# A vision for Stanmore Garden Community

The Stanmore Consortium
September 2020

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# 1

# Introduction to the Vision

# 1 Introduction to the Vision

## 1.1 Introduction to Stanmore Garden Community

### Why prepare this Vision?

Shropshire Council is required by the government to update its Local Plan to provide for growth over the period 2016 – 2038. In an earlier Plan period insufficient land was allocated to meet Shropshire's required housing land supply, and a good deal of piecemeal development occurred with minimal pre-planned facilities and infrastructure. Preparation of a well thought-out Plan avoids this situation.

In 2017 The Council called for sites which were available for development (and deliverable). It asked if land at Stanmore was available and subsequently included Stanmore Garden Community in its Local Plan Review Preferred Sites Consultation for a comprehensive mixed-use development.

"Shropshire's Economic Growth Strategy* identifies the need for a 'step change' in Shropshire's economy to: reduce levels of out commuting; retain employment and skills locally; increase productivity; and address housing affordability issues."

*Under that strategy the Council aims to keep in balance its policy of attracting inward investment to Shropshire with creation of new jobs and the provision of new housing so that the size of the working age population is maintained and meets the needs of employers for an available pool of suitable labour.

Providing for schools, medical facilities, sheltered and affordable housing and properly organised employment opportunities on any scale needs to be done in conjunction with the allocation of market housing so that the necessary funding can be obtained.

In doing this the Council can ensure that local workers have available housing without long travel distances and that developers provide the necessary housing mix with affordable units as housing is notoriously expensive and young people find it difficult to get on the 'housing ladder'.

The delivery of residential accommodation in Bridgnorth has been much reduced in the last 10 years, from an average of 75 units annually to only 12 in 2018/19. Yet the town has a thriving local economy and its workforce grew in the period 2013-2017 by 1,100 – the fastest growth rate in the entire county.

The Apley Estate and Stanmore Properties own land - comprising farmland and a large, successful business park with 1,700 employees - immediately east of Bridgnorth and identified in the last Plan Review as a potentially suitable place for the town to expand.

The Stanmore Consortium proposal for a community based on Garden Village design principles and comprehensively master planned was prepared in conjunction with the Council and widely consulted on locally with meetings and exhibitions.

Under the Masterplan, Stanmore Country Park would be enhanced and made more accessible with connections through the village area to Hermitage Ridge and the main settlement of Bridgnorth with an additional 40ha of publicly accessible green space provided.

Subsequently Council officers decided to recommend an alternative site at Tasley, west of Bridgnorth for consideration for inclusion Local Plan in place of Stanmore. It is clear that this recommendation does not bear examination and extends the town westwards into open countryside in an unsustainable way.

## The Landowner Consortium and Promotion

Land comprising 125.71ha is contained within the 'red line' surrounding the proposal but this includes already-developed areas such as the Hobbins, Stanmore Business Park together with large areas of parkland and green infrastructure which simply support the Garden Village proposal. Two landowners (Apley Estate and Stanmore Properties collectively referred to as the Consortium) control the land. The Country Park (not included for any development) is owned by Shropshire Council.

## The Promoters

### The Apley Estate.

Extending to 8,500 acres around Bridgnorth, the Estate has had only three owners in the last 500 years and the current incumbents, Lord and Lady Hamilton continue the tradition of day-to-day involvement in running the estate, 2,500 acres of which they directly farm, as well as managing all the woodland, extending to 1,000 acres.

The remaining land is let to long term tenants many of whom have had connections with the Estate for over 100 years. Apley's philosophy is to maintain and preserve the heritage of the Estate while contributing to and being involved with the local community. Its ownership includes workspace and some 300 tenanted cottages as well as the renowned Apley Farm Shop complex which is an important visitor attraction. The Estate directly employs over 70 staff and invests heavily in the maintenance and improvement of its land and buildings.

Apley is a 'Legacy' owner whose current plan is set out over the next 120 years. Having been involved in the development of Bridgnorth for many years Apley has a vision to continue creating an attractive, sustainable community giving local people the opportunity to live and work in Shropshire's beautiful countryside. Quality is an overriding priority and the proposed Stanmore Garden Community would be subject to strong design controls to maintain the Estate's legacy.

### Stanmore Properties Limited

Founded by local builder and developer, Geoff Hickman (late of Stanmore Hall), who bought the bulk of RAF Bridgnorth when it closed in the mid-1960's, he continued its engineering heritage over a period of fifty years, with new buildings developed and occupied by a variety of local and national businesses. The company ownership is spread among a large number of family members and its day to day management is shared by the family, with professional directors and consultants adding necessary strategic expertise.

The family is very conscious of its long connection with the town of Bridgnorth and has teamed up with the Apley Estate to promote the Stanmore Garden Community concept so that Stanmore Business Park (previously Stanmore Industrial Estate) can continue to prosper and grow.

Currently the Business Park is effectively fully occupied and, to maintain a supply of available buildings, expansion land is required - which forms an essential part of the Garden Community proposal. Coupled with this is the urgent need to increase the working age population locally as Stanmore employers report great difficulties in recruiting staff locally as Bridgnorth's pool of labour is shrinking. The Business Park, screened from view by woodland, comprises 635,000ft$^2$ of buildings occupied by around forty businesses and 1,700 workers. The largest, with 700 employees, is the biggest industrial employer in Shropshire and a world leader in design and manufacture of precision motor components. By contrast the Park provides start-up units from 1,000ft$^2$, housing 'one-man bands' many of which have thrived, grown and moved into larger premises over the years.

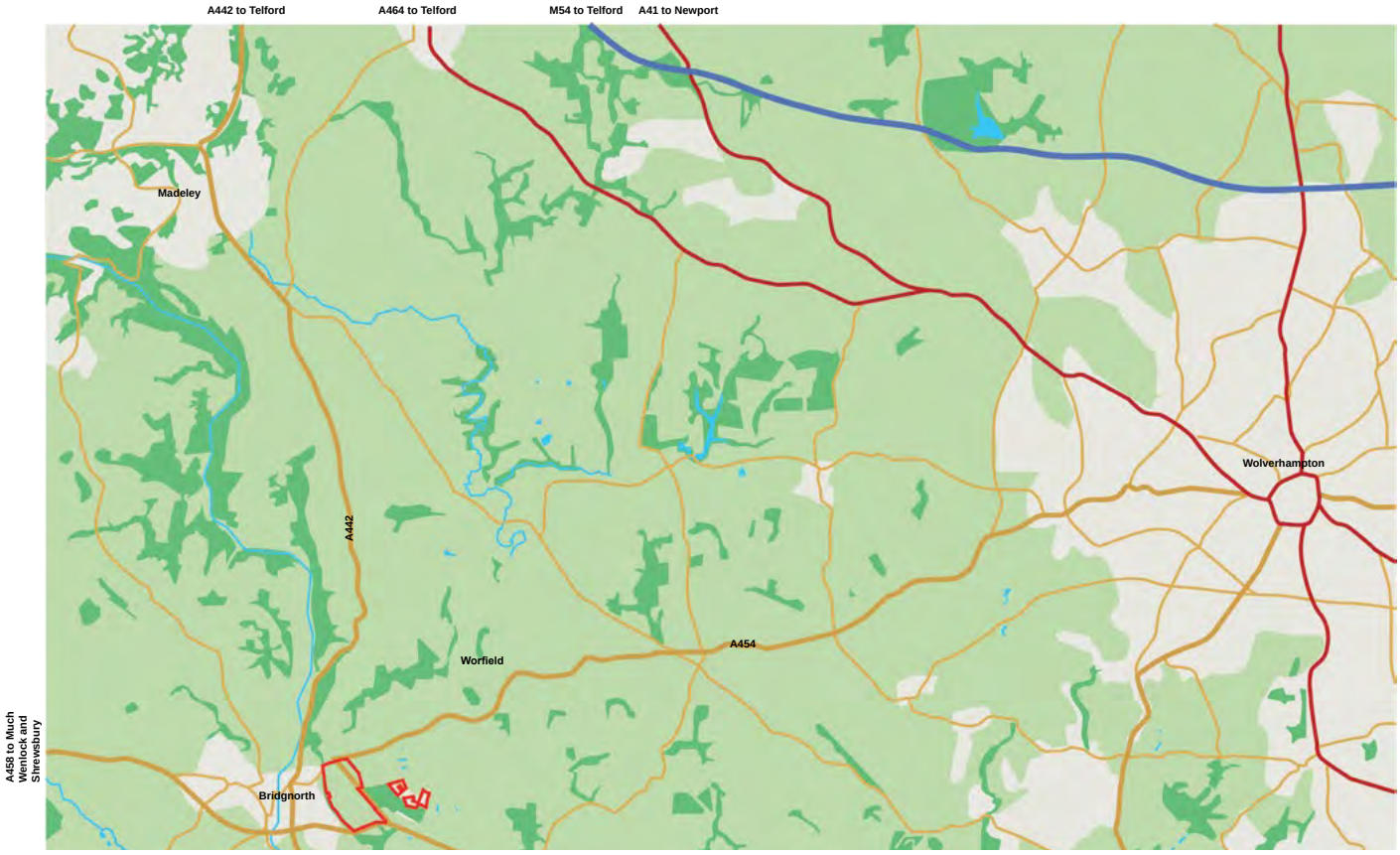
# 1.2 Introduction to the Site

## Regional Location

Bridgnorth is the third-largest town in the administrative area of Shropshire, a largely rural County in the West Midlands. The largest is Shrewsbury, in the north west corner of the County and 30km from Bridgnorth - itself closer to Telford (18km) to the north and Wolverhampton (21km) to the east. Bridgnorth is a market town serving a large rural community and popular with retired people and commuters alike.

Key

- Site boundary
- Motorway
- Dual carriageway
- Main roads
- Secondary roads
- Settlement
- Agricultural areas
- Woodland areas




1-01 Existing site with in its regional context

## Local Context

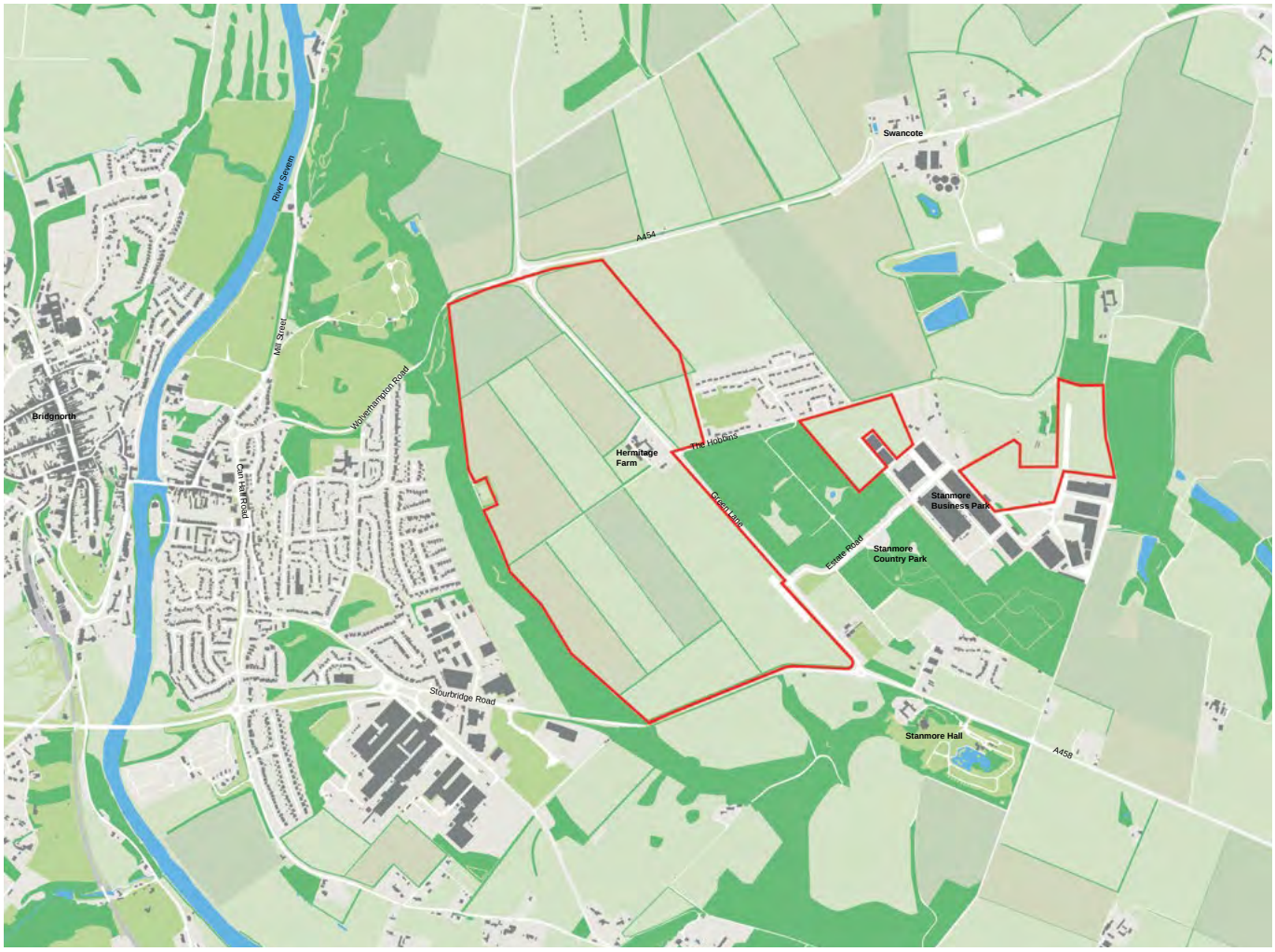
The site lies immediately east of Bridgnorth; the town itself is divided by the River Severn and split between High Town and Low Town. High Town sits on the escarpment above the river and has the administrative centre and the high street shopping. It and its two churches have a commanding presence over the Severn valley.

Low Town sits below, to the eastern side of the river, connected by a narrow bridge and meandering road to High Town. It mainly comprises more recent housing development and a sizable industrial estate that rise up the hillside along Stourbridge Road, towards Hermitage Ridge.

The woodland on the ridge forms a long natural corridor separating Bridgnorth from the Stanmore Garden Community site which comprises intensively cultivated farm land of rectangular fields in a shallow valley.

Key

- Site boundary
- Existing buildings
- Settlement areas
- Agricultural areas
- Woodland areas
- Water features




1-02 Existing site with in its local context

## Site Description

The overall site within the red line boundary comprises a total area of 103ha, over 90% of which is agricultural land. It is bounded to the west by the wooded Hermitage Ridge sloping down to Bridgnorth and gradually sloping east into the shallow valley, then rising to the A454 which forms the main eastern boundary to the land.

Hermitage Farm lies on the A454 at about the mid-point of the site with land to the north in large rectangular fields typical of modern farming. The Hobbins settlement sits in this area, a remnant of the former RAF site occupying the land to the southeast, now transformed into the successful Stanmore Business Park and part as Stanmore Country Park.

The Hobbins is quite isolated from the rest of Bridgnorth and will benefit from community infrastructure and public transport in the new Village centre based on the existing Hermitage Farm buildings.

## Approximate site areas

Total site area (within red line) - 103ha, comprising:

Agricultural land - 92ha

Plantation - 4.5ha

Brownfield former RAF site - 5ha

A454 highway - 1.5ha

1-03 View to west from Stanmore Business Park over the Hobbins to Hermitage Ridge

1-04 Stanmore Business Park looking south east

1-05 Existing site plan

Key

- Site boundary
- Existing buildings
- Settlement
- Woodland
- Water features

# 1.3 Planning Context

In the context of Bridgnorth the Shropshire Local Plan comprises the Core Strategy 2011 and the Site Allocations and Management of Development (SAMDev) Plan 2015. These guide development up to 2026.

The Council is now reviewing the Plan and will extend the Plan Period to 2038.

At Bridgnorth, the Council is required to undertake a Green Belt review, which the SAMDev Inspector found constrained development to the east of the town. The Review has already been through consultation stages on the Strategic Issues and Options facing Shropshire (early 2017); the Preferred Scale and Distribution of Development (late 2017); and Preferred Sites Consultation (late 2018/early 2019). The strategy remains as before an 'urban focused' distribution of development, which includes Bridgnorth as a Principal Centre serving a wide hinterland.

## Local Plan policies advocating approach to Stanmore Garden Community

- Shropshire vision for a 'step change in economic productivity';
- A 'high housing growth' model is preferred;
- A 'balanced employment growth' is proposed;
- An 'urban focussed' distribution of growth; but with –
- **Garden village settlements in strategic locationsto support rural sustainability.**

## Strategic opportunities

- Resurgent demand, investment  and job creation in Shropshire;
- Combined Authority of West Midlands conurbation and establishing the 'Midlands Engine';
- Shropshire places a premium on economic growth -
- But need to translate into employment opportunities and also,
- To deliver sustainable uses to support these locations
- Close to West Midlands conurbation; could attract in ward investment from this location.

## Shropshire settlement hierarchy

- Bridgnorth identified as Principal Centre; Third largest town;
- Community hubs and clusters all lie to the south and west of the town;
- No clusters to the east of Bridgnorth - Opportunity for Stanmore to serve the immediate rural community as a 'hub' or 'cluster'

A detailed assessment of the Local Plan policies is addressed elsewhere but for Bridgnorth the Plan policies lead to:

## Key strategic planning challenges for Bridgnorth

- The need to provide more affordable housing;
- Addressing the current imbalance between housing and employment by making housing available for the local workforce and additional employment land for both local business growth and to enable inward investment;
- Improving access to community facilities, open space and the countryside.
- Locating development to best meet Bridgnorth's needs, which means reviewing the Green Belt which constrains growth east of the Town.
- The opportunity at Stanmore to enhance sustainability of the existing housing (at the Hobbins and Russell Close) and the large employment area at Stanmore Business Park.

## Shropshire Local Plan Review 2018 – Preferred Site

A larger site than now promoted, was allocated as a preferred site in the Consultation of 2018 for Stanmore Garden Community (see plan opposite), where the Council considered release from the Green Belt was justified by exceptional circumstances with:

- 16ha employment land
- 29ha for 850 dwellings
- 5ha local centre for local services and facilities for both existing and new residents;
- 36ha green infrastructure

Additional land is safeguarded in the future for:

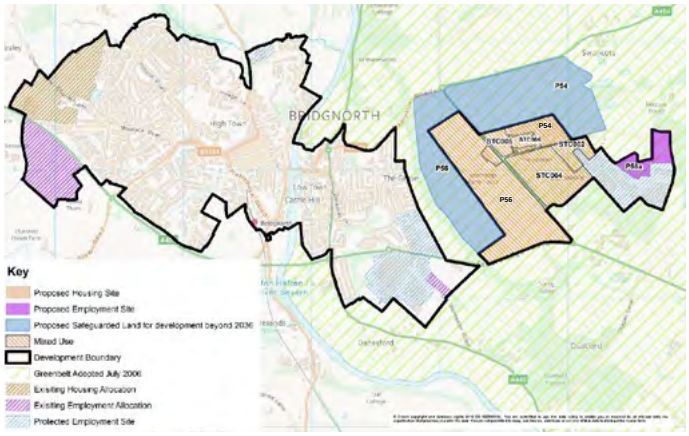
- 32ha residential uses
- 48ha employment uses.

## Shropshire Local Plan Review - 'Regulation 18' Pre-Submission Draft 2020

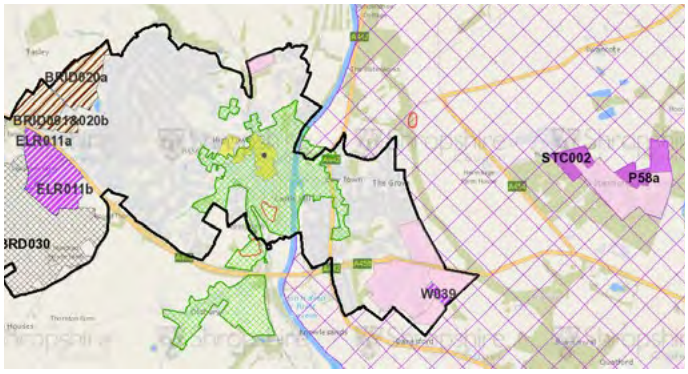
This brings together in one place all the previous consultation plans to identify a draft vision and framework for the future development of Shropshire to 2038. The strategy remains an urban focus and Bridgnorth a Principal Centre.

The Stanmore Site is however no longer the preferred garden village and an alternative, Tasley Garden Village, has been substituted as the Preferred Site for a mixed use urban extension, claimed to comply with principles of a garden village. It is larger than Stanmore at 1,050 dwellings (planned to increase to 1,750); 16ha employment and; new local centre; and 20ha green Infrastructure and a 19ha linear park.

Notwithstanding the large (16 ha) proposed allocation of employment land at Tasley, Stanmore Business Park is recognised by the Council as a successful and important location for skilled employment which should be allowed to grow; it is still identified for expansion in the draft Plan on 11.4ha of land to be removed from Green Belt and for which the Council has identified 'exceptional circumstances'.




1-06 Shropshire Preferred Sites Consultation 2018 Plan




1-07 Shropshire Regulation 18 Pre-Submission Draft Plan

# 2

# Site Constraints and Development Opportunities

# 2 Site Constraints and Development Opportunities

## 2.1 Site Constraints

There are a number of constraints identified in supporting documentation which will be dealt with by design, respected or mitigated as appropriate.

### Key Constraints

#### Heritage and Archaeology

The only feature on the development site itself is crop marks identified in one field but which are not visible physically. Investigation can be undertaken prior to development.

Off-site the main archaeological feature is The Hermitage Caves (a scheduled monument), a unique archaeological sit which lies to the north west, beyond the site. It is entirely contained in the ancient woodland, and sits in a cliff well below the ridge and some distance from any land identified for future development. The development will enable protection to be provided together with information boards and enhancement of the setting of the caves.

#### Ecology and Landscape

The main constraint is the Ancient Woodland along Hermitage Hill Ridge. The EDP report fully addresses this matter and detailed proposals will be agreed with the Council to provide an additional buffer and protect any sensitive areas. Existing public and other footpaths will be improved to keep pedestrians from straying into woodland areas.

The Country Park is well used and an important local resource. The Consortium recognises its popularity and preliminary discussions have been held with the Council's Outdoor Partnerships Service about funding potential improvements to the Park to better serve the town and Garden Community residents.

The open landscape is arranged with linear hedgerows running NW-SE and NE-SW.

The local agricultural land form originated from enclosed heathland and the large rectangular fields have been in this format for over 150 years. The hedgerows are generally low quality habitat, having been reduced during farming activities, but do provide a base ecological feature that could be used and enhanced to create a network of corridors through the landform as it rises to the west up to Hermitage Hill Ridge. This ridge is seen from distance along the A458 to the south east and its visual dominance will be an important retained feature.

As the topography naturally drains surface water to the south and eastern extremities of the site, these locations are logical areas to create sustainable drainage ponds and to limit development.

#### Access and Movement

The site is well served by long, straight 'A' roads. This allows for easy access arrangements, particularly along the A454 to the north and centre of the site with new roundabout junctions providing traffic calming and opportunities for several access points.

Footpaths and Public Rights of Way (PROW) crossing the site will be retained and their connections improved. Where they pass through Hermitage Ridge, existing paths can be enhanced without harm to woodland, providing better links to Low Town. A new route suitable for the less able and cyclists will be provided in the gap under the existing overhead electricity cables. Full details will be agreed with the Council for the continued protection of the ancient woodland.

The existing pavements on the Stourbridge and Wolverhampton roads (north and south of the site) are narrow but as Apley Estate owns all the land, these can be widened and improved so that the Community will have multiple connections by road and protected path/ cycleways to Bridgnorth.

#### Utilities

As current farmland there are few existing utility services and new service infrastructure will be installed. Existing overhead electricity cables will be brought underground, removing an unsightly feature.

#### Existing Settlements

There are two existing settlements immediately impacted by the site. The first is the small Hermitage Farm to the centre of the site which is owned by Apley Estate. The farmstead cluster of buildings will be adapted and re-used to provide the new Local Centre with shops, cafes and community facilities.

The second area is The Hobbins. This housing estate is a legacy of the former RAF site, formerly accommodating NCO's but now in private and housing association ownerships. It forms an isolated community without any services and will benefit from availability of the Local Centre, improved infrastructure, Bus and other services.

Conclusion

Detailed studies show there are no major constraints to development on this land. In fact the development will make available funding to improve features like the Country Park, enhance transport to Bridgnorth through a 'Park and Choose', provide local facilities for existing residents in the Hobbins and locally, workers on the Business Park and provide attractive routes through green spaces to the Town for pedestrians, cyclists and walkers.

2-01 Site constraints and key features plan

Key

- Main junction
- Gateway into Bridgnorth
- Reservoir
- Replanted ancient woodland
- Ancient woodland
- Country Park
- Low quality grassland
- Listed buildings
- Locally listed buildings
- 15 offset from ancient woodland
- Frontage
- Public rights of way
- Unprotected rear gardens
- Power cables
- Power posts
- Low SW flood risk
- High SW flood risk
- Panoramic view spot
- Vista viewpoint
- Wide vista viewpoint
- Farmland access points
- Hermitage Caves SM
- Reservoir Access route
- Visible slopes
- Indicative site boundary

# 2.2 Development Opportunities

## Wider Development Opportunities

The Stanmore Garden Community provides numerous opportunities for Bridgnorth. These cover spatial, environmental and social issues, many of which are summarised in Shropshire Council's Local Plan draft allocation text.

### Shropshire Local Plan

The site was identified in the Preferred Sites Consultation 2018, but now superseded, save for 11ha of employment land at Stanmore, by Tasley Garden Village in the Pre-Submission Plan 2020 as Shropshire Council's preferred option for a new village or extension to Bridgnorth.

However it is clear that the Stanmore Garden Community still remains the best option for delivering the future needs of Bridgnorth. It provides new job opportunities in a location which is already highly successful and where expansion space is at a premium. Rather than locating housing 4 miles to the west, on what has always been seen as the 'wrong side of the river', it places people in new and affordable housing close to jobs and, for those who commute to work, 4 miles closer to Telford and the West Midlands employment areas than if the site at Tasley were chosen.

By the Council's own admission, there is sufficient evidence of 'exceptional circumstances' in Bridgnorth to justify releasing land from Green Belt at Stanmore.

In building upon the fabric of the former RAF Bridgnorth to create a new community of undoubted quality, as a mixed-use 'garden settlement' the site would:

- improve local access to community facilities and infrastructure for existing residents;
- bring jobs and people together reducing the need to travel to work, provide expansion space for existing businesses and support inward investment;
- provide a wide range of housing to meet local needs, particularly affordable and 'later life' housing and potentially for 'key workers';
- significantly enhance the quantity, quality and connectivity of public open space and access to the countryside for existing and future residents;
- create new employment areas within the proposed Village and as an extension to Stanmore Business Park giving much needed expansion space and extending employment opportunities in the town;
- deliver a new area of publicly accessible woodland and open space to include Hermitage Ridge providing: informal managed footpaths creating functional and recreational linkages between Low Town and the country park;
- protection to ancient woodland and the Hermitage caves with interpretation boards.

### Delivering Comprehensive Development with Full Community Amenities

A larger scale and comprehensive development has the benefit of being able to provide all the infrastructure, facilities and services needed by a community and which a smaller housing estate simply could not justify.

With an agreed (and enforceable) Design Code, together with legal agreements, the landowners will bring in a variety of local and regional builders develop housing in phases as required by local demand.

Over the last 40 years Bridgnorth has been subject to piecemeal development, leading to little community infrastructure being brought forward. Because Apley is a legacy landowner with a forward plan mapped out over the next 125 years it can and will maintain control over the design and quality of the new community and enter a Stewardship agreement to ensure that the common areas of the Village are looked after in perpetuity.

Such an allocation will provide certainty for Bridgnorth's expansion over the next forty years, enabling the delivery of the new infrastructure, affordable housing, community facilities and open spaces.

### Re-balance the Settlement of Bridgnorth

At the last Plan Review the Inspector stated that the Council should look at land to the east as there was 'concern…' over the way the town was spreading out to the west. Growth in Bridgnorth over the last 40 years has been heavily weighted to the south and west of the settlement.

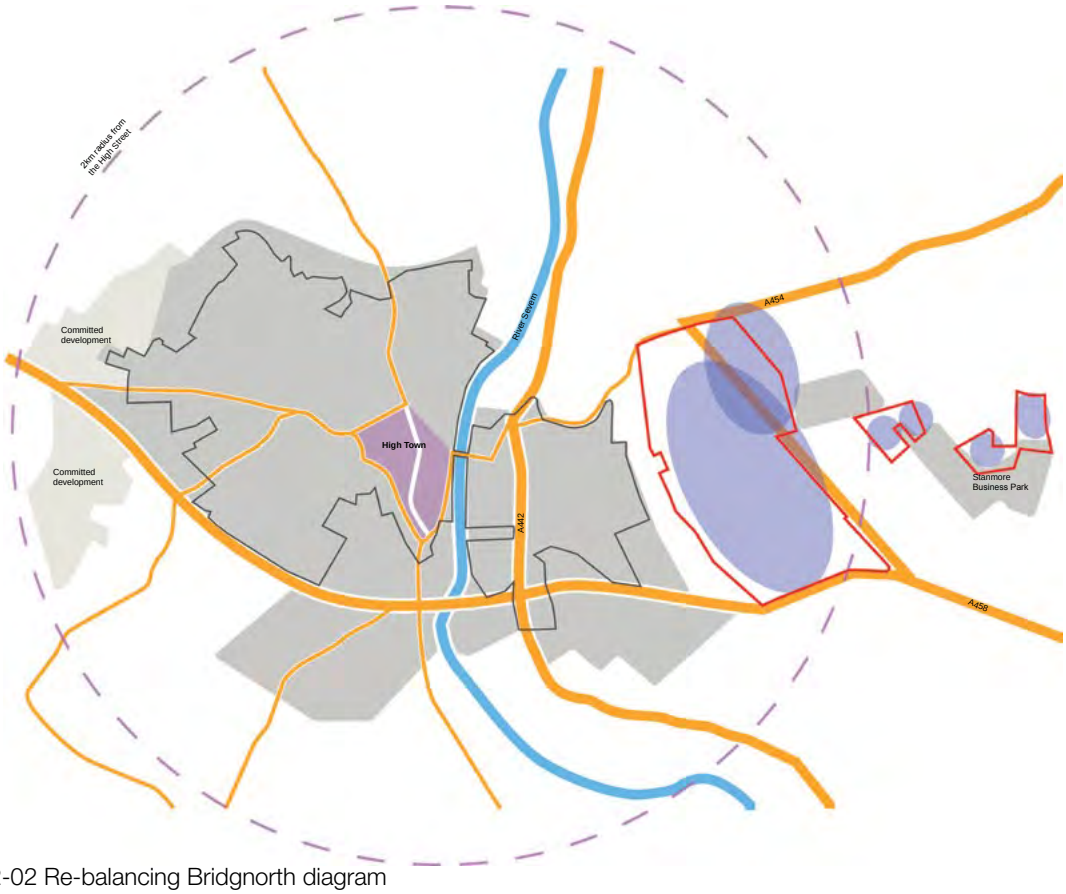
Major expansion west of the river would be less sustainable than at Stanmore since it has poor proximity to the town's employment areas (all to the east of the river) requiring longer road journeys (certainly not walkable) and taking traffic capacity from the by-pass and river bridges. Allocating Stanmore Garden Community will not only provide comprehensively planned housing and infrastructure but also redress the imbalance identified in the Socio-Economic Study, (March 2020) between housing and employment provision.

Economic development consultancy, Hatch Regeneris, undertook this major study of population, workforce, employment and housing as well as a comparative overall economic assessment of Bridgnorth, from published data, to inform the proposal for the expansion of Employment and Housing in Bridgnorth. This report has been supplied to the Council and is available on the Consortium's website.

**Protection of Bridgnorth's Employment Base**

The major employment areas of Bridgnorth lie to the east of the settlement, at Stanmore Business Park, Faraday Drive Estate, Chartwell and Bridgnorth Aluminium.

Expansion of the employment base in this area is logical as there is little demand from firms to locate west of the town (beyond Tasley) where connectivity to Telford, and the Black Country is poor and travel distances for businesses and workers are greater.




2-02 Re-balancing Bridgnorth diagram

# 2.3 Site opportunities

As part of the wider development opportunity some elements will be retained and improved, others respected and new features created utilising the best designs.

**Expansion of Employment base**

A major opportunity for the site is the immediate and wider expansion of the Stanmore Business Park. This is a most important employment site for Bridgnorth housing the County's largest engineering employer, and needs space for growth as it has reached capacity and is fully occupied with existing businesses unable to expand.

Expansion benefits local employers by enhancements to their supply chain as well as providing other business space for incoming specialist engineers, for start-ups and co-located working space.

**Create a new** Community **with a Unique Sense of Place**

Building large housing estates is typical of the offer made by national volume housebuilders utilising standard house types and layouts – but creating places which 'could be anywhere'.

At Stanmore Apley Estate is a 'legacy landowner' with a 125 year forward plan and the ambition to create a community which has identifiable character and style with a Village Centre containing local shops, residential squares and community facilities, then spreading out naturally to less dense areas of varied housing. The opportunity exists to create a new village that complements Bridgnorth, comfortable in its setting, responding to its environment, which 'feels like a place to live' and creates a positive gateway into the town from the east.

Having overall control, Apley can and will provide mandatory design principles through a Design Code agreed with the Council and adopted to ensure the quality and principles of the Masterplan are delivered.

Additionally, the new employment and housing will increase and diversify spending in the town centre, helping to sustain the High Street and its complementary shops, services and businesses and encouraging tourism through a 'park and choose' transport service. This is a truely exciting opportunity for Bridgnorth.

**New Community Hub**

A Local Centre incorporating (inter alia) a school, local independent retailing, pub or café, medical accommodation, car parking and a 'park and choose' facility would provide the heart of the new community, serving also the existing adjacent business and housing populations of around 2,500 people – currently with no facilities – and giving connectivity to Bridgnorth (including those at The Hobbins). It would also provide facilities for the rural community to the east of Bridgnorth and because demand exists already, the Local Centre would be delivered as a very early phase of the development.

**Protection of Major Ecological Environments**

Through the development, funding will be available to make major improvements to habitats, protect woodland and its flora and fauna and provide a buffer to the Hermitage Ridge ancient woodland.

**Increase Ecological Biodiversity**

By creating new 'green corridors' and large areas of planting, the development will not only provide valuable habitat and biodiversity but will connect the woodland areas and the Country Park with existing habitats and foraging corridors for wildlife.

**Enhanced Stanmore Country Park**

Stanmore Country Park is a well-loved local amenity.

Being planted only in the 1990's with limited site remediation, it has relatively low ecological value , but time and money has been put into improving it as a habitat and amenity over the years. It is recognised as an important amenity for the disabled due to its flat topography and hard surfaces. With the agreement of interest groups there is the opportunity to enhance this Park as part of the development, improving access and creating a richer habitat. Connecting the park to the ancient woodland will also significantly improve its ecological value, providing foraging corridors for bats and other fauna.

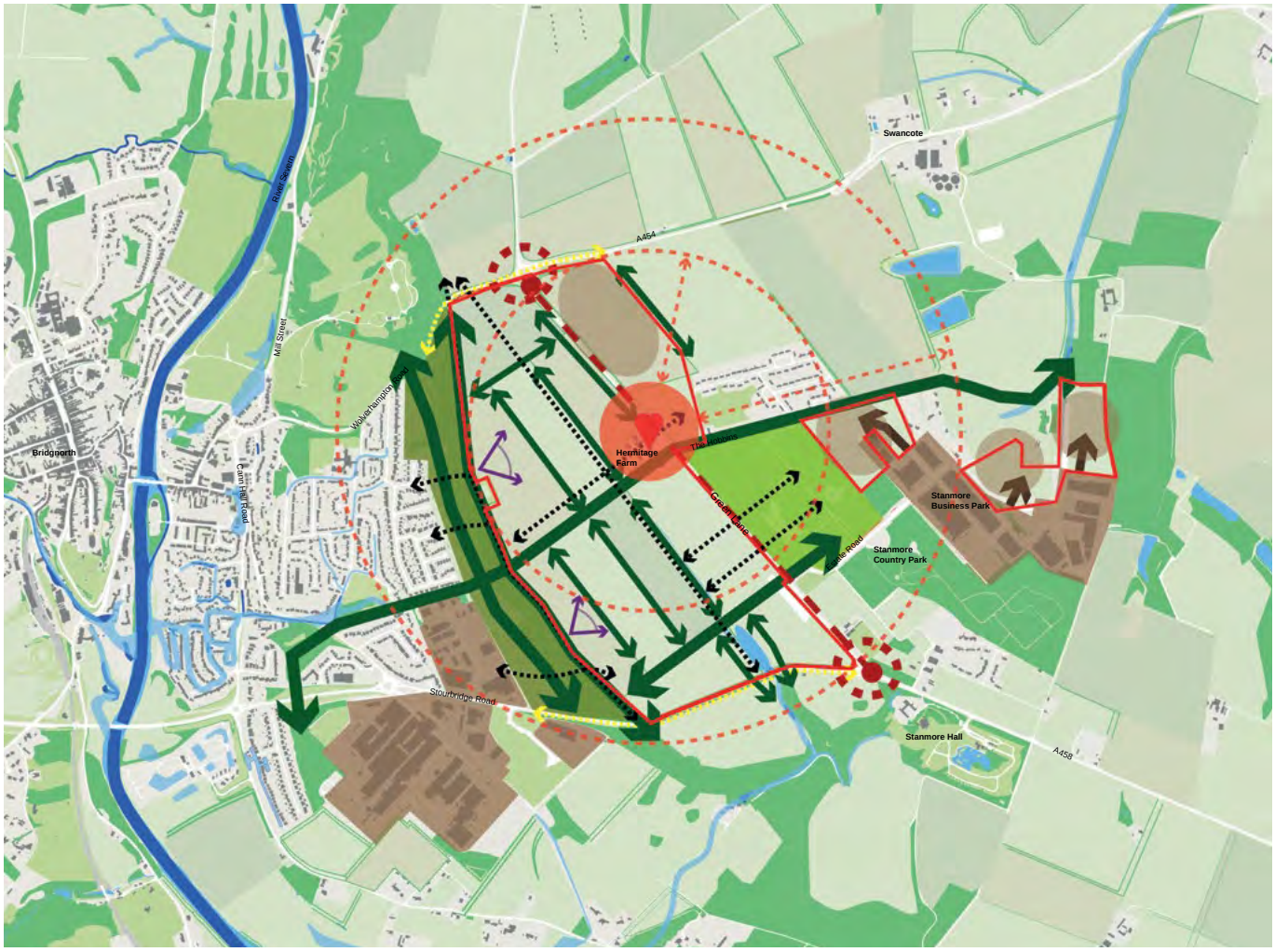
### Utilise the Topography

The topography of the site presents opportunities to create interesting and characterful development with housing in the lower areas being of 3 or even 4 storeys and low density properties occupying the slopes towards the Ridge, thus protecting views of the woodland.

### Improved Accessibility

The site is already well served by Public Rights of Way, footpaths and bridleways and those leading to Bridgnorth will be improved to create interesting and attractive routes to the town. The existing pavements to the Stourbridge and Wolverhampton roads (north and south of the site) can be widened and improved as Apley owns and can dedicate the land required.

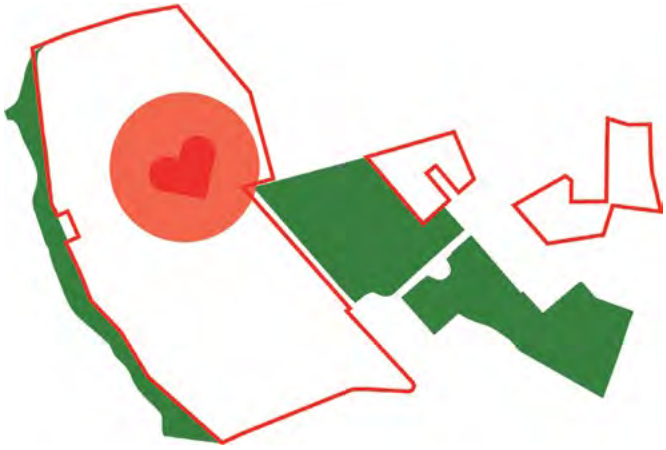
Provision of cycle and wheel chair access as well as the 'park and choose', electric cycle hire and facilities for walkers mean more inclusive use is available, thus improving physical and mental health and wellbeing.




2-04 Development opportunities plan

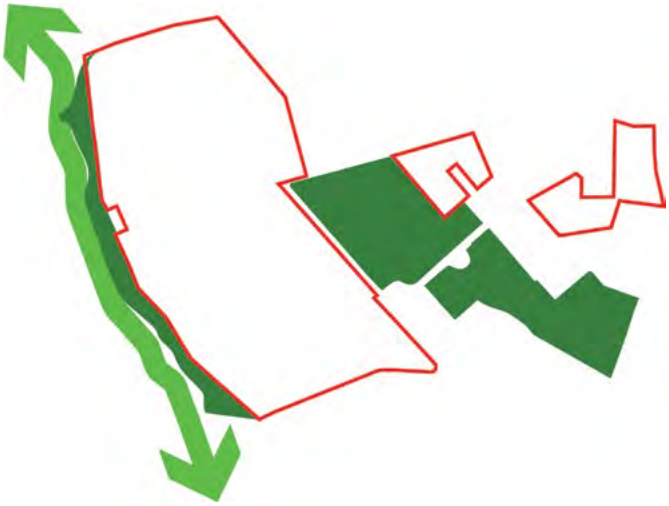
# 2.4 Development Principles

The emerging concept options for this development must be grounded on a set of sound principles against which solutions should be tested. These principles should underpin the masterplan at all scales and constantly inform design decisions throughout the planning process. Six development principles have been established for Stanmore Garden Community.



### Principle 1 'A heart for the village'.

- This will provide essential services (subject to local needs) for the new and existing communities, possibly comprising:
  - Community centre;
  - Primary school;
  - Dentist surgery (NHS advise Doctors surgery probably not required);
  - Local convenience retail;
  - Café/restaurant or family pub
  - 'Live/Work' studios
  - Sheltered or Care accommodation
  - Sport and play facilities.
- It will be located centrally, accessible to the A454 and in close proximity to the core housing areas

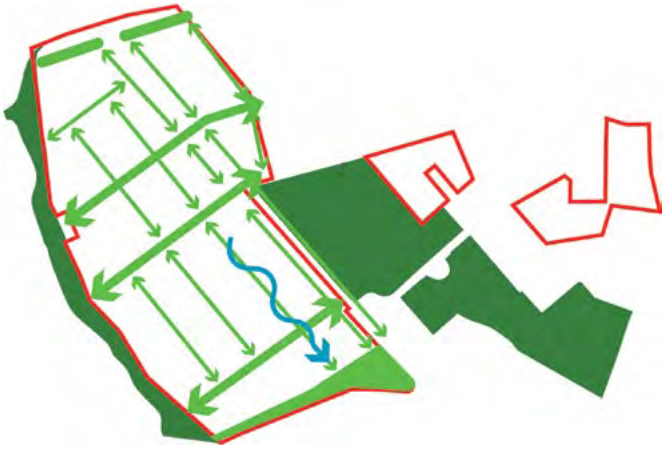


### Principle 2 'Protect and enhance naturally important environments'

- The ancient woodland will be protected with additional native planting;
- The Green Belt will be retained around the woodland to protect the setting of 'Bridgnorth Low Town'

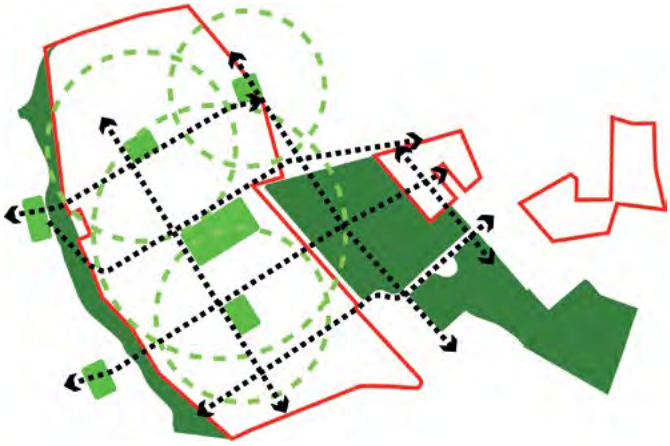
### Principle 3 'Enhance the Country Park'

- By agreement, the Country Park can be enhanced through selective replanting with potential reconfiguration to improve its ecological biodiversity and the possibility of making more areas of the woodland accessible for existing and new users.



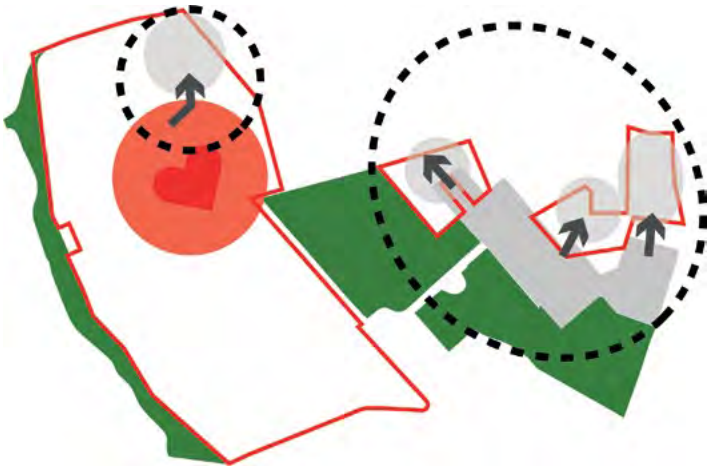
## Principle 4 'Improve green infrastructure connectivity'

- Enhance existing woodlands and hedgerows;
- Enhance existing boundary planting, protecting mature and specimen trees;
- Connect major natural features through new on-site planted ecological corridors;
- Utilise topography to create combined Green Infrastructure and SuDs corridors;
- Protect existing housing with enhanced boundary planting and development setbacks.



## Principle 5 'Enable a healthy and happy community'

- Create a linked network of sport, play and amenity spaces using the Fields in Trust's 6 Acre Rule as a basic minimum quantum of space;
- Create an interlocking network of footpaths and cycle paths;
- Create opportunities through inclusive footpath design, particularly over Hermitage Ridge



## Principle 6

## 'Protect the economy of Bridgnorth'

- Provide expansion opportunities for Stanmore Business Park to protect a major employment base for Bridgnorth and allow land or buildings to permit incoming investment to continue.

# 3

# Vision for Stanmore Garden Community

# 3 Vision for Stanmore Garden Community

# 3.1 Preferred Masterplan Concept

## Preferred Masterplan Concept

### The Philosophy

The Masterplan has been developed following design team workshops to debate the most suitable approach to development, meetings with Shropshire Council officers and Members and wide consultation with stakeholders.

It takes the best features from the options considered and comments made during the comprehensive consultation undertaken, using the principles of Garden Village design with generous 'green spaces', but adapted to maintain required housing numbers. Following comments the overall area has been reduced by 37 hectares of land which will remain in the Green Belt and the proposal places great emphasis on retaining and enhancing the Country Park and providing Green Infrastructure with wildlife corridor connections to the existing woodlands of Hermitage Ridge. Improved walking and cycling connections are made to Bridgnorth town including improvements on the Stourbridge and Wolverhampton Road footways.

Provision of infrastructure and services is an essential feature,and, with the highest standards of design, the intent is tocreate a community with a real sense of identity, a development that will stand the text of time rather than merely having the appearance of a large housing estate which could be anywhere in the UK.

### Accessibility

The Masterplan takes access points from the existing A454 road which is lightly trafficked but has unrestricted speeds. By introducing a variety of roundabout and other junctions, the accesses to the Garden Community and Business Park provide significant natural traffic calming (with a 20 mph limit at the Local Centre) and makes the existing turning into the Hobbins safer.

Basing the Village on the Local Centre, as its 'Heart,' provides the essential central facilities needed both for new and existing local residents and allows the Village residents to access services on foot as everything will be within easy walking distance. While the detail of designs is yet to be fixed, the natural growth of communities works on the principles of grouping higher densities around the Centre where mixed uses include shops, apartments studio/live-work units, care home and sheltered/assisted living facilities (with easy access to facilities), surgeries and public transport.

### The Village Heart

By combining car parking for the Local Centre, the School, Bus services and a 'Park and Choose' facility (where visitors can leave cars and catch a bus into Bridgnorth) with potential electric/manual Cycle Hire and a Visitor Centre/Café for the Country Park, 'life' and activity are brought to the Village Heart.

Where the A454 passes through the edge of the Local Centre, it will be 'calmed' to 20mph, and the Centre's shops and facilities will have sufficient prominence to attract passing trade – essential for commercial viability.

The Village centre will also provide services for the workforce at Stanmore Business Park, residents of the Hobbins, Russell Close and the Stanmore Hall complex, comprising some 2,500 people who currently have to travel into Bridgnorth for daily shopping needs. This will enable the Centre to be provided in one of the earliest phases of development without waiting for large numbers of new houses to be completed.

### Affordability

The Consortium subscribes to the need to provide housing of varying types and tenures that are suitable for local needs, of which an agreed proportion are genuinely affordable, some allocated for 'key' or 'local' workers, and housing for the open market in addition. The Apley estate already has some 300 tenanted houses of which about one third are let on 'affordable' terms and it would aim to retain a proportion of the new housing. Legal agreements with the Council will govern these matters and guarantee adherence to the principles laid down – and the Consortium has submitted details of its proposals to provide a minimum of 30% of the houses on 'affordable' terms.

### Design Code

The Landowner Consortium comprises owners with a 'long term view' who intend to ensure that Stanmore

Garden Community becomes and remains a place which they themselves will be proud to be associated with. Many promoters merely sell off land as soon as planning permission has been obtained often needing to attain high minimum prices, with builders who buy seeking to press on as quickly as possible to recoup their expenditure. Generally this delivers standard national house types and layouts which lack local interest and relevance.

The Stanmore Consortium, having undertaken its own promotion, is under no pressure to sell land quickly and will ensure that house building proceeds only at the pace the market demands. Apley and Stanmore Properties will remain involved in the delivery of the Village Community and to ensure high quality design standards, will agree a Design Code for the entire Village with the Council.

This will be based on delivery of layouts as promoted in the Masterplan with types and styles of houses, roads and landscape features mandated so that, it is developed in accordance with the Masterplan and approved by the Consortium as well as the planning authority.

### Stewardship

In keeping with its 'legacy' philosophy, Apley will establish a stewardship body to take ownership of common areas of the Village and ensure their maintenance in perpetuity for the benefit of its residents who will be entitled to representation on it.

### Self-Build Housing

Land for Self-Build Housing may be made available, following discussions with the Council, to satisfy known demand and encourage innovative design in an appropriate location.

### Low Carbon and Climate Change

Shropshire Council has set ambitious targets for carbon emissions to reduce Climate Change and the Consortium members have similar aims. By using the Design Manual they will ensure that Stanmore Garden Community complies with or exceeds Shropshire's targets for low or zero carbon emission - using available, innovative renewable technologies such as ground source, solar and battery storage - and built to satisfy highest standards of energy efficiency.

### Employment

Basing the Village on the existing long-established and successful Stanmore Business Park with an employee base of some 1,700 workers gives the opportunity to link the need for (more affordable) housing for existing workers, accommodation for future workers (to increase the employment pool available for employers) and the need for access to services and convenience shopping for workers on the Business park. Complementing the business park will be a small business centre encouraging local specialist and start- up companies who require flexible occupation of accommodation.

The allocation of further land for Employment will allow for growth of existing businesses, attract inward investment and widen the variety of employment types by making available land for laboratory, research, innovation and office uses, thus protecting and enhancing Bridgnorth's economy.

### Planning for the Future

The Masterplan has been drawn to accommodate potential further housing needs identified by the Council beyond the 2038 limit of the Plan period. While any further allocation will require to be fully justified, the Stanmore Garden Community Masterplan will have provided the infrastructure and services needed for the further growth in housing and employment provision.

# 4

# Proposed Updated Concept Masterplan

4-01 Concept masterplan diagram

New employment
Stanmore Business Park
New employment
Protected Country Park
Protected Country Park
Housing

# 4 Proposed Concept Masterplan

## 4.1 Proposed Concept Masterplan

The concept masterplan provides a high level framework for development to ensure that the vision in the Garden Community proposal can deliver the amount of development identified for allocation in the draft Local Plan.

The vision is for a hillside, garden village providing a variety of homes for all ages and needs, affordability, and the essential services needed by this and the wider community. It importantly secures the long term future of Stanmore Business Park and the employment base of Bridgnorth.

**Stanmore Garden** Community

Set on the sloping land east of Hermitage Ridge and in the shallow valley below, the new garden village links to the important green infrastructure of Hermitage Ridge woodland and Stanmore Country Park while including extensive parkland and recreational area within the Village itself.

The garden village will comprise

- Up to 850 new homes of all types and tenures (with the planned ability to expand to 1,500 later) reflecting the form found on the historic hillsides of Bridgnorth;
- Up to 16ha net of new employment land;
- A variety of community facilities such as a primary school with playing field, community centre, small scale independant retail, cafe and
- Surgery (all based on needs assessment);
- Publicly accessible sports pitches
- Extensive new public open space including Stanmore Gardens, a central linear parkl;
- Green infrastructure corridors of ecologically rich native planting with extensive tree coverage connecting existing woodlands and incorporating sustainable drainage systems and pools;
- A454 adapted along the north/south section to provide new junctions into the site together with pedestrian and cycle friendly interface and a widened exit from the Business Park.
- Protection of the Hermitage Caves and the woodland of Hermitage Ridge.

4-02 Aspirational garden villages - Edenbook Garden Community(Alamy Stock)

4-03 Concept masterplan diagram

## Key to concept masterplan

- Existing buildings
- Proposed employment
- Mixed use (50-60dw/ha)
- High density (30-40 dw/ha)
- Medium density (20-30dw/ha)
- Low density (20dw/ha)
- Primary school
- Woodland and green infrastructure
- Amenity and play space
- Water features

# 4.2 Concept Masterplan Elements

### Village centre

The focus of the Garden Community is the Local Centre which re-uses and extends the Hermitage Farm buildings in the centre of the site facing the A454. Converting these building to form a square gives an area for focussed community uses and events which suits small retail uses and can accommodate other complementary uses. Providing multi-use car parking close by and a building to serve and shelter public transport users retains essential activity and vitality in the Local Centre.

Elements to be provided for (as needed):

- 2 form entry primary school, with playing field
- Convenience shopping with traditional butcher, Baker, Pharmacy.
- Community centre;
- Other community facilities such as doctors/dentists surgery;
- Later life accommodation such as sheltered/extra care;
- Care Home
- Local centre parking, school drop off/pick up and a 'park and choose';
- Bus service pull-in (local and 'Park and Choose' service to Bridgnorth)
- Community orchard;
- Higher density homes;
- Cycle (electric) hire shop
- Possible Farm Shop

4-04 Village centre location diagram

Existing buildings

Proposed employment

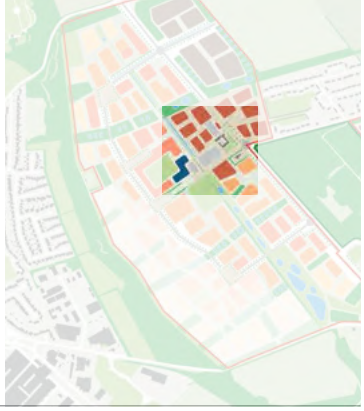
Mixed use (50-60dw/ha)

Primary school

Woodland

4-05 Example of similar village centre: Buttermarket, Poundbury (Alamy Stock)

4-06 Indicative layout of Stanmore Village Centre



The layout illustrates the village centre spaces and amenities. To the A454 (Green Lane) it shows a bus pick up and waiting space adjacent to a central community hub. The Hermitage Farmstead has been re-purposed as a community facility with specialist retail such as a farm shop, e-bike hire and allotments. The main community square with formal gardens sits between these community facilities. The primary school sits close to a large 'park and choose' space for parking with easy access to the bike hire and bus stops. This area also serves as a drop off area for the primary school although walking and cycling will be encouraged for the community given its central location.

4-07 Proposed view of the village centre farmstead courtyard

4-08 Aerial view of the village centre

### Green Infrastructure

Green infrastructure is a key feature of this proposal.

In addition to the existing 9.5ha of woodland along Hermitage Ridge and 10 ha of pasture below to the west, 40ha of green infrastructure and public open space will form an integral part of the development. By advance-planting some of the later phase areas, the core green infrastructure will become established and the 'green corridors' will be completed early establishing comprehensive ecological connections. Including the area of pasture to become publicly accessible, west of Hermitage Ridge, the overall area of green infrastructure will account for over 40% of the proposal.

Retaining and enhancing the major existing woodlands of Hermitage Ridge (and Stanmore Country Park if agreed) the proposal will further protect the Ridge with a minimum green 15m buffer zone incorporating native planting to discourage public access into it apart from along public footpaths.

These woodlands will be connected with 30m wide green corridors including new paths to access the existing public footpaths along Hermitage Ridge. A further 40m wide green corridor is proposed leading from Hermitage Ridge to the eastern edge of the site, wrapping around and providing a secureboundary to the northern edge of The Hobbins.

The A roads along the site will be planted with 15-20m wide landscape features incorporating trees and shrubs to enhance the existing strong hedgerows.

Inside the site a number of green spaces are proposed, the largest being the linear 'Stanmore Gardens', located at the low point of the site and forming the primary sustainable drainage (SuDS) corridor with public open space, linking into the green corridors, the village green and accessible from the wider community.

Smaller neighbourhood greens are located within easy walking distance of all housing and separate landscape provision will be made in Stanmore Business Park.

### Sustainable Surface Water Drainage

In accordance with local policy and best practice, it is proposed that the surface water drainage system is designed to fit within a comprehensive 'green and blue' (management and storage) infrastructure strategy, including 'core' landscaping, biodiversity enhancement and recreational uses.

All surface water runoff from the development will be drained, stored and released at a greenfield runoff rate, ensuring that pre-development volumes are maintained up to a 1 in 100 year + 40% climate change rainfall event.

The development will achieve this through a number of SuDS techniques, which will not only guard against flood risk for the lifetime of the development but also provide the necessary water quality enhancements prior to discharging to the local watercourse system or to ground (soakaway). These will include:

- Basins/ponds;
- Wetlands;
- Swales;
- Permeable paving;
- Bio-retention (rain gardens/tree pits); and
- Green roofs with rainwater harvesting.

4-09 Green infrastructure diagram

4-10 Mature Swale example: Upton urban extension (Alamy Stock)

4-11 Indicative layout of Stanmore Gardens

The layout illustrates the setting of the lower area of Stanmore Gardens. The top edge of the drawing shows the primary road entering the site. Housing of different character and types is arranged around the edges of the gardens presenting a strong frontage to the parkland with attractive views over these features. The gardens themselves comprise a natural SuDS system of ponds and swales with boardwalks, foot and cycle paths, play spaces and open grassed areas for informal play.

4-12 Proposed view north through 'Stanmore Gardens' incorporating SuDS and public open space

## Residential

The proposal provides for a variety of residential types and tenures. It will deliver homes for all ages from studios and one bedroomed apartments for those starting on the 'housing ladder' through to specialist care facilities for the elderly and infirm. A mix of 1-3 bed apartments and 2-5 bed family homes will be spread across the site, with the local centre accommodating a greater number of apartment homes, arranged around community facilities, at higher density and benefitting from the mixed uses in the Centre. The houses will be designed taking into account the changing needs of the workforce with many potentially working increasingly from home in the future.

Specialist 'later life' houses (generally restricted to over 55's who are downsizing), sheltered and extra-care accommodation and a care home can all be provided for, located within easy reach of the Centre and its facilities and public transport.

By the A454 are the bus stops and waiting areas and the Local Centre will feature higher density homes using apartment, duplex and terraced dwelling types, in squares and terraces of between 2-4 storeys some with communal gardens.

The primary route through the site will feature a mix of dwelling types with key spaces formalised by terraced accommodation and taller villa properties.

'Important' buildings will be of 3 storeys for emphasis. As the development spreads out and up the hillside towards Hermitage Ridge, it will accommodate lower density and 2-storey height properties to ensure the ancient woodland setting is preserved.

4-13 Village centre location diagram

- Existing buildings
- Mixed use (50-60dw/ha)
- High density (30-40 dw/ha)
- Medium density (20-30dw/ha)
- Low density (20dw/ha)
- Primary school
- Woodland
- Amenity and play space
- Water features

4-14 Examples of similar gardenesque residential areas: new Earswick (Alamy Stock)

4-15 Indicative layout of Stanmore Gardens

The layout illustrates a typical neighbourhood in the village. This typical approach, whilst varying in density of housing across the site illustrates the connection to the natural environment with woodland corridors connecting to the Hermitage Ridge and Country Park, central neighbourhood gardens with play facilities, water features and space to sit, dwell and socialise. Homezone streets are also integral to the idea of natural plan in well surveyed spaces encouraging slow traffic speeds and prioritising walking and cycling.

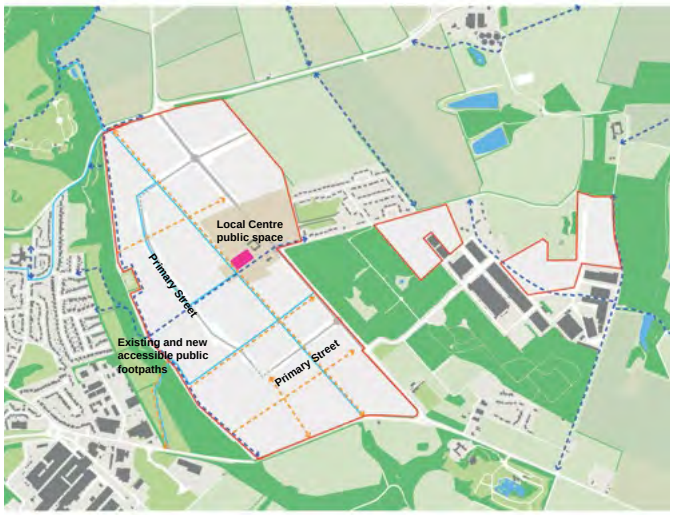
4-16 Proposed view through a typical residential street (Homezone)

## Access and Movement

The development is accessed off the A454, a lightly trafficked road whose route through the development will be retained but with its character much changed where it passes the Local Centre. Roundabout junctions to north and south will give access into the site (and improve the current access to the Hobbins) and link to the main internal spine road.

At the local centre a 20 mph limit and other calming features will improve and encourage accessibility across this road, although the addition of new roundabouts forms a natural speed limit which drivers cannot ignore.

With several access points and improvement of the exit from the Business Park (two lane exit) the spine road traversing the contours through the Garden Village will be completed in stages, but allowing construction traffic to avoid completed housing areas.




4-17 Access and movement diagram

Proposed park and choose

Proposed pedestrian routes

Proposed cycle routes

Existing Public Rights of Way

This road will be generously proportioned to provide space for cycle and pedestrian movement and for large tree growth in the spirit of a garden settlement.Numerous pedestrian and cycle routes cross the site, connecting to existing footpaths, into the Country Park, to the local centre, where the 'park and choose' facility is located and to the open space at 'Stanmore Gardens'.

4-18 Example of similar walking and cycling features: Woodland boardwalk (Alamy Stock)

4-19 Example of similar walking and cycling features: Sensitive woodland boardwalk and cycle hire at CentreParcs (Alamy Stock)

4-20 Proposed walking and cycling diagram

## Employment

A key feature of this proposal is the sustainable approach to securing Bridgnorth's employment base by expanding the land at Stanmore Business Park. Land is identified to expand this Park to the east and north towards The Hobbins, although the existing planting along this lane will be retained to ensure impact is minimal on the local residents.

Additional land, mostly safeguarded for the next plan period, is identified to the north of The Hobbins up to the A454 with a new access onto the n/s A454, north of the new local centre, connecting back to the A454 closer to Swancote.

Lastly, some small scale employment is proposed to the local centre to deliver a vibrant community centre..

4-21 Proposed employment areas

- Existing buildings
- Proposed employment
- Mixed use (50-60dw/ha)
- Woodland and GI
- Amenity and play space
- Water features

4-22 Example of startup office space in the Old Glove Factory, Bradford on Avon (Alamy Stock)

4-23 Example of an employment area in a strong landscape setting with SuDS features (c.Richard Sutcliffe https://www.geograph.org.uk/)