

STANWAY RAILWAY SIDINGS



DEVELOPMENT BRIEF

ADOPTED APRIL 2011

1. INTRODUCTION

Development Vision

The Council envisages that the Stanway Sidings Site will be developed to provide a high quality housing scheme that respects the unique character of the site and takes full advantage of the opportunities to integrate the scheme with the existing natural features.

Background

The site comprises former railway sidings that are no longer required in connection with rail transport. In common with other redundant railway land, the site is now owned by the BRB (Residuary) Ltd, which is tasked with the disposal of the land. The site is therefore available for development and in the summer of 2010 was offered for sale.

The Site

The site is located to the west of Colchester, within the predominantly suburban context of Stanway and Eight Ash Green. The site is triangular in shape, and is bounded by Halstead Road to the south; Iron Latch Lane to the east; and the main east coast railway line to the north. The site has a gross site area of 5.85 ha. The entire southern boundary and the majority of the eastern boundary fall within a large group Tree Preservation Order 23/88.

Purpose and Structure of the brief

The purpose of this document is to illustrate the aspirations that the Council has for the development of this site and to guide potential developers in bringing forward a suitable scheme for the development of the site.

The document is structured as follows. The policy context in which any planning applications for the development will be considered is set out in Section 2. This is followed in Section 3 by a detailed description of the site together with an analysis of the unique characteristics of the site. Section 4 sets out the design response to the characteristics of the site and seeks to establish some of the design principles that will guide the development of the site. The document concludes in Section 5 with considerations relating to the delivery of the development.

2. POLICY CONTEXT

Applications for the development of this site will be assessed against National Planning Policies and Guidance, as well as Colchester's Local

Development Framework. The Stanway Parish Plan and Design Statement will also be a material consideration.

The local planning policies that will be relevant to the consideration of any planning application for the development of this site are set out in the Colchester Borough Core Strategy; the Colchester Borough Development Policies DPD and the Colchester Borough Site Allocations DPD. The most relevant policies in those documents are as follows:

Core Strategy

SD2- Delivering Facilities and Infrastructure

H2 – Housing Density

H3 – Housing Diversity

H4 – Affordable Housing

UR2 – Built Design and Character

PR1 – Open Space

PR2 – People friendly Streets

ER1 – Energy, Resources, Waste, Water and Recycling

Development Policies

DP1 – Design and Amenity

DP2 – Health Assessments

DP12 – Dwelling Standards

DP16 – Open Space

DP17 – Accessibility and Access

DP19 – Parking Standards

DP20 – Flood Risk and Management of Surface Water Drainage

DP21 – Nature Conservation and Protected Lanes

Site Allocations DPD

Policy SA H1, which identifies Stanway Railway Sidings as a housing site.

The Stanway Parish Plan and Design Statement

The Stanway Parish Plan and Design Statement was published in February 2011. The Parish Plan sets out the community aspirations for Stanway, particularly in relation to the character and design of development.

3. SITE AND AREA ANALYSIS

3.1 This section provides an analysis of the unique character of the site, including the area beyond the immediate boundaries of the site.

3.2 Land Ownership and Tenure

The site is currently owned by the BRB (Residuary) Ltd.



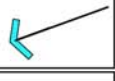
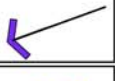






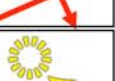

3.5 Existing Land Uses and activity

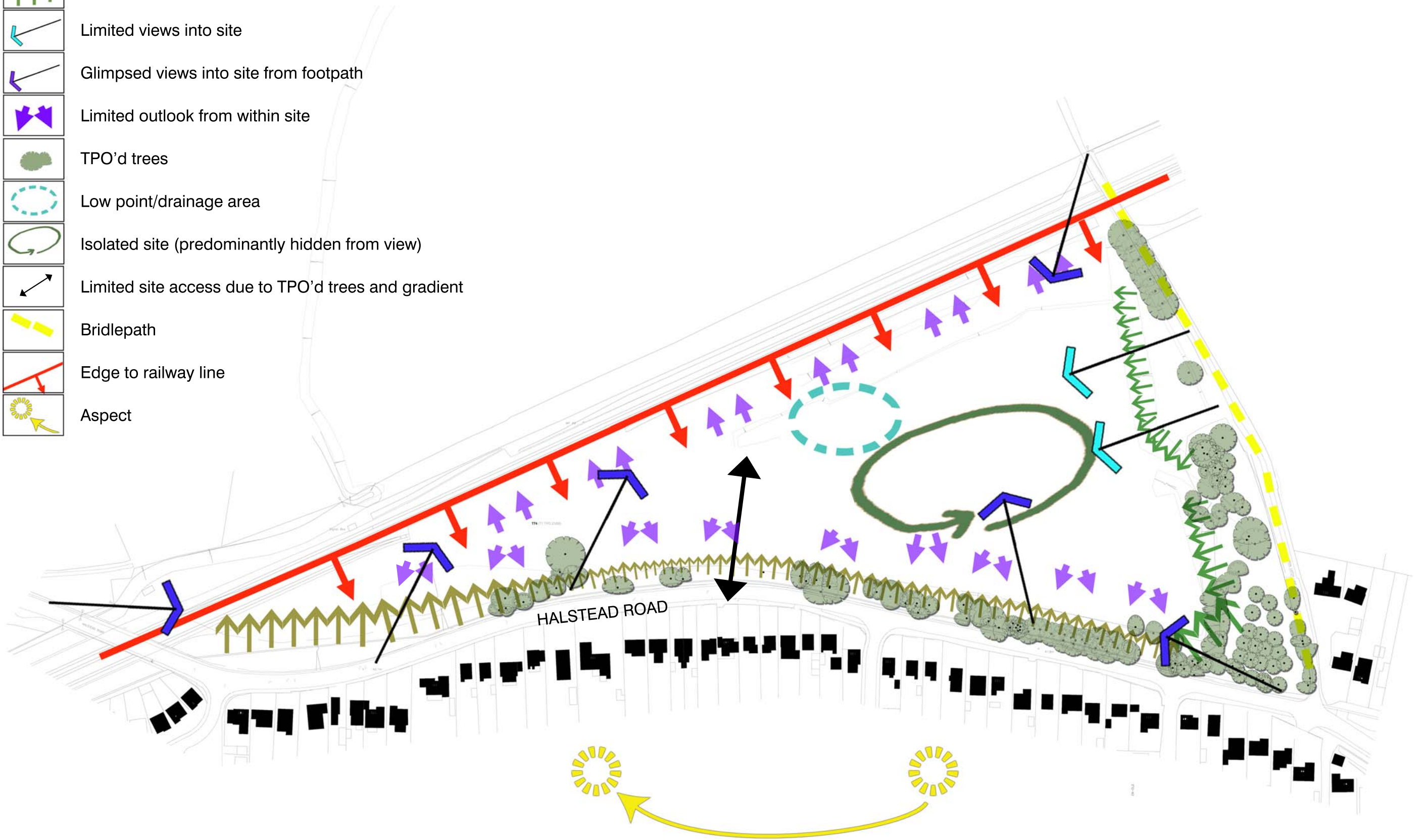
The site was formerly used as railway sidings, although that use ceased some years ago. The site is fenced on all boundaries, and currently no uses or activities take place on the site. Due to the period of inactivity since the site was last used as railway sidings, the site has become overgrown. The site may therefore be best described as vacant brownfield land.

The area adjoining the site comprises residential development to the south, east and west, with open countryside to the north.

To the south and east of the site, Halstead Road is characterised by a ribbon of residential development comprising mostly detached houses and bungalows. These properties exhibit a wide variety of styles and external appearance, with no particular style predominating. This pattern of residential development continues westwards, beyond the boundary of the site.

KEY

-  Significant level change (4-6m)
-  Level change/embankment
-  Limited views into site
-  Glimpsed views into site from footpath
-  Limited outlook from within site
-  TPO'd trees
-  Low point/drainage area
-  Isolated site (predominantly hidden from view)
-  Limited site access due to TPO'd trees and gradient
-  Bridlepath
-  Edge to railway line
-  Aspect



Iron Latch Lane is a single track lane that bridges over the railway line towards a wooded area on the north side of the railway. There is a bridleway along the length of the lane.

The northern boundary of the site adjoins the main railway line between London and Colchester, and beyond to Ipswich and Norwich. The land on the opposite side of the railway line is an area of established woodland.

Apart from a small shop in Eight Ash Green, there are no local facilities within walking distance of the site, although the major retail development at Tollgate is relatively close.

The site forms part of the Iron Latch Lane Woods and Meadow Local Wildlife Site (LoWS). This LoWS is split into three parts; the largest block of habitat is split by the railway line and includes this site. This block comprises predominantly Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*), Silver Birch (*Betula pendula*) and Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) wood with Willows (*Salix* spp.) in the wetter areas. Higher free draining ground has Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) and Broom (*Cytisus scoparius*) scrub. The drier slopes support Sheep's Sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*), Wood Sage (*Teucrium scorodonia*) and Heath Speedwell in open situations not dominated by Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*). The wetter valleys have ferns scattered under dense shading canopy, including Male-fern (*Dryopteris filix-mas*) and Broad Buckler-fern (*D. dilatata*).

3.5. Constraints

There are a number of constraints that will affect the development of this site. The main constraints are identified below.

Ground contamination

As a result of the former use, the site is known to be contaminated. The precise extent of that contamination is yet to be confirmed, although it is likely that the site will require significant remediation before the land is restored to a standard appropriate for residential development.

Topography

There are significant and abrupt differences in levels between that part of the site immediately adjoining Halstead Road/Iron Latch Lane and the remainder of the site. This difference in levels (approximately 4 metres) not only has implications for the land take required to achieve vehicular access at acceptable grades and for determining the most suitable point for vehicular access to the site, it may also have structural implications associated with the development.

Moreover, although the remainder of the site is relatively flat, it does also slope slightly towards the north and west, which therefore has implications for the drainage strategy associated with any residential development of the site.

Protected Trees

The entire southern boundary adjoining Halstead Road and much of the eastern boundary adjoining Iron Latch Lane fall within a group Tree Preservation Order 23/88. This Order protects a range of mostly indigenous species of mature deciduous broadleaf trees, which make an important contribution to the character of the site.

Ecology

The site forms part of the Iron Latch Lane Woods and Meadows Local Wildlife Site. .

Ecological surveys for Stanway Sidings were undertaken from 2007. Surveys included;

- Updated ecological constraints survey (2007)
- Japanese knotweed survey (2008)
- Great crested newt and reptile survey (2008)
- Receptor site surveys including great crested newt and reptiles (2009)

Constraints included the presence of a medium population of great crested newts and small population of reptiles. These populations are fragmented and isolated. Suitable habitat for nesting birds and bats is also present within the site.

Extensive areas of New Zealand pygmy weed (*Crassula helmsii*) were identified which is an invasive plant species included on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

Surveys have also been carried out of the 20 ha woodland to the north of Stanway Sidings. Only populations of smooth newts and a small population of reptiles were identified on this site. New Zealand pygmy weed was not identified. At present, this site offers suitable habitats for immediate translocation of amphibians and reptiles with the potential for enhancements to ensure longevity of the population.

Drainage

The low level of the developable area within the site and the gradual slope of the site towards the north and west create significant constraints in terms of the drainage strategy for the site.

Railway noise

The northern boundary of the site adjoins the main east coast railway, with significant passenger and freight traffic during the day and freight traffic at night.

Summary of the site constraints

Although the site has a gross area of 5.85 ha, the constraints identified above are likely to reduce the developable area of the site. Further, this developable area is likely to require remediation of contaminated land and to require sustainable drainage solutions. The Council will expect these constraints not to impact on the quality of the final scheme.

The constraints identified above are shown on the accompanying Constraints Plan.

3.6 Movement and permeability

Pedestrians

The land is privately owned and is fenced on all boundaries. Consequently, there is currently no public pedestrian access to the site itself, although Iron Latch Lane is used by pedestrians and is a bridleway and public right of way 149 commences at the railway bridge on Halstead Road. Private access to the site is possible from a gate on Iron Latch Lane.

Cycling

There are currently no cycle routes through the site.

Public transport

The site is on a bus route to the town centre, with three bus stops on Halstead Road and a further stop the junction with Halstead Road and London Road, with two stops in each direction within 400 metres of the site. The Halstead Road bus stop is served by First Bus route 88 – frequency every 2 hours, serving Colchester Town Centre, Halstead and Great Yeldham. The stop at the Halstead Road/London Road junction is served every 10mins by routes 65, 70, 71, providing access to, Marks Tey, Braintree and Chelmsford as well as the local Tollgate Retail Park. Network Colchester route 5 also serves the Halstead Road/London Road junction every 60mins.

The nearest railway station is Marks Tey, approximately 2.5 miles to the south east, with regular services to London, Chelmsford, Colchester, Ipswich and Norwich.

Vehicular access

There is currently no vehicular access to the site.

Parking

There is no car parking on the site.

3.7 Urban Design appraisal

Landscape and topography

The key feature of the topography of the site is the significant difference between ground level on the site and ground level on Halstead Road and Iron Latch Lane. This difference in ground level, together with the protected trees along the southern and eastern perimeter, ensures that the site is practically invisible from Halstead Road or Iron Latch Lane. This applies equally to views into the site and views from within the site.

Consequently, with no significant or visible context for the built form, there is an opportunity to create a unique development having its own sense of space, based upon a design that sympathetically integrates an individual architectural approach with an enhanced woodland environment.

Continuity and enclosure

The site is fully enclosed on two boundaries and the railway forms the third boundary, and as such forms a defined entity. The character of the site is significantly different from that of the adjoining residential development on Halstead Road and this, together with the difference in ground levels, results in no continuity between this site and adjoining sites.

Scale and massing

Although the site itself is devoid of any buildings, the surrounding residential development is a combination of single-storey and two-storey, with in some case accommodation within the roofspace. However, as indicated above, the lack of visual connectivity between the site and the surrounding residential development facilitates deviation from the prevailing scale and massing in the surrounding residential area.

Character and distinctiveness

The distinctiveness of the site is derived from its topography and tree cover. By contrast, the defining characteristic of the surrounding residential development is the lack of cohesive design and appearance

of the individual dwellings. Consequently, the character of the surrounding area should not define the character of any development on the site, which should be properly defined by the topography and tree cover.

Biodiversity

Following the cessation of the use as railway sidings, the site has evolved into a post industrial habitat and forms part of the Iron Latch Lane and Meadow Local Wildlife Site. The site is known to provide habitat for Greater Crested Newts and for nesting birds, as well as for a wide variety of flora and fauna. The Council will expect a complete range of mitigation and biodiversity enhancement measures to be incorporated within the design proposals. The topography of the site together with the presence of protected trees on the southern and eastern perimeters and woodland to the north provides an opportunity for mitigation and enhancement measures.

Railway

Noise and vibration from the railway line will need to be mitigated.

Woodland

In the previous planning permission on this site a substantial area of woodland to the north of the railway line was to be given over to an appropriate custodian to be managed as a nature reserve. The Council will expect a long-term management plan for the woodland, including an element of public access, to form part of the proposals. The Council would accept this as part of the open space provision.

4. DESIGN RESPONSE

This section responds to the specific site characteristics, constraints and opportunities identified above and seeks to guide the future development of the site to ensure that a high quality environment is created. An indicative site layout to show how the site characteristics, constraints and opportunities might be accommodated on the site is appended at the end of this Development Brief.

4.1 Appropriate uses

The Council's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) identifies this site as being suitable for housing, and the site is included as such in the Council's Site Allocations DPD. Consequently, the site forms part of the Council's projected housing supply and it follows that housing is the most appropriate use for the site.

One of the key characteristics of this site is the number of constraints to development imposed by the topography, protected trees, ecology and drainage solutions. The various constraints to development on this site add significantly to the abnormal costs involved in bringing forward any development on the site.

In considering sites of this size for housing, the Council would normally expect ancillary uses to be included within a redevelopment scheme, including uses such as nurseries and an element of ancillary retail. However, the Council recognises that the inclusion of such uses detracts from the overall viability of residential schemes and that, where abnormal costs associated with the development of the site are high, the inclusion of such uses could prevent a residential scheme from being deliverable.

The Council therefore considers that it would be preferable to secure a high quality wholly residential scheme on the site, which includes appropriate level of affordable housing, provides sufficient open space and retains the protected trees in an appropriate setting, rather than seek to include secondary uses that would adversely affect the quality of the residential scheme. The Council also recognises that this site represents an important contribution to the projected housing supply and considers that the benefit of securing these new units justifies the omission of other uses from a residential scheme.

4.2 *Quantum of development*

The Council's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) indicates that this site may be able to accommodate up to 175 dwellings. However, the various constraints to development associated with this site reduce the developable area and a scheme proposing that number of dwellings may not be appropriate in this setting. Consequently, the Council accepts that the need to accommodate development in a scheme that integrates sympathetically into an enhanced woodland environment may result in a scheme coming forward that provides fewer dwellings than that contemplated in the SHLAA. The Council therefore considers that site can accommodate a minimum of 120 dwellings and a maximum of 140 dwellings.

4.3 *Affordable housing*

The Council will expect 35% of the total residential provision to be affordable housing. Developers are referred to the Council's SPD on Affordable Housing and asked to note that the Council would seek a ratio of 80% rented and 20% Intermediate tenure housing on the site.. The Council will expect any variation from the Council's SPD requirements to be fully justified.

4.4 *Community*

Any scheme will be expected to produce a balanced community with a range of house and flat sizes.

4.5 Establish a strong sense of identity

The topography of the site, together with the protected trees around the southern and eastern perimeter, ensure that the site is practically invisible from Halstead Road or Iron Latch Lane. In addition, there is no prevalent style of dwelling in the ribbon of development along the south side of Halstead Road.

Consequently, with no significant or visible context for the built form, there is an opportunity to create a unique development having its own sense of space, based upon a design that sympathetically integrates an individual architectural approach with an enhanced woodland environment.

In order to establish a strong sense of identity, it will be necessary to retain as many of the protected trees around the perimeter of the site as possible and to integrate the development within that setting. Opportunities should be taken to enhance the woodland setting, which is a key part of the character of the site. It would also be desirable to retain, and enhance where required, the trees adjoining the railway. Not only will this provide a sense of continuity with the woodland on the opposite side of the railway, it will also act as a buffer against railway noise.

4.6 Open space

Communal open space within the scheme can be created in and adjoining the woodland area and around the edge of the site. The Open Space should be located and designed to cater for all occupiers of the scheme, and should include a children's play area (LEAP).

The Council envisages that 10% of the net developable area would be provided as Public Open Space, although the Council would accept use of part of the woodland to the north of the railway line as open space provision.

Private open space should be provided as part of the development, although the scheme should be designed so that protected trees are not located within private gardens. Rear gardens backing onto TPO land are discouraged unless suitable alternative access is achieved to the TPO land.

4.7 Vehicular access

Vehicular access should be from Halstead Road. In determining the best point for access, it will be necessary to balance the loss of protected trees with considerations of highway safety and achieving an

acceptable grade for the access road. The need to achieve an acceptable grade for the access road will also be a significant factor in determining the land take required to achieve a satisfactory access and therefore the layout of the residential development. All roads should meet Essex County Council standards.

Levels of parking will need to meet the standards contained within the Parking Standards Supplementary Planning Document.

4.8 Creating a network of accessible routes

The difference in ground level between Halstead Road and the developable area of the site will also present challenges in establishing pedestrian links between the site and existing pedestrian routes. Nonetheless, consideration should be given to providing a pedestrian link with Iron Latch Lane as part of any proposed development.

Within the site itself, the layout should facilitate pedestrian movement across the site and to provide easy access to areas of communal open space.

4.9 Biodiversity

The Council will expect a range of mitigation and biodiversity enhancement measures to be incorporated within any design proposals.

Potential mitigation includes;

- Preparation of the 20 ha receptor site. This includes habitat creation for amphibians and reptiles including the creation of 5-7 new ponds and hibernacula.
- Translocation of Great Crested Newts under a Natural England Development Licence to the receptor site.
- Translocation of all other amphibians and reptiles to receptor site in the woodland to the north of the site.
- Update constraints survey for all protected flora and fauna in 2011 to identify any new constraints and check existing conditions.
- Bat surveys of Oak trees along the fringe of the site in 2011.
- Removal of New Zealand pygmy weed by a qualified contractor.
- Report with results, further mitigation, timescales and management plan for development and receptor site

4.10 Railway Noise

The Council will expect suitable mitigation of railway noise, vibration and other environmental impacts associated with the railway to be included within any residential development of the site, possibly through a combination of layout and maintaining/enhancing the existing

planting along the southern boundary of the site, mounding or the erection of acoustic fencing.

4.11 Minimising environmental resource use and waste

It is expected that sustainable design and construction measures will be incorporated throughout the site. The Council's aspiration is that every residential unit within the development will be constructed to a minimum of level 3 under the Code for Sustainable Homes. In the event that the developer can demonstrate that there are sound reasons why this aspiration cannot be met in relation to every residential unit on the site, the Council will expect a sustainability statement to be submitted with the proposals outlining how sustainable design and construction measures have been incorporated into the proposal.

Unless, following an adequate assessment, soil conditions and/or engineering feasibility dictates otherwise, the Council will require sustainable urban drainage solutions to be employed in devising the drainage strategy for the site.

5. DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

This section describes how the development is to proceed and be delivered on the ground.

5.1 Pre-application discussion

In view of the constraints to the development of this site, the Council considers that pre-applications will be an important part of the development process in respect of this site. Developers are therefore encouraged to take advantage of the Council's pre-application advice procedures at an early stage.

5.2 Planning application and potential planning obligations

Any planning application for the residential development of this site should be accompanied by a range of supporting documents, including:

- Design & Access Statement
- Topographical Survey
- Transport Assessment
- Arboriculture Report
- Ecology Survey and mitigation proposals
- Ground Quality Assessment/ Contamination report
- Drainage Strategy
- Noise Survey










The Council has adopted a development team protocol for prioritising Section 106 Agreements to make the scheme acceptable in planning terms. The team will meet to discuss any scheme and its potential contributions once a preliminary enquiry has been made that has enough information for consideration, this is likely to include contributions arising from our SPDs together with highways, education and community facilities. The level of contributions required should be commensurate with the scheme for which planning permission is sought, taking into account the abnormal costs associated with developing this site. In establishing a fair and reasonable contribution the team may request an open book approach with the developer in which a financial appraisal is submitted and reviewed.

5.2 *Site preparation*

No work will commence until adequate measures will be taken to safeguard protected species and nesting birds on the site including, if appropriate, the relocation of protected species to alternative suitable habitats.

The Council will also expect ground conditions on the site to be restored to a condition suitable for residential development before construction commences.

KEY

-  Landscaped areas along embankment edge, railway and accommodating TPO'd trees
-  Indicative access point
-  Indicative street tree planting along key access road to link into existing trees and landscape
-  Key landscape space
-  Gateway space - arrival into site
-  Permeable links through site connecting to existing network
-  Indicative block layout
-  Edge defined by built form and woodland
-  Frontages to provide overlooking landscape along embankment edge

