

Amherst Hill, Brompton Design Brief

CONSULTATION DRAFT JULY 2010

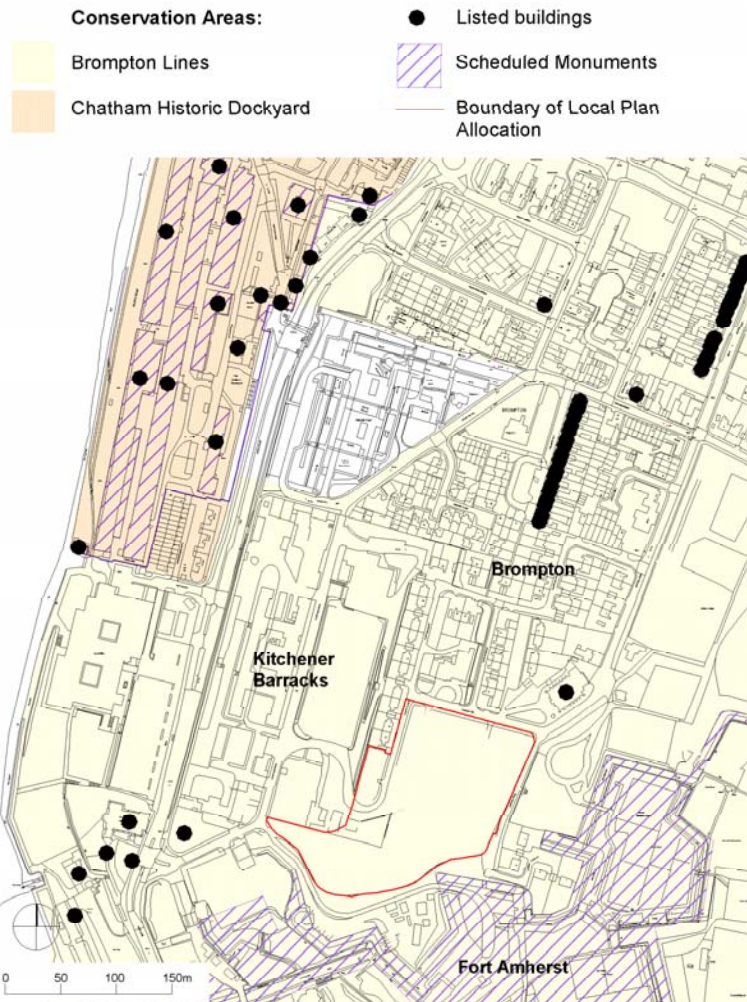


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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Defence Estates propose to dispose of their Amherst Hill site for housing development. This design brief clearly sets out the parameters to ensure that this development is sensitive to its surroundings and appropriate in scale and design.

KEY



1.1 The site and its setting

The site lies within the area enclosed by the Chatham Lines, a linear fortification first constructed in the mid-eighteenth century to defend the Dockyards at Chatham from landward attack. Although small, it has an elevated position and forms the backdrop to Fort Amherst at the southern end of the Lines.

The sensitivity of this setting relates both to its visual prominence and proximity to the Fort Amherst Scheduled Ancient Monument. The site also lies adjacent to the Grade II listed Garrison church and falls within the Brompton-Lines Conservation Area and proposed Chatham Dockyard and its Defences World Heritage Site.

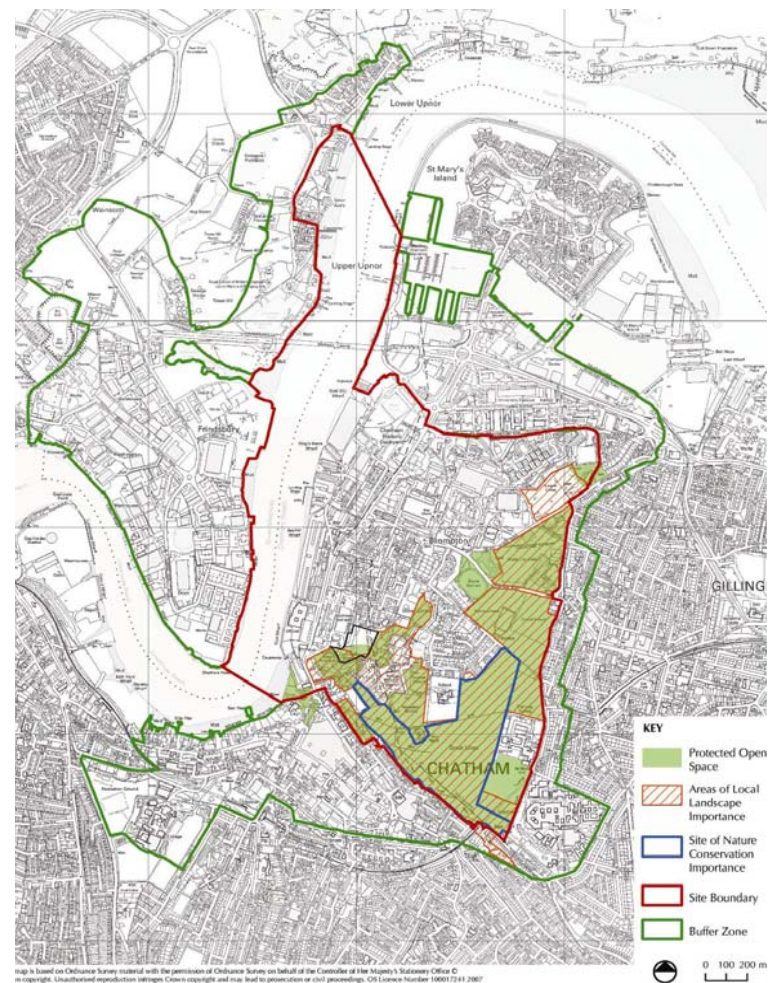
The 'Old Brompton Village' area to the north of the site is dominated by residential land use but this site has remained largely undeveloped throughout its long military history.

1.2 Planning Policy Context

The site is currently unused by the land owner, Defence Estates, and is allocated for residential use by Policy H1: GL150 of the Medway Local Plan (Adopted May 2003) as follows:

Mature trees to be retained; scale and character appropriate to its Conservation Area location required. Development will be subject to an agreement to secure a contribution towards a comprehensive restoration of the Scheduled Ancient Monument, and the provision, improvement and maintenance of public open space in the vicinity of the site. A detailed design brief to be drawn up to guide the development, with a view to minimising the visual impact on Fort Amherst and the local area. The brief should address dwelling size and height; appearance; orientation; the definition of detailed development boundaries by reference to the landform and existing trees; vehicular and pedestrian access; layout; the provision and disposition of open space; and landscaping (including the retention of trees where appropriate).

The site to be disposed of has an area of 1.66 hectares of which Policy H1: GL150 allocates approximately 1.31 hectares for residential development up to a capacity of 34 dwellings.



Protected landscape designations within proposed World Heritage Site. The site is outlined in black and includes an area of protected open space.

English Heritage (EH) objected to the allocation of the site as part of the Local Plan process and require that the setting of the Scheduled Monument is protected by leaving a proportion of the site un-built. The setting of a scheduled monument is defined in DCMS policy as:

the area surrounding a heritage asset which affects its significance, or appreciation of that significance.

(Scheduled Monuments - Identifying, protecting, conserving and investigating nationally important archaeological sites under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979, Nov 2009, DCMS)

The site features prominently in view 5 of the Strategic Views and Landmarks (Appendix A, Part 2 of the Building Heights Policy for Medway Adopted May 2006). The management strategy for this view is to protect views to Fort Amherst and the green ridgeline that it creates.

The Great Lines Heritage Park Masterplan and World Heritage Site Management Plan have also been produced since the Local Plan allocation of this site. The Masterplan includes a set of historic environment policies to guide development and ensure the protection and enhancement of the park. These include the return of land to the Great Lines and proposals to maintain the integrity of the Field of Fire through restricting additional encroachment. Conserving the

open landscape character of the Great Lines also requires the removal of tree and hedge planting and fencing of a minimally visually intrusive design. These are not formally adopted policies but are voluntarily supported by major stakeholders.

The Masterplan also proposes the restoration of the 18th and 19th century landscapes associated with the Garrison Commanders House of the barracks (whether in part or in entirety) on the southern portion of the disposal site and adjacent Officer's Park, and Cornwallis Battery. The plan below is an extract from 1864 Survey Plan (National Archives MPH 1/356) showing the kitchen gardens and pleasure grounds – landscapes that express the military lives lived within the site.



1.3 Purpose of this document

This document has been prepared in the context of Defence Estates desire to dispose of the site and to satisfy the Local Plan requirement that a detailed design brief should guide the development of this site with a view to minimising the visual impact on Fort Amherst and the local area. Adoption of the Design Brief as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) will provide the Council with a clear policy framework to guide the development of the site by:

- providing information to developers on site capacity and the quality of development expected;
- providing guidance on the limits of tolerable encroachment on Fort Amherst;
- ensuring the protection and enhancement of Brompton Lines Conservation Area;
- conforming to policies in the Great Lines Heritage Park Masterplan (GLHP); and
- serving to underline that the site's context and character is a considerable asset and provides a unique development opportunity for housing of the highest design quality.

In achieving a suitable development proposal, close collaboration between the developer and their design team, Medway Council and English Heritage will be essential. Pre-application design discussions are important in this process and a formal Design Review procedure will also be considered.

The brief was produced three stages reflected in this document. First the key features of the site that define what portion of it can be developed were considered. These are its history and archaeology, open space and landscape requirements, ecology, access and movement. Together these features establish access to the site, the layout and orientation of its houses and the location and amount of open space provided.

Then illustrative layouts are used to test the capacity of the framework set in section one. These are not intended to be prescriptive or to restrain the creativity of designers but to provide guidance on the amount, mix and nature of development that the site can support.

The layouts are accompanied by illustrative sections to suggest how the development should work with the distinctive topography of the site. The sections are used to

establish the limits to the height of development. Height is the key factor in producing a design brief that seeks to minimise the visual impact of development.

Reference is also made to precedent schemes that have informed the development of the illustrative layouts. These provide further guidance on architectural quality and appearance and the selection of materials and details. These examples have been selected specifically because of their success in downplaying architectural style so that they are neither historical nor modern but are discrete, contemporary, low impact designs that demonstrate an integrated design philosophy appropriate to their surroundings.



Images

Top View of Amherst Hill from Jacksons Recreation, Rochester.

Bottom View of Amherst Hill from Fort Pitt Hill

2.0 DEFINING THE DEVELOPABLE AREA

2.1 Existing Landform and Archaeology

Historic characterisation establishes a framework that takes sensible and proportional account of the inherited landscape, offering the opportunity to build upon a sense of place. It informs the design and planning process by providing a strategic overview of archaeological remains and the historic setting and function of Fort Amherst.

The site has a strong human topography created through substantial landscape modification. The present day landform reflects past patterns of use. This is important in understanding the character of the site and should inform and influence the proposed development.

A 2006 archaeological survey confirmed a range of military features and human remains of probable Anglo Saxon date. Twenty evaluation trenches were excavated representing a 4% sample of the site. As well as confirming a range of features, the survey also indicates the type of further archaeological remains that are likely to be present.

The plan on page 15 is colour-coded to differentiate buried archaeological and existing historic features. It provides the

framework for more fine-tuned analysis and decision-making. The location of these features is approximate and further archaeological evaluation in response to a specific development proposal is likely to be necessary.

It is acceptable to develop on the area of some of the buried archaeology although the remains may require preservation in situ. Recording through excavation is also a probable condition of any planning permission. The WWII air raid bunkers are not highlighted on the plan but may be removed as part of the enabling works for the development, subject to an agreed methodology.

Other archaeological features can not be developed upon and therefore provide one set of limits to the extent of the developable area. The protected area containing remains of the glacis, inhumation burial and formal gardens of the commanding officers house also provides a buffer zone between the Fort and the development.

These features provide a context within which the historic legacy of the site and its meaning can be used in the design of the development. A more detailed explanation of each feature follows on page 14.

SUMMARY CHRONOLOGY OF THE SITE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE NAVAL DOCKYARD AND MILITARY DEFENCES AT CHATHAM

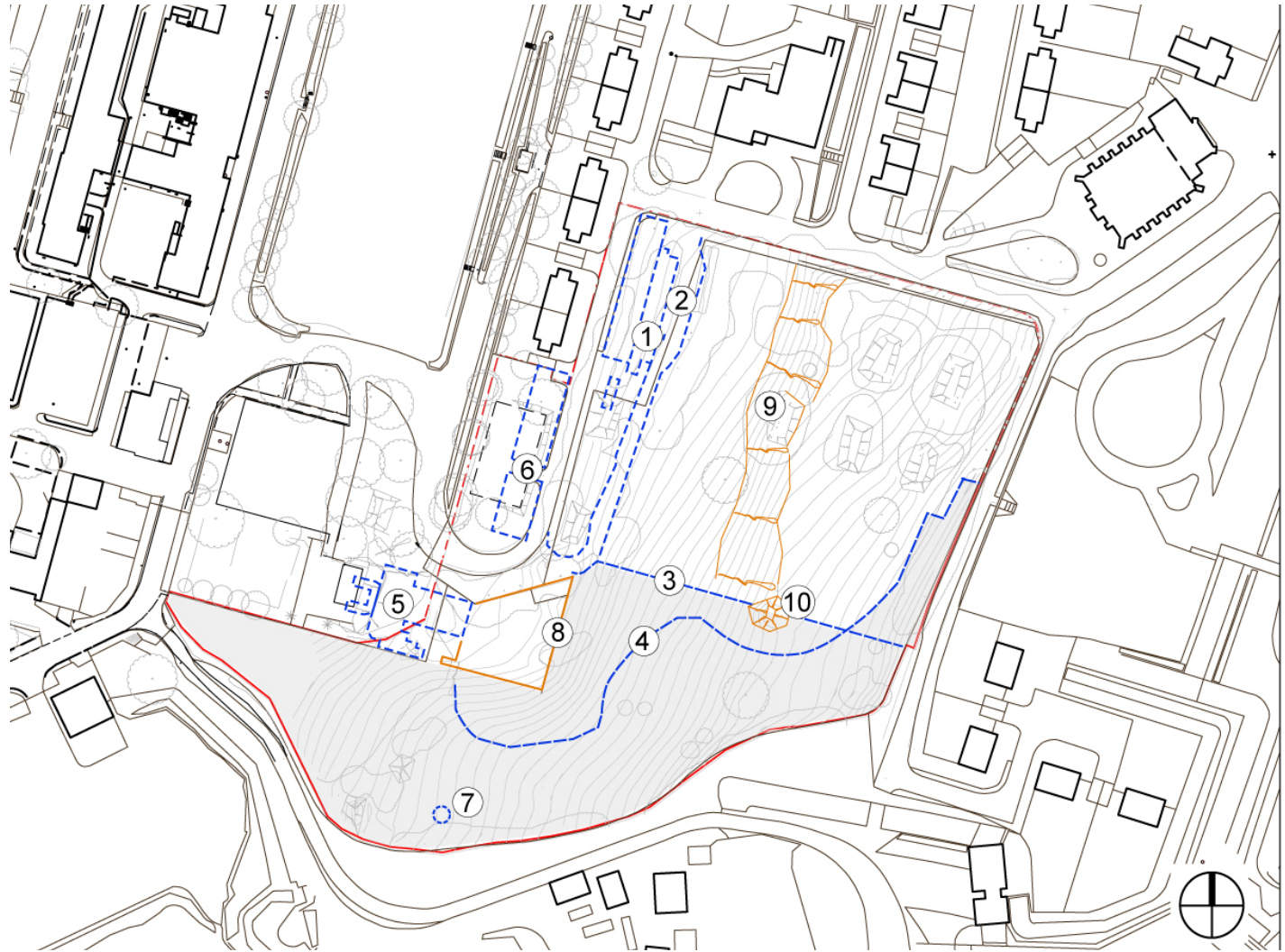
	The Tudor Period		The Victorian Period
to 12th C	Roman and Saxon remains of Chatham as a place and medieval settlement around St Mary's Church, Chatham.	1852-4	Garrison Church constructed (now St Barnabas Church).
1547	Rental of two storehouses on 'Jyllingham Water' to facilitate Navy fleet being moored 'in ordinary' on the Medway - first record of a ship yard at Chatham.	1860	Following a series of French invasion scares a report from the Royal Commission recommends the creation of a ring of fortified land forts to replace the Chatham Lines, now largely obsolete on account of recent artillery developments. Amherst Hill quickly given over to garden use.
1588	Fleet readied at Chatham in anticipation of the Spanish Armada.	1885	Extension of Dockyard to north.
	Stuart Period	1889-94	Naval Defence Act passed and 229 orders are placed for warships.
1667	Unmanned naval fleet laid up at Chatham attacked by Dutch Navy.		
1669	Cockham Wood Fort and Gillingham Fort built to protect moored ships. Hoo Ness Fort built around the same time.		
1703	New Commissioner's House constructed (now Britain's oldest surviving naval building) on site of its predecessor. Extended c.1790.	1908	The Twentieth Century Chatham launches first submarine to be built in a royal Dockyard.
	The Georgian Period	1914-9	During the course of World War I, Chatham builds three cruisers and 12 submarines, whilst carrying out large numbers of refits.
1755	Start of the military occupation of Amherst Hill.	1933	Economic depression leads to 4,000 job losses.
1756-63	Seven Years War. Bastioned earthworks created around all the naval Dockyards including the construction of Fort Amherst.	1939-45	Despite being under regular air attack several vessels constructed or refitted at Chatham during the course of WWII. Amherst Hill used for the provision of air raid shelters with a number of bunkers being located to the northern end of the site. There is also evidence that southern and eastern areas of the site were used as allotments.
1757	Start of construction of Chatham Infantry Barracks built to house the troops needed to man the Chatham Lines.	1984	Chatham Dockyard closes after more than 430 years of service to the Royal Navy.
1779-82	Chatham Lines are improved with the revetting of the earth ramparts in brick.	1999	Chatham Dockyard and its Defences included on the UK's Tentative List of World Heritage Sites.
1793	Outbreak of war with revolutionary France	2007	Chatham World Heritage Partnership launched.
1794	Chatham Lines extended at north and south ends.	2009	Chatham Dockyard and its Defences Management Plan published.
1803	Chatham Lines rebuilt. Lower Lines and Fort Amherst citadel created and additional detached forts built to south of Chatham.		
1819	Fort Pitt completed		

Extracts from 'An archaeological evaluation at Amherst Hill, Chatham, Kent - Canterbury Archaeological Trust Ltd. Feb 2006.

1. The far north-west corner of the site would have fallen inside the boundaries of the 1757 barracks. The barracks wall and remains relating to the officers coach house and stables, grooms quarters survive at a shallow depth below the ground.
2. Access road relating to 1.
3. After the mid nineteenth century the lines ceased to be the first line of defence for Chatham Dockyard and the 1864 Survey of Chatham infantry barracks shows that the area was quickly given over to garden use. The north-eastern area of the site remained open ground whilst formal gardens were established in the south-east of the site to the rear of the house of the commanding officer of the barracks. The house was enclosed by a brick wall on its south and east sides and was well screened by shrubbery. To the east of this wall was a large kitchen garden with pleasure grounds to the south (refer to extract from 1864 Survey Plan, page 7). The 2006 survey encountered well-preserved remains of formal garden's and a pre-military inhumation burial in the south-western part of site.
4. Following construction of the lines in the mid-eighteenth century, the area was maintained as an area of open ground acting as a 'field of fire' for Amherst Redoubt should the rest of the Lines defensive system be breached. Military plans of the

area (especially the 1804 map) and the archaeological survey show clear evidence that a glacis (an artificial mound of earth outside of the ditch designed to raise the attacking troops up to provide defensive advantage to the defending troops) formed part of the plans for the fortification and falls within the south-east corner of the development site.

5. Remains of the house of the commanding officer of the barracks.
6. The survey did not undertake any excavation in this area of the site but it is probable that further evaluation would reveal foundations of the officers quarters from the 1757 barracks.
7. A grave for an inhumation burial was located in this area of the site and it is likely that there are others in the vicinity.
8. Existing wall of the formal walled gardens of the house of the commanding officer.
9. At the northern end of the site a substantial terrace was cut into the natural chalk with dumps of redeposited clay seen upslope of this cut. This activity may relate to the construction of an unused terrace formed for the building of the Barracks or relates to extraction of materials used in its construction.
10. An artificial mound of earth of unknown origin. A vent shaft for the tunnel complex of Fort Amherst is thought to emerge within the site boundary and must be located and carefully avoided.



KEY TO ARCHAEOLOGICAL FEATURES

--- Buried archaeological remains:

- 1 Stables, coach house and Groom's quarters and barracks wall
- 2 Access road (1757 map)
- 3 Wall of Commandant's house garden
- 4 Approximate line of glacis
- 5 Mid C18th Commandant's house
- 6 Office quarters (1757 barracks)
- 7 Inhumation burial

— Surviving historic features:

- 8 Wall to walled garden of Commandant's house
- 9 Bank created by cutting of terraces
- 10 Earth mound

■ Non-developable area

2.2 Open space and Landscape

The framework set by historic characterisation guides the extent of tolerable encroachment by new development on the scheduled monument. This buffer zone is also the major determinant of the provision and disposition of open space within the development and is considered part of the Great Lines Heritage Park (GLHP). The provision for the glacia and reinstatement of the 19th century garden represent the appropriate balance between public and private space in the context of the aspirations of the GLHP masterplan.

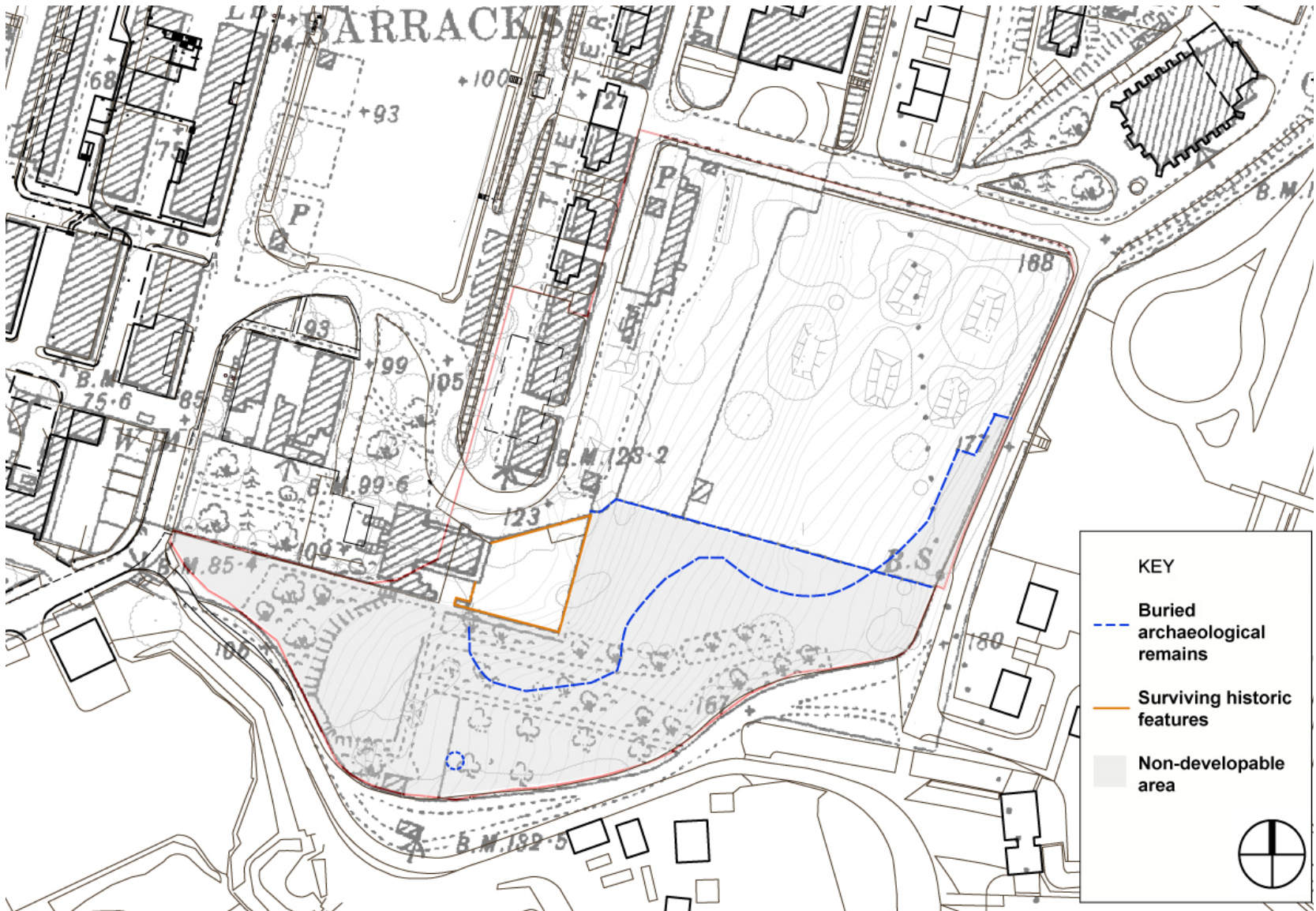
Discussions with the adjacent landowner, the Fort Amherst Heritage Trust (FAHT), and English Heritage, have established a number of key principles relating to the design and management of the open space on the southern portion of the disposal site. It is not intended that the public open space be transferred to the Council. Instead, as an archaeologically protected piece of ground, it is envisaged that it will be endowed to a Trust who would assume responsibility for its management and maintenance on the basis of a capital endowment sufficient to cover future maintenance costs. This endowment would form part of the s106 Agreement. In

order to minimise cost, and as is appropriate to reinstatement of the glacia, the open space should be designed as low maintenance grassland, and there should be no vehicular access to it other than that required for maintenance.

The historical interpretation of the site should be supported by the design of the public open space - the GLHP provides a model for interpretive panels. The GLHP Masterplan policies also require that fencing should be of a minimally visually intrusive design to conserve the open landscape character. Between the Cornwallis Battery and the site, the robust, open five wire fence used elsewhere in the GLHP would be the preferred design solution.


The new housing development should provide some natural surveillance onto the open space. The boundary treatment to rear gardens where visible from the Fort should be high quality brick walls and permitted development rights should be removed in the granting of planning permission to ensure that these design aspirations endure.

Opposite - 1896 Survey plan showing the 19th century garden superimposed onto the present day plan and defined archaeologically protected open space.



KEY

- Buried archaeological remains
- Surviving historic features
- Non-developable area



2.3 Ecology

A site walkover was undertaken in October 2009 with a Medway Council tree officer to provide an initial assessment of the importance of tree groups and individual trees. The plan below proposes the retention where possible and re-planting of the trees on the northern and eastern site boundary although this must be subject to a detailed assessment of their condition. A minimum buffer of 10m is recommended beyond the canopy of the large trees on the eastern site boundary.

All of the existing trees on the southern site boundary adjacent to Cornwallis Battery, should be removed as part of the development. They are not considered to be of high quality and do not contribute to the appreciation of the historic function of the Fort. The Great Lines Heritage Park masterplan policies require the removal of tree and hedge planting to conserve the open landscape character.

Where trees are not located on the site boundary, a balanced decision would consider their contribution to providing character in the proposed development relative to the constraint that their retention places on the site

layout. This decision should be made in consultation with Medway Council tree officers.



Above View of trees on eastern site boundary. The site is on the right hand side of Maxwell Road..



2.4 Access and Movement

As previously noted, the present day landform of the site reflects past patterns of use and the development framework proposes to follow the pattern of access and movement established in the existing site topography. The layout of north-south aligned access lanes is characteristic of Brompton and permits a degree of openness to sight lines to and from the Fort.

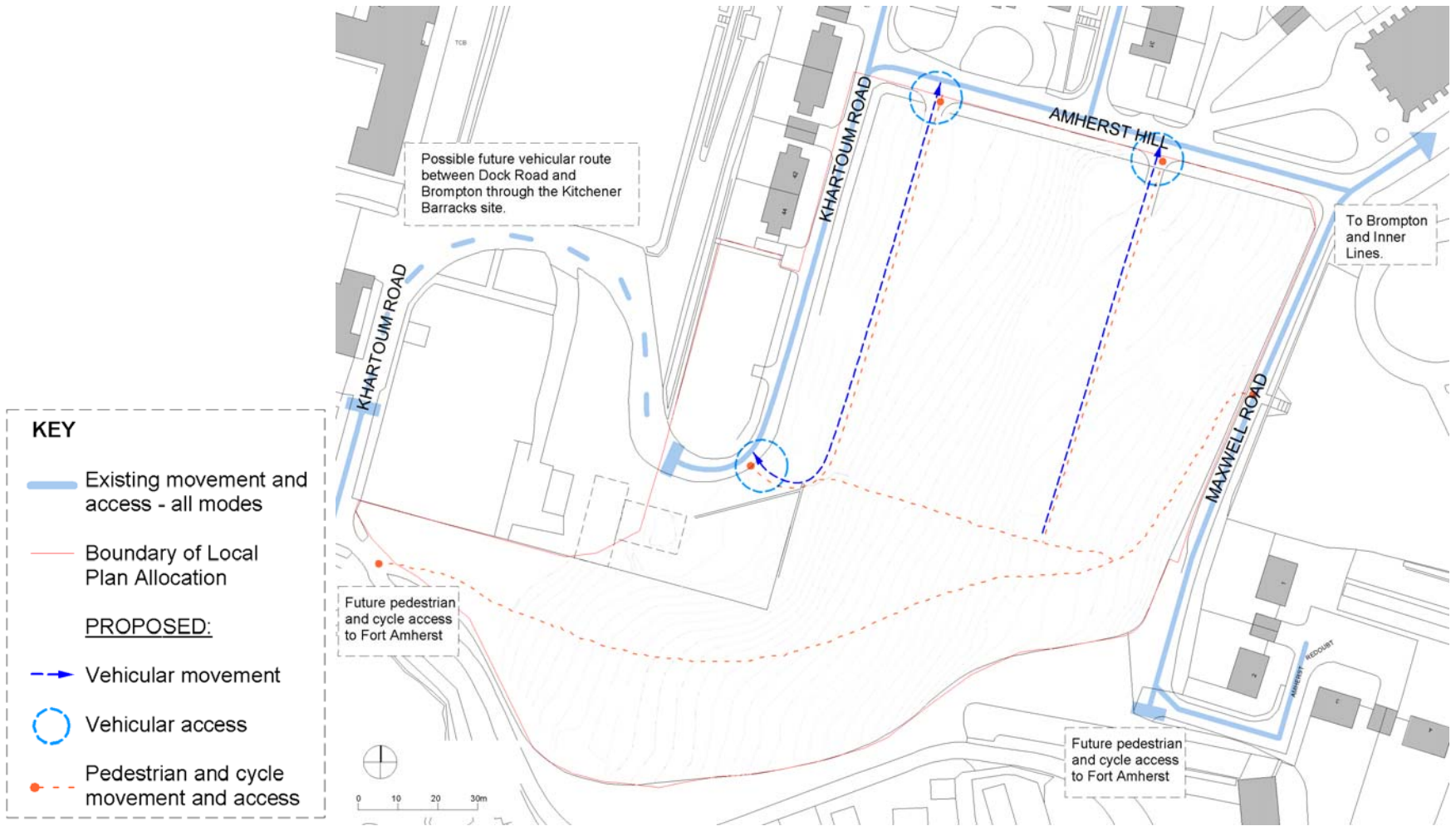
The developable area of the site is broadly divided into three parts; a sloping upper and lower terrace running approximately north-south separated by a more steeply sloping bank. The two proposed principal vehicular routes follow the line of each terrace. Due to the steep gradients, detailed design work will be required to establish the feasibility of an east-west connection between these routes.

Three vehicular access points to the site are proposed. One on Khartoum Road and another on Amherst Hill are at either end of the route that traces the access road used in the 18th century barracks. Another access point higher up Amherst Hill uses an existing break in the fence line on the northern boundary and leads to a proposed route following

the line of the upper terrace. Marked changes of level on the eastern and western boundaries inhibit vehicular access.

The proposed public open space has the potential to provide new pedestrian and cycle links from Dock Road up to the Inner Lines. Fort Amherst will be the major gateway to the Great Lines Heritage Park and potential World Heritage Site. The long term aspiration of the Great Lines Heritage Park Masterplan is to allow complete public access to much of the Fort at all times.

Provision for vehicular movement should also take into account the potential future impacts of surrounding developments such as the large Kitchener Barracks site directly adjacent to Amherst Hill. This redevelopment would be of a scale likely to substantially alter existing patterns of pedestrian access and movement in the area.



3.0 DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

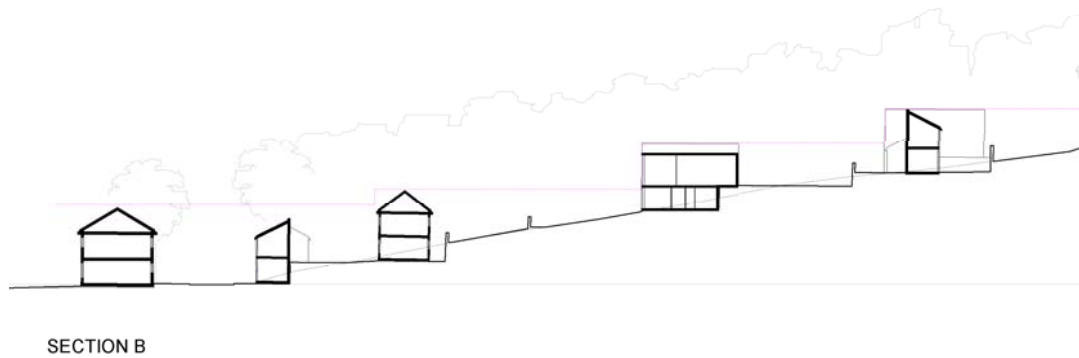
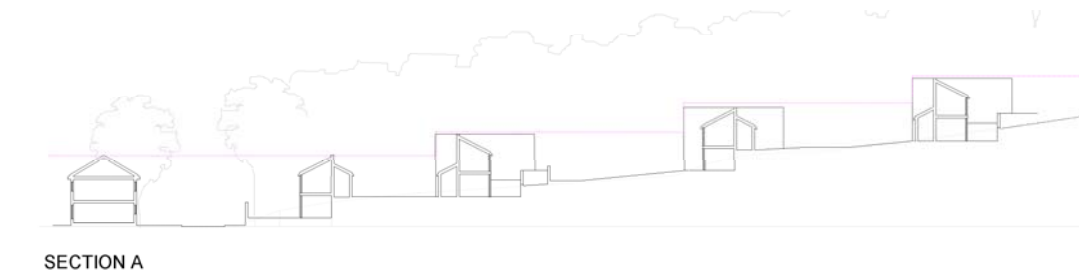
3.1 ILLUSTRATIVE LAYOUT 1

Schedule

No. of beds	Units
4/5	13
3/3.5	8
2	13
Total	34

This layout proposes a complex of part one and part two storey buildings nestling in the landscape. Retaining walls act structurally and as an organizing element running through each terrace. Interlocking monopitch roofs about these walls and the buildings are arranged to create small courtyard spaces in front of the buildings enclosed by curved brick walls. Shared parking is provided adjacent to the blocks of houses but does not intrude into the courtyard spaces. There is also some potential for on parking on streets bordering the site.





Lyde End, Bledlow, Buckinghamshire: housing by Aldington and Craig Architects, 1977.

Now grade II listed, this modernist scheme illustrates a good example of the contemporary use of brick to relate to a village context of modern brick buildings. All of the buildings combine two sharply defined monopitch roof forms of different height. This is a model that has wide application: contemporary but in touch with tradition.

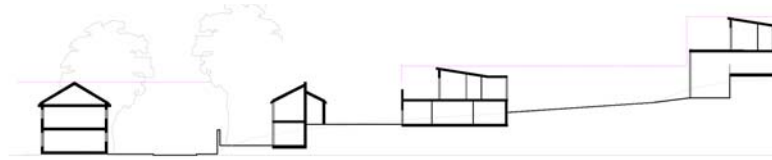
3.2 ILLUSTRATIVE LAYOUT 2

Schedule

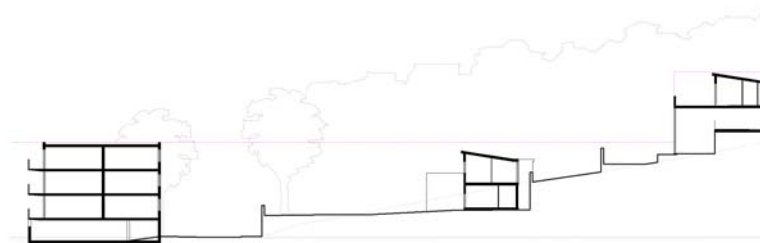
No. of beds	Units
4	21
2	4
Apartments	9
Total	34

The 4 bed units are large detached/semi-detached villas with integral garages. Although 2 storey, these houses are considerably larger than those proposed in layout 1 and follow a more regular arrangement. The bulk and visual impact of the buildings would be minimized by setting them into the landscape and the low, mono-pitch roofs could be intensive green roofs. Parking provision is 2:1 for the large dwellings (garage plus one space within plot) and 1:1 for the mews houses and apartments.

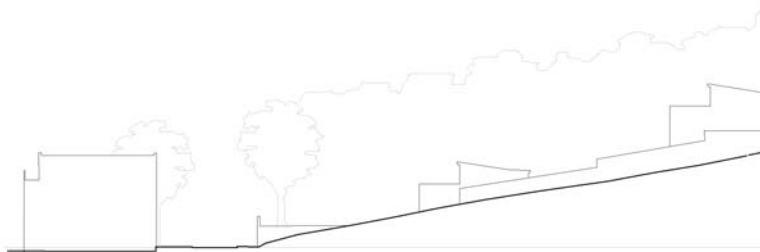




SECTION A



SECTION B



ELEVATION



The Lane, Blackheath (above) and New Ash Green, Kent (below). 1960s housing designed by Eric Lyons for the Span Development Company.

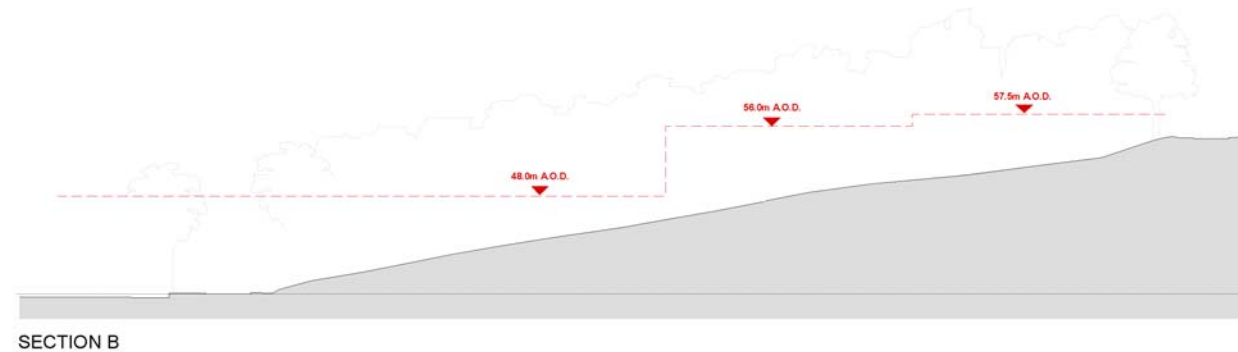
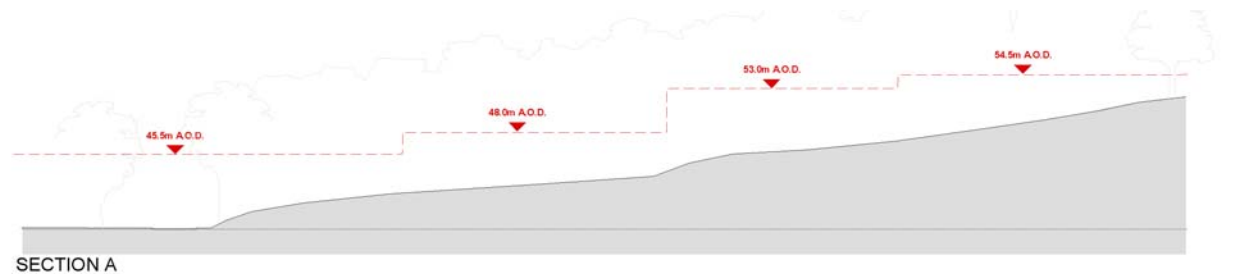
Maintenance of the building exteriors and the landscape of The Lane is managed by an elected committee of residents. In the Span 'formula' the careful and sensitive design of the buildings and landscape are equally important. Access is via a single access road, or 'lane', leading from Blackheath Park, a distinguished road of large villa's within the Cator Estate conservation area. New Ash Green was also conceived as a potential "model of how to get civilised modern community living in an area of beautiful landscape" (Richard Crossman, 1964)

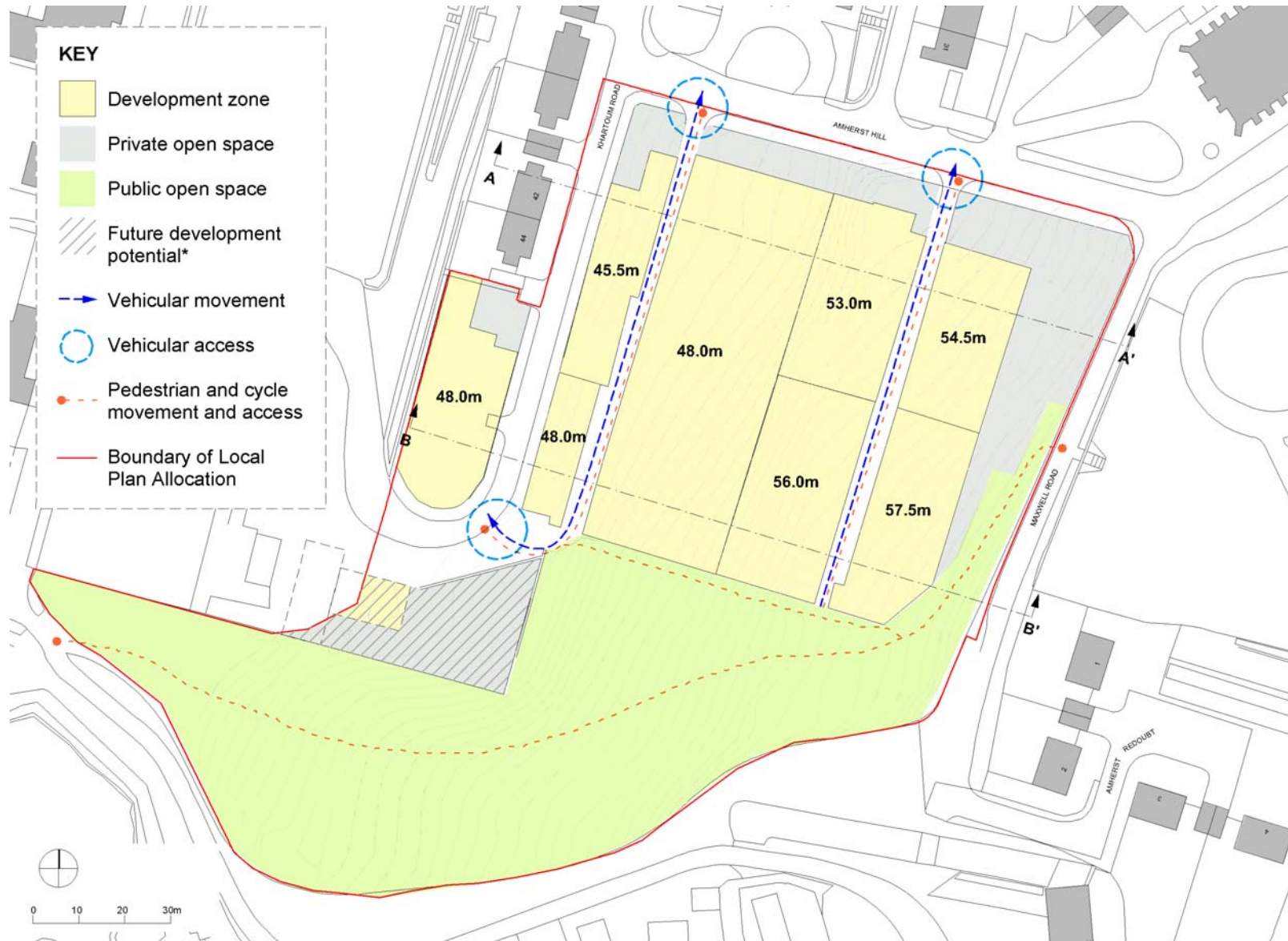
3.3 DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

The yellow shading of the composite development framework plan indicates the developable area of the site. The numbers within each zone indicate the maximum height of development in metres above ordnance datum. The blue dotted line indicates the principle movement axes across the site.

This framework points to a layout formed of four rows of houses stepping down the main site, three on the eastern part and one on the slim development plot on the western edge. The development in this slimmer plot could follow the layout of the 19th century stables, coach house and Groom's quarters.

The plot on the west side of Khartoum Road is the lowest zone within the developable area. It is also screened by existing mature trees in views from Fort Amherst and beyond. It is therefore the only part of the site suitable for three storey houses or an apartment block.





* Will come forward for development with the planned future release of the Kitchener barracks site.

References

1. Medway Local Plan (Adopted May 2003)
2. Department for Culture, Media and Sport, Scheduled Monuments, Identifying, protecting, conserving and investigating nationally important archaeological sites under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979, November 2009
3. 'Capitalising on the Inherited Landscape – An introduction to historic characterisation for masterplanning', English Heritage/Homes & Communities Agency, October 2009
4. An archaeological evaluation at Amherst Hill, Chatham, Kent - Canterbury Archaeological Trust Ltd. February 2006.
5. Great Lines City Park Landscape Design Statement, prepared by HTA Landscape Design Team on Behalf of Medway Council and Chatham World Heritage Steering Group. Nov 2008
6. Great Lines City Park Historical Statement, prepared by EDA on Behalf of Medway Council and Chatham World Heritage Steering Group. Nov 2008
7. A Building Height Policy for Medway Adopted May 2006 Part 2: Appendix A Strategic Views and Landmarks
8. BD Magazine Housing October 09 Issue 31

