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## Opportunities, Influences & Scheme Evolution

## 04. Opportunities, Influences & Scheme Evolution

The Opportunities and Influences associated with the proposed development have been identified following the assessment of the Site and its surroundings, as detailed in Section 3. These are listed below and shown on the Opportunities and influences Plan at Figure 4.1. This assessment of the Site and its surroundings has informed the design proposals.

### 4.1 INFLUENCES

#### Key Views and Sensitivity

The ridgeline, which dissects the Site and follows the route of Weasel Lane from the south western boundary to the north eastern corner of the Site, has potential in terms of providing key views both into and out of the Site. These views are enhanced through the sensitive positioning of development and building heights, and reinforced by additional planting to retain the landscape dominant ridge in accordance with AVDC Policy 35, which identifies these elements as key design considerations.

The Site's south western boundary presents the opportunity to include a defensible boundary in the form of a wooded edge, to clearly define the edge of the development and achieve a sensitive transition into the neighbouring countryside.

The Site's eastern boundary is bound by existing residential properties which back onto the Site. Careful consideration must be given to how the proposed development alongside the eastern boundary relates to the existing homes, to ensure their residential amenity is respected.

#### Topography

The Site's topography is dominated by the broadly central east – west ridgeline. This undulating landform creates three discrete land parcels which will generate different characters and require individual design response. The development must contend with this undulating topography.

The Site naturally divides into two areas along the Weasel Lane ridge: the north/north west with its undulating land falling northwards towards the A421; and the south/south east which gradually falls toward the south eastern corner of the Site. The varied topography of the Site creates natural locations for drainage, which will be foci of activity and designed as key spaces and places within the masterplan. The overall landscape framework also accommodates means of strategic surface water attenuation, in accordance with Plan:MK Policies FR1 - FR2.

#### Connectivity

The Site is located on the edge of Milton Keynes and must be positively connected to the existing grid road network by accommodating a potential future dual carriageway grid road through the development, in accordance with Plan:MK Strategic Objective 12, which seeks to ensure the grid road pattern is extended into any major new development areas. Connections to established routes are essential and these provide the structure around which the layout is based, to provide a hierarchy of movement networks reflecting Plan:MK Policy CT1 which seeks to encourage non-car modes of transport, and Policy CT3 which seeks to ensure that pedestrian and cycle infrastructure is provided within development. The development provides strong pedestrian routes through the Site. Public Rights of Way, particularly along Weasel Lane, are to be retained and enhanced.

#### Existing Landscape

The Site comprises some features of landscape value, including Weasel Lane, some hedgerows, and field boundaries. These will be retained and will form important structuring elements of the proposed layout. A wider network of green infrastructure – equivalent to some 45% of the entire Site - will add to the existing landscape characteristics, enabling the development to positively respond to the transition from urban edge to the north and east, to open countryside to the west and south. Existing ditches on Site should be retained where appropriate and brought into favourable management as part of the proposed development.





Existing public byway Weasel Lane should be retained and incorporated into the Site layout.



Existing Site features, such as trees and hedgerows should be retained where possible and influence the design and Site layout.



Views from and towards Newton Longville should be carefully considered.



Whaddon Road provides the opportunity for an access point to serve the western part of the Site.



Site Boundary **144.85ha**

## INFLUENCES



Existing contours



Existing public footpath



Existing bridleway



Existing restricted byway



Existing Sustrans Route 51



Extent of Flood Zone (source: Gov.uk)



Extent of surface water flooding (source: Gov.uk)



Existing vegetation



Approximate locations of areas of archaeological significance



Ridgeline



Proposed East/West Railway



Overhead HV power line



Overhead LV power line



Oil pipeline and approximate safeguarding



Strategic Grid Road Reserve link between A421 and A4146



Milton Keynes/Buckinghamshire Council boundary

## OPPORTUNITIES



Potential vehicular access points



Potential pedestrian and cycle links



Long distance view towards Newton Longueville St Faith Church



Potential locations for SuDS features



Potential principal green corridors

## CONTEXT



Potential vehicular access points



Listed Buildings



Ancient Woodland



Ancient Replanted Woodland



Local Wildlife Site (LWS)



County Wildlife Site (CWS)



MK Woodland Corridor



Biological Notification Site (BNS)



MK Wetland Corridor



Scheduled Monument - Fishpond in Water Spinney 600m SE of St Gile's Church Tattenhoe



Hammond Park Recreation Ground



Extent of East/West Rail boundary for proposed works



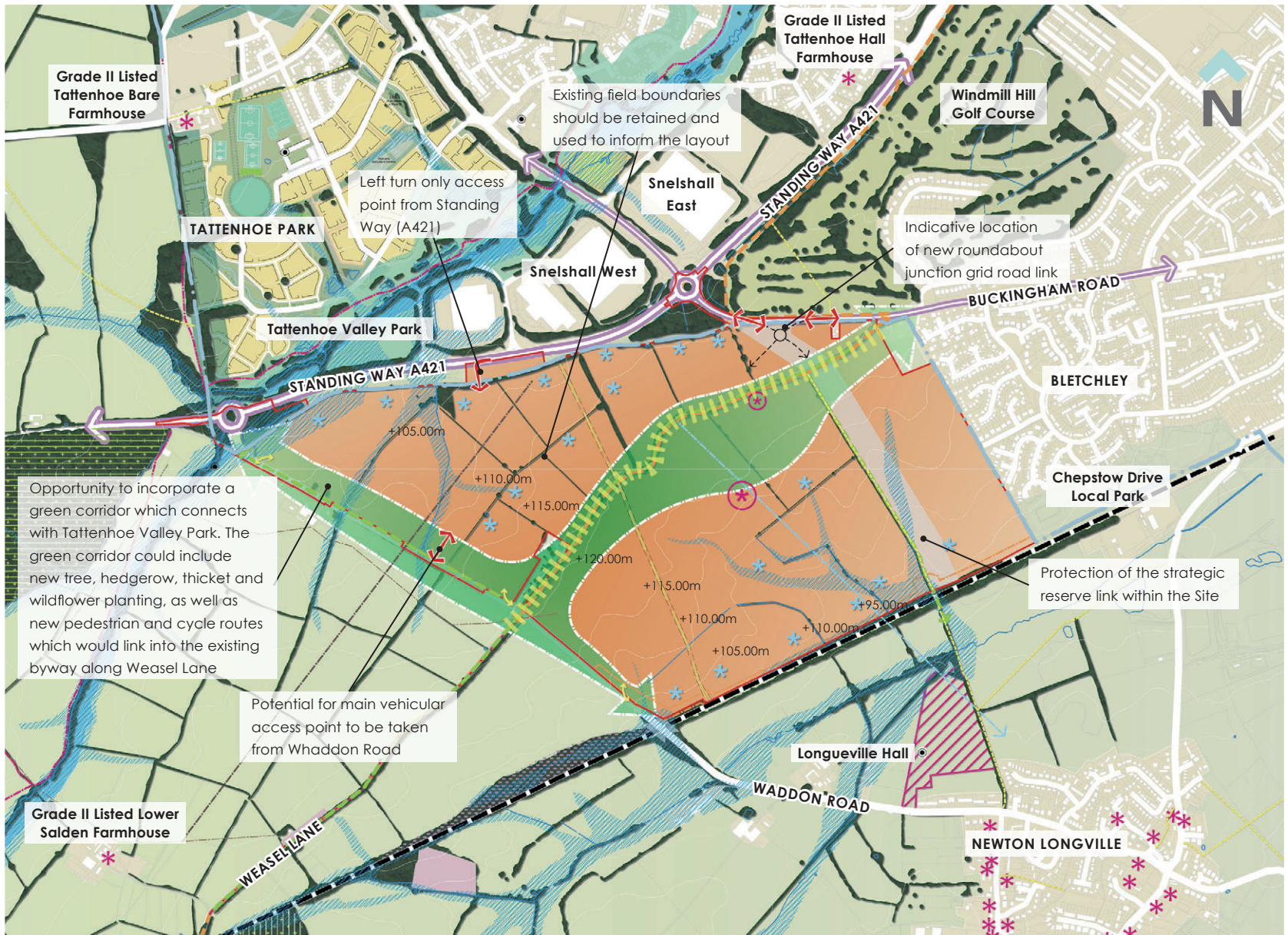


Figure 4.1: Opportunities and Influences Plan

## 4.2 UTILITIES

There are various utilities which cross the Site as shown in Figure 4.2. A pair of oil pipelines run on a north to south alignment through the Site, and will be accommodated within the proposed development through a linear area of public open space. The area of public open space will present the opportunity to provide a direct north-south open space connection within the Site, which will subsequently connect with Weasel Lane.

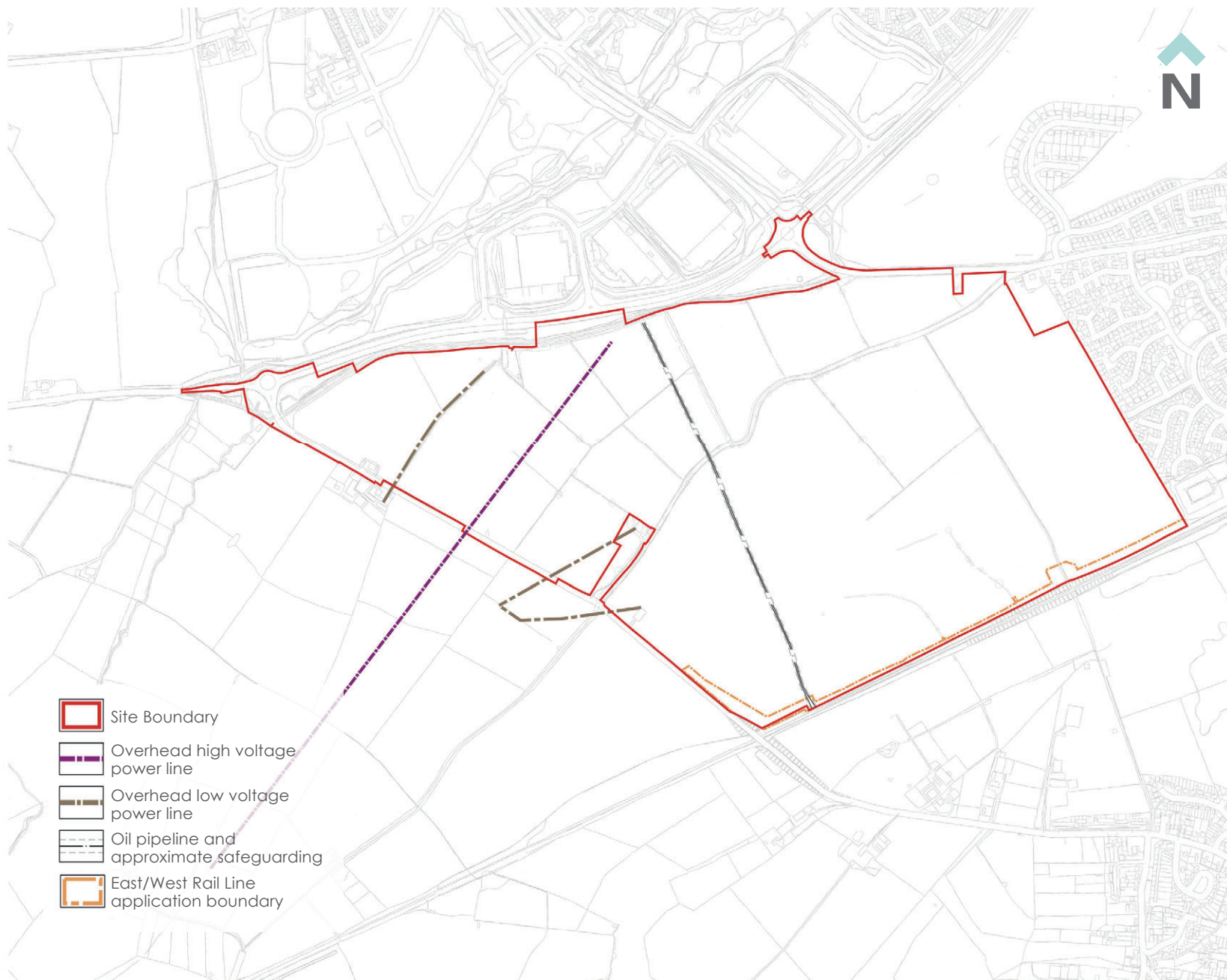
There are also a number of overhead power lines, including a high voltage power line, which will be diverted underground as part of the development proposals.

### **East/West Rail**

The southern boundary of the Site coincides with the application boundary for the East/West Rail Line. The development proposals should remain outside of the extent of the proposed rail line works.

The proximity of the East-West Rail Line to the southern boundary also means that development on the southern edge of the Site will need to be carefully designed to avoid any adverse noise or visual intrusion.





**Figure 4.2:** Utilities Plan and location of East/West Rail Line Boundary



### 4.3 DESIGN EVOLUTION

A series of pre-application meetings and design workshops were held with officers from both AVDC and MKC in 2013 and 2014, between the Consortium's team, stakeholders and the planning authorities, in order to inform the design approach.

It has been recognised and identified within the Milton Keynes Core Strategy and the outcome of the Examination of the Aylesbury Vale Local Plan, that there are clear advantages to close joint working arrangements between the local authorities. The Consortium is committed to engaging with members of both local authorities in the preparation of these proposals. The Consortium has also been actively engaging with members and local communities of Buckinghamshire Council (formerly Aylesbury Vale) and Milton Keynes.

#### **Pre-meeting in advance of Formal Pre-Application Meetings (March 2013)**

Prior to commencement of formal pre-application meetings, a pre-meeting was held with the former Aylesbury Vale District Council to introduce the scheme and emerging masterplan proposals. A number of key points were highlighted as important considerations to be worked through as part of the progression of the masterplan. These included:

- an aspiration to co-locate the community and education facilities, such as sports hall/meeting rooms;
- provision of community facility as part of Neighbourhood Centre;
- public open space requirements should be consistent with existing ADVC policies to include AVDC green infrastructure strategy, and adoption and maintenance should be detailed and agreed through the planning process;
- provision of surface water drainage strategy must be considered at earliest opportunity, likely to be located within open space, but should not reduce its function nor accessibility;
- agreement to commencement of a series of design workshops with both Aylesbury Vale and Milton Keynes Councils to review and influence the masterplan.

A first iteration of the Illustrative Masterplan was tabled to Milton Keynes Councillor (Figure 4.3). The Site abuts the administrative boundary of Milton Keynes on two of its sides, and due to its siting and scale, forms a logical extension to Milton Keynes. This approach is reflected in the clear urban design principles employed within the Site's design.

Inherently, there will be mutual relationship between the Site and Milton Keynes in terms of the provision of services, amenities and infrastructure. In this regard, the Consortium have considered ways in which the development can deliver benefits to the wider community, in terms of infrastructure and/or facilities that are either presently lacking or over stretched within the wider community.

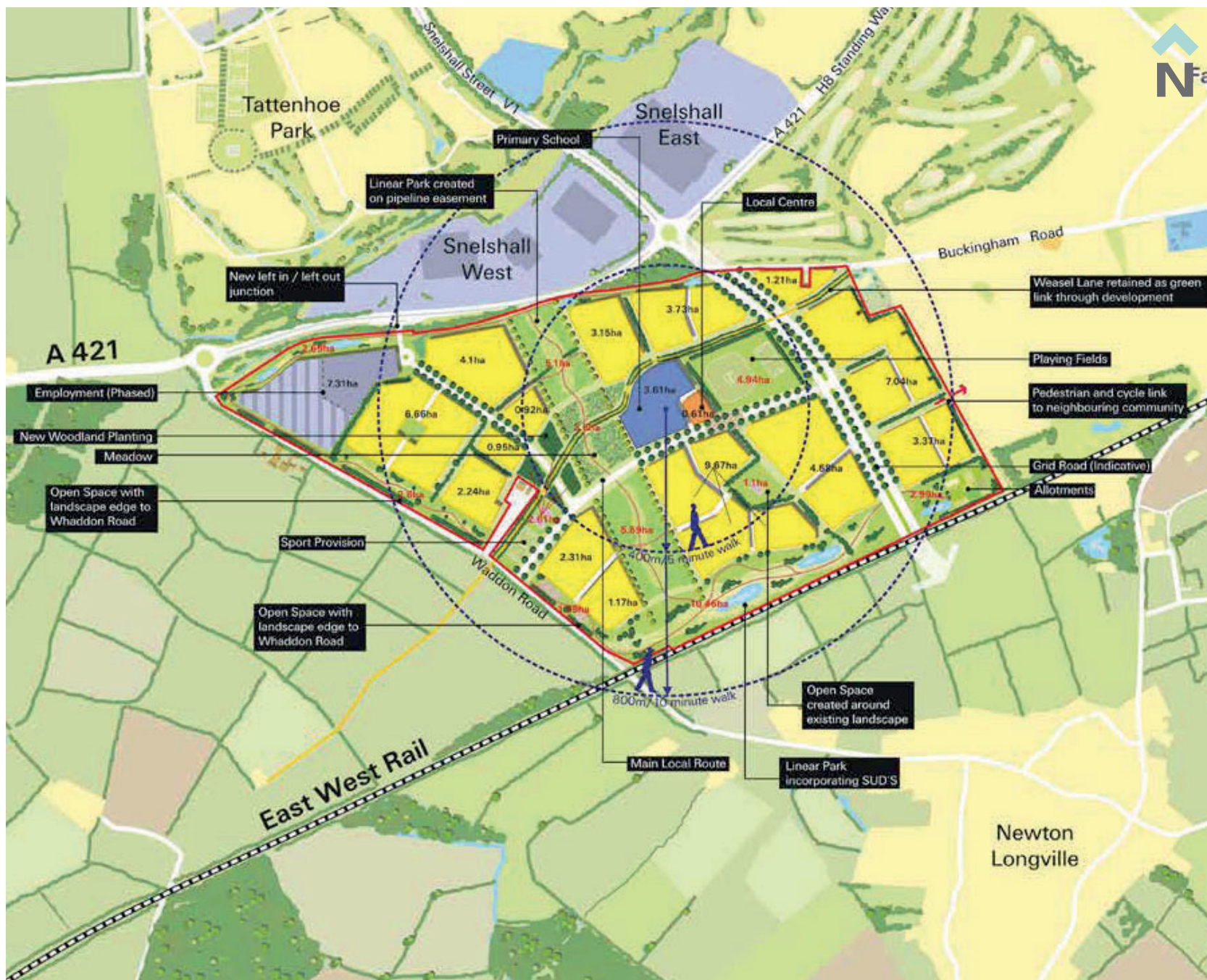


Figure 4.3: The Illustrative Masterplan as at December 2012



### First Design Workshop held with AVDC and MKC (April 2013)

A draft Illustrative Masterplan was tabled (Figure 4.4).

The key components of this plan included:

- a central park for the development which provided community sport and recreation activities, adjacent to which was located a primary school and local centre;
- located at the north west corner of the Site was 7ha of B8 employment sheds, located adjacent to the Snelshall employment area on the northern side of the A421;
- Weasel Lane was shown to be retained and enhanced to provide rural green east-west link through the development, which connected open space parcels to the west to the central park open space and primary school within the heart of the development;
- residential development was proposed at the eastern extent of the Site, to include the provision of an enhanced landscape edge to the existing housing at Far Bletchley; and
- allotments were provided at the southern edge of the Site, adjacent to the railway and the existing allotments serving Far Bletchley.

The design workshop prompted a number of comments relating to the design approach, layout and form of development illustrated by the initially prepared masterplan.

The key design changes discussed at this meeting and implemented as part of the evolution of the masterplan were:

- creation of a new access of Whaddon Road to the west, to aid legibility;
- parameter plan to show indicative locations for pedestrian underpasses along grid road section, to demonstrate how pedestrian movement across the grid road is achieved;
- parameter plan shows a strong landscape buffer of some 30m in width to provide a softer transition from rural edge, to demonstrate appropriate edge treatments on the southern and western edge of the Site;
- more conscious application of variation in development density is illustrated to provide distinction between looser knit block structure at the rural edges, to respond to Vale of Aylesbury character, and regular form of north eastern parcels to reflect Milton Keynes typology;
- creation of an ecological corridor at the eastern edge of the development site provides a biodiversity route from the railway edge to Weasel Lane and beyond, and further serves as a green buffer to development from Far Bletchley;
- community facilities to be co-located within educational sites to improve efficiency of management of those services; and
- creation of open space and recreation strategy to include provision of surface water drainage, which provide structuring elements of distinctiveness within the masterplan.

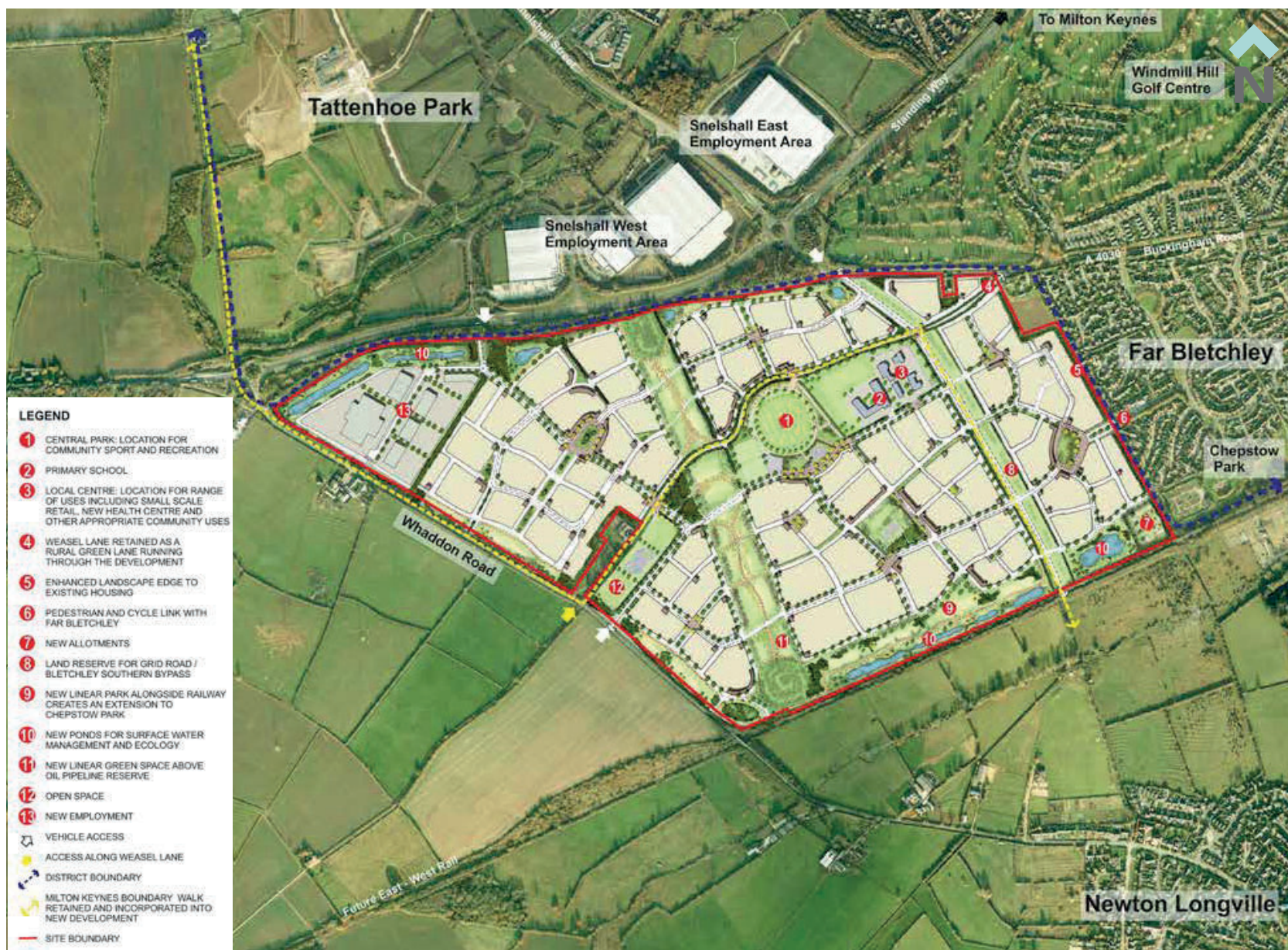


Figure 4.4: The Illustrative Masterplan as at April 2013



## Second Design Workshop held with AVDC and MKC (July 2013)

Following careful consideration of the comments received from participants of the first design workshop, further work was carried out to refine the development proposals. A concept plan (Figure 4.5), was tabled to demonstrate the design approach and development principles that were to underpin the emerging masterplan (Figure 4.6).

The concept plan demonstrates the Site's interrelationship with neighbouring development and the cross boundary position. Links, Redways and pedestrian links via the existing underpass beneath the A421 are shown to be established, strengthening the links between Tattenhoe and the development site.

The concept plan demonstrates a Milton Keynes neighbourhood relating to Tattenhoe to the north, and a development that responds to Far Bletchley. A further neighbourhood is established to the south, separated by the green wedge aligning with Weasel Lane, which responds more to the character of Aylesbury Vale villages, in particular Newton Longville.

The key design changes discussed at this meeting, and implemented as part of the evolution of the masterplan were:

- relocation of the employment parcel at the north west of the Site and creation of a new gateway to define the approach to Milton Keynes from the west;
- reduction of scale of employment to a more modest 2ha to be provided in the form of smaller office start-up units, as identified through consultation with the local community;
- the employment is relocated to a more central position along the northern boundary of the Site, to benefit from presence on the A421 frontage and to provide a focal gateway into the new development. The employment area is adjacent to the Neighbourhood Centre and close to the proposed grid road;
- opening up views of the development along the A421 frontage at key locations, to invite better connections between the development and the former Buckingham Road;
- improving connections up to the northern Tattenhoe Park area and the Snelshall linear park system;
- exploring the potential to accommodate a secondary school campus on the eastern flank of the Site; and
- clarification that the land safeguarded over the high pressure pipelines could be reduced, and provides an opportunity to create a strong landscape feature for the development.

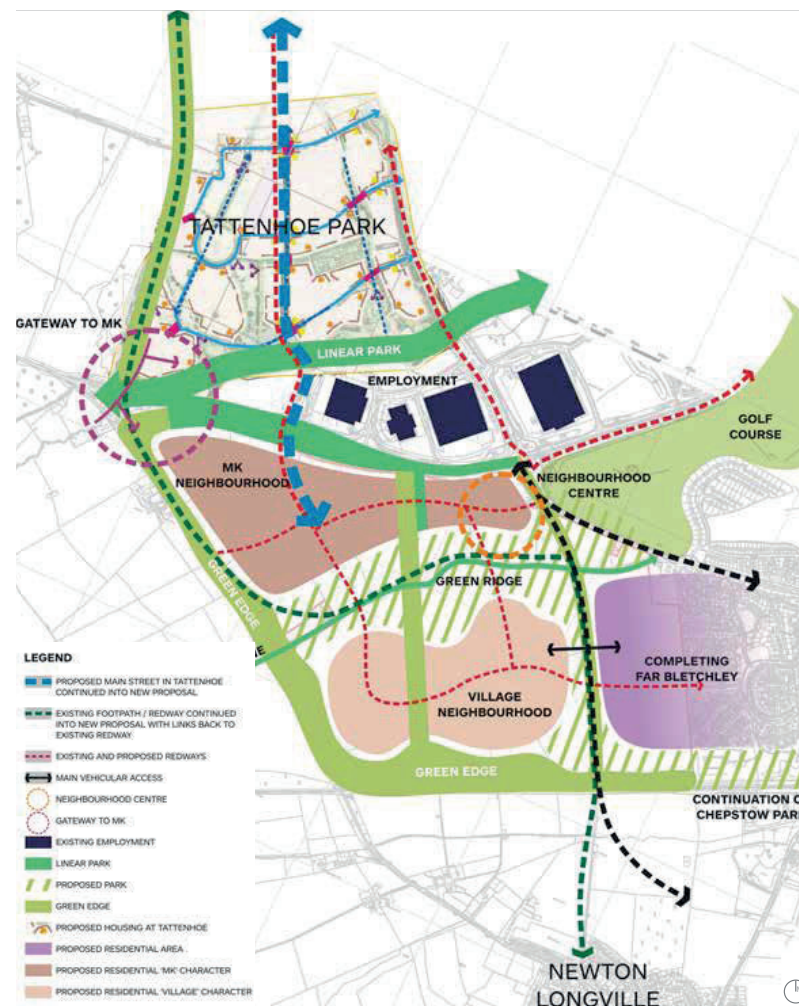


Figure 4.5: Concept Plan as at July 2013



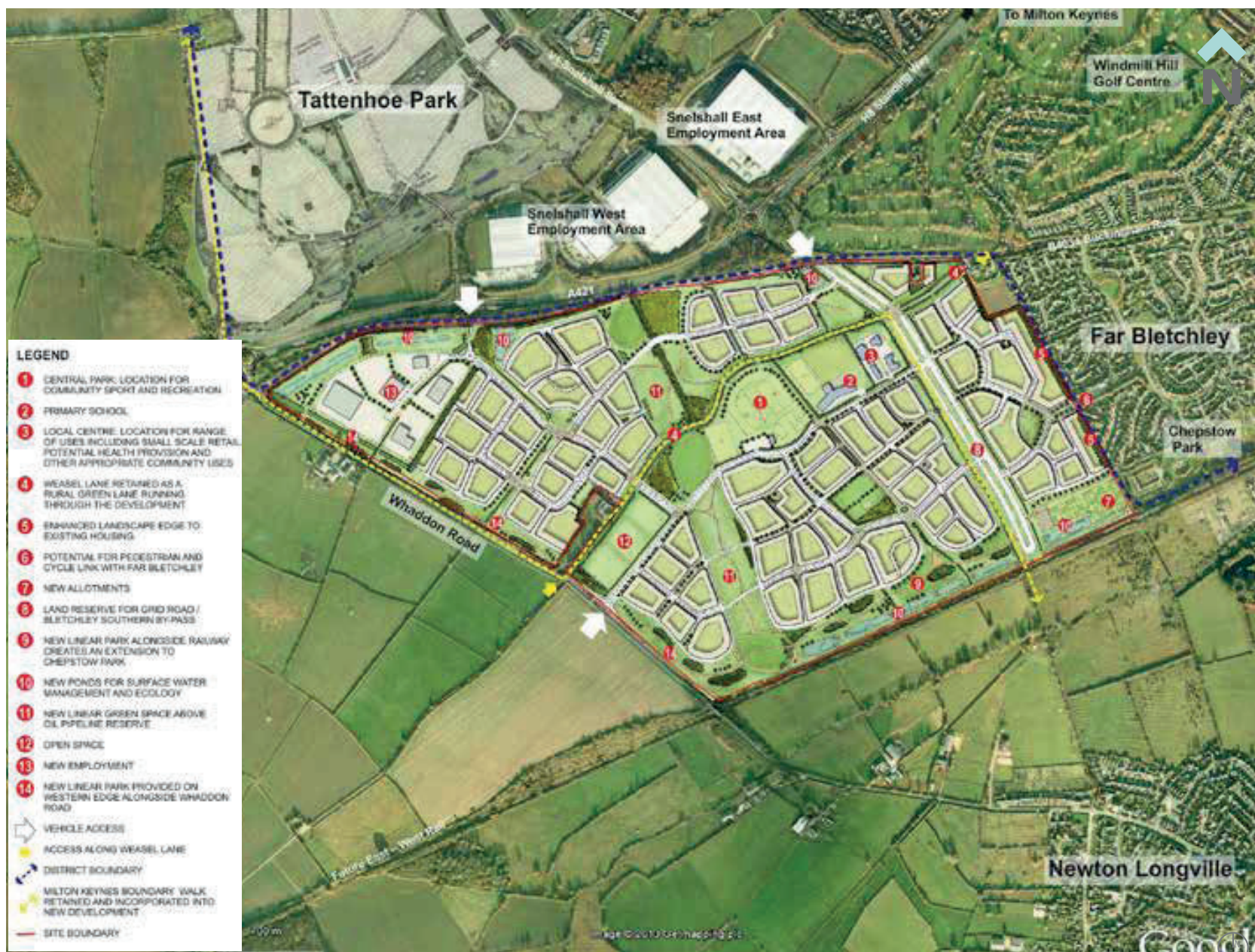


Figure 4.6: The Illustrative Masterplan as at May 2013



### **Third Design Workshop held with AVDC and MKC (July 2013)**

The final pre-application review helped to fix key design elements of the development proposal. An Illustrative Masterplan was tabled (Figure 4.7). The key elements discussed are listed below:

#### **Secondary School**

There was agreement to the benefits of securing a secondary school as part of the development, and general agreement was given for its location at the eastern extent of the Site, where the areas of archaeology interest remains unaffected by the development, and the school grounds form a robust landscape buffer to Far Bletchley.

Consideration was also given to an element of housing south of the secondary school to provide for community safety/overlooking of the open space.

#### **Neighbourhood Centre**

The Neighbourhood Centre is located further north, adjacent to the employment area and benefitting from close proximity to the principal access. The Neighbourhood Centre will cater for a range of unit sizes. Within the Neighbourhood Centre would be small scale convenience retail, and a flexible commercial space that could be used to provide community facilities such as a community hall and doctors surgery.

### **Introduction of Secondary Street**

The masterplan included the addition of a secondary street in a southerly alignment, linking the primary street adjacent to the Neighbourhood Centre to the primary school.

#### **Green Infrastructure**

The masterplan demonstrates some 45% of the total Site area as green infrastructure. The general disposition of green space was supported, with further detail requested to be provided in relation to the location and layout of formal pitch provision. Pitches could be accommodated with the secondary school for shared, dual use. Allotments were also relocated further north, to provide a buffer to the existing properties and maintain the green swathe which runs from Weasel Lane toward Windmill Hill Golf Course. The allotments would be conveniently served by pedestrian, cycle and vehicular access in this location.

#### **Grid Road**

The provision of a grid road is a fundamental element to be accommodated by the proposals. The proposed development only requires the construction of a single carriageway primary street with a signalised crossroads junction with Buckingham Road (A421). The grid road corridor will however provide a landscaped reserve strip to enable future provision of a dual carriageway grid road with roundabout at the aforementioned crossroads.



Figure 4.7: The Illustrative Masterplan as at September 2013



#### Illustrative Masterplan as at December 2014

The subsequently enhanced masterplan (Figure 4.8) was the product of collaborative and proactive discussions with officers at AVDC and MKC local authorities.

The master plan which formed the basis of the Planning Application included:

- a more prominent neighbourhood centre located close to new business space and homes;
- mixed-use development of B1 offices and dwellings at a higher density, overlooking landscaped areas and SuDS to provide a new attractive gateway to the development;
- allotments to contribute to the east-west green swathe through the Site along Weasel Lane ridgeline;
- the Weasel Lane and Sustrans route 51 retained and enhanced as an important route through the new development, new homes set back from Weasel Lane and existing landscape features, and orientated to provide overlooking of public routes, and provision of two appropriately designed, at grade, highways crossings;
- a secondary school campus with a prominent new building facing onto the primary street;



Figure 4.8: The Illustrative Masterplan as at December 2014

- a green link providing an ecological corridor from the railway edge to Weasel Lane and beyond;
- a new linear park to southern edge of development provides acoustic setback from the railway line and creates an extension to Chepstow Park;
- lower density homes to the southern edge to create a more informal edge response;
- an extensive linear park running alongside Whaddon Road fronted by lower density homes, incorporating new landscape planting, trees, footpaths and cycleway links to improve north west section of MK Boundary Walk;
- the existing alignment of oil pipelines reserve provides the basis for a new north-south linear open space link through the development – as has been the positive design response to this piece of national infrastructure elsewhere in Milton Keynes;
- a centrally located formal open space, sports pitch provision and children's play areas to serve new residents and reinforce the Weasel Lane green swathe through the development;
- a centrally located primary school fronting onto primary street, overlooking the main sports provision;
- highway improvements to Bottledump Roundabout;
- highway improvements to Tattenhoe Roundabout; and
- a new roundabout terminates southern end of primary street on the proposed alignment of the Grid Road Reserve.

### Planning Application Revision

Due to the time that has elapsed since the Planning Application and the aforementioned Illustrative Masterplan were submitted, the following amendments have been made to the submitted masterplan proposals, as shown on Figure 5.1:

- The alignment of the oil pipeline crossing the Site was not identified correctly in the original Planning Application drawings, and as a result has been amended to show the correct alignment. The oil pipeline was, and continues to be, located within an area identified as a green infrastructure corridor running through the heart of the Site in a north to south direction.
- The standards required for climate change mitigation have been enhanced since the Planning Application was originally submitted. As a result, larger surface water attenuation ponds have been included as part of the proposals, which has required minor changes in the size and disposition of the proposed development parcels.
- The housing needs of older people are identified as a specific issue in the emerging Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan, and this type of housing is supported by policy (Policy H6b as modified) on those sites identified by AVDC as suitable in the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment. The Site is identified as a suitable housing site and is a draft residential allocation. As a result, the SWMK Consortium decided that a Care Home should be provided within the proposed development as part of the overall quantum of proposed C3 housing. The Care Home is located immediately to the west of the proposed Neighbourhood Centre, adding to the vibrant mix of uses in this part of the Site.