

1. General Comments

The proposal demonstrates strong alignment with the One Horton Heath masterplan and the emerging Parkside character area, particularly in its response to Foxwood Road as a primary structuring element and its integration with adjoining parcels. The scheme successfully reinforces the intended hierarchy of movement and built form, contributing to the legibility of the wider development and supporting the transition between the Local Centre, The Folds, and surrounding green infrastructure.

The overall layout is coherent and legible, with a clear street hierarchy that supports ease of navigation. Foxwood Road is appropriately treated as a prominent urban street with continuous frontage, while secondary and tertiary streets provide a more domestic scale. The use of nodal spaces, key corners, and changes in enclosure assists wayfinding and contributes positively to placemaking.

Opportunity for Improvement

1. The Homestall Gateway

- For those approaching the Green Spine from the south, the gateway is framed by development of domestic scale that integrates closely with the adjoining landscape. Building heights and massing appear carefully moderated to avoid visual dominance, creating a softer, landscape-led arrival condition appropriate to its relationship with open space and green corridors.
- However, while the reduced scale is contextually sensitive, there is a risk that the gateway could read as understated in townscape terms. Introducing a slightly stronger built form at the immediate point of entry—such as a more clearly articulated corner building or a modest height accent—could reinforce legibility and ensure the gateway is perceived as a meaningful threshold rather than simply another landscaped edge.

The scheme performs well in terms of connectivity, with a permeable network of pedestrian and cycle routes linking to the wider masterplan, Local Centre, and green corridors. The downgrading of Fir Tree Lane to a pedestrian/cycle priority route is a particularly positive urban design move, reinforcing sustainable travel and creating a softer landscape-led edge.

Opportunity for improvement

1. Coordination of Proposals: Internal Distributor Road and Hard Landscape Works along Foxwood Road

- It would be helpful to understand how the hard landscape proposals along Foxwood Road coordinate and align with the Internal Distributor Road proposals to provide a more attractive route and reduce conflicts between users.

- When well designed, shared-use spaces can help reduce vehicle speeds, improve perceptions of road safety, and enhance accessibility. Careful consideration should therefore be given to how this approach is applied and in which locations it is most appropriate.
- Pedestrian priority (and cycle priority on shared-use paths) at junctions should be clearly established through raised tables and set-back give-way lines.
- Would it be possible to overlay both proposals to ensure they work well together, that neither renders the other unviable, and that all opportunities to improve the overall design are being taken into consideration?

2. Density, Built Form and Heights

The distribution of density broadly aligns with the Design Code, with increased massing along Foxwood Road and closer to the Local Centre. This supports an urban character where appropriate while allowing a softer grain adjacent to sensitive edges.

The mix of apartments and houses is generally well handled, though care should be taken to ensure apartment buildings are clearly distinguished as positive landmarks through their siting and relationship to public space, rather than appearing as isolated objects within the layout.

The built form across the parcel currently lacks vertical diversity, with the majority of development limited to two storeys, aside from the apartment buildings and the house type used along Foxwood frontage. Greater variation in building heights should be introduced to enhance visual interest, support a more legible urban hierarchy, and contribute to a richer and more dynamic streetscape.

Opportunity for improvement

1. The use of a three-storey house type would be encouraged to introduce greater variation in building heights in particular along the Spine, as a primary structuring street within the area, and to help create a more varied and visually engaging townscape.

2. Soften the Transition Between 4-Storey Apartments and 2-Storey front gable dwellings (The Homestal - Green Spine West Street Scene and The Homestal - West Elevation)

- The street scene shows a 4-storey apartment block placed beside a series of 2-storey front-gable dwellings. Although there is plenty of space between the block of flats and the surrounding housing, the transition in height can appear abrupt. To achieve a more coherent and visually comfortable streetscape, a softer transition between these height changes should be considered. Potential design approaches include:
 - Introducing 2–3 storey intermediary buildings or stepped massing to gradually bridge the height difference.
 - Using roof forms, balconies, or setback upper floors on the taller building to reduce the visual impact of the height change.

3. Street Scenes

The proposed street elevations present a coherent and generally well-composed urban frontage. The continuous building line and relatively strong enclosure create legible and attractive street scenes that reinforce the hierarchy of routes and support an urban character.

The elevations read clearly as part of a planned neighbourhood rather than a series of individual plots, which is positive in urban design terms.

The elevational rhythm is well handled, with regular vertical articulation through changes in plot width, roof form, and façade detailing. This avoids excessive repetition while maintaining overall cohesion along longer frontages.

4. Materials Palette and Consistency

The proposed materials palette—centred on a mix of brick tones (including lighter and warmer hues) with weatherboarding and limited accent materials—is appropriate to the semi-urban Parkside context and broadly aligns with the Design Code aspirations.

The use of brick as the dominant material gives the street scenes a sense of permanence and robustness, while the introduction of weatherboarding provides visual relief and references the greener edge conditions.

That said, the success of the scheme will depend heavily on:

- Consistent detailing of mortar colour, window reveals, and sill treatments.
- Ensuring weatherboarding is used selectively and meaningfully, rather than as a superficial overlay.

5. Character Areas

5.1 Green Spine

The Green Spine forms the primary structuring element of the scheme and plays a critical role in movement, landscape identity, and placemaking. Its strong landscape-led character, defined by formal tree avenues, feature planting, and a clear north–south alignment, is a positive aspect and provides legibility across the development. The integration of walking and cycling routes within a generous green corridor supports sustainable movement and reinforces the Green Spine as a key public space.

In townscape terms, the relationship between built form and landscape is generally successful; however, careful consideration should be given to maintaining a consistent sense of enclosure along its length. Variations in building height and typology, including the introduction of taller apartment blocks in places, risk creating abrupt transitions if not carefully mediated. The use of intermediary building forms, stepped massing, or consistent building lines could help reinforce continuity and spatial coherence.

5.2 Green Fringes

The Green Fringes character area provides an effective transition between the built development and the surrounding green infrastructure. The landscape-led approach, with native-inspired planting and softened edges, is appropriate and helps embed the development within its wider context. The relatively informal character supports biodiversity and creates a gentle interface with adjacent open spaces.

However, care should be taken to ensure that the built form addressing these edges maintains sufficient presence and surveillance, avoiding overly weak frontages. Clear definition of public and private realms will be important to prevent these areas from feeling residual or ambiguous in use.

5.3 Quobleigh Villas

Quobleigh Villas successfully responds to its countryside-edge context through a lower-density, landscape-driven approach. The integration of meadows, native tree planting, and SuDS features is a strong aspect of this character area and helps soften the transition to Quobleigh Woods.

From an urban design perspective, it will be important to ensure that streets and spaces retain a clear structure and legibility, so that the emphasis on landscape does not undermine wayfinding or spatial coherence. Buildings should continue to positively frame streets and open spaces, with consistent building lines and active frontages where possible.

5.4 Greenway

The Greenway is a key movement corridor and one of the most important public-facing spaces within the scheme. Its landscape-led character, combined with its role as a primary east–west pedestrian and cycle route, is well conceived. The mix of 2–4 storey development overlooking the route helps provide enclosure, activity, and natural surveillance.

To strengthen its role, particular attention should be given to consistent frontage treatment, corner articulation at junctions, and the design of shared-use surfaces. Material changes, tree placement, and built form markers should clearly reinforce its function as a strategic route rather than a secondary street.

5.5 Foxwood Road

Foxwood Road benefits from a strong woodland and damp meadow character that reflects its proximity to existing landscape features. The intention to blur the boundary between woodland and development is positive and contributes to a softer, more natural edge.

That said, this landscape emphasis should be balanced with sufficient built form definition with greater height. Development fronting Foxwood Road should maintain a clear urban edge, with well-defined entrances and consistent building lines, to ensure the route reads as a coherent street rather than a landscape buffer alone.

Furthermore, the success of the Foxwood Road frontage relies heavily on the use of three-storey, front-gable house type to secure greater height and reinforce a strong and coherent built edge.

Also, the prevalence of side walls along the primary street weakens the definition of the street corridor, resulting in poor enclosure and a lack of active frontage, contrary to the expectations for a primary movement route.

Opportunity for Improvement

1. Rear garden side walls fronting Foxwood Road should be avoided, as they fail to provide an appropriate level of enclosure for a street of this importance and create a poor pedestrian experience, including unattractive views of rear garden boundaries and domestic paraphernalia.

The layout should be rearranged to prioritise the orientation of principal building elevations toward Foxwood Road, ensuring active frontages, improved enclosure, and a stronger relationship between buildings and the public realm.

5.6 Holme Road

Holme Road establishes a distinct, verdant character that draws on the wooded nature of the site and nearby green corridors. The use of multi-stem and specimen trees, combined with varied but consistent housing typologies, creates a pleasant and leafy residential street.

Urban design quality here will depend on maintaining rhythm and continuity in frontage treatment, parking integration, and boundary design.

6. Other topics

6.1 The design approach along the parking courts will be particularly important in minimising conflict and ensuring legibility, through careful consideration of surface treatments, level changes, and detailing. The use of materials that are clearly distinct from the carriageway would help to lift the quality of these spaces.

6.2 In respect of the proposed boundary treatments—namely the half-height brick walls and composite fencing across a significant portion of the scheme—I defer to the Landscape Officer for detailed comment. However, there are some concerns regarding their appropriateness within publicly facing locations.

Overall, the proposal represents a well-considered and policy-compliant urban design response that integrates effectively with the One Horton Heath masterplan.

The elevational treatment and materials strategy a strong and credible urban design response. At the detailed design stage, care should be taken to ensure that the high quality of the proposed housing, together with the distinctive public realm, is maintained and not diluted through the delivery process.