



MAY 2025

Land off Echo Hill, Royston

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

Iceni Projects Limited on behalf of
Gladman Developments Ltd

May 2025

ICENI PROJECTS LIMITED
ON BEHALF OF GLADMAN
DEVELOPMENTS LTD

Iceni Projects

London: Da Vinci House, 44 Saffron Hill, London, EC1N 8FH

Edinburgh: 11 Alva Street, Edinburgh, EH2 4PH

Glasgow: 177 West George Street, Glasgow, G2 2LB

Manchester: This is the Space, 68 Quay Street, Manchester, M3 3EJ

t: 020 3640 8508 | **w:** [iceniprojects.com](https://www.iceniprojects.com) | **e:** mail@iceniprojects.com

linkedin: [linkedin.com/company/iceni-projects](https://www.linkedin.com/company/iceni-projects) | **twitter:** [@iceniprojects](https://twitter.com/iceniprojects)

Land off Echo Hill, Royston
LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Icen Projects has been instructed by Gladman Developments Ltd to undertake a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment in relation to the outline planning application for the proposed residential development at Land off Echo Hill, Royston (the 'Site').
- 1.2 The proposals are for an outline application for the demolition of No. 24 Echo Hill and the erection of up to 84 dwellings with public open space, landscaping and sustainable drainage system ('SuDS'), with all matters reserved save for access.
- 1.3 The Site lies within the administrative area of North Hertfordshire District Council and is located at the south western edge of the town of Royston. The Site's location is shown on the plan in **Appendix A1**.
- 1.4 This assessment describes the existing character and quality of the landscape on and around the Site, and also considers the potential landscape and visual effects of the proposed development on the Site and wider area.

Methodology

- 1.5 The assessment is based on Site visits undertaken in January and May 2025 by a qualified and experienced Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute. The weather conditions at the times of the Site visits were cloudy with good visibility, and sunny with good visibility.
- 1.6 This report considers the potential impact on both landscape character and visibility, with a distinction drawn between landscape effects (i.e. direct and indirect effects on the landscape resource and character), and visual effects (i.e. the views that people have of the Site and surroundings from publicly accessible places, and also residential views). The methodology utilised in this report is set out in **Appendix A8**.

2. PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024)

- 2.1 The NPPF sets out the national planning policy, with section 15 dealing with conserving and enhancing the natural environment. Paragraph 187 of the NPPF states that planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by, amongst others:

'a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);

b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland'.

- 2.2 Further guidance is set out within the Planning Practice Guidance ('PPG'), supported by the National Design Guide and the National Model Design Code, which provide guidance on how well-designed places can be achieved.

- 2.3 The national planning policies and guidance of relevance to this Assessment are summarised in **Appendix A5**.

Local Planning Policy Context

North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031

- 2.4 The North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031 was adopted in November 2022. The following Strategic Objectives, spatial strategies, and spatial policies are relevant to the Site and this assessment:

- Strategic Objective ENV2 - protect and enhance the historic character of North Hertfordshire's towns, villages, hamlets and landscape by promoting good design that creates a distinctive sense of place.
- Strategic Objective ENV3 - protect, maintain and enhance the District's historic and natural environment, its cultural assets and network of open spaces, urban and rural landscapes.
- Policy SP5: Countryside and Green Belt, states that the Council supports the principles of the Green Belt and recognise the intrinsic value of the countryside. Green Belt and Rural Areas Beyond the Green Belt are shown on the Policies Map.

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- Policy SP9: Design and Sustainability, states that the Council considers good design to be a key aspect of sustainable development.
 - Policy SP12: Green infrastructure, landscape and biodiversity, states that the Council will accommodate significant growth during the plan period whilst ensuring the natural environment is protected and enhanced.
 - Policy CGB1: Rural Areas beyond the Green Belt, states that in the Rural Areas beyond the Green Belt, as shown on the Policies Map, planning permission will be granted provided that the development: meets a proven local need for community facilities, services or affordable housing in an appropriate location; and would provide land or facilities for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation and cemeteries that respect the generally open nature of the rural area.
 - Policy D1: Sustainable Design, states that planning permission will be granted provided that development proposals: respond positively to the site's local context; take all reasonable opportunities, consistent with the nature and scale of the scheme, to create or enhance public realm; optimise the potential of the site by incorporating SUDS; retain existing vegetation and propose appropriate new planting; minimise the visual impact of street furniture and parking provision; have regard to the Design SPD, and any other relevant guidance.
 - Policy NE2: Landscape states that planning permission will be granted for development proposals that: respect the sensitivities of the relevant landscape character area and have regard to the guidelines identified for built development and landscape management; do not cause unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area or the landscape character area in which the site is located, taking account of any suitable mitigation measures necessary to achieve this; are designed and located to ensure the health and future retention of important landscape features; and have considered the long-term management and maintenance of any existing and proposed landscaping.

North Hertfordshire Design Supplementary Planning Document (July 2011)

2.5 The Design Supplementary Planning Document ('SPD') is a guide for the future development of the towns, villages and rural areas in North Hertfordshire.

2.6 Design Principles for Royston identified in the document are as follows:

- *'Pedestrian linkages into the town centre should be enhanced in any new development*
- *Views of St John's Church should be protected and where possible enhanced*
- *High quality materials should be used for public realm enhancements'.*

North Hertfordshire District Green Infrastructure Plan (August 2009)

2.7 The Green Infrastructure ('GI') Plan for the District establishes the policy context for green infrastructure, provides a GI deficiency analysis, and sets out recommendations and design principles for the proposed GI network.

2.8 Royston has been identified as having deficiencies in several types of open space, including town parks and gardens, recreation grounds, amenity green spaces, natural and semi-natural areas, allotments, play and youth facilities, and outdoor sports facilities.

2.9 Therfield Heath, located west of the Site is a *“169 hectare Local Nature Reserve and is noted as one of the most extensive remaining chalk grasslands in eastern England. The site is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), attracts significant biodiversity and is home to the largest pasqueflower colony in Britain. The site is accessible at all times, but is sensitive to increased recreational use.”*

2.10 The Green Infrastructure vision for North Hertfordshire includes the following:

‘The rural North Hertfordshire landscape of farmland, sculpted chalk landforms, minor river valleys and oak/hornbeam woodland, is conserved and managed to form a positive setting for the main areas of settlement within the district, as well as to conserve their distinctiveness and sense of separation.

Well designed, contained urban extensions conserve key views and connect visually and physically to the wider landscape and the adjacent townscape, as well as conserving and respecting existing landscape and environmental assets.

A multi functional and well connected countryside, recognising the importance of the whole landscape, and facilitating access to the landscape and to nature for a range of users and their needs. Green infrastructure provides for access without the need for the car.’

Other Relevant Documents

2.11 Other relevant documents include:

- North Hertfordshire Urban Design Assessment Royston, Final Report September 2007.

The document states that the Site is adjacent to two Urban Design Zones: Low Density Mixed Residential and Post War Suburban, both within the Royston town boundaries

- Royston Town Centre Strategy, Supplementary Planning Document, June 2008.
- Royston Conservation Area Statement.

Previous Application

2.12 The Site was subject to a previous outline planning application for up to 99 residential dwellings in April 2020 (Application Ref: 20/00744/OP). The application was refused in April 2021. It was noted that due to its prominent position and the topography of the Site outside Royston’s settlement boundary, the proposed development would be *‘likely to result in significant localised adverse impacts on both the character of the area and visual receptors, particularly when viewed from certain*

locations on Royston Heath.' It was also noted that *'the combination of residential built form on high ground and the associated urbanising infrastructure, and development breaking the skyline, would act to occasion a marked and adverse change in the character of the immediate and intermediate locality and wider valued landscape'*, thereby conflicting with the aims of the NPPF and local plan policies.

- 2.13 The Site was also subject to another separate outline planning application for up to 107 residential dwellings in March 2018 (Application Ref: 18/00747/OP). The application was refused in January 2019, for the same reasons as set out above.
- 2.14 Icení Projects were not involved in those designs or assessments, and the current proposed layout was developed through consultation between the Icení Landscape Architects and the Masterplanners, in order to ascertain and agree where development would be acceptable in relation to landscape and visual effects, and to minimise impacts to the skyline.

3. SITE CONTEXT

Site Context

- 3.1 The Site lies on the southern edge of the town of Royston, within North Hertfordshire. The Site extends to 8.97ha and comprises two rectangular grassland fields, as well as the residential property at No. 24 Echo Hill. The location and character of the Site are shown on the OS Map and Aerial Photograph contained in **Appendices A1** and **A2**, and photographs of the Site are included in **Appendix A3**.
- 3.2 The two field parcels are made up of a larger field to the east which adjoins the existing development at Layston Park and Royse Grove, and a smaller field to the west which adjoins Briary Lane. An internal hedgerow separates the two fields in a north-south direction. The Site is bound by mature managed hedgerows.
- 3.3 The Site adjoins the rear gardens of existing residential properties at Layston Park and Royse Grove to the east of the Site (accessed off London Road), and the properties at Echo Hill to the north of the Site. Layston Park and Echo Hill are areas of post-war suburban development, characterised by cul-de-sacs with a mix of detached and semi-detached properties. In contrast, Royse Grove features noticeably lower density housing, with large, detached properties set within spacious, landscaped plots.
- 3.4 The historic market town centre of Royston is located approximately 500m north east of the Site, and features a mix of medieval and Georgian architecture, with notable landmarks including the 14th Century Royston Cave, a network of underground chambers with mysterious carvings, and the Grade I Listed Church of St John the Baptist.
- 3.5 Briary Lane adjoins the Site boundary in the west. Extending south from Baldock Street, Briary Lane begins as hard-surfaced road and provides access to residential properties north west of the Site. Beyond Sun Hill, Briary Lane becomes a bridleway that is more informal in character. Wicker Hall/Heath Farm are located directly west of Briary Lane and is set within landscaped grounds with blocks of woodland.
- 3.6 Beyond Briary Lane to the west is Therfield Heath, a 169 hectare designated Site of Special Scientific Interest ('SSSI') and Local Nature Reserve comprising large areas of rolling uncultivated land and chalk grassland. Therfield Heath is open to public recreational use and provides facilities including a golf course, sports pitches and common land. Irregular woodland blocks are situated along the elevated southern and eastern edges of the Heath, where the land slopes down towards Baldock Road.

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- 3.7 The landscape to the south of the Site between Royston and Therfield is predominantly arable farmland, characterised by open and gently undulating medium to large scale fields with field boundaries commonly consisting of hedgerows, scattered trees and occasional tree belts. The area is punctuated by small farmsteads and pockets of woodland planting.

Landscape Character Assessments

National Landscape Character

- 3.8 Natural England has produced profiles for England's National Character Areas ('NCAs'), dividing England into 159 different natural areas, which are defined by their unique combination of landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity, cultural, and economic activity. The Site lies within National Character Area 87 – East Anglian Chalk.

- 3.9 The key characteristics of NCA 87 include:

- *'The underlying and solid geology is dominated by Upper Cretaceous Chalk, a narrow continuation of the chalk ridge that runs south-west–north-east across southern England, continuing in the Chilterns and along the eastern edge of The Wash. The chalk bedrock has given the NCA its nutrient-poor and shallow soils.'*
- *Distinctive chalk rivers, the River Rhee and River Granta, flow in gentle river valleys in a diagonally north-west direction across the NCA.*
- *The chalk aquifer is abstracted for water to supply Cambridge and its surroundings and also supports flows of springs and chalk streams; features associated with a history of modification include watercress beds, culverts and habitat enhancements.*
- *The rolling downland, mostly in arable production, has sparse tree cover but distinctive beech belts along long, straight roads. Certain high points have small beech copses or 'hanger', which are prominent and characteristic features in the open landscape. In the east there are pine belts.*
- *Remnant chalk grassland, including road verges, supports chalkland flora and vestigial populations of invertebrates, such as great pignut and the chalkhill blue butterfly.*
- *Archaeological features include Neolithic long barrows and bronze-age tumuli lining the route of the prehistoric Icknield Way; iron-age hill forts, including that at Wandlebury; impressive Roman burial monuments and cemeteries such as the Bartlow Hills; a distinctive communication network linking the rural Roman landscape to settlements and small towns, such as Great Chesterford; the four parallel Cambridgeshire dykes that cross the Chalk: the Anglo-Saxon linear earthworks of Devil's Dyke, Fleam Dyke, Heydon/Bran Ditch and Brent Ditch; ridge-and-furrow cultivation remains of the open field systems of the earlier medieval period; and large numbers of later moated enclosures, park lands created, sheepwalks, arterial routes and nucleated villages that emphasise the land use change of this period.*

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- *Brick and ‘clunch’ (building chalk) under thatched roofs were the traditional building materials, with some earlier survival of timber frame. Isolated farmhouses built of grey or yellowish brick have a bleached appearance.*
 - *Settlement is focused in small towns and in villages. There are a number of expanding commuter villages located generally within valleys. Letchworth Garden City is a nationally significant designed garden city.*
 - *In and around the wider area of Newmarket, stud farms impose a distinctive geometric, enclosed and manicured pattern to the landscape.*
 - *The NCA is traversed by the Icknield Way, an ancient route that is now a public right of way. Roads and lanes strike across the downs perpendicularly and follow historical tracks that originally brought livestock to their summer grazing. Today major roads and railways are prominent landscape characteristics of the NCA.’*

Landscape East

- 3.10 Landscape East brings together landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity, historic environment and spatial planning interests together under a single banner to steer the development of the East of England Landscape Framework and to identify and disseminate good practice in all aspects of landscape protection, management and planning.
- 3.11 The Site lies on the boundary of Lowland Village Chalklands and Chalk Hills and Scarps.
- 3.12 The overall description for Lowland Village Chalklands identifies the following characteristics: *‘Low lying, but gently rolling arable landscape, dissected by small streams, with a distinctive pattern of nucleated villages and a patchwork of woodlands and shelterbelts.’*
- 3.13 The overall description for Chalk Hills and Scarps identifies the following characteristics: *‘Prominent chalk hills, in places forming a distinct edge, elsewhere incised by dry valleys to create a rounded rolling landform. Often well wooded with long distance views, this is a large scale landscape with an ordered pattern of fields and woodlands.’*

North Herts Landscape Study (Character, Sensitivity and Capacity) - (2011; extracts contained in Appendix A6)

- 3.14 The North Herts Landscape Study (Character, Sensitivity and Capacity) document is based on the original Landscape Character Assessment work carried out by Babbie in 2004 and the subsequent Sensitivity and Capacity work carried out by The Landscape Partnership in 2011.
- 3.15 The Site is located within Landscape Character Area (‘LCA’) 228: Scarp Slopes South of Royston. The key characteristics of LCA 228 are:
- *‘Incised chalk scarp slope;*

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- *Large scale pattern of rectilinear fields;*
 - *Long straight roads, open and without hedge boundaries, climbing the face of the scarp; and*
 - *Absence of larger settlements'*

3.16 The distinctive features of the LCA include:

- *'Area abuts suburban boundary to Royston; and*
- *Therfield Heath to the south-west of Royston – an area of uncultivated land designated as a SSSI.'*

3.17 Landscape character sensitivities for the LCA, as set out in the Study include:

- *'A largely rural character consisting significant variations. The area is predominantly arable but contains notable areas of grassland and woodland throughout the Character Area, with an absence of both development and other detractors;*
- *An undulating landform with steeper slopes towards the upper plateau edge, incised by dry water cut valleys. The marked topography is emphasised by the predominantly open character of much of the area. The area would be very sensitive to change or degradation;*
- *Woodland habitat and shelterbelts are a prominent feature on the slopes, creating a sense of enclosure and on the skyline locally forming the horizon. However a number of the trees (most notably beech) are dying back particularly on the higher ground. The area would be vulnerable to further loss;*
- *The area consists of large scale undulating rectangular arable fields. Hedges are infrequent and where present provide clipped linear hedgerow boundaries. There is some new hedgerow planting at the boundaries. The character area would be vulnerable to the loss of the open character of the area.*
- *Areas of chalk grassland are of habitat importance with the highest value areas including Therfield Heath (SSSI) and Coombe Bottom. This habitat would be very sensitive to any degradation;*
- *The character area has an absence of large settlements. It is characterised by individual farmsteads and isolated settlements, generally on south facing slopes enclosed by shelterbelts. The character area would be vulnerable to inappropriate or unsympathetic development and any form of development not in scale with the historic settlement patterns;*
- *The character area also provides recreation facilities including a golf courses and areas of common on Therfield Heath. The area would be vulnerable to removal of these facilities. However particular features of the facilities e.g. raised green and tees on the golf course and car parks create a negative impact on the natural topography character of the area;*

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- *The character area overall is very much intact, with a good representation of typical character. The area is in a good state of repair, with varied texture, diversity with a complex pattern and form. The character area would be vulnerable to degradation of these characteristics; and*
 - *Good public access through numerous rights of way, including the Icknield Way and the Hertfordshire Way.'*
- 3.18 The study notes that overall, the LCA is of 'High sensitivity', noting that *'The pronounced undulating landform and mix of grassland and arable fields creates an open area with panoramic views, while the sections of wooded dip slopes create a sense of enclosure with limited urban influence.'*
- 3.19 In terms of visual sensitivities, the study notes the following:
- *'Expansive open area with long distance and panoramic views particularly to the north;*
 - *Woodland and shelter belts form and break up the skyline;*
 - *Sweeping patterns of arable fields, with bleached horizons; and*
 - *Clipped hedgerows create a soft line, ascending the scarp with small woodland copses at the corners of fields.'*
- 3.20 The study assesses the LCA as being of 'High sensitivity', noting that *'Views to and from the scarp slopes including undeveloped and wooded skylines are relatively open and would be highly sensitive to the introduction of urbanizing features.'*
- 3.21 Overall, the study concludes that the LCA is of 'High landscape value', noting that *'Aspects of particular value within Scarp Slopes South of Royston are the recognisable sense of place, the striking landform, the visual interest, memorable uninterrupted views, the sense of openness and visible expressions of the local geology.'*
- 3.22 The study assesses the capacity of the LCA to accommodate small urban extensions (under 5ha), as 'Low', and notes that *'This type of development would not be entirely appropriate within this Character Area, due to its rural and undeveloped character. Visual impacts could be high, due to the panoramic and open views currently experienced.'*
- 3.23 It notes that the sensitivity and potential impacts of a specific development should be assessed through a more detailed analysis of the local context and character.
- 3.24 The overall condition of the LCA is assessed as 'Poor' and the robustness is 'Strong.' The resultant strategy and guidelines for managing change within the Area is 'Restore Condition to Maintain Character', which includes the following:
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- *'Maintain the general open character of the area and in particular the long distance views over the lowland landscape to the north;*
 - *Promote management of woodland to encourage a diverse woodland flora;*
 - *Promote the creation of buffer zones between intensive arable production and areas of semi-natural habitat and the creation of links between habitat areas; and*
 - *Maintain and extend the rights of way network.'*

3.25 From our Site visits and consideration of the surroundings, we would note that some of the characteristics described in the Study are evident within the area, however, it should be noted that the town of Royston adjoins this character area, and also adjoins Therfield Heath and the Site, and while parts of this LCA may be rural and undeveloped, the parts adjoining Royston are clearly influenced by the presence of the town.

Designations and Heritage Assets (Plan in Appendix A4)

- 3.26 The Site is not covered by any statutory or non-statutory designations for landscape or heritage quality or value.
- 3.27 Therfield Heath is Registered Common Land, Local Nature Reserve and Site of Scientific Interest ('SSSI') and is located approximately 70m to the north of the Site and approximately 120m to the west of the Site. The Heath forms a large part of the overall character of Royston as a place, as it is located adjacent to, and clearly visible from one of the primary vehicular entrances to the town (Baldock Road), and as it is bound by the town to the north and east.
- 3.28 There are several Scheduled Monuments ('SM') to the west of the Site, including:
- Two bowl barrows: part of the round barrow cemetery on Therfield Heath which is 450m away from the Site;
 - Earl's Hill bowl barrow: part of the round barrow cemetery on Therfield Heath 820m away; and
 - A cluster of Scheduled Monuments within Therfield Heath approximately 1km to the west.
- 3.29 Approximately 2km to the south east of the Site are Springfield style enclosure, three bowl barrows and two pond barrows on Whiteley Hill. The Royston Cave SM is located 600m to the north of the Site and there is no intervisibility due to the intervening built up area of Royston town.
- 3.30 Numerous Listed Buildings are located within Royston town centre and Royston Conservation Area, with the closest to the Site located approximately 270m to the east of the Site. The Conservation Area encompasses much of the town centre focused around High Street and King Street, and extends southwards to London Road, terminating at the junction of The Warren, approximately 300m

north east of the Site. The Conservation Area is separated from the Site by intervening modern housing, resulting in no intervisibility.

- 3.31 Fox Farm House and Milestone, both Grade II Listed, are located on London Road, respectively 750m and 1km to the south of the Site.

Tree Preservation Orders

- 3.32 We are not aware of any Tree Preservation Orders ('TPO') on the Site, and none were identified during previous applications on the Site.

Public Rights of Way

- 3.33 There are no Public Rights of Way ('PRoW') on Site, and it is not publicly accessible.
- 3.34 Several PRoW are located within the immediate vicinity of the Site and local area, including Icknield Way and Hertfordshire Way long distance walking routes. Bridleways run along the western Site Boundary (Bridleway Royston 013), and along the southern Site boundary (Bridleway Royston 014).
- 3.35 The western Bridleway (Royston 013) links into the network of PRoW that extend across Therfield Heath to the west of the Site and to the open agricultural landscape to the south of the Site. Therfield Heath is covered by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW Act) which grants the public free access over the area.
- 3.36 The plans in **Appendix A1** and **A4** show further public rights of way near the Site.

4. SITE DESCRIPTION AND VISIBILITY

Site Description

- 4.1 The Site comprises two rectangular grassed field parcels: a larger field parcel to the east and a smaller field parcel to the west, totalling 8.91ha. A mature managed hedgerow separates the two fields.
- 4.2 The northern boundary adjoins the rear gardens of residential properties at Echo Hill, which are defined by timber post and rail fencing and hedgerows.
- 4.3 The northern section of the eastern boundary of the Site is defined by a tree belt and hedgerow, while the southern section is defined by hedgerows and fencing along the rear gardens of properties at Royse Grove.
- 4.4 The southern boundary of the Site is defined by managed hedgerows extending along Bridleway Royston 014, before wrapping around the reservoir and associated buildings indented into the south west of the Site.
- 4.5 The western boundary of the Site is bound by hedgerows and fencing along Briary Lane (Bridleway Royston 013).
- 4.6 The residential property at no. 24 Echo Hill forms part of the Site. The house is proposed to be demolished in order to provide access to the Site off Echo Hill via the plot. It extends to 0.06ha, and comprises a 2.5 storey detached house and its gardens. It is not of architectural or historical value, and dates from the late 20th Century.

Topography

- 4.7 Royston sits within a shallow bowl of the East Anglian Heights chalk escarpment, with the land gradually sloping down northwards towards the lower-lying Cambridgeshire Plain. The settlement rises up the north-facing scarp. The town centre of Royston and development north of Baldock Road is relatively flat, ranging from approximately 55 – 75m Above Ordnance Datum ('AOD'), whilst the southern edge of the town is defined by north-facing more steeply sloping ground, that rises to a high point of approximately 124m AOD.
- 4.8 The Site itself generally slopes down in a north easterly direction, from a high point in the south west of the Site at approximately 123m AOD, to a low point of approximately 100m AOD in the north west of the Site. The Site also slopes down from west to east, from a high point in the south western corner

of the Site at approximately 123m AOD to approximately 106m AOD in the south east corner of the Site. There is a ridgeline which occurs within the Site, extending up from the northern part of the eastern boundary, towards the reservoir south west of the Site, with the land falling within the Site to the north and south of this ridge.

Visibility

- 4.9 An assessment of the visibility of the Site was undertaken, and a series of representative photographs were taken from public vantage points, rights of way and public highways. The viewpoints are shown on the plans in **Appendix A1** and **A2**, and the photographs are contained in **Appendix A3**.
- 4.10 While there are open views from the higher parts of the Site outwards, views of the interior of the Site are more limited due to the undulating topography of the wider area, the adjoining built development, and the intervening vegetation. The key views of the Site are described below and in the tables contained in **Appendix A8**.

Near distance views

- 4.11 The interior of the Site is mostly screened in views from Bridleway Royston 013 which bounds it to the west, due to the hedgerow along this lane (photographs 3, 5, 9). There is a view available through the field access gate into the northern parts of the Site, from the lane adjacent to the north western corner of the Site (photograph 5). During the winter months, there are more filtered views of the western field of the Site, with the existing houses north of the Site partially visible in filtered views behind the Site. Views from the lane adjacent to the reservoir are prevented by the intervening vegetation at the reservoir site (photograph 10). From north of the Site along this bridleway, there are very limited, partial views of the Site, seen between the existing development and intervening vegetation. From further south of the Site along this bridleway, views of the Site are prevented by the intervening topography, hedgerows adjoining the bridleway, and the vegetation and buildings at the reservoir (photograph 14).
- 4.12 Views of the interior of the Site from Bridleway Royston 14 along the southern Site boundary are mostly prevented by the intervening hedgerow along the Site boundary (photographs 11, 12). There is, however, a view across parts of the Site through the field access gate in the south western corner of the Site. In these views, the existing houses north and east of the Site are partially visible behind the Site, with the wider landscape within the lower-lying Cambridgeshire Plain visible in the long distance (photograph 11). Views from further east along this bridleway are prevented by the intervening houses on the rising ground (photograph 13).
- 4.13 Further near distance views are available from the properties which adjoin the Site. The houses which back onto the northern boundary have views of parts of the Site from rear windows and some

gardens (as seen in photographs 4, 6, 8). Similarly, the houses east of the Site have views of parts of the Site from mostly rear windows and gardens (as seen in photographs 7, 11).

- 4.14 The house at No. 24 Echo Hill is visible from the street adjoining it. Views towards the interior of the Site from Echo Hill are, however, limited to very narrow views towards the northern Site boundary, seen through the gaps between the detached houses along the street (photograph 2).
- 4.15 There are views of the Site from Wicker Hall/Heath Farm west of Briary Lane (Bridleway Royston 14), including from the house and grounds, over the intervening lane and hedgerows (as seen in photograph 4).

Middle and long distance views

- 4.16 Middle and long distance views from the east are prevented by the intervening built development and vegetation, although some homes may have partial, filtered, winter views of the higher parts of the Site.
- 4.17 Middle and long distance views from the south are prevented due to the intervening topography, with the land south of the Site falling away.
- 4.18 Near to middle distance views towards the Site are available from the higher, south eastern parts of Therfield Heath in the vicinity of Wicker Hall/Heath Farm, and the PRow in that area (footpaths 9, 10, and 11). In views from the Heath north of Wicker Hall/Heath Farm, the Site is partially visible over the intervening hedgerows along the lane and at Wicker Hall/Heath Farm, and over the intervening built form (photograph 18). The existing houses north of the Site are also partially visible in these views, seen adjacent to the Site.
- 4.19 From further south of this part of the Heath from along public footpath 11, views towards the Site become screened by the intervening vegetation between the path and the Site, as well as due to the falling topography.
- 4.20 Moving north west from this part of the Heath on public footpath 7, views of the Site become screened due to the intervening topography, with the path falling towards the north west. In middle to long distance views from the area around the junction of public footpaths 6 and 7, around the facilities and parking area within the centre of the Heath, views towards the Site are available over the rising intervening ground (photograph 17). In these views, the residential edge of Royston to the east and south of the Heath, along its edges, is visible. The Site is screened behind the intervening topography and tree belt west of Wicker Hall/Heath Farm.
- 4.21 From further west within the Heath, from along some of the higher areas, views are available towards the Site over the intervening topography (photographs 15, 16). In these views, the existing settlement

edge adjoining the Heath north west of the Site is partially visible in filtered views through the trees adjoining the houses, with most of the Site screened in views by the intervening vegetation west of Briary Lane. There is however a view of the northernmost part of the Site, seen adjacent to the houses on Echo Hill, with the remainder of the Site southwards screened by intervening vegetation west of Briary Lane. Views from the Hertfordshire Way long distance walking route along the southern edge of the Heath, are mostly prevented by the intervening woodland, with the route running within the woodland on the higher slopes here.

- 4.22 While there are open views northwards from the Site, the Site is barely discernible in long distance views back towards the Site from the north. In views from The Causeway in Kneesworth north of Royston, the Site is partially visible, but not readily discernible, with the town and the Heath partially visible in between the trees on the north-facing slope, and the existing industrial area in Royston partially visible in the foreground (photograph 19). Views from Byway 21/15 at South End, south of Bassingbourn and north of Royston, are similar (photograph 20). There are likely to be further instances of views from the north, however, considering the distances involved, views of the Site are expected to be similar in these instances.

Landscape Quality, Value and Sensitivity

- 4.23 The Site is not covered by any statutory or non-statutory designations for landscape or heritage quality or value. It comprises two ordinary grassland fields bound by hedgerows, and an ordinary, modern residential property. The Site is of ordinary quality.
- 4.24 The Site is not publicly accessible, and has no particular recreational value, although two bridleways adjoin it. The Site is not of heritage or ecological interest, nor is it tranquil or wild. It is not particularly distinctive, but it is located further along the continuation of the ridge near the ecologically important Therfield Heath. There are views over the Cambridgeshire Plain from the Site, however, the Site is not of scenic value in itself. There are no known associations which would elevate the value of the Site. While the Site lies near Therfield Heath, it is separated from it by intervening development at Wicker Hall/Heath Farm which does not reflect the character of the Heath. It is also separated from the vast majority of the Heath due to the topography, with the ridge west of Briary Lane containing most of the Heath from the landscape/townscape to the east, with only the small area north of Wicker Hall/Heath Farm and south of the houses on Stake Piece Road located on the east-facing slope, and therefore facing towards the Site. Overall, the Site is assessed as being of medium landscape value, and it does not form part of a valued landscape.
- 4.25 The Site is capable of accommodating residential development on the lower areas, whilst retaining the higher parts of the Site as open space. The existing hedgerows are capable of being retained for the most parts, with limited losses required for movement and access routes. Overall, the Site is assessed as being of medium to high sensitivity.

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- 4.26 The residential edge adjoining the Site is not of architectural or heritage value, and is modern and suburban in character. The fields south of the Site are ordinary in character. The land and intervening properties at Wicker Hall/Heath Farm are also ordinary. A small south eastern part of Therfield Heath lies near to the Site and is intervisible with it, however, overall, the landscape and townscape immediately adjoining the Site are not of particular value or sensitivity. These areas are assessed as being of medium landscape sensitivity.
- 4.27 The wider town of Royston comprises mostly modern development, with the Conservation Area covering the central, older parts of the town. The settlement is of medium sensitivity. The wider landscape around the Site is undulating and mostly in arable use, and is of medium to higher value and sensitivity. However, Therfield Heath beyond Wicker Hall/Heath Farm to the north west of the Site, is of high landscape, ecological, historical, and recreational value, and is a valued landscape in relation to the NPPF paragraph 187a.

5. LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL EFFECTS

The Proposed Development

5.1 Full details of the proposed development are set out within the submitted Design and Access Statement ('DAS'). The proposals, which are in outline with all matters reserved except for access, are for the demolition of No. 24 Echo Hill and development of up to 84 dwellings and associated open space and infrastructure. As illustrated on the Illustrative Landscape Strategy Plan in **Appendix A7**, key elements of the proposals include:

- The demolition of No. 24 Echo Hill, and creation of vehicular and pedestrian access into the remainder of the Site off Echo Hill road through the plot;
- Built development proposed to be located within the north and east of the Site, on the lower slopes adjoining the existing modern houses within Royston, and no higher than the current 111m AOD contour line;
- Housing to be no higher than 2 storeys plus the roof, with lower houses proposed on the higher parts of the Site (such as houses with accommodation on ground floors and within roof/attic spaces, or houses on two levels with dropped eaves to create a lower roofline);
- The land in the west and south of the Site on the higher ground is proposed to be retained as public open space, in order to retain long distance views north from within the Site (and make these publicly accessible), and to maintain the undeveloped skyline formed by the highest ground within the Site, as viewed from the north;
- The creation of a new woodland belt within the Site, located on the higher ground, and connecting to the existing woodland belts to the north east of the Site, in order to ensure a wooded skyline is maintained in the east, in keeping with the character of the ridgelines as described within the North Herts Landscape Study;
- Drainage swales and basins are proposed in the lowest parts of the Site in the north west and south east, and these will be landscaped to create attractive features whilst enhancing habitat and biodiversity;
- Further pedestrian links are proposed onto the adjoining bridleways west and south of the Site;
- The new areas of public open space will be designed to provide recreational opportunities, with seating areas provided on the higher parts of the Site to allow views towards the wider landscape, including towards the north;

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- A new equipped children's play area will be provided, as well as areas of meadow grass and new tree and native thicket planting;
 - Recreational footways will be provided within the development and the proposed open spaces; and
 - The creation of a community orchard to enhance habitats and create an attractive landscape, whilst benefiting wildlife.

5.2 Below, we consider the effect of the proposed development on the landscape and visual character of the area.

Relationship to Settlement

5.3 The Site is well related to the adjacent settlement, being bound by modern housing to the north and east. This housing is also located on the rising and undulating ground which marks the Site, and the houses at the Site will continue the characteristic of residential development on the north-facing slopes of Royston. While the proposed houses will extend higher than the existing adjoining homes, they will not be out of character within this part of the town, which is located along the north-facing slope.

5.4 The proposed development will be bound by Briary Lane to the west, and Bridleway Royston 14 to the south, which also forms the extent of development of the houses south east of the Site on Royse Grove. The Site therefore benefits from clear boundaries which will contain the settlement from the wider, open countryside beyond to the south west and south. The development will be connected to the existing town via pedestrian and cycle links, as well as the vehicular connection to Echo Hill.

5.5 The adjoining houses north and east of the Site are up to 2.5 storeys, and the proposed up to 2 storey houses at the Site will therefore reflect the scale of the adjoining settlement.

Landscape Features

5.6 Short sections of the internal hedgerow require removal to facilitate movement and connection within the Site, and small sections of hedgerow may be removed in the south east of the Site to create a connection to the adjoining bridleway. The remainder of the structural vegetation on the Site is capable of being retained and accommodated within the development, with 12m of complimentary landscaping retained alongside the hedgerows. The ornamental vegetation within the garden on No.24 Echo Hill will be removed.

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- 5.7 The Illustrative Landscape Strategy plan in **Appendix A7** shows how new native hedgerow, woodland, tree, and thicket planting is proposed to be incorporated into the development, and this new structural planting will more than compensate for the small losses of hedgerow to accommodate access and movement. Large new areas of grassland or wildflower meadows could be created within the proposed areas of public open space, and new areas of marginal and aquatic planting could be included within the SuDS basins and swales. The new planting will create an attractive landscape, enhance habitat and opportunities for fauna, and increase species diversity on the Site.

Public Rights of Way

- 5.8 No public rights of way would be directly affected. The development could connect to the bridleways to the south and west.
- 5.9 A recreational route will be created around the new homes and within the area of public open space, thereby enhancing opportunities for recreational walking in the area.

Visual Effects

- 5.10 As set out in Section 4, while there are open views from the higher parts of the Site outwards, views of the interior of the Site are more limited due to the undulating topography of the wider area, the adjoining built form, and the intervening vegetation. The visual changes are described below, and the effects are assessed in the tables in **Appendix A8**.

Near distance views

- 5.11 The proposed homes in the western field and northern parts of the Site will be partially visible from Bridleway Royston 13 alongside the Site, seen over the intervening hedgerow. The existing houses north of the Site are partially visible from this route, and the proposed houses will therefore form a continuation of this character. As the proposed planting within the west of the Site matures, the views will become heavily filtered in the summer and filtered in the winter. The development will remain screened from beyond the Site to the south along this path. There will be limited views from the bridleway north of the Site of the new homes, seen within the context of the existing houses north of the Site.
- 5.12 The proposed houses within the south east of the Site will be partially visible over the intervening hedgerow, in views from Bridleway Royston 14 adjacent to the Site. The new homes will become filtered by the proposed planting, and will be seen within the context of the existing houses east of the Site which are already visible from the route. There will be limited opportunities for views of the new homes through gaps between the existing houses east of the Site, from the bridleway east beyond the Site. Long distance views through the field access gate in the south west of the Site from along the bridleway, will remain available over the proposed development, with the houses partially

visible in these views, in a similar manner to the existing houses north of the Site which are already visible from here.

- 5.13 The proposed development will be visible from the houses which adjoin it, and some further properties along Echo Hill. The proposed built form has been set back from the Site boundaries in order to maintain an area of open space between the new and existing houses. This space can be planted up with vegetation to limit views from the Site into the rear gardens of the houses which bound it to the north, thereby also mitigating some of the visual effects from the existing properties. Similarly, the houses on Royse Grove which adjoin the Site will have views of the proposed development over the intervening boundary vegetation, but new planting can be incorporated between the existing and proposed houses, to reduce intervisibility.
- 5.14 Views into the Site will be available from Echo Hill opposite, and through, the new Site entrance. The development will be seen within the context of the existing settlement, and will not appear out of character. There will also be limited opportunities for views of the new homes through the narrow gaps between the existing houses on the road, from Echo Hill.
- 5.15 The proposed housing will be partially visible from the properties at Wicker Hall/Heath Farm over the intervening vegetation. As the proposed planting matures, the new homes will become assimilated in the existing settlement in these views, and will become filtered.

Middle and long distance views

- 5.16 The proposed homes will remain screened in middle and long distance views from the east and south due to the intervening topography and built form, although there may be limited middle distance winter views of the new homes from existing houses to the east, seen behind intervening development.
- 5.17 In middle distance views from the east-facing section of Therfield Heath to the north west of the Site, the new homes will be visible over the intervening vegetation and built form, seen within the context of the existing houses which adjoining the Site on Echo Hill. The proposed layout has been designed to maintain the highest parts of the Site free from built form, in these views. There may also initially be views of the tops of the houses within the south east of the Site from this part of the Heath, however, these houses will become screened as the proposed woodland planting within the higher parts of the Site matures. The proposed woodland will also form a wooded skyline which will be seen behind the houses in the north of the Site, reflecting the current treed character of the ridgeline as evident to the east of the Site and as currently seen over the south of the Site. The existing settlement is already visible from the Heath, and the proposed development will not appear out of character or incongruous once the proposed planting has matured.

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- 5.18 The proposed development will remain screened from lower down and westwards within the Heath, including from the lower parts of public footpaths 6 and 7, as well as from the recreational grounds, due to the intervening topography.
- 5.19 From the higher points within Therfield Heath to the west, the proposed development within the north of the Site will be partially visible adjoining the existing houses on Echo Hill, with the majority of houses within the Site screened in summer views by the intervening vegetation west of Briary Lane, and heavily filtered in the winter. The new woodland planting within the Site will further reduce winter views.
- 5.20 In long distance views from the north, the proposed development may initially be discernible due to the brightness of the new building materials. However, as the buildings become more weathered, and the proposed planting matures, the development will not be discernible in long distance views, and will instead be seen as part of the existing settlement which rises up the hill. The proposed development will not impact on long distance views towards Therfield Heath, and the Heath will remain open and identifiable in these views. The proposed woodland planting within the Site will aid in screening the new homes in the south of the Site, and form a backdrop to the homes in the north east of the Site.

Landscape Character Effects

- 5.21 The character of the Site will change from grassland fields to a residential development with associated open space and infrastructure. The character of No.24 Echo Hill will change, with the existing house lost and the plot serving to accommodate the new access street into the development.
- 5.22 The vast majority of structural vegetation will be retained, strengthened with new planting, and managed to ensure its longevity and health. Only short sections of hedgerow require removal to facilitate access and movement within the Site. The proposed development includes new areas of native tree and thicket planting, as well as areas of wildflower meadows and water-tolerant planting within the SuDS. It also includes new recreational walking routes, street trees, and areas of amenity grass to provide an area for more active recreation. While the effects are assessed as adverse due to the loss of the open fields, this does not mean that the development will be inappropriate or unattractive. Instead, as set out within the Design and Access Statement, the new homes and spaces will be designed to reflect the vernacular of the area, and to maintain the higher, more open parts of the Site undeveloped in order to retain views from the Site towards the wider landscape to the north.
- 5.23 The Site is well related to the adjacent settlement, being bound by modern housing to the north and east. This housing is also located on the rising and undulating ground which marks the Site, and the houses at the Site will continue the characteristic of residential development on the north-facing slopes of Royston.

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- 5.24 The proposals have been designed to incorporate areas of open space between the new homes and the wider countryside, in order to create an appropriate transition between the built settlement and the wider landscape. The proposed woodland belt planting will create a physical extension of the tree belts which occur to the north east of the Site, but it would also visually soften the built form within the Site, as it matures. It will ensure that the proposed houses do not break the skyline, which will be marked in the east by a continuation of the tree line which occurs east of the Site, and which is characteristics within this Landscape Character Area. The woodland belt will run along a section of the ridge within the north east of the Site, thereby screening views of the houses to either side of the ridge, while reflecting the treed ridge character which exists to the east of the Site.
- 5.25 By limiting the development height to 2 storeys or lower, and keeping the built development below the 111m AOD contour, long views from the proposed open space within the Site will be maintained over the new houses towards the north. As shown on the Illustrative Masterplan within the Design and Access Statement, it is likely that the new homes would be located even lower than the 111m AOD contour, as private access drives or lanes will be required to access these properties, and these will be located south of the houses, meaning that the houses will be located further north within the Site, and therefore at a lower level. In addition, as shown in the Design and Access Statement, the houses in the highest parts of the Site are proposed to be lower in building height, with dwellings to be below 2 storeys. While these views from the higher parts of the Site are not currently publicly accessible, they will become so once the development is in place, and will provide an additional landscape and recreational feature in terms of the opening up of this view to the public. Further recreational paths within the open space will offer additional walking and recreational opportunities.
- 5.26 There will be a limited effect on the townscape character of the immediate settlement adjoining the Site to the north and east. While one residential property will be demolished, the new access road in its place will be perceived within the context of the existing street and houses, and the new streets and homes will not appear out of character. Appropriate set-backs can be incorporated within the layout between the new and existing houses, to maintain their privacy and amenity.
- 5.27 The proposed development will remain separate from the open landscape on the south-facing slope south of the Site, due to the intervening topography and vegetation, and there will be no material effect on the landscape character to the south.
- 5.28 There will be a limited effect on the character of Therfield Heath, with the impacts limited to views of the new development from a small part of the Heath which lies on the east-facing slope north west of the Site, with the new homes seen within the context of the existing settlement which is also visible from here. From this part of the Heath, the existing town is already readily evident, and the proposed development will not change the setting or character surrounding the Heath materially. The development will not materially affect a valued landscape.

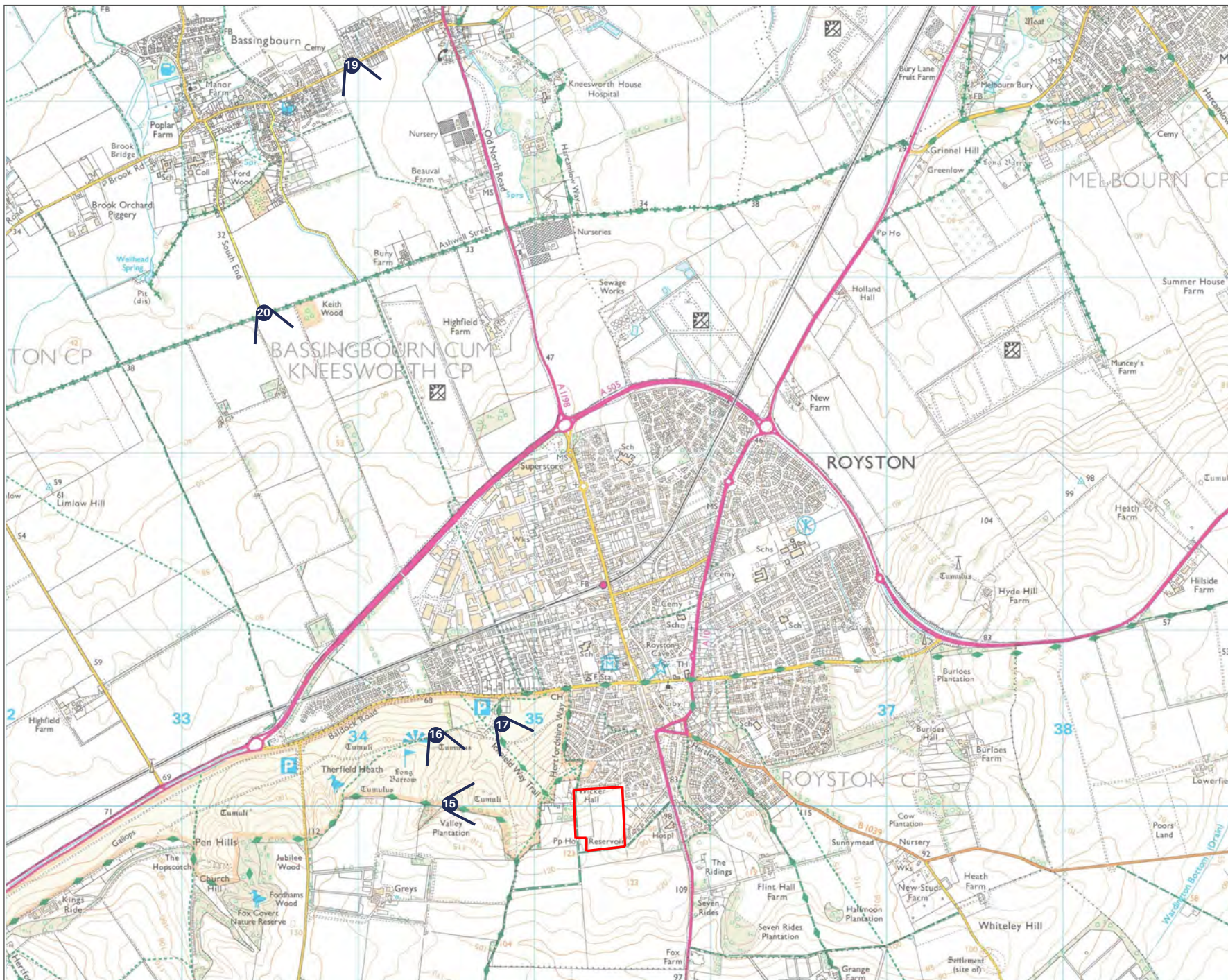
-
- 5.29 The proposed development, being well contained from the wider countryside, and well related to the existing settlement, will not have a material effect on the wider landscape character beyond the immediate setting, nor on the wider character of Royston.
- 5.30 Overall, there is no landscape or visual reason why development at the Site would be unacceptable, and the Site is capable of being developed in line with the proposals.

6. CONCLUSION

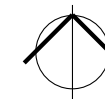
- 6.1 Icen Projects has been instructed by Gladman Developments Ltd to undertake a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment in relation to the outline planning application for the proposed residential development at Land off Echo Hill, Royston.
- 6.2 The proposals are for an outline application for the demolition of No. 24 Echo Hill and the erection of up to 84 dwellings with public open space, landscaping and sustainable drainage system, with all matters reserved save for access.
- 6.3 The Site lies on the south western edge of Royston, on the north-facing rising land within the town which characterises the southern parts of the settlement. It is bound to the north and east by existing residential development, to the west by scattered buildings (farm buildings and dwellings), and to the south by further farmland. Therfield Heath, a large area of open space, lies a short distance north west of the Site, with the Heath bound by the existing settlement to its north and east.
- 6.4 While there are open views from the higher parts of the Site outwards, views of the interior of the Site are more limited due to the undulating topography of the wider area, the adjoining built form, and the intervening vegetation. The proposed development will be visible in near distance views from the adjoining bridleways and houses, and from parts of Therfield Heath further away. However, the new homes will be seen within the context of the existing adjoining settlement, and will not appear out of character. The highest parts of the Site are proposed to be retained as open space and free from development, and new woodland and tree planting is proposed to assimilate the houses into the existing settlement in views.
- 6.5 The character of the Site will change from grassland fields to a residential development with associated open space and infrastructure. The character of No.24 Echo Hill will change, with the existing house lost and the plot serving to accommodate the new access street into the development. The vast majority of structural vegetation will be retained, strengthened with new planting, and managed to ensure its longevity and health. Only short sections of hedgerow require removal to facilitate access and movement within the Site. The proposed development includes new areas of native tree and thicket planting, as well as areas of wildflower meadows and water-tolerant planting within the SuDS. It also includes new recreational walking routes, street trees, and areas of amenity grass to provide opportunities for more active recreation.
- 6.6 The Site is well related to the adjacent settlement, being bound by modern housing to the north and east. This housing is also located on the rising and undulating ground which marks the Site, and the houses at the Site will continue the characteristic of residential development on the north-facing slopes of Royston.

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- 6.7 There will be no material effect on the wider landscape to the south due to the intervening topography and limited intervisibility, and the fact that the development will form a logical extension to the existing settlement, and as it will be well contained from the wider countryside by the boundary features as well as the adjoining bridleways. There will be no material effect on the townscape character of the immediate settlement adjoining the Site to the north and east. There will be a limited effect on the character of Therfield Heath, with the impacts limited to views of the new development from a small part of the Heath, with the new homes seen within the context of the existing settlement which is also visible from here. The development will not materially affect a valued landscape.
- 6.8 The proposed development, being well contained from the wider countryside, and well related to the existing settlement, will not have a material effect on the wider landscape character beyond the immediate setting, nor on the wider character of Royston.
- 6.9 Overall, there is no landscape or visual reason why development at the Site would be unacceptable, and the Site is capable of being developed in line with the proposals.

A1. SITE LOCATION PLAN



- Site Boundary
- - - Public Footpath
- Cycleway
- Bridleway
-  Representative viewpoint number and direction of view



ICENI PROJECTS LIMITED
Da Vinci House 44 Saffron Hill
London, EC1N 8FH



PROJECT **Land off Echo Hill, Royston**
DRAWING **Site Location Plan**
CLIENT **Gladman Developments Ltd**

SCALE @ A4	Not to Scale	DRAWING NO.	I000357-DL01
DRAWN BY	GH	REV	-
CHECKED BY	SG	DATE	February 2025

ICENI PROJECTS ACCEPTS NO RESPONSIBILITY FOR ANY UNAUTHORISED AMENDMENTS TO THIS DRAWING.
ONLY FIGURED DIMENSIONS ARE TO BE WORKED TO.

A2. AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH



Site Boundary



Photograph
number and
direction of
view



ICENI PROJECTS LIMITED
Da Vinci House 44 Saffron Hill
London, EC1N 8FH



PROJECT **Land off Echo Hill, Royston**

DRAWING **Aerial Photograph**

CLIENT **Gladman Developments Ltd**

SCALE @ A4 **Not to Scale** DRAWING NO. **I000537-DL02**

DRAWN BY **GH** REV **-**

CHECKED BY **SG** DATE **May 2025**

ICENI PROJECTS ACCEPTS NO RESPONSIBILITY FOR ANY UNAUTHORISED AMENDMENTS TO THIS DRAWING.
ONLY FIGURED DIMENSIONS ARE TO BE WORKED TO.

A3. PHOTOGRAPHS



Photograph 1

View south towards Site from Briary Lane (bridleway 013) at junction with Sun Hill

Visualisation type 1
Cylindrical projections
48% @ A3, 96% @ A1
Canon EOS 2000D
Canon IS 18-55mm

Looking direction: South
HfoV: 90 degrees
13.05.2025, 14:45



Photograph 2 View south towards Site from Echo Hill

Visualisation type 1
Cylindrical projections
48% @ A3, 96% @ A1
Canon EOS 2000D
Canon IS 18-55mm

Looking direction: South
HfoV: 90 degrees
13.05.2025, 14:39

ICENI PROJECTS LIMITED Da Vinci House 44 Saffron Hill London, ECN1 8FH	PROJECT	Land off Echo Hill, Royston	DRAWN BY	GH	DRAWING NO.
	DRAWING TITLE	Photosheets	CHECKED BY	SG	I000537-DL03
	CLIENT	Gladman Developments Ltd	DATE	May 2025	REV
					-



Photograph 3 View south towards Site from Briary Lane (bridleway Royston 013)

Visualisation type 1
Cylindrical projections
48% @ A3, 96% @ A1
Canon EOS 2000D
Canon IS 18-55mm

Looking direction: South
HfoV: 90 degrees
13.05.2025, 14:37



Photograph 4 View west along northern Site boundary

Visualisation type 1
Cylindrical projections
48% @ A3, 96% @ A1
Canon EOS 2000D
Canon IS 18-55mm

Looking direction: West
HfoV: 90 degrees
10.01.2025, 13:53

ICENI PROJECTS LIMITED Da Vinci House 44 Saffron Hill London, ECN1 8FH iceni	PROJECT	Land off Echo Hill, Royston	DRAWN BY GH	DRAWING NO.
	DRAWING TITLE	Photosheets	CHECKED BY SG	I000537-DL03
	CLIENT	Gladman Developments Ltd	DATE May 2025	REV -



Photograph 5 View south east towards Site from Briary Lane (bridleway Royston 013)

Visualisation type 1
Cylindrical projections
48% @ A3, 96% @ A1
Canon EOS 2000D
Canon IS 18-55mm

Looking direction: South east
HfoV: 90 degrees
10.01.2025, 13:39

ICENI PROJECTS LIMITED Da Vinci House 44 Saffron Hill London, ECN1 8FH iceni	PROJECT	Land off Echo Hill, Royston	DRAWN BY GH	DRAWING NO.
	DRAWING TITLE	Photosheets	CHECKED BY SG	I000537-DL03
	CLIENT	Gladman Developments Ltd	DATE May 2025	REV -



Photograph 6 View east within Site from northern end of internal field boundary

ICENI PROJECTS LIMITED Da Vinci House 44 Saffron Hill London, ECN1 8FH 	PROJECT	Land off Echo Hill, Royston	DRAWN BY GH	DRAWING NO.
	DRAWING TITLE	Photosheets	CHECKED BY SG	I000537-DL03
	CLIENT	Gladman Developments Ltd	DATE May 2025	REV -



Photograph 7 View east from within Site towards existing properties on Royse Grove

Visualisation type 1
Cylindrical projections
48% @ A3, 96% @ A1
Canon EOS 2000D
Canon IS 18-55mm

Looking direction: East
HfoV: 90 degrees
10.01.2025, 14:05

ICENI PROJECTS LIMITED Da Vinci House 44 Saffron Hill London, ECN1 8FH iceni	PROJECT	Land off Echo Hill, Royston	DRAWN BY	GH	DRAWING NO.
	DRAWING TITLE	Photosheets	CHECKED BY	SG	1000537-DL03
	CLIENT	Gladman Developments Ltd	DATE	May 2025	REV
					-



Photograph 8 View north from within Site towards existing properties on Echo Hill

Visualisation type 1
Cylindrical projections
48% @ A3, 96% @ A1
Canon EOS 2000D
Canon IS 18-55mm

Looking direction: North
HfoV: 90 degrees
10.01.2025, 13:50

ICENI PROJECTS LIMITED Da Vinci House 44 Saffron Hill London, ECN1 8FH iceni	PROJECT	Land off Echo Hill, Royston	DRAWN BY GH	DRAWING NO.
	DRAWING TITLE	Photosheets	CHECKED BY SG	I000537-DL03
	CLIENT	Gladman Developments Ltd	DATE May 2025	REV -

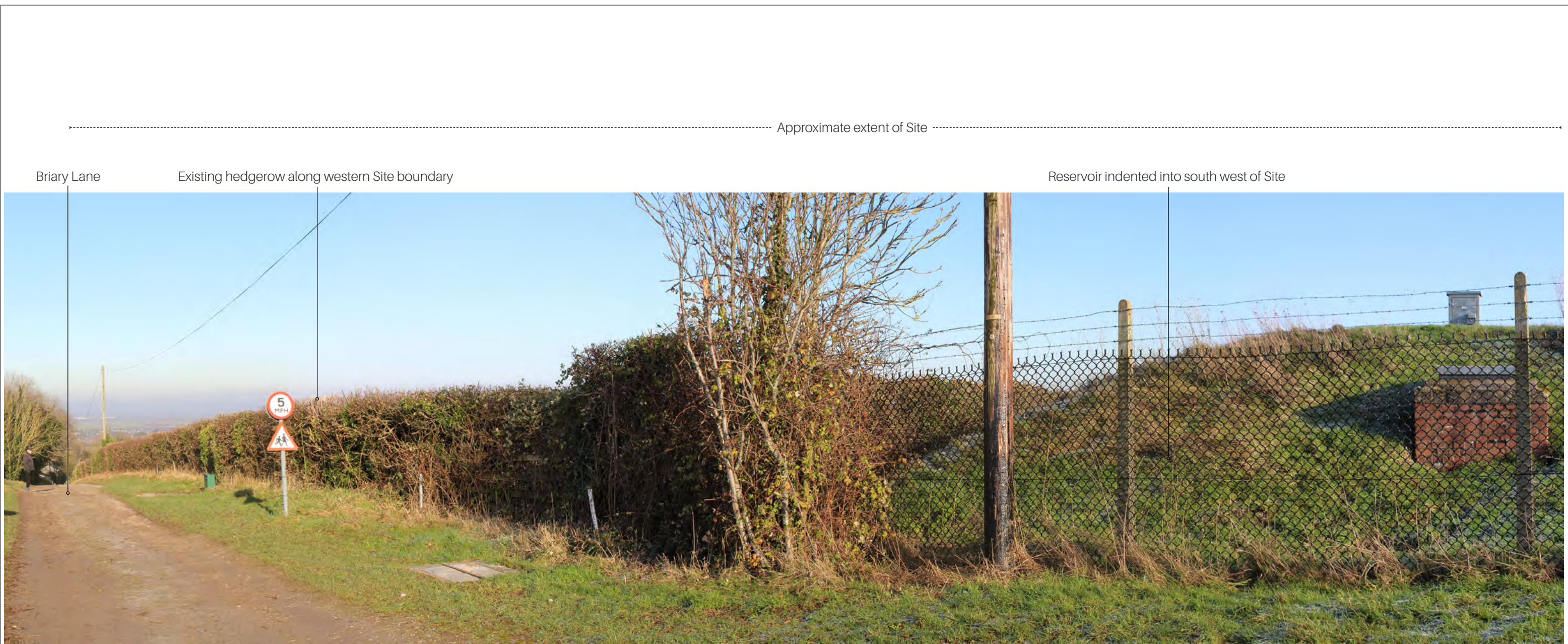


Photograph 9

View east towards Site from Briary Lane (bridleway Royston 013)

Visualisation type 1
Cylindrical projections
48% @ A3, 96% @ A1
Canon EOS 2000D
Canon IS 18-55mm

Looking direction: East
HfoV: 90 degrees
10.01.2025, 13:40



Photograph 10 View north east towards Site from Briary Lane (bridleway Royston 013)

Visualisation type 1
Cylindrical projections
48% @ A3, 96% @ A1
Canon EOS 2000D
Canon IS 18-55mm

Looking direction: North east
HfoV: 90 degrees
10.01.2025, 13:42

ICENI PROJECTS LIMITED Da Vinci House 44 Saffron Hill London, ECN1 8FH 	PROJECT	Land off Echo Hill, Royston	DRAWN BY	GH	DRAWING NO.
	DRAWING TITLE	Photosheets	CHECKED BY	SG	I000537-DL03
	CLIENT	Gladman Developments Ltd	DATE	May 2025	REV
					-



Photograph 11 View north east towards Site from bridleway Royston 014

Visualisation type 1
Cylindrical projections
48% @ A3, 96% @ A1
Canon EOS 2000D
Canon IS 18-55mm

Looking direction: North east
Hfov: 90 degrees
10.01.2025, 13:45



Photograph 12 View west along bridleway Royston 014

Visualisation type 1
Cylindrical projections
48% @ A3, 96% @ A1
Canon EOS 2000D
Canon IS 18-55mm

Looking direction: West
HfoV: 90 degrees
10.01.2025, 13:47

ICENI PROJECTS LIMITED Da Vinci House 44 Saffron Hill London, ECN1 8FH 	PROJECT	Land off Echo Hill, Royston	DRAWN BY GH	DRAWING NO.
	DRAWING TITLE	Photosheets	CHECKED BY SG	I000537-DL03
	CLIENT	Gladman Developments Ltd	DATE May 2025	REV -



Photograph 13

View south west towards Site along bridleway Royston 014

Visualisation type 1
Cylindrical projections
48% @ A3, 96% @ A1
Canon EOS 2000D
Canon IS 18-55mm

Looking direction: South west
HfoV: 90 degrees
13.05.2025, 14:25

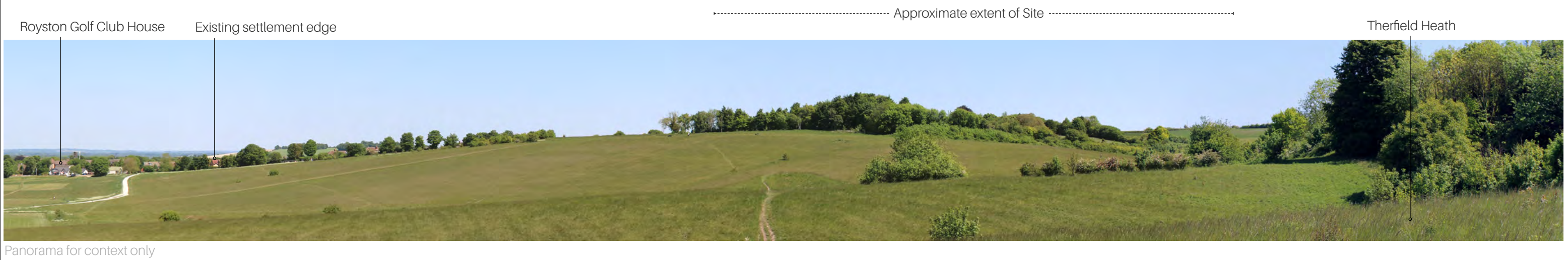
ICENI PROJECTS LIMITED Da Vinci House 44 Saffron Hill London, ECN1 8FH 	PROJECT	Land off Echo Hill, Royston	DRAWN BY GH	DRAWING NO.
	DRAWING TITLE	Photosheets	CHECKED BY SG	I000537-DL03
	CLIENT	Gladman Developments Ltd	DATE May 2025	REV -



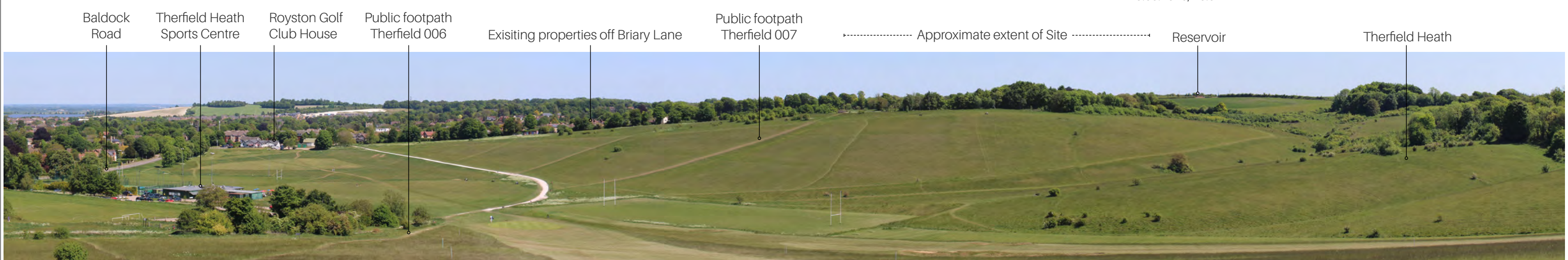
Photograph 14 View north towards Site from public footpath Royston 013

Visualisation type 1
Cylindrical projections
48% @ A3, 96% @ A1
Canon EOS 2000D
Canon IS 18-55mm

Looking direction: North
HfoV: 90 degrees
13.05.2025, 14:24



ICENI PROJECTS LIMITED Da Vinci House 44 Saffron Hill London, ECN1 8FH	PROJECT	Land off Echo Hill, Royston	DRAWN BY	GH	DRAWING NO.
	DRAWING TITLE	Photosheets	CHECKED BY	SG	I000537-DL03
	CLIENT	Gladman Developments Ltd	DATE	May 2025	REV
					-



Panorama for context only

ICENI PROJECTS LIMITED Da Vinci House 44 Saffron Hill London, ECN1 8FH	PROJECT	Land off Echo Hill, Royston	DRAWN BY	GH	DRAWING NO.
	DRAWING TITLE	Photosheets	CHECKED BY	SG	I000537-DL03
	CLIENT	Gladman Developments Ltd	DATE	May 2025	REV
					-



Photograph 17

View south east towards Site from intersection between public footpaths Therfield 007 and Therfield 006

Visualisation type 1
Planar projections
75% @ A3, 150% @ A1
Canon EOS 2000D
Canon IS 18-55mm
Looking direction: South east
HfoV: 40 degrees
13.05.2025, 13:51



Panorama for context only

ICENI PROJECTS LIMITED Da Vinci House 44 Saffron Hill London, ECN1 8FH iceni	PROJECT	Land off Echo Hill, Royston	DRAWN BY	GH	DRAWING NO.
	DRAWING TITLE	Photosheets	CHECKED BY	SG	I000537-DL03
	CLIENT	Gladman Developments Ltd	DATE	May 2025	REV
					-



Photograph 18 View south east towards Site from Therfield Heath

Visualisation type 1
Cylindrical projections
48% @ A3, 96% @ A1
Canon EOS 2000D
Canon IS 18-55mm

Looking direction: South east
HfoV: 90 degrees
10.01.2025, 13:34

ICENI PROJECTS LIMITED Da Vinci House 44 Saffron Hill London, ECN1 8FH 	PROJECT	Land off Echo Hill, Royston	DRAWN BY GH	DRAWING NO.
	DRAWING TITLE	Photosheets	CHECKED BY SG	I000537-DL03
	CLIENT	Gladman Developments Ltd	DATE May 2025	REV -



Visualisation type 1
Planar projections
75% @ A3, 150% @ A1
Canon EOS 2000D
Canon IS 18-55mm
Looking direction: South east
Hfov: 40 degrees
13.05.2025, 15:25

Photograph 19 View south east towards Site from The Causeway

ICENI PROJECTS LIMITED Da Vinci House 44 Saffron Hill London, ECN1 8FH iceni	PROJECT	Land off Echo Hill, Royston	DRAWN BY	GH	DRAWING NO.
	DRAWING TITLE	Photosheets	CHECKED BY	SG	I000537-DL03
	CLIENT	Gladman Developments Ltd	DATE	May 2025	REV
					-

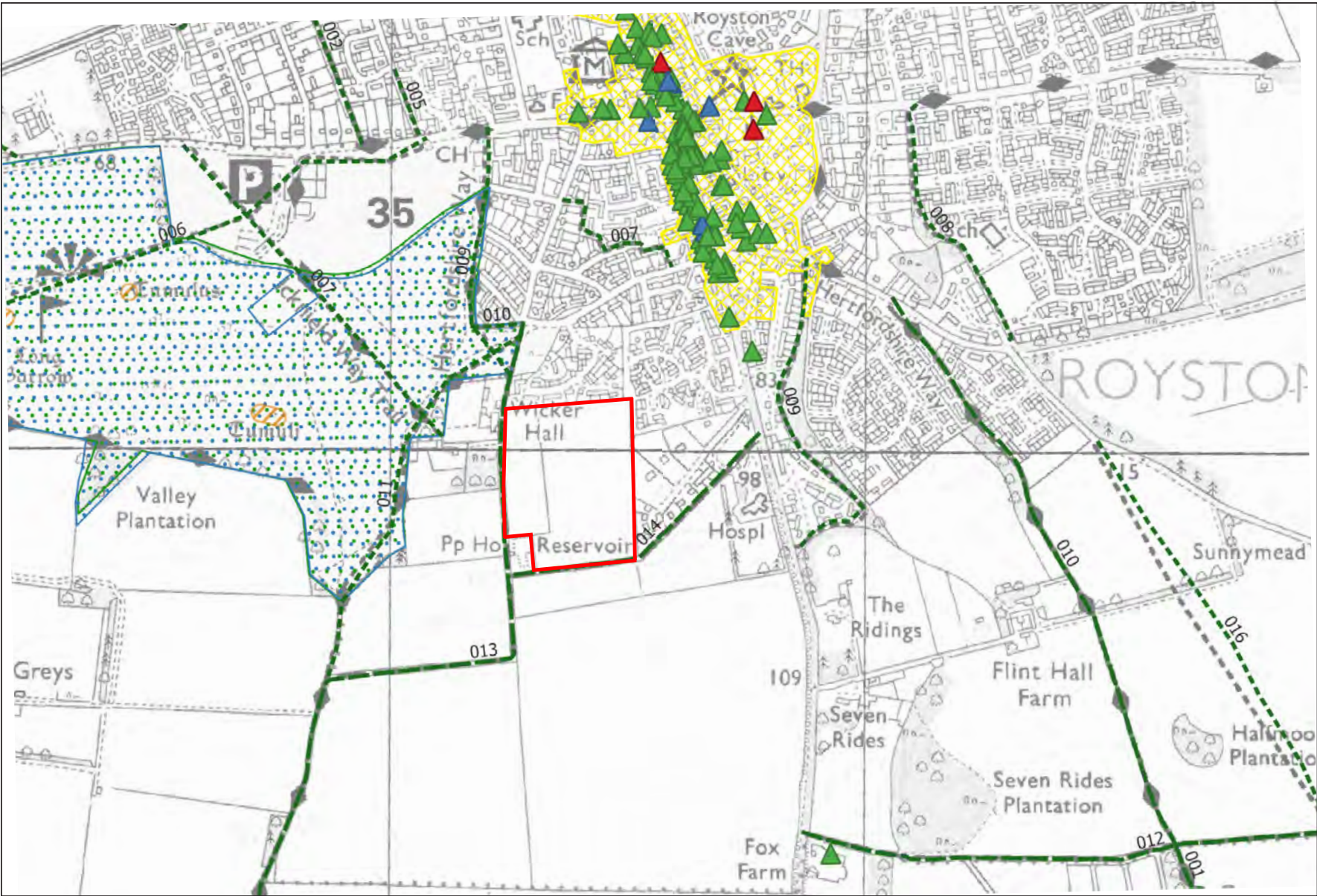


Visualisation type 1
Planar projections
75% @ A3, 150% @ A1
Canon EOS 2000D
Canon IS 18-55mm
Looking direction: South east
Hfov: 40 degrees
13.05.2025, 15:32

Photograph 20 View south east towards Site from intersection between South End and byway 21/15

ICENI PROJECTS LIMITED Da Vinci House 44 Saffron Hill London, ECN1 8FH 	PROJECT	Land off Echo Hill, Royston	DRAWN BY	GH	DRAWING NO.
	DRAWING TITLE	Photosheets	CHECKED BY	SG	I000537-DL03
	CLIENT	Gladman Developments Ltd	DATE	May 2025	REV
					-

A4. DESIGNATIONS PLAN



- Site Boundary
- Public Footpath
- Bridleway
- Grade I Listed Building
- Grade II* Listed Building
- Grade II Listed Building
- Green Belt
- Therfield Heath Nature Reserve
- Site of Special Scientific Interest
- Conservation Area
- Scheduled Monument

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0 250 500m

ICENI PROJECTS LIMITED
Da Vinci House 44 Saffron Hill
London, EC1N 8FH



PROJECT **Land off Echo Hill, Royston**
DRAWING **Designations Plan**
CLIENT **Gladman Developments Ltd**

SCALE @ A4	Not to Scale	DRAWING NO.	I000537-DL04
DRAWN BY	GH	REV	-
CHECKED BY	SG	DATE	February 2025

ICENI PROJECTS ACCEPTS NO RESPONSIBILITY FOR ANY UNAUTHORISED AMENDMENTS TO THIS DRAWING.
ONLY FIGURED DIMENSIONS ARE TO BE WORKED TO.

A5. NATIONAL LANDSCAPE POLICY SUMMARY

NATIONAL LANDSCAPE POLICY SUMMARY

National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024)

- 1.1 In December 2024 (and corrected in February 2025), the government published the updated National Planning Policy Framework ('NPPF'), which maintains the focus on sustainable development that was established as the core of the 2012 NPPF. Those parts relevant to this assessment are summarised below.
- 1.2 Paragraphs 10 and 11 of the NPPF state that at the heart of the framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should be applied in relation to both plan-making and decision-taking.
- 1.3 Paragraph 20 of the NPPF states that strategic policies should set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and design quality of places, and make sufficient provision for, among other elements, the **conservation and enhancement of the natural built and historic environment including landscapes and green infrastructure and planning measures to address climate change mitigation and adaptation.**
- 1.4 Section 12 of the NPPF sets out that planning policies and decisions should support the creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places. Paragraph 132 states that **design policies should be developed with local communities so they reflect local aspirations and are grounded in an understanding and evaluation of each areas defining characteristics.** Paragraph 133 requires Local Authorities to prepare design guides and codes which act as a framework to reflect local character and design preferences to create high quality designed places which are beautiful and distinctive.
- 1.5 Paragraph 135 states that planning policies and decisions, should ensure that developments, amongst others:
 - will function well and add to the overall quality of the area not just or the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
 - are visually attractive as a result of good architecture layout and effective landscaping
 - are sympathetic to local character and history including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change.

- 1.6 Paragraph 136 highlights the importance of new and retained trees to the character and quality of urban environments, with appropriate species chosen for the location and the needs of all users.
- 1.7 Paragraph 137 states that design quality should be integral to the evolution and assessment of proposals, and paragraph 139 goes on to state that poorly designed development should be refused, particularly where it does not follow local or government design guidance.
- 1.8 Section 15 of the NPPF deals with conserving and enhancing the natural environment. Paragraph 187 of the document states that the planning system should contribute to the protection and enhancement of the natural and local environment through, among other things, protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, **in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan.** The paragraph also outlines that the planning system should recognise **the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land and of trees and woodland.**
- 1.9 Paragraph 188 highlights that plans should distinguish between the hierarchy of international national and locally designated Sites allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value here consistent with other policies in this framework take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure and plan or the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries.
- 1.10 Paragraph 193 notes that in the process of determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply several principles. Among these, the paragraph notes that **development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees should be refused unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists.**
- 1.11 Section 13 of the NPPF concerns Protecting Green Belt land. Paragraph 142 notes that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently
- 1.12 Paragraph 190 states that **permission should be refused for major development** within the National Parks, the Broads and National Landscapes apart from where exceptional circumstances and public interest can be demonstrated. Such applications will require assessments of the need for the development, other options for the location of the development outside the designated area and any detrimental effects on the environment, landscape and recreational opportunities.

- 1.13 The definition of major development for the purposes of paragraphs 189 and 190, is noted as being a matter for the decision maker, and should be considered in terms of its **nature scale and setting and whether it could have a significant adverse impact on the purposes or which the area is designated or defined.**

Planning Practice Guidance ('PPG'; February 2025)

- 1.14 The Planning Practice Guidance PPG as relevant to this assessment covers landscape and the natural environment, and the design of new developments. The PPG may be out of date in its reference to NPPF paragraph numbers, and where this is the case, the latest paragraph number has been included in the text in square brackets.
- 1.15 Paragraph 001 ID 26-001-20191001 of the Design process and tools section sets out the purpose of the guidance, which aims to explain the process and tools that can be employed to achieve well-designed places. The guidance refers to paragraph 130 – 134 [131 – 135] of the NPPF which relates to ensuring good design, and states that the section should be read in conjunction with the National Design Guide published October 2019, which it notes should be used in both plan-making and decision making. Ten good design characteristics are identified in the National Design Guide, and these are set out as follows in the PPG:
- Context
 - Identity
 - Built form
 - Movement
 - Nature
 - Public spaces
 - Uses
 - Homes and buildings
 - Resources
 - Lifespan.
- 1.16 Paragraph 006 and 007 deal with masterplans, stating that they should be site specific and should **set the vision and implementation strategy for a development.** Paragraph 006 notes that they may need to be accompanied by other technical reports including landscape assessment and proposals for securing biodiversity net gain.
- 1.17 The Natural Environment section of the guidance aims to explain the key issues to consider in relation to the implementation of policies to protect and enhance the natural environment, including local requirements.

1.18 Paragraph 004 defines Green Infrastructure, while in paragraph 005 it explains its importance as a natural capital asset that provides multiple benefits, including enhanced biodiversity, landscapes and urban cooling. In paragraph 006 the guidance sets out the planning goals green infrastructure can assist in achieving, and these are:

- Building a strong competitive economy;
- Achieving well designed places;
- Promoting healthy and safe communities;
- Mitigating climate change flooding and coastal change;
- Conserving and enhancing the natural environment.

1.19 The final paragraph 008 in the green infrastructure sub-section notes that green infrastructure opportunities and requirements need to be considered at the earliest stages of development proposals as an integral part of development and infrastructure provision and taking into account existing natural assets and the most suitable locations and types of new provision.

1.20 Within the Biodiversity, Geodiversity and Ecosystems section, the topic of net gain has been included. Paragraph 020 describes net gain as **an approach to development that leaves the natural environment in a measurably better state than it as beforehand. Net gain is an umbrella term for both biodiversity net gain and wider environmental net gain.**

1.21 In the Landscape section of the guidance, paragraph 036 refers to that part of paragraph 170 - 174 [187 – 191] of the NPPF which deals with the recognition of the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside in local plans, and the need for strategic policies to **provide for the conservation and enhancement of landscapes. This can include nationally and locally designated landscapes but also the wider countryside.** Paragraph 036 goes on to note that:

'Where landscapes have a particular local value it is important for policies to identify their special characteristics and be supported by proportionate evidence. Policies may set out criteria against which proposals or development affecting these areas will be assessed. Plans can also include policies to avoid adverse impacts on landscapes and to set out necessary mitigation measures such as appropriate design principles and visual screening here necessary. The cumulative impacts of development on the landscape need to be considered carefully.'

National Design Guide 2019

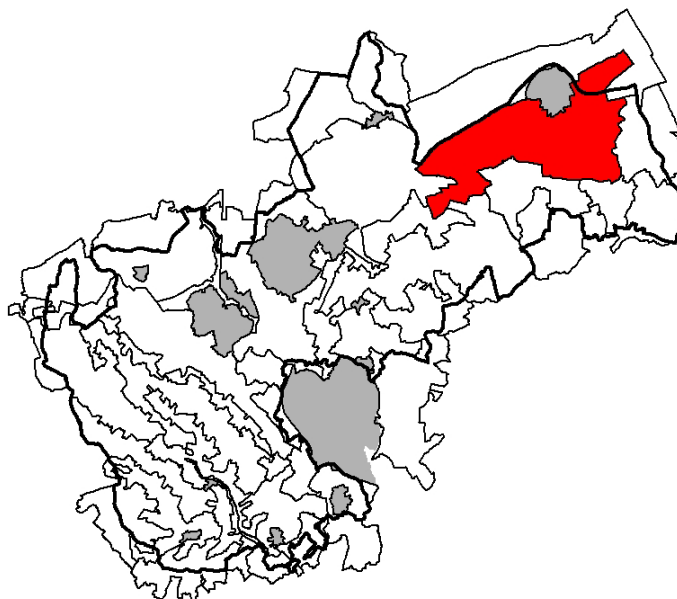
1.22 The National Design Guide 2019 provides guidance to illustrate how well designed places that are beautiful enduring and successful can be achieved in practice.

1.23 The guidance identifies ten good design characteristics and the following are of most relevance to landscape and visual assessment.

- Context is described as the location of the development and the attributes of its immediate local and regional surroundings. The Guide goes on to state that: *'An understanding of the context history and cultural characteristics of a site neighbourhood and region influences the location siting and design on new developments. It means they are well grounded in their locality and more likely to be acceptable to existing communities. Creating a positive sense of place helps to foster a sense of belonging and contributes to well-being, inclusion and community cohesion.'*
- The identity or character of a place comes from the way that buildings streets and spaces landscape and infrastructure combine together and how people experience them. It is not just about the buildings and how a place looks but how it engages with all of the senses. Local character makes places distinctive. Well-designed sustainable places with a strong identity give their users occupiers and owners a sense of pride helping to create and sustain communities and neighbourhoods.
- Nature contributes to the quality of a place and to people's quality of life and it is a critical component of well-designed places natural features are integrated into well designed development. They include natural and designed landscapes, high quality public open spaces, street trees, and other trees, grass, planting and water.

1.24 The National Model Design Code, July 2021 expands upon the ten characteristics of good design providing an overarching framework for design.

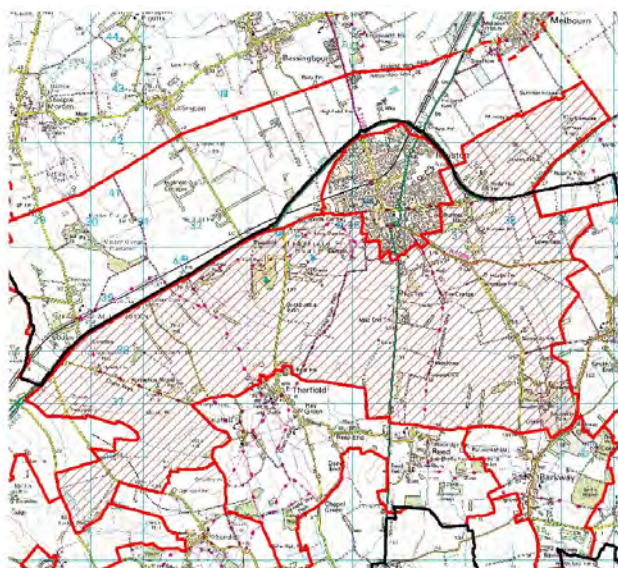
**A6. EXTRACT FROM NORTH HERTS LANDSCAPE STUDY
(CHARACTER, SENSITIVITY AND CAPACITY) - (2011)**

LOCATION

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LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

An extensive area running parallel and to the south of the A505. The scarp extends from the Cat Ditch Valley in the west to the Wardlington Bottom Drain in the east. The area extends southwards, rising to meet the break of slope with the plateau landscape. To the east of Royston a small chalk outlier extends northwards, ending at Goffers Knoll.



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LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Chalk scarp slope incised by dry water cut valleys. Undulating landform with steeper slopes towards the upper plateau edge. Large scale arable fields with ordered pattern of rectilinear field boundaries and lanes with straight boundaries. Occasional farmsteads. Small tree plantations set out in discrete coverts. Individual tree belts.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Incised chalk scarp slope
- Large scale pattern of rectilinear fields
- Long straight roads, open and without hedge boundaries, climbing the face of the scarp
- Absence of larger settlements

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- Area abuts suburban boundary to Royston
- Therfield Heath, to the southwest of Royston - an area of uncultivated land designated as a SSSI
- Coombe Road sits within a deeply incised valley
- The A10, Roman road
- Historic earthworks
- Newsells Park

ASSESSMENT

PHYSICAL INFLUENCES

Geology & soils

Chalk overlain by shallow rendzina soils and calcareous loams. Some areas of glacial gravels notably at Wardington Bottom.

Topography

Sloping landform falls from chalk plateau to rolling lowland landscape to the north.

Degree of slope

Typically 1:10 but slightly shallower in places.

Altitude range

70m to 160m.

Hydrology

No discernable water courses other than localised drainage ditches.

Land cover and land use

Predominantly arable.

Vegetation and wildlife

The principal habitat of importance is chalk grassland. An area of high biodiversity is centred around Therfield Heath and Coombe Bottom (Coombe Road, south west of Thrift Hill). Therfield Heath, SSSI is the single largest area of unimproved chalk grassland in the county. It comprises coombes, downland and areas of mixed scrub home to an array of plants and invertebrates including pasque flower, perennial flax, bastard toadflax and burnt tip orchid and the largest colony of chalkhill blue in the county. Coombe Bottom is another key chalk grassland area occurring on steep scarp slopes. Woodland communities on these slopes are primarily broadleaved, with beech being a notably successful species. Other important sites occur at Deadman's Hill, Heath Farm, Barkway Road, Whiteley Hill and the A505 cutting at Burloes.

Unimproved calcareous grassland occupies only 0.25% of the land use of North Hertfordshire and supports a number of rare plants and invertebrates, including fragrant orchid, dropwort, great pignut, juniper as well as nationally uncommon butterfly species such as small blue, chalkhill blue and Duke of Burgandy. Semi-improved calcareous grassland occurs at Newsells Park.

The open fields of the Character Area are noted for breeding quail, stone curlews, harriers, short-eared owl, merlin and grey partridge.

HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES

Numerous cropmarks, revealed by aerial photographs, of prehistoric ring ditches linear features and enclosures including a probably prehistoric or Romano-British field system cover a large part of the Character Area.

Ancient earthworks cut into the chalk are common, including chalk pits and lynchets.

The best surviving ancient landscape in the county lies in the northwest. Surviving elements include Neolithic long barrows, a Bronze Age barrow cemetery and an Iron Age boundary called 'The Mile Ditches'. A medieval moated site lies to the south of the Barrow Cemetery. Springfield style enclosure, three bowl barrows and two pond barrows on Whiteley Hill lie to the east of the area. A prehistoric barrow cemetery and Cross Dyke also occurs in Five Hill Field, 290m southwest of Heath Farm.

Field Pattern

The historic agricultural landscape pattern is comprised of 18th century and later enclosure, post 1950s enclosure and prairie fields with post 1950s boundary loss. 20th century leisure use lies to the north with a 20th century stud farm and informal medieval parkland to the east. There are also pockets of 19th- 20th century plantation in the area.

Transport Pattern

Long straight roads open and without hedge boundaries, climbing the face of the scarp slope. The A10, Roman road cuts across the area.

Settlements and Built Form

The historic settlement pattern is characterised by occasional farmsteads. A small number of traditional buildings lie to the southeast in Newsells Park. Queen Ann House, burned in WWII, was replaced by a smaller NeoGeorgian house in 1954. 18th century outbuildings survive as part of Queen Ann House including stables, which are built of red brick with lantern and pediment archway. The timber framed and thatched Lodge was built in 1804. Newsells Bury lies to its west in the grounds, a small brick house of the late 17th century. To the north of Newsells Park lies a small hamlet of 17th century thatched estate cottages.