



Fairfax

FAIRFAX (READING) LTD AND READING GOLF CLUB

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

IN RESPECT OF

READING GOLF CLUB

KIDMORE END ROAD

EMMER GREEN, READING

REV. A

THE VISION FOR READING GOLF CLUB

The Vision for the land at Reading Golf Club, Emmer Green, Reading is as follows:

- Create a landscape led, sustainable development, that sits alongside the existing area of Emmer Green and the wider area of Reading, that will provide much needed new housing and community infrastructure.
- A high quality design that will deliver a mix of housing (including affordable units), community and recreational facilities as well as various open spaces and landscape features that will integrate with existing green spaces. The proposals will encourage pedestrian permeability, and provide areas and margins for enhancing the existing ecology and biodiversity.
- The scheme will adopt best practice principles and good design solutions that revolve around creating a legible scheme that reflects local needs (as identified by Reading Borough Council) and also the landscape character of this part of Reading and the wider area.

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INTRODUCTION

1.01 SCOPE AND CONTEXT OF THE DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT.

This Design & Access Statement has been prepared on behalf of Fairfax (Reading) Ltd and Reading Golf Club Ltd, and forms part of their Planning Application Submission in respect of the redevelopment of Reading Golf Club, Kidmore End Road, Emmer Green, Reading.

The Statement, which is part of the Validation Requirements of the General Development Procedure Order (GDPO), embodies the summaries of the various technical reports prepared as part of the submission by various disciplines - including arboricultural constraints, landscape and LVIA considerations, heritage, ecological, flood risk and highways assessments. Each of these disciplines have produced detailed reports from which the overall assessments of the site, and identified constraints, have been incorporated into this Statement.

Consideration has been given to the importance of demonstrating the mechanisms that will be used for the delivery of design quality within the built environment. To this end, this document has the following functions and use:

- i. Provides a concise description of the key issues identified in the supporting Technical Reports identified by the disciplines listed above.
- ii. It describes how an evaluation of these reports leads to the initial design decisions that will inform the illustrative material that shows the development proposals.
- iii. This document provides information on how matters such as urban design, composition, access, circulation, open space and landscape have influenced the indicative proposals.
- iv. The document also sets out a framework that will promote a high quality, legible design solution.

This Design & Access Statement accords with the guidance given by the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) in their document titled 'Design and Access Statements: How to write, read and use them' - CABE - 2006. It should be read in conjunction with the application drawings, statements and reports that form the Planning Application package.

1.02 SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

Reading is a large minster town located on the northern side of the County of Berkshire - of which it is the County Town. It has a common boundary with South Oxfordshire District Council to the north, West Berkshire to the west and Wokingham on its eastern side. It sits at the confluence of the River Thames and the River Kennet, and on the Great Western Main Line and the M4 motorway - the latter two connect the town to London and also to the West Country.

Reading is some 40 miles to the west of London, 24 miles south of Oxford and 70 miles to the east of Bristol.

Whilst Reading as a town grew predominantly on the southern side of the River Thames the areas to the north such as Caversham and Emmer Green developed from independent villages to become part of the wider area of Reading. The density of housing and development in these areas on the northern side of the Thames is obviously lower than that associated with the town or its immediate periphery, and there are tree-lined roads giving a 'green' feel to this part of the Borough.

The site under consideration is situated on the northern side of Reading and the River Thames within the area known as Emmer Green. It sits on the western side of Kidmore End Road and comprises part of Reading Golf Club and its associated course and clubhouse.

The application site area within Reading Borough Council administrative boundaries measures some 12.15 hectares. As will be examined in more detail elsewhere in this Statement, there are a number of constraints and restraints that will inform the amount of the site that is developable - including the retention of important trees and landscape margins, ecological factors, drainage issues, as well as the need for road, cycle and footpath legibility and permeability.

The existing golf club is accessed off Kidmore End Road, opposite the 'T' - junction that serves Chalgrave Way, on the eastern side of the site, with the club house located close to the entrance and with the associated car parking sitting along the frontage amongst the existing screen of trees. There is an additional point of access further to the north along Kidmore End Road which has been created principally for emergency access.

The application site is, as mentioned, bounded on its eastern side by Kidmore End Road, on the southern side by Emmer Green Primary School and the retirement complex that includes Lyefield Court and the Conifers. Whilst both of these areas of development abut the site their built forms are set back from the boundary, behind existing landscape screens.

With the exception of the north west boundary the application site is surrounded by existing areas of residential development such as Brooklyn Drive and Eric Avenue - that are separated from the site by established tree planting. The north west boundary shown on the Location Plan runs across the existing golf course on the alignment of the County Boundary that separates Berkshire (Reading Borough Council) from Oxfordshire (South Oxfordshire District Council). As a result the boundary is open - with sporadic trees denoting fairway separation.

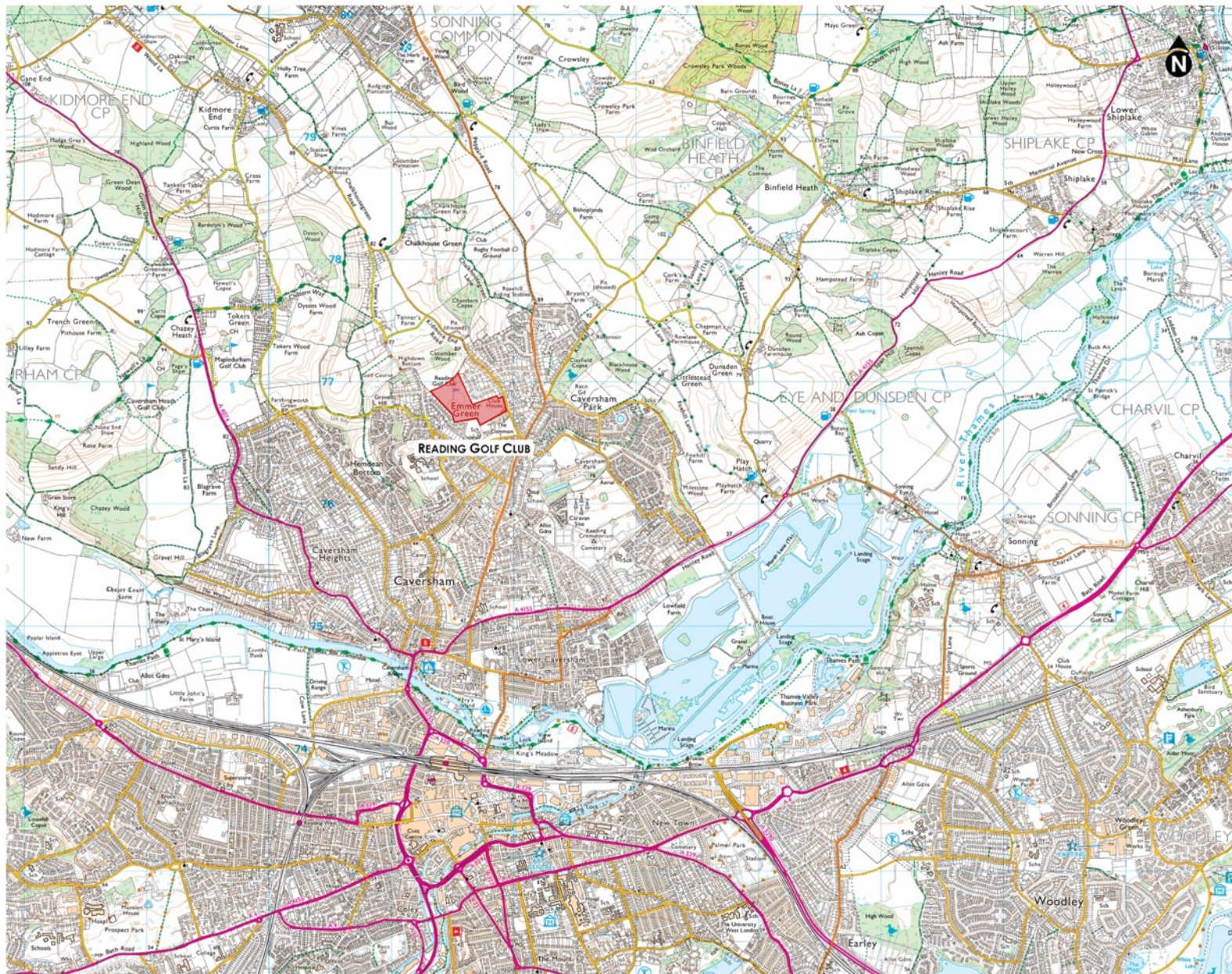
1.02 SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION CONTINUED....

In terms of topography and land fall - this part of the golf clubs land has a fairly even cross-fall that runs from the high point on the South-East side down to the North-West. Owing to the size of the site the change in level appears as a fairly even gradient.

Looking at the wider area the application site connects to the neighbouring road system via Kidmore End Road and Peppard Road.

To the north Kidmore End Road connects to Chalkhouse Green , Kidmore End and areas such as Peppars Common. To the south, Kidmore End Road links to Reading Town Centre and Caversham via Peppard Road.

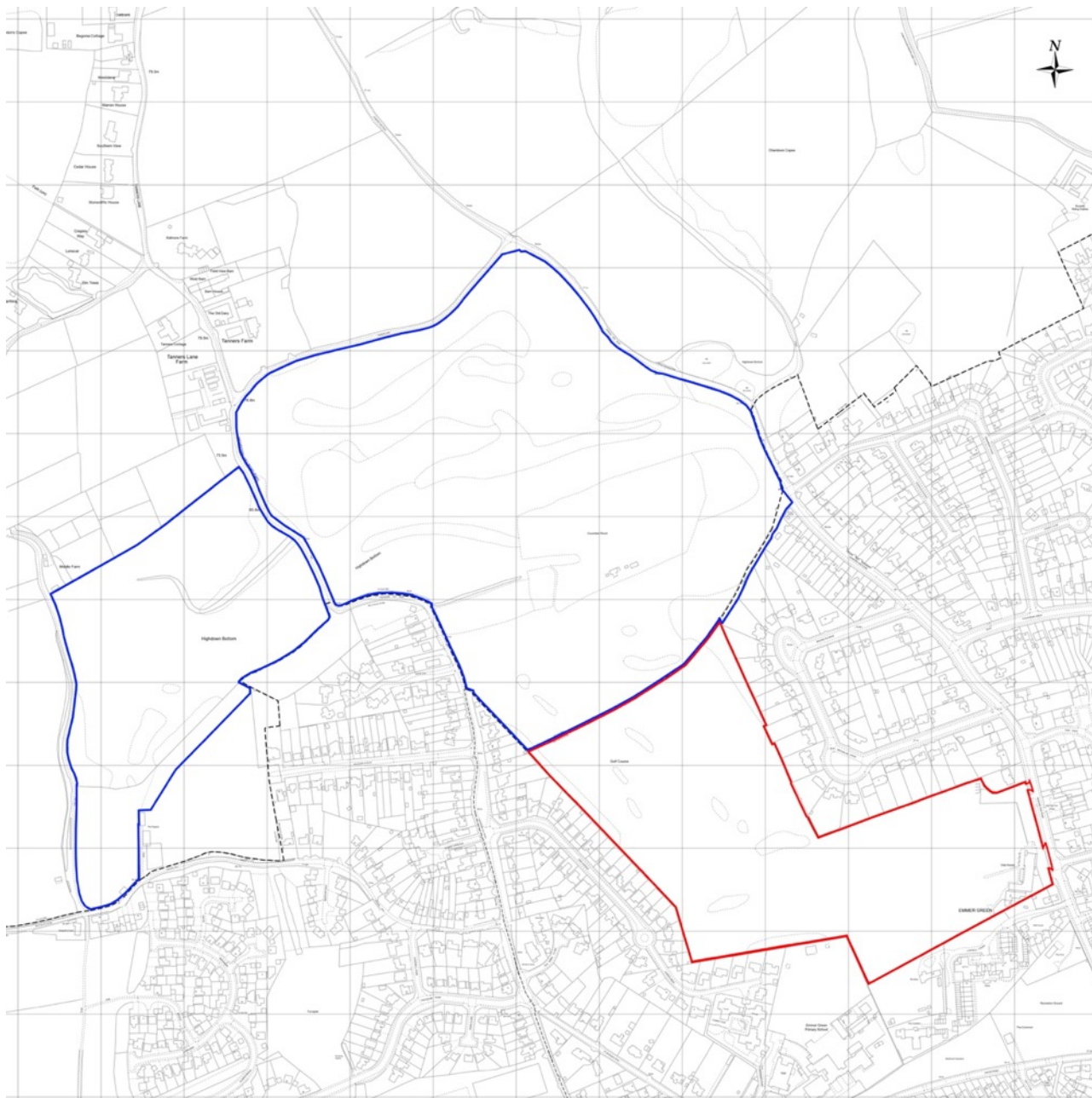
There are good links to the wider area by bus, cycle and pedestrian routes as well as by car. The bus service runs to Emmer Green and from there to Reading Town Centre - ensuring that the proposed development site is in a wholly sustainable location.



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LOCATION OF THE
APPLICATION SITE



-  THE SITE
-  APPLICATION SITE
-  OTHER LAND OWNED BY RGC

SITE LOCATION PLAN

APPRAISALS

2.01 SITE CONTEXT

As mentioned earlier, the application site is located on the northern side of Reading, where it abuts the administrative boundary of South Oxfordshire District Council.

Reading is a major commercial centre, which has involvement in the information technology and insurance sectors in particular. Whilst it sits relatively close to London with good transport links, it has a net inward flow of commuters. The town regularly ranks highly in indices assessing the economic and well-being of an area as a result of having good access to employment, healthcare, relatively high income levels and locally available skills.

Reading is also a major regional retail centre that serves much of the Thames Valley. It is home to the University of Reading, Reading Football club and the London Irish Rugby Team.

Culturally, Reading has a variety of museums and theatres including the Hexagon Theatre, South Street Arts Centre and a variety of independent theatre groups. The annual Reading Festival, one of the countrys' largest live musical gatherings attracts a great number of people to the town each year.

It benefits from being well located - with a variety of local services nearby, together with easy access to national transport links via the rail and motorway networks.

There are employment and educational uses near the site - as well as a plethora of recreational facilities, both formal and informal.

The sustainability credentials are established and recognised in Policy CA1b, and the documentation that accompanies this submission illustrates this in more detail.

2.02 SITE CONSTRAINTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

There are a number of existing features that will constrain any development on this site, but the corollary is that providing these are respected then there are some obvious areas that become opportunities for development. See the Constraints Plan - drawing 2306/PL.02 Rev. A.

A. Arboricultural Constraints.

The site has a considerable quantity of mature and semi-mature trees - many of which have informed the layout of the golf course. Over the years as the course was developed additional trees were added to help delineate the various fairways and to create enhanced areas of screening. Prior to any design work being undertaken all the existing trees were assessed and are described individually in the accompanying tree report that forms part of the application package.

The Indicative Masterplan shows that the majority of these important trees are not only retained, but as importantly, given adequate space around them to ensure that they are not pressured by the development process or by future occupants. The quality of the retained trees necessitates them being at the heart of any proposal - rather than simply being part of the background narrative.

B. Landscape Constraints.

The landscaping constraints sit alongside the arboricultural issues mentioned above and are pivotal in the approach to the formation of any development Masterplan.

A key objective, and therefore a constraint, is to reduce the potential visual impact of a development on a sites immediate neighbours and the wider area. To this end the Following are to be considered:

Retain the majority of existing tree and perimeter planting to mitigate potential for unacceptable adverse impact on views and amenity.

Use the form of the layout to ensure that where possible back gardens abut back gardens. This moves the development further off the existing boundary - automatically reducing the visual impact.

Restrict the majority of the units proposed to being 2-storey to eaves level. A few units could be slightly taller to create a more interesting roofscape - but these will need to be more centrally located.

More specifically, the Local Planning Authority require a scheme that has a linear landscape core that connects Kidmore End Road with the South Oxfordshire District Council boundary on the northern side of the site. This linear feature should not only run from one end of the site to the other but should also incorporate existing landscape features so that there aren't 'islands' of unconnected open space.

2.02 SITE CONSTRAINTS AND OPPORTUNITIES CONTINUED...../

C. Ecological and Bio-Diversity Constraints.

Golf courses often have limited ecological and bio-diversity margins due to the 'manicured' nature of the management of the fairways, greens and bunkers etc. The existing boundaries provide the main corridors for wildlife - with the exception of the bird population - some of whom nest in the fairway and boundary trees, as identified within the Ecological Impact Assessment.

This being the case an opportunity exists to genuinely improve the current situation with the reinforcement of existing planted margins to form wildlife corridors which can be linked to the larger areas of open space. In addition, the provision of the surface water attenuation features in shallow landscape depressions as part of the SUDs strategy will bring forward alternative and diverse habitats, and a 10% net biodiversity gain has been targeted through the proposals.

D. Surface water run-off Constraints.

New developments are required to accommodate surface water run-off from storms that may occur on a 1:100 year incidence - with assumptions needing to be made for climate change - which may see an increase in rainfall of some 30%.

Proposals will need to be incorporated that will allow for the disposal of the surface water via a combination of soakaways and linked ponds/attenuation features. Not only will these accommodate the surface water run-off but will be an opportunity for the provision of alternative habitats for the wildlife. These will be part of a Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SUDs) system.

E. Access Constraints.

The principle highways constraint is the need to provide safe access to the site for both pedestrians and vehicles. In this instance there are currently two access points to the site - firstly the main golf club car park entrance, with a second - slightly to the north which is in the form of an alternative emergency route.

The same approach will be used in the development proposal, with improved geometry and carriageway construction.

The access strategy is not just limited to the entrance, but involves various footpath and cycle routes that will encourage connectivity throughout any proposals and will also see connections being made to the wider area.





2.03 LOCAL CHARACTER STUDY

There are a variety of development styles in the area that surrounds the site.

Below is a montage of images that illustrate this variation.



CHARACTER STUDIES



CHARACTER STUDIES

DEVELOPING RATIONALE & MASTERPLAN

3.00 DEVELOPING RATIONALE AND MASTERPLAN

The approach to the development of the Indicative Layout that accompanies this submission has been guided by the following principles that have been identified by various bodies as providing advice on identifying the characteristics of well-designed spaces.

The list suggests that proposals should include the following:

1. Incorporate, where possible, a mix of uses and activities.
2. The location of the development should be fit for purpose to accommodate the proposed uses.
3. Ease of movement/access to the site and within it is important.
4. Provision within a development of practical areas of publically accessible open space - that are also safe for users.
5. Where appropriate create a place that can be adapted.
6. Be efficient in both land and resource use.
7. Appealing appearance.
8. Create a development that has a distinctive and positive identity through the forming of a legible sense of place.

These characteristic guidelines sit alongside the CABE analysis of the Design Solution - which lists the following as aspects to be considered:

Use and Amount
Layout
Scale
Appearance
Landscaping
Access

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.

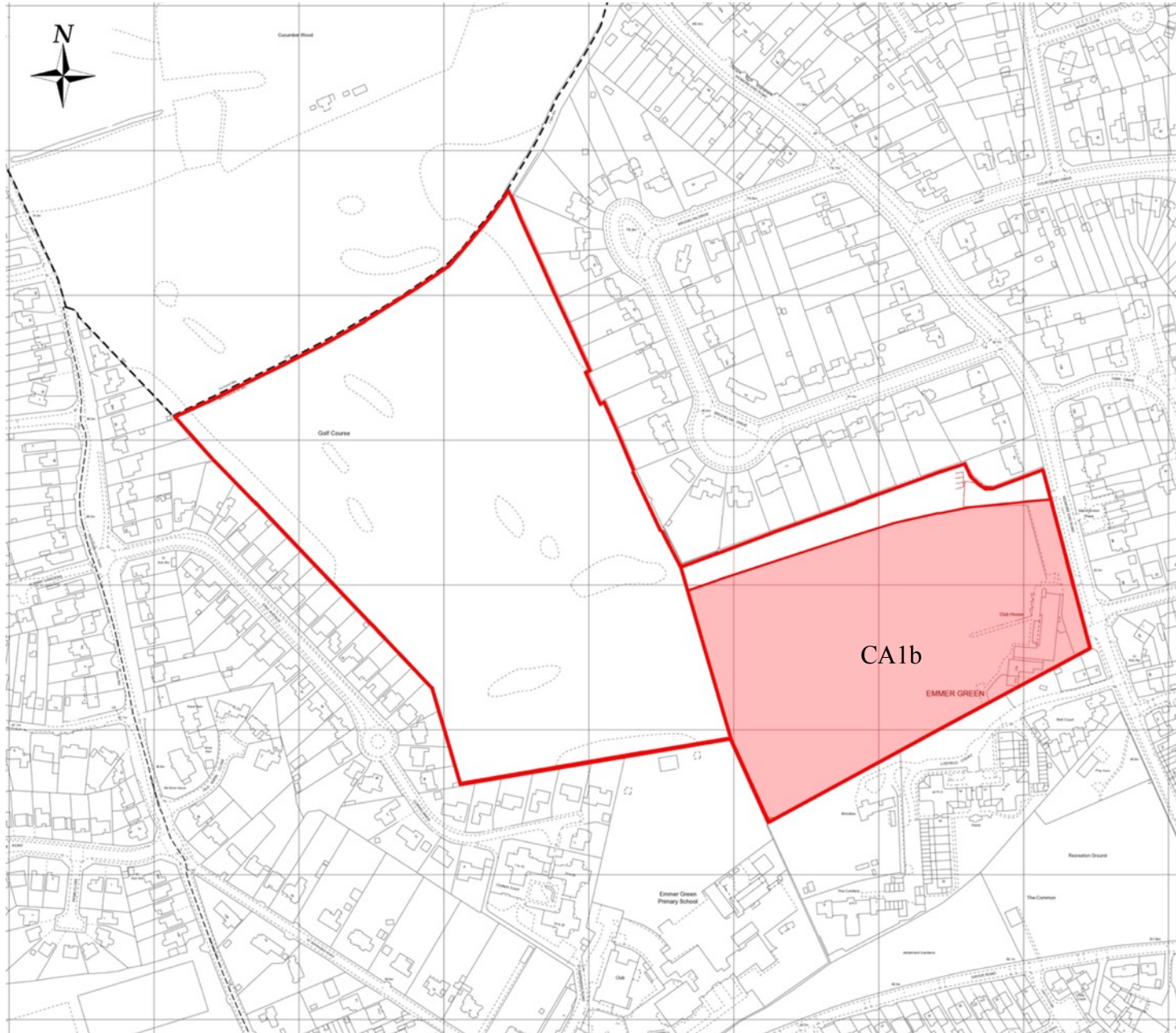
As close to 1/3rd of the available land within the application site is already deemed suitable for residential use, and the balance is bounded on several sides by existing residential use, it seems wholly reasonable to propose much needed housing on the balance of the land within Reading Borough Council's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

Turning to the amount of development proposed. The submitted package of information includes an Indicative Layout that shows how up to 260 new homes could be created on the site, as well as a circa 850 sq. m. health facility.

The total site area is circa 12.15 hectares (circa 30.05 acres) - which would suggest a density of 21.3 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 Indicative Layout that accompanies this submission is supplied to demonstrate how a scheme of up to 260 new homes and a healthcare facility can be accommodated on the site. Whilst a Reserved Matters submission will be able to determine the layout and siting of the proposed units, and the preferred mix, the Indicative 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 located 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 less usable islands of landscaping buffering.
5. The Panel were not convinced that the 'tree-like' form and pattern of development proposed reflected 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 Indicative Layout has been adapted to reflect 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 850 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 Indicative 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.

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 Secured by Design guidance.



SITE LAYOUT

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 Stantec.

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 to serve the healthcare facility, whilst providing for emergency access to the residential scheme. 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 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 Indicative Layout proposals.

This is clearly shown in the 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 Indicative 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 sites front boundary - hence being able to acceptably accommodate this form.

3.06 APPEARANCE

Matters relating to appearance, fenestration and material choices will be part of a 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.