

# MANCHESTER SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE



## Housing with Heritage

Revitalising Thornton Hough



### TEAM MEMBERS:

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## Team

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## Collaborators

Our project partners, P4 Planning (Planning Consultants) and Donald Insall Associates (Heritage Consultants), supported us in structuring the proposal from a planning and conservation perspective. Sophie Stanton from P4 Planning enhanced our understanding of the planning policy and project scope by accompanying us on site visits and client meetings. This helped in grounding the masterplan, treating it as more than a design exercise. Instead we set it within the realistic planning & conservation context.

We worked in collaboration with Amelia Bircham, the heritage consultant from Donald Insall Associates, who contributed to the heritage conservation side of the project. This helped us to position both Thornton Manor and the hough as historical assets which must be protected and supported through a sensitive proposal.

Their collective hope is to shape the proposal through the lens of sensitive planning, heritage protection, and creating a masterplan scheme. This should support the restoration of Thornton Manor, while forming a self-sustaining village for its residents.

# Introduction

## Housing with Heritage

The project focuses on developing a masterplan for a high-quality residential area within the village of Thornton Hough. One of the village's most significant landmarks is Thornton Manor, a historic country estate originally built in the mid-19th century, with the first manor house dating from around 1849–1850. Architecturally, the manor reflects Victorian Gothic Revival and Tudor Revival influences, which contribute strongly to the character of the surrounding village.

In February 2022, Thornton Manor was severely damaged by a fire believed to have been caused by an electrical fault. As a result, one of the key aims of this project, alongside providing new housing within one of the best-preserved model villages in north-west England, is to create a long-term source of income that could contribute towards the restoration and preservation of the historic estate valued at £20M.

## Brief

Masterplan proposal which aims to:

- To propose housing on the existing lots as a long-term source of income that could contribute towards the restoration.
- To preserve and expand green spaces within the site while protecting key views from the manor towards the surrounding landscape.
- To integrate sensitively with the existing village infrastructure and architectural character by drawing inspiration from the local vernacular, and Victorian influences visible throughout Thornton Hough.



# SITE VISIT

Historical Context

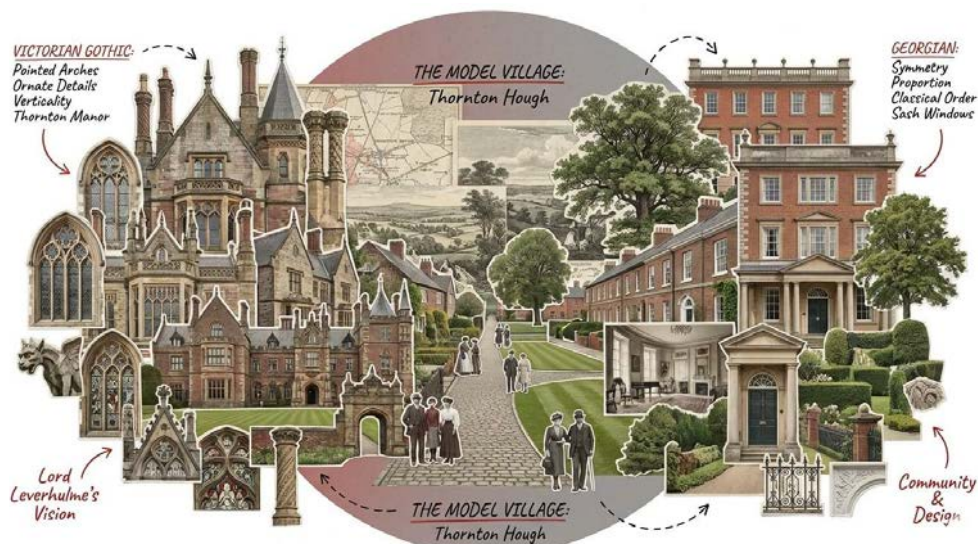
## Thornton Manor

A grade II listed country house, acts as the main heritage asset within the wider village area. It's presence, scale and surrounding landscape gives it the strong spatial and visual authority which acts as an anchor for movement guide, views and housing placement. The intent of the proposal should be to protect the site's heritage, while allowing the introduced housing to support restoration, revenue generation and long-term estate value.

## Thornton Hough

The estate village has strong connection with heritage buildings, rural streets, traditional cottages. It also has prominent connections with surrounding landscape features. It's tectonic character comes from material consistency and a balance between open and closed spaces.

## Collage: The model Village



## Client Requirements

<p>I. Housing Quality</p> 	<p><b>BRIEF</b> High quality housing with varying income groups.</p> <p><b>SPATIAL RESPONSE</b> Inclusive quality mixed throughout the site.</p>
<p>II. Mixed Community</p> 	<p><b>BRIEF</b> Different household types to be accommodated.</p> <p><b>SPATIAL RESPONSE</b> Integrated homes, walkable streets, safe space.</p>
<p>III. Self-sustaining Amenities</p> 	<p><b>BRIEF</b> Period style, daily use amenities.</p> <p><b>SPATIAL RESPONSE</b> Village centres, circular economy functions.</p>



Existing site is a key heritage asset



Their is a stron local street language; existing period style



Landscape is important around the manor



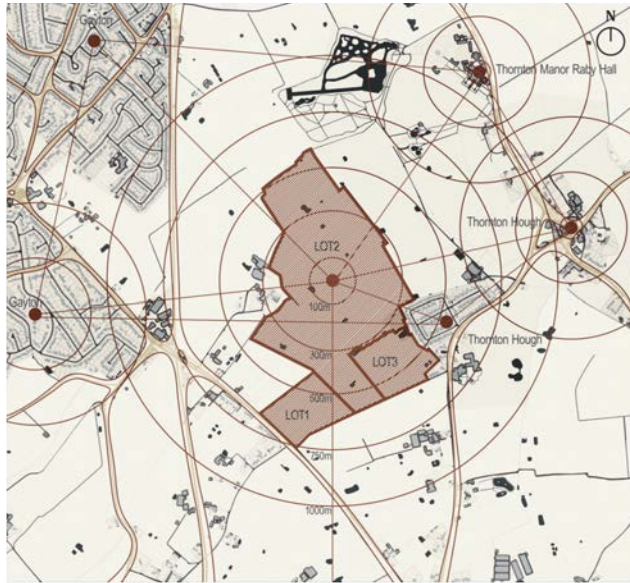
Fragile Heritage conditions; damaged but valuable



The village becomes the funding source for the restoration

# SITE ANALYSIS

Context & Policy



Site context & distance mapping

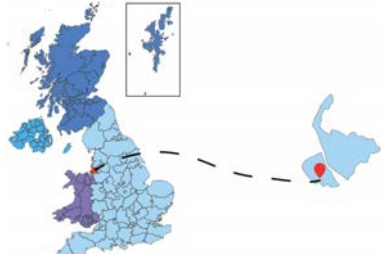
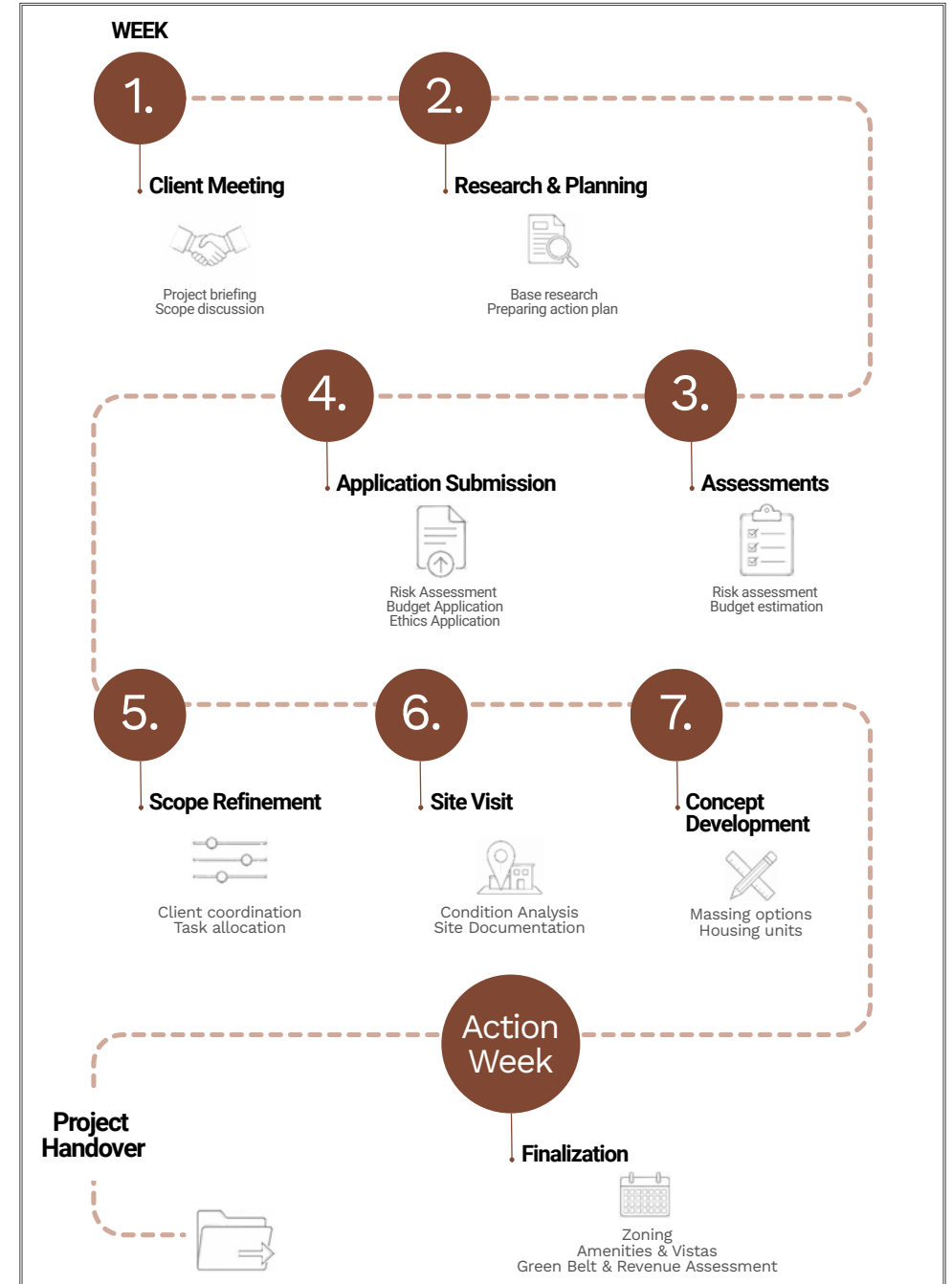
The distance rings from 100m to 1000m illustrate the site's accessibility and proximity to nearby settlements. While closely connected to surrounding villages, the site also remains integrated with the wider countryside.

Characterised by open fields, scattered buildings, and low-density development, the site acts as a transitional zone between settlement edges and the rural landscape.

Overall, the site balances accessibility with landscape openness, creating an important link between surrounding communities and the countryside.

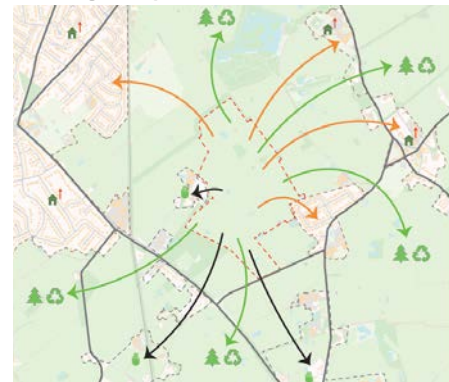
# ACTION PLAN

Project Timeline



Site Location

## Planning Policy



Site's design logic under the Wirral Local Plan

Ecological Network Village Setting Views Rural Character

**Brownfield-first response:** growth redirected towards the existing built-up areas (orange arrows).

**Green Belt Protection:** Maintain green belt boundaries, with justifiable interventions.

**Ecological Enhancement:** Green arrows indicate the strengthening of landscape.

**Public Access:** Black arrows indicate improved access links while protecting the existing site.

## Cultural Analysis

**Heritage-led:** From the medieval church to Victorian and Arts & Crafts buildings, the area reflects centuries of design evolution.

**Landscape:** The estate layout, mature trees, and open green spaces preserve the character of an English manorial landscape.

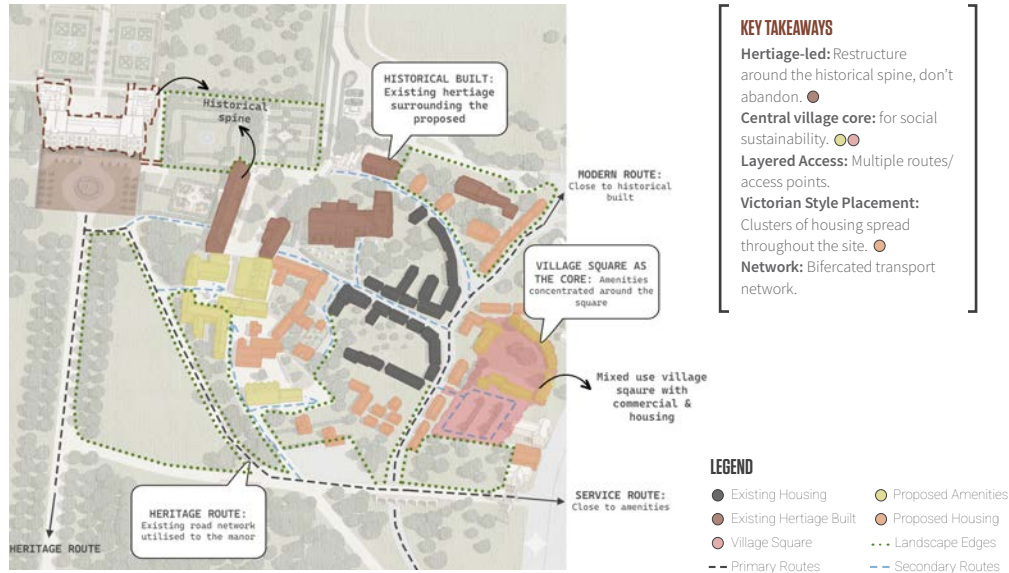
**Community Identity:** A strong sense of belonging and local pride rooted in shared history and ongoing community life.

**Continuity of Use:** Historic buildings continue to serve modern functions, ensuring that heritage remains part of daily life.

# PRECEDENT STUDIES

Analysis & Takeaways

## PRECEDENT STUDY\_1: HATFIELD TOWN (Spatial Arrangement)



## PRECEDENT STUDY\_2: BURTON MANOR (Housing)



**KEY TAKEAWAYS**

**Landscape-Edge Housing:** Housing positioned closer to landscape.

**Heritage through details:** Showcased in facade details.

**Varied layout sizes, consistent quality:** Internal features and layout sizes vary but material palette, architectural details & spatial quality remains consistent.

**LAYOUT:**

**70 m<sup>2</sup>, 4 BEDROOM LAYOUT:** Large family housing with ample living & private spaces.

**90 m<sup>2</sup>, 3 BEDROOM LAYOUT:** Compact efficient planning without compromising the quality.

# DESIGN STRATEGY

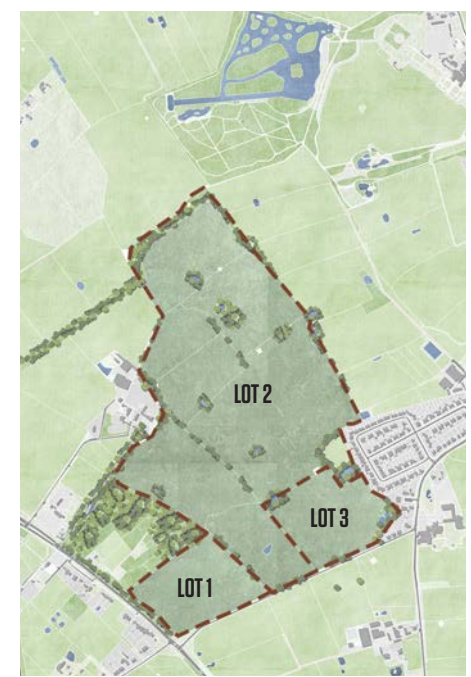
Site demarcation & concept on the basis of research



## STATEMENT OF INTENT: "PLACE" Approach

"Place", a self-driven approach is being opted to transform Thornton Hough into a self-sustaining heritage village. The design strategy opted is - **Period Character, Landscape-Led design, accessible routes, community mix and estate heritage**, structured through this approach the intent is to **conserve the location's heritage assets**, while supporting a sustainable community living and long-term restoration value.

<p><b>P</b> </p> <p><b>Period Character</b></p> <p>Period style/ Victorian estate-village architectural language retained through form and details.</p>	<p><b>L</b> </p> <p><b>Landscape-Led</b></p> <p>Incorporating green spaces, utilizing existing water bodies and open land as the social infrastructure.</p>	<p><b>A</b> </p> <p><b>Accessible Routes</b></p> <p>Street network to be walkable, pedestrian friendly, &amp; multiple access routes, similar to precedent studies.</p>
<p><b>C</b> </p> <p><b>Community Mix</b></p> <p>High-quality housing with shared amenities in support, varying on the basis of affordability.</p>	<p><b>E</b> </p> <p><b>Estate Heritage</b></p> <p>Placing Thornton Manor as the visual, physical and cultural anchor for the new proposal.</p>	



Existing site plan with lots demarcated



Existing site built layed out for spatial understanding

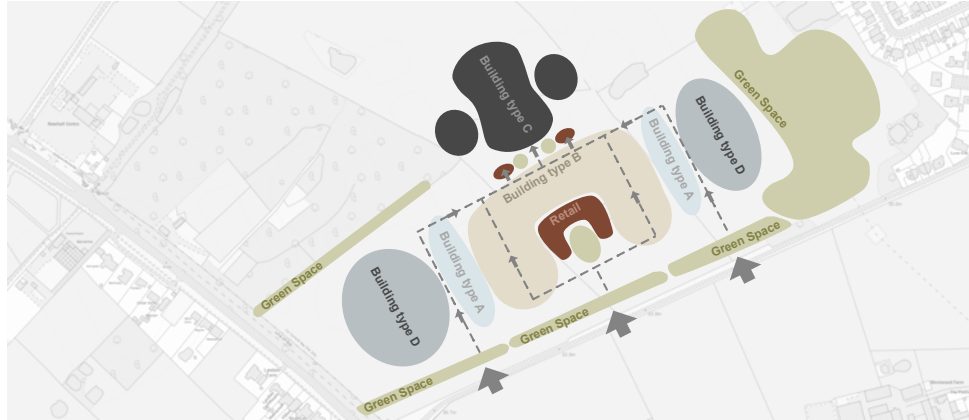


Spatial arrangements explored through model-making

# PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT

Spatial Arrangement

## Stage\_1: Mixed housing, centred amenities, & green spaces as buffers



Intent: A mixed residential community centred around social interaction and accessibility, with small scale amenities at a walkable distances across the site. Existing & proposed landscape edges act as buffer between the site and the surrounding areas, while providing a connect with nature. Proposed housing is organised gradually according to size and affordability, creating a subtle transition between different residential types, this also avoids complete segregation, ensuring that residents of different housing categories remain connected within the wider community rather than isolated from one another.

## Stage\_2: Development on the basis of density + access strategy

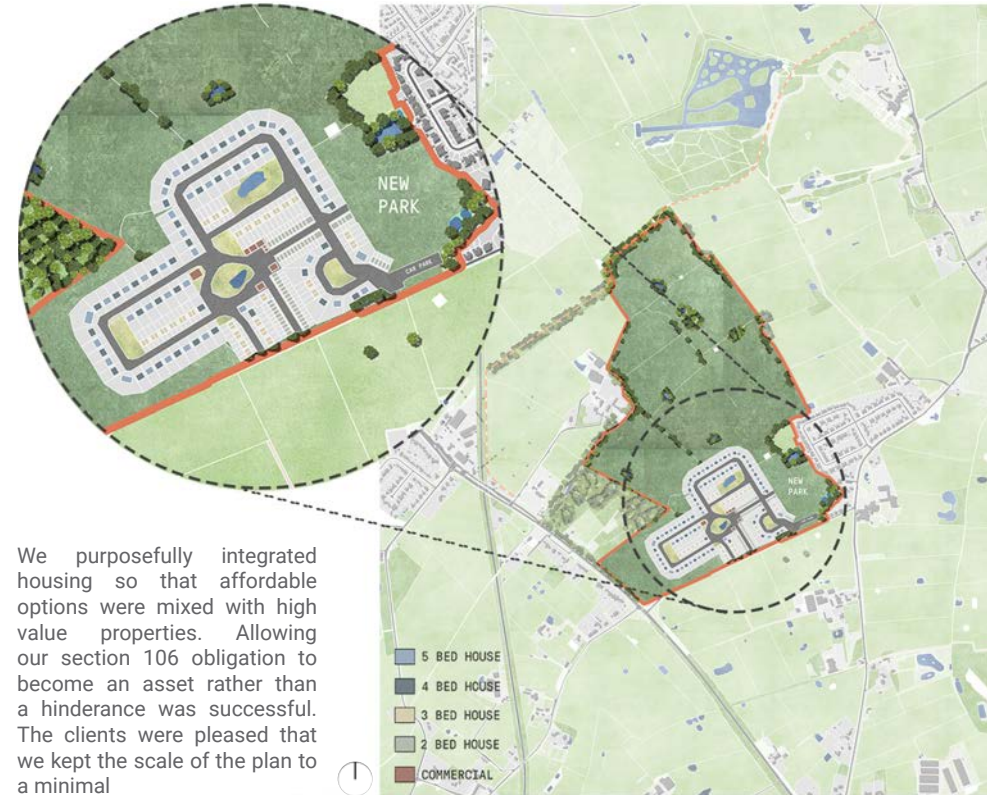


Initially proposed masterplan is developed further by gradually increasing the density of housing, with denser formation towards the center and more spread out at the edges. Three access points provided for site movement, with smaller amenities spread for easier access. A large park is introduced along the pylon corridor, acting as a landscape buffer, also turning the site constraint into a recreational space.

- Building Type C (4bed house, high income)
- Building Type D (3bed house, high income)
- Retail
- Existing Built
- Building Type A (3bed house, affordable)
- Building type B (2bed house, affordable)
- Green Spaces

# FINAL MASTERPLAN PROPOSAL

Proposed massing & views



We purposefully integrated housing so that affordable options were mixed with high value properties. Allowing our section 106 obligation to become an asset rather than a hindrance was successful. The clients were pleased that we kept the scale of the plan to a minimal

The final proposal prioritises a heritage-led, landscape oriented, mixed housing scheme. The proposal also contributes to the site's landscape by planting new trees and supporting biodiversity net gain, along with these existing flood drains and existing electrical cables are avoided through conscious layouting. We aimed to integrate the existing landscape into the masterplan.



View from public footpath undisturbed due to protective tree line



View from manor wood public footpath undisturbed due to tree line

Note: All drawings are indicative and not to scale; they intent to demonstrate the spatial arrangement only.

# PROPOSED HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

Detailed Housing Planning

## Building Type C (4 Bed House, High Income)

### KEY FEATURES:

- Bedroom:** 4 (all en-suites)
- Bathrooms:** 4
- Parking:** Double garage + 2 bays
- Floors:** 2 storeys
- Material Palette:** Natural Slate (Roof), Red/Brown Brick (Walls)

### Facade Details:

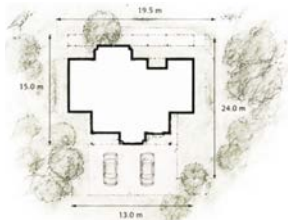
- Stone dressings, timber sash windows
- Symmetrical 5-bay frontage
- Central entrance with stone surrounding
- Stone string course and window surrounds

### Details:



Floor Area Schedule	
Ground Floor:	142m <sup>2</sup>
First Floor:	128m <sup>2</sup>
<b>TOTAL GIA:</b>	<b>270m<sup>2</sup> / 2,906 ft<sup>2</sup></b>

### Building Footprint:



Footprint Area: 195 m<sup>2</sup>

### Ground Floor Plan



G.I.A: 142 m<sup>2</sup>

### First Floor Plan



G.I.A: 128 m<sup>2</sup>

### Design Drivers:

#### Heritage-led design:

Architectural language similar to Thornton Manor and surrounding estate buildings.

#### Minimal detailing, high quality:

High-quality homes proposed to generate the necessary funds for restoration, in line with Green Belt policy.

#### Landscape integration:

Native landscaping proposed on the plots, to preserve the rural character and views across the estate, along with Co<sub>2</sub> reduction.

#### Sustainable:

High performance fabric, air source heat pumps and discreet PV panels to reduce operational cost & energy.

### Material Palette:

- Wall**  
Red/Brown Brick
- Facade**  
Stone Dressings
- Door**  
Timber
- Roof**  
Natural Slate
- Window**  
Timber Sash Windows

# HOUSING PROPOSAL

On the basis of typologies

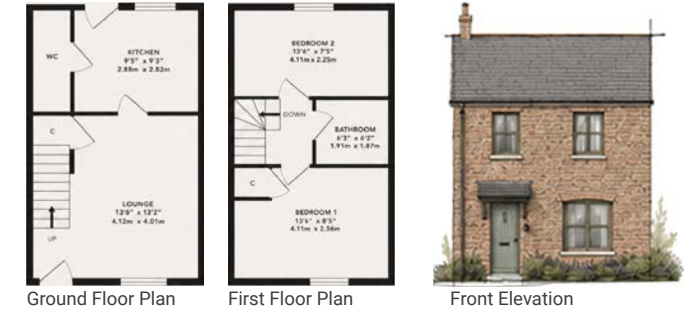


### Key Features:

- Bedroom:** 2
- Bathrooms:** Family bathroom with modern fittings
- Storage:** Practical storage
- Open plan kitchen/living**

FLOOR AREA: 54.8 m<sup>2</sup> / 589 ft<sup>2</sup> approx.

### Building Type B (2Bed House, Affordable)

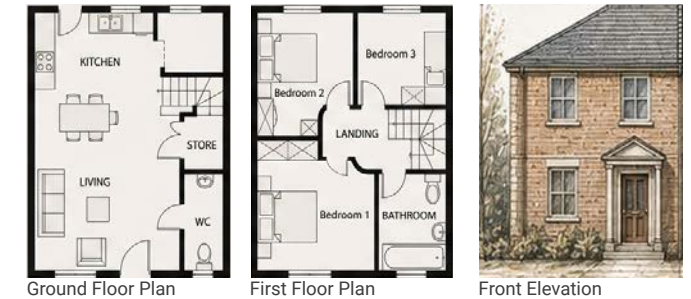


### Key Features:

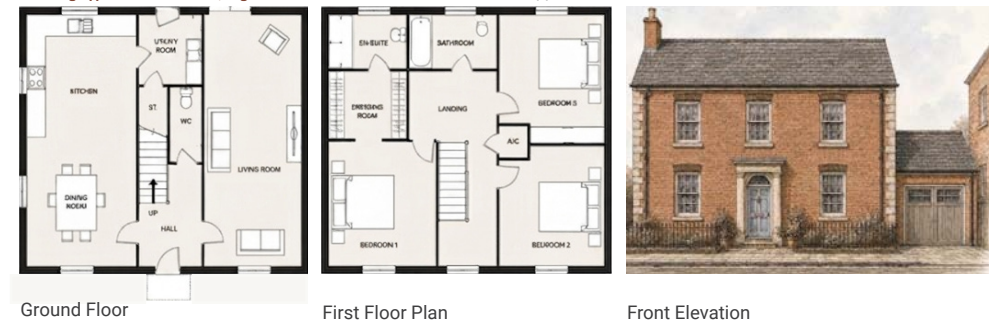
- Bedroom:** 3
- Bathrooms:** Family bathroom with modern fittings
- Storage:** Practical storage
- Open plan kitchen/living**

FLOOR AREA: 116 m<sup>2</sup> / 1249 ft<sup>2</sup> approx.

### Building Type B (3Bed House, Affordable)



### Building Type D (3Bed House, High income) TOTAL GIA: 126 m<sup>2</sup> / 1356 ft<sup>2</sup> approx.



Note: All drawings are indicative and not to scale; they intent to demonstrate the spatial arrangement only.

# REVENUE ASSESSMENT

On the basis of the proposed scheme

53 x 2-bed, 56 x 3-bed, 40 x 4-bed, 40 x 5-bed, 9 village shops, 20% Section 106, new park

Housing type	Your likely new-build sell price	Current Thornton Hough resale equivalent	Positioning
2-bed	£260k-£300k (£285k)	£220k-£320k	Slight premium
3-bed	£375k-£450k (£425k)	£450k-£600k	Competitive
4-bed	£550k-£700k (£650k)	£600k-£800k	In line
5-bed	£800k-£950k (£900k)	£750k-£1M+	Premium
Village shops	£350k-£600k	Depends on rental yield	Realistic

Cost category	Estimated cost
House construction	£45M
Retail/shop construction	£2M
Roads & infrastructure	£6M
Drainage/utilities	£3M
Section 106 + affordable housing impact	£5M
Professional fees	£4M
Finance costs	£5M
Marketing & sales	£1.5M
Contingency	£2.5M
Total cost	£74M

This scheme would provide an estimate of £25M profit at the current market rates. In the scheme we only allowed for £2.5M contingency however if we assume a 10% contingency at £7.2 then profit is still £20.1M



Type	Approx build cost each	Profit per unit	Units	Gross Development Value	Total profit
2-bed	£160k	£45k	53	£14.6M	£2.4M
3-bed	£210k	£90k	56	£22.4M	£5.0M
4-bed	£300k	£210k	40	£24M	£8.4M
5-bed	£380k	£210k	40	£34M	£8.4M
Shops		£90k	9	£4.1M	£0.8M
Total			198	£99M	£25M



# VISTA & LANDSCAPE STRATEGY

Subtitle

## Landscape Strategy

The proposed landscape scheme helps embedding green infrastructure throughout the masterplan. Large parks, open spaces & water bodies are distributed between the housing clusters, the village core, and along the pedestrian routes. This creates a green infrastructure which supports recreational activities, sustainability, drainage, and visual relief throughout the village.

### Intent:

**Built mass segregation** - Helps in breaking the continuity of the housing arrangements.

**Landscape network** - Green spaces are connected through pedestrian walkways and landscape corridors.

**Pylon buffer park** - Large park is proposed along the pylon corridor to create a visual and physical barrier between the pylon corridor and the houses, this helps in turning the site constraint into a usable safe open space.

**Sustainable village** - Central green and small green spaces scattered across the site give residents shared open spaces, solidifying the social and environmental sustainability of the site.



## Reflection

This live project provided a valuable opportunity to collaborate with students from different architectural backgrounds, encouraging the exchange of ideas, skills, and approaches throughout the design process. Working within a multidisciplinary team strengthened the final proposal and highlighted the importance of communication and collaboration in achieving a coherent design outcome.

A key aspect of the project was the close collaboration with the clients and collaborators at Thornton Manor, Philip Cowan and Dianne Paula Simpson. Through site visits, discussions, and access to existing drawings and proposals, we gained a deeper understanding of the site conditions, client expectations, and long-term vision for the estate.

The project also strengthened our understanding of contextual and heritage-led design. Also, how modern architecture can support the preservation and long-term sustainability of heritage settings while still meeting present-day needs.

Finally, both this project and the wider MSA Live programme provided valuable experience of working on a real live project with real clients, constraints, and responsibilities. Unlike a purely academic exercise, the project required us to respond to genuine expectations and practical limitations throughout the design process. Overall, the experience strengthened my understanding of collaborative working, heritage-led development, and community-focused design, while improving my confidence in approaching real-world architectural challenges.

## ABOUT

Each year the MSA LIVE programme unites Masters Architecture year 1, Masters of Architecture & Adaptive Resuse students, BA foundation and year 1 and Masters Landscape Architecture 1 in mixed-year teams to undertake live projects with external partners to create social impact.

## LIVE PROJECTS

All MSA LIVE projects are live. A live project is where an educational organisation and an external partner develop a brief, timescale, and outcome for their mutual benefit.

## SOCIAL IMPACT

All MSA LIVE projects are for community benefit or have social impact. Social impact is the effect an organization's actions have on the well-being of a community. Our agendas are set by our external collaborators.

## EXTERNAL PARTNERS

MSA LIVE projects work with many organisations: charities, community groups, social enterprises, community interest companies, researchers, practitioners and educators.

## STUDENT-LED

Our MSA students take the lead in the project conception, brief development, delivery and co-ordination of a small project. The projects are celebrated in presentations at the end of the academic year.

## KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

Working in teams within and across year groups and courses; MSA students participate in peer to peer learning. In addition, collaborators, participants and students engage in the transfer of tangible and intellectual property, expertise, learning and skills.

## LARGE SCALE

This year approximately 400 students from 5 cohorts in MSA have worked on 34 projects with partners.

## QUESTIONS

For questions about MSA LIVE please contact the MSA LIVE team, Emily & Julie:

**[e.crompton@mmu.ac.uk](mailto:e.crompton@mmu.ac.uk)** and  
**[j.fitzpatrick@mmu.ac.uk](mailto:j.fitzpatrick@mmu.ac.uk)**

## BLOG

**[live.msa.ac.uk/2026](http://live.msa.ac.uk/2026)**

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