

3.0 SITE APPRAISAL

3.3 SITE CHARACTER



1 Figure 14: View looking across Hambridge Farm with the watercourse in the centre of the site, with indicative development as part of SWSDL shown in grey



2 Figure 15: View towards Easthampstead Road from the south, the main site and Wokingham visible beyond. with indicative development as part of SWSDL shown in grey



3 Figure 16: View looking north west across the site with Old Wokingham Road on the right, with indicative development as part of SWSDL shown in grey



4 Figure 17: View from the centre of the northern part of the site looking towards the northern perimeter boundary, with indicative development as part of SWSDL shown in grey

3.3.1 The main area of the site is typical of arable farmland; generally open with landscape features predominately located along field boundaries. The site boundaries are generally well vegetated with pockets of woodland, mature hedgerow and hedgerow trees. The site also includes some existing development in the form of farmsteads, residential properties and agricultural buildings. Some of them are visually intrusive and rather unsightly. Local topography combined with the presence of maturing landscape features both within the site and its immediate context provide an enclosed site character.

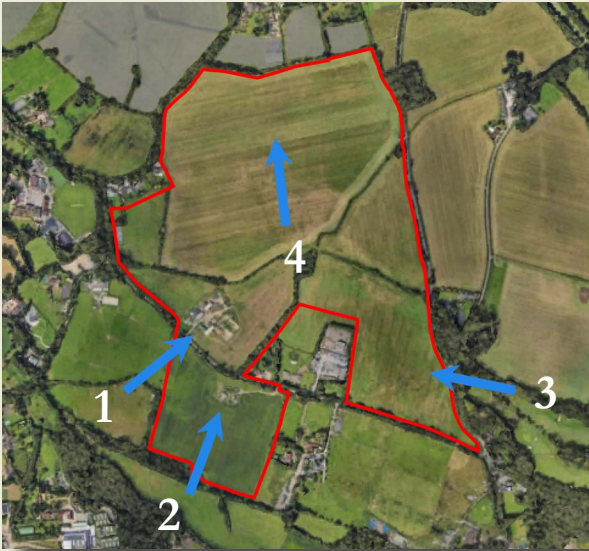


Figure 18: site photographs key plan, with indicative development as part of SWSDL shown in grey

3.0 SITE APPRAISAL

3.4 CONTEXT AND CONNECTIVITY

3.4.1 A Transport Assessment was prepared by ALP and it focuses on assessing the impact of the development on the Old Wokingham Road corridor, and Easthampstead Road, as well as the junctions which form the route to the A329(M) corridor. This accords with the focus outlined in the SPD and local plan update, as well as the scoping exercise agreed with Wokingham Borough Council.

3.4.2 The South Wokingham SDL Distributor Road has been partially built in the form of William Heelas Way between the roundabout with Waterloo Road and the junction with London Road to the north. Future stages of the SDL Distributor Road will link the William Heelas Way / Waterloo Road Roundabout with Easthampstead Road to the north of the development site and end with a connection to the A321 Finchampstead Road / Landen Court / Tesco's Roundabout.

3.4.3 The Distributor Road will help facilitate the movement of vehicles from the development site to and from the west and Wokingham town centre. The figure 19 below is an extract from the Wokingham Borough Council South Wokingham Distributor Road web page and illustrates the proposed route of the South Wokingham Distributor Road in the context of the South Wokingham SDL boundary and the site.

3.4.4 The closest pair of existing bus stops to the development site are located 1.2km to the north of the site on Waterloo Road within Wokingham. This bus stop can be accessed via Easthampstead Road or Waterloo Road. Other bus stops in the vicinity of the development site are located at Merlin Way, Peacock Farm and Tesco Finchampstead Road.

3.4.5 The nearest railway station to the site

is located at Wokingham and is located 2.9km northwest of the development site. Wokingham station is located on the Waterloo to Reading Line and North Down Line. The Waterloo to Reading Line runs between London Waterloo in the northeast and Reading in the southwest via villages and towns including Twickenham, Bracknell, Wokingham and Earley. The North Down Line Runs between Reading and Reigate with services continuing on to Gatwick Airport.

3.4.6 The overarching principal of national and local transport policy is for new developments to be located where it is accessible by a range of transport including walking, cycling and public transport. Safe access and appropriate parking should be provided. Fundamentally, development should only be prevented from coming forward for transport reasons if the residual impact would be severe.

3.4.7 The site has been identified as one suitable for development as an extension of the already consented South Wokingham SDL. Utilising the extensive infrastructure that has been committed to be delivered as part of that scheme, it will maximise opportunities for walking and cycling links as well as further bolstering the ability to deliver a sustainable public transport strategy.

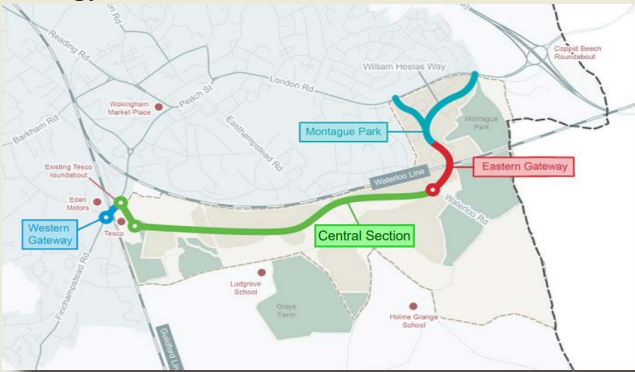


Figure 19: proposed route of the SWDR from WBC Website

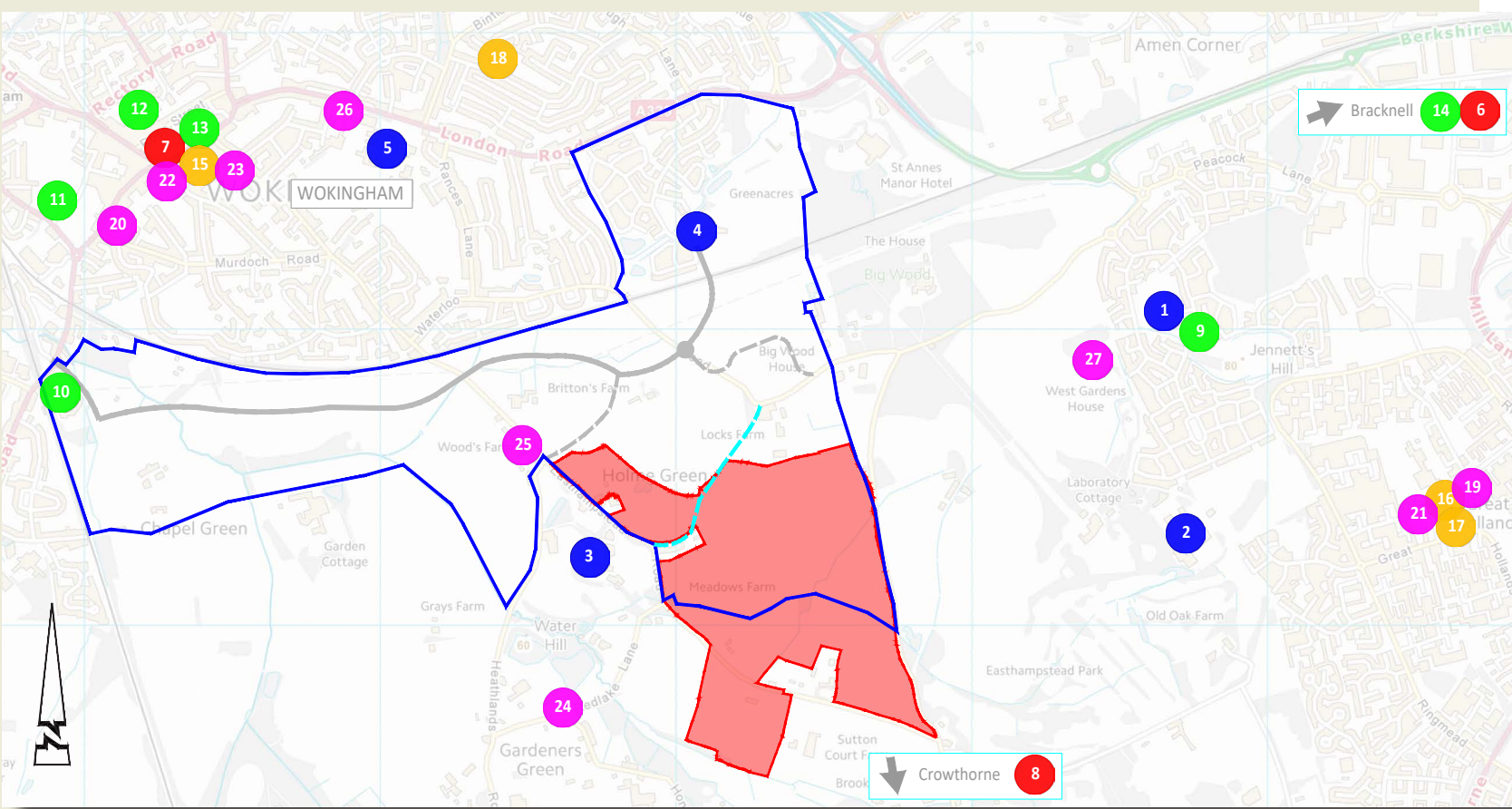


Figure 20: plan indicating local services

EDUCATION		WALK DISTANCE	EMPLOYMENT		WALK DISTANCE
1	Jennett's Park Primary School	2.2km	6	Bracknell Town Centre	4.9km
2	Easthampstead park Community School	2.8km	7	Wokingham Town Centre	2.6km
3	Home Grange School	1.5km	8	Crowthorne Town Centre	4.8km
4	Floreat Montague Primary	1.1km			
5	St Crispin's School	2.1km			
RETAIL		WALK DISTANCE	HEALTH		WALK DISTANCE
9	Co-op	2.2km	15	Wokingham Medical Centre	3.1km
10	Tesco	2.8km	16	Lloyds Pharmacy	3.6km
11	Aldi	3.5km	17	Great Hollands Health Centre	3.6km
12	Waitrose	3.1km	18	Bean Oak Dental Centre	2.2km
13	Wokingham Town Centre	2.6km			
14	Bracknell Town Centre	4.9km			
COMMUNITY & LEISURE		WALK DISTANCE	23	Ritz Cinema	2.7km
19	Great Hollands Library	3.7km	24	Public House	1.3km
20	Wokingham Library	3.2km	25	Public House	1.1km
21	Great Hollands Post Office	3.8km	26	St Crispin's Leisure Centre	2.2km
22	Wokingham Post Office	2.9km	27	Peacock Meadows	2.0km

KEY:	
	Approximate Site Area
	Proposed Route of South Wokingham Distributor Road
	Proposed Access Roads Within South Wokingham SDL
	Existing Route of Byway 30
	South Wokingham SDL Boundary

3.0 SITE APPRAISAL

3.5 ECOLOGICAL CONTEXT

3.5.1 Surveys were undertaken onsite through 2022 and 2023 which included bat surveys including transect surveys, static detector surveys and tree surveys. The site falls within the 5km buffer zone for Thames Basin Heath SPA. The site has various ancient woodlands within the zone of influence around the site. Local Wildlife Sites are found within the zone of influence of the site.

3.5.2 The Site comprises of large grassland fields with boundary hedgerows. There is a tributary of the Emm Brook running east to west across the Site which is intersected by an ephemerally wet ditch which runs north to south. There is a parcel of cropland in the south and several small parcels of woodland and mixed scrub scattered across the Site.

3.5.3 Hedgehog (NERC mammal) were confirmed onsite. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] No evidence of hazel dormouse was found onsite. No evidence of otter or water vole was found onsite. Eight species of bat were recorded using the site for commuting and foraging. Suitability for nesting birds was recorded onsite, with nesting evidence within hedgerows and onsite buildings. Reptiles confirmed onsite were a low population of slow worm and a good population of grass snake. No evidence of great crested newt was recorded onsite.



Figure 21: View across site looking towards the watercourse and Hambridge Farm

3.0 SITE APPRAISAL

3.6 SITE CONSTRAINTS

3.6.1 The key constraints and opportunities have been established by the research and technical studies which were carried out in conjunction with the design process. The diagrams below are a summary of identified constraints. They illustrate that the site offers no significant physical constraints to development, however considering its rural surroundings it requires a sensitive approach which will mediate the transition from the town's edge to the countryside.

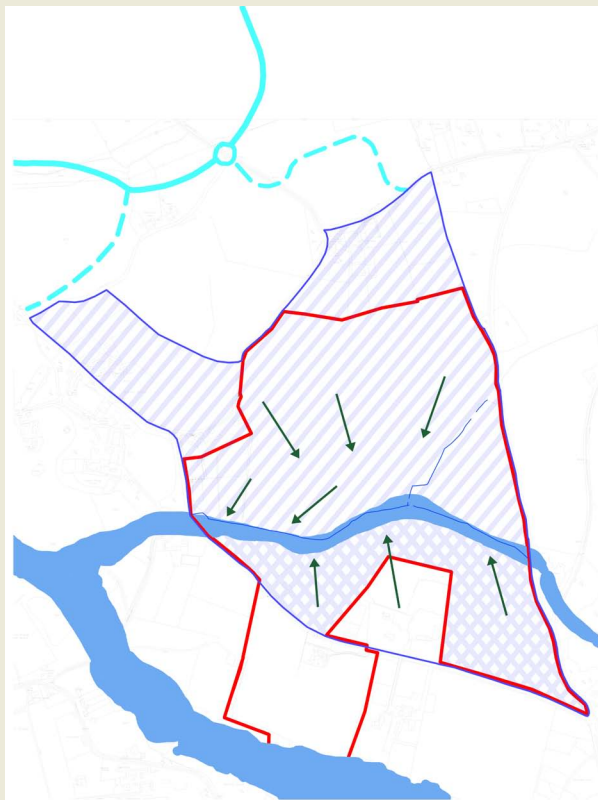


Figure 22: topography and drainage

TOPOGRAPHY AND DRAINAGE

3.6.2 The existing watercourse is an important feature enhancing the rural feel of the site and should inform the character and form of the development.

3.6.3 The associated flood risk zones and topography, with the land gently sloping towards the watercourse will need to be considered and factored into the landscape and drainage strategies of the proposal.

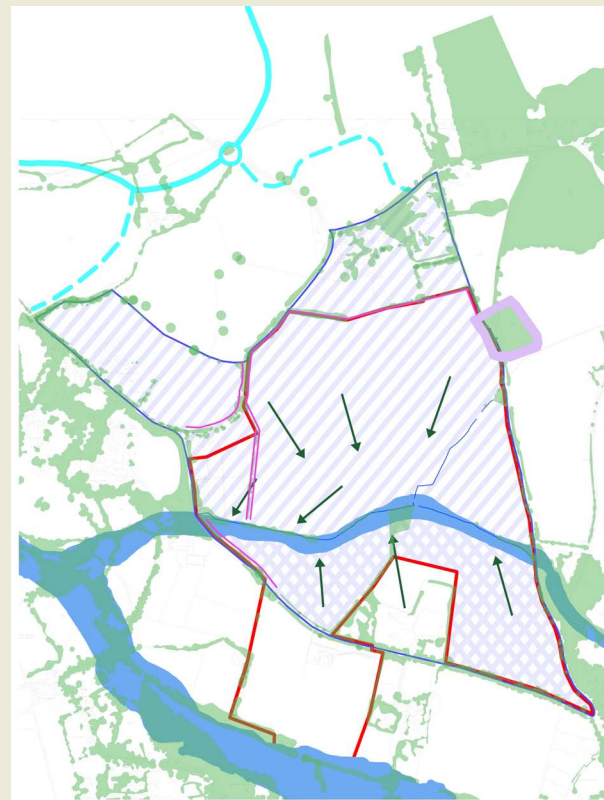


Figure 23: topography, drainage and arboriculture

ARBORICULTURE

3.6.4 Well established landscape features like the existing trees and mature hedgerows, which are largely around the perimeter of the site, or are associated with the watercourse are to be retained and incorporated into the design with the necessary buffer zones.

3.6.5 An Ancient Woodland adjacent to the north east of the site, which will require a 15metre buffer zone, needs to be respected and incorporated into the design.



Figure 24: topography, drainage, arboriculture, surrounding development, listed buildings and PROWs

SURROUNDING DEVELOPMENT, LISTED BUILDINGS AND PROWs

3.6.6 Although the site is mostly in agricultural use there are existing PROWs including Byway 30 that have to be respected and incorporated.

3.6.7 Some existing sporadic development within the site, like Hambridge Farm for example, requires addressing, as in its current form, it detracts from the character of the area.

3.6.8 Although there are no historic structures on the site itself, the scale and form of the development needs to be appropriate and respectful of the nearby Listed Buildings.

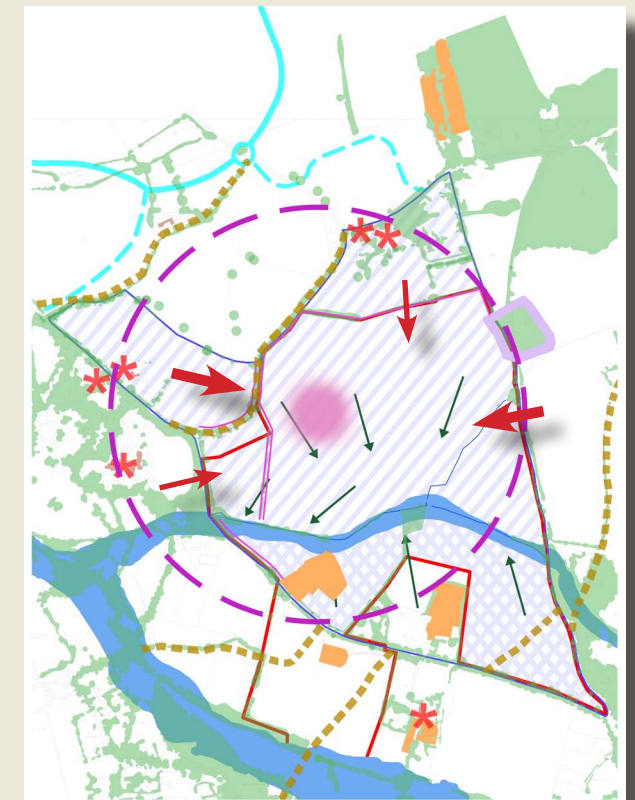


Figure 25: topography, drainage, arboriculture, surrounding development, listed buildings, PROWs and connectivity

CONNECTIVITY

3.6.9 Possible locations for vehicular access to site were identified and indicated by red arrows above.

3.6.10 A walkable development with a single centre can be achieved if the centre is located in the north west quarter of the site making it possible to reach all of the development by foot in no more than 10 minutes, as indicated by the dotted circle above.

3.6.11 Good links to the neighbouring site within the South Wokingham SDL area, also within 10 minute walk, will be required to allow the centre to become a shared asset.

4.0 CONSULTATION

4.1 PRE-APPLICATION ENGAGEMENT WITH THE COUNCIL

4.1.1 Following the Council’s publication of a Revised Growth Strategy consultation between November 2021 and January 2022, and the change in administration May 2022, Lightwood and Nicholas King Homes began to prepare a co-ordinated masterplan for the proposed SW EDL extension. In October 2022 this was presented to the new administration with officers in support.

4.1.2 Subsequently, a series of meetings took place with officers as part of Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) focused on the preparation of the review of the Local Plan (PPA). During these meetings both developers presented their emerging proposals to planning officers and technical specialists. Although focused on assisting the Council with generating site-specific Local Plan policy, the PPA session covered ground that would have been considered as part of a planning application focused pre-app PPA. No written feedback has been prepared by the Council, and therefore the evolution of the proposals has been reliant on the discussion that took during the meetings. Developer drafted minutes have been circulated and no amendments have been suggested.

4.1.3 During the PPA period the Council agreed a revised Local Development Scheme (LDS) at the end of July 2023 which foresaw a Regulation 19 consultation beginning in November 2023. This did not come to pass due to the delay in a revised NPPF being published. The Council has yet to update its LDS as it would now seem that Regulation 19 will not be reached until after the local elections in May 2024.

4.1.4 The list below sets out the sequence of meetings at which the proposals have been presented and discussed. Each session lasted 2 hours, with the site visit taking a little longer.

October 22nd 2022

Briefing to the new administration
Comparing the emerging proposals to the Council own masterplanning evidence base (David Lock Associates)

PPA1 January 25th 2023

Opportunities & constraints
Preferred Strategic masterplanning approach

PPA 2 February 22nd 2023

Transport and Movement Strategy

PPA 3 March 2023

Site visit

PPA 4 May 11th 2023

Green Infrastructure Strategy

PPA 5 May 25th 2023

Allotments & playspaces
Street typologies, character areas and placemaking

PPA 6 January 15th 2024 (AM)

Strategic Transport (recap of access strategy and presentation of modelling outputs)

PPA 7 January 15th 2024 (PM)

NB – rescheduled from December 7th
Heritage (a focus Pearce’s Farmhouse for Nicholas King Homes)
Landscape Masterplan and detailed SANG design

4.2 PUBLIC CONSULTATION

4.2.1 A public consultation event took place on 14th June 2024 at St Sebastian’s Memorial Hall, Wokingham, for the Lightwood Strategic site and the Nicholas Kings Homes sites.

4.2.2 This provided the opportunity for the local community to view the masterplan and speak to the consultants about the development and provide feedback.

4.2.3 In addition, a website has been published which contains the same boards and information so that those who were unable to attend the Public Consultation event can have the same information remotely; in order to provide them with the opportunity to provide feedback, an email address where feedback can be sent. Figure 26 below is a snapshot of the home page of the website.



Figure 27: 14th June 2024 public consultation event

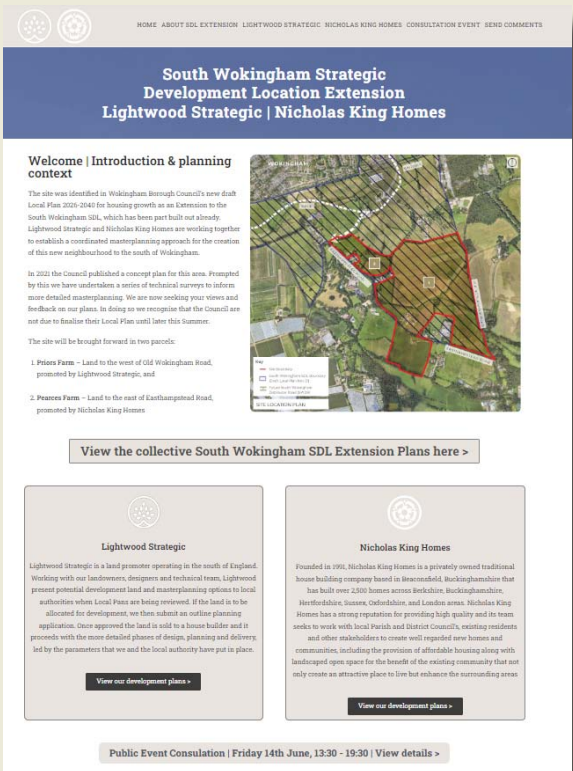


Figure 26: home page of the website



Figure 28: 14th June 2024 public consultation event

5.0 OPPORTUNITIES

The site offers numerous opportunities for creating a unique and successful development such as:

5.1 AN INTRODUCTION OF GREEN OPEN SPACE RIGHT AT THE HEART OF THE DEVELOPMENT

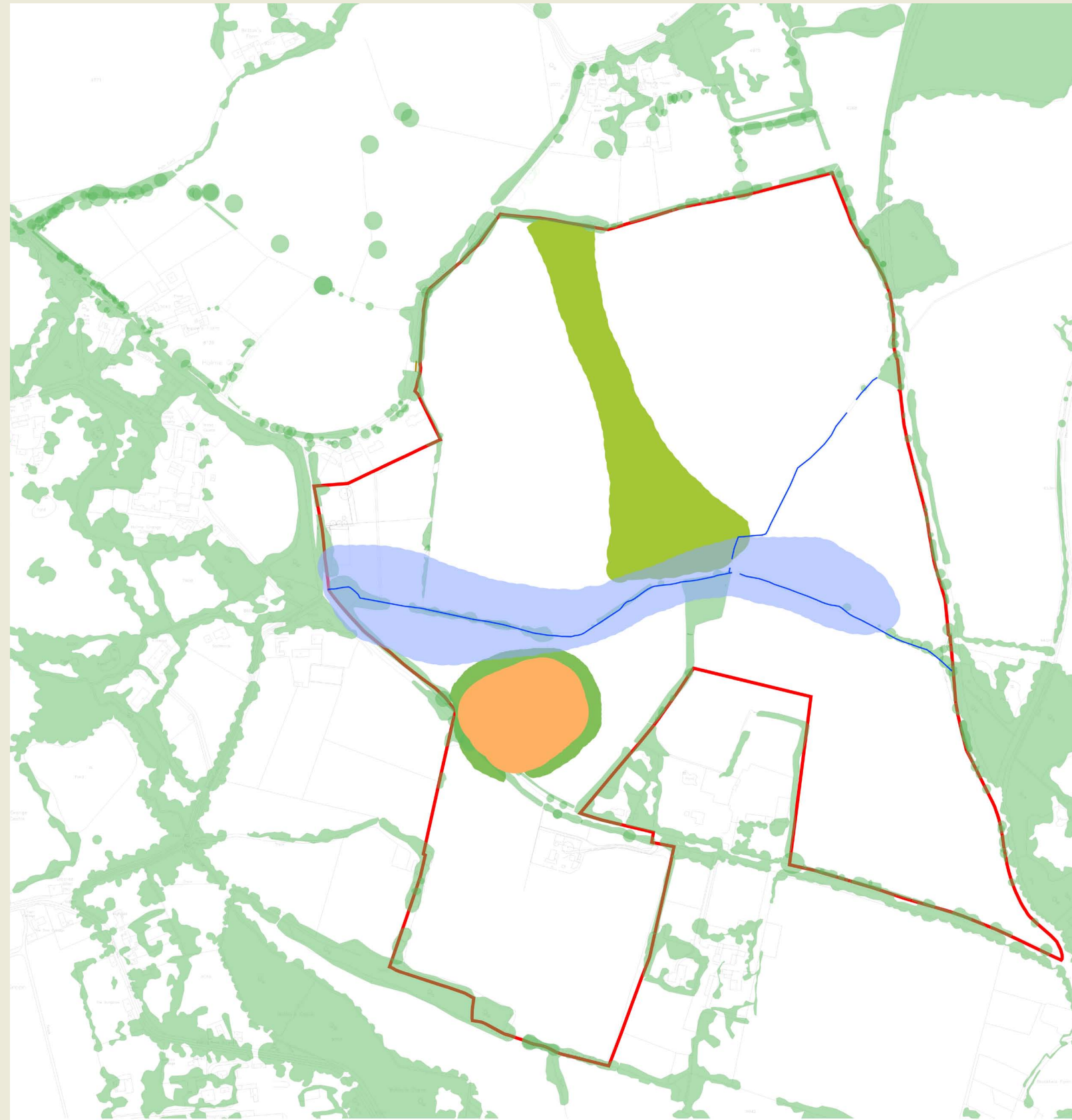
- Bring the existing countryside into the heart of the masterplan by creating a linear park between two neighbourhoods. This would make for a gentle transition from the urban edge development to the open rural setting.

5.2 AN ENHANCEMENT OF THE EXISTING WATERCOURSE

- This can be achieved by building on the existing vegetation including mature trees along the watercourse with sustainable planting to create a riverine corridor which would be not only visually attractive but also contribute to the biodiversity.

5.3 A PROVISION OF SUSTAINABLE DRAINAGE

- Blue and green infrastructure can be integrated with attenuation ponds designed as a part of the site-wide drainage scheme and integrated into the green open space limiting the surface water run off rates to capture and convey surface waters before releasing them at a rate that replicates natural systems.



5.4 AN INCREASE IN BIODIVERSITY

- With the retention and enhancement of important onsite habitats and creation of new habitat types, biodiversity can be increased through planting around the site including the enhancement of the existing mature hedgerows.

5.5 AN ENHANCEMENT OF HAMBRIDGE FARM AREA

- The currently rather unsightly area of sporadic development around Hambridge Farm can be transformed into a distinct part of development with unique character suitable for its more rural setting

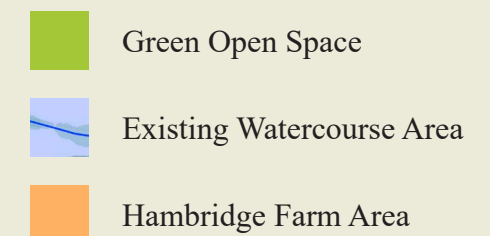


Figure 29: proposed site with drainage, watercourse, green space/biodiversity, and Hambridge Farm opportunities illustrated

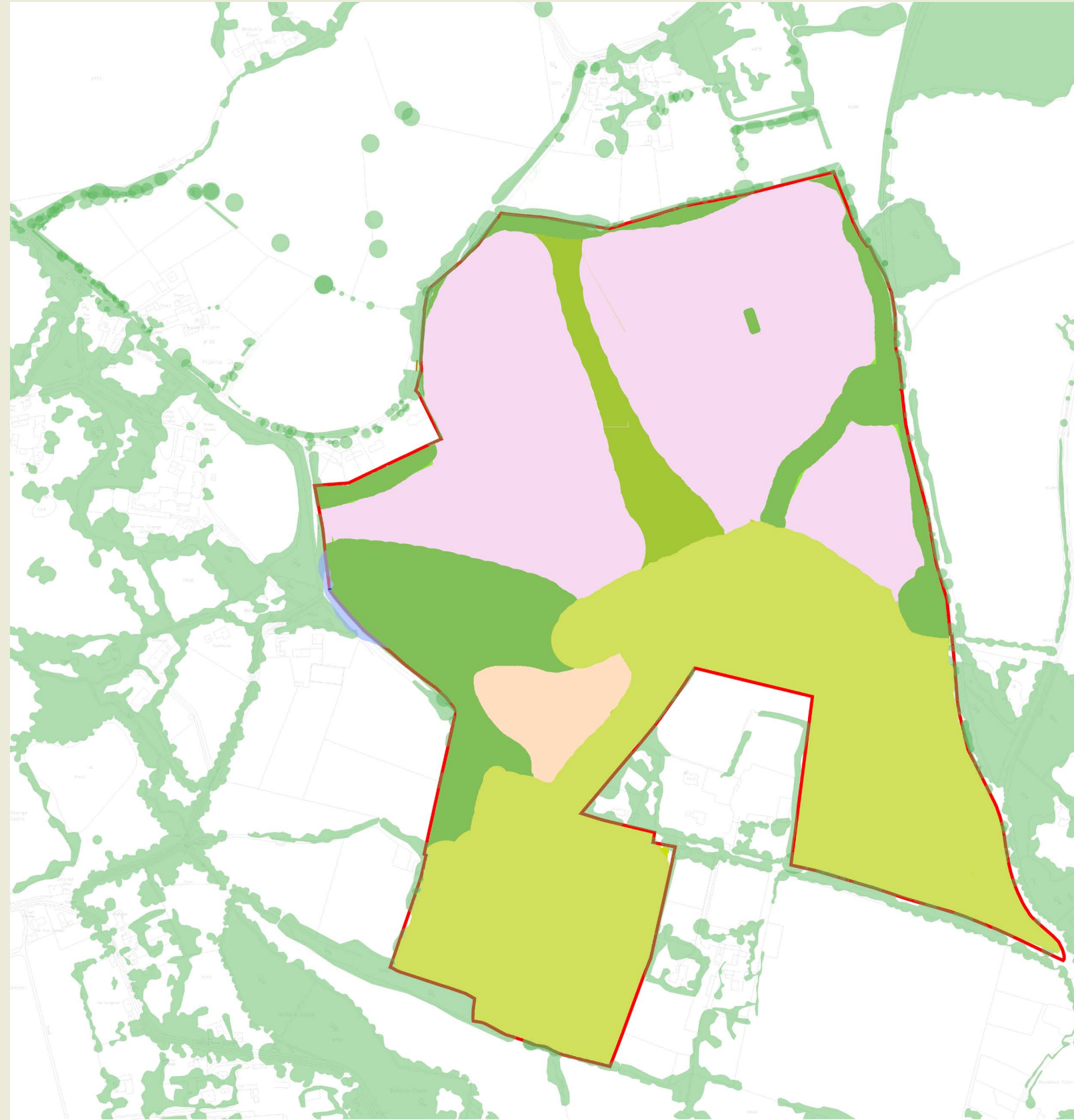
5.0 OPPORTUNITIES

5.6 A CREATION OF SUITABLE ALTERNATIVE NATURAL GREENSPACE

- A large Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) can be provided in an accessible location within easy reach of the development providing connections to the existing PROWs and the open countryside.

5.7 A CREATION OF DEVELOPMENT COMPLEMENTING THE URBAN EDGE LOCATION

- In line with the David Lock Strategic Sites report, the site is suitable for a residential development. With sensitive approach, drawing upon the character of existing Wokingham architecture it could be designed to form a new edge to the southern side of Wokingham and provide a suitable transition to the countryside beyond, by making the northern development areas (pink in figure 30 opposite) part of the more urban extension and making the small parcel at the south (beige figure 30 opposite), which is completely surrounded by greenery, much more rural in character. The site could deliver up to 850 dwellings.



- Green Open Space- Possible Park
- Green Open Space- Possible SANG
- Green Open Space
- Northern Development Area
- Southern Development Area

Figure 30: proposed site with SANG, development opportunities and Green Open Space illustrated