

4 Creating the Urban Structure

This chapter introduces the key elements of the master plan and the urban design objectives and principles which have influenced the form of the development. The principles of sustainable development identified in section 2.5 and the environmental objectives set out in section 3.4 have been central in defining the mix of uses, density and form of the development. The analysis of urban form and local vernacular in section 3.3 has ensured that the development reflects, where appropriate, the character of successful small towns and villages in Kent, whilst still providing scope for contemporary design solutions.

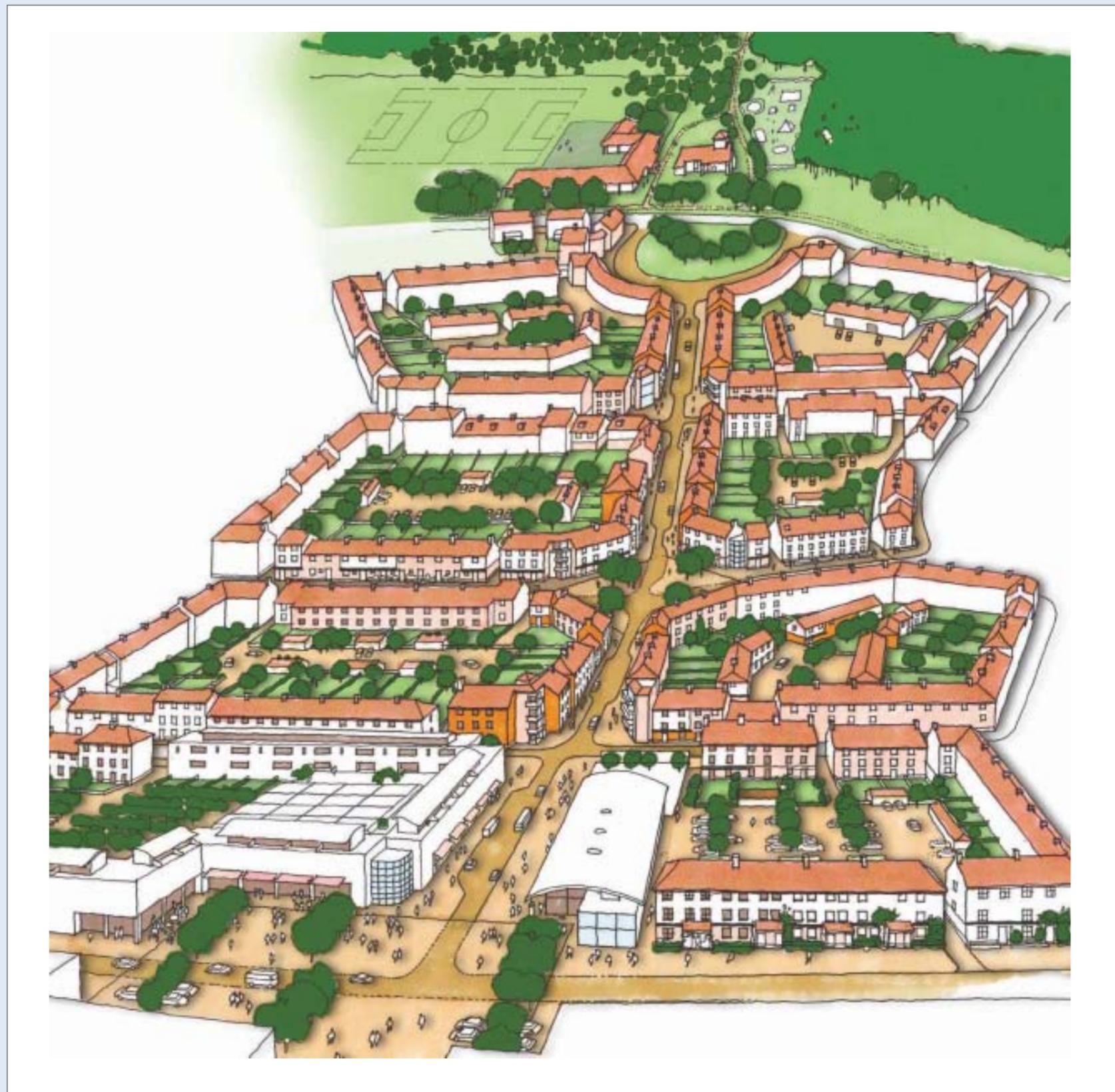
4.1 The Master Plan

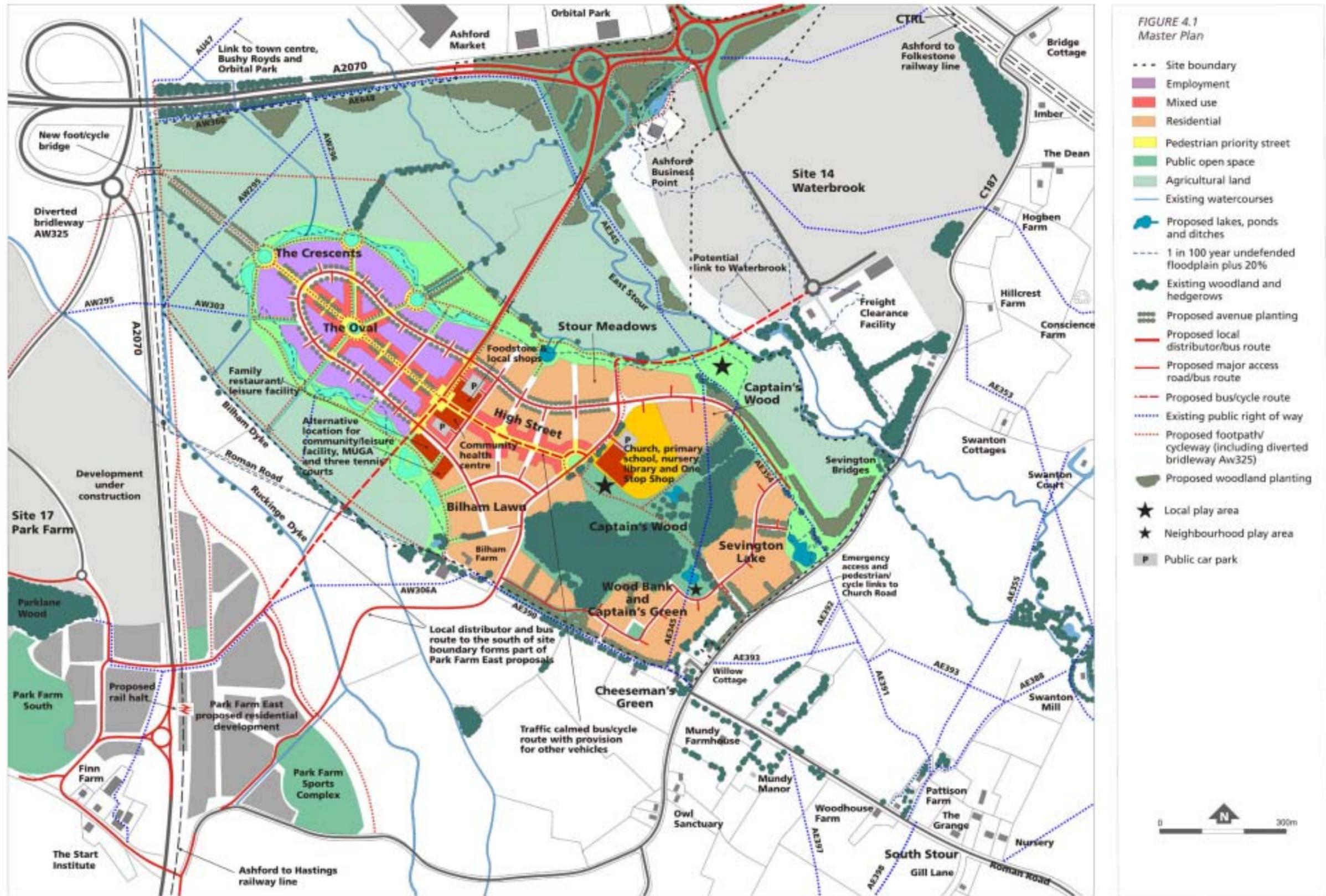
The form of the master plan illustrated overleaf in Figure 4.1 is based upon the broad land use pattern for Development Site 13 as depicted on the Proposals Map to the Local Plan. The South Willesborough Dykes Site of Nature Conservation Interest (which encompasses Captain's Wood and the land either side of the East Stour River and the Ruckinge Dyke system) will remain free from built development, as will the wider green corridors alongside the two watercourses.

Built development will lie outside the 100 year undefended floodplain of the East Stour, ignoring the presence of the Aldington Reservoir upstream of the site. A substantial area of land, therefore, will remain in agricultural use.

To encourage efficient use of land and in keeping with the guidance given in PPG3, average net residential densities will be of the order of 36 dwellings per hectare (dph) over the entire scheme. The residential land on the north side of Captain's Wood is of sufficient size to accommodate 700 houses at an average net density of 40dph. The land on the opposite (south) side of Captain's Wood, in the vicinity of Cheeseman's Green, could accommodate a further 400 houses, at an average net density of 30dph.

Detached houses on large plots will blend into the countryside edge adjacent to Church Road and the existing properties at Cheeseman's Green.





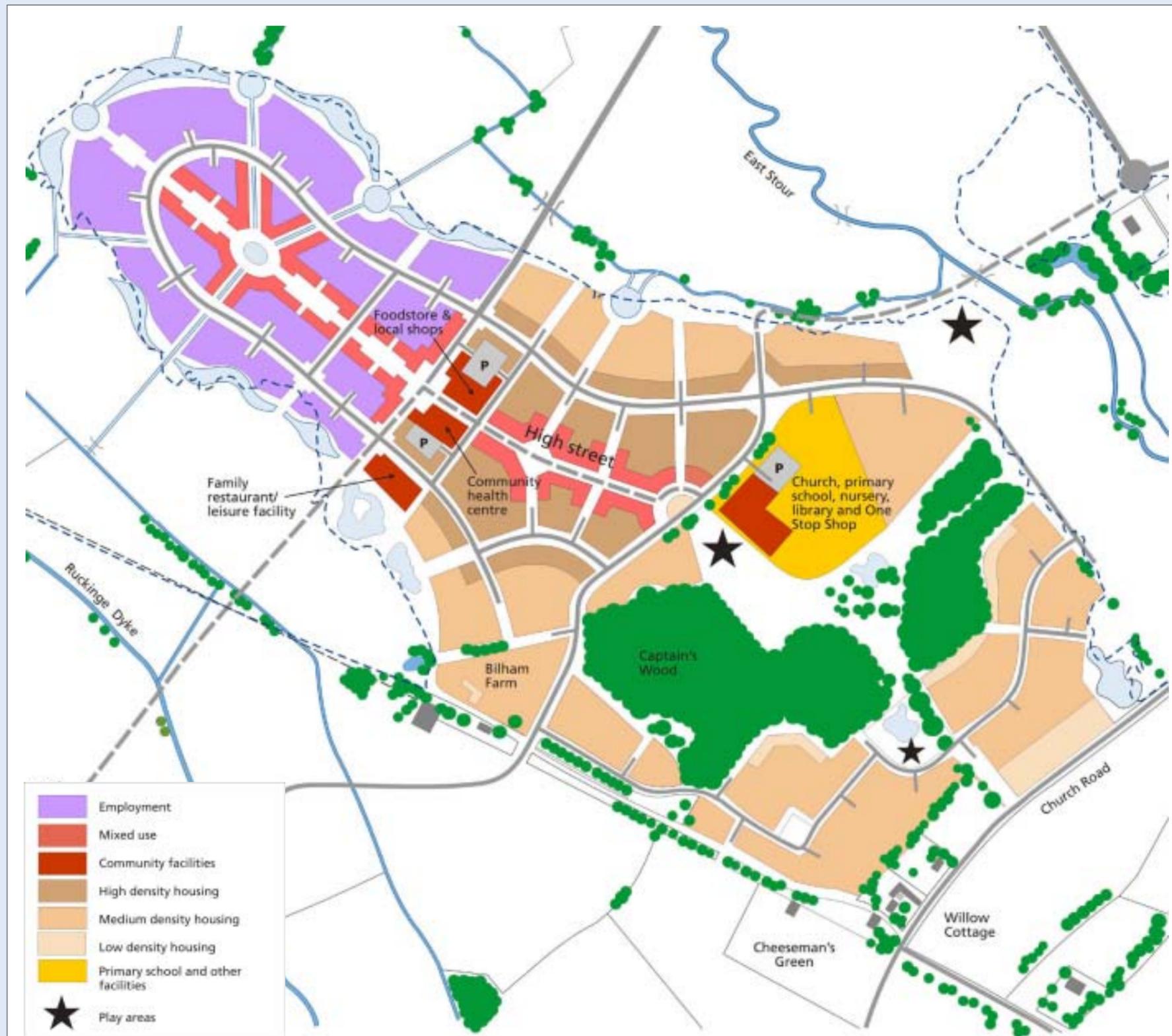


Figure 4.2 Land Use and Density

4.2 Land Use, Density and House Size Mix

The following land use and density principles have been adopted and are shown in Figure 4.2:

- The central spine, including the High Street, is made up of higher density housing with a mix of community and leisure uses, and places of work;
- A gradual decrease in density occurs as the distance from the High Street increases;
- Higher density forms of housing are located along major access roads to encourage “street activity”;
- The employment/mixed use/residential areas promote opportunities for potential occupants to live and work in the same area, thus reducing the need to travel to work;
- Promoting a mix of uses provides activity at different times of the day/evening;
- Variation in household size and tenure within local character areas will contribute to a mixed community, avoiding the allocation of a single typology to specific areas;
- Mixing tenure will promote social inclusion, and social/affordable housing will be indistinguishable from private housing;
- Very low density housing is proposed adjacent to Church Road and the existing properties at Cheeseman’s Green.

As noted above, the average net residential density at East Stour Village is 36dph. This strikes a balance between the guidance set out in PPG3 which encourages housing development which makes more efficient use of land (defined in para 58 of PPG3 as between 30 - 50dph) and those policies in the Local Plan which make provision for large detached houses and the need to sensitively handle any development towards the east of the site.

In line with the site specific requirements of the Local Plan (para S13.11) 20% of the total housing provision will be allocated for affordable housing with the remainder for private ownership. Based on the requirements of Ashford Borough Council, the anticipated house size mix of the affordable housing is addressed in section 8.5 below. For the private ownership element, 25% of the total number of private dwellings would be 1/2 bed units, 35% 3 bed units and 40% 4+ bed units.

This mix reflects both marketability and the desire to create a balanced community. The mix has been amended from that set out in the Environmental Statement to reflect changing social trends (in particular the increase in single person households) and the requirement set out in the Ashford Borough Local Plan (paragraph S13.11) that a variety of housing types should be provided, ranging from flats to large detached houses.



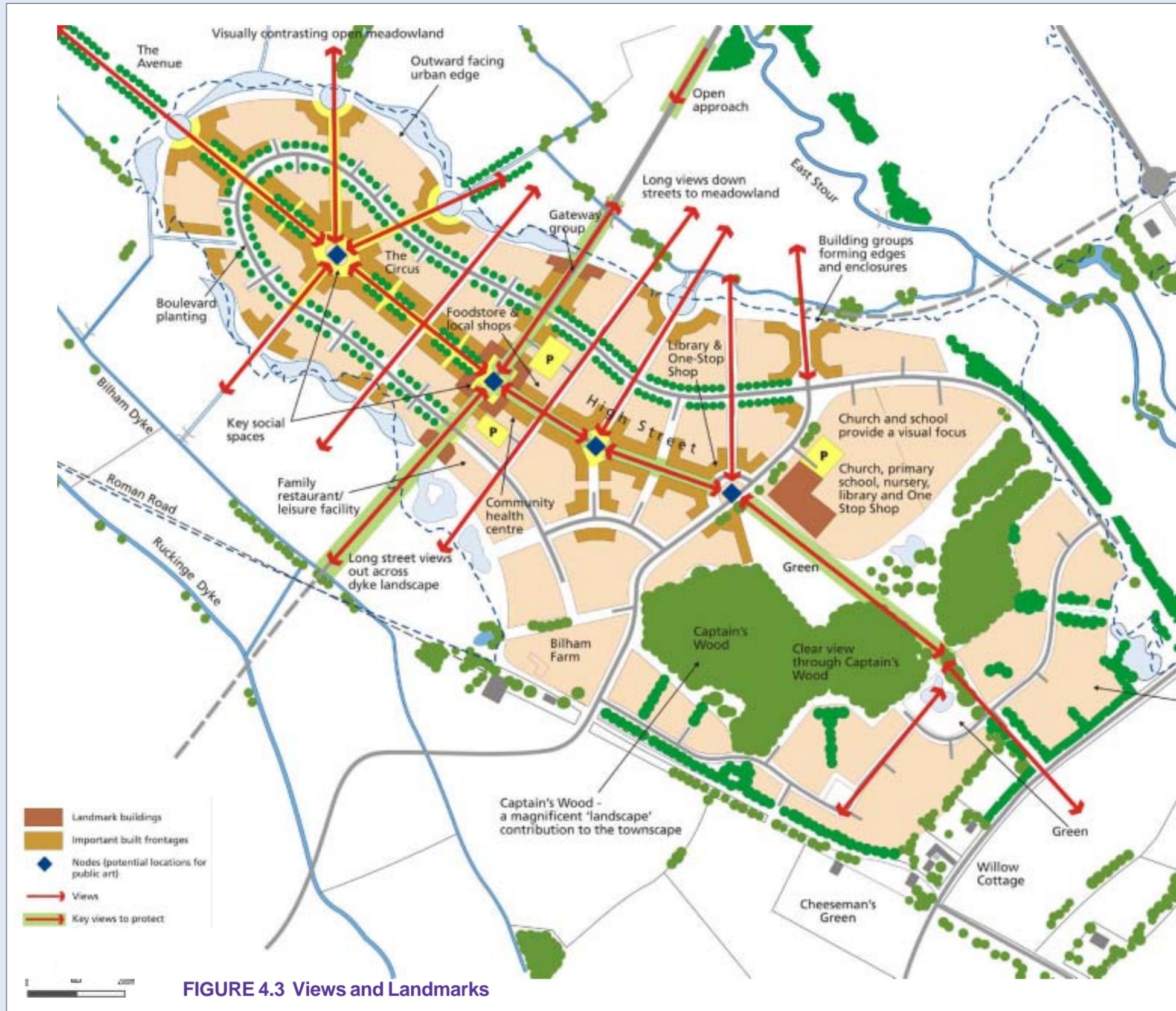


FIGURE 4.3 Views and Landmarks

4.3 Views and Landmarks

The scale, massing and height of the proposed development has been considered in relation to the topography, the general pattern of building heights in the area, and views, vistas and landmarks. The legibility and landmarks of the new village are illustrated in Figure 4.3. The following design principles are proposed:

- Development should optimise existing vistas, for example to Sevington Church, and create new ones;
- Key views will help occupants and visitors to navigate around the village;
- Major street junctions should be designed as active places and could incorporate features such as entrances to major facilities, bus stops, information points and public art;
- Corner buildings should consolidate the urban composition;
- Active frontages provide an interface between the building and "street activity";
- Edges and transitions should have an appropriate frontage, facing onto the open countryside;
- Civic and community buildings should be located around public spaces;
- The primary school and church should provide key focal points;
- Public art should be used selectively to reinforce the character of urban spaces.



FIGURE 4.4 Public Realm

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The public realm consists of the network of streets, squares, greens and other spaces within the village. The starting point has been the re-establishment of the traditional street as the focus of the community. It is where people of all ages come together and interact.

The public realm for the development, shown on Figure 4.4, has been designed to provide a hierarchy of connected spaces, for example:

- Civic spaces which form the core of the district centre and mixed use quarter, providing pedestrian priority within a high quality environment;
- Street spaces such as the High Street, combine the provision of primary vehicular access to the village, with a safe pedestrian and cyclist environment, while reflecting a traditional street pattern in terms of spatial form and relationship to adjacent frontages;
- Minor access roads which reflect the historic streets of Kent villages in terms of their spatial form, and will be designed to achieve a traffic-calmed environment;
- Mews and courtyards which are primarily residential in character and paved as shared surfaces;
- Minor roads and private drives which are used to serve housing fronting onto Captain's Wood and the East Stour Valley.

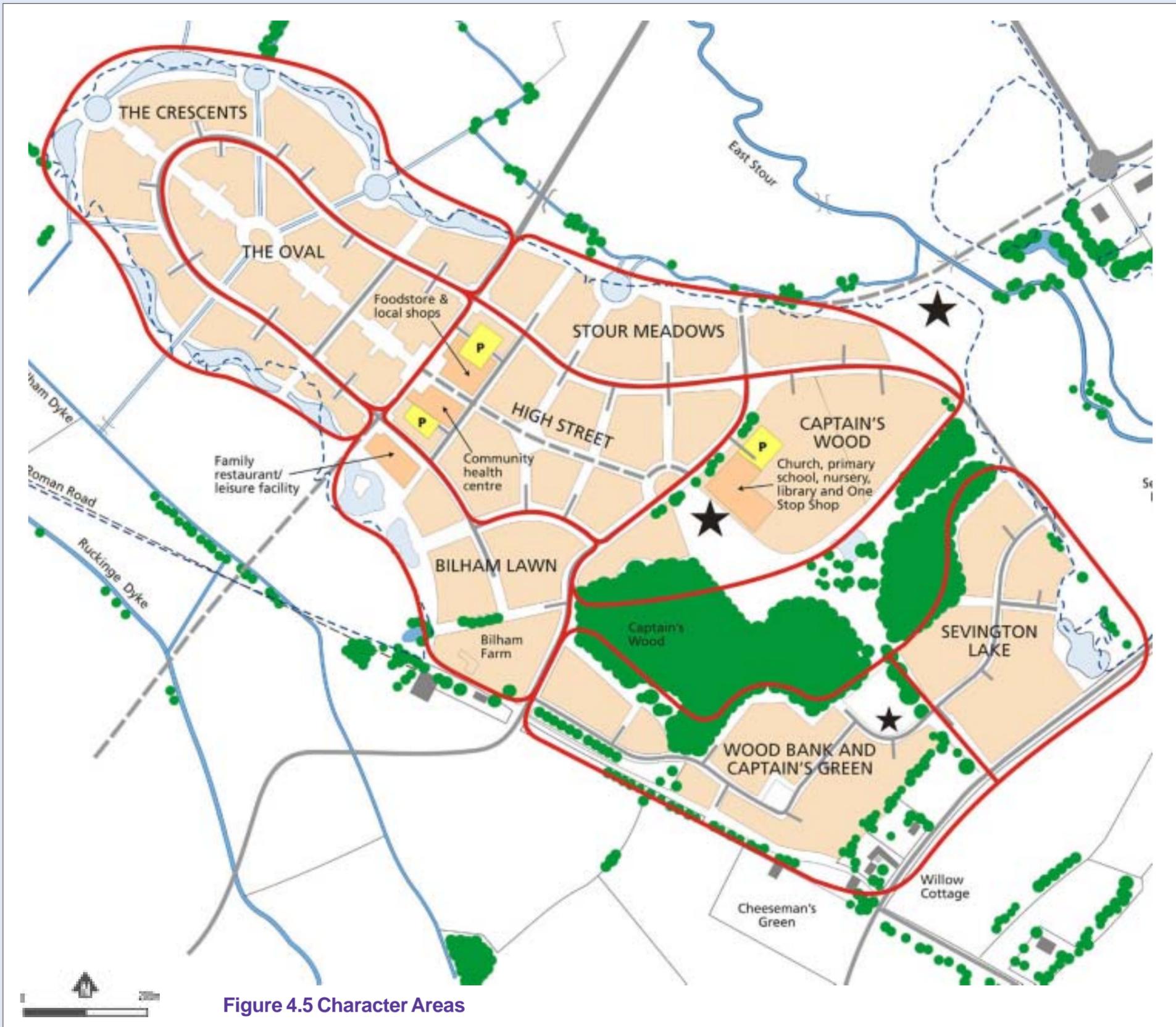


Figure 4.5 Character Areas

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The Local Plan states that the design of each neighbourhood “should create a sense of place including attractive streets and open spaces and avoiding bland suburban layouts” (para S13.9). This approach has been adopted and the proposals for the new community are structured around a series of character areas which will:

- Each have its own identity and sense of place;
- Establish a formal clear hierarchy of connected spaces;
- Use local materials, building methods and details in enhancing local distinctiveness;
- Respond to local building forms and patterns of development;
- Integrate the new development into its landscape setting;
- Combine the creative re-interpretation of local practices with the latest technologies.

The master plan is divided into the following character areas, as illustrated in Figure 4.5 :

- The High Street
- The Oval
- Stour Meadows
- Bilham Lawn
- Captain's Wood
- Captain's Green
- Wood Bank
- Sevington Lake
- The Crescents

The High Street

The High Street, which will run through the middle of the village from Captain's Wood to the main crossroads, has been designed to function as the heart of the village. The school, nursery and library/One Stop Shop (incorporating other community-based services such as a citizen's advice bureau and tourist information point) will be at one end of the street by Captain's Wood, while the foodstore and health centre will be at the other end near the village crossroads. Public open spaces and meeting points will be located at either end of the High Street and at its mid-point.

A mix of uses will be accommodated along the High Street (retail facilities, community facilities, live/work units, flats and terraced residential properties) in buildings that are designed to be flexible to allow for a range of uses over time and on different floors of the building, as can be found in traditional high streets. The concept of the High Street emerged out of the Planning and Design workshops and was seen to offer benefits over the previous scheme (a split centre with commercial/community activities located in two separate areas) in terms of greater viability, vitality and shorter walking distances between facilities.

Buildings will be mostly three storeys in height, but with occasional four storey flats, typically with commercial and community facilities at ground level and residential accommodation above. The housing will be relatively high density (up to 50dph net). Sheltered accommodation would be particularly appropriate in this location, as the pedestrian street provides convenient access to the community facilities, shops and bus stops located nearby.

The Oval

An area of mixed use development will be provided alongside the High Street. Grouped around an "oval", this area will consist of a mixture of two, three and four storey buildings comprising small offices, workshops,



studios and high density residential accommodation (up to 50dph net). The central paved "oval" is the focus of six avenues which radiate out to provide views and connections to the surrounding landscape.

The aim of creating employment and other facilities close to people's homes, is to reduce the need to travel and, by avoiding the "desertion" of many workplaces outside of the normal working day, give the area an added vitality. The buildings should be designed so that uses can either be mixed vertically within live/work units or horizontally in

separate buildings within development clusters and also to provide opportunities for smaller businesses and starter-units to be established and grow. A contemporary design solution for the buildings should also be encouraged.

The use of white facing materials is recommended as a unifying design element within the mixed use/employment area and residential properties on the perimeter of the development facing onto the East Stour Valley. Refer to page 44 for a detailed layout of the mixed use and employment area.

The High Street

Stour Meadows

To the north of the High Street a residential neighbourhood, Stour Meadows (average 40dph net), will overlook the East Stour green corridor. The crescents in Stour Meadows will consist of mainly two and three storey townhouses, fronting onto the river valley; thus providing a well-defined urban edge as seen from the green corridor. Some of the houses on the outer edge of the neighbourhood will be laid out in the form of crescents grouped around landscaped ponds, which will provide attenuation for surface water run-off.

Stour Meadows will be crossed by several footpaths and cycleways which will link the riverside corridor to the high

street which runs throughout the scheme. A road from the local distributor network will provide access to a small informal car park serving the green corridor.

The use of white facing materials and a contemporary design response is proposed for the residential properties fronting onto the East Stour Valley. This will visually link the residential area with the adjoining mixed use/employment area.

Bilham Lawn

Stretching along the edge of the village fronting onto the floodplain, the properties in the character area known as Bilham Lawn will both enjoy views out over the floodplain

of the Ruckinge and Bilham Dykes towards Park Farm and create a clear and well defined edge when seen from the surrounding landscape.

A variety of house types will be provided (average 40dph net), including low density detached and semi-detached housing set around the existing Bilham Farm (which will be retained) and linked houses to create a continuous street frontage along the edge of the village. These houses will front onto the back edge of the footway, with parking generally at the rear or side of the properties. It is also proposed that the road running along the southern edge of the area, should be treated as a "village street", widened at certain points to accommodate on-street parking.

The use of white facing materials is also proposed as a unifying design theme for properties facing onto the Ruckinge and Bilham Dykes. As with Stour Meadows, this will provide visual continuity with the adjoining mixed use/employment area.

Captain's Wood

Captain's Wood provides an important backdrop to East Stour Village and several residential neighbourhoods will be located around it, all of which will be of a lower density (average 35dph net) so as to respect the setting of the wood and nearby existing properties.

Housing, either detached or semi-detached, will front onto the woodland; an approach which offers the occupiers greater security than would be the case if the houses were to turn their backs onto the woodland. Private open space will be an important feature of the character area.

A 2ha plot on the north side of the wood and at the end of the High Street, is reserved for a primary school, which will be combined with a nursery. Centrally located, these and other community facilities have direct access off the local distributor road network (on which school drop-off/pick-up facilities will be provided) and are located



Stour Meadows



*Aerial view of development
to the south of Captain's Wood*

alongside the main pedestrian/cycle route which forms the spine of the new community. By extending the boundary of the school into the woodland, the opportunity exists to create a nature study area for the children. Within the grounds of the school is a junior size football pitch which could be made available to serve the wider community.

Adjacent to the school, on the edge of Captain's Wood, is a green with a play area. This could take the form of an adventure play area made out of timber and other natural materials. Those edges of the green not formed by the school or the wood will be clearly defined by frontage housing.



Fingers of woodland planting are proposed extending from the wood to provide a framework for new development and corridors for wildlife, while new wood banks create a defensible edge to the wood with clearly defined entrances.

A re-interpretation of the local vernacular of the Low Weald would be an appropriate response for this lower density residential area. For example, the use of steeply pitched tiled roofs with chimneys and a variety of wall structures and facing materials based on traditional precedents.

Captain's Green and Wood Bank

Captain's Green and Wood Bank lie to the south of Captain's Wood and are similar in character to Bilham Lawn and Captain's Wood on the other side of the woods, with low density housing (average 30dph net), a woodland setting and ample open space.

One of the guiding principles in drawing up the site development briefs which will accompany detailed planning submissions for Captain's Green and Wood Bank (see page 90 below) will be the need to respect the setting of existing properties at Cheeseman's Green and Bilham Farm. This could be achieved by ensuring that the land adjacent to existing properties is set aside as private open space, possibly paddocks, belonging to the low density housing plots which are planned for this area.

A traditional design response, based on a re-interpretation of the local vernacular is recommended for the residential areas to the south of Captain's Wood. This should include steeply pitched roofs with chimneys, tile hanging, weather boarding and plastered finishes on the upper floors of properties and brick walls using suitable local brick colours. The development will be set within a strong landscape framework.

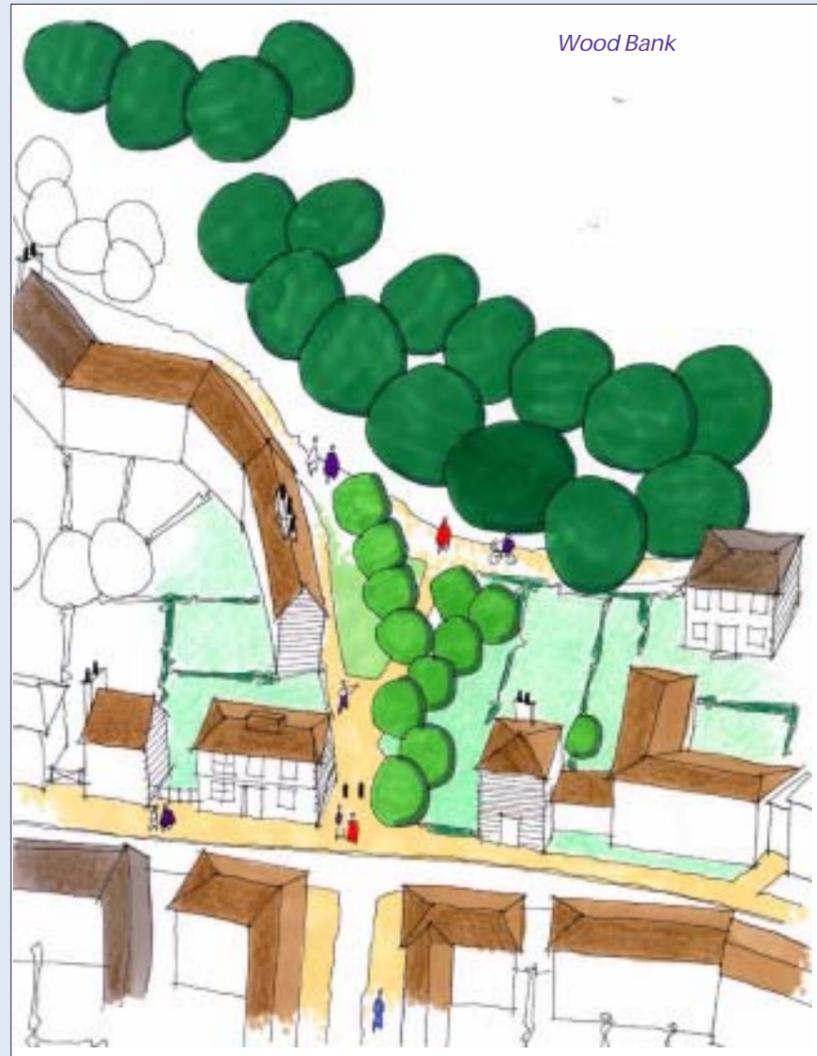
As noted above, low density detached houses with long back gardens are proposed adjacent to existing properties at Cheeseman's Green and to act as a buffer to Church Road.



Captain's Green

A village green, mirroring the green on the north side of the woodland and extending from the wooded glades of Captain's Wood, provides the focus for this character area. Large four and five bedroom houses enclose the green together with three storey apartments on the street corners. Other houses fronting onto the wood are served by an informal country lane.

A number of plots in this area could be allocated for self-build housing. While respecting the overall design



guidelines set out in this brief, such plots could provide opportunities for innovative design solutions, taking advantage of the attractive backdrop of Captain's Wood.

The hedgerow of mature oak trees linking to Church Road will be retained as well as the species-rich hedgerows alongside the country lane.

Wood Bank

This is a medium density housing area situated between the southern edge of Captain's Wood and Bank Lane, the course of the Roman road.

'Fingers' of woodland planting extend out from Captain's Wood to provide a woodland setting for the new development.

Houses front onto the wood and are served by an informal country lane.

The edge of the wood is defined by an historic wood bank. This will be restored and entrances to the wood (which will be limited) clearly defined.

The major access road which passes through this area is fronted with houses and a small square helps reduce vehicle speeds.

Access to Bilham Farm will be retained.

Sevington Lake

A small lake is proposed on the edge of the green corridor next to Church Road which provides the setting for this residential character area (average 30dph net), overlooking the open valley of the East Stour.

The main street is enclosed by informal terraces of houses, while lower density housing, served by an informal country lane, front onto Captain's Wood.

Properties are set back from Church Road in order to conserve its rural appearance, which will be reinforced by new hedgerow and tree planting.

The existing species-rich hedgerows alongside Church Road will be retained.

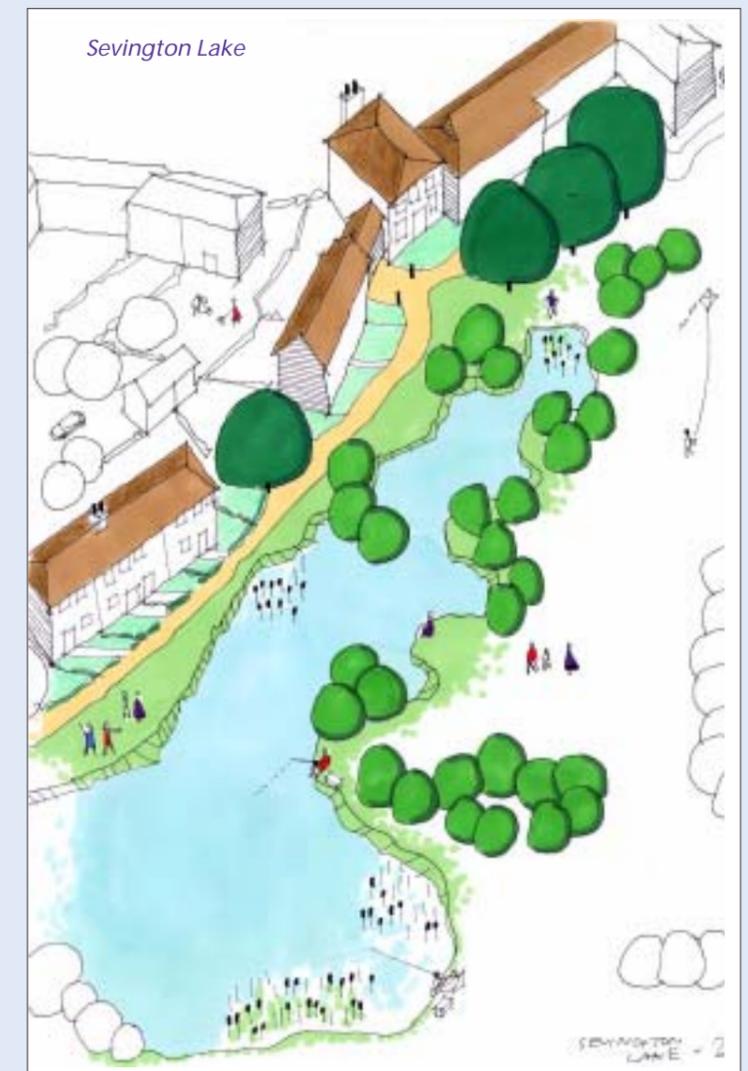
The Crescents

Adjacent to the "inner mixed use zone" will be the employment area, which will be suitable for larger scale uses, such as light industrial units and offices; potentially these could cater for any of the smaller businesses in the inner zone which have outgrown their accommodation and need to relocate into larger premises. A variety of

building forms and sizes could be provided to accommodate different requirements.

The outer edge of this zone (marking the limit of built development) follows the boundary of the estimated 1 in 100 year undefended floodplain. The buildings in this "outer zone" will be a maximum of three storeys in height and will be so designed as to create a clear and well-defined urban edge as seen from the Southern Orbital Road. Car parking and servicing should be accommodated within development parcels.

At the main entrance to the development, a landmark building is proposed that could be suitable for a headquarters office.



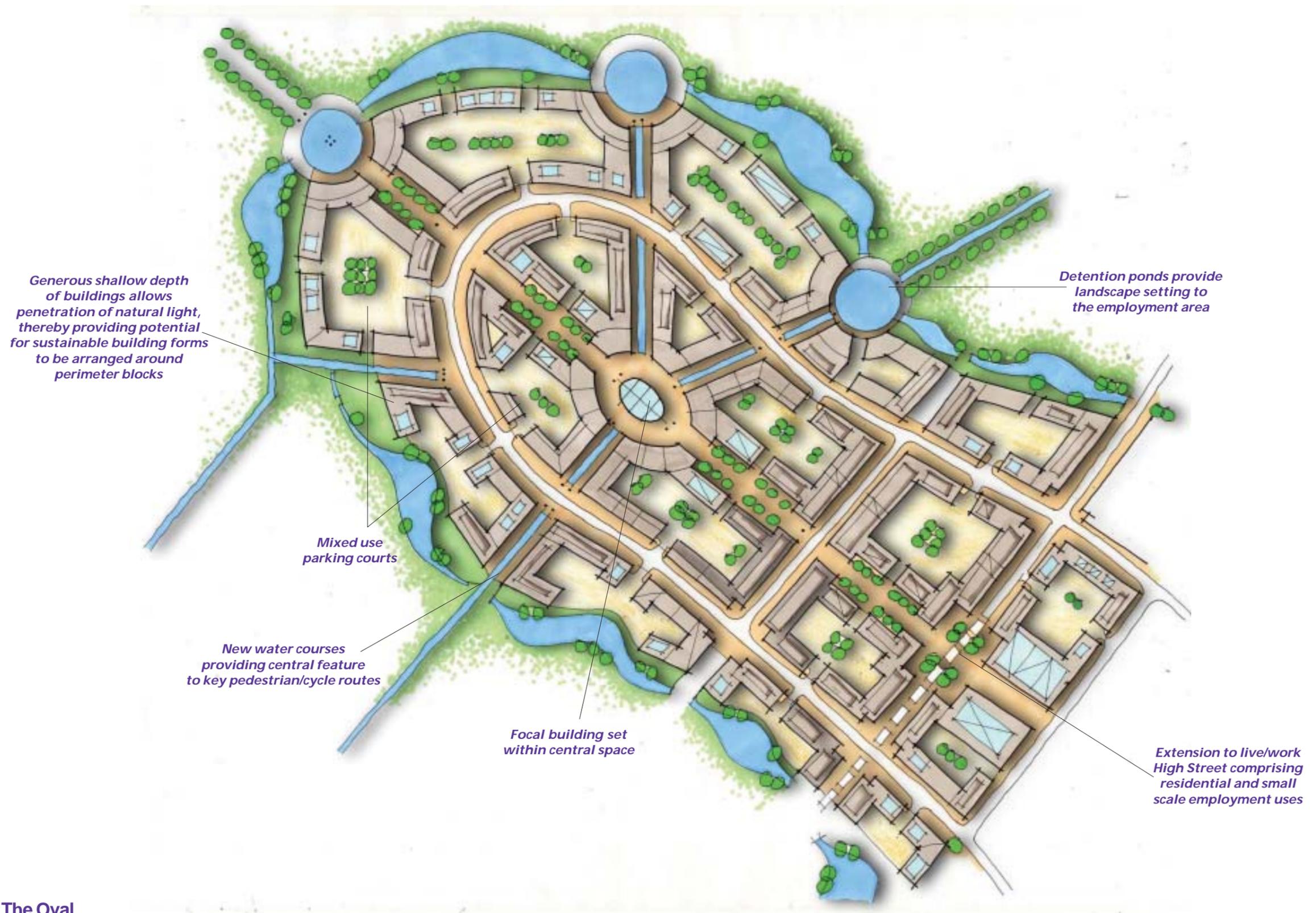


The Crescents

New ponds and lakes are proposed to provide an attractive setting for the development and a sustainable drainage solution. These are linked to the existing network of dykes. Public squares and crescents overlook the new water features, which are located at the end of the avenues radiating out from the “oval”.

The employment buildings should utilise light coloured external panels in combination with glass and expressed structures to create a contemporary design response. The sustainable drainage features around the perimeter of the employment area will provide a natural waterside setting, with buildings reflected in the new water bodies. Refer to page 74 for further details on employment buildings.





The Oval

