

# North Witney

A sustainable new community

Development Framework Document

December 2012



# Report Control Form

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# Introduction

Boyer Planning has been instructed by the North Witney Consortium (Taylor Wimpey, Gleeson Homes, Jack Moody Developments and Cranbrook Construction) to prepare a development framework document for the land at North Witney. This document supports the promotion of the site at North Witney for allocation as a housing site through the West Oxfordshire District Council Draft Local Plan.

The document seeks to summarise the solutions to perceived environmental and technical issues relating to the site. The document also outlines the consortium's initial proposed development framework, which responds to the technical assessments.

This preparation of this document has supported by a series of technical assessments including:

- Archaeological Appraisals;
- Ecological Reports;
- Flood Risk and Drainage Assessment;
- Highways and Access assessment;
- Infrastructure studies;
- Landscape and Visual Impact Appraisal;
- Sustainability Appraisal; and
- Transport Network Assessment.

The aim of this document is set out in three further sections:

## Site Appraisal

This section sets out the consultant teams' understanding of the features on the site, including an assessment of the constraints and opportunities.

## Concept Masterplan

This section explains the elements which have informed the concept Masterplan.

## Conclusions

The final section sets out the benefits of the proposals, outlining how an allocation for the site would be appropriate.

The document should be read in conjunction with the representations made to the West Oxfordshire District Council Draft Local Plan consultation (December 2012). We hope to be able to discuss our draft proposals with the Council in early 2013.

# Site Appraisal

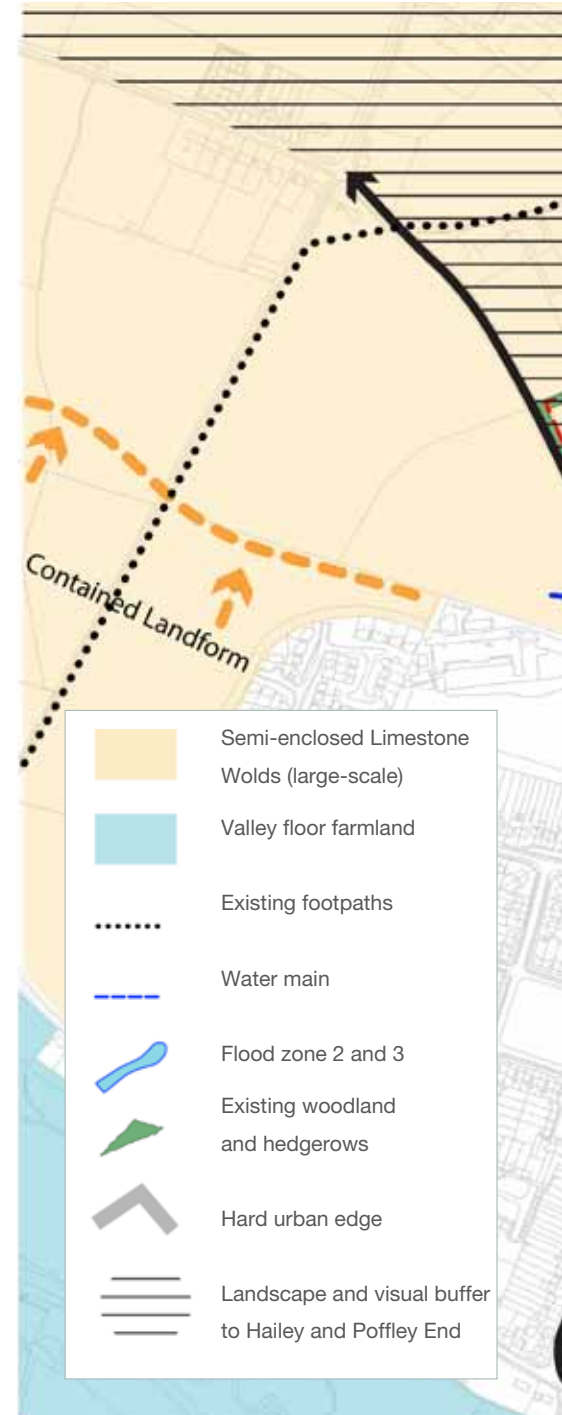
The site covers over 55 hectares of land with mainly agricultural uses, although some of the land includes development such as The Kings School and a number of farm buildings. The site wraps around the existing northern edge of Witney, providing the opportunity for connections into the existing infrastructure. The following section outlines the key features on the site, and how these can be utilised to inform development of the site.

## Landscape

The site does not have any designations relating to landscape character, locally or nationally. The closest area of landscape interest is the Cotswold AONB, which is over 2km north-west of the Witney. Due to the separation between the site and the AONB there is no opportunity for development to have an adverse impact on designated landscape areas.

The site sits within the semi-enclosed limestone wolds (smaller scale) of the Wychwood Uplands character area of the West Oxfordshire Landscape Assessment. The study assessment identifies Witney as being within the Upper Windrush Valley. A detailed assessment of the landscape character of Witney is included in part 3 of the LA document. This identifies a ridge following the line of A4095 which runs through the site; the document also identifies the land to the north-west which includes a containing land form. The settlement assessment does not include all of the land within the promotion for North Witney. Witney sits within the valley of the River Windrush, which results in land sloping away from the centre of the town towards high points north of Ramsden and Leafield, although as the settlement assessment identifies there are localised ridges within the valley.

The site is divided by a series of hedgerows, creating a smaller field pattern, with limited areas of dense planting on the edges of the site. The dense planting around the edge of the site will reduce the visual impact of development from the north, with the hedgerows assisting in breaking up development and creating a network of green spaces through the site. One hedgerow is flanked by a tributary of the River Windrush and provides an opportunity to create stream side leisure spaces within any development.





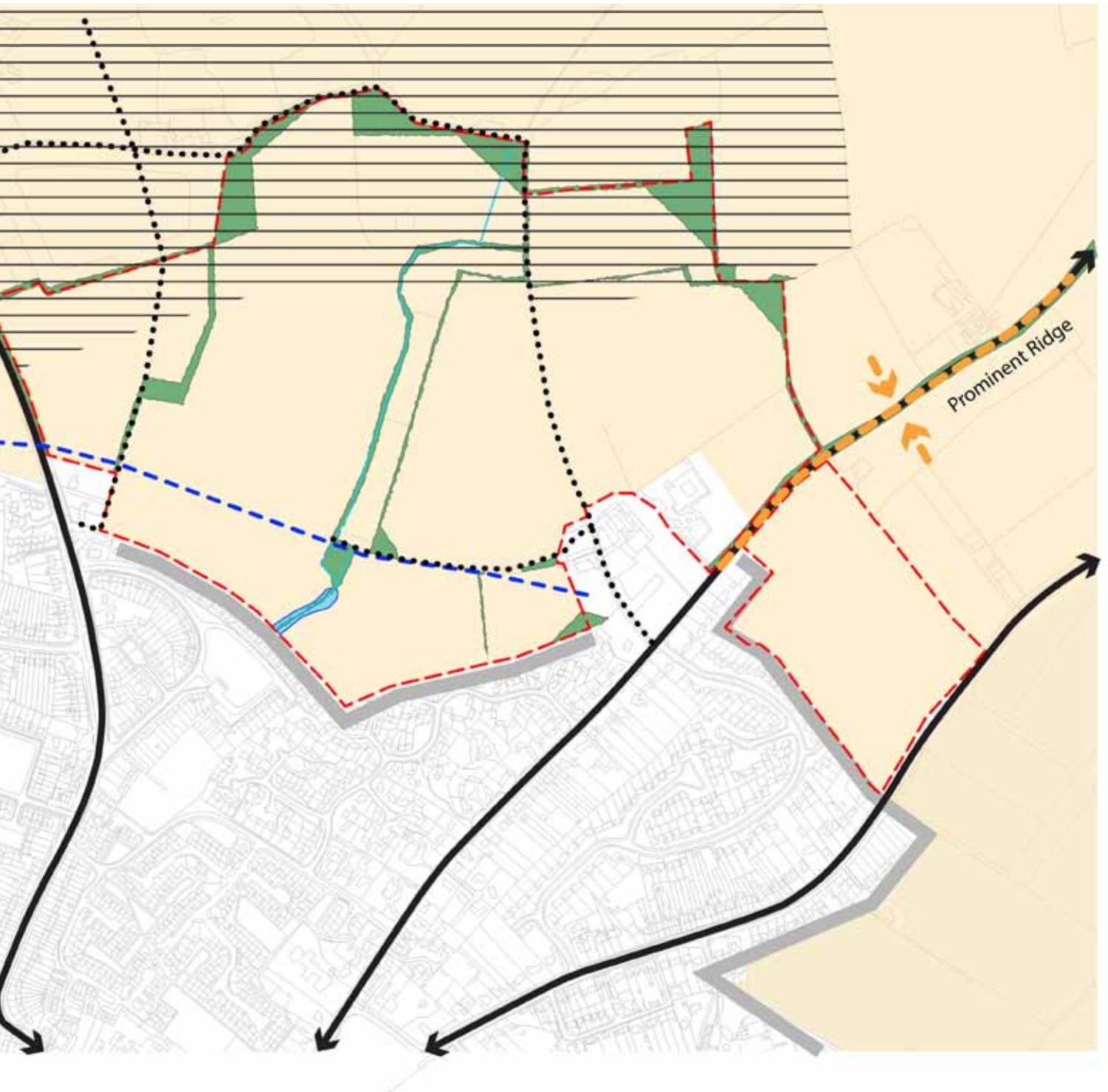


Fig 1: Illustration of the existing features on and around the site



*Existing farm buildings within the site*



*Existing blue and green network*

## Ecology

There are non-statutory wildlife sites within or adjacent to the site. As large parts of the site are used for agricultural uses there is limited ecological interest on the site, with limited scope for habitats. However, the areas not in use for agricultural land, such as the hedgerows, paddocks and small woodlands have ecological potential. Detailed surveys for species have been completed on the site and these have demonstrated that the hedgerows in the northern part of the site are of local ecological importance, with the others being 'poor'.

## Flooding and Drainage

Environment Agency maps illustrate that the majority of the site lies within flood zone 1, with only a very small part of the southern most element of the site being subject to localised flooding around the southern part of the tributary to the River Windrush. Around the area subject to flooding there is an opportunity to create an attenuation basin to hold surface water during heavy rainfall; this may also provide benefits downstream.

Due to the topography of the site, drainage can be dealt with by gravity, bringing all drainage routes to the southern boundaries of the site and connecting into the existing network, with any storage on site to ensure run off rates do not exceed current levels.

*Existing residential development south of Woodstock Road*





*Existing residential edge of Witney*



*The Kings School*

### **Accessibility**

The site is well connected to Witney, offering a number of routes into the town centre. Whilst there are difficulties with the single point crossing the River Windrush at Bridge Street, there are opportunities for the use of alternatives to the private car. The site is well served by bus routes with the 11, 213 and 242 running along Woodstock Road and the 213 and X9 running along Hailey Road linking the east and west of the site with the centre of Witney.

There is ease of access to the centre of Witney by foot and cycle, along both main routes into the town. The site is less than 1.5 miles from the centre of Witney resulting in an averaging walking time of around 25 minutes to get to the centre of Witney.

### **Local facilities**

In addition to being well connected to the centre of Witney, there are a range of local facilities close to the site which can assist in integrating the development with the existing communities within Witney. Local shops exist along Hailey Road and around Bridge Street, with local schools off Hailey Road and Harvest Way all accessible from the site. These local facilities can be topped up where necessary within the development of the site at North Witney, helping to bring residents from the existing town into the new development.





# Vision

The North Witney Consortium believes that the site is a sustainable location to create a high quality residential led development, with additional uses to support the existing community. A series of key principles for the development of the site have been created to guide the on-going masterplanning of the site. These principles have been informed by the detailed assessments completed and the aspirations to ensure the development serves the needs of the existing community as well as new residents.

## Connected Community

Ensuring the new development integrates with the existing edge of Witney, utilising existing public routes and ensuring desire lines to existing and proposed facilities are maintained.

## Sports Provision

Creating additional pitches for use by the wider community within Witney.

## Education Enhancement

Providing additional educational facilities within the site and upgrading the existing pitches of The Kings School.

## Accessible Routes

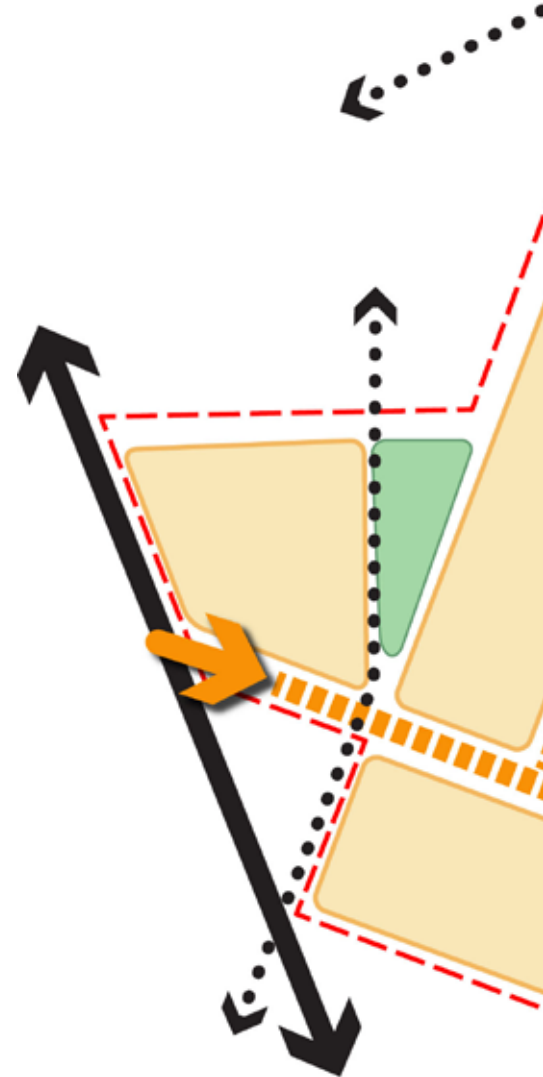
Providing access through the site to the wider network of public rights of way, as well as ensuring all residents can move easily around the site.

## Wooded Setting

Retaining the existing woodlands on the northern boundary of the site and where possible improving and enhancing these to create an attractive woodland setting for the northern edge of Witney.

## Blue Network

Utilising the tributary to the River Windrush to inform a water strategy to ensure surface water can be held on site and create an attractive series of spaces within the landscape.



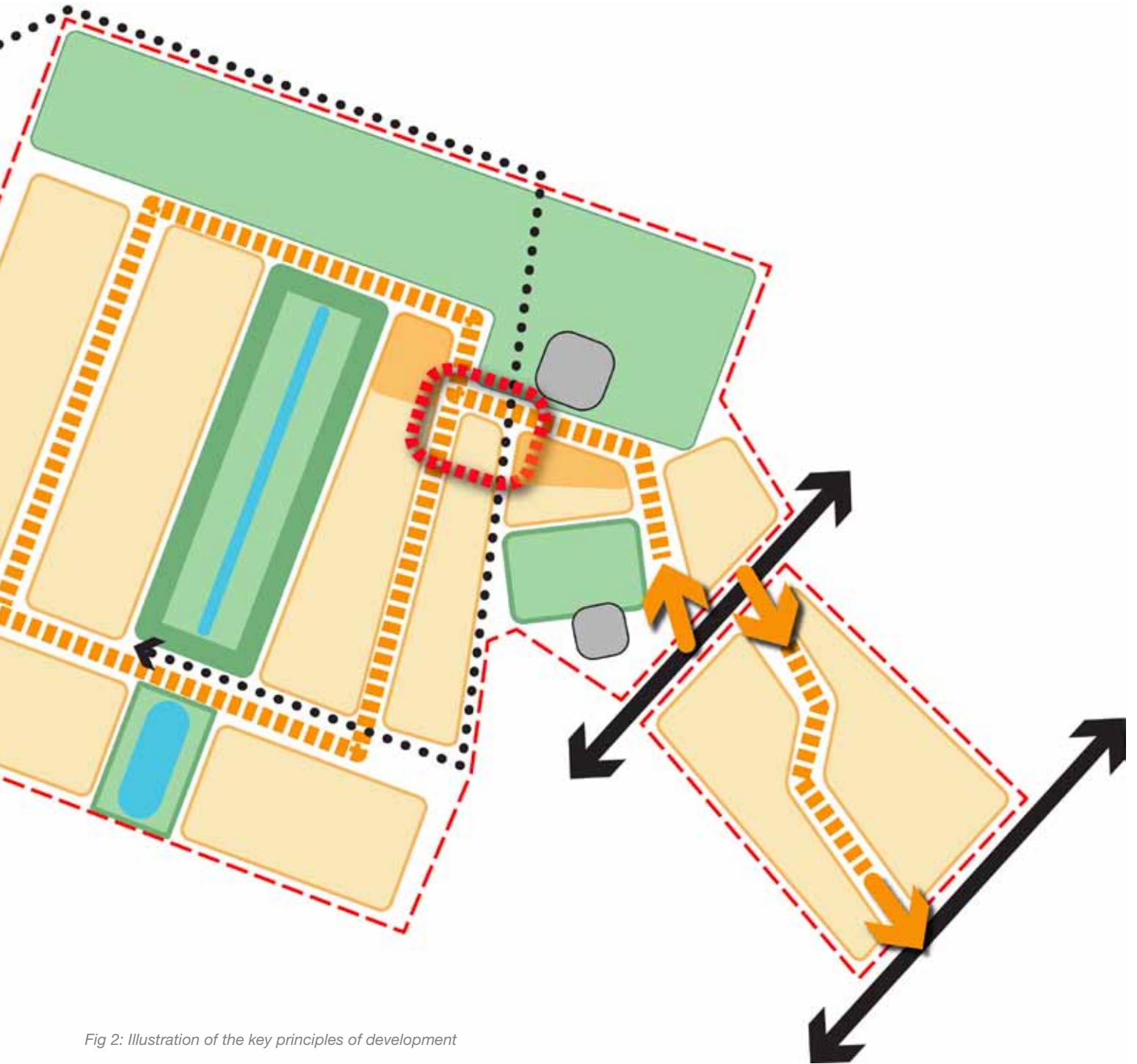
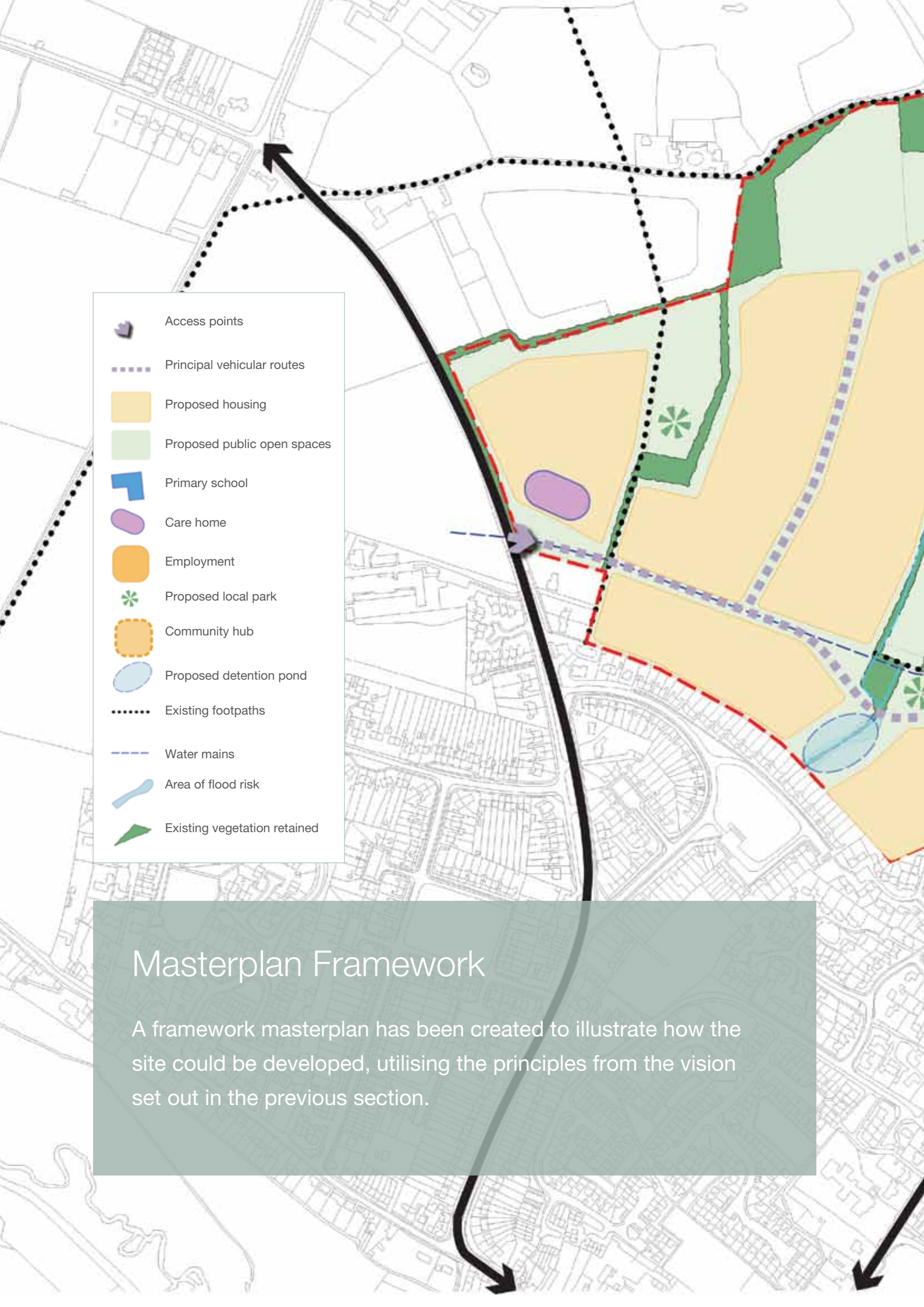


Fig 2: Illustration of the key principles of development

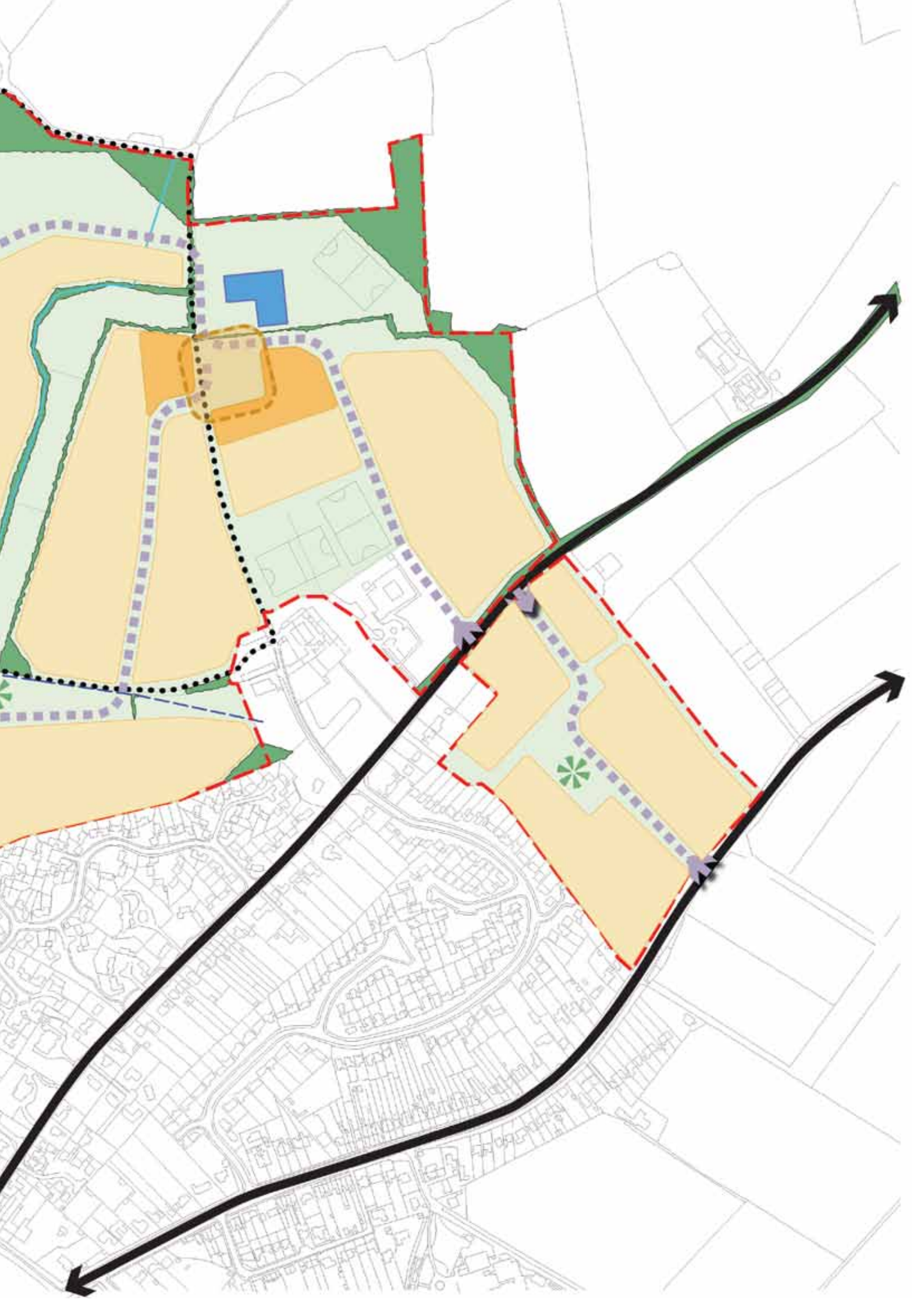


- Access points
- Principal vehicular routes
- Proposed housing
- Proposed public open spaces
- Primary school
- Care home
- Employment
- Proposed local park
- Community hub
- Proposed detention pond
- Existing footpaths
- Water mains
- Area of flood risk
- Existing vegetation retained

# Masterplan Framework

A framework masterplan has been created to illustrate how the site could be developed, utilising the principles from the vision set out in the previous section.





The framework creates two points of access into the site, connecting a central loop which provides a main street running through the site. The points of access from the existing highways network are staggered to provide separation of junctions, however, these could be formed into crossroads if acceptable to the highways authority.

The south eastern parcel provides an opportunity to be accessed from both Woodstock Road and New Yatt Road, with the principal access being from Woodstock Road and the connection through to New Yatt Road only being made if development has started north of New Yatt Road. The parcel provides a central open space as a focal point to the development and will allow existing exposed backs of properties to form wider perimeter blocks.

The main body of the site is accessed from both New Yatt Road and Hailey Road with the main street loop created around a central green/blue corridor. This green corridor terminates in the southern end of the tributary in an attenuation basin to hold surface water and help manage flows into the River Windrush. The northern part of the site creates open space to soften the edge of development and provide space for informal recreation, with additional fingers of green space formed around existing hedgerows.

The main body of the site includes The Kings School, which would be retained, however, the pitches associated with the school would be reorganised to provide pitches to the north of the school.

The main body of the site will have a community hub which includes a frontage onto the proposed school as well as frontage for an area of small scale employment within the site. Buildings within this area will provide higher density development providing slightly increased massing. In addition to the employment opportunity, school and residential development, the western part of the site will provide an element of extra care housing, acting as an employment generator and providing for the ageing population.

The table below summaries the land take and includes an indication of the quantum of development.

Use	Area	Quantum
Residential	29.4 ha	1,200 – 1,500 new homes
Extra Care	0.2 ha	40 bed care facility
Employment	1 ha	3,000 sqm of employment
Education	2.3 ha	2 form entry school
Open Space	22.5 ha	n/a



## Conclusions

The site at North Witney provides an opportunity to deliver a development in a sustainable location which can provide development to help meet the housing requirements of West Oxfordshire. The site provides an opportunity to integrate development with the existing community; and the framework for the site has been created responding to the opportunities at the site.

The site at North Witney is capable of being developed and delivered and provides appropriate supporting infrastructure. The development is capable of being phased to allow early development of part of the site and the proposals have been designed to not harm interests of acknowledged importance.

A clear vision for development has been created, which has been developed into a framework which illustrates how 1,200 to 1,500 new homes could be created along with a new school, local facilities and employment opportunities. The proposals will integrate with the existing communities on the northern edge of Witney, providing a range of facilities for both existing and new residents. The proposals will work with the existing blue and green infrastructure and enhance the woodland setting of North Witney.

The site at North Witney should be included as an allocation for a residential led development within the West Oxfordshire District Council Local Plan.







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