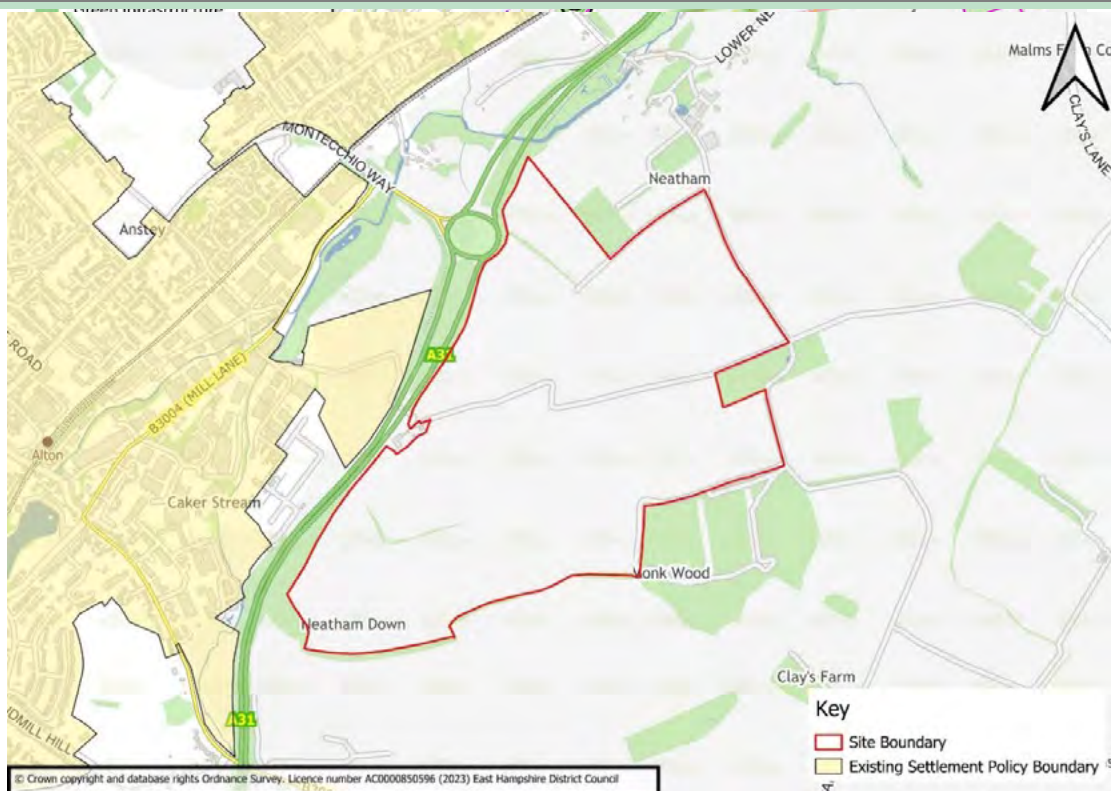


ALT8 – Land at Neatham Manor Farm, Alton

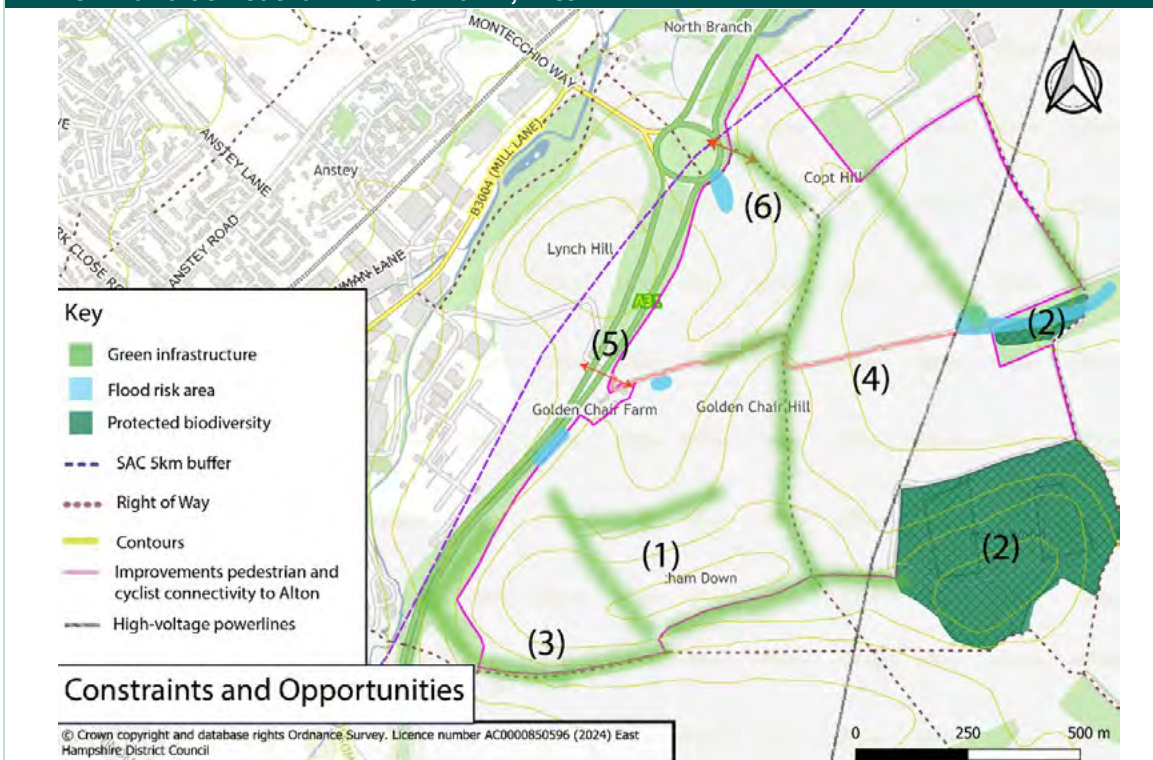
LAA Reference	BIN-011
Z	
Site Size (Ha)	97.9 ha
Existing Use	Agricultural
Proposed Future Uses	Residential (including travelling communities), commercial, education, community
Proposed Number of Homes	Approximately 1000 (including 6 travelling showpeople plots)

**Site Description**

The site lies to the east of Alton, adjacent to the A31 and to the south-west of buildings in Neatham. A substantial area of woodland (Monk Wood) adjoins the south-east boundary. To the west and south of the site are areas of farmland in arable use. There are public rights of way adjoining the eastern and southern site boundaries, as well as a route through the site that connects Copt Hill in the north with Neatham Down in the south. The route to the south of the site forms part of the Hangers Way. The public footpath within the site enters the northern end after crossing the A31 roundabout at Montecchio Way.

The site itself is comprised of large fields separated by hedgerows, some of which are more substantial than others, and agricultural access tracks. A farm track that leads to Golden Chair Farm bisects the site and connects with a bridge across the A31. Copses, woodland and hedgerows define the edges of the site in many locations, although a small section of the site boundary in the north is undefined by physical features. The land rises from the A31 corridor as part of an undulating downland landscape, with the western areas of the site being contained by landform. A notable ridgeline runs through the centre of the site between Copt Hill and Neatham Down. To the east of the ridge, the land slopes gently towards the eastern boundary. Utilities infrastructure (electricity pylons) pass through eastern and central areas. The site lies at the edge of the chalk landscape in East Hampshire, close to the geological boundary with the Wealden greensands.

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List of constraints & opportunities

- **Landscape:** potential for adverse visual and landscape impacts. The site forms part of an unsettled landscape with a strong sense of rural tranquillity despite the proximity of Alton and the A31. There is potential for long-distance views of the South Downs National Park from eastern parts of the site and views into the site from the Hangers Way. Western areas of the site are better contained by landform.
- **Topography (1):** the land rises relatively steeply in southern parts of the site associated with Neatham Down.
- **Biodiversity:** recreational impacts on the Wealden Heaths European SPA & SAC sites would need to be appropriately mitigated.
- **Biodiversity (2):** site adjoins two SINCS (Neatham Farm Manor Copse and Monk Wood). Monk Wood is also identified as ancient natural woodland.
- **Green infrastructure (3):** mature field boundaries (hedgerows and trees) are present within the site and along the southern boundary. These are distinctive characteristics of the site and its landscape setting. There is opportunity to enhance these features.
- **Access:** road connection to the A31 and Alton could be achieved at the roundabout adjacent to the site.
- **Access (4):** potential to connect new development to the public rights of way network and provide new pedestrian routes across the site, enabling healthy & active lifestyles.
- **Access (5):** potential to improve pedestrian and cyclist connectivity to Alton via the existing bridge. Future access arrangements for Golden Chair Farm are to be clarified.
- **Flood risks (6):** small areas in the north (close to the roundabout on the A31) and on the eastern boundary are susceptible to surface water flooding. These flood risks could be exacerbated by increases in surface water run-off rates from the site.
- **Utilities:** there are overhead powerlines traversing the site, north-to-south (high voltage) and east-to-west (lower voltage).
- **Noise and odour:** potential for adverse impacts on residential amenity in western areas of the site from noise associated with traffic on the A31 and the close proximity of the Alton Sewage Treatment Works.
- **Agricultural land quality:** the site and has been identified as Grade 3 agricultural land, which is a finite resource.

ALT8 – Land at Neatham Manor Farm, Alton**Summary of Reasons for Inclusion**

This is the largest proposed development that has been included for consultation in the Draft Local Plan. The site's development would constitute a significant expansion to the settlement of Alton, the largest settlement in the Local Plan Area, creating a new neighbourhood with the potential for its own distinct character. Drawing on the influences of the landscape and the potential to strengthen areas and boundaries of biodiversity value to form a more coherent and substantial green network, the site promoter has identified opportunities to deliver around 1,250 new dwellings and other supporting uses. Taking account of the constraints and opportunities, a more conservative estimate of 1,000 new homes is being put forward by the Local Planning Authority at this time. An indicative concept for the development is illustrated on the following page.

Large parts of this site have previously been considered through the Large Development Sites (Regulation 18) consultation in late 2019. At that time, Land at Neatham Down was promoted for 600 new homes; 1 hectare (ha) of employment land; 9 ha of open space, a shop/pub, a primary school, and opportunity for travelling communities accommodation. The Local Planning Authority and site promoter will work with infrastructure providers to understand the requirements for new infrastructure for the larger site, but new areas of open space, neighbourhood amenities (a shop and pub) and the potential for a new primary school will be considered as a starting point. Due to the proximity of the Lynch Hill proposal, new employment land would not be required, but accommodation for travelling showpeople is needed and could be provided close to the A31 access.

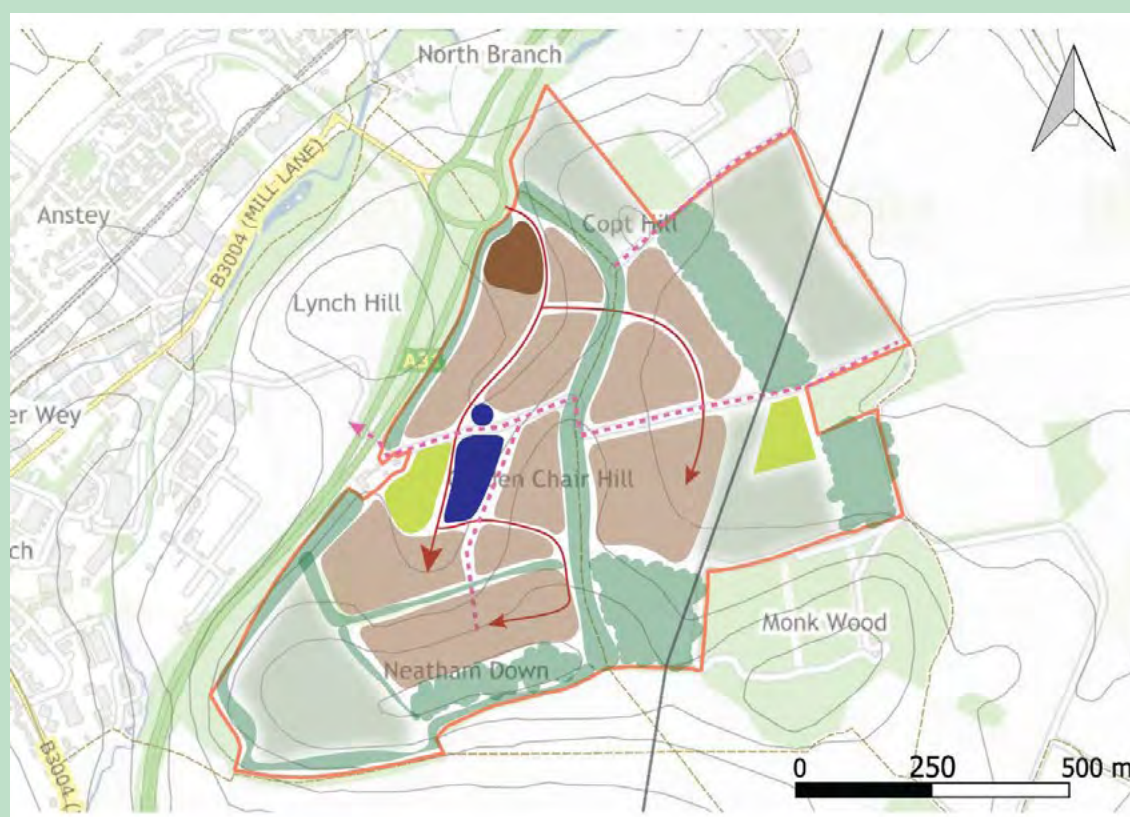
This revised, larger strategic proposal could deliver more of the area's housing requirements, incorporating a mix of housing sizes, types and tenures, including provision for self-builders. Landscape constraints are greatest in eastern areas, which would be more suitable for recreational open space and biodiversity enhancements. Exposed or steeply sloping parts of the site are likely to be less suitable for new buildings. A detailed landscape and visual impact assessment would need to be undertaken to understand which areas could be developed, but landscape studies that have already been undertaken by the site promoter support the potential for development in western areas.

Impacts on environmental constraints (biodiversity, green infrastructure, flood risks) can be avoided or mitigated by appropriate design and layout, whilst there is good potential for biodiversity enhancements through connecting the fragmented habitats and providing new areas of woodland and chalk grassland. Although this would lead to a loss of agricultural resources (high-quality farmland), this needs to be balanced by the potential for supporting nature recovery in an area that is intensively farmed. Suitable alternative natural greenspace could be provided in relation to the Wealden Heaths SPA & SAC sites, although retaining a rural ambience and setting for rights of way on the edges of the site is a key design challenge. There is good potential to offer new residents access to the countryside, including the Hangers Way, to encourage healthy & active lifestyles.

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Access and accessibility is an important consideration for a sustainable development. There is existing road infrastructure (a roundabout on the A31) that could connect the site to the road network, although the highways authority has advised that an assessment of traffic movements on the A31 must demonstrate that there is no negative impact. Overall, the site scores above average in the Local Planning Authority’s Accessibility Study. However, there is a large variation in accessibility scores across the site, with areas in the west being (in theory) more accessible to facilities and services in Alton by walking and cycling modes. Proposals will need to take advantage of opportunities to open up the existing bridge to pedestrians and cyclists and to support improvements to the network of routes identified in the LCWIP. Passive design principles, the installation of solar panels and the potential for a district heating system could help tackle the climate emergency.

Indicative concept for development



Key

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Existing green infrastructure | New woodland & planting |
| Formal open space | Local centre (services & facilities) |
| New travelling showpeople | New housing |
| New chalk grassland & wildflowers | Height contours |
| Existing rights of way | Primary vehicular routes |
| High voltage electricity cables | New pedestrian and cycle routes |

ALT8 – Land at Neatham Manor Farm, Alton**Infrastructure Requirements**

- **Education:** Developer contributions (e.g. by a s.106 contribution) will be required to meet the educational requirements (early years, primary and secondary schooling) of new housing. There is potential for a new primary school to be built on-site, within the area identified as the local centre. The issue of whether to expand existing primary schools within Alton or provide a new facility on the site will be the focus of partnership working with the education authority.
- **Health:** Developer contributions (e.g. by a s.106 contribution) will be required to expand existing GP surgeries in Alton (The Wilson Practice and/or Chawton Park Surgery).
- **Local centre:** the on-site provision new local services, including a shop, a pub and/or a community centre should be investigated.
- **Natural greenspace:** significant areas of new woodland and natural planting are likely to be required to avoid adverse landscape impacts. This will need to be introduced in advance of development, given time to become established and would need to be maintained to ensure the effective screening of new built form.
- **Access:** A new vehicular access point onto the A31 (via a new arm off the existing roundabout) and a new on-site movement framework suitable for all users will be necessary to support development. Improved connectivity to rural rights of way and greater permeability should be investigated. New, high-quality pedestrian and cycle connections to Alton will be imperative to avoid feelings of disconnection from the town. The existing bridge across the A31 should be made publicly accessible for walking and cycling, whilst other pedestrian and cycling improvements (e.g. along Montecchio Way and across the A31) should be investigated. Developer contributions (e.g. by a s.106 contribution) to implementing the Alton LCWIP may be required.
- **Formal open space and sport:** On-site provision to meet the open space requirements associated with new housing. This could include new allotments or a community orchard in the eastern part of the site, taking advantage of the quality of the agricultural land and the restrictions on built development in close proximity to overhead power lines. There is also potential for off-site sports contribution to improve facilities in Alton.
- **On-site drainage:** many parts of the site have been identified as highly or probably compatible with infiltration sustainable drainage systems. Appropriate infrastructure will