

APPENDIX A

Witton Gilbert Neighbourhood Plan



Land South of Front Street and Historic Zone

Draft Design Brief

March 2017

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Introduction

The Government White Paper on housing published February 2017 sets out to strengthen neighbourhood planning and design, giving communities a more direct say over development and to influence the design of new houses in the local area. Several public consultation engagements have shown that local people want new development to be in keeping with the traditional character of the Front Street and the historic zone, whilst at the same time contributing to the continuing evolution of the village.

The NPPF is clear about the importance of good design and to improve the approach to design, the Government proposal to amend the NPPF expects that neighbourhood plans should set out clear design expectations. This will provide greater certainty about the sort of design which will be acceptable.

This design brief is intended to facilitate pre-application discussions as a guide to the aspirations of the local community about the type and design of any development proposal. It is not in any way intended to impose or require a specific or rigid form.

The intention is to provide a more user friendly interpretation of the policies and principles set out within the Neighbourhood Plan and convey in more detail the form of development which the community in Witton Gilbert would like to see come forward in this location.

The design brief has been developed taking into account the objectives and principles of the Neighbourhood Plan as well as the principles set out in the current Building for Life document. In developing the following guidance, an assessment of the existing features and characteristics of the site has been used to identify a number of key aspects that any future development within the designated area must take into account. In addition to this, potential options for future site layouts have been outlined to help inform any future proposals for development.

It aims to supplement the provisions set out within Policy 4 (Development in or adjacent to the Historic Zone and associated site H2) Policy 5 (Historic Zone of Witton Gilbert) of the Neighbourhood Plan and build on a range of other policies identified within the Plan that are relevant to any developments to the south of Front Street and within the historic zone.

Policy Context

The following policies of the Witton Gilbert Neighbourhood Plan are relevant to the site south of Front Street as well as to development in and around Front Street itself. Policy 6 (Sustainable Design), Policy 2 (Housing Development in Witton Gilbert Village), Policy 4 (Development in or adjacent to the Historic Zone and associated site H2) Policy 5 (Historic Zone of Witton Gilbert) and Policy 3 (Older People's homes) form the basis of this design brief with the diagrams and precedent images set out below taking into account the principles and objectives set out in each. As such any development to the south of Front Street or in the Historic Zone area must be in accordance with these policies.

Building for Life

In accordance with criterion (b) of Policy 2 (housing development in Witton Gilbert village) of the Neighbourhood Plan, any proposed housing development on the land to the south of Front Street must provide high quality and sustainable design as outlined in the current Building for Life document. Some of the criteria have influenced choice of housing sites, for example, proximity to public transport, availability of local services. It is therefore essential that development schemes for the land to the south of Front Street take into account the current Building for Life principles as set out below.

Key Design Factors

Following an assessment of the areas key strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, a number of key points to which any future development should pay particular attention have emerged. Care must be taken to ensure these are well considered in any proposed schemes. These design principles build on the policies set out within the Neighbourhood Plan and provide more detailed guidance in terms of what type of development might be appropriate for the site.

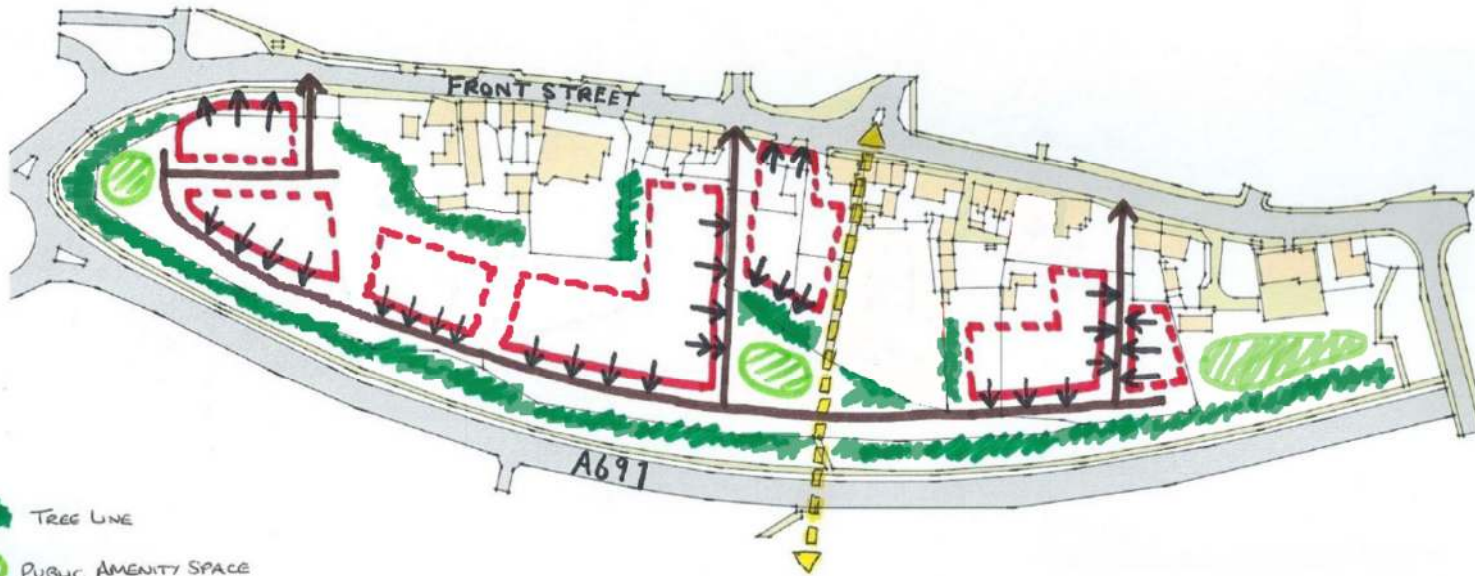
The concepts explored below have also informed the development of an indicative layout for the area that is set out in this section of this design brief. In order to convey the type of approaches that are sought through the neighbourhood plan, a number of diagrams have been prepared and example images from developments that have employed these principles have been identified through a review of housing case studies from the CABE Archive and the Housebuilder Awards 2015.

Building for Life principles:

- Connections: Does the scheme integrate into surroundings?
- Facilities & Services: Does the scheme provide (or is close to) community facilities?
- Public transport: Does the scheme have good accessibility to public transport?
- Meeting local housing need: Does the development have a mix of housing types and tenures that suit local requirements?
- Character: Does the scheme create a place with locally inspired distinctive character?
- Working with the site and its context: Does the scheme take advantage of site characteristics e.g. Topography. Habitats
- Creating well defined streets and spaces: Do buildings enclose streets and spaces and turn corners well?
- Easy to find your way around: Is the scheme designed to make it easy to find your way around?
- Streets for all: Are streets designed to encourage low vehicle speeds?
- Car Parking: Is resident and visitor parking sufficient and well integrated?
- Public and private spaces: Will public and private areas be clearly defined?
- External storage and amenity: Is there adequate external storage for bins recycling and cycles?

Emphasis should be placed on ensuring any future development is sympathetic to the character of Front Street and the wider area. In addition, connections within and through the site are particularly important not only for enhancing existing routes but also enabling phased development of the site and ensuring areas can be connected in future. Finally, significant attention should be given to ensuring suitable densities are achieved and overdevelopment of the site is avoided. These key aspects of any future development are explored in more detail below along with their relationship to policies within the emerging neighbourhood plan.

WITTON GILBERT
NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN



-  TREE LINE
-  PUBLIC AMENITY SPACE
-  PRIMARY FRONTAGES
-  PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL
-  POTENTIAL RESIDENTIAL
-  PEDESTRIAN ROUTE
-  VEHICULAR ROUTE

LAND SOUTH OF FRONT STREET
- INDICATIVE LAYOUT

Character and Infill Development

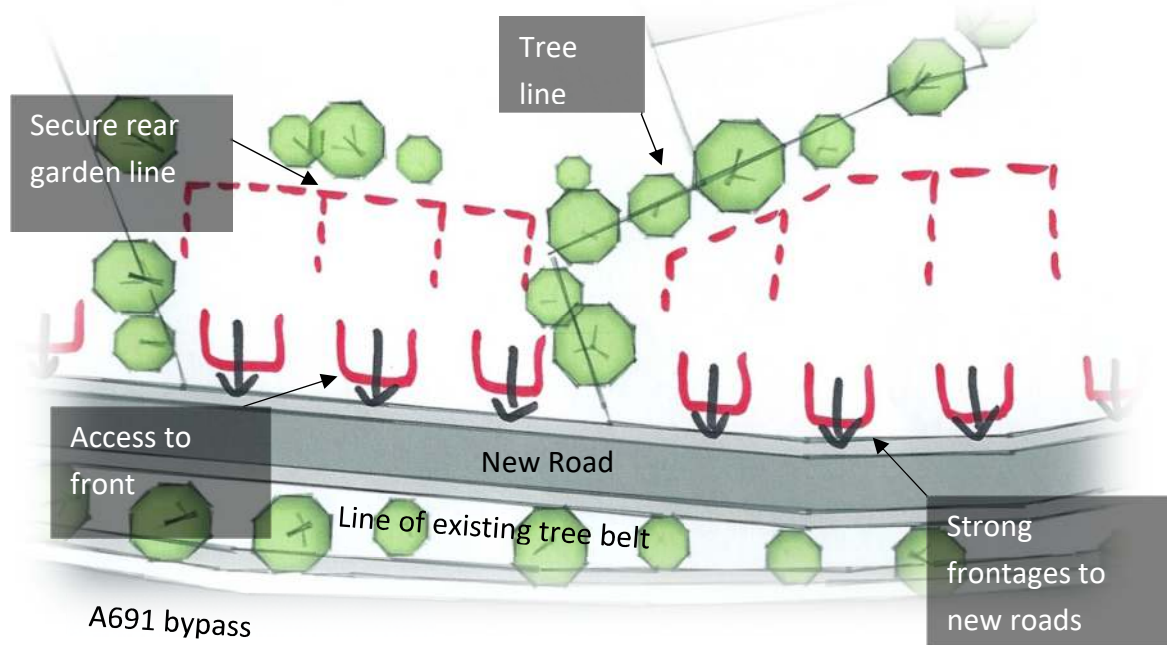
Proposals which seek to repair the urban fabric of the existing frontage along Front Street are to be encouraged. Development should be sympathetic to Front Street's form and its historic character in accordance with Policy 4 (Development in or adjacent to the Historic Zone and associated site H2) of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Development proposals should also present strong frontages to new roads to instil a sense of place and character, enclosing streets and spaces in line with Policy 2 of the Neighbourhood Plan and the current Building for Life principles. This is particularly important around the edge of the development site where proposals will have the most significant visual impact and have the opportunity to improve entrances and views into Witton Gilbert. Whilst proposals should attempt to ensure safe and secure access arrangements by avoiding areas of parking to the rear of properties, that are often poorly overlooked and can compromise security, in some instances access to the rear may be necessary, for instance, where there is infill development along Front Street, such as in the example above. In these instances, any rear parking should be private access only and should only serve dwellings where front access is not achievable.



Thorley Lane, Bishop Stortford; Example of urban repair

WITTON GILBERT NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN 2018 - 2033



Development should aim to utilise the site's existing assets such as the existing tree lines and the existing pedestrian routes that cross the site. The openness and level of greenery that the site currently benefits from should be reinterpreted through any future development of the site through retaining of existing landscape features that are of significance and through the use of low density development including large private gardens and open green spaces.



Wickhurst Green, Horsham



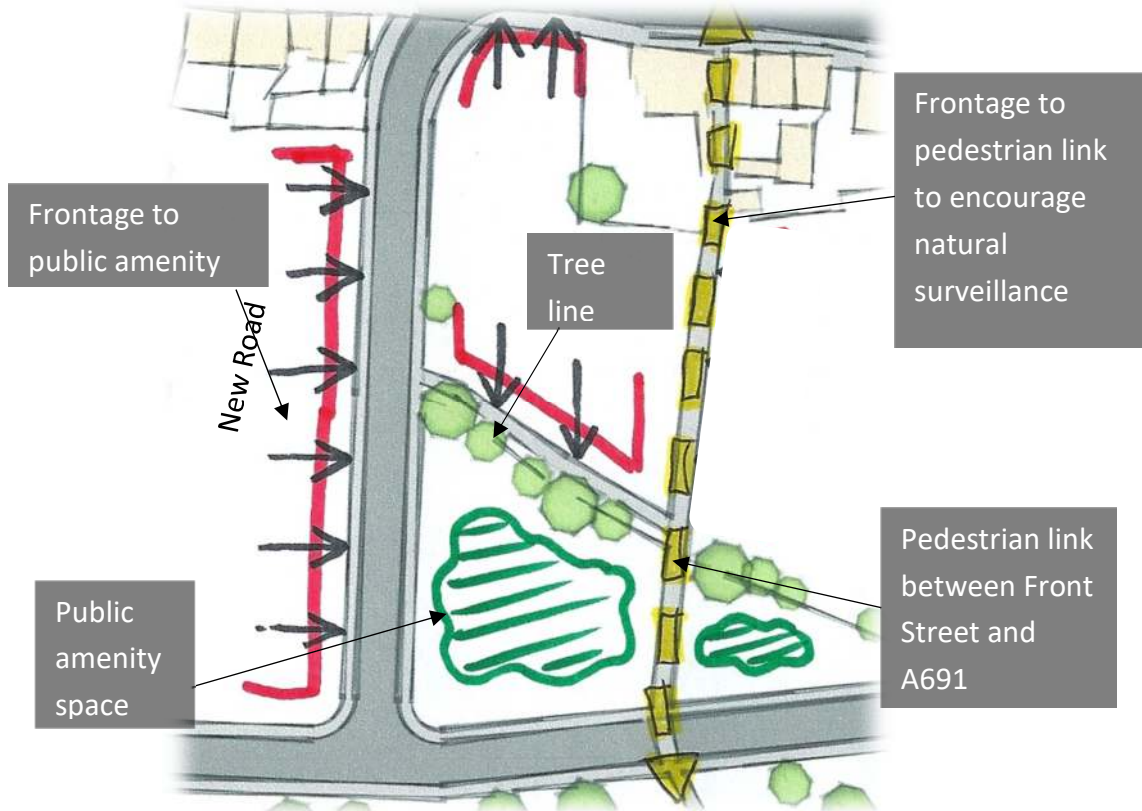
Wickhurst Green, Horsham



Queen Elizabeth Park, Guildford

Examples of public open spaces in new housing development

Connections Through and Within the Site



Connections Through and Within the Site

The diagram on the previous page demonstrates the revitalisation of the existing pedestrian route that traverses the site from north to south and links Front Street with the A691 bypass and beyond, in line with Policy 12 (Improvements to Cycling and Walking Network) and Policy 5 (Historic Zone of Witton Gilbert) of the draft Neighbourhood Plan. Development should be encouraged to front onto this pedestrian link to maintain a village scale and character as well as provide natural surveillance of the walkway.

It is also envisaged that this pedestrian link could connect with an area of green space to the south within the site that could be earmarked as public amenity space or for other community uses such as a village green or play area. Again this shall be well overlooked and will create an attractive focal point for any development to the south of Front Street. This area of the site may also facilitate a Sustainable Urban Drainage system in accordance with Policy 6 (Sustainable Design) and Policy 4 (Development in or adjacent to the Historic Zone and associated site H2) of the Neighbourhood Plan.



Wickhurst Green, Horsham



Queen Elizabeth Park, Guildford



St Luke's Park, Wickford

Housing Type and Density

As previously stated the Neighbourhood plan has identified that between 50 and 70 new houses will be required in the plan area over the next 15-years. However, guidance from the Local Planning Authority on any potential development to the south of Front Street has placed greater emphasis on ensuring the density of the site is appropriate; with an overall low density development recommended in order to allow for larger rear gardens and maintain the greenness, maintain existing habitat and openness of the site.

Development must therefore be sympathetic to the scale and density of the existing village and be in keeping with neighbouring properties. Overdevelopment of the site through the use of high density housing should be avoided. Denser residential development in the form of two storey terraced housing may be appropriate as infill development of the frontage on Front Street, however the density of the site should decrease as development moves away from Front Street with the remainder of the site primarily comprising semi-detached and detached properties in order to create a soft and attractive edge to the village and maintain the landscape character and setting of Witton Gilbert.



Additional Considerations

Creating Well Defined Streets and Spaces

Streets should be defined by the position of buildings rather than the route of the carriageway. Buildings must turn corners well, so that both elevations seen from the street have windows to them, rather than offering blank walls to the street. Consider using windows that wrap around corners to maximise surveillance and bring generous amounts of natural light into people's homes. Using a pattern of road types to create a hierarchy of streets and consider their enclosure, keeping well-proportioned height to width ratios relative to the type of street.

Streets for All

Streets should be designed so vehicle speeds do not exceed 20 mph. It is therefore advised that developers work with the Council's Highways Authority to create an environment where buildings and detailed street design is used to tame vehicle speeds. Sharp or blind corners force drivers to slow when driving around them while buildings that are closer together also make drivers proceed more cautiously. 20mph zones are becoming increasingly popular with local communities and are a cost effective way of changing driver behaviour in residential areas. Think about how streets can be designed as social and play spaces, where the pedestrians and cyclists come first, rather than simply as routes for cars and vehicles to pass through. Hard landscaping should be of the best quality that is viable without cluttering the streets and public spaces. Homes should also be designed to facilitate good natural surveillance opportunities; carefully considering the impact of internal arrangement on the safety and vitality of the street. Consider maximising the amount of glazing to ground floor, street facing rooms to enhance surveillance opportunities and create a stronger relationship between the home and the street. Homes should offer something to the street, therefore detail, craftsmanship and build quality are of paramount importance. Development should afford particular attention to the space between the pavement and front doors. A thoughtful and well-designed entrance area and front door scheme will enhance the kerb appeal of homes whilst

also contributing towards creating a visually interesting street. Changes in level must also be carefully considered, as well as the interface between different materials, finishing quality and the placement of utility boxes.

Clearly Defined Public and Private Spaces

Clearly defining private and public spaces with clear vertical markers, such as railings, walling or robust planting should be provided. Where there is a modest building set back (less than 1m), a simple change in surface materials may suffice. In terms of planting, select species that will form a strong and effective boundary, such as hedge forming shrubs rather than low growing specimens or exotic or ornamental plants. Prospective developers should ensure sufficient budget provision is allocated to ensure a high quality boundary scheme is delivered. Public spaces should be well overlooked by neighbouring properties with plenty of opportunity for residents to see streets and spaces from within their homes. Opportunities should also be provided for direct and oblique views up and down the street by considering the use of bay, oriel and corner windows where appropriate. Designing balconies can further increase opportunities for natural surveillance. Development should also consider how spaces can be designed to be multi-functional, serving as wide an age group as possible and how they could contribute towards enhancing biodiversity. Proposals should also consider where people might want to walk and what routes they might want to take and plan paths accordingly, providing lighting if required. Consider the sun path and shadowing throughout the day and which areas will be in light rather than shade. Areas more likely to benefit from sunshine are often the most popular places for people to gather. Exploring whether local communities would wish to see new facilities created or existing ones upgraded is advised. Think how play can be approached in a holistic manner, for example by distributing play equipment or playable spaces and features across an entire open space. A management and maintenance plan should identify sustainable ways to fund public or shared communal open spaces.

Sufficient and Well Integrated Car Parking

Development must anticipate car parking demand, taking into account the location, availability and frequency of public transport together with local car ownership trends and ensure sufficient parking spaces are provided for visitors. Streets should be designed to accommodate on street parking, but also allow for plenty of trees and planting to balance the visual impact of parked cars and reinforce the spatial enclosure of the street. On street parking has the potential to be both space efficient and help to create a vibrant street where neighbours have more opportunity to see and meet other people. Very regular and formal parking treatments have the potential to reduce anti-social parking. People are less prone to parking in places where they should not be parking, where street design clearly defines other uses, such as pavements or landscape features. It is important to ensure people can see their car from their home or can park it somewhere they know it will be safe. Rear parking courts should be avoided where possible. However a range of parking solutions may be most appropriate to best serve the context and the types of housing proposed. Where parking is positioned to the front of the property at least an equal amount of the frontage should be allocated to an enclosed and landscaped front garden as it is for parking to reduce vehicle domination. Where rows of terraces are proposed, consider positioning parking within the street scene for example, a central reservation of herringbone parking.