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1.0 introduction

Introduction

This report has been prepared on behalf of the landowners of the land at Bishops Green to the west of Ecchinswell Road and to the north of Featherbed Lane, referred to as site BGI in the Ecchinswell, Sydmonton and Bishops Green Neighbourhood Plan (ESBG).

The land is being considered for allocation in the ESBG and the purpose of this report is to provide information for the ESBG Steering Group (SG) to help inform the Regulation 16 consultation, examination and referendum, and explain how the site could be developed to meet the aspirations of the neighbourhood plan, be sympathetic to the setting and character of the village and be in conformity with Local Plan policies.

The report provides an analysis of the site and its setting to establish the key constraints that will need to be considered for any development proposals. The constraints have then been used to inform a development framework and a set of design principles for the site. Finally, a sketch layout illustrates how the site could be developed in line with the design principles and the neighbourhood plan policies. The sketch masterplan is not a fixed proposal. The detailed proposals for the scheme will be developed in consultation with the ESBG Steering Group and the community as part of the planning process that will follow after the Neighbourhood Plan is made.

The Ecchinswell, Sydmonton and Bishops Green Neighbourhood Plan

The land has been put forward following a Call for Sites by the SG and a formal site selection process. The SG is seeking to allocate a site for approximately 15 new homes to reflect the indicative housing requirement for Bishops Green issued by Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council (BDBC) to the SG and believes a development at this scale and in this location will be the more compatible and sympathetic option for the growth of the village. The scheme outlined in this report will help deliver the vision including a mix of dwellings to help meet the community's local needs, green space and sustainable travel improvements.

NPPF and the Local Plan

As well as being in compliance with the Neighbourhood Plan policies, the development of this site will also have to be in conformity with the latest version of the NPPF and BDBC development plan policies. The Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan 2011 – 2029 is the currently adopted Local Plan. The relevant policies likely to apply in bringing forward development in Bishops Green include policy CN1 Affordable Housing, CN3 Housing Mix for Market Housing, CN9 Transport, EM1 Landscape, EM4 Biodiversity/Nature Conservation, EM5 Green Infrastructure and EM10 Delivering High Quality Development. A Local Plan update is in the early stages of preparation but its policies remain at a formative stage.

2.0 context

Bishops Green (**fig. 1**) is a nucleated settlement on the western side of Ecchinswell Road with Bishops Green Farm being the only development on the eastern side. Ecchinswell Road has retained a rural character with embanked verges and hedging, and a lack of pavements lighting and signage, but there are areas where it passes through the settlement where there has been an urbanising effect caused by the building layout and design, frontage treatments and fences which has compromised the rural character.

Despite the proximity of Newbury and the business park development to the south of Greenham Common, the settlement sits within a rural setting characterised by a large number of wooded areas and woodland belts that define field boundaries, and watercourses running north to the River Enborne within the Kennet catchment. To the south the landscape character opens out into a patchwork of less contained larger arable fields.

The settlement has two main character areas: The older part on the eastern side is a collection of midC20 terraced housing blocks planned around Eagle Road and originally planned to serve Greenham Common military personnel when it was an active airbase; The newer part on the western side planned around a series of cul de sacs accessed off Ash road is a recent development of mixed housing linked flatted blocks and parking courts. A village centre located between the two areas provides the local amenities including a village hall, convenience store, children's playground and an open green space.

Although there are differences in character between these two areas in terms of their building heights, layout and density, both have a suburban character which is reinforced by the design and layout of the buildings, public realm, roads and parking.

The site is on the western side of Ecchinswell Road adjoining the southern settlement edge. Its development would form an extension to the existing settlement pattern although it will need to be sensitive to visual impacts on the landscape setting, particularly from the south and east, and on the impacts of the rural character of Ecchinswell Road and Featherbed Lane.

It is important that the development feels connected to, and a part of the village.



Fig. 1 the context

3.0 the site

The site (**fig. 2**) is a field of around 2.1 hectares on the corner of Ecchinswell Road and Featherbed Lane. The proposals are for the development of around 15 dwellings on the northern part of the field only with the southern part given over to landscape that will provide an open space amenity for the village, structural planting and the reinstatement of the existing hedgelines to screen the development and create a stronger more attractive settlement edge, and on-site biodiversity gains that will create new ecological network opportunities.

The site is relatively level, with a west to east slope down to Ecchinswell Road and a high point in the south western corner. It is rectangular, approximately 180m x 110m and on a north-south axis. This site is currently in agricultural use as paddock and pasture and is generally improved grassland with no landscape features.

Overhead electricity lines on poles cross into the site from the south approximately 35m from the south western corner to a transformer just beyond the site's north-eastern corner. A further set of poles along the highways verge to Ecchinswell Road carry telephone lines alongside and the site's eastern boundary.

The northern boundary (**fig. 3**) is defined by a fenceline to the new properties on the southern side of Rooksfield with the remnant of a tree belt on the western side that connects into the established tree belt along the western boundary which runs south to Featherbed Lane and north into Gold Copse SIN, a large block of ancient replanted woodland to the west of the village. The deciduous tree belt along the western boundary (**fig. 4**) is gappy in places but provides continuity as an ecological corridor between the hedgeline to the south and the woodland to the north.

Along both sides of Featherbed Lane (**fig. 5**), which is a single track rural road, there are continuous managed hedgelines around 1.5m high forming the southern boundary of the site, with open views across the site from Featherbed Lane.

There are also managed hedgelines along both sides of Ecchinswell Road (**fig. 6**) although the hedgeline along the site boundary to Ecchinswell Road has missing sections (**fig. 3**) to the north and south.



Fig. 2 the site



Fig. 3
View across the site
to the northern
boundary



Fig. 4
View across site to the
western boundary tree
belt



Fig. 5
Featherbed Lane
hedgerows

Passive design

The site and the field are relatively unobstructed by landscape features, and their orientation and topography have a good southerly aspect that creates potential for a passive design approach to the layout and the design of the buildings.

Access

Ecchinswell Road is within a 40mph restricted zone along the frontage of the site and there is an existing field access track (**fig. 7**) in the north eastern corner of the site at the crossroads junction of Rooksfield, Hyde Lane and Ecchinswell Road. Its proximity to the crossroads and the restricted visibility are likely to make it unacceptable as a vehicle access to serve the development. It is likely that a new vehicle access will be required off Ecchinswell Road and this should be located to minimise impacts on the existing hedgerow.

A wide verge along the western side of Ecchinswell Road (**fig. 8**) between Rooksfield and Eagle Road, approximately 80m in length currently does not have a footpath but has the potential to provide for pedestrian/cycle access to the village centre from the development.

There are two Public Rights of Way Footpaths within proximity to the site. FP077/1/2 about 300m to the west of the site along Featherbed Lane which crosses Sydmonton Common and FP077/3/1 about 50 m south of the Featherbed Lane junction which leads to the village of Headley about 1.6km to the east through Little Westlands Copse.

Character of the setting

In terms of the settlement and the immediate setting of the site, there are no precedents in terms of character, materials or design that could be used to inform a scheme. The key considerations for design will be protection of the rural character, minimising visual impacts locally and on the wider setting, and creating a well defined and more attractive settlement edge.



Fig. 6
Ecchinswell Road
looking north



Fig. 7
Access off Rooksfield



Fig. 8
Verge along
Ecchinswell Road

4.0 constraints

The constraints plan (**fig. 9**) summarises the key constraints for the development of the site based on this analysis and the points below.

Access: Vehicle access off Ecchinswell Road with a pedestrian/cycle link to the village centre.

Amenity: Privacy and amenity of the residential properties adjoining the site to the north and west to be protected.

Built development: Built development to be kept to the northern end of the site and building layout to consider solar orientation and passive design and visual impact on the settlement edge.

Landscape: Southern part of the site to be landscaped to create open space amenity, respond to views and setting, provide biodiversity gains and create settlement edge character.

Heritage: There are no heritage or archaeological designations that will constrain the development of the site.

Landscape and Habitat designations: There are no Land Based, Habitats and Species, or Landscape designations that will constrain the development of the site. Four TPO's are located adjacent to highway land to the west of Ecchinswell Road north of the site between Rooksfield and Eagle Road.

Ecology and biodiversity: Arboricultural and ecological surveys will be carried out to inform the detailed design and a planning application. The existing perimeter landscape features, including the trees and hedgelines are assumed to have ecological value and should be retained and integrated into the layout. The Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre identifies the field as an 'ecological network opportunity'.

Drainage: A sustainable drainage strategy (SUDs) will be required with the potential for using the sites falls to create retention features with habitat and biodiversity benefits.

Services: Apart from the electricity lines, there are no known services running across the site that would constrain development and it is understood that foul drainage, water and electricity capacity and connections are available.

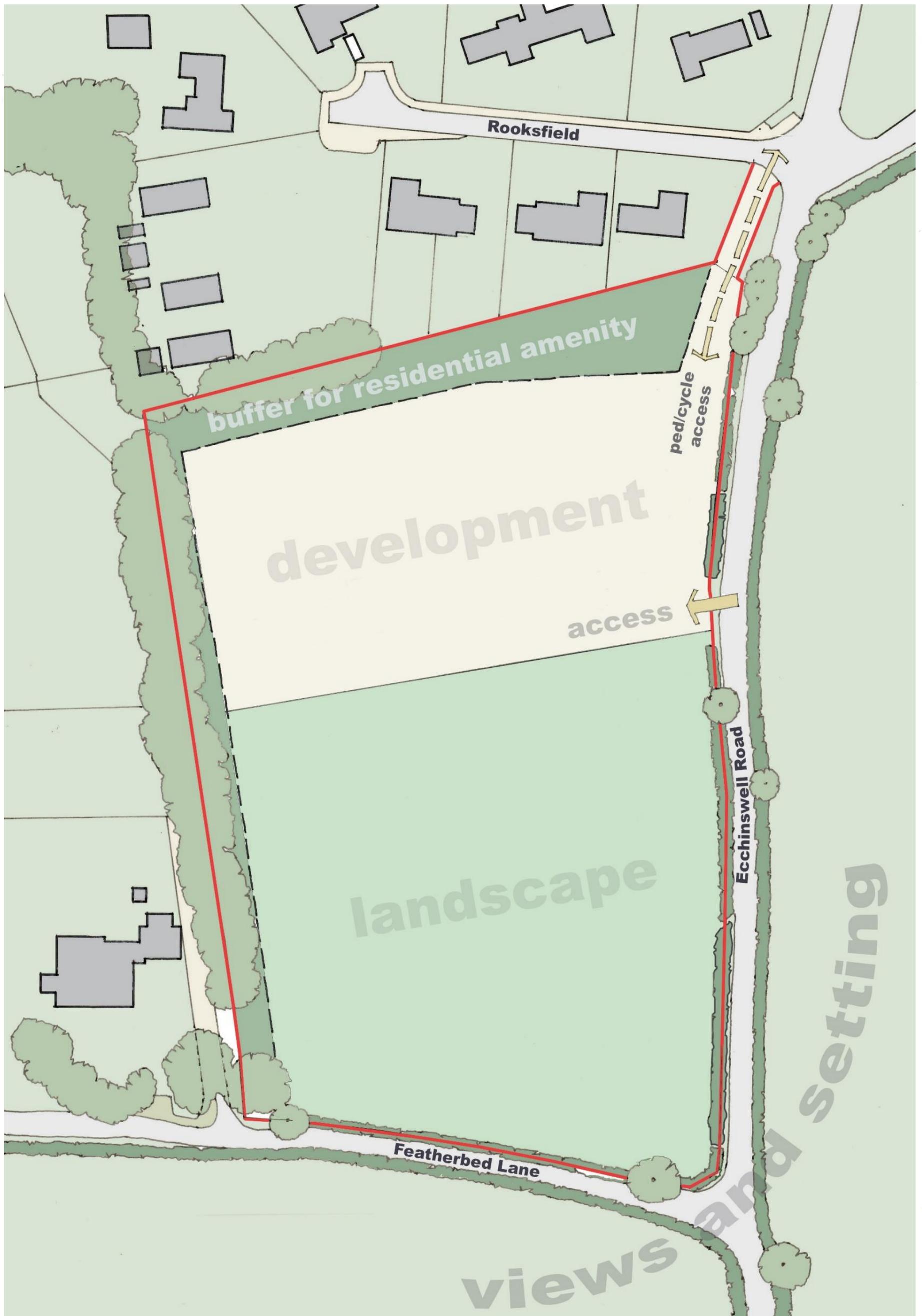


Fig. 9 constraints plan

5.0 development framework

The development framework

The development framework and design principles set out in this section illustrate how the site's constraints will be addressed to meet the ambitions and policy requirements of the ESBGNP to create a positive addition to the village. The development will contribute to improving the pedestrian/cycle connection (1) between the site and the village centre. Vehicle access (2) will be off Ecchinswell Road will be located to avoid the loss of existing hedgerow. A courtyard (3) will be a pedestrian priority environment for accessing and servicing the dwellings, creating a rural character frontage and threshold to the landscape to the south. Buildings to provide active frontage (4) to the open space with building and roof forms that respond to the rural setting and settlement edge. Building layout and form (5) to maximise solar access for passive design. Building layout and design to provide active frontage (6) to the pedestrian/cycle link. Buffer planting to the northern boundary (7) to create an ecological corridor and protect residential amenity. Infill planting along western boundary (8) to protect residential amenity and improve the ecological corridor. Hedgelines reinstated (9) along Ecchinswell Road to protect the rural character and improve biodiversity. Structural tree planting (10) to create visual enclosure and a setting for the open space. Informal accessible open space amenity (11) and Field (12) as low maintenance pasture.

KEY

1. Pedestrian/cycle link
2. Vehicle access
3. Entrance courtyard
4. Active frontage to courtyard
5. Solar access and passive design
6. Active frontage to ped/cycle link
7. Buffer planting
8. Infill planting
9. Hedgelines reinstated
10. Structural tree planting belt
11. Informal open space
12. Field

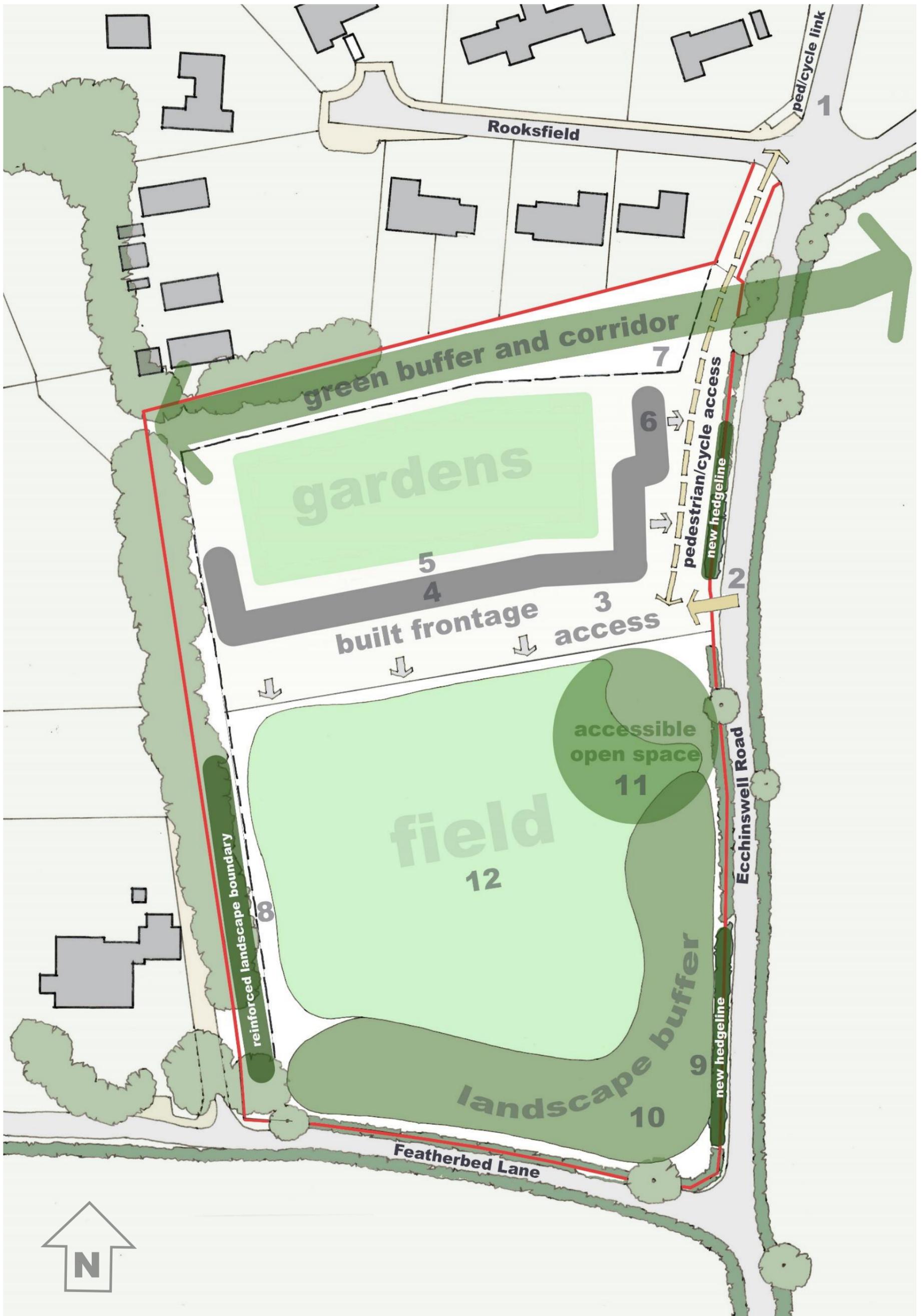


Fig. 10 concept development framework

6.0 sketch masterplan

The Sketch Masterplan (**fig. 11**) illustrates how the site could be developed within this framework to create an attractive environment that will be in keeping with the rural character of the wider setting, and a positive addition to Bishops Green.

- The access will be a shared surface to create a pedestrian priority environment with an informal courtyard as an arrival space and focus within the scheme with provision for servicing and visitor parking. Parking will be distributed in small pockets to minimise the impact of cars.
- Two 'barn' buildings are proposed fronting onto the courtyard as they have a scale, roofscape and material character that is appropriate to the rural settlement edge, and also provide an efficient and flexible envelope for accommodating a mix of dwelling types. Orientation of the barn will give a south facing aspect for maximising passive design potential of the building.
- A small cluster of dwellings next to the barn will provide for any specific dwelling types that might be required to meet local needs, and have been arranged to provide oversight of the pedestrian link into the site and a stronger sense of connection with the village.
- This layout provides the opportunity for a centrally located shared energy hub to reduce energy costs and carbon footprint.
- A SUDS pond as part of the landscape design will provide wildlife habitat and biodiversity gain, and potentially a new route through the site linked into the existing footpaths.
- Existing trees and landscape features will be retained and the boundaries reinforced to create a definitive settlement edge and contain the development.
- The proposals will help link the village together by creating a new open space at the southern end of the village that complements the village centre at the northern end.

References

The reference images (**fig. 12**) are intended to illustrate the initial ideas on the character and materials of the scheme.



Fig. 11 sketch masterplan

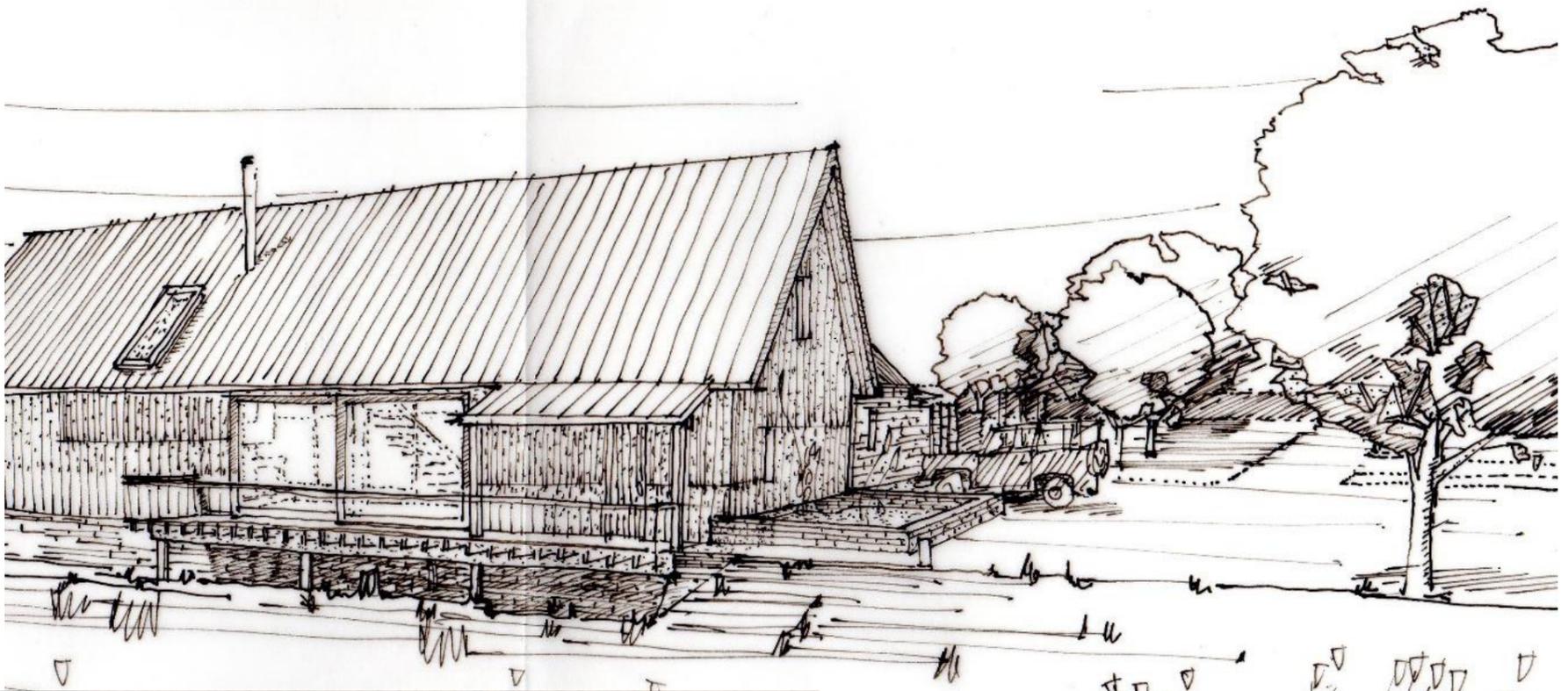


Fig. 12 reference images

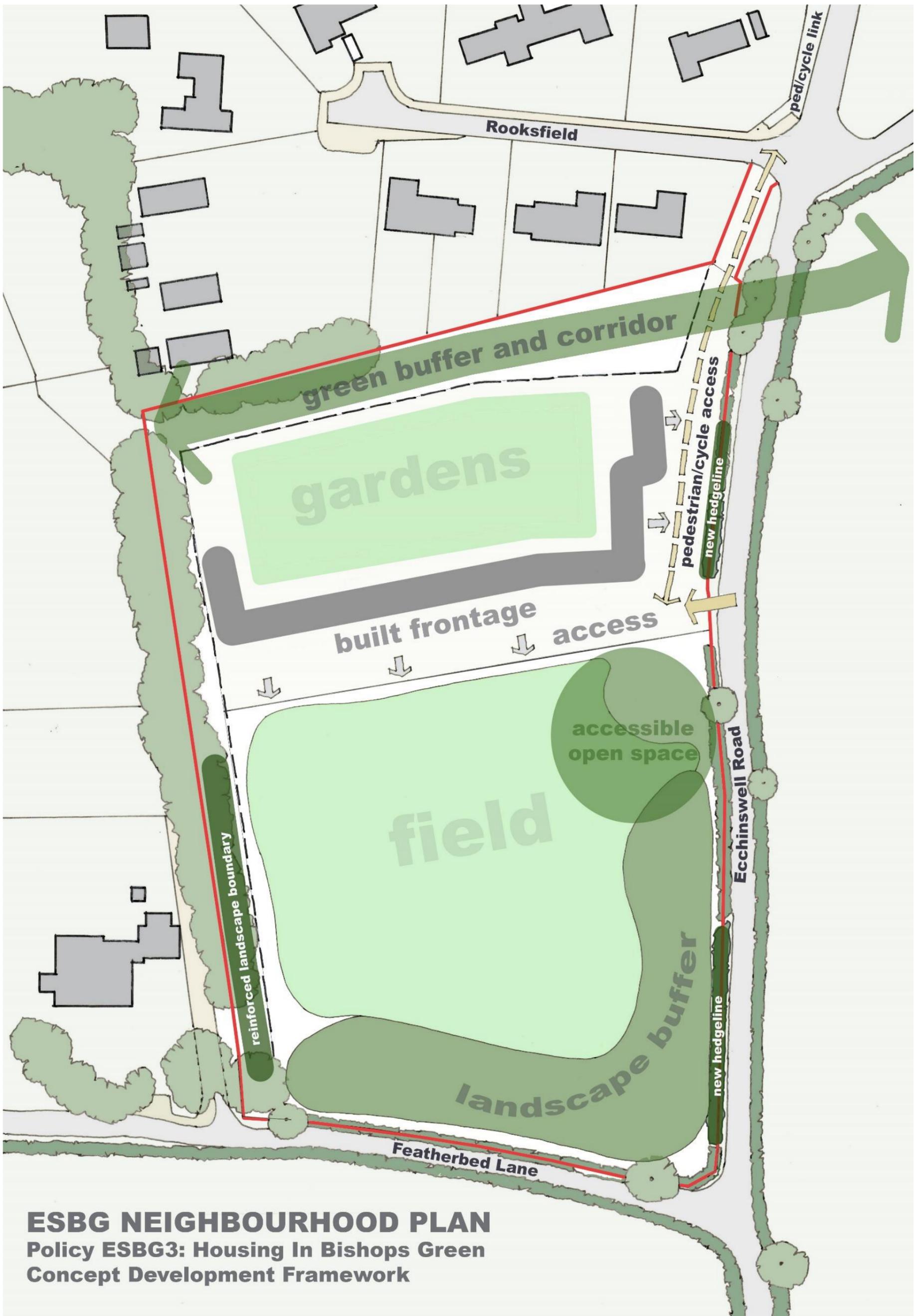
7.0 summary

The proposals outlined in this report will contribute to the community's vision and objectives by delivering an environmentally responsive development that provides a modest level of housing growth and offers more options for local young families and older residents. It sets out a concept as a basis for agreeing and developing a scheme that meets the aspirations of the neighbourhood plan and is a sympathetic addition to the village. It is not a fixed proposal, but a development concept to be used to agree a set of design principles to ensure the quality of the detailed design, and the dwelling types. The development concept will provide the following:

- A design approach that is in keeping with the rural character and landscape setting.
- A layout and design principles that minimise impacts on existing dwellings and views.
- The flexibility to accommodate the dwelling types and sizes required by the local plan and neighbourhood plan.
- A contribution to achieving the 'slow the pace' improvements along Ecchinswell Road.
- A new open space amenity for the village linked to the existing village centre and green.
- Tree planting and a wildlife SUDS area to create biodiversity gain.
- Improvements to the local ecology corridors.
- The potential to link into the existing public footpaths.
- The creation of a strong settlement boundary that will control expansion of the village envelope.

Further information will be provided as required for the Examination of the neighbourhood plan, and following a successful referendum, the detailed design proposals will be developed in consultation with the ESG Steering Group and the community.

The Concept Development Framework plan in Appendix A on page 18 sets out a series of development parameters for policy ESG3 of the neighbourhood plan based on the proposals in this report.



ESBG NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN
Policy ESBG3: Housing In Bishops Green
Concept Development Framework

Fig. 13 concept development framework

