

URBAN DESIGN PROOF OF EVIDENCE
Vaughan Anderson BA MA PG Dip

SITE: Officers' Meadow, Land North of Shenfield, Brentwood

Appeal against Brentwood Borough Council for failure to give notice of its decision within the appropriate period on a full application for permission for:

Hybrid planning application for 344 units including 35% affordable housing, safeguarded land for a 2FE primary school and early years facility, public open space and associated landscaping, drainage and highways infrastructure (23/01164/FUL)

on behalf of
CROUDACE HOMES LTD

Date:
20 January 2025

Local Planning Authority Ref:
23/01164/FUL

Town and Country Planning Act 1990

**SECTION 77 AND TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING
(INQUIRIES PROCEDURE) (ENGLAND) RULES 2000
APPLICATION BY CROUDACE HOMES LTD
SITE ADDRESS: OFFICERS' MEADOW, LAND NORTH OF SHENFIELD,
BRENTWOOD**

REF: 23/01164/FUL

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1.0 QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

- 1.1 This Proof of Evidence is prepared by Vaughan Anderson BA (First Class Hons), PgDip. Architecture, MAUD (dist.)
- 1.2 I have over 25 years' experience in urban design, masterplanning and architecture during which I have worked in both architectural and masterplanning practices. I have been a director for over the last ten years of my career at EDAW, AECOM, LDA Design (working in the UK and globally) and Barton Willmore (now Stantec), where I currently work.
- 1.3 I have worked on the Land North of Shenfield Site since 2020, when I prepared the initial design concepts, capacity studies and undertook masterplan evolution on behalf of the 'consortium' of landowners, including Croudace, Redrow, Countryside (now Vistry) and Stonebond.
- 1.4 I led the design team to prepare the Masterplan Development Principles Document, between 2022 and 2023 on behalf of the Consortium, which was approved by Brentwood Borough Council in August 2023.
- 1.5 I am familiar with the Appeal Site and the Appeal Application.
- 1.6 I have led the design process and advised on a wide range of complex residential led mixed use masterplanning projects, securing planning consent and producing design codes for new settlements and urban extensions for strategic land promoters and house builders, such as Houghton Regis North1, Linmere (5000 dwellings including 3 primary school, 3 local centres, and over 130,000 sqm of retail, commercial and employment uses, Land at Manchester Road, Knutsford for a urban extension for over 500 dwellings, 5 hectares of employment space, a primary school and mixed use centre and for the Crown Estate.

- 1.7 The Evidence that I have prepared and provide in this Proof of Evidence is true and has been prepared and given in accordance with the guidance of my professional institution. I confirm that the opinions expressed are my personal professional opinions.

2.0 SCOPE OF EVIDENCE, BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

- 2.1 This Proof of Evidence is in support of an Appeal against Non Determination of a full application (Brentwood Borough Council (BBC) planning application ref: 23/01164/FUL) which forms part of a hybrid planning application by Croudace Homes for:

344 units including 35% affordable housing, safeguarded land for a 2FE primary school and early years facility, public open space and associated landscaping, drainage and highways infrastructure in relation to land at Officers' Meadow, Land North of Shenfield (the Appeal Application).

- 2.2 The other part of the hybrid application is an outline application for a safeguarded school and early years nursery site. The hybrid application was split by the Council. The outline application received a resolution to grant at Planning Committee on 9 July 2024.

Scope of Evidence

- 2.3 Three putative reasons for the Refusal of Planning Permission were emailed by the Corporate Manager Development Management Brentwood Borough Council & Rochford District Council on 26 July, as set out in the Statement of Case (SoC), and are as follows:
- 2.4 **Reason for Refusal 1:** *"The proposed three storey buildings by reason of their height and location at the proposed new junction of Chelmsford (Western Gateway) and new entrance within Alexander Lane (Southern Gateway) do not respond sympathetically to the existing context of the area, which is predominantly two storey buildings, and are harmful to the character and appearance of the area, in conflict with local plan policy BE14 - 1.e."*

- 2.5 **Reason for Refusal 2:** *“There has been insufficient early, inclusive and effective engagement with the community in conflict with Policy BE14 - 2.a.and as such there has been failure to properly consider the needs of the community within the development.*
- 2.6 **Reason for Refusal 3:** *“The type, mix, and size of the affordable housing units, especially the three and four bedroom houses does not adequately reflect the Council’s identified need as per paragraph 6.36 (p115 of the Adopted Local Plan) which identifies a need of 86% affordable/social rent and the Size & Tenure of all affordable housing required up to 2033, (figure 6.2 of the Adopted Local Plan also on p115) and therefore, the offer would not meet the aims and objectives of Policy HP05 because it would not meet the adopted requirements for affordable housing across tenure and size in the Borough.*
- 2.7 This Proof of Evidence addresses Reason 1). This evidence should be read alongside the planning evidence of Ms Jane Piper, who addresses the other two reasons for refusal, issues of planning policy and the overall planning balance that needs to be struck in reaching a decision.
- 2.8 In addition to specifically addressing BBC adopted Local Plan Policy BE14 - 1.e, and other relevant Local Plan policies, my evidence will also consider other material considerations such as the NPPF, National Design Guide (NDG) and guidance included in the Essex Design Guide (EDG).
- 2.9 This evidence will demonstrate how the Appeal Application Design and Access Statement (DAS) and design package is consistent with the NPPF (December 2024), the BBC Local Plan adopted in March 2022, the 2021 NDG, the EDG and the Masterplan Development Principles document (MDP) approved by BBC in August 2023 that was submitted with the application, as required by Policy R03.

Background

- 2.10 The planning policy context of the Local Plan, the site's allocation, the MDP process and Appeal Application process are all set out in Ms Piper's evidence at Sections 4, 5 and 6.

Methodology

- 2.11 In preparing this proof, I have reviewed the reasons for refusal 1 provided by the Corporate Manager Development Management Brentwood Borough Council & Rochford District Council on 26 July, as set out in the Statement of Case (SoC) in the context and compared the rationale of the design approach developed for the scheme for consistency with the design with guidance set out in national guidance such as the NPPF and NDC and local guidance such as the Essex Design Guide to substantiate the decisions that informed the urban design and built form proposals for Land North of Shenfield Site.
- 2.12 To inform my assessments and provide my advice, I visited the Appeal Site and surrounding area, and I have undertaken my own assessment of the effects of the proposed development.
- 2.13 I have independently reviewed the base line position in terms of the form, scale, architectural character, the disposition of neighbouring buildings and their resulting contribution to the street scene, and the settlement pattern of the surrounding area. I have also looked at materiality both on neighbouring buildings and within the neighbourhoods in the local context. I have considered the existing urban grain in terms of the disposition of development and its relationship to the site.
- 2.14 While I was involved in the production of the Masterplan Design Principles document, I was not involved in the further design development undertaken

by Finc Architects who consequently evolved the design and submitted a Reserved Matters Application for the Site.

- 2.15 On reviewing the revised scheme proposals and Design and Access Statement [DAS] dated August 2023 prepared by Finc Architects, my opinion was that the Application submitted had a strong and accurate correlation with the MDP document.
- 2.16 I note from the DAS pg.15, that the initial design proposals were for lower density development to be located along Chelmsford Road (Western Gateway) and Alexander Road (Southern Gateway), however feedback provided by Place Service and Brentwood Borough Council requested higher density gateway buildings to be located at the locations mentioned above.
- 2.17 From my review of the design rationale, references, and subsequent proposals set out in the DAS for the Western and Southern Gateway, I believe they are sound. These proposals were informed by national and local guidance, alongside engagement with officers, and align with the aspirations set in the MDP document. Furthermore, the proposals positively contribute to creating a high-quality gateway and a sense of place for this new neighbourhood in Shenfield.
- 2.18 As shown in Ms Piper's evidence, the Appeal Application, and MDP, evolved through a collaborative process with BBC and Essex County Council (ECC) Place Services Urban Design Officers and other statutory consultees that started in April 2021. The submitted Statement of Community Involvement (SCI), September 2023 (CD 1.7) set out the engagement undertaken.

3.0 THE APPEAL APPLICATION

3.1 The Appeal Site description is set out in the Statement of Common Ground.

3.2 The Appeal Application is a full application, which forms part of a hybrid application, for:

344 units including 35% affordable housing, safeguarded land for a 2FE primary school and early years facility, public open space and associated landscaping, drainage and highways infrastructure in relation to land at Officers' Meadow, Land North of Shenfield.

3.3 The Appeal Application was validated on 9th October 2023.

3.4 The Appeal Application was delivered by a large team of consultants, with the Architecture and Urban Design being delivered by FINC.

3.5 The application benefits from an approved Masterplan Development Principles document (MPD), which I and my team at Barton Willmore (now Stantec) led on with input from FINC, who provided the Contextual Analysis, the rest of the consultant team and with significant input from BBC and ECC Place Services Officers.

3.6 As set out in Ms Piper's evidence, the Appeal Application includes the following:

- 344 new homes, including policy compliant 35% affordable homes
- Land for a co-located primary school and early years and childcare nursery
- 5% custom-build homes
- Vehicular access via Chelmsford Road and Alexander Lane
- The diversion of Alexander Lane, creating a quiet lane for existing pedestrians and cyclists (particularly to Shenfield High School) and a new

and improved route through the development site linking to Chelmsford Road

- Enhanced sustainable links (pedestrian, cycle and public transport) with Shenfield station and local services and facilities in the wider area, which will also benefit existing residents
- Well-connected internal road layout which allows for good accessibility and connectivity to other parts of R03, to promote active travel to optimise health and well-being, legibility and a strong setting and sense of place
- New multi-functional green infrastructure for its residents
- An enhanced Public Right of Way within the site
- Protection and maintenance of the Ancient Woodland of Arnold's Wood, as well as continued access
- Pedestrian and cycle crossing points across Chelmsford Road
- Improved bus services, including a bus loop to the railway station
- A flood and SUDs strategy that has been agreed by all the relevant statutory consultees
- Protection and maintenance of all the TPOs and the veteran tree on site
- Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) of 24% net gain in habitat units, a hedgerow gain of 13% and a watercourse gain of 22%
- A new landscaped plaza designed to be the heart of the development
- A new landscaped park of nearly 4 hectares
- The Neighbourhood Equipped Area of Play (NEAP) for the whole allocation
- A residential density of 36.3 dwellings per hectare to comply with Policy HP03
- New homes consisting of a variety of 1, 2, 3 and 4 bedroom high quality market, accessible, affordable and custom build apartments and houses.

3.7 In summary, the Officers' Meadow proposals will deliver a significant number of benefits not only for future residents, but also existing residents in the local area and the town of Shenfield. Further details of the proposed development and the design rationale are contained in the submitted amended (Rev C) Design and Access Statement (DAS).

4.0 THE PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT RELATING TO DESIGN

- 4.1 The following statutory provisions and policies are of particular relevance to the consideration of this Appeal.

National and Local Planning Policy

- 4.2 **The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, CD 8.1)**, December 2024 sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. It is a material consideration in the determination of this Appeal. Section 11 Making effective use of land and Section 12 Achieving well-designed places will be considered in this design proof of evidence. Ms Piper has addressed other relevant parts of the NPPF.
- 4.3 Maximising land use efficiency and promoting higher-density developments are important to delivering sustainable development, which is an integral part of the NPPF, It should be noted that although paragraph references in this Proof relate to the December 2024 NPPF, the previous December 2023 version, which was in place at the time of the Planning Committee's consideration of the application, had the same provisions.
- 4.4 The July 2021 NPPF introduced the National Design Guide (NDG) and the National Model Design Code (NMDC) and the enhanced role of design in the planning system which are described in more detail below in paragraph 4.7.
- 4.5 **The Brentwood Borough Council (BBC) Local Plan (adopted March 2022, CD 7.1)** is the primary planning document guiding development within Shenfield. Its purpose is to shape the borough's growth, covering housing, employment, transport, and community infrastructure. It aims to ensure sustainable development, balancing economic growth with environmental protection and social needs. Housing Development and meeting local housing needs, with a focus on affordable housing and mixed-use

developments is one of the key elements of the Local Plan. The plan also emphasizes the protection of historical and natural assets, and promoting health and well-being while accommodating the growing population's needs.

National Planning and Design Guidance

- 4.6 **The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)**, which was published in November 2016 and last updated in February 2024, also contains relevant guidance and will be referred to as necessary. In particular, section ID 26: Design: process and tools is of relevance to this proof.
- 4.7 **The National Design Guide (NDG 2021, CD 8.4)** adopted in January 2021, and the National Model Design Code (NMDC), adopted in June 2021, set out and illustrates the Government's priorities established in the NPPF (CD5.01) for well-designed places in the form of ten characteristics. While not new, these demonstrate what good design means in practice. These characteristics work together to:
- create the physical **Character** of a place,
 - nurture and sustain a sense of **Community**, and
 - positively address environmental issues affecting **Climate**.
- 4.8 The NDG forms part of the planning practice guidance (PPG) which sets out how well-designed places are achieved through the planning system, including: how LP policies can set out the design outcomes that development should pursue; the role that a plan's vision, objectives and strategic (and non-strategic) policies can play; the role of local design guides, masterplans and design codes. The PPG also describes how decisions about design are made including how pre-application discussions can be used to achieve well-designed places, and tools for assessing and improving design quality including design review panels such as the Essex Quality Review Panel.

Local Design Guide

- 4.9 **The Essex Design Guide** (EDG) is supplementary planning guidance on achieving high-quality design in new developments within in Essex, including street layout/ hierarchy, connectivity, parking, amenity, play, garden communities and a number of other factors. It offers practical advice to developers, planners, and architects, ensuring that new developments contribute positively to the county's character, sustainability, and quality of life.
- 4.10 **The Masterplan Development Principles Document MDP, (CD 1.5)** was approved by BBC Officers on 3rd August 2023. It was prepared in response to Local Plan Policy R03(2.a), which states that the development of the allocated site should “*be accompanied by a comprehensive masterplan and phasing strategy to inform detailed proposals as they come forward*”. It sets out the general principles for the vision of Land North of Shenfield and ensures that vision is consistent throughout the development process, as the different parcels are brought forward through individual planning applications by the four Land North of Shenfield developers, including the applicant, Croudace Homes. It has been prepared in collaboration with all four developers, BBC and ECC Place Services and other statutory consultees.

5.0 RESPONDING TO THE PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT RELATING TO DESIGN

- 5.1 The matters of comparative scale and massing, density and existing context and associated policies are central to my evidence and are explained in more detail in paragraphs 5.25 - 5.57, to address the height and location Reason for Refusal 1 of the proposed three storey Western and Southern Gateway buildings.
- 5.2 An assessment of the existing character of a site and its context (appropriate to the scale of the application), is an important building block in the preparation of a good design. A Contextual Analysis document has been comprehensively prepared and included in the planning application DAS (CD 1.6), as well as appended to the approved MDP (CD 1.5). In addition to this analysis, further assessment of the prevailing character (and building heights) in proximity to the Western and Southern Gateway and how proposals responded to it is included in paragraphs 5.23 - 5.47.
- 5.3 The National Design Guide (NDG) states that a design proposal *“may draw its inspiration from the site, its surroundings or a wider context. It may also introduce new approaches to contrast with, or complement, its context.”* It also explains that *“well-designed places and buildings come about when there is a clearly expressed ‘story’ for the design concept and how it has evolved into a design proposal”*. Clearly, appropriate design responses can depart from that existing character, provided the existing place is understood fully and that important reasons justify this departure. The Officers' Meadow DAS accompanying the application alongside the approved MDP communicate this story effectively and comprehensively.
- 5.4 Achieving variety in density and housing mix is an important consideration as is the relationship between density and character. The minimum residential density requirement set out in local plan policy HP03, alongside the proposed density and the density of the existing built form are presented in paragraphs 5.48 – 5.57.

- 5.5 The government encourage local planning authorities, communities and developers to work together to decide what high quality homes, buildings and places should look like in their area. This should be reflected in local plans, neighbourhood plans, design guides and codes, taking into account government guidance on design, as set out in NPPF paragraph 134. On reading the documentation that accompanied the application put before members, this was the case. That said, members decided to refuse the application.
- 5.6 In my professional opinion, the design process that has been followed is the correct one. The design team considered a range of local and national policy and guidance throughout the application process; BBC officers and ECC Place Services, as their urban design consultants, both had and took the opportunity to review and influence those designs, to evolve the design through engagement with the developer and design team (commentary from BBC officers, ECC Place Services and other statutory consultees and the design response to their views are summarised in the Design Evolution Document, CD 8.15).
- 5.7 The Western and Southern Gateway proposals are consistent with the principles and objectives set out in NPPF, the NPPG and NDG/ NMDC, the Local Plan, the Essex Design Guide and the approved MDP. The starting point of this Proof of Evidence is the NPPF (CD 7.1), as it sets the scene for the Local Plan policies, the allocation and the design requirements of any application.

RESPONDING TO THE NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK (NPPF 2023, CD5.01)

5.8 One of fundamental objectives of the NPPF is to achieve sustainable development and pursuing it in a positive way by applying a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which means approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan, in this case the BBC Local Plan, without delay (NPPF paragraph 11c).

5.9 Paragraph 115 of the NPPF states that in assessing sites that may be allocated for development in plans, or specific applications for development, it should be ensured that:

“a) sustainable transport modes are prioritised taking account of the vision for the site, the type of development and its location;

b) safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users;

c) the design of streets, parking areas, other transport elements and the content of associated standards reflects current national guidance, including the National Design Guide and the National Model Design Code...”

5.10 Paragraph 117 of the NPPF then goes on to say that applications for development should:

“a) give priority first to pedestrian and cycle movements, both within the scheme and with neighbouring areas; and second – so far as possible – to facilitating access to high quality public transport, with layouts that maximise the catchment area for bus or other public transport services,

and appropriate facilities that encourage public transport use;

b) address the needs of people with disabilities and reduced mobility in relation to all modes of transport;

c) create places that are safe, secure and attractive – which minimise the scope for conflicts between pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles, avoid unnecessary street clutter, and respond to local character and design standards...”

- 5.11 The BBC Local Plan removed the Land North of Shenfield R03 allocation site from its previous Green Belt designation given the exceptional accessibility and sustainability afforded by the site in proximity to frequent Elizabeth Line services into London, Heathrow and Reading from Shenfield Station, and the need for housing.
- 5.12 The Chelmsford Road is a major existing public transport route and the majority of the Croudace site is within 400m of an existing bus stop. Further, it is understood that Croudace is providing financial contributions and the bus shelters for a bus loop to be provided through the site, as agreed with ECC Highways. This will mean that all the residents on this site will have easy access to a bus to the station and the Elizabeth Line.
- 5.13 The Western Gateway will be served by this frequent bus services along Chelmsford Road within 2-3 minutes (less than 200m) walking distance. At the Southern Gateway, residents will be within 920m of Shenfield station which corresponds to a 11.5 minute walk or a less than 3 minute cycle (based on a walking speed of 1.4m/s - from CDH.27 Guidelines for Providing for Journeys on Foot CIHT 2000, paragraph 3.30; and the absolute minimum cycling speed of 20 kph - from LTN 1/20 Cycle Infrastructure Design, table 5-4). Moreover, the Officers' Meadow development will provide for a new segregated cycle way along Hunter Avenue, which will ensure the cycle ride for residents of the Southern Gateway will not only be quick but also safe.

- 5.14 By providing higher density buildings in close proximity to the Chelmsford Road, the new internal road and Alexander Lane (the closest walking/cycling distance to the rail station) the Appeal Application meets paragraph 115a) of the NPPF by prioritising access to sustainable modes of transport in this location.
- 5.15 Furthermore, the site layout and connectivity plan (CD 1.31) shows a variety of pedestrian and cycle routes through the site, linking to existing (and improved routes with the quiet way being provided in the s106 by Croudace along Hunters Avenue) providing active travel options for new and existing residents. The Appeal Application, therefore, meets the other elements in Paragraph 115 and 117 of the NPPF, as set out above.
- 5.16 It is also worth noting in relation to the site's connectivity, that the consented Redrow Land North of Shenfield site is dependent on the Officers' Meadow to deliver sustainable transport modes and will promote car dependent lifestyles if delivered on its own without the significant infrastructure and linkages that the Officers' Meadow site contributes.
- 5.17 By optimising density in close proximity to a major public transport route at the Western Gateway and to short walking and cycling distances to the rail station and town centre at the Southern Gateway, it is my opinion that the application has positively responded to the exceptional connectivity that the site offers. Thus, making effective use of land to promote sustainable travel modes and limit future car use.
- 5.18 Paragraph 129 of the NPPF states that planning policies and decisions should support development that makes efficient use of land, taking into account:

“a) the identified need for different types of housing and other forms of development, and the availability of land suitable for accommodating it;

b) local market conditions and viability;

c) the availability and capacity of infrastructure and services – both existing and proposed – as well as their potential for further improvement and the scope to promote sustainable travel modes that limit future car use;

d) the desirability of maintaining an area's prevailing character and setting (including residential gardens), or of promoting regeneration and change; and

e) the importance of securing well-designed, attractive and healthy places.”

5.19 The identified need for different types of housing and local market conditions is dealt with in Ms Piper's evidence.

5.20 Paragraphs 129 c) and e) are addressed above in paragraphs 5.13 - 5.17 of this proof.

5.21 The desirability of maintaining an area's prevailing character and setting, or the promotion of regeneration and change is considered here.

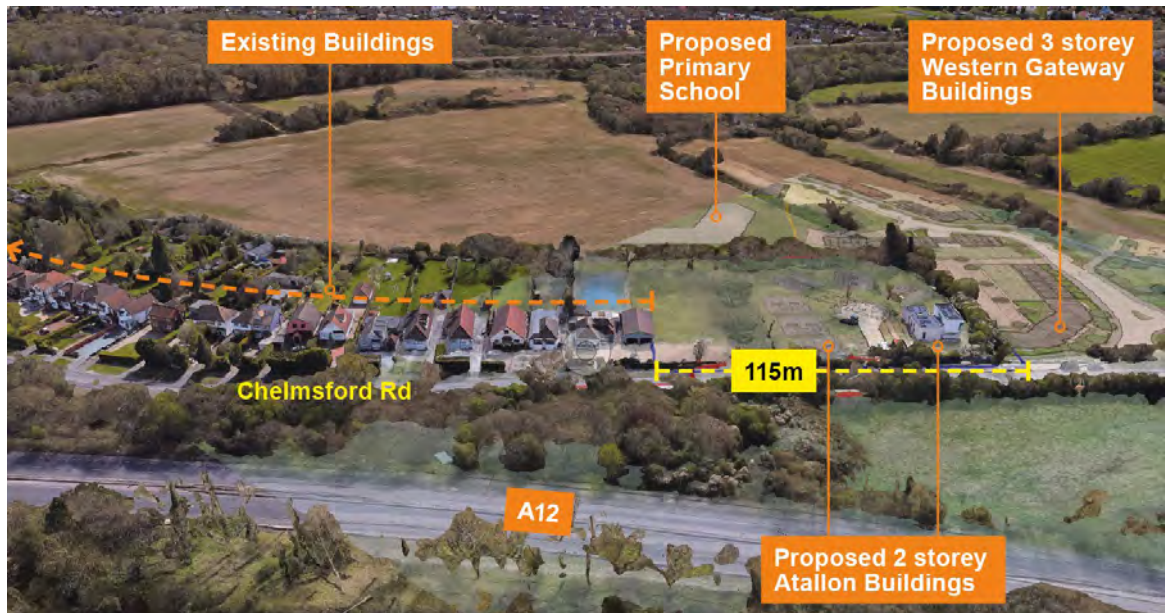
Existing Prevailing Character

5.22 The area's prevailing character and setting have been analysed appropriately and comprehensively in the Contextual Analysis (CA) included in the DAS, which clearly shows that the site is in proximity to areas of mixed character, architectural treatment and scale.

5.23 The following paragraphs will consider the character of the existing built form closest to the Western and Southern Gateway proposed three storey buildings in more detail.

The Western Gateway Existing Prevailing Character

- 5.24 The Google Earth 3d view below shows the site of the proposed three storey buildings at the Western Gateway in relation to existing built form.



5.25

Figure 1: View of existing houses along Chelmsford Road in proximity to the Western Gateway site



5.26

Figure 2: View of existing building heights in proximity to the Western Gateway site

- 5.27 The prevailing character of the residential area fronting Chelmsford Road is defined by low density suburban housing of mixed architectural features and materials, combined with the adjacent contemporary Atallon Site under construction.

Table 1. Western Gateway Existing Prevailing Character	
Density	10.2 dwellings per hectare
Building Height	Variety of 1, 1.5, 2, 2.5 storey buildings
Building Typology	Predominantly detached, some semi-detached
Layout and street pattern	<p>Buildings predominantly fronting Chelmsford Road with generous front gardens ranging from 11.5m to 22.5m accommodating parking. Relatively consistent building line with varying building widths and gaps. Long back gardens approximately 55m.</p> <p>Some properties arranged in a cul-de-sac, including Fen Close and the adjacent Atallon site.</p>
Architectural Features/ Materials	<p>Variety of building footprints, widths and roofs (gable fronted, hipped roofs, Dutch gambrel roof, wide fronted houses with roof parallel to the street). Flat roof detached houses proposed at the adjacent Atallon site.</p> <p>Variety of features and architectural styles e.g. bay windows in varied colours, projected porches, dormer windows.</p> <p>Variety of materials: various render colours, red brick, mock Tudor. Brown and red tile roofs.</p>
Boundary treatment & Public Realm	Variety of low and high hedges, low brick walls, timber fencing; combination of soft and hard landscaped front gardens.



5.28

Figure 3: Varied existing building character and features in proximity to the Western Gateway site



5.29

Figure 4: Contemporary flat roof houses at Atallon cul-de-sac under construction

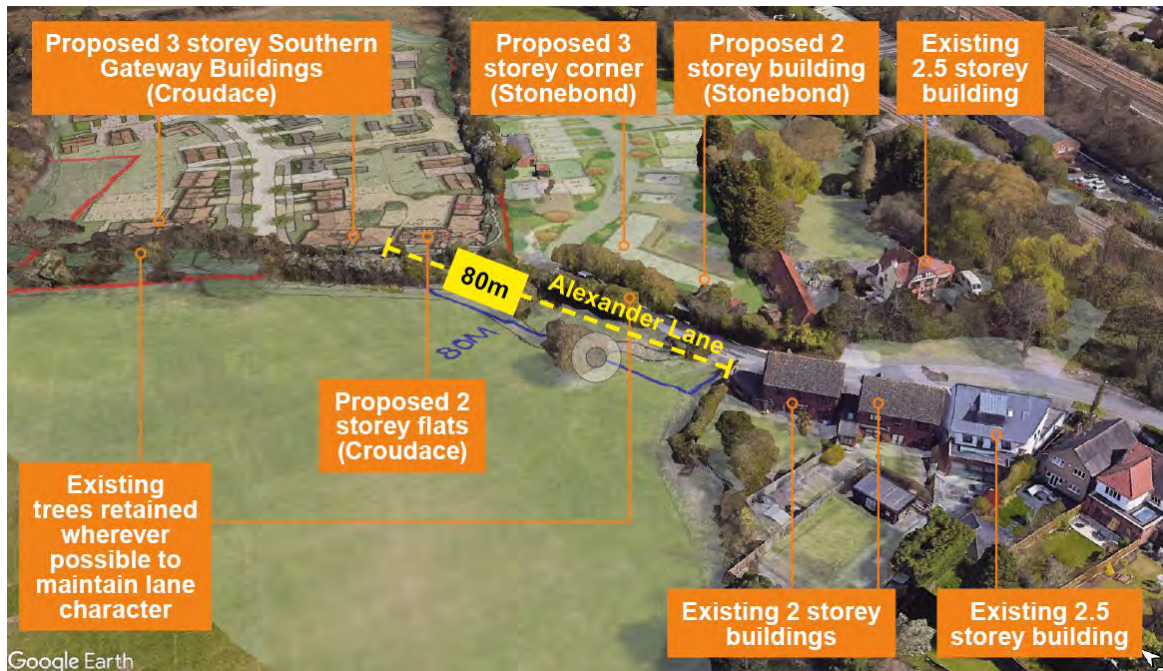


5.30

Figure 5: View of 169 Chelmsford Rd, approximately 115m away from proposed 3 storey Western Gateway Buildings, and Atallon 2 storey house

The Southern Gateway Existing Prevailing Character

- 5.31 The Google Earth 3d view below shows the site of the proposed three storey buildings at the Southern Gateway in relation to existing built form.



5.32

Figure 6: 3d view of existing houses along Alexander Lane in proximity to the Southern Gateway Stonebond and Croudace sites



5.33

Figure 7: View of existing building heights in proximity to the Southern Gateway site

- 5.34 The prevailing character of the residential area fronting Alexander Lane is defined by 1930's suburban residential housing predominantly 2 storey with two 2.5 storey houses near the proposed Croudace and Stonebond sites.

Table 2. Southern Gateway Existing Prevailing Character	
Density	12.1 dwellings per hectare
Building Height	Predominantly 2 storey buildings. Two 2.5 storey buildings
Building Typology	Semidetached and detached
Layout and street pattern	Buildings predominantly fronting Alexander Lane with varying front garden depths ranging from 2m to 10m accommodating parking. Relatively consistent building line except for the northernmost houses closest to the three storey buildings at the Southern Gateway. Regular back gardens approximately 28m in the southern part of the lane, becoming more irregular in shape and size as the lane curves.
Architectural Features/ Materials	<p>2 storey row of eight 1930's pitched roof semidetached, with mock Tudor detailing, projected vertical volumes with bay windows, white render, pebbledash, red brick plinth, red tile roof. Gable fronted detached book ending regular row of semidetached.</p> <p>2.5 storey contemporary wide fronted detached house at bend in the lane, with pitched roof and rooflights, projected door volume. White render, grey cladding and slate roof.</p> <p>2.5 storey detached with half-hipped red tile roof, red brick and mock Tudor detailing.</p>

	2 storey wide fronted detached cottages with red brick, black timber boarding, brown window frames and brown tile pitched roof broken up with projecting gabled volumes.
Boundary treatment & Public Realm	Combination of low hedges, low brick and render walls; soft and hard landscaped front gardens.



5.35

Figure 8: Varied existing building character and features in proximity to the Southern Gateway site.

- 5.36 This existing built form presents less variation and more consistency in building character with some variation at the northern end of Alexander Lane in terms of architectural style.

Change in Character

- 5.37 Currently the Appeal Site comprises, in general, arable fields, tree belts, Ancient woodland and scrub land.

- 5.38 The allocation of the site as part of Policy R03 will inevitably bring change. The issue thus becomes what sort of change, and how can the policies of the NPPF, the Local Plan and best urban design practice be brought together to provide a sustainable, high quality, and successful new neighbourhood for Shenfield.
- 5.39 The design team, BBC, Place Services and the Essex Quality Review Panel were faced with the question of whether to maintain the areas' prevailing character or to promote change (NPPF paragraph 129 d). They resolved to strike a balance between the two approaches to deliver a measured and careful design response.
- 5.40 At the Western Gateway, where existing built form character is more mixed and less dense, they opted for a fresh design approach which follows the exemplar Brentwood Preparatory School (BPS) gateway to signal the presence of this new high quality neighbourhood and to provide enclosure to the large Chelmsford Road roundabout and generous open space and parkland delivered as part of the proposals.
- 5.41 The assessment of the existing prevailing character recognises that, whilst this area presents some positive features, the lack of a cohesive architectural language, the limited built form presence on the street due to deep building setbacks, the significantly low density, the physical distance of 115m from the proposed three storey buildings, alongside the lack of publicly accessible open space, did not add up to appropriate design cues for the creation of a high quality attractive gateway.



5.42

Figure 9: Award winning Brentwood Preparatory School BPS regarded nationally as a building of exceptional design quality.



5.43

Figure 10: Western Gateway Aerial CGI showing the proposed 3 storey Western Gateway buildings addressing the open nature of the site entrance and creating a focal point that book-ends Shenfield.

- 5.44 At the Southern Gateway, where existing built form character is more cohesive and existing trees and verges contribute a verdant character to Alexander Lane and a visual buffer from existing built form, a softer

transition between the existing building heights and the proposed three storey buildings was achieved. In addition to this gentle increase in scale and massing, the blended architectural approach using pitched roofs broken up with projecting gables as well as the materials and details selection, ties the proposed buildings to the nearby existing built form.



5.45

Figure 11: Proposed Alexander Lane street elevation showing the gradual progression from left to right (north to south): from the 3 storey apartment gateway blocks to the 2.5 storey existing building, and the verdant character of the lane including existing and proposed trees and landscaping.

5.46

Both the Western and Southern gateway proposals are the result of a carefully thought out and sympathetic response to the existing prevailing character. Hence the proposed 3 storey height of the buildings at the Western and Southern Gateways are appropriate urban design responses for their context and is therefore not harmful to the character and appearance of the area

5.47

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Density

5.48 Paragraph 130 of the NPPF states

“Area-based character assessments, design guides and codes and masterplans can be used to help ensure that land is used efficiently while also creating beautiful and sustainable places. Where there is an existing or anticipated shortage of land for meeting identified housing needs, it is especially important that planning policies and

decisions avoid homes being built at low densities, and ensure that developments make optimal use of the potential of each site. In these circumstances:

a) plans should contain policies to optimise the use of land in their area and meet as much of the identified need for housing as possible. This will be tested robustly at examination...

b) local planning authorities should refuse applications which they consider fail to make efficient use of land, taking into account the policies in this Framework..."

- 5.49 BBC has complied with paragraph 130a) in Adopted Policy HP03 which states that proposals for new residential developments not allocated in the Plan should take a design led approach to density which ensures schemes are sympathetic to local character and make efficient use of land and be expected to achieve a net density of at least 35 dwellings per hectare net or higher, unless the character of the surrounding area suggests that such densities would be inappropriate, or where other site constraints make such densities unachievable.
- 5.50 It is not clear why this policy does not relate to allocated sites, other than a number of dwellings is set out in each allocation policy. It is commonly accepted, however, that 35 dwellings per hectare is the minimum for making efficient use of land.
- 5.51 Making the most efficient use of land on R03 is considered to be particularly important as the site was removed from the Green Belt specifically to help meet the Borough's housing need and, as I understand it, the allocation's ability to meet the housing target in R03 has substantially diminished due to the constraints on site being better understood through the application process and a more significant climate change requirement for flood risk required by the EA. Therefore, to optimise efficiency and the benefits of this highly sustainable location, apartments were considered.

5.52 This coincided with two events:

1. the request from BBC and ECC Officers for gateways at the entrances of the allocation: at the north on the Redrow and Countryside sites and to the west and south on the Croudace site.
2. The 2022 SHMA being sent to the Appellant. This is addressed in Ms Piper's evidence.

5.53 The Appeal Application has a density of 36.3 dwellings per hectare and includes six apartment blocks with 65 dwellings, plus 279 houses. There are 22 three-storey houses to assist with density and the creation of the gateway. If these gateway buildings were reduced to two storeys, the number of new homes would decrease by approximately 18 units, equivalent to 5% of the total provision, thereby reducing the density to 34.4 dwellings per hectare. This loss of units would result in reduced efficiency in the use of the land at this highly accessible and sustainable location within the allocation

5.54 It should be noted that LP policy HP03 c) states that "*other locations with good public transport accessibility*" are expected to achieve a higher density, generally above 65 dwellings per hectare which is, therefore, considered an appropriate density for Shenfield potentially even in locations other than the Town Centre, subject to being high accessible by public transport and sympathetic to local character.

5.55 In light of the above, the placemaking strategy has rightly favoured positioning housing typologies such as apartments which are likely to rely the most on public transport and active travel at the Western and Southern gateways (and along the main internal road where the bus loop will be serviced) to benefit from and encourage sustainable travel.

5.56 The existing densities of 10.2 and 12.1 dwellings per hectare in the residential areas near the Western and Southern Gateways, respectively,

are not suitable references for replication on the Site. Replicating these densities would unduly constrain the ability to achieve the required number of homes, supported by the Site's high accessibility and part of the reason for its removal from the Green Belt. Moreover, density is only one factor to consider in the scheme's design.



Figure 12: Existing densities of the residential areas in proximity to the Western and Southern Gateways

Well-designed places

5.58 In order to achieve well-designed places, Paragraph 135 of the NPPF states that planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments,

“a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;

b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;

- c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities).*
- d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;*
- e) optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and*
- f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.“*

5.59 Each of these requirements is addressed below, with the exception of criteria e) which is addressed in Ms Piper's evidence.

5.60 The Appeal Application has a well-conceived layout and design that optimises the site's location, the existing landscape structure, the policy requirements and the constraints on site. It also works cohesively with the other parts of the allocation to provide a comprehensive development, providing most of the required non-residential uses. It provides a high quality bespoke architectural response that takes cues from Shenfield whilst providing a more forward-looking, contemporary feel. It will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development (criteria a and b).

- 5.61 In terms of effective landscaping, the Nature and Public Spaces sections in the DAS (p.45-48) demonstrate how existing and proposed planting will contribute to the distinctive character of the Western and Southern Gateways and to soften the visual impact of proposed homes. A variety of tree species including native trees will complement and enhance the existing mature trees which the site already benefits from, and, alongside street trees, a soft landscape boundary treatment approach will be delivered to complement the architectural approach (criterion b).
- 5.62 Criterion c) is dealt with in paragraphs 5.23 – 5.47 above on the prevailing character, which describe how a careful and nuanced approach was taken to the Western and Southern Gateway proposals to deliver a sympathetic response to local character, while promoting gentle increases in densities and change.
- 5.63 The design team engaged thoroughly with BBC officers, Place Services and the Essex Quality Review Panel to create a strong sense of place for the Officers' Meadow site and particularly for the Western and Southern Gateways, ensuring that the proposed building types and materials address the main access points into the site to create a sense of arrival and deliver attractive, welcoming and distinctive places, as per criterion d).
- 5.64 Proposals for the Officers' Meadow also comply with criterion f) by delivering building frontages with a clear distinction between public and private space, overlooking open space and streets to provide natural surveillance, and to create places that are indeed safe, inclusive and accessible, with a very high standard of amenity for users and promoting community cohesion and resilience.
- 5.65 The Western and Southern Gateway proposals strike an appropriate balance between delivering high quality design that is sympathetic to local character and encouraging innovation and change in the local area by taking design cues from exemplar precedents such as the Brentwood Preparatory School (BPS).

- 5.66 As demonstrated by the CGIs and elevations included in the planning application, they will be visually attractive and provide high quality architecture sympathetic to the local character and history, whilst making an efficient use of land through increased densities. A strong sense of place will be established by creating vibrant built form frontages in these key locations that will promote pedestrian/ cycle movement and public transport patronage to reach the nearby station, town centre and local destinations, thus promoting active travel and sustainable transport modes, as required by paragraph 135 of the NPPF.

RESPONDING TO THE BRENTWOOD LOCAL PLAN

5.67 The planning permission to proposals was refused based on Local Plan Policy BE14 - 1.e not being complied with (Reason for refusal 1). In this section I go through this policy and demonstrate how the proposals, in fact, respond positively and comply to it and other relevant Local Plan Policies, starting with the Allocation Policy R03 and including Residential Density Policy HP03.

5.68 Policy R03 Land North of Shenfield

5.69 Policy R03 sets out the second largest strategic allocation in the adopted BBC Local Plan, of which the Appeal Site is the largest part. The policy allocates Land North of Shenfield for 825 dwellings, a 2.1ha safeguarded 2FE primary school and early years nursery Appeal Site, a 60-bed care home and around 2ha of employment land. It also acknowledges that the allocation will be brought forward by four developers, including Croudace Homes delivering the Officers' Meadow site.

5.70 The large quantum of homes allocated in the policy has since been reduced to approximately 700 homes due to drainage, ecology and other technical considerations acknowledged by BBC. However, there are clear expectations that the Appeal Site, as the largest part of the allocation, will deliver a large proportion of homes and make efficient use of land available for development.

5.71 Two Development Principles set out in Policy R03 (2b and 2c) are also relevant to this evidence: *"Development should: b) be of a design quality and layout that reflects its key gateway location, particularly on land near to Junction 12, A12; c) provide vehicular access via Chelmsford Road (A1023) and Alexander Lane;"*

5.72 The Essex Design Guide EDG provides useful guidance on gateways relevant to this appeal and R03 Development Principle b):

“The main purpose of a gateway is to indicate visually to drivers that they are entering a special area, (...).

“Gateways should also be distinct in appearance, so that pedestrians from all parts of the population – including the partially sighted, older people and people with dementia – can understand their purpose without confusion.”

- 5.73 R03 Development Principle b) sets out the important *“key gateway location”* of the Land North of Shenfield allocation site in relation to the town, and the role of *“land near to Junction 12”* in signalling the arrival into Shenfield from the A12. R03 Development Principle c) sets out the vehicular access points via Chelmsford Road and Alexander Lane which provide access into the Officers' Meadow site, acknowledging that these will be the main points of access for the allocation.
- 5.74 These R03 development principles have been embraced by the approved MDP document which sets out the Northern Gateway as an important gateway for Shenfield near the A12 Junction 12, and the Western and Southern Gateways as important points of arrival into the proposed neighbourhood. Moreover, the Western Gateway was acknowledged as an important gateway for the town as well as the wider R03 allocation by BBC, Place Services and the consultant design team, in light of its key placemaking function of signalling the nearby proposed school and the Officers' Meadow as the largest part of the allocation.
- 5.75 The Local Plan Inspectors' Report (CD 9.4) also acknowledges in relation to Policy R03, at paragraph 158, that *“the site is a key gateway location and provides a logical extension of the built up area of Shenfield, close to existing facilities including schools, shops and the Shenfield railway station which now incorporates the Elizabeth Line.”*

5.76 **Strategic Policy BE14: Creating Successful Places - 1.e | The Western Gateway**

“Proposals will be required to meet high design standards and deliver safe, inclusive, attractive and accessible places. Proposals should: (...) respond positively and sympathetically to their context and build upon existing strengths and characteristics, and where appropriate, retain or enhance existing features which make a positive contribution to the character, appearance or significance of the local area (including natural and heritage assets).”

5.77 The layout for the Western Gateway meets the high design standards advocated by this policy and delivers an attractive and distinctive built frontage creating a sense of arrival for the Officers' Meadow neighbourhood, school and facilities in a highly accessible location. The proposed built form responds positively to its mixed character context and retains existing trees and hedges wherever possible, which make a positive contribution to its distinctiveness.

5.78 This is also recognised by ECC Place Services referring to the Western Gateway within their March and May 2024 reports and stating:

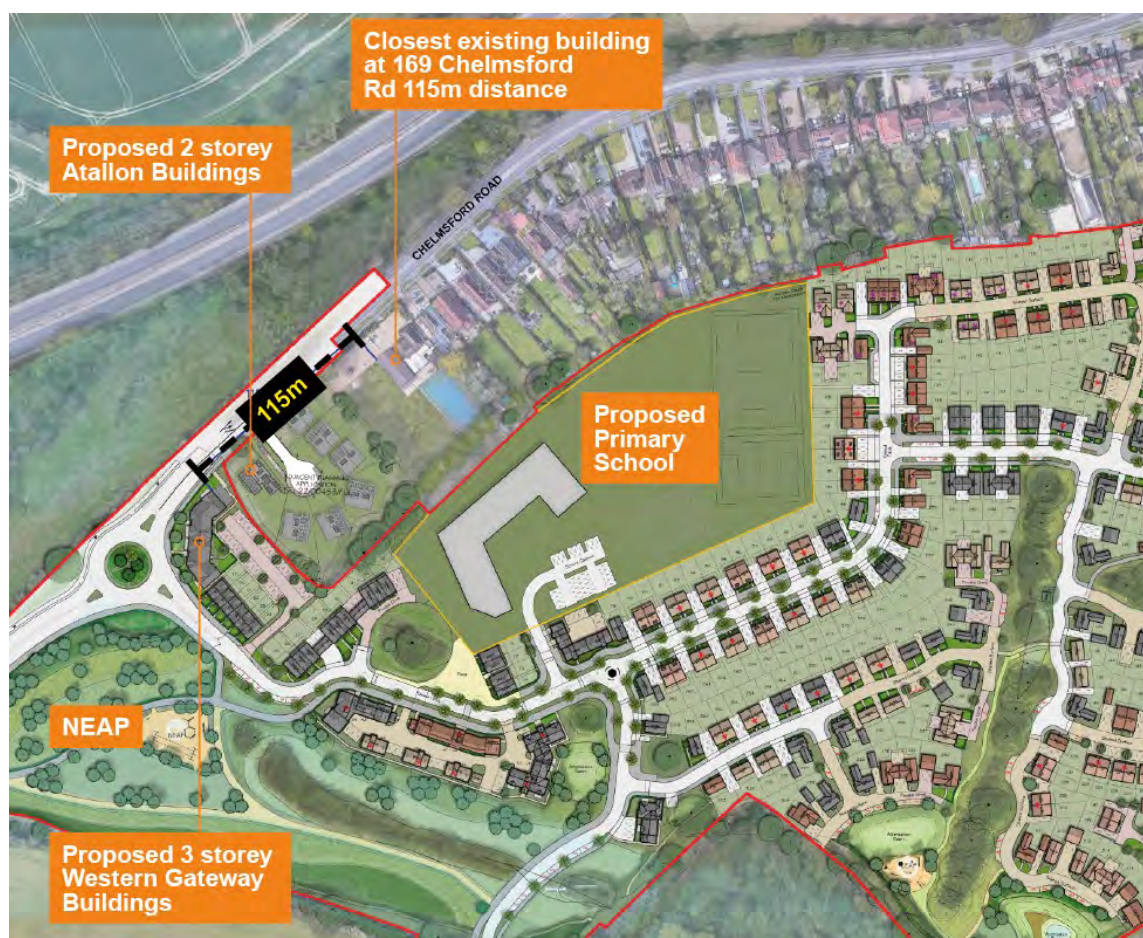
“The architecture of the most prominent character areas is positive, and where house types have been adapted by the architects to be contemporary, these have become exemplary.”

5.79 The Western Gateway is one of the key gateways to Land North of Shenfield, which is the second largest allocation in the borough, and one of the most accessible locations in the wider region benefitting from Elizabeth line services at Shenfield station. Therefore, the existing context analysed in the Contextual Analysis for the site (included in the DAS and appended in the approved MDP) rightly takes into account the wider character of Shenfield, rather than focusing on its immediate context only. This includes

higher density residential areas, as well as green street and woodland edge character examples well beyond the built form adjacent to the site.

- 5.80 The immediate existing built form context to the Western Gateway is not so close to the development either, the nearest existing house being approximately 115m away from the edge of the proposed three storey buildings in question. This existing house, along with the existing row of houses along Chelmsford Road are of limited architectural merit. They are set back from the street scene behind a fence and hedge with a relatively consistent building setback from the road. They occupy large plots at a density of 10.2 dwellings per hectare, which would be entirely inappropriate for the Western Gateway and its highly accessible and sustainable location. This density would not meet the minimum density requirements of local plan policy HP03 nor NPPF paragraph 130 which urges to *“avoid homes being built at low densities”* and encourages a *“significant uplift in the average density of residential development”* to ensure that developments make optimal use of the potential of each site.

5.81



5.82

Figure 13: Zoom in of proposed layout showing the Western Gateway in relation to existing built form

5.83 The proposed Atallon cul-de-sac including 7 contemporary detached dwellings (see figure 4, paragraph 5.30), sits immediately adjacent to the Western Gateway three storey buildings creating a very different character to existing built form which again suggests that the existing Chelmsford Road frontage character is not so relevant for the Western Gateway.

5.84 Policy BE14 - 1.e requires a sympathetic response to the existing context of the area which does not in any way require that the Western Gateway emulate this context nor its layout, scale and massing which is varied and of an inappropriate density.

5.85 Instead, the design team have taken design cues from the award winning Brentwood Preparatory School (BPS), which marks the boundary between Shenfield and Brentwood and, therefore, is an appropriate and aspirational gateway precedent entirely meeting the high design standards required of

the prominent location this gateway affords within the site. It should also be noted that the three storey western gateway buildings are also smaller in scale and massing than the BPS (13.44m high compared to the approximately 15m high BPS).

5.86 Strategic Policy BE14: Creating Successful Places - 1.e | The Southern Gateway

5.87 The Southern Gateway also reflects the need and aspiration to create higher massing to signal the gateway function of this prominent part of the site and to provide higher density in a highly accessible location, see paragraph 5.13 - 5.17.

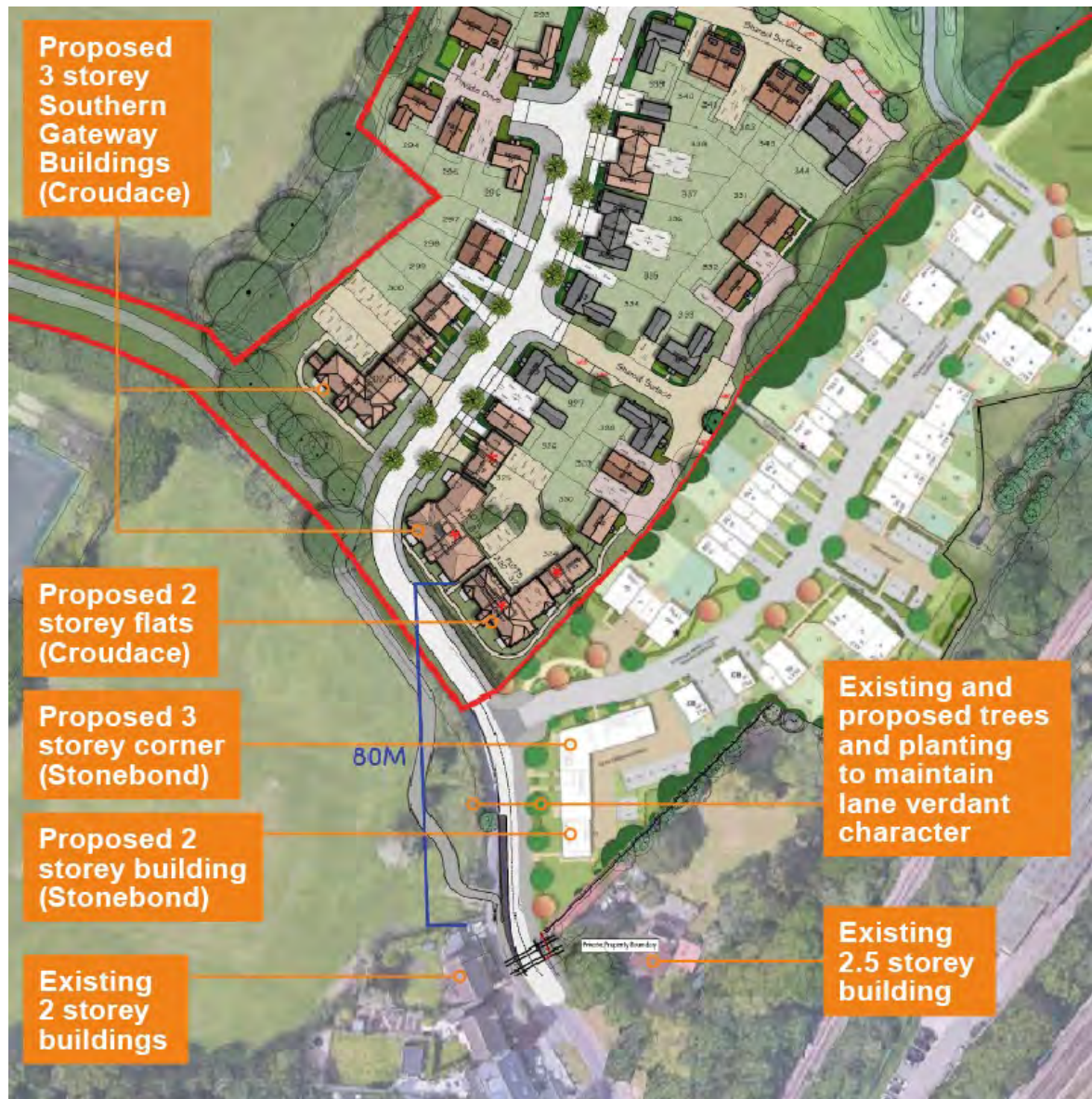
5.88 The proposed Southern Gateway three storey buildings are located approximately 80m north of the closest existing two storey dwelling on the opposite side of Alexander Lane. An existing two and a half storey house on a large plot adjoins proposed Stonebond 2 storey buildings with a 3 storey corner element to the south of the gateway. The closest existing two storey buildings is located on the opposite side of Alexander Lane.



5.89

Figure 14: Existing two storey house on Alexander Lane. Dense existing vegetation opposite this house forming the plot boundary of an existing

two and a half storey house not visible from the street bordering proposed 2 storey detached homes.



5.90

Figure 15: Zoom in of proposed layout showing the Western Gateway in relation to existing built form, Gradual progression from north to south: from the 3 storey apartment gateway blocks to the 2.5 and 2 storey existing buildings.



5.91

Figure 16: Proposed Alexander Lane street elevation (Croudace) showing

the gentle increase in scale and massing and the blended architectural approach using pitched roofs broken up with projecting gables

- 5.92 Overall, the proposed built form creates an appropriate transition from existing built form with scale and massing progressing from the 2 storey existing building and 2.5 storey existing building, to the 2 and 3 storey proposed Stonebond buildings, to a 2 storey small apartment block within the Croudace site, to the 3 storey apartment gateway blocks. Existing dense vegetation along Alexander Lane (retained wherever possible to maintain the verdant character of the street), alongside its curvy alignment, result in very limited, if any, visual connection between the 2 storey existing buildings and 3 storey apartment gateway blocks.
- 5.93 In conclusion, the proposed 3 storey Southern Gateway buildings also respond sympathetically to their existing context. They will not be harmful to the character and appearance of the area which will be enhanced by their presence.

RESPONDING TO THE MASTERPLAN DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES DOCUMENT (MDP, CD1.5).

5.94 The Masterplan Development Principles (MDP) document has been prepared by the four Land North of Shenfield developers in collaboration with BBC officers, the Essex Quality Review Panel and the Place Services Urban Design team. The Committee Report recognises its status in shaping proposals for the Appeal Site by stating that: *“although not formally adopted, the DF is also a material consideration when determining this application.”* The weight and status of this document is considered further in Jane Piper’s planning proof of evidence on paragraphs 10.11 – 10.37.

5.95 The Committee Report also recognises the extensive engagement underpinning the preparation of the MDP:

“it has been informed by stakeholder feedback following several revisions. A high-level Masterplan was presented to officers in June 2022, revisions were first submitted in December 2022, and then February and May 2023. The DF was also presented to the Essex Quality Review Panel in June 2023. BBC officers (Planning, Housing, Strategic Policy, Tree, Landscape and Ecology, Environmental Health) and Place Services Urban Design team have reviewed and provided comments to all the DF iterations.”

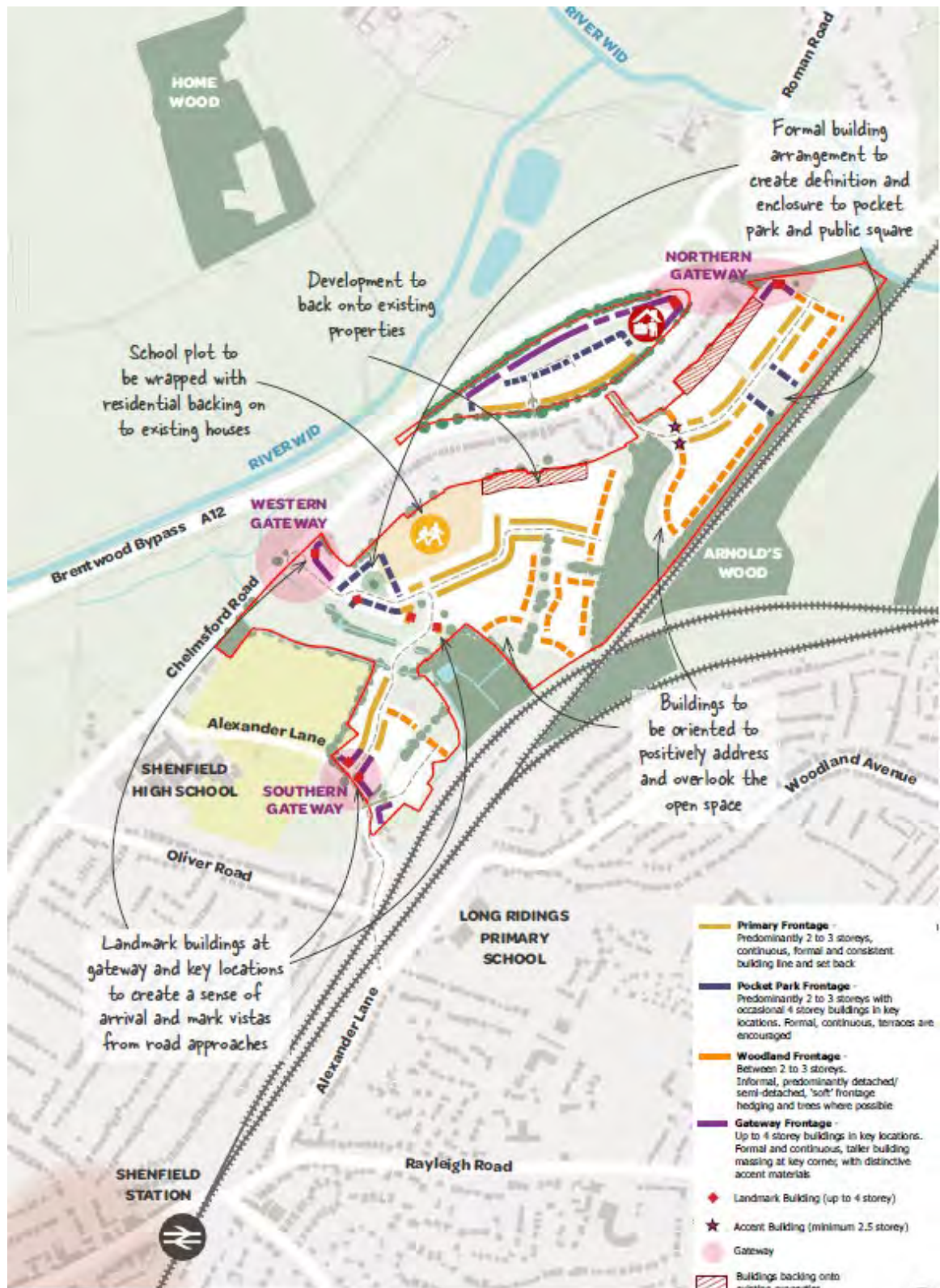
5.96 Of relevance to this proof are:

- a) The Design Opportunities concept plan (p.27);
- b) The Indicative Built Form Strategy Plan (Figure 22 p.59);
- c) The Contextual Analysis (appended to the MDP and included in the DAS accompanying the planning application), and prevailing character which have been considered in paragraphs 5.25 – 5.47.

5.97 The Design Opportunities concept plan (MDP, p.27) introduces the opportunity to create the three gateways for the site: the Western and

Southern Gateways, alongside the Northern Gateway near the A12 Junction.

- 5.98 The Indicative Built Form Strategy Plan provides further design guidance for the three Gateways and clearly identifies landmark building locations of up to four storeys here, alongside indicative building "Gateway Frontage" alignments for them. Moreover, the plan legend indicates these Gateway Frontages are to be *"up to 4 storey buildings in key locations. Formal and continuous, taller building massing at key corner, with distinctive accent materials."*



5.99

Figure 17: The MDP Indicative Built Form Strategy Plan (Figure 22 p.59)

5.100 A landmark can be defined as “a building or structure that stands out from its background by virtue of height, size or some other aspect of design” (By Design: Urban Design in the planning system: towards better practice,

companion guide to planning policy guidance and subsequent planning policy statements aimed at encouraging better design between 2000 - 2014). *“Used intelligently, landmarks play an important role in establishing a sense of legibility and drama within an area”* (EDG). This legibility is important particularly at the Western Gateway to signal the proposed school, open spaces and play facilities delivered at Officers' Meadow.

- 5.101 Clearly, the detailed proposals comply with the requirements set out in the MDP by delivering higher massing (albeit three storey and, therefore, not as tall as the up to four which the MDP allowed for). The proposals also provide formal and continuous frontage creating a sense of enclosure to these key entrance points with distinctive materials and architectural treatment appropriate to their important placemaking function.

RESPONDING TO THE ESSEX DESIGN GUIDE (EDG on line).

- 5.102 Since its original creation in 1973, the Essex Design Guide (EDG) has been encouraging high-quality development, promoting locally sympathetic design with sufficient flexibility to allow for innovation, and is the primary source of design advice for residential development within the county. The document is designed to provide contemporary socio economic, environmental, and best practice guidance to planners and those interested in the provision of new housing developments. It also aspires to be a sole reference source for creating high-quality, sustainable developments, including additional 2018 new content on the themes of Active Design Principles, Ageing Population, Health and Wellbeing, Digital and Smart Technology, and Garden Communities.
- 5.103 Paragraph 139 of the NPPF clearly states that *“development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes.”* For Local Planning Authorities in Essex, including BBC, the Essex Design Guide can be used to address this.
- 5.104 For many years, the EDG has brought together and updated good practice in masterplanning within a set of well-established urban design principles which have considered throughout the application process, as well as during the preparation of the approved MDP. The Essex Quality Review Panel was established to provide advice to support developers and LPA's to improve the quality of development and ensure the principles of the Design Guide are upheld, and has recognised the high quality design that the Officers' Meadow application will deliver to Shenfield.
- 5.105 The Spectrum of Visual Density EDG webpage which sits within the understanding the functional context section of the guidance, describes the increase in visual density from an uninhabited landscape to a built-up urban centre.



5.106

EDG extract - From left to right: Rural situation, Arcadia, Boulevard Planning, Unsatisfactory Suburbia, Urban Situation, Large Town/City Centre scale

5.107 The EDG webpage states:

"At the centre of the spectrum is 'unsatisfactory suburbia', which sees houses set on plots in such a cramped fashion that there can be no illusion of their existing within a landscape setting. The houses are also too loosely grouped to contain spaces satisfactorily: frontages are fragmented by gaps and public space is dominated by estate roads and driveways. Space can therefore not be organised effectively, and this is the fundamental reason most suburbia is a failure in visual terms.

"At the further end of the spectrum are urban situations, in which space is enclosed by more or less continuous building frontages. Such developments are focused on delivering housing at densities above 20 houses per hectare (eight per acre). Such groupings are characteristic of most historic towns and villages in Essex."

5.108 The design response for the Western and Southern Gateways have considered the above guidance, alongside the minimum 35 dwellings per hectare HP03 requirement and the MDP storey height and building frontage requirements, to create a sense of enclosure and ensure a sense of arrival to welcome people into this attractive new neighbourhood.

5.109 Conversely, a layout with loosely grouped houses emulating the scale and massing of nearby existing built form would not have contained these spaces satisfactorily resulting in fragmented frontages and public space

dominated by estate roads, and, ultimately, an unsatisfactory suburbia character. This approach would have, therefore, been contrary to EDG guidance and subject to planning refusal as per NPPF paragraph 139.

RESPONDING TO THE NATIONAL PLANNING PRACTICE GUIDANCE (NPPG) AND THE NATIONAL DESIGN GUIDE (NDG, CD 7.4).

- 5.110 The NDG forms part of the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) which sets out how well-designed places are achieved through the planning system, including: how LP policies can set out the design outcomes that development should pursue; the role that a plan's vision, objectives and strategic (and non-strategic) policies can play; the role of local design guides, masterplans and design codes. The PPG also describes how decisions about design are made including how pre-application discussions can be used to achieve well-designed places, and tools for assessing and improving design quality including design review panels such as the Essex Quality Review Panel.
- 5.111 The robust planning process underpinning the design of the Western and Southern Gateways, evidenced in the submitted DAS (CD 1.6) and Design Evolution Document (CD 8.15), has consistently taken the opportunities offered by the PPG to pursue high quality design outcomes.
- 5.112 For completeness, this Design Proof demonstrates that the layout of the Western and Southern Gateways is indeed compliant to NDG characteristics relevant to RfR1 and will enhance the health and wellbeing of the local community and create safe, inclusive, accessible and active environments.

Context - enhances the surroundings

C1 Understand and relate well to the site, its local and wider context

- 5.113 The Contextual Analysis, appended to the MDP (CD 1.5) and included in the application DAS (CD 1.6), demonstrates how proposals are well grounded in their locality and based on understanding the site's features, surrounding context, history and characteristics. In keeping with good urban design practice, an appraisal of placemaking elements within the immediate

and wider context of the site has been carried out to inform the character of the proposals in line with.

- 5.114 This assessment has been included in the DAS (CD1.6) and MDP(CD1.5) to complement the 'story' for the design concept and how it has evolved into a design proposal. The study rightly identifies the wider context within which the application site is set, being the second largest allocation in BBC. Places featured in the study were selected because of their relevance as well as proximity to the site, and assessed in terms of their urban form, buildings and plots, public realm, parking and details and materials.

C2 Value heritage, local history and culture

- 5.115 The design evolution of the Western and Southern Gateway proposals was influenced by this character study. The approach goes further than the mere avoidance of harm. The design concepts sought to create distinctive arrival points complementing the existing built form and delivering attractive routes (including pedestrian and cycle ways) benefitting both existing and future residents.

Identity - attractive and distinctive

I1 Respond to existing local character and identity

- 5.116 As described earlier, a careful assessment of placemaking elements within the immediate and wider context of the site has informed proposals.

I2 Well-designed, high quality and attractive

- 5.117 As described in more detail in paragraphs 5.41 and 5.43 Figure 9, the design response takes its cues from a relevant local gateway precedent, the BPS which is exemplar.

I3 Create character and identity NDG (CD 7.4)

- 5.118 As described on p.19 of the DAS the Western Gateway apartment building adequately addresses the site entrance large roundabout and parkland, and creates a local landmark for Shenfield. Great care has been taken to create a bespoke parapet roof made up of a red brick and slate roof tile combination with extruded feature brick work and brick patterning including brick window surroundings. Paired with distinctive light green cladding along the formal terrace and modern contemporary black front doors, these facades create interest and an overall high quality character that marks this important location.
- 5.119 Buildings in the Southern Gateway (described on p.31 of the DAS) utilise contemporary details and take cues from tradition Essex barns, with significant informal landscaping retained from the existing treelines maintaining a verdant character. The 3 storey gateway buildings enclose the entrance with houses featuring additional gables to create a varied attractive roofscape appropriate to this location and the Alexander Lane streetscape.

Built form - a coherent pattern of development

B1 Compact form of development

- 5.120 As mentioned in paragraph 5.48 – 5.57, proposals have been carefully designed to make an efficient use of the site. They deliver a carefully considered built form response to the site with varying densities providing a more or less continuous frontage to streets and spaces to create a rich and distinctive character to the proposed neighbourhood depending on their placemaking function within the neighbourhood, with less dense frontages near sensitive woodland edges and more continuous denser frontages in highly accessible sustainable locations served by active travel and public transport. This is fully in conformity with the MDP, the LP policies, the EDG and NDG.

6.0 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 In summary, the height and location of the proposed three storey Western and Southern Gateway buildings described in Reason for Refusal 1 are the focus of this proof, as is the existing context of the area.
- 6.2 The existing character of built form in Shenfield has been carefully assessed during the design process and recorded in the DAS and MDP. A more in-depth analysis of the prevailing character (and building heights) in proximity to the Western and Southern Gateway is included in paragraphs 5.25 – 5.47 to support this proof.
- 6.3 The prevailing character in proximity to the Western Gateway is mixed in terms of building heights, building widths and gaps, roofscape, architectural styles, features and materials, albeit with a consistent building line with large setbacks from Chelmsford Road.
- 6.4 The prevailing character in proximity to the Southern Gateway is more consistent in the southern part of Alexander Lane with some variety at the northern end closest to the proposed Southern Gateway buildings. Overall, this area is less mixed than the residential area in proximity to the Western Gateway, however existing trees, hedges and the curving alignment of Alexander Lane provide a buffer to the proposed Southern Gateway.
- 6.5 The low density, mixed nature of these edge of settlement, suburban residential areas with limited architectural merit, therefore, presents a low sensitivity and a degree of receptivity to carefully designed change.
- 6.6 The proposed three storey Western Gateway buildings will add further variety to the already mixed character of the area. They will stand out somewhat from their background by virtue of their height creating a landmark and establishing a sense of legibility and arrival to the Officers' Meadow neighbourhood. This approach mirrors the nearby exemplar award winning Brentwood Preparatory School BPS gateway to the town,

addresses the open nature of the site entrance and creates a focal point that book-ends Shenfield. It responds sympathetically to the existing context of the area, and will not be harmful to its character and appearance, which will, in fact, be greatly enhanced.

- 6.7 Similarly, a sympathetic design response is proposed for the three storey Southern Gateway buildings. A gradual transition from the 2 and 2.5 storey existing buildings to: the 2 and 3 storey proposed Stonebond buildings; the 2 storey proposed Croudace small block of flats; and the 3 storey Gateway buildings, results in an appropriate gentle increase in scale and massing and a much needed increase in density. The use of pitched roofs broken up with projecting gables as well as the careful materials and details selection, creates a blended architectural approach which ties the proposed buildings to the nearby existing built form. The retention of existing trees and hedges alongside proposed new landscaping and trees maintain the verdant character of Alexander Lane and separation from existing built form. The proposed three storey Southern Gateway buildings will not be harmful to the character and appearance of the area and, conversely, they will surely enhance its distinctiveness.
- 6.8 These high quality proposals were not conceived by the design team in isolation, they evolved in response to pre application and local concerns as evidenced in the Design Evolution Document (CD 8.15). The design process on the Western and Southern Gateways of the Officers' Meadow site was entirely appropriate with active, early engagement with BBC officers, Place Services and the Essex Quality Review Panel.
- 6.9 As can be seen from the committee report the scheme was deemed appropriate.
- 6.10 Planning Committee Report, Officers' Analysis p.75, paragraphs 9.44, 9.46
"Overall, it is considered that the proposed layout is of very high quality, and that it will provide high living standards for future residents. (...) To conclude, the proposed development is in full compliance with LP Policies

BE14 (Creating Successful Places), BE15 (Planning for Inclusive Communities) and R03 (Land North of Shenfield), subject to conditions about materials and details of the school plaza's landscape."

- 6.11 Clearly, local and national planning policies and guidance require modern developments in highly sustainable and accessible locations to be built at higher densities than existing suburban built form. This is even more imperative given the frequent Elizabeth line services offered nearby at Shenfield station making the town one of most highly accessible places in the region.
- 6.12 I would conclude with my view that the Western and Southern Gateways proposals align with sound placemaking and design principles, meet the policy requirements of the development plan and NPPF, as well as national and local guidance in the NDG, the EDG and the MDP and create high quality coherent places well integrated in their existing context.