

# Yarnfield and Cold Meece Sites Masterplans Neighbourhood Plan

2024

### Quality information

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## Introduction

# 01

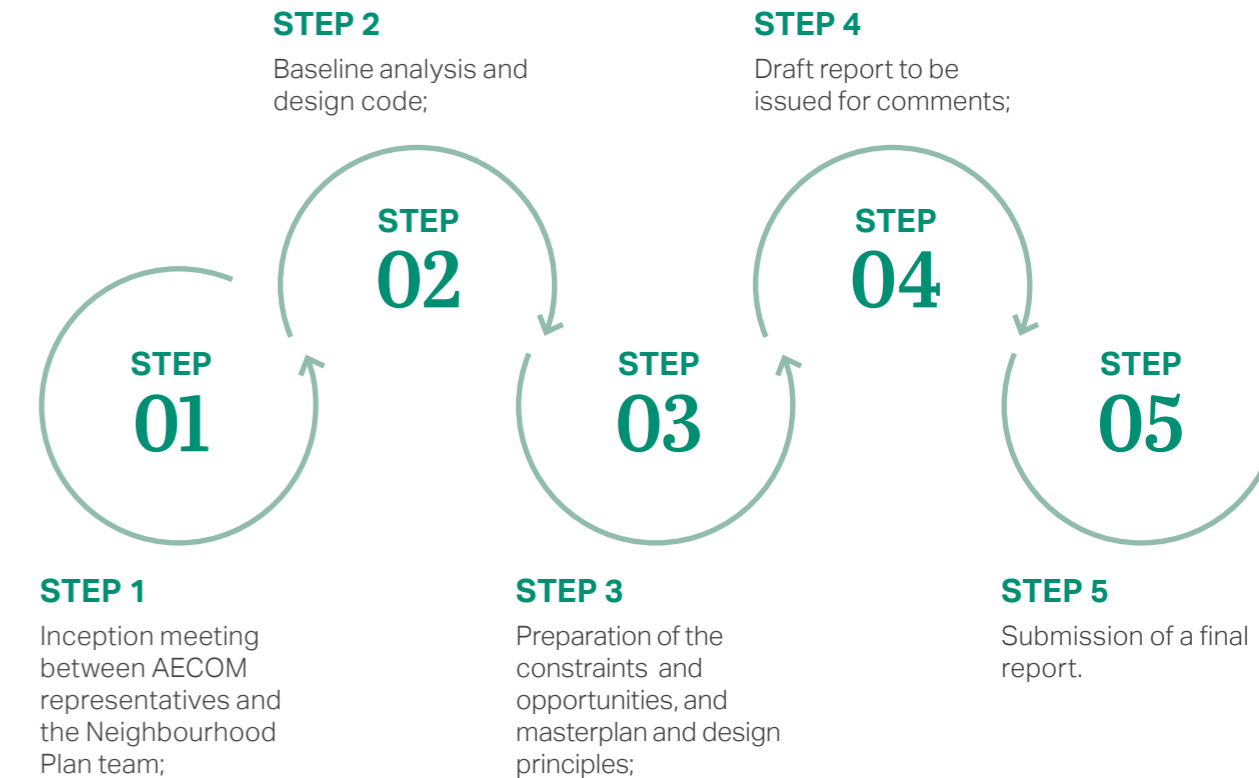
## 1. Introduction

This section provides context and general information to introduce the project and its location.

### 1.1 Objectives

This report presents an illustrative masterplan for three potential development sites in the Yarnfield and Cold Meece Neighbourhood Area. It has been prepared by consultants at AECOM on behalf of Locality, working with the Yarnfield and Cold Meece Parish Council Neighbourhood Plan team. It is based on a combined appraisal of the area carried out through a desk study and fieldwork. The Yarnfield and Cold Meece Neighbourhood Plan team selected the potential development sites identified for the illustrative masterplan based on the evidence base gathered, including consultation responses received as part of the Neighbourhood Plan and Local Plan consultation process.

The Yarnfield and Cold Meece Parish Council is well progressed in the production of its Neighbourhood Plan and has requested this work to access professional advice on the planning and design of potential new development in the area.



### 1.3 Process

This document has been prepared to provide high-level spatial plans for the selected sites, to show the scale and nature of the developments which can be accommodated on the sites, should other constraints be resolved and the sites are allocated in the Neighbourhood Plan.

#### Process

The following steps have been undertaken to prepare this report:

- Initial meeting and site visit;
- Urban design analysis;
- Site constraints and design options;
- Draft report;
- Final report.

### 1.2 Area of study

The masterplan covers sites at the Former Gymnasium and Tennis Courts, Yarnfield Park Conference Centre and Offices, and the Former DVSA Test Centre at Cold Meece (Figure 01).

The design studies are high-level and illustrative, based on current policies and site visit appraisals, prepared to demonstrate how the design principles that the Parish Council wishes to promote could be applied on the sites. We have not undertaken technical studies on topics such as ground conditions, traffic and drainage. It is expected that applicants undertake full design exercises on the sites. This report is just a step in that direction, enabling stakeholders to progress from an informed position.

#### KEY

 Sites boundaries





## 2. Planning policy and guidance

### 2.1 National planning policy

#### National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), 2023

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) outlines the Government's overarching economic, environmental and social planning policies for England. The policies within the NPPF apply to the preparation of local and neighbourhood plans, and act as a framework against which decisions are made on planning applications.

The latest update to the National Planning Policy Framework focuses on sustainable development through precise policy directions. The parts of the NPPF which are of relevance to this masterplan are:

- Part 12 (Achieving well-designed places): It mandates high standards for development aesthetics and functionality, enhancing local characteristics.
- Part 13 (Protecting Green Belt land): Emphasizes stringent controls against inappropriate developments on Green Belt land, requiring clear justifications for any boundary changes.
- Part 15 (Conserving and enhancing the natural environment): Strategies are outlined for protecting biodiversity and ecological systems, promoting environmental resilience in urban settings.

#### Planning Practice Guidance

Planning Practice Guidance expands on the NPPF and outlines planning best practice. First published in 2014 it has had several updates, the most recent in October 2019. The section on design includes guidance on promoting good design (Paragraph: 001 Reference ID: 26-001-20191001). It states that "good design is set out in the National Design Guide under the following 10 characteristics, context, identity, built form, movement, nature, public spaces, uses, homes and buildings, resources and lifespan."

The 2024 updates to the UK Planning Practice Guidance introduce mandatory 10% Biodiversity Net Gain for developments, ensuring ecological enhancements. Specific exemptions are detailed, such as for non-major and householder developments until April 2024, with minor impacts under de minimis conditions also exempt. These changes underscore a stronger commitment to environmental sustainability within planning regulations.

### **2021 National Model Design Code MHCLG**

This report provides detailed guidance on the production of design codes, guides and policies to promote successful design. It expands on 10 characteristics of good design set out in the National Design Guide. This guide should be used as reference for new development.

### **2020 - Building for a Healthy Life Homes England**

Building for a Healthy Life (BHL) is the new (2020) name for Building for Life, the government-endorsed industry standard for well-designed homes and neighbourhoods. The new name reflects the crucial role that the built environment has in promoting wellbeing. The BHL toolkit sets out principles to help guide discussions on planning applications and to help local planning authorities assess the quality of proposed (and completed) developments, but can also provide useful prompts and questions for planning applicants to consider during the different stages of the design process.

### **2019 - National Design Guide MHCLG**

The National Design Guide (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2019) illustrates how well-designed places that are beautiful, enduring and successful can be achieved in practice.

### **2007 - Manual for Streets Department for Transport**

Development is expected to respond positively to the Manual for Streets, the Government's guidance on how to design, construct, adopt and maintain new and existing residential streets. It promotes streets and wider development that avoid car dominated layouts but that do place the needs of pedestrians and cyclists first.



## **2.2 Local planning policy context**

### **Local Plan Core Strategy Development Plan Document**

The Stafford Borough Local Plan 2011-2031, which was adopted in 2014, is a document that outlines the borough's long-term strategy for land use and development. The Part 1 of the Local Plan sets out design-related policies in the context of urban development, emphasising the establishment of settlement boundaries to guide sustainable growth and preserve local character. It stresses designing developments that are well-integrated and supportive of the existing community infrastructure, aligning with broader sustainability goals and ensuring design quality within defined spatial boundaries.

The Part 2, Adoption Document, focuses on sustainable development through strategic settlement boundaries and design quality, enhancing community facilities and promoting local services for improved livability and sustainability.

The upcoming Stafford Borough Council Local Plan 2020-2040 recognises the importance of good design in creating appealing, sustainable, and successful places. It includes policies that require all new development to meet certain design standards, such as ensuring that buildings are well-proportioned, use high-quality materials, and are designed to be energy-efficient and accessible, in order to achieve this goal. Green roofs, rainwater harvesting, and renewable energy systems are among the innovative and sustainable design solutions encouraged by the plan. It also promotes the use of public art and the inclusion of green spaces in new developments.

### **Supplementary Planning Documents**

The Borough Council has prepared Supplementary Planning Documents to provide more detailed guidance on policies or proposals in the Local Plan (SPDs). SPDs do not contain new policies, but rather supplement the policies in the adopted Plan for Stafford Borough by detailing how the policy will be implemented.

The Adoption Statement confirms that the Council has now adopted the SPDs listed below.

- The Design SPD: It was adopted by full Council on April 24, 2018.
- The Shop Fronts and Advertisements SPD: On April 24, 2018, it was adopted by full Council.

## 2.3 Neighbourhood plan

On August 5th, 2021, Stafford Borough Council approved and designated the Yarnfield and Cold Meece Neighbourhood Plan Area. The Parish Council proposed the Neighbourhood Plan based on the parish boundary and submitted a map and statement outlining their intentions. It presents an opportunity for the local group to establish a level of specificity that caters to the local area. Upon approval, the plan will coexist with Stafford Borough Council's Local Plan, granting the local people some degree of autonomy in regulating local development. This allows local communities to significantly influence the future development of Yarnfield and Cold Meece Parish up to 2040.



Figure 02: Parish boundary plan

KEY

 Parish boundaries

## 2.4 Engagement Process

This section provides a brief process breakdown of the key elements and milestones used throughout the duration of the production of this document.

### Inception Call with Steering Group

An inception call with the Yarnfield and Cold Meece Steering Group allowed AECOM to confirm the brief and programme of works.

### Site Visit

AECOM undertook a visit to the neighbourhood plan area to further understand the Yarnfield and Cold Meece neighbourhood area and the sites.

### Workshops

AECOM provided masterplan concepts and layouts to the local group for discussion. The sites themselves have been consulted on and this work has been done to indicate how these, and similar sites within the Yarnfield and Cold Meece settlement boundary, can be taken forward.



Site 1: Former  
Gymnasium and  
Tennis Courts

03

### 3. Yarnfield and Cold Meece Site 1: Former Gymnasium and Tennis Courts

This section provides an analysis of the site and the evolution of the masterplan for the site.

#### 3.1 Site visit

The rectangular-shaped former Gymnasium and Tennis Courts site, 1.08 ha, is located north of Yarnfield built-up area. Recently built residential development areas bound it to the east and south, with open countryside to the north and east. The land remains a brownfield site, surrounded by a fence and characterised by overgrown vegetation, after the original gymnasium and tennis courts were demolished. Mature trees and hedgerows surround the eastern and western corners of the land.



Figure 04: View 1: East corner of the site



Figure 05: Existing housing site to the east of the site



Figure 03: Site 1 plan and views locations



Figure 06: View 3: Existing housing site to the south of the site

### 3.2 High level constraints

Several key site constraints are concluded based on the site visit and baseline study. These issues will be integrated into the masterplan consideration process.

#### Key consideration points:

- ① • The site is outside but in close proximity to the boundary of the Yarnfield Settlement. The site is within Green Belt which need carefully design considerations, to ensure providing soft edges along village defensible boundaries and soft transaction to open countryside.
- ② • The vehicular entry point is the existing access point from the east.
- ③ • A brownfield site with the footprints of demolished buildings and hardstanding still visible.
- ④ • There is an existing footpath along the southern boundary. Development would need to retain the footpath and should take opportunities to improve natural surveillance.
- ⑤ • The residential areas to the south back on to the countryside, and need a soft transition into the open countryside.
- ⑥ • Mature woodlands are present in the western and eastern portions of the site, and should be retained for biodiversity and part of the site's natural landscape character.



Figure 07: View 4: Existing trees to the eastern corner of the site



Figure 08: View 5: Fenced off demolition site with over grown vegetation



Figure 09: View 6: A long distance trail along the western boundary of the site

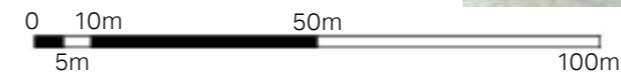


Figure 10: View 7: Footpath along the southern boundary of the site needs improvements



- KEY
- Site boundary
  - Existing trees
  - View point location
  - ▨ Hard surface
  - ⬇ Footpath access
  - ⬇ Vehicular access
  - ⬇ Footpath needs upgrading
  - ⬇ Rear garden facing footpath
  - ⬇ Existing footpath

Figure 11: Site Constraints



### 3.3 Site opportunities

In addition to the constraints set out within the previous section, there are also a number of opportunities which have been identified and could be integrated into the masterplan:

#### Key consideration points:

- ① • Potential for site access should be explored from Yarnfield Parkway at the southeast corner of the site.
- ② • A site specific response to reflect the 'edge of settlement' and the transition into the open countryside.
- ③ • Improve active travel as a traffic free route, through improved surfacing, landscaping and natural surveillance.
- ④ • Provide a strong landscape buffer to define Green Belt edge along the northern village edge.
- ⑤ • Mature woodlands to be integrated into a proposed well-linked Green Infrastructure. This approach will enhance performance of Biodiversity net gain (BNG) which is a way of creating and improving natural habitats.



Figure 12: View 8: Utilizing existing woodland at the end of Yarnfield Parkway to create a mature and distinctive ambiance

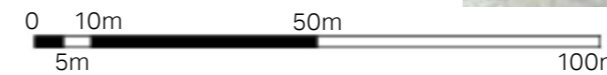


Figure 13: Precedent image: Potential to create a strong frontage to countryside along the northern edge



- KEY
- Site boundary
  - Potential open space
  - Existing footpath
  - Potential development parcels
  - Potential footpath access
  - Potential vehicular access

Figure 14: Site Opportunities



### 3.4 Green Infrastructure

The site one masterplan establishes a comprehensive and multi-functional green infrastructure network. It seeks to preserve the rural character created by the countryside landscape. Natural features, such as existing hedgerows and trees, have been retained where possible, and additional planting has been provided within new open spaces.

The green spaces to the east are designed as a gateway to residential communities. The existing mature woodland to the west is also retained. These open spaces are connected to more expansive areas via a pedestrian network, which allows safe pedestrian access throughout the site. Landscape buffers will be provided along the northern boundaries to reduce the impact on the character of the surrounding countryside. These measures will increase Biodiversity net gain (BNG) and makes sure development has a measurably positive impact on biodiversity, compared to what was there before development.



Figure 15: Precedent images



- KEY
- Site boundary
  - Open space
  - Existing footpath
  - Existing trees
  - New trees
  - Landscape node / gateway
  - Green infrastructure links

Figure 16: Green Infrastructure



### 3.5 Movement network

It is envisaged that the site's primary access will be from Yarnfield Parkway. The remaining suggested routes will cross the site, with efforts made to preserve the existing vegetation. An emergency access will be available through a small opening in the site's southern edge. Proposed footpaths will increase site permeability and connect with the village and the existing PRow network.

It is essential that the site is well-embedded into its surrounding context and integrates well with Yarnfield's existing village fabric. New development should seek to integrate well within its surroundings, reinforce existing connections, and create new ones.

Active travel (walking and cycling) is a key design aspect of any new development. As a traffic free route that links to the wider network, opportunities to increase connectivity, improve natural surveillance and enhance the green corridor should be taken.

Key principles which have been adopted into this masterplan include:

- Providing a choice of safe, direct and attractive routes which will actively encourage walking and cycling;
- Creating well-defined and legible streets;
- Making safer and attractive connections between the long distance trail from west to eastern residential areas.



Figure 17: Precedent images



- KEY
- Site boundary
  - Open space
  - Existing footpath
  - ➔ New vehicular access
  - New road
  - New private drive
  - - - New active travel route
  - - - ➔ Emergency access

Figure 18: Movement network

### 3.6 Land use

The opposite plan identifies the areas proposed for development and the proposed land use. The configuration of these areas has been defined by vegetation constraints, visual impact, access constraints, and a commitment to maintaining green infrastructure and open space within the site boundary.

All development parcels are suggested for residential use, while the remaining land is used for open spaces and wildlife habitat.

The existing residential zones have housing densities ranging from 21 to 25 dwellings per hectare (DPH). Given the site's location on the outskirts of the village and being over washed by the Green Belt, a more moderate density of 15 to 20 DPH may be more appropriate, contributing to the maintenance of a rural character.

The masterplan sets out a capacity between 7 to 10 units. It is envisioned that all of the housing would be low density family homes with gardens, as per the existing village edge context. However, the precise mix of housing type and tenure is not specified in detail at this stage.

**Key Land uses breakdown:**  
**Total area: 1.08 ha**  
**Open space: 0.54 ha**  
**Residential and road area: 0.54 ha**  
**Potential units: 7 - 10 units**  
**@ Density of 15 - 20 dwellings per hectare**

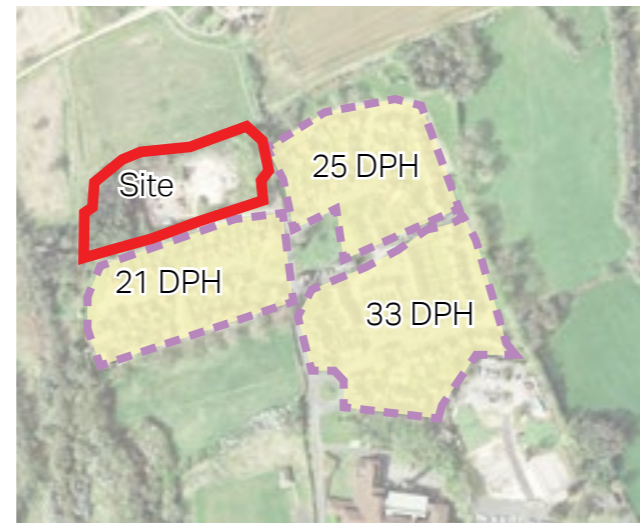
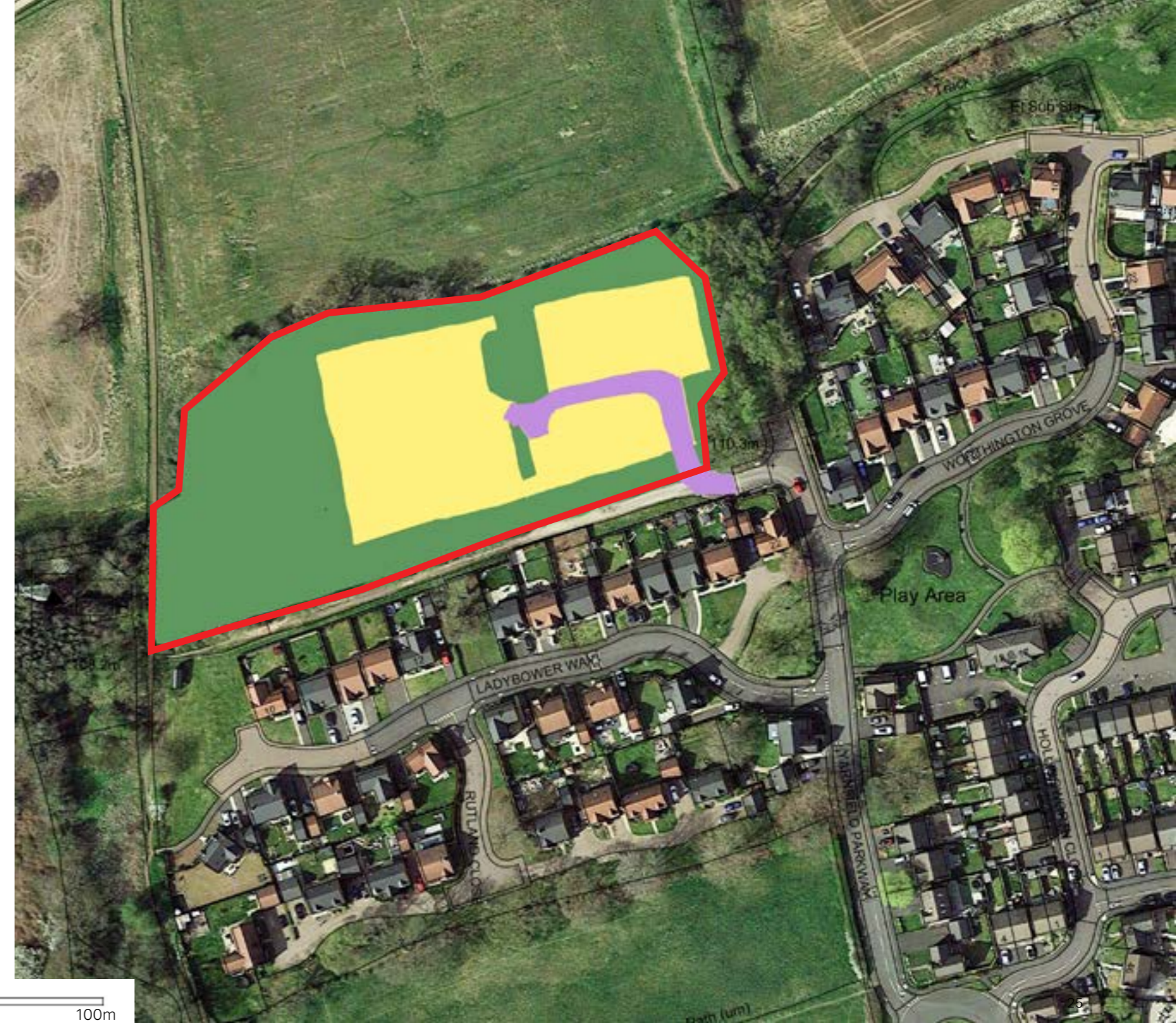
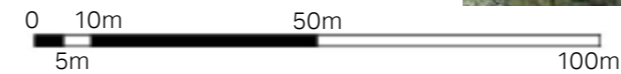


Figure 19: Housing densities of existing residential areas



- KEY
- Site boundary
  - Open space
  - New residential parcels
  - New road

Figure 20: Land use plan



### 3.7 Building Heights

The building heights plan displays the key urban design tenets intended to ensure the creation of an excellent environment. A better harmony between the parts of the masterplan may be produced by carefully considering these aspects and combining them into a specified set of criteria. This masterplan will re-enforce a rural character of the area.

Buildings of up to two storeys, excluding rooms in the roof, may be constructed in the southeast corner around the site entrance. This configuration could serve as a gateway to the site. The building height along the site's northern edge should be limited to 1 - 1.5 storeys, which aims to minimize the visual impact on the open countryside.

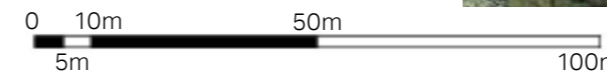
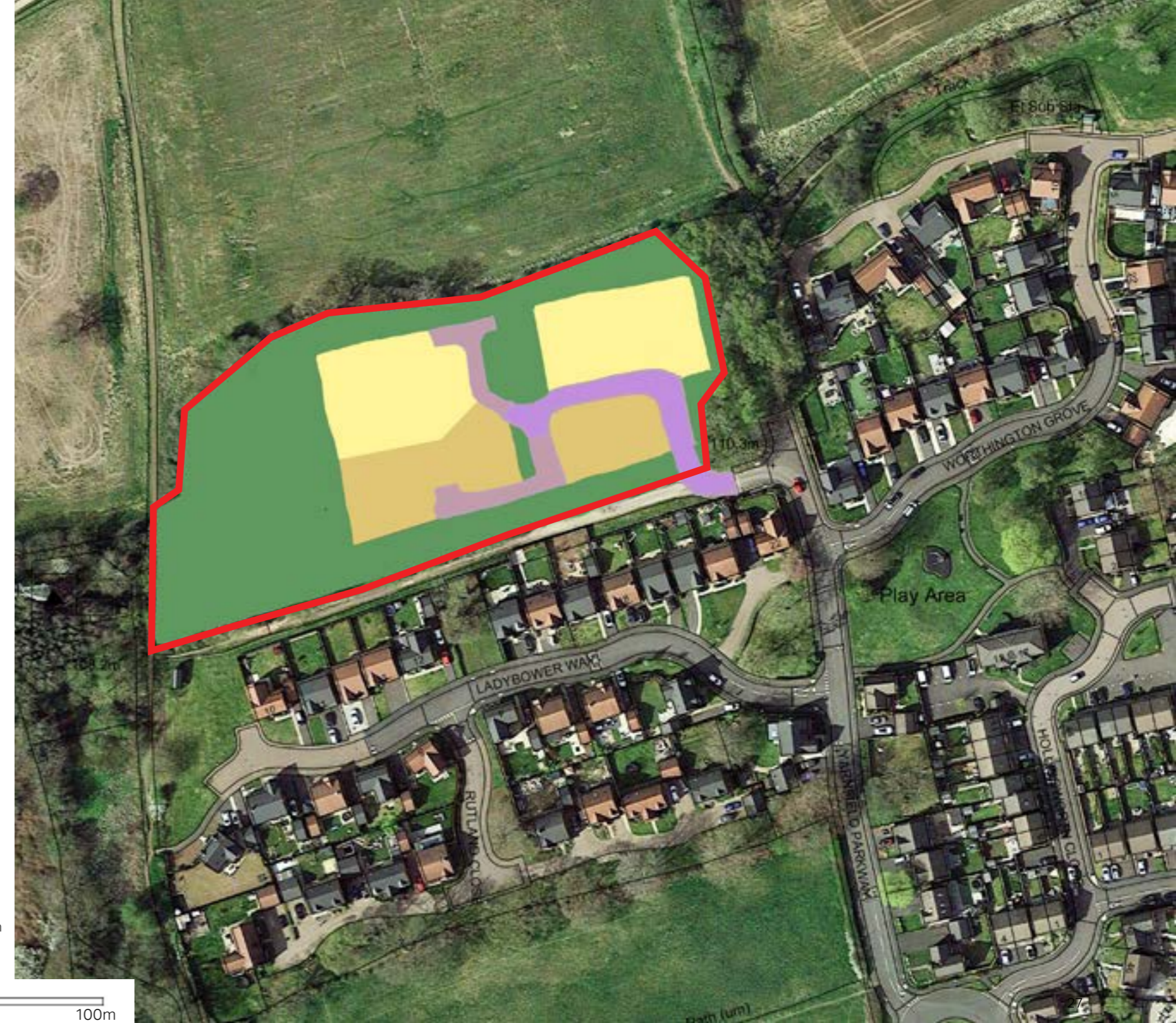


Figure 21: Precedent images showing 1, 1.5, and 2 storeys buildings



- KEY
- Site boundary
  - Open space
  - Parcel with up to 1.5 storey buildings
  - Parcel with up to 2 storey buildings
  - New road

Figure 22: Building heights plan



### 3.8 Conceptual Masterplan

The proposed development will deliver a sensitively designed scheme which is grounded in the following objectives:

- Improve the environmental quality of the site to soften Green Belt frontage to the north of the village;
- Enhance the ecological value of the site through retaining existing trees, and new habitat and open spaces creation;
- Ensure that development is effectively woven into the existing village context and enhance local character;
- The Green Belt is a vital policy tool for preventing urban sprawl and protecting natural landscapes. It is crucial that its integrity remains intact to guarantee sustainable development and strong environmental protection.

#### Fixes

- ① • A well-connected Green Infrastructure network should be established to integrate with the existing mature trees. A strong landscape buffer should be provided along the northern edges to create a soft transition into the open countryside.
- ② • Site access will be from Yarnfield Parkway.
- ③ • Buildings should, where possible, front public spaces such as footpaths and landscape nodes.

#### Flexes

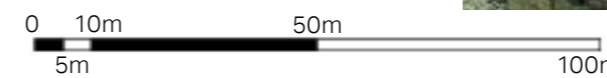
- ④ • Landscape nodes are recommended at the site's entrance gateway and central areas to create key public spaces and encourage outdoor activities.
- ⑤ • Landscape buffers should be included along the southern boundary to create a safe and attractive footpath environment.
- ⑥ • 7-10 high-quality residential units could be delivered on the site; bungalows are preferred.
- ⑦ • The building layout should be designed to complement the proposed road, ensuring an easily navigable and pleasant spatial experience.



#### KEY

- Site boundary
- Open space
- New residential parcels
- New road
- Indicative building frontage
- Existing trees
- New trees
- Landscape node
- Green infrastructure links
- Existing footpath

Figure 23: Conceptual masterplan



## Site 2 Yarnfield Park Conference Centre and Offices Masterplan

# 04



## 4. Site 2: Yarnfield Park Conference Centre and Offices

This section provides an analysis of the site and the evolution of the masterplan for the site.

### 4.1 Site visit

The Yarnfield Park Conference Centre and Offices site was originally utilised by the US Air Force as a clearing centre during WWII for aviation troops. The General Post Office Engineering Department Central Training School took over after the war in 1946. The Conference Centre remains operational. Openreach has concluded its longstanding association with Yarnfield, ceasing its use of the location for national training. Consequently, the Conference Centre has invested in refurbishing the offices to expand its conference facilities. Compass Group UK holds a lease on the property until 2039.

This site covers an area of 7.44 ha, located to the north of the original Yarnfield and built-up area. Recently built residential development areas bound it to the north and south, open countryside to the east, and area of public open space and Multi Use Play ground to the west.

The conference centre will continue operating long-term. However, the car park and vacant land to the north have posed several issues for the village. The road leading to the car park passes through residential areas, causing traffic congestion and safety concerns. The local group has chosen this site and aims to integrate the conference centre, car park, and vacant land. They consider there are opportunities to better arrange parking spaces and utilise the vacant land for development to achieve sustainable growth and create a safer environment for the village.



Figure 25: View 2: Current abandoned zones within the northern section of the site.



Figure 24: View 1: Existing car park and water tower



Figure 26: Site 1 plan and views locations

## 4.2 High level constraints

Several key site constraints are identified based on the site visit and baseline study. These issues will be integrated into the masterplan consideration process.

### Key consideration points:

- ① • Current vacant brownfield site adjacent to recently developed residential areas.
- ② • The car park entrance is within a residential area, potentially impacting local traffic and highway safety due to increased vehicle movement and potential congestion at nearby junctions. Concerns about the underutilised car park's inefficient land use, its compliance with Green Belt policies, and alignment with the site character draft policy necessitate further evaluation despite previous permissions.
- ③ • The proximity of residential areas to office buildings lacks sufficient screening, affecting transitions to the open countryside.



Figure 27: View 4: Existing housing backs on to the car park area



Figure 28: View 5: Vacant areas in the north part of the site



Figure 29: View 6: Open space to the west of the Conference Centre



Figure 30: View 7: An entrance of the existing office blocks

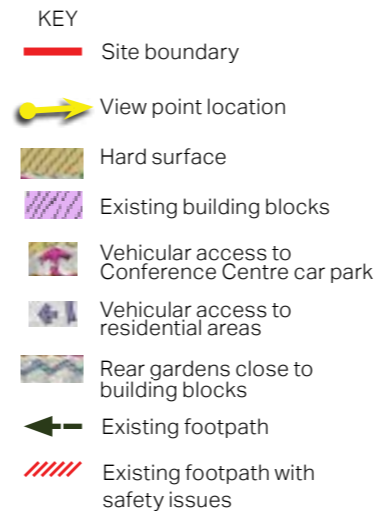


Figure 31: Site Constraints



### 4.3 Site opportunities

In response to the various constraints considerations, the following opportunities might be integrated into the masterplan:

**Key consideration points:**

- ① • The existing conference centre and associated accommodation buildings and office blocks will be retained and potentially renovated with further investment.
- ② • Add accesses from Yarnfield Parkway for mixed use areas. This approach could allow for separate accesses to plots in different land use. NB: it's preferential however to bring forward sites in a holistic masterplan and co-ordinate a street network.
- ③ • Create potential new parcels to current vacant areas and the car park, and create strong landscape screening to countryside.
- ④ • Create a landscape structure which allows for separation of uses whilst also acting as a shared community resource of all adjacent development.
- ⑤ • Create safe and convenient green links throughout the site and surrounding areas.



Figure 32: View 8: Green space and Yarnfield Park Conference Centre



Figure 33: View 9: Existing accommodation blocks



Figure 34: View 10: Existing entrance for office buildings



**KEY**

- Site boundary
- Potential open space
- Existing footpath
- Potential development parcels
- Potential road corridor
- Potential vehicular access for residential areas
- Potential vehicular access for conference centre
- Conference centre areas
- Existing footpath with safety issues to be integrated into a safe active travel network

Figure 35: Site Opportunities



## 4.4 Green Infrastructure

The master plan will provide a Green Infrastructure that is safe, well-connected, and connected to the surrounding community and landscape.

### Key consideration points:

- ① • A landscape buffer strip around the eastern edge may be created to lessen the impact on the open countryside,
- ② • A central landscape node or squares may be positioned in the centre of the site, providing the locals with excellent public areas.
- ③ • Hedgerows and tree belts will be established between the residential areas and the employment and conference centre zones to provide an standoff between the uses and enhance privacy.
- ④ • The new development areas could have a series of green spaces, including play areas for children of different ages.
- ⑤ • A cohesive network of open spaces should be developed to link residential and conference centre areas, featuring landscape nodes at central points like beneath the water tank tower and at gateway locations.



Figure 36: Precedent images of green spaces



- KEY
- Site boundary
  - Open space
  - ← Existing footpath
  - Existing trees
  - New trees
  - Landscape node / gateway
  - Green infrastructure links

Figure 37: Green Infrastructure



## 4.5 Movement network

The primary entrance to the employment areas from the site will be via Yarnfield Parkway, which is distinct from the entrances for residential zones accessed from Brookvale Drive and Hayeswater Grove. Vehicular pathways will traverse the site, linking all three access points.









Planned footpaths are set to enhance site connectivity, establishing links with the conference centre, residential zones, and the established network of footpaths. It is crucial that the site becomes seamlessly woven into its encompassing environment, harmoniously melding with Yarnfield's existing village fabric.



**Figure 38:** Precedent images showing good quality cycle routes / footpaths and roads



### KEY

-  Site boundary
-  Potential green space
-  Existing footpath
-  Potential new vehicular access if residential areas proposed
-  New vehicular access for conference centre
-  Linked access points preferred if residential development proposed.
-  Potential parking court/area
-  Potential new footpath

**Figure 39:** Movement network



## 4.6 Land use and possible capacity

The opposite plan identifies the potential areas for development and a likely land use. The configuration of these areas has been defined by vegetation constraints, visual impact, access constraints, and a commitment to maintaining green infrastructure and open space within the site boundary.

The western portion of the site shall be preserved and updated for employment and mixed-use purposes. The current conference centre and associated accommodation, office buildings are set to be retained and upgraded.

Development plots on the eastern part of the site are earmarked for residential purposes, whilst the remaining land will be utilised for open spaces and wildlife habitats.

The neighbouring residential areas have housing densities ranging from 33 to 37 dwellings per hectare (DPH). Given the site's location in the northern part of the village and its proximity to the Green Belt, a more moderate density of 25 to 35 DPH may be more appropriate, contributing to the maintenance of a rural character.

The masterplan sets out a capacity between 45 to 63 dwellings. It is envisioned that all of the housing would be family homes with gardens, as per the existing village context. However, the precise mix of housing type and tenure is not specified in detail at this stage.

**Key Land uses breakdown:**  
**Total area: 7.44 ha**  
**Open space: 5.49 ha**  
**Road area: 0.39 ha**  
**Conference Centre, accommodation, and office areas: 1.01 ha**

**Potential housing area: 1.80 ha**  
**Potential new residential units:**  
**45 units @ density of 25 DPH;**  
**54 units @ density of 30 DPH;**  
**63 units @ density of 35 DPH.**

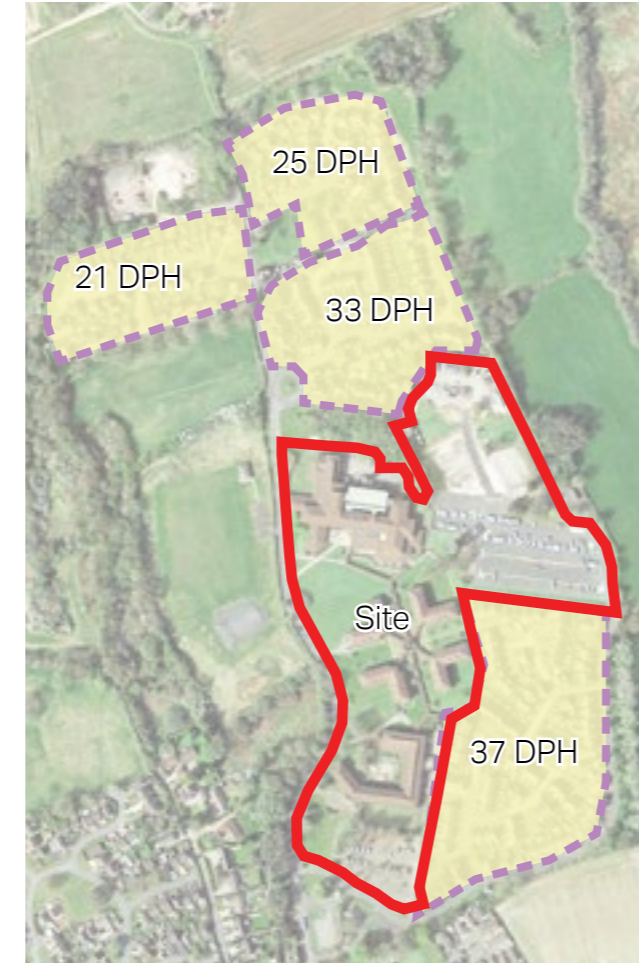


Figure 40: Densities of existing residential areas

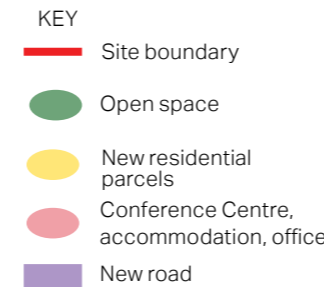


Figure 41: Land use plan



## 4.7 Building Heights

The building heights plan displays the key urban design tenets intended to ensure the creation of an excellent environment. A better harmony between the parts of the masterplan may be produced by carefully considering these aspects and combining them into a specified set of criteria. This masterplan will contribute to the rural character of the area.

Regarding the conference centre areas, the maximum building height should not exceed the existing Conference Centre, which is around 15 metres.

For any residential development, the area to the west of the parcels can have buildings up to 3 storeys to continue a conference centre character. The remaining residential areas should be limited to 2 storeys, with 2.5-storey feature buildings at key locations. Along the eastern edge where fronting the countryside, buildings should be limited to a maximum of 2 storeys to reduce the impact on the Green Belt.



**Figure 42:** Precedent images showing 1.5, 2, and 2.5 storeys residential buildings



- KEY**
- Site boundary
  - Open space
  - Parcel with up to 2 storey buildings
  - Parcel with up to 3 storey buildings
  - Existing 1 storey building (5 m)
  - Existing three storey building (15 m)
  - New road

**Figure 43:** Building heights



## 4.8 Conceptual Masterplan

The proposed development must deliver a sensitively-designed scheme which is grounded in the following objectives:

- Retain and upgrade the Conference Centre, accommodation and office buildings; relocate car parks to west and arrange accesses along Yarnfield Parkway;
- Enhance the ecological value of the site through a new green infrastructure network, habitat creation and open space preservation;
- Deliver a high-quality, inclusive and well-designed masterplan which provides desirable housing whilst addressing housing needs and demand in the area.
- A clear and sensitive response to creating a defensible edge to greenbelt, should this site come forward.

### Fixes

- ① • A strong natural edge with mature trees and hedgerows must be retained and enhanced along the eastern edges to create a clear and sensitive natural frontage to the Green Belt and countryside.
- ② • Separate accesses for the residential and conference centre areas are required.
- ③ • A well-connected Green Infrastructure network with safe footpaths must be established.

### Flexes

- ④ • A central green space located at the heart of the site should be created to provide high-quality public space.
- ⑤ • 45-63 high-quality residential units could be delivered on the site, together with renovation of the existing conference centre and associated buildings.
- ⑥ • A well-connected footpath network should be established throughout the site to provide a safe and pleasant movement network.
- ⑦ • New residential buildings could be developed on existing car parking and vacant areas in the eastern part of the site.
- ⑧ • Existing car parking should be relocated to the west, accessible from Yarnfield Parkway, and divided into smaller car parks associated with buildings.



### KEY

- Site boundary
- Open space
- New residential parcels
- New road
- Indicative building frontage
- Existing trees
- New trees
- Landscape node
- Green infrastructure links
- Existing footpath
- New vehicular access for residential areas
- New vehicular access for conference centre
- Employment and mixed-use land uses

Figure 44: Conceptual masterplan



Site 3 Former DVSA Test Centre Masterplan  
05



## 5. Site 3: Former DVSA Test Centre Masterplan

This section provides an analysis of the site and the evolution of the masterplan for the site.

### 5.1 Site visit

The original use of the site was as a large, four platform railway station serving the Royal Ordnance factory in Cold Meece during the Second World War. Once the station was decommissioned the site became a DVSA Test Centre (Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency). The 3 lane testing hall is of steel-framed construction with a metal profile roof with brick, and corrugated asbestos panels and wired glass window elevations. Office accommodation is located next to the testing bay being of single storey brick construction with a flat roof. Externally, the site has extensive hard standing and landscaped areas. The site is fenced and lit throughout. The site closed several years ago.

The site is just outside of the potential Meecebrook Garden Community proposed by Stafford Borough Council.



Figure 45: View 2: The site is fenced off and no access to the site



Figure 46: View 1: The access is blocked from the site entrance



Figure 47: Site 1 plan and views locations

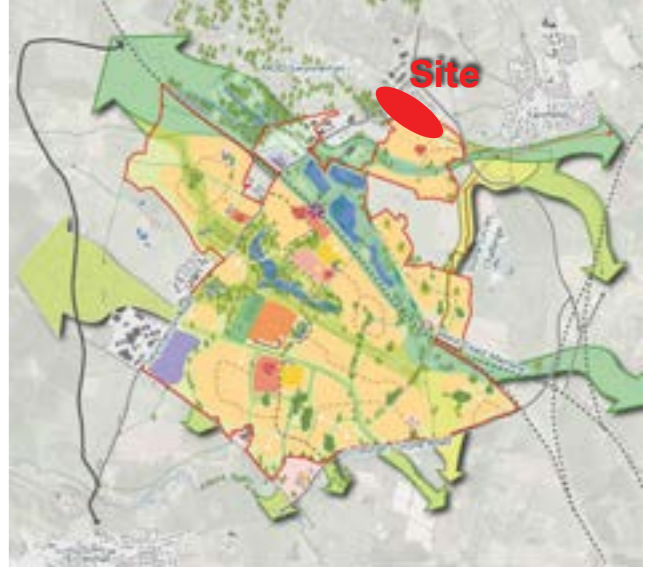


Figure 48: Masterplan shown in Meecebrook Garden Community report

## 5.2 High level constraints

Several key site constraints are concluded based on a site visit and a baseline study. These issues will be integrated into the masterplan consideration process.

### Key consideration points:

- ① • Limited points of access.
- ② • The Green Infrastructure within this site forms part of a wider network which covers the potential Garden Community.
- ③ • The site is narrow which may limit development options.
- ④ • The site is isolated, the boundaries are strongly vegetated, separating the development parcel from adjacent areas.



Figure 50: View 1: The access to the site is fenced off



Figure 49: View 2: the hard surface within the site



Figure 51: The site is shown as a strategic link within the potential garden community masterplan context



Figure 52: Site Constraints

### 5.3 Site opportunities

In response to the various constraints, the following opportunities might be integrated into the masterplan:

**Key consideration points:**

- ① • The access to be obtained from Swynnerton Road.
- ② • Potential Green Infrastructure around the site boundaries to form a part of the proposed Garden Community.
- ③ • Linear development parcels along one road within the site.
- ④ • Create safe and attractive links to future garden community and Yarnfield and Cold Meece.
- ⑤ • This site is not within or abutted by Green Belt.



Figure 53: View 3: The existing trees at the site entrance to be retained



Figure 54: Existing building opposite to the site



Figure 55: Existing buildings along The Woodlands



Figure 56: Site Opportunities

## 5.4 Green Infrastructure

This masterplan establishes a comprehensive and multi-functional green infrastructure network. It seeks to preserve the rural character imbued by the countryside landscape. The existing natural features, such as existing hedgerows and trees, have been retained where possible, and additional open spaces have been provided.

Along the north-east edge the green spaces are planned as linear open areas, serving as a strategic link. The masterplan intends to introduce two landscape nodes at the eastern and western corners of the site. Additionally, a generous landscape belt will run along the southern boundary and extend to the site access areas, minimising any adverse effects on the character of the surrounding countryside.



Figure 57: Precedent images of Green Infrastructure



Figure 58: Green Infrastructure



## 5.5 Movement network

Access to the site will be achieved by means of Swynnerton Road, utilising an internal loop road within the site.

Waving footpaths are set to enhance site connectivity along the northern edges of the site, establishing links to wider areas, Yarnfield and Cold Meece and the potential Meecebrook Garden Community.



Figure 59: Precedent images of roads with green spaces



Figure 60: Movement network



## 5.6 Land use

The opposite plan identifies the areas proposed for development and the proposed land use. The configuration of these areas has been defined by vegetation constraints, visual impact, access constraints, and a commitment to maintaining green infrastructure and open space within the site boundary.

The development parcels are designated for residential use (C3) or C2 uses such as care homes, or facilities to people who need extra care, while the remaining land is used for open spaces and wildlife habitat.

Option 1 C3 uses: The neighbouring residential areas have housing densities ranging from 8 to 15 dwellings per hectare (DPH). Given that the site's location is in the middle of these residential sites and its proximity to countryside, low density buildings could be appropriate. The masterplan outlines a capacity ranging from 6 to 12 dwellings. The vision is for all the housing to consist of spacious family homes with gardens.

Option 2 C2 uses: Up to 24 care home units could be delivered on the site, with community gardens. The actual building footprint will be determined in a later stage.



Figure 61: Densities of existing residential areas



Figure 62: Land use plan

## 5.7 Building Heights

The building heights plan displays the key urban design tenets intended to ensure the creation of an excellent environment. A better harmony between the parts of the masterplan may be produced by carefully considering these aspects and combining them into a specified set of criteria. This masterplan will complement the rural character of the area.

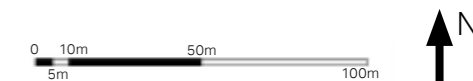
One storey buildings can be used in the eastern and western corners, around the site entrance area, which can help to create a gateway to the site. The building height for the central areas should be limited to 2 storeys, which aims to minimize the visual impact on the surrounding open countryside.



Figure 63: Precedent images showing 1 and 2 storeys buildings



Figure 64: Building heights



## 5.8 Conceptual Masterplan

The proposed development will deliver a sensitively designed scheme which is grounded in the following objectives:

- Improve the environmental quality of the site and create a sustainable and attractive community;
- Enhance the ecological value of the site through new habitat creation and open space preservation;
- Ensure that development is effectively woven into the existing village context and fabric.

### Fixes

- ① • Site access must be obtained from Swynnerton Road.
- ② • A well-connected green corridor must be established, integrating the existing mature hedgerows and woodlands.
- ③ • Landscape buffers must be retained and enhanced along the southern and eastern boundaries to create a strong natural frontage to the countryside.

### Flexes

- ④ • The building arrangement should reflect the proposed road orientation to create an enjoyable spatial experience for residents and visitors.
- ⑤ • 6-12 high-quality residential units or 24 care home units could be delivered on the site.
- ⑥ • All open spaces should be well maintained to ensure they function effectively in the long term.



Figure 65: Conceptual masterplan

Design Quality

06

## 6. Design Quality: General guidelines when presented with a development proposal

As the design guidance in this document cannot cover all design eventualities, this chapter provides a number of guidelines based on established good practice against which the design proposal should be evaluated. The aim is to assess all proposals by objectively answering the questions below. Not all the guidelines will apply to every development. The relevant ones, however, should provide an assessment as to whether the design proposal has considered the context and provided an adequate design solution. These principles should be read in conjunction with the Yarnfield Design Code Report produced by AECOM. For more details please contact Yarnfield Parish Council (link to the website: <https://www.ycm-pc.org.uk/>).

### 1

#### General design guidelines for new development:

- Integrate with existing paths, streets, circulation networks and patterns of activity;
- Reinforce or enhance the established settlement character of streets, greens, and other spaces;
- Harmonise and enhance existing settlement in terms of physical form, architecture and land use;
- Relate well to local topography and landscape features, including prominent ridge lines and long-distance views;
- Reflect, respect, and reinforce local architecture and historic distinctiveness;
- Retain and incorporate important existing features into the development;
- Respect surrounding buildings in terms of scale, height, form and massing;
- Adopt contextually appropriate materials and details;
- Provide adequate open space for the development in terms of both quantity and quality;
- Incorporate necessary services and drainage infrastructure without causing unacceptable harm to retained features;
- Ensure all components e.g. buildings, landscapes, access routes, parking and open space are well related to each other;
- Positively integrate energy efficient technologies;
- Make sufficient provision for sustainable waste management (including facilities for kerbside collection, waste separation, and minimisation where appropriate) without adverse impact on the street scene, the local landscape or the amenities of neighbours;
- Ensure that places are designed with management, maintenance and the upkeep of utilities in mind; and
- Seek to implement passive environmental design principles by, firstly, considering how the site layout can optimise beneficial solar gain and reduce energy demands (e.g. insulation), before specification of energy efficient building services and, finally, the incorporation of renewable energy sources.

## 2

### Street grid and layout:

- Does it favour accessibility and connectivity? If not, why?
- Do the new points of access and street layout have regard for all users of the development; in particular pedestrians, cyclists and those with disabilities?
- What are the essential characteristics of the existing street pattern; are these reflected in the proposal?
- How will the new design or extension integrate with the existing street arrangement?
- Are the new points of access appropriate in terms of patterns of movement?
- Do the points of access conform to the statutory technical requirements?

## 3

(Continues)

### Local green spaces, views & character:

- What are the particular characteristics of this area which have been taken into account in the design; i.e. what are the landscape qualities of the area?
- Does the proposal maintain or enhance any identified views or views in general?
- How does the proposal affect the trees on or adjacent to the site?
- Can trees be used to provide natural shading from unwanted solar gain? I.e. deciduous trees can limit solar gains in summer, while maximising them in winter.
- Has the proposal been considered within its wider physical context?
- Has the impact on the landscape quality of the area been taken into account?
- In rural locations, has the impact of the development on the tranquillity of the area been fully considered?
- How does the proposal impact on existing views which are important to the area and how are these views incorporated in the design?
- Can any new views be created?
- Is there adequate amenity space for the development?
- Does the new development respect and enhance existing amenity space?

## 3

### Local green spaces, views & character:

- Have opportunities for enhancing existing amenity spaces been explored?
- Will any communal amenity space be created? If so, how this will be used by the new owners and how will it be managed?
- Is there opportunity to increase the local area biodiversity?
- Can green space be used for natural flood prevention e.g. permeable landscaping, swales etc.?
- Can water bodies be used to provide evaporative cooling?
- Is there space to consider a ground source heat pump array, either horizontal ground loop or borehole (if excavation is required)?

## 4

### Gateway and access features:

- What is the arrival point, how is it designed?
- Does the proposal maintain or enhance the existing gaps between settlements?
- Does the proposal affect or change the setting of a listed building or listed landscape?
- Is the landscaping to be hard or soft?

## 5

(Continues)

### Buildings layout and grouping:

- What are the typical groupings of buildings?
- How have the existing groupings been reflected in the proposal?
- Are proposed groups of buildings offering variety and texture to the townscape?
- What effect would the proposal have on the streetscape?
- Does the proposal maintain the character of dwelling clusters stemming from the main road?
- Does the proposal overlook any adjacent properties or gardens? How is this mitigated?
- Subject to topography and the clustering of existing buildings, are new buildings oriented to incorporate passive solar design principles?

## 5

### Buildings layout and grouping:

- If any of the buildings were to be heated by an individual air source heat pump (ASHP), is there space to site it within the property boundary without infringing on noise and visual requirements?
- Can buildings with complementary energy profiles be clustered together such that a communal low carbon energy source could be used to the supply multiple buildings that might require energy at different times of day or night to reduce peak loads? And/or can waste heat from one building be extracted to provide cooling to that building as well as heat to another building?

## 6

### Buildings heights and roofline:

- What are the characteristics of the roofline?
- Have the proposals paid careful attention to height, form, massing and scale?
- If a higher than average building(s) is proposed, what would be the reason for making the development higher?
- Will the roof structure be capable of supporting a photovoltaic or solar thermal array either now, or in the future?
- Will the inclusion of roof mounted renewable technologies be an issue from a visual or planning perspective? If so, can they be screened from view, being careful not to cause over shading?

## 7

### Building line and boundary treatment:

- What are the characteristics of the building line?
- How has the building line been respected in the proposals?
- Has the appropriateness of the boundary treatments been considered in the context of the site?

## 8

### Household extensions:

- Does the proposed design respect the character of the area and the immediate neighbourhood, and does it have an adverse impact on neighbouring properties in relation to privacy, overbearing or overshadowing impact?
- Is the roof form of the extension appropriate to the original dwelling (considering angle of pitch)?
- Do the proposed materials match those of the existing dwelling?
- In case of side extensions, does it retain important gaps within the street scene and avoid a 'terracing effect'?
- Are there any proposed dormer roof extensions set within the roof slope?
- Does the proposed extension respond to the existing pattern of window and door openings?
- Is the side extension set back from the front of the house?
- Does the extension offer the opportunity to retrofit energy efficiency measures to the existing building?
- Can any materials be re-used in situ to reduce waste and embodied carbon?

## 9 (Continues)

### Building materials and surface treatment:

- What is the distinctive material in the area?
- Does the proposed material harmonise with the local materials?
- Does the proposal use high-quality materials?
- Have the details of the windows, doors, eaves and roof details been addressed in the context of the overall design?
- Do the new proposed materials respect or enhance the existing area or adversely change its character?
- Are recycled materials, or those with high recycled content proposed?

# 9

## Building materials and surface treatment:

- Has the embodied carbon of the materials been considered and are there options which can reduce the embodied carbon of the design? For example, wood structures and concrete alternatives.
- Can the proposed materials be locally and/or responsibly sourced? E.g. FSC timber, or certified under BES 6001, ISO 14001 Environmental Management Systems?

# 10

## Car parking:

- What parking solutions have been considered?
- Are the car spaces located and arranged in a way that is not dominant or detrimental to the sense of place?
- Has planting been considered to soften the presence of cars?
- Does the proposed car parking compromise the amenity of adjoining properties?
- Have the needs of wheelchair users been considered?
- Can electric vehicle charging points be provided?
- Can secure cycle storage be provided at an individual building level or through a central/ communal facility where appropriate?
- If covered car ports or cycle storage is included, can it incorporate roof mounted photovoltaic panels or a biodiverse roof in its design?

# 11

## Architectural details and design:

- If the proposal is within a conservation area, how are the characteristics reflected in the design?
- Does the proposal harmonise with the adjacent properties? This means that it follows the height, massing and general proportions of adjacent buildings and how it takes cues from materials and other physical characteristics.
- Does the proposal maintain or enhance the existing landscape features?
- Has the local architectural character and precedent been demonstrated in the proposals?
- If the proposal is a contemporary design, are the details and materials of a sufficiently high enough quality and does it relate specifically to the architectural characteristics and scale of the site?
- Is it possible to incorporate passive environmental design features such as larger roof overhangs, deeper window reveals and/or external louvres/shutters to provide shading in hotter months?
- Can the building designs utilise thermal mass to minimise heat transfer and provide free cooling?
- Can any external structures such as balconies be fixed to the outside of the building, as opposed to cantilevering through the building fabric to reduce thermal bridge?



**Next Step**

**07**

## 7. Next Step

This document provides a masterplan and recommendations for the potential site layouts in Yarnfield and Cold Meece and should be read in conjunction with the Yarnfield and Cold Meece Neighbourhood Plan Design Code document. The report is based on high-level reviews of the village's site context, constraints, and designations.

The review suggests that any future development should be in line with the local characteristics and the existing context. Therefore, the general design principles and concept masterplan will guide future developments in Yarnfield and Cold Meece to respect the area and conserve the existing setting, heritage, links, and village character.

The Parish Council will use this document to embed the design principles into the Neighbourhood Plan. Developers should use this document to understand the design quality required.

Overall this document provides a holistic set of design principles and conceptual masterplans for development in Yarnfield and Cold Meece, which will ensure that the village's character and appearance are protected in the event of future developments coming forward.

## About AECOM

AECOM is the world's trusted infrastructure consulting firm, delivering professional services throughout the project lifecycle — from planning, design and engineering to program and construction management. On projects spanning transportation, buildings, water, new energy and the environment, our public- and private-sector clients trust us to solve their most complex challenges. Our teams are driven by a common purpose to deliver a better world through our unrivaled technical expertise and innovation, a culture of equity, diversity and inclusion, and a commitment to environmental, social and governance priorities. AECOM is a *Fortune 500* firm and its Professional Services business had revenue of \$13.2 billion in fiscal year 2020. See how we are delivering sustainable legacies for generations to come at [aecom.com](http://aecom.com) and [@AECOM](https://twitter.com/AECOM).



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