



Land at Durrants Lane & Shootersway, Berkhamsted

FRAMEWORK MASTERPLAN DOCUMENT

Revised October 2011

**Taylor
Wimpey**



Land at Durrants Lane / Shootersway, Berkhamsted

Framework Masterplan Document

Issue Date: Revised October 2011

Doc Ref: CSA/1074/003f

Prepared by:



CSa Environmental Planning
Dixies, High Street,
Ashwell, Herts, SG7 5NT
email: ashwell@csaenvironmental.co.uk



Woolf Bond Planning
The Mitfords, Basingstoke Road
Three Mile Cross, Reading, RG7 1AT
email: office@woolfbond.co.uk

On behalf of:





This masterplan forms part of the published evidence base to the Pre Submission Core Strategy (PSCS). The information provided in the document has been prepared by the agents of the landowners. It explains how Strategic Site Proposal SS1 Land at Durrants Lane/Shootersway, Berkhamsted can be delivered, and expands on the development principles for the site set out in the Pre Submission Core Strategy (PSCS).

The masterplan does not form part of the formal representation stage of the Pre Submission Core Strategy (PSCS). However, if you do want to make representations on the proposal, then you need to direct your responses to Proposal SS1 in the Pre Submission Core Strategy (PSCS).

Details of the Pre Submission Core Strategy (PSCS) and the representation stage can be found on the Council's website (www.dacorum.gov.uk/planning) or by contacting:

Strategic Planning and Regeneration team
Planning, Development and Regeneration
Dacorum Borough Council
Civic Centre
Marlowes
Hemel Hempstead HP1 1RX

e-mail: strategic.planning@dacorum.gov.uk

telephone: 01442 228660

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Framework Document has been prepared to outline how the land at Shootersway and Durrants Lane can be brought forward and developed for:

- **Approximately 180 homes**
- **The refurbishment of Egerton Rothesay School**
- **New areas of formal and informal open space**

The new homes will be sustainable, minimising their environmental impacts and providing a high quality of life for new residents. Approximately 35% of the new homes will be for affordable tenures and the development will place an emphasis on much needed family homes.

A key benefit of the development is its ability to deliver new areas of informal and formal open space both for the school and for use by the wider community and local sports teams, whilst also providing for their long term maintenance.

Critically, the development of the site will secure funds for the refurbishment of Egerton Rothesay School on its existing site, so that it can further improve its important services providing support for pupils with Dyslexia, Dyspraxia and speech and language issues.

SECTION	Page
Executive Summary	ii
1.0 Introduction	2
2.0 Planning Context	3
3.0 Site Context	6
4.0 Analysis of the Site	7
5.0 Opportunities, Constraints and Development Options	12
6.0 Framework Masterplan	14
7.0 Sustainability And Deliverability	16
8.0 Conclusion	17

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Framework Document relates to land at the junction of Shootersway and Durrants Lane on the south west side of Berkhamsted. The site is edged red on Fig 1.2 and extends in total to 14.2ha. A further area of land controlled by Taylor Wimpey is located to the north west of Durrants Lane and extends to some 2ha (edged blue on Figure 1.1).

Site Ownership

1.2 The site is divided up into a number of distinct land parcels which are shown on Fig 1.1 below and are controlled as follows:

- Taylor Wimpey UK Ltd (TW)
- Hertfordshire County Council (CC)
- Egerton Rothesay School (ERS)
- Dacorum Borough Council (DBC)



Figure 1.1 - Site Ownership

1.3 The parties have formed a Consortium and wish, jointly, to promote the land for development (Note: Dacorum Borough Council are not a Developer Partner). The site is allocated for housing and associated development, including the rebuilding of the Egerton Rothesay School in the Dacorum Borough Local Plan 2004.

1.4 The purpose of this document is to review and update the Local Plan proposals and provide a framework for a high quality development. Woolf Bond Planning and CSa Environmental Planning have been instructed by the Consortium to prepare this document which is intended to demonstrate how a revised allocation, and thereafter a development scheme for the site, can be brought forward.

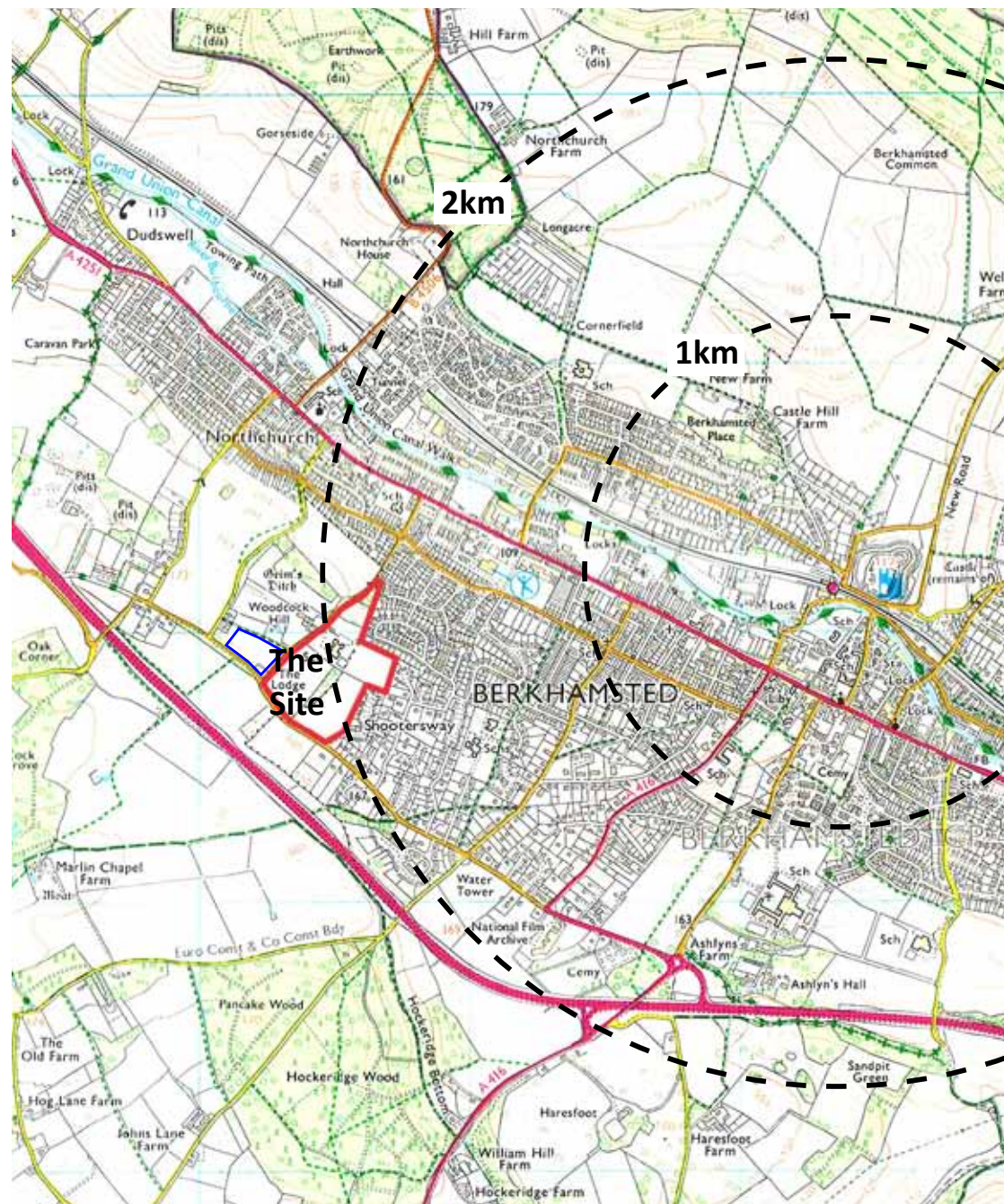


Figure 1.2 - Site Location Plan

2.0 PLANNING CONTEXT

2.1 Figure 2.1 below is an extract from the 2004 Dacorum Borough Local Plan, 1991 to 2011. The site is located to the south west of the settlement at the junction of Shootersway with Durrants Lane. It is important to note that the site has already been excluded from the Green Belt.

2.2 Proposal H37 of the Local Plan (together with Proposals C1/L1) set out the future plans for the site. As regards housing development, Proposal H37 identifies a development area of 4.4 hectares in the central part of the site, including the existing school buildings and playing fields. The Proposal identifies a net capacity of 100 dwellings and the proposed scheme requires a comprehensive planning framework to link the three main land use areas; namely, housing (Proposal H37), a school with playing fields (Proposal C1) and new leisure space (Proposal L1). The access for the housing was to be taken from Durrants Lane. The development scheme needed to avoid impact on the surrounding countryside, cross valley views and avoid impact on the skyline.

2.3 Existing trees and landscaping were to be retained with reinforcement of the boundaries to the new, long term Green Belt edge to the settlement.

2.4 Mixed two storey housing was to be provided with no housing permitted unless the school and playing fields are accommodated on the adjoining sites and the provision of new leisure space is secured.

2.5 Contributions were required towards additional educational facilities whilst the Local Plan also requires the consideration of the remnants of Grim's Ditch, a prehistoric monument which crosses the site.

2.6 A Development Brief was required to guide the extent and location of land uses, investigating improved local road and pedestrian facilities, a school transport plan, the possibility of a secondary access from Ridgeway and future management of Cox's Dell and the Plantation.

2.7 Proposal C1 relates to the provision of some 8.3 hectares of land and provides for a school with dual use playing fields and new informal leisure space. The Proposal C1 is similar to Proposal H37, as summarised above, in that it links the provision of the housing with the school and additional open space. The proposal was for access from Shootersway for a new school

complex in the south east corner of the site on about 4.4 hectares of land with the south west portion of the site extending to 3.9 hectares for pitches and informal amenity purposes.

2.8 Otherwise, similar provisions apply as regards the needs to protect Grim's Ditch and for preparation of the Development Brief.

2.9 As regards Proposal L.1 this relates to, broadly, the same area as C1 summarised above, namely 8.3 hectares in the southern part of the site. The Policy seeks a minimum of 3.9 hectares for pitches and informal amenity space with dual use of the playing pitches required.

2.10 The site is now being brought forward in the Pre Submission Core Strategy (PSCS), which identifies it as a 'Strategic Site' (Proposal SS1).

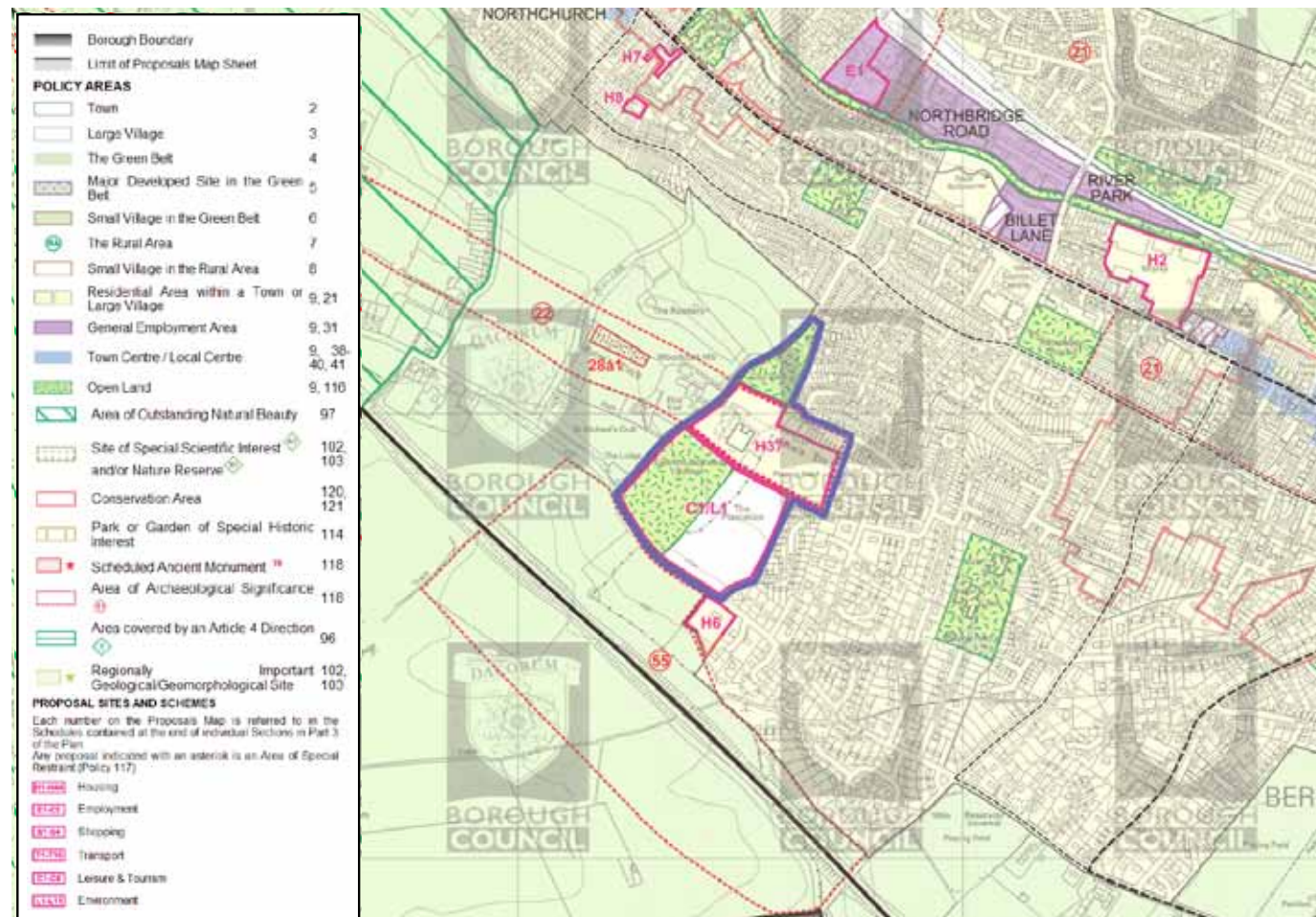


Figure 2.1 - Extract from Adopted Local Plan

Updated Planning Position

- 2.11 The original proposals for the school, housing and open space were prepared in 2002. Negotiations between the Borough and County Councils, Taylor Wimpey and Egerton Rothesay School in respect of the same have continued through time with alternative schemes investigated. As part of this process the Consortium between Egerton Rothesay School, Hertfordshire County Council and Taylor Wimpey was formed.
- 2.12 It has become apparent from discussions that one of the overriding issues in terms of implementing a scheme is the cost of relocating or simply refurbishing the existing Egerton Rothesay School building complex, especially in the present economic climate.
- 2.13 There have been various discussions with Dacorum Borough Council, along with ongoing changes to the Policy Framework with preparation of the East of England Plan and the subsequent alterations proposed to the system by the new Coalition Government.
- 2.14 The Council are now updating local policy through preparation of the Local Development Framework (LDF) – Core Strategy and associated Development Plan Documents (DPDs). In this regard the Consortium remains keen to achieve a comprehensive scheme for the site.
- 2.15 It is agreed that the prospect of any wholesale relocation and rebuilding of the school to the south east of the site as originally proposed is not achievable. This is because the logistics of relocating the school and the costs associated with it, along with the need to develop the housing in order to fund rebuilding the school, makes this approach uneconomical and impractical. Therefore, the only practical option appears to be retention of the existing school on its existing site with improvement to its facilities.
- 2.16 It is also agreed with the school and Hertfordshire County Council that the restriction of development to around 100 dwellings only on 4.4 hectares of the site is unlikely to produce sufficient funds to make any financial contribution towards the school redevelopment, as well as providing the larger area of dual use playing fields sought by current policy. In any event there is a requirement for increased housing provision in the Borough.
- 2.17 The general approach now agreed between Dacorum Borough Council and the Consortium is that revisions are necessary to the current Local Plan proposals. This includes retention of the Egerton Rothesay School on its existing site with provision of residential development along the eastern side of the land comprising the 3.5 hectares owned by Taylor Wimpey adjoining Coppins Close and the existing School Playing Fields to the east of the school building. This will provide a residential development site of around 6 hectares.
- 2.18 Land to the south of the existing school buildings extends to 3.9 hectares and can be retained for playing fields and associated parking in accordance with the original Local Plan proposals. Furthermore Taylor Wimpey are able to provide additional land for more playing fields extending to approximately 2 hectares in the Green Belt west of Durrants Lane and north of Shootersway. This area is edged blue on Fig 1.1.

- 2.19 In discussions with the Local Planning Authority the following principles have been identified as guiding the future masterplan for the site as a whole, partly based on the Local Plan provisions, referred to above, and guidance contained in the Pre Submission Core Strategy (PSCS):

- Provide a mix of predominantly 2 storey housing, including approximately 35% affordable homes and informal open space.
- Contribution towards quality education and community facilities.
- Development is in a sensitive ridge top and edge of town location, adjacent to existing housing. The layout, design, density and landscaping must therefore safeguard the amenities of nearby housing and create a soft edge with the proposed leisure space and adjoining countryside.
- Impact of the scheme on the local road network will need to be mitigated through promoting sustainable transport options, reinforcing pedestrian/cycle links through the site and funding improvement to the Shootersway/Kingshill Way and Durrants Lane/High Street junctions (as necessary).
- Main access to be taken from Shootersway and this could include a secondary access from Durrants Lane.
- Impact of school traffic must be tackled by providing a new drop off facility for pupils, to be established through preparation and submission of a School Transport Plan.
- Grim's Ditch is an important archaeological feature of the site. An Archaeological Assessment must set out measures to mitigate the impact of development on it and the need to preserve remains in situ.
- Development must secure funds for the refurbishment of the school on its existing site.
- The scheme must secure additional areas of informal and formal leisure space and ensure their long term maintenance. More formal leisure space (i.e. sports pitches) should be made available for both the community and local sports teams.

Delivery of the Scheme

2.20 As regards delivery of the scheme the Council have indicated as follows:

- A comprehensive planning framework is needed to link the three main land uses and their timing, i.e. housing, school with playing fields and new leisure space.
- Development will be programmed in order to enable the completion of approximately 180 homes and other uses by approximately 2015.
- The development should address the policy framework established for the site in the Pre Submission Core Strategy (PSCS).
- The priority is to deliver the school playing fields at an early stage of the scheme.
- Housing will be phased to allow this to be delivered and to generate funds for refurbishment of the school.
- The masterplan is to provide a detailed planning and design framework sufficient to take forward the scheme through to a planning application. The masterplan's role is key in clearly demonstrating how the development of the site can be successful brought forward, addressing the detailed design and planning issues.
- The planning application will be processed under a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA).
- Joint working with the landowners will ensure delivery of the scheme, secure necessary developer contributions and ensure that long term management of all open spaces, including Cox's Dell and The Plantation is in place.
- The Council will work with Hertfordshire County Council to identify the level and type of contributions required towards sustainable transport measures, local highway works and additional educational and community facilities.

Public Consultation

2.21 As already outlined above, the proposals for the site have been developed in close consultation with the school, Hertfordshire County Council and Dacorum Borough Council, which has helped to develop a clear understanding of the economic, environmental and social context of the scheme. As a first stage of public consultation Dacorum Borough, together with Woolf Bond Planning and CSa Environmental Planning, carried out a design workshop in July 2011 with Berkhamsted Town and Northchurch Parish Councils to informally discuss how the development of the site could be taken forward and assist in producing a more detailed design vision to be reflected in a set of design codes. The consultation exercise identified the following design objectives:

- Affordable housing should be indistinguishable from market housing.
- Detached houses with generous garden depths should border Coppins Close and the fringes of the site. Semi-detached dwellings are appropriate within the central part of the development and higher density terraced properties could be located towards the northern part of the site.
- A play facility should be located by Grim's Ditch and be accessible to people elsewhere. New landscaping should be incorporated along Grim's Ditch.
- Traffic calming and safe crossing points should be provided, especially to sports pitches and recreational land.
- New housing should be of traditional design and based upon local character.
- On-street car parking should be catered for within the design of the new streets.
- Increase planting on the site's Shootersway frontage.
- Detached houses should overlook the Shootersway frontage (fronting onto tree line).
- A sense of space should be created at the entrance to the site. Important to consider the heights and spacing between buildings and their relationship with each other.
- Views across the site to The Plantation are important. Gaps between buildings should be incorporated to provide views of wooded areas.
- A footpath and hedgeline should be provided along the school edge.

2.22 As the proposals for the site progress further towards a planning application, pre-application consultation with local residents and community groups shall also be carried out to assist in successfully and appropriately developing the proposals.

3.0 SITE CONTEXT

- 3.1 Berkhamsted is a thriving town with a population of approximately 15,000 inhabitants. The town centre has a good range of shops, including a modern food supermarket and a growing range of smaller scale commercial uses. There is also a range of existing facilities within walking distance of the site including a local newsagent / small grocery store.
- 3.2 Historically the town developed along the floor of the Bulbourne Valley, an important transport corridor connecting the London Basin with Aylesbury Vale. Subsequent expansion occurred on the valley sides, including the suburban development to the north and east of the site.
- 3.3 The Durrants Lane site lies within the settlement boundary on the western fringe of the Shootersway area of Berkhamsted. The neighbouring countryside to the west and south falls within the Green Belt. The site is roughly triangular in shape, with the apex of the triangle lying to the north on Durrants Lane and the base running along Shootersway. To the east, the site borders the residential areas served off Marlin Close, Coppins Close, Chalet Close and Tresco Road. To the south the boundary follows Shootersway and to the west Durrants Lane.
- 3.4 Neighbouring development comprises detached and semi-detached dwellings of mixed age and character, arranged in an informal, medium density suburban layout. The density of development is higher to the north although no development exceeds 2½ storeys in height.
- 3.5 The main body of the site extends to approximately 14.2 hectares and is bounded to the west by Durrants Lane, to the south by Shootersway and to the north and east by existing development. It is divided into several distinct parcels and ownerships, with the centre of the site comprising the buildings and grounds of Egerton Rothesay School, the southern part two arable fields, and the remainder of the site is woodland. In addition, there is an arable field to the west of Durrants Lane which lies within the Green Belt. It is proposed that this land is available for community playing fields and potentially allotments.
- 3.6 In terms of the general topography of the area, the central and southern portion of the site occupy a broad plateau of land, at approximately 170m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD). The northern portion of the site slopes steeply towards the River Bulbourne and the Grand Union Canal which flows through the centre of Berkhamsted. To the south, beyond Shootersway, the land gently falls to a second, smaller valley, which runs parallel to the River Bulbourne.



Figure 3.1 - Aerial photograph

4.0 ANALYSIS OF THE SITE

- 4.1 A significant amount of detailed technical work has been undertaken to determine the suitability of the site to accommodate development. The following section summarises the work undertaken to date and identifies any further work which may be required to support a planning application.

Ecology

- 4.2 The main site is comprised of 6 distinct land parcels which include arable land, buildings, hard standing, amenity grassland, rough grassland, woodland and scrub. Additional habitats include species poor hedgerows. To the west of Durrants Lane is a further arable field which contains several mature trees.
- 4.3 No habitats of significant ecological value have been identified within the site although the land to the north of the site, the woodland in the southern part, and the vegetation on the boundaries offers opportunities for local wildlife. The following surveys have been undertaken:
- **Badger survey:** Badger setts identified in the woodland to the north (Cox Dell) with evidence of activity foraging across the site. No impacts to these setts identified but new planting and woodland management should include benefits for badgers.
 - **Bat activity surveys:** No roosts identified during the surveys. Low level of bat activity focused to the woodland edges and hedges. Lighting should be designed to minimise impacts on bat flight routes along these features.
 - **Assessment of trees to support roosting bats:** Small number of trees found with potential to support roosting bats. These trees are recommended for retention.
 - **Reptile survey:** No reptiles were found on site.
 - **Great crested newt surveys:** No evidence of great crested newts was found in any of the waterbodies within 500m of the site including on site pond in Cox Dell.
 - **Breeding bird survey:** Size and diversity of breeding bird population considered less than expected for habitat present. No rare species or species of conservation importance recorded.
- 4.4 Opportunities exist to provide biodiversity gains via simple enhancement measures alongside development.

LEGEND

RG	Rough grassland
	Sandpit
	Hard standing
A	Amenity grassland
	Scattered trees
	Species poor hedge
	Bank/Slope
	Fence
	Mixed woodland
A	Arable
	Pond
XXX	Ornamental planting
	Dense scrub
	Buildings
	Tall ruderals
A-F	Land Parcels



Figure 4.1 - Habitats plan

Landscape

- 4.5 There are a number of significant trees and areas of woodland on the site, particularly to the periphery and in Cox Dell and The Plantation. However, none of these are covered by Tree Preservation Orders.
- 4.6 There are no designations for landscape character or quality covering the site.
- 4.7 The topography of the wider area is relevant to the setting of site. There is a break of slope on Durrants Lane, by Cox Dell, resulting in the body of the site being screened from view as one approaches from the north. The land to the south of the site, beyond Shootersway, also falls away sharply, resulting in views from this direction being limited to the vegetation on the southern site boundary only. There is also a break in slope along the northern boundary of the two arable fields with the land to the south sloping gently downwards towards Shootersway and that to the north falling slightly more steeply to the Grand Union Canal. The result of this is that the existing school buildings are partly screened by this localised ridgeline.
- 4.8 The heavily vegetated nature of the site boundaries, the extent of built development to the east of the site and topography of the local area is such that views of the site are limited and for the most part confined to fragmented, near distance views.



Photograph of south-east field



Photograph of south-west field looking north towards the school



Photograph of existing playing field located to the north of the school



Existing school buildings



Existing school playing fields

Archaeology

- 4.9 An archaeological desk-based assessment of the site has been undertaken, including consultation of archaeological and historical information from documentary and cartographic sources. On the basis of the information obtained it is apparent that the site is located within an area containing evidence of activity of prehistoric and Roman date.
- 4.10 Hertfordshire's Historic Environment Record (HER) records show one archaeological feature within the site. This is Grim's Ditch, a linear boundary of probable Iron Age date, the course of which crosses the site on an approximate east-west alignment, following the northern boundaries of Areas D and A. Although the HER note the existence of a surviving length of this monument in the north corner of Area A, nothing is visible on the site. This feature will need to be protected and retained as undisturbed land.

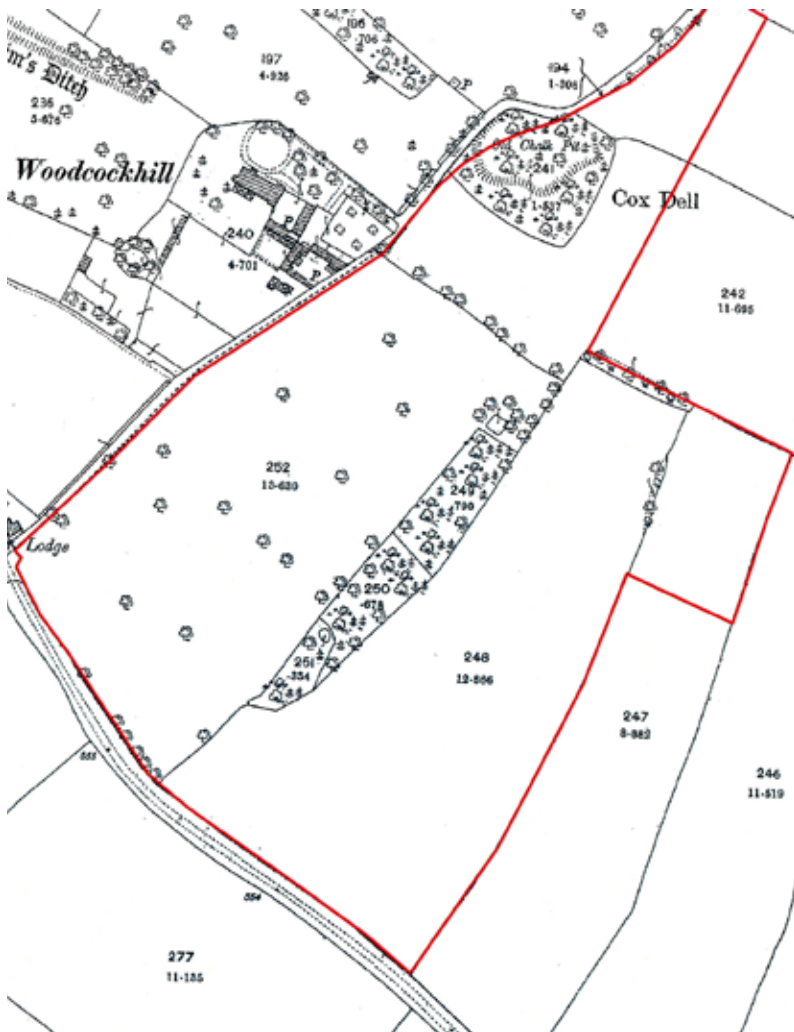


Figure 4.2 - Extract from Ordnance Survey map dated 1898



Figure 4.3 - Archaeological potential of the site

- 4.11 Of the land to the east of Durrants Lane, the archaeological potential can be described as follows:

Area A: The north side of this area contains Grim's Ditch which is of high potential whereas the remainder of the parcel is of low potential.

Area B: Other than Grim's Ditch this area is considered to have low archaeological potential.

Area C: This part of the site has been disturbed by chalk extraction and tree planting which would have caused significant disturbance to buried archaeological features and as such the potential is low.

Area D: This part of the site has been disturbed by the construction of the school buildings, car park, access and services, as a result of which any buried archaeology is likely to have been truncated or destroyed. The potential is therefore low.

Area E: This area has been in agricultural use for at least three centuries so preservation of buried archaeology is likely to be good. The potential is therefore moderate to low.

Area F: This area has similarly been in agricultural use for at least three centuries and is evaluated as a moderate to low potential.

- 4.12 Prior to submission of a planning application, consultation shall be carried out with the County Archaeologist to establish a pre-determination programme of archaeological evaluation.

Agricultural Land Classification

- 4.13 A detailed Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) survey of the site was carried out by a Chartered Soil Scientist in April 2008, in accordance with current ALC guidelines. This involved examining soil profiles to a depth of 120cm with the use of a hand-held soil auger at 7 locations on an approximate 100m grid.
- 4.14 Most of the study area (i.e. 6.7ha of the site), comprising the school buildings, playing fields and woodland, was classed as 'Other Land/Non-agricultural'. Most of the agricultural land within the study area (i.e. 4.9 ha of the site) was classed as Subgrade 3b, with a smaller area (i.e. 2.7 ha or of the site) classed as Subgrade 3a. As set out in Paragraph 28 of PPS7 (2004), '...Little weight in agricultural terms should be given to the loss of agricultural land in Grades 3b'.
- 4.15 The small area of Subgrade 3a agricultural land falls at the lowest end of the 'best and most versatile' scale. This parcel of Subgrade 3a agricultural land is located within an area proposed for use as a playing field and, therefore, it will not be permanently lost under built development. The survey did not include the land to the west of Durrants Lane as this land similarly is proposed for playing fields and will not be permanently lost to development.
- 4.16 Where practicable, it is recommended that the proposed scheme should involve the reuse of soil resources on site.
- 4.17 In all regards above, the development of land at the site does not significantly conflict with national, regional or local planning policy in agricultural land quality terms.



Figure 4.4 - Plan showing agricultural land classification

Highways & Transportation

- 4.18 The site is located in an accessible location in close proximity to local transport services, facilities and other local services, adjoining existing areas of residential development. Both pedestrian and vehicular access could be safely provided to all areas of the proposed scheme with the primary access to the residential development likely to be taken from Shootersway in the south.
- 4.19 The local highway authority, Hertfordshire County Council, has no objections in principle to the development of the site, subject to details of the necessary highway improvements to accommodate the site access arrangements being agreed (refer to 7.5 for further details).
- 4.20 Residential / estate roads would be designed in accordance with the guidance set out in 'Manual for Streets' and Travel Plans would be produced to support the application for both residential development and the re-development of the school site.

Services & Utilities

- 4.21 With regard to the provision of appropriate services to the site, initial investigations outline that the existing infrastructure surrounding the site is of sufficient capacity to serve the proposed development without the requirement for new, large-scale service connections although some level of reinforcement is likely to be required.
- 4.22 Potable water is anticipated to be taken from the mains in Shootersway, gas from the mains branches along Shootersway / Durrants Lane and electricity from the nearest HV supply.

Flood Risk & Drainage

- 4.23 The site lies on a broad plateau of land approximately 170m AOD above the valley floor of the River Bulbourne. It lies outside any 1:100 year floodplain as shown on the Environment Agency flood maps and therefore flooding does not form a constraint to the development of the site.
- 4.24 Initial reviews of the site characteristics and soil composition suggest that the likely surface water drainage strategy would involve on-site soakaways. The number and type of soakaways will depend on the nature and depths of clay and chalk strata with further soil investigations proposed to evaluate the soakaway potential.

Foul Water Drainage

- 4.25 There are existing foul sewers in the residential areas to the east and north-east of the site and the intention would be to connect into one of these sewers. The nearest foul sewer to the site is in Coppins Close where the houses are served by a rising main and pumping station which connects to the foul sewer in Shootersway.
- 4.26 The options to serve the site are either to connect to the existing sewers to the north-east that currently serve Tresco Road, Durrants Lane, Chaucer Close and Edlyn Close or to connect to the foul sewer in Shootersway via a raising main.
- 4.27 Further detailed analysis is required to work out the most appropriate option for servicing the site.

Local School Capacity

- 4.28 Dacorum Borough Council has been working closely with Hertfordshire County Council on this issue in looking at individual sites and future growth in the town. Both short-term and long-term school capacity are being addressed (including the creation of new primary schools). Consequently, the proposed new housing development will need to make full financial contributions towards the provision of new school places.

5.0 OPPORTUNITIES, CONSTRAINTS AND DEVELOPMENT OPTIONS

Opportunities & Constraints

- 5.1 To enable a sustainable urban extension to be created on the site and to ensure the best environmental fit for the development, a number of opportunities and constraints have been identified, which the masterplan will need to respond to. These constraints and opportunities include those identified by Berkhamsted Town and Northchurch Parish Councils.

Opportunities

- Address the local housing need
- Creation of new recreational space/community facilities
- Investment in the existing school
- Create new pedestrian and cycle routes/linkages within the site
- To create a new safe pedestrian crossing point on Durrants Lane
- To improve the management of Cox's Dell
- Creation of a development with a distinctive sense of place that respects traditional building styles and materials

Constraints

- Location of archaeology - Grim's Ditch
- Green Belt boundary - need to create a defensible and enduring boundary
- Amenity of existing school to be respected
- Respect the amenity and character of neighbouring dwellings
- Conserve the setting of the existing woodland areas
- Limited points of access
- Respect the sensitivity of the site's ridge top location

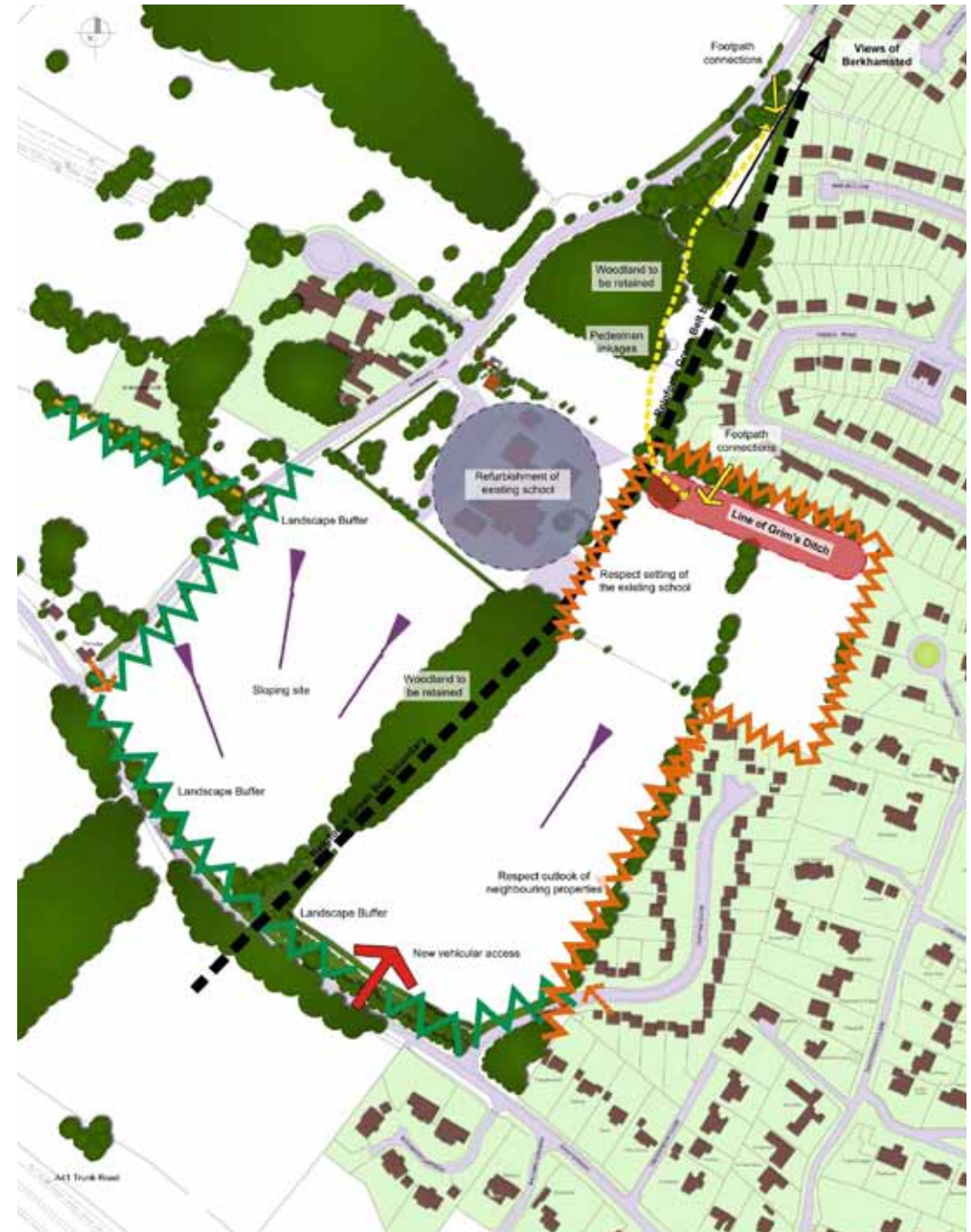


Figure 5.1 - Opportunities & Constraints

Masterplan Options

- 5.2 A number of spatial arrangements for the site have been considered as part of the initial masterplanning exercise. The favoured option is illustrated in Figure 5.3 below as this provides the best environmental fit for the development and the best synergy between uses. An alternative arrangement is also illustrated which is accessed off Durrants Lane. The pros and cons of each scenario are briefly considered below.

Option A

- 5.3 In Option A the main vehicular access is taken off Durrants Lane. Housing is located in the eastern part of the site, behind the existing belt of woodland. Pedestrian links are provided to Tresco Road to the north, to Durrants Lane to the northwest and to the playing fields to the west. Overflow parking for the school is provided to the south of the access road.

Pros

- Housing is discreetly located behind the woodland belt
- The woodland belt along Shootersway remains unbroken
- Playing fields are located on the more sensitive part of the site
- Housing is well related to the existing housing to the north and east

Cons

- The access road separates the overflow parking from the school
- Durrants Lane is unsuitable as a main vehicular access
- Residential Access Road would need to cross the woodland in the centre of the site
- Egerton Rothesay School have serious safety concerns over children crossing the access road to get to the playing fields.

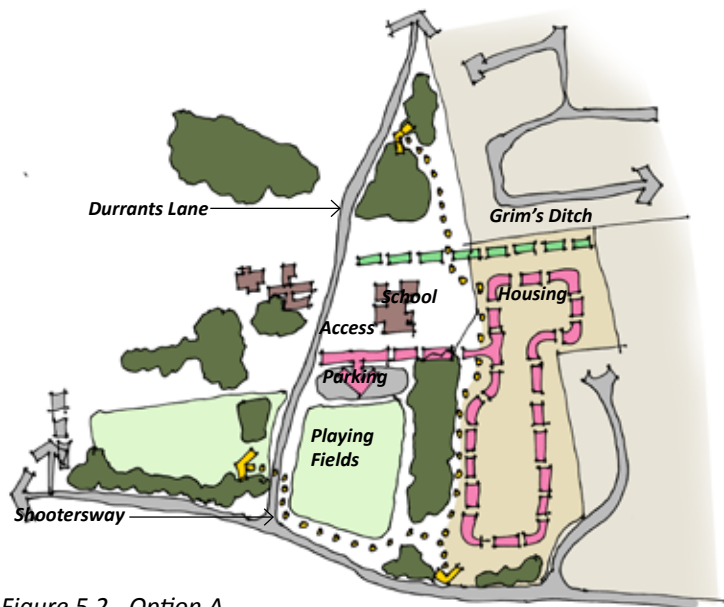


Figure 5.2 - Option A

Option B

- 5.4 Option B has a similar spatial arrangement of land uses but takes its access from Shootersway.

Pros

- Housing is discreetly located behind the woodland belt
- The woodland belt in the centre of the site remains intact
- Playing fields are located on the more sensitive part of the site
- Housing is well related to the existing housing to the north and east
- Overflow parking is well related to the school
- Impact on Durrants Lane is modest
- School children have safe access to playing fields

Cons

- Woodland on Shootersway is breached
- Slightly longer vehicular route to the town centre.

- 5.5 The Consortium consider Option B to be a preferable arrangement as it protects the integrity of the woodland within the site, provides a better and safer relationship between the school and the new playing fields and has less of an impact on Durrants Lane.

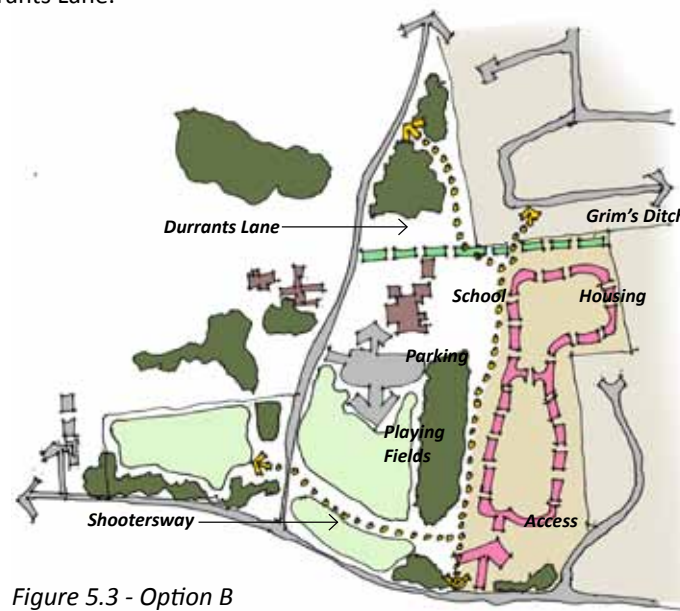


Figure 5.3 - Option B

6.0 FRAMEWORK MASTERPLAN

6.1 In this section the parameters for the masterplan are defined. These masterplan parameters address the technical and environmental studies and result from dialogue with Dacorum Borough Council. Importantly, they also respond to the feedback received from Berkhamsted Town and Northchurch Parish Councils at the design workshop carried out in July 2011. This is not a definitive list, as the scheme will be developed further in joint partnership with Dacorum Borough Council and the local community. The below parameters set out the principal elements of the masterplan.

1. Community Playing Fields

The land to the west of Durrants Lane is controlled by the Consortium and is available for community playing fields. The land is currently in agricultural use and lies within the Green Belt. The provision of playing fields is however compatible with its Green Belt status. New safe linkages shall be provided to them and the privacy of the adjoining dwellings respected.

2. Emergency Access

An emergency access and a maintenance access will need to be provided to this land.

3. Allotments

Subject to local demand, a small part of the land to the west of Durrants Lane could be made available for community allotments.

4. Shared Parking

An area of car parking shall be provided to the east of Durrants Lane to serve the community playing fields and informal open space and to act as an over-flow car park for the school. The car park will need to be sensitively designed and appropriately landscaped.

5. Turning head and coach parking

The access to the new car park will need to make provision for coach parking and have safe pick-up and drop-off points for the school.

6. School Expansion/Refurbishment

Within the existing school site there is the potential for expansion and refurbishment of the existing school buildings.

7. Footpath Connection to Durrants Lane

A footpath connection shall be provided alongside the school site and through the woodland to Durrants Lane.

8. Cox Dell

The woodland to the north of the school is to be retained and a management plan provided to enhance the structure of the woodland and the habitats within it.

9. Footpath Link to Tresco Road

There is an existing footpath leading from the school playing fields to Tresco Road. This shall be retained and resurfaced.

10. Grim's Ditch

Grim's Ditch is an important historic asset and should be retained within an area of open space and new landscaping. No development shall occur within 20 metres of the ditch and dwellings shall be orientated to front on to it. The opportunity exists to locate a play area close to the ditch.

11. Coppins Close/Chalet Close Boundary

Housing backing onto this boundary should be detached, have generous gardens and be of a similar scale to neighbouring development. Vegetation along the boundary will need to be retained and supplemented with new planting and privacy of the existing dwellings respected.

12. Housing Development

Housing shall be predominantly 2 storey with occasional 2½ storey development to add interest. There should be a clear definition between the public and private realm and a permeable, pedestrian friendly street layout. The highway layout must be subservient to the built form of the development and provide a clearly defined

sequence of spaces. All of the important trees within the site are to be retained.

13. Shootersway Access

Vehicular access into the site is to be from Shootersway. The access shall be designed to minimise the impact on the tree belt along the site frontage. The new houses should create a sense of place at the site entrance.

14. Shootersway Frontage

The existing vegetation along the site frontage is in relatively poor condition and includes a range of non-native trees. The long-term objective for this area is to retain the vegetation along the site frontage but to gradually replace the non-native trees with indigenous stock. The new houses should overlook this frontage.

15. The Plantation

This belt of woodland is an important feature of the local landscape and is to be retained and managed. Development should face onto the woodland.

16. Informal Open Space

An area of informal open space should be provided on the perimeter of the school playing fields and a footpath link provided to the proposed car park and to the community playing fields to the west of Durrants Lane.

17. Dual Use School Playing Fields

The existing school playing fields are to be relocated to the south of the school. The playing fields shall be established and available to the school prior to the release of the existing playing fields and available for use by the wider community.



Figure 6.1 - Masterplan Key Plan



7.0 SUSTAINABILITY & DELIVERABILITY

Sustainability

- 7.1 The Egerton Rothesay site lies on the edge of Berkhamsted about 2km to the south west of the town centre. Development on the site would comprise an urban extension which is encouraged by relevant planning policy. There are reasonable links connecting the site to the rest of the town via Shootersway and Durrants Lane and there is a footpath link extending through to Tresco Road and The Ridgeway where local services are available.
- 7.2 PPS1 identifies sustainable development as the core principle underpinning planning. Para 4 identifies the Governments aims for sustainable development including:
- Social progress which recognises the needs of everyone;
 - Effective prudent protection of the environment; and
 - The prudent use of natural resources.
- 7.3 The need for social cohesion and inclusion is recognised and the detailed layout for the proposed development should make provision for a range of dwelling types, sizes and tenures which on the one hand will provide for local housing needs and on the other recognise and accept the development pattern which already exists in the area.
- 7.4 Access to existing employment, community facilities and services, including shops, schools and healthcare is good and will be complemented by new facilities on site, including the proposed recreational provision.
- 7.5 In terms of transportation proposals, a new access to the residential development will be provided from Shootersway whilst a further new access for the school, including a car park, is to be provided from Durrants Lane. A new roundabout at the Shootersway/Durrants Lane junction will reduce vehicle speeds and allow the 30mph zone to be extended which will be an advantage for all locally. More parking on the school site will remove the problem of existing parking on verges. The wider impact of traffic on issues such as the junction of Shootersway with Kings Road will be assessed in detail in due course and improvements can be made as necessary. The scheme is generally supported by Hertfordshire County Council as the Local Highway Authority.
- 7.6 As regards pedestrian routes, the links through to Tresco Road will be improved to provide a connection to local shops and services. As to bus services there are presently no local services passing the site but there are 3 services utilising the A4251 High Street in Berkhamsted which is within 600/700 metres walk from the site. Buses in turn provide a link to the railway station which is some 2.5km walk from the site with the main town centre area being some 1.5 to 2km away.
- 7.7 In summary it is not considered that there are any overriding problems with providing necessary services and facilities for the development.

Deliverability & Development Phasing

- 7.8 The Consortium controls the whole of the site which is the subject of this Framework Document and there are no reasons why the land cannot be brought forward for development subject to a suitable and acceptable development package being agreed. Arrangements are being finalised within the Consortium to sort out equalisation and funding issues, including contributions towards the future improvements to Egerton Rothesay School, all of which will help to maintain its current status as an important service provider locally. The school plays a very important role in providing specialist support for specific educational needs, such as Dyslexia, Dyspraxia or speech and language issues.
- 7.9 As regards phasing of the development the scheme for approximately 180 houses is not of sufficient size to require detailed long term phasing. However it is anticipated that development would start from the Shootersway end of the site and the construction of approximately 180 dwellings would take in the order of 2-3 years. Development of this, presently, undeveloped land will mean that the existing school playing fields to the north can be retained for at least the first year or so of the development programme which will in turn mean that provided the works to instigate the new playing fields on the land south of Egerton Rothesay School and west of Durrants Lane are implemented at the earliest phase of the development, then the latter pitches will be available by the time it is necessary to develop the existing school playing fields.
- 7.10 A further requirement of the principles set out in the Pre Submission Core Strategy (PSCS), is that the school playing fields should be available for dual use including by the local community. In this regard there is considerable pressure for playing pitches across the whole of Berkhamsted, not least by the Berkhamsted Raiders who are a local club running a large number of youth football teams. Again it is envisaged that a management structure will be put in place which will allow for use of the pitches by the Raiders (the club already use the Egerton Rothesay Playing Fields) as well as, from time to time and on an agreed basis, allowing other pitches to made available for public use.
- 7.11 One further advantage of the scheme as noted above is that the car park area to be provided south of the existing school buildings will be available on weekdays for use by staff at the school. However the school does not open on Saturday mornings so the parking will be available for sports related uses over the weekends when the pitches are likely to be at their highest level of use.

Suitability

- 7.12 As demonstrated through this document, the site is in a suitable location to accommodate residential growth and can provide local community facilities to complement those in the surrounding area. The document has also demonstrated that there are no in principle technical or environmental constraints that would preclude development on the site.

8.0 CONCLUSION

- 8.1 The site at Durrants Lane, the subject of this Framework Document, is an existing allocation in the Development Plan. The Plan seeks a mix of uses on the site, including residential, redevelopment of the school and the provision of additional formal and informal public open space.
- 8.2 The Local Authority are in the process of renewing their Development Plan and the opportunity is being taken to update the proposals for the site which were originally prepared in 2002, including taking account of viability issues and producing a more realistic and implementable development scheme. Given that there are approximately 6 hectares of land potentially available for residential development and there is an acknowledged need locally to provide additional housing, the opportunity is being taken to increase the number of dwellings on the site from 100 up to approximately 180 dwellings, subject to the normal development control process. This approach enhances the possibility of achieving the aims of the original allocation, namely to retain the Egerton Rothesay school given the important local service it provides for special needs children, at the same time as providing additional pitches for recreational need.
- 8.3 The Durrants Lane site provides an appropriate location for achieving such growth and the illustrative masterplan shows how a high quality sustainable urban extension of approximately 180 homes can be delivered in an appropriate manner. In addition to providing the much needed housing, the site can also deliver a range of community benefits including improvements to the Egerton Rothesay school and a provision of playing pitches to help meet recreational needs across the town.



Dixies, High Street,
Ashwell, Herts, SG7 5NT
email: ashwell@csaenvironmental.co.uk