



**GRESLEY PARK, HERTFORDSHIRE
INITIAL LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL ASSESSMENT
Baseline March 2017**

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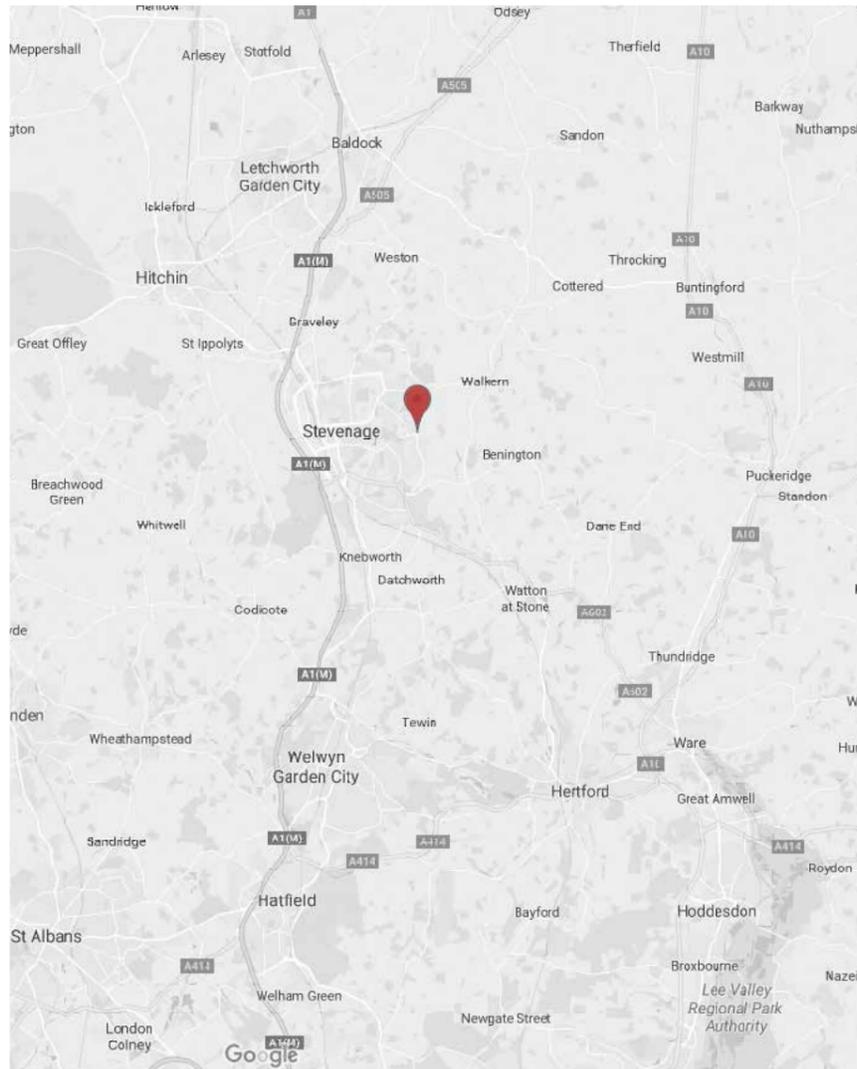
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This document is a draft baseline assessment and sets out the existing site conditions and surrounding landscape / visual context.

A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) will be completed on preparation of the site masterplan.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- i. James Blake Associates Ltd. have been instructed to complete an initial landscape and visual assessment for land off Gresley Way, Stevenage, Hertfordshire on behalf of Pigeon Land Ltd. and Hythe Ltd. The Site (approximately 37 hectares) lies on the eastern edge of the town extending north to south between Stevenage Road and Lanterns Lane.
- ii. The aims and objectives of the assessment are to identify the landscape and visual constraints and opportunities of the site and its surrounding context to confirm the areas suitability to accommodate an urban extension. It is envisaged that the proposal will comprise a range of homes alongside the provision of infrastructure including a neighbourhood centre, community facilities, a primary school and associated green infrastructure. Access to the site will be from Gresley Way.
- iii. The assessment has been informed by a period of desk study and field survey undertaken during 2015 - 2016. The methodology follows best practice guidance.
- iv. The area to the east of Stevenage lies within the current boundary of the Metropolitan Green Belt. Other designations include a number of Conservation Areas (Walkern, Aston and Bennington), along with areas of ancient woodland. A number of Listed Buildings are also present within the study area.
- v. The Site comprises a number of fields currently under arable cultivation which are bordered and contained by structural vegetation comprising a series of deciduous and mixed (deciduous and coniferous) tree belts planted in the 1990's alongside an earlier field pattern of hedgerow and trees. These include a series of perimeter banks and dense tree planting along Gresley Way, which in conjunction with Box Wood to the north, forms a well-defined and visually contained eastern edge to the town.
- vi. The area is located on the edge of the plateau between Stevenage and the broad valley of the River Beane. The topography of the Site is gently rolling, falling approximately 10m west to east towards the river. The southern field slopes more strongly to the south towards a small tributary ditch.
- vii. A public bridleway (PRoW Aston 004) runs through the middle of the Site, before continuing along the south eastern boundary (PRoW Aston 021). The route connects Stevenage with the wider network of paths in the open countryside to the east.
- viii. To the west the adjacent settlement comprises a series of housing estates on quiet cul-de-sacs; the majority of properties back on to Gresley Way.
- ix. The landscape to the east of Stevenage comprises the middle section of the Beane Valley (East Herts Landscape Character Assessment). The topography of the area is strongly undulating with a sharp transition to a ridge of high ground to the east, and the urban edge to the west. Small wooded areas linked by hedges and large arable fields are key characteristics of the area, while the simple landform and open nature allows some extensive views. Although the character of the area is locally recognised, the area is not subject to any landscape designations.
- x. The Site reflects some of these characteristics; however, it differs from the overall character of the area as the belts of planting and woodland blocks (both within and surrounding the site) provide a sense of enclosure and substantially screen the land from the surrounding landscape. This is demonstrated with reference to a series of representative near, middle and long distance views, including views within and across the Beane Valley and from the edges of the surrounding settlements.
- xi. This assessment, in conjunction with technical studies that form part of the Council's evidence base, confirm that the land is suitable for release from the Metropolitan Green Belt and provides a sustainable location for development in both landscape and visual terms. This is as a result of the substantial containment provided by the existing structural planting, which also ensures its visual and physical separation from the Beane Valley and surrounding settlements.
- xii. The constraints and opportunities of the Site have subsequently informed a landscape-led strategy for development. This strategy incorporates the retention, enhancement and long-term management of existing structural vegetation to maintain an effective screen between the development and countryside and preserve the strong level of woodland cover within the wider landscape in accordance with District Landscape Management Guidelines.
- xiii. Within the development a high quality sustainable design and layout, including green infrastructure corridors, areas of open space, and tree lined avenues, in conjunction with a suitable building density, height and character will enable a strategic development of approximately 600 houses with associated infrastructure.



Broad Site Location

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 James Blake Associates Ltd. have been instructed to complete an initial landscape and visual assessment for land off Gresley Way, Hertfordshire on behalf of Pigeon Land Ltd. and Hythe Ltd.

1.2 The aims and objectives of this assessment are to identify the landscape and visual constraints and opportunities of the site and its surrounding context to confirm the areas suitability to accommodate an urban extension to the east of Stevenage. It is envisaged that the proposal will comprise a range of homes alongside the provision of infrastructure including a neighbourhood centre, community facilities, a primary school and associated green infrastructure. Access to the site will be from Gresley Way.

1.3 This has been achieved through the following process:

- A review of existing and emerging planning policy relevant to landscape;
- Summarising the characteristics of the landscape surrounding the site with reference to existing studies;
- Identifying and assessing the condition of landscape elements within the site;
- Identifying the potential visual envelope and associated representative views from which the site and any future development may be seen; and
- As part of a landscape-led strategy make recommendations to minimise the potential landscape and visual effects of the development, and where appropriate provide positive enhancement. Such measures will form the basis of the future development masterplan.

1.4 The boundary of the site of land at Gresley Way and the extent of the study area is shown on **Figure 1**. The site (approximately 37 hectares) lies on the eastern edge of Stevenage, Hertfordshire, adjacent to the Beane Valley. The proposed site is a parcel of land running north to south from Stevenage Road to Lanterns Lane.

1.5 The extent of the study area is based on the potential visual envelope of the site and the proposed development (i.e. the area from which views of the future development may be visible), informed by topographical maps and field survey. The study area especially encompasses views from the east, within the Green Belt. The land drops into the Beane Valley and then rises up again beyond Walkern, providing potential long distance panoramic views across the valley.

1.6 The study area is defined by Box Wood to the north, with the villages of Walkern and Benington to the east, and Aston End and Aston to the south. To the west the study area is limited to Gresley Way and the edge of Stevenage due to the screening effect of properties on the edge of the town.

Methodology

1.7 The description of the landscape at Gresley Way and the further surrounding landscape character and visibility are based on a

period of desk study and field survey carried out on 27th October 2015 and 11th November 2016. The site and visual surveys were carried out with good visibility. The study area is shown in **Figure 1**. Sources of information for the desk study are listed in **Appendix 1**.

1.8 This report has been prepared in accordance with the guidance contained within Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland (Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage, 2002) and the baseline section of Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third Edition (The Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013).

1.9 Within the report a clear distinction is made between landscape character and views:

- Landscape Character: the physical characteristics or elements of the landscape, which together establish the character of the area e.g. geology, topography, hydrology, land cover, land use, vegetation and settlement pattern i.e. the landscape as a resource; and
- Views: the area from which the site and the development is likely to be visible, and the extent or degree of its visibility within the landscape to people.

1.10 An overview of the planning policy framework (national and local) as relevant to landscape was completed (Section 2.0). This assessment included the identification of both statutory and non-statutory designations within the study area and relevant planning policies in relation to the protection and enhancement of existing environmental assets, residential development and design.

1.11 The landscape character of the area (Section 3.0) was established by reviewing published landscape character assessments. Landscapes, which share similar characteristics, can be classified into generic Landscape Character Types (LCTs) and/or specific Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) with distinct landscape attributes. A hierarchy of LCTs and LCAs has been identified at a range of different scales from the National, Regional and County/District level. Fieldwork was used to verify local characteristics specific to the site and its surrounding area. Characteristic and important landscape attributes (including scale, topography/landform, landscape pattern, settlement/human influences and perceptual/aesthetic aspects) were identified.

1.12 This baseline information was reviewed to determine the overall condition and sensitivity of the landscape to the change proposed. Relevant guidelines were reviewed to inform judgements regarding the siting and design of the proposed development and management of landscape attributes to inform a strategy to ensure that the development responds to local distinctiveness and character.

1.13 The existing and potential visibility of the site was determined by analysis of topographical data (OS mapping) combined with aerial images. As the degree of visibility may be locally influenced

by landform and vegetation, fieldwork was undertaken to assess the extent of potential views (Section 4.0).

1.14 A number of representative views located in publicly accessible areas within the visual envelope were selected. Locations were based on the distance from the site; the relative height of the site and the receptor; the proportion of the site or degree of existing visibility; the nature of the view (including views particularly characteristic of the area); the likelihood for the view to be influenced by the development; and the anticipated number or sensitivity of potential receptors. The potential receptors, for example users of properties (such as residents, employees or visitors); users of public rights of way (including public footpaths, bridleways, byways and permissive paths); users of transport routes; and other places accessible to the public were recorded.

1.15 Photographs were taken of each representative view. Viewpoint photographs were taken during the day in autumn with good visibility using a digital camera (focal length of 50mm to replicate the view from the human eye). The extent of views are anticipated to decrease during summer, when vegetation is in full leaf; views in winter will be more open. To achieve a wider field of view at certain locations, a series of overlapping photographs were taken. These photographs were joined together to form panoramic images. For ease of reference, visible elements within the site and adjoining area were identified on each photograph.

2.0 POLICY CONTEXT

2.1 This section provides an overview of the planning policy framework (national and local as relevant to landscape). This assessment includes the identification of both statutory and non-statutory designations within the Study Area (including protected landscapes, historical and ecological assets). This information was used to establish the context for the proposed development and identify issues, which need to be considered as part of the early site planning and design.

2.2 The Proposed Development is considered against national and local planning policy, including emerging policy. Policies contained within the following documents have been reviewed:

- The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), March 2012;
- Local Plan Second Review, East Hertfordshire District Council, adopted April 2007;
- East Herts District Plan (Pre-Submission Version), November 2016 and supporting technical studies including:
 - Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA), August 2016;
 - East Herts Green Belt Review, Peter Brett Associates on behalf of East Herts District Council, September 2016; and
 - Settlement Appraisal: East of Stevenage, 2016.

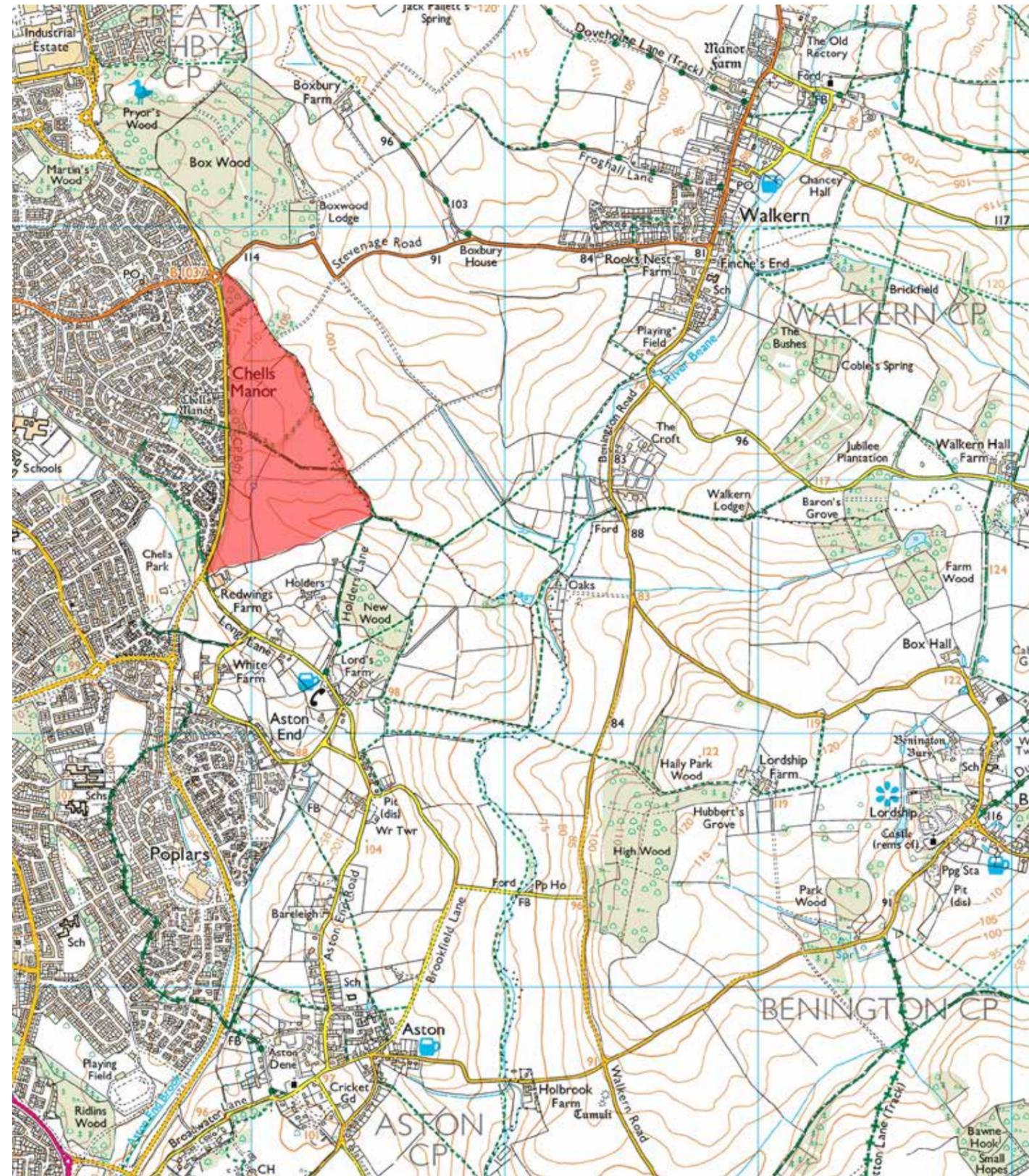


Figure 1: Site Location Plan. Scale 1:25,000 @A3
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Policy Constraints

2.3 The Site lies within East Hertfordshire District Council's administrative area. Policy constraints within the study area are shown on **Figure 2 - Policy Context** and are listed below:

- The Site lies within the London Metropolitan Green Belt to the east of Stevenage. The area is proposed to be removed from the Green Belt as part of the East Herts District Plan.
- Scheduled Monument comprising the earthworks in Box Wood to the north;
- Grade II Listed buildings in close proximity to the Site include:
 - Fox Cottage on Long Lane at Aston End;
 - Farmhouse at Lords Farm at Aston End;
 - Farmhouse at White Farm at Aston End;
 - Farmhouse at Rooks Nest Farm at Walkern;
 - Walkern Mill and Millers Cottage at Walkern;
- Chells Manor (Grade II* Listed) at Stevenage, west of Gresley Way;
- The Walkern, Aston and Benington Conservation Areas;
- The Registered Park and Garden of Benington Lordship (Grade II) located to the west of Benington. The grounds encompass Benington Castle (Scheduled Monument); and
- Box Wood (to the north) and High Wood/Hubberts Grove across the valley to the east) are Ancient and Semi-Natural Woodlands.

2.4 A number of public rights of way run through or are in close proximity to the Site:

- Bridleway Aston 004 (through the Site);
- Bridleway Walkern 021 (along SE boundary of the Site and then east towards Benington Road);
- Bridleway Aston 021 (from south of Site into Aston End);
- Bridleway Stevenage 107 (running from the Site into the edge of Stevenage).
- Bridleway Stevenage 104 (running from the south west corner into Stevenage).

2.5 The policies relevant to the Site and Proposed Development are summarised below.

National Planning Policy

2.6 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), published in March 2012 sets out the national planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. The NPPF outlines the role of the planning system in achieving sustainable development based on three mutually dependent dimensions: economic, social and environmental. As such the NPPF sets out a clear '*presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan-making and decision-taking*'.

2.7 Specific to the proposed development are the following paragraphs which relate to general design and the Green Belt designation. The Site lies within part of the London Metropolitan

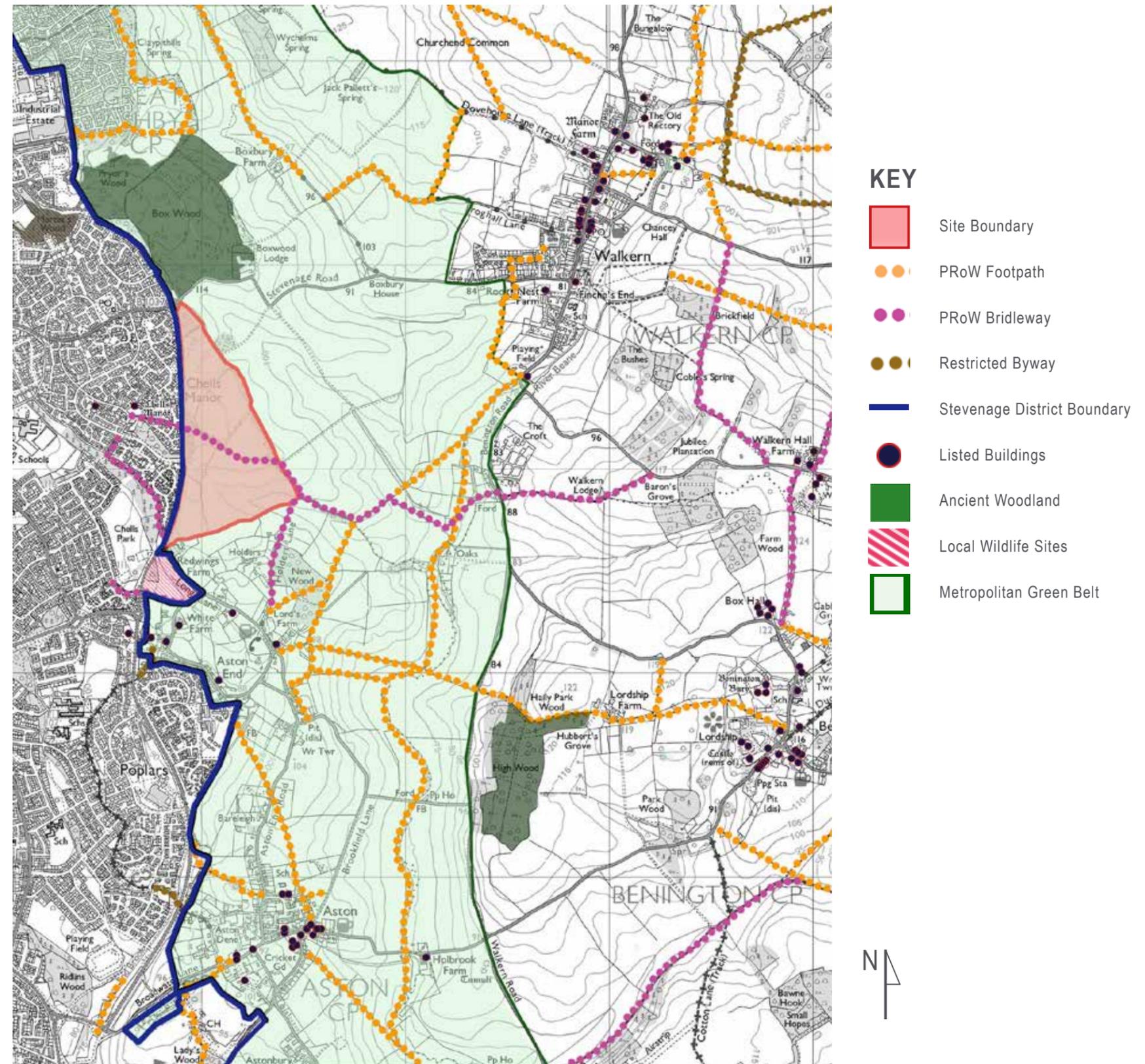


Figure 2: Policy Context Plan. Scale 1:25,000 @A3

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Green Belt, which covers approximately the southern third of the District:

(paragraph 57) *“It is important to plan for the achievement of high quality and inclusive design for all development, including individual buildings, private and public spaces and wider area development schemes.”*

(paragraph 79) *“The Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.”*

(paragraph 83) *“Local planning authorities with Green Belts in their area should establish Green Belt boundaries in their Local Plans which set the framework for Green Belt and settlement policy. Once established, Green Belt Boundaries should only be altered in exceptional circumstances, through the preparation or review of the Local Plan. At that time, authorities should consider the Green Belt boundaries having regard to their intended permanence in the long term...”*

(paragraphs 84 & 85) *“When drawing up or reviewing Green Belt boundaries local planning authorities should take account of the need to promote sustainable patterns of development... When defining boundaries, local planning authorities should [inter alia]:*

- *ensure consistency with the Local Plan strategy for meeting identified requirements for sustainable development;*
- *not include land which it is unnecessary to keep permanently open;*
- *satisfy themselves that Green Belt boundaries will not need to be altered at the end of the development plan period; and*
- *define boundaries clearly, using physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent.”*

East Hertfordshire Local Plan

2.8 The current adopted East Hertfordshire District Council (EHDC) Local Plan comprises the Local Plan Second Review, 2007. The development plan sets out what, where, when, and how development is managed in the District.

2.9 **Policy GBC1** Appropriate Development in the Green Belt protects the Green Belt from inappropriate development. In accordance with the policy and appropriate development within Green Belt is listed.

2.10 However, the emerging District Plan (Pre-Submission Version) describes at paragraph 3.315 the need for review: *“...the challenging level of housing need in the District cannot be met in a sustainable way without undertaking a carefully planned review of the Green Belt in certain locations.”*

2.11 The Council undertook a Green Belt Review (September 2015); the report is a key part of the evidence which supports the

preparation of the new District Plan. This consisted of Part 1 which provided a District-wide review of broad parcels, and Part 2 which provided the detailed site assessment and boundary review of selected areas of search. This review identified a number of areas which could be removed from the Green Belt as development sites or broad locations within which development sites could be subsequently refined.

2.12 The Green Belt Review encompasses the Site, as it is seen as being a potentially sustainable location for development on the eastern edge of Stevenage; close to employment, services and public transport.

2.13 Paragraph 1.7.5 subsequently confirms *‘In terms of where population change and growth is occurring and where economic growth with new jobs is likely to arise, the main settlements are naturally the locations where most of the development should be accommodated, and in terms of the location of facilities and services together with access to public transport services and opportunities, the periphery of the main settlements is where new development should achieve the greatest accessibility, once the opportunities for satisfactory development within the settlements has been taken into account. As such, land to the East of Stevenage is being reconsidered as an option for development of a smaller scale than that previously tested.’*

2.14 Within the Green Belt Review the Site is located within Parcel 2. Any assessment and conclusions described in the Review document is for an area, which extends far beyond the Site and further into the wider countryside to neighbouring villages. This Statement therefore aims to provide a more specific and accurate appraisal of the Site alone, utilising the results of the Green Belt Review where applicable.

2.15 **Policy SD1** (Making Development More Sustainable) requires that all development should be *“physically well integrated and respond to local character and distinctiveness”* and *“protect and enhance the natural and built environment.”*

2.16 **Policy HSG1** (Assessment of Sites Not Allocated in this Plan) states that planning applications for unallocated (‘windfall’) sites within main settlements (such as this Site off Gresley Way) will be tested against a set of criteria that demonstrate their potential sustainability. In terms of landscape, this includes e) *“the physical and environmental constraints on development of land,”* f) *“the need to retain previous or existing use of the site,”* and g) *“the need to allow development of any adjacent site for its allocated or identified use.”*

2.17 All development proposals are required to conserve and enhance local character. **Policy GBC14** (Landscape Character) is a criteria based policy against which development proposals will be assessed. This will include a) *“conserving, enhancing or creating landscape features... to strengthen local landscape character,”* b) *“contributing to the strategy for managing change,”* and c) *“enhancing or conserving key characteristics and distinctive features.”* The EHDC Landscape Character Assessment (adopted SPD) will inform the nature of such

measures.

2.18 **Policy ENV1** (Design and Environmental Quality) states that all proposals are expected to be of a high standard of design and layout and to reflect local distinctiveness. Development will be expected to:

- *“Demonstrate compatibility with the structure and layout of the surrounding area;*
- *Complement the existing pattern or grain of development;*
- *Relate well to the massing and height of adjacent buildings and surrounding townscape;*
- *Respect the amenity of the occupiers of neighbouring buildings and the future occupiers of the development;*
- *Incorporate sustainable initiatives in design, layout and construction;*
- *Consider the impact of any loss of open land on the character and appearance of the locality;*
- *Minimise loss or damage of important landscape features; and*
- *Provide landscape, recreation/amenity features and habitat creation where appropriate.”*

2.19 The EHDC Local Plan sets out that landscape should be an integral part of the design approach to new development; as such development should be sympathetic with the surrounding landscape and reflect the prevailing character, materials and detailing of the locality.

2.20 **Policy ENV2** (Landscaping) requires that proposals *“retain and enhance existing landscape features. Where losses are unavoidable, compensatory planting or habitat creation [with consideration of the Hertfordshire Local Biodiversity Action Plan] will be sought...”*. Proposals on prominent sites (such as on the edges of settlements) will be required to give *“special consideration to landscape treatment.”* EHDC will use conditions to ensure that the approved landscape scheme will be carried out and that appropriate maintenance is undertaken.

2.21 **Policy ENV11** (Protection of Existing Hedgerows and Trees) seeks to maximise the retention and reinforcement of existing hedgerows and trees as part of all development proposals. Where removal is unavoidable, *“replacement planting of broad-leaved species”* will be expected.

2.22 These landscape policies require that characteristic features are protected and retained. Where possible enhancement should also take place. The key site features encompass field boundary planting (including deciduous and coniferous tree belts), a rolling topography, and the public rights of way which runs through the site, linking into a wider network. There is the potential for these features to be preserved and enhanced, especially to ensure that enclosure is maintained and views into the site are minimised.

2.23 Development within the Site will extend the limits of the town, but the aim is to ensure that the existing well-defined boundary and screen is as effective in this new location and the quality of the wider landscape is not diminished.

Other Material Information

2.24 The Walkern Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Proposal was produced by East Hertfordshire District Council and it was adopted on 14th December 2016. This document seeks to “*identify the special architectural or historic interest, character and appearance of the Walkern Conservation Area, assess its current condition, identify threats and opportunities related to that identified special interest and any appropriate boundary changes.*”

- 2.25 The village is described as follows:
“A historic linear village along the High Street set on the higher ground on the west slopes of the River Beane with arrays of buildings, many listed and historic, along both sides.”
- 2.26 Many of the important views within Walkern are down the High Street and are inward looking into the village.
“Long if meandering views are evident along the High Street, those at the north showing the built forms, while at the south they are more overtly rural. Views are guided along Church End by the striking large barns.”

- 2.27 It goes on to describe the visual amenity value of the village:
“The village is quite visually enclosed with most long views being along the undulating High Street. Views of the surrounding countryside mainly unfold beyond the line of houses although peeks between houses of trees are important. There are a number of good transverse views giving a sense of space and the rural setting.”
- 2.28 It is noted that most modern development has been located to the west of the village which further encloses views towards this aspect, especially on Stevenage Road and Moors Ley, which are outside of the Conservation Area.

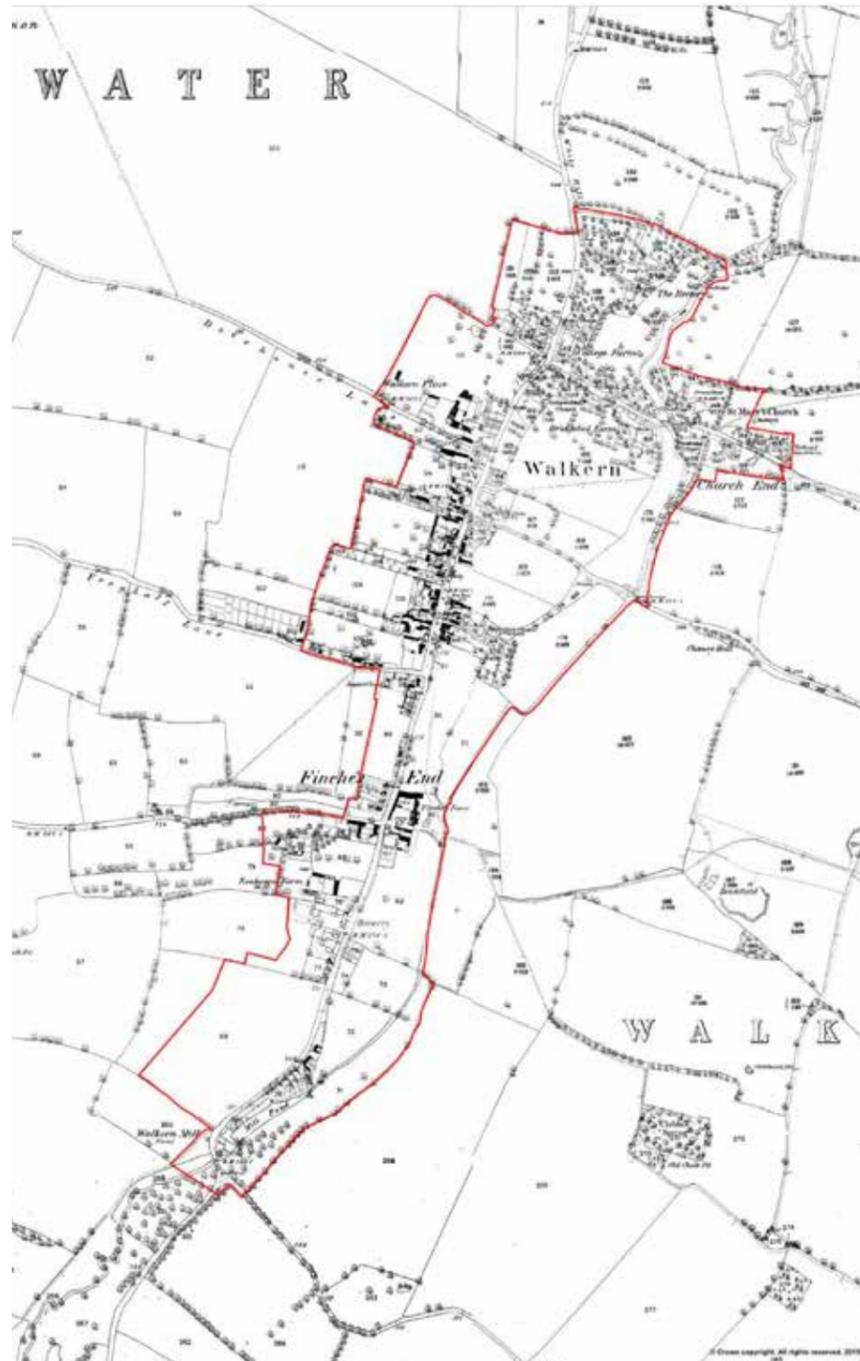


Figure 3: OS Map of 1878 - 1881. Scale NTS
 Source: Walkern Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Proposal (page 15)



Figure 4: Conservation Area Plan. Scale NTS
 Source: Walkern Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Proposal (page 7)

East Herts Green Infrastructure Plan

- 2.29 This document has been prepared for East Herts District Council by Land Use Consultants (March 2011). It describes the landscape as follows:
“East Herts has a rich green infrastructure resource centred on the principal river valleys of the Lee, Beane, Quin, Rib, Ash and Stort in addition to a varied mosaic of landscape and habitat types, such as grassland, ancient and plantation woodland and farmland.”
- 2.30 *“In the face of competition for resources and environmental change, now more than ever we must look to our landscape and to sites to perform the widest range of functions for people, communities and quality of life, wildlife and ecosystems. This concept of ‘multifunctionality’ is shown in the illustration from Natural England’s Green Infrastructure Guidance.”*
- 2.31 The Site is part located within an ‘action zone’ categorised as a Woodland Enhancement Zone (along its eastern boundary), in a linear area stretching from Box Wood in the north to Aston End in the south refer to **Figure 6**. This is described as follows:

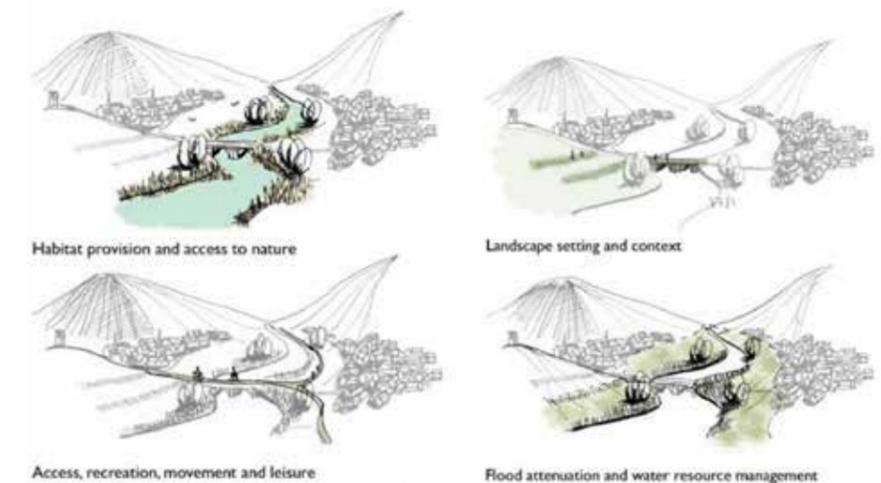


Figure 5: The Green Infrastructure Approach
 Source: Natural England Green Infrastructure Guidance (2009)

“Linking woodland habitats (e.g. lowland wood-pasture, heathland and acid grassland and alder wet woodland) and restoring landscapes/defining the network of valleys including regionally rare Wooded Chalk Valleys.”

2.32 In more general terms the vision for green infrastructure for East Herts is set out in three key initiatives. Those points relevant to the Site’s landscape are as follows:

- “To Conserve and Enhance:
 - The varied landscapes of the District – farmland, ancient woodland, wooded chalk valleys, settled chalk valleys, heathlands and commons and intricate network of river valleys;
 - The quiet rural landscape character and distinctive agricultural landscape, while also linking areas of broadleaf woodland to provide increased landscape connectivity and resilience in the face of climate change, balancing this with large scale open landscape character;
- To Improve and Create:
 - Links for a variety of users – walkers, cyclists and riders;
 - Enhanced links to greenspace, particularly in the larger and higher density settlements such as Hertford and Ware, and Bishop’s Stortford and outlying suburbs, and Buntingford and Sawbridgeworth, as well as opportunities for urban greening for community benefit and value, such as orchards;
- To Recognise and Value:
 - The importance of links between landscape and nature and ensuring that this is the first layer of consideration in the development process;
 - GI for people – the importance of provision for low key and informal recreation to enhance the value of existing green infrastructure, and creating/promoting an improved series of links between settlements, commons and the wider countryside;
 - The importance of the green infrastructure network for health and quality of life, seeking to promote awareness and appreciation of the network;
 - The need for an appropriate balance between community, access, recreation and biodiversity interests;
 - The need for joined up working with key partners, landowners, the parish councils and local ‘green groups’ to deliver sustainable proposals;
 - The educational potential of GI - the need to raise awareness of and promote linked agendas such as local food including recognition of the importance of historic orchards throughout the District.”

2.33 These points could be incorporated into any new development to provide open spaces with a varied and flexible function - suitable for nature, people and the environment.

East Herts District Plan (Pre-Submission Version)

2.34 The new East Herts District Plan sets out the Council’s planning framework and plans for growth for the period 2011-2033. The

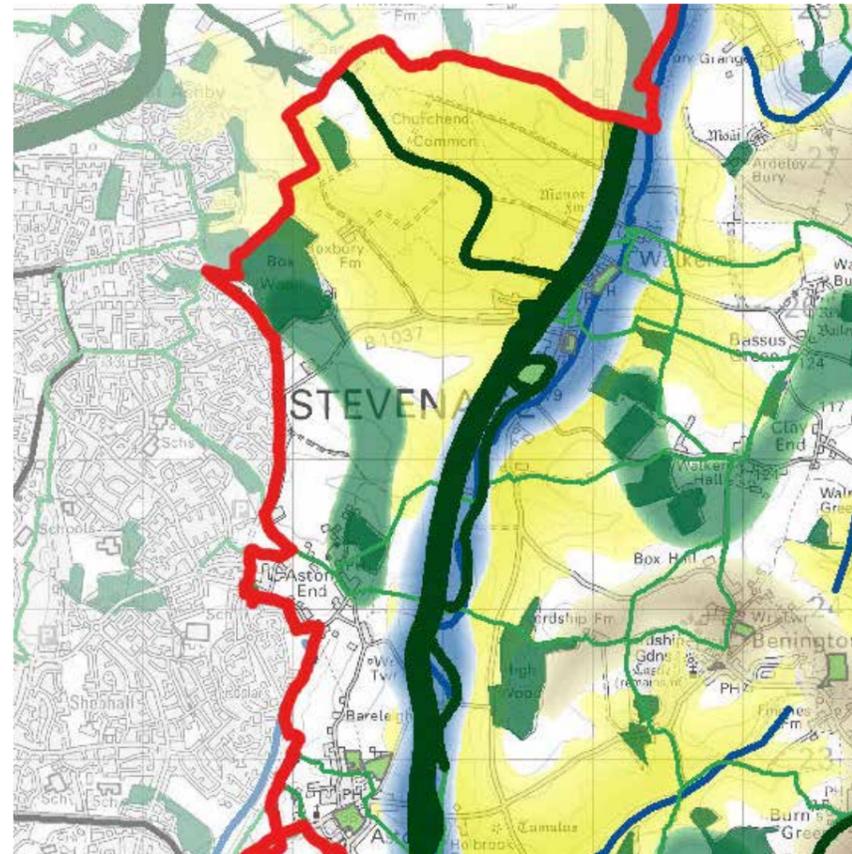


Figure 6: Proposed Green Infrastructure Network. Scale NTS
Source: East Herts Green Infrastructure Plan (page 45) and Natural England, Green Infrastructure Guidance

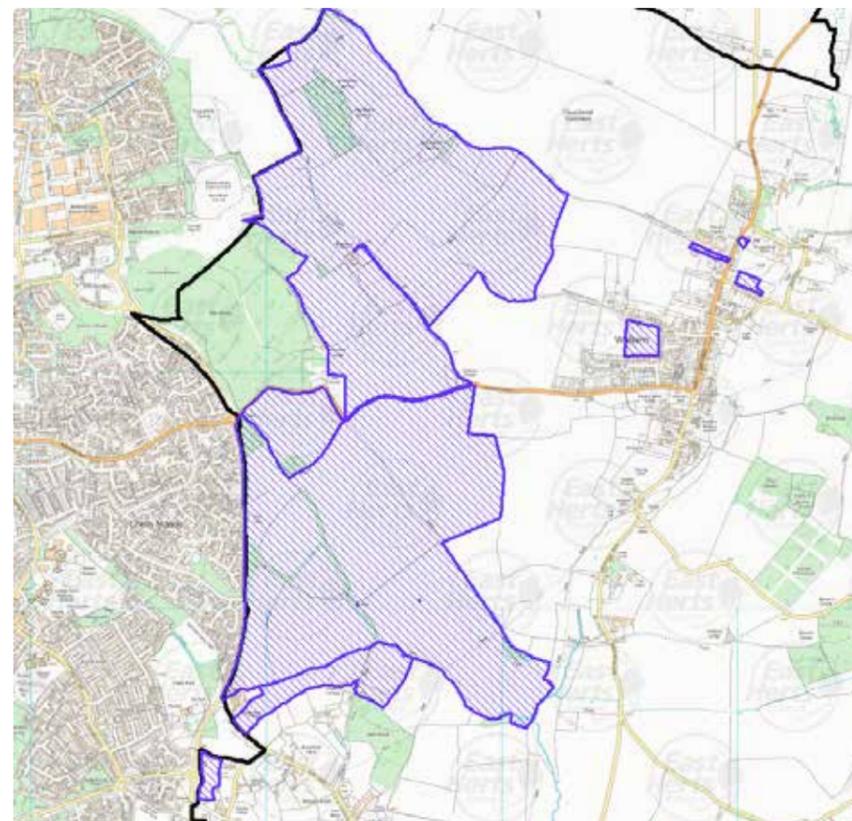
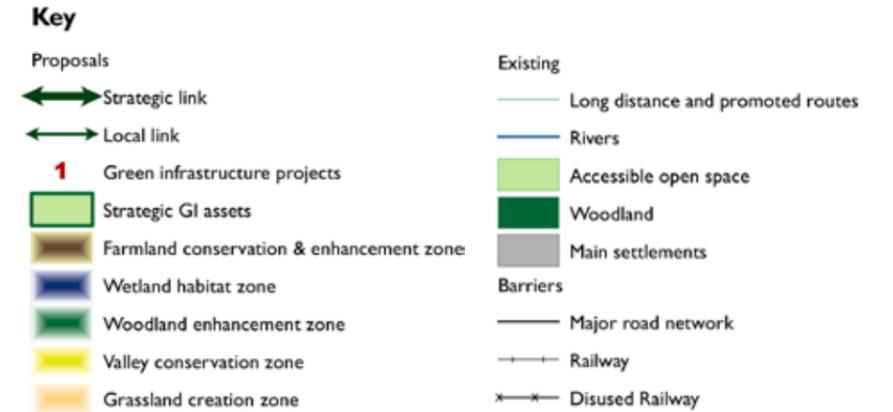


Figure 7: SHLAA Online Map. Scale NTS
Source: East Herts District Council website



District Plan is currently at the Pre-Submission Stage, but once adopted the policies in the District Plan will replace the policies in the Local Plan 2007.

2.35 The preparation of the District Plan is supported by a series of technical studies providing local contextual evidence to assist the plan-making process and to inform planning decisions .

2.36 The majority of this evidence (such as the Green Belt Review) provides a broad assessment of the District; however, a number of studies consider the Site and its suitability for development.

Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA)

2.37 The Site is located within the SLAA area referenced 43/002 refer to **Figure 7**. The SLAA area and its suitability for housing is described as follows (it is noted that this SLAA area covers a much larger area than the site):

“This is a large greenfield site predominantly in agricultural use. The southern part of the site lies immediately to the east of Stevenage and the northern half of the site is located to the east of Box Wood, an Ancient Woodland and Conservation Wildlife site. The southern half could be appropriate as part of an urban extension to Stevenage, although consideration would have to be given to the impact on the Beane valley. The site is currently unsuitable due to its location within the Green Belt.”

2.38 It then describes the achievability of the site to be developed: “The site could form part of a larger strategic scale development in this location. The site could be considered to be either deliverable or developable depending on the nature and scale of development.”

2.39 Subject to a change in Green Belt Policy, the area is considered to be suitable for development.

Settlement Appraisal

2.40 The Settlement Appraisal for East Stevenage (East Herts Council, 2016) provides a robust and thorough assessment of these technical assessments. From a landscape perspective

these include the following:

- East Herts Green Belt Review (September 2015); and
- East Herts Landscape Character Assessment (2007).

2.41 This is supported by assessments undertaken by the adjoining authority of Stevenage Borough Council which also cover the area to the east of the town namely the:

- Stevenage Green Belt Review Phase 1 (2013) and Phase 2 (2015); and
- Stevenage Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study, 2006.

2.42 These studies confirm that the Site in both landscape and visual terms is suitable as a location for an urban extension of this scale. This includes consideration of the potential effects on the landscape of the Beane Valley:

“Studies have shown however, that this site is well contained by structural planting which has defined the outer edge of the site and also created visual barriers within the site along particular contours, further shielding views from the current edge of Stevenage, from within the site towards the valley, and from the opposite side of the valley towards the site.”

2.43 The Settlement Appraisal confirms that the retention and enhancement of the mature tree belts and hedgerows, a high quality sustainable design and layout including enhanced green infrastructure corridors through the site (incorporating tree-lined avenues, areas of open space and sustainable drainage), along with suitable building density and height will provide a strategic development of approximately 600 houses with associated infrastructure.

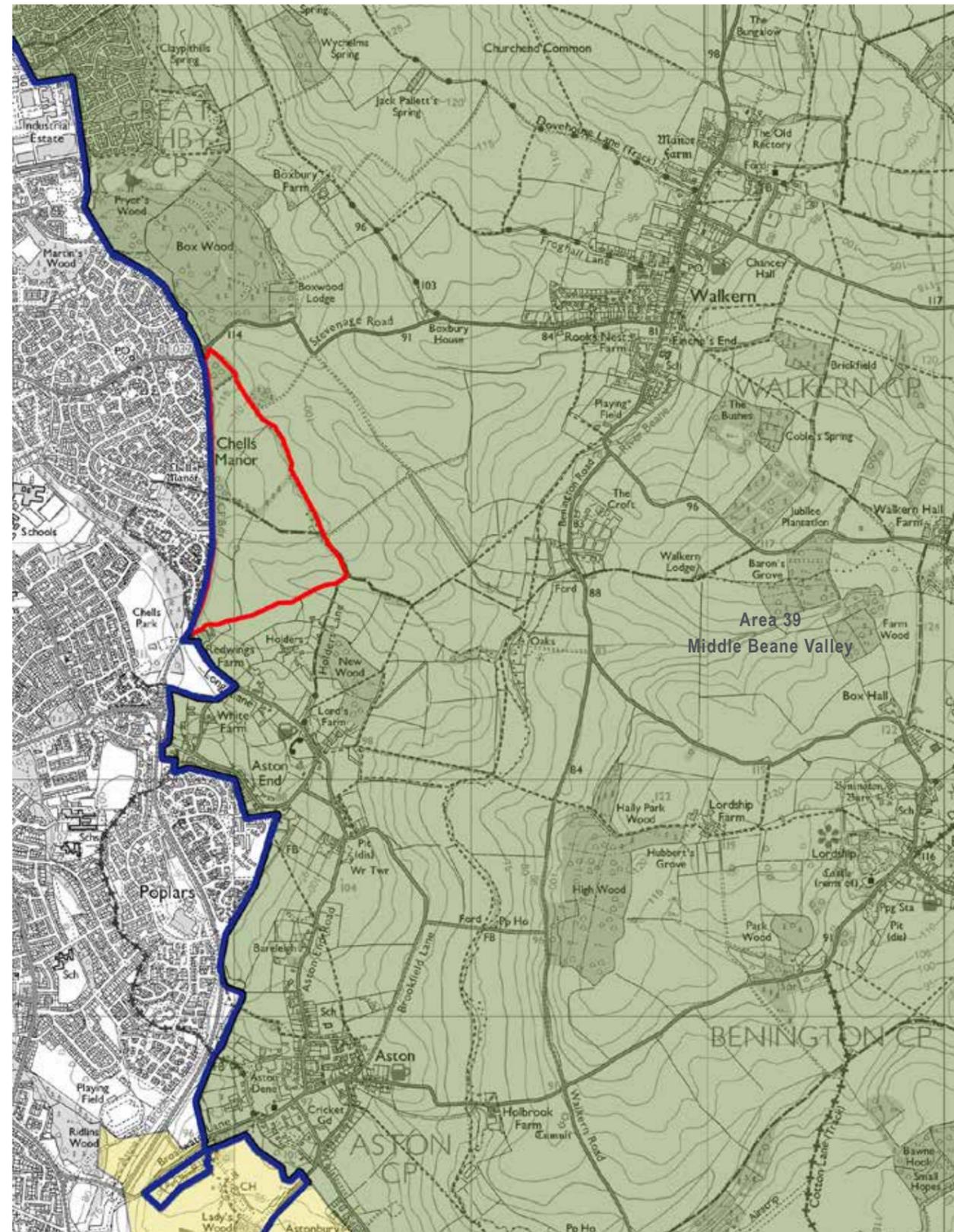
2.44 The Site is subsequently allocated in the Pre-Submission East Herts District Plan by **Policy EOS1** Land East of Stevenage (Gresley Park).

3.0 LANDSCAPE AND SETTLEMENT CHARACTER

3.1 The character of the landscape evolves over time as a result of the interaction of human activity and the natural environment (people and place). Attributes used to assess landscape character include:

- Physical – geology, landform, climate, soils, landcover;
- Cultural and Social – land use, settlement, enclosure & history; and
- Aesthetics – colour, texture, pattern, form and perception.

3.2 The landscape character types (LCTs) and Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) within the study area from National to District level are described below. The main features of the landscape of the study area and County Landscape Character Types are shown on **Figure 8**.



KEY

Site Boundary

Stevenage District Boundary

National:
NCA 86: South Suffolk and North Essex
Clayland (Whole Map)

District:
East Hertfordshire District Landscape Character
Areas

Aston Farmland Estate

Middle Beane Valley



Figure 8: Landscape Character Plan. Scale 1:25,000@A3

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National Landscape Context

- 3.3 At the national level (National Character Map of England, Natural England, 2013) the eastern side of Stevenage, lies within the South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland (NCA 86). The character area is described as follows:

“The South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland National Character Area covers the four counties of Suffolk, Essex, Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire. It stretches from Bury St Edmunds in the north-west to Ipswich in the north-east, roughly following the line of the A14 trunk road through the Gipping Valley. It then embraces the Colchester hinterland before encompassing the urban areas of Braintree and Chelmsford in the south and stretching to Bishop’s Stortford and Stevenage in the west.

It is an ancient landscape of wooded arable countryside with a distinct sense of enclosure. The overall character is of a gently undulating, chalky boulder clay plateau, the undulations being caused by the numerous small-scale river valleys that dissect the plateau. There is a complex network of old species-rich hedgerows, ancient woods and parklands, meadows with streams and rivers that flow eastwards. Traditional irregular field patterns are still discernible over much of the area, despite field enlargements in the second half of the 20th century.”

- 3.4 Overall, the following statements of opportunity of relevance have been identified for the character area:

- *“SEO 1: Maintain and enhance the character of this gently undulating, rural landscape by maintaining agricultural productivity and encouraging sustainable land management practices that protect and enhance the landscape, geodiversity and biodiversity assets and benefit carbon storage and water quality, as well as the over-riding sense of place.*
- *SEO 2: Protect and enhance the area’s ancient woodland cover, parkland trees, river valley plantations and ancient hedgerows, through the management of existing woods and the planting of new woods, hedgerows and hedgerow trees to benefit landscape character, habitat connectivity and a range of ecosystem services, including timber provision, the regulation of soil erosion and the strengthening of the sense of place and history.*
- *SEO 3: Enhance the slow-flowing, winding rivers and their pastoral valley flood plains that provide linkages through the landscape, including redundant sand and gravel extraction sites, for their ecological, historical and recreational importance. This will support the operation of natural processes and their contribution to biodiversity, geodiversity, soil quality, water availability, regulating water flow and the character of the area.”*

District Landscape Context

- 3.5 In accordance with the EHDC Landscape Character Assessment the Site is located within Area 39 ‘Middle Beane Valley’. This character area encompasses the whole area east of Stevenage,

from Lamsden Common, north of Watton-at-Stone, and extends northwards along the valley to Walkern and up as far as Cromer.

- 3.6 The key characteristics of this character area are described as follows:

- *“strongly undulating west-facing slope;*
- *sharp transition to ridge to east and to urban edge to west;*
- *built edge of Stevenage generally well concealed and contained by mature and semi mature woodland;*
- *woods located to the tributary valley heads and on the upper slopes adjacent to Stevenage;*
- *well-managed hornbeam coppice woodland;*
- *large fields and arable cultivation;*
- *few settlements; and*
- *expansive views from the edges to the Beane Valley.”*

- 3.7 The Site reflects some of these characteristics, where the field pattern is large and currently under arable cultivation, the topography is undulating and it abuts the built edge of Stevenage, which is largely well concealed.

- 3.8 It also differs from the overall character in that it is relatively enclosed and views are limited and are by no means ‘expansive’. Belts of planting and woodland blocks surrounding the Site provide a sense of enclosure and screen the Site from the surrounding landscape. This feature is absent across the rest of the character area including the Beane Valley, where field boundaries have been eroded with intensive farming practices.

- 3.9 It is concluded that key characteristics and features identified within the wider character area are not apparent within the Site due to the substantial belts of planting and neighbouring woodland blocks.

- 3.10 The Landscape Character Assessment identifies a number of opportunities to enhance the landscape. Those relevant to the Site are listed below:

- *“encourage landowners to safeguard existing hedges, increase hedged field boundaries, create permanent grass strips around field margins and prevent spray drift, using financial incentives as available, with a particular view to enhancing the quality of habitats adjacent to existing high-quality habitats in the Beane Valley;*
- *consider the possibilities of creating circular footpath routes in the area, especially from the re-opened railway station in Watton-at-Stone (adjoining area), to take advantage of views over the sculptural landform;*
- *focus hedging opportunities on internal field boundaries, not those along roads and footpaths which could interrupt views over this area;*
- *continue to manage both the established and young woodlands to the western boundary with Stevenage to minimise the visual impact of the settlement on the landscape to the east; and*
- *encourage traditional woodland management measures including coppicing.”*



Figure 9: Site Photos - Edge of Stevenage, bounded by Gresley Way
Source: Site visit, dated 27th October 2015



Figure 10: Site Photos - PRoW through the site
Source: Site visit, dated 27th October 2015



Figure 11: Site Photos - Large scale field pattern, surrounded by tree belts
Source: Site visit, dated 27th October 2015

3.11 The introduction of development within the Site provides an opportunity to enhance existing hedgerows, tree belts and wooded areas and extend the existing public rights of way routes, maintaining and improving access into the surrounding countryside.

Site Description

3.12 The site is situated on the eastern edge of Stevenage. The town is bordered by Gresley Way with the road, adjacent banks and dense lines of trees forming a well-defined boundary. The town side of the road consists of housing estates on quiet cul-de-sacs, which generally back onto the road with walls and close board fencing.

3.13 The site itself consists of five arable fields with a public right of way (PRoW) running through the middle of the area. Semi-mature deciduous and mixed plantation woodland strips (planted in the 1990's) are present along the eastern boundary and through the site; species include beech, field maple, ash, oak, hawthorn, norway spruce and lime.

3.14 Mature hedgerows, with occasional standards, form the southern and western boundaries and divide fields. These are mainly species poor, comprising hawthorn, blackthorn and elder with numerous gaps along their lengths.

3.15 The site has a rolling topography which generally slopes down towards the east into the valley of the River Beane (which runs south from Walkern). The landscape generally consists of large-scale arable fields, surrounded by dense belts of woodland planting, which form some enclosure. There is a single lone mature oak tree situated within one of the fields which is a feature within the landscape.

3.16 There are some urban features within this generally rural landscape and these consist of power lines and a telecommunications mast at the eastern side of the site. There are no buildings present.

3.17 There are few views out of the site due to the dense belts of vegetation bounding the fields. However, due to the falling landform there are some views towards the east and south above the tree line. These views are generally distant in nature across to the other side of the valley, where the topography rises again. There are closer views out towards the south where Holders and Garden Cottage can be glimpsed through vegetation against the backdrop of New Wood.

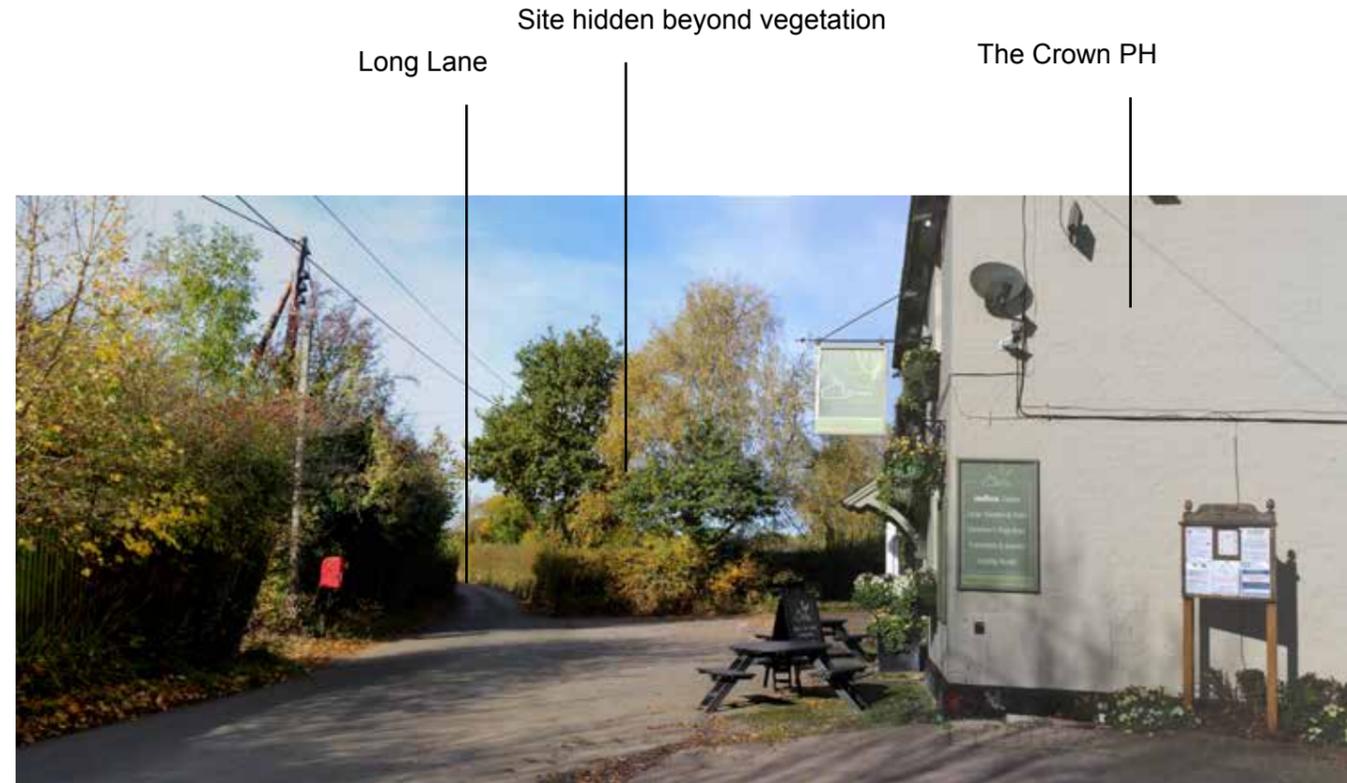
3.18 A PRoW (Stevenage 107) runs through the existing housing on the edge of Stevenage to the west, crossing over Gresley Way, before continuing through the centre of the Site (Aston 004). The route is surfaced, the latter sections becoming an informal track before exiting the Site on its eastern boundary. The PRoW then bears south and runs along the boundary of the site to its south east corner before forking off towards Aston (via Holders Lane) to the south and linking to the wider network of footpath routes along the Beane Valley to the east.

4.0 VISUAL ANALYSIS

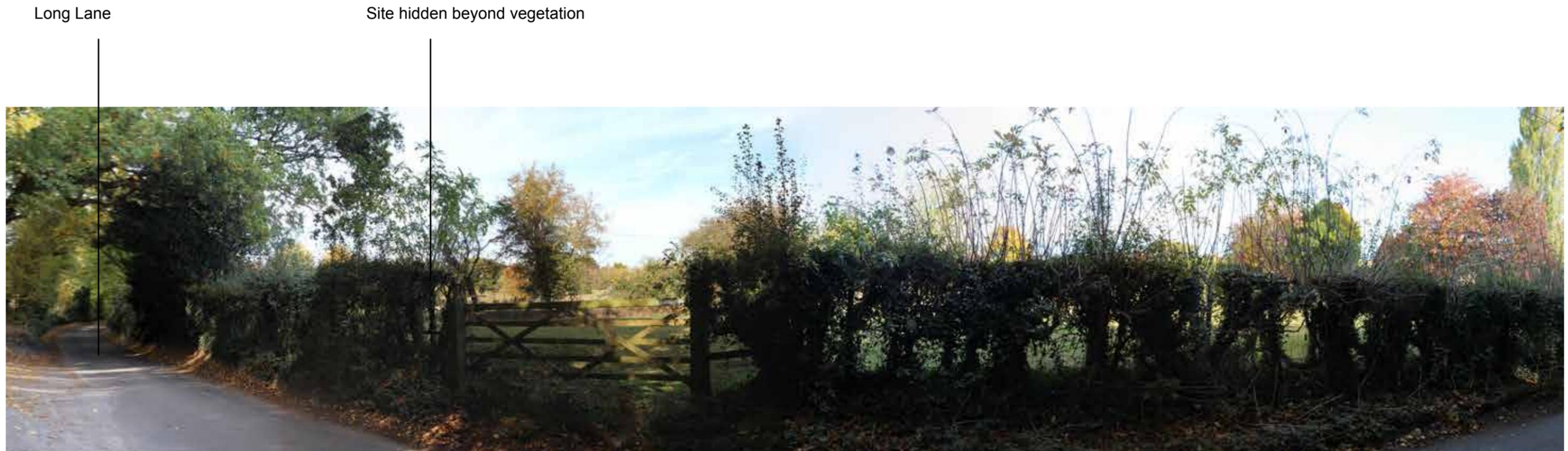
Visual Envelope

- 4.1 The visual envelope demonstrates the extent of potential visibility to or from the site and development area.
- 4.2 The location of the site, on the edge of the plateau at the top of the Beane Valley, reduces views from within the valley where the rising landform forms a screen, along with field boundary vegetation. Blocks of woodland also screen views from the north and south east. Views are generally screened from the west from Stevenage by the roadside mounding along Gresley Way and dense planting belts. For this reason the viewpoints have generally been selected to the north, south and east where views into the Site may be afforded.
- 4.3 Within the study area a number of representative views of the Site have been selected according to distance, the degree of visibility, the nature of the view and the anticipated number or type of potential receptors. All the photographs were taken in the autumn and demonstrate the medium case scenario in regards to visibility. Visibility is slightly higher in the middle of winter when deciduous vegetation is not in leaf; however, the depth of planting and the mix of both deciduous and coniferous species maintains a good level of cover for the majority of near, middle and long distance viewpoints. Visibility will be lower in the middle of summer when vegetation is in full leaf.

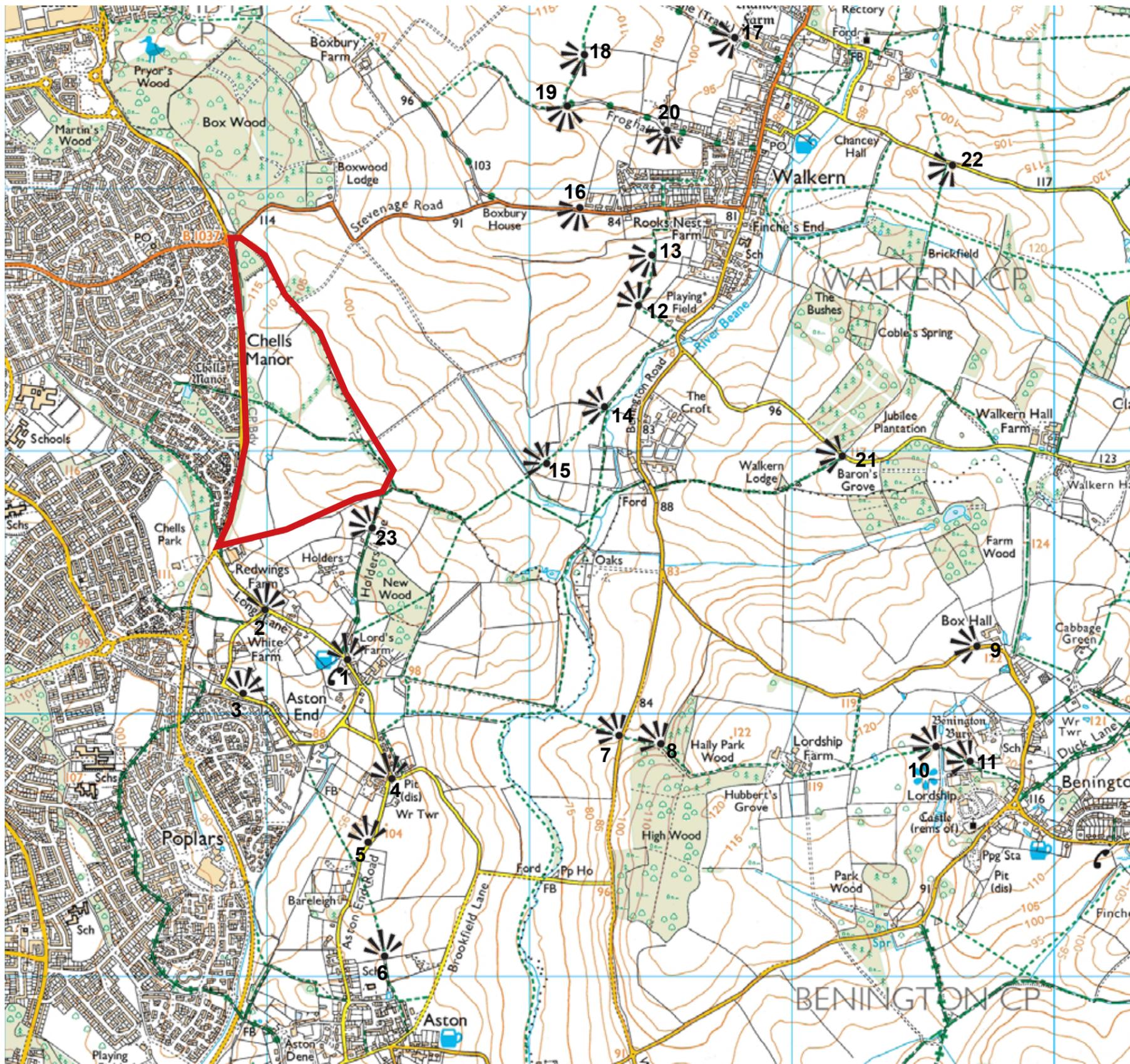
Figure 12: Representative Viewpoints 01 - 23
Source: Site visit, dated 7th November 2016



VIEWPOINT 01



VIEWPOINT 02



KEY



Site Boundary



Viewpoint Location

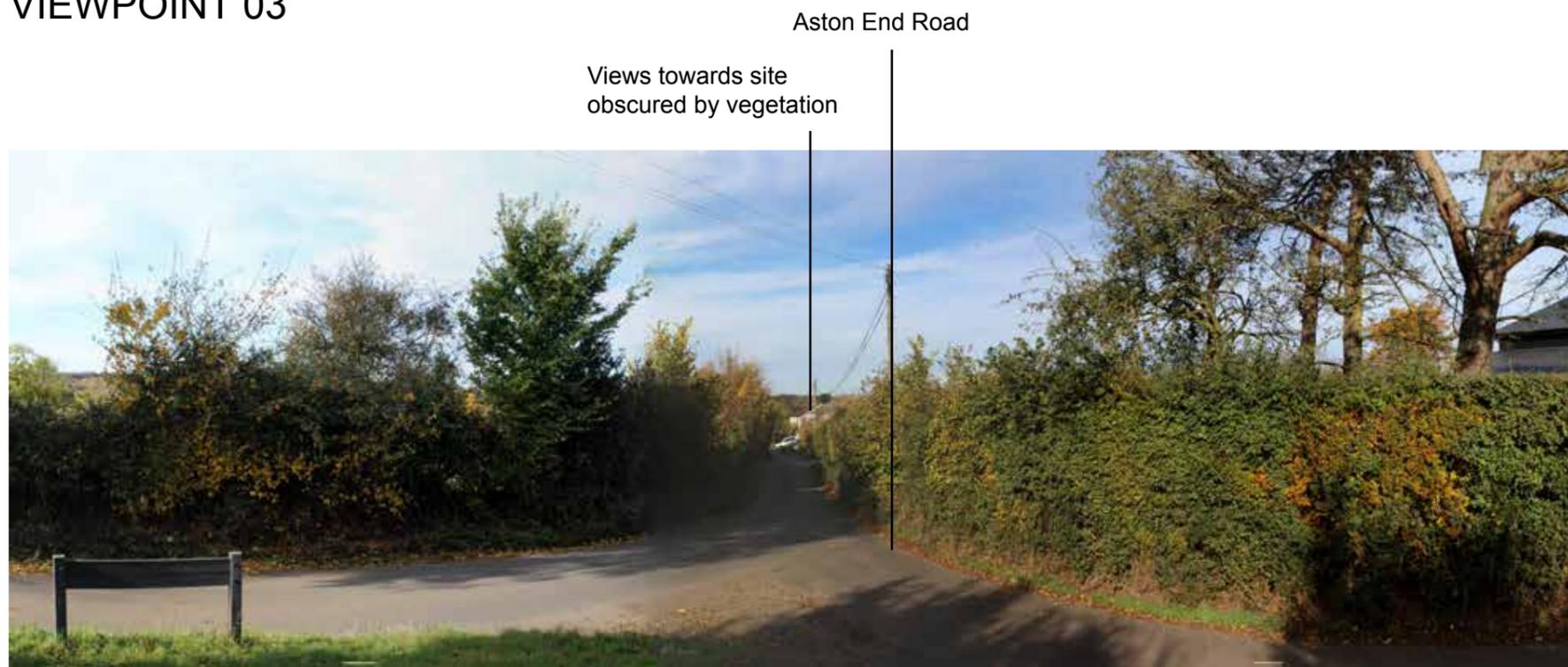
Figure 13: Viewpoint Location Plan. NTS

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VIEWPOINT 03



VIEWPOINT 04

Figure 12: Representative Viewpoints 01 - 23 Continued:
Source: Site visit, dated 7th November 2016

Near Distance Views

- 4.4 Views from the site's immediate surroundings are limited by the dense belt of vegetation bounding the site and additional mounding alongside Gresley Way. **Figure 9** shows the effective screen along the western boundary of the site which serves to limit views in this direction, even in winter.
- 4.5 Near distance views from Stevenage Road, to the north of the Site, are also limited by planting including hedgerows along the route as well as the perimeter woodland vegetation. The winding nature of the road also reduces opportunities to experience views (e.g. at field gates and gaps in the hedgerow) and appreciate the surrounding landscape.
- 4.6 Views of the site from the south are experienced from properties on the edge of Aston End and from PRow Aston 021 as it approaches the south east corner of the site (**Viewpoint 23**). The view is rural in nature and overlooks rolling farmland. In the foreground is a field which drops away from the PRow, and appears to be grazed rough grass with some large specimen trees. The landform then rises again into the Site and the southern field is visible facing towards the viewpoint. The field is surrounded by dense planting and so distant views beyond this field to the remainder of the Site are not available.

Middle Distance Views

- 4.7 There is the potential for middle distance views from Aston End, Walkern and the network of PRows which crisscross the countryside. **Viewpoints 1, 2, 3 and 4** show the middle distant views from the south at Aston End. It is clear from these locations that the village is relatively enclosed by vegetation - field boundaries, garden planting and roadside hedgerow planting - which screens views into the surrounding countryside. None of the viewpoints selected experience views of the site.
- 4.8 A number of varying viewpoints were selected along the length of Walkern village to ensure that all potential views were identified. **Viewpoints 12, 13, 14 and 15** are located at the southern end of Walkern, on the western edge of the village. These are on PRow Walkern 041 and Walkern 020 and 020A. In this location the topography of the valley forms a higher ridge to the west of the village, which screens all views beyond and so no views of the site are experienced. However, **Viewpoint 15** takes a route which traverses up a small spur of higher ground allowing partial views of the Site, primarily the vegetation along the eastern boundary. The views are filtered due to a line of trees along a shallow ditch in the foreground.
- 4.9 **Viewpoints 16, 17, 18, 19 and 20** are located to the north of the village, on its western edge. The views, towards the west are generally rural, consisting of rolling countryside, although the northern edge of Stevenage at Great Ashby Way including the Pin Green Industrial Estate is evident to the north of Box Wood. To the south west, Stevenage is generally not visible in the background as it is screened by the landform and vegetation along its boundary, as well as intervening hedges and woodland.

Poplars Housing Estate

Site obscured by landform and vegetation

Brookfield Farm



VIEWPOINT 05

Boundary planting to edge of Aston St Marys school grounds

Site obscured by landform and vegetation

Public right of way Aston 022



VIEWPOINT 06

Figure 12: Representative Viewpoints 01 - 23 Continued:
Source: Site visit, dated 7th November 2016

Public right of way Benington 002

New Wood

Site obscured by landform and vegetation



VIEWPOINT 07

Public right of way Benington 002

Site obscured by landform and vegetation

Haily Park Wood



VIEWPOINT 08

Figure 12: Representative Viewpoints 01 - 23 Continued:
Source: Site visit, dated 7th November 2016

Site obscured by roadside vegetation



VIEWPOINT 09

Site obscured by landform and vegetation



VIEWPOINT 10

This includes vegetation along Gresley Way and within the Site. The Site is not visible, as it is also effectively screened by perimeter vegetation; however, there are occasional glimpses from higher ground from short sections of PRowS Walkern 033 and 034 (broadly above the 110m contour). As represented by **Viewpoint 18** there are glimpses of a small section of the northern part of Site over the existing boundary woodland belts. The view is seen at distance (similar to development at Great Ashby Way) and any effects could be effectively mitigated by the layout and design of the masterplan, including open space, in conjunction with reinforcing the existing planting (both internal and on the perimeter). Any glimpses of roofs would subsequently be set in a strong framework of vegetation.

- 4.10 **Viewpoints 7 and 8** represent views from Walkern Road and the PRow Benington 002 as it crosses the road and runs into High and Haily Park Wood. Views consist of rolling countryside, which rises towards the edge of Stevenage. The distance, landform and vegetation limits views towards the town and there is no sign of the urban edge. The site is glimpsed in the background, but change will hardly be noticeable.

Long Distance Views

- 4.11 Viewpoints were selected from across the Beane valley, as the topography rises towards the east. **Viewpoints 9, 10 and 11** are from Benington, **Viewpoint 21** from PRow Walkern 028 at the unnamed Lane to Bassus Green, and **Viewpoint 22** from PRow Walkern 011 at the unnamed lane to Clay End.
- 4.12 Generally there are limited views from Benington over the surrounding countryside due to the intervening ridge of higher ground between the village and the Beane Valley to the west. Vegetation (including parkland) also encloses the village which further reduces views. Roads are lined with native hedgerows and fields are bounded by hedgerow and tree planting.
- 4.13 More extensive views are afforded from the PRowS. Views are of open countryside, with the village of Walkern visible in the bottom of the valley and single properties and large farmsteads (such as The Croft) scattered through the area. The Site is visible in the background, but any changes to this area will hardly be noticeable due to the distance and boundary planting.
- 4.14 **Viewpoints 5 and 6** represent views from Aston. They consist of mainly countryside in the foreground; in some instances the edge of Stevenage is visible especially as new housing (Poplars Estate) breaks through the planted edge (**Viewpoint 5**). The topography rises between this village and the Site and so views are screened.

Figure 12: Representative Viewpoints 01 - 23 Continued:
Source: Site visit, dated 7th November 2016

Site obscured by landform and
vegetation



VIEWPOINT 11

Site obscured by rising
landform

Public right of way
Walkern 041



VIEWPOINT 12

Figure 12: Representative Viewpoints 01 - 23 Continued:
Source: Site visit, dated 7th November 2016

Public right of way
Walkern 041

New Wood

Site obscured by rising
landform

Box Wood

Stevenage Road,
Walkern



VIEWPOINT 13

Public right of way
Walkern 020A

Site obscured by rising
landform



VIEWPOINT 14

Figure 12: Representative Viewpoints 01 - 23 Continued:
Source: Site visit, dated 7th November 2016

Public right of way
Walkern 020A

Southern / eastern edge of site can be
glimpsed beyond vegetation



VIEWPOINT 15

Site obscured by landform and
vegetation

Stevenage Road Box Wood



VIEWPOINT 16

Figure 12: Representative Viewpoints 01 - 23 Continued:
Source: Site visit, dated 7th November 2016

Site obscured by hedgerow

Dovehouse Lane (track)



VIEWPOINT 17

Public right of Way
Walkern 034

Boxbury House

Site glimpsed in background

Box Wood

Estates off Great Ashby Way



VIEWPOINT 18

Figure 12: Representative Viewpoints 01 - 23 Continued:
Source: Site visit, dated 7th November 2016

Public right of way
Walkern 034

Site obscured by vegetation

Box Wood



VIEWPOINT 19

Properties on Stevenage Road

Site obscured by landform and
vegetation

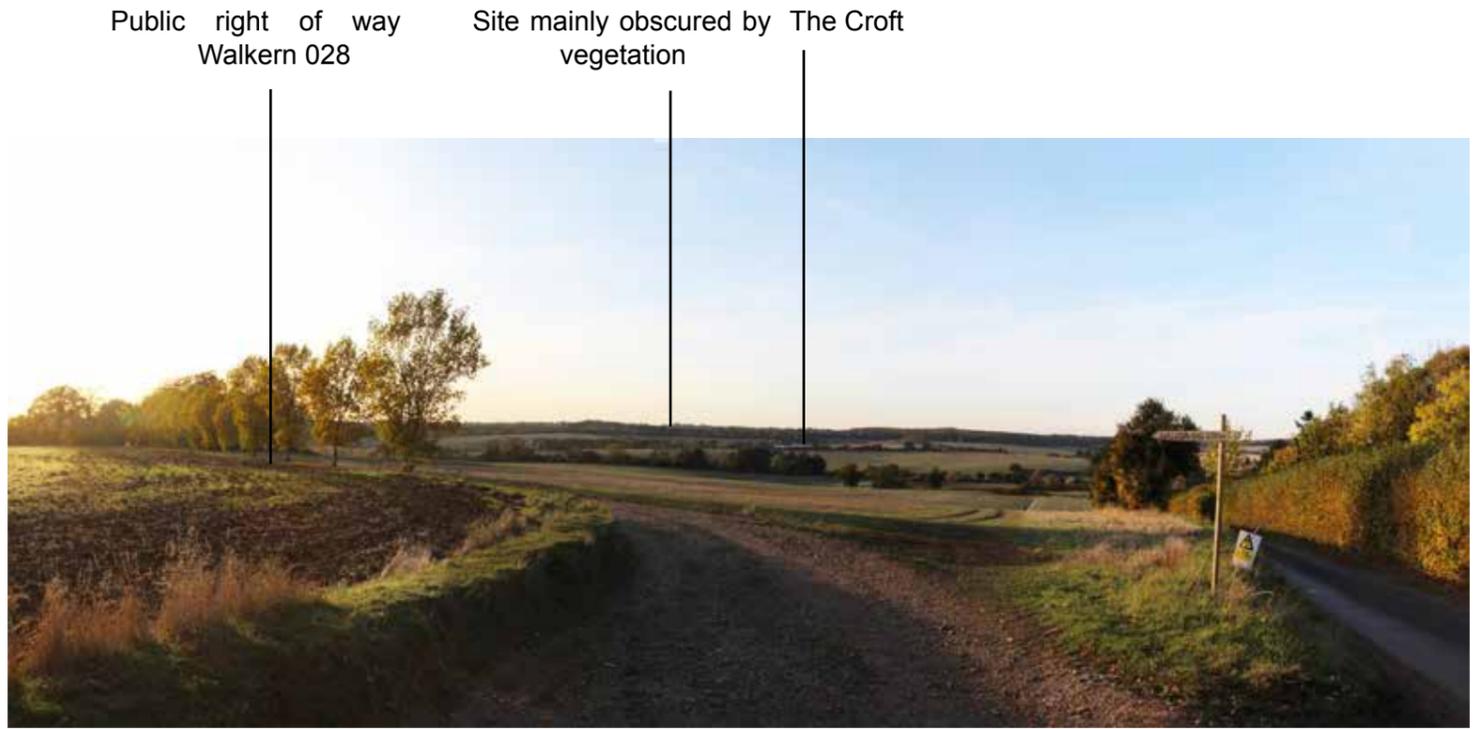
Box Wood

Froghall Lane

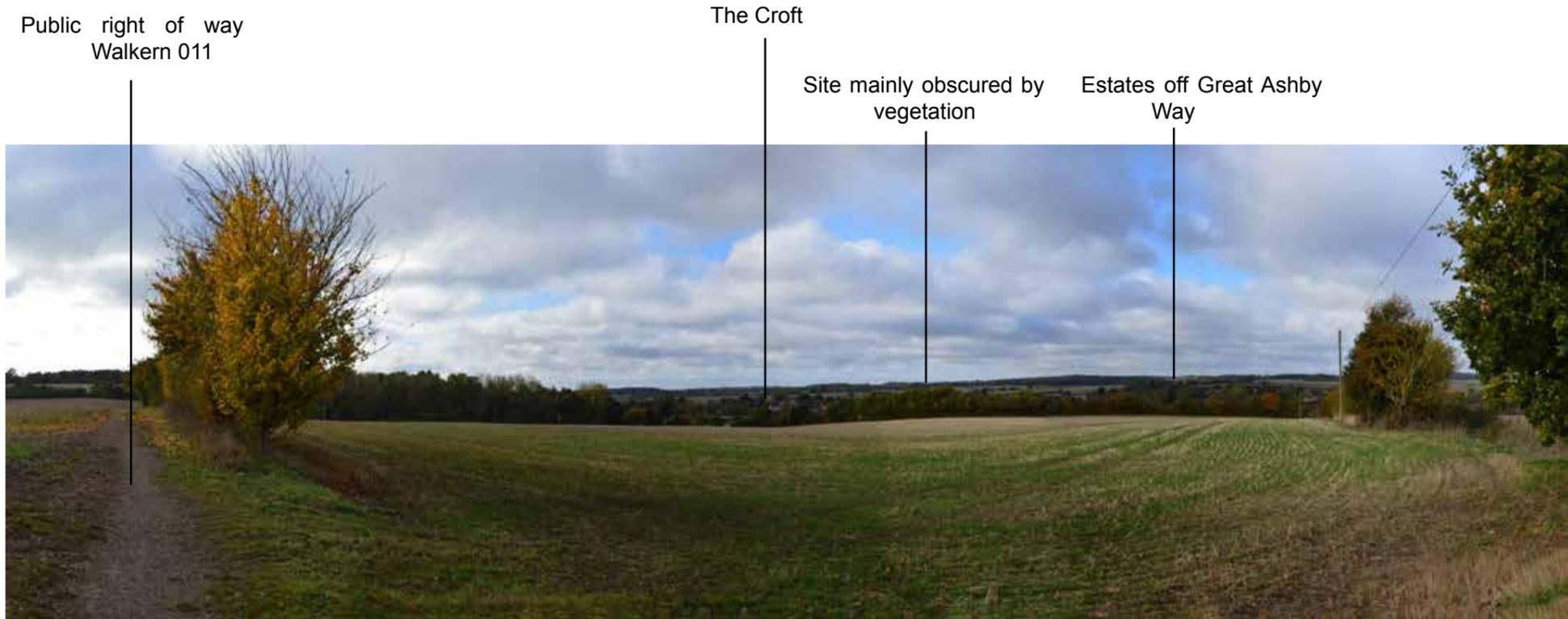


VIEWPOINT 20

Figure 12: Representative Viewpoints 01 - 23 Continued:
Source: Site visit, dated 7th November 2016



VIEWPOINT 21



VIEWPOINT 22

Figure 12: Representative Viewpoints 01 - 23 Continued:
 Source: Site visit, dated 7th November 2016

Southern edge of site

Hedgerow boundary vegetation 6m in height, with oak trees 12-14m

Public right of way Aston 021 (beyond hedge)



VIEWPOINT 23

Figure 12: Representative Viewpoints 01 - 23 Continued:
Source: Site visit, dated 7th November 2016

5.0 LANDSCAPE STRATEGY

5.1 An initial Concept Masterplan has been prepared which shows the landscape strategy to be employed on this site (drawing JBA14/171-01).

5.2 The masterplan is landscape led, and has been informed by the constraints and opportunities of the Site identified in technical studies and verified by the site specific landscape character and visual assessment outlined in this report.

5.3 In regards to Green Belt a key feature is to retain the existing belts of planting bounding the fields which ensure the area is well-contained and visually and physically distinct from the Beane Valley. Where necessary these will be infilled, reinforced and enhanced through long-term management. This is especially the case at the edge of the development where the realigned Green Belt boundary is to be located.

5.4 The retention of this vegetation will maintain an effective screen between the development and countryside and preserve the strong level of woodland cover within the wider landscape in accordance with Landscape Management Guidelines. Development will be set back from this planted edge to protect tree canopies and root protection areas. This setback could encompass open space incorporating informal footpath routes (potentially offering a circular route), seating and trails.

5.5 Within the development a high quality sustainable design and layout, including green infrastructure corridors and areas of open space, in conjunction with a suitable building density, height and character will provide a strategic development of approximately 600 houses with associated infrastructure.

5.5 The principal strategic interventions will include:

- Internal tree belts are also to be retained where possible to enhance the green infrastructure links and habitat connectivity through the site. The tree belts will create strategic green corridors through the development and break up residential areas into smaller parcels.
- Vehicular and pedestrian routes through the site are to be tree lined to provide structure and to enhance the level of tree cover throughout.
- Open spaces / pocket parks are located throughout the development to provide opportunities for informal and formal recreation – green space, play and seating. Trim trail and/or sculptural features could also provide added interest. These areas will be linked by green routes and footpaths.
- A central park has been located as a focus to the development, next to the proposed primary school. This park is surrounded and overlooked by buildings for natural surveillance. It consists of pond feature, which will create an ecological and educational resource.
- Routes through the site will link up to the surrounding public right of way network (Aston 004 and 021). These routes will be maintained providing access to the surrounding

landscape of the Beane Valley.

- The central avenue, which runs through the site, will be wide and spacious with generous grass verges and a formal avenue of large-scale street trees to provide a strong structural link.
- Secondary streets will be more enclosed than the central avenue, but tree and shrub planting will continue to be a key feature, to soften the street scene and add interest. Trees will provide a green landscape dominated structure.
- Less dense residential development will be located in areas adjacent to countryside to form a transition between the urban and rural landscape.
- Ecological interventions will be accommodated within the scheme where possible, including ponds, wildflower meadows, native hedgerow, shrub and tree planting.

5.6 The masterplan demonstrates how the development could provide an opportunity for new community, recreational and ecological features within this site.

APPENDIX 1 – SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- Ordnance Survey maps (1:25000 Explorer Series);
- Historic Ordnance Survey maps;
- Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland, Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage, 2002;
- Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third Edition (GLVIA3), The Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013;
- Landscape Institute Advice Note 01/11 - Photography and Photomontage in Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, The Landscape Institute, March 2011;
- Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) (<http://magic.defra.gov.uk/>);
- The National Heritage List for England, Historic England (<https://www.historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list>);
- Hertfordshire Rights of Way Online Mapping (<http://webmaps.hertsdirect.org/row/row.htm?layers=%5B1:0,1,2,3%5D>);
- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), March 2012 and associated National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance>);
- Local Plan Second Review, East Hertfordshire District Council, adopted April 2007;
- East Herts District Plan 2011-2031 (Pre-Submission Version) and Proposals Maps, East Herts Council, November 2016;
- Site Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA), East Hertfordshire District Council, August 2016;
- East Herts Green Belt Review, Peter Brett Associates on behalf of East Herts Council, Final Report September 2015;
- Settlement Appraisal - East Stevenage, East Herts Council, 2016;
- National Character Area (NCA) Profile 86 - South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland, Natural England, January 2014;
- East Herts Landscape Character Assessment SPD, East Hertfordshire District Council (adopted 12th September 2007);
- East Herts Green Infrastructure Plan, Land Use Consultants (March 2011); and
- Walkern Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Proposal, East Hertfordshire District Council (adopted 14th December 2016).

APPENDIX 2 – GLOSSARY

- **Analysis (Landscape)** The process of breaking the landscape down into its component parts to understand how it is made up.
- **Assessment (Landscape)** An umbrella term for description, classification and analysis of landscape.
- **Classification** A process of sorting the landscape into different types or character areas using selected criteria but without attaching relative values to the different kinds of landscape.
- **Countryside** The rural environment and its associated communities.
- **Diversity** Where a variety of qualities or characteristics occurs.
- **Element** A component part of the landscape (e.g. roads, hedges, woods).
- **Enhancement** Landscape improvement through restoration, reconstruction or creation.
- **Environment** Our physical surroundings including air, water and land.
- **Field pattern** The pattern of hedges and walls that define fields in farmed landscapes.
- **Heritage** Historical or cultural associations.
- **Landcover** Combinations of land use and vegetation that cover the land surface.
- **Landform** Combinations of slope and elevation that produce the shape and form of the land.
- **Landscape** Human perception of the land conditioned by knowledge and identity with place.
- **Landscape character** The distinct and recognisable pattern of elements that occurs consistently in a particular type of landscape, and how this is perceived by people. Usually referenced to a place or area, landscape character reflects particular combinations of geology, landform, soils, vegetation, land use and human settlement. It creates the particular sense of place of different areas of the landscape.
- **Landscape character type** A landscape character type will have broadly similar patterns of geology, landform, soils, vegetation, land use, settlement and field pattern nationwide. Not referenced to place i.e. open moorland.
- **Landscape effects** Change in the elements, characteristics, character and quality of the landscape as a result of development. Effects may be positive or negative.
- **Landscape feature** A prominent eye-catching element, for example church spire or hilltop.
- **Landscape quality (or condition)** Is based on judgements about the physical state of the landscape and about its intactness, from visual, functional and ecological perspectives. It also reflects the state of repair of individual features and elements, which make up the character in any one place.
- **Landscape resource** The combination of elements that contribute to landscape context, character and value.
- **Landscape sensitivity** The extent to which a landscape can accept change of a particular type and scale without unacceptable adverse effects on its character.
- **Land use** The primary use of land, including both rural and urban activities.
- **Methodology** The scientific approach and techniques used for the study.
- **Mitigation Measures** including any process, activity or design to avoid, reduce or compensate for adverse landscape and visual effects of a development project.
- **Perception (of landscape)** The psychology of seeing and possibly attaching value and/or meaning (to the landscape).
- **Receptor** Physical landscape resource, special interest or viewer group that will experience the effect.
- **Sense of place** The essential character and spirit of an area: genius loci literally meaning 'spirit of place.'
- **Sustainability** The principle that the environment should be protected in such a condition and to such a degree that ensures new development needs the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs,
- **Visual amenity** The value of a particular area or view in terms of what is seen.
- **Visual effect** Change in the appearance of the landscape as a result of development. This can be positive (i.e. beneficial or an improvement) or negative (i.e. adverse or a detraction).
- **Visual envelope** Extent of potential visibility to or from a specific area or feature.
- **Worst-case situation/scenario** Principle applied where the environmental effects may vary, for example, seasonally to ensure that the most severe potential effect is assessed.
- **Zone of visual influence** Area within which a proposed development may have an influence or effect visual amenity

