

# Vision Framework

November 2017

# Featherstone

prepared on behalf of David Wilson Homes



## CONTENTS

1 Introduction	03
2 The potential	04
3 The place	07
4 The proposition	16
5 Key conclusions	31

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This document explores the development potential of land to the west and north west of Featherstone, South Staffordshire.

It provides information with regard to the deliverability of the sites for residential development, in particular the deliverability of site 397 which has been selected as the 'preferred option' for land to be safeguarded for future development needs at Featherstone.

The aim of the document is to articulate how development to the west and north west of the existing settlement represents an opportunity for positive and beneficial growth.

David Wilson Homes has significant land interest that can facilitate delivery of residential development in the right location for Featherstone, its communities and South Staffordshire Council.

## **Spatial framework**

The document illustrates an indicative spatial framework plan which could form the foundation to future development proposals. The framework plan provided is for illustrative purposes only and demonstrates just one option of how the site could be developed, albeit the framework is based on a detailed analysis and understanding of site constraints.

This has been prepared at the early stages of development concept, and as such sets out a preliminary and high level framework that will need to be refined going forward.

Whilst the spatial framework presented here has been generated in response to both strategic and site-specific considerations and observations, we accept that detailed appreciation of constraints and their potential effect on development envelope will need further appraisal, to guide the detailed layout of any development on the site.

Notwithstanding, the document and the proposition it illustrates have been prepared with a diligence and robustness which provides plan-makers with the confidence that development in this location is a credible and compelling opportunity.

## **Scope**

This document articulates:

- The potential - broad summary of strategic policy drivers
- The place - an appreciation of context and constraints
- The proposition - the spatial and placemaking opportunities presented by the site.

The South Staffordshire Core Strategy sets out the spatial planning strategy for the District to 2028. It establishes a long term vision, objectives and planning policies to steer and shape development as well as defining where development should be located.

Within the preferred options site allocations document, South Staffordshire Council has identified that an early review of the Local Plan is required to address the housing shortfall in the Housing Market Area. This is likely to take place by 2022.

Featherstone is located in Locality Area 3 (North Eastern Area) and the opportunity sites being promoted by DWH are located to the west of the settlement of Featherstone. Featherstone is identified as a Local Service Village. The Vision for Featherstone and the locality area, as set out in the Core Strategy is:

**“The local communities within the north eastern area of the District have seen considerable development and change over the last 30 years, and mineral working and other activities have left a degraded landscape in parts of the locality. The period up to 2028 will be a time of consolidation with the emphasis on improving the environment and much reduced levels of development.**

The villages of Essington and Featherstone will have experienced limited growth which will have contributed to meeting their local needs and to support existing facilities and services. Affordable housing and proposals to provide extra care housing within these communities will have been delivered with partners. In Featherstone, practical projects to improve the environment will have reshaped the village and helped to develop a sense of place and community pride. New open space and recreation facilities including playing pitches to serve the community will have been delivered through new development.

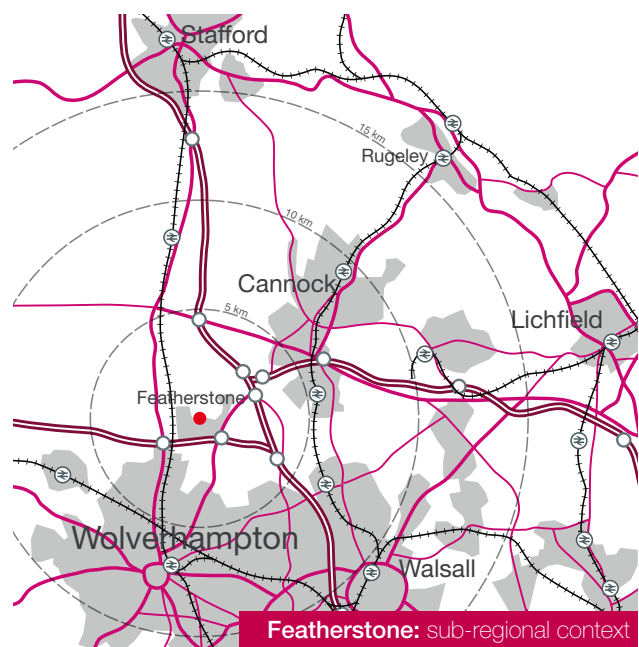
The wider historic environment within the locality area, including the historic parkland at Hilton Park and the archaeological resource will have been maintained and progress will have been made on reducing the number of buildings identified as being at risk.

Within the locality area, identified needs for indoor and outdoor sport and recreation and improved community access to existing sports facilities will be addressed in partnership with key organisation. This includes improving the quality of existing facilities and delivering high quality new facilities.

The redevelopment and regeneration of brownfield land at the Royal Ordnance Factory for employment use will have transformed the character and appearance of the area and bring further job opportunities.

Within the locality area, development in the Green Belt will have been managed in order to maintain the separation and distinctiveness of villages, with protection for the environment and appropriate countryside uses, including support for farm diversification schemes. Schemes to improve the character and quality of the landscape in the area will have been delivered through the Forest of Mercia and new development.












The existing natural assets within the locality area including wildlife habitats and ecological networks will continue to be protected and enhanced. Proposals to enhance biodiversity and green infrastructure links will have been delivered within the support of key partners.”

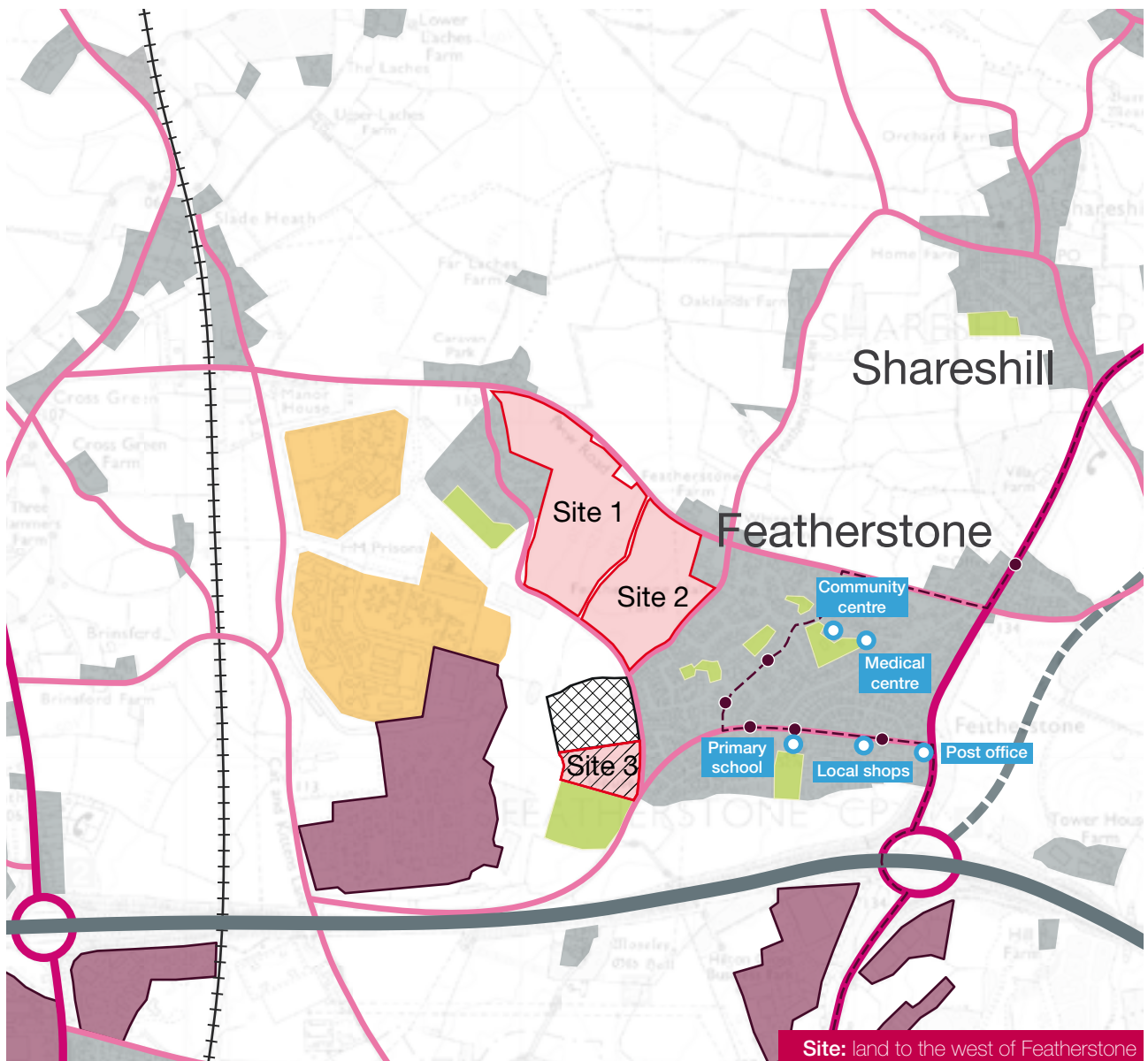


Core Policy 6: 'Housing Delivery' of the Core Strategy requires 226 dwellings to be delivered in Locality Area 3, of which 40 dwellings are allocated to Featherstone. Policy GB2: 'Land Safeguarded for Longer Term Needs' of the Core Strategy seeks to ensure that safeguarded land is identified through the Site Allocations Document Issues and Options Document (SAD) for housing development for the next plan period. The SAD requires land to be safeguarded for a further 34 dwellings for future housing needs during the period 2028 to 2038.

The Local Plan Review may require additional sites to be identified for residential development in Featherstone over a shorter time period.

David Wilson Homes, has previously submitted representations to the Site Allocations Document (Issues and Options and Preferred Options consultation) to highlight the suitability of their sites for residential development. This Promotion Document is submitted to provide South Staffordshire Council with further information in order to confirm that the sites are deliverable.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
|  Site 396 - Opportunity sites                  |  Bus routes       |
|  Site 397 - Preferred land for safeguarding    |  Bus stops        |
|  Site 168 - 'preferred option' for development |  Recreation space |
|  Key routes                                    |  Employment use   |
|  Other routes                                  |  Prison           |
|   |  Local facilities |





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FEATHERSTONE

Future development of the scale and nature proposed at Featherstone must be based on a sound appreciation of context.

Good planning and good design is about shaping development in response to the constraints and opportunities evident in the wider and immediate locality.

Featherstone is a small village north of Wolverhampton. Until around the 1950s it comprised only a few scattered farms set in open agricultural land. From the mid-1900s, formally planned residential developments took shape along The Avenue and Hilton Road, gradually spreading west and north west.

Today, Featherstone is largely contained physically and visually by the M54 motorway to the south; HM Prison Featherstone and a small area of residential development to the west; and by the A460 to the east.

New development here on any scale needs to be respectful and responsive to its context, aware of the need to maximise use of development land but protecting the special character of the surroundings.



**Top right: farm building on the edge of the village**

**Right: modern housing on the western edge of the village**



# Key features and characteristics

## Movement network


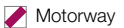
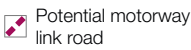
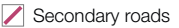
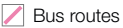


New Road is the main distributor road serving Featherstone, running north of the Featherstone residential area. It connects to the A460 to the east with the A449 at Cross Green to the west. East Road connects New Road at Brinsford with Cat and Kittens Lane via Brookhouse Lane (which continues the route south of site 3). From Cat and Kittens Lane, the A449 and the northern outskirts of Wolverhampton at Bushbury can be reached.

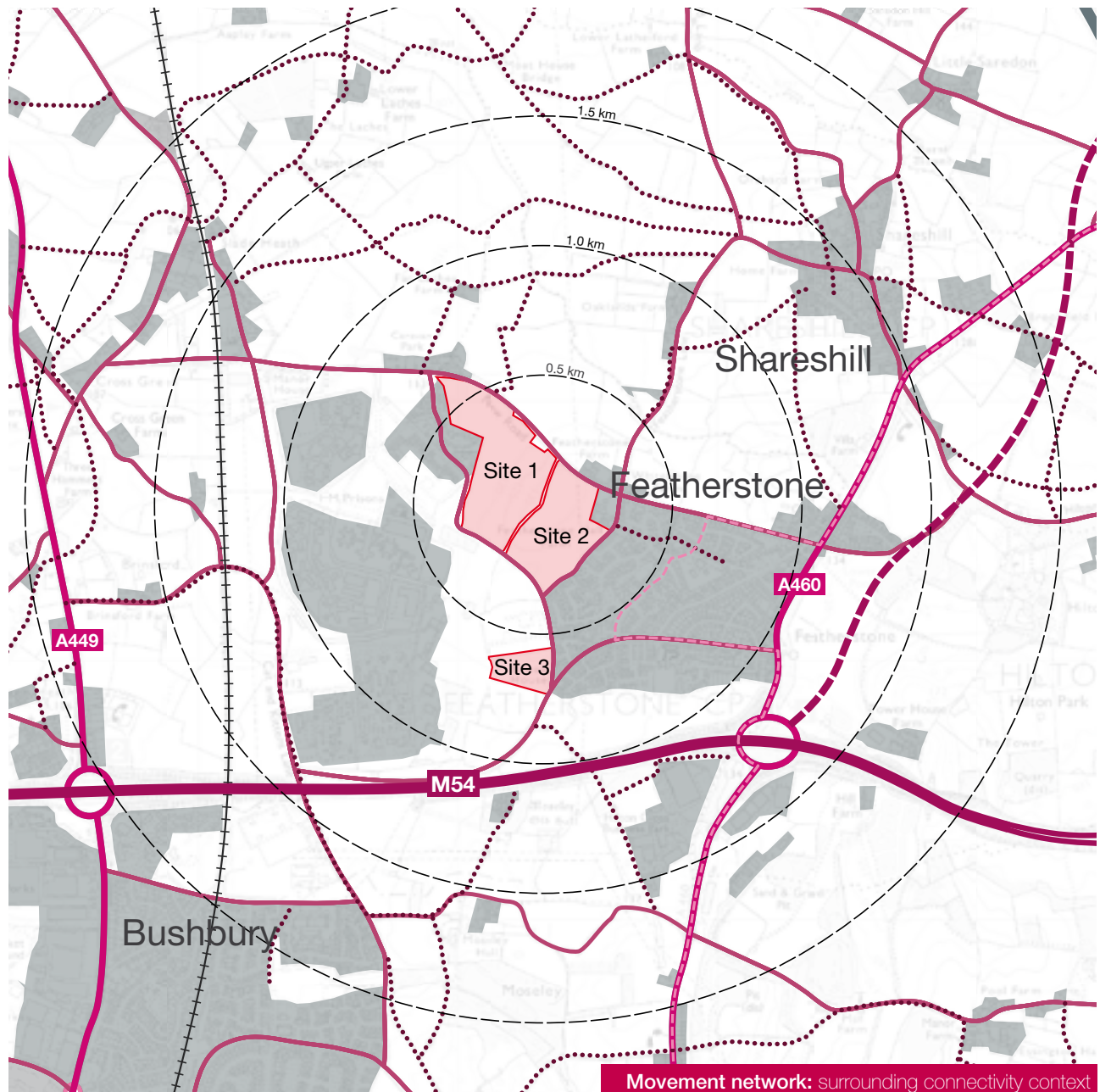
The A449 is a strategic highway and dual carriageway that runs in an approximately north-south direction to the east and west of Featherstone respectively, and links Wolverhampton with Stafford. This route connects with the motorway network at M54 junction 2.

The A460 is a strategic route that connects Wolverhampton with Cannock and Rugeley. It also provides access to the motorway network at M54 junction 1, M6 junction 11 and M6 Toll junction T8.

Proposals for a M54 to M6/M6 Toll link road are currently under consultation. A potential route for this road is to the immediate west of Featherstone.

Featherstone is served by two bus routes with regular weekday services to Brinsford, Wolverhampton, Cannock and other local destinations.

-  Main roads
-  Motorway
-  Potential motorway link road
-  Secondary roads
-  Bus routes
-  Public right of way
-  Railway



**Movement network: surrounding connectivity context**












## Facilities and services

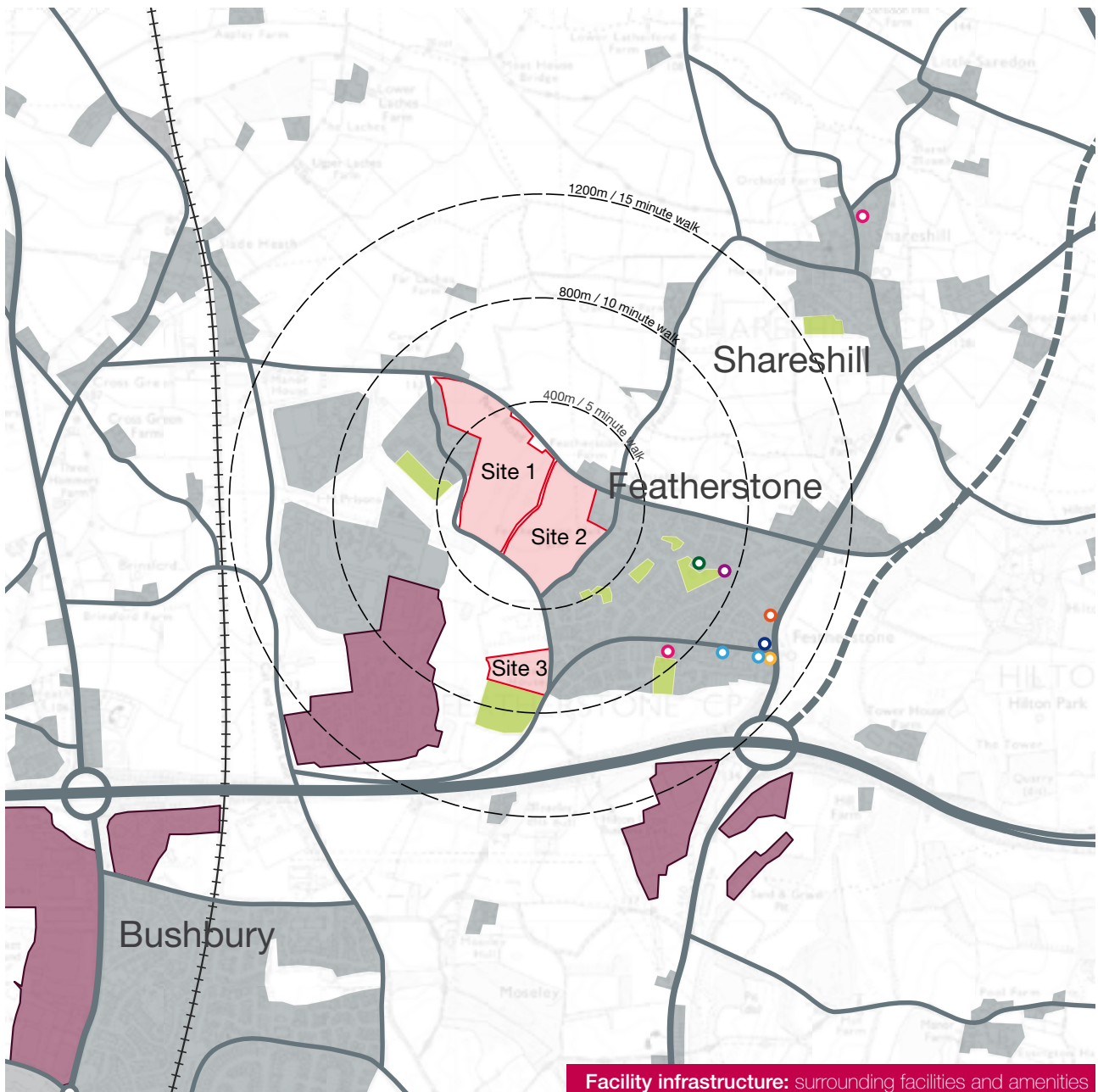
There are several local facilities and services within a short distance of the sites. These include two primary schools (one at Featherstone; the other at Shareshill); a nursery; a health centre; a community centre; a post office; a petrol filling station; local shops; and business parks / employment uses, including the HM Prisons complex west of the sites.

There are also several areas of recreational space within the vicinity of the sites.

There are opportunities for additional facilities to be provided on site 396 to increase accessibility to services.

The ROF employment site has been identified as potentially being suitable for expansion subject to a suitable access solution.

-  School
-  Medical centre
-  Community centre
-  Post office
-  Local shops
-  Public house
-  Church
-  Employment areas
-  Recreational green space



## Green infrastructure and landscape

The general topography of the surrounding area is gently undulating, with land rising more distinctly towards the east/south east of Featherstone at Hilton Park. This area, east of the A460, is designated as a historic landscape area and is characterised by areas of woodland, including areas of ancient woodland at Keeper's Wood and bodies of water. There are no other landscape designations within a c. 5km radius of from the site.

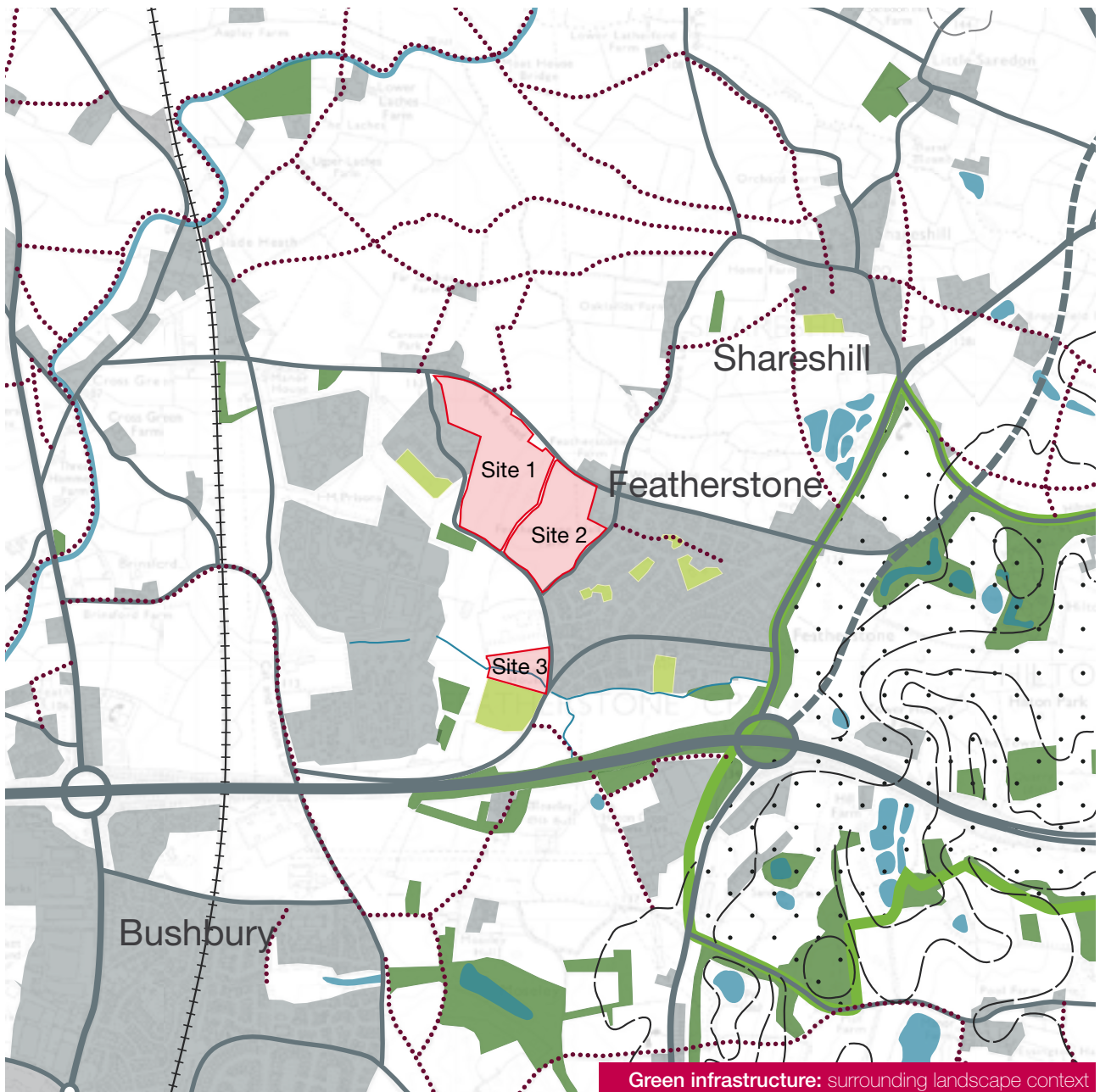
The Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal lies approximately 1 km to the north west of Site 2. Featherstone Brook, a narrow watercourse, flows east to west through Site 3.

Numerous public rights of way cross open land to the north of Featherstone, providing long views towards the settlement.

There are several listed buildings within the surrounding area, the nearest to the site being Featherstone Farmhouse, located immediately north of the site along New Road.

Featherstone has pockets of recreational green space throughout the village, including to the immediate south of Site 3.

- Recreational green space
- Woodland
- Historic landscape area
- River / body of water
- Public right of way

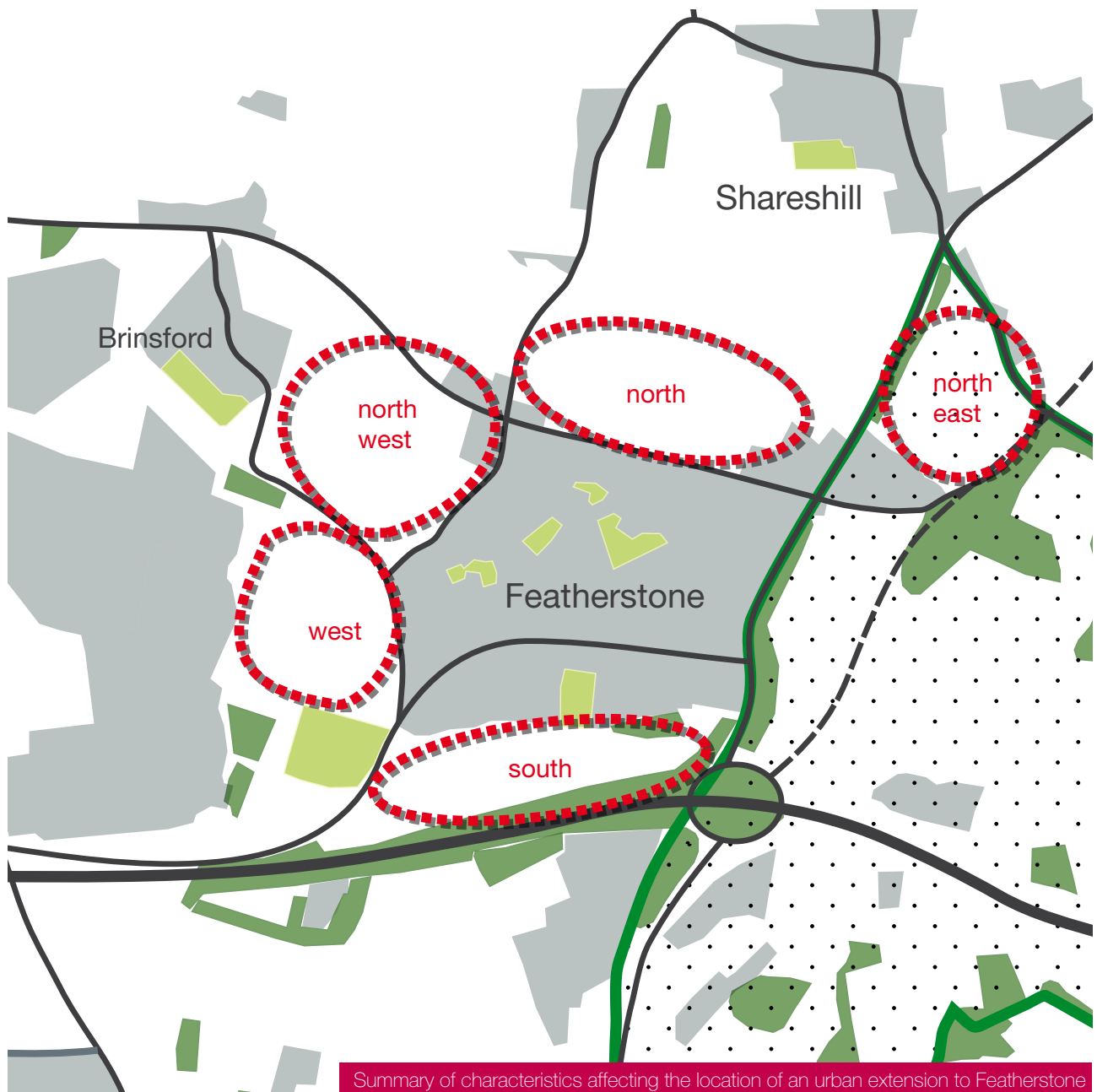




## Accommodating growth - spatial challenges

The identified need for growth confirms that land beyond the established urban area will need to be released for development.

The mapping of key features and characteristics reveals a number of challenges to be addressed in determining where growth could be feasible and/or beneficial to the village.



## Areas not suitable for growth

### North

- This area is characterised by agricultural landscape mainly used for grazing and keeping horses. The area to the north of Featherstone is defined by New Road to the south; the northern extents of this area have no defensible boundaries to the wider countryside. As such, the lack of defensible boundaries means this land would not test well against the purposes of the Green Belt as set out in paragraph 80 of the NPPF.
- The area makes a valuable contribution to the Green Belt to the north of Featherstone. The rolling terrain and flora are an attractive addition to the area and the most interesting in the locality. The form is reminiscent of parkland landscape which differs from other sites due to the more varied morphology and range of tree species. The pattern of vegetation is random but includes a good range of plant density which is replicated further northward in the local landscape pattern.

### North east

- This area is located between the north eastern edge of Featherstone; Cannock Road; Dark Lane; and Hilton Lane.
- The site is separated from the other locations by Cannock Road and is influenced by the busy A460 Cannock Road. The open arable field contrasts with the large boundary vegetation, typical of the Hilton Hall estate landscape which it abuts. The area is an important element of the Green Belt due to its maturity, scale and character.
- The site appears relatively disjointed from the existing settlement and would likely lead to coalescence with the adjacent settlement of Shareshill. The site is therefore unlikely to be considered favourable for removal from the Green Belt
- The site is also located within a Historic Landscape Area.

### South

- This area is contained by the existing residential area of Featherstone to the north and the M54 motorway to the south. A strip of woodland (Whitegreaves Wood) creates a buffer between this parcel of land and the motorway.
- Development would close the open green buffer running parallel with the motorway. This is not only a spatial asset but also a valuable wildlife corridor and refuge which runs continually from Coven Heath to the M6. The southern edge of Featherstone is well defined by the mature hedgerow and vegetation which is typical of field pattern in the area.
- A water course follows the line of the northern boundary hedge and is a valuable habitat and wildlife conduit. Development in this area would be visually more prominent from the motorway. Extending the built form towards the motorway compromises a valuable Green Buffer.

## Areas suitable for growth

### North west

- The land comprises two large fields separated by Rabbit Lane. The scale and shape of the field are in keeping with the local field pattern. Although within the Green Belt, the site is used for arable crops with permanent vegetation confined to the boundaries. When not growing crops the land is in fallow, and is therefore a visually transient element of the Green Belt.
- The form of the land is continual slope to a high point and down again which differs from the more typical rolling terrain of the land on the north side of New Road.
- Developing the entirety of this site could result in coalescence with the adjoining settlement of Brinsford. However, if development is limited to the lower parts of the site and higher ground retained as open space, then this will create a natural 'green wedge' through the site, and development limited to the existing urban edges of Featherstone and Brinsford.

### West

- The site alone does not relate well to the existing settlement of Featherstone, however were Sites 168 and 397 brought forward for development together, this could be a suitable option for growth.



# The proposition

This section focuses on our vision for a responsive and sustainable residential environment at land west and north west of Featherstone

It is clear that potential locations for growth to the north, north east and south have inherent constraints which may be difficult to address satisfactorily and indeed have the potential to affect the deliverability of development.

Whilst land to the north west / west will need a sensitive development / design response, unlike other locations it does not have fundamental constraints that would be difficult to deliver and/or require significant mitigation.

Our proposition is therefore that land to the north west and west of Featherstone would provide the foundation for responsive and sustainable development – development that fits with the spatial characteristics of the settlement, respects key constraints and maximises opportunities for good quality and distinctive new homes.

Development here would be accessible to key locations and assets within the village and within the wider area. It could provide high quality new homes meeting a range of needs integrated with accessible, connected and valuable green infrastructure. Sites 1 and 3 provide opportunities for the provision of additional services due to their scale.

## Connected



The village is of a walkable scale, which enhances the accessibility of the site and in turn would help to support a range of different housing products and markets.

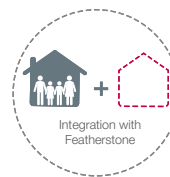


The natural character of the setting added to good local and sub-regional connectivity would enhance the potential for very high quality design and commitment to quality of place.

## Views and green corridors



New development could help create strong, valuable and functional green space assets as part of the wider green infrastructure network, and responding positively to sensitive views into the site from the surrounding area.



New development could deliver a range of built environment characters that respond to each of the site's particular edge conditions, integrating with both town and countryside.

## Transition from urban to rural environments



As an edge of settlement site the character of new development could offer the best of both urban and rural environments, including strong green infrastructure, mature landscape elements and flexible plots.



Site layout should maximise opportunities to integrate strong, legible and convenient routes that promote walking and cycling, including to/from adjacent urban and rural environments.



## Site principles

Sites 1 and 2 (land off New Road) extend to 15.36 and 10.21 hectares respectively and both lie to the south of New Road. They are separated by Rabbit Lane, an unclassified public highway. Site 3 (land off East Road), which extends to 3.05 hectares, lies to the west of East Road, some 200m to the south of Site 2. All three sites are undeveloped and are currently used for agriculture. Site 3 has been identified as the 'preferred option' for land to be safeguarded for future development of the preferred options SAD.

Whilst the prospect of development extending to the west of Featherstone brings clear opportunities, a sensitive approach to site design will be critical to its success. The quality of the surroundings demands the right built environment - the right quality of place.

A number of spatial principles begin to emerge from analysis of constraints and opportunities. These are presented here as an early response to site opportunities and characteristics, and could be developed in further detail going forward.



Aerial photograph showing location of sites

# 1. Topography and views

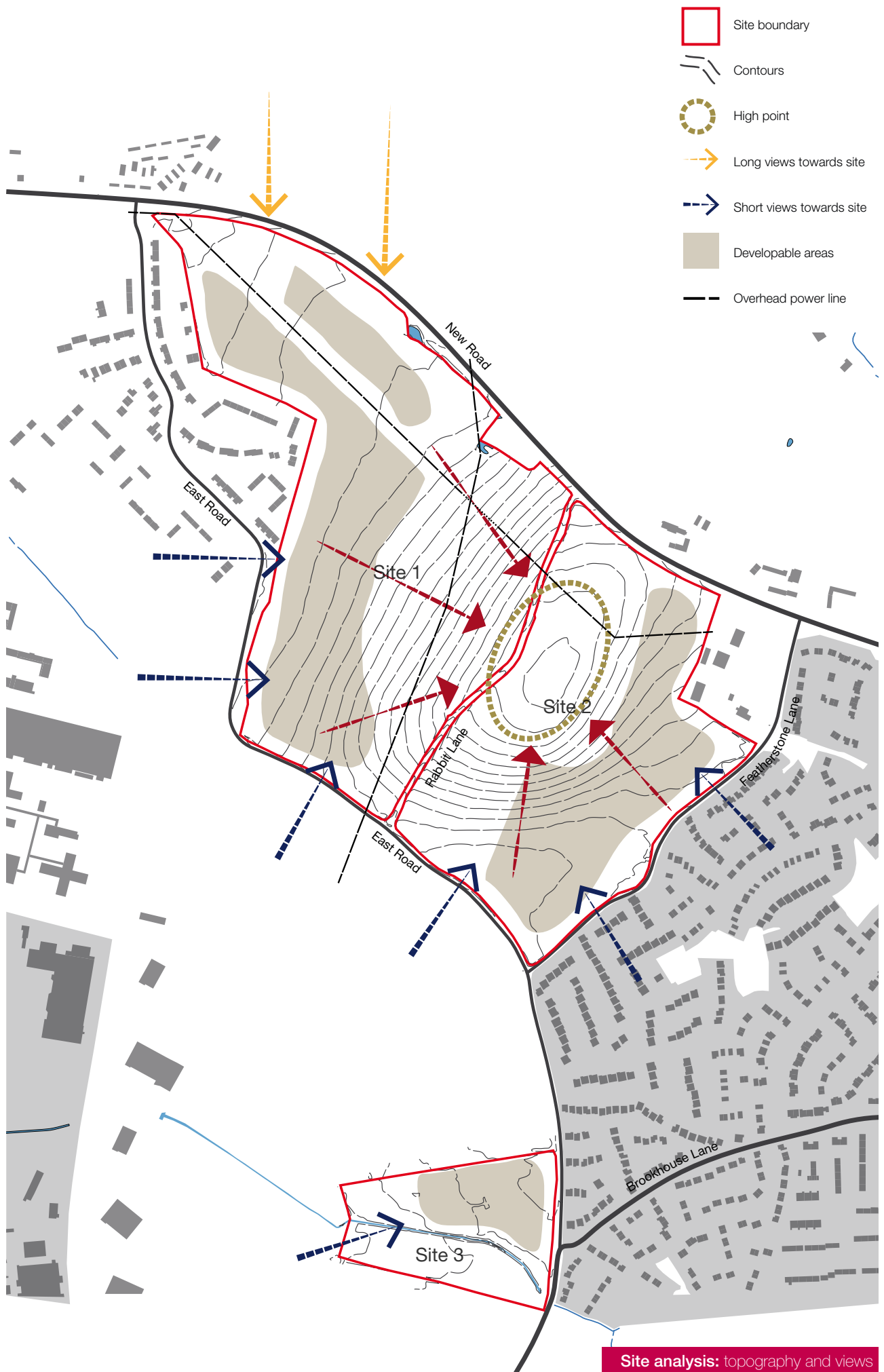
## Key observations

- The land off New Road (Site 1 and 2) has a distinct topography, with a high point of 134m AOD close to the centre of the site, just on the eastern side of Rabbit Lane. The land falls steeply to the west, east and south, before becoming a gentler slope to the southern and north western site edges, falling to around 114m and 121m respectively. Views into the site are mainly from adjacent roads and some residences. Most distant views are from public footpaths to the north. Views from the east are restricted by the residential areas of Featherstone. The proximity of the M54 limits views from the south as do the prison buildings to the west.
- Land off East Road (Site 3) is also visually enclosed by the prison to the east; motorway to the south; and residential development to the east. The site is lower and flatter than land off New Road, with a gentle slope downwards from north east to south west. The watercourse, which traverses the site from the south eastern corner to midway along the western boundary, features small embankments on either side.
- Most views into Site 3 are confined to the immediate periphery of the site, mainly from access roads and residences. Views into the site are generally contained by mature trees and hedgerows along its boundaries and along Featherstone Brook. There are gaps in the vegetation along the western boundary and along the western part of the brook, allowing glimpsed views into the site from the west.

## Response

- The location and form of new development should be sensitive to topographic characteristics, with careful management of view corridors in terms of the potential impacts of building / roof profiles and the location of screen planting to filter views towards the development.
- The higher part of Sites 1 and 2 should be left free of development and managed as public open space.
- Any flood attenuation should be located in the lowest part of the site, in the north western corner.





## 2. Landscape structure

### Key observations

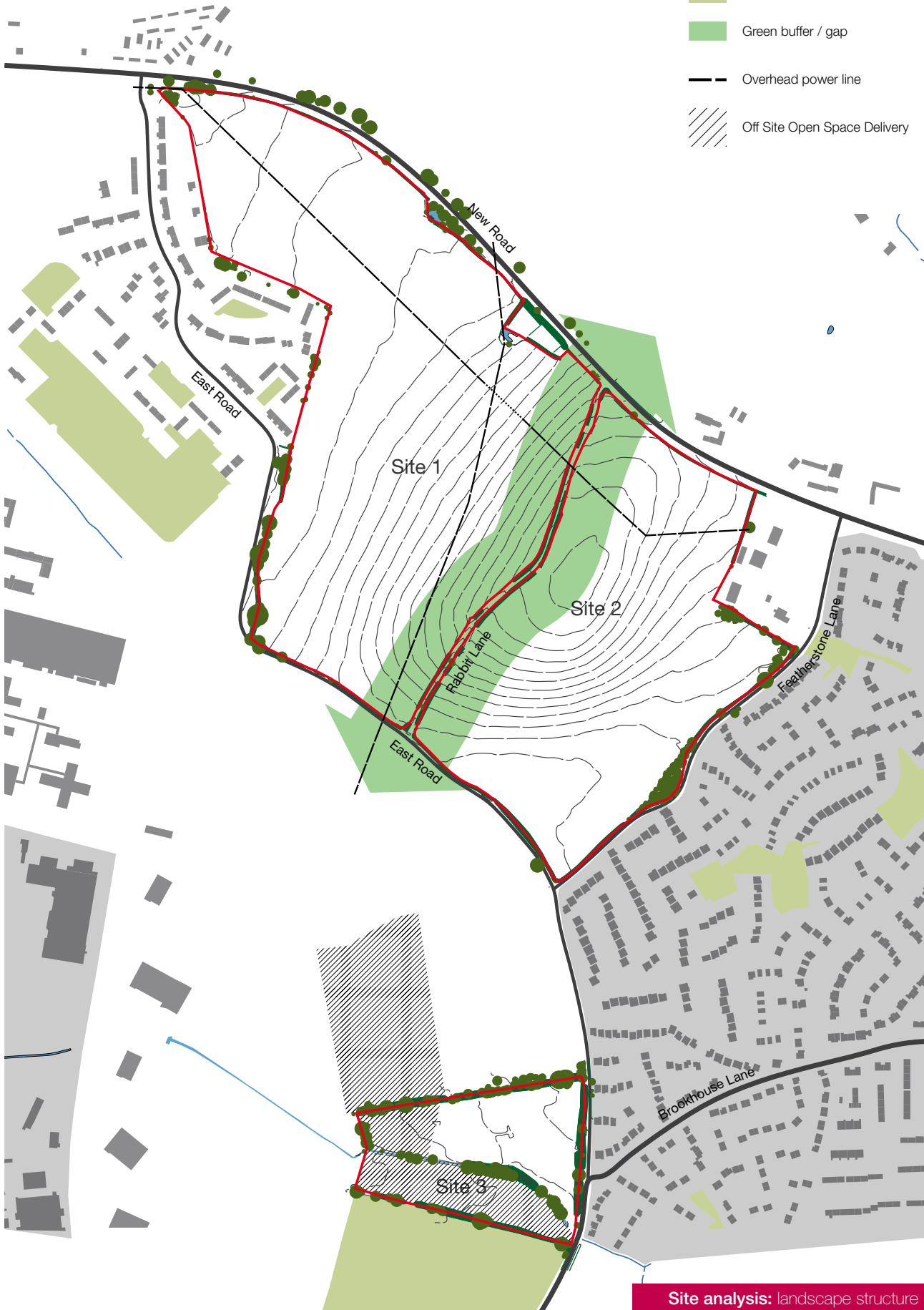
- Mature trees and hedgerows are confined to site boundaries within land off New Road. Hedgerows are generally well maintained and established. There are some large gaps, particularly along the north west section of East Road and Featherstone Lane. The hedgerow along New Road is in good condition and well maintained.
- The Spinney, a small area of woodland towards the eastern boundary with Featherstone Lane, comprises a range of tree and shrub species considered to be of ecological value and a buffer with the adjacent residential area.
- Land off East Road (Site 3) contains mature trees and hedgerows of varying condition along its boundaries. Featherstone Brook divides the site into two sections and is lined with a number of mature and semi-mature tree species.
- Part of Site 3 identified as Off Site Open Space Delivery in the SAD.

### Response

- Gaps in hedgerows to be supplemented with additional planting. Hedgerows to be retained and maintained where possible.
- Provide a green buffer with additional planting around the site between site boundaries and new development.
- Retain and enhance the watercourse as a surface feature.
- Create a definitive gap between development on Site 1 and Site 2 to avoid coalescence between the two settlements.
- Provide connections to area identified as Off Site Open Space Delivery in Site 3.



- Site boundary
- Existing trees and hedgerows
- Existing green spaces
- Green buffer / gap
- Overhead power line
- Off Site Open Space Delivery



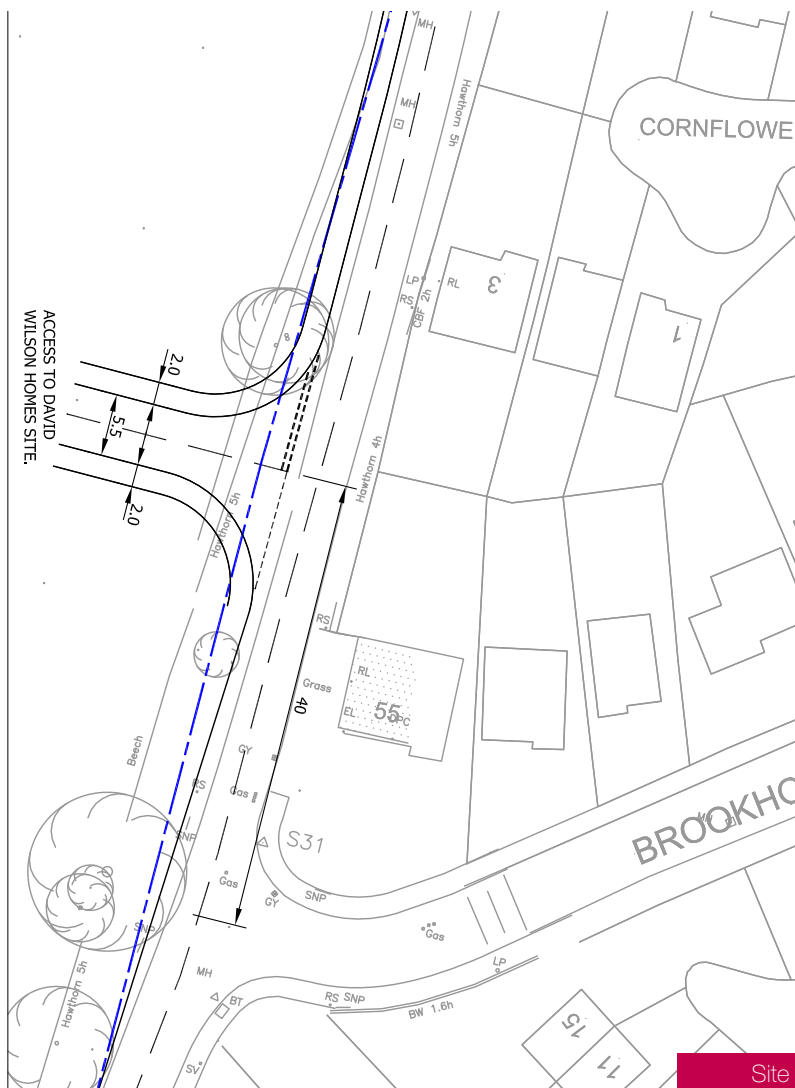
### 3. Access and movement

#### Key observations





- Featherstone Lane is a single track road that links New Road with East Road to the west of the existing Featherstone residential area.
- Rabbit Lane is a narrow unpaved track which runs between Site 1 and Site 2, connecting New Road to the north with East Road to the south. Though it is classified as public highway, it is unsuitable for vehicles in its current form, although it could be upgraded.
- Land off New Road has highway frontages to New Road, Rabbit Lane and East Road. Featherstone Lane is a single track road and is unsuitable to serve additional development.
- Site 3 has highway frontage to East Road.

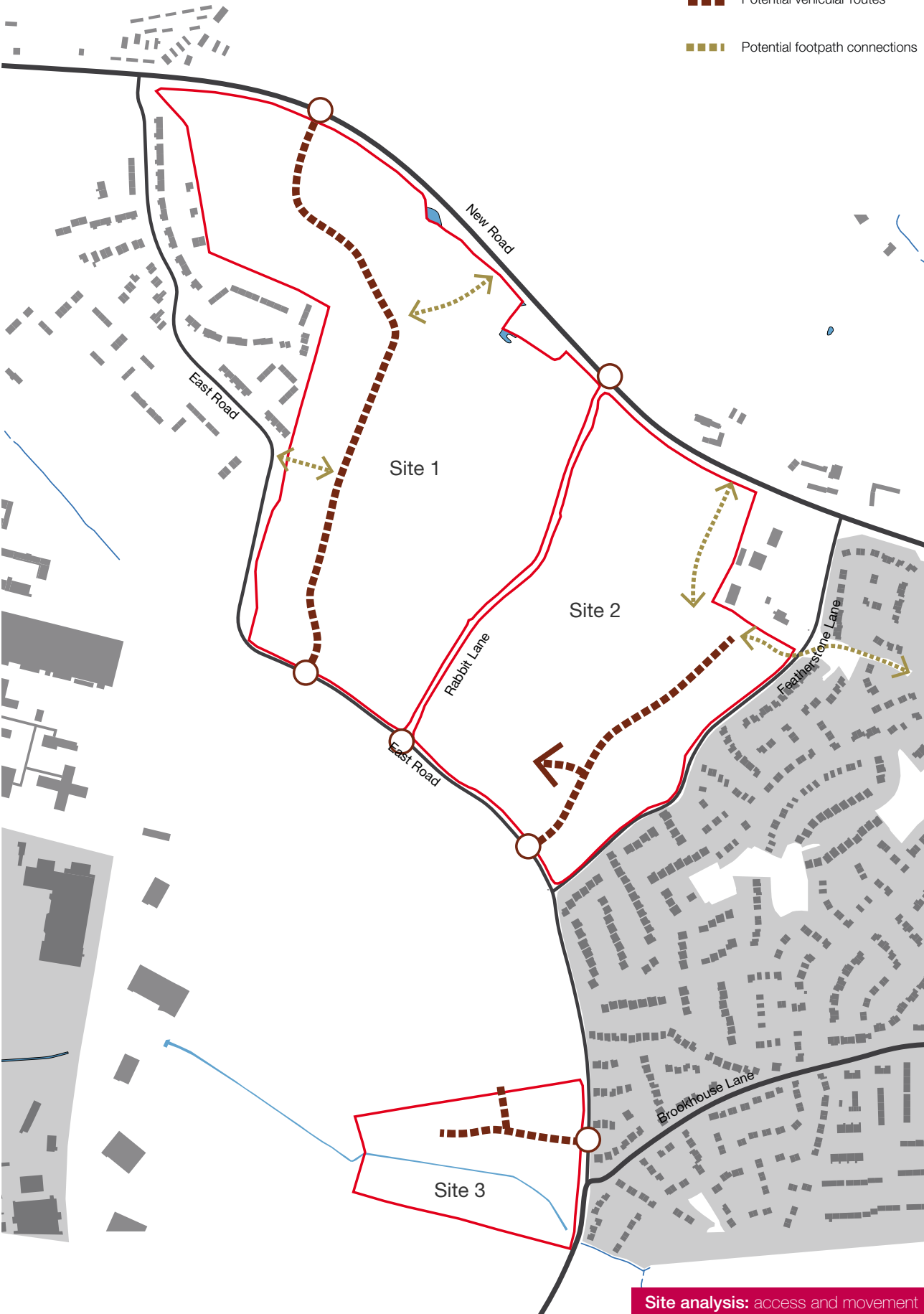
#### Response

- It is considered that access to Site 2 from East Road - with appropriate widening – should be considered.
- It is considered that both New Road and East Road could provide access into Site 1, subject to appropriate phasing. The provision of access from New Road will allow a significant proportion of Site 1 to be served from this point, reducing the need for development traffic to pass through Brinsford village.
- It is envisaged that access to Site 3 would be provided from a new simple priority junction with East Road, approximately 40m north of the junction with Brookhouse Lane. The proposed access strategy (below) demonstrates that Site 3 is accessible and that a suitable and safe access can be accommodated, including sufficient visibility splays. The proposed access point would not prejudice or be unsuitable in combination with any separate access point required for the Brinsford Lodge site to the north, which is proposed for allocation for residential development in the Site Allocations Document.



Site 2 proposed access strategy

-  Site boundary
-  Potential vehicular access points
-  Potential vehicular routes
-  Potential footpath connections



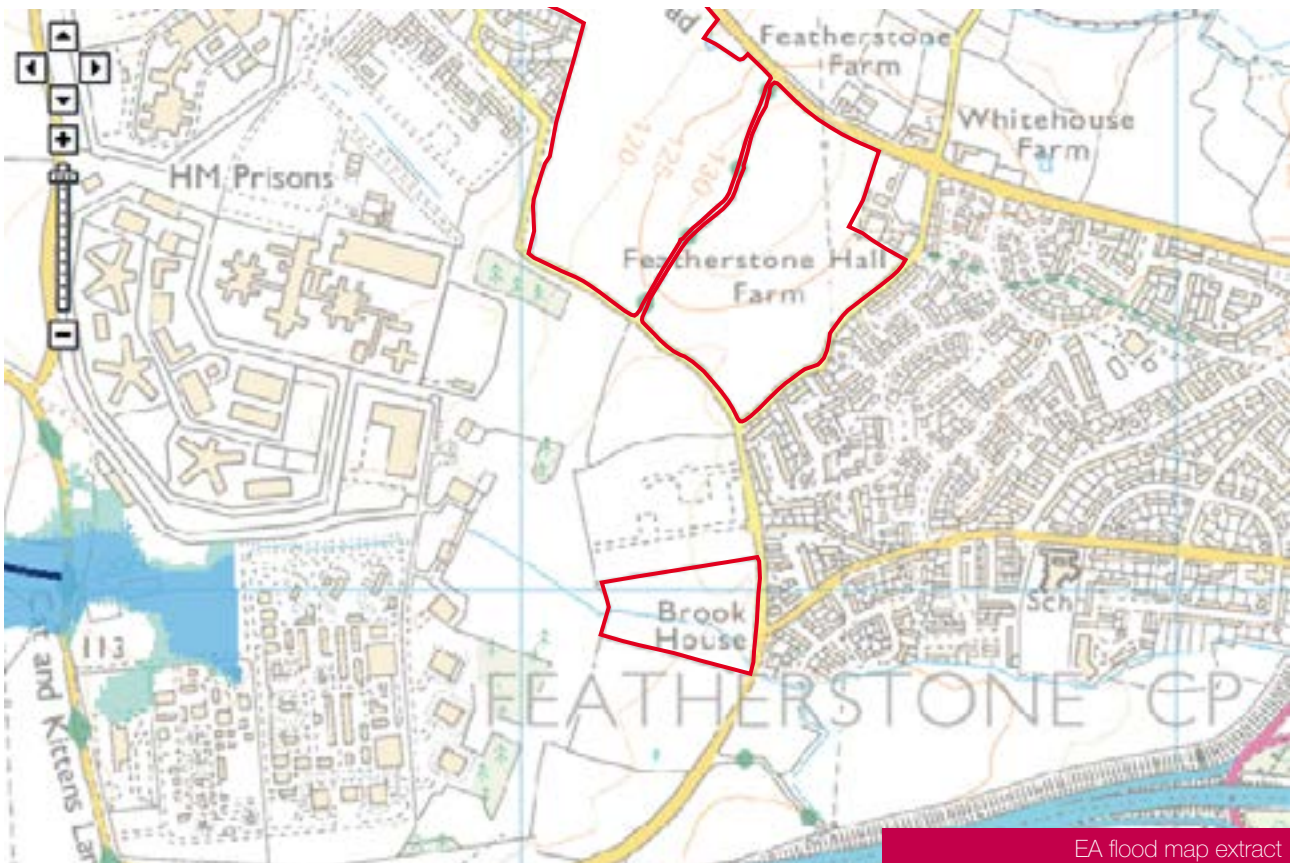
## 4. Flood risk

### Key observations

- The Featherstone Brook is a minor watercourse which runs through the southern part of Site 3 flowing east to west.
- The EA Flood Map (extract shown below) demonstrates that Sites 1, 2 and 3 are in Flood Zone 1. Land identified as being located within Flood Zone 1 is considered to be sequentially preferable and not subject to passing the requirements of the Sequential Test.
- Review of other sources of flood risk identifies that only surface water flood risk presents a potential risk on Site 3, restricted to land to the south of the Featherstone Brook.
- Anecdotal evidence suggests that the Featherstone Brook is not prone to flooding.

### Response

- Built development on Site 3 is proposed only to the north of Featherstone Brook in order that there is limited interference with the existing watercourse.
- A minimum 8m easement has been incorporated between any proposed built development and the Featherstone Brook in line with best practice guidance.
- Sites 1, 2 and 3 have sufficient Green Infrastructure space within which Sustainable Urban Drainage infrastructure could be incorporated if necessary as part of any future development.
- Further hydraulic modelling may be required in order to inform future development.







## Building a framework – key steps

The broader site principles can be applied to create a more specific spatial framework for the site.

We believe that the spatial structure can respond to key opportunities and drivers offered by the site and its context to create a responsive and sustainable place.

The diagrams here illustrate a series of draft spatial parameters which respond to the opportunities and principles set out earlier in this document.

### Maximise landscape assets



- Respond to the site's unique suburban and rural characteristics
- Utilise existing tree groups and hedgerows where possible
- Development on Sites 1 and 3 confined to lower parts of the site to allow substantial gaps between the two development areas and focus views towards areas of higher ground
- Help to limit the visual impact of new buildings seen in wider views across Sites 1 and 2
- Development on Site 3 confined to northern part to avoid crossing the watercourse
- Attenuation pond located towards the lower part of Site 1.

### Create a landscape structure



- Multifunctional green buffer / corridor incorporate ecological / biodiversity value and recreation value
- Central area of public open space to Sites 1 and 2 with green connections through development, to help frame views
- New public open space within the southern part of Site 3 and link to wider POS to the west
- Create a clear green wedge between Featherstone and Brinsford
- Additional planting to help soften and screen views from existing development
- Reinforced landscaping to west of proposed development in Site 3.

## Access and circulation



- Vehicular access points into the sites from New Road and East Road
- Finer grain linkages create a permeable and legible movement structure
- A clear street hierarchy to Sites 1 and 2 offers suitable vehicular access to all parts of the development, whilst promoting an attractive pedestrian and cycle environment
- A high level of pedestrian permeability with linked areas of public open space
- Road links within Sites 1 and 2 become progressively 'lower order' moving through the development towards the central open space / rural edge, helping to create subtle street spaces towards these edges.

## Opportunities for phased development



- A clear and logical sequence of development. Early phases to the south east of Site 2 are more closely connected with the existing urban area and enable access
- A transition in the grain of development, from medium grain and density towards the existing urban edge at Featherstone and Brinsford; to a low density / informal grain towards the central POS and rural edges
- Grain of plots maximising definition and overlooking of green space helping to improve natural surveillance and enhancing amenity value
- Site 3 relates well to site 168 which has been identified as the preferred option for allocation.

## The Framework

The key steps come together to create a layered but co-ordinated framework plan.

This provides a vision of comprehensive development, but one that is built up by carefully considered steps and could be delivered over a period of time through incremental phasing.

The developable areas and approximate yields of the sites, based on an overall average density of 30-35 dwellings per hectare, are as follows:

- Site 1 – 6.7 ha / 210 dwellings. The remainder of this site will be used as informal recreation space.
- Site 2 – 3.8 ha / 150 dwellings. The remainder of this site will be used as informal recreation space.
- Site 3 – 1-1.25 ha / 40 dwellings. The remainder of this site would be used as informal recreation space.

The diagram describes a development structure that could potentially deliver c. 400 dwellings.



### Site 1

This site provides an opportunity to meet longer term housing needs.

Structured landscaping along Rabbit Lane would preserve the gap between settlements in perpetuity so there would be no risk of coalescence

### Site 2

We envisage the capacity of the site as c. 150 dwellings.

There are also opportunities for the provision of additional services to serve existing and future residents.

### Site 3

Development within the north eastern corner with the remainder of the site retained as green space, to avoid impact on Featherstone Brook.

Potential to link site to the site to the north, to provide a comprehensive development in this part of the settlement.

New footpath links through the site from East Road.

Low risk of flooding.

Identified as preferred option of land to be safeguarded for future development.

- 1 Proposed vehicular access points
- 2 Perimeter green buffer / recreational route
- 3 Link to existing public footpath / connection to Featherstone residential area
- 4 View corridors retained towards higher ground
- 5 New informal public open space
- 6 Finer grain development parcels towards higher ground / northern edge
- 7 Approximate size and location of attenuation pond



- Site boundary
- Developable area
- Development parcels
- Informal public open space
- Perimeter / buffer space
- Site access roads
- Internal access roads
- Footpaths

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This document helps to articulate how development to the west and north west of Featherstone represents an opportunity for positive and beneficial growth. David Wilson Homes has land interests in this location that can facilitate its delivery.

The document has illustrated an indicative spatial framework plan which could form the foundation to future development proposals. This has been built up in response to appreciation of context, demonstrating a credible and compelling opportunity.

This can become the starting point to a process of refinement and detailing, based on further assessment of potential constraints and technical feasibility.

**For further information contact**

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