

5.5. Ecology

- 5.5.1. An Ecological Assessment has been undertaken to understand the baseline conditions and potential effects of the proposed development. The site is known to support day roosts of common pipistrelle bats and assemblages of breeding birds, and has potential suitability for a range of protected and priority species including otter, badger, European hedgehog, polecat, harvest mouse, invertebrates and common toad.
- 5.5.2. The assessment identified potential adverse impacts on some of these features, and appropriate mitigation measures have been proposed to address them. At the time of preparing this DAS, further surveys are ongoing to establish the presence and distribution of roosting bats, hazel dormouse and breeding birds across the site. The results of these surveys will inform any additional mitigation required.
- 5.5.3. In parallel with mitigation, opportunities for ecological enhancement have been embedded into the proposals. Measures include the installation of bat roosting features, bird and dormouse nesting boxes, and habitat provision for invertebrates. New planting and landscape design will provide enhanced foraging and commuting corridors, as well as breeding and sheltering habitats for a wide range of species.
- 5.5.4. With these measures in place, no residual or cumulative impacts are anticipated. The development therefore has the potential to deliver a net ecological benefit and is considered capable of complying with national and local planning policies relating to biodiversity, including Policy 106 of the Local Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.

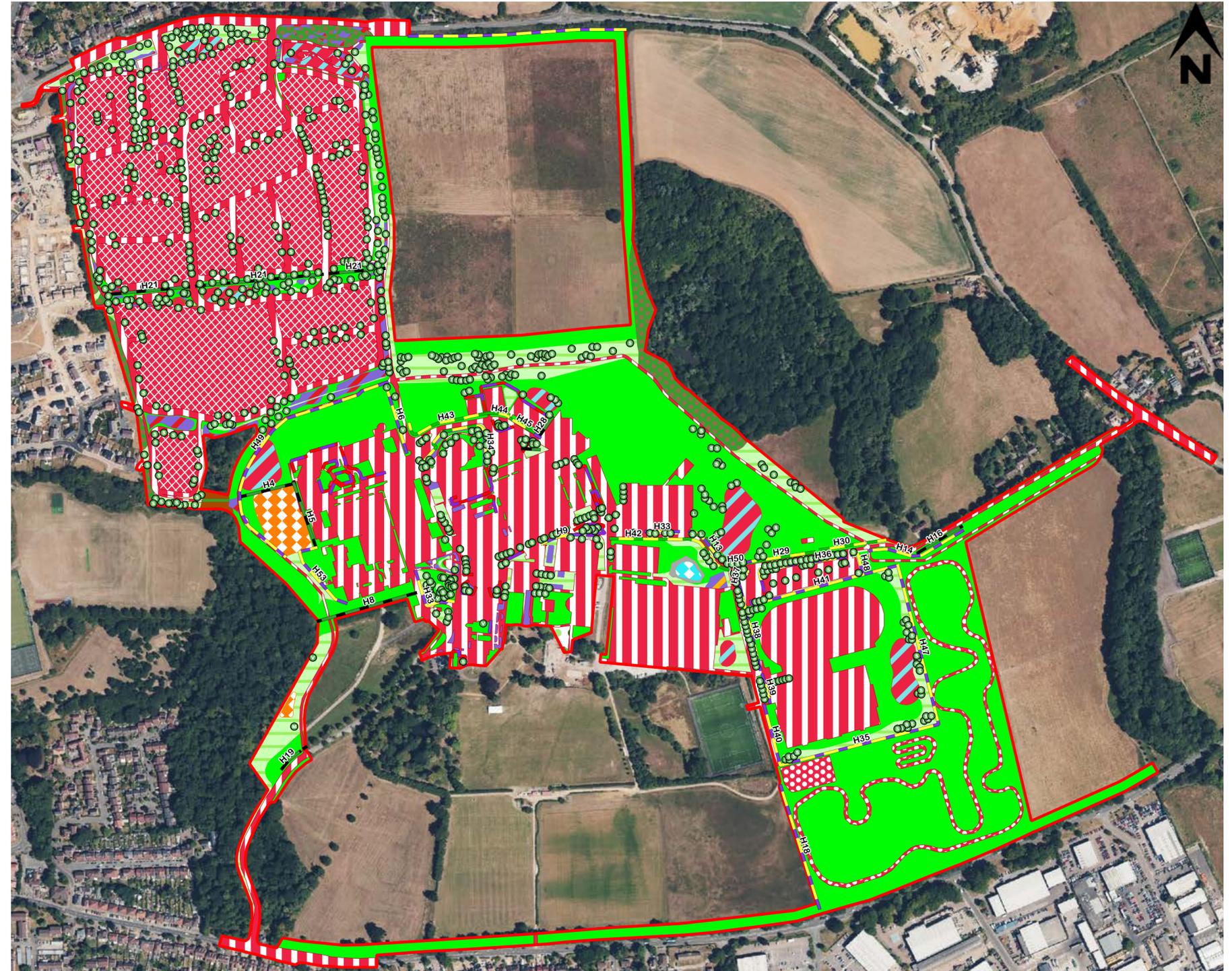


Figure 5. Ecology Mitigation Plan

5.6. Scale

- 5.6.1. With the exception of the College, the area surrounding the scheme is predominantly residential (C3), with a variety of dwelling scales that reflect the locations suburban and semi-rural character.
- 5.6.2. Dwellings in the vicinity generally consist of two-story detached, semi-detached, and terraced homes, which are the most common residential typologies. Some developments also feature flats, contributing to a varied streetscape.
- 5.6.3. To the west, within the proposed Oaklands Grange development, housing is typically two to three stories, with a mix of traditional and contemporary architectural styles.
- 5.6.4. The surrounding area includes both older housing stock and newer residential schemes but maintaining a consistent medium-density suburban scale.
- 5.6.5. The City of St. Albans includes a blend of Medieval, Tudor and Georgian structures centred around a magnificent cathedral at the core, with a mid-20th Century expansion to the City suburbs. Around the site, buildings remain low to medium-rise, ensuring a human-scale environment that integrates well with the surrounding landscape and green infrastructure.

Key Legend

-  Phase 1 Application Area
-  Buildings between 5-10m in height
-  Buildings between 10-15m in height
-  Scheme Application Boundary
-  College Owned Land Boundary

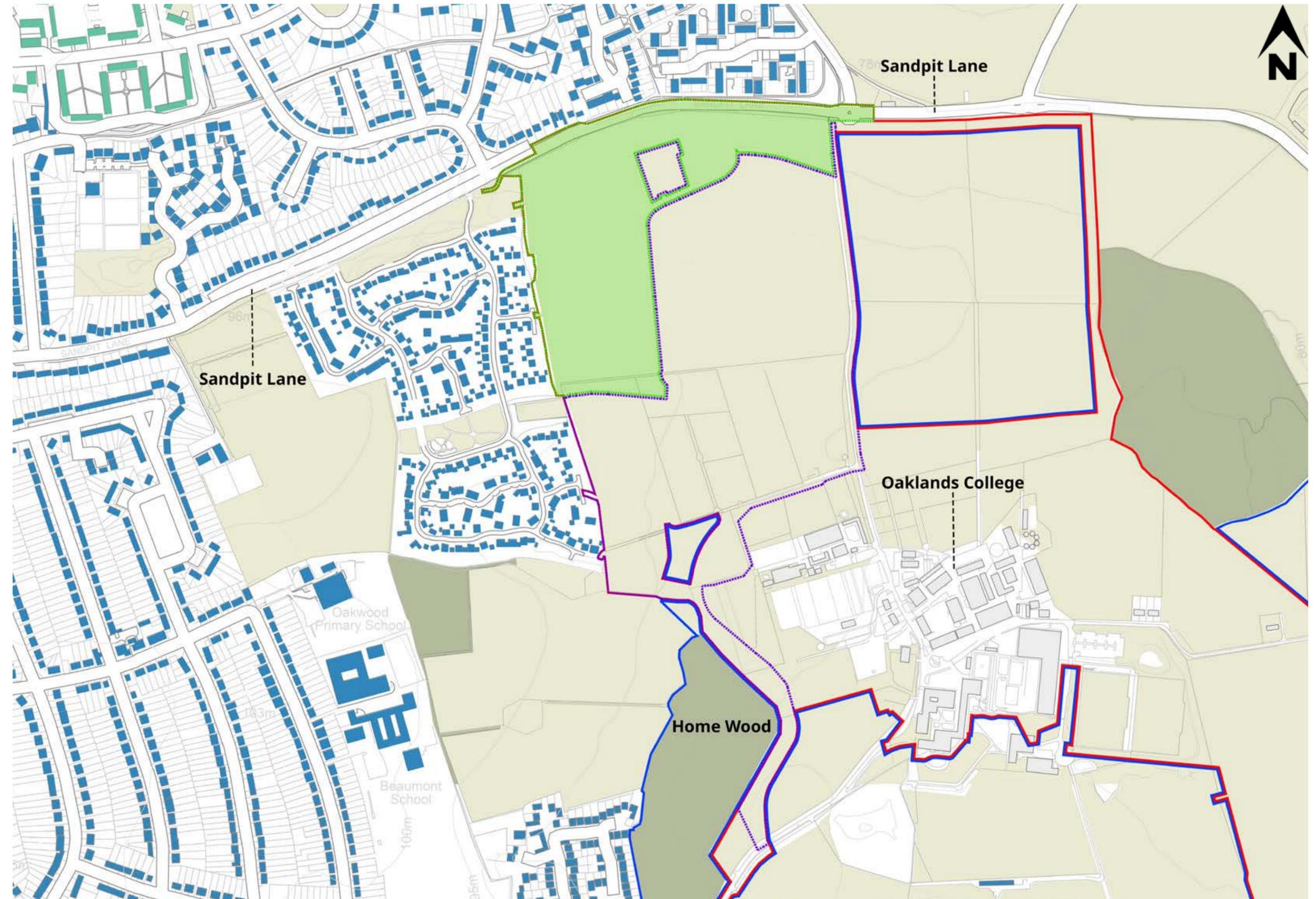


Figure 6. Existing Context Scale

5.7. Vehicular Routes

- 5.7.1. The site benefits from strong vehicular connectivity, linking it to St. Albans City Centre, Hatfield & the wider road network.
- 5.7.2. Sandpit Lane, residing to the north of the site, has strong westerly connections to the A1081 which bisects St. Albans Town Centre, as well as links north to Sandridge and South East to Hatfield via Oaklands Lane.
- 5.7.3. The sites proximity to the primary road network supports the sustainable growth of the residential community.
- 5.7.4. The secondary roads in the vicinity consist largely of residential streets which connects the various neighbourhoods and links back to the primary streets. Tertiary roads provide sole access to residential properties and experience low volumes of traffic.

Key Legend

- Phase 1 Application Area
- Primary Roads
- Secondary Roads
- Tertiary Roads
- Scheme Application Boundary
- College Owned Land Boundary
- Local Railway Station Direction

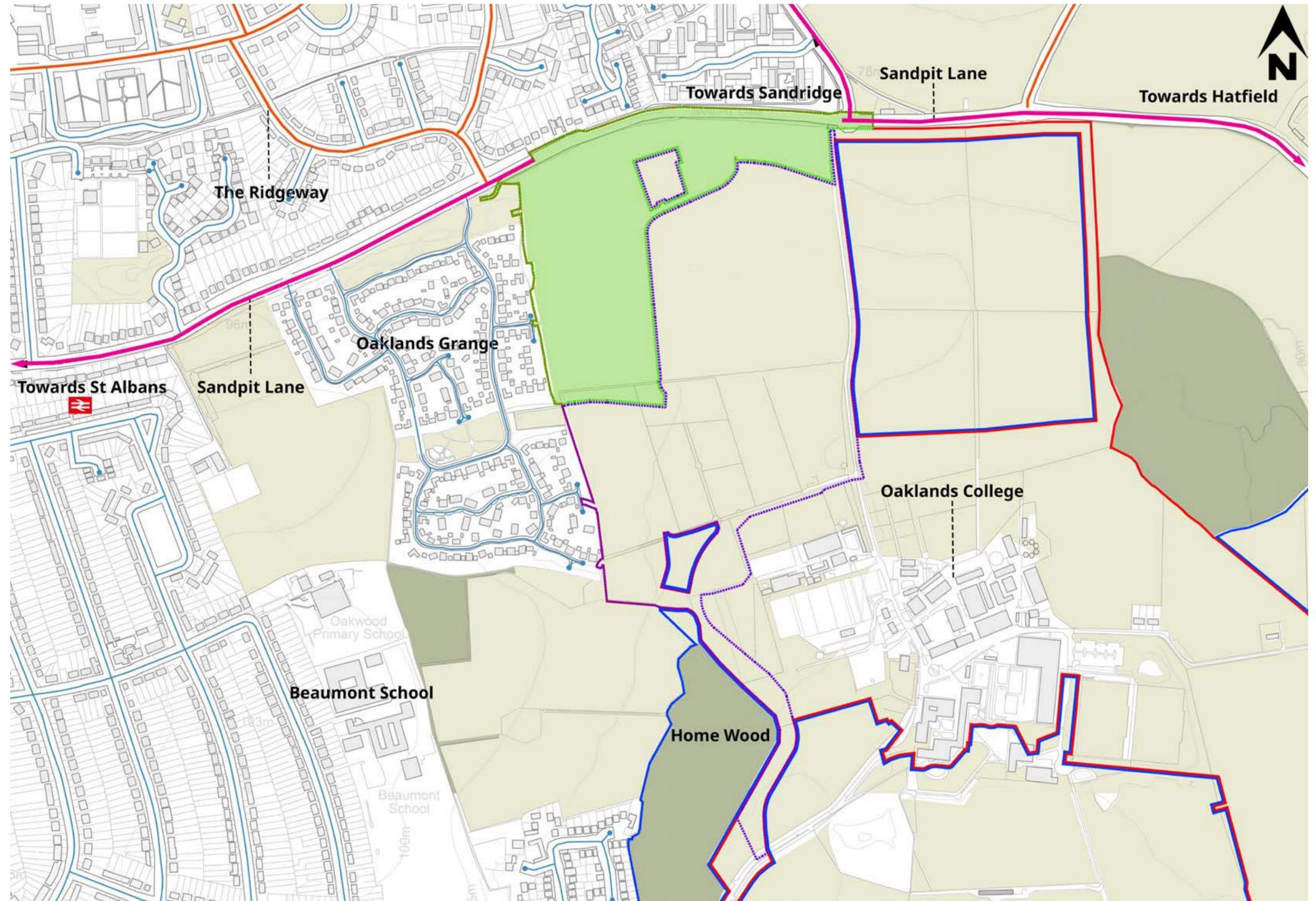


Figure 7. Vehicular Routes

5.8. Public Transport

- 5.8.1. The 653 bus service operates to the North of the site, providing links into St. Albans City Centre, before terminating in New Greens, to the Northwest of St. Albans. The nearest bus stops to the site in this location reside along Newgate close and adjacent to the new Oaklands Grange site.
- 5.8.2. St. Albans City Station, providing direct services into Central London, resides to the west of the site. It presents an approximate 6 minute drive and 30 minute walk or a 10 minute cycle via Alban Way to the south of the site.

Key Legend

- Phase 1 Application Area
- Local Bus Route
- Existing Bus Stops
- Scheme Application Boundary
- College Owned Land Boundary
- Local Railway Station Direction

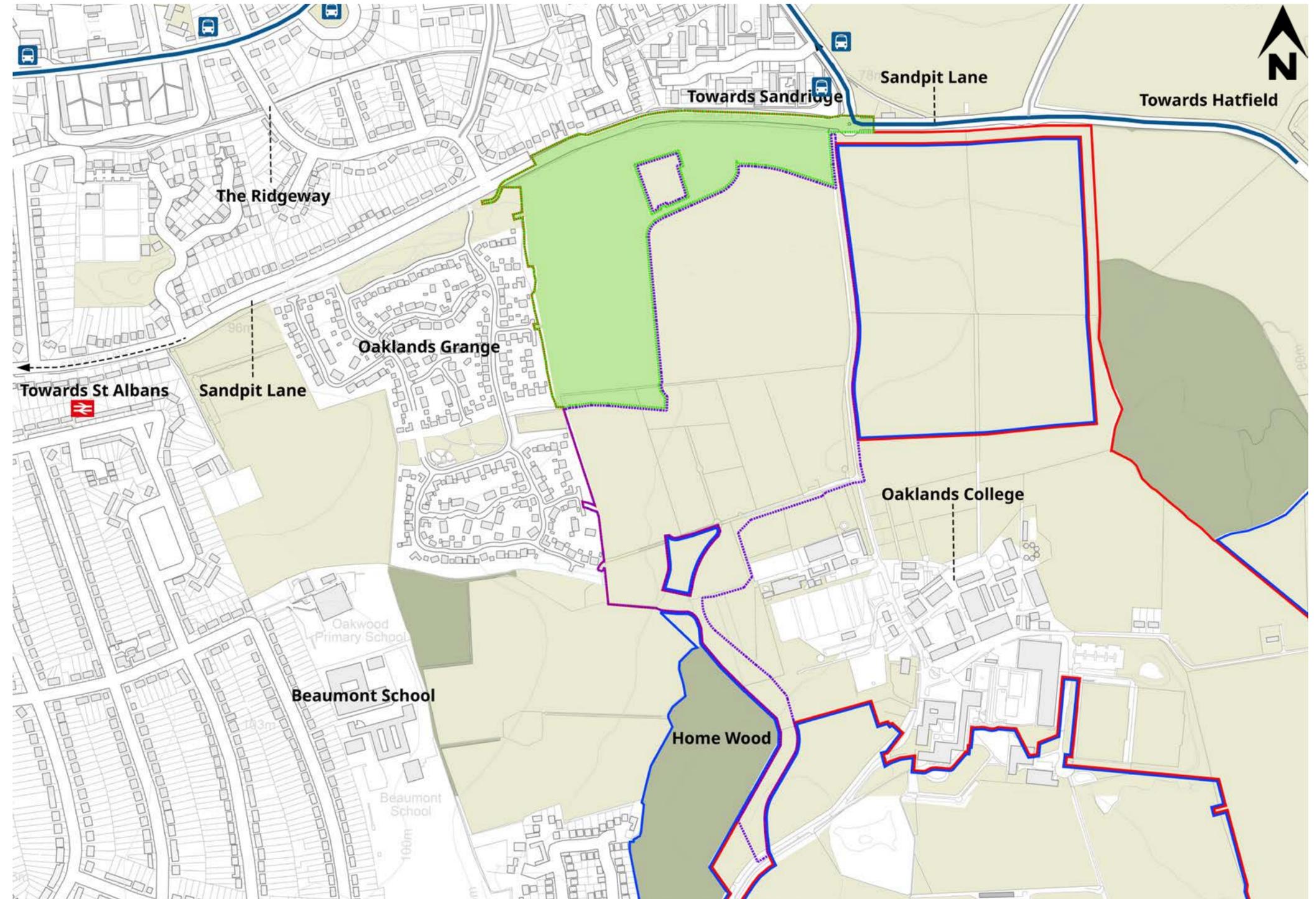


Figure 8. Public Transport

5.9. Pedestrian Routes

- 5.9.1. A strong network of walking and cycling routes exist around the site, providing access and connectivity to the surrounding natural and urban areas.
- 5.9.2. Jersey lane residing to the North of the site is a pedestrian route linking the communities of Marshalwick, Jersey Farm & Sandridge. Alban way, to the south of the site, is a shared-use path along the former Hatfield/St. Albans railway and serves as a popular commuting and leisure route. The Site has can play a role in strengthening the North/South link between these two important pedestrian routes, and integrate itself into the existing network.
- 5.9.3. Oakwood Primary School and Beaumont School are within a 10 minute walking distance to the South West of the site. The development has the potential to strengthen East/West pedestrian routes by connecting into Oaklands Grange.
- 5.9.4. The proposal also seeks to enhance pedestrian routes running parallel to Sandpit Lane and provide crossing points to create a more recognised route between Jersey Lane.
- 5.9.5. The Eastern side of the B4 Site is bounded by North Drive, which connects Oaklands College to Sandpit Lane. The proposal seeks to upgrade North Drive to meet the HCC's guidance for bridleways, as well as providing new ramblers routes in this area.

Key Legend

- Phase 1 Application Area
- Existing Public Right of Way (PRoW)
- Existing Bridleway
- Walk | Cycle Times
- Main Pedestrian Route to Railway Station
- Pedestrian Route to Local Shops
- Scheme Application Boundary
- College Owned Land Boundary
- Local Railway Station Direction

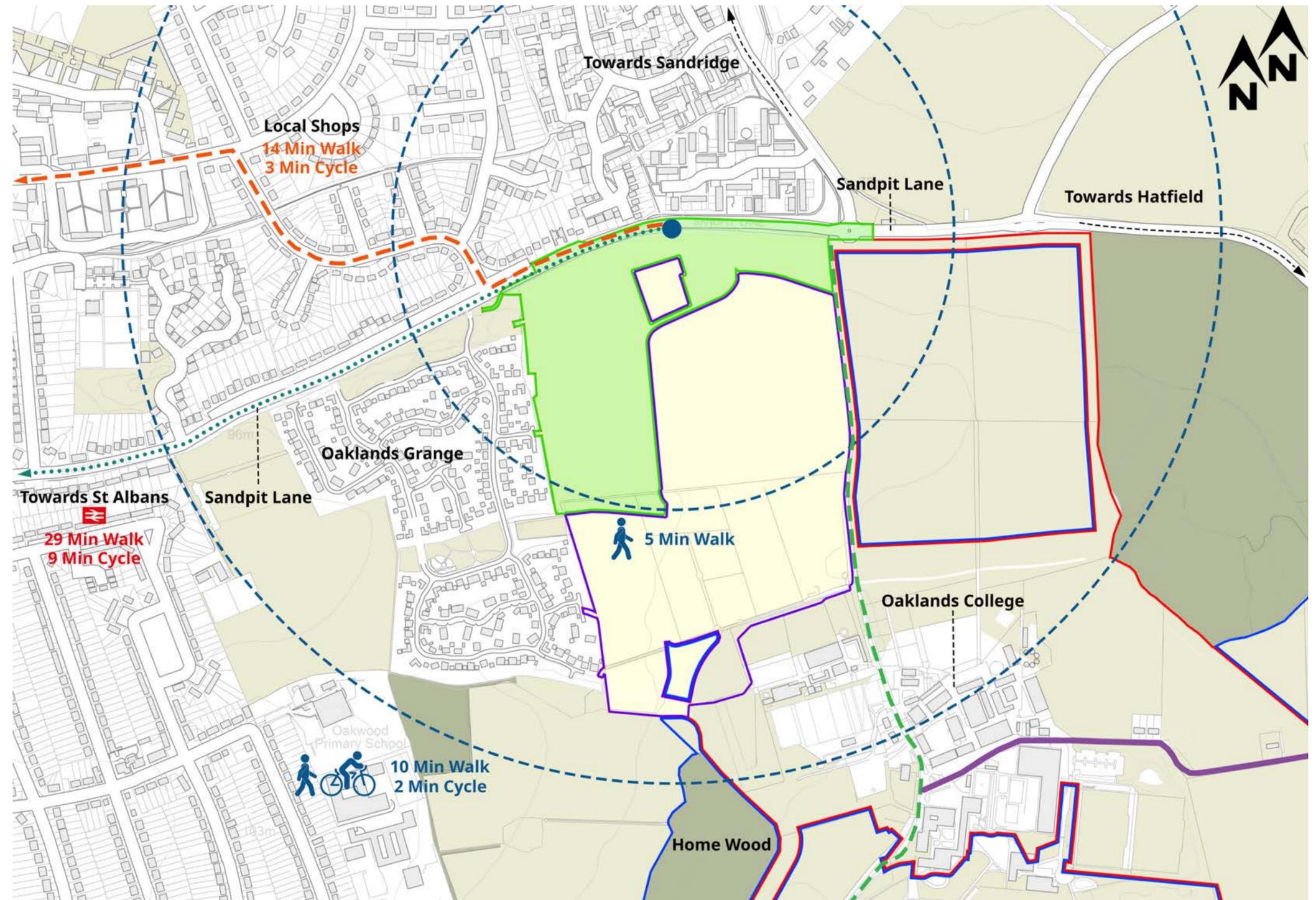


Figure 9. Pedestrian Routes

5.10.Land Use

5.10.1. The adjacent diagram illustrates the various Land Uses in the immediate B4 vicinity. Residential dwellinghouses dominate the canvas to the North & West. The image does however highlight the areas educational heritage, particularly Oaklands College to the South East and facilities ranging from a nursery to a secondary school in the West.

5.10.2. The diagram does however perhaps highlight the need for local amenity in the area, which could be supplied through the provision of a local centre.

Key Legend

-  Phase 1 Application Area
-  Scheme Application Boundary
-  College Owned Land Boundary
-  Oaklands Grange (TW Development)
-  Residential Area
-  Educational Facility
-  Community Space

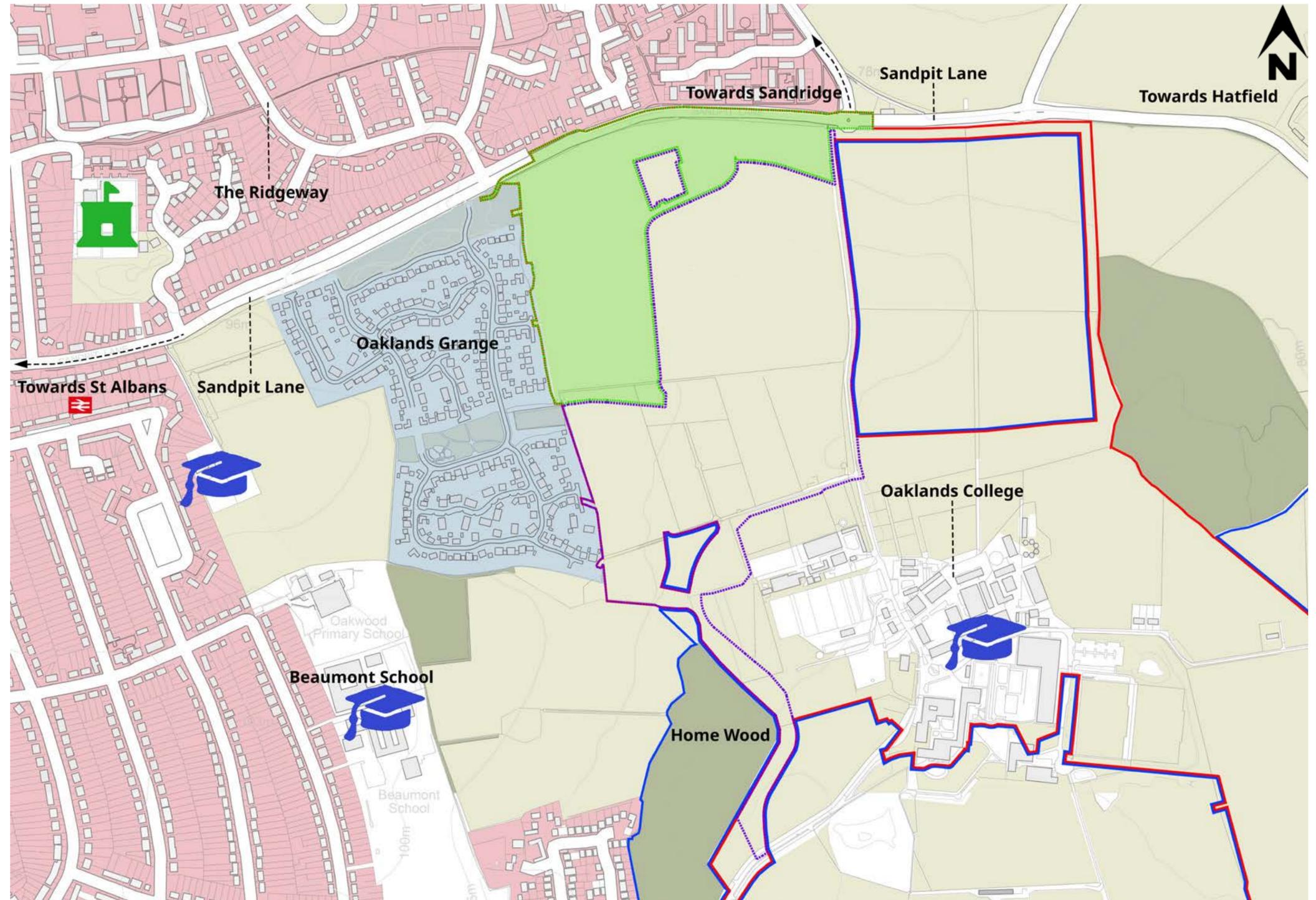


Figure 10. Land Use

5.11. Density & Urban Grain

- 5.11.1. The Site is bounded by residential developments to the North, West & South, comprising a variety of 20th & 21st Century developments. The building configurations are generally based on a perimeter block format with generous rear gardens and building frontages facing onto the public realm. The majority of the urban blocks are large which creates a coarse urban grain.
- 5.11.2. A 1960s/1970s estate is located directly north of the site which is more unconventional in areas with the rear of dwellings and gardens facing onto the public realm, with the dwelling frontages facing onto a communal green space. This area is more dense and creates a finer urban grain.
- 5.11.3. Directly west, a new housing development known as Oaklands Grange is situated. This is more dense than the 1930s estate further to the west, but follows similar perimeter block principles with dwellings facing the public realm, with private amenity space to the rear of the dwellings. Perimeter blocks are generally smaller with a greater network of connecting roads and footpaths.
- 5.11.4. Generally the housing to the site is low to medium density and produces a mainly coarse urban grain with pockets of development slightly more finer in urban grain. Two storey dwellings, in a semi-detached formation is the most common typology used in the area of residential development, however two and a half storey dwellings together with bungalows are also present throughout.

Key Legend

- Phase 1 Application Area
- Scheme Application Boundary
- College Owned Land Boundary
- Low - Medium Urban Density
- Medium - High Urban Density

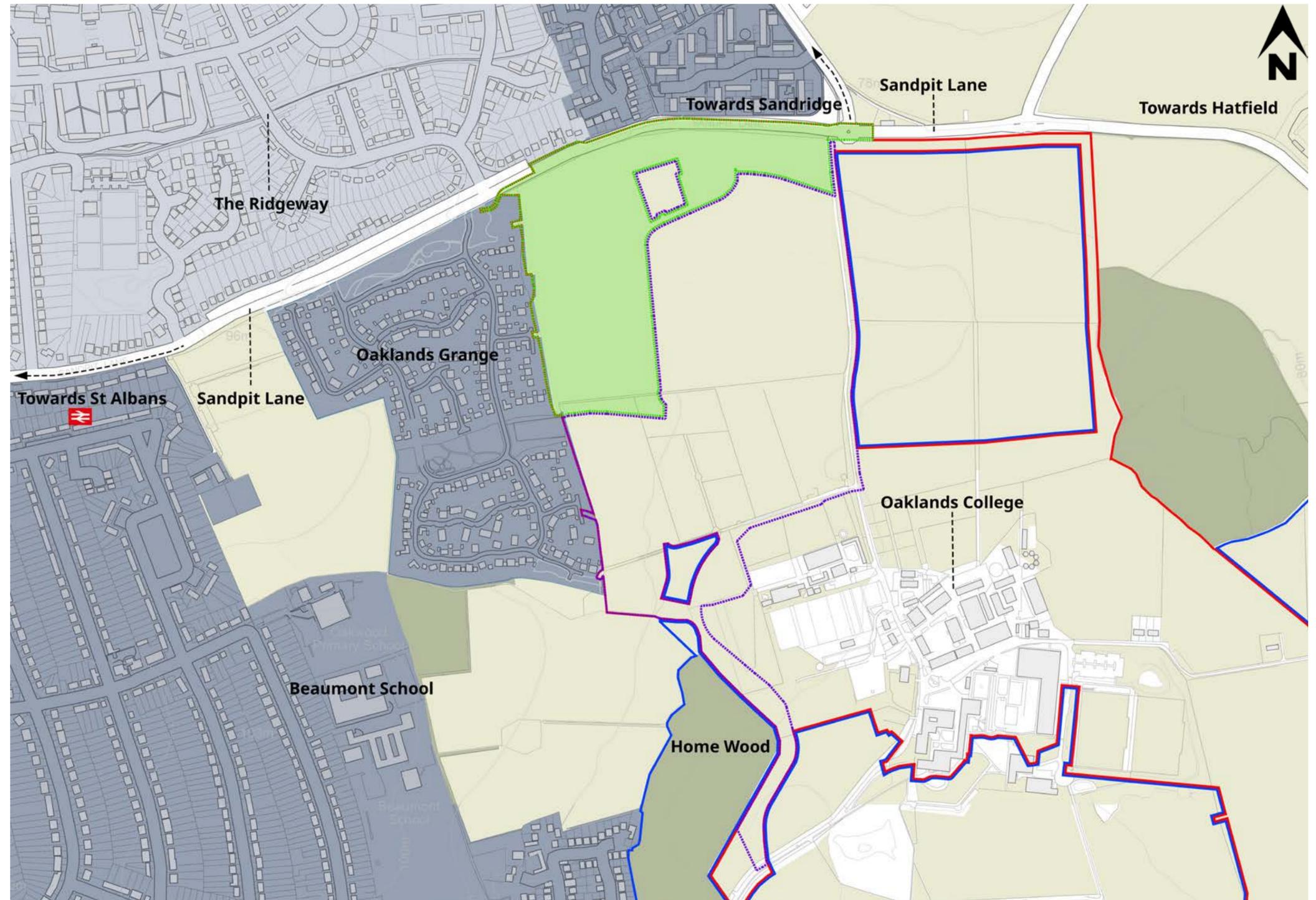


Figure 11. Density & Urban Grain

5.12.Context Photos

- 5.12.1. The context photo route begins along Sandpit Lane, heading towards the City Centre. The site resides to the south, whilst to the north resides predominantly 2-2.5 storey detached and semi-detached houses, boasting a number of styles and facade characteristics, without a clear and defined character. Most of the dwellings are setback from the street and have some kind of private driveway or front garden.
- 5.12.2. The route takes a turn left into the Oaklands Grange development following the primary access road, it comprises a modern interpretation of the historical vernacular comprising a mix of brick, render and weatherboard finishes. A variety of window frame colours are used throughout the scheme, including green.
- 5.12.3. Continuing along Sandpit Lane, the route takes another turn left onto Beachwood Avenue/Woodland Drive, which is made up of 2 storey houses and 3 storey apartment blocks. Oakwood Primary resides within the vicinity. The dwellings are predominantly finished in render or brick of buff or red tones. The roof form varies, but is predominantly pitched including gabled and hipped roofs, finished in interlocking clay or concrete tiles.
- 5.12.4. The route concludes on South Drive via Hatfield Road, which along this stretch is made up of a mixture of modern 3-storey apartments and town-houses, as well as a series of small sole trader businesses, two storey semi-detached dwellings of a similar vernacular and a small number of bungalow type dwellings opposite the college land.

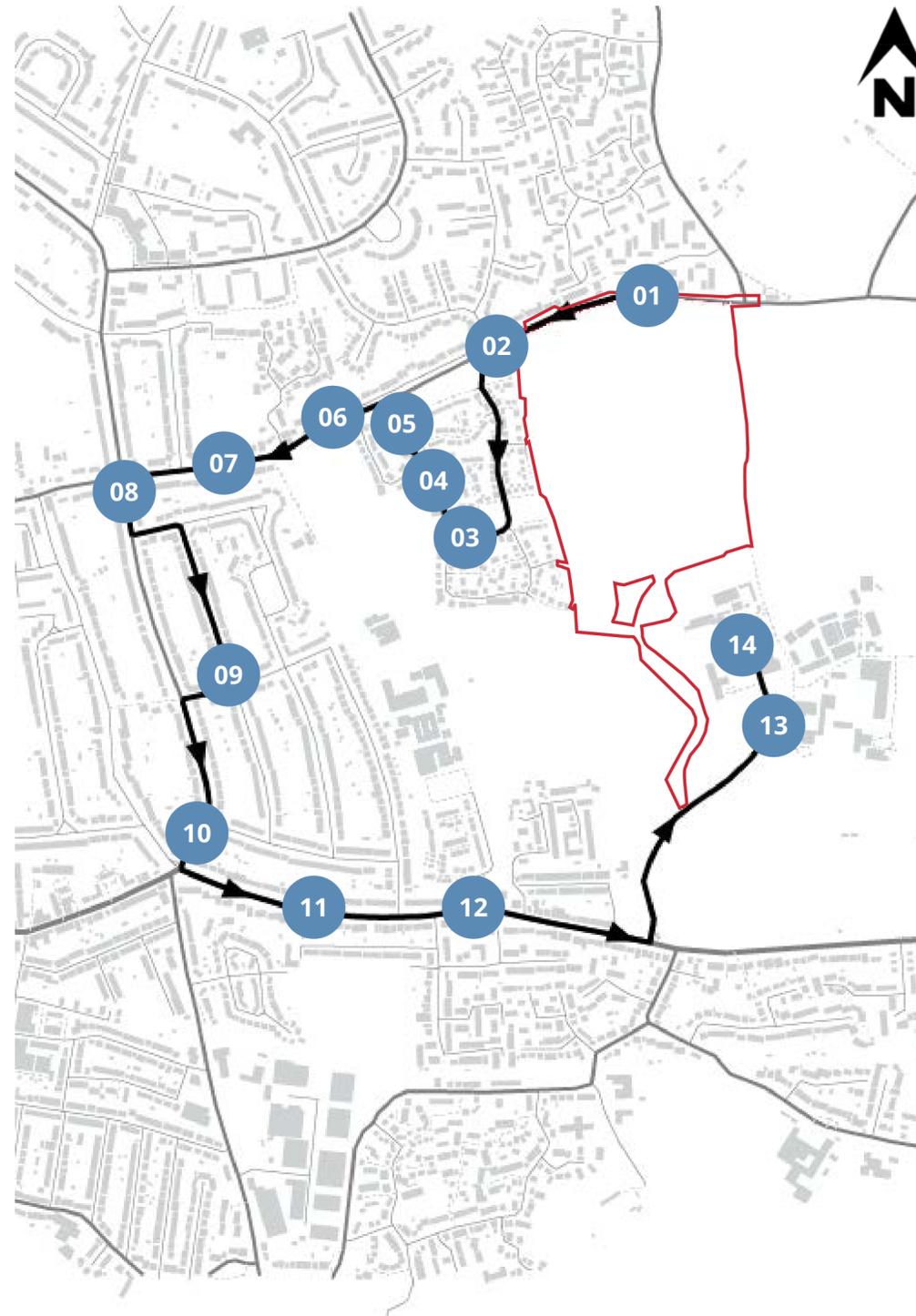


Figure 14. Context Photo Route Key



Figure 12. Image No. 1 Sandpit Lane Dwelling House



Figure 13. Image No. 2 Sandpit Lane Dwelling house with varying characteristics

Wider Context



Figure 15. Image No. 3 Oaklands Grange Dwelling house with render finish



Figure 17. Image No. 4 Oaklands Grange semi-detached dwelling houses with brick finish



Figure 19. Image No. 5 Oaklands Grange dwelling house with weatherboard finish



Figure 16. Image No. 6 Sandpit Lane semi-detached dwelling houses



Figure 18. Image No. 7 Sandpit Lane Dwelling house white render



Figure 20. Image No. 8 Sandpit Lane semi-detached dwelling houses

Wider Context



Figure 21. Image No. 9 Woodland Drive apartment blocks



Figure 23. Image No. 10 Beachwood Avenue semi-detached dwelling houses



Figure 24. Image No. 11 Hatfield Road Detached dwelling house



Figure 22. Image No. 12 Hatfield road apartments/townhouses



Figure 25. Image No. 13 Oaklands College Mansion House



Figure 26. Image No. 14 Oaklands College Evolution Building

5.13. Existent Character Areas

5.13.1. As part of the context analysis, four character areas have been identified to provide a deeper understanding of the site's surroundings. These areas are:

5.13.2. Newgate Close 

5.13.3. Barnfield Road 

5.13.4. Milvus Road 

5.13.5. Osprey Drive 

5.13.6. Each area possesses distinctive characteristics that contribute to the local context. By analysing these areas, the proposals can be better informed and aligned with their setting. Key elements under consideration include road and pavement widths, building setbacks, and rear garden sizes, alongside the architectural vernacular, materiality, and landscaping.

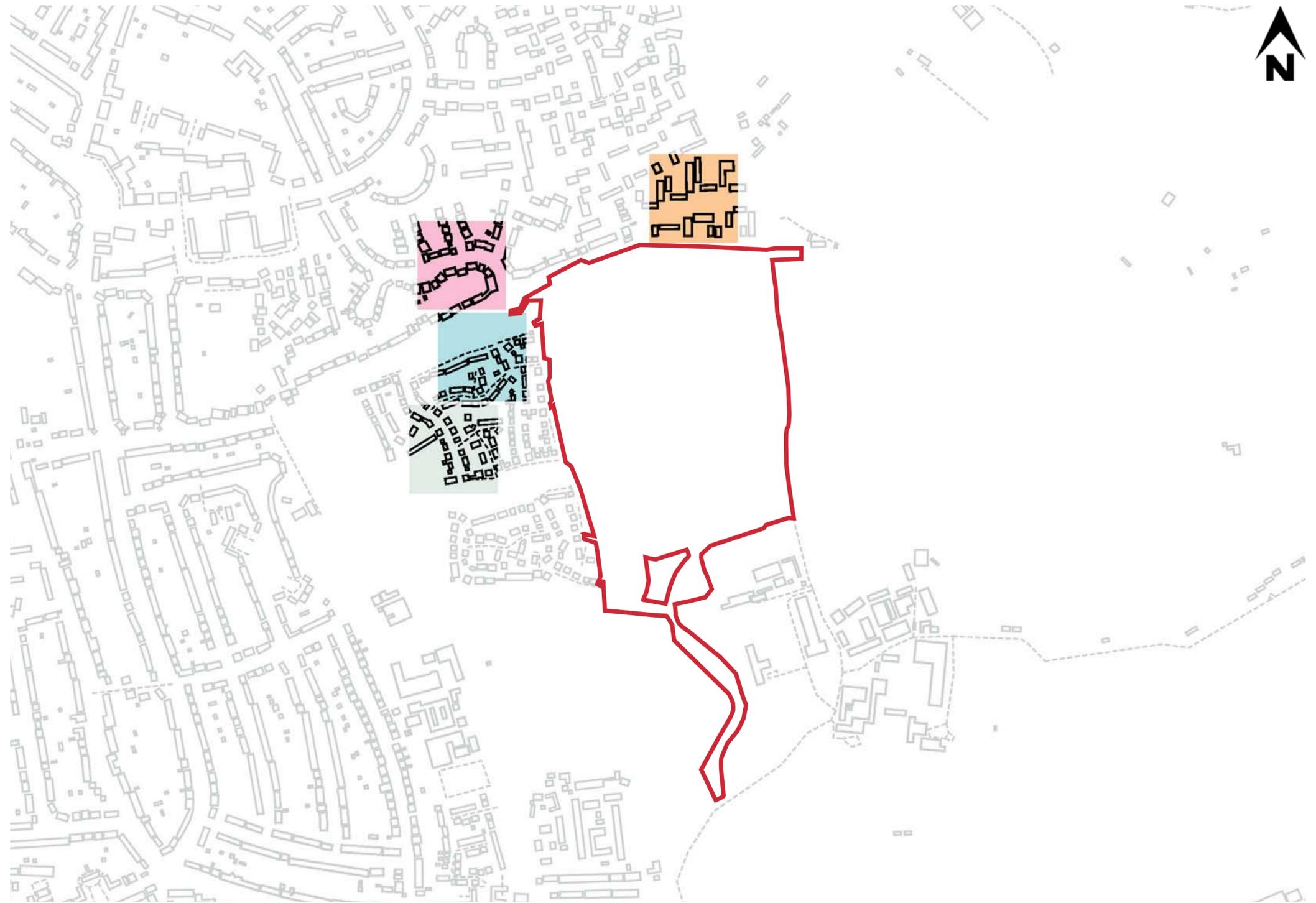


Figure 27. Local Context Character Areas

5.14.C.A-1 | Newgate Close

5.14.1. Newgate Close is a densely packed cul-de-sac immediately to the north of the site. It generally features 2-storey red brick terraced houses with some semi-detached homes dispersed throughout the area. The dwellings in this region can be characterised by uniform ridge-line heights and modest pitched roofs. Additionally, there is notable use of box dormers and clay tiles. Although simple, the architectural details are consistent amongst the dwellings. uPVC windows are commonly used and brick soldier courses are frequently used above openings.

5.14.2. The housing arrangement is inward facing, with houses tightly aligned along a road (approx 6.6m) that can facilitate two way traffic. There is a reasonable set back from this road, with front gardens and driveways providing a gap of approximately 10m either side. Many homes include a single-vehicle driveway or off street parking. Landscape features are soft and suburban: low hedges, small lawns, shrub borders and occasional street-tree plantings are used to soften the hard edges that are associated with the architectural style.



Figure 30. Redbrick External Wall Finish



Figure 31. Clay Interlocking Roof Tile

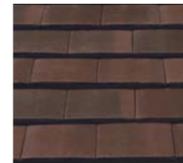


Figure 32. Clay Wall Hung Tiles

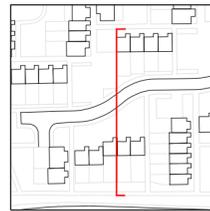


Figure 33. Key Plan

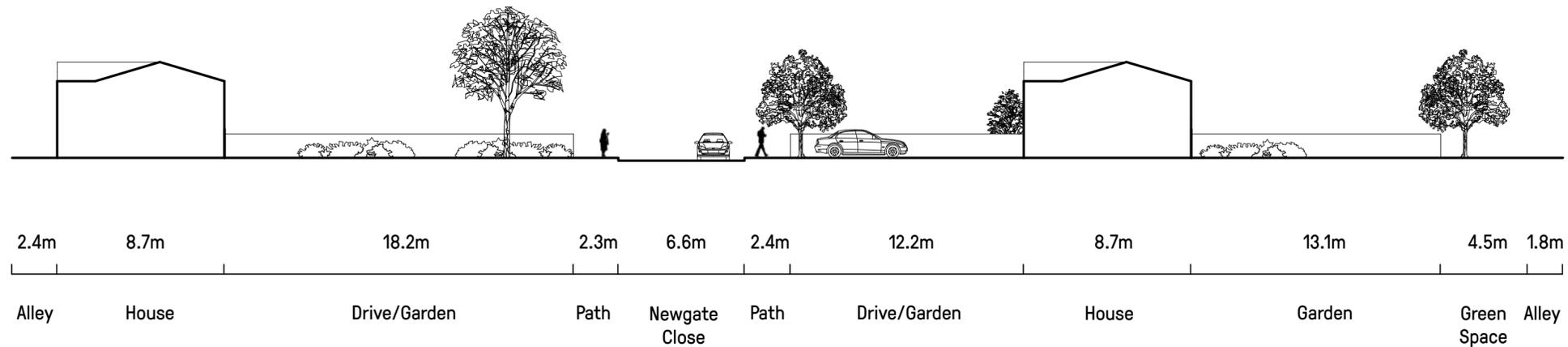


Figure 34. Newgate Close Street Section



Figure 28. Newgate Close North



Figure 29. Newgate Close South

5.15.C.A-2 | Barnfield Road

5.15.1. Barnfield Road is a mid-century suburban street featuring primarily 1930s-1970s semi-detached and detached houses to the north of the site. Building heights along the road are uniformly two stories, with steeply pitched roofs consisting of clay tiles. The houses typically present modest frontages, with enough space for driveways, shrubs and small lawns. Architectural details include classic mid-century features: net-crete or brick facades, bay windows on ground floors, simple canopies over entrances, and casement style-glazing.

5.15.2. Building plots face directly onto the road, which is large enough for two-way traffic. Additionally, the houses typically feature either a driveway or a garage. The road itself has verges on both sides, with walkways situated on the other sides of the verge. These walkways are approximately 1.5-2m and separate the residences and the road. Landscaping features include uniform front lawns, low hedges and short boundary walls. There are occasional street trees along the road.



Figure 37. Redbrick External Wall Finish



Figure 38. Rendered Wall Finish, colour varies



Figure 39. Clay Tiles (Grey & Red)

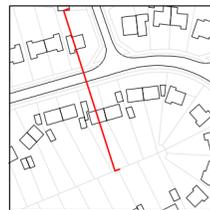


Figure 40. Key Plan

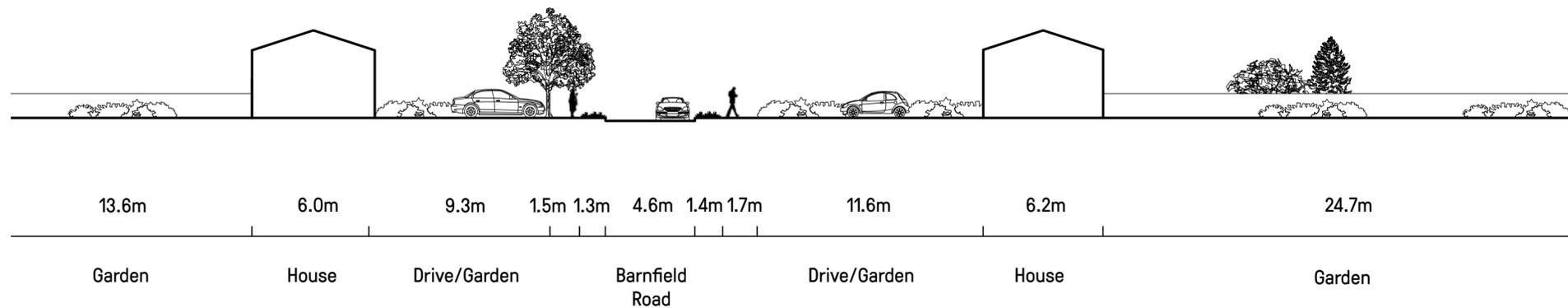


Figure 41. Barnfield Road typical street section



Figure 36. Detached Dwelling House, Barnfield Road



Figure 35. Semi-detached Dwelling houses, Barnfield Road

5.16.C.A-3 | Osprey Road

5.16.1. Osprey Road comprises the Primary loop road through the recent Oaklands Grange development. The street is characterised by a series of 2-2.5 storey detached and semi-detached dwelling houses, with pitched roofs (some gable fronted).

5.16.2. The material palette along Osprey Drive is typically a more formal multi-red brick, with coloured window frames, a pitched entrance canopy and a decorative soldier course pattern laid at an angle in areas. Marker buildings are treated in Black weatherboard or a cream render.

5.16.3. A 2 meter wide path runs adjacent to the 6 meter spine road, driveways with garages are typically set between dwelling houses. Most plots have a front garden of fluctuating size.



Figure 47. Key Plan



Figure 44. Redbrick External Wall Finish



Figure 45. Rendered Wall Finish



Figure 46. Gray Slate Roof Tile



Figure 43. 2-Storey semi-detached dwellings on Osprey Road

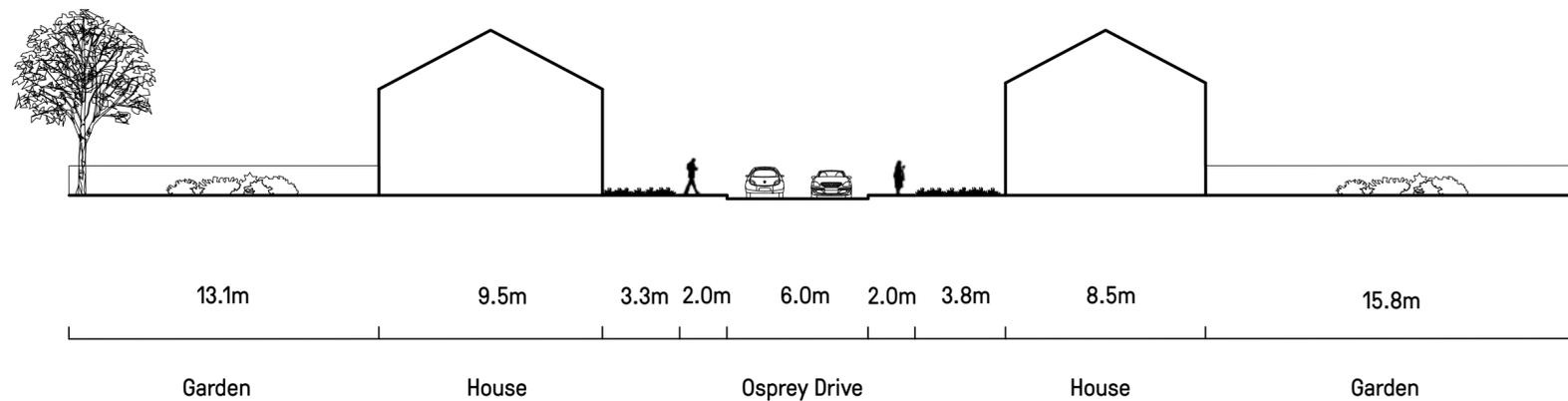


Figure 48. Osprey Road Street Section



Figure 42. 2.5-Storey semi-detached dwelling on Osprey Road

5.17.C.A-4 | Mirvus Road

5.17.1. Mirvus Road is typically made up of 2.5 storey dwelling houses with pitched roofs and box dormers, occasionally broken up with 2 storey detached houses with projecting gable elements.

5.17.2. The material palette constitutes a consistent multi-red brick wall finish, grey slate roof tiles, cream window frames and a projecting pitched canopy detail. A mock tudor board gable detail exists on a couple of houses, providing subtle variation. Black weatherboard is utilised on the corner turner house to aid wayfinding.

5.17.3. The road is tertiary in typology with a shared surface road. The frontages survey a green edge containing an active travel route which characterises the area. Front gardens are typically quite large, providing a nice setback from the road, whilst parking is typically located between dwellings.



Figure 1. Key Plan



Figure 51. Redbrick External Wall Finish



Figure 52. Black Weatherboard Wall Finish



Figure 53. Gray Slate Roof Tile



Figure 50. Mirvus Road - Black weatherboard to corner turner, red brick dwellings behind



Figure 49. Mirvus road street scene, consistent material, parking and external amenity typology

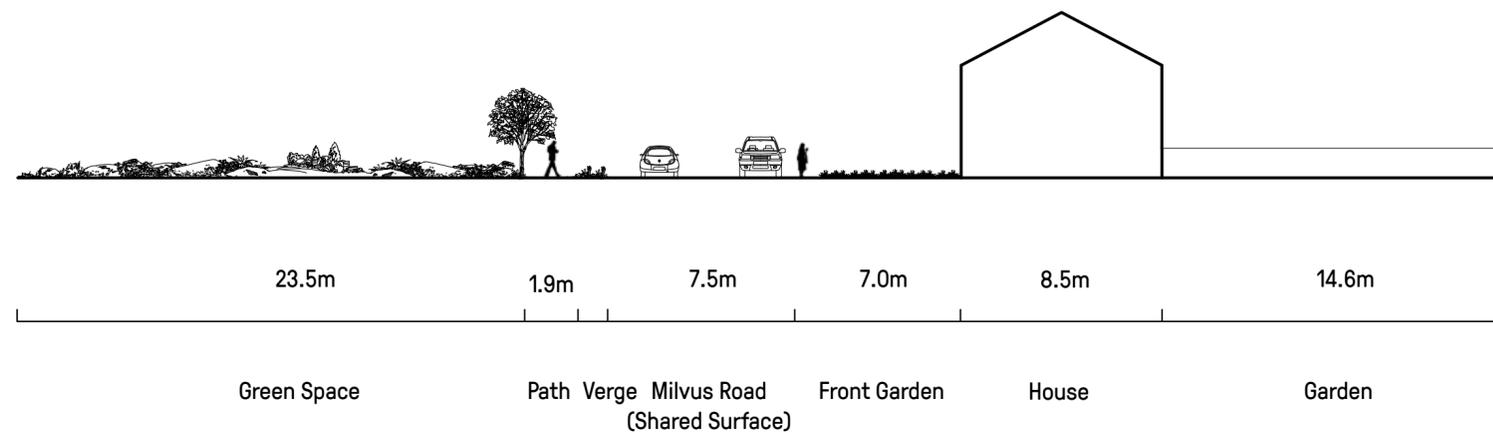


Figure 54. Mirvus road street section

5.18.Existing B4 Site Axonometric



Figure 55. Site B4 Existing Site Axo

5.19.Existing Site Photos



Figure 56. Existing Site Image - View from the western boundary looking north towards Sandpit Lane



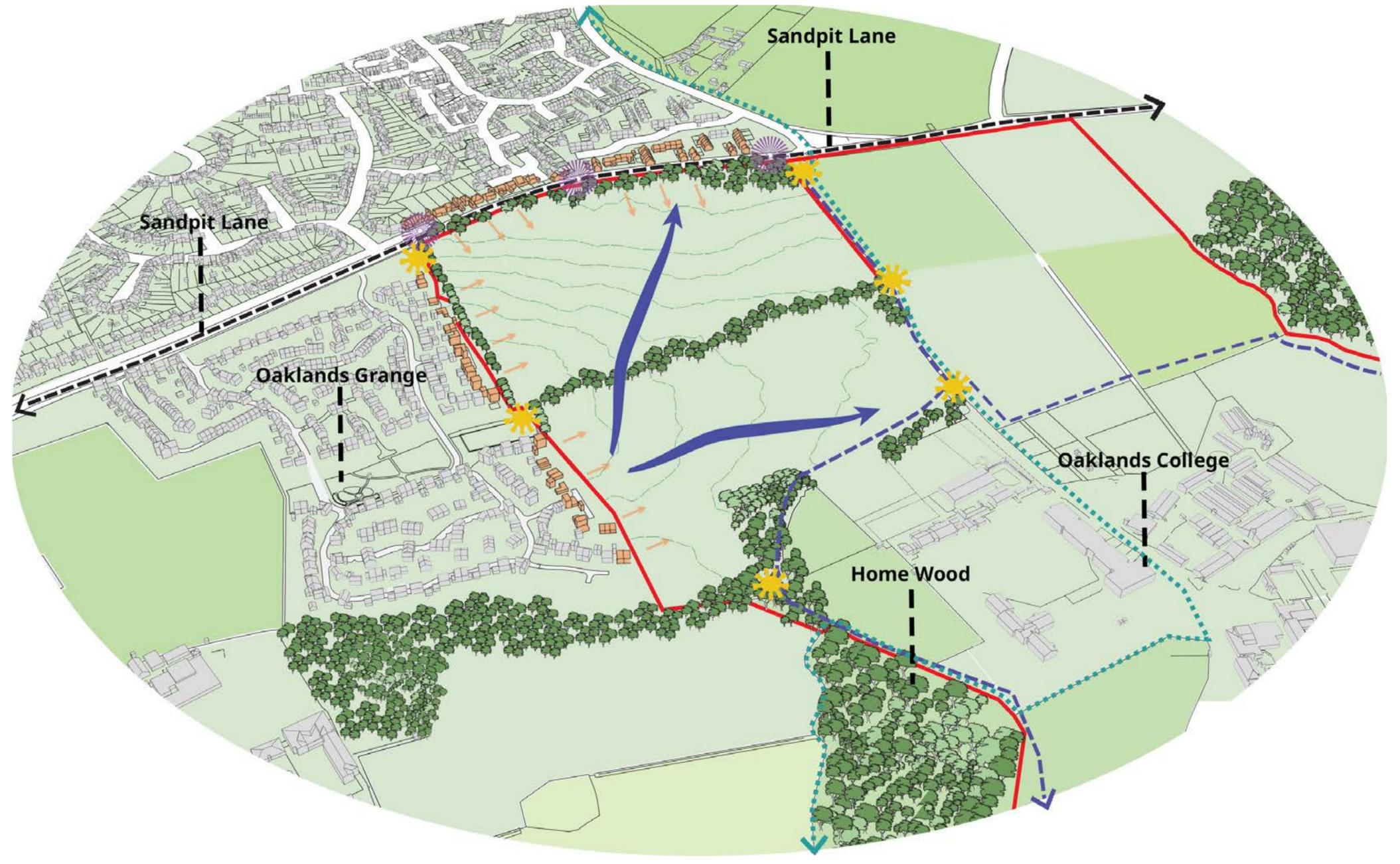
Figure 57. Existing Site Image - View from the western boundary looking east



Figure 58. Existing Site Image - View from the eastern boundary looking southwest towards Oaklands Grange and the existing treeline bisecting the site

5.20. Site Constraints

- 5.20.1. The site presents a range of constraints that has informed the design approach.
- 5.20.2. The site is on the edge of the Green Belt. Any proposed development must demonstrate sensitivity to local areas such as Home Wood, alongside the site's landscape character and visual relationship with its surroundings.
- 5.20.3. The site features a noticeable change in levels, rising from approximately 79m in the east to 88m in the west. This gradient presents both challenges and opportunities in terms of building placement, access and integration with the existing landscape. The natural dip in site topography also contributes to an area of surface water flooding, east-west through the centre of the site.
- 5.20.4. Sandpit Lane, which runs along the Northern boundary of the site generates noise that may impact residential amenity. This necessitates a considered approach to site layout, building orientation and potential mitigation measures.



Key Legend

- Scheme Application Boundary
- Topography Contours
- ★ Existing Site Entrances
- - - Green Belt Boundary
- Surface Water Flood Risk
- ★ Acoustic Impact from Main Road
- Neighbouring Properties
- Views from Neighbouring Properties

Figure 59. Site Constraints Diagram

5.21. Site Opportunities

- 5.21.1. The site relates well to the existing settlement edge, and the roofscape of the new housing to the west provides containment.
- 5.21.2. There are opportunities to improve and rationalise pedestrian and cycle connectivity through the B4 site and the wider college grounds. There is also the potential to link through to the neighbouring Oaklands Grange Development
- 5.21.3. There's much potential to enhance habitat links and biodiversity and to restore hedgerows.

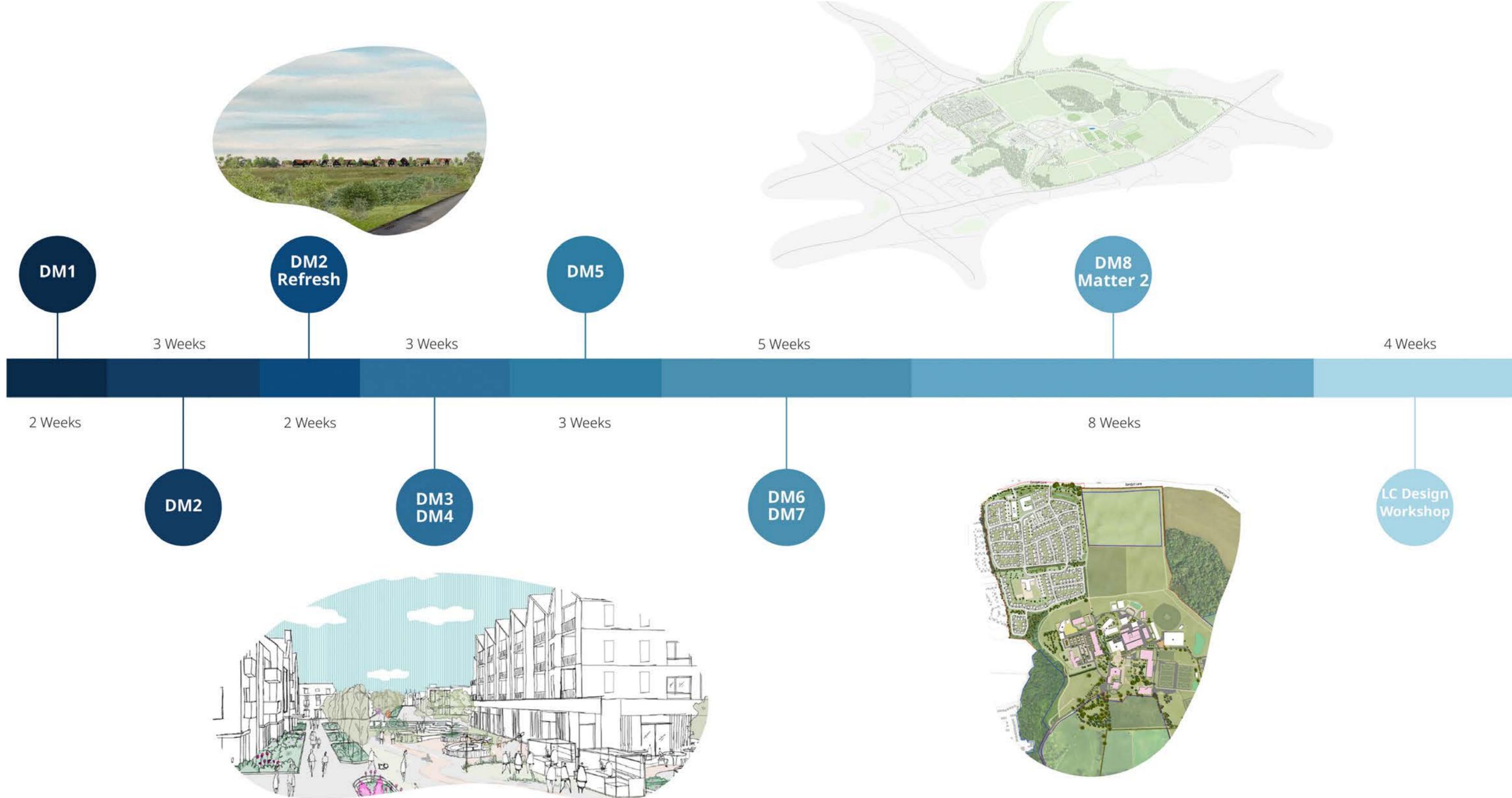


Figure 60. Site Opportunity Diagram

6. Design Development



6.1. Design Development Timeline



6.2. DM2 Pre-App Meeting

6.2.1. Following Design Meeting 1 (DM1), which focused on the contextual analysis of the site/area as per the SACDC Toolkit, the team were advised to prepare the following items to aid discussions at Design Meeting 2 dated 05.02.2055:

- Draft Framework Plans inc. Land Use, Movement, Landscaping etc.
- Spatial typologies such as; Street hierarchy & character, Activation, Water Management etc.
- The Architectural response in terms of House Types, Densities, Height & Scale

6.2.2. The team received feedback during the course of the meeting and were also issued formal written feedback in the days following.

6.2.3. A principal argument revolved around proposals to remove/divert PRoWs, particularly the North/South route through the College, as although this improves campus security, it could be argued that it creates a large area of impermeable land. The PRoW Improvement Plan which seeks to upgrade and better link the wider network was tabled. Diversions through Homewood may present safety concerns after dark, and instead function as a downgrade.

6.2.4. The Sandridge Parish Neighbourhood Plan 2021 also references policies relating to movement including creating a linkage for cyclists and pedestrians between Jersey Lane residing to the North of the Site, and Alban Way to the south of the site, whilst also providing additional crossing points along Sandpit Lane.

6.2.5. Another key theme revolved around presenting the scheme as one vision working together, rather than two projects. Efforts were made to create a site-wide document, which demonstrated a step in the right direction.

6.2.6. Additionally areas of improvements and thought provoking questions were offered up, these included comments around ensuring frontage parking is broken up by green space, and challenging the positioning of the local centre and in particular the primary school in the south-eastern corner, which could generate unwanted traffic through the development.

1.1.1. The Central open space was praised for having good placemaking potential and creating a link between the adjacent Oaklands Grange Development.



Figure 61. Draft Illustrative Masterplan presented at Design Meeting 2

6.3. DM2 Refresh Pre-App Meeting

6.3.1. A 'DM2 Refresher' meeting was called so some of the key points highlighted at DM2 could be addressed, DM3 & DM4 were subsequently scheduled to be merged so that programme would not slip.

6.3.2. In preparation the team adapted the scheme by:

- Redesigning the North/South PRoW to follow the edge of homewood, rather than through it, improving surveillance. Creation of an East/West Route connecting into it.
- Initial considerations into Draft Local Plan Policy NEB12 on Green Open Space provisions condensing development zones to a 40DPH density, in line with targets.
- Production of Street typology plans and sections, as well as an initial character assessment diagram in response to DM2 comments.

6.3.3. Following the conclusion of the DM2 Refresher presentation, the team were encouraged to explore the following:

- Synergies between the B4 development & the College, as well as ecological corridors across the site and the wider network.
- Additional clarity along the western edge, surveillance in this area and connections through to Oaklands Grange
- The character of the SuDs areas need to be better defined, a variety of dry and wet basins would be welcomed.

6.3.4. A College safeguarding strategy note was presented, but it was debated that a solution that meets both public and College needs should be found. The routes to the south of the primary school also raised concerns, given the likely boundary treatments and lack of surveillance in this area.

6.3.5. The research subsequently conducted on 'catchment' supports having the primary school to the south of the B4 site, however the plot could be re-designed to improve surveillance.



Figure 62. The Illustrative Masterplan presented at the DM2 Refresh Meeting

6.4. DM3/DM4 Pre-App Meeting

6.4.1. Following the conclusion of the DM2 Refresher meeting, the team were tasked with producing the following information:

- A revised illustrative masterplan showing increased detail, individual plots etc.
- A first draft of parameter plans.
- A first look at the detailed element of the residential site including, sketch 3D views, street scene elevations and associated landscaping.

6.4.2. The evolving Masterplan also underwent the following changes, influenced by DM2 refresher feedback and the receipt of outstanding information:

- An increase in attenuation capacity across the residential site, to the north, east and central open space, driven by civils input.
- The repositioning of the Primary School Site, with houses wrapping much of the perimeter, creating edge activation and surveillance.
- Integrating dwelling houses to the west of the care home, creating a more contextual edge
- The exploration of material character styles to the eastern edge of the site and primary spine roads.

6.4.3. Following the DM3/DM4 presentation, the team received the following feedback:

- The location of the Local Centre should be treated as fluid, as of this stage. The team were encouraged to explore its relationship to the primary school, perhaps through a direct line of sight, and review the SACDC toolkit in conjunction.
- The team should go further to make the most of the unique and interesting mix of uses proposed for this exceptional site.
- The Cul-de-sacs in Oaklands Grange should be connected with footpaths to the Oaklands Blossom residential development.



Figure 63. The Illustrative Masterplan presented at DM3/DM4 showing an increased level of detail

6.5. DM3/DM4 Pre-App Meeting

6.5.1. In addition, the team were commended for the more successful items below:

- The Architectural expression of material style 1 along the eastern edge, where the Gable ends echo the arts and crafts buildings in Sandridge and Wheathampstead. Material style 2, shown promise but perhaps further consideration needed to be given to the polychromatic patterns.
- The layering of topography, surface water, landscape, SuDs and street layout created a strong narrative for the layout of the residential area.
- The revised character assessment and height diagrams now relate to the streets and spaces.

Top Right: Provides an insight into the types of diagrams and images produced for the various pre-app meetings, and illustrates how the process helped evolve the scheme. This example focuses on the Character Assessment Diagram, and shows its progression and how comments surrounding relating character areas to the streets and spaces where been taken on board.

Bottom Right: Shows the vision and architectural expression for the eastern edge of the B4 site. Which would be seen from Sandpit Lane on approach to St. Albans. This area exhibits material style 1, and places an emphasis on prominent gable-ends, echoing the arts and crafts buildings in Sandridge and Wheathampstead.



Figure 64. DM2 Refresher Character Study Diagram

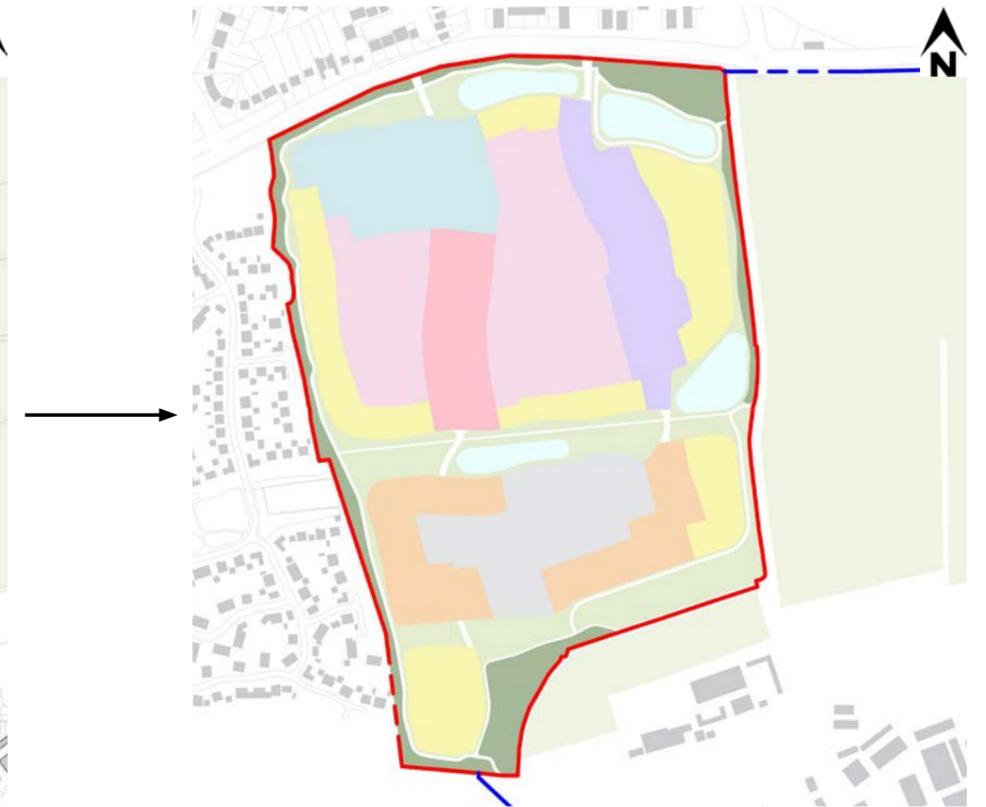


Figure 65. DM3/DM4 Character Study Diagram



Figure 66. Eastern Edge Visualisation, Illustrating similarities with Sandridge & Wheathampstead

