

Landscape and Visual Impact Appraisal

Roundwood, Stevenage
Croudace Homes Ltd

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1.1 Nicholas Pearson Associates (NPA) was appointed by Croudace Homes to undertake a Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) relating to the proposed residential development at Roundwood, Stevenage. The planning application description is:

“Residential development of 281 dwellings and associated roads, parking, realignment of Back Lane, drainage, landscaping, open space, servicing facilities and associated works.”

- 1.1.2 The Site, located on the northern edge of Stevenage, is allocated for Housing (site GA1) within the North Hertfordshire District Council Local Plan 2011-2031.

- 1.1.3 Other relevant documents comprise:

- Planning Statement (Stantec).
- Design and Access Statement (Croudace).
- Tree Survey and Arboricultural Impact Assessment (Hayden’s Arboricultural Consultants).
- Ecological Impact Assessment (NPA).

2.0 METHODOLOGY

- 2.1.1 The scope of the LVA relates to the assessment of potential effects on the local and wider landscape character and visual effects upon receptors (people likely to view the proposed changes).

- 2.1.2 The assessment methodology follows the principles and processes as set out in Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) – The Landscape Institute and IEMA (3rd edition 2013) para 1.1 for a development which falls outside the requirements of the EIA Directive and Regulations. The work has comprised:

- Desk study and baseline survey to establish relevant landscape and visual receptors. Landscape receptors are defined as common landscape characteristics or features potentially impacted by the proposed development. Visual Receptors are defined as groups of people whose views may be impacted by the proposed development.
- Describing the nature and value of the receptors.
- Describing the proposed development as it relates to potential changes to landscape character and views.

- Undertaking an appraisal of the overall sensitivity of receptors; the magnitude of change and the effects anticipated because of the proposals.

2.1.3 A desktop review of landscape planning policy, designations and published landscape character assessments was undertaken, and key data sources are listed below. This review was supplemented by Viewpoint photography in March 2022 and a site appraisal in February 2023.

Study Area

2.1.4 The study area for the assessment encompasses the local character areas and visual receptor groups which could be directly or indirectly affected by the proposals. This comprises:

- the Site;
- the local character associated with the northern edge of Great Ashby,
- north east Stevenage;
- enclosed agricultural land;
- horse paddocks;
- and woodlands in the local vicinity.

2.1.5 In visual terms **receptor groups within** the study area encompass residents, users of public rights of way, and road users.

3.0 PLANNING CONTEXT

Planning Policy Framework (2023)

3.1.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 2021) sets out guidance on good design, to achieve well-designed places, under section 12. Guidance relating to the effect on visibility and visual amenity includes that it should be ensured that developments (paragraph 130):

"...will function well and add to the overall quality of the area ... are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping..."

3.1.2 Paragraph 131 notes the important contribution of trees to development and the need for new streets to be tree-lined, and that opportunities are taken to retain existing trees, incorporate additional tree planting and provide for long-term maintenance.

3.1.3 Paragraph 174 states: The planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

"Protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils; 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..."

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

3.1.4 The NPPF is supported by Planning Practice Guidance (PPG). Within Natural Environment, updated in July 2019, a section on Landscape states that:

The National Planning Policy Framework is clear that plans should recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and that strategic policies should provide for the conservation and enhancement of landscapes. This can include nationally and locally designated landscapes but also the wider countryside..."

Local Planning Policy – North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031

3.1.5 The North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031 (Adopted November 2022) seeks to: 'address the key issues facing North Hertfordshire and will set a strategic vision and spatial strategy for the District over the period 2011 to 2031'. Policies relating to landscape character and views/ visual amenity are summarised below.

Environmental Strategic Objectives ENV1 to ENV5

Should seek to:

- *"ENV1 - Direct development towards the most sustainable locations which seek to maintain the existing settlement pattern.*
- *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.*
- *ENV3 - Protect, maintain and enhance the District's historic and natural environment, its cultural assets and network of open spaces, urban and rural landscapes.*

- *ENV4 - Mitigate the effects of climate change by encouraging the use of sustainable construction techniques, the appropriate use of renewable energy technologies and reducing the risk of flooding.*
- *ENV5 - Reduce water consumption, increase biodiversity and protect and enhance the quality of existing environmental assets by enhancing new green spaces and networks of green space for both recreation and wildlife."*

Policy GA1: Land at Roundwood (Graveley Parish)

3.1.6 Allocates the proposed development site for housing. The policy sets out specific development requirements concerning landscape character and visibility, including:

- *"Retention and sensitive treatment of priority woodland habitats surrounding site to north and west'.*
- *'Consider and mitigate against any adverse impacts upon adjacent local wildlife site at Parsonsgreen Wood'.*
- *'Integration of Footpath Graveley 010 as a perimeter feature around the north of the site'.*
- *'Sensitive design and landscaping around northern and western peripheries to minimise impacts upon wider landscape and heritage assets, including the setting of the Scheduled Ancient Monument at Chesfield Church'.*

Policy SP12: Green infrastructure, landscape and biodiversity

3.1.7 Requires developments to:

"a) Protect, identify, manage and where possible enhance a strategic multi-functional network of green infrastructure;

b) Consider and respect landscape character, scenic beauty and locally sensitive features, particularly in relation to the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty;

c) Protect, enhance and manage designated sites in accordance with the following hierarchy of designations and features:

- *Internationally designated sites*
- *Nationally designated sites*

- *Locally designated sites;*
- *Non-designated sites that include important habitats and species*

d) Protect, enhance and manage biodiversity networks including wildlife corridors, ancient woodlands and hedgerows, wetland and riverine habitats, Local Geological Sites, protected species, priority species and habitats, and non-designated sites of ecological value and ensure measurable net gains for biodiversity; and

e) Protect other open spaces and support provision of new and improved open space.”

3.1.8 Within Policy SP12, paragraph 4.158 defines Green Infrastructure and paragraph 4.159 describes the benefits derived from it. It includes:

“...a healthy environment, improved biodiversity value, climate change mitigation and flood attenuation as well as enhanced networks for walking and cycling, which contributes to a carbon neutral development. The retention of substantial connected networks of green space in urban, urban fringe and adjacent countryside areas to serve growing communities is vitally important in ensuring these benefits are maximised.”

Policy NE2: Landscape

3.1.9 States that planning permission will be granted for development proposals that:

“a) Respect the sensitivities of the relevant landscape character area and have regard to the guidelines identified for built development and landscape management;

b) 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;

c) Are designed and located to ensure the health and future retention of important landscape features; and,

d) Have considered the long-term management and maintenance of any existing and proposed landscaping.”

Policy NE6: New and Improved open space

3.1.10 States that planning permission will be granted for development proposals that make provision for new and/or improved open space which:

"a) Meets the needs arising from the development having regard to the Council's open space standards and other relevant guidance;

b) Contributes towards improving the provision, quality and accessibility of open space; and,

c) Incorporate any necessary open space buffer(s) for landscape, visual, ecological or air quality reasons."

3.1.11 Para 11.33 states that:

"In some developments, there may be a requirement for open space buffers for landscape, visual or ecological purposes, for instance connective features such as hedgerows and watercourses. In these cases, it will be expected that the open space standards will be delivered alongside any buffer areas which are necessary."

Policy SP9: Design and Sustainability

3.1.12 States that the Council considers good design to be a key aspect of sustainable development and will:

"Support new development where it is well designed and located and responds positively to its local context."

3.1.13 Paragraph 4.121 and Paragraph 4.122 stress the importance of good design and place making to reveal the character and quality of an area:

"Design is central to good planning. The achievement of high quality, sustainable design is required by Government guidance. Planning policies should promote high quality, inclusive design in layouts and buildings in terms of function and impact. Design which does not make the most of opportunities to improve the character and quality of an area should be refused."

"North Hertfordshire has a high quality natural and built environment. Promoting sustainable growth is one of the priorities for the District. Achieving this objective depends on securing development that is of a high quality and inclusive design which reinforces local distinctiveness through fully addressing the creation of a sense of place and a safe and healthy environment."

Statutory and Non-Statutory Designations

3.1.14 There are no national or local landscape designations covering the Site.

4.0 LANDSCAPE BASELINE

National Landscape Character

4.1.1 The National Character Areas (NCAs), as shown in Figure 7.04, provide the wider context of the study area and site.

- NCA 86 South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland, which covers the Site, and
- NCA 87 East Anglian Chalk, northeast to the site.

4.1.2 The Site is located within National Character Area 86 – South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland (Natural England, 2014). This covers a large area and provides a very broad context. A summary is:

“The South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland National Character Area (NCA) shares a boundary with six other NCAs: Suffolk Coast and Heaths, South Norfolk and High Suffolk Claylands, The Brecks, East Anglian Chalk, Chilterns and the Northern Thames Basin. They all share a generally flat topography, with underlying bedrock geology of Late Cretaceous Chalk overlain by sand and gravel deposits as well as glacial tills. The underlying chalk aquifer supplies the population of East Anglia, functionally linking these areas. The key characteristics identified in the NCA and considered relevant to the Site are summarised below:

- *An undulating chalky boulder clay plateau is dissected by numerous river valleys, giving a topography of gentle slopes in the lower, wider valleys and steeper slopes in the narrower upper parts.*
- *Fragments of chalk give many of the soils a calcareous character, which also influences the character of the semi-natural vegetation cover.*
- *Lowland wood pasture and ancient woodlands support the dormouse and a rich diversity of flowering plants on the clay plateau. Large, often ancient hedgerows link woods and copses, forming wooded skylines.*
- *The agricultural landscape is predominantly arable with a wooded appearance. There is some pasture on the valley floors. Field patterns are irregular despite rationalisation, with much ancient countryside surviving. Field margins support corn bunting, cornflower and brown hare.*
- *Larger 20th-century development has taken place to the south and east around Chelmsford, Ipswich and the new towns of Harlow and Stevenage.*

- *Winding, narrow and sometimes sunken lanes are bounded by deep ditches, wide verges and strong hedgerows. Transport infrastructure includes the A14, A12, M11 and Stansted Airport.*
- *A strong network of public rights of way provides access to the area's archetypal lowland English countryside. An undulating clay vale with a mix of arable and pasture."*

4.1.3 National Character Area 87 – East Anglian Chalk (Natural England, 2014) does not cover the site but is within the local vicinity of the site to the northeast. This covers a large area and provides a very broad context. A summary is:

"The East Anglian Chalk of Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire, Suffolk and north-west Essex forms a narrow continuation of the chalk ridge that runs southwest–north-east across southern England, continuing in the Chilterns National Character Area (NCA) and along the eastern edge of The Wash...To the south and east it is bounded by the overlying chalky boulder clay of the South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland NCA, which includes Saffron Walden... The key characteristics identified in the NCA and considered relevant to the Site are summarised below:

- *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.*
- *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.*
- *...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...*
- *... 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.*
- *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."*

District wide landscape character assessment

4.1.4 The most recent district level assessment undertaken on behalf of NHDC is the 2011 'North Herts Landscape Study (Character, Sensitivity and Capacity) by the Babbie Group.

4.1.5 The Site is covered by District Landscape Character Area (DLCA) 220 – Weston Plateau Parklands. Not directly covering the site, but to the southwest of the site is DLCA 219 – Baldock Gap. Other character areas within the study area are scoped out due to distance. See Figure 7.04 Landscape Character Areas. These include:

- Area 215 – Wymondley and Titmore Green
- Area 216 – Arlesley- Great Wymondley
- Area 219 – Baldock Gap
- Area 221 – Upper Beane Valley Tributaries
- Area 222 – Weston- Green End Plateau

District Landscape Character Area 220 – Weston Plateau Parklands

4.1.6 The site is located to the west and on the southern boundary of DLCA 220 – Weston Plateau Parklands. The area is:

"...directly to the south of Weston village. The Character Area however extends from the Baldock Gap scarp to the west, the suburban edge of Stevenage to the south and the valley of the Weston Tributary in the east (which flows into the River Beane) The Character Area also takes in a section of parkland at Chesfield Park to the southwest."

4.1.7 Key characteristics of the DLCA 220 are as follows:

- *"Plateau landform"*

- *"Arable land use"*
- *"Extensive mature woodland cover"*
- *"Interlocking pattern of fields, lanes and curvilinear boundaries"*
- *"Scattered farmsteads"*

4.1.8 The character of the area is said to be *"predominantly arable land use"*. The area is described as *"well wooded – predominantly ancient deciduous woodlands"*. Across the area, there is a *"network of winding lanes"*.

4.1.9 In visual terms, emphasis is placed on:

- The importance of the woodlands creating a sense of enclosure which enhances the landscape character.
- *"Open and affording views over the plateau"*

4.1.10 Distinctive features, relating to the study area include:

- *"Pylon on southern boundary"*
- *"Abuts northern edge of Stevenage"*

4.1.11 Historical and cultural influences within the vicinity of the site include:

"Chesfield Church, a Scheduled Monument... Ruins of the 14th century church of St Ethelreda lie to the north of Chesfield Church and this is all that remains of a deserted medieval village."

4.1.12 The matrix score for the 'Evaluation' section describes the character area as being of 'Moderate' condition (on a scale of Poor, Moderate and Good), and of 'Moderate' robustness (on a scale of Weak, Moderate and Strong), resulting in a target to 'Improve and Conserve'. The landscape character of the area and visual aspects are considered to have a 'moderate sensitivity'. The character area is of 'moderate landscape value', due primarily to the:

"...relative intactness of the parkland landscape, the condition and extent of the woodland blocks and other landscape elements that create a sense of place, the relatively few rural lanes and perceived distance from significant habitation except the northern edge of Stevenage."

4.1.13 Landscape sensitivities include the *"mixture of smaller more intimate enclosures defined by woodland cover with open areas affording views over the plateau"*. It notes that the landscape type of DCLA 220 is *"not frequent within North Hertfordshire"* and local distinctiveness is provided by the *"mature setting"*

of Chesfield Park'. The Suburban edge of Stevenage and the electricity pylons are an "intrusive factor" and a "detractor to the character area".

4.1.14 Any expansion of Stevenage would require:

"...appropriate mitigation methods, primarily through woodland screening".

4.1.15 The strategy and guidelines for managing change for the target 'Improve and Conserve', that are relevant to the site for landscape and visual aspects are noted below:

Landscape Management guidelines:

- *Promote the restoration of ancient woodland and other woodland planting and where historically appropriate, link up small remnants of ancient woodland.*
- *Encourage appropriate tree planting using local native species to help maintain the traditional wooded appearance and character of the clay plateau.*
- *Promote the creation of buffer zones between intensive arable production and areas of semi-natural habitat and the creation of links between habitat areas.*
- *Promote hedgerow restoration along the lines of historic field boundaries and for the creation of visual links between existing woodland areas.*
- *Restore gappy hedges, reinstate lost ones or create new features using indigenous mixes and increased number of hedgerow trees.*
- *Promote the diversity of hedgerow species and the planting of standard hedgerow trees.*

Built development guidelines:

- *Encourage the planting of appropriate broadleaved woodland and vegetation to screen new development that could intrude in panoramic and framed rural views.*
- *Retain the rural character of Weston Park and Chesfield Park, ensuring that any new development is appropriately sited and of a scale, form, and style appropriate to the parkland setting.*
- *Planting should reflect existing patterns, with hedges following field and road boundaries and strategic copses to mitigate buildings.*
- *Avoid the location of new development in visual intrusive locations.*
- *Ensure that new development does not necessitate the removal of existing woodland blocks or the loss of ancient hedgerows.*
- *Use the opportunity of any new developments to create new accessible green infrastructure*

4.1.16 The Site forms only a very small part of the district-level character area. Local landscape character areas/ landscape receptors are therefore also identified and described below, based on local field and desk studies.

Landscape Character of the Site and Context

Overview

4.1.17 The Site is located north of the civil parish of Great Ashby, Stevenage. The residential area of Great Ashby is to the east and south of the site. To the north and west of the Site are enclosed arable fields and paddocks. See Figure 7.01 Site Location.

4.1.18 The Site topography is generally level or very gently sloping. It is enclosed by a tree and native hedgerow belt and woodlands. Back Lane is situated to the east and south of the site boundary. Forestry Commission National Forest Inventory woodlands are situated alongside the boundaries of the site to the north and west. The latter, Round Wood, forms a component of the proposed Chesfield Conservation Area.

4.1.19 A public footpath (Graveley 010) runs along the northern boundary of the site, part of the Hertfordshire Way, connecting Chesfield Manor Stables and the northern end of Chesfield Park with the north of Great Ashby civil parish.

4.1.20 To the east and south of the site, the Great Ashby settlement edge comprises a mix of detached, semi-detached and terraced housing, together with play provisions and the Mendip Way Park, a linear open recreational space running northeast to southwest, following the overhead power lines.

4.1.21 The Site is considered to largely reflect the characteristics of the southern parts of DLCA 220 – Weston Plateau Parklands; in particular:

- *“Woodlands and hedgerows creating a sense of enclosure to the arable field”.*

4.1.22 Overall, the Site is moderately enclosed by the woodland, and tree and hedgerow boundaries. It is therefore discrete and distinct from the broader pattern of interlocking fields, lanes, and curvilinear boundaries within the Green Belt to the north and west.

4.1.23 The site has a proximity relationship with and is influenced by, the nearby built settlement - the residential areas of Great Ashby to the south and west.

Landscape Receptors

- 4.1.24 The landscape receptors selected are based on consideration of the wider landscape character (DLCA Area 220 – Weston Plateau Parklands) and local analysis to identify Landscape Receptors (LR) around the Site. These are selected considering aspects such as land use, topography, settlement pattern and form, and vegetation. Four LR groups have been identified as follows (refer to Figure 7.05).

LR1 – The Site and associated woodland to the north and west, including Round Wood

- 4.1.25 The site is located within this LR which comprises an arable grassland field enclosed by woodlands and tree and hedgerow boundaries. Round Wood is located to the west of the site, forming a component of the proposed Chesfield Conservation Area. It exhibits the interlocking pattern of fields, lanes and curvilinear boundaries associated with the wider landscape character. It has a 'Community' level landscape value, relating to all these natural factors contributing to the local setting.

LR2 – existing Urban Edge

- 4.1.26 The LR comprises the existing residential settlements of Great Ashby civil parish. Development is generally 2-storey residential within a pattern of estate roads and cul-de-sacs and generally well-defined settlement boundaries. There are small recreational open spaces within this residential area. The Mendip Way linear recreational space divides the broad Great Ashby residential area but is not included within this LR due to its remoteness from the Site. LR2 has a 'Community' landscape value, relating to the generally well-defined settlement boundaries, the modest scale and form of development, as well as the relationship with its landscape setting.

LR3 – Boundary Hedgerows/ tree belts

- 4.1.27 The LR comprises the local environs of Back Lane which form the southern and eastern boundaries of the Site, including its grass/forb-cover verges, tree lines, scattered/grouped mature trees, and lapsed hedgerows. It has a 'Community' landscape value, relating to its accessibility and generally well-defined boundary to the Site.

LR4 – Hertfordshire Way and associated planting

- 4.1.28 The LR comprises the public footpath, located alongside the northern edge of the Site. It passes through mostly open countryside and some local villages. It has a 'Local' landscape value, relating to its recreational value.

5.0 VISUAL CONTEXT

5.1.1 A considered approach to establishing the visual baseline and identifying viewpoints has been undertaken, taking account of the variety of visual receptors and their representative viewpoints and associated values. Viewpoints selected are representative of the type and nature of the publicly accessible views available to the different receptor groups. No specific landmark views or key views were identified within the study area. The process has considered:

- The areas from which the development may be visible - through a 'bare ground' Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) and a 'screened' Google Viewshed (including topography and elevated surfaces above the 'Bare ground') mapping studies and field-verification survey;
- The different groups of people who may experience the views.

5.1.2 Descriptions of views experienced by the receptor groups and the appraisal of potential effects from the proposed development are all based on winter views when deciduous vegetation is bare. As such the appraisal is based on the greatest extent of visibility to the Site experienced by each receptor group.

5.1.3 The ZTV and Google Viewshed indicate the potential for views of the Site from a large part of the overall study area. In reality, field studies found that the combination of the flat and relatively low elevation of the Site, together with the effects of intervening built form and vegetation, significantly reduced the actual Zone of Visual Influence of the Site. This is especially the case with respect to the woodland belts to the north and west of the site and intervening built form to the east and south of the site. These limit, restrict and provide visual enclosure to views from many locations beyond the local area.

5.1.4 Views of the Site available from the local area are experienced by a range of people. To appraise the nature of existing visual experiences and the nature of any changes, views towards the Site are consolidated into visual receptor groups – informed by common user groups and by geographical association to the site. The identified visual receptor groups, typical users, and representative viewpoint locations include:

- VR1: The Hertfordshire Way – pedestrians and horse riders (View locations 1, 2, 3 and 10)
- VR2: Back Lane, South – road users and adjacent residents (View locations 5, 8 and 9)
- VR3: Back Lane, East – road users and adjacent residents (View locations 4, 5, and 6)
- VR4: The Mendip Way green corridor – Pedestrians and cyclists (View 6 and 7)

- VR5: Public Rights of Way north of site (Graveley 009, Weston 018, and Weston 017) – Pedestrians (View 11, 12 and 14)
- VR6: Danmask Green Rd, south of Weston – road users (View location 13)

Visual Receptors

VR1: The Hertfordshire Way

- *Receptors:* Pedestrians using the footpath and views from Chesfield Manor Stables and other residential properties along the Hertfordshire Way.
- *Nature of views:* Transitory and sequential along the footpath, permanent from residential. Rural views across the local agricultural landscape of fields and paddocks, with boundary woodland, together with field hedgerows and tree belts, providing local enclosure. Properties on the northern edge of Great Ashby are variously seen from the north of the site. As such there is some perception of suburban fringe to the views which reflects the well-settled landscape character of the area.
- *Visual relationship with Site:* The Site is in the foreground to mid-distance of views or concealed by intervening vegetation, associated with Round Wood and hedgerows. There is an awareness of the relative proximity of settlement edges.
- *Value:* 'Local'. Views are valued at a local level for their scenic quality and conservation interest. These views contribute to the visual setting of the receptor group. This is recognised through the proposed Chesfield Conservation Area.
- *Seasonal effects:* Some increased local enclosure and concealment of settlement in summer.
- *Representative Viewpoint references (with viewing distance in metres):* VP1 (250m), VP2 (5m), VP3 (10m), and VP10 (505m).

VR2: Back Lane, South

- *Receptors:* Pedestrians, road users, and residents of Great Ashby.
- *Nature of views:* Transitory and sequential along the road, static from residential properties. Rural, views across the main body of the Site - a local agricultural landscape of a field, with boundary woodland, together with field hedgerows and tree belts providing local enclosure. Some partial glimpsed views of existing Great Ashby properties to the east of the site. As such there is some perception of a suburban fringe to the views which reflects the well-settled landscape character of the area.

- *Visual relationship with Site:* The proposed residential development is in the foreground to mid-distance of views or concealed by intervening vegetation or built form, associated with the Great Ashby residential area. There is an awareness of the relative proximity of settlement edges.
- *Value:* 'Community'. Views are valued at a community level but not recognised through any formal designation.
- *Seasonal effects:* Some increased local enclosure and concealment of settlement in summer.
- *Representative Viewpoint references (with viewing distance in metres):* VP5 (0m), VP8 (76m), and VP 9 (0m).

VR3: Back Lane, East

- *Receptors:* Pedestrians, road users, and residents of Great Ashby.
- *Nature of views:* Transitory and sequential along the road, static from residential properties. Rural, views across the main body of the Site - a local agricultural landscape of a field, with boundary woodland, together with field hedgerows and tree belts providing local enclosure. Views of existing Great Ashby properties, such there is some perception of suburban fringe to the views which reflects the well-settled landscape character of the area.
- *Visual relationship with Site:* The proposed residential development is in the foreground to mid-distance of views or concealed by intervening hedgerows, trees or built form. There is an awareness of the relatively proximity of settlement edges.
- *Value:* 'Community'. Views are valued at a community level but not recognised through any formal designation.
- *Seasonal effects:* Some increased local enclosure and concealment of settlement in summer.
- *Representative Viewpoint references (with viewing distance in metres):* VP4 (0m), VP5 (0m), and VP6 (70m).

VR4: The Mendip Way green corridor

- *Receptors:* Pedestrians, road users, and cyclists.
- *Nature of views:* Transitory and sequential along the green corridor and road. Views across the green recreational space, which is locally enclosed by a hedgerow and tree belt, and views of the existing Great Ashby properties. As such there is some perception of a suburban fringe to the views which reflects the well settled landscape character of the area.

- *Visual relationship with Site:* The Site is partially glimpsed in the mid-distance of views or concealed by intervening vegetation or built form, associated with the Great Ashby residential area. There is an awareness of the relatively proximity of settlement edges.
- *Value:* 'Community'. Views are valued at a community level but not recognised through any formal designation.
- *Seasonal effects:* Increased local enclosure and concealment in summer.
- *Representative Viewpoint references (with viewing distance in metres):* VP6 (70m), and VP7 (256m).

VR5: Public Rights of Way north of site (Graveley 009, Weston 018, and Weston 017)

- *Receptors:* Pedestrians.
- *Nature of views:* Transitory and sequential along the footpath. Rural, views across, local agricultural landscape of fields, with boundary woodlands, together with field hedgerows and tree belts providing local enclosure.
- *Visual relationship with Site:* The Site is not visible in the view as it is concealed by intervening woodlands, field hedgerows or tree belts.
- *Value:* 'Local'. Views are valued at a local level for their scenic quality, which contributes to the visual setting of the receptor group. This is recognised through the proposed Chesfield Conservation Area.
- *Seasonal effects:* Increased local enclosure and concealment in summer.
- *Representative Viewpoint references (with viewing distance in metres):* VP11 (589m), VP12 (773m) and VP14 (1652m).

VR6: Danmask Green Rd, south of Weston

- *Receptors:* Road users and Pedestrians.
- *Nature of views:* Transitory and sequential along the road. Rural, views across local agricultural landscape of fields, with boundary woodlands, together with field hedgerows and tree belts providing local enclosure.
- *Visual relationship with Site:* The Site is not visible in the view as it is concealed by intervening woodlands, field hedgerows or tree belts.
- *Value:* 'Local' Views are valued at a local level for their scenic quality, which contributes to the visual setting of the receptor group.
- *Seasonal effects:* Increased local enclosure and concealment in summer.

- *Representative Viewpoint references (with viewing distance in metres):* VP13 (1356m).

5.1.5 Overall, the Site, when visible, is seen in local views as part of the rural, agricultural setting. The extent of vegetation associated with woodland, trees and hedgerows within and around the Site provides considerable visual containment and enclosure. There is some visual influence from the adjacent areas of settlement which reflects the well-settled landscape character.

6.0 THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

6.1.1 The following provides a summary of the key elements of the development proposal that may relate to landscape character and visual effects. Full details are provided in the Planning Statement and the Design and Access Statement (DAS):

Construction Phase

6.1.2 To include:

- Any enabling works as required including site compound set up and dismantling, and creation of storage and laydown areas;
- Vegetation removals and erection of protection measures;
- Ground works – utilities, drainage, formation of highway and building sub-structures;
- Above-ground highway works;
- Above-ground construction of dwellings;
- External works, including soft landscape works, signage and lighting.
- All site deliveries and movement of plant within the site.

Operational Phase

6.1.3 This assessment is based upon the following development parameters as provided in the DAS:

- Erection of 281 dwellings, with proposed residential building height range of 2 to 3 storeys, with a variety of dwelling sizes, including a mix of 1 or 2-bedroom apartments, and 2, 3, 4 and 5-bedroom houses.
- Rear parking courtyards and private off-street driveways plus on-street visitor parking.
- Dedicated refuse and cycle storage.
- A road hierarchy has been developed within the site. Changes in surface finishes and the use of speed-restricting features, and tree planting add to the rural edge character.

- The proposals provide wide buffer zones of semi-natural habitat along the site boundaries, incorporating areas of grassland habitat, sustainable drainage features (swales and basins), new native tree planting and areas of native shrub planting.
- A network of accessible open spaces running through and around the development, including a central Linear Park.
- The 'stopping up' of vehicular traffic to sections of Back Lane along the southeast and eastern boundaries of the Site.

6.1.4 The assessment of visual effects is based on proposed buildings within the development of between 2 and 3-storeys. The tallest proposed buildings (3-storey apartments) have a ridge line 11.65m above ground level. Details of the proposed site earthworks will be confirmed through the technical design work stage. However, the preliminary drainage strategy indicates a potential need for ground raising towards the north of the site by approximately 1.85m reducing southwards and eastwards towards the centre of the site. An appraisal of the proposed building heights relating to the ground raising illustrates:

- The area of proposed maximum ground raising (1.85m) is mitigated by the presence only of 2-storey buildings (9.04m ht). The maximum ridge height of 2-storey units is therefore 10.89m above the existing ground level.
- 2.5-storey houses (10.49m ht) are located on sites expected to be raised by no more than 0.6m (plot 184). The maximum ridge height of 2.5-storey units is therefore 11.09m above the existing ground level.
- Whilst located further from the area of maximum ground raising, the site of the closest 3-storey apartment blocks (units 159-167) is expected to be raised by 0.266m. With a building height of 11.65m, this block would therefore be up to 11.916m above existing ground.

6.1.5 It is therefore expected that the proposed final ridgeline of any dwelling within the Site shall be no greater than 11.916m above the existing ground level.

Design and Mitigation

6.1.6 The development proposals have been carefully considered, by an experienced multi-disciplinary team, to minimise adverse landscape and visual impacts and maximise enhancements and integration with the local area. The design process has been complemented by a series of design workshops undertaken with the Planning Officers of NHDC and Hertfordshire County Council Highways staff. Mitigation is

integrated through the design process ensuring that it is 'primary' mitigation and not responsive to pre-determined impacts. Key primary design and mitigation aspects of the development are:

- The NHDC workshop process led to an agreed layout that responds positively to the existing urban edge to the south and east, and rural edges to the west and north. Taller height built form across a formal layout, and at a higher building density, is situated to the southeast of the site. Lower height built form across an informal layout, and at a lower building density, is situated to the north and northwest of the site.
- Retention of the majority of existing healthy site boundary vegetation with all removals limited to new points of access and unsafe trees.
- Proposed new/ supplementary boundary vegetation including new and 'infill' native hedge planting, new hedgerow trees, new native scattered trees and new native shrub planting.
- Proposed long-term landscape management, including hedge laying.
- Provision of generously proportioned buffer corridors of complementary habitat to existing trees and hedgerows at the perimeter of the Site in compliance with NHDC Planning policy 'Biodiversity and geological sites'. Such buffers have been increased to 15m from the canopy edge of Ancient Woodland.
- Provision of new recreational access paths and links to the existing highway and public rights of way.
- Sections of Back Lane along the southeastern and eastern boundaries are to be stopped up to vehicular traffic with the surfaced routes narrowed to form an attractive greenway for improved access by pedestrians, cyclists, and horse riders.
- Built development is set back from the southern edge providing a wide buffer zone to the nearby housing along Back Lane whilst facilitating an open and inviting connecting space for the community, whilst integrating new sustainable drainage features.
- Where land raising is proposed to facilitate the drainage strategy in the northwest corner of the site, the built development edge is set back from the site boundary and dwelling heights are restricted to 2-storeys.
- Provision of wide street verges to support the integration of street trees and rain gardens.
- Areas of proposed accessible open spaces, managed for recreational, amenity and biodiversity benefits including:
 - A central Linear Park linking to, and incorporating, a series of 'play on the way' facilities.

- A new community orchard.
- Extensive tree planting, including a wide range of species to promote biodiversity value, and climate resilience whilst enhancing visual amenity.
- Provision of an integrated sustainable drainage strategy providing multi-functional benefits, including to visual amenity.
- Inclusion of sensitive lighting zones to the site boundaries relating to ecology but also mitigating visual effects.

7.0 LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT

Construction Effects

7.1.1 The landscape effects of the proposed construction period:

- *Sensitivity.* 'Medium'. There is sensitivity relating to the adjacent woodlands to the northeast and west boundaries. Parsonsgreen Wood is adjacent to the site on the northeast boundary. Round Wood forms a component of the proposed Chesfield Conservation Area on the west boundary. Also, including its context as part of the setting to adjacent settlement, especially Great Ashby, whilst noting the allocation for residential development.
- *Nature of effect.* Temporary, direct effects of construction/ building works within the Site area, with types of effects varying throughout the works. These construction effects will be similar to those which occur routinely at edges of urban locations (as part of planned development). There will be no direct landscape effects on the wider landscape area or other landscape receptors. No specific mitigation in relation to landscape matters is proposed for the construction period, other than that to be undertaken by a considerate contractor, such as maintaining a clean and tidy site, use of tree/ vegetation protection, and use of a Construction and Environment Management Plan (CEMP). Landscape effects will vary through the construction period, generally increasing in extent and scale across the Site, and as the development is constructed.
- *Magnitude of effects.* Will vary from medium – high; the main construction activities associated with the residential area and highway works will be set back from the site boundary, except for the site access works and alterations. The construction of the primary access route will affect Back Lane road, as will work on the proposed stopped-up sections of the road. All construction activities will be temporary in duration.

- *Overall levels of effect.* Temporary and varying between **Moderate - High (adverse)** during the construction period, but tempered by its temporary duration.

Planning Policy

7.1.2 The proposals accord with the planning policy context in relation to the following aspects:

- Being informed by landscape character assessment and being responsive to the local area.
- Provision of tree-lined streets and rain gardens.
- Supplementary boundary vegetation proposed in tandem with long-term landscape management, including hedge laying.
- Retention of existing site boundary vegetation with all removals limited to new points of access.
- Provision of a buffer zones of complementary habitat to existing trees and hedgerows at the perimeter of site. Distances vary from 7m to 15m by agreement with NHDC through the pre-application design workshop process.
- Provision of new recreational access paths and links to the existing highway and public rights of way.
- Provision of landscape/ green infrastructure as an integral part of the proposals.
- Mitigation of adverse landscape and visual effects as far as possible through sensitive design and landscape measures.

Impacts on Landscape Receptors

LR1 – The Site and associated woodland to the north and west, including Round Wood

- *Sensitivity:* 'Medium'. This combines the recognised values of the arable field, woodlands and lanes landscape, within which it is located, its contribution to the wider landscape character, and acknowledges its setting relative to the edge of the adjacent settlement. Balanced with moderate susceptibility to change associated with the wider well-settled landscape character; established planning policies for accommodating residential development; and the proposed nature of development, which is an established element of the area.
- *Nature of change:* 'Direct'. Loss of areas of arable grassland within the field. Replacement with residential development and associated infrastructure (within a 7-15m buffer from the site perimeter) and roads, parking, drainage, landscaping, open space and servicing facilities. The

change will result in increased enclosure of landscape as a result of the additional vegetation and built form and extending the urban influences within the local landscape character area.

- *Magnitude of change:* Medium to High; relating to the overall change to the character of the Site, noting that the existing trees and hedgerows will be largely retained, as will areas of open landscape, including a buffer between the new built form and the perimeter of the site.
- *Overall level of effect:* **Moderate (adverse)**; direct effect.

LR2 – Existing Urban Edge

- *Sensitivity:* 'Medium'. This combines the recognised values of the adjacent arable field landscape as a setting to the settlements of Great Ashby civil parish, with moderating susceptibility to change associated with the wider well-settled landscape character; and the proposed nature of development, which is an established element of the area.
- *Nature of change:* 'Indirect' - change to a limited part of landscape setting relating to loss of area of an open arable field and replacement with residential development. The change will result in increased local enclosure of the landscape as a result of the additional vegetation and built form.
- *Magnitude of change:* 'Low' - relating to the change to a limited part of the landscape setting, and provision of a landscape buffer.
- *Overall level of effect:* **Slight adverse**; indirect effect associated with landscape setting.

LR3 – Boundary Hedgerows/ tree belts

- *Sensitivity:* 'Medium' This combines the recognised value of the mature tree and hedgerow belt landscape as a setting, with proposals to retain and supplement the existing site boundary vegetation with all removals limited to new points of access.
- *Nature of change:* 'Direct' - loss of sections of the mature tree and hedgerow belt at new points of access. The change will result in decreased local enclosure of landscape, as a result of vegetation removal. Conversely, Direct gains are expected as retained section of the mature tree and hedgerow belt are supplemented. Change to the primary access route on land to the east and south of the settlement.
- *Magnitude of change:* 'Low' - relating to the limited section of the mature tree and hedgerow belt being removed for new access points.

- *Overall level of effect.* **Negligible/ slight (adverse)**; indirect effect on setting and direct effect relating to some vegetation loss balanced by infill/supplementary planting elsewhere.

LR4 – Hertfordshire Way and associated planting

- *Sensitivity.* 'Medium'. This combines the recognised values of the adjacent arable field landscape as a setting to the Hertfordshire Way, with moderating susceptibility to change associated with the wider well-settled landscape character; and the proposed nature of development, which is an established element of the area.
- *Nature of change.* 'Indirect' - change to a limited part of landscape setting relating to loss of area of an open arable field and replacement with residential development. The change will result in increased local enclosure of landscape as a result of the additional vegetation and built form.
- *Magnitude of change.* 'Low' to 'Medium' - relating to a small part of the Hertfordshire Way accommodating additional vegetation and nearby built form, although a reduced scale and density, and more loose layout of the built form reduces the urbanising impact on this receptor.
- *Overall level of effect.* **Slight adverse**; indirect effect associated with the landscape setting.

7.1.3 Overall, there will be Slight to Moderate adverse impacts on the landscape arising from the loss of the arable field, new breaks formed in existing vegetation boundary for access, and the introduction of residential development and associated infrastructure within the Site, located to the north and west of the existing Great Ashby settlement. Such adverse impacts relate to part of the local landscape setting of the adjacent woodlands, the proposed Chesfield Conservation Area, and the existing residential settlement of Great Ashby.

7.1.4 The design/ mitigation includes landscape buffers providing separation between the existing settlement and the proposed development, and the integration of built development which reduces in scale and density towards the rural edge. In broad terms there are established planning policies for accommodating residential development, and the proposals reflect the characteristics of the adjacent residential area of Great Ashby. The proposals will be in keeping with the wider well-settled landscape character.

Summary landscape assessment

Receptor	Sensitivity	Magnitude of change	Level of effect
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LR1 – Round wood and associated woodland plantation	Medium	Medium to High	Moderate (adverse)
LR2 – Existing Urban Edge	Medium	Low	Slight (adverse) – landscape setting
LR3 – Boundary Hedgerows/ tree belts	Medium	Low	Negligible/ slight (adverse) – landscape setting
LR4 – Hertfordshire Way and associated planting	Medium	Low to Medium	Slight (adverse) – landscape setting

8.0 VISUAL ASSESSMENT

8.1.1 All assessments are based on 'winter' conditions where visual screening from vegetation is minimised. Summer 'in leaf' conditions generally result in increased visual screening and therefore a reduced level of visual effect.

8.1.2 An assessment of effects on available views during the 'operational phase' is provided below with respect to the geographic areas and receptor groups considered in the baseline. A summary of visual effects is provided during the 'construction phase'.

Construction Period

8.1.3 The visual effects of the proposed construction period:

- *Sensitivity*: 'Medium to High' - relates to the views from residential properties and local public rights of way.
- *Nature of change*: 'Temporary' - visual effects relating to construction/ building works within the Site area within a 7-15m buffer from the site's vegetated boundaries, with effects varying throughout the works. These visual effects will be similar to those which occur routinely at urban edge locations, directed by planning policy. No specific mitigation of visual effects is proposed for the construction period, other than that to be undertaken by a considerate contractor, such as maintaining a clean and tidy site, and use of a CEMP. Visual effects will vary through the construction period, generally increasing in extent and scale within the contained development area within the Site, and as the development is constructed.
- *Magnitude of effects*: Vary from 'Low – Medium' to 'High'. The activities will be limited in extent and duration.

- *Overall levels of effect:* Temporary and varying between **Slight to Moderate (adverse)** during the construction period. The moderate effects will primarily relate to residential properties closest to the Site (north and western edge of Great Ashby) and views from the Hertfordshire Way, adjacent to the north perimeter of the site.

Operational Period

VR1: The Hertfordshire Way - VPs 1, 2, 3 and 10

- *Sensitivity:* 'Medium' - users of the public right of way, and residential properties.
- *Nature of change:* The proposed residential development will be variously and partially visible in the near/mid-distance, which will change the character and composition of views from the footpath. The existing vegetation, supplemented by new planting will provide good visual integration and enclosure. The proposed 12m open space buffer along the northern boundary will help to retain a sense of openness beyond the immediate vegetated boundary. Visual enclosure and integration of the proposals will increase over time as new planting matures.
- *Magnitude of change:* 'Low' to 'Medium'.
- *Overall level of effect:* **Slight to Moderate (adverse)**, reducing to **Slight (adverse)** over time as the new planting matures.

VR2: Back Lane, South - View locations 5, 8 and 9

- *Sensitivity:* 'Medium' - users of the public highway, and residential properties.
- *Nature of change:* The proposed residential development will be variously and partially visible in the near/mid-distance, which will change the character and composition of some views. The removal of some existing boundary trees, both where unsafe for retention and to form the new highway and multiuser path junctions, will form new vistas into the site. New planting, in the form of a section of native hedging and shrub cover to the west of the new junction, and new scattered trees to the east, will serve to provide good visual integration and enclosure of the new built form, increasing in coverage with time. The proposed 15m open space buffer to the southern part of the development will provide an appropriate visual separation and sense of openness. The space includes new attenuation basins, designed to hold permanent water as a visual focal point. The stopping up of traffic to Back Lane in the southeast will further allow for a reduction in the existing

carriageway width and widening of the existing highway verges improving views from this part of the highway.

- *Magnitude of change:* 'Medium' to 'High'.
- *Overall level of effect:* **Moderate to High (adverse)**, reducing to **Slight (adverse/ beneficial)** over time as the planting matures and the effects of the stopping up of traffic to Back Lane.

VR3: Back Lane, East - View locations 4, 5, and 6

- *Sensitivity:* Medium; users of the public highway, and residential properties.
- *Nature of change:* The proposed residential development will be variously and partially visible in the near/mid-distance, which will change the visual character. Two new junctions to the east of the site, and a pedestrian access to the southeast of the site will result in localised vegetation removals although infill hedge planting and the re-laying of retained hedges will provide long-term enhancements to the perimeter within local views. Much of Back Lane in this receptor area will be changed to a foot/ cycle path, resulting in reduced traffic, a narrowing of the hard surfacing, and the widening of existing verges to form a more visually appealing greenway. The retained boundary vegetation, supplemented by new planting will provide good visual integration and enclosure to the new built edge whilst permitting a degree of inter-visibility with the intent of ensuring that the greenway feels visually connected to the new development and benefitting from natural surveillance. However, the proposed 7m open space buffer adjacent to the retained hedges ensures that the new dwellings will be set back sufficiently to provide an appropriate visual separation. The degree of visual enclosure and integration of the proposals will increase over time as new planting matures.
- *Magnitude of change:* 'Medium' to 'High'.
- *Overall level of effect:* **Moderate to High (adverse)**, reducing to **Slight (adverse/ beneficial)** over time as the planting matures and the effects of the stopping up of traffic to Back Lane.

VR4: The Mendip Way green corridor - View locations 6 and 7

- *Sensitivity:* 'Low-Medium'; users of public footpath/ cycleway
- *Nature of change:* The proposed residential development will be concealed by intervening built form. Very limited, partial glimpses may be possible of development in the mid-distance. However, such glimpses will be seen in the context of the adjacent existing settlements. Visual enclosure and

integration of the proposals, in any available views, will increase over time as proposed planting/vegetation matures.

- *Magnitude of change:* 'Negligible – Low'.
- *Overall level of effect:* **Slight (adverse) to Negligible.**

VR5: Public Rights of Way north of site (Graveley 009, Weston 018, and Weston 017) – View locations 11, 12 and 14

- *Sensitivity:* 'Medium' - users of public footpath.
- *Nature of change:* The proposed residential development will be concealed by intervening vegetation. The roofline of some dwellings may be partially visible from various locations to the north and west, especially in winter.
- *Magnitude of change:* 'Negligible'.
- *Overall level of effect:* **Negligible**

VR6: Danmask Green Rd, south of Weston – View location 13

- *Sensitivity:* 'Medium' - public highway
- *Nature of change:* The proposed residential development will be concealed by intervening vegetation. The roofline of some dwellings may be partially visible from various locations to the north and west, especially in winter.
- *Magnitude of change:* 'Negligible'.
- *Overall level of effect:* **Negligible**

Overall Visual Effect

- 8.1.4 The proposed construction of the development will be variously visible, particularly to views from residential properties closest to the site and local public rights of way. However, the visual effects will be temporary in nature.
- 8.1.5 The proposed development will be variously visible, in north, west, and south-looking views, from Back Lane south and east of the site, the adjacent properties (Great Ashby), and the Hertfordshire Way adjacent to the north boundary of the site.
- 8.1.6 The proposals will be glimpsed/partially seen in the mid-distance from the Hertfordshire Way and Great Ashby residential properties.

- 8.1.7 In other views, based on a development of 2 to 3-storey housing, the proposals will be visually discrete, with the combination of existing and proposed vegetation providing considerable local integration, inclusive of the proposed landscape buffers to each side of the development. The upper rooflines of some dwellings may be visible from various locations to the north and west especially in winter.
- 8.1.8 The proposed landscape buffer and planting will provide a degree of visual separation between the existing settlement edge of Great Ashby and the new built form.
- 8.1.9 Visual effects will reduce over time as the proposed planting matures, providing additional visual integration and enclosure.

Summary visual assessment

Receptor location	Sensitivity	Magnitude of change	Level of effect, at Y0 and Y10/15
VR1: The Hertfordshire Way - View locations 1, 2, 3 and 10	Medium	Low to Medium	Slight to Moderate (adverse), reducing to Slight (adverse)
VR2: Back Lane, South – View locations 5, 8 and 9	Medium	Medium to High	Moderate to High (adverse), reducing to Slight (adverse/beneficial)
VR3: Back Lane, East – View locations 4, 5, and 6	Medium	Medium to High	Moderate to High (adverse), reducing to Slight (adverse/beneficial)
VR4: The Mendip Way green corridor – View locations 6 and 7	Low - Medium	Negligible to Low	Slight (adverse)/ Negligible
VR5: Public Rights of Way north of the site (Graveley 009, Weston 018, and Weston 017) – View locations 11, 12 and 14	Medium	Negligible	Negligible
VR6: Danmask Green Rd, south of Weston – View location 13	Medium	Negligible	Negligible

9.0 SUMMARY

- 9.1.1 The landscape character of the Site is moderately enclosed by the woodland, and tree and hedgerow boundaries. It is therefore discrete and distinct from the broader pattern of interlocking fields, lanes, and curvilinear boundaries within the Green Belt to the north and west. The site has a proximity relationship with and is influenced by, the nearby built settlement - the residential areas of Great Ashby to the south and west.

9.1.2 In terms of the visual context, when visible, the Site is seen in local views as part of the rural, agricultural setting. The extent of vegetation associated with woodland, trees, and hedgerows within and around the Site provides considerable visual containment and enclosure. There is some visual influence from the adjacent areas of settlement which reflects the well-settled landscape character.

9.1.3 The development proposals have been very carefully considered, by an experienced multi-disciplinary team, to minimise adverse landscape and visual impacts and maximise integration with the local area. Key design and mitigation aspects are:

- Proposals informed by planning policy and extant landscape character assessments, together with site appraisal, as well informed by ecology and arboricultural surveys and assessment.
- Environmental assets such as existing site boundary vegetation, are retained, and protected, with removals limited to new points of access and unsafe trees in order to minimise any loss of assets and provide a mature landscape setting for the development. This meets the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031, Policy GA1: Land at Roundwood (Graveley Parish), development requirement:

– *‘Retention and sensitive treatment of priority woodland habitats surrounding site to north and west’.*

- Provision of a landscape buffer (7-15m wide) at the perimeter of the application Site, to provide separation between the proposed built form and the adjacent residential area of Great Ashby, as well as providing landscape buffer adjacent to the Green Belt. This meets the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031, Policy GA1: Land at Roundwood (Graveley Parish), development requirement:

‘Sensitive design and landscaping around northern and western peripheries to minimise impacts upon wider landscape and heritage assets, including the setting of the Scheduled Ancient Monument at Chesfield Church’.

The northern landscape buffer and infill planting to the boundary is appropriate for the existing District Landscape Character Area 220 – Weston Plateau Parklands, with the following characteristic:

– *“Woodlands and hedgerows creating a sense of enclosure to the arable field”.*

- Open space/ landscape masterplan and landscape proposals provides, as part of multi-functional green infrastructure; tree-lined streets; structure planting of native woodland, trees, shrubs and grasslands. This network of new open spaces will include a linear park, which will provide a framework to the built form. These landscape proposals will reinforce local landscape character; complement and enhance established hedgerows and other boundaries; and integrate proposed development into the local landscape, as well as provide climate resilience.
- Retention of existing public footpaths adjacent to the Site, with provision of proposed recreational routes around the Site. This meets the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031, Policy GA1: Land at Roundwood (Graveley Parish), development requirement:
 - *'Integration of Footpath Graveley 010 as a perimeter feature around the north of the site'.*
- A proposed height for built form which will be in keeping with the local character of nearby residential development, with a design of residential dwelling massing and forms to relate to the local area. The proposed layout responds positively to the existing urban edge to the south and east, and rural edges to the west and north. Taller built form across a formal layout, and at a higher building density, is situated to the central and southeast parts of the site. Lower built form across an informal layout, and at a lower building density, is situated to the north and northwest of the site. This meets the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031, Policy GA1: Land at Roundwood (Graveley Parish), development requirement:
 - *'Sensitive design and landscaping around northern and western peripheries to minimise impacts upon wider landscape and heritage assets, including the setting of the Scheduled Ancient Monument at Chesfield Church'.*
- A sensitive lighting design, which as well as avoiding/ minimising impacts on ecology will minimise adverse nighttime landscape and visual impacts. This helps to meet the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031, Policy GA1: Land at Roundwood (Graveley Parish), development requirement:
 - *'Consider and mitigate against any adverse impacts upon adjacent local wildlife site at Parsonsgreen Wood'*
- The proposed implementation of long-term management plans for green infrastructure/ landscape assets. Management operations/provisions to be separately agreed with the local planning authority.

- 9.1.4 With respect to landscape impacts, there will be generally Slight to Moderate adverse impacts arising from the loss of the arable field and the introduction of residential development within the Site area, to the northwest of the existing Great Ashby settlement. Such adverse impacts relate to part of the local landscape setting the adjacent woodlands, the proposed Chesfield Conservation Area, and the existing residential settlement edge of Great Ashby. The proposals for design/ mitigation include landscape buffers and the provision of open space providing separation between the existing settlement/ proposed Conservation Area and the proposed development. In broad terms, there are established planning policies for accommodating residential development, and the proposals reflect the characteristics of the adjacent residential area of Great Ashby. The proposals will be in keeping with the wider well settled landscape character.
- 9.1.5 With respect to visual impacts, there will be generally Moderate adverse impacts as the proposed development will be variously visible from Back Lane south and east of the site, the adjacent properties (Great Ashby), and the Hertfordshire Way adjacent to the north boundary of the site. The proposals will be glimpsed, seen in part, in the mid-distance from the Hertfordshire Way and Great Ashby residential properties. In other views, the proposals will be relatively discrete, with the combination of existing and proposed vegetation providing considerable local integration and a proposed 7-15m buffer of open space. The upper storeys of the dwellings will likely be visible from various locations to the north and west, especially in winter. These visual effects will reduce over time as the proposed planting matures, providing additional visual integration and enclosure. In addition, the proposed landscape buffer and planting will provide some visual separation between Great Ashby.
- 9.1.6 Overall, the proposals will present a contained area of new residential development, within an allocated site for residential development. The proposed new built form integrates the allocation site into the existing urban edge to the south and east, and provides a well-considered transition in layout, scale and height towards the rural edge to the north and northwest. The proposals include comprehensive green infrastructure integrated as part of the development providing a good landscape setting and level of landscape amenity. The development approach maximises opportunities for a high-quality design and minimises adverse landscape and visual effects associated with the impacts to the landscape setting of Great Ashby.

Roundwood

Landscape and Visual Appraisal Figures

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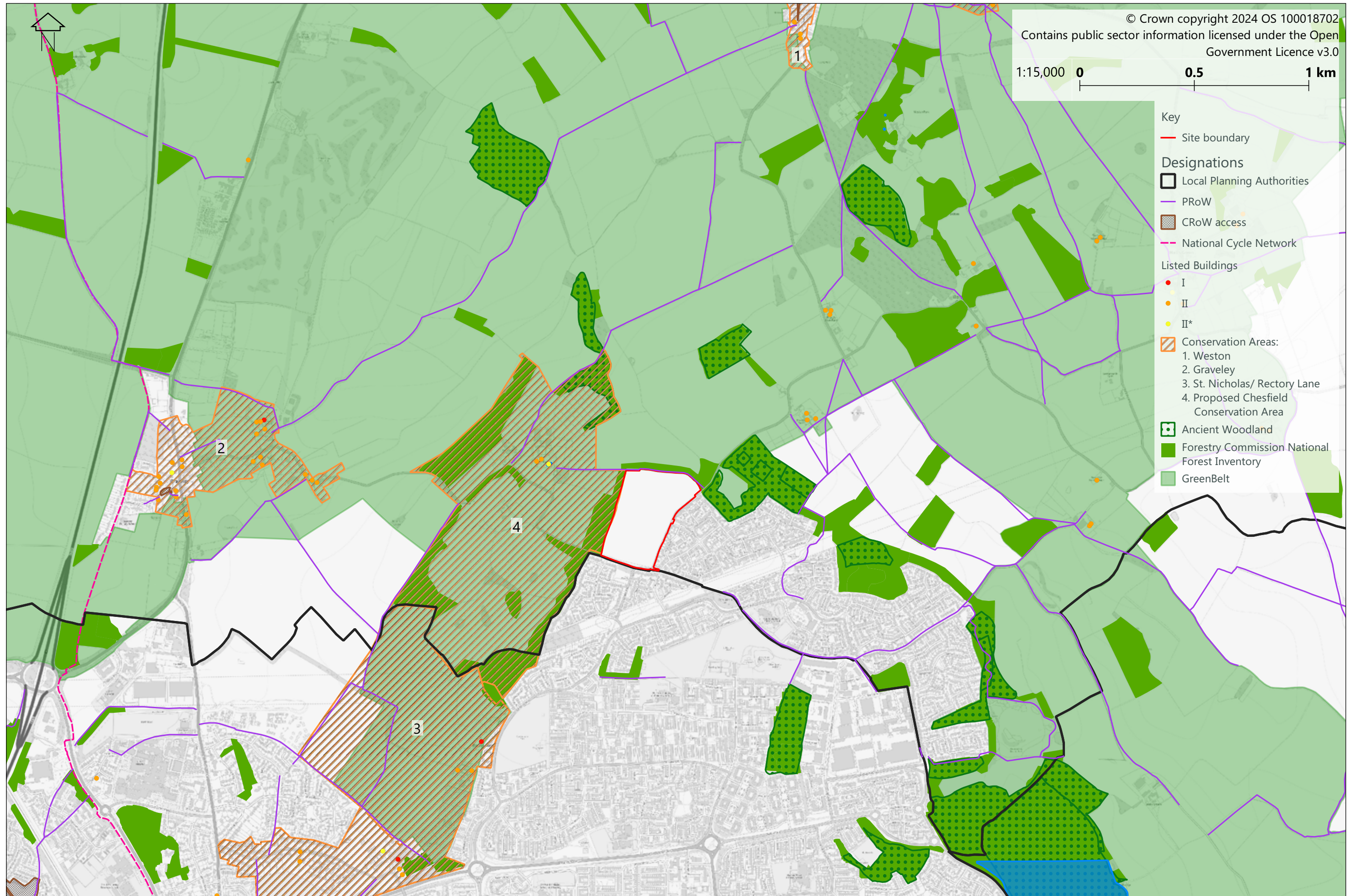
Fig. 7.20: Viewpoint Location 11

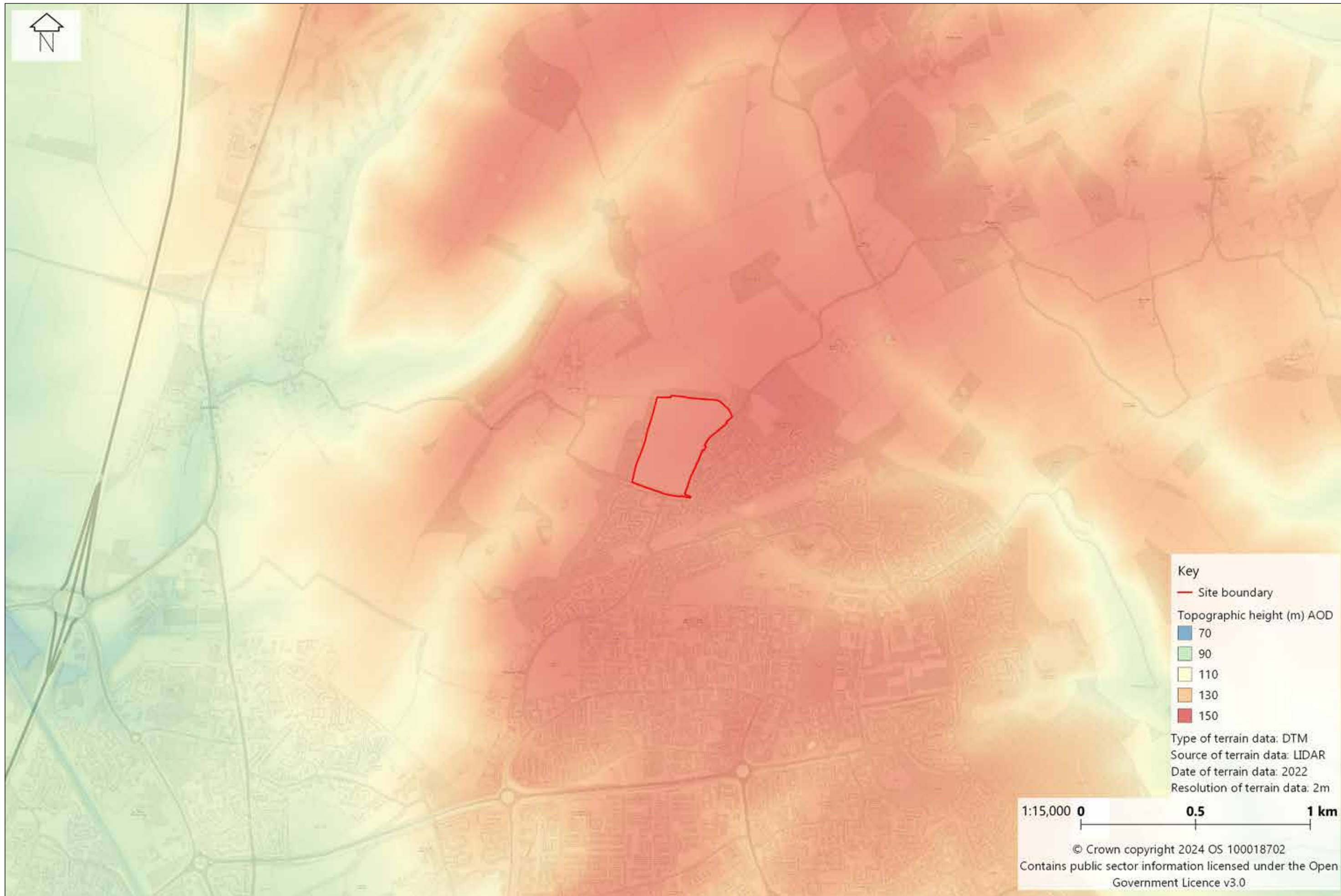
Fig. 7.21: Viewpoint Location 12

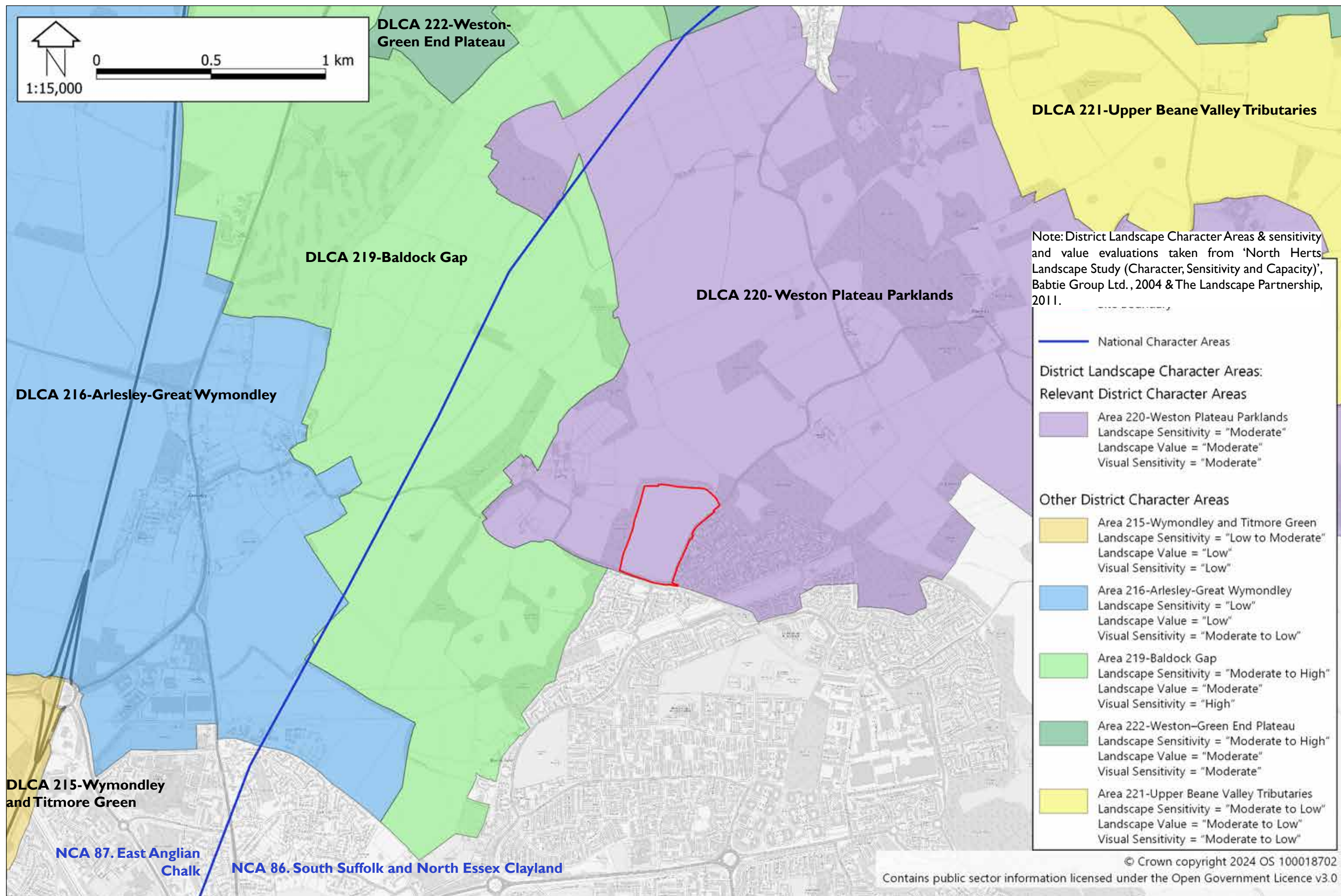
Fig. 7.22: Viewpoint Location 13

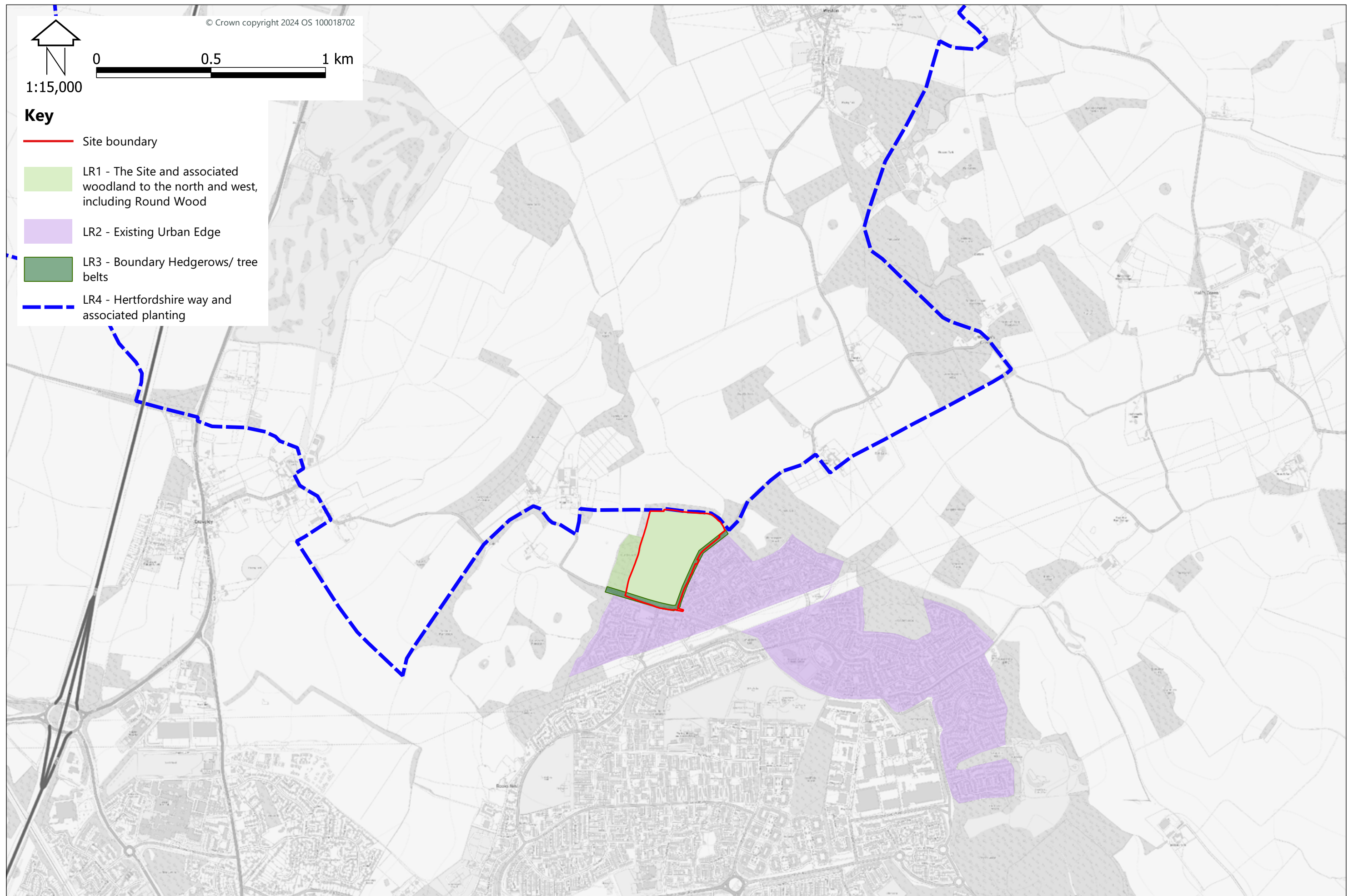
Fig. 7.23: Viewpoint Location 14

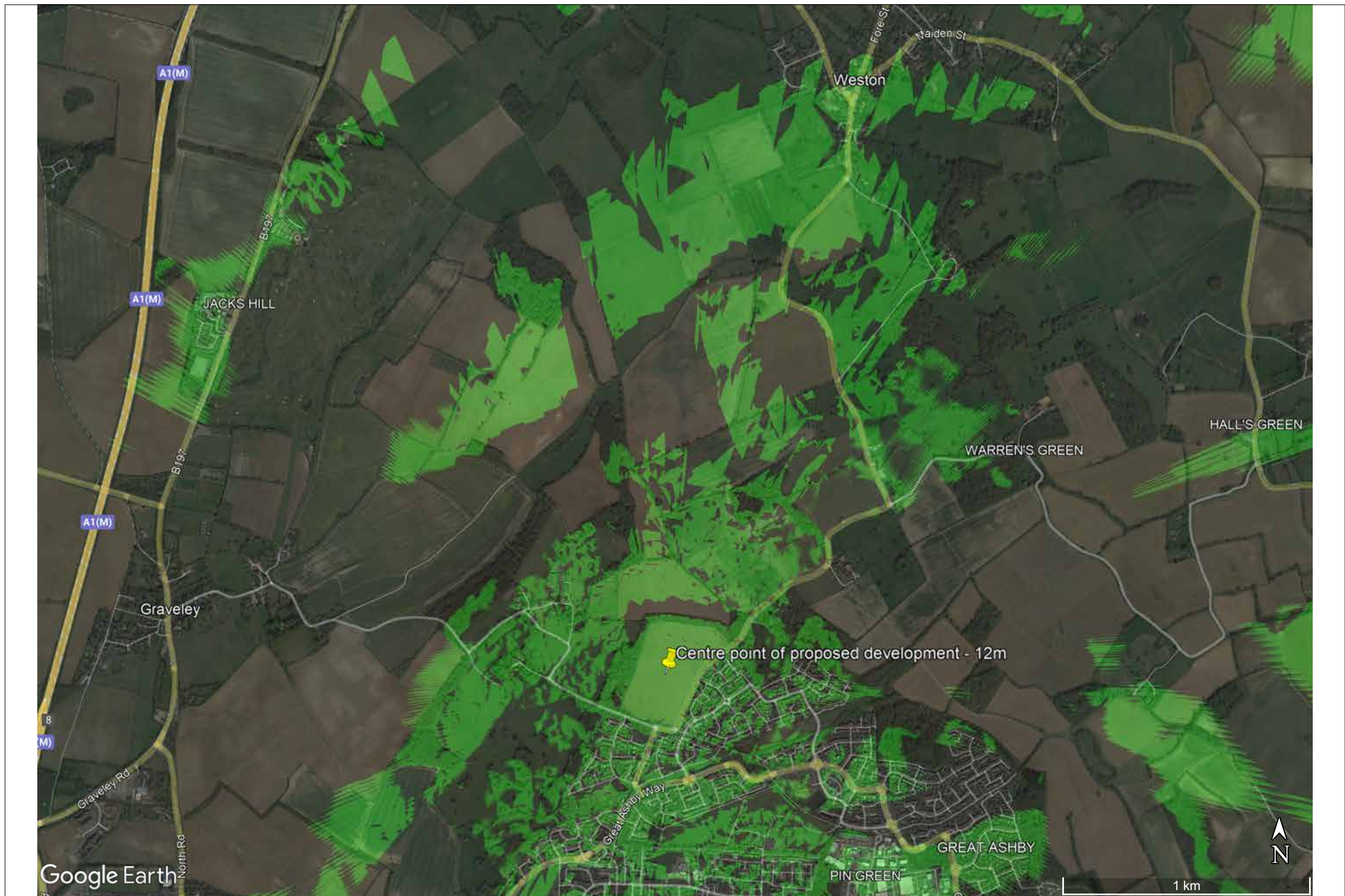






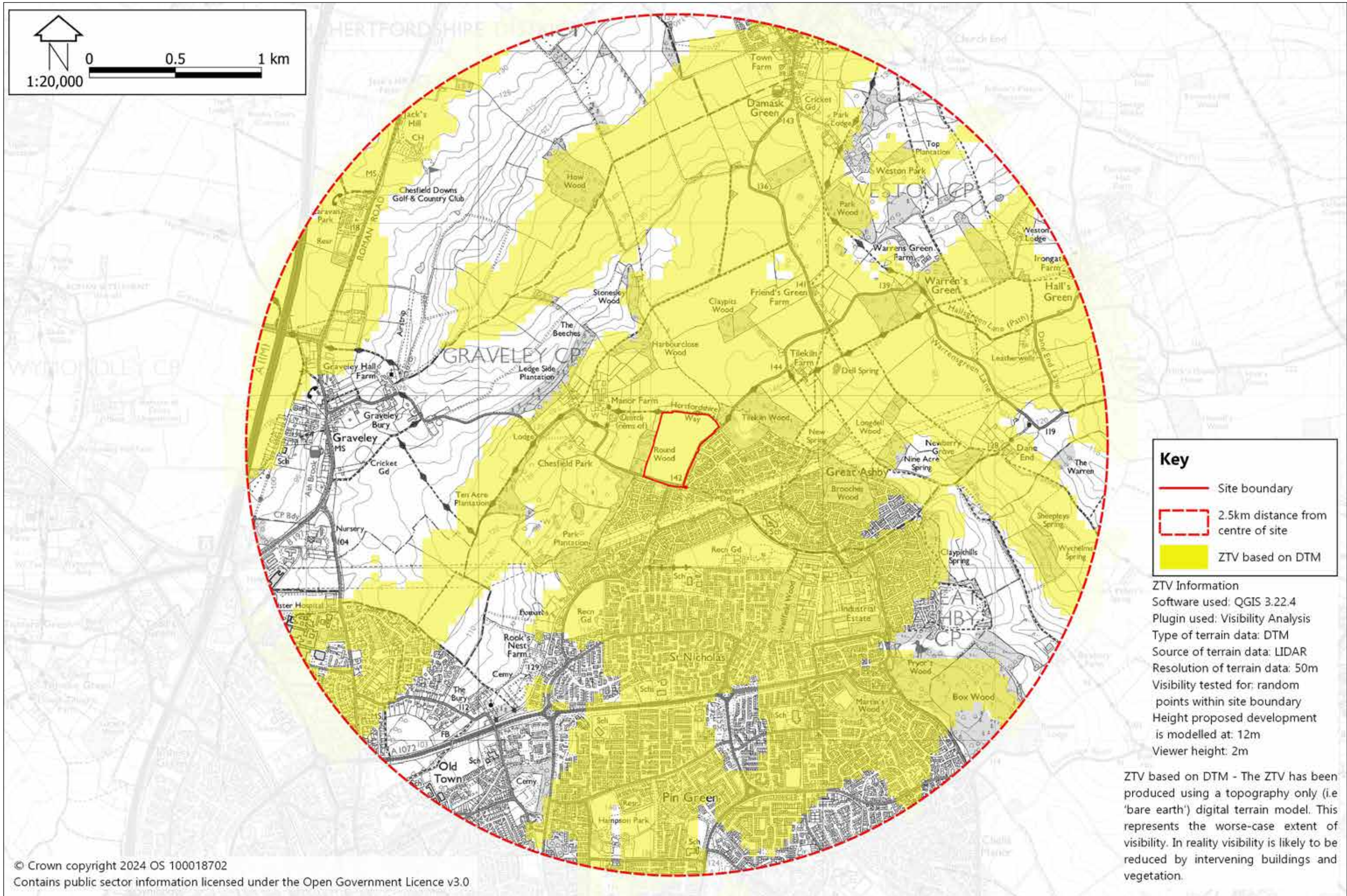


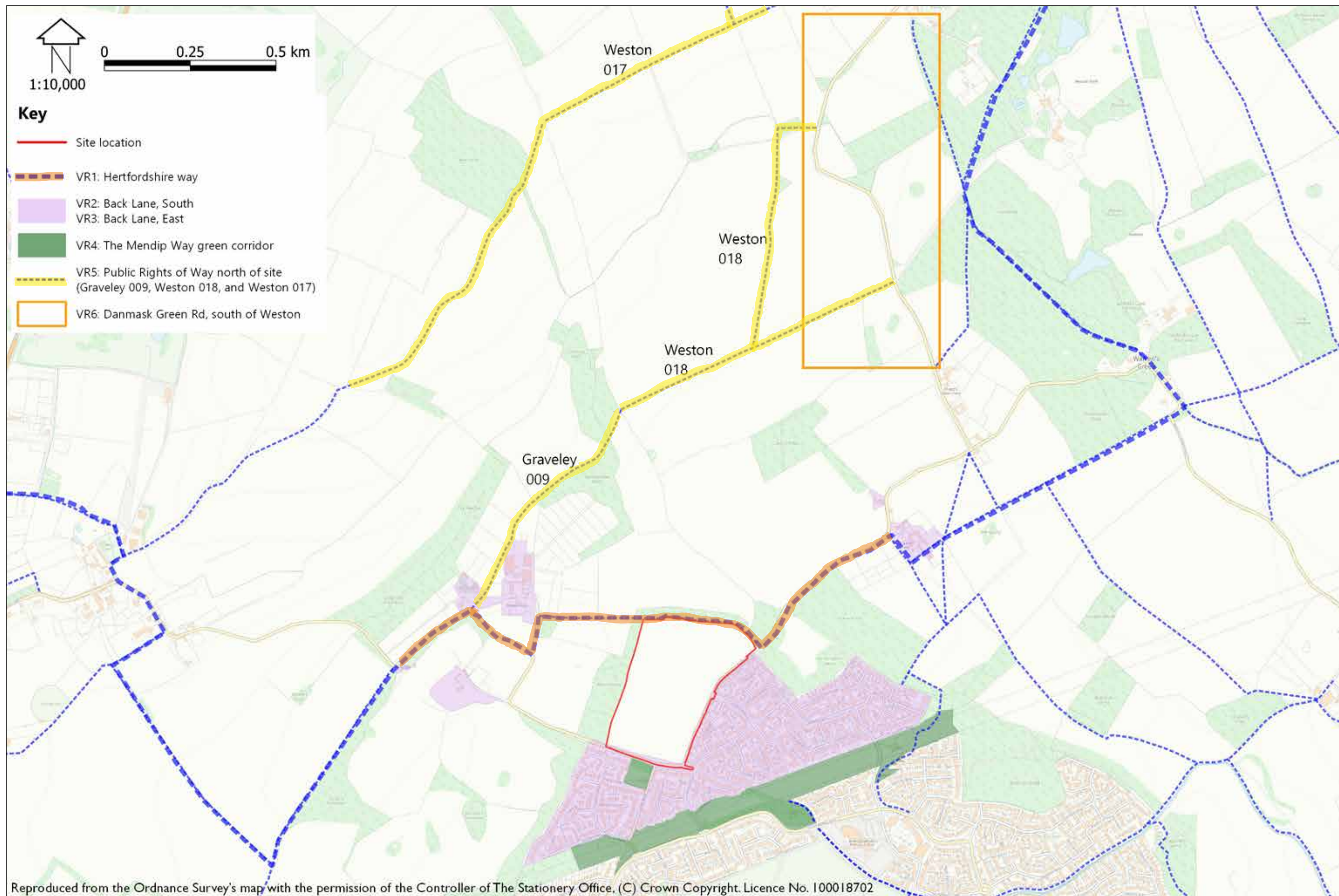


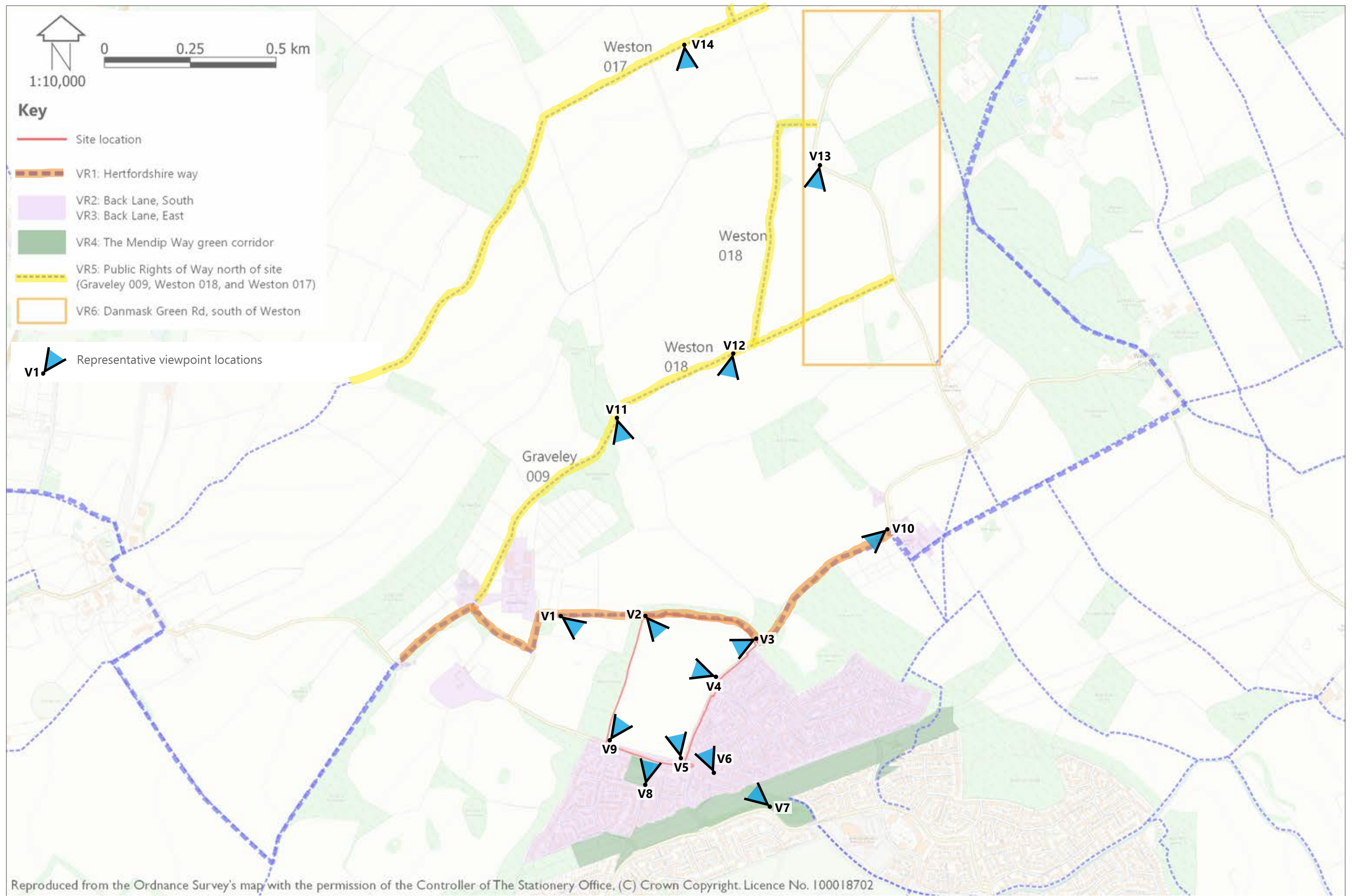


Project:	Roundwood
Client:	Croudace Homes Ltd
Date:	December 2024

Figure Title:	Fig. 7.06: Google Viewshed		
Project No.:	NPA 10666	Status:	For Information
Page Size:	A3		





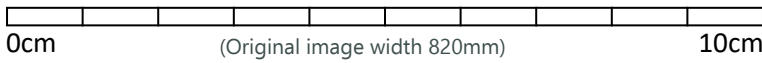




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When printed, cylindrical images need to be curved around the viewer to represent real-world viewing angles. Alternatively they could be viewed flat by moving the head to maintain a constant viewing distance across the panorama. (Ref: LI TGN 06/19)



Please note: To view this image digitally, calibrate this scale bar, on screen, for a correct scale representation and view the image at a comfortable arm's length

Date Taken: 01/02/2022
Camera Location: 51.935722, -0.18569282
Direction of View: south east

Field of View: 90 degrees
Camera: Canon EOS D5 MkIII
Distance to site: 244 m

Projection: Cylindrical
Lens: Sigma 50mm
Visibility: Good

Visualisation Type: Type 1
Image Enlargement: 100%
Page Size: A1 width

Project: Roundwood
Client: Croudace Homes Ltd
Date: August 2022

Figure Title: Fig. 7.10: Viewpoint Location 1
Project No.: NPA 10666
Status: For Information

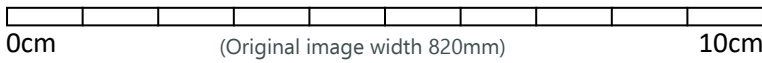


Site Location

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Please note: To view this image digitally, calibrate this scale bar, on screen, for a correct scale representation and view the image at a comfortable arm's length

Date Taken:	01/02/2022	Field of View:	90 degrees	Projection:	Cylindrical	Visualisation Type:	Type 1	Project:	Roundwood	Figure Title:	Fig. 7.11: Viewpoint Location 2
Camera Location:	51.935665, -0.18221962	Camera:	Canon EOS D5 MkIII	Lens:	Sigma 50mm	Image Enlargement:	100%	Client:	Croudace Homes Ltd	Project No.:	NPA 10666
Direction of View:	south east	Distance to site:	15 m	Visibility:	Good	Page Size:	A1 width	Date:	August 2022	Status:	For Information



Site Location

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0cm 10cm 30cm
(Original image width 820mm)

Please note: To view this image digitally, calibrate this scale bar, on screen, for a correct scale representation and view the image at a comfortable arm's length

Date Taken:	01/02/2022	Field of View:	90 degrees	Projection:	Cylindrical	Visualisation Type:	Type 1
Camera Location:	51.934845, -0.17730099	Camera:	Canon EOS D5 MkIII	Lens:	Sigma 50mm	Image Enlargement:	100%
Direction of View:	south west	Distance to site:	12 m	Visibility:	Good	Page Size:	A1 width

Project:	Roundwood	Figure Title:	Fig. 7.12: Viewpoint Location 3
Client:	Croudace Homes Ltd	Project No.:	NPA 10666
Date:	August 2022	Status:	For Information



Site Location

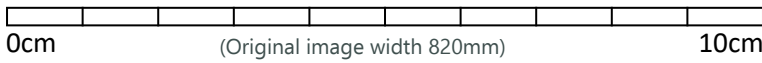
Date Taken:	01/02/2022	Field of View:	90 degrees	Projection:	Cylindrical	Visualisation Type:	Type 1	Project:	Roundwood	Figure Title:	Fig. 7.13: Viewpoint Location 4
Camera Location:	51.933857, -0.17920965	Camera:	Canon EOS D5 MkIII	Lens:	Sigma 50mm	Image Enlargement:	100%	Client:	Croudace Homes Ltd	Project No.:	NPA 10666
Direction of View:	West	Distance to site:	3 m	Visibility:	Good	Page Size:	A1 width	Date:	April 2022	Status:	For Information



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Please note: To view this image digitally, calibrate this scale bar, on screen, for a correct scale representation and view the image at a comfortable arm's length

Date Taken: 01/02/2022
Camera Location: 51.931702, -0.18052447
Direction of View: North west

Field of View: 90 degrees
Camera: Canon EOS D5 MkIII
Distance to site: 16 m

Projection: Cylindrical
Lens: Sigma 50mm
Visibility: Good

Visualisation Type: Type 1
Image Enlargement: 100%
Page Size: A1 width

Project: Roundwood
Client: Croudace Homes Ltd
Date: August 2022

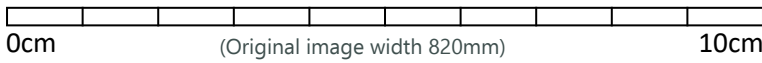
Figure Title: Fig. 7.14: Viewpoint Location 5
Project No.: NPA 10666
Status: For Information



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Please note: To view this image digitally, calibrate this scale bar, on screen, for a correct scale representation and view the image at a comfortable arm's length

Date Taken:	01/02/2022	Field of View:	90 degrees	Projection:	Cylindrical	Visualisation Type:	Type 1	Project:	Roundwood	Figure Title:	Fig. 7.15: Viewpoint Location 6
Camera Location:	51.931612, -0.17991534	Camera:	Canon EOS D5 MkIII	Lens:	Sigma 50mm	Image Enlargement:	100%	Client:	Croudace Homes Ltd	Project No.:	NPA 10666
Direction of View:	North west	Distance to site:	57 m	Visibility:	Good	Page Size:	A1 width	Date:	April 2022	Status:	For Information



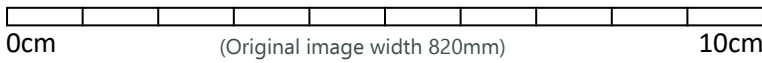


Site location beyond built form and vegetation

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Please note: To view this image digitally, calibrate this scale bar, on screen, for a correct scale representation and view the image at a comfortable arm's length

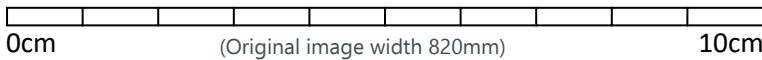
Date Taken:	01/02/2022	Field of View:	90 degrees	Projection:	Cylindrical	Visualisation Type:	Type 1	Project:	Roundwood	Figure Title:	Fig. 7.17: Viewpoint Location 8
Camera Location:	51.931209, -0.18228453	Camera:	Canon EOS D5 MkIII	Lens:	Sigma 50mm	Image Enlargement:	100%	Client:	Croudace Homes Ltd	Project No.:	NPA 10666
Direction of View:	North	Distance to site:	81 m	Visibility:	Good	Page Size:	A1 width	Date:	August 2022	Status:	For Information



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Please note: To view this image digitally, calibrate this scale bar, on screen, for a correct scale representation and view the image at a comfortable arm's length

Date Taken: 01/02/2022

Camera Location: 51.932276, -0.18387455

Direction of View: North east

Field of View: 90 degrees

Camera: Canon EOS D5 MkIII

Distance to site: 8 m

Projection: Cylindrical

Lens: Sigma 50mm

Visibility: Good

Visualisation Type: Type 1

Image Enlargement: 100%

Page Size: A1 width

Project: Roundwood

Client: Croudace Homes Ltd

Date: August 2022

Figure Title: Fig. 7.18: Viewpoint Location 9

Project No.: NPA 10666

Status: For Information



Site location beyond vegetation

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0cm 10cm
(Original image width 820mm)

Please note: To view this image digitally, calibrate this scale bar, on screen, for a correct scale representation and view the image at a comfortable arm's length

Date Taken: 01/02/2022

Camera Location: 51.937649, -0.17175633

Direction of View: South west

Field of View: 90 degrees

Camera: Canon EOS D5 MkIII

Distance to site: 500 m

Projection: Cylindrical

Lens: Sigma 50mm

Visibility: Good

Visualisation Type: Type 1

Image Enlargement: 100%

Page Size: A1 width

Project: Roundwood

Client: Croudace Homes Ltd

Date: August 2022

Figure Title: Fig. 7.19: Viewpoint Location 10

Project No.: NPA 10666

Status: For Information



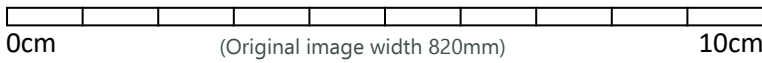
Site location beyond vegetation



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Please note: To view this image digitally, calibrate this scale bar, on screen, for a correct scale representation and view the image at a comfortable arm's length

Date Taken: 01/02/2022

Camera Location: 51.942512, -0.17776287

Direction of View: South

Field of View: 90 degrees

Camera: Canon EOS D5 MkIII

Distance to site: 790 m

Projection: Cylindrical

Lens: Sigma 50mm

Visibility: Good

Visualisation Type: Type 1

Image Enlargement: 100%

Page Size: A1 width

Project: Roundwood

Client: Croudace Homes Ltd

Date: August 2022

Figure Title: Fig. 7.21: Viewpoint Location 12

Project No.: NPA 10666

Status: For Information



Date Taken:	01/02/2022	Field of View:	90 degrees	Projection:	Cylindrical	Visualisation Type:	Type 1	Project:	Roundwood	Figure Title:	Fig. 7.22: Viewpoint Location 13
Camera Location:	51.947228, -0.17432266	Camera:	Canon EOS D5 MkIII	Lens:	Sigma 50mm	Image Enlargement:	100%	Client:	Croudace Homes Ltd	Project No.:	NPA 10666
Direction of View:	South	Distance to site:	1343 m	Visibility:	Good	Page Size:	A1 width	Date:	August 2022	Status:	For Information



Approximate location of site, beyond vegetation

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