

Land west of Brookmans Park Railway Station

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

Introduction

This document has been prepared on behalf of Hill Residential Limited (Hill) and the Royal Veterinary College (RVC) at the request of Welwyn Hatfield Council. It provides a strategic framework to guide the preparation of a planning application for the development of Land west of Brookmans Park Railway Station, site HS22 in the adopted Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan 2016-2036.

The Framework sets out principles for creating a high-quality and sustainable development.

It identifies key design opportunities and indicates the distribution of development, green connections and access provisions.



Hill Residential Ltd

**The Power House
Gunpowder Mill
Powdermill Lane
Waltham Abbey
Essex
EN9 1BN**



Royal Veterinary College

**Hawkshead Lane
Brookmans Park
Hatfield
Hertfordshire
AL9 7TA**



PRP

**10 Lindsey Street
London
EC1A 9HP**

Planning Policy Overview

Policy SADM 31 in the adopted Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan (2016-2036) released the Land west of Brookmans Park Railway Station from the Green Belt and allocated site HS22 for residential development. Development of HS22 requires:

- A new, replacement, pedestrian and cycle bridge across the railway.
- Provision of additional primary school capacity including making provision on site for a two form of entry primary school.

A dwelling capacity of 428 homes is provided for by policy.

Table 15 of the Local Plan sets out a number of considerations to be taken into account in bringing forward proposals for the site. Those considerations have informed this Strategic Framework and will continue to inform proposals as they develop further.

Strategic Framework - Stakeholder Engagement

The Strategic Framework for Land West of Brookmans Park Railway Station has been the subject of extensive engagement in 2024, in tandem with the pre application process with Welwyn Hatfield. This includes:

- Formation of the Strategic Framework Steering Group to oversee and guide the preparation of the Strategic Framework. The Group consists of a cross party panel of borough councillors and is convened by planning policy officers.
- Site visit and design review with Hertfordshire Design Review Panel who have praised the high quality rationale within the Strategic Framework.
- Supportive councillor and officer feedback to the Strategic Framework presentation (July 2024) which has informed the development of the Strategic Framework and overarching principles guiding the design approach and planning application for HS22.
- Well attended Public Engagement event held in Brookmans Park, together with online engagement across July 2024.
- Further engagement with the local community, councillors and the Design Review Panel will take place prior to submission of the planning application.

Scheme Benefits for the community of Brookmans Park

The proposed development is expected to provide the following socio-economic benefits for the Brookmans Park community:

- Land for a new 2 Form Entry primary school whose facilities could be made available to the local community outside of school hours.
- A new, widened, pedestrian and cycle footbridge over the railway line to provide:
 - a.** improved connections from Brookmans Park to the station, new primary school, the public rights of way network and the new community.
 - b.** a direct connection from the development to the village centre promoting the vitality of shops and services within Brookmans Park.
- New gateways to the village including enhanced access arrangements / public realm in the Station vicinity.
- New public open spaces, areas for play, green corridors and 'walking loops' within the development promoting connections between the new and existing community and to the wider public rights of way network.
- Protecting the most important habitats on site, enhancing existing habitats and creating new areas of bio-diversity.
- Speed reduction and improved pedestrian environment on Station Road.
- Potential for financial contributions towards identified social infrastructure needs.
- 35% of the homes will be delivered as affordable housing.
- Providing much needed housing for the borough.
- Providing employment and apprenticeship opportunities during the construction phase for the local community and local businesses.

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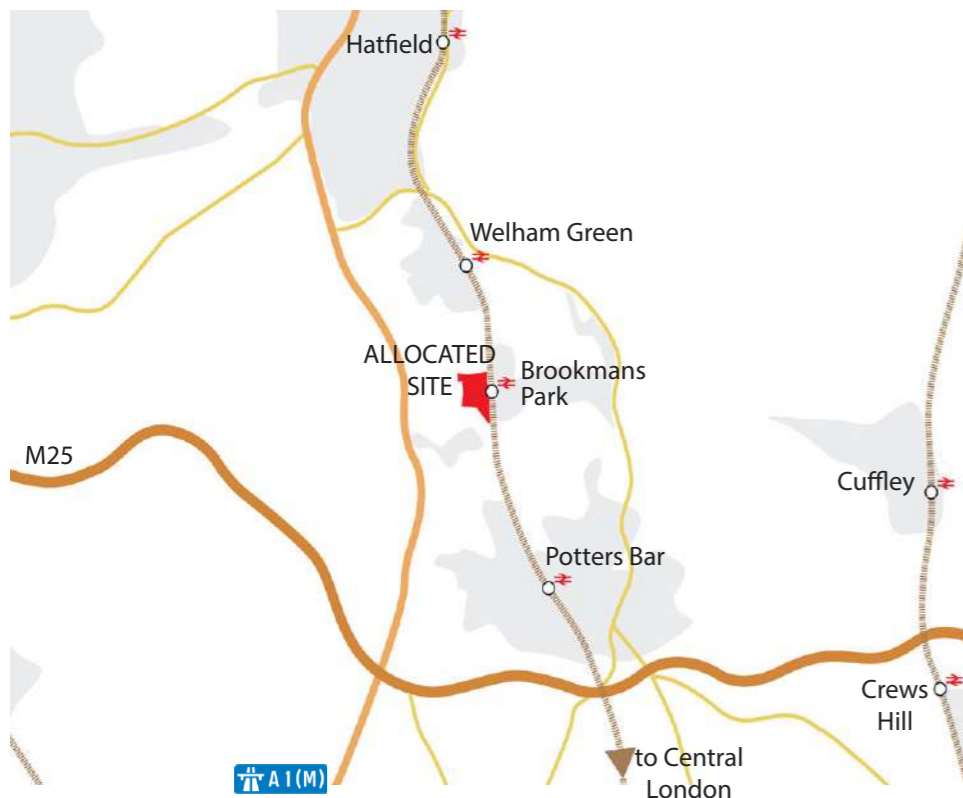
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Understanding the Place

Site Location and Connectivity

- The site adjoins Brookmans Park and lies to the west of Brookmans Park railway station close to the village centre.
- Brookmans Park village centre is a 10-minute walk from the proposed development, situated on the eastern side of the railway line. It provides a selection of around 40 local shops, bars, restaurants and cafés making it the largest centre outside of Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield,
- The RVC itself, a major local employer, is a 15-minute walk from the site.
- The site also benefits from a direct connection to Brookmans Park railway station providing access to regular trains to major employment and service locations including Welwyn Garden City, Hatfield, Stevenage and London.
- The site is located north of London in the borough of Welwyn Hatfield, with the wider strategic road network (A1(M) and M25) less than 10 minutes away by car.



Local Context | Architectural Character

Brookmans Park Village Centre



Brookmans Park Village Centre



Bradmore Green



Brookmans Gastropub
(Previously Brookmans Park Hotel)

Brookmans Park has a thriving village centre including shops and places to eat, as well as wider commercial services such as dentistry, hairdressing and pet grooming, set within an attractive 1930s architectural character. The village green, Bradmore Green, is flanked by commercial uses at ground floor level with residential accommodation above many of the properties. A wide range of materials are present in the village centre, from dark-red to bright orange brickwork, white render and half-timber facades. The buildings are richly detailed with polychromatic brickwork, varying brick patterns, soldier coursing and stone banding.

Evolution of Brookmans Park Character



Whilst Brookmans Park originated in the late 1700s when the Gausson family created an estate in the area, its character predominantly formed after the 1st World War when the railway station was built and the village began to expand more rapidly. The village contains a wide range of architectural styles, demonstrating the area's rich history and growth through different historical periods. The majority of residential properties are large, 1930s style detached homes with deep frontage setbacks and large rear gardens. There is also a selection of early-mid century, arts and craft style homes, as well as neo-Georgian houses.

Wider Area Character



Woodman Inn, Water End



Royal Veterinary College Campus



Royal Veterinary College,
Agricultural Buildings

The Royal Veterinary College campus comprises a group of large scale, contemporary educational and residential buildings as well as a series of warehouses and agricultural buildings for educational use. Further west, a series of rural neighbourhoods are located along Warrengate Road.

Brookmans Park Modern Character



The Green Belt has previously prevented outward growth for the village, hence recent and emerging redevelopment of existing properties has been prevalent. There isn't a coherent style to the refurbished homes. Some have been renovated with a contemporary finish, introducing balconies and feature glazing panels, but still with some reference to the more traditional surrounding character. Their materiality is a mix of red and buff brick or white and cream render, with some examples of faux half-timber façades.

Local Context | Landscape Character

Brookmans Park exhibits a wide range of landscape character styles including woodland walks, local wildlife areas, leisure parklands, agricultural fields and urban greens.



The Folly Arch by J.C. Buckler



Water End Swallow Holes - SSSI



Mimmshall Brook



Gobions Wood



Brookmans Park Golf Course



Royal Veterinary College Grazing Fields



Brookmans Park Village Green



Gobions Pond







North Mymms footpath

Local Context | Strategic Green Infrastructure

There are a number of strategic green spaces within close proximity to the site:

- **Water End Swallow Holes (SSSI):** 10.89ha; Approx 0.4km to the west
- **Gobions Wood Nature Reserve:** 93.69ha; Approx 0.7km to the east
- **Peplin's Wood:** 15.48ha; Approx 0.5km to the north-east
- The strategic green infrastructure also includes areas designated as local wildlife sites that aren't formally publicly accessible, such as Brick Kiln Wood (WS144) and Potterells Wood (WS145).



KEY	
	STRATEGIC GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE
	WATERCOURSES AND BODIES OF WATER
	1KM RADIUS
	PUBLIC RIGHT OF WAY

The Site

The site is bordered by Brick Kiln Wood (partly designated as ancient woodland) to the west, a rural country lane to the north, the East Coast Main Line to the east and Ray Brook, paddocks and pastures associated with the Royal Veterinary College towards the south.

The site also benefits from the ability to form a direct connection to Brookmans Park railway station.

Brookmans Park village centre to the east is within 800m of all parts of the site.

There are a number of existing footpaths around the site including a north-south route running through the eastern part of the site and an east-west route along Ray Brook to the southern boundary. An informal route has established to the east of the site, running north-south along the railway.

KEY



Aerial image



1 View from Brookmans Park Train Station towards Brookmans Ave and Station Rd



2 View from train platform footbridge looking along the eastern site boundary



3 Topography generally flat towards the north, but slopes down to Ray Brook



4 Start of hedged footpath from Bradmore Lane along the eastern boundary of the site



5 Southern Pond



6 View across the lower part of the site which is a mixture of grassland and scrub



7 View from north to south-west: woodland edge on the right, Royal Veterinary College Campus in the distance



8 Northern pond



9 View west down Bradmore Lane

Routes, Rights of Way and Access Points













This diagram illustrates the existing vehicular and pedestrian routes around the site, highlighting potential and existing points of access to the allocated land.

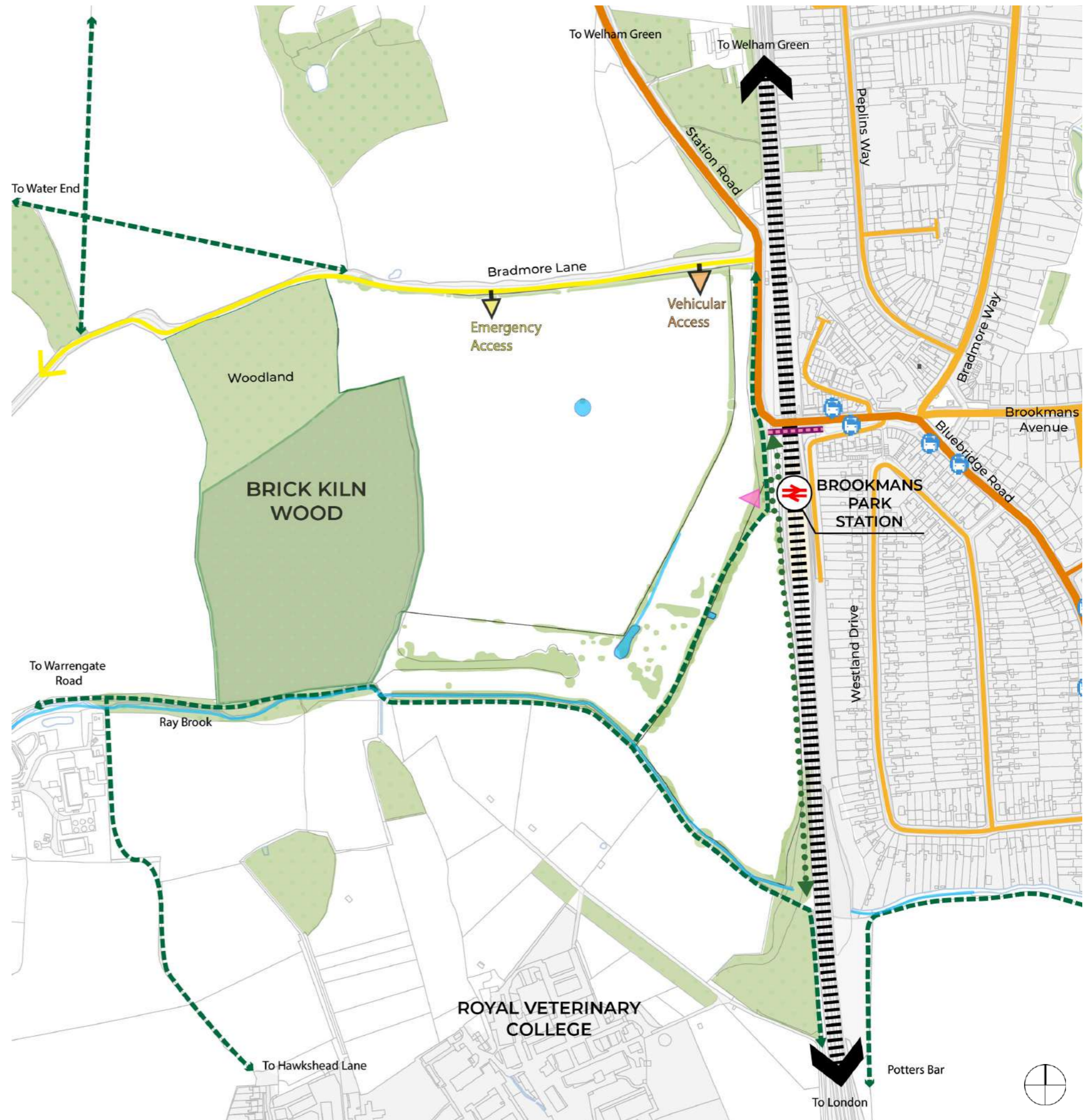
It also indicates conveniently located public transport routes with the train station and bus stops that sit adjacent to the site.

Trainline: East Coast Mainline (Welwyn Garden City - London Kings Cross)

Buses: 305 Sandridge - Potters Bar, 610 Luton-Cockfosters, 355 Welham Green-Enfield

KEY

-  EAST COAST MAIN LINE
-  RESIDENTIAL STREETS WITH DESIGNATED FOOTPATHS
-  COUNTRY LANE
-  BUS ROUTE
-  PUBLIC RIGHT OF WAY
-  INFORMAL WALKING ROUTE
-  BROOKMANS PARK STATION
-  BUS STOP
-  VEHICULAR ACCESS
-  EMERGENCY ACCESS
-  POOR QUALITY EXISTING FOOTBRIDGE
-  PEDESTRIAN ACCESS FROM THE STATION



Topography

The levels significantly change across the site and require careful consideration.

The north-west corner of the site is generally level and sits at the highest point. Gentle slopes fall towards the north-east corner and the south-west corner.

The north-eastern boundary of the site features steep banks along Station Road.



KEY

- 89 AOD
- CONTOUR
- GENTLE SLOPE
- MODERATE SLOPE
- STEEP BANK

Flood Risk




The majority of the site is within Flood Zone 1 according to the Environment Agency flood risk map for planning.

This diagram illustrates the extent of the maximum flood risk across the site including the following:

- Flood Zone 2
- Flood Zone 3



KEY

-  WATERCOURSES / WATER BODIES
-  FLOOD ZONE 2 EXTENT
-  FLOOD ZONE 3 EXTENT

Landscape and Biodiversity Appraisal

L1 Field and modified grassland/temporary leys of low ecological value. The main field is relatively flat, enclosed to the north, west and east by vegetation and/or development with main relationship to RVC fields and campus. There are some wider views to south west. The field to the east is narrow and relatively flat, enclosed by hedgerows. The field to the south east has a distinctive slope predominantly to the south with the main relationship to RVC fields and campus.

L2 The southern site field has neutral grassland and areas of mixed scrub of higher ecological value, on steeper south facing slopes of minor valley of Ray Brook. Semi-natural, enclosed, intimate character.

L3 The Ray Brook is a small watercourse flowing east to west, mostly enclosed by hedgerows. Hedgerows and trees form valuable screening and boundary defining the watercourse. The stream itself is not a prominent feature.

L4 Areas of mixed scrub and individual hawthorns.

L5 Brick Kiln Wood consisting of mature oak woodland, part Ancient Woodland. Forms strong boundary to west and gives woodland edge character to adjacent parts of site. Sensitive ecology feature requiring minimum 15m buffer.

L6 Bradmore Lane is lined with hedgerows and mature trees, mostly oaks. Forms strong northern boundary to site and visual enclosure.

L7 Hedgerows in the north eastern part of site are of generally poor condition and sparse with limited landscape contribution.

L8 Wooded embankment to Station Road and station platform in poor to moderate condition (mostly category C). 1 tree of category A (high quality).

L9 Section of FP9 lined by hedgerow and trees. Mostly category B, some A.

L10 Relatively open/sparse vegetation on section of boundary adjacent to Railway (with informal path adjacent to railway). Site exposed to railway.

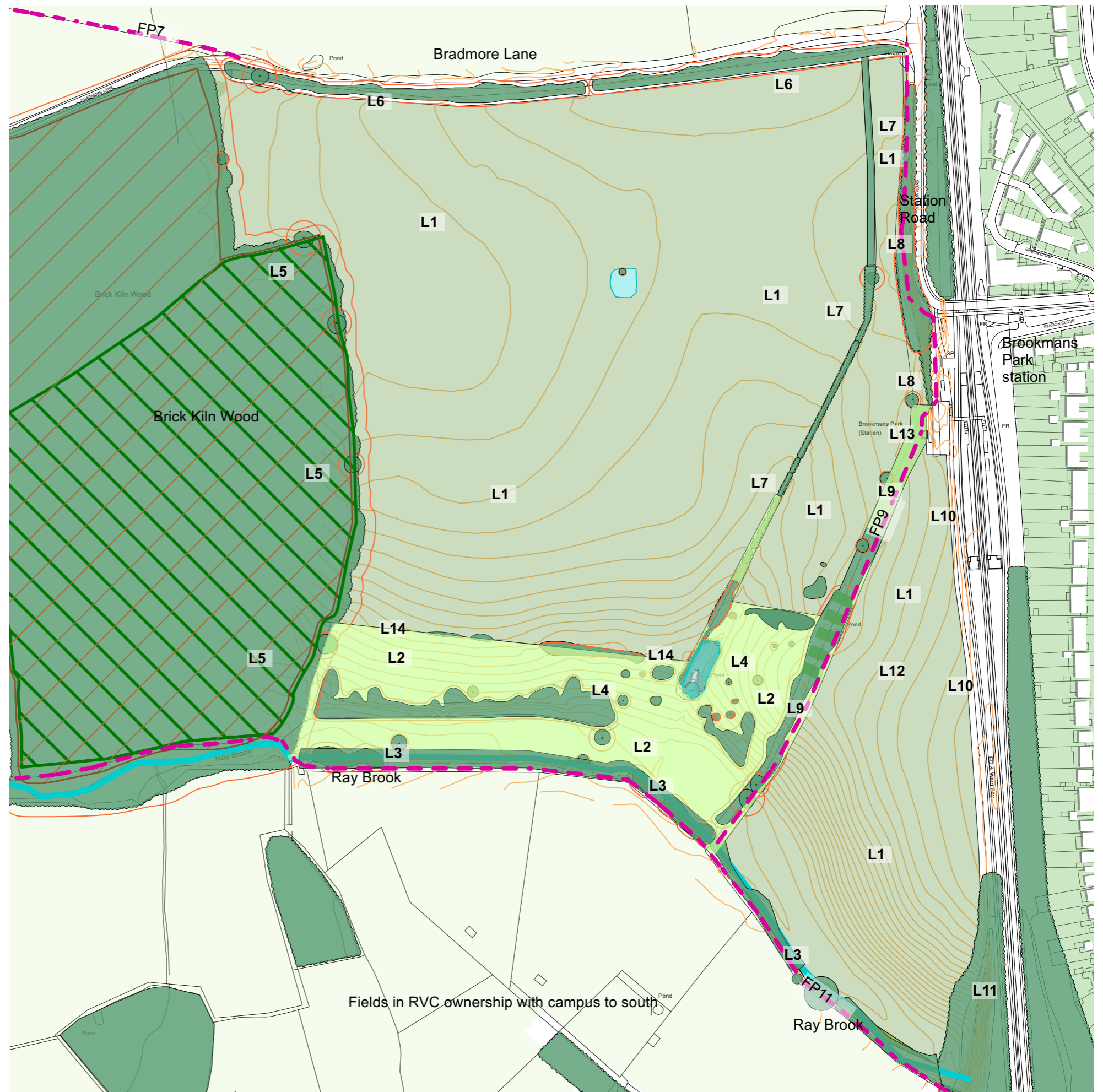
L11 Dense scrub beyond site boundary on rail embankment

L12 Overhead power lines in field.

L13 Substation

L14 Fenceline with some poor quality hedge/scrub remnants on southern boundary of the larger site field.

KEY			
	ANCIENT WOODLAND		EXISTING WOODLAND, SCRUB AND HEDGEROW**
	LOCAL WILDLIFE SITE		EXISTING WATERCOURSES
	PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY		MODIFIED GRASSLAND/TEMPORARY LEYS
			NEUTRAL GRASSLAND






























Constraints & Opportunities

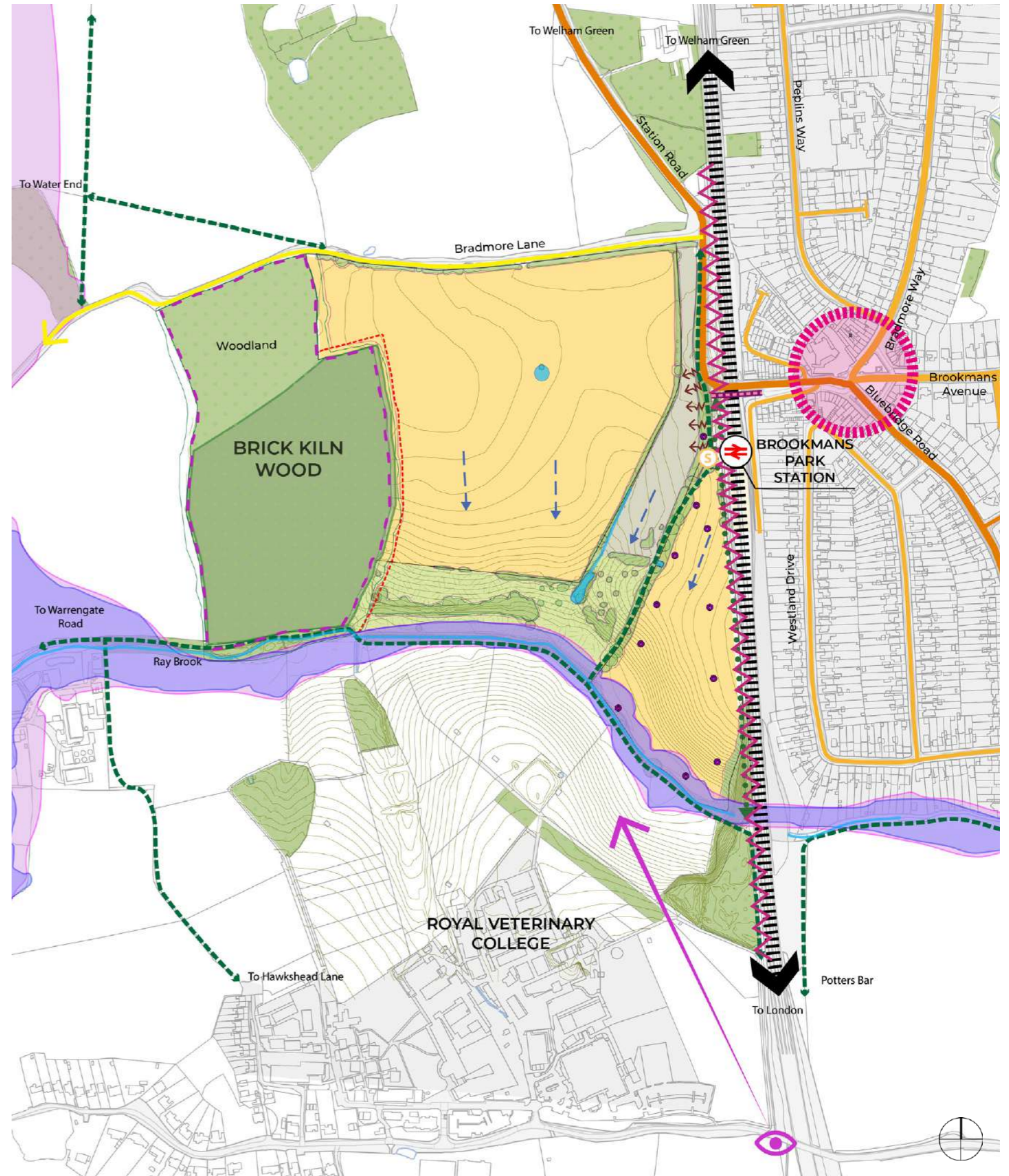
Site Constraints Plan

Site analysis studies have identified a series of constraints. These include:

- A 15m buffer to the ancient woodland (Brick Kiln Wood)
- Significant level changes at the southern extent of the site and in places between the site and railway station
- An area of good quality grassland and scrub to the south
- A series of 11KW electricity lines running through the south-eastern field
- Access and maintenance of the existing substation close to the station entrance
- Potential for noise pollution from the East Coast Main Line
- Public rights of way which run through the site and along the eastern and southern boundaries
- A key view identified in the Local Plan from the footpath to the south toward Hawkshead Lane
- Existing water bodies and water courses
- Existing hedgerows cross the site
- Retaining the rural character of Bradmore Lane

KEY

	BUFFER TO ANCIENT WOODLAND		WS 144 LOCAL WILDLIFE SITE
	EAST COAST MAIN LINE		ANCIENT WOODLAND
	RESIDENTIAL STREETS WITH DESIGNATED FOOTPATHS		MIX OF GRASSLAND AND SCRUB
	COUNTRY LANE		ARABLE LAND
	BUS ROUTE		GRASSLAND
	PUBLIC RIGHT OF WAY		SURROUNDING LANDSCAPE
	INFORMAL WALKING ROUTE		WATERCOURSES / WATER BODIES
	EXISTING VEGETATION		NOISE FROM RAILWAY
	VEGETATION CANOPY		STEEP SLOPE
	VEGETATION ROOT PROTECTION AREA		POOR QUALITY EXISTING BRIDGE
	11KW ELECTRICITY LINE POSTS		FLOOD ZONE 2 EXTENT
	EXISTING SUBSTATION		FLOOD ZONE 3 EXTENT
	GENERAL DRAINAGE DIRECTION		VILLAGE CENTRE
			LIMITED DISTANT VIEW FROM HAWKSHEAD LANE



Reviewing possible school locations

Policy HS22 requires provision be made for the site to accommodate a 2 Form Entry Primary School. National guidance identifies that the area required for a 2FE Primary school is between 1.6 and 2 hectares. Given that land has been taken out of the Green Belt to meet the housing needs for the area, it will be important that the school site is designed as efficiently as possible.

✓ PREFERRED LOCATION

- E** • Well located for pedestrians and cyclists
- Avoid off-site car traffic travelling through the residential neighbourhoods
- Signal the entrance to the school from the point of entry into the site
- Allow easy use of outdoor space
- Take advantage of the existing levels
- Suitable noise levels achievable. Station Road creates further separation from the railway, additionally the densely landscaped bank and hedged public footpath further shield the site from the railway noise
- Enables more cohesive design of housing areas
- Improved gateway to site from Bradmore Lane access
- Most favourable for construction phasing given unlikely short term need

LESS FAVOURABLE LOCATION

- C** • Take advantage of the existing levels
- Allow easy use of outdoor space
- Avoid off-site car traffic travelling through the residential neighbourhoods
- More distant from pedestrian/cycle bridge than option E
- Lack of gateway presence
- Suitable noise levels achievable

✗ UNFAVOURABLE LOCATIONS

- A** • Furthest distance from pedestrian/cycle bridge
 - Off-site traffic has to route through residential neighbourhood
 - Trunk water main within school site
-
- B** • Off-site traffic has to route through residential neighbourhood
 - Furthest distance from pedestrian/cycle bridge
 - Sterilises north-west corner of site
-
- D** • School grounds cannot accommodate the existing pond
-
- F** • Off-site traffic has to route through residential neighbourhoods
 - Significant change in levels
 - Furthest distance from pedestrian/cycle bridge
-
- G** • Loss of open space as focal point of development
 - Off-site traffic has to route through residential neighbourhoods
-
- H** • Significant change in levels
 - Significant loss of existing hedgerow
 - Public right of way would require diversion
 - Off-site traffic routes through residential neighbourhoods
-
- I** • Proximity to railway noise
 - Off-site traffic has to route through residential neighbourhoods
 - Significant change in levels



Key Opportunities

The principles of the Framework originate from the existing landscape and ecological features of the site and the likely movement routes the development will create.

A series of desire lines were identified which would enable the development of a permeable scheme that connects to the wider area and prioritises pedestrian and cycle movement.

The creation of an access to the train station and onwards to the village centre provides a focal point.

Potential key spaces are identified at the main points of access into the site and desire line junctions. These would vary in character based on their location and aid legibility and wayfinding through the scheme.

Developing a green open space in the heart of the development would create a safe and pleasant place for residents to gather.

The preferred school location takes advantage of the existing levels, allows easy use of outdoor space, signals the school entrance from Station Road, avoids car traffic travelling through the residential neighbourhoods and is well located for pedestrians and cyclists. The school perimeter would be softened by additional planting.

The proposals also aim to incorporate the existing hedgerows within the green infrastructure masterplan as far as possible, whilst balancing an optimised use of land which can deliver an appropriate amount of development.

KEY

PUBLIC RIGHT OF WAY	DEVELOPMENT PARCEL
INFORMAL WALKING ROUTE	WATERCOURSES / WATER BODIES
MOVEMENT DESIRE LINES	LANDSCAPE OPEN SPACE
EAST COAST MAIN LINE	EXISTING VEGETATION
WS 144 LOCAL WILDLIFE SITE	GATEWAY OPPORTUNITY
BUFFER TO ANCIENT WOODLAND	POTENTIAL GREEN HEART
WOODLAND	LOWER QUALITY HEDGE FOR REMOVAL
ANCIENT WOODLAND	ADDITIONAL PLANTING OPPORTUNITY
SURROUNDING LANDSCAPE	OPPORTUNITY FOR SUDS FEATURE
PROTECTED ECOLOGICAL ZONE	PREFERRED SCHOOL LOCATION
VEGETATION CANOPY	POTENTIAL PLAY SPACES
VEGETATION ROOT PROTECTION AREA	POTENTIAL SOFT PLAY OPPORTUNITY
PROPOSED VEHICULAR ACCESS	VILLAGE CENTRE
POTENTIAL EMERGENCY ACCESS	COUNTRY LANE
GENERAL DRAINAGE DIRECTION	BUS ROUTE
NEW PEDESTRIAN/CYCLE CONNECTION	PERMEABLE LINKS THROUGH EXISTING HEDGES



The Framework Plan

A Sustainable Community and Healthy Lifestyle

CONNECTING PEOPLE WITH NATURE AND GREEN SPACES



A SAFE, ACCESSIBLE AND WELL LINKED PLACE



CELEBRATING LEGACY AND CULTURE



QUALITY HOMES DESIGNED FOR ALL PEOPLE



MAXIMISING VIEWS OVER GREEN SPACE















LEARNING LIFECYCLE

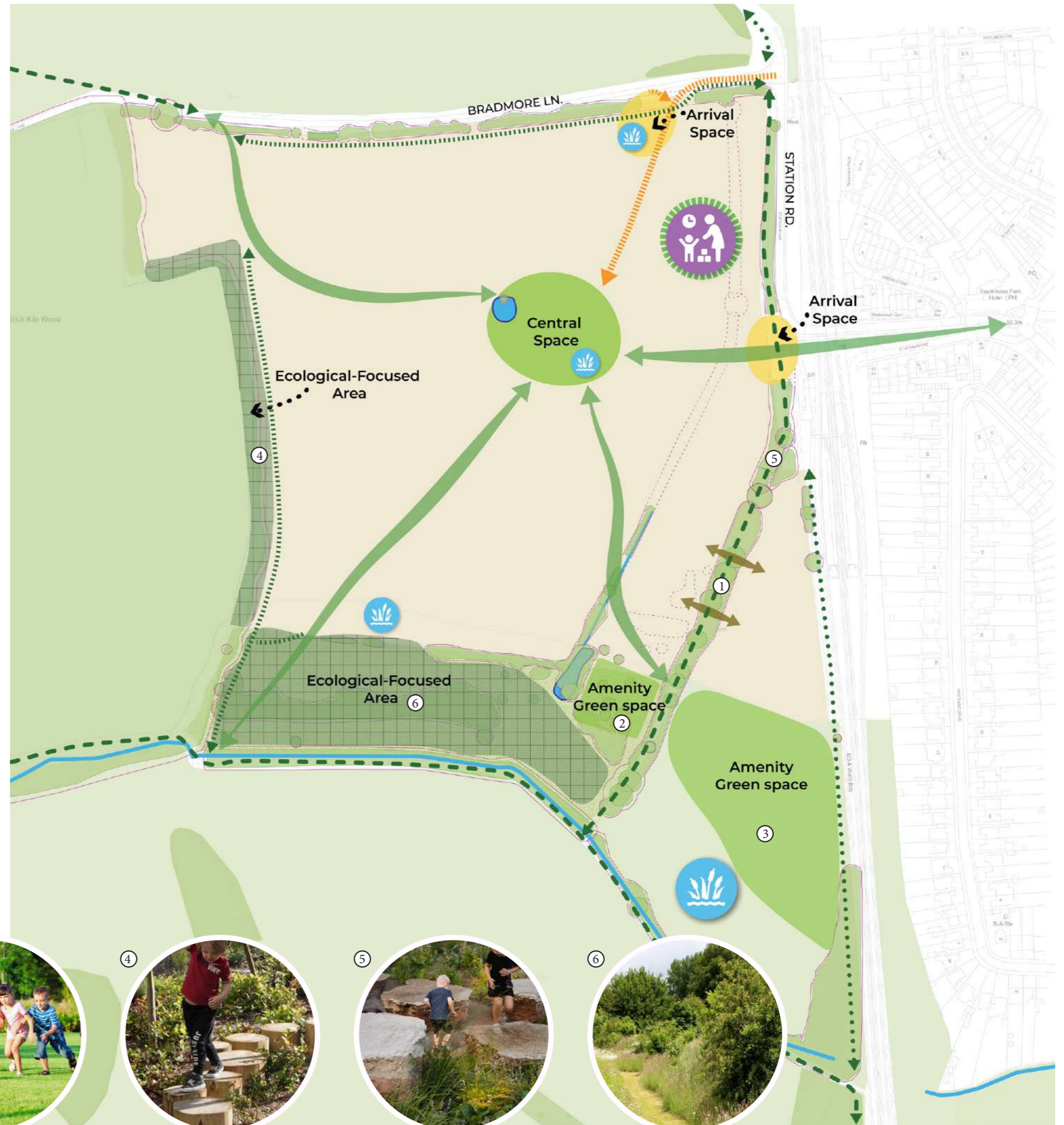


Open Space and Green Infrastructure

- The proposals will offer opportunities for play both at home in private gardens and in the diverse range of public open spaces. Outdoor play spaces include open lawns, encouraging informal and imaginative play close to plants, encouraging sensory experiences, and connecting children with nature.

KEY

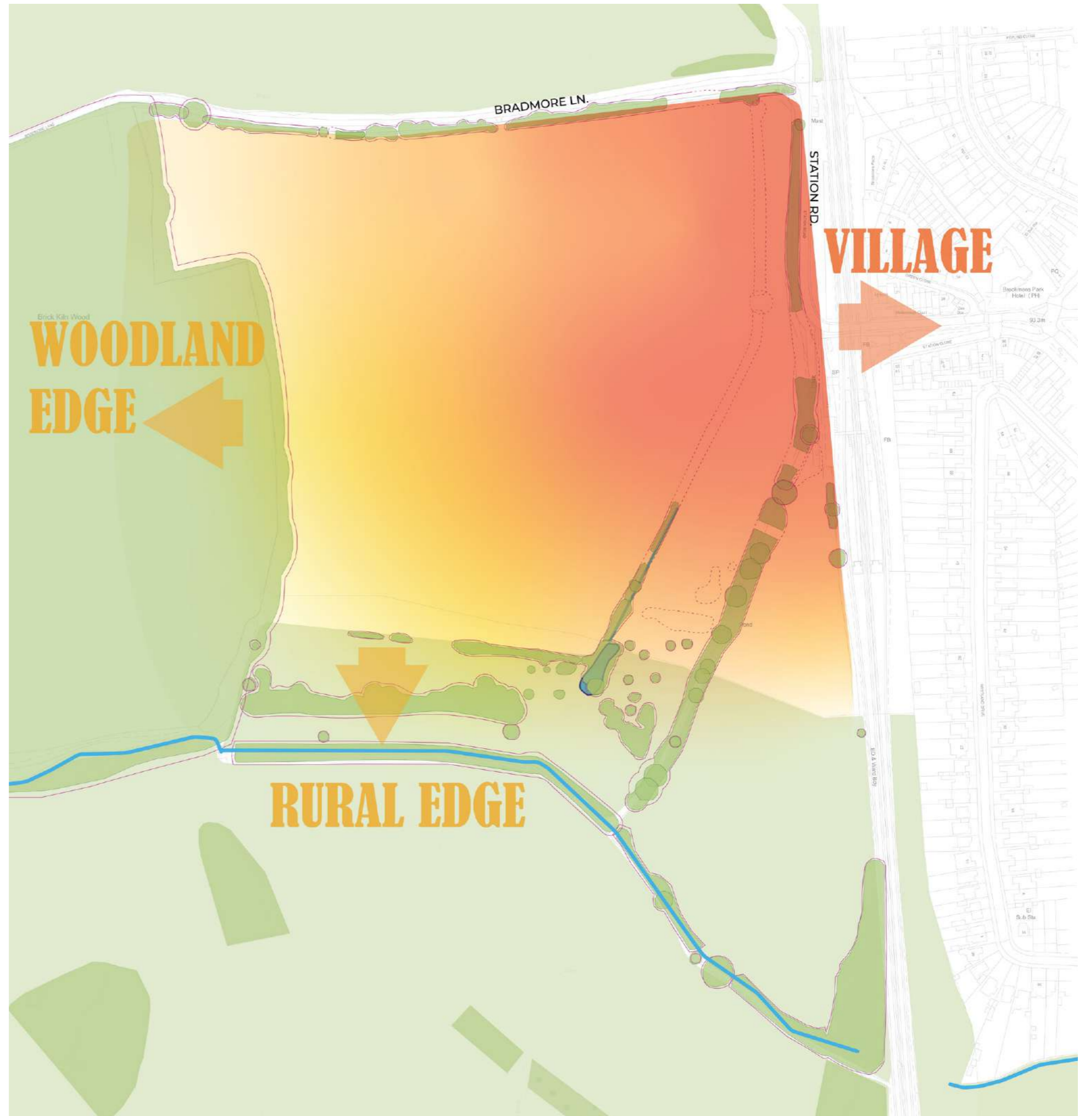
-  2FE PRIMARY SCHOOL LOCATION
-  PUBLIC RIGHT OF WAY
-  DEVELOPMENT PARCEL
-  GREEN SPACE
-  ECOLOGICAL-FOCUSED AREA
-  ARRIVAL SPACE
-  SUSTAINABLE DRAINAGE SYSTEMS
-  INFORMAL WALKING ROUTE
-  MOVEMENT DESIRE LINES
-  PROPOSED VEHICULAR ACCESS
-  PROPOSED PEDESTRIAN CONNECTIONS
-  PERMEABLE LINKS THROUGH EXISTING HEDGES



Character Strategy

With a development of this scale, a variety of character areas are desirable in order to create interest and wayfinding.

The character diagram illustrates the potential transition from a more formal character around the station entrance and central green to a more rural and informal character along the woodland edge in the west and the greenbelt boundary to the south.



Summary of Framework Principles

The Strategic Framework sets out the overarching principles that should inform the detailed design development of this site in order to support the delivery of high quality sustainable homes, considered landscaping and active travel links to support a balanced community at Brookmans Park that meets the agreed objectives and maximises the benefit of the allocation. These principles include but are not limited to:

- creating a landscape-led, permeable scheme which connects to the wider community and existing movement network
- establishing a clear hierarchy of routes to enable legibility of movement throughout the proposed development
- prioritise pedestrian and cycle movement, enhancing active travel
- provide natural surveillance, creating open spaces that are safe and pleasant, with clear definition of public and private realm
- develop a variety of character areas across the site, derived from place-specific responses to the design of streets, open spaces, land use and building form, to create interest and establish a sense of place
- consider a tighter, more formal urban grain close to the railway station and surrounding the central open space; and a looser, informal urban grain towards the western woodland edge and open landscape to the south
- accent buildings and key corners should be considered when developing the masterplan in order to define key spaces and to act as markers along movement routes
- consider introduction of carefully designed and framed views towards the development from key points in the surrounding area
- maximise opportunities to enhance ecology and biodiversity
- enhance shrub and tree planting, introducing additional boundary planting where desirable and possible, while still allowing selective views into the development
- locate the 2FE primary school land where it enables easy access for pedestrians and cyclists and supports its role as a community hub
- a comprehensive SuDS strategy integrated with the landscape design
- maximise opportunities for planting, biodiversity and natural play within the southern green belt landscape to create buffer zone
- enhance connections to the wider countryside
- make efficient and effective use of land removed from Green Belt for housing.



Summary of Sustainability Principles

In line with emerging national environmental policy, we are looking to create a holistic 'sustainable' place at Brookmans Park.

Our strategic approach to sustainability is built around four key impact areas and associated goals. The strategy is outcome-led and retains the flexibility to allow for future solutions - taking account of future residents' well-being and wider environmental, social, and economic impacts.

The external environment provides a variety of spaces with distinct characters and uses to support a healthy life, active travel, and social interaction. The proposals include spaces for relaxing, socializing, playing and discovering within a planted environment.

The masterplan is developed following the Building for a Healthy Life considerations.



Making the right choices for designs, materials, partners and processes shaped by environmental and social responsibility



A home and community where people can lead happy, healthy and sustainable lifestyles



Protect, enhance and create habitats, providing opportunities for people to enjoy nature.



A connected and diverse place where people can fulfil their potential and contribute meaningfully to shaping their community

Building for a Healthy Life Considerations

INTEGRATED NEIGHBOURHOODS
Natural connections
Walking, cycling and public transport
Facilities and services
Homes for everyone

DISTINCTIVE PLACES
Making the most of what's there
A memorable character
Well defined streets
Easy to find your way around

STREETS FOR ALL
Healthy streets
Cycle and car parking
Green and blue infrastructure
Back of pavement, front of home



PRP