

# **The Welborne Plan**

## **Issue 3: Site, Setting, Allocations, Design Principles and Character Areas (WEL3 – WEL8)**

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Action arising from hearing session

November 2014

**CD-38**

## Introduction

Chapter 3 of the Welborne Plan deals with specifically with the Welborne site and its setting. At the Welborne Plan Examination hearing sessions, the Council was asked to consider two points raised during the hearing session on Issue 3 - Site, Setting, Allocations, Design Principles and Character Areas (WEL3 to WEL8).

The issues were:

1. Production of a paper on maintaining settlement separation, and in particular the treatment of settlement buffers – particularly with reference to the issues raised regarding the views of the site from the north;
2. Explanation of the modifications that are sought by the Council to be made to policy WEL7 - Strategic Design Codes.

### 1 Maintaining Settlement Separation

Chapter 3 of the Welborne Plan addresses the need to maintain the separate identities of Welborne and the surrounding communities through the use of settlement buffers. Policy WEL5 sets out the physical and visual separation between Welborne and neighbouring settlements of Funtley, Knowle and Wickham as being no less than 50m in width. At the hearing session of the Welborne Plan Examination, concerns were raised as to whether a gap of 50m would be capable of providing separation between Welborne and the adjacent settlements of Funtley, Knowle and Wickham. The Inspector requested that the Council prepared a note to explain the rationale behind the 50m figure referred to within Policy WEL5.

Paragraphs 3.55 to 3.56 of the Welborne Plan confirm that the central purpose of the settlement buffers is to protect the separate identity of the various settlements. Policy WEL5 itself identifies that the two main aims of the Settlement Buffers are to achieve physical and visual separation from the surrounding settlements

#### The Physical Separation

Policy WEL5 sets out the physical separation as being no less than 50m in width and caveats this by requiring that sufficient visual separation is achieved. The strip of woodland to the east of the A32 can be used to illustrate the effectiveness of a strip of land with mature planting in providing a physical and visual separation (**Appendix 1**). The strip of woodland to the east of the A32 varies in depth between approximately 30 and 50m. Whilst even at the narrowest section there is a reasonable degree of physical and visual separation, at the widest section of 50m, given its dense woodland nature, there is both a strong physical and visual separation.

Even the more limited tree cover along the eastern and southern edge of the Knowle Triangle gives a good degree of visual separation between the site and the edge of the built up area of Knowle. Policy WEL5 recognises that the provision of a continuous strip of mature trees may not always be feasible or appropriate and therefore allows for buffers of greater depth to be provided if necessary. It is therefore considered that it is the landscape treatment of the proposed buffer strips which will be as important in achieving visual separation as the actual width.

The suggested minimum settlement buffer width within Policy WEL5 also strikes a balance between providing a space that is capable of providing a sense of separation, while ensuring that the essential links to and from Welborne for pedestrians and cyclist can be perceived as safe and convenient for future users. This is fundamental in ensuring that residents outside of Welborne also benefit from the services and amenity that will be provided through the development.

### The Visual Separation

To ensure that a minimum Settlement Buffer width of 50 metres protects the amenity and distinct identity of neighbouring settlements, it is fundamental that the quality of the landscaping and the design of the built form together result in a visually effective separation. In most cases, the Settlement Buffer will add to existing areas of open space and landscape to create a more extensive settlement gap. For example; at Funtley, it will adjoin the existing recreation area and back gardens; at Knowle it will add to the areas of open land identified in the Winchester Core Strategy and; the same applies in relation to Wickham, where Blakes Copse already provides screening from the A32.

The Welborne Plan and the supporting draft Welborne Design Guidance provides a robust basis for assessing whether the necessary visual separation is achieved. The areas of different landscape character as set out in chapter 4 of the Plan are based on a detailed landscape assessment and when read in conjunction with policy WEL5 will also ensure that the necessary separation can be achieved. For example any new housing development abutting each of the settlement buffers will be built at a lower density, and appropriately landscaped. The result of which will ensure that there is a gentle transition from the areas of greenspace which make up the buffer to the edge of the built form. In no instances will there be an abrupt solid hard edge between the buffers and the developable areas. This lower density approach will by its very nature provide a softer interface with more opportunities for tree planting and landscaping.

The Welborne Design Guide requires buffers to be of a semi-natural character as opposed to an intensively used green space such as parks or play spaces. The absence of any urban structures would help ensure that the buffer is seen as a transitional green space separating settlements rather than a more formal or multi-functional green space which would be located within the site rather than on the periphery.

Furthermore, the Strategic Design Codes also have a key role to play in providing a design approach for Welborne that creates a distinct character from the neighbouring settlements. Moving through a well-designed and generously landscaped greenspace between different communities, with a distinctive character and appearance, will also enhance the perception of separation.

Chapter 8 of the Plan and in particular policies WEL32, WEL 33 and WEL34 also set out the way in which green infrastructure will be used to reinforce the different character areas and also the perceived separation between Welborne and the surrounding settlements. An extension of the typical enclosed woodland mosaic character of the Forest of Bere landscape southwards into the site will also help to

knit the area into the surrounding landscape, integrate development, create a woodland backdrop and limit any residual visual impacts. The establishment of a series of east-west infrastructure corridors as incorporated in the Strategic Framework Diagram, would in the northern part of the site break up the visible area of development into smaller parcels and extend woodland planting in from surrounding woodlands and Copse. This would ensure that development is integrated into the surrounding landscape and would, combined with the topography prevent the site from being seen as a continuous built form linked with adjacent settlements.

The combined effect of these policies will ensure that the distinct character of neighbouring settlements is maintained and is set out as follows with reference to each settlement buffer. This point is illustrated in the site sections attached (**Appendix 2**).

### Wickham

The Plan recognises the particular sensitivities of the ridge to the north of the site in achieving separation between Wickham and Fareham especially when viewed from the south. Two key principles have been established to address this issue:

1. Extend the woodland planting along the northern boundary of the site to close the gap to potential views from the north
2. The landscape buffer extending along the A32 beyond Blakes Copse and as far south as the Knowle Roundabout. The purpose of this is to extend the feeling of separation while moving along the A32.

In looking at the topography of the north east corner of the site above Heytesbury Farm it can be seen that the 50m contour line does not mark the highest point. In fact the ground continues to rise evenly towards the northern boundary of the site reaching heights of 57m AOD in the west and 58 AOD in the east. Even at its lowest point there is only a localised dip in the central part of the northern boundary to approximately 50m but this rises up quickly to both the east and west.

This means that in terms of views to and from Wickham, the effective ridge line is not the 45/50m contour line but rather the northern boundary of the site. The typography offers the opportunity for new landscape screening in a 50m settlement buffer to provide effective screening to views from the north.

In terms of views from the A32 it is clear that the mature woodland of Blakes Copse provides substantial screening to development above the 45/50m contour line and this screening will be enhanced through additional planting between the new community and the A32.

The Strategic Framework Diagram illustrates a significant east to west green infrastructure corridor which links Aytesbury Copse with Blakes Copse. As such when viewed from the north or south there will not be an appearance of continuous built form between Wickham and Welborne. This is demonstrated on the attached site sections (**Appendix 2**).

The entire ridge area to the north would equate to approximately 10 hectares, as

such, excluding this area from development would have a significant impact on Welborne's housing capacity and could also undermine the viability of the project. Overall the Council's view is that the concerns over views from the north can be appropriately dealt with through sensitive structural landscaping rather than a wider settlement buffer at this location.

This would also help soften the impact of Welborne when seen in longer views across the site from north Fareham, by ensuring that the new development is set within a strong structural landscape framework along the strategic green infrastructure corridors running across the site from east to west, as required in policy WEL 33.

It is recommended that policy WEL 33 is amended to reflect this by the addition of a new second paragraph;

"The structural landscaping schemes should clearly show how Welborne will sit within its landscape setting, particularly when viewed from Portsdown Hill to the east and across the site from the south."

### Knowle

The Plan acknowledges the importance of ensuring the separation of Knowle from Welborne particularly when viewed from the south and the east. The area of land to the south of Knowle, referred to as the Knowle triangle will provide a significant physical and visual separation of Knowle from the central and south west sections of Welborne. In addition, a settlement buffer is identified as linking Dash wood to the Knowle triangle, providing a continuous buffer to maintain the separate identity of Knowle.

The north west of the site, adjacent to Knowle is identified in the Plan as being within the woodland character area and requiring housing to be of a lower density. Planning applications would be expected to extend the typical enclosed woodland mosaic character of the Forest of Bere landscape southwards into this area, to help knit the area into the surrounding landscape, integrate developments, create a woodland backdrop and limit any residual visual impact. Housing of a lower density would by its nature have a more open character which would complement the buffer, Dash Wood and Knowle triangle. When viewed from the east, the buffer would link the Knowle triangle to Dash Wood to the north of the site and would provide a continuous green link along the north west of Welborne which would prevent the appearance of continuous built form.

### Funtley

The Plan also acknowledges the need to maintain the separation of Welborne from Funtley which is positioned to the south west of the site. The Strategic Framework Diagram and Policies Map incorporates a buffer which wraps around part of the south western edge of the site, running to a point opposite the western edge of Fareham Common.

The majority of the land adjacent to the buffer with Funtley is allocated for residential use; however there is also an area in the southern section which is allocated for

employment use. The size of the buffer adjacent to Funtley or the planting within it may be varied along its length, to take account of the different land uses within the site. The wording of policy WEL5 is sufficiently flexible to allow for the buffers to be designed to fit the context and increased in width where necessary. For example, if the structures within the employment area are significantly taller than the houses in the residential area, it may be necessary to have a wider buffer and/or more significant planting. The residential development would have a rural or edge of urban character which would be distinct from that of Funtley. The Plan also indicates that the position of the housing on the edge of Welborne would be required to be of a lower density and therefore a more open character. This would provide a visual reminder that it occupies an edge of urban area and would add to the perceived separation between Welborne and Funtley.

The absence of any vehicular links proposed between Welborne and Funtley would also increase the sense of separation between the different communities as movement by foot or cycle would require people to experience the buffer as a space in its own right. The experience of the buffer as a transitional space would also add to the perceived separate identities of Welborne and Funtley. There are very few views out of Funtley to Welborne, so the buffer will ensure that visual separation is also maintained.

### Conclusion

While wider buffers may potentially be attractive to existing residents seeking to create separation from the new community we also need to be mindful that current and future residents (of Funtley and Knowle in particular) will want to access primary and secondary schools, the BRT and bus stops, the jobs in the employment area and the facilities and services in the district and local centres. Creating wider landscape buffers could deter people from walking or cycling to these facilities outside daylight hours if the buffers seem too wide and are less well overlooked, thus encouraging trips by cars. Striking the right balance between the effective and efficient use of scarce land, protecting the setting of existing communities, and allowing for safe and convenient accessibility is a matter that needs to be addressed through more detailed masterplanning looking at the particular characteristics of each area.

Overall it is considered that the settlement buffers as described in policy WEL5 are sufficient to provide visual and physical separation to maintain the separate identity of Welborne and the surrounding settlements.

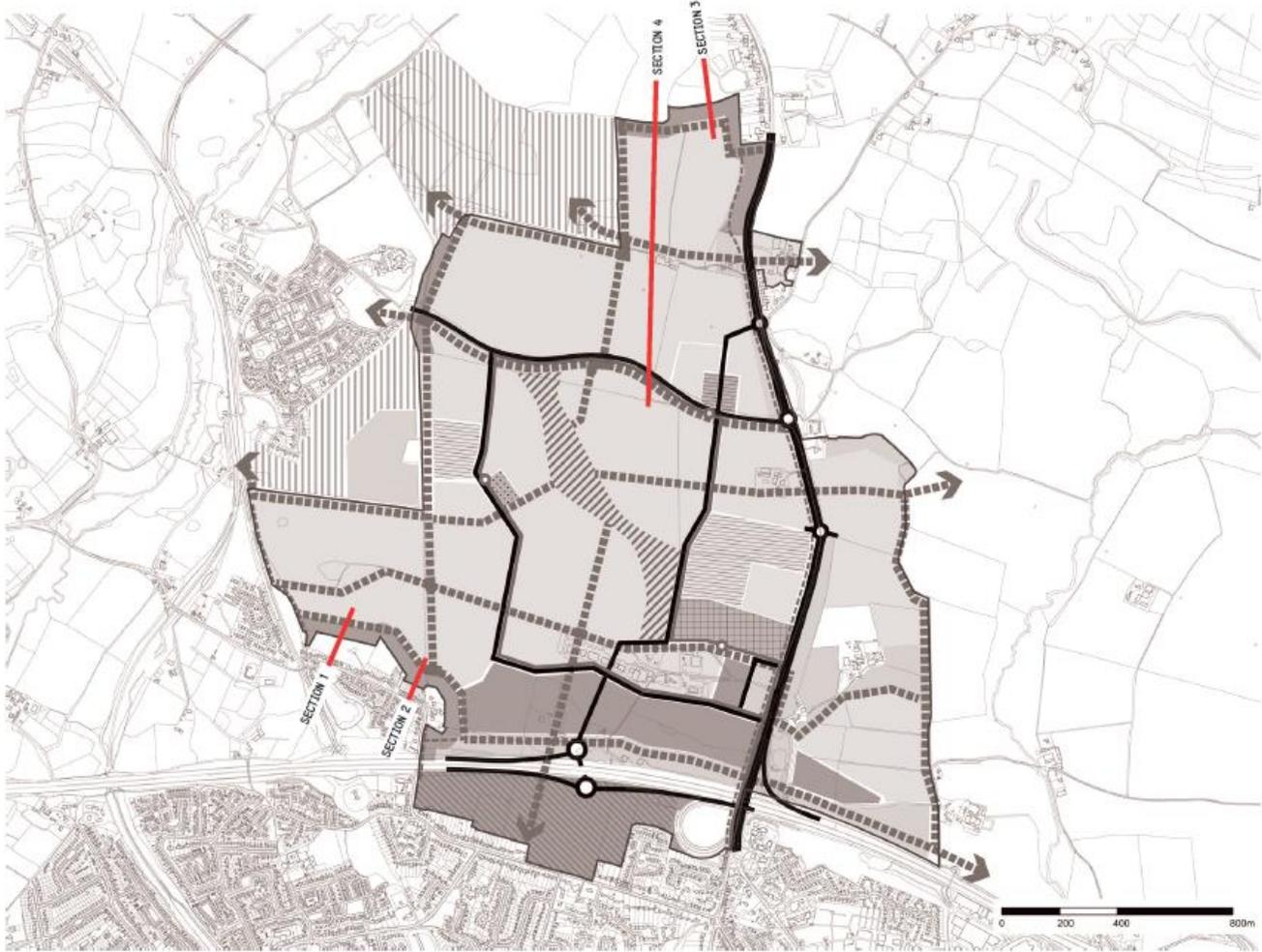
APPENDIX 1

**Illustration 1:** Example of 50 metre landscaped strip. Jct. of Pook Lane and A32



APPENDIX 2

LDĀDESIGN



Location Plan

ISSUED BY Exeter t. 01392 280430  
DATE Oct 2014 DRAWN DWe  
SCALE@A3 As shown CHECKED PC  
STATUS Draft APPROVED PC

DWG. NO. 3889\_001

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PROJECT TITLE  
WELBORNE PLAN

DRAWING TITLE  
Illustrative Site Sections  
Location Plan

Section 1: Through the settlement buffer to the north of Funtley  
1:500 A3



Section 2: Through the settlement buffer to the north of Funtley  
1:500 A3



ISSUED BY Exeter t: 01392 260430  
DATE Oct 2014 DRAWN DWe  
SCALE@A3 As shown CHECKED PC  
STATUS Draft APPROVED PC

Note:  
- Landform based on 5m. contour information.  
- Sections are illustrative only, green corridors and housing areas are subject to detail design.  
- No dimensions to be scaled from drawing.  
- Potential building line adjacent to settlement buffers shown at 50m. from the site boundary.

PROJECT TITLE  
WELBORNE PLAN

DRAWING TITLE  
Illustrative Site Sections  
North of Funtley

DWG. NO. 3889\_002

Section 3: Through the northern boundary of the site  
1:500 A3



Section 4: Through the east - west green corridors and tree belts in the northern area of the Welborne site  
1:2500 A3



ISSUED BY Exeter t: 01392 260430  
DATE Oct 2014 DRAWN DWe  
SCALE@A3 As shown CHECKED PC  
STATUS Draft APPROVED PC

DWG. NO. 3889\_003

Note:  
- Landform based on 5m. contour information.  
- Sections are illustrative only, green corridors and housing areas are subject to detail design.  
- No dimensions to be scaled from drawing.  
- Potential building line adjacent to settlement buffers shown at 50m. from the site boundary.

PROJECT TITLE  
WELBORNE PLAN

DRAWING TITLE  
Illustrative Site Sections  
Northern Boundary

## 2 WEL7 - Strategic Design Codes

At the Issue 3 hearing session, the Council acknowledged that it had indicated in its response to the Inspector on the Welborne Design Guidance SPD (CD-04) that it had proposed a change to policy WEL7. This was further referenced in the Council's response to Q3.9 in its Issue participant statement (CD-10).

The proposed changes are for the purpose of clarifying the process and triggers for reviewing the Strategic Design Codes, subsequent to their approval. The ability to review Strategic Design Codes is crucial to ensure flexibility over the course of the long build-out period. The Council would expect engagement with the new community at Welborne as well as with residents in neighbouring communities when the Design Codes are reviewed.

Therefore the Council proposes the following modification to policy WEL7, with new text underlined and deleted text ~~struck through~~:

### WEL7 - Strategic Design Codes

Strategic design codes shall be prepared by the site promoters, to cover at least the areas within their own control. The strategic design codes shall be submitted for approval by the Council either, accompanying initial outline, reserved matters or detailed planning applications ~~or alongside any applications for detailed consent or reserved matters for the relevant phase or development.~~ Where the strategic design codes are not submitted with initial outline planning applications, high-level development principles shall be submitted with the Structuring Plan, in accordance with the Welborne Design Guidance Supplementary Planning Document.

The strategic design codes will need to clearly demonstrate how they have responded to the unique characteristics of that area, and how they will ensure consistency in the approach to designing key items of infrastructure especially where it crosses land ownerships or development parcels.

Planning permission will be granted for subsequent applications proposals which are in accordance with the design principles set out within the Welborne Strategic Framework, the relevant comprehensive masterplan and the strategic design codes. The Design and Access Statement which accompanies planning applications for each phase of the development shall clearly set out how the relevant sections of the strategic design codes approved with the initial applications have been complied with.

The strategic design codes shall be subject to review and revision, as required by the Local Planning Authority, throughout the course of the development period to ensure that they remain up to date and relevant, and to ensure that they support and do not harm the deliverability of each development phase.