



HICKS ROAD MASTERPLAN



This Masterplan forms part of the published evidence base to the Core Strategy. The information provided in the document has been prepared by the agents of the landowners. It explains how Strategic Site Proposal SS2 Land at Hicks Road, Markyate can be delivered, and expands on the development principles for the site set out in the Consultation Draft of the Core Strategy.

The Masterplan does not form part of the formal consultation on the Consultation Draft of the Core Strategy. However, if you do want to comment on the proposal, then you need to direct your responses to Proposal SS2 in the Core Strategy.

Comments received will help the Council formulate its own views as to how the site should come forward.

Details of the Consultation Draft of the Core Strategy and the consultation arrangements can be found on the Council's website (www.dacorum.gov.uk/planning) or by contacting:

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1. Executive Summary

1.1 Introduction

This Masterplan has been prepared, on behalf of Zog Brownfield Ventures Ltd (ZBV), to investigate the regeneration options for the Markyate Industrial Estate – situated to the north and south of Hicks Road, within the eastern section of Markyate.

Zog Brownfield Ventures Ltd is the majority landowner within the Industrial Estate and keen to drive forward the renewal/redevelopment of the site as a whole. This represents a key opportunity to deliver long-term regeneration for this important site, which in turn will generate significant benefits for the wider area.

In order to provide a comprehensive solution, the Masterplan area focuses on those areas of the estate falling within ZBV's ownership, but also includes neighbouring land/sites (including Hicks Road itself) where there are considered to be opportunities to secure area-wide improvements.

The purpose of the Masterplan is to investigate potential regeneration objectives/options and to establish a development framework for the site identified as Proposal SS2 within the Dacorum Borough Council LDF Core Strategy (Consultation draft version) and set the blueprint for the future redevelopment of the site.

1.2 Hicks Road – Summary of opportunities and benefits

The Hicks Road site is the only large-scale brownfield site within Markyate and benefits from being located close to the heart of the village. The existing buildings on-site are largely inefficient, with many in a poor state of repair. The future redevelopment of the site provides the opportunity to deliver significant benefits for the entire village – this will include:

- new homes (approximately 80) – including family housing and apartments to meet local housing needs;
- new affordable housing – including intermediate and rented accommodation;
- modern business accommodation – including new office space, alongside light industrial (Class B1) and storage units (Class B8) designed to reflect current market demands;
- the creation of a new public square centrally within the development – to create a new focal point for the village (with new active uses);
- small-scale retail uses (Classes A1/A2/A3 and A4) to add life and vibrancy to the new public spaces and to complement the role and function of the existing High Street;
- a new surgery/PCT unit – relocated from its current premises;
- the re-provision of the existing public car park (adjacent to the surgery) within the new development to cater for the parking needs of the village;
- a residential care-home.

Overall, the redevelopment of the Hicks Road site provides an exciting opportunity to create a new social and commercial focus for the village, consolidate existing employment opportunities, deliver new housing, improved healthcare facilities and other services to complement the High Street.

1.3 The Masterplan approach

This Masterplan is intended to explore the opportunities presented by the regeneration of the Hicks Road site and to establish the framework for the future redevelopment of the site. The Masterplan is also intended to form part of the evidence base in support of the proposed designation of Hicks Road as a 'Strategic Site' within Dacorum Borough Council's Core Strategy.

To-date, the preparation of the Masterplan has been informed by:

- Discussions with officers at Dacorum Borough Council
- Discussions with Markyate Surgery/PCT on the potential inclusion of an expanded surgery
- Masterplanning and design development work by GML Architects and Fabrik;
- Advice from Rolfe Judd Planning on planning policy objectives;
- Discussions between RSK/ Entran and the Environment Agency in relation to flood risk and the River Ver (which runs beneath the site);
- Advice on market demand and supply for business/employment floorspace within Markyate (and the wider Borough) from GVA Grimley;
- Advice on highways & transport issues from Entran;
- Liaison with existing tenants from Brasier Freeth;
- Consideration of the Markyate Urban Design Assessment (January 2006)

1.4 Implementation and Delivery

The Masterplan is initially intended to assist Dacorum Borough Council formulate a fresh planning policy approach for the redevelopment of the site. The Masterplan will then be used as the template for the delivery of the future mixed-use development.

During the detailed formulation of the development proposals for the site, the developer will continue to closely liaise with all key stakeholders and decision makers. The developer has indicated their intention to enter into a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) with the Council to guide the preparation and submission of the future planning application.

The developer is also committed to continuing to work with existing tenants, neighbouring land owners and the Primary Healthcare Trust/Surgery to formulate comprehensive proposals which maximise the benefits to be delivered by the site.

The indicative programme for the delivery of a mixed-use development is as follows:

- Dacorum Borough Council – LDF Core Strategy (Consultation draft version) public consultation Nov-Dec 2010;
- Pre-application consultation to commence with key-stakeholders and decision makers – Nov-Dec 2010;
- Detailed development proposals for redevelopment of site to be formulated – Dec 2010-Jan 2011;
- Masterplan/Development Proposal Public Consultation – Jan 2011;
- Planning Application Submission for detailed development proposals – Early 2011;
- First Phase Development to commence – 2012/2013;
- Completed Development – 2014/2015.

2. Markyate Village Analysis

2.1 Location and History

Markyate is a large village (with a population of approximately 3,000) located along the A5 to the south west of Luton. The village has grown up along the route of the ancient Watling Street (a Roman Road) close to the source of the River Ver, and chiefly evolved from a stagecoach stop on the main route between London and Birmingham.

Markyate enjoys good road connections with Luton (5 miles to the north east) and Dunstable (6.5 miles to the north-west). The village also benefits from being in close proximity to the A5 and M1 motorway, which provide road links to Hemel Hempstead and Saint Albans (both to the south). Whilst Markyate has no direct train links, the village does benefit from local bus routes to the surrounding towns.

Whilst the River Ver passes through the centre of Markyate, it has been culverted along much of its course. The countryside around the village falls within the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and the Markyate Cell (originally a Benedictine Priory – and now a manor house and historic parkland) is located to the north east.

The High Street continues to be based on the historic street pattern and is designated as a Conservation Area. Whilst the number and variety of retail and commercial uses has declined over-time (due in part to competition from neighbouring towns and out-of-centre retailers), the village does retain some small-scale local facilities and pubs along the High Street.

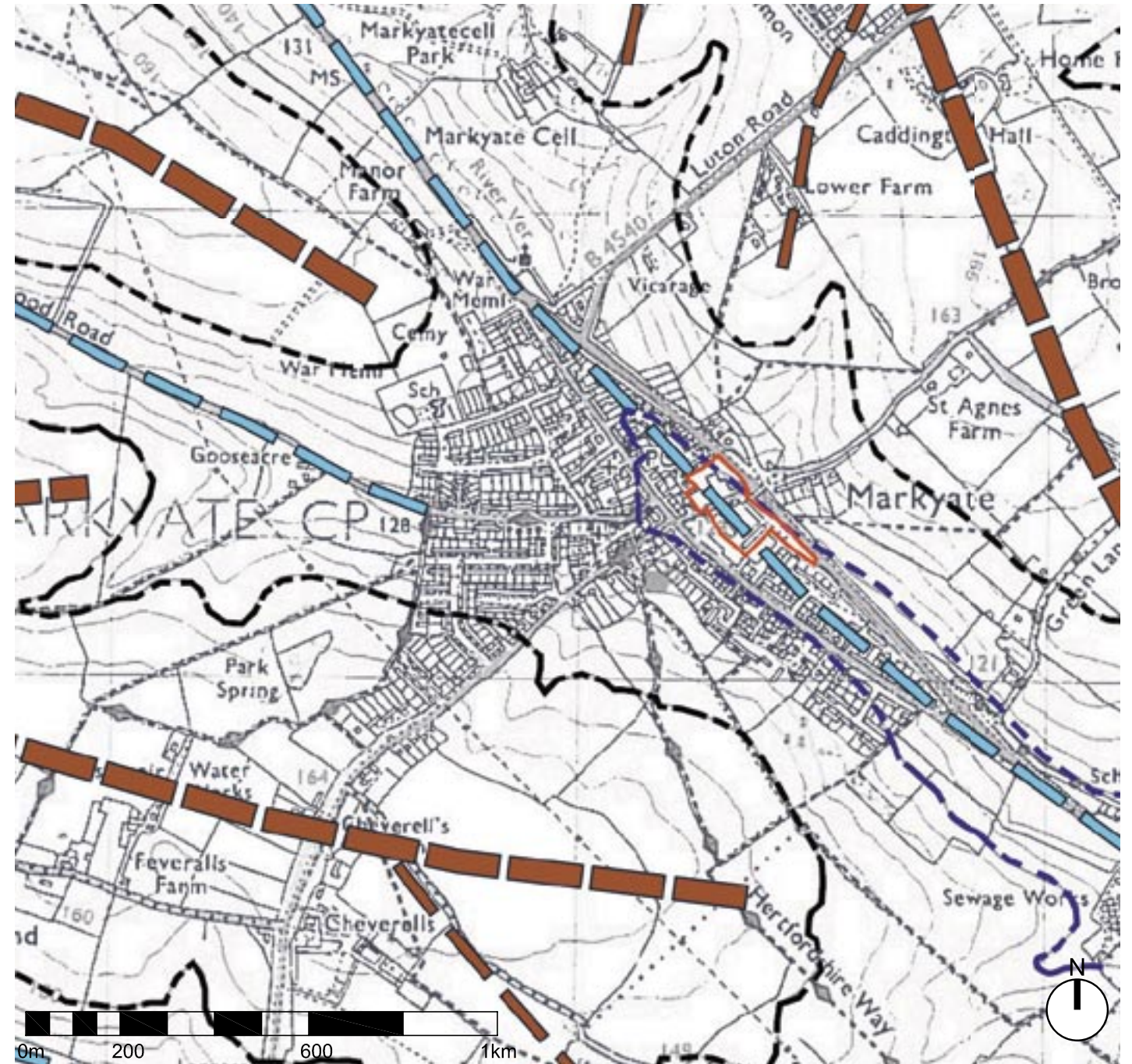
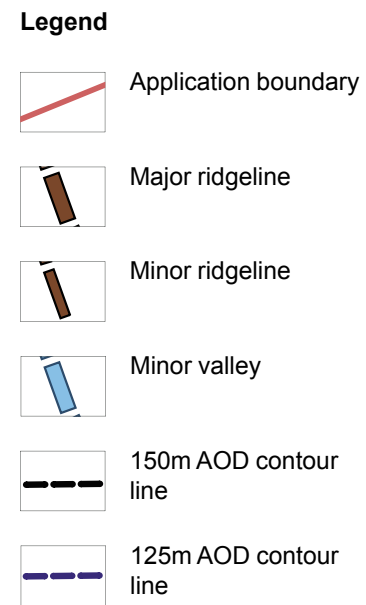
The Hicks Road Industrial Estate (the Masterplan site) is situated both to the north and south of Hicks Road and sits between those properties fronting onto the High Street and the A5 corridor. It is the largest employment site within the village, but much of the industrial accommodation has declined over-time and the estate has experienced increased levels of vacancy.



2. Markyate Village Analysis

2.2 Topography

The local topography setting for the study area is within a gently undulating landscape, with numerous localised ridgelines and valleys. The site itself lies within a localised valley and is enclosed by ridgelines to the north-east and south-west, rising from approximately 120-125m AOD at site level to 170m AOD along the ridgelines.



Plan illustrating topography

2. Markyate Village Analysis

2.3 Land Cover

Summary of landuse surrounding the site and settlement of Markyate:

Agriculture – Agricultural landscape surrounds the village. The agriculture uses are mixed with a dominance of arable crops in larger fields. Some smaller fields in closer proximity to the village are used for paddocks and grazing.

Historic and Cultural Landscape – The historic core of Markyate is designated as a Conservation Area and contains a number of listed buildings. Markyate Cell is designated as a park or garden of Special Historic Interest and is on the English Heritage list of registered Parks and Gardens. Some of the areas of woodland in the surrounding countryside and designated as Ancient and Semi-ancient Woodland.

Woodland/Vegetation Pattern – The local area is well treed, with small woodland blocks, tree belts and hedgerows within the urban areas, along road corridors, public rights of way and field boundaries. Markyate Cell has many parkland trees. The individual mature trees, together with the treebelts and woodland blocks are the key landscape features of the area providing a well treed setting to the settlement.

Settlement Pattern – The settlement pattern broadly follows the movement corridor from north-west to south-east and extends to the south-west. The settlement is bound on its northwest side by the A5 road and by rural uses to other edges.

Transport Links – The main transport corridor is the A5 running south-east to north-west, a primary trunk road from London to the north. The network of roads off this corridor is broadly arranged on a north to south alignment.

Public Rights of Way – A series of public rights of way lead out from Markyate centre to the wider countryside in all directions. The Hertfordshire Way routes through the village from the west and out to the south.

Public Open Space – There are three areas of designated open land, sports field and allotments in Markyate all within 10min walking distance of the site. These are reviewed in more detail in open space analysis.



Plan illustrating landuse and landcover

2. Markyate Village Analysis

2.4 Local Character - High Street



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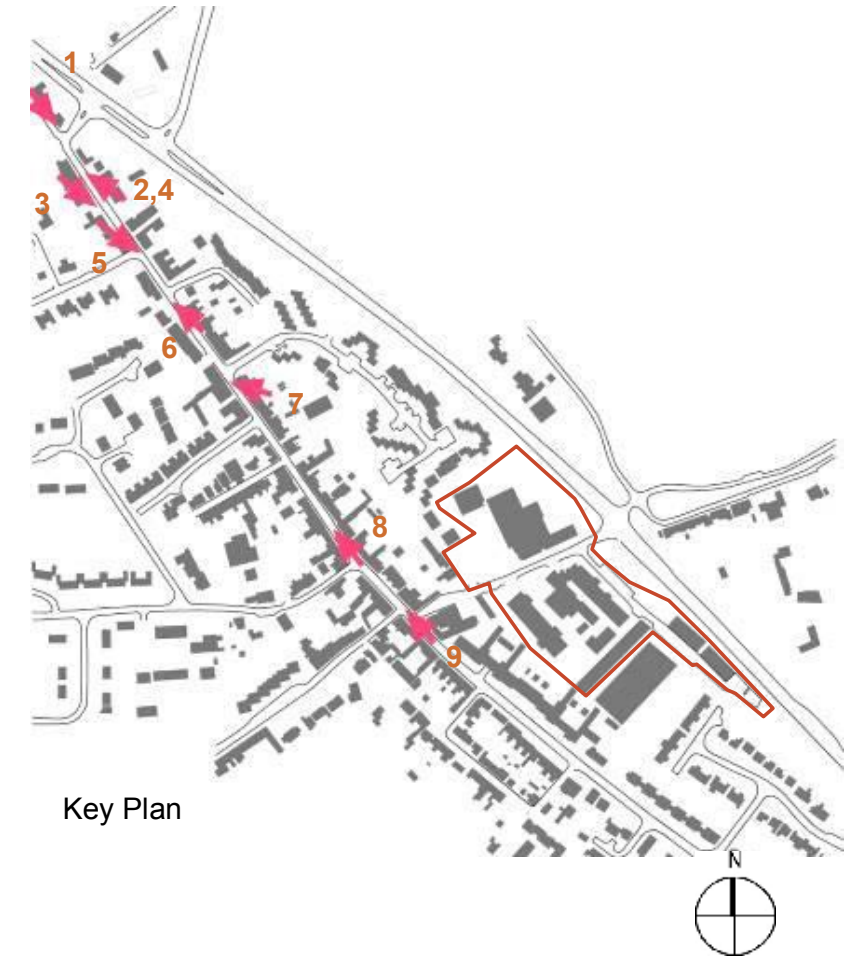
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Key Plan

3. Hicks Road Site Analysis

3.1 Markyate Industrial Estate Site

The Hicks Road Industrial Estate (c.2.8 hectares) is located both to the north and south of Hicks Road, adjacent to the A5. The estate currently includes a mix of industrial units, warehouses, workshops, a depot and office space (providing c.11,500sq.m). Sharose Court, Richmond House and those buildings to the south of Hicks Road, currently fall within the ownership of Zog Brownfield Ventures Ltd, with the units positioned within the south eastern end of the site and north-west of the site falling in separate ownerships.

Whilst some buildings on-site are relatively new (including Sharose Court) others are poor quality, inefficient and lacking in modern services and amenities. As a result ZBV has been finding it increasingly difficult to let floor space within these buildings, despite continual marketing and proximity to A5 and village centre.

Although the estate occupies a prominent position within the village a number of the buildings on site are utilitarian / functional in appearance and hence visually detract from the wider village. Furthermore the arrangement of the buildings and the general aesthetics of the estate has created a somewhat unattractive street scene, which makes a relatively hostile environment for pedestrians and cyclists.

The majority of the site is currently hard landscaped with very few trees around the boundaries, mainly along the North-Eastern boundary with A5 road.

Currently River Ver passes through the site in culvert collecting surface water drainage from a number of Thames Water sewers (Pict. 8). However the culvert creates a number of potential problems including shallow flooding within the estate. In order to provide comprehensive approach the Masterplan also encompasses the existing surgery (no.1 Hicks Road). ZBV has been in discussions with neighbouring landowners and will consult with them during the preparation of the Masterplan.



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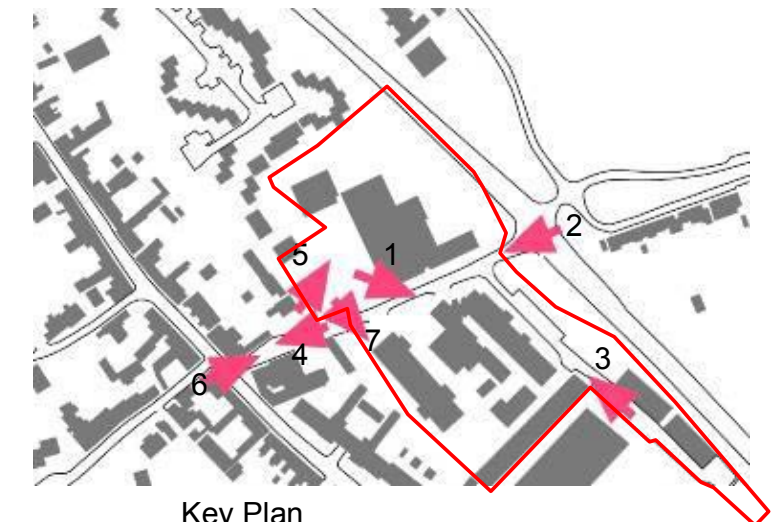
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Key Plan

3. Hicks Road Site Analysis

3.2 Existing Townscape Analysis

As noted within Dacorum's Urban Design Assessment for Markyate (June 2006), the townscape of Markyate is based around four distinctive character areas:

- Village Centre Zone – centred on the historic High Street and includes the remaining retail and commercial uses. The centre zone is also lined by tightly packed residential terraces, which provide a distinctive street-scene;
- Inner Zone – includes the predominately residential areas located to the north and south of the village centre, and is based around a mix of new cul-de-sacs and the original village through roads. Density varies between larger detached properties and tighter terraces of houses;
- Semi-Rural Zone – located at the outer extent of the village and consists primarily of terrace houses and semi detached properties (of a low to medium density);
- Industrial Zone – centred on the Masterplan site and located immediately to the east of the village centre. The zone includes a variety relatively old industrial buildings, storage areas and office buildings. The area is also interspersed with open areas – primarily used for parking and servicing. Despite its location within the heart of the village it is not well integrated or linked to the wider village.

Key

- Master plan boundary
- Industrial Zone
- Village Centre Zone
- Inner Zone
- Semi-Rural Zone

Dacorum Urban Design Assessment, Markyate
Dacorum Borough Council
2006



3. Hicks Road Site Analysis

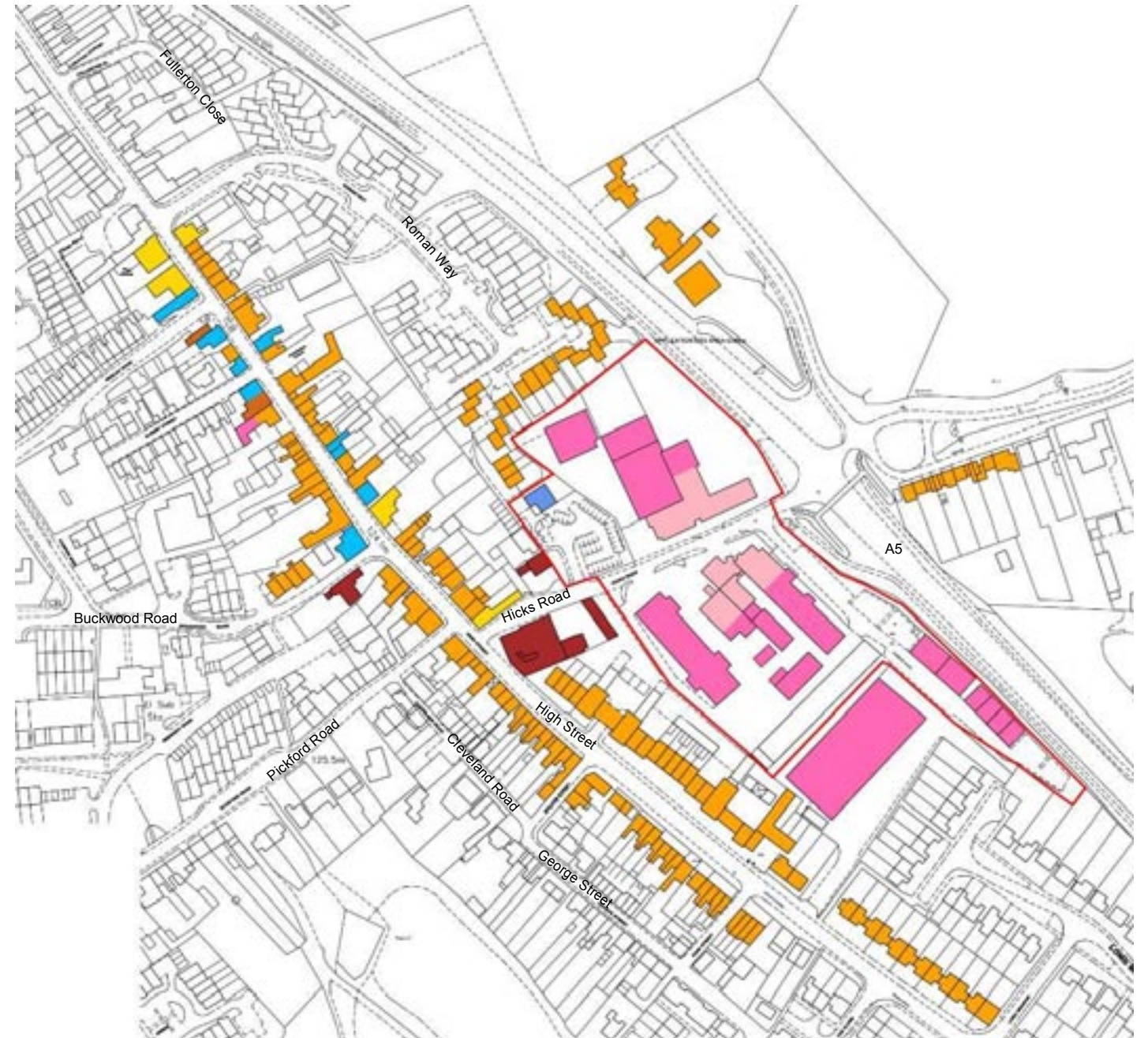
3.3 Existing Land Use Plan

The Hicks Road Industrial Estate provides the main focus for business and employment uses within the village and does benefit from good road links directly onto the A5.

The High Street provides the focus for the remaining retail and commercial uses within the village. However, despite the cohesive nature of the street pattern, there are only a small number of shops and pubs left within the village centre. Instead, the High Street is now dominated by residential accommodation interspersed with small-scale retail facilities.

There is currently no strong focal point for commercial/retail activity within the town and little space to promote community uses, evening economy and outdoor cafes.

| Key | |
|-----|-------------------------|
| | Masterplan boundary |
| | A1 shops |
| | A3 food and drink |
| | B1 business |
| | Part vacant B1 business |
| | C3 dwelling houses |
| | D1 – Doctor's surgery |
| | Sui Generis |



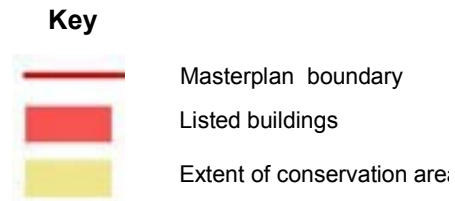
3. Hicks Road Site Analysis

3.4 Conservation Area and Listed Buildings

The Markyate Conservation Area is centred on the High Street area (the village centre zone) and includes a number of listed buildings (many of which reflect the village's historic association with the Holyhead turnpike – one of the principal stagecoach routes).

The High Street still retains much of its nineteenth century form and is characterised by small plot sizes which are tightly packed and orientated along the linear road network.

The Hicks Road Industrial Estate sits directly to the east of the Conservation Area (and several listed buildings) and it is apparent that the existing buildings within the estate fail to relate in scale or form to the character of the neighbouring Conservation Area.



3. Hicks Road Site Analysis

3.5 Connections

The principal road links within Markyate include the High Street and the A5 (which by-passes the Village). The High Street currently suffers from congestion as a result of the number of vehicles passing through the village, the tight street pattern and the high incident of on-street car parking. By contrast, the A5 forms as part of the strategic road network and runs between the M1 (south of Luton), Milton Keynes and Rugby.

Hicks Road provides the central link between the High Street and A5. At present, Hicks Road suffers from a pinch point (close to the junction with the High Street), which can make it difficult for two vehicles to pass each other. Hicks Road also provides the main pedestrian link to the countryside to the east of the village (via the footbridge over the A5). However, the pedestrian environment through the industrial estate is generally poor and does little to attract through movement.



3. Hicks Road Site Analysis

3.6 Existing Buildings Heights

•The predominant building height throughout the Village is 2 storeys.

•Buildings across the Hicks Road Industrial Estate range in height from 2 – 3.5 storeys. Whilst taller buildings may be appropriate for a commercial site they are out of scale with adjacent two storey residential areas.



3. Hicks Road Site Analysis

3.7 Landscape Appraisal

Topography: The site is predominantly flat with a general fall across the site from the northern corner, from approximately 127m AOD to the southern part of the site at approximately 121.5m AOD. The change in level is more prominent in the northern corner where the site connects to the higher ground of the A5 set on an embankment. The site sits lower than its surrounding context due to its location in the River Ver valley corridor.

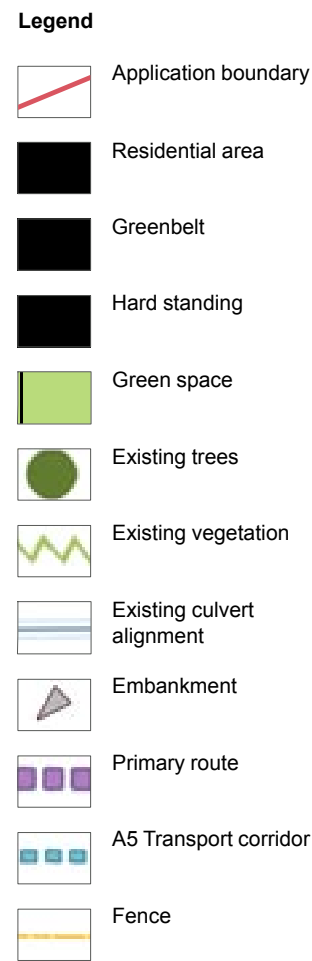
Land Use and Boundary Treatments:

The site is of mixed use with predominantly industrial use. There is limited green space on site and is not usable as recreational space. The site is bound by the A5 transport corridor on the western boundary and by the boundary treatments to residential properties to the south, west and north. Hicks Road transects the site. There are several internal boundaries defined by fence lines.

Vegetation: There is a limited amount of vegetation within the site. There are several individual trees within the existing car park. A mature treebelt with a dense vegetation understory runs along the sites boundary with the A5. Buffer vegetation occurs where the site adjoins rear gardens of properties.

Landscape Features: Due to the extent of existing development on the site the most significant features are at the site boundary, these include mature vegetation boundary along the A5. The River Ver runs through the site in a culvert but is not visible.

Immediate setting: The site is bound by 1, 1.5 and 2 storey residential development to the north, south and west: Roman Way to the north, Long Meadow to the south and High Street to the west. To the east are properties on higher land along The Ridings, separated from the site by the A5. The site is therefore bound and influenced by the residential scale buildings. The A5 transport corridor physically separates the site from the open countryside to the east.



Plan illustrating the existing site landscape