

**Development Brief:
Hillcrest School, St. John's Road,
Exmouth**

**Adopted
August 2005**

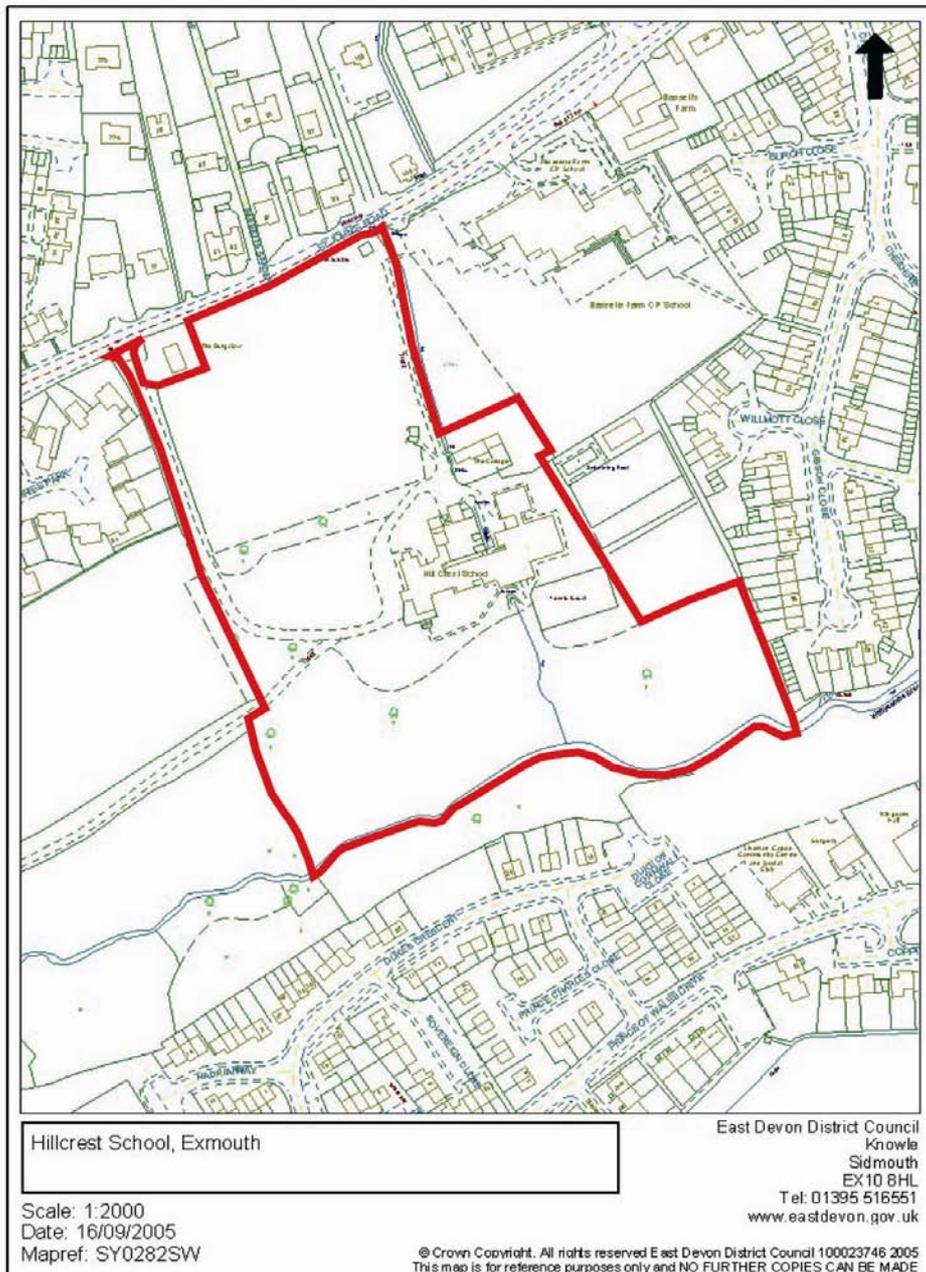
1.0 Scope and Status of Document

The following text is intended to set the parameters for acceptable development on the Hillcrest School site rather than providing a prescriptive plan. It should be read in conjunction with the policies of the East Devon Local Plan - Revised Deposit 2003. A draft of this Development Brief was subject to a formal six week public consultation period between 22 April and 3 June 2005.

- 1.1 The document has been amended as a result of the representations received and for further information please contact Sukie Tamplin, Principal Planning Officer, East Devon District Council, Council Offices, Knowle, Sidmouth, Devon, EX10 8HL. Tel: 01395 516551 extension 2719, e-mail stamplin@eastdevon.gov.uk. For queries relating to the listed building please contact Stephen Guy, Conservation Architect, East Devon District Council (as before). Tel: 01395 516551 extension 2056, e-mail sguy@eastdevon.gov.uk. The Development Brief was adopted by the District Council as interim Supplementary Planning Guidance to the emerging Local Plan for development control purposes on 2 August 2005.

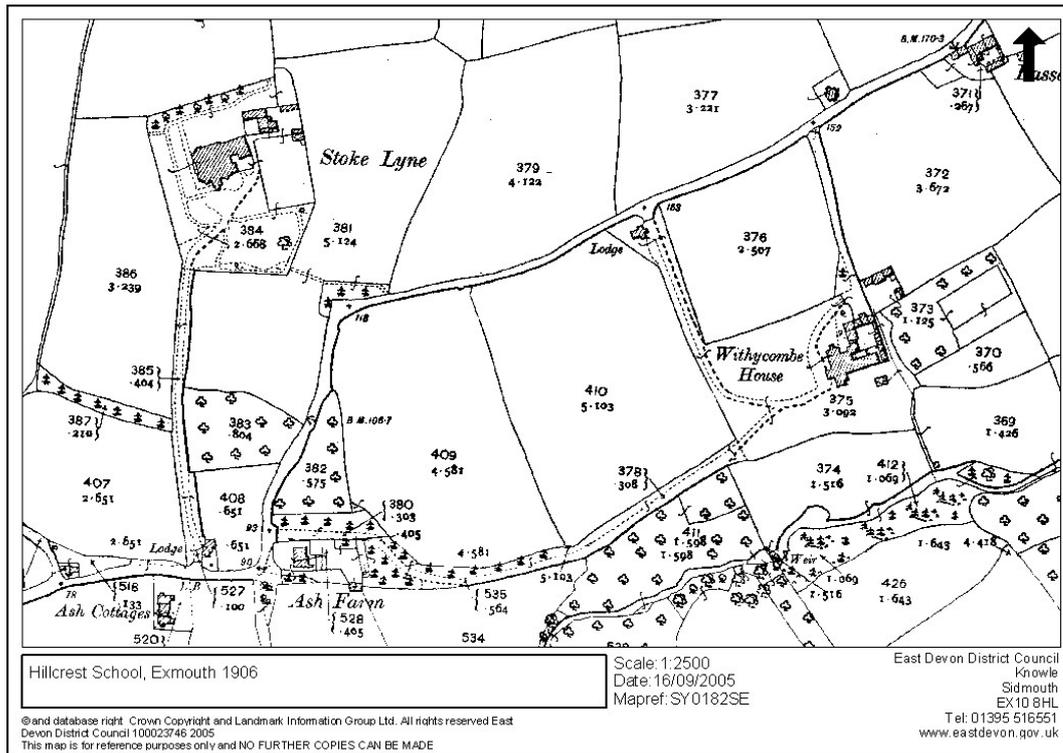
2.0 Site Information and Context Appraisal

- 2.1 **Site Location and Defined Area** - The site extends to approximately 3.7 hectares.



Site Context and Character

2.2 Hillcrest School, formerly known as Withycombe House, was built in the early nineteenth century as a substantial residence in generous grounds. The site was rural at the time with the nearest development being agricultural (Ash Farm and Bassett Farm) and another large country villa, known as Stoke Lyne (now demolished). The property was listed grade II on 6th December 1949 and has evolved since its construction. The building was conceived in the Gothic villa tradition with a continuous castellated parapet rising to end gables with corner and ridge pinnacles. A courtyard of stables and coach house designed in a similar manner is located at the rear and is now substantially remodelled. The property is accessed from the north via St John's Road and it is noted that the former lodge has now been replaced with a modern bungalow on the opposite side of the entrance.



2.3 A sizeable 1940's- 50's extension was added to the rear of the site. In its original purist form this was a notable architectural statement and would probably be worthy of retention if it had not been subsequently altered and extended.



Aerial photograph of Hillcrest School showing original arrangement of rear ancillary buildings and modernist extension.

- 2.4 The interior of the main building has been altered although the ground floor principal rooms and the grand entrance hall remain intact. The hall and stairway are panelled with a heavy plaster cornice and pilasters, polychromatic floor tiles and surviving carved newel posts. The principal room to the left of the hall contains a decorative fire surround with a dentilled mantel. The remaining rear rooms and the first floor arrangement have been substantially subdivided to form accommodation for the school. The windows in the principal elevation of the building have recently been replaced with unsatisfactory PVCu units in an attempt to emulate the mullion and transom windows with margin lights. The majority of the original chimney stacks have also been removed.



Principal elevation and main entrance



Entrance hall and decorative plasterwork

Land Ownership and Use

- 2.5 The whole site is currently owned by Devon County Council and, until July 2004, the main building was used as a school with associated outbuildings, playing field and amenity space.

Site Analysis

- 2.6 The site is surrounded by the modern residential developments of St John's Road to the north, Willmot Close and Gibson Close to the east, Dukes Crescent and Duke of Cornwall Close to the south and Humphries Park to the north-west. Bassetts Farm Primary School lies to the north-east and the community playing fields lie to the south-west. There is an area of woodland running along the Withycombe Brook to the south of the site. The site is bordered to the north by a low grey limestone wall. Although this does not provide a substantial degree of enclosure to the site or the highway its contribution to the character of the estate is considered important.
- 2.7 The school building is approached from the north and separated from the highway by open land and a belt of mature trees immediately to the north of the building group. The entire front elevation is not revealed until the drive turns to the east. The arrangement, maturity and variety of the trees found on site contribute to the character and setting of the listed building. Apart from views of the listed building afforded from the principal approach it is noted that there are other notable vantage points throughout the site. The lower land to the south and west of the main house provides full vistas of front and side elevations and the raised ground level upon which the building sits heightens the visual command of the architecture. The view of the building from the entrance into the rear courtyard is considered significant. The juxtaposition of the castellated gables and overlaid projecting ground floor bays is considered a characterful aspect.



Aerial photograph of Hillcrest School © Getmapping 1999, licensed to Devon County Council



Hillcrest from the southwest and its setting in the landscape



Juxtaposition of castellated gables on the north elevation

Transport Links

- 2.8 Hillcrest is located on St John's Road, within 200m of the Dinan Way distributor road. A regular bus service operates along both these roads. Exmouth Railway Station is located approximately 2.5 km away and offers a regular service to Exeter.
- 2.9 Hillcrest is also situated centrally in relation to the Valley Parks proposed network of footpaths and cycleways and offers an opportunity to extend these links.

3.0 Policy Review

- **Devon Structure Plan 2001-2016- Policy ST15** requires Local Plans to “identify towns which provide a strategic focus for the provision of local housing and employment opportunities, education facilities and other local services to meet local needs and those of their rural hinterland and only those needs...”. Exmouth is identified as an Area Centre in the Local Plan. Structure Plan **Policy ST1** requires that development is carried out in a sustainable manner. **Policy C01** requires that the quality of the landscape and its distinctive characteristics be protected. **Policy C06** requires attention to good design and layout that respects the character of the site and its surroundings in planning for new development. **Policy C07** requires that the quality of the historic environment should be conserved and enhanced and **Policy TR7** requires that development proposals make provision for pedestrians and cyclists.
- **East Devon Local Plan-** The site lies inside the Built-up Area Boundary of Exmouth, within which residential development is acceptable in principle. No special land use policies apply to this area but the following general policies are among the most relevant (listed in the order they appear in the Local Plan):
 - S3 (Development within Built-up Area Boundaries)
 - D1 (Design and Local Distinctiveness)
 - D1B (Sustainable Construction)
 - D4 (Landscape Requirements)
 - D5 (Trees on Development Sites)
 - D6 (Public Art)
 - EN10 (Protected Species)
 - EN13 (Extension, Alteration or Change of use of Buildings of Special Architectural and Historic Interest)
 - EN14 (Demolition of a Listed Building)
 - EN21 (Control of Pollution)
 - EN23 (Maintenance of Water Quality and Quantity)
 - EN24 (Adequacy of Foul Sewers and Sewerage Treatment Works)
 - EN27 (Surface Run-Off Implications of New Development)
 - H3 (Affordable Housing)
 - RE3 (Open Space Provision in New Housing Developments)
 - TA4 (Footpaths, Bridleways and Cycleways)
 - TA6 (Adequacy of Road Network and Site Access)
 - TA8 (Parking Provision in New Development)
 - LEX 2(The Valley Parks)

3.1 Supplementary Planning Guidance

- Affordable Housing- Draft
- Trees in New Development
- Open Spaces

Planning History

- 3.2 A proposal for 'Extension and Alterations' (reference 90/P0568) was granted Deemed Consent by Devon County Council in April 1990.

- 3.3 A number of works, most notably the replacement of the existing windows with PVCu, have been undertaken without the benefit of Listed Building Consent.

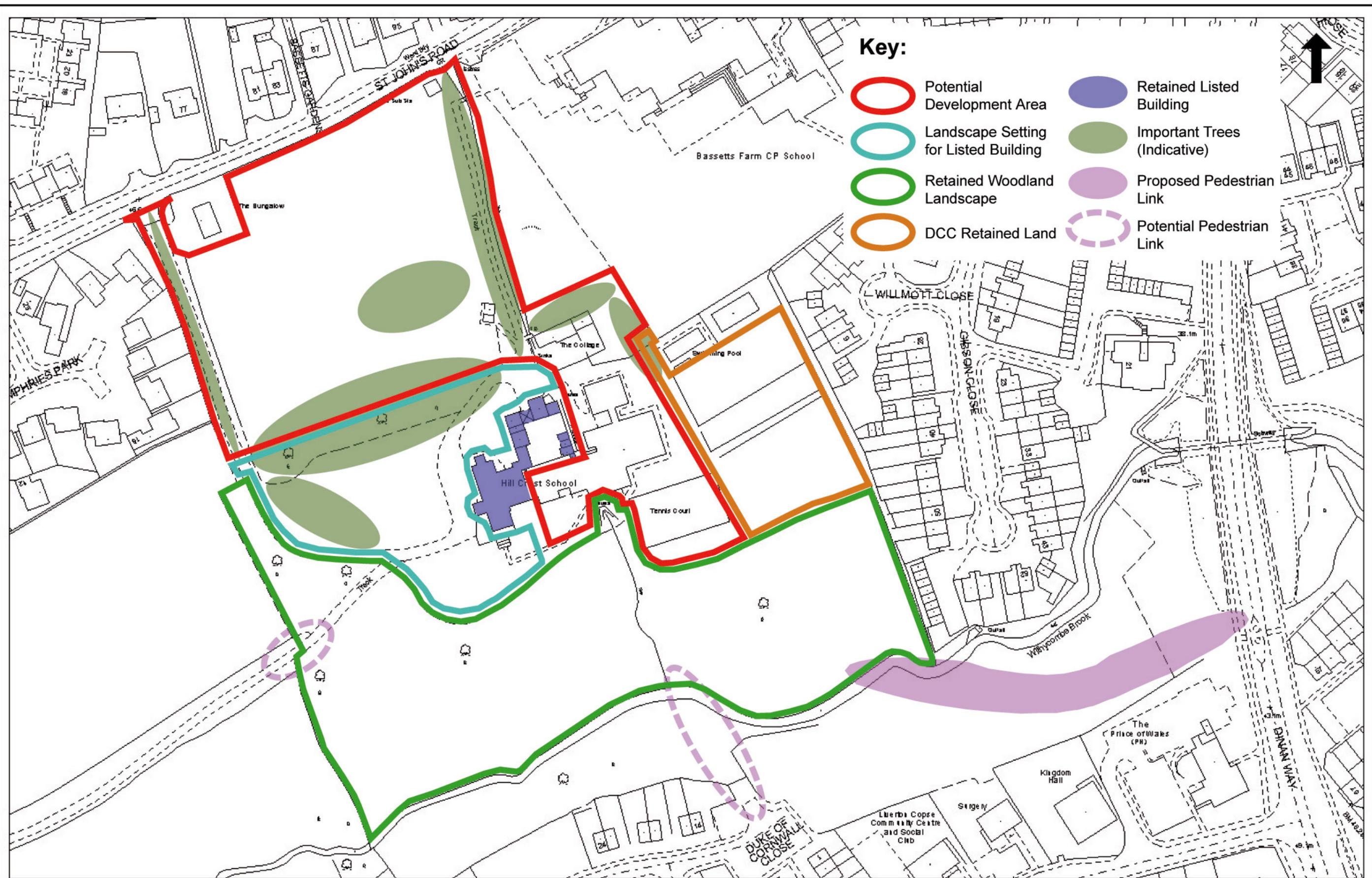
4.0 Planning and Design Principles

Scope for development of the listed building

- 4.1 The conversion of the listed building to residential is acceptable in principle subject to the following criteria:
- 1) The reinstatement of the timber windows in the principal elevations of the school must be a priority. Listed Building Consent was not sought for existing PVCu windows and it is considered that these are entirely inappropriate.
 - 2) The principal rooms in the building should be preserved in their entirety and decorative plasterwork, joinery and doors repaired and reinstated where appropriate. Further subdivision or erosion of room proportions should be resisted.
 - 3) The reinstatement of original room dimensions and proportions should be encouraged.
 - 4) The removal of the 1940-50 extension in its present form would be considered acceptable.
 - 5) The reinstatement of chimney stacks and the full extent of the former courtyard buildings would be encouraged.
 - 6) Any sub-division of the principal building range must retain the present form and appearance of the main hall, stairs and landing. The removal of the first floor lobby and the reinstatement of the cornice would be encouraged.

Scope for the development of the Hillcrest Grounds

- 4.2 **Setting of the listed building-** Any new development within the Hillcrest Grounds must be carried out in accordance with the guidance in PPG15 2.14 with regard to the design of new building within the setting of listed buildings and PPG15 2.16-2.17 with regard to statutory considerations to the preservation of the setting of listed buildings. Local Plan policy EN13 relates to works to listed buildings and those affecting the setting of a listed building.
- 4.3 The area to the west of Hillcrest and its landscape, which forms the setting for the listed building, should be preserved and enhanced without any development. Judicious reordering of the hard landscaping to the front of the building could enhance the setting of the listed building.
- 4.4 The land immediately to the south of the main building group should be retained as an open backdrop to Hillcrest and left undeveloped with landscape enhancement of the wooded area bordering the watercourse at the southern boundary of the site.
- 4.5 The principle of development of the land between the St John's Road and the belt of trees to the north of Hillcrest would be considered acceptable in terms of preserving the setting of the listed building. The form of development should be informed by the views through the site and should preserve views of Hillcrest from significant vantage points as highlighted in this development brief. A fragmented approach to built form would undoubtedly allow for the preservation of views and would be considerably more coherent with the character of the listed building and its setting than surrounding suburban development.
- 4.6 The redevelopment of the area presently occupied by the 1940-50 extension should reinstate the breathing space offered by the original design concept of the modern extension. A significant degree of detachment would be encouraged. Design should be informed by the specific character and nature of the site and make a positive contribution to the immediate setting of the listed building in regard to scale, bulk, footprint and architectural approach.
- 4.7 Permitted Development for Parts 1 and 2 of the (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 will be withdrawn for those houses within close proximity to the listed building in order to allow the local planning authority to retain control over the impact that such development may have upon its setting.
- 4.8 **Trees-** Parts of the Hillcrest site are densely covered with trees, all of which are subject to a blanket Tree Preservation Order, confirmed on 6th September 2004. Before any development is



- Key:**
- Potential Development Area
 - Landscape Setting for Listed Building
 - Retained Woodland Landscape
 - DCC Retained Land
 - Retained Listed Building
 - Important Trees (Indicative)
 - Proposed Pedestrian Link
 - Potential Pedestrian Link

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Scale: 1:1250
 Date: 16/09/2005
 Mapref: SY0282SW

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proposed a full tree survey should be undertaken and its findings discussed with the District Council's Landscape/Aboriginal Officers.

- 4.9 In accordance with Policy D5 (Trees on Development Sites) of the East Devon Local Plan it will be essential to maintain a 5m distance between the edge of the mature crown spread of any trees within or adjacent to the site and any building or works. No hard surfacing or drainage, undergrounding of services or sub-soil works will be permitted under the mature crown spread.
- 4.10 It is envisaged that the wooded area to the south of the site will provide the majority of the open space required by the development, contributing to the Valley Park and ensuring that the woodland is retained as an informal amenity area and wildlife corridor. Open Space requirements are discussed in detail later in this brief.
- 4.11 **Nature Conservation-** The site has a high potential to support of range of wildlife including protected species such as bats, badgers, reptiles and birds. In particular, bats may be using the roof spaces of Hillcrest House and trees on the site, which could have implications for any tree work and the redevelopment of the building. In accordance with Policy EN10 (Protected Species) development that is likely to have an adverse impact on protected species will only be permitted where appropriate measures are taken to secure their protection. Therefore it will be necessary to undertake an ecological investigation of the site, including a protected species survey, as part of any planning application.
- 4.12 **Density-** Planning Policy Guidance Note 3 states that 30- 50 dwellings should be accommodated per hectare in order to make efficient use of land. Policy ST1 of the Devon Structure Plan requires that development is carried out in a sustainable manner and efficient use of land is made. The District Council will seek to achieve development at the highest density possible given the constraints on the site.
- 4.13 **Affordable Housing-** Local Plan Policy H3 establishes a figure of 40% of dwellings to be 'affordable to those people who are unable to afford to rent or buy houses generally available on the open market' on sites of 0.5 hectares or greater or where 15 or more dwellings are being provided. This figure derives from a housing needs survey undertaken by Fordham Research on behalf of the Council in 2001 and updated in 2005. Affordable housing can be in the form of subsidised rental housing or (subsidised) low cost home ownership (e.g. through shared equity) in each case with occupancy typically managed through a registered social landlord. In order to secure this provision it will be necessary to consult, at an early stage, with the Head of Housing and Social Exclusion (Mr John Golding, telephone 01395 517508 E-mail address: JGolding@eastdevon.gov.uk).
- 4.14 **Height-** Building height will be governed by the need to protect the character and setting of the listed building and the topography of the site. Buildings to the north of the listed building should mainly therefore be **2 storeys**, although a third storey could be accommodated in a pitched roof.
- 4.15 There is scope to provide a courtyard development adjacent to Hillcrest and to increase the height of some of the houses to 3 storeys (perhaps in the form of townhouses with integral garages). This would add interest to the form of the development as well as increasing density so that a greater area of open space can be retained around the buildings.
- 4.16 Due to the potential proximity of the new development to surrounding residential properties consideration will also need to be given to the impact of the new development on these properties.
- 4.17 **Materials-** In accordance with Policy D1 (Design and Local Distinctiveness) design should incorporate sustainable development principles and materials, be locally distinctive and reinforce a sense of identity, therefore it would be appropriate for dwellings to be predominantly rendered to reflect the listed building with dark coloured, preferably slate, roofs. High quality contemporary designs will be encouraged.
- 4.18 **Housing Size and Form-** A variety of market and affordable housing should be provided with a **mix of unit sizes**. It is envisaged that some terraced housing and flats may be required in order to achieve preferred densities. Proposals should ensure that the development does not appear cramped and sufficient land is available to provide high quality open space.

4.19 **Sustainable Construction-** One of the key objectives of the planning system is to promote sustainable forms and patterns of development. Proposals should accord with Policy D1B (Sustainable Construction) and its recommendation that the BREEAM (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessments Method) categories be used, with a BREEAM accreditation of Good or above being desirable. Various mitigation measures can be used to reduce water and energy consumption and it is recommended that consideration be given to the following measures as suggested by the Environment Agency:

- The installation of fittings to reduce water usage.
- Reduced volume WC or dual flush WC.
- Spray taps on handwash basins.
- Rainwater harvesting systems.
- Solar energy systems.
- Low energy lighting systems.
- Use of natural light in building design
- Use of recycled and locally won materials at the development stage.

4.20 **Flooding-** The Environment Agency's Flood Map shows flood zone 2 and 3 areas alongside the Withycombe Brook within the wooded area. To accord with Policy EN27 (Surface Run-Off Implications of New Development) it is recommended that a Flood Risk Assessment be produced in accordance with Planning Policy Guidance Note 25 with a view to determining:

- Areas that are considered to be functional flood plains on the site.
- Any areas at risk of flooding.
- An adequate means of surface water disposal in accordance with the principles of Sustainable Urban Drainage.

4.21 **Foul Drainage** – To accord with Policies EN23 (Maintenance of Water Quality and Quantity) and EN24 (Adequacy of Foul Sewers and Sewerage Treatment Works) it is important that foul drainage is kept separate from clean surface and roof run off and is connected to the public sewerage system. It is recommended the Water Company is consulted at an early stage regarding the availability, location and adequacy of the existing public sewerage and sewerage treatment facilities.

4.22 **Pollution** – It is important that the development of the site is carried out in such a way that unacceptable levels of pollution are avoided in accordance with Policy EN21 (Control of Pollution). Various mitigation measures can be used to lessen the risks of pollution and it is recommended that consideration be given to the following measures as suggested by the Environment Agency:

- Construction vehicles should not cross or work directly in any watercourses and temporary bridges should be constructed for vehicles to cross and excavations done from the bank.
- Pumps used for pumping water from excavations should be sited well away from watercourses and surrounded by absorbent material to contain oil spillages and leaks.
- Discharge of silty or discoloured water from excavations should be irrigated over grassland or passed via a settlement lagoon so that gross solids are removed. The Environment Agency must be advised if a discharge to watercourse is proposed.
- Storage of fuels for machines or pumps should be well away from any watercourse. The tanks should be bunded or surrounded by oil absorbent, material (regularly replaced when contaminated) to control spillage and leakage.
- Any disposal of waste off-site should be carried out in accordance with the Duty of Care and the Waste Management Licensing Regulations 1994. Concerning waster materials, any developer will need to be aware that any buildings demolition may give rise to Special Wastes (e.g. asbestos containing products, central heating oil). Special Wastes are subject to additional control prior to disposal and the Environment Agency can provide advice on these regulations if required.
- The Environment Agency must be notified immediately of any incident likely to cause pollution.

- 4.23 **Lighting-** Specifically designed lighting equipment that minimises the upward spread of light near to, or above the horizontal should be used to comply with Policy EN21 (Control of Pollution).
- 4.24 **Access, Roads and Car Parking-** Access to the development should be via a new access onto St John's Road. St John's Road is the subject of a New Street Order to which the site frontage with St. John's Road would need to comply. The existing wall should be reconstructed as an important feature of the site but it should be set back to the New Street Order widening line, with a 7.3 m carriageway on St John's Road and a 2m footway. The new access should be staggered by at least 10m (and preferably more) from opposite the Bassetts Gardens junction and provided with 70mX4.5mX70m splays, 10m radii and 5.5m width. The developer is advised to consult with the Local Highway Authority regarding their requirements.
- 4.25 Vehicles should not dominate the development and the provision of a 'homezone' covering the access roads and communal car parking areas will reduce the impact of vehicles and improve pedestrian safety. Car parking provision should not exceed the standards set out in Policy TA8-1 bedroom units- 1 space per unit, 2+ bedroom units- 2 spaces per unit. Flats should be provided with dedicated cycle parking at the rate of at least 1 space per 2 dwellings. Given the proximity of this new development to the Valley Parks cyclepaths higher levels of cycleparking are strongly encouraged.
- 4.26 Car parking should be located in secure rear courtyards or adjacent to houses rather than to the front and could be on the basis of communal parking rather than dedicated spaces. Where parking is located to the side, hardstandings and garages should be recessed to avoid breaking up the building line.
- 4.27 **Education Provision-** Contributions towards the cost of primary education provision will be sought to meet the need generated by new residents. The rate will be that which is applicable when the application is determined and this will be secured through a legal agreement. This should be discussed with the Local Education Authority at the earliest opportunity (Mr Jim Weedon, telephone 01392 383477 EMail jim.weedon@devon.gov.uk).
- 4.28 **Footpath and Cyclepath Links-** Hillcrest immediately adjoins the Withycombe Valley Park and it is envisaged that the wooded area to the south of the site will contribute greatly to the Park and its network of footpaths and cycleways.
- 4.29 Pedestrian and cyclelinks should be provided to St John's Road at the north of the site, to the playing field and track to the south-west of the site and to Gibson Close to the east. and, via a footbridge to Dinan Way and the community facilities (doctor's surgery, community hall, public house) in Prince of Wales. These links will be adopted by Devon County Council as Local Highway Authority and will need to be built to adoptable standards.
- 4.30 It is also desired that a footbridge link be formed to Dukes Crescent/Duke of Cornwall Close and to give a more direct link to the community facilities in Prince of Wales Drive via the Valley Park. However, the land between the southern edge of the site and the highway is not in the ownership or control of the District Council and so any footpath provision would be subject to negotiations with the landowners.
- 4.31 **Public Art-** Policy D6 of the Local Plan acknowledges the role that artists can play in enhancing and improving the quality of the public domain. The redevelopment of this site provides an ideal opportunity to engage artists in making artwork, which will enhance the development, reinforce a sense of identity and create links to the wider area. There is scope to use public art on the southern part of the site to draw pedestrians and cyclists into the Valley Park, which adjoins it. The policy encourages developers to allocate a percentage (i.e. 1%) of the capital costs of any new building, refurbishment and landscaping scheme towards the production of works of public art and it's long term maintenance. Such public art should be site specific work that can be permanent, temporary, internal or external. It can include work that is integrated into a development, from street furniture, lighting, brickwork and landscaping designs to internal details of a building, its furniture, flooring, ceramics and textiles. It can include sculpture, photography, performance, moving image and events. Public art need not be within public

spaces, but has to be accessible to the public realm, or available in the semi-public areas of completed developments.

4.32 **Open Space**

There is a formal playing pitch on land to the north of the school however, this is below the threshold in Circular 09/98, and there is therefore no requirement under current guidance for its retention or replacement.

The categories of open space are:

4.33 **Local Area of Play (LAP)**

A small area of open space specifically designed for small children up to 6 years of age within 1 minutes walk (60m) of home. Its total area is a minimum of 100m² with an additional 5m buffer zone and contains basic items of play equipment. In some developments, the high recommended density of LAP's may be reduced in recognition of the important role played by larger back gardens.

4.34 **Locally Equipped Area of Play (LEAP)**

An area of open space designated and equipped for children of an early school age within 5 minutes walk (240m) of home. The activity zone is a minimum of 400m² with an additional buffer zone of 10m. It must have at least five types of play equipment and provide seating for parents or carers. A LEAP is required for every 250 residents.

4.35 **Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NEAP)**

A larger area of open space specifically designed for older children within 15 minutes walk (600m) of home. The activity zone is a minimum of 1000m² with an additional 30m buffer zone. The equipment requirements are more comprehensive and include a larger facility such as a ball court. This facility will serve the purpose of a LEAP within a radius of 240m. A NEAP is required for every 1000 residents.

4.36 The NPFA standard seeks to provide a LEAP for every 250 residents and a NEAP for every 1000. From the standard, 250 residents generate a need for 2000m² of open space, 400m² of which should take the form of a LEAP. Depending on any future proposed development, there may also be a requirement for a NEAP within the larger context and hence those 250 residents would generate the need for one quarter of a NEAP.

4.37 Of the 2000m² required by 250 residents, 400m² of these should be accounted for by a LEAP. This leaves a theoretical shortfall of 1600m². This can be made up by the provision of Informal Play Space (IPS). This must serve two purposes, the first is to provide further play and active learning opportunities for local children whilst the second is to give meaningful areas of green open space within the development which are suitable for adoption by East Devon District Council.

4.38 In determining whether an area of public open space can contribute towards the Informal Play Space provision, it is important that East Devon District Council lay down criteria which the area must meet, both for play and maintenance purposes. These have not been defined nationally, however, any guidance should require the space to comply with the following points:

Be of no less than 200m² for any individual area (reason: to give sufficient space for very basic play)

Have a minimum dimension of no less than 5m in any given place (reason: to allow for ease of cutting with triple gang mowers). Accordingly, roadside grass verge strips will not be included

Feature one litter bin for every 400m² (reason: to maintain the cleanliness of the local environment)

Feature two benches for every 400m² (reason: to provide facilities for parents or carers)
Feature two trees for every 400m² (reason: to provide long term visual amenity and shade)

Feature at least 10% low maintenance non-poisonous shrub cover with (reason: to offer children the opportunity to experience natural scent, colour and texture in accordance with NPFA recommendations and to enhance the visual diversity of the local landscape).

- 4.39 Where the District Council will be required to 'take over' a site a commuted sum for its maintenance will be sought based on the figure applying at the time.
- 4.40 Informal open space provided within the site should be located adjacent to the Withycombe Brook in order to make the greatest contribution to the Valley Park and the setting of the listed building and to ensure that the woodland is properly maintained and managed in perpetuity. The Council is willing to accept a transfer of the woodland area adjoining the Withycombe Brook to form public open space as an extension to the Withycombe Valley Park subject to the developer of the site:
- i) Making the trees and site safe for public use, and
 - ii) Making a financial contribution to the Council to meet the future maintenance costs of the site.
- 4.41 The Local Equipped Area of Play may be more appropriately located in the northern section of the site, where it will not detract from the setting of the listed building and will be fronted by surrounding houses to increase security and create a sense of identity and ownership.
- 4.42 Full landscaping details must be submitted to, and approved by, the District Council prior to commencement of the development and with respect to any landscaping plan it is recommended that it mimics the parkland history of the site.
- 4.43 The developer may wish to provide a further amenity area around the trees in the centre of the site as no development can be carried out within 5metres of the edge of their mature crown spread. This would ensure the trees protection and would soften the appearance of the development.