

Northleach with Easington Neighbourhood Plan

SITE ASSESSMENTS REPORT

22nd December 2015

Neil Homer, Planning Director, RCOH LTD

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an assessment of three sites to evidence their allocation for development in the Pre Submission Neighbourhood Plan for Northleach with Easington (NENP).

1.2 The sites are:

- A. Land south of West End, Northleach for a small housing scheme and improvements to the western settlement edge. (2013 SHLAA ref N12C – part and N12B - part)
- B. Land adjoining The Old Coalyard Industrial Estate, Northleach for an employment, housing and public car parking scheme. (2013 SHLAA ref N13C and N13A - part)
- C. Land south of the Primary School, Town Row, Northleach for an extension to school buildings and play area.

1.3 Each site is shown on the plan below. The sites have been identified for an allocation in addition to two sites on the eastern edge of the town, which the local planning authority - Cotswold District Council (CDC) – is proposing to allocate in its forthcoming District Local Plan. The NENP does not intend to duplicate those allocations.

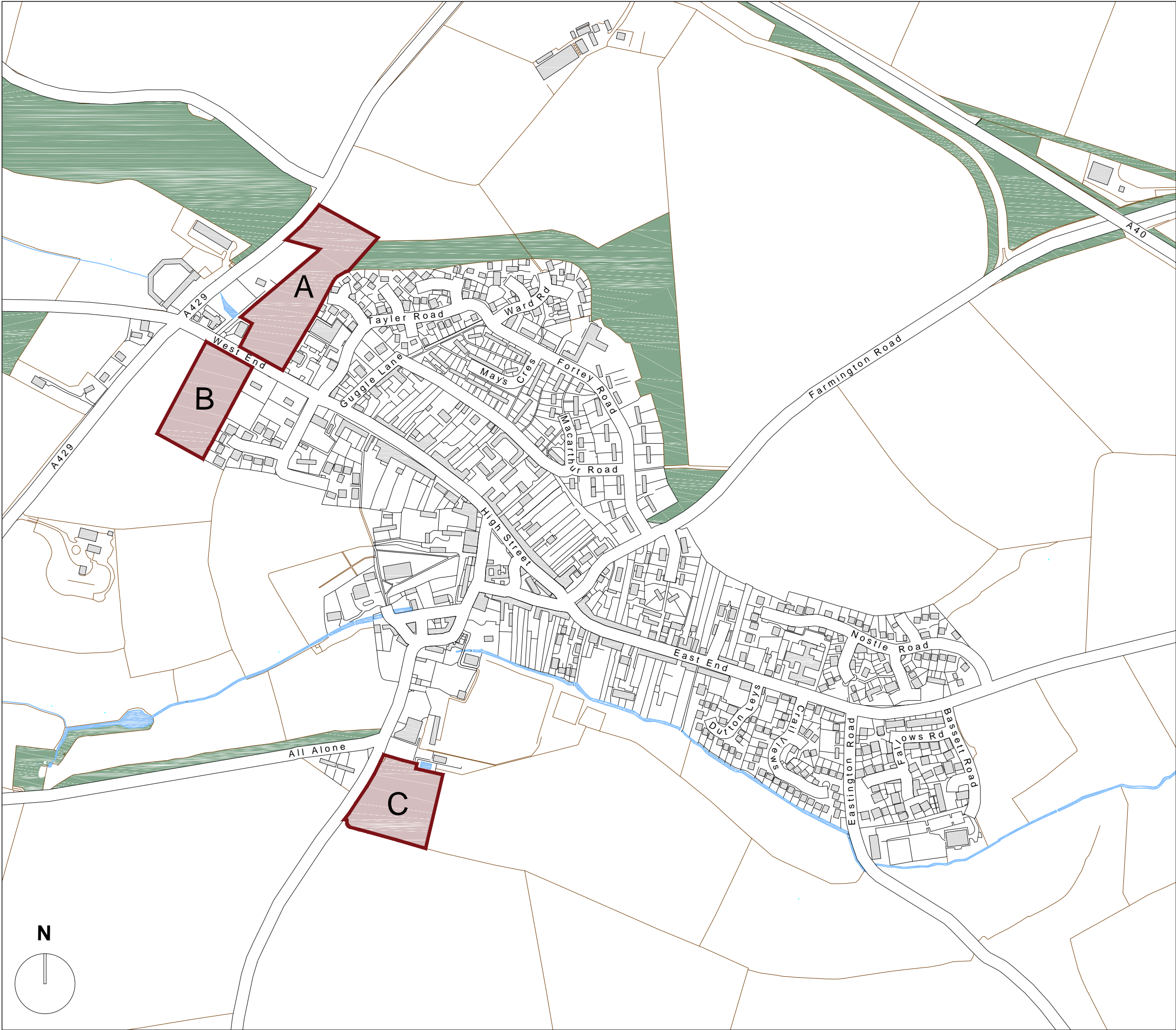
1.4 In respect of these additional sites, CDC has indicated (at a meeting with the Steering Group in April 2015) that further evidence is required to support their allocation, especially in respect of their potential effects on heritage assets and on the landscape and scenic beauty of the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). This report is intended to provide that evidence and its initial conclusions were discussed with CDC officers at a meeting with members of the group and RCOH on 19 November.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 The brief is to prepare a report that defines the potential heritage and landscape effects of development on each of the three sites and the mitigation measures to avoid any harmful effects.

2.2 The background evidence is: the CDC Land around Key Settlements Study (2014), the CDC SHLAA (2014), the Cotswold Design Code (2000), the draft policies in relation to each site of the NENP from September 2015 and the draft NENP design guidance.

2.3 The tasks are:



- Sites**
- A** Land adjoining the Old Coal Yard Industrial Estate
 - B** Land South of West End
 - C** Land off Town Row

-	--/--/2015
-	-
Rev.	Date.
	Detail

Notes:

Do not scale from drawing - all dimensions to be confirmed on site.

Drawing to be read in conjunction with other drawings and documents scheduled on rCOH Ltd Project Issue Sheets as apt.

Report all errors/ omissions to rCOH Ltd.

Drawings and Designs therein remain property of rCOH Ltd unless ownership /licence transfer confirmed in writing by rCOH Ltd, and no use direct or otherwise permitted except upon such confirmation.

rCOH Ltd trading as

rCOH

© COPYRIGHT ASSERTED

T > 020 8977 2175
E > rCOH@rCOH.co.uk
W > www.rCOH.co.uk

PROJECT > 4013_025 Northleach

DRAWING > Site Plan

DWG No. 4013_025_001	Drawn By:	KL
Rev. -	QA Check:	---
Scale > 1:5000 @ A3	Date:	16/12/2015
DWG STATUS	Sketch	X
	Submission	-
	Tender	-
	Contract	-
	Construction	-

- i. Define the significance of the contribution each site makes to the historic character and scenic beauty of the Conservation Area and other defined heritage assets and of the AONB landscape respectively (using the Historic England 'Site Allocations' guidance of October 2015 and the former English Heritage 'Understanding Place' guidance of 2012)
- ii. Define a proposal for each site comprising a parameters plan, which establishes the principles of site layout, building orientation and building heights
- iii. Assess how each site proposal affects the defined significance and contribution by testing task ii against the conclusions of task i, identifying any necessary mitigation measures to avoid harmful effects
- iv. Provide a summary justification for each site proposal
- v. Accompany the written text with an illustrated parameters plan, site photos and indicative photo montage for key public views as necessary

2.4 This work is not intended to have the same scope and depth of a Heritage Statement or of a Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment, as they are not necessary at this stage (they may be for planning applications in due course).

2.5 For clarity, it is also not the purpose of this report to justify the proposed allocation of these sites in the Neighbourhood Plan. The Sustainability Appraisal and Basic Conditions Statement of the Plan will demonstrate how any residual harm to heritage assets or to the scenic beauty of the AONB is outweighed by the various social and economic benefits of the proposals.

3. SITE ASSESSMENT: LAND SOUTH OF WEST END

Location and Description

3.1 The site is located in the Cotswolds AONB on the western edge of the town on the southern side of the West End and A429 Fosse Way junction at the entrance to the town. It is part of a larger field and the area being considered is 1.01 hectares adjoining the existing settlement boundary.

3.2 It has a north-east to south-west orientation with a slope of approximately 15m up from the West End road. The site has an open aspect from West End with views of the ridgeline, the treed hedgeline along Fosse Way and housing adjoining the eastern side of the site.

3.3 Along the Fosse Way the views are incidental between gaps in the hedgerow and tree belt and they are dominated by the housing on Shepherd's Way, which adjoins the eastern side of the site. There is no existing vehicle access off either West End or the Fosse Way. The site frontage along West End is unrestricted by overground services and has good visibility. There is a row of mature street trees opposite the site along West End within the pavement verge.

3.4 The housing adjacent to the site is served off Bettenson Rise and Shepherds Way and there is a planning consent in place for the redevelopment of both the plot immediately adjacent to the site fronting onto West End and the open plot behind to replace the existing house with 9 new dwellings (known as 'The Chequers').

Assessing Special Interest of Heritage Assets

3.5 The land partially adjoins the westernmost boundary of the Northleach Conservation Area, which follows the line of the carriageway of West End. There are no listed buildings in close proximity to the site. The Old Prison (Grade II), now the offices of the Cotswold AONB, lies on the other side of the A429 Fosse Way and this site lies beyond its setting. The two listed buildings at the Old Coalyard are some distance to the west of the site along West End and it does not therefore form part of their settings.

3.6 The primary character of the Conservation Area is derived from the many historic buildings within the town centre and that lie along West End and East End as they extend away from the town centre.

3.7 The Conservation Area boundary stops some way to the east of the site on the southern side of the town but extends further west to the north of the site to include, in sequence, the Old Coalyard (including two Grade II listed buildings), an open space and a telephone exchange building that lie opposite the site on West End. Although the commercial buildings at the Old Coalyard and the exchange are of historic interest, being a part of the town for many years and being rural in scale and character, none make a significant contribution to defining the character of the Conservation Area as they are isolated from the core of the town centre and are of a different scale and function to those of the town centre.

3.8 The current open space that lies partially opposite the site presents a gap between the Old Coalyard and the exchange building (and a modern housing scheme at the junction of the Fosse Way) and affords a view north to the wider AONB landscape that surrounds the town. However, the gap is not appreciated as such, given the two lines of mature trees along its frontage; one line of beeches and birches within the site boundary and the other a line of limes within the carriageway. During the months when these trees are in leaf, the gap is hidden from West End and makes no contribution to defining an edge to the Conservation Area. During the winter months, the partial exposure of the rear or gable ends of modern houses and commercial buildings on Midwinter Road in views from West End makes no significant contribution to defining the historic character of town. Nor does the land contribute to defining the historic character of the listed buildings at the Old Coalyard as they cannot be enjoyed.

3.9 The south-western edge of the Conservation Area, which wraps around St Peters & St Pauls Church and its cluster of buildings in that part of the town centre, is partially visible from the site some 300m to its south east. Only the church tower is visible over the ridge line above and to the east of the site; the remainder of that part of the Area is obscured by modern housing development on Shepherds Way (and will be further obscured by the consented scheme at The Chequers). For that reason, the Conservation Area cannot be appreciated or enjoyed from the site.

3.10 Similarly, the historic core of buildings in the Conservation Area begins beyond Guggle Lane and Fire Station, some 150-200m east of the site. Although West End has a straight alignment from the site to this area, the distance between the two and the lack of any sense of enclosure or punctuation in the streetscene result in the area beyond this historic core making no significant contribution to the anticipation, enjoyment or understanding of the historic core until it is almost reached in views from the west.

3.11 However, when appreciated as a whole, rather than simply the Conservation Area, the land does contribute to defining the setting of the town in the AONB landscape. There are long views towards the town along a short distance of the A429 from the road junction with West End for some 30m south as glimpses through the mature tree line and hedges. The separation of the town from the A429 to the south of West End allows for a wider appreciation of the town in its setting.

3.12 That said, this contribution would be greater if there was a corresponding open gap between the A429 and the town north of West End and if there was no development to the immediate west of the A429. The fact that there is well-established development around three sides of the crossroads and along the north of West End does give the effect of creating a sense of arrival to the town at this point and not some distance further along West End, thus considerably reducing the effect of separation. A further weakness, which is acknowledged in the District Council's Landscape Character Assessment report, is the nature of the development at Shepherds Way/Bettenson Rise. Its appearance on the edge of the town detracts from the character of the historic core that lies beyond by hiding views of the church tower and of other historic buildings that surround the church.

3.13 In summary, the contribution of site to the significance of the setting of the Northleach Conservation Area is very small. It is remote from the historic core of town centre buildings, the cumulative value of which defines Northleach more than any other feature. By contrast, that part of the Conservation Area closest to the site makes only a very small contribution to defining that character.

Assessing Special Interest of AONB

3.14 This site lies within the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) comprises open farmland which rises up the valley slope to the south of West End with potential views to the south limited by the valley crest which is also crowned by coniferous tree planting. There is an established hedgerow alongside the A429 which blocks views across the site from the west. There is no other significant vegetation on site. The roadside edge fronting West End is defined by a grass verge with traditional low Cotswold stone wall defining the site boundary.

Development Implications:

3.15 A small development scheme on the frontage of West End and adjoining the present developed boundary would be well below the ridgeline and would represent a logical western extension of existing built form towards the A429. But, the land is visually prominent from the junction of West End and the A429, requiring a sensitive consideration of its effects on the AONB.

3.16 A preliminary assessment of the potential landscape impacts associated with development of the site based on the preferred NENP allocation identifies:

- The partial loss of the open land between A429 Fosse Way and Northleach which the District Council's Landscape Character Assessment report identifies as contributing to the undeveloped corridor alongside the A429.
- The potential change to the character of the AONB associated with loss of green space and introduction of new built form.
- The potential beneficial change to the character of the AONB

3.17 A preliminary assessment of potential visual impacts associated with development of the site identifies:

- That there are limited wider visual impacts due to enclosing valley slopes, vegetation and housing which limits potential views to south, west and east.
- There would be localised visual impacts from West End, and from the junction of West End and the A429 associated with loss of green space and change in landscape character.
- There would be visual impacts from opposite south facing valley slopes including from housing facing onto the site along Taylor Road.

3.18 However, there are mitigation measures to reduce development impacts and provide for development opportunities, comprising:

- Carefully considered design of buildings along site frontage has potential to contribute positively to street-scape.
- Potential for new avenue planting and Cotswold stone walling along site frontage to mirror features on opposite side of road in order to create strong entrance statement.
- Opportunity to provide softer development edge to western town boundary through design of new housing layout and associated boundary treatments.
- Careful siting of buildings to create/maintain existing channelled views of church tower from A429.
- Avoiding development on upper slopes would maintain a clear view of the southern ridgeline from West End at entrance into town and from A429.

Analysis Conclusions

3.19 From the above analysis of the site in respect of its contribution to defining the character of heritage assets and the AONB, the following is concluded:

- The site has development potential with potentially localised visual impacts and landscape impacts that could be substantially mitigated through design.
- New development alongside West End would be consistent with the linear development pattern of the town with no significant impacts on listed buildings or heritage features.
- The site lies outside Conservation Area and is physically separated from it by established housing buffer with additional consented development immediately to the east of the site providing further future buffering.
- High quality built form and reinforced frontage landscaping would provide an opportunity to achieve an enhanced approach to the town with a softer development edge whilst maintaining a visual buffer alongside the A429. In landscape terms this potentially positive contribution to the AONB would need to be weighed against both the physical and perceived loss of open land within the AONB.

Site Proposal

3.20 The brief for the site is to provide a housing development on approximately 0.5 hectares of the site with the remaining area given over to creating a landscape boundary and buffer to the whole of the western settlement edge.

3.21 Given the landscape and heritage constraints, a design strategy based on developing a small cluster of dwellings is proposed as shown on the following Constraints Plan. Limiting development to this part of the site will minimise the impact on existing incidental views across the town from the West End and A429 Fosse Way junction.

3.22 It will be important for the built form to 'sit in the landscape' so as not to interrupt the existing landscape backdrop and horizon line, and the role of architectural design will be important in terms of form, layout and materials to ensure the development works in its immediate landscape setting and in the wider townscape setting both as an improvement to the entrance to the town and in its contribution to the local streetscape.

3.23 This design strategy and site assessment suggest an area of around 0.5 hectare of this site could be developed for housing, which based on the lower density character of the area could deliver 12 – 15 dwellings depending on type and mix.

Analysis of Site Proposal and Mitigating Effects

3.24 To test the heritage and landscape impacts of the development of the site based on this brief, an illustrative layout has been prepared along with a set of development parameters as shown on the Parameters Plan on the following page.

3.25 The illustrative layout demonstrates how these parameters could be applied in practice to mitigate the impacts of development. It is not proposed as a definitive design solution, but would provide a basis for considering future outline or detailed design proposals.

Summary Justification

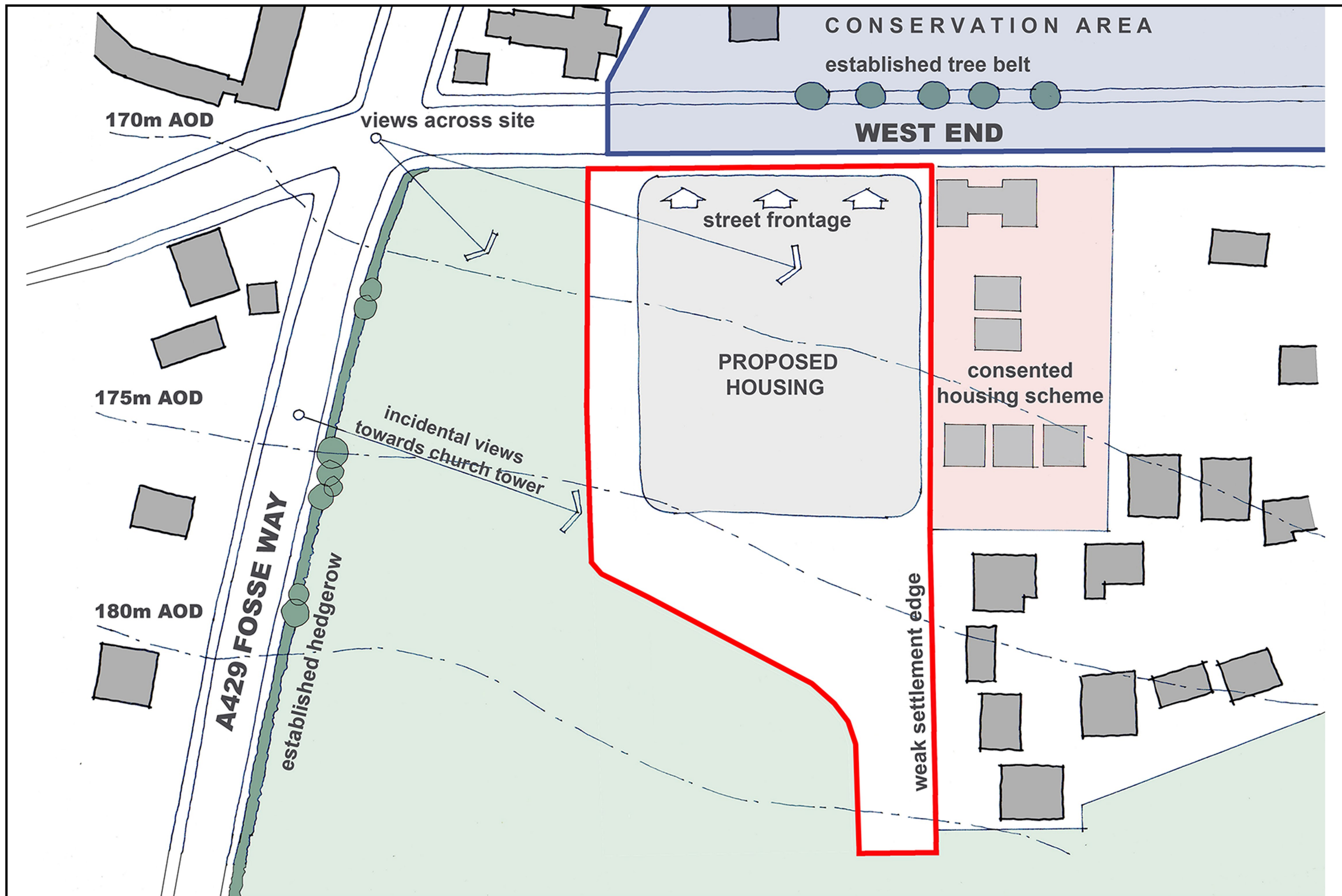
3.26 This design approach respects the key characteristic of the town setting by leaving the upper slopes undeveloped. It will also maintain a green corridor alongside the Foss Way.

3.27 It will improve the definition and character of the western settlement edge and the entrance to the town, and in so doing meet the ambitions of the 'environmental improvements' as set out in the Key Settlements Study, to improve the Fosse Way junction and the settlement edge by providing woodland planting adjacent to the rear of Shepherd's Way.

3.28 The design response as set out in the parameters is also an opportunity to improve the streetscene and town gateway through landscape improvements and the built form, which will be in keeping with and complement the local character and the Conservation Area.

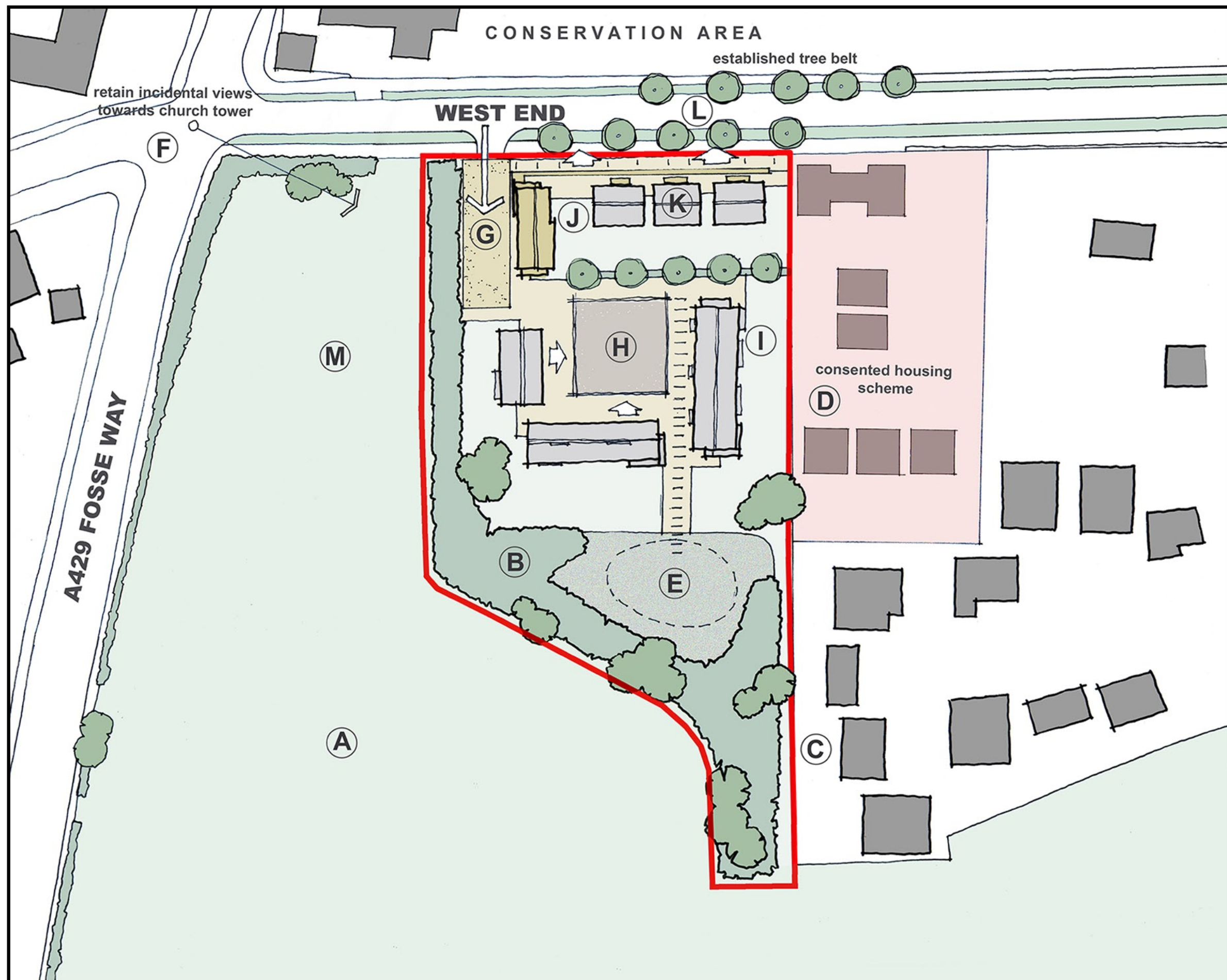
3.29 In summary, the Key Settlements Study recognises that it is the recent development adjacent to the site that has had a negative impact on the setting of the Church and the Fosse Way, and also recognises the need for environmental improvements to the setting of the Fosse Way junction.

3.30 There is therefore a tension between the wish to retain a degree of separation between the town and the Fosse Way and the environmental improvements to the setting of the Fosse Way junction that this site could help deliver. The development of this site in line with these parameters will provide an opportunity for creating a settlement edge and entrance to the town that is planned, purposeful and appropriate. It demonstrates how the heritage and landscape sensitivities are to be addressed, and in so doing strikes a positive balance between these two ambitions.



Site 1, Land South of West End, Constraints Diagram

December 2015



KEY

- A No development on upper slopes to maintain a clear view of the southern ridgeline from West End at entrance into town and from A429
- B Landscape buffer to western settlement edge including hedgerows and tree planting to create a softer and more clearly defined development edge
- C Back garden edge to existing development
- D Back garden edge to consented 'Chequers' housing scheme
- E Potential informal public open space amenity within landscape buffer
- F Layout planned to provide a setting for views of the church tower from the A429/West End junction.
- G Vehicle access off West End
- H Layout planned around internal space as a focus to the development and to minimise impacts of vehicle movements and parking on the setting
- I Layout planned to create roofscapes in keeping with the character of the village core
- J High quality key building to define town gateway and as the fourth corner to the crossroads
- K Positive building frontage to West End
- L New tree planting and Cotswold stone walling along site frontage to reinforce streetscene
- M Green Corridor maintained alongside Fosse Way

Site 1, Land South off West End
Parameters Plan - December 2015

4. LAND ADJOINING THE OLD COALYARD INDUSTRIAL ESTATE

Location and Description

4.1 The site is located in the Cotswolds AONB on the western edge of the town on the northern side of West End with a site area of 1.60 hectares on a north-east to south-west orientation with the south west corner taken up by an existing single storey telephone exchange building that is not part of the site. The site slopes approximately 20m up from the West End road, with open land beyond which continues to rise forming a treed horizon line as a backdrop.

4.2 There is an existing access off West End with a gate and dropped kerb on the eastern side of the site frontage. There are also two rows of mature trees along this frontage, one in the street verge and the other within the site along the southern boundary.

4.3 Along the eastern boundary are a number of employment uses as part of The Old Coal Yard Industrial Estate which fronts onto West End. The estate includes two listed buildings and there are larger scale buildings to the rear of the site that are accessed from Midwinter Road.

4.4 Midwinter Way continues around to the north east serving an area of residential development. Hammond Drive, one of the cul de sacs off Midwinter Way backs onto the eastern boundary of the site providing the potential for a second vehicle access.

Assessing Special Interest of Heritage Assets

4.5 The land lies entirely within the Northleach Conservation Area boundary on its westernmost edge. Indeed, the southern boundary of the Area in this location coincides with the southern site boundary but the site extends beyond the northern boundary of the Area. The Area also extends a short distance to the west to include the telephone exchange building and then extends eastwards along West End towards the town centre.

4.6 The significance of the land to defining the character of the Conservation Area has been assessed in relation to the Land South of West End in Section 3 above, which lies partially opposite this land. To avoid repetition, it is noted that the assessment concluded that the land makes no significant contribution to defining the historic character of the town or to the setting of the listed buildings at the Old Coal yard.

Assessing Special Interest of AONB

4.7 This site forms part of a wedge of green space between housing fronting onto West End and accessed via a field gate leading onto the main road. The site rises up the valley slope to the north with views limited by the valley crest.

4.8 There is a pronounced western boundary development edge formed by housing and The Old Coal Yard Industrial Estate with a line of well established mature boundary trees (Birch and Beech), fronting the road and set behind a traditional

Cotswold stone wall. An avenue of mature lime trees planted in the roadside grass verge effectively forms a double avenue serving both as a screen to the site and as an important town gateway feature.

Development Implications:

4.9 The site currently forms a gap between housing within the town and a small housing development at the junction of Fosse Way and West End. A mixed use development scheme preferred by the NENP would close this gap. However, the site is reasonably well screened from West End by existing avenue planting and would be below the upper contour for development identified by the District Council's Landscape Character Assessment report and not be widely visible.

4.10 A preliminary assessment of potential landscape impacts associated with development of the site identifies:

- o The loss of the green wedge linking the wider landscape with West End.
- o An erosion of the notional green buffer between Northleach and the Fosse Way (already compromised by housing at the main road junction).
- o That there may be a loss of frontage vegetation to achieve necessary sight lines for site access.
- o The potential change to the character of the AONB and the Conservation Area

4.11 A preliminary assessment of potential visual impacts associated with development of the site identifies:

- o There are limited wider visual impacts due to enclosing valley slopes, vegetation and housing which limits potential views to north, west and east.
- o There are localised visual impacts from West End associated with loss of green space although existing land is partially screened by existing mature tree avenues both within site and alongside road.
- o There are some visual impacts from opposite north facing valley slopes (farmland with no public access).

4.12 However, there are mitigation measures to reduce development impacts and provide for development opportunities, comprising;

- o Siting entrance to avoid/minimise frontage tree loss.
- o Careful protection of retained trees during construction.
- o New tree planting of frontage trees within frontage car park or hard standing to further filter views across site.
- o Buffer planting to northern boundary to close gap in existing tree cover and achieve continuous woodland belt on upper valley slopes.
- o Massing of buildings along site frontage to be of a scale that is consistent with general street scene (larger buildings set back into site).

- o Potential for provision of public access through site to link into public footpaths to north (subject to wider land ownership constraints).

Analysis Conclusions

4.13 From the above analysis of the site in respect of its contribution to defining the character of heritage assets and the AONB, the following is concluded:

- o The site has development potential with potentially localised visual impacts and landscape impacts that could be substantially mitigated through design
- o Development alongside road would be consistent with the linear development pattern of the town.
- o High quality built form and reinforced frontage landscaping would provide an opportunity to achieve an enhanced gateway to the town. In landscape terms this potentially positive contribution to the AONB would need to be weighed against both the negative impacts of physical and perceived loss of open land within the AONB.

Site Proposal

4.14 The brief for the site is to provide a mixed employment (B1-B8) and residential development along with a publically accessible car park with a capacity for around 30 cars and 2 coaches. The overall site area is 1.60 hectares and it sits on open sloping ground behind an avenue of trees along West End. There is existing development either side of the site with employment uses in the Old Coal Yard Industrial Estate to the east and residential to the west.

4.15 Given the landscape, heritage and technical constraints, a design strategy based on a layout with the car park and employment uses located to the front of the site served off West End, and a residential area located to the rear of the site served off Hammond Drive is proposed. The parking area will be located at the front of the site avoiding building in the Flood Zone area as shown on the following Constraints Plan; this will also provide a protected area for the existing tree planting along the site frontage. Residential development will be kept within the 180m AOD and the site boundary includes an area for the completion of the tree belt.

4.16 Although the heritage assessment concluded that this land makes no significant contribution to defining the historic character of the town or to the setting of the listed building at the Old Coal Yard, the role of architectural design will be important in terms of form, layout and materials to ensure the development makes a positive contribution to the local streetscape and wider townscape.

4.17 This design strategy and site assessment suggests an area of around 0.25 hectare of the site could be developed for business use with a capacity for around 900m² gross floor area, and 0.5 hectares for housing with a capacity for 10 to 15 dwellings depending on size and mix. The remaining area would provide landscape structure and buffers between uses, a tree protection zone at the front of the site and an area of approximately 34m x 64m for parking.

4.18 The parking area could accommodate around 30 cars plus 2 coaches. The access general arrangement would be subject to further detailed technical studies as part of a subsequent planning application. A new pedestrian link could also be provided as indicated on the plan between West End and the footpath network to the north.

Analysis of Site Proposal and Mitigating Effects

4.19 To test the heritage and landscape impacts of the development of this site based on the brief, an illustrative layout has been prepared along with a set of development parameters as shown on the Parameters Plan on the following page.

4.20 The illustrative layout demonstrates how these parameters could be applied in practice to mitigate the impacts of development. It is not proposed as a definitive design solution, but would provide a basis for considering future outline or detailed design proposals.

4.21 This will keep development below the 180m AOD contour noted as being the limit to development in the Key Settlement Study and fill in the gap in the tree belt, completing the landscape screen along the northern settlement edge.

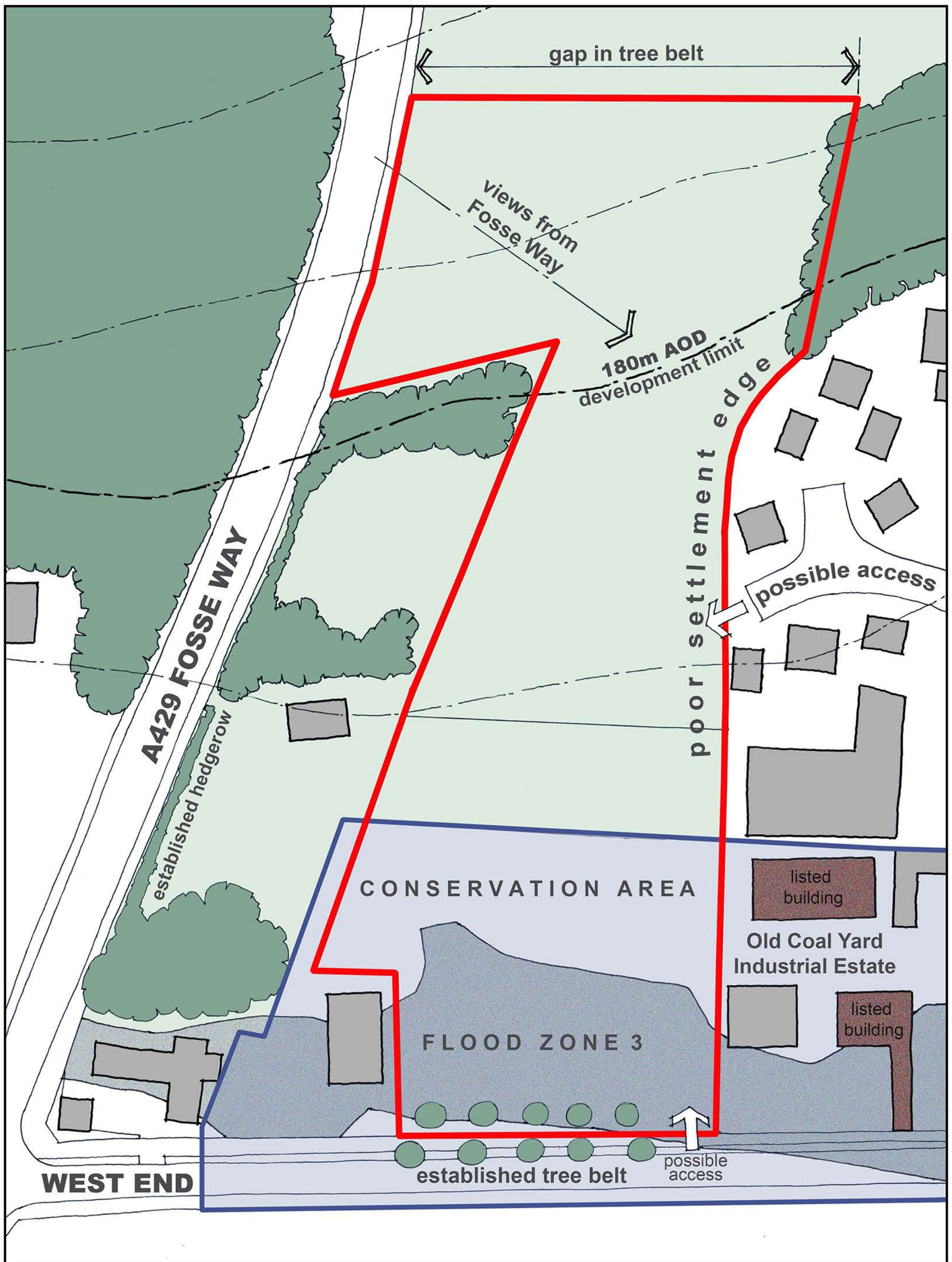
Summary Justification

4.22 This design approach respects the key characteristic of the town setting by setting the development below the 180m AOD contour which the Key Settlements Study addressed in its para 17.11 'Landscape sensitivity considerations' notes as being the '*upper limit to expansion*'.

4.23 The development will include the extension and completion of the landscape buffer along the northern settlement boundary, which will have the additional benefit of screening views of the Taylor Road development from the Fosse Way, which is noted as a 'negative' characteristic of the setting in the Study. Completing this tree belt will deliver one of the environmental improvements suggested in paragraph 17.14 of the Study by providing; '*Woodland planting adjacent to housing facing Fosse Way*'.

4.24 Although it would fill in the gap between the A429 Fosse Way and Northleach, this gap has very little value or presence in terms of visual separation. Recent development to the west of the site has removed any remaining sense of gap between the Old Coal Yard and the Fosse Way, and the tree planting at the front of the site further reduces the visual function of this site as a gap or open space.

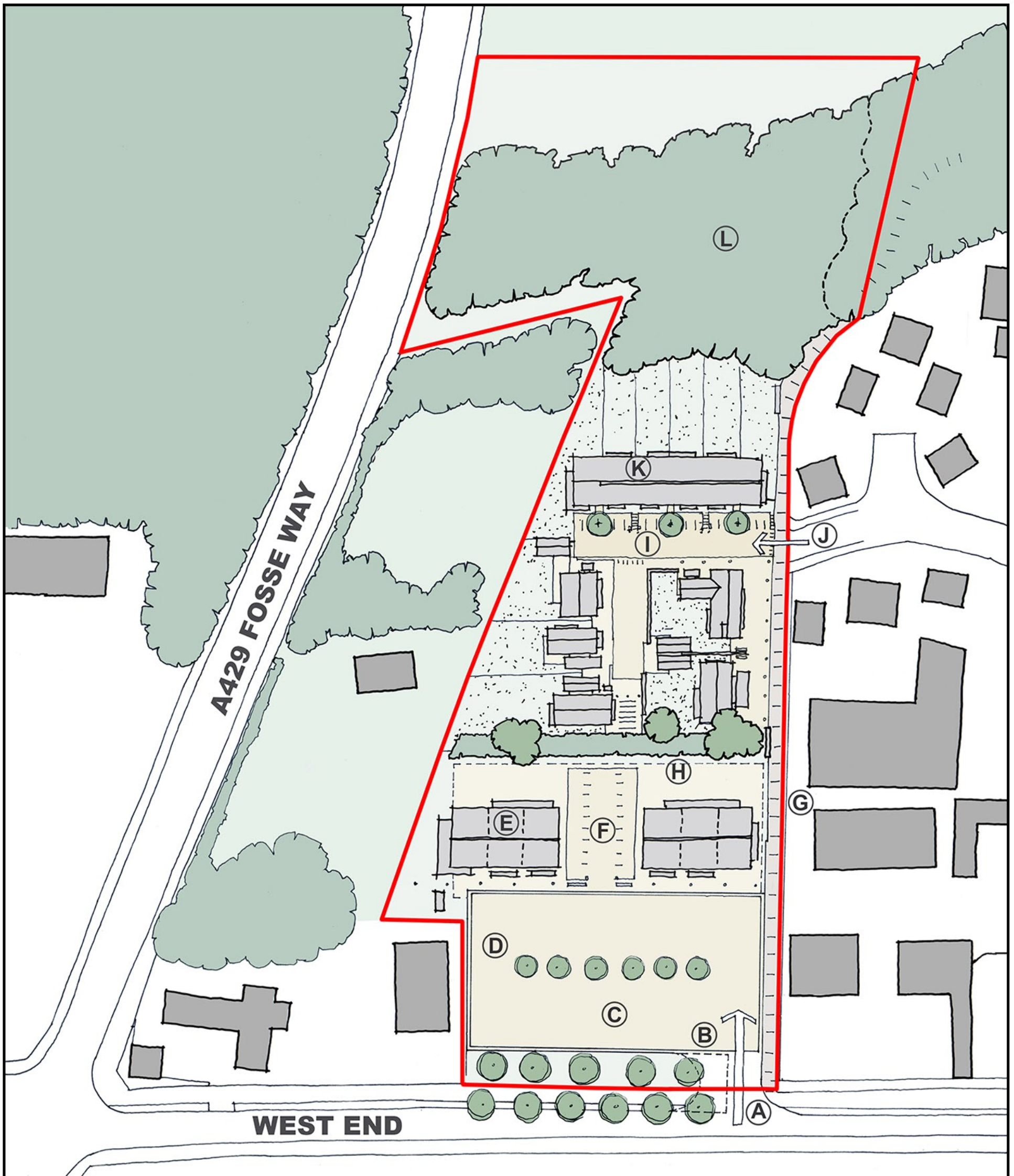
4.25 In summary, any loss of the visual benefit of the site as a green wedge linking the wider landscape would be more than offset by completing the northern landscape belt and improving local accessibility with a new pedestrian link with the footpath network to the north.



Site 2, Land adjoining the Old Coal Yard Industrial Estate
 Constraints Diagram- December 2015

Site 2, Land adjoining the Old Coal Yard Industrial Estate

Parameters Plan - December 2015



KEY

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| A Access to car park and employment units | E Employment units to reflect scale and character of Coal Yard buildings | I Small scale residential development of 10 to 15 dwellings set below 180m AOD |
| B Entrance layout to be designed to minimise loss of trees along frontage | F Parking and service area for employment units | J Vehicle and service access to residential area from Hammond Drive |
| C Parking area offset to provide protection zone for existing trees | G New public footpath linking West End with footpaths to the north | K Building form, layout and character complement the Cotswold vernacular and town roof scape |
| D New tree planting to frontage and car parking area to further filter views across site | H Landscape buffer between employment units and residential | L Existing northern tree belt to be extended up to the A429 |

5. LAND SOUTH OF THE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Location and Description

5.1 The site is located in the Cotswolds AONB on the southern edge of the town on the eastern side of Town Row south of the junction with All Alone. It is part of a field adjoining the school boundary and recreation facilities with an area of 1.04 hectares being considered for expansion of the school facilities. It has a north south orientation with a slope of approximately 8m up from the adjoining school site. The site has an established tree belt and hedgeline along its western boundary with Town Row with a weaker field boundary along its southern boundary which allows for some incidental views from the higher ground to the south along Town Row. The eastern boundary is open with views across the site from a public footpath to the east.

Assessing Special Interest of Heritage Assets

5.2 The land lies some 70m south of the southernmost boundary of the Northleach Conservation Area beyond the junction of Town Row and All Alone. There are no listed buildings nearby – the church and the cluster of other historic town centre buildings are some 250m to the north of the land.

5.3 The land cannot be seen in views from the ridge south of the town into the valley across the historic town as it lies below the ridge line and sits in front of the school buildings. Nor can its lower half (closest to the school buildings) be seen in views from the town centre (or along Town Row) out to the southern ridge as it is hidden behind those buildings and a mature tree line for the most part. Only its southern most edge that lies above the buildings can be seen in these views. As a result, the land makes no contribution to the significance of the character of the Conservation Area or other heritage assets.

Assessing Special Interest of AONB

5.4 The site lies outside the Conservation Area and comprises open farmland on elevated land at the top of the north facing valley slope to the south of Northleach, immediately south of existing school buildings. Views to the south are limited by the ridgeline which partially encloses the site. There is an established but incomplete hedgerow alongside the road on the western site boundary which filters views across the site from the west. Immediately to the north is a vegetated break of slope associated with terracing of the school grounds. This provides significant screening of the site from close and middle distance viewpoints to the north.

Development Implications:

5.5 The type of additional education uses preferred by the NENP would involve terracing the existing landform to create useable outdoor space and to accommodate a low level single storey school building associated with the existing school buildings. Development would represent an edge of town development and would need careful handling in order to minimise impacts on the wider landscape.

5.6 A preliminary assessment of potential landscape impacts associated with development of the site identifies:

- o The loss of an agricultural field on the edge of town with associated change to the character of the AONB.
- o That the proposed land use is consistent with local landscape character comprising terraced land and buildings associated with existing school.
- o That there would be localised change to the existing landform associated with creation of level terracing.

5.7 A preliminary assessment of potential visual impacts associated with development of the site identifies:

- o There are limited local and middle distance visual impacts due to ridgeline to the south, established hedgerow along western boundary, and established planting on embankment terrace to north.
- o There are some long distance views from the housing areas on the south facing slopes to north of the town looking across valley; however the development would form part of the wider view and of relatively low impact.
- o There may be some views from public footpaths crossing rising ground to the east of the site however these could be addressed through boundary planting.

5.8 However, there are mitigation measures to reduce development impacts and provide for development opportunities, comprising:

- o Planting to reinforce western, southern and eastern boundaries would effectively integrate the site into the wider landscape and significantly address potential impacts.
- o A single storey building located along the northern edge of the site could be accommodated with very little visual impact and the proposed terracing work would be consistent with the existing pattern of school terracing.
- o Sensitive use of materials, external lighting and colours required to minimise impacts

Analysis Conclusions

5.9 From the above analysis of the site in respect of its contribution to defining the character of heritage assets and the AONB, the following is concluded:

- o Although this is at first sight a potentially sensitive edge of town site, the low impact nature of the proposal, coupled with existing vegetation and landform mean that in landscape terms the site has the capacity to accommodate development of the type proposed.
- o The site lies well outside the town Conservation Area and heritage assets. There would be no discernible impact on the setting of the Grade 1 listed Church.

- o A sensitively designed scheme would provide an opportunity to provide a strong landscape framework with positive benefits to the wider area in terms of new tree planting to define the town boundary and link into existing green infrastructure.
- o In landscape terms this potentially positive contribution to the AONB would need to be weighed against both the physical and perceived loss of open land within the AONB.

Site Proposal

5.10 The brief for the site is to provide for the expansion of school facilities, including play areas and car parking. At this stage the nature of the expansion has not been fixed and the strategy is therefore to provide a development framework that will be flexible and accommodate a number of different expansion scenarios. The existing school layout is built on terraced land to negotiate the ground slope with a north south pedestrian link from the car park area at the northern end up to the swimming pool at the southern end.

5.11 Given the physical constraints and landscape setting, a design strategy based on providing a series of flexible development platforms linked to the existing school is proposed. This will require ground modelling of the existing site contours as shown on the following Constraints Plan in order to achieve plots that are suitable for school buildings and their associated external areas.

Analysis of Site Proposal and Mitigating Effects

5.12 To test the landscape impacts of the development of this site based on this brief, an illustrative layout has been prepared along with a set of development parameters as shown on the Parameters Plan on the following page.

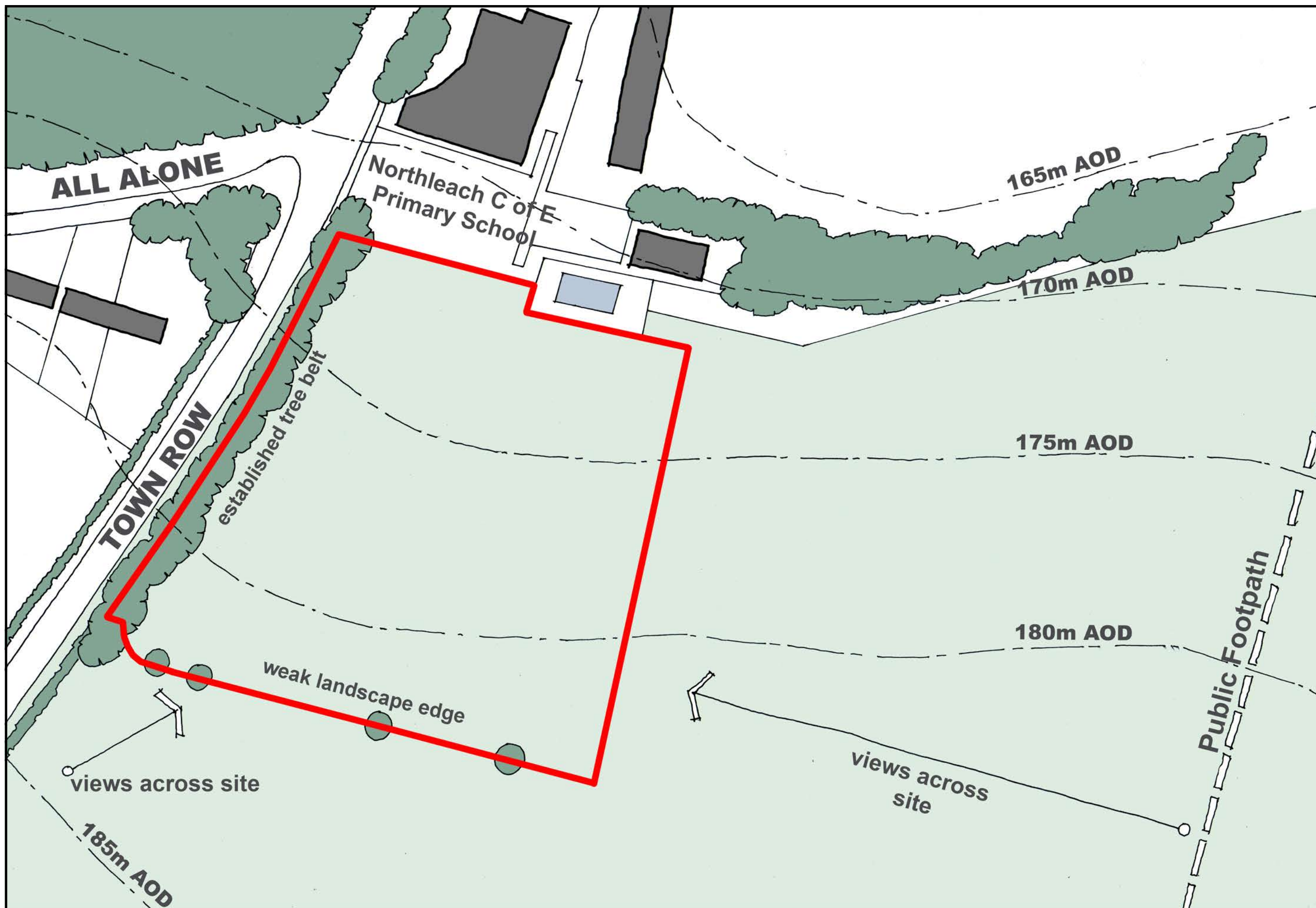
5.13 The illustrative layout shows a development framework rather than a design proposal with the intention of agreeing a strategy for how the site might be developed over the long term. In this respect it is essential that there is the flexibility to vary the location of building plots and open spaces in response to the school's needs as they develop over time.

5.14 Although the preceding heritage assessment has confirmed that the land makes no contribution to the significance of the character of the Conservation Area or other heritage assets, the landscape assessment has identified a potentially positive contribution to the AONB through the development providing a strong landscape framework to define the town boundary and link into existing green infrastructure.

5.15 The key aspects of the proposed parameters are therefore related to the works involved in forming usable development platforms on the sloping site and the proposal that these are used to create a strong landscape structure to contain the development and define the settlement edge.

Summary Justification

5.16 The proposed development strategy as described above and set out in the Parameters Plan would not affect the significance of the character of the Conservation Area or other heritage assets, but would make a potentially positive contribution to the AONB whilst also providing long term social benefits.

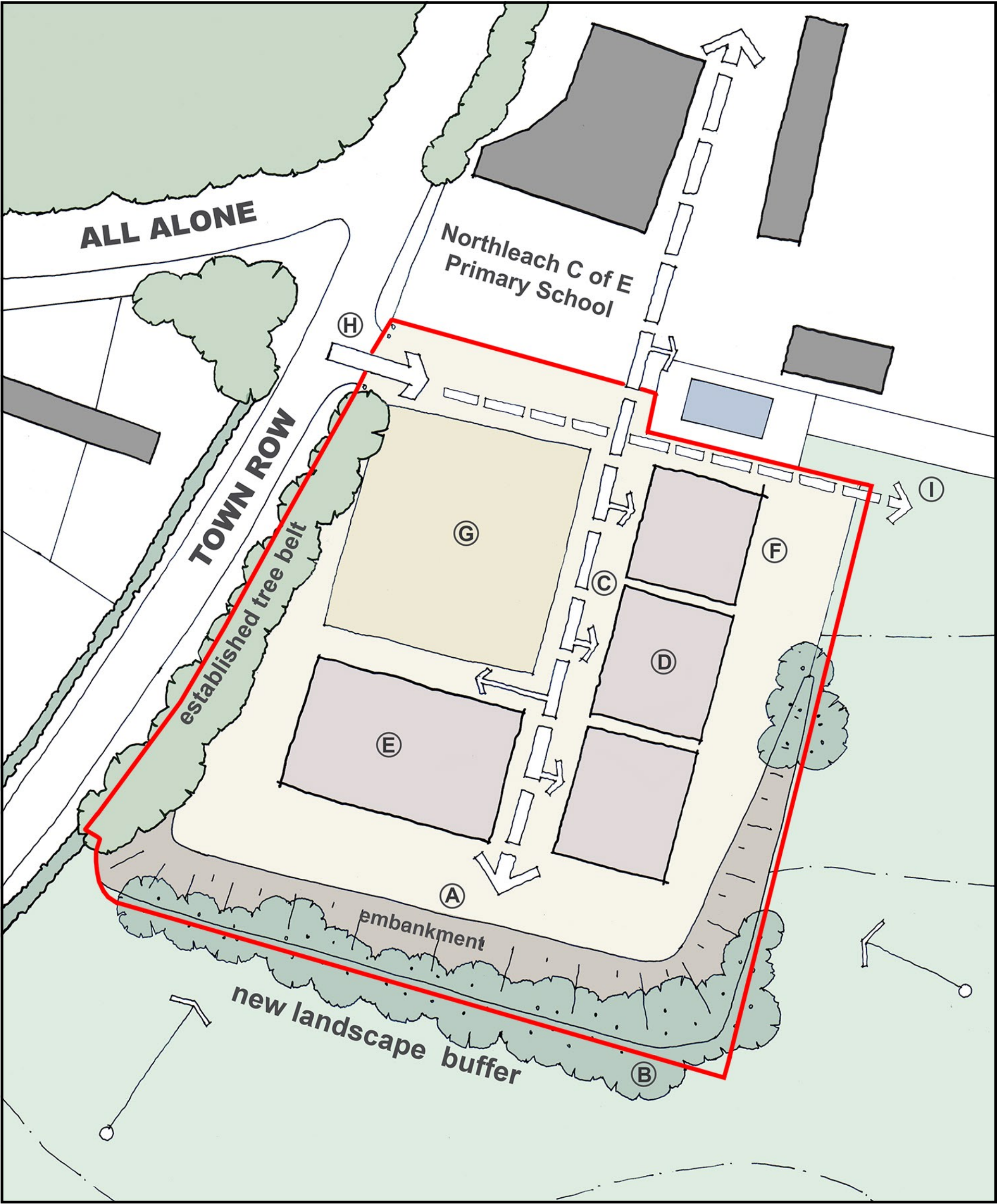


Site 2, Land off Town Row, Constraints Diagram

November 2015

Site 3, Land off Town Row

Parameters Plan - December 2015



- KEY**
- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|--|
| A | Embankment formed to create level development platforms | E | Massing, scale and roofscapes of buildings designed to fit in the landscape setting | I | Access to be maintained for agricultural use |
| B | New tree planting to embankment to provide shelter, screening and well defined development edge | F | Outward facing elevations to take account of landscape setting and views | | |
| C | School pedestrian link extended into site | G | Area for play, recreation or parking | | |
| D | Potential building plots | H | Vehicular access | | |

6. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN POLICY

6.1 On the basis of the above site assessments, it is recommended that an allocation policy of the Neighbourhood Plan, and its supporting text, should be worded as follows:

The Neighbourhood Plan allocates land for development as follows, as shown on the Policies Map, and development proposals will be supported, provided they are in accordance with the established principles:

- i. *Land south of West End, Northleach for a housing scheme, provided:*
 - a. *The housing scheme does not extend any further than the rear boundary of the adjoining development site at The Chequers;*
 - b. *The layout of the scheme and the built form allow the scheme to sit within its landscape surroundings and do not disrupt long views across the site to the church from the A429;*
 - c. *The landscape scheme provides a buffer to the open fields to the west and south of the site and it extends to screen the edge of the town at Shepherds Way; and*
 - d. *A planning obligation is made to provide an appropriate financial contribution to the costs of the public car parking scheme on land adjoining The Old Coalyard.*
- ii. *Land adjoining The Old Coalyard Industrial Estate, Northleach for an employment, housing and public car park scheme, provided:*
 - a. *The employment scheme comprises business uses (B1 – B8) only and is accessed from West End;*
 - b. *The scale, massing, external appearance and orientation of the employment scheme buildings reflect those of the adjoining Old Coalyard site;*
 - c. *The housing scheme is accessed from Hammond Drive and does not extend beyond the 180m contour line;*
 - d. *The housing scheme is not fully occupied until the business, public car park and landscape schemes are completed;*
 - e. *The public car parking scheme is accessed from West End and comprises at least 2 coach spaces and 30 car spaces;*
 - f. *The loss of mature trees in the highway and within the site boundary frontage is kept to a minimum;*
 - g. *The landscape scheme comprises a significant buffer between the housing and A429, a buffer between the housing and employment schemes, incidental tree planting within the housing and public car parking schemes, and new tree planting along the site frontage to West End; and*

- h. *The site layout makes provision for a publicly accessible footpath from West End to connect with the public rights of way network to the north of the town.*
- iii. *Land south of the Primary School, Town Row, Northleach for D2 educational and ancillary uses, provided:*
 - a. *Vehicular access is located in the north west corner of the site and a means of access is retained along the northern boundary of the site for agricultural vehicles;*
 - b. *The scale, massing and roofscapes of any buildings reflect the open landscape setting to the east and south of the site;*
 - c. *The layout of buildings and spaces makes provision for a north-south pedestrian access through the site to connect with the access with the main school buildings; and*
 - d. *The landscape scheme comprises a new landscape buffer on the southern and western site boundaries.*

4.X This policy allocates land for development on three sites within or on the edge of Northleach to achieve a series of community benefits. The allocations are in addition to sites consented and proposed for housing development on the eastern edge of the town in the emerging Cotswold District Local Plan. The evidence to support each allocation is contained within the Neighbourhood Plan Site Assessments Report.

4.X All three sites have been assessed as contributing to the sustainable development of the town over the next decade or so. The proposed new employment land adjoining the Old Coalyard will enable the relocation and expansion of an existing business in the town, which in turn will release a brownfield site for a small housing scheme on a residential street. It will also contribute to meeting local housing needs with a small housing scheme off Hammond Drive and provide a much needed public car park, including spaces for coaches. The land has been made available for development and the landowner has indicated support for the provisions of this policy.

4.X The proposed small housing scheme south of West End will also contribute to meeting local housing needs, as well as making a financial contribution to the costs of laying out the public car parking scheme on the land opposite as a public benefit. The policy also requires a landscape scheme to screen development on this western edge of town as a further public benefit to enhance the character of the town in views from the west. Together, those benefits justify this small incursion beyond the town into the AONB. Again, the land has been made available for development and the landowner has indicated support for the provisions of this policy.

4.X The proposed extension of education uses at the town's primary school will allow the school to grow in future years. The scheme will require some ground works to make a level site suited for new school buildings, outdoor play space and additional car parking spaces for school staff and parent visitors. The landowner has made the

land available for this purpose, provided access is retained through the site for agricultural vehicles.

22nd December 2015

Neil Homer, Planning Director, RCOH LTD
