

# **PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT**

at

**LAND AT FERRAND LANE, GOMERSAL**

# **IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

prepared by

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## **PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT AT FERRAND LANE, GOMERSAL**

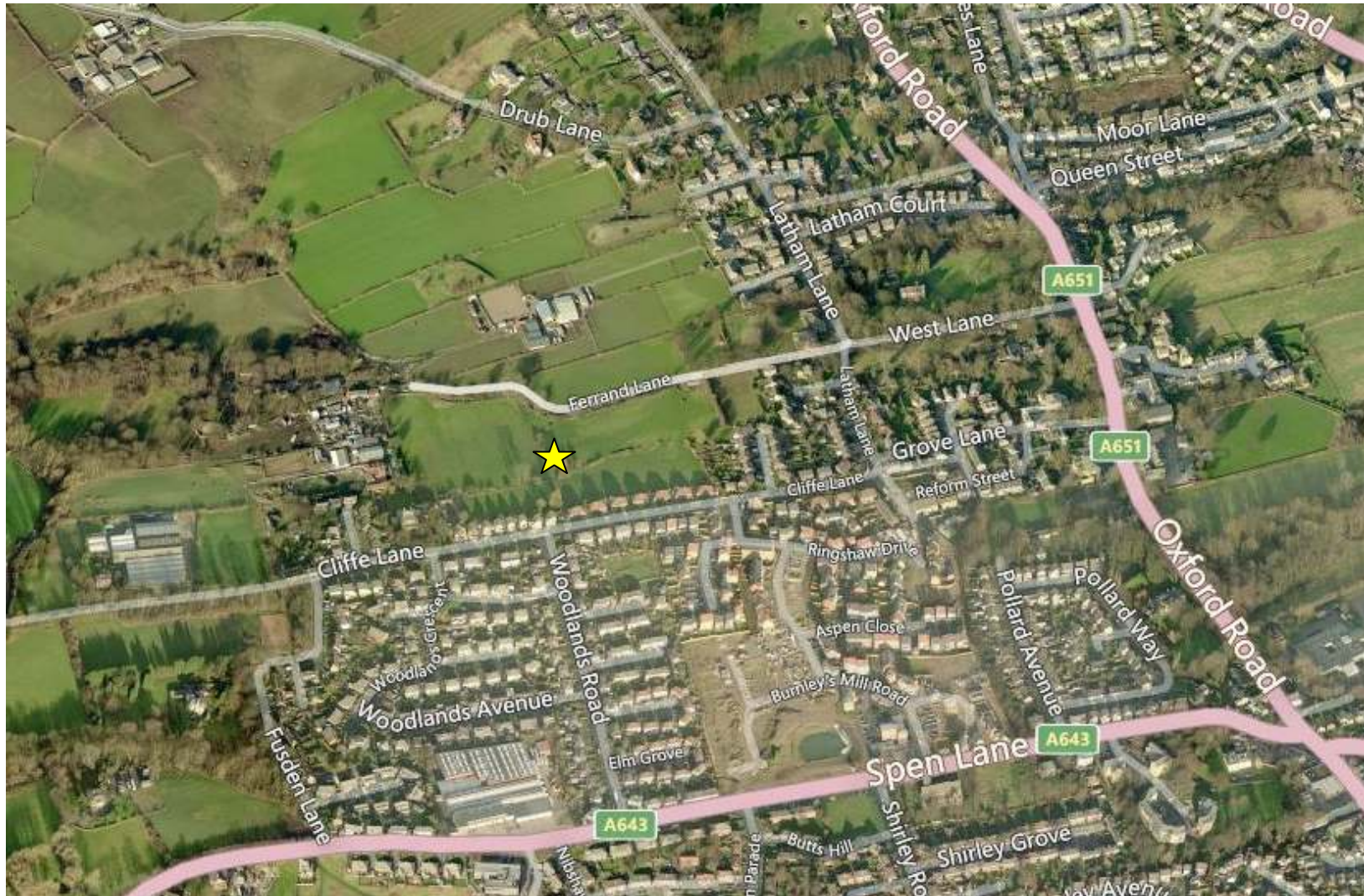
### **IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

#### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This Impact Assessment has been prepared in support of a representation made to Kirklees District Council to approve in principle the allocation in the Local Plan of land on Ferrand Lane, Gomersal, for future residential development. It is made in view of the fact that the central part of the settlement of Gomersal is designated as a conservation area, and that Historic England has required an impact assessment on the conservation area to be made before it can give its response. This must necessarily include the impact on any Listed buildings in the area.
- 1.2 This Assessment relates only to building conservation matters and does not cover other land allocations and policies.

#### **2.0 LOCATION AND BRIEF DESCRIPTION**

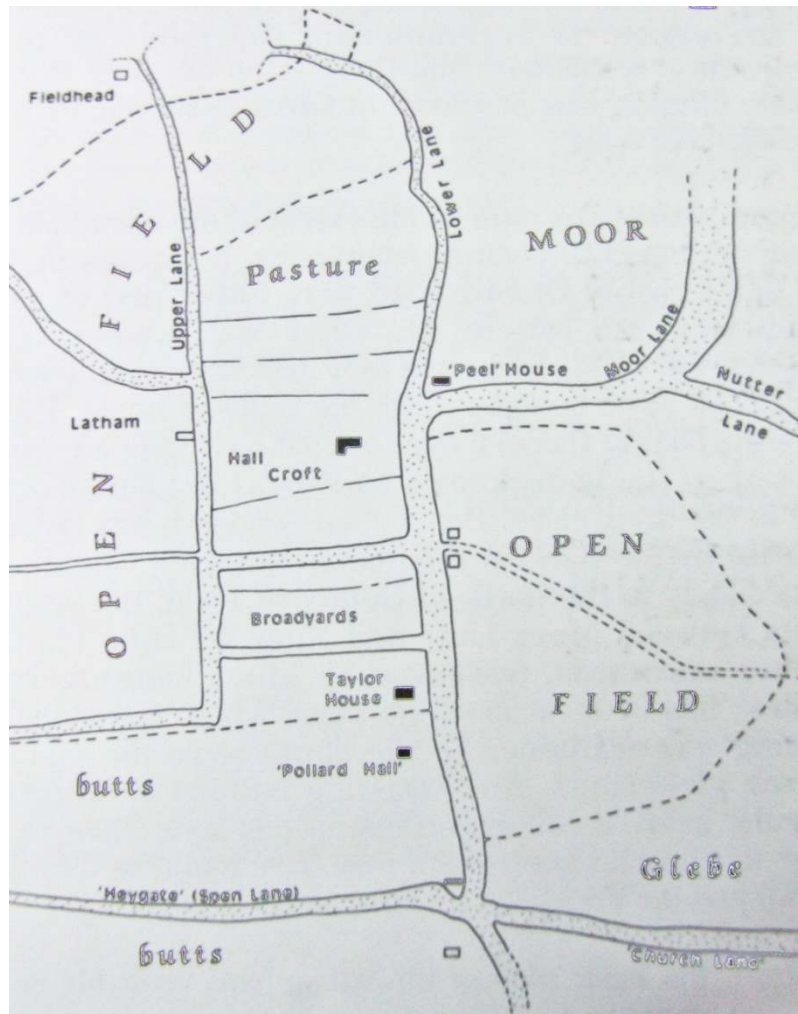
- 2.1 Gomersal is an historic settlement in the eastern foothills of the Pennines, located centrally between the cities of Leeds, Bradford, Wakefield and Huddersfield. It is essentially a linear settlement along a north-south ridge, following an historic route (- now the A651 Oxford Road -) connecting Bradford (to the north) and Dewsbury and Huddersfield (to the south), at a point where the route diverged and was intersected by other cross-country roads.
- 2.2 The settlement is roughly 2.5 km in length extending from the modern M62 motorway (at the north end) to the outskirts of Heckmondwicke (at the south end). In the centre of the settlement the A651 is crossed by the east-west A643 road (- Spen Lane-) from Birstall to Cleckheaton (see **Fig 1**). The character of the settlement is primarily residential, with much modern housing development on the west side, centred around Spen Lane.
- 2.3 Much of Oxford Road to the north of Spen Lane retains its historic character and has been designated as a conservation area, including short branches off to the east and longer branches to the west, especially along West Lane (see **Fig 1**): the latter leads to the Grade II Listed Methodist church of 1827-8 which terminates the conservation area: thereafter it becomes a small lane (Ferrand Lane) descending between fields to the Throstle's Nest farmstead. The proposed development site is on the south side of Ferrand Lane, on existing fields falling distinctly to the west and northwest.



Aerial view of north part of Gomersal, proposed development site starred yellow. **Fig 1**

### 3.0 HISTORY

- 3.1 In the absence of a conservation area character appraisal it is necessary to carry out a rough assessment of the area, including its historic origins, in order to identify any characteristics which might be affected by the proposed development. The history is described in detail in *'Gomersal - a Window on the Past'* by Gillian Cookson 1992.
- 3.2 There is known to have been a settlement here in pre-Conquest times, and Anglo-Saxon relics in the Norman church of St Peter at Birstall nearby would seem to bear this out. In common with much of the area in the eastern foothills of the Pennines the local industry was agricultural, particularly sheep rearing, supplemented by domestic textile production in the winter months: domestic cloth production was well established here by the 17th century, sold through the Leeds and Halifax markets. Coal mining and iron ore extraction had also been established by the 14th century.



Suggested layout of mediaeval village (Cookson) showing major houses **Fig 2**

- 3.3 Gomersal in particular benefitted from the growing and profitable textile industry and the yeoman houses and farmsteads scattered along the ridge were joined by larger houses of considerable wealth and status, indicating the Gomersal was already an attractive and prestigious place to live. Some of these still survive within the conservation area eg Peel House and Pollard Hall, both from the 17th century or earlier (see **Fig 2**). There was however no central focus to the settlement, the manor house and church being located further east for ease of access to the wider area.
- 3.4 The status and influence of the settlement was such that in 1775 a Cloth Hall was built in Gomersall to try to break the monopoly of the Leeds White Cloth Hall, although its success was short-lived. It later became a woollen mill (see **Fig 3**).
- 3.5 Mechanisation was introduced at the end of the 18th century to deal with the preparation and finishing processes in factories, but powered weaving was not available until well into the 19th century, and Gomersal is recorded as still having 130 hand-loom weavers in 1840. The area was prominent in the Luddite uprising of 1812 when many rioters were injured or killed and the leaders were executed in York.
- 3.6 The 18th century Red House Museum on Oxford Road (formerly the residence of the prominent Taylor family, see **Fig 2**) is noted as featuring in Charlotte Bronte's novel '*Shirley*', which drew material from the Luddite riots.
- 3.7 In 1826 the turnpike road from Bradford was completed, rising southwards up the east flank of the ridge to the ridge summit at 'Gomersal Hill Top' where it was crossed by Spen Lane. The ridge summit was otherwise marked by Upper Lane (now Latham Lane) - see **Figs 1 and 2**.
- 3.8 The earliest detailed map of the area (- the Ordnance Survey map of 1854, see **Fig 3** -) shows the northern part of Gomersal relevant to this assessment. Evidence of the cottage woollen and weaving industry is evident in the tenter frames in the surrounding fields: at the same time it is evident that the area was undergoing much more radical industrialisation, with large woollen mills, coal pits, stone quarries, brick works and rope works taking over the fields, with their associated catchment ponds and reservoirs.
- 3.9 The map shows buildings (- mostly houses -) scattered rather randomly along the north-south highway, with smaller houses on the east side and larger detached houses in substantial grounds on the west side: they may have housed the mill owners or other industrialists. Farrend Lane already exists, serving Throstle's Nest farm, with open fields either side. By this time the non-conformist churches had taken root in the village, taking advantage of the lack of a Protestant church in the vicinity, with a Wesleyan (now Methodist) chapel built at the end of West Lane and a Congregational (now United Reformed) chapel on Oxford Road, both built in the 1820's. A fine Public Institute of classical design was built on Oxford Road in 1860.



Ordnance Survey Map 1854 **Fig 3**

- 3.10 The Ordnance Survey map of 1894 (see **Fig 4**) shows relatively little change. The previous industrial activities appear to have diminished, with fewer coal pits, quarries and brick fields etc. Gomersal was unable to keep pace with the industrialisation of the area due to its elevated position, the mills etc tending to migrate to the valley bottoms where there was a better supply of water: the village therefore avoided the damaging new developments found in many other east Pennine villages.
- 3.11 The last major development to affect the village was the construction of the LNWR Heaton Lodge and Wortley failway line from Leeds to Heckmondwyke, built at around the turn of the 19th century: however, its impact was limited as the line was tunnelled under Gomersal from a point north of Ferrand Lane to the north end of the village, emerging next to what is now Queen Street (see **Fig 5**).

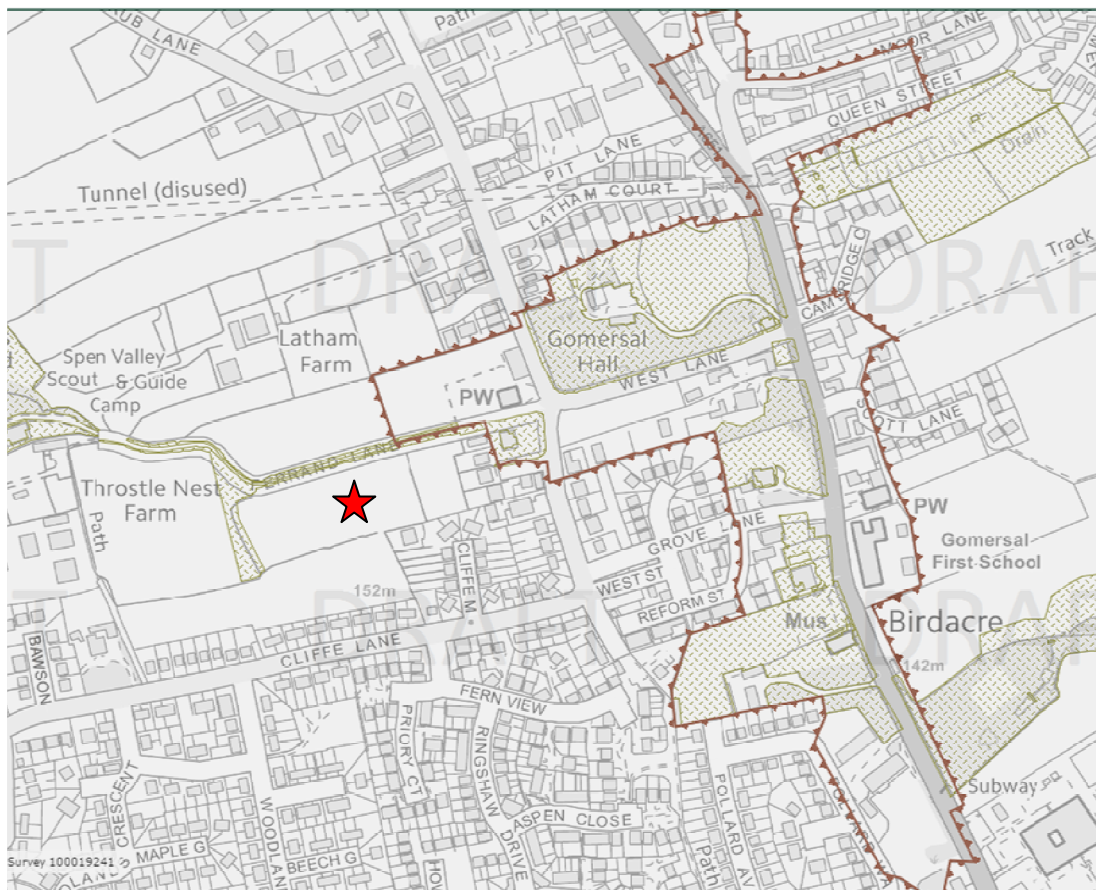


Ordnance Survey Map of 1894 Fig 4



Ordnance Survey Map of 1944 Fig 5

- 3.12 The Ordnance Survey map of 1944 (see **Fig 5**) still shows relatively little change apart from the expansion of the Gomersal Mill on Spen Lane, and the impression is one of a settled residential area liberally interspersed with mature trees. The Methodist chapel had by now (prior to or around 1900) expanded along Ferrand Lane by acquiring an adjoining plot, no doubt intended to serve the Sunday School which had been added at that time.
- 3.13 The 1944 map shows the first mass (pre-War) housing development, consisting of a small cluster at the south end of Latham Lane and on the corner with Cliffe Lane, on summit of the ridge. Following the closure and clearance of the Gomersal Mill this was to be followed by much more mass housing development along and between Spen Lane and Cliffe Lane (see **Fig 1**), along the ridge and down the western slopes.
- 3.14 Gomersall has been designated as a conservation area by Kirklees District Council, and a conservation area character appraisal is awaited.



Plan showing conservation area, proposed development site starred red. **Fig 6**



#### 4.0 THE CHARACTER OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

- 4.1 The following is a description of the conservation area, as seen travelling northwards along Oxford Road from Spen Lane to the bifurcation at the north end of the area.
- 4.2 After the Spen Lane Road junction some of the key characteristics which distinguish the conservation area from the general topography of the wider area are soon apparent: the road is spacious, flanked by mature trees which overhang the road and bounded by well constructed stone walls with shaped copings. To the west are large period houses in spacious grounds screened by vegetation (notable the Grade II\* Pollard Hall), with 'through views' obscured by trees: the adjoining Grade II Red House with its classically designed coach house indicates an affluent and settled residential area. To the east there is a more rural setting, with a wood followed by a field sloping away to the valley below and giving long views of the ridges beyond.
- 4.3 The first nucleus of buildings near the Grove Lane junction includes the classically designed and Grade II Listed public hall to the west and the Grade II Congregational Chapel to the east, giving a strong sense of community and quality. Otherwise the large secluded houses which continue on the west side, within high enclosing walls bounded by trees, are now joined on the east side by more modest terraced and workers' houses, several occupied by shops or businesses, in a more tight knit suburban form (see **Figs 7 and 8**).
- 4.4 At this point Oxford Road starts a distinct descent to the north, and its strategic location traversing the east flank of the ridge is apparent: to the east the land slopes away with more long views between buildings to the valley bottom and the hillsides beyond, and the larger houses appear to have been located to take advantage of these easterly views. By contrast, Grove Lane rises steeply to the west and quickly reverts to being an access road to the Post-War housing estates on the ridge top and beyond.
- 4.5 Beyond West Lane (- which is described later in 4.6 -) Oxford Road passes a final large house on the west side (- Gomersal house, which is invisible from all sides due to its high boundary wall and tree screen -) followed by new housing developments. The street pattern becomes more fragmented near the 'Shoulder of Mutton' public house where Knowles Lane continues the historic road line and the later turnpike road veers off to the west. The Grade II\* Listed Peel House on Knowles Lane forms a visual 'stop' to the conservation area (see **Fig 10**) and provides a final reminder of the age and status of the settlement, and before that both Queen Street and Moor Lane turn down steeply to the east and contain a handful of original terraced or semi-detached houses representative of the Victorian middle classes (see **Fig 9**).
- 4.7 Along this length of Oxford Road there is little evidence of industry or sources of employment, but the agricultural origins of the settlement are still discernible in the older surviving farmhouse such as the Grade II Listed Sigston Hall.



View south along Oxford Road near Grove Lane **Fig 7**



View south along Oxford Road near West Lane **Fig 8**



View down Moor Lane **Fig 9**



View north up Knowles Lane, to Peel House **Fig 10**



View westwards up West Lane **Fig 11**



Congregational chapel from Latham Lane **Fig 12**  
(entrance to Ferrand Lane between chapel and Victorian villa beyond)

- 4.8 The only real departure from this north-south linear conservation area is a branch running off westwards up West Lane (see **Fig 11**). The initial character is that of an unspoilt narrow country lane, bounded on the north side by the high boundary walls and trees of Gomersal Hall and on the south (after some currently derelict buildings) by a hedge bounding a paddock, suggesting a transition into open countryside. This impression is however short-lived on reaching Latham Lane, which serves modern housing to both north and south, and the main purpose of the deviation is to include the attractive and Grade II Listed Methodist Chapel and its Sunday School located on the summit of the ridge (see **Fig 12**).
- 4.9 Beyond the Latham Lane road junction Ferrand Lane continues the line of West Lane, starting as a wide unadopted and unmade road introduced by a large Victorian villa on the south corner, bounded by mature trees, followed by modern houses and fields (see **Fig 13**). On the north side is the Methodist chapel churchyard, bounded by mature trees, and a further area also bounded by trees, possibly intended to serve the Sunday School but now of no obvious purpose.
- 4.10 At this point the conservation area stops and the character of the area changes dramatically. Having crossed the ridge Ferrand Lane narrows and descends steeply between fields and wide views now open up to the north and west. To the south side of the lane the steeply sloping fields descending from the modern housing on the skyline are the location of the proposed housing development (see **Fig 14**).
- 4.11 The main characteristics of the conservation area can therefore be summarised as follows:
- A spacious and unspoilt road (Oxford Road) curving gently and descending south to north through the entire length of the conservation area along the eastern flank of the ridge, with a prime aspect to the east over a rural setting and limited uphill views to the west stopped by mature trees or modern housing.
  - Road and property curtilages bounded by attractive stone walls and - west of Oxford Road - bounded and sometimes extensively filled by mature trees.
  - A surviving and attractive section of unspoilt country lane (West Lane).
  - A large number of Listed detached houses of high quality on the west side of Oxford Road, in spacious and secluded grounds, indicating the appeal and success of this area historically through early industry and later as a residential area.
  - The historical association with Charlotte Bronte (Red House).
  - Some surviving historic farmhouses and agricultural buildings indicating the origins of the settlement.
  - Some modest workers' houses and later middle class houses making up the social and economic mix and providing evidence of social change.
  - A high proportion of good quality public buildings, both civic and religious, many of which are Listed, indicating a strong sense of community.
  - Predominant value provided by individual buildings rather than by spatial qualities.



View westwards from Ferrand Lane **Fig 13**



View from Ferrand Lane across proposed development site **Fig 14**



View south-eastwards from Drub Lane, Ferrand Lane in centre **Fig 15**

## 5.0 THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 5.1 The location of the proposed development site on Ferrand Lane is shown on **Fig 1** and **Fig 6**. An indicative layout has been produced to support the representation to allow housing allocation and this is attached below as **Fig 16**.
- 5.2 **Fig 16** shows the site being accessed via a new junction off Cliffe Lane, which is well outside the conservation area and whose frontages have already been developed as modern housing. Because of the large size of the site provision is made for an emergency 'escape' access to Ferrand Lane but otherwise the new houses would have their rear gardens backing onto Ferrand Lane, with no vehicular connections, allowing the lane hedges to be preserved. Ferrand Lane would remain unadopted.

## 6.0 IMPACT ON THE CONSERVATION AREA

- 6.1 The purpose of the above analysis has been to identify the essential characteristics of the conservation area, and its setting, in order to be able to assess whether the proposed development could cause direct or indirect harm to it.
- 6.2 The analysis shows that the conservation area derives much of its character from its historic buildings, rather than from its spatial qualities or its relationship with the wider landscape. It is therefore somewhat enclosed and inward-looking, and its qualities tend to be appreciated at close quarters and do not involve a wider context.
- 6.3 Any views out of the conservation area are almost exclusively to the east, down the valley slope, giving the conservation area an easterly aspect. Whilst they are incidental they do help to confirm the rural setting and origins of the settlement, and add to the character of the area. In contrast, the proposed development site lies on the opposite side of the ridge, facing west, with no visual connection with the bulk of the conservation area and separated from it by existing modern housing. At ground level the profile of the ridge results in a far greater division between the two areas than is apparent in the aerial and plan views (**Fig 1** and **Fig 6**), and the development site can be largely regarded as being visually unrelated and irrelevant.
- 6.4 The only area in which the development site and the conservation area come close enough to have any possible relationship is at the west end of West Lane and the start of Ferrand Lane, around the Methodist chapel (see **Fig 6**). On the south side of Ferrand Lane the conservation area boundary takes in the corner Victorian villa but not the houses beyond, which therefore prevent the two areas from meeting. The new development would therefore have no visual impact along this boundary.

- 6.5 On the north side of Ferrand Lane the conservation area boundary extends a short distance down the centre of the lane, and at this point the new development to the south would be opposite the extension to the chapel site to the north made around 1900 (see 3.12 above). The function of this part of the chapel site is unclear - it may have been intended to serve as a recreation area for the Sunday School but there is no evidence. It does not seem to have been used as an amenity area for the chapel and the graveyard to the east was always more than capable of providing enough space for burials.
- 6.6 This area of the chapel site was presumably included in the conservation area in order to take in the full curtilage of the chapel and its stone boundary wall and trees (see **Fig 13**), which is logical. Apart from the fact that it falls to the west, whereas the chapel is on land still falling to the east, the chapel is orientated firmly to the east, turning its back to the churchyard and with no suggestion that views to the west were of value.
- 6.7 The chapel itself is far enough away from the proposed development site that - bearing also in mind its orientation - its setting would not be materially affected. Whilst nearer, its graveyard would also not be significantly affected.
- 6.8 The impact on long distance views of the conservation area has been considered but these are limited to views from Drub Lane to the north east (see **Fig 15**). However, the chapel is screened by trees and the new housing would sit below a skyline already lined with modern housing, with no detriment to the chapel or conservation area.
- 6.9 The conservation area includes no more of Ferrand Lane than is necessary to protect the chapel site, and the proposed development site does not include any remains of historic industry or activity (other than agricultural) which add intelligibility and value to the area.

## **7.0 CONCLUSION**

The proposed development site is physically and visually remote from the majority of the conservation area, particularly due to the presence of the intervening ridge and modern housing, and even where the two areas come into close proximity the impact will be negligible. The conclusion of this analysis is therefore that development of the proposed site for housing will have no detrimental impact on the conservation area, or on any of the Listed buildings within the area.



Proposed housing site -indicative layout Fig 16