

Design & Access Statement
Rockley House
Wrotham Road, Culverstone

Full Planning Application : Revision A, March 2026



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1.0

Background



1.0 Background

1.1 Introduction

This Design and Access Statement is part of a planning submission for the demolition of existing farm buildings and the development of 6 dwellings on the land at Rockley House, Wrotham Road accessed via a shared driveway which joins Wrotham Road.

Note: The main road adjacent to the site is known as Wrotham Road, South Street and the A227- it will be referred to as Wrotham Road through this document.

The application site is North of Culverstone Green in the Gravesham Borough of Kent

1.2 Site Location

Rockley house is situated between two villages, it is 0.5km north of Culverstone Green and 2.8km South of Meopham, these are connected by Wrotham Road. The Site sits centrally between several larger towns - it is 15km north west of Maidstone, 13.5km south east of Dartford, 13.5km north east of Sevenoaks and 11 km South of Gravesend and the Thames Estuary. The site is 37km south east of Central London. The site is easily accessible to multiple motorways with the M20, M26, M25 and M2 within a 12km radius. The closest railway stations are Meopham and Borough Green and Wrotham, they are 4.5km and 6.6km away respectively.



Site Location Plan

2.0

Existing Site & Context



2.0 The Existing Site & Context

2.1 Site Location and Description

Site Location

The application site is located on Wrotham Road, within Gravesham Borough Council.

The Site

The application site currently comprises of five existing buildings spanning across the northern portion of the site. The existing buildings consist of a shed, shipping containers, stables and barns, one of which is open sided, there is also a structure currently used for on-site storage.

The existing site boundary consists of a post and rail fence, the northern boundary is outwardly lined with trees and shrubs.

All buildings on the site to be developed, excluding the shipping containers, are permanent buildings that have been used for equestrian purposes. Outside of the site boundary is Rockley House, consisting of two storeys and has had alterations made to it during its lifetime.

The land has been in use since the mid 19th century, with the main house being built around the turn of the century.

Site Context

The majority of the buildings within the site context are from the 1800's to 1970's. They are predominantly detached or semi-detached, single or two storey houses with off street parking and medium garden plots.

There is a mixture of materials used locally including different styles of facing brick- most commonly varieties of red brick, render, hanging tile, timber boarding, slate and tile roofs.

Buildings in the local area are set back from the road providing a continuous building line with front gardens and driveways.



Aerial photo of site at 1:2000

2.0 The Existing Site & Context



Aerial photo of surrounding at 1:10,000

2.0 The Existing Site & Context

2.2 Site Context

Photographs showing local site context



2.0 The Existing Site & Context

2.3 Access

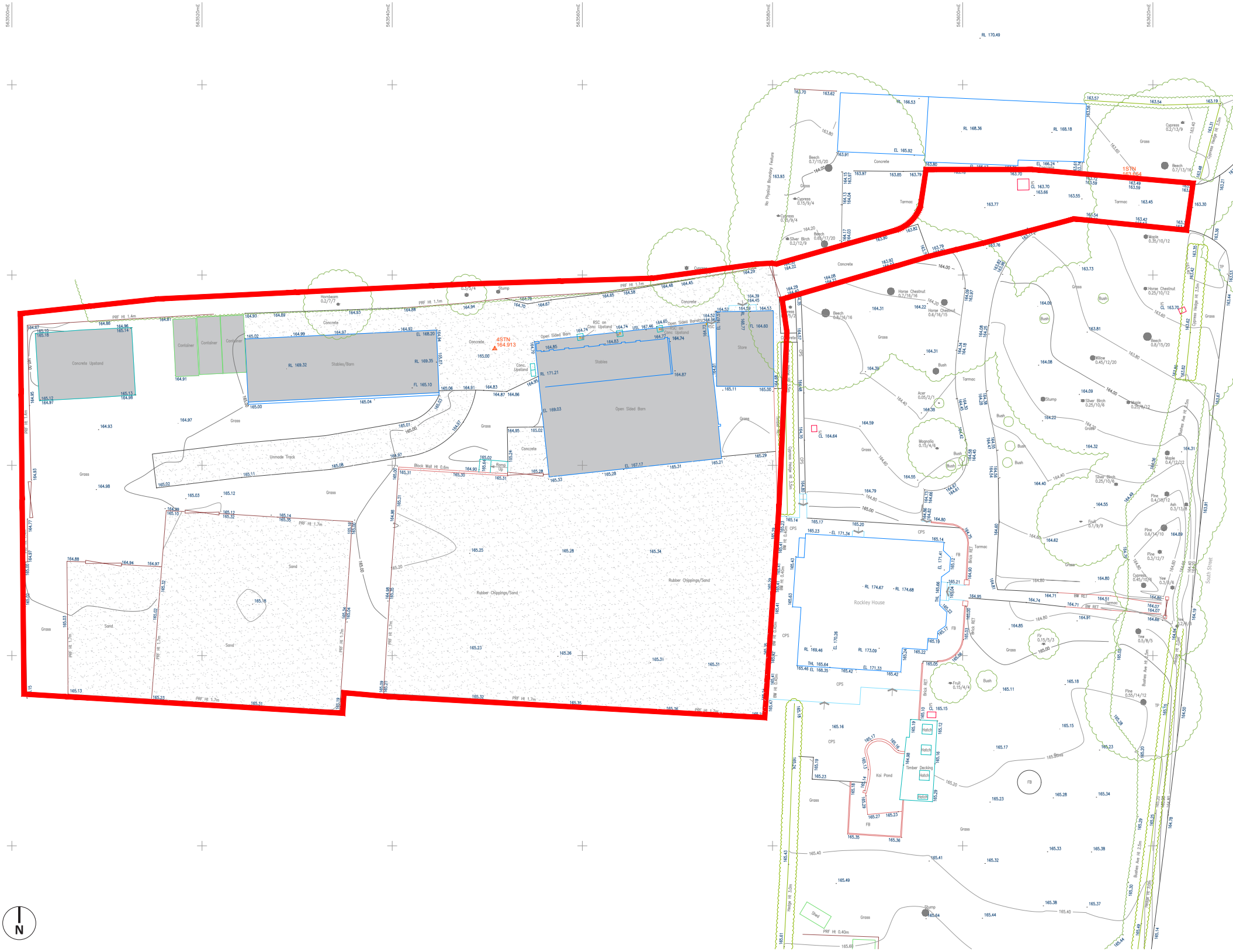
Existing access to the site is off of Wrotham Road, via a driveway shared with Rockley House. The adjoining road has a speed limit of 30mph, there are several other private accesses which also join the road towards the north.

2.4 Levels and Topography

There is a gentle slope from the South East, with a highpoint of 165.36m, toward the North West with a lowpoint of 164.67m. The site is effectively flat, with a 0.69m level difference across 89m - a gradient of 1:129. The access driveway connecting the site to the Wrotham Road is steeper, with the junction having a level of 163.3m

2.5 Trees

There are two trees within the red line boundary, they currently sit outside of the boundary fence.



Topographical survey (not to scale)

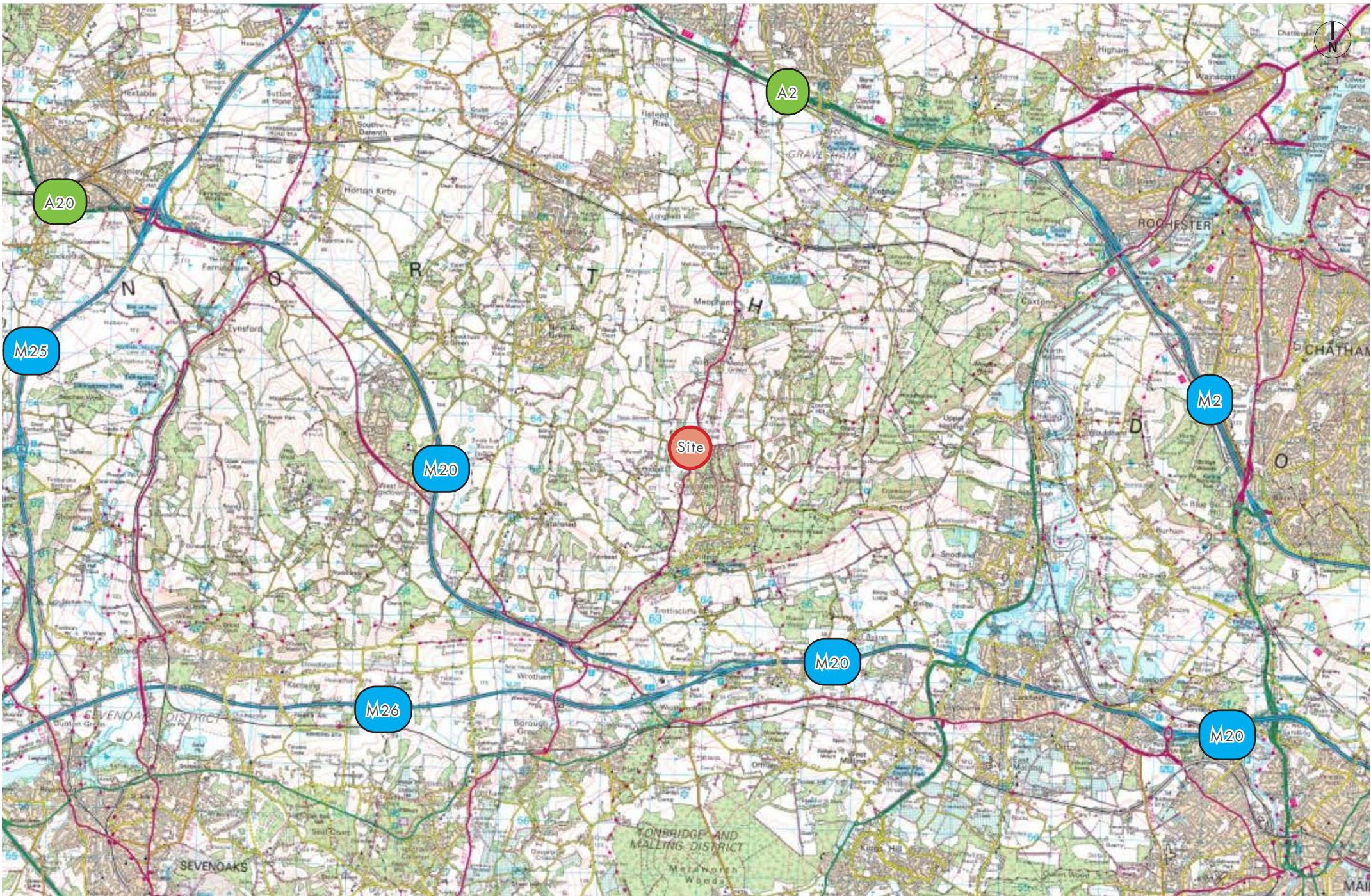
2.0 The Existing Site & Context

2.7 Local Highway Network

The site joins the Wrotham Road, linking it to nearby villages Meopham and Lower Culverstone, as well as to larger towns Gravesend and Sevenoaks.

Wrotham Road also links the site to the motorway network. There is access to multiple motorways with the M20, M26, M25 and M2 all within at 12km radius.

The site is just approximately 100m from the nearest bus stop.



Ordnance Survey : Bing Maps



3.0

Design Framework

3.0 Design Framework

3.1 Introduction

This section sets out the key policies and guidance which form the framework within which the design of the scheme has been developed.

Please refer to the Planning Statement from Robinson Escott Planning LLP.



3.2 National Planning Policy Framework

The NPPF was published in 2012 and has been updated on a number of occasions since, the latest being in December 2024. The document sets out national guidance relating to design. Paragraph 131 states:

“The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. Being clear about design expectations, and how these will be tested, is essential for achieving this. So too is effective engagement between applicants, communities, local planning authorities and other interests throughout the process.”

Paragraph 135 explains that planning decisions should aim to ensure that developments:

- a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
- b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
- c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);
- d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit; e) optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and
- f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.

Further detailed guidance on design issues was provided in March 2014, within the Government’s Planning Practice Guidance. The Guidance explains that planning should promote:

- Local character (including landscape setting)
- Safe, connected and efficient streets
- A network of green spaces (including parks) and public places
- Appropriate security measures and address crime prevention
- Access and inclusion
- Efficient use of natural resources
- Cohesive and vibrant neighbourhoods

A well designed place is defined as one which is functional, supports mixed uses and tenures, is adaptable and resilient, has a distinctive character, is attractive and promotes ease of movement. Public spaces should be lively. Guidance is provided on layout, building form, scale, details and materials.



The ten characteristics of well designed places (National Design Guide, September 2019)

3.3 The National Design Guide

The National Design Guide was initially published by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government in September 2019 and updated in January 2021. It is a response to the ‘Living with Beauty’ report published in January 2020 by the Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission.

This guide illustrates how well-designed places that are beautiful, enduring and successful can be achieved in practice. It forms part of the Government’s collection of planning practice guidance and should be read alongside the separate planning practice guidance on design process and tools.

The National Design Guide addresses the question of how we recognise well-designed places, by outlining and illustrating the Government’s priorities in the form of ten characteristics. The choices made in the design process contribute towards achieving these characteristics and shape the character of the place.

The 10 characteristics of the National Design Guide

Well-designed places have individual characteristics which work together to create its physical distinctiveness. The ten characteristics highlighted in the National Design Guide help to nurture and sustain a sense of community and work to positively address environmental issues affecting climate. They all contribute towards the cross-cutting themes for good design set out in the National Planning Policy Framework. The ten characteristics which are set out in the Design Guide and will be extensively considered in the design development of this scheme are:

- Context
- Identity
- Built form
- Movement
- Nature
- Public spaces
- Uses
- Homes and Buildings
- Resources
- Lifespan

3.0 Design Framework

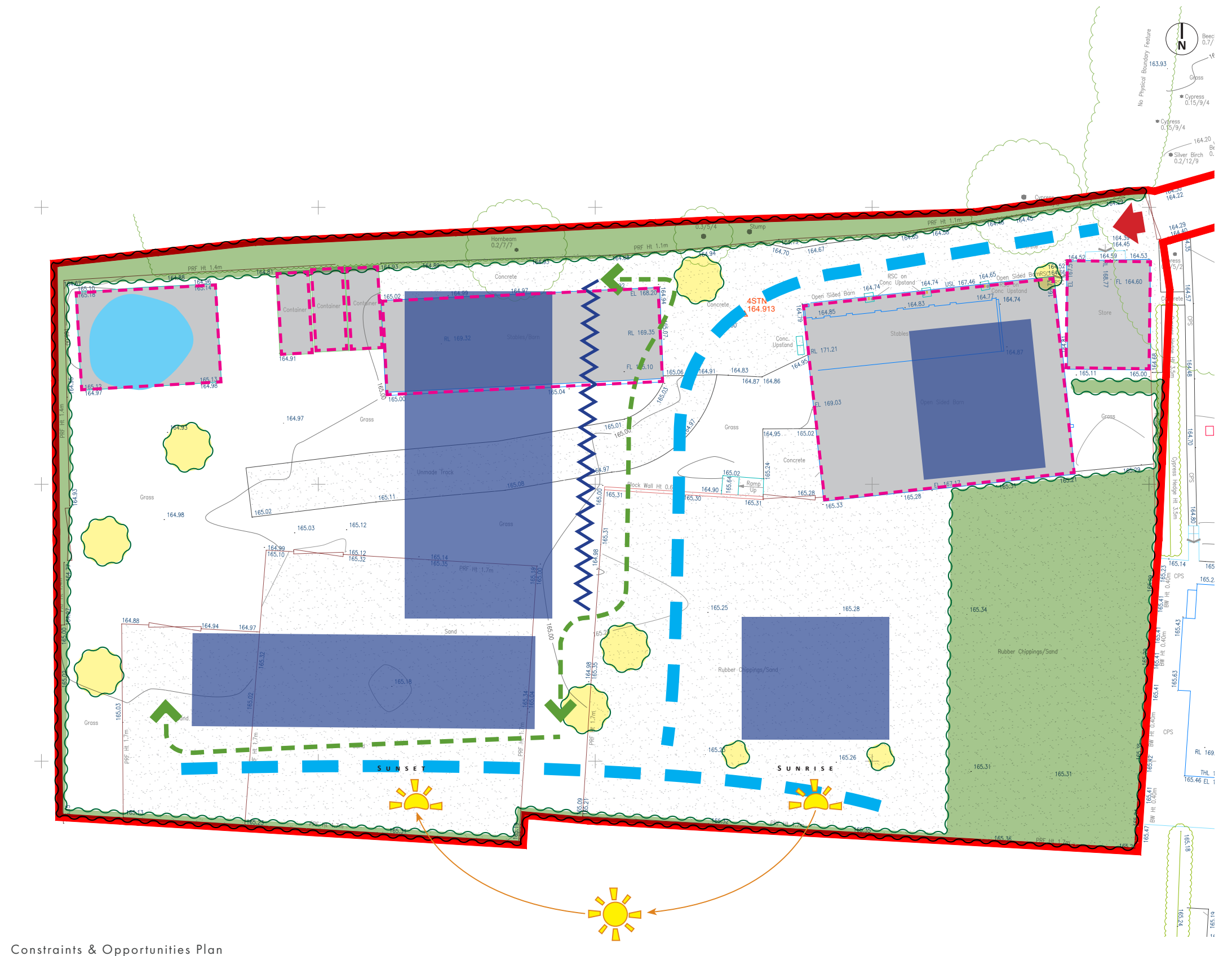
3.4 Site Considerations & Opportunities

The development concept of the site has been informed by the physical considerations and opportunities of the site and its analysis, which are as follows:-

- Strong frontage to access route;
- Opportunity for large gardens and a shared meadow
- Opportunity to park cars out of site of the road in private parking spaces or in the shared carport.
- Opportunity for a low-speed shared surface to allowing pedestrians to walk through to the meadow or to their cars.
- Good landscaping opportunities, avoiding frontages facing onto one another, incorporating landscaping around the boundary of the site and lining the road to avoid an over developed suburban feel.

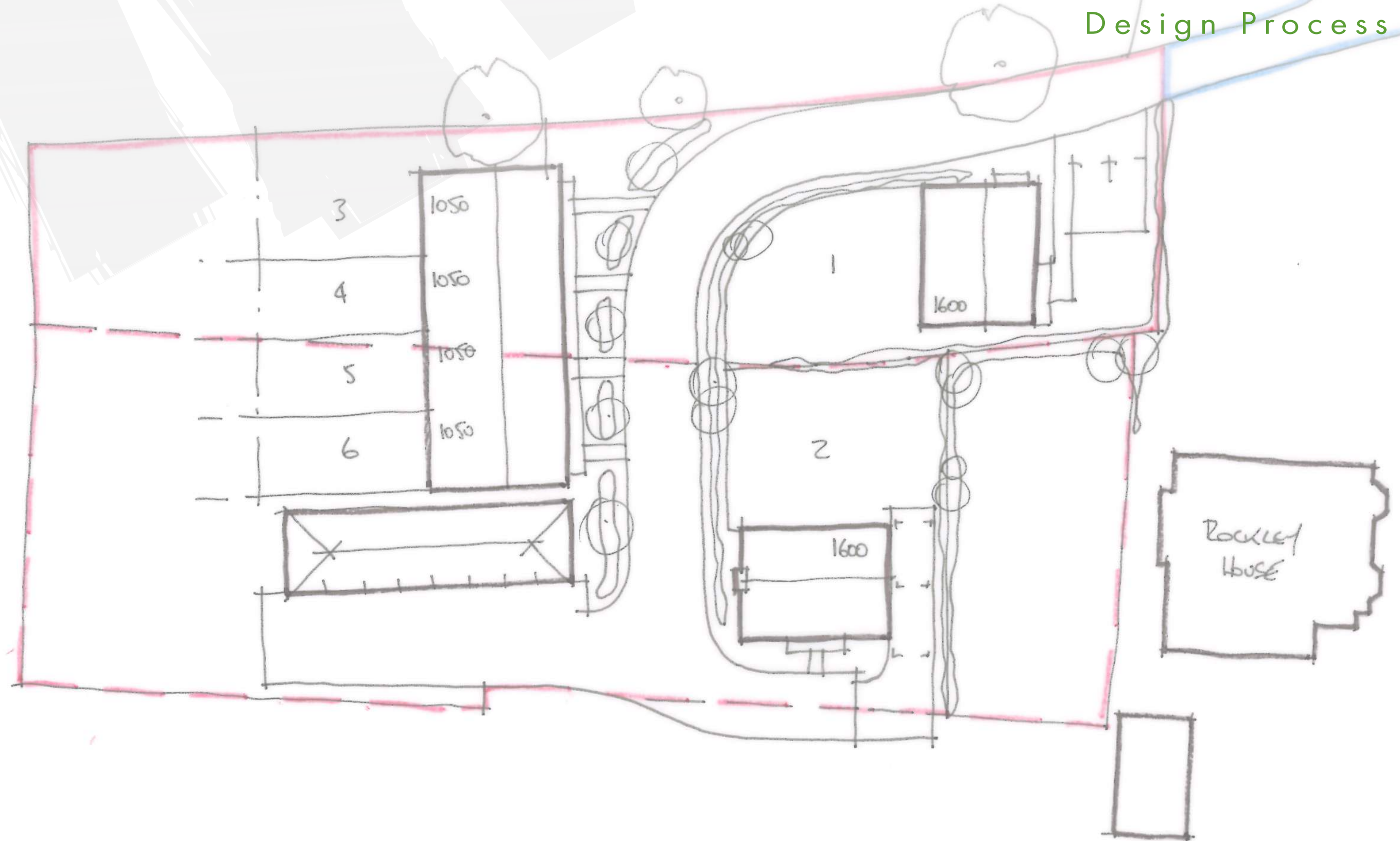
KEY

- Site boundary
- ➔ Site access
- New access drive
- New footpath
- ☀ New tree
- Existing hedgerow enhanced
- New pond
- ⚡ Strong frontage to access road
- New development
- Buildings to be removed



4.0

Design Process



4.0 Design Process

4.1 Introduction

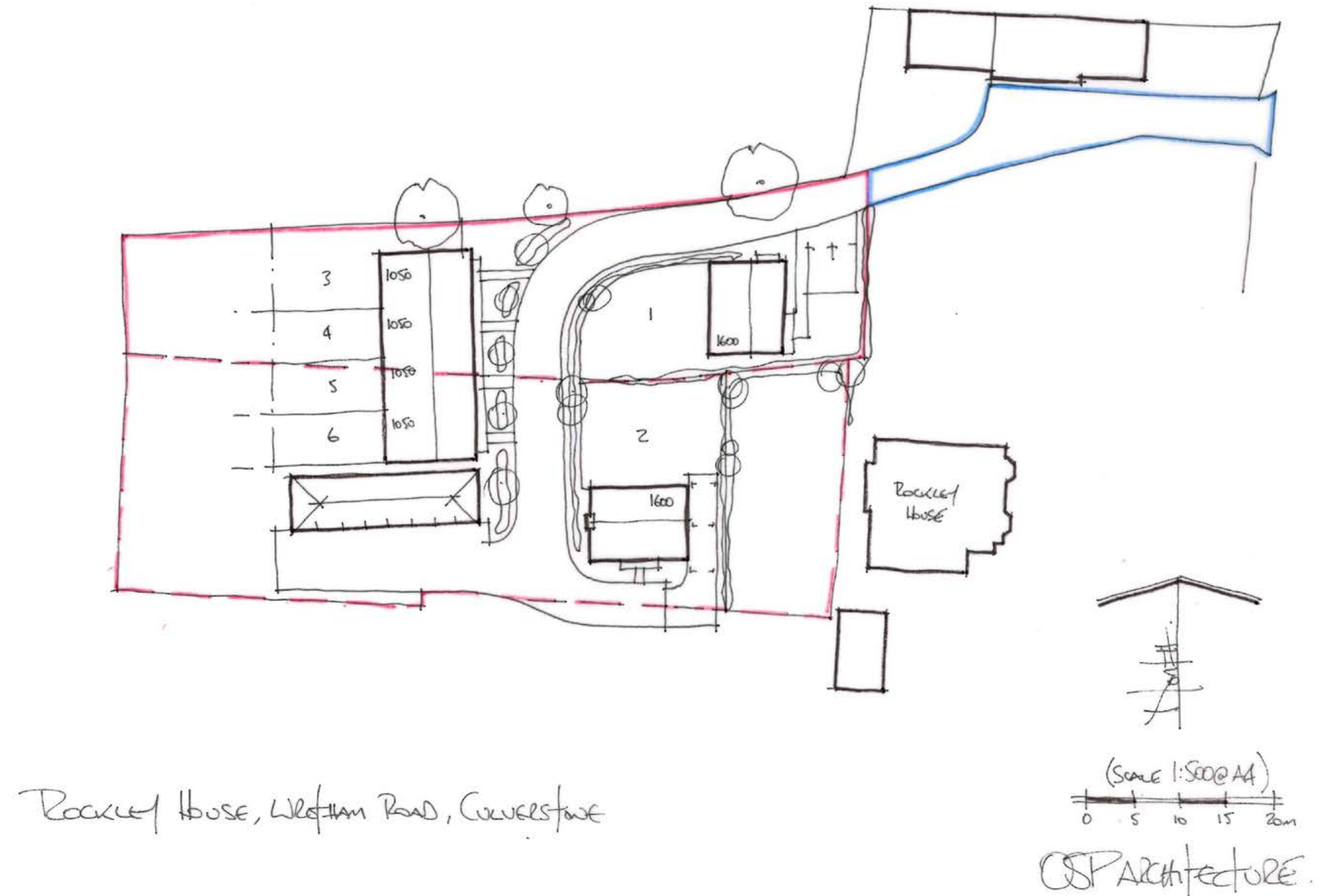
The planning application proposals are the result of an in depth analysis of the local context and an evolving design response that has adapted to the views of our client, the design team and Gravesham Borough Council.

This section aims to demonstrate that process and how the result is a better set of proposals more routed in context and appropriate design response.

4.2 Planning History

The last meaningful development of the site was a two storey and single storey extension to the western elevation, this obtained planning in 1995.

Since then there has been another planning application for a proposed change of use from a detached garage to a two bedroom dwelling, with the provision of two parking spaces. Following a couple of initial refused applications and alteration proposals, an application was accepted in 2023. This application is currently under construction.



Preliminary sketch site layout

5.0

Proposals



5.0 Proposals

5.1 Overview

The proposed design of the site has been developed through a rigorous appraisal of the site and local context and character, including the thorough assessment of the considerations and opportunities that have informed the design approach from feasibility stage through to planning submission. The intention with these proposals is to provide an exemplary scheme that seeks to enhance the site and fit in harmoniously within the setting.

The proposal for 6 dwellings is seen to be an appropriate development for the site that will guarantee future use of the site, while preserving and enhancing the rural aesthetic of the area.

5.2 Layout

The positioning of the dwellings on site is concentrated to the centre and the east of the site. This along with the generous gardens and communal meadow to the west boundary, both preserve and enhance the open aspect of the site, which is in keeping with the surrounding open countryside.

The four house terrace provides a strong frontage as you enter the site, these terraced houses are set back from the road behind a pedestrian footway and a front garden.

The two detached houses have been positioned to wrap around the inverted corner created by the green buffer to the South East corner of the site. The feature frontages of the detached houses have been orientated to avoid areas of significant footfall or car traffic. The site has been set out to avoid overdevelopment, with the houses set back from the road, with large gardens helping to space out each unit.

The proposed site layout would:

- Take a previously developed site and enhance the rural aesthetic, utilising bespoke designed properties that follow the local vernacular.
- Provide 6 new bespoke homes, there are four 3 bedroom houses grouped together as a terrace providing a strong built form to the street. The other two homes are 4 bedroom detached houses with large private garden spaces.
- Respect the neighbouring properties by allowing generous separation from the proposed building form with good landscape screening.
- Provide a residential development of 16 dwellings per hectare (DPH), a density regarded as appropriate for this site.
- Retain all boundary vegetation and supplement with new planting.
- Provide policy compliant parking in areas that would not dominate the public realm.



Proposed site layout

5.0 Proposals

5.3 Appearance

The proposed development has been arranged as a terrace of 4 dwellings and 2 detached homes. It has been designed taking consideration of the surrounding context to complement the predominant rural character of the local area, through the use of similar and established materials, details features and form.

Plot 1 is the first plot you encounter when you approach the site from the east. It is a two storey detached house with a ridge height lower than that of the larger Rockley House next door.

Plot 1 has a feature front elevation which is defined by a reconstituted stone portico, framing the main entrance. There are also corresponding bay windows, sills and headers which consist of the same material. The main material used is a Buff Yellow London Stock brick, which will match that on the front of Rockley House. There is a dark red brick chimney which will also match the feature red brick used on the main house. The roof will be a grey slate tile to match that of the existing house. The house has a front garden and side entrances leading to a generous rear garden, enclosed by a dense hedgerow. Plot 2 is the same in appearance to Plot 1, but is positioned to the south of the site.

As you pass Plot 1 at the site entrance, Plots 3 to 6 are presented directly in front of you as a 4 house terrace - the front elevations of these face directly toward the site entrance and line the single driveway through site.

The terrace houses are set back from the road allowing space for a pedestrian pathway and a front garden for each plot. The feature front elevations has the same Yellow Buff brickwork used on the main house along with the dark red brick forming a base plinth, separating piers and quoins in the corners. Like the detached houses the windows have reconstituted stone sills and headers along with a front door feature, though in this case it is a more subtle timber porch. The terraces follow a similar roof form as the detached houses with a grey slate tile, while having a slightly higher ridge height. The terraced houses are two storeys high and have a generous rear garden with access to a communal meadow.

The proposed houses have been designed with the hierarchy of the wider site in mind. The main Rockley House being considered the principal form with the alterations and expansion having come over the lifespan of a multi-generational family home. The detached homes look to serve a similar purpose as the main house, but are slightly smaller in scale, to be subservient to the historical focal point of the site. The form of these houses has been kept simple, aligning with the start of the journey that will take place over time as a family grows within the home.

The terraces then by their nature are subservient buildings. Following the form of workers cottages, serving the larger more prominent homes, The same material is used as the other buildings, both existing and proposed - helping to tie together the historical farm and the residential future of the site.

As a complement to the lands historical past, the carport will be built using simple black timber boarding reminiscent of a barn-like form, serving the users of the site. The carport will conceal the cars on site, while promoting the rural aesthetic that is so key to the site.



2 no. detached houses



4 no. terraced houses

5.0 Proposals

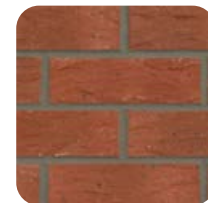
5.4 Materials

The development will use a unifying palette of materials, but variations in form, size and style will create a distinctive character and identity for the development.

A simple palette of high quality materials is proposed:

- Buff facing brick
- Red facing brick
- Slate roof tiles
- Reconstituted stone window heads
- Reconstituted stone bay windows and porch to detached houses
- Black barge boards, fascias and soffits
- Sash windows with white frames and sub cills
- Black rainwater goods
- White timber porches to terraced houses

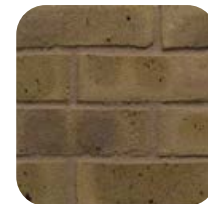
Materials palette:



Dark red plain brick



Reconstituted Stone



Buff London yellow brick



Slate tile



Rockley House, South Street

Off white render, white window frames, white fascia boards, white rain water goods, buff brick with red brick quoins and banding details; red/brown tile roof and chimneys



KEY

- Buff facing brick
- Red multi-stock facing brick plinth and pier details
- Open sided car barn Black timber boarding above red brick with timber frame
- Slate roof tile

5.0 Proposals

5.5 Amount

The proposed scheme will provide 6 No. new dwellings in the following mix:

- 4 x three bedroom;
- 2 x four bedroom.

As illustrated on the plan (right):

5.6 Density

The site area is 0.37 hectares of previously developed land, comprised of existing built form and hardstanding areas, with an area of garden to the rear.

The development of 6 dwellings on the 0.37 (0.92 acres) site generates a density of 16 DPH (Dwellings per hectare), deemed appropriate for this setting.

KEY

4 bedroom houses

3 bedroom houses



Proposed amount plan

5.0 Proposals

5.7 Scale

Existing Developed Area 2559m²
Proposed Developed Area 1353m²

There is a 47% reduction of Developed Area on site - 53% of the site is regenerated to green spaces through the green buffer, communal meadow and the garden spaces, settling the proposed firmly into the rural landscape.

Existing Building Footprint 564m²
Proposed Building Footprint 419m²

Building Footprint is reduced by 26%, a material benefit to the scheme.

Existing GEA 564m²
Proposed GEA 831m²

GEA is increased by 47%

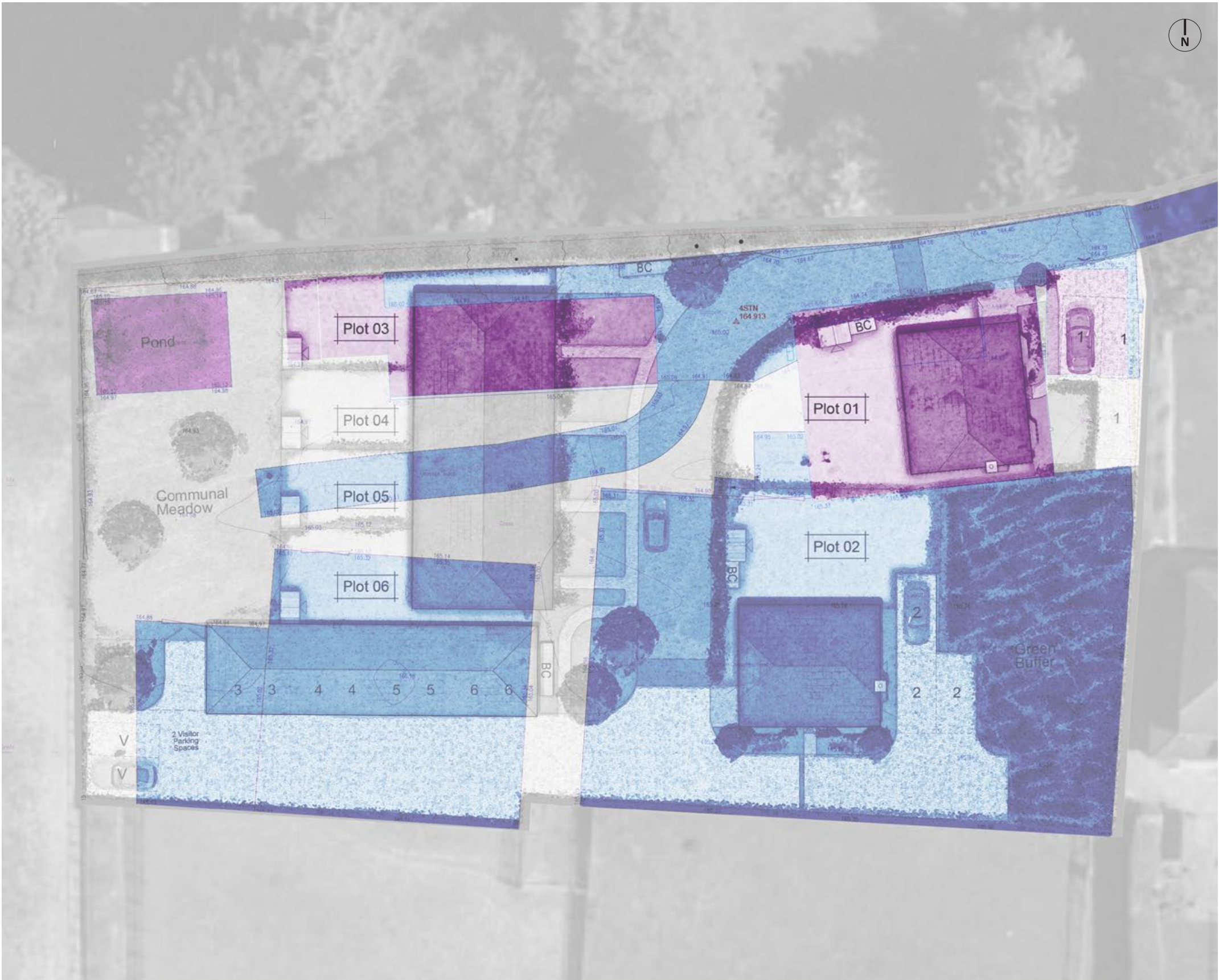
*Proposed GEA and Footprint does not count the Carport toward the total figure.

The Carport is considered an optional building that offers other planning benefits to the scheme, in that it is used as a step down in height to the sites' boundaries and it is a mechanism to hide vehicles, which, in turn, reduces wider visual impact of the scheme.

KEY

Existing hardstand

Existing buildings



Existing survey overlaid on proposed site layout

5.0 Proposals

5.8 Boundary Treatments

Dwelling boundaries enclosing Plot 1 and Plot 2 and the Site boundary will be a 1.8m hedge.

The communal meadow will be bound by a 1.2 m post and rail fence. Abutting gardens for all and side entrances will be lined with a 1.8m close boarded fence.



Proposed boundary treatments plan

5.0 Proposals

5.9 Garden Sizes and Separation Distances

Garden sizes and separation distances will meet the recommendations made in the Gravesham Local Plan (Supplementary planning guidance 2 Residential layout guidelines including Housing Standards Policy Statement October 2015).

	Min. Garden Areas (m ²)	Min depth from rear wall of house (m)
3 Bedrooms (Plot 3-6)	60.0	10.0
4+ Bedrooms (Plot 1-2)	100.0	10.0

- Habitable rooms facing one another have a minimum distance of 21m.
- Habitable rooms have a minimum distance of 21m from the rear garden area (5m depth adjacent to the rear of the dwelling.)

KEY

-  Back gardens
-  Rear area
-  Garden area measurements
-  Habitable rooms



Garden Sizes and Separation Distances Plan

5.0 Proposals

5.10 Ecology Assessment

There are no protected species on the site and the site has low ecological value.

5.11 Inclusiveness - Access for All

In accordance with the guidance and requirements for access, highlighted in Section 3.0 of this document, the dwellings have been designed to comply with Approved Document Part M of the Building Regulations (2016) and the requirements of the Equality Act (2010):

- The proposed development will place an emphasis on pedestrian, mobility impaired and cycle use over car travel.
- The development has been designed to allow movement choice. Means of travel other than the car will be encouraged.
- Parking will not dominate the development.



5.12 Sustainability

Domestic waste and recycling

Storage and collection of refuse and recyclable waste has been considered as an integral part of the design process.

Provision will be made within dwellings for the storage of recyclable waste to assist in encouraging recycling within the household. This space will generally be provided either in kitchens or utility rooms.

External residual and recyclable waste storage will be within rear garden.

Energy

The new houses will provide the following in their specification:

- Air tightness standards will be enhanced demonstrating an improvement above the Building Regulations.
- Improved thermal detailing.
- Air source heat pumps.
- All windows will be double-glazed.
- A Home Owners' Pack will be provided.
- Electric vehicle charging points will be provided for every property.



Flooding

To slow down the surface water run-off rates and reduce the risk of flooding elsewhere, the following drainage features have been incorporated into the proposed development:

- The amount of hard landscaping will be minimised, whilst the use of porous and permeable surfaces will be maximised.

Community

A Home Owners' Pack will be provided with the dwellings which will contain at least the following information:

- Local transport services.
- Utility suppliers.
- Energy efficiency.
- Local amenities.
- Refuse collection.
- Recycling facilities.
- Local organisations and community groups.
- Environmental technologies installed in the home.
- Water efficiency information.



5.0 Proposals

Adaptability

The new homes will be designed to provide the opportunity for residents to work at home, having sufficient space and facilities and being equipped with suitable outlets that will enable the occupants to have data access and necessary power supplies.

Parking

Sustainable transport seeks to reduce the use of the car and thus encourage alternative modes of transport. The number of parking spaces provided is considered to be appropriate for the proposed mix and the location of the site.

Cycling

In order to encourage cycling as an alternative mode of transport to journeys by car, these proposals are well integrated with the pedestrian and cycle movement network in the surrounding area which will provide safe and convenient access by cycle to local facilities.

Cycle storage is provided in garden stores for houses. Secure storage provision will further encourage their ownership and use.

Bus Routes

The site is just approximately 100m from the nearest bus stop.

Materials

Consideration will be given to the use of local materials and suppliers where viable to reduce the transport distances and to support the local economy. Consideration will be given to the following measures:

- Use of 'A' rated materials as assessed using the BRE Green Guide to Specification for Buildings wherever possible
- Use of timber, the source of which is certified by FSC / PEFC or an equivalent approved certification body where practical
- Use of insulation materials with zero ozone depletion potential



6.0

Access & Movement



6.0 Access & Movement

6.1 Transport Assessment - Movement

A safe and convenient means of access can be provided. The proposals will have no severe impact on highway safety or the existing road network.

6.2 Parking

There are 16 parking spaces (2 spaces each per 3 bed house, 3 spaces each per 4 bed house), and 2 visitor spaces.

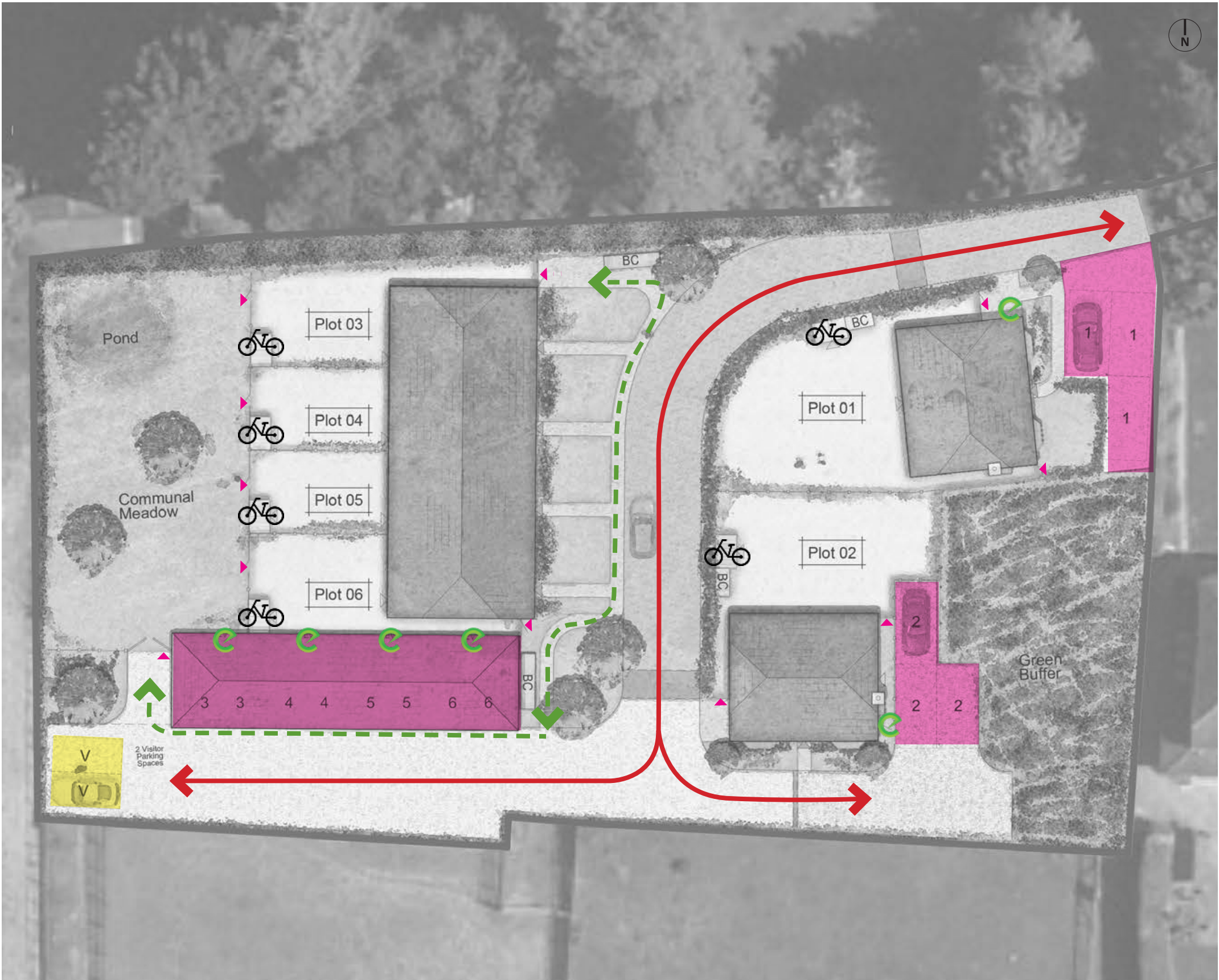
Cycle parking will be provided within the rear gardens.

Vehicle and cycle parking is provided in accordance with Gravesham Borough Council guidelines.

Parking Type	Minimum Spaces
3 bed house (4)	2 per house
4 bed house (2)	3 per house
Visitor parking	2 spaces
Total	16 spaces
Bicycle parking	2 per house

KEY

Main Route

Footpath for garden access

Proposed access and parking plan

6.0 Access & Movement

6.3 Servicing and Refuse Collection

Recycling and refuse storage are located adjacent to each dwelling and are easily accessible.

Plots 3 and 4 share a refuse storage point, as do Plots 5 and 6.

Bins and recycling containers will not be visible on the access road.

Refuse and recycling for 3 and 4 will be placed at the end of the footpath, adjacent to the road.

Plots 5 and 6 will place their refuse and recycling adjacent to the store and road.

Plots 1 and 2 will place the refuse and recycling to the side of the house, adjacent to the road.



KEY	
●	Bin Storage
●	Collection Point

Refuse collection strategy plan

7.1 Conclusion

The proposed scheme of six dwellings with an accompanying carport will make a positive contribution to the character of the area. Building from the precedent set by Rockley House the six high quality homes will enhance the character of the area.

Utilising the intrinsic relationship between Rockley House and it's context, the proposed development was always going to require a design which was sensitive to the existing home. Driven by the materials used on the existing house and the generous space allowed, the site has been able to become a fully established design which is in accordance with the density and character of the surrounding area, in it proposing an opportunity for new high quality homes, without interrupting the local, rural feel.

The proposal provides the opportunity to provide the land with consistent and valuable use moving forward, while also presenting an offering to regenerate green spaces and provide a development synchronised with it's surrounding landscape.

The scheme presented is therefore our interpretation of the best and most conducive use of this site, with due regard to numerous consideration and opportunities within the parameters of the site and planning policy.

7.0

Conclusion





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