

# Westcroft Reserve Site 3 Development Brief



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# SECTION 1 INTRODUCTION

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## 1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 This Development Brief concerns an allocated Reserve Site on the western edge of Westcroft adjacent to Snelshall Street (see fig 1).
- 1.1.2 Milton Keynes Council and Milton Keynes Development Partnership (MKDP\*) have high aspirations that development of this site can help deliver the Council's corporate aims concerning the delivery of housing across Milton Keynes that meets individual needs.

### Vision Statement:

"To create a high quality development that helps meet housing needs across Milton Keynes and which respects the setting of adjacent development"



**Figure 1: Site Area**

## 1.2 Purpose of Development Brief

- 1.2.1 The purpose of this Brief is to provide strategic planning and design guidance appropriate for the development of this site in Westcroft. This will aid the development process, by allowing developers to submit informed proposals that respond to the landowner, Council and other local stakeholder aspirations / expectations for the site.
- 1.2.2 The content of the Brief has been prepared to help deliver the Council's Corporate Plan Themes and Outcomes as well as the Core Strategy.
- 1.2.3 The consultation process associated with the preparation of this development brief is intended to give all interested parties full opportunities to set out their aspirations for the site and/or to identify constraints that need to be accommodated.
- 1.2.3 The Development Brief has been prepared to accord with current Planning Policy – a key aim though is to contextualise the policy for the site covered by the Brief. The Brief cannot formally change current policy, however there may be material considerations that suggest variations of current policy may be appropriate. Where this is the case, the Brief will state what they are and what the preferred use and / or variation in policy is. This will be weighed against the current policy when determining a planning application for the site.
- 1.2.4 Once approved by Milton Keynes Council Cabinet, the guidance contained within the Brief will be a material consideration in helping determine planning applications for the site concerned.

*from the Homes and Communities Agency, in line with the council's Corporate Plan and Economic Development Strategy. MKDP take a commercial and entrepreneurial approach to sell and develop these assets with third party developers and investors, whilst ensuring full community and stakeholder engagement in the preparation of development briefs for the sites.*

*It is a requirement on the MKDP that an adopted Development Brief must be in place before they commence marketing or developing any of their larger sites. This is intended to enable the Council, following consultation with all interested parties, to set clear expectations for the nature of any future development on the site; but also to assist the MKDP in marketing the site and to give potential bidders/ development partners a degree of confidence about the parameters within which they should develop their proposals.*

*\*MKDP is a limited liability partnership set up by Milton Keynes Council to facilitate Milton Keynes' continued growth and economic success by promoting the development of land assets transferred to the council*

### 1.3 Location, Site Details and Land Ownership

- 1.3.1 This 1.66 acre (0.67ha) site is situated toward the west flank of Milton Keynes on the eastern edge of the residential estate of Westcroft facing the V1 Grid Road (Snelshall Street).
- 1.3.2 The site is located within 0.5km of Westcroft District Centre and 5km from Central Milton Keynes.
- 1.3.4 The entire site is within the ownership of MKDP.

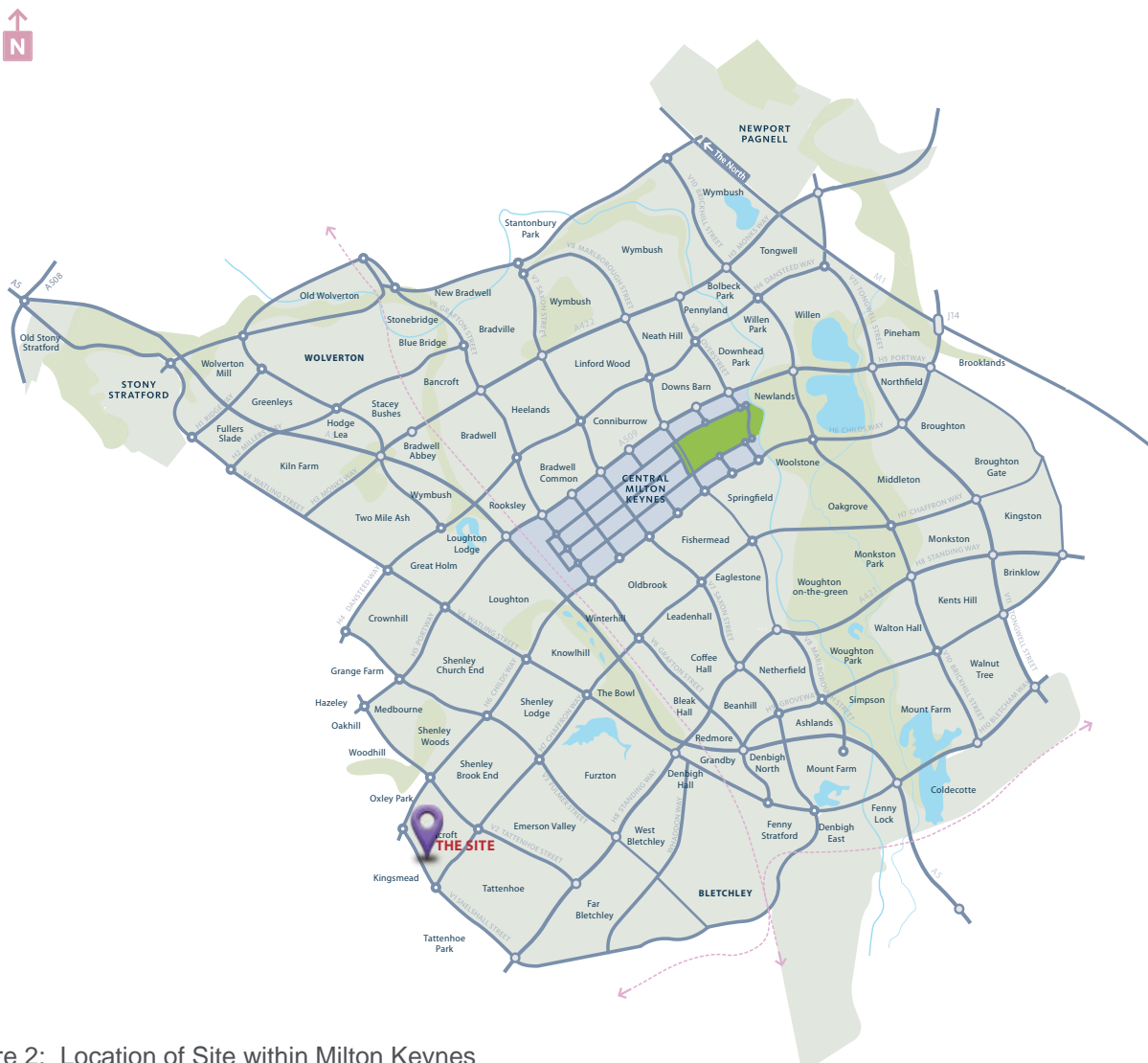


Figure 2: Location of Site within Milton Keynes

## 1.4 Structure of the Development Brief

The Brief is divided into five sections:

**Section 1** outlines the purpose of the brief, its location and ownership and other related information for developers.

**Section 2** describes the planning policy context for the site.

**Section 3** provides a site analysis of the site itself and the surrounding area. A thorough understanding of this will have an important bearing on the potential land uses, key design principles and parameters.

**Section 4** outlines what land use opportunities, following an assessment of public consultation views, exist for the site.

**Section 5** represents the Key Planning and Design Principles, that should inform any development proposals. The accompanying Parameters Plan spatially illustrates the design principles.

## 1.5 Other Information

- 1.5.1 Once adopted the development brief will be followed and supported by a marketing brief prepared by MKDP which will outline pertinent information where appropriate regarding title, any existing leasehold arrangements, rights of access, restrictive covenants and clawback arrangements.
- 1.5.2 The marketing brief is also intended to set out additional MKDP aspirations for sustainability / energy standards, design and mix of uses and tenures, phasing of development, together with more detail on MKDP preferred route to the market and selection criteria.



Figure 3: Aerial photo of site





# SECTION 2

# POLICY CONTEXT

2.1 Policy Context

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## 2.1 Policy Context

2.1.1 Any proposals for the site should be informed by and will be expected to support the delivery of the Milton Keynes Council Corporate Plan and comply with the following national and local planning policy.

### Milton Keynes Council Corporate Plan

2.1.2 This Brief will in particular will support the Themes of “Living in MK” and “Cleaner, Greener, Safer, Healthier MK”.

### National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

2.1.3 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was adopted in March 2012 and sets out in a concise document, Government policy on planning and achieving sustainable development. Paragraph 7 sets out that there are three dimensions to sustainable development; economic, social and environmental, which the planning system and hence developments should contribute towards the achievement of.

2.1.4 The following sections of the NPPF are of particular relevance to the development of this site:

- Delivering a wide choice of high quality homes
- Requiring good design
- Promoting healthy communities

### Milton Keynes Core Strategy

2.1.5 The following are the key policies within the adopted Core Strategy which all proposals would need to adhere to:

- Policy CS2 Housing Land Supply
- Policy CS10 Housing
- Policy CS11 A well connected Milton Keynes

- Policy CS12 Developing Successful Neighbourhoods
- Policy CS13 Ensuring High Quality, New Designed Places
- Policy CS17 Improving access to local services and facilities
- Policy CS18 Healthier and Safer Communities

### Milton Keynes Local Plan

2.1.6 The site is allocated in the Local Plan as a Reserve Site (Policy C9 applies).

2.1.7 “Reserve Sites” is the term used to describe small sites in residential housing areas that are left undeveloped to accommodate unforeseen local\* needs. There is a range of uses to which these sites can be put eg private housing, social housing, sheltered housing (generally for the elderly in a managed way), specialist housing, hostels, meeting places, health centres, dental surgeries, workshops, places of worship and local shops. The Local Plan has not identified a proposed use for this specific site but many of the above uses are identified as suitable.

*\* Local is defined as existing across Milton Keynes as a whole.*

2.1.8 Development of any of the above uses would need to consider the following further policies:

#### Design Policies

- D1 Impact of Development Proposals on Locality
- D2A Urban Design Aspects of New Development
- D2 Design of Buildings
- D4 Sustainable Construction

#### Transport Policies

- T3, T4 Pedestrians and Cyclists

### Housing Policies

- H3-H5 Affordable Housing
- H8 Housing Density
- H9 Housing Mix

### Planning Obligations

- PO1, PO2 General Policies
- PO4 Percent for Art

### Supplementary Planning Documents

2.1.9 The following Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) should be considered when preparing any planning application for the site.

- New Residential Development Design Guide (2013)
- Affordable Housing (2013)
- Sustainable Construction (2007)



- A suite of Supplementary Planning Documents and Guidance Notes relating to Developer Contributions

### Summary of Planning Policy Position

2.1.10 There is an expectation that the site will be developed. It is allocated in the Local Plan as a Reserve Site and therefore it was intended to be left undeveloped to accommodate unforeseen local needs which are now in existence.



# SECTION 3

# CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS

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### 3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 It is important to have a full understanding of the existing site and surrounding area as this helps inform and underpin the opportunities, potential land uses, design principles and associated parameters plan.

### 3.2 Surrounding Area (Fig 4 and 5)

- 3.2.1 Figure 4 highlights within a 400m and 1km catchment of the site existing and proposed local facilities. These are important to identify and be aware of as the allocation of a Reserve site allows for local facilities to be proposed so the existing supply serving the surrounding area needs to be known.
- 3.2.2 The site is closely surrounded by 2 to 3 storey predominantly family housing on 3 of its 4 sides. All this housing fronts onto the site. The south western edge of the site has an open aspect facing onto the grid road corridor associated with Snelshall Street (V1).
- 3.2.3 The established residential estate of Kingsmead North lies to the west of the site across Snelshall Street while to the south of the site Kingsmead South will shortly be developed for predominantly housing.



Housing facing the northern edge of the site with private drive and redway to the front



Housing facing the site along the north west edge of the site



Housing facing the eastern edge of the site along Cranborne Avenue. The slope of the site is evident



Looking across the grass site towards Snelshall Street. The site slopes down toward the southern corner.

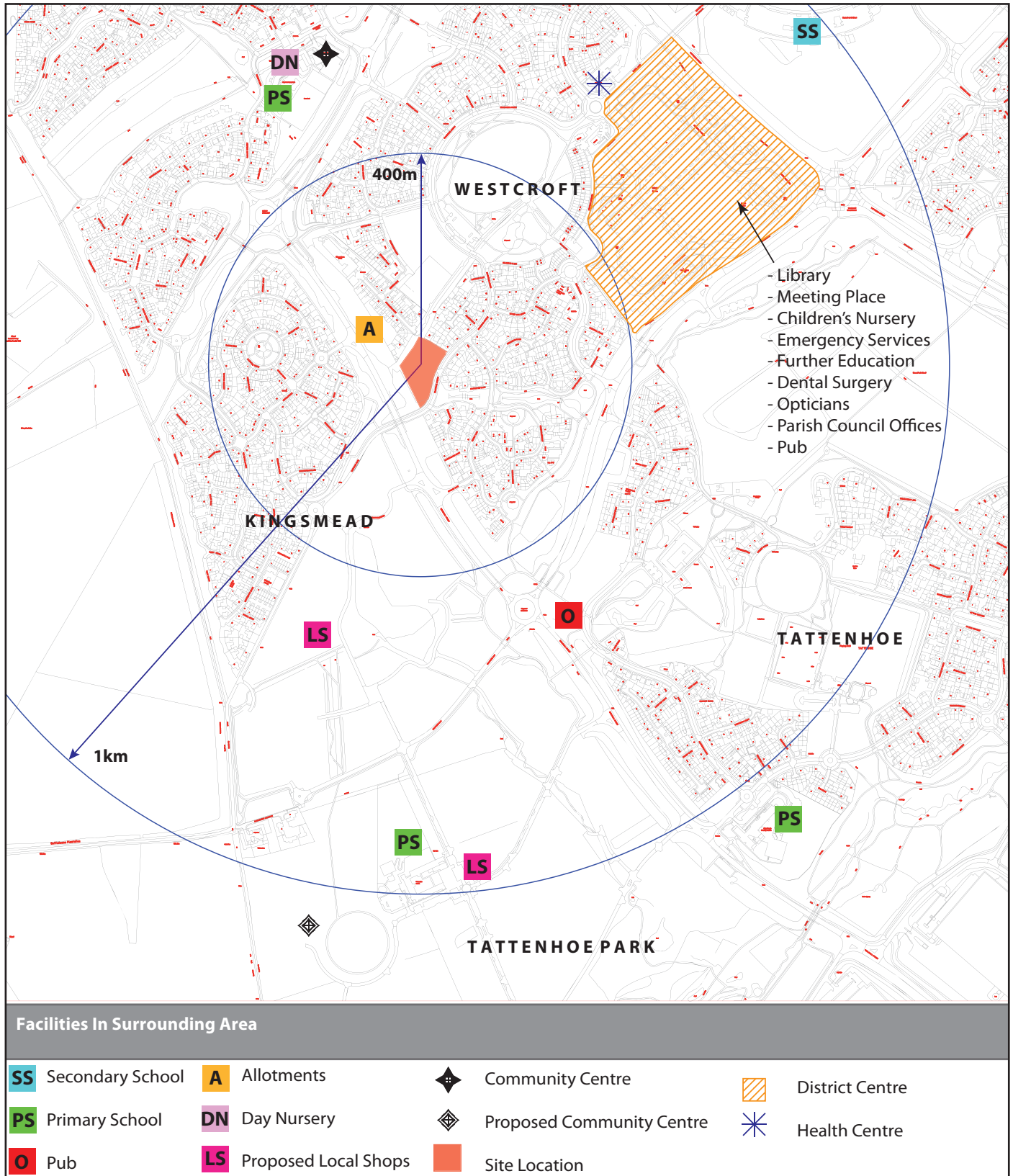


Figure 4: Facilities in the Surrounding Area



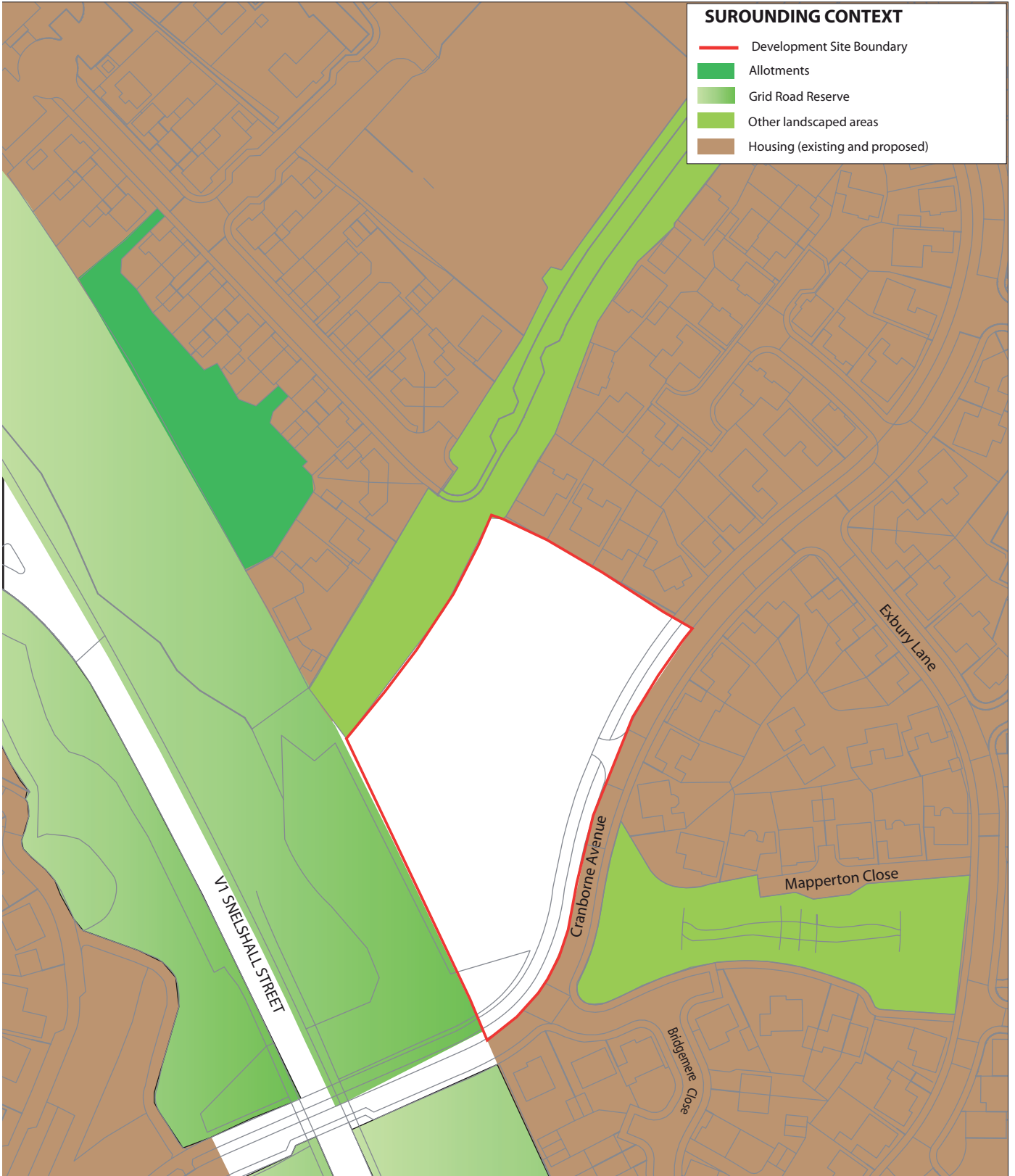


Figure 5:  
Land Uses in the Surrounding Area

### 3.3 Site Analysis

- 3.3.1 The site itself comprises maintained grassland and is featureless.
- 3.3.2 While the site is fairly flat on the north eastern half the south western half slopes quite steeply down to the southern corner where Cranborne Avenue passes under Snelshall Street.
- 3.3.3 A line of small trees within a shallow ditch forms the north western boundary to the site.
- 3.3.4 There are no known constraints to the site.
- 3.3.5 The site's eastern edge is Cranborne Avenue which will provide vehicular access to the site.
- 3.3.6 The northern edge of the site is bordered by a redway which is adjacent to a private drive serving 4 houses.
- 3.3.7 A grass strip of approximately 17m separates the north western edge of the site from a private drive serving 4 houses facing the site.

### 3.4 Existing Access (Fig 6)

- 3.4.1 Although the site is adjacent to Snelshall Street it has a convoluted vehicular access not least because Cranborne Avenue is currently blocked off where it passes underneath Snelshall Street.
- 3.4.2 Cranborne Avenue provides the vehicular access to the site with an existing bell-mouth in place to access the site itself.
- 3.4.3 The site is however well served by pedestrian access with a redway along the eastern and northern edges of the site. There is also an additional pedestrian route connecting the most northern point of the site with the playing fields to the north.
- 3.4.4 The closest bus stops, with frequent services are at Westcroft District Centre as well as close to Kingsmead and Whitney Roundabouts all which are within approximately 500m of the site.



Cranborne Avenue along the eastern edge of the site, with redway. Underpass to Snelshall Street evident as is slope to southern corner



Existing bell-mouth to site off Cranborne Avenue



Cranborne Avenue looking away from the site

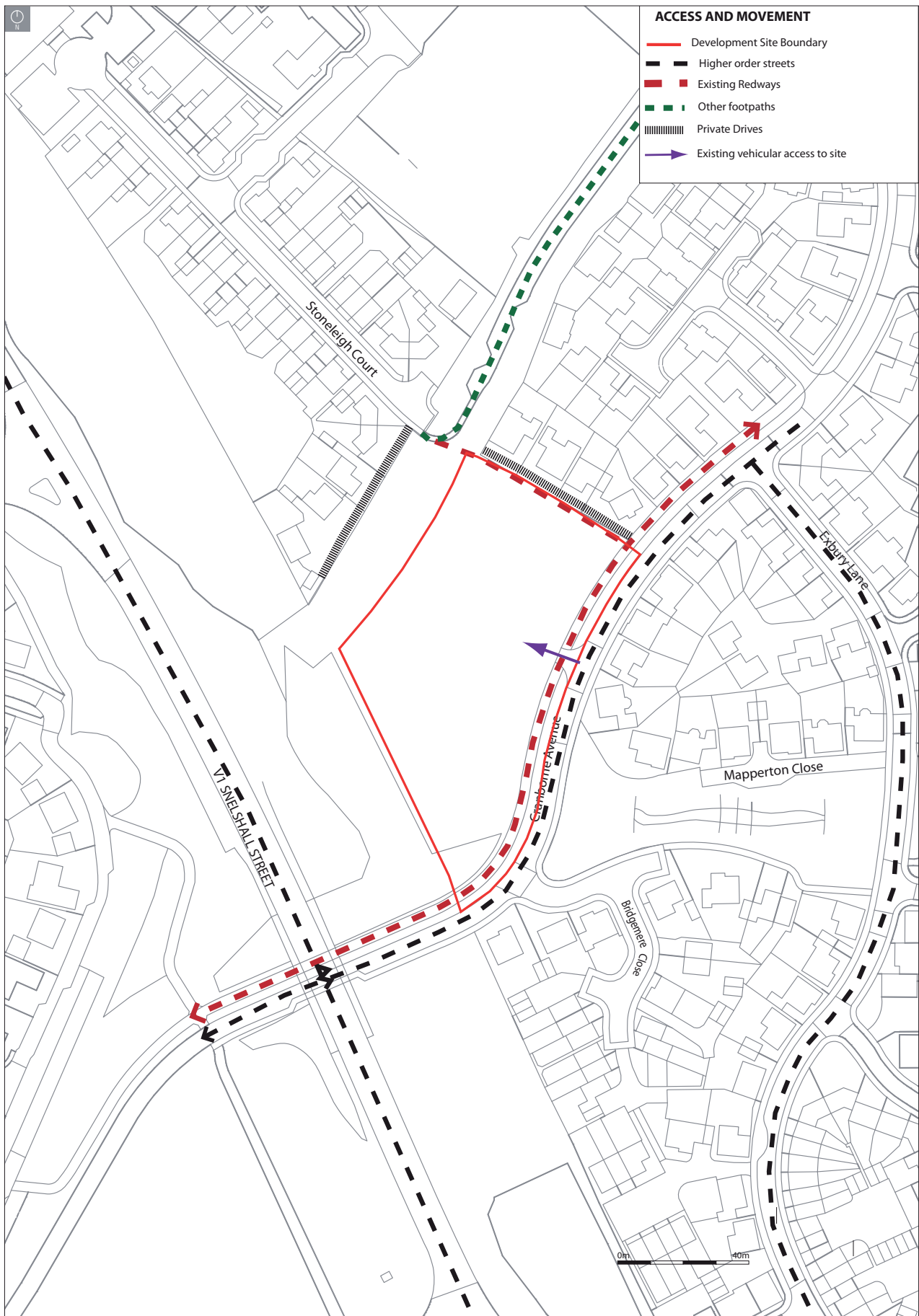


Figure 6:  
Existing Access and Movement Plan

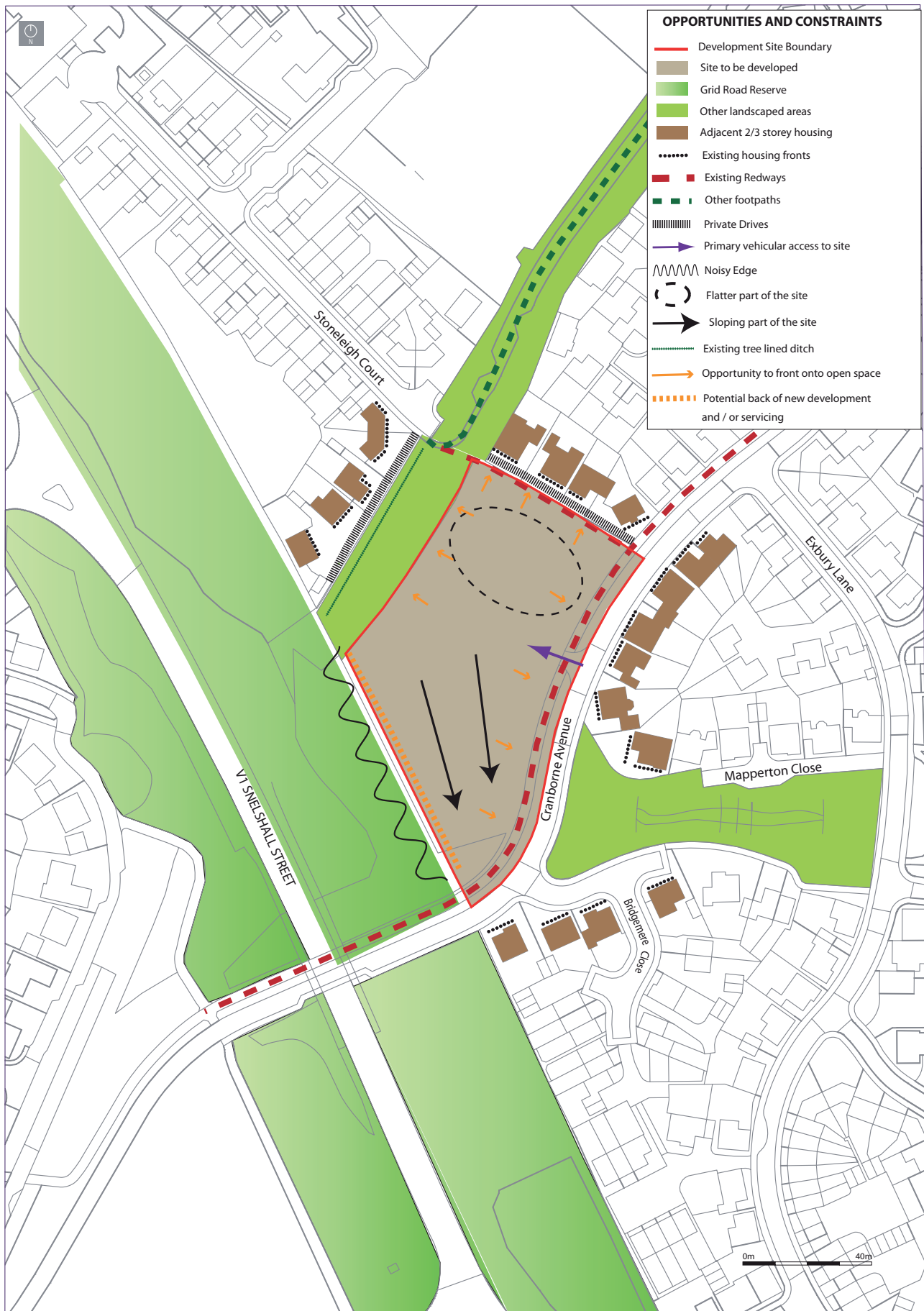


Figure 7:  
Opportunities and Constraints Plan

## 3.5 Summary Opportunities and Challenges (Fig 7)

### Opportunities

- 3.5.1 The site is allocated in the Local Plan for development and there is an expectation that it will be developed.
- 3.5.2 Milton Keynes requires new housing and in particular to meet certain sectors of the population and the planning policy position permits the site to deliver this.
- 3.5.3 There are no known ecological constraints.
- 3.5.4 Existing access arrangements are already in existence.

### Constraints / Challenges

- 3.5.5 Vehicular noise from the adjacent Snelshall Street.
- 3.5.6 Sloping nature of southern part of the site.
- 3.5.7 The shape of the site and in particular the corner in the southern end of the site.
- 3.5.8 The close proximity of existing housing and therefore the need for new development to protect the privacy and amenity of existing residents.

# SECTION 4

# DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

4.1 Development Opportunities

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## 4.1 Development Opportunities

- 4.1.1 The planning policy context as outlined in Section 3 states that the site is suitable for a variety of uses that were unforeseen when Westcroft was being planned.
- 4.1.2 A key factor in determining what sort of development is permissible on the site will be firstly what impact it has on the existing residents who live closely around 3 edges of the site and secondly, what traffic impact it will have on the internal approach estates roads within Westcroft such as Cranborne Avenue. An appropriate development is one that that does not undermine the amenity of existing residents who border onto the site and has minimal impact on the approach estate roads to the site within Westcroft.
- 4.1.3 Milton Keynes Council have now indicated that the site would be suitable for meeting its housing needs including for example an extra care facility for elderly people with Dementia. Facilities such as these have been indicated as having a low impact on the surrounding highway network.
- 4.1.4 A small portion of the site might remain which could be used for a small number of houses that would need to “fit in” with and be respectful of existing the surrounding housing. In this case the housing should be located at the northern edge of the site adjacent to the existing housing that face the existing private drive. These uses would help meet the Corporate Plan Themes of “Living in MK” and a “Cleaner, Greener, Safer, Healthier MK” in particular through meeting the outcome of “Fit for purpose housing that meets individual needs”.
- 4.1.5 There is no existing bund along Snelshall Street. It is likely therefore that appropriate noise mitigation measures will need to included in the design and construction of new housing closest to this road.

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# PLANNING AND DESIGN

# PRINCIPLES

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## 5.1 Introduction

- 5.1.1 Proposals for the site should be informed by the following principles. These principles have been informed by the existing planning policy position, the contextual analysis as well as the constraints/challenges and opportunities facing the site.
- 5.1.2 Where relevant, the principles are spatially represented by the accompanying Parameters Plan (see figure 8).

## 5.2 Layout

- 5.2.1 While development doesn't necessarily need to follow the 'perimeter block' approach, it is essential that there is a clear distinction / separation between public and private space so that all publicly accessible parts of the development are fronted by active frontages (or at the very minimum are not fronted by blank frontages where there is no visual connectivity between occupants inside the building and those outside in the public realm) and private areas are inaccessible to the public. In the event of the site accommodating some additional housing along the north east edge, this housing should front onto the existing housing along this edge.
- 5.2.2 The layout should not result in ambiguous space that is not clearly public or private (such as alleyways or other 'leftover space').
- 5.2.3 The layout of the development should be legible to enable easy wayfinding and ease of movement.
- 5.2.4 The small size of the site coupled with the size of the potential extra care facility suggests that the site will not need to be subdivided

by further streets. If it however is, it needs to follow the perimeter block principles outlined in para 5.2.1.

## 5.3 Key Frontages and Corners

- 5.3.1 Three of the sites 4 sides face the fronts of existing housing. Best practice suggests fronts of housing should not face the backs of housing (and back gardens). The eastern, northern and north west frontage are all therefore important frontages and should face to open onto these sides.
- 5.3.2 The south western side however faces Snelshall Street and this offers the best opportunity to place the backs of development and any other elements that would be more intrusive if facing the public realm.
- 5.3.3 The north east and most southern corner are the most prominent corners of the site and should therefore have an appropriate design response to reflect their prominent position.

## 5.4 Density and Building Heights

- 5.4.1 The density of development should reflect that of the surrounding area and therefore densities of approximately 35du/ha would be appropriate.
- 5.4.2 Building heights should reflect that of the surrounding area and therefore predominantly 2 storey development would be appropriate.

## 5.5 Detailed Design Appearance

- 5.5.1 The architectural approach to development should be informed by the contextual analysis and in this case the surrounding built form in particular because of its proximity to the

site. This indicates that a development of good quality buff and red brick would be appropriate.

- 5.5.2 All buildings should be of exceptional design quality, should enhance their surroundings and be constructed from high quality, durable materials.
- 5.5.3 Any social / affordable housing provided must be indistinguishable from market housing (ie 'tenure blind').

## 5.6 Sustainable Construction and Energy Efficiency

- 5.6.1 The Council's Local Plan Policy D4 and its supplementary Sustainable Construction SPD furthermore sets sustainability standards that will have to be considered as part of the overall design process.

## 5.7 Access, Movement and Parking

- 5.7.1 Cranborne Avenue which runs along the eastern edge of the site will provide vehicular access to the site. An existing bell-mouth already exists to provide access to the site itself.
- 5.7.2 As part of the proposals for the site a solution to the lack of turning and parking space for the residents bordering the north eastern edge of the site must be found. Options include a widening of the existing private drive or adopting this drive to provide shared access for the small amount of potential new housing on the site as well as the existing housing along the north eastern edge.
- 5.7.3 It is recommended that Milton Keynes Council open up Cranborne Avenue where it passes under Snelshall Street to enable construction

traffic only to access the site from Kingsmead rather than through the narrow streets of Westcroft. This temporary access can be secured through a Temporary Road Closure Order.

- 5.7.4 If any other vehicular access points are deemed necessary off Cranborne Avenue this should be discussed at an early stage with the Council's Development Management Highway Officer.
- 5.7.5 The existing redway and pedestrian network around the site will be retained providing good pedestrian and cycle links to neighbouring areas and Westcroft District Centre.
- 5.7.6 It is not expected that any other public pedestrian routes will be needed to cross the site.
- 5.7.7 Car parking will normally be provided in accordance with Milton Keynes Council's current parking standards.
- 5.7.8 It is anticipated that a range of parking solutions will be required to support the development. The key principle however is that parking be located as conveniently as possible for all residents. Given the proximity to the noisy Snelshall Street, consideration should be given to locating any large areas of parking or servicing (if required) to the rear of the development adjacent to Snelhall Street.

## 5.8 Public Realm and Landscaping

- 5.8.1 There is no existing landscaping on site that requires retention.
- 5.8.2 Landscaping is however a unique selling point of MK and therefore the development of the site must be underpinned by an overall landscaping masterplan that delivers high quality landscaping to the development.

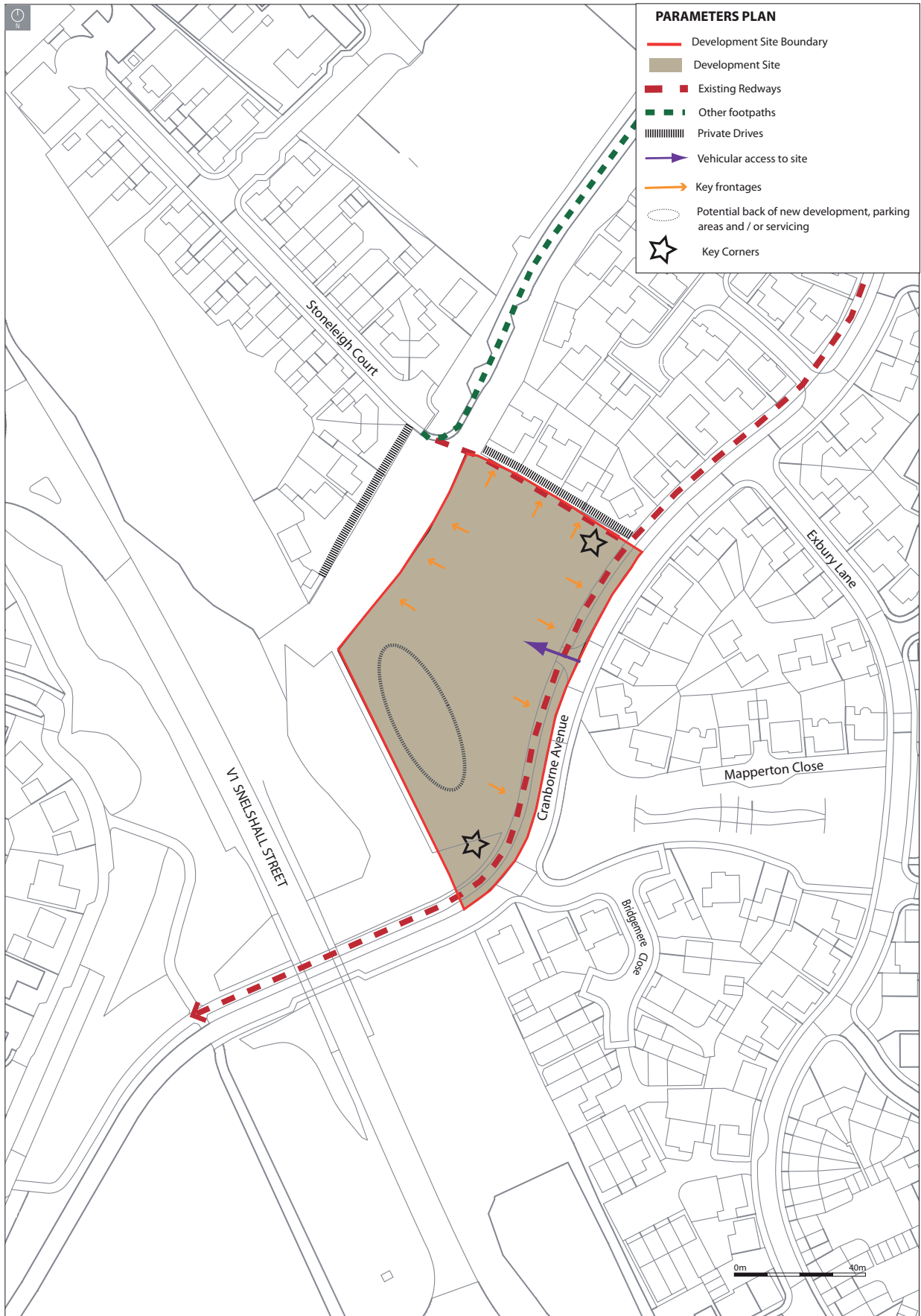


Figure 8:  
Parameters Plan

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