

Marchmont Farm LA1

COMMUNITY WORKSHOP
FINAL REPORT July 2013



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DRAFT REPORT June 2013

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The workshop event was an opportunity for a range of stakeholders to influence and shape the proposed development in a way that helps meet their aspirations and concerns.



doc. ref: **092_Q_130702_LA1_Feria-Urbanism_FINAL**

Feria Urbanism is a planning + design studio that specialises in urban design, urban planning, urban strategies, public participation and community engagement. Established in 2007, we have been involved in a diverse range of projects across the UK and have developed key skills in organising community engagement events that inform urban and rural strategies.

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report designed and produced by Feria Urbanism

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The LA1 Local Allocation, seen in front of the distant trees, as viewed from the west.

01 INTRODUCTION



Beyond the allocation site lies Piccotts End, a village with Conservation Area status. This rural settlement is connected to the allocation site by Piccotts End Lane, a rural track and footpath.

Background

Dacorum Borough Council has an obligation to deliver development which meets the economic, housing and other needs of the borough. In response to this, the Council proposes to accommodate more than 11,000 new homes between 2006 and 2031.

While a large part of the provision is being directed to built-up areas, the Council estimates that land for around 1,550 homes needs to be found on new Green Belt sites (known as the “local allocations”). These are located around the main settlements, principally Hemel Hempstead. These allocations include land at Marchmont Farm. Space within this broad area will be set aside for open space, drainage and landscaping.

The Proposal

The proposal includes about 300 homes and supporting mixed-use non-residential development. The proposal is contained in the Council’s Core Strategy. It is known as a local allocation and referenced as Proposal LA1 as set out in Section 20 of the Core Strategy.

At this stage in the process, no planning permissions have been granted. The Council does not intend the first homes to be completed before 2021.

The proposal cannot be built until a planning application has been submitted and approved. Policies in the local planning framework will guide any such planning application. The Council expects any application to conform to the local planning framework. The landowners will decide exactly when a planning application will be submitted.

Core Strategy Context

Proposal LA1 for Marchmont Farm is part of the Core Strategy that has been the subject of examination by a Planning Inspector. The Inspector’s job is to examine, on the evidence, whether the Core Strategy is sound. He has considered very carefully the evidence provided to him, the need for more housing and the effect on the Green Belt.

He has suggested that the Core Strategy should move forward with the proposed housing target, provided the Council commit to an early review of the Core Strategy. The Inspector has indicated no issue of soundness with Proposal LA1.

The Inspector wanted the Council to consult on some modifications, which it has done. None of the modifications directly affect LA1.

Representations received on the main modifications were passed to the Inspector on 5th April 2013. The Council is now waiting for the Inspector's Report. It is expected that the report will declare the Core Strategy sound. If so, then the location will be agreed and the issues that remain will be the form and layout of the development.

Landowners + Developers

Various parcels of land are owned or are subject to an options agreement to allow the proposal to come forward. There are three principal landowners. One house builder is involved, Gleasons. Dacorum Borough Council and the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) are the other two owners. The Council's ownership is the smallest of the three holdings.

The Council has agreed a "Statement of Common Ground" with the landowners to assist the Planning Inspector. This demonstrates that the proposal can be delivered and its impacts controlled. It also provides a useful guide to the information available and indicates some of what needs to be done next. Together with community and stakeholder engagement, this will inform the master plan.

Design + Development Questions

Particular questions the Council needs to address are:

- how development fits together including an indication of what it will be like to live in;
- how it integrates with the existing town and the community;
- how it relates to the landscape and surrounding countryside;
- the precise Green Belt boundary (which will be shown on a map);
- the precise extent of the development proposals (which will be shown on a map).

The first step in addressing these issues was a public engagement and consultation workshop conducted on 14th May 2013. This report is the summary of that event. The event has provided a key set of ingredients to the subsequent phases, that will include the preparation of a Site Allocations document accompanied by a master plan for the proposal.

Site Allocations Document

The Site Allocations document, like the Core Strategy, will form part of a new local plan for Dacorum Borough. The Council must submit the Site Allocations document for independent examination, just like the Core Strategy.

The Site Allocations document will delineate the Green Belt boundary and precise extent of each local allocation, including Proposal LA1. It will say more about the timing and delivery of each of the developments.



Houses on Rannoch Walk front the northern part of the allocation site. Understanding the concern's of residents that live here when generating a design and layout will help protect their amenity. This will be a vital part of the development process.



The current management approach within Hunting Gate Wood, adjacent to the allocation site, includes barriers to prevent motorcycle access. Improvements to these paths and access points could be delivered through this development.

Master Plan

A master plan will be prepared. Joint responsibility for its preparation will be with the developer, land owner and Council. The master plan will support each local allocation. This master plan will say more about the character of the proposed development and how it will work and fit in with its surroundings (e.g. the existing urban fabric and strategic landscaping). The Council will be responsible for considering consultation responses and approving the master plan.

Range of Accommodation

The Government requires local authorities to make provision for all homes, including the identification of a target and five year land supply. Sites must be identified. This applies to both the settled community and travellers. The Council's policies do not exclude provision of homes for members of the travelling community within Proposal LA1 or on other local allocations: what will ultimately be considered appropriate will depend on the particular site circumstances and need over the plan period.

Green Belt Revisions

The land at Marchmont Farm is currently within the Green Belt. The Core Strategy proposes removal of an area from the Green Belt west of the existing Grovehill neighbourhood in order to accommodate proposed development.

The Council intends to delineate the new boundary of the Green Belt and the town itself in the Site Allocations document. The Core Strategy establishes the general principle of the type and scale of development. The Site Allocations will help define the proposal. A master plan will inform that process, providing further guidance on layout, strategic landscaping and so on.

The Council must take into account Government advice when it draws a new line for the Green Belt. Boundaries should use physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent. The Council will also have regard to the conclusions of the Planning Inspector who originally suggested the Council look seriously at this area for new housing. He suggested that any housing should be kept to the east of a ridgeline on a spur of land that projects south westwards.

The Council considers that Proposal LA1 represents the western limit of Grovehill and its development into the Gade valley. It will remain important to protect the surrounding countryside and Gade valley from further building and to maintain Piccotts End as a separate community.

Park Extension

The proposal specifies an extension of Margaret Lloyd Park. The detail of the proposal and its contribution to education and community facilities at Grovehill will be the subject of further deliberation and consultation with stakeholders and the local community. Access to those facilities is also an important issue.

Consultation + Engagement

The Core Strategy has been subject to extensive consultation over a number of years, as follows:

- 2006 Growth at Hemel Hempstead
- 2008 Site Allocations
- 2010 Consultation Draft of the Core Strategy
- 2011 Pre-Submission Draft of the Core Strategy

The Core Strategy and issues associated with it are very wide ranging. The Council uses its web site, adverts, press releases and more recently social media to publicise the Core Strategy. The Council also uses an independent Citizens' Panel for feedback.

The Council has advised people of consultations through its magazine, Dacorum Digest, including pull out supplements. The Autumn/Winter edition 2010 helped advertise consultation on the "Consultation Draft Core Strategy" and specifically referred to a local development option at Marchmont Farm.

Further Consultation

The principle of the development has been accepted by the Council. There is still a lot to consider however. There will be consultation on the master plan and Site Allocations document during 2014.



Margaret Lloyd Park is a well-loved local open green space and accommodates routes eastwards towards the mixed-use local centre located around Henry Wells Square.



The LA1 workshop was held at the Grovehill Community Centre on 14.05.13.

02 WORKSHOP STRUCTURE

“The decision on the principle of development at this location is confirmed, but there is still a long way to go in terms of planning and design”

Quote from the local planning authority used during the introduction to the workshop event.

Roles + Responsibilities

The workshop series for the local allocations LA1, LA3 and LA5 was organised by Dacorum Borough Council but it was structured and managed by an independent facilitator team from Feria Urbanism, a Bournemouth-based design practice with extensive experience of such a role.

All workshops were attended by representative stakeholders, including local residents, representatives of community groups and the County Council. The workshop series was observed by Dacorum Borough Council planning officers and landowner representatives.

The background to each workshop was informed by Core Strategy Proposal and other information.

Task Based Workshop

The LA1 workshop was run over a single afternoon at the Grovehill Community Centre, Hemel Hempstead on Tuesday 14th May 2013. Given the limited amount of time, the facilitator team were keen to maximise the opportunities for participants to develop and share their ideas. This meant less talk from the planning officers and facilitators to give space to more discussion and debate from the participants.

The introduction was therefore kept to a maximum 15 minutes to help set the scene before handing over to a series of group tasks. These tasks comprised 4 x 30 minute tasks that progressively got more detailed as regards design detail and planning.

There was a break after the second task, that combined refreshments with a shared feedback session. The afternoon concluded with a 30 minute shared feedback session (after the fourth and final task) plus explanation of the next steps.

Setting The Scene

The workshop opened with a welcome from Richard Blackburn, planning officer at Dacorum Borough Council. He introduced the people involved and their roles together with a brief explanation of the starting point to the local allocation as given by the Dacorum Borough Council Core Strategy.

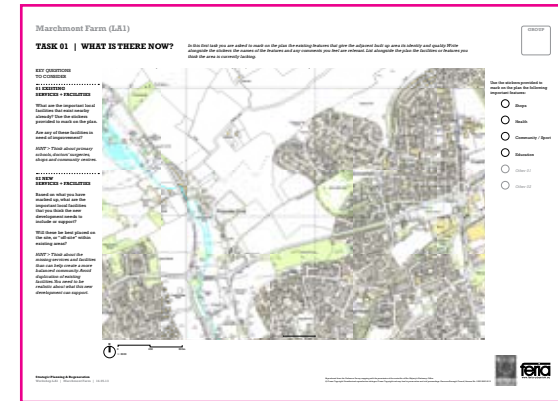
The lead facilitator then explained that the purpose of workshop was to try to establish a basic set of design principles for the development of the site. These principles were to be captured in the form of a set of words and a series of sketch drawings and diagrams that will capture an assessment of the site's potential and opportunities.

The workshop structure was designed to identify areas of consensus and common ground but also allow for a variety of opinions and ideas.

Technical Corner

The lead facilitator very briefly explained the technical data relevant to the site (such as topography, landscape, views, drainage, existing roads and paths etc) during the introduction. This was only a very brief overview to help set the scene.

Participants were encouraged to refer to the technical data throughout the afternoon — in the form of aerial photos, plans, maps, charts and diagrams — that was pinned on the walls of the workshop venue in the form of a “technical corner” and was used as a resource base.



Shared Feedback Sessions

The lead facilitator provided a summary of the first two tasks at the halfway point. This feedback was enabled through the use of photos taken of each groups' outputs projected onto a big screen. Group members were invited to share their thoughts with the wider room as their plans and work are presented. A similar technique was used at the end of the afternoon, after the fourth and final task, when the lead facilitator talked through the common ground and the points of difference. Groups and individuals were again asked to contribute to the debate and discussion.

In conclusion, the next steps in the process were explained by Laura Wood, planning officer at Dacorum Borough Council. These next steps include the preparation of the workshop report, the master plan work in support of the Site Allocations Document.



The workshop was designed to help get participants involved in a range of development issues at an early stage in the process.

NOTE: Larger copies of the workshop task sheets can be found in the Appendix B, pages 38 — 41.

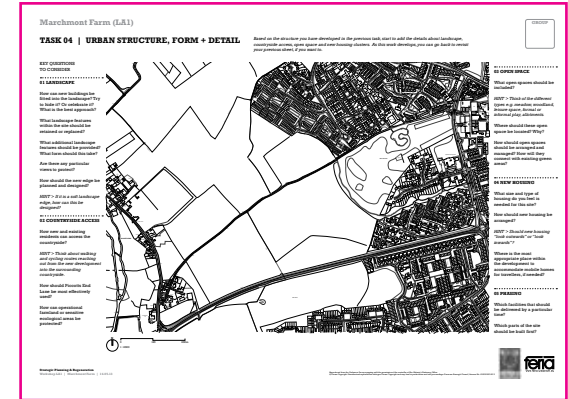
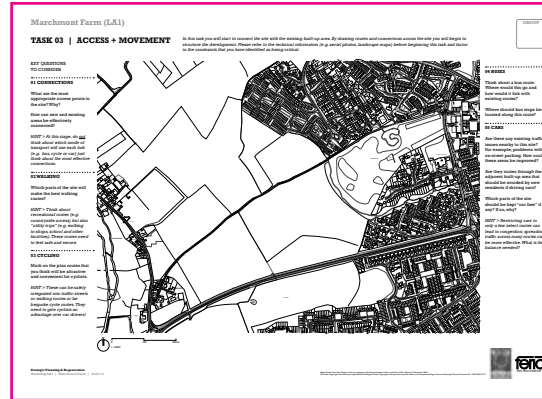
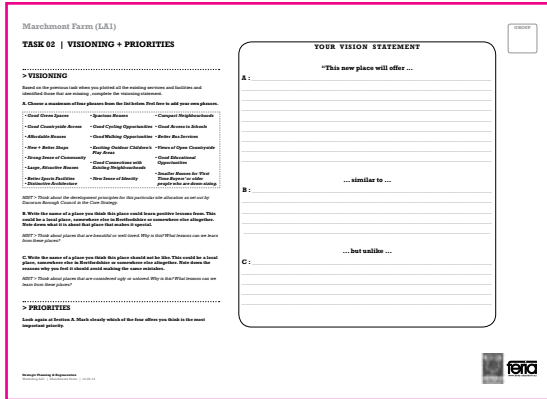
TASK 01

What Is There Now? [30 mins]

What makes this place special? Participants were asked to use their local knowledge to mark on the plan a series of important features, both on the site itself and in the surrounding areas. These features could be natural (e.g. views, woodland areas etc), social (e.g. local schools, clubs, pubs) or commercial (e.g. local shops, services and facilities). Participants were also encouraged to add useful insights such as roads that are difficult to cross, areas of anti-social behaviour and so on.

Developing a pattern of uses and activities on a plan helps to reveal the gaps in local facilities and also the features worthy of retention, such as landscape features.

This first task was also designed to move the workshop away from a “constraints-led planning” to “opportunities-led planning” which is a more positive approach.



TASK 02 Visioning + Priorities [30 mins]

Based on the results of the first task, participants were asked to set out in words a vision for the site and the priorities as regards what the development should deliver in terms of social, community and environmental infrastructure.

How can this development address existing issues as well as creating new opportunities? Participants were asked to select a set of phrases or characteristics from a range provided to help develop a defining characteristics for the new development.

This task also asked about other places, either nearby in Hertfordshire or further afield, that could provide a positive inspiration for the new development or a steer away from mistakes from the past that should not be repeated.

TASK 03 Access + Movement [30 mins]

The next challenge for participants was to effectively connect the local allocations site with the adjacent urban context. The lead facilitator used a short slideshow (see pages 16 — 17) to give participants some ideas on the techniques that could be used. For example, safe pedestrian-only routes, shared surfaces and decent quality cycle routes.

The aim of this slide show was to broaden the debate away from just cars and parking towards more integrated thinking about streets and how they can help connect communities.

Groups were asked to layer into this task the technical data, such as slopes, topography, ecology and so on. The outputs by this stage in the afternoon were a sketch network of routes that showed ways in which the site can be plugged into the existing urban fabric.

TASK 04 Structure, Form + Detail [30 mins]

Once the network of streets and spaces had been established in the previous task, the final challenge for the groups was to add details regarding land uses, housing form, density and other details, as they felt appropriate based on their visioning work in the second task.

For example, groups were encouraged to mark on the sketch plans where they felt the non-residential uses could best be placed, where and what type of recreational routes could be introduced and how built form should address the adjacent landscape e.g. look outwards or turn its back and look inwards.

Groups were asked to take the final task as far as they felt able, with the help of the facilitation team. This final task concluded the workshop in terms of the productive element of the event, and was followed by a shared feedback session.

Best Practice in Urban Design

... or things to consider over the next 60 minutes

After the completion of Task 01 and Task 02, the lead facilitator explored the group results through a shared feedback session. Photographs of each of the group's work was projected onto the big screen so that all workshop participants could see the results.

This was followed by a short slideshow that gave all participants a brief insight into the issues they should consider during Task 03 and Task 04, when they were asked to examine the issues of access and movement together with urban structure, form and detail. The purpose of this slideshow was to provide a break in proceedings, give participants a chance to reflect on their work and give them some useful design ideas before they began the next phases in the process. Shown here are some key extracts from that slideshow.

Integrated Thinking

Think about these four key issues in sequence, clockwise from the top. This will ensure no design principle is overlooked and that each issue is addressed at the appropriate time.



Walkable Neighbourhoods

Can mixed-uses areas that comprise shops, community facilities and schools, be surrounded by residential areas to create a compact walkable neighbourhood? This is vital if we are to reduce dependency on the private car.



Green Spaces

If green spaces are to be retained within the development, think carefully about how they can be integrated. Some spaces can be overlooked by new development (see illustration) in the form of a green or pocket park to ensure they are cared for and feel safe to use. Others can be more remote and isolated but they are likely to be used less often and less intensively.



Different Generations

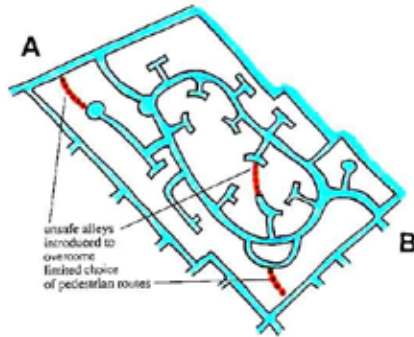
Think about how different generations might use the new place. This includes the elderly as well as young children and families. Many recent housing developments have failed to consider the wide range of abilities, likes and dislikes of different demographic groups yet one of the measures of successful of place-making is how effectively different groups are integrated.

As an example, this toy shop in Spain (below) has been designed with a door for children and one for adults, adding an element of delight to the street scene. Meanwhile, a new housing development outside Bristol (bottom) has an expensive new green space but has banned ball games and bicycles. Why? Who is this space for? These issues need to be considered early in the design process.



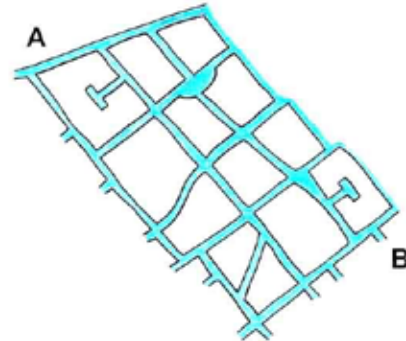
Fragmented Network

Avoid creating a fragmented network of big fast roads (below middle) with few connections as these can easily get congested at key junctions and deter walking and cycling. Avoid pedestrian-only alleyways (bottom) as these feel unsafe for many people and only make car use more likely.



Integrated Network

Create a flexible grid of well-connected streets and lanes to ensure good opportunities for walking and cycling; use cul-de-sac streets sparingly and carefully integrate car parking (both photos) into the street scene.



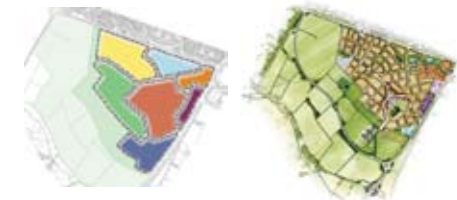
Streets Last A Long Time

While land uses change fairly frequently (e.g. a shop can become an office) and buildings can be demolished and rebuilt after many years, streets tend to stay forever. Getting them in the right place is therefore more important than knowing exactly which vehicles will use them and when.



Character Areas + Density

On larger sites, it may be possible to think about different areas of character rather than a place of more uniform design. This character could be informed by different housing density. Can the more dense areas of development be clustered around the mixed uses areas to help deliver a walkable neighbourhood? Can lower density development be located along a rural edge? What sort of edge condition will result? How will the development be viewed from afar?





The workshop brought together elected members, house builders and residents.

02 WORKSHOP RESULTS

“These aren’t easy decisions but all places are either growing or declining”

Quote from the introductory slideshow to the workshop event.

“Taking part in this event does not necessarily equate to acceptance of the development”

Quote from the shared feedback session that concluded the workshop.

Consensus + Common Ground

One immediate area of consensus was a shared ambition from all participants that implementation of the LA1 Local Allocation should deliver some direct benefits for the existing local centre around Henry Wells Square. The Grovehill Futures Neighbourhood Forum, one of the Government’s frontrunner neighbourhood planning pilots, has made the regeneration of the local centre one of its priorities.

Making sure that there are excellent links between the site and the local centre will be important if new residents are to frequent the existing local services and feel part of an established neighbourhood.

The inclusion of strong green and rural themes into the proposal was another area of common ground. Participants were aware of some of weaknesses of the Grovehill neighbourhood (e.g. an often a confusing layout with many car dominated residential areas) but they were clear that a strength was proximity to open countryside and the retention of significant stretches of quality open space, such as Margaret Lloyd Park. Using the LA1 development to enhance existing open spaces and to give new and existing residents improved access to countryside was seen as important to all who took part.

A further area of consensus was the need to protect the identity of Piccotts End and to ensure no coalescence with the Hemel Hempstead urban area.

Points of Difference

There was concern expressed at the workshop by some participants that the LA1 Local Allocation is a distraction from the real needs of the local community i.e. real improvements to the existing urban fabric — to the housing stock, the public realm and the local services and facilities. The investment, time and energy that will be necessary to implement LA1 could be used more directly and more effectively within the community.

Some participants felt that the housing implemented on the site should include smaller homes and more affordable dwellings to meet local needs. An interesting counterpoint to this was that larger, more expensive houses for owner-occupation on the site could help redress an imbalance in the neighbourhood, by bringing in outsiders (e.g. business owners, entrepreneurs) who may start to see Grovehill as a desirable neighbourhood and these outsiders could help give the local economy a boost.

Areas for Further Examination

There was no clear consensus around access to the northern part of the allocation site by vehicle, although there was strong support for good walking and cycling routes in this area. Further work will be needed to test how a good selection of connections can be achieved. This may require the opening up of what are currently cul-de-sac streets in the surrounding area and this will undoubtedly be contentious as the master planning work progresses.

Task 01

What Is There Now?

The main focus of public services and facilities in the local area is at Henry Wells Square. The cluster of uses include shops, health services, public houses and schools.

New Investment Needed

Although there is a reasonable range and choice of facilities, there was a feeling at the workshop that these will require expansion if they are to accommodate the increased pressure upon them brought about by the new development. Potential capacity issues at the health centre (situated to the east of the site) were highlighted with one workshop group concluding that it would be better to extend the existing facility rather than to create a new one.

Limited Congestion

There were no significant issues raised with current vehicular routes around the allocation site. However the Link Road / Aycliffe Drive roundabout suffers occasional congestion. Participants felt new development should not be allowed exacerbate this congestion.

School Capacity

Residents of the area believe that Astley Cooper Secondary School (situated to the north east of the site) has the capacity to hold more students from the new development.

Integrated Development

Taking all of the above into consideration, it is clear that those that took part in the workshop are looking for integration between new and existing residents — nobody wanted an “us and them” situation to develop.

To prevent this, rather than implementing new facilities that could potentially isolate the new development from the rest of the community, residents should be encouraged to feel that existing local facilities are theirs too. The fresh developer investment required to deliver the allocation site needs to be felt in a positive way by existing local services and businesses through an “uplift” brought about by increased footfall and general reinvestment in existing facilities.



The “Grovehill Future” project is being run by the Neighbourhood Forum. One of its main aims is the regeneration of the local centre. How can investment at the LA1 site allocation assist the forum in this key aim and ambition?



The edge of the allocation can be seen on the left of the photograph, its proximity to residential frontages from Rannoch Walk clearly evident.



Narrow pedestrian-only alleyways link Rannoch Walk to the allocation site. Achieving suitable vehicle access to the northern part of the LA1 site is a challenge.



Summary Plan Task 01 — What Is There Now?

Task 02

Visioning + Priorities

The second task asked participants to develop a vision statement and a set of priorities for the new development. The results from each group are set out here, supported by the additional notes generated throughout the workshop process.

Consensus + Common Ground

There was a clear view that car-dominated designs, of the sort predominant in New Town residential layouts, such as those in Grove Hill, are to be avoided in this new urban extension. The places name-checked by participants in the “but unlike” task suffer from an emphasis on the car at the expense of the pedestrian experience.

The other area of consensus was the need to make this new development feel green and open. Easy access to surrounding countryside was seen as a real selling point as regards quality of life. It was accepted that this edge location might suffer in terms of access to the town centre and centres of employment but its rural-urban edge was very important and this needs to be a strong theme of the new development.

Areas for Further Examination

The recurring theme from all groups was on the positive landscape qualities and how these could and should be harnessed into the new development. Exactly how this is achieved is a question for detailed design work. There is a risk that development may become disjointed and fragmented if landscape wedges, green pockets and other small areas of non-developable land are introduced. This can hamper the “walkability” of the new development. The subsequent master planning work will be required to look at this particular aspect in more detail.



Crawley Drive in Grovehill (top and above) was cited by participants as a place that successfully combines landscape and built environment to create a positive sense of character. This a place that new development at Grovehill could learn from.

VISION STATEMENT 01

This new place will offer

good green spaces, good friendly environment,
easy access to the countryside.
affordable houses for families
a good mixture of affordable houses.
redevelopment of existing shops
strong sense of community
to be continued into new development
open market housing to attract businesses
views of open countryside
good access to schools.

similar to

Milton Keynes — the structure, the access, the open spaces and the businesses

but unlike

Watford — classic built up town
that feels overcrowded
Luton — feels over developed
and acts as over spill from London

VISION STATEMENT 02

This new place will offer

good green spaces around the houses
 keep and extend bus services
 smaller houses for first time buyers
 or those downsizing
 space for children to play
 good walking opportunities especially into
 nearby countryside
 sustainable design with energy efficient
 buildings and sustainable drainage
 well-designed + adequate car parking
 mix of garden sizes

similar to

Poundbury

Crawley Drive — houses surrounding green
 space that help develop community spirit

Chesham — where houses have a 'low profile'
 and step down the hillside

but unlike

Woodhall Farm — poor arrangement of car
 parking leading to problems and annoyance
 between neighbours

VISION STATEMENT 03

This new place will offer

improved sense of community
 good connections with existing neighbourhoods
 green infrastructure
 good green spaces
 good countryside access
 good walking opportunities
 views of open countryside.
 high density but also high quality
 everyday sports facilities e.g. astroturf

similar to

Welwyn Garden City
 Northridge Way
 Boxmoor
 Piccotts End
 Leverstock Green

but unlike

Livingstone Walk
 Waveney — complicated walkways + poor
 quality garage blocks
 Washington Avenue — where the layout
 encourages speeding



Boxmoor (top) and Northridge Way (above) were two places cited by participants as having aspirational qualities and with positive lessons for the Grovehill development.



Specific concerns about the form of development around Washington Avenue was the dominance of hard surfaces and car parking infrastructure, such as garages within the ground floor of buildings. These combine in a negative way to “deaden” the life and activity at street level.

MARCHMONT FARM (LA1) EXTRA COMMENTS FROM THE GROUPS

- Does the design need to respect the slope by having houses going ‘downwards’ in terraces?
- Put landscaping in as soon as possible, such as new hedgerows to give it time to mature
- Avoid overly ‘hard’ places like Washington Avenue (see right)
- Consider evergreen trees and deciduous trees to maintain a green feel twelve months of the year
- Sustainable drainage (SUDS) will be vital
- Consider using SUDS as a feature and to help prevent flooding down slope.
- Youth facilities and Scout Hut would be welcome additions on the site.
- Bridle ways need clear signage
- Footpaths need clear designation and signage
- Slowing down traffic on the link streets to and from the site will help with noise reduction
- Nursery places and school places for under fives are vital
- Enhance and enlarge the Margaret Lloyd Park and continue to protect wildlife (e.g. newts)
- Position and orientation of housing will determine pathways and the sitting of refuse bins.

Nieuw Vennep, Netherlands was considered a good place to learn from: It has a good range of small-scale local services (right, top); well-designed streets with active ground floors and prominent corners (right, middle); and it integrates well with its landscape context, in this instance the classic low-lying flat-lands of northern Europe.



VISION STATEMENT 04

This new place will offer

secure family play spaces between houses
 good green spaces
 views over open countryside
 smaller houses for first time buyers and for families downsizing but with good sized rooms

similar to

Eindhoven + Nieuw Vennepe, Netherlands

places with planned family spaces
 integrated into new housing
 different coloured road surfaces
 near to housing access
 design to be in-keeping with existing area

but unlike

places with three storey houses (such as those on Washington Avenue) or very long terraces



Livingstone Walk (top) was seen as having a confusing layout making it difficult to walk around easily. Washington Avenue (above) has a series of small cut-through links between garages that are unpleasant and feel unsafe. Both these negative design features need to be avoided in the new development.



Waveney in Grovehill (top) also suffers from poor quality connections. Streets that appear to be designed only for the car (Washington Avenue, above) deter other forms of welcome and legitimate street activity, such as children's play.

Task 03

Access + Movement

The third task was focussed around access and movement issues. This was a critical stepping stone in the process as it allowed participants to make connections between what exists in the surrounding area now and the proposed development sites.

Poor Connections

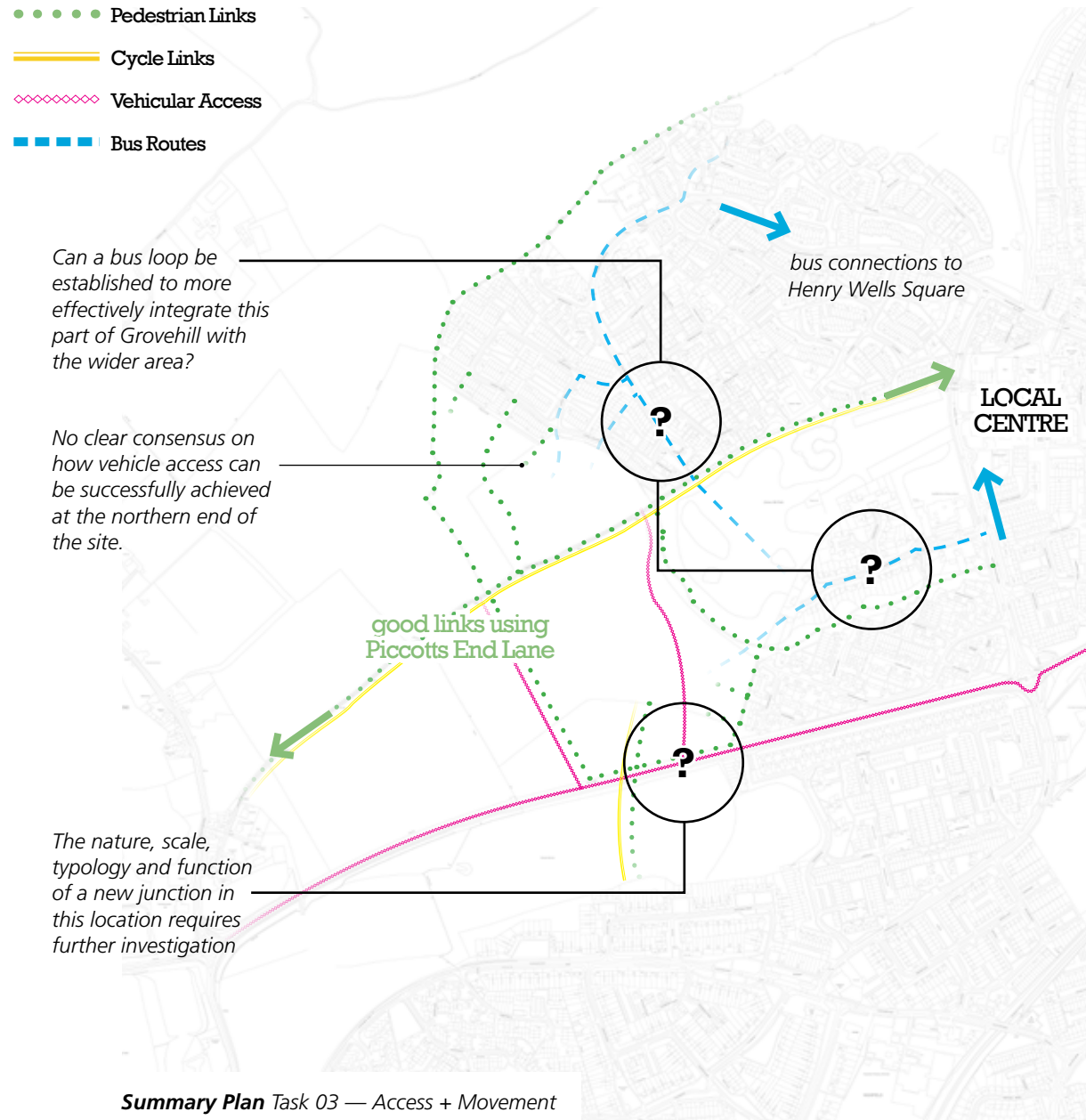
Access and movement opportunities through the adjacent urban area were felt to be poor quality by participants, especially for users of public transport. Those that took part were keen that the new development brings improvements to existing access and movement issues.

Using the woodland walks in fine weather and in daylight can be very pleasant but it is often an unpleasant experience at other times of the day and year. Many pedestrian routes through the urban area are fragmented and do not benefit from natural surveillance from adjacent buildings. Cycle-specific infrastructure was considered either infrequent or substandard. Some key road junctions experience a traffic build-up at certain peak hours.

Public Transport

This summary plan captures participants' wishes to extend the key bus route through the park to allow a connection from the end of Washington Avenue and Hunting Gate. This may prove impractical (and undesirable) given the special nature of the green space to be crossed but its visual expression on the plan captures the frustration at the present fragmented network.

New bus routes have also been located through the existing neighbourhood areas. There was a general feeling that public transport needs to be improved across the wider area and that the sites needs to "plug into" this improved network.



Pedestrian Connections

High quality footpaths were a main requirement for the new development. These were seen as preferable over vehicular routes in the northern part of the site as they were seen to not disturb the existing around Lomond Road and nearby streets. There was also call for a perimeter path, to extend from the site itself and wrap around the edge of the existing neighbourhoods to help connect the site with the countryside.

Recreational Routes

A long walking and cycling route was suggested, utilising Piccott Ends Lane. The route will run centrally through the allocation site, forming an accessible route for all new residents, both westwards towards Piccotts End and eastwards towards Henry Lloyd Square.

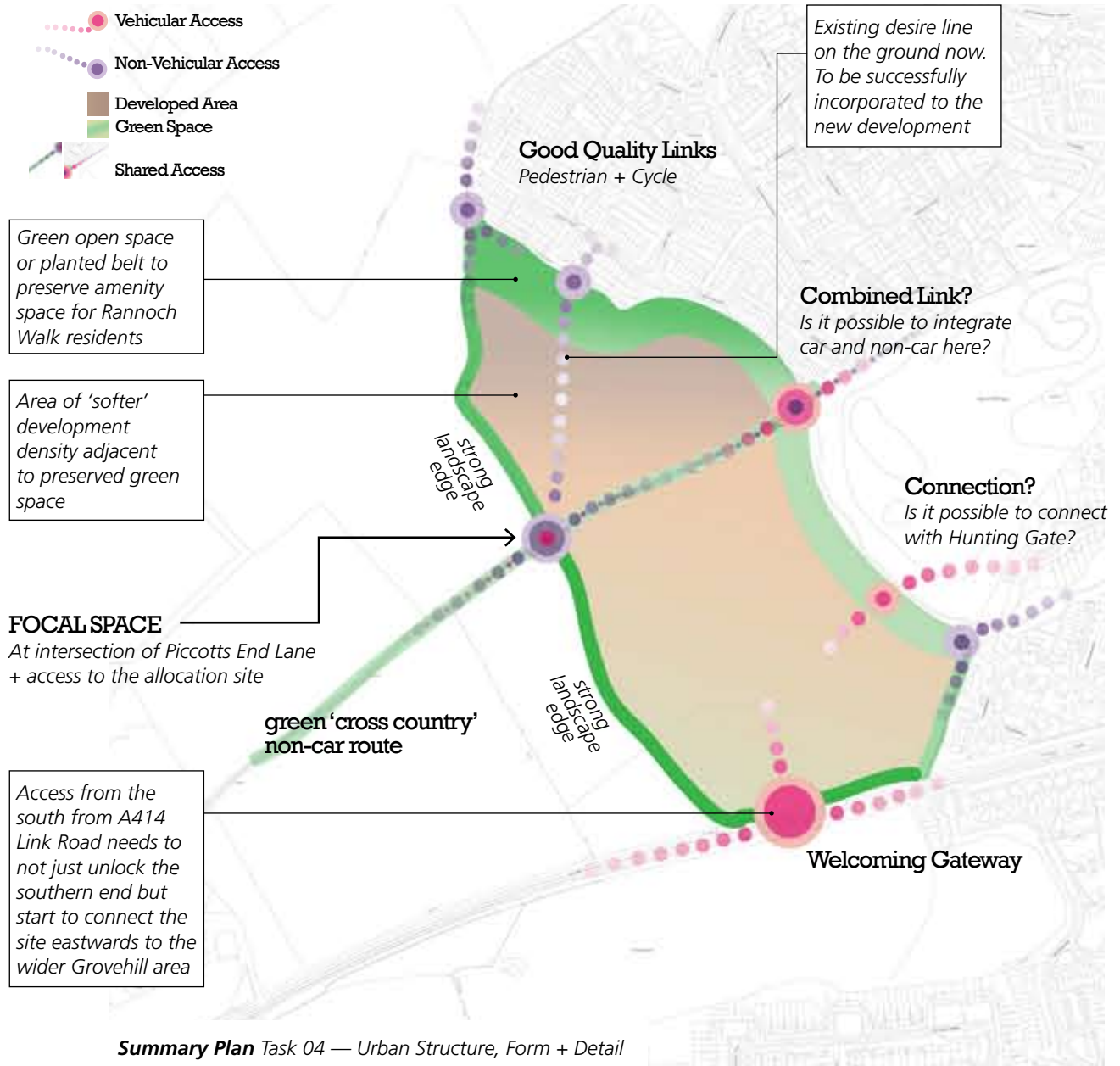
A vehicular access from the south of the site will provide relief to the network to the west (preventing the need for vehicles to enter the main Grovehill local centre before looping back on themselves). However, vehicle connections to the north remained undecided at the workshop. To be achieved successfully, these may require one of the smaller roads or narrower junctions to be modified.

Task 04

Urban Structure, Form + Detail

Piccotts End Lane

In this task, the participants expressed a desire for access lane to the west of the allocation site, following the existing route of Piccotts End Lane. Once beyond the allocation site, the route is surrounded by open land and provides a good access point to recreational countryside land.



Summary Plan Task 04 — Urban Structure, Form + Detail

Within the allocation sites itself, Piccotts End Lane could become a combined route for all modes of transport. The form, design and nature of this route could adopt “shared surface” characteristics to ensure each mode of transport is successfully accommodated.

This northern end of lane has the potential to connect to the wider urban area via Washington Avenue. This connection would not become the main access for vehicular traffic but it could become a limited local access route to the countryside and an extended Margaret Lloyd Park.

Vehicular Access

The preferred access for vehicular traffic, as expressed at the workshop, was to the south of the new development, connecting the site with the A414 Link Road. This keeps most traffic to the south of the site, away from the open access to the countryside to the north. A further access point may be possible from Hunting Gate, beside Margaret Lloyd Park. Participants wanted to open this road up and create an extended road into the main site. This will free traffic from the south and allow the vehicular traffic to filter out to the east, into the existing urban area.

There was concern that without multiple access points, the site will become dependant on just one or two points, that could easily become congested or be over-scaled in size to accommodate all vehicles.

Existing Desire Lines

Participants identified a strong desire line, a pathway in the form of an “... existing trodden-down path” across the fields, linking the Lomond Road area with Piccotts End Lane. Participants wanted this to be retained and incorporated into the new layout. Its retention would regularise access to the countryside beyond for existing residents, who have created an established, albeit informal, route here.

Countryside Access

As well as Piccotts End Lane, a further access point to and from the site can be found at the northerly point, wrapping around the outer edge of the built area. This too was identified for retention.

Another pedestrian route is found along the south-easterly point of the site, next to Margaret Lloyd Park. This park is a corridor for wildlife, an existing green resource it can only be created into a central local space for new and local residents.

Long Range Views

The access to countryside is predominantly located to the north of the site. Those participants who live in areas adjoining open fields are particularly keen that their existing long-range views are retained as far as possible.

Open Spaces

The need for open space in the development was not addressed directly by participants with the exception of one group, that suggested a consolidated focal open space within the centre of the site. The same group then developed an alternative approach, creating dispersed open space amongst the housing. No preference was noted but the group found this design experimentation interesting.

A point which was raised by several groups in the workshop was the need for drainage to the south to be adequate in capacity. Ideas for sustainable drainage systems, including permeable pavements, soakaways and other ecological measures need to be put into place to mitigate flood risk.

Landscape Details

All groups indicated a strong desire to keep an open space adjacent to existing residents living on the current outer edge of the built urban area. A green strip was proposed between new and existing housing, to be overlooked to ensure user safety. This “green setback” space could accommodate a public footpath and a children’s play area.

Existing residents wished to see tall and dense plantation to run along the western edge of the development. This would keep the new development theme consistent around a green and rural feel and also mitigate the risk of overly dominate views of the development from the west.

Mixed-Use

No groups were looking for non-residential uses facilities on the site as existing facilities found at Henry Lloyd Square are in need of regeneration. Ensuring good access from the new site development back to this existing mixed use heart will help increase footfall and ensure that existing businesses benefit from the new investment.

House Types

Residents expect new homes to be of good quality, affordable and want different styles/sizes to be integrated. One group said that the affordability issues was not such a concern and this site could include larger houses to rebalance the area. Grovehill Hill lacks “aspirational” housing, it was said, and this site could provide it.

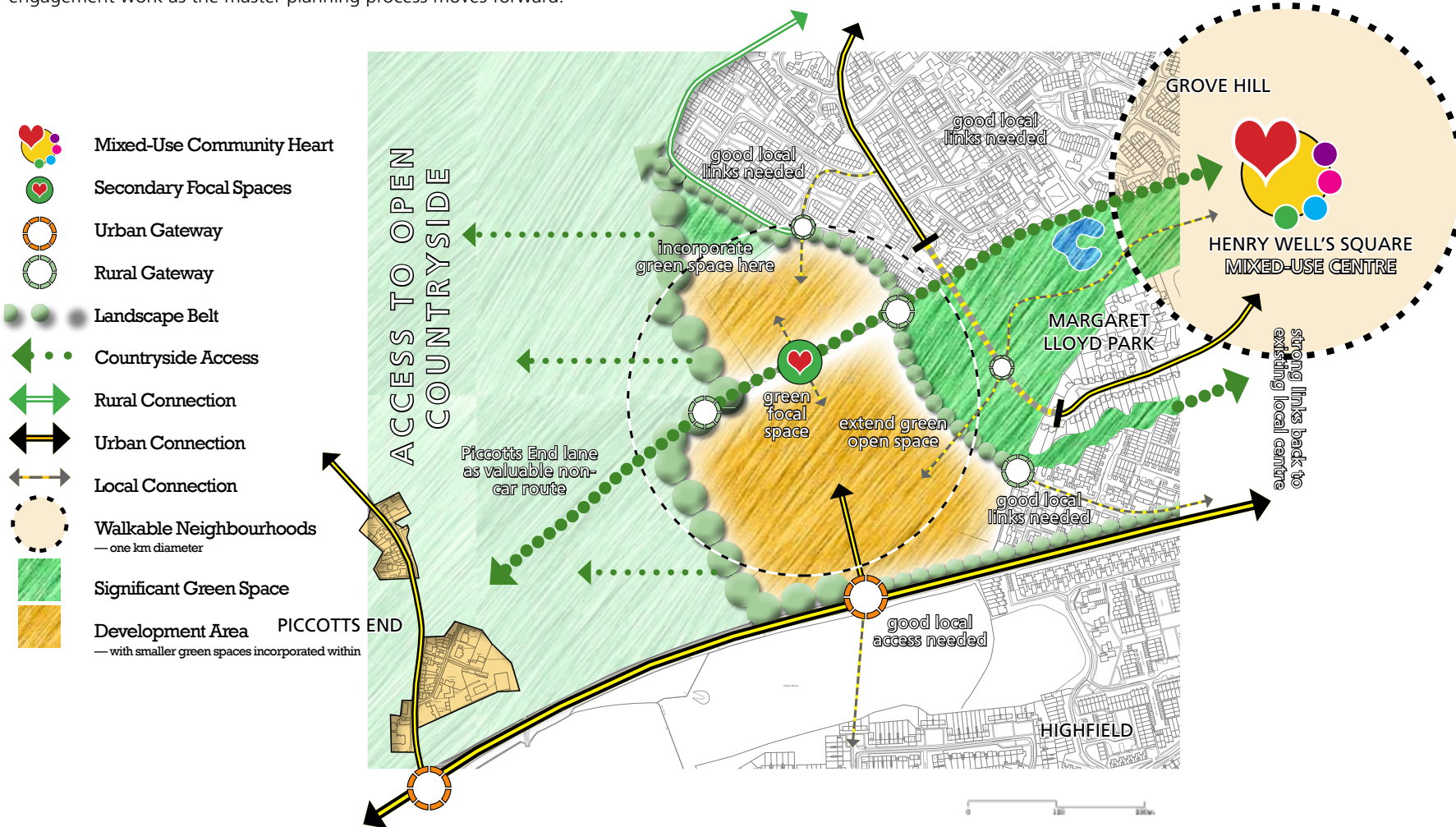
A main concern for all groups was to develop a green and rural feel for the site and to retain and enhance all existing footpaths that run through the site. This in itself will determine the finer details of layout and design. One group showed how they felt new houses could be arranged, following the topography and the contours of the land.

Urban Design Concept Plan

Bringing It Together

Based on the workshop outputs, an urban design concept plan has been prepared. This diagram begins to wrap the various strands of work from the participatory workshop into an overall guiding vision. This urban design concept should not be considered definitive as it is driven almost entirely by the limited consultation and engagement process undertaken thus far.

It now requires further analysis and testing from a technical perspective, including landscape assessments, transport, ecology, archeology and underground services through the master planning process. Refinements will also be sought from local stakeholders through further community engagement work as the master planning process moves forward.



URBAN DESIGN CONCEPT PLAN LA1 MARCHMONT FARM



Group discussion was an important element of the workshop format.

04 NEXT STEPS

Workshop Report

The results of the workshop were written up and interpreted by the facilitation team. This process included the creation of a series of summary plans for each task, new graphics to capture the emerging concepts and supporting text. It is this work that comprises this report. This report has been made available online by Dacorum Borough Council.

Future Consultation

The workshop process allowed the Council to gather all interested parties together and collate contact details. This will allow the Council to get in touch either by email or letter (depending upon which contact information has been recorded) with details of future consultation events.

Master Plan

The Council will be meeting again with the landowners and their urban design teams to begin drafting a concept master plan for the LA1 Local Allocation. This master plan will be directly informed by the workshop discussions and outputs, including the urban design concept plan, and also by other technical work, such as detailed landscape, ecological and transport assessments.

Further Technical Work

There is still further technical work that needs to be finalised. For example, an archaeological study is currently underway and depending upon what this finds it could have an impact upon what goes where on the site.



Participants mark valued local services on the plan using coloured dots.

Appendix A

Key Contacts

— Laura Wood

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— Richard Eastham

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Attendees List

Participants

L.	Aitlkaboud
Roger	Andrews
Derek	Baulch
Alexander	Bhinder
Maggie	Chandler
Martin	Cotton
Mike	Devlin
Terence	Douris
Adrienne	Gear
Mr + Mrs	Gurney
Paul	Harris
Stanley	Hartland
Martin	Hicks
Victoria	Lindsey
Kevin	Minier
Mr + Mrs	Narroway
Michael	Nidd
Patricia	Nidd
Michelle	Osbourn
Paul	Pedlingham
Angela	Preston
Ian	Smiles
Robert	Spooner
Craige	Thorpe
Colette	Wyatt-Lowe

Observers

Loretta	Asare
Laura	Badham
Richard	Blackburn
Lizzie	Cowan
Mike	Evans
Nigel	Gibbs
Mark	Jackson
Neil	Murphy
Matt	Richardson
Laura	Wood

Many thanks to all who gave up their time to take part in the workshop.

The Facilitation Team

Feria Urbanism is a design and planning studio that specialises in urban strategies and public participation.

We have organised and led many interesting and meaningful public engagement and participation events. Design workshops, exhibitions and consultation events have been an integral part of many of our projects. We have developed a range of successful techniques that allow people in both rural and urban areas to influence and improve the places in which they live. We have worked closely with parish councils, local community groups and we also support borough and district councils in their work with local residents. Our work with rural communities in Kent is featured as a best practice case study in the recent RIBA guidance on Neighbourhood Planning.



Clockwise, from top left:
*Richard Eastham, Antonia Morgan, Eleana Orr
and Esra Abdelrahman.*



Antonia Morgan (centre) facilitates a group as they assess local connections.

Appendix B

Copies of Workshop Task Sheets

Marchmont Farm (LA1)

TASK 01 | WHAT IS THERE NOW?

In this first task you are asked to mark on the plan the existing features that give the adjacent built up area its identity and quality. Write alongside the stickers the names of the features and any comments you feel are relevant. List alongside the plan the facilities or features you think the area is currently lacking.

GROUP

KEY QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

01 EXISTING SERVICES + FACILITIES

What are the important local facilities that exist nearby already? Use the stickers provided to mark on the plan.

Are any of these facilities in need of improvement?

HINT > Think about primary schools, doctors' surgeries, shops and community centres.

02 NEW SERVICES + FACILITIES

Based on what you have marked up, what are the important local facilities that you think the new development needs to include or support?

Will these be best placed on the site, or "off-site" within existing areas?

HINT > Think about the missing services and facilities that can help create a more balanced community. Avoid duplication of existing facilities. You need to be realistic about what this new development can support.



Use the stickers provided to mark on the plan the following important features:

- Shops
- Health
- Community / Sport
- Education
- Other 01
- Other 02

Marchmont Farm (LA1)

TASK 03 | ACCESS + MOVEMENT

In this task you will start to connect the site with the existing built-up area. By drawing routes and connections across the site you will begin to structure the development. Please refer to the technical information (e.g. aerial photos, landscape maps) before beginning this task and factor in the constraints that you have identified as being critical.



KEY QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

01 CONNECTIONS

What are the most appropriate access points to the site? Why?

How can new and existing areas be effectively connected?

HINT > At this stage, do not think about which mode of transport will use each link (e.g. bus, cycle or car) just think about the most effective connections.

02 WALKING

Which parts of the site will make the best walking routes?

HINT > Think about recreational routes (e.g. countryside access) but also "utility trips" (e.g. walking to shops, school and other facilities). These routes need to feel safe and secure.

03 CYCLING

Mark on the plan routes that you think will be attractive and convenient for cyclists.

HINT > These can be safely integrated into traffic-streets or walking routes or be bespoke cycle routes. They need to give cyclists an advantage over car drivers!



04 BUSES

Think about a bus route. Where would this go and how would it link with existing routes?

Where should bus stops be located along this route?

05 CARS

Are there any existing traffic issues nearby to this site? For example, problems with on-street parking. How could these areas be improved?

Are there routes through the adjacent built-up area that should be avoided by new residents if driving cars?

Which parts of the site should be kept "car free" if any? If so, why?

HINT > Restricting cars to only a few select routes can lead to congestion; spreading traffic across many routes can be more effective. What is the balance needed?

Marchmont Farm (LA1)

TASK 04 | URBAN STRUCTURE, FORM + DETAIL

Based on the structure you have developed in the previous task, start to add the details about landscape, countryside access, open space and new housing clusters. As this work develops, you can go back to revisit your previous sheet, if you want to.

GROUP

KEY QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

01 LANDSCAPE

How can new buildings be fitted into the landscape? Try to hide it? Or celebrate it? What is the best approach?

What landscape features within the site should be retained or replaced?

What additional landscape features should be provided? What form should this take?

Are there any particular views to protect?

How should the new edge be planned and designed?

HINT > If it is a soft landscape edge, how can this be designed?

02 COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS

How new and existing residents can access the countryside?

HINT > Think about walking and cycling routes reaching out from the new development into the surrounding countryside.

How should Piccotts End Lane be most effectively used?

How can operational farmland or sensitive ecological areas be protected?



03 OPEN SPACE

What open spaces should be included?

HINT > Think of the different types e.g. meadow, woodland, leisure space, formal or informal play, allotments.

Where should these open space be located? Why?

How should open spaces be arranged and managed? How will they connect with existing green areas?

04 NEW HOUSING

What size and type of housing do you feel is needed for this site?

How should new housing be arranged?

HINT > Should new housing "look outwards" or "look inwards"?

Where is the most appropriate place within the development to accommodate mobile homes for travellers, if needed?

05 PHASING

Which facilities that should be delivered by a particular time?

Which parts of the site should be built first?



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Marchmont Farm LA1

COMMUNITY WORKSHOP
FINAL REPORT July 2013