

# A Design Code for a new neighbourhood at Plantation in Dartington





## Note

This document is intended as a starting point for discussions on the Design Code for the Plantation site.

I have set out what I believe to be the key areas and made some suggestions on how the code can be structured and implemented.

This is an exercise in balance between exciting opportunities, the constraints of the site and planning regime and viable delivery for the project.

Much of the detail concerning issues like materials, specification and tenure needs discussion and decisions with the Local Authority and the Dartington Hall Trust in the first instance.

I have structured the code so that it can serve as a guide and format for community workshops where focussed and productive discussions can be had in delivering the project.

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## Project Vision and Rationale.

The Dartington Hall Trust (DHT) “continues to focus on learning, the arts, social enterprise, a responsible and sustainable approach to the environment and to the use of land, and new ways to promote fair and sustainable communities” Ref: Trustee Recruitment Pack 2016.

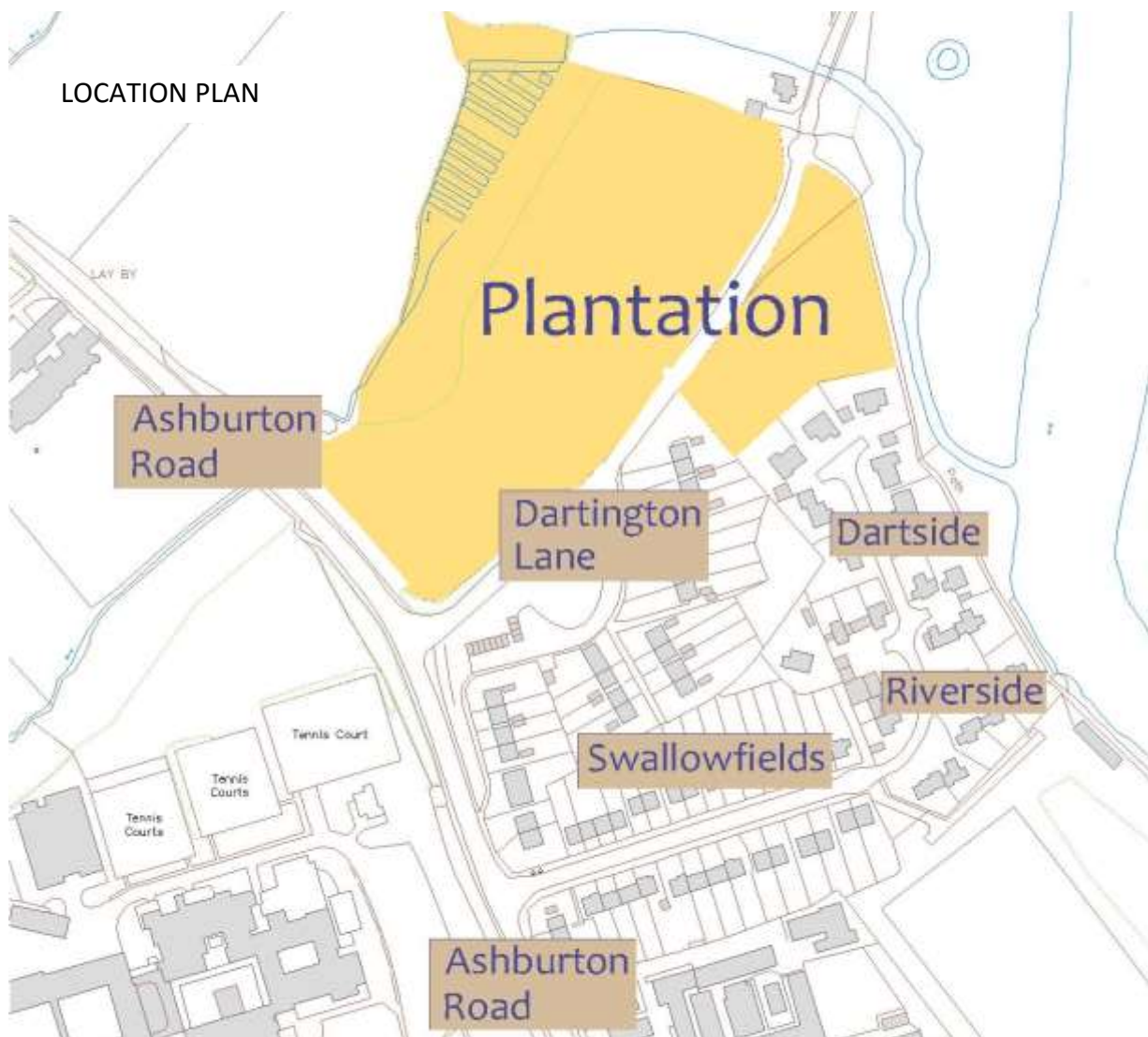
The above statement should serve as an overriding guide to the purpose of the Design Code in delivering the type of development that DHT wishes to see on land where it has influence.

The Plantation site is an opportunity to build a new neighbourhood which represents the values of DHT.

DHT is proposing to act as enabling developer to facilitate the delivery of an exemplar scheme for 20 to 40 new homes.

To maximise the opportunity for local people to be involved in the project and yet ensure an efficient build process, a well-managed self-build approach is favoured.

The project should embrace and record the learning experience throughout the process to maximise best practice and scalability.



## Purpose of the Design Code.

The purpose of the Design Code is to shape and form the development in such a way as to respect the site wildlife, landscape, natural features and well-loved existing buildings locally whilst at the same time permitting innovation and contemporary design.

This complements the project masterplan which will inform the planning application.

Plantation is to have a strong sense of local character and identity as an example of a new, energy efficient and eco-friendly Dartington vernacular.

This Design Code has been drawn up to accord with the adopted South Hams Local Plan Policies, Devon County Council Highways guidance and advice from the National Self Build Association.



Dartington Lane as it runs past the Plantation site.



The Plantation field.



The old lodge, the most significant building adjacent to the site.

## Purpose of the Design Code continued ...

The Design Code also serves to deliver the aspirations of the Trust through the process of development.

The code can be applied to the aesthetics, specification and social elements of the project.

Given that it is also the wish of the Trust to enable a self-build process on the scheme, the code is essential in controlling the nature and form of this aspect of the development as there will be no direct contractual agreements between the Trust and the builder.

However, it is important that the code does allow for innovation and individualisation in the design and delivery of the buildings.

The planning consent will determine the 'macro' elements such as building heights, access, parking numbers and so forth.

This code is set out to allow the self-builder a range of choices that have been pre-agreed with the Local Authority and DHT.

Living Village Trust design for a Design Coded development at Higher Newham Farm near Truro.





## Community consultation

The Design Code is a set of principles that inform the site masterplan and the nature of the individual plots.

A core part of the code is developed from a process of community consultation, comment from the Local Authorities and the needs of DHT.

In this way the Design Code works as a focal point and mechanism whereby the delivery of the project is the prime focus, rather than diverse sets of abstract values.

For example, there has been discussion on how the use of local materials from sustainable sources should be a key element in new housing development on DHT land where viable and practical.

The Design Code will serve to focus on these issues and deliver a compromise to ensure that it is applied in such a way as to make the houses buildable to current regulations and affordable within the context of DHT needs.

Decision makers on the Design Code consultation need to understand and take responsibility for those decisions and the resultant deliverability dynamics to ensure that the project can be delivered.

This document is a discussion paper which sets out a possible format for the Design Code.

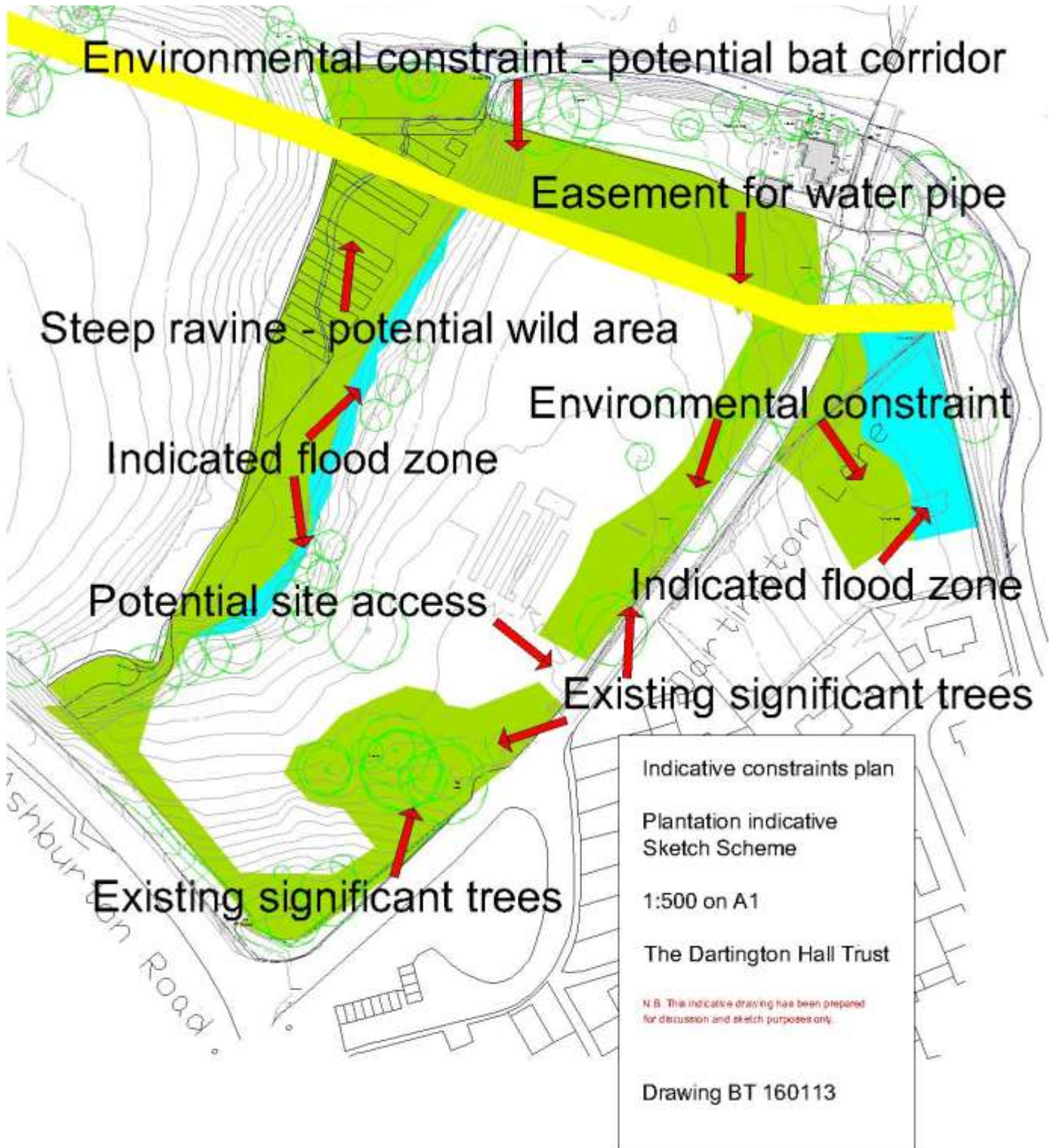
In itself this format will attract comment and questions but it serves as a starting point to tackle the most likely issues.

After consultation has been taken into account the code format, content and focus will be modified to set out a deliverable number of options that have been broadly agreed through the consultation process.

## Site Constraints

The Design Code applies to areas of the development site that are considered to be developable.

Other parts of the site will be excluded from development by virtue of environmental, wildlife, easement rights and potential flood risk concerns.

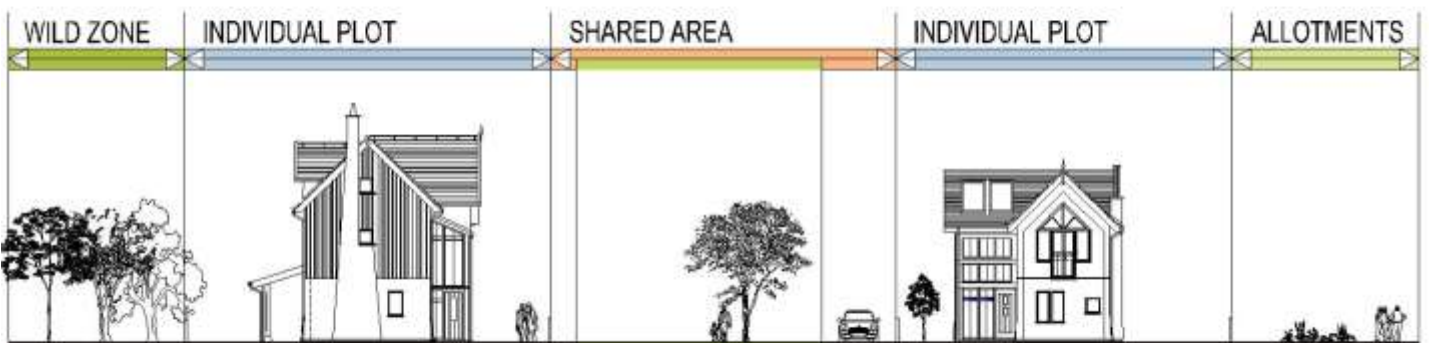


## Code Areas

The Design Code applies to the development area on the Plantation site.

1. Private plot holders or community self-builders.
2. Shared areas to be delivered by the Enabling Developer and managed by the Development Management Company on completion of the development.
3. Allotments
4. Wild Zone

(N.B. house elevations are indicative illustrations only)

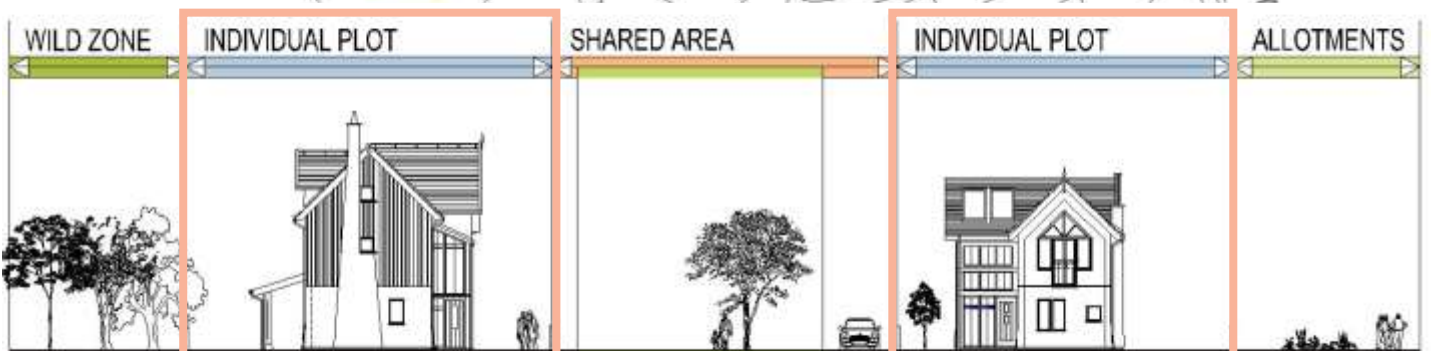




## The Individual Plots

The plots shown on the drawing are for discussion purposes only.

The shape, form, size, tenure and location of the plots taken forward will be determined by DHT and the masterplan process but potential plot holders will need to be made aware of their options.

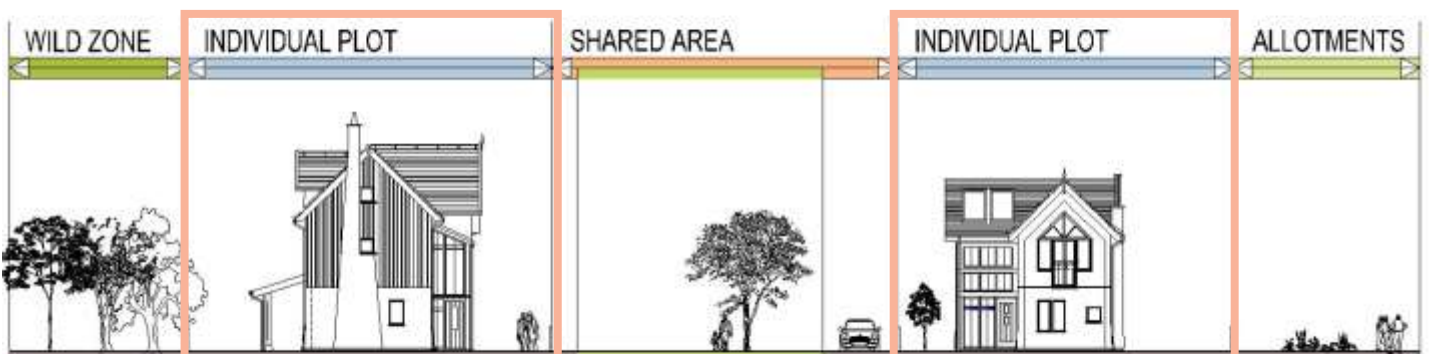
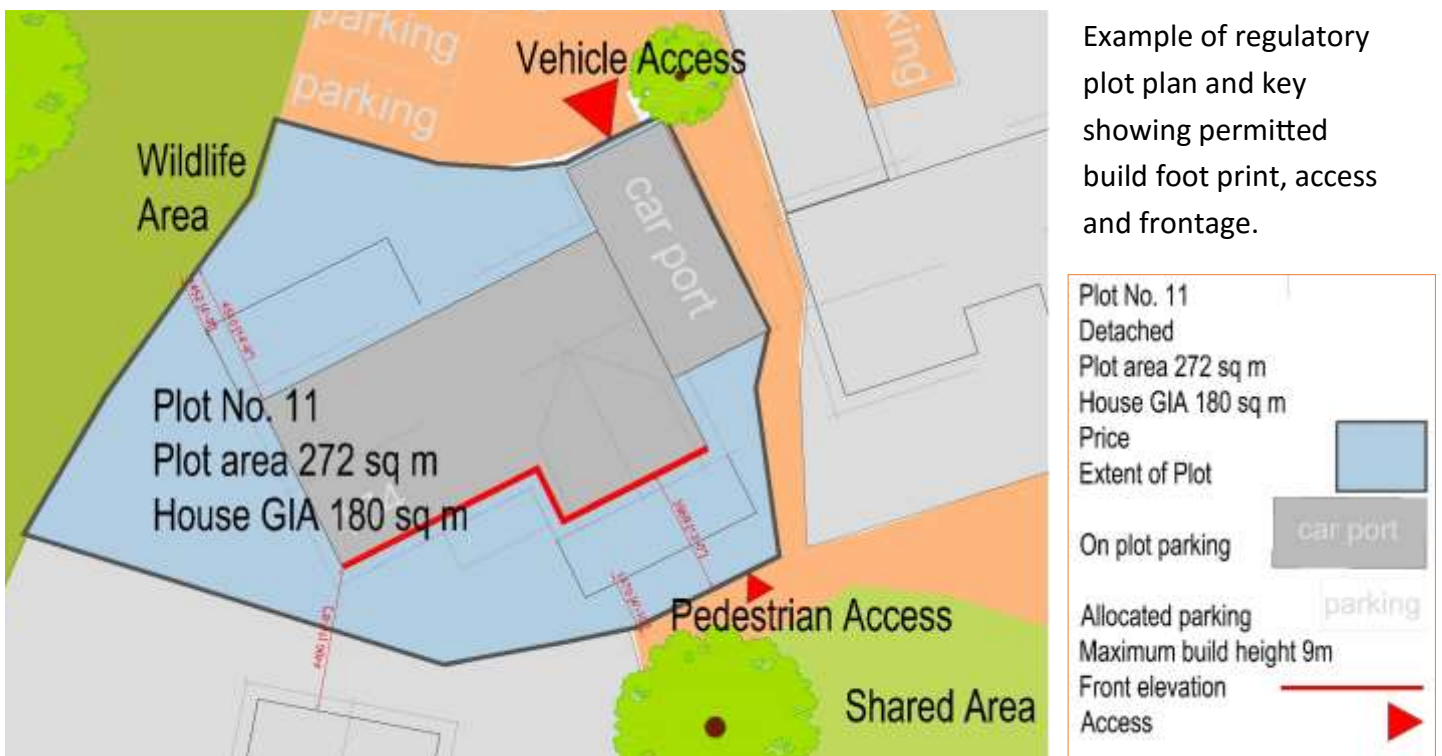


## The Individual Plots continued ...

The self-build process is an integral part of the Design Code.

Following research into successful self-build schemes in the UK and abroad it is proposed that a process similar to that used in Almere in Holland (and recently adopted at Graven Hill in Oxfordshire) is implemented.

The process works so that the enabling developer designs and delivers the infrastructure whilst the self-builder chooses a plot which comes with a Build Permit unique to that plot. This specifies the constraints (and opportunities) to build on that plot which will have been pre-determined by the Local Authority and the enabling developer. Typically, these would concern elements such as the height of the building, placing on the plot and gap between plots. Because of the dense nature and sensitivity of the Plantation site I propose that more detail, such as use of materials, roof pitch, boundary height and type are also included in the Build Permit.



## The Individual Plots continued ...

It is vital that the project is well managed and that the individual homes are delivered within a reasonable time-line. Potential plot purchasers (and their funders) can then be confident that they won't be living on a building site for many years.

A delivery agreement must therefore be put in place with the enabling developer having 'step in' rights if the plot holder has failed to build to the required stage within the agreed maximum times.

For example:

Delivery stages and time periods.

### STAGE ONE—MAXIMUM SIX MONTHS

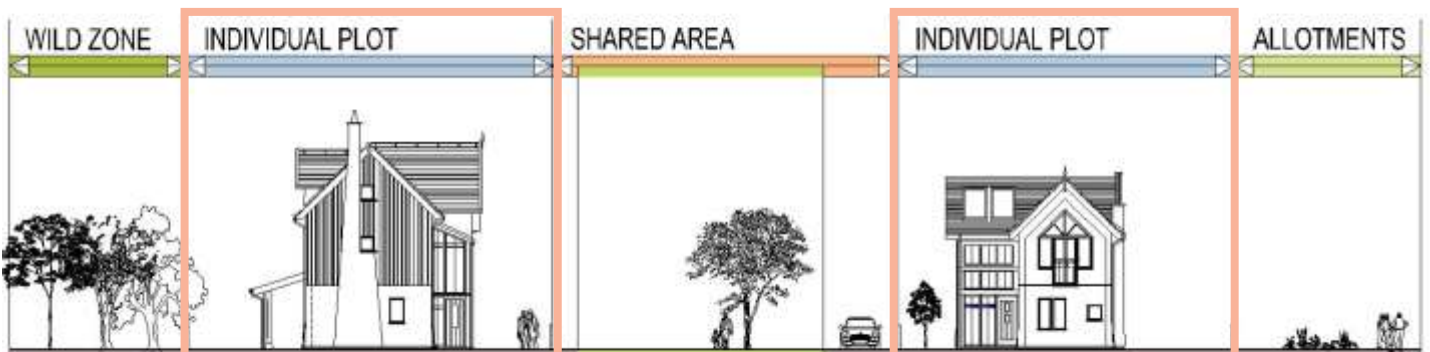
After fully understanding the constraints and opportunities within the Design Code for their chosen plot, the plot can be reserved with a fee which covers design and costings advice.

### STAGE TWO—MAXIMUM TWO MONTHS

Detailed designs for the house on the plot are signed off as agreed by the enabling developer and Local Authority. This triggers Exchange of Contracts on the plot sale and the first stage contract with the developer/builder to deliver foundations to Golden Brick (for VAT purposes).

### STAGE THREE—MAXIMUM TWENTY FOUR MONTHS

When the foundations are completed and accepted by the builder the Completion of the Sales Contract for the plot will take place and the plot holder will contract with the builder to deliver the completed house. (A plot holder could possibly be sub-contracted by the builder to help with completion works).



## The Individual Plots continued ...

At Stage One the plot purchaser is made aware of the constraints and Design Code for the plot and progresses through to Stage Two to work with the enabling developer and builders' designers to get an agreed detailed design for the house on that plot.

An example of plot building permit for Plot No. 11.

### SUBJECT TO PLANNING APPROVAL AND ENABLING DEVELOPER CONSENT

1. A car port must be provided on plot as shown in the plot drawing.
2. The building must accord generally with the consented house on the plot. (For example, ridge height, volume, floor space.)
3. Innovative design and construction is positively encouraged but must comply with building regulations and achieve insulation values to Part L as a minimum.
4. The buildings must be constructed by one of the approved framework contractors. Self-build will be considered where the builder can demonstrate ability to meet the project delivery criteria, site rules and comply with CDM regulations etc.
5. The house must be built within the plot build foot print zone as shown, include an open porch on the front and maintain sufficient space between neighbours to allow movement between the front and rear of the plot.
6. The front elevation, as indicated by the red edging, must relate to the shared area and address the shared space.
7. External materials must be from the allocated palette of materials for this plot as illustrated and referenced on the right.
8. External doors and windows must be from sustainable timber from pre-approved suppliers.
9. Front boundary to shared area to be no higher than 0.5m.
10. Area for bin and cycle storage must be included within the plot.
11. Ridge height to be 9m or less. Flat roofing exempt but limited to 9m sq. per plot.
12. The plot is for one detached unit of no more than 180 sq m gross internal area.
13. Working from home will be permitted provided that it complies with planning, is ancillary to domestic use and does not encroach outside the house.
14. All works and storage of materials during construction must be contained within the plot and allocated parking space.
14. Must be owner occupiers' primary residence.

Examples of external materials

Slate Ref:



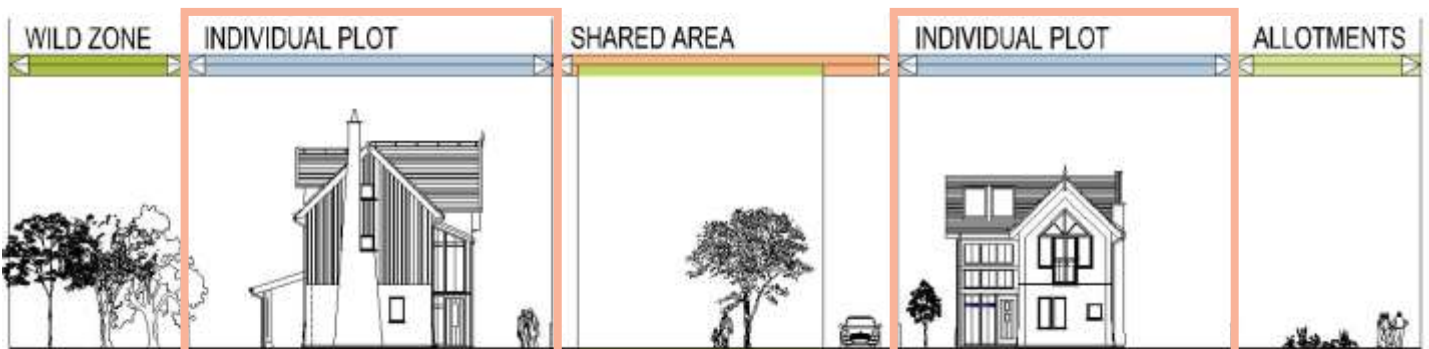
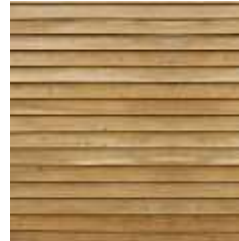
Stone Ref:



Render Ref:



Cladding Ref:



## The Shared Areas

This area will also be determined by the masterplan process and be designed in accordance with the wishes of the Trust and through conversations with the Local Authority.

The area shown on the plan include village greens, access roads, pedestrian pathways, cycle routes, parking and neighbourhood entrance. This is for illustration only at this stage as the masterplan is evolving and discussions are ongoing with the Local Authority.



## The Shared Area continued ...

This is the land that connects the houses and other amenities to the public road. It also provides public open space such as grassed village green and places that are designed to encourage community interaction.

There will be opportunity to introduce new concepts into the shared areas but it is also vital that Plantation is seen as a contemporary part of the existing fabric of Dartington and Totnes, and not an alien imposition.

An essential starting point for the design consideration is in the analysis of local places that are successful and have proved resilience before introducing new and unproven concepts. For example:

Staple Hill is a successful, resilient shared green.

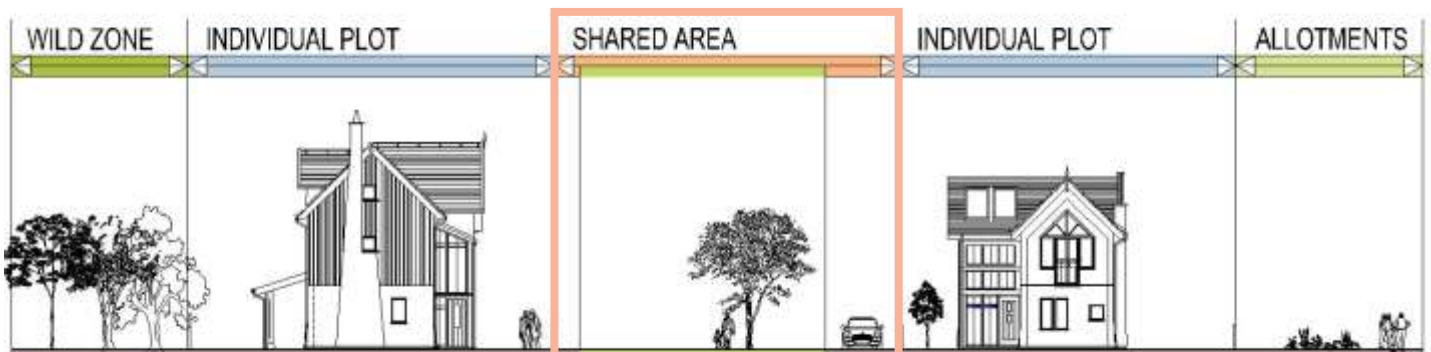


These houses at Week have a successful access and separate garden arrangement.



The analysis of much loved local places as the starting point for a new design must however take into account current building regulations, highways and planning requirements.

If Local Authority adoption is being considered, the access routes should comply with Devon County Council's Highways in Residential Estates Guide for Type R33 Shared Surface Access Ways. In any event planning considerations will require the requisite compliance in policy and this needs to be kept in mind at all times.

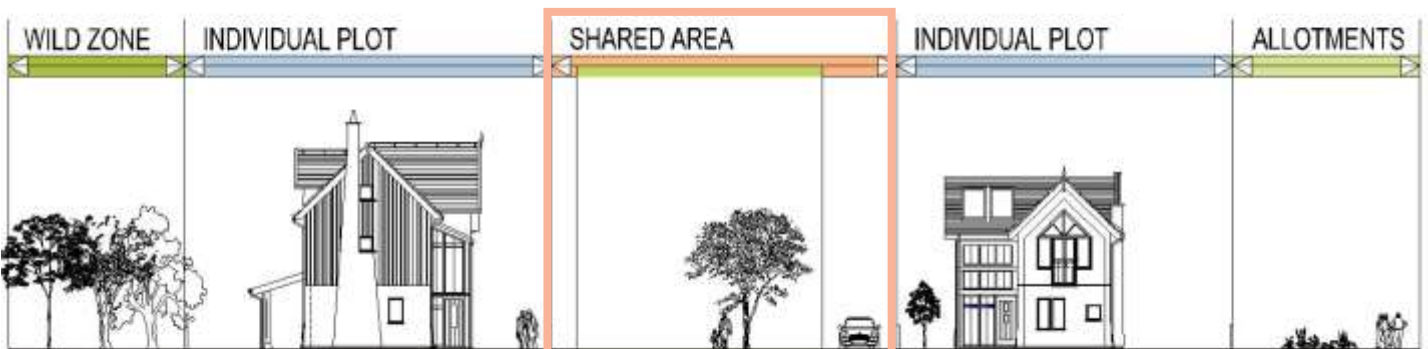


## The Shared Area continued ...

The shared area will function as amenity space and routes for pedestrians, cycles and vehicles through the new neighbourhood. Here, the design priority must favour the pedestrian to promote community and good neighbourliness. Vehicle speeds can be regulated by physical narrowing with solid objects such as large stones or trees and the nature of the surface of the shared space.

One of the keys to the success of a new neighbourhood is in providing attractive routes through the area interspaced with pleasant meeting points and appropriate open space amenities. As a general rule, parallel edges and right angles are to be avoided. Taking cues from other successful places is a good start. For example:

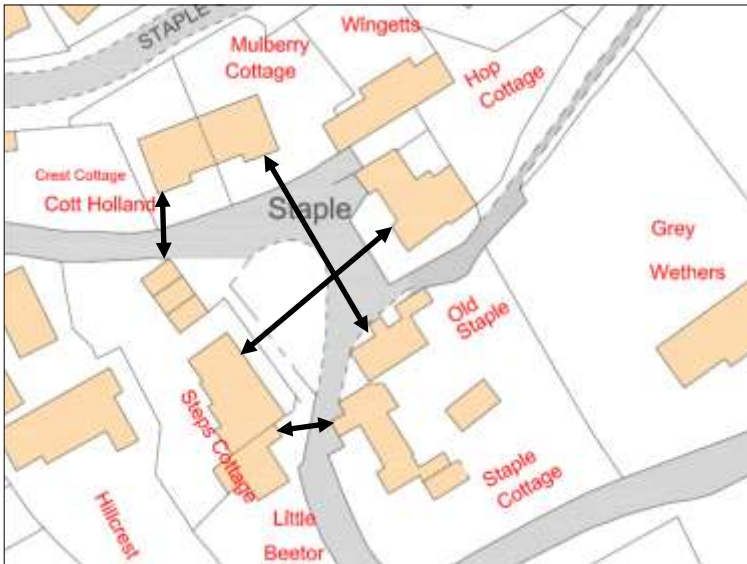
Examples of pedestrian routes, shared spaces and parking at The Wintles in Shropshire as designed by The Living Village Trust.



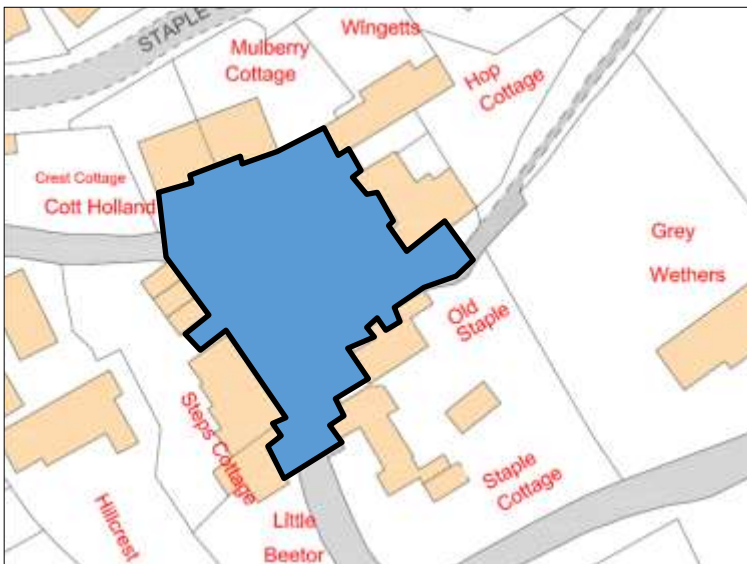
## The Shared Area continued ...

The relationships of the shared area open spaces to the surrounding buildings and landscape is also crucial. Again, it is useful to study local examples that are pleasing and successful to think about size and shape.

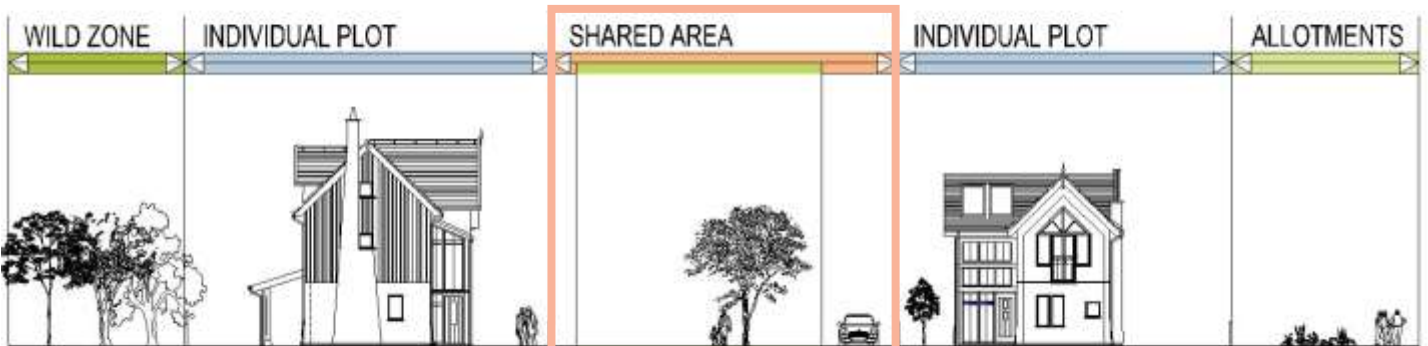
For example:



Distances between buildings, especially across open spaces and entrance ways at Staple Hill in Dartington



The shapes created between the buildings are what make it interesting and more likely to encourage 'ownership' by the residents.





## The Shared Area continued ...

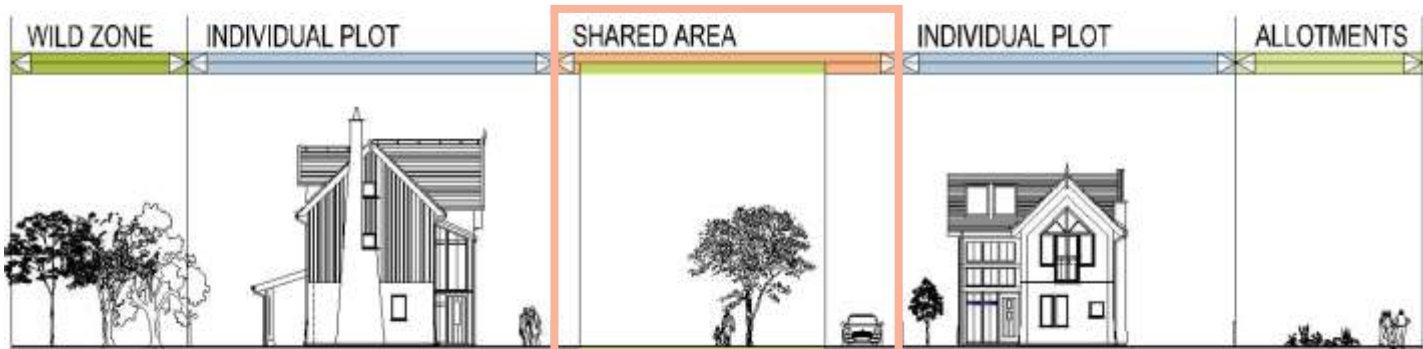
Much of the long term resilience of the shared areas will depend on the opportunity for residents to make them their own. It is proposed that, upon completion of the scheme, all the common parts and un-adopted roads will be transferred to the residents via a management company or CLT. With service charges apportioned across the estate by plot area.

Again, local examples will be useful to analyse for their form, relationship to the shared space and materials used.



A robust way of trying to ensure that the new neighbourhood will be accepted by existing local residents would be to invite them to participate in the coding process. Asking locals to identify, photograph or sketch elements of the existing locality that they appreciate and enjoy as part of a project archive would be very empowering. This would then serve as very useful reference materials for the shared space design.

Being able to deliver the resultant design within the requirements of the Local Authority may present some challenges, though by and large the sorts of details discussed here are not part of the regulations.



## The Shared Area continued ...

Whilst the aesthetics of a new neighbourhood will be important to the residents both new and already in the local area it is also important to think through the opportunities that a new shared area might bring.

Examples of good placemaking elements should be also explored from outside the locality.

For example:

- Safe places for young and old people.
- Desire lines.
- Places for exercise.
- Gateways that create an identifiable neighbourhood.
- Opportunities for permanent art or performances.
- Connection to areas outside the new neighbourhood.
- Quiet places for reflection and meditation.
- Trees, formal gardens, seating areas.
- The layout should strive to minimise vehicle roads, whilst each property should have good access for loading, deliveries and emergencies.

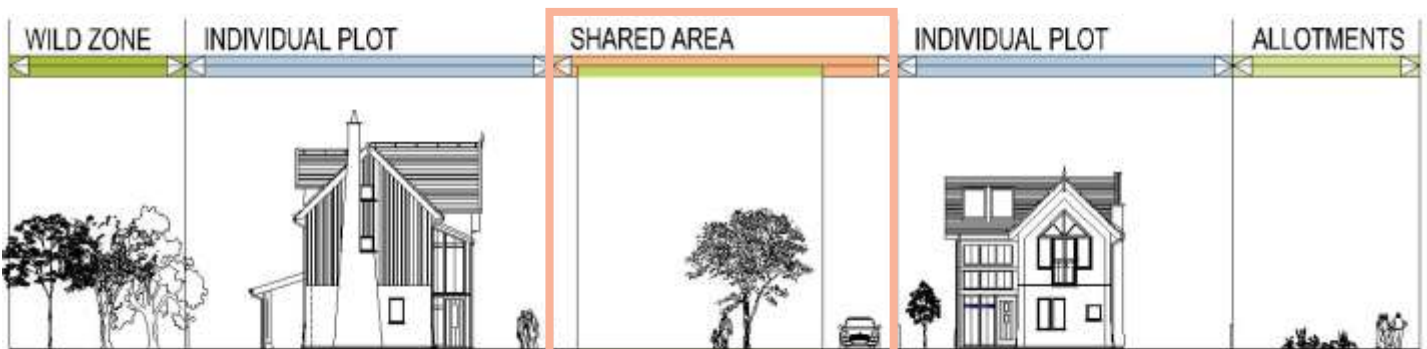
A 'pop up' veg patch in Australia.



A 'pocket park' in Brooklyn by IOBY.

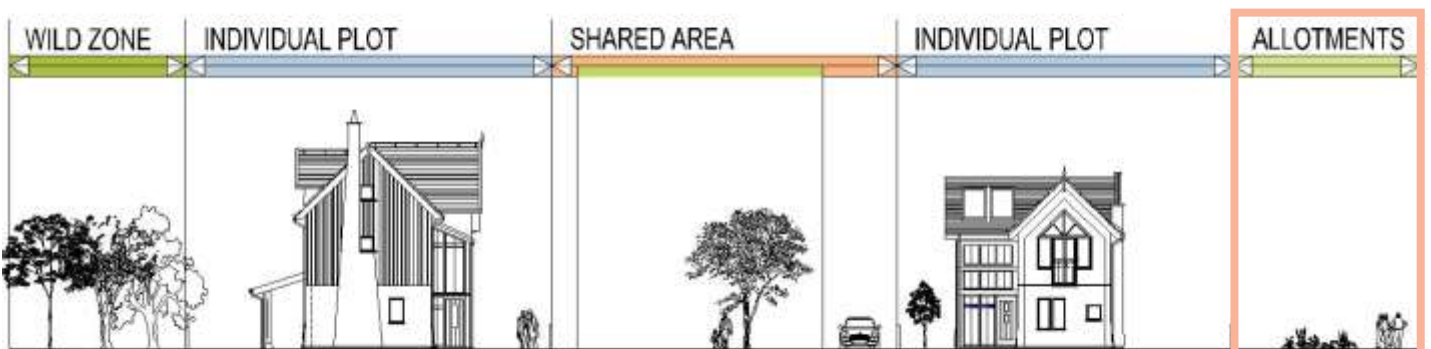


The above are from A Pattern Language by Christopher Alexander. Many other sources will be available.



## The Shared Growing Area

This is likely to be in the position shown as determined by ecological constraints.



## The Shared Growing Area

Growing areas serve a very important part in contributing to a new neighbourhood.

They are much more than food growing areas. They are and opportunities for social interaction, learning and innovation.

Initial design and provision of the food growing area will be by the enabling developer but on completion of the development control of the area will pass to the Plantation management company.

Access, services (water) and shared facilities (e.g. tool shed) will need to have a maintenance plan.

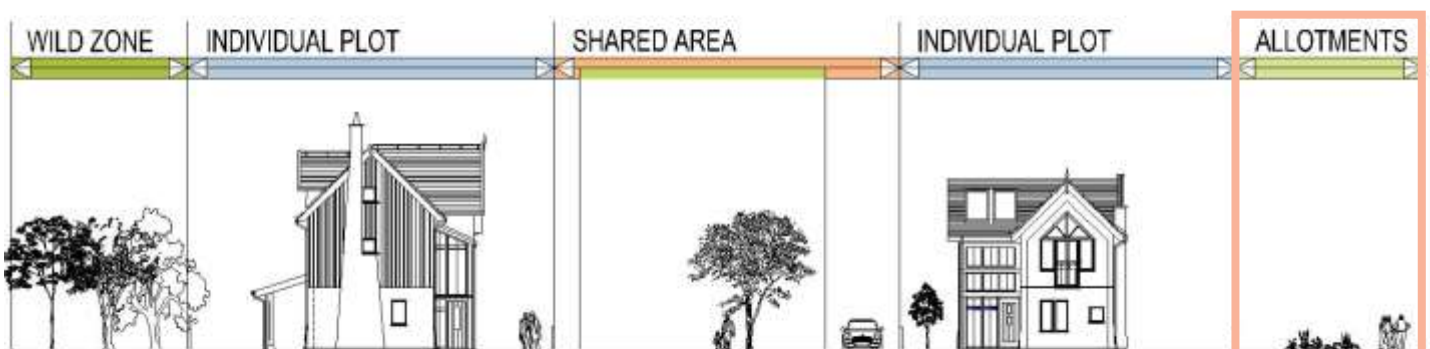
Native species to support bat flight paths will need to be implemented.

Areas for composting and process for removal of waste need to be provided.

Rules on types and sizes of sheds etc. will need to be considered.

Control of weeds and method of site management needs to be set up prior to management company take over.

Existing allotment rule books could be adapted to suit.



## The Wildlife Areas

These will be part of the development that is controlled by the enabling developer and then given over to the Plantation management company on completion of the development.

Any introduction of non-natural elements should be as unobtrusive as possible.

Any new pathways or landscape objects must be with natural materials.

Selective thinning out of undesirable species may need to be carried out as advised by ecologists.

New planting of appropriate and indigenous species where necessary.

A programme of care for the Wild Areas needs to be established for the management company and residents.

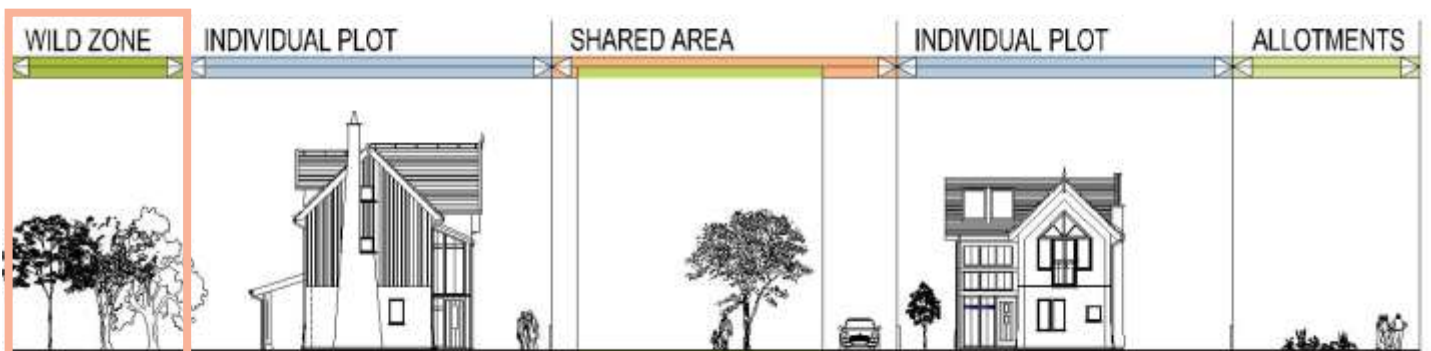
Presumption in favour of dead wood retention.

Existing wildlife care recommendations and rules should be considered.

Natural play area within this space could be considered.



Wild areas soon become established. 10 years ago this was open fields at the Wintles.



## The Wildlife Areas

These will largely be determined by ecological survey and the wish of the Trust to increase these types of area on the site.

