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# St John's Woodland Village

A place to belong

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“

***St John's Woodland Village*** will be an extraordinary place inspired and defined by a hidden landscape.

The proposals will leave a lasting legacy and deliver a place of distinction where people of all ages are put in touch with nature to lead healthy and happy lifestyles.

”

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**The Vision for St John's, Exmouth**

**St John's Woodland Village will be an extraordinary place defined by a hidden landscape and where people of all ages will be put in touch with nature.**

This contemporary woodland village will become a place of authenticity that emerges

in a world of its own, self-contained but enjoyed by all.

St John's community core and a bold new and accessible landscape will promote healthy and happy lifestyles.

The identity of the place and its community will

become renowned for a heightened environmental awareness.

A contemporary village inspired by the landscape. A community in touch with nature.

**...A place to belong.**



**Contemporary woodland village**

*... a place of authenticity and a distinct identity that emerges in a world of its own*



**Strong Community**

*... a community core that complements the existing community assets and puts people in touch with nature to nurture a shared ethos of environmental awareness*



**Landscape Heritage**

*... protecting landscape assets that are centuries old and leaving a lasting legacy for the future*



**Self-sufficient 15 min place**

*... opportunity to live, learn, play, work, grow produce, grow a family, and live healthy happy lifestyles*



**Gateway to nature**

*... a woodland village on the threshold of the East Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty*



**Place for all**

*... a village for people of all ages to live and thrive, from young professionals and families through to elderly residents*

# Context

History of the place

Between the 19th and 21st centuries Exmouth grew considerably, adopting the layout patterns typical for each time period. However, the urban core and landscape features have remained in place throughout.

The town has experienced significant growth since the 1960s. More recently, the

opening of Dinan Way has enabled the built urban area to extend to the north and east to adjoin with the edges of the St.John's site boundary. Goodmores Farm represents the next phase of development in the planning pipeline, further extending the town to the north.

The St John's site comprises a patchwork of fields, hedgerows and woodland. These mature hedgerows and woodland would offer an attractive setting for new residents, whilst their retention and sensitive treatment would help to support biodiversity and important ecological corridors extending into and out of the town

Exmouth is the district's largest town, its 36,000 residents representing 25% of the district's population<sup>1,2</sup>. As such, it should be a focal point for future strategic growth considerations.

As would be expected from a town of its size, it has a good range of services, sports facilities

and education provision, and benefits from good rail and road connections to Exeter and surrounding towns. Furthermore, its residents enjoy a superb quality of life with easy access to the Jurassic Coast, Woodbury Common and the Exe estuary.

The sensible planning approach is to grow the district on this strong and well-supported urban foundation.

- 1. Exmouth Neighbourhood Plan
- 2. Devon County Council – Exmouth Profile

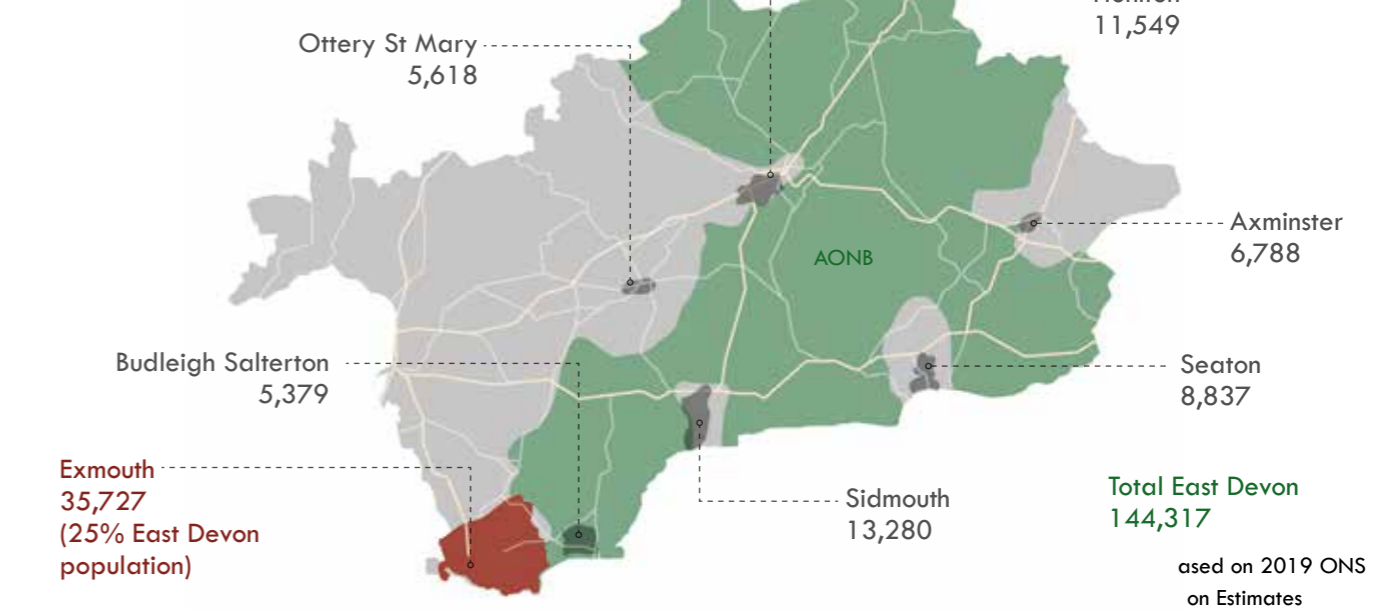
**This vision document demonstrates how a new urban village and woodland parkland asset for the town can be delivered on the site to help deliver the growth that Exmouth and the district need to sustain their economic futures, whilst protecting and enhancing the landscape and sensitive habitats within and surrounding it.**



Exmouth historical changes



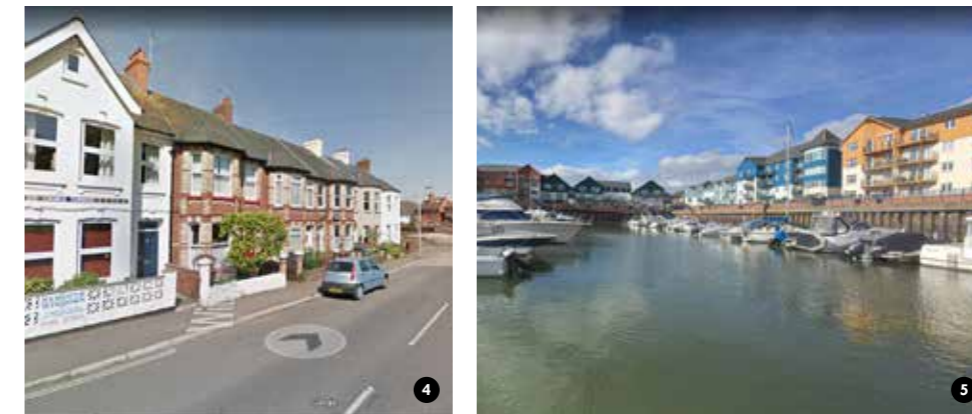
East Devon p



The site heritage



Exmouth built up area heritage and modern times



- 1. Historical landscape of fields, hedgerows and woodland
- 2. St John in the Wilderness
- 3. Mature hedgerows and woodlands
- 4. Typical Exmouth neighbourhoods
- 5. Exmouth Marina

**Economy and Planning**

Following East Devon's decision to withdraw from the Greater Exeter Strategic Plan, large-scale growth aspirations will now be guided through the preparation of a new district Local Plan. The Local Plan

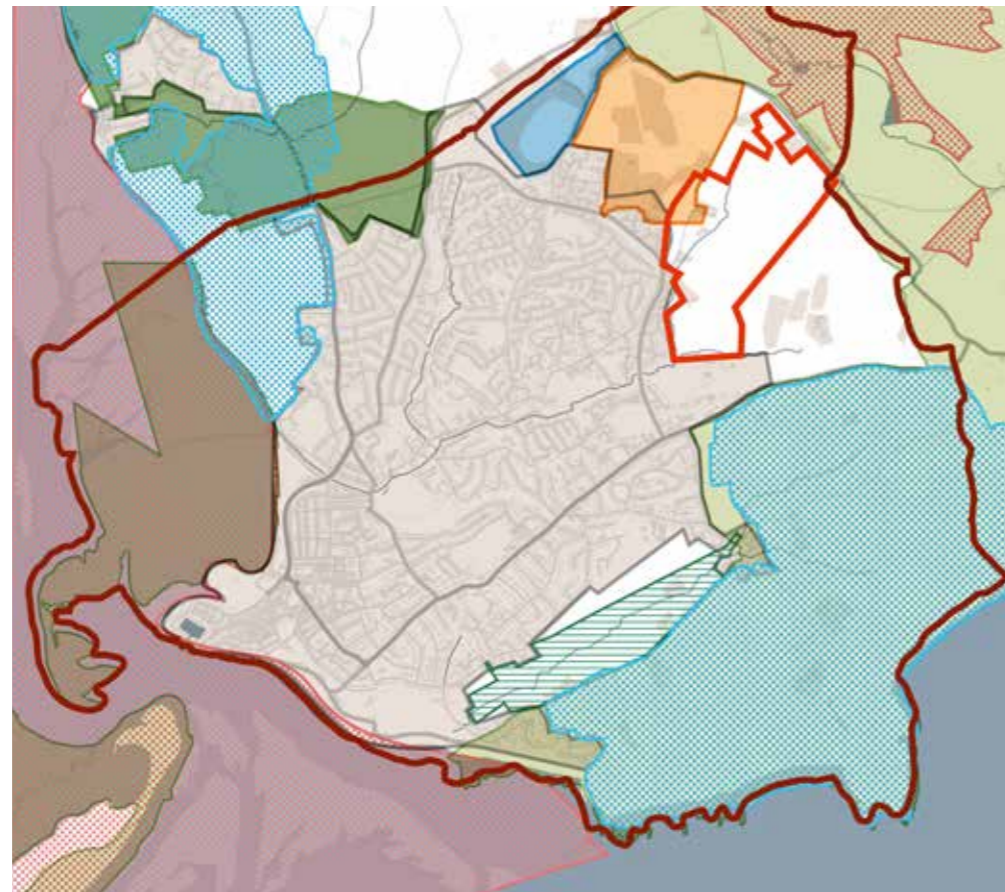
will likely have to be prepared in accordance with the proposals set out in the Government's Planning for the Future White Paper, allocating land for growth, renewal and protection across East Devon.

One of the key recommendations in the White Paper is the introduction of a new method of calculating housing provision which, if implemented, could result in an increase in East Devon's annual housing requirements from 928 dwellings currently to 1,614<sup>1</sup>.

Regardless of whether or not the new standard methodology for housing requirements is introduced, East Devon faces some important spatial decisions when it comes to planning for growth. Sustainably located sites are at a premium in a district that is constrained by numerous

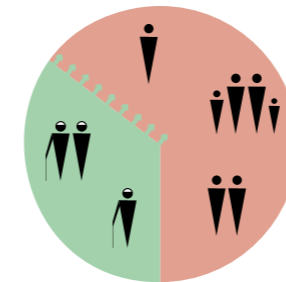
environmental designations covering a significant proportion of the land area. Exmouth's high quality of life offer is a magnet for retired residents in particular. So much so that the ONS identified Exmouth as being within the top 10 towns in England for most

elderly median age of residents<sup>4</sup>. Demographic projections suggest that, without intervention, this age profile is only going to become more exaggerated, with more over 65-year olds and fewer young people and families of working age.



- Exmouth boundary
- Built up areas
- Site
- Marley
- Bystock
- Special Protection Area
- Coastal Preservation Area
- Green Wedge
- Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- Proposed Littleham/Maer Valley Park

**Ageing resident population<sup>2</sup>**



28% over 65 years

**High levels of net out commuting<sup>3</sup>**



Exmouth also has a relatively narrow economic base, with over 60% of jobs falling within the accommodation and food (18.9%), wholesale and retail trade (17.2%), health and social work (16.5%) and education (11.2%) sectors<sup>5</sup>. As a result of this, the town has a very low level of self-containment, with substantial numbers of economically active residents commuting to the Exeter area on a daily basis<sup>6</sup>.

It is clear that without the provision of a decent range of starter homes and family housing, the population will continue to age, the economic base will continue to polarise, and the vitality and viability of Exmouth town centre will be further undermined as retailers compete for a fast diminishing segment of consumer spend in the face of strong competition from online shopping

The question is, how and where can Exmouth accommodate housing growth to help support a more balanced demographic profile and the diversification of its economy? Analysis of the diagram on p.10 reveals that the fringes of the built-up urban area are largely protected by environmental designations, notably the East Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the Coastal Protection Area and the

Exe Estuary Special Protection Area. Furthermore, the current Local Plan allocates land between Exmouth and Lympstone as a Green Wedge, and the Neighbourhood Plan protects against development in the land holdings of the former Marley and Bystock Estates and an area designated for the proposed Littleham/Maer Valley Park. This effectively leaves the land at St John's on the north east fringe of the built urban area as one of the only options for delivering sustainable growth in Exmouth over the next Local Plan period.

1. Lichfields (2020) Keeping up with the pace: What does the new standard method mean for the South West
2. ONS Population Estimates 2019
3. ONS Census 2011
4. BBC (2014) The Town that Thronged with Old People
5. Devon County Council – Exmouth Profile
6. ONS – Census 2011

Existing Context

The proposals for St John's Woodland Village have been shaped by an appreciation of the place itself and an exploration of opportunities to deliver sensitive, good growth that results in benefits beyond the red line boundary of the site.

The development site lies in the gap between the Exmouth town boundary and the built up urban area, with its south-western part adjoined to existing neighbourhoods.

Virtually all of the site is well-screened from views from the surrounding area

by topography, mature vegetation and existing built form, and not visible from key, sensitive locations like the SW Coast Path, the main centres of population and more distant places such as Dawlish Warren. Only the northernmost, elevated part of the site might potentially be exposed to views from

across the estuary to the west, but would form a very small, undiscernible component of the view at such distance.

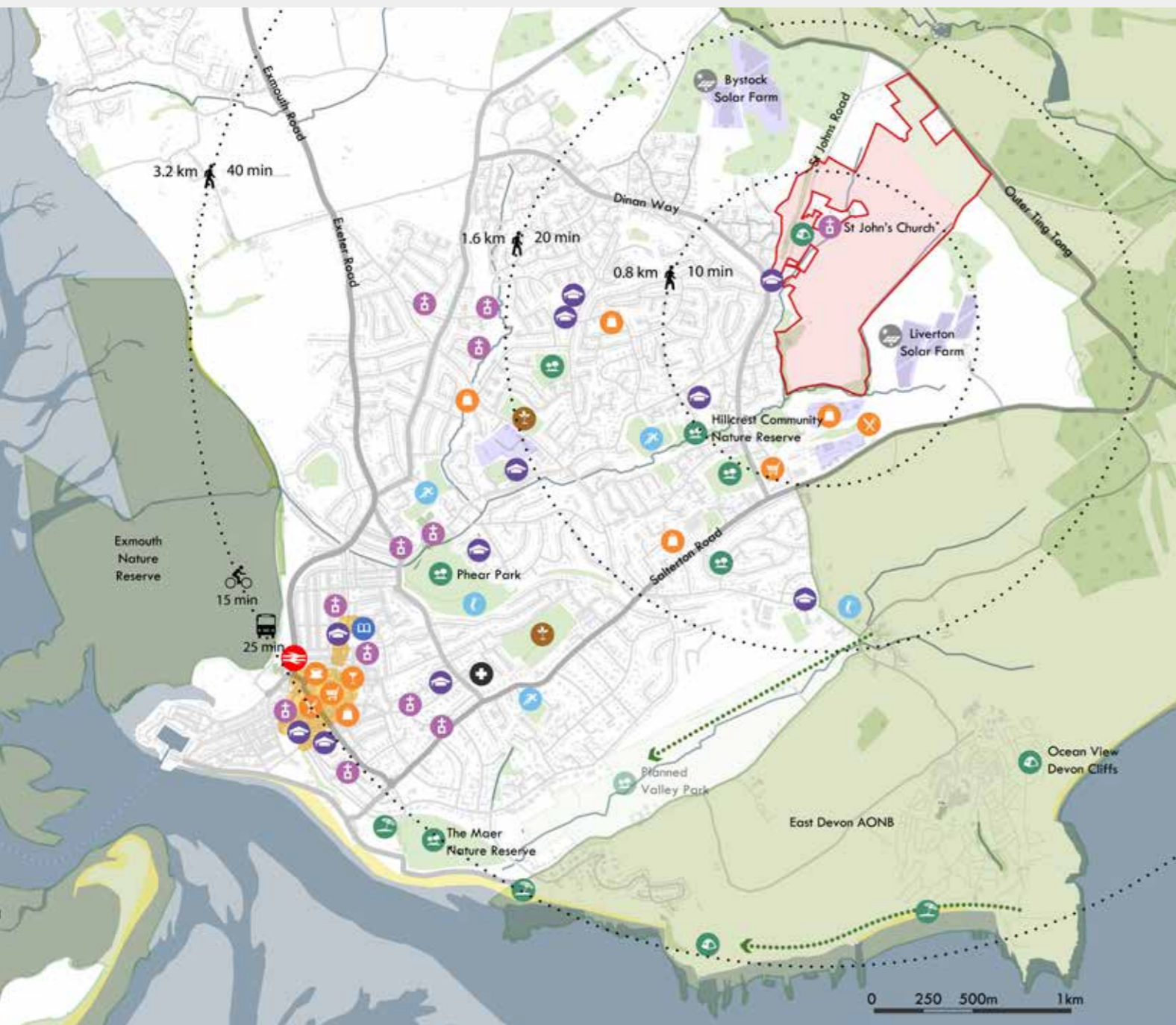
The site's peripheral location does not limit potential foot and cycle links to the historical civic core and train station. Moreover, the site has a

unique setting for a new community to emerge in touch with nature and surrounded by the East Devon AONB.

This presents an opportunity to lead with landscape to deliver good growth and put in place a sympathetic transition between 'town and country' in perpetuity.

The proposals at St John's Woodland Village allow for a celebration of this gateway between the urban area and nature, forging dynamic and lasting green infrastructure connections that will benefit the existing community, and safeguard Exmouth's more valuable landscape assets. The parkland setting

and woodland asset to the west will provide a new recreational resource for Exmouth residents ensuring that the development is self-contained, thereby ensuring that the sensitive Pebblebed Heath habitats are not exposed to increased visitor pressure.



1 A distinctive, self-contained community

The scale and location of the site provides an opportunity to create a new community that is complementary to Exmouth and its town centre. Comfortable walking distances within the site mean that there is an opportunity to

achieve a degree of self-containment, with future residents easily able to access open spaces, co-working hubs and social infrastructure, whilst at the same time increasing activity and spend in the town centre.



2 Connecting wider green infrastructure

The generous amount of woodland within the site offers great potential to create a new and unique recreational resource for new residents and Exmouth as a whole. Providing distinctive views next to well equipped

public open spaces and amenities, the place has potential to become a recreational hub, and together with mature woodlands under the site promoter's ownership, will reduce the recreational pressure on the sensitive AONB.



3 Community assets for all to enjoy

The new community hub with a school, 15th century church, café, working hub, playgrounds and village green is to become a new destination for residents both old and new.

New routes should prioritise walking and cycling, minimising the reliance on the cars not only for the future St John's Woodland Village residents, but also for visitors from adjacent neighbourhoods.

Site scale context

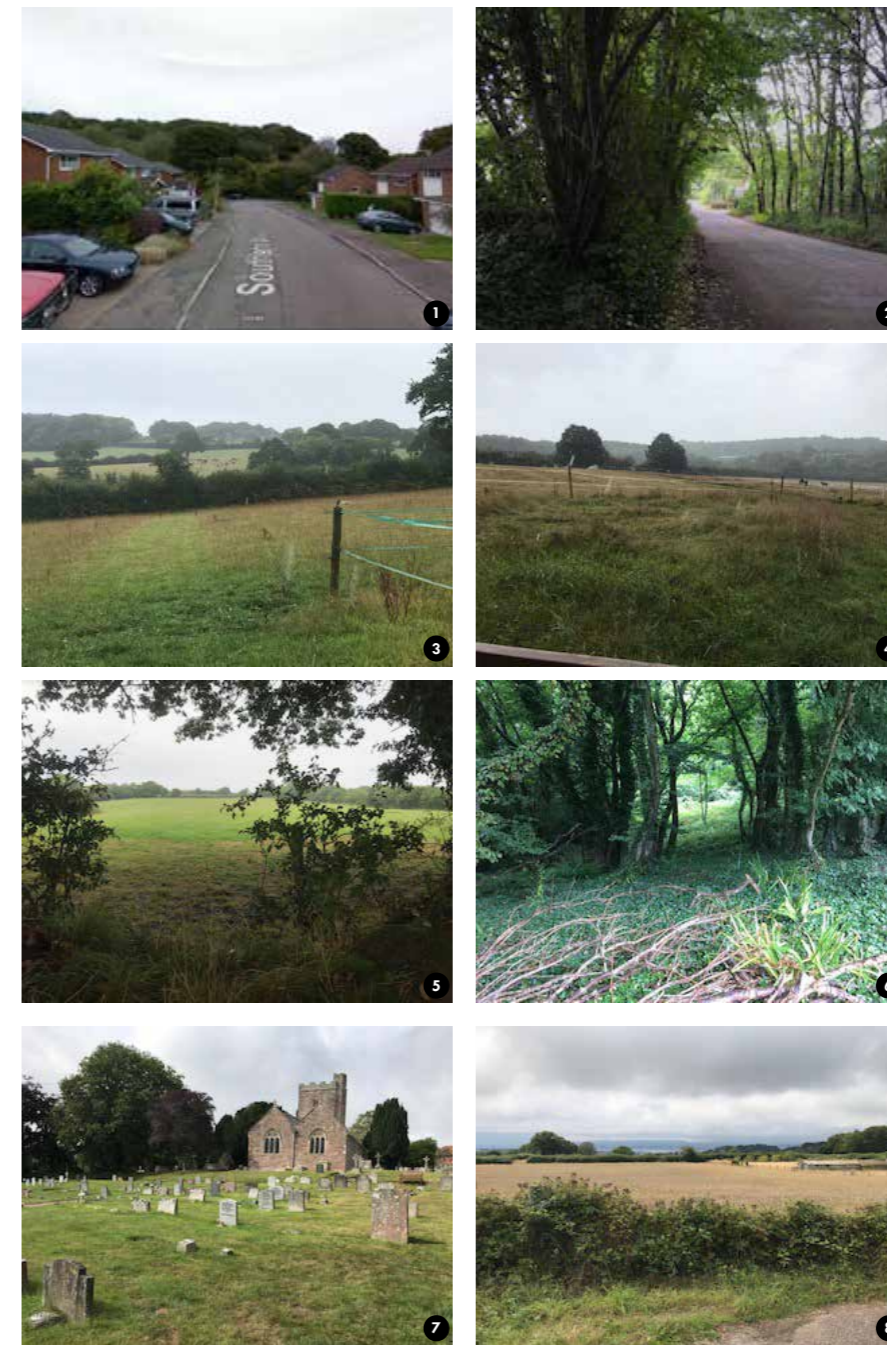
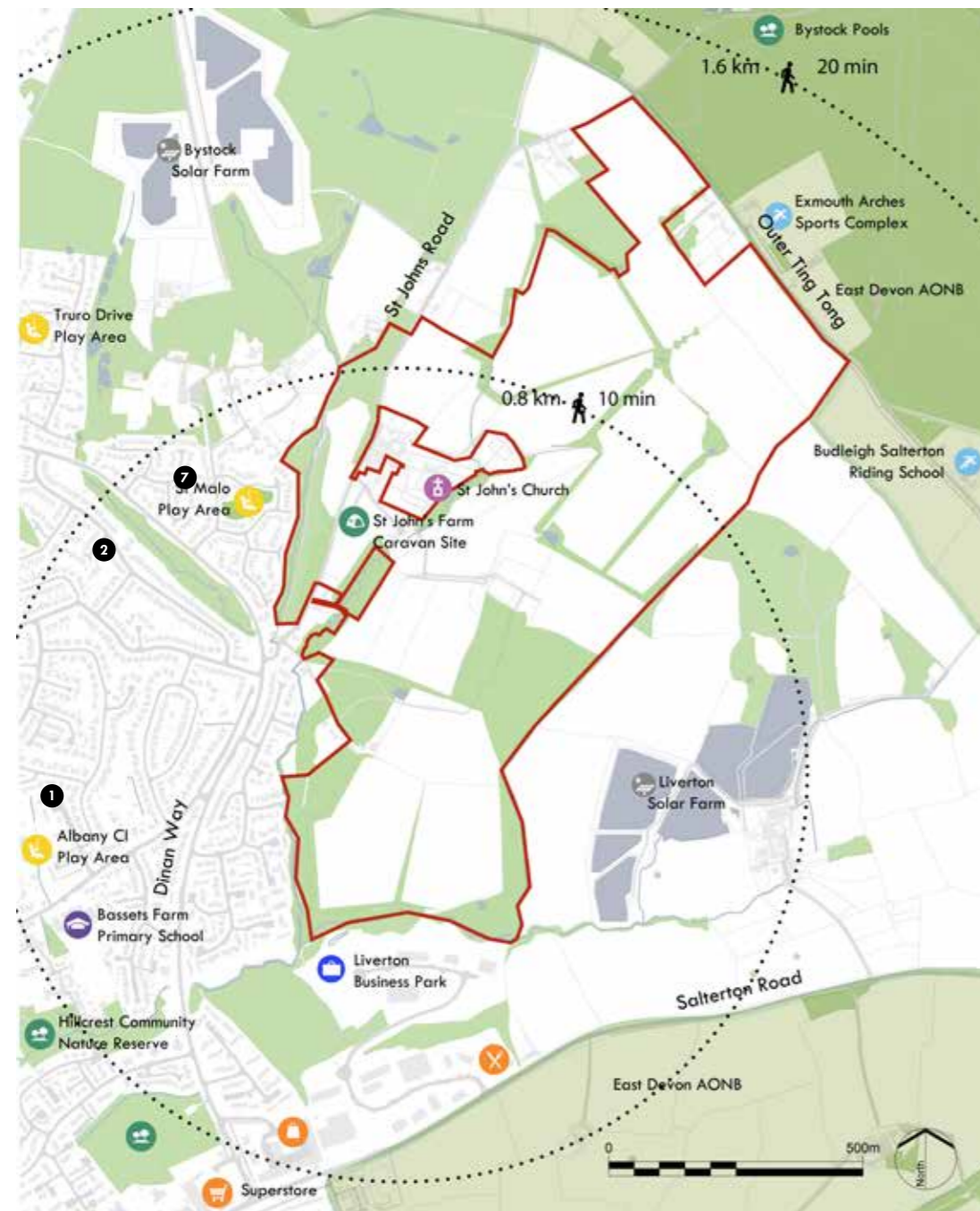
The site is well enclosed and sits at the transition between town and country. Recent developments around the site, including Bystock and Liverton solar farms and Liverton Business Park already give the perception that the built urban area boundary is extending outwards.

Despite being separate from Exmouth in visual terms, the site is physically attached to existing schools and open spaces.

Enhancing access to the landscape and sensitively treating existing features and the setting of the AONB, will allow a community to emerge with its own identity, while making a

complementary addition to Exmouth; using landscape to define an appropriate edge in perpetuity

St.John's Church is a key heritage asset at the heart of the site which can become a new focus for community life, forging links between the new and existing developments.



1, 2 .Vehicular accessibility:  
(1. Access through Southern Woods  
2. John's road, narrowed with mature hedgerows)

3,4. Undulating topography, mosaic of woodlands and field boundaries

5,6.Mature hedgerows on site

7,8. Visual and heritage related sensitivities

**Opportunities and Constraints**

**Ownership within the site**

The site benefits from a considerable area of land under control by a landowner consortium with a deep history in the local area.

In addition to the core development area, the consortium own land to the west that has the potential to become a

substantial recreational asset for the town.

The site is very well served by existing utilities infrastructure and so, compared to standalone new settlements, there will be a relatively low cost for infrastructure provision, enhancing viability and the scope for affordable housing and community facilities. The CIL contribution will enable other infrastructure

projects to be delivered for the good of the town.

**Vehicular access options:** Three existing publicly adopted highway access points into the site can be utilised:

- Access from St John's Road can be achieved with improvements to the existing highway network to deliver improved pedestrian and

cycle connections by way of localised widening or altering vehicle priority with appropriate shuttle work through narrow sections. Alternatively, land on either side of St John's Road could be utilised for a re-aligned vehicular access route, allowing St John's Road itself to become an active travel corridor through the centre of the site.

• Access from the southern boundary of the site can be achieved via the existing residential estates roads of Southern Wood and Meadow View Road. The local network is of traditional design with wide carriageway and footways either side, providing flexibility in the future to provide improved pedestrian and cycle connectivity while retaining core traffic

capacity. • The B3179 forms the north eastern boundary of the site where a significant site frontage allows for flexibility in achieving access at this point. This is likely to form a principal route to destinations beyond the local Exmouth catchment, with journey times from the northern boundary of the site along the B3179 being at least as attractive

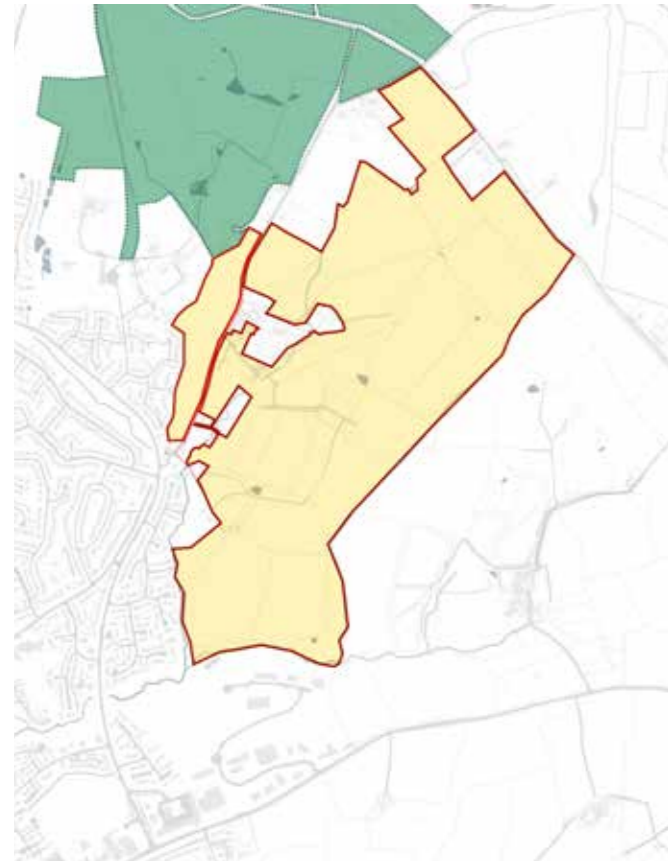
as Dinan Way and would form a preferred route for those living in the site.

**Mosaic of fields and woodlands**

The site is characterised by a mosaic of well enclosed fields set within a mature network of broadleaved woodland and hedgerows. The wooded landscape character and visual

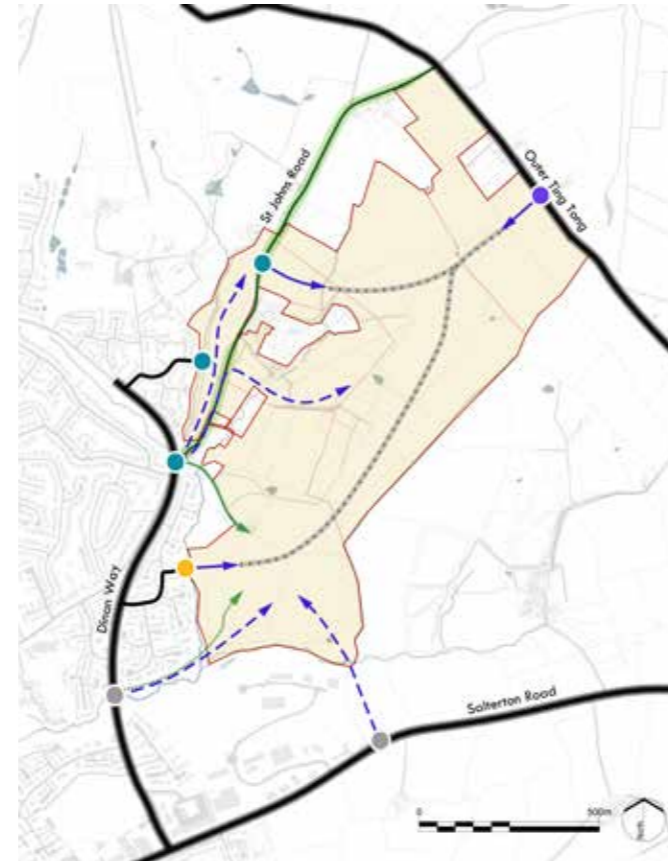
containment of the site defines character, and creates placemaking opportunities for a self contained community to emerge that sensitively fits within the landscape setting. Retention of woodland areas, hedgerows and watercourses will help create identity as well as protect on site biodiversity.

**Ownership within the site**



- Development area 59.6 ha
- Site boundary
- Additional land within consortium for potential recreational use 84.8 ha

**Vehicular access opportunities**



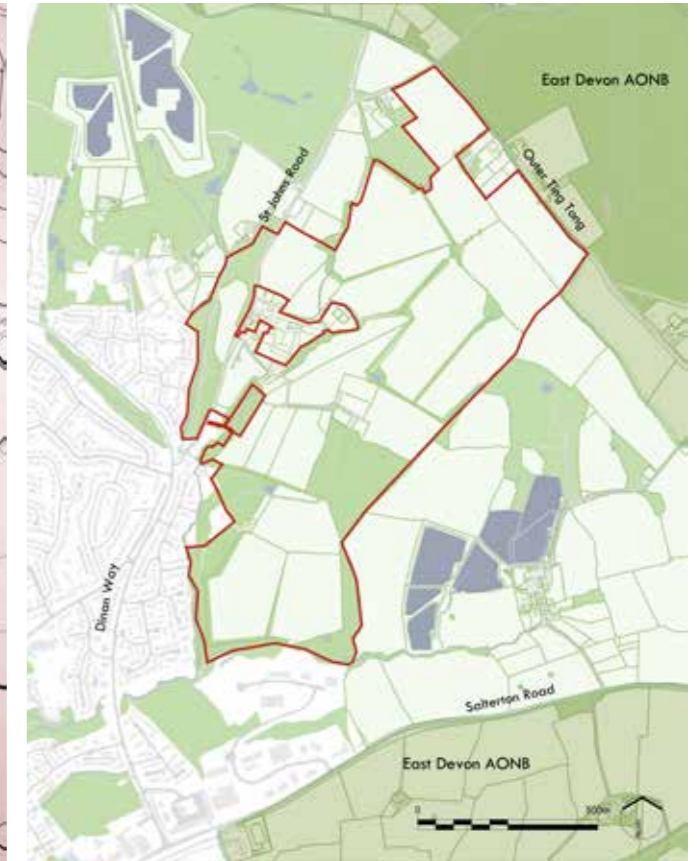
- Development area
- Primary road (2+ lanes)
- Single lane road narrowed by mature woods and hedgerows
- Road through existing neighbourhood
- Access opportunities: Vehicular:
  - preferred options
  - alternative options
- Access capacity:
  - 100-300 dwellings
  - 300-400 dwellings
  - 400+ dwellings
- Cycle/pedestrian

**Steep topography**



- 150m
- 25m

**Mosaic of fields and woodlands**



- Parcel boundaries
- Woodlands and mature hedgerows
- Fields
- AONB

**Opportunities and Constraints**

**Landscape Designations**

The Pebblebed Heaths located to the north-east of the site have the following landscape designations: Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Area (SPA). The East Devon Local Plan stipulates that, in order to protect

the Pebblebed Heaths, new dwellings will not be allowed on or within 400 metres of the SPA

**Visual Impact and Sensitivity**

The site accommodates a number of view corridors related to listed buildings. Areas with high visual

impact are located to the south of St John's church and along Outer Ting Tong to the north-east of the site. The masterplan will consider these sensitive views and will place development parcels in respect to them.

**Composite Constraints and Opportunities Plan**

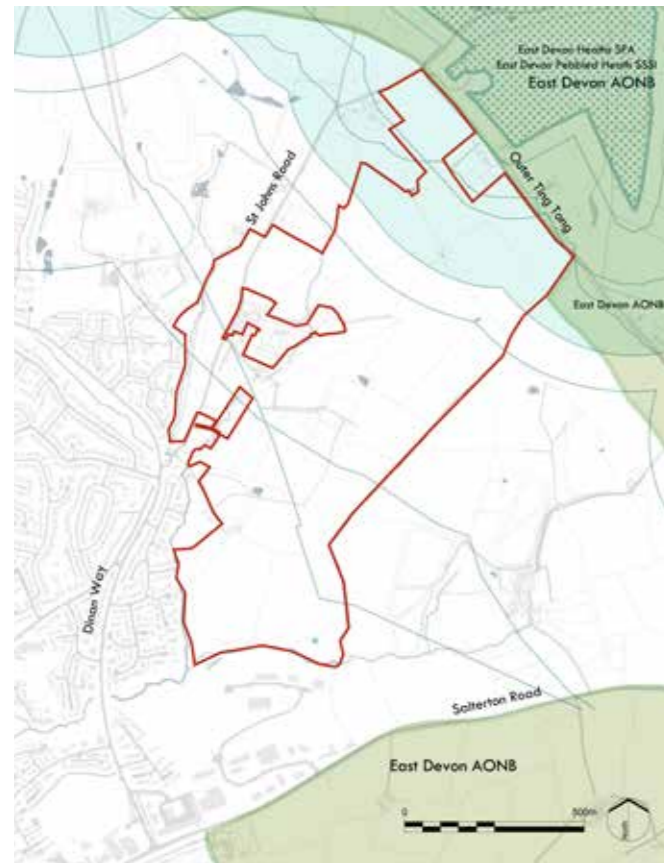
Based on the analysis of the site constraints and opportunities the site has been divided into plots that mostly follow the historical landscape structure, and each of the plots has been assessed on the suitability for development. The major factors that

informed this assessment included landscape designations as well as the quality of the existing mature landscape and its value for the area.

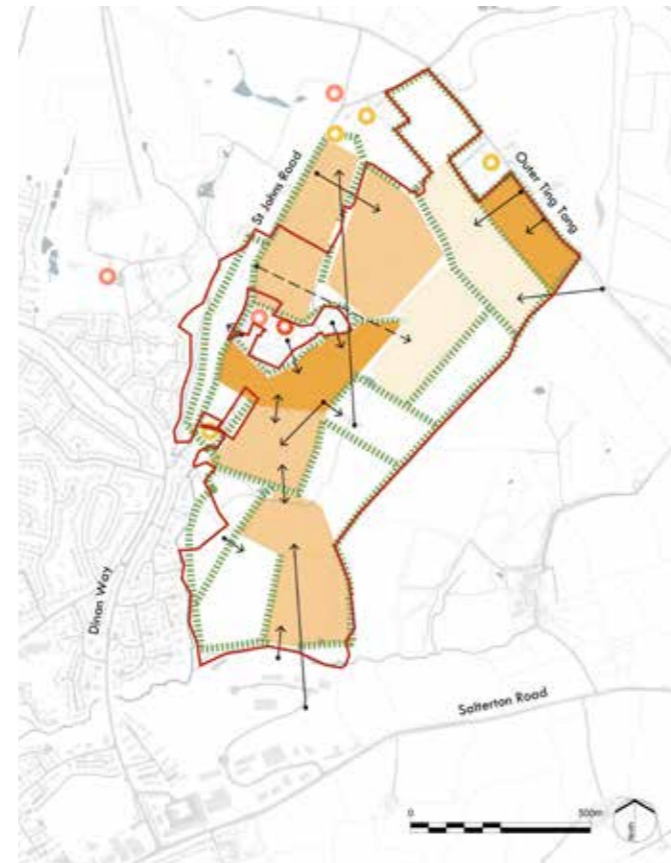
The site's topography and natural drainage opportunities have also been assessed.

The setting of St. John's Church and the overall impact on the historical context of the wider landscape have also been considered whilst seeking to make a positive, sustainable addition to Exmouth.

**Landscape designations**

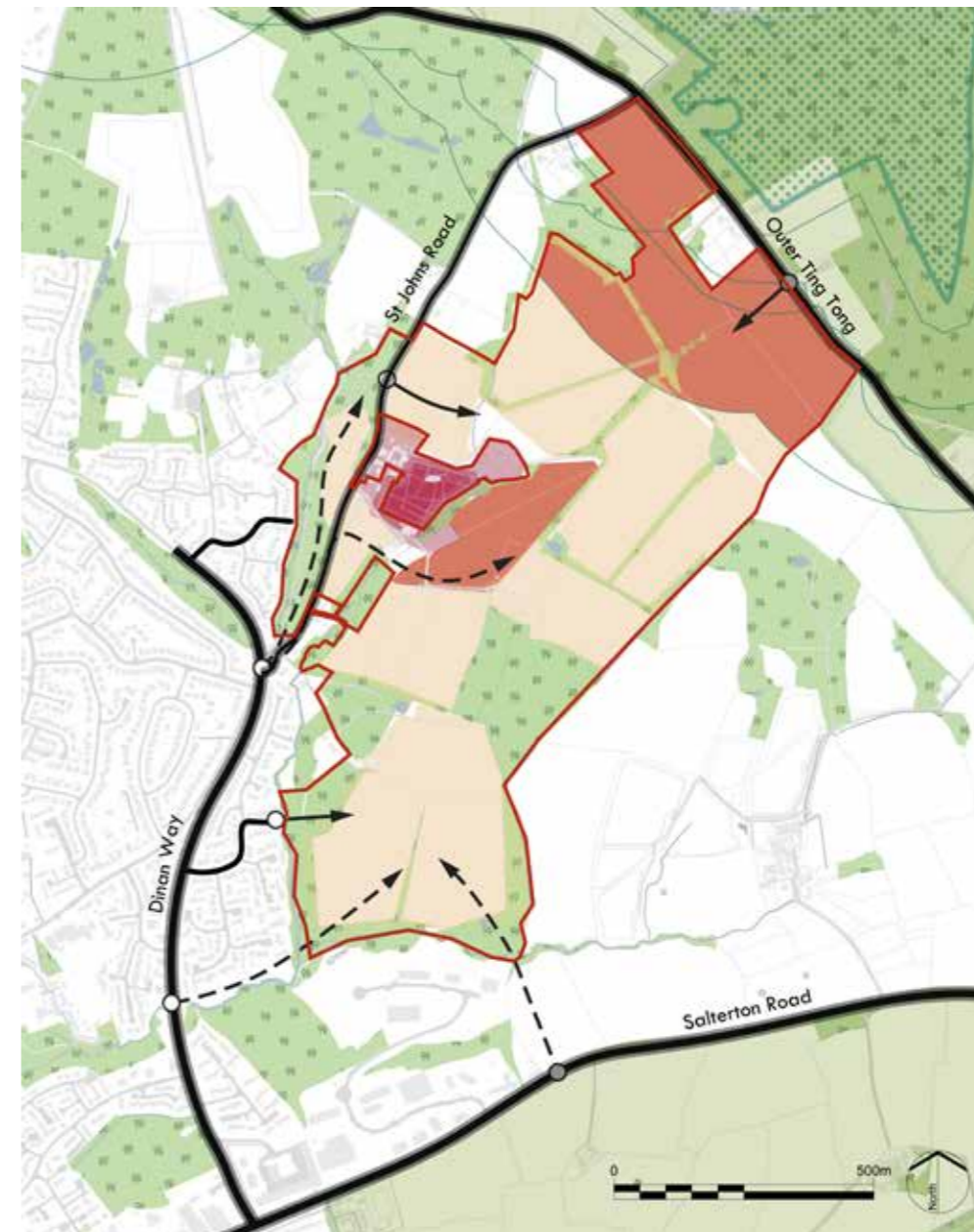


**Visual Impact and Sensitivity**



- Parcel boundaries
- SACs, SPAs and SSSIs
- AONB
- SSSI impact areas

- Visual impact:**
- No visual impact
- Moderate
- High visual impact
- Physical/visual border
- \* Listed Grade II\*
- \* Listed Grade II
- \* Other buildings to consider
- Connections



- Not suitable for development:**
- Mature woodlands
- Ecological restrictions/sensitive site
- Historical site (landmark, community core, heritage character)
- Suitable for development:**
- Developable areas

- 🌳 Not suitable for development:  
Total 43.3 ha  
Including:  
17.0 - ecological buffer  
22 - woodlands and wedges  
4.3 - sensitive site
- 🏠 Gross developable:  
41.5 ha

## Masterplan Design Proposal

**Design Moves**

The masterplan is underpinned by a series of simple design moves that respond to constraints and opportunities to set out a clear strategy for how a masterplan could be developed in more detail.

When considered together, the big moves create a fundamental framework that allows for flexibility for detailed solutions to emerge. lifestyle opportunities that will help deliver upon the potential described in this vision document.

Each move seeks to create character, place and

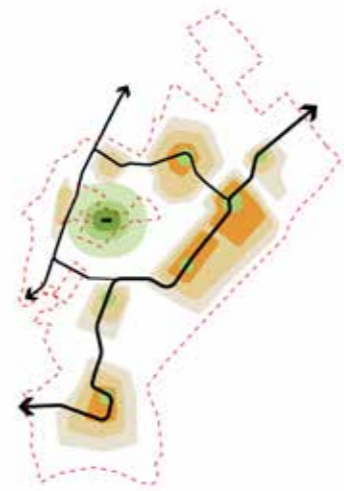
**1 Landscape Led**



*“Inspired by nature”*

Working with, and enhancing existing landscape assets and habitats, a high quality landscape framework intuitively flows through the site creating opportunities for residents and the surrounding community to enjoy enhanced access to this new landscape AND surrounding green infrastructure.

**2 Development clusters**



*“In touch with nature”*

Development perched on the landscape edge to promote a shared ethos of environmental awareness with people put in touch with nature at every opportunity. Defined by the Woodland backdrop, this concept promotes a clear identity.

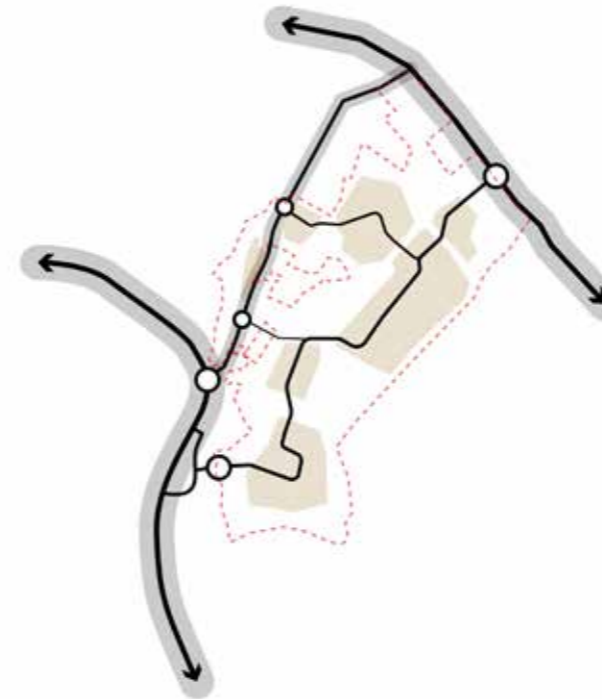
**3 A Village street**



*“The anatomy of a village”*

A connecting causeway that recreates the character and qualities of older patterns of development and living that were more in tune with natural systems. A street designed for people and pedestrian experience as a priority.

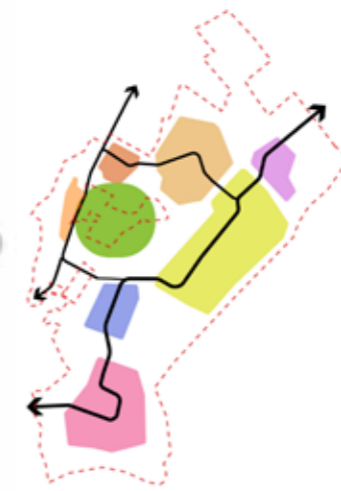
**4 Self contained but connected**



*“A 15 minute place”*

Learning lessons from lockdown and future-proofed for future lifestyle needs, the Village will be connected via innovative mobility solutions and active travel options PLUS workspaces and open spaces to deliver daily needs within 15 minutes walk to encourage healthy and happy lifestyles.

**5 Distinct character areas**



*“Distinctive places”*

Each cluster of development has an identity inspired by its landscape setting, promoting a sense of ‘post code pride’ and creating a place of distinction and authenticity. The diversity and distinctiveness will make parcels attractive to a range of developers to facilitate the pace of delivery.

**6 Varied density and mix**



*“Places for all”*

A place with a variety of development products to attract people of all ages, delivering homes, not buildings. A place that appeals to a wider demographic and is particularly attractive to families, helping to arrest the town’s gradual economic decline.



**The Vision for St John's, Exmouth**

Two thirds of people polled recently in the UK felt that a sense of community has declined in their lifetime.

The vision for St John's Woodland Village seeks to reverse this trend.

The proposals start with a desire to understand who might live here and how might they thrive to create a community that will be fully adaptable to meet people's changing needs, regardless of age, race, faith, or mobility.

The priority for the scheme is to create a sense of community with a place that encourages neighbours old and new to come together in a place that they can call

home and experience a lasting sense of belonging. People respond strongly to places which feel welcoming, safe and inclusive, so, the masterplan is structured in a way to create these conditions and add to the pleasure and pride people take in their community, increase the desire for people of all ages to invest in a home for each stage of their life, and nurture healthy and happy lifestyles in a place they are proud to call home.

**A community where all feel a sense of belonging**

First time social renter



Millennial moving out of Exeter



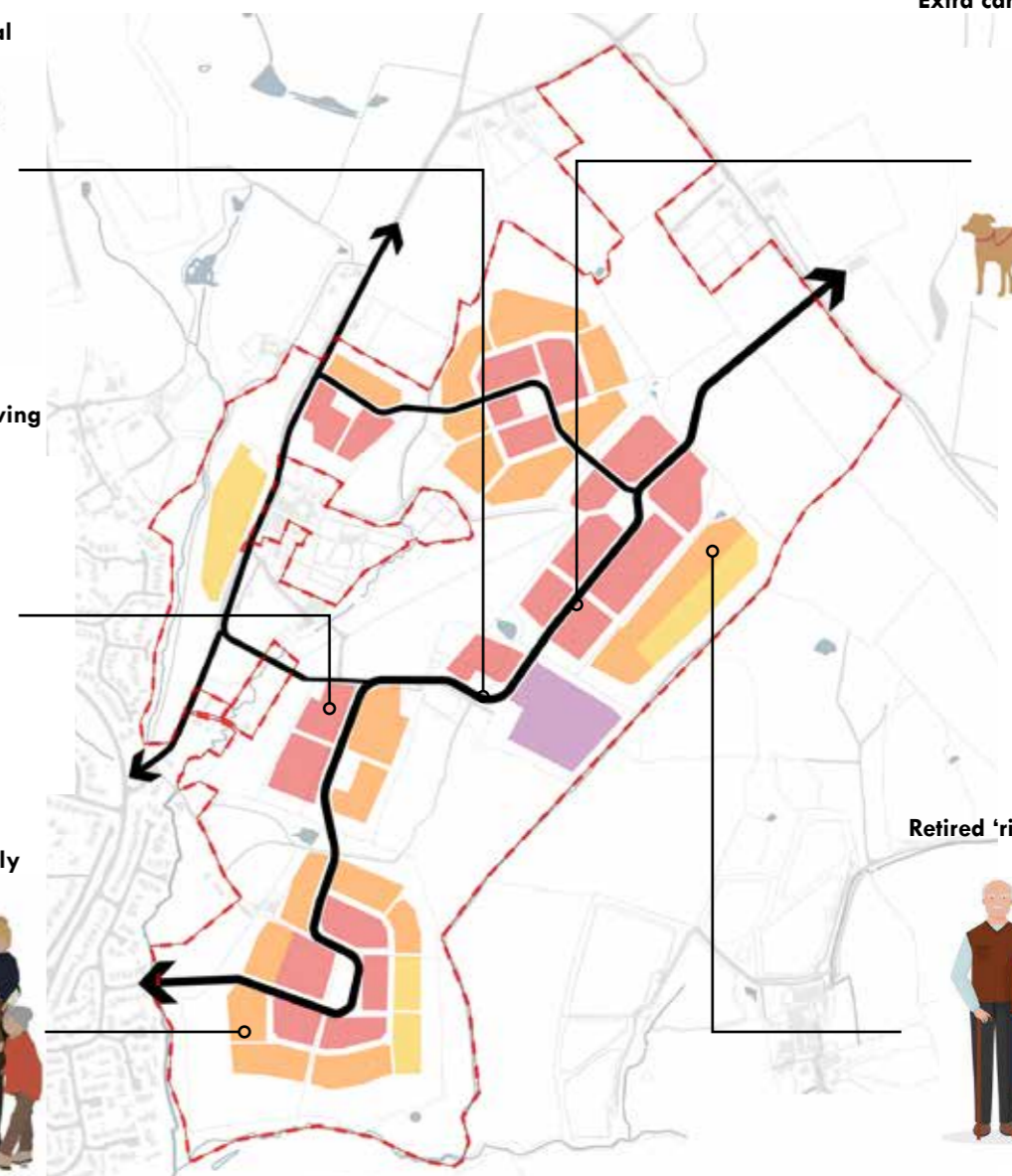
Growing family



Extra care resident



Retired 'rightsizers'



**The Vision for St John's, Exmouth**

The site commands a sensitive design approach to create a truly special place that responds to the quality of the existing landscape.

The masterplan seeks to create a place that benefits Exmouth as a whole while also achieving the degree of self containment desired to create a place with a sense of community spirit and vitality. To achieve this balance, a range of densities are proposed across the site, with a logical distribution according to location in order to support place making objectives and to respond to sensitivities associated with the landscape

and accessibility.

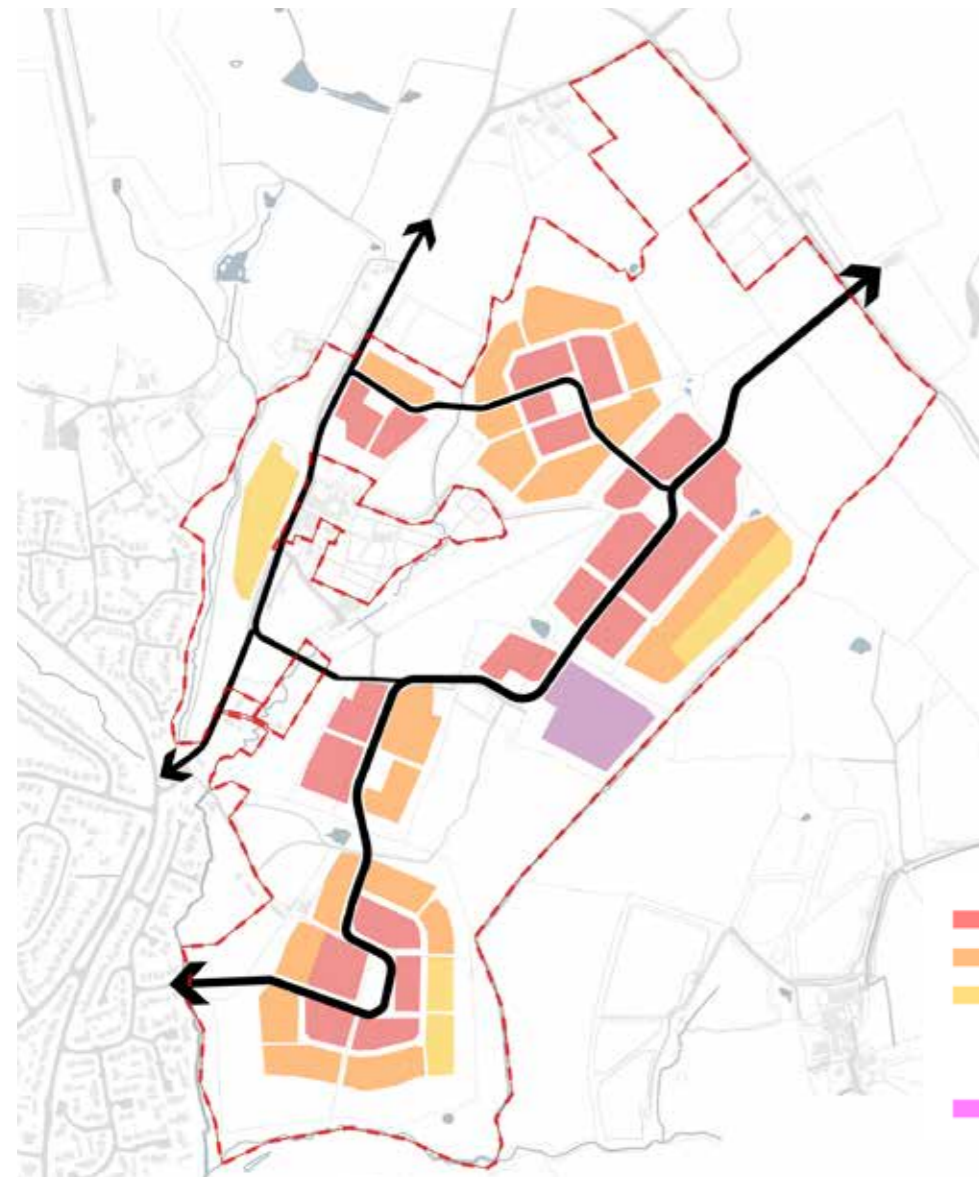
The density profile provides a flexible framework within which a range of residential products could be delivered to respond to emerging local needs including starter homes and social rental apartments; through to larger detached family homes; retirement homes for 'right-sizers'; and bespoke properties for quality retirement and extra care needs.



The masterplan also allows for the delivery of the necessary social infrastructure including primary school, a work hub and community building, all with the aim of creating a place where people can live, learn, work and play. This is all set within a strong landscape structure with ample open space. St John's Common measures c 8 hectares and is approaching the size of Phear Park and The Maer.



Character of the place

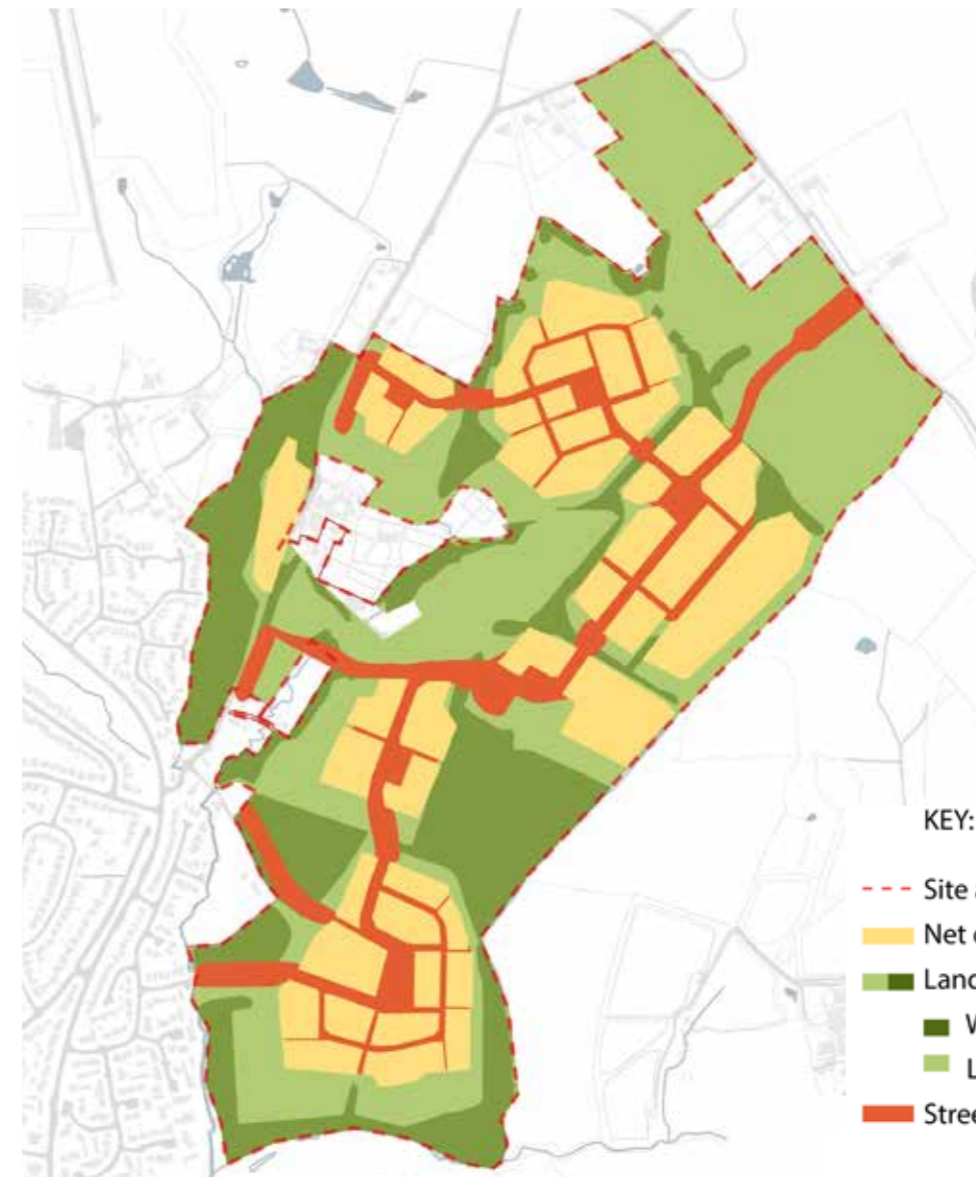
**Land Use and Density**





 719 Homes  
 1800 Population

40dph 9.47 Ha = 379  
 30dph 9.43 Ha = 283  
 20dph 2.85 Ha = 57  
 TOTAL homes: 719  
 Primary School site 1.5 Ha

**Land Budget**



 23.25 ha NDA  
 6.5 ha Public open space required

KEY:  
 - - - Site area: 84.78 Ha  
 Net development area = 23.25 Ha  
 Landscape/nature assets = 49.23 Ha  
 Woodland = 22 Ha  
 Landscape = 27.23 Ha  
 Streets and public realm = 12.3 Ha

**Sustainable Travel**

Residents of the site will benefit from close proximity to employment, schools, recreation space and local facilities, combined with excellent mobility options. As such, there is an opportunity to influence resident travel mode switch away from car use, thereby maximising the ability to achieve net zero Carbon ambitions and the

**promotion of active and healthy lifestyles.**

Whilst access by car will be facilitated, it is not the intention for it to be convenient. It is important that travel priority starts with excellent, attractive and direct active travel links and finishes with the accommodation of only essential car travel.

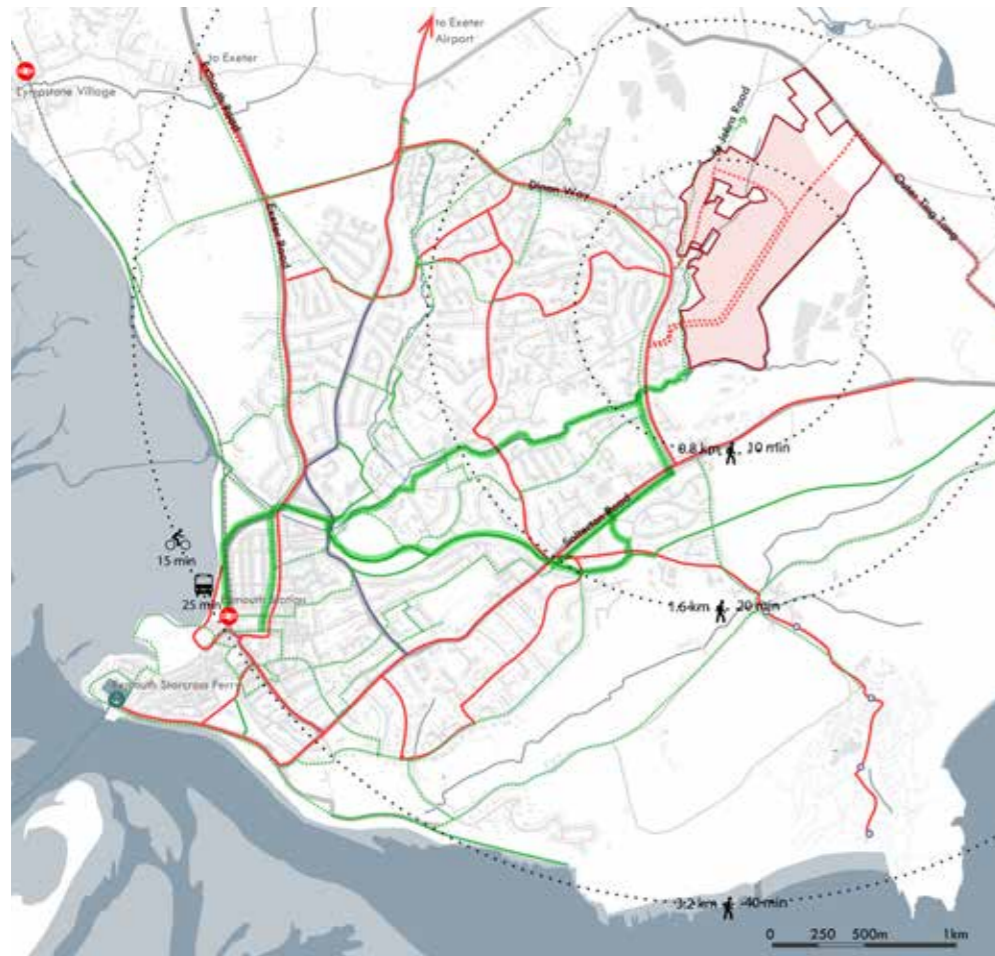
Easy access between the site and the town centre by non-car modes will result in increased spend, trade and activity in Exmouth's shops, businesses, clubs and facilities.

An estimated population increase of c 1,800 additional people, with a diverse demographic, will help to sustain a successful town centre and district economy.



Active commute and more sustainable types of transport

**Connections to existing public transport and cycle routes**



- Bus routes (existing)
- - - Bus routes (proposed/diversion)
- Cycle routes (existing)
- - - Cycle routes (proposed as a part of the Strategy for Cycle Routes in Exmouth)

**Cycle routes**

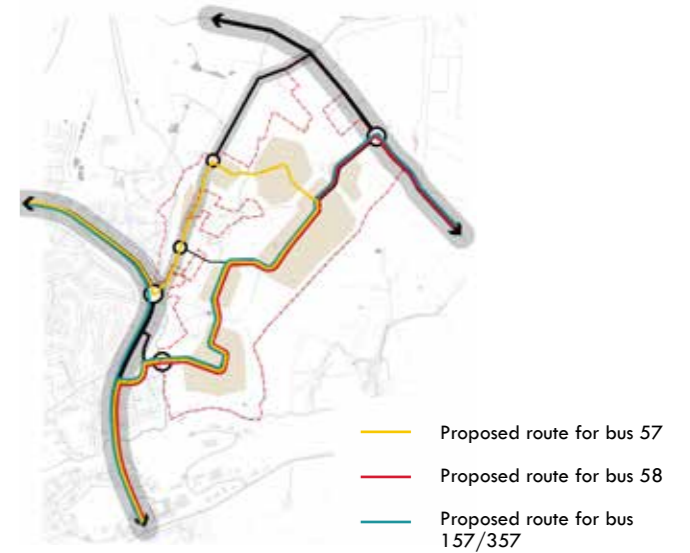


**Cycling**

The site provides potential to tie into the current and future cycle infrastructure such as the existing National Cycle Network Route 2 along Salterton Road or the proposed Withycombe Valley Route identified within the Exmouth Neighbourhood Plan which could provide a more direct active travel corridor from the town centre to the site. Furthermore, there were historic aspirations to take this route well beyond Dinan Way, continuing beyond Veiges Farm towards the Common, a section which passes directly through the site which could be implemented alongside any proposals.

The prospect of implementing a high quality and direct active movement corridor will benefit both residents within the site but also existing residents within Exmouth Town. By connecting into the existing cycle network, direct cycle links can be provided to larger transport interchanges such as Exmouth railway station which provides direct links into Exeter.

**Access to public transport**



Such measures will ensure that any traffic impact on either St John's Road or Southern Wood can be managed and suppressed such that these points of access may form secondary traffic routes, ensuring that trips by car will remain unattractive when compared to high quality active travel corridors towards the town centre.

**Bus travel**

The southwestern edge of the site already benefits from close proximity to a range of existing bus services. There is also the potential for these routes to be diverted into the site in the future. The creation of an access onto the B3179 also provides alternative future route options, either diverting to or from Dinan Way or by utilising the B3179 access to allow routes to enter or exist to the north. Of particular note are the existing 15 minute frequency service provided by route 87 and the half hourly services provided by routes 157/357, either of which could represent a regular public transport offering for the site.

**St John's Common**

**“A place that puts you in touch with nature. Fresh air, tranquil walks, and a place to build relationships”**

St John's Common is the physical and social heart of the community. This naturalistic common respects the setting of St. John's church and places

it as a centre piece of a new community core with a work hub and community building integrated within new residential areas.

The new parkland includes a network of walking routes that connect into the wider landscape for residents and the existing community to enjoy.

Development clusters are perched on the edge of the common with safe connectivity promoting accessibility to local facilities including a Work Hub to encourage an enterprising community to emerge on site.



**St John's Village Core**

**“A place to meet your neighbours for a cup of coffee and support local producers at the weekend farmers market.”**

Each cluster has a central square that promotes the village identity and a sense of community spirit among residents.

The Village Core is the largest square and accommodates a diverse programme of seasonal activities to bring the community together.

A cafe and local convenience store activates the ground floor around the Village Square to animate the space,

promoting safety and security.

Wide pavement and cycle lanes along the Causeway support a pedestrian and cycling friendly environment.



