

Ramsey Green at Gibraltar Corner High Level Transport Strategy

August 2021

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Note sets out the high-level transport strategy for development of Ramsey Green at Gibraltar Corner, Kempston, Bedfordshire. It has been prepared for Axis Land Partnerships who is promoting the land for Bedford Borough Council's Call for Sites. At this stage, the development proposals are expected to comprise of up to 425 dwellings.
- 1.2 The Note briefly sets out the proforma assessment and policy context in which promotion of Ramsey Green would be assessed. It then describes the existing and future accessibility of the site by the main modes of transport, along with the travel characteristics of existing residents in the vicinity of the site based on 2011 Census data. A high-level transport strategy for the development is then presented, the focus of which is on promotion of non-car modes of transport.

2. Call for Sites Assessment

- 2.1 The Site has been submitted into the Call for Sites in July 2020 resulting in a Proforma Assessment dated XX XX 2021, which included the following highway comments:

'Site includes both Bedford Borough Council Site ID 342, 343. The site locations are around 3 miles south-west of Bedford town centre. Access to the sites is feasible from Home Road. Traffic generation from the potential residential development would generate an increase in traffic movements in Home Road, Green End Road, Ridge Road and on the junction of Home Road/ Ridge Road. The closest bus stop is approximately 330 m from north the site in Ridge Road. There are no public rights of way or formal cycleways way serving the site. A Transport Assessment (TA) will be required to identify the impact of traffic in Ridge Road as well as at the Home Road/ Ridge Road junction. Potential signalisation of the Home Road/ Ridge Road give way junction may be required. Development of the footway across Home Road in the frontage of the site required as well as creation of a pedestrian access via Ibbett Close. The site is located on the western side of Home Road at Gibraltar which is in between Kempston Church End and Wootton. The site is approximately 3.2 miles west of Bedford town centre. The proposed development will be accessed via Home Road which has a 30-mph speed limit. The proposed access is approximately 225 m walking distance from the nearest bus stop on Ridge Road. The footway width is 1.2 m with 0.5 m verge on the access side of the carriageway for a part of the site and for the rest of the site there is no public rights of way. There is no formal cycleways way serving the site. The proposal would need to ensure a footway is constructed linking the proposed access with the existing footway roughly 20 m to the south in order to access public transportation facilities'.

- 2.2 These comments were provided by Bedford Borough Highways and will be highlighted and addressed throughout this high-level transport strategy.

3. Policy Context

National Policy

- 3.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), July 2021, sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. It notes that:

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Significant development should be focused on locations which are or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes. This can help to reduce congestion and emissions, and improve air quality and public health (paragraph 105).

- 3.2 It advises that, when assessing sites that may be allocated, or specific applications for development:
- (a) *'Appropriate opportunities to promote sustainable transport modes can be - or have been - taken up, given the type of development and its location;*
 - (b) *Safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users;*
 - (c) *The design of streets, parking areas, other transport elements and the content of associated standards reflects current national guidance, including the National Design Guide and the National Model Design Code; and*
 - (d) *Any significant impacts from the development on the transport network (in terms of capacity and congestion), or on highway safety, can be cost effectively mitigated to an acceptable degree' (paragraph 110).*
- 3.3 NPPF further advises (at paragraph 112) that, for development proposals, priority should be given first to pedestrian and cycle movements, and second - so far as possible - to facilitating access to high-quality public transport. However, it also recognises (at paragraph 105) that opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas, and this should be considered in both plan-making and decision-making.

Local Policy

- 3.4 Bedford Borough Council (BBC) adopted its new 'Local Plan 2030' in January 2020. The Plan sets out the borough's growth needs to 2030. It is identified that transportation is key to achieving sustainable growth in the area, with a number of local transport priorities highlighted in the area, such as sustainable forms of transport and improvements to junctions and public realms. **Policy 53 Development Layout and Accessibility** states that, where possible developers should take available opportunities to integrate the principles of sustainable design and layout into proposals to provide convenient access to existing local services by foot, cycle, and public transport.
- 3.5 In accordance with **Policy 89 Electric Vehicle Information** *'The Council will maximise the use of sustainable transport in developments, and support low carbon public and personal transport such as electric cars, bikes and buses'*. To maximise the use of sustainable modes of transport, new residential developments should be designed to enable charging of plug-in and other ultra-low emission vehicles in safe, accessible, and convenient locations and, where appropriate, provide electric charging points at a rate of one per dwelling.
- 3.6 In July 2020, BBC launched a 'Call for Sites' through which they are looking for potential sites for development. Suitable sites will be assessed against their suitability, availability, and viability. This Note sets out how the site is viable in terms of local transport infrastructure as well as opportunities for enabling sustainable and innovative transport options within the site.

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Summary of Policy

- 3.7 The key transport policy guidance for new developments from the NPPF and the adopted Local Plan is to reduce the need to travel by car before then prioritising non-car modes of travel, focussing on accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport. Travel by the private car is at the bottom of the transport-user hierarchy. However, it is recognised that travel choices for rural areas are more limited than those available in urban areas.

4. Existing and Future Transport Conditions and Characteristics

- 4.1 The site is located within the Kempston Rural civil parish in the rural settlement of Gibraltar Corner, approximately 5 km southwest of Bedford Town Centre. The site is separated into two parcels (Site ID 1333), one smaller parcel to the east of Home Road, with the second larger parcel to the west of Home Road. Combined the parcels are approximately 21.5 ha in size. The land to the east of Home Road is located to the north of Ibbett Close and to the south of Green End Road. The land parcel on the west side of Home Road includes land situated to the north of Wood End Road.
- 4.2 The site benefits from very good connectivity to Bedford, Kempston and Wootton by foot, bicycle, and public transport. The site's location is approximately 2 km from Kempston High Street, which boasts numerous schools, shops, cafes/ restaurants, sports facilities, and multi-purpose community centres. There are also a number of doctors and dentists within Kempston.
- 4.3 Vehicular access to the site is currently via Home Road and Wood End Road. Home Road is a single carriageway road with no segregated footway and/or cycleway along the site's frontage. It is subject to the national speed limit. Wood End Road is connected to Home Road via Ridge Road. Wood End Road is a single carriageway, subject to the national speed limit on the section adjacent to the site and leads out of Gibraltar Corner. As recognised in the BBC highway comments, there is no public rights of way or formal cycleways serving the site but there is an existing footway on Wood End Road which runs between Gibraltar Corner and Wood End.
- 4.4 The travel characteristics for the adjacent urban area have been obtained and reviewed, using the 2011 Census 'Method of Travel to Work' data, to identify the likely travel characteristics of future residents. The mode share for residents living near the site indicates a reliance on the private car, with approximately 74% travelling to work by private car. Approximately 9% walk to work, 5% travel by bus, 2% travel by train and 3% by cycle. This journey to work data is indicative of the existing transport accessibility of the site and reflects the semi-rural nature of the district in which opportunities for travel by non-car mode can be limited.
- 4.5 The 2021 Census also identified that approximately 21% of households in the Borough of Bedford do not have access to a private car or van. Therefore, public transport services have a dual purpose for new and existing communities, to provide fast and direct journeys to key destinations and also to link communities and improve accessibility.
- 4.6 The site has reasonable walkability with footway provision through to the Kempston and the village of Wootton providing non-car access to Kempston Rural Primary School, and a wide range of other local services and facilities that would meet many of the day-to-day needs of local residents. A large area of Kempston is within 2 km of the site, so these day-to-day needs could easily be met on foot or cycle, therefore limiting the impact of the development on the wider highway network. Box End Park is an approximately 20-minute walk north of the site, which could be a key attraction and Woburn Road Industrial Estate is an approximately 14-minute cycle from the site, which has the potential to provide jobs to the future residents.

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- 4.7 National Cycle Network Route 51 (with both on-road and traffic-free sections) runs through Gibraltar Corner on Ridge Road. This route is a long-distance cycling route, beginning in Oxford and passes Milton Keynes, Bury St Edmunds, and Ipswich before reaching the coast at Felixstowe. Cyclists must use an on-road route south of Gibraltar Corner towards Marston Moretaine, but through Kempston and on to Bedford, cyclists can utilise a traffic-free route providing onward connectivity to Willington and Route 12. This provides a good opportunity for residents to explore the area actively.
- 4.8 As previously discussed within BBC's comments, there are no Public Rights of Way (PRoW) within the close vicinity of the site. The site proposals provide the opportunity to improve access to the regenerated woodlands of Buttons Ramsey and The Kill, which adjoins the western boundary of the site. In addition, the John Bunyan Trail passes directly through the north-western edge of the site and is a popular circular walking and cycling trail, approximately 77 km in length, which runs from the north of Bedford to the north of Luton. These offer excellent outdoor amenities and connectivity directly with nature for those living in Ramsey Green.
- 4.9 The closest bus stop is located on Ridge Road, approximately 330m from the proposed site access along Home Road, as recognised within BBC's highway comments. This is frequented by the 53, 53A, A2 and C1 Cranfield Connect. These services provide access to Wootton, Kempston, Bedford, Bromham, Cranfield and Milton Keynes.
- 4.10 Bedford Railway Station is located approximately 5.8 km northeast of the site and is accessible via the 53 and C1 Cranfield Connect bus services or by a 20-minute cycle ride. West Midlands Trains, East Midlands Railway and Thameslink operate services out of this railway station to Milton Keynes (at Bletchley), Corby, and London St Pancras International. London and Milton Keynes could be key commuter destinations, with the journey taking between 45-65 minutes, respectively.
- 4.11 East West Rail (EWR) is a major project to establish a strategic railway connecting East Anglia with Central, Southern and Western England. In particular, it plans to construct a line linking Oxford and Cambridge via Bicester, Milton Keynes (at Bletchley) and Bedford, largely using the trackbed of the former Varsity Line. The third section of the line, hereby referred to as the Bletchley & Marston Vale Line, sees proposals for a redeveloped Bedford Station and another EWR station just south of Bedford at Bedford St John's. The developers' emerging preference is a new and extended Bedford station, with more facilities, new platforms, and a new location just north of the Ford End Bridge. Changes are also proposed to Bedford St John's station, as these stations are currently unable to accommodate the new services which EWR would bring to the town.
- 4.12 It is anticipated that some Bedfordshire villages along the Bletchley & Marston Vale Line could lose their railway station, as one proposal suggests merging the ten current stations into five new modern stations. This would lead to better connections to Cambridge, as well as faster and more reliable services at the new stations, but the stations would be less accessible for people in existing communities. An alternative proposal would see the existing hourly service retained at the ten stations but with less frequent and slower services than the other option, with fewer stations having access to EWR.

5. Transport Strategy for Ramsey Green

Objectives

- 5.1 The brief review of the transport planning context and existing and future transport conditions indicates that the transport strategy for the site will need to focus on the objectives set out in the order below:
- (a) Reduce the need to travel by car;

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- (b) Promote walking and cycling with surrounding areas, with the provision of high-quality walking and cycling connections with the town of Kempston and local employment areas, such as Woburn Road Industrial Estate;
 - (c) Encourage public transport for connections with Kempston, Bedford, Milton Keynes, London, and local employment areas.
- 5.2 High-level initiatives and measures to securing the above transport strategy objectives for Ramsey Green are described below.

Reduce the Need to Travel by Car

- 5.3 There are a number of local services and facilities provided within Kempston and Wootton that would meet many of the day-to-day needs of future residents. This includes local shops, community, leisure and medical facilities, and local schools. These are within easy walking and cycling distance of the site, and therefore provide good opportunities for local residents to meet many of their day-to-day needs by non-car modes and reduce their impact on the wider highway network. Thus, assisting with an important aim of transport policy.

Promote Walking and Cycling

- 5.4 There will be high-quality walking and cycling routes through the site which will connect to the existing footway along Wood End Road, Home Road and Ibbett Close to Kempston. The footways along Wood End Road and Home Road could be improved as part of the development proposal.
- 5.5 The development's layout itself will be developed at the detailed design stage so that pedestrian and cycle trips within the site are on routes that are convenient, logical and more attractive for short distance trips than driving. The layout will be influenced by the guidance in Manual for Streets, which notes that well designed streets have a crucial part to play in the delivery of sustainable communities. The development would create a highly permeable environment within the site, with links to / from the adjacent built-up areas for pedestrians and cyclists, so that the development is easy to walk and cycle through, and integrated with the adjacent Gibraltar Corner, surrounding rural areas and nearby area of Kempston.
- 5.6 Footway improvements will be delivered as shown on the site access plans at **Appendix A** which will improve pedestrian conditions along Home Road and Wood End Lane on land within the development site and the public highway boundary, to connect in with the existing footway network in Gibraltar Corner including bus stops and link with National Cycle Route 51 along Ridge Road, using the underpass beneath the A428 to connect with Kempston and Bedford via the Bedford Green Wheel. Bedford town centre is within a reasonable five mile cycle ride of the site via this cycling infrastructure, providing good opportunities to promote cycling for residents of the development. This will be further promoted by the provision of high quality cycle parking at locations that are safe, secure, and covered.
- 5.7 Local pedestrian and cycling routes, as well as the health benefits associated with walking and cycling will be highlighted to residents, through either a Travel Pack, notice board or website.

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Encourage Public Transport

- 5.8 To encourage use of the bus, residents would be offered a voucher for one month's free bus travel, as well as each being given a resident's Travel Pack which highlights to them the local bus routes and timetables, and the existing footpath network. The footway improvements along Home Road will improve the accessibility of existing bus stops in Gibraltar Corner, therefore enhancing the site's public transport accessibility.
- 5.9 Public transport options will be highlighted and promoted to residents in the development through the provision of maps and timetables.

6. Vehicular Access Strategy

- 6.1 BBC's highway comments acknowledged access to the site is feasible on Home Road. Two simple T-junctions (staggered) are proposed on Home Road and a single T-junction on Wood End Lane would form the primary vehicular, pedestrian and cycle accesses to Ramsey Green. As noted above, footway improvements along Home Road and Wood End Lane are proposed with informal pedestrian crossings which will link the development with the existing footway network in Gibraltar Corner, which will enhance access with public transport and local amenities. Preliminary designs of the proposed vehicular accesses on Home Road and Wood End Lane have been prepared in accordance with highways design guidance and are enclosed at **Appendix A**. The junctions will be developed further at the design stage.
- 6.2 Within the site, streets will be designed in accordance with the principles of Manual for Streets, meaning the needs of pedestrians and cyclists will be considered from an early stage in the design of the masterplan. A pedestrian/ cyclist only access is proposed via Ibbett Close, as recognised within BBC's highway comments.
- 6.3 Car parking provision will be balanced at a level which seeks to deter habitual car use for journeys that could be made by non-car modes, but also recognises likely car ownership levels and the semi-rural character of the area.
- 6.4 The ability to install electronic vehicle charging equipment would be provided for dwellings, to encourage residents to own electric cars. This would seek to address issues related to air quality.

7. Transport Assessment and Travel Plan

- 7.1 It is anticipated that the proposed development would generate an increase in vehicular and person trips on Home Road, Green End Road, Ridge Road and at the junction of Home Road and Ridge Road. To assess the impact of these trips on the local highways network, a Transport Assessment may be required as identified within BBC's comments. The demand for signalisation of the give way junction at Home Road and Ridge Road will also be addressed within the Transport Assessment, as discussed within BBC's comments.
- 7.2 A comprehensive Travel Plan would be required for the development, along with a Travel Plan Co-ordinator. The purpose of the Travel Plan would be to encourage non-car modes of travel. The responsibility for the Travel Plan would rest with the developer and cover a period from before first occupation to at least full occupation, so that the encouragement of non-car modes of travel is maintained throughout the build-out of the development. The Travel Plan could then be carried forward by the Management Company.

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8. Future Innovation

- 8.1 In addition to the site's connectivity opportunities outlined above, current, and future innovations in transport technology and changing working/ shopping habits in a post-Covid-19 era also offer great opportunities to develop a sustainable development.
- 8.2 Ways of working are changing rapidly, with home working, flexible work patterns, the gig economy and freelancing becoming more common as technology allows for enhanced communication, with the potential for radical changes to spatial planning as 'the commute' becomes less significant to where people choose to live.
- 8.3 A transport strategy containing many of the elements and opportunities listed below is considered essential to the delivery of a sustainable community, with some having the potential to reduce the number of vehicles on the highway network:
- e-scooter rentals and e-bikes (with electric charging hub facilities onsite);
 - electric vehicles (household electric charging stations);
 - autonomous/ semi-autonomous vehicles;
 - mobility as a service (MaaS) such as a single application providing access to car rides, rentals, public transport, etc.;
 - use of "big" data and analytical techniques to enable insight and better management of transport networks;
 - smart autonomous deliveries/ autonomous pods/ drone delivery;
 - 5G networks; and
 - superfast broadband.
- 8.4 It is important that the transport industry utilises and effectively implements the above opportunities. The transport sector accounts for a high proportion of the UK's CO₂ emissions, with the sector being far off reaching the national target of net zero by 2050.
- 8.5 This is largely from the use of petrol cars and high level of car ownership currently in the UK. Reducing reliance on private cars will therefore be an important aim of the transport strategy for the site going forward.
- 8.6 Ramsey Green has the potential infrastructure and suitable location to successfully implement the initiatives listed above in order to reduce car use and be resilient to changes in future transport policy, with reference to the Climate Change agenda.

9. Conclusion

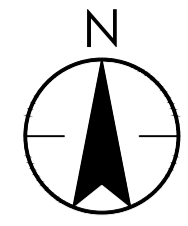
- 9.1 This Note sets out the high-level transport strategy for development on Ramsey Green at Gibraltar Corner. The emphasis for this strategy is on reducing the need to travel before then prioritising non-car modes of travel, focussing on opportunities for access by walking, cycling and public transport.

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- 9.2 The development offers good opportunities to enhance the pedestrian and cycle accessibility of the site, through footway improvements along Wood End Lane and Home Road to connect with the existing footway network in Gibraltar Corner and link with National Cycle Route 51 and the Bedford Green Wheel cycle route via Ridge Road. These improvements will mean the centre of Bedford will be within a reasonable five mile cycle ride of the site via high quality cycle infrastructure, and local pedestrian accessibility will enhance walking connections with Gibraltar Corner and the existing bus stops along Ridge Road.
- 9.3 With the implementation of the strategy and highway comments, it is considered that the site is deliverable, the proposal positively contributes to the character of the existing settlement and accords with national and local transport policy guidance. Therefore, Ramsey Green at Gibraltar Corner is suitable, from a transport and highways perspective, for being brought forward as part of Bedford Borough Council's Call for Sites.

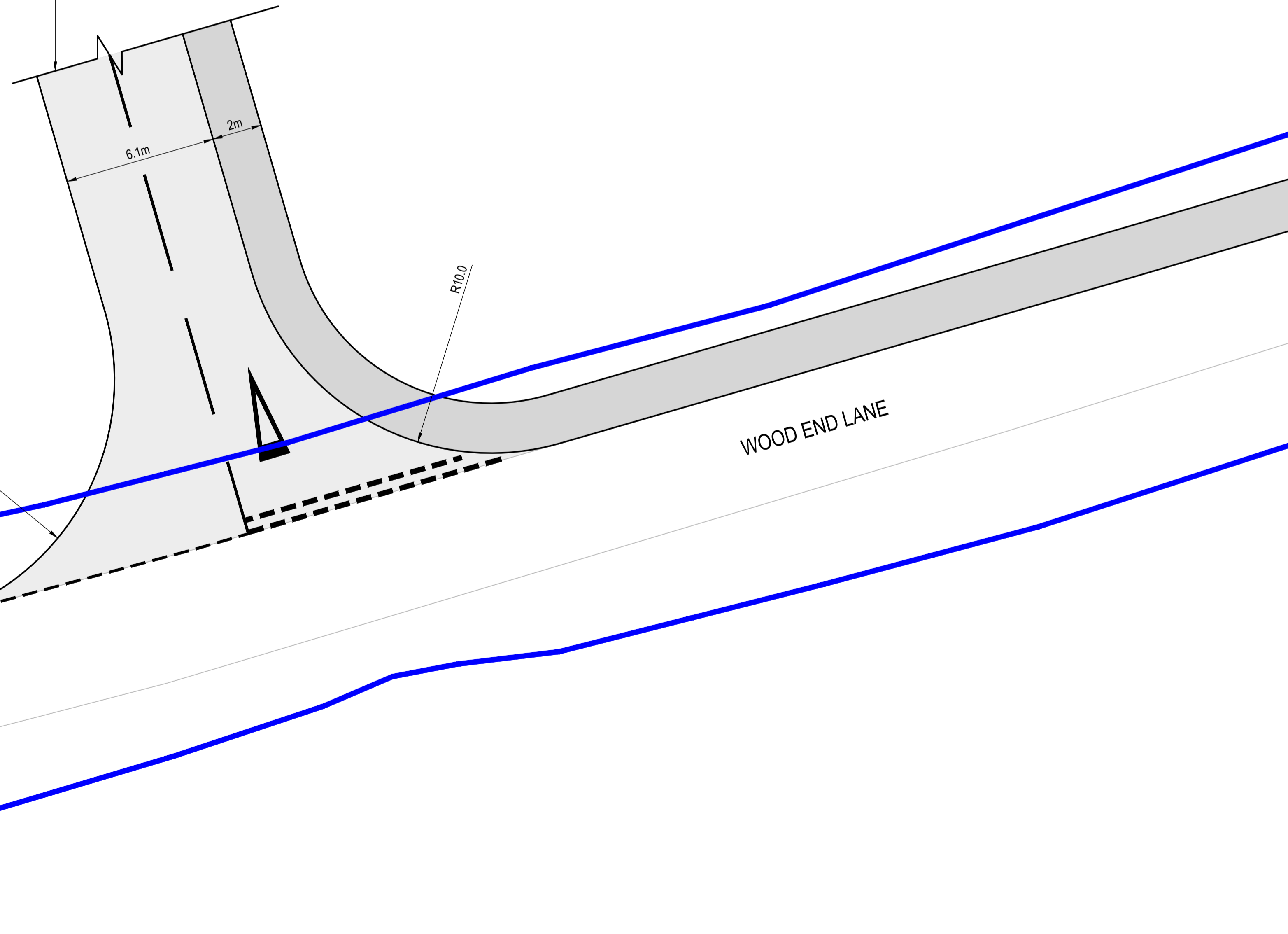
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Appendix A Proposed Site Accesses



PROPOSED SITE

3.0m FOOTWAY/ CYCLEWAY
6.1m CARRIAGEWAY



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Highway boundary information obtained from Bedford Borough Council on the 29.07.2021.

This drawing is to be read in conjunction with all Engineers and Architects drawings and specifications.

This design is preliminary therefore further searches are required during detailed design to determine the significant risks associated with the sites topography, geology and potential contamination, drainage, existing utilities and vegetation, amongst others.

Vehicle Profile

Bedford Borough Council Highway Boundary

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PROPOSED SITE ACCESS AT WOOD END LANE

Project No.
332210113

Scale
1:125

Revision
P01

Drawing No.

332210113_5501_101

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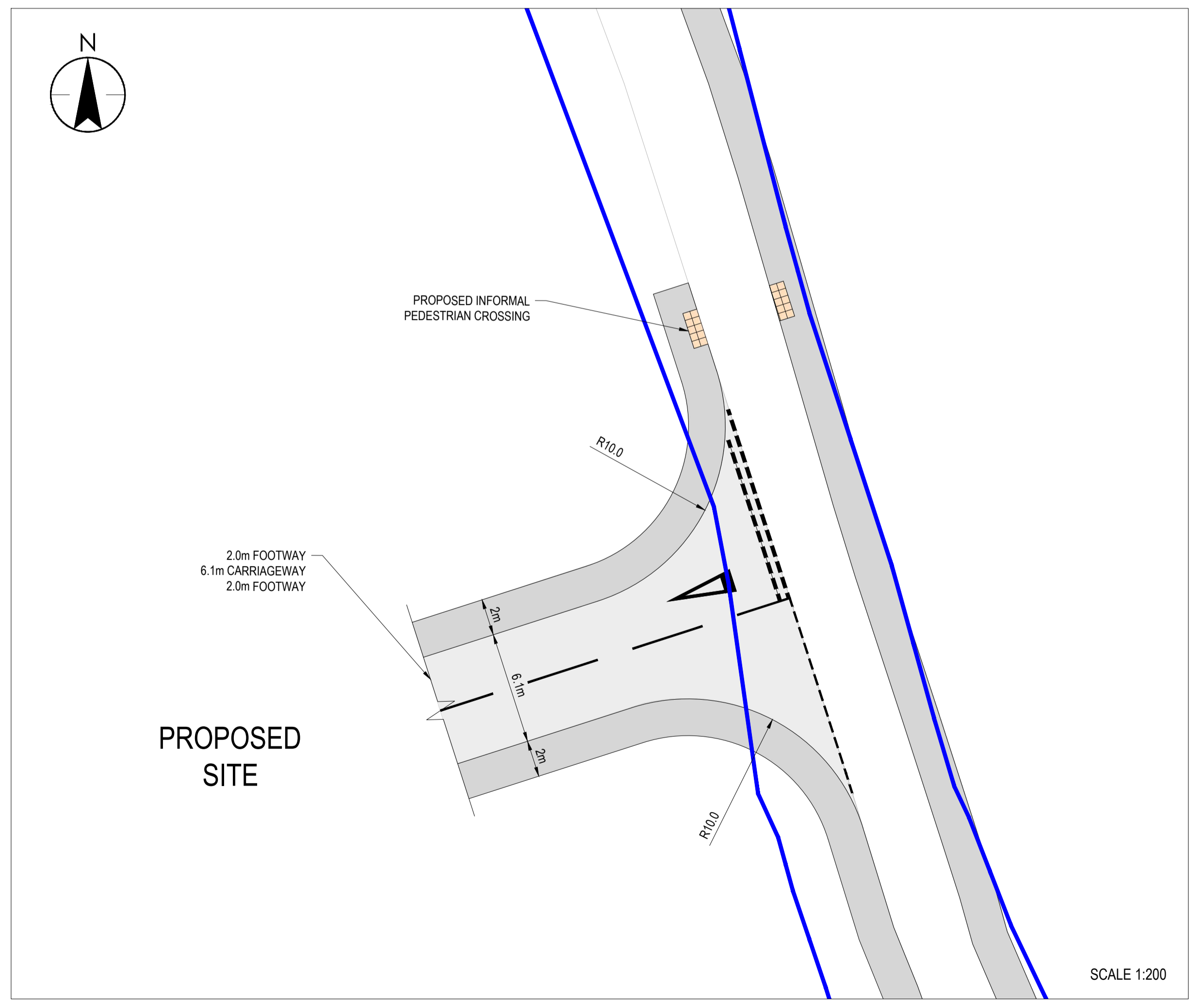
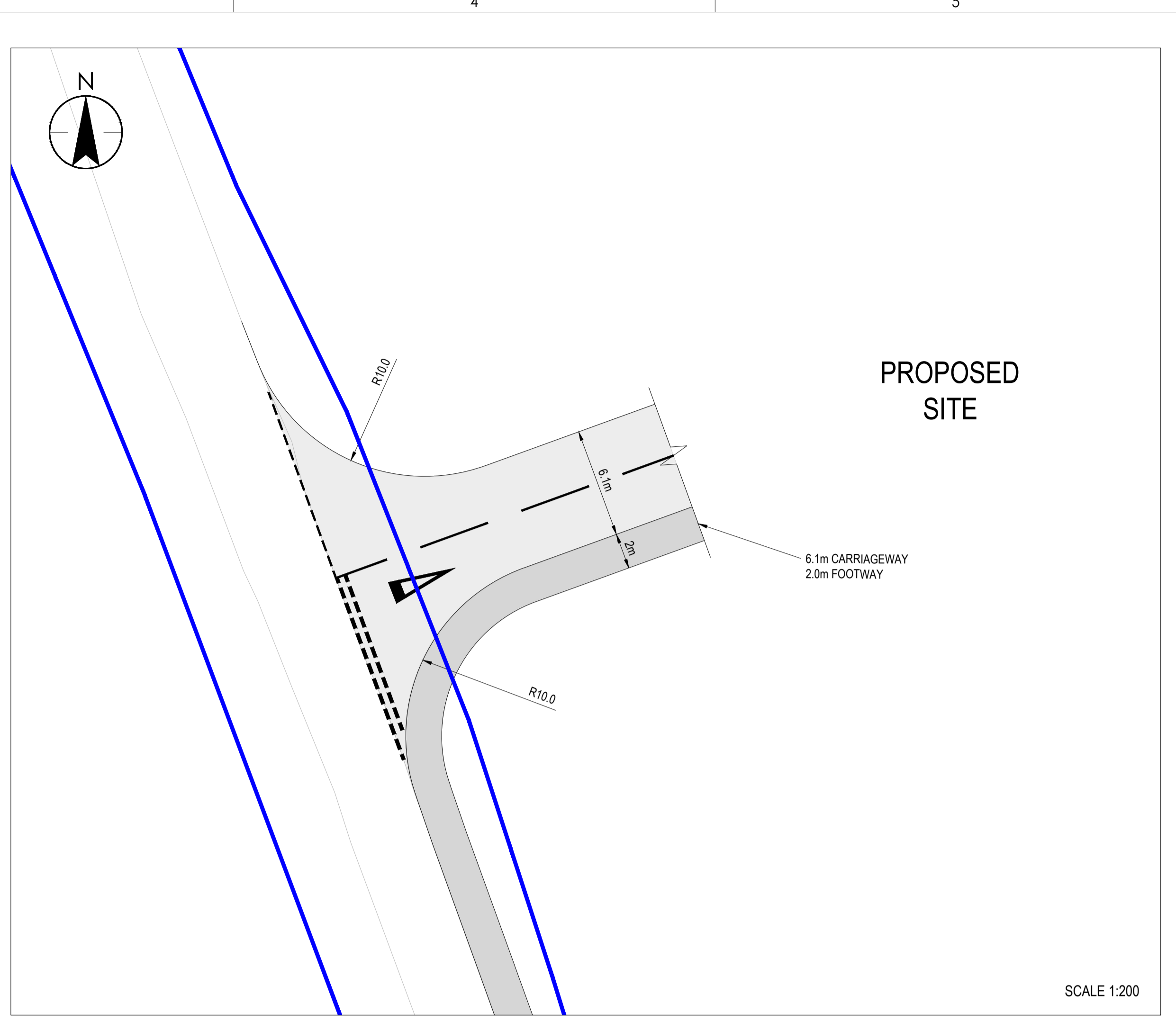
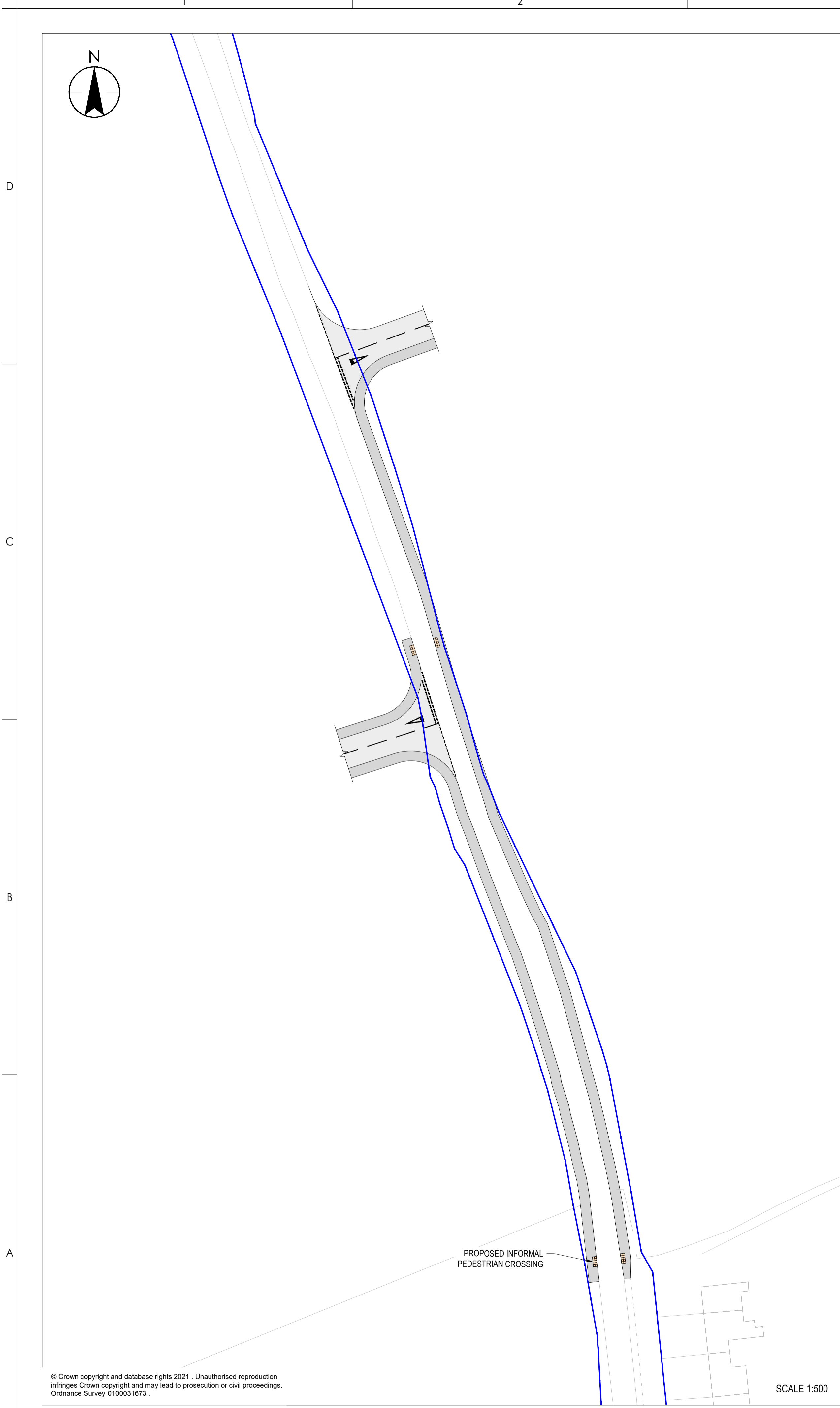
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Vehicle Profile



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PROPOSED SITE ACCESSES AT HOME ROAD

Project No. 332210113	Scale 1:200
Revision P01	Drawing No. 332210113_5501_102

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