

**Taylor  
Wimpey**



# Grove Farm Joint Strategic Plan Issue and Options Promotion

January 2016

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## Introduction

This document has been prepared by DLP Planning Ltd on behalf of Taylor Wimpey, to support the promotion of land it has interests in at Grove Farm, Backwell. The site proposed has been put forward for consideration as a suitable location for housing development within the West of England Joint Spatial Plan.

The submission has been prepared by DLP Planning with input from:

- BE1 – Urban Design and Masterplanning
- PBA – Transport and Access
- PBA – Drainage and utilities
- Tyler Grange – Landscape and Visual
- Tyler Grange - Ecology

The site is known as Land at Grove Farm,

## Background

The West of England Joint Spatial Plan is being produced by the area's four local authorities – Bristol, Bath and North East Somerset, South Gloucestershire and North Somerset. The plan will help to steer development in the area over the next 20 years. The plan will identify: the number of new homes to be planned for; the amount of new employment land to be planned for; where these new homes and employment land will be located; and what transport and infrastructure investment will be needed in order to support the needs of the growing area.

The Plan estimates that around 85,000 new homes are needed in the area by 2036 in order to maintain its current prosperity. This is nearly 30,000 more than is already planned for.

This submission is in response to the Issues and Options consultation, which runs from the 9th of November 2015 to the 29th of January 2016, and looks to consider allocating sites which will be genuinely deliverable over the next twenty years.

The Issues and Options paper has identified five theoretical spatial scenarios for the delivery of development: These are:

1. Protection of Green Belt, which assesses the impact of additional growth assuming no change to the existing Green Belt.
2. Concentration at the Bristol urban area.
3. Transport focus, which involves focusing on locations that are assessed to perform better in terms of access to sustainable travel choices and likely local and strategic congestion impacts.
4. A more even spread of development across the sub-region – growth at Bristol, but also other towns and expanded settlements.
5. New settlement (or a limited number of expanded settlements)

## Development Summary

The site covers an area of 53.4 hectares and is situated to the south of Moor Lane, north of Chelvey Road and West Town Road and to the west of Backwell itself. The land is currently in agricultural use.

The size of the site is sufficient to make a significant and deliverable contribution to the required housing provision, with the potential to deliver up to 650 new homes (depending on the detailed master-planning) and associated infrastructure within the identified plan period.

The site represents a sustainable location for new residential development in terms of access to public transport, nearby employment opportunities and a wide variety of local amenities. It is ideally located with regards to the Nailsea and Backwell Railway Station.

As a starting point, an initial constraints and opportunities exercise has been undertaken, which has informed the preparation of a land budget plan. This exercise has shown that the site has the potential to deliver the following as an example:

- Around 650 homes;
- New education facilities including a primary school;
- Provision of a local centre;
- Community uses;
- Provision of green space, including new play areas and potential for a linear Country Park;
- New transport infrastructure within the site, along with the potential to make significant contributions to wider transport initiatives within Backwell; and
- enhanced pedestrian and public transport links to the existing train station;

It will also support improvements to the local highway network and the delivery of local affordable housing.

Taylor Wimpey benefit from a signed Option covering the majority of the site. The land is therefore available for development and can be delivered within the identified plan period.

## Response the Issue and Options

We welcome the agreement by the four unitary authorities to prepare a Strategic Plan to cover the West of England area for the next 20 years. We note however that there are issues with regards to the overall

assessment of the amount of housing need and whether the level identified in the Plan is sufficiently high enough to deliver the economic growth the plan aspires to achieve. Concerns are also raised as to the decision to split the Housing Market Areas, which leaves the whole of the south of Bristol in a separate HMA. This is inconsistent with the West of England Local Enterprise Plan, and could potentially result in the Plan being unsound. It would be advisable for the Joint Committee to address these issues.

We have also reviewed the alternative assessments produced by Barton Wilmore on behalf of a consortium of developers and also the critique and assessment produced by Professor Glen Bramley on behalf of Business West, with regards to the overall housing need within the plan area. Despite differing assumptions both reports highlight major shortcomings with regards to current objectively assessed housing needs for the WoE area and recommend a substantial increase in the level of housing to be provided. We therefore recommend that these alternative assessments are fully considered and the joint authorities and all stakeholders establish how best to respond.

The Plan represents an opportunity for specific locations for new development to be identified, which would provide developers some certainty with regards to preparing their schemes and the relevant planning authorities the ability to plan positively within their area. It would also allow for associated improvements and additional infrastructure to be provided in conjunction with new development.

- **Option 1 - Protection of Green Belt, which assesses the impact of additional growth assuming no change to the existing Green Belt.**  
- The proposed site, whilst abutting the Green Belt, does not require any Green Belt land take for development purposes. An option for providing an enhance entrance to Backwell would include a small portion of Green

Belt land, but no development, other than a new access road would be provided, therefore the land could be retained within the Green Belt.

- **Option 2 - Concentration at the Bristol urban area.** - Whilst we support Bristol as being the main focus for new development, to deliver wider benefits and improvements across the West of England area, it is considered that limiting development to Bristol will fail to deliver wider economic growth across the plan area.
- **Option 3 - Transport focus, which involves focusing on locations that are assessed to perform better in terms of access to sustainable travel choices and likely local and strategic congestion impacts.** - Backwell is one of the more well-connected settlements within North Somerset, with a well-established train station with direct services into Bristol and Weston-super-Mare. The A370 is also identified as a Priority Corridor in the Joint Transport Plan. Development at Grove Farm would provide further support these routes, and the masterplan shows both are readily accessible by foot from the majority of the site.
- **Option 4 - A more even spread of development across the sub-region – growth at Bristol, but also other towns and expanded settlements.** - For this option to work, it will be important that sustainable locations are identified which will not result in any increase in the need to travel. Backwell would therefore be expected to be one of these locations. Development should be provided that are of sufficient size to deliver planning benefits.
- **Option 5 - New settlement (or a limited number of expanded settlements)** - No site has been identified for this, which raises significant questions with regards overall deliverability of this option.

It is important that the Plan delivers a balance between growth and quality of life, with new housing provision being delivered alongside proposed job creation and infrastructure improvements. If the Plan fails to deliver new homes then it will be impossible to address affordable

housing needs, result in unaffordability due to market constraints, constrain economic growth and potentially increase travel requirements and commuting. It is therefore key that the Plan is fully integrated with Transport Plans and the Joint Transport Plan (JTP).

On this basis, we therefore consider that locations, such as Backwell, which are well served by existing, well established public transport corridors, should feature prominently in the development strategy.

The Issues and Options presents five spatial scenarios and we would make the following comments with regards to Grove Farm

In conclusion, the proposed Grove Farm site will meet a number of the spatial option proposed in the Issues and Options Plan. We consider that it is important that a spatial option which delivers the requisite number of houses to support the economic growth of the area, is delivered, and that this should seek to reduce the need to travel to work and should therefore be heavily focussed on existing public transport routes, where significant improvements can be delivered.

## Next Steps

This is the second step in the process of bringing this land forward for development. Details of the site have previously been submitted as part of the West of England Joint Strategic Planning Strategy Call for Sites which closed on the 6th of March 2015. However, we would like to take this opportunity to provide you with more details on the site and Taylor Wimpey would very much welcome the opportunity to have further discussions with the four authorities about the development of the site.

## 2.0 Planning Policy Context

### National Planning Policy Framework

#### Sustainable Development

In March 2012 the Government published the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) with a view to streamlining planning policy and planning processes. The NPPF's overriding objective is to secure the sustainable development needed to meet the needs of the country's communities and businesses.

A presumption in favour of sustainable development was introduced in the Ministerial Statement: Planning for Growth (31 March 2011) and is central to the NPPF. Paragraph 14 states that;

*“At the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan-making and decision-taking.”*

The NPPF requires Local Planning Authorities to positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area, encouraging growth in the most sustainable locations. Paragraph 7 identifies that there are three dimensions to sustainable development;

*“economic, social and environmental. In terms of an economic role the planning system should contribute to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation. A social role would support strong, vibrant*

*and healthy communities by supplying housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations, and an environmental role that contributes to protecting and enhancing the natural, built and historic environment.”*

Based on the sustainable nature of this site in terms of its locational attributes; accessibility to nearby amenities; and the proposed use which can support local growth, whilst being considerate of the natural, built and historic environment, we feel this site is suitable for consideration in terms of a residential allocation.

#### Housing Delivery

Paragraph 47 of the NPPF states that to boost significantly the supply of housing, LPA's should use their evidence base to ensure that their Local Plan meets the full, objectively assessed needs for market and affordable housing in the housing market area.

The basis of this consultation is in response to the need to identify deliverable sites for housing and employment, alongside improvements to transport and other infrastructure, within the West of England area by 2036.

In terms of suitability therefore, the site at Grove Farm, Backwell, is capable of delivering a sustainable residential development and based on the site context and size could also be delivered within the plan period.

### Economic Sustainable Development

NPPF paragraph 19 notes that planning should operate to encourage sustainable growth, with significant weight placed on the need to support economic growth through the planning system.

NPPF paragraph 38 states that for larger scale residential developments in particular, planning policies should promote a mix of uses in order to provide opportunities to undertake day-to-day activities including work on site. Where practical, key facilities such as primary schools and local shops should be located within walking distance of most properties.

The site has the capacity to provide a new Local Centre and Primary School, as detailed on the indicative masterplan provided as part of this submission.

## Promoting Healthy Communities

Paragraph 69 of the NPPF refers to the importance of the planning system in creating healthy, inclusive communities. It notes that planning policies and decisions should achieve places that promote opportunities for meetings between members of the community, such as mixed use developments, strong neighbourhood centres and active street frontages.

NPPF paragraph 70 notes that to deliver the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning decisions should plan positively for the provision of shared space, community facilities and other local services in order to enhance the sustainability of communities.

Paragraph 72 states that the Government attaches great importance to ensuring that a sufficient choice of school places are available to meet the needs of existing and new communities.

As previously mentioned, this proposal provides a new school and local centre, as well as a large amount of natural open space in order to encourage social and recreational activities. Development of the site also allows for improved access to Nailsea and Backwell Station.

## North Somerset Policy Position

### **North Somerset Core Strategy**

The North Somerset Core Strategy was adopted in April 2012. However, some of the policies were remitted following a High Court Challenge to policy CS13 'Scale of new housing'. Although it was only policy CS13 that was found to be unlawful, several other policies were also remitted

as it was considered there would need to be consequential changes to them, should policy CS13 be amended.

Following re-examination, the Inspector ruled that there should be an increase in the amount of housing to be built over the plan period. CS13 now states that 20,985 dwellings will need to be provided within North Somerset by 2026. The proposed development will make a contribution to meeting this increased housing target. North Somerset Council have agreed to an early review of their Core Strategy in order to examine the other remitted policies affected by CS13.

Within NSC's settlement hierarchy Backwell is described as a Service Village. Policy CS14 currently states that 805 dwellings are to be built in the service villages during the plan period. Within NSC's evidence base which underpins its Core Strategy Backwell is identified as the best served of all the 9 Service Villages.

### **North Somerset Replacement Local Plan (saved policies)**

The Replacement Local Plan was adopted in March 2007. A number of the policies were saved after the Core Strategy came into use. Once the Sites and Policies DPD is adopted it will supersede many of the remaining policies in The Replacement Local Plan.

### **Emerging North Somerset Sites and Policies Plan Part 1:**

#### **Development Management Policies DPD**

North Somerset Council is currently consulting on the main modifications to be made to the Sites and Policies Plan Part 1: Development Management Policies. This consultation takes place until the 26th of February. They aim to fully adopt the plan in April 2016.

The DPD will contain detailed planning policies for managing new development. It will also identify the aims of local communities for their respective areas. This will have the status of 'another material consideration' and the weight attached to individual policies will vary according to the tests set out at paragraph 216 of the NPPF.

## 3.0 Site Description

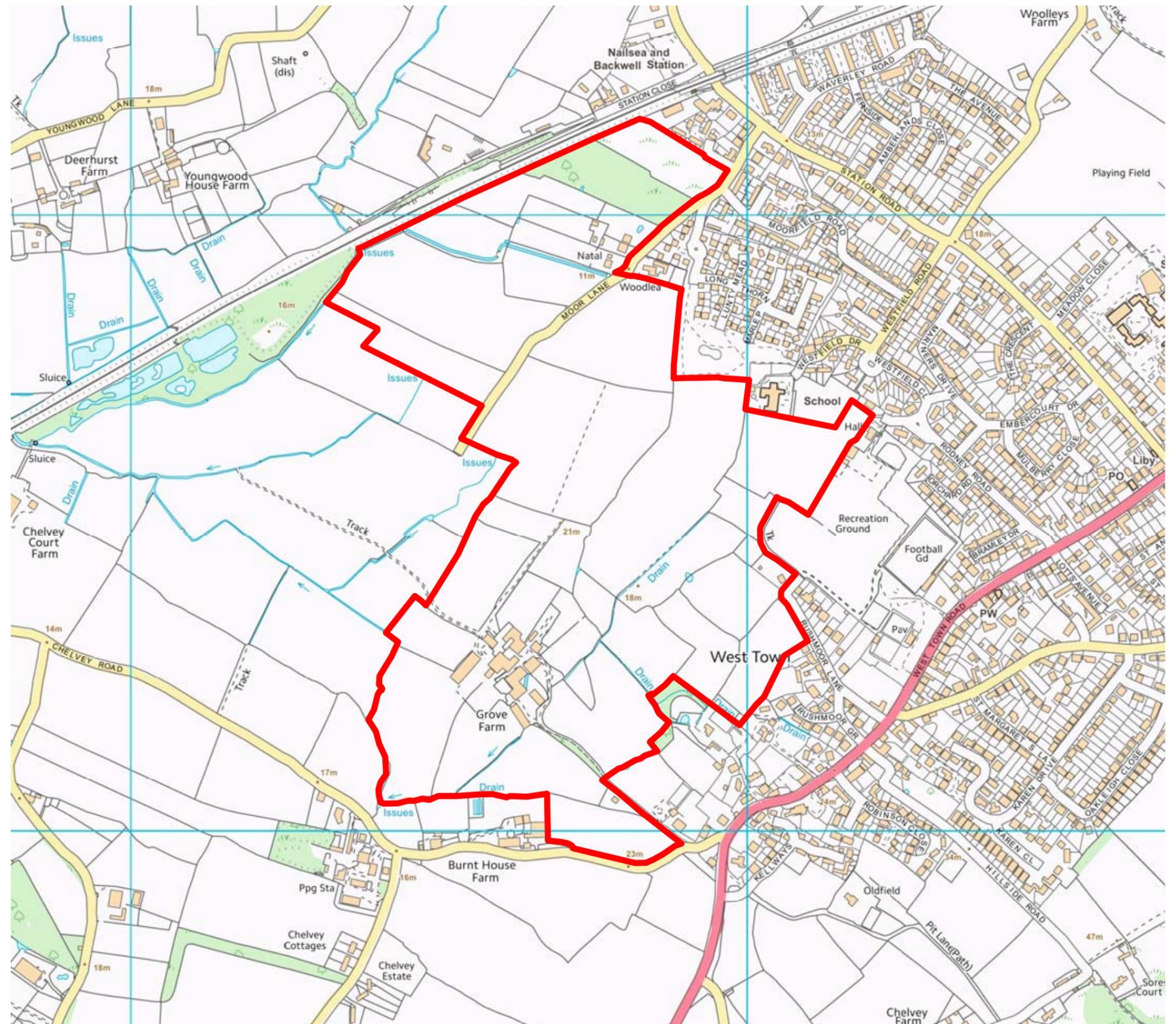
The site is located adjacent to the existing limits of the settlement of Backwell and extends to approximately 53.4 hectares of land. It is situated to the south of Moor Lane, north of Chelvey Road and West Town Road and to the west of Backwell itself.

The land is currently in active agricultural use and sits within a wider area of open countryside to the west of Backwell, characterised by gently undulating land with primarily medium sized fields. The field boundaries are generally defined by hedgerows with intermittent specimen trees and the site is crossed by a number of footpaths.

A gentle ridge runs through the site in a north-south direction. Grove Farm itself is situated on the ridge towards the south of the site and is accessed off Chelvey Road via Grove Farm Lane. The land to the east of this ridge gently slopes down towards Backwell and West Town in the east and south east respectively.

With the exception of a few properties at West Town and one at Moor Lane to the north, the site does not generally abut residential properties. It does, however, abut public open space and a children's play area to the north and West Leigh Infant School and Backwell Playing Fields to the east. In addition to the outdoor sports pitches, these playing fields are also associated with a range of facilities including: tennis courts; a bowling green; and accommodation for scouts, guides and martial arts.

The site is well connected to its surroundings by the existing public transport infrastructure including a network of footpaths and cycleways.



# 4.0 Constraints and Opportunities

A constraints map of Land at Grove was prepared in first instance. This illustrates the parts of the site which are suitable for development and those that are constrained by existing features. Specific details are given below.

## Transport and Access

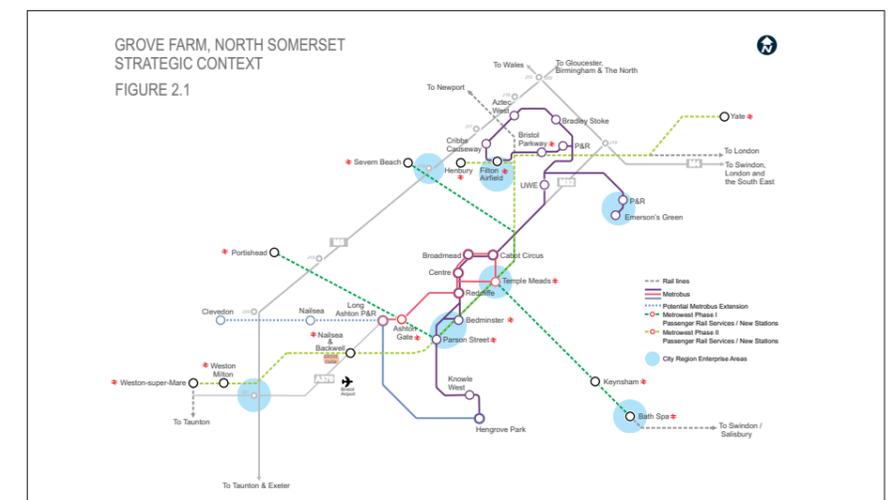
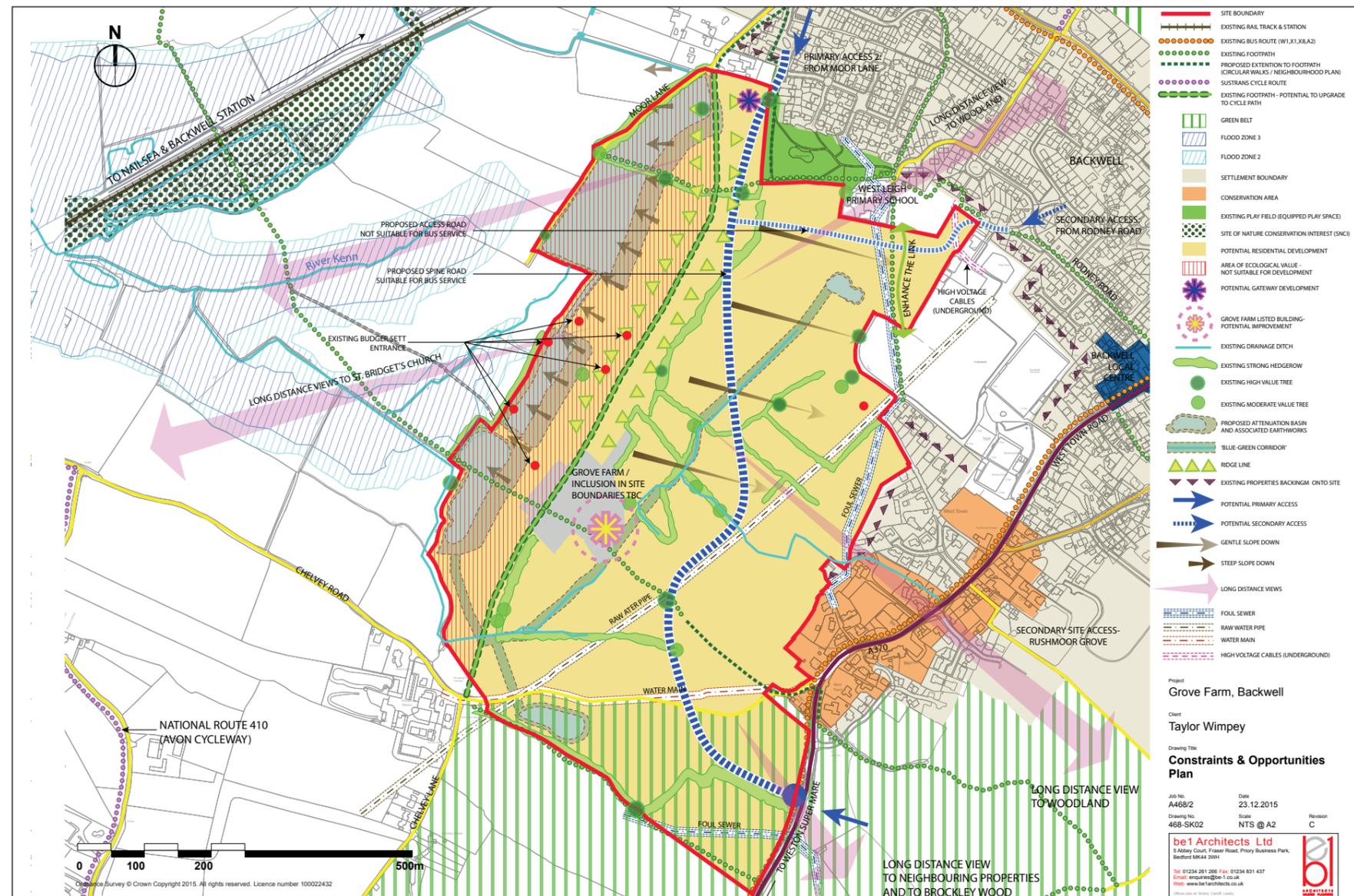
### A sustainable strategic location

A development at Grove Farm, Backwell, would benefit from good accessibility to a number of strategic destinations within the West of England by sustainable modes of transport. Backwell is on the

transport corridors connecting Bristol and Weston super Mare. The A370 traverses Backwell north-east to south-west and forms the main strategic road corridor through the village. This road corridor has already seen significant investment in public transport provision, being one of the bus corridors identified within the Greater Bristol Bus Network, with frequent services connecting to Bristol city centre as well as southern Bristol. The A370 corridor is also identified within the JTS's Future Concepts as a possible strategic corridor to benefit from a package of bus, highway and active travel improvements.

Nailsea and Backwell railway station is on the railway line linking Bristol city centre and Weston-super-Mare. This line and the Nailsea and Backwell station form part of the MetroWest scheme and as part of committed investment will see increases in frequency of rail services into Weston-super-Mare and Bristol city centre on the way to Yate. This improved rail service will connect Backwell to the Bristol Temple Quarter Enterprise Zone as well as employment opportunities in the J21 (Weston-super-Mare), Filton and Emersons Green Enterprise Areas.

Figure 2.1 illustrates Backwell and the Grove Farm development site within its strategic transport context.



Grove Farm provides the opportunity to deliver a development offering quality in travel choices for strategic trips to the rest of the sub-region, and relates well to programmed and future transport investment opportunities, meeting the key locational criteria set out in the JSP Issues and Options document.

Development at Grove Farm, Backwell, would benefit from close proximity to established local retail, leisure, health and education facilities available within the village. These include a Leisure centre as well as several sports clubs, restaurants, take-away food outlets and shops, as well as medical and dental centres. Most of these facilities are located along the A370 with a cluster at the junction with Station Road and on Rodney Road and would fall within a 1-mile walk from the development. The National Travel Survey 2014 statistics identifies that 76% of trips of less than a mile are walked and this suggests that trips to established local facilities and services would predominantly be made on foot.

Nailsea would provide further facilities for retail and leisure trips, as well as access to additional education establishments. Nailsea town centre is located about 3km from the development site and includes, amongst others, a Waitrose store and a Tesco store. Nailsea also offers local employment opportunities including GE Oil and Gas and Wessex Billing Services Ltd. Bus services on Station Road in Backwell provide connections to these retail and employment opportunities by non-car modes of transport. Bristol Airport and The Bristol Port Company are two of the largest employers in the area with significant growth prospects. Bristol city centre and Weston super Mare would also offer a wide range of employment opportunities, accessible via train and bus services.

This further demonstrates that Grove Farm would form a sustainable location for development in transport terms providing a full range of travel options to a wide range of local facilities and services in Backwell and nearby Nailsea and to the main employment concentration areas of Bristol and Weston super Mare.

### Good local transport networks

Local transport networks within the vicinity of the Grove Farm site would allow the development to make the most of its sustainable location. With localised improvements and a series of measures supporting sustainable travel patterns that the proposed development could deliver through its transport strategy, the development would benefit from access to good existing walking, cycling and public transport networks. The residential streets surrounding the development provide a good quality walking environment linking to all local facilities, including the railway station. Station Road is identified as a busy transport corridor within the village and the traffic levels it accommodates are seen as a barrier to walking and cycling, something that development at Grove Farm could address. The Grove Farm site is criss-crossed by a number of Public Rights of Way linking West Town to the south-east to Station Road and the station to the north, highlighting a number of desire lines and recreational routes that could be formalised and enhanced through high quality site design.

Backwell is located in between National Cycle Route 33 (Festival Way) to the north-east and National Cycle Route 410 (Avon Cycleway) to the south-west, both providing the opportunity for cycle connections to longer distance destinations. The Grove Farm development provides the opportunity to create a new link between these two routes, better connecting Backwell to the local cycle network.

Backwell is well served by public transport with Nailsea and Backwell railway station providing regular services to Bristol and Weston super Mare throughout the day. The station is located approximately 800m from the centre of the Grove Farm development site and would be readily accessible by walking and cycling modes. Bus services run along the A370 and Station Road delivering at least half hourly services to a range of destinations including Bristol city centre, South Bristol, Bristol Airport, Nailsea, Clevedon, Portishead and Weston super Mare. Whilst parts of the Grove Farm development would fall outside the typical walk catchment of these bus services, the development would offer the opportunity to address this constraint by improving walking routes to existing stops and potentially diverting bus services through the development area.

The road network around the Grove Farm development is mainly formed of the A370, which links the village to Bristol to the north-east and Weston super Mare to the south-west, and Station Road, which runs to the north-west linking to Nailsea. The junction of the A370 and Station Road is a known pinchpoint along the A370 corridor and experience issues with congestion during the typical morning and evening peak periods. The Grove Farm development benefits from a good frontage onto the A370, where a main vehicular access into the development could be gained, while other vehicular connections to Moor Lane and Rodney Road as well as on Chelvey Road could play a secondary role delivering permeability and integrating the development to the existing urban fabric. The sustainable location of the development in terms of transport supported by a sustainable transport strategy offering a series of measures promoting non-car modes of travel will deliver the appropriate framework to support development at Grove Farm and limit the traffic impact of development on the local road network.

## Approach to a Sustainable Transport Strategy

4.13 In response to the Grove Farm site access constraints and opportunities, and recognising committed and planned transport infrastructure improvements in the vicinity of the site, an approach to a Sustainable Transport Strategy for the development has been identified, with the potential to provide a range of transport measures to manage travel demand and mitigate traffic impact. The following key transport measures have been identified that could support development at Grove Farm, Backwell:

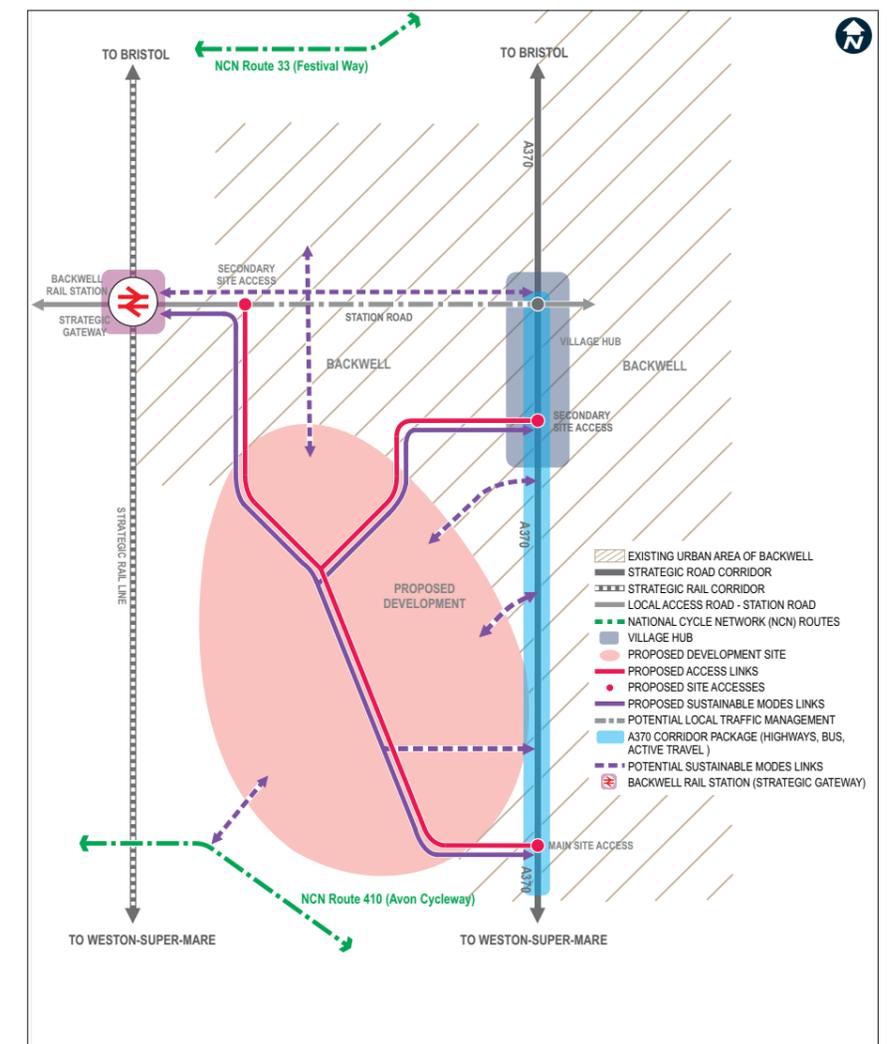
- Development at Grove Farm will benefit from easy access on foot or by bike to a wide range of retail, leisure and education facilities, likely to cover most residents' day-to-day needs. Development at Grove Farm will deliver suitable connections to local walking and cycling networks and deliver off-site improvements to encourage walking and cycling for most local journeys.
- Development at Grove Farm will deliver a permeable network of pedestrian and cycle routes, providing convenient and direct links to local facilities as well as delivering additional routes for existing residents across the south west quadrant of the village, in particular improving access to the railway station for residents to the south of the village.
- Development at Grove Farm provides the opportunity to create a cycle link between NCR410 to the south-west of the development area and NCR33 to the north-east of Backwell. This would deliver improved connectivity to these routes to/from the development and the village.
- Grove Farm is located within walking distance of the Nailsea and Backwell railway station and will benefit from improved rail frequencies as part of planned investment through the MetroWest scheme. This will afford improved accessibility to main employment destinations and connecting to most major enterprise areas in the West of England sub-region. The

development's Sustainable Transport Strategy will therefore deliver direct connections to the railway station by walking, cycling and potentially bus to integrate sustainable modes of transport at the station. The station will therefore act as the main gateway to the development for strategic trip making.

- Development at Grove Farm offers the opportunity to create additional routes through the south west quadrant of the village. In order to build on the good network of bus routes serving the village, the development's road network will provide the opportunity for bus penetration through the development area with connections to the railway station as well as links to Nailsea and its wider range of facilities.
- The delivery of additional routes through the south west quadrant of the village will also refocus the village's bus, pedestrian and cycle networks, reducing the pressure on Station Road. Development at Grove Farm would offer the opportunity to reconsider the role and design of Station Road and deliver measures to reduce the impact of traffic on this road corridor and lessen the severance effect of traffic along this route.
- A sustainable transport strategy for development at Grove Farm will therefore build on the site's good sustainable accessibility to local services as well as regional sustainable transport links. The combination of smarter choice measures and local improvements in the transport infrastructure that could be delivered will form the main pillars of a strategy that recognises the local congestion issues along the A370 corridor and in particular at the A370/Station Road junction. The strategy for development at Grove Farm will be based on a hierarchy of movements that puts walking and cycling at the top of the agenda followed by public transport. Vehicular access to the development area would be delivered via a new junction on the A370 at the southern end of the village. This proposed junction would act as a gateway to the village and could be designed in a way that allows the management of traffic volumes through the village itself as part of a wider corridor package for the A370 providing benefit to the local community in

terms of environment and safety. A development at Grove Farm would also have the ability to consider means of addressing congestion issues at the A370/Station Road junction.

Figure 2.2 illustrates the Sustainable Transport Strategy for a



## JSP and JTS emerging transport objectives

In conclusion, development at Grove Farm, Backwell, would benefit from good strategic access to key employment and urban centres in the West of England sub-region by sustainable modes of transport, as well as good local access to a wide range of day-to-day facilities by walking, cycling and public transport. There are opportunities to build on the site's sustainable location and address identified access constraints within the framework of a Sustainable Transport Strategy to the benefit of the development, the local community of Backwell and in line with wider sub-regional committed and planned transport investments.

As such development at Grove Farm responds positively to the access and locational criteria set by the JSP and the JTS:

- It can deliver a series of measures that complement and support planned investments in the region's transport system, making Nailsea and Backwell railway station a strategic gateway to the development, supporting MetroWest objectives, and providing the means of managing traffic along the A370 corridor. It can deliver an integrated transport system supporting sustainable travel making from the proposed development as well as from the local community in Backwell to the benefit of existing and new residents.
- It can support the delivery of an accessible and inclusive transport system connecting to job opportunities within the West of England sub-region.
- It can limit the traffic impact of development on the local road network by focusing on sustainable access to the development and the village of Backwell, and contributing to corridor based investment in local demand management measures and improvements to highway infrastructure.
- It can support the delivery of a high quality design transport system within the development and through Backwell.

In addition, development at Grove Farm, Backwell, would bring the opportunity to contribute to a number of the Future Development Concepts identified in the JTS. The following table provides example of how The Grove would be supported by and support possible future transport initiatives.

Table 2.1: The Grove and the JTS's Future Transport Concepts

Ref	Future Transport Concepts	Opportunity at The Grove, Backwell
1	Strengthen enhanced public transport corridors	Nailsea and Backwell station as the development's strategic gateway, integrated with local bus services including services along the A370
2	Extended MetroBus network	Bus service through development could act as feeder service to an extended MetroBus to Nailsea, opening up connections to Bristol and South Bristol
3	Extended MetroWest network	Development supported by and supporting improved services at Nailsea and Backwell Station
5	Cycle superhighways	Opportunity to connect NCR33 and NCR410 through the development
7	Major site mitigation package	Development accompanied by Sustainable Transport Strategy putting sustainable access first, limiting highway impact on local roads
8	Sub-regional pinch points	Potential to address pinch point at A370/Station Road
9	Strategic corridor package	Opportunity to create new gateway to village on A370 with opportunity for traffic management along the A370 corridor
10	International gateways	Location in relation to Bristol Airport
12	LSTF+ (local smarter travel)	Sustainable Transport Strategy for the development promoting smarter travel
13	Regional connectivity	Via Nailsea and Backwell station gateway, access to most key local enterprise zone and areas on back of MetroWest scheme
15	Travel Demand management	As part of Travel Plan for the development, with opportunity to widen to Backwell

## Landscape

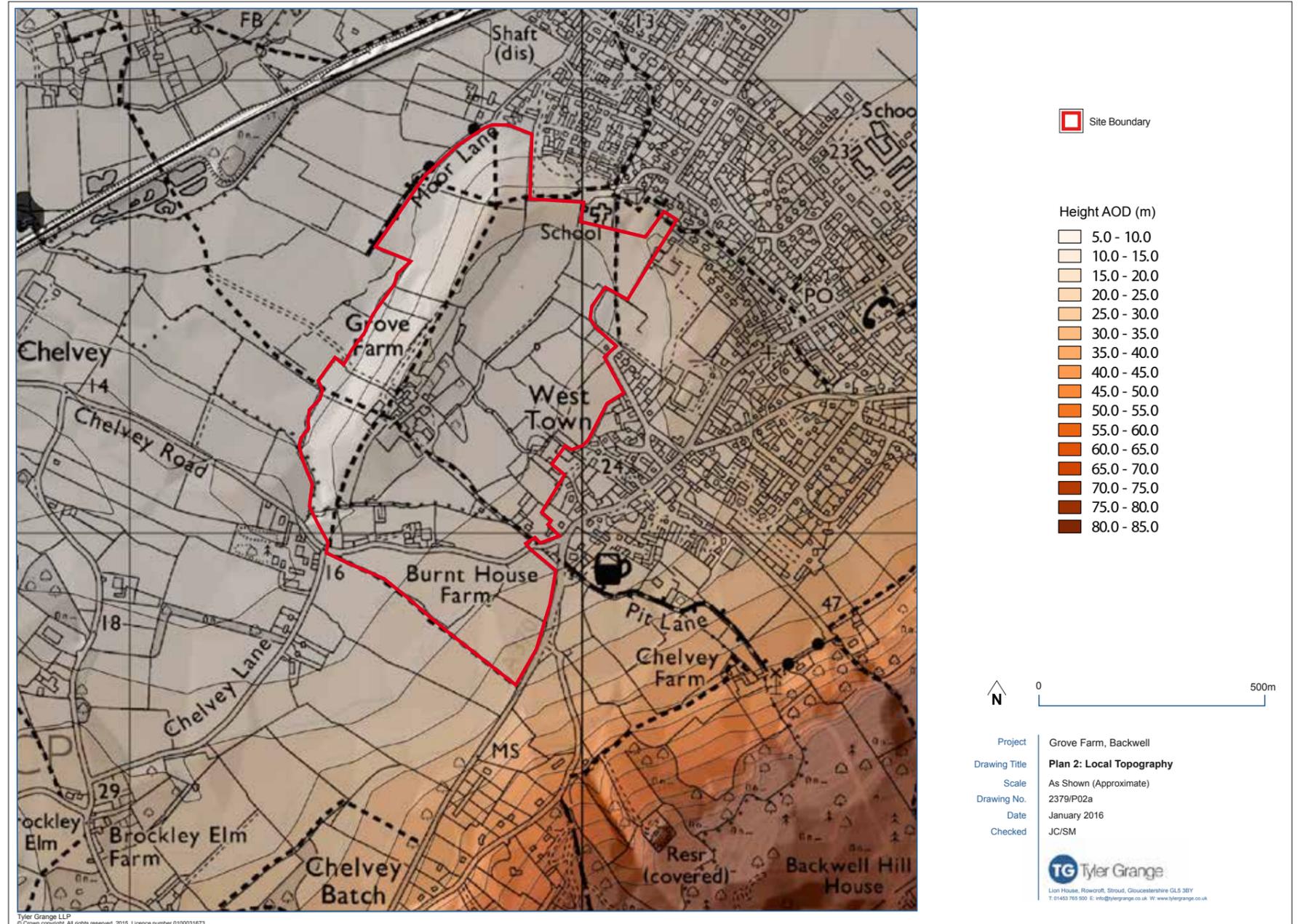
### The Site and Environs

The site is divided by a local ridge running generally north / south with steeper slopes falling westwards and more gently sloping to the east towards the settlement edge of Backwell. Beyond the site the landform is generally flat to the west punctuated by Nailsea with land rising more steeply to the wooded hillsides of Backwell Hill and Cleeve Hill to the east and south east forming a well-wooded backdrop to Backwell.

The site is divided by a local ridge running generally north / south with steeper slopes falling westwards and more gently sloping to the east towards the settlement edge of Backwell. Beyond the site the landform is generally flat to the west punctuated by Nailsea with land rising more steeply to the wooded hillsides of Backwell Hill and Cleeve Hill to the east and south east forming a well-wooded backdrop to Backwell.

Small to medium irregular fields of mixed arable and pasture land surround the settlement with the linear railway corridor bisecting the rural landscape between Nailsea and Backwell, to the north west. The built edge of Backwell lies to the north and east of the site that includes a mixed use of residential dwellings, recreation areas, the school, and the Conservation Area of West Town.

Public Rights of Way (PRoW) cross the site linking it to the wider landscape and the settlement of Backwell and it is noted that walking routes promoted by Backwell Parish Council include sections of these routes.



While the site is not currently protected by any statutory or non-statutory landscape designation, Chelvey Road forms the Green Belt boundary and the southern tip of the site lies within it.



Taken from footpath LA2/34/20, within the northern edge of the Site, looking north east.



Taken from footpath LA2/34/20, within the northern edge of the Site, looking south west.



Taken from within the southern edge of the Site, where footpath LA4/7/20 joins Chelvey Road, looking south east.



Taken from the pedestrian footway beside the A370, where footpath LA4/7/20 meets the A370, looking north.



Taken from the entrance to Bizley Farm, on Netherton Wood Lane, looking east towards the Site.

The following are relevant landscape related policies:

**North Somerset Council Core Strategy, Adopted April 2012**

Policy CS1 – Addressing climate change and carbon reduction.

Policy CS4 – Nature conservation.

Policy CS5 – Landscape and the historic environment.

Policy CS12 – Achieving high quality design and place-making.

**North Somerset Replacement Local Plan Written Statement,**

**Adopted March 2007**

Policy GDP/1 – Preferred locations for development.

Policy GDP/3 - Promoting good design and sustainable construction:

policy GDP/1 – Preferred locations for development.

Policy ECH/3 – Conservation Areas.

Policy ECH/7 – Landscape Character Areas.

Policy RD/3 – Development in the Green Belt.

Policy T/7 – Protection, development and improvement of the Rights of Way Network and other forms of public access

## Landscape Character

The site falls within NCA 118: Bristol, Avon Valleys and Ridges of the Natural England National Character Assessment. Although the site and its environs share some of the key characteristics, the description is considered to be too generic. Cascading down, the North Somerset Landscape Character Assessment (December 2005) provides greater detail of more relevance (Supplementary Planning Document).

**North Somerset Landscape Character Assessment (2005)**

The site lies within the wider Landscape Character Type J “Rolling Valley Farmland” and at a finer grain, Landscape Character Area J5 “Land Yeo and Kenn Rolling Valley Farmland.”

In general, the following key characteristics are of relevance to the site and environs:

- Rolling landform formed by numerous rivers and tributaries;
- Presence of variety of water bodies including rivers, streams, ponds, drainage ditches and reservoirs;
- Pastoral landscape with views to wooded ridges;
- Fields bounded by thick hedges with hedgerow trees; and
- Scattered stone farmsteads with stone outbuildings and walls.

The Landscape Character Assessment identifies landscape guidelines specific to each Landscape Character Type and Landscape Character Area that are intended to ensure that distinctive character is maintained.

The key relevant landscape guidelines include:

- Conserve the nature of the pastoral landscape;
- Minimise the impact of the urban edge and the encroachment of visually intrusive land uses through design guidance and appropriate land management; and
- Nurture new and existing hedgerow trees.

## Summary of Landscape Opportunities and Constraints

Below we have detailed the opportunities and constraints of the site in terms of the landscape character and visual amenity:

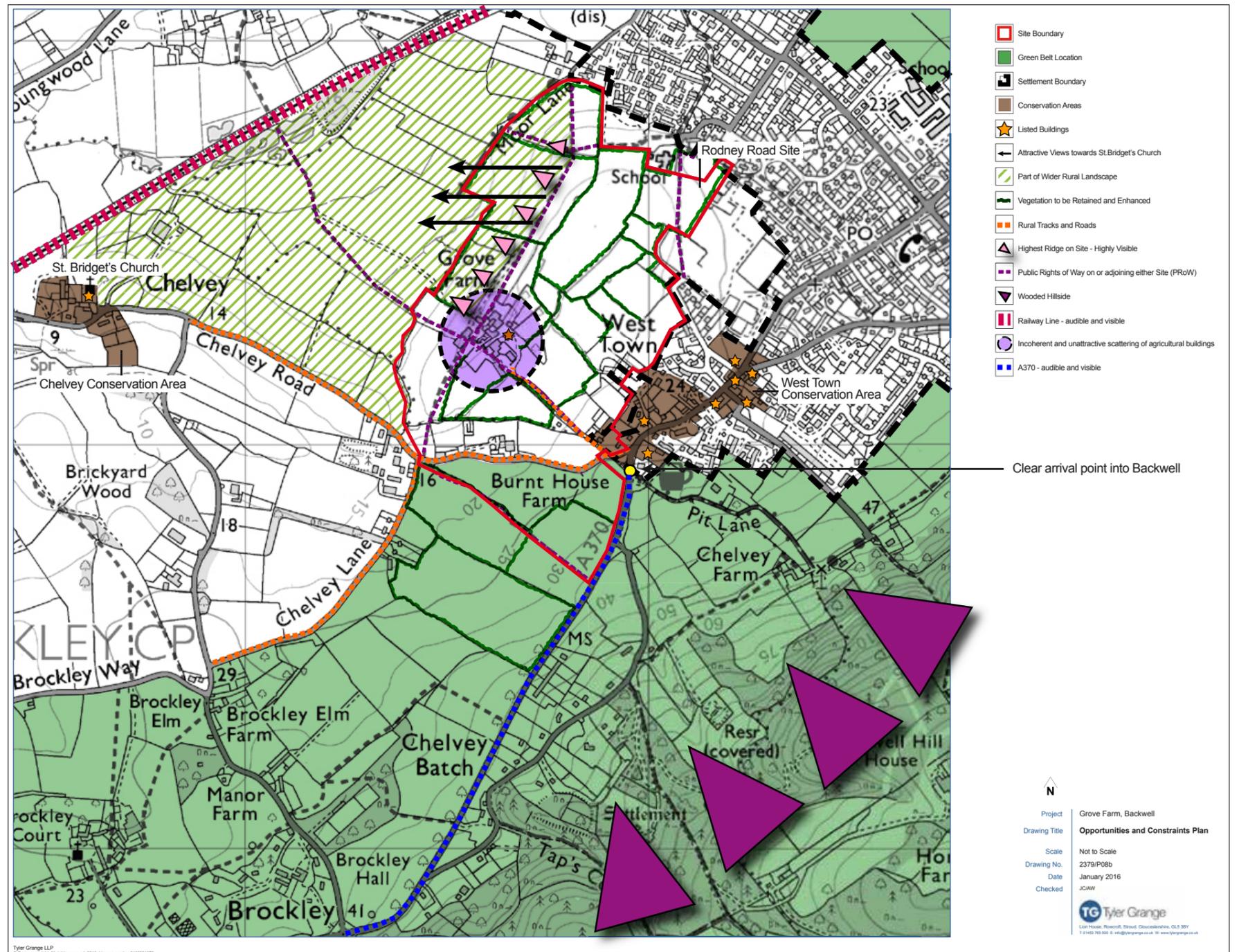
- Green Infrastructure has the potential to deliver a wide range of benefits in terms of assets and functions. The proposals may secure GI at multiple levels for multiple benefits to provide a balance between the natural and built environment.
- Awareness of published landscape guidelines will ensure that the distinctive characteristics are maintained in relation to: conserving the rural nature of the pastoral landscape; nurturing new and existing hedgerow trees;

minimising the impact of the urban edge and the encroachment of visually intrusive land uses through design guidance and appropriate land management.

- The height, scale and massing of development on any part of elevated land needs to be considered in relation to the visual prominence of the site and potential for skyline development in views.
- The site is visually contained by the woodland to the east and south east, limiting possible views to the north, south and west. The eastern fields within the Northern Site are visually contained due to their location on lower lying ground and by vegetated field boundaries and riparian vegetation following rhynes and drainage ditches.
- To the west of the “ridge” the landscape maintains a rural quality that is absent in the landscape to the east. It is considered that development to the west of the “ridge” would be more sensitive and that the harmful effects arising would be difficult to mitigate successfully. This area may remain as undeveloped landscape for recreational or water management uses.
- There are attractive views towards St. Bridget’s Church in Chelvey and towards the wooded skyline to the east that will require consideration in the design process. The wooded skyline (Backwell and Cleeve Hills) encloses the local area and forms an attractive backdrop to Backwell. In addition, views to the wider landscape in all directions from the “ridge” could be accommodated within development proposals
- There is an opportunity to improve the visual environment by the removal of the haphazard arrangement of agricultural buildings surrounding the listed Grove Farm.
- Eastern fields could accommodate development in response to visual containment and the context of the built edge of Backwell.
- There are a number of heritage assets including listed buildings and West Town Conservation Area (and settings) within the local area protected by NPPF and local policy (Policy ECH/3 and Policy CS5). It is noted that St. Bridget’s Church (Grade I) in Chelvey, is a key landmark in a number of

views and sits within the Chelvey Conservation Area and a group of listed buildings.

- PRow will require consideration in accordance with Policy T/7.
- There are opportunities to enhance and manage hedgerows where they are poorly maintained (Policies CS1, CS4, CS9 and Biodiversity and Trees SPD). In addition, there are opportunities to introduce characteristic stone walls and hedgerows into development, in accordance with Policies CS12, GDP/3, ECH/7 and Residential Design Guide SPD.
- Site is located adjacent to the Green Belt.



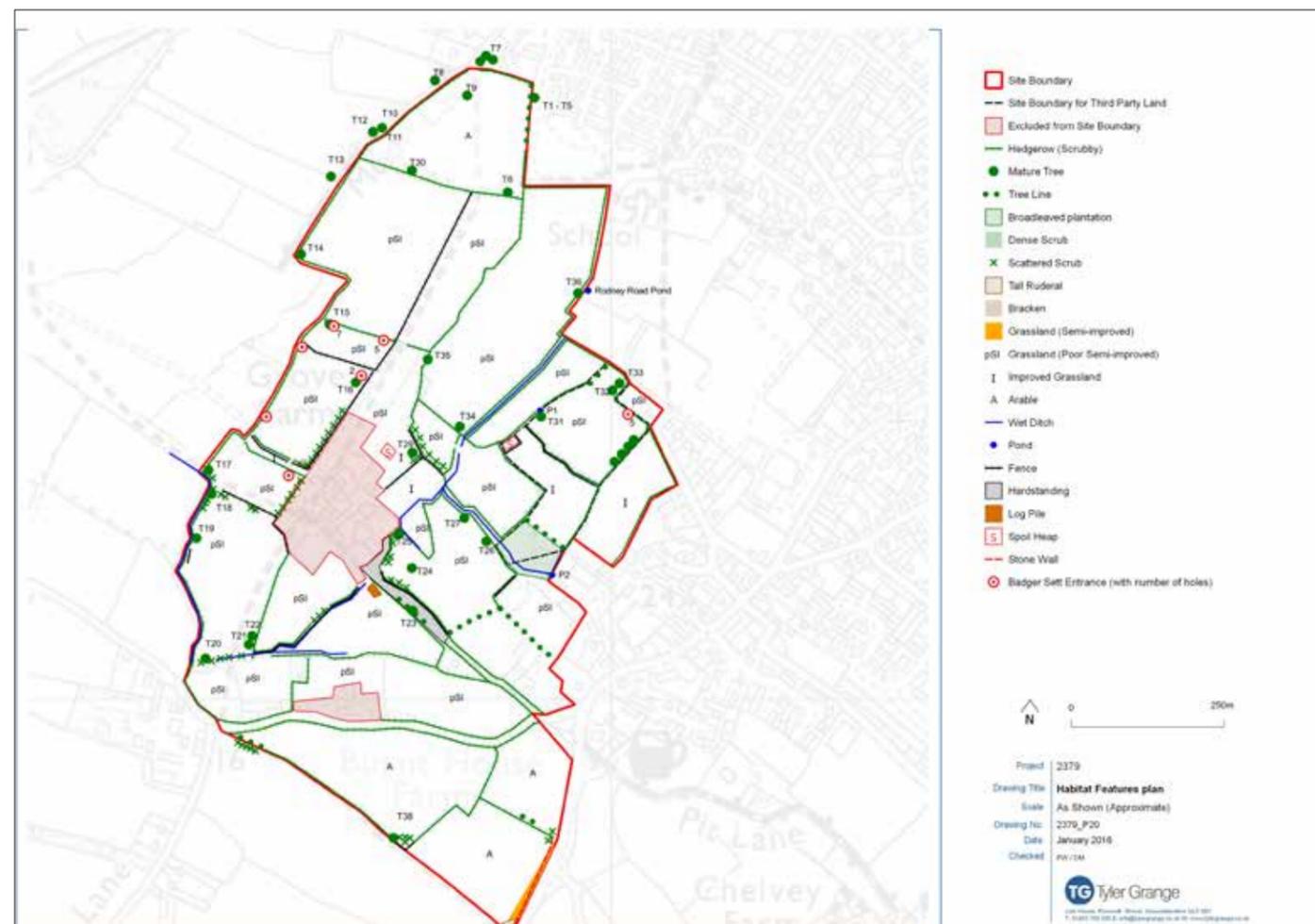
## Biodiversity

### The Site and Environs

The site comprises small to medium irregular fields of mixed arable and pasture, bounded by fences and hedgerows/treelines of mixed quality. A few wet ditches and ponds are present.

A Phase 1 survey, background data search, great crested newt surveys and winter bird surveys undertaken in 2015/2016 revealed the following interest:

- The site is not covered by any statutory or non-statutory ecological designated sites;
- North Somerset and Mendips Bats Special Area of Conservation lies 2.4km south, designated for its greater horseshoe bat interest (maternity and hibernation roosts);
- The habitats on site are generally of low ecological value;
- Badger setts are present, concentrated on the western side;
- Great crested newts were not present in the ponds; and
- There is potential for dormouse to be present in some of the hedgerows and the site offers opportunities for roosting and foraging bats. Dormouse and bat surveys will be undertaken in 2016.



## Summary of Biodiversity Opportunities and Constraints

1. The masterplan for the site will develop only part of the site ensuring that multifunctional green infrastructure is incorporated to retain ecological interest and corridors for mobile fauna;
2. Given the location of the Mendips Bats SAC, greater horseshoe bats are likely to present within the site, so the masterplan will keep opportunities for this species to forage within and move across the site; and
3. The green infrastructure offers the opportunity to diversify and enhanced retained habitats, and provide a range of new habitats, such as new linear habitats (watercourses and hedgerows) to divide up larger fields and provide shelter, new waterbodies, species rich grassland, new tree and shrub planting.

## Drainage

### Drainage Opportunities and Constraints

The development site is bounded by higher ground to the north, south and east, whilst the centre and west of the site is of a lower elevation. The ground on the site generally slopes towards lower ground in the centre or the west of the site which are separated by a higher elevation ridge. This is reflected by drainage features present on site.

The site is entirely in Flood Zone 1, meaning that the site is not predicted to flood from rivers or the sea during a 0.1% AEP (1 in 1000 year) event. There is no significant risk to the site of flooding from surface water generated off-site. Surface water mapping available on the EA website has shown that surface water flooding may occur in the central area which sits at a low elevation. This flooding is from runoff arising on site and would be managed with the use of Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) as part of the development's green infrastructure provision.

The site is not designated as a groundwater source protection zone and the low permeability of the underlying geology would limit the potential for groundwater flooding. EA mapping indicates that the central area of the site is a minor aquifer. Observations from the site visit confirmed that site permeability is likely to be low. According to the EA, the site is not shown to be at risk of flooding from reservoirs. There are no records of flooding on the site. NSC has provided records of flooding with the closest being Westfield Drive and Moorfield Road to the north of the site. These are assumed to have been caused by surface water flooding. Site observations suggest that the existing watercourse running north to south in the low lying central area of the site is culverted in the vicinity of Grove Farm.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that developers should seek opportunities to reduce the overall level of flood risk in the area and beyond. Other key policy related points to be taken into consideration are as follows:

- West of England Sustainable Drainage Guide – Section 1

“SuDS are the preferred method managing surface water runoff from a development area. Fundamental to this approach is that the area must preserve both drainage and open space functions for the majority of the time. Specific approaches and requirements should be discussed on a development by development basis.”

- North Somerset Sustainable Drainage Guide – Section 2

The North Somerset Drainage Design Guidance document sets out the preferred approach to draining development sites in the county and puts a strong emphasis on mimicking natural drainage paths and integration within the site landscape vision.

“Combining public open space with the SuDS system to give an amenity and promote wellbeing is encouraged.”

“Routes through the development for the conveyance of exceedance flows known as blue corridors which link with retention ponds, wetlands or swales, can be used as cycle ways or paths.”

- Creating Sustainable Buildings and Places in North Somerset

“As part of our strategy to manage flood risk we are using Sustainable Drainage systems”

### Emerging drainage proposals

Development at The Grove provides the opportunity to deliver an exemplar SuDS scheme which provides significant amenity and biodiversity benefits.

In accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), run-off from the site cannot increase as a result of developing the site. Infiltration at the site is expected to be limited and consequently surface water will need to be stored and released gradually. A drainage concept has been developed based around the natural drainage pathways separating the site into several localised catchments.

Water runoff from each catchment would collect into a central blue-green corridor which broadly follows the existing main drainage ditch and includes removing the culvert near Grove Farm. This alignment follows the natural drainage path and hence would safely convey water to the storage areas should a blockage of the system occur or the

capacity of the system be exceeded. The blue-green corridor would convey flows to attenuation basins located in the western side of the site. Given the land available, focusing storage in the western portion of the site would provide significant opportunity for providing amenity and ecological benefits.

Within the wider development other Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) techniques such as swales, permeable paving, filter drains and filter strips, could be employed to reduce the contaminant load on the water entering the basins, slow the flow of water and provide ancillary ecological and landscape benefits.

In summary, the site lies entirely within flood zone 1 with the lowest probability of fluvial flooding. The site will need to control the discharge of surface water leaving the site using SuDS attenuation areas. The attenuation areas could form part of the site’s green infrastructure bringing both amenity and ecological benefits to the development. Therefore from a fluvial flood risk and surface water drainage perspective, there are no significant issues that would preclude development.

## Agricultural Land

A review of the Government's Agricultural Land Classification data shows the site to be a combination of grades 3a, 3b and 4 agricultural land.

## Historic Environment

Part of Backwell to the east of the site is designated as West Town Conservation Area and contains a number of listed buildings. Part of this conservation area runs along the south-eastern boundary of the site. There is also a further, smaller conservation area, Chelvey Conservation Area, focused around St Bridget's Church to the south-west of the site.

Within the site Grove Farmhouse is a Grade II Listed Building, but none of the surrounding associated outbuildings are listed. Development will need to respect the setting of the farm house, but the removal of a number of the more modern buildings around it would serve as an opportunity to enhance its overall setting.

## Other Environmental Issues

The A370 runs to the south of the site; therefore noise could potentially be an issue in this location. However, an adequate landscape buffer along the southern boundary could mitigate any impacts and could be provided as an integral part of the wider development of the site.

## Utilities

### Utilities Opportunities and Constraints

A high level Utilities constraints and opportunities review has been undertaken in relation to development at The Grove. It shows that the development site can be served by utilities, subject to the reinforcement of some networks.

The existing electricity network has the capacity to serve the site currently. There are two 11kV overhead lines within the development boundary, plus some low voltage electricity infrastructure. The electricity network for the development would connect to this existing infrastructure and be complemented with local substations on site.

In terms of the gas network, there are no recorded gas mains within the site boundary and the nearest main to the site is located in Rushmore Lane. As a result reinforcement to the gas infrastructure will be necessary to serve the development site. At this stage, it is envisaged that Wales & West Utilities will deliver the necessary improvements to connect the site.

The surrounding residential areas around the development site are well supplied by BT infrastructure and as a result it is expected that the proposed site can be easily connected to Telecommunication infrastructure.

The development is 'criss-crossed' by a number of raw water pipes. At this stage, it is envisaged that Bristol Water will provide adequate infrastructure for serving the development area.

There are no recorded sewers within the boundary of the development site although adjacent residential areas are served by foul sewer networks to the north and south of the site, networks that cross the railway line connecting ultimately to the Wessex Water Kingston Seymour treatment works. Capacity is limited although we expect that Wessex Water will deliver the required sewer infrastructure to serve the development.

In summary, preliminary investigations indicate that there are no significant issues from a utilities perspective that would preclude development on the Grove Farm site.

## Introduction

The development proposal for the land at Grove Farm, Backwell, is to deliver up to 650 new dwellings, with a residential development that responds positively to the sites constraints and opportunities.

A new green infrastructure framework will provide the setting for the proposed development, with the inclusion of enhanced green links throughout the site and further proposed green amenity space.

Access to the site will be via the A370 to the south and Long-Thorn to the north. A new primary estate road would run centrally through the proposed development.

The proposed site is already suitably accessible in terms of access to public transport, the existing highway network and cycling and pedestrian routes to nearby amenities.

The development represents the opportunity to provide:

- Up to 650 dwellings
- A new Primary School.
- Approximately 10 hectares of natural green amenity space with public access to support local biodiversity.
- A new Local Centre.
- Proposed attenuation basins to allow sustainable drainage.
- The introduction of children's play areas.

The key design principles consider how landscape, movement and development form will work together to help achieve a sense of place and create identity and character for the proposed development. As such the design principles are broken down into the following:

- Movement structure
- Place-making
- Green Infrastructure
- Phasing and Delivery

## Movement Structure

The proposed development will be accessed from both the northern and southern boundaries via Long-Thorn and the A370 (West Town Road) respectively.

The development proposal includes a primary estate road which will run through the centre of the site and provide the main form of vehicle circulation within the site.

General movement principles include:

- Maintaining the existing footpath and cycle linkages through the site, linking areas of landscape and other uses such as local facilities and services
- Promoting a new access route through the site which provides the main form of vehicle circulation within the site, as well as external connections to the surrounding area.

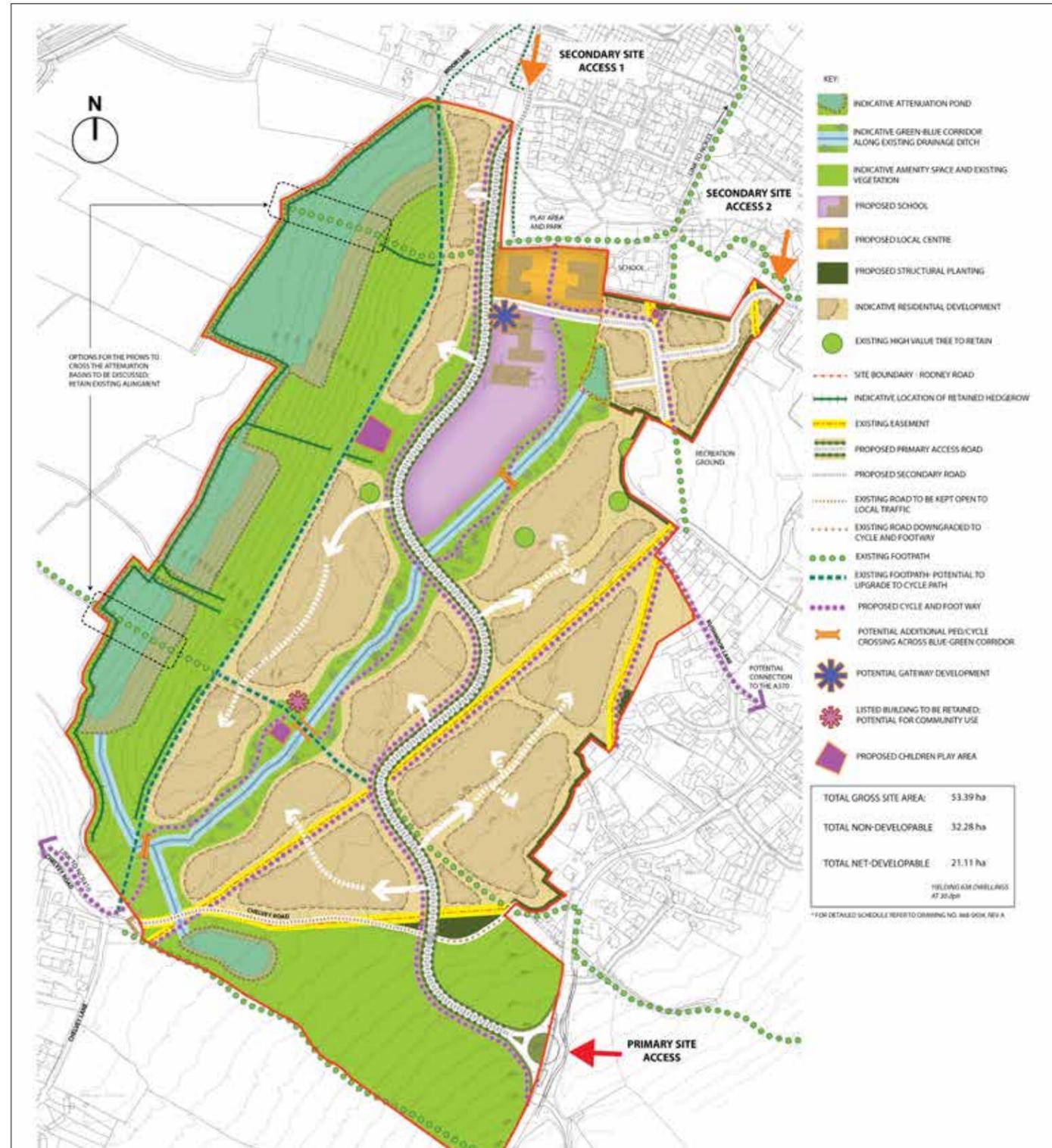
## Place Making

The development proposal is based on an understanding of the sites context and constraints, as well as a series of place making principles. The approach is to make a residential development that sits well within the existing green infrastructure and creates a natural extension to the existing settlement of Backwell. The development will provide new facilities to be enjoyed by Backwell residents and new residents alike, whilst also remaining well connected to the nearby facilities and services such as health, education and public transport.

## Green Infrastructure

The development proposal has considered the site's existing landscape features from the outset, which include the setting and the ridge. The approach is to create a network of natural green spaces that add greater environmental value by harnessing the ecological benefits of the site. As such the green infrastructure principles will include:

- The creation of a central green/blue corridor by enhancing the existing drainage ditch that runs through the site.
- The creation of a large area of publicly accessible green space which will run along the whole of the western side of the site where development is unsuitable due to the steeper slopes/drainage considerations. This area of land will also hold the larger proposed attenuation basins.
- The creation of two areas of publicly accessible natural equipped areas of play (NEAP) at central locations within the site. The indicative locations for the NEAPs are along the blue/green corridor to the south west of the site with the second being situated further northwards adjacent to the large area of public open space. The proposed cycle routes will further link these children's play areas to other parts of the site.
- Protection of important biodiversity assets and landscape characteristics as part of the wider green infrastructure proposals.
- Retaining the four existing high value trees.



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