

Chapter 3.

Vision

This section describes our Vision for the site, identifying the key aims and objectives for the site and outlining the key design principles which shape the design proposals.



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Our landscape vision

“

This new neighbourhood will be landscape led and will feature a mosaic of interconnected open spaces that are accessible to all people. A multi functional network of open space will offer welcoming places for people to come together and connect, as well as space for nature to thrive.

Green Corridors will boost biodiversity and draw on the enduring qualities of the area. Growing gardens and community orchards will provide space for productivity.

Close contact with nature will be part of the pleasure of life in this neighbourhood, with a series of beautiful new parks and open spaces characterised by naturalistic planting.

The landscape heritage will inform the layout of the new community,, which will reinstate historic tree belts and field boundaries.

It will be rooted in place with excellent connectivity and framed views to Rayleigh Church and Windmill in the distance.

This new community will provide a powerful sense of rootedness and belonging. With its range of houses and tenures, it will become a place to claim as your own and to share.

”



Design principles

Natural and Historic Landscape

The well vegetated field boundaries are a key element of the site's landscape character and attractive setting. However, the 19th Century historic field boundaries and some of the associated tree belts running east west are now lost. So there is an opportunity to reinstate elements of this historic landscape, providing a connection to the past and a legible, structuring element to the layout.

Structure and Character

The established tree belts and landform compartmentalise the site into four areas of open space, each with their own setting and character, which transitions noticeably from peri-urban and contained to the west, to rural and naturalistic to the east. Some of the four areas can be considered further as sub-areas, due to their landform and landscape elements.

Edges and Neighbours

The site is bounded by a variety of edges, comprising both built and open space. The variation in townscape components results in a mixed character dominated by larger scale retail and commercial units to the north and housing and domestic scale development to the west and south. The new neighbourhood will respond to these edges sensitively, with new housing along the western and northern edges providing a continuation of the existing development pattern, providing an active interface where appropriate; and housing along the southern and eastern edges forming a more informal, undulating edge, pulling back from the site boundary to provide a gentle transition.

Views and Vistas

The rolling landform of the site is another one of the key elements of the site and affords views to surrounding areas / landmarks. These views provide

an opportunity to assist with legibility within the new neighbourhood. The two key landform areas are:

- The plateau in the south west of the site, which occupies an elevated position that affords distant views to the countryside in the east; to the next ridge to the south and towards Holy Trinity Church and Rayleigh Windmill to the north.
- The sloping landform to the east, which falls fairly steeply away to the east and north.

Community Heart

A community hub (comprising a healthcare facility, community facility and early years facility arranged around a focal village green) would be well located on the plateau, being central within the layout, close to existing housing and connected to desire routes.

Public Transport Connection

A new bus link will connect between Stadium Way and Daws Heath Road. Bus stops within and close to the site will provide a convenient and accessible service.

Pedestrian and Cycle Permeability

Several cycle and pedestrian access points will be provided, setting up a network of active travel routes through the site. These will connect into the existing movement network, providing excellent permeability.

Multi Functional Open Space

The masterplan will be landscape led and will feature a mosaic of interconnected green spaces. The lake, new and existing trees and hedgerows will be retained and augmented to create a series of interconnected ecological corridors, which will support biodiversity and create places for people to connect with each other and with nature.

Following on from the strategic and site related assessment, a number of design principles have been identified to guide the design

Natural and Historic Landscape



Structure and Character



Edges and Neighbours



Community Heart



Pedestrian and Cycle Permeability



Views and Vistas



Public Transport Connection



Multi Functional Open Space



Chapter 4.

Engagement & Evolution

This section summarises the extensive process of refining the proposed design, in consultation with local and statutory stakeholders, such as the Local Plan Delivery Board, through the development of the Masterplan and subsequently the planning application.



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Engagement and Evolution

Introduction

For fuller details relating to the consultation process undertaken prior to submission of this application, please refer to the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) by Code, submitted as part of this application.

The public engagement strategy was strongly influenced by the Covid-19 pandemic. Considering the restrictions in place during the pandemic, the project team considered how public consultation could be undertaken without breaking strict limits on groups of people meeting indoors and outdoors, and without endangering local residents and members of the project team. It was envisaged that engagement would be undertaken through a dedicated consultation webpage, which could be updated to reflect the latest stage of the planning application's preparation, and residents invited to review the latest proposals and comment on specific questions which would help to inform the preparation of the masterplan.

Throughout the preparation of the planning application, members of the planning application team have engaged with various statutory consultees and key stakeholders to discuss their relevant disciplines in advance of submitting the proposals to Castle Point Borough Council for consideration. Statutory consultees contacted in advance of submission of the application have included:

- Anglian Water
- Lead Local Flood Authority
- Essex County Council Highways
- Essex Wildlife Trust
- Place Services Green Infrastructure Team
- NHS England

First stage of engagement

During early 2021 local residents living or working near to the site were asked about what they consider to be the most relevant issues for the planning application team to assess and to take into account whilst planning for the form and scale of development proposed in policy HO13 (Land east of Rayleigh Road, Hadleigh) of the then draft Castle Point Local Plan (2018-2033).

Responses are summarised within the SCI and in most cases were focused on the impact of the proposed development, including in relation to infrastructure, highways, and the site's location within the Green Belt.

Comments received indicated a preference for new housing to be located closer to the commercial land uses to the north east of the site, in addition to ensuring that the new community facilities are provided close to new areas of open space. Other comments received expressed concern regarding potential landscape impacts from the proposed community facilities and a desire to see these located in close proximity to the commercial units adjacent to the north of the site. Responses also expressed a desire for:

- New green spaces, new play spaces and retention of the fishing lake.
- An active landscape which encourages physical activity around the scheme.
- New family housing to form part of the new proposals, the provision of new affordable housing and housing which would be suitable for elderly people, including bungalows.

These responses helped the design team develop initial proposals for the site which were subsequently presented to the Local Plan Delivery Board based around a number of key design principles, shown here.



Edges



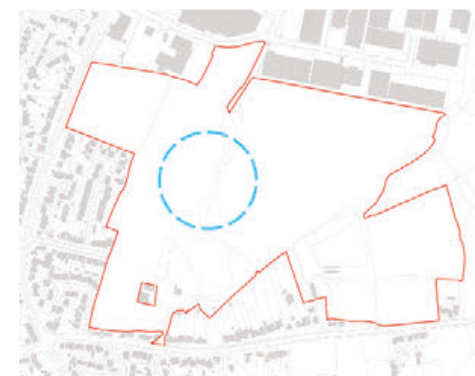
Historic and Natural Landscape



Landform and Vistas



Setting and Character



Community



Public Transport



Connectivity



Multi Functional Open Space

“Communities can effectively shape both design policies and development through a collaborative process of meaningful participation. Early engagement and linking engagement activities to key stages of design decision-making and plan-making can empower people to inform the vision, design policies and the design of schemes.” National Planning Policy Framework, 2019

1. Retained woodland
2. New woodland
3. Parkland
4. Retained hedgerow
5. Play
6. Fitness trail
7. Footpath
8. Village green
9. Rough grassland
10. Lowland meadow
11. Fenland meadow
12. Orchard
13. Community growing gardens / allotments
14. SuDS
15. Fishing lake
16. Green lane

Initial Multi Functional Open Space diagram



Second stage of engagement

Following the first stage of engagement, the masterplan for the site was developed and refined. Particular attention was given to the following issues:

- Identification of key existing assets within the site to be retained, including trees, hedgerows, and the lake;
- Creation of a landscape-led framework of open spaces and green corridors, based around existing retained landscape elements but also adding new features such as the central focal green and the treed corridors along the historic field boundaries, to create a site-wide structure within which development parcels could be appropriately located;
- Refinement of the surface water attenuation and drainage strategy for the proposals, based around the natural catchments established by the site's topography, reducing the potential development extent achievable within the site and enhancing the landscaped open space proposals;
- Consideration of the vehicular access strategy for the proposals, in particular whether a through route should be created across the site, reaching the conclusion that such a through route should be permitted for pedestrians, cyclists, buses and emergency vehicles, but that private vehicles should be prevented from using the site as a link between Stadium Way and Daws Heath Road;

Within the framework of this emerging masterplan, the second stage of the public engagement process, during summer 2021, focused upon four separate options for the location of the proposed new community facilities. These options are shown here. Of the responses that expressed a preference, options 1 and 4 were preferred.

Second Stage Options

Option 1

- All non residential facilities are clustered around the village green, providing a mixed use hub.
- Buildings provide enclosure and activity onto the village green.
- Facilities are centrally located and easily accessible for new and existing residents.



Option 2

- All non residential facilities are located at a gateway location, marking the entrance to the new neighbourhood.
- Facilities are located close to the retail park and the bulk of existing housing, creating a critical mass.



Option 3

- Healthcare centre provides a gateway marker building, with the community centre and nursery overlooking the village green.
- Allows for new housing to be interspersed with the non residential uses.



Option 4

- Healthcare centre and nursery overlook the village green, providing activity and enclosure. Community / sports hall front onto the lowland meadow green corridor.
- Allows for new housing to be interspersed with non residential uses.
- Facilities are centrally located and easily accessible for new and existing residents.

Local Plan Delivery Board Presentation

Following the second stage of engagement, the masterplan was further refined, prior to presentation to the Local Plan Delivery Board in Autumn 2021. Refinements made included:

- Development of Option 1 as the strategy for the location of community buildings, with the healthcare facility, community hall and early years facility all adjoining the Village Green, reinforcing its status as the key focal heart within the proposed layout;
- Refinement of green infrastructure strategy, with the provision of allotments and community orchard confirmed and the locations and variety of childrens' play provision refined;
- Refinement of biodiversity strategy, with ongoing assessments of potential for deliverable net gain and refinement accordingly of landscape proposals and proposed green infrastructure typologies;
- Refinement of development extent within the central part of the layout, achieving best use of available land while ensuring that drainage and biodiversity requirements can be achieved.



Pre-application Consultation

During the spring of 2022, a pre-application submission was made to Castle Point Borough Council, and comments were subsequently received. Refinements to the design made subsequently included:

- Refinement of the proposed urban design approaches across the proposed layout; these are described within the latter part of this Design and Access Statement through the understanding of the proposals as comprising four Character Areas;
- Refinement of the non-vehicular access strategy and greater clarity in showing whether proposed access points are both vehicular and pedestrian, or pedestrian only;
- Assessment of the potential of the layout to accommodate an appropriate housing mix;
- Detailed refinements to drainage and highways proposals in response to ongoing specialist technical consultations and design work within the wider design team.

The recommendation was also made that a presentation of the proposals to Members should take place prior to undertaking any further consultation and prior to the submission of the planning application. On this basis, a presentation to Members took place in October 2022 as a further part of the pre-application consultation process.

1. Retained trees and woodland
2. New tree planting
3. Parkland
4. Retained hedgerow
5. Play
6. Fitness trail
7. Footpath
8. Village green
9. Species rich grassland
10. Species rich seasonal wet grassland
11. Orchard
12. Community growing gardens / allotments
13. SuDS
14. Fishing lake
15. New buffer planting



Third stage of engagement

Following the meeting with Members, it was agreed to provide an additional opportunity for local residents and businesses to comment upon the draft planning application documents, particularly those residents located closest to the application site boundary. This consultation stage took place in November 2022.

Most of the comments received related to the principle of development here, and potential impacts on wider infrastructure resulting from the proposals. One comment was made in relation to the proposed surface water drainage scheme for the proposals. Details on this issue can be found within the Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy documents submitted as part of this planning application.

Summary

The consultation process undertaken with Castle Point Borough Council, other statutory and wider stakeholders, and in particular the surrounding neighbourhood, have enabled the design team to refine the proposals with a greater understanding of the issues that are most important to the wider community.

This section of the Design and Access Statement has summarised how the proposed designs have evolved through this process. The following section describes in greater detail the proposals which have been informed and shaped by this engagement process and for which planning approval is now sought.



