

Stage 3 Matters Statement for Stevenage Borough Council Local Plan Examination

Matter 16 – Housing Site Allocations: HO3 North Stevenage

Statement of behalf of Miller Homes and Bellway Homes

Stevenage Local Plan Examination

Stage 3 Matters and Questions

Matter 16 – Housing Site Allocations

1. *Are the proposed housing site allocations appropriate and justified in the light of potential constraints, infrastructure requirements and adverse impacts?*

- 1.1 The housing site allocations included within the Plan have been identified in order to meet the objectively assessed need for housing identified by SBC. This is in line with Paragraph 14 of the Framework, which sets out that local planning authorities should meet Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, or specific policies in the Framework indicate development should be restricted, for example if land is designated as a Green Belt.
- 1.2 In assessing how the OAN will be met through the Plan period, the Council has undertaken a 'brownfield first' approach with a specific focus upon urban regeneration. The spatial strategy then identifies a major greenfield site to the west of Stevenage (Allocation HO2), which has previously been removed from the Green Belt. However, as both the administrative boundary and Green Belt are drawn very tightly around the urban area, the Council has also had to examine additional options to accommodate growth, through development in the Green Belt. The Council is intending to meet the OAN in full through the release of two Green Belt sites, North Stevenage (Allocation HO3) and South East Stevenage (Allocation HO4).
- 1.3 The Council has been fully aware from an early stage in the plan making process that a decision had to be made as to whether to release Green Belt land in order to meet the identified OAN. The Revised Housing Targets Consultation Paper, which was issued for consultation in June 2015, carried out a comprehensive assessment to determine whether it was appropriate to release land within the Green Belt for housing development. This consultation set out two clear choices:
- Maintaining the current Green Belt boundary on the understanding that this will not provide enough homes to meet future needs within the Borough; or
 - Meeting identified housing needs within the Borough on the understanding this will require the release of some land from the Green Belt.
- 1.4 In deciding whether to release land from the Green Belt, the Council has carried out an extensive analysis of the Green Belt around Stevenage. This has included an initial survey of land against Green Belt purposes, followed by an exercise of site assessment and capacity

testing. This was then supported by a Technical Paper assessing whether exceptional circumstances prevailed to justify releasing Green Belt land within Stevenage. This body of work has justified the release of two Green Belt sites, including HO3 (North Stevenage), without damaging the overall purposes of the Green Belt.

- 1.5 More specifically, in relation to Site HO3 (North Stevenage), the Council's Green Belt Review concludes that the *"...parcel's south facing topography means there is relatively limited connection with the open countryside to the north. Mature planting along Stevenage's boundary makes the visual containment stronger."* A further assessment of site HO3 has been undertaken by Bellway and Miller under HO3 Question 4.
- 1.6 The Council has also undertaken their own assessment of the impact on Heritage Assets in relation to allocation HO3, which concludes *"...that development adjacent to the conservation area could go ahead with very minimal impact upon the significance of the heritage assets, and that development up to the hedgerow with the conservation area (parcel B) could be effectively mitigated in the most part. This would enable the objectively assessed housing needs to be met, whilst also ensuring the development is sustainable and seeks to conserve the historic environment"*. A further assessment on Heritage Assets has been undertaken by Bellway and Miller and this is considered further under the HO3 Question 3.
- 1.7 The Council has prepared an Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) to establish what infrastructure requirements will be required to support the provision of the required amount of housing. Whilst the Council is in the process of updating the IDP, the evidence suggests that the local infrastructure network can accommodate the level of planned growth with a series of planned improvements to that network, that are capable of being financed and implemented.
- 1.8 Policy HO3 and the Council's IDP identifies a broad package of infrastructure which we confirm will be provided as part of the sustainable urban extension including encouraging the use sustainable modes of transport, provision of a local centre including a potential site for a new GP surgery, provision of a new Primary School and extensive natural and semi-natural open space as well as a package of off-site contributions towards (*inter alia*) improvements to highway safety and secondary education.
- 1.9 The above should be read alongside the responses made later in this statement with respect to Policy HO3 – North Stevenage Urban Extension questions 1 to 6 and earlier submissions made by Bellway and Miller to Matter 12 (Natural and Historic Environment) and Matter 5 (Green Belt).

2. *Are the assumptions regarding the capacity of the sites justified, what is this based on?*

2.1 The Council's assumption of delivery of 800 units for site HO3 is based on extensive discussions with the Bellway Homes and Miller Homes over a period of years. These discussions have had full regard to environmental considerations, which have been assessed, notably through the preparation of a Landscape Visual Impact Assessment, a Heritage Statement, a Phase 1 Ecology Survey, archaeological trial trenching and a Flood Risk Assessment. In addition, the impact of this allocation on the local infrastructure network has been extensively discussed, including an assessment of the highway capacity of the surrounding road network together with the education requirements that will need to be addressed and the possibility of providing health care facilities on-site. This work will be included within the preparation of a planning application that will be submitted to the Council shortly.

2.2 The above considerations have been facilitated through extensive master planning work carried out by Bellway and Miller. The purpose of this work has been to further assess the site capacity. The masterplan has been developed having regard to the need to deliver a range of housing types, sizes and tenures to ensure a mixed and balanced community is created on the site.

3. *What is the basis for proposing housing on areas of public open space and sites currently in recreational use? What is the situation regarding the adequacy of open space/recreational facilities in the areas concerned? How would the proposed housing sites affect this? Is the approach justified and is it consistent with the NPPF?*

3.1 Development of proposed housing allocated HO3 is not on an area of existing public open space. The allocation of the site would deliver a significant increase in accessible open space. The creation of St Nicholas' Meadows as well as other green corridors and play spaces will deliver 40 hectares of new public open space (over 60% of the proposed allocated site as shown on the Draft Land Use and Access Parameter Plan at **Appendix 2**).

4. *Are the detailed requirements for each of the allocations clear and justified? Have site constraints, development mix and viability considerations been adequately addressed? Are the boundaries and extent of the sites correctly defined?*

4.1 Allocation HO3 is addressed in more detail in subsequent paragraphs and a Site Location Plan as provided as **Appendix 1**; however the detailed requirements for this allocation are considered, on the whole, to be clear. Notwithstanding this, a number of suggested changes to Policy HO3 were made in the Regulation 19 Representations and which are summarised below for ease of reference:

- With regard to part (e), we seek clarification regarding what is meant by 1% of new homes being “*made available*” for self build purposes, and seek confirmation that this percentage is based upon evidence regarding *demand* for self build properties in the area. There is concern that a large urban residential expansion that is within the entire control of two house builders is not particularly suitable for including up to 8 self-build homes. This would mean segregating a small part of the allocation for separate disposal to potentially eight different land purchasers, questioning whether services and other infrastructure would be supplied to this part of the site and discussing whether some of these plots would be for affordable housing if they are to form part of the overall development and planning application.

- Part (f) seeks the provision of at least 30% affordable housing on the site. We formally request that the words “*subject to viability*” are added to this policy to ensure that this element of Policy HO3 is not overly prescriptive to the extent that it could restrict the development coming forward. We also request that the words “*at least*” are removed, in order to be consistent with draft ‘Policy HO7: Affordable Housing Targets’. The evidence base to this Plan does not demonstrate that more than 30% affordable housing can or should be delivered at this site.

- In terms of part (g), Bellway and Miller Homes ask that the requirement to provide for supported or sheltered housing on site is based upon evidence of demand for this tenure in this location.

- Part (h) seeks to incorporate local facilities to serve the local community, including a GP surgery. Whilst we do not object to this, we request that this policy is amended to reflect demand, as follows: “*...potentially including land for a GP surgery, where there is an identified demand*”.

- Part (i) refers to a primary school being provided as part of the scheme. We formally request that this is made more specific to refer to a “*...1-form entry primary school to serve the residents of Stevenage Borough*”;

- It is our view that the archaeological assessment and flood risk assessment required by parts (k) and (l) are not required to be set out within Policy HO3, as these are standard planning application requirements. We therefore request their removal from the policy;

- We consider that further clarification is needed in relation to part (p), and request that it is reworded as follows: “*Existing Public Rights of Way are will be retained and designed into the development, where possible, and diverted where necessary*” to ensure appropriate flexibility; and

- Clarification on part (q) is also required as follows to ensure that heritage assets are given the appropriate level of protection: *“Building styles and layout within the Conservation Area to the east of the site should reflect the key features of the conservation area”*.
- Supporting paragraph 14.52 should be amended to be consistent with paragraph 9.30: *“The provision of new public open space in this area will comprise the open space provision for the North Stevenage development allocation detailed in Policy HO3 could also allow for some offsetting of open space requirements arising from other developments...”*
- The supporting text to Policy HO3 states that an additional access point is likely to be required. This will be required for phases of development beyond 300 dwellings (or equivalent level of traffic-generating uses). On this basis, we request that this paragraph is amended to state that *“an additional access point is likely to be required for phases of development beyond 300 dwellings (or equivalent level of traffic-generating uses)”*.

- 4.2 The site constraints, development mix and viability considerations have been discussed in detail between Bellway Homes and Miller Homes and the Council. This has led to the development of a Masterplan that takes into consideration these issues. There are a number of relevant points that are set out in the following paragraphs.
- 4.3 Firstly, landscape and heritage considerations have been carefully assessed to determine the extent of land that it was considered to be acceptable to remove from the Green Belt for future residential development.
- 4.4 Secondly, discussions have taken place with SBC regarding the preferred density of development across the site, having regard to issues such as topography and landscape impact. These discussions have included the consideration of acceptable building heights across the site. The Council's preferred mix of units for the affordable housing provision has also been included.
- 4.5 Thirdly, Bellway and Miller have been able to provide the Council with additional information on other site constraints that will inform the likely capacity. The main issue has been the likely impact on the site capacity arising from the existing electricity pylons crossing the site.
- 4.6 Through these discussions, the proposed boundary and extent of the allocation HO3 is considered to be correctly defined.

Policy HO3 – North of Stevenage

1. Is the development of this site dependent upon the allocation of adjacent land for housing in North Hertfordshire district?

- 1.1 As shown on the Proposed Masterplan, Site HO3 can be developed independently of the land to the north within NHDC. The allocation does not rely on the NHDC site for access or infrastructure, such as community facilities or drainage. The proposed approach to landscaping and building heights on the northern boundary has also developed as a result of the need to minimise visual impact should the site to the north not come forward. A copy of the draft Illustrative Framework is provided as **Appendix 2**, the draft Land Use and Access Parameter Plan as **Appendix 3**, draft Density Parameter Plan as **Appendix 4** and the draft Green Infrastructure and Drainage Parameter Plan as **Appendix 5**.
- 1.2 Notwithstanding the above, the proposals have been designed to allow for the seamless integration with the site to the north should this come forward. In particular, the non-residential uses are proposed on the northern boundary to allow for the expansion of the primary school and local centre for the NHDC development. This will ensure that further development in this area contributes to further developing a sustainable urban extension through the use of shared facilities and co-location of residential and non-residential uses. In terms of highway access, two points of access are proposed onto North Road allowing for a loop road through the North Stevenage allocation. The loop road will be designed flexibly so it can provide further linkage to the North Hertfordshire allocation and allow for a change in priority of the accesses, such as downgrading the southern access to a public transport only access.
- 1.3 Bellway and Miller are in regular discussion with the developer of the land to the north and will continue to work with them as both proposals develop to ensure the seamless integration of both sites is achieved. A draft concept masterplan for how the sustainable urban extension could work as a cross-boundary expansion is included at **Appendix 6**.

2. Has the impact of the proposal on the character and appearance of the surrounding area been formally considered?

- 2.1 As part of the preparation of the forthcoming planning application a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) has been prepared. A draft version of the LVIA is enclosed as **Appendix 7**. Whilst not yet complete, this work has reached an advanced stage, and gives a full account of the likely impacts of the HO3 and NH8 proposals and their significance.
- 2.2 The LVIA considers and evaluates the predicted impacts of the proposal on the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

- 2.3 Verified Visual Montages (VVM) are in the course of being prepared, using best practice techniques, from a range of locations within the site and the locality and will provide a photographic representation of how the proposals are likely to influence the character and appearance of the site and the surrounding area over time. The completed summer and winter VVM of Viewpoint 3 is enclosed as VVM Figures 1 and 2.
- 2.4 The analytical process followed in the compilation of the LVIA including has informed and influenced the evolution of the design of the proposals and associated mitigation measures of the scheme.
- 2.5 A separate assessment has been carried out to ascertain the impacts of the proposals on the heritage assets within the area surrounding the site and this addressed at Question 3 below.
- 2.6 As part of its evidence base for identifying potential sites within the borough suitable for development including housing allocation HO3, Stevenage Borough Council draws upon the findings of the Stevenage Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study, January 2006.
- 2.7 This study assesses the landscape and visual sensitivity and capacity of the areas around Stevenage currently outside the urban footprint of the town and as part of the process the study area was divided into a number of local landscape areas. The local character areas within the study area assessed as having a moderate and high capacity to absorb development were identified as potential development areas.
- 2.8 The study broadly divides the site into two landscape character areas. The 'North Stevenage Farmlands' character area covers the entire extent of housing allocation H03 and is described as having a moderate sensitivity and moderate capacity for urban extensions. This character area includes the part of the site proposed for built development. The eastern part of the site in which the creation of St Nicholas' Meadows is proposed is predominantly covered by the 'St Nicholas and Rooks Nest Farm Valley' local landscape character area, which is described as having a high sensitivity and low capacity for urban extensions. The local landscape character areas identified by the study covering the site and the surrounding area are shown on Figure 10.4b of the LVIA.
- 2.9 The draft LVIA prepared for the planning application for the proposed site divides the 'North Stevenage Farmlands' local landscape character area into two site specific landscape character areas, namely LLCA1 to the south and LLCA3 to the north. The LVIA considers that LLCA1 has a low-medium sensitivity and that LLCA3 has a medium sensitivity which broadly accords with the findings of the Stevenage study. The LVIA identifies the eastern part of the site where the St. Nicholas Meadows are proposed as the LLCA2 landscape character areas, which is similar in extent to the 'St Nicholas and Rooks Nest Farm Valley' local landscape

character area outlined within the Stevenage study. LLCA2 is considered to have a medium-high sensitivity which is broadly in agreement with the Stevenage study. These landscape character areas are shown on Figure 10.5 of the LVIA.

- 2.10 Overall, the level of adverse impacts resulting from the implementation of the built footprint of proposed development need to be considered in the context of the beneficial impacts that will be delivered in landscape character terms over the majority of the site area once the proposed mitigation measures shown on the Landscape and Ecology Strategy Plan (Figure 10.41 of the LVIA) have become established.

3. *Would the proposal result in harm to heritage assets?*

- 3.1 Part of site allocation H03: North Stevenage is within the St. Nicholas / Rectory Lane Conservation Area. In addition, a number of other heritage assets within the Borough of Stevenage are located within proximity to the proposed allocation. As such, careful consideration has been given to their protection at the same time as bringing forward essential housing as a sustainable urban extension to help meet Stevenage Borough's OANs.

- 3.2 The proposals for North Stevenage are significantly advanced and a planning application is due to be submitted shortly. As part of this preparation, an assessment of the effects and impact on heritage assets in proximity to the site is being undertaken within the Environmental Statement and Heritage Statement.

- 3.3 The Heritage Statement has identified the following heritage assets that have potential to be affected by the development of allocation H03:

- Chesfield Park (a non-designated heritage asset) adjoining the north-east boundary of the site;
- Rooks Nest House (a Grade I listed building) close to the south-east boundary;
- Rooks Nest Farmhouse and outbuilding (two Grade II listed buildings) close to the south-east boundary);
- The Old Bury (a Grade II * listed building) close to the southern corner of the site;
- Church of St. Nicholas (a Grade I listed building) close to the southern corner of the site; and
- The St. Nicholas / Rectory Lane Conservation Area.

- 3.4 It is important to note that it is the listed buildings off Rectory Lane and Weston Road, which constitute the nucleus of the heritage interest in this part of Stevenage. They have relatively intimate and well wooded settings and do not depend for their significance upon their physical presence within a broad sweep of country. Neither, so far as we can tell, were these buildings constructed to command particular views or prospects, in contrast to much 18th century country

house building. Some of these buildings have associative interest arising from EM Forster's residence at Rooks Nest as a child. This interest is cultural and historic, rather than architectural.

- 3.5 The built form is set several hundred metres from the easternmost edge of the HO3 allocation and, once the St. Nicholas Meadows' proposals have reached maturity, will have very limited, or no, inter-visibility with the proposed housing.
- 3.6 The only heritage asset which will experience a direct effect arising from HO3 is the westernmost field parcel of the St. Nicholas/Rectory Lane Conservation Area, as extended less than 10 years ago. It is important to recognise that conservation area designation is not generally considered appropriate for protecting extensive tracts of open land. The 2007 Extension to the Conservation Area was promoted following a review of Stevenage's Conservation Areas in 2005, which recommended extending the boundary to include some of the fields to the west of the buildings off Weston Road. The recommendation was as follows: *"it is recommended that the conservation area boundary should therefore take in the fields towards the lines of pylons using a long established hedge line/ woodland edge as the boundary"* (para.4.31).
- 3.7 It is not surprising that there was some uncertainty about where to draw the western boundary, as not all the land in question has a historic or functional link with Rooks Nest Farm and the line is to a certain extent arbitrary. The line chosen in 2007 did not, for reasons which are not set out, follow "a long established hedge line/ woodland edge", but rather a footpath through the centre of a field which was not farmed as part of Rooks Nest Farm.
- 3.8 Following extensive analysis of landscape and heritage issues, the HO3/NH8 proposals now take the opportunity to focus on the "long established hedgeline" which would bound the easternmost development parcel, to reinforce it and to supplement it with the planning of standard trees and copses to provide a highly attractive landscaped western edge to St. Nicholas' Meadows, alongside the laying out of hay meadows and new footpaths. It is considered that this will, in aggregate, provide a highly attractive setting for the listed buildings to the west, which we understand to have been the original aim of the conservation area extension in 2007. At the same time, this allows for homes for over 200 people to be located on the easternmost parcel of HO3, in circumstances where Stevenage Borough has very limited land for housing at its disposal and needs to optimise the use of all its land resources in order to meet its OAN.

3.9 The planning application will cover a site area of approximately 75 hectares of which almost 46 hectares are within the St Nicholas/Rectory Lane Conservation Area. Less than 6 hectares of the section of the site within the conservation area would be used for roads and buildings. This area is to be removed from the Green Belt and included within the site allocation; the remainder (St. Nicholas' Meadows) would be landscaped to restore the approximate appearance of this area in the late-nineteenth century and would be accessible to the public through the retention of existing rights of way and the creation of a new network of footpaths. Guiding Principles for the Establishment of St Nicholas' Meadows are attached as **Appendix 7**. These principles are based on extensive consideration of the historic context and seek to minimise the impact of the development on heritage assets.

3.10 An Environmental Impact Assessment is being prepared to accompany the forthcoming planning application and the initial conclusions of the assessment are that, on balance, the medium and long term impacts (including the proposed mitigation that is generally an integral part of the proposed development) would be as follows:

- A Minor Adverse Impact upon the significance of Chesfield Park (a non-designated heritage asset);
- A Minor Adverse Impact upon the significance of the St. Nicholas/Rectory Lane Conservation Area; and
- A Minor Adverse Impact upon the significance of Rooks Nest House, Rooks Nest Farmhouse and outbuilding, The Old Bury, and the Church of St. Nicholas (five listed buildings)

3.11 As a result of the above, the Heritage Statement concludes in relation to the NPPF, the following:

"The Minor Adverse Impacts on above-ground heritage assets that have been identified are considered to result in 'less than substantial harm' to the significance of the designated heritage assets (the Conservation Area and the listed buildings). 'Less than substantial harm' can range from very minor (almost negligible) harm to harm that is so great that it would come close to being 'substantial harm' (that is harm that '... seriously affects a key element' of the special interest of a heritage asset - see paragraph 18a-017-20140306 of the Planning Policy Guidance). It is considered that, in relation to the Conservation Area, the level of harm is at approximately the mid-point of the range of 'less than substantial harm'. In relation to the listed buildings, it is considered to be in the lower half of the range."

3.12 The assessment above demonstrates that significant consideration has been given to the potential impact on heritage assets in relation to site allocation HO3.. Whilst harm is identified, it is considered to be less than substantial and therefore Paragraph 134 of the NPPF is engaged.

3.13 The proposals offer significant public benefits which are considered to outweigh the less than substantial harm identified to the conservation area and listed buildings. The public benefits are summarised as follows:

- The proposed development of the site will deliver a comprehensive new sustainable urban extension to Stevenage which is in line with the Council's aspirations and will make a significant contribution towards meeting housing need in the early part of the Plan period;
- The proposals include the delivery of 38 hectares of public open space in the form of St Nicholas' Meadows for the benefit of new and existing residents. The existing public rights of way will be retained and new public routes will be created significantly enhancing access to the retained Green Belt. Furthermore, the proposals for St. Nicholas' Meadows will enhance the conservation area and the setting of the listed buildings, namely Rook's Nest House, Rook's Nest Farmhouse and outbuilding;
- The proposals provide of a range of dwelling types and sizes, including aspirational homes and self-build opportunities, which will meet the needs of different occupiers and will assist in creating a strong and balanced community;
- The eastern parcel will be low density and incorporate the 5% aspirational housing as sought by SBC;
- The proposals include 30% affordable housing that will be provided as a mix of houses and flats across a range of sizes to meet local needs;
- The proposals will provide a range of high quality landscaped spaces across the site which will enhance local habitats and biodiversity;
- The proposals include the provision of a new primary school and local centre with the ability for further expansion should additional development to the north of the site come forward in the future; and
- The proposed development will also generate a range of financial benefits including New Homes Bonus, Council Tax generation and other site specific planning obligations.

3.14 Given the foregoing, it is concluded that whilst the proposals will result in less than substantial harm to the heritage assets, this is outweighed in accordance with the public benefits of the scheme and therefore, in accordance with paragraph 134 of the NPPF, is acceptable.

4. *Do exceptional circumstances exist to justify the removal of the site from the Green Belt?*

4.1 This response should be read in conjunction with Bellway and Miller's response to Stage 2 Matter 5 (Green Belt).

- 4.2 There is a long and complex history associated with the release of Green Belt land within Stevenage. With regard to allocation HO3, the East of England Plan Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) published in 2008 identified that sustainable urban extensions would be required to the north and west of Stevenage. The RSS therefore established the principle of the release of Green Belt land to the north of Stevenage to facilitate housing delivery. The Local Plan is therefore consistent with the previous RSS through releasing HO3 from the Green Belt for residential development.
- 4.3 The Green Belt release of HO3 has also been considered within the wider context of the emerging NHDC Local Plan which seeks to allocate land adjacent to Land North of Stevenage for residential use. This accords with the principles established originally in the RSS and will bring forward an integrated sustainable urban extension to the town. As such, having regard to Paragraph 84 of the Framework, the release of the site would promote sustainable patterns of development.
- 4.4 Notwithstanding this historical context, the Council has carried out a comprehensive analysis of land at north Stevenage, to justify its removal from the Green Belt. The site is identified as site N4 (iii) in the Site Assessment and capacity Testing Review of the Green Belt around Stevenage prepared by SBC. This report notes that:
- “This parcel forms the immediate fringe to North Stevenage and as such contains it, but its south facing topography means that there is relatively limited connection with the open countryside to the north. Mature boundary planting along Stevenage’s boundary makes the visual containment stronger.”*
- 4.4 The Council's Green Belt Review recommends that Parcel N4(iii) be released from the Green Belt given its current containment by strong defensible boundaries and the opportunities to strengthen these through further landscaping. In addition, the Review recognises the contribution the release of Parcel N4(iii) will make to the borough's workforce and the provision of a diverse mix of high quality homes. It is also recognised that any impacts on the setting of Graveley to the north can be mitigated through good masterplanning and that a development could realise the incorporation of significant green infrastructure.
- 4.5 Notwithstanding the assessment undertaken by the Council, an assessment of the site against the five purposes of the Green Belt is set out below:
- *To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas:* The site is considered to make a contribution to checking unrestricted sprawl of large built areas as it does act as a northern edge to the built up boundary.

- *To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another:* The Green Belt around Stevenage forms part of the London Green Belt and contains the regional towns of Stevenage, Letchworth, Hitchin and Welwyn. The proposed revision to the Green Belt for allocation HO3 will not in any way result in coalescence of Stevenage with Letchworth, which is the closest significant urban settlement to the north.
- *To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment:* The designation of the site as Green Belt does make a contribution to safeguarding the countryside from development; however the site is part of a much larger area of countryside and the development relates well to the existing urban edge.
- *To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns:* The site is not located within or in close proximity to a historic town.
- *To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land:* The housing land allocation process has prioritised urban regeneration, in particular the regeneration of the town centre. The release of HO3 will assist that process through bringing in increased spending power to the town from the residents of the new housing. This as an important aspect of the overall objective of promoting the development of Stevenage as a successful and thriving regional town.

4.6 On this basis it has been demonstrated through the Council's Green Belt Review and this Statement that the proposed revisions to the Green Belt boundary will not undermine the purpose and function of the Green Belt around Stevenage.

4.7 Whilst it has been established that the proposed revision to the Green Belt boundary will not undermine the purpose and function of the Green Belt around Stevenage, it is necessary to consider whether the proposed boundaries are suitable. This matter is addressed in Paragraph 85 of the Framework.

4.8 Paragraph 85 sets out the considerations to be taken on board when reviewing Green Belt boundaries including to:

- ensure consistency with the Local Plan strategy for meeting identified requirements for sustainable development; and
- define boundaries clearly, using physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent.

4.9 HO3 will provide for a sustainable urban extension to the town and in this regard will meet sustainable development objectives. The allocation will provide for a local centre, education provision and will include a package of highway measures to encourage strong transport links to the town centre by modes other than private vehicle, notably by bus, cycle and on foot.

Furthermore, existing planting and landscaping along the proposed development boundaries will be retained and strengthened.

- 4.10 Furthermore, Bellway Homes and Miller Homes are proposing that an extensive area of Green Belt adjacent to site allocation HO3 is to be re-defined as public open space, as St. Nicholas' Meadows. The proposals include for the provision of this land as publically accessible open space with a new network of footpaths and biodiverse areas of wildflower meadows, tree and hedge planting. This approach ensures that access to, and the environmental value of the retained area of Green Belt will be significantly enhanced. This is consistent with the Government's White Paper (February 2017) which is proposing to amend national policy to ensure that *"where land is removed from the Green Belt, local policies should require the impact to be offset by compensatory improvements to the environmental quality or accessibility of remaining Green Belt land"*. The Local Plan allocation is also entirely consistent with this objective.
- 4.11 The release of the site will therefore promote sustainable patterns of development, as required by paragraph 84 of the Framework. The site will deliver substantial benefits as summarised below:

Social Benefits

- Significant contribution to the supply of housing required to meet present and future needs, in conjunction with the other major urban extensions identified for Stevenage;
- Proposed range of housing types will complement the existing housing provision in Stevenage, and help to create a strong, vibrant and diverse community;
- Provision of a range of dwelling types and sizes, including aspirational homes and self-build opportunities, will meet the needs of different occupiers and will assist in creating a strong and balanced community;
- Provision of 30% of the housing to be built as affordable housing;
- Provision of public routes, footways and open space within the development proposals to aid social interaction;
- Creation of a large public open space representing over 60% of the site area, to the benefit of the new and existing local community which will encourage healthy lifestyles through the provision of attractive and accessible open space;
- Creation of a new local centre comprising flexible floorspace for retail, business and community uses which will provide key local services accessible to the new community to support health, social and cultural well-being. These facilities will be capable of meeting

the community's needs without the immediate or unavoidable need to rely on private motor vehicles;

Economic Benefits

- Construction of the development will support 188 jobs directly on site as well as indirect support to 258 additional jobs in the supply chain. It is anticipated that a proportion of these new jobs will be taken up by local workers;
- Development of the site would provide support for local building trades, with some of the works being carried out by local trades persons and materials being stocked locally wherever possible. The construction phases would create increased footfall to local shops and services from those employed providing further short term economic benefits to the community;
- Residents of the scheme would generate approximately £15 million per year additional leisure and retail expenditure within the District;

Environmental Benefits

- Beneficial impacts through the retention of existing tree and hedge planting and the introduction of significant new planting;
- Provision of 40ha of new public open space which will contribute to restoring the historic landscape;
- Soft landscaping areas will be introduced which will deliver ecological and environmental benefits to the site and surrounding area through net gains in biodiversity at the site;
- New dwellings will be designed to minimise waste, be adaptable to climate change and reduce carbon emissions;
- Accessibility of the site, and proposed footway connections assist in the move towards a low carbon future, reducing the need for access to everyday services by private cars; and
- Provision of new and enhanced pedestrian and cycle ways will improve access to sustainable modes of transport.

4.12 The Council has determined through the plan preparation process and Sustainability Appraisal that exceptional circumstances exist to release site HO3 from the Green Belt. Bellway and Miller Homes have carried out considerable site analysis that supports the Council's conclusion that exceptional circumstances exist to justify the release of this site from the Green Belt. Whilst the site is identified as having a limited contribution towards Green Belt purposes, any harm to

these purposes is outweighed by the significant benefits generated by the provision of substantial new housing to meet the identified housing need, including the provision of substantial affordable housing. In addition, the development will actually provide for increased access to the Green Belt through the provision of new publically accessible open space.

5. *Would the increase in houses in this area generate the need for a new secondary school?*

5.1 The development of this site does not on its own generate a need for a new secondary school. HCC and the Council's IDP do, however, identify a need to expand existing schools as well as provision of a new secondary school as a result of Local Plan growth; however the County has not yet identified an appropriate site.

5.2 Appropriate financial contributions will be made towards the development of a new school site or extension to an existing school in order to address the impact of the development on secondary school provision. Bellway and Miller are working with HCC and SBC to ensure this can be addressed at the planning application stage.

5.3 The HCC document 'Meeting the demand for school places 2016/17 (Secondary)' shows that there is currently a surplus of 13.5% of places against demand and in the next academic year (2017/18) there will be a 12.4% surplus. The early delivery of this site can therefore utilise existing surplus capacity within existing schools along with appropriate financial contributions towards the extension or provision of a new secondary school.

6. *Would it give rise to any highway safety issues or traffic congestion that could not be mitigated?*

6.1 Pre-application discussions with both Hertfordshire County Council and Highways England (as local and strategic highway authorities respectively) regarding highway and transport matters associated with development at North Stevenage have been undertaken.

6.2 With regard to the local highway network, it has been established with HCC that it is appropriate to provide highway access to the development site from North Road. It is proposed to provide two new traffic signal controlled junctions on North Road to provide highway access to the development site.

6.3 The road traffic accident record for the local highway network has been obtained from HCC for the period 1 June 2011 to 31 May 2016 (the most recent dataset available at the time of writing). The road traffic accident record is summarised below:

Summary of Road Traffic Accidents, June 2011 – May 2016

Location	No. of Accidents Recorded		
	Fatal	Serious	Slight
Hitchin Road between A1(M) Junction 8 and Coreys Mill Lane	0	0	6
Hitchin Road / Coreys Mill Lane Junction	0	0	7
Coreys Mill Lane between Hitchin Road and North Road	0	1	1
North Road / Coreys Mill Lane Junction	0	0	1
North Road in vicinity of Granby Road Junction	0	1	5
North Road Junction with Graveley Road	0	4	23

- 6.4 The accident data outlined above indicates that there have been few accidents on North Road. The development of the North Stevenage site will not have a significant impact on North Road from a road safety perspective. It is apparent that a number of accidents have occurred at the North Road / Graveley Road junction and this junction will be improved as part of the North Stevenage development.
- 6.5 Some minor highway improvement measures, such as the North Road/ Graveley Road junction improvement referred to above, may be required either from a road safety or highway capacity purpose. Such measures will be identified and agreed with the HCC as part of the Transport Assessment process.
- 6.6 A new off road shared footway / cycleway is proposed along North Road between the site and the existing Stevenage cycleway system at Coreys Mill Lane. This link is deliverable within highway boundary, and will include a new Toucan crossing just north of Chancellors Road. The proposed link in the context of the existing cycleway system is shown at **Appendix 9**.
- 6.7 The new North Road cycle link will effectively extend the Stevenage cycleway network to the site. This will significantly enhance the pedestrian and cycle accessibility of the site with the rest of Stevenage, including the main employment areas, town centre and railway station, all of which are within a reasonable cycling distance of the site. This enhanced cycle accessibility will reduce the need for travel by private car for residents of the development, therefore mitigating its potential vehicular traffic impacts on the local and strategic highway network. The new cycle facility will also improve non-car accessibility for existing residential areas east of North Road with the town centre and the Lister Hospital, by providing the Toucan crossing on North Road.
- 6.8 With regard to the strategic road network, Highways England has confirmed that it will improve the A1(M) between junctions 6 and 8 to a smart motorway. These works will include the

improvement of junctions 7 and 8 to accommodate local plan generated traffic. The A1 improvements will be complete by 2020.

- 6.9 In summary, the North Stevenage site will provide highway improvement measures which will mitigate its impact on the local highway network. Highways England will implement improvements to the A1(M) which will provide capacity to accommodate traffic associated with the North Stevenage site. Therefore, the North Stevenage development site will not give rise to any highway safety issues or traffic congestion that cannot be mitigated.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Site Location Plan

Appendix 2: Illustrative Framework (DRAFT)

Appendix 3: Parameter Plan: Land Use and Access (DRAFT)

Appendix 4: Parameter Plan: Densities (DRAFT)

Appendix 5: Parameter Plan: Green Infrastructure and Drainage Plan (DRAFT)

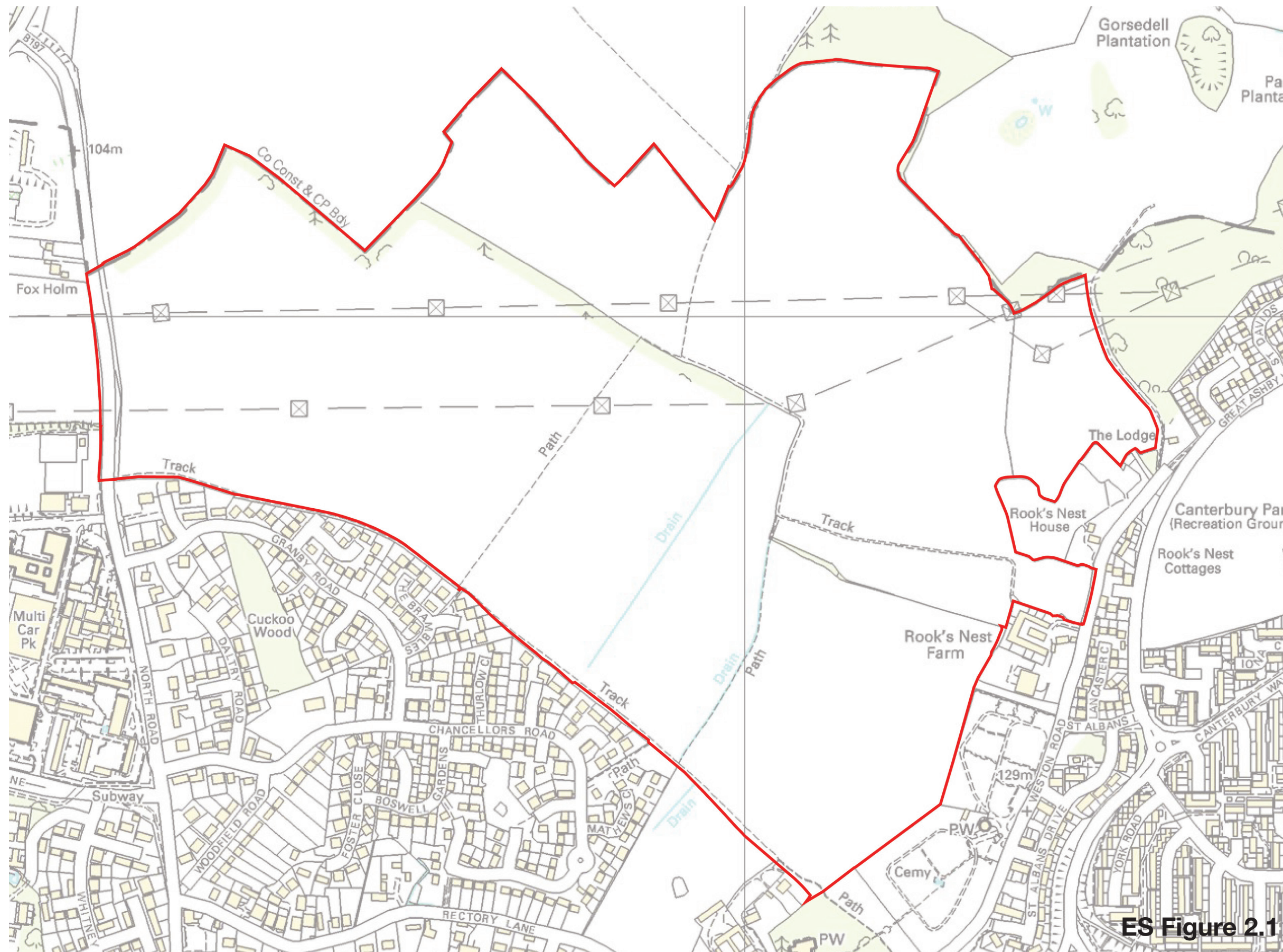
Appendix 6: Design and Access Statement (DRAFT) Extract – North Herts Draft Allocation

Appendix 7: Landscape Visual Impact Assessment (DRAFT)

Appendix 8: Guiding Principles for Establishment of St. Nicholas' Meadows

Appendix 9: Existing Cycle Network and Proposed Cycle Link

Appendix 1: Site Location Plan



Site boundary

ES Figure 2.1

Land north of Stevenage

on behalf of Bellway Homes and Miller Homes

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scale	1:5000 at A3	checked by	AR
		job no.	OXUD320426
		date	16 Nov 2016



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Appendix 2: Illustrative Framework (DRAFT)



- Site boundary
- - - North Hertfordshire boundary
- North Hertfordshire proposed allocation
- Public open space
- St. Nicholas' Meadows
- Proposed development blocks
- Proposed shared space/footpath
- Proposed carriageway
- Proposed high-density residential development
- Proposed medium-density residential development
- Proposed low-density residential development
- Proposed independent living
- Proposed primary school
- Proposed local centre
- MUGA/Equipped play area
- Existing public right of way
- Proposed footpath
- Proposed pedestrian route
- ➔ Proposed pedestrian site access
- ➔ Proposed vehicular site access
- Existing vegetation (hedgerows/trees)
- Proposed vegetation (copse/hedgerow)
- Proposed trees
- Attenuation features
- Existing 400kV Pylons
- Existing 132kV Pylons

ES Figure 3.8

Land north of Stevenage

on behalf of Bellway Homes and Miller Homes

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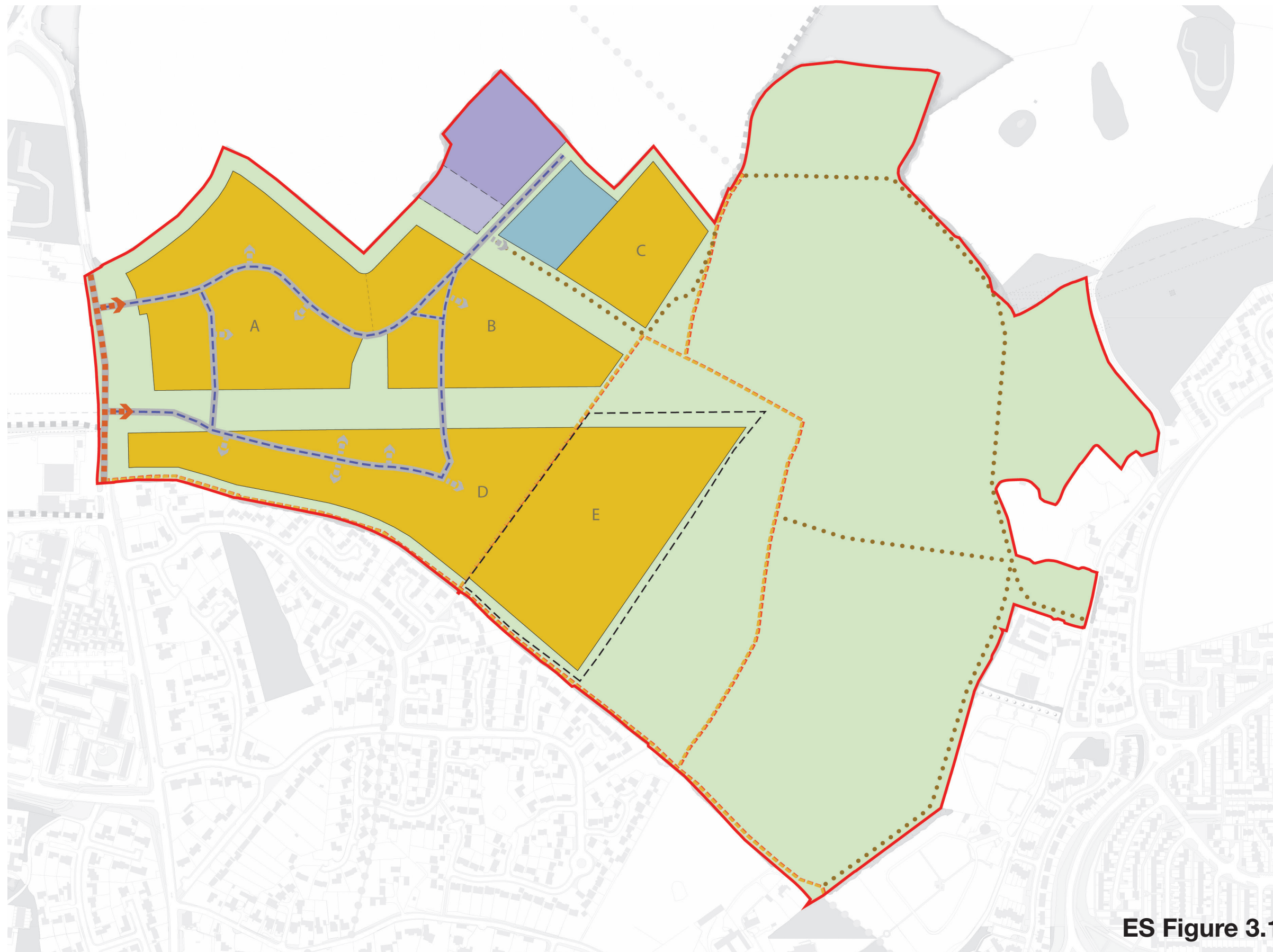
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Appendix 3: Parameter Plan: Land Use and Access (DRAFT)



- Site boundary**
- Land use parameters**
- Residential
 - Residential land use parcel descriptions - for descriptive purposes only
 - Land for 1.5 form entry primary school
 - Primary school reserve land option
 - Local centre
 - Open spaces (to include pylon corridor, landscaping, drainage, play spaces)
- Access**
- Vehicular Access from North Road
 - Indicative vehicular, pedestrian and cyclist access from primary access road
 - Primary access road (subject to centre line deviation of +/- 10m)
 - Existing footpaths and bridleways to be retained
 - Indicative proposed footpaths
 - Area subject to design code and detailed submission of layout and scale

ES Figure 3.1

Land north of Stevenage

on behalf of Bellway Homes and Miller Homes

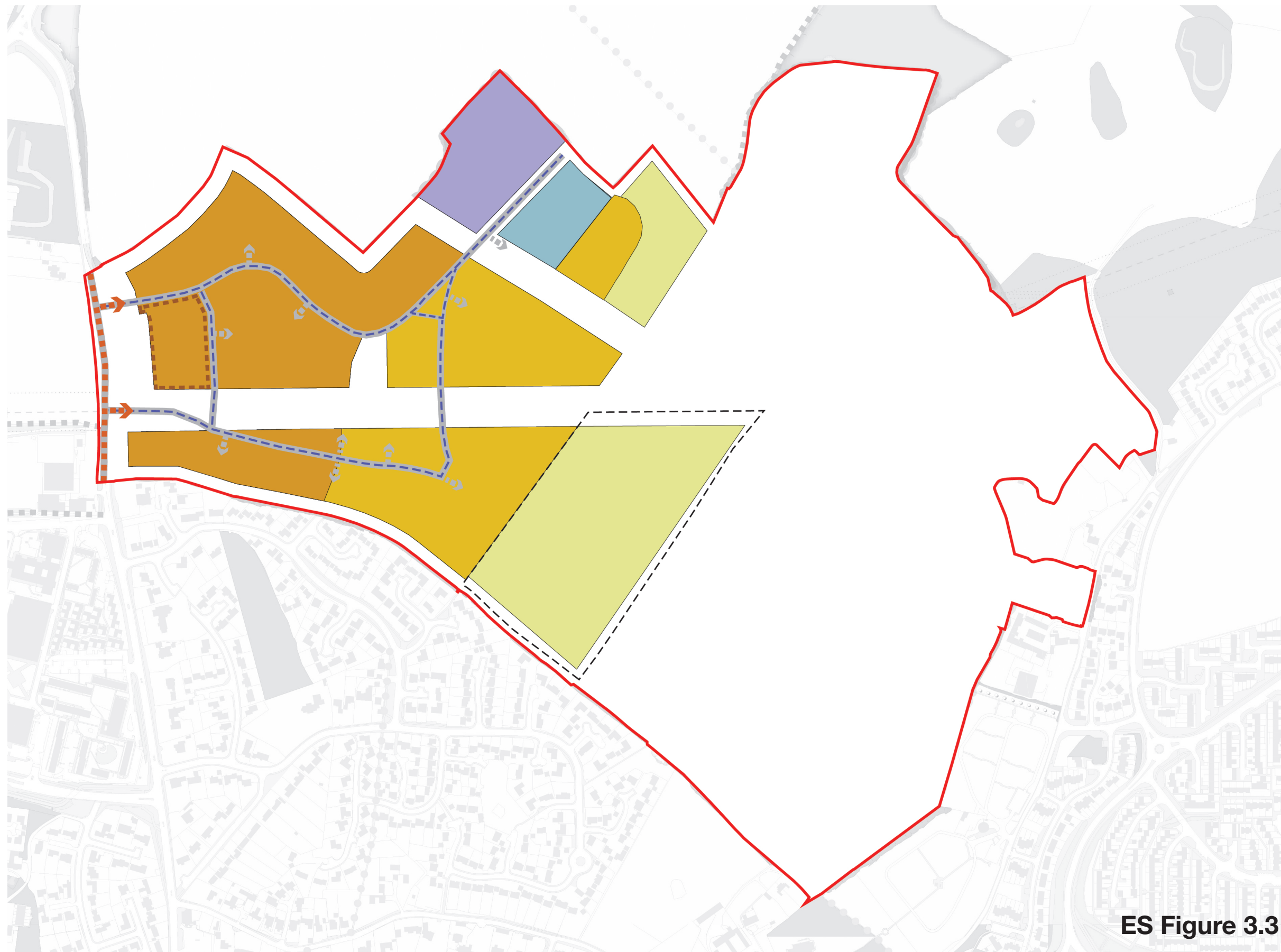
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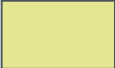
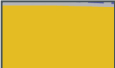





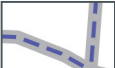
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revision	G	drawn by	JG	job no.
scale	1:5000 at A3	checked by	AR	date
				21 Dec 2016



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Appendix 4: Parameter Plan: Densities (DRAFT)



-  Site boundary
- Density parameters**
-  Low density 15-25dph
-  Medium density 25-35dph
-  High density 35-50dph
-  Independent living accommodation, density up to 120 dph
-  Primary school
-  Local centre: bespoke residential uses maximum 50dph
-  Area subject to Design Code
-  Primary access road (subject to centre line deviation of +/- 10m)

Land north of Stevenage

on behalf of Bellway Homes and Miller Homes

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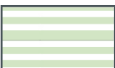
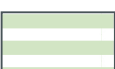

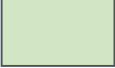
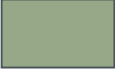












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Appendix 5: Parameter Plan: Green Infrastructure and Drainage Plan (DRAFT)



-  Site boundary
-  Proposed residential development parcel
-  Proposed local centre
-  Proposed primary school
- Green Infrastructure**
-  Proposed green space
-  St. Nicholas' Meadows - Existing arable field managed as meadow
-  Landscaped Corridor along existing pylon route
-  Existing vegetation to be retained
-  Existing vegetation to be removed
-  General area for proposed copse planting
-  Area proposed for mature tree copse planting
-  Proposed hedgerows
-  Proposed trees
-  Proposed orchard
-  Proposed SuDs ponds/attenuation basins
-  Proposed Multi-use games area (MUGA)
-  Existing footpaths and bridleways
-  Proposed footpaths
-  Existing bat commuting corridor - to be retained as area of minimal lighting (dark corridor)

ES Figure 3.4

Land north of Stevenage

on behalf of Bellway Homes and Miller Homes

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drawing no.	UD05	drawing	Green Infrastructure and Drainage plan		
revision	G	drawn by	JG	job no.	OXUD320426
scale	1:5000 at A3	checked by	NT	date	21 Dec 2016



Appendix 6: Design and Access Statement (DRAFT) Extract – North Herts Draft Allocation

Key

- Site area
- Existing settlement
- Residential development
- Primary school
- Local centre
- Public open space
- Green corridors
- Main vehicle routes



Figure 14

Potential integration and links to draft North Herts allocation

Appendix 7: Landscape Visual Impact Assessment (DRAFT)

10 Landscape character and visual amenity

10.1 Introduction

- 10.1.1 Nicholas Pearson Associates (NPA) are appointed by Miller Homes and Bellway Homes (The Applicants) to prepare the landscape character and visual amenity chapter of the Environmental Statement (ES) for the outline planning application for residential development of land north of Stevenage. This chapter has been prepared in the form of a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA).
- 10.1.2 A full description of the Site and proposed development is provided in Chapter 3, Proposed Development and supporting figures. Landscape factors have been considered in all aspects of the land use and design proposals both in the wider local context as well as the site specific development proposals and mitigation.
- 10.1.3 Particular attention is made to the parameter plan titled: Green Infrastructure and Drainage Strategy at figure 3.4. This shows the important landscape mitigation measures inherent within the proposed development proposals including: the strategic provision of open space; landscape proposals (particularly within the proposed undeveloped eastern part of the site), dark corridors for bats; and the overall principle of and location of drainage features.
- 10.1.4 Landscape is defined in the European Landscape Convention, as follows: *'...an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors'*.
- 10.1.5 Visual considerations relate specifically to the views of a landscape afforded to people. These separate but related issues form the basis for this landscape and visual impact assessment (LVIA). Council of Europe (2000)¹; 'European Landscape Convention', Council of Europe.

10.2 Planning policy and guidance

- 10.2.1 The overall planning context is set out in Chapter 15 of the ES. However, the following are highlighted as being of specifically relevant to landscape matters.
- 10.2.2 National Policy
- 10.2.3 The National Planning Policy Framework 2012 (NPPF) sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. One of the core principles is that planning should recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. Local plans should include strategic policies for the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment, including landscape. This includes designated landscapes but also the wider countryside. Others include:
- Core Planning Principle 5 – *'take account of the different roles and character of different areas, promoting the vitality of our main urban areas, protecting the Green Belts around them, recognising the intrinsic value and beauty of the countryside and supporting thriving rural communities within it;*

¹ Council of Europe 2000, European Landscape Convention.

- Core Planning Principle 7 – *‘contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural environment and reducing pollution. Allocations of land for development should prefer land of lesser environmental value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework;*
 - Paragraph 109 – The planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:
 - *protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, geological conservation interests and soils;*
 - *recognising the wider benefits of ecosystem services;*
 - *minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity where possible, contributing to the Government’s commitment to halt the overall decline in biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;*
 - *preventing both new and existing development from contributing to or being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability; and*
 - *remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.*
 - Paragraph 113 – “Local planning authorities should set criteria based policies against which proposals for any development on or affecting protected.... landscape areas will be judged. Distinctions should be made between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites, so that protection is commensurate with their status and gives appropriate weight to their importance.”
- 10.2.4 The proposed development site does not directly occupy any part of an internationally or nationally recognised landscape character or visual amenity resource protected by statutory designation.
- 10.2.5 The emerging Stevenage Local Plan 2011-31 is at the Examination stage following the ‘Publication draft’ of January 2016. Policies of landscape relevance include:
- *Policy SP12: Green Infrastructure and the natural environment*
 - *The green infrastructure and natural environment of Stevenage will be protected and enhanced. We will:*
 - *a. Identify, and ensure the ongoing protection of, key areas of open space and biodiversity value including:*
 - *i. parks, recreation grounds, amenity spaces and woodlands which are integral to the open space structure of Stevenage as Principal Open Spaces. This will include Fairlands Valley Park;*
 - *ii. locally important wildlife sites; and*
 - *iii. a series of ten green links around the town. These will be collections of spaces that are worthy of protection for their connectivity and their recreation, amenity or wildlife value.*
 - *b. Preserve and enhance locally important linear features including:*
 - *i. the historic lanes and hedgerows which pre-date the New Town; and*
 - *ii. structural green spaces along major routes within the town.*
 - *c. Provide multi-functional green space and sports facilities as an integral part of new*

developments in accordance with the latest standards and permit the creation of other new open spaces where they will meet an identified deficit; and

d. Only allow the loss of green infrastructure or assets of biodiversity importance where they meet the detailed criteria set out in this plan.

10.2.6 Policy HO3: North of Stevenage

Land to the North of Stevenage, as defined by the proposals map, is allocated for the development of approximately 800 dwellings.

A Masterplan for the whole site will need to be submitted as part of an outline planning application. The Masterplan must be approved prior to the submission of detailed development proposals for the site.

Development proposals will be permitted where the following criteria are met: (Note. relevant landscape criteria only listed).

m. The proposal seeks to preserve or enhance the conservation area, including the setting of adjacent listed buildings. The following mitigation measures should be incorporated;

i. As much of the requirement for aspirational homes (criteria d) as possible should be met on the part of the site that lies within the conservation area. Development within this area should also be heavily landscaped to reduce the visual impact of development;

ii. Existing hedgerows should be maintained and additional screening implemented to reduce the visual impact of the development;

v. Existing Public Rights of Way are retained and designed into the development, where possible; and

n. The scheme incorporates a network of green infrastructure, with an emphasis on high quality landscaping within and around the development to reduce the impact of the development on the surrounding greenfield / Green Belt land.

10.2.7 Supporting text relevant to landscape includes:

9.30 The site lies partly within the St. Nicholas and Rectory Lane Conservation Area. Our evidence (84) shows that the development of this area will have some degree of impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area. However, this will not be significant, and will be outweighed by the social and economic benefits that would be provided by the development of the land for residential use. A number of mitigation measures are identified that should help to minimise any negative aspects of development.

9.31 In particular, it recommends that larger, aspirational homes are provided within the part of the site that lies within the Conservation Area, and that these are heavily landscaped to enable more effective transition from the new housing to the adjacent open spaces. Existing screening is currently provided by the hedgerow, but this could be increased to make it more effective. This has worked successfully for the adjacent development of Chancellors Road, which also directly adjoins the conservation area. Building styles, massing and layout will require careful consideration.

9.33 In accordance with our Open Space Strategy, and the findings of the Heritage Assessment, we will seek to protect the openness of the countryside closest to St. Nicholas Church and within Rectory Lane Conservation Area, known locally as Forster Country. The protection will

recognise the literary connection of the land to E.M. Forster and Rooks Nest House (85). As part of any development proposal, we will require the remaining open space to be retained as such, either via a Legal Agreement or through the transfer of land to the Borough Council. This will be as part of / in lieu of on-site open space provision. Policy NH8 supports proposals which aim to enhance this site and to create a country park.

10.2.8 Policy NH5: Trees and woodland

Proposals which affect, or are likely to affect, existing trees, will require an arboricultural report. Existing trees must be protected and retained where possible, and sensitively incorporated into developments. Planning permission for proposals where the loss of trees is demonstrated to be unavoidable will be granted where:

- a. Sufficient land is reserved for appropriate replacement planting and landscaping;*
- b. Replacement trees or planting are provided which are;*
 - i. Of equal or better quality than the trees which are lost;*
 - ii. Sensitively incorporated into the development; and*
 - iii. Where appropriate, locally native species of similar maturity; and*
- c. In the case of a loss of woodland:*
 - i. It can be demonstrated that any adverse affects can be satisfactorily mitigated;*
 - ii. The need for the use of the site outweighs the amenity of the woodland; or*
 - iii. It can be demonstrated that there would be a net gain in the quality of any remaining woodland through the enhancement of the recreational, amenity, landscape and/or nature conservation value of the remaining woodland and that there would be provision for its improved long-term management.*

10.2.9 Policy NH6: General protection for open space

Planning permission for development of any existing, unallocated open space (or part of any open space) will be permitted where:

- a. The loss of the open space is justified having regard to:*
 - i. The quality and accessibility of the open space;*
 - ii. The existence, or otherwise, of any interventions to improve quality or access;*
 - iii. Whether the open space is serving its function or purpose; and*
 - iv. Whether alternate space(s) would remain available for community use; and*
- b. Reasonable compensatory provision is made in the form of:*
 - i. Replacement provision of a similar type, size and quality;*
 - ii. The upgrade of other, existing open space; or*
 - iii. Exceptionally, a commuted sum to secure open space provision elsewhere.*

10.2.10 Policy NH7: Open space standards

Planning permission for residential development will be granted where:

a. On-site open space provision is made in accordance with the standards and thresholds set out in the Council's Green Space Strategy;

b. Any such provision results in usable and coherent areas of an appropriate size; and

c. Appropriate arrangements are made to ensure the long-term maintenance of the open space.

Where a development is phased, or a site is either divided into separate parts or otherwise regarded as part of a larger development, it will be considered as a whole and the appropriate standards will apply. Where an applicant successfully demonstrates that (any element of) the required provision cannot reasonably be achieved on site, a commuted sum will be sought.

10.2.11 Note that the policy includes council standards for access to Parks & Gardens, Amenity Greenspace, Allotments, Natural and semi-natural greenspace, and spaces for Children and Young people, on pp 161-162.

10.2.12 Policy NH8: North Stevenage Country Park

10.2.13 Within that part of the Rectory Lane and St Nicholas Conservation Area which lies within the Green Belt, proposals that facilitate improved public access and / or the creation of a country park will be supported in principle where they also support the aims and purposes of the existing policy designations.

10.2.14 Supporting text:

14.50 The land to the north of Stevenage, beyond Rectory Lane and Weston Lane is known colloquially as 'Forster Country' for its literary connections to writer E.M Forster. The house at Rooks Nest (134) and the surrounding land inspired his writings. The Rectory Lane & St Nicholas Conservation Area was widened in 2007 to embrace this setting. The open area that remains within both the conservation area boundary and the Green Belt measures over 45 hectares.

14.51 The Council will seek to protect the openness and accessibility of this area, potentially through the means of a country park. This protection will recognise the literary connection of the land to E.M. Forster. 'Forster Country' is presently agricultural land outside the built-up area of the town traversed by a number of public rights of way but with no formal facilities. As such, it is not included in the analyses of open spaces in the Green Space Strategy. Pursuing a more formal management regime on this land may provide scope for (parts of) it to be considered as amenity greenspace and / or natural and semi-natural open space.

14.52 The provision of new public open space in this area could also allow for some offsetting of open space requirements arising from other developments in the plan period, or from the town as a whole, and any proposals will be viewed in this context. This includes consideration of any developments beyond the borough boundary in North Hertfordshire adjacent to the northern edge of the town.

14.53 The land to the west of the revised Green Belt boundary is allocated for housing development. Any scheme should demonstrate that both the land allocated from development and this area has been considered holistically, from North Road to Weston Road. In doing so, it is recognised that:

- The land within the conservation area would be unsuitable for intensive recreational use (such as sports pitches) or intensive management regimes (such as conversion to*

formally laid-out parkland); while

- *The quantity of open land here is well in excess of that which would be required of any new development to the north of Stevenage following application of the open space standards in Policy NH7.*

10.3 Assessment methodology

10.3.1 This chapter has been prepared in the form of a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA). Provided within this section is the methodology utilised for the LVIA. A glossary of terms used within this chapter is included at page 155-159 of the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment – Third Edition (LI/IEMA, 2013).

Study Areas

10.3.2 As a result of baseline analysis and an understanding of the nature and scale of the development, and the likely extent and distribution of effects, the assessment defines the following study areas:

- General Study Area – of up to 4km distance from the Application Site (providing the broad geographical context), represented in Figure 10.1 and 10.6; and
- Detailed study area – of approximately 1-2km from the Application Site (the area within which any significant effects are likely to fall), represented in Figures 10.2-10.5 and Figures 10.7-10.8.

Methodology

10.3.3 The assessment methodology for assessing landscape and visual effects prepared by NPA is principally based on the following best practice guidance:

- Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment – Third Edition (LI/IEMA, 2013)²;
- Landscape Character Assessment – Guidance for England and Scotland (Swanick & LUC, 2002) produced on behalf of the Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage; and,
- Photography and photomontage in landscape and visual impact assessment (Landscape Institute Advice Note 01/11).

10.3.4 The nature of landscape and visual assessment requires both objective analysis and subjective professional judgement. Accordingly, the following assessment is based on the best practice guidance listed above, information and data analysis techniques.

10.3.5 It uses subjective professional judgement and quantifiable factors wherever possible and is based on clearly defined terms (see Glossary on pages 155-159 of the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment – Third Edition (LI/IEMA, 2013)).

² Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2013) Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition.

10.4 Landscape Assessment

- 10.4.1 Landscape effects derive from changes in the physical landscape fabric which may contribute to changes in its character and how this is experienced. These effects need to be considered in line with changes already occurring within the landscape and which help define the character of it.
- 10.4.2 Effects upon the wider landscape resource, i.e. the landscape surrounding the development, requires an assessment of visibility of the proposals from adjacent landscape character areas, but remains an assessment of landscape character and not visual amenity.

Visual Assessment

- 10.4.3 The assessment of effects on visual amenity draws on the predicted effects of the development, the landscape and visual context, and the visibility and viewpoint analysis, and considers the significance of the overall effects of the proposed development on the visual amenity of the main visual receptor types in the study area.

Identifying Landscape and Visual Receptors

- 10.4.4 This assessment has sought to identify the key landscape and visual receptors that may be affected by the changes proposed.
- 10.4.5 The assessment of effects on landscape as a resource in its own right draws on the description of the development, the landscape context and the visibility and viewpoint analysis to identify receptors, which, for the proposed development may include, but not be limited to, the following:
- The landscape fabric of the development site;
 - The key landscape characteristics of the local context;
 - The 'host' landscape character area which contains the proposed development;
 - The 'non-host' landscape character areas where there is the potential for secondary effects beyond the host landscape character area (this is only undertaken where effects may extend beyond the host character area); and
 - Landscape designations on a national, regional or local level (where relevant).
- 10.4.6 The locations and types of visual receptors within the defined study areas are identified from Ordnance Survey (OS) maps and other published information (such as walking guides), from fieldwork observations and from local knowledge provided during the consultation process. Examples of visual receptors may include, but not be limited to, the following:
- Settlements and private residences;
 - Users of National Cycle Routes and National Trails;
 - Users of local/regional cycle and walking routes;
 - Those using local rights of way – walkers, horse riders, cyclists;
 - Users of open spaces with public access;
 - People using major (Motorways, A and B) roads;
 - People using minor roads; and

- People using railways.

Assessment of Landscape and Visual Effects

10.4.7 The assessment of effects on the landscape resource includes consideration of the potential changes to those key elements and components which contribute towards recognised landscape character or the quality of designated landscape areas; these features are termed a landscape receptor. The assessment of visual amenity requires the identification of potential visual receptors that may be affected by the development. As noted, following the identification of each of these various landscape and visual receptors, the effect of the development on each of them is assessed through consideration of a combination of:

- Their overall sensitivity to the proposed form of development that includes the value attached to the receptor following the baseline appraisal, combined with the susceptibility of the receptor to the change proposed, determined during the assessment stage; and
- The overall magnitude of change that will occur - based on the size and scale of the change, its duration and reversibility.

Defining Receptor Sensitivity

10.4.8 A number of factors influence professional judgment when assessing the degree to which a particular landscape or visual receptor can accommodate change arising from a particular development. Sensitivity is made up of judgements regarding the '*value*' attached to the receptor, which is determined at baseline stage, and the '*susceptibility*' of the receptor, which is determined at the assessment stage when the nature of the proposals, and therefore the susceptibility of the landscape and visual resource to change, is better understood.

10.4.9 Susceptibility indicates 'the ability of a defined landscape or visual receptor to accommodate the specific proposed development without undue negative consequences'³. Susceptibility of visual receptors is primarily a function of the expectations and occupation or activity of the receptor. A degree of professional judgement applies in arriving at the susceptibility for both landscape and visual receptors and this is clearly set out in the technical annexes to this assessment.

10.4.10 A location may have different levels of sensitivity according to the types of visual receptors at that location and any one receptor type may be accorded different levels of sensitivity at different locations.

10.4.11 Therefore, where the susceptibility of a receptor to the type of development proposed may result in a change to the 'inherent' value of that receptor or location, this is made explicit within the assessment text.

10.4.12 Table 10.1 below provides an indication of the criteria by which the overall sensitivity of a landscape receptor is judged within this assessment, and considers both value and susceptibility independently.

³ Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2013) Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition Page 158.

Table 10.1: Landscape Sensitivity Criteria

Category	Landscape Receptor Value Criteria	Landscape Susceptibility to Change Criteria
Very High	Nationally/Internationally designated/valued countryside and landscape features; strong/distinctive landscape characteristics; absence of landscape detractors.	Strong/distinctive landscape elements/aesthetic/perceptual aspects; absence of landscape detractors; landscape receptors in excellent condition. Landscapes with clear and widely recognised cultural value. Landscapes with a high level of tranquillity.
High	Locally designated/valued countryside (e.g. Areas of High Landscape Value, Regional Scenic Areas) and landscape features; many distinctive landscape characteristics; very few landscape detractors.	Many distinctive landscape elements/aesthetic/perceptual aspects; very few landscape detractors; landscape receptors in good condition. The landscape has a low capacity for change as a result of potential changes to defining character.
Medium	Undesignated countryside and landscape features; some distinctive landscape characteristics; few landscape detractors.	Some distinctive landscape elements/aesthetic/perceptual aspects; few landscape detractors; landscape receptors in fair condition. Landscape is able to accommodate some change as a result.
Low	Undesignated countryside and landscape features; few distinctive landscape characteristics; presence of landscape detractors.	Few distinctive landscape elements/aesthetic/perceptual aspects; presence of landscape detractors; landscape receptors in poor condition. Landscape is able to accommodate large amounts of change without changing these characteristics fundamentally.
Very Low	Undesignated countryside and landscape features; absence of distinctive landscape characteristics; despoiled / degraded by the presence of many landscape detractors.	Absence of distinctive landscape elements/aesthetic/perceptual aspects; presence of many landscape detractors; landscape receptors in very poor condition. As such landscape is able to accommodate considerable change.

10.4.13 For visual receptors, judgements of susceptibility and value are closely interlinked considerations. For example, the most valued views are those which people go and visit because of the available view – and it is at those viewpoints that their expectations will be highest and thus most susceptible to change.

10.4.14 For this reason the sensitivity of visual receptors is rated in a single step process which

combines both susceptibility and value as indicated by the criteria in Table 10.2 below:

Table 10.2: Visual Receptor Sensitivity

Category	Visual receptor Criteria
Very High	Designed (i.e. deliberately created) view (which may be to or from a recognised heritage asset or other important viewpoint), or where views of the surroundings are an important contributor to the experience. Key promoted viewpoint e.g. interpretative signs. References in literature and art and/or guidebooks tourist maps. Protected view recognised in planning policy designation. Examples may include views from residential properties, especially from rooms normally occupied in waking or daylight hours; national public rights of way e.g. National Trails and nationally designated countryside/landscape features with public access which people might visit purely to experience the view; and visitors to heritage assets of national importance.
High	View of clear value but may not be formally recognised e.g. framed view of high scenic value, or destination hill summits. It may also be inferred that the view is likely to have value e.g. to local residents. Examples may include views from recreational receptors where there is some appreciation of the landscape e.g. golf and fishing; local public rights of way, access land and National Trust land, also panoramic viewpoints marked on maps; road routes promoted in tourist guides for their scenic value, plus main roads within nationally important landscapes (e.g. AONBs or National Parks).
Medium	View is not promoted or recorded in any published sources and may be typical of the views experienced from a given receptor. Examples may include people engaged in outdoor sport other than appreciation of the landscape e.g. football and rugby or road users on minor routes passing through rural or scenic areas.
Low	View of clearly lesser value than similar views experienced from nearby visual receptors that may be more accessible. Examples may include road users on main road routes (motorways/A roads) and users of rail routes or people at their place of work (where the place of work may be in a sensitive location). Also views from commercial buildings where views of the surrounding landscape may have some limited importance.
Very Low	View affected by many landscape detractors and unlikely to be valued. Examples may include people at their place of work, indoor recreational or leisure facilities or other locations where views of the wider landscape have little or no importance.

10.4.15 For visual receptors, judgements of susceptibility and value are closely interlinked considerations. For example, the most valued views are those which people go and visit because of the available view – and it is at those viewpoints that their expectations will be highest and thus most susceptible to change.

10.4.16 The tables above offer a template for assessing overall sensitivity of any landscape or visual receptor as determined by combining judgements of their susceptibility to the type of change or development proposed and the value attached to the landscape or view as set out at paragraph 5.38 of GLVIA 3rd Edition (2013). However, the narrative in this chapter may demonstrate that

assessment of overall sensitivity can change on a case-by-case basis. For example a high susceptibility to change and a low value may result in a medium overall sensitivity, unless it can be demonstrated that the receptor is unusually susceptible or is in some particular way more valuable. A degree of professional judgement applies in arriving at the overall sensitivity for both landscape and visual receptors

Magnitude of Change

10.4.17 The magnitude of any landscape or visual change is determined through a range of considerations particular to each receptor. The three attributes considered in defining the magnitude are:

- Scale of Change;
- Geographical Extent; and
- Duration and Reversibility/Proportion.

10.4.18 Receptor locations from which views of the proposed development are not likely to occur will receive no change and therefore no effect. With reference to the Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) and site survey, the magnitude of change is defined for receptor locations from where visibility of the proposed development is predicted to occur.

10.4.19 Table 10.3 provides an indication of the criteria by which the size/scale of change at a landscape or visual receptor is judged within this assessment.

Table 10.3: Scale of Change Criteria

Category	Landscape Receptor Criteria	Visual Receptor Criteria
Very High	Total loss of or major alteration to key elements/features/ characteristics of the baseline condition. Addition of elements which strongly conflict with the key characteristics of the existing landscape.	There would be a substantial change to the baseline, with the proposed development creating a new focus and having a defining influence on the view.
High	Notable loss or alteration to one or more key elements/features/characteristics of the baseline condition. Addition of elements that are prominent and may conflict with the key characteristics of the existing landscape.	The proposed development will be clearly noticeable and the view would be fundamentally altered by its presence.
Medium	Partial loss or alteration to one or more key elements/features/ characteristics of the baseline condition. Addition of elements that may be evident but do not necessarily conflict with the key characteristics of the existing landscape.	The proposed development will form a new and recognisable element within the view which is likely to be recognised by the receptor.
Low	Minor loss or alteration to one or more key elements/features/ characteristics of the baseline	The proposed development will form a minor constituent of the view being partially visible or at

	landscape. Addition of elements that may not be uncharacteristic within the existing landscape.	sufficient distance to be a small component.
Very Low	Barely discernible loss or alteration to key elements/features/ characteristics of the baseline landscape. Addition of elements not uncharacteristic within the existing landscape.	The proposed development will form a barely noticeable component of the view, and the view whilst slightly altered would be similar to the baseline situation.

10.4.20 Table 10.4 provides an indication of the criteria by which the geographical extent of the area will be affected within this assessment.

Table 10.4: Geographical Extent Criteria

Landscape Receptors	Visual Receptor Criteria
Large scale effects influencing several landscape types or character areas.	Direct views at close range with changes over a wide horizontal and vertical extent.
Effects at the scale of the landscape type or character areas within which the proposal lies.	Direct or oblique views at close range with changes over a notable horizontal and/or vertical extent.
Effects within the immediate landscape setting of the site.	Direct or oblique views at medium range with a moderate horizontal and/or vertical extent of the view affected.
Effects at the site level (within the development site itself).	Oblique views at medium or long range with a small horizontal/vertical extent of the view affected.
Effects only experienced on parts of the site at a much localised level.	Long range views with a negligible part of the view affected.

10.4.21 The third, and final, factor, in determining the predicted magnitude of change is duration and reversibility. Duration and reversibility are separate but linked considerations. Duration is judged according to the defined terms set out below, whereas reversibility is a judgement about the prospects and practicality of the particular effect being reversed in, for example, a generation. The categories used in this assessment are set out below:

- Duration
- Long term (20 years+);
- Medium to Long term (10 to 20 years);
- Medium term (5 to 10 years);
- Short term (1 year to 5 years); and
- Temporary (less than 12 months).

Reversibility

10.4.22 Reversibility is defined as follows:

- Permanent with unlikely restoration to original state, e.g. major road corridor, power station, urban extension etc.

- Permanent with possible conversion to original state, e.g. agricultural buildings, retail units;
- Partially reversible to a different state, e.g. mineral workings;
- Reversible after decommissioning to a similar original state, e.g. wind energy development; and
- Quickly reversible, e.g. temporary structures.

Significance of Effect

10.4.23 The purpose of the EIA process is to identify the significant environmental effects (both beneficial and adverse) of development proposals. Schedule 4 to the EIA Regulations specifies the information to be included in all environmental statements, which should include a description of:

“...the likely significant effects of the development on the environment, which should cover the direct effects and any indirect, secondary, cumulative, short, medium and long-term, permanent and temporary, positive and negative effects of the development...”

10.4.24 In order to consider the likely level of any effect, the sensitivity of each receptor is combined with the predicted magnitude of change to determine the level of effect, with reference also made to the geographical extent, duration and reversibility of the effect within the assessment. Having taken such a wide range of factors into account when assessing sensitivity and magnitude at each receptor, the level of effect can be derived by combining the sensitivity and magnitude in accordance with the matrix in Table 10.5.

Table 10.5 Level of Effects Matrix

Overall Sensitivity	Overall magnitude of Change				
	Very High	High	Medium	Low	Very Low
Very High	Substantial	Major	Major/ Moderate	Moderate	Moderate/ Minor
High	Major	Major/ Moderate	Moderate	Moderate/ Minor	Minor
Medium	Major/ Moderate	Moderate	Moderate/ Minor	Minor	Minor/ Negligible
Low	Moderate	Moderate/Minor	Minor	Minor/ Negligible	Negligible
Very Low	Moderate/ Minor	Minor	Minor/ Negligible	Negligible	Negligible/ None

10.4.25 Each effect is described and evaluated individually through the combination of all of the relevant factors and assessed as either significant or not significant. For landscape and visual effects, those effects identified at a substantial, major, major/moderate or moderate level (bold type within matrix above) are generally considered to be significant and those effects assessed at a moderate/minor, minor, minor/negligible or negligible level are considered to be not significant.

10.4.26 In certain cases, where additional factors may arise, a further degree of professional judgement may be applied when determining whether the overall change in the view will be significant or not and, where this occurs, this is explained in the assessment.

Definition of Effects

10.4.27 Taking into account the levels of effect described above, and with regard to effects being either adverse or beneficial, the following table, Table 10.6, which represents a description of the range of effects likely at any one receptor.

Table 10.6 Definition of Effect

Effect	Definition
Substantial	Changes resulting in a complete variance with the landscape resource or visual amenity.
Major	Changes resulting in a fundamental change to the landscape resource or visual amenity.
Moderate	A material but non-fundamental change to the landscape resource or visual amenity.
Minor	A slight but non-material change to the landscape resource or visual amenity.
Negligible	A detectable but non-material change to the landscape resource of visual amenity.
None	No detectable change to the landscape resource or visual amenity.

Nature of Effect

10.4.28 Effects can be adverse (negative), beneficial (positive) or neutral. The landscape effects will be considered against the landscape baseline, which includes published landscape strategies or policies if they exist. Changes involving the addition of large scale man-made objects are typically considered to be adverse as they are not usually actively promoted as part of published landscape strategies. Accordingly, landscape effects as a result of these aspects of the proposed development will be assumed to be adverse, unless otherwise stated within the assessment.

10.4.29 Visual effects are more subjective as peoples' perception of development varies through the spectrum of negative, neutral and positive attitudes. In the assessment of visual effects the assessor will exercise objective professional judgement in assessing the level of effects and, unless otherwise stated, will assume that all effects are adverse, thus representing the worst case scenario.

10.4.30 Receptor locations from which views of the proposed development are not likely to occur will receive no change and therefore no effect. With reference to the Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) and site survey, the magnitude of change is defined for receptor locations from where visibility of the proposed development is predicted to occur.

Cumulative Effects

10.4.31 Cumulative effects generally occur where there may be combined or sequential visibility of two or more developments of the same type and scale, or where the consideration of other schemes would increase an effect identified. Where other similar schemes are in the planning system and made known to the applicant, or are under construction, these are considered in conjunction with the proposed scheme. The cumulative effects of this development are considered within section 10.9 of this ES Chapter relative to landscape and visual Impact issues.

Field Surveys

10.4.32 A number of field assessments of local site circumstances, including photographic survey of the character and visual context of the development site and its surroundings, and an assessment of Rights of Way, have been undertaken between September and late November 2016 in order to gather robust baseline information. The latter field assessments were undertaken in near-winter conditions and have, therefore, been undertaken, as far as is practicable, in accordance with best practice guidance which states that such assessments should be undertaken when the leaves are absent from the majority of trees/vegetation and visibility is at its greatest.

10.4.33 These field based assessments were only undertaken by a Chartered Landscape Architect.

Limitations and Assumptions

10.4.34 Baseline conditions have been established using existing assessments, available documentation and field assessment; it is important to note that this information may change before or during the construction and operation of the proposed development.

10.4.35 Within reasonable limits, the assessment is undertaken in consideration of the 'worst case' scenario for the development, i.e. those potential outcomes, situations or locations which would result in the most profound effect on landscape and visual receptors. It therefore identifies the greatest degree of change likely to accrue, and may be subject to mitigating factors or alternative conditions which might reduce those effects. For example, visual effects are considered in both summer and winter context; although the magnitude of effect is expressed for winter landscape conditions when trees are bare of leaf cover and the visibility of development is at its greatest. Where this is the case, the assessment identifies alternative conditions or further mitigation which might result in impacts being less pronounced.

10.4.36 The assessment applies a pre-determined methodology to arrive at conclusions. This procedure brings a degree of objective, procedural rigour into what otherwise might be judged to be 'personal opinion'. Certainly, professional judgement still plays its part, but the purpose of adopting a methodology is to make the process as clear and logical as possible.

Night-Time Assessments

10.4.37 The proposed residential development is proposed adjacent to a large urban conurbation which emits light spill and sky glow. As the proposed development would be lit in a normal manner and has no special lighting, the extent of additional night time lighting impacts would be a very minor addition to the baseline conditions and therefore no assessment has been made of the night-time visual effects.

Consultations

10.4.38 Consultation with the Local Planning Authority has principally involved communications regarding the selection of representative viewpoints, which were agreed with the SBC Planning Officer. The viewpoints were subsequently reviewed, discussed and agreed in December 2016 with the landscape consultant appointed by SBC to review the planning application.

10.4.39 During the EIA scoping process, the Local Planning Authority was consulted on the methodology and associated terminology for undertaking the Landscape Visual Impact Assessment.

10.5 Baseline conditions

Landscape Character

- 10.5.1 Existing Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) studies help to establish a baseline for landscape receptors within the 4km study area. Such LCAs may be of varied scales ranging from broad-scale national character area studies to detailed local authority assessments. GLVIA3 recognises that LCAs “*adopted and published by competent authorities are usually the most robust and considered documents*” (GLVIA3; 77) although consideration needs to be given as to their usefulness in informing the LVIA process where this was not their original intent.
- 10.5.2 For the purposes of this assessment existing National Character Area studies are described to provide context only, whilst character areas described by studies at a more local level are taken forward as landscape receptors to be assessed. Where relevant, specific landscape receptors are also identified and assessed. These may include site-specific landscape characteristics, where these differ from the wider local landscape character area descriptions, as well as receptors specifically recognised through designation.
- 10.5.3 For the Site and its local context, a number of existing character areas are described within LCA studies (see Figures 10.4a and 10.4b) and these are summarised below.

National Character Areas

- 10.5.4 Published by the Countryside Agency (now Natural England) in 1999, the Character of England Map sets out landscape character areas on a national scale⁴. Natural England is continuing the task of revising the National Character Area (NCA) profiles and has already published two NCA profiles which together cover the Site. The NCAs are shown on Figure 10.4. These NCAs are: NCA 86 South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland, which covers all but a small proportion of the Site except the far western part, and NCA 87 East Anglian Chalk covering the far western part. Further west is NCA 110 The Chilterns but this is not considered relevant to this study due to distance. These two NCAs covering the Site are summarised as follows:

Area 86 - South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland

- 10.5.5 This countryside character area covers the central and eastern parts of the Site. Its boundary runs approximately from the south west corner of Ledge Side plantation in the north to the edge of the existing Stevenage urban area in the south.
- 10.5.6 In broad terms, Area 86 is characterised as a broadly flat, boulder clay plateau. It has an open, yet wooded character, demonstrating aspects of medieval enclosure and the impacts of 20th century field rationalisation. It is now predominantly arable farmland although some pasture land can also be found in the undulating valley floors. The field pattern is irregular with some remnant Ancient Countryside.
- 10.5.7 Few large woods remain in this character area, although typically copses can be found connected by hedgerows. These serve to provide the appearance of a wooded skyline with some bare ridgelines. The effect is a sense of distant enclosure despite the frequently large-

⁴ The Countryside Agency (1996); 'Countryside Character Volume 6: East of England', The Countryside Agency and English Nature.

scale intervening fields.

Area 87 - East Anglian Chalk

- 10.5.8 Covering the most western part of the Site, this countryside character area extends to the north and east towards Cambridge and beyond. It is a large-scale, typically open landscape interspersed by distinctive beech tree belts along straight roads and hilltop clumps and woodlands.
- 10.5.9 There is a generally muted colour palette in evidence with white or yellow brick farmhouses reflecting the distinctive white soils. A few large towns are present along major transport routes but most commuter towns retain a rural character.
- 10.5.10 In form, this character area is of a variable landform but is traversed by significant linear features such as ancient Roman earthworks (Devil's Dyke, Fleam Dyke and Icknield Way) and modern sizeable roads.
- 10.5.11 The National Character Areas are included within the baseline section of this chapter to provide the wider context for the landscape character, but due to the scale of these defined areas in relation to the Site they have not been taken forward for assessment.

District and Local Landscape Character Assessments

- 10.5.12 More detailed landscape character assessments have been undertaken for this study area, including, at a district level the '*North Hertfordshire and Stevenage Landscape Character Assessment*' (Babtie Group 2004)⁵ and at a more local level the '*Stevenage Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study, Final Report*' (Halcrow Group, 2006)⁶. However, the most recent district level assessment undertaken on behalf of NHDC by the Babtie Group is the 2011 '*North Herts Landscape Study (Character, Sensitivity and Capacity)*'⁷. The study retains the landscape character area locations, definitions and evaluation from the previous Babtie report, but provides an update to additionally include a consideration of the sensitivity of landscape character areas and their capacity to accept change. The study is submitted by North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC) as evidence in support of their draft Local Plan, and is considered to be the most appropriate existing district level landscape character assessment to provide a wider context to the proposed draft SBC North Stevenage allocation which encompasses the proposed site area. The '*Stevenage Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study, Final Report*' (Halcrow Group, 2006)⁸ subdivides further the Landscape character areas identified within the '*North Herts Landscape Study (Character, Sensitivity and Capacity)*' and applies a finer grain of

⁵ Babtie Group Ltd. (2004); '*North Hertfordshire and Stevenage Landscape Character Assessment*', Stevenage Borough Council and North Hertfordshire District Council.

⁶ Halcrow Group Ltd. (2006); '*Stevenage Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study, Final Report*', SBC/NHDC.

⁷ Babtie Group Ltd. (2011) '*North Herts Landscape Study (Character, Sensitivity and Capacity)*', North Hertfordshire District Council.

⁸ Halcrow Group Ltd. (2006); '*Stevenage Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study, Final Report*', SBC/NHDC.

assessment with regards to the ability of the receiving landscape to accommodate different types of development. The study is submitted by Stevenage Borough Council (SBC) as evidence in support of their emerging Local Plan.

North Herts Landscape Study (Character, Sensitivity and Capacity), 2011

10.5.13 The proposed Site spans the interface of two district Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) defined by the study. These are Area 216 'Arlesey - Great Wymondley' and Area 219 'Baldock Gap'. The boundaries of these LCAs in relation to the Site are illustrated in Figure 10.4a.

Area 216 'Arlesey - Great Wymondley'

10.5.14 This character area covers the western and southern parts of the Site. The Site is located to the southern extent of the character area. This part of the LCA is described as a *"Rolling arable landscape of large scale fields and with relatively few trees in the south"* (p.103). In more detail the assessment states that:

"to the south the rolling landform in a fold running north-south gradually merges into the gently undulating low lying landform to the north. There is a gradual change in character between the enclosed historic landscape in the south and the large scale open, exposed arable landscape in the north. Southern section [sic] is characterised by scattered small plantations and copses whilst to the north there are very few hedges and trees but linear shelter belts feature" (p.103).

10.5.15 Of the distinctive features listed for this landscape character area, only the A1(M) is found in the vicinity of the study area for the proposed Site. However, the study also notes that *"electricity pylons stride through the area in the south"*, and these are *"detractors to the character of this area"* (p. 108).

10.5.16 The character area is said to be *"not rare and is exhibiting typical pressures associated with urban fringe use"* (p.106). However, the study states that *"the south of the character area would be vulnerable to loss of its historic character"* (p.108). Other vulnerabilities described, relating to the study area or the allocations, include the removal of existing field boundaries, the lack of management or removal of woodland copses, the upgrading of minor lanes and associated hedgerow removal, and the loss of screening to the A1(M). In visual terms, emphasis is placed in the role of the copses in maintaining an enclosed historic character, the views into the countryside from settlements, and the scope for mitigation of existing *"raw"* urban edges through screening with tree belts.

10.5.17 Overall, the character area is described as being of *"Moderate"* condition (on a scale of Poor, Moderate and Good), and of *"Moderate"* robustness (on a scale of Weak, Moderate and Strong), resulting in a target to *"Improve and Conserve"* (p.107). The landscape character of the area is considered to have a *"low sensitivity"* and visual aspects are considered to have a *"low to moderate sensitivity"* (p.108).

10.5.18 The character area is considered to be of *"low landscape value"* (p.109), due primarily to the adverse effects of the large number of roads and transport routes and the presence of significant settlement to the fringes.

10.5.19 In relation to the proposed housing allocation and consequently the Site it is notable that the study finds that the *"landscape capacity for major urban extensions... is considered to be low"* (p.110). These comments however appear to be principally be concerned with preventing the

coalescence of settlements, particularly Hitchin and Letchworth

Area 219 'Baldock Gap'

10.5.20 This character area covers the northern and eastern half of the Site. The proposed site is located to the southern extent of the character area. The LCA defines a chalk scarp landscape running in a north to south direction between Baldock and Stevenage. The southern part of the LCA (including the Site) is reasonably typical of the general landscape character, the key characteristics of which are described as:

- *Undulating chalk scarp with local steep sided valleys;*
- *Large arable fields;*
- *Small, occasional plantations, or shelter belts;*
- *Small sunken lanes and footpaths climbing up the slopes."*

(p.120)

10.5.21 It is noted in the study however that whilst *"panoramic views are common from the scarp towards the lower lying land in the west and north... views are less pronounced to the south, which is more of a valley landform"* (p.124).

10.5.22 Within the Site study area, distinctive features listed for this landscape character area include the suburban edge of Stevenage and Rooks Nest House, which is the setting for Howards End, and occupies an area known as Forster Country (which includes the Site).

10.5.23 The LCA states that the *"distinctive scarp edge"* is *"relatively common in North Hertfordshire"* (p.122). However, other vulnerabilities described, relating to the study area, include the risk of additional built or urbanising features, increased recreational uses, and loss or harm of existing woodland. In visual terms, the study notes that the skyline is currently undeveloped and an important feature, but that the edge of Stevenage to the south, is visually intrusive.

10.5.24 Overall, the character area is described as being of *"Good condition"* (on a scale of Poor, Moderate and Good), and of *"Weak"* robustness (on a scale of Weak, Moderate and Strong), resulting in a target to *"Strengthen and Reinforce"* (p.123). The landscape character of the area is considered to have a *"moderate to high sensitivity"* and visual aspects are considered to have a *"high sensitivity"* (p.124).

10.5.25 The LCA is considered to be of *"moderate landscape value"* (p.124), recognising the intactness of the landscape, the recognisable sense of place, striking landform, memorable views, visual interest, sense of openness and visible expressions of the local geology.

10.5.26 In relation to the proposed Site it is notable that the study finds that the *"landscape capacity for major urban extensions... is considered to be low"* (p.124a). It should be noted that no built development is proposed within this district level landscape character area.

Stevenage Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study, 2006

10.5.27 The proposed Site spans the interface of three local Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) as defined by the study. These are Area 13 'Chesfield Park', Area 14 'St. Nicholas and Rooks Nest Valley' and Area 15 'North Stevenage Farmlands'. The boundaries of these LCAs in relation to the Site are illustrated in Figure 10.4b.

Area 13 'Chesfield Park'

10.5.28 This character area extends into the north eastern corner of the Site. The defined key characteristics of this LCA are listed below:

- Historic parkland;
- Chesfield Manor and Church;
- Small scale field pattern of pastures around Chesfield Manor;
- Narrow historic lane.

The study considers that the LCA has a high sensitivity and low capacity for development.

10.5.29 The site specific landscape analysis carried out as part of the LVIA defined the southern extent of this LCA slightly further north but otherwise is in agreement with the findings of the study.

Area 14 'St Nicholas and Rooks Nest Farm Valley'

10.5.30 This character area extends across the eastern part of the Site. The defined key characteristics of this LCA are listed below:

- Small enclosed valley;
- Hedged pasture fields;
- Attractive views of St Nicholas Church and The Bury;

The study considers that the LCA has a high sensitivity and low capacity for development.

10.5.31 The site specific landscape analysis carried out as part of this LVIA defined a landscape character area that was similar but extended further to the north west. The level of sensitivity defined by the LVIA was considered to be slightly lower than that defined by the study as the additional extent of the LVIA LCA contains the detracting influences of high voltage electricity pylons.

Area 15 'North Stevenage Farmlands'

10.5.32 This character area extends across the central and western parts of the Site. The defined key characteristics of this LCA are listed below:

- Gently undulating arable farmland rising to ridgeline;
- Open character;
- Few field boundaries
- Pylon intrusion;

The study considers that the LCA has a moderate sensitivity and moderate capacity for development.

10.5.33 The site specific landscape analysis carried out as part of the LVIA broadly divided this LCA further into two separate character areas (see Figure 10.5) with very similar levels of sensitivity as that ascribed within the study. The LVIA considers that the most southerly of these character areas was considered to have a slightly lower level of sensitivity due to the detracting influences of the existing settlement edge and the dominating presence of the high voltage pylons.

10.5.34 Due to the similarities in scale and extent between the local landscape character areas defined by the SBC study and those defined within this LVIA the SBC character areas have not been separately assessed within the LVIA.

Site-Specific Landscape Analysis and Receptors

10.5.1 The comparisons between the landscape character areas defined within this assessment and those outlined within the SBC 2006 study are detailed in the section above. This assessment finds that the landscape character areas described by the 2011 study have reasonable merit when applied specifically to the Site. However, the character of the landscape across the study area transitions far more gradually from the 'rolling arable landscape of large scale fields with relatively few trees', in the west to the 'undulating chalk scarp with local steep sided valleys' in the east, than the LCA boundaries suggest. Indeed, it is difficult to discern any clear distinction around the supposed watershed within the site.

10.5.2 At a site-level, the landform does rise towards the eastern edge (see Figure 10.3 and Figure 10.5), although there is little sense of the dramatic scarp slope that exists further north. The most notable characteristic is the southern edge of the ridgeline which extends beyond the Site to the north running south-westwards to north eastwards along the western edge of Chesfield Park and is marked by Ten Acre Plantation. The adjacent farmland rolls around this spur of the ridge so that three separate landscape character areas can be identified covering the Site, and sometimes seamlessly beyond the site boundary (see Figure 10.5). These are described as specific Landscape Receptors as follows:

Local Landscape Character Area 1 (LLCA1) – Suburban edge

10.5.3 This character area lies wholly within the Site and comprises large-scale arable farmland and is characterised by its gently undulating topography and south-facing aspect which provides a strong relationship with the existing urban edge of Stevenage. The urban edge is an abrupt boundary line, formed variously of fences and hedgerows to the rear of private gardens. The edge transitions poorly to the arable landscape within the Site, being devoid of structural planting or any other rural linear feature typical of the wider character area.

10.5.4 A dominant component of the character area are the two lines of large overhead high voltage electricity cables and pylons which traverse the open fields. These are a particularly discordant element in the landscape and a starkly urbanising element.

10.5.5 The western boundary of the character area is defined by North Road and tree and shrub planting on its embankment, providing enclosure locally at lower elevations. To the east, the terrain begins to roll down into a valley running southwards from Chesfield Park. The top of the valley side marks a subtle shift from this character area to the adjacent character area

(described below).

- 10.5.6 To the northern boundary, the land rises upwards before rolling over a local uplift, coinciding with a linear tree shelter belt forming the existing field boundary. The trees provide enclosure to this edge of the character area and where the proposed development footprint within the Site is located to the south of this tree belt, the boundary is strongly defined and severs any relationship with the open countryside beyond. The tree belt comprises relatively young specimens with records indicating that it was planted in 1997-98 and therefore the heights of the trees will continue to increase with maturity and thus become an even stronger boundary feature separating this part of the Site from the land to the north.

Local Landscape Character Area 2 (LLCA2) – Chesfield Valley

- 10.5.7 This character area lies wholly within the Site with the area comprising a mixture of arable and pasture fields, traversed by high voltage overhead electric cables and pylons, a discordant element in the landscape. The local character area is generally defined by a valley form extending southwards from Chesfield Park to the north. To the west, the field rises gently upwards towards the adjacent character area, the boundaries of which are considered to transition gradually. Whilst the adjacent character area is closely associated with the abrupt urban edge, here the character of the boundaries is more positive, comprising large detached properties and farm units along Weston Road. These overlook the character area from the east. Further south, the adjacent properties also include a recently extended cemetery and St. Nicholas' churchyard. All of these properties include notable mature trees and well-formed vegetated boundaries, although they also retain inter-visibility with the open fields beyond.
- 10.5.8 Of cultural note is Rooks Nest House, located adjacent to the northern stretch of Weston Road. The house was the childhood home of the author E. M. Forster, and is considered to be a strong influence on the novel *Howards End*. The house, previously called Rooksnest, is now a Grade 1 Listed Building, whilst the fields to the west are part of an area colloquially known as Forster Country. A sculpture 'Only Connect' marks the entrance to Forster Country from St. Nicholas' Church.
- 10.5.9 The part of the Site included within this LLCA falls within the northern part of the St Nicholas/Rectory Lane Conservation Area. The effects of the scheme proposals on the Conservation Area and any listed buildings located within 1km are assessed within Chapter 11 of the ES.
- 10.5.10 The fields within this local landscape character area provide a link between the churchyard and Chesfield Park to the north. The southern extent of the Park is marked by two notable plantations running south-eastwards along the ridges of the valley – Ten Acre Plantation, to the west, and Park Plantation to the east. These woodlands frame the parkland itself and provide a strong positive northern boundary to the character area. Ten Acre Plantation extends to meet a tree follows the local ridgeline westwards preventing inter-visibility with the countryside to the north. The northern part of the St Nicholas/Rectory Lane Conservation Area covers the entire extent of this LLCA.

Local Landscape Character Area 3 (LLCA3) – Graveley Edge

- 10.5.11 This character area occupies a small portion of the northern part of the Site beyond the shelter belt forming the northern edge of LLCA1, with the larger part of the character area extending seamlessly northwards beyond the site.

10.5.12 The local landscape character area comprises open, large-scale arable farmland with a generally north-westerly aspect. To the west, the area is bounded by North Road and its associated tree and shrub planted embankment, which provides local screening and enclosure. To the east, the character area rises towards a ridgeline marked by Ten Acre Plantation, which marks the boundary with Chesfield Park. A public right of way footpath follows the tree line. From here there are broad panoramic views to the north, north-west and west. Hedgerows and tree lines traversing the fields provide a degree of local enclosure, but from elevated ground the character is predominantly open with a close relationship to the rolling arable countryside to the north, whilst enclosed by plantations running north eastwards along the ridge line. The hedgerows within the central and northern areas suggestive of former field boundaries running parallel with the contours and perpendicular where forming the ends of fields. Now, these features are absorbed within larger fields and offer only fragmented enclosure.

10.5.13 At the bottom of the slope, to the north-east, lies the village of Graveley. The settlement edges are generally well defined in landscape terms by existing hedgerows and tree lines, although built form is evident amidst the mature tree cover. Church Lane runs east out of the village as a sunken lane cutting across the arable landscape and rising to the wooded ridgeline alongside Ledge Side Plantation and Ten Acre Plantation. The narrow lane is a discrete element in the landscape allowing a consistent rolling arable landscape to extend northwards.

However, due to a combination of topography, with it mainly being located on south west facing slopes, and distance from Graveley, the portion of the Site located at the southern end of this local landscape character relates most strongly to the northern edge of Stevenage.

Public Rights of Way

10.5.14 Public Rights of Way (PROWs) are well represented locally, forming a network of routes connecting the northern urban edges of Stevenage and local settlements to the wider countryside (see Figure 10.7). Two public footpaths run north to south within the centre (Public footpaths 017 and 008) and eastern parts (Public footpath 023) of the Site, and also along the eastern part of the southern edge (Public footpath 018). A bridleway (Bridleway 022 and 105) runs along the western part of the southern edge. The PROW network links to the Hertfordshire Way (Recreational Route) located north of the Site connecting to Graveley and further to the north and north east.

Visibility

Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV)

10.5.15 The Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) is calculated for the Site boundary and the proposed built development within it is based on a 'digital terrain model' (DTM) with a resolution of 50m and in this instance a theoretical proposed building elements height between 1.6 and 12.5m height for viewers at 1.5m above ground. The maximum height above ground for the proposed buildings is 12.5m with other proposed buildings varying in height from 8.5m to 10m and 11m, as defined in the Building Heights Parameters Plan, submitted with the planning application. The ZTV is illustrated in Figure 10.6. The ZTV illustrates a broad swathe of land from which new elements within the Site could theoretically be seen. The calculation of the ZTV does not however consider the visual screening effects of any existing built form or vegetation.

10.5.16 The ZTV is used to inform the study area and a site visit was undertaken in good weather

conditions during September and November 2016. Publicly accessible areas within the ZTV were visited to test the viability of the ZTV and enable the mapping of a site-verified Visual Envelope (see Figure 10.7) for the maximum areas covered by the Site footprint. Professional judgement was used to interpolate the extent of the visual envelope between separate accessible locations. Viewpoints have been selected to encompass a range of visual receptor groups, from publically accessible locations within or adjacent to the site verified visual envelope and from a range of view directions. A viewpoint is included from the entrance to Chesfield Park to establish whether views are gained from a publically accessible location adjacent to this non-designated parkland. Another viewpoint is included from Rooks Nest House and it's garden to establish whether views are gained from this private location which has important literary connections as the former home of the author E.M Forster. The selected visual receptor groups and the associated representative viewpoints are detailed below.

Views and Visual Amenity

Visual Receptor Groups

A: Settlements and Dwellings

10.5.17 Figure 10.7 illustrates that there are residential dwellings within, or adjacent to, the visual envelope of the Site. For the purposes of this study, this visual receptor group is taken to represent residents and regular users/ visitors to buildings within the settlements. These visual receptors are sub-divided by geographic location as follows and are shown on Figures 10.7 and 10.8:

A1: Properties north of Rectory Lane

Representative Viewpoints: 4, 5 and 6.

10.5.18 Properties north of Rectory Lane form the existing settlement edge of Stevenage and the southern boundary of the Site. Properties typically date from the late 20th Century and are orientated around local access roads and culs-de-sac, so that aspects and respective views vary considerably. The area comprises mature garden vegetation and street trees, which together with the 2-storey houses, serve to limit views through to the Site.

10.5.19 Vantage points within the receptor area are limited to the northern edge, where close views are glimpsed from the ends of culs-de-sac, between houses, and from rear and side elevations of houses closest to the Site. Where permitted, the existing agricultural landscape occupies the foreground to mid-distance of views. Large pylons and high voltage electricity cables are a dominant and discordant element of the views.

10.5.20 Views across the Site are framed to the north by a tree line forming the western end of the Site's northern boundary. The tree belt screens views of the most northerly part of the Site.

A2: Weston Road Area

Representative Viewpoints: 1, 2 and 17.

10.5.21 Weston Road runs north to south parallel to the eastern boundary of the Site. Properties to the east of the road comprise late 20th Century semi-detached and terraced dwellings. Those towards the southern end are typically orientated north and south whilst those further north

(Rooks Nest Cottages) are orientated towards the west, and the Site. Weston Road is flanked by vegetation including mature trees and hedgerows. These provide a good degree of screening of views from the east, although in places, hedgerows are trimmed low and enable views over and across to the Site.

- 10.5.22 To the west of the road, properties lie within the St. Nicholas/ Rectory Lane Conservation Area. These include the large detached houses of Rooks Nest House (Grade I Listed and setting of E. M. Forster's 'Howards End') and Rooks Nest Farm (Grade II Listed farmhouse), as well as Weston Road Cemetery, The Old Bury (Grade II*) and St. Nicholas' Church (Grade I Listed), at the southern end of the receptor group. These western properties have a close visual relationship with the adjacent arable landscape within the Site, colloquially known as 'Forster Country'. Whilst these properties are typically bounded by mature trees and hedgerows, views are nonetheless experienced. Such views would look down across the local valley, extending from St. Nicholas' churchyard in the south to Chesfield Park in the north. Views westwards look across the eastern part of the Site which rolls down a local valley and back up over a local ridgeline in the mid-distance towards more distant views towards Hitchin. The electricity pylons are a prominent feature within these views and plainly do not evoke EM Forster's book Parts of the western portion are hidden from view due to the rolling topography.

A3: Graveley

Representative Viewpoints: 8, 9 and 10.

- 10.5.23 The village of Graveley lies to the northwest of the Site. Most of the village is designated as a Conservation Area. The village is divided by the High Street which is fronted by terraced cottages, larger detached dwellings, inns and a garage. More modern, mid-20th Century housing developments lie to the west of the High Street, along Ashwell Common, Ashwell Close and Oak Lane. To the east of the High Street, larger detached dwellings and farmhouses follow Church Lane running towards and beyond St. Mary's Church (Grade I Listed). These properties, including Graveley Bury (Grade II Listed), are typically set amidst mature treed gardens with trimmed hedges or stone walls, so that an intimate and enclosed character prevails. By contrast, an area of open space, including a cricket ground, lies towards the south of the village, although this is also well framed by boundary hedges.
- 10.5.24 The southernmost edge of Graveley lies outside of the Conservation Area. Views out from the village edge towards the direction of the Site are rare due to the screening effect of vegetation within the village.
- 10.5.25 Views from Church Lane are limited to a single field gate between The Old Rectory and Crow End (Grade II Listed) - see Viewpoint 9. Here the view looks across a small-medium sized field framed by hedges and hedgerow trees. The field rises to the south in the view reaching its horizon approximately 80m beyond the field boundary. A mature tree line extends beyond the field boundary to meet the horizon in the distance. The Site lies beyond this and is not visible.
- 10.5.26 Towards the southern approach to the village, from north of the Graveley Road/High Street/North Road junction to the southern edge of Graveley village the existing road is bounded on the east by a low embankment with intermittent shrubby vegetation. These combine to conceal the existing fields to the farmland north of the Site and the Site itself from views from the village approach.
- 10.5.27 Properties to the west of the village in the Ashwell Common area occupy elevated ground (100-

105m AoD) but views back across the village towards the Site are typically screened by intervening vegetation and built form. Views are generally likely to be restricted to second storey east-facing rooms within houses to the west of Ashwell Common. A single property at the southern end of Ashwell Common has a more open view to the south-east, towards the Site. The view (see Viewpoint 7) looks across a large open arable field in the foreground which drops towards Graveley Road in the mid-distance before fields to the north of the Site can be seen to rise towards the ridgeline. Existing fields within the Site south of the tree belt are concealed. However, the tall electricity pylons crossing the Site and the prominent Lister Hospital building are clearly visible from this part of the village.

B: Roads and Road Users

10.5.28 Figure 10.7 illustrates that there are roads within, or adjacent to, the visual envelope of the proposed allocation boundaries. For the purposes of this study, this visual receptor group is taken to represent motorists, pedestrians, horse riders and cyclists using the highway network. These visual receptors are sub-divided by geographic location as follows:

B1: Graveley Road/ North Road

Representative Viewpoint: 6.

10.5.29 North Road extends northwards out from the existing urban edge of Stevenage and firstly alongside the western boundary of the Site. Beyond the Site to the north, the road meets the Graveley Road at a T-Junction. Graveley Road continues northwards to the village of Graveley where the road become the High Street.

10.5.30 The highway route is generally well bounded by trees and shrubby vegetation so that views east towards the Site are well screened. Two notable gaps in the vegetation provide glimpsed transitional views into the Site. To the south of the route, a 40m opening allows views into the Site (see Viewpoint 6). Here the view reveals a large arable field rising in elevation towards the east. A tree belt in the north of the Site frames the view to the north and conceals the northernmost smaller part of the Site. Large electricity pylons and overhead cables dominate this transitional view.

10.5.31 Another gap in the highway embankment vegetation is presented just north of the tree belt on the north western edge of the Site. The gap is approximately 60m in length and permits transitional views east and north-east into the arable farmland rising in elevation to the north of the Site. The tree line conceals the Site with the exception of a small existing field access break which allows a narrow vista through to the field beyond the tree line. Elsewhere on the route there are no existing views of the Site.

B2: Weston Road

Representative Viewpoint: 2.

10.5.32 Weston Road extends northwards from St. Nicholas' Church towards the southeast corner of Chesfield Park, where the road is blocked off to vehicle access although cyclists and pedestrians can pass onwards through to Islington Way. The route runs parallel to the eastern

extent of the Site, separated by Weston Road Cemetery to the south, Rooks Nest Farm, Rooks Nest House and The Lodge to the northern extent. The road marks the eastern boundary of the St. Nicholas/ Rectory Lane Conservation Area.

10.5.33 Views from the road are generally well enclosed by the adjacent boundary vegetation and buildings so that any visual relationship to the Site is intermittent and transitional. The most notable existing view westwards is located adjacent to the recently extended Weston Road Cemetery grounds. At this location the boundary hedge is kept clipped to a height of only 1.5m, permitting views over from taller motor vehicles, pedestrians and horse riders. The view looks across the managed landscape of the cemetery which is framed by a new hedge and tree planting. Beyond the cemetery, the view takes in the rolling arable landscape eastern portion of the Site and the existing urban edge of Stevenage to the south. The arable landscape is divided by existing tree belts and unclipped hedgerows. A ridgeline forms the horizon to the north, limiting views towards the northernmost part of the Site. Lister Hospital and large pylons are prominent discordant features within this transitional view.

10.5.34 Further north on Weston Road, views towards the Site are restricted to a single opening at the entrance to Rooks Nest Farm (see Viewpoint 1). Here, the transitional view looks across a paddock in the foreground, framed to the south by the farm buildings and to the north by mature trees in the grounds of Rooks Nest House. The vista between comprises rolling arable fields, a tree belt and large pylons within the Site. Views are also gained to the northernmost part of the Site beyond the tree belt. Over the ridge, the existing glimpsed vista reveals properties at Graveley village.

B3: Church Lane/Back Lane

Representative Viewpoints: 9, 12, 13 and 14

10.5.35 Church Lane extends from Graveley village eastwards towards the northern edge of Chesfield Park. The first half of the route, once out of the village, follows the contours of the southern slope of a shallow valley within an open rolling arable landscape. The lane is locally devoid of boundary vegetation allowing clear views to the north, south and east. To the north, the view extends as far as the public footpath 5, which follows a shallow ridge and tree line to the northeast. To the east, the view is framed by Ledge Side Plantation running northwards from Chesfield Park. Further south, the Park is framed by Ten Acres Plantation which follows the scarp edge and forms the visual skyline.

10.5.36 To the south of Church Lane further arable fields are seen to roll down towards the receptor group. These fields lie within the area to the north of the Site but the Site itself is not visible due to the intervening topography.

10.5.37 Church Lane continues eastwards to meet with Ledge Side Plantation where it turns to the south west and continues up the scarp edge. Here the Lane is framed by mature tree cover which conceals views back across the lower lying fields, including the land to the north of the Site. A small field opening at the top of the scarp permits a glimpsed, transitional vista at Viewpoint 13. However the lane abruptly turns to the north-east, preventing lingering views for transitory receptors. Where witnessed, this view looks across a small arable field framed to the south by Ten Acre Plantation. The field drops away in the mid-distance where the top of a hedgerow/ tree line can be seen. The northernmost part of the Site is partly visible as are the upper parts of the tree belt in the northern part of the Site. Large electricity pylons and overhead cables are

also seen in the view with the Lister Hospital also clearly seen in the mid-distance. Back Lane extends from the eastern end of Church Lane and passes the entrance to Chesfield Park where oblique views across the adjacent parkland to the south are gained.

C: Public Rights of Way

Figure 10.7 illustrates that there are a number of public rights of way within, or adjacent to, the visual envelope of the Site. For the purposes of this study, this visual receptor group is taken to represent walkers and horse riders (where designated as bridleways). These visual receptors are sub-divided by geographic location as follows:

C1: Hertfordshire Way between The Lodge and Graveley village (Public footpaths 007 and 008)

Representative Viewpoints: 9, 13 and 18.

10.5.38 The Hertfordshire Way is a national recreational trail which crosses the farmland to the north of the Site. Locally, the route runs from the village of Graveley (see Viewpoint 9) in a southeast direction across arable fields to the scarp ridge (see Viewpoint 18) at the southeast corner of Ten Acre Plantation. The route then abruptly turns to the northeast following the field boundary adjacent to Ten Acre Plantation.

10.5.39 From the scarp ridgeline, views are open and panoramic towards the west, northwest and north. The view looks down across the open arable landscape back towards the village of Graveley and the surrounding arable landscape, which rises again in the north. The A1(M) is a notable discordant feature in the panorama.

10.5.40 The lower section of the route towards the village of Graveley, gains an increasingly enclosed character as the settlement edge restricts longer views. A subtle ridgeline running from Ten Acre Plantation westwards also limits views southwards such that the Site is not visible until higher elevations. Here views are limited to the northernmost part of the Site to the north of the tree belt with views further south being screened.

C2: Public Footpath 022

Representative Viewpoint: 8.

10.5.41 Public footpath 006 follows the southern boundary of Graveley village joining Graveley Road with Church Lane (via the Hertfordshire Way). Whilst the views towards the Site from within the village are generally well screened by mature garden vegetation, this route falls outside of the garden boundaries and is visually open to the arable landscape which rises upwards to the east.

10.5.42 From this receptor group, the larger part of Site is concealed by a tree line following the administrative boundary, although the large pylons crossing the allocation are clearly visible on the skyline. In the foreground, the arable fields rise towards the Site with the northernmost part of the Site visible on the upper slopes.

10.5.43 Further northeast, the footpath runs alongside Graveley Bury to meet Church Lane and the route falls outside of the Graveley Conservation Area. This section falls within a smaller enclosed field framed by hedges and hedgerow trees. The field rises to the south in the view reaching its horizon approximately 80m beyond the field boundary. A mature tree line extends

beyond the field boundary to meet the horizon at a distance of approximately 230m from Viewpoint 8. The existing ground conceals the Site which is located beyond the horizon line.

C3: Public Footpaths 8, 17, 18, 23/ Bridleways 22 and 105

Representative Viewpoints: 3, 4, 5, 6, 15 and 16.

10.5.44 This visual receptor group includes public rights of way (bridleways) which follow the existing urban edge of Stevenage between North Road and St. Nicholas' Church. It also includes two footpath routes which run northeast from this edge and converge towards Ten Acre Plantation. From these routes views look across a large rolling arable field which forms the Site. The field rises to the north, where it is bounded by a tree belt line following the north eastern Site boundary, and by Ten Acre Plantation framing Chesfield Park. A fold in the landscape runs southwest from Chesfield Park so that routes across the landscape are afforded a variety of aspects. From all locations the existing Stevenage urban edge forms an abrupt and prominent feature to views, whilst the large pylons crossing the field are dominant. The subtle ridgeline on the administrative boundary limits views north to the tree shelter belt from the Public Rights of Way within the Site that extend along and adjacent to the northern edge of Stevenage. Footpaths 17 and 23 however gain more widespread views as they rise up the hillside. The views include a broad panorama south to Stevenage and the A1(M). However, to the north, the views from the top of the ridge permit views of the farmland to the north of the Site.

10.5.45 Public rights of way 17, 23 and 18 are located within the St. Nicholas/ Rectory Lane Conservation Area.

C4: Ashwell Common (Permissive Path)

Representative Viewpoint: 7.

10.5.46 This permissive path crosses Ashwell Common from the southwest of Graveley village in a line parallel to the A1(M). The motorway is both a visually and audibly dominant feature of the route. The motorway serves to limit more distant views to the west. To the east, views are broad. They look across an open arable field which falls towards Graveley Road, which in turn gives way to a further large-scale arable field rising back up to a scarp forming the wooded boundary with Chesfield Park.

Representative Viewpoint: 14

10.5.47 From Ten Acre plantation a tree belt can be seen in views to follow the ridgeline running broadly in a westerly direction. The ridge and tree belt combine to screen views of all but a small part of the northernmost part of the Site. However, the large overhead pylons can be clearly seen over and above the tree line. Further south, Lister Hospital is a prominent landmark identifying the urban edge of Stevenage.

C5: Public Bridleway 5

Representative Viewpoints: 10 and 11.

10.5.48 Bridleway 5 runs northeast from Graveley village (near to St. Mary's Church) following a local

ridgeline upwards to the scarp edge. From the village the route follows a narrow sunken lane which is flanked by wooded embankments preventing views out to the surrounding countryside. A brief gap in the vegetation at the start of the route, south of the church (Viewpoint 10) reveals an arable field in the foreground rolling downwards towards a small wooded stream and Church Lane beyond, which is partly visible rising towards Ledge Side Plantation. Beyond Church Lane, arable fields can be seen rising back up the hillside towards Ten Acre Plantation. These plantations form the visual skyline. A field boundary hedgerow can be seen running parallel to Ten Acre Plantation with the ground between not visible. No views to the Site are gained.

10.5.49 Further along the bridleway to the northeast, the route emerges from the sunken lane into a more open arable landscape. From here, broad panoramas are afforded, particularly towards the south (see Viewpoint 11). These views comprise a large-scale rolling arable landscape with fields divided in part by tree belts. Plantation woodland occupies the scarp ridge and the skyline. From this more elevated part of the route, the farmland to the north of the Site is visible with a small part of the northernmost part of the Site visible. Large electricity pylons and overhead cables within the Site are also seen in the view with the Lister Hospital also in the distance.

Table 10.7: Representative Viewpoints Summary

Viewpoint No.	Season	Figure(s) Ref.	Viewpoint Description
1	Summer & Winter	10.9	View from Weston Road, adjacent to Rook's Nest Farm looking west. (British National Grid: 524417, 226632).
2	Summer & Winter	10.10	View from Weston Road Cemetery looking north west (British National Grid: 524312, 226354)
3	Summer & Winter	10.11 & 10.12	View from footpath 18 at northern edge of St. Nicholas churchyard looking north. (British National Grid: 524099, 226311).
4	Summer & Winter	10.13	View from junction of public footpaths 18 and 23 looking north west. (British National Grid: 523927, 226436).
5	Summer & Winter	10.14 & 10.15	View from junction of public footpaths 17, 18 and Bridleway 105 looking north. (British National Grid: 523653, 226667).
6	Summer & Winter	10.16 & 10.17	View from Bridleway 105 looking north east. (British National Grid: 523212, 226801).
7	Summer & Winter	10.18 & 10.19	View from Ashwell Common permissive path looking east. (British National Grid: 522740, 227405).
8	Summer & Winter	10.20 & 10.21	View from public footpath 6, near Graveley Cricket Ground, looking east. (British National Grid 523317, 227603).
9	Summer & Winter	10.22 & 10.23	View from Hertfordshire Way, near Church Lane looking south. (British National Grid 523670, 227860).
10	Summer & Winter	10.24 & 10.25	View from Bridleway 5 near St. Mary's Church, Graveley looking east. (British National Grid 523556, 228093).
11	Summer & Winter	10.26	View from Bridleway 5, to the north east of Graveley looking south. (British National Grid 524099, 228472).
12	Summer & Winter	10.27 & 10.28	View from Church Lane looking south. (British National Grid 523927, 227851).
13	Summer & Winter	10.29 & 10.30	View from Hertfordshire Way near Church Lane looking south west. (British National Grid 524318, 227737).
14	Summer & Winter	10.31 & 10.32	View from entrance to Chesfield Park at Back Lane looking south west. (British National Grid 524674, 227664).
15	Summer & Winter	10.33 & 10.34	View from public footpath 8 looking east. (British National Grid 523971, 227148).

16	Summer & Winter	10.35 & 10.36	View from public footpath 23 looking west. (British National Grid 524,038,226,707).
17	Winter	10.37 & 10.38	View from Rooks Nest House looking west. (British National Grid 524,423,226,741).
18	Winter	10.39 & 10.40	View from Hertfordshire Way looking south south west (British National Grid 523,780,227,393).

10.6 Potential effects

10.6.1 This section firstly identifies the various landscape and visual receptors and their sensitivity. As the mitigation for the proposed development has been considered as part of the design process, it is considered appropriate to assess the predicted effects/impacts within the residual effects section of this chapter.

Landscape Receptors Sensitivity

Local Landscape Character Area 1 (LLCA1) – Suburban edge

10.6.2 This LLCA will overall have a Low-Medium sensitivity as it comprises an area of open arable fields bordered along their southern edge by the housing which forms part of Stevenage's northern edge. This housing exerts an urbanising influence on the LLCA which does not contain any landscape designations. This urban/suburban edge is not buffered by any landscape elements which means that there is no gradual transition between the property boundaries and the adjacent arable fields. The property boundaries generally comprise a mixture of timber fencing and hedges of varying height and depth. The LLCA exhibits a strong degree of enclosure along its northern and north eastern edges, provided by a virtually continuous belt of native trees, however this is offset by a relatively low degree of enclosure along much of its eastern edge as it comprises an intermittent hedgerow, with a higher degree of physical enclosure afforded along its western edge where it abuts the North Road. The presence of significant landscape detractors in the form of two lines of electricity pylons reduces the sensitivity of this LLCA. The factors described above reduce the value of the landscape within this LLCA with the detracting elements jointly resulting in an area that has the potential to accommodate some degree of change.

10.6.3 The potential effects of the proposed development include the replacement of the existing arable fields with housing of varying heights and densities and the loss of parts of the vegetation adjoining the North Road which are likely to result in potential adverse effects on the landscape character. There are likely to be some beneficial landscape effects arising from the creation of a series of surface water attenuation features with associated planting within a central area of green space, the planting of a network of street trees together with a green corridor of native hedges and trees along the southern edge. Extensive, but carefully considered planting of native species is also proposed.

Local Landscape Character Area 2 (LLCA2) – Chesfield Valley

10.6.4 It is considered that this LLCA will have a Medium-High sensitivity overall as it comprises a

shallow valley of arable fields that extends in a southerly direction from Chesfield Park that is located further to the north. Although undesignated in landscape terms this LLCA is wholly located within the northern part of the St. Nicholas/Rectory Lane Conservation Area. In value terms it displays positive enclosure to the north formed by a combination of the rising ground and the presence of both Ten Acre Plantation and Park Plantation which jointly serve to provide a wooded edge with the adjacent landscape of Chesfield Park. The houses that border the LLCA to the east include the listed buildings of Rooks Nest House and Rooks Nest Farm with Weston Road Cemetery extending down to St. Nicholas' Church and churchyard. These heritage features contain and are bounded by large amounts of mature vegetation. Jointly, these features exert a positive influence on the edges of the LLCA in conjunction with a mature hedgerow along its southern edge. A mature hedge line extends from east to west across the LLCA. These positive elements are offset to a degree by the detracting influence of the electricity pylons that extend across the area. Collectively these features serve to provide a reasonably high landscape value which correspondingly lowers its capacity for change.

- 10.6.5 The proposals for this part of the Site consist of the creation of a series of hay meadows with additional hedge and tree planting together with a surface water attenuation pond/basin and an orchard. Jointly, these proposals are likely to result in highly positive landscape effects.

Local Landscape Character Area 3 (LLCA3) – Graveley Edge

- 10.6.6 This LLCA is broadly defined by its open aspect, situated as it is on a local ridge and comprising of a number of large arable fields with little enclosure except along the peripheral edges. Positive enclosure is afforded along the eastern edge by Ten Acre Plantation, along the southern edge by a linear belt of woodland and along the western edge by the vegetation adjoining variously the North Road/Graveley Road and the southern edge of Graveley. The open aspect of the LLCA provides the opportunity for long distance, panoramic views to the south and west. These factors combined result in a Medium sensitivity as the LLCA has some value locally but is undesignated in landscape terms but also has few detracting influences. It is therefore considered to be able to accommodate some change.
- 10.6.7 The potential landscape effects within this LLCA are limited to the replacement of a part of an arable field with a combination of a primary school, local centre and an area of housing which is likely to result in limited adverse effects. However, there are also proposals for additional planting of native species trees, shrubs and hedgerow restoration on the site boundary.

Visual Receptors Sensitivity (Refer to Figures 10.9 to 10.4 for viewpoint photographs)

Table 10.8: Representative Viewpoints Summary Sensitivity

Viewpoint No.	Visual Receptor Group.	Sensitivity description.	Figure(s) Ref.	Viewpoint Description
1	A2	The visual receptors likely to experience this view are residents of	10.9	View from Weston Road, adjacent to

		properties located adjacent to Weston Road, some of which are listed buildings and are therefore considered to have a Very High Sensitivity due to the perceived value of the view by these receptors and their consequent susceptibility to change.		Rook's Nest Farm looking west. (British National Grid: 524417, 226632).
2	A2,B2	The visual receptors likely to experience this view are residents of properties located adjacent to Weston Road and visitors to the cemetery and are therefore considered jointly to have a High Sensitivity due to the perceived value of the view by these receptors and their consequent susceptibility to change. Users of Weston Road are considered to have a Medium sensitivity due to their predominant focus likely to be on the road corridor.	10.10	View from Weston Road Cemetery looking north west (British National Grid: 524312, 226354)
3	C3	The visual receptors likely to experience this view are users of footpath 018 who are likely to have an appreciation of their surroundings and a consequent heightened susceptibility to change. High sensitivity.	10.11 & 10.12	View from footpath 18 at northern edge of St. Nicholas churchyard looking north. (British National Grid: 524099, 226311).
4	A1,C3	The visual receptors likely to experience this view are users of footpath 018 and residents of properties adjoining the southern boundary of the Site who are likely to have an appreciation of their surroundings and a consequent heightened susceptibility to change. High sensitivity.	10.13	View from junction of public footpaths 18 and 23 looking north west. (British National Grid: 523927, 226436).
5	A1,C3	The visual receptors likely to experience this view are users of footpath 018 and residents of properties adjoining the southern boundary of the Site who are likely to have an appreciation of their surroundings and a consequent heightened susceptibility to change. High sensitivity.	10.14 & 10.15	View from junction of public footpaths 17, 18 and Bridleway 105 looking north. (British National Grid: 523653, 226667).
6	A1,B1	The visual receptors likely to experience this view are users of Bridleway 105 and residents of properties adjoining the southern boundary of the Site who are likely to have an appreciation of their surroundings and a consequent	10.16 & 10.17	View from Bridleway 105 looking north east. Also users of North Road (British National Grid: 523212, 226801).

	C3	heightened susceptibility to change. High sensitivity. Receptors of the view from North Road are considered to have a Low sensitivity due to the predominant focus of their view being that of the road corridor.		
7	C4	The visual receptors likely to experience this view are users of the permissive path who are likely to have an appreciation of their surroundings and a consequent heightened susceptibility to change. High sensitivity.	10.18 & 10.19	View from Ashwell Common permissive path looking east. (British National Grid: 522740, 227405).
8	C2	The visual receptors likely to experience this view are users of footpath 006 who are likely to have an appreciation of their surroundings and a consequent heightened susceptibility to change. High sensitivity.	10.20 & 10.21	View from public footpath 006, near Graveley Cricket Ground, looking east. (British National Grid 523317, 227603).
9	A3,B3,C1	The visual receptors likely to experience this view are users of Hertfordshire Way and residents of properties adjoining Church Lane on the southern edge of Graveley who are likely to have an appreciation of their surroundings and a consequent heightened susceptibility to change. Very High sensitivity. Receptors of this view also include users of Church Lane who are likely to have a Medium sensitivity.	10.22 & 10.23	View from Hertfordshire Way, near Church Lane looking south. (British National Grid 523670, 227860).
10	A3,C5	The visual receptors likely to experience this view are residents of properties adjoining Church Lane on the eastern edge of Graveley and users of Bridleway 005 who are likely to have an appreciation of their surroundings and a consequent heightened susceptibility to change. Very High-High sensitivity.	10.24 & 10.25	View from Bridleway 005 near St. Mary's Church, Graveley looking east. (British National Grid 523556, 228093).
11	C5	The visual receptors likely to experience this view are users of Bridleway 005 who are likely to have an appreciation of their surroundings and a consequent heightened susceptibility to change. High sensitivity.	10.26	View from Bridleway 005, to the north east of Graveley looking south. (British National Grid 524099, 228472).
12	B3	The visual receptors likely to experience this view are users of Church Lane who are likely to have a limited appreciation of their view as their attention will predominantly	10.27 & 10.28	View from Church Lane looking south. (British National Grid 523927, 227851).

		be focused on the road corridor. Medium sensitivity.		
13	B3,C1	The visual receptors likely to experience this view are users of the Hertfordshire Way (Public footpath 008) who are likely to have an appreciation of their surroundings and a consequent heightened susceptibility to change. Very High sensitivity. Receptors of this view also include users of Church Lane who are likely to have a Medium sensitivity as they are likely to have a limited appreciation of their view as their attention will predominantly be focused on the road corridor.	10.29 & 10.30	View from Hertfordshire Way (Public footpath 008) near Church Lane looking south west. (British National Grid 524318, 227737).
14	B3	Receptors of this view are likely to be users of Church Lane who are likely to have a Medium sensitivity as they are likely to have a limited appreciation of their view as their attention will predominantly be focused on the road corridor.	10.31 & 10.32	View from entrance to Chesfield Park at Back Lane looking south west. (British National Grid 524674, 227664).
15	C3	The visual receptors likely to experience this view are users of footpath 008 who are likely to have an appreciation of their surroundings and a consequent heightened susceptibility to change. High sensitivity.	10.33 & 10.34	View from public footpath 008 looking east. (British National Grid 523971, 227148).
16	C3	The visual receptors likely to experience this view are users of footpath 023 who are likely to have an appreciation of their surroundings and a consequent heightened susceptibility to change. High sensitivity.	10.35 & 10.36	View from public footpath 023 looking west. (British National Grid 524,038,226,707).
17	A2	The visual receptors likely to experience this view are residents of Rooks Nest House, a listed building with noted literary connections (E.M.Forster) and are therefore considered to have a Very High Sensitivity due to the perceived value of the view by these receptors and their consequent susceptibility to change.	10.37 & 10.38	View from Rooks Nest House looking west. (British National Grid: 524423, 226741).
18	C1	The visual receptors likely to experience this view are users of the Hertfordshire Way (Public footpath 007) who are likely to have an appreciation of their surroundings and a consequent heightened	10.39 & 10.40	View from Hertfordshire Way (Public footpath 007), between Graveley Bury and Ten Acre Plantation looking south. (British National Grid 523780, 227393).

		susceptibility to change. Very High sensitivity.		
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10.7 Mitigation and enhancement

- 10.7.1 The following section outlines mitigation measures incorporated into the design of the scheme assessed in order to reduce impacts.
- 10.7.2 The design of the proposed development has taken into account the potential effects for both landscape receptors and the visual receptors. The proposed design measures are shown on both the Green Infrastructure and Drainage Parameters Plan (figure 3.4) and on the Landscape and Ecology Strategy Plan (figure 10.41) submitted as part of the planning application.
- 10.7.3 These are listed in the text below with the appropriate reference numbers (shown in brackets) as indicated on Landscape and Ecology Strategy Plan.
- 10.7.4 A key element is the provision of approximately 40 hectares of landscaped open space on the eastern part of the site, where the existing agricultural fields (2) will be kept free of built development and managed and planted to create smaller, hedged hay meadows with improved public access, within the area shown as St Nicholas' Meadows on figure 10.41.
- 10.7.5 The landscape design measures also include the provision of a native tree and shrub planting belt along the eastern edge of the proposed housing parcel (15) located within the Conservation Area. This will be supplemented by an enhancement of the existing hedgerow to the east that is located adjacent to this edge of the proposed residential parcel E on figure 3.1 and the planting of a number of tree copses (6) which will be aligned broadly parallel with this existing hedgerow. A larger tree copse (6) is also proposed within the northern section of this edge. The combination of these planting proposals will effectively visually integrate this edge of the proposed housing into the receiving landscape over time (trees estimated to have established to a height sufficient to screen the roofs of the eastern housing parcel within 15-20 years).
- 10.7.6 Similarly a further native tree and shrub planting belt and a copse of native trees (15) is proposed along the eastern edge of the most northern housing parcel which is located to the north of the existing woodland shelter belt. This will provide a vegetative buffer to the north eastern edge of this proposed housing parcel.
- 10.7.7 Another native species planting belt (15) is proposed to the northern edge of the proposed development to supplement the existing hedgerow and in order to provide a green edge to this section of the site boundary and to filter views to this edge of the proposals in views from the north.
- 10.7.8 Extensive additional native species hedgerows with trees (4) and an orchard (1) are proposed in conjunction with the establishment of a series of hay meadows (2) within the St. Nicholas Meadows area. These measures will enhance both the landscape character and biodiversity of this part of the Site.
- 10.7.9 The extensive existing woodland belt (5) that extends from east to west within the Site will be retained which screen the majority of the buildings within the proposed development in views from the north. A small section (approximately 13m wide) is proposed to be removed to facilitate the construction of the road that links the central part of the proposals to the most northern part of the Site.

- 10.7.10 A network of trees (13) will be planted either side of the roads within the proposed development in order to provide an attractive streetscape. A combination of hedges and trees (7) is proposed between the existing houses on the northern edge of Stevenage and the southern edge of the proposed housing to create a linear green corridor which will define the existing footpath/bridleway corridor and filter views between the existing and proposed houses.
- 10.7.11 Parts of the existing vegetation located along the western boundary of the Site will be removed (12) to facilitate the two proposed access points for the proposed development. This vegetation will be replaced with native trees and shrubs in order to provide an appropriate framing of the entrance points whilst respecting the visibility splays associated with the new junction arrangements.
- 10.7.12 A series of attenuation ponds/basins (11) are proposed along the centrally located area of green space under the high voltage electricity pylons and cables, which will be planted with appropriate species of marginal/emergent planting around their fringes with complementary groups of low level native trees and shrubs. These features will provide the houses to the north and south with an attractive vista and provide opportunities for informal amenity for local residents which will be enhanced by a series of proposed paths. It is also proposed to underground the northern electricity pylons and cables within the proposed built footprint of the development which will result in beneficial landscape and visual effects within this part of the Site.

Phasing

- 10.7.13 It is proposed that the planting of the various landscape features within the St. Nicholas Meadows area of the Site and those along the most northerly boundary of the Site will take place in advance of the construction of the houses within the eastern and northern parts of the site. This will allow these areas of planting to begin to become established by the time that the construction of the houses is complete within these parts of the Site.
- 10.7.14 It is acknowledged that there will be temporary effects on both the landscape character and visual amenity during the construction phase of the project due to the presence of contractor's vehicles, plant and equipment and the consequent noise and dust arising from the construction activities including the undergrounding of part of the northern overhead electricity lines. These effects are taken into account within the assessment of effects below and will be mitigated as far as possible through best practice measures that would be set out in a Construction and Environmental Management Plan. This would minimise the impacts of traffic, noise, dust and lighting, and would limit construction operations to standard working hours.

10.8 Residual effects

- 10.8.1 These are identified within tables 10.9, 10.10 and further detailed within the text below:

Landscape Receptors

North Herts Landscape Study Area 216 'Arlesey - Great Wymondley'

- 10.8.2 The development proposals will have a Minor Adverse level of effect at construction stage on this published LCA; which takes into account that a part of the southern section of this character

area (within the Site boundary) will change from an area of arable fields to an area of residential development with associated landscape proposals, resulting overall in an adverse effect. The most south-easterly part of this landscape character area will change from an arable field into two hay meadows with native tree copses and an attenuation pond/basin, resulting in a beneficial effect. It is therefore considered that given the small scale of the development proposals compared to the size of the total character area that the scale of change will be relatively minor. Once the various mitigation measures have established it is considered that the residual level of effect on the character area as a whole will be Negligible Adverse.

North Herts Landscape Study Area 219 'Baldock Gap'

- 10.8.3 The development proposals will have a Negligible Adverse level of effect at construction stage on this published LCA. This takes into account that a very small part of the southern section of this character area (the most northern area of the Site) will change from part of an area of arable fields to an area of mixed use development with associated landscape proposals, resulting in a very small adverse effect. The majority of the landscape character area within the Site boundary will change from an area of predominantly arable fields to a mixture of hay meadows with additional hedgerows, tree copses and an orchard which will result in a beneficial effect. Overall, it is therefore considered that due to the small scale of the part of the Site contained within the character area and the fact that most of this will comprise beneficial landscape proposals that the residual effect will be Minor Beneficial.

Local Landscape Character Area 1 (LLCA1) – Suburban edge

- 10.8.4 The development proposals will have a Major/Moderate Adverse level of effect on this LLCA at the construction stage due to the change from an area of arable fields, bordered on its northern edge by a linear woodland belt but subject to the detracting influences of the adjacent built northern edge of Stevenage and the presence of high voltage electricity pylons to an area of proposed residential development with associated road infrastructure. It is considered that over time when the mitigation measures such as the undergrounding of the northern set of electricity pylons and cables, street tree planting, hedge and tree planting along the southern edge and a central area of green space including SuDS ponds/basins and associated planting have become established that the residual level of effect will reduce to Moderate Adverse.

10.8.5 Local Landscape Character Area 2 (LLCA2) – Chesfield Valley

- 10.8.6 The development proposals will have a Moderate Beneficial level of effect on this LLCA at the construction stage due to the change from an area of predominantly arable fields to a mixture of hay meadows with additional hedgerows, native species tree and shrub planting, a SuDS pond/basin, tree copses and an orchard which will result in a beneficial effect. It is considered that over time when the mitigation measures detailed above have established that the residual level of effect will change to Major Beneficial.

Local Landscape Character Area 3 (LLCA3) – Graveley Edge

10.8.7 The development proposals will have a Minor Adverse level of effect on this LLCA at the construction stage due to the change from an area of arable fields with an open aspect and character to a small area of mixed use development, to the north of the existing woodland belt, enclosed along its northern edge by the landscape proposals (native tree and shrub belt) forming a green edge supplementing the existing patchy remnant hedgerows. Street trees are also proposed as part of the development. The mixed use development proposed within this character area will only entail the loss of a relatively small area of the existing arable fields. It is therefore considered that over time when the mitigation measures detailed above have established that the residual level of effect will be Minor Adverse.

Visual Receptors

Viewpoint 1

10.8.8 The development proposals will have a Moderate/Minor Adverse level of effect on this visual receptor (residents of properties to the east and adjacent to Weston Road) at the construction stage due to the change in the view to incorporate partial, middle distance views of the eastern edge of the proposed built development which will be filtered to a degree initially (5 years after planting) by the proposed orchard and hedge planting. The degree of concealment afforded by the planting proposals of the built development edge will increase markedly over time to a point (15-20 years after planting) where it is screened even during winter months. It is therefore considered that over time when the mitigation measures detailed above have established that the residual level of effect will change to Minor Beneficial as views to the visually detracting electricity pylons (including the undergrounding of the northern pylons and cables within the built footprint of the development) become increasingly diminished and the proposed planting becomes more prominent in the view.

Viewpoint 2

10.8.9 The development proposals will have a Major/Moderate Adverse level of effect on this visual receptor (residents of properties to the east and adjacent to Weston Road, visitors to the cemetery) at the construction stage due to the change in the view to incorporate middle distance views of the eastern edge of the proposed built development which will be filtered to a limited degree initially (5 years after planting) by the proposed native tree and shrub and hedgerow planting. Longer distance views to the west will be slightly reduced by the introduction of the proposal, however it should be noted that this includes the undergrounding of the northern set of electricity pylons and cables within the built footprint of the development. The degree of concealment afforded by the planting proposals of the built development edge will increase over time to a point (15-20 years after planting) where views will be limited to glimpses of roofs even during winter months. The views will also change in the middle distance over time, from arable fields to include hay meadows, additional hedgerows and tree copses, which are considered to be beneficial constituents of the view. It is therefore considered that over time when the mitigation measures detailed above have established that the residual level of effect will change

overall to Minor Adverse. It is considered that users of Weston Road will experience limited, oblique glimpses of the proposed development and will therefore be subject to a lower level of adverse effects; resulting in a residual Negligible Adverse effect.

Viewpoint 3

10.8.10 The development proposals will have a Moderate Adverse level of effect on this visual receptor (users of the Public Right of Way) at the construction stage due to the change in the view to incorporate middle distance views of the eastern edge of the proposed built development on the skyline, which will be filtered to a limited degree initially (5 years after planting) by the proposed native tree and shrub and hedgerow planting. The visibility of the pylons and cables will be reduced by the undergrounding of part of the northern overhead electricity lines. The degree of concealment afforded by the planting proposals of the built development edge will increase over time to a point (15-20 years after planting) where views will be limited to glimpses of roofs even during winter months. The views will also change in the middle distance over time, from arable fields with limited hedgerows to include hay meadows, additional hedgerows and tree copses, which are considered to be beneficial constituents of the view. It is therefore considered that over time when the mitigation measures detailed above have established that the residual level of effect will change overall to Minor Adverse.

Viewpoint 4

10.8.11 The development proposals will have a Major/Moderate Adverse level of effect on this visual receptor (users of the Public Right of Way and residents of adjacent houses) at the construction stage due to the change in the view to incorporate relatively close views of the eastern edge of the proposed built development on the skyline, which will be filtered to a limited degree initially (5 years after planting) by the adjacent proposed native tree and shrub, hedgerow and tree copse planting. The degree of concealment afforded by the planting proposals of the built development edge will increase over time to a point (15-20 years after planting) where views will be limited to glimpses of roofs even during winter months. The views will also change over time, from an arable field to include a hay meadow and a SuDS pond/basin, which are considered to be beneficial components of the view. It is therefore considered that over time when the mitigation measures detailed above have established that the residual level of effect will change overall to Minor Adverse.

Viewpoint 5

10.8.12 The development proposals will have a Major Adverse level of effect on these visual receptors (users of the Public Right of Way and residents of adjacent houses) at the construction stage due to the change in the view to incorporate close views of the southern edge of the proposed built development and the adjacent northerly orientated tree lined street. These views will be filtered to a very limited degree initially (5 years after planting) by the adjacent proposed native hedgerow/tree planting and the nearby street trees. The detracting views of overhead electricity cables will be marginally reduced due to the proposed undergrounding of the northern set of

pylons and cables. The degree of visual filtering afforded by the planting proposals of the built development will increase over time (15-20 years after planting) but views of the adjacent proposed houses will still be afforded. It is therefore considered that over time when the mitigation measures detailed above have established that the residual level of effect will change overall to Moderate Adverse.

Viewpoint 6

10.8.13 The development proposals will have a Major Adverse level of effect on these visual receptors (users of the Public Right of Way and residents of adjacent houses) at the construction stage due to the change in the view to incorporate close views of the southern edge of the proposed built development. These views will be filtered to a very limited degree initially (5 years after planting) by the adjacent proposed native hedgerow/tree planting. The detracting views of overhead electricity cables will be marginally reduced due to the proposed undergrounding of the northern set of pylons and cables. The degree of visual filtering afforded by the planting proposals of the built development will increase over time (15-20 years after planting) but views of the adjacent proposed houses will still be afforded. It is therefore considered that over time when the mitigation measures detailed above have established that the residual level of effect will change overall to Moderate Adverse.

10.8.14 Users of North Road who currently only experience oblique, glimpsed views into the arable fields of the Site through the gateway located at the south west corner, due to the screening effect of the mature vegetation located on the eastern side of the road will initially experience views (Major/Moderate Adverse at the construction stage) of the two access junctions with associated lighting and signage together with partial views of the proposed buildings situated along the western edge of the proposed development and the consequent removal of sections of the roadside vegetation. Over time when the tree and shrub planting proposed around the edges of the access road junctions has established it is likely that the resulting residual effects will be Moderate/Minor Adverse.

Viewpoint 7

10.8.15 The development proposals will have a Minor Adverse level of effect on these visual receptors (users of the permissive path) at the construction stage due to the limited change in the view to incorporate oblique, partial, distant and transient views of the north western edge of the proposed built development which will be filtered by the intervening vegetation. These views will be further filtered to a limited degree initially (5 years after planting) by the adjacent proposed native tree and shrub/ enhanced existing hedgerow planting. The degree of visual filtering afforded by the planting proposals of the built development will increase over time (15-20 years after planting) to result in a residual Negligible Adverse effect.

Viewpoint 8

10.8.16 The development proposals will have a Moderate Adverse level of effect on these visual receptors (users of the public footpath) at the construction stage due to the close views that will be afforded of the northern edge of the development proposals within the existing arable field

to the north of the woodland shelter belt. These views will progressively become filtered by the proposed tree and shrub planting along the northern edge of the proposed development. It is considered that after 15-20 years this planting will have achieved a sufficient height and density to conceal the majority of the built edge resulting in a residual Moderate/Minor level of effect. Also the detracting views of overhead electricity cables will be marginally reduced due to the proposed undergrounding of the northern set of pylons and cables.

Viewpoint 9

10.8.17 The development proposals will not be visible for the visual receptors at this location due to the variations in local topography.

Viewpoint 10

10.8.18 The development proposals will not be visible for the visual receptors at this location due to a combination of local topography and intervening mature vegetation.

Viewpoint 11

10.8.19 The development proposals will have a Minor Adverse level of effect on these visual receptors (users of the bridleway) at the construction stage due to the limited change in the view to incorporate partial, distant views of the northern edge of the proposed built development which will be partially concealed by the local ridge of land. The partial, distant views of the northern edge of the proposed development form a minor component of this panoramic view. These limited views will be further filtered to a limited degree initially (5 years after planting) by the adjacent proposed native tree and shrub planting. The degree of visual filtering afforded by the planting proposals of the built development will increase over time (15-20 years after planting) to result in a residual Minor Adverse/Negligible Adverse effect.

Viewpoint 12

10.8.20 The development proposals will not be visible for the visual receptors at this location due to the variations in the local topography.

Viewpoint 13

10.8.21 The development proposals will have a Moderate/Minor Adverse level of effect on these visual receptors (users of the Hertfordshire Way-Public footpath 008) at the construction stage due to the limited change in the view to incorporate partial, distant views of the northern edge of the proposed built development which will be partially concealed by the local ridge of land and which are set down against the distant wooded skyline.. The partial, distant views of the northern edge of the proposed development form a relatively minor component of this panoramic view. These partial views will be further filtered to a limited degree initially (5 years after planting) by the adjacent proposed native tree and shrub planting. The degree of visual filtering afforded by the planting proposals of the built development will increase over time (15-20 years after planting) to result in a residual Minor Adverse effect. It should be noted that the views of the northern

edge of the proposed development will become increasingly apparent in the view as the users of this footpath proceed further south.

Viewpoint 14

10.8.22 The development proposals will not be visible for the visual receptors (users of Back Lane near the entrance to Chesfield Park) at this location due to the variations in the local topography and the intervening vegetation.

Viewpoint 15

10.8.23 The development proposals will have a Moderate Adverse level of effect on these visual receptors (users of the Public Right of Way) at the construction stage due to the limited change in the view to incorporate partial, oblique, close views of the northern eastern edge of the proposed built development. These partial views will be filtered to a limited degree initially (5 years after planting) by the adjacent proposed native tree and shrub planting. The degree of visual filtering afforded by the planting proposals of the built development will increase over time (15-20 years after planting) in combination with views of the adjacent proposed hay meadows and tree copse planting will result in a residual Neutral effect.

Viewpoint 16

10.8.24 The development proposals will have a Moderate Adverse level of effect on these visual receptors (users of the Public Right of Way) at the construction stage due to the limited change in the view to incorporate partial, oblique, close views of the eastern edge of the proposed built development. These partial views will be filtered to a reasonable degree initially (5 years after planting) by the adjacent proposed native tree and shrub and hedgerow planting. The degree of visual filtering afforded by the planting proposals in views of the built development will increase over time (15-20 years after planting) comprehensively and will result in a residual Neutral effect.

Viewpoint 17

10.8.25 The development proposals will have a Moderate/Minor Adverse level of effect on this visual receptor (residents of Rooks Nest House) at the construction stage due to the change in the view to incorporate partial, middle distance views of sections of the eastern edge of the proposed built development which will be filtered to a degree initially (5 years after planting) by the proposed native tree and shrub planting and the existing mature vegetation that fringes the property. The degree of concealment afforded by the planting proposals of the built development edge will increase markedly over time to a point (15-20 years after planting) where it is screened even during winter months. The proposed change from arable fields to hedged hay meadows will also have a visually positive effect. It is therefore considered that over time when the mitigation measures detailed above have established that the residual level of effect will change to Neutral.

Viewpoint 18

10.8.26 The development proposals will have a Major Adverse level of effect on these visual receptors (users of the Hertfordshire Way) at the construction stage due to the close views that will be afforded of the northern edge of the development proposals within the existing arable field to the north of the woodland shelter belt. These views will progressively become filtered by the proposed tree and shrub planting along the northern edge of the proposed development. It is considered that after 15-20 years this planting will have achieved a sufficient height and density to conceal the majority of the built edge resulting in a residual Moderate/Minor level of effect.

10.9 Cumulative effects

10.9.1 The Cumulative Effects Assessment in ES chapter 3 identifies a number of sites that should be considered for the potential cumulative (additional or synergistic) effects with the proposed development.

10.9.2 Land adjacent to the north of the Site is identified as a site allocation NS1 ('North of Stevenage'), in Graveley parish, for 900 dwellings, within the North Hertfordshire Local Plan Proposed Submission (October 2016), which has been submitted for Examination. It is likely that the development of a large area of land would have significant effects on the landscape character of the agricultural landscape currently occupying this area as partly defined within this chapter by the Graveley Edge Local Landscape Character Area. It is likely that as site NS1 is adjacent to the proposed development site, the zones of influence for the two site developments are likely to overlap, so cumulative effects on landscape and visual amenity are likely. For example the development of NS1 would result in the loss of additional parts of the existing arable fields and would alter the currently open aspect of this area in conjunction with the proposed development. There would be a fundamental change in the panoramic views to the south west and west currently gained from the Hertfordshire Way which extends through the allocation area. The views south east and east from the public footpath that skirts the southern edge of Graveley would also be adversely affected when both developments are constructed. However, in the absence of any firm development proposals for site NS1 being published, which would enable the layout of development and ecological effects to be identified, it is not possible to predict the likely cumulative landscape and visual effects with any certainty. However, it can be acknowledged that the creation of St. Nicholas Meadows and the retention of green corridors across the site can assist in the mitigation of landscape and visual effects.

10.9.3 A planning application has been submitted for the proposed development site at Roundwood, 1.19km to the north east of the Site. This site is also included in the North Hertfordshire District Council Local Plan Proposed Submission (October 2016) as the Land at Roundwood site (GA1) allocation for 330 homes. The planning application documentation includes reports of Landscape and Visual Impact Baseline, and Landscape Design, as well as a Design & Access Statement. The Roundwood development proposes that boundary treelines and hedgerows are largely to be retained and enhanced, and includes a storey heights plan showing development of 2.5 and 3 storey houses. The Roundwood site is separated from the proposed development site by the intervening woodlands of Ten Acre Plantation, Park Plantation and Round Wood, and generally the wooded boundaries to the parkland of Chesfield Park (which also contains copses and individual trees). The Roundwood site Landscape and Visual Baseline Report

shows the Zone of Influence of the Roundwood site is limited to areas to the north of that site. As the visual envelope for the proposed development and the zone of visual influence for the Roundwood development do not overlap, no significant cumulative effects are likely.

- 10.9.4 ES chapter 3 also lists three other developments that should be considered for the potential to generate cumulative effects with the proposed development – developments proposed at Longfield Fire & Rescue, Antelope House, and Lonsdale School. These are within urban areas of Stevenage, and none are within the Site Verified Visual Envelope shown in LVIA Figure 10.7. The development proposed at Longfield Fire and Rescue Centre, 780m to the south west is for 95 dwellings of 2 and 2.5 storeys in place of existing buildings. The development at Antelope House 1650m to the south involved a change of use of a 4 storey office block to 91 residential units with no external alterations. The development proposed and approved at Lonsdale School 1700m to the south east is for 67 dwellings of 2 and 2.5 storeys in place of existing school buildings. It is considered likely that these sites will not have any significant cumulative effects with the proposed development in relation to landscape and visual amenity, due to the effects of distance, the low height of proposed buildings, and intervening built development.

10.10 Summary

- 10.10.1 The key findings of the assessment are that the proposed development will result in Significant Adverse (Major/Moderate Adverse reducing to Moderate Adverse) effects on the Suburban edge local landscape character area) where the majority of the built development proposals are situated. It is considered that The Chesfield Valley local landscape character area covering the St. Nicholas Meadows area will result in Major Beneficial (Significant) residual effects and the local landscape area spanning the northern edge (Graveley Edge) of the proposals will result in Negligible Adverse (Not Significant) impacts.
- 10.10.2 It is considered that the impacts resulting from the proposed development in views from Weston Road and properties adjacent to it (including Rooks Nest House) and generally from Public Rights of Way to the east of the Site will not result in residual Significant effects due to the positive influence of the proposals for St. Nicholas Meadows. Many of the visual receptors experiencing these views are located within the St. Nicholas/Rectory Lane Conservation Area. It is likely that visual receptors (Viewpoints 5 and 6) located adjacent to the southern edge of the Site will experience Significant Adverse residual effects due to the proximity of the proposed built development to these receptors and the more limited opportunities for mitigation. In assessed views from the west and north it is considered that the proposed development will not result in Significant Adverse residual effects due to a combination of local topography, intervening vegetation and the planting proposals,

10.11 Summary Tables

The landscape receptors which have been identified in this chapter and the residual impacts of the proposed development on these receptors are summarised in Table 10.9 below.

LANDSCAPE BASELINE AND RESIDUAL EFFECTS TABLE (LBET)									
Landscape Type and Reference	Judged Sensitivity of Landscape		Magnitude/Scale of Change of Landscape Effects		Overall Magnitude of Change	Level of Effects at Construction Phase	Level of Effects 5 years after planting	Level of Effects 10 years after planting	Residual Effect-15-20 years after planting
	Receptor Value	Overall Sensitivity	Scale or size of the degree of change including degree of contrast integration at stages of project	Geographic extent of the area affected					
	Susceptibility to change		Where applicable are the effects reversible?						
Landscape Character-District									
North Herts Landscape Study (Character, Sensitivity and Capacity), 2011. Area 216 'Arlesey - Great Wymondley'	Low Value Low Susceptibility	Low	Very Low Not reversible	Site Scale	Low	Minor Adverse	Negligible Adverse	Negligible Adverse	Negligible Adverse

LANDSCAPE BASELINE AND RESIDUAL EFFECTS TABLE (LBET)									
Landscape Type and Reference	Judged Sensitivity of Landscape		Magnitude/Scale of Change of Landscape Effects		Overall Magnitude of Change	Level of Effects at Construction Phase	Level of Effects 5 years after planting	Level of Effects 10 years after planting	Residual Effect-15-20 years after planting
	Receptor Value	Overall Sensitivity	Scale or size of the degree of change including degree of contrast integration at stages of project Where applicable are the effects reversible?	Geographic extent of the area affected					
North Herts Landscape Study (Character, Sensitivity and Capacity), 2011. Area 219 'Baldock Gap'	Medium Value Low-Medium Susceptibility	Medium - High	Very Low Not reversible	Site Scale	Low	Negligible Adverse	Minor Beneficial	Minor Beneficial	Minor Beneficial
Site Specific Analysis									
Local Landscape Character Area 1 (LLCA1) – Suburban edge	Low Value Low-Medium Susceptibility	Low-Medium	High Not reversible	Local Scale	High	Major/Moderate Adverse	Moderate Adverse	Moderate Adverse	Moderate Adverse
Local Landscape Character Area 2 (LLCA2) – Chesfield Valley	Medium Value Low Susceptibility	Medium-High	High Not reversible	Local Scale	High	Moderate Beneficial	Major Beneficial	Major Beneficial	Major Beneficial

LANDSCAPE BASELINE AND RESIDUAL EFFECTS TABLE (LBET)									
Landscape Type and Reference	Judged Sensitivity of Landscape		Magnitude/Scale of Change of Landscape Effects		Overall Magnitude of Change	Level of Effects at Construction Phase	Level of Effects 5 years after planting	Level of Effects 10 years after planting	Residual Effect-15-20 years after planting
	Receptor Value	Overall Sensitivity	Scale or size of the degree of change including degree of contrast integration at stages of project	Geographic extent of the area affected					
	Susceptibility to change		Where applicable are the effects reversible?						
Local Landscape Character Area 3 (LLCA3) – Graveley Edge	Low-Medium Value Low-Medium Susceptibility	Medium	Low Not reversible	Local Scale	Low	Minor Adverse	Minor Adverse	Minor Adverse	Minor Adverse

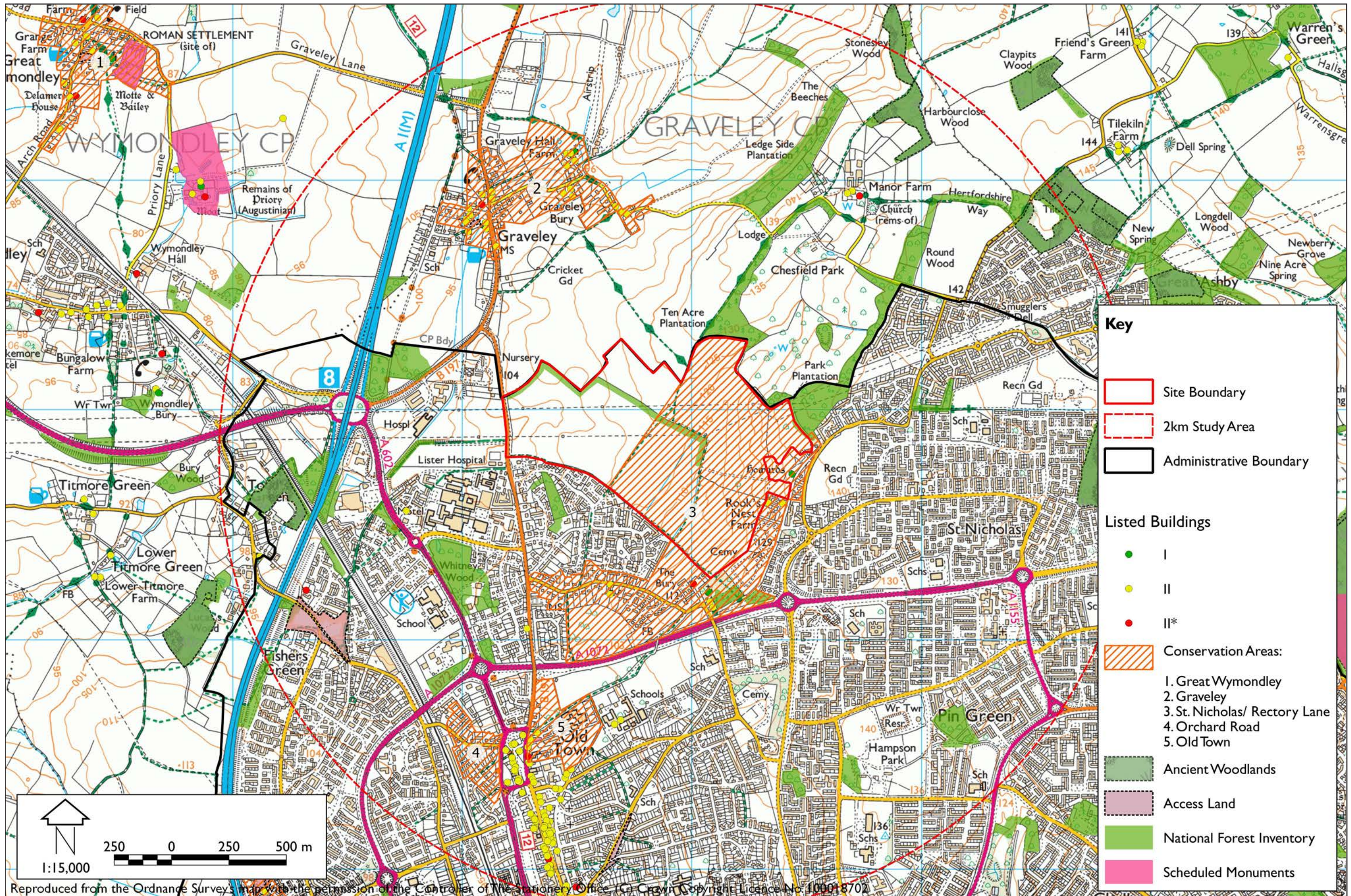
The visual receptors which have been identified in this chapter and the residual impacts of the proposed development on these receptors are summarised in Table 10.10 below.

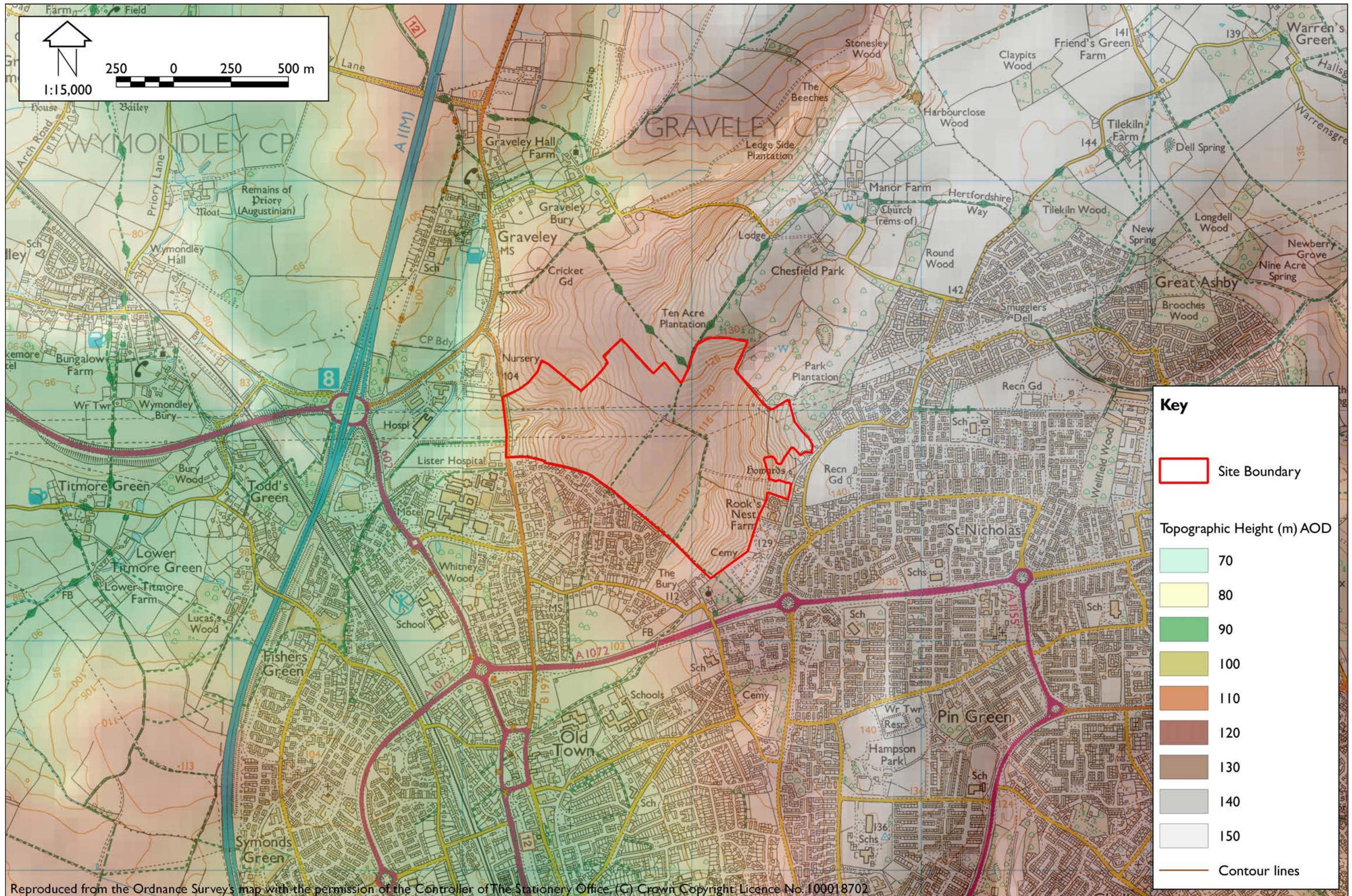
Ref	Receptor Type	Sensitivity of Visual Receptor		Magnitude/Scale of Change of Visual Effects				Level of Effects at Construction Phase	Level of Effects 5 years after planting	Level of Effects 10 years after planting	Residual Effect-15-20 years after planting
		Receptor Value Susceptibility to change	Overall Sensitivity	Distance to Site Boundary	Nature of the View	Is the View Permanent or Transient?	Scale of Visual Effects				
1	Resident	Local Value High Susceptibility	High	100m	Partial	Permanent	Medium	Moderate/ Minor Adverse	Minor Adverse	Minor Beneficial	Minor Beneficial
2	Residents Visitors to cemetery	Local Value High Susceptibility	High	100m	Partial	Permanent/ Transient	Medium	Major/ Moderate Adverse	Moderate/ Minor Adverse	Minor Adverse	Minor Adverse
	Road users	Local Value Low Susceptibility	Medium	100m	Glimpse	Transient	Low	Minor Adverse	Negligible Adverse	Negligible Adverse	Negligible Adverse
3	Footpath users	Local Value High Susceptibility	High	0m	Full	Transient	Medium	Moderate Adverse	Moderate/ Minor Adverse	Minor Adverse	Minor Adverse
4	Footpath users	Local Value High Susceptibility	High	0m	Full	Transient	High	Major/ Moderate Adverse	Moderate Adverse	Minor Adverse	Minor Adverse
	Residents	Local Value High Susceptibility	High	10m	Glimpse	Permanent	Low	Moderate/ Minor Adverse	Moderate/ Minor Adverse	Minor Adverse	Minor Adverse
5	Footpath users	Local Value	High	0m	Full	Transient	Very High	Major Adverse	Major Adverse	Major/	Moderate Adverse

Ref	Receptor Type	Sensitivity of Visual Receptor		Magnitude/Scale of Change of Visual Effects				Level of Effects at Construction Phase	Level of Effects 5 years after planting	Level of Effects 10 years after planting	Residual Effect-15-20 years after planting
		Receptor Value Susceptibility to change	Overall Sensitivity	Distance to Site Boundary	Nature of the View	Is the View Permanent or Transient?	Scale of Visual Effects				
	Residents	High Susceptibility Local Value High Susceptibility	High	10m	Full	Permanent	Very High	Major Adverse	Major Adverse	Moderate Adverse Major/ Moderate Adverse	Moderate Adverse
6	Footpath users	Local Value High Susceptibility	High	0m	Full	Transient	Very High	Major Adverse	Major Adverse	Major/ Moderate Adverse	Moderate Adverse
	Residents	Local Value High Susceptibility	High	10m	Full	Permanent	Very High	Major Adverse	Major Adverse	Major/ Moderate Adverse	Moderate Adverse
	Road users	Local Value Low Susceptibility	Low	10m	Glimpse	Transient	High	Major/ Moderate Adverse	Moderate Adverse	Moderate/ Minor Adverse	Moderate/ Minor Adverse
7	Path users	Local Value High Susceptibility	High	550m	Partial	Transient	Low	Minor Adverse	Minor Adverse	Negligible	Negligible

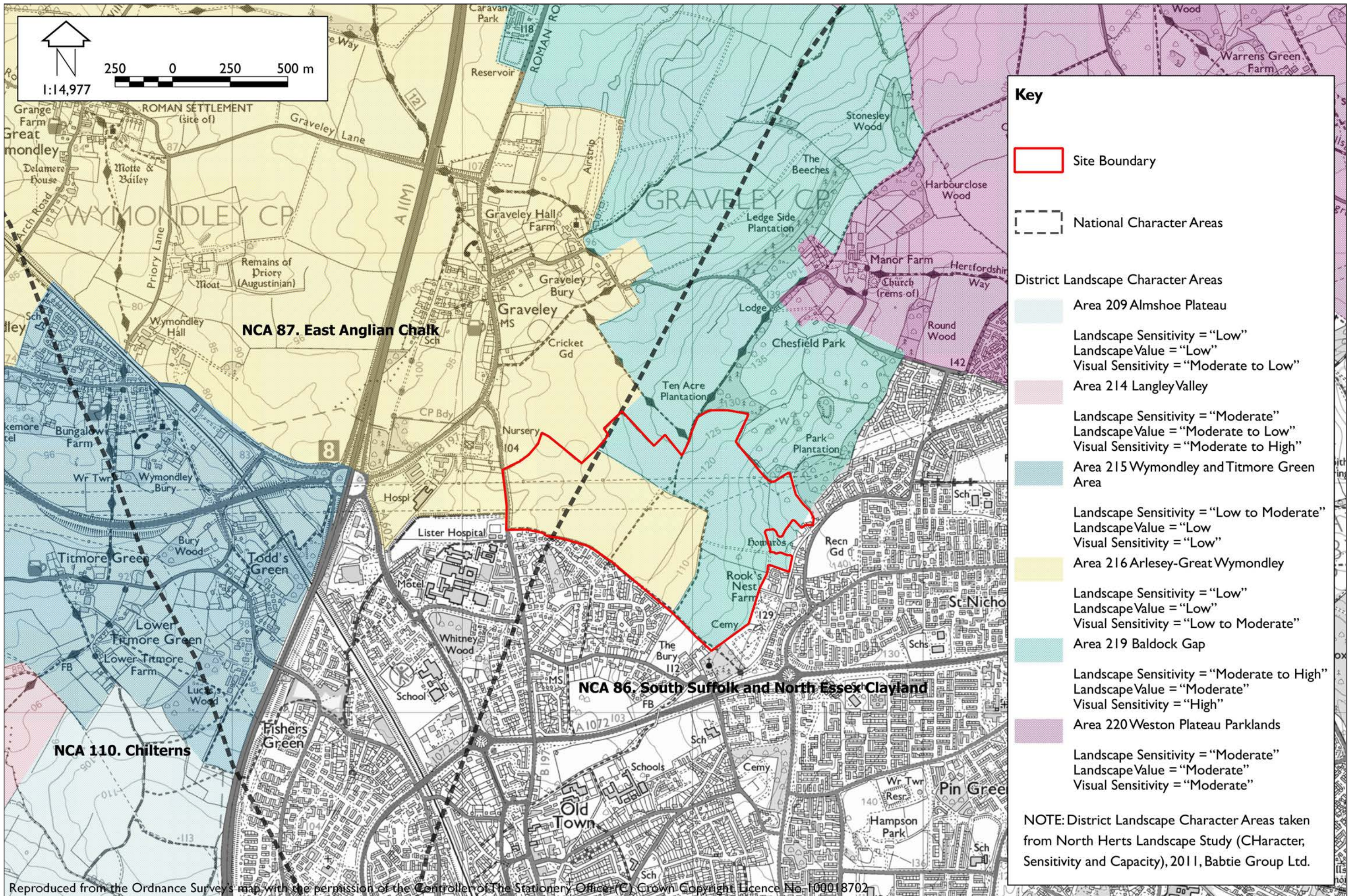
Ref	Receptor Type	Sensitivity of Visual Receptor		Magnitude/Scale of Change of Visual Effects				Level of Effects at Construction Phase	Level of Effects 5 years after planting	Level of Effects 10 years after planting	Residual Effect-15-20 years after planting
		Receptor Value Susceptibility to change	Overall Sensitivity	Distance to Site Boundary	Nature of the View	Is the View Permanent or Transient?	Scale of Visual Effects				
8	Footpath users	Local Value High Susceptibility	High	300m	Partial	Transient	High	Moderate Adverse	Moderate Adverse	Moderate/Minor Adverse	Moderate/Minor Adverse
9	Users of Long Distance Path/Residents	Regional Value, Very High Susceptibility	Very High	500m	None	Transient	None	None	None	None	None
		Local Value, High Susceptibility	Very High			Permanent	None	None	None	None	None
	Road users	Local Value Medium Susceptibility	Medium			Transient	None	None	None	None	None
10	Residents of Graveley/ Bridleway users	Local Value	Very High	800m	None	Permanent	None	None	None	None	None
		High Susceptibility	High	800m	None	Transient	None	None	None	None	None
11	Bridleway users	Local Value High Susceptibility	High	1.1km	Partial	Transient	Low	Minor Adverse	Minor Adverse	Minor Adverse/ Negligible	Minor Adverse/ Negligible

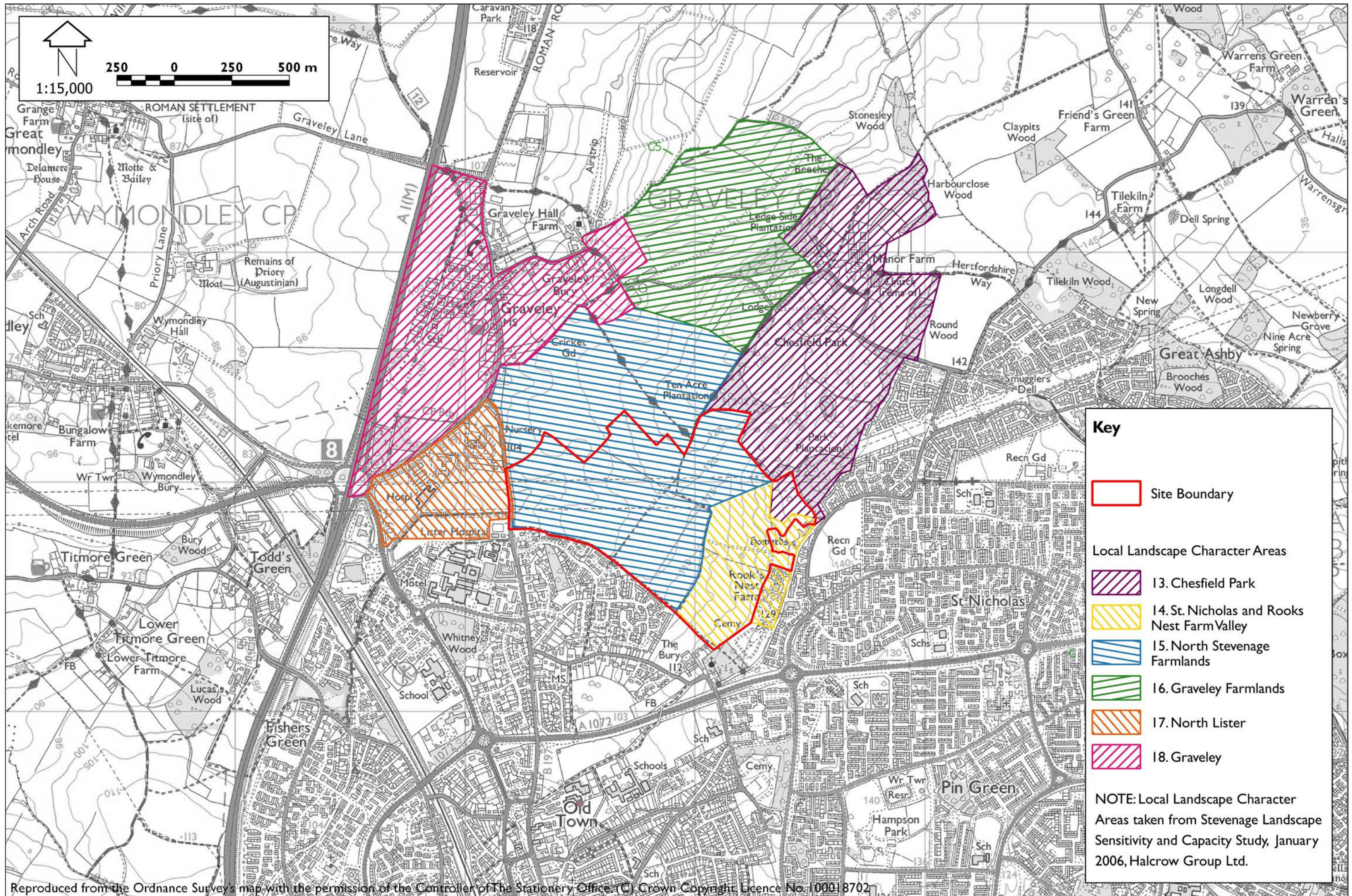
Ref	Receptor Type	Sensitivity of Visual Receptor		Magnitude/Scale of Change of Visual Effects				Level of Effects at Construction Phase	Level of Effects 5 years after planting	Level of Effects 10 years after planting	Residual Effect-15-20 years after planting
		Receptor Value Susceptibility to change	Overall Sensitivity	Distance to Site Boundary	Nature of the View	Is the View Permanent or Transient?	Scale of Visual Effects				
12	Road users	Local Value Medium Susceptibility	Medium	650m	None	Transient	None	None	None	None	None
13	Users of Long Distance Path/	Regional Value, Very High Susceptibility	Very High	700m	Partial	Transient	Low	Moderate/ Minor Adverse	Moderate/ Minor Adverse	Minor Adverse	Minor Adverse
	Road users	Local Value	Medium	700m	Glimpse	Transient	Very low	Negligible Adverse	Negligible Adverse	Negligible Adverse	Negligible Adverse
14	Road users	Local Value, Medium Susceptibility	Medium	700m	None	Transient	None	None	None	None	None
15	Footpath users	Local Value, High Susceptibility	High	0m	Full	Transient	Medium	Moderate Adverse	Minor Adverse	Neutral	Neutral
16	Footpath users	Local Value, High Susceptibility	High	0m	Full	Transient	Medium	Moderate Adverse	Minor Adverse	Neutral	Neutral
17	Residents	Regional Value, High Susceptibility	Very High	40m	Partial	Permanent	Low	Moderate/ Minor Adverse	Minor Adverse	Neutral	Neutral
18	Users of L. Distance Path	Regional Value, Very High Susceptibility	Very High	100m	Full	Transient	High	Major Adverse	Major Adverse	Moderate Adverse	Moderate/ Minor Adverse

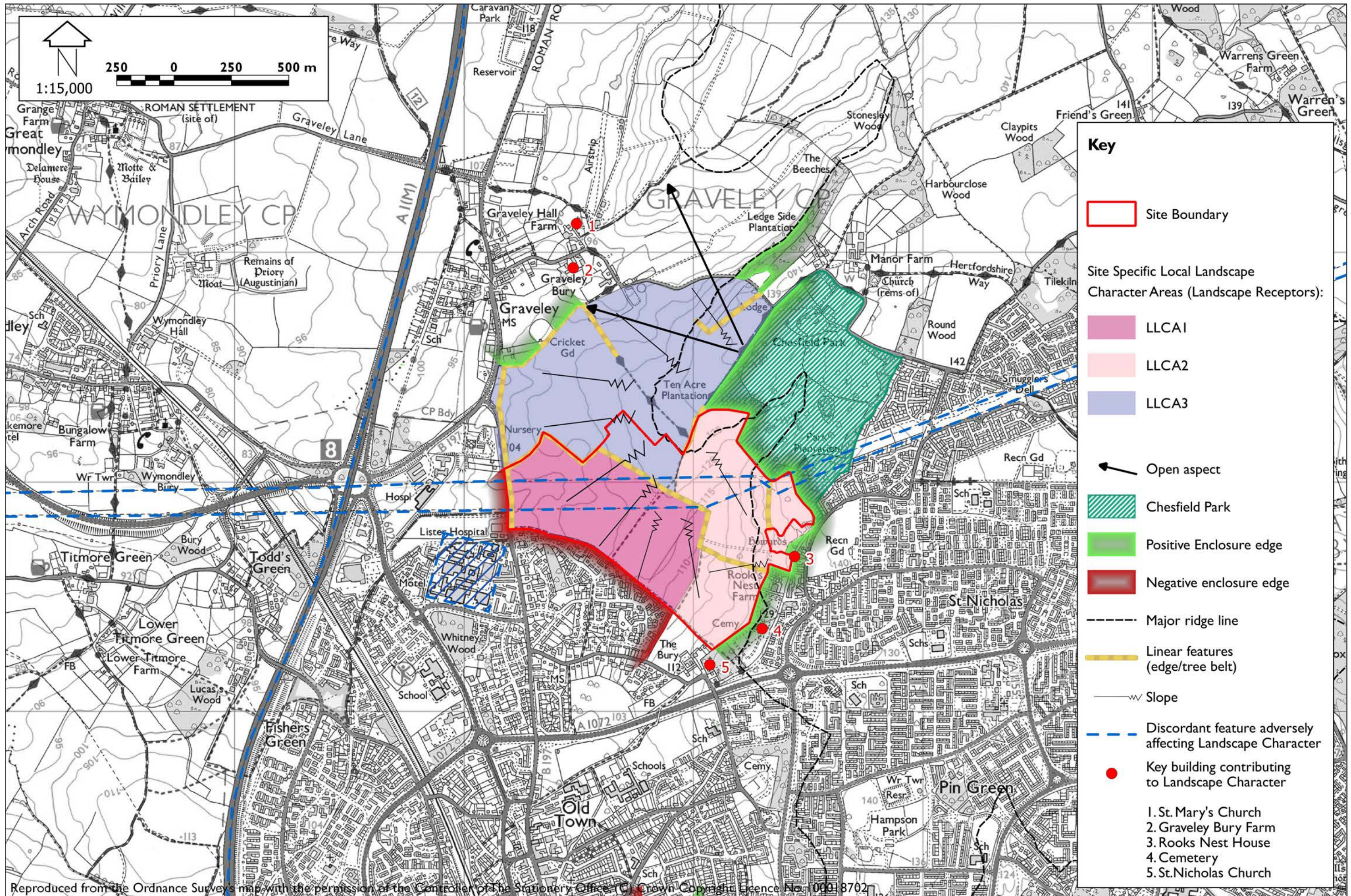




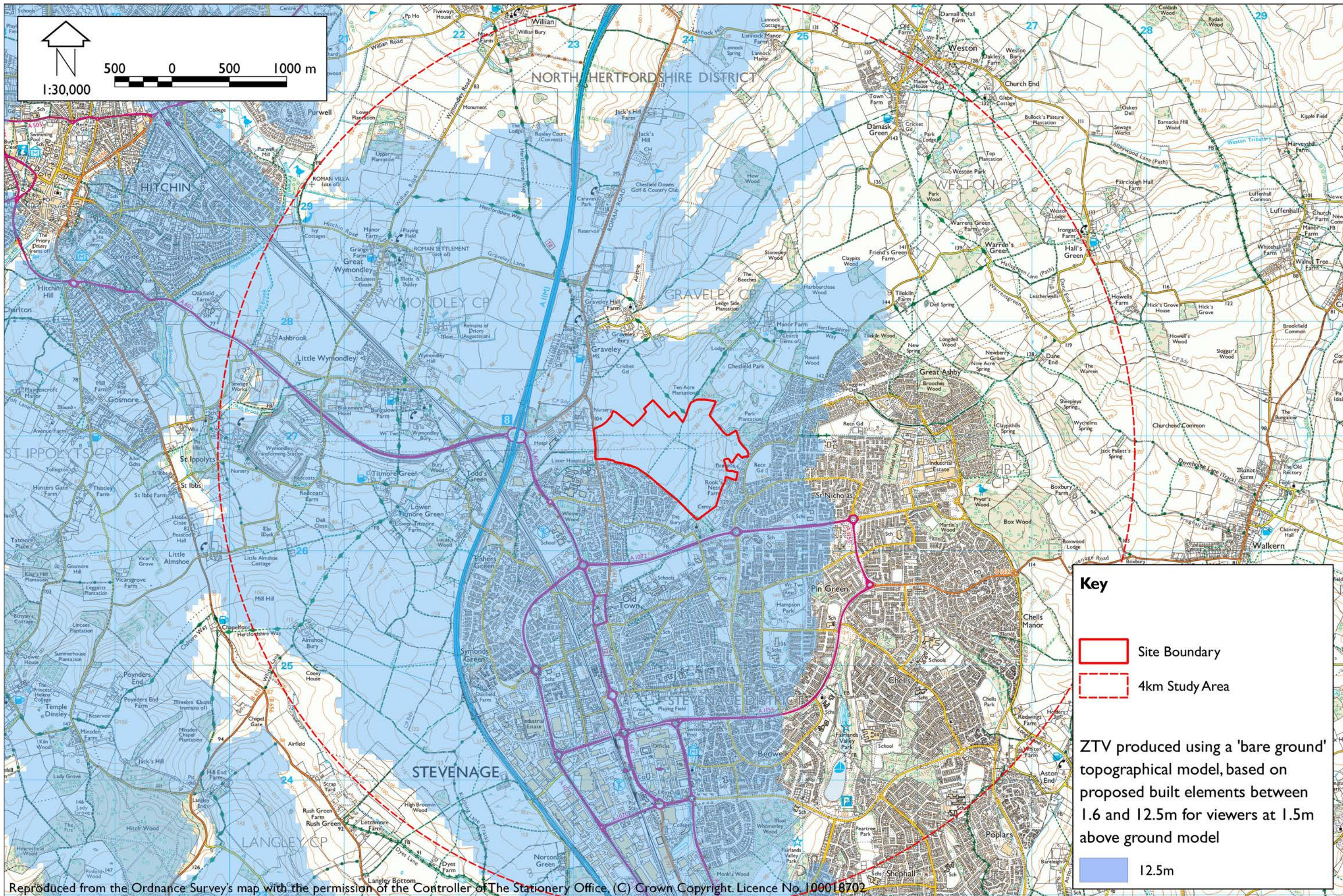
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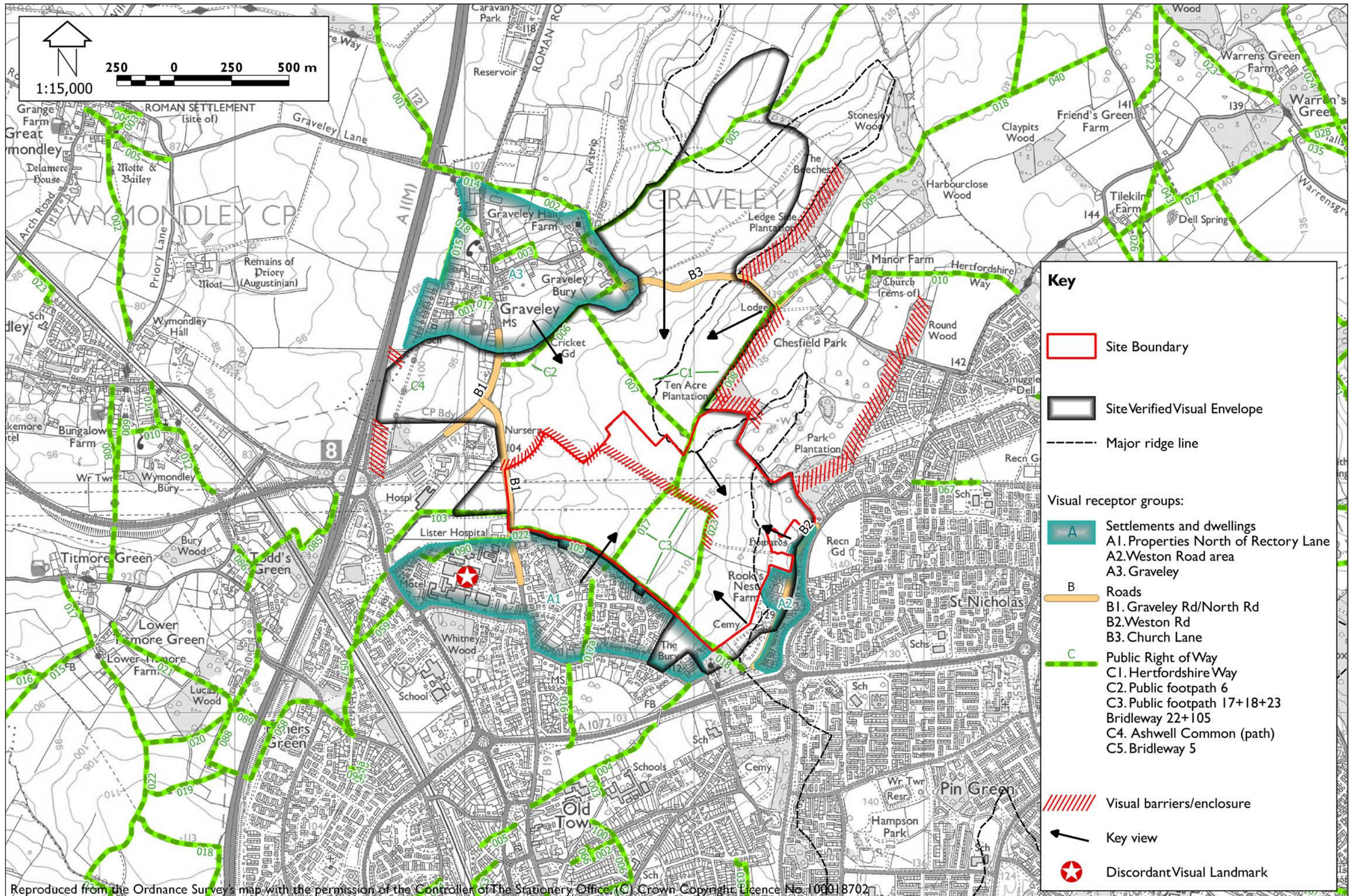




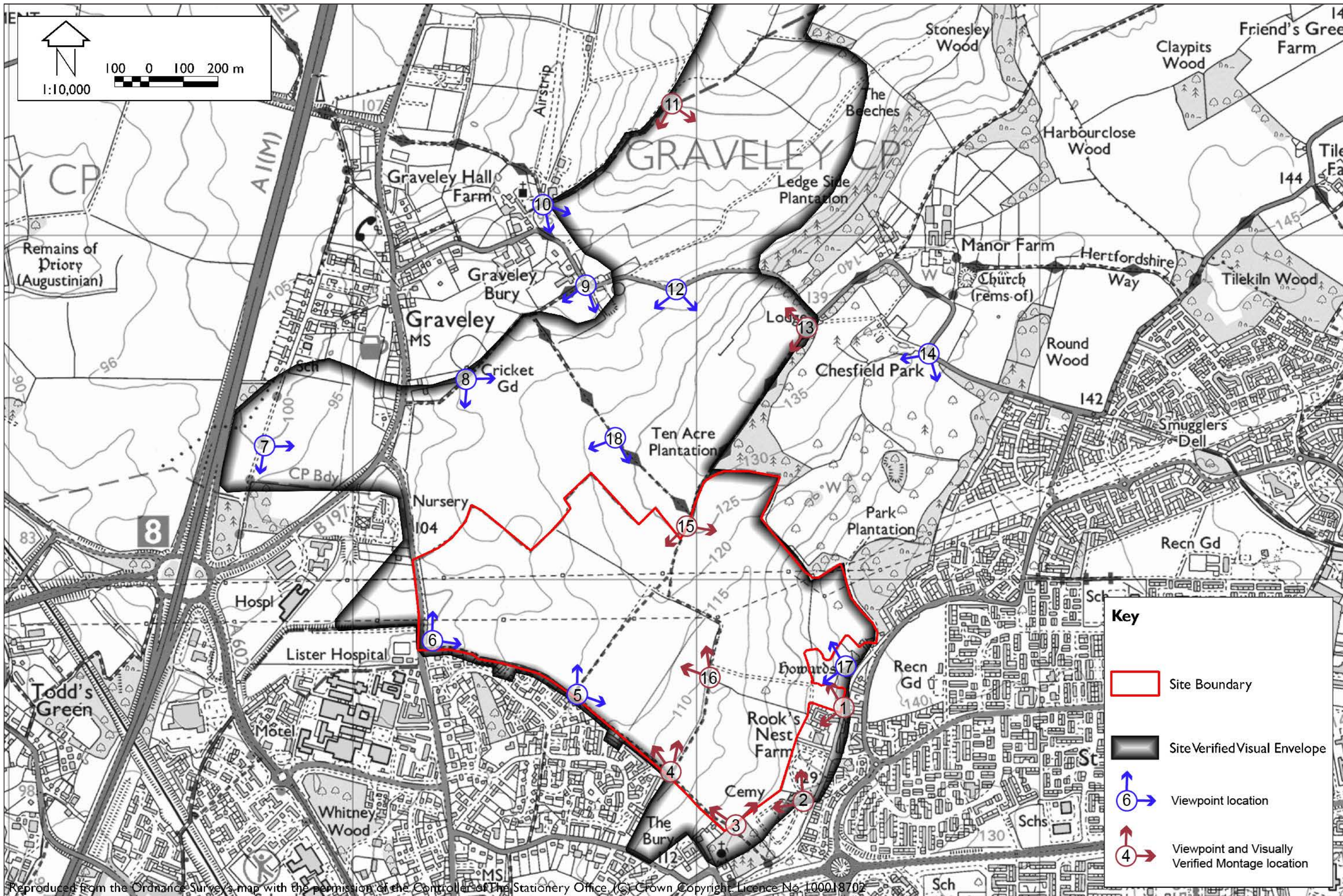
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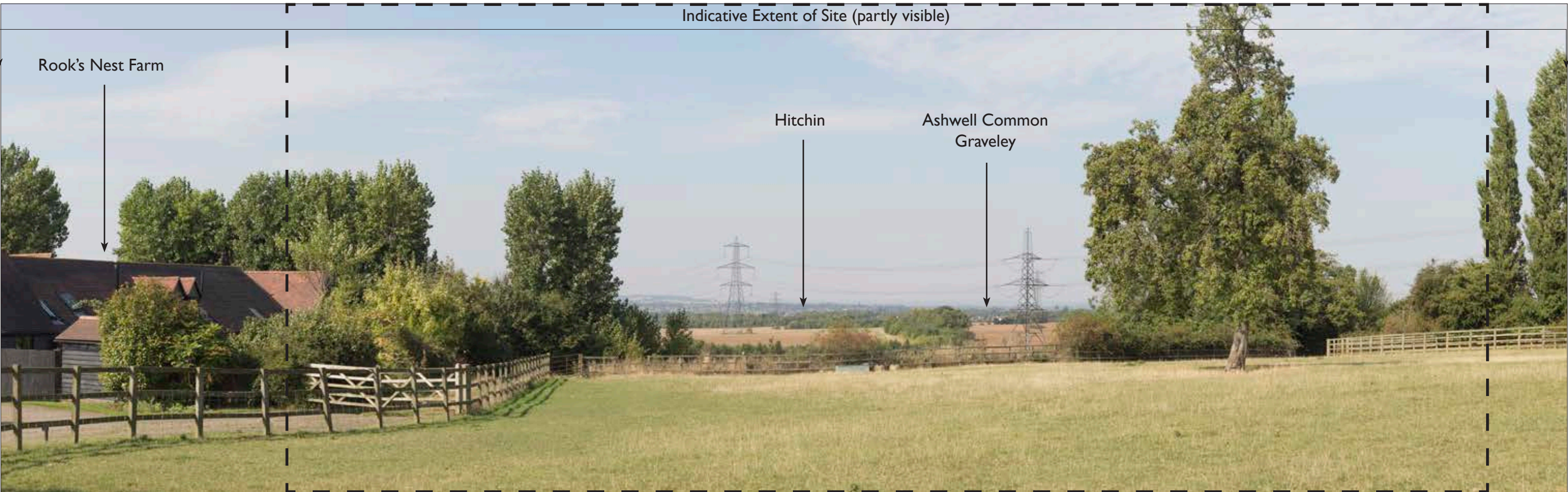
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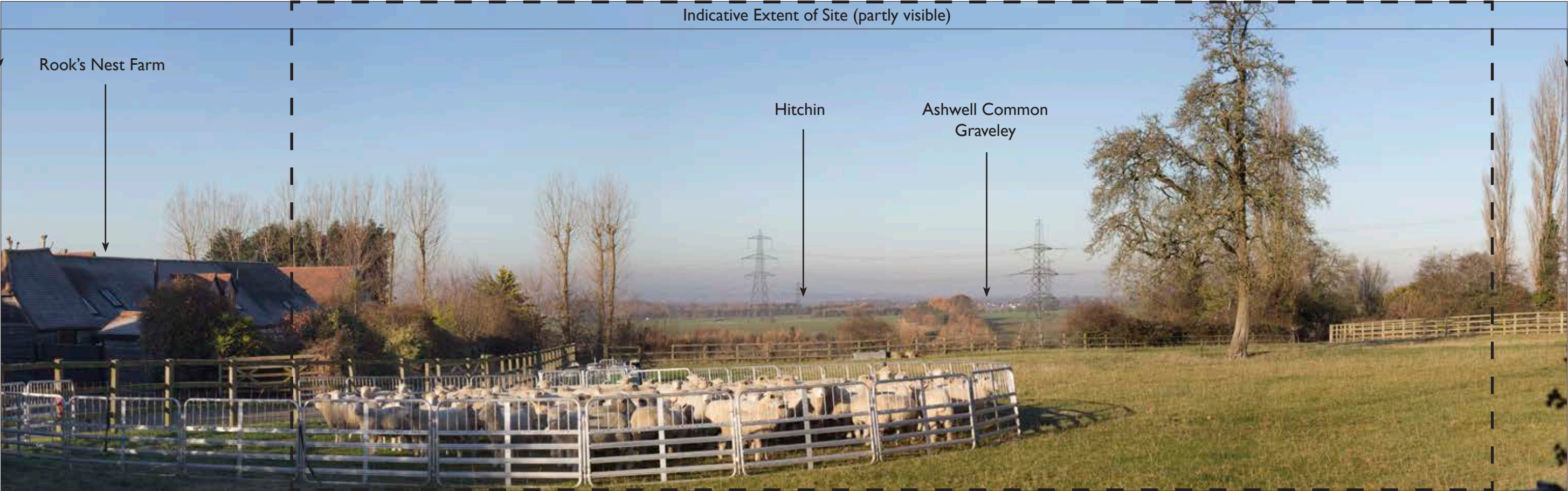
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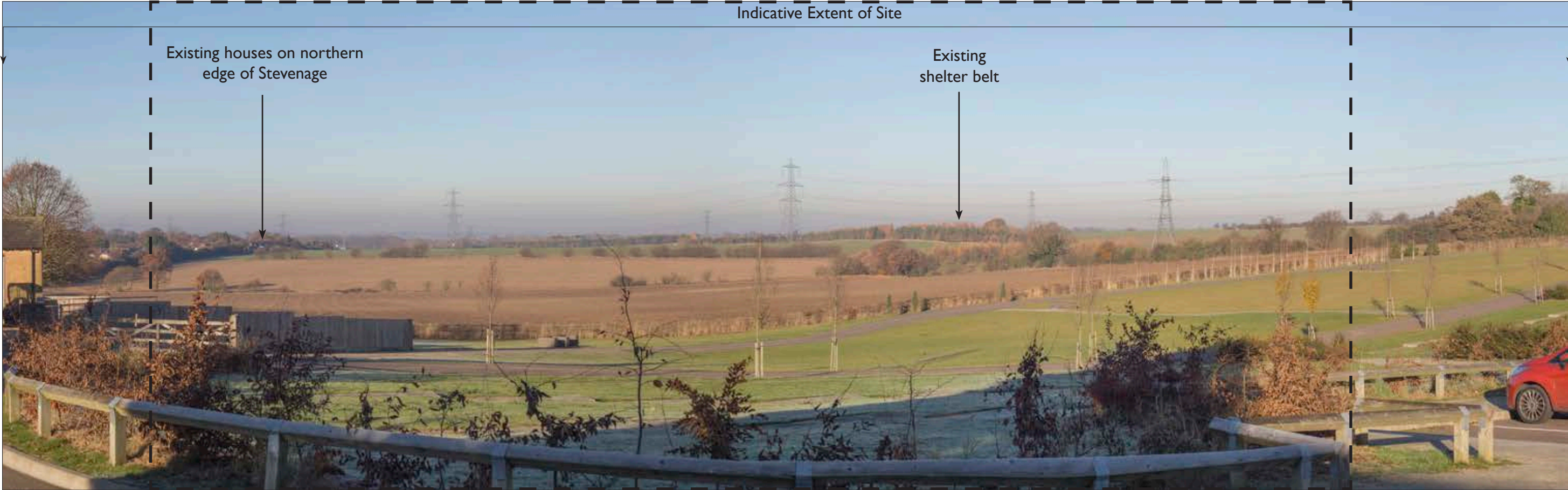
Viewpoint I Summer - View from Weston Road, adjacent to Rook's Nest Farm looking west. (British National Grid: 524417, 226632). *Dashed line indicates the extent of the verified view



Viewpoint I Winter



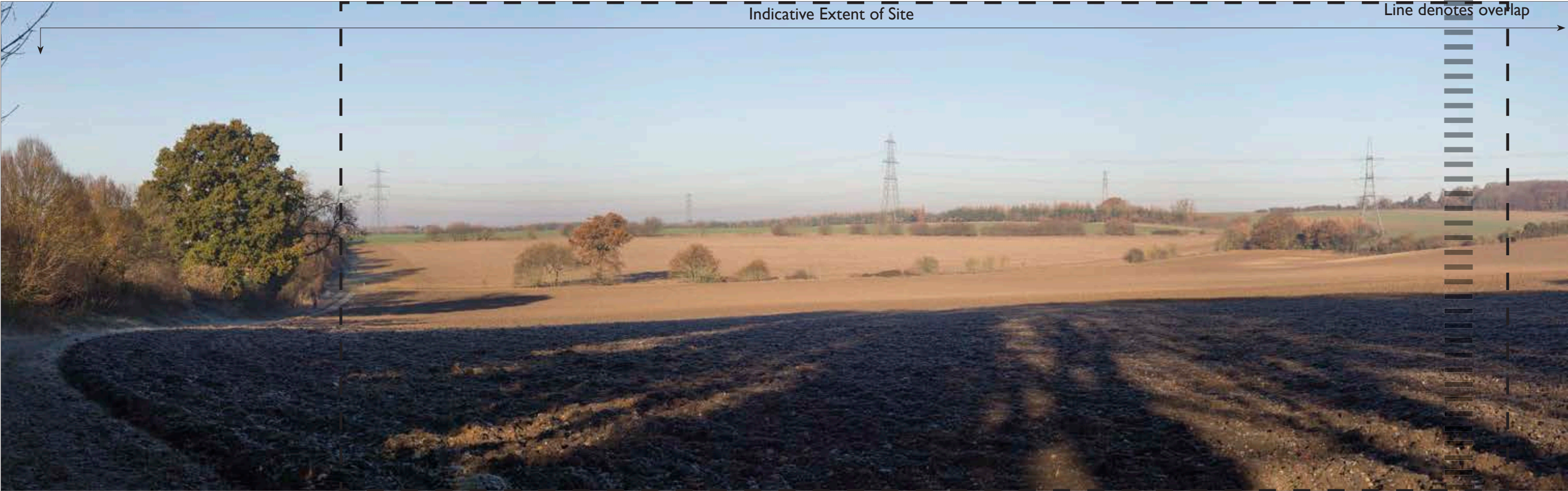
Viewpoint 2 Summer - View from Weston Road Cemetery looking north west (British National Grid: 524312, 226354) *Dashed line indicates the extent of the verified view



Viewpoint 2 Winter



Viewpoint 3 Summer - View from footpath 18 at northern edge of St. Nicholas churchyard looking north west. (British National Grid: 524099, 226311). *Dashed line indicates the extent of the verified view



Viewpoint 3 Winter

PROJECT NO:	10651	CLIENT:	MILLER HOMES AND BELLWAY HOMES	FIGURE NO:	10.11
DATE:	February 2017	PROJECT:	LAND NORTH OF STEVENAGE	TITLE:	Viewpoint 3 - Photographs
ISSUE STATUS:	DRAFT				



Viewpoint 3 Summer - View from footpath 18 at northern edge of St. Nicholas churchyard looking north. (British National Grid: 524099, 226311).



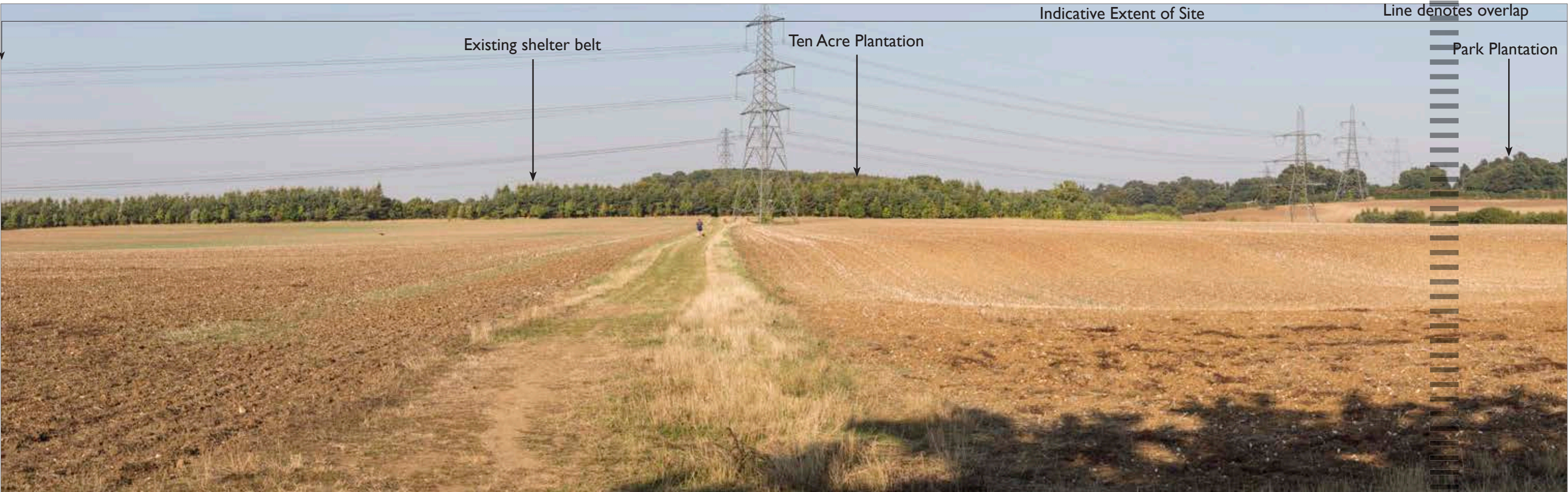
Viewpoint 3 Winter



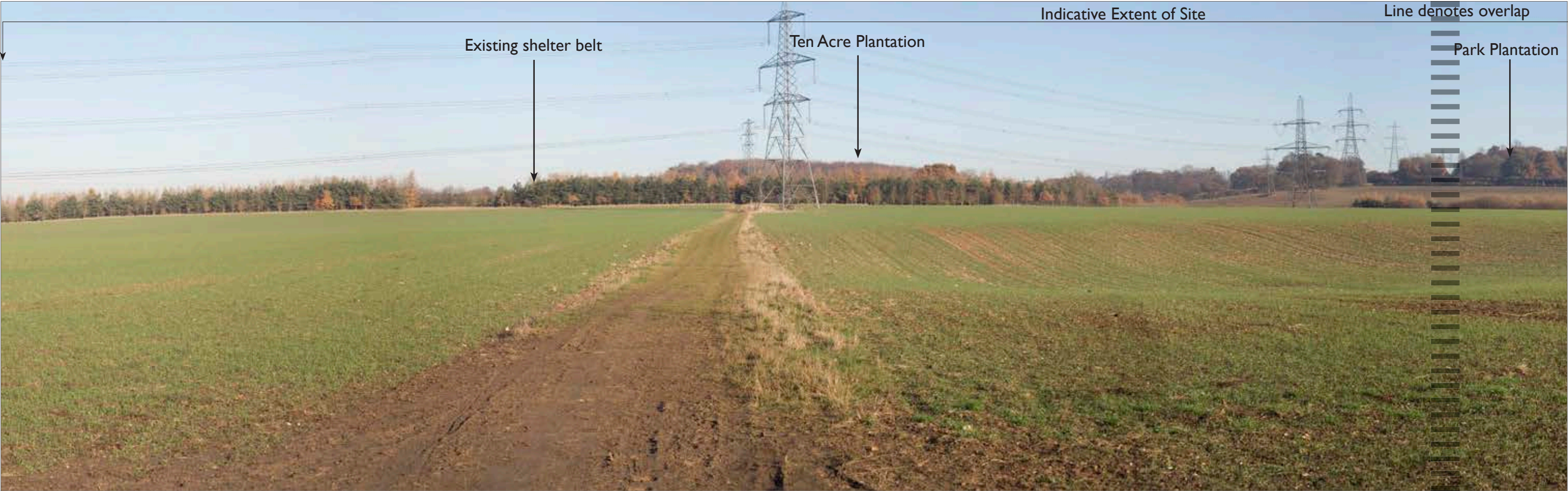
Viewpoint 4 Summer - View from junction of public footpaths 18 and 23 looking north west. (British National Grid: 523927, 226436). *Dashed line indicates the extent of the verified view



Viewpoint 4 Winter



Viewpoint 5 Summer - View from junction of public footpaths 17,18 and Bridleway 105 looking north. (British National Grid: 523653, 226667).



Viewpoint 5 Winter



Viewpoint 5 Summer - View from junction of public footpaths 17,18 and Bridleway 105 looking east. (British National Grid: 523653, 226667).



Viewpoint 5 Winter



Viewpoint 6 Summer - View from Bridleway 105 looking north east. (British National Grid: 523212, 226801).



Viewpoint 6 Winter



Viewpoint 6 Summer - View from Bridleway 105 looking east. (British National Grid: 523212, 226801).



Viewpoint 6 Winter



Viewpoint 7 Summer - View from Ashwell Common permissive path looking east. (British National Grid: 522740, 227405).



Viewpoint 7 Winter



Viewpoint 7 Summer - View from Ashwell Common permissive path looking south. (British National Grid: 522740, 227405).



Viewpoint 7 Winter



Viewpoint 8 Summer - View from public footpath 6, near Graveley Cricket Ground, looking east. (British National Grid 523317, 227603).



Viewpoint 8 Winter



Viewpoint 8 Summer - View from public footpath 6, near Graveley Cricket Ground, looking south east. (British National Grid 523317, 227603).



Viewpoint 8 Winter



Viewpoint 9 Summer - View from Hertfordshire Way, near Church Lane looking south. (British National Grid 523670, 227860).



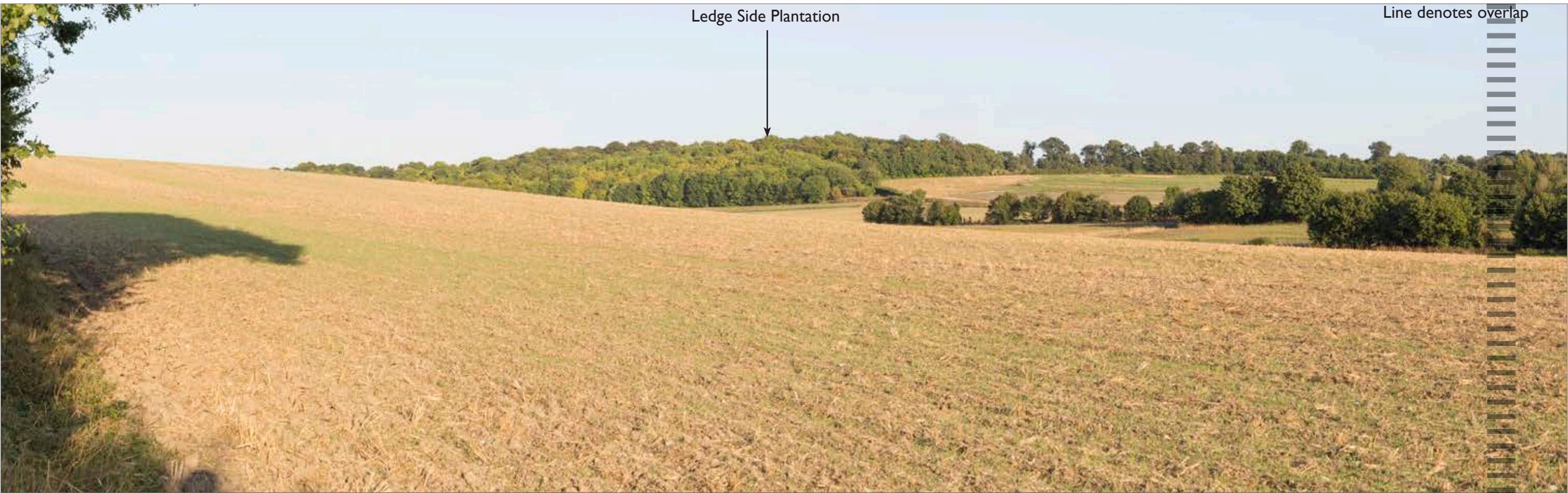
Viewpoint 9 Winter



Viewpoint 9 Summer - View from Hertfordshire Way, near Church Lane looking south. (British National Grid 523670, 227860).



Viewpoint 9 Winter



Viewpoint 10 Summer - View from Bridleway 5 near St. Mary's Church, Graveley looking east. (British National Grid 523556, 228093).



Viewpoint 10 Winter

PROJECT NO:	10651	CLIENT:	MILLER HOMES AND BELLWAY HOMES	FIGURE NO:	10.24
DATE:	February 2017	PROJECT:	LAND NORTH OF STEVENAGE	TITLE:	Viewpoint 10 - Photographs
ISSUE STATUS:	DRAFT				

Line denotes overlap

Indicative Extent of Site (not visible)



Viewpoint 10 Summer - View from Bridleway 5 near St. Mary’s Church, Graveley looking south east. (British National Grid 523556, 228093).

Line denotes overlap

Indicative Extent of Site (not visible)



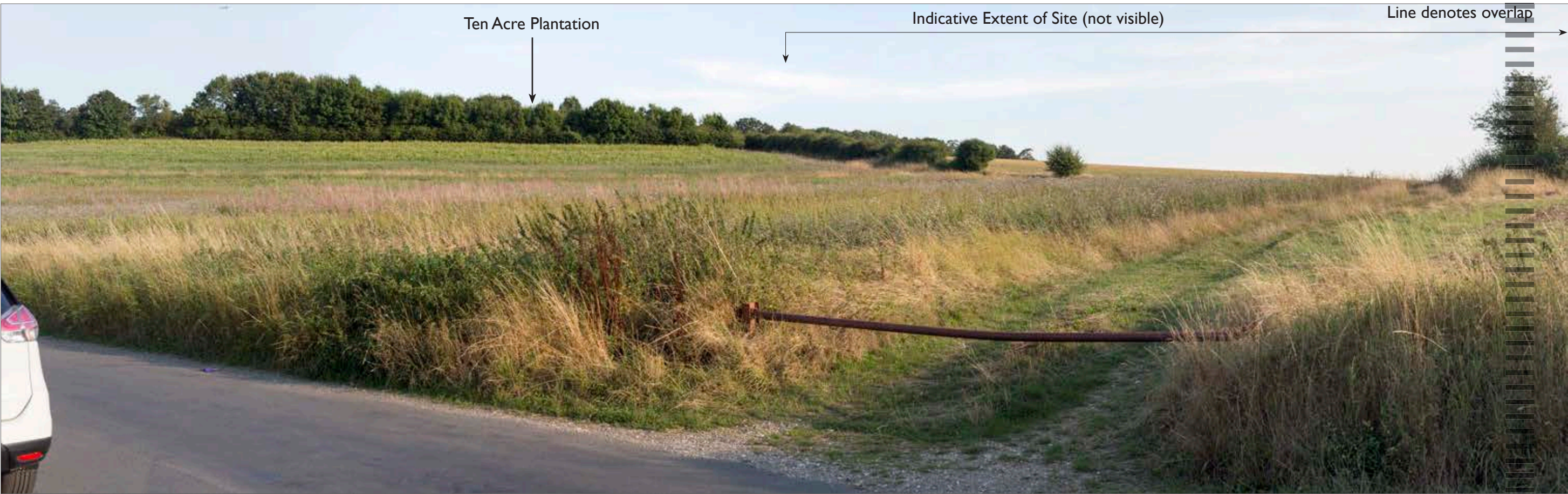
Viewpoint 10 Winter



Viewpoint 11 Summer - View from Bridleway 5, to the north east of Graveley looking south. (British National Grid 524099, 228472). *Dashed line indicates the extent of the verified view



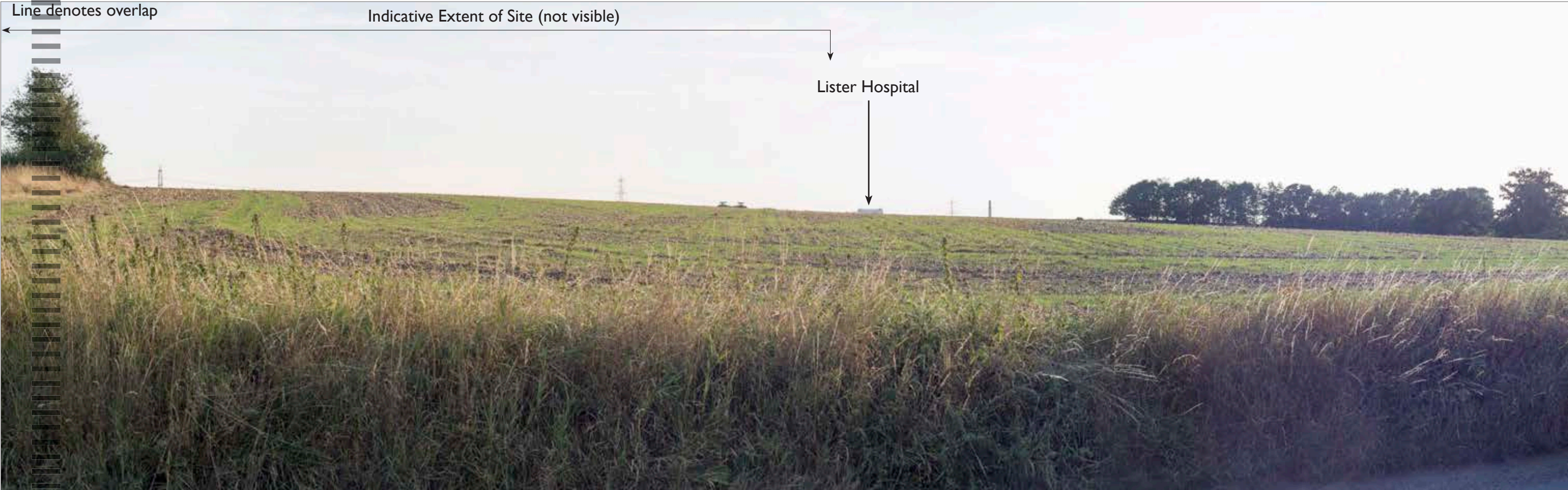
Viewpoint 11 Winter



Viewpoint 12 Summer - View from Church Lane looking south. (British National Grid 523927, 227851).



Viewpoint 12 Winter



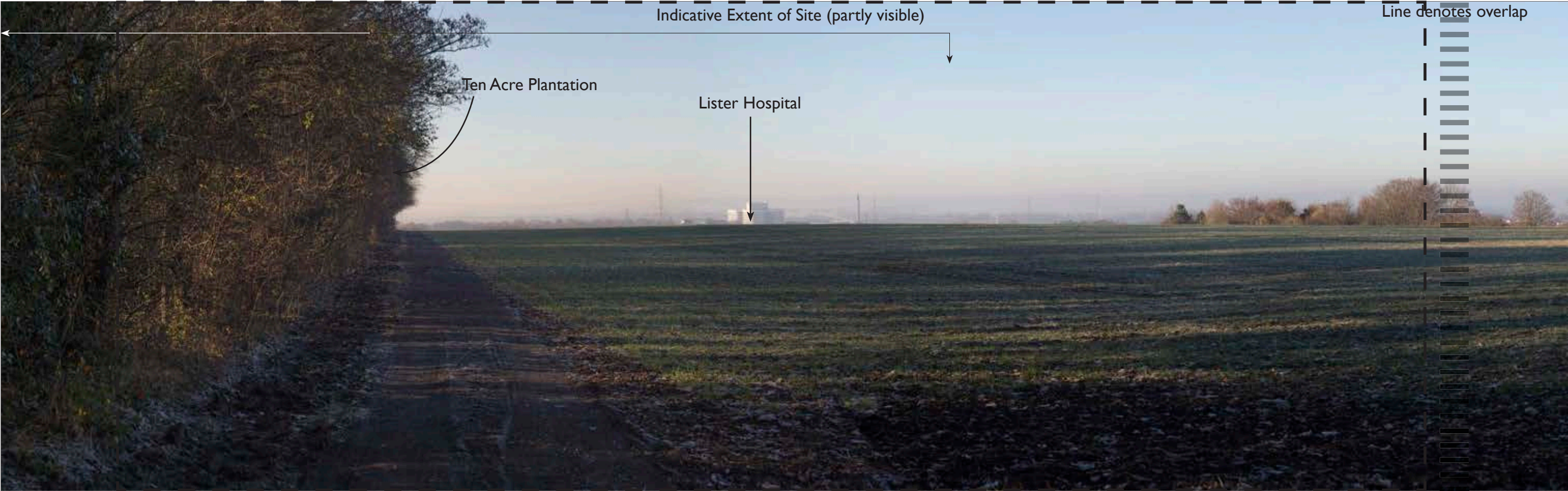
Viewpoint 12 Summer - View from Church Lane looking south. (British National Grid 523927, 227851).



Viewpoint 12 Winter



Viewpoint 13 Summer - View from Hertfordshire Way near Church Lane looking south west. (British National Grid 524318, 227737). *Dashed line indicates the extent of the verified view



Viewpoint 13 Winter

Line denotes overlap



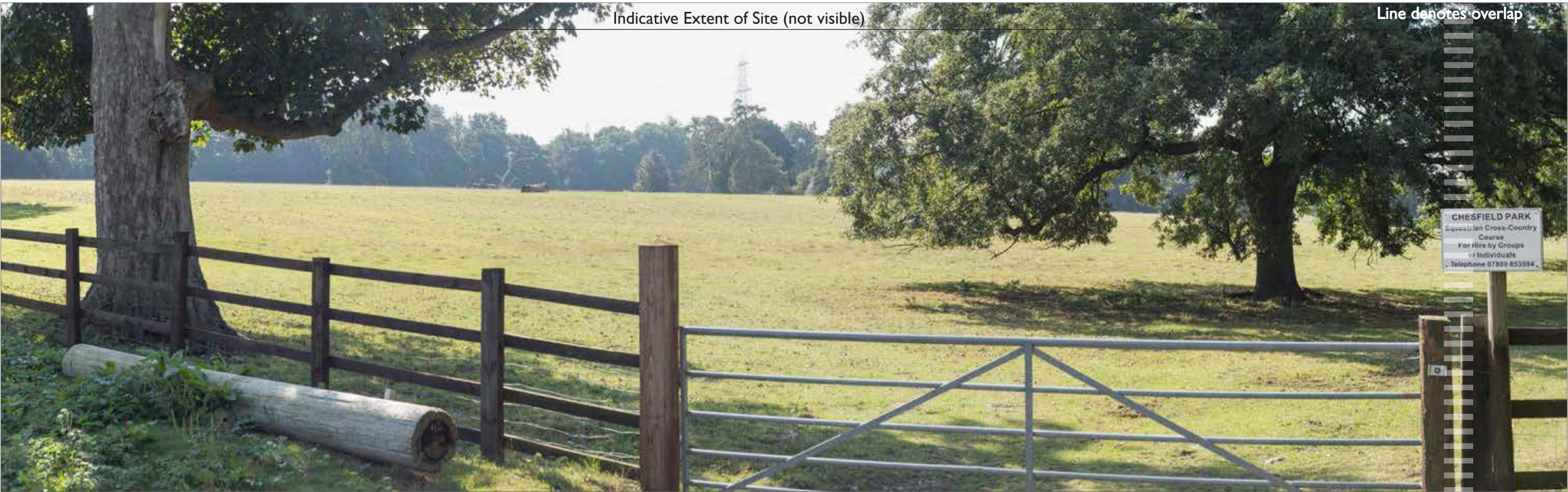
Viewpoint 13 Summer - View from Hertfordshire Way near Church Lane looking west. (British National Grid 524318, 227737).

Line denotes overlap

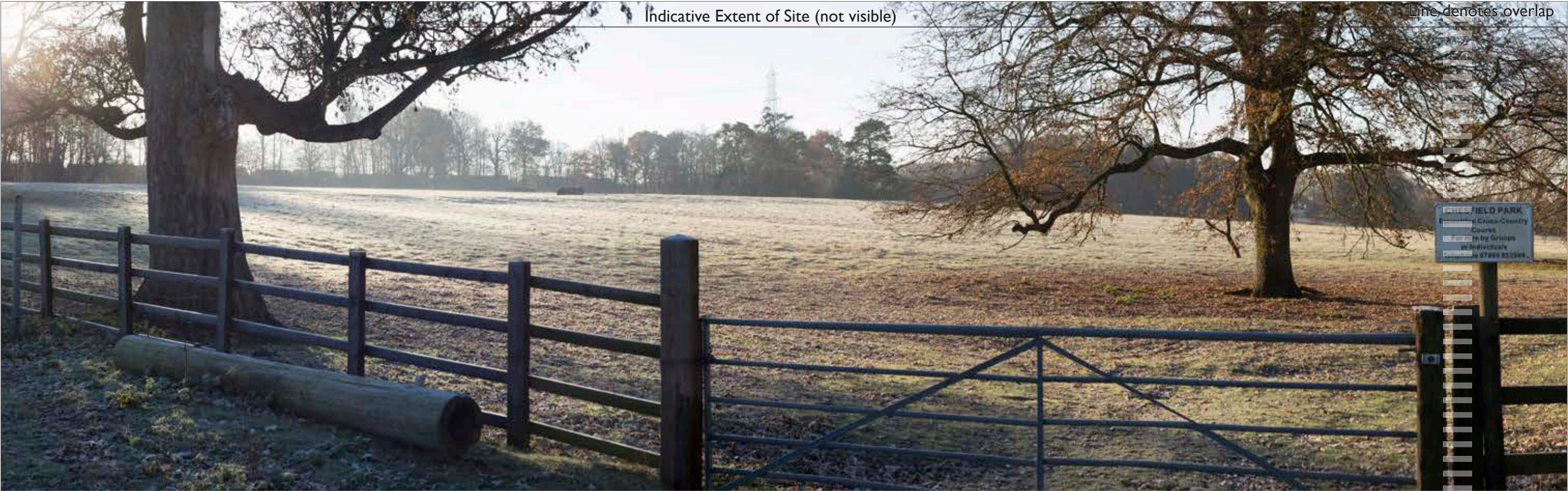


Viewpoint 13 Winter

PROJECT NO:	10651	CLIENT:	MILLER HOMES AND BELLWAY HOMES	FIGURE NO:	10.30
DATE:	February 2017	PROJECT:	LAND NORTH OF STEVENAGE	TITLE:	Viewpoint 13 - Photographs
ISSUE STATUS:	DRAFT				



Viewpoint I4 Summer - View from entrance to Chesfield Park at Back Lane looking south west. (British National Grid 524674, 227664).



Viewpoint I4 Winter



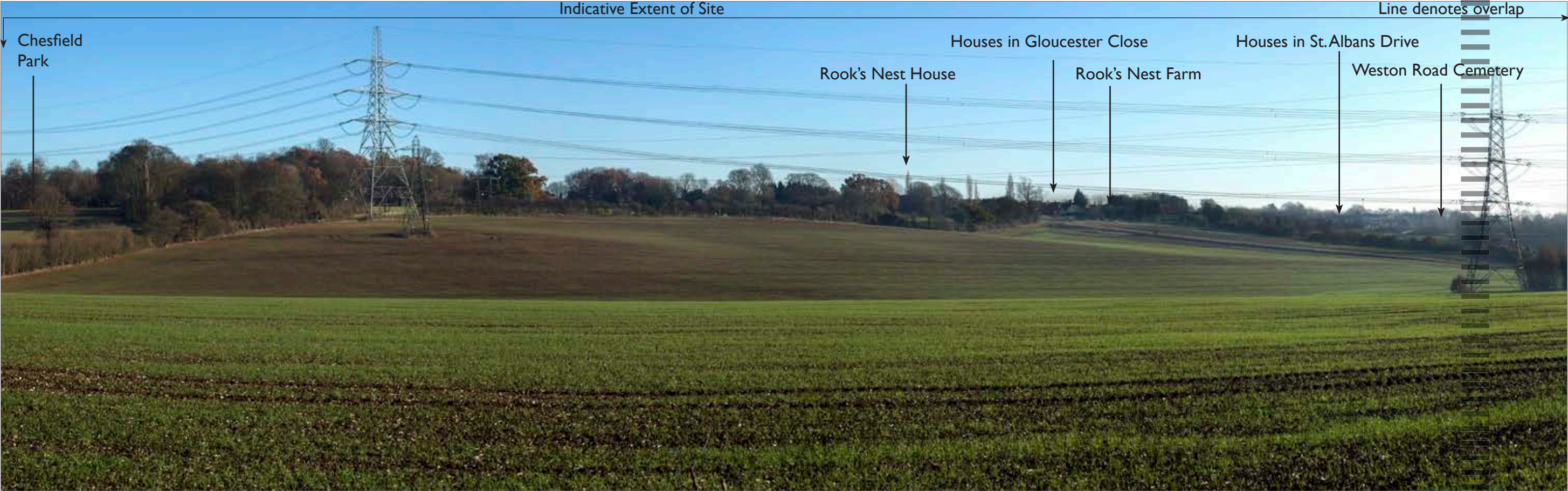
Viewpoint I4 Summer - View from entrance to Chesfield Park at Back Lane looking south west. (British National Grid 524674, 227664).



Viewpoint I4 Winter



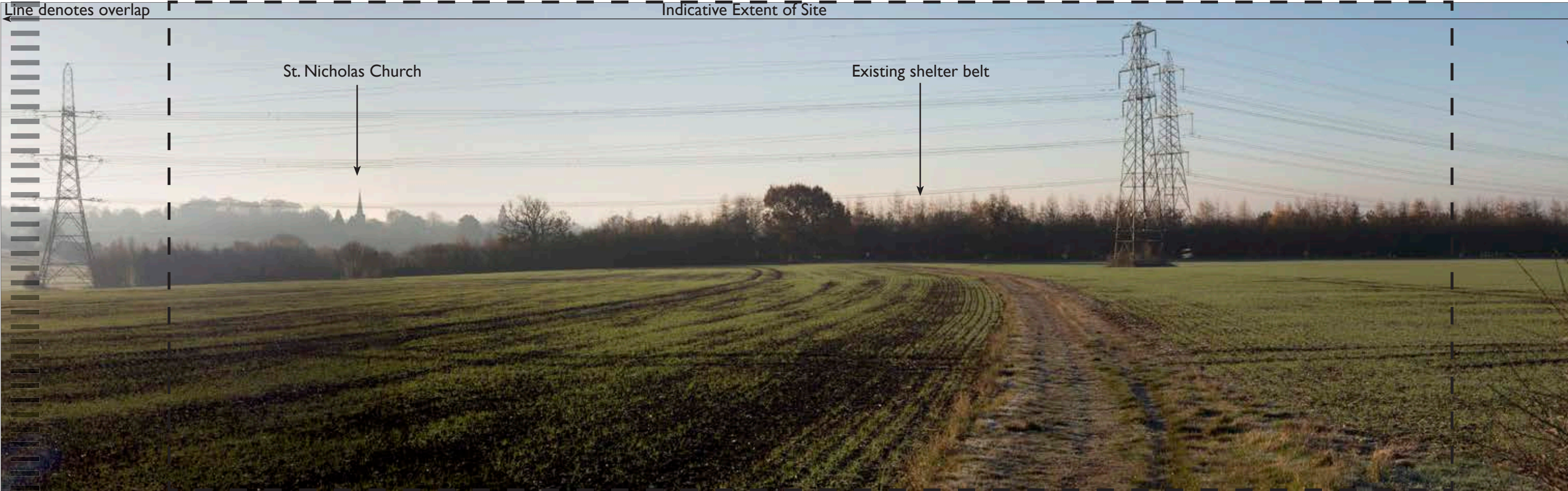
Viewpoint I5 Summer - View from public footpath 8 looking east. (British National Grid 523971, 227148).



Viewpoint I5 Winter



Viewpoint 15 Summer - View from public footpath 8 looking south. (British National Grid 523971, 227148). *Dashed line indicates the extent of the verified view



Viewpoint 15 Winter



Viewpoint I6 Summer - View from public footpath 23 looking west. (British National Grid 524,038,226,707). *Dashed line indicates the extent of the verified view



Viewpoint I6 Winter



Viewpoint 16 Summer - View from public footpath 23 looking north. (British National Grid 524,038,226,707).



Viewpoint 16 Winter



Viewpoint 17a Winter - View from edge of Rooks Nest House garden looking west.



Viewpoint 17a Winter - View from edge of Rooks Nest House garden looking west.



Viewpoint 17b Winter View from upper storey window of Rooks Nest House looking west.

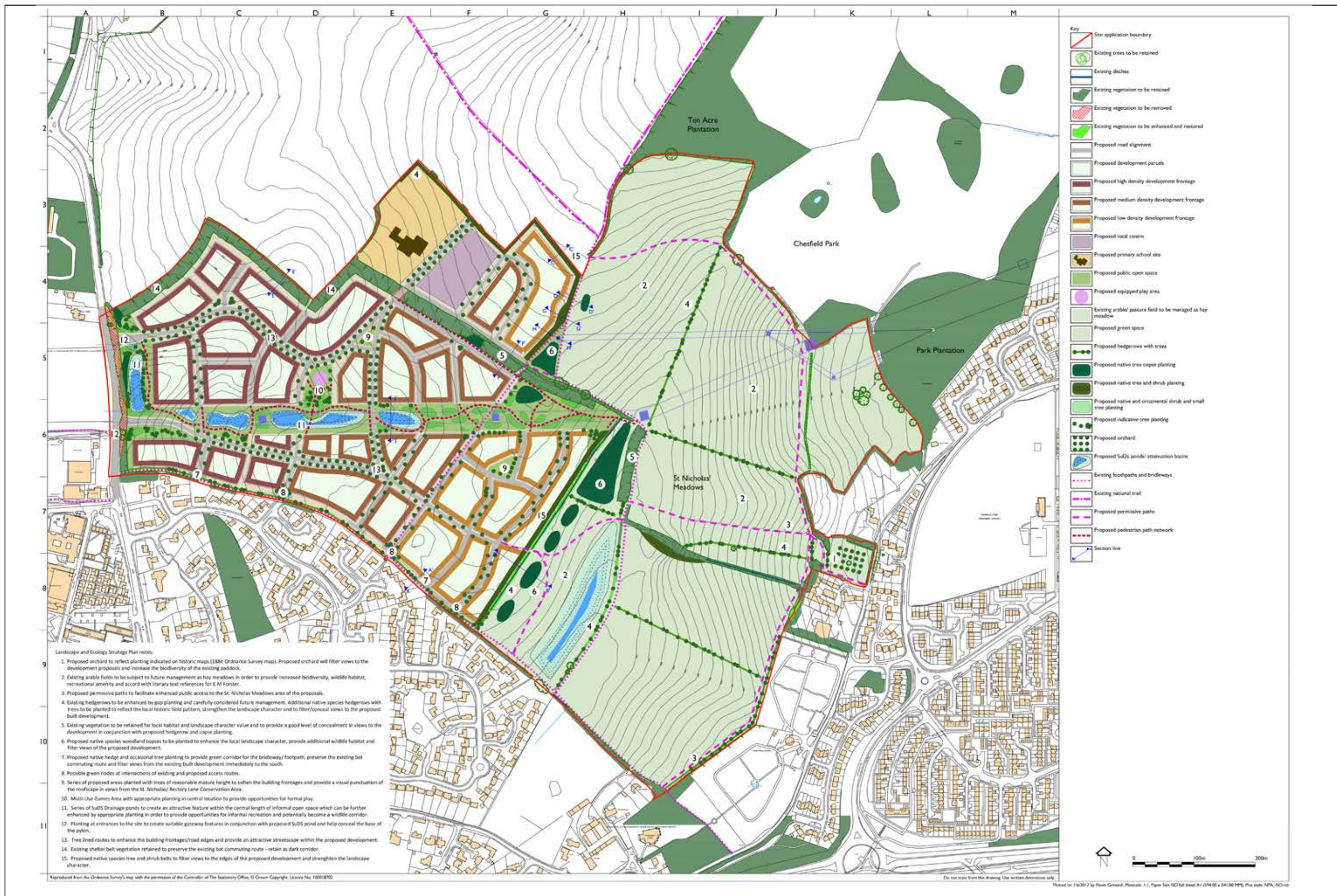


Viewpoint 18 Winter - View from the Hertfordshire Way between Graveley Bury and Ten Acre Plantation looking south south west.

<div>NICHOLAS PEARSON ASSOCIATES</div> <div>ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNERS • LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS • ECOLOGISTS</div>	PROJECT NO:	I0651	CLIENT:	MILLER HOMES AND BELLWAY HOMES	FIGURE NO:	I0.39
	DATE:	February 2017	PROJECT:	LAND NORTH OF STEVENAGE	TITLE:	Viewpoint 18 - Photograph
	ISSUE STATUS:	DRAFT				



Viewpoint 18 Winter - View from the Hertfordshire Way between Graveley Bury and Ten Acre Plantation looking south south west.





Existing summer view 3



Proposed summer view 3 when proposed planting is 15 to 20 years old

<div>NICHOLAS PEARSON ASSOCIATES</div> <div>ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNERS • LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS • ECOCOLOGISTS</div>	Project No: I0651 MH	Client: MILLER HOMES BELLWAY HOMES	VVM Figure No: I	VVM Number: S-3 Ex & S-3 Pro	Direction of View: NW	Single Frame / Composite: Composite	Horizontal Field of View: 53.2	Vertical Field of View: 18.2
	Date: February 2017	Project Title: LAND NORTH OF STEVENAGE		Date and Time: 14/09/2016 13:03:59		*Principle viewing distance: 400mm	Co-ordinates: 524099, 226311	
	Issue Status: Draft	Figure Title: Viewpoint 3 Existing and Proposed Summer View		Location: footpath 18 at northern edge of St. Nicholas churchyard		Weather/ Lighting conditions: Bright and sunny		Eye level: (AOD): 120.3



Existing winter view 3



Proposed winter view 3 when proposed planting is 15 to 20 years old

<div>NICHOLAS PEARSON ASSOCIATES</div> <div>ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNERS • LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS • ECODISIGNERS</div>	Project No: I0651 MH	Client: MILLER HOMES BELLWAY HOMES	VVM Figure No: 2	VVM Number: W-3 Ex & W-3 Pro	Direction of View: NW	Single Frame / Composite: Composite	Horizontal Field of View: 53.2	Vertical Field of View: 18.2
	Date: February 2017	Project Title: LAND NORTH OF STEVENAGE		Date and Time: 29/11/2016, 10:32:59		*Principle viewing distance: 400mm	Co-ordinates: 524099, 226311	
	Issue Status: Draft	Figure Title: Viewpoint 3 Existing and Proposed Winter View		Location: footpath 18 at northern edge of St. Nicholas churchyard		Weather/ Lighting conditions: Bright and sunny		Eye level: (AOD): 120.3

Appendix 8: Guiding Principles for Establishment of St. Nicholas' Meadows

LAND NORTH OF STEVENAGE

Guiding Principles for the Establishment of St Nicholas' Meadows

As part of the development of land north of Stevenage, it is proposed that the south-eastern end of the site (within the St. Nicholas/Rectory Lane Conservation Area) should be restored (predominantly as hay meadows) to approximately the pattern of fields that would have existed in the late nineteenth century. This approach to the south-eastern end of the site would accord with design guidelines set out in the St. Nicholas/Rectory Lane Conservation Area Management Plan Supplementary Planning Document, adopted by Stevenage Borough Council in July 2012. It would also accord with Policy NH8 of the emerging Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011–2031.

Historic landscape

An extract from the 1834 Tithe Map of Stevenage (see Appendix B), indicates that, at that date, this part of the parish consisted of a pattern of small fields, on both sides of Weston Road. At that date much of the land at the south-eastern end of the site was owned by the Bishop of London and occupied by a John Smith (who appears to have farmed from Bury Farm to the north-west of the church). The land to the north-west (that is proposed for housing development) was owned by the Rector of Stevenage (probably as part of the glebe lands) and was occupied by a Charles Williams.

The 1884 Ordnance Survey map (see Appendix C) shows that, by that date, the majority of the small fields had been amalgamated into much larger parcels of land. This map also shows a number of trees within the various hedgerows.

Since 1884 a small number of other field boundaries have been lost to the west of Weston Road (within the site of the proposed development). The principal changes to the area have occurred during the second half of the twentieth century as a result of the development of the urban areas of Stevenage to the east of Weston Road and to the north of Rectory Lane. In addition, the Weston Road Cemetery has been created to the south of the farm and two overhead electricity lines now cross the site.

Although the majority of the field boundaries shown on the 1884 Ordnance Survey map (see Appendix C) survive, they are now generally in poor condition. Many have gaps in their hedges, there are few hedgerow trees, and traditional hedgerow flora has been largely been lost as a result of modern farming practices.

Literary references

The novelist E.M. Forster (1879–1970) was familiar with the area during the late nineteenth century. He spent some of his childhood at Rooks Nest House (now a Grade I listed building because of its association with Forster) and used it as the basis for the house, Howards End, in his novel of the same name. Relevant extracts from the novel and a description of Rooksnest (the name by which he knew the house) written by Forster are included as Appendix A. Forster's descriptions indicate that the surroundings of the house were dominated by farming activity, with references to meadows, hay-cutting, and the harvesting of wheat, together with ducks, cows and guinea-fowls (see extracts from pages 19 and 20, and 141, 325 and 326 of the novel in Appendix A). The hedges around the fields and their flora appear to have been important to Forster (see extracts from pages 19 and 20, and 264 of the novel, together with pages 338 and 339 of Forster's description of Rooksnest in Appendix A).

The 1834 Tithe Map shows an irregularly shaped field to the north-west of Rooks Nest House that was almost certainly the meadow that formed part of the property in Forster's time (see extract from page 268 of the novel in Appendix A). The boundaries of this field (which lies outside the site of the proposed development) remain largely unaltered since 1834 and it is understood that the field remains within the same ownership as Rooks Nest House. This field is probably not the 'big meadow' that features in the last chapter of the novel (see extracts from pages 325 and 326, and 332 of the novel in Appendix A).

Proposal

As shown on the illustrative framework drawing for the proposed development, it is suggested that a section of land at the south-eastern end of the site (within the St. Nicholas/Rectory Lane Conservation Area) should be restored as St. Nicholas' Meadows. Within this area the field boundaries shown on the 1884 Ordnance Survey map (see Appendix C) that have been lost would be reinstated with hedgerows, including hedgerow trees and other traditional flora. These are hedges that would have existed when Forster (who was born in 1879) first came to the area. In addition, the new boundary that has been created to the west of the Weston Road Cemetery would be developed as a similar hedgerow, together with hedgerow trees. In addition, the surviving field boundaries would be improved by gap-filling where breaks exist and additional trees would be introduced. Carefully considered hedgerow management would re-create traditional hedges and would allow tree saplings to grow to a mature height as hedgerow trees.

It is also proposed that a few of the pre-1884 field boundaries within this area (as shown on the 1834 Tithe Map of Stevenage – see Appendix B) would be reinstated in order to provide the opportunity to introduce further hedges and trees, with appropriate traditional flora. A further new hedgerow (extending west from Rooks Nest House) would also be created (mainly for ecological reasons); this would approximately follow some of the field boundaries shown on the 1834 Tithe Map (see Appendix B). A number of small copses of trees would also be planted in this area (principally for ecological reasons). In addition, it is proposed that an orchard (as shown on the 1884 Ordnance Survey map – see Appendix C) be reinstated between Rooks Nest House and the farm buildings to the south.

The likely species within the restored and new hedgerows would include Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), Hazel (*Coryllus avellana*), Elder (*Sambucus nigra*), Dog Rose (*Rosa canina*), Field rose (*Rosa avellana*), Old Man's Beard (*Clematis vitalba*), Dogwood (*Cornus sanguinea*). A selection of trees would be included within these hedgerows and would include Oaks (*Quercus robur*), Hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*), Sweet Chestnut (*Castanea sativa*), Field Maple (*Acer campestre*). Similar species would be used within the new copses. These species reflect those currently found within the local area and also include species that are mentioned within Forster's literary texts.

It is proposed that the majority of the fields within this pattern of restored and new hedges would be managed to create species-rich hay meadows. Such meadows generally require a lower level of soil fertility than that found within agricultural soil that has been subject to an arable regime (as is the case for land within the site). The lower fertility allows a range of wildflower species to establish without being out-competed by grass species. The aim would be to produce a meadow sward that includes a range of perennial grasses and wildflowers. This would be achieved by determining the current fertility of the soil and the residual levels of key nutrients (such as phosphorus) within the topsoil and subsoil horizons in order to ascertain the most appropriate technique for the management of the soils and the establishment of traditional hay meadow plant species.

All these elements of the proposals would lead to a significant increase in the biodiversity of this part of the site. The meadows and their hedgerows would provide beneficial shelter, food and habitat for a range of birds, mammals and invertebrates. The network of hedgerows would also provide wildlife corridors connecting to other hedgerows, shelterbelts, copses and areas of woodland and scrub within the western part of the site and the surrounding area.

A new network of footpaths is also proposed across this area, linked to the existing footpath network and to Weston Road. This would provide public access into the St. Nicholas' Meadows.

The management of the hay meadows is likely to be incompatible with full public access. The timing of hay-cutting operations is important to allow grass and wildflower species to set seed prior to harvesting. The main hay cut would therefore need to take place in July and August. The method of cutting the hay is also crucial to ensure that any ground-nesting birds are given the opportunity to disperse safely to the field margins.

This approach to the south-eastern end of the site would follow the relevant design guidelines set out in the St. Nicholas/Rectory Lane Conservation Area Management Plan Supplementary Planning Document, adopted by Stevenage Borough Council in July 2012. In particular, the restoration of hedges and hedgerow trees reinforce the traditional local character, which is recognised in paragraph 9.19 that states:

A significant strength of the St Nicholas/Rectory Lane Conservation Area is the visual amenity of the local rural character. The original pattern of gardens and grounds and the presence of trees and hedgerows contribute greatly to the character of the area.

The provision of additional footpaths that increases recreational access to the area would accord with paragraph 9.20, which includes the comment that:

... open fields to the north contribute greatly to the recreational opportunities for Stevenage and the wider area.

The proposals for the hedgerows and hay meadows would increase the biodiversity of this part of the site in accordance with paragraph 9.26, which includes the statement that:

We will support the improvement of existing habitats and encourage the development of new nesting areas for protected species

In addition, this approach accords with Policy NH8 of the emerging Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011–2031, which seeks to improve public access to this part of the St. Nicholas/Rectory Lane Conservation Area.

Conclusion

This approach to the south-eastern end of the site would result in a restoration of the late-nineteenth-century landscape character of this area and its flora, together with a significant increase in the biodiversity of this part of the site.

In view of the importance of E.M. Forster to this part of Stevenage, it is considered that the approach set out above, would be appropriate and would result in the re-creation of something of the character of the area as it was known by Forster. It would therefore result in an enhancement of this part of the St. Nicholas/Rectory Lane Conservation Area and an enhancement of part of the setting of Rooks Nest House (a Grade I listed building).

5th December 2016

Woodhall Planning and Conservation

APPENDIX A

SETTING OF ROOKS NEST HOUSE AS DESCRIBED BY E.M. FORSTER

Rooks Nest House (a Grade I listed building) provided the basis for the house, Howards End, in the novel of the same name by E.M Forster (1879–1970), who had lived in the house for part of his childhood. There are some descriptions of the surroundings of the property in the novel (beyond the descriptions of the house itself and its garden). Some additional information is provided in a description of Rooksnest (the name by which he knew the house), written for the most part when Forster was 15. This description is included as an appendix to the 1989 Penguin Books edition of the novel, edited by Oliver Stallybrass.

Relevant extracts from the novel and the appendix are provided below (the page numbers are those of the 1989 Penguin Books edition).

THE NOVEL

Pages 19 and 20

Extracts from letter from Helen to her sister Meg

Then there's a very big wych-elm – to the left as you look up – leaning a little over the house, and standing on the boundary between the garden and meadow. I quite love that tree already. Also ordinary elms, oaks – no nastier than ordinary oaks – pear trees, apple trees, and a vine. No silver birches, though. ...

This long letter is because I'm writing before breakfast. Oh, the beautiful vine leaves. The house is covered with a vine. I looked out earlier, and Mrs Wilcox was already in the garden. ... Then she walked off the lawn to the meadow, whose corner to the right I can just see. ... The dog-roses are too sweet. There is a great hedge of them over the lawn – magnificently tall, so that they fall down in garlands, and nice and thin at the bottom, so that you can see ducks through it and a cow. These belong to the farm, which is the only house near us.

Page 141

Comments by Mr. Wilcox to Margaret

Well, Howards End is one of those converted farms. They don't really do, spend what you will of them. We messed away with a garage all among the wych-elm roots, and last year we enclosed a bit of the meadow and attempted a rockery. ... You remember, or your sister will remember, the farm with those abominable guinea-fowls, and the hedge that the old woman never would cut properly, so that

it went all thin at the bottom. ... And the position wasn't right either. The neighbourhood's getting suburban.

Pages 262 and 263

Margaret walks from the station to Howards End

At the church the scenery changed. The chestnut avenue opened into a road, smooth but narrow, which led into the untouched country. She followed it for over a mile. Its little hesitations pleased her. Having no urgent destiny, it strolled downhill or up as it wished, taking no trouble about the gradients, nor about the view, which nevertheless expanded. The great estates that throttle the south of Hertfordshire were less obtrusive here, and the appearance of the land was neither aristocratic nor suburban. To define it was difficult, but Margaret knew what it was not: it was not snobbish. Though its contours were slight, there was a touch of freedom in their sweep, to which Surrey will never attain, and the distant brow of the Chilterns towered like a mountain. ...

Page 264

Part of the description of Margaret's walk from the farm to Howards End

... The hedge was a half-painted picture which would be finished in a few days. Celandines grew on its banks, lords-and-ladies and primroses in the defended hollows; the wild rose bushes, still bearing their withered hips, showed also the promise of blossom.

Page 268

Margaret with Miss Avery

'It's a beautiful meadow,' she remarked. It was one of those open-air drawing rooms that have been formed, hundreds of years ago, out of the smaller fields. So the boundary hedge zigzagged down the hill at right angles, and at the bottom there was a little green annex – a sort of powder-closet for the cows.

Page 325 and 326

Beginning of the final chapter

Tom's father was cutting the big meadow. He passed again and again amid whirring blades and sweet odours of grass, encompassing with narrowing circles the sacred centre of the field. ...

Fourteen months had passed, but Margaret still stopped at Howards End. No better plan had occurred to her. The meadow was being re-cut, the great red poppies were reopening in the garden. July would follow with the little red poppies among the wheat, August with the cutting of the wheat.

Page 329

Helen to Margaret

'All the same, London's creeping.

She pointed over the meadow – over eight or nine meadows, but at the end of them was a red rust.

Page 330

Paul to his father, Mr Wilcox, following the suggestion that Howards End might be left to him

... 'As I've given up the outdoor life that suited me, and have come home to look after the business, it's no good my settling down here,' he said at last. 'It's not really the country, and it's not the town.'

Page 332

End of final chapter

From the garden came laughter. 'Here they are at last!' exclaimed Henry, disengaging himself with a smile. Helen rushed into the gloom, holding Tom by one hand and carrying her baby on the other. There were shouts of infectious joy.

'The field's cut!' Helen cried excitedly - 'The big meadow! We've seen to the very end, and it'll be such a crop of hay as never!'

APPENDIX

Page 333

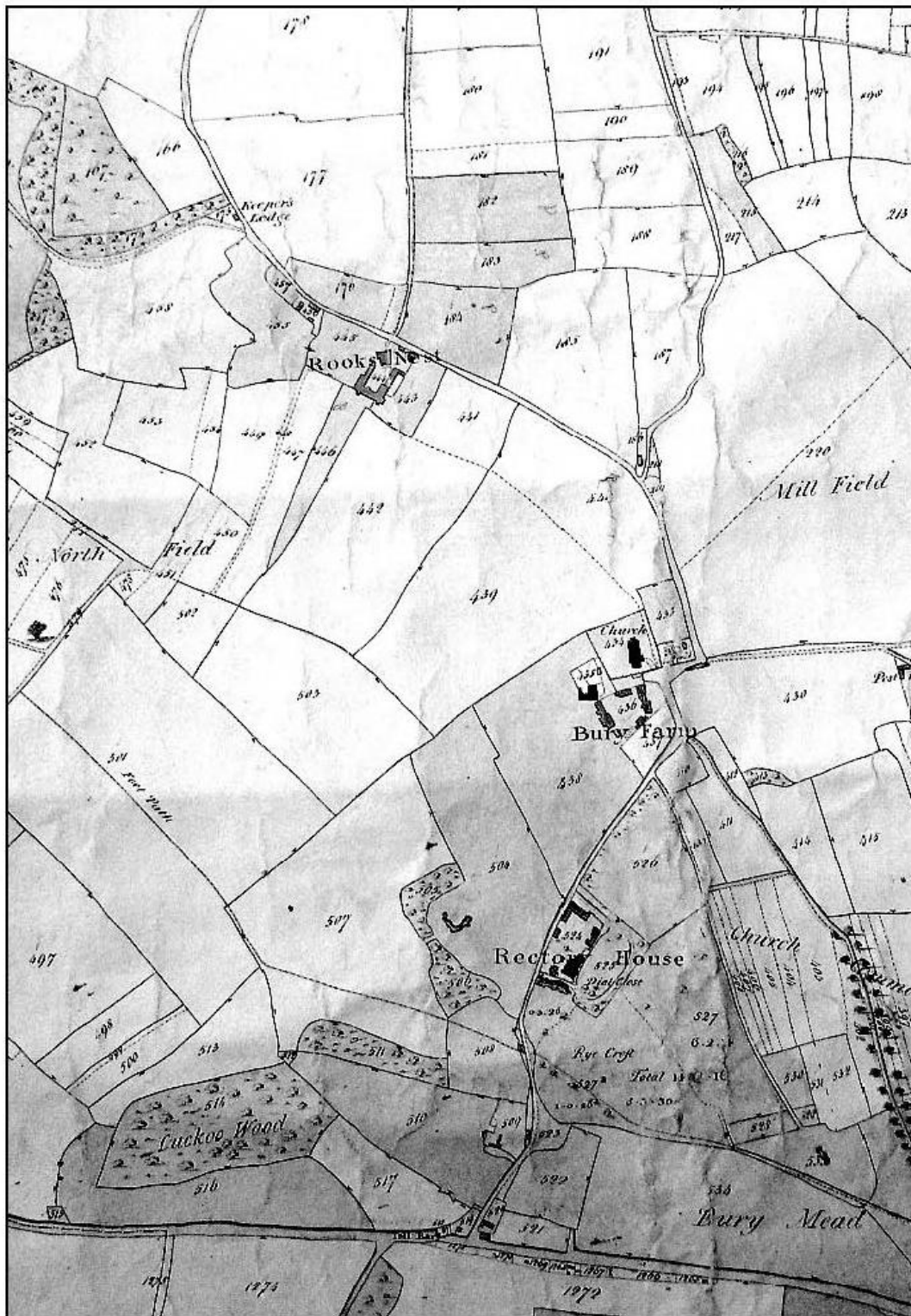
I have, or think I have, a clear impression of my arrival at Rooksnest. I certainly remember coming in the train I think I remember too coming in the fly and seeing the church and the farm as we passed and also seeing Rooksnest itself but I do not remember entering the house

I suppose I had better begin by a description of the house. It was about one mile from Stevenage walking and one and a half driving and was on a particularly bad piece of road which led from Stevenage to Weston, a small village about three miles further on and naturally had very little traffic. Stevenage is on the G.N.R. and is the highest point on the line between London and York and Rooksnest is a good deal higher than Stevenage so we had a very fine view to the west and north-west over Hertfordshire and part of Cambridgeshire. People who were accustomed to call Herts an ugly county were astonished at this view and the surroundings of the house were altogether very pretty, first and foremost the fine view, and to the north a peep of the park with its little woods of firs and oaks. We could not see beyond the road as there was a high hedge and there were no windows looking out that way. The house faced south-west but it professed to face south.

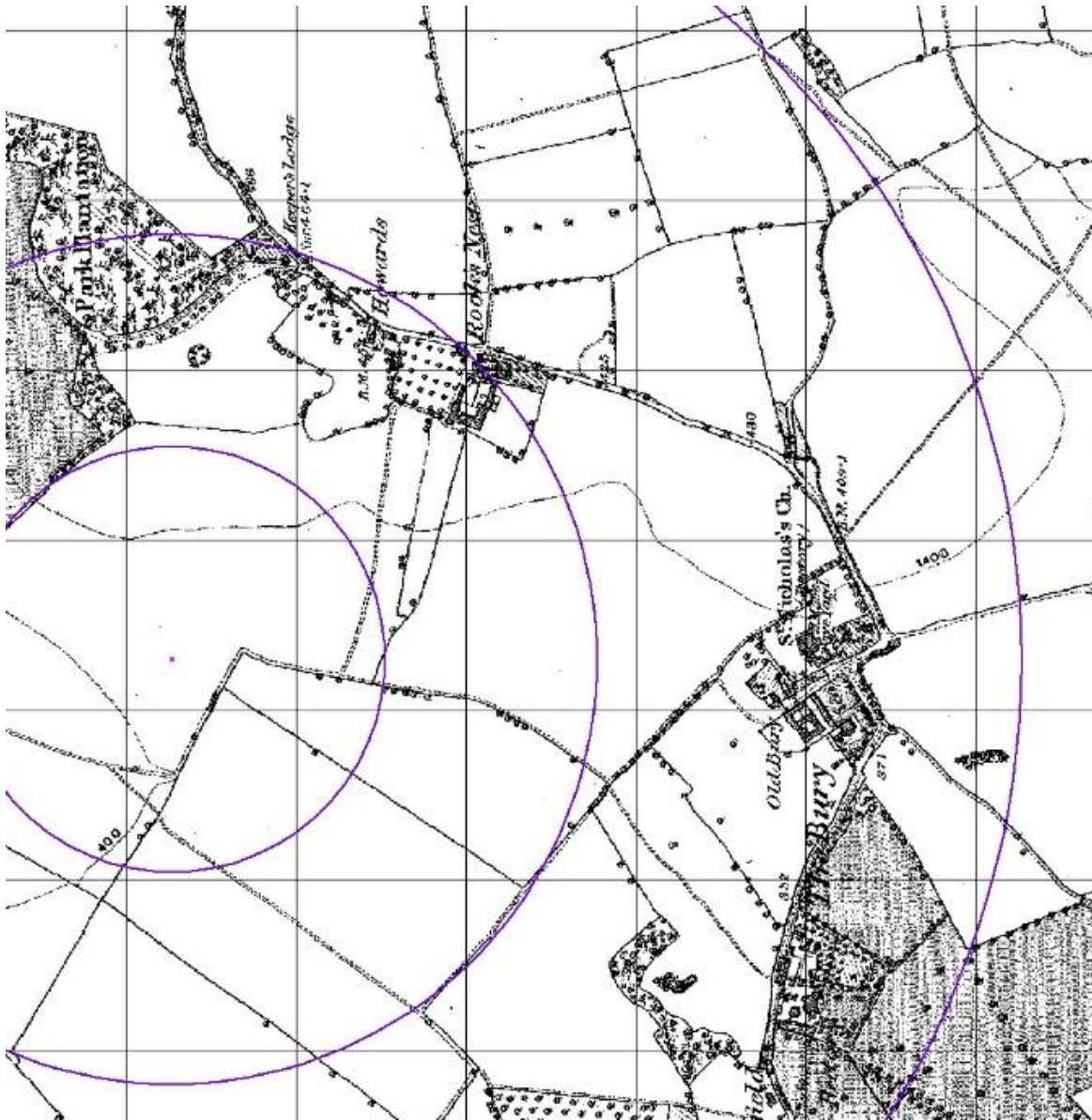
Pages 338 and 339

All one side of the garden stretched the meadow. It was our meadow but we let it to Mr Franklin on condition that no obnoxious animals should be allowed there. ... The boundary line between the two was a fence of four wires which we had not to spoil the view We were very fond of the meadow. It had three fine greengage trees, which we were allowed to have, and a large oak tree on which was hung a swing. It was of very odd shape ... and was all downhill. It had hedges full of clematis, primroses, bluebells, dog-roses, may, bryony and nuts, with many trees which were nearly all in the hedges. In it was a little dell which communicated with our pond in the back garden to prevent it getting too full. From it were most lovely views of the surrounding country. It was generally used for hay in summer.

APPENDIX B
EXTRACT FROM 1834 TITHE MAP



APPENDIX C
1884 ORDNANCE SURVEY MAP



Appendix 9: Existing Cycle Network and Proposed Cycle Link

