

Welsh Road West | Southam

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01 | INTRODUCTION & SITE DESCRIPTION

INTRODUCTION

This document provides analysis of a site to the west of Southam town centre from an urban design and landscape perspective. It has been prepared by a team instructed by Barwood Development Securities Ltd and led by urban designers Node, with landscape analysis input from Tyler Grange who have undertaken an initial landscape and visual impact assessment to ensure that design development evolves in a landscape and visually sensitive manner.

The document sets out the key features of the site and its context before identifying opportunities for its potential development and the positive benefits this could have for Southam. A framework masterplan then indicates how the site could be developed in the future to meet these objectives.

SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

Southam town centre has a strong historic character and contains a wide range of uses, including retail, civic services and a number of schools. Close to the site on Welsh Road West is Southam College and a recently constructed, publicly accessible leisure centre.

The site itself comprises two land parcels located either side of Welsh Road West. The land contains a number of mature trees and hedgerows, which retain the historic field boundaries within the site. The topography of the site falls to the west and south where the River Stowe winds a meandering path along the southern boundary, with an attractive landscape setting including a number of mature trees.

A number of public rights of way cross the land, providing easy accessibility on foot into the town centre and into the wider landscape. To the south-east of the site is the Holy Well: a listed building and scheduled monument.

2]



PHOTO 1: the historic townscape within Southam town centre



PHOTO 2: Southam town centre: a wide range of facilities



PHOTO 3: Southam College and leisure centre



PHOTO 4: Welsh Road West, the gateway to Southam

02 | SITE AND LOCAL AREA ANALYSIS

KEY ISSUES

The site is located on the edge of Southam town centre. Key issues affecting the site and its context that should inform development are:

A NEED FOR HOUSING

There is a need for additional housing in sustainable locations that promote walking and increased usage of the town's existing facilities. There are constraints on much of the land around the town, including a designated area of restraint to the south-east of the site and the barrier created by the A423 that renders land beyond this challenging to reach on foot from the town centre (see photo 8 on previous page). A site to the north-east has been granted planning permission for 165 houses.

STRONG SENSE OF LOCAL CHARACTER

The town has a high quality urban context with a strong sense of local, historic character: as reflected by the conservation area designation and the number of listed buildings within the town centre (photo 1 and 2).

LOCAL FACILITIES

Southam benefits from a diverse range of local facilities from employment at Holywell Business Park, to retail and civic functions within the town centre, and a Tesco superstore to the south of the town. There are a number of primary schools and Southam College, which provides for the 11-18 age group (photo 3), together with having a leisure centre on site which is also accessible to the public. The viability of these facilities, together with the economic prosperity of the town as a whole would benefit from additional footfall.

A VIBRANT AND SUCCESSFUL TOWN CENTRE

This site has a unique opportunity to assist in enhancing the success of Southam's town centre through providing additional development within short and convenient walking distance which would support and improve the retail and service offer in the town.

LOCAL TOPOGRAPHY

The topography of the local area rises up to the town centre and falls towards the two river corridors of the Itchen and Stowe, to the west and south of the site respectively. The site reflects this change in levels, with a drop in levels radiating from the centre of the eastern boundary. This renders parts of the site visible from the surrounding context to the north and west.

RIVER VALLEYS

The two river corridors create highly attractive features in the landscape (photo 7). The flood plain around the rivers has been identified by the Environment Agency in their flood mapping: this includes an area to the south of the site which will need to be excluded from any potential development area.

PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY

The local area includes a number of public rights of way that connect into the town and into the wider landscape. This includes three routes that cross the site which provide an opportunity for future development to connect well with its setting and must be incorporated sensitively into proposals.

GATEWAY TO SOUTHAM

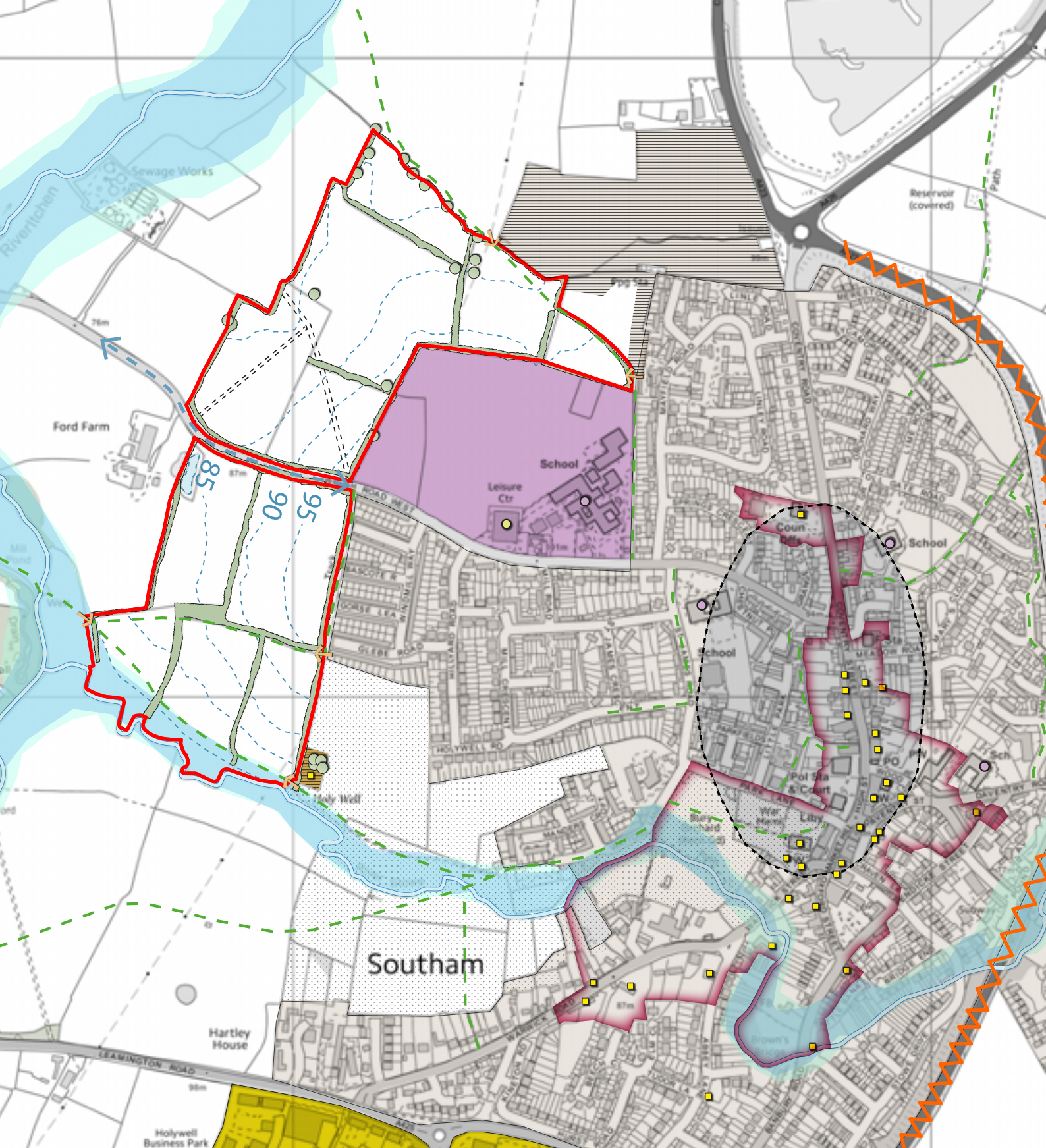
The site forms the gateway to the town centre from the west. At present the speed limit on Welsh Road West is 50mph and vehicles approaching the town arrive at speed. At the eastern edge of the site's frontage to the road is a gateway feature, with a drop in speed limit to 30mph, some decorative planting and the start of pedestrian pavements (photo 4).

EXISTING LANDSCAPE

The site area includes existing landscape features including mature trees and hedgerows along the field boundaries (photo 5).

HOLY WELL

The Holy Well, located close to the south-east boundary of the site is a listed building and scheduled monument. The well has monastic roots and is an important feature of the town, being located adjacent to a public right of way, which is well used by local people (photo 6).



LEGEND

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|--------------------------------------|--------------------|------------------------------|-----------------|
| Site boundary (30.28ha) | Area of restraint | Existing hedgerow/vegetation | EA flood zone 2 |
| Existing residential dwellings | Conservation area | Public right of way | EA flood zone 3 |
| Residential planning consent granted | Listed building | Barrier | |
| Town centre | Scheduled monument | Fast moving traffic | |
| School | Contours | Pedestrian access | |
| Leisure centre | Existing tree | Water | |

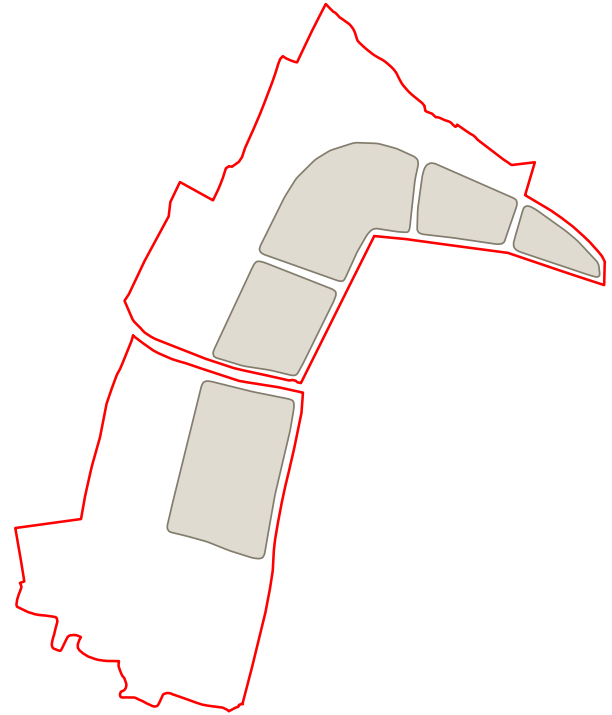
03 | THE OPPORTUNITY

The site to either side of Welsh Road West is a unique development opportunity in Southam for a number of reasons:

1: PROVIDE FOR HOUSING NEED

The scale of the site means that the built development can be restrained to an area which has been identified as less sensitive in landscape terms and still have the potential to help strategically meet housing need in the town, rather than via a range of small, piecemeal developments.

The size of the site also allows for the creation of a design which responds to the character of the existing townscape and also creates character areas within the site that respond to the differing built and landscapes conditions at its boundaries, together with creating variety and interest within the site itself.

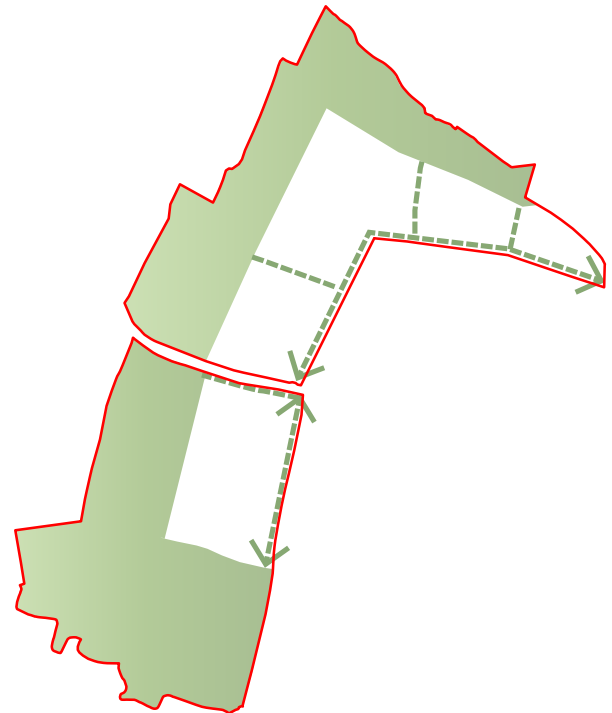


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2: PROVIDE NEW LANDSCAPE SPACES

The site's existing features allow for the creation of a range of high quality new landscape spaces which will serve existing Southam residents as well as future residents of the site. The existing setting of the River Stowe is very attractive but there is nowhere to stop and appreciate it. Development of the site could allow for the creation of a country park landscape which could incorporate wildflower meadow planting rolling down a slope to the river, with areas cleared for picnics and informal recreation space. The parkland will also provide a good landscape buffer to the grade II listed building and scheduled monument, Holy Well as well as enhancing public access to this area of the town.

The landscape design would also seek to respond to the landscape and visual analysis by enhancing existing field boundaries and landscape buffers to the site with species suitable for the area, ensuring that the site transitions softly into its more rural context to the north and west. The creation of generous landscape spaces will ensure that views out of and through the site are also preserved.

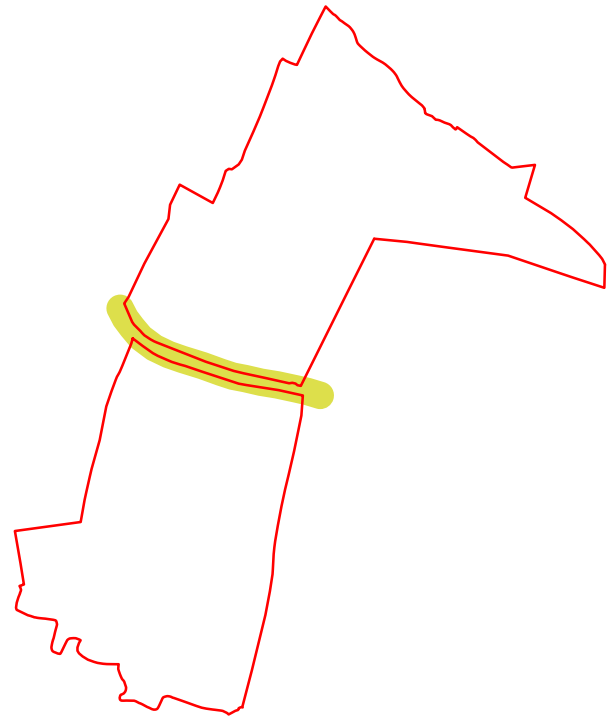


3: ENHANCE GATEWAY TO SOUTHAM

The section of Welsh Road West that bisects the site is currently 50mph, with vehicles entering this edge of the town at speed.

The site's location on either side of Welsh Road West gives the scheme the opportunity to create a strong positive character which can create a more appropriate gateway to the town from the west. This could also include enhancements to the public realm which together with the additional junctions required to gain access to the site could assist in slowing traffic.

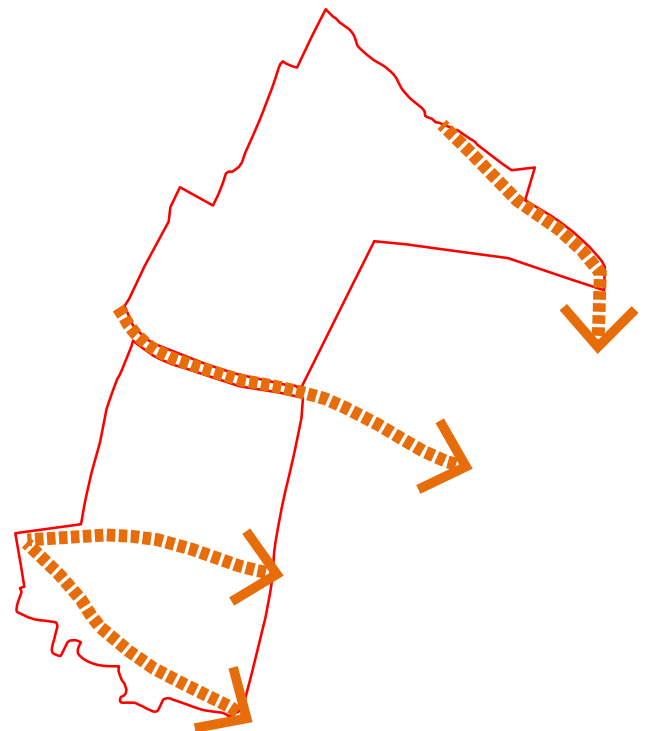
The public realm enhancement could also improve the arrival experience with new planting and signage as well as improving the pedestrian environment, which is important as Welsh Road West is a key connection into the town centre.



4: PROMOTE TOWN CENTRE CONNECTIONS ON FOOT

The design should capitalise on the existing, good level of pedestrian connectivity from this site, in particular towards the town centre. These routes should be enhanced to ensure that residents can easily reach the town centre on foot or by bicycle. This includes linking into the existing public rights of way and enhancing Welsh Road West. This is a key advantage of this site over other potential development sites, which are primarily focused to the east of the A423, a major dual carriageway which creates a visual and physical barrier separating the town from the land beyond. It is hard to imagine residents of sites beyond this road walking to the town centre.

It is important to emphasise that these connections work in reverse too, promoting access into the site from existing residents to utilise the new landscape space and through the site into the wider landscape context.



04 | CONCEPT MASTERPLAN

DESIGN

A concept masterplan has been undertaken to translate the opportunities into a framework for development.

The key features of the development are:

Built development: c.10.54ha

- This could provide the opportunity to create a broad range of house types / size allowing for the creation of a diverse, sustainable community and making a substantial contribution to local housing need whilst still retaining substantial areas of the site for landscape.
- The scale of the site allows the creation of character areas which will provide interest and variety across the site including variation in density. This will allow for the creation of a low density edge to the more rural context to the north and west, creating a softer built edge to the scheme.
- The proposed development should reflect Southam's existing built character. This includes the scale and massing of buildings and their location on plot, with opportunities to create tighter areas with taller, denser development at key nodes and lower scale, looser knit development at rural edges. The materials and colour palette should reflect the historic use of red brick and render, with clay tiles and slates used for roofing materials.

Landscape area: c.19.74ha

This comprises a mix of landscape types including:

- River front parkland: the principal area of publicly accessible open space, designed to be used by residents of the scheme and the wider community. This will provide a substantial area of land to be utilised for informal recreation space, together with space for children's play. The landscape itself could be planted as wildflower meadow with walkways and clearings for recreation space, providing an ecological asset as well as an amenity space
- Buffer planting to adjacent development providing dense planting utilising a locally appropriate species mix. This will minimise visual intrusion from the scheme on the neighbouring residential dwellings and Southam College.
- Rural transition space: natural landscape area to the north and west of the built elements of the site, providing a soft edge to the development which allows the site to blend into its setting
- Existing landscape features: existing trees and hedgerows to be retained and enhanced with appropriate species. In addition to enhancing the landscape character of the site, this will also have ecological benefits and provide greater mitigation of the potential visual impact of the scheme.

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PHOTO A: Scheme to draw on Southam's historic character



PHOTO B: Scheme to open up public access to river front



LEGEND

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| Site boundary (30.28ha) | Tree | Pedestrian access | Public right of way |
| Built development | Existing vegetation enhanced | Principal route | Connections to town centre |
| Landscape | Children's play | Secondary route | Views to landscape |
| Possible wildflower planting | River | Shared surface route | |
| Buffer planting | Vehicle access | Enhancement to gateway | |
| Soft landscape edge | Potential emergency access | Public realm improvements | |

For further information, contact

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