



OAKLANDS COLLEGE

Oaklands College Campus - East St Albans



East St Albans Locations

Oaklands College is a leading Further Education and training provider based in Hertfordshire, with campuses in St Albans, Welwyn Garden City and Borehamwood. Oaklands College has been working with St Albans City and District Council and Hertfordshire County Council to deliver the housing requirement specified in the recently withdrawn Draft Local Plan. The Draft Local Plan allocated eleven sites for development to meet the housing and employment need within the District (The Draft St Albans City and District Local Plan 2020-2036 Policy S2). East St Albans was included in this allocation, identifying land within Oaklands College ownership. This document, prepared by DLA Architecture, evaluates the broad location through a series of site observations and starts to set out the outline masterplan for the East of St Albans.



Figure: Overview of Oaklands College - East St Albans. The proposed visual of Oaklands College after the current development. The housing site is situated in the distance to the North West of the College Campus.



Figure: Local plan site view - existing view looking South towards Oaklands College down North Drive. A public route.



Hemel Hempstead

(M1)



St Albans

East St Albans

Hatfield



TOTAL SITE AREA:
21.5 Hectares

(Including a 2.1
Hectare 2 FE Primary
School Area)

Figure: East St Albans - draft SACDC Local Plan land allocation. Including HCC land, Oaklands College.

- Key:
- Oaklands College local plan residential development and primary school location
 - Taylor Wimpey site location
 - Hertfordshire County Council land location (HCC)

5. East St Albans allocation - 1,250 dwellings

EAST ST ALBANS

The East of St Albans Strategic Location

East St Albans Locations

The allocated East St Albans area will provide 1,250 dwellings, as specified in the withdrawn SACDC draft local plan. The Taylor Wimpey site is currently under construction and will provide 348 dwellings towards the specified 1,250 allocation. The remaining 902 dwellings will need to be provided within the remaining East St Albans land allocation. The following work has been developed in response to the withdrawn Local Plan and demonstrates how the requirements that were set out could be achieved.



1. Oaklands College - Residential Site



2. Taylor Wimpey - Oaklands Grange



3. HCC - South Field Site

OAKLANDS COLLEGE

Oaklands College Campus - East St Albans

East St Albans Proposals

The development will deliver:

- Masterplanned development led by the Council in collaboration with local communities, landowners and other stakeholders;
- Minimum capacity 1,250 dwellings (including area with extant permission for 348 homes);
- The 1,250 dwelling figure above includes at least one 50+ bed C2 Residential or Nursing care home, at least one 50+ home C3 Flexi-care scheme and 12 units to provide special needs accommodation, in accordance with Policy L2;
- Minimum 40% Affordable Housing in accordance with Policy L3;
- Minimum overall net density 40 dwellings per hectare;
- Housing size, type and mix as set out in Policy L1 and Appendix 6;
- Strategic and local public open space, including managed woodland and ecological network links;
- Retention of important trees and landscape features;
- A 2FE primary school, including Early Years provision, to serve the new community;
- Transport network (including walking and cycling links) and public transport services upgrades/improvements;
- Investment / reinvestment in improved education and training provision and facilities at Oaklands College;
- Retain, repair and make fit for purpose the Mansion House building;
- Hydrotherapy pool;
- 3% of homes provided to be self-build housing;
- New neighbourhood centre, including commercial development opportunities;
- Recreation space and other community facilities, including health provision;
- Community Management Organisation with sufficient assets to provide sustainable management of community facilities, open spaces and parklands;
- Excellence in design, energy efficiency and water management;
- Site wide Combined Heat & Power system delivered in association with research and teaching initiatives at the College and its partner institutions;
- Appropriate renewable energy production and supply mechanisms;
- Best and most appropriate use of existing sand and gravel resources on site, rather than by prior extraction.

NB: These requirements do not apply in respect of the extant permission for 348 dwellings referred to under point 2.

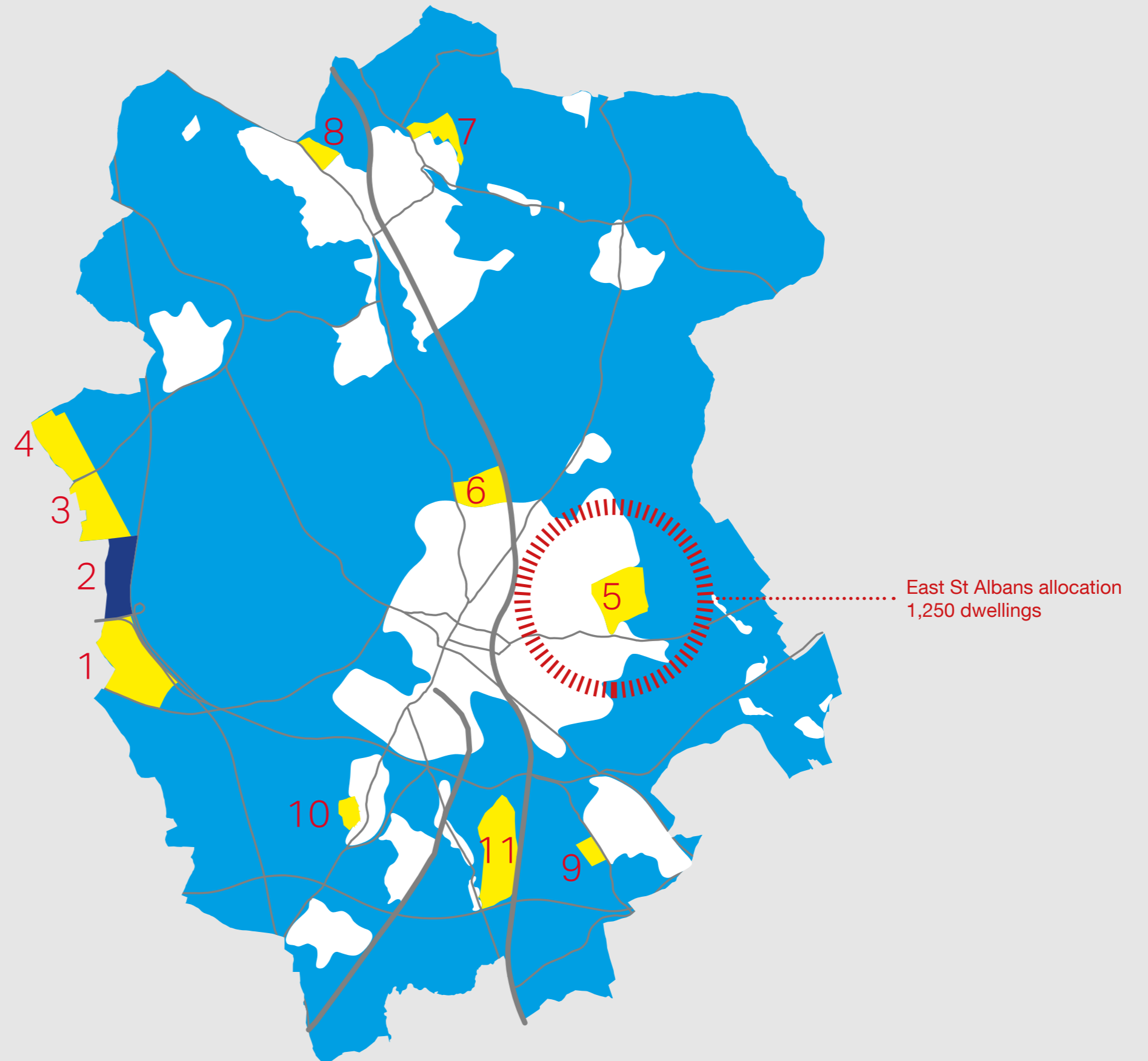


Figure: Extract from the SACDC Draft Strategic Sites Design Toolkit - March 2020. Broad locations diagram.



2.0 Oaklands College East St Albans
Vision & Concept Narrative



Figure: Local plan site view - existing view looking North towards Sandpit Lane down North Drive. A public route.

VISION & CONCEPT

The East of St Albans Strategic Location

Summary

The East of St. Albans Strategic Location provides a fantastic opportunity to create a community established from a sustainable masterplan which can offer a wide range of benefits and opportunities to its residents and at its heart is focussed on education, health and well-being.

The vision for the site is to create high quality homes set within an integrated masterplan connecting directly into the College Campus. The masterplan places Oaklands College even more firmly at the heart of the community with public access through foot and cycle paths to the beautiful parkland, the wide range of sports facilities and the annual calendar of inclusive events.

The vision for the broader location imagines a new and unique place. At once a setting for hundreds of low energy homes within a green landscape whilst also a destination for education, sporting and leisure pursuits. The low energy movement of people from, to and through the broad location will become key to its success, linking west into St. Albans City Centre and acting as a Green Belt Gateway towards the east, Ellenbrook Fields County Park and beyond.

This vision narrative seeks to explain some of the important ideas and frameworks which have been observed through the early masterplanning stages. The following vision frameworks are discussed:

- Landscape Vision & Framework
- Land Use Vision & Framework
- Movement Vision & Framework

The vision frameworks are specific to the site and the strategic broad location. Much work is still to be undertaken and tested but it is considered some strong concepts have been established.

Context

The East of St. Albans Strategic Location is located to the north of Oaklands College and Hatfield Road and immediately south of Sandpit Lane. The site is approximately 2.5 miles East of St. Albans City centre and is in southern Hertfordshire.

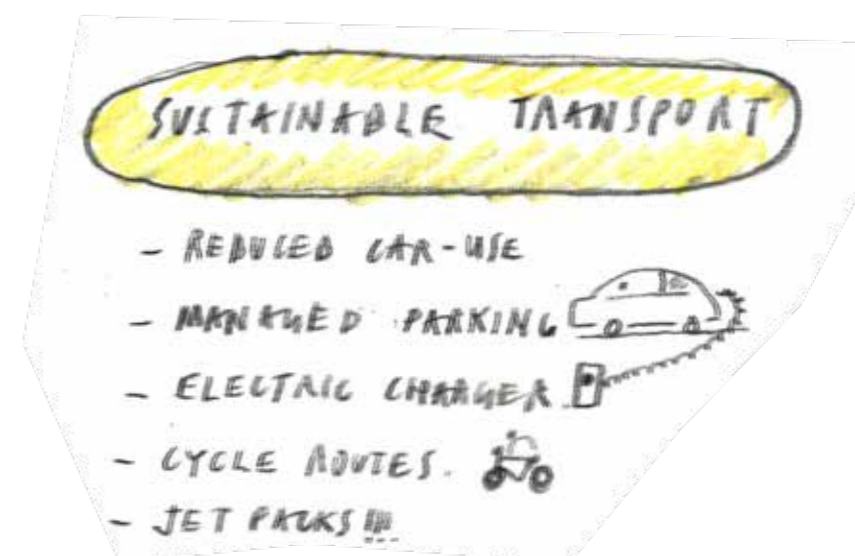
The site falls within the Green Belt zone and enjoys excellent views to the north and east and southwards onto the site from Ridgeway and Jersey Farm. The Green Belt extends to the east of the site beyond Oaklands Lane towards the A1(M) and Hatfield.

On approach from Sandpit Lane the site slopes gently upwards towards the south and down towards Oaklands College and Hatfield Road.

The site is bordered to the west by the Taylor Wimpey housing development, which is currently under construction, and further west by Oakwood Primary School, Beaumont Secondary School and Verulam Secondary School. These schools are bounded by playing fields to the east, which help to maintain the 'open' character of the context.

To the southwest corner of the site is a residential development known as Wynches Farm estate which borders the site. A dense strip of woodland called Holme Wood surrounds the development and extends northwards to the Equine area of Oaklands College.

To the far eastern edge of the site is woodland stretching from Hatfield Road, along Oaklands Lane and culminating in a large expanse to the far east of the site.



LANDSCAPE VISION & FRAMEWORK

The East of St Albans Strategic Location

Green Belt Setting

The ambition of the masterplan is for a landscape led design approach. The vision and proposals to date recognise the importance of the Green Belt setting and the need to retain, where possible, existing landscape features such as hedge rows and public footpaths. There is also an opportunity to maximise the excellent views across the site to the north and east and ensure they are retained where possible as the site layout develops.

The Landscape Vision has identified the following key typologies:

- Shared Community Space,
- Play and Nature Trails,
- Urban Agriculture,
- Connections to wider green and blue infrastructures including the breadth of facilities across the campus of Oaklands College.

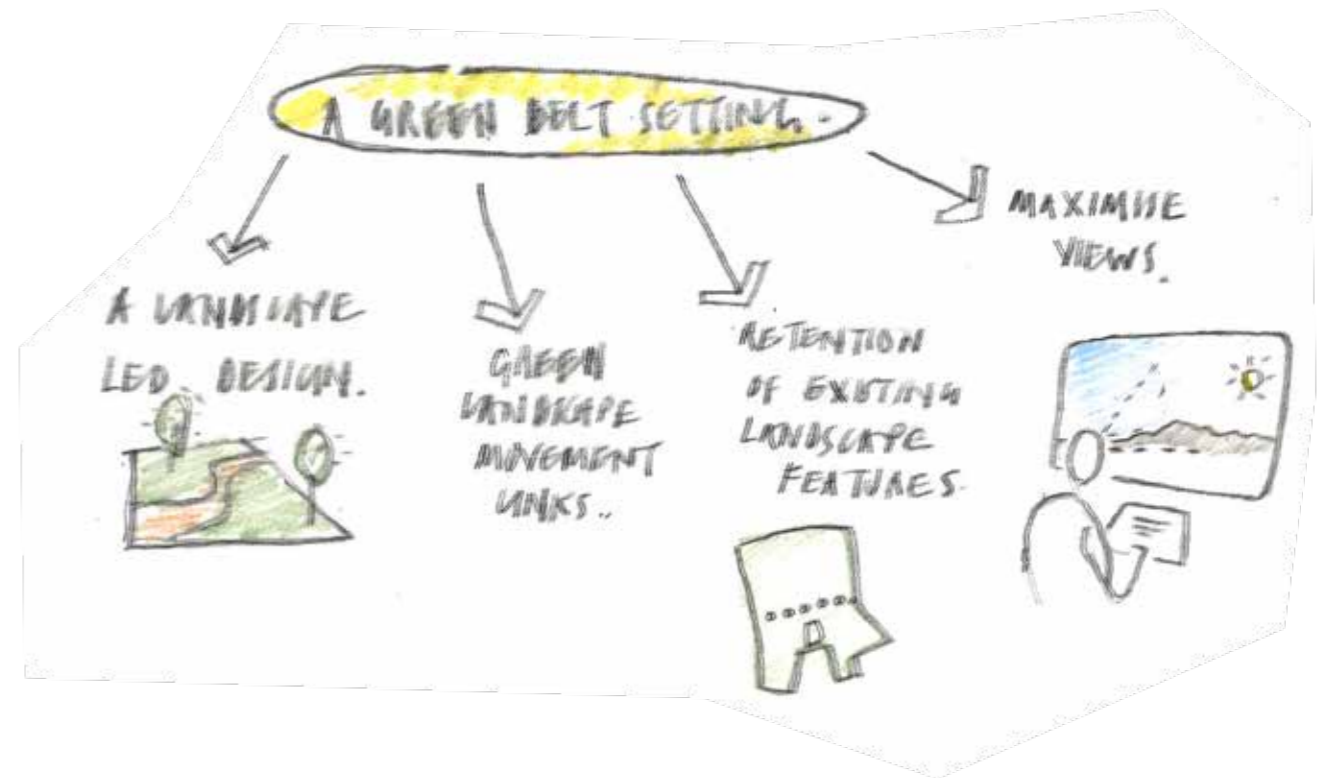
Shared Community Space

By considering the landscape design from the outset there provides an opportunity for shared community spaces. Creating welcoming spaces and promoting community cohesion. The landscape design could include places for people to work, play and socialise. Combining the characteristics of shared work and social spaces within a natural environment the aim is to capitalise on the principles of sustainability and well-being. The landscape concept seeks to design flexible spaces in nature that can be used as workspaces for residents/ visitors and guests to use. These may be stand alone "Pods" or small buildings to be included for small groups of 4 to 8 people to gather in a natural environment in all weathers and seasons. These semi-formal spaces would be combined with external areas for social interaction, solitary or group work sessions and social events thereby maximising the spaces in-between and creating an infrastructure which could be appropriated for individual needs. To ensure the effective use of the landscape an important design principle will be the clear connection between any 'outdoor' structure and the immediate external spaces and the wider natural areas beyond. Water and power to these spaces would be desirable and the potential to incorporate off grid and sustainable principles will be explored, e.g. utilising photovoltaic panels, turbines or ground source heating.

Play and Nature Trails

The landscape vision aims to enhance the use and enjoyment of public space by introducing a range of vibrant trails that combine a sense of nature and play and where possible public art. With these features come a range of benefits which enhance a sense of identity, including places for interaction, creating a sense of civic pride and injecting energy into public spaces. The creation of playful trails is intended to create an experience of a journey through the site. With pathways and the green infrastructure they sit within becoming multi-functional spaces creating an environment that promotes well-being and encourages an active and healthy life-style.

Public art will be incorporated into open space, avoiding "traditional" artistic interventions by creating opportunities throughout all elements to incorporate artistic interventions such as play items, surface finishes or landscape features such as benches.





Figures: A series of landscaped and natural play trails - precedent projects.

Figure: Abode at Great Kneighton, Cambridge, by Proctor & Matthews Architects.
<https://www.proctorandmatthews.com/project/abode-great-kneighton-cambridge>

LANDSCAPE VISION & FRAMEWORK

The East of St Albans Strategic Location

Play and Nature Trails Continued...

Green space and a feeling of being in Nature will be formed through an interconnected and extensive green infrastructure. Planting will reflect the aims and objectives as set out within St. Albans' planning and landscape character assessments, as well as relevant documents. This is intended to allow the community to have opportunities to live, work and play within areas that appear natural.

Play elements are an important part of any community and, through an extensive green infrastructure, provides the opportunity to move away from a typical fenced playground set up that can often stifle creative and expressive play. It is proposed that the play elements are along trails, seamlessly incorporated into the green infrastructure, that promote more creative and interpretive play. There will also be opportunities for more traditional play items such as swings, slides etc. However, opportunities will be investigated as to how these may be more integrated rather than simply being in a fenced-off designated play area.

Urban Agriculture

The landscape structure of the site provides the opportunity to incorporate urban agriculture into the development framework. With much of the site currently being agricultural land, this provides space for productive urban landscapes which in turn will benefit the immediate and local communities.

Some of these opportunities include:

- Curriculum links with Oaklands College Land Management and Horticulture courses. This could include partnering and stewardship opportunities for students as part of a long-term Community Management Organisation,
- Production potential, providing residents and community groups with access to locally grown quality produce,
- Reducing food mileage by eating locally produced food,
- Making use of the agricultural land on site and maintaining soil quality,
- Creating a sense of belonging and learning for those, of all ages, who haven't tried growing their own produce before,
- Potential to include animal husbandry and much needed Urban Bee keeping.

With many of the benefits being primarily from the production of the produce, the masterplan will seek ways of creating a visually appealing productive urban landscape. The landscape strategy aims to transform the existing open agricultural farmland into a publicly accessible multi-functional space for the residents and local community.

Aims of the Urban Agriculture are:

- Productive areas,
- Social interaction and sense of ownership, and
- Creating spaces with high aesthetic qualities as well as being functional and productive.





Figures: Precedent images of various community projects, focusing around urban agriculture and social interaction.

LANDSCAPE VISION & FRAMEWORK

The East of St Albans Strategic Location

Connections to wider green and blue infrastructures:

The vision towards the green and blue infrastructure is not limited to the 'red line' around the designated site area. For the East of St. Albans Strategic Location to be successful a wider view as been taken towards the broad location and the potential for the new development to create a landscape infrastructure which links with and is supportive of neighbouring green and blue initiatives.

Observation and evaluation to date includes connections which are specific to the East of St. Alban Location, including:

- Jersey Lane - the extension of this existing green corridor route through the proposed residential development and joining with other existing green pathway networks to the north of the site.
- The Alban Way – new and improved green infrastructure connections from the new development to the Alban Way. This improved connectivity would create a green and sustainable transportation route direct into St. Albans City and importantly to the railway station, which is a key commuter hub.

Both Jersey Lane and the Alban Way have Greenspace Action Plans whose existing work and initiatives the Landscape Framework proposes to incorporate and build upon as necessary.

The Oaklands College Campus is set in a beautiful historic landscape and has extensive recreation and amenity facilities which would be accessible to the residents of the masterplan and the general public.

These include the following:

- Access to the College park lands and lake,
- Large areas of amenity space with wide habitat corridors,
- An extensive network of green rights of way. With improvements proposed to footpaths, jogging routes and cycle pathways,
- An Equine and Animal Care Centre are located immediately to the south of the residential site and the proposed location of the primary school,
- Extensive sports pitches, including full size and 5 a-side football and rugby, all

weather hockey and football pitches,

- New proposals which are planned and are part of the vision for the broad location include: a new sports pavilion and changing facilities and a new athletics track.

It is recognised that the real strength of the development will be the green connectivity and interplay between the new residential development, existing residential neighbours, the education facilities and the wider green infrastructure beyond. The landscape structure of the site provides the opportunity to incorporate an extensive and interconnected sustainable urban drainage system. Sustainable urban drainage features provide multiple opportunities for not only surface water retention, but also ecological enhancement, amenity value and educational opportunities. Any swales, ponds or wetland areas associated with the proposals will be designed to appear natural and create a variety of habitats by planting with native aquatic and marginal species which will provide additional habitat for a diverse range of plants and animals as well as creating an engaging environment for users. There is the potential to provide decking areas, seating and information boards to supplement these areas providing a valuable resource for recreational users as well as any local interest groups and school groups.





Figure: Alban Way - a view looking down an existing section of the public path.



Figure: Alban Way - a view looking down an existing section of the public path.



Figure: Jersey Lane - a view looking North down an existing section of the public lane.



Figure: East St Albans - a view looking North towards Sandpit Lane. Positioned over the proposed Oaklands Campus.

LAND USE VISION & FRAMEWORK

The East of St Albans Strategic Location

Land Use:

The evaluation of appropriate land use to a specific site includes physical qualities such as topography, orientation, existing landscape / building features and land use adjacencies. These qualities are of importance however proximity and travel distances are considered a priority when considering the land uses across the East of St. Albans Strategic Location.

Due to the location from St. Albans City Centre, the railway station and shopping amenities land use requirements and their sustainable travel distance will be key in order to reduce the desire to travel by car. This is relevant in relation to the following:

- Home to Local Centre
- Home to Primary School
- Home to Public Open Space
- Home to Sports Facilities
- Home to City Centre & Transport Hub

The existing and new land uses across the broad context offer the potential for a complementary mixing of uses which would assist in creating an emerging neighbourhood structure. Such a structure could be realised as an Eco-Neighbourhood Network with land uses also assisting neighbouring housing developments.

Within the catchment of the East of St. Albans Strategic Location and the multiple land uses within the campus of Oaklands College there is the opportunity for a very strong mix of Live, Learn and Work land uses:

- Eco Homes – new sustainable Housing
- Eco-Education – new and existing education facilities within walking or cycling distance
- Eco-play – new and existing green landscape amenity and sport facilities on the doorstep
- Eco-Shop – local food production from seed to plate to compost
- Eco-Business – green start-up units within walking distance from home





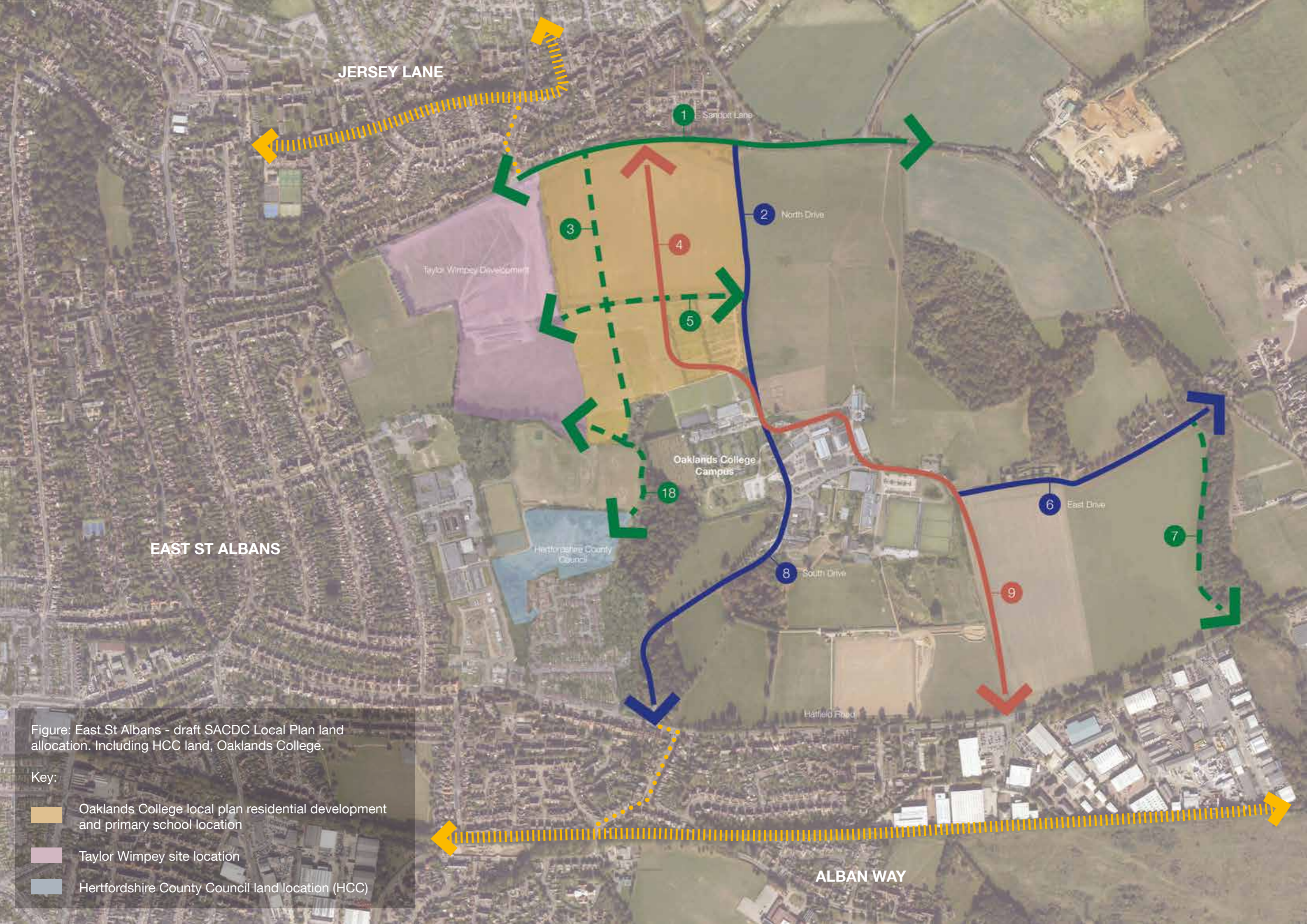
Figure: Goldsmith Street - largest Passivhaus scheme in the UK, Norwich, by Mikhail Riches Architects. Precedent image.
<http://www.mikhailriches.com/project/goldsmith-street/#text>



Figure: Accordia in Cambridge, by FCB Studio.
<https://fcbstudios.com/work/view/Accordia>



Figure: Marmalade Lane in Cambridge, by Mole Architects.
<https://www.molearchitects.co.uk/projects/housing/k1-cambridge-co-housing/>



JERSEY LANE

1 Sandpot Lane

2 North Drive

Taylor Wimpey Development

Oaklands College Campus

Hertfordshire County Council

Hatfield Road

EAST ST ALBANS

ALBAN WAY

Figure: East St Albans - draft SACDC Local Plan land allocation. Including HCC land, Oaklands College.

Key:

- Oaklands College local plan residential development and primary school location
- Taylor Wimpey site location
- Hertfordshire County Council land location (HCC)

MOVEMENT VISION & FRAMEWORK

The East of St Albans Strategic Location

Movement:

The movement framework has been a key driver in the development of the masterplan and has been researched alongside the landscape framework. As outlined in the framework sections above the main concern has been to minimise the need for day-to-day car use and create sustainable transport links to the city centre and railway station and west towards Hertfordshire University and Hatfield.

The reality of achieving this is proposed through the following:

- The use of existing green infrastructure corridors such as Jersey Lane and the Alban Way,
- The stitching together of existing green corridors with new pedestrian and cycle routes, such as the proposed link through HCC's land, thereby creating viable and efficient routes and benefiting adjacent housing developments,
- The design of on-site road networks to accommodate public transport and the positioning of stops within the residential catchment,
- The retention and improvement of key public rights of way, including North Drive, which runs north to south and parallel to the east of the site,
- Improvement works to Sandpit Lane to allow for clear and safe pedestrian and cycle lanes.

Existing Routes...

1. Potential to improve Sandpit Lane - provide both pedestrian and cycle provisions.
2. Existing route North from Oaklands College - route to be retained for pedestrians and cyclists. Retained route from Hatfield Road to Sandpit Lane.
6. Existing route East from Oaklands College - route to be retained for pedestrians and cyclists.
8. Existing route North and South of Oaklands College - route to be retained for pedestrians and cyclists. Public vehicular access to Oaklands College only.

Proposed Routes...

3. Proposed pedestrian and cycle link from North to South through the development.
4. Proposed bus route from Hatfield Road to Sandpit Lane. Connecting through Oaklands College and the proposed development.
5. Proposed pedestrian and cycle link from East to West through the development. Potentially connecting the Taylor Wimpey site to the West.
7. Potential pedestrian and cycle link South from East Drive to Hatfield Road.
9. Proposed bus route South from Oaklands College and the development.
18. Connectivity South from the development to Hatfield Road.



3.0 Oaklands College East St Albans
Observing Place

Key:

- Woodlands
- Taylor Wimpey Site
- Hertfordshire County Council - South Field Site
- Oaklands College Local Plan Site
- Potential SUDs locations
- Surrounding Housing

OBSERVING PLACE

Oaklands College Local Plan St Albans

Constraints and Opportunities

The constraints and opportunities diagram opposite identifies the areas for consideration, within the site red line and outside within the wider context. Housing sits to the North and West of the site and provides a number of key connections that could be made. Including the connection to the existing College to the South.



The image above shows the road improvement works to Sandpit Lane, and the entrance area to the new Taylor Wimpey site.

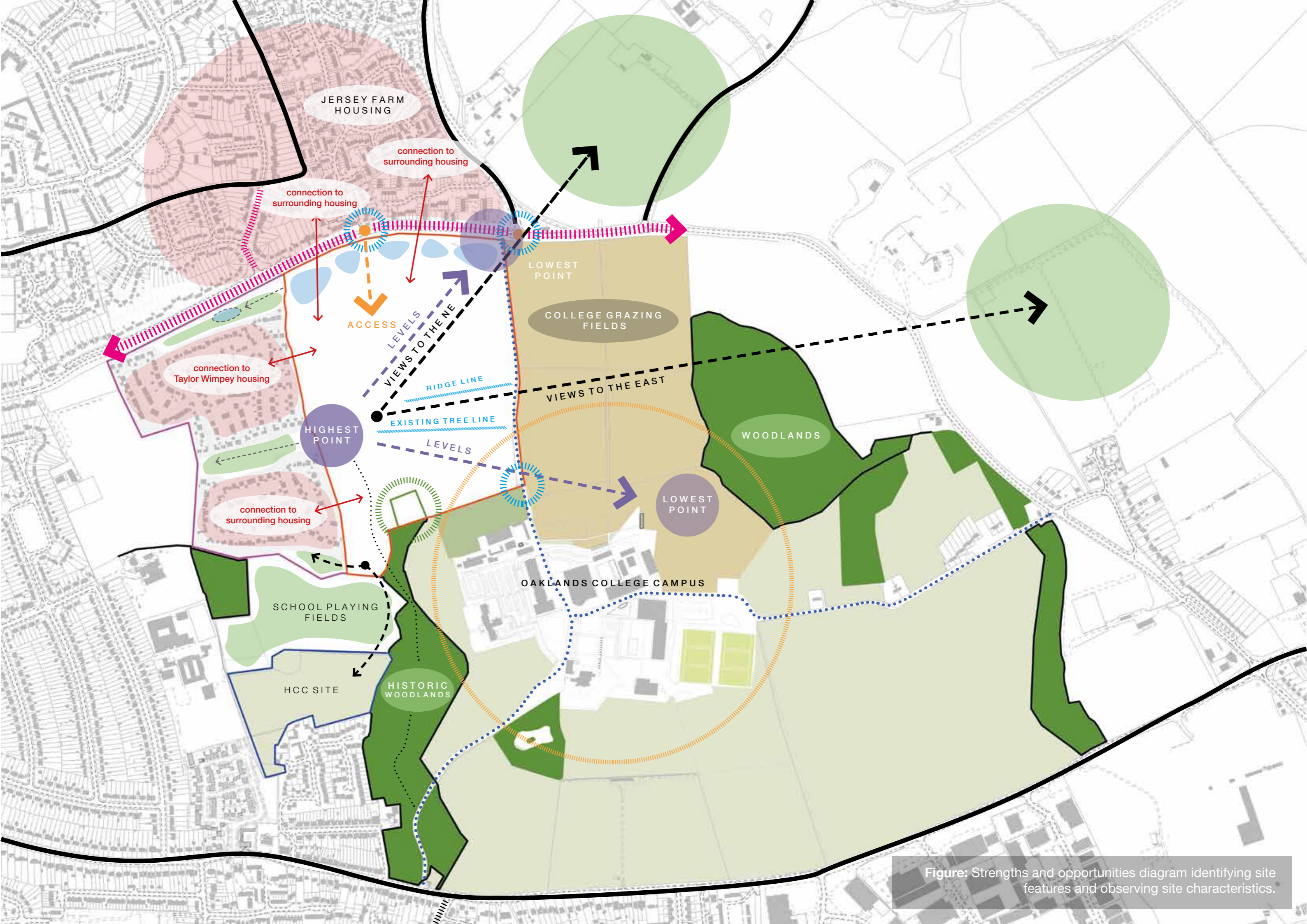


Figure: Strengths and opportunities diagram identifying site features and observing site characteristics.

WIDER CONNECTIVITY

Wider East St Albans Connections

East St Albans - Identified Connections

Existing Routes...

12. Jersey Lane - existing bridal path.

Existing Routes for Improvement...

10. Coopers Green Lane - Draft A414 Corridor Strategy 2018.

11. House Lane - improvements North to Sandridge.

13. Barnfield Road and Ardens Way. Improvement in connectivity from Sandpit Lane to Jersey Lane. Cycle provisions along Barnfield Road and Ardens Way.

14. Sandpit Lane. Improvements along Sandpit Lane, West of the proposed development. Cycle provisions to be included and connectivity to the town.

15. Beechwood Avenue. Improvement in cycle provisions, greater connectivity between Sandpit Lane and Hatfield Road.

20. Colney Heath Lane - cycle connectivity from South Drive/Hatfield Road to the Alban Way.

21. Existing Alban Way (Alban Way Improvement Document).

22. Hatfield Road. Cycle improvements along Hatfield Road from St Albans City station and,

23. Hatfield Road. Improved connectivity East to Hatfield.

24. Connectivity to Ellenbrook Fields - Country Park.

Suggested New Routes...

16. Greater connectivity to the Taylor Wimpey development and the South-West of the development. Connection through Oakwood Primary School to Central Drive and Beechwood Avenue.




17. Taylor Wimpey proposed cycle path and suggested route to the South.

18. Connectivity South from the development to Hatfield Road through Oaklands College land.

19. Connectivity South through the Hertfordshire County Council site.

Refer to the Proposed Strategic Plan for points 1-9 (presented at the beginning of this document).

Diagram Key:

-  Oaklands College local plan residential development and primary school location
-  Taylor Wimpey site location
-  Hertfordshire County Council land location (HCC)

Existing routes and tracks outside of Oaklands College/local plan boundary. Jersey Lane route North of the College (number 12).



Suggested route outside of Oaklands College/local plan boundary. Hertfordshire County Council land



Sandpit Lane improvement works to incorporate a cycle path and pedestrian footpath.



Existing routes. South Drive retained as a main route from Hatfield Road to Sandpit Lane. Both North and East Drive to be retained.



Existing routes. Site wide routes outside of Oaklands College/local plan boundary. Suggested improvements to be made to increase connectivity.



Taylor Wimpey proposed and suggested routes outside of Oaklands College/local plan boundary.



New routes suggested within Oaklands College/local plan boundary. Indicatively identified and further development required.



New bus route connecting Hatfield Road to Sandpit Lane. Public vehicles can not gain access through the College via this route, buses only.



New routes suggested outside of Oaklands College/local plan boundary. Routes to be discussed with SACDC and HCC.



Diagram Key:



Figure: East St Albans wider strategic improvements and connections. Including the Alban Way and Jersey Lane.

EXISTING LAND USES

Oaklands College Campus & East St Albans

Existing Surrounding Land Uses

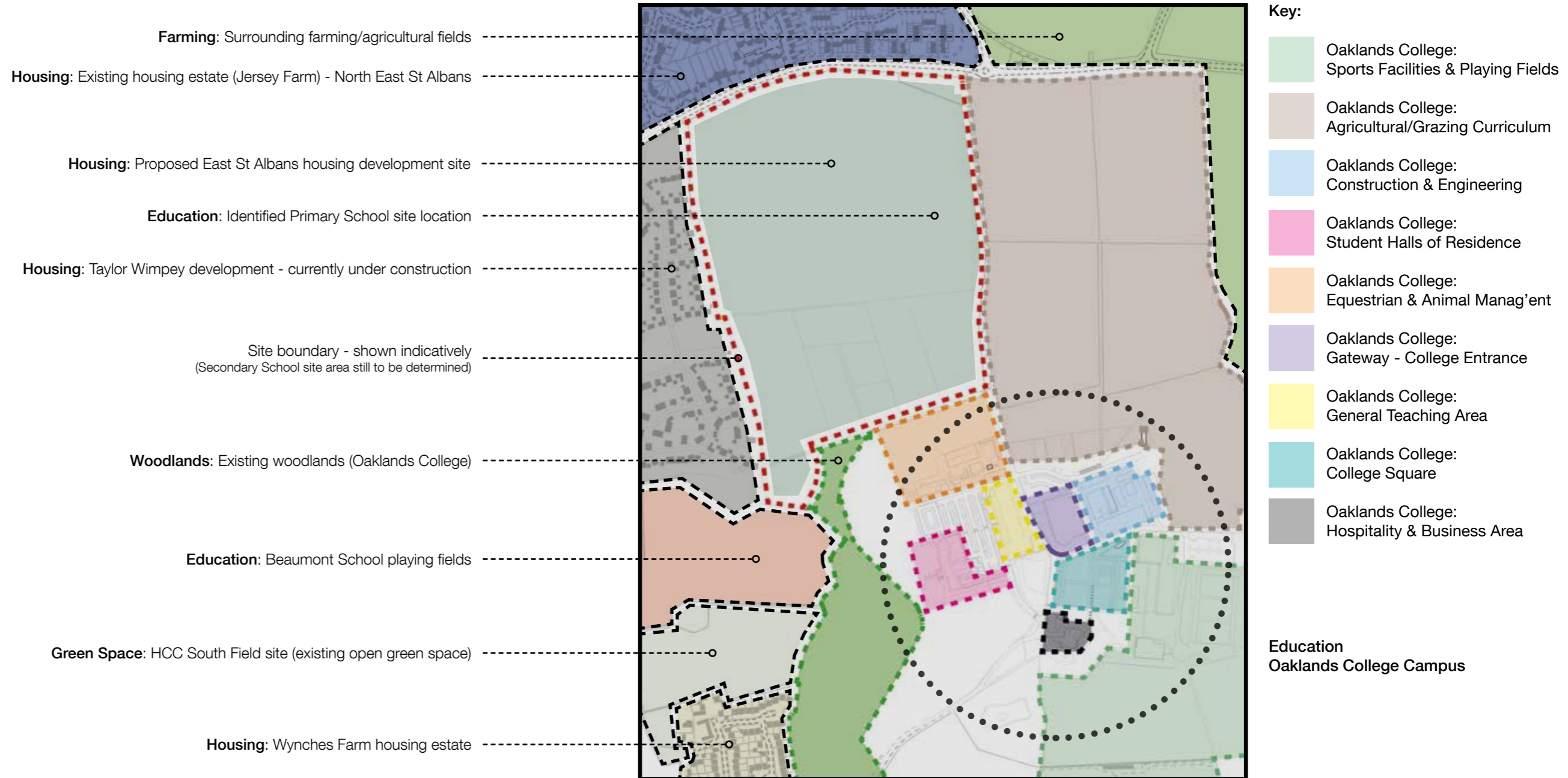
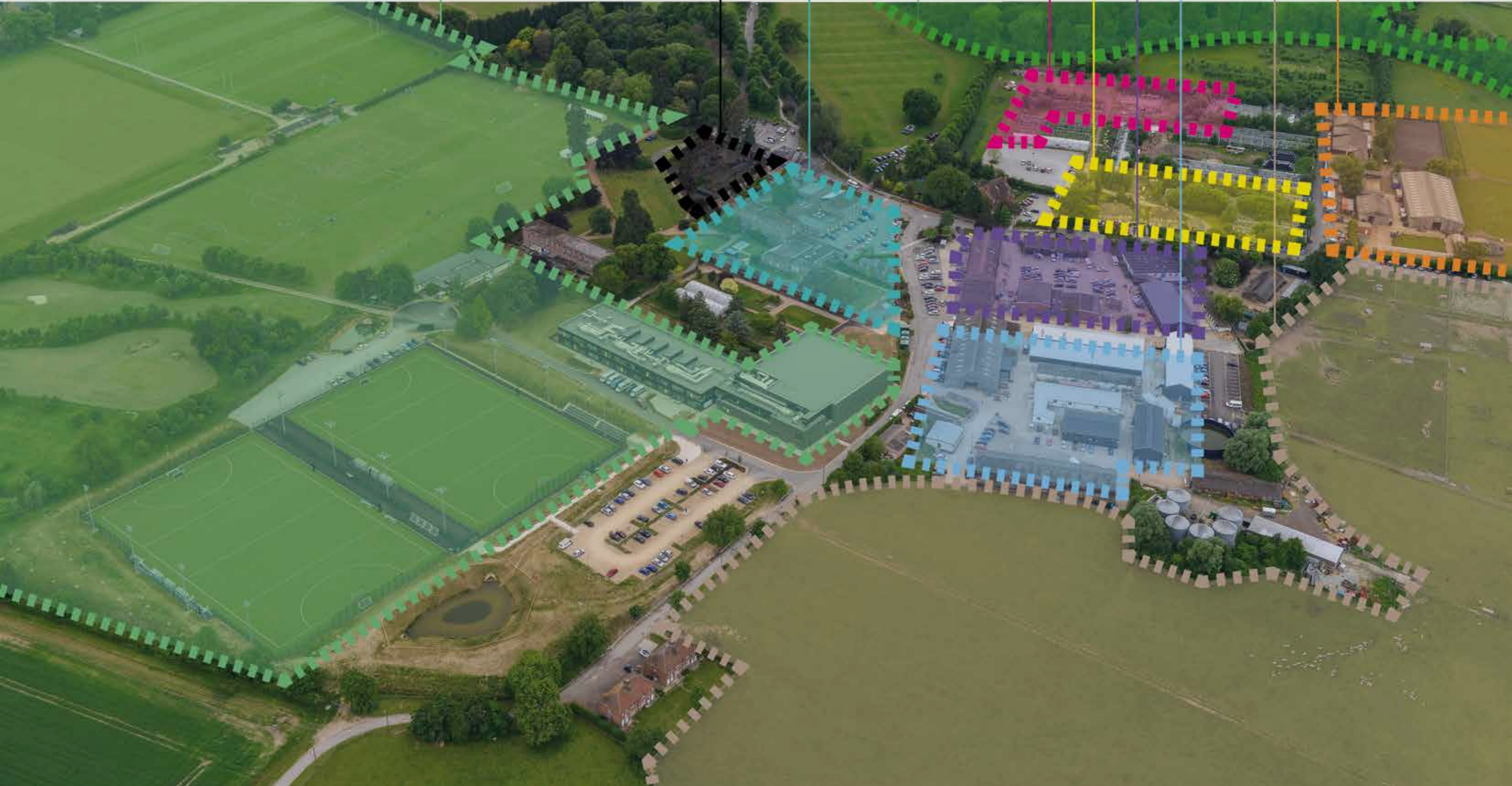


Figure: Proposed Oaklands College Campus overview - after the current planned campus re-development.

Proposed Oakland College Masterplan Layout - Land Uses

- Sports facilities and playing fields
- Hospitality and business area
- College square
- Oaklands woodlands
- Student halls of residence
- General teaching area
- Gateway to College
- Construction & Engineering
- Agricultural and farming fields
- Equestrian and animal management





4.0 Oaklands College East St Albans
Masterplan Layout

MASTERPLAN OPTIONS 1&2

The East of St Albans - Masterplan

- Comprehensive new road junction improvements.
- Central vehicular entrance working with the visibility splays from Sandpit Lane and the internal site contours.
- Housing typologies distributed amongst distinct character areas.
- Sustainable drainage integrated into the masterplan through swales and reed beds.
- A mix of high quality designed homes.
- Invigorating open public green spaces with shared allotments, alongside private gardens and woodland areas.
- The college at the heart of the community and education.
- Self-build homes which would also be used as a teaching tool for the college.



- Local centre and Primary School located to the East of the site allowing for access from main vehicular route and also pedestrian access from the existing North Drive bridal way.
- Public amenity space distributed evenly throughout the site and underpinning the landscape led approach to the masterplan.
- The highest point of the site is marked by a landscaped meadow and benefits from views to the East. This also links to the neighbouring housing development to the West.
- A new two form entry Primary School able to link with other schools in the area but also with Oaklands College.
- Large areas of residential amenity space with wide habitat corridors.
- Improved public access to Oaklands College sports facilities.



Figure: Athena, Cambridge, by Alison Brooks Architects.
<https://www.alisonbrooksarchitects.com/project/athena-cambridge/>

SUMMARY

A summary of community benefits are as follows:

- The proposed masterplan will provide affordable housing in line with the requirements of the local community and St Albans City & District Council requirements;

A mix of high quality designed homes, in particular 2 bedroom and 3 bedroom homes helping to fill the gaps identified in the updated Strategic Housing Market Assessment (Independent Assessment of Housing Needs). Including the self build requirement within the eastern portion of the masterplan, which would also be used as a teaching tool for the College and St Albans residents;

- An exemplar high quality design masterplan that allows residents and the general public to access the parkland, the lake, existing and new footpaths, and cycle paths, as well as the college restaurant, farm shop, and community days centred on the new public square – College Square – as part of the current masterplan;

- A new two form entry Primary school able to link with other schools in the area but also with the college, enabling an exciting educational opportunity for the primary school children to access all the facilities the College has to offer;

- Sustainable drainage integrated into the masterplan through swales, ponds, and reed beds;

- Large areas of residential amenity space with wide habitat corridors, considerable numbers of new native trees planted;

- Comprehensive new road junction improvements including new junctions and access roads – with the potential for a bus link through from Sandpit Lane to Hatfield Road;

- Improved public access to college sports facilities and the possibility for growth in this area to meet community need;

- And fundamentally – all the money released through this site allocation will be invested in realising the potential of the communities served by Oaklands College.



Figure: North Drive public access - a view looking South down the entrance to North Drive from Sandpit Lane.

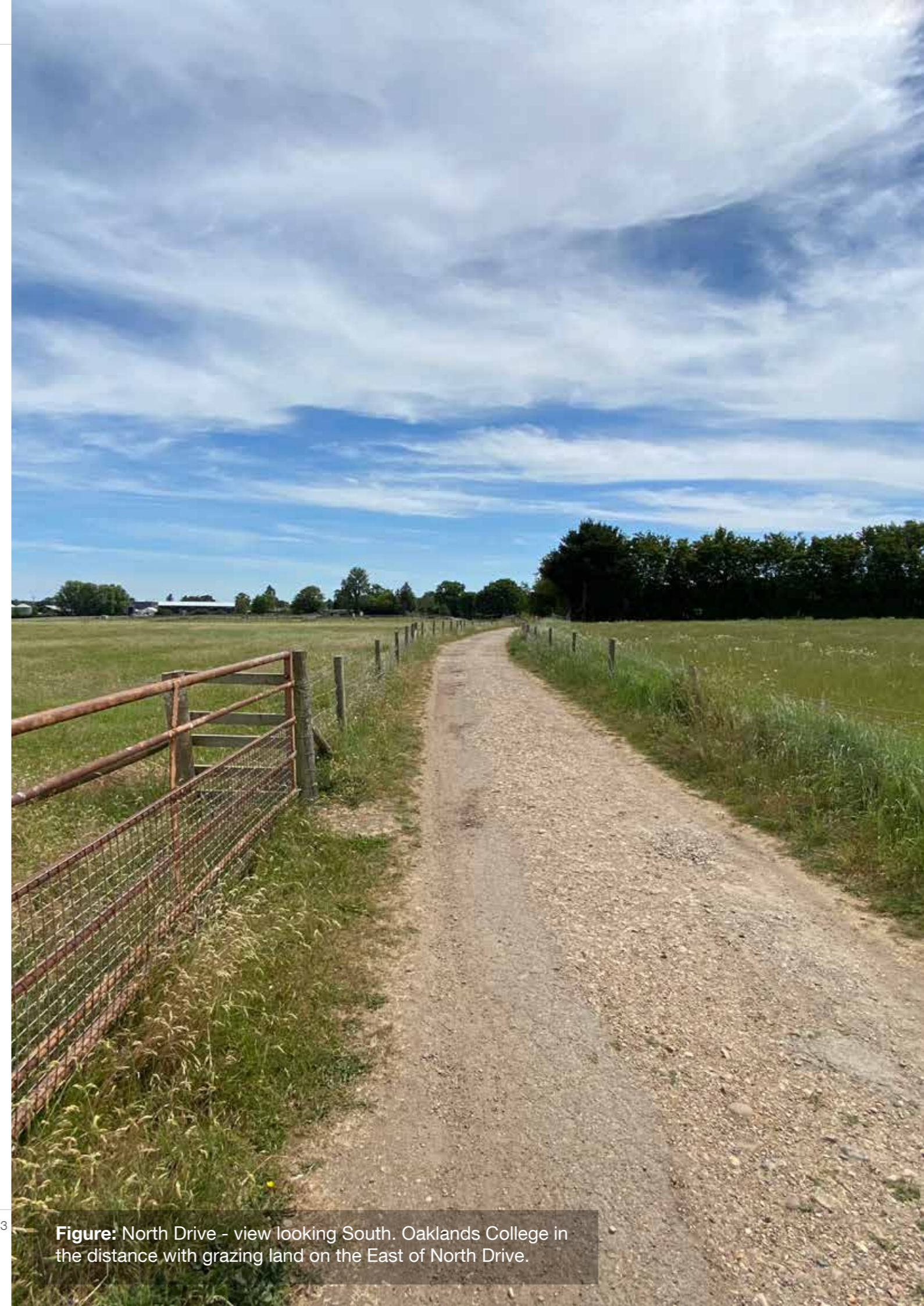


Figure: North Drive - view looking South. Oaklands College in the distance with grazing land on the East of North Drive.



5.0 Oaklands College East St Albans
Appendix 1 - Site Plan

SITE LOCATION PLAN

The East of St Albans - Masterplan

Figure: Site location plan including the site red line - page size reduced from A1 to A3.

