



## Land at Bleadon Hill

Design & Access Statement

Outline Planning Application for up to 36 Dwellings with all matters reserved except for access at land at Bleadon Hill

September 2019





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## Document check/issue record ICS/02-9047/DAS

Version	Approved For Issue	Issue to	Date
1	PD	JB	30/08/19
2	PD	NSC	02/09/19
3	PD	NSC	03/11/20

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## 1. Introduction

This Design and Access statement (DAS) has been prepared on behalf of Innova Consulting Services Limited (the "applicant") to accompany an outline planning application for up to 36 dwellings at land at Bleadon Hill, Weston-super-Mare submitted to North Somerset Council (NSC). It is proposed that all matters are reserved for future consideration except for access.

The DAS will explain how the design process has evolved to respond to planning policies, the context of the site and its constraints and opportunities. The DAS will demonstrate the applicant's commitment to good design and to creating a development which will be accessible and inclusive to all.

The DAS is prepared to meet the requirements of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015. It has been structured to accord with NSC's DAS template and the following sub-headings have been used:

- Site location
- Description of proposed development
- Site context
- Design response
- Access
- Public Consultation
- Conclusion

This statement should be read in conjunction with the planning statement and technical reports submitted in support of the outline planning application. A full assessment of the relevant planning policy considerations has been undertaken within the planning statement but for reference, the relevant planning policies are:

- The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)-February 2019
- North Somerset Core Strategy-Adopted in April 2012.
- North Somerset Sites and Policies Plan Part 1: Development Management Policies-Adopted in July 2016

Key:



Figure 1: Site Boundary



## 2. Site Location

### 2.1 Site location

The application site (the “site”) lies immediately to the south-east of the town of Weston-super-Mare, and to the south of a classified road known as Bleadon Hill. The site is shown within Figure 2.



Figure 2: Site Location

## 2. Site Location

The site lies within the parish of Weston-super-Mare. The boundary of the parish of Bleadon runs along the southern and eastern boundaries of the site as shown within Figure 3:

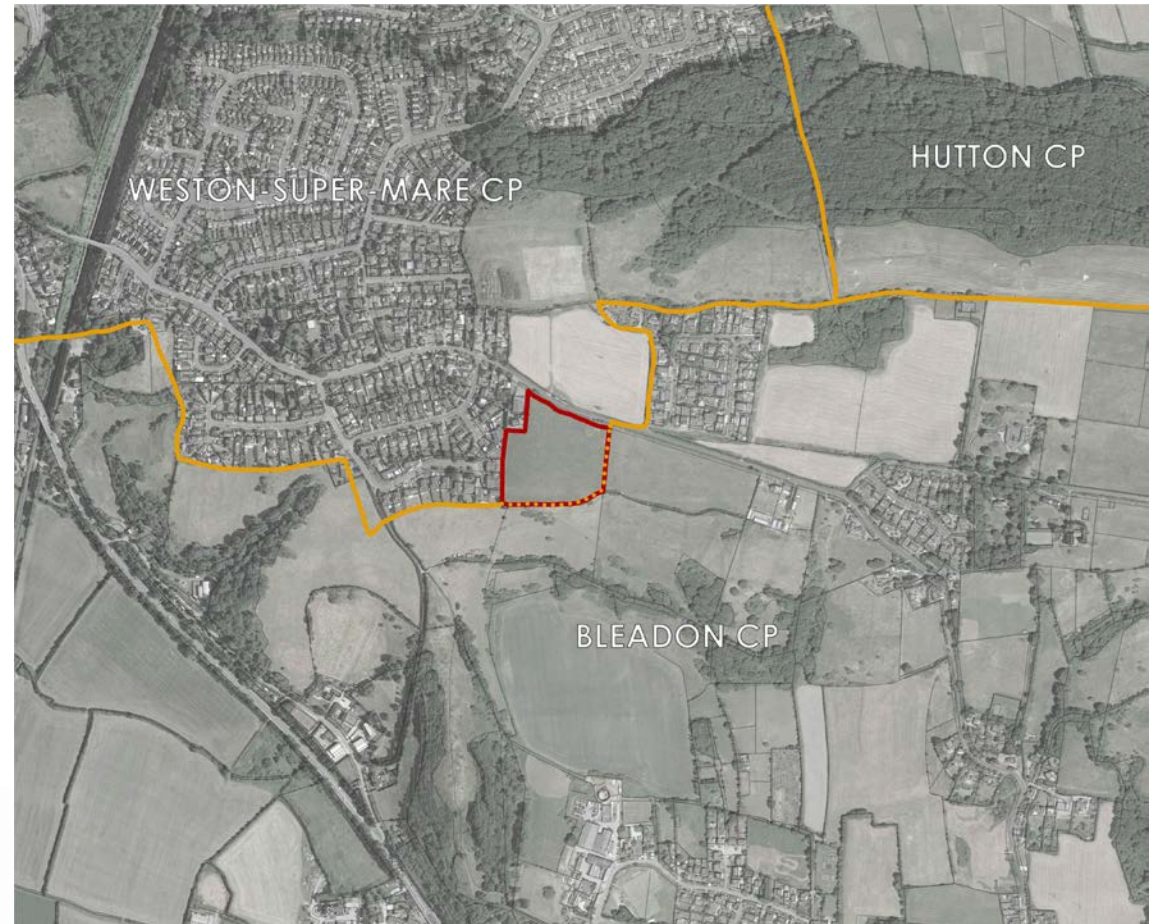


Figure 3: Parish Boundaries



## 2. Site Location

### 2.2 Site analysis

- Area of site: 2.02 hectares.
- Access: The site is currently accessed from Bleadon Hill via a field access.
- Landscape: The site is not within a designated landscape. It lies within the Mendip Hills National Character Area and within the Mendip Ridges and Combes Landscape Character Area, as defined by NSC's Landscape Character Assessment.
- Land Use: The site is currently pastureland.
- Ecology and trees: There are hedgerows along the northern, eastern and southern boundaries of the site. There are no protected trees within the site. A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and ecological surveys have identified that the site is poor semi-improved grassland with a low reptile population and low to moderate bat activity.
- Heritage: There are no heritage assets within or immediately adjacent to the site.
- Flood zone: The site lies within Flood Zone 1 which is the zone identified by the Environment Agency as being the zone with the lowest risk of flooding.
- Planning: The site lies adjacent to the established residential areas of Leighton Crescent and Southridge Heights. The site forms part of a larger site for which an outline planning application for up to 79 dwellings was dismissed on appeal (NSC reference 15/P/0167/O and appeal reference APP D0121/W16/3142927). The appeal site included the field to the immediate east of the site.
- Planning: To the north of the site is a development referred to in Figure 4 as "Keepers Gate". This was granted outline planning permission on appeal in 2016 (reference 15/P/0938/O and APP D0121/W16/3151660) and is currently under construction.



Figure 4: Site Location and surrounding housing

### 3. Description of the Proposed Development

The outline planning application is for up to 40 dwellings. All matters are reserved except for access, landscaping, layout, scale and external appearance are matters to be reserved for future consideration through Reserved Matters (REM) applications.

Although layout is a reserved matter, the application has been accompanied by an illustrative masterplan. This masterplan has been tested in relation to several considerations, including:

- Safe access in, to and out of the site from Bleadon Hill;
- Safe movement around the site;
- Biodiversity mitigation and enhancements;
- Drainage requirements;
- Landscape impact; and
- Retention of key landscape elements.

The illustrative masterplan is shown within Figure 5. It demonstrates that a development of 36 dwellings can more than adequately be accommodated within the site, along with the necessary internal road network, car parking, new park and sustainable drainage system (SuDS). The application is also accompanied by two parameter plans for green infrastructure (GI) and building heights and it is proposed that these plans are approved as part of the outline planning application.

A Section 106 Legal Agreement will secure the necessary infrastructure (including social infrastructure) to support the future occupants of the new dwellings.



Figure 5: Illustrative Masterplan



## 4. Site Context

### 4.1 Introduction

The context of the site has been considered in relation to two aspects:

- Site characteristics; and
- Opportunities and constraints.

### 4.2 Site characteristics

Weston-super-Mare experienced significant growth after the Second World War and into the mid to late 20th century. Figure 6 is an extract from an Ordnance Survey map dating from 1938 which shows the southern edge of the town and the location of the site (which is outlined in red). As the town grew, it encompassed neighbouring villages, including Uphill and Oldmixon. Hillcote is a separate parcel of development, to the north-east of the site. This development is labelled on Figure 6 and is believed to have originated in the 1920s.

The Bleadon Hill road starts at the A370 crossing over the railway (Devil's Bridge) and continues through the eastern expansion area of the town, past the site. Beyond Hillcote, the road forks into Roman Road and Celtic Way with the latter providing access into the village of Bleadon.

Broadleaved woodland predominates to the north of the Bleadon Hill ridgeline, forming a defined edge to more extensive urban development at Oldmixon and Hutton on the north facing slope of Bleadon Hill.

Permanent pasture emerges as the primary land use on the southern slope of Bleadon Hill descending into the Levels, but is interspersed by a ribbon of 20th century residential development on the shallower slopes towards the crest of the hill. There is a moderately sized early 20th century residential estate at 'Hillcote', occupying a very prominent position on the upper hill slope approximately 150m to the north-east of the site. Sizable areas of scrub have emerged on the less intensively managed areas of pasture on the steeper scarp slope to the south of the site.

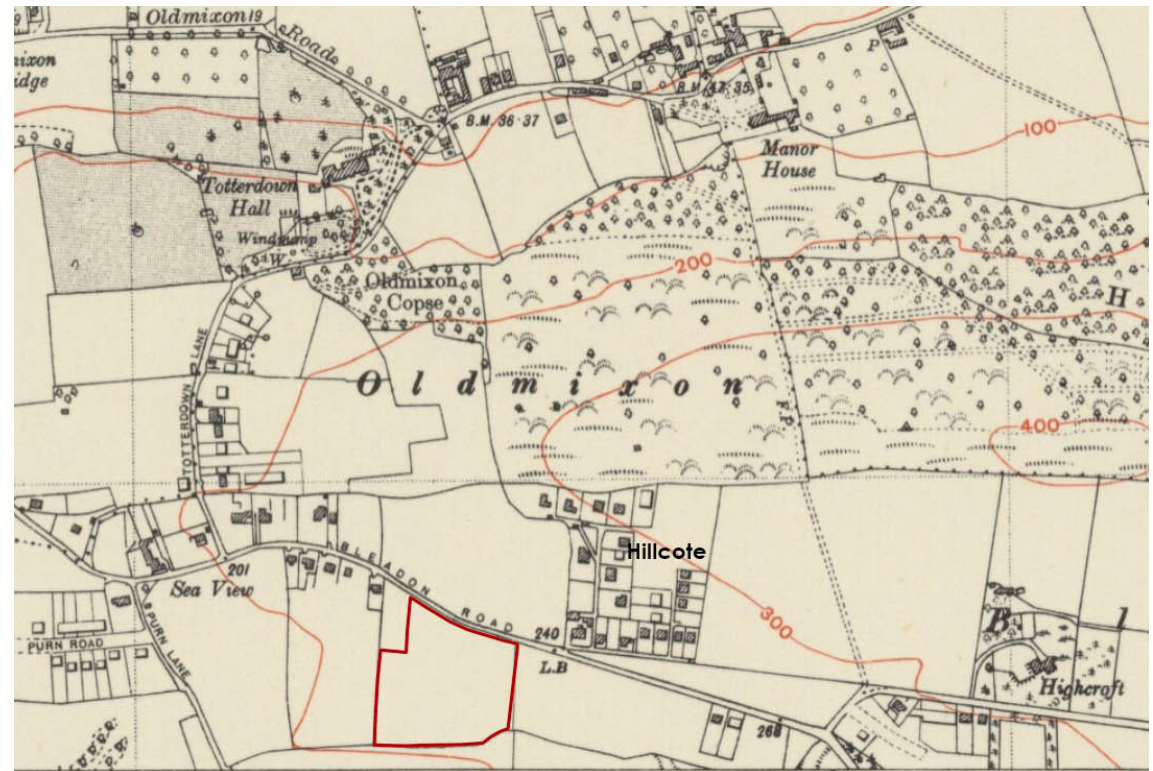


Figure 6: 1938 map of site and surrounding area.

## 4. Site Context

Architectural styles within the immediate settlements are unremarkable yet still contribute to the local vernacular that is typical of the wider region. Much of the existing development to the north and east of the site dates from the second half of 20th Century. The use of white or pale coloured render and clay pantile roofs is evident in much of the built environment, but many of the older buildings tend to be constructed of locally sourced Mendip limestone. Bungalows and dormer bungalows are the predominant dwelling type identified in the residential areas immediately adjacent to the site. Figures 7 & 8 demonstrate the prevalence of bungalows and dormer bungalows in the surrounding settlement.

The Hillcote development to the site's north-west features a more eclectic mix of building types and architectural styles and features prominently on the Mendip ridgeline. Beyond this, and further to the site's east there lies a small development lining Celtic Way. The density of development decreases further to the east with some sporadic and larger modern properties and farmhouses featuring along Roman Road.

600m to the site's south, the historic centre of Bleadon village (Figure 9) is host to several listed buildings and some local services.



Figure 9: Examples of houses in Bleadon Village



Figure 7: Houses within 500m radius of site



Figure 8: Houses within 500m radius of site



## 4. Site Context

### 4.3 Opportunities and constraints

The main constraints of the site are considered to be its edge of settlement location and proximity to the Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Sensitive views of the site, and designations within the locality of the site, are shown within Figure 10.

Other constraints are considered to be:

- Residential dwellings at the western boundary;
- The location of the site within Consultation Zone C of the North Somerset and Mendip Bats Special Area of Conservation (SAC);
- Topography: The sites slopes from the North-East (AOD 71.5) to the South-West (AOD 62.5) at an elevated location on the hillside;
- Single width public highway.

The development provides an opportunity to deliver open market and affordable housing at a time when there is an urgent local and national need. In addition, the development offers the following opportunities:

- The provision of areas of public open space;
- Enhanced planting of existing hedgerows;
- New native tree planting;
- Enhancements to bat and reptile habitats;
- A new defined soft edge to the southern side of the town, screening the mixed boundary treatments along the western edge and the telephone exchange;
- Formalisation of the one-way traffic system to the west of the site.

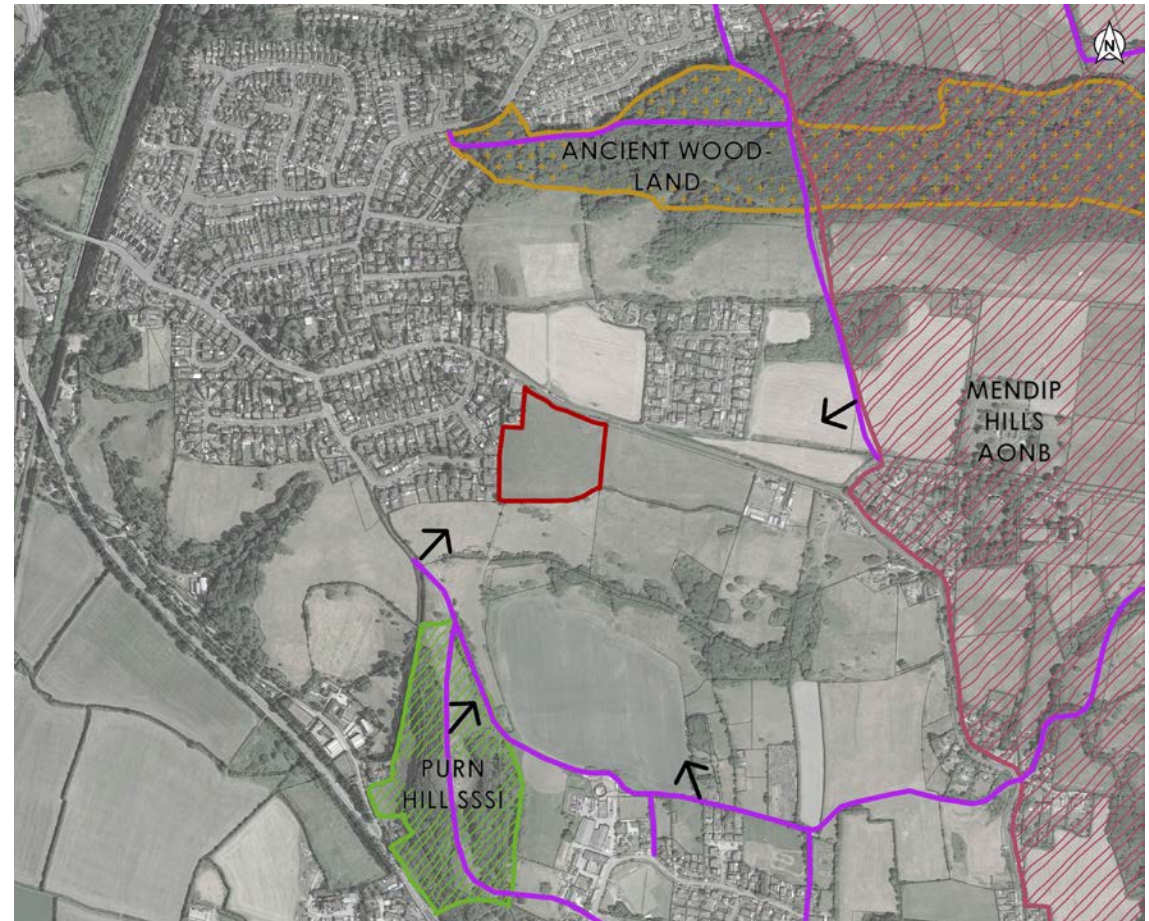


Figure 10: Constraints of site



## 5. Design Response

### 5.1 Introduction

The NPPF sets out that good design, “...is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities” (paragraph 124).

Paragraph 127 of the NPPF advises that planning decisions should ensure that developments:

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

The importance of high-quality design and place making is set out within policy DM32 of the Local Plan. The policy advises that new developments should be designed to “contribute to the creation of high quality, distinctive, functional and sustainable places where opportunities for physical activity and recreation

are maximised”. Development proposals should be sensitive to the local character of the area, the setting and context of the area and should enhance the area in which the development is located and local distinctiveness should be enhanced, and design solutions should contribute to the sense of place and identity. The policy goes on to set out the criteria against which proposals will be considered.

The response to the element of the design will be discussed in relation to the following:

- Landscape led approach
- Indicative house types
- Layout
- Density
- Landscaping

## 5. Design Response

### 5.2 Landscape led approach

The site forms part of a larger site for which an outline planning application for up to 79 dwellings was dismissed on appeal. (NSC reference 15/P/0167/O and appeal reference APP/D0121/W16/3142927). The appeal site included the field to the immediate east of the site. The refusal reason that was upheld on appeal related to landscape impact:

*1. The proposed development, by reason of its scale and location, will appear as a long extension of the built-up area into the countryside. This will cause unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the landscape, including views to and from the Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The proposed development is therefore contrary to Policies CS5 and CS12 of the Core Strategy, Policy GDP/3 of the North Somerset Replacement Local Plan, Policy E1 (Mendip Ridges and Coombs) of the North Somerset Landscape Character Assessment, Policy DM10 of the Sites and Policies Plan Part 1 – Development Management Policies (Publication Version) and Paragraphs 58, 64, 75 and 109 of the National Planning Policy Framework.*

The comments of the Inspector have been reviewed in detail and have informed the design of the development now proposed. A detailed Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) has also been prepared in support of the planning application.

The Inspector was clear that the appeal proposal would result in a development that would protrude from the existing built edge of the town, rather than “round it off”. It was considered that this would be harmful as it would result in a consolidation of development along Bleadon Hill and would harm the dispersed settlement pattern which forms the transition between the built edge of Weston-Super-Mare and contributes to the setting of

the AONB. The development now proposed has overcome this fundamental objection by the omission of the eastern field. The site now proposed solely relates to the western field.

The development proposed by this application will round off the existing built edge. The low density of the development and the public open space along the eastern and southern boundaries will create an appropriate transition between the urban edge of the town and the rural landscape beyond.

The appeal development was considered by the Inspector to have a “significant urbanising effect along Bleadon Hill”. Again, the reduction in the size of the application site will reduce this urbanising effect substantially. The development now proposed has also sought to retain the northern hedgerow as much as possible, with a modest section to be removed to facilitate the creation of an access.

The Inspector agreed with the LVIA submitted with the appeal application that with mitigation planting, there would be no significant adverse impact on landscape character or the setting of the AONB from longer distances. The development now proposed will also include mitigation planting along the southern and eastern boundaries, with development set further back from the southern boundary than the appeal proposal. The development now proposed will not have a harmful impact upon the landscape character or setting of the AONB.

The LVIA that accompanies this outline planning application has identified that the proposed development will not have a significant impact upon views from the AONB.

Hillcote dominates views to the west from the footpath and the western edge of the AONB. The proposed development may be partially visible from the AONB but it will form a relatively small component in a much wider panoramic view and will be seen against a backdrop of the existing residential area at Leighton Crescent. Views across the wider landscape from the AONB to the Somerset Levels, the Bristol Channel and Brean Down, will not be lost or obscured.

As part of the landscape mitigation, it is proposed to manage and reinforce the existing hedgerow on the eastern site boundary and to plant additional trees adjacent to the boundary. In the medium term, these measures will soften the built development within the site, providing visual integration with the wider landscape setting.

An analysis of views of the site from the south has informed the extent to which the built form should extend and appropriate building heights within the development. The site nestles within the landscape when viewed from the south and the LVIA has established that while there may be views of the rooftops of the proposed dwellings, the views in themselves will not cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the landscape. Furthermore, these views will be softened by additional tree and hedgerow planting.

## 5. Design Response

### 5.3

The layout of the site has evolved as consultation responses have been received during the course of the application. The initial layout was for 40 dwellings and an extract is shown at figure 11.

Following on from responses received from the landscape officer, the building heights were reduced and an addendum to the LVIA submitted in February 2020. The revised parameter plan is shown at Figure 13.

Comments from the Council's Natural Environment Agency Officer were received in May 2020 and further comments from the AONB Officer in response to the LVIA Addendum were received in June 2020. In response to these, the layout of the site was amended as follows (fig 12):

- Reduction in number of dwellings from 40 to 36.
- Setting the dwellings back from the road, increasing the space between the development and the hedgerow
- Realigning the dwellings along the western boundary and increasing the distance between the proposed and existing dwellings
- Reducing the amount of development in the north-east corner and therefore reducing any potential impact upon the setting of the AONB.
- Increased provision of parking to accord with NSC's car parking standards
- One maximum ridge height across the site (6.5m)
- Simplification of proposed unit types
- Amendments to access and off site highways mitigation works follow discussions with NSC's Highways Team.



Figure 11: Illustrative layout submitted with the application

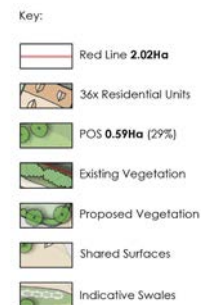


Figure 12: Proposed masterplan



## 5. Design Response



Figure 13: Amended green infrastructure parameter plan

It is proposed that the extent of the built form (and public open space) and the proposed building heights are fixed as part of this outline planning application through the green infrastructure (GI) and building heights parameter plans. Extracts of these amended plans are shown at Figure 11 and 12. Subsequent REM applications will be required to adhere to these plans. Only one maximum ridge height is now proposed.

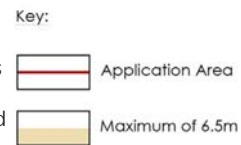


Figure 14: Amended building heights parameter plan

# 5. Design Response

## 5.4 Indicative house types

The application is for outline planning permission and the scale, layout and external appearance of the proposed dwellings will be finalised through the REM applications. However, for the purposes of the illustrative masterplan, it has been envisaged that the majority of the house types within the site will be one and a half storey dwellings, i.e dormer bungalows. By their nature, this house type will have a lower ridge line than a traditional two storey dwelling and this will reduce the visual impact of the development. The scale of this house type will be in keeping with existing dwellings to the west of the site and they will not be overbearing to those dwellings.

The masterplan has been based upon the following house types and indicative sizes shown in Figure 15.

The materials of the proposed dwellings will be agreed through the REM applications, but it is anticipated that the materials will be:

- Artificial stone in a grey/reddened colour to replicate Mendip limestone;
  - Render in a muted off-white colour or light grey colour;
  - Clay pantiles;
  - Interlocking concrete roof tiles in grey colour.
- (Examples of these materials are shown within Figure 16).



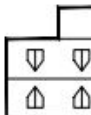
Bleadon Unit Schedule			
	Unit Type	Approx GIA m(sq m)	No. of units
	1-2 bed	84	10
	2-3 bed	102	19
	3-4 bed	129	7

Figure 15: Unit Schedule

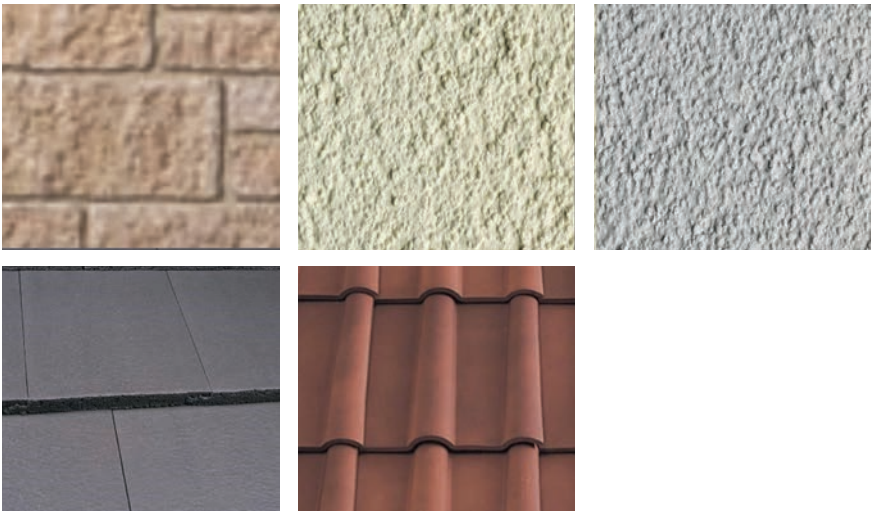


Figure 16: Materials

## 5. Design Response

### 5.5 Layout

The layout of the site has been designed to not only minimise the impact of the development upon the landscape but to minimise the impact on the neighbouring dwellings at the western boundary. The layout shown within the illustrative masterplan has been designed to accord with the principles set out within NSC's Supplementary Planning Guidance: "Residential Design Guide (1): Protecting the living conditions of neighbours". However, the exact layout of the dwellings will be agreed at the REM stage, along with the positioning of first floor windows.

The SPG states that the loss of a private view is not relevant to the consideration of a planning application (unless it coincides with an important view from public land that would compromise the visual character of an area). Through the LVIA work, it has been established that there are no important views from public land which coincide with private views. However, it is appreciated that residents of the neighbouring residential development, have enjoyed views across the site for several years and while it is not practical or viable to maintain every individual view, the illustrative layout has been designed to maintain, as best as possible, views across the site.

There are overhead lines that cross the site and construction work will be undertaken in accordance with the necessary guidance provided by the utility company. The re-siting of overhead lines will be subject to an agreement between the developer and the relevant utility company outside of the planning process.

### 5.6 Density

The landscape led approach to the development of the site has resulted in a relatively low density with 29% of the site (0.59ha) as public open space. The density of the site is 27 dwellings per hectare (dph) based upon the developable area, or 18dph taking the site as a whole.

The NPPF, in respect of density, states within paragraph 123 that "Where there is an existing or anticipated shortage of land for meeting identified housing needs, it is especially important that planning policies and decisions avoid homes being built at low densities, and ensure that developments make optimal use of the potential of each site". The paragraph goes on to state that... "local planning authorities should refuse applications which they consider fail to make efficient use of land, taking into account the policies in this Framework".

Policy 36 (Residential densities) advises that "...residential development should optimise the potential of a site to accommodate development whilst protecting or enhancing the distinctiveness and character of the area". In determining the appropriate density for a site, attention is given to a range of criteria including the physical characteristics of the site and the location.

There is clearly a balance to be made between delivering much needed housing and creating a development which is in keeping with its locality. In this instance, the relatively low density proposed is considered to be appropriate for the site to provide a suitable transition between the existing built form and the rural landscape beyond.

### 5.7 Landscaping

Landscaping is a reserved matter and the detail will be provided within the REM applications. A GI parameter plan has been submitted with the outline application to ensure the retention of public open space; this will be along the eastern and southern boundaries and towards the centre of the site. It is envisaged that this central space will have a more formal appearance while the open space along the eastern and southern boundaries will be more informal with native planting to enhance biodiversity.

Existing hedgerows will be enhanced with new planting along the eastern and southern boundaries along with new native tree planting. This will have a significant benefit to biodiversity and will assist with integrating the development visually into the landscape context.

The public open space will also incorporate swales required as part of the SuDS scheme required to serve the development.

The detail of hard landscaping will be agreed at the REM stage but it will comprise of permeable surface materials where possible which will also contribute to the SuDS.

Front boundary treatments for the dwellings will be an important feature of the appearance of the development. It is anticipated that these will comprise a mix of low boundary walls and hedging.



## 5. Design Response

### 5.8 Comparison with appeal site

Section 5.2 of this statement discussed how the appeal decision has informed the landscape-led design approach to the development. This is evident in the differences between the masterplan that accompanied the appeal application, shown at Figure 17 and the masterplan now proposed, shown at Figure 18.

The key differences have been summarised within the table below.

	Appeal Masterplan	Proposed Masterplan
Site Area	3.96 ha	2.02 ha
Maximum no. of dwellings proposed	79	36
Public Open Space	0.19 ha	0.59ha
Public Open Space as a % of the site area	4.8%	29%
Density (developable area)	21dph	27dph
Density (gross area)	20dph	20dph
% of dwellings proposed to be one and a half storeys in height	16% (based upon an estimate of 44 dwellings within the western field)	100%
Minimum distance between built form to southern boundary	8.6m	24m



Figure 17: Appeal Site Masterplan (Originally drawn by Clifton Emery Design)



Figure 18: Illustrative Site Masterplan

## 6. Access

The access from Bleadon Hill to serve the new development is to be considered as part of the outline planning application.

It has been designed to provide a safe access in, to, and from the site from Bleadon Hill for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles. Following discussions with NSC's Highways Team, two options are proposed that are shown at figures 19 and 20.

A Transport Statement accompanying the application has assessed that the site is within walking distance of bus stops. The site has good cycle linkages to services and facilities and to the wider countryside beyond for recreational and leisure purposes. Measures to promote sustainable modes of transport are proposed within the Transport Plan Statement.

The location of car parking spaces, dropped kerbs and surface materials will be fully assessed at REM application stage however the indicative layout has been designed to include the required parking provision for each dwelling.

The internal layout of the dwellings will be designed to accord with Building Regulations and again the detail will be secured through REM applications.

Figure 19: Extract of plan SK01/D

*This relocates the priority narrowing further west at the boundary between the site and the telephone exchange. It also reduces slightly the width of the build out to provide a clear 3.1m carriageway width through the build out. The build out extends to the junction with the telephone exchange and enables a 2.45m wide footway to be provided, formed by the subsequent reduced carriageway width. BT apparatus would not be relocated.*

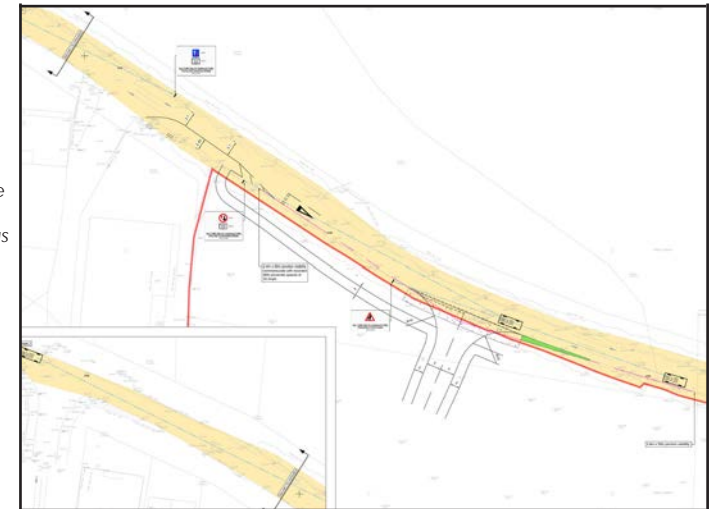
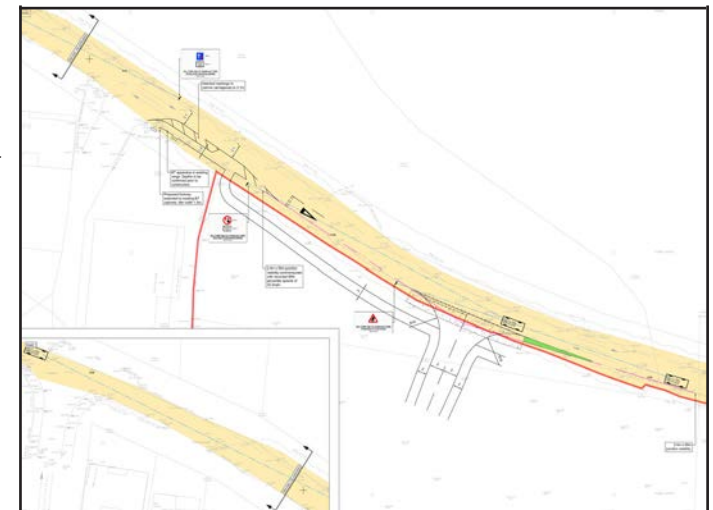


Figure 20: Extract of plan SK02/A

*This relocates the priority narrowing further west at the boundary between the site and the telephone exchange. It also reduces slightly the width of the build out to provide a clear 3.1m carriageway width through part of the build out. A 1.5m wide footway is provided on the lee side of the build out. This is partially located with the carriageway and partially within the existing verge. BT apparatus would not be relocated.*



## 7. Public Consultation

Letters, along with a questionnaire, were posted to dwellings adjacent to, or very close to, the western boundary of the site. BT Group plc, which have a leasehold interest in the telephone exchange were also consulted.

Representatives of the applicant met with Councillors of Weston-super-Mare Town Council and Bleadon Parish Council to discuss the proposed development.

A summary of the relevant issues raised by neighbours and the Town and Parish Councils along with a brief response, are set out within Table 2.

Comment	Response
The site is not suitable.	It has been demonstrated through extensive technical work that the site is suitable for development in respect of landscape impact, accessibility, biodiversity, drainage and sustainability.
This area is not suitable for 'affordable' homes as most properties are expensive in this area.	Because properties in the area are more expensive there is an affordability issue for local people. provision of affordable housing will overcome this.
What sort of properties are planned along the northern boundary and how high will they be?	The building heights parameter plan indicates that dwellings up to two storeys in height will be built along the northern boundary. The exact heights of the buildings will be approved at the REM stage.
What plans are there to improve the bus service in this area, so homeowners do not have to rely on cars for their primary transport?	The site is currently served by a community bus service and is within walking distance of another bus stop from which a regular bus service can be caught which will provide access to a range of services and facilities within the town. Any necessary improvements to the bus service will be subject to negotiations with NSC during the consideration of the application.
Impact of increased traffic on the local highways network.	The Transport Statement that accompanies the outline planning application has fully assessed the impact of the development upon the local highway network.
Site is not sustainable/lack of services	The site was previously considered on appeal to be sustainable. Services can be accessed on foot or by public transport.

Comment	Response
Development will join Bleadon to Weston-super-Mare.	The development may about the parish boundary of Weston-super-Mare with Bleadon but it will not visually connect the two settlements.
Impact upon biodiversity and the SSSI.	This has been fully considered and the application has been accompanied by a Preliminary Ecological Assessment, bat activity and reptile surveys. Mitigation and enhancements have been identified as a result of these works.
There is no need for additional housing (including affordable housing) within the District. There is already additional housing being built in the Bleadon area and across Weston.	There is a recognised need for housing, including affordable housing, within the District. NSC cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites and it has been identified that there is a backlog of 2,878 dwellings to be delivered over the remainder of the Local Plan period (up to 2026).
Bleadon Hill is being turned into a housing/urban estate. This is a countryside area of Weston super Mare	The site lies adjacent the built edge of the town. The development has been carefully designed to provide an appropriate transition between this edge and the countryside beyond.

Table 2: Summary of responses received through Public Consultation



## 8. Conclusion

The proposed development has been carefully designed to respond to the context of the site. It will be a sensitive extension to the edge of the town, responding well to its location between the existing built edge of the town and the rural landscape, and AONB, beyond. The development now proposed is significantly different to the development previously refused at appeal.

The applicant's commitment to delivering a safe and high-quality development is demonstrated through the submission of both green infrastructure and building height parameter plans.

The proposed development will provide dwellings at a time when there is a well-documented national and local need and will create a mixed community with open market, affordable and accessible homes. It will deliver a number of other benefits including ecological enhancements and public open space.

The proposed development will be a sustainable development which accords with both local and national planning policies.



Figure 21: Site masterplan in context

