

The Ridgeway

Location

The Ridgeway Character Area is located in the western and south-western part of the wider site, adjoining the rear of houses along Asquith Avenue, Asquith Gardens and Firfield Road to the west, and Daws Heath Road to the south.

It adjoins the Gateway character area to the north, and the Slopes character area to the east, separated by the central tree belt.

Topography

This area is located on a fairly level plateau at the highest point of the site, with edges that slope gently down to the north, east and south.

Setting

The Ridgeway site comprises a roughly rectangular open area of land, which extends northwards forming the eastern half of the Gateway area.

The open area is relatively featureless, save for a small existing group of agricultural buildings within its southern part which are accessed by a lane off Daws Heath Road. This group of buildings is retained and excluded from the application site.

The western and southern edges of this area mostly adjoin the rear gardens of existing properties. Intermittent hedgerows and some trees are found along these boundaries but often the boundary garden fences are visible. The upper floors of adjoining properties sometimes have views into the site.

The southernmost part of the western boundary is formed by a hedgerow which runs along the edge of Firfield Road.

The eastern boundary of this area is defined by the central tree belt, which changes character southwards along the boundary, becoming more intermittent and hedgerow-like before terminating in a line of trees along the access lane off Daws Heath Road.

Enclosure and sense of place

The Ridgeway is the part of the wider site that feels least enclosed. This is primarily due to its elevated setting, in combination with its boundary landscaping which is lower in scale and generally more intermittent than that of the Gateway area.

The adjoining properties to the west prevent distant views in that direction. However, views beyond the site to the north, south and east are available from this area.

To the north, Rayleigh Mount, Windmill and Church are visible, 2 kilometres away.

To the east, where gaps in the central tree and hedgerow belt permit, views across to Little Haven nature reserve are available.

To the south, intermittent views are available towards Hadleigh Country Park, around 3 kilometres away, through the gaps between neighbours fronting Daws Heath Road.

The existing sense of place of this area is defined most strongly by its elevated position and the relationships thereby created with the wider surrounding area.



Land Uses	Other Amenities	Housing Typologies	Residential Density
Residential	Village Green including play area	A wide mix of terraced and semi-detached houses, with some flats, and with a larger proportion of detached houses within the southern part of the character area	Medium density, average between 30 - 40 dwellings per hectare, higher within the northern part of the character area and lower within the southern part
Community and sports hall	Allotments		
Medical centre	Play area		
	Pedestrian and cycle routes		



Landscape Structure

The extent of the development area within this area is established by existing and new landscape features.

The northern part of the area is defined by the landscaped corridor linking to Rayleigh Road and is arranged around the new Village Green.

Leading southwards from the Village Green, a central street continues the axial vista terminated by Rayleigh Church aligned with the Spine Street.

A second axial vista is created by the extension of the alignment of Asquith Avenue eastwards into the site. At the intersection of these two vistas, a small green incorporating childrens' play is located, adjacent to allotments which also adjoin the landscaped community orchard area further to the east.

Within the southern part of the area, a landscaped corridor incorporating the necessary sustainable drainage provision in this area creates a buffer between new homes and existing properties on Daws Heath Road, as well as providing an attractive setting for arrival by pedestrians from the south-west.

Layout Pattern

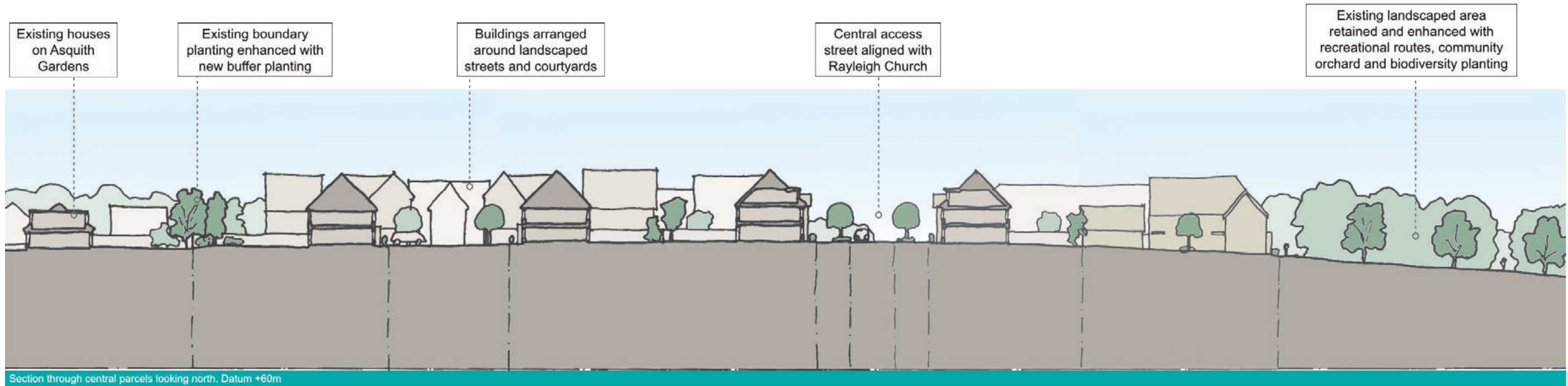
To the north of the Asquith Avenue vista, the layout comprises a strongly rectilinear block pattern, echoing the layout pattern of the Gateway area to the north.

This approach generates a number of perimeter blocks, with frontages facing onto streets and the landscaped open space to the east.

The western boundary of this area is characterised by the back gardens of new properties adjoining the existing back gardens of properties on Asquith Gardens, Asquith Avenue and Firfield Road. Along this boundary, existing planting is generally retained and enhanced with new tree and shrub planting to increase the buffering between existing and new rear gardens and ensure that new buildings are located at an appropriate distance to avoid potential overlooking.

Within the northern end of the area, the Health Centre and Community Hall both front onto the Village Green, reinforcing the focal nature of this space as the heart of the new community.

To the south of Asquith Avenue, the layout pattern becomes more informal, responding to the more informal character of Daws Heath Road.



Building Typologies

The frontage to the Village Green comprises the Health Centre and Community Hall, the buildings with the largest footprints within the whole layout.

Between the Village Green and the Asquith Avenue vista, a mix of semi-detached and terraced houses and flat buildings are arranged around the rectilinear perimeter block pattern in this area.

To the south of Asquith Avenue, the predominant typology is detached houses, although semi-detached houses and small terraces can also be used.

Response to Topography

The topography within this area is virtually level and it is anticipated that new buildings will be set at or around existing ground levels.

Structure and Legibility

Strong built frontages front onto streets and landscaped spaces within this area.

Feature buildings are identified at key locations. These are:

- Fronting the Village Green;
- At prominent corners around the intersection between the two key vistas;
- At the 'gateway' giving access into the landscaped area adjoining the south-western corner of the area.

It is anticipated that the detailed design of the character area as a whole will be carefully considered to ensure that vistas through streets and across landscaped squares are terminated appropriately by built form.

Formality and Informality

The Ridgeway area will have a transitional character, with relative formality in its northern part around the formal Village Green and immediately to the south, but becoming much more informal further southwards, closer to Daws Heath Road.



Character Precedent Images

The images on the adjoining page are taken from other recent developments. They have been selected to give an indicative idea of the potential character of certain locations within the Ridgeway character area.

The captions below each image describe the particular location to which each image is intended to relate.

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Terraced houses set behind avenue of trees



Streets fronted by houses with focal buildings framing gateways and terminating vistas



Detached houses overlooking landscaped area incorporating sustainable drainage features



Childrens' play area incorporating retained trees and fronted by new houses and apartments



New planting softens development edges and creates buffer between existing and new homes

The Slopes

Location

The Slopes Character Area is located within the centre of the site, between the Ridgeway and Paddocks character areas. Its northern edge adjoins the commercial and light industrial area to the north, while its southern edge adjoins the rear of the long gardens to properties on Daws Heath Road

Topography

This area slopes down eastwards towards the retained stream and lake. Within the northern part of the area the slope is gradual, while within the southern end of the area it is considerably steeper.

Setting

The Slopes site mostly comprises a large open area of land. This is defined by the boundary with the adjoining commercial uses to the north, the strong existing tree belt to the west at the top of the slope, and another linear tree belt at the base of the slope to the south-east, associated with an existing stream which runs northwards. Within the eastern part of the area an artificial fishing lake has been created using earth embankments which are planted with mostly younger trees.

At the southern end of the area, its steepest sloping part comprises an area of scrub, trees and woodland, which adjoin the Daws Heath Road properties immediately to the south.

Enclosure and sense of place

The nature of the site's topography and the strength of the boundary tree belt along its western boundary mean that the Slopes has a sense of identity separated from the Gateway and Ridgeway areas to the west.

Its open character and east facing slope establish a visual relationship with Little Haven nature reserve and the adjoining landscape to the east. This is particularly apparent in the more elevated, western parts of the area. Within the eastern, lower parts of the area, the scale and proximity of the eastern woodland corridor means that distance views are no longer possible and the sense of enclosure due to the site's landscape structure is increased.

The existing sense of place of this area is strongly landscape led, primarily by the strength of its boundary treed corridors, but also in its higher parts by its more distant relationship with the wider landscape to the east.



Land Uses	Other Amenities	Housing Typologies	Residential Density
Residential	Play area	Predominantly semi-detached and detached houses. Some terraced houses, especially within the southern parcel, and some flats, especially within the northern parcel	Medium density, average between 30 - 40 dwellings per hectare. Densities generally reduce within the lower parts of the character area
Early Years facility	Community Orchard Pedestrian and cycle routes		



Landscape Structure

The strong existing tree belts along the western and south-eastern edges of this area are supplemented by new landscaped corridors to create a well defined landscape led structure.

Two landscaped corridors incorporating new tree planting run across the area, reflecting historic field boundary patterns, dividing the development area into three parcels.

Within the northern part of the area, additional landscaping supplements the existing boundary planting to create a further green corridor along the northern boundary, providing attractive access routes as well as creating an appropriate buffer between new homes and the existing commercial area to the north.

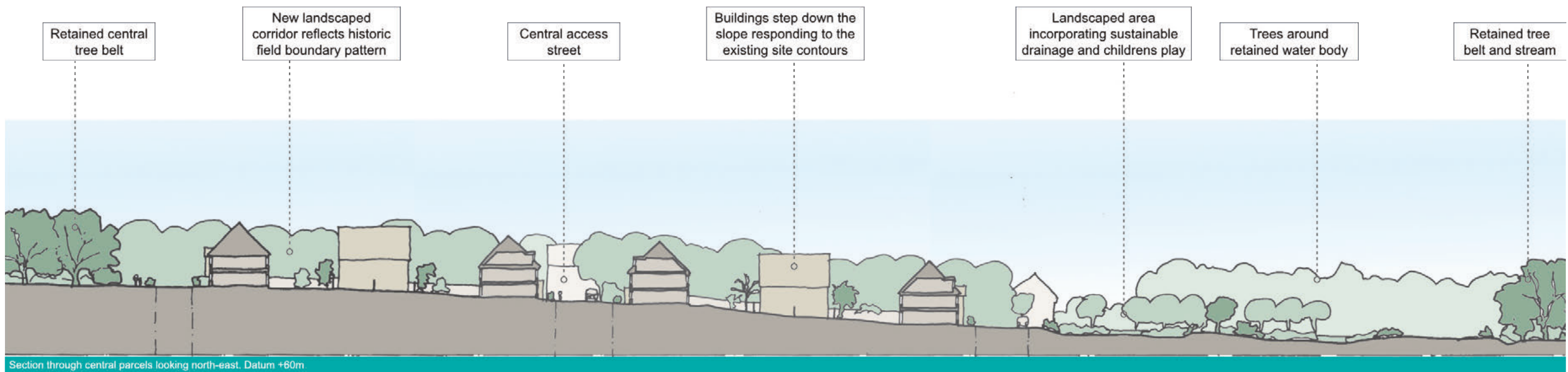
Layout Pattern

The three parcels created by the landscape structure are each subdivided into development blocks.

The southern parcel has the most formally structured layout, following the alignment of the central spine street which runs along its northern and eastern edges. Strong frontages face onto the spine street and the surrounding landscaping.

The central parcel is divided into two roughly equal perimeter blocks, with houses facing outwards onto adjoining landscaped corridors. The layout geometry of these parcels responds to the varying alignments of these landscaped edges.

The northern parcel is the largest within this character area. Frontages and streets here are generally gently curving, responding to the existing contours and the adjoining landscape layout. The northern frontage is straighter in geometry but the building line here is stepped as necessary to accommodate the proposed street layout.



Building Typologies

The most common building typology within The Slopes is likely to be semi-detached houses, interspersed with detached houses. Small lengths of terraced houses are occasionally used, as are flat buildings, in particular within the northern parcel.

The southern parcel also accommodates an early years nursery building, close to the Village Green to the west.

Response to Topography

The topography within this area will need careful consideration as detailed designs are developed. Where streets and frontages generally follow existing contours, changes in level can be managed within adjoining landscaped areas and private gardens. Where frontages run more perpendicular to slopes, steps in terraces or between adjoining buildings will manage changes in level.

Structure and Legibility

Strong built frontages front onto the spine street and other landscaped spaces, generally creating a perimeter block pattern. Within the southern parcel, which has a more fragmented pattern, buildings are located to ensure surveillance to all streets and spaces.

Feature buildings are identified at key locations. These are:

- At key corners fronting the Spine Street;
- At key corners visible across adjoining landscaped spaces;
- At key corners along the central access street which links the three development parcels.

Formality and Informality

The Slopes area will show a gradual transition between the more formal character of the southern parcel, closer to the Village Green and Spine Street, and the greater informality of the central and northern parcels, with the northern parcel being the most informal.

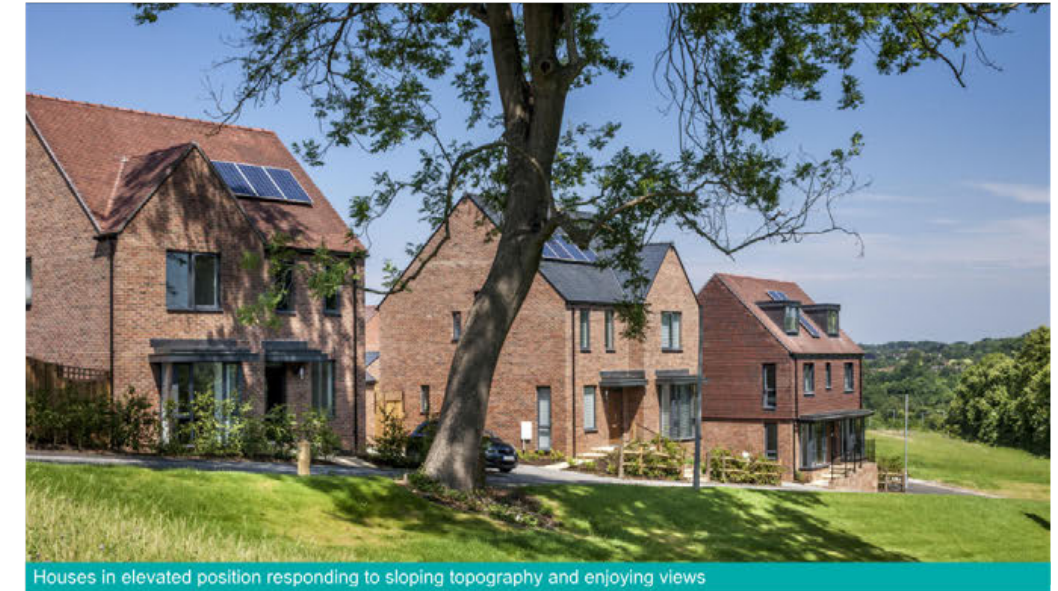


Character Precedent Images

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The Paddocks

Location

The Paddocks Character Area is located in the south eastern part of the site. Its southern boundary adjoins Daws Heath Road directly within its central part; either side of this existing properties are located between Daws Heath Road and the site. To the west it adjoins rear gardens; to the east it adjoins the natural landscape associated with Little Haven nature reserve. To the north, the Slopes character area is located.

Topography

This area slopes down northwards towards the retained stream and lake. The southern part of the area adjoining Daws Heath Road is almost flat, the slope is gradual, while within the northern part of the area it is steeper although still quite gradual.

Setting

Existing treed hedgerows form the northern and eastern edges and also bisect the area, dividing it into four quadrants.

The south-eastern quadrant has an open frontage onto Daws Heath Road, with occasional small boundary trees. To the east, existing properties on Daws Heath Road adjoin.

The south-western quadrant is separated from Daws Heath Road by a landscaped belt and existing properties. Its western boundary comprises rear gardens of other Daws Heath Road properties. A track off Daws Heath Road giving access to the fishing lake runs through this area.

The north-western quadrant is more secluded, with lower topography and the absence of adjoining

properties generating a quieter and more landscape led setting.

All three quadrants so far described are currently employed as open paddocks. The north-eastern quadrant is more naturalistic in character. All its boundaries comprise treed hedgerows.

Enclosure and sense of place

The Paddocks has an existing character different to the other parts of the site, reflecting its situation off Daws Heath Road which is more rural in character than the generally suburban residential pattern to the west and the commercial development to the north.

Within this context, however, the four quadrants within the Paddocks area vary in their sense of enclosure and individual character.



The two southern quadrants, especially the south-eastern, are more open in feel with interrelationships with their immediate neighbours and the passing traffic of Daws Heath Road.

The northern quadrants in contrast feel more enclosed and separated from the adjoining built context. In particular, the north-eastern quadrant functions as a transitional space between the wider site and the Little Haven nature reserve.



Land Uses	Other Amenities	Housing Typologies	Residential Density
Residential	Play area Pedestrian and cycle routes	Predominantly detached houses and apartments, with some semi-detached houses and occasional small terraces along the spine street frontage	Lower density, average between 20 - 30 dwellings per hectare

Structure and legibility key

- Primary parcel frontage 
- Feature building - indicative location 
- Significant vista - indicative location 
- Focal space within development parcel 
- Landscaping creating setting for development parcels 



Landscape Structure

The Paddocks area has a strong existing landscape structure, with existing treed hedgerows dividing the area into four quadrants.

Within the northern quadrants, development is set back from their northern and eastern edge by additional landscaping. This area incorporates the necessary sustainable drainage provision within this area, together with an informal childrens' play area. It also allows for new planting to provide a gradual transition between the new development and the existing naturalistic landscape adjoining to the east.

Along the Daws Heath Road frontage, development is also set back, allowing for the retention of existing boundary planting (save where removal is necessary for the creation of sight lines associated with the new vehicular junction).

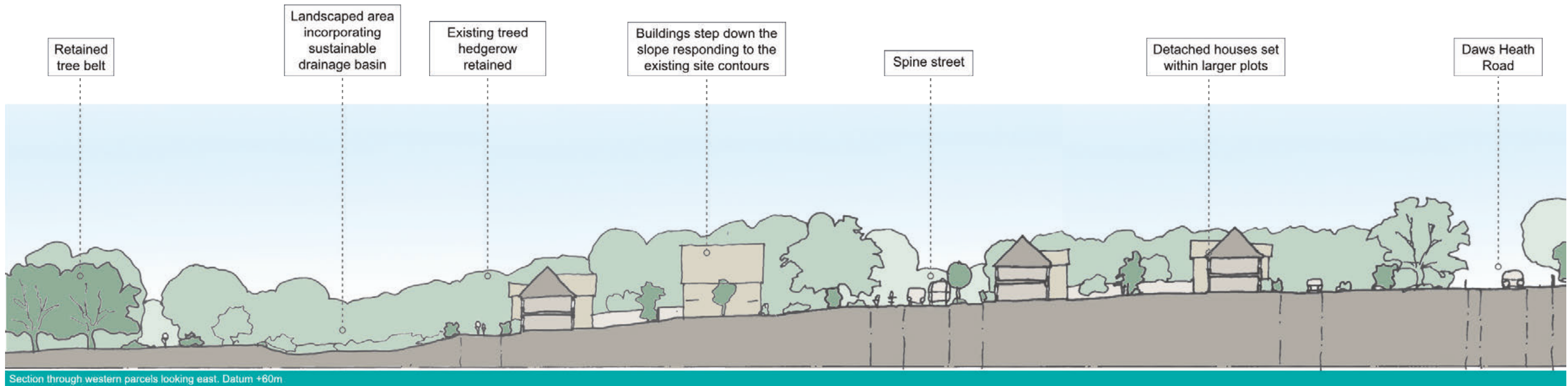
Layout Pattern

The dominant elements within The Paddocks are the linear landscape features which enclose the four quadrants within this area. Within this setting, development blocks here are generally laid out in small informal groups, accessed by small streets and lanes which lead off the Spine Street.

The layout of these groups varies in response to the size of the individual parcels, the access arrangements and the relationships with adjoining neighbours, whether existing properties or landscape elements. Many of these groups are largely composed of detached houses set within larger plots compared to the remainder of the wider layout. Within these areas, parking and servicing are usually on plot and accessed directly from the adjoining street.

The exception to this is the Spine Street. On entry into the site from Daws Heath Road this street is lined with trees and flanked on both sides with buildings laid out to address the junction and create a welcoming sense of arrival.

On arrival at the central hedgerow, the Spine Street turns west and the hedgerow forms its northern frontage. To the south, built frontage forms the outer face of the gentle curve back northwards into the remainder of the site. Along this frontage, buildings are interspersed with junctions giving access to lanes and small courtyards providing parking and servicing for these properties.



Building Typologies

The most common building typology within this area will be detached houses. Occasional semi-detached or terraced houses will be located here. Larger blocks of flats will be absent from this area, although occasional flats over garages or carports might be used.

Topography

The more informal and detached nature of the layout approach and built form here will respond well to the gently sloping topography here. The southern frontage to the Spine Street will need to gradually step down as it continues northwards.

Structure and Legibility

The Paddocks area is generally characterised not by continuous built frontages, but by the greater fragmentation of built form and the presence of extensive existing and new landscaping. Buildings here are generally seen within a landscaped setting.

Feature buildings are identified at key locations. These are:

- Facing the main arrival point into the wider site from Daws Heath Road;
- At key locations along the Spine Street, especially at junctions or adjoining landscaped corridors;
- At key corners of the development area along its northern edge;
- Within the centre of the north-eastern quadrant, at junctions within the layout.

Formality and Informality

The Paddocks area will have a consistent character which will be informal in approach, responding to its wider setting adjoining Daws Heath Road and the naturalistic landscape adjoining.



Character Precedent Images

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Detached houses creating informal frontage to landscaped open space



Tree lined street fronted by houses and incorporating landscaping and segregated footway and cycleway



Small group of larger houses accessed via shared surface lane



Access lane passing between trees and hedgerows providing arcadian setting



Larger detached houses with varied character and materials set within soft landscaping