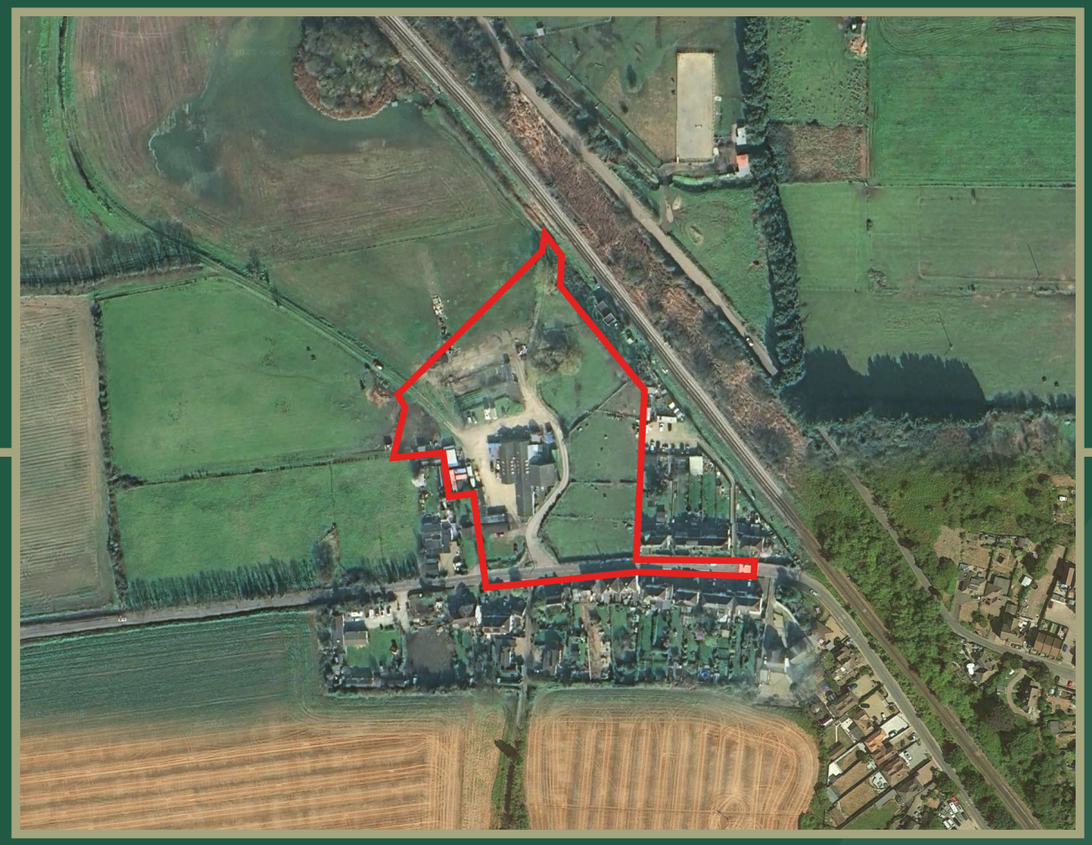
Richborough



Lower Higham, Land Off Chalk Road

Design & Access Statement

July 2025

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7.0 Summary

1.0 Introduction

This Design and Access Statement supports the Outline application for the demolition of existing buildings and erection of up to 40 residential dwellings, public open space and associated works. Approval is sought for the principal means of vehicular access from Chalk Road and all other matters are reserved

1.1 Site & Project Description

The site is located on the edge of Chalk Road, adjacent to the residential area of Lower Higham in Kent. The site is in mixed use with the existing buildings being used for a mix commercial and domestic purposes and the surrounding land being used for temporary storage and animal grazing.

To the east, the site borders an existing railway line, as well as the Thames & Medway Canal. To the south, there is vehicle and pedestrian access into Buckland Farm via Chalk Road, with residential development fronting the main road along the south-eastern portion.
Beyond the site and further south contains parcels of residential neighbourhoods, with Higham Railway Station being situated off School Lane, and the railway line running parallel to Chalk Road and the eastern site boundary.

The site is bordered on the eastern boundary with large mature trees that provide a buffer to the parallel railway line. Along the southern, western and northern boundary, the site is bordered by hedgerow and fence line, as well as a gated entry into Buckland Farm.





Location

Lower Higham is a small, picturesque village located in the Gravesham Borough of Kent. It retains a strong rural character, with a mix of traditional and modern housing, and is surrounded by scenic countryside. The village offers a peaceful, village atmosphere while being well-connected to nearby towns such as Strood and Rochester, providing convenient access to local amenities, schools, and transport links.



Wider Local Context

2.0 Site Photographs





View 1



View 2



View 3



View 4



View 5



View 6



View 7



View 8



View 9



View 10



View 11



View 12



View 13



View 14

3.0 Planning Context

3.1 Planning Policy Context

The adopted development plan for Gravesham Borough Council comprises:

- Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy and Local Plan Policies Map (2014)
- Gravesham Local Plan First Review (1994) – Saved Policies
- Kent County Council Minerals and Waste Local Plan 2013-30 (2020)

In accordance with Paragraph 11 of the NPPF, strategic Local Plan policies need to be considered against their level of conformity with the policies of the NPPF before assigning a level of weight that should be applied to them. The NPPF is therefore considered to be an important material consideration for the proposals.

The Site is located within the Green Belt (Core Strategy Policy CS02) and adjacent to the settlement boundary for Lower Higham. The Thames Estuary and Marshes RAMSAR and SSSI (Core Strategy Policy CS12) is located to the north of the site boundary along the Thames and Medway Canal. Lower Higham Conservation Area (Core Strategy Policy CS20) lies approximately 250m to the east of the Site.

Relevant design related policies and Guidance include:

- Policy CS11: Transport
- Policy CS12: Green Infrastructure
- Policy CS13: Green Space, Sport and Recreation
- Policy CS14: Housing Type and Size
- Policy CS15: Housing Density
- Policy CS19: Development and Design Principles
- Local Plan First Review Policy T9
- Kent Design Guide
- Designing for Gravesham Design Code
- Local Plan SPG 2 - Residential Layout Guidelines

The emerging Site Allocations and Development Management Policies document from 2020 identified the site as a draft allocation known as GBS-C: Land at and adjoining Buckland Farm, Chalk Road, Higham, with an estimated capacity of 40 dwellings.

Summary of key design policies;

Policy CS12: Green Infrastructure confirms a multifunctional linked network of green spaces, footpaths, cycle routes and wildlife stepping stones and corridors will be created, protected, enhanced and maintained. The overall landscape character and valued landscapes will be conserved, restored and enhanced.

Policy CS15: Housing Density confirms sites will be developed at a variety of densities, depending on their location and accessibility to public transport. The form and density of housing will vary in response to accessibility and other characteristics of the site. Variations in density across a site should be used to develop different character areas. However, in the rural area, new residential development will be expected to achieve a minimum density of 30 dwellings per hectare.

Policy CS 19: Development and Design Principles confirms new development will be visually attractive, fit for purpose and locally distinctive. It will conserve and enhance the character of the local built, historic and natural environment, integrate well with the surrounding local area and meet anti-crime standards. The design and construction of new development will incorporate sustainable construction standards and techniques, be adaptable to reflect changing lifestyles, and be resilient to the effects of climate change.

Gravesham Design Code SPD : Includes the following design requirements for residential development; the internal floor area of new homes must meet the Nationally Described Space Standards, all new dwellings should be M4(2) Building Regulations compliant (accessible or adaptable dwellings) and 10% of new dwellings should be M4(3) Building Regulations compliant (dwellings suitable for wheelchair users).”

3.2 Planning Case

Gravesham Borough Council cannot demonstrate a five year supply of housing land and therefore the tilted balance in favour of sustainable development is engaged. The Council’s most recent five year housing land supply position statement was published in February 2025 and confirms a deficit of 1,603 dwellings with the Council demonstrating a housing land supply of only 3 years. Gravesham Borough Council also failed the Housing Delivery Test for 2023; the test measured only 59% and is well below the 75% threshold for ‘significant under delivery’. There is a clear and demonstrable need to approve residential development to meet the needs of the Borough.

The site is sustainably located and is identified as a draft allocation in the emerging Local Plan. The Site is previously developed land occupied by several buildings and other structures associated with the commercial and domestic land uses and the temporary storage present on site. The premises is no longer fit for purpose and cannot viably be brought up to standard. The building structures are out-dated, in need of repair at significant cost and cannot readily be updated to meet modern business needs. The age of the buildings mean significant work is also required to ensure it meets up to date energy efficiency standards, which are due to increase significantly in the near future. The site is also not located in a desirable area for businesses to locate given the surrounding residential land uses and distance to the major road network. The planning application demonstrates that there is no viable option to renovate the existing buildings for their commercial uses given the expected low level of return in rent. The Planning Statement confirms that the requirements of Policy CS07 in respect of the loss of employment floorspace have been met.

The site is within the Green Belt and the Planning Statement submitted with this application assesses the site against the National Planning Policy Framework’s (NPPF) definition of grey belt and concludes that the site is eligible. The Planning Statement evidences how the scheme accords with paragraphs 155 to 157 of the NPPF in respect of development on land within the Green Belt and meeting the requirements of the ‘Golden Rules’. The proposed development should therefore not be regarded as inappropriate development in the Green Belt and having regard to paragraph 158 of the NPPF; “a development which complies with the Golden Rules should be given significant weight in favour of the grant of permission.".

The planning application is supported by evidence to demonstrate the land is unsuitable for its continued employment use – due to location constraints and the poor quality of the existing structures on-site. The Landscape and Ecology related impacts of the development, based on the proximity to the RAMSAR and SSSI and the Sites Green Belt location, is discussed later in this document.”

3.3 Planning History

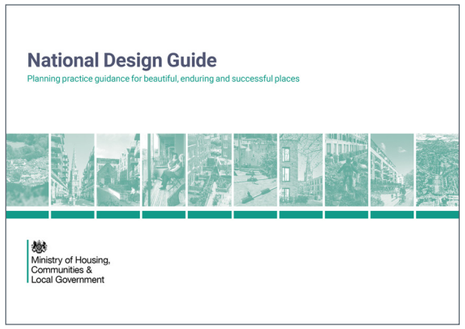
An application for prior notification for the proposed change of use of Unit D and land within its curtilage from Class B1(C), light industrial to Class C3, dwelling house, to create 3 no. residential units was approved on site in September 2020 (application reference: 20200637).

The application confirms that the largest unit on site is occupied by Equipets Cleaning Services, with the primary business being washing, repairing and dehairing of horse rugs and pet beds.

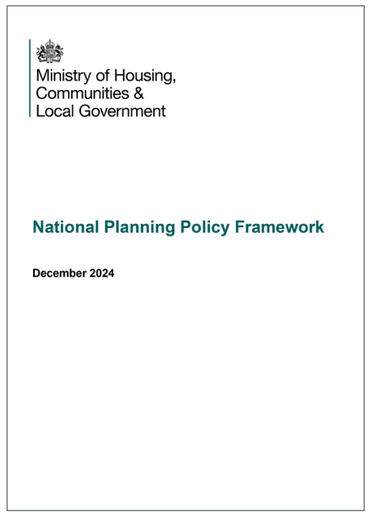
3.4 Proposed Development Benefits

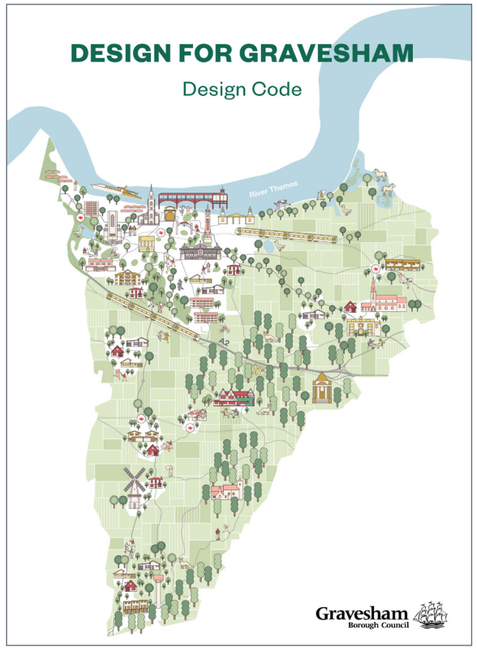
Richborough is of the view that the proposals could deliver the following key benefits:

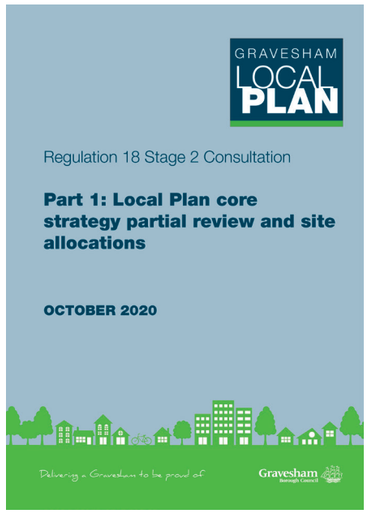
- A significant contribution to meeting the housing needs of the Borough through the delivery of up to 40 dwellings, including 50% affordable homes which could address issues of worsening affordability;
- Provision of a mix of houses of varying size and including family properties and those wishing to downsize.
- The provision of new homes located to ensure residents have easy access to the existing Higham train station with regular services to nearby cities and towns;
- Improved pedestrian infrastructure on the northern side of Chalk Road along the sites frontage, provision of off-street parking for neighbouring residents that currently park on the street and a suite of off-site highway mitigation measures that promote sustainable and active travel and seek to reduce vehicle speeds.”
- Delivery of an extensive and accessible landscape and open space strategy, including an area of play, that can be enjoyed by all residents;
- Ecological enhancements through the provision of sustainable drainage systems, biodiverse rich grassland, new hedgerows, and tree planting which would uplift the biodiversity value of the Site by a minimum of 10%.

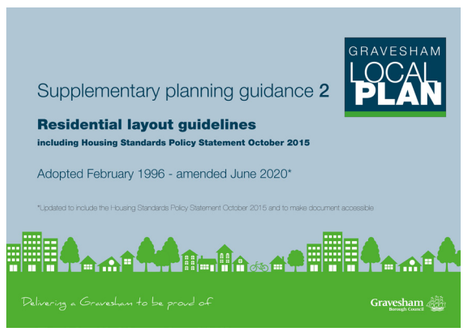

National Design Guide
Planning practice guidance for beautiful, enduring and successful places
Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government


APPROACH PRINCIPLES COLLABORATION DEVELOPMENT
the Kent design guide


Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government
National Planning Policy Framework
December 2024


DESIGN FOR GRAVESHAM
Design Code
River Thames
Gravesham
Borough Council


GRAVESHAM
LOCAL
PLAN
Regulation 18 Stage 2 Consultation
Part 1: Local Plan core strategy partial review and site allocations
OCTOBER 2020
Delivering a Gravesham to be proud of
Gravesham
Borough Council


Supplementary planning guidance 2
GRAVESHAM
LOCAL
PLAN
Residential layout guidelines
including Housing Standards Policy Statement October 2015
Adopted February 1996 - amended June 2020*
*Updated to include the Housing Standards Policy Statement October 2015 and to make document accessible
Delivering a Gravesham to be proud of
Gravesham
Borough Council

4.0 Site Analysis

4.1 Historic Analysis

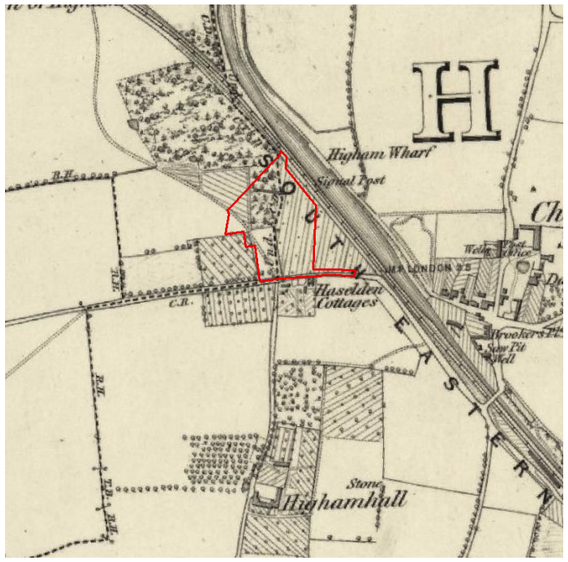
The area around Lower Higham, particularly Chalk Road, underwent significant transformation between 1840 and 1980. In the early part of the 19th century, the landscape was predominantly agricultural, with open fields and farmsteads characterising the rural environment.

The introduction of the railway in the late 19th century marked a key turning point, as it connected the area to larger towns and London, encouraging modest urban growth. As the 20th century progressed, particularly during the interwar period, the wider area saw the development of residential streets and small housing estates, as demand for homes grew in response to increased commuter traffic.

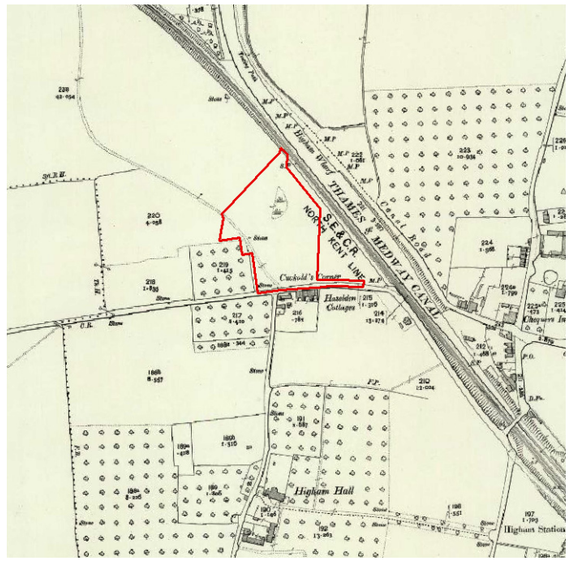
By the 1960s and 1970s, the area's urban form became more suburban, with modern houses interspersed with older structures. Roads were upgraded to accommodate the rise in car ownership.

The concluding figure ground study illustrates the settlement pattern of Lower Higham, highlighting its predominantly low-density, residential character and the organic layout of the village.

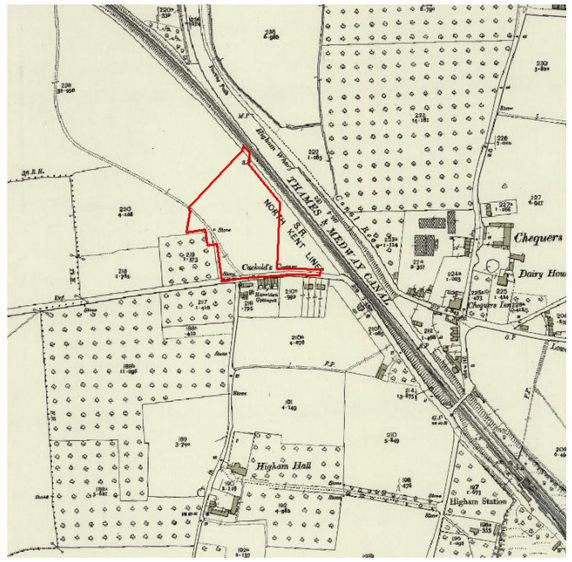
The built form is interspersed with generous garden spaces and informal street arrangements, reflecting its rural context and incremental growth over time. Development is typically arranged in linear patterns along key routes such as Chalk Road and Lower Rochester Road, with more recent infill and cul-de-sac typologies branching off these historic spines. The study helps to demonstrate the relationship between buildings, open space and movement, forming the basis for understanding the village's character and informing a sensitive design approach.



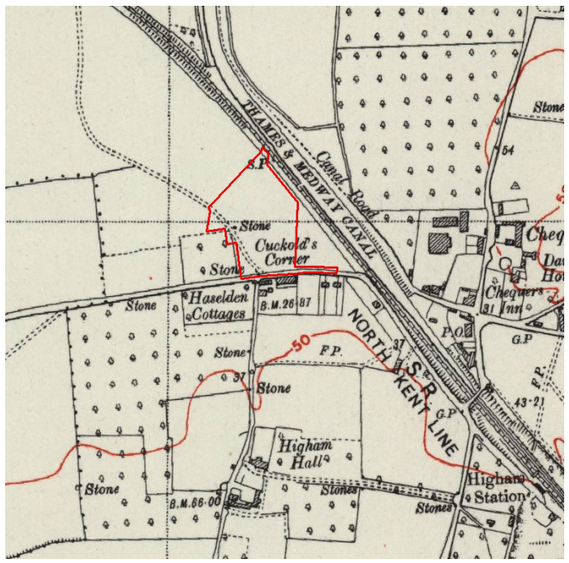
1870



1908



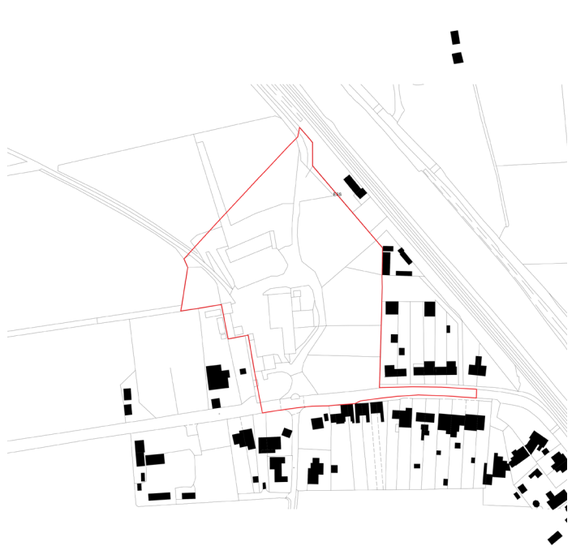
1933



1946



1974



Present

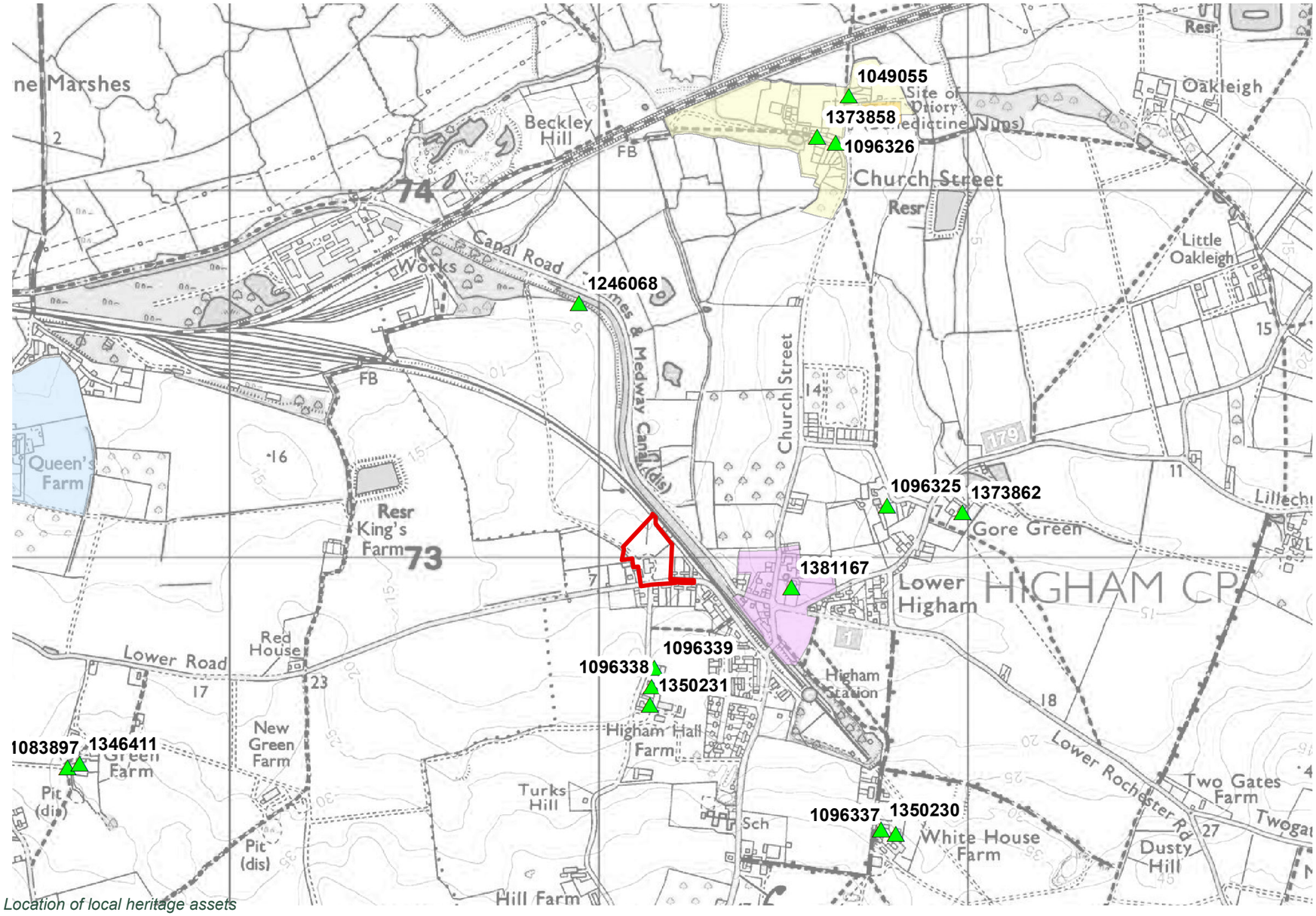
4.2 Designated Heritage Assets

The site is situated in an area rich in historic character, with several designated heritage assets within its surrounding context. There are a number of Grade II listed buildings located within Lower Higham, which contribute to the architectural and historical value of the area. These buildings are recognised for their special interest and are protected under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

In addition, the site lies within proximity to the Lower Higham Conservation Area, a designated area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. The conservation area encompasses a variety of built form, including traditional village buildings, historic boundary treatments, and a well-preserved rural setting that reflects the historical development of the settlement.

The Lower Higham Conservation Area lies c. 175m east of the site and includes a single Grade II Listed Building, Dairy Farmhouse which lies c. 325m east of the site (listing ref: 1381167). The Heritage Statement submitted with the application confirms that the site is not visible in views from the Grade II Listed Dairy Farmhouse or its immediate surrounds, due to intervening vegetation and built form. From within the application site, the Listed Building is only partially visible, with filtered glimpses of its upper elements, primarily from the access road and grazing areas located on the eastern side of the site. The change to the application site is therefore expected to result in no harm to the overall heritage significance of the heritage asset or Conservation Area.

Developed proposals will therefore need to carefully consider the significance of these heritage assets. This includes assessing the visual, historical, and spatial relationships between the site and its surroundings, and ensuring that the design approach respects the character and appearance of the conservation area.



Location of local heritage assets

KEY

- SITE BOUNDARY
- GRADE I LISTED BUILDING
- GRADE II LISTED BUILDING
- CHURCH STREET, HIGHAM CONSERVATION AREA
- LOWER HIGHAM CONSERVATION AREA
- QUEEN'S FARM, SHORN CONSERVATION AREA

4.3 Local Character Analysis

The Site's immediate built context is predominantly residential, with a mix of building types and scales reflecting the gradual, organic growth of Lower Higham. The village exhibits a layered architectural character, shaped by its rural setting, historic evolution, and piecemeal development over time.

The following section seeks to examine the architectural qualities and urban grain that contribute to the identity of Lower Higham. This local context will help to inform the design of the proposed development, ensuring it responds sensitively to its surroundings and contributes positively to the character of the area.

A series of local character areas have been selected for closer analysis. These areas illustrate a variety of building forms, street patterns, material palettes and boundary treatments that define the spatial and architectural language of Lower Higham. The analysis also seeks to identify consistent patterns and features such as scale, roof forms, fenestration and landscape setting that can guide an appropriate design response.

Building Typologies

Lower Higham is characterised by a variety of building typologies:

- Terraces;
- Semi-detached;
- Detached;
- Bungalows; and
- 3 storey townhouses

Chalk Road consists of a mix of terraced, semi-detached and detached homes. terraces which are either narrow or wide fronted. In the immediate surroundings to the site, the houses opposite and adjacent are predomantly semi-deatched in nature with small runs of terraced homes. As Chalk Road continues to the south east, dwellings become larger and detached in nature.

Chalk Road acts as the main route into Lower Higham from Gravesend from which secondary and tertiary streets branch off. To the south, along Taylor's Lane, a cluster of buildings can be found at Ostlers Court as well as Higham Hall Farm House.

n the north side of the railway line a broad range of housing typologies can be seen, in Chequers Street, Chequers Close, Church Street, Gore Green Road, and in Martins Close where bungalows are present. The range of existing house typologies as evidenced provides a wide palette of vernaculars, densities, and form from which can be used to develop the character of the site.

Although historical patterns of development tend to provide a similar range of housetypes within clusters, the range that typifies the Lower Higham character as varied. This existing character not only suggests that any new development should be reflective in terms of its varied housing typologies but also allows flexibility in terms of style, massing and form on larger scale developments.



Terraced houses - Bull Lane



Terraced houses - Canal Road



Detached house - Church Street



Terraed townhouses - Church Street



Bungalows - Martins Close



Bungalows - Gore Green Road



Semi-detached houses - Chalk Road



Semi-detached houses - Steadman Close



Courtyard development - Ostlers Court



Detached house - Chalk Road



Higham Hall Farm House - Taylors Lane

Street Design Components

Lower Higham demonstrates a variety of urban design characteristics that contribute to the distinctiveness of its street scenes. These components play a key role in shaping the identity and rhythm of individual streets and provide a valuable reference for future development.

In the immediate context of the site, Chalk Road exhibits a wide range of building typologies and urban forms. On both sides of the street, housing is residential in nature, but varies in terms of scale, frontage treatment and building line. To the north of Chalk Road, adjacent to the site, there is a notably consistent building line with well-sized front gardens, reinforcing a clear spatial structure. In contrast, the southern side of the street displays a more irregular urban form, where building lines vary and frontage treatments range from expansive driveways to narrow strips of landscaping.

Rows of narrow-fronted terraced dwellings often present a consistent building line, creating a strong and uniform street edge. However, this rhythm is regularly broken by properties set further back, with varied boundary treatments that include low brick walls, hedges, landscaped front gardens, and in some cases, no defined boundary at all - resulting in hard landscaped driveways that open directly onto the street. These differences in setback and frontage treatment introduce a layered and diverse character to the street.

Across Lower Higham, a variety of street and development patterns can be observed. Dwellings fronting open countryside, as seen along Lower Rochester Road, provide a rural edge quality. Cluster forms such as mews, courtyards, and cul-de-sacs contribute to a more intimate and informal character in locations like Jupp Court, Chequers Court, Steadman Close and Martins Lane. More formal street layouts are evident in areas like Lake Drive, where a regular building line and consistent street pattern are maintained.

These varied design elements contribute to the village's overall character and offer a palette of components to inform new development.

Key street design components identified within Lower Higham include:

- Varied building lines – including consistent frontages and stepped or staggered forms;
- Deep front gardens, contributing to a spacious and green street character;
- A mix of boundary treatments, ranging from walls and hedges to open driveways;
- Countryside-facing frontages that soften the transition between built form and rural edge;
- Clustered development typologies such as mews, small courts, and cul-de-sacs;
- More formal street layouts with regular building rhythms and structured public realm.

Understanding these existing urban forms is essential in guiding a contextually responsive layout that respects and reinforces the established street character of Lower Higham.



Consistent building line - Chalk Road



Countryside frontage - Lower Rochester Road



Varied Frontages - Steadman Close



Cul-de-sac / Crescent - Steadman Close



Deep Frontages - Chalk Road



Limited / Defensible Space - Chalk Road



Courtyard development - Chequers Court



Courtyard Development - Jupp Court

Architectural Vernacular

Facade details

There are a number of details that as a collective help to form the character of Lower Higham. These design features add both interest and depth to the streetscene. Projecting gables, sometimes found with hipped roof elements are a common feature as well as a range of various decorative pediments, entrance canopies and window styles.

External Materials

The material palette in Lower Higham is varied, reflecting the village's incremental growth and the mix of traditional and more contemporary housing styles. Older properties are predominantly constructed from red or brown brick, with occasional use of lighter buff tones. Render is also present, typically in pale, muted colours such as cream, off-white or light grey.

Modern developments and infill schemes introduce more uniform, machine-made bricks, often in orange or buff, and painted render finishes, adding to the diversity of the streetscape.

Cladding is not a dominant feature within the historic core, but becomes more prevalent on newer properties, particularly toward the rural edges of the village. Where used, cladding appears in a variety of colours and is often applied to accentuate architectural features such as gables, bay projections, or first floors. It is more prominently seen in modern streets such as Lake Drive.

While there is variation in materials across different streets, individual dwellings typically maintain a consistent palette, reinforcing a coherent appearance at the plot level. The village's characteristic narrow frontages and simple, two-storey forms help to create a legible and human-scale environment, where changes in materia subtly define the rhythm of the built form.

Although there is no single dominant material across Lower Higham, the layered application of brick, render and occasional cladding contributes to a distinct and locally responsive architectural language that should inform the design of future development.



Weatherboarding to upper storey - Chalk Road



Light coloured render - View to Chalk Road



White render houses - Lake Drive



Projected gable elements in render and red brick - Chalk Road

Roof Profiles

Roof materials are generally clay tiles in red or brown hues, though some slate is present on older or more formal dwellings.

In keeping with local tradition, many dwellings in Lower Higham feature narrow plan forms with simple pitched or gable roofs. This form contributes to a consistent and modest roofscape across much of the village.

Throughout the local area, there are examples of traditional hipped roofs and front-facing gables, often found on larger detached or semi-detached dwellings. More complex roof forms also appear where L- or T-shaped floor plans are used, creating varied eaves lines and contributing architectural interest to the streetscape.

In several locations, particularly in later 20th-century developments, roofs incorporate street-facing dormer windows, either within pitched roof slopes or as part of mansard-style arrangements, providing additional headroom at first-floor level without significantly increasing overall building height.



Pitched dormers



Mansard Roof & Parapet wall detail



Varied roof forms



Repetitive gable roof elements

4.4 Landscape and Green Belt

The Site and Its Landscape

The Site is situated within the lower lying part of Higham village and inside such features as ‘shelterbelts, fence lines, gappy hedgerows and ditches provide an element of enclosure’. The Site contains a long established equestrian land use with a built stable block and hard standing. The combination of the hedgerow, hedge line trees, gentle level change and surrounding tree cover is typical of the host landscape where ‘shelterbelts, fence lines, gappy hedgerows and ditches provide an element of enclosure’ where ’smaller paddocks adjoining properties east of Higham’ beyond which, there are ‘regular pattern of medium to large fields throughout the area.’ The Site is located within the northwestern edge of the village within this smaller, more intimate scaled area that is less open with broad, long views across larger scaled fields, which outlie the village.

Planning Designations

The site does not lie within, adjoin, or is close to a Nationally designated landscape. The site does not lie within, adjoin, or is close to a locally designated landscape, such as a Significant Gap or Green Space. The site is found on the northwestern edge of the settlement overlooked by neighbouring residential development. It is judged that the Site has a previously development nature on the edge of a village scale settlement. The Site is within the (London) Green Belt; albeit on the periphery as the designation meets the settlement of Higham.

The Discernibility of the Site

There are limited locations (particularly within the wider landscape) and from within lower lying landform to the north along the River Thames estuary where the Site is visible in public views given the existing vegetation of ’shelterbelts, fence lines, gappy hedgerows and ditches provide an element of enclosure’ which are seen along the edge of Higham when viewed across the open countryside from the riverside. The Site is predominantly from within the edge of village nearest to and neighbouring the Site, as well as extending across the relatively flat landform to the southwest to the northwest within the initial 1k m distance of the Site, after which point the gently undulating landform screens views of the Site.

The Landscape Setting

The Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment was published in May 2009 finds the Site to be located within the Higham Arable Farmland Landscape Character Area, which is descfibed as:

‘Higham Arable Farmlands are located east of Gravesend and south of Shorne and Higham Marshes….The landform is very gently undulating, and generally rises from north to south. Adjacent to the marshes the land levels out, although inland it retains a Downs dipslope character for example the distinctive dry valley feature east of Higham. There are extensive views across open arable land from within the character area and views out of the character area, towards the marshes and the River Thames in the north, from some higher vantage points and areas near the boundary line.’

Typical features fund within the setting of the Site include the following:

- ‘Very gently undulating topography;
- Open arable farmland;
- Views out to the marshes and the River Thames in the north;
- Original Saxon village of Lower Higham and more recent development to the south;
- Marsh side hamlets and settlements;
- Isolated farmsteads and scattered properties with locally distinct styles and materials;
- Pockets of orchards and garden nurseries; and
- Thames and Medway Canal (disused) runs to Lower Higham.’

It is considered that the published analysis and assessment of landscape character provides a contextual appreciation of the wider landscape. Given this the Site is experienced as within the ‘built limits’ of the northwestern village edge, and in its current use represents an existing built development situated on Chalk Road.



Wide angle baseline panorama views of existing view towards the proposed development

The Green Belt

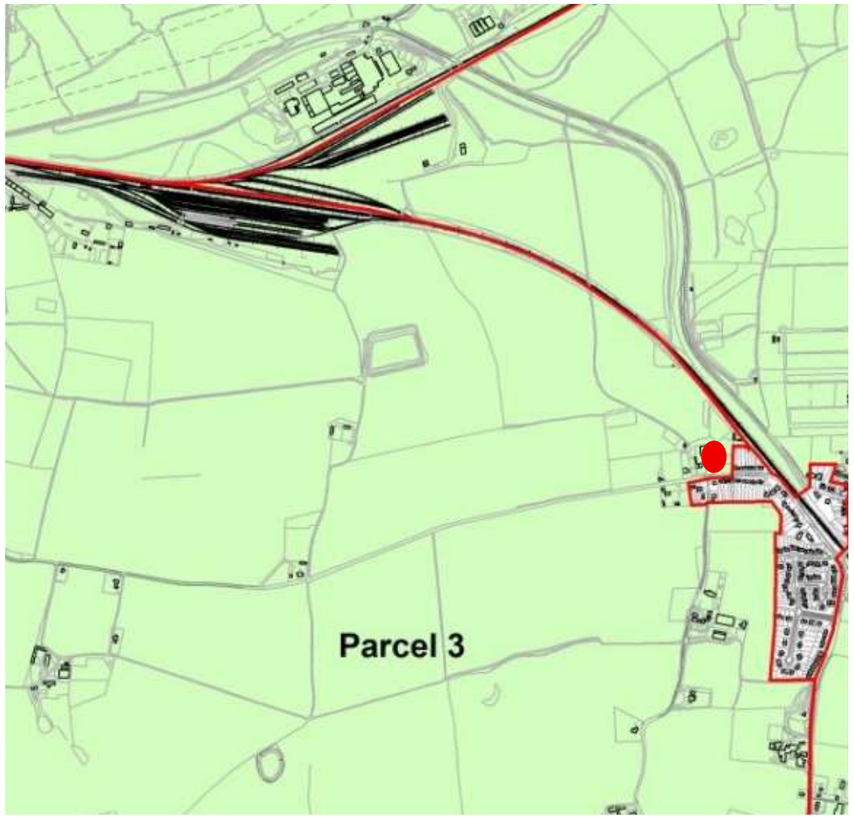
Much of Gravesham's rural area to the east and south of Gravesend and Northfleet falls within the metropolitan Green Belt which is intended to protect London from sprawling further outwards. Parts of the Borough form the eastern boundary to the metropolitan Green Belt.

The whole of the Green Belt in Gravesham is covered by the 2018 Gravesham District Council's Gravesham Green Belt Study. The area has been subdivided into parcels and vary in size and generally follow boundaries formed by roads and railways, and 'in more remote areas with few roads, tracks, the edge of the urban area of Gravesend/ Northfleet/Ebbsfleet defined on the Local Plan Policies Map, edges of settlements inset from the Green Belt defined on the Local Plan Policies Map and the Council's administrative boundary'.

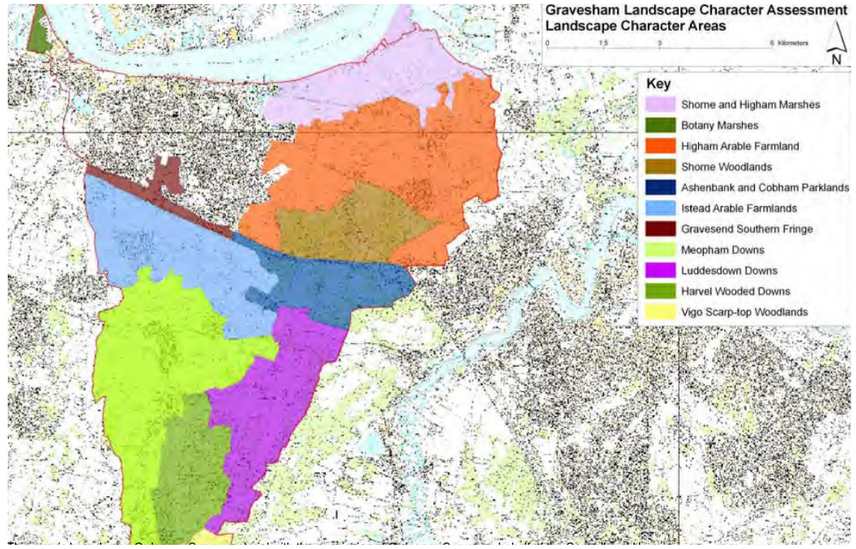
The site is located on the peripheral edge of Parcel 3 within the Green Belt Study (2018). Parcel 3 is described as follows;

'The parcel lies between the north Kent railway line to the north and the A226 Gravesend Road to the south. Queens Farm Road and Green Farm Lane form the western boundary and School Lane comprises the eastern boundary. A number of settlements inset from the Green Belt abut the parcel; Lower Higham to the north east, Higham to the south east and Lower Shorne to the south west. The area is bisected from west to east by Lower Road/Chalk Road.' and

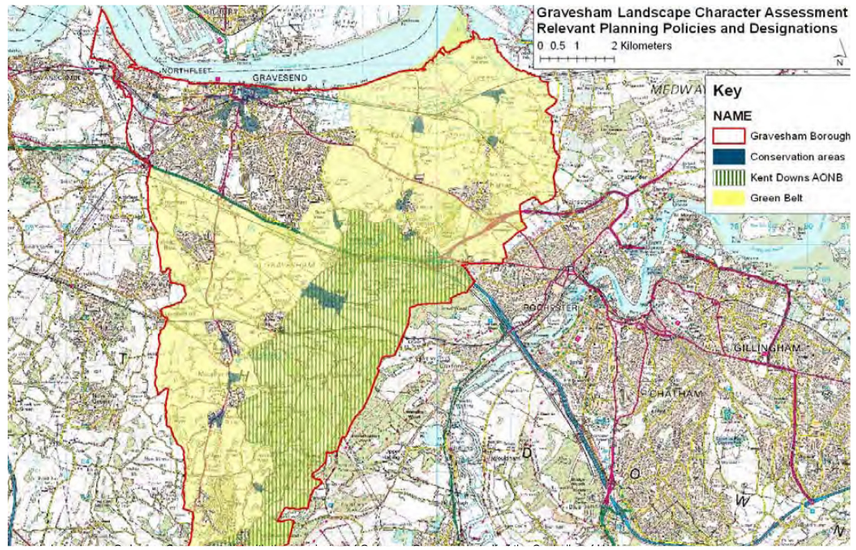
'The parcel is mainly arable land. It contains some scattered farmsteads and dwellings, as well as Higham Primary School. The north western part of the parcel contains railway sidings and industrial development associated with Hoo Junction and industrial buildings around Queens Farm Road.'



Gravesham Green Belt Study April 2018



Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment - Character Areas



Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment - Planning Policies and Designations

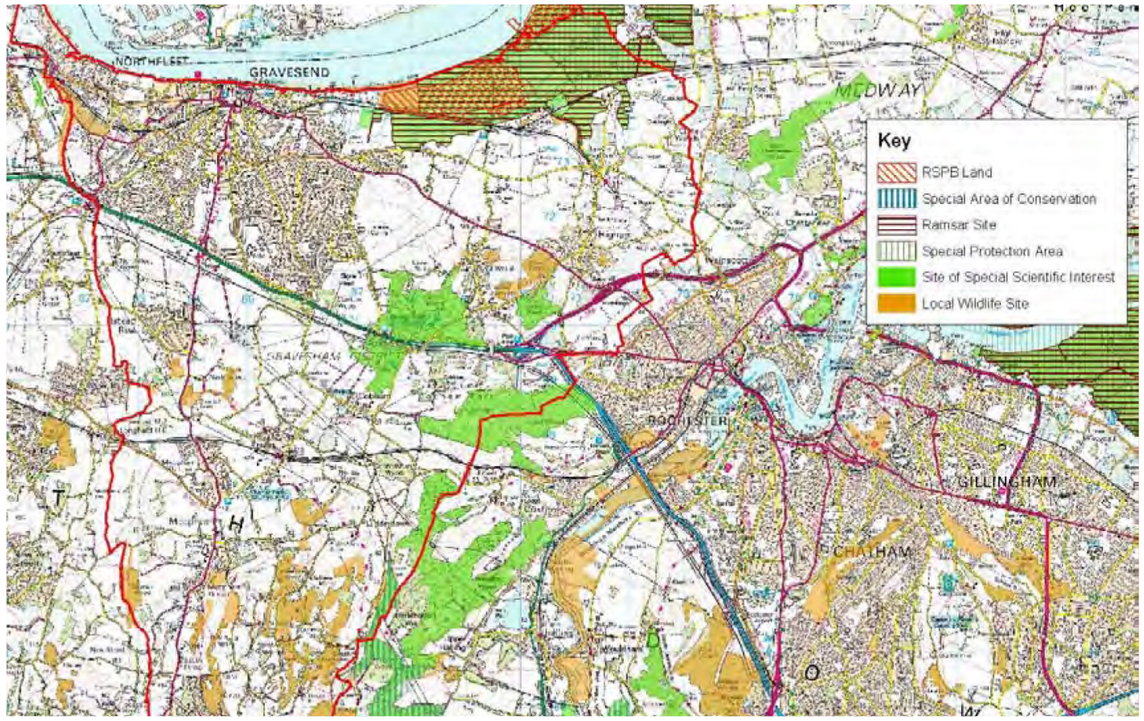
4.5 Ecology and Biodiversity

Existing Baseline: Ecology

The Application Site does not lie within a Designated Site for Nature Conservation. The Application Site is however located within 15m of the Thames Estuary and Marshes Ramsar and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), and 50m of the Canal and Grazing Marsh, Higham Local Wildlife Site (LWS). The Application Site also falls within 1km of the Thames Estuary and Marshes Special Protection Area (SPA).

The Application Site is dominated by grazed modified grassland with limited patches of scrub, a small waterbody and built-up areas. The Site is bounded by hedgerows, trees as well as the railway to the east of the Site. The majority of the habitats within the Application Site are of low ecological value, such as the grazed grassland. The habitats noted for their higher value ecological include the hedgerows, trees, scrub and the waterbody.

The Application Site has been noted to have potential to support a variety of protected species. This includes great crested newts due to the presence of a noteworthy number of waterbodies within the landscape and foraging and roosting bats within the boundary habitats. The adjacent area also has the potential to support notable breeding and wintering bird populations. A suite of protected species surveys will be recommended within the Application Site and within the Zone of Influence, to determine presence/absence and to inform required mitigation requirements to ensure legal compliance within wildlife legislation and policy.



Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment - Biodiversity

4.6 Flood Risk

The Environment Agency Flood Map for Panning shows the majority of the site is located within Flood Zone 1, there is an area in the north of the site located in Flood Zone 2 and Flood Zone 3. The site does however benefit from flood defences along the River Thames.

The Environment Agency Flood Risk from Surface Water Map indicates that the majority of the site is designated to be at low risk from surface water flooding. The map shows three areas within the site to be at higher risk of surface water flooding, however modelling shows these are generally shallow in depths, not exceeding 0.3m.

Flood risk from all other sources is considered to be low.

4.7 Noise & Vibration

The principal sources of noise and vibration affecting the Site is predicted to be from transportation using the Thameslink railway line and Chalk Road.

An environmental sound survey has been undertaken within the Site in order to determine the prevailing acoustics conditions. An acoustic model has been created in order to predict sound levels across the Site for comparison against relevant criteria contained within ProPG, BS8233, AVOG. A vibration assessment has been undertaken in accordance with BS 6472.

Based on the assessments completed utilising the illustrative development framework plan, the following has been determined

- Acoustic modelling has demonstrated that BS 8233's lower-level criterion of 50 dB LAeq,16hr, will be satisfied at all garden locations on the Site without the need for any additional mitigation.
- With regards to internal acoustic conditions across the Site, most habitable rooms will satisfy the relevant criteria through the provision of standard thermal double glazing and direct airpath window mounted trickle ventilators, however, some enhanced glazing and ventilation will be required where plots face Chalk Road and the railway in order to achieve the whole-dwelling ventilation requirements of AD-F
- Vibration levels indicate that there is no probability of adverse comment during the daytime and night time and as such no mitigation is required.

4.8 Arboriculture

The quality and amenity value of the trees on site is relatively low. The removal of the vegetation necessary to allow for the proposed development will not have a significant negative impact on the quality of the tree resource within the wider area.

The proposed landscaping will serve to significantly improve the age, species diversity, bio-diversity value, disease resilience and long-term future of the tree resource whilst providing an attractive environment for future residents. The details of landscaping, including planting specification and aftercare to ensure the successful establishment of all new trees can be secured by use of a standard planning condition

4.9 On-site Services

Within the site overhead BT and low voltage electric cables are present and these will be will be diverted by the developer.

Other diversions including sewer, water, electricity and BT are required within Chalk Road to facilitate access however any diversion costs will be funded by the developer.

Available capacity for key services will be made available to serve the proposed development and where required relevant infrastructure charges will be paid by the developer. Reinforcements to the foul sewer network are required and will be funded by Southern Water as part of their requirements under the Water Industry Act.

4.10 Highways & Access

The existing setting along Chalk Road presents several constraints in terms of pedestrian and vehicular infrastructure. At present, there is no formal footpath provision immediately abutting the site on either the north or south side of the road. As a result, pedestrians are required to walk within the carriageway until a footpath commences adjacent to Michelle Cottages, located to the east of the site boundary.

In a similar manner, a number of the existing terraced dwellings located immediately to the south and east of the site do not benefit from off-street parking. Consequently, residents rely on informal on-street parking within the carriageway, which can lead to congestion and safety concerns, particularly in the absence of a dedicated pedestrian route.

In response to these existing conditions, the proposed development includes the provision of a new footpath along the northern edge of Chalk Road, fronting the site, significantly improving pedestrian safety and connectivity in this part of the village. Additionally, a new off-street parking courtyard is proposed to serve existing residents of the adjacent terraced properties, helping to reduce reliance on on-road parking and ease pressure on the carriageway.

These improvements contribute positively to the local setting by enhancing pedestrian accessibility, improving road safety, and supporting the integration of the new development into the wider village infrastructure.

Street Pattern and Connectivity

The internal layout of the proposed development will be designed in accordance with the guidelines of Manual for Streets (Mfs) and MfS2, with the objective of producing an inclusive design which places people at the heart of the design process. The street pattern produces a hierarchy of highway and active travel routes which enables and encourages activity within the site.

Routes are designed with desire lines considered, and levels of activity and overlooking buildings provide an increased sense of security for pedestrians, further encouraging active lifestyles and building a sense of community.

The site will be designed to achieve a 20mph speed limit within the development to provide a safe environment for pedestrians, making crossing routes safer where pedestrians and vehicles are moving around one another.

Local Facilities

Lower Higham is located around 1.5km to the north of Higham.

A number of facilities are situated within a 2.0km walking distance, referred to in PPG13 and referenced within MfS. Most of the facilities are situated within a c.1.0km to 1.8km walk from the proposal site.

Higham Primary School, Highcliffe Village Pre-School and Higham Recreational Grounds is a c.1.0km walk to the south of the site.

Further afield, local facilities within Higham are situated within a c.1.8km walk, which are likely to be used on a day-to-day basis. This includes, but not limited to, a hairdresser, fish and chip shop, Chinese takeaway, a village grocer, Gardeners Arms Public House, post office, and local churches.

Active Travel

All facilities can be reached via existing footways that run alongside Chalk Road and School Lane. Both routes are lightly trafficked, which will increase their appeal to existing and future residents to use.

The local road network within the vicinity of the site is rural and lightly trafficked and is therefore likely to be usable for cyclists of all abilities.

The site is situated within close proximity to the National Cycle Network (NCN), with access provided to local and regional destinations, such as Gravesend, via on-road and traffic-free routes.

The figures adjacent present achievable walking and cycling distances from the site via existing walking and cycling connections, as well as the local facilities and destinations that can be reached.

Public Transport

The nearest bus stops are situated c.480m to the south of the site on School Lane, adjacent Higham railway station. Both bus stops provide access to several bus services, including the 111, 311 and 417. Collectively, these provide services to Higham, Gravesend, and Cliffe.

Higham railway station is also situated c.480m to the south of the site. The station provides direct connections to Gravesend, Gillingham, London St Pancras (incl. stations in London, Luton Airport, and Luton, generally at a frequency of 2 per hour Monday to Sunday.

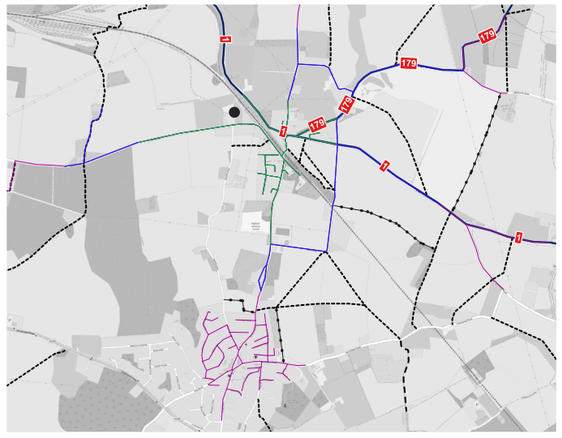
Given the frequency of services and destinations serviced from Higham railway station, it is likely that this would be an attractive method of travel, especially for commuting trips.



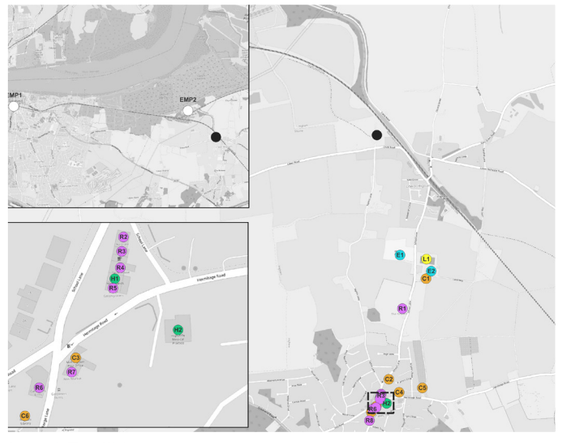
Chalk Road - no footpaths at site frontage



Chalk Road - parked cars on roadside



Walking Distances



Local Facilities

Key

- Site Location
- Walking Distances
  - 800m
  - 1.2km
  - 2.0km
- Public Bridleway
- Public Footpath
- Restricted Byway
- On-Road Route on NCN
- On-Road Route not on NCN
- Traffic-Free Route not on NCN
- Traffic-Free Route on NCN
- Community
- Education
- Employment
- Healthcare
- Leisure
- Retail

4.11 Movement Networks



The site is well connected within the local movement network. A railway line runs along the north-eastern boundary, providing a strong transport connection, with Higham Station located nearby and within walking distance, offering regular services between London and Medway towns. Chalk Road, a primary route, runs along the southern boundary of the site and provides direct road access west towards Gravesend and south into Lower Higham. The area benefits from several bus stops within walking distance, connecting the site to surrounding villages and larger settlements. There is also a dedicated cycle route that follows the Thames and Medway Canal along Canal Road, forming part of a wider green corridor that encourages active travel and recreational use.

PROW
RESTRICTED BYWAY
CYCLE ROUTES
PROMOTED ROUTES
PRIMARY ROUTES
SECONDARY ROUTES
TERTIARY ROUTES
HIGHAM STATION
RAILWAY LINE
BUS STOPS

4.12 Policy Plan



The site is located within the Green Belt but is in close proximity to the wider suburban edge of Lower Higham, with the parish boundary lying just to the west of the site. To the east is the Lower Higham Conservation Area, which reflects the historic core of the village and contains several heritage assets. Towards the north, the site is near a designated Ramsar site along the Thames and Medway Canal, which is recognised for its international importance as a wetland habitat.

GREEN BELT
SCIENTIFIC INTEREST
RAMSAR SITE
BUILT UP AREA
LOWER HIGHAM CONSERVATION AREA
PARISH BOUNDARY
GRADE II LISTED BUILDING

4.13 Land Uses



The site is positioned between a mix of existing land uses, with residential development located directly to the south of Chalk Road. Beyond the immediate built-up area, the surrounding land is predominantly agricultural, contributing to the rural setting of the village. However, there are also pockets of commercial and educational land uses nearby, including Higham Primary School and Higham Village Pre-school, which provide important local services and contribute to the community infrastructure.

AGRICULTURAL

RESIDENTIAL

COMMERCIAL

EDUCATION

TRAIN STATION

4.14 Building Heights



The surrounding area features a variety of building heights, generally ranging from 1 to 2.5 storeys, reflecting the mixed residential character of Lower Higham. However, within the immediate vicinity of the site, particularly along Chalk Road, the predominant built form is two storeys. This consistent scale contributes to a coherent street scene and a well-defined residential edge along the southern boundary of the site.

2.5 STOREY

2 STOREY

1.5 STOREY

1 STOREY

4.15 Site Considerations

1. The site lies within the designated Green Belt. Any proposed development will need to respond sensitively to the current landscaped setting, particularly along the western and northern boundaries, which will form the new interface with the Green Belt.
2. There are several mature trees located along the eastern boundary and scattered within the site. These natural features are to be retained where possible and enhanced as part of a comprehensive green infrastructure strategy.
3. The railway line runs partially along the site's eastern boundary. Development in this area will require careful separation, with appropriate buffer treatments to address acoustic impacts and visual screening
4. An existing farm track currently crosses the site and provides an established access route. This track will need to be retained and accommodated within the proposed layout.
5. The design of the site access must incorporate two large visibility splays, which will strongly influence the location and alignment of the primary vehicular access point into the development.
6. The northern portion of the site lies within Flood Zones 2 and 3. Any development proposals will need to respond through appropriate layout design and include suitable mitigation measures. A Flood Risk Assessment will be required as part of any planning submission.



Key

- SITE BOUNDARY
- SITE ACCESS
- GREEN BELT
- CONSERVATION AREA
- NOISE SOURCE
- RESTRICTED VIEWS
- FLOOD ZONE 2
- FLOOD ZONE 3
- SURFACE FLOODWATER RISK
- SENSITIVE FRONTAGES/VIEWS
- SPINE ROAD
- EXISTING FARM TRACK/ACCESS
- PROWS
- EXISTING BUILDINGS TO BE REMOVED
- RAILWAY LINE
- RAILWAY EASEMENT
- VISIBILITY SPLAYS
- OVERHEAD UTILITIES

4.16 Design Opportunites Plan

1. Vehicular access from Chalk Road to the south provides a logical and efficient connection to the existing highway network. This also presents an opportunity to create a landscaped entrance that establishes a strong sense of arrival and reinforces the green character of the development.
2. The site presents an opportunity to retain and enhance existing vegetation and mature tree planting, contributing to local character and providing a green framework for the development.
3. There is further potential to reinforce tree planting along site boundaries, particularly to the west and north, to help mitigate visual impacts of the development from the wider landscape and enhance the site's interface with the Green Belt.
4. The area of the site within Flood Zones 2 and 3 offers the opportunity to be used as public open space and BNG enhancement, contributing to flood resilience while providing a multifunctional landscape. In combination with a green buffer along the western edge, this space can accommodate safe play areas, promote biodiversity, and enhance wildlife habitats within a low-traffic environment.
5. A clearly defined street hierarchy can be established, with a primary spine road terminating in views toward open space. This creates a strong sense of place and visual orientation throughout the development. The layout has been carefully designed to round off the existing built-up edge of Lower Higham, forming a natural and coherent extension to the village.
6. Proposed streets will be high-quality in design, taking cues from the surrounding built form in terms of scale, rhythm, and layout. The development aims to be characterful and locally inspired, drawing on familiar patterns and traditional materials seen elsewhere in the village.



Key

- SITE BOUNDARY
- SITE ACCESS
- GREEN SPACE
- PARCEL
- PLAY SPACE OPPORTUNITY
- SUDS OPPORTUNITY
- FLOOD ZONE 2
- FLOOD ZONE 3
- EXISTING POND
- CHALK ROAD
- EXISTING FARM TRACK/ACCESS
- POTENTIAL PARKING FOR EXISTING DWELLINGS
- SECONDARY ROUTE
- TERTIARY ROUTE
- RAILWAY LINE
- PROW

5.0 Design Development

5.1 Vision

The vision for the proposed development is to deliver a sensitively designed, high-quality residential community that forms a natural extension to the existing settlement of Lower Higham. The scheme will provide up to 40 new homes, with 50% delivered as affordable housing, meeting local needs and offering a varied mix of tenures and house types to support a diverse and inclusive community.

Set within the Green Belt, the development will be carefully designed to respect its rural context and surrounding character. Existing trees and hedgerows will be retained and enhanced where possible, with new open space formed to opportunities for informal recreation, children's play, and biodiversity enhancements.

Homes will take inspiration from the local vernacular, responding to the predominantly two-storey scale of nearby buildings along Chalk Road, and using a palette of materials and architectural detailing that reflect the area's traditional character. A clear street hierarchy will promote legibility, with a primary street aligned to open space views and an enhanced entrance from Chalk Road creating a welcoming gateway into the development.

Residents will benefit from convenient access to Higham Station, local bus routes, and nearby community services including Higham Primary School and local shops. Walking and cycling connections will be prioritised, supported by the nearby Thames and Medway Canal cycle route, promoting sustainable and active modes of travel.

The development aspires to create a strong sense of place that not only respects the local heritage, environmental sensitivities, and visual setting of the site, but also delivers a sustainable, well-connected, high-quality development. The design approach seeks to achieve an outline framework that aligns with the objectives of the Gravesham Area Design Code and the Kent Design Guide, ensuring that both local and county-level design principles are embedded from the outset. This approach reflects the wider aspirations for place-making while also supporting the long-term needs of the Lower Higham community.



Ecological enhancements & benefits to wildlife



Provision of up to 40 new homes



Policy compliance



High quality public realm & access to open spaces for all



Strengthen and link communities through building inclusive environments



50% Affordable housing provision



Respects the wider local character & creates a high quality and lasting design



Successful location



Varied housing typologies that will increase local housing choice and provide character



Well designed streets



Distinctive character informed by local vernacular



Communal food growing



Informal doorstep play



Communal food growing



Meaningful open space and amenity





Drainage strategies

5.2 Concept Sketches

The design concept has been informed by early survey work and site assessments carried out by specialist consultants, helping to shape a layout that responds to the site's conditions, features, and surrounding context. This has ensured the development is developed with its opportunities and constraints in mind from the outset.

Initial sketches and studies explore how new routes, buildings, and open spaces can be arranged to create a well-connected and attractive new place to live. The layout has been guided by the need to provide clear movement routes for both vehicles and pedestrians, while ensuring that green spaces are integrated throughout the site.

The design allows for appropriate separation from nearby properties, includes space for public open areas, and takes into account key views into the site from the surrounding area, including the new Green Belt interface.

A focus has been placed on creating a sense of arrival as well as placing emphasis on key locations and views to shape the overall structure of the scheme.

Shaped by the guidance set out in the Kent Design Guide and Gravesham Area Design Code, the design-led process has set the foundation for a development that is both sensitive to its surroundings and capable of delivering a strong sense of place.



5.3 Enhancing Features

While some existing vegetation will need to be removed to accommodate the proposed development, the layout seeks to retain and enhance key natural features wherever possible. Where appropriate, existing landscaping will be reinforced and new planting introduced to integrate the scheme sensitively into its setting. Along the railway boundary, additional landscape screening will be considered, subject to agreement with Network Rail and any associated operational constraints. Existing hedgerows can also be strengthened in places to help create a linear green corridor across the site, improving connectivity between spaces. Through this approach, the development will deliver generous areas of public open space that support both recreation and local biodiversity.

- SITE BOUNDARY
- EXISTING VEGETATION
- EXISTING BUILDINGS
- SITE CONTEXT
- RAILWAY LINE



5.4 Development Blocks

With site constraints in mind, the proportions of the site lend themselves to a slightly irregular block formation, creating a layout that feels organic while still providing structure. The design is also guided by the extents of the existing built-up edge, helping to ensure a logical and sensitive transition between the new development and the surrounding village. This approach allows for flexibility in accommodating a range of house types and parking arrangements, helping to deliver a varied and responsive residential character. Existing landscape features, particularly along the northern boundary and at the site's edges, will be retained and enhanced to create smaller, informal green spaces. These areas will help to draw pedestrians into and through the site, improving connectivity and encouraging interaction with the landscape.

- SITE BOUNDARY
- EXISTING VEGETATION
- EXISTING BUILDINGS
- SITE CONTEXT
- RAILWAY LINE
- FARM TRACK/ACCESS
- PRIMARY ROUTE
- PARCEL
- GREEN SPACE
- SUDS
- VEGETATION BUFFER



5.5 Nodes & Frontages

Built form will be used to strengthen key routes and desire lines, with active frontages, natural surveillance, and carefully considered materials enhancing the visual interest and overall pedestrian experience. The generous setback along Chalk Road provides an opportunity to create a welcoming sense of arrival, with a well-landscaped edge that frames the entrance into the development. Nodes and focal points will be strategically placed to aid movement and orientation, while distinctive focal buildings throughout the site will introduce variety in the townscape, supporting both legibility and wayfinding.

- SITE BOUNDARY
- EXISTING VEGETATION
- EXISTING BUILDINGS
- SITE CONTEXT
- RAILWAY LINE
- FARM TRACK/ACCESS
- VEGETATION BUFFER
- PRIMARY ROUTE
- PARCEL
- GREEN SPACE
- SUDS
- POS
- BUILT FORM
- NODES

5.6 Armature Plan

The armature plan has been developed through various illustrative layouts and development sketches which have considered street hierarchy, open space location, built form frontages, and pedestrian experience that works with the existing constraints.

Street Hierarchy

- The proposed street network responds directly to the site's constraints, with routes carefully positioned to work around retained access points and routes as well as existing landscape features while providing a natural flow through the development.
- A clear hierarchy of movement is established, from a village primary spine road accessed from Chalk Road, to smaller shared surface streets and low-speed lanes that create more intimate relationships to edge conditions.
- Key views and pedestrian desire routes have been considered with the alignment of streets, which will offer glimpses of open space, mature trees, and focal buildings to support legibility.

Layout

- The layout is shaped by a slightly irregular block structure, allowing for flexibility while creating a coherent and legible place.
- The arrangement of homes and spaces is designed to ensure that streets and green spaces benefit from active frontages and natural surveillance, promoting a safe and welcoming environment.
- Development is focused around a central primary street, with tertiary routes branching east and west to serve the majority of the development.
- Blocks are structured to allow for varied house types, on-plot and off-plot parking, and compliant garden spaces, while maintaining comfortable separation distances and privacy throughout.

Open Space

- The development proposes a generous landscape framework, with open space forming an integral part of the overall design and character of the site.
- The northern area of the site, falling within Flood Zones 2 and 3, will be used to deliver accessible public open space, offering a multifunctional green area that supports drainage, biodiversity, and recreation.
- Boundary planting will be enhanced to reinforce separation from neighbouring areas, screen the railway line, and create a soft, natural edge to the Green Belt.
- Existing mature trees, particularly along the eastern boundary will be retained as far as possible and celebrated as features within the open space network.
- A series of safe, low-traffic play areas will be positioned within walkable catchments to encourage activity, play, and social interaction.

Key

- SITE ACCESS
- PUBLIC OPEN SPACE
- PARCEL
- BUILT FORM
- FOCAL POINT
- SUDS
- FLOOD RISK ZONE 2
- FLOOD RISK ZONE 3
- EXISTING POND
- PROPOSED PARKING
- SPINE ROAD
- EXISTING FARM TRACK/ACCESS
- EXISTING FARM TRACK REMOVED
- PRIMARY ROAD
- SECONDARY ROAD
- RAILWAY
- PROPOSED FOOTPATH
- PLAY AREA



Initial Armature Plan

5.7 Concept Development

Following the initial armature plan the concept was developed further in conjunction with technical review and feedback from the consultant team, pre-application meeting and public consultation. Key changes outlined below:

- Highway searches were undertaken, and the position of the site access was adjusted to accommodate the required visibility splays without encroaching on third-party land. As a result, the alignment of the access road was modified to reduce excessive curvature.
- The internal road geometry was refined to support shared use by residential traffic and occasional farm vehicle movements. This adjustment enabled an extension of the developable area towards the western boundary.
- A partial farm access route along the main spine road, with a diversion northward through the open space, was explored.
- The size and position of the attenuation basin were revised following detailed drainage capacity assessments.
- The overall development footprint was pulled back to ensure no encroachment into Flood Zone 2 or 3.
- The building has been brought forward so that proposed built form better aligns with existing properties along Chalk Road. Property frontages still remain deep and can allow for the opportunity for planted spaces to soften the street scene, provide visual interest, and contribute to a greener, more attractive public realm.
- The proposed layout introduces development onto the western boundary, replacing the existing green buffer in this location. While this represents a shift from the previously more open edge, care will be taken to ensure that this new interface creates a well-considered and attractive interface. Opportunities exist to incorporate appropriate boundary treatments to help soften this edge and maintain a positive visual transition between the village and the surrounding landscape.



Armature Plan Development

5.8 Pre Application Engagement

An initial pre-application meeting with Gravesham Borough Council was held on 16th June 2025 with the Planning Case Officer. The discussion was constructive and the queries raised at the meeting have been considered during the layout design development process. Feedback on the emerging proposals was provided, with the following key points raised for consideration:

- The proposed housing mix and density should reflect local character and context with the scale and plot arrangement more closely reflecting the surrounding vernacular.
- The proposed housing mix should align with adopted Policy PS14.
- A daylight and sunlight analysis should be prepared to assess the potential internal layouts impacts on amenity.
- The provision and configuration of open space should be provided in accordance with relevant local guidance and policy expectations.

5.9 Public Consultation

The public and stakeholder engagement strategy included early pre-application discussions with relevant technical bodies, notifying Parish and Ward Councillors and the delivery of a consultation leaflet to local residents with details of a website and questionnaire with additional information.

A leaflet was distributed to 580 addresses in Higham and Lower Higham on 9 May 2025. The leaflet directed residents to a site specific website that provided more information on the emerging proposals, the site constraints and opportunities and allowed for residents to provide comments and complete a short questionnaire. The consultation period closed on 26 May 2025, albeit comments received after this date were still accepted.

The application is supported by a Statement of Community Engagement which provides more detail on the engagement undertaken and a summary of the 33 public consultation responses received.

Overall, the feedback received was constructive. There was some support for the proposed development with comments relating to a range of themes, including the need for smaller properties and homes suitable for older people and support for the redevelopment of the site. The majority of comments raised matters around impact on traffic in the surrounding area, the natural environment, and the impact of the development on infrastructure.

WE WOULD LIKE YOUR COMMENTS

Richborough are keen to hear your views on the emerging development proposals before they submit the two Outline Planning Application. We welcome any comments that you may have, including what you might want to see on the Sites.

This is not the last time you will be able to make comments on these proposals. Once the planning application is submitted to Gravesham Borough Council you will also be able to submit formal comments to the Council directly. These comments will be considered by the Council when they determine the planning applications. In the future, there will be further opportunities for safe engagement to allow more involvement in how the detail of the schemes might look.

We are particularly interested in your answers to the following questions:

1. What types of housing do you think would be most suitable for the Site?
2. Do you support the provision of open space as part of the development, and do you have any suggestions for how this area could be laid out?
3. Do you have any comments on the Illustrative Framework Plan?
4. Please provide any other comments you have on the proposed development.

Please submit your comments by **26 May 2025** by visiting **www.chalkroad-higham.co.uk**

Our public consultation has now launched.
You can share your views by visiting our consultation website on:

www.chalkroad-higham.co.uk

OR **SCAN ME**

Please submit your comments by 26th May 2025

Richborough

PUBLIC CONSULTATION | MAY 2025

Land North of Chalk Road, Lower Higham



Richborough is preparing Outline Planning Application for new residential development at Land to the north of Chalk Road, Higham.

The Site comprises previously developed brownfield land and is identified as a draft residential allocation in the emerging Site Allocations and Development Management Policies document with an estimated capacity of 40 dwellings (Site Reference GBS-C).

WE WOULD LIKE YOUR VIEWS

This leaflet has been prepared so we can share the emerging proposals for the Site and so we can provide details of the public consultation website.

We are seeking feedback regarding our development proposals and your comments will help shape the finalised planning application before submission to Gravesham Borough Council.

ABOUT US

This Site is being promoted by Richborough, a land promotion business who work in partnership with landowners, Councils, local stakeholders and the community to bring forward development schemes that deliver new homes and facilities that meet the needs of the local area.

Richborough's guiding ethos is to create sustainable developments that are of a high quality and integrate sympathetically with the surroundings.

www.chalkroad-higham.co.uk

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LAND NORTH OF CHALK ROAD, LOWER HIGHAM

The Site is immediately north of Chalk Road, to the north west of Lower Higham, and is occupied by several buildings and other structures associated with the existing equestrian and light industrial uses present on site. The existing buildings are of a significant scale and there are also large areas of hardstanding around the buildings.

The Site is sustainably located within walking distance of a range of existing services and facilities including a Primary School and Train Station.

Our emerging proposals comprise the demolition of existing buildings and the development of around 40 dwellings, including affordable homes, additional landscaping, retention of existing green infrastructure and new areas of public open space.

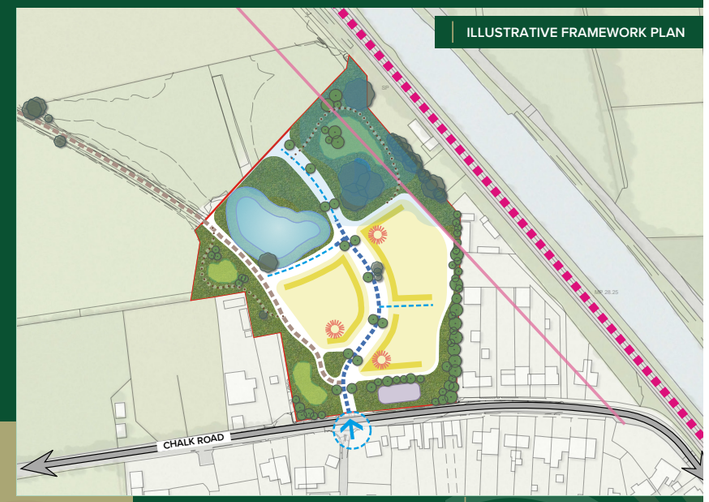
In advance of the submission of an Outline Planning Application, we are now consulting the local community on our emerging proposals, which have been informed by various site assessments, including a series of technical and environmental studies.

We would like to hear your views so we can review feedback before finalising and submitting our proposals and designs.

Our proposals will deliver a range of benefits as follows:

- The delivery of around 40 dwellings with a mix of market and affordable homes (compliant with policy requirements) contributing to local housing need;
- A variety of new homes of varying tenures to create and add to a diverse and balanced community;
- Retention of existing trees and hedgerows around the edge and across the Site, where possible;
- Delivery of an extensive and accessible landscape and open space strategy, including an area of play, that can be enjoyed by all residents;
- Ecological enhancements through the provision of sustainable drainage systems, biodiverse rich grassland, new hedgerows, and tree planting which would uplift the biodiversity value of the Site by more than 10%.

ILLUSTRATIVE FRAMEWORK PLAN



KEY:

- SITE ACCESS
- PUBLIC OPEN SPACE
- PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL AREA
- BUILT FORM
- FOCAL POINT
- SUSTAINABLE DRAINAGE
- FLOOD RISK ZONE 2
- FLOOD RISK ZONE 3
- EXISTING POND
- PROPOSED PARKING
- SPINE ROAD
- EXISTING FARM TRACK/ACCESS
- PRIMARY ROAD
- SECONDARY ROAD
- RAILWAY
- RAILWAY EASEMENT
- PROPOSED FOOTPATH
- PLAY AREA

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Public Consultation Leaflet

6.0 Proposal

6.1 Illustrative Development Framework Plan & Illustrative Masterplan

The Illustrative Development Framework Plan and Illustrative Masterplan have been shaped through an iterative and collaborative design process, informed by detailed site analysis, technical inputs, and feedback from pre-application discussions with Gravesham Borough Council and the local community.

Informed by this process, the overall development approach has been refined to better reflect the prevailing residential character and built form of Lower Higham. While specific housing types and layouts will be determined at the reserved matters stage, the framework supports a range of dwelling typologies that are sympathetic to local scale, grain, and appearance.

The Development Framework Plan establishes the overarching structuring principles for the site, including land use distribution, movement and access strategy, and landscape approach. It sets out a flexible yet robust design structure that responds to both physical and technical constraints, including flood zones, existing vegetation, and buffers required to mitigate the effects of noise and vibration from the adjacent railway line. It also incorporates practical offsets to protect residential amenity and promote environmental performance.

In response to early design feedback, the proposed parking court for existing residents has been relocated from the road frontage to the eastern corner of the site. This helps reduce car dominance along Chalk Road, enabling a more attractive and pedestrian-friendly street scene, while also improving the relationship between public and private spaces within the scheme.

Building on the principles outlined in the framework, the Illustrative Masterplan demonstrates how development could be delivered within these parameters. It illustrates a legible, landscape-led layout that integrates existing features where appropriate and establishes a network of streets, spaces, and building plots that together support a high-quality, sustainable neighbourhood. Key features include small courtyard-style groupings, orientation of built form to activate streets and spaces, and the use of nodal points to reinforce legibility and placemaking.

While illustrative in nature, the masterplan presents one way the site could evolve in line with local and national planning policy. It strikes a considered balance between development efficiency, contextual sensitivity, and placemaking quality—supporting the delivery of a well-integrated new community that enhances the character and function of Lower Higham.

6.2 Housing Mix and Quality Standards

The proposed development will deliver up to 40 high-quality dwellings within a carefully landscaped environment, designed to respect and enhance the setting of the site and the wider local area.

An illustrative masterplan shows a potential scheme incorporating a diverse housing mix, which could include 1-bedroom maisonettes and 2, 3, and 4-bedroom houses. The illustrative mix responds to a broad range of housing needs, including the policy requirement for affordable housing through both rental and shared ownership tenures. The proposals support the creation of a balanced, sustainable, and inclusive community, aligned with local housing priorities identified by Gravesham Borough Council.

All dwellings will be designed to comply with the Nationally Described Space Standards (NDSS) to ensure high-quality internal living environments, in accordance with the Gravesham Design Code . In addition, 100% of homes will meet Building Regulations Part M4(2) for accessible and adaptable dwellings, with 10% to Part M4(3) standards to meet the needs of wheelchair users and others requiring enhanced accessibility.

Affordable housing will be provided at 50%, in line with relevant national policy requirements. Affordable homes will be ‘tenure blind’, indistinguishable in appearance, location, layout, and materiality from market homes, thereby promoting social cohesion and integration across the development.

Private gardens for houses will comply with the minimum standards set out in the Gravesham Design Code, while maisonettes will benefit from private or communal amenity space, ensuring all residents have access to high-quality outdoor areas.

The proposed development promotes a density and layout in keeping with the surrounding character. The parameters allow for a generous sense of openness, a well-defined public realm, appropriate separation distances, and carefully considered amenity spaces.



SP

THAMES AND MEDWAY CANAL

CANAL ROAD

MP 28.25

SUDS

orchard

play

Atlantis

7.3m

CHALK ROAD

Cuckold's Corner

Michele Cottages

TAYLORS LANE

Avonlea

Haselden Cottages

Orchard View

Whitebread House

16

9

8

6

4

1

N

Key

- SITE BOUNDARY
- PUBLIC OPEN SPACE
- CHILDREN'S PLAY
- COMMUNITY ORCHARD
- BUILT FORM
- SUDS
- EXISTING POND
- EXISTING VEGETATION
- PROPOSED TREE PLANTING
- PRIMARY ROAD
- SHARED SURFACES

Illustrative Masterplan

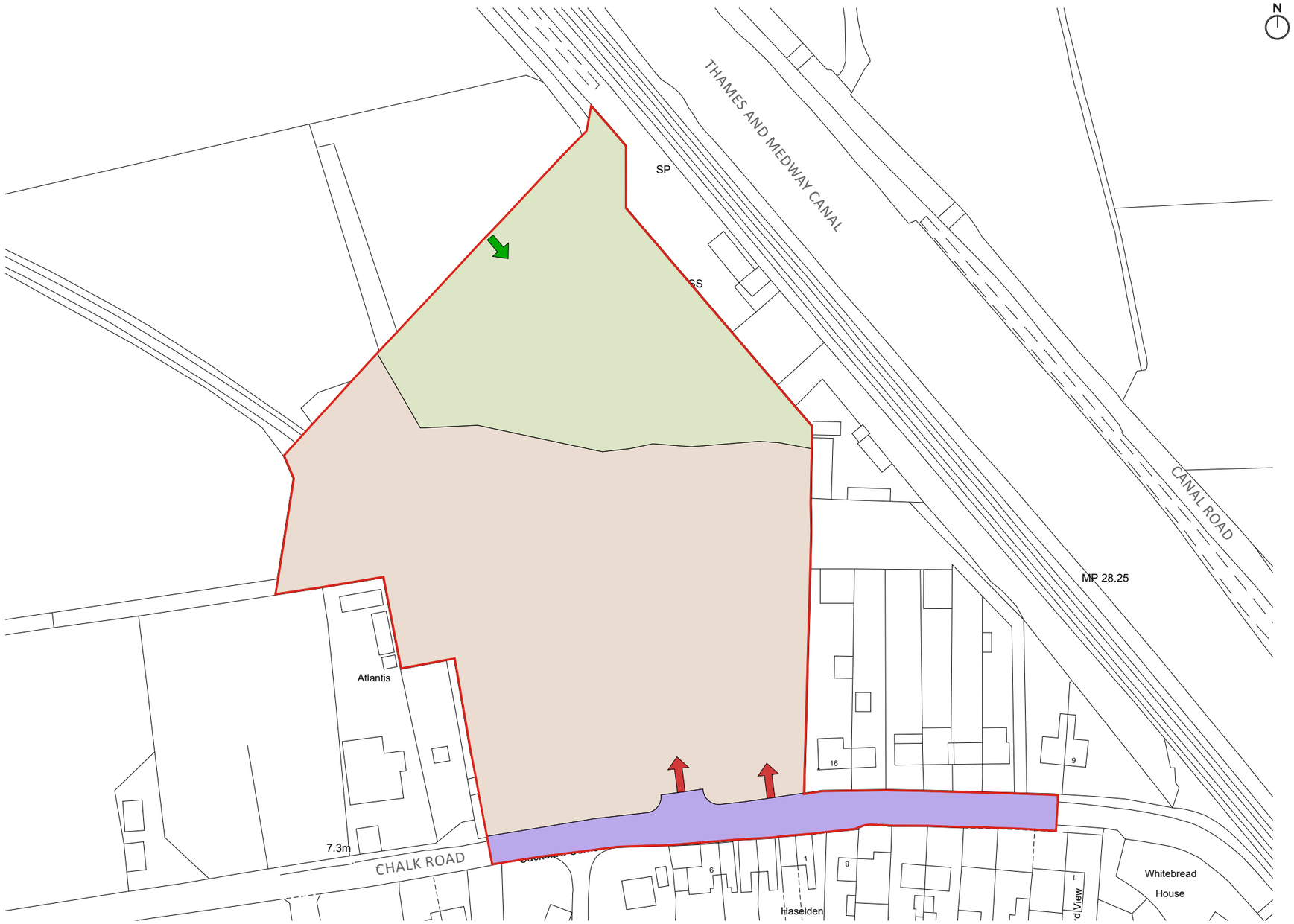
6.3 Land Use Parameters

The proposed Land Use Parameter Plan sets out the intended distribution of uses across the site to guide future detailed design. The development will include:

- Residential development, located within defined development parcels, to accommodate up to 40 dwellings. The layout will respond to the site's constraints and opportunities, landscape features, and amenity considerations
- Public open space, provided as an integral part of a landscape-led approach. This will offer opportunities for informal recreation, contribute to biodiversity, and support the overall character and quality of the development.
- Access infrastructure, including land for the formation of a new vehicular access including visibility splays.

Three vehicular access/egress points are proposed - a primary access for all vehicle modes which will serve the main residential area, a secondary access/egress specifically for agricultural vehicles, ensuring continued access to agricultural land to the north to enable appropriate long-term site management, and a third access that will provide entry to a localised parking area.

These parameters are illustrated on the accompanying Land Use Parameter Plan, which maintains flexibility for future design refinement.



Land Use Parameter Plan

6.4 Open Space Typologies

The emerging open space strategy is landscape-led and aims to provide a variety of multifunctional green spaces to support health, well-being, biodiversity, and community interaction. While not forming part of the formal application submission, an indicative Open Space Typologies Plan has been prepared to illustrate the potential distribution and character of open space across the site.

The plan identifies a series of indicative open space typologies, including:

- Amenity green space: Informal green areas that provide visual relief, opportunities for passive recreation, and contribute to the overall landscape character of the development.
- Community orchard: A defined area of land that could be brought forward as a shared, productive landscape feature, encouraging community engagement, seasonal interest, and ecological benefit.
- Children's and young people's play space: An indicative location for play provision is identified, supporting inclusive and accessible opportunities for physical activity and social interaction across a range of age groups.

See table below which outlines the proposed public open space typologies, provision, and requirements, calculated in accordance with Gravesham Borough Council's Open Space Standards Paper (August 2016). Based on an assumed average household size of 2.3 persons, the development is expected to generate approximately 92 residents. The scheme demonstrates an overprovision of public open space, ensuring that the development not only meets but exceeds the minimum requirements to support health, well-being, and community use.

All open space areas will be subject to detailed design at a later stage, and will be developed in accordance with local planning policy and relevant guidance to ensure high-quality provision that meets the needs of future residents.

POS Typologies	Requirement (Ha)	Provision (Ha)
Amenity Green Space	0.085	0.438
Children & Young People	0.003	0.003
Alottments	0.038	0.038*

*Provided as a community orchard due to being located in flood zone 2.



6.5 Proposed Density

The proposed development is based on up to 40 dwellings, resulting in a gross density of 33.9 dwellings per hectare (dph) and a net density of 42.6 dph. This represents an appropriate and efficient use of the land, optimising the site's capacity while remaining responsive to its edge-of-settlement location and surrounding village context. The density supports a layout that accommodates a mix of dwelling types, generous open space provision, and a well-considered street hierarchy, ensuring the scheme integrates sensitively with the existing built form of Lower Higham.

6.6 Character & Placemaking

While detailed design will be addressed at reserved matters stage, the Illustrative Masterplan demonstrates how character and placemaking can be successfully achieved within the development. The proposed layout illustrates a clear street hierarchy, the orientation of built form to reinforce active frontages, and the inclusion of intimate courtyard-style groupings that reflect local vernacular patterns. Key nodal points and open spaces are used to structure the layout, create a sense of arrival, and promote legibility throughout the site. These principles establish a strong foundation for delivering a distinctive, locally responsive, and well-integrated residential environment that complements the character of Lower Higham.

6.7 Building Heights

The typologies used to inform the Illustrative Masterplan have been carefully considered, with a predominantly two-storey building height proposed to reflect the prevailing built form and massing found within the surrounding context of Lower Higham. This approach ensures the development integrates sensitively with its village setting. However, the selective use of taller elements, such as 2.5-storey buildings, may be explored at key locations to define marker buildings, strengthen important spaces, and enhance legibility and wayfinding across the site. Building heights will ultimately be confirmed at reserved matters stage, guided by these context-driven principles.

6.8 Street Hierarchy

The proposed street hierarchy has been developed in accordance with the principles set out in the Kent Design Guide and Gravesham Design Code, with an emphasis on legibility, safety, and the creation of a well-connected and inclusive movement network. The Illustrative Masterplan demonstrates how a logical hierarchy of routes can be established, supported by dedicated footpaths, active frontages, and street layouts that respond to the orientation of built form.

Proposed materials and surfacing treatments will reflect the function and status of each street within the hierarchy, reinforcing character and ease of navigation. The layout also allows for service and emergency vehicle access, in line with technical requirements, and incorporates space for street tree planting where appropriate, contributing to the overall landscape quality and environmental benefits of the scheme.

The approach to street design has been subject to technical input and review by the design team and highway advisors, and there is broad agreement that the framework complies with relevant highways design principles and provides a robust basis for future detailed design.

6.9 Frontages

The illustrative layout of the development has been carefully arranged to ensure that building frontages respond positively to key site edges and spaces, supporting both character and function.

Railway Edge (North-East Boundary)
Proposed built form has been located outside of the designated railway easement zone, respecting operational constraints. Existing vegetation along this boundary is retained as far as possible, providing a natural buffer to mitigate visual impact. While these dwellings are illustrativly shown to front onto this edge, detailed consideration at Reserved Matters stage will be required to address acoustic performance and boundary treatments, ensuring a high-quality living environment and appropriate interface with the infrastructure corridor.

Northern Frontages Facing Public Open Space / Green Belt
Dwellings located along the northern edge should front onto newly proposed areas of public open space, creating a positive, active edge and establishing a strong relationship with the adjacent countryside. These homes will form a new visual backdrop to the redefined Green Belt boundary. The illustrative layout demonstrated a more organic arrangement of built form to reflect the looser development pattern typically found at rural settlement edges, helping the development blend more seamlessly into its surroundings.

Western and Eastern Boundaries
Along the western and eastern boundaries, built form is intended to side or back onto adjacent land uses where appropriate. In these locations, exposed elevations will be carefully designed to avoid any adverse impact on neighbouring properties in terms of privacy or overlooking, while still maintaining a sense of activity and security.

Chalk Road Frontage
New homes along Chalk Road should be set back to align with the existing built line and will adopt a continuous rhythm of development. This approach reflects the existing urban grain and ensures a coherent street scene that integrates sensitively with the character of the wider Chalk Road properties.

6.10 Sunlight & Daylight (Part O)

The layout has been carefully considered to optimise daylight and sunlight access across the site. A variety of garden orientations are proposed to balance solar gain, site efficiency, and character. Wherever possible, dwellings are arranged to maximise natural light to principal living spaces and private amenity areas, while minimising overshadowing by limiting proposed buildings to 2.5 storeys maximum.

The varied plot orientation also contributes to a more organic street layout, reflecting the grain and rhythm of the surrounding context.

At the detailed design stage, further assessment of daylight and sunlight performance will be undertaken, as required, including analysis at key times of day (10am, 12pm, 2pm, and 4pm). This will ensure the scheme delivers a high standard of residential amenity and aligns with relevant best practice guidance.

6.11 Sustainability

The proposed masterplan incorporates a range of sustainability measures to ensure the development is environmentally responsible and future-proofed. A sustainable drainage strategy (SuDS) will manage surface water runoff through features such as swales, basins, and permeable paving, contributing to flood resilience and biodiversity.

The scheme supports sustainable travel by promoting walking and cycling and ensuring good connectivity to existing transport networks. At the detailed design stage, a fabric-first approach will be encouraged to minimise energy demand, supported by efficient systems and the potential for renewable technologies such as solar panels and air source heat pumps.

Homes will be designed to reduce carbon emissions, improve thermal performance, and use low-impact materials where possible. Biodiversity enhancements, including native planting and habitat features, will help deliver environmental and ecological benefits across the site.

6.12 Precedents



Characterful intimate courtyard style developments
- Ostlers Court



Sense of enclosure and active frontages to courtyard spaces
- The Avenue, Saffron Walden



Loose arrangement towards open countryside views
- Beaulieu, Chelmsford



Well designed streets with natural surveilance
Kings Hill, West Malling



Appropriate use of materials to reflect local vernacular
- Carrowbreck Meadow, Norfolk

6.13 Proposed Landscape

In their Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment, the Local Planning Authority advises the priorities for managing the landscape within which the Site is situated is to 'Restore and Create', which defined by the County Council as 'actions that restore distinctive features and the removal or mitigation of detracting features, whilst creating new features or areas where they have been lost or are in poor condition.' Additionally, the proposed scheme as proposed would ensure that new development would not 'introduce extensive or obtrusive elements within visually sensitive areas of the open landscape'

The landscape strategy proposed optimises the retention of existing trees and provides opportunity for new hedge line tree and hedgerow planting. The development proposals have been released iteratively to retain the typical landform of the Site, and to ensure that new development is not experienced as prominent with the low-lying landform typically locally, and which characterises the setting to the village, and will preserve the perception of openness along this swathe of land. The proposals create opportunities for further native tree planting and create a setting for the new neighbourhood, structural landscaping within the buffer areas is proposed with a mix of native trees, shrubs and meadow grassland for diversity of ecosystems and habitat creation as well as strengthening of screening and protection of visual amenity.

Development is concentrated where it is most appropriate in environmental terms to do so, creating an area of Public Open Space and habitat enhancement to the north of the Site (on the 'outside' of the scheme), retaining new built form on the inner side of the Site so that is marries with the existing environment of built form along Chalk Road, with the wider village related land uses beyond.



Landscaping Plan

6.14 Ecology

The Scheme incorporates a mosaic of retained and created habitats, including grasslands, hedgerows, trees, as well as incorporated Sustainable Urban Drainage (SUDs) features. Habitat connectivity will be retained along the eastern boundary, providing connectivity to the railway and into the wider landscape.

A Biodiversity Impact Assessment (BIA) will be undertaken to assess the biodiversity performance of the Scheme, and to inform adaptation of the design to work towards achieving, and where possible surpassing, the mandatory requirement for 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). As the majority of the Site is dominated by low ecological value habitats, the Scheme has good potential to achieve this minimum requirement with habitat retention, enhancement and creation.

The ecology strategy for the scheme will also include mitigation proposals to protect of habitats and species during the construction phase. Additionally, mitigation proposals will be provided to mitigate direct and indirect impacts to the identified designated Sites within the Zone of Influence.

Existing Baseline:

The Application Site does not lie within a Designated Site for Nature Conservation. The Application Site is however located within 15m of the Thames Estuary and Marshes Ramsar and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), and 50m of the Canal and Grazing Marsh, Higham Local Wildlife Site (LWS). The Application Site also falls within 1km of the Thames Estuary and Marshes Special Protection Area (SPA).
The Application Site is dominated by grazed modified grassland with limited patches of scrub, a small waterbody and built-up areas. The Site is bounded by hedgerows, trees as well as the railway to the east of the Site. The majority of the habitats within the Application Site are of low ecological value, such as the grazed grassland. The habitats noted for their higher value ecological include the hedgerows, trees, scrub and the waterbody.
The Application Site has been noted to have potential to support a variety of protected species. This includes great crested newts due to the presence of a noteworthy number of waterbodies within the landscape and foraging and roosting bats within the boundary habitats. The adjacent area also has the potential to support notable breeding and wintering bird populations. A suite of protected species surveys will be recommended within the Application Site and within the Zone of Influence, to determine presence/absence and to inform required mitigation requirements to ensure legal compliance within wildlife legislation and policy.

Ecology/BNG Strategy

The developmental area within the Site is mostly restricted to the southern half of the Site, and within existing areas of previous development. The more ecologically valuable habitats within the northern area of the Site are to be retained and enhanced as part of the Schemes commitment to achieving 10% biodiversity net gain (BNG). To achieve this, a wet neutral grassland mix has been proposed around the margins of the proposed SUDs, as well as a new planted hedgerow along the north western boundary of the Site. With the proposed retention, enhancement and creation regime, a gain of at least 13% BNG is expected within the Site boundary, surpassing the 10% requirement.

A range of protected species surveys have been undertaken (and are ongoing) as part of the proposals, including birds, bats and great crested newts. Current results show the Site is of limited ecological value, with the main area of interest being the eastern railway linear feature, adjacent to the Site, which provides a connective feature for a range of species into the wider landscape. However, the development area is set back from this, so impacts to connectivity are deemed negligible.
As the Site falls so closely to internationally designated Sites, impacts are expected through an increase in recreational pressures. As such, it has been proposed that the Scheme is subject to payment into the Kent Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Scheme (SAMMS) to assist in efforts to manage visitor numbers.



Biodiversity Baseline

6.15 Drainage Strategy

Surface water flows generated from the proposed development will be attenuated on site and discharge via an existing culvert.

All surface water flows will discharge to an attenuation basin on site and this will discharge at a controlled rate of 2.0l/s which represents a 95% betterment of the existing Brownfield Discharge Rate. A total storage volume of 783.08m3 will be available to accommodate all events up to and including the 1%AEP45CC event. Rain gardens and permeable paving will be used across site to provide extra storage and act as a first stage of treatment for any run-off.

Foul water flows from the site will discharge via a pumping station to form a new connection with the existing foul water sewer located in Chalk Road as agreed with Southern Water.









Drainage Solutions

6.16 Highway Proposals

As part of the access proposals, a 2.0m footway link will be provided to connect to existing footways on Chalk Road to the east of the site, allowing future residents direct access to the surrounding footway network.

The proposals will also include off-road parking facilities for existing residents along Chalk Road who currently rely on on-street parking along the site frontage

Additional off-site measures are proposed to further encourage active and sustainable methods of travel, including but not limited to, vegetation clearing on key footways to increase the usable width, additional crossing facilities, and signage.

Mitigation is proposed to reduce vehicle speeds on Chalk Road through the extension of the existing speed cushions on Chalk Road to the east of the site access. In addition to this, vehicle activated speed signs are proposed to remind drivers of the speed limit and encourage slower traffic speeds.

Street Hierarchy & Code Compliance

The proposed layout establishes a clear and legible street hierarchy, developed in line with the principles of the Kent Design Guide and the Gravesham Design Code. Emphasis is placed on creating a safe, well-connected, and inclusive movement network, with dedicated footpaths, active frontages, and street layouts that reinforce the orientation and character of built form.

Parking provision has been carefully considered and is compliant with Gravesham Borough Council's adopted standards. Parking areas are designed to ensure good visibility, minimise conflict with other vehicles, and integrate sensitively within the streetscape. Parking courts are arranged to avoid car-dominated environments, ensuring a balanced relationship between vehicles, buildings, and public realm.

Materials and surface treatments will help distinguish the function and status of different routes, supporting wayfinding and visual coherence. The layout also allows for emergency and service vehicle access in line with tecnical requirements.



Proposed Site Access with swept path analysis

6.17 Design Guidance Compliance

National Design Guidance

The government launched a National Design Guide (NDG) in Oct 2019 providing practical guidance for development proposals to meet design policy set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The guide shows how well-designed places that are beautiful, enduring and successful can be achieved. Well-designed new development is integrated into its wider surroundings, physically, socially and visually. It is carefully sited and designed, and is demonstrably based on an understanding of the existing situation, including:

The landscape character and how places or developments sit within the landscape, to influence the siting of new development and how natural features are retained or incorporated into it

Patterns of built form, including local precedents for routes and spaces and the built form around them, to inform the layout, form and scale; and

The architecture prevalent in the area, including the local vernacular and other precedents that contribute to local character, to inform the form, scale, appearance, details and materials of new development

It goes onto say, however, well-designed places do not need to copy their surroundings in every way. It is appropriate to introduce elements that reflect how we live today, to include innovation or change such as increased densities, and to incorporate new sustainable features and systems.

Nationally Described Space Standards

These standards (NDSS) deal with internal space within new dwellings and is suitable for application across al tenures. It sets out requirements for the Gross Internal (floor) Area of new dwellings at a defined level of occupancy as well as floor areas and dimensions for key parts of the home, notably bedrooms, storage and floor to ceiling height. All units have been designed to align with this guidance and are fully-compliant with the published standards laid out in the 2015 MHCLG standards (as amended in 2016).

Approved Document M Requirements

As per Gravesham Design Code all Homes will be designed to Part M4 Category 2 – `Accessible and Adaptable Dwellings` requirements. `Wheelchair User Dwellings`, M4 Category 3 will be accommodated in 10% of dwellings. Compliance with these regulations ensures that the scheme makes a reasonable provision for most people to access the dwelling and incorporates features that make it potentially suitable for a wide range of occupants.

Kent Design Guide

The development has been shaped by the overarching principles set out in the Kent Design Guide, which advocates for high-quality, context-responsive design that creates distinctive and lasting places. The masterplan has been developed with a degree of flexibility to ensure that any future detailed application can respond appropriately to site conditions, while remaining aligned with the core aspirations of the Kent Design Guide.

The illustrative development framework plan and masterplan has been informed by an understanding of the site's context and its relationship with the surrounding built form, topography, and movement patterns. The intention is to build on the positive characteristics of the local area - including grain, scale and structure - to reinforce a clear and legible sense of place. The arrangement of blocks, streets and open spaces has been designed to allow for permeability, walkability, and a logical hierarchy of form, with a layout that can accommodate a range of detailed housing typologies and architectural styles at reserved matters stage.

The layout has deliberately avoided a rigid, highway-dominated form, instead promoting a network of connected streets and spaces that can evolve to support a mix of residential character areas. Future detailed design will be able to draw on the guidance in the Kent Design Guide to deliver strong active frontages, varied building lines, and high-quality public realm that supports community interaction and well-being.

While detailed design and house types will be determined at a later stage, the scheme will be capable of meeting or exceeding relevant design standards. All dwellings will be expected to comply with the Nationally Described Space Standards and be designed to meet Approved Document M Volume 1, Category 2 – Accessible and Adaptable Dwellings as a minimum, with 10% of units to be delivered as Approved Document M Volume 1, Category 3 – Wheelchair User Dwellings. Private garden sizes will meet the standards set out in the Gravesham Borough Council Design Code, and maisonettes will be supported by meaningful communal amenity space that offers usable, well-oriented outdoor areas for residents.

The design framework ensures that the layout can deliver a strong sense of place, with scope for varied architectural expression, clear movement routes, and a landscape-led structure that respects and enhances the site's setting. This approach provides a robust foundation for the next stage of design, consistent with the Kent Design Guide's focus on contextualism, flexibility, and placemaking.

Gravesham Design Code

The Design for Gravesham Design Code is a borough-wide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) that sets out Gravesham Borough Council's expectations for high-quality, context-driven development. It supports Local Plan Core Strategy Policy CS19 and forms a material consideration in planning decisions. The code seeks to ensure that new development enhances the borough's distinctive character, supports sustainable growth, and creates well-designed, inclusive places.

Structured around four guiding themes—Community First, Quality and Place, Connectivity and Infrastructure, and Future for Gravesham—the document promotes development that is responsive to local character, contributes to community well-being, and addresses long-term environmental resilience. It outlines eleven key design principles, covering aspects such as layout, built form, materials, landscape, access, sustainability, and public realm quality.

The design code places strong emphasis on understanding and responding to local context. Applicants are expected to demonstrate how their proposals relate to the site's character and surrounding built environment, ensuring new development contributes positively to place identity. Community engagement is also central, with the code encouraging early consultation to inform design proposals and reflect local needs and aspirations.

The SPD includes detailed expectations for housing quality, amenity standards, movement, green infrastructure, and climate responsiveness. It introduces a Compliance Checklist for applicants to evidence how proposals align with the code's principles and clearly defines mandatory versus expected design responses. Importantly, the code reinforces the need for design quality to be retained through to delivery and discourages post-approval design dilution.

Aligned with national guidance, including the National Design Guide and Model Design Code, the Design for Gravesham provides a locally specific and practical framework for raising the design quality of development across the borough, ensuring that growth strengthens both place and community.

The proposals have been developed in line with the overarching principles of the Design for Gravesham Design Code, ensuring the scheme responds positively to its setting while allowing sufficient flexibility for future detailed design at reserved matters stage.

The illustrative masterplan demonstrates how a future development could come forward that aligns with the Design Code's ambitions to:

- Promote locally responsive design: The illustrative framework allows for a layout and built form that reflect the character and grain of surrounding settlements, whilst introducing a clear, legible structure of streets, spaces and blocks adaptable to varied architectural treatment.

- Deliver a green, landscape-led environment: The proposals embed a strong green infrastructure network from the outset, including land for amenity space, a potential community orchard, and informal play opportunities. These spaces reflect the Code's aspirations for walkable, biodiverse neighbourhoods with access to open space for all.

- Encourage sustainable and inclusive communities: The proposed development parameters support the delivery of accessible, adaptable homes, a walkable street hierarchy, and active frontages. These will help create a well-connected, people-friendly environment in line with the Code's emphasis on inclusive and sustainable place-making.

- Enable future high-quality design: While detailed architectural proposals will be brought forward at a later stage, the development framework provides the necessary flexibility to accommodate varied housing types and tenure, high environmental performance, and locally responsive materials and detailing, all within a Code-compliant structure.

In summary, the outline proposals establish a robust yet adaptable foundation from which a high-quality, contextually sensitive and Code-aligned development can be delivered.

Item	Description	Mandatory parameters only	Mandatory and partial interpretative parameters	Both mandatory and interpretative parameters	N/A
1	Do the 4 main threads (Community First, Quality and Place, Connectivity and Infrastructure and Future for Gravesham? underpin the design proposals?	✓			
2	Are the design proposals accompanied by a vision? Has the vision being clearly set out in the Design and Access Statement?	✓			
3	Has the applicant engaged meaningfully with the local community throughout the design process **as set out in the mandatory and interpretative parameters of Design Principle 4.1?**		✓		
4	Do the design proposals positively respond to Gravesham's unique identities **as set out in the mandatory and interpretative parameters of Design Principle 4.2?**	✓			
5	Do the design proposals promote a place-specific and contextural approach **as set out in the mandatory and interpretative parameters of Design Principle 4.3?**	✓			
6	Do the design proposals follow the guidance for public space **as set out in the interpretative parameters of Design Principle 5.1?**				✓
7	Has the proposed play space been designed in line with **the mandatory and interpretative parameters of Design Principle 5.2?**				✓
8	Have the proposed surface finishes been designed using high quality, robust materials promoting accessibility for all **as set out in the mandatory and interpretative parameters of Design Principle 5.3?**				✓
9	Have inclusive design and accessibility been considered from the outset in line with the **mandatory and interpretative parameters of Design Principle 5.4?**	✓			

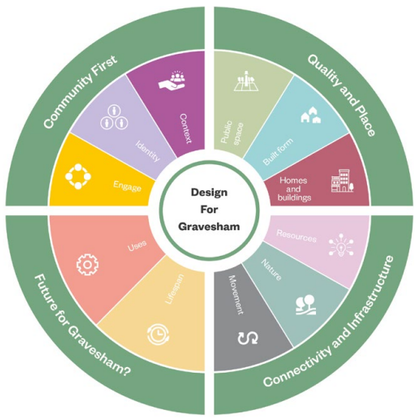
Item	Description	Mandatory parameters only	Mandatory and partial interpretative parameters	Both mandatory and interpretative parameters	N/A
10	Has the proposed street furniture been designed in line with **the mandatory and interpretative parameters of Design Principle 5.5?**				✓
11	Does the proposed lighting create a safe and welcoming environment **as set out in the mandatory and interpretative parameters of Design Principle 5.6?**				✓
12	Has the proposed wayfinding been designed in line with **the mandatory and interpretative parameters of Design Principle 5.7?**				✓
13	Has the proposed community-led art been integrated in the public realm and designed in line with **the mandatory and interpretative parameters of Design Principle 5.8?**				✓
14	Does the proposed development pattern, grain and scale follow the **mandatory and interpretative parameters of Design Principle 5.9?**		✓		
15	Does the proposed height reflect the existing local character **as set out in the mandatory and interpretative parameters of Design Principle 5.10?**		✓		
16	Have the proposed tall buildings been designed **as set out in the mandatory and interpretative parameters of Design Principle 5.11?**				✓
17	Does the proposed density reflect the existing local character **as set out in the mandatory and interpretative parameters of Design Principle 5.12?**	✓			
18	Does the proposed development respect the existing building line **as set out in the mandatory and interpretative parameters of Design Principle 5.13?**			✓	
19	Have thresholds and frontages been integrated within the proposed architecture and landscape and designed in line with the **mandatory and interpretative parameters of Design Principle 5.14?**	✓			
20	Does the development respect and respond to the prevailing roof form **as set out in the interpretative parameters of Design Principle 5.15?**		✓		

Item	Description	Mandatory parameters only	Mandatory and partial interpretative parameters	Both mandatory and interpretative parameters	N/A
21	Have the proposed elevations been designed to respond to the scale and proportions of the surrounding character areas **as set out in the mandatory and interpretative parameters of Design Principle 5.16?**	✓			
22	Have proposed materials been chosen in line with the **mandatory and interpretative parameters of Design Principle 5.17?**	✓			
23	Do the proposed dwellings meet the requirements set out in the **mandatory and interpretative parameters of Design Principle 5.18?**		✓		
24	Have the proposed dwelling been design taking into account aspect, orientation, daylight and sunlight as set out in the **mandatory and interpretative parameters of Design Principle 5.19?**	✓			
25	Has private and communal amenity been designed in line **mandatory and interpretative parameters of Design Principle 5.20?**		✓		
26	Have proposed balconies been designed in line **mandatory and interpretative parameters of Design Principle 5.21?**				✓
27	Has the development been designed to respond to existing or planned public transport accessibility and to promote active travel in line with **mandatory and interpretative parameters of Design Principle 6.1?**	✓			
28	Have streets been designed to follow **mandatory and interpretative parameters of Design Principle 6.2?**				✓
29	Has vehicular parking been designed to follow **mandatory and interpretative parameters of Design Principle 6.3?**		✓		
30	Have servicing requirements been incorporated into the design of the public realm and proposed buildings in line with **mandatory and interpretative parameters of Design Principle 6.4?**		✓		
31	Has cycle parking been designed to follow **mandatory and interpretative parameters of Design Principle 6.5?**	✓			

Item	Description	Mandatory parameters only	Mandatory and partial interpretative parameters	Both mandatory and interpretative parameters	N/A
32	Has the development been designed to conserve, enhance, connect and improve the use and access of the Borough's blue and green infrastructure in line with **mandatory and interpretative parameters of Design Principle 6.6?**	✓			
33	Have the proposed open spaces been designed in line with **mandatory and interpretative parameters of Design Principle 6.7?**			✓	
34	Has biodiversity been considered, protected and enhanced in the design proposals in line with **mandatory and interpretative parameters of Design Principle 6.8?**		✓		
35	Have Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) been integrated in the design proposals in line with **mandatory and interpretative parameters of Design Principle 6.9?**		✓		
36	Has planting been proposed in line with **mandatory and interpretative parameters of Design Principle 6.10?**	✓			
37	Have new trees been proposed in line with **mandatory and interpretative parameters of Design Principle 6.11?**	✓			
38	If the development sits along the Gravesham Riverside, does the proposed design follow **mandatory and interpretative parameters of Design Principle 6.12?**				✓
39	Have buildings and spaces been designed to improve energy efficiency and resilience in line with **mandatory and interpretative parameters of Design Principle 6.13?**				✓
40	Have the design proposals consider retrofit of existing buildings in line with **mandatory and interpretative parameters of Design Principle 6.14?**				✓
41	Does the development contribute towards the provision of a rich-mix of opportunities in line with **mandatory and interpretative parameters of Design Principle 7.1?**				✓
42	Has development carefully considered management and maintenance throughout the design process in line with **mandatory and interpretative parameters of Design Principle 7.2?**				✓

Gravesham Design Code Compliance Checklist

Although the application is at outline stage, the illustrative masterplan has been tested for compliance against the aspirations in the Gravesham Design Code. Defined as a 'medium site' some principles are not mandatory for our proposed development, although we have sought to incorporate as many recommended principles as possible. Other more detailed principles will be developed in due course as part of any future Reserved Matters applications



Gravesham Design Code Guiding Principles

7.0 Summary

This Design and Access Statement accompanies an outline planning application for up to 40 new dwellings on land at Chalk Road, Lower Higham. The scheme has been shaped by comprehensive site analysis, including environmental and physical constraints such as proximity to the railway, flood zones, and mature landscape features. The application is supported by a series of parameter plans that define the overarching development principles, while an illustrative masterplan demonstrates one way the site could be sensitively and efficiently brought forward in line with these parameters.

The development responds to its context through a landscape-led layout that integrates new homes within a well-structured green framework. A clear street hierarchy is established, ranging from a primary spine road to more intimate shared surfaces and lanes. This supports movement and legibility, while offering framed views of green space, mature trees, and focal buildings.

The block structure is slightly irregular to allow for flexibility, while ensuring active frontages and natural surveillance across all public areas. The layout supports a diverse housing mix, compliant private garden spaces, and a blend of on- and off-plot parking.

Open space plays a central role in the design. Areas of amenity green space, the potential for a community orchard, and provision for children and young people's play are all embedded into the masterplan. Although indicative at this stage, these typologies are designed to deliver biodiversity, drainage benefits, and accessible, high-quality environments for all residents.

The proposed three vehicular access points ensure functional and inclusive access across the site, including: a primary residential entrance; a dedicated access for agricultural vehicles to enable long-term land management; and a third access point serving a smaller courtyard parking area.

While illustrative in nature, the masterplan demonstrates how the site can deliver a well-integrated, characterful and sustainable neighbourhood — one that is in keeping with its Green Belt edge context and capable of delivering meaningful long-term benefits for future residents and the local community.

The design of the layout has been carefully considered to allow flexibility for a new built environment to come forward that accords with the principles of high-quality design and best practice. We are pleased to submit these proposals to Gravesham Borough Council for consideration.

Key Principles from Kent Design Guide

- **A** The hierarchy of form ..... provides a sense of place. It is ofteh marked by an increase in the density and height of buildings towards the centre (2.2)
- **B** New areas of development should use a hierarchy of urban spaces to make it easy to understand the layout, as well as move to and through it. (2.2.2)
- **C** Having a variety of spatial types enhances character ans sense of place (2.2.3)
- **D** Clear definition of space enables residentsot exercise control over their environment. Semi-private space should be designed to be overlooked, be well lit and well maintained to maximise the sense of ownership (2.2.5)
- **E** In new development, the aim should be to achieve the qualities that people find attract in traditional settlements,using variation of form, space, ancillary buildings, garages, planting and boundary walls to create high quality environments and to achive a more efficent and sustainable use of land (2.2.6)

Key Principles from Gravesham Design Code

- **1** Responds to the prevailing pattern and intervals of existing development to reflect the grain of the existing charachter area (5.9)
- **2** Building heights and density reflect the existing local character (5.10 & 5.12)
- **3** Chalk Rd primary frontage repects the existing building line (5.13)
- **4** Dwellings to be NDSS and M4(2) compliant with 10% M4(3) provision (5.18)
- **5** Private amenity provided to at least minimum area requirements (5.20)
- **6** Vehicle parking sizes and provision in accordance with requirements (6.3)
- **7** Open space provides opportunity for play and community stewardship, it is well overlooked and accessible from proposed footpath links (6.7)
- **8** Open space provides space for SuDs and opportunity to enhance biodiverstiy within the site (6.8 & 6.9)

N

THAMES AND MEDWAY CANAL

SP

SUDS

8

7

orchard

play

4

6

C

A

B

4

D

2

E

1

5

3

MP 28.25

Atlantis

16

9

Michele Cottages

7.3m

CHALK ROAD

Cuckold's Corner

TAYLORS LANE

Avonlea

6

1

Haselden
Cottages

8

Orchard View

Whitebread
House

CANAL ROAD

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