

Appendix 11

Land North of Welwyn Road, Hertford

Landscape and Visual Appraisal - Site Feasibility

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Document Control

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Appendix A: Photography Method

1.0 Background



Figure 1: Location Plan (Aerial photography sourced from Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, i-cubed, Earthstar CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AEX, Getmapping, Aerogrid, IGN IGP)

Introduction

- 1.1 This Document is submitted as part of the representations made on behalf of our client, London and Regional Properties (L&R), in relation to Archers Spring, Land North of Welwyn Road, Hertford (part of Draft Allocation HERT3).
- 1.2 The site is owned by L&R, one of Europe's largest privately owned property companies. L&R have brought together a team of leading advisors including McBains Cooper, LUC, BSG Ecology, WSP Group and Savills to assist with developing proposals that will make the very best of this unique opportunity to deliver a high quality and sustainable new residential development to the west of Hertford.
- 1.3 This document appraises the sites landscape character and current visual prominence, and provides an initial assessment of the likely effects of development.

2.0 Landscape Character and Context



Figure 2: View along Bentley Road to the east of the site



Figure 3: Entrance to Bentley Road from Welwyn Road

Landscape Context

- 2.1 Hertford is a medium sized town in East Hertfordshire. The 12.9ha site lies on the eastern edge of the town
- 2.2 The site lies within Natural England's National Character Area (NCA) 111: Northern Thames Basin. The character area is described as 'an area rich in geodiversity, archaeology and history with diverse landscapes ranging from the wooded Hertfordshire plateaux and river valleys, to the open landscape and predominantly arable area of the Essex heathlands, with areas of urbanisation mixed in throughout.'
- 2.3 The NCA makes several recommendations for environmental improvement, the following being applicable to this site:
- 2.4 SEO 4: Manage and expand the significant areas of broadleaf woodland and wood pasture, and increase tree cover within urban areas, for the green infrastructure links and important habitats that they provide, for the sense of tranquillity they bring, their ability to screen urban influences and their role in reducing heat island effect and sequestering and storing carbon.
- 2.5 Local Landscape Context
- 2.6 At a local level the site is within the area covered by East Herts Landscape Character Assessment, adopted in September 2007 as supplementary planning guidance. This assessment is also referenced by Hertfordshire County Council.
- 2.7 East Herts Landscape Character Assessment: The site lies on the edge of Character Area 67: The Bramfield Plain. It borders Area 44, the Panshanger Parkland to the south and the settlement of Hertford to the east. The Bramfield Plain is described as 'a very gently undulating to flat area of open arable land, unsettled and with little woodland. It is enclosed to the north-west by the wooded ridge of the Tewin-Datchworth plateau and by river valleys to south (Mimram) and east (Rib)'. It notes its key characteristics as:
 - *'flat open arable farmland*
 - *long views over area and river valleys*
 - *narrow winding lanes with bare or over-managed hedgebanks, with passing places and 'oxbow' verges*
 - *few hedges or hedgerow trees*
 - *estate character of Bramfield village and outlying buildings'*
- 2.8 The assessment notes the character area as 'generally visible from the high ground to the north west and the slopes below, and it commands extensive views to the edge of Hertford. This is a coherent, long-settled, tranquil, medium-scale landscape.'

2.0 Landscape Character and Context



Figure 4: View looking east towards the eastern boundary of the site at the rear of properties on Bentley Road



Figure 5: View of the wildlife site looking north from the western plateau

The report goes on to say that in terms of the landscapes rarity and distinctiveness, it is 'unusual by virtue of its flatness in this generally undulating county, but otherwise an unremarkable arable landscape.'

2.9 Currently the assessment notes that there 'has been little visual impact on this area from built development, other than extensive mineral extraction on its eastern edge.' It suggests that 'the northwestern edge of Hertford is well screened from view' indicating that Hertford itself has minimal impact on the setting of this character area.

2.10 Several suggested improvement and conservation measures are proposed, many of which are applicable to the site, as follows:

- 'where possible and appropriate, replace former hedges along historic field boundaries, but not necessarily along road boundaries, where they could obscure views over this open landscape. Use only local species, preferably of local provenance, to reinforce distinctiveness
- do not plant hedgerow trees, as these are not found in this area
- tree planting should be confined to the creation of buffer zones round existing woods, preferably following historic field or woodland boundaries. Where possible, use this type of planting to link discrete woodlands. Use only locally native species of local provenance. Do not plant trees in areas that have not previously been woodland, this could alter the balance of landscape features in this area. Ensure that new woodland planting is of a scale to match existing woodland in the area
- encourage the appropriate management of the new nature reserve to maximise biodiversity, since it is not a feature that contributes to the historic local landscape character
- encourage the management of road verges and banks to increase biodiversity
- within arable farmland encourage the establishment of wide field margins, beetle banks, etc. to increase biodiversity without altering the landscape character of the area
- look at creating green corridors between ridges and river valleys.'

3.0 Site Description



Figure 6: Site Features (Aerial photography sourced from Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, i-cubed, Earthstar CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AEX, Getmapping, Aerogrid, IGN IGP)

Site Description

- 3.1 The site lies immediately outside the urban edge of Hertford to the north of the B1000. It presents a negative character to the B1000 with broken fences, extensive defences against illegal access and appears generally unmanaged. This perception only extends to a narrow margin immediately adjacent to the road; the remainder of the site not being visible because of perimeter bunds/vegetation, and lowered site levels.
- 3.2 The core of the site has a completely different character and is dominated by two relatively level plateaux with steep intervening slopes and small isolated spoil heaps (all the legacy of mineral extraction and subsequent partial land raising in inert fill). The site orients to the wooded context which extends along the northern boundary (with distinctive scots pine in the west and good quality deciduous in the east). The site is divided into two parts by a spur of open woodland / scrub.
- 3.3 This and the deciduous woodland contain some fine veteran ash and field maple pollards. Levels fall away in the north-east corner of the site into a grassy dell.
- 3.4 The spur, grassy dell and intervening slopes are a County Wildlife Site and have an attractive landscape character, mainly because of its enclosure and the characteristic Scots pine woodland to the north.
- 3.5 The plateaux by contrast are dominated by unmanaged vegetation and are of little landscape or ecological value. Their main attribute is their visual containment – by 6m bunds along the B1000 (west plateau) and 2m bunds (east plateau); dense woodland along the north boundary and rapidly establishing self-sown trees on the west boundary. The east edge has a low bund with adjacent, mainly two storey, housing set well back.
- 3.6 Several ecological surveys have been undertaken on the site and these and their findings are detailed in a separate report.

4.0 Visual Appraisal

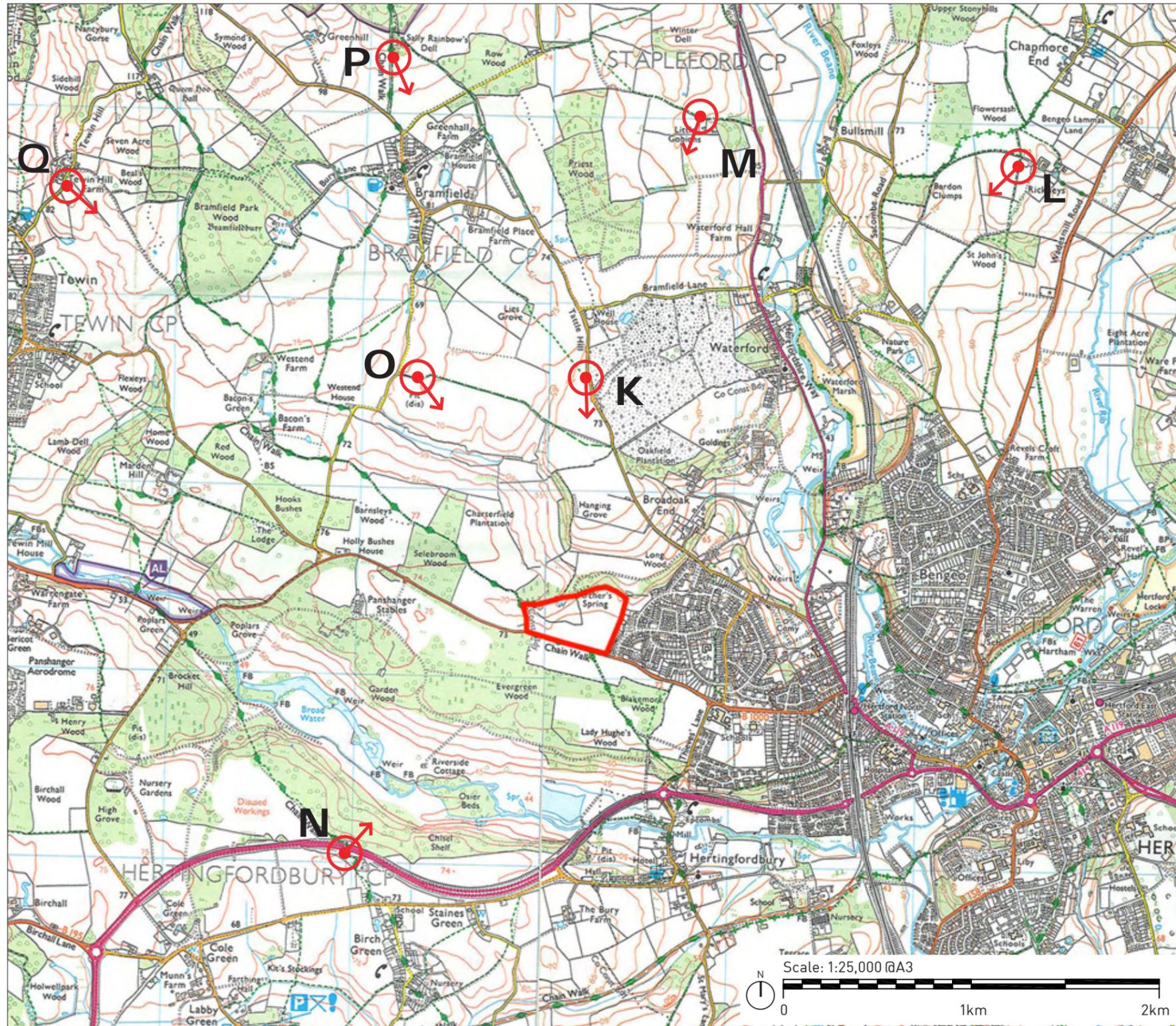


Figure 7: Mid-Long range photo viewpoint location plan (Source: Extract from OS 194 and 182 Explorer Series 1:25,000)

Visual Appraisal

Methodology

- 4.1 A visual appraisal was undertaken to understand the current visual prevalence of the site, and to make some initial assumptions as to the potential visual effect of development on the site.
- 4.2 From our preliminary assessment of the landscape context we consider that there is potential for visual impacts to:
 - The countryside surrounding west Hertford;
 - public rights of way crossing through the countryside; and
 - close range effects on the existing edge of the built-up area, in particular residential areas to the east.
- 4.3 These effects were appraised through visual appraisal from selected viewpoints.
- 4.4 Viewpoints were selected following extensive local search of publicly accessible areas from which it may be possible to see the site. Viewpoints were therefore restricted to those on public highway or rights of way. In each case 'worst case' viewpoints were sought. This follows best practice. The selected viewpoints are shown on Figure 7 (mid-long range) and Figure 8 (short range).

Summary

- 4.5 The combination of relatively gentle topography, the elevation and location of the site, and numerous substantial woodland belts means that the site is well screened from many potential viewpoints particularly from east of Hertford. Local viewpoints A, B, C and D demonstrate glimpsed views of the site from Welwyn Road, while viewpoints E, F and G to the east indicate partial views between buildings and tree groups, the existing woodland spur is visible in several of these views.
- 4.6 To the south and west, closer views are obscured by the surrounding woodland buffers as demonstrated in viewpoint H and J. Viewpoint I offers views of the southern site boundary as you emerge from the copse of trees to the south of Welwyn Road, again the woodland spur is evident in this view. Further to the south, views of the site are obscured as represented by viewpoint (N) taken on the bridge over the A414.
- 4.7 The gentle topography and numerous woodland belts mean the site is screened from view from the north, north-east and north-west as indicated in viewpoints K, L, M, P and Q. Slight partial views of the roof tops of buildings on Bentley Road are evident from viewpoint O taken on the footpath to the east of Holly Grove Road. This would imply that future development may be partially visible within this corridor.

4.0 Visual Appraisal

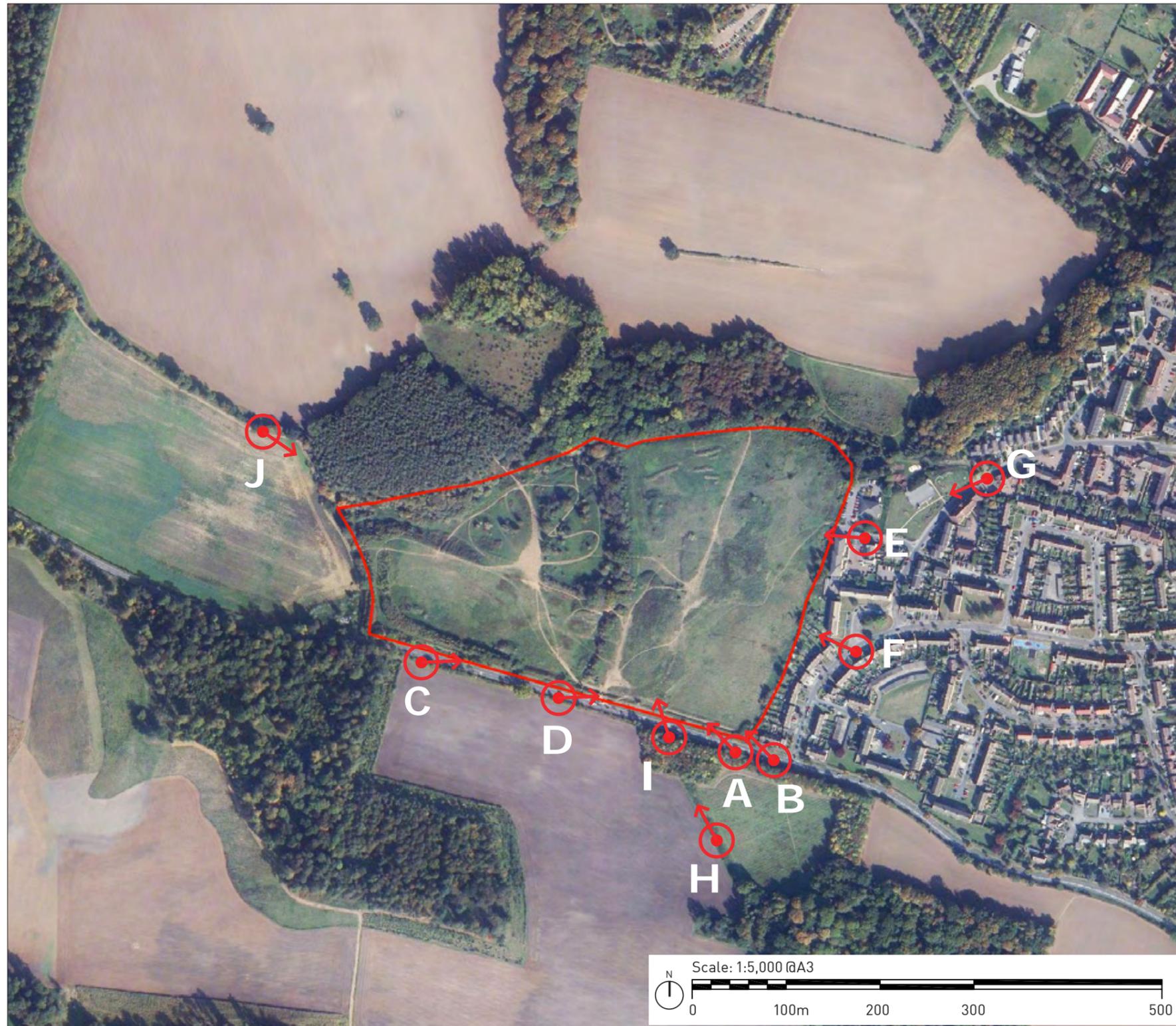


Figure 8: Short range photo viewpoint location plan (Aerial photography sourced from Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, i-cubed, Earthstar CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AEX, Getmapping, Aerogrid, IGN IGP)

Visual Appraisal and likely effects

- 4.8 Each of the viewpoints has been appraised using a standard approach. This consists of a panoramic photograph with suitable annotations to identify the sites location within the view. The methodology used when taking the photographs is outlined in appendix A.
- 4.9 The site was photographed on Thursday 17th July 2014 and conditions were dry, sunny and clear. The photographs are somewhat limited as they only represent the visibility of the site during the summer months. The general dense nature of the surrounding woodland and gentle topography make the assumptions likely to be similar if winter views were considered. It is however recommended that should further assessment be necessary, this is done during the winter months when the trees are not in leaf.

5.0 Photographic Viewpoints

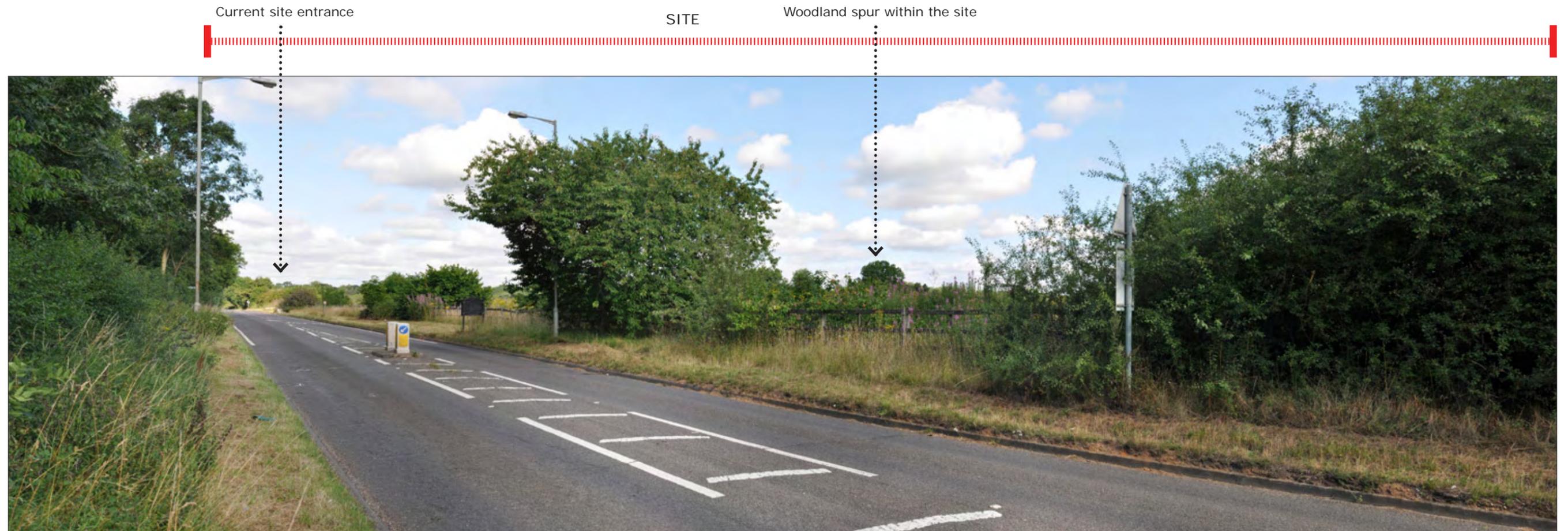


Figure 9: Viewpoint B - View south side of Welwyn Road (B1000)

Viewpoint A

South side of Welwyn Road (B1000), looking NW towards the southern site boundary, Figure 9.

The site boundary is defined by a timber post and rail fence, with a low bund rising up to the rear. Patches of poorly managed hedgerow shrubs are evident along the boundary, set within a grass verge to the edge of the highway. Views of the sites ground plain are restricted by the vegetation and topography, however the woodland spur to the centre of the site is evident in the centre of the view.

It is highly likely that any development on the site would be visible from this viewpoint. While development will impact on the view, it offers the opportunity to improve this boundary, providing structured planting to better reflect the hedgerow character to the south side of Welwyn Road.

5.0 Photographic Viewpoints



Figure 10: Viewpoint B - View from to the south of Welwyn Road

Viewpoint B

From Welwyn Road to the south of the residential settlement to the east of the site, looking NW at the sites SE corner, Figure 10.

The view illustrates the exit from the built up areas of Hertford into the wider countryside. Existing blocks of shrub and tree planting in the corner of the site, together with existing housing to the right of the view obscure much of the site from view. Glimpses of the site are more evident to the left of the view as you proceed further down Welwyn Road as illustrated in viewpoint A.

It is considered that development on the site will be visible from this viewpoint, particularly if it is greater than three storeys. Again, the opportunity to enhance the site boundary fronting Welwyn Road should be a key consideration in any development proposals.

5.0 Photographic Viewpoints



Figure 11: Viewpoint C - View from the south side of Welwyn Road (B1000)

Viewpoint C

South side of Welwyn Road (B1000), looking east along the southern site boundary, Figure 11.

The view illustrates the approach to Hertford, with the chimney tops of housing just visible at the end of the road corridor. Substantial blocks of unmanaged native shrub planting are visible obscuring the site boundary and extending across the grass verge on the north side of Welwyn Road. Further down the road to the right of the view, the vegetation breaks down revealing glimpses of the site to the rear.

The existing vegetation would seem to obscure much of the site and therefore any future development. Glimpses are likely further along the road. Provided the vegetation is retained and effectively managed, impacts on this viewpoint would be considered to be minimal.

5.0 Photographic Viewpoints



Figure 12: View from the south side of Welwyn Road (B1000)

Viewpoint D

South side of Welwyn Road (B1000), looking NE towards the existing site entrance, Figure 12.

The current site entrance is visible to the right of the view. A timber post and rail fence defines the boundary of the site, partially obscured by vegetation. Invasive species such as Buddleia are visible to the rear of the fence indicating a lack of active management. Various isolated groups of shrubs and young trees are visible along the boundary edge. Various existing buildings to the east of the site are visible above the vegetation line to the right of the view.

The existing vegetation and the presence of a low bund along the site boundary obscure the site's ground plane. New development is likely to be visible from this viewpoint and will impact on the nature of the view. Development should seek to improve the vegetated edge of the road and restore the native hedgerow character. Development provides the opportunity for providing a positive gateway to Hertford.

5.0 Photographic Viewpoints

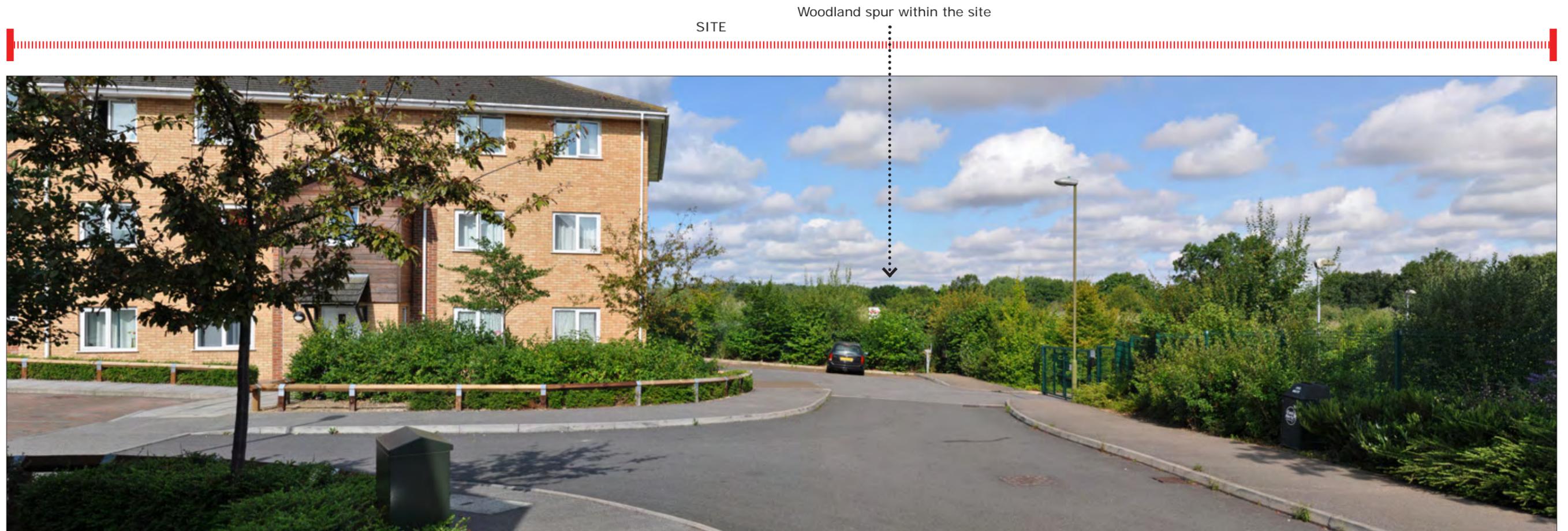


Figure 13: View from Perrett Gardens

Viewpoint E

View from Perrett Gardens, looking west towards the site, Figure 13.

Maturing vegetation lines the site boundary, with the central woodland spur within the site visible to the rear. The residential block to the left obscures views of the site however by their nature, residents within the block are likely to enjoy extensive views across the site.

Development within the site is likely to impact on the view for residents bordering the site and from Perrett Gardens. Intermediate boundary screen planting is advised to supplement long gardens to existing housing.

5.0 Photographic Viewpoints

SITE



Figure 14: View from Bentley Road

Viewpoint F

From Bentley Road, looking west between the existing residential properties, less than 0.5km to the east of the site, Figure 14.

The existing residential development in the foreground obscures views of the site other than for occasional glimpses as represented in this view.

It is likely that proposed development will be clearly visible from the existing residential properties and occasionally from the Bentley road as represented here.

5.0 Photographic Viewpoints



Figure 15: View from the Ridgeway

Viewpoint G

From the Ridgeway to the north of the Ridgeway Local Park, less than 0.5km east of the site, Figure 15.

The site and the central woodland spur are clearly visible in the centre of the view. Specimen tree planting and existing residential buildings obscure further views of the site.

It is considered that development on the site would be visible above the playground in the centre of the view, with the remainder obscured by the three storey residential buildings to the left. It is suggested that development is limited to three storeys to minimise wider impacts on this view.

5.0 Photographic Viewpoints



Figure 16: View from footpath in Panshanger Park

Viewpoint H

From Panshanger Park, looking NW towards Blakemore Wood, less than 0.5km to the south of the site, Figure 16.

The site is not visible from this view being obscured by Blakemore Wood and the new established woodland to the sides of the footpath.

5.0 Photographic Viewpoints



Figure 17: View from the exit to the footpath south of Welwyn Road

Viewpoint I

Exit from footpath on to Welwyn Road to the south of the site, looking north towards the southern site boundary, Figure 17.

The site is visible in the centre of the view, with vegetation to the sides of the footpath restricting broader views of the site. The central woodland spur is evident to the left of the gate.

New development on the site will be visible from this viewpoint.

5.0 Photographic Viewpoints



Figure 18: Viewpoint J - View from the public right of way to the NW of the site

Viewpoint J

From the Chain Walk to the NW of the site, looking SE towards the western site boundary, Figure 18.

The extent of the Pine plantation to the north west of the site is evident in the view, giving way to a bund topped with mature deciduous tree planting and shrub planting straddling the boundary. The existing vegetation obscures views of the site.

It is considered unlikely that any development will be visible from this section of footpath due to the intervening layer of boundary vegetation.

5.0 Photographic Viewpoints



Figure 19: Viewpoint K - View from the edge of Tattle Hill

Viewpoint K

From the edge of Tattle Hill on the entrance to the footpath to Bramfield, looking south towards the site, Figure 19.

The vegetation evident to the back of the field boundary is the home to the Lea Valley Shooting Association. This layer of vegetation obscures any views of the site.

Due to the relatively level landform and intervening vegetation, it is considered unlikely any new development will be visible on the site from this viewpoint.

5.0 Photographic Viewpoints

Boundary of Rickneys



Figure 20: Viewpoint L - View from the footpath to the south of Chapmore End

Viewpoint L

From the footpath to the south west of Chapmore End, west of Rickney's Farm, 3km to the NE of the site, Figure 20.

Although on slightly elevated ground, the intervening layers of vegetation and development mean that the site is not visible from this viewpoint.

5.0 Photographic Viewpoints

Boundary to Little Gobions



Figure 21: Viewpoint M - View from the footpath to the west of Little Gobions

Viewpoint M

From the footpath to the west of Little Gobions, 2.5km NNE of the site, Figure 21.

The footpath sits slightly lower in the gently undulating landscape, this combined with blocks of woodland obscure any views of the site.

5.0 Photographic Viewpoints



Figure 22: Viewpoint N - View from the footpath over the A414

Viewpoint N

From the footpath over the A414 to the NW of Birch Green, 1.5km to the SW of the site, Figure 22.

The dense woodland planting within Panshanger Park obscures any views of the application site.

5.0 Photographic Viewpoints

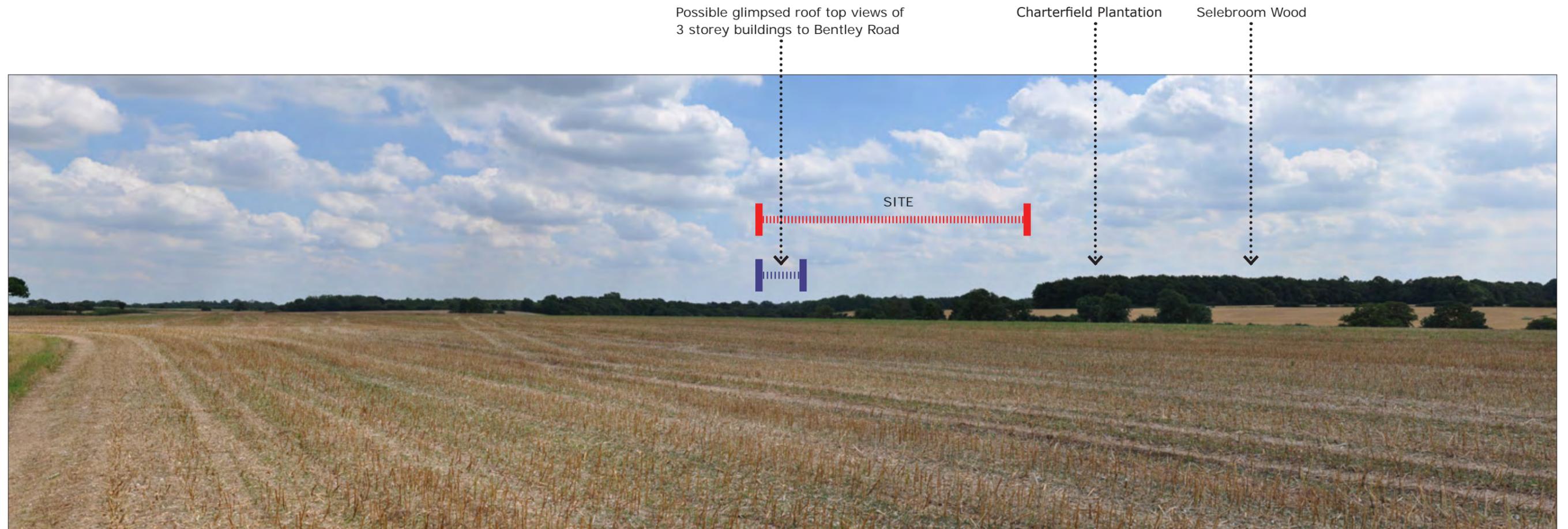


Figure 23: Viewpoint O - Footpath to the east of Holly Grove Road

Viewpoint O

From the footpath to the east of Holly Grove Road, 1.25km NW of the site, 1.25km away, figure 23.

Selebroom Wood and Charterfield Plantation are visible to the right of the view. The site's ground plan is indistinguishable at present due to the intervening vegetation. Glimpsed views of the existing residential development to the east of the site are just distinguishable between the trees.

As the neighbouring 3 storey development is visible, it is likely that any future development on the Archers Spring site of similar or greater height would have some impact on this viewpoint.

5.0 Photographic Viewpoints



Figure 24: Viewpoint P - Footpath to the north of Bramfield

Viewpoint P

From the footpath to the north of Bramfield to the south of Brights Hill, 3km NNW of the site, Figure 24.

Green Hall Farm is visible to the right of the view. The site is not visible from this viewpoint.

5.0 Photographic Viewpoints

SITE (NOT VISIBLE)



Figure 25: Viewpoint Q - Tewin Hill adjacent to Tewin Hill Farm

Viewpoint Q

From Tewin Hill adjacent to Tewin Hill Farm, 3.5km NW of the site, Figure 25.

The substantial woodland blocks of Bramfield Park Wood, Selebroom Wood and Charterfield Plantation, together with the relatively flat landscape, obscure any views from the site.

6.0 Landscape Parameters



Figure 26: Landscape Parameters Plan

Development Recommendations

- 6.1 The site is well screened from all but the closest views. Extensive woodland and topography limits medium and long range views. Provided development is predominantly 2 or 3 storey this existing screening should control visual impact.
- 6.2 Local impacts on the B1000 could be effectively managed by creating a positive urban 'gateway' development with quality buildings visible from the B1000. The existing boundary condition could be augmented by appropriate tree and shrub planting. Planting should be denser in the eastern part of the southern boundary, becoming sparser to reveal views of the new development as you approach Hertford. This could assist in giving the site character and making it part of the adjacent landscape.
- 6.3 The north and west boundaries with open countryside already have good screening and will provide effective containment. The stand-off from the north boundary should only be driven by the need to provide a landscape buffer to the woodland, suitable access and a biodiversity corridor rather than limit visibility.
- 6.4 All three boundaries have the potential to form a far better urban edge than that currently provided. The fourth edge with the existing residential area should consist of back gardens backing onto existing sizeable back gardens. The dwelling to dwelling distance augmented by additional planting along the boundary would minimise overlooking issues and would mitigate visual intrusion caused by the new development.
- 6.5 Development proposals could include significant recreation and access benefits including:
 - New formal and informal recreation and natural play facilities in association with Bentley Road community centre
 - Safe and attractive shared access routes / corridors for pedestrian and cyclists from Bentley Road housing to the County Wildlife Site and major new public open space
 - Similar routes within the development parallel to the B1000 to provide linkage with existing residential areas and the missing link on the 'Chain Walk' route
 - A further footpath network with potential health and wellbeing facilities such as Green Gym, local natural play etc.
 - Public open space of 3.5ha approx
 - If considered appropriate pedestrian access to Archer's Spring.
- 6.6 Landscape benefits helping to deliver the aspirations in the East Herts Landscape Character Assessment could include:
 - Substantial new native buffer tree and scrub planting arranged on boundary.

6.0 Landscape Parameters and Conclusion



Figure 27: View of existing bund along the north side of Welwyn Road

- Extensive meadow creation
- Wetland / damp habitat created in association with attenuation facilities
- Attractive landscape corridors adjacent to new shared routes and roads
- Retention of veteran and other notable trees incorporating these into the new landscape as local landmarks
- Adoption of a natural landscape style based on existing landscape character, native planting and ecological principles
- Management to an agreed landscape management plan with key objectives for biodiversity and sustainability.

6.7 These benefits could help deliver a number of local policies and initiatives including the East Herts Green Infrastructure Plan in particular objectives in relation to:

- Access and recreation
- Enhancement of settlement approach corridors
- Land remediation
- Nature conservation.

Existing Planning Permission

6.8 The site benefits from an existing permission to build an indoor tennis centre incorporating indoor courts, pool, gym and outdoor facilities including outdoor swimming pool, tennis courts and golf range. The proposed single building on the eastern plateau was up to 10m high which would be approximately equivalent to a 3 storey building.

6.9 It is suggested that this permission sets a precedent for allowing taller buildings on the site, provided they are sensitively designed. This permission should be used as a baseline for further landscape and visual assessment as may be required.

Conclusion

6.10 It has been demonstrated that views of the existing site are limited primarily to those in the immediate vicinity. Development of the Welwyn Road site if carried out sensitively would be expected to have minimal impacts on the surrounding landscapes, development would also provide opportunities to improve the landscape through enhancement measures, particularly within the nature reserve along the Welwyn Road boundary and provision of open space to the north.

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Appendix A

Photography Method

- Use the SLR camera with the standard fixed 50mm lens (note that if not working properly ensure lens is clicked into place)
- Use the tripod in the red and black bag, legs and extension at maximum height
- Level the bottom spirit bubble using leg adjustments
- Level the upper spirit bubble using the brass dials
- Point the bottom black 'measure' towards the main viewpoint (use compass if you can't see it)
- Take a couple of photos of the tripod location & image to identify viewpoint number
- Attach camera to tripod in portrait format, camera to be square to mount, note 2-part movement to locking mechanism
- Use the viewfinder to align the site in the centre of the main image (can rotate tripod with xxx dial)
- Settings: Auto without flash generally best in fine weather
- Can use auto focus > use AF-L to lock settings and focus through all photos
- Option to focus manually, use if auto focus identifies the wrong areas
- Should be ISO 100 or 200, high quality jpeg photo
- Aim to cover 180 degrees with 7 photographs, tripod automatically clicks between correct angles
- Take centre photo first > half click shutter to focus then keep AF-L depressed while taking photo and:
 - Rotate tripod head 3 clicks to the left (15 degrees per click)
 - Take a photo at each click back to centre and 3 clicks to the right (7 in total)
 - Repeat to return back the left (option to reset the focus and settings in the centre first)
- Finally remove finger from AF-L!
- Taking two sets of photos ensures additional copies in case of moving birds etc. Wait between shots if cars appear in the frame
- Check photos on screen, including ISO settings etc
- Plot location of camera on google aerial printout

Selection of view points

- 'Clear' view of site in centre of panorama (sometimes site won't be visible!)
- Location that is easily identified on aerial photo eg right next to gate / lamppost / specific tree / manhole
- View that includes a selection of focal points in the landscape such as church, tower, mast, specific trees