



Vision Framework

Land at East of Green Lane,
Clapham, Bedford.



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Project Team

Client

De Merke Estates

Planning



Transport



Architecture



Landscape





Site Location Aerial Image

1.0 Introduction

Instructions:

- 1.1 Neame Sutton Limited, Chartered Town Planners is Instructed by De Merke Estates (“De Merke”) to prepare a Vision Framework document for its promotion site at Land East of Green Lane, Clapham, Bedford.
- 1.2 This Vision Framework document and its accompanying appendices is intended to assist Officers at Bedford Borough Council (“BBC”) in their consideration of the promotion site as a suitable location for housing as part of the preparation of the emerging Local Plan Review (Regulation 18 Consultation).

Scope of Document:

- 1.3 The remainder of this document deals with the following matters:

Section 2	Site and Local Context
Section 3	Planning Context
Section 4	Site Appraisal
Section 5	Development Principles
Section 6	Conclusion



Figure 1. Photograph of Clapham Village traditional sign

2.0 Site and Local Context

Site Location:

- 2.1 The promotion site is located in the south of the Parish of Clapham, in an area known as Clapham Green.
- 2.2 Clapham is regarded as a sustainable location for growth containing a good range of local services, facilities, employment and public transport opportunities, including schools, community facilities, food retail, public houses, open space, sport and recreation facilities.
- 2.3 Clapham is required to deliver 500 new homes, and a single site has been allocated in the Clapham Neighbourhood Plan (made in 2021).
- 2.4 The Site has a total area of around 8.5ha and is situated on sloping land on the eastern edge of the village of Clapham Green. The Site is irregular in shape and comprises two distinct land parcels, the most westerly being pastoral and in close proximity to the existing settlement edge. The remainder is open arable land. Vegetative features are limited to remnant blocks of woodland (including Crabtree Spinney, a priority habitat) and scattered trees on the periphery of the Site.

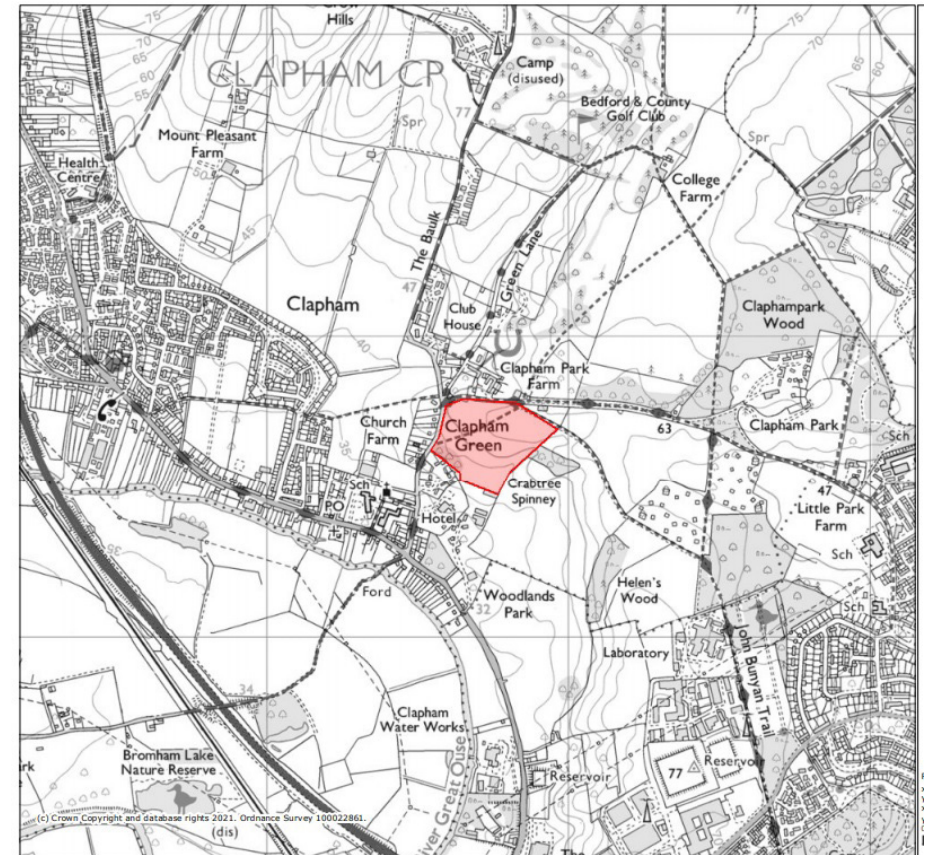


Figure 2. Map of site area in wider Parish Context. Source: DEFRA Magic Maps.

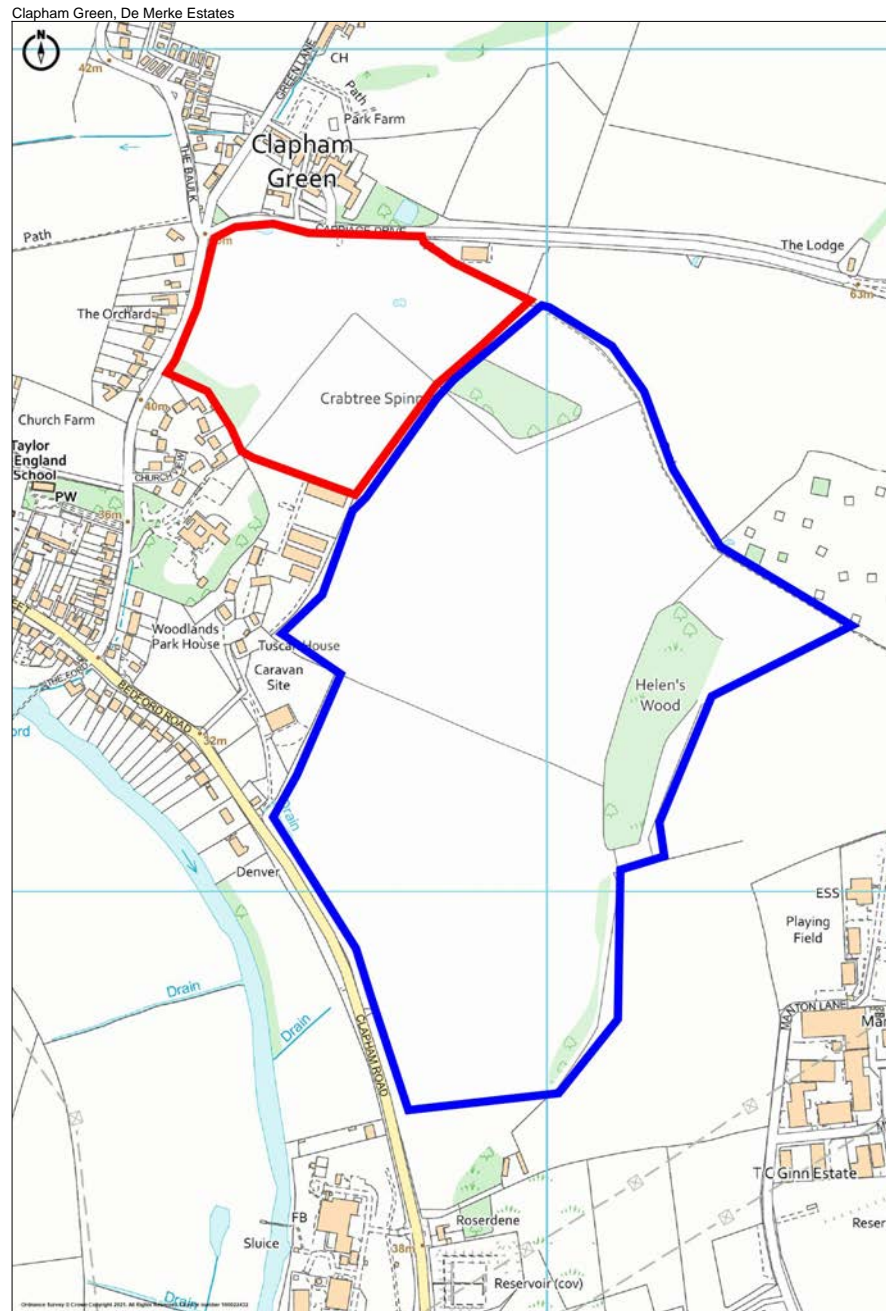


Figure 3. The Promotion Site and areas of ownership

Existing Site:

Site Description:

- 2.5 The site is situated to the east of Clapham Green with Green Lane marking its western boundary and Carriage Drive to the north. The eastern boundary of the Site is separated from the edge of Bedford by approximately 480m of adjacent agricultural land. This area of land is the subject of recent consultations as the proposed route of the East- West Rail route, exiting out of Bedford. The railway will change the character of the landscape in this area.
- 2.6 However, current land uses on the edge of Bedford include typical fringe land uses including industrial estates and a sports centre. In recent years, permission has been given for a new private through school (4-18years). There is also an allocated site for residential development, "Lodge Hill". The Manton Industrial Estate is visible from the edge of Clapham Green at the northernmost edge of the Site.
- 2.7 As set out above, the northern boundary of the Site is partially marked by Carriage Drive, part of the historic access to Clapham Park, and partially by a hedgerow and footpath 9. The eastern boundary is marked by a fence and areas of tree planting. The southwestern boundary is marked by another fence and sporadic tree planting, alongside which extends Bedford Road / Clapham Road. The western boundary is marked in the south by the rear of properties in Clapham Green, including Woodlands Park hotel, an area of caravan storage and industrial units and, in the north, by Green Lane.
- 2.8 A remnant area of woodland, Crabtree Spinney, is situated within the north

of the Site and a second area of woodland, Helen's Wood, is situated within the north-eastern field. Further sporadic areas of tree planting are located along the eastern boundary. In addition to the hedgerows along the northern boundary, and the blocks of Woodland (Crabtree Spinney and Helen's Wood), there are a number of individual field trees within the Site.

- 2.9 The land falls from the north eastern edge (approx. 60m AOD) to across the Site to the south western boundary (approx. 35m AOD). The open character and landform enable extensive views to the south and south east,
- 2.10 The Site is located in Flood Zone 1 and is not the subject of any environmental constraints.

De Merke's Interest in the Land:

- 2.11 De Merke owns the land. Tenant farmers manage the agricultural land. The land is available and deliverable.



Figure 4. View of site from Carriage Drive

Existing Context:

Surrounding Context:

- 2.12 Clapham Green has a linear form, with residential buildings along High Street and Green Lane. Off Green Lane there are two newer residential roads, principally Church view to the south which contains large detached brick built dwellings of a traditional design. Further to the north west of Clapham Green, off Green Lane, is a static caravan site on The Baulk which has open views to the west. To the North of the Site and Carriage Drive is Bedford Golf and Country Club.
- 2.13 To the south/south west there is the Grade I Listed Church of St Thomas of Canterbury. The church lies on the northern edge of Clapham with development immediately to the east, west and south. To the north there is a field between the church and the housing on Green Lane. The Site is separate and distinct from the church and its setting. The church tower is a notable landmark in the local landscape



Figure 5. Views towards site from Bedford Road, Clapham Green



Figure 6. Leylandi Tree Belt South of Site



Figure 7. Views towards site from Green Lane, Clapham Green

3.0 Planning Context:

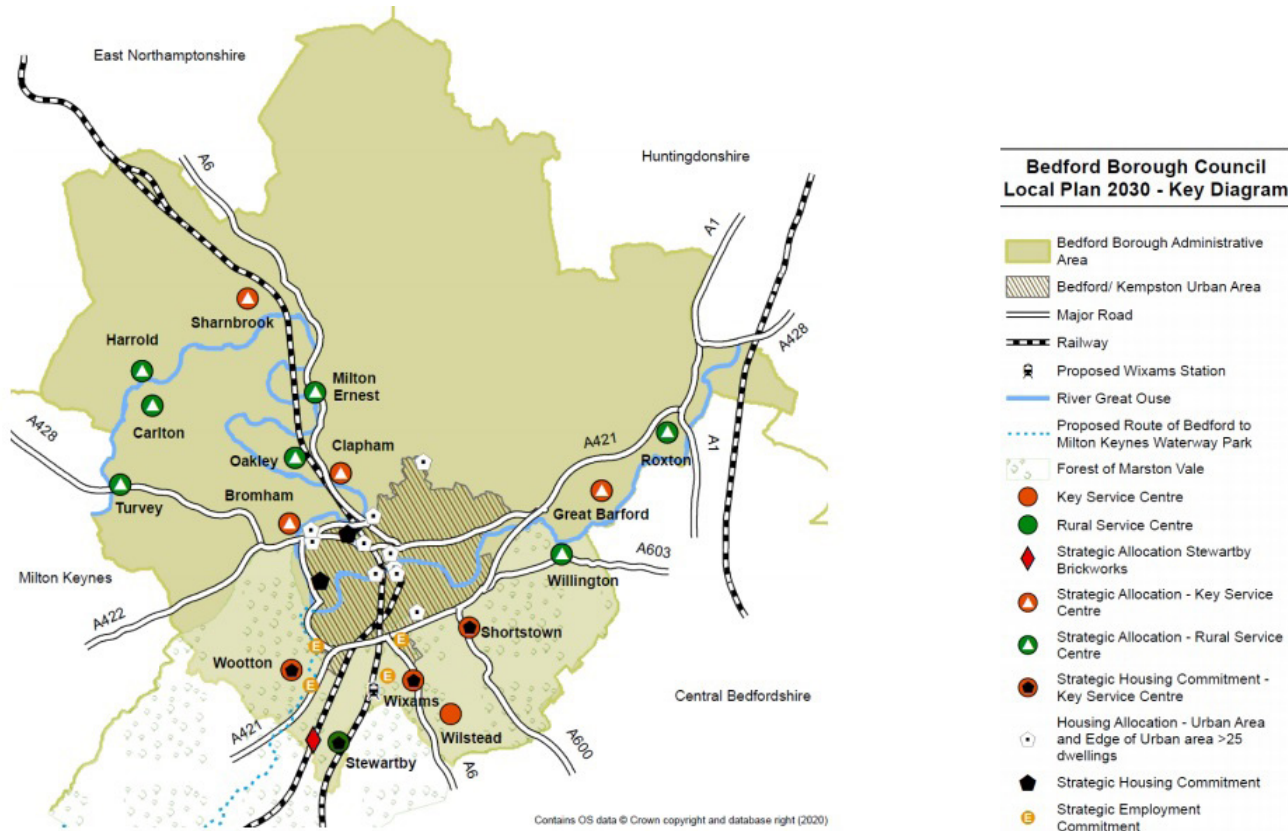


Figure 8. Policy Context Plan from Bedford Borough Council Local Plan

The Development Plan:

Local Plan Position

- 3.1 The site falls within the Borough area of Bedford. The development plan is formed of a number of adopted plans:
- Local Plan 2030
 - Local Plan 2002
 - Allocations and Designations Local Plan 2013
 - Neighbourhood Plans made.

The Local Plan 2030

- 3.2 The Bedford Local Plan (BLP) was adopted by the Council in January 2020. This plan sets out strategy and policies for growth in the borough.
- 3.3 The Local Plan has been adopted but has only passed through examination due to a condition (main modification) imposed by the Examiner for the Council to undertake a Local Plan review almost immediately. A replacement plan must be submitted for examination by January 2023.
- 3.4 The two principle reasons for the early review are the longer-term growth requirements of, in particular, the Oxford- Cambridge Arc and the East West Rail north of Bedford.

3.5 The Plan sets a housing requirement of a minimum of 3 169 homes. Clapham, along with 4 other settlements, set an allocation of 500 homes that must be provided within the Parish. Clapham is recognised as a large village as well as a key service centre. It is clear that Bedford Borough Council consider Clapham to be highly sustainable, capable of strategic allocations.

The Local Plan 2002

3.6 Most policies have been replaced but some site-specific policies relating to developments that are not yet complete are still needed (for example Wixams, north of Bromham Rd Biddenham and Wootton).

Allocations and Designations Local Plan 2013

3.7 Some policies have been replaced but others remain relevant and up to date.

3.8 This Allocations and Designations discusses the importance between Clapham- Bedford but also Oakley- Clapham (Paras 15.21 and 15.22). Policy AD42 'Local Gaps' and the policies map shows this as the gap 'Clapham to Brickhill'.

Clapham Neighbourhood Plan

3.8 Clapham Neighbourhood Plan has not yet been submitted to BBC. It has recently undergone a local consultation following the preparation of a Strategic Environmental Assessment where De Merkes land holding, including the proposal site, was considered as a reasonable alternative to their preferred site west of Milton Road. It performed well against the other sites.

3.9 The Neighbourhood Plan however has progressed with the Milton Hill site

despite option 2(East of Clapham) performing more favourably.

Emerging Local Plan Review:

3.10 The current Local Plan is under review with a Regulation 16 Consultation (issues and options) taking place between 21 June and 3 September 2021. Delays to the plan have been reported, with a regulation 18 Version Expected in February 2022.



4.0 Site Appraisal:

Landscape Context:

4.1 A Landscape Sensitivities and Opportunities Report has been produced in support of this vision document. The purpose for this report is to describe the existing landscape character and visual environment associated with the Site and provide advice on the landscape and visual constraints to development.

4.2 By way of background the Site has recently considered in the Strategic Environmental Assessment for the Neighbourhood Plan as a reasonable alternative. Out of the 3 possible sites, the promotion site was considered the least favourable with the following comment:

“The site would form an urban extension to the south east of the village and would be in-keeping with the existing built form to some extent. However, the site is relatively open to the east and south, and therefore development has the potential to impact upon views into and out of the site.

Under Option 3 similar constraints also exist to that of Option 1 in terms of potential coalescence between neighbouring settlements. Development of Option 3 would likely contribute towards the erosion of the Local Gap between Clapham and Bedford, conflicting with emerging CNP objectives/ Policy L1, and BCC Landscape Sensitivity Study development guidelines set out above”

4.3 The Assessment goes on to conclude,

“Overall it is recognised that all options are large in scale and would significantly alter the existing landscape and settlement pattern to some extent; with the potential for significant long-term negative effects. However, it is also considered that the strategic nature and

topography of options present opportunities for future schemes to respond to constraints (i.e. undulations and coalescence) and mitigate potential harm through sensitive design and master-planning. In terms of the layout the principle recommendations that have influences a master-plan will be to protect the hedgerows, both in the layout and the pressures for future tree removal. ”

4.4 The Landscape Sensitivities and Opportunity Report has been produced in support of the sites promotion and has identified specific areas of the landscape that must be conserved and how the open landscape could accommodate residential development. The report concludes that there are no formal protections of the site, in landscape terms. Overall, in the context of the allocation, the landscape of the Site is not a Valued Landscape as indicated in Paragraph 170 a) of the NPPF.

4.5 The Landscape Assessment does not however detail the impact of the east-west rail on the landscape. This is because at this time, the level of information about the railways vertical and horizontal alignment is not yet set. Current publications of the route show a viaduct over the River Great Ouse and then a cutting into the higher land to the east of the site, approximately 9m below existing ground level. This will undoubtedly change the landscape character as a significant piece of national rail infrastructure. In turn, this could offer opportunities to increase the quantum of development on the site.

4.6 The master-plan of the site has acknowledged the findings of this commissioned report and the layout is based on the opportunities plan, as shown below.

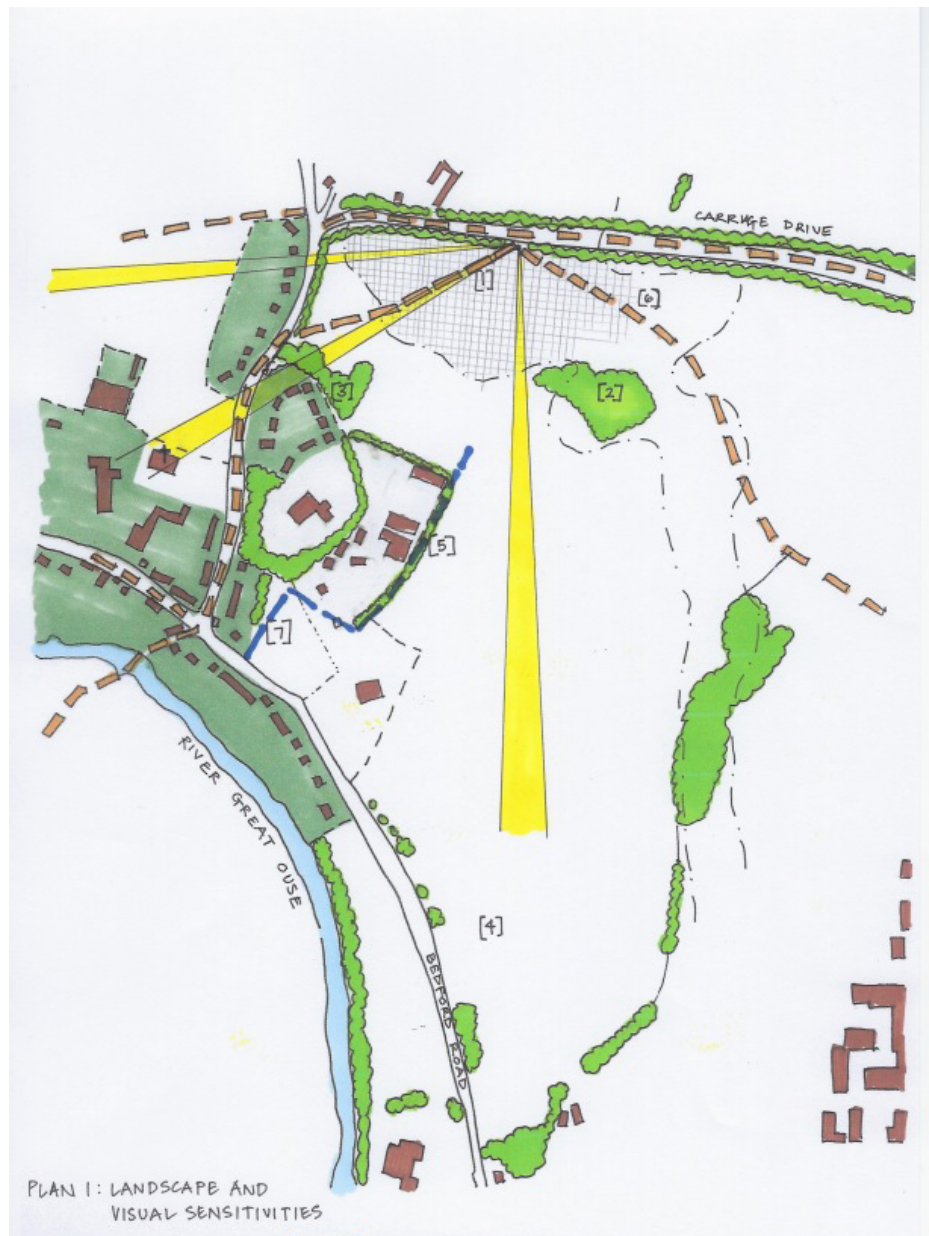


Figure 9. Landscape and Visual Sensitivities (extract from Landscape Appraisal)



Figure 10. Opportunities (extract from Landscape Appraisal)

Ecology:

- 4.7 Prior to any future planning application detailed ecology surveys would be undertaken to identify the nature and extent of any protected species or supporting habitat and appropriate mitigation and enhancement measures proposed. The site also offers sufficient land to enable habitat enhancement to be created alongside a residential development that would result in a net gain in terms of biodiversity.

Ground Conditions:

- 4.8 Any future application proposal on the site will be informed by a full ground investigation that investigates the underlying geology as well as identifying any issues in relation to ground contamination. At this stage there are no known issues with the site in terms of ground conditions or contamination.

Utilities:

- 4.9 A Utilities capacity check will be undertaken ahead of any future application proposal to ensure that adequate capacity exists in the key utilities necessary to serve the site. Should any deficiency in capacity be identified this will be rectified as part of the development of the site.

Highways and Access:

Site Accessibility and local Amenities

- 4.10 The site is considered to be sustainably located.

- 4.11 There is good pedestrian access to and from the site via Green Lane and Bedford Road, where the 2m wide footpath is lit by street-lighting. As part of any future application, investigative work will be undertaken on how to further enhance the existing pedestrian provision within the surrounding area towards Bedford and within Clapham. This could take the form of upgrading the existing shared footway/cycleway along Clapham Road to create a wider and more strategic route for all non-motorised users.

- 4.12 The shared footway/cycleway along Clapham Road forms the only dedicated cycling infrastructure within the vicinity of the site. However, the local highway network in Clapham is subject to 30mph speed limit which encourages a slow speed traffic environment and therefore provides an attractive option for future residents to cycle on carriageway to local destinations within Clapham and nearby Bedford. The slow speed 30mph traffic environment is enforced along Clapham Road due to the presence of mobile police enforcement cameras.

- 4.13 Public transport links from the site are provided via bus routes 25, 50 and 51 which travel to and from Bedford Bus Station. The bus stops are located either side of High Street at the bottom of Green Lane.

- 4.14 Bedford Rail station is approximately 2.75km southeast (approx. 9 minute cycle). The range of destinations accessibly by rail and the frequency of the services provides a realistic opportunity for future residents to travel to higher order destinations further afield by public transport.

A network of PRow pass through the site and route southeast toward Bedford, as well as west within Clapham.

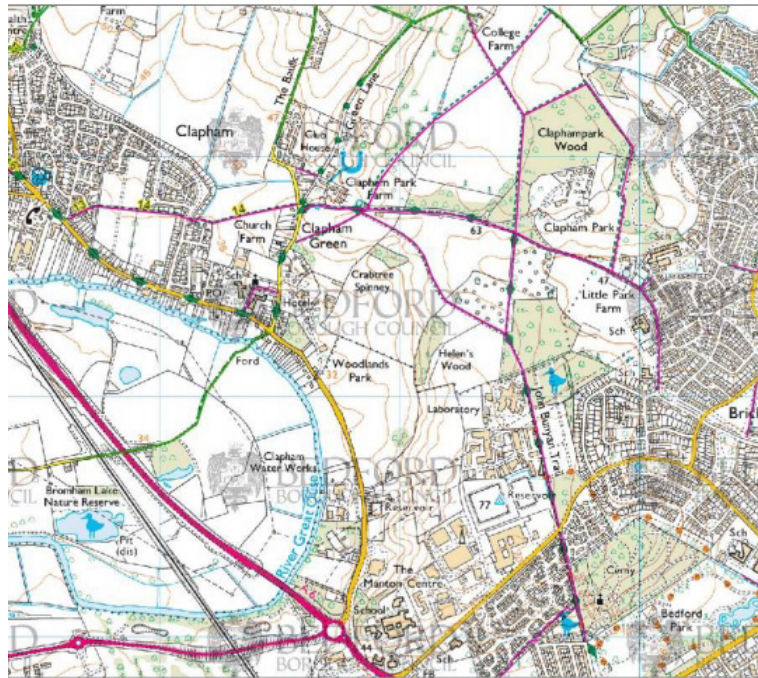


Figure 10. Rights of Way Network

Source: BBC Online Publicx Rights of Way Map

Site access

4.15 The site will take access from Green Lane via a simple priority style junction which will benefit from good visibility splays, in compliance with national standards.

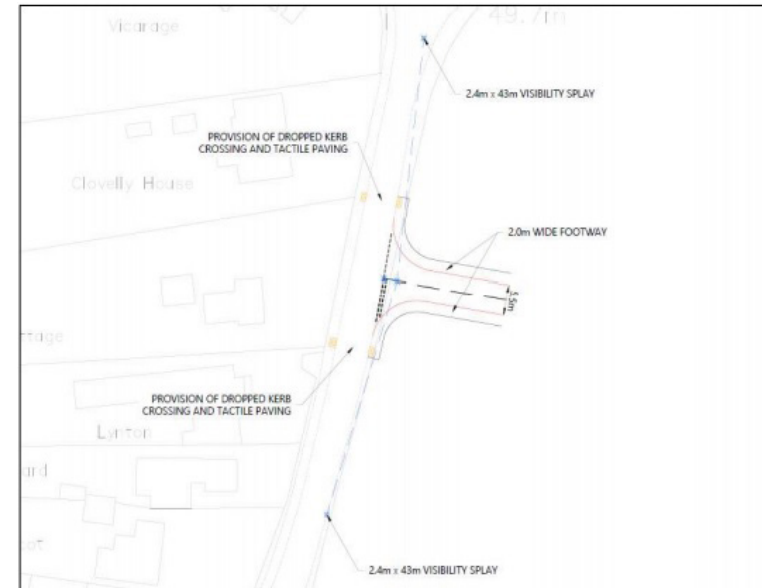


Figure 11. New Priority Junction from Green Lane

The priority junction arrangement has the following design feature

- A 5.5m carriageway with 2m wide footways provided on either side of the carriageway
- 2.4 x 43m visibility splays (in accordance with 30mph speed limit) on either side of Green Lane

4.16 It was observed that there is a level difference between the site and Green Lane. In order to provide for suitable access, grading of the access road within the site will be provided so that it joins Green Lane at a gradient in keeping with contemporary design guidance. Some regrading of the embankment either side of the access will also be required in order to provide for visibility.

Traffic Generation

- 4.17 With the proposals expected to include circa 100 dwellings, vehicular traffic generation will be low, with peak hour traffic not likely to exceed 79 vehicle movements (based on a 150 unit scheme).
- 4.18 The existing use of the land as pasture means that any tree and hedgerow cover is limited to the boundaries of the site.
- 4.19 It is currently envisaged that any development on the site would enable the majority of existing trees and hedgerows to be retained and enhancement where appropriate. Any future application proposal would be informed by a full BS Standard Tree Condition Survey and Arboricultural Method Statement in any event.

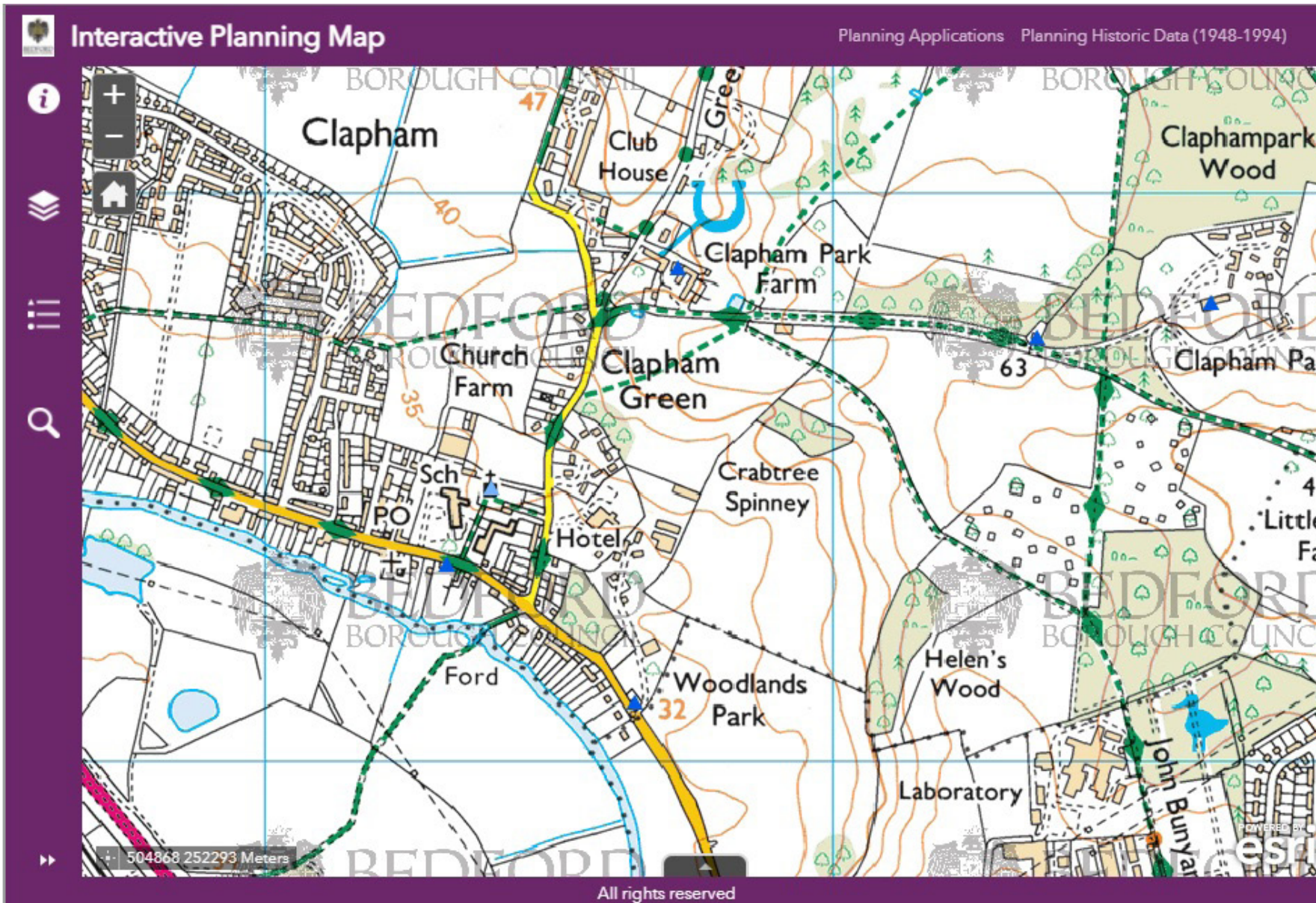
Flood Risk and Drainage:

- 4.20 The promotion site is mostly located within Flood Zone 1 on the Environment Agency's indicative flood risk mapping. The site is not therefore at risk from fluvial flooding.
- 4.21 The site will benefit from a surface water management scheme to ensure to minimise the risk of flooding in the wider area.
- 4.22 The drainage solution for any development on the site will follow a Sustainable Urban Drainage ("SUDS") solution that will ensure discharge is maintained at no higher than Greenfield runoff levels taking into account appropriate climate change allowances.
- 4.23 At this stage it is considered that a suitable SUDS scheme can be designed to adequately drain the site and in this respect drainage and flood risk are

not a constraint to the development of the site.

Heritage:

- 4.24 The site is not within or adjacent to a Conservation Area.
- 4.25 There are no listed buildings within the Site itself or directly border it. There are 5 listed buildings within 500m of the Site. These are:
- Horse and Groom Public House, Grade II listed
 - Clapham, Park Farmhouse, Grade II Listed
 - Church of St Thomas of Canterbury, Grade I Listed
 - Woodlands Lodge, Grade II Listed
 - Lodge to Clapham Park , Grade II Listed.
- 4.26 A future planning application would be supported by a Heritage Assessment as well as an Archaeology Assessment but at this stage of the sites promotion, heritage is not thought to a be constraint to development.



Source: Bedford Borough Council Interactive Planning Map

5.0 Design Principles

- 5.1 Due to its position within the landscape, care has been taken in the indicative layout to respond to the Landscape Specialists advice. This includes maintaining the sites open and elevated character.
- 5.2 The provision of open land adjacent to the parkland trees (east of the site) will ensure that these features are protects and can be appreciated by the public passing along the local right of way network which is also preserved as part of the promotion.
- 5.3 Proposed is new woodland consistent with vegetation which can be seen on historic maps from 1887. As much of the existing boundary tree and hedgerow planting as possible will be retained and enhanced where necessary. This not only maintains the character of the surrounding environment, but helps to screen and enclose the development. Whilst the site will be well-screened by surrounding planting, the heights of the buildings will be limited where necessary to avoid any potential impact on views.
- 5.4 The upper slopes of the River Great Ouse valley have previously been occupied by woodland and scattered trees. There is an opportunity to provide parkland trees and pasture on the elevated land to both restore characteristics tree cover and maintain views across the valley.
- 5.3 Building forms will be considered in relation to their setting and appear subservient to the important buildings and landscape of the surrounding area. A variety of hipped and barn hip roofs will be used to create interesting elevations, in keeping with the character of the area.
- 5.4 The choice of materials for the development will be in keeping with the surrounding context. Brick and roof tiles will be the predominant materials with the occasional use of rendered or contrast brick detailing. Boundary treatments will include brick walls, post-and-rail fencing and hedges.



Brick



Brick wall detailing



Roof tiles/ barn hip roof



Post and rail fencing



Figure 12 (above). Focused view of housing layout.

Figure 13 (right). Site Masterplan.



Opportunities:

- 5.5 The key opportunities for new development include:
- The potential to create a high quality sustainable residential environment well integrated with the existing community and the physical context for the site
 - Provision of a range of dwelling types and sizes
 - Provision of much needed affordable housing
 - Creation of high quality publicly accessible open space including play space
 - Ecological enhancement and net biodiversity gain alongside landscape management
 - Provision of sustainable homes that meet or exceed the current Building Regulations requirements in terms of energy efficiency, reducing carbon emissions and reliance upon fossil fuels
 - Short term economic benefits in terms of construction and throughout the supply chain
 - Long term economic benefits in terms of supporting the local economy, ensuring the vitality and viability of existing services and facilities
 - Infrastructure contributions

The Development Proposal:

- 5.6 The current proposal for the development of the site takes on board the headline analysis of key constraints and seeks to deliver a sustainable form of development that will positively enhance the character and context of the site to the benefit of the local community.
- 5.7 At this preliminary stage a scheme for circa 100 no. dwellings comprising a mix of 1, 2, 3 and 4 bedroom homes, car parking, garages, private amenity space and public open space is envisaged.
- 5.8 The built form would most likely comprise 1 and 2 storey properties reflective of the existing built form in the settlement as well as generating visual interest through scale, modeling and composition.
- 5.9 A layout based on perimeter blocks to provide continuous surveillance of the public realm through active frontages with a mix of formal and shared surface roads to provide variety in the streetscene.
- 5.10 A comprehensive landscape strategy would be included that ensures appropriate landscape planting and management of the whole site.
- 5.11 Play space following the Play England guidance that integrates play with natural features for a variety of experiences would be included in the open space.
- 5.12 Ecology enhancement and buffering from key landscape features to be retained would also be a key component of any future master-plan for the site.

Conclusion:

- 6.1 Land at East of Green Lane, Clapham has been appropriately assessed in terms of its planning, environmental and physical context. This document summarises the assessment work undertaken and demonstrates that the site is suitable to accommodate future housing development.
- 6.2 The illustrative proposal presented within this document demonstrates how a high quality design solution can be achieved for a modest scale of development up to 100 no. homes on the site.
- 6.3 The site is readily available, suitable and achievable well within a 5 year period from the point of allocation in the emerging Local Plan and therefore comprises an ideal opportunity for new housing to assist the Council in meeting its future needs for market and affordable accommodation.





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