

*Land off Northcote Hill*

# Honiton

Vision Document | March 2025



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# Introduction

## Document Purpose and Structure

The document sets out a vision for the site and presents how a sustainable, vibrant and resilient residential development could be delivered that would benefit the existing town of Honiton and help support aspirations for sustainable development within the area.

This document should be read alongside other parts of the submission which provide further detail, demonstrating the site's suitability for development.

## Planning and Site Context

East Devon District Council are preparing a new Local Plan, which will guide development within the District until 2042.

The draft Local Plan identifies Honiton as a Market Centre, a Tier 2 settlement, which is considered to benefit from strategic and local facilities, providing a balanced mix of jobs, services and growth potential. Market Towns are to accommodate significant development across the Plan period 'to serve its own needs and that of the wider surrounding areas'.

Within the draft Local Plan, Land off Northcote Hill is identified as two housing allocations north and south of the

railway line and are therefore acknowledged to be a suitable and sustainable location able to accommodate new homes.

The site is dissected by the East Devon Railway Line, and allocated for new development in two parts:

1. The Land North of the Railway Line (draft Local Plan allocation site reference - GH/ED/39a); and
2. Land South of the Railway Line (draft Local Plan allocation site reference - GH/ED/39b)

Land north of the railway line benefits from a resolution to grant at planning committee (23/0331/MOUT) "for the demolition of existing buildings and erection of up to 115 dwellings, public open space, sustainable drainage systems, landscaping, vehicular access via Tunnel Lane and associated highways improvements and infrastructure."

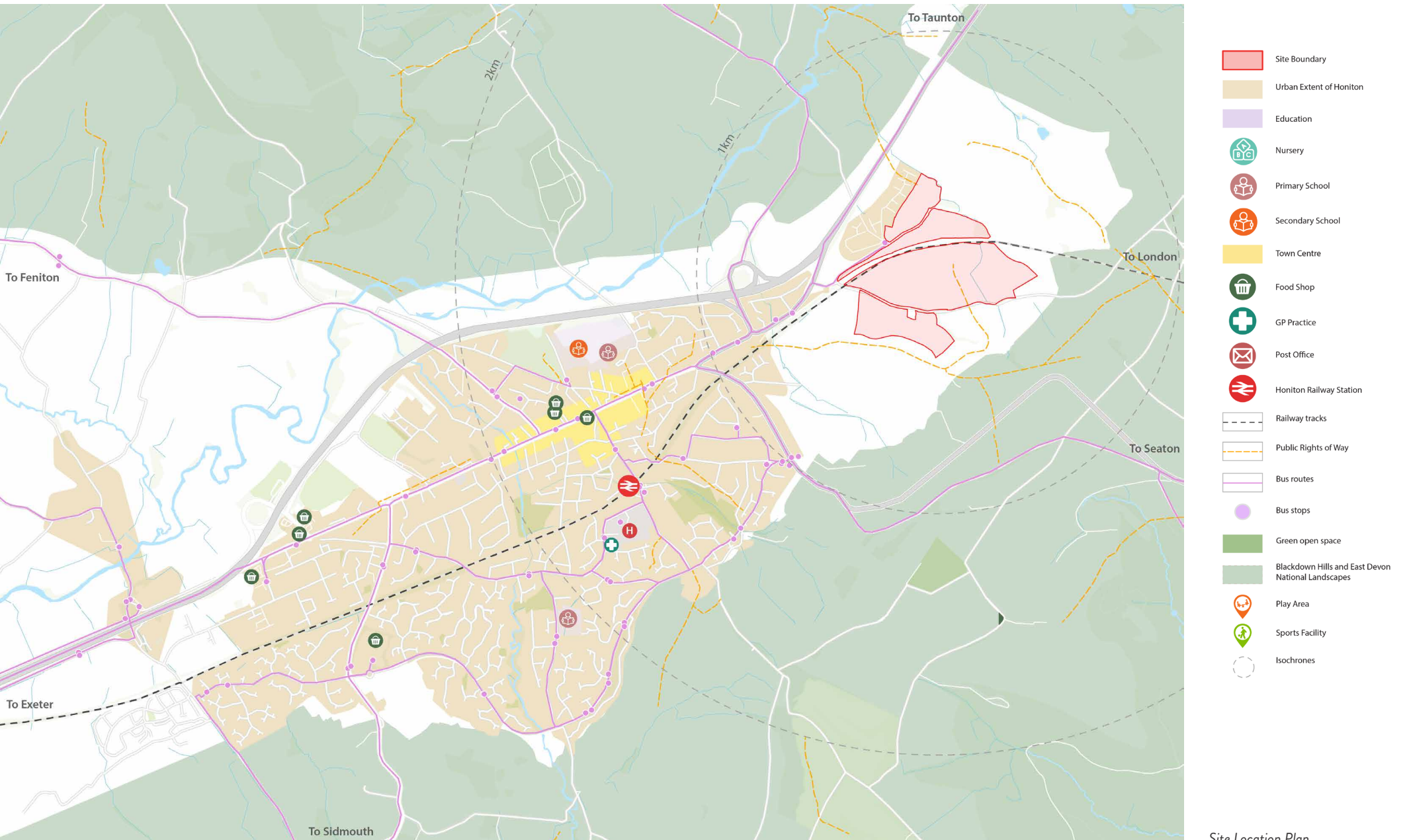
Together, land off Northcote Hill (north and south of the railway line) can deliver a new sustainable neighbourhood to the east of Honiton. The site is not subject to any other statutory or local policy designations, is available and deliverable; and will make a significant contribution to the delivery of new homes in East Devon and the Council's housing land supply, in line with the Council's spatial strategy.



*Illustrative Masterplan for 'Land north of the Railway Line' (draft Local Plan allocation site reference - GH/ED/39a)*



*Land off Northcote Hill (north and south of the railway) red line boundary over aerial*



Site Location Plan

# Site Location and Context

## Site Location and Context

The site is located on the north eastern edge of Honiton, on land north and south of Northcote Hill. Monkton Road (A30) is located north and west of the site, while Axminster Road (A35) can be found to the south.

Whilst Honiton is constrained to the north and west by flood zone, and to the north, east and south by both the Blackdown Hills and East Devon National Landscapes, the site itself is unconstrained from these designations and provides a suitable location for further development at Honiton. The town centre and High Street is located approximately 1.4km to the south west of the site. It offers a range of retail provision, services, amenities and employment uses in a central and accessible location, encouraging journeys by foot, bicycle, or public transport. Honiton Railway Station and Honiton Hospital are located to the south of the town centre on Church Hill. Larger format retail and employment uses are located on the western edge of Honiton, at Heathpark Way and Devonshire Road, located less than 3km from the site. This industrial area includes a variety of food and home improvement stores, East Devon District Council Offices, East Devon Business Centre, and numerous other occupiers.

Honiton Railway Station encourages sustainable modes of travel to and from Exeter and Yeovil, with journey times of approximately 30 minutes to both locations. The principal benefit of a rail offering in this location is the reduction in the environmental impact of commuting to Exeter, providing an attractive alternative to the private car. Additionally, direct train services to London provide an uninterrupted journey in under 3 hours. It is clear that the development of the site would create a new neighbourhood for Honiton that is accessible to its range of uses and offerings, and that would sustain those uses going forwards, helping Honiton to thrive in a sustainable way.

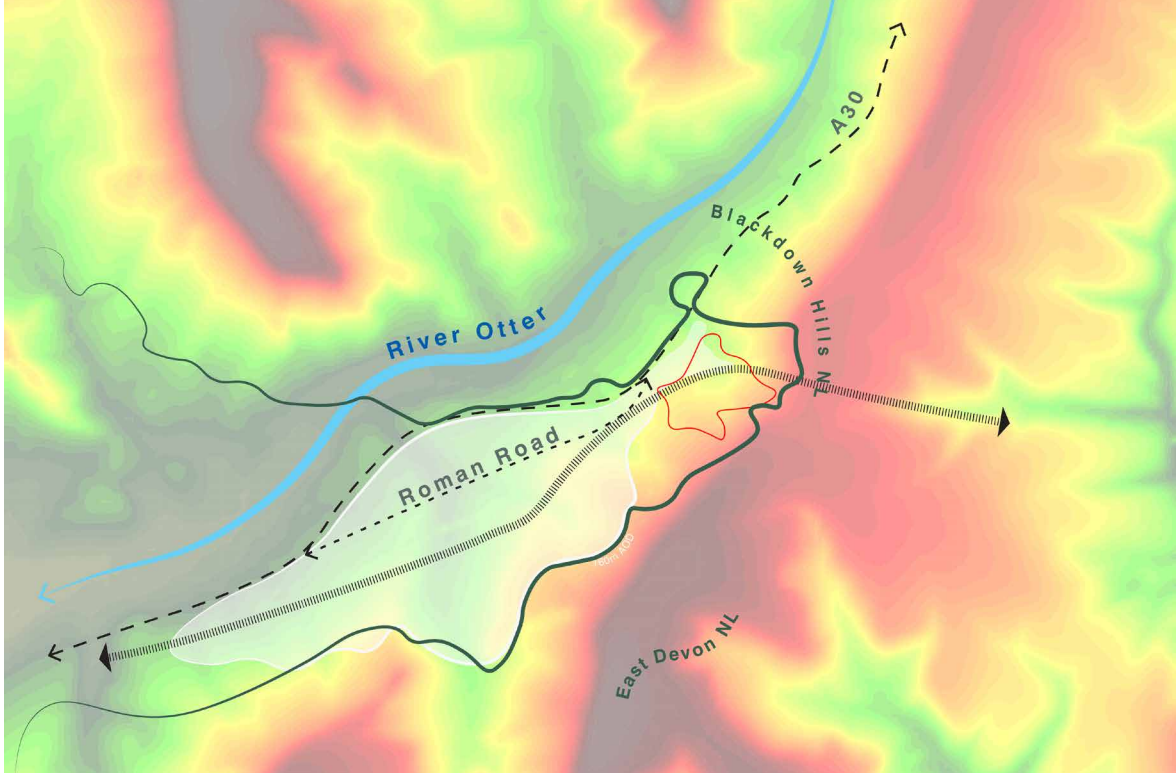
## Landscape Setting

Honiton has developed along the line of an ancient Roman road, which now forms the High Street. The roadway was formed to the south of the River Otter and the flood plain, following the southern valley flank. Modern communication routes follow a similar alignment. Honiton lies on the lower slopes and follows the contours of the landscape, rising up to approximately 160m AOD and forming a wave-like pattern in the landscape.

The National Landscape boundaries are drawn tightly around the south-eastern edge of Honiton, with the exception of land within the Site and land to the south-west.

Development in the western part of the Site would continue the established expanded linear pattern that exists within Honiton. Owing to the landform in the eastern bowl appearing distinct from this pattern, and above 160m AOD, it should remain open or be proposed as an open space that will provide a suitable setting for the National Landscape.

This sensitive approach to development extent related to landform would maintain and reinforce the legibility of settlement pattern within Honiton.



Location of the Site in the context of the settlement pattern of Honiton and its relationship to topography, transport corridors and the National Landscape boundaries



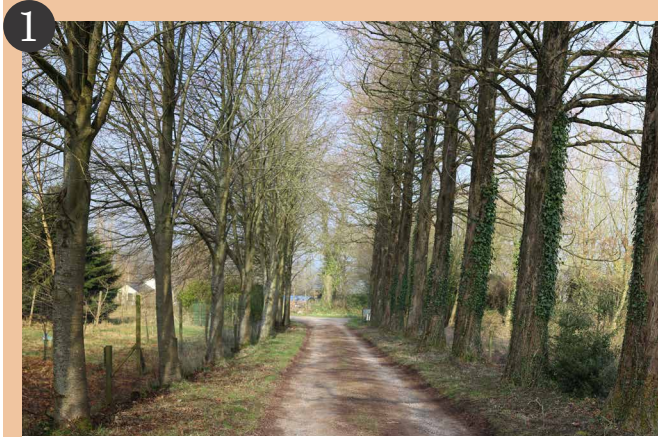
View towards the Site from Dumpdon Hill. The Proposed Development will follow the wave like settlement pattern of the southern edge of Honiton and its existing relationship with the boundaries of the National Landscapes

# Understanding the Site

## Site Description

The Site is comprised of four adjacent land parcels, divided by existing movement routes such as the railway track, Northcote Hill and Tunnel Lane, all running east-west. A north-south ridgeline divides the site at its centre, making the ground fall away towards the east and the west. The site totals approximately 28ha and is comprised predominantly of grassland. The more southern land which includes the former nursery has the only public right of way within the red line areas. The lane running to the nursery currently includes the only public right of way within the red line areas. Other public rights of way surround the site but do not connect into it. The river Otter runs to the north of Honiton, on the other side of the A30 from the site. A small portion of the northern part of the site is located within Flood Zones 1 and 2.

400kV National Grid transmission lines run as overhead cables diagonally through the central part of the site.



1 *An avenue of redwood trees lines the lane to Perrie Hale Nursery*



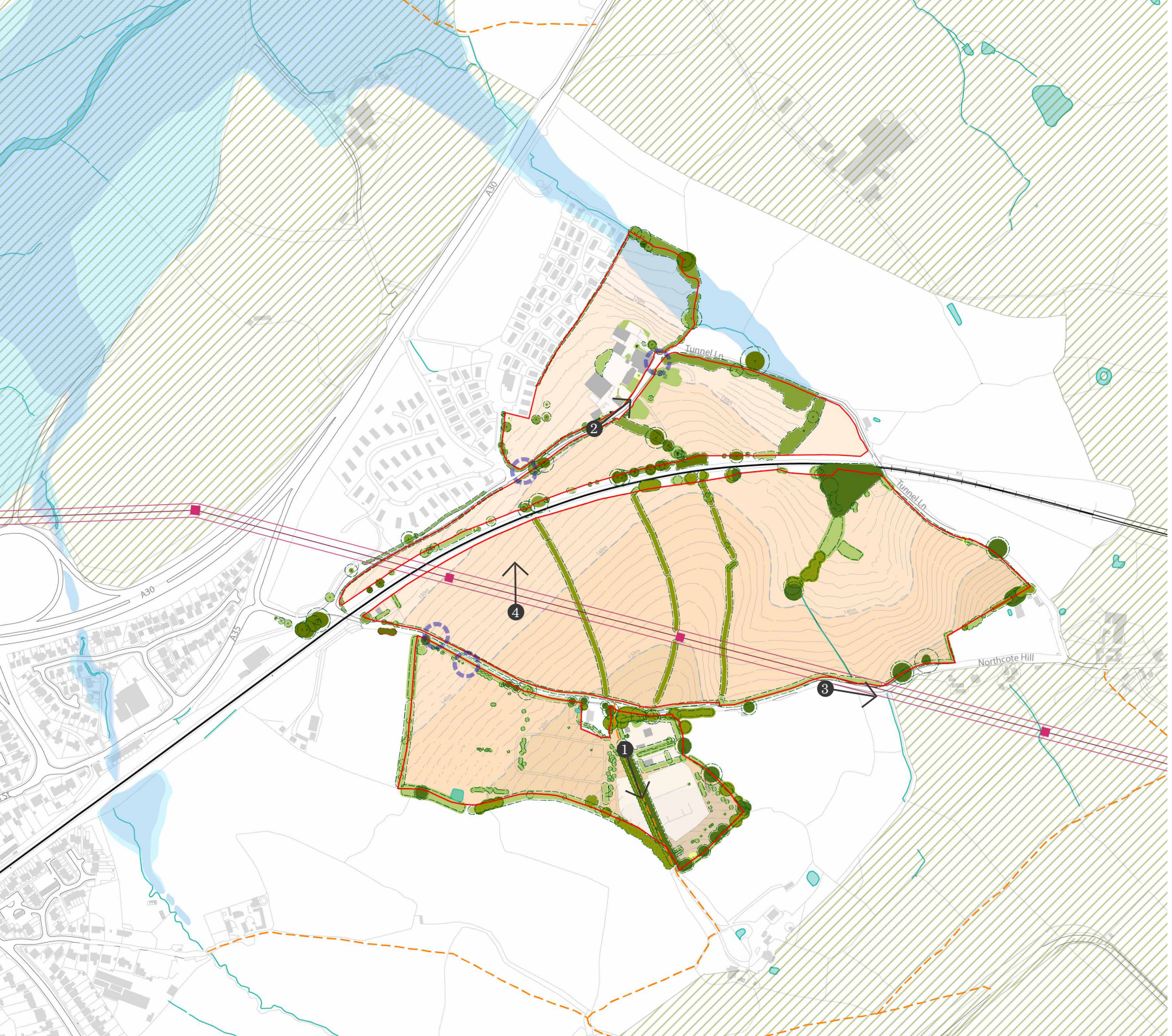
2 *Tunnel Lane provides access to the northern parcels of the Site*



3 *Overhead electric cables run diagonally across the central portion of the site*



4 *Railway tracks run east-west, dividing up the site*



- Site Boundary
- 1m Contours  
Elevation:
  - 170-160m
  - 160-150m
  - 150-140m
  - 140-130m
  - 130-120m
  - 120-110m
- Built up area on site
- Public Right of Way
- Blackdown Hills and East Devon National Landscapes
- Flood Zone 2
- Flood Zone 3
- Inland body of water
- Watercourse
- Category A tree
- Category B tree
- Category C tree
- Category U tree
- Root Protection Area
- National grid transmission lines - centreline
- National grid transmission lines - overhead cable
- National grid transmission lines - pylon
- Railway line
- Potential Vehicular Access Location
- Site Photo Locations

Site Constraints Plan

# Key Development Considerations

The development considerations below outline the opportunities arising from the site, making it suitable for the provision of a new residential neighbourhood.

## Landscape, Ecology and Drainage

- The site lies within a wider valley, enclosed by the Blackdown Hills and East Devon National Landscapes. There is an opportunity to locate development behind a local ridgeline that runs centrally through the site, protecting views to the site from the surrounding landscape designations, whilst maximising views from the site outwards to the countryside.
- Development should be located on the north-west facing slopes of the western part of the site, which has a stronger relationship with the existing settlement of Honiton. This area can be contained with native planting along the central ridgeline, providing a clear distinction between the eastern and western parts of the site.
- The bowl landscape in the eastern part of the site can be retained with the opportunity for a Community Park, enhancing its existing rural character through additional native planting and a network of accessible paths and seating.
- Some hedgerow removal will be required in western site areas to enable site access and development parcels to be introduced. Biodiversity net gain will be achieved across the site, particularly within the eastern part of the site, through

retention and enhancement of natural habitats.

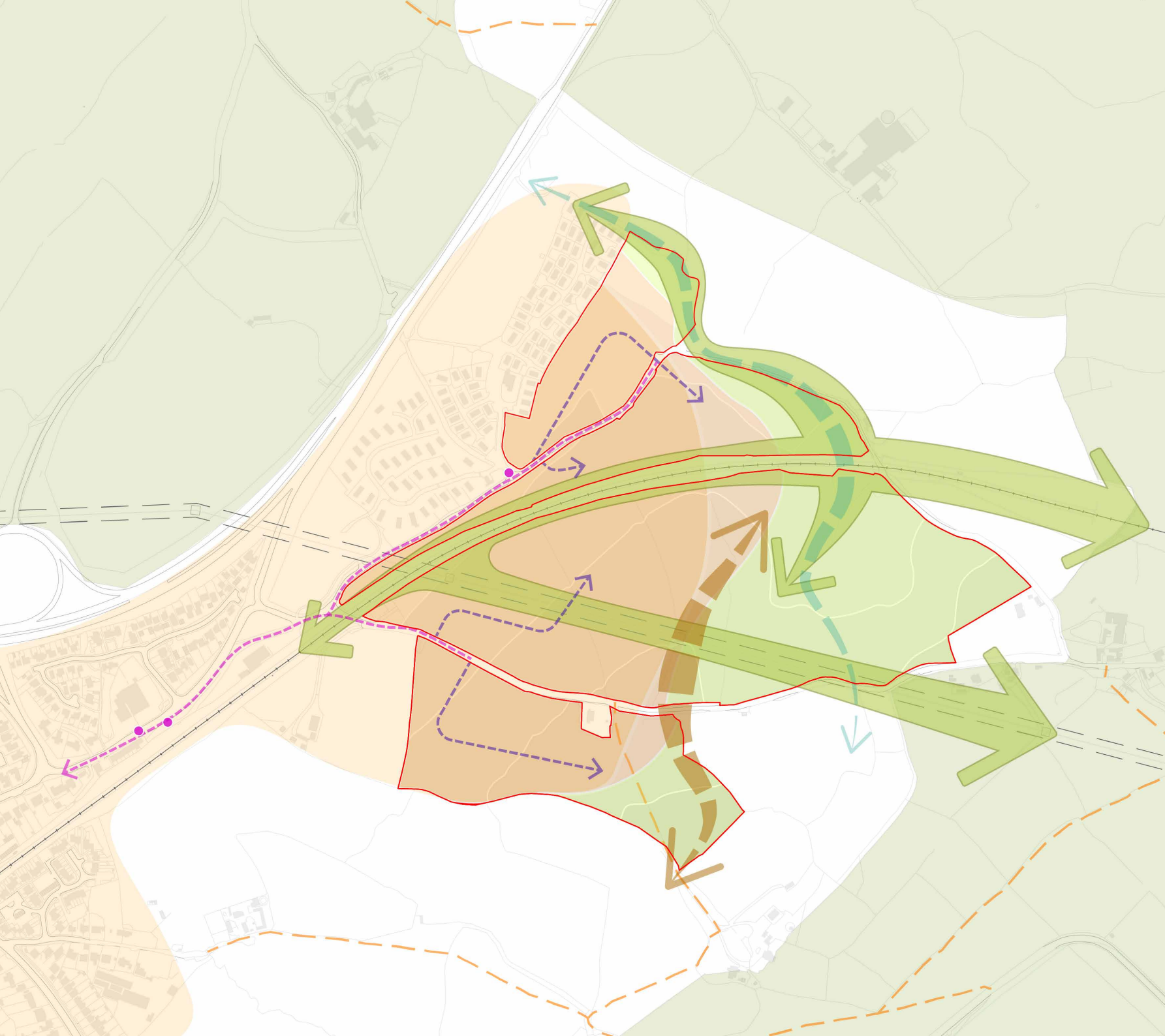
- The overhead power cables running diagonally across the site will require a development setback, but also create an opportunity for public open space running through the site, incorporating habitat creation and playful elements
- A sustainable drainage system will be integrated into the design to support biodiversity and water quality within the development.

## Access and Mobility

- The site can be accessed in several locations, from Northcote Hill and Tunnel Lane.
- There are several opportunities for active travel routes connecting the site to the town centre, Honiton Railway Station and other key destinations. These primarily take the form of footways, pedestrian crossings points and a network of Public Rights of Way (PROWs) through Honiton.
- There is an opportunity to add pedestrian footways to a length of Northcote Hill to promote walking between the site and the existing town.

## Design and Character

- The existing landscape structure will inform the layout of development parcels and streets, retaining elements of the field patterns where it is relevant to do so, and where it is conducive to the character of the site.
- Views to the surrounding countryside will be maximised to further tie the character of the development to its rural context, and accentuate its sense of place.
- Development will be located in the western part of the site, which has a stronger relationship with the existing settlement of Honiton. This will continue the established linear pattern of development within its valley context.
- There is an opportunity to enhance the belt of vegetation along the ridgeline, to wrap around the development within the western valley, and to demarcate the start of the biodiversity-rich area of open space to the west.



-  Site Boundary
-  Blackdown Hills and East Devon National Landscapes
-  Approximate Extent of Honiton
-  National grid transmission lines - overhead cable
-  Public Right of Way
-  Railway line
-  Developable area
-  Transition area - Opportunity for low density development
-  Area to be retained and enhanced as POS
-  10m contours
-  Ridgeline
-  Opportunity for Wetland Corridor
-  Potential Movement Route
-  Movement Route towards Honiton Town Centre
-  Opportunity for Green Corridor
-  Existing Bus Stop

Design Drivers Diagram

# Vision

**The vision for the site is to create a vibrant and sustainable new neighbourhood for Honiton that is well integrated within the settlement and its landscape setting. The site can deliver around 400 new homes (115 in Phase 1, 285-300 in Phase 2) alongside the opportunity for a Community Park and Neighbourhood Hub, to serve the new and existing community.**

Land off Northcote Hill will make a logical extension to Honiton, and will be visually integrated with the town by following its development pattern along the valley floor. The site will have excellent local connections, including existing routes and proposed improvements to the highway network. Attractive pedestrian and cycle routes will encourage active and sustainable modes of travel over the use of the private car. When paired with the proximity of the site to Honiton town centre, it is clear that the site offers ample opportunity for sustainable and local living.

The site will harmoniously blend into its surroundings by retaining and enhancing a network of green open spaces for the enjoyment of the wider community. The opportunity for the creation of a Community Park in the eastern portion of the site can offer many recreational features, alongside the enhancement of ecological value, through additional planting and a wetland corridor.

The site will provide new homes to meet local demand, including affordable housing. There is an opportunity to provide a community hub, located centrally within the development, which will foster social interaction and the assimilation new and existing residents in Honiton. The layout of the site will be clear and legible, with buildings and streets fronting onto green open spaces, creating a safe and attractive environment for all.

The identity and legibility of the site are key elements of the wider vision. The layout of the site will be clear and legible, with buildings fronting onto streets and green open spaces, creating a safe and attractive environment for all.

# Community Benefits

The illustrative masterplan shows how the site can comfortably deliver a high-quality development comprising:



The provision of up to 115 dwellings on land north of the railway line and 285-300 dwellings on land south of the railway line, making efficient use of land and delivering a significant contribution to the Council's housing needs in the short to medium term



The delivery of a neighbourhood hub



The opportunity for the creation of significant areas of informal and formal public open space, including a community park



The delivery of a range of play



The opportunity for a new orchards and an allotment



A network of walking routes through open space



Off-site improvements to highways, enhancing traffic flow and increasing pedestrian and cycle connectivity for new and existing residents.



The provision of attenuation basins to the south of the site offering a sustainable urban drainage system (SuDS) which also offer a habitat for aquatic wildlife



The delivery of ecological enhancements and on-site biodiversity net gain



- Site Boundary
- Public Open Space
- Developable Area
- Residential Parcels
- Primary Street
- Primary Frontage
- Secondary Frontage
- Key buildings
- Street Trees
- Proposed tree and shrub planting
- Existing vegetation to be retained
- Existing hedges to be retained
- New Devon hedgerow
- Indicative wildflower meadow
- Shrub planting under pylons
- Play areas
- SuDS ponds
- Bioretention swales
- Indicative paths through Open Space
- Community Park
- Proposed allotments
- Proposed orchard
- Existing ponds to be retained
- Proposed Vehicular Access
- National grid transmission lines - overhead cable
- National grid transmission lines - pylon
- Railway line
- Indicative location for Proposed Pumping Station
- Proposed Community Hub

Illustrative Masterplan

# Strategies

## Access and Connectivity Proposals

The site's sustainable location (within 1.4km of the town centre) will naturally favour walking and cycling trips over the use of the private car. In addition to this, the transport strategy for the site focuses on active travel proposals that seek to encourage sustainable modes of transport and to create a permeable network of routes throughout the site.

The masterplan will particularly ensure the development is as permeable as possible for pedestrians and cyclists. It will also ensure that walking and cycling connections to the local area are of good quality, by proposing a new footway and crossing on Northcote Hill, and proposing the pedestrianisation of Tunnel Lane.

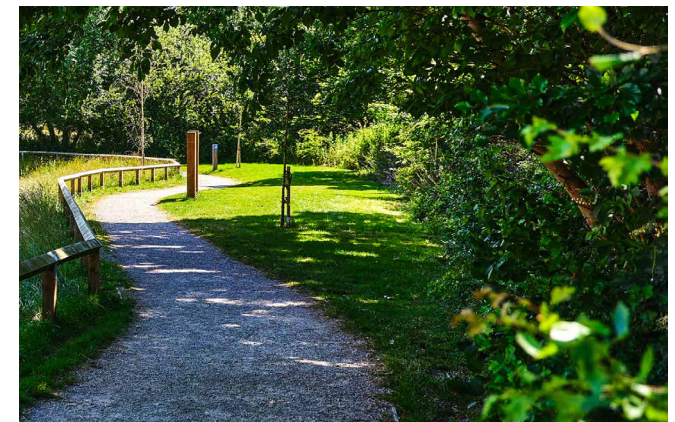
These active travel connections provide access to local bus stops and Honiton Railway Station, encouraging the use of existing, high quality public transport services.

Vehicular access to the land north of the railway line can be taken from two locations on Tunnel Lane, providing access to parcels located to the north and south the lane. Equally, vehicular access to the land south of the railway line can be taken from Northcote Hill, providing access to the northern and southern parcels along this road. Separate emergency access also provides additional ped/cycle access from Northcote Hill.

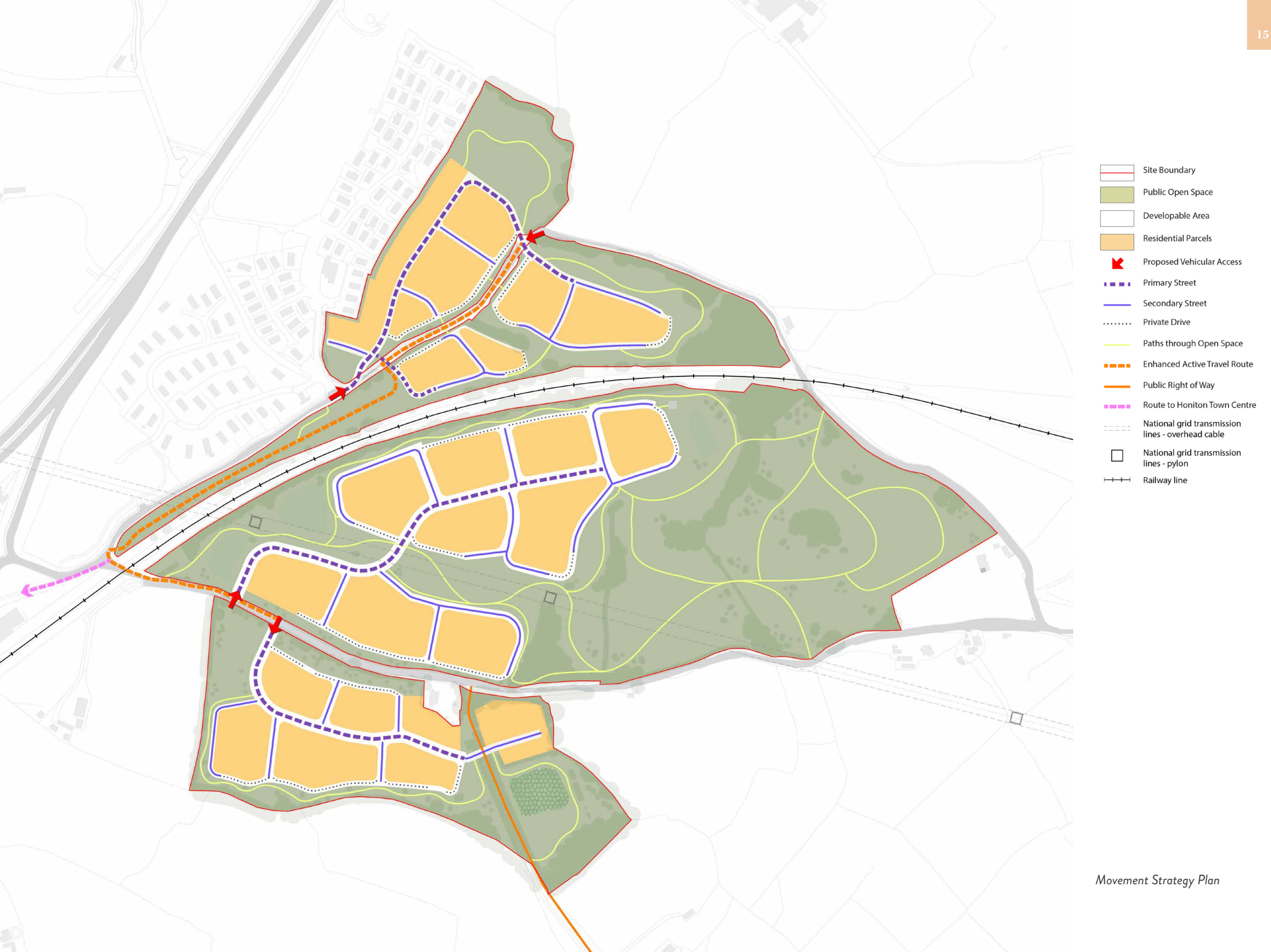
Within the site, a clear hierarchy of routes will comprise primary streets, secondary streets and private drives, as well as paths through open space. This network will provide as much connectivity as possible between the parcels that make up the site.



*Footpath signs provide wayfinding at Bramley View, Bramley (Taylor Wimpey)*



*Paths connect the green open spaces at Cherry Tree Park, Shavington (Taylor Wimpey)*



## Open Space: Landscape, Ecology, and Drainage Proposals

The proposed development will be set within a framework of green infrastructure that responds to the landform of the Site, the character of the local landscape and the Blackdown Hills and East Devon National Landscapes.

The eastern bowl (of the area south of the railway) provides the opportunity for a Community Park, comprising a large naturalistic open space, providing a suitable setting for the National Landscape. Existing hedges within this area will be retained and new Devon hedge banks will be included, continuing these linear green infrastructure features.

The remnant orchard in the area to the north of Tunnel Lane, will be reinforced with further orchard trees. The eastern part of the former nursery will be retained as green infrastructure and has potential to be used for allotments, another area of community orchard and further woodland planting.

The route of the power lines and pylons will become a green corridor. A number of landscape features will draw the eye down from the pylons and cables, soften the linearity of this route and create a more locally-characteristic, intimate scale at ground level. Similarly, landscape features will be used to break up the linearity of the green corridor lining the railway tracks, running east-west across the site.

These proposals support the a form of development of the site that is in accordance with ecological hierarchy. By focusing on avoidance, mitigation and enhancement measures, Biodiversity Net Gain could be achieved on site.

Drainage of the site can be achieved through the use of SuDs features, including ponds and potential bioretention swales.



*Drainage features are well incorporated into the landscape at Heathfields Farm, Wilmslow (Taylor Wimpey)*



*Play areas are located within green space and well overlooked at Kings Gate, Colden Common (Taylor Wimpey)*



*Seating is integrated into green open space at Kilnwood Vale, Faygate (Taylor Wimpey)*



- Site Boundary
- Public Open Space
- Developable Area
- Residential Parcels
- Street Trees
- Proposed tree and shrub planting
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- Existing hedges to be retained
- New Devon hedgebank
- Wildflower meadow
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Illustrative Masterplan, Landscape Principles

