

8. Building for Life – the Sign of a Good Place to Live

Building for Life 12 (BFL 12) has been led by three partners:

Cabe at the Design Council

Design for Homes

Home Builders Federation

BFL12 is a Government-endorsed industry standard for well-designed homes and neighbourhoods and local authorities, communities and developers are encouraged to use it to guide discussions about creating good places to live. It is also designed to help local planning authorities assess the quality of proposed and completed developments and can be used for site-specific briefs and help to structure design policies and briefs.

In its new Local Plan Core Strategy, the Borough Council supports the BFL approach in raising the standard of new developments. BFL consists of 12 questions with four questions in each of three chapters:

- **Integrating into the neighbourhood**
- **Creating a Place**
- **Street and Home**

The BFL12 assessment uses a 'traffic light' system (red, amber and green) where new developments are expected to aim for as many 'greens' as possible, to minimise the number of 'ambers' and to avoid 'reds'.

In applying Core Strategy **Policy CS2 “High Quality Design”, Broadnook Design and Access Statements - DAS1 The Framework document and DAS2 The Delivery document** - explore and define detailed proposals for a significant part of the overall application site and in combination they explain the **Broadnook land uses, access, layout, appearance and landscaping.**

The BFL12 assessment in the following table is based on and has been informed by those proposals.

BUILDING FOR LIFE 12

A. Integrating into the Neighbourhood

1. Connections

Does the scheme integrate into its surroundings by reinforcing existing connections and creating new ones, while also respecting existing buildings and land uses around the development site?

The Broadnook proposals introduce a set of new connections where none currently exist. Local and strategic enhancements to the rights of way network are achieved linking nearby settlements and significantly enhancing strategic connection between the Charnwood Forest network and the Soar/Wreake/ Grand Union Canal / Watermead Park areas to the east. New cycling and walking routes are made with employment areas, Birstall Park and Ride and the Cedars Academy. The new routes are attractive, logical and well overlooked where possible. Where appropriate they will be well lit.

2. Facilities and Services

Does the development provide (or is it close to) community facilities such as shops, schools, workplaces, parks, play areas, pubs or cafes?

The Broadnook Centre includes a new primary school and a range of shopping, social, community and commercial facilities to serve day to day needs. Extensive parkland, play space and business and enterprise opportunities are all within easy reach by safe, convenient and direct paths and cycle routes focussing on Central New Walk. The Broadnook Centre provides an attractive, vibrant and welcoming combination of facilities and high quality public realm – the heart of a new community.

3. Public Transport

Does the scheme have good access to public transport to help reduce car dependency?

The North of Birstall location is adjacent to the best transport choice corridor in Leicestershire where a range of existing high quality / high frequency bus services link Leicester City Centre with Loughborough via the Soar Valley villages. A 15 minute service is prospectively available from the outset facilitated by diverted or extended services, Birstall Park and Ride is an added advantage. Improved cycle and pedestrian links also form part of the proposals.

4. Meeting local housing requirements

Does the development have a mix of housing types and tenures that suit?

The proposals will contribute to the objectively assessed housing needs for Charnwood in the way anticipated by adopted Policy CS20. A range of house types, sizes and tenures will be brought forward including affordable homes, having regard to market conditions, economic viability and other infrastructure requirements, in accordance with Policy CS3. The proposals include a 'retirement village' providing excellent bespoke facilities for older and downsizing residents.

B. Creating a Place

5. Character

Does the scheme create a place with locally inspired or otherwise distinctive character?

The Broadnook proposal is expressly inspired by national garden suburb heritage and in particular the locally distinctive legacy in Charnwood Borough. As the Core Strategy states:

“This location provides an opportunity to create a new garden suburb to reflect the pioneering work started during the early part of the twentieth century along the Great Central Railway... During the early part of the twentieth century a number of homes were built to Garden Suburb principles along the route of the Great Central Railway. This is particularly evident at the Ridgeway in Rothley, part of the unfinished Rothley Garden Suburb, which was strongly influenced by Hampstead Garden Suburb. The plan included individually designed houses with good sized gardens”

The Core Strategy also identifies Garden Suburb principles and a Vision for Broadnook which have influenced the distinctive and authentic character of the proposals. The detailed housing proposals demonstrate their contribution to the overarching distinguished character.

6. Working with the site and its context

Does the scheme take advantage of existing topography, landscape features (including water courses) wildlife habitats, existing buildings, site orientation and microclimates?

A full environmental appraisal of the site and its setting has been completed. The Development Framework Plan accounts for the conclusions of the Local Plan Examination discussion as well as topic based assessments such as ecology, landscape and visual influences and archaeology. The scheme responds to the setting and topography of the site which has also informed the surface water drainage strategy. Significant existing landscape features are retained and enhanced as key influences on the development framework. Extensive and significant new landscape is proposed including the creation of attractive new routes and spaces. A major net gain in biodiversity and planting will be achieved with strong nature conservation benefits.

7. Creating well defined streets and spaces

Are buildings designed and positioned with landscaping to define and enhance streets and spaces and are buildings designed to turn street corners well?

As described by both DAS1 and DAS2 this objective has been a key consideration for the working groups and a range of participants. Generous spaces and street landscaping are fundamental attributes of the garden suburb character and a hierarchy of street typologies provides a framework for both a beautiful environment as well as a legible movement network. Bespoke building design provides thoughtful views and vistas face and surveille in all locations complemented by fine landscape. The dwellings are carefully selected from a Broadnook palette and arranged harmoniously to create the spacious and dignified character

8. Easy to find your way around

Is the scheme designed to make it easy to find your way around?

In true garden suburb tradition, the Broadnook layout is simple in form and function with a logical and legible street pattern and clear orientation. The overall spatial concept is based on walkable neighbourhood dimensions focussing on the Broadnook Centre. A boulevard loop provides easy connections and the landscaped Central New Walk is a structural east-west route of strength and character linking all key destinations. The detailed proposals confirm that the street typologies provide varied but complementary street character and a variety of well-proportioned public spaces and enclosure which will enhance orientation and connectivity. Keynote buildings have been designed to occupy important locations along the primary and secondary streets, at corners and at the end of streets enabling people to move easily through the garden suburb. The new streets' landscape and greenways create new, interesting views as well as safeguarding and taking advantage of key viewpoints.

C. Street and Home

9. Streets for All

Are streets designed in a way that encourages low vehicle speeds and allows them to function as social spaces?

The hierarchy of streets respond to the degree of activity in providing access and circulation. The boulevards include traffic calming "events" and alignment to naturally encourage lower vehicle speeds. At the 'lower' end of the hierarchy streets will be pedestrian friendly with lanes and drives providing shared surface areas with a special people-friendly character. A greater sense of enclosure is brought about by landscaping and narrower corridor widths and definition. Easy, comfortable and direct footpath links provide excellent connectivity throughout the garden suburb. The proposed dwellings provide good natural surveillance in all areas and contribute positively visually interesting and active streets.

10. Car Parking

Is resident and visitor parking sufficient and well integrated so that it does not dominate the street?

The detailed housing proposals (see DAS2) demonstrate that particular attention has been given to car parking provision. It will be provided in a number of ways with the primary typology being on plot with a garage with strong hedge and tree planting providing an attractive and effective screen. In a limited number of areas there will be discrete grouped or street parking again within thoughtful and appropriate landscape. Where parking is located / grouped to the rear or side of dwellings it will be contained within small areas serving no more than a small group of houses. Some on-street parking will occur – and is acknowledged to be both space efficient and positive in creating a more active and vibrant place.

11. Public and Private Spaces	
Will public and private spaces be clearly defined and designed to be attractive, well managed and safe?	This is an extremely important part of the garden suburb ethos and the way in which it is proposed to be tackled and achieved is clear from both the overall and detailed proposals described by DAS1 and DAS2. Key public spaces and the public realm are clearly defined by new buildings and/or key landscaping. Boundary treatments are taken from a palette of common character which clearly defines public, private and defensible space with the emphasis on robust hedge planting. The spaces created or well overlooked by neighbouring properties, public gathering and connecting spaces have been approached in an holistic manner utilising high quality landscape and layout. DAS2 confirms that detailed design has carefully considered these aspects and the “perimeter block” formation ensures that rear gardens are private and secure spaces.
12. External storage and amenity space	
Is there adequate external storage space for bins and recycling as well as vehicles and cycles?	Storage space is being provided predominantly where possible within secure enlarged gardens with convenient, safe and secure access. Overall provision and location of storage for bins and recycling boxes will ensure that they will not have an adverse impact on the visual appeal or practical use of streets.



*“Our standards of design can be so much higher.
We are a nation renowned worldwide for creative excellence yet,
at home, confidence in development itself has been eroded by the
too frequent experience of mediocrity”*

Minister for Planning Introduction to NPPF March 2012





Wanlip



Birstall



Rothley



Thurstaston

9. Community Engagement and Consultation

The Broadnook proposals have been advanced over a long period of plan-making and pre-application joint working.

Comprehensive consultation took place across the Borough during key stages of the Charnwood Local Plan Core Strategy process. The North of Birstall location was identified as a strategic priority during a key Local Plan stage in 2012 and sustained that status when the Borough Council submitted the draft Plan to the Secretary of State for Examination in December 2013. As the Inspector records in his final report (September 2015):

“...At the time of submission, work on a potential site allocation had not progressed sufficiently. Rather than delay the Core Strategy, the Council took what I consider to be a reasonable and pragmatic view and proceeded with a broader Direction of Growth.” (para.130)

The Inspector eventually considered the then up to date position at an Examination hearing session in December 2014 by discussion with invited interested parties. His analysis was made in light of assessment and masterplanning work carried out in the intervening period and his conclusions took full account of representations made on the Direction of Growth proposal during the 2012-2013 Core Strategy consultation exercises. A significant number of those were concerned with containing new development and infrastructure west of A6 and north of A46.

The response to Core Strategy consultation and engagement has been positive and constructive. By the time of the Examination hearing on the matter, the draft proposals had been advanced and the Direction of Growth Development Framework clarified and crystallised.

The Inspector supported the advanced proposition and proposed a Main Modification:

“As submitted, Policy CS20 lacks sufficient clarity as to the area being considered for development and its relationship with key physical boundaries. In addition, the Council accepted that there was no longer a justification or requirement for a link road from the A6 to the Wanlip junction or a Wanlip bypass. Main modification MM12 would also address these concerns.”

MM12 crystallised the precise location of the North of Birstall Direction of Growth in the form of a garden suburb having considered representations from residents and representatives of Wanlip, Rothley and Birstall. The Inspector’s wording, as follows, is now adopted Core Strategy text:

“The sustained urban extension will be to the north of the A46, west of the A6, east of the Great Central Railway and to the south and west of the Broadnook Spnney. It will create a balanced community and a safe, high quality and accessible environment ...”

The Core Strategy as modified was adopted by the Borough Council in November 2015. Its amalgam of policies has provided clear and comprehensive guidance to the emergence of the Broadnook application proposals. Directed by the Borough Council's Statement of Community Involvement a formal pre-application consultation has been carried out, running for just over 5 weeks from 12th January to 19th February 2016. A full range of communication methods were used to provide information about the proposals and ensure that people had the opportunity to provide feedback.

A series of four consultation exhibitions were held at Wanlip, Birstall, Rothley and Thurcaston. The events gave local councillors and residents the opportunity to view the plans, discuss the proposals with members of the project team and to provide response.

The exhibitions were well attended and prompted positive engagement. The overall response has been very positive and encouraging. The responses are set out comprehensively in the **Statement of Community Involvement** which accompanies the application and are arranged by reference to each of the four neighbouring settlements as well as an overall response.

The exhibition material gave a full account of the Broadnook proposals, assisted by the advanced masterplan detail, the draft proposals for the Broadnook Centre including the range of facility provision, and the priorities being established for the Enterprise Park. In particular the exhibition confirmed the commitment to extensive green infrastructure and the clear detailed proposals by Barwood and Davidsons were helpful in explaining priorities for housing layout and design.

The overall approach has been comprehensively endorsed. In response to the question:

“The essence of the Broadnook Garden Suburb will be to create a spacious, dignified and leafy environment with very generous areas of green space and new planting. It is proposed that well over 50% of the site will comprise:

- *Priorities for nature conservation and biodiversity*
- *Parkland and open spaces*
- *Walkways and cycleways*
- *Tree-lined streets*
- *Pleasant links to the countryside*
- *Woodland and wetland*
- *Allotments*

Do you agree with this approach?”

97% of the respondents agreed.

Similar levels of support (90% plus) were forthcoming for the Broadnook Centre proposals, the range of high quality job opportunities, the approach expressed by the Barwood and Davidsons housing details and the proposed junction improvements as a consequence of the transport studies. The proposition to establish a Broadnook Garden Suburb Trust to ensure long term safeguards and stewardship has also been strongly endorsed.

In overall terms some 66% of the respondents were broadly or fully in support of the Broadnook Garden Suburb proposals. Consistent with this only a limited number of responses suggested revisions or additions to the proposals. Suggestions included renaming the proposals to Broadnook Garden Village instead of Suburb, building a Church of England School and references to improving the rights of way network further. Very little criticism of the overall concept and content of the garden suburb proposal was forthcoming.

In terms of the overall Development Framework Plan – the disposition of land uses, the green infrastructure and landscape framework, the approach to design and character for example – there is demonstrable support.

One issue highlighted from the exhibition concerned views from the west towards the new development. In response, the Development Framework Plans have been revised to increase the degree of new tree planting on and above the western slopes in order to strengthen the domination of new landscape.

In combination then the Core Strategy and pre-application community involvement has combined, in the applicant's view, to influence, refine and shape the optimum submission proposal.



“Good quality design can make a difference in shaping our built environment and the sustainability of development and our quality of life can be enhanced by more careful thought about the places we create. All new development provides the opportunity to create surroundings that future generations will cherish.”

Charnwood Borough Council 2009



Section 10 | The Design Approach to the Phased Delivery of the Broadnook Garden Suburb



10. The Design Approach to the Phased Delivery of the Broadnook Garden Suburb

The Broadnook Garden Suburb proposals have been brought forward in the form of a hybrid planning application by agreement with key stakeholders including the Borough Council under the auspices of a Planning Performance Agreement.

One major reason for doing so has been the joint aspiration to confirm genuine garden suburb design in order to achieve the Charnwood Local Plan policy ambitions. It was concluded early on in the process that instead of completing an intermediate design code stage it would be preferable to go to full details – hence the Barwood and Davidsons complete proposals.

At the same time, assisted by PPA Working Group discussion and with the benefit of the Wei Yang Brief it has been possible to define high levels of detailed design intentions for the overall garden suburb and its primary attributes. These are expressed by

- (i) two Design and Access Statements
- (ii) a Green Infrastructure Strategy
- (iii) a set of parameter plans
- (iv) clear final draft proposals for the Broadnook Centre including a full range of relevant social, community and commercial facilities
- (v) firm proposals for the Broadnook Enterprise Park including a range of employment uses and buildings to serve local and strategic needs
- (vi) a Broadnook Street Typology with supporting design principles and criteria
- (vii) a cohesive network of footpaths, cycleways and bridleways which establish a choice of greenway routes throughout the site and connectivity with the surrounding area.

In combination, this material clearly confirms for those areas beyond the detailed area of the hybrid application:

- The disposition of land uses and facilities
- The approach to built form, design, scale, height and massing
- Materials, detailing and boundary treatment
- Movement including street hierarchy, connectivity and design principles
- The design and function of landscaping, Green Infrastructure and Open Space

This comprehensive Design Guidance provides specific criteria to guide future detailed planning applications and demonstrates the manner in which the design of the development can be secured through the Reserved Matters process throughout the lifetime of the development and between individual phases.

This approach to the way in which future proposals should be brought forward was anticipated and supported by the Wei Yang Brief. It anticipated a process whereby the overall framework and masterplan would be established by the initial outline consent. A planning condition would require a Development Brief to be prepared in advance of Reserved Matters application in order to elaborate upon the principles.



Wei Yang advised:

“Designing and delivering an exemplary Garden Suburb involves consideration of not only the initial master planning and site preparation work but also the later phases of delivery, on-going management and maintenance. This will ensure that the principles are not eroded with the transfer of responsibility from the plan-makers and holders of the vision (effectively the Local Planning Authority and the landowner / developer who will have agreed the regulatory framework) to housebuilders, other developers and statutory agencies.”

In respect of the key “site-wide requirements” for Broadnook Wei Yang therefore proposed the following “checklist” to inform the submission of future detailed or reserved matters applications:

(i) Articulating the Generous Structural Landscape:

The Detailed Planning Application should

1. include a diagram situating the proposed development in the context of the structural landscape and its relationship with it: frontage typology, containment, visual relationship, intermediate spaces etc.
2. Demonstrate that detailed development areas are strongly responding to the landscape and complementing it.
3. Adopt different designs in response to primary, secondary or local green spaces.
4. Ensure that there is no encroachment in areas allocated for landscape.
5. Include management and maintenance arrangements in line with the unique opportunities offered by a Garden Suburb

(ii) Effective Gateways

Each Detailed Planning Application should include

1. A diagram which clearly identifies the gateways, their purpose and the proposed design approach. This diagram should be consistent with and develop the overall concepts included in the Outline Planning Application.
2. Proposed designs for frontages, forecourts, public spaces and landscape that clearly deliver the concepts and requirements of each gateway as indicated within the framework of the Outline Planning Application.
3. Proposed management and maintenance arrangements in line with the unique stewardship opportunities offered by a Garden Suburb

(iii) A Socially and Economically Active Broadnook Centre

The Detailed Planning Application should include:

1. Diagrams which clearly identify the gateways, land use distribution, integration with surrounding areas and character of open spaces. These should be consistent with, and develop, the overall concepts included in the outline planning application
2. A conceptual diagram identifying the expected distribution of likely places for informal social activity and interaction distinguished by type/time of day and age (for example the likely place where parents will interact at school pick-up time, typical lunchtime places of activity, opportunities for the elderly etc.)

3. Proposed overall design of key public and civic spaces, including frontages, property edges and hard/soft landscape that clearly achieves the concepts and requirements of the District Centre as indicated within the framework of the Outline Planning Application
4. Design of individual buildings with reference to the collective and overall desired environment and urban design.
5. Proposed management and maintenance arrangements in line with the unique stewardship opportunities offered by a Garden Suburb

(iii) **Distinctive Character Areas**

Detailed Planning Applications should provide:

1. The evidence that the proposed development embraces the principles that have been established, identifying elements that reinforce both unity and distinctiveness.
2. Details for each area, including overall objectives, gateways and key public spaces, density, built form, landscape character and planting style, car parking approach etc.
3. Illustrations of the character using sketches and photography, with clear definition of elements of unity and distinctiveness between areas.

So far as the future housing areas are concerned the process towards reserved matters application will begin with conceptual layouts, responding to the Development Framework and Parameter Plans – a preliminary approach is shown on page 248 for the southern housing areas at Broadnook.

It is clear from both Design and Access Statements (DAS1 and DAS2) that the quality of the architecture, the landscape-led environment and the community facilities will make Broadnook Garden Suburb a very desirable place to live. These features will also generate a strong sense of place among residents and a high level of community activity.

The importance of trees, green spaces and landscape together with the critical relationship between site and design are central features of the garden suburb.

A range of housing densities and sub areas with complementary character will form components of an overall composition with the buildings very much in harmony with the surroundings – the detailed submission details from Barwood and Davidsons exemplify this.

Future submissions will be the product of multiple positive features as set out below – and each project pursued and progressed through continued collaborative joint working involving the **Broadnook Foundation** initially and subsequently the **Broadnook Garden Suburb Trust** (see Section 11).

Considerations

Layout and public realm

- Thoughtful overall composition based on garden suburb principles mindful of the local Great Central Railway related legacy.
- Keynote and landmark houses and closes
- Definition and appreciation of special views
- Quiet and peaceful spaces of individual character
- Secure and picturesque walking and cycling routes (with a special approach to Central New Walk if part of the area of interest)
- Roadways and streets of appropriate scale
- Details and quality of materials

Landscape and Trees

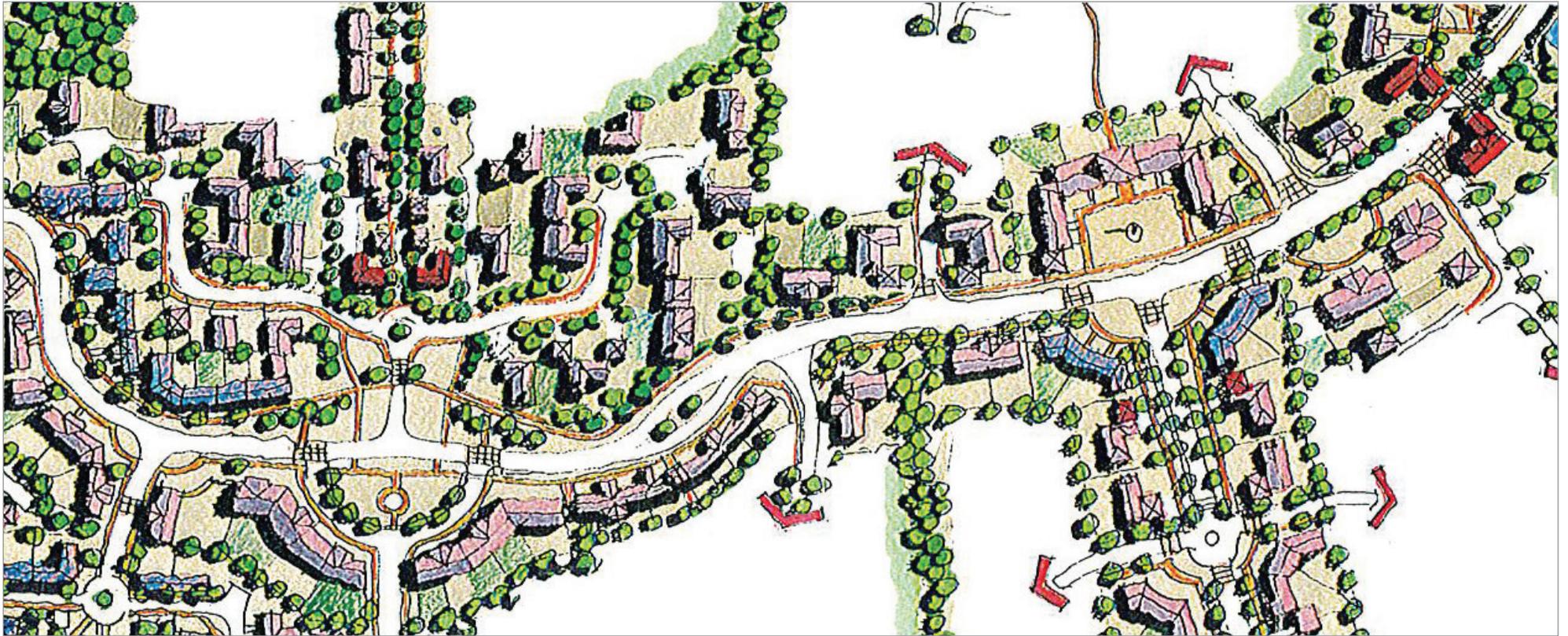
- Important range of public open spaces from countryside scale to greens and pocket parks
- Grass verges (with trees where appropriate) on most roads and streets
- Abundant and varied street trees complemented by many trees in gardens
- Appropriate space for appropriate trees a key watchword
- Hedges to frame houses, streets and to link spaces
- Streets with special or single tree species

Building type and design

- An agreed predominant architectural style and houses of a consistently high quality
- A mix of styles which is confident, with variety but forming an overall harmonious composition with a distinctive Broadnook character
- Complementary use of materials, styles and features
- Some grand houses of individual design but of complementary scale with flair and variety in unexpected places
- Imaginative treatment of cottages and apartments to provide and define interesting communal spaces e.g. quadrangles, courtyards and greens but retaining privacy and a sense of intimacy
- Skilful scaling of buildings – predominantly two storeys with attractive use of roofscape

Materials and detailing

- Traditional locally distinctive Charnwood materials as baseline – red/orange brick with blue brick detailing, slate roofs, white render
- Consistently high quality detailing and craftsmanship on all houses
- Variety of window shapes and styles but to a common predetermined palette
- Roofs and roofscapes (with chimneys) can be a key feature. Overhanging eaves for large houses, low eaves for cottages with half dormers are regular features of traditional garden suburbs
- Tiling and brickwork features





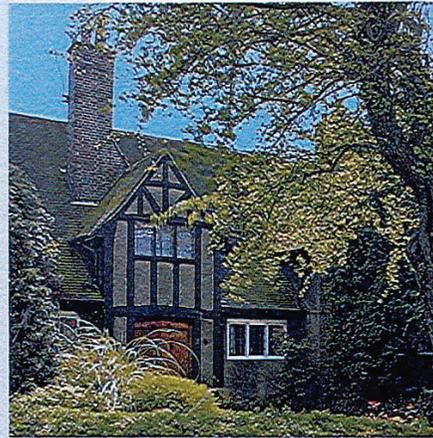
“The Garden City ideals were shaped by people who believed that there could be a better, more sustainable and more co-operative way of living. The big achievement of the Garden City Movement was to turn idealism into real progress. Development at Letchworth and Welwyn Garden Cities and at Hampstead Garden Suburb showed it is possible to build attractive places which encourage a better way of living for everyone.”

(Town and Country Planning Association 2013)



Section 11 | Maintaining High Standards and Ensuring Long Term Stewardship

Hampstead Garden Suburb



~ Design Guidance ~

HAMPSTEAD GARDEN SUBURB TRUST & LONDON BOROUGH OF BARNET

11. Maintaining High Standards and Ensuring Long Term Stewardship

As the Wei Yang advice has established (see Section 10) the delivery of an exemplar Garden Suburb at Broadnook requires careful, consistent and continuing commitment to the highest standards of design and implementation over a significant period.

Key participants include longstanding landowners wish to ensure that Broadnook is implemented and managed in a beneficial way and a special place is created. It is very important that the quality of the environment should be cared for and safeguarded in the long term.

The Poundbury Principle

The prospective enduring involvement of landowners in the design, delivery and management of exemplary development at Broadnook has similarities with the successful approach and achievements by the Duchy of Cornwall's Poundbury proposals at Dorchester. At the outset the landowner there was involved closely with key stakeholders to define the spirit, nature and detailed content of the scheme and to agree how implementation would be controlled. As demonstrated in that case, it is particularly important for the early phases of development to be established successfully and to set the highest standards from the beginning.

The Broadnook Foundation

Broadnook is a proposal for a new community in a location with established neighbours. Early liaison, monitoring and consistent decision-taking requires consideration to be given to a working party structure to ensure a collaborative approach.

It is proposed to establish a "Broadnook Foundation" which will provide a co-ordinating role to oversee the delivery of the Broadnook proposals. The Foundation's constitution would provide for representation from the landowners and individual developers with the ability to incorporate a wide range of agencies and organisations as required e.g. Parish Councils, the County Council (in respect of highways, education and social services), Wildlife Trust, Environment Agency, Natural England and utility companies.

The Foundation will ensure close liaison between partners and ongoing engagement with the emerging Broadnook community. The Foundation would also ensure that the requirements of the respective Design Briefs had been agreed and met before formal planning applications could be made.

Broadnook Garden Suburb Trust

As the Planning Statement explains it is proposed, in the tradition of Garden Cities and Suburbs, that a long-term scheme of management will be the responsibility of a Trust which will at the appropriate point take over the role of the Foundation. Long term care for the community facilities, green infrastructure and the public realm will be allied to an inclusive constitution and representation. A further statement on the Trust is in preparation.



“We wish to ensure that the real and important benefits that people rightly expect are secured from the outset – quality design with cutting-edge technology, local employment opportunities, accessible green space near homes, high quality public realm. Great places for great communities.”

(The Rt. Hon. Greg Clark MP, Secretary of State for Communities
and Local Government

Brandon Lewis MP – Minister for Housing and Planning
Locally-Led Garden Villages, Towns and Cities 2016)



12. Summary, Conclusion and Prospect

In 2011, during the course of advancing the new Local Plan, the Borough Council endorsed a Vision for Charnwood to guide and influence decision-making over the ensuing years. It was recognised that strategic decisions then being taken on the location and nature of new development would have a significant effect on the achievement of the Vision's aspirations. The Vision declared:

“One of the main objectives will be to ensure that future development within the Borough will aspire to deliver world class design and to ensure that the decisions that are made now will leave a positive legacy for the community into the future. The main aspiration for “place” is ..”Our Charnwood ... will be a place that future generations will be proud of.”

This laudable aim was in part a response to concerns about the design quality of some new development in recent years.

The concern was repeated a year later on the publication of the National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012). In introducing the Framework the Minister for Planning stated:

“Our standards of design can be so much higher. We are a nation renowned worldwide for creative excellence, yet, at home, confidence in development itself has been eroded by the too frequent experience of mediocrity.”

and went on to emphasise that;

“So sustainable development is about positive growth – making economic, environmental and social progress for this and future generations.

The planning system is about helping to make this happen.”

The Borough Council returned to the task of advancing its Local Plan and has shared the perspective. In the Core Strategy, the Council emphasises;

“... people expect new buildings to be designed to a higher standard than they have been in recent years. The success of our Vision can only be realised if there is a marked improvement in the quality of new development. We want to significantly improve the standard of new developments when compared to what has gone before.”

Ebenezer Howard and his Garden City pioneers would have recognised and supported similar sentiments over a hundred years before. Howard's response was to advocate a stronger relationship between town and country:

“in which all the advantages of the most energetic and active town-life, with all the beauty of the country, may be secured in perfect combination.”

As a consequence Garden Cities and Suburbs have been created which are demonstrably successful, combining an attractive environment and a healthy community.

Charnwood has its own distinctive legacy prompted by the construction of the Great Central Railway at the time when the garden city movement was at its height. The garden suburb style housing at Quorn, Rothley and Birstall close to the original GCR stations is highly regarded for its spacious and dignified virtues.

The Rothley Garden Suburb is the most extensive and striking of the existing examples and its attributes have now been recognised through the recent designation of the Rothley Ridgeway Conservation Area (2010). Even so, whilst it constitutes a collection of impressive houses with a strong unifying theme in excellent landscape it does not wholly satisfy garden suburb principles since the original ambitions were not fulfilled. A comprehensive Garden Suburb Plan was prepared in 1910 over a significantly greater area and incorporating support services, facilities and workplaces - intended at the time to utilise a significantly greater area. It was never completed.

In the context of pressing housing requirements and mindful of this important and impressive local heritage both the Borough Council and the Broadnook landowners have explored the locational advantages (in terms of accessibility and environment) for a fully-fledged new garden suburb North of Birstall. In doing so they have been encouraged by Government endorsement (NPPF para. 52) that

“The supply of new homes can sometimes be best achieved through planning for larger scale development, such as new settlements or extensions to existing villages and towns that follow the principles of Garden Cities.”

The Borough Council concurs since the North of Birstall location...

“... provides an opportunity to create a new garden suburb to reflect the pioneering work started during the early part of the twentieth century along the Great Central Railway”

(Core Strategy para 9.40)

Paying homage to the original pioneers the Core Strategy identifies “**Garden Suburb Principles**” to guide the North of Birstall proposal;

- strong vision, leadership and community engagement;
- land value capture for the benefit of the community;
- community ownership of land and long-term stewardship of assets;
- high quality, imaginative design including homes with gardens;
- mixed tenure homes which are affordable for ordinary people;
- a strong local jobs offer with a variety of employment opportunities well related to homes;
- generous green space linked to the wider countryside, well managed and high quality gardens, tree lined streets and open spaces with opportunities for residents to grow their own food;
- access to strong local, cultural, recreational and shopping facilities in walkable neighbourhoods; and
- integrated and accessible transport systems.

These principles have been very much to the fore in concert with the up-to-date planning policy context throughout the design evolution journey.

This Framework Design and Access Statement explains the process through which these principles and associated policies and priorities have been explored and applied. The physical, social and economic context has influenced the design in conceptual terms and shaped the final proposal. The key principles have guided the evolution of the development framework through collaborative joint working. In turn it has been subject to scrutiny at the Core Strategy Examination leading to policy refinement and the basis of comprehensive community engagement.

A key aspect of the discussion on design and access is the clarity which shines through about the nature and quality of the garden suburb proposal itself. Participants, commentators and respondents understand and recognise the locally distinctive attributes of existing garden suburb housing in Charnwood Borough and enthusiastically endorse the prospect of a fully-fledged garden suburb being brought forward – with full attention to jobs and facilities complementing the residential elements – if further growth is required in this part of South Charnwood.

Ebenezer Howard’s “town-country” magnet has been applied in Charnwood by encapsulating it into the agreed Vision for Broadnook;

“... it will combine the benefits of proximity to the City and of the countryside. There will be excellent access to the City, Soar Valley settlements and Loughborough for work and leisure. The landscape and green spaces will define its distinctive character and offer fresh air, tranquillity and beautiful character.

It will have been comprehensively planned and will be managed in the interests of the community to offer an excellent quality of life. The range of homes, jobs, community facilities and shops will meet the day-to-day needs of the people who live there. Community uses will provide a focus of civic pride”

The Framework DAS describes how this ‘Vision’ has been translated into firm and responsive proposals. Taking a vital step further it provides a context for **DAS2: Delivering the Broadnook Garden Suburb** which provides comprehensive details for key aspects of implementation including primary access, a countryside park with extensive green infrastructure and two areas of bespoke Broadnook housing.

These are well-considered and very high quality proposals comprising a flagship scheme which responds to the unique context.





“Ebenezer Howard was strongly influenced by William Morris, John Ruskin and the Arts and Crafts Movement, and the early Garden Cities were quite consciously designed to be beautiful places that would lift the spirits of those who lived there. Howard and his team at Letchworth – the architect Richard Barry Parker and planner Raymond Unwin – thought very deeply about how best to create homes in attractive places that were aesthetically, culturally and environmentally rich and stimulating.”

(Town and Country Planning Association 2014)

In memory of Stuart Richardson
10.06.1948 - 10.12.2015

