

# FERNHAM HOMES

FEBRUARY 2024

## Fernham at Five Oak Green

LOCAL PLAN REPRESENTATIONS DOCUMENT



Rosewood Place, Matfield  
An award-winning development of 45 homes.

Evening  
Standard  
NEW HOMES  
AWARDS 2022  
WINNER

# FERNHAM HOMES



# Contents

## Executive Summary

5. Executive Summary

## Fernham Homes

6. Who are Fernham Homes?

7. Fernham Homes - the house builder of choice

8. Our Developments

9. Our Team

## The Need for Development

12. Housing Need

## Site Analysis

16. Site Location and Local Facilities

17. Historical Analysis

18. Site Constraints

19. Arboricultural Survey

20. Landscape Impact

21. Ecology & Biodiversity Net Gain

22. Access

23. Green Belt

## Design

26. Site Considerations

27. Indicative Framework Plan

## Deliverability

29. Deliverability

Hillside Park, Linton Hill, Maidstone



# Executive Summary

Fernham Homes is a regional housebuilder, operating across Kent, Sussex and south-east London with a strong track record and reputation for building high quality homes. The business is led by experts in their fields, with decades of experience in planning, design and the delivery of new homes and places. Strong progress is being made on Fernham Homes' business plan to deliver 300 homes a year in the next five years.

Fernham Homes control the site Land at Tolhurst Road, Five Oak Green, and is promoting it for residential development through the Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC) Local Plan. It is 0.7 hectares in area, accessed via Tolhurst Road with a direct walking and cycling link to Five Oak Green, Capel Primary School, and bus stops.

The evidence base for the TWBC Local Plan identifies that:

- the site would have a Low harm rating if removed from the Green Belt (LUC Stage 3 Green Belt Assessment)
- "This site is considered suitable as a potential site allocation" (Strategic Housing and Economic Land Available Assessment: Reasonable Alternative Sites (May 2023))

Fernham Homes would directly deliver the residential development of the site within the very early years of TWBC's new Local Plan. It would make a positive contribution to the housing land supply for the borough, for market and affordable homes: there is an identified need for such housing within Tunbridge Wells borough and Capel parish (Capel Housing Needs Assessment (October 2021)).

Fernham Homes has assembled an expert consultancy team to contribute to the vision and delivery of this site. Work undertaken by the team demonstrates that safe vehicular and pedestrian access can be provided, and that development of the site would sit well within its context, protecting key views and trees and providing a strong, permanent and physical new boundary to the Green Belt.

The site is available and achievable for the purposes of the tests of deliverability as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and accordingly there is strong justification for the inclusion of the site as a housing allocation in the Local Plan.

# Who are Fernham Homes?

Fernham Homes is a regional housebuilder based in West Malling, Kent, operating across Kent, Sussex and south-east London.

Over the past 25 years Fernham has built a strong reputation for building high quality homes in sustainable locations.

The shareholders of Fernham Homes are committed to growing the business, seeking to increase the number of homes delivered from 50 to 300 per annum in the next five years.

Our vision is to be the housebuilder of choice in Kent for all stakeholders, including the communities within which we build, the supply chain, our customers, and the Local Planning Authorities we work with.

## Our Company Values



# Fernham Homes - the house builder of choice



Fernham Homes has a long history of delivering high quality developments in Kent, East Sussex and south-east London.



A flexible approach – unlike many national volume house builders – which allows Fernham Homes to provide a mixture of development on site. This includes different types and tenures of homes, social infrastructure and employment.



Passionate about high quality design, architecture and landscaping.



As a growing regional housebuilder Fernham Homes drive forward planning applications at pace and, once consent is granted, work to build homes immediately.



Fernham Homes are led by experts in land, planning, design, and the delivery of developments, with decades of experience involving sites from the small scale to strategic sizes.



Fernham Homes are committed to the relationships that are built. This means we invest in working with stakeholders, and we deliver on the commitments we make.

# Our Current Developments



## Sissinghurst

19no. 2-4 bed homes and replacement village hall.

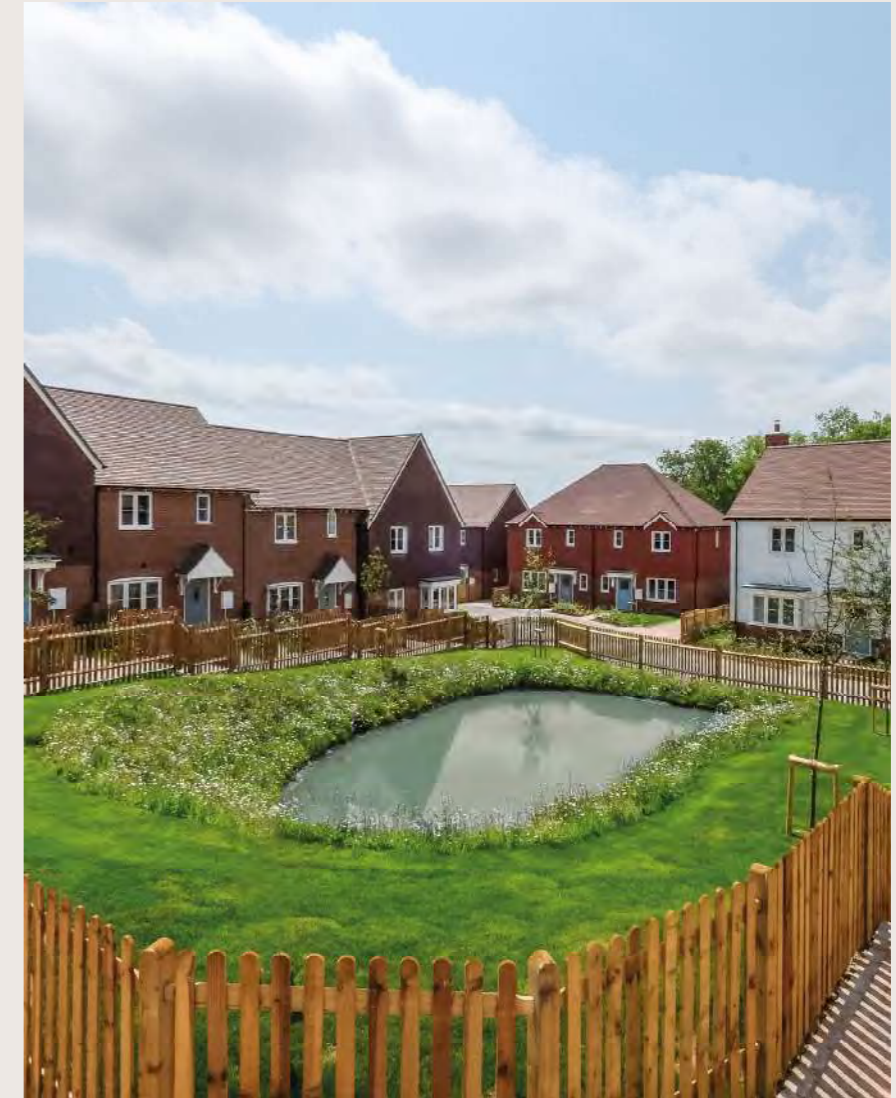
Under construction.



## Matfield

45no. 2-5 bed homes.

Completed Summer 2023.



## Ticehurst

30no. 2-4 bed homes.

Scheduled completion Spring 2024.



## Our Team



Sean Ellis

Managing Director

Sean has over 30 years of experience working in residential development across London and the south of England. Following 18 years with The Berkeley Group, where he was an Executive Director and Chairman, Sean joined the board of Fernham Homes in 2022 as Managing Director and shareholder to grow the business.



Chris Loughead

Operations Director

Chris has over 10 years experience in housebuilding largely spent with Barratt David Wilson and Crest Nicholson. Joining from Crest Nicholson in 2020 where Chris spearheaded growth in Kent and held a senior Regional Board position before joining Fernham Homes. Chris' experience spans from strategic land promotion through to complex brownfield land regeneration.



Steve Baughen

Head of Planning

Steve has over 20 years experience in Planning, working in consultancy and – predominantly – in west Kent in Local Planning Authorities, including as Head of Planning at Tunbridge Wells Borough Council for four years. Steve has particular experience in Local Plan preparation, the consideration of strategic growth of settlements and the release of land from the Green Belt.



Matt Dennis

Design Manager

Matt has over 10 years experience in residential development design working, as a qualified Architect, for both private practices and housebuilders alike. Matt's broad experience ranges from working on single listed buildings through to developments consisting of several hundred dwellings.

Hillbury Fields, Ticehurst



Hillside Park, Linton Hill, Maidstone

# The Need for Development



# Housing Need - Tunbridge Wells borough

## General Housing Need

**667**

The minimum local overall housing need for Tunbridge Wells (through the "Standard Method") is 667 homes per year.

**5yr**  
HLS

TWBC states that it only has 4.29 years of housing supply\*. Fernham Homes consider the actual supply to be lower.

**40%**  
UnderDelivery

Since the adoption of the NPPF (2012) the average number of homes built per year has been 398\*: i.e. 40% under delivery.

**17%**  
UnderDelivery

Since the adoption of the TWBC Site Allocations Local Plan (SALP - 2016) the average number of homes built per year has been 554\*: i.e. 17% under delivery.

## Affordable Homes

**277**  
AH/year

TWBC's Local Plan evidence base sets out a need for 277 more affordable homes per year\*.

**34%**  
AH Need Met

Since the adoption of the NPPF (2012) the number of affordable homes built per year has been 93\*: i.e. only 34% of affordable housing need has been met.

**601**

This acute need is reflected by 601 households on the TWBC Housing Register\*.

**81%**

81% of those on the Housing Register are in the greatest need categories, including homelessness and insanitary or overcrowded housing\*.

## Older Persons Homes

**+40%**  
↑  
65+ years

**+50%**  
↑  
75+ years

40% more people aged 65+, and 50% aged 75+, in Tunbridge Wells borough in 2038 as compared to 2020\*\*.

Level Access

Smaller gardens

Lower running costs

Lower maintenance

Need For

Reflecting the increasing age of the population, there is an increased need for properties with level access and smaller gardens. 56% of older persons expect to downsize to smaller properties\*.

## Worsening Affordability

**1:13.4**  
↑  
**1:8.7**

House prices relative to income have increased by 54% in Tunbridge Wells borough since 2012\*\*.

**+10%**  
↑  
2022 Rent

**+6.5%**  
↑  
2023 Rent

Rental rates have increased substantially in the last two years\*\*.

\* Evidence from TWBC (2023)

\*\* Evidence from Icenii Modelling (2023)

## Older Persons Homes



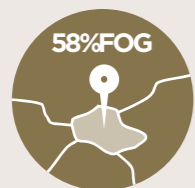
67% more heads of households aged 65+ in Capel parish in 2038 as compared to 2020\*\*\*.

## TWBC Affordable Housing Register – Capel Parish



There are 35 households on the TWBC Affordable Housing Register whose preferred area is Capel parish\*.

## Capel Housing Needs Assessment: Conclusions



Capel Parish Council would prefer new affordable homes to be in the existing villages\*\*\*. 58% of the dwellings in the parish are in Five Oak Green\*\*\*\*.



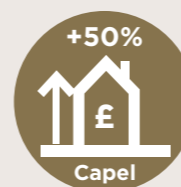
There is an identified need for 105 additional affordable homes to own (e.g. shared ownership) in the parish until 2038\*\*\*.



The recommended mix of new homes is for more smaller (1 & 2 bed) properties, with some 3 and 4 bed homes\*\*\*.

## Housing Need - Capel Parish

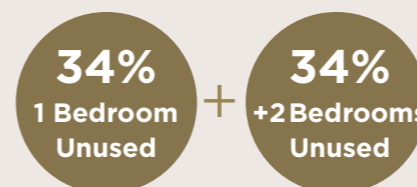
### Lack of Smaller Homes, Under Occupancy & Worsening Affordability



House prices in Capel parish relative to income have increased by 50% since 2011\*\*\*.



There is a lack of smaller properties in Capel parish: only 22% have 1 or 2 bedrooms, compared to 42% in Tunbridge Wells borough\*\*\*.



Approximately  $\frac{2}{3}$  of homes in Capel parish are under-occupied\*\*\*: i.e. there are more bedrooms than occupants need. This is particularly the case with older residents.



The lack of smaller properties, and people under-occupying larger properties, contributes to the fact that the average home in Capel parish is not affordable for households with an average income



There are only 4 shared ownership dwellings in Capel parish.

\* Evidence from TWBC (2023)

\*\*\* Evidence from Capel Housing Needs Assessment (2021)

\*\*\*\* Evidence from Census (2021)

Rosewood Place, Matfield



Hillside Park, Linton Hill, Maidstone

# Site Analysis



## Site Location & Local Facilities

Five Oak Green is classified as a Category E settlement by TWBC.

The site is in a sustainable location, with pedestrian access to Capel Primary School and the village shop, hall and play facilities at the heart of Five Oak Green.

Similarly, within a 250m walk there are bus stops offering direct (at least) hourly services to Tonbridge and Paddock Wood. Both towns provide services such as GP surgeries, secondary schools, supermarkets, and access to rail links to London and Kent.

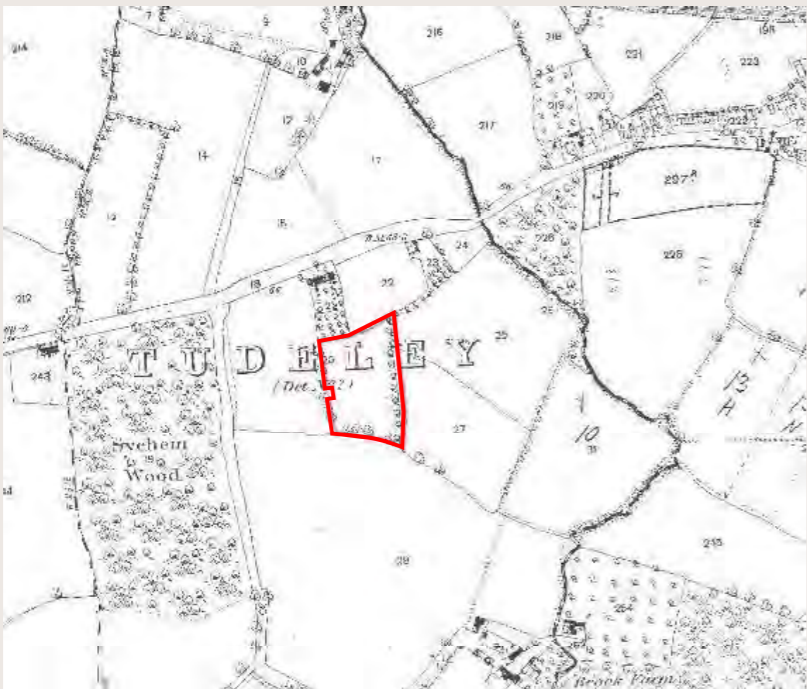
There is an extensive Public Right of Way (PROW) network within the vicinity of the site, allowing routes to the countryside beyond Five Oak Green.



- |                |                     |                |           |                              |
|----------------|---------------------|----------------|-----------|------------------------------|
| Primary School | Employment Premises | Community Hall | Allotment | Site Boundary                |
| Village Shop   | Play                | Bus Stop       |           | Existing Public Right of Way |



# Historical Analysis



1871-1900



1907-1923



1929-1952



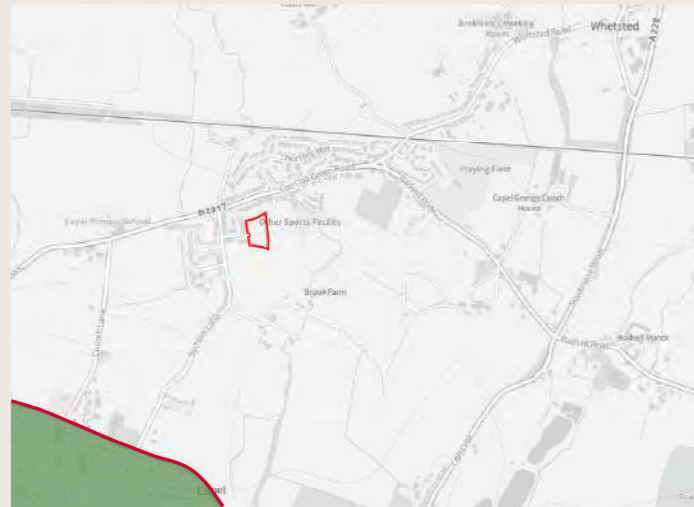
1990

Five Oak Green originated at the confluence of what is now the Five Oak Green Road, Whetsted Road and Badsell Road as shown in the 1871 – 1900 map.

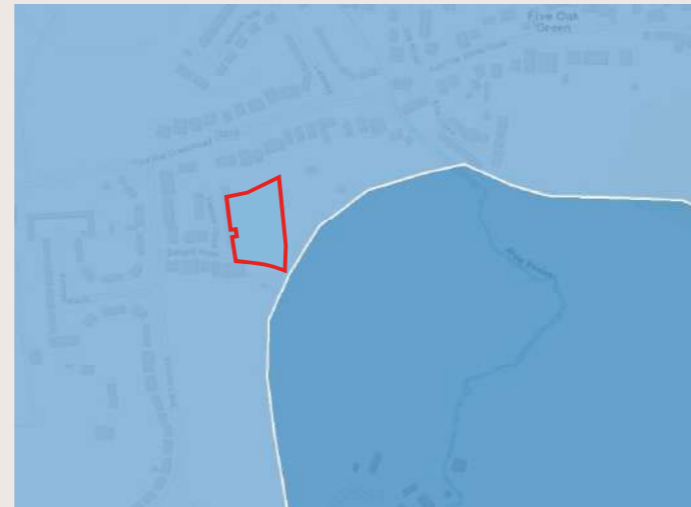
The settlement expanded slowly along all three roads during the early Twentieth Century, with the 1929 – 1952 mapping showing new residences to the west of Five Oak Green, along the bend in Sychem Lane.

During the latter half of the Twentieth Century – as shown in the 1990 aerial photograph - there was considerable expansion of Five Oak Green, particularly to the west along both sides of the Five Oak Green Road. This expansion has led to residential development joining with the housing already constructed along Sychem Lane.

The evolution of the settlement means that the site essentially sits between the residential development at Tolhurst Road and Pemble Close, and that along the southern side of Five Oak Green.



Outside AONB



Agricultural Land Classification



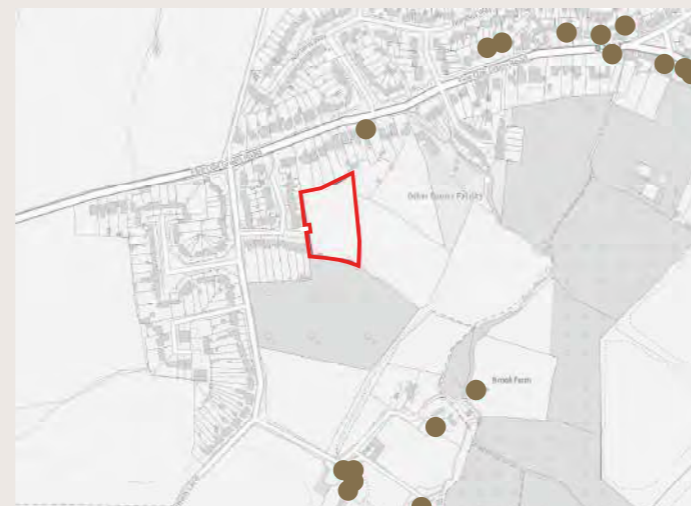
Flood Zone



Overland Surface Water Flows



Public Rights of Way



Designated Heritage Assets

## Site Constraints

The site lies well outside the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), which covers approximately 70% of Tunbridge Wells borough.

There is no Ancient Woodland on or near the site.

Similarly, the only Listed Building (Grade II Stream Cottage) is distinct from the site and set within its own curtilage: its setting would not be affected by the development of the site.

Whilst there is a strong PROW network in the vicinity, none run through the site.

The site is outside Flood Zones 2 and 3. There are overland surface water flows in the very north eastern corner of the site: these can be accommodated in any new development.

Similar to all of Five Oak Green, the site is within the Grade 3 Agricultural Land Classification: it has not been in use for agricultural purposes and is not part of a wider farm.

Part of the site is safeguarded for Sandstone – Tunbridge Wells Sand Formation: however, there are extensive land banks of such minerals in Kent and they are not used widely in modern construction.

# Arboricultural Survey

An arboricultural survey has been undertaken which has identified the following categorisations of trees, tree groups and hedges:

Category A: of high quality and value

- none

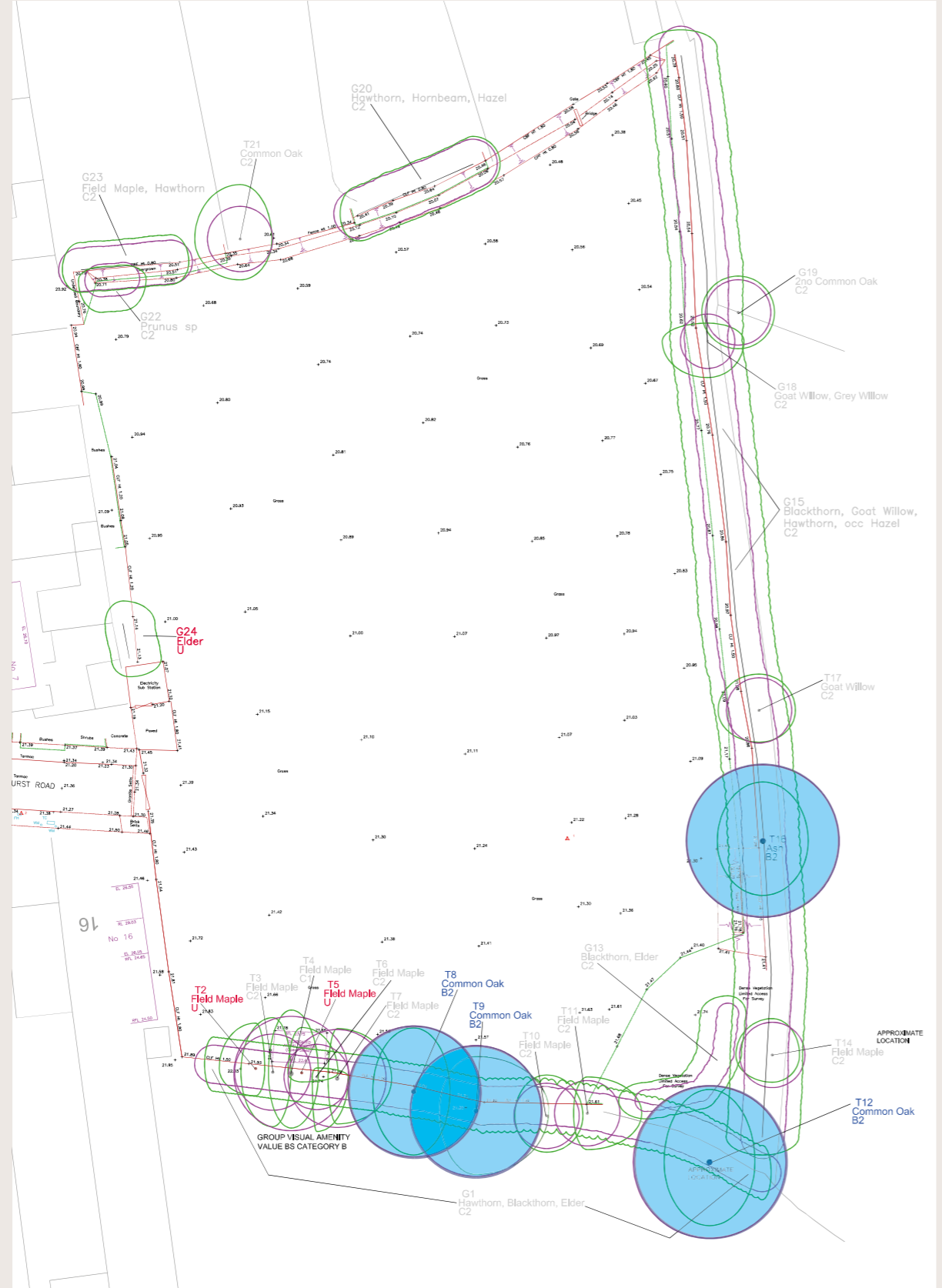
Category B: of moderate quality and value - highlighted in blue on the plan to the left

- 4 x trees

Category C: of low quality and value

- 9 x trees
- 8 x groups

All of the trees are located in the boundaries around the edge of the site: development would be pulled away from the boundaries. No trees are required to be removed to provide access to the site.



**G1 - G24 Tree numbers**

**BS Category of Condition**

<span style="border: 1px solid green; border-radius: 50%; padding: 2px;">0</span>	BS Condition A
<span style="border: 1px solid red; border-radius: 50%; padding: 2px;">T8</span>	BS Condition B
<span style="border: 1px solid grey; border-radius: 50%; padding: 2px;">T3</span>	BS Condition C
<span style="border: 1px solid blue; border-radius: 50%; padding: 2px;">T2</span>	BS Condition U

Crown spread

BS Calculated root protection areas

# Landscape Impact

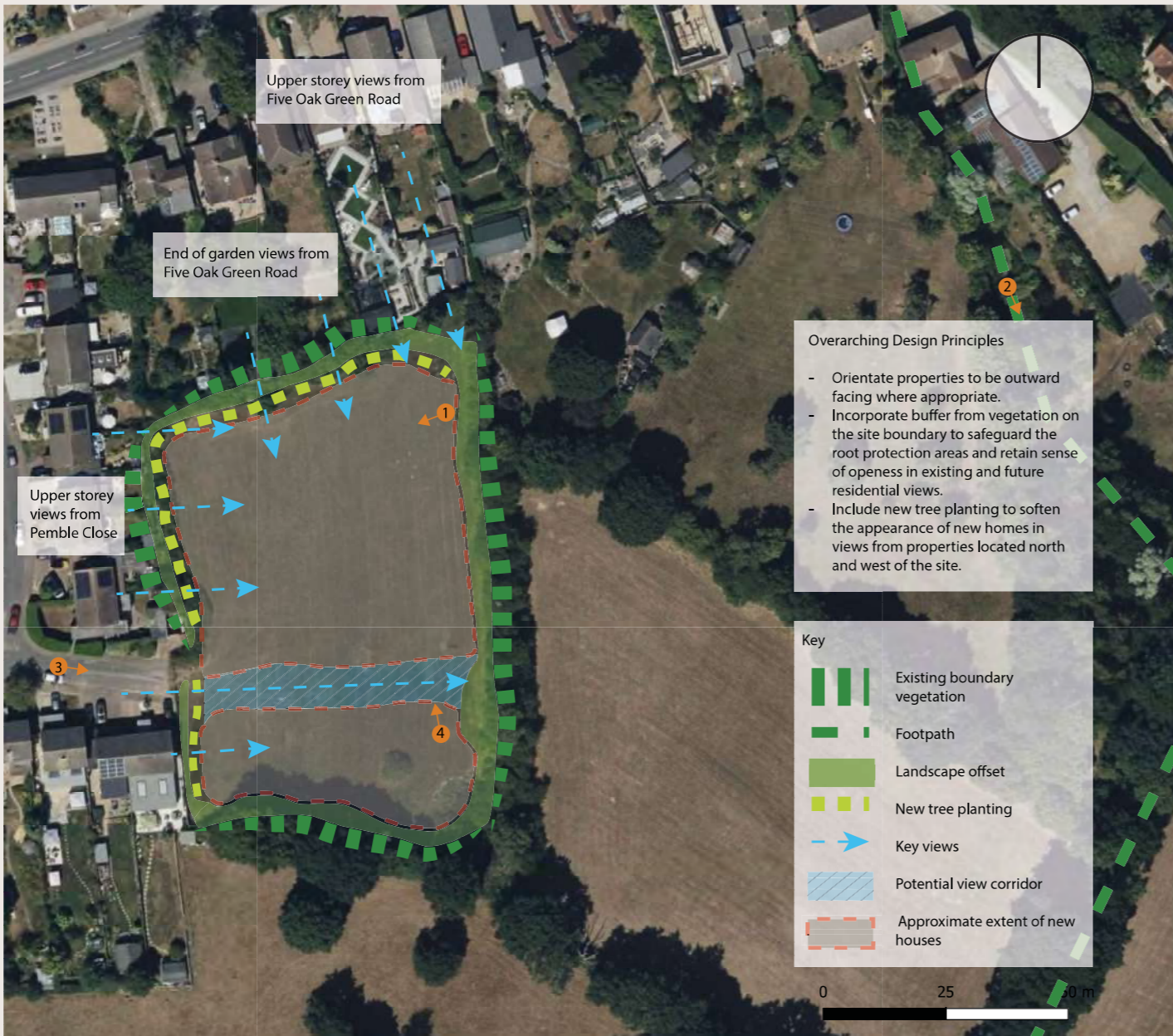
A landscape and visual appraisal has been undertaken by Icen.

This identifies that the site is flat, has mature hedgerow and deciduous trees lining the site's eastern and southern boundaries, and the fields surrounding the site are defined by mature hedgerows and belts of trees. In combination these limit intervisibility with the wider countryside and greatly limit views across the landscape.

The appraisal identifies that the western part of the site's northern boundary is lined by deciduous vegetation, including mature trees, limiting intervisibility with the rear of properties on Five Oak Green Road to the north. The eastern side of the northern boundary is more open, affording greater intervisibility between the site and existing dwellings.

As the site is visible from some upper storeys of properties on Pemble Close and Five Oak Green Road the design should seek to minimise the extent of the change by incorporating offsets from the site boundary and introducing new planting to soften the appearance of new houses.

There is the opportunity to incorporate local play space.



# Ecology & Biodiversity Net Gain

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and a preliminary Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) assessment has been undertaken by Urban Edge.

This identifies that the site is of low to moderate ecological value.

Surveys for foraging/commuting bats and reptiles will be required to inform any planning application.

The preliminary BNG assessment has identified scope to provide at least 10% on-site BNG.

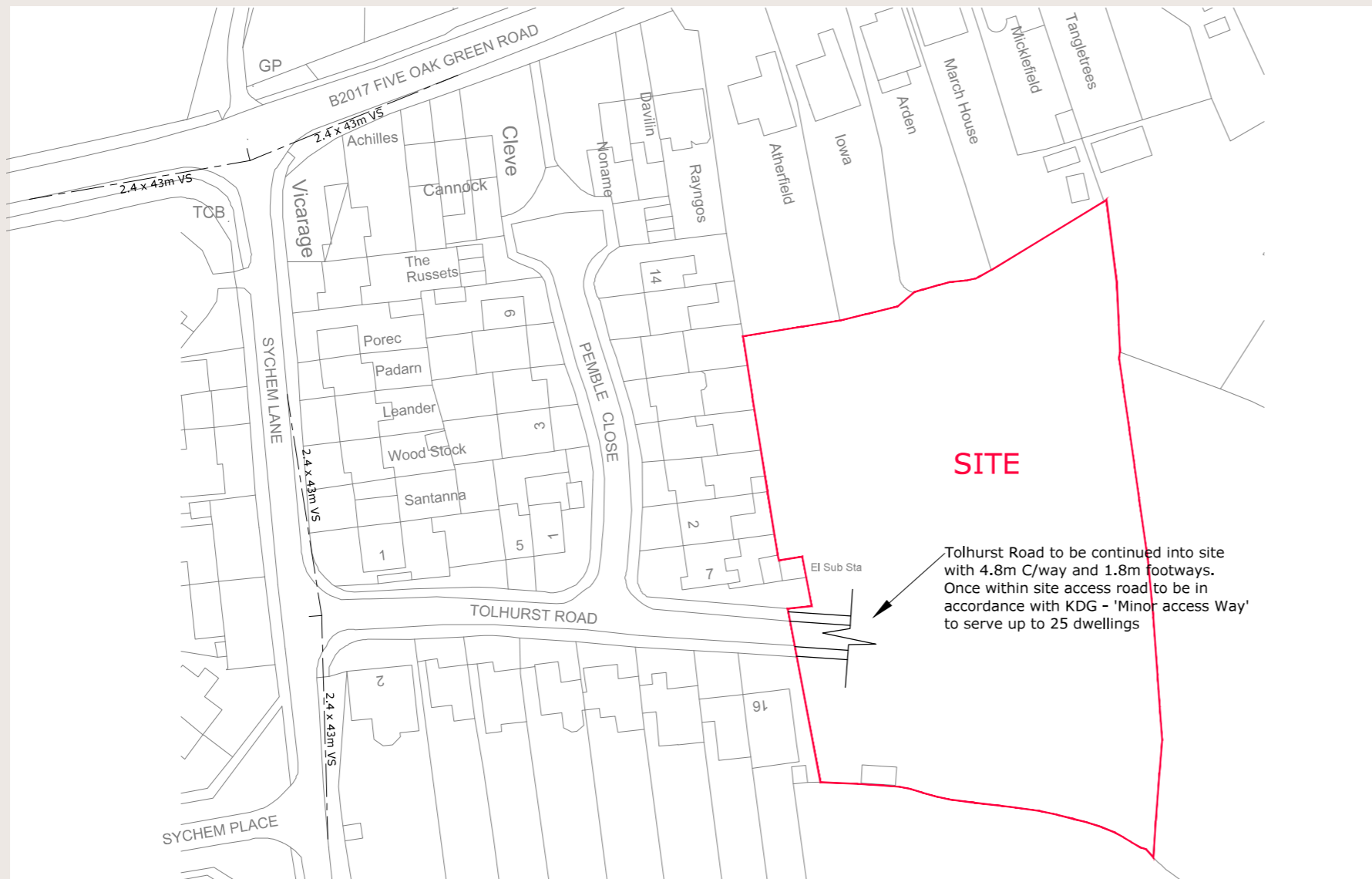


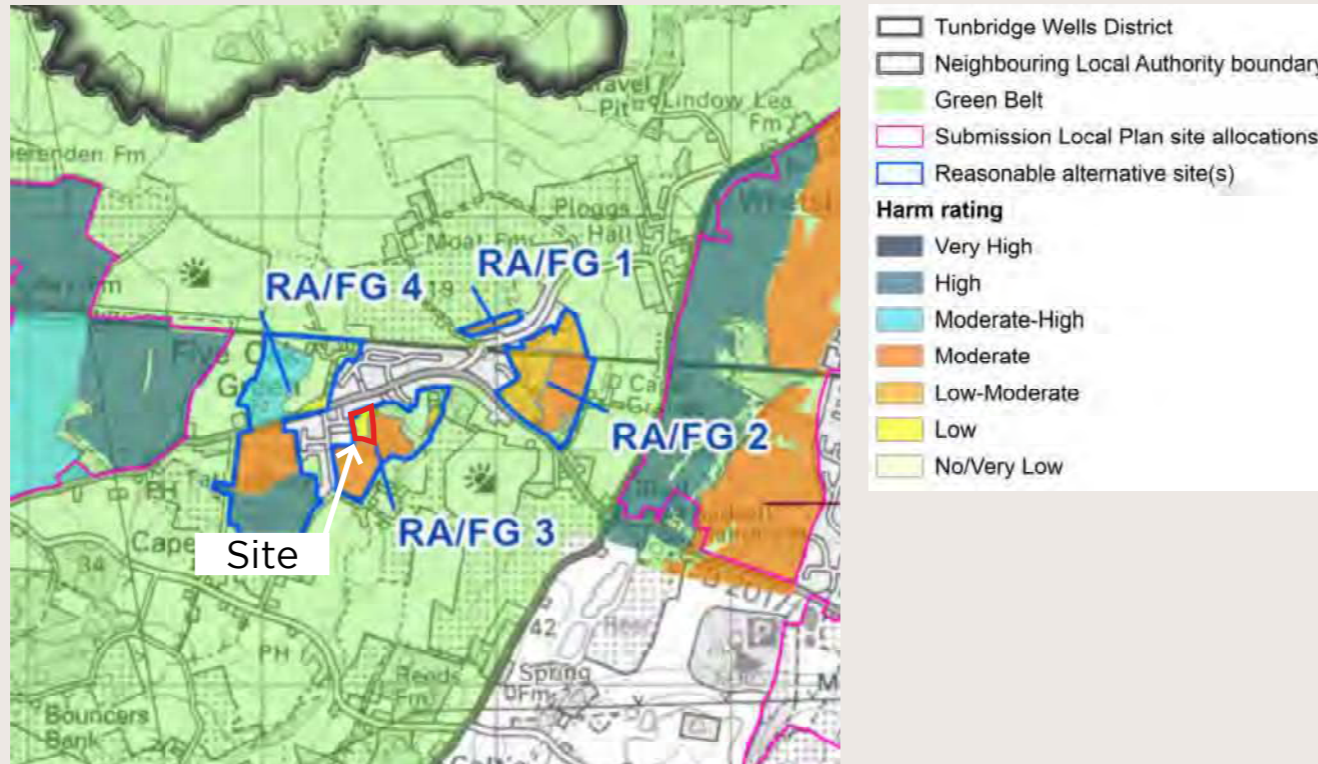
## Access

Safe and suitably designed vehicular access can be provided to the site from Tolhurst Road as shown on the adjacent plan.

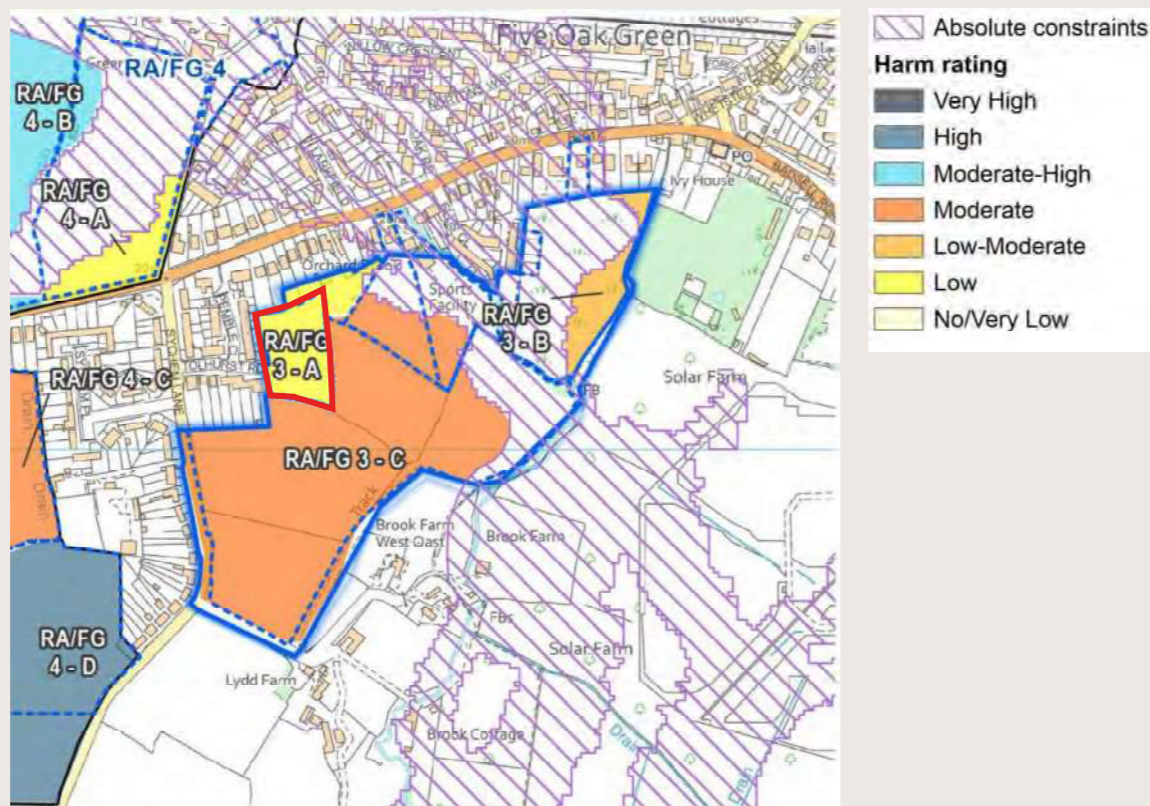
A direct pedestrian and cycle route is available to Five Oak Green Road, bus stops, Capel Primary School and the village centre via the pavement on Sychem Lane and the footway which cuts from Pemble Close to Five Oak Green Road.

The proposed access arrangements have been considered "at pre-application stage" by Kent County Council (KCC) Highways & Transportation: a positive response has been provided by KCC.





LUC Harm Rating for Reasonable Alternative Sites around Five Oak Green



LUC Harm Rating for Assessment Area RA/FG 3

## Green Belt

LUC has undertaken Stage 1, 2 and 3 Green Belt Assessments as part of TWBC's evidence base for the new Local Plan.

The Stage 3 Green Belt Assessment is at a more granular level than the Stage 1 and 2 Assessments. It assesses and compares all of the Reasonably Alternative sites adjacent to settlements in the Green Belt in Tunbridge Wells borough and grades them "Very Low" – "High".

The site was assessed under assessment area RA/FG 3: it comprises the majority of the sub area RA/FG 3-A.

As indicated in the adjacent plans, the LUC Stage 3 study has identified that the site has a Low harm rating.

Only one site in Tunbridge Wells borough was assessed as a Very Low harm rating. This is already a proposed allocation in the new Tunbridge Wells Local Plan.

7 sub-areas, including the site at Tolhurst Road, have been assessed as a Low harm rating.

Of these Tolhurst Road is unique in that it is the only "Low" rated site which is suitably located and not affected by flooding which is not already proposed for allocation in the submitted version of the new Local Plan.

Rosewood Place, Matfield





# Design





### Key

- |  |   |                           |
|--|---|---------------------------|
| Existing trees and hedges (Category C – of low quality)      | Neighbouring property (and garden)      | Surface water flow        |
| Existing trees and hedges (Category B – of moderate quality) | Potential new site access               | Views from public highway |
| Public Right of Way  | Filtered views from adjacent properties | Listed Building           |
|  | Site boundary                           |                           |

## Site Considerations

The due diligence work undertaken has established that there are some constraints to the site, together with significant opportunities.

The key site features are recorded in the plan to the left:

- the site is flat, and well bounded by mature vegetation to the south, east and (partly) the north: this contributes to the Low harm rating identified in the LUC Stage 3 Green Belt Assessment
- it is bounded to the north and west by the rear gardens of existing houses
- there is an overland surface water flow in the north eastern corner of the site
- there is an established access to the site in the south-westerly corner

The main identified opportunities are:

- to create a high quality and well designed residential development which contributes to the identified need for housing for the largest village in Capel parish
- to provide a play area for use by existing and new residents
- to reinforce the boundaries of the site through additional tree planting
- to retain the viewing corridor



## Indicative Framework Plan

-  Retained tree and hedge lines
-  Potential residential development to include space for drainage, ecology, play, etc
-  Public Right of Way
-  Access point
-  Layout to take account of view to Category B tree
-  Additional tree and hedge planting
-  Site boundary

Hillside Park, Linton Hill, Maidstone



# Deliverability

## Suitable

The site is adjacent to the settlement boundary of Five Oak Green, in close proximity to Capel Primary School and the village centre (including the shop, hall and play facilities). There are bus stops within a short walking distance (250m) which provide direct routes to the towns of Tonbridge and Paddock Wood. These towns contain higher order services and have rail links to London and wider Kent.

Detailed due diligence has been undertaken which demonstrates that there are no physical limitations or problems such as safe access, infrastructure, flood risk, hazardous risks, pollution or contamination.

Assessment of the performance of the Green Belt by TWBC's consultants (LUC) has concluded that the removal of the site from the Green Belt would only cause Low harm. There are no other sites that are 'Low' rated which are suitably located and not affected by flooding which are not already proposed for allocation in the submitted version of the new Local Plan.

A suitable scheme can be designed to protect views, the landscape, and the amenity of adjacent neighbouring properties.

## Available

The site is under the control of Fernham Homes.

There are no financial or legal restrictions that would impact on the viability or delivery of homes on the site: the site is available.

## Achievable

Fernham Homes has undertaken considerable preparatory work for the site and is actively promoting it through the emerging TWBC Local Plan, and is considering the preparation of a planning application in 2024.

Similarly, Fernham Homes has a strong track record – post the grant of planning permission - of rapidly starting on site and delivering new homes.

Accordingly, the delivery of homes at the site is eminently achievable.

**FERNHAM**  
**HOMES**