

# Design and Access Statement

## Millers' Field, Oundle

A development by **TOWN. Mole**

millers'  
field





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# Foreword

Millers' Field in Oundle is a proposal for a high-quality, custom-build community of 14 homes offering high levels of environmental and social sustainability.

In 2019 TOWN and Mole Architects were selected by Anne and Peter Miller, the owners of Millers' Field, to design and deliver an exemplary, sustainable development of low-energy homes. The development will retain the existing allotments and dedicate them for permanent use. Our plans envisage the creation of a publicly accessible nature space by the stream that will enhance biodiversity and provide valuable amenity to residents and the wider community.

TOWN and Mole have brought together a group of future residents to work closely with the professional team, to help shape the vision and design proposals for Millers' Field. This group is called the Millers' Field Building Group; we believe this will be the UK's first genuine Dutch-style Building Group giving future residents a way to get involved from the outset.

TOWN and Mole are currently working with nine households who are signed-up members of the Millers' Field building group and who will eventually become the residents of this development. More information on the Building Group and our process of engagement with the wider community is detailed in the accompanying Statement of Community Involvement.

The design process for Millers' Field has also involved engagement with various stakeholders, including North Northamptonshire Council, neighbours of the site, the wider local community, as well as the Millers' Field Building Group.

This document sets out our design proposals and describes how these have been developed, informed by the site, by planning policy, and by engagement with the Local Planning Authority, stakeholders, the local community and future residents.

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## Marmalade Lane, Cambridge

A multi-award winning project by TOWN and Mole. Marmalade Lane is a 42 home cohousing project in Cambridge.

# Our Vision for Millers' Field



Our vision for Millers' Field is to create a high-quality, custom-build community offering high levels of environmental and social sustainability. The community will comprise 14 homes, across flexible housing typologies that will support elderly living and new families. Alongside homes there will be shared, safe and sociable spaces for biodiversity, socialising and children's play.



## Create a positive legacy.

Together with our landowner partners, we aim to create a development that will create positive benefit for the local area.



## Preserve and enhance local green space.

Public access to the site will be maintained, with half the site to be made available for community use in perpetuity, for allotments, nature and community open space.



## Respect local character.

The proposed development will respect Oundle's architectural heritage and the nearby conservation area.



## Meet local housing needs.

This development will help address the housing needs of Oundle, including homes for older people and families.



## Be an environmental exemplar

The project will be an exemplar low carbon, sustainable development, demonstrating how net zero carbon housing can be delivered.



## Encourage food growing.

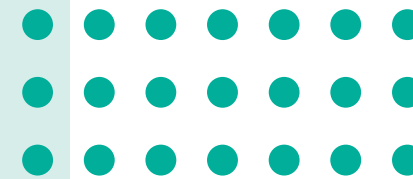
The proposed development will preserve and enhance access to the existing allotments, creating a permanent resource for local food growing.

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## 01. Introduction





## The Millers

Anne and Peter are the owners of Millers' Field and lend their family name to the proposed development.

Their father, Robin Miller, was Director of Music at Oundle School from 1954. In 1965, he purchased the field, located opposite Orchard House on Benefield Road, where he and his family lived. Anne and Peter Miller are now seeking to develop Millers' Field in accordance with their father's wishes and would like both future residents and the local community to benefit from its development.

The Millers are keen to leave a legacy to the town. This will be achieved through creating a small exemplar community of good quality sustainable homes on the north western half of the site, built to a high standard of energy efficiency and design. The other half of the site will be made available for community use in perpetuity for allotments, nature and community open space.



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## Project Team

### TOWN.

TOWN is a profit-with-purpose developer with a mission to build good places for better lives.

We deliver homes, streets and neighbourhoods that improve people's quality of life, enable more sustainable ways of living and improve the wider places they are part of.



### Mole

Mole architects are one of the most critically acclaimed practices in the UK whose portfolio includes a number of exemplar low energy housing schemes. They endeavour to create architecture that 'lifts the spirits, protects the environment, and contributes to society'.



TOWN and Mole's close and ongoing collaborative relationship was forged with the design and delivery of Marmalade Lane in Cambridge; a nationally recognised, multi-award-winning, 42-home cohousing scheme which delivered strong social and environmental outcomes.

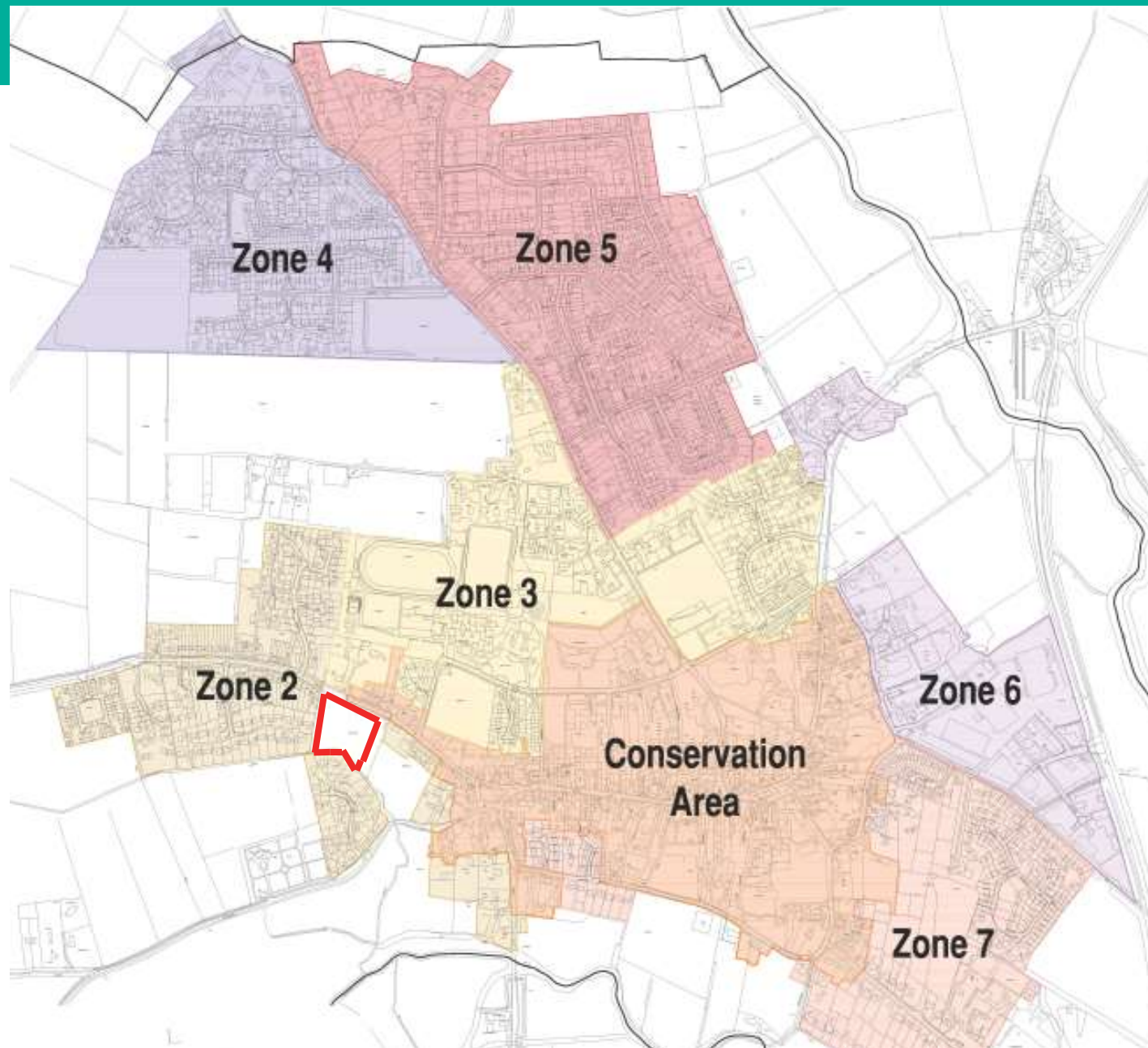


# Site Context

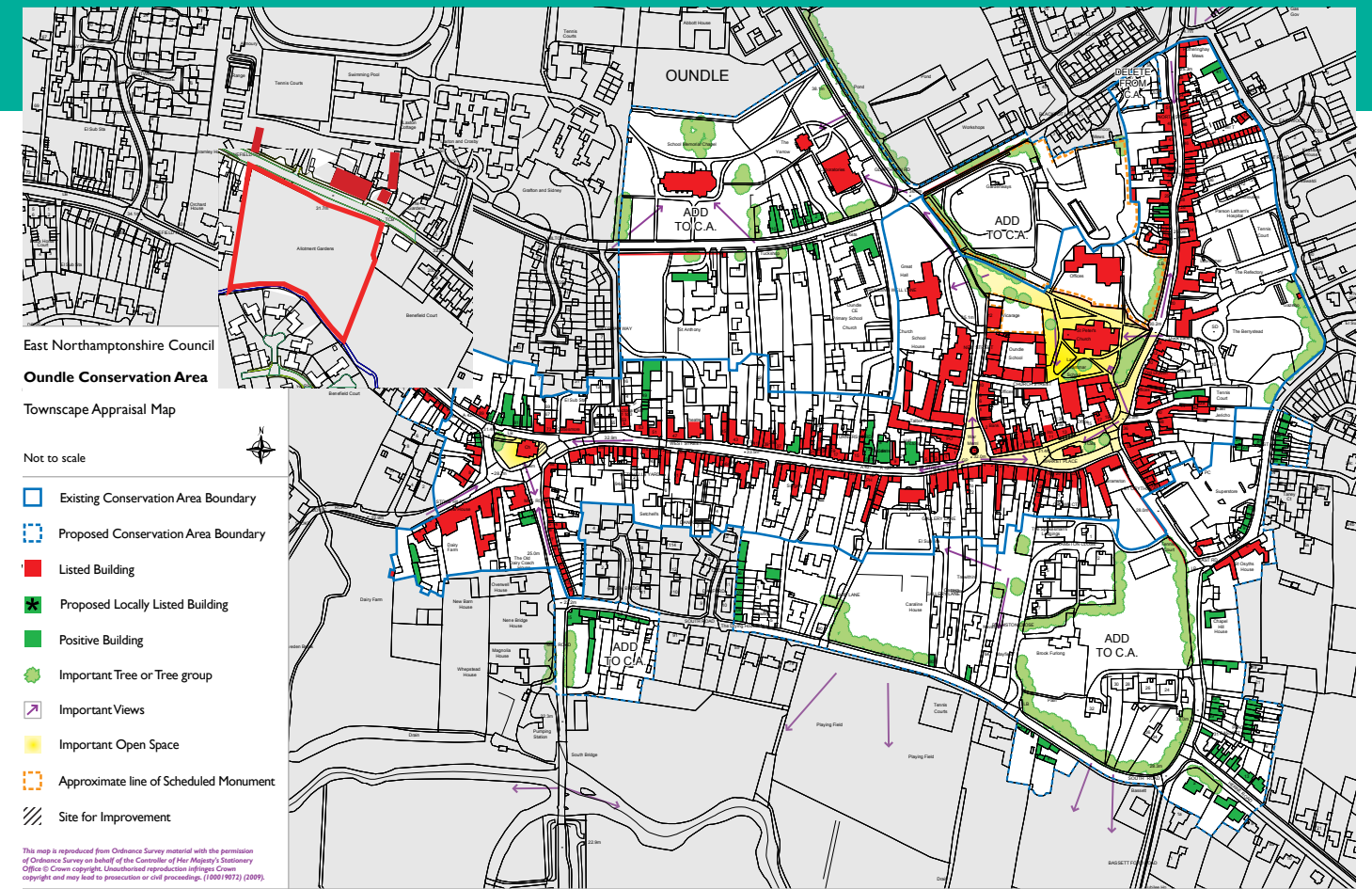
Millers' Field sits at a transition point between two character areas - the historic town centre, the Conservation Area, and Zone 2, the more recent twentieth century development (as identified in the abandoned neighbourhood plan).

## Responding to this, Millers' Field will:

- be architecturally sensitive to the Conservation Area and in particular the listed buildings opposite
- seek to maintain the semi-rural character of the immediate surroundings



Oundle Town Design Statement - Zone Locations

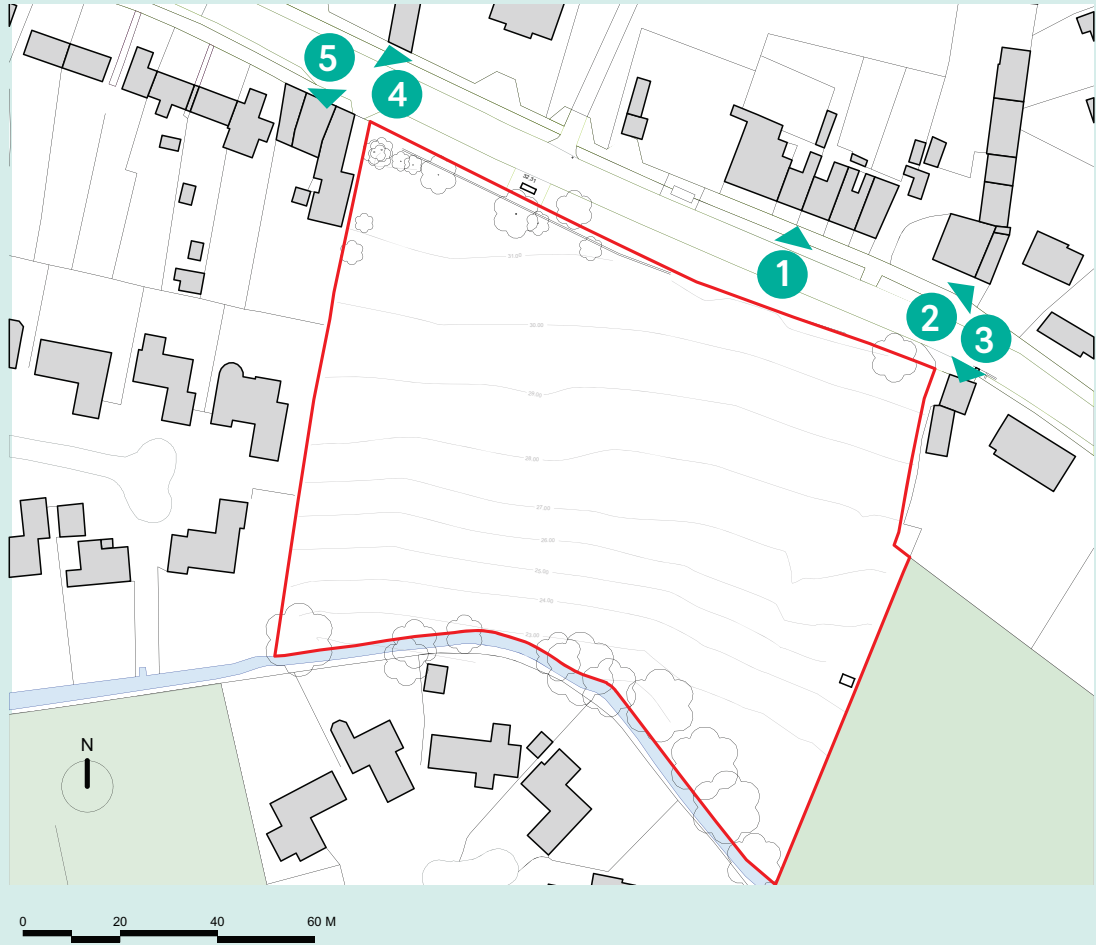


Oundle Conservation Area and Listed Buildings



# Immediate Site Context

Listed buildings and period properties



1. Benefield Road - Listed Terrace Houses



2. Benefield Road - Detached Houses



3. Benefield Road - Garage/Outhouse



4. Benefield Road  
Row of terrace houses





5. Benefield Road - Row of terrace houses

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




# Site Location





## Town Centre

 10 minute walk  
 4 minute bike

## Schools

 <b>Oundle School</b> 12 minute walk	 <b>Prince William School</b> 20 minute walk
 5 minute bike	 6 minute bike

## Shopping

 <b>Co-op</b> 10 minute walk	 <b>Waitrose</b> 14 minute walk
 3 minute bike	 6 minute bike

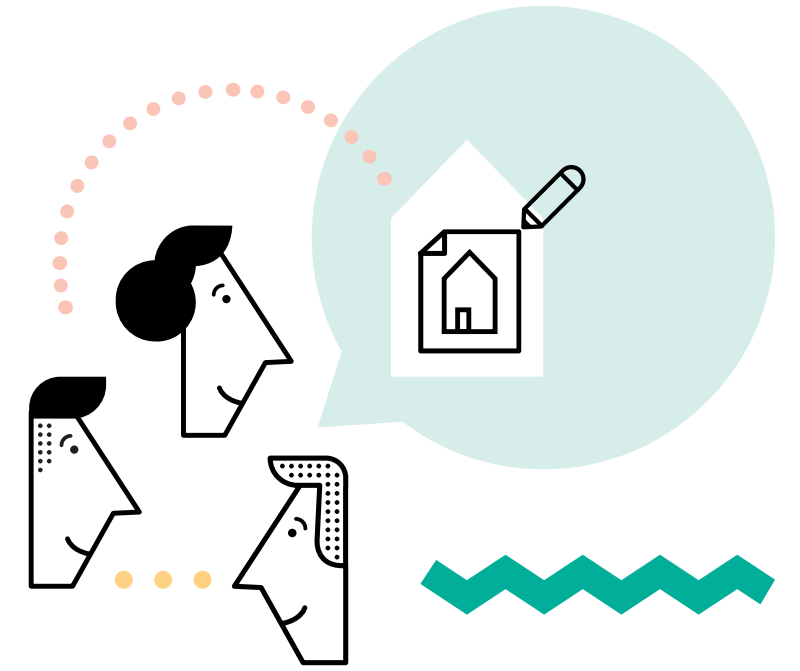
The Site

Town  
Centre





## millers' field



### Building Group Process

As outlined in the Statement of Community Involvement, Millers' Field has been designed in close collaboration with a 'Building Group'. This approach involves engaging future residents early in the development process, giving them meaningful input into the design of their future community.

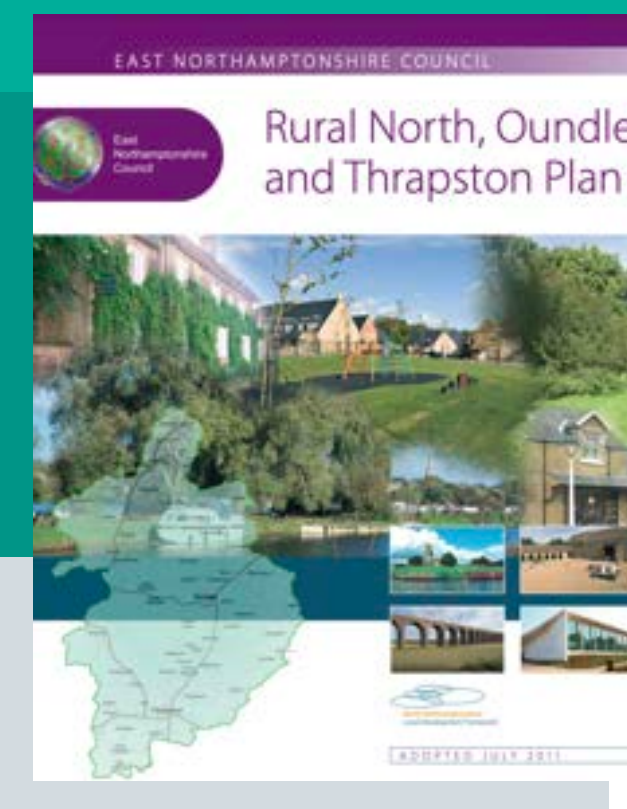
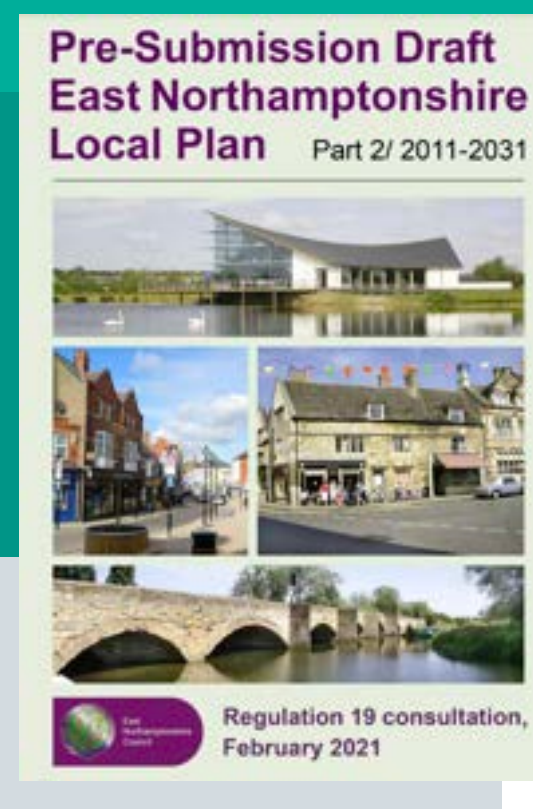
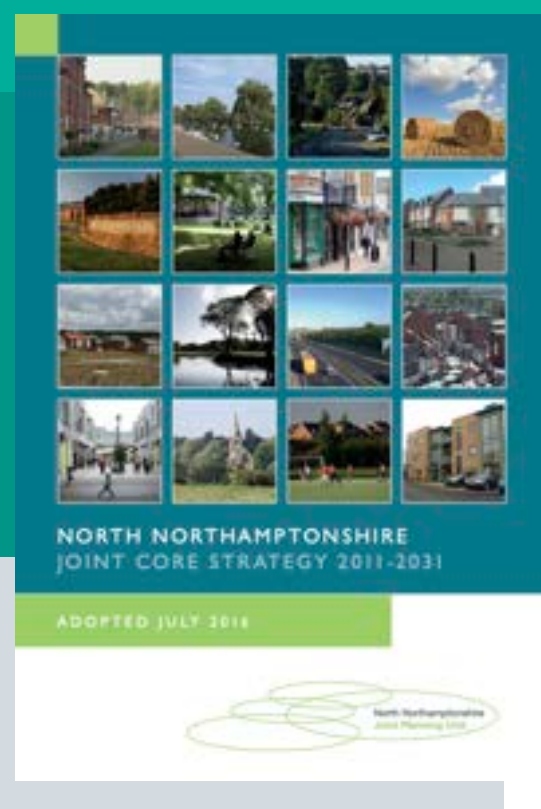
**The benefits of a 'Building Group' approach include:**

- A well-managed custom-build process that offers future residents input into design proposals, while ensuring that plans are acceptable to planners and deliverable.
- Future residents gain increased ownership of and pride in the finished development.
- Community is fostered through the design process.
- Increased neighbourliness and reduced loneliness.
- Increased take-up of communal sustainability initiatives such as car clubs, library of things, food-growing and energy-saving approaches.

The Building Group currently consists of nine members, many with strong connections to Oundle. While Millers' Field isn't exclusively a retirement development, many Building Group members are considering downsizing and are seeking adaptable, sustainable homes in a supportive community. They have actively shaped the development through in-person and online codesign workshops conducted between May 2022 and August 2023.



# Planning Policy Context



## The Statutory Development Plan comprises:

- North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (JCS) (2016).
- Emerging East Northamptonshire Local Plan (LPP2)(2021).
- Rural North, Oundle and Thrapston Development (RNOTP) Plan, adopted July 2011.
- Saved Policies East Northamptonshire District Local Plan 1996.

The National Planning Policy Framework (2023) and National Planning Policy Guidance provide the national policy and advisory context.

## Other relevant designations include:

- Flood Zone: The development area within the proposed masterplan is within Flood Zone 1.
- Conservation Area: The site is not within the Oundle Conservation Area, but it is immediately adjacent to it and proposals must therefore respect its setting.
- Listed buildings immediately opposite the site.

Millers' Field is a windfall site that aligns with the Development Plan when taken as a whole. It addresses the identified need for homes catering to older people, while setting a new standard for sustainability.

The development's appropriateness has been substantiated

through two separate preapplication engagements with the Local Planning Authority. The inclusion of the site for the development of "at least 14 dwellings' within the draft Oundle Neighbourhood Plan, demonstrates local approval, even if that Plan itself was ultimately discontinued.

The Planning Policy context is discussed in further detail in the accompanying Planning Statement.





**02. Site Analysis**

# Site Opportunities & Constraints



## Opportunities

The site offers many opportunities that help contribute to a successful and healthy place to live:

### Retained views

Views to the south and southeast towards open fields and the Nene Valley are to be retained and enhanced in line with the aspirations of the discontinued Neighbourhood Plan.

### Proximity to town centre and public transport

The site is a short walk or cycle into Oundle centre. We are looking to improve access to the bus stop on the south side of Benefield Road with a new footpath.

### New frontage to Benefield Rd

The proposals include a new frontage to Benefield Road and retained mature trees and hedgerows.

### New public green space and permanent dedication of allotments

The allotments and south of the site, making up around 50% of the total site area, will be retained for use by existing residents in Oundle. The southern part of site will incorporate a Sustainable Urban Drainage system, enhance the Lyveden Brook and include a new pedestrian loop.

### Improvement of allotment access

We are proposing to provide additional car parking spaces and safer access for this well-used local amenity.

## Constraints

There are also constraints on the site which will help to shape the development:

### Flood Plain

Built development will not be proposed in areas in the south of the site which fall within Flood Zone 2/3.

### Access & Levels

The site slopes down towards the Lyveden Brook. Any new scheme will need to consider stepped massing.

### Overlooking

The design of the detailed scheme will need to address potential overlooking issues from properties on Benefield Road, Warren Bridge and Clifton Drive.



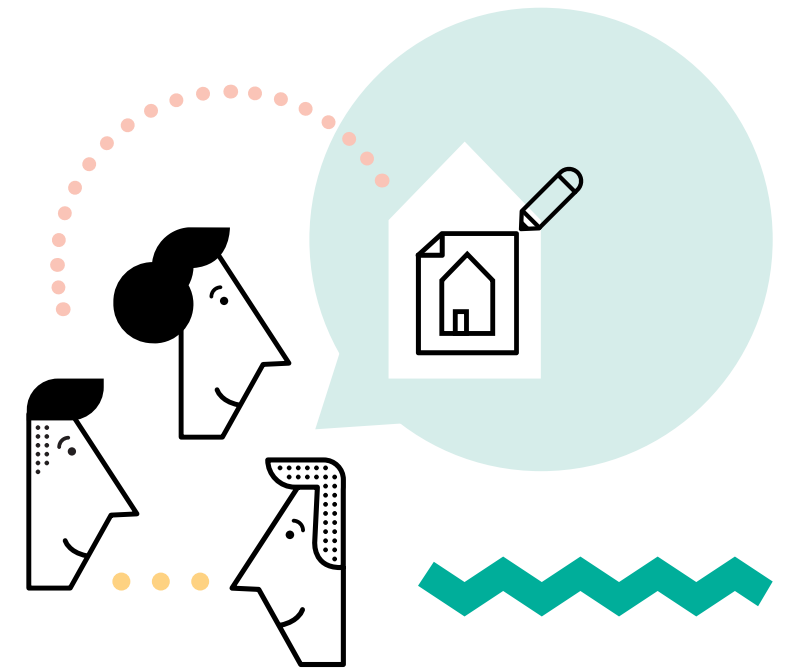




**04. Design Evolution**



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## Introduction

The design evolution of proposals for Millers' Field has been shaped by a process of engagement with a comprehensive range of stakeholders. This has encompassed engagement with North Northamptonshire Council via pre-application meetings, with the wider community and in-depth collaboration and codesign with the Millers' Field Building Group. For a comprehensive account of the engagement process please refer to the accompanying Statement of Community Involvement (SCI).



# Design Iteration One

## June 2021

The initial proposal featured a 32-unit scheme that was subject to a pre-application meeting in June 2021. This design aimed to make the most of the land's proximity to town amenities and its accessibility via public transport. The scheme incorporated a range of house types, from smaller two-bedroom apartments to larger four-bedroom homes, spread across three terraces. The northern terrace faced Benefield Road. Car parking was strategically placed at the periphery to prioritise pedestrian movement, and north-south viewing lanes were maintained to allow clear views through the site.

Feedback from planning officers indicated that while the site was considered acceptable for development, a reduction in density and massing was preferred.



32 unit scheme

## Design Iteration Two

### May 2022

This proposal of a 25-unit scheme was presented to local residents and Oundle Town Council in May 2022. The design responded to local need for homes for older people and downsizers; it replaced a three-storey apartment block and a row of terraced houses in the previous iteration with a row of six bungalow-type houses, facilitating ground-floor living.

There was openness to the principle of development among stakeholders, but with some concerns about the risk of overdeveloping the site, with a preference for further reduction of the scale of development.



25 unit scheme



# Design Iteration Three

In May 2023, two variations of a 14-unit scheme were presented to North Northamptonshire council in response to feedback from officers and local residents and changing market conditions.

A reduction in scale enabled a greater focus on bungalow-type housing, catering to local downsizers and being reflective of the demographic and needs of the early members of the building group. The options also met the requirement for affordable housing provision set out by the North Northampton Joint Core Strategy (Policy 30) and aligned with the minimum expectation of the Neighbourhood Plan.

## Horseshoe Configuration

The horseshoe option arranged all homes around a central communal space protected from any vehicle activity and connected to the nature area at the site's southern end.

## North-South Terrace Configuration

The north-south terrace layout took advantage of the site's southern orientation making it ideal for passive heating and shading approaches.

Both schemes were positively received during a pre-application discussion in May 2023, with a marginal preference for the "Horseshoe" configuration expressed.

Option 1 - Horseshoe Configuration



Option 2 - North South Terraces



## Design Iteration Four - Current Proposal

The proposed indicative scheme, which forms the basis of our outline application is an evolution of the North-South Terraces option. This scheme was positively received at an engagement event with local residents in September 2023.

This configuration also responds to further engagement with civil engineers in managing access levels and the existing topography.

This proposed scheme is explored in further detail in the next section of this document.







**05. Indicative Proposal**

# Design Responses

## Space to grow

Allotments preserved as a permanent community asset, and growing space increased. Improved, new access to the allotments with dedicated parking.



## Preserved views

Valued views from Benefield Road towards the south east are preserved.



## Nature area

A new green amenity space, accessible to the public.



## Frontages

New terraced frontage to Benefield Road, responding to existing terraced frontage to the north.



## Highways

Improved pedestrian route and access to bus stop.



## Social spaces

Space for residents to meet and play safely including a central shared garden.





# Key Benefits



14 new sustainable homes.



Oundle's first custom-build community.



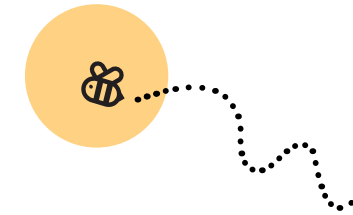
A focus on elderly living, helping free up family housing in Oundle.



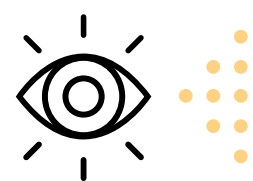
Permanent retention of the allotments, and provision of a new public nature area.



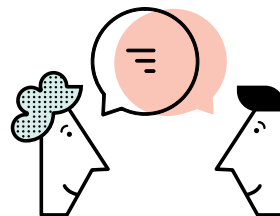
Net-zero carbon in operation and low-carbon construction.



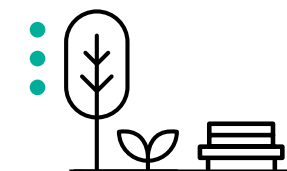
Bio-diversity net gain and SUDs.



Views preserved from Benefield Road.



Sociable, people-friendly design.



Balance of private and communal green spaces.



New footway along Benefield Road.



# Landscape

The landscape strategy for Millers' Field is focussed on delivering biodiversity net gain. This involves preserving and enhancing existing habitats, and introducing new ones. Additionally, the strategy aims to create both public and private green spaces, contributing to the wellbeing of both residents and the wider community.

The decision to retain the allotments is significant, as they play a dual role in supporting biodiversity and providing a space for food growing and social interaction. Preserving the majority of the existing tree line along Benefield Road is crucial for maintaining the semi-rural feel of the immediate context of heritage assets to the north side of the road.

The western access has been carefully designed to minimise impact, proposing the loss of only two himalayan birch trees and one horse chestnut tree which is in moderate condition.

A group of young alders to the south of the site will be removed, replaced by 27 new small and medium trees.

The area to the south of the site alongside Lyveden Brook, which will be publicly accessible from Benefield Road, will be improved. This includes transforming a currently sparsely vegetated area into a wildflower grassland. Similar efforts will be made along the borders of the site, creating habitats that will benefit local wildlife.

Residents will have a balance of both private and shared green spaces. South-facing gardens will provide space for the private enjoyment of nature, while smaller front gardens will offer the opportunity for interaction with neighbours. At the heart of the development there will be a shared garden and communal space, which will be shaped in collaboration with the Building Group members during the detailed design stages.



## Indicative Site Section

The reduction in the number of dwellings, from 25 to 14, has enabled the creation of a larger nature area to the south of the site. The movement of the development north, further reduces the risk of visual impact on Warren Bridge residents, with additional tree planting increasing the screening currently present.



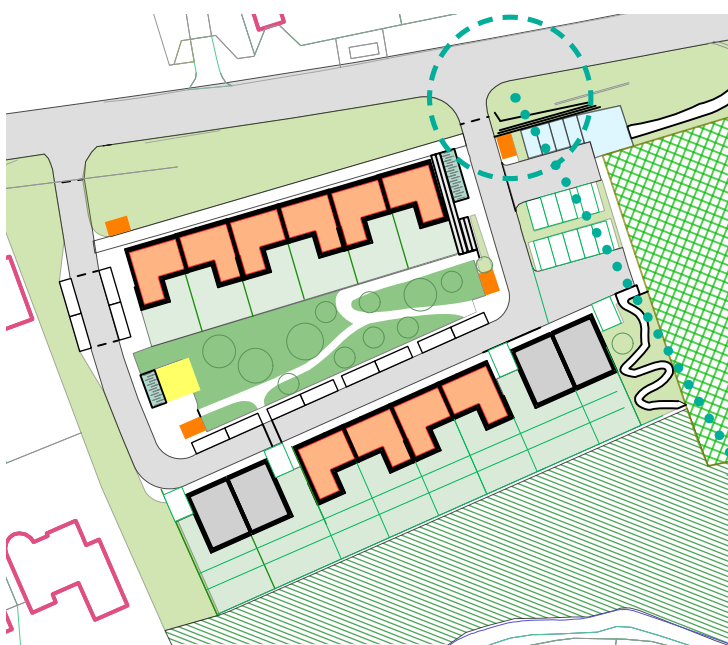
# Visual Impact Appraisal



View looking south across allotments



View looking east on Benefield Road



The view across the allotments to the southeast is an important perspective from Benefield Road, offering distant views across Stoke Doyle Road to the countryside beyond. The retention of the allotments and provision of parking, strategically shielded by landscaped vegetation, in the northeast corner of the site, ensures that the southeastern view remains unobstructed. This view is of significant importance for the listed assets on the north side of Benefield Road, as it remains largely undisturbed by the development.



The eastern view along Benefield Road serves as an important vantage point as one approaches the Conservation Area character zone, marking the transition from sparser twentieth-century development to the tighter-knit fabric of medieval Oundle. By setting back the northern terrace that faces Benefield Road, the retention of the treeline has a minimal impact on this view.



# Visual Impact Appraisal



View looking east on Benefield Road - wireline (below)



View looking west on Benefield Road - wireline (below)



The wireline view of the northern terrace of the Millers' Field development offers an impression of how the scale and form of the development, as visible through gaps in the tree line, integrates with the site's context.



The wireline view of the northern terrace of the Millers' Field development reiterates that the scale and design of the development, as seen through the tree line, aligns with the site's context.



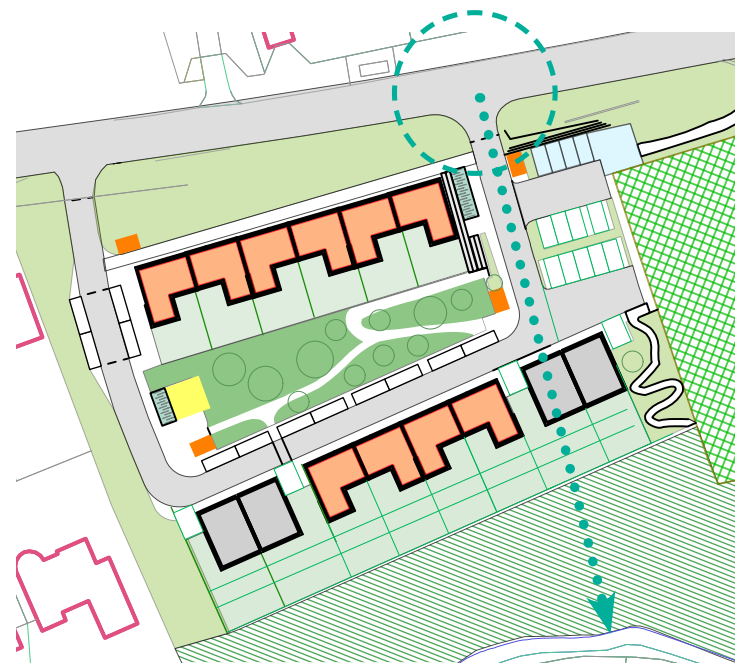
# Visual Impact Appraisal



View from new access lane at east of site



View down new access lane at west of site



The north-south perspective offered by the eastern access lane shows that the site's indicative layout doesn't infringe upon the current sense of openness experienced from Benefield Road.



At the western end of the site, a new access lane running north to south provides a view down to the Lyveden Brook tree line at the southern end of the site and also contributes to maintaining an atmosphere of openness and the semi-rural character of the townscape.



# Exemplar Sustainability Standards

Millers' Field is driven by a core mission to set a new standard in sustainable housing development. While TOWN's commitment to social sustainability is evident through our Building Group approach, this section provides an overview of our environmental sustainability strategy, with more detailed information available in the accompanying Sustainability Statement.

Our approach at Millers' Field goes beyond regulatory requirements and industry standards, aligning with the UK's Net Zero commitments. We adopt a Whole Life Carbon methodology, addressing both operational and embodied emissions. By utilising low carbon materials like timber and stone, we aim to construct homes with emissions below 300kgCO<sub>2</sub>e/m<sup>2</sup> (Modules A-C), in accordance with LETI 2030 targets. Furthermore, our emphasis on circular economy principles, such as designing for disassembly, ensures that materials are reusable at the end of their life cycle.

## Passivhaus principles



In the design phase, we adhere to Passivhaus principles and seek certification wherever possible. This involves minimising space heating demand through optimal orientation, along with extensive insulation, airtight construction, and mechanical ventilation with heat recovery. Through an all-electric approach employing heat pumps and energy-efficient appliances, our homes aim for operational energy consumption not exceeding 35kWh/m<sup>2</sup>/annum. Combined with maximising solar electricity generation, homes at Millers' Field will achieve Net Zero operation.

## Water efficiency and management



Millers' Field will use water efficiently through fixtures, appliances, and rainwater recycling.

Rainwater will be managed through a sustainable urban drainage approach, where through the use of nature-based solutions such as rain gardens, cascading swales, and permeable paving, water will be retained on site and run-off rates will be carefully managed.

The development will use less than 80 litres of water per person per day, this figure is beneath typical usage rates, saving money for residents and reducing demand on the local supply infrastructure.

## Enhanced biodiversity



Millers' Field will enhance biodiversity through the provision of wetlands and increased planting across the site. We will deliver a minimum overall net gain of 10% in biodiversity with a focus on on-site retention and improvement.

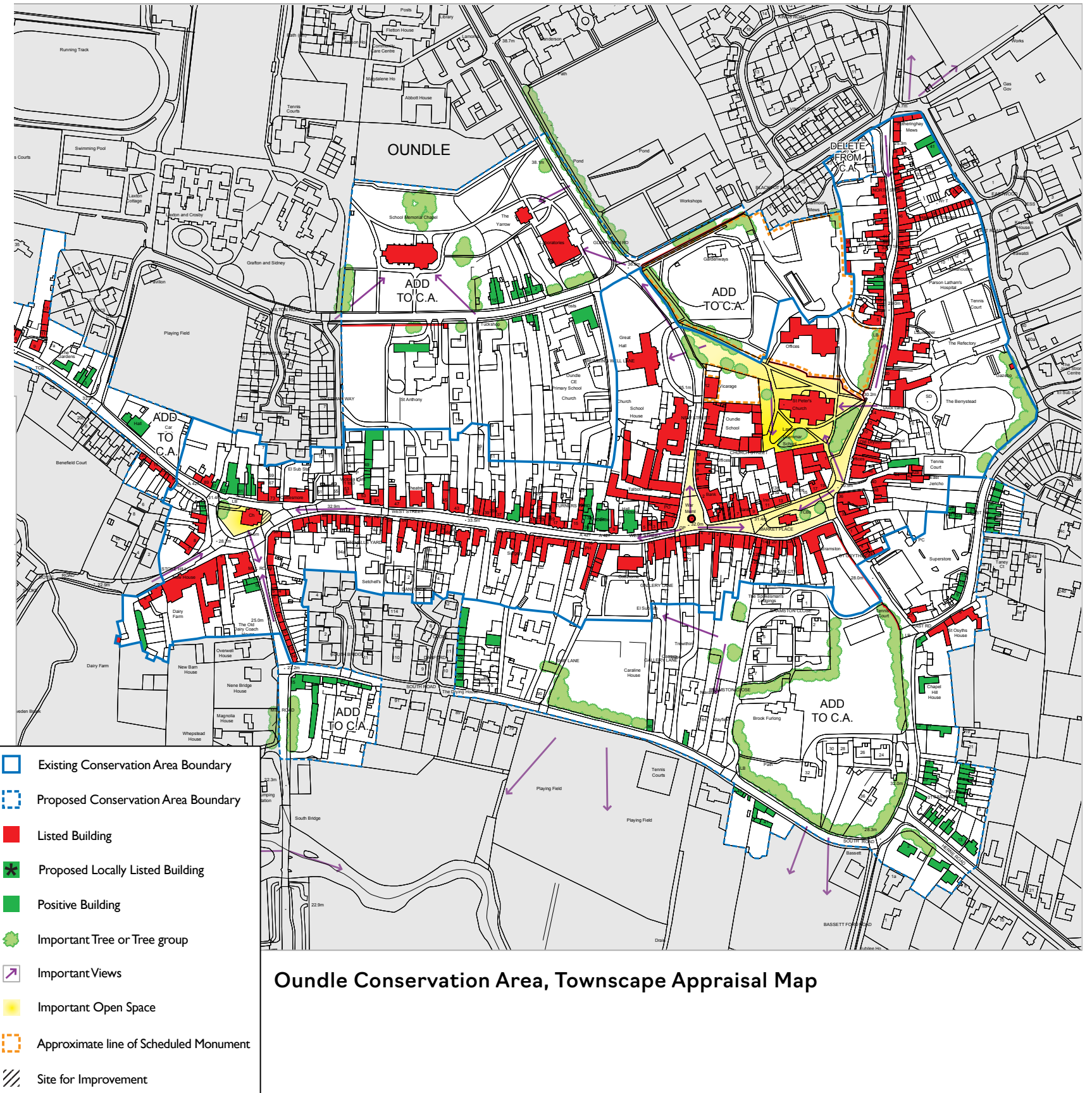
All homes at Millers' Field will have a strong connection to green spaces on the site.

# Heritage

The accompanying Heritage Statement establishes that the indicative proposal is a thoughtful approach to the site, which reflects the site's significance within the larger townscape, and ensures no adverse impact on surrounding heritage assets. The proposal also responds appropriately to the character of the local area.

Preserving the allotments retains an important historical source of character in the area defined as Zone 2 in the abandoned Neighbourhood Plan. Additionally, the new pedestrian access from Benefield Road to the south of the site enhances public appreciation of its role within the townscape.

The incorporation of north-south viewing corridors through the site references Oundle's medieval lanes, improving the visibility between the heritage assets to the north and the countryside beyond. The predominantly terraced layout along the street of the proposed site, with enclosed gardens, references the surrounding conservation area to the north of the site which is predominantly rows of terraced two storey houses. This design approach demonstrates a sensitivity to the town's architectural character. The retained and improved green boundary to the north enhances the setting of the listed terraces opposite the site.





## Access & Movement



Illustrative view of housing, street and shared green space at the centre of the development



Indicative view of the access lane at the west of the development

For a detailed overview of access arrangements, please refer to the accompanying Transport Statement.

Millers' Field is situated in a sustainable location, accessible by walking, cycling and public transport to Oundle town centre and a range of key amenities. The site itself will be a pleasant place to walk owing to gradient management. Cycling will be encouraged through the provision of secure cycle storage.

### Vehicular Access

The proposed indicative masterplan includes an internal access loop road designed to facilitate access to homes, parking, and to serve as a route for service vehicles within the site. This is enabled by the establishment of two new vehicular access/egress points from Benefield Road.

Approximately 40 metres west of the existing allotment access, a new vehicular access will be created. This will afford access to the residential development and will also serve as the access and egress point for the allotments.

Here, designated parking spaces for allotment users will be provided. This new access point for the allotments will allow the existing vehicular allotment access, situated on an inward bend of Benefield Road which currently presents visibility challenges, to be repurposed exclusively for pedestrian use.

To access homes located further south within the development, the road will function as a one-way route through the development. Egress will be facilitated by a newly designated egress-only junction, situated approximately 30 metres east of the nearest dwelling located further west along Benefield Road.

The access and egress points are situated more than 40 metres apart, as well as from other junctions on the same side of the road. Additionally, the nearest junction on the opposite side of the road is located more than 20 metres away from either of the two proposed entrances. These measures meet the required 43-metre visibility splays, which align with the 30-mph speed limit.

A swept path analysis has been conducted using an 11.2-metre vehicle, in accordance with guidance provided by North Northamptonshire Council.

### Non-Vehicular Access

An existing allotment access to the east will serve as a pedestrian entry point. Given the low traffic volume anticipated for the development, pedestrians will also have access to the proposed vehicular access and egress points.

The indicative layout also incorporates a pedestrian footpath across the central shared garden area. This ensures that all residents can access Benefield Road without encountering gradients steeper than 1:20, in line with M(4)2 standards.

Additionally, pedestrian access to the new nature area located to the south of the site is provided to the east.

## Conclusion

This Design and Access statement encapsulates TOWN's approach to Millers' Field in Oundle. Our vision is to create a development of 14 homes that embodies holistic sustainability, creates a strong sense of community, enhances nature spaces for the wider town and leaves a positive, enduring legacy for the Miller family.



Extensive engagement with local stakeholders, planners, and the future residents of Millers' Field through our innovative Building Group process has significantly shaped our proposals. The scheme has been refined through several iterations, transitioning from an initial concept of 32 homes to a more focused 14, designed to cater to downsizers and elderly living, while still addressing the needs of young families in the community.

The scheme ensures the preservation of the site's semi-rural character, safeguarding views from Benefield Road both through and beyond the development. It demonstrates sensitivity to the presence of listed assets and the context of the adjacent Conservation Area.

By protecting the existing allotments and establishing a new publicly accessible nature area near Lyveden Brook, the scheme also contributes to the wider community.

Millers' Field will surpass sustainability standards set by local planning policy and national regulations, setting a new benchmark for residential development in the area. Positioned within walking distance of the town centre and other key amenities and conveniently located near public transport routes, Millers' Field encourages future residents to embrace healthy, sustainable lifestyles.

The creation of a sense of community, supporting residents' overall well-being, is woven into the fabric of the design and indicative layout. This is achieved through creating plenty of social spaces for daily interaction with neighbours and prioritising pedestrian movement over cars. It is also achieved through the Building Group process itself; by involving residents from the earliest stages in designing their future homes, this process fosters a sense of community and neighbourliness right from the outset of the development.

We are looking forward to working with the planning authority, stakeholder, local community and the Building Group to bring forward a development that will provide a positive legacy for Oundle.



A development by

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