

3.01 USE AND AMOUNT

Firstly, with regard to use. Part of the application site has already been identified by Reading Borough Council as being land suitable for a mixed form of development. The Local Plan includes Policy CA1b that indicates that the western portion of the site that fronts Kidmore End Road is suitable for 90 - 120 dwellings, with a healthcare facility and replacement Golf Clubhouse - on circa 3.83 hectares (circa 9.47 acres) of land.

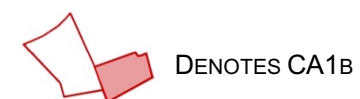
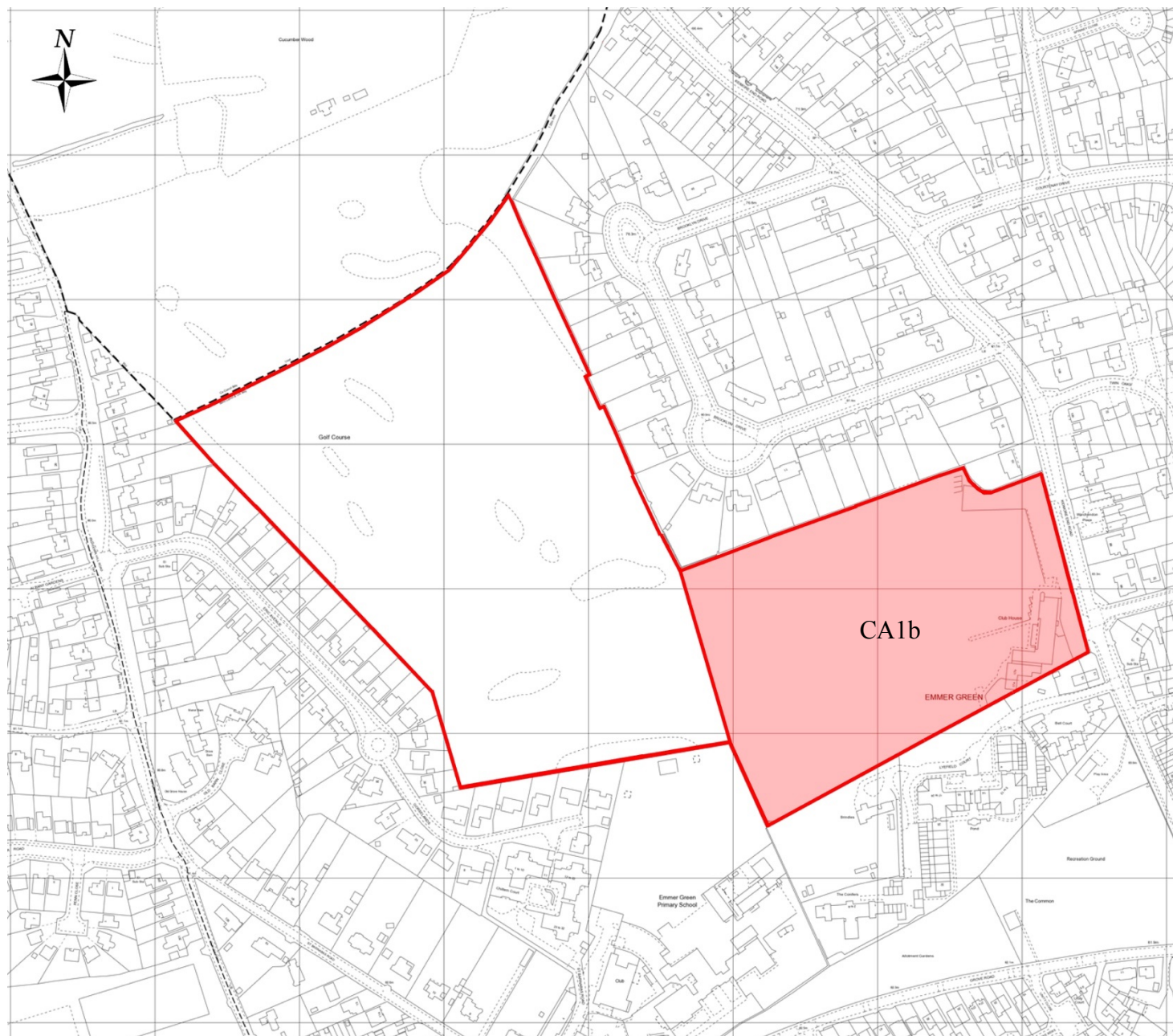
As close to 1/3rd of the available land is already deemed suitable for residential use, and the balance is bounded on several sides by existing residential use, it seems wholly reasonable to propose much needed housing on the balance of the land within Reading Borough Council's administrative boundary.

Turning to the amount of development proposed. The submitted package of information includes a Site Layout that shows how up to 257 new homes could be created on the site, as well as a circa 600 sq. m. health facility.

The total site area is circa 12.15 hectares (circa 30.05 acres) - which would suggest a density of 21.15 dwellings per hectare. This is a relatively low figure in comparison to many modern developed sites. The density is however, slightly skewed by the constraints identified - principally the retained existing landscape features. The modest total of units and hence density, ensures that it sits well in the locality. It should be borne in mind that the Local Planning Authority have agreed in principle to a proposal on CA1b that would see a residential development density ranging between 24 - 35 dwellings per hectare - PLUS a healthcare facility and replacement clubhouse building on the small area of CA1b

Whilst, as mentioned earlier, good use of a resource such as land is an important consideration, so too is the impact of a proposed development on the sites immediate neighbours and the wider area.

In this instance with the mix of units and modest density figure proposed we feel that the balance between efficient use of land and lessened impact on the surrounding area has been struck appropriately.



USE & AMOUNT

3.02 LAYOUT

The Site Layout that accompanies this submission demonstrates how a scheme of up to 257 new homes and a healthcare facility can be accommodated on the site. The Layout provided reflects the identified constraints and opportunities, and in particular seeks to address comments raised by the Design Review Panel (DRP) - consulted as part of the pre-application process.

The DRP raised a number of issues in respect of a previous iteration of the Layout, with the key points raised being as follows:

1. The proposals should be landscape led, with a green infrastructure strategy that incorporates existing landscape features within the proposed areas of open space.
2. The proposals should look to connect to the wider area with pedestrian footpath and cycle routes that will provide connections to the wider area and the land to the north.
3. The DRP suggested that the medical centre/community facility should address Kidmore End Road, rather than be buried within the site. This location assists access to the premises via the local bus route, and helps create a legible area of community benefit in a more accessible area of public realm.
4. The DRP felt that the previous proposal lacked clear legibility due to the frequent use of dead ends, private driveways, disconnected islands of development separated by unusable islands of landscaping buffering.
5. The Panel were not convinced that the 'tree-like' form and pattern of development proposed did not reflect the local area which "...is formed by residential blocks on a connected network of streets...". Their preference was to see back garden to back garden relationships established along the perimeter of the site so that it not only mirrored the local grain but also provided greater security.

The Site Layout reflects all of the key points raised by the DRP. There is a central landscaped spine, of differing widths, that connects Kidmore End Road with the northern boundary of the golf course that abuts the South Oxfordshire Boundary. The landscape core is not a wholly new corridor of planting, but is a linear feature that links many of the existing treed areas to create a green infrastructure route.

The above landscaped corridor is then paired with a variety of pedestrian routes that run alongside the green space, some formal, others that could be less established - all contributing to the general permeability and connectivity. The footpaths connect to the rear of Emmer Green Primary School, to the areas of open space - all the way through to the northern boundary of the application site.

The DRP's suggestion that the healthcare facility should be re-located at the entrance has also been adopted by the applicants and is noted as having flats over. The footprint is sized to allow for not only the 600 sq.m. medical facility and service cores for the flats above, but will also accommodate a couple of disabled flats that are accessed off the ground floor - providing easy access for those wheelchair bound or less ambulant.

3.02 LAYOUT CONTINUED....

The Site Layout now shows a far more linear and connected series of roads, and therefore pattern of development. Gone are the dead ends and cul-de-sacs - replaced with street fronting houses that closely follow the pattern and grain of the adjoining streets. In a number of instances additional features or re-positioned front doors are shown - particularly on corners - so that casual visual policing of open spaces or landscaped areas is built into the scheme, and not added as an afterthought.

The above arrangement aids the provision of back garden to back garden relationships. It sees the insecure boundary to open space relationships removed - hence according with the guidance given by the Police in Secure By Design.



3.03 ACCESS AND MOVEMENT

For details regarding the access arrangements, in particular the geometry, please refer to the Traffic Assessment that forms part of the submission package prepared by PBA.

The main access to the site is located close to the existing entry to the golf club. A further, less substantial, entrance to the site is located further to the north along Kidmore End Road - with a view to this principally acting as an 'emergency' access that could also serve the healthcare facility. This separate arrangement will add to the schemes legibility - rather than the confused narrative previously proposed.

Within the site there is more of a network of roads that run through the proposed development in a linear manner. The road pattern is in the form of a primary access route with a series of straight streets and 'T'- Junctions - the latter acting as speed restraint features. The only exception to the straight street approach is the 'loop' adjacent to the northern boundary. This provides a route for possible bus movements and service vehicles - and helps in the encouragement of walking and cycling through and around the site in a clearly defined way.

The omission of the cul-de-sac, dendritic, form of development proposal for the road pattern has allowed for the provision of a variety of character areas - albeit with a consistent feature of the main property frontages addressing the road/street that serve them.



MOVEMENT STRATEGY

3.04 LANDSCAPE

As mentioned throughout the Statement, existing and proposed landscape features, and their integration, are key to the Site Layout proposals.

This is clearly shown in the Landscape Design and Access Statement document prepared by Fabrik - that accompanies this submission package.

3.05 SCALE

The 'scale' of a proposal is measured in differing ways, but is in reality a combination of the 'amount' of development proposed in density terms, and the bulk and mass of the built form that is indicated.

The most important consideration is "... does a scheme sit comfortably alongside the neighbouring developments?"

The Site Layout shows a scheme that respects the heights of the local housing stock - which is principally 2-storey to eaves level - with steeply pitching roofs. Many of the houses that are adjacent to the site have accommodation in the roofspace, as a result of conversion or part of a re-building process. We are suggesting that some of the proposed new homes could also utilize the roof space for accommodation. As well as making good use of the available land the slightly different roof profiles with dormers or roof lights will help create interest - ie the whole development will not be of a uniform height.

The health facility, with flats above, is to be 2 1/2 - 3 storey in height which we believe is appropriate for a structure that sits close to the centre of the frontage and is set back from Kidmore End Road. The properties opposite the frontage are set back considerably from Kidmore End Road, and are sat behind the screen of trees that run along the boundary - hence the slight increase in height will have little visual impact.

3.06 APPEARANCE

Matters relating to appearance, fenestration and material choices will be part of the subsequent Reserved Matters Application. However, we have provided some sheets of elevational ideas with the new homes set in a street scene context.

It is we feel important that the style adopted is not 'anywhere architecture' that is often prevalent with standard developer fare. Given the size of the proposed development it is felt that one cohesive style would be most appropriate - whereas pepper-potting different forms across the scheme wouldn't.

Whilst there is no specific architectural movement or historic style that is dominant locally, the majority of the neighbouring properties are traditional in both form and appearance. The Elevational material supplied with this submission reflects that with a leaning towards the 'Arts and Crafts' movement, detailing and material use. As a late 19th - early 20th Century architectural style it eschewed the fussy detailing that was prevalent in Victorian architecture and looked to a simpler 'hand-crafted' appearance. This form of mellow vernacular would span the range of designs and types of units on the site - from short terraces of houses, through to more substantial detached houses and flats - and most importantly it is a style that would fit well in this landscaped setting.



ELEVATIONAL
TREATMENTS





S U M M A R Y

4.00 SUMMARY

The Proposals embodied in this submission show that an opportunity exists for the creation of a high-quality residential development that will help address Reading's need for family housing.

In recent years, Reading has seen the construction of a large number of flats in and around the town centre, but there has not been a commensurate increase in the number of new, family-sized residences.

The proposals contained in this submission show that a predominantly housing-led scheme can be delivered, complete with affordable units and a health care facility, without having undue impact on the sites immediate neighbours or the wider area.

The landscape core to this proposal pays regard to the historic golf course use, and as the green link runs through the site, it incorporates many of the existing landscape features - thereby providing a green backdrop to the development.