

CABINET

3 December 2001

**Ashton Green – Phase 1
Planning, Design & Development Guidance and Requirements**

Report of the Director of Environment, Development & Commercial Services

1 Purpose of Report

To seek the approval by Cabinet to adopt the Ashton Green Phase 1 - Planning, Design & Development Requirements, as supplementary planning guidance to the City Of Leicester Local Plan.

2. Summary

Ashton Green forms a major urban extension to the north-west of the city, which is allocated in the City of Leicester Local Plan (1994) for residential development. It has been a long - standing allocation for residential development since the mid-1970s, when it formed part of the larger Beaumont Leys urban extension of the city.

A new approach to the design and development of urban extensions is proposed at Ashton Green. It is intended to develop this area to a much higher quality, in terms of design and layout, and also to incorporate a range of sustainable development principles (e.g increased energy efficiency).

The City Council will shortly be releasing the first phase of land at Ashton Green. The Planning, Design & Development Guidance will be used to guide the design and layout for this part of Ashton Green to ensure that a high standard of development is achieved. The guidance includes requirements, which seek to:

- secure a very high quality in the design and layout of buildings and spaces to produce a quality development which has a clear sense of identity and community;
- achieve the provision of an element of affordable and accessible housing in the new development;
- protect and incorporate features of landscape and ecological importance in the new development;
- ensure that the development properly contributes towards the future provision of a range of community facilities and services (including a high frequency bus service, shops and community facilities, additional education facilities etc) in the area; and

- incorporate a range of energy efficient measures in new houses (reduced energy demand and employing renewable energy sources) and achieve a more efficient use of water (reduced water consumption, sustainable urban drainage).

A community consultation exercise on the draft supplementary planning guidance was carried out in September/October 2001. The Strategic Planning & Regeneration Scrutiny Committee considered the draft guidance at its meeting on 31 October 2001.

The details of the consultation process and the comments of the Scrutiny Committee are set out in the Supporting Information.

The consultation process raised many community concerns and anxieties. As far as possible these have been detailed and addressed in the supporting information. Whilst no amendments to the draft guidance are thought necessary as a result of the comments made, it is recognised that further work will be required to build up a constructive dialogue with local people to help shape the detailed planning of Ashton Green.

3 Recommendations

3.1 CABINET is requested to:

- (a) consider the comments made via the consultation process;
- (b) consider the comments made by the Scrutiny Committee on 31st October 2001; and
- (c) adopt the Ashton Green Phase 1 – Planning, Design & Development Guidance and Requirements as supplementary planning guidance to the City of Leicester Local Plan.

4 Financial Implications

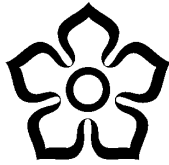
There are no financial implications directly relating to the report itself. The impact of the Planning, Design & Development Requirements on the City Council as the landowner of Ashton Green will be the subject of separate reports to members.

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Leicester
City Council

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Planning, Design & Development Guidance and Requirements**

PAPER 1 - SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Report of the Director of Environment, Development & Commercial Services

1. Details of Consultation Process.

The consultation period was started in mid-September and lasted until mid-October. The following parties were consulted:

City Council Departments

Director of Arts & Leisure
Director of Housing
Director of Social Services
Director of Education
Town Clerk (Legal Services)

Site Owner and Interested Parties

A copy of the Planning, Design & Development Requirements was sent to the landowner (Leicester City Council – Property Services).

Adjoining and neighbouring residents.

An information leaflet (attached) was posted to all houses in the Glebelands, Thurstaston Pastures and Benskins Croft developments. Copies of the full Planning, Design & Development Requirements were made available to all local residents who requested a copy.

Ward Councillors.

Copies of the leaflet and the Planning Design & Development Requirements were sent to local ward councillors in Mowmacre ward and the adjoining Beaumont Leys ward.

Community Groups

A copy of the leaflet and planning requirements was sent to the Thurcaston Glebelands Community Group, which has recently been formed. Copies have also been sent to Mowmacre Tenants & Residents Association, as well as to Birstall and Thurcaston Parish Councils.

2. Consultation Replies/Public Meetings/Response to Issues and Concerns

City Council officers had previously attended a meeting at Glebelands School on 26th June 2001 to make an initial presentation about Ashton Green and to answer questions about the project. Approximately 150 local residents attended the meeting.

Various concerns were raised at the meeting about Ashton Green, including:

- The need for the development;
- The lack of awareness of the Ashton Green proposal when neighbouring houses were bought;
- Concerns about building on more 'greenfield' land when there is 'brownfield' land available in the city;
- The capacity of Glebelands School. On-going problems associated with traffic outside the school was also raised;
- Impact on the wildlife and ecology and also the mature trees and hedgerows; and
- Concern about the provision of affordable housing in this area.

The level of concern that was raised resulted in a decision to produce the Ashton Green information leaflet that formed the basis of the consultation exercise. The leaflet was structured to address and provide a response to the above concerns.

A detailed response about the Ashton Green development was received from Thurcaston Glebelands Community Group as well as comments from Birstall Parish Council and 6 individuals.

A meeting with the Community Group committee was also held on 18.10.01, when the issues that have been raised by the group were discussed in more detail.

I have summarised the substantive comments from all respondents and grouped them into subject areas. After each set of comments a response is provided.

Principle of development.

- The proposals go against government policy in that brownfield sites should be used first before out-of-town areas.
- Development of these fields will lead to the loss of open countryside for the surrounding areas of Glebelands, Mowmacre, and Beaumont Leys.

Response

The site is allocated in the adopted City of Leicester Local Plan (1994) principally for residential development and has been a long standing residential development allocation since the mid-1970s, when it formed part of the larger Beaumont Leys urban extension of the city. Over the next 15 years, more than 16,000 homes will need to be built to meet the city's housing requirements.

While the City Council is seeking to achieve a greater proportion of housing built on previously used land (i.e. brownfield) not all of it can be provided in these locations. Work to calculate the 'urban capacity' of the city has indicated that some 'greenfield' land (including Ashton Green) will be required to be developed.

The government expects 60% of all new housing to be provided on brownfield sites, with the balance being provided on 'greenfield' urban extensions. This target is being achieved in Leicester.

Education and Schools.

- Glebelands school will soon become oversubscribed – will development mean more mobile classrooms?
- No mention of a need for additional nursery facilities or secondary school provision.
- Will there be adequate spaces at Birstall, Stonehill and Anstey Martin Schools or is Babington being considered?
- Will the current teacher to pupil ratio be maintained (as higher density housing may adversely affect average class sizes)?
- Concern that the City Council will be reactive rather than pro-active i.e. there will be a delay before additional classrooms and teachers will be made available.
- Glebelands Pre-School group is already full and wishes to expand – will there be any assistance ?

Response.

The numbers of additional pupils generated from new housing areas is calculated using a nationally agreed formula. It is estimated that a further 3 classrooms will be needed to serve the Phase 1 development. The section on Planning Obligations (4.0 c) contains a requirement that the developer contributes to the provision of additional facilities. The contributions are likely to be provided early in the development process, so future works at Glebelands School (i.e. new permanent classrooms and modifications to existing rooms and facilities) can be planned and phased in advance of them being needed.

The size of the Glebelands school site is fixed; but the additional works can be satisfactorily accommodated within the site.

Issues relating to secondary school places at Birstall Stonehill and Anstey Martin schools are matters for Leicestershire County Council as these schools lie outside of the city boundary. The nearest city secondary school is Babington Community College.

Issues relating to teacher/pupil ratios and average class sizes are matters that will be determined by the school itself. However, with the provision of additional facilities there is no reason to suppose that ratios will deteriorate.

I am currently in discussion with colleagues in the Education Department regarding the Pre-School Groups requirements.

Traffic and Roads.

- More pupils will generally lead to more traffic at Glebelands School, leading to pollution and an increased possibility of accidents – what is being done to encourage parents/children to walk to school ? How will parking problems be managed ?
- The site is suburban and in this location people will use their car unless all their needs can be satisfied in the immediate vicinity – it is therefore ludicrous to emphasise this development as 'car free'. On-street visitor parking spaces will inevitably be used by residents.
- Needs of public transport, emergency services, removals and refuse must be taken into account in design. While there may be a need to prevent rat runs, road humps can increase pollution

- What changes are planned for Greengate Lane? Given that there are no pavements on this busy road.
- The extension of Bevan Road will cause a loss of privacy because some houses have been built at a lower level.

Response.

A much better connected street network will enable more people to walk with their children to school rather than use the car. We can only encourage walking to school via community awareness campaigns or through 'safer routes to school' projects and cannot stop people from using their cars if they so wish. If parking problems around the school become so great, traffic regulation orders may need to be considered.

Comments suggesting draconian restrictions in the use of the private motor car are based on a misunderstanding. What the City Council is seeking to achieve in Ashton Green is to provide viable alternatives to the motor car so that people, if they so wish, can walk or cycle to facilities and have access by a good quality public transport service to facilities further afield.

The intention is to create a low speed, safe environment in Ashton Green. The main routes through the area will be designed to allow proper access by buses and emergency vehicles. All streets will be wide enough to allow access for removal vans and refuse lorries.

If the forthcoming transport assessment shows that improvements to Greengate Lane are needed, including a footpath/cycleway, these will be provided as part of the development.

The impact of the Bevan Road extension on existing housing would need to be assessed at any detailed planning application stage. There is currently a hedgerow and some trees, which screen properties from the future development area.

Affordable Housing.

- Where does the 30% affordable housing target come from?
- Is the "5-7.5% of rented housing in Phase 1" part of overall 30% affordable target or additional to it?
- Concentrations of affordable housing bring associated problems of noise, crime, vandalism, unemployment, etc. Insurance premiums may increase and there may be a depreciation in the value of houses.

Response.

Government guidance on planning for new housing (principally set out in Planning Policy Guidance Note 3 (PPG3)) states clearly that local authorities should provide wider housing opportunity and choice, offer a better mix in the size, type and location of housing than is currently available and seek to create mixed communities. Where there is a demonstrable lack of affordable housing to meet local needs (as is the case in cities such as Leicester) then local authorities should seek the provision of affordable housing in new housing development. If insufficient affordable housing is provided planning consent may be refused.

The City of Leicester Local Plan sets a target figure of 30% of affordable housing to be normally sought on new development sites. This would be made up of low cost owner occupied, shared ownership and rented properties. The rented element would typically comprise at least half of the amount (equivalent to between 15% and 17.5% of the total houses).

In the case of Ashton Green Phase 1 the amount of rented housing as a proportion of the total housing has been reduced to between 5% and 7.5%. This reduced amount reflects voids currently found in nearby areas such as Beaumont Leys.

The situation will be kept under review in later phases.

There is no intention to 'concentrate' affordable housing in any location.

Environment/Ecology.

- The site contains many well-established trees and hedgerows – will these be protected and maintained?
- Are there any protected wildlife species in the area?
- Large trees retained in small rear gardens can lead to on-going future maintenance problems, as well as loss of light, and hedgerows of interest should not form property boundaries

Response.

Ecological and landscape surveys will be required to be prepared to guide the design of the master plan to ensure important and healthy trees and hedgerows are retained.

Normally mature trees and hedgerows are retained in public open space or roadside verges, because of problems in maintaining them in private ownership.

Shops/Community Hall.

- Market Street concept is not universally welcomed – may not be a need for it with enlarged Beaumont Centre and quality bus service.
- Concern that shops will become gathering points for teenagers, resulting in vandalism.
- What about parking for shops and community hall?
- Community store will only be open for 5 hours per day – why not longer?
- What restrictions are there to prevent too many shops?
- Who will maintain and run the community building – short and long term?

Response.

The concept of Market Street is central to the success of Ashton Green – where a range of shops and other facilities will be available locally to serve the immediate community. It is intended that Market Street will become a lively and active focal point for the whole community; an attractive and distinctive environment which is well used and safe. The Ashton Green shops and facilities will thus serve a more local function than Beaumont Centre; and the two will complement each other, rather than compete. Parking for the shops and community facilities will be available in Market Street.

The community store will be open for 5 hours a day as a minimum requirement so that a basic level of convenience shopping is available. If a private entrepreneur is prepared to operate a shop for longer hours this will be more than welcomed, provided that it commences operation in the time-scale set out in the Planning Obligations.

Planning restrictions will prevent too many shops opening and control any other commercial activities which may adversely affect residential amenity.

The Community building is likely to be transferred to the City Council, who will manage it. The section on planning obligation requires a sum of money to be provided by the developer to cover running costs for the first 5 years of its operation.

Housing Density

- How can high-density housing fit into a high quality development? It could drag down the overall quality of Ashton Green.
- The intended density in dwellings per hectare at Ashton Green is much higher than for other development sites (e.g. Glenfrith Way, Hamilton, etc shown in Residential Land Availability – March 2001).
- Would it not make sense to put the higher density housing away from existing home owners, so that they are not forced to live next door to housing they were not expecting?
- On what basis is the need for 3-storey houses justified?
- How is a “robust building” defined?
- The proposal that the ground floors of properties on Market Street be let on short-term residential tenancies could lead to the introduction of a transient population resulting in additional management problems.
- What are Access Housing Standards?

Response.

Government guidance (PPG3) requires that new housing is built within the density range of 30-50 dwellings per hectare (net) and higher in more accessible locations. The figures from the Residential Land Availability schedules are for gross site areas. Gross site areas are typically 20% greater than net developable areas (to account for major road links, public open space and landscaped areas). All sites within the residential land availability schedules will be developed above the minimum of 30 dwellings per hectare (net) in line with PPG3.

It is anticipated that the density at Ashton Green will generally fall within the 30-50 density banding, although a small area of higher density could be possible around Market Street. For illustration the net density figures for The ‘Best Homes’ housing scheme (Deacon Road) is 60 dwellings per hectare and for Benskins Croft, 38 dwellings per hectare.

The proposed new housing immediately adjoining existing areas is therefore likely to be of a similar density, with development around Market Street similar to that achieved at Deacon Road - which is of a good design quality. Some 3-storey housing is being encouraged, especially in Market Street, to help to punctuate the development at key locations, to improve choice and to provide visual interest. 3-storey buildings already exist around Benskins Oval and these help to better define this large open area.

“Robust buildings” are those which can easily change from one use to another. These building types are suggested for some ground floor areas in Market Street, where eventually shops and other facilities are proposed but are not likely to be viable in the early years of Ashton Green. Positive ground floor uses, such as residential, could take up accommodation in the short term, avoiding the need for unsightly boarded-up shopfronts.

Access Housing Standards will ensure that all dwellings in Ashton Green are accessible for disabled people or can be easily adapted if a member of the household becomes disabled at a later date.

Village Design

- Residents should have a say in the naming of the most important street in Ashton Green. ‘Market Street’ is unacceptable being more associated with a town rather than a village. ‘Main Street’ is suggested as being more appropriate.

- How can a coherent design theme be adopted when there are already 5 distinct types in the area? How can immediate characterisation of houses (e.g satellite dishes, coloured garages) be controlled ?
- Concern about crime and safety in narrow streets and alleys. The statement “creation of a series of linked spaces and streets, well enclosed by buildings” conjures up the image of a muggers’ paradise.
- Facing windows and doors onto public areas takes away the privacy of residents.

Response.

The name ‘Market Street’ is only a suggestion. Other names for this key focal point in Ashton Green, which emerge from a community consensus, would be welcomed.

A design theme is needed (e.g. brick and roof colours, building height and massing, elevational detailing, etc.) to help provide a clear identity for the new development. This does not imply uniformity. One of the strengths of Ashton Green should be in the variety of built form. Property owners will also have the same permitted development rights to enhance their properties as other citizens.

Community safety is a very important consideration in Ashton Green. The creation of a network of connected spaces and streets follows Government guidance in PPG3, and supporting texts, in seeking to create a layout that is more traditional in character. Housing and other uses will look directly onto these streets and spaces, making them feel much safer. Isolated alleys and spaces, which are not overlooked, will not be allowed.

Play Provision.

- What assurances can be given that play facilities will be provided? Benskins Croft with 300 houses has no play areas. What amount is expected in Ashton Green?

Response.

Assuming a residential population in Phase 1 of about 1200, some 2.5 acres of children’s play space will be required together with about 4.5 acres of youth and adult outdoor play space. The precise amount of play provision will be subject to detailed negotiation with developers when the master plan is prepared. This is likely to include a play area on the un-developed northern half of Benskins Oval so that the residents of Benskins Croft have easy access to it. Wilcon Homes is shortly to provide a play area on the greenway opposite Taverners Road.

Public Transport.

- The bus service should be environmentally friendly (e.g. low emission or LPV).
- 150 houses in Glebelands will not be covered by a service stopping and terminating in Market Street.
- Bus services focussed on the city do not take account of other needs (e.g. family visits to Swithland Woods, Loughborough FE colleges)
- The frequency of services will be academic if the cost is prohibitive – particularly for those on low incomes.

Response

The most environmentally friendly option will be investigated when the bus contract is negotiated.

Additional services will be provided to serve other parts of Ashton Green when later phases come on-stream, which are likely to run closer to the northern part of Glebelands.

Subsidies can only reasonably be sought for bus services, which focus on Leicester City Centre. Bus fares will not be allowed to exceed the standard fares rates for similar length journeys elsewhere in Leicester.

Police & Security.

- What steps will be made to minimise crime and will increased police patrols be dedicated for the area?
- Is CCTV planned?
- Has the police Architectural Liaison Officer been consulted on potential crime zones?

Response.

The minimisation of crime in Ashton Green, through good urban design, is an important consideration and will be a key issue when the master plan is prepared. The Police Architectural Liaison Officer will be invited to become involved at that stage of the planning process (which will also consider the viability of any CCTV).

Environmentally Friendly Housing

- A number of issues were raised about how the Council could compel people to use environmentally friendly features (e.g low energy fridges, heating).
- What are sustainable urban drainage systems and can we be assured that they will not contain industrial effluent from Bursom Industrial Park?
- What are shelter belts?
- Who will own the wind farm, and where will it be sited?
- Can the Council demonstrate the successful use of solar panels, bio-mass CHP and wind power in new developments, or is it just an academic exercise?

Response.

The City Council can only positively encourage, and not compel, the use of low energy appliances and features in new housing. Once fitted, it would be up to the individual as to whether they are used or not – but hopefully the potential cost savings would have an influence.

Sustainable urban drainage systems are features such as ponds and wetlands used to control the amount of surface water run-off - and to thus reduce the amount of flood risk downstream. Drainage systems will not be connected to Bursom Industrial Park.

Shelter belts are tree plantations and woodlands, which are sited to deflect strong winds and shelter areas of housing.

A wind farm is very unlikely to be acceptable in Ashton Green itself because of visual impact and noise. Renewable energy could, however, be obtained from windfarms elsewhere and delivered via the national grid.

Successful examples of recent developments incorporating low energy features include Hockerton in Nottinghamshire and Beddington in London.

Council's Role.

- A good deal of concern was raised that the Ashton Green proposal has not been revealed in local authority searches. The public meeting in June was the first time that many residents became aware of this proposal.
- Can we see the outline planning application for the site?

- What developers are currently interested / involved in discussions?
- What guarantees are there that future developers will stick to the Ashton Green concept and has a system of monitoring this been devised with possible input from the local community?
- What avenues are there for compensation if properties are devalued?

Response.

The Ashton Green proposal is a long-standing residential allocation in the City of Leicester Local Plan (1994) and previous development plans dating back to the 1970s – forming part of the Beaumont Leys urban extension. The existence of the Local Plan would have been revealed in the local authority search when purchasers bought their properties in the area.

The outline planning application for Ashton Green has not been submitted, because the required surveys (traffic and environment impact), which must accompany the application, have yet to be carried out.

Developer interest in Ashton Green will become apparent once the ‘expressions of interest’ stage (planned over the next few months) has been carried out.

The City Council will seek to retain an interest in the land, to ensure that the Ashton Green concept is followed. The involvement of the local community in the Ashton Green development process would be very much welcomed and could involve a useful input into the developer selection process, the preparation of the master plan and in later on-going management issues.

The impact on the value of properties is not a planning issue and, therefore, there is no avenue for compensation.

3. Strategic Planning & Regeneration Scrutiny Committee.

The Ashton Green Phase 1 – Planning, Design & Development Guidance & Requirements was reported to the Strategic Planning & Regeneration Scrutiny Committee on 31.10.01.

A total of 16 questions were raised at the Committee by members of the public (Thurcaston Glebelands Community Group). These sought to explore and clarify many of the issues raised above. A detailed response was made by City Council officers to each of the questions.

Members of the Scrutiny Committee noted the content of the report and raised the following concerns:

- The development of Ashton Green should be designed around well connected and active streets, rather than a warren of back alleys and cul de sacs.
- How can we achieve the desired high quality of design and development and how can we ensure that this happens?
- How is the protection of the existing landscape and the ecology to be done?
- How is the bus service going to be delivered?
- Concern that the leaflet produced for the consultation exercise was not user friendly.
- How do we ensure that Ashton Green will be fully accessible particularly for the elderly?

A brief summary of the response of officers is set out below:

- *The street layout in Ashton Green will be based on the principle of the creation of a network of well-connected streets providing direct connections to the shops and facilities in the village centre. It is intended that all of the streets in Ashton Green should be designed to be fronted by houses. This will provide direct overlooking, increasing the feeling of safety for people passing along them. The use of back alleys and cul de sacs will be strongly discouraged.*
- *A high quality of design and development in Ashton Green will be achieved through the drawing up of a master plan, based on high quality planning and design objectives. The design quality will be controlled via planning conditions in any future planning applications and also via any future land sale agreements.*
- *An Environmental Impact Assessment will have to be carried out before any planning applications can be considered. This will include a survey of the important areas of landscape and ecology and measures to protect these in any new development.*
- *The bus service will be delivered via future planning obligations and also conditions in the land sale agreement.*
- *The consultation leaflet was designed to address initial concerns raised at the public meeting in July and was written to try to explain the main features of Ashton Green in a plain English format.*
- *The design and layout of Ashton Green will ensure that facilities and public spaces will be easily accessible to all, including the elderly.*

4. Conclusion.

The vast majority of comments received during the consultation exercise relate to the potential impact of the proposed development and the way that it will work in the future.

These have been addressed, as far as possible, as set out above. Whilst many concerns no doubt remain it is important remember that the Guidance is but an initial (though vital) stage in a long planning process. The remaining stages will include: preparation of the transport and environmental impact assessments; the outline planning application; possible 'call-in' by the Secretary of State; selection of Phase 1 preferred developer; preparation of the Phase 1 master plan; and, submission of detailed planning applications.

The local community will be kept informed of progress through these stages and, where practicable, encouraged to input into the process.

5. Implications Contained in this Report.

Equal Opportunities.

The above requirements seek to ensure that all public areas in the development (e.g. streets, parks, public open space and play areas) are fully accessible and available to all sections of the community (including children, women and the elderly).

The requirement for an element of affordable housing will ensure a better mix and balance within the community.

Legal Implications.

There are no direct legal implications for the City Council contained in this report. Any future development, or land disposal agreements that the City Council may pursue, will be the subject of further reports to members.

Sustainability & Environmental Implications (including EMAS).

The guidance includes measures to encourage sustainability in the new development (e.g. higher densities and lower parking standards to ensure the more efficient use of land, energy efficiency in new buildings).

The development will contribute to meeting the following EMAS target:

- 8.1 Creation of additional publicly accessible green space.

Crime & Disorder Implications.

The guidance includes measures to engender public safety and security.

6. Background Papers – Local Government Act 1972

Strategic Planning & Regeneration Scrutiny Committee 31.10.01 (Ashton Green Phase 1 – Planning, Design & Development Guidance and Requirements)

City of Leicester Local Plan (1994)

Policy & Resources Committee 15.8.00

Policy & Resources Committee 13.6.00 (Presentation by EDAW Ltd)

Environment & Development Committee 16.9.98 (Ashton Green – Development Codes)

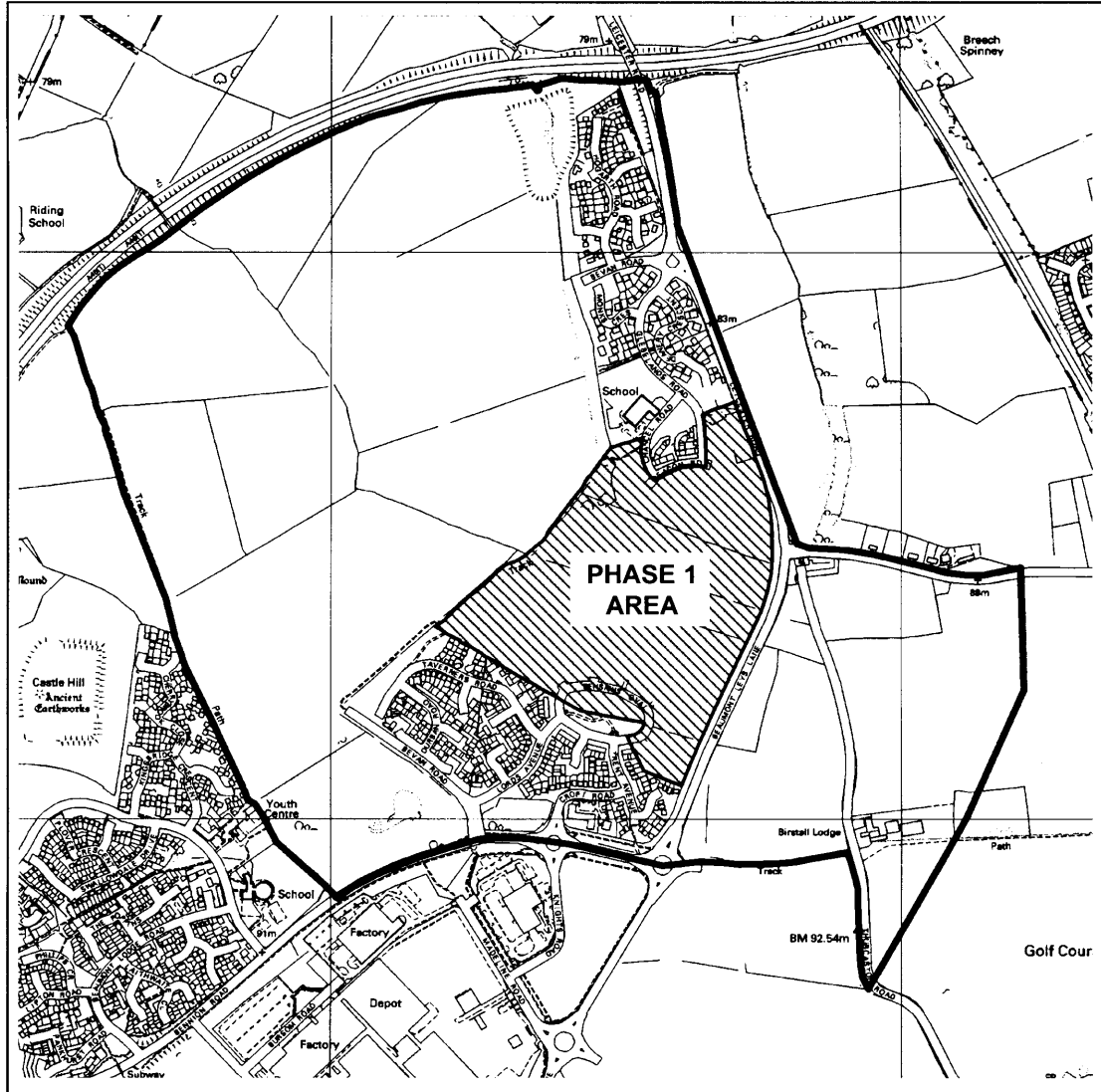
Environment & Development Committee/Policy & Resources Committee 16.9.97

7. Attached Documents.

‘Ashton Green : Creating a New Community’ (Consultation Leaflet)

Ashton Green Phase 1 Area – Planning, Design & Development Guidance and Requirements.

Ashton Green: Creating a New Community



Plan 1 Ashton Green - Site Location

1. What is this leaflet about?

The purpose of this information leaflet is to provide an introduction to 'Ashton Green'. It summarises the need for the project, its main features and the time-scale for implementation. It also attempts to address concerns raised by local people and others.

The images and plans contained in this leaflet are intended to reflect the quality of development at Ashton Green that the City Council would like to see.

2. What is Ashton Green?

Ashton Green represents a new approach to large scale housing schemes and seeks to both improve the quality in new development and to provide development that is more sustainable. The total development area measures over 90 ha (230 acres) to be located on the north-west edge of the city. It is estimated that Ashton Green will eventually contain between 3,000 to 3,500 dwellings.

Ashton Green will be developed in phases over a long period – perhaps up to 20 years. In Phase 1 the City

Council intends to release land for development between the existing housing areas of Benskins Croft and Glebelands. This site measures approximately 14 hectares (35 acres) and could contain approximately 500-600 dwellings. It is likely to take in the region of 3-5 years to build Phase 1, depending on the state of the housing market.

3. Why develop here ?

The site is allocated in the adopted City of Leicester Local Plan (1994) principally for residential development, but also includes a small local centre. It has been a long-standing residential development allocation since the mid-1970s, when it formed part of the larger Beaumont Leys urban extension of the city (Abbey District Plan 1978).

Over the next 15 years, about 15,000 homes will need to be built in Leicester to meet the city's housing requirements. Even though the City Council is seeking to achieve a greater proportion of housing built on 'previous used' land (following Central Government Guidance), not all of it can be provided in these locations. Therefore some 'greenfield' land in Leicester (including Ashton Green) will have to be developed.



4. Will it be just more suburban sprawl ?

A key aim of the Ashton Green proposal is the creation of a quality place, which will be the focus for the new community as well as for the housing development which has been built in this area in the last 10-12 years. A 'village' layout is proposed comprising a series of focal points (e.g. town squares, village greens, parks etc.) around which the development will be built. The key focus for the development is a 'Market Street' around which the shops and community facilities will be located. This will help to give the new community a real sense of identity and character.

5. What will be done to protect the environment?

The Ashton Green site contains a large number of trees and hedgerows. Before any development is permitted, a detailed survey of the area will be carried out and important areas of landscape and wildlife identified. New development will be located to minimise the impact on these features.

Ashton Green will also include a range of sustainable development features, including: higher levels of insulation in houses, energy efficient fittings within the house and re-use of water collected from roof slopes for toilets and gardens.

6. How will Ashton Green benefit local people?

As Ashton Green develops, it will enable local people to take advantage of:

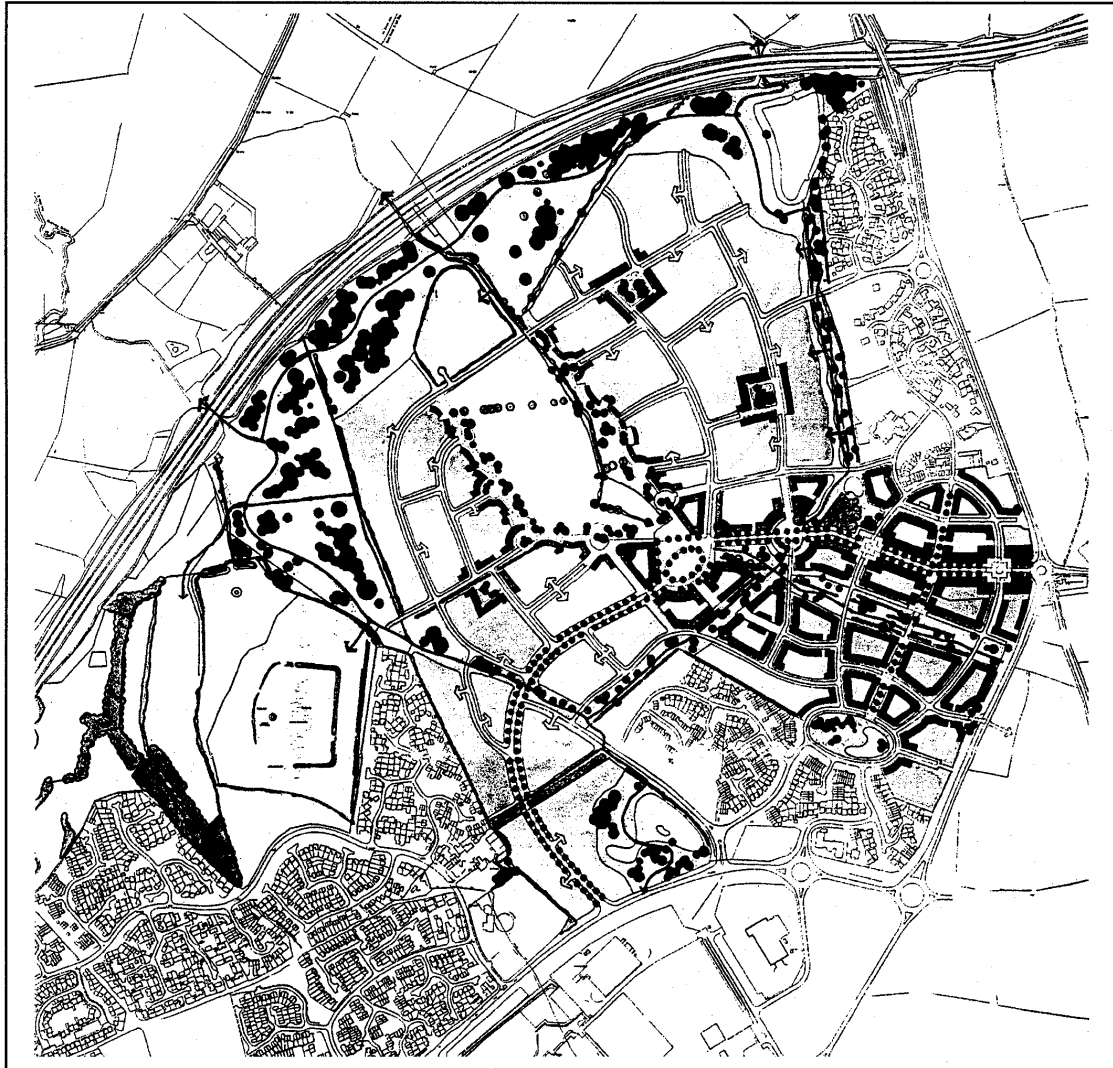
- a range of shops and facilities located within walking distance of new homes,
- regular and frequent bus services as an alternative to the car,
- good connections to make quicker and more direct access to shops and facilities particularly on foot,
- access to good public open space including new parkland.

7. How will Ashton Green be designed?

The design and layout of Ashton Green will be determined following the selection of development partners. A master plan will be commissioned, which will be expected to include the following key features:

- A new access road into the site will be created from the Beaumont Leys Lane /Greengate Lane junction. This will form the 'Market Street' which is to become the new focus for the Ashton Green area. It will have the appearance of a typical village centre containing shops and community facilities to serve the new development.
- Early connections from Benskins Croft to Glebelands via Market Street will be required, in order to focus activity on the village centre and to encourage travel to it and the nearby primary school by foot and cycle.
- New areas of public open space, including parks, play areas and landscaped areas.
- Higher density housing development will be focussed around 'Market Street' and other key locations to ensure as many people as possible live close to and thus support shops and other facilities.

Plan 2 shown overleaf, was produced by consultants for the City Council, to illustrate one way in which Ashton Green could be developed.



Plan 2: A development framework produced by EDAW Ltd. to show how Ashton Green could eventually be developed

8. When will shops and other services be provided?

Normally, in new developments shops and community facilities are built at a very late stage in the development process. The aim of the Ashton Green project is to ensure that essential community facilities are provided when they are needed and as the development continues to grow they can be extended or upgraded.

The services and facilities that are being considered in Phase 1 (with provisional target dates) include:

- A quality bus service to be provided linking Ashton Green to Beaumont Centre and onwards to the City Centre (the eventual target is for a service every 10 minutes during the day and every 20 minutes in the evenings and on Sundays). This is intended to be introduced soon after the occupation of the first house.
- A community store to be provided following the occupation of the first 100 houses (open for at least 5 hours per day).
- A doctors surgery and associated health care facilities to be provided following the occupation of 250 houses.
- A multi-use building to allow a range of community/sporting uses to be provided, following the occupation of 300 houses.



9. What will be the impact on local schools?

Glebelands Primary School is likely to reach its capacity over the next few years and provision will need to be made to cater for the increased numbers of pupils generated by the Phase 1 area. An estimate of the need for additional facilities at Glebelands School is currently being made and if required will be paid for by the developer.

It is currently estimated that a further two primary schools will be required to serve the remainder of Ashton Green. These will be provided at accessible sites within the development area.



10. What type of houses will be built?

A range of housing types and tenures will be sought in the Ashton Green development to meet the City's housing needs. This is to ensure that a balanced community is eventually formed in this development.

11. When will it happen?

Phase 1

- Community consultation (Stage 1)
Public meeting – June 2001 Consultation on 'Planning, Design & Development Requirements' – September/October 2001 (See below)
- City Council seek expressions of interest from prospective development partners for Phase 1 – Autumn 2001

- Outline planning permission for Phase 1 - Winter 2001/2
- Development partner chosen - Jan 2002
- Preparation of Master Plan for Phase 1 including community consultation (Stage 2) – Spring 2002
- Detailed planning permission for individual housing sites / work commences on site – Summer 2002.
- Completion of Phase 1 – between 2005 and 2007.

Further Phases

A similar pattern of; selection of development partner / preparation of master plan / community consultation / 3-5 year development period, is likely to be followed for subsequent phases of Ashton Green. Phases will 'overlap' depending on successful progress in delivering a quality environment and the attractiveness of the area to potential buyers. Overall it is likely to take up to 20 years for all phases to be completed.

12. What do you think of the Ashton Green proposal ?

More details about the City Council's approach to Ashton Green can be found in 'Ashton Green Phase 1 – Planning, Design & Development Requirements'

This document is currently in draft form and the Council would welcome your views and ideas about it.

If you would like to receive a copy, please contact:

Nigel Reeves
Urban Design Group
Environment & Development
Leicester City Council
New Walk Centre
Leicester LE1 6ZG

Tel : 0116 252 7239
Fax : 0116 247 1149
EMail : reevn001@leicester.gov.uk

Comments should be returned to the above address before 17th October 2001.



Ashton Green

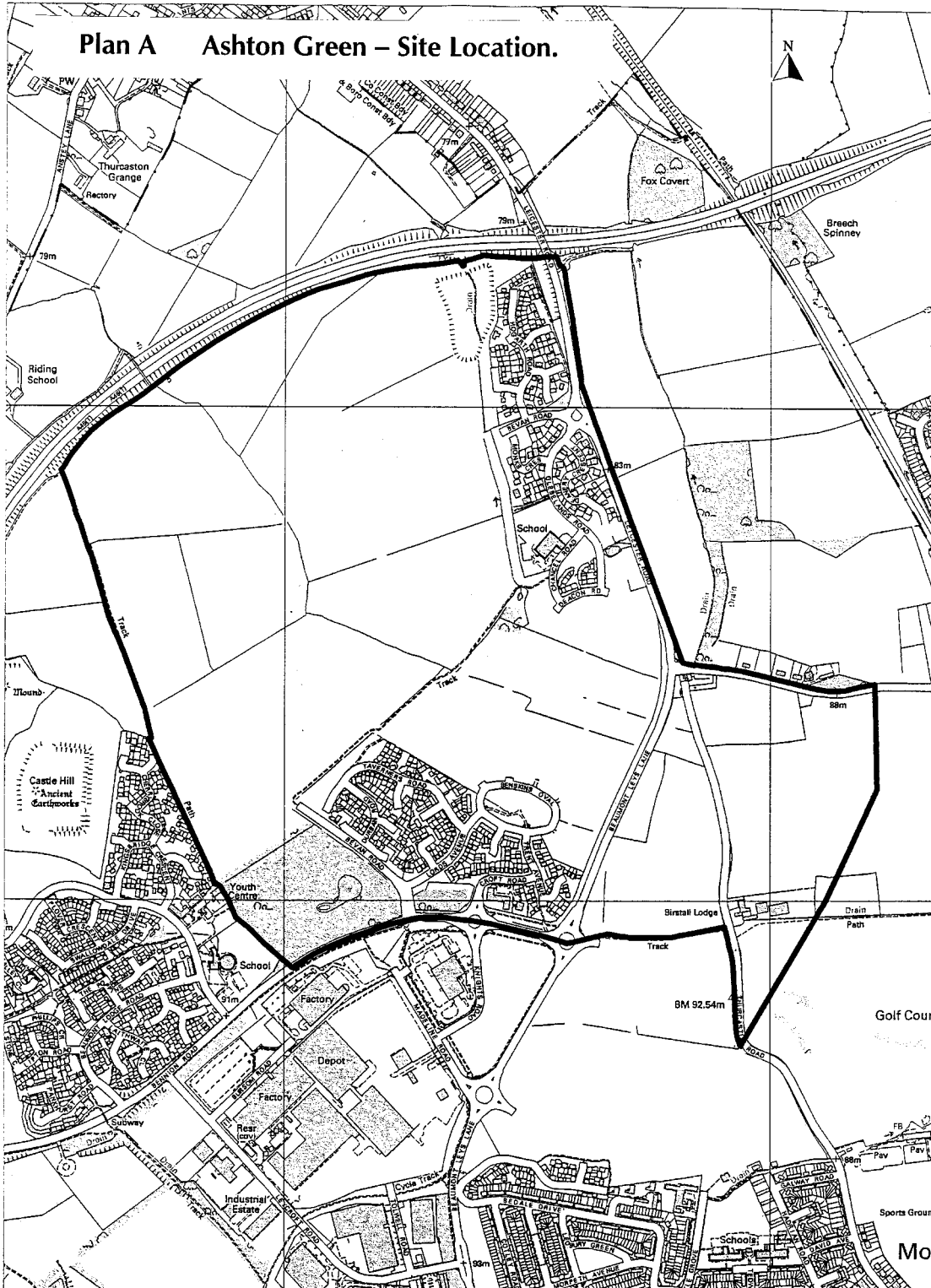
Phase 1 Area

Planning, Design & Development Guidance and Requirements

Environment & Development
Leicester City Council

December 2001

Plan A Ashton Green – Site Location.



Based upon the Ordnance Survey mapping with the permission of the Controller of H.M. Stationery Office.
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Scale 1:10000
 Date: 21/6/2001

**ASHTON GREEN
 SPECIAL POLICY AREA**

1.0 Introduction.

Ashton Green forms a major urban extension to the north west of the city. It is allocated in the City of Leicester Local Plan (1994) for housing development plus a range of complementary facilities including shops, community facilities and two new primary schools. The location of Ashton Green and its relationship to surrounding areas is shown on Plan A.

A new approach to the design and development of urban extensions is proposed at Ashton Green. It is proposed to develop Ashton Green to a much higher quality in terms of design and layout (creating a good sense of place and identity) and also to incorporate a range of sustainable development principles (increased energy efficiency, sustainable urban drainage etc).

The total site area of Ashton Green comprises 230 hectares and the target number of dwellings to eventually be provided is in the region of 3,500.

It is intended that Ashton Green be developed on a phased basis over the next 15-20 years. This document is concerned primarily with Phase 1 of this development, although many of the principles will be relevant to Ashton Green as a whole. The location of Phase 1 is shown on Plan B.

Within Phase 1 it is likely that there will be a staged release of development land, dependant on market conditions and other factors.

2.0 Ashton Green – Aims.

There are two key aims that the City Council is seeking within the Ashton Green development as a whole. These are set out below:

- ***To create a new settlement which has a clear sense of place and identity.***

This will be achieved through the creation of a clearly understood network of routes, key spaces and landmarks.

A range and mix of uses and facilities will be required in the settlement centre to create a vibrant and active focus for Ashton Green. The wider Ashton Green development will be designed to create neighbourhoods based around streets, squares and greens.

A high quality design in terms of layout and building design and massing will be required.

- ***To create a new settlement which is sustainable.***

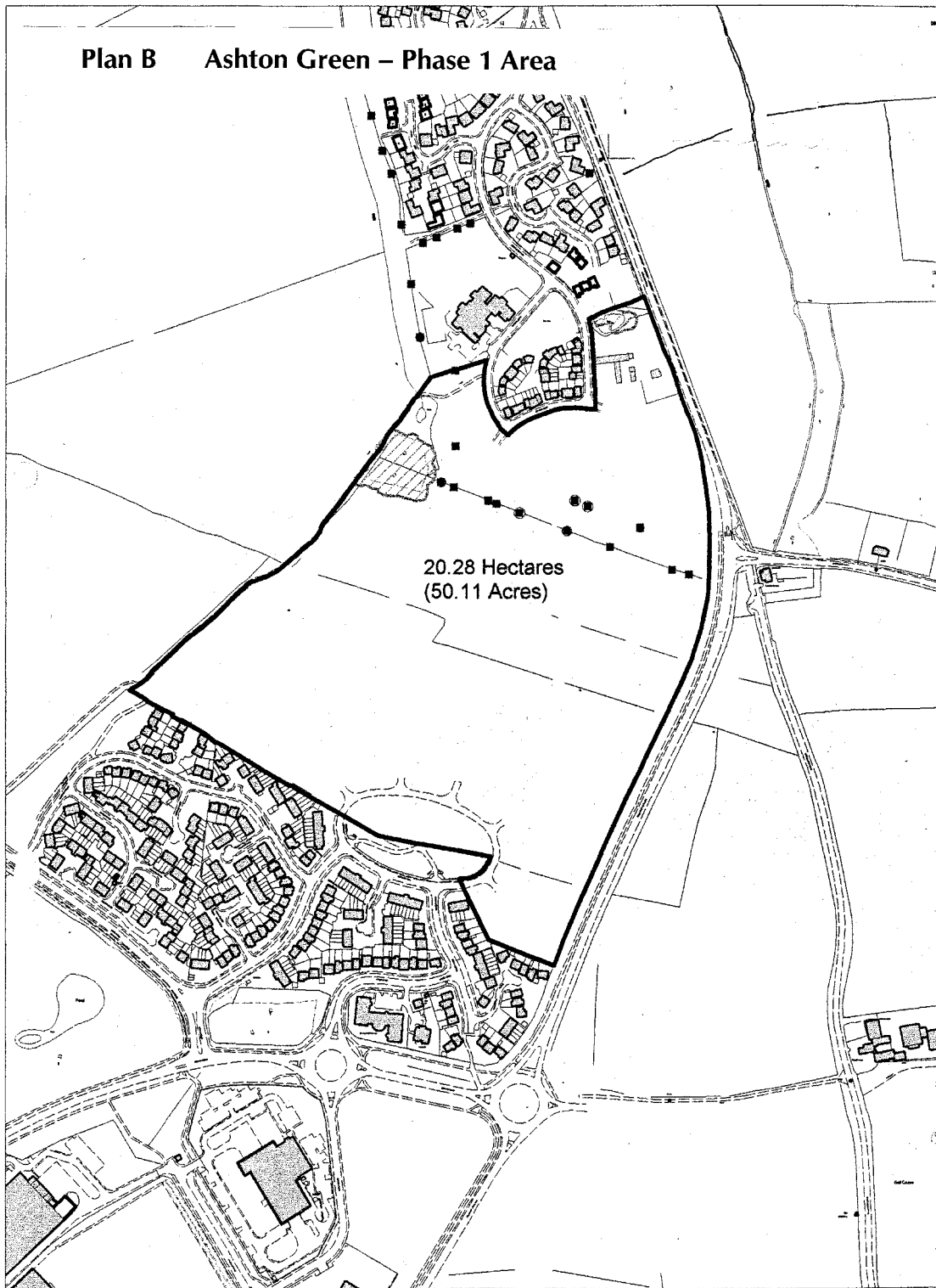
There are many features, which will be integrated within the Ashton Green development to produce a more sustainable development form.

These include:

- *higher density development, particularly around the settlement centre and in accessible locations (i.e. along and close to public transport routes)*
- *a connected street network to provide clear and direct links particularly for pedestrians and cyclists*
- *a range and mix of uses (shops, community facilities, employment) which because of their location will be easily accessible to the local community by foot and by cycle.*
- *Good accessibility by public transport*
- *Very high energy efficiency and performance in new buildings*
- *the maximisation of recycling opportunities for waste products*
- *sustainable urban drainage systems to deal with surface water run-off*

It is intended that Ashton Green will demonstrate best practice in new housing development, in both the production of high quality in both the final layout and built form and also in sustainable development practice.

Plan B Ashton Green – Phase 1 Area



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Scale 1:5000
Date: 25/1/2001

Peter Webster, Director,
Environment & Development
Leicester City Council



3.0 Phase 1 Area – Planning & Design Requirements

The total site area measures 20 ha (50 acres). It is located on the western side of Beaumont Leys Lane close to the junction with Greengate Lane. It lies between two recently built housing developments – Glebelands to the north and Benskins Croft to the south.

3.1 Planning Status

Ashton Green is a long-standing residential allocation since the mid-1970s and formed part of the Beaumont Leys urban extension of the city (Abbey District Plan 1978).

It is currently allocated in the City of Leicester Local Plan (1994), for residential development and a small local centre (containing local shopping and community facilities).

The Draft Replacement Local Plan will be placed on deposit in Autumn 2001. Ashton Green is identified in the draft replacement plan as a 'Special Policy Area' to recognise the City Council's aspirations to create a high quality and sustainable development. Ashton Green is also a very important element of the local plan's strategy making a major contribution towards meeting Leicester's housing needs over the next 10-15 years.

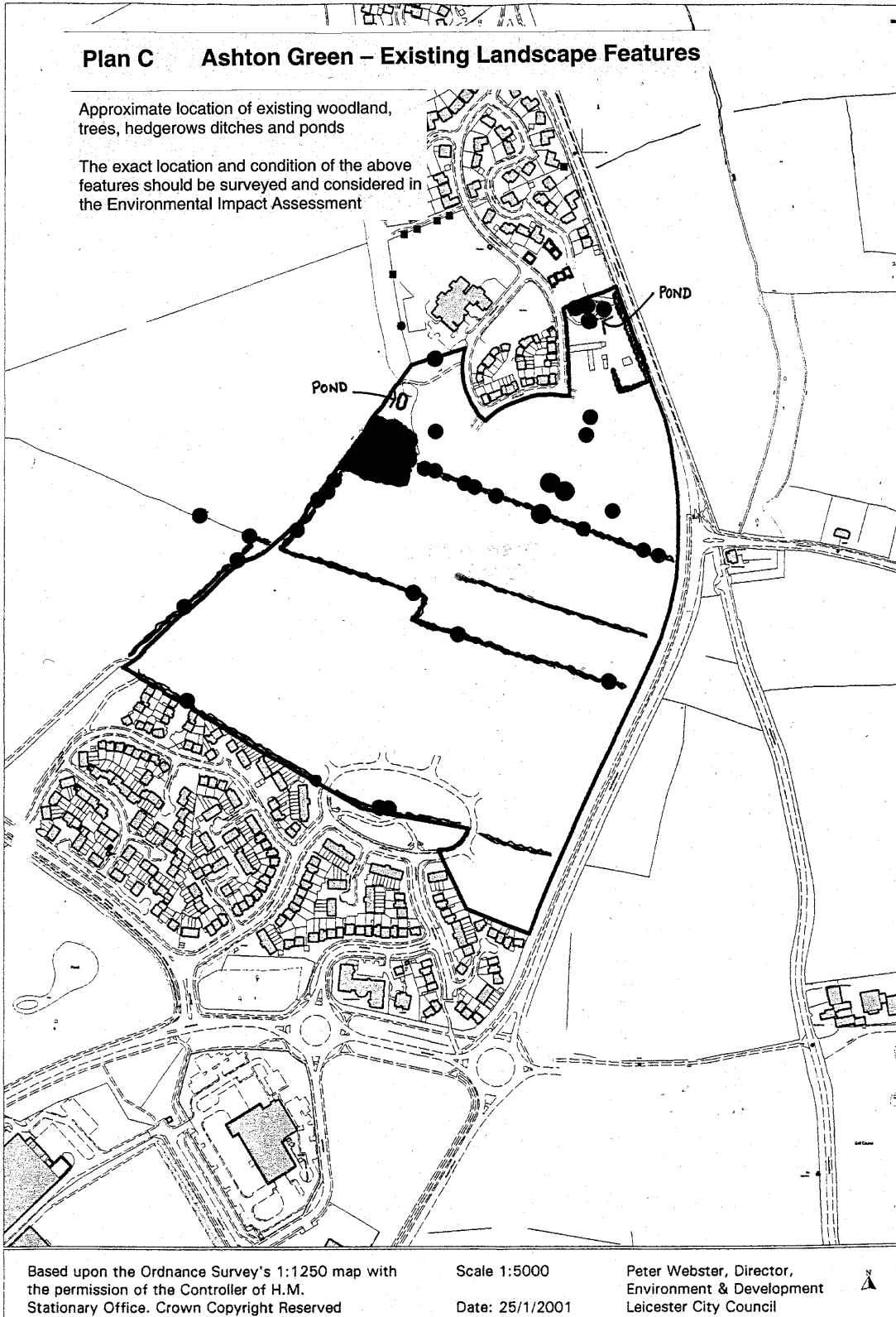
Two outline planning applications for; (a) the whole of the Ashton Green area, and (b) the Phase 1 area, are shortly to be submitted by the current landowner - Leicester City Council, Property Services Division (these will be accompanied by the necessary Transport and Environmental Impact Assessments).

Any planning obligations or planning conditions that result from the determination of the outline planning application will be also be attached to the future land sale agreement, when the site is disposed of.

3.2 Existing Landscape Features and Ecology.

Overall the Ashton Green site has little topographical variation. It contains two minor drainage catchments both draining to the Rothley Brook to the north.

The Phase 1 area is generally flat falling very gently from north to south. The land on the northern and north-western fringes of Ashton Green (outside of the Phase 1 area) slopes downwards to the Rothley Brook valley. There are attractive views from the site to the Charnwood Hills beyond.



The trees and the spinney within the Phase 1 area, are protected by the Glebelands Tree Preservation Order (N4.168). A copy of this order is set out in Appendix A. The approximate location of these trees is also shown on Plan C.

The hedgerow and depression to the west of existing housing at Glebelands is identified as a Site of Important Nature Conservation on the Site Alert Map 2000, produced by the City Council. There may also be other areas of wildlife/nature conservation value, which will need to be assessed.

Plan C provides an indication of the existing landscape features on this site, including hedgerows/ditches, trees and a small woodland area. It will be expected that many of these features will be retained within the new development, subject to a site survey (see below).

A survey of the location and condition of the existing trees and hedgerows and the nature conservation value of the area, will be required to be carried out by the selected developer to establish its full extent and value and to identify any remedial works needed.

(Part of this work may already have been carried out via the production of the Environment Impact assessment to accompany the outline planning application for Phase 1)

3.2 Site Access

A Transport Assessment (formally traffic impact assessment) **will be required** to determine the most appropriate form of access arrangement and any required improvements to the surrounding transport infrastructure. A Green Travel Plan may also be required to accompany this assessment. This will be commissioned by the City Council as part of the outline planning applications for the whole site and for the Phase 1 area.

Some key highway infrastructure improvements that are likely to be needed include:

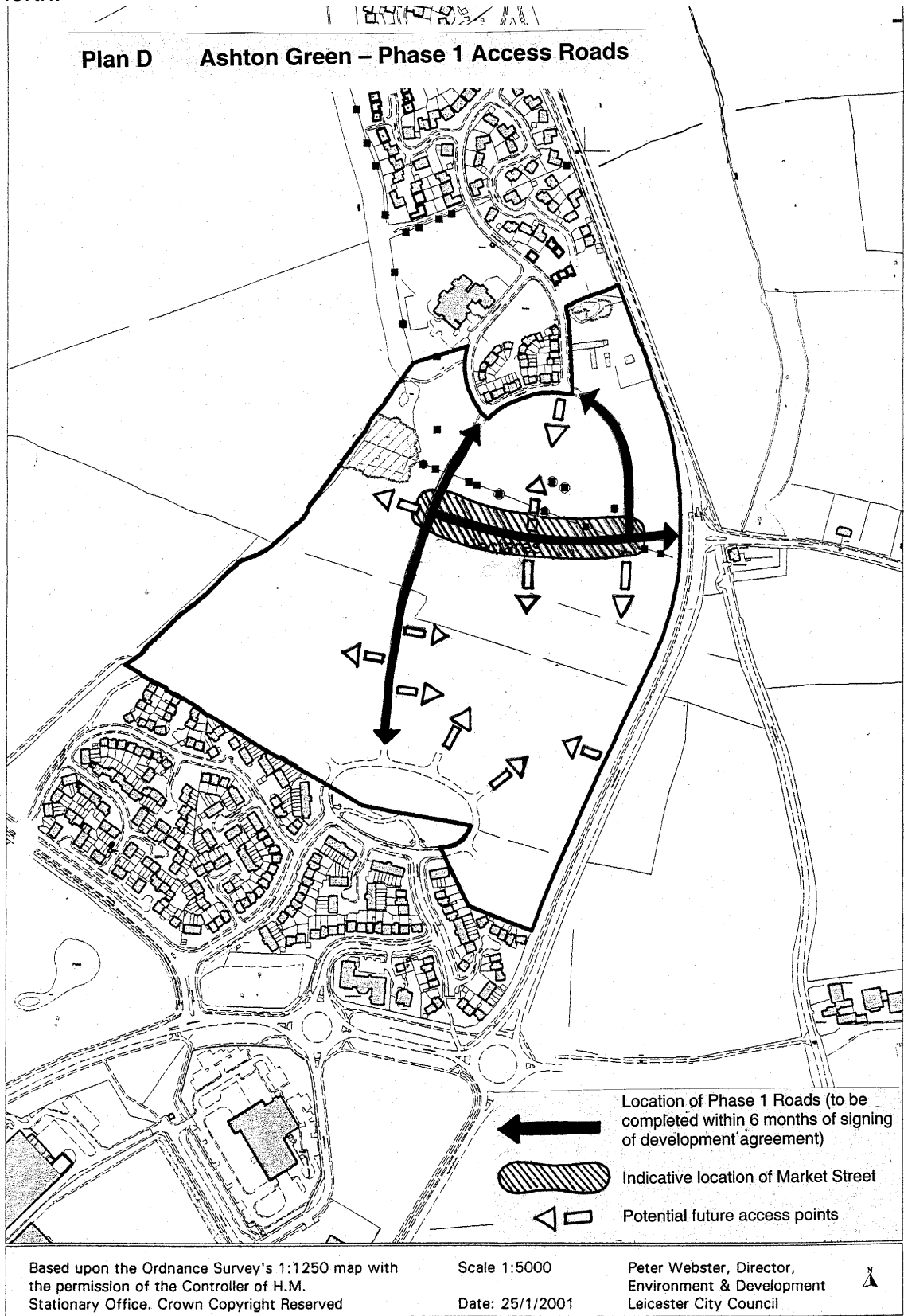
- The completion of a footpath alongside Beaumont Leys Lane and Leicester Road.
- A 'toucon' crossing, in a location to be agreed, on Leicester Road close to the Greengate Lane junction.
- Traffic calming of the whole length of Leicester Road and Beaumont Leys Lane from Bennion Road to the road over bridge across the A46 Western By-Pass.

The extent of the required highway improvements will be established via the required scoping exercise that will be carried out as part of the preparation of the transport assessment.

The main access to the site will be from Leicester Road close to the junction with Greengate Lane. **The main 'Market Street' access road and the connecting road network (as indicated on Plan D) will be provided by the Phase 1 developer.**

Market Street and the Phase 1a roads (indicated on Plan D) must be completed within 6 months of the signing of the development agreement, to

ensure early connections to Benskins Croft to the south and Glebelands to the north.



More detailed site layout, design and highway requirements, are set out in Section 5.0 below.

3.3 Site Constraints.

There are a series of site features and constraints, which will affect development of the Phase 1 area. The site features are indicated on Plan C above and the approximate location of the services listed below, are shown in Appendix D.

The main features and constraints that should be taken into account in the layout of the Phase 1 area, include:

- The existing hedgerow and ditch network and mature trees/woodland
- The spine sewer running across the site to the south of the proposed Market Street
- The 36 inch water main following roughly the same alignment
- A BT telecommunications line running along the western boundary of the Phase 1 area.

Prospective developers are recommended to carry out their own enquiries to establish and satisfy themselves of the actual position and routing of any services which may be present on the above site

3.4 Archaeology.

The site has not been subjected to a systematic archaeological survey and the area could reveal archaeological remains, which may need to be investigated and recorded prior to development.

There have been number of small archaeological finds in the wider Ashton Green area, indicating the possibility of prehistoric occupation. It also lies adjacent to Castle Hill (a scheduled ancient monument). The remains will have been significantly truncated by post medieval and modern agriculture and by former sewage disposal use, but are likely to survive immediately below the existing topsoil and will be vulnerable to the impact of the development.

An Archaeological Impact Assessment (AIA) will be required to be carried out for the Phase 1 development area. This should include both documentary appraisal and field evaluation of the site to ensure the identification and characterisation of any surviving archaeological remains and their subsequent recording.

3.5 Ground Conditions.

Although for many years the Phase 1 area has been in agricultural use (fields put to pasture), the site may have been used as part of a much wider area for the disposal of sewage sludge (this was carried out for several decades up to 1964).

Leicester City Council commissioned Pick Everard to carry out an appropriate contaminated land investigation for the site. This assumed that the proposed land use would be residential development with domestic gardens.

The report was published in September 2000 and this indicated that contaminant and soil gas levels in the Phase 1 area were found to be very low and thus the environmental risks due to soil contamination were considered to be negligible.

Although the site is therefore likely to be suitable for the proposed development without remediation, **the selected development partner(s) is strongly recommended to carry out their own survey into the ground conditions for the Phase 1 area.**

4.0 Planning Obligations.

The Ashton Green development will generate a need for a range of community facilities and services, both within the initial Phase 1 area and also in the wider development.

As the site is currently owned by the City Council, it cannot enter into a Section 106 Agreement with itself (as would normally be the case of sites owned by third parties). Therefore, any obligations which cannot be secured via a planning condition, will be required to be provided as part of any future development agreement signed between the City Council and the selected developer(s).

The Phase 1 area Planning Obligations are set out below. The later phase obligations, which may have an impact on the Phase 1 area (e.g. facilities located in Market Street but to serve the wider Ashton Green area) are also listed.

The mechanics for the delivery of the following obligations must form part of the site development master plan, which is described more fully in Section 5. This is to ensure that the delivery mechanism for the community facilities will be provided as an integrated part of the overall development of Phase 1.

4.1 Phase 1 Planning Obligations

(a) Quality Bus Service

A high quality bus service with a high frequency, will need to be provided if the residents of Ashton Green are to be encouraged to use other modes of transport instead of the car. This should be in place at the very start of development, otherwise there will be little incentive for new residents to transfer from using their cars and onto the bus.

The bus service is likely to initially terminate in Market Street and run from Ashton Green via Bennion Road to Beaumont Centre and then via Glenfrith Way and along the new A50 bus corridor to the City Centre. It is likely to be a limited stop service (not picking up inbound after Glenfrith Hospital and limited setting down points closer to the city e.g. Woodgate and Sanvey Gate), to ensure that the bus service provides a quick connection between Ashton Green and the City Centre.

Some services may be required to continue to Stonehill School at Birstall, if Ashton Green remains within the priority area for this school.

The detailed specifications for the bus services are set out below:

Years 1 and 2 (to be introduced on the occupation of the first house)

- **A 15 minute frequency daytime service – 6.00 am to 7.00 pm (Mon – Sat)**
- **A 30 minute frequency evening (7.00 pm to 11.00 pm) and Sunday/Bank Holiday service (6.00 am to 11.00 pm)**

A temporary bus waiting and turning area will need to be created in a location in Market Street, which is to be agreed in the master plan. This should be located so that it is easily accessible to both new and existing housing, but avoid areas under construction.

Years 3 - 4

- **A 10 minute frequency daytime service – 6.00 am to 7.00 pm (Mon – Sat)**
- **A 20 minute frequency evening service (7.00 pm to 11.00 pm) and Sunday/Bank Holiday service (8.00 am to 11.00 pm)**

The buses to be used on the service must conform with the public service vehicle accessibility regulations in accordance with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and be fully wheelchair accessible. Buses which have low emission levels or even those powered by alternative energy sources which are now being developed should also be strongly considered.

All buses must have provision for at least 28 seated passengers.

A bus shelter (including seating and with the ability for easy connection to a future real time information system) will be required to be provided at each designated bus stopping point.

All dwellings in the Phase 1 area must be no more than 400m walking distance from a bus stopping point. **These will be determined when the Phase 1 master plan is prepared.**

As the Phase 1 area is completed, and adjoining parts of Ashton Green released for development, there may be a need to change or extend the agreed bus route. The development agreement must be structured to allow this flexibility to happen.

(b) Shops and Community Facilities (Village Centre).

A key factor, in ensuring that a more sustainable development pattern is created at Ashton Green, is the early provision of a range of shops and community facilities to meet the immediate local needs for incoming residents, so that they do not need to travel elsewhere. These should be provided within a reasonable time scale of residents moving into the development.

The Phase 1 area is located close to existing housing developments at both Benskins Croft (300 dwellings approx.) and Glebelands (150 dwellings approx.). The early road connection from Market Street to these housing areas, will mean that a larger market for these facilities (than simply the Phase 1 area) will be present from Day 1. The existing primary school at Glebelands will also provide an attractor, resulting in people from Benskins Croft passing Market Street on their way to and from this school.

The requirements for shops and community facilities in the Ashton Green Phase 1 area is as follows:

A community shop with a net internal area on the ground floor of not less than 40 sq.m. for the sale of convenience goods, which must be open for at least 5 hours per day and must be provided following the occupation of 100

houses in the Phase 1 area. This must be operated continually for a period of 5 years, following its opening.

Once the Ashton Green development is up and running, more shops are likely to be required within Market Street to serve the needs of the wider community. The planning and urban design guidelines (see Section 5), will require that Market Street is built out within a certain period of time. This is to ensure that the main focus for the Ashton Green development is completed quickly, rather than leaving 'gap' sites empty for many years awaiting end users.

To achieve this requirement, more robust buildings must be used in key locations, which allow flexibility on the ground floor for a range of uses (e.g. shops, health facilities, community facilities, pubs/restaurants etc) to be provided. In the short term, before Ashton Green is big enough to support additional facilities, the ground floors should be used for short-term residential uses, to avoid empty buildings or 'boarded up' frontages detracting from the appearance of the village centre.

The ability to provide robust building forms in the Ashton Green village centre, will be a key determinant as to the ability of the developer to provide proper mixed-use development. Certain ground floor sites will therefore need to be identified for future end users as Ashton Green is developed.

The built form of the village centre (to be defined in the master plan) must be completed following the occupation of 400 houses in the Phase 1 area.

Other community facilities must also be provided within a specified period following commencement of the development, in order to secure a more sustainable pattern of usage.

A single doctor surgery (and associated health facilities), following the occupation of 250 houses in the Phase 1 area. This must have the ability to be extended to allow up to 5 doctors and associated facilities (e.g. health promotion, baby clinics etc.) to meet the requirements of the whole of Ashton Green.

A community building measuring a minimum of at least 500 sq.m. must be provided following the occupation of 300 houses in the Phase 1 area. This building must be designed to allow multi-use activities, including community meetings and activities, small scale sports use and also to possibly allow for a local library facility to be provided within it. It will be handed over to the local authority on completion.

In terms of the activities proposed, the building should be able to accommodate 2 badminton courts, which could later be extended (via contributions from subsequent phases of Ashton Green) to create a larger sports hall. This should eventually be able to accommodate 4 badminton courts or five a side/basketball court plus changing facilities. When part of the building is being used for sporting activities, at least one third must still be available for alternative community uses/administration.

A commuted sum will required to pay for the operation and running costs of the community building for a period of 5 years from the date of its opening. The final costings will depend on the overall design, layout and proposed facilities/usage of the building).

(c) Education.

Glebelands Primary School is located immediately to the north of the Phase 1 area and has now been open for approximately 2/3 years. It is estimated that the forecast numbers on roll will be close to capacity by 2004. This figure does not include any children from the proposed Phase 1 development.

It is estimated that the Phase 1 development will generate the need for an additional 84 places at Glebelands Primary School. Therefore an additional 3 classrooms will be required to be provided at the school, in the form of an extension, plus the internal remodelling of existing classrooms and other facilities. It is estimated that the total cost for these works will be in the region of £700,000.

There may also be the requirement for additional nursery age provision. This is still under consideration at present, because it could be provided in a new facility in Market Street rather than at Glebelands School.

There are currently sufficient surplus places in nearby secondary schools to cater for the needs generated from the Phase 1 area.

(d) Affordable Housing.

The City Council will require an element of affordable housing to be provided within Ashton Green. Generally, a target figure of 30% of housing in all new developments in the City (in excess of 25 units or on sites in excess of 1 hectare irrespective of the number of units) should be affordable. This target is set out in Policy H3a of the adopted City of Leicester Local Plan (1994)

The mix of affordable housing that is required for the Phase 1 area, should reflect the fact that there is a high proportion of this form of tenure in adjoining areas. Therefore additional rented housing should form a small proportion (i.e. 5-7.5%) of the total number of units in Phase 1. The bulk of the affordable housing requirement in Phase 1 should comprise low cost and shared ownership housing.

The situation will be reviewed for subsequent phases of Ashton Green and the requirements for these phases will be in line with on-going assessments of housing need.

Low Cost Market Dwellings can take the form of restricted floor space properties, which will sell for a lower price than other market properties. Shared ownership properties will also fall into this category.

Affordable Rented Houses are most likely to be provided by the developer in conjunction with a Registered Social Landlord, in the form of houses for rent. The developer and landowner will have to provide the subsidy required to make the scheme viable, which may be in the form of discounted land or otherwise.

These houses should be occupied only by households who are in need of affordable housing. Housing let at market or cost rents would not meet this requirement.

All affordable housing at Ashton Green should meet the Housing Corporation's Scheme Development Standards.

Further details on a suitable housing mix for the Phase 1 area, to meet the current housing need in the city, can be obtained from the City Council's Housing Department (See Contacts – Section 7.0)

(e) Accessible Housing.

The City Council is of the opinion that, while Part M of the Building Regulations will assist in providing new housing to 'visitability' standards, further provision in terms of accessibility requirements is required to meet the changing needs of occupants. The City Council 1997 Housing Needs Survey revealed that 20% of households in Leicester contain at least one person with a disability.

Therefore at least 20% of new dwellings in the Phase 1 area must be built to the city Council's own Access Housing Standards (See Appendix B).

4.2 Other Facilities/Land Uses

Other facilities/land uses that the City Council would wish to encourage to locate within the 'Market Street' include the following:

- Public house/restaurant/cafes
- Leisure development (to serve local need)
- Additional retail units (the total maximum retail floorspace must not exceed 1,000 sq.m.)
- Offices/financial and professional services (to serve local need)
- Additional health facilities (e.g. dentist practice)

The timing of these will depend to a great extent on market conditions and the potential 'catchment' population that is available at the time. Some of these may not be viable until a much larger proportion of Ashton Green is completed.

5.0 Site Layout & Urban Design Requirements.

The key to the success of Ashton Green is the achievement of a very high quality in the design and layout of buildings and spaces for the Phase 1 area. This area

(and the proposed Market Street in particular) will act as a focus for the remaining development and its success will inevitably set the standard for the rest of Ashton Green.

There are many ways to design a high quality sustainable place and it is not the purpose of this guidance to prescribe a single solution as to how the Phase 1 area should be built. Instead, a series of design performance indicators and suggestions as to how they can be met is set out below:

5.1 Need for Site Development Master Plan

A master plan showing how the Phase 1 area is to be developed must be prepared and submitted by the selected developer(s) for approval by the City Council. This must include:

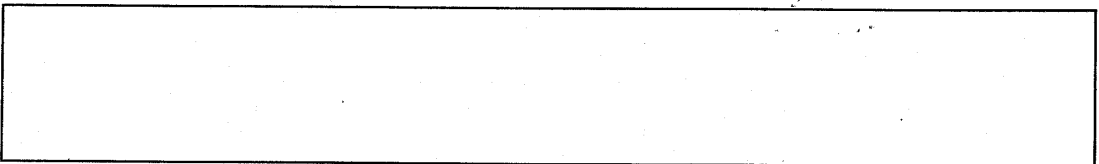
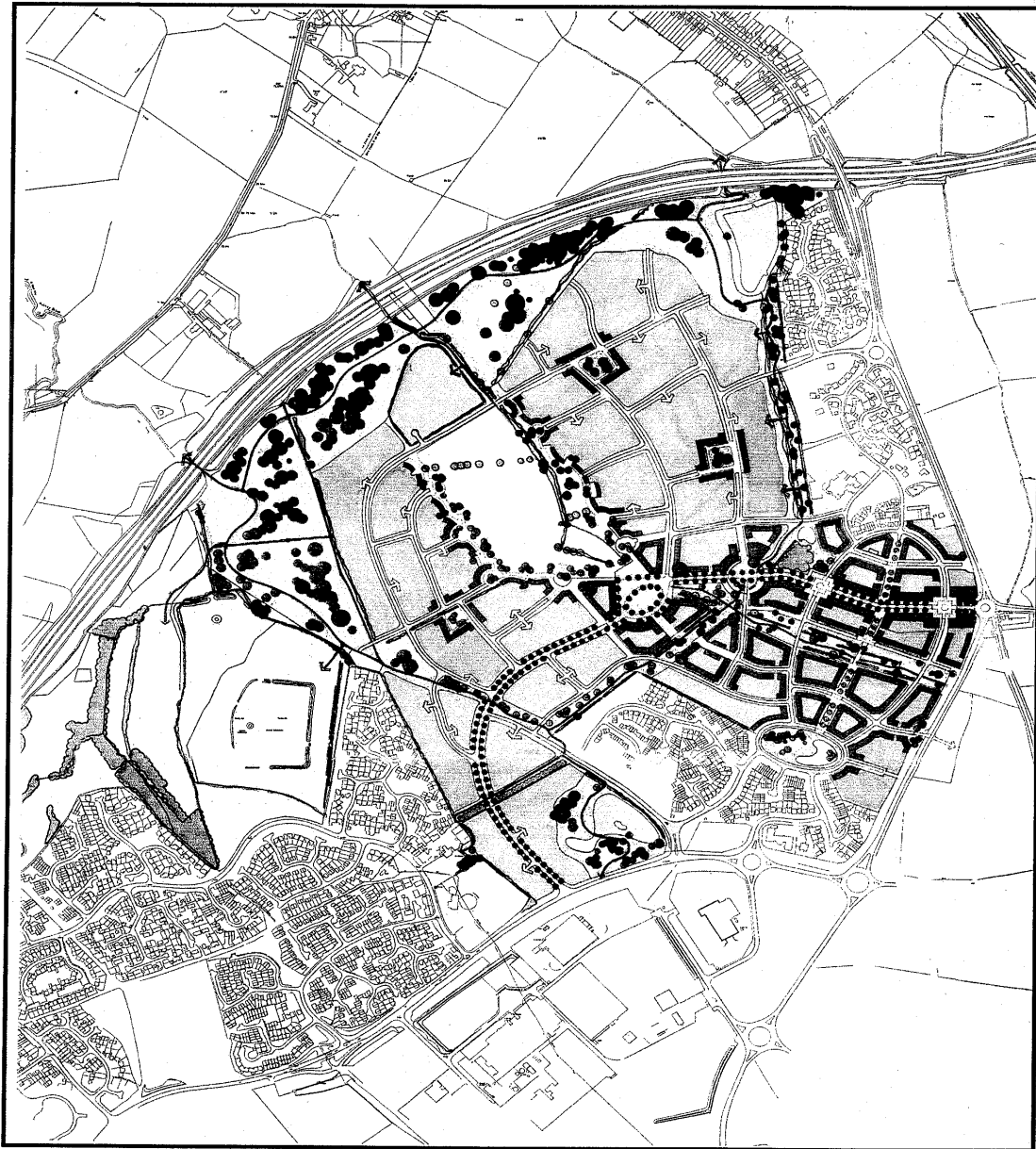
- A survey of the existing land form, natural features and sites of wildlife and ecological interest and suggestions about how they will be incorporated into the overall development proposal.
- A design statement (as required by PPG1) setting out the design rationale explaining the key decisions and design ideas that underpin the overall master plan.
- The design and layout of the key places and routes in the Phase 1 area and the proposed building form & massing that relates to and defines them.

This should include the main access road into the Phase 1 development, the main street network within it (including connections to the existing housing to the north and south) and the key public spaces that are provided. This should be demonstrated using plans, sections and three-dimensional representations.

- The land uses that are proposed to be located within Phase 1.
- The movement network (including pedestrian, cycle and public transport routes).
- The disposition of public open space and play space.
- The proposed development density for each part of the Phase 1 area.
- The phasing of development.
- Suggestions about how Phase 1 can be connected to the later phases of Ashton Green.

Plan E below, was produced for the City Council by EDAW Ltd, to show one way in which the key public spaces and links in Ashton Green could be designed and laid out. It has been provided for information purposes, but it must be stressed that other design solutions that meet the key design and site layout principles set out below (Section 5.2), could be equally valid.

Plan E – Ashton Green Development Framework (EDAW Ltd)



ashton green development framework Illustrative Plan

Scale: NTS
Date: June, 2000

EDAW

934285 Ashton Green 0-Graphics Development Framework Master plan hand drawn.cdr

5.2 Key Design and Site Layout Principles.

The areas immediately surrounding Ashton Green are characterised by typical suburban development, which tend to lack a clear sense of identity or focus. One of the key aims of the new development at Ashton Green is to create a development of high quality and which forms a strong and clearly visible identifiable focus for this area.

The main design aims to be incorporated in the layout for the Phase 1 area, are set out below:

- ***To create a memorable place with distinctive character***
- ***To ensure that the development is well connected; internally, through a network of streets and linked spaces and externally, to surrounding areas. The focus should be on people rather than traffic.***
- ***To create a high quality public realm by incorporating public space (streets, focal points, open space etc.) that is well defined, well used, attractive, safe and well maintained.***
- ***To create a sustainable place.***

These key planning and urban design principles are expanded on below.

The City Council will positively encourage development that incorporates the planning and design principles set out in 'By Design - Urban design in the planning system : towards better practice (DETR 2000) and 'Better places to live : A companion guide to PPG3 (DTLR 2001).

Design Principle 1

- ***The inclusion of a central public space within the Phase 1 area, to create a memorable place.***

It is proposed that the main access into Ashton Green should be in the form of a main street called Market Street. This will lead to or become in its own right the central public space to be located in the Phase 1 area.

The Central Public Space will provide a focal point for socialising, recreation and orientation. It could be designed as a market place, town square or village green but should be of a size sufficient to allow a range of activities to take place, as well as to cater for normal village functions such as shopping. It should also be large enough to allow trees to be planted which will eventually be able to grow to a substantial size (as found in many village settings). This model is found in many villages and small towns throughout the East Midlands and can engender a sense of identity and encourage the formation of a distinctive community or neighbourhood.

The design of this space will be determined as part of the master plan preparation, but development around the space should include the following elements:

- **Higher density development (e.g. in the form of 3 storey and terraced houses),**

- The main non-residential uses (shops, community facilities, leisure etc.) should be located around it
- The positioning of buildings on or close to the back of footway (to produce the desired level of enclosure around the space).
- A high quality of design and layout of the buildings fronting this space (in terms of building massing and placement, elevations, materials and detailing).
- The incorporation of speed reducing features in the streets surrounding and defining the space
- A high standard and design quality in terms of the landscape treatment of all surfaces between buildings.

A high quality design theme must be followed in the design and layout throughout the Phase 1 area.

This will require the provision of the highest quality elevational treatment to buildings, which face onto the key places and streets, to create a quality character for Ashton Green.

The Phase 1 area must also be easy for people to find their way around. The provision of landmark buildings must be provided in key locations (e.g at the end of vistas, at key junctions).

A variety of building styles and materials will be encouraged in the Phase 1 area, providing that a general design theme throughout Ashton Green is maintained and that local identity is coherent. Variations in materials and building styles will be particularly appropriate, where a landmark feature is needed.

Ashton Green should also reflect the local context. The design and layout of the Phase 1 area should respond to the prevailing topography, landscape and also the character found in neighbouring settlements in Leicestershire which have a clear and attractive identity and character.

Design Principle 2.

- ***A place that is well connected and easy to get around and move through, but not dominated by the motor car***

The City Council will encourage the use of Design Bulletin 32 (Residential Roads and Footpaths – 1992) and its companion guide ‘Places, Streets & Movement’ (DETR 1998), which is identified in PPG3 as a source of good practice guidance on the layout and design of new development in Ashton Green.

‘Places, Streets & Movement’ suggests that in designing new residential layouts, the design of the spaces and places should be considered first and the layout then adjusted to meet highway needs. This should result in the area being developed based primarily on the needs of people rather than the motor car.

The key highway design principles that must be achieved in the layout of Phase 1 are set out below:

- **The creation of a movement network that ensures that travel by foot, bicycle and public transport has priority.** This is best achieved using a connected street network, but restricting full connectivity for motor vehicles along some streets to prevent 'rat running'. This network should focus on the village centre and other key places/activities identified in the Phase 1 master plan.
- **Traffic speeds should be managed by the arrangement of buildings and spaces.** Physical traffic calming measures, such as speed humps and chicanes, should be regarded as back up measures where the layout alone does not produce low speeds.

The Phase 1 area will comprise a network of connected streets focussed on the 'Market Street'. This will ensure that direct connections are available for all modes of transport to the shops and other facilities, particularly for people on foot and cycle. Not all sections of the network will be fully connected for motor vehicles.

Street layouts that comprise a high proportion of cul de sacs should generally be avoided.

Speed reduction will be achieved a combination of the design of streets and places in which the placement of buildings will be a critical element. Some speed reduction measures can be incorporated to back up the above, where the layout alone does not produce lower speeds.

Generally a low speed environment, where the average vehicle speeds are below 20 mph, should be created.

The design of the street network in the Phase 1 area must take account of traffic calming at the earliest stage of the design process, and it should not be considered as an afterthought. A standard road layout with road humps every 60-80 metres will not be acceptable. The needs of public transport and the emergency services must also be taken into account in the design of the major routes.

Issues to be considered include providing smaller corner radii rather than wide sweeping curves, more frequent junctions to slow traffic through the development and using some on-street visitor parking to contribute to traffic calming and create a lower speed environment. Other features (where required) could include, chicanes and pinch points as well as raised junctions.

Most roads within the Phase 1 area apart from the main access road off Leicester Road should generally be 5.5 metres in width with 1.8m wide footways on each side. The main access road should be a minimum of 6.75m wide with footways, for bus access. Narrower carriageway widths may be accepted, where a small number of dwellings are served.

All public parts of the Phase 1 area must be fully accessible for pedestrians and cyclists as well as disabled people.

The main route network in the Phase 1 area must be designed to accommodate full public transport access.

The location of routes must ensure that at least 75% of the site is within 250m of a formal bus stop.

A bus turning and waiting area in the village centre must be provided. There may be up to 4/5 bus routes which eventually serve Ashton Green and provision for these must be made, including turning facilities, waiting areas and shelters/bus information.

Early consultation on the above design requirements with the City Council's traffic engineers in conjunction with the City Council's planners and urban designers is strongly recommended.

Design Principle 3

- **The creation of a high quality public realm**

The public realm comprises all parts of the Phase 1 area that are available and accessible for use by everyone, including the central public spaces, the street and footpath network, incidental open space, play areas etc.

It is essential that the highest quality of design and layout be achieved in these areas because the success of Ashton Green will ultimately depend on the quality of the public realm that is provided.

The arrangement of paving, planting, lighting, orientation, street furniture, signage etc will all need to be considered as part of this. This should follow a common design theme throughout the Phase 1 area.

All parts of the public realm in Phase 1, must be overlooked by buildings (with windows and entrances) to allow natural surveillance and create activity within them, so that these spaces feel safer.

The layout of the remainder of the Phase 1 area surrounding the village centre, must create a development which has a sense of place and community, through the layout of streets, buildings and spaces. It is considered that this could best be achieved by creating a series of linked spaces and streets, well enclosed by buildings. Buildings should be placed on or close to the back of the footway to define and enclose space.

New planting will be expected to make a specific contribution to development - to provide interest on streets, soften buildings, create structure and delineation and establish landmarks.

Planting proposals should form part of an integrated design approach involving the co-ordination of overall layout, access, hard landscaping, lighting, services and street furniture

Plant species should be appropriate to local ground conditions, reflect local populations and consideration given to their long term growth characteristics and maintenance requirements.

The Phase 1 area will produce a demand for amenity and public open space including equipped play space. The adopted CLLP (1994) and the draft replacement plan contain policies, which require the following levels of play provision and open space in new development:

Childrens Play Areas.

0.8 ha of childrens play space should be provided per 1000 population (pro-rata) in the Phase 1 Area and must include the following:

- **For each development of more than 15 dwellings – at least one Local Area for Play (LAP) must be provided.** The number of LAPs provided for each development is to increase in relation to the number of dwellings to ensure that the NFPA recommended ‘walking times’ to play areas are achieved.
- **For each developments of more than 50 dwellings – at least one Local Equipped Area for Play (LEAP) must be provided.** The number of LEAPs provided for each development is to increase in relation to the number of dwellings as detailed for Local Areas for Play.
- **A Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NEAP) must be provided in the Phase 1 area. This must include an enclosed ball court as well as other facilities suitable for older aged children.**

The provision of children’s play spaces should be an integral part of residential layout. The variety of types of playspace will depend on the size and type of development and identified local need. The National Playing Fields Association’s (NFPA) ‘Six Acre Standard’ (1992) sets out the minimum standard of provision that will be expected.

Detailed proposals for each of the play areas are to be approved in writing by the Director of Arts & Leisure prior to construction. Additionally, if adoption of these play areas by the city Council is desired then a commuted sum to cover maintenance costs for a period of 10 years will be required.

Youth and Adult Outdoor Play Provision.

A minimum of 1.6 ha of play space per 1000 population (pro rata) must be provided in the Phase 1 area.

Design Principle 4

- ***The creation of a sustainable place***

There are many aspects to the creation of more sustainable development, which the City Council will seek to achieve within Ashton Green.

(a) Density.

In order to support a range of shops and services within the proposed village centre (Market Street) and to create a more sustainable development form, as high a density as possible will need to be achieved within Phase 1. This is so that the maximum number of people as possible in this area, are within walking distance of these facilities.

Therefore a high density development must be achieved in the Phase 1 area. (i.e. at the higher end of the recommended density for new development in PPG3 of 30 -50 dwellings per hectare) Higher densities in excess of this will also be encouraged particularly around the village centre, but grading down on the periphery of the site where it adjoins existing housing areas

The design and layout of higher density development will provide a greater challenge than standard suburban housing layouts. This will involve resolving issues of protecting residential amenity in different ways, especially by more innovative design rather than simply relying on standard back to back distances between windows.

(b) Mixed Use.

An important element of sustainable development forms is the creation of mixed-use development instead of new areas where different uses – housing, employment, leisure – are contained in different zones. This allows people to have the opportunity to have ease of access to a range of uses without having to travel great distances in a motor car.

The Phase 1 area – in particular the village centre - provides an ideal location in which a mix of uses could be situated. This would clearly make a positive contribution to the creation of an active and vibrant centre for Ashton Green.

The City Council will therefore seek a wide range of uses in the village centre, subject to a consideration of the acceptability of the proposed use.

The list of uses (set out in Section 4.2) represents the type of uses that are being sought in this location. Other suitable uses in planning policy terms will also be actively encouraged.

Adaptable and robust building forms should be provided, particular around the village centre, which will allow for future conversions to take place at ground level over time, when the Ashton Green catchment population has increased to support these additional uses.

(C) Energy

Ashton Green is intended to demonstrate ‘best current practice’ both in the way the site consumes energy and also how it is provided. This is to be achieved

through maximising on principles of energy efficiency, whilst relying upon widespread use of renewable technologies.

The main target for the Ashton Green development is to provide **low energy houses that meet the zero carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions standard**. This would set a standard to be achieved that exceeds the current requirements in the Building Regulations.

A zero carbon dioxide house can be achieved through a combination of:

- Low energy demand, through:
 - higher levels of insulation (target figure TBA)
 - optimising dwelling orientation possibilities
 - using shelter belts and earth forms to reduce the impact of prevailing winds
 - the use of low energy appliances/heating systems

- Employing renewable energy sources, such as:
 - solar hot water systems
 - biomass combined heat and power
 - wind power
 - photo voltaic systems
 - other off-site sources

Maximum flexibility for developers is maintained by not specifying the precise modes of delivery of the targets at this stage. However, the recently concluded Energy Strategy study for Ashton Green, conducted by De Montfort University under EU Altener programme funding, demonstrates how this may be approached:

The renewable energy potential for Ashton Green has been clearly identified. Providing 100% of this resource to the proposed development can be achieved. This can be done in a variety of ways as is demonstrated in the examples set out in table 8.

Table 8:
Example strategies for providing 100% renewable energy to Ashton Green

<u>Example 1:</u>	<u>Example 2:</u>	<u>Example 3:</u>
<p style="text-align: center;">Renewable energy sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Solar hot water (on site) - Biomass CHP (off site) - Wind power (off site) <p style="text-align: center;">Assumptions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - all domestic properties have SHW heaters. - power from two E40 wind turbines 	<p style="text-align: center;">Renewable energy sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Solar hot water (on site) - Biomass CHP (off site) - Wind power (off site) - PV (on site) <p style="text-align: center;">Assumptions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - all domestic properties have SHW heaters. - power from wind is derived from two E40 turbines. - all properties have PV as well some of the non domestic buildings (coverage = 120m² of roof space on non domestic buildings) 	<p style="text-align: center;">Renewable energy sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Solar hot water (on site) - Biomass CHP (off site) <p style="text-align: center;">Assumptions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - all domestic properties have SHW heaters.

Note: References to 'on' and 'off' site relate to the likely location of energy generation. Solar Hot water heaters and PV panels will be attached to buildings in the Ashton Green Area. The biomass CHP plant and the wind farm are more likely to be located close to Ashton Green as opposed to taking up valuable land space within the area.

For the Phase 1 area, developers should demonstrate how progress towards the Zero CO2 emission target can be met.

The preferred developer will be expected to respond positively to the conclusion of the strategy for Ashton Green.

There are guidelines on overall energy requirements and possible methods of deploying renewable energy sources in the attached report (*An Energy Strategy for Ashton Green – Summary Report*) set out in Appendix C.

Further information on the above is also contained in the Government Information Report 'GIR 53 – Sustainable Homes' (DETR).

(e) Water.

Best practice in the usage of water both within the home and also in terms of surface run off, must be incorporated in the Ashton Green development (including Phase 1).

A sustainable urban drainage system (as endorsed by the Environment Agency) must be provided in Phase 1 and must be capable of being integrated into the wider Ashton Green development.

This is to prevent the discharge of pollutants into local water-courses and attenuate peak flows, particularly during rainy periods. The source of pollutants is widespread, including run-off from roads and driveways, spillages of oil and chemicals and accidental connections of foul drainage to the surface water drain.

The system must be designed so that eventually it flows into the existing Storm Detention Area located to the west of Hogarth Road. This will be required to be re-modelled to create a more naturalistic design, although this will be take place in the later phases of Ashton Green.

Further information on sustainable urban drainage is contained in the Environment Agency publication 'Protecting the Quality of our Environment – A Guide to Sustainable Urban Drainage', and in case studies reported through the CIRIA 555 project.

All households must be provided with the means by which the average water consumption can be reduced by 30%.

This can be achieved by a range of features, including low flush WC's, aerated tap and shower fittings and the re-use of water collected from roof slopes.

6.0 Future management and community consultation

The future management of the key places and open spaces in Ashton Green must be considered at the outset to ensure that a successful and well-managed development results.

The City Council will give consideration to the formation of a local management company (which has local community representation) who will have the responsibility for managing these areas. Alternatively, if any land is intended to be transferred back to the City Council, early discussions with the Director of Arts & Leisure is strongly recommended regarding the design and the level of commuted payments to cover future maintenance.

The developer will also be expected to provide funding to enable active community participation in the various stages of development at Ashton Green, particularly with regard to the future preparation the Phase 1 area master plan. This could include 'planning for real' and/or community consultation exercises, regular liaison meetings etc.

7.0 Contacts

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Ashton Green Phase 1 Planning, Design and Development Guidance & Requirements

Appendices

*Members wishing to inspect copies of these documents
should contact Nigel Reeves (x7239)
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Appendix 1	Glebelands Tree Preservation Order
Appendix 2	Leicester City Council – Access Housing Standards
Appendix 3	An Energy Strategy for Ashton Green – Summary Report
Appendix 4	Ashton Green – Location of Services.