



LEEK

MOUNT ROAD | DESIGN BRIEFS

2019 NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

DRAFT

Quality information

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INTRODUCTION



SECTION



INTRODUCTION

Mount Road, a movement and recreation corridor at the eastern edge of the town, serves as a spine to the five development sites that make up the focus of this design brief. Mount Road is an adopted single carriageway road without street lighting or footpaths where the national 60 mph speed limit applies.

Two of the sites lie to the west and relate back to the existing town and three sites lie to the east with some views out to the rural countryside. All of the sites have a role in defining the edge of Leek.

The report was commissioned by the Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) working group of Leek, via government funding provided to the group via Locality. The consultant lead for this project for the working group and author of this report is AECOM Urban Advisory.

1.1 PURPOSE

The high-level purpose of this report is to provide an evidence base for the Neighbourhood Development Plan and support for relevant policies in the Leek NDP.

The specific purpose of the design briefs is to provide helpful guidance to all involved with the design and development of the sites to realise their innate value as sites with individual opportunities and strategically as part of a holistic framework which can benefit the wider community in Leek.

1.2 SCOPE

The Design Brief document is focussed on the four sites above but seeks to integrate them in a wider context of a framework for the area that moves beyond creating individual inward-looking schemes and provides a sense of place for a new community to integrate with the wider community and town.

The five sites are Proposed Housing Allocations for the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (submitted for examination in June 2018). They are identified as follows on the map of sites and in this document;

In the Inspector's report on the Local Plan his advice requested amendments to the regarding the recreational value of Mount Road (Matter 8 – Allocations). He suggested an amendment to the new criterion relating to the recreational value of the Mount as follows:

“Recognition of the recreational value of the Mount to the community and to reflect this in master planning proposals through the sensitive treatment of Mount Road and Kniveden Lane, appropriately located green infrastructure, recognition of key views and connectivity to public rights of way.”

The following documents and guides have been reviewed in order that the design briefs comply with both local policy and best practice in design; (A full policy review can be found in the Appendix A.)

Staffordshire Moorlands Design Guide

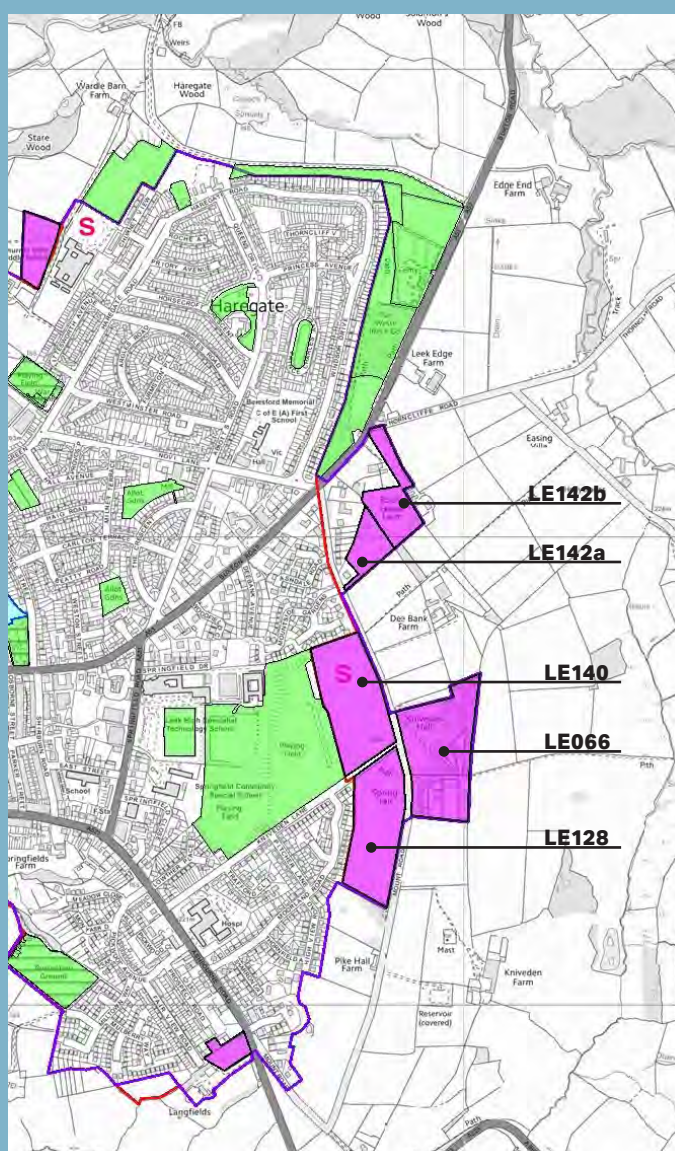


Fig. 1.1: Local Plan map of Site.

ASSESSMENT

2

SECTION

2.1 METHODOLOGY

AECOM Urban Advisory understand that local communities are cyclical, changing and evolving over time. We aim to get to the heart of neighbourhood planning issues to provide tailored advice that will encourage best practice in placemaking and urban design.

“Placemaking is a multi-faceted approach to the planning, design and management of public spaces. Placemaking capitalises on a local community’s assets, inspiration, and potential, with the intention of creating public spaces that promote people’s health, happiness, and well-being”.

Our assessment methodology involved four key elements; a policy and guidance review; a site walkover; a stakeholder workshop and desktop mapping and assessment. This approach builds on the CABI and Design Council Guide - Design in neighbourhood planning - How we can help you (01.01.2013).

This ‘on the ground’, locally engaged approach is supported with the provision of mapping from the local authority at Staffordshire Moorlands District Council. This Ordnance Survey mapping data together with our planning policy, guidance and existing technical studies (landscape, ecology, heritage and highways) form the basis of a desktop review.

A site walkover and a follow-on stakeholder workshop session discussing the issues observed on site and broader topics relating to placemaking and the design brief complete the local picture.

2.2 SITE VISIT RECORD

The site walk was undertaken on Monday 11th March and a quiet, rural character along the Mount road was observed together with active use by recreational walkers. The sites themselves had a range of conditions to consider at their various edges with excellent potential for a sensitive development to occur within the limits of the wider natural landscape.

Three key site conditions for these elevated sites were;

- the relationship back to the existing settlement
- the relationship out to the wider countryside;
- the relationship to Mount Road corridor

A more detailed description of Mount Road’s physical and spatial characteristics follows under the key frameworks of Movement; Landscape; Neighbourhood and Townscape.



Fig. 2.0: Mount Road Area Photographs.

2.3 DESKTOP STUDY, MAPPING AND DATA

The following series of plans exhibit the four key contextual frameworks for the sites to be considered within, in order to create a holistic design framework;

EXISTING ACCESS AND MOVEMENT STRUCTURE

Users of Mount Road are from many categories and include; recreational, persons of all ages, dog-walkers, routine daily walkers, organized groups, horse riders and cyclists. Occasionally sheep are driven along the road between farms. Some park on the Road.

Figure 2.1 illustrates the Public Right of Ways (PROW), Staffordshire Moorland Walks long distance route, cycleways, bus routes and stops and the street network across the local area. It also locates the existing pedestrian and vehicular access points in respect of the site boundaries, showing where pedestrians can cross the sites and where off-road vehicles can enter the greenfield sites via gates and vehicles enter the developed sites (LE066).

Pedestrian Movement

The key assets of the area are the Staffordshire Moorlands Walk, broadly a circular walk around the outskirts of Leek, passing along Mount Road and PROW links east out to the countryside, towards the Peak District Park.

Cycle Movement

There is no direct cycle route connection from any of the sites. The network begins to the north and west of the site on Abbots Rd, Springfield Road.

Public Transport

No bus services run along the Mount Road. The nearest stops for LE142A/B are located at the Buxton Road (to Town Centre) to the north. The nearest stops to LE140/LE066/LE128 are at Buxton Road/Novi Lane junction or Springfield Road to the south-west, adjacent to the school's frontage at the foot of the hillside.

Street Network

Mount Road is a surfaced lane with green verges, benches at regular intervals and without kerb delineated footpaths, giving a strongly rural feel in parts but provides the main vehicular access north to Buxton Road/Town Centre. There is a footpath link on one side from Buxton Road south to Mountside Gardens.

Where Kniveden Lane splits sites LE128/ LE140 it is a narrow unadopted lane in a state of disrepair with no footpaths. Leading south-west the lane is maintained as adopted highway with a footpath on one or both sides of it.



Fig. 2.1: Mount Road Access and Movement Analysis.

EXISTING LANDSCAPE STRUCTURE

The Mount Road follows below the ridgeline, here known as Kniveden Hill.

Topography

Mount Road and most of the site areas sit just below the ridgeline that broadly defines the eastern extent of the valley in which Leek sits. Site LE066, the most heavily wooded, straddles the ridgeline higher up. LE142B sits on the downslope of the ridge as it falls to the north. LE142A /LE140 and LE128 are below the ridgeline on the town side, to the west.

Character and Enclosure

The 'Mount Road corridor' is variously vegetated along the field boundaries that define the lane and the sites and intervening patterns of enclosure.

A combination of avenue trees, hedgerows, small woodland and mature specimen trees break up the landscape and define the main movement corridor. Drystone walls border much of the eastern side of the road, set back behind grass verges.

Edge character

Overall along the eastern edge of Leek, there is an east – west divide between open/vegetated/farmed land and the urban area, typically the backs of houses. This line is somewhat broken up where the playing fields of the school and associated wooded boundaries penetrate the urban area, via site LE140.

Habitat and Ecology

Beyond the ridgeline to the east lies the Churnet Valley and its associated ecological corridor (Map7.2, Appdendix A). There are some small areas of woodland, particularly surrounding Kniveden Hall (LE066). The main habit areas lie east of the map extents in the lower Churnet Valley (Local plan evidence base). Site 142B is a livery with stables and exercise areas for horses.

Views

Some outward facing views (characteristic according to the LCA) that we were able to observe on site are as follows;

A - Long distance view to The Roaches, a prominent rocky ridge to the north

B - View from Mount Road over the Churnet Valley to the Peak District Park

C - Broad panorama east over the Churnet Valley and edge of The Peaks

D - Clipped view north-east with vegetation to Churnet valley and Peaks

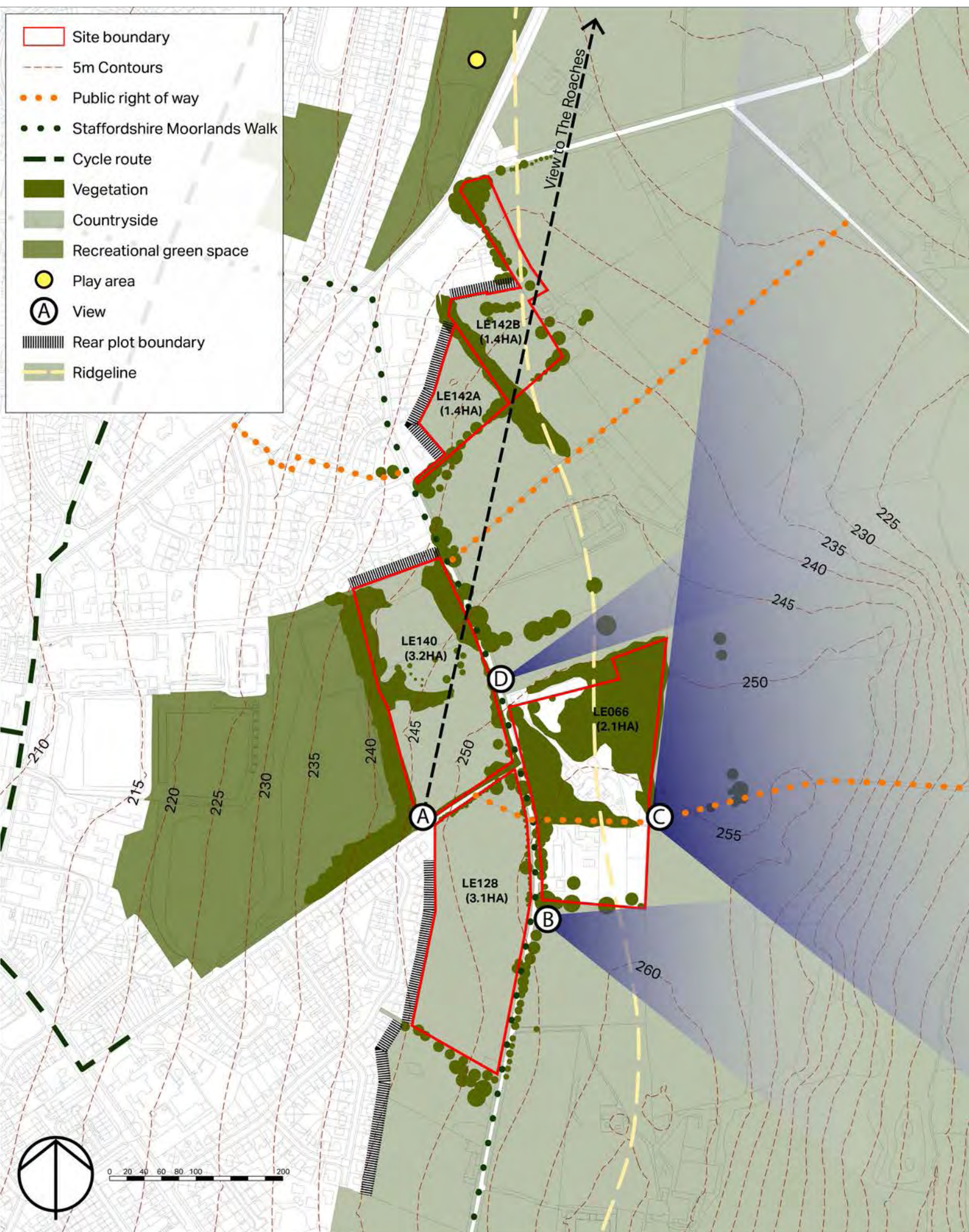


Fig. 2.2: Mount Road Landscape and recreation Analysis.

EXISTING NEIGHBOURHOOD STRUCTURE

The nearest residential areas are along Buxton Road (to which sites LE142A/B form an extension to), Mountside Gardens off Mount Road (which LE140 extends from) and Kniveden Lane which links to both LE128 and LE140. Houses along Moorland Road back onto LE128. The outlying farmsteads of Dee Bank Farm and Kniveden farm also sit upon the ridge line.

It should be noted that the topography does provide some sense of identity for a distinct new neighbourhood around the junction of Kniveden Lane/ Mount Road.

Centres

The sites are all within 1.5km of Leek town centre which has a range of food and drink and comparison shopping. A large supermarket (Asda) lies within 450m of the sites, to the west of Meadows Special School forming a local centre.

Education

The sites lie within 400m (as the crow flies) of varying schools, including; Leek high School; two Special Schools, Springfield and Meadows directly to the west and a primary school, Beresford Memorial C of E to the north-west.

Health

Moorlands hospital lies south-west at the end of Kniveden Lane. It provides a range of outpatient services and has a Minor Injuries & Illnesses Unit.

Kniveden Hall is currently vacant, The Care Home use ceased several years ago and the property is currently vacant. The adjoining Springhill site is used by the Combined Health Care Trust. Both these sites are allocated for residential use in the emerging Local Plan.

Recreational Use

There is a significant area of open space abutting Site LE140, however this is within the school site and is not for community use.

To the north of the sites is a half wooded, half open informal recreation area known as 'The Waste' that contains a variety of paths and natural open spaces.

A local play area is also situated within The Waste, in good proximity to the northern two sites LE142A and LE142B (although across the busy A53 Buxton Road).

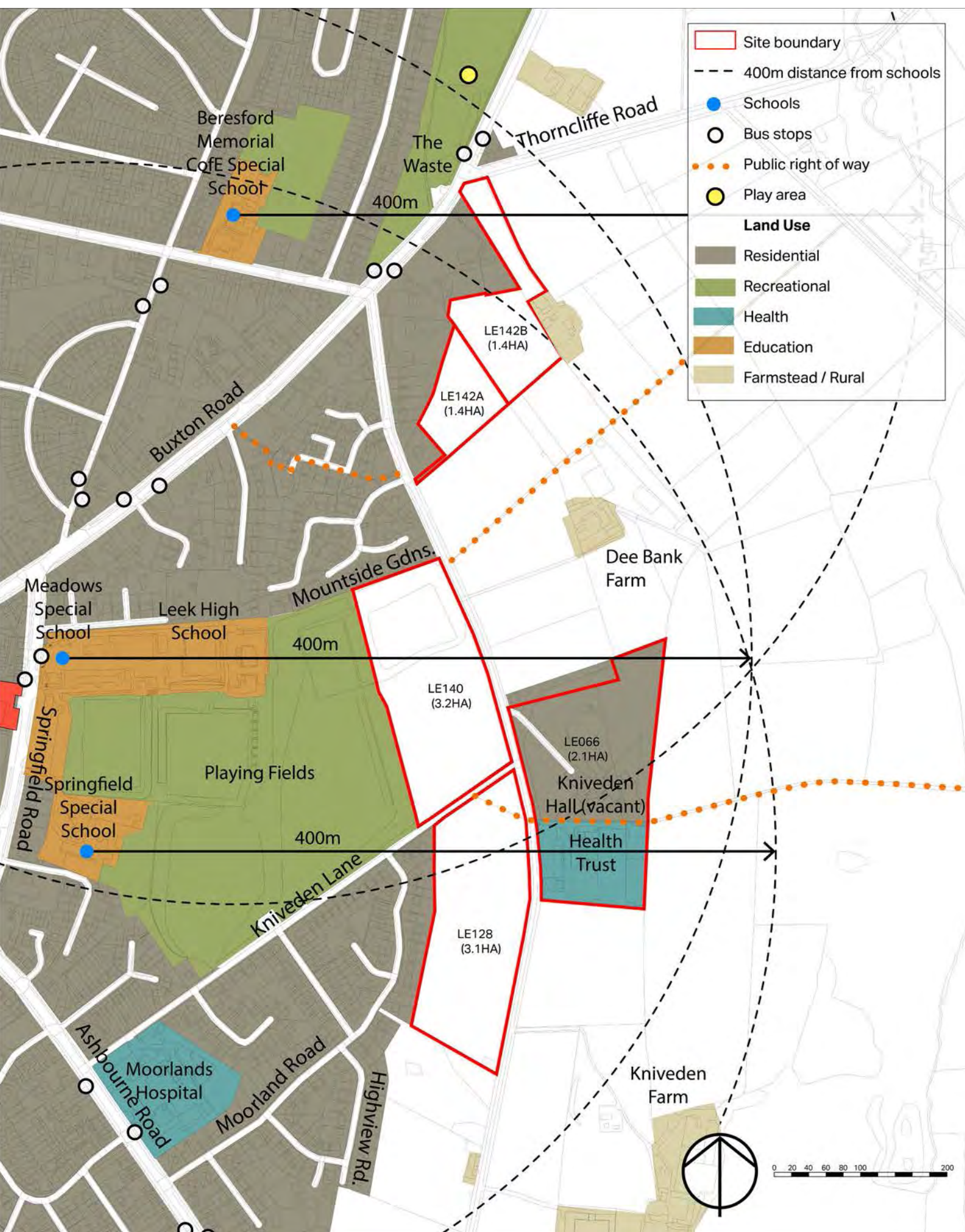


Fig. 2.3: Mount Road - A Walkable Neighbourhood.

TOWNSCAPE AND LEGIBILITY

In general, as previously noted, development has tended to stay off the ridgetop except for the historic farmsteads and Kniveden Hall as an exception. The main built form of the town lies to the west and slopes down into the valley towards Leek town centre which itself sits on a hill within the valley. A wide range of housing including; traditional street frontage; stone houses; modern housing clusters accessed from Mount Road, facing the open rural landscape or set back behind hedgerows.

The elevated nature of the sites and the clear position of Mount Road in relation to the ridgeline (broadly parallel) and the Buxton road/ Kniveden road running downhill into town help wayfinding. The public rights of way and some characteristic views (LCA) to the town and out to the countryside should be retained to help maintain the area's 'sense of place'.

Sense of Place

Sense of place is about how the physical characteristics of the area imbue it with social and cultural value. "The Mount" has a significant established identity and sense of place for many local people. This derives from its open rural character, elevation, long views to the west and south, groups of mature trees and woodland, vernacular stone buildings and dry-stone walls, pasture land and the absence of street lighting and footpaths. Together these characteristics create a sense of tranquillity and refuge, which should be protected as far as possible in the development of the allocated sites.

Landmarks and Views

There are characteristic views back to the town from The Mount and its wealth of landmarks are spotted within the wider scene of built development that spans this valley.

A – Broad panorama back across the town centre where the spire of the Church of St. Mary is just visible between homes. Views to local 'landmarks' (of a type) on the ridgeline, a small wind turbine and telephone mast are noted.

Built Heritage

There are no listed buildings on any of the sites or in the near vicinity. The nearest listed buildings are the boundary stone on Mount Road near its junction with Ashbourne Road and the Drinking Water Fountain on Buxton Road south of its junction with Mount Road. Moorlands Hospital has a listed building but out of site at the foot of the hill.

Gateways and 'Nodes'

The junction of Thorncliffe Road and Buxton Road is marked by a restaurant and a small triangular build-out / signpost in the road which helps to give a sense of place and form a 'gateway' to the town. This is located near to the proposed access to site LE142B from Thorncliffe Road.

The junction of Mount Road and Buxton Road has less of a sense of arrival and a greater traffic distribution function, providing access to residential areas and managing traffic movements onto the Buxton Road from future development.

The junction of the Kniveden Lane and Mount Road is also important and has a subtle sense of place due to the coming together of street junction, public right of way access, notable mature trees on the corner and some informal parking that occurs here for recreation.

2.4 EVALUATION

The following issues were highlighted by the AECOM and the neighbourhood plan group either during the session described in Appendix B or subsequently upon reflection and further desktop investigation.

i) Need for outward facing development - lanes;

ii) Need to respect the character of Mount Road (policy DSL2 - appendix);

iii) Need to accommodate / direct traffic sensitively;

iv) Connectivity to the Buxton Road / Kniveden Lane / Ashbourne Road;

v) Desire lines related directly to the topography;

vi) Connected multi-functional landscape structure.

Issues outside of scope of Design Briefs

Wider non-vehicular ring-route around Leek's periphery (not to be excluded by the design briefs which will retain key routes and corridors such as Mount Road / ridge-top desire line).

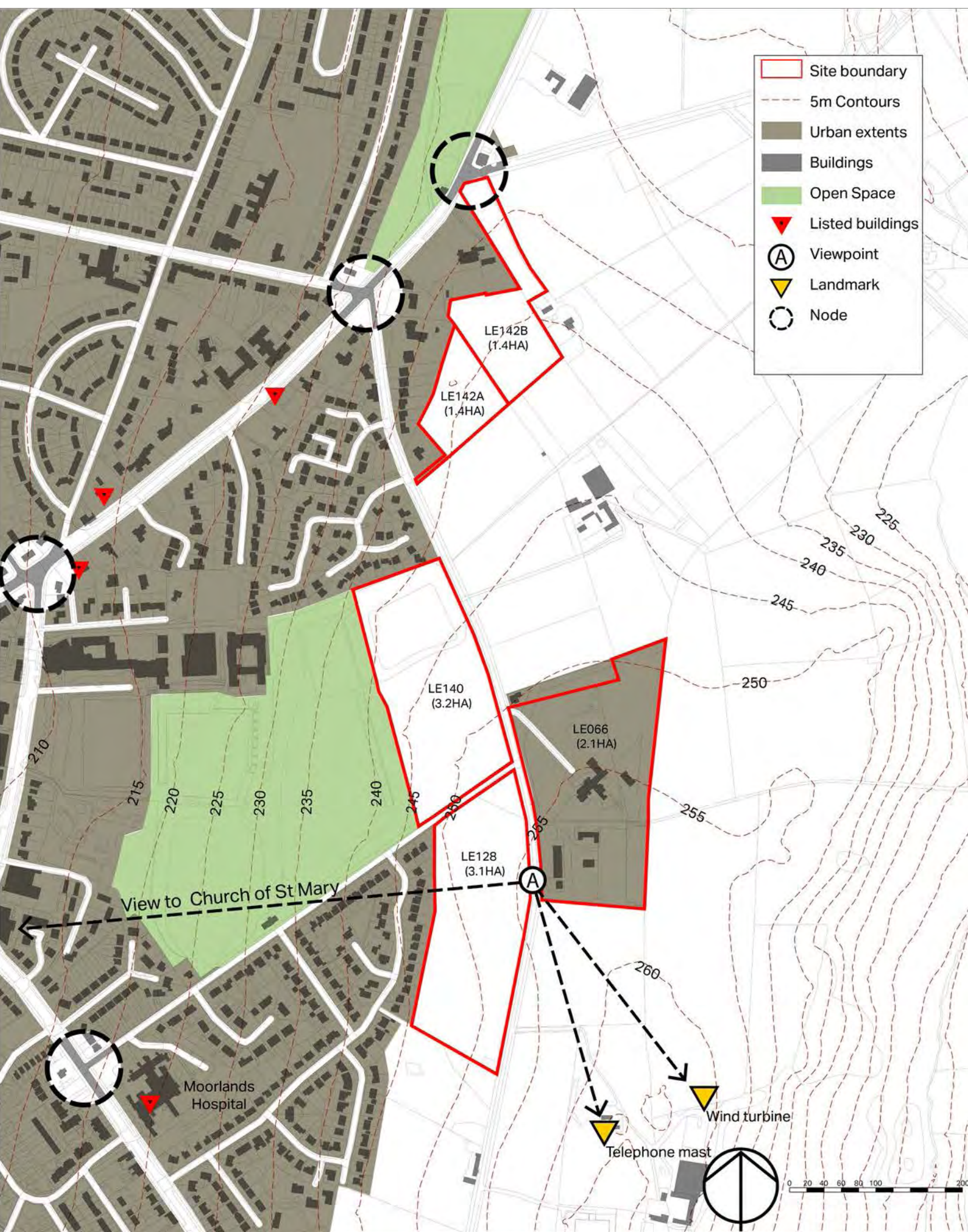


Fig. 2.4: Mount Road Townscape and Legibility Structure.

AREA WIDE DESIGN RATIONALE

3

SECTION

3.1 MOUNT ROAD HOLISTIC FRAMEWORK

EVALUATION: TOWARDS A HOLISTIC FRAMEWORK

The following section builds upon the analysis of the Movement; Landscape; Neighbourhood and Built-Form structures in the previous section to evaluate the sites regarding the development of a holistic design framework for development.

Access and Movement

- Promote and connect to the wider countryside via Public Right of Way's
- Minimise creation of a vehicle dominant highway along Mount Road via careful consideration of vehicle access points (e.g. from Kniveden Lane)
- Incorporating and improving the Churnet Valley Strategic Route
- Integrating safe routes to school for pedestrians and cyclists
- Promote 'Active by Design' design principles across the sites
- Minimise 'rat-run' potential of access roads and Mount Road
- Minimise heavily engineered highways solutions on Mount Rd
- Consider improvements to Mount Road / Buxton Road junction
- Create a series of routes that follow pedestrian desire lines first
- Consider how sites can contribute to a wider ridge-top walking route
- Improve wayfinding with signage and a hierarchy of streets and spaces
- Design interventions to Mount Road highway so as to reduce the design speed and improve pedestrian safety and amenity for pedestrians etc.
- Consider consulting with the County highways and police to reduce the speed limit along Mount Road for the extent of the sites' frontages and further where safety would be increased for the new neighbourhood.

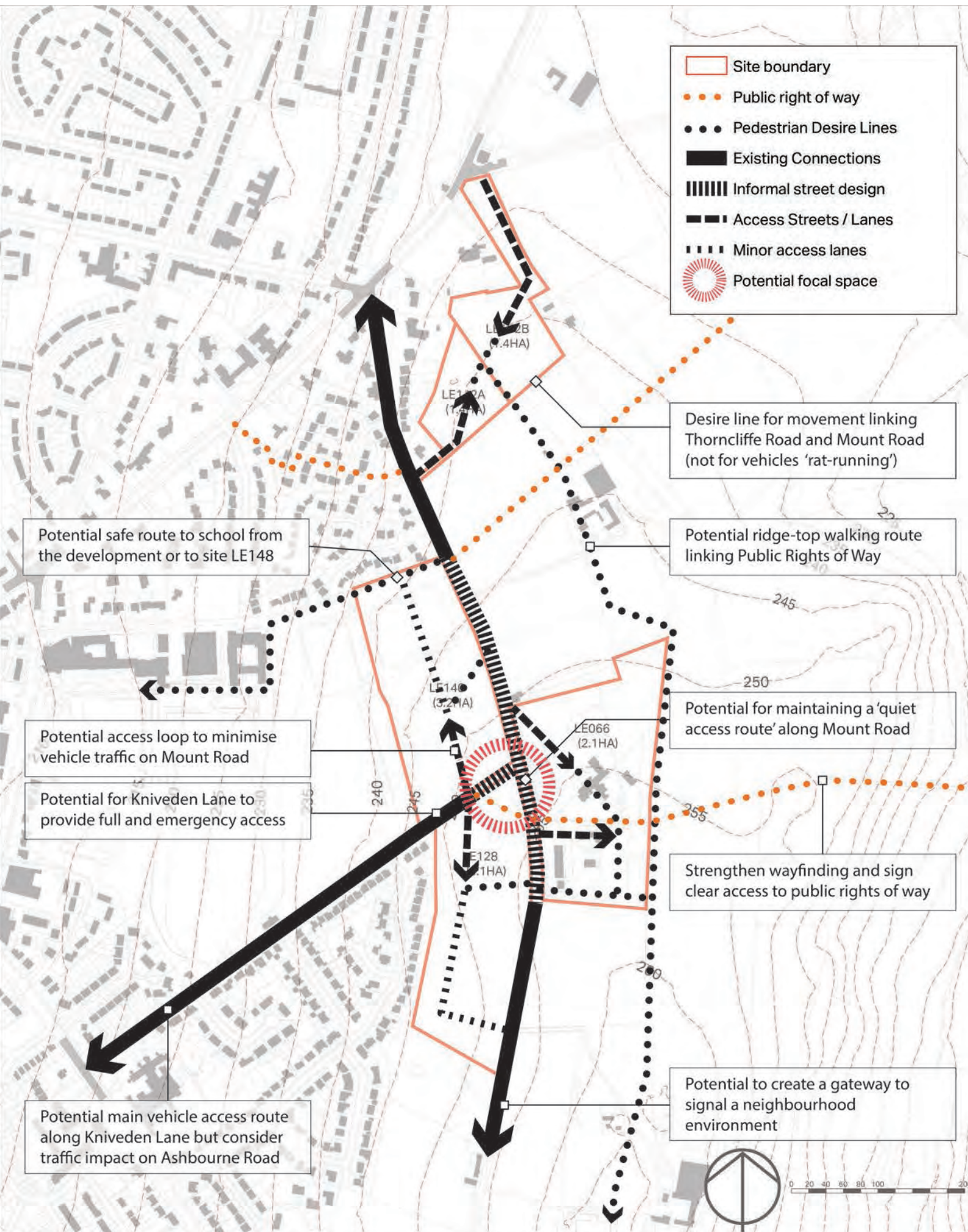


Fig. 3.1: Access and Movement Framework Rationale.

Landscape, Green Space and Heritage

- Consider aspect and prospect to and from development and where to place development parcels and appropriate screen planting and buffers (the overall extent of additional buffer planting/ screening to be provided will be informed by a detailed Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment at the planning application stage).
- Create a multi-functional network of green infrastructure (landscape and planting) and blue infrastructure (SuDS and swales).
- Enable ecological connectivity through retaining and reinforcing existing planting and vegetation by allowing suitable offsets to built development
- Reinforce and create a rural green character along Mount Road that is not dominated by the type of highways infrastructure chosen to access sites.
- Allow suitable offsets / extended garden sizes where new development backs on to or sits above existing homes due to site topography.
- Retain and promote a woodland character area at Kniveden Hall.
- Place built-development sensitively within the landscape and in relation to topography to take advantage of the mature landscape setting, creating a broken development line at the edge with generous green transition zones and the opportunity for long views.
- Avoid 'sky-lining' or exposing a hard built-frontage at the settlement edge that is not set within mature landscaping and vegetation.



Fig. 3.2: Landscape Framework Rationale.

Neighbourhood Structure

- Integrate proposed residential allocations with adjacent areas.
- Create a 'walkable neighbourhood' with a defined centre (a village green or square framed by dwellings) as a focus for neighbourhood identity.
- Protect existing and create enhanced recreation uses within sites.
- Maximise links to Nearby schools (Springfield Road) and safe routes.
- Prioritise wayfinding and legibility for residents and recreational users.
- Integrate the proposed First school allocation (LE140) with adjacent educational land use for access, noise and overall character reasons.
- Retain a flexible neighbourhood structure in case the school does not come forward and so that the site can incorporate an alternative use.
- Consider retaining areas of allotments, orchards and gardens in visually sensitive areas, e.g. on site edges facing the Peak District National Park.

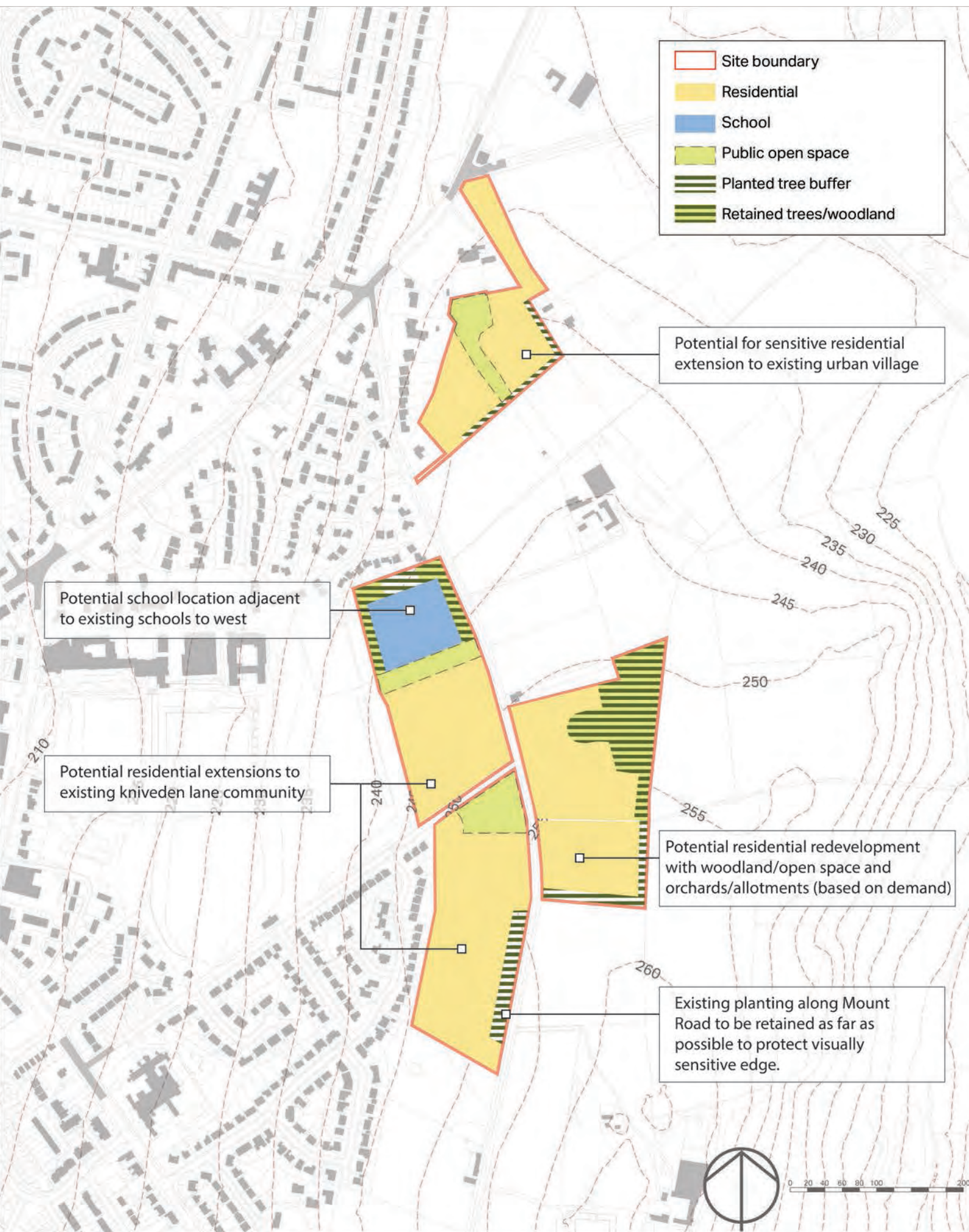


Fig. 3.3: Neighbourhood Framework Rationale.

Built Form and Urban Character

- The rural, edge of settlement character of Mount Lane should be enhanced and celebrated by maintaining a calm, sensory environment.
- Promote outward facing development on proposed sites to maintain 'eyes on the street' and maximise potential for social interactions.
- Prevent overbearing development on Mount Lane by specifying minimum distance building set-backs and low-key access lanes behind hedgerows.
- Provide a range of housing types and sizes for a diverse neighbourhood and create varied yet harmonious composition of buildings set within an attractive and consistent public realm, embedded within the landscape.
- Create characterful buildings with a varied architectural treatment and a generous minimum set-back from the road.
- Utilise natural and local materials but do not be afraid to use suitable alternatives where appropriate if the aim is to achieve a higher quality.
- Kniveden Hall is not a listed building and has potential as a landmark of sorts within the neighbourhood. As far as possible the designed garden and specimen trees at Kniveden should be integrated within the proposed site layout.
- Consider the proposed first school as worthy of special architectural treatment for its civic function and role as a neighbourhood 'landmark'.
- The spatial form and enclosure of the streets and open spaces between buildings is as important as the buildings to create a 'sense of place'.
- Ensure the scale of development is in keeping with the surroundings and sensitive to views from the town and countryside and local street-scenes.
- The language of architecture, the layout of buildings, natural landscape and public realm should combine to form a locally distinctive place from which an identity can grow and mature.

Other requirements:

- Infrastructure connectivity / capacity assessment (e.g. Buxton Road / Kniveden Lane)

DESIGN BRIEFS

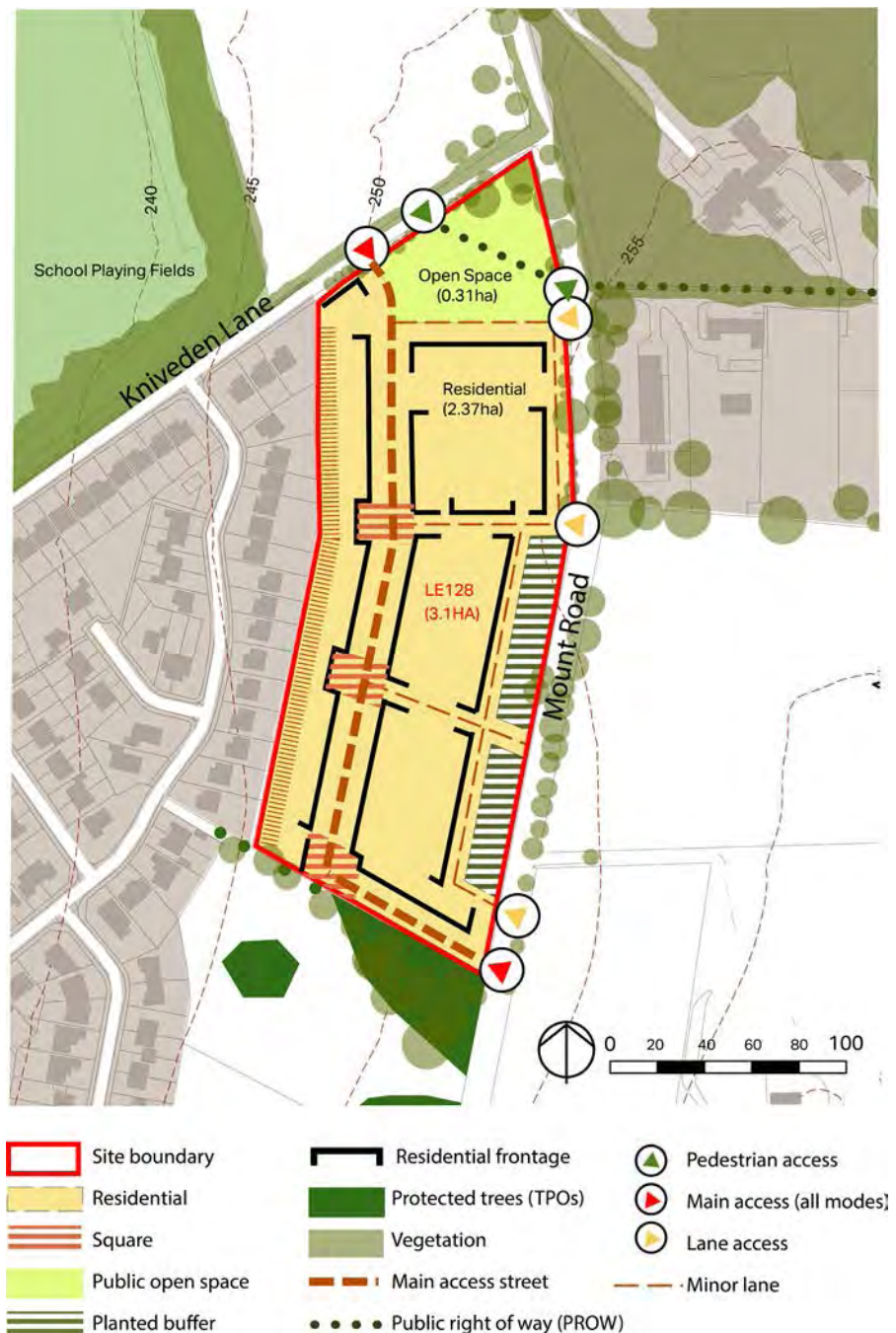
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SECTION

As an indicative comparison for the overall development capacity reference has been made to the SMDC Viability Report (2018) which proposed the following indicative figures. This following section sets out a more detailed assessment of the sites based on the known opportunities and constraints and the holistic framework described in the previous section.

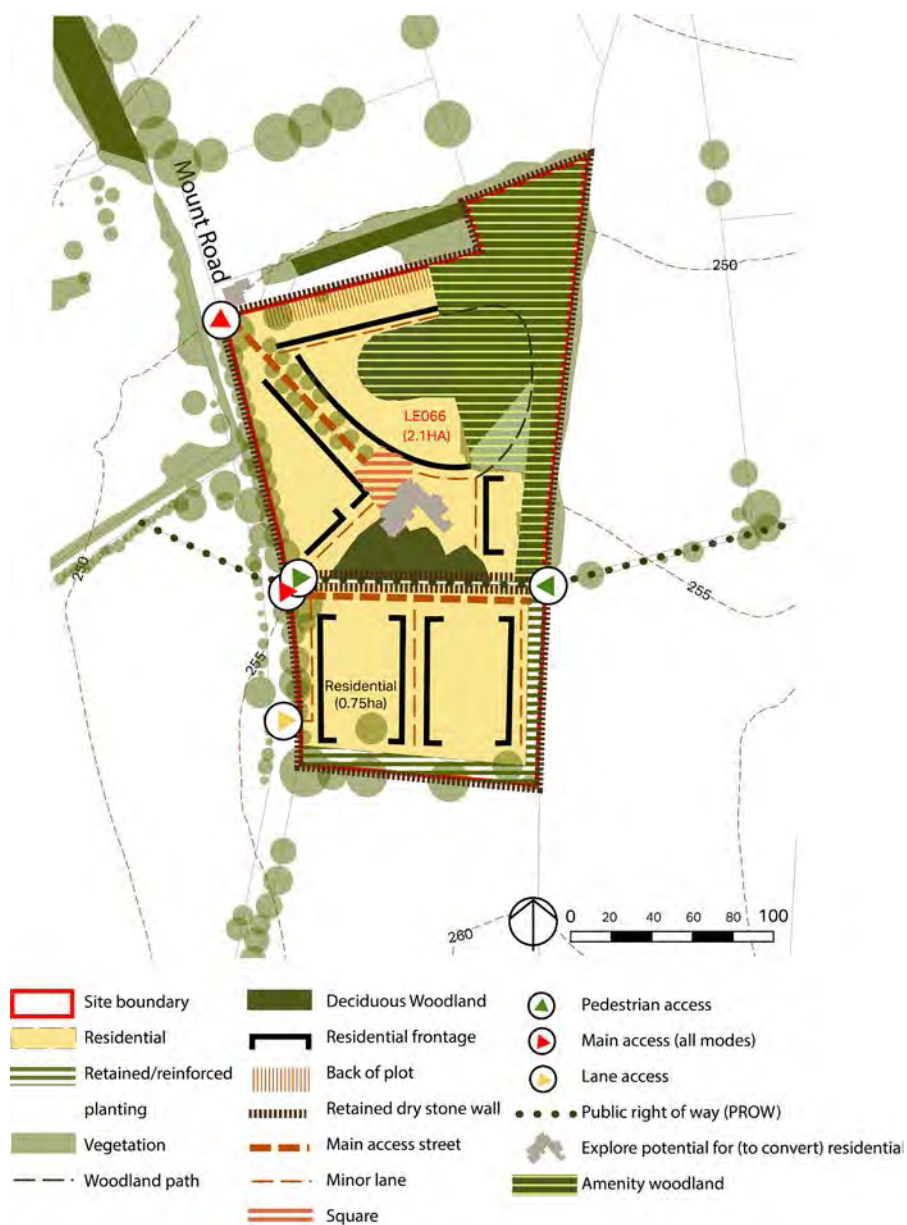
- Name: Land at the Mount
- Residential Site Area - 10.62 ha
- POS - 11%
- Net Dev area - 9.57 Ha
- POS Area – 1.05 Ha
- No of dwellings 345 Nr (36.1dph)

LE128 – Considerations: Existing PROW crosses north east corner. Potential Leisure Use on site, open aspect to PDNP, currently in use for grazing.



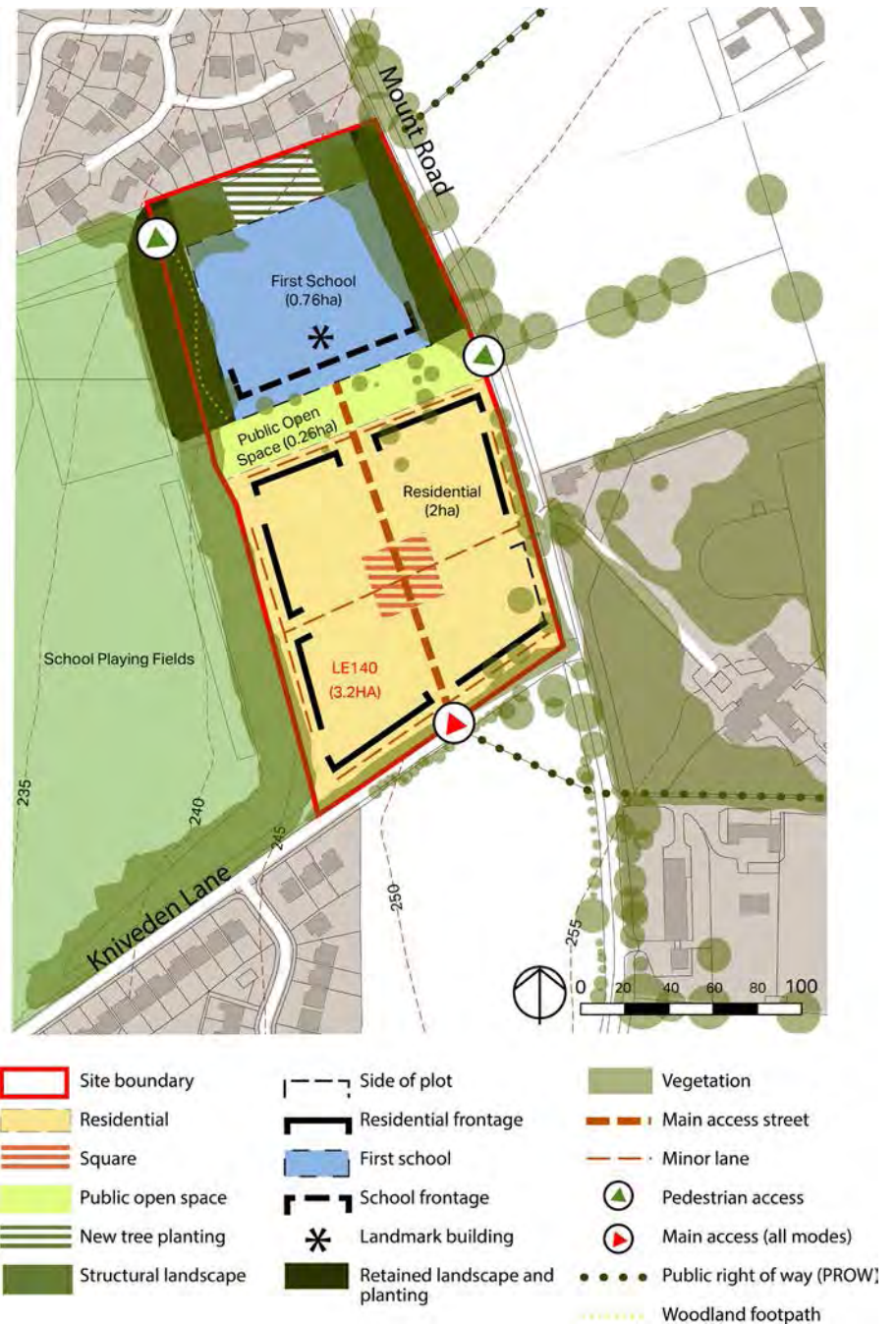
Use	Area	Percentage of Site	Indicative units
Residential	2.37	76%	85
Public Open Space	0.31	10%	
Structural Landscape	0.42	13%	

LE066 –Considerations: Well-screened from PDNP by woodland to the north eastern edge; Kniveden Hall potential to convert to residential; designed landscape setting with specimen mature trees – opportunity to retain; Kniveden Partnership provide mental health services, horticulture and advice on southern site; bisected by PROW to be retained.



Use	Area	Percentage of Site	Indicative units
Residential	2.2	61%	79
Public Open Space	0.15	4%	
Structural Landscape	2.2	35%	

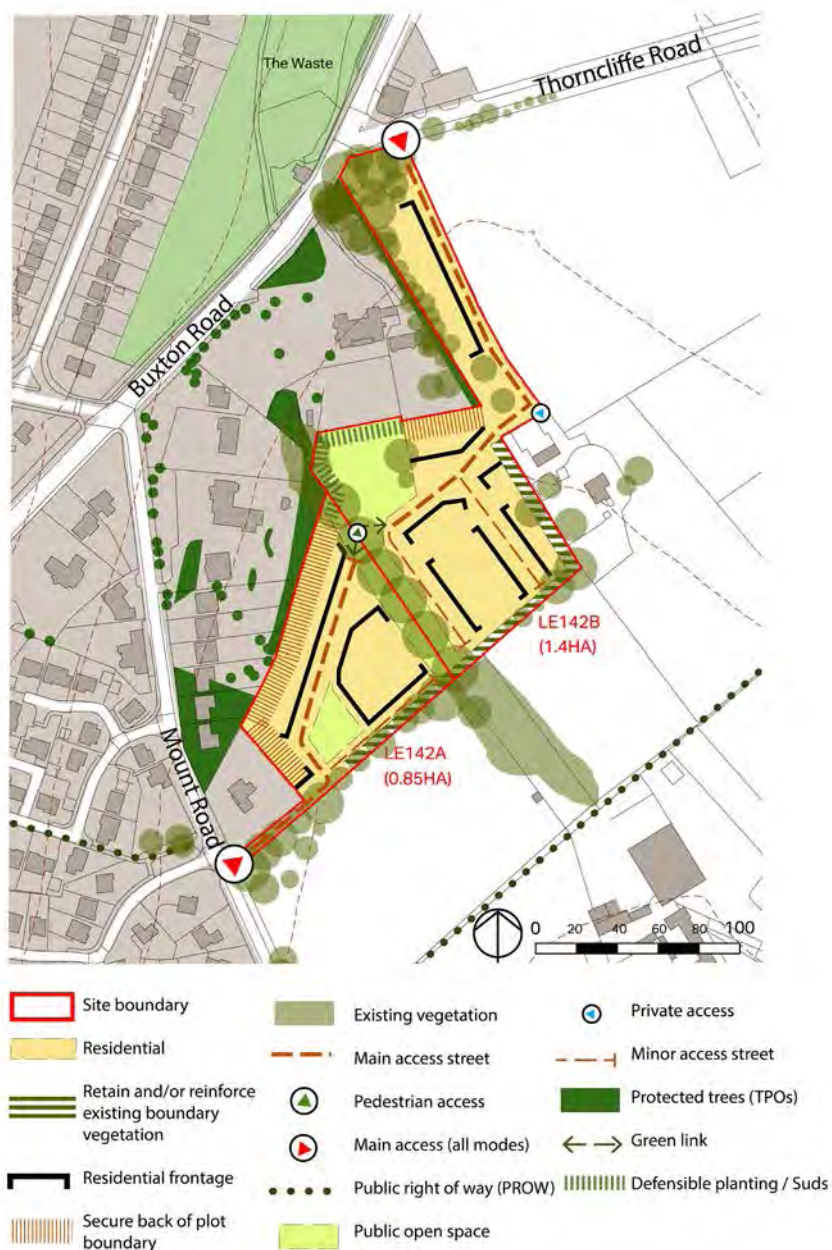
LE140 – Considerations: First School site allocation (0.76Ha reserved); former reservoir site; visible earthworks; potential overlooking back gardens of houses to north (Mountside Gardens).



Use	Area	Percentage of Site	Indicative units
Residential	1.7	53%	61
Public Open Space	0.26	8%	
Structural Landscape	0.23	7%	
School	0.78	25%	
Retained Woodland	0.23	7%	

LE142A—*Considerations:* Access strip from Mount Road; well contained by planting; currently fields in use for grazing; existing dwellings back onto site.

LE142B—*Considerations:* Access issue from Thorncliffe Road due to potential ransom strip, exposed aspect on edge of settlement, equestrian training centre use on site currently.



LE142A

Use	Area	Percentage of Site	Indicative units
Residential	0.72	84%	29
Public Open Space	0.09	11%	
Structural Landscape	0.04	5%	

LE142B

Use	Area	Percentage of Site	Indicative units
Residential	1.01	74%	49
Public Open Space	0.28	20%	
Structural Landscape	0.09	6%	

CONCLUSIONS

5

SECTION

5.1 SUMMARY FINDINGS

The individual site design briefs summarised in the previous section relate to of a cluster of sites along Mount Road that should be developed holistically and supported by sensitive infrastructure improvements including for education, transport, open space, sport and recreation.

- Site: Land at the Mount
- Net Residential area - 8.62 Ha
- School - 0.78 Ha
- POS Area – 1.05 Ha
- Landscape / woodland - 3.2 Ha
- No of dwellings 310 (at 36 DpH)

A high-quality new place that is a part of Leek but has its own neighbourhood identity will only be realised by a continued strong commitment to detail design, sustainability and the focus to deliver a neighbourhood that responds to the special character of Mount Road, not just a series of housing estates.

If the spirit of the guide is followed, there is a certain opportunity to deliver a small complementary new community along Mount Road that will preserve and enhance the special characteristics of the area and continue to be a used for informal leisure whilst delivering sustainable growth to the town to meet the needs of the present without compromising the needs of future generations.

5.2 NEXT STEPS

There is scope for further investigations regarding the capacity of the site to deliver a carbon neutral development. Various forms of renewable energy should be investigated.

In order to fully investigate the capacity of the sites a more detailed masterplanning process is required to integrate the design guidance and concepts from this guide with the provision of the necessary infrastructure and built development.

This report has set out an evidence base for the Leek Neighbourhood Plan and it is recommended that this guide is embedded within the forthcoming plan as policy.

APPENDICES

6

SECTION

A - POLICY AND EVIDENCE REVIEW

The Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (June 2018 examination began)

SS5 Leek Area Strategy: Which aims to Enable the sustainable development of Leek and consolidate it's role as a principal service centre and market town. Protect and enhance the special character and heritage of Leek. Support the delivery of complementary regeneration and infrastructure projects.

H1 New Housing Development: The policy seeks to provide sufficient supply of land to meet housing needs. Provide New housing in sustainable locations and provide a range of market and affordable housing.

DC1 Design Considerations: The policy seeks to enhance and protect the special and the character and distinctiveness of local areas, increase the use of sustainable design and construction methods and provide inclusive design.

The following policies H2 and DSL2 are referenced specifically for the Proposed Housing Allocations which lie outside the town boundary.

H2 New Housing Development: In the towns, residential developments of 15 dwellings (0.5 hectares) or more shall provide a target of 33% affordable housing on-site from all sources.

DSL2 The Mount: The policy aims to secure appropriate residential and educational development of the site and of identified impacts.

Emerging policy: Search policies

- Climate change (to 100% renewables, reduction of GHG to target)
- The role of planning in healthy living sustainable living

- Place-making
- High quality design

Existing Technical Studies

The Council has undertaken several technical studies covering Viability, Landscape, and Historic Environment in Leek and covering 'The Mount' (DSL2).

Historic Environment Character Assessment: Staffordshire Moorlands August 2010

- A well-preserved planned landscape created by surveyors following an Act of Enclosure (1811). The field system is associated with several regular courtyard farms which are probably of contemporary date (LLHECZ 2).

- Settlement within the zone retains its historic dispersed pattern of farmsteads. Kniveden Hall is the only 20th century development.

- There is little capacity for the historic environment of the zone to absorb change without fundamentally altering the historic landscape character of the zone.

- Based on the allocation, any new development should be of a low density and be located to respect the historic fields and the overall dispersed settlement pattern. Such development should also be designed to reflect the local vernacular in terms of scale and architectural form (PPS 5 policy HE 7.5).

- There is a moderate to low potential for below ground archaeological remains to survive within the zone. There may be a requirement for a Heritage Statement to be submitted as part of any planning application in line with PPS 5 Policy HE 6.
- Mitigation works may be required to fulfil PPS 5 Policy HE 12.

Staffordshire Moorlands District Council Landscape, Local Greenspace and Heritage Impact Study (August 2016)

Results of the landscape assessment for the allocated sites.

LE142a Land east of Mount Road

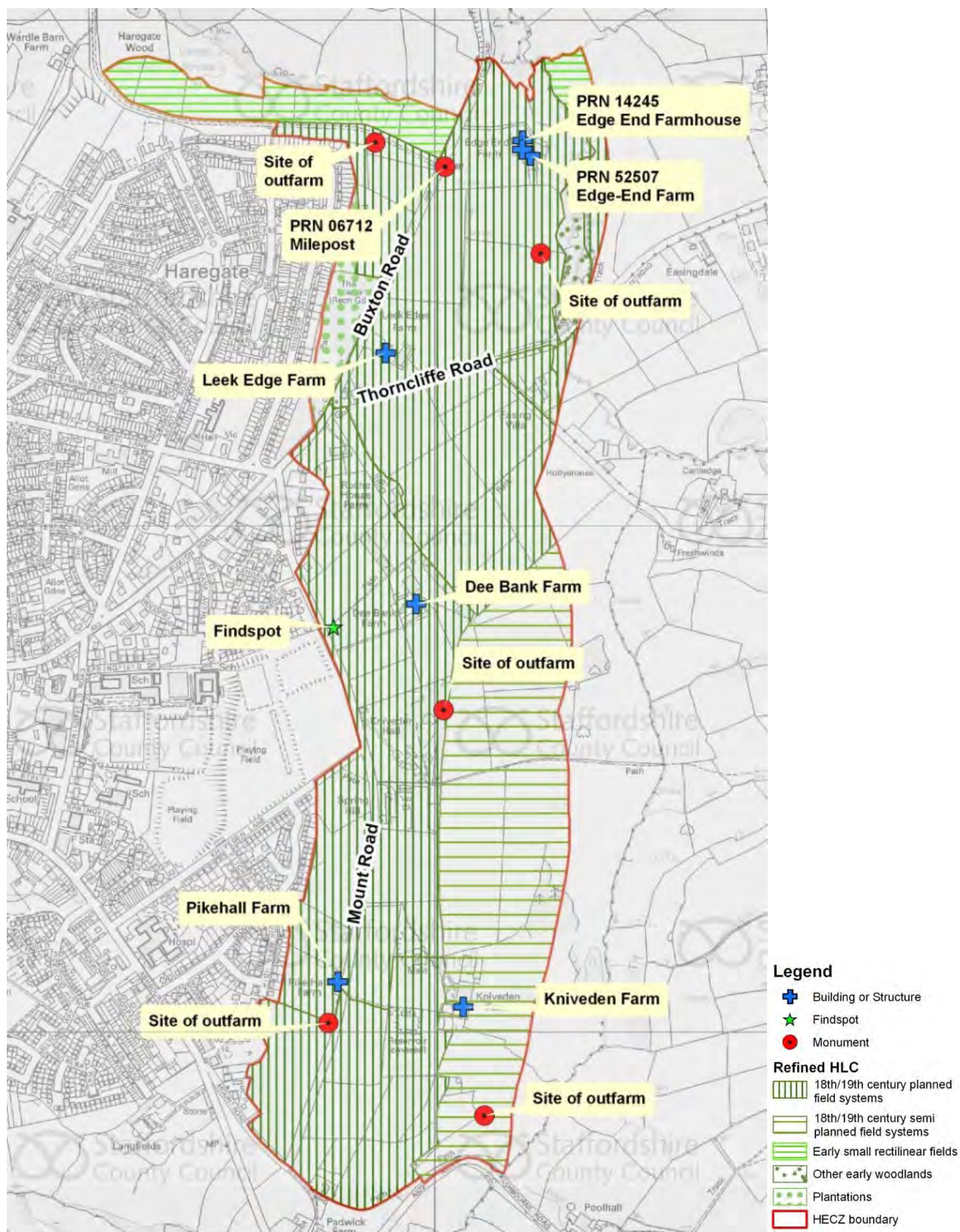
Site comprises land to the east of Mount Road, on the north-eastern edge of Leek. The site is visually prominent and visible from the Peak District National Park, as it is located atop of the ridge that screens views of Leek. Development within the site would adversely affect the existing well-defined, vegetated settlement edge, and could affect the setting of the PDNP. Site is of high landscape sensitivity.

LE142b Land south of Thorncliffe Road

The site comprises an existing farmstead and paddocks, and the access track which extends north to Thorncliffe Road. Existing development within the site does not contribute to a well-defined settlement edge. However, the existing development is located within the areas of the site with the lowest visual prominence. Development across the entire site would likely be visible from the PDNP and could affect its setting. Development, particularly in the north of the site, could also affect the rural approach to Leek from the PDNP. Site is of high landscape sensitivity.

LE140 - Land west of Mount Road (north of Knivedon Lane)

Site comprises land sloping down from Mount Road to the settlement edge and is enclosed by tree belts on the northern and western boundaries. There are also trees on the eastern boundary, however these are sparser. The site



slopes down from Mount Road and so views from the PDNP are screened by the ridge and intervening vegetation on the site boundary and on the land on the opposite side of Mount Road (including the woodland surrounding Knivedon Hall). **However, building heights should be limited in the east of the site to reduce the prominence of the development. In addition, planting and landscaping should be undertaken on the eastern edge of the site, to create a strong, vegetated settlement edge and ensure the development is further screened from the PDNP.**

Site is of medium landscape sensitivity. Site-specific landscape mitigation measures could include advanced planting and landscaping on the eastern boundary, and limited building heights in the eastern half of the site.

LE128 - Land west of Mount Road (south of Kniveden Lane)

North: The site comprises the northern half of a field (southern half is site LE128b) which slopes up from the eastern edge of Leek to Mount Road. The existing settlement edge is well-defined but urban, and only at a slightly lower elevation than the site, and so is visible across it. The site is currently screened from the PDNP by the ridge of Mount Road, the existing tree planting on Mount Road and the woodland surrounding Kniveden Hall. **However, building heights should be limited in the east of the site to reduce the prominence of the development. In addition, planting and landscaping could be undertaken on the eastern edge of the site, to create a strong, vegetated settlement edge and ensure the development is further screened from the PDNP.**

South: Land south of Thorncliffe Road The site comprises an existing farmstead and paddocks, and the access track which extends north to Thorncliffe Road. Existing development within the site does not contribute to a well-defined settlement edge. However, the existing development is located within the areas of the site with the lowest visual prominence. Development across the entire site would likely be

visible from the PDNP and could affect its setting. Development, particularly in the north of the site, could also affect the rural approach to Leek from the PDNP.

The site is of high landscape sensitivity. Please note that this study forms part of a wider evidence base to support SMDC's Local Plan. Therefore, the conclusions within this report will be weighed against other evidence when determining the overall suitability of a site for development.

LE066 - Land east of Mount Road

The site is located on the on the eastern edge of Leek, east of Mount Road. The site is previously developed, with the northern section comprising Kniveden Hall amongst woodland, and the southern half comprising a property and polytunnels/horticulture. The site is located beyond the ridge of Mount Road, which currently screens views of Leek from the PDNP. Existing development within the site is generally screened by the trees and other vegetation both within and surrounding the site. The woodland within the site also provides screening of existing development within Leek. Development within the site would be visually prominent and could potentially affect the setting of the PDNP.

Site is of high landscape sensitivity. Please note that this study forms part of a wider evidence base to support SMDC's Local Plan. Therefore, the conclusions within this report will be weighed against other evidence when determining the overall suitability of a site for development.

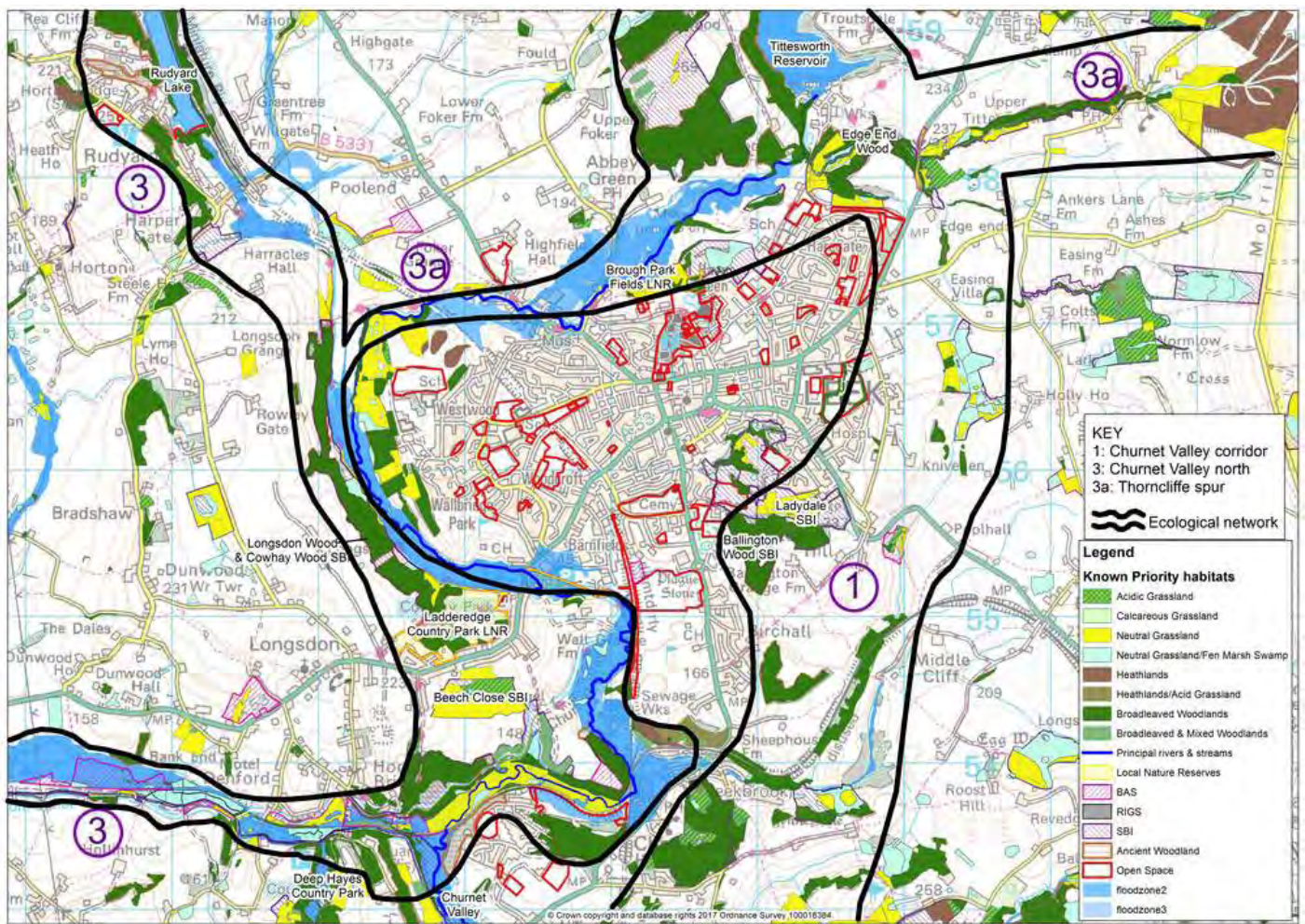
Landscape Character Assessment of Staffordshire Moorlands

Ancient slope and valley farmlands (east of Leek/'The Mount')

Key Characteristics:

Strongly undulating or sloping landscape cut by small scale steep sided

- Stream valleys Small scale mainly ancient irregular fields bounded by trees and hedgerows
- Extensive views from higher ground
- Intimate wooded valleys
- Stone buildings and drystone walls towards uplands
- Isolated properties
- Narrow winding lanes
- Parklands
- Quarrying



Map. 7.2: Ecological Corridors.

B - ENGAGEMENT WITH THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN WORKING GROUP

Site Visit and Neighbourhood Plan Group Engagement (11.3.19)

On the 11.3.19 AECOM staff visited the sites and walked the area and its context using the existing public rights of way, recording observations via photography and plan mark up.

9.00AM - Site visit

- o Key Issues identified:
 - i) Topography
 - ii) Edge Character
 - iii) Aspect and prospect
 - iv) Public Rights of Way
 - v) Rural Character of Lane
 - vi) Active Use - Leisure function
 - vii) Existing inward-facing development

12.00PM - Workshop Meeting with the Neighbourhood Plan Group

In the afternoon two AECOM staff met with the seven available members of the neighbourhood plan group at the Foxlowe Arts Centre for a round table discussion about Mount Road. AECOM introduced themselves and set out their role in providing support to the group. The group introduced themselves and their respective roles and interests. AECOM then tabled aerial photography and OS mapping showing the site boundaries and their context and facilitated discussion to identify the following assets, issue and opportunities on Mount Road and the physical opportunities and constraints.

- o Broad Issues identified:
 - i) Wider ring route aspiration
 - ii) Local connectivity to settlement
 - iii) Infrastructure linkage to the north
 - iv) Local Buxton Road junction capacity issue
 - v) Existing Staffordshire Moorlands Walks along Mount Road
 - vi) Active By Design (CABE) a good reference guide
 - vii) Affordable housing need - not big houses on the hill

viii) A survey carried out by members of the Leek NDP Steering Group in 2018 showed c. 200 walkers per day along Mount Road.

ix) Ridgeline's significance for movement / views

x) Kniveden Hall is an Arts and Crafts house built in 1901, it is not listed.

xi) Future proofing development plans

xii) Cyclist and pedestrian safety

xiii) Unadopted Kniveden Lane

xiv) Proximity of Peak District National Park (PDNP)

About AECOM

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