Neighbourhood Development Order

North Benfleet

Design Statement

August 2025

ISSUE

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1.0 introduction

1.1 introduction

This Design Statement has been prepared in support of the North Benfleet Neighbourhood Development Order.

The North Benfleet Neighbourhood Development Order grants permission for development within the North Benfleet Plotlands area (**fig. 1**). The type, scale and amount of development is defined by the Order:

The North Benfleet NDO grants planning permission as described below:

> **The demolition of some existing buildings and structures and the construction of approximately 250 dwellings, a local centre with a total of up to 350 sq.m. gross internal floorspace of Class E(a)/F2(a) convenience food retail use (of no more than 280 sq.m.), Class E(b) café/restaurant, Class E(f) day nursery, and / or Class F2(b), a new road to adoptable standards with a means of access onto Pound Lane as phased development in the Mini Masterplan Area and single plot developments in the Infill Development Area defined on Plan C.**

The Order makes provision for development to be controlled through Design Codes to deliver high quality design outcomes from all new development across the Plotlands.

Consents for development under the Order will need to contain all of the necessary additional information required for Basildon to approve the scheme.

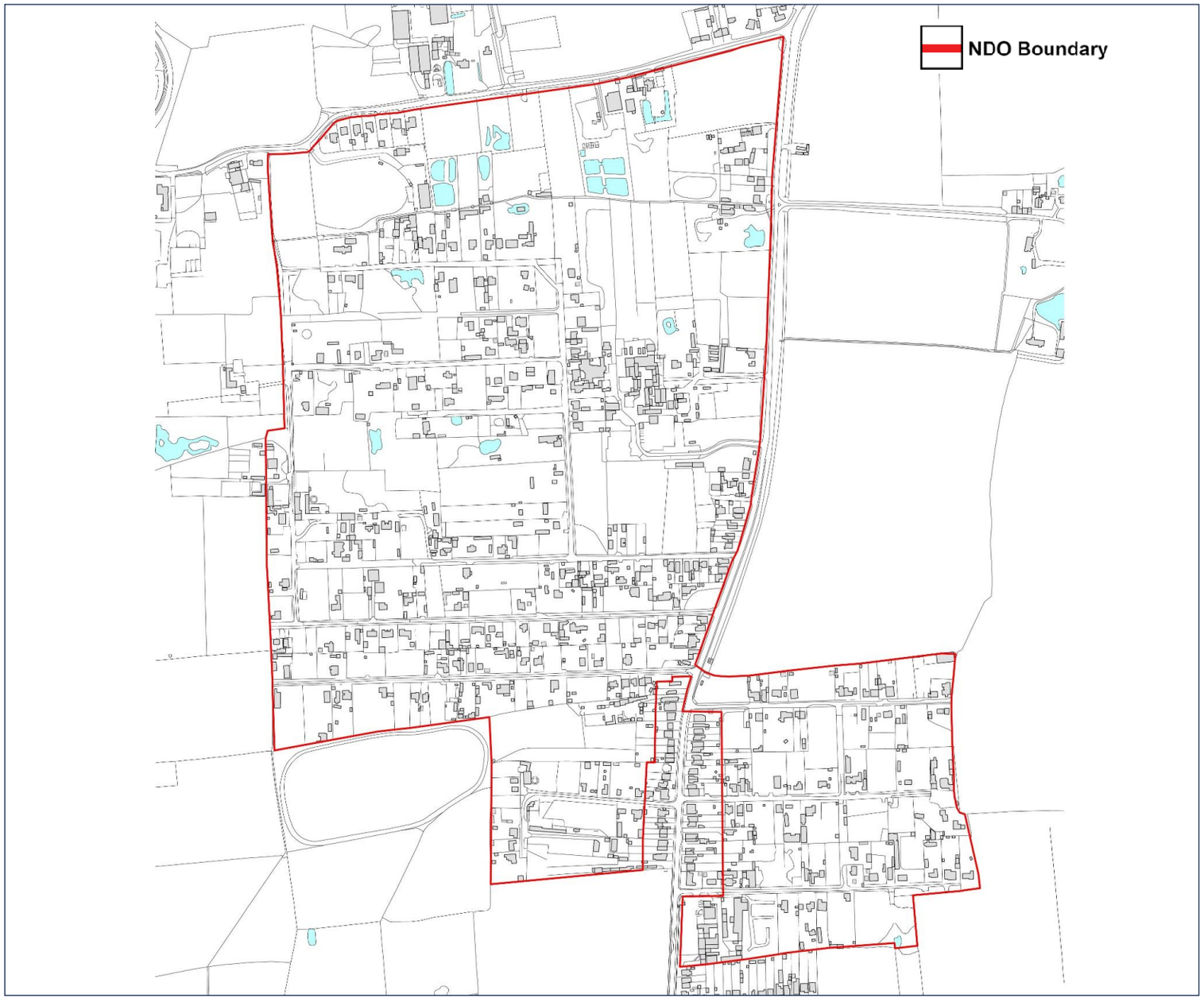

Fig.1 The North Benfleet Neighbourhood Development Order

1.0 introduction

1.2 design code

The Design Statement describes the process that led to the proposals permitted by the Order. It sets out the vision that is the basis for the Order then considers the context of the site with an analysis of both the context and the site to establish the constraints as a basis for a design response.

From this analysis, a development concept for the plotlands was established through consultation with the community and statutory stakeholders that responds to the constraints and opportunities and makes provision for an amount and type of development that meets the objectives of the vision.

The development concept has been translated into a Design Code which includes development parameters to control the layout, massing, scale and form of buildings, and the relationship to their surrounds. The Order which grants planning approval for development within the plotlands, includes a number of Conditions that will have to be discharged before the development can commence. These Conditions will ensure the detailed design proposals are compliant with the statutory and technical standards that would be required through a planning application.

The Design Code includes guidance on the design and technical matters that will need to be addressed to discharge the Order Conditions.

1.3 Environmental Impact

The Proposed Development is not located within an environmentally 'sensitive area' as defined by Regulation 2(1) of the EIA Regulations. However, the total area of the Proposed Development Site is approximately 79.8 ha comprising approximately 22.5 ha of developable land for the phased areas and 42.0 ha of developed plotland area where infill will be permitted.

Therefore, the North Benfleet NDO meets the above Schedule 2 category 10(b) thresholds and a formal request for an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) screening opinion was submitted pursuant to Regulation 6 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 as part of the Regulation 21 consultation.

The Secretary of State confirmed that the proposed development described in the request and the documents submitted with it, **is not 'EIA development'** within the meaning of the 2017 Regulations.

The EIA Screening report which concluded that the Proposed Development is not likely to result in significant adverse effects on the environment and does not constitute EIA development can be found as part of the supporting evidence for the Order.

1.4 The Green Belt

Both North Benfleet and the adjacent village of Bowers Gifford are located within the London Area Green Belt and although the Order can permit development in the Green Belt, it is conditional on it being demonstrated that the development will not have detrimental impacts on the purposes of the Green Belt.

Hankinson Duckett Associates (HDA) carried out an independent Green Belt Assessment of 8 sites located within the Green Belt in Basildon Borough which included the North Benfleet Plotlands and the study forms part of the evidence base for the Neighbourhood Development Order.

The Green Belt Study's summary judgement of the North Benfleet Plotlands was that; *The site has a very limited contribution to the overall aims and purposes of the Green Belt and could be developed without significant harm to the wider Green Belt designation.*

The *Bowers Gifford & North Benfleet Neighbourhood Development Orders: Green Belt Study of NDO sites* can be found as part of the supporting evidence for the Order.

2.0 the vision

2.1 the vision

The vision for the North Benfleet Plotlands evolved through a process that began with the Bowers Gifford and North Benfleet Neighbourhood Plan (BGNBNP) whilst the Borough Council was in the process of preparing its new Local Plan.

The BGNBNP aimed to address the disconnect between the Plotlands and the rest of the community, which has been exacerbated by a highly restrictive Green Belt policy that has led to considerable unauthorised development that has detracted from the special character of the area. To achieve this the BGNBNP proposed a policy to remove and inset the North Benfleet Plotlands settlement in the Green Belt through a Neighbourhood Development Order to allow the development of vacant or under-used plots for new homes.

The Neighbourhood Plan was put on hold when the Basildon Local Plan was withdrawn but the Parish Council decided to use the work of the Neighbourhood Plan to produce a Neighbourhood Development Order (NDO) to help deliver the vision and keep future decisions in the hands of the local community.

Through ongoing consultation with the community and landowners the BGNBNP vision was adapted and evolved into a vision for the North Benfleet Plotlands.

The vision for the North Benfleet Plotlands is to deliver improvements to the environment and community infrastructure that are sympathetic to the character and setting of the plotlands by unlocking development through the Order that creates opportunities for new homes, a local centre, new green infrastructure and enhancements to the highways and movement infrastructure. These improvements will also contribute to the 'one village' aspiration for North Benfleet and Bowers Gifford.

2.0 the vision

2.2 Key Objectives

The following objectives for delivering this vision were agreed during this process and were used to draft the NDO and develop the Design Code.

Character:

• Be a development that respects the local landscape context and local vernacular.

• Use the plotlands layout and character to inform the overall structure, scale and order of spaces.

• Use open space to make the place distinctive and to aid legibility.

• Work within the height, massing and character of the plotlands building typology to reinforce the identity and historic legacy of the plotlands.

• Reflect the materials and variety of the plotlands.

Community:

• Provide a range of housing to suit different lifestyles and cater for a wide range of people.

• Introduce a shop and community facilities to provide for the basic daily needs of the community. - helping foster a strong sense of community

• Create open space as a focus for the plotlands community.

• Provide a 'people-focused' network of streets that are not dominated by cars.

Connectivity:

• Create a clear hierarchy of streets that are safe and attractive to use

• Provide a new road network with provision for footpaths and cycling.

• Improve the existing road network with a focus on shared use.

• Improve connections into the wider footpath network and access to Basildon and the existing local employment areas.

Climate:

• Ensure that new houses are designed so that access to cycles is as convenient as access for motor vehicles.

• Protect against flooding through a SuDS approach to drainage design.

• Building layout and design to consider orientation and façades to achieve passive design benefits.

• Conserve and improve the existing green and blue corridors to enhance opportunities for wildlife.

• Encourage recycling through community BRING sites and household waste management.



3.0 analysis

3.1 the context

The North Benfleet Plotlands is located immediately north of the village of Bowers Gifford and to the east of Basildon town. It is in the London Area Green Belt and one of the largest of the thirteen plotlands in the Borough with an area of around 83 Ha and 240 dwellings.

It sits within a triangular patchwork of undeveloped fields defined by the major road network with the urban edge of Basildon 500m to the west, the A127 500m to the north and the A130 around 1.3km to the south and east. To the east, South Benfleet extends up to the A130 as an urban fringe to Southend on Sea.

The rail stations of Pitsea and Basildon are 2.5km and 5km away with Basildon offering a wide range of facilities and employment opportunities.

Despite the proximity of Basildon and the major roads, North Benfleet maintains a sense of separation and of being in a rural setting.

The North Benfleet plotlands is in two parcels (**Fig. 2**). The main parcel (**A**) is to the west of Pound Lane with a smaller parcel (**B**) to the south and east of Pound Lane where it joins onto Bowers Gifford.

To the west is a 500m green gap between North Benfleet and Basildon with field boundaries and the Woodland blocks around Rushley Park and along the edge of Basildon reinforcing the separation between the two settlements.

Locally, the topography is relatively flat with the land rising gently to the east and All Saints Church sitting on the higher ground overlooking the slope down to Pound Lane which forms the eastern boundary of North Benfleet.



Fig.2 The North Benfleet context aerial

3.0 analysis

The northern boundary of North Benfleet (**photo 1**) is defined by Burnt Mills Road, a rural road bordered by hedge lines. It has no footpaths and is separated from the A127 to the north by open fields.

The eastern boundary of the main parcel is along Pound Lane it is a combination of residential frontages between Osborne Road and Cat Tree Lane, and an established landscape buffer of hedge line and trees (**photo 2**) between Cat Tree Lane and Burnt Mills Road

Open fields run to the east of Pound Lane up to the A130 with a continuous landscape belt along Pound Lane. The smaller southern parcel directly adjoins arable fields and the woodland block of Page Woods (**photo 3**).

The southern boundary of the main parcel is separated from Bowers Gifford by a group of fields with the field to the north of Homestead Road forming the only open gap between the two settlements (**photo 4**). The smaller southern parcel joins Bowers Gifford along the back garden boundary of the properties along Page Road (**photo 5**).

Along the western boundary back garden edge properties Upper Avenue contained by hedge line (**photo 6**) which continues along the undeveloped edge to the north alongside the public footpath (**photo 7**) that runs from Acacia Road north to Burnt Mills Road. To the west of this boundary a 500m gap between North Benfleet and Basildon of fields and woodland including Rushley Park reinforces the separation between the two settlements.



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3.2 Planning

The adopted Local Plan for BBC comprises the Basildon District Local Plan Saved Policies 2007, which originally formed part of the Basildon District Local Plan, adopted in March 1998 with Alterations in September 1999. The Saved Policies represent the local planning policies currently applied by the Council to inform determination of planning applications in the Borough and enforce planning control.

The proposals map that accompanied the Basildon District Local Plan identifies 13 plotland areas, which include North Benfleet. Policy BAS GB7 was saved in 2007 and states:

'Except as outlined in policy BAS GB8, the re-use or adaptation of suitable buildings will be allowed in the Green Belt provided that:

i) the building is in keeping with its surroundings by reason of its form, bulk and general design, and the conversion works proposed would not be detrimental to the character of the building itself;

ii) the creation of any residential curtilage does not harm the openness or visual amenities of the green belt;

iii) the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction, and are capable of conversion without major or complete reconstruction, other than limited extension;

iv) the proposed use would not be significantly more harmful to residential and visual amenities than the previous use and conflict with the openness of the green belt;

v) the proposed use would not result in inappropriate outside storage of any materials, machinery and/or vehicles; and

i) the surrounding roads should be adequate to accommodate the increase in vehicle traffic generated, having regard to the physical and environmental capacity of the roads and their function in the county road hierarchy.'

A draft new local plan for BBC was prepared and submitted to the Planning Inspectorate, however this was withdrawn in March 2022. BBC is in the process of preparing a new Local Plan which will set out the overall planning framework to support growth and development in the Borough. The new Local Plan will cover the entire Basildon administrative area and include strategic priorities and a long-term vision for the area. It is anticipated that the draft new Local Plan will be published at the end of 2025 and adopted at the end of 2027.



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3.0 analysis

3.3 The History of plotlands

The plotlands as a typology developed in the south-east of England over a seventy-year period, starting with the agricultural depression of the 1870s with a peak of activity in the 1920s and 1930s. Several interrelated factors contributed to their development including

The decline of agricultural prices reducing the value of areas of poor soil, like South Essex, the development of mass transport with the London to Southend line driving the development of the South Essex plotlands, the absence of a strict planning framework and the enforcement of existing building regulations.

The term plotlands refers to their planning as a regular layout plots generally 50 ft (15m) wide and 150ft to 200ft (45m - 60m) deep laid out on a gridded road structure.

Change, following the Second World War, including increased control on development through the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act, the establishment of Green Belts, the normalisation of building standards and the wave of New Town construction beyond the Green Belts, gave local and central government new tools to pursue an underlying antipathy to the plotlands, undermining the vitality of the existing plotlands and making the creation of new plotlands an impossibility.

The 1922 OS mapping (**Fig. 3**) shows the southern land parcels yet to be subdivided into plots. In the northern part, the two north-south roads of Upper and Lower Avenue are in place but there are few plots developed, and the fields around Smilers Farm between Pound Lane and Lower Avenue have no plot development.

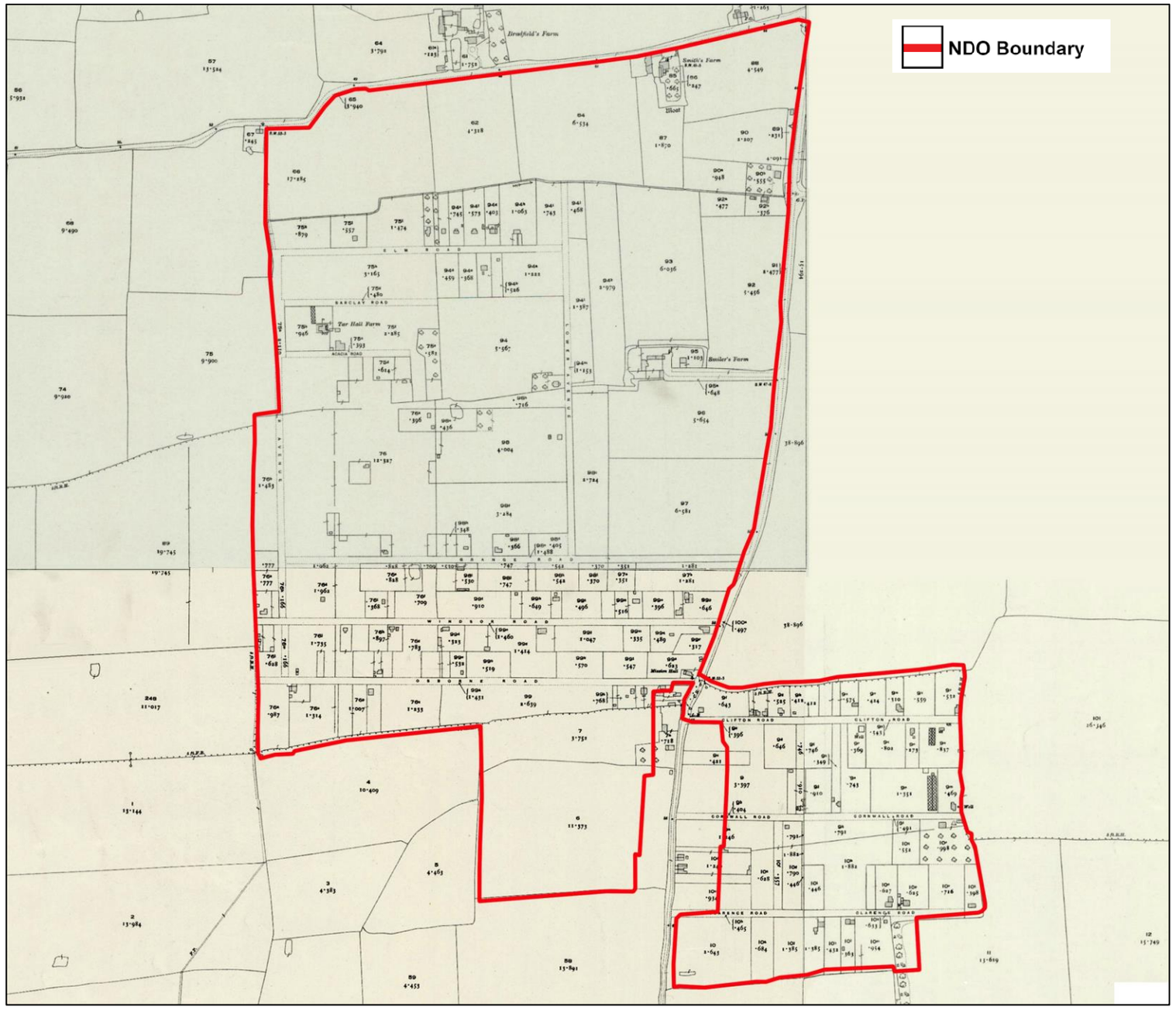

Fig.3 1922 OS map

3.0 analysis

Essex County Council initiated the development of Basildon New Town which commenced in 1952 and within two decades the self-build plotland settlements of Pitsea and Laindon were cleared, leaving only Laindon Hills and North Benfleet in their pre-New Town form.

Laindon Hills was designated as a country park in the 1980s and progressively abandoned. It is now a mixed woodland with one house, 'The Haven', preserved as a Plotlands Museum.

Like most plotlands, the character of North Benfleet derived from it being a self-built settlement, which coupled with the relaxed planning regulations during the inter-war period and the preference for cabins, chalets and bungalows as standalone structures in a rural setting, created a distinct character of variety and personalized dwellings in contrast to the uniformity of suburbia.

The 1947 OS mapping (**Fig. 4**) shows a greater level of development in the southern part of the Plotlands with a frontages to the western side of Pound Lane. There is more development in the northern part, but with a gap remaining between Grange Road and Carlton Road, and development along the eastern side of Lower Avenue on the fields around Smilers Farm.

Seven plots have also been developed along the northern boundary with frontages onto Burnt Mills Road.

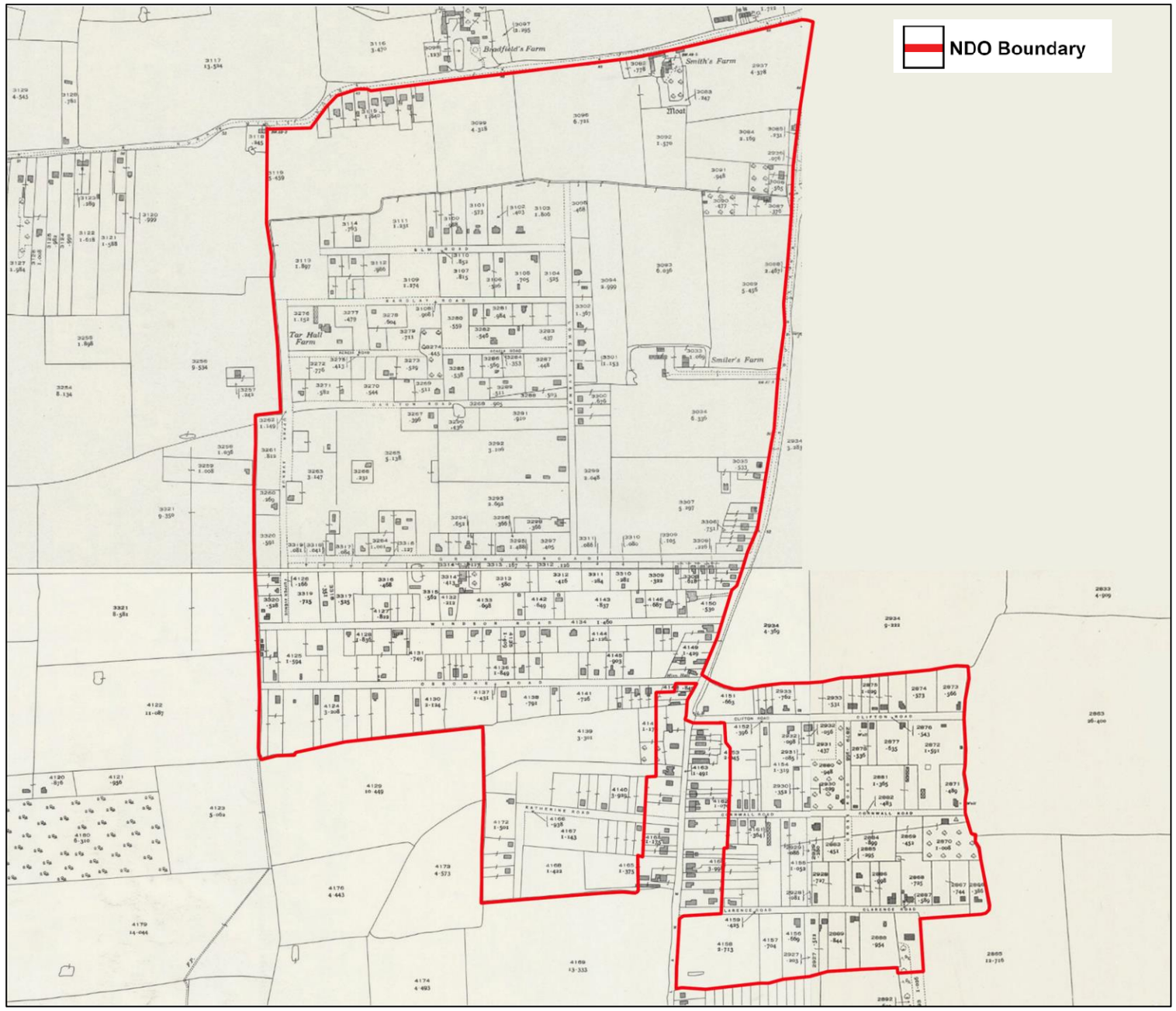

Fig.4 1947 OS map

3.4 The Plotlands today

The Plotlands character today is defined by its low density and chalet bungalow style dwellings(**photo 8**) planned around an incomplete gridded network of unadopted roads with a high proportion of underdeveloped plots (**photo 12**). The restrictive Green Belt policy has led to a considerable amount of unauthorised development (**photo 13**) that has detracted from the special character of the area and with no coherent plan for the Plotlands this is likely to continue. Although some of the original variety and character of the plotlands remains, the later post war development including the redevelopment of existing dwellings, has favoured the chalet bungalow building type with dormers and a roof pitch that can accommodate habitable space. This building type has also been adopted in Bowers Gifford reinforcing the connection between the two settlements.

However, the underlying structure has remained relatively unchanged since 1947 as can be seen from the current OS mapping (**Fig. 5**) with the majority of development still to the south where it is accessed directly off Pound Lane, and the northern and eastern areas remaining less developed with a number of larger plots that have not been subdivided.

There is more development around Smilers Farm, although this, including the buildings in the north-eastern corner is generally for non-residential uses.

Further development along Pound Lane has reinforced the connection between the North Benfleet Plotlands and Bowers Gifford.

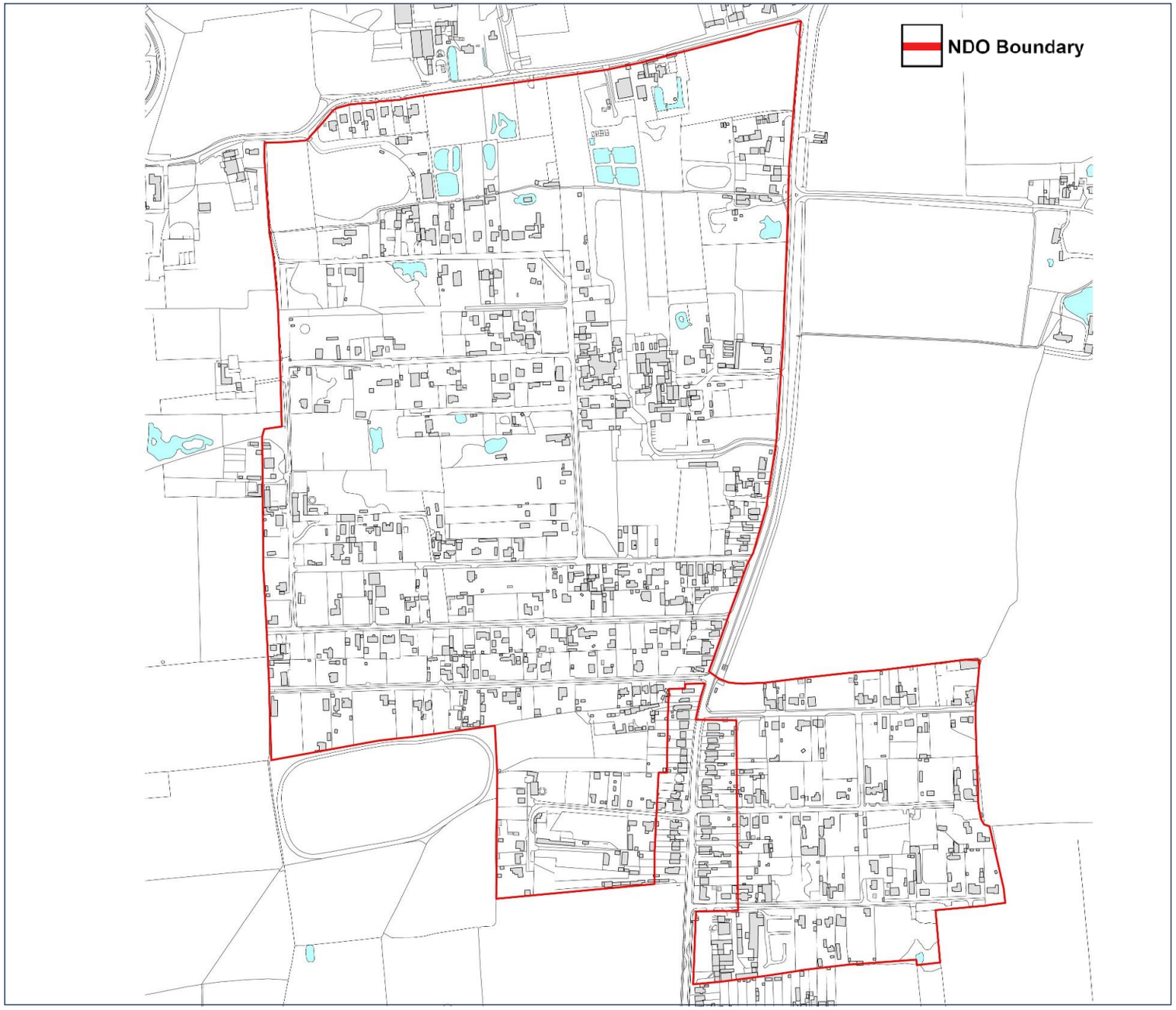

Fig.5 2020 OS map



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3.0 analysis

The two changes that have had the greatest negative impact on the plotlands have been the additional structures, hardstandings, vehicle storage areas, and mobile homes that have resulted in a loss of vegetation and visual clutter, (**photo 14**), and the treatment of plot frontages along with the development on large plots which has created gaps in the streetscape and altered the rural streetscape to something more suburban in character (**photo 15**).

The other issue that will be key when considering change within the plotlands is the roads (**photo 16**). Their existing layout, capacity, unadopted status, ownership and management limits the additional development that could be accommodated. They vary in width from are around 4.0m to 5.5m and have been reduced in places (**photo 17**) through property boundaries/ and frontages encroaching on the verges.

Although there are no designated footpaths, the traffic levels generated by the low density of development supports their use as shared surfaces, and the lack of markings, signage and street lighting contribute to the rural plotland character.

The plotlands has rural characteristics in terms of its setting and density although the gridded road structure and regular sized plots is at odds with the informal accretive development pattern of rural settlements. However, this is part of the plotland's unique character that is valued by the community.



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3.5 Density

Based on a review of OS MasterMap, Google Earth, Streetview and site visits, the North Benfleet plotlands is estimated to have around 215 dwellings in the NDO red line area of 80 hectares giving an overall density of **2.7 dph.**

Densities across the plotlands vary (**Fig. 6**), with the more developed area to the south averaging around **4.3 dph** and the less developed area of the main parcel to the north averaging around **0.8 dph**.

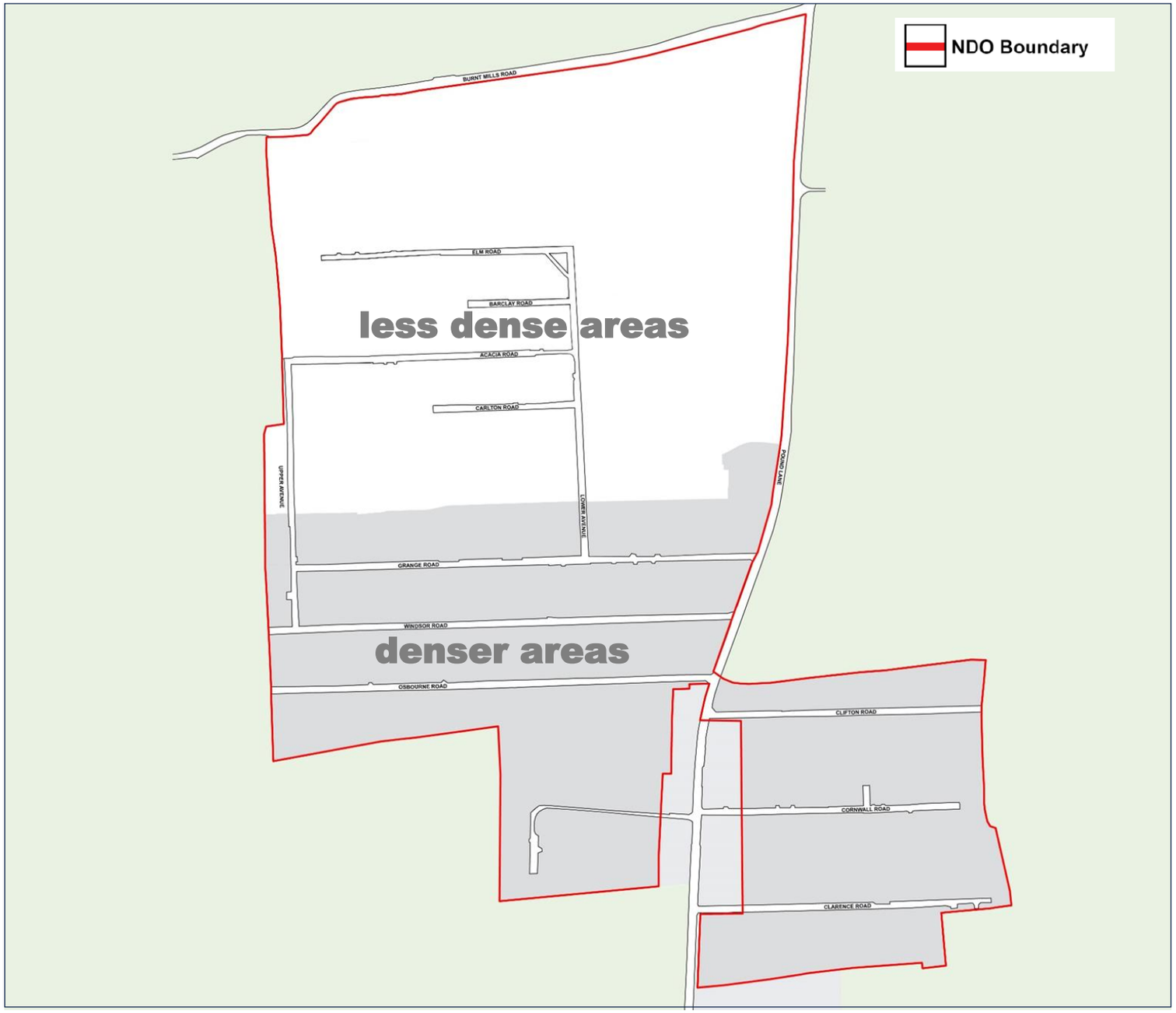

Fig.6 density

3.6 Capacity

The calculation of the additional capacity that could be accommodated across the plotlands is based on infilling the undeveloped parts in the south and the north of the NDO area.

The calculation allows for an average plot width of 15m and block depths based on an extension of the existing planning grid and road layout with each block being two plots deep.

This will create a layout in keeping with the existing pattern giving the opportunity to reinforce the historic character of the plotlands which is an important objective of the vision.

Based on the layout criteria above it is estimated that the vacant plots and undeveloped areas outside those areas not suitable for development, including those that have flood oor landscape constraints, could deliver approximately 250 additional dwellings with around 70 dwellings on the more developed southern parts of the plotlands and around 180 dwellings in the less developed northern parts of the plotlands.

This would give a density of **5.8 dph** on the overall NDO area of 80 hectares and a density of **7.5 dph** across the unrestricted area of 62 hectares.

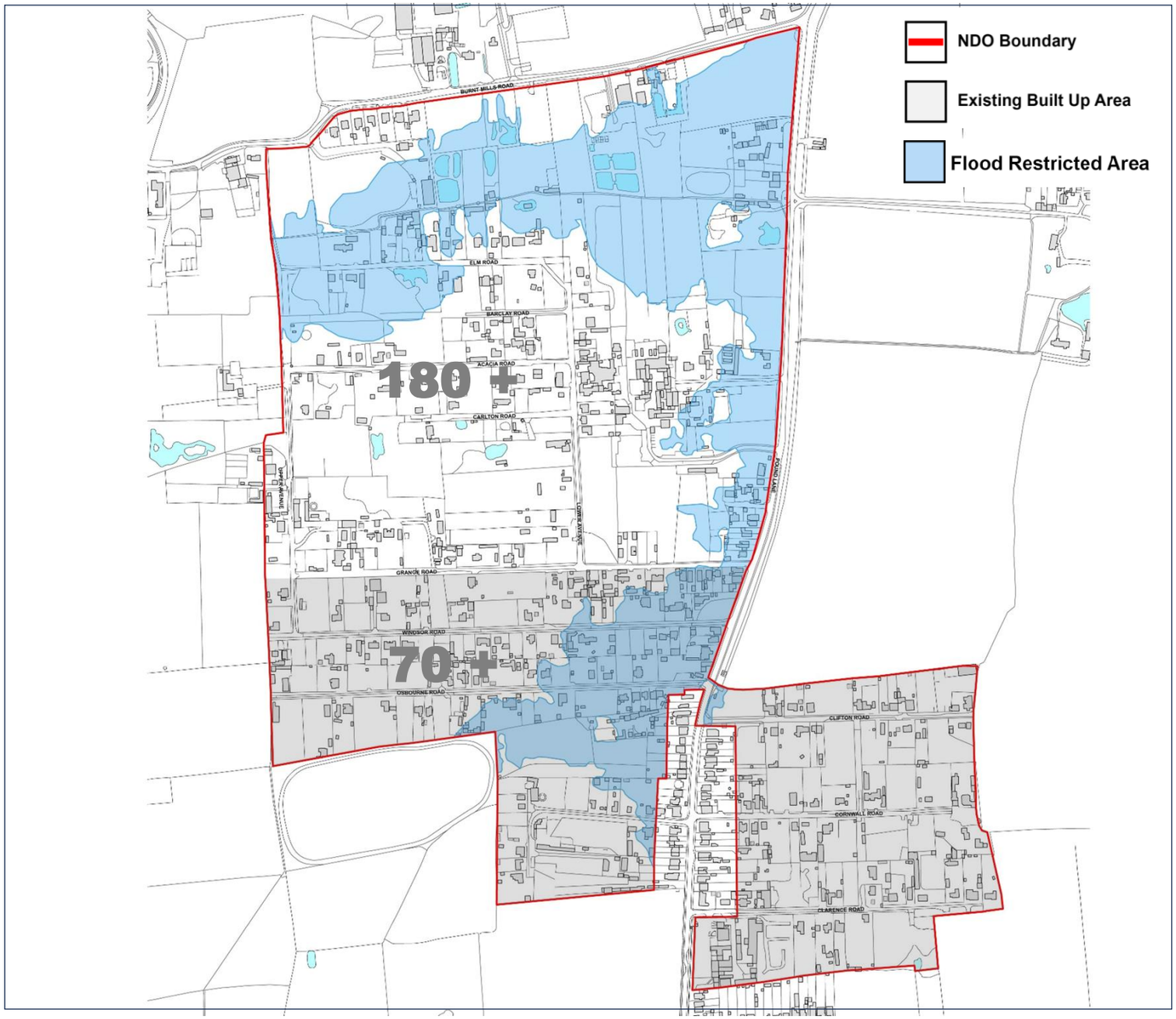

Fig.7 capacity

3.7 Constraints

access and transport:

The proximity of Basildon with its amenities and local employment opportunities along with the Pitsea and Basildon railway stations, and the bus services which run along Pound Lane improve the sustainability of the Plotlands. However, it has no local centre and facilities including shops and recreation amenities are very limited.

The Plotlands east west road grid connects into the wider road network via Pound Lane. The road grid is relatively complete in the smaller southern parcel with Clarence, Cornwall and Clifton Roads connecting directly into Pound Lane. In the main northern parcel, the grid is incomplete and does not extend north of Elm Road with only Osborne, Windsor and Grange Roads connecting into Pound Lane.

There are three additional accesses off Pound Lane into the northern parcel, Lawrence Road, Cat Tree Lane and a Smilers Farm access, but these do not connect into the Plotlands road grid.

None of the roads within the Plotlands are adopted and there no footpaths, street lighting, markings or signage. They are owned and managed by residents and are in various states of repair. There will be limitations on the additional capacity that the existing road network can accommodate.

A public footpath runs within the eastern boundary from the Acacia Road/Upper Avenue junction north to Burnt Mills Road providing access to Basildon and the Burnt Mills Industrial Estate, and south along Upper Avenue down to London Road.

biodiversity:

The desktop biodiversity appraisal carried out for the EIA screening confirmed that there are no statutory designations or constraints, including protected species and habitats, that will prevent development.

Recreational pressure on European sites applies to this development and this will be addressed by a payment to the Essex RAMS.

geotechnical:

The areas within the Order proposed for development are generally parcels of greenfield land which suggests there are unlikely to be issues with contamination. However, there are some areas which have been used for motor trade related uses and these will need to be assessed for the risk of contamination if they are to be put forward for development.

heritage:

There is a is heritage asset within proximity of the northern boundary of the NDO area, .Bradfield's Farmhouse which is Grade II Listed opposite the NDO area on the northern side of Burnt Mills Road. There are also the remains of World War II pillboxes within the NDO area.

A Heritage Assessment has been carried out for these assets and a Heritage Assessment is required by the Order Conditions to support proposals that might affect their setting.

Landscape

Within the Order area there are existing hedgerows, some of which are remnants of field boundaries (**photo 18**), areas of scrub on undeveloped land, undeveloped parcels of managed grassland (**photo 19**)and paddocks, and a number individual trees and groups of trees.

These features have landscape and biodiversity value and contribute to the character of the Plotlands, but there is no overall management of the landscape, and it has been degraded through piecemeal development resulting in a patchwork of disconnected residual green spaces (**photo 20**).

There are two groups of trees in the main Plotlands parcel , one in the northeastern corner which is within the Flood Zones 2 and 3 area, and one on the western side between Grange Road and Acacia Road (**photo 21**). In the smaller parcel are a number smaller groups of trees with the main one around Cornwall Road. There are no TPOs within the Order area.

There are a number of water features in the main Plotlands parcel, mostly in the northern part of the main parcel including manmade ponds, drainage features and an unnamed east-west watercourse.

The perimeter of the Order area is fairly well contained by hedges and trees which helps define the settlement edge and provide a buffer to the wider setting. There are gaps in this landscape boundary along Burnt Mills Road, and Pound Lane where the southern part of the main parcel and the smaller parcel open onto Pound Lane which provides continuity with Bowers Gifford.

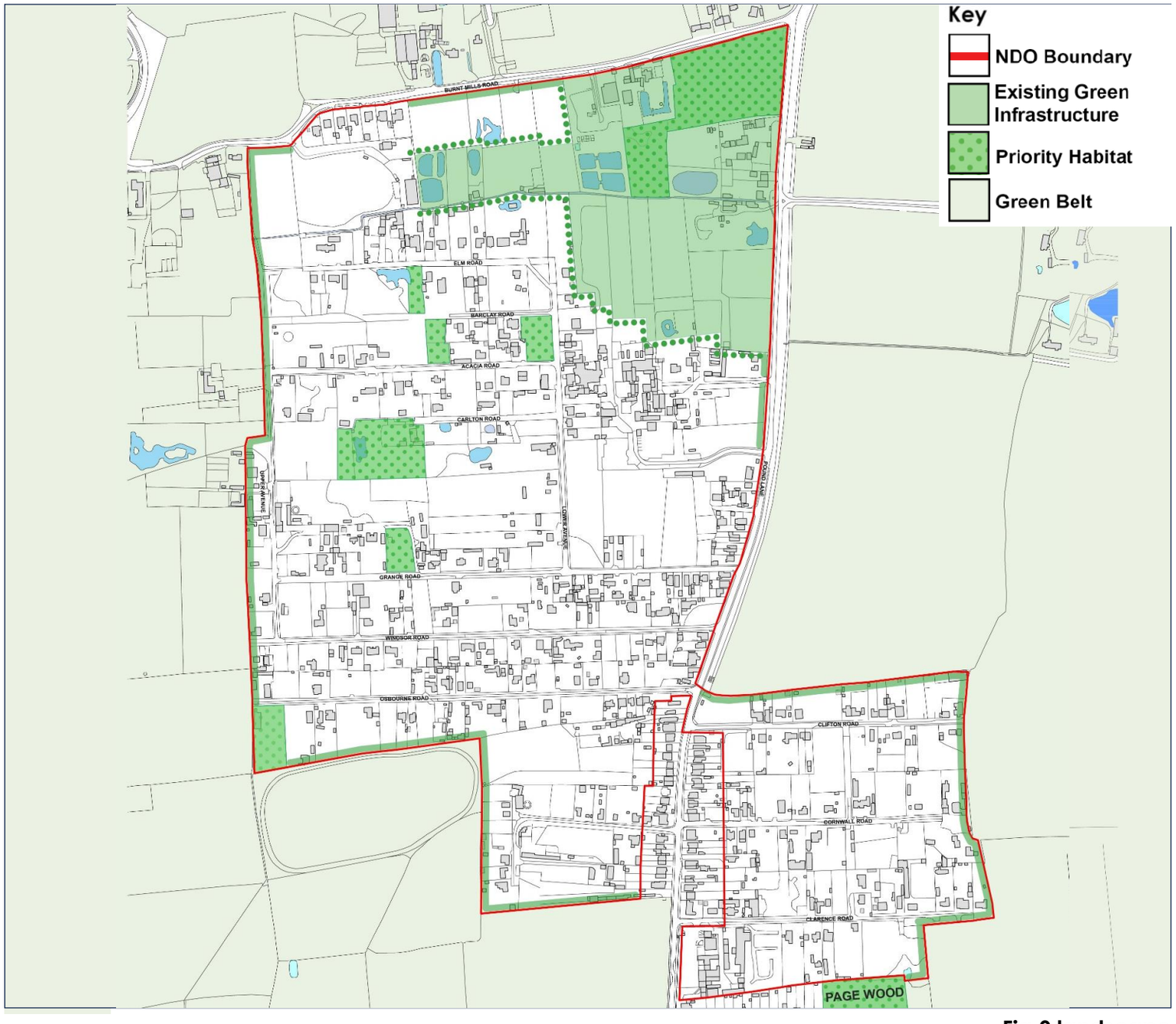

Fig.9 landscape

3.0 analysis

A public footpath (**photo 21**) runs along the western side of this boundary, and on the eastern side at the southern end the boundary connects into Page Woods which is protected by TPOs and was bought in 2016 by the Bowers Gifford and North Benfleet Residents' Association to secure its use as a local amenity and for wildlife.

The lack of street lighting, signage and road markings across the Plotlands (**photo 22**) contributes to its rural character.



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flood & drainage

The plotlands is affected by areas of flood risk and the **North Benfleet Flood Risk Scoping Study** April 2025 was commissioned to consider the risk of flooding from all sources including Tidal, Main Rivers and Ordinary Watercourses, and Surface Water making allowance for climate change to identify constraints to help inform design measures that would need to be considered as part of any future development proposals within the plotlands.

The North Benfleet Flood Risk Scoping Study took account of the **Where Water Goes Report** (2017) commissioned by ECC to investigate the nature of flooding within Bowers Gifford and North Benfleet which identified the principal flood risks as fluvial and surface water with the fluvial flood risk related to the North Benfleet Brook that flows in a northerly direction along the eastern boundary to Pound Lane with an east west watercourse across the northern part of the NDO area.

The Flood Risk Scoping Study combined the fluvial and surface water constraints to indicate 'flood restricted' areas in the plotlands that are unsuitable for development. (**Fig. 7**) and provided guidance on flood related matters for the development of design proposals within the plotlands which have been incorporated into the Design Codes.

The North Benfleet Flood Risk Scoping Study supports the plotlands as a feasible brownfield site that should be considered for development taking a sequential approach that steers development towards areas of lowest risk. The Order is within a Critical Drainage Area and ECC is the lead local flooding authority (LLFA) who must be consulted as a Statutory Consultee on FRA and SUDS strategies.

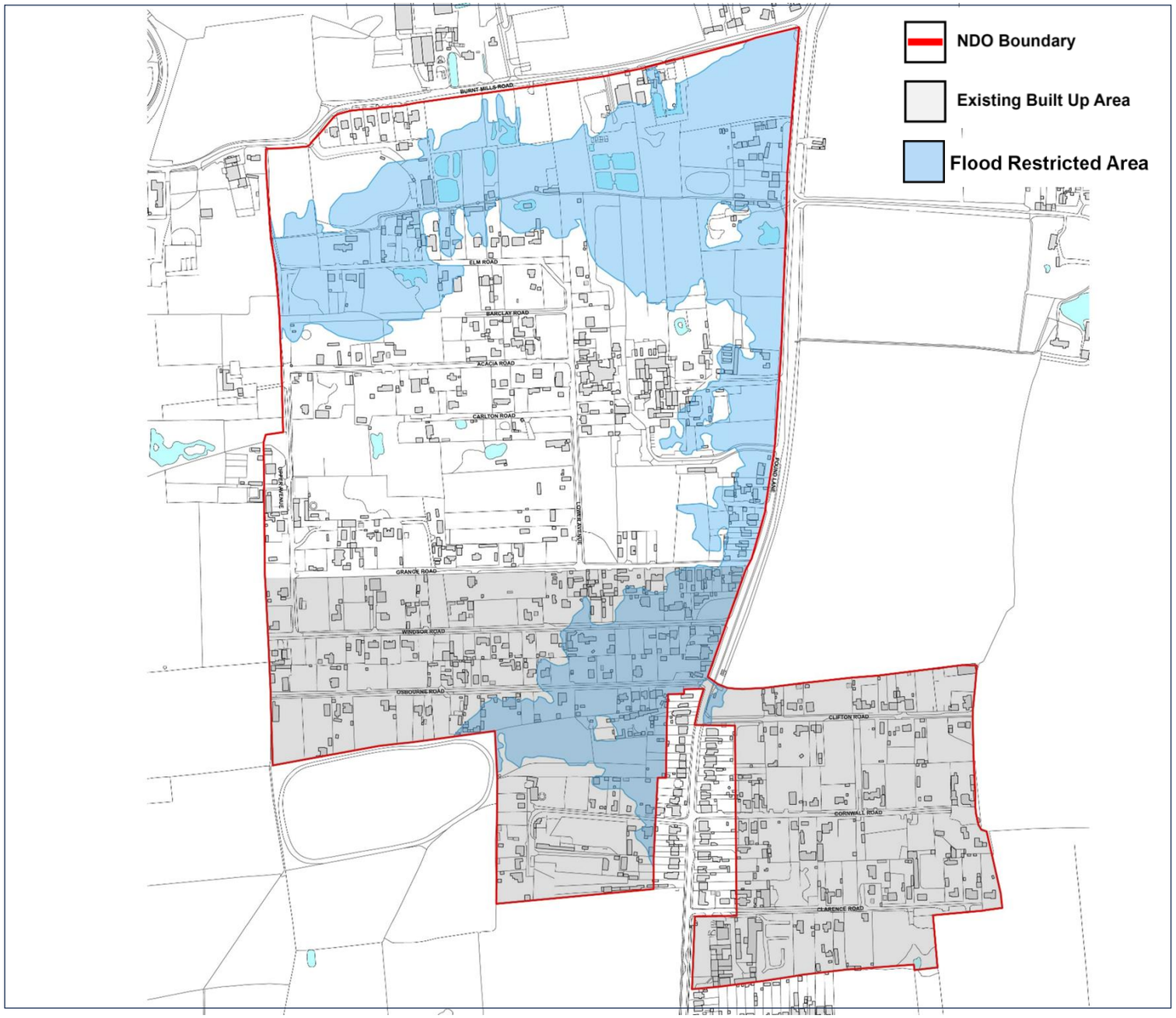


Fig.7 flood restricted areas

3.8 the plotlands potential

Although the plotlands were the product of the specific social, economic and political circumstances of their time, their underlying dynamics have lessons that are relevant to how development should be approached today.

land use: The plotlands were 'light touch' in terms of their impacts on the land encouraging open space to be used more productively than is the norm within current development practices.

custom build: The recent government support for custom build as an alternative to the volume housebuilders' model aims to replicate the plotlands model which was predominantly self-build, with the investment of 'sweat capital' opening up access to home ownership to many who were otherwise excluded. This approach has the added benefits of providing economic support for SME's and delivering better placemaking outcomes.

community: the plotlands, partly for the reasons above, engendered a greater sense of identity, common purpose and shared responsibility in their use and management, creating a strong sense of community.

These aspects of the plotlands have resonance with current thinking and offer an approach to delivering more interesting and sustainable communities than the national housebuilders model. This approach has already been successfully trialed with schemes such as the Graven Hill development at Bicester.

3.9 conclusions

The analysis identified no key constraints that would prevent further development in the Plotlands.

However, any further development will require a design approach that addresses the constraints there are whilst protecting the character of the plotlands. This is important not just in terms of design, but also in order to take the community along with the proposals to ensure a successful referendum.

To achieve this requires a development concept that works within the constraints, meets the objectives of the vision, and is deliverable.

The development concept will have to:

- Maintain the Plotlands identity
- Respect the landscape and setting
- Improve access and connectivity
- Work within the flood constraints





4.1 Developable areas

The developable areas within these constraints were tested through consultation with the community and landowners and the layout criteria set out in section 3.6 to arrive at the capacity for approximately 250 new dwellings proposed by the Neighbourhood Development Order.

As residential development within flood zones 2 and 3 requires a sequential exception test, these areas have been excluded from the land proposed for residential development although they remain within the Order as they have benefits in terms of landscape, ecology and setting, and can be used to provide land for non-residential uses to support the development.

The surface water flood risk issues will need to be addressed in the layout to deliver a safe means of access and egress.

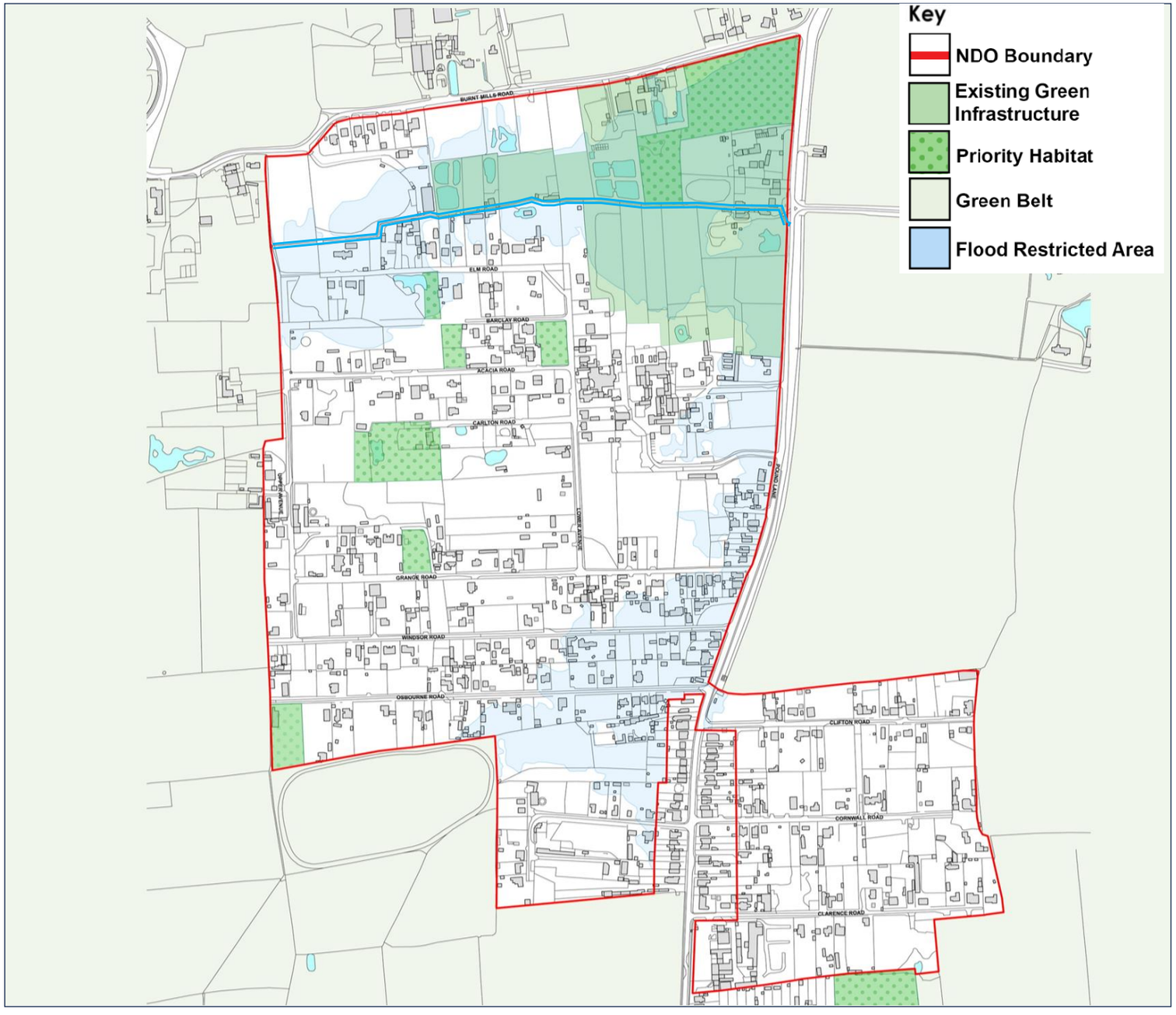


Fig.10 developable areas

4.2 Access and capacity

There is sufficient capacity in the existing roads which connect directly into Pound Lane and serve the southern part of the plotlands to accommodate the approximately 80 additional dwellings proposed in section 3.6. Grange, Windsor and Osbourne Roads which serve the southern part of the main parcel on the western, side of Pound Lane, and Clifton Cornall and Clarence Roads which serve the smaller parcel on the eastern side of Pound Lane. This would require an average of around fourteen new properties along each road. The additional vehicle movements will be minimal and the development concept is for these roads to remain as shared use.

However, the existing roads that serve the northern part of the main parcel alck sa direct connection to Pound Lane and have limited additional capacity. Upgrading them is not viable given the complicated ownership pattern. To address this the development concept proposes a new '**Loop Road**' (**Fig. 11**) with a new access onto Pound Lane to create additional capacity to support the approximately 170 dwellings proposed by the Neighbourhood Development Order.

The **Loop Road** will be on undeveloped land so it will not require the upgrading of existing roads and will be less complex in terms of ownership boundaries. It will be delivered in phases through the development it serves. The Loop Road will be to adoptable standards and include footpaths and provision for cycling. The Loop Road will make provision for an emergency access onto Burnt Mills Road and will be integrated into the existing road network to improve connectivity across the plotlands, creating a hierarchy of streets that protects the existing pedestrian friendly character of the plotlands.

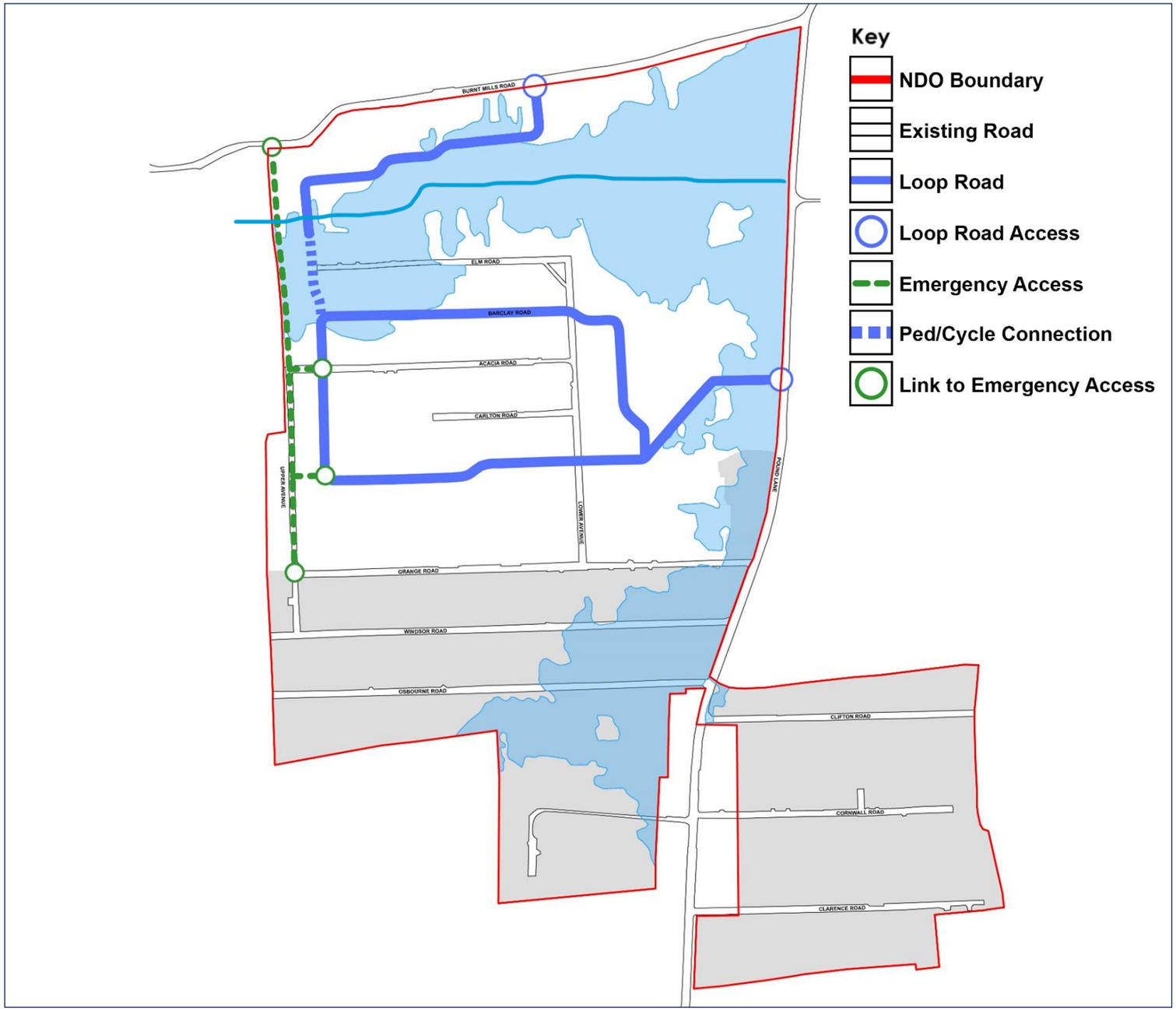


Fig.11 access and capacity

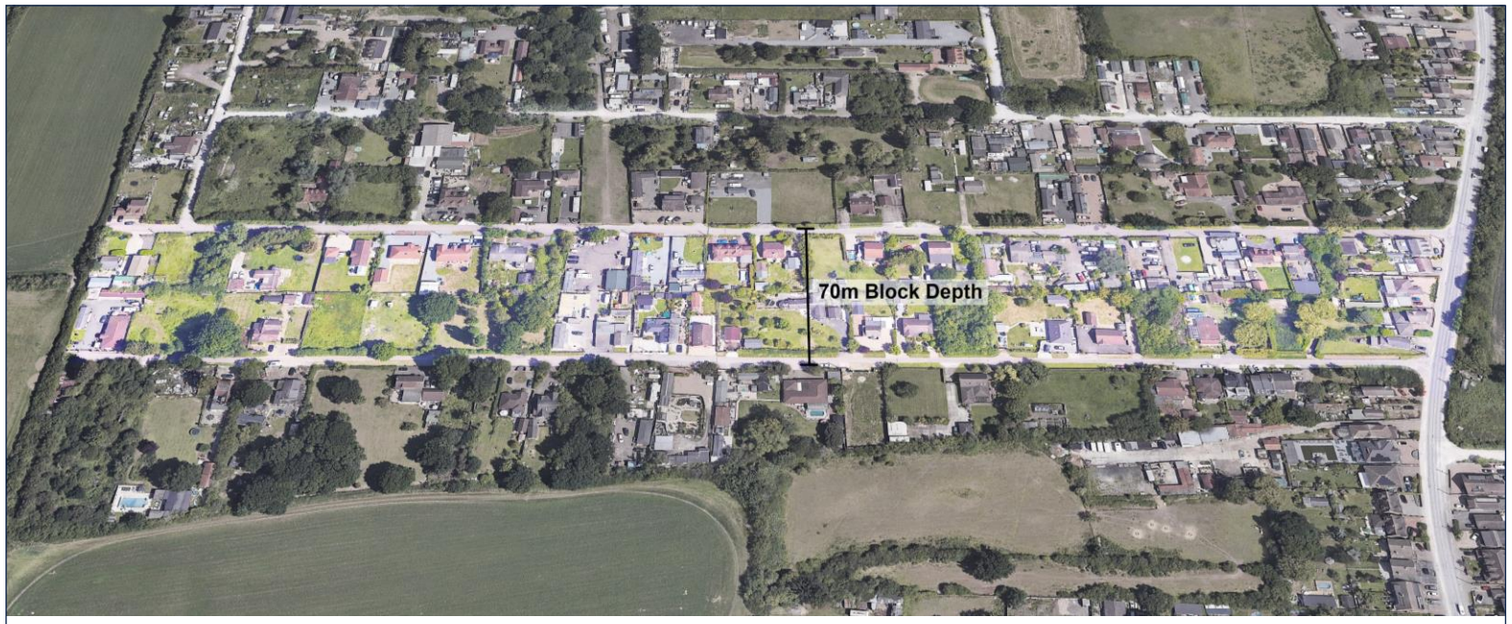
4.3 Layout and dwelling types

The development concept is based on completing the underlying block pattern of the plotlands to create a series of new plots for dwellings that reflect the character, scale and typology of the Plotlands.

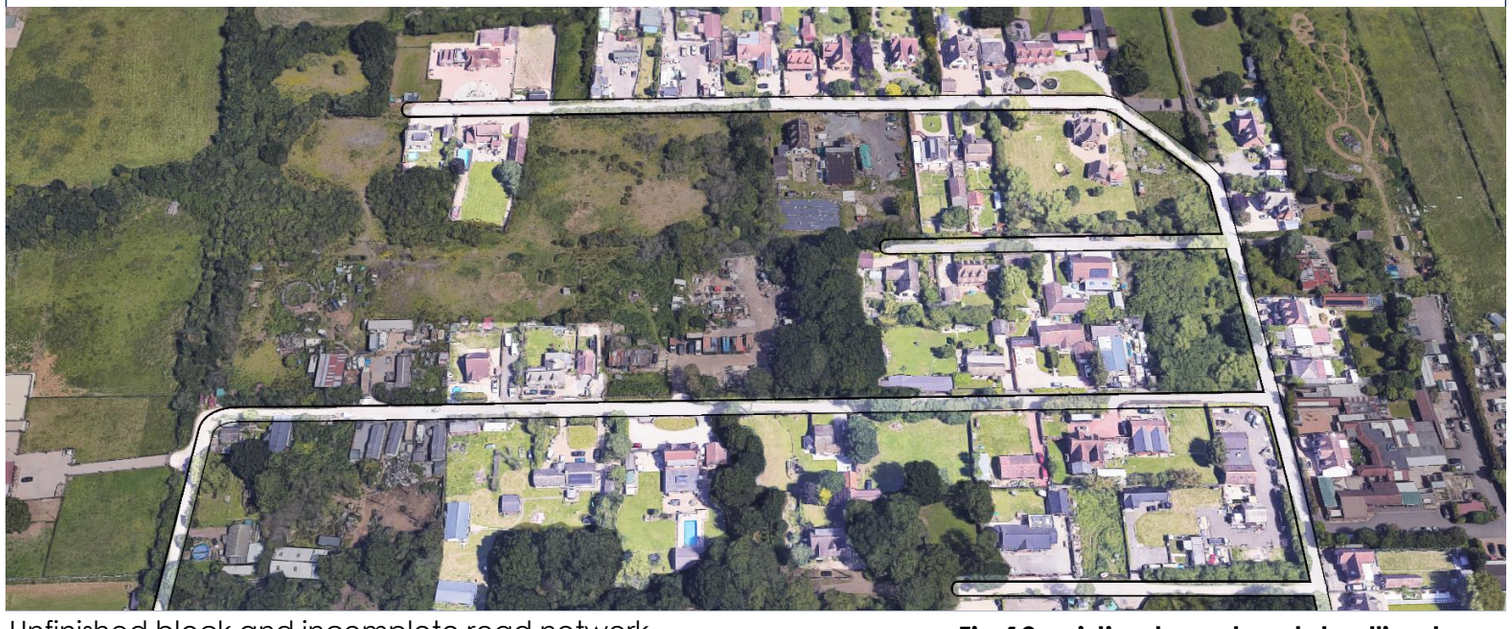
The gridded road layout of the Plotlands creates a structure of development parcels (**Fig. 12**) that is a strong defining feature and part of its sense of place.

The subdivision of these development parcels into plots and the types of dwellings that have historically been built are another important feature of the character of the Plotlands which sets it apart from the usual suburban development.

It will be important that any development that comes forward through the Neighbourhood Development Order builds on this layout and pattern and uses these dwelling typologies in order to reflect and reinforce the Plotland's character and sense of place.



A clearly defined block of developed plots



Unfinished block and incomplete road network

Fig.12 existing layout and dwelling types

4.4 Development types

The concept will deliver two types of development across the Plotlands (**Fig. 13**).

Mini Masterplans

In the northern, less developed part of the main parcel where the Loop Road is proposed development will be brought forward through Mini Masterplans which will deliver development in phases.

Plot Infill

In the more developed areas served off the existing roads which connect directly into Pound Lane development will be through Plot Infill which will be limited to single dwellings on individual plots, that are either undeveloped or the redevelopment of existing dwellings.

Phasing

The phasing sequence of the Mini Masterplans will ensure all new dwellings can be accessed via the Loop Road directly off Pound Lane so as not to rely on and add to vehicle movements on the existing Plotlands road network. Each phase will fund and deliver the Loop Road that serves it.

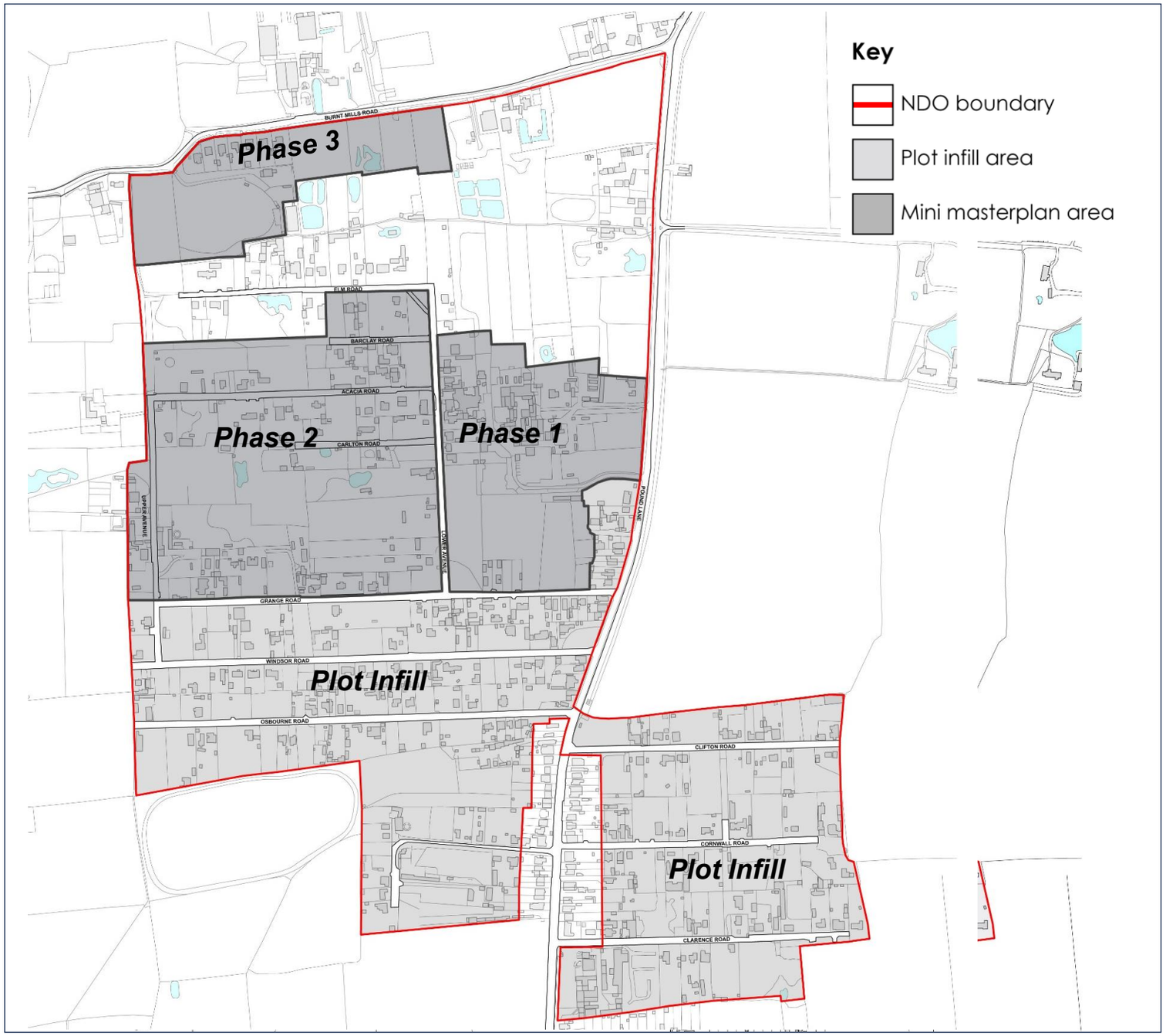


Fig.13 development and phasing

4.5 local centre and sustainability

The development concept proposes a **local centre** (**Fig. 14**) with the following uses allowed for in the Neighbourhood Development Order:

'….. a local centre with a total of up to 350 sq.m. gross internal floorspace of Class E(a)/F2(a) convenience food retail use (of no more than 280 sq.m.), Class E(b) café/restaurant, Class E(f) day nursery, and / or Class F2(b)…. '

The local centre will improve the sustainability of the Plotlands and create a community focus and amenity. The convenience food retail and café/restaurant elements will provide for local convenience shopping and eating within walking distance, reducing the need for car journeys. The day nursery and community uses will also provide local facilities and increase social interaction.

The local centre will be located in Phase 1 where it will be most accessible for the expanded Plotlands and Bowers Gifford. This also provides the opportunity for extending the bus route into the Plotlands with a stop at the local centre using the new Loop Road.

Local centre uses can be located in the Flood Restricted Area Zone 2 area along where non-residential ground floor uses would be acceptable, with the potential for upper floor residential use to help fund the local centre. The flood restricted areas might also be used as open space to reinforce the local centre as a community focus.



Fig.14 local centre and sustainability

4.4 Green Infrastructure

The existing green infrastructure and setting of the Plotlands have evolved in an unplanned way. There are landscape features of ecological, visual and amenity value including; individual trees and blocks of trees, hedgerows, varied scrub and grassland, and natural and manmade water features.

In many areas these have been unmanaged and degraded through licensed and unlicensed development with the risk of further degradation. To avoid this, a structure is needed that recognizes the value of these assets and embeds them as part of a green infrastructure plan that creates a setting for and is protected by development.

Despite this lack of planning and protection, the perimeter of the Plotlands is defined by hedgerows and trees that have created a clearly defined settlement boundary and contribute to protecting the setting of the Green Belt.

The development concept provides for the protection, integration and extension of the existing green and blue infrastructure to create biodiversity enhancement, amenity and adaptation to climate change.

The resulting landscape framework (**Fig. 15**) will reinforce the existing settlement boundary to protect the Green Belt setting and improve the connectivity of green corridors into the wider ecological network.

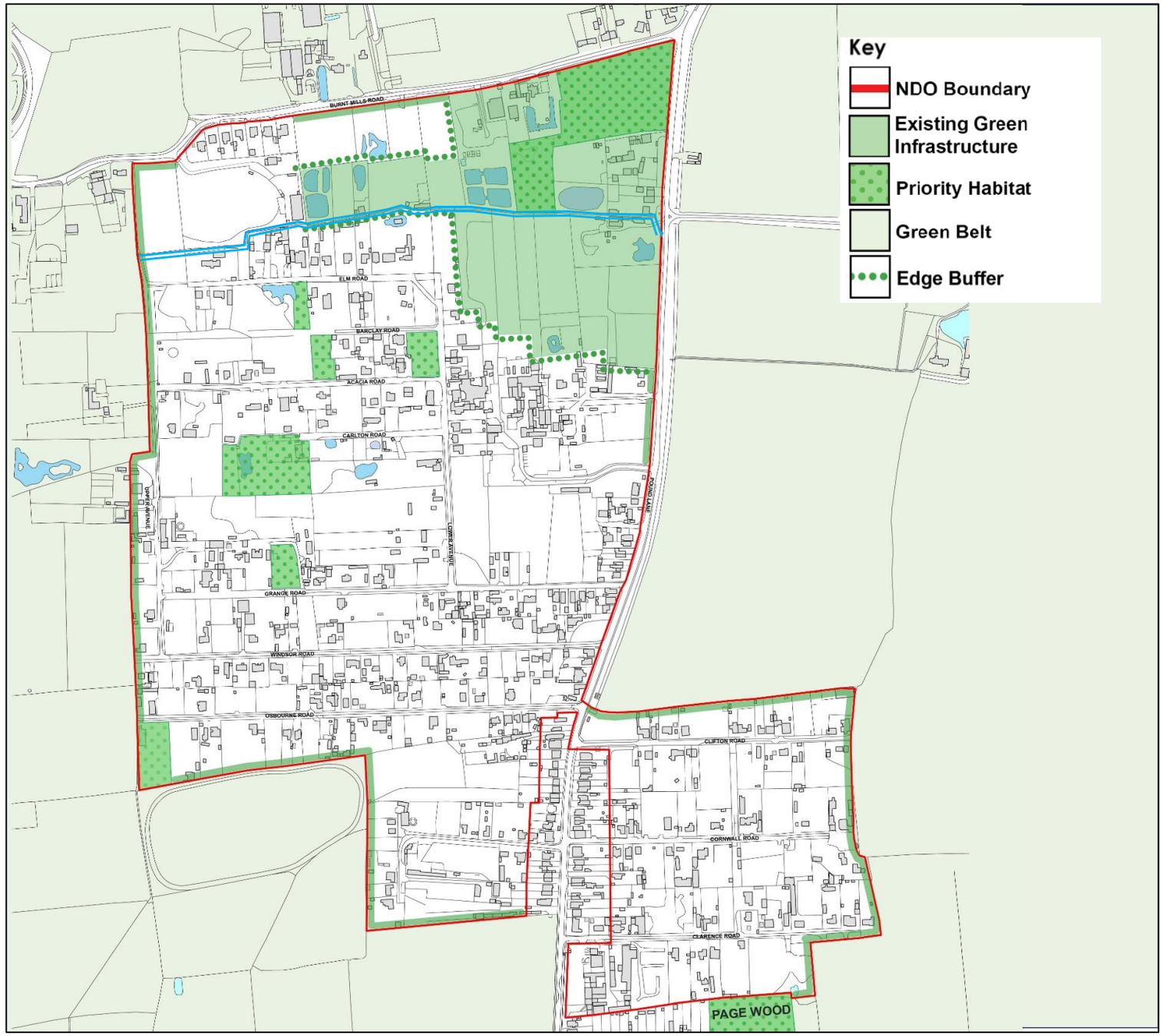


Fig.15 green infrastructure

4.6 summary

The North Benfleet Plotlands is an established residential community whose character, landscape and ecological features are at risk from being degraded through unplanned development, licensed or otherwise.

There is capacity within the North Benfleet Plotlands for additional development without compromising its low density character.

The Neighbourhood Development Order can enable this by permitting development in the Green Belt and providing an incentive for landowners to bring their land forward for development in a way that will safeguard the character of the Plotlands, make it a more sustainable place and deliver new homes.

The concept sets out a framework for development and the Design Codes provide the guidance for preparing proposals that will be considered as acceptable development under the permission granted by the Neighbourhood Development Order.



5.0 the design code

5.1 Purpose

Compliance with the Design Codes is a condition of the Neighbourhood Development Order.

The purpose of the Design Codes is to guide and control the development that comes forward under the Neighbourhood Development Order permission. They are set out to provide guidance for landowners and their consultants to prepare detailed design proposals that will be deemed to fall within the development permitted by the Order. The Design Codes will also provide Basildon Borough Council's Development Management officers guidance for the assessment of proposals to determine if they should be approved or rejected under the conditions set out in the Neighbourhood Development Order.

5.2 Scope

The Design Codes provide a set of development parameters for the phased areas within the Plotlands where the new Loop Road is to be created, and design guidance for the detailed design of all development that comes forward through the Neighbourhood Development Order.

The development parameters are prescriptive in terms of layout, types of dwellings and plot sizes to ensure development will be in keeping with the Plotlands character.

The design guidance is advisory and provides information on building form, materials, parking and external landscape with latitude for different detailed design solutions to be proposed in response to particular constraints, providing scope for variety whilst being in keeping with the overall character of the Plotlands.

Both the development parameters and design guidance reference existing standards such as the Manual for Streets, the Essex Design Guide and other statutory requirements and standards that would otherwise apply to development of this type and scale.

5.3 Structure

The Design Code is in two parts:

Mini Masterplans

Mini Masterplans will be required to support development proposals in the phased areas of the Plotlands. Mini Masterplan proposals will need to demonstrate compliance with the parameters for each of the phases including the layout of the new Loop Road within the phase and how it connects to the adjoining phases.

Plot infill

Design proposals for individual dwellings will need to comply with the design guidance set out in the Plot Infill Design Code.

5.4 Process and approvals

The Order and Design Codes make provision for an application to discharge the conditions relating to the detailed proposals for each plot to be made either as part of the Mini Masterplan process, or in stages following approval of the Mini Masterplan.

The preferred approach is for each phase is to be agreed with Basildon Council as part of the NDO process.

In all cases within the Mini Masterplan areas a draft layout including plot parameters should be approved prior to preparing and submitting the detailed proposals to discharge the conditions.

Neighbourhood Development Order
North Benfleet

Design Statement
August 2025
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