

Land Off Lowe Hill Road, Wem

Introduction

Metacre Ltd. is progressing plans to develop up to 100 homes on land to the west of Lowe Hill Road in Wem. The site would create a sustainable development providing the local community with a range of high quality, high specification homes. The proposal will make an important contribution to local housing supply.

Purpose of this Event

Most of the proposed site is allocated for development as part of Shropshire Council's statutory development plan. This event is an opportunity to view and comment on the emerging proposals, in advance of an outline planning application submission in early 2020.

The outline planning application will seek to establish the principles for development at the site, which will inform the design of more detailed proposals. We are not, at this stage, designing the scheme in full and will not be seeking approval for the precise layout of the development or the appearance of the proposed houses.

Who are Metacre

Metacre Ltd. is a subsidiary of Northern Trust who are a privately owned company established in 1962. The company has a comprehensive track record in property investment, development, land management and regeneration and deliver development projects across multiple sectors, including housing and employment. In recent times it has secured planning permission for the development of some 4,500 new homes and is currently working on the delivery of a further 5,000 dwellings across 30 sites.

The company's objective in each and every case is to deliver high quality, sustainable developments that respond positively to their context area and create attractive places in which people want to live, work and spend their leisure time. Legacy is important to Northern Trust, as are the relationships that they build with local authorities, local people and stakeholders.



The Site

Wem is a market town located approximately 14.5km to the north of Shrewsbury and has approximately 5,400 residents. The proposed site is located off Lowe Hill Road on the western side of Wem. The site is approximately 6.26ha and irregular in shape, with an existing residential development to the south and east.

The site is predominantly used for agricultural purposes and comprises mainly poor semi-improved neutral grassland. The site is characteristic of the 'Settled Pastoral Farmlands' setting and forms part of the irregular field patterns found to the north, south and west of Wem.

The site boundary mostly comprises hedges which range in terms of overall quality. Some large mature trees are present on site and those in the southern field are remnants of former field boundaries.



View looking towards Lowe Hill Road and Pym's Road.



Three large mature trees in the south of the site



Defunct hedgerow along the eastern boundary

Planning Background

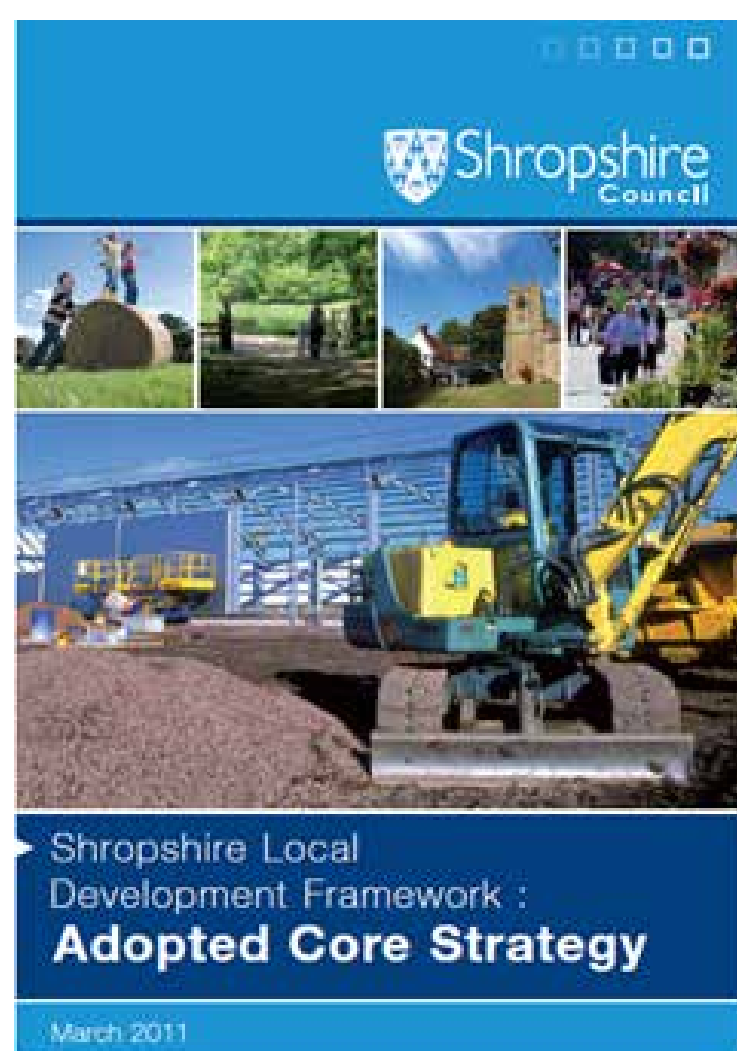
The Council's Core Strategy was adopted in 2011 and includes a commitment to deliver 27,500 new homes in the period to 2026. This includes 9,000 affordable homes. The land at Lowe Hill Road was promoted for development through the local development plan and, in particular, Shropshire Council's Sites Allocations and Management of Development (SAMDev) Plan.

The Shropshire Core Strategy has identified Wem as a Market Town / Key Centre and a sustainable location for balanced housing and employment development. In response to the Core Strategy requirement, the SAMDev Plan (adopted in 2015) allocates 'Land off Pym's Road' (WEM003) in Wem for 100 new dwellings and a possible community facility.

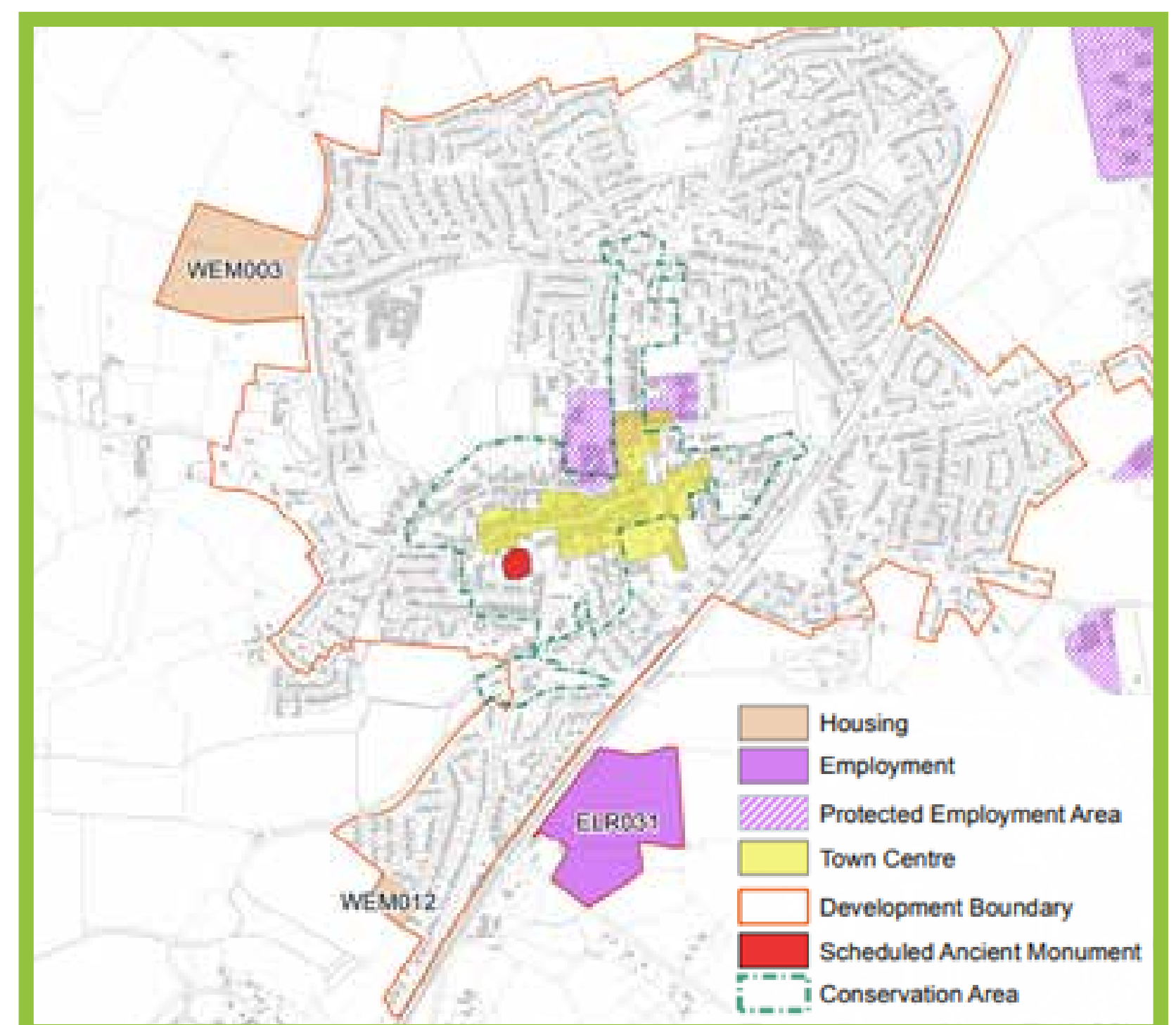
An outline planning application is being prepared to further establish the principle of development at the site. Due to the presence of below ground utilities infrastructure, the outline application will include additional land beyond the allocation boundary to ensure that the full 100 dwellings can be delivered.

The outline planning application will be submitted to Shropshire Council for consideration. Assuming that outline planning permission is granted, it will be necessary to develop and seek approval for more detailed proposals including the layout and design of the scheme.

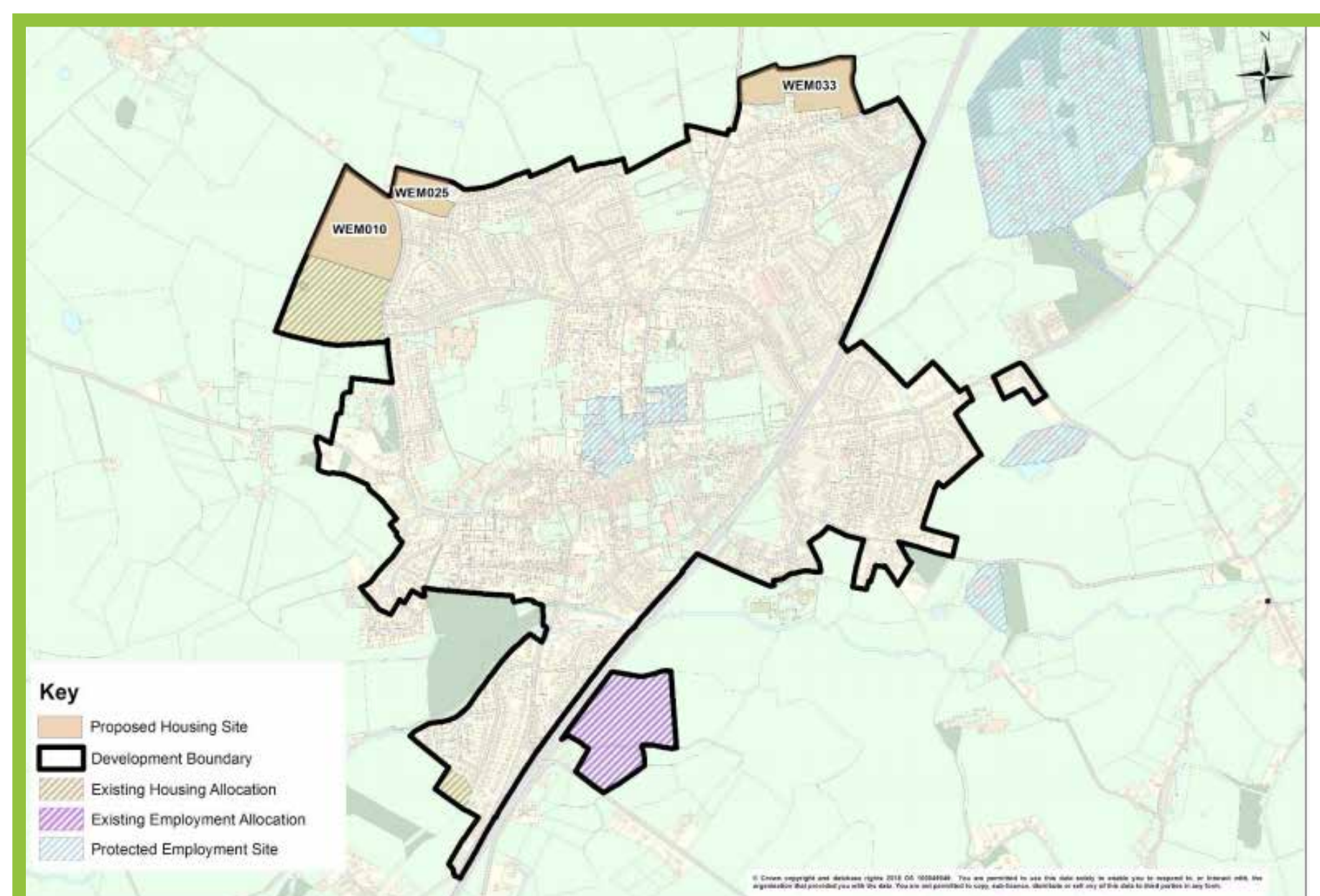
The Council is currently reviewing its development plan in order to plan for growth up to 2041. As part of the 'Shropshire Local Plan Review', the Council is considering whether to allocate further land to the north of the existing site allocation. This land does not form part of the current proposals but could represent a future phase of development.



Adopted
Core
Strategy (2011)
Front Cover



Adopted SAMDev Plan (2015)
Policies Map, Wem Extract



Shropshire Local Plan Review – Consultation on Preferred Sites
(November 2018)
Preferred Allocations and Preferred Allocations – Wem Extract



The diagram above shows how the development will sit
within the built context of Wem.

Constraints & Opportunities



Heritage

A Heritage Assessment by BWB Consulting has considered the potential impact of the development on both 'designated' and 'non-designated' heritage assets. This includes scheduled monuments, listed buildings and Registered Historic Parks and Gardens, as well as below ground archaeology.

There are no Scheduled Monuments or Listed Buildings within the site. There are no sites pertaining to the Prehistoric, Roman or Medieval period recorded within the site. There was a dearth of Prehistoric and Roman activity in the wider area but there is evidence for medieval activity in the surrounding landscape which is primarily linked to the development of Wem.

This continued into the post-medieval period and includes industrial activity, evidence for which has been found within the northern part of the site in the form of a brick works. Further assessment work will be carried out as the proposals are developed.

The impact of the development on the setting of nearby heritage assets, including the listed Old Rectory Hotel to the south, No 28 Chapel Street, is likely to be mitigated by the presence of intervening buildings and / or mature trees.

Flood risk and drainage

A Flood Risk Assessment by Wardell Armstrong has considered flood risk and surface water drainage. The site is located within Flood Zone 1 which means the risk of fluvial flooding is considered to be low. The proposed layout has been designed to accommodate the identified risk of flooding from overland flow.

The proposed surface water drainage strategy aims to ensure there is no increase in surface water flows from the development, ensuring that flood risk is not increased within the local area, and where possible, decreased due to the proposals. The system will restrict flows from the site to the 'greenfield run off rate' up to and including the 1 in 100 year event, plus a 40% allowance for climate change.

This will provide a betterment in extreme events by providing attenuation basins within the development. These basins also provide water quality and ecology benefits. To further mitigate flood risk, it is proposed to construct a swale around part of the perimeter of the site. This swale will capture off site flows, directing them to the outfall point, delaying the peak flow into the existing sewerage network, and providing betterment to water quality.

Constraints & Opportunities



Transport

The site access design and junction assessments have been undertaken by Curtins. The site access will be from Lowe Hill Road and will serve an internal road network. The access will make provision for pedestrians and cyclists to encourage sustainable modes of transport.

The proposed development has been discussed with Highways Officers at Shropshire Council and a Transport Assessment will be submitted with the outline planning application. The assessment includes a detailed traffic impact analysis of the following key junctions:

- Proposed Site Access junction;
- Lowe Hill Road/Pyms Road priority junction;
- Lowe Hill Road/B5063 priority junction; and
- B5063 High Street/Mill Street priority junction.

The Transport Assessment demonstrates that the junctions will be able to accommodate the additional traffic generated by the proposed development.

The masterplan will provide sustainable infrastructure providing connections to the remainder of Wem. This includes the installation of wide, well-lit footways into the development site and speed calming features in proximity to the Site Access and The Thomas Adams School.

Landscape and visual

The site is not located within any national or local nature, heritage or landscape designation. Within the wider study area there are a number of heritage and conservation landscape features present that are of relevance.

The undulating nature of the topography combined with the layers of vegetation on a relatively small, slightly irregular field pattern limit the views across the landscape towards the application site from the sensitive receptors. This includes users of the local public rights of way network.

The combination of the gently sloping, valley topography and scattered tree vegetation provides a level of visual enclosure to the site. From views to the west, the site will be assimilated into the build edge of Wem. The landscape proposals will consider the opportunity to screen the northern edge of the development further.

There is limited inter-visibility of features across the landscape. Generally the visual envelope is contained to almost directly adjacent to the site as there will be views available from the residents directly to the east of the Site on Lowe Hill Road.

Ecology

Ecological surveys were carried out during 2017 & 2018 to consider the presence and any impact upon protected species. The surveys found that the majority of the site is of limited ecological value.

It is anticipated that the mature trees within the southern field and in the hedgerows to the northwest of the site will be retained. A large dead ash tree present will be removed for safety reasons.

The protected species recorded were bats, badgers and great crested newts. There were no signs of bats roosting on site although bats use the land for feeding and commuting to a small extent. There are no badger setts on site but signs of badger activity were noted along the site margins.

A small population of great crested newts use the pond in the field to the south. A trapping and exclusion scheme will be implemented, coupled with a habitat creation exercise, including two new ponds, to compensate for any losses of habitat.

The provision of nesting boxes on retained trees and the retention of the hedgerows coupled with new landscaping proposals will ensure there is no net loss of bird breeding habitat. The proposed landscaping scheme will provide additional habitat for bats, badgers and great crested newts. There will therefore be no likely residual impact upon protected or otherwise important species or habitat resulting from proposals to develop the site.



Indicative Site Layout

The plan below shows the proposed residential development for up to 100 new homes. These homes will be accessed from a single point of vehicular access from Lowe Hill Road. Public open space areas, biodiversity enhancements and boundary planting are also offered as part of an attractive, well connected proposal.



Design Conclusions

The main considerations that will need to be incorporated into the design are:

- Maximise connectivity, there is a potential & existing pedestrian link to the north east, these are both highlighted on the diagram adjacent. These links should run through green corridors and link centrally within the development
- Create a series of multi-functional and well connected green spaces that are safe and accessible to all
- Consider the developments relationship with existing neighbouring properties
- Ensure walking distances to bus stops are as short as possible.
- Retain high quality existing trees within the site
- Consider the relationship with existing trees and design the scheme to respond positively with them so that they are integrated into the development
- Proposed houses should overlook any pedestrian links to maximise natural surveillance

The outline planning application will include additional land beyond the western boundary of the existing site allocation. This is necessary due to the presence of the gas main the southern part of the site, and will enable the 100 dwellings identified in the development plan to be delivered.

In accordance with the SAMDev Plan, the masterplan also reserves land for a possible community facility. The form of the facility has not yet been determined and will be considered further in the light of consultation responses received.

