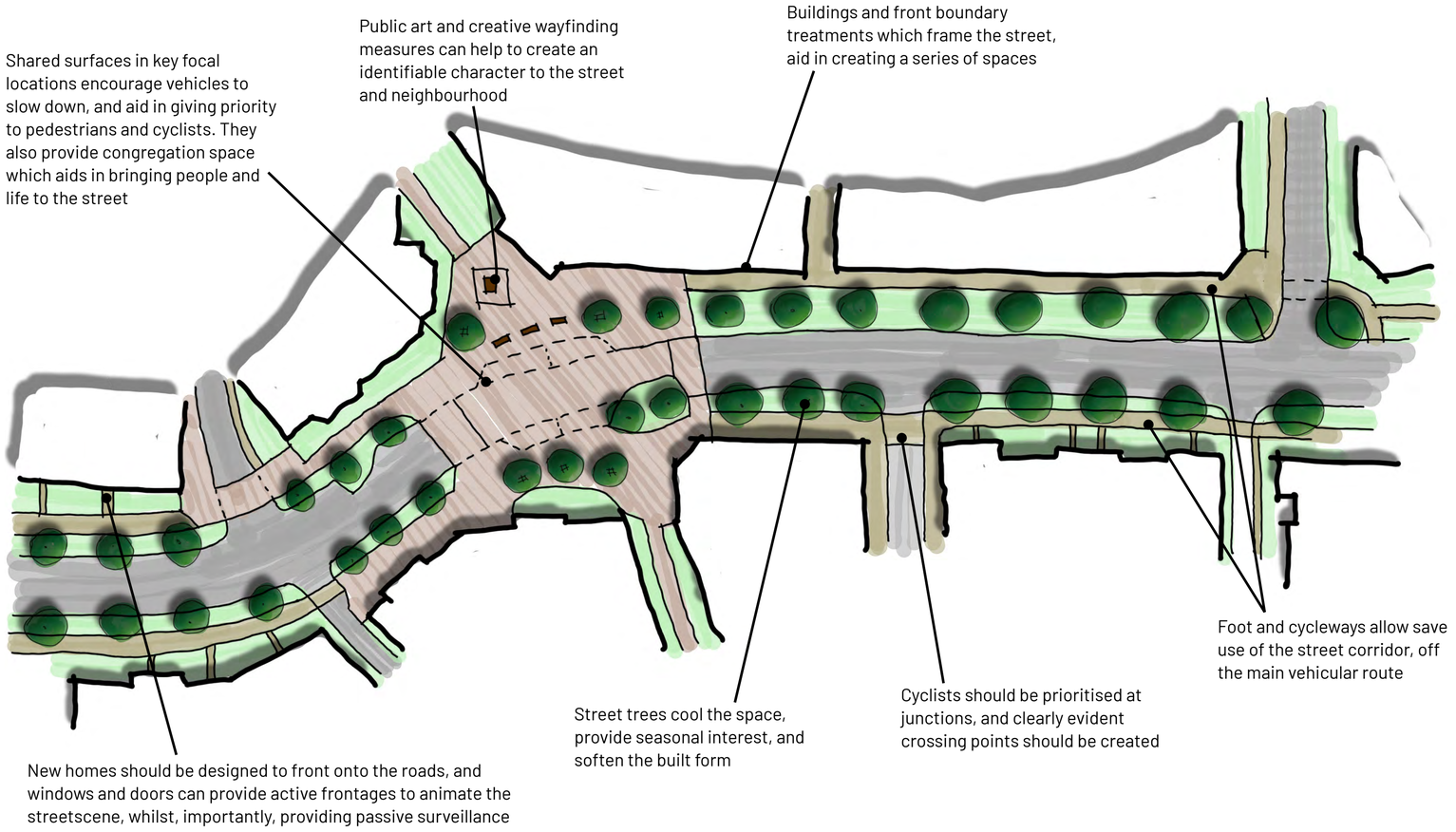
2. Key Principles

Streets as Spaces

2.16 Streets should be designed to allow for easy walking and cycling across any proposed development. New houses should front onto the street, providing passive surveillance to create a safer environment.

2.17 Avenues with street trees should be created along the main street, which should pass through different character spaces, and could include shared space squares and pocket parks. The main street should form a core space within the development, where people could move around and meet other people within the neighbourhood.

2.18 The plan opposite provides an illustrative example of how a street could function as an active space for users.



▲ Figure 2.6 - The streets will be designed to form spaces where people feel safe, and which can become attractive congregation and movement areas

2. Key Principles

Character Areas

2.19 To ensure a neighbourhood that is easy to navigate and that reflects and respects its context, a variety of character areas should be created as part of any development proposals for the Site.

2.20 Within the various character areas, the streets, house types, massing, materials and landscaping will need to be designed to ensure a variety of characters and spaces can be created. In some parts of the development, very specific design interventions may be required to respond to landscape or heritage sensitivities. In other parts, the design approach may be specific in order to create a more civic, shared spaced. At the detailed design stage, the proposed homes and spaces should be designed to reflect these specific character areas.

▲ Figure 2.7 - Individual character areas will respond to the identified opportunities and constraints of the Site, to create a sense of place which is unique this setting

3

Consideration of Options

3. Consideration of Options

PRIMARY SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY FACILITY LOCATION OPTIONS

3.1 Discussions have been ongoing between Hertfordshire County Council's (HCC) Education team, North Herts District Council (NHDC), and the landowner and design team, to determine the educational provision strategy on the GA2 allocation. Since the adoption of the Local Plan, HCC have confirmed that, due to the difference in anticipated timings of the demands for educational facilities, these should be planned to be functionally separate. While the Local Plan sets out that a 4ha combined education site should be provided within the northernmost part of the Site, the requirements are now as follows:

- A 2.1ha primary school site, to be located either in the far north of the Site (Option 1), or within the centre of the Site (Option 2);
- A 1.9ha reserve education land to be located within the far north of the Site, with the potential to extend playing fields into the adjoining Green Belt at a later stage.

3.2 NHDC have requested that the Masterplan consider the opportunities and constraints to the delivery of these requirements. The information on the following pages sets out the various options considered. The landowner and design team have reviewed these, and the preferred approach would be to co-locate the primary school and additional reserved education land within the north of the Site, and also the new community facility, in order to create a hub of activity at the heart of any proposed development.

Option 1

3.3 The location of the primary school has been explored as part of the initial design process. Good design practice encourages the co-location of community facilities such as schools and shops, allowing people to combine journeys to these facilities, and also creating a focal centre for daily life and activities.

3.4 A community hub also aids legibility of the neighbourhood, and can provide a key space where the specific identity of the neighbourhood can be expressed. Therefore, in exploring the layout options, the team have considered the location of the primary school and community hall together, forming a community hub. Additional facilities, such as a play area, are also proposed to be located within the community hub space.

Advantages

- The land parcel is unconstrained, and measures 2.1ha in size,
- Site topography is level,
- The community hub allows for the incorporation of the key open space at Dell Spring,
- The parcel is located along the main street and bus route, and easily accessible for pedestrians and cyclists,
- The community hub can be formed around a civic space, incorporating a green link between the trees in the south and Dell Spring in the north,
- Could possibly incorporate shared parking between the primary school and the community facility,
- Can be brought forward independently of other phases without harm to townscape character,
- Parcel can be accessed by pedestrians and cyclists from GA1,
- Quieter part of the Site, located at the countryside edge, and
- The parcel is rectangular, allowing for built form and playing fields to be on either side of the parcel.

Disadvantages

- The community hub would not be centrally located within the new neighbourhood,
- The community hub would be 300m further north west along the main road, than the Option 2 location,
- The furthest proposed housing would be approximately 800m from the community hub,
- The parcel is located further from the 'entrance' to the neighbourhood, so more roads would be needed to be built to deliver the school early.

▲ Figure 3.1 - Potential location for primary school and community facility in the north

3. Consideration of Options

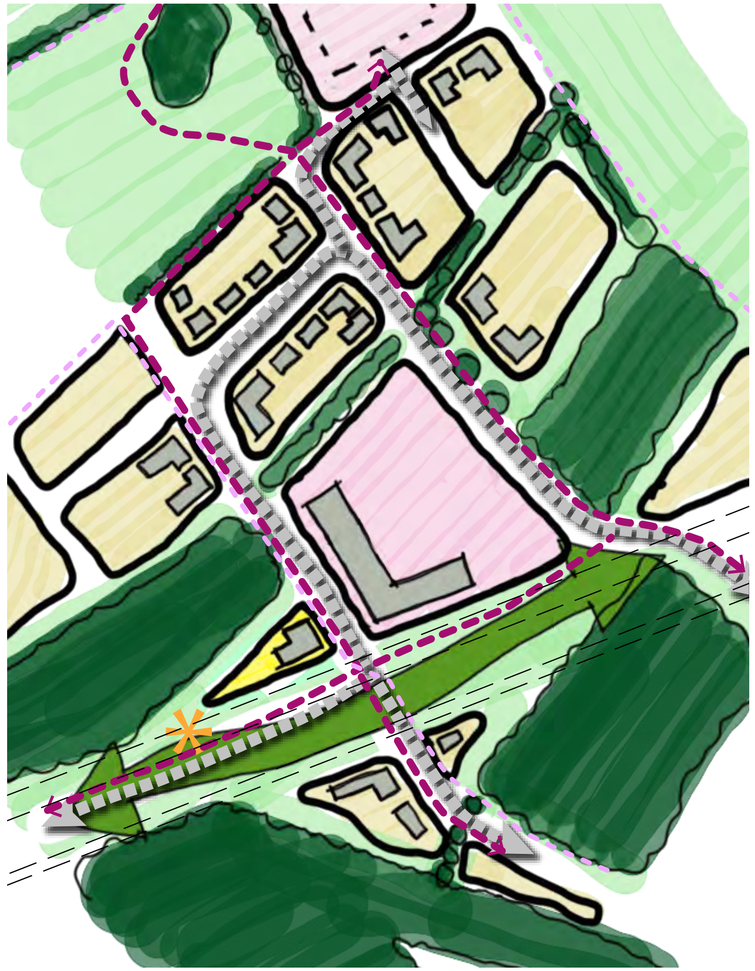
Option 2

Advantages

- The land parcel is unconstrained and approximately 2.1ha in size,
- Steeper landform than the option 1 parcel, but still developable,
- The community hub could be connected to green space within the overhead line pylon corridor,
- The community hub would be located more centrally in the proposed neighbourhood than in option 1,
- The parcel is located along the main street and bus route, and easily accessible for pedestrians and cyclists,
- Could possibly incorporate shared parking between the primary school and the community facility,
- The parcel is more square than rectangular in form,
- The parcel is closer to the 'entrance' of the new neighbourhood, so less road building would be required to deliver the school early,
- The furthest proposed dwelling from the community hub would be approximately 600m,
- Parking could be accommodated within the pylon corridor.

Disadvantages

- The parcel is adjacent to the overhead lines and pylons,
- There is less opportunity to create a civic space as this area is located across the main street in a busier part of the Site,
- Would need to incorporate the potential bus link, which would likely mean that the school site would be bound on two sides by the main street, limiting passive surveillance and placemaking opportunities,
- Although located at the 'entrance' to the proposed development, low level built form at the primary school and community hub area are less likely to frame a focal, important space, especially as no built form can be accommodated within the pylon corridor,
- There would likely be commercial concerns as there would be no location for 'show homes' etc and users would have to travel further into the Site to reach the proposed new homes,
- There may also be phasing concerns as the entrance to the new neighbourhood may remain undeveloped till later phases, leaving a vacant area,
- Less homes could be accommodated on the Site overall as the option 2 parcel could accommodate a greater amount of higher density housing than in option 1, resulting in a reduction in total unit numbers.



▲ Figure 3.2 - Potential location for primary school and community facility in the centre

3. Consideration of Options

Overhead Line Considerations

3.5 The potential to underground the existing high voltage overhead powerlines has been considered as part of the initial design work. Due to the costs and complications involved in under-grounding the 400kV northernmost line and pylons, it is not possible to underground them as part of the development of GA2. Such a project would be strategic in nature and would need to be brought forward by the National Grid.

3.6 While the cost and technical constraints of under-grounding the smaller, 132kV southern lines are less, it is still a complicated and costly operation to undertake.

3.7 In considering the potential to underground the 132kV powerlines as part of the development of the Site, several factors have been taken into account in coming to the conclusion that it would not be viable to underground the overhead lines. These include the following:

- The visual impact benefits would not be significant, as the adjoining 400kV powerline would still cross the Site;
- The delivery of the houses will be significantly delayed as such a large infrastructure project would take time to plan and implement, and the utility company managing these lines currently have no plans to underground them here;
- The under-grounding would not benefit the views or use of the wider landscape/townscape, as only the section within the Site would be removed from view;
- The additional developable land within the Site, if the 132kV lines were to be undergrounded, would be 1.02ha (or 30-35 dwellings). The additional income generated from would not be sufficient to offset the cost of under-grounding the lines; and
- Any benefits or additional land released for development by the under-grounding of the 132kV lines would still be limited by the relative proximity of the remaining 400kV line.

3.8 There is an ongoing dialogue with the National Grid to ensure their requirements have been incorporated into the latest version of the design work, as shown in this Masterplan Document. Engagement will continue through to the submission of the final detailed design to ensure proposals are in full compliance with minimum safety requirements.

▲ Figure 3.5 - Potential developable area if the 132kV powerlines were undergrounded

3. Consideration of Options

Location of Drainage Basin and Allotments

3.9 The emerging options for the layout aim to create a balance between maximising the development potential of the Site, whilst ensuring a sensitively designed scheme that reflects the Site's opportunities and constraints. To that end, the development proposals include green infrastructure and drainage measures which would lie outside of the GA2 allocation boundary. The concept of utilising land within wider landholdings and, in defined circumstances, within the Green Belt to support the delivery of the allocation, is broadly supported in national policy and the supporting text to Policy SP18 of the Council's Local Plan.

3.10 The surface water drainage strategy has been developed through consultation with the Council and the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA). In line with the SuDS management train concept, runoff is controlled locally in the first instance, with downstream controls also implemented. Several swales and drainage basins should be included within the development as part of the SuDS. Most of these basins could be accommodated within the proposed green infrastructure network, including the open space that is located within the overhead lines corridor. However, considering the relatively steep slope within the south of the Site, and the subsequent land take that would be required to construct an attenuation basin on this slope, a further drainage basin would be proposed to the south east, adjacent to the existing drainage basin which already serves parts of Great Ashby. In this location, the proposed basin would need to occupy an area of land of around 2.4ha.

3.11 The background evidence has shown that there is a need for allotments within Great Ashby. Several locations adjacent to the allocation boundary have been considered. The proposed development would generate a requirement for approximately 0.4ha of allotments, but it is recognised that a larger allotment site would be of a greater benefit to the existing and proposed community. Several locations for allotments have been considered, including at Dell Springs, on the land around Tilekiln Farm, and on the farmland to the north east of the Site. After consultation with the Council, it was agreed that the allotment site should be located within the Community Hub area, to form a green space within the heart of the development.

▲ Figure 3.6 - Potential locations for drainage basin and allotments

3. Consideration of Options

Locations to best achieve Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

3.12 The BNG metric is one way of calculating the benefits of a scheme in relation to the biodiversity created as part of a development. It considers the baseline condition of a site, as well as the proposed enhancements in terms of habitat creation, as well as management, with these elements then feeding into a calculator.

3.13 BNG of 10% is proposed to be achieved on this development. While this is in line with the statutory requirement, we do not consider that a higher BNG is achievable on this site, due to the existing Ancient Woodland on site which is already in good condition. The richness of the existing natural capital (such as the woodlands in good condition) is the reason that a higher BNG cannot reasonably be achieved. When existing conditions are biodiverse, it is that much harder to enhance by 10%. Therefore, unlike an equivalent scheme on arable land, there is very limited scope to enhance open spaces proposed beyond the current position.

3.14 This is also why we propose that some areas of land outside of the allocation, but within the Application boundary, should be enhanced to achieve BNG, as a large land area will be required just to achieve a 10% gain in this case.

3.15 Biodiversity is being prioritised on-site in the first instance and within the allocated land, including through the proposed long-term management of woodlands to ensure their existing interests are maintained alongside development. New connecting and complementary habitats will also be incorporated within the development to enhance BNG and the ecological network.

3.16 'Off-site' BNG, i.e. that beyond the immediate influence of development (human activity, pets etc.) delivers substantially greater benefits for nature, as it can be allowed to develop without as many negative pressures that people can bring. Not including the additional land 'off-allocation' will ultimately result in less physical space for nature. Fundamentally, it is not a negative approach to deliver BNG 'off-site' as this alleviates the conflict which can arise between well-designed spaces for people, and spaces which deliver meaningful biodiversity. The scheme, with some BNG accommodated outside of the allocation, will successfully achieve both.

3.17 Providing additional space for BNG outside of the allocated site but adjacent to the development delivers a realistic, and achievable solution, and offers the greatest ecological enhancement opportunities.

▲ Figure 3.7 - BNG strategy to achieve maximum ecological gains

3. Consideration of Options

Bus Route Options

3.18 During consideration of the design options, Hertfordshire County Council ('HCC') requested the investigation of a shorter route for the proposed bus link. Two options were presented to the Council (as shown at Figures 3.8 and 3.9). The preference was Option 1, i.e. the longer bus route which would ensure that the vast majority of houses within the development are located within a suitable walking distance from the new bus route and stops. The team considered that this bus route option would be more suitable to encouraging use, especially considering the slope of the Site and the fact that residents would need to walk for further than 400m up a relatively steep hill to get to a bus stop from within the south of the development. This could deter residents from using the bus service and could lead to the service not being viable for the bus operator. Furthermore, the need to provide vehicular access to the various housing parcels within the Site, as well as the desire to create a legible layout, that was not reliant on a series of cul-de-sacs for access, meant that two north west to south east roads (one within the east and one within the west of the Site) would need to be provided within the development in any case. Consequently, there are minimal potential savings in terms of carriageway length.

3.19 There is also a need to ensure that the longer loop option does not result in unacceptable ecological harm, as the route would need to pass between Longdell Wood and Nine Acre Spring, as well as through the treeline south west of Nine Acre Spring. An ecological assessment considered the potential ecological effects of the Option 1 bus loop. The Council would be amenable to localised areas of road narrowing in these more ecologically sensitive areas, where buses would have priority over oncoming vehicles, and as such two narrowings within the road within the two areas described above have been incorporated into the option.

3.20 Bus operators have provided input into, and have agreed, to the bus strategy, including the proposed Option 1 route. Constructive discussions have been had with Arriva Bus Operator. The bus operator has confirmed the longer loop layout to be acceptable and they are now expected to prepare a timetable for the services and required funding contributions. Inputs included the suggestion of laybys being provided for bus stops, and also that a Phase 1 bus route could enter the Site, and turn and exit again at the first roundabout.

▲ Figure 3.8 - Option 1, longer bus route: the preferred option

▲ Figure 3.9 - Option 2, shorter bus route

3. Consideration of Options

Access route off Mendip Way

3.21 A number of access options have been explored in consultation with HCC to inform the masterplan process. Initial proposals included access into the Site through New Spring, which has since been identified as an area of Ancient Woodland. Options also included taking a roundabout off Mendip Way, which could lead east into the Site towards a further potential roundabout, that would allow for a looped access route serving the various development parcels across the allocation.

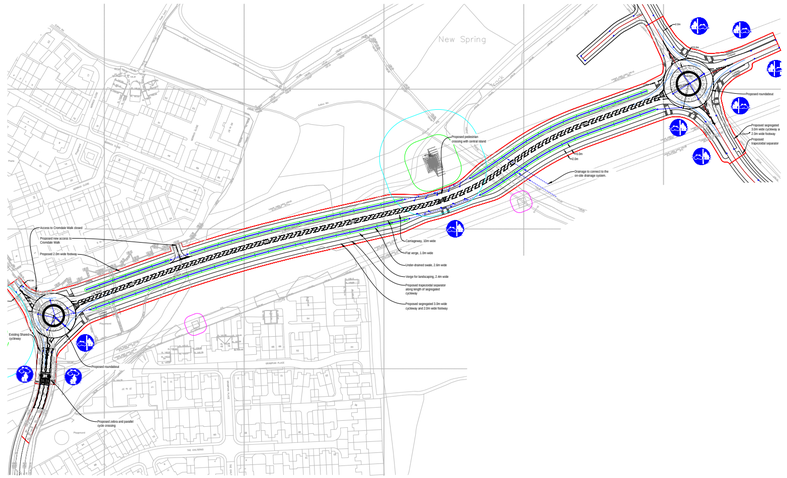
3.22 However, concerns were raised from the HCC regarding potential road corridor widths once any associated drainage and pedestrian and cycle infrastructure would be taken into account. HCC also advised that the use of roundabouts would be considered unnecessary and not the preferred junction arrangements used by the Highway Authority. Simple priority junctions with additional priority designed in for buses, would be sufficient to accommodate any proposed vehicle movements associated with the development of the allocation, while allowing active travel to be prioritised.

3.23 The plans opposite present a number of options that have been explored with HCC in detail to understand how a satisfactory primary Site access and route corridor could be achieved. Comments from the Design Review Panel have also helped shape the approach to the Site access requirements. This work will inform the design detail that will follow and will be agreed and secured through the relevant planning permissions and agreements.

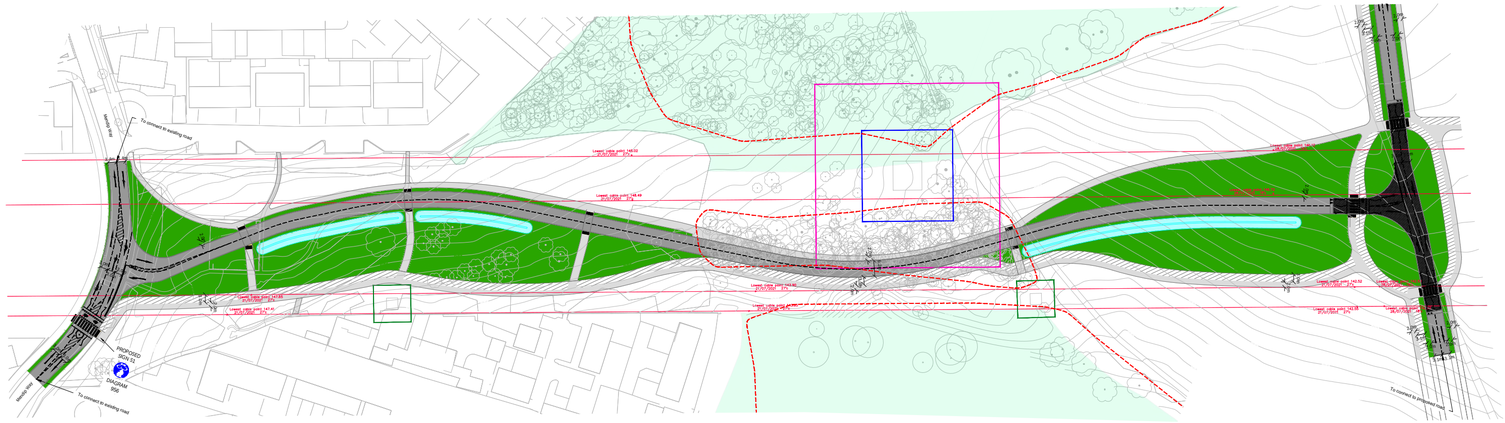
3.24 Existing public footpaths and informal routes within the pylon corridor could be accommodated within the new layout, and appropriately located road crossings could also be provided. The majority of green space will be retained within the corridor, which could be designed to provide both formal and informal areas of public open space, as well as areas for nature conservation. A replacement play area of 1,000sqm, sufficient for a NEAP, could potentially be accommodated a short distance from the existing play area, which is to be removed.

3.25 The potential access road would not incur into the Ancient Woodland, but it could partly fall for a limited section within the 15m buffer to the Ancient Woodland. However, this land within the buffer is subject to frequent management due to the overhead lines, and does not display the characteristics associated with Ancient Woodland.

▲ Figure 3.10 - Illustrative access route originally proposed through New Spring, but it is now known that this area comprises Ancient Woodland



▲ Figure 3.11 - An initial access proposal and corridor option as discussed with HCC



▲ Figure 3.12 - The access and corridor option explored further with HCC to demonstrate that an acceptable solution could be produced

4

Consultation Feedback

4. Consultation Feedback

4.1 As well as the consistent and consultation with officers at NHDC, further consultation has also taken place with the general public and other interested stakeholders. The proposals have also been presented to an independent Design Review Panel, where the initial scheme options and ideas were considered by other design and planning professionals, in order to test the solutions.

4.2 An Illustrative Masterplan was presented at the various consultations and Design Review Panel in May and June 2024, which is shown at Figure 4.1 opposite.

▲ Figure 4.1 - The illustrative masterplan as presented for public consultation and at the Design Review Panel

4. Consultation Feedback

DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

4.3 The design team presented the evolving scheme to the Design South East Review Panel ('DRP') in early May 2024. The review included a site visit, and then discussions on the key principles of the illustrative masterplan. The Panel's comments were shared with the design team and the Council.

4.4 The key recommendations from the DRP were:

1. Clarify the vision for the character, identity, and structure of this new place, informed by contextual analysis, public engagement, and the site's natural assets.

2. Develop a truly landscape-led scheme by reinforcing the existing green corridors and allowing the topographical, ecological, and hydrological features of the site to structure the masterplan layout.

3. Identify opportunities and constraints related to the site's heritage and landscape assets, including views, and ensure that these are embedded in the masterplan so as not to be lost in later stages of design development.

4. Remove the highways-dominated design of the loop road and prioritise the provision of direct and convenient active travel routes to destinations within and beyond the site boundary to improve the connectivity of the site and to encourage sustainable mode shift.

5. Engage with appropriate organisations, such as the wildlife trusts, to develop an active management strategy to retain and enhance the Ancient Woodland while offering appropriate access to the public.

6. Explore how a stronger sense of place could be achieved by densifying the northwestern half of the site and co-locating civic elements to create a 'village heart' that is complemented by the attractive landscape at Dell's Spring.

7. Identify the privacy and function of each proposed green space to clarify the strategy for public recreation across the site, taking account of topography and realistic assessment of the size of required sustainable drainage system (SuDS) features.

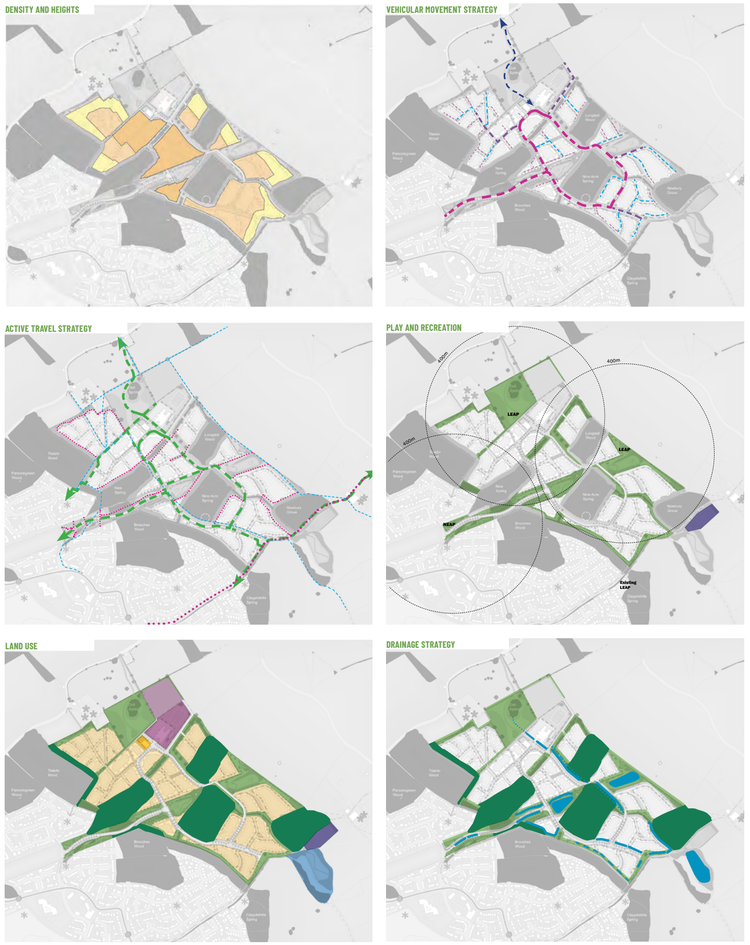
8. Retain and protect Dell Spring as an unspoilt landscape area to reduce the impact on the setting of Tile Kiln Farm.

4.5 The design team considered the comments from the DRP, and a follow-up meeting was held with NHDC to consider the suggestions. Some of the suggestions were not achievable, while others helped to further shape the illustrative masterplan to focus on the unique character of the Site. Not all suggestions made by the DRP were agreed upon, as the panel did not have the benefit of a very thorough understanding of the Site's technical constraints or other matters such as land ownership and concerns raised by the HCC in relation to highways. Some of the suggestions related to elements that will be considered further and designed in detail at a later stage.

4.6 The final illustrative masterplan incorporates much of the comments and suggestions made by the DRP, and the resultant masterplan now better reflects the landscape character within which the Site it is located, whilst also ensuring active travel routes are more direct, convenient and attractive.

4.7 Specific design responses include:

- Separating the cycle and footways from the primary vehicular carriageway along the potential access corridor, to make active travel routes more direct, and to locate them within a parkland area where possible.
- Green corridors strengthened to form the primary structure of the development.
- The potential primary road corridor has been redesigned, creating more variety in the location of the cycle paths and cycleways, and verges and tree planting, in order to create areas of differing character, while reducing the dominant appearance of the primary street on the plan.
- The northern part of the Site is proposed to be more dense to help create a central area of focus at Dell Spring, the Community Hub, and Primary School.
- The area for allotments have been relocated to the Community Hub, to create a greener heart to the development and to be more accessible.
- The western SuDS basin has been redesigned to serve as an area of usable public open space, with amenity grass in the bottom of the basin.
- The potential emergency access point has been moved away from Dell Spring to protect the landscape character and setting of Tile Kiln Farm.
- The proposed landscape treatment of the spaces has been reconsidered, to create more usable amenity areas where one could kick a ball.



▲ Figure 4.2 - Emerging parameters presented to the Design Review Panel

4. Consultation Feedback

PUBLIC EXHIBITION

4.8 A public exhibition and consultation event was held at the Great Ashby Community Centre in late May 2024, where the emerging proposals were presented to the public via information boards. Members of the design team were on hand to answer questions and hear comments.

4.9 The event was attended by around 190 visitors and 156 feedback forms and email comments were received.

4.10 Most of the comments made by the public related to the principle of development, and many had not been aware that the site had been allocated for residential development. Many noted the lack of medical facilities in the area, or the difficulty getting a doctor or dentist appointment.

4.11 There were also many comments in relation to the local highway network, and queries on the proposed access design. The design team explained that the scheme was designed to maximise active and public travel, and that the Highways Authority were being consulted at every stage of the design process.

FURTHER STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS

4.12 The applicant team had written to several community groups and other interested parties, offering them the opportunity to discuss the proposals.

4.13 The design team met with members of the Great Ashby Community Council at a meeting in early June 2024, to discuss the proposals and answer questions.

4.14 The key concern raised by the Community Council again related to the local highways capacity, and the lack of local services and facilities (such as doctors and hospital spaces).

4.15 The design team shared the findings of their preliminary highways and transport assessments with the Community Council, and will continue to respond to any queries ahead of the submission of the planning application.

4.16 The design team also noted that the use of the proposed Community Facility was not fixed, and that it could be used as a medical centre, should the local NHS Trust deem it a suitable, necessary, and a viable location.

HERTS AND MIDDLESEX BADGER GROUP

4.17 Key members of the design team, including the Ecologist, met with members of the Badger Group in early June 2024 to discuss the proposals.

4.18 The Group were happy to hear that the Ancient Woodlands would be retained, and also made some suggestions as to how the scheme could be amended to better benefit badgers. The design team explained that, while the badger population on the Site is no doubt important, their concerns in relation to badgers had to be balanced with other ecological concerns and mitigation measures, alongside the need to accommodate the built development.

4.19 Nevertheless, the design team took their comments into consideration, including additional areas of wildflower grass across the wider development, to benefit badger habitats. Further mitigation measures will be designed into the scheme at the detailed design stage, as set out further on in this document.

▲ Figure 4.3 - Information on the proposals was shown to the public at the exhibition

5

Development Framework

5. Development Framework

5.1 The Illustrative Development Framework Plan has been informed by the various technical and site analysis work that has been undertaken to date and demonstrates how the Site could be developed.

5.2 This shows the location and extent of the proposed land uses, Site access points and links, and the retained and proposed structural vegetation. It illustrates the result of the design development process for the Site. Over the following pages, each framework layer is explained in more detail to understand how it has informed the Illustrative Development Framework Plan.

5.3 This plan shows how the following schedule can be provided on Site:

- Approximately 640 dwellings within 19.62ha of residential development land;
- A 2.1ha site for a primary school and a further 1.9ha of reserved land for educational uses;
- A site for a Community Facility, and new allotments;
- 33.27ha of green infrastructure, including the retained woodland, hedgerows, trees and Dell Spring, as well as large new areas of open space and planting;
- A Sustainable Drainage System ('SuDS') to manage surface water run-off; and
- Vehicular access off Mendip Way, alongside several cycle and pedestrian links into the Site.

5.4 The Illustrative Development Framework Plan, as mentioned above, has been informed by the various framework plans set out over the following pages. These framework plans set out the principles and parameters that should inform the more detailed design work that will follow this process at both the Outline and Reserved Matters planning application stage.

5.5 An Illustrative Masterplan contained in section 6 of this document demonstrate how these design principles and parameters will inform the more detailed design of the Site.

5.6 It is expected that a Design Code will be submitted and agreed with the Council as a condition of the outline planning application. This will set out the principles of the development in further detail, and will ensure that the good design principles developed during the Strategic Masterplanning and Outline Application stages, are carried through to the Reserved Matters applications and the detailed design of the development.

- Allocation Boundary
- Proposed Housing
- Open Space
- Proposed Allotments
- Streets, with cycleways and footways
- Shared surfaces/key squares
- Public footpath
- Bridleway
- Potential emergency access
- Pedestrian links
- Pedestrian and cycle links
- Existing bus route and stop
- Existing woodland, hedgerows and trees retained
- Ancient Woodland
- Existing vegetation to be removed
- Proposed trees
- Proposed native woodland planting
- Proposed native thicket planting
- Proposed native hedgerow
- Proposed meadow/long grassland
- Existing drainage basin
- Existing watercourse, ditches and ponds
- Proposed swales and drainage basins
- Wildlife pond
- Children's play area
- Pylons and overhead powerlines
- Existing play areas
- Historic quarry
- Grade II Listed Buildings

▲ Figure 5.1 - Illustrative Development Framework Plan

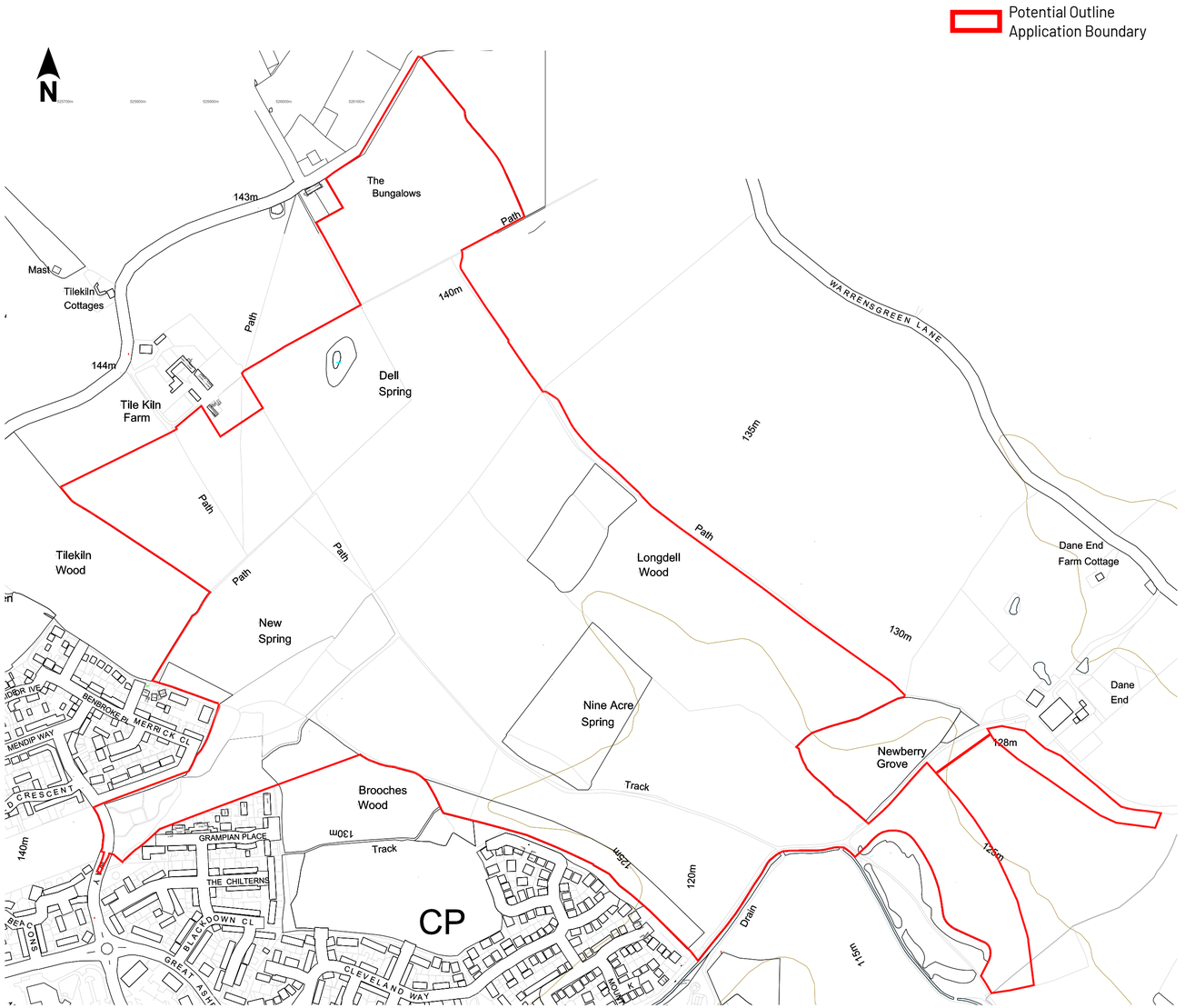
5. Development Framework

Proposed Application Boundary

5.7 The Site boundary for the Outline Application will differ from the allocation boundary for several reasons, including land ownership reasons. Through the design process and consultation with the Council and other stakeholders, it has also become apparent that some land uses and functions would be better located outside of the allocation area.

5.8 A drainage basin which forms part of the SuDS, is proposed to be located a short distance to the south east of the allocated land. At initial design stage we evaluated the proposed development site in its entirety to assess existing surface water flow paths, topography, low points/outfall locations and catchment areas. The outcome from this appraisal was to utilise the existing attenuation basin (which was created as part of earlier phases of development at Great Ashby) for the final attenuation and increase its size to allow for the additional surface water flows from GA2. However, during the design process it was apparent that an additional basin, adjacent to the existing, would be the preferred option due to its prime location to intercept the surface water flow paths from the development. There are three attenuation features proposed throughout the development, and all are in undevelopable areas, with basins 1 and 2 located beneath the overhead lines, and basin 3 located in a field that is otherwise undevelopable due to its steep topography.

5.9 A small field to the north of the allocation, adjacent to Warrensgreen Lane, is proposed to be included within the Site in order to provide land for further planting to achieve Biodiversity Net Gain, as well as to provide additional informal recreational opportunities. Further woodland planting is proposed to the south east of the Site and will also be included within the Application site. The strategy to address ecological effects and to deliver a net gain in biodiversity includes first the delivery of habitats within and around development within the allocation, which provides multifunctional spaces for people and their interaction with nature. In addition, targeted habitat delivery is proposed beyond the allocation boundary, in strategically significant locations for biodiversity gain. These locations link fragmented habitats and strengthening local ecological networks away from development. Equivalent gain would not be achieved within the allocation boundary, as these areas are not as strategically significant, and delivery here would diminish any potential gains. The combination of these approaches demonstrates a commitment to both delivering access to nature, as well as a meaningful contribution to local nature recovery. This approach is consistent with the Biodiversity Gain Hierarchy as set out in statute.



▲ Figure 5.2 - Potential Outline Application Boundary

5. Development Framework

LAND USE FRAMEWORK PLAN

5.10 The Land Use Framework Plan shows how the following uses could be accommodated:

- Residential Development
- Primary School Site: **2.1ha**
- Reserved Land for Education: **1.9ha**
- Community Hub
- Green & Blue Infrastructure (incl. allotments)

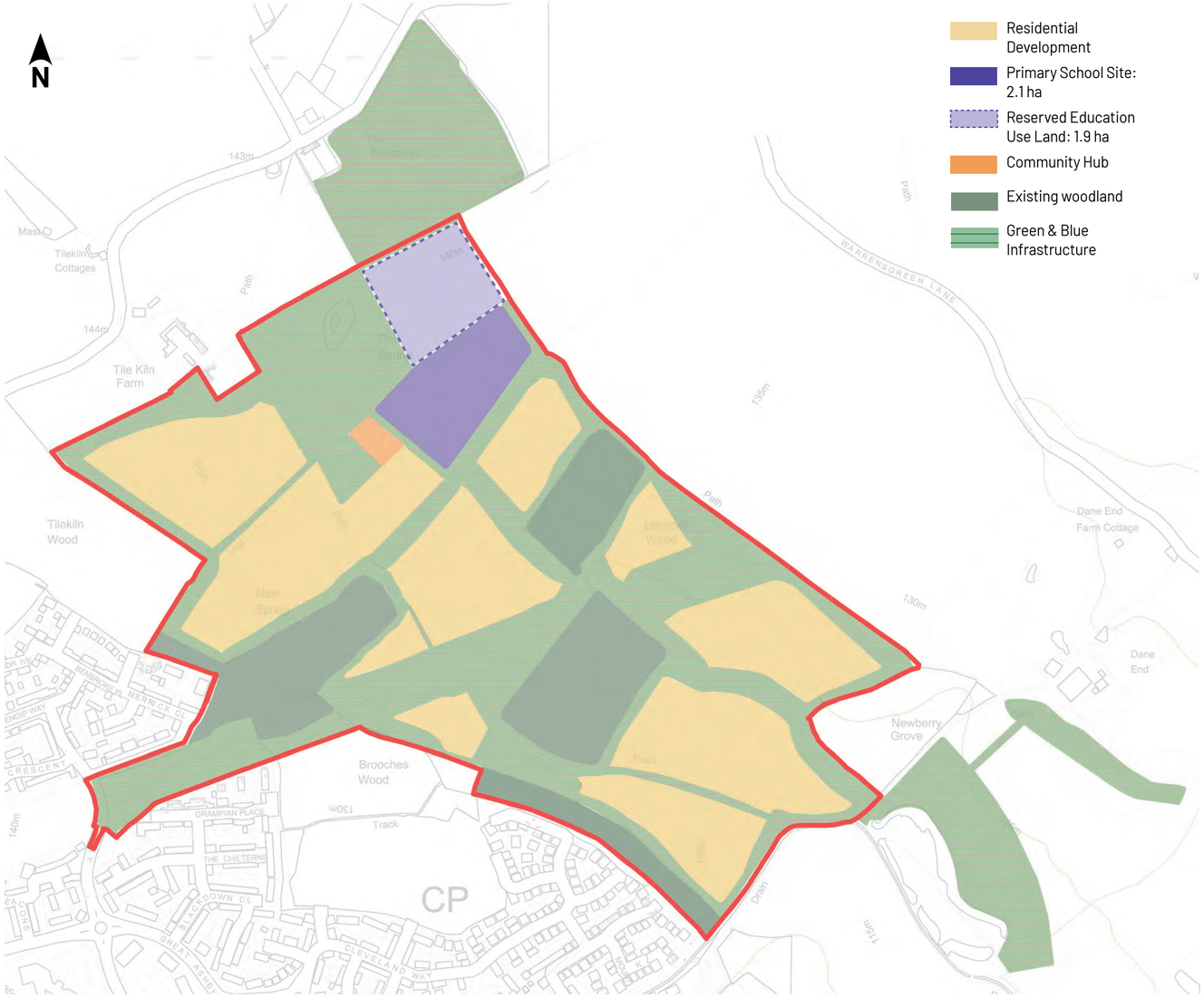
Residential

5.11 Based upon this and subsequent frameworks, it is estimated the Site could potentially accommodate approximately 640 new homes, which would equate to a density between 32 and 35 dwellings per hectare. Local Plan Policy SP18 stipulates a development capacity of approximately 600 dwellings for GA2, which aligns with this estimation. This estimate will be tested further at the Outline Application stage.

5.12 The proposals would include for 40% affordable housing. At the detailed design stage, the development will be designed to provide a range of types and sizes of dwellings, with the exact mix to be agreed with the Council in line with policy requirements. The proposed housing would likely include a mix of flats, terraces, semi-detached and detached properties.

5.13 At least 50% of the houses will be built to M4(2) Accessible and Adoptable standard, as required by policy.

5.14 Proposals should also include 6 self-build plots, the location of which will be agreed in principle at the Outline Application stage.



▲ Figure 5.3 - Land Use Framework Plan

5. Development Framework

Education

5.15 Continued consultation with Herts County Council as education authority has confirmed the requirement for a 2-form entry primary school site of 2.1ha, and an area of land of 1.9ha reserved for potential future educational uses. The site for the school should be provided as part of the first phase, to allow the school to be built at any stage of development, as required by the education authority.

5.16 The Illustrative Development Framework demonstrates how new cycle and pedestrian routes could be designed to provide access to the school from both within the development, as well as from the wider Great Ashby area.

Community Hub

5.17 Policy SP18 requires neighbourhood-level facilities to be provided, of approximately 500m2 (net) of retail and food and beverage floorspace and other necessary medical and social infrastructure. Through consultation with the Council and other stakeholders, it has been considered that a local shop would not be viable, due to the small-scale of the development and the proximity of the existing shop at the Great Ashby Neighbourhood Centre. A multi-use building and site is therefore proposed to be included within any development proposals, which would complement rather than compete with the existing facilities at the Great Ashby Neighbourhood Centre. This could take the form of a multi-use community facility, which could allow for community activities, meetings, or events.

5.18 Should it prove feasible and necessary, part of this site and building could be used for healthcare provision purposes, should the NHS trust deem it a suitable location. It is envisaged that the hall will be designed in accordance with the guidance set by Sports England for Village and Community Halls.

Green Infrastructure

5.19 The Green Infrastructure network within the development should be designed to be multi-functional. It would include the areas of retained vegetation, the proposed SuDS swales and basins, new active and recreational travel routes, areas for informal recreation and play, and areas with new planting to benefit wildlife. More information on the Green Infrastructure is contained in Section 6.

▲ A site for a new primary school will need to be provided

▲ A Community Hall could link to a civic space at the school and Dell Spring, creating a central Hub

▲ A multi-functional network of green infrastructure should be created in the development

5. Development Framework

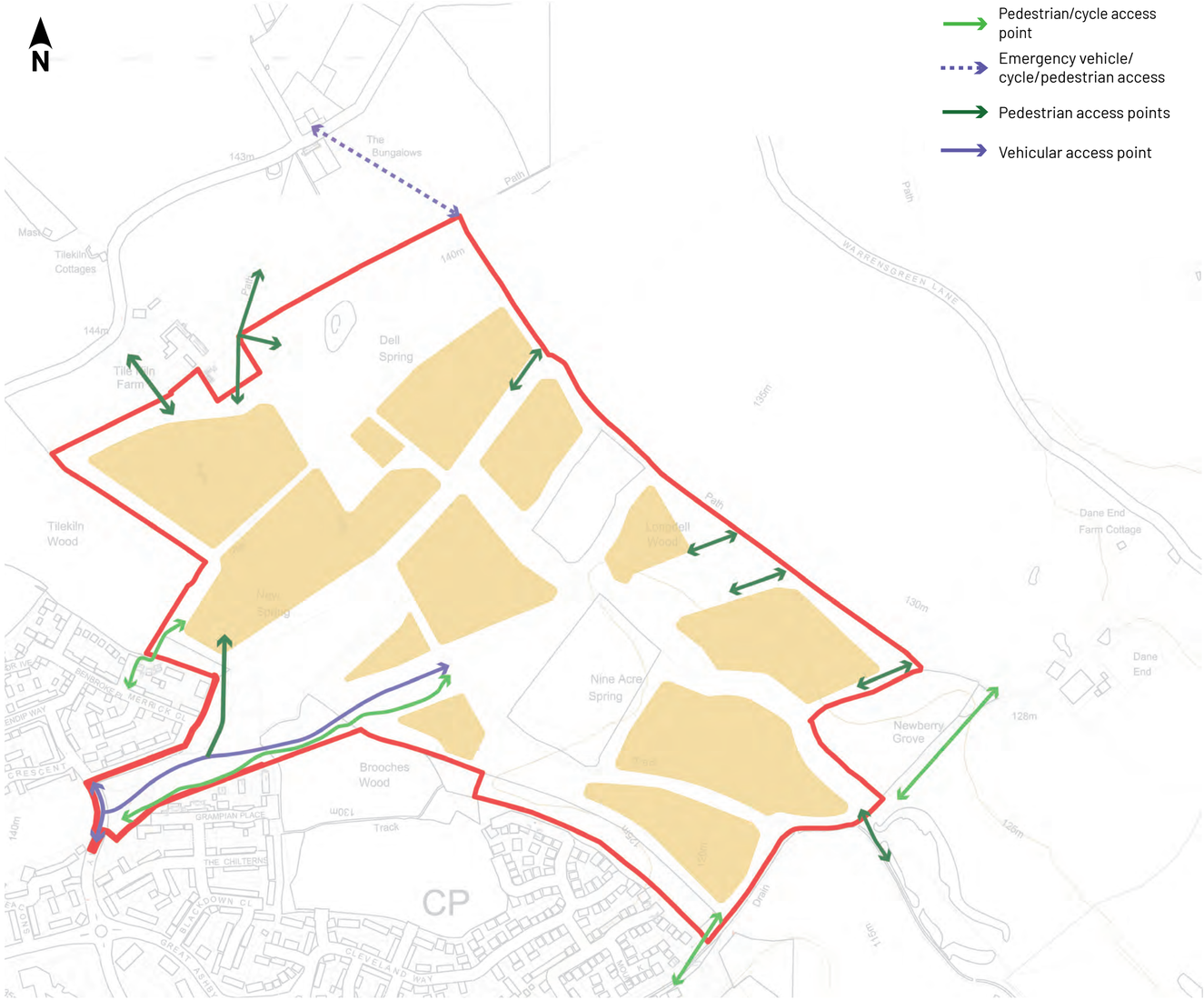
ACCESS

Primary Access

5.20 The vehicular access to the development should be taken from Mendip Way via a new t-junction. The access road would lead east under the pylon corridor into the wider development area. The route of the street should be designed to avoid the pylons and their associated off-sets, and most importantly, the areas of Ancient Woodland. There will likely be a small incursion into the 15m buffer to the Ancient Woodland along its central section, however, the adjoining area of woodland is already compromised due to the overhead lines, which cross it, and the need for maintenance access for these powerlines. The access corridor would require the removal of the existing play area at Mendip Way, however, as shown on the Illustrative Development Framework. A new Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NEAP) would also be required and could be located east of Mendip Way, to the south of Cromdale Walk and north of the new road. Areas of existing woodland (not Ancient) would require removal under the pylon corridor in order to create the access, however, much of this woodland is already heavily managed to allow maintenance of the overhead lines.

5.21 The access road would need to be designed to be 6.2m wide, and should be able to accommodate a bus service. The road should also be designed to have a 20mph speed limit.

5.22 A 3m wide cycleway alongside a 2m wide footway would also need to be provided to the south of the access road, within the corridor under the pylons. This would link to a pedestrian and cycle crossing point at Mendip Way and would allow access to the Great Ashby Neighbourhood Centre. The foot and cyclepath could adjoin the main carriageway through the area adjacent to the Ancient Woodland, to minimise tree losses. A separate footway could be provided to the east along the northern side of the main carriageway, and would link to the junction of Mendip Way and Cromdale Walk, also providing access to the new NEAP. The existing pedestrian routes within this area of land beneath the pylons should be retained and connected to the new foot and cyclepath network, and crossing points would need to be provided over the new road to link to these paths.



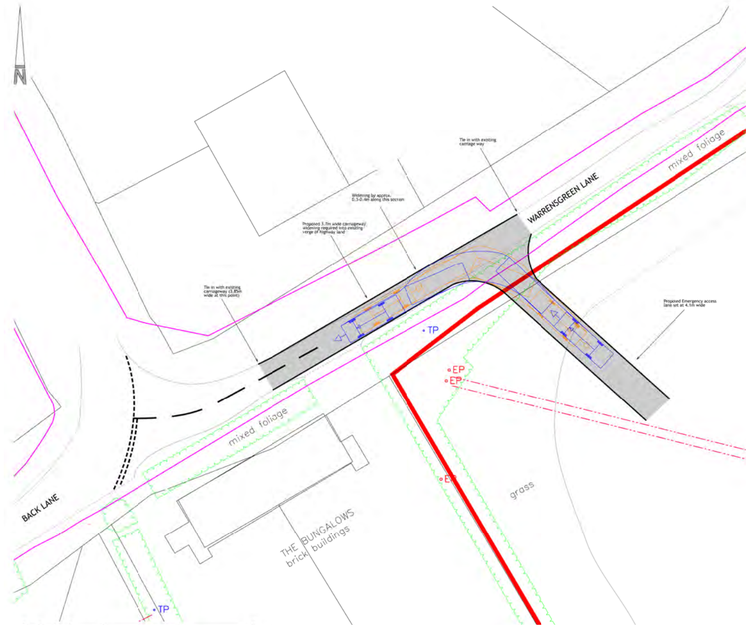
▲ Figure 5.4 - Access Framework Plan

5. Development Framework

Emergency Vehicle Access

5.23 An emergency access point should be provided into the Site off Warrensgreen Lane and be controlled with a gate or bollards, to ensure that its use will be restricted to emergency vehicles in cases where the primary access is blocked. This link would need to be at least 2.75m wide, and could be surfaced with hoggin or a reinforced grass on top of a suitable base layer capable of accommodating heavy vehicles. This route should link into the north of the development near the primary school, and also be usable by pedestrians, cyclists and horse-riders.

5.24 The plans opposite present a number of options that have been explored in detail with HCC to understand how satisfactory access could be achieved. The final designs will be agreed at the Outline and Reserved Matters planning applications stages.



▲ Figure 5.5 - Emergency access could be taken from Warrensgreen Lane

▲ Figure 5.6 - Vehicular and bus access could be off Mendip Way

5. Development Framework

ACTIVE TRAVEL

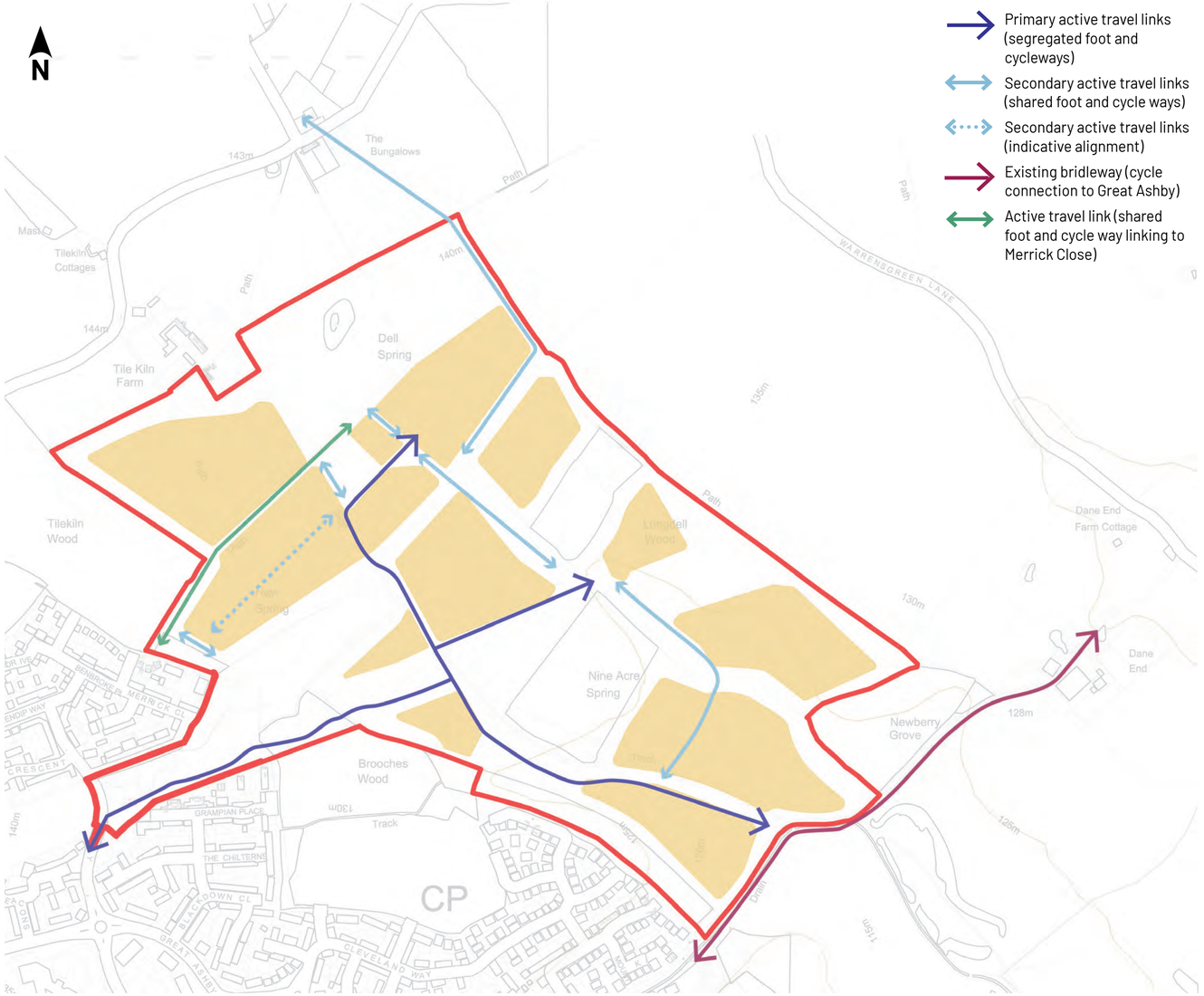
Pedestrian and Cycle Movement

5.25 In addition to the pedestrian and cycle paths provided within the access corridor, other links to the development from the surrounding area are also proposed. The existing public footpath into the Site off Merrick Close is proposed to be upgraded to a pedestrian and cycle route, to allow for active travel links from Great Ashby to the new school. This route would need to be 3m wide, except for a short section next to Merrick Close and adjoining the Ancient Woodland where it can only be 2m wide due to the adjoining road and woodland. This active travel link would continue through the development towards the primary school and Community Hub.

5.26 Pedestrian and cycle access would also be available off the existing bridleway within the south of the Site, with this route leading to the Great Ashby Neighbourhood Centre to the west.

5.27 Further pedestrian only links to the development would be available via the public footpaths which bound and cross the Site. These offer access to Back Lane, Warrensgreen Lane, and Mendip Way via the open space within the pylon corridor.

▲ Direct links will be created to where people want to go, and these will be overlooked by houses



▲ Figure 5.7 - Active Travel Framework

5. Development Framework

5.28 A hierarchy of foot and cycle routes will be created within the development. Along the main access into the Site and onwards to the Community Hub, a segregated cycleway and footway will be provided.

5.29 On the remainder of the primary streets, a shared foot and cycleway will most often be provided to one side of the street, with a footway usually provided to the other side.

5.30 On secondary and tertiary streets, cyclists would ride on the street in these low-traffic environments, with pedestrian walkways provided to either one or both sides of the street.

5.31 Courtyards, private drives and mews will mostly be shared-spaces, with vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians all utilising the same space for movement.

5.32 The exact arrangement will consider the amount of homes served by the various streets, as well as the location of alternative or dedicated active travel routes nearby.

5.33 Pedestrians and cyclists will be expected to have priority at crossings and junctions, and at the detailed design stage, features such as Copenhagen-style crossings would be utilised to reinforce this priority.

▲ Segregated cycleways will be provided along the access into the development, and to the school

▲ Shared foot and cycle ways will be located along the primary streets

▲ On secondary streets, cycling will be on road, with either one or two footways for pedestrians

▲ Low-traffic streets will allow walking and cycling in shared spaces

5. Development Framework

LEISURE ROUTES

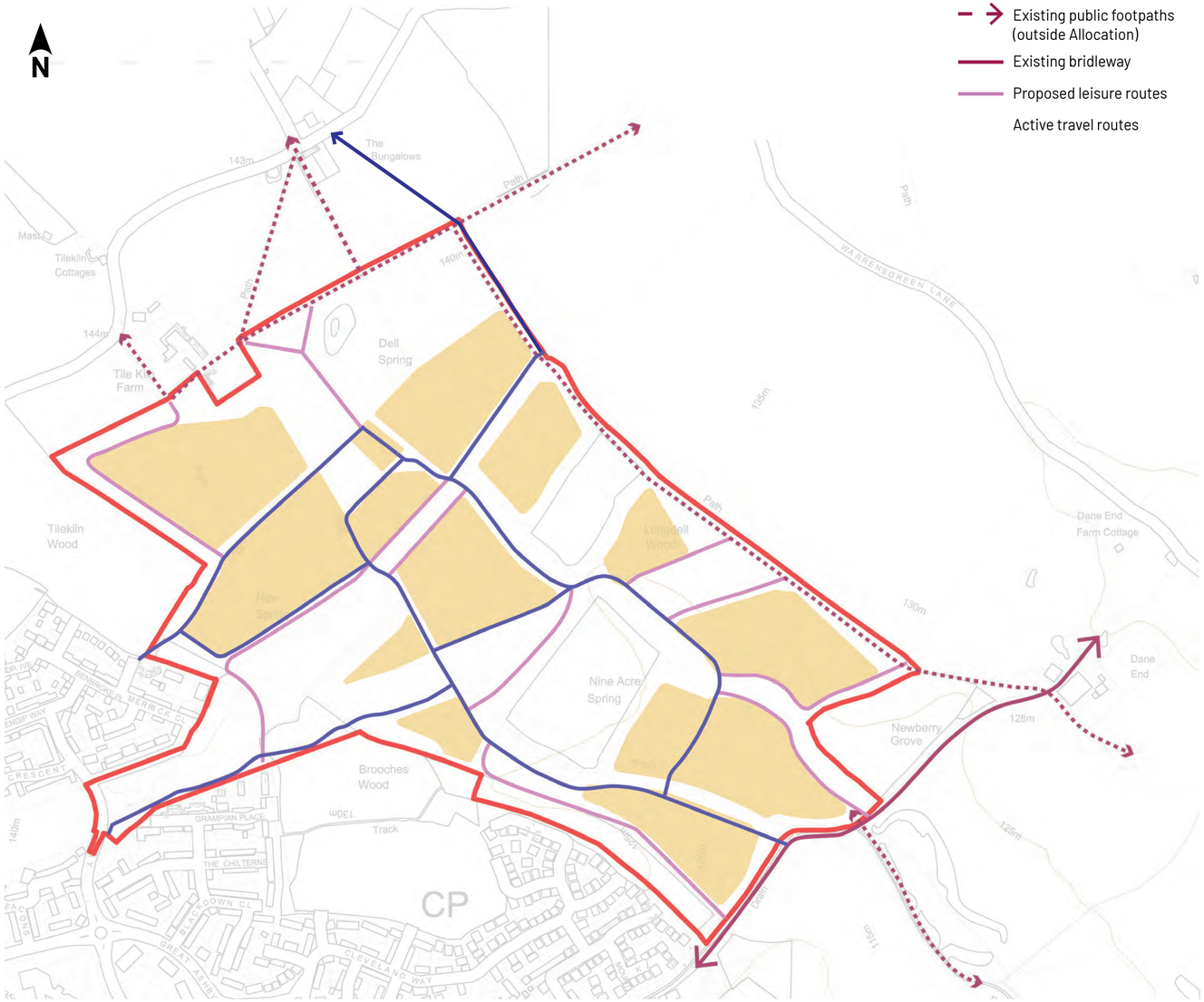
Footpaths and Bridleways

5.34 A permeable network of streets and paths should be designed to allow easy pedestrian and cycle links to and within the development. New foot and cycleways should be provided alongside the primary street, and could connect to all parts of the development.

5.35 Recreational routes could be created within the new areas of public open space, which should link to the new and existing footways, as well as to the existing public rights of way. The routes should be hard surfaced in most cases, although mown paths and hoggin surfaces would also be acceptable within areas of open space. These pedestrian links would likely need to be 2m wide in most instances.

5.36 The existing public footpaths, which cross and adjoin the development, should be retained along their current alignment. While the definitive routes of public footpaths should be retained as walkable paths where possible, some diversions and new routes will also be proposed.

▲ A variety of paths and links should be provided, with various characters and to various destinations



▲ Figure 5.8 - Leisure Routes Framework Plan

5. Development Framework

5.37 Public footpath Weston 029 would be accessed via the new footway along the primary street, and the footway should be aligned to the definitive route where feasible. Similarly, public footpath Weston 026 would likely be accessed via the new active travel route south of Tilekiln Wood, with this made path located outside of the 15m off-set from the Ancient Woodland. However, pedestrians should still be able to walk the definitive, unmade route adjacent to the woodland, should they wish to.

5.38 Public footpaths Weston 046 and Great Ashby 011 in the west of the Site should be retained within the development. Great Ashby 011 would need to be fenced where it leads through New Spring, in order to limit public access to the Ancient Woodland. This area may also be surfaced, as muddy ground often results in pedestrians walking off the path into the surrounding woodland in search of dry ground. Any improvement works would need to be agreed with the Council and be sensitively designed and implemented to protect the ground flora and trees within the woodland.

5.39 Public footpaths Weston 026 and the northern part of Weston 029 should be accommodated along footways, paths, or verges within the street layout.

5.40 Public footpath Weston 044 at the north eastern Site boundary should be retained along its current alignment.

5.41 There is a potential opportunity to upgrade some of the public footpaths to bridleway status so that, in connection with the new emergency access track, new equestrian links between the south of the Site and Warrensgreen Lane would be created. This would allow for a variety of leisure route options within and around the development.

▲ The route of existing public right of ways will be retained alongside the woodland area

▲ Some public rights of way in the Site will be surfaced to accommodate an expected increase in use

▲ The public footpaths will be incorporated along the new streets in places

▲ The new homes will front onto the retained public rights of way to provide passive surveillance

5. Development Framework

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

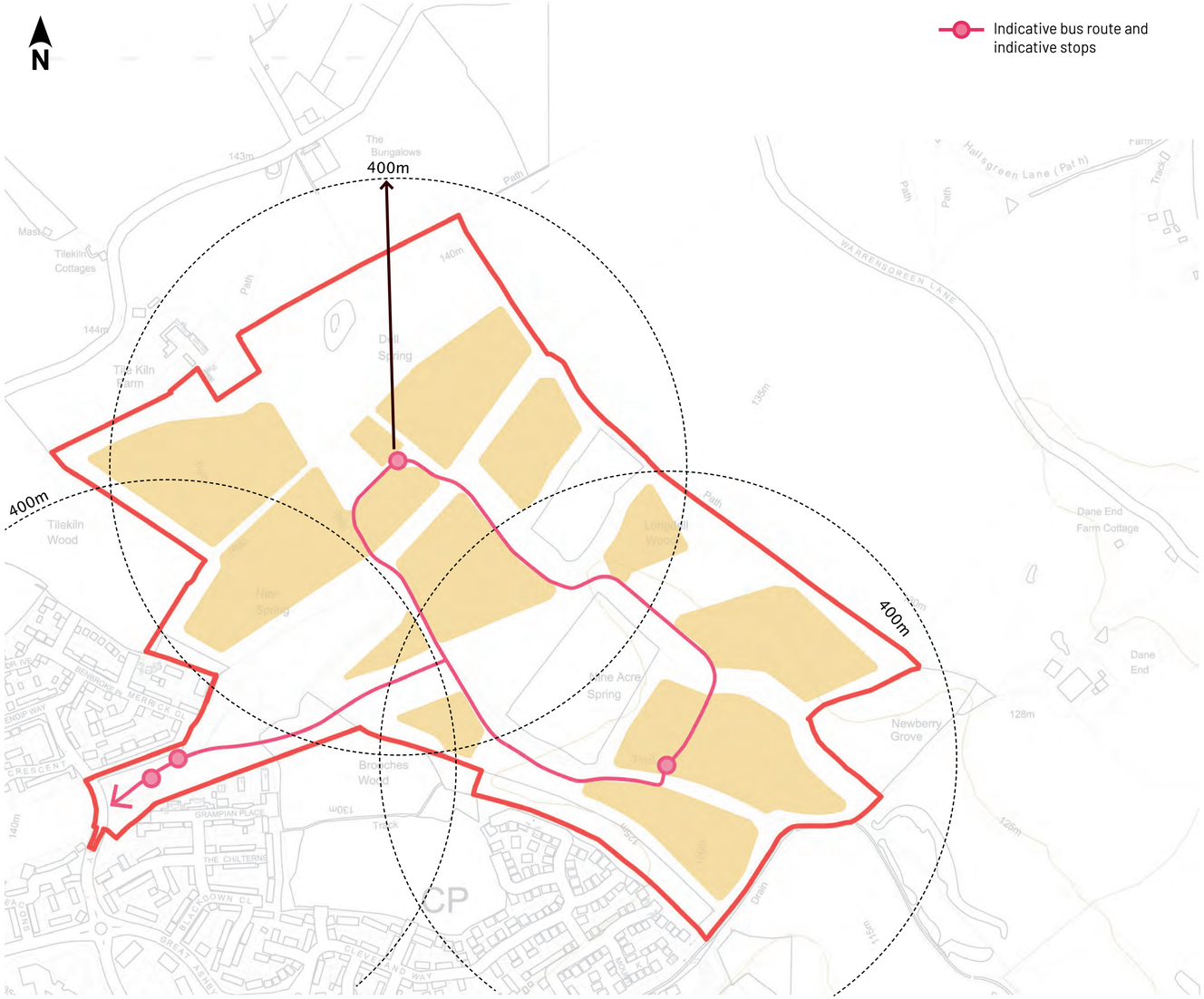
Bus Route

5.42 Proposals should be designed to accommodate a new bus route through the development. Consultation with both the Highways Authority and the bus operator Arriva have informed a proposed route, as shown on the Illustrative Development Framework. An option would be to reroute the SB7 bus service to serve the development on its inbound journey towards Stevenage, resulting in an half-hourly service.

5.43 The bus operator has suggested four bus stops would be required to serve the development: one within the north, one within the south, and two along the access corridor (one in either direction). This would allow the vast majority of new dwellings to be within 400m of a bus stop, which is an important consideration taking into account the topography of the Site in the south.

5.44 The bus operator would prefer to have a layby for pick up and drop offs at the primary school, however, the other stops could be on the road. Part of this new bus route, i.e. the section to the primary school, should be delivered in the first phase, and a temporary turning space could be designed into the scheme to the south west of the school to allow the bus to turn and exit the Site.

5.45 The bus route would likely follow along primary or secondary streets within the development. There would likely be two areas where the bus route would need to be reduced in width to a single lane, where the street passes through the most ecologically-sensitive spaces. The street here should be designed to offer priority to buses (and vehicles moving clockwise), with vehicles moving in the other direction (i.e. anti-clockwise) having to stop and give priority to oncoming traffic.



▲ Figure 5.9 - Public Transport Framework Plan

5. Development Framework

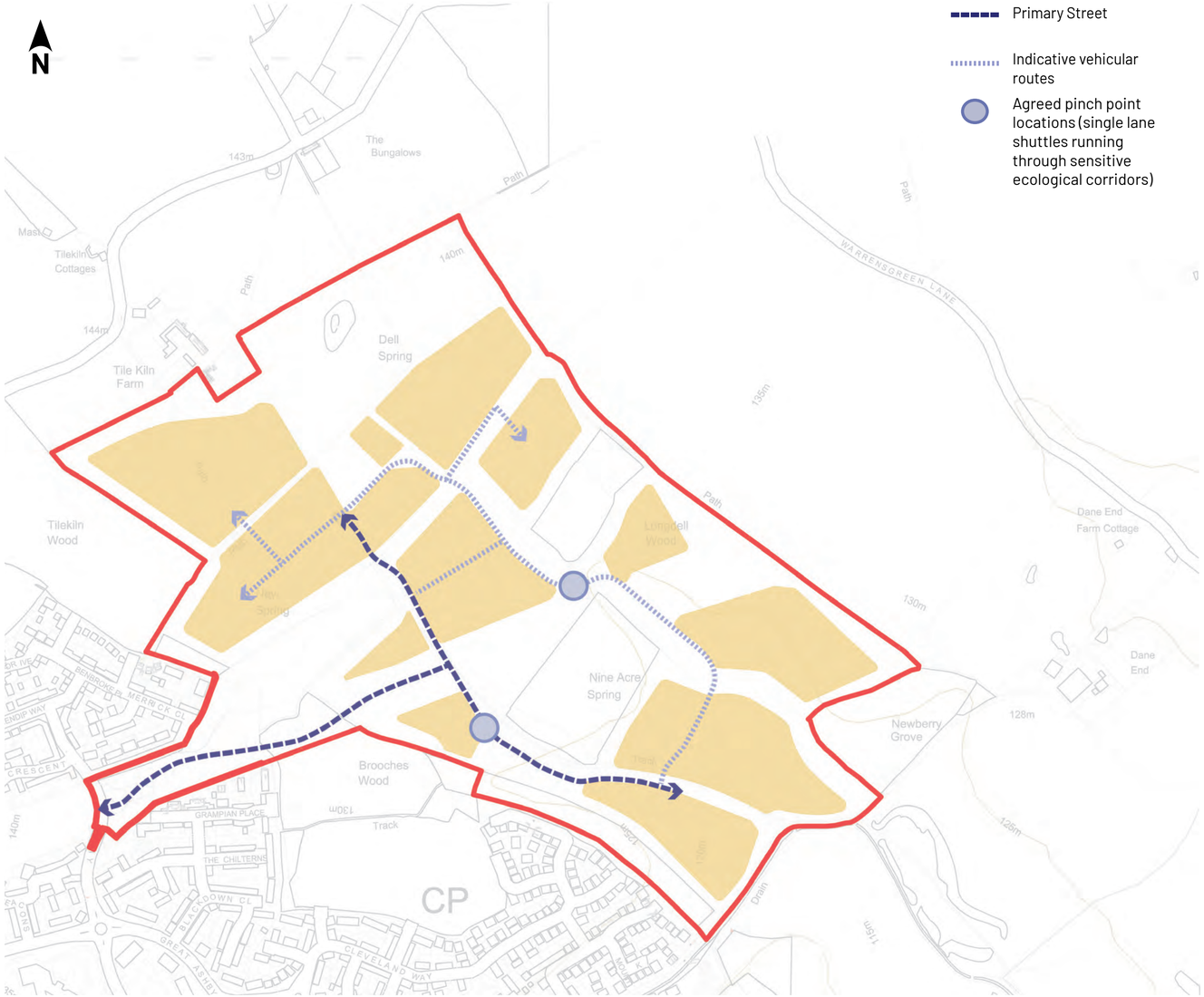
VEHICULAR

Vehicular Movement and Parking

5.46 Proposals should incorporate a hierarchy of movement routes, ranging from the primary street down to private drives and courtyards. This will aid in creating a variety of identifiable characters within the development, and support the creation of a legible development. The exact widths of the carriageway, cycleways and footways should be agreed at the detailed design stage.

▲ The primary street should include green verges and street trees in most places

▲ Secondary streets would likely have footways to either side of the street



▲ Figure 5.10 - Vehicular Framework Plan

5. Development Framework

5.47 The primary street should form the primary route into the development, and would lead into the north and south of the scheme off the new access from Mendip Way. The primary street should be 6.2m wide, with foot and cycle ways as appropriate.

5.48 The primary street should also include green verges with heavy standard sized street trees to aid with placemaking in the early phases, as well as incidental areas of open space. Key spaces should be created along the primary street, to create interest and aid legibility. A maximum distance of 15m between street trees should be incorporated.

5.49 New homes could be accessed directly off this primary street via private driveways, although the amount of crossings over foot and cycleways should be limited. Most homes would be accessed via shared access drives to rear parking courts, to ensure a regular, strong built frontage is maintained along the street. Visitor parking could be provided in dedicated bays in places along the street.

5.50 Secondary streets would lead off the primary street towards the outer peripheries of the development, and will likely carry less traffic than the primary street.

5.51 Street tree planting should be incorporated in dedicated verges in certain areas along secondary streets, to create varying characters along the streets. A maximum distance of 15m between street trees should be incorporated.

5.52 The new homes should be accessed directly off these streets via private driveways. On-street parking and visitors parking can be accommodated in dedicated bays along these streets.

5.53 Tertiary streets provide local access to mews and courts, and serve a lower numbers of dwellings. These streets would be narrower in width, with foot and cycle provision as necessary.

5.54 They may have street trees and planting in dedicated areas of open space within tertiary streets, or landscaping may be accommodated within the front gardens. A maximum distance of 15m between street trees should be incorporated.

5.55 Dwellings could be accessed directly off these streets and a variety of on-plot and on-street parking solutions could be accommodated to create a varied street scene.

5.56 The extent of the different levels of the hierarchy and the principles that would inform their design will be developed as part of the next stage of works to support an Outline Planning application and Reserved Matters applications.

▲ Visitor and shared parking can be provided in dedicated bays along the primary and secondary streets

▲ Verges and street trees will soften the streetscene

▲ Small mews courts with units that provide overlooking of parking areas

5. Development Framework

5.57 Mews and courts form the lowest trafficked streets within the development, and only provide access to residential properties. These streets are mostly located on the peripheries of the development where no through-vehicle movement is necessary, but they will also be used within the centre of the development to provide vehicular access to small groups of properties set off the main streets. There would still be the need to ensure permeability for pedestrians and cyclists as part of the site-wide movement networks.

5.58 These street types would be narrower, and will be shared with pedestrians and cyclists. Trees and other vegetation will be designed into the streets, or incorporated within front gardens or adjoining public open spaces. Although they don't provide vehicular through-links, they should still allow for pedestrian and cycle permeability.

▲ The use of block paving on roads can help slow traffic speeds

Car and Cycle Parking

5.59 Car and cycle parking should be provided in line with the requirements of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan, and will be agreed with the Council at the Outline Planning Application and / or Reserved Matters stage.

5.60 The current minimum requirements are as follows:

Dwelling size	Car parking	Cycle parking
1 bedroom	1 space per dwelling minimum	1 secure covered space per dwelling. None if garage or secure area provided within curtilage of dwelling
2-3 bedroom	2 spaces per dwelling minimum	

5.61 Garages will be counted towards meeting the car parking standards only if they are at least 7m x 3m measured internally. To count as cycle parking, garages must be designed with sufficient internal space to store and move cycles, easy entry and exit with a bike, and an unobstructed path to the street at all times.

5.62 Visitor and unallocated car parking space also needs to be provided at between 0.25 and 0.75 spaces per dwelling, dependant on the amount of private garages within the development. Some properties would likely have private garages, therefore 0.5 parking spaces per dwelling will be unallocated and/or for use by visitors. These spaces will be located and designed so that they could be changed into other uses (such as green spaces) in the future, should private car ownership decline as expected.

5.63 Regarding visitor cycle parking, a requirement of 1 space per dwelling would be required.

5.64 At the detailed design stage, parking will be designed to be subservient to the built form and landscaping, and to not dominate the streetscene. Car parking should be located in a variety of spaces near to the new houses.

5.65 All new dwellings with dedicated parking spaces would need to include EV charging points, with communal charging points located in most areas of unallocated parking.

▲ Where parking on the street or to the front of housing is utilised, it should be well landscaped with shrubs and trees to break up the parking spaces and soften the streetscene

▲ A variety of parking solutions should be used, including garages (which could have flats over them)

5. Development Framework

GREEN AND BLUE INFRASTRUCTURE

5.66 The key principles upon which the Illustrative Development Framework has been developed, includes the retention of the existing structural landscape elements, as well as the creation of green corridors to link these elements where possible. This network of green spaces and corridors, i.e. the green infrastructure, forms the backbone of the framework.

5.67 Green infrastructure should be designed to be multi-functional, and therefore these spaces aim to accommodate elements for environmental, ecological, habitat, movement, and social benefits. Green infrastructure should include key parts of the Sustainable Drainage System ('SuDS') infrastructure, as well as active travel routes and other recreational paths. It should also include the existing retained and proposed vegetation, as well as including spaces for active and passive recreation.

5.68 The green infrastructure proposed should be set out into various different open space types, in line with the Fields in Trust guidance ('Fit'; 2015). The proposed open space types are described across the following pages. The plan alongside, and the associated areas, show one way in which the various open space types could be accommodated, although the exact distribution and provision of each typology will be agreed at the detailed design stages.

Playing Pitches and Other Outdoor Sport

5.69 Initial Sport England advice suggested that the scheme should focus on improving existing sports provision at St Nicholas Park and/or the 3G pitch at Round Diamond School, subject to continued secured community use. The exact use of the contribution would need to be agreed with the Council as part of the Section 106 agreement. The Site's topography, alongside the presence of the overhead lines on the most level part of the Site, mean that the incorporation of formal playing pitches or other sports land uses (such as bowling greens), is not a viable option within the Site. It is therefore proposed that a contribution is made for off-site playing facilities.

▲ Figure 5.11 - Green & Blue Infrastructure Framework Plan

5. Development Framework

Parks and Gardens

5.70 Parks and gardens are defined as formal green spaces including urban parks, country parks, forest parks and formal gardens. Policy requires the provision of 0.8ha per 1,000 population, of new parks and gardens. For a development of 650 dwellings (at an average of 2.4 people per dwelling), this would equate to a need for 1.25ha of parks and gardens that would be need to be accommodated within the development. This could includes areas of new urban parks proposed within the green infrastructure under the pylons, and a park with a more informal character at Dell Spring, for example.

▲ Picnic areas and seating could be used within the parkland at Dell Spring

▲ Equipped play areas should be located within the development and will be overlooked to enhance safety

Amenity Open Space

5.71 Amenity open space is defined as informal recreation spaces, communal green spaces in and around housing, and village greens. The provision required is 0.6ha/1,000 population, which would equates to approximately 0.94ha within the development. There would be considerable opportunity to meet this requirement, and likely exceed it by utilising areas such under the pylons, as well as around some of the retained woodlands and within the green corridors, which would lead through the development parcels. These spaces could be less formal and multi-functional, and would allow for informal recreation, as well as providing spaces for people to meet others, such as while out walking, or for informal play (kicking a ball, small children cycling) near to the adjoining houses.

5.72 The SuDS basin within the east of the development could be designed to also provide amenity open space. While this part of the Site slopes relatively steeply, the embankments required for the drainage basin would allow for a level area of open space to be created within the bottom of the basin. Considering the fact that only a small part of the basin is expected to be wet at most times (i.e. the 1 in 30 year level within the far west of the basin), it could be possible to lay the remainder of the basin as a level area of amenity grass, which could be used for informal play.

5.73 In the event that larger areas of the basin is wet, then less of the amenity grass would be usable. However, it is acknowledged that play provision is an acceptable use within an area prone to flooding. The embankments of the basin would need to be carefully considered, in order to allow access into the basin's play area, while limiting and deterring access onto any sloping embankments. To this end, a combination of timber post and rail fencing, signage, and native vegetation such as brambles (which also serve a habitat creation function) could be proposed to be used to ensure a safe and usable landscape is created.

▲ Amenity open spaces could include small areas of local open space set amongst the houses

▲ Amenity open space should include green corridors and recreational walking routes

5. Development Framework

Natural and Semi-natural Open Space

5.74 These spaces are defined as woodland, scrub, grassland, wetlands and open water, amongst others. The Illustrative Development Framework includes four main areas of retained woodland. However, as they are mostly Ancient Woodlands, careful consideration around access and education needs be applied as part of the detailed design process. The existing public footpath which leads though the western part of New Spring will require careful consideration in relation to access. A Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan will likely be required at the future planning stage and may need to include active woodland management to be agreed with the Council in order to manage the trees, wildlife, and access into the woodlands on the Site, as well as New Spring.

5.75 Other areas of semi-natural habitat should be incorporated into the land around the Ancient Woodland, including new areas of thicket or grass planting. The proposed swales and the western and southern basins could also be planted with long grass and thicket species, to create semi-natural landscaped areas, which benefit wildlife and ecology, but that are also pleasing to look at.

5.76 The requirement for natural and semi-natural open space is 1.8ha/1,000 population, which would equate to 2.81ha for the development. The Illustrative Development Framework demonstrates a total area of approximately 15ha of semi-natural open space (excluding the woodland).

5.77 Much of this is provided in the far north of the Site within the habitat creation area, which will be landscaped and managed to achieve a biodiversity net gain, which is covered within the Ecology and Biodiversity section.

▲ Information signs and naturalistic planting should be incorporated in areas of semi-natural open space

▲ The habitat creation area should include informal paths for walking

Allotments

5.78 Policy requires 0.27ha of allotment provision per 1,000 population, which equates to 0.42ha for this scheme. These would likely be located within the central core of the development, where they can benefit from shared parking and services with the Community Hub. The allotments should be located in a visually prominent area. They could be designed as community gardens, where a combination of individual growing plots and shared facilities such as storage sheds, green houses and shelters, and compost heaps are provided. The allotment site should be bound by a hedgerow along the primary street, to create an attractive edge from the primary street side, whilst also controlling access. Further fencing could be incorporated to control access, or the area could be left unfenced. The allotment site would benefit from overlooking and passive surveillance provided by the adjoining Community Hub as well as the higher density houses that bound this area to the south and west.

▲Community food growing space such as allotments and orchards could be proposed within the development

5. Development Framework

Equipped and Designated Play Space

5.79 The development requires the provision of 0.25ha/1,000 population of equipped play space, and a further 0.30ha/1,000 population of other outdoor play provision (such as a Multi-Use Games Area ('MUGA') and a skateboard park). Considering the topography of the Site and the overhead lines, as well as the Site's proximity to the existing large community park at St Nicholas Park, it would be likely that the 'other outdoor play' requirement will be provided via a contribution to improvements within St Nicholas Park. St Nicholas Park does not currently have a MUGA, however, space exists to incorporate one. This would also allow easy access to a MUGA for both existing and proposed residents of Great Ashby and Stevenage.

5.80 The Site would require 0.39ha of equipped/designated play areas. The Illustrative Development Framework Plan includes a Neighbourhood Equipped Area of Play ('NEAP') within the public open space proposed to the north of the new access road and to the south of Cromdale Walk, near to the existing play area, which will be removed to accommodate the access. This new play area would be larger than the one to be removed, and should include play equipment for a wider range of ages. While the play area would be located under the overhead lines, sufficient space exists to accommodate play equipment here, whilst maintaining at least a 5.3m intervening distance between the play equipment and the powerlines, in line with requirements. The play equipment installed would be no higher than 5m in height. The NEAP should also be separated from the new access road and Mendip Way by hedgerow planting along the streets, and low-level fencing, such as metal railings or timber fencing, which could be incorporated alongside the hedgerows to clearly define the play space and prevent children running into the adjoining streets.

5.81 Two Local Equipped Areas of Play ('LEAP's) could also be provided, as shown on the Illustrative Development Framework Plan: one within the open space in the far east of the development, and one within the far south of the proposed parkland at Dell Spring. The LEAP in the far east could form part of the wider area of amenity space, which could be created within the SuDS drainage basin, and pedestrian links could be created between the play and amenity space. The LEAP should be overlooked by surrounding houses, and should be accessible via the active travel routes as well as the existing public footpath on the eastern Site boundary.

5.82 The LEAP to the south of Dell Spring should be designed to be more natural in material and appearance, to reflect the more natural landscape setting to the north. This play area should be designed and located to form part of the wider community core to the south, and paths and access should connect the play area to the Community Hub and primary school to the south. An area of amenity grass around the LEAP would allow for further informal play, as well as general informal recreational activities, such as picnics.

5.83 The play areas should be designed to offer play opportunities for children of all abilities. They should include new shrub and tree planting, and be fenced where deemed necessary. They should also include a variety of equipment to allow a range of play activities, and allow for benches and litter bins. The various play areas should either be designed to feature modern, metal play equipment, or timber and more natural materials (such as logs, boulders, and earth mounds), dependant on their proposed location and the surrounding landscape/townscape character.

▲ The play areas should include equipment to allow all children to play to their abilities

▲ The NEAP should cater for a wider range of children, and offer more modern play equipment

▲ The LEAP at Dell Spring would comprise natural materials to suit the surrounding landscape

5. Development Framework

DRAINAGE STRATEGY

5.84 In addition to ensuring that the development is not at risk of flooding from external sources, it is also important to ensure that the scheme itself does not exacerbate flood risk for others. It is therefore essential that the arrangements for storm and foul water disposal are fully assessed to guarantee that the effects are mitigated and that there will be no impact on the existing land drainage regime. The drainage proposals will be formally assessed by the Lead Local Flood Authority at Outline Application stage.

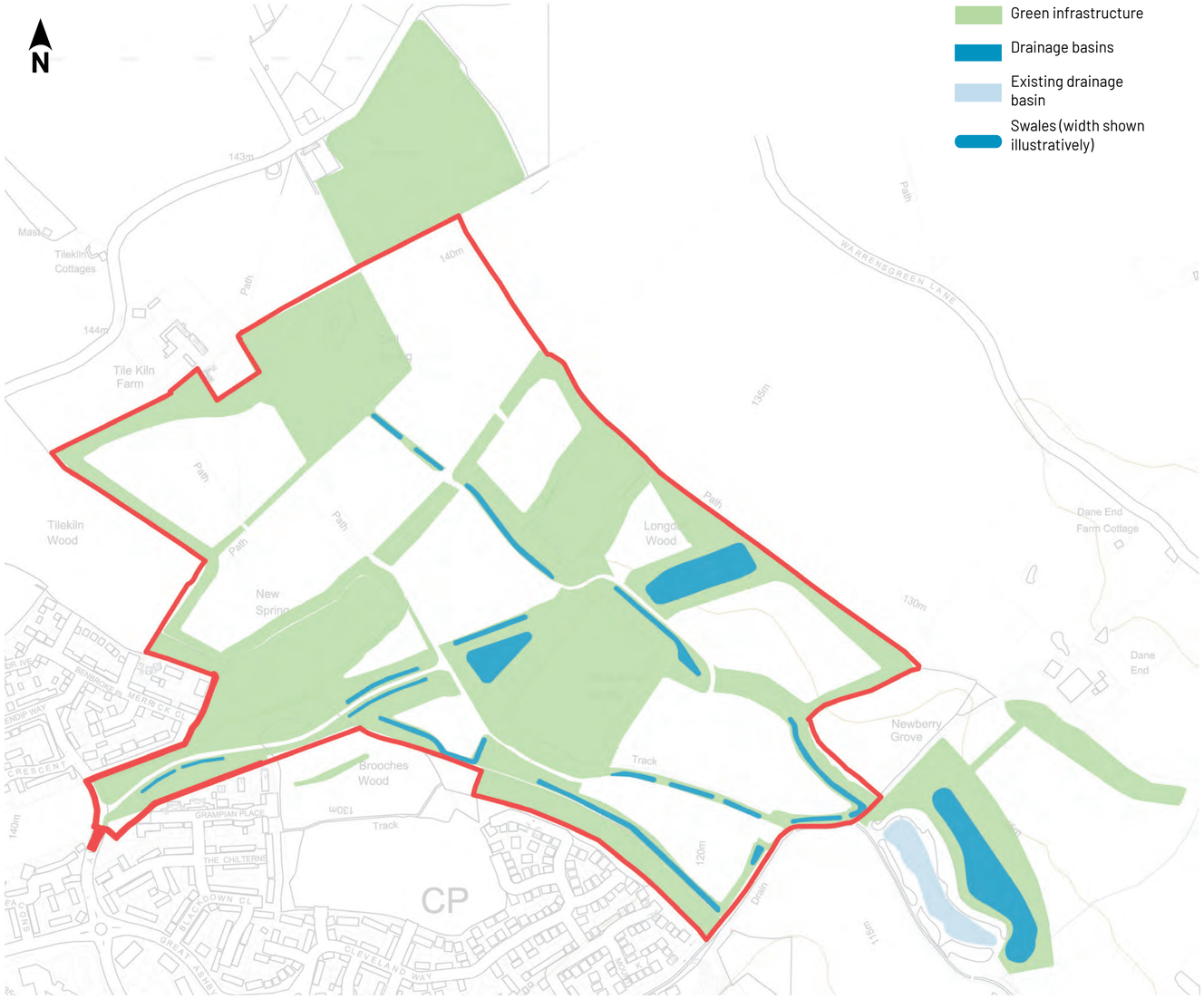
Foul Water Drainage Strategy

5.85 Thames Water acknowledge that there is currently insufficient capacity within the existing sewer network to serve the entire development, however Thames Water are obliged to provide a suitable foul drainage solution to consented development and will therefore ensure that a suitable outfall is available at the time connection is required.

Surface Water Drainage Strategy

5.86 Guidance on the arrangements for storm water disposal from new developments has encouraged the application of a hierarchy for surface water disposal. This has now been formalised in the Building Regulations Part H. The hierarchy is also the basis of the advice on surface water disposal contained within the SuDS Design Guidance for Hertfordshire (March 2015).

5.87 The first choice for surface water disposal, which should be pursued, is via infiltration. Only where it has been determined that the ground conditions are not suitable should the second choice of disposal to a ditch and/or watercourse be considered. If there is no alternative, the third and last choice of disposal to the public sewer can be considered. The results of infiltration testing confirmed that the soakage rates recorded on the Site were generally poor and insufficient to support a fully infiltration-based strategy. It is however considered that infiltration by way of permeable paving could be utilised in some areas of the Site. This should be further considered at the Outline Planning stage. The Site has been split into three main catchments based upon the Site topography and existing natural drainage patterns. A series of large attenuation basins could be provided to attenuate the flows for storm events up to an intensity of 1 in 100 years + 40% climatic change. A further allowance could be made for urban creep. The surface water should be conveyed to and between the basins by a combination of landscaped swales and a piped network. Flows would ultimately be discharged to the existing ditch network at the calculated Qbar run-off rate.



▲ Figure 5.12 - Illustrative Drainage Strategy Framework

5. Development Framework

5.88 Swales and basins should be attractively landscaped in order to integrate them into the wider landscape and green infrastructure of the development. The basin and swale banks should be designed to be at 1:3 gradient in most cases. They should be planted and managed to create wildlife habitat and to be attractive landscape features within the open spaces and street scenes. At the detailed design stage, elements like railings and headwalls should be carefully considered and designed so that the swales and basins do not appear over-engineered.

5.89 There are two main overland surface water flow paths, which both lead roughly north to south within the Site. The flow path within the east of the Site, from Dell Spring, should be retained within open space within the proposed green infrastructure network along the existing trees and woodland edges. In the west, the flow path which enters the Site via Brooches Wood may require diversion to a new drainage ditch, which would run along the edge of the existing woodland belt to the south west of the Site. The ditch should be located to lie outside of the Root Protection Areas of the existing woodland, and to form part of the green corridor between the woodland and the new houses. The overland flow should continue to drain into the existing ditch along the south of the Site.

▲ Swales could be planted with suitable vegetation to create attractive landscape elements which benefit ecology and condition the surface water run-off

▲ The drainage basins are expected to be dry the vast majority of the time, and should be overlooked by the new homes to provide passive surveillance and to create attractive open spaces

5. Development Framework

ECOLOGY AND BIODIVERSITY

5.90 The Site has been subject to a full suite of ecological survey and investigations in 2023 and 2024, following previous surveys and investigations. This work included desktop studies, habitat survey and assessment, targeted fauna and protected species surveys, and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) calculations. This work has been used to inform the illustrative Development Framework Plan to ensure positive ecological outcomes can be secured.

5.91 The ecological interests of the Site are determined largely by its broad habitat composition: large arable fields enclosed by mature broadleaved woodlands with some native hedgerows, mature trees and smaller areas of grassland.

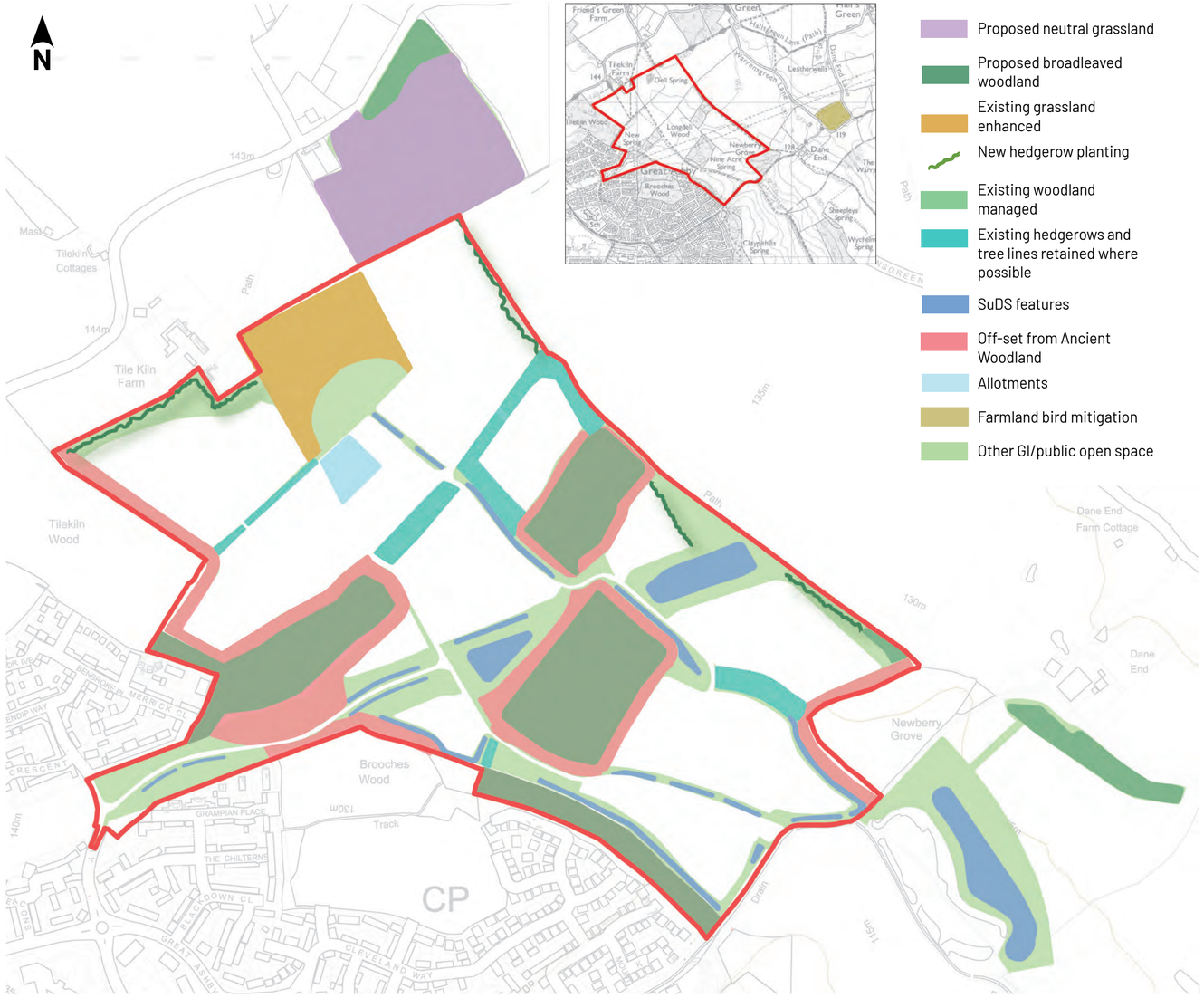
5.92 Arable fields support the least ecological interest, albeit with some notable specialists such as skylark and brown hare. Development parcels have been largely confined to these areas, seeking to avoid the majority of potential impacts to the Site's ecology.

5.93 Woodlands enclose much of the Site and are broadleaved in composition and the majority ancient in origin (present from at least 1650). Typical vegetation includes mature stand of oak, ash, field maple and hornbeam, with some beech and small-leaved lime. The understorey is often well-developed with hazel and hawthorn frequent, along with others such as Midland hawthorn reflecting the age of these woodlands. The ground flora strongly reflects both the underlying soils and ancient status of the woods, with locally abundant bluebell as well as sanicle, wood anemone, and wood meadow-grass. Small areas of recently planted or secondary woodland at the Site provide some lesser habitat interests.

5.94 Grasslands at the Site are largely species-poor, but provide important open habitats not well-represented locally. Smaller areas of scrub, hedgerow and mature trees also provide some structural diversity away from woodlands, contrasting with extensive open arable fields.

5.95 Faunal interests, with the exception of some farmland birds, are concentrated around wooded habitats and include several badger clans, bat, woodland birds and notable invertebrate species.

5.96 The baseline biodiversity value of the Site has been calculated using the Statutory Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool, and subsequently employed to guide good design decisions in respect of biodiversity.



▲ Figure 5.13 - Ecology & Biodiversity Framework Plan

5. Development Framework

5.97 In respect to delivering a minimum of 10% gain in biodiversity and to strengthen local ecological networks, the Illustrative Development Framework has been progressed to include the following:

- An additional arable field to the north of the Site, which lies strategically between grassland and parkland habitats around Tilekiln Farm, and Warrensgreen Wood and further arable land north of Warrensgreen Lane, that could be utilised as part of the development. Habitat creation here would deliver in respect of Lawtonian principles ('bigger, better, more joined up'). The following habitats could be created in this location on lime-rich, clayey soil, to deliver in respect of the:
  - Arable reversion to neutral to lime-rich grasslands, including wetter grasslands of clay.
  - New ponds that be excavated in areas known to be subject to surface water flooding, ensuring ponds could fill and fluctuate naturally.
  - New woodland and scrub planting to extend wooded habitats at Warrensgreen Wood.
- New woodland planting south of Dane End Farm to the east of the Site to connect Newberry Wood with other wooded habitats further east.
- New hedgerows along the north eastern edge of the development to provide a habitat connection along this boundary.

Ecological Mitigation Strategy and Biodiversity Net Gain

5.98 The scheme should be designed to deliver in excess of 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), that could be demonstrated through the use of the Statutory Biodiversity Metric. This takes into account habitat retention, creation and enhancement works as set out above, as well as the inclusion of tree-lined streets and other landscaping within the built environment. All of the above can be robustly secured through either an appropriately worded planning condition, s106 agreement and/or the control of detailed design at the relevant Reserved Matters stage.

5.99 In respect of ecological interests, the development should sought to avoid, minimise, mitigate and ultimately compensate, through the following principles:

- Avoid entirely the loss of any irreplaceable woodland ancient woodland, including for vehicular access.
- Locate the vast majority of development within arable land of the lowest ecological interest.
- Reduce the potential fragmentation effects upon habitats, and associated flora and fauna through landscaping and sensitive configuration of open spaces.
- Mitigate for small scale loss of non-ancient woodland and scrub through new woodland, tree and native shrub planting.
- Compensate for any unavoidable loss of habitat, or connectivity between habitats, through new habitat creation, including the creation of links between habitat patches in the wider landscape.

5.100 The principles should be achieved through the following key ecological measures that could be implemented as part of any proposed scheme:

- **Ancient woodland:** buffers around all known and suspected broadleaved woodlands, comprising a combination of native shrub planting and woodland edge tall herbs and grasses.
- **Farmland Birds:** Off-site provision of ground-nesting, feeding and winter forage for a range of farmland species, such as skylark.
- **Habitats:**
  - Long-term woodland management to counter potential urbanising effects and recreational pressures.
  - Design and management of SuDS features, such as swales and basins to maximise their wetland and other habitat interests.
  - Creation of new grassland, scrub, woodland and pond habitats across the Site to deliver a net increase in coverage of all these habitat types.
- **Bats:**
  - Design and management of bat 'hop-overs' across key linear habitats (hedgerows, linear woodlands) to maintain connectivity for light-shy bats.
  - Management of woodlands within the Site for bats including the provision of structural diversity and roosting sites.
  - Detailed lighting strategy for the site to take into consideration nocturnal wildlife, including bats, specifically with regard to the latest Bat Conservation Trust guidelines.
- **Badger mitigation**
  - Tunnels with guide walls and sympathetic road design/speed control in close proximity to setts, and known dispersal routes to minimise traffic-related mortality.
  - Defensive thorny planting around known setts which may be subject to disturbance from additional recreation.
  - Appropriate, limited use of Natural England derogation licence where setts cannot feasibly be wholly retained, or left undisturbed, alongside development.
- **Invertebrates**
  - Both maintain existing and increase amount of saproxylic (deadwood) resource with the Site through protection and retention of such resources.
  - Enhance and manage specific features (e.g. chalk pit at Nine Acre Spring Wood) for invertebrates.
  - Generally to increase the abundance of calcareous/calcicolous plant species at the Site to benefit species associated with this important resource.
  - Provision of wetland and aquatic habitats (e.g. wildlife ponds) not well represented at the Site to encourage aquatic invertebrates.

▲ Tunnels under roads help prevent badger deaths due to traffic

▲ Brush piles and deadwood along woodland edges create habitat and deter public access to the woods

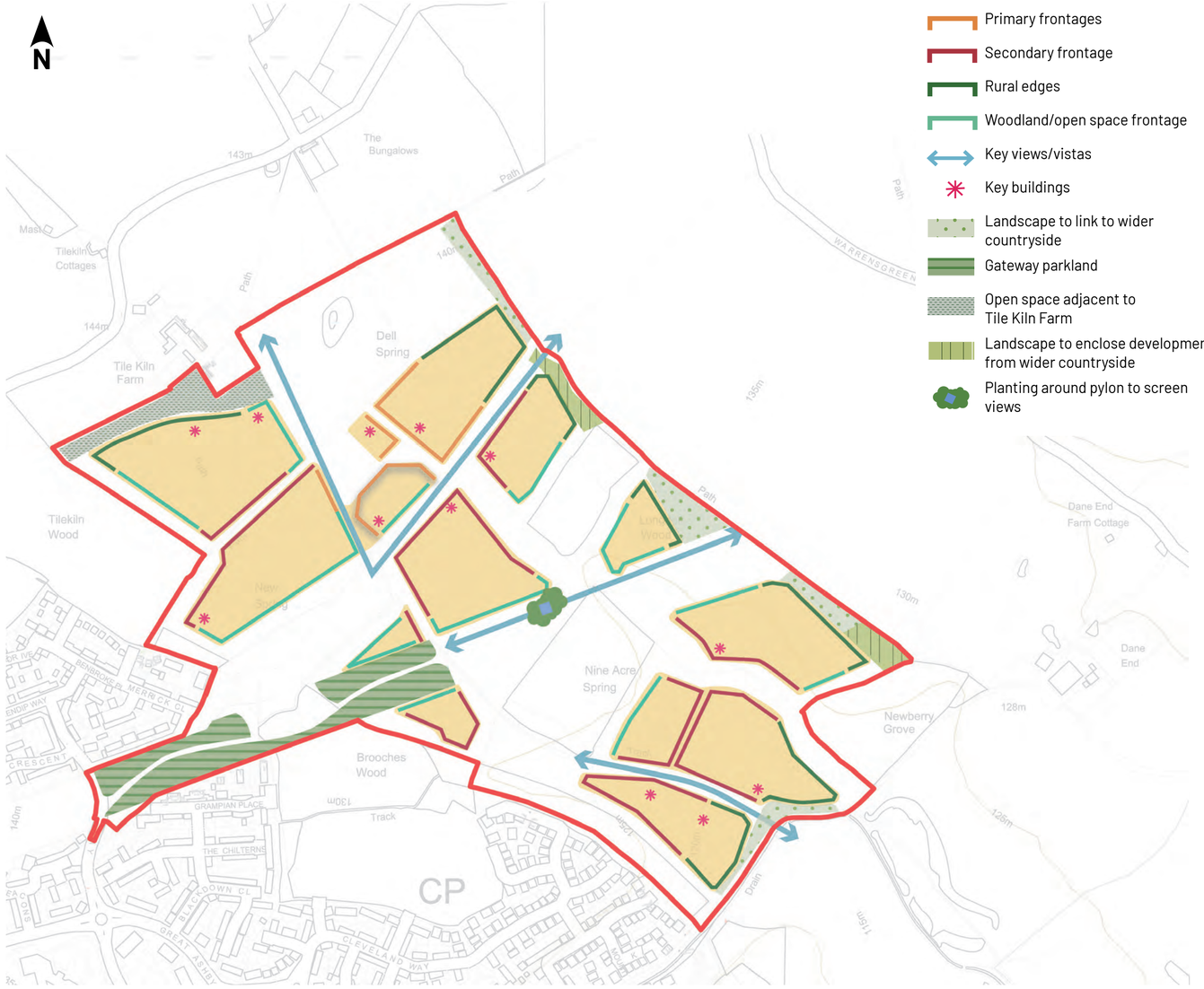
5. Development Framework

LAYOUT

5.101 The key layout principles that have shaped the Illustrative Development Framework Plan are set out in the previous section. However, there are some key urban design principles that have also been incorporated within the Framework Masterplans, and which should be carried forward into the Outline and Reserved Matters planning applications.

5.102 The key urban design principles are illustrated on the plan opposite and include the following elements.

▲ Focal buildings aid in creating a legible development and an attractive streetscene



▲ Figure 5.14 - Urban Design Framework Plan

5. Development Framework

Key Frontages

5.103 The layout of the proposed dwellings should, in most cases, follow a perimeter block structure, where private rear gardens are enclosed by the built form of the dwellings which surround them. This allows dwellings to front onto the streets and open spaces, creating an attractive aspect and providing passive surveillance of communal spaces. Rear garden boundaries along public spaces should be avoided where possible. However, even when using perimeter blocks, it is not always possible to ensure building frontages on all sides of the block. The Urban Design Framework Plan illustrates the primary locations for frontages, to ensure that the adjoining streetscenes are attractive and to ensure passive surveillance of the most important public areas, such as active travel routes or equipped play areas.

Key Spaces

5.104 Key spaces are created throughout the development, to create a variety in terms of character, and to aid legibility and wayfinding. These spaces are often located at key street junctions, thereby aiding legibility and helping to create a sense of place. These spaces could include paved areas, green incidental open spaces, a variety of styles of buildings, or pieces of public art.

▲ Key spaces mark important areas or junctions, and help with wayfinding

Focal Buildings

5.105 Focal buildings are used to terminate vistas, aid in legibility and wayfinding, and creating variety and interest in the streetscene. These buildings are often located within key spaces, indicating that both the built form and the surrounding landscaping should be designed together to create a specific 'place'.

5.106 Focal buildings should be located at the entrances to the development from along the public footpaths and bridleways. Focal buildings could be the taller buildings within a streetscene, or could have additional detailing to make them stand out within the street. They could incorporate different (but complimentary) materials to other buildings on the street.

▲ Focal buildings could be more detailed than others, to mark corners or important vistas

Views

5.107 A series of longer and open views have been designed into the Illustrative Development Framework, to create variety and interest, and to ensure that the layout reflects its surrounding context. The views and view corridors also aid in connecting the development to the countryside beyond. Streets should be orientated to allow views towards the woodland blocks within and around the Site, again aiding in anchoring the development into its setting. While focal buildings are often used to terminate views, they could also be used to frame vistas within and towards the outside of the development. Similarly, structural landscaping can be used to terminate views (such as screening the bottom of the pylon), or to focus views towards and within an area of open space. Views should also be maintained where they provide outlook towards the countryside from the public footpath along the Site's north eastern boundary.

▲ Views can be terminated by focal buildings, or could be designed to be longer and open

5. Development Framework

Respecting Tile Kiln Farm

5.108 Proposals should include an area of informal open space, as well as dwellings of lower density and height fronting northwards towards Tile Kiln Farm. This would ensure that some of the effects of the development on the setting of the Listed Buildings are mitigated. A community orchard could be included in this open space, to provide some visual screening between the development and Tile Kiln Farm.

Open and Enclosed Landscape Edges

5.109 A combination of open and enclosed landscape characters should be incorporated along the interface with the development and the adjoining countryside. At the existing development at Great Ashby, dense tree belts were planted between the development and the adjoining countryside, however, this visually severed the development from its countryside setting, as well as with the proposed extension of the settlement. Therefore, a different approach should be considered, with different landscape characters created in different areas.

5.110 In the north east adjacent to the primary school site and educational land, the landscape character should be more open, to allow intervisibility between the development and the arable land beyond, and to ensure a visual connection between the two. North of Longdell Wood, an existing dense hedgerow and tree belt could separate any proposed dwellings from the wider countryside, and as such this edge should be retained as an enclosed edge, i.e. enclosing the dwellings from the wider countryside through the retention and incorporation of structural vegetation. Between Longdell Wood and Newbury Grove, the landscape character should also be open, with new homes set back from the adjoining countryside behind an area of open space, which could form a transition between the built form and the countryside beyond. However, at the southernmost part of this boundary, just north of Newbury Grove, housing should be enclosed with new woodland and thicket planting, that would visually screen the development nearest to the Listed Dell Farmhouse, and form a continuation of the wooded character at Newbury Grove. Within the south east of the development, the landscape character should again be more open, with intervening open space and the existing boundary hedgerows forming a transitional character between the built development and the countryside.

▲ The Listed Buildings at Tile Kiln Farm are separated from the Site by intervening

▲ The interface between the development and the countryside should be designed to be open in places

▲ The Listed Buildings at Tile Kiln Farm are also separated from the Site by intervening vegetation

▲ The interface between the development and the countryside should be designed to be enclosed in places

5. Development Framework

APPEARANCE

5.111 The exact materials and design of the houses is a Reserved Matter, however, it is expected that the homes will be of a similar scale and massing to the existing houses within Great Ashby, although it is expected that a lower form of density is built on the peripheries of the Site, which adjoin the countryside. New houses should reflect the higher quality vernacular evident within Stevenage and the surrounding villages such as Weston and Graveley, although modern, energy efficient materials and designs should be considered alongside more traditional forms and building materials, to create a development which respects and reflects its setting, but is suitable for modern and future living.

5.112 The images on this page illustrate some of the architectural qualities evident within Great Ashby, Stevenage, Weston, and Graveley. These should be used as design cues at the detailed design stage, although a modern interpretation of these elements would also be suitable, provided an overall harmony is achieved between the appearance of the development at the Site and that at Great Ashby.

5.113 Character and variety can be achieved through distinct differences (e.g. white render vs brick vs black timber clad as shown on the images opposite). Alternately character and variety can be achieved through more subtle variations to a design approach and palette that is otherwise more uniform across a site. The most appropriate combination(s) will be explored as part of the more detailed design process at the Reserved Matters stage.











5. Development Framework

SCALE, DENSITY AND MASSING

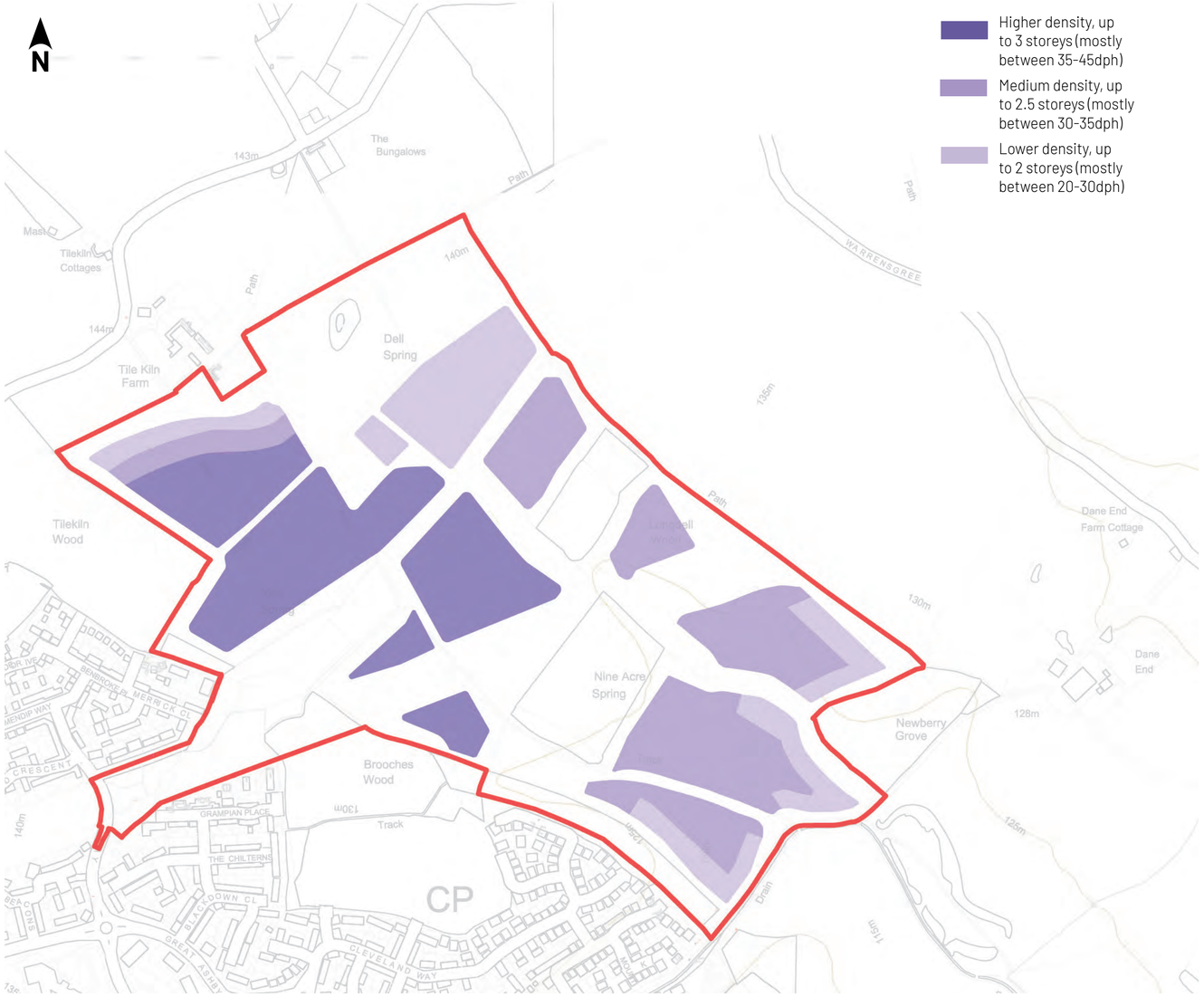
5.114 The Local Plan does not set prescriptive density standards and relies on a design-led approach to development. The average density of the development based on the Illustrative Development Framework would equate to approximately 33dph. This would be comparable to the densities within the Site's surrounding context, and is considered comparatively low within the context of urban extensions such as this. Within this average density, there would be opportunities for a variety of densities to add character to any development proposals, such as higher density dwellings located within the heart of the scheme and lower density development on the peripheries of the Site. This variety will help achieve good design and create interest and legibility within the development itself.

5.115 The plan opposite provides high-level guidance that is appropriate to the current stage of scheme development. The approach to built form will be refined and secured through subsequent Outline and Reserved Matters planning applications. This may identify localised opportunities within these broad areas to vary heights and / or densities outside of these guidelines to secure high quality urban design.

5.116 Higher density development should be concentrated within the centre of the scheme and within the northern parts of the Site, where the topography is flatter and where there is a higher level of enclosure. This would create strong, continuous building frontages, which will frame the streets and green spaces, highlighting these areas as the heart of the Site. On the peripheries of the development, it is expected that housing will be of a lower density, in order to allow for more spaces between the dwellings, and for features such as deeper front gardens, which aid in creating a transition between the built form and the rural open spaces beyond. Low density housing could also be located in the far north of the development, adjacent to Tile Kiln Farm.

5.117 Development between these higher and lower density areas will help create a transition in terms of densities between these inner and outer parts of the scheme. These areas should be of a density that makes efficient use of the Site, whilst respecting the character of the surroundings.

5.118 The exact housing types, size and mix has not been determined as yet, and will be agreed with the Council as the project progresses. However, it is expected that the development will include a range of house types and sizes, although most properties are likely to be family houses with private gardens.



▲ Figure 5.15 - Scale and Density Framework Plan

6

Illustrative Masterplan and Landscape Strategy

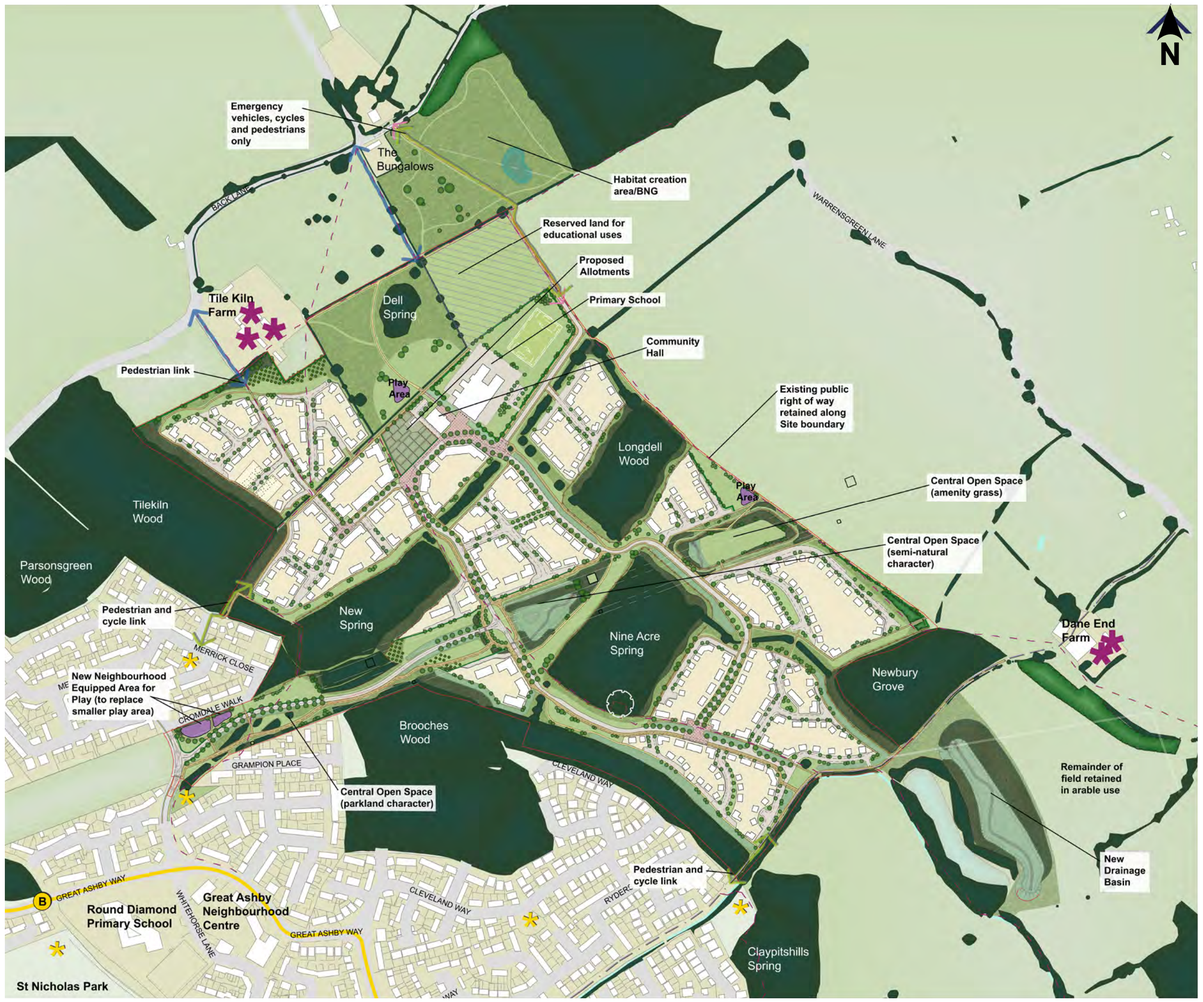
6. Illustrative Masterplan and Landscape Strategy

ILLUSTRATIVE MASTERPLAN

6.1 The Illustrative Masterplan opposite demonstrates one way in which the Site could be developed following the framework parameters and good design principles as set out within the previous sections of this document. It is important to note that the exact layout and design of the Site will be agreed with the Council at a later stage.

6.2 The Illustrative Masterplan illustrates how approximately 640 new dwellings could be accommodated on the Site, alongside streets, parking areas, and open spaces. It also demonstrates how new areas of open space could be designed to include a variety of areas and recreational opportunities. It also illustrates how new habitat could be created within the development to increase the ecological value of the Site.

- Allocation Boundary
- Housing development and illustrative frontages
- Proposed self-build plots
- Open Space
- Proposed Allotments
- Streets, with cycleways and footways
- Shared surfaces/key squares
- Public footpath
- Bridleway
- Potential emergency access
- Pedestrian links
- Pedestrian and cycle links
- Existing bus route and stop
- Existing woodland, hedgerows and trees retained
- Ancient Woodland
- Existing vegetation to be removed
- Proposed trees
- Proposed native woodland planting
- Proposed native thicket planting
- Proposed native hedgerow
- Proposed meadow/long grassland
- Existing drainage basin
- Existing watercourse, ditches and ponds
- Proposed swales and drainage basins
- Wildlife pond
- Children's play area
- Pylons and overhead powerlines
- Existing play areas
- Historic quarry
- Grade II Listed Buildings



▲ Figure 6.1 - Illustrative Masterplan

6. Illustrative Masterplan and Landscape Strategy

ILLUSTRATIVE LANDSCAPE STRATEGY

6.3 The Illustrative Landscape Strategy Plan opposite demonstrates how the illustrative masterplan could be integrated into the landscape setting of the Site. New areas of green infrastructure and public open space would be provided across the development and would set out the various characters that could be created, as well as landscaping that would be required as part of landscape and ecological mitigation. It also illustrates the inter-relationship between potential new housing and streets, and the landscaping within which they would sit.

6.4 The key landscape elements and character areas that should be considered are illustrated across a number of high level sketches on the following pages. These should be used to inform the next stages of the design work as part of the Outline and Reserved planning application stages.

- Allocation Boundary
- Housing development and illustrative frontages
- Open Space
- Proposed Allotments
- Streets, with cycleways and footways
- Shared surfaces/key squares
- Public footpath
- Bridleway
- Potential emergency access
- Pedestrian links
- Pedestrian and cycle links
- Existing bus route and stop
- Existing woodland, hedgerows and trees retained
- Ancient Woodland
- Existing vegetation to be removed
- Proposed trees
- Proposed native woodland planting
- Proposed native thicket planting
- Proposed native hedgerow
- Proposed meadow/long grassland
- Existing drainage basin
- Existing watercourse, ditches and ponds
- Proposed swales and drainage basins
- Wildlife pond
- Children's play area
- Pylons and overhead powerlines
- Existing play areas
- Historic quarry
- Grade II Listed Buildings

▲ Figure 6.2 - Illustrative Landscape Strategy Plan

6. Illustrative Masterplan and Landscape Strategy

The park north of the access road and south of Cromdale Walk within the Central Open Space could include the replacement play area as it is well located within the Site, as shown on the Illustrative Development Framework. This could be designed to include areas of amenity grassland for informal play and could be separated from the adjoining houses and streets by hedging and ornamental or structural planting, as well as appropriate railings or low-level fencing. This would be further explored at the detailed design stage of the process.

The Central Open Space to the south of the access road and north of Grampion Place could be designed with a parkland character, with new foot and cycle paths leading through the area of retained trees and thickets, as well as new areas of wildflower meadows. Structural vegetation alongside the existing properties would keep the homes separate from the public open space. This is demonstrated on the Illustrative Development Framework.

The parkland area along to the western end of the access road could incorporate areas of amenity grass for informal play, overlooked by the adjoining houses. A community orchard could be located here on either side of the road, to create interest and provide habitat. This is shown on the Illustrative Development Framework. The foot and cycleway would lead through the southern part of the park, and swales with meadow grass seeding would provide seasonal interest. Street trees along the road can add structure to the space, which would also be enclosed by the existing woodland.

Parts of the woodland buffer could include areas of shorter grass, to allow views of the woodland and limited access nearer to them, such as picnicking space or informal walking.

Any proposed open space between the new homes and Tile Kiln Farm should be informal in character, with the opportunity for new areas of thicket and orchard planting located alongside meadow grass to be explored that could to soften the settlement edge in this location.

Dell Spring should mostly be retained as long grass, and managed to increase the quality of the grassland. The southern part of Dell Spring could be designed utilising a country park character. The play area should comprise more natural materials, such as timber seating and picnic benches. An area of amenity grassland could be located to the south and could be linked to the adjoining Community Hub space. Mown paths could lead through the north of this space.

6. Illustrative Masterplan and Landscape Strategy

The relationship between the new houses, Dane End Farm, and the wider countryside is an important consideration. A more open settlement edge should be proposed here, with new houses set back from the countryside edge behind a new native, managed hedgerow on the development's side of the public footpath. This would allow for intervisibility between the houses, and the path and the countryside, whilst clearly marking the edge of the settlement. An area of new woodland planting adjacent to Newbury Grove could also be incorporated here, to create a visual separation between Dane End farmhouse and the nearest proposed dwellings.

The southern drainage basin should be better landscaped so it has less impact on the Green Belt and character of the area than the existing basin that it would adjoin. New areas of thicket planting should be accommodated on the banks, and wet wildflower grass and emergent planting incorporated within the bottom of the basin. A new area of native broadleaved woodland could be located north of the basin to aid in providing BNG, and to provide privacy to Dane End Farm from the south, as shown on the Illustrative Development Framework.

The Central Open Space should be designed to have a variety of characters along its length, creating different habitats and providing different recreational opportunities. This area north of Nine Acre Spring should have a more informal, naturalistic character, with the drainage basin landscaped with structural shrub planting around it, such as cornus and willow species, and meadow grass and emergent planting within it. New structural planting should be incorporated around the base of the pylon, to filter views of it. A foot and cycleway would provide east-west links in the north, and in the south, and area of amenity grass and a further informal path that could allow for informal recreation within this space.

The easternmost end of the Central Open Space should be designed to offer formal and informal play opportunities. The proposed housing should be set back from the public footpath to allow the retention of a view corridor towards the south from the footpath. A native hedgerow could be used to mark the edge of the built form, with the open space then linking into the wider countryside beyond on the eastern side of the public footpath. A play area and amenity grass, as well as scattered trees could be located here, as shown on the Illustrative Development Framework.

The habitat creation area should have a semi-natural character, incorporating new grassland planting, scattered trees, and new woodland planting where possible. A new wildlife pond could be provided within the space, and mown paths could provide a walking route around this field linking to the adjoining paths. This area should be designated as an area for Biodiversity Net Gain, as per the Ecology & Biodiversity Framework Plan.

The area of open space along the mature retained trees and south west of Longdell Wood should be more informal in character, with meadow grass located around the retained trees and within the swales between the primary street and the foot/cycleway. This would create an attractive space to walk through, which would still be overlooked by adjoining houses, but would feel slightly removed from the built development. This corridor of open space could also serve to convey the existing overland flow route, that currently runs within this area.

6. Illustrative Masterplan and Landscape Strategy

'DAY-IN-THE-LIFE' SKETCH PERSPECTIVES

6.5 A day in the life at the rural edge of the development is marked by a harmonious blend of a tranquil landscape setting and the daily routines of its diverse residents and visitors. In the early morning, families with young children start their day with a walk or bike ride along the network of scenic trails that wind through the Site linking through to the surrounding countryside. Parents walk their children to school or one of the many playgrounds, where kids from diverse backgrounds come together to play and make new friends. Older residents, enjoying the slower pace of life, are often seen taking leisurely strolls with their pets, greeting neighbours, and pausing to chat about the latest community events.

6.6 As the day progresses, the area sees a mix of activity. Younger professionals, working remotely, might be found taking a lunchtime stroll and picnic from working in dedicated home office spaces set up within private gardens. Others might be commuting to nearby towns, utilising the active travel options provided within the development. Visitors, drawn by the serene environment whilst out walking from nearby settlements, explore the Sites nature and woodland characteristics, gaining a deeper appreciation for the rural surroundings. These activities showcase the development's commitment to promoting sustainable living.

6.7 Evenings bring a calm yet vibrant atmosphere as families return home from school and work. As the sun sets, the rural edge becomes a place of relaxation and reflection. Visitors often leave with a sense of the community's unique rhythm, while residents, whether long-established or new, appreciate the blend of nature and modernity that defines their day-to-day lives.

▲ A sketch perspective showing an illustrative rural edge of the development

6. Illustrative Masterplan and Landscape Strategy

6.8 In the early morning, the central community hub comes alive with residents of all ages. Parents walk their children to the primary school, exchanging greetings with neighbours along the way. Some older residents, enjoying the cool morning air, are seen out walking towards the allotment area. Young professionals, meanwhile, grab a quick coffee from the local café before heading to catch the local bus heading off to work. The shared paths and walkways make it easy for everyone to move around, creating a vibrant sense of activity and connection.

6.9 As the day unfolds, the central community area becomes a hub of diverse interactions. Retirees meet at the community facility for a midday yoga class or to participate in hobby groups, while parents with younger children gather at the playgrounds, where kids from different backgrounds play and form friendships. Visitors, perhaps drawn by the unique blend of amenities and green spaces, enjoy a leisurely lunch at the local café. For those commuting to nearby towns, a new bus route and well-designed bike lanes make it convenient to travel to and from the development, ensuring the community remains accessible yet serene.

6.10 In the evening, the central hub buzzes with energy as residents and visitors come together for social and recreational activities. Families enjoy picnics at Dell Spring or attend community events at the hub whilst enjoying pop up street food stalls. Teenagers can be found at the community facility, participating in organised activities or simply hanging out with friends at one of the park areas. Couples and groups of friends might take a stroll through the central area enjoying the sunset. As the day winds down, the central community hub, with its thoughtful design and inclusive atmosphere, continues to be a welcoming and dynamic space for all who pass through.

▲ A sketch perspective of the illustrative central community hub

6. Illustrative Masterplan and Landscape Strategy

6.11 To begin the day, the medium-density residential area stirs gently to life as residents of all ages begin their daily routines. Families with young children walk along tree-lined streets to the nearby primary school, exchanging friendly nods with neighbours along the way. Professionals, some heading to offices and others working remotely, grab a quick coffee from the local café or take a morning jog through the landscaped routes and shared green spaces that weave through the neighbourhood. Older residents enjoy a slower pace, strolling through the quiet pathways or heading to the community allotments to tend to shared plots. The mix of house types ensures that everyone, regardless of age or background, can find a comfortable and accessible place to call home.

6.12 As the day progresses, the neighbourhood hums with a variety of activities. Young children, free from school, play in the various pocket parks and open spaces, while parents chat nearby. Visitors, perhaps family and friends of residents or those curious about the development, explore the area on foot or by bike, visiting the local community hub and the various landscape spaces. Well-connected public transport and bike-friendly streets make it easy for everyone to navigate, whether heading to neighbouring towns and villages or exploring the development's own amenities.

6.13 In the evening, the neighbourhood transforms into a lively yet welcoming space, as residents and visitors alike take advantage of the mild weather to enjoy outdoor activities. Families gather in the parks and spaces for picnics or recreational activities. Couples and friends stroll along the well-lit walking routes, watching the sun-set. The character area strikes a balance between urban convenience and a close-knit, community-focused atmosphere, offering a dynamic yet peaceful environment for people of all ages and backgrounds to enjoy.

▲ A sketch perspective of a medium density housing area within the Site

7

Housing Diversification Strategy

7. Housing Diversification Strategy

HOUSING NEED

7.1 The Applicant has been working with the Council since the early stages of the Local Plan formation with the aim of making a significant contribution to the housing needs of North Hertfordshire through the Site at GA2.

7.2 The Illustrative Development Framework demonstrates how the Site could accommodate approximately 640 market and affordable dwellings within Great Ashby, which is located within the Weston Parish, and would therefore contribute to the District's identified need. The scheme would allow for the delivery of the entire allocation capacity within the plan period in accordance with the Council's housing delivery strategy.

7.3 The Local Plan states that on most suburban and edge-of-settlement sites, applicants should make an initial assumption of 60% larger (3+ bed) and 40% smaller (1 or 2 bed) homes to ensure an overall mix is achieved. The exact mix will be identified and agreed at the Reserved Matters stage and will likely be informed by the most recent data on housing need and availability, and also be subject to market and viability testing.

7.4 For the purposes of the strategic masterplanning process, an initial approach is proposed in relation to housing need and diversification based on the following factors.

7.5 It is acknowledged that the SHMA should inform the proposed housing mix for house types, sizes and tenure of the scheme, the latest release being the SHMA PART II UPDATE, November 2023. This is a technical analysis of the housing needs of North Herts and Stevenage in the context of each Council's existing Plans periods in 2031.

7.6 The following table combines the latest data from the SHMA for the North Herts and Stevenage areas:

Overall Need for Market and Affordable Dwellings|Combined North Herts and Stevenage|SHMA Part II Update Nov 2023

	Dwellings	Affordable Housing	Market Housing	Total Housing
Flats	1 bed	408	848	1,256
	2 bed	499	696	1,195
Houses	2 bed	1,383	655	2,038
	3 bed	2,490	3,898	6,388
	4 bed	453	1,221	1,674
	5+ bed	115	313	428
	Total	5,348	7,631	12,979

	Dwellings	Affordable Housing	Market Housing	Total Housing
Flats	1 bed	3.14%	6.53%	9.68%
	2 bed	3.84%	5.36%	9.21%
Houses	2 bed	10.66%	5.05%	15.70%
	3 bed	19.18%	30.03%	49.22%
	4 bed	3.49%	9.41%	12.90%
	5+ bed	0.89%	2.41%	3.30%
	Total	41.21%	58.79%	100.00%

PRIVATE MARKET HOUSING

7.7 In determining the final housing mix for the development, the Applicant will consider a range of factors, including updated local housing assessments including further updates to the SHMA and the Council's public registers, recent data on housing completions, and current market trends. The process will take into account both housing need, based on household size, and housing demand, which reflects broader market behaviour, such as preferences for larger homes or the desire for additional space.

7.8 Factors influencing demand may include lifestyle choices, such as under-occupancy for future flexibility or the growing trend of working from home, which can drive interest in larger properties. The appeal of the location, being within a commuter belt and offering both a village-like environment and access to London, may further increase demand from a wider population.

7. Housing Diversification Strategy

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

7.9 Any proposed development will be required to meet the affordable housing requirements outlined in the Local Plan.

7.10 The Applicant should consult with the Council's Housing Officer at the detailed planning application stage to better understand demand, which may differ from broader district averages. Further analysis and assessments should be undertaken to evaluate the affordable housing component, including the anticipated tenure ratio (65% rent / 35% other) and the requirements for social rent, affordable rent, and First Homes.

7.11 To ensure the marketability and deliverability of any affordable housing, recent trends in demand and supply, particularly the growing demand for Shared Ownership should also inform design considerations. These considerations should also include a commitment to the provision of tenure-blind affordable housing distributed across the Site.

7.12 Applicants should also be expected to engage with local affordable housing providers through market testing to ensure that the affordable housing offer aligns with current provider preferences and market conditions. The final mix of affordable housing will reflect recent evidence on demand and supply dynamics to ensure it meets both market needs and deliverability requirements.

SUPPORTED, SHELTERED AND OLDER PEOPLE HOUSING

7.13 The projected increase in older residents in North Herts is noted, as well as the Local Plan policies aimed at providing accessible and sheltered housing for this age group. Policy HS4 calls for specialist housing on larger sites, although no specific requirement is outlined in Policy GA2 for this Site.

7.14 A preliminary review of supply and demand for care homes in the Stevenage area indicates a surplus of facilities for the foreseeable future, with recent planning applications for similar developments being withdrawn due to low interest from specialist operators. Feedback from developers of elderly accommodation also suggests a preference for town centre locations with access to a broader range of services.

7.15 While the site offers good transport links, it may not fully meet the specific criteria of specialist housing providers at this time. However, flexibility is maintained in the Illustrative Development Framework to accommodate a care home or elderly housing if market conditions were to change in the future.

ACCESSIBLE AND ADAPTABLE HOUSING

7.16 Development proposals should include an appropriate provision of accommodation to suit the needs of people with disabilities in accordance with policy HS5 of the Local Plan, ensuring compliance with M4(2) Accessible and Adaptable standard and to the M4(3) wheelchair user specification standards.

SELF-BUILD PLOTS

7.17 Policy SP18 of the Local Plan in relation to this Site (GA2) includes the requirement for the provision of 6no. self-build plots, which has been incorporated in the Illustrative Development Framework Plan.

▲ A mix of housing typologies should be provided across the site

▲ Individual design characteristics can provide interest and variety across the Site to help define different character areas

8

Sustainability Strategy and Future Proof

8. Sustainability Strategy and Future Proof

THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT WILL SEEK TO HAVE AN OVERALL POSITIVE IMPACT ON THE ENVIRONMENT

8.1 On 21st May 2019, North Herts Council declared a climate emergency, setting a target to achieve net-zero emissions by 2030. To aid in achieving this goal, a number of sustainability measures have been embedded within the design of the proposed development. These measures will both reduce the impact of the proposed development on the environment and the global climate, as well as ensuring resilience to, and the ability to adapt to, the impacts of climate change.

A primary school and community hub will also be delivered as part of the proposed development, ensuring services, amenities and facilities are within a short walking or cycling distance, which will reduce the carbon dioxide emissions associated with travel within, to and from the proposals.

High levels of fabric efficiency, and the use of renewable technologies, such as heat pumps, will aid in reducing the demand for energy within the scheme.

In addition to selecting the design and layout of their new home, self-build plot developers are able to specify the standards to which their new home will be built. This includes aspects such as insulation levels, heating and ventilation and renewable energy technology, which directly affect the energy consumption and therefore carbon dioxide emissions of the home. Research has shown that, as the eventual bill payer, self-build clients are willing to go well beyond building regulations minimum standards in designing energy efficiency into their homes, as they will have lower operating costs. Therefore, self-build developments are likely to result in more sustainable homes.

Circular economy principles will be embedded to ensure materials are kept at their highest value for as long as possible, and to aid in reducing the generation of waste.

Electric-only systems to heat and power the buildings to decarbonise in line with the national grid.

Materials used for the construction of the proposed development will be selected in consideration of their environmental effects, and potential impacts on future occupant health. Where appropriate, materials will be procured in line with the recommendations of the Building Research Establishment's (BRE) Green Guide to Specification. Where feasible, materials will be locally sourced, and materials with a high recycled content will be used preferentially.

The incorporation of footpaths and cycleways throughout the proposals aid in delivering sustainable travel options for future residents, without needing to rely on the private car.

Electric vehicle charging facilities will be provided to support the continued shift away from fossil-fuel reliant private cars.

A landscape-led approach, with green infrastructure to be woven throughout the masterplan, to ensure access to nature on the doorstep.

Water efficient fittings and potential measures to enable the harvesting of rainwater will also be included. This will reduce the environmental impact, as well as ensuring bills can be reduced as far as possible for future residents.

Embedding green infrastructure within the fabric of the scheme ensures opportunities for biodiversity are retained, maintained and enhanced.

The provision of green and open spaces will also aid in mitigating the heat island effect.

8. Sustainability Strategy and Future Proof

SUSTAINABILITY

8.2 In line with the Council's emerging Sustainability SPD, it is expected that applicants will select several sustainability themes on which to achieve higher sustainability levels. These will be influenced by factors such as location, scale and context of the proposed development.

8.3 The themes set out in the SPD include:

- Optimising Design & Fabric Performance
- Achieving Low Carbon Energy
- Minimising Carbon Footprint
- Healthy Placemaking
- Promoting Biodiversity
- Sustainable Travel
- Conserving Water
- Incorporating Sustainable Drainage
- Historic Buildings

8.4 Most of these themes will be relevant to the proposed development at GA2 and therefore should be incorporated into the design process as the scheme progresses.

8.5 It would be expected that any development proposals brought forward would meet the bronze level requirement for each theme, but with an aspiration to achieve the higher silver or gold levels, as outlined within the following table.

Theme	Targeted Level of Achievement	Proposed Measures
Optimising Passive Design and Fabric Performance	Silver	Targeting of high EPC ratings for all dwellings Submission of Sustainability Statement Targeting a minimum 50% reduction in carbon dioxide emissions over the relevant Building Regulations baseline Targeting of high levels of energy and space heating efficiency
Achieving low carbon energy	Silver	Seek to meet at least 75% of the energy demand of dwellings through renewable technology, such as air source heat pumps (ASHPs) and photovoltaic (PV) panels Provision of roof spaces that have been optimised for the incorporation of PV panels
Whole life carbon assessment	Silver	Provision of Whole Life Carbon Assessments, updated at pre-commencement and pre-occupation stages Targeting of low levels of embodied carbon both related to construction materials, and the operation of the scheme
Circular economy principles	Silver	Beneficial re-use of excavation materials on-site Submission of Circular Economy Statement
Green and Blue Infrastructure	Gold	Submission of a Landscape Strategy, mapping play areas, amenities and food growing areas Delivery of Green Infrastructure in line with Natural England's Green Infrastructure Principles, and which provides strategic links
Ecological surveys and	Gold	Undertaking of Ecology Surveys supported by photographic evidence
Arboriculture	Bronze	Submission of Arboricultural Assessment
BNG	Silver	Target 10% BNG on-site Provision of on-plot ecological enhancements
Ecological buffers	Silver	Implementation of sufficient ecological buffers, in line with Natural England guidelines
Transport statement	Gold	Submission of Transport Statement that includes for measures to target 50% of local trips being undertaken by active and/or sustainable modes, such as car clubs and pedestrian / cycle infrastructure
EV Charging	Gold	Provision of EV charging facilities for all dwelling and within mobility hubs
Conserving water	Bronze	Targeting of residential water consumption of no greater than 110 litres per person per day
SuDS scheme	Silver	Targeting of greenfield runoff rates through implementation of site-wide SuDS strategy that addresses the four pillars of SuDS

9

Delivery and Management

9. Delivery and Management

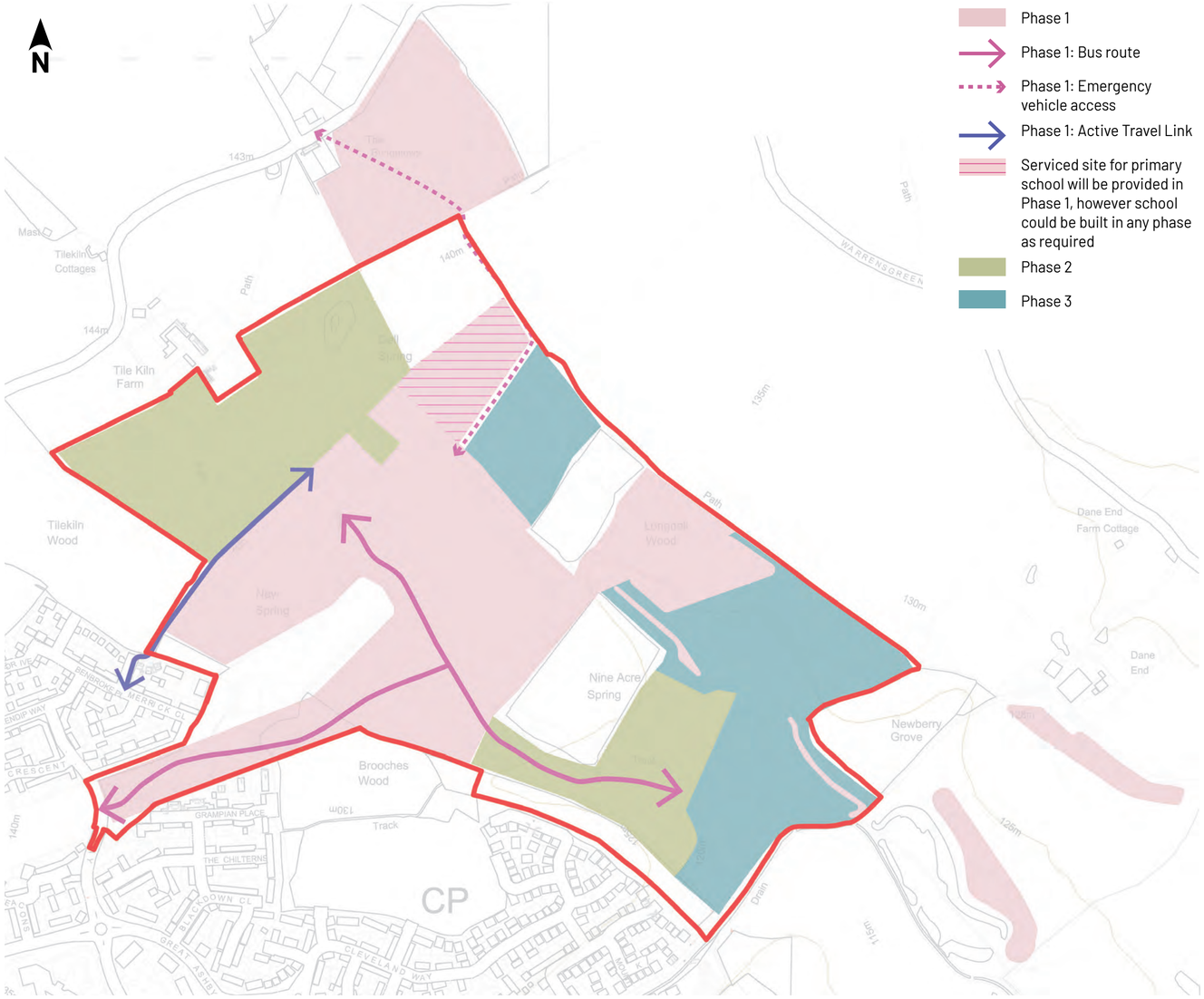
PHASING

9.1 The development of GA2 will support the delivery of a comprehensive, sustainable and well-connected new community, with each phase functioning as a place in its own right.

9.2 This Development Framework document forms part of the early stage of the design process for the Site. A developer partner would undertake the detailed design and delivery of the Site. This, along with uncertainty over the timing of the school and the community facility, necessitates the indicative nature of the phasing of the Site at this stage.

9.3 The key principles which will underpin the future, more detailed phasing strategy are outlined below:

- As part of the first phase, the new access from Mendip Way should be created. Any replacement play area, as well as the foot and cycle links within this area, would be delivered as soon as possible, once the access road is constructed, in order to allow public use of this western area of open space.
- The next stretch of the primary street should lead north to serve the central core of the development to enable the key amenities and facilities to come forward as part of the early stages of development.
- The Applicant and developer will work with the District and County Councils to agree the timing of off-site highway improvements, including those that promote active travel, and this should be incorporated into the detailed phasing plan that will follow.
- All phases should ensure that built infrastructure and measures for sustainable travel (bus, walking and cycle access) are available for residents and workers on the Site. This will include access to existing primary and secondary schools, interconnectivity with GA1 and links to the existing Great Ashby Community Centre and shopping facilities. This should be developed in partnership with the District and County Council's, bus operators, and other partners.
- Each phase is expected to deliver a mix of housing type/tenures.
- Each phase will provide access to new and existing open space and recreational facilities.



▲ Figure 9.1 - Proposed Phasing Strategy Plan

9. Delivery and Management

9.4 An indicative Phasing Plan has been prepared, as shown on the previous page, in order to guide the delivery of the Site. It is suggested that the development be brought forward in three broad phases.

9.5 Phase 1 could see the construction of the main access road into the Site off Mendip Way, and northwards towards the primary school. This would allow the housing alongside the primary street within the north of the Site to be constructed. This would also allow for the play area and parks along the new access road to be delivered, as well as part of the parkland within the central green space. This would also allow for the creation of the western drainage basin. The emergency vehicle link should be built in Phase 1. The bus route should also proposed to be implemented as soon as possible during Phase 1. Buses will access the Site from Mendip Way, and then turn into the northern part of the Site along the primary street up to the primary school. It may then be possible for the bus to turn around along the primary street and along past the south east of the primary school, to exit out of the Site.

9.6 Phase 1 could also see the delivery of the serviced primary school site, as well as the allotments. The swales and drainage basin within the east and south of the Site would also be required to serve this Community Hub area, and should also be delivered as part of Phase 1. Although the serviced school site will be delivered in Phase 1, the school can be brought forward at any phase, in line with requirements.

9.7 Phase 2 could include the housing area to the north west of the Site, as well as housing within the south west. It would also include the creation of the parkland at Dell Spring, and the provision of the Community facility.

9.8 Phase 3 could see the remainder of the housing and open spaces within the Site constructed, as well as the delivery of the habitat creation area in the far north of the Site. The primary street would at this stage be complete, and the bus route would be provided linking through the Site in a clockwise direction along the primary street.

9.9 While the phases are indicative, they do give an indication of how the development could be brought forward. The exact strategy, phasing, and delivery program will be confirmed at the future detailed design stage.

INFRASTRUCTURE DELIVERY

Utilities

9.10 At this stage, it is understood that only localised service diversions would be required at the access off Mendip Way, and within the far north of the Site, where the emergency access is located. Discussions will continue with the utility providers as the design and development of the scheme progresses, and costs and contributions agreed.

Electricity

9.11 In order to supply the proposed development, a load of 4,113kVA is required. A Point of Connection application was made and a response from UK Power Networks was received, advising that a 11,000V High Voltage Connection can be provided from the Verity Way Primary substation on Coventry Close, and that approximately 3km of off-site works would be required. Further reinforcement works are also required, entailing two transformer upgrades. An indicative cost for the works has been provided to the Applicant.

Potable Water

9.12 Affinity Water have confirmed the likely point of connection and available capacity for the development site via a pre-development assessment. A point of connection has been confirmed at the 180mm HPPE Water Main within Mendip Way. The existing network does not have sufficient capacity to supply the proposed development without upstream reinforcement works. The following upgrades are noted as required: *'It is recommended that the pump at Pinn Green Reservoir is set at 20m to improve the pressure at the critical point. In addition, it is recommended that the standby pump at the Pinn Green Reservoir is activated and the pressure control set at 20m to reduce the impact upon the network'.* The cost for these works is currently covered under payment of the Infrastructure Charge due for each connection.

Social Infrastructure

9.13 As shown on the Proposed Phasing Strategy Plan, the serviced site for the primary school will be delivered in phase 1, allowing the school to be delivered from phase 1 onwards and the Community facility from phase 2 onwards. A financial contribution will be made towards education, and will be agreed with the County Council during the Application process. A financial contribution will also be made towards health care and facilities, although the potential exists to utilise part or all of the proposed Community facility as a medical centre or similar, should this be proven necessary and viable during the Application discussions.

Sports and Recreational Infrastructure

9.14 As set out earlier in this document, it is proposed that a financial contribution is made to off-site sports provision and towards indoor sports provision, although the Community facility would be capable of accommodating some indoor sports uses at a local level. The Proposed Phasing Strategy Plan shows how the open spaces and play areas within the development could be brought forward in a phased manner.

Drainage System

9.15 The Proposed Phasing Strategy Plan shows how the proposed SuDS elements are suggested to be phased, to ensure that the various development parcels are satisfactorily drained.

Structural Landscaping and BNG

9.16 It is proposed that the structural landscaping is brought forward alongside the development parcels as per the Proposed Phasing Strategy Plan. The habitat creation area and the areas of new woodland, as part of the BNG strategy, will be implemented during the first planting season once construction has started, early in Phase 1.

Ecological Mitigation

9.17 Any proposals should be designed to deliver in excess of 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) demonstrated through use of the Statutory Biodiversity Metric. This takes into account habitat retention, creation and enhancement works as proposed above, as well as the inclusion of tree-lined streets and other landscaping within the built environment.

9.18 All of the above could be robustly secured through either an appropriately worded planning condition, s106 agreement and/or the control of the detailed design of the scheme at the Outline and Reserved Matters planning stages.

9. Delivery and Management

Public Transport

9.19 As set out earlier in this document, the Illustrative Development Framework has been designed to allow a bus route to enter the Site, move around the primary street in a clockwise direction, and exit the Site again. Discussions have been had with the bus operator to confirm the principles of this. A temporary bus service would be delivered early on in the development phases, in order to ensure new residents have access to public transport as soon as possible.

Highway Improvements

9.20 An Accessibility Audit has been undertaken to consider where improvements to walking and cycling routes may be required. The Illustrative Development Framework includes the creation of a new separated cycle and footway crossing over Mendip Way to the western side of the street, from the new access junction into the Site on the eastern side of the street. The proposals could also potentially require the removal of a very short section of the timber fence along the northern edge of Merrick Close, to allow easier access onto the new foot and cycle path into the Site, off Merrick Close.

9.21 It is likely that the existing public footpaths and bridleway within the Site will be either widened, and/or surfaced, in order to accommodate the expected increase in use.

9.22 It is unlikely that any off-site junctions or road would require improvement, due to the low level of impact arising from the development, as well as the drive towards encouraging active travel as opposed to the use of the private car.

9.23 Potential improvement options are set out in the tables adjacent and on the following page, and will be agreed with the Council as the design of the development progresses:

Improvement Location	Proposed Transport Intervention	Analysis
Walking Route 1: Main site access off Mendip Way to Round Diamond School and cluster of facilities including among others Busy Bees Nursery school, Great Ashby Community Centre and Budgens supermarket.	Resurfacing and widening of the route along all its length on eastern side to 2.0m wide, removing the overgrown vegetation and replacing the surfacing where required. The existing coloured carriageway surfacing and road markings near the pedestrian crossing by Round Diamond School and the dropped kerb paving on Mendip Way arm could also be replaced.	The cluster of amenities, located within 400m of the proposed site access off Mendip Way. Due to the proximity to the site a large number of residents will seek to reach the facilities including the supermarket and the nursery. The proposed intervention will ensure the route is more convenient for walking and other users, encouraging sustainable trips for a large proportion of residents from the site.
Walking Route 2: Bridleway site access via Fairfield Way Bus Stop, Round Diamond School and cluster of facilities; to equestrian crossing on Great Ashby Way.	Resurfacing and widening of the route along all its length to 3.0m wide, improving the street lighting particularly in the areas of St Nicolas Park and near the Fairfield Way bus stop and removing the overgrown vegetation. The raised kerb for the Fairfield Way bus stop and also a tactile paving on equestrian crossing near Fairfield Way bus stop could also be provided.	The least scoring walking route, with the lowest results. As Route 1, this route is the closest cluster of amenities, including the supermarket and the nursery, from the proposed Bridleway site access. The proposed intervention will ensure the route is more convenient for walking and other users.

Improvement Location	Proposed Transport Intervention	Analysis
Cycling Route 1: Site access to The Leys Primary and Nursery School, Giles Junior Sand Nursery and Infants' School, Trotts Hill School and Almond Hill Junior School	Cleaning, resurfacing, and widening of the route, improving the street lighting particularly near schools and removing the overgrown vegetation. The BT cabinet located near St Nicolas playground could also be relocated and the cycleway widened in this location. More direct route by St Nicolas Playground could also be provided, while the bin from the footway on the turn to cycleway by Giles School could also be relocated.	Route 1 forms a part of a cycleway to the Stevenage Train Station and also wider cycleway network
Cycling Route 3: Site access to Employment Area, Martins Wood Primary School and The Noble School Secondary School.	Resurfacing, and widening of the route (particularly through Industrial Estate on Wedgewood Way), improving the street lighting particularly near schools and removing the overgrown vegetation. The new tactile paving could also be provided where required.	Route to the nearest Secondary School, it is considered that the primary focus on the improvements should be given to this route.

9. Delivery and Management

1

Improvements of the Bus Stop: The Beacons - Services: SB7

2

Proposed widening of the existing footpath to 3.0m wide cycleway

3

Proposed widening of the existing footpath to 3.0m wide cycleway

4

Proposed widening of the existing footpath to 3.0m wide cycleway

5

Improvements of the Bus Stop: Fairfield Way - Services: SB7

6

Proposed widening of the existing footpath

▲ Figure 9.2 - Proposed footway and cycleway improvements off-site

9. Delivery and Management

CONSTRUCTION ENVIRONMENT MANAGEMENT PLAN (CEMP)

9.24 A CEMP addresses how potentially adverse impacts associated with the future construction activities on site will be managed. A CEMP is expected to be agreed with the Council as a pre-commencement planning condition, before any construction activities start. Development must be undertaken in line with an approved CEMP, and failure to do so may constitute a breach of planning consent, with possible follow-up enforcement.

9.25 An example of the matters expected to be considered within the CEMP for GA2 are set out below. The GA2 CEMP will also take into account the existing or proposed CEMP for other nearby developments, including that at GA1.

Site operation and Traffic Management

- Construction Access and Off-site Movement:
  - To include agreed construction hours avoiding local school drop off times if required.
  - Confirmation of construction traffic routes.
  - Details of how deliveries will be timed to avoid waiting outside the site or conflicting movements.
  - Escort and Banksman to be provided where required for abnormal loads
  - Details of signage to be provided along construction route.
- On-site Traffic Management:
  - Details provide of on-site road/waiting areas and hardstanding for deliveries.
  - Details of on-site safety signage.
  - Details of on-site haul roads to be constructed to minimise mud leaving the site.
- Loading and Unloading of plant and materials:
  - Details of loading areas /storage compound.
- Types of vehicles and frequency of movements:
  - Details of the vehicles required for construction and their likely frequency. I.e. vehicles such as mobile cranes will enter the site but then remain on site for a long period until no longer required.
  - Tracking drawings provided for abnormal vehicles if required.
- Delivery and Construction operating hours
- Storage of Plant and Material:
  - Material to be covered to avoid dust.

Parking

- On-site staff parking and impact on existing parking:
  - Confirmation of layout of staff car parking will be submitted for approval will include large spaces for vans.
  - In the event that temporary TROs are required on the surrounding roads this will be mitigated through a temporary car park for residents as close to the site access as practicable.

Environmental Controls

- Dirt/mud:
  - Details of wheel washing facilities to be submitted and agreed.
- Water Quality:
  - Measures to avoid contamination.
- Dust:
  - Excavation impact minimased by screening/watering down.
  - Vehicles properly covered when leaving site.
  - No burning/crushing on site.
  - Wheel washing facilities.
- Recycling/Disposal of Waste:
  - Details of on-site separation and material to be reused.
- Noise
  - Details of noise mitigation hoarding along boundaries
  - Noise suppression equipment to be used where possible
  - Electric equipment used in preference to petrol/diesel.
  - Location of noisy plant and equipment located as far as practicable from existing properties.
- Drainage
  - Details of temporary drainage strategy prior to implementation of approved strategy.

Site Security and Lighting

- Security Hoarding:
  - Details to be submitted for comment.
- Temporary Lighting:
  - Details to be provided for approval accounting for environmental concerns.

Community Liaison

- Meetings with Site Manager / Community Liaison representative.
- Leaflet drops with updates.
- Contact Details of Community Liaison personnel to be provided.
- Liaison with Local Authority – updates to be provided to Local Authority particularly in advance to activities which may have a greater impact on residents.

9. Delivery and Management

FUTURE MANAGEMENT

9.26 Green and blue infrastructure, as well as streets and other infrastructure, will require ongoing management and maintenance.

Highways

9.27 It is expected that the primary street, secondary and tertiary streets are built to an adoptable standard, and that the highway authority will then take ownership of these roads once the development is complete. The management and ownership of any other roads and associated areas i.e. courtyards will most likely be transferred to the properties that are associated with them. This would be subject to further discussions as the Site layout and design progresses.

Communal Areas, including Open Space

9.28 Communal areas, including open spaces and paths, will likely be managed by a management company, although no particular model has been agreed at this stage. A management company would usually be set up by the developer, and the property owners would enter into a covenant with the management company (which is usually initially run by the developer) to pay an annual charge to fund the functions of the management company (service charge). The property owners will gain a share of the freehold of the communal areas. The responsibilities of the management company would be set out in the transfer deed or management deed if that model was progressed.

9.29 Alternative management structures could also be explored with the Council. At this stage no particular model has been agreed.

SuDS

9.30 The SuDS would ideally be transferred to Thames Water, who currently manage the existing basin. The exact mechanism and arrangement for this will be confirmed at a later stage.

Management Plans

9.31 As part of the Reserved Matters, management plans will be developed and agreed with the Local Authority. These will include management prescriptions for communal and other open spaces and landscaping, play areas, ecological areas, woodlands including ancient, and SuDS, amongst others. This will ensure that the management of these spaces delivers the desired social and ecological outcomes as proposed as part of the development.

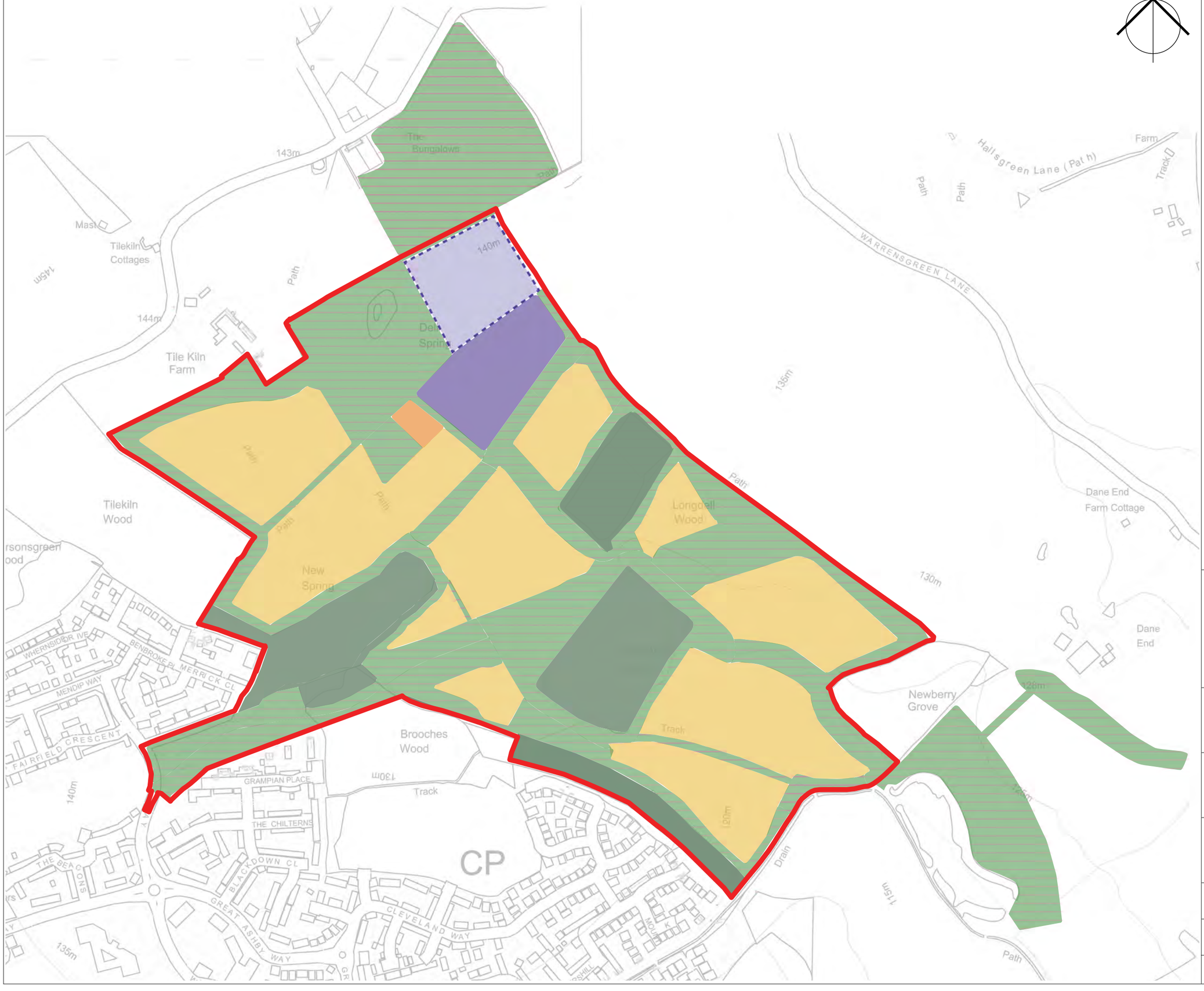
Social Infrastructure

9.32 The allotments and Community facility could either be transferred to the Local Authority or the Parish, or to a group such as the Great Ashby Community Council. It could also form part of the freehold and be managed by the management company and owned by the residents. Discussions will take place with stakeholders to ascertain the best solution in this case. The primary school will be delivered and owned by the local Education Authority, Hertfordshire County Council.

Biodiversity Net Gain

9.33 Habitats of greater ecological interest and those created or enhanced to deliver specific ecological mitigation or for BNG will be subject to specialist management and maintenance schedules. This management will be enshrined within a Site-Wide Habitat Management & Monitoring Plan (HMMP) setting out a 30-year management schedule, focusing upon targeted ecological outcomes alongside recreational use. The HMMP will be implemented by a suitably qualified and experienced management company or organisation.

Appendix A. A3 Framework Plans



Residential Development

Primary School Site: 2.1 ha

Reserved Education Use Land: 1.9 ha

Community Hub

Existing woodland

Green & Blue Infrastructure

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TITLE
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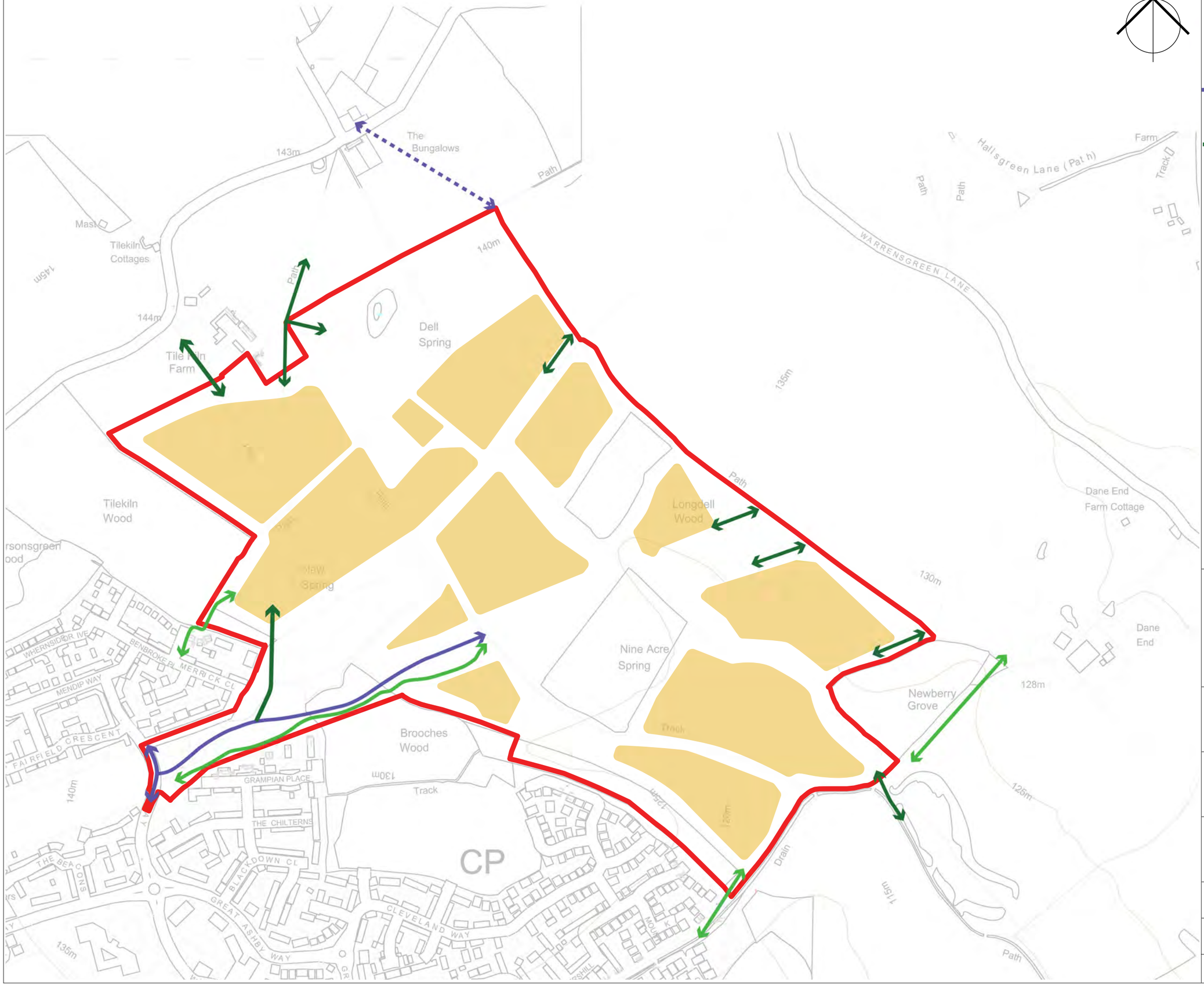

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Proposed Access

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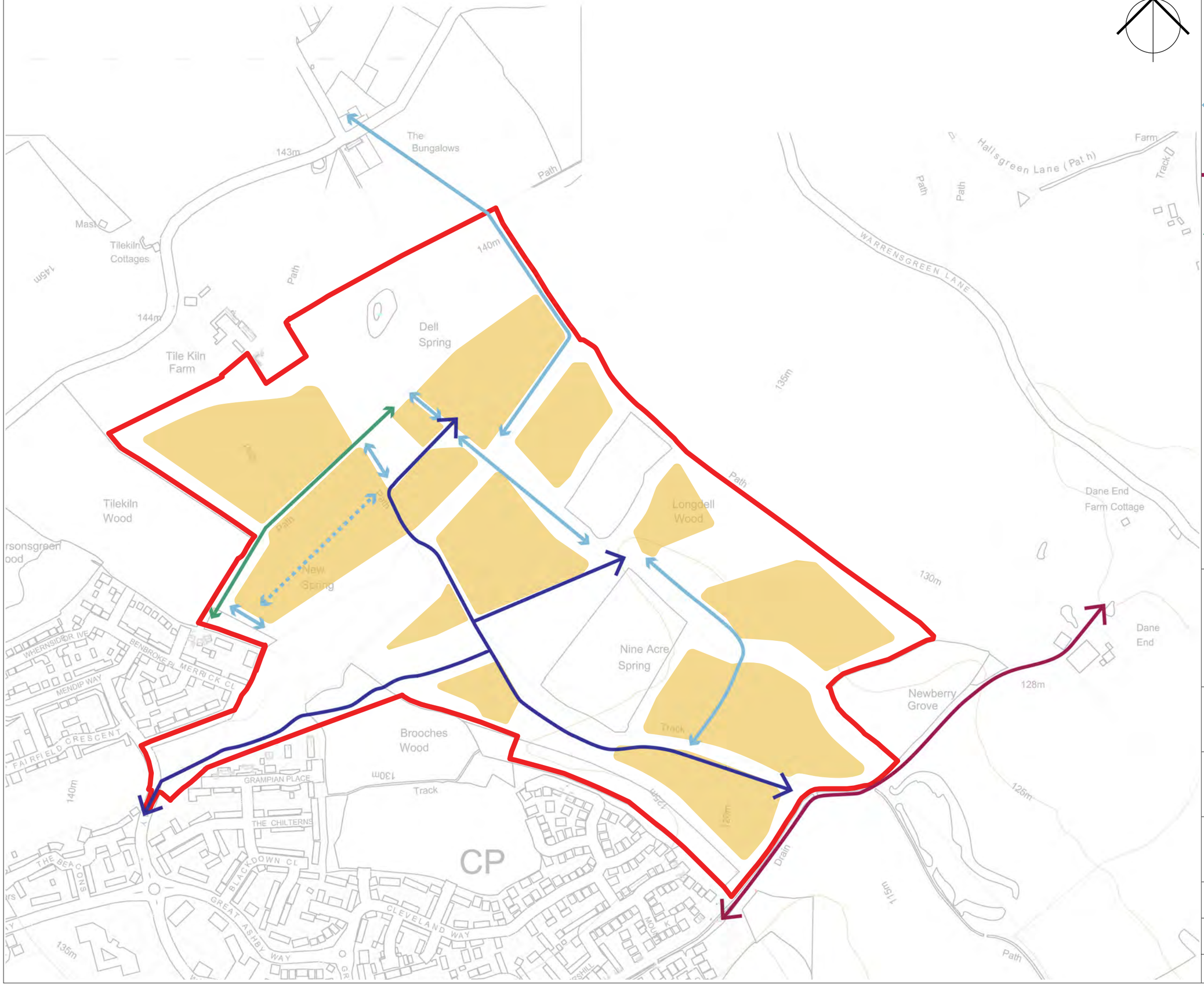

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Proposed Active Travel

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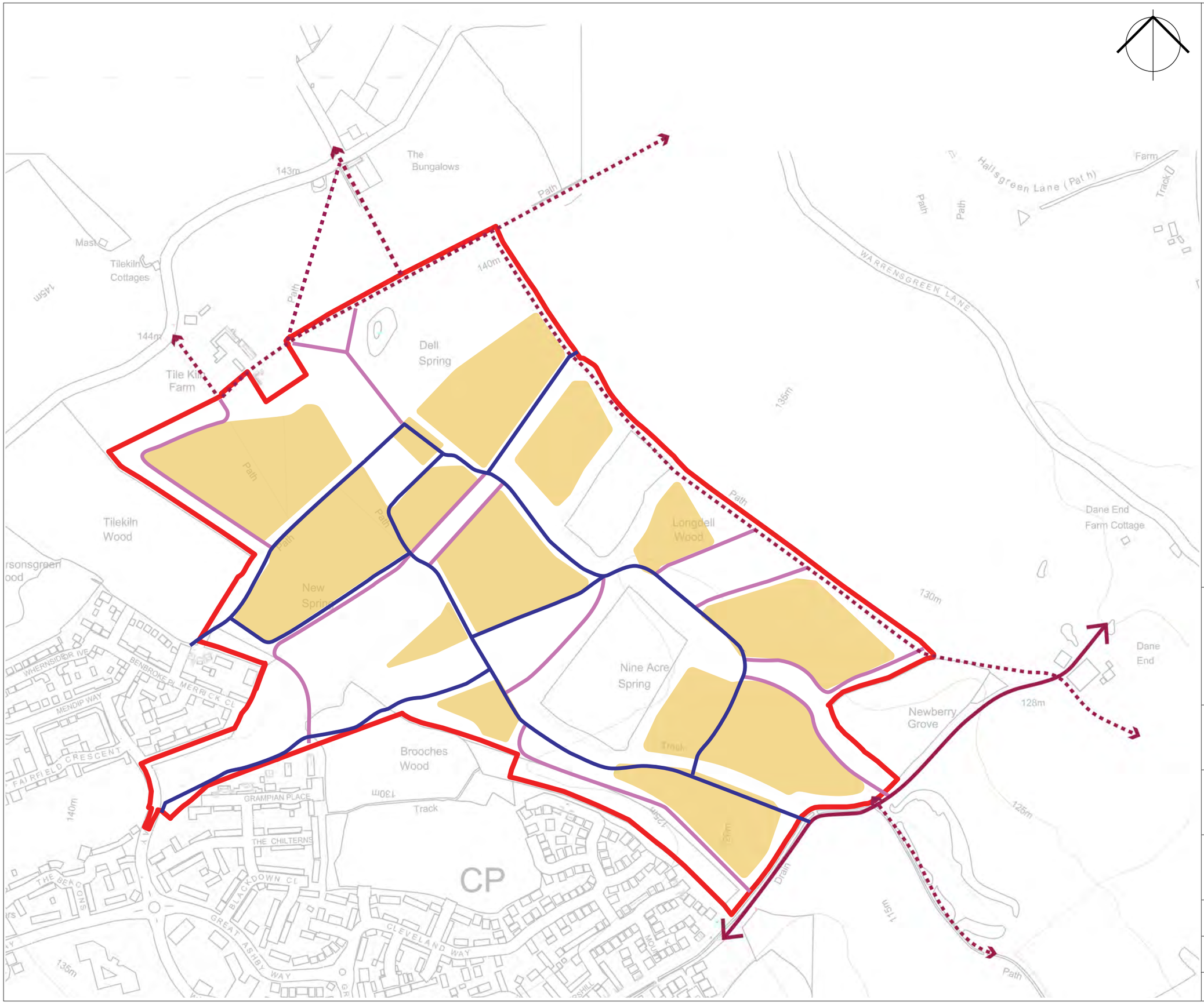

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Proposed Leisure Routes

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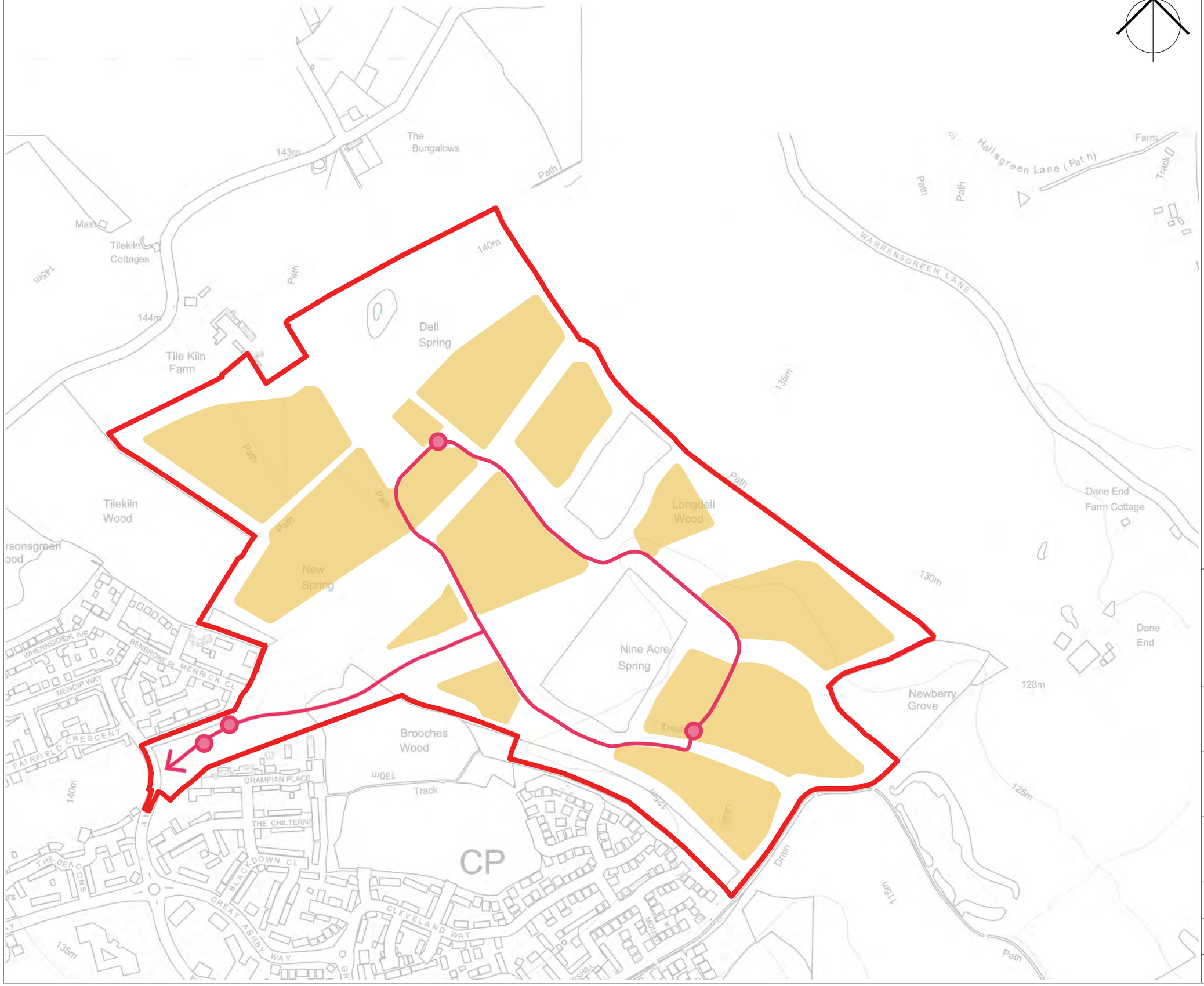

Indicative bus route and indicative stops

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Proposed Public Transport

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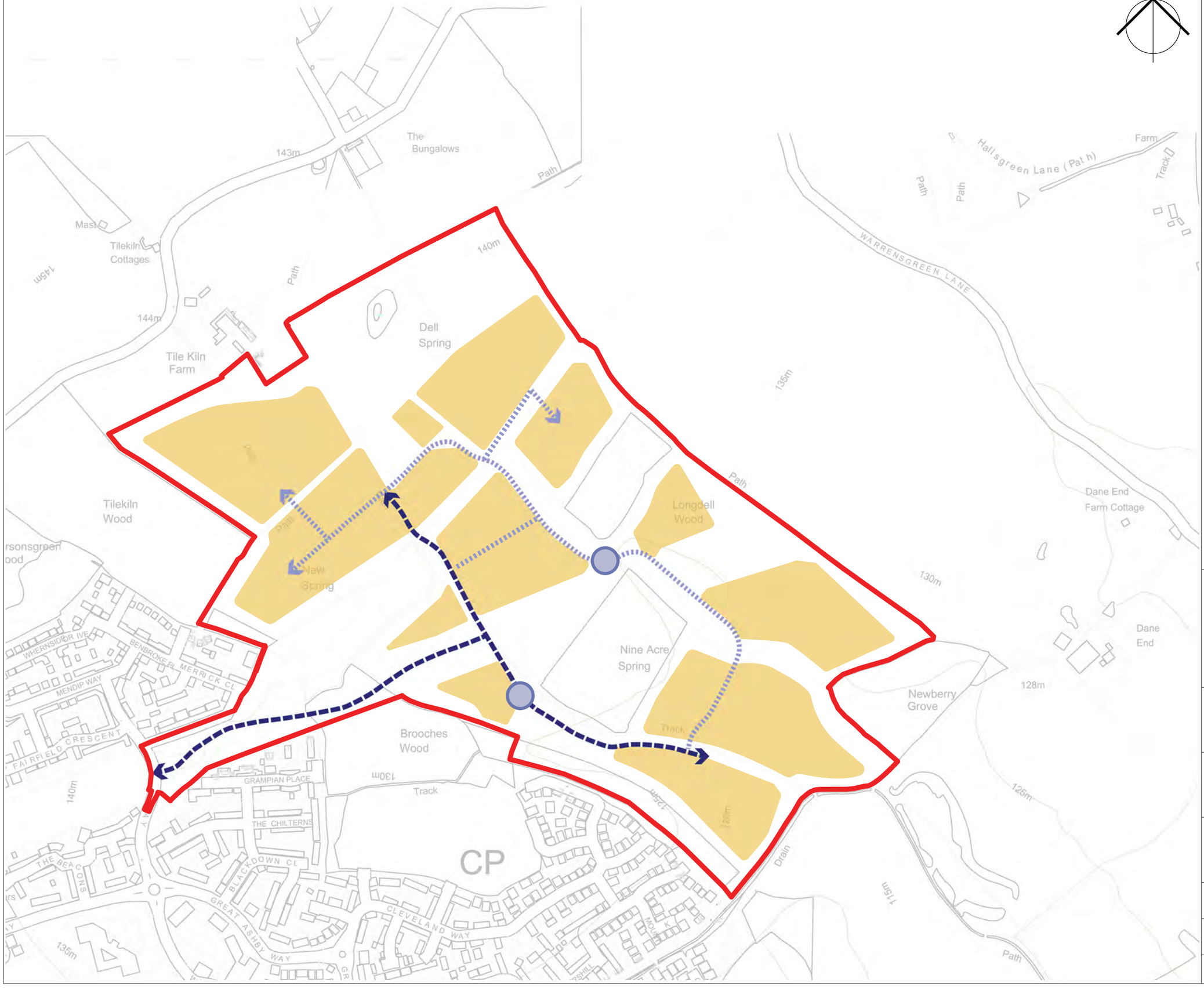

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Proposed Vehicular Movement

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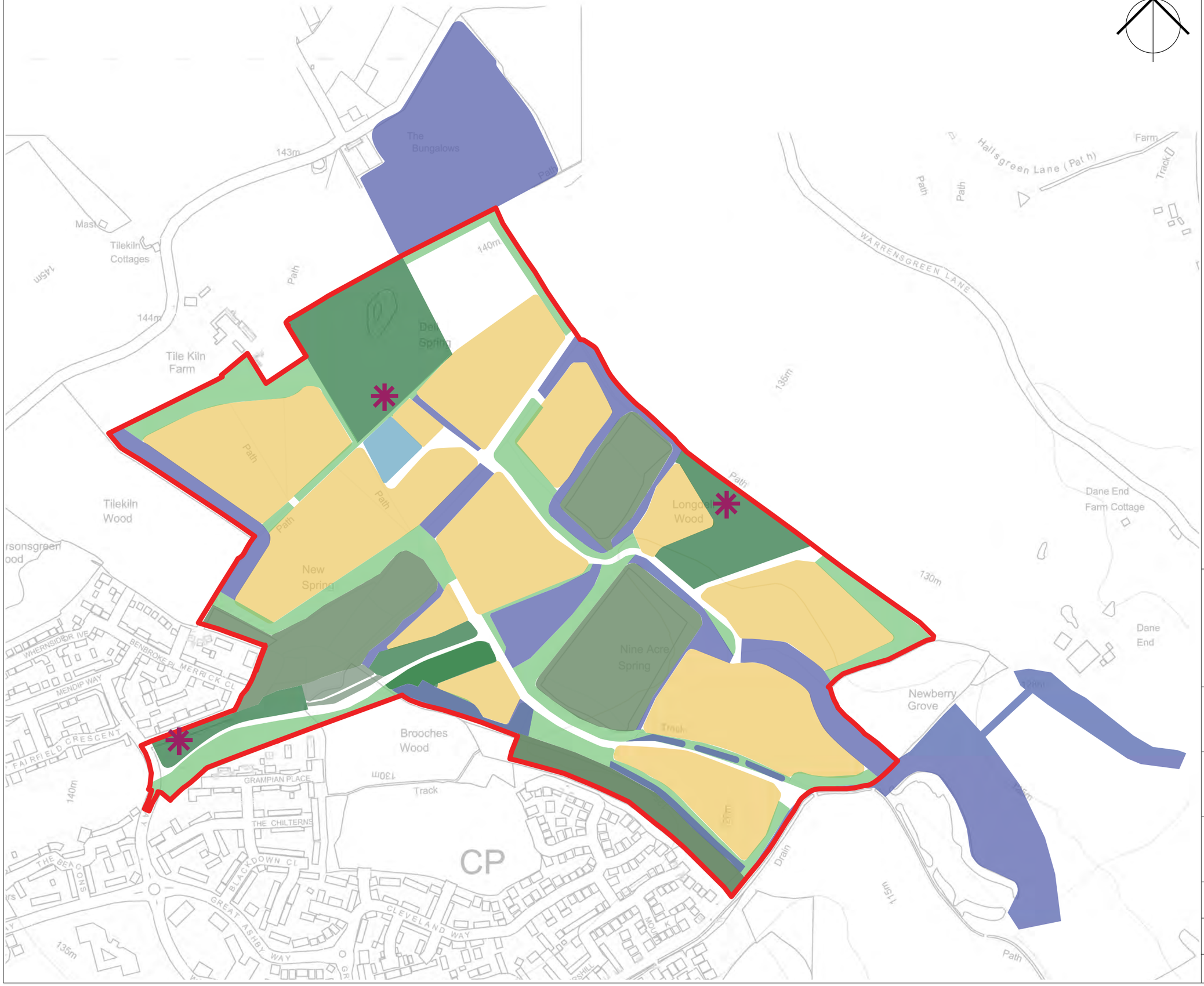

Existing woodland

Amenity open space

Parks and gardens

Natural and semi-natural open space

Allotments

Indicative location for play

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Proposed Green and Blue Infrastructure

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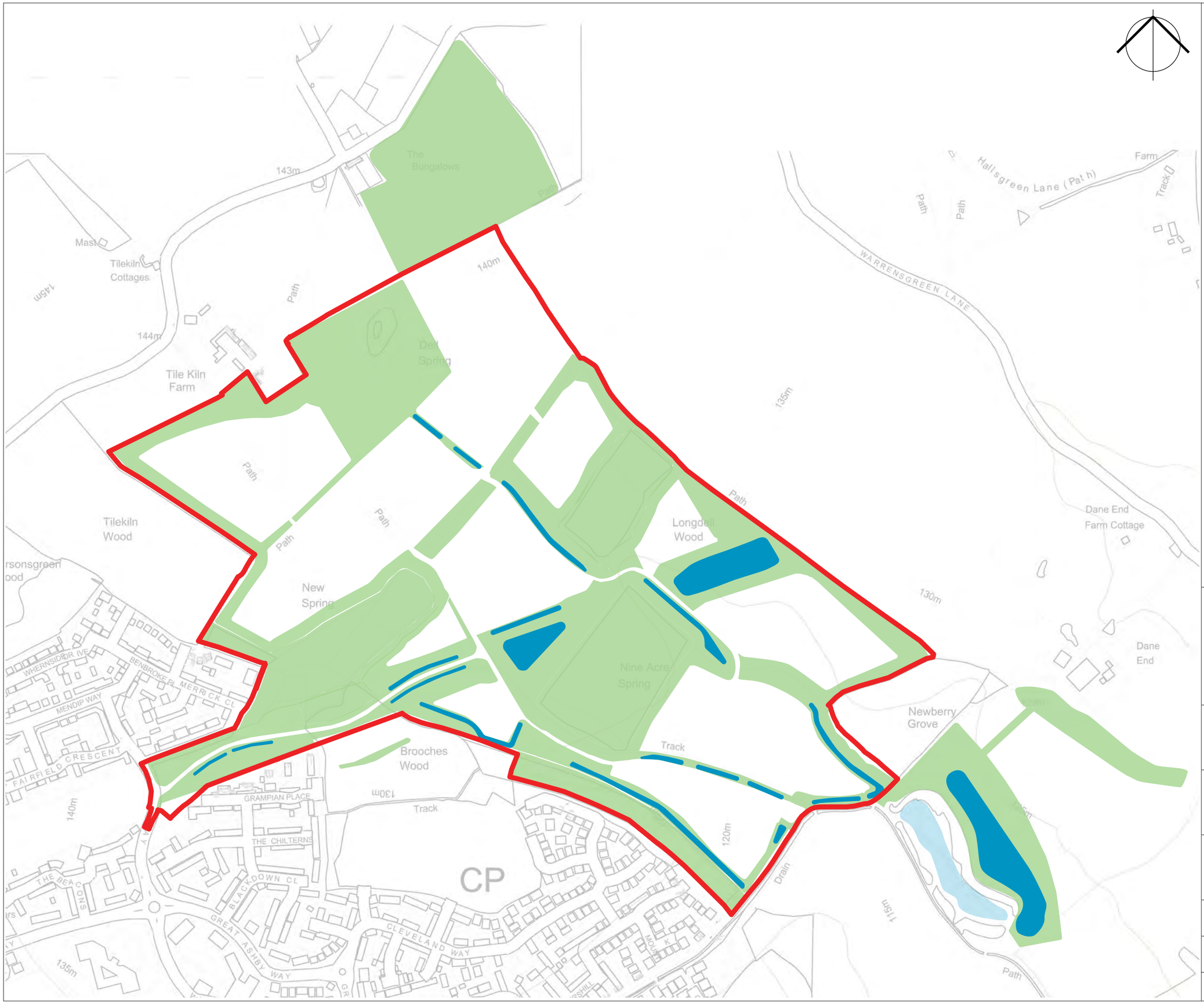

- Green infrastructure
- Drainage basins
- Existing drainage basin
- Swales (width shown illustratively)

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Proposed Drainage

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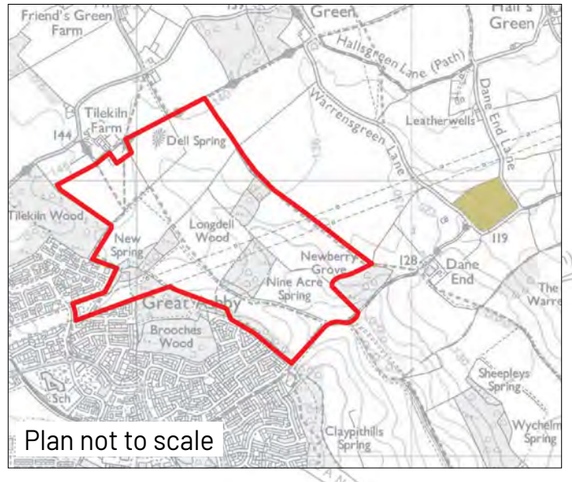

- Proposed neutral grassland
- Proposed broadleaved woodland
- Existing grassland enhanced
- New hedgerow planting
- Existing woodland managed
- Existing hedgerows and tree lines retained where possible
- SuDS features
- Off-set from Ancient Woodland
- Allotments
- Farmland bird mitigation
- Other GI/public open space

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Proposed Ecology and Biodiversity

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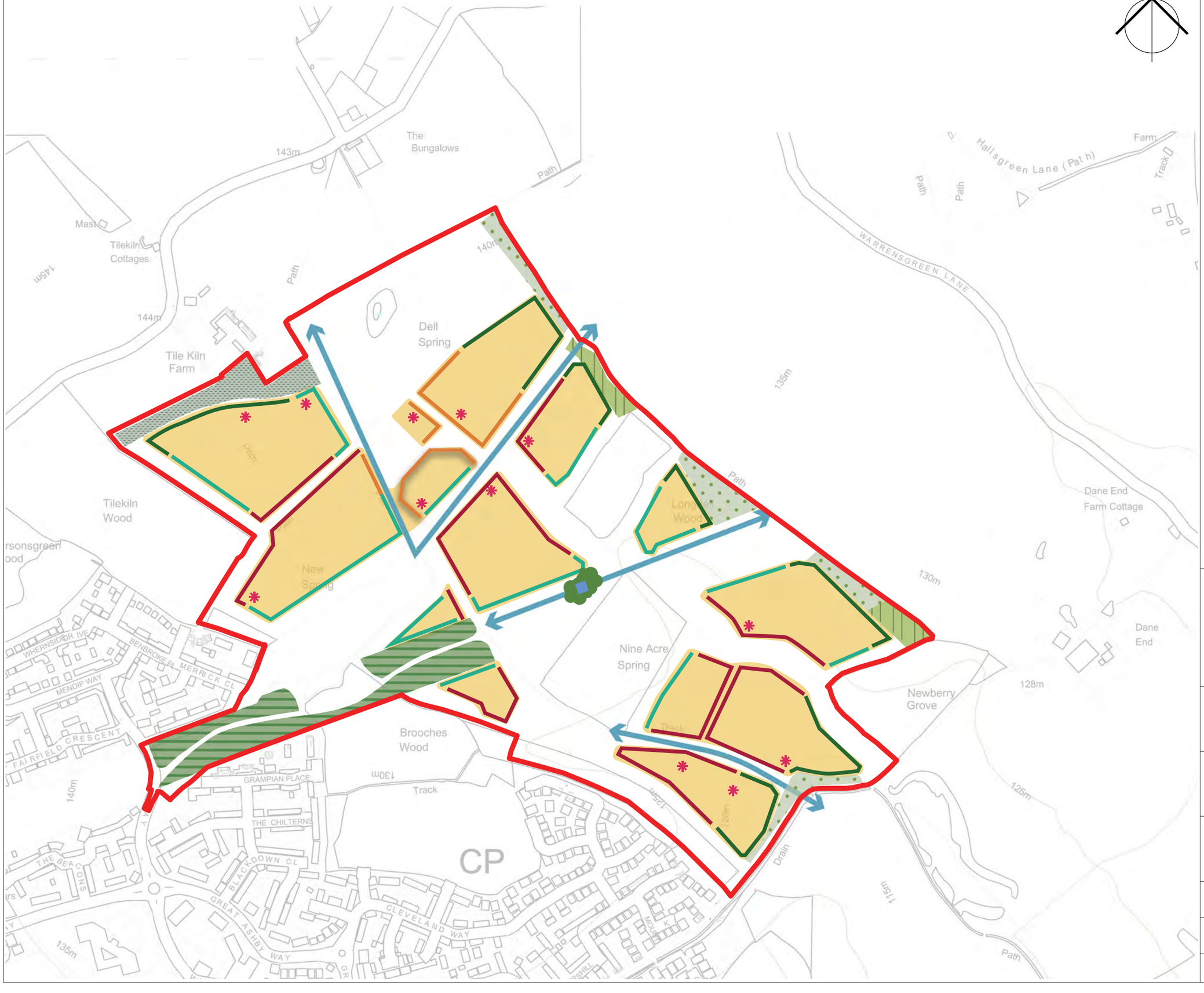

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Proposed Urban Design Principles

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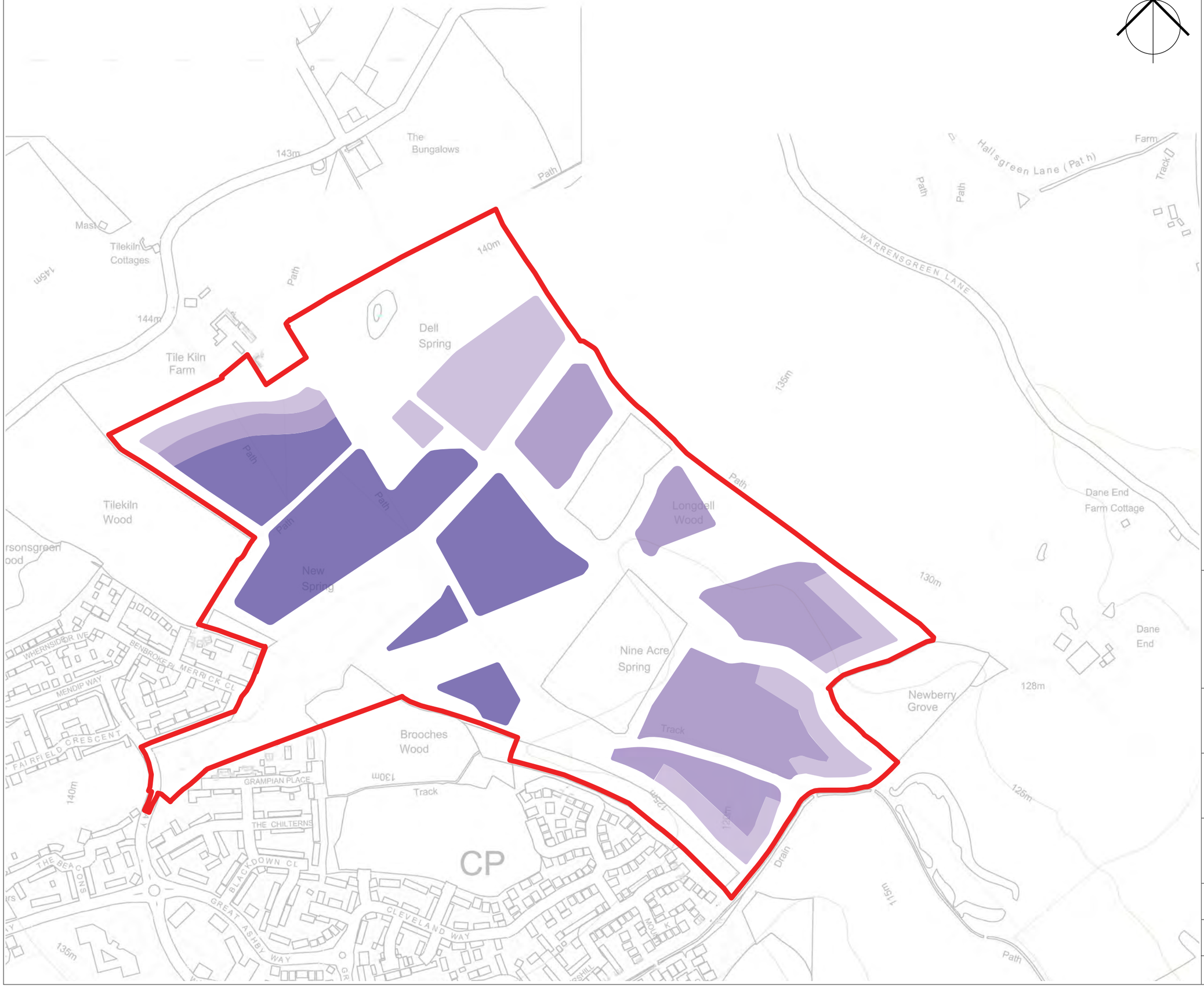

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Proposed Scale and Density

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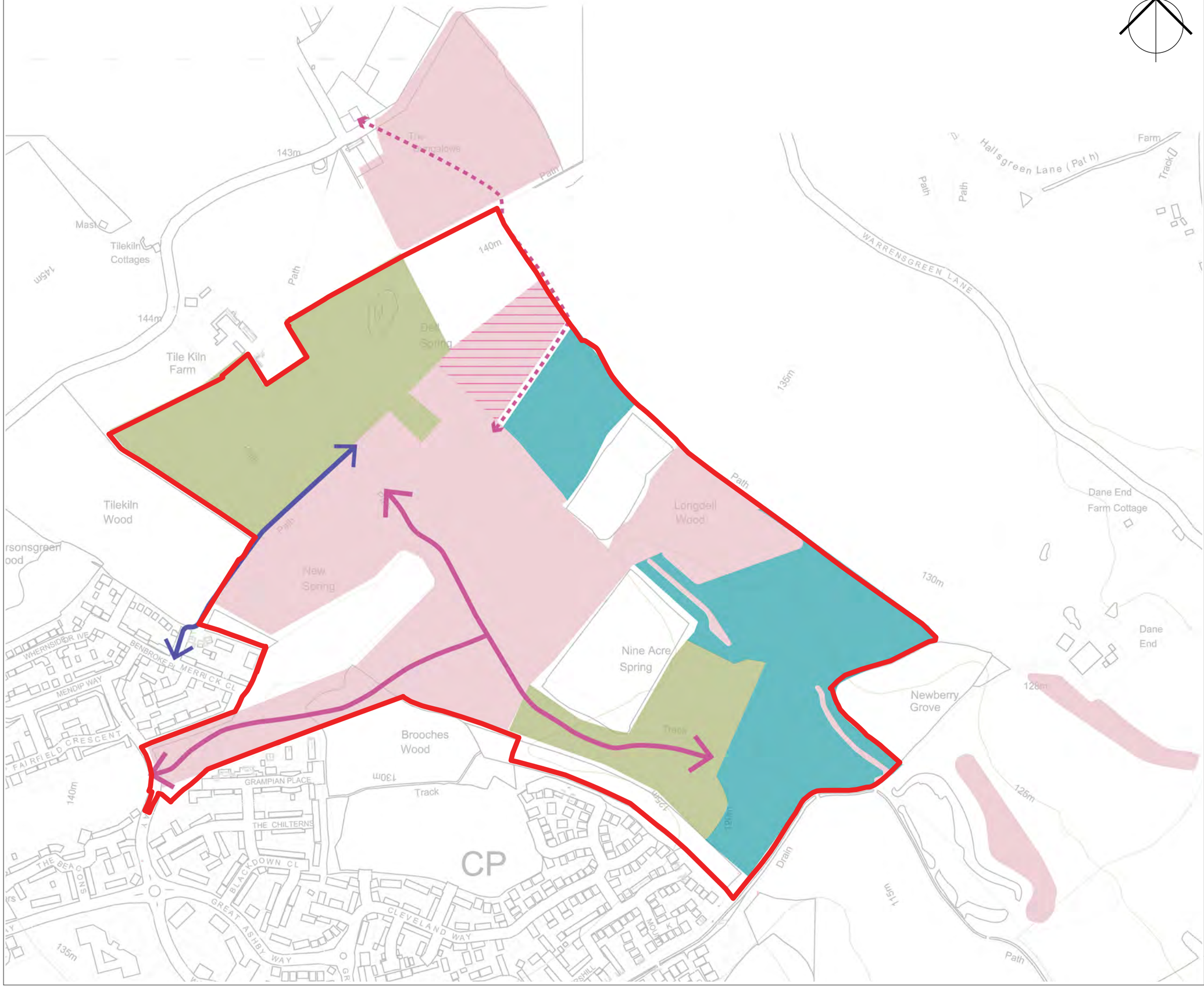

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TITLE
Proposed Phasing

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