

6 July 2018

Annette Feeney  
Local Plan Programme Officer, c/o  
Huntingdonshire District Council,  
Pathfinder House,  
St Mary's Street,  
Huntingdon,  
PE29 3TN  
**Sent by Email**

Dear Sir/Madam,

**RE: Matter 8 (Proposed site allocations St Ives Spatial Planning Area) Morning Session of Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> September 2018**

On behalf of Homes England, this written hearing statement responds to the questions contained within the Matters and Issues Paper, Matter 8, due to be heard during the morning session on Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> September. The statement is related to matters of detail and should not be read as an objection to the plan as a whole. In most cases it seeks minor modifications that will provide greater flexibility to the allocation SI 1 St Ives West. Whilst many of the questions are best answered by Huntingdonshire District Council ('HDC'), Homes England has provided supplementary information where it is felt it would aid the Inspector's understanding of Homes England's landholdings (Grange and the Field Site) within the wider allocation of SI 1 St Ives West.

Homes England would be pleased to discuss these representations in greater detail in advance of the examination in public if anything else is required.

Yours sincerely,



David Carlisle  
Associate  
AECOM Limited, on behalf of Homes England  
david.carlisle@aecom.com

**Question 1) What is the background to the site allocation? How was it identified and which options were considered?**

Houghton Grange and the Field Site were previously in the control of The Biotechnology & Biological Sciences Research Council ('BBSRC'). The BBSRC supported the allocation in consultations dating back to 2012.

Homes England formally took control of the site in November 2016. Since this time a substantial amount of technical reports and surveys have been conducted to assist the: disposal of Phase 1 ('Houghton Grange'); and preparation of an outline planning application for Phase 2 (the 'Field Site').

**2) What is the scale and type/mix of uses proposed?**

Homes England last submitted capacity assumptions to HDC in November 2017, in response to the Housing Trajectory Update survey; and the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment consultation (November 2017). Homes England remains confident that ~224 units on The Field Site and ~90 homes on Houghton Grange are justified and feasible. Based upon a 40% affordable housing requirement and the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2014), this could result in the following scheme mix:

Assumed Housing Mix - Peterborough SHMA (2014) - assumed mid-point						
	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed	5 bed	Total
<b>Market</b>	7.5%	22.5%	47.5%	22.5%	0.0%	100.0%
<b>Affordable</b>	37.5%	27.5%	27.5%	7.5%	0.0%	100.0%

Houghton Field Tenure Mix						
	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed	5 bed	Total
<b>Market</b>	10	30	64	30	0	134
<b>Affordable</b>	34	25	25	7	0	90
<b>Total</b>	44	55	88	37	0	<b>224</b>

Houghton Grange Tenure Mix						
	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed	5 bed	Total
<b>Market</b>	4	12	26	12	0	54
<b>Affordable</b>	14	10	10	3	0	36
<b>Total</b>	18	22	36	15	0	<b>90</b>

### 3) What is the basis for this and is it justified?

The following evidence has been prepared to support development of Homes England's landholding:

Survey Schedule	Area Covered
<b>Surveys Undertaken To-Date</b>	
Preliminary Landscape and Visual Appraisal	Entire Site
Topographical Survey	Entire Site
Heritage Appraisals (Retained + Demolished Buildings)	Entire Site
Highways Junction Traffic Counts	Highway Junction on Houghton Road--
Utilities Surveys (Including Envirocheck)	Entire Site
Phase 1 Habitat and Further Botanical/Habitat Survey	Entire Site
Badger Survey	Entire Site
Reptile Survey	Entire Site
Terrestrial Invertebrate Scoping Survey	Entire Site
Great Crested Newt eDNA Surveys	Grange
Great Crested Newt Population Assessment Surveys	Entire Site
Bat activity Survey	Entire Site
Bat Emergence Surveys: trees and buildings	Entire Site
Further Bat Emergence Surveys	Entire Site
Internal Building Inspections for Bats	Grange
Breeding Bird Survey	Entire Site
Arboricultural Survey	Entire Site
Tree Survey Report	Entire Site
Structural Condition Survey (Retained Buildings)	Grange
Geotechnical Survey (Phase 1)	Grange
Geotechnical Survey (Phase 2)	Grange
Hazardous Materials Scoping Survey	Grange
Asbestos Surveys	Grange
Suspected animal burial ground investigations	Grange
Below Ground Services Survey (Including Drainage)	Grange
Hazardous Materials Sampling (Buildings and Drainage)	Grange

The evidence confirms that ~90 units are deliverable on Houghton Grange. Equally, it assists in de-risking the site in advance of disposal to a developer. Site-wide evidence has informed assumptions on the Field Site's development capacity. The current ongoing period of public engagement, begun in July 2018 is further refining this process. The Field Site has a number of landscape, ecological, heritage and utility features that will need to be respected and dealt with sensitively as part of any development proposals (see **Appendix 1** – Site Context). On the basis of the evidence available, it is Homes England's firm view that a minimum of ~224 units are justified and deliverable.

**Appendix 2** sets out a Framework Structure Plan that demonstrates Homes England's current view on the potential developable area, based on the site's constraints, opportunities, extant policy (including

the Houghton and Wyton Neighbourhood Plan) and early pre application consultation and discussion. The structural framework has been driven by landscape-led approach and placemaking principles contained within Huntingdonshire Design Guide, Huntingdonshire Landscape and Townscape Assessment SPD (2007), Building for Life 12 and Secured by Design Homes<sup>1</sup> (e.g. 'open space must be designed with due regard for natural surveillance'). This approach responds to the specific criteria within draft policy SI 1. In particular it focuses on criterion (g). It responds to the surrounding context and landscape character and has been developed following review of the objectives emphasised in the draft Local Plan, the Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy and Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

Homes England is committed to quality place-making and design; through emerging policies and procedures, and through work in partnership with bodies such as the Design Council. High-quality design in housing developments creates long-term benefits for society and the economy.

In our Regulation 19 representations we questioned what 'detailed urban design work' (paragraph 11.4 of the submitted Local Plan) had informed the illustrative diagram attached to policy SI 1. HDC has confirmed, via pre-applications discussions, that this is in reference to the work that fed into the 2005 and 2011 Urban Design Framework ('UDF') for St Ives West. Whilst the 2011 UDF was quashed by the High Court in 2013, elements of the analysis and urban design work remain relevant. Homes England's Framework Structure Plan for the Field Site is in alignment with the UDF and complies with the neighbourhood plan's anti-coalescence policy HWNP3.

#### 4) What is the current planning status of the site in terms of planning applications, planning permissions and completions/construction?

The SI 1 allocation consists of 5 parcels of land: (1) the former St Ives Golf Course which has planning permission for 184 dwellings (1301895OUT) and is under construction; (2) The How which has planning permission for 7 dwellings (1201890FUL and 1201891FUL); (3) The Field which has an undetermined planning application for housing (224 dwellings) and other uses (1301056OUT); (4) Houghton Grange, with outline planning permission and the potential for circa 90 dwellings (1402210OUT); and (5) a county wildlife site to the south of Houghton Grange.

Of the ~400 new homes allocated in the draft policy, planning permission is in place for 281 dwellings across the five parcels that make up the wider allocation. Of the remaining two undeveloped sites, one is the county wildlife site. Therefore the Field site is realistically the only land available on which the remaining 119 houses allocated to this area could be sited. The overall target of 400 units cannot practically be achieved without the Field Site. This situation, and the ongoing capacity work, (see question 3) suggest that the housing target for SI 1 is too low and does not reflect the true development capacity of the Field Site.

#### 5) What are the benefits that the proposed development would bring?

Houghton Grange and the Field Site have the potential to deliver 300+ high quality new homes in close proximity to the services and employment present in St Ives and Houghton. The emerging structural framework (**Appendix 2**) and extant outline permission envisage public open space in excess of the IDP's standards (see previous representations) and shall deliver a linear park providing physical separation between the Field Site and the Spires. The open space would provide recreation and a green corridor with links to the St. Ives Thicket and Ouse Valley Way from Houghton Road. The northern boundary treatment would restore the tree lined approach on the south side of the A1123. The southern boundary is defined by a substantial area of publicly accessible green space, reinforcing the strategic green corridor along the Great Ouse River corridor. New walking and cycling links will form the basis for a wider network in the surrounding area, promoting healthy walkable neighbourhoods. Development on Houghton Grange will secure the future use of the heritage assets. SuDS features and natural wildlife corridors would enhance biodiversity across the wider landholding.

<sup>1</sup> See sections 8, 9 and 17 of 'Secured by Design HOMES 2016' (Police Crime Prevention Initiatives Limited, 2016) Accessed at: <http://www.securedbydesign.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/SBD-HOMES-2016.pdf>

Development will help to meet urgent housing needs and will create a high quality residential environment and a sustainable new community. It will help to protect and enhance the biodiversity and green infrastructure of the area and improve connections within the locality.

## 6) What are the potential adverse impacts of developing the site? How could they be mitigated?

Surveys undertaken to date show there are no major ecology constraints throughout the site, however, all habitats and species surveyed on-site shall be relocated or accommodated in accordance with appropriate mitigation measures. The detailed design stage for both sites shall be used to ensure that the setting of all heritage assets is respected in accordance with extant statutory policy and conservation area management plan.

The Framework Structure Plan fully complies with LP12 and LP13 and specifically criterion (b), (h) and (i) of LP13 which seek to ensure development:

- successfully integrates with adjoining buildings, the routes and spaces between buildings, topography and landscape and provides;
- includes public spaces with defined sense of enclosure, with multi-functional green spaces and corridors;
- functions well and is safe and secure to use; and
- successfully integrates into existing neighbourhoods through taking account of community and individual safety considerations and minimising opportunities for crime.

Homes England's view is that such objectives are incompatible with such a large gap on the Field Site, as depicted on the SI 1 illustrative diagram, which makes such objectives impossible to achieve. **Appendix 4** contains an extract from the Field Site Preliminary Vision Document. **Appendix 4** has been used in pre-application discussions with HDC and materials used in the July 2018 public engagement workshops. It sets out Homes England's preliminary vision for landscaping Houghton Road and linear park, so as to maintain physical and visual separation with the Spires development.

## 7) How is the site affected by flood risk? How has this been taken into account in allocating the site? How have the sequential and, if necessary, exception tests been applied?

St Ives is an area of fluvial flood risk but the site itself is in a low risk area. The Cambridgeshire Surface Water Management Plan identifies St Ives as being at particular risk from surface water flooding. The Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Table 12-1<sup>2</sup> shows that only 2% of the St Ives West allocation is outside of Flood Zone 1.

## 8) What are the infrastructure requirements/costs and are there physical or other constraints to development? How would these be addressed?

There are no major infrastructure constraints. The outline planning permission and emerging Field Site structural framework envisage approximately 314 units in total. The following key infrastructure items are assumed at this stage, subject to detailed masterplanning for the Field Site:

- Estate Roads / External Landscaping / Utilities
- Country Park (including Layout)
- Public Open Space Layout
- Playground
- Management Company Set-Up

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<sup>2</sup> The Cambridgeshire Surface Water Management Plan. P79

9) In particular what is the situation with waste water treatment capacity and how would any issues be resolved?

The HDC 'Stage 2 Detailed Water Cycle Study' (2014) confirms that there are no insurmountable issues for growth for St Ives at the settlement level or the SI 1 allocation itself<sup>3</sup>.

10) Is the site realistically viable and deliverable?

The Local Plan Viability Study and Addendum (2017)<sup>4</sup> concludes that the majority of greenfield and brownfield typologies (up to 250 dwellings) are viable at the 35-40% affordable housing level. Homes England expects to dispose of the Houghton Grange site (Phase 1) in January 2019, following developer procurement through Homes England's Delivery Partner Panel. All tenderers will have conducted their own viability due diligence.

Homes England is planning to submit an Outline Planning Application for the Field Site (Phase 2) in Autumn 2018.

11) What is the expected timescale and rate of development and is this realistic?

Homes England is planning to hold two public consultation events on 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> July 2018. This follows a preliminary workshop meeting with some (but not all) surrounding Parish and Town Councils on 2<sup>nd</sup> July; and pre-application meetings with HDC on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2017 and 30<sup>th</sup> April 2018. It is Homes England's intention to synthesise all consultation feedback and pre-application advice to inform a detailed masterplanning process over the summer 2018. A public information event will follow to show how the design team responded in the autumn 2018, in advance of an application submission scheduled for late autumn.

Homes England responded to HDC's Housing Trajectory Update (November 2017) with the following trajectory data (this remains valid):

St Ives West - Houghton Grange:

2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32	2032/33	2033/34	2034/35	2035/36	
		25	65																

St Ives West – Field Site:

2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32	2032/33	2033/34	2034/35	2035/36	
			50	50	50	50	24												

<sup>3</sup> Pages 67-68 and 70 - Accessed at: <http://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/media/2532/detailed-water-cycle-study-update.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> pp27-29 (Section 5.3) Local Plan Viability Study (June & December 2017) Accessed at: <http://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/media/2695/local-plan-viability-study.pdf>  
<http://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/media/2855/local-plan-viability-study-addendum.pdf>

## 12) Is the boundary of the site appropriate? Is there any justification for amending the boundary?

It is appropriate. Expansion of the allocation to the North West of Houghton Grange (or a distinct new allocation), as posited by other participants, would seriously harm the last remaining intact north-south gap between St Ives and Houghton. The importance of this gap was recognised by the first Houghton and Wyton Neighbourhood Plan examiner<sup>5</sup> and in the 2011 UDF (Section 4.1.8 and Map 24).

## 13) Are the detailed policy requirements effective, justified and consistent with national policy?

No. Our previous representations have not resulted in modifications to SI1's housing target, open space requirement, supporting text or illustrative diagram. We do not repeat our representations in this hearing statement but our concerns remain unresolved.

### Elements of SI 1 that remain unsound (having regard to the NPPF)

The sheer size of the open space on the eastern extent of the Field Site is not explicitly discussed or justified anywhere in the 2011 UDF document or submitted landscape evidence. The UDF only propounds the following edge treatments to the eastern boundary of the Field Site<sup>6</sup>: 'Planting areas forming an edge / barrier': and 'landscaping corridor'. UDF maps 18, 19 and 26 set out HDC's summary of the urban design analysis and preferred urban structure (from 2011). The UDF mapping included only a modest green/landscape corridor on the eastern edge of the Field Site. The only 'safeguarding gap'/'strategic green separation between St Ives and Houghton' described in the 2011 UDF is the gap west of Houghton Grange – see Map 24. Homes England endorses this analysis and view the north-south gap west of Houghton Grange as the last remaining intact undisturbed gap.

Homes England's structural framework (**Appendix 2**) is in alignment with the 2005 and 2011 UDFs. Critically, a larger landscape corridor/band of open space is shown on the eastern edge. This complies with Policy HWNP3 (Anti –coalescence) and will ensure the physical and visual separation of the Field Site and The Spires. The submitted SI 1 illustrative diagram is contrary to HDC's urban design evidence and thus paragraph 11.4 and the illustrative diagram require amendment or deletion as there is no evidential basis for artificially restricting the capacity of the Field Site in this way. **Appendix 3** demonstrates how much residential development would be sterilised if the approximate location of the illustrative diagram was overlaid on Homes England's structural framework (showing developable parcels). **Appendix 3** demonstrates that Homes England's Framework Structure Plan could provide a physical gap of approximately 40-60m in width, whereas the illustrative diagram is approximately 130-230m in width. Homes England's view is that this gap (as depicted) is too large to be functional and does not represent good placemaking or compliance with Secured by Design principles.

HDC's 2015 version of the policy and illustrative diagram did reflect the 2011 'detailed urban design work' – see 'Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036: Targeted Consultation'<sup>7</sup>. Amendments made to the policy and illustrative diagram following the consultation were not made on the basis of the urban design work/evidence. The changes were made in response to consultation feedback and the erroneous assertion that the revised illustrative diagram is necessary to comply with Policy HWNP3. The submitted Statement of Consultation<sup>8</sup> (page 396) confirms this: "*Amendments have been made to reduce the capacity and landscape impact.*" As such it is wrong for the submitted Local Plan to state that the 'detailed urban design work' justifies the current illustrative diagram – this reference has not

<sup>5</sup> Page 20, third paragraph 'Houghton & Wyton Neighbourhood Development Plan 2015 - 2036 Independent Examiner's Report' (Ann Skippers, December 2015) Accessed at:

<http://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/media/2067/houghton-wyton-hdc-examiner-report-final-version.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Section 4 'St Ives West urban design framework' (HDC, 2011)

<sup>7</sup> Figure 13 : Illustration of the vision for the layout of St Ives West p226 – 'Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036: Targeted Consultation' (HDC, 2015) Accessed at: <http://consult.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/file/3312615>

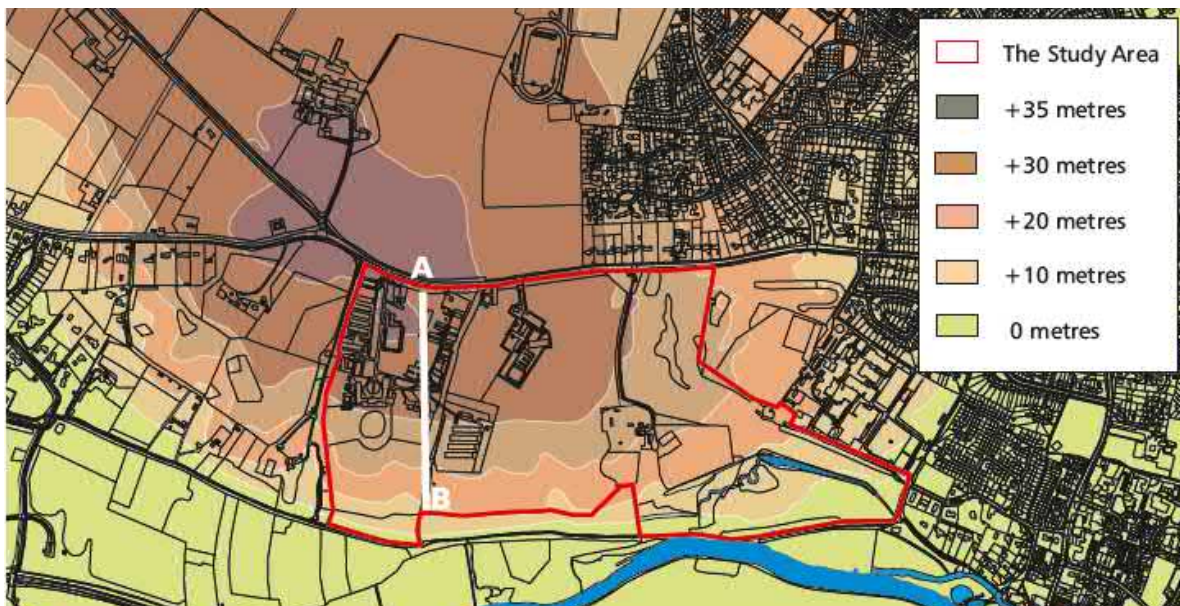
<sup>8</sup> Accessed at: <http://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/media/2860/statement-of-consultation.pdf>

changed since 2015 and evidently cannot support both diagrams which are materially different to one another – see below (our **emphasis**):

Local Plan to 2036: Targeted Consultation (2015)	Local Plan to 2036: Proposed Submission (2018)
<p>13.7 This allocation indicates a form of development that recognises the both the opportunities and sensitivities of the site. <b>Figure 13 summarises detailed urban design work illustrating how the development of the area should take place.</b></p>	<p>11.4 This allocation indicates a form of development that recognises both the opportunities and sensitivities of the site. <b>The indicative illustration below summarises detailed urban design work setting out how development of the area could take place.</b></p>

It is also incorrect to state that landscape impacts justify a reduction in capacity – see our previous representations and summary of AECOM landscape findings. The 2011 UDF includes contour mapping (Map 9 – see below). There is development in the east (The Spires and The How), west (Houghton Grange) and north (Slepe Meadow) of the Field Site. Adjacent development falls within the +20 to +30 metres above ordnance datum contour lines. Yet the illustrative diagram seeks to prevent development in the same contour lines on The Field Site due to it exceeding a belt of trees in the south east of the Field Site. This further demonstrates that the Field Site has been artificially suppressed for development, contrary to the best available evidence and development precedents.

Figure 1 UDF Map 9



In the submitted Statement of Consultation (see p109-110 and p455-457), in respect of the Field Site, HDC state: ‘detailed landscape negotiations’ and ‘further community involvement’ are required. This flexibility is not reflected in the Local Plan. In addition, the Local Plan was not amended following the detailed analysis provided by the Houghton and Wyton Neighbourhood Plan examiners. The examiners proposed modifications that removed references to a strategic gap on the Field Site and both resisted wording that would place an ‘embargo’ on development for the Field Site. Yet the submitted SI 1 illustrative diagram *does* place an embargo on the eastern side, contrary to the landscape evidence – this is unjustified. The reasoning to reduce the Field Site’s capacity (landscape impact) is erroneous and in its present form the policy and diagram would artificially limit new housing development in this location and prejudice the optimal use of the site.

**How the plan can be made sound**

The plan can be made sound with relatively minor modifications that would afford Homes England the flexibility to continue to explore development options for the most optimal use of the site, in compliance



with the provisions of SI 1 and extant policy contained within the Houghton and Wyton Neighbourhood Plan. Placing an embargo on a large swathe of Homes England’s landholding is not justified by the evidence. Amending the illustrative diagram to provide greater flexibility would improve the effectiveness of the plan.

The precise changes/wording that is being sought

Homes England request that SI 1 is modified as follows:

1. approximately **23 17ha** of green space’.
2. approximately **400 500 units**’,

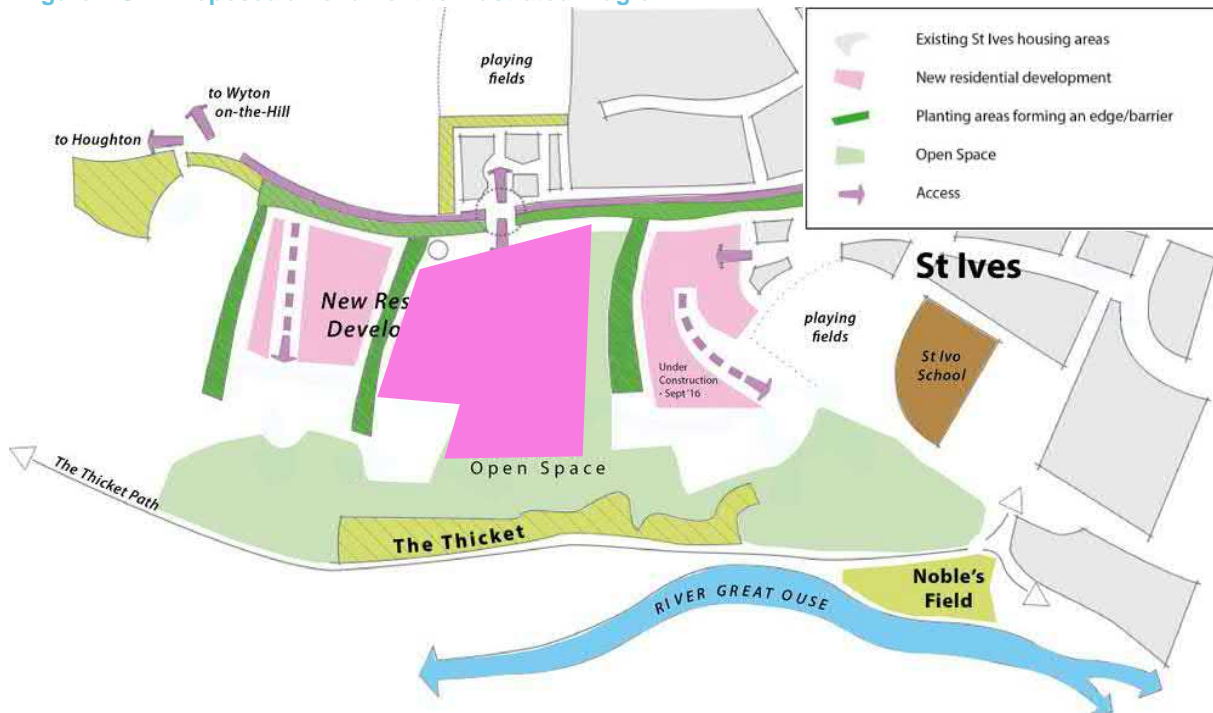
This reflects a reduced band of open space on the eastern edge of the Field Site and more accurately reflects the development potential of the Field Site in light of up to date evidence, developed following publication of the NPPF and in accordance with Landscape Institute best practice (see previous representations). The following minor modifications to the supporting text are also required:

**11.4 ...The indicative illustration below summarises ~~detailed urban design work setting out~~ how development of the area could take place. Detailed scheme designs shall be established via a masterplan and public consultation in accordance with policies SI 1 and LP 14.**

**11.9 ... A ~~substantial~~ band of greenspace should be retained through the portion of the ~~BBSRC field to the eastern of the derelict buildings extent of the Field site~~ and up to the western edge of residential development at 'The Spires'...**

Finally, the illustrative diagram should be amended as follows (see below):

Figure 2 SI 1 Proposed amendment to Illustrated Diagram



The above increase to the 'New residential development' area reflects a reduction of approximately 6ha of green space. The amended supporting text makes clear detailed scheme design shall be subject to the provisions of LP14.

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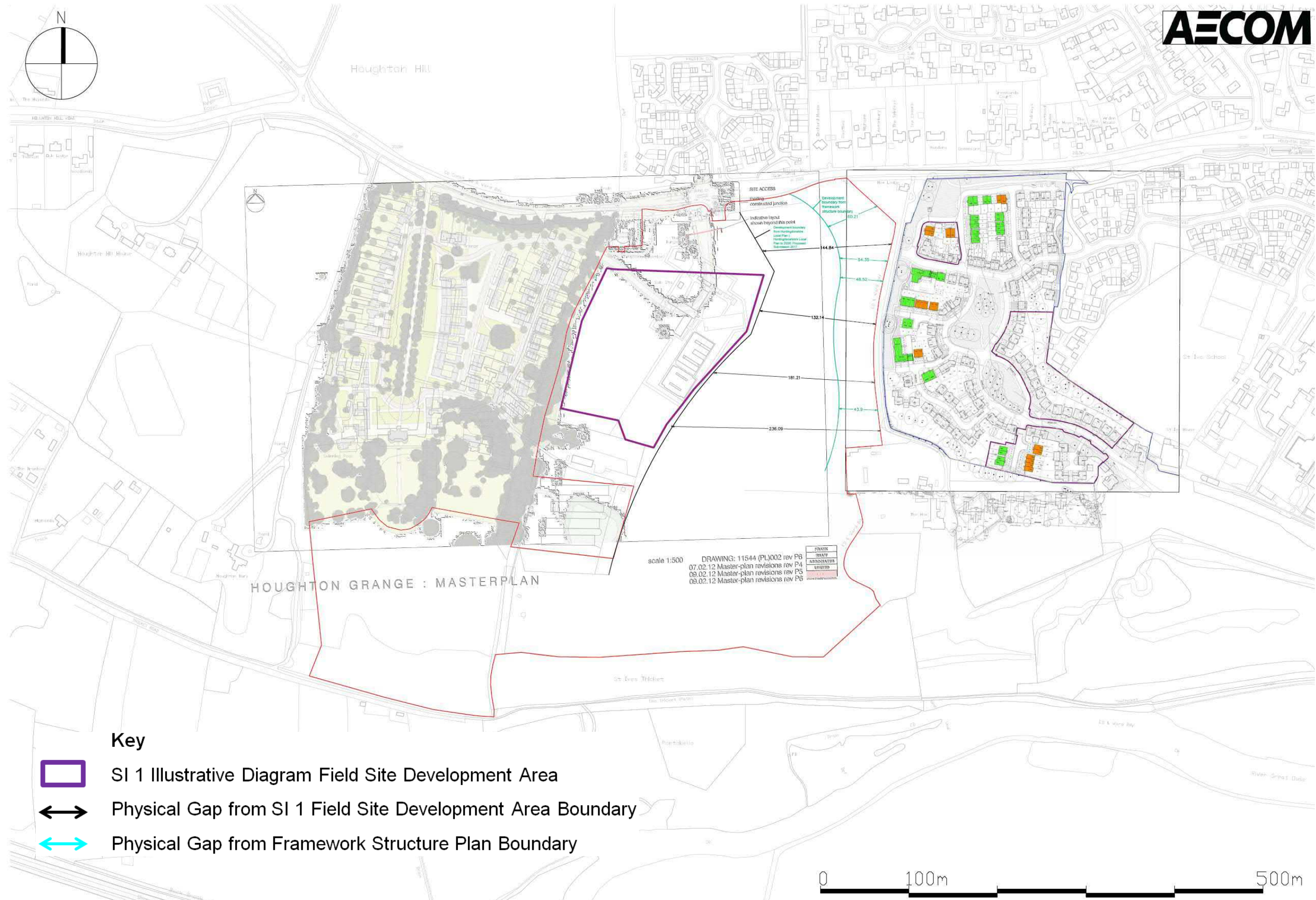
**APPENDIX 1 – Site Context**



APPENDIX 2 – Framework Structure Plan



**APPENDIX 3 – Local Plan Illustrative Diagram Analysis**



## Appendix 4 – Field Site Preliminary Vision Document Extract

# Houghton Road



Figure 1-4: Houghton Road

This section of the document analyses the character of Houghton Road. It explores the constraints and opportunities of the existing streetscape to inform the proposed design response for the Application Site. It examines the spatial arrangements of the landscape and the buildings along the road, and aims to explore the visual appearance of the streetscape throughout the journey from St Ives towards Houghton.

Houghton Road is the main east-west link between Houghton and St Ives. Figure 1-4 illustrates the character of Houghton Road along its eastern section west of Elm Drive.

As the plan above indicates, the road on the south side is predominantly characterised by a persistent line of trees and hedgerows. In contrast, the northern side of the road is bordered by walls and dispersed vegetation of the front gardens of the individual properties up to Slepe Meadow. Slepe Meadow challenges the character of the road by directly fronting it with a relatively rigid built edge.

The following pages demonstrate the views observed when travelling from St Ives towards Houghton along Houghton Road. This is presented to provide assessment of the edge condition and the character of the road.



Figure 1-5: View 1: Elm Drive looking west.

In this section Houghton Road is directly fronted by buildings. In spite of the generous set backs the buildings still dominate the streetscape, and the street scene appears to be largely urban.



Figure 1-6: View 2: High Leys looking west.

Although the dominance of buildings on the streetscape starts diminishing in this location, the traffic light junction preserves the largely urban character.

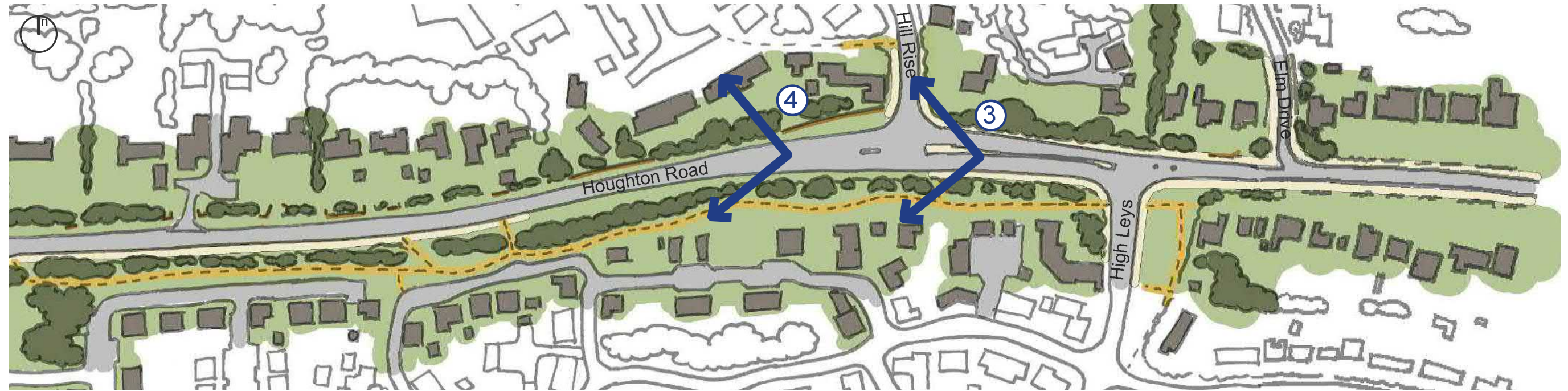


Figure 1-7: View 3: Hill Rise looking west.

Immediately after the Hill Rise junction the urban character starts diminishing due in part to the loss of the footpath. The buildings also start losing their direct physical relationship with Houghton Road. On the southern side buildings are partly obscured by unified hedgerows and a line of trees but they still over-look at the road. This character generally continues until the application site. On the north side, on the other hand, buildings almost totally lose their relation to Houghton Road as they are obscured by mature plantation in the front gardens.



Figure 1-8: View 4: West of Hill Rise, looking west.

At this point Houghton Road becomes an isolated vehicular carriageway due to absence of a footpath. Similar to the previous scene buildings are apparent with their first floor and roofs on the southern site but they still provide some visual surveillance of the road, whereas buildings are totally hidden behind the mature plantation on the north.



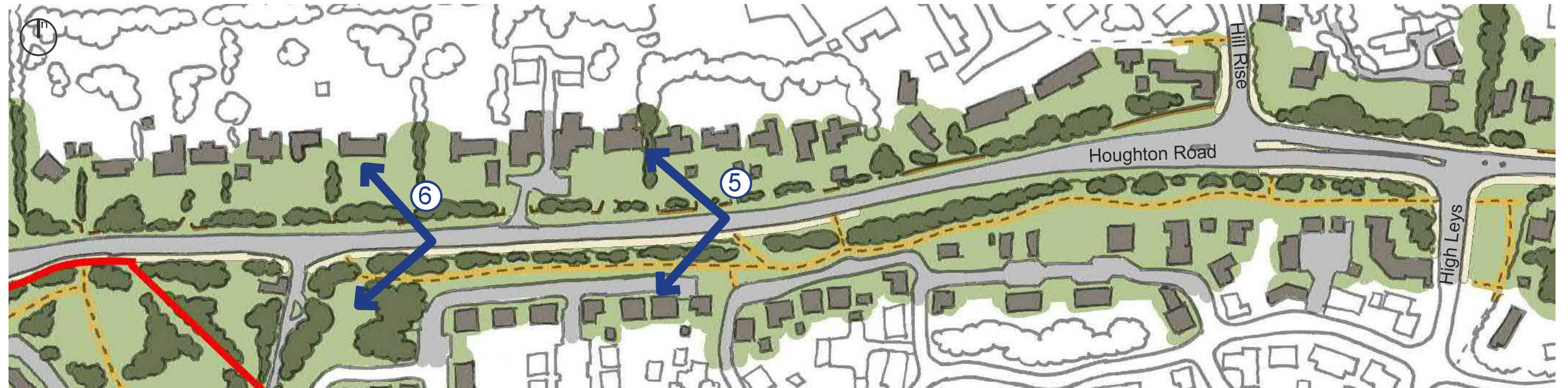


Figure 1-9: View 5: North of The Spires looking west

On this section of Houghton Road the character of the streetscene is consistent on the southern side, however, on the northern side buildings are more visible due to smaller and less dense vegetation. A more urban character returns due to the narrow footpath on the southern side.



Figure 1-10: View 6: North of The Spires looking west.

This section of the road has an enclosed character due to large set backs and mature vegetation immediately adjacent to the road.

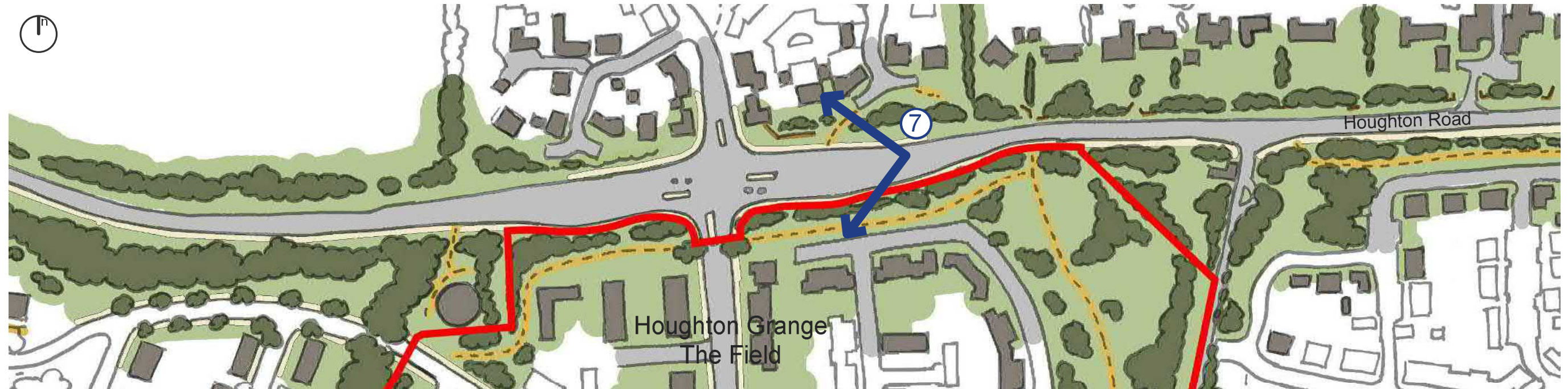


Figure 1-11: View 7: Slepe Meadows looking west - existing.

At the Application Site the general character of Houghton Road starts to change. The carriageway widens to a four-way traffic light junction and appears more urban, due in to the buildings at the north side directly fronting the road. The openness of the southern side appears to be lost to the dominance of the carriageway and the rigid built edge on Slepe Meadow.



Figure 1-12: View 7 - proposed development

The image above illustrates the tree lined approach suggested for the Application Site on the Houghton Road frontage. It is proposed that the built up edge will be set back approximately 15m, responding to the general character of the southern side of Houghton Road. This green space could accommodate a line of trees, hedgerows, walking and cycling route, and green space while also allowing new properties to provide over-looking of the existing footpath and bus stop on Houghton Road. This approach will soften the dominance of the wide carriageway and the rigid built up edge at the north side, while creating a complete character on Houghton Road.

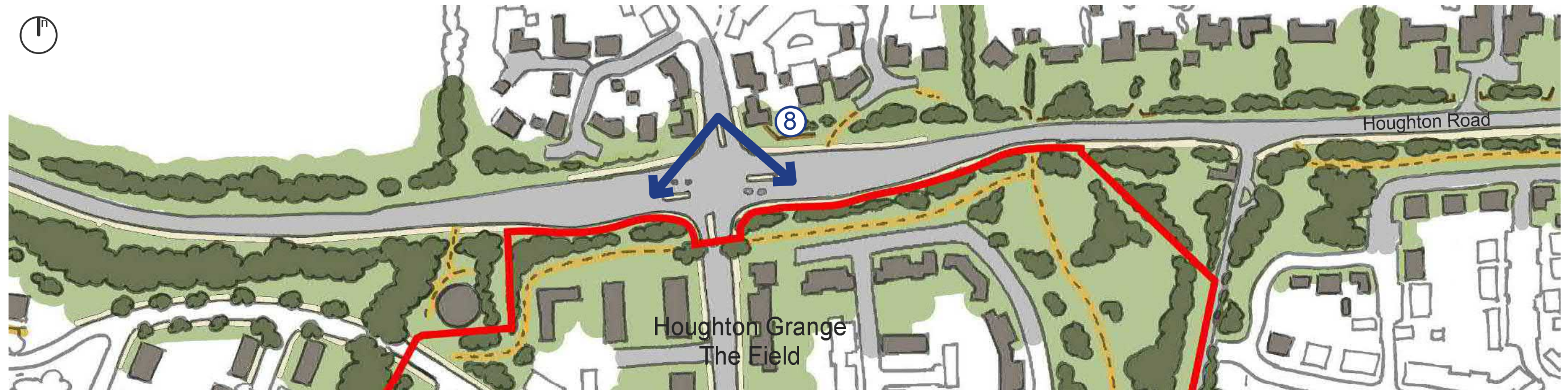


Figure 1-13: View 8: Vehicular access to the Application Site - existing

The vehicular access of the Application Site.



Figure 1-14: View 8 - Illustrative proposed development

The image above illustrates how the preliminary proposals for the Application Site could address the vehicular access. This approach aims to create a green entrance softening the character of the traffic light junction, providing an attractive experience to the people travelling on Houghton Road.



Figure 1-15: View 9: The Grange Entrance looking west.

Adjacent to land comprising Houghton Grange Phase 1 the mature and thick plantation screens the southern side of the Houghton Road completely. The open countryside view on the northern side dominates the character Houghton Road in this location after the development on Slepe Meadow.



Figure 1-16: View 10: West of Sawtry Way looking west.

At Houghton Hill Road the countryside character dominates the scene, with large and mature trees on the south side of the road and open views on the north.

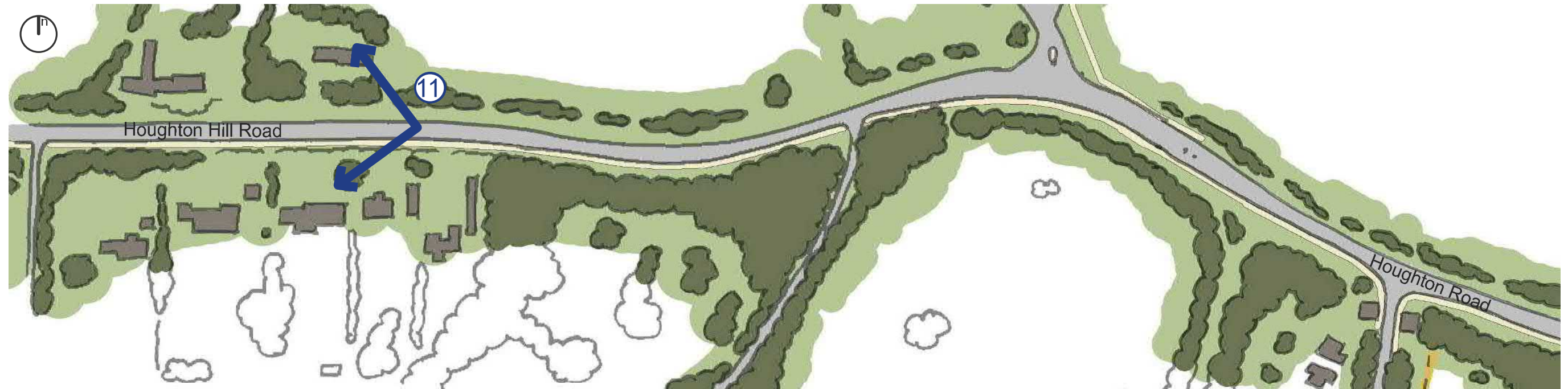


Figure 1-17: View 11: Houghton Hill Road looking west.

In summary, Houghton Road has a largely consistent character on its southern side with lines of trees, hedgerows and large set backs with modest built up edges.

The character to the north is more varied along this route, with some highly urban form in places, and open countryside elsewhere. Given these conditions, it is considered that a sensitive approach to the configuration of development on the Application Site can complement and indeed enhance the character of this section of Houghton Road.

The entry point to Houghton Village from the east marks a clear change in character with large setbacks and well landscaped front gardens.

# The Linear Park

The Framework Structure Plan suggests an integrated network of landscape areas throughout the new community, creating a pleasant green environment for new residents. As part of this framework a significant area of green public open space is proposed on the eastern edge of the site, forming an attractive linear park.

The Linear Park would be designed to provide an accessible open space for both new and existing communities, a green corridor to link to the network of surrounding open spaces and a gateway to the Great Ouse strategic open spaces. It also aims to provide a physical separation between Houghton Grange and The Spires to create “a sense of separation” as stated in policy SI 1 criterion g.

The Linear Park could be designed around a number of key principles and intended uses:

- 1 **Physical separation** - The Linear Park creates a distinctive physical separation between development of The Field and that of The Spires already constructed to the east. At this stage it is suggested that the park could have a minimum width of 43m, providing a generous separation between built form and the Spires to the east.
- 2 **Overlooked and safe** - The dimensions of the park have been designed to serve both the functions of the open space as a recreation park as well as a physical separation zone. Since the eastern side of the Linear Park is not fronted by buildings it is critical that the frontages of development on The Field are located within an appropriate distance in order to achieve passive surveillance and provide a well overlooked space for the safety of users.
- 3 **Gateway** - A Green gateway located at the north of the park would welcome users and include way-finding features to surrounding open spaces such as the “country park”, St Ives Thicket, Ouse Valley Way, and walking and cycling routes.
- 4 **Informal recreation** - the landscape is assumed to be generally informal with areas of wild meadow planting and areas for rest.
- 5 **Play** - A play area could be located to the south of the Linear Park where it is safe and well overlooked. The play area could contain natural play equipment such as play tree stumps and boulders.



Figure 1-18: The Linear Park