
LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

For proposed residential development at:

Land east of Bedford Road

Hitchin

Hertfordshire

SG5 2UR

Site: Bedford Rd Hitchin

Project Ref: 1496

Client: Arts Constriction Ltd

Version: 5

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- A Landscape Visual Impact Assessment (“LVIA”) has been prepared in support of a planning application for residential development and associated landscaping at: Land East of Bedford Road, Hitchin, Hertfordshire.
- The proposed development will be contained within one land parcel of approximately 1.7 hectares (“the site”). Access will be from the west on Bedford Road. The proposal is a planning application for a high quality, sustainable scheme comprising up to 50 new homes, including affordable housing, together with amenity space, landscaping and all associated infrastructure and works. The proposals include a large public open space (“POS”) on the northern edge of the site.
- The site is on the northern edge of the large town of Hitchin within one pasture field enclosure. There are no built structures, however the southern and eastern boundaries are defined by wide hedgerows; the northern edge by some mature hedge plants and a conifer; and the western edge by a line of ash trees (*Fraxinus excelsior*) of varying ages, mature to the northwest becoming sparse and young to the southwest. The site is adjacent the large housing estate ‘Westmill’ to the west and the extensive school grounds of The Priory Community School to the south and east, and the course of the River Oughton to the north. A named trail ‘Icknield Way’ lies to the north as part of an extensive footpath network in the northern landscape, however there are few Public Rights of Way (“PRoWs”) within the townscape to the south.
- The proposed residential development will be accessed via a new access point from the north western edge of Bedford Road. The route will continue within the site along the eastern edge, circulating again to the western mid-point. The design retains a deep POS on the northern edge, and the southern and western boundary will be retained within the public realm.
- The site is enclosed by mature vegetation including trees and overgrown hedge lines which will be largely retained as established mitigation. Tree species include ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), oak (*Quercus robur*), Norway maple (*Acer platanoides*) and field maple (*Acer campestre*). Hedgerow species includes hawthorn (*Crataegus spp.*), blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), sycamore, field maple, dogwood (*Cornus*

sanguinea), elm (*Ulmus spp.*) and some ash. The site is mainly rough pasture with some stands of willow (*Salix spp.*) and bramble.

- The topography within the site is relatively level with a fall of approximately 2m to the north over approximately 175m of the field enclosure. Historically the landscape was part of an extensive field network and isolated from the centre of Hitchin to the south and the village of Ickleford to the northeast (National Library of Scotland, accessed August 2025). Both Hitchin and Ickleford have spread over the 20th century, the site becoming surrounded by the extents of Hitchin by the late 1960s. Ickleford has extended to the northwest of the site.
- The site is in the northern extents of Hertfordshire. The site is partly grade 3 'good to moderate' land according to the Agricultural Land Classification, accessed August 2025. The site appears to be left as a hay crop. There are no enclosures for grazing.
- Nationally, the site is part of the **National Character Area 110 ("NCA 110") Chilterns**. The North Hertfordshire Landscape Study (2011) places the site in 'River Oughton and Purwell Valleys' landscape character area, described as '*cattle grazed water meadows.....Mature landscape character well defined by urban development (Hitchin). Trees restrict views. General change of land use adjacent to Ickleford where land is predominantly used for horse grazing and stabling*' (NHLS 2011: 109).
- For the site itself, the landscape effects of the introduction of residential development is **slight/moderate** due to the **low** to sensitivity of landscape elements. However, the magnitude of change is considered **medium**, the development will not be uncharacteristic of the settlement edge. Important landscape elements such the tree and hedge lines on some site boundaries will be preserved. There is some loss of poorly structured hedgerow and trees on the western edge for the swales and access point.
- The assessment of the effects of the proposals on the local landscape character found that there would be a **slight/moderate** landscape effect on the district's landscape due to the Green Belt status. No Conservation Areas, scheduled monuments or listed buildings will be affected. There is a **slight** effect on the wider landscape, however the magnitude of change is **negligible**.

- The settlement edge location and mixed ages and styles of surrounding built environment leaves capacity for new built form. There is some loss of open ground. The effect on townscape character is judged to be **slight/moderate** and **neutral**.
- With regard to the visual effects of the proposed development upon local receptors, several dwellings and one school may experience some **slight to moderate** visual effect due to the **high** sensitivity of some visual receptors, living area views. This is, according to standard criteria, a significant effect. Bedford Road and Burford Way will experience a **slight** visual effect however this is in the context of the existing settlement edge.
- No footpaths will experience visual effect to views, and this is considered to be true when vegetation is not in leaf.
- Cumulative effects were assessed. It is judged that there is a **slight/moderate** and **neutral** cumulative landscape effect and a **slight** and **adverse** cumulative visual effect.
- The construction period is likely to cause some landscape and visual effects above operational effects, however this is for a medium duration depending on phasing of construction and can be mitigated by site hoarding and controls usually applied within a CEMP.
- The receiving landscape exhibits a suburban, settlement edge character and the site is semi enclosed by boundary vegetation. This will be retained and enhanced including a large area of public open space on the northern edge. The site offers the opportunity to develop Green Belt land that bears a strong links to the suburban fabric of the town of Hitchin within the context of 'Grey Belt' criteria according to national planning policy.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Greenlight Environmental Consultancy Limited has been commissioned by Arte Construction Ltd to carry out a LVIA with elements of a townscape review for a residential development on land east of Bedford Road, Hitchin, Hertfordshire.
- 1.2 Landscape and townscape character results from the way that different aspects of the environment (physical, natural, and cultural) interact and how people perceive them. Different combinations and/or patterns of landscape components (geology, soils, topography, hydrology, land cover, land use, vegetation, and settlement) create areas of distinctive character. Landscape and townscape effects may arise as a result of changes to individual landscape components and/or the character of the area.
- 1.3 The existing baseline situation and the proposals for the development are then analysed against the assessed potential visual and landscape effects. The approach to the report is in accordance with current guidance (see Section 2.1 below).
- 1.4 This report forms part of the planning submission and also seeks to inform how the potential landscape and visual effects of the scheme for the surrounding area can be minimised.
- 1.5 The initial 'Study Area' is 2km from the site boundary. This extends north to Ickleford Common; east to the eastern extents of Hitchin; south to Pirton Road; and west to Hitchin Road.
- 1.6 The proposed development is for approximately fifty dwellings, a mix of detached and semi-detached properties within a pasture field that is the site. The development will be accessed from Bedford Road to the west. Although there will be some boundary trees and hedge removed for access, the majority of trees and hedgerow plants will be retained and enhanced.
- 1.7 The site has been subject to planning applications in the past: 22/03040/FP for 53 homes was submitted in 2022 however it was withdrawn (North Hertfordshire Council website).
- 1.8 There are landscape elements that mitigate any possible landscape and visual effect of the proposals including the boundary tree lines and hedgerows.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Relevant guidance

2.1.1 This appraisal has been undertaken in accordance with best practice as outlined in the following publications:

- Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' (GLVIA3) – Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment 2013.
- An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment October 2014 Christine Tudor, Natural England
- Assessing Landscape Value Outside National Designations- Landscape Institute Technical Advice Note 02/21 – 2021
- Landscape Character Assessment - Guidance for England and Scotland – Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage 2002.
- The Guidelines for Environmental Impact Assessment - Institute for Environmental Management and Assessment 2004.
- Townscape Character Assessment - Technical Information Note 05/2017
- Visual Representation of Development Proposals - Landscape Institute Technical Advice Note 06/19 – 2019

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 The methodology used for this assessment is based on the guidance listed above. The criteria used in the methodology is detailed at [Appendix 2](#).

2.2.2 A desktop review of published data, such as landscape character assessments, OS maps and landscape planning policies, has been carried out. This identified potential landscape and visual receptors that could be affected by the proposed residential development. The field survey visit was carried out on the 14 August 2025 to confirm the findings of the desktop review. Photographs taken at approximately 1.5m height, with a with a Nikon D7200 camera and Nikon DX AF-S NIKKOR 35mm 1:1.8G fixed lens except where stated otherwise. For Type 1 photomontages please refer to A3 Figures Volume under separate cover.

2.2.3 The structure of the report is as follows:

- (i) In Section 3 is the current policy context, which may include emerging Local Plans.

- (ii) In section 4 is the existing situation, i.e. the baseline condition of the landscape is reviewed. This includes the topography, vegetation cover and land uses, published landscape character studies, landscape and other relevant designations, and the current visibility of the site.
- (iii) In Section 5 the proposals for the development are set out, including the proposed mitigation planting proposals.
- (iv) In Sections 6 and 7 respectively, the potential landscape and visual effects are assessed in detail (construction and operational phases) using the landscape and visual receptors identified in Section 4, by considering the interaction between them and the proposals for the development.
- (iv) Finally in Section 8, conclusions are drawn.

2.2.4 Zone of Theoretical Visibility (“ZTV”) mapping has been used to identify the worst-case scenario for potential locations from which the proposed development might be visible. It is important to note that such modelling cannot represent accurately small-scale landscape elements in the terrain. The terrain data is based on landform and vertical structures but does not incorporate weather conditions or the orientation of receptor, and thus does not provide a definitive mapping of actual visibility. The ZTV information is used in conjunction with other desktop study to inform further the understanding of the development in the larger landscape, and to focus the field surveys and the selection of viewpoints (please refer to the A3 Figures Volume under separate cover).

2.3 **Assessment of effect**

- 2.3.1 In this report, in accordance with the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Guidelines, 3rd edition (2013) the landscape and visual effects is ascertained by cross-referencing the sensitivity of the baseline landscape or visual receptor and the magnitude of change as a result of the development. Whilst the methodology is designed to be robust and transparent, professional judgement must be applied to determine the scale of each effect.
- 2.3.2 Please see Appendix 3 which sets out the criteria used to aid determination of landscape or visual effect. Only where the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment forms part of an Environmental Impact Assessment (“EIA”), will the term ‘significant’ be used in line with the European Parliament Directive 2011/92/EU.

2.4 **Positive / Adverse / Neutral**

2.4.1 Effects are defined as **adverse**, **neutral** or **positive**. Neutral effects are those which overall are neither adverse nor positive but may incorporate a combination of both.

2.4.2 The decision regarding the significance of effect and the decision regarding whether an effect is beneficial or adverse are entirely separate. Whether an effect is **positive**, **neutral** or **adverse** is identified based on professional judgement (GLVIA3 indicates at paragraph 2.15 that this is a “*particularly challenging*” aspect of assessment, particularly in the context of a changing landscape).

2.5 **Scope**

2.5.1 In the case of this scheme, pre application advice has not been sought from North Hertfordshire Council however this report has reviewed reason for refusals of the previous scheme. The design has been developed to alleviate concerns raised in reasons for refusal.

2.6 **Limitations of the assessment**

2.6.1 This assessment is based on views from publicly accessible locations. Where impact to private views is noted, it has been estimated.

2.6.2 The viewpoints identified in this assessment are illustrative and represent the potential impact of the development from a range of receptors e.g. dwellings, commercial properties, rights of way, roads etc. This report does not necessarily identify all locations from where the site is potentially visible.

2.6.3 The site survey was conducted on a day of some cloud however views were clear; views were also assessed by noting the land form, elevations and land cover reducing permeability.

2.6.4 It is important to note that this assessment was carried out in summer, and therefore ‘in leaf’ vegetation contributes to the enclosure of the development, ‘not in leaf’ vegetation will create some openness, however the enclosure of the site by trees and hedgerows will screen views for approximately seven months of the year between April and November.

2.7 **Establishing Study Area**

2.7.1 The site survey revealed that the site is barely visible beyond the boundaries and that local road users and adjacent residences on Bedford Road will be the main visual receptors. Although the ZTV

shows the site to have some openness to the east no views extend beyond the dense, wide tree belt, this is lucky to continue even when not in leaf due to the density of hedgerow and trees. The ZTV with obstructions indicates that there is more visibility to the north and south than was possible from the ground on the day of survey.

2.7.2 Therefore, the study area for viewpoints and landscape interaction is limited to possible seasonal views from the north with no views likely to be possible beyond the built edge of Hitchin to the south, east and west.

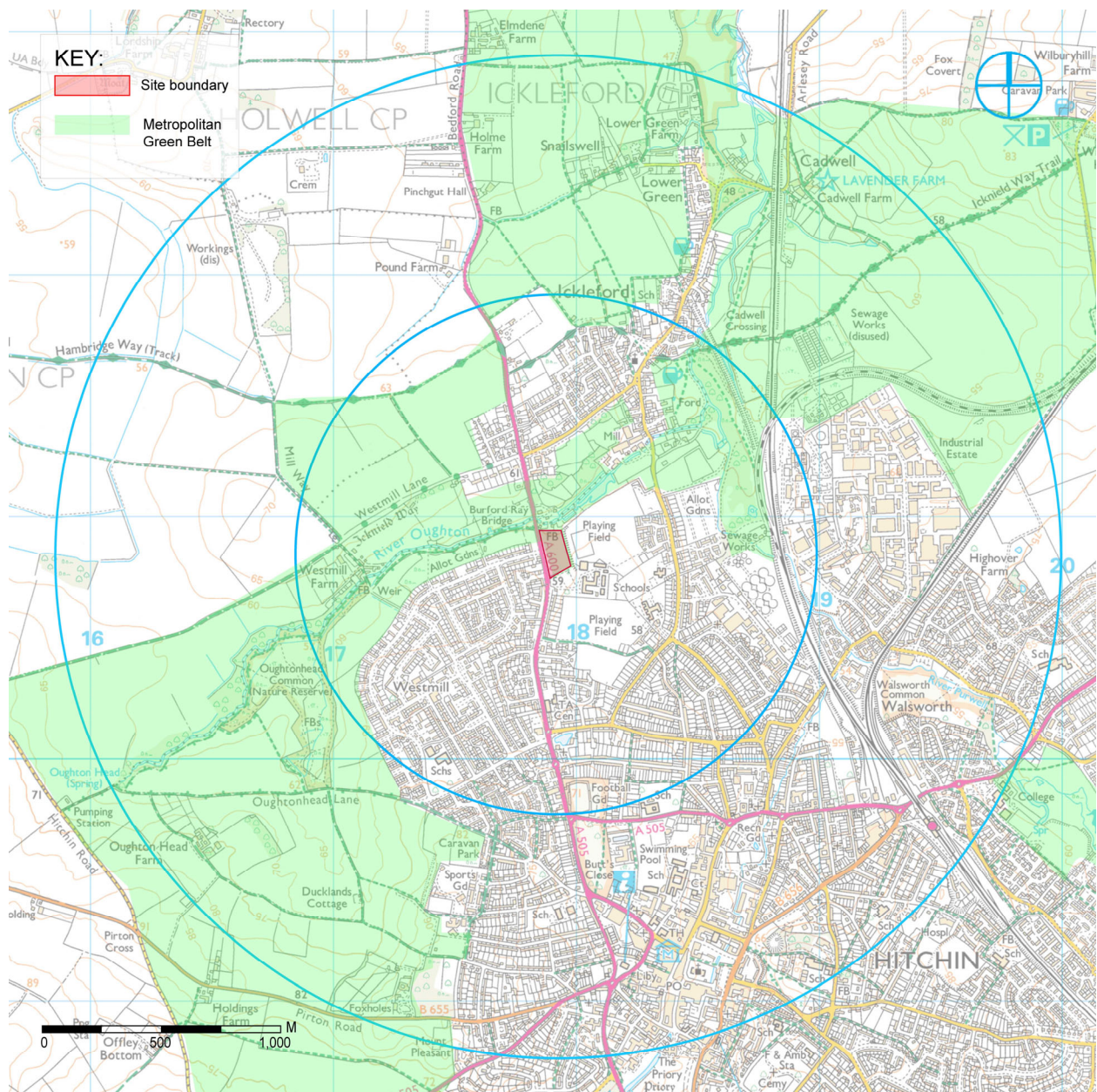


Figure 1: Map showing the location of the site in relation to Green Belt. Site marked in red; and 1km and 2km from the centre of the site is indicated by the blue circles. (OS Map provided by www.centremapslive.com at scale 1:25,000).

3 **POLICY CONTEXT**

3.1 National Planning Policy Framework 2024 (“NPPF”)

3.1.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2024) sets out a clear presumption in favour of sustainable development. The framework outlines three mutually dependent dimensions or roles for the planning system:

- a) *‘an economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;*
- b) *a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering well-designed, beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities’ health, social and cultural well-being; and*
- c) *an environmental objective – to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy’ (NPPF 2024: 5).*

3.1.2 Conserving and enhancing the natural environment. Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

- 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;*
- c) *maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate;*

- d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures and incorporating features which support priority or threatened species such as swifts, bats and hedgehogs;*
- e) preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans; and*
- f) remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate' (NPPF 2024: 54).*

3.1.3 In regard to Green Belt, it is inappropriate unless one of the following exceptions applies:

- a) buildings for agriculture and forestry;*
- b) the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use), including buildings, for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments; as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it;*
- c) the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building;*
- d) the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;*
- e) limited infilling in villages;*
- f) limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the development plan (including policies for rural exception sites); and*
- g) limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land (including a material change of use to residential or mixed use including residential), whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt.*

h) Other forms of development provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. These are:

- mineral extraction;*
- engineering operations;*
- local transport infrastructure which can demonstrate a requirement for a Green Belt location;*
- the re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction;*
- material changes in the use of land (such as changes of use for outdoor sport or recreation, or for cemeteries and burial grounds); and*
- development, including buildings, brought forward under a Community Right to Build Order or Neighbourhood Development Order’ (NPPF 2024: 44-45).*

3.1.4 Paragraph 155

‘The development of homes, commercial and other development in the Green Belt should also not be regarded as inappropriate where:

- a) The development would utilise grey belt land and would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan;*
- b) There is a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed;*
- c) The development would be in a sustainable location, with particular reference to paragraphs 110 and 115 of this Framework; and*
- d) Where applicable the development proposed meets the ‘Golden Rules’ requirements set out in paragraphs 156-157 below’ (NPPF 2024: 45-46).*

3.1.5 Paragraph 156

‘Where major development involving the provision of housing is proposed on land released from the Green Belt through plan preparation or review, or on sites in the Green Belt subject to a planning application, the following contributions (‘Golden Rules’) should be made:

- a) *affordable housing which reflects either: (i) development plan policies produced in accordance with paragraphs 67-68 of this Framework; or (ii) until such policies are in place, the policy set out in paragraph 157 below;*
- b) *necessary improvements to local or national infrastructure; and*
- c) *the provision of new, or improvements to existing, green spaces that are accessible to the public. New residents should be able to access good quality green spaces within a short walk of their home, whether through onsite provision or through access to offsite spaces’ (NPPF 2024: 46).*

3.1.6 Paragraph 157

‘Before development plan policies for affordable housing are updated in line with paragraphs 67-68 of this Framework, the affordable housing contribution required to satisfy the Golden Rules is 15 percentage points above the highest existing affordable housing requirement which would otherwise apply to the development, subject to a cap of 50%. In the absence of a pre-existing requirement for affordable housing, a 50% affordable housing contribution should apply by default. The use of site-specific viability assessment for land within or released from the Green Belt should be subject to the approach set out in national planning practice guidance on viability’ (NPPF 2024: 46).

- 3.1.7 The site is located within the Green Belt on the built edge of Hitchin. Development extends to the west of site around the **Westmill (A)** suburb of **Hitchin (C)** (See Figure 5 for reference). The openness is not unduly affected by the proposals due to existing built edge of the town. The separateness of settlement is retained between Ickleford and Hitchin. There proposals include for provision of 50% affordable housing. The site is sustainable with strong transport links to the town centre with bus stops on Bedford Road. Employment sites are within 600m of the site to the east. Additionally, access to walking routes to the north are strong, the Oughtonhead Common Local Nature Reserve lies 50m to the northwest. The site also includes a landscape buffer on the northern edge, has no built elements within the flood zone and retains a gap for climate change led flooding that may be more extensive. The proposals are very enclosed from the eastern and southern dense hedgerows and trees. This enclosure is likely to continue when vegetation is not in leaf due to the density of stems and branches.

3.2 North Hertfordshire Council's Local Plan (LP 2022):

3.2.1 The North Hertfordshire Council's Local Plan was adopted in 2022. The emerging Local Plan was drafted in 2022 and currently in consultation. Policies relevant to landscape issues are reproduced below.

3.2.2 Policy SP1 – Sustainable Development in North Hertfordshire

'This Plan supports the principles of sustainable development within North Hertfordshire. We will:

- a) Maintain the role of key settlements within and adjoining the District as the main focus for housing, employment and new development making use of previously developed land where possible;*
- b) Ensure the long-term vitality of the District's villages by supporting growth which provides opportunities for existing and new residents and sustains key facilities;*
- c) Grant planning permission for proposals that, individually or cumulatively:*
 - i. deliver an appropriate mix of homes, jobs and facilities that contribute towards the targets and aspirations in this Plan;*
 - ii. create high-quality developments that respect and improve their surroundings and provide opportunities for healthy lifestyle choices;*
 - iii. provide the necessary infrastructure required to support an increasing population;*
 - iv. protect key elements of North Hertfordshire's environment including biodiversity, important landscapes, heritage assets and green infrastructure (including the water environment); and*
 - v. secure any necessary mitigation measures that reduce the impact of development, including on climate change; and*
- d) Support neighbourhood plans and other local planning initiatives where they are in general conformity with the strategic policies of this Local Plan (LP 2022: 40).*

3.2.3 Policy SP5 – Countryside and Green Belt

'We support 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. We:

- a) *Have conducted a comprehensive review of the Green Belt. Land has been removed from the Green Belt to:*
 - i. *enable strategic development at the locations referred to in Policies SP8 and SP3;*
 - ii. *enable local development around a number of the District's towns and villages; and*
 - iii. *define boundaries for villages referred to in Policy SP2 which fall within the Green Belt but were previously 'washed over' by this designation;*
- b) *Have provided new Green Belt to cover, in general terms, the area bounded by the Metropolitan Green Belt to the east, the Luton Green Belt to the west and the A505 Offley bypass to the north;*
- c) *Will only permit development proposals in the Green Belt where they would not result in inappropriate development or where very special circumstances have been demonstrated; and*
- d) *Will operate a general policy of restraint in Rural Areas beyond the Green Belt through the application of our detailed policies' (LP 2022: 53).*

3.2.4 Policy SP9 – Design and Sustainability

'The Council considers good design to be a key aspect of sustainable development. We will:

- a) *Support new development where it is well designed and located and responds positively to its local context;*
- b) *Require Strategic Masterplans to be produced for Strategic Housing Sites and other significant development. Significant development generally comprises residential development of 100 dwellings or more. Exceptionally, developments under 100 dwellings will be considered significant if there are site specific complexities and sensitivities that require a masterplan-led approach. In some circumstances a Strategic Masterplan may also be required to consider the cumulative impact of more than one site to support a co-ordinated and integrated approach to place-making and design.*
- c) *Require Strategic Masterplans and planning applications for Strategic Housing Sites and significant development to (as applicable):*
 - i. *create buildings, spaces and streets which positively reflect and respond to the local landscape, townscape and historic character*

- ii. *create integrated, accessible and sustainable transport systems with walking, cycling and public transport designed to be the most attractive forms of transport and effectively linking into the surrounding areas;*
 - iii. *provide a clear structure and hierarchy of pedestrian friendly streets and well-connected footpaths and cycleways integrate with the wider built and natural environment and communities;*
 - iv. *plan for integrated and mixed-use communities with walkable locally accessible community, employment and retail facilities;*
 - v. *positively integrate with adjacent rural and urban communities and positively contribute to their character and the way the area functions, including addressing cumulative, cross boundary planning and infrastructure matters;*
 - vi. *create and accessible multi-functional green infrastructure network that provides:*
 - *a key structuring and functional place-making feature supporting healthy lifestyles, sport, play and recreation linking into the wider Green Infrastructure Network; and*
 - *a high-quality integrated network to support ecological connectivity, biodiversity net gain, climate adaptation and mitigation linking into the wider Ecological Network*
 - vii. *ensure the effective use of sustainable urban drainage and sustainable water management;*
 - viii. *ensure a hierarchy of linked, high quality and attractive public spaces and public realm that is safe, attractive and supports social interaction for all age groups; and*
 - ix. *design to last with a clear stewardship, management and maintenance strategy*
- d) *Ensure Strategic Masterplans are informed by a technical and design evidence base and include the following for Strategic Housing Sites and where applicable for other significant development:*
- i. *site specific vision and place-making principles*
 - ii. *Masterplan setting out the quantum, scale, type, mix and distribution of land uses, housing and community facilities;*
 - iii. *Green Infrastructure Framework identifying the scale, distribution, type and design of green spaces, biodiversity net gain, strategic drainage and on and off-site linkages:*

- iv. Movement Framework setting out the key access points, strategic highways, street hierarchy and footways and cycleways (on and off site)*
 - v. Urban Design Framework and design principles identifying how the site responds to local character and context and key structuring elements and layout principles (including heights and densities)*
 - vi. Sustainability & Energy Framework identifying site-wide and building scale opportunities for low and zero carbon*
 - vii. Illustrative Masterplan Layout*
 - viii. Infrastructure Delivery, Phasing & Management Strategy*
- e) Encourage the submission of Strategic Masterplans for the Council's consideration and agreement before the submission of a planning application. We will also confirm the scope and contents of individual Strategic Masterplans with applicants in pre-application discussions. Planning applications must be accompanied by a Strategic Masterplan. Where applications have already been submitted to the Council a Strategic Masterplan should be agreed with the Council prior to or as part of the grant of planning permission. Adherence to the Strategic Masterplan will be secured through planning conditions and/or legal agreement.*
- f) Assess proposals against detailed policy requirements set out in this Plan and have regard to the Design SPD; and*
- g) Adopt the Government's additional technical standards for the size of new homes, water efficiency and, in specified circumstances, accessibility' (LP 2022: 69-71).*

3.2.5 Policy SP12 – Green Infrastructure, Landscape and Biodiversity

'We will accommodate significant growth during the plan period whilst ensuring the natural environment is protected and enhanced. We will:

- 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’ (LP 2022: 78).*

3.2.6 Policy SP13 - Historic Environment

‘The Council will balance the need for growth with the proper protection and enhancement of the historic environment. When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight will be given to the asset’s conservation and the management of its setting. We will pursue a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment through:

- a) *Maintaining a strong presumption in favour of the retention, preservation and enhancement of heritage assets and their setting according to their significance;*
- b) *Identifying sites on the national register of Heritage at Risk or on the Council’s ‘At Risk’ register;*
- c) *Periodic reviews of Conservation Areas and other locally designated assets; and*
- d) *Publication of detailed guidance (LP 2022: 80).*

3.2.7 Policy D1 Sustainable Design

‘Planning permission will be granted provided that development proposals:

- a) *Respond positively to the site’s local context;*
- b) *Take all reasonable opportunities, consistent with the nature and scale of the scheme, to:*

- i. create or enhance public realm;*
 - ii. optimise the potential of the site by incorporating Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS);*
 - iii. reduce energy consumption and waste;*
 - iv. retain existing vegetation and propose appropriate new planting;*
 - v. maximise accessibility, legibility and physical and social connectivity both internally and with neighbouring areas;*
 - vi. future proof for changes in technology and lifestyle;*
 - vii. design-out opportunities for crime and anti-social behaviour; and*
 - viii. minimise the visual impact of street furniture and parking provision;*
- c) Have regard to the Design SPD, and any other relevant guidance;*
- d) Within Letchworth Garden City have regard to the Letchworth Garden City Design Principles contained in Appendix 5; and*
- e) For residential schemes, meet or exceed the nationally described space standards and optional water efficiency standards' (LP 2022: 116).*

3.2.8 Policy NE1 Strategic Green Infrastructure

'Planning permission will be granted provided that development:

- a) Protects, conserves and where possible enhances the strategic green infrastructure network;*
- b) Avoids the loss, fragmentation, severance or negative impact on the function of the strategic green infrastructure network;*
- c) Creates new strategic green infrastructure where appropriate and is accompanied by a plan for its long-term maintenance and management; and*
- d) Has suitable mitigation measures or appropriate replacement to satisfactorily address adverse impacts on the strategic green infrastructure network' (LP 2022: 149).*

3.2.9 Policy NE2 Landscape

'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' (LP 2022: 150).*

- 3.2.10 Although the site is outside of the development boundary of **Hitchin (C)**, the site is bounded by development which extends east along Bedford Road to the west within the large suburb of **Westmill (A)**; the town of Hitchin extends further north than the site on Old Vale Way to the east. To the south the grounds of **The Priory School (4)** grounds provide some openness however the school has visible built form. Further open space exists at Kings George Park, which has games pitches, 100m south of the site. The deep grass verge will be retained in the public realm along the western edge on Bedford Road reducing the proposals effect on openness.
- 3.2.11 The proposals preserve the established vegetation boundaries. Views which are illustrated in the accompanying Figures A3 Volume to this report show that the built nature of the site surrounds and strong tree lines within the village screen the site in views from higher ground.

4 SITE CONTEXT

4.1 Overview

4.1.1 This section sets out the context of the site within the surrounding area. It outlines the location, topography, vegetation cover, land uses, designations, townscape, nearby settlements, existing rights of way. Annotated photographs (Type 1) found in A3 Figures Volume A3 Figures Volume under separate cover.

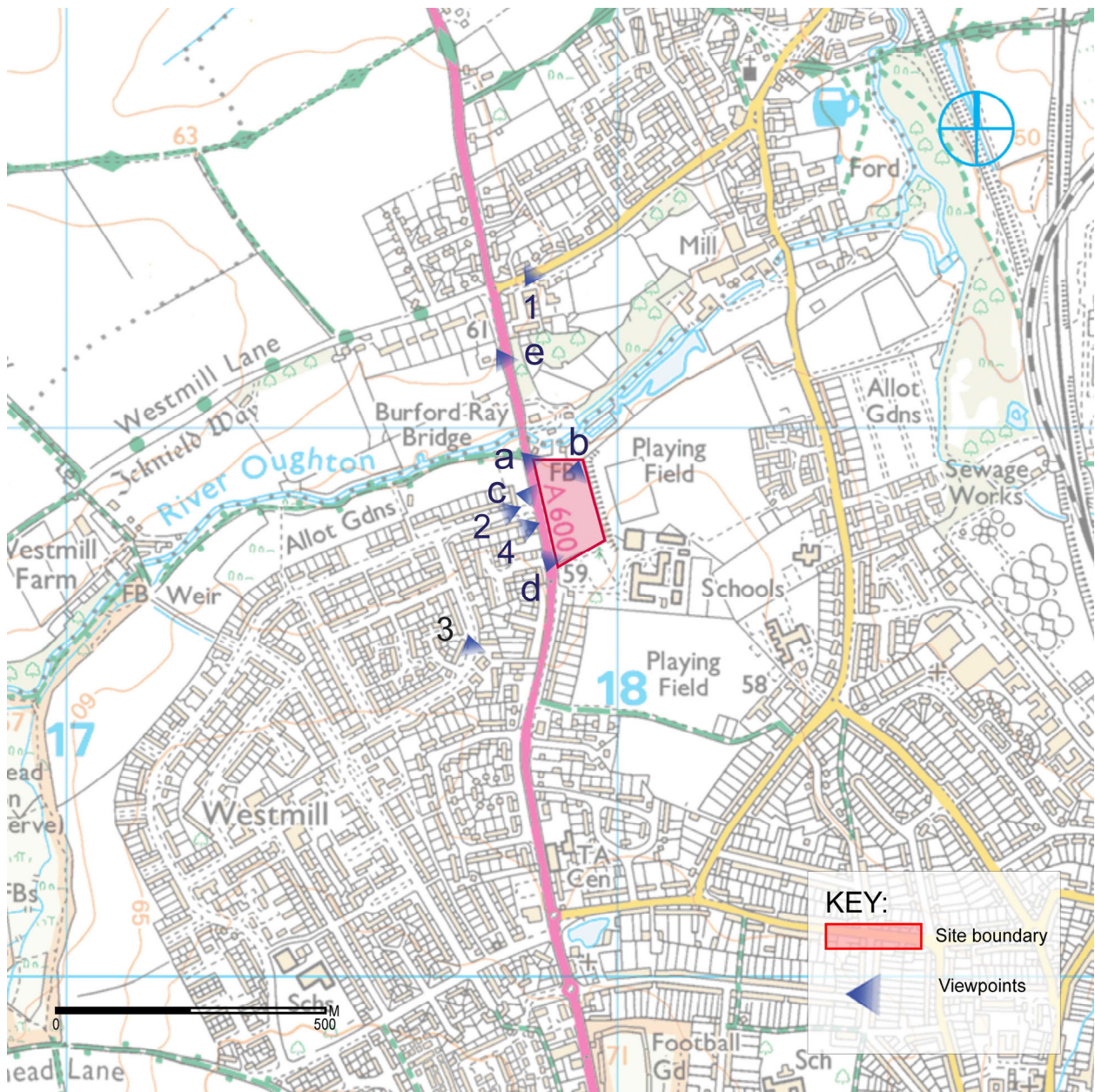


Figure 2: Map showing the location of viewpoints of photographs provided within the A3 Figures Volume under separate cover. Additional views of the townscape throughout the report indicated by numbers (Extract of OS Map provided by www.centremapslive.com at scale 1:25,000)

- 4.1.2 For all quoted distances from the site, unless otherwise stated, the measured distance is the approximate distance in kilometres from the closest boundary of the site to the closest boundary of the location being discussed, measured in a straight line.

4.2 Location and Boundaries

- 4.2.1 The site is located in Hertfordshire at Grid Reference TL 17912 30875 and the nearest postcode is SG5 2UR. The site is on the northern edge of the town of **Hitchin (C)**. The site is within a rural location, however the site is surrounded by developed land to the west, south and east. Beyond the natural break in settlements along the River Oughton, the large village of **Ickleford (B)** lies 160m to the north; and the large suburb of **Westmill (A)** lies immediately to the west. The immediate landscape is characterised by the settlement edge of Hitchin (**Viewpoints b**). Bedford Road is a busy stretch linking Hitchin to settlements in the north including **Bedford**. Ground rises to the southwest along the Chiltern ridgeline. The landscape is crossed by numerous paths. Some routes, the boundaries of fields and roads routes are tree and hedge lined.
- 4.2.2 The site is contained within established boundaries of mature trees and hedgerow plants. The site is made up of a pasture field, this appears to raise a hay crop and there is no fencing on site to graze livestock. Development idiots will not notice this will be contained within the field boundary of 1.7 hectares. The site is within the Green Belt which follows the course of the River Oughton and the settlement gap between Ickleford and Hitchin, the eastern edge of Hitchin and the northern edge of Ickleford; and extends northeast (See Figure 1).
- 4.2.3 On the northern edge of the site is the course of the River Oughton. The river rises at Oughtonhead 2km southwest of the site. The course of the river heads east passing through the **Oughtonhead Common** Local Nature Reserve ("LNR"), a well wooded stretch that extends to within 15m of the site on the western edge of Bedford Road. Directly to the north beyond the river's course is the thatched cottage of **Burford Ray Lodge (2)**, a bungalow with several large sheds between the dwelling and the site. Two more detached properties lie in large gardens directly north of the site. The river continues to the northeast along a tree lined course. The northern boundary of **Field 1** has a non-continuous hedge of maturing hawthorn, ash and conifer. The settlement gap between Hitchin and Ickleford has been reduced by development on Ansell Grange 140m north of the site. The village is extensive to the north of the site however the tree lines loan the river's course screens the village from the south. The 'Ickniel Way', named trail lies 670m to Ickleford's northern edge and beyond this are extensive, irregularly shaped arable fields.

- 4.2.4 On the eastern edge of the site there is an off-site tree belt with a dense hedgerow plants including hawthorn, field maple, blackthorn, dogwood, and mature trees including sycamore, oak, ash, Norway maple and some pine (**Viewpoints c and d**). The density of the tree belt will provide screening to the east even when not in leaf. Directly to the east lies sports fields associated with **The Priory School (4)** and the all-weather pitch is used by the Hitchin Belles Football Club. Beyond the playing fields are the northern reaches of Hitchin on Old Hale Way which is surrounded by extensive allotments. East of the site are two substantial employment areas separated by a main railway line which splits to links Hitchin with Cambridge and East Anglia to the east and Peterborough and north, and London to the south. Letchworth Garden City is only 3km to the northeast however there is a distinct settlement gap between it and the town of Hitchin.
- 4.2.5 The southern edge of the site shares a boundary with **The Priory School (4)** car park. The boundary is a dense, well managed hedge line of mainly ash and hawthorn (**Viewpoint b**). Within the school grounds there are mature broadleaf trees to the southeast of the site screening the main school buildings. A modern school block over two or three floors has views over the site. South of the school is King George's Park, a large area of green with facilities for the rugby club. Beyond this and south along Bedford Road the residential areas of Hitchin characterise the townscape. The northern suburbs are generally large dwellings semi-detached or detached with generous gardens established by the 1950s (National Library of Scotland , accessed August 2025). The centre of Hitchin provides an extensive shopping centre with supermarkets and services.
- 4.2.6 To the west the site is bound by Bedford Road. The road is a main route out of Hitchin to the north, and also a busy bus route with routes that link to the centre of town and Hitchin Railway Station. The road has a 30 mile and hour speed limit, bus stops, a crossing island and street lights leading to a suburban character. The western boundary of the site is mainly ash trees of varying ages. The north western edge is enclosed by mature ash, field maple with hawthorn, blackthorn and elm. As the boundary heads south, the vegetation cover becomes gappy with young ash and sycamore trees with hawthorn bushes forming a non-continuous hedge line. The suburb of **Westmill (A)** to the west of Bedford Road was substantially completed by the 1960s with some more later 20th century infill (National Library of Scotland , accessed August 2025). The Burford Way heads west away from the site and is characterised by 1960s semi-detached council housing development. The estate forms the northwest extents of Hitchin and beyond this the landscape is rural. Irregularly shaped arable fields lie north and south of the Oughtonhead Common which is wooded with grazed meadow.

- 4.2.7 Within the site, there is no structures of any kind, and the field is laid to pasture. There is emerging willow, and bramble stands, and the grass mix becomes more varied to the north.
- 4.2.8 Historically the site was part of a wider field pattern that has little resemblance to the enclosures existing today. The site in its current form did not exist, and is likely to have been part of open pasture along the southern edge of the river (National Library of Scotland, accessed August 2025) (See Figure 4). By the late 19th century Hitchin was expanding from a market town due to railway connections in the 1850s, although some areas were cleared for early 20th century redevelopment reflected in the housing style to the south of the site. Further expansion in the mid-20th century saw land adjacent the site developed as postwar council owned estate (Hitchin Historical Society, accessed August 2025).

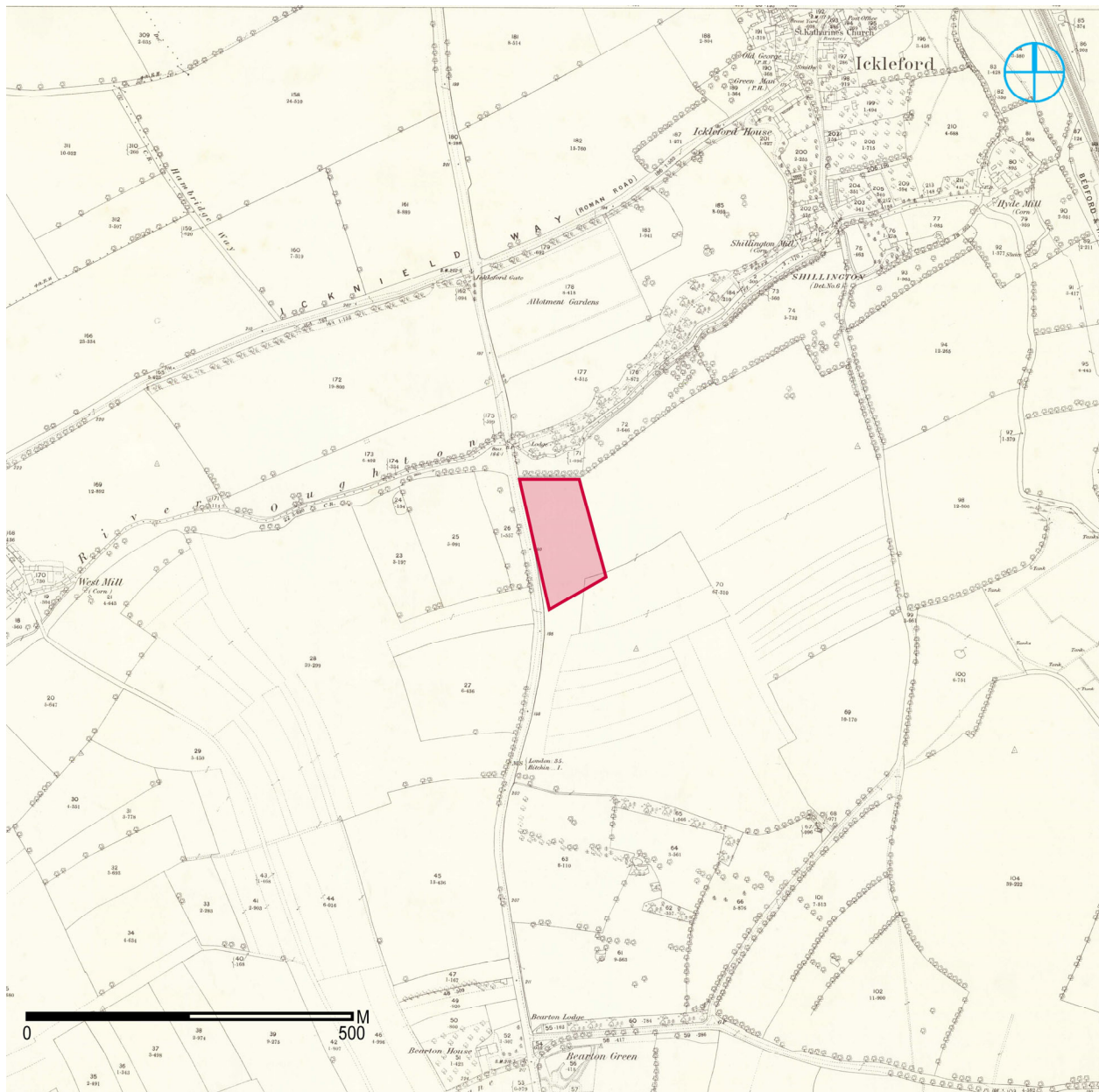


Figure 3: Map showing the site in its historical context Ordnance Survey, Hertfordshire VII.13 (Hitchin Urban; Ickleford; Pirton) - Ordnance Survey 25 inch England and Wales, 1841-1952) (National Library of Scotland) Surveyed 1879, published 1881.

4.2.9 The Application Site landscape receptors are summarised in the table below and the overall sensitivity of the site is described.

Table 4.1 - Application Site Landscape Elements and Features

Landscape Element	Description	Sensitivity to accommodate change
Land form	The application site is on relatively level ground with a fall of approximately 2m from the south to north, average 58m Above Ordnance Datum ("AOD").	Low
Land cover	The application site is approximately 1.7 hectare within one field enclosure (Agricultural land classification is Grade 3 according to Natural England).	Medium
Trees and hedgerows	There are mature trees and hedgerows on all boundaries.	Medium
Water features	There are no water features however the River Oughton lies close to northern edge.	Medium
Built features	There are no built elements on site.	Low
Roads and footpaths	The site is currently accessed from the carriageway Bedford Road	Low



Figure 4: Satellite map showing the location of the site in red (based on Google map accessed August 2025).

4.3 **Land Cover**

- 4.3.1 The land is Grade 3 'Moderate to Good' agricultural land under the Agricultural Land Classification (Natural England Agricultural Land Classification website, accessed August 2025), however clearly it has been in pasture for some time.
- 4.3.2 There are good boundary trees and hedgerows on the western and southern edge, the northern and western boundaries are open in parts and would be a relatively open views when not in leaf.
- 4.3.3 Icknield Way is strongly hedge and tree lined. Most local roads have hedgerows and trees, some non-continuous.

4.4 **Land Use**

- 4.4.1 The landscape surrounding the site is suburban, well managed school grounds and medium density housing established throughout the 20th century. The residential fabric of the settlement includes green spaces

4.5 **Settlement**

- 4.5.1 The landscape to the south of the site is settled and established as part of the historic development of the market town of Hitchin. Early expansion of Hitchin occurred as a result of the railways, however the low density suburban, early 20th century development replaced cramped slums with larger semi-detached and detached housing reflecting the garden city movement of the time which retained large green spaces to town centres.
- 4.5.2 Westmill and surrounding school land is the result of post war local authority housing and infrastructure projects. The housing pattern is of a higher density semi-detached, medium rise flats (three stories) and maisonette homes. The new home building at Westmill has continued throughout the 20th century, with infill building to a higher density and with smaller gardens integrated into the original street layout. There is a new community centre and local shops within the Westmill a short walk from site.



Photograph 1 Typical 1920s semi-detached housing in Ickleford, larger houses set in generous gardens



Photograph 2 Typical 1960s higher density local authority built, semi-detached housing on Burwood Way.

- 4.5.3 Connectivity to the town centre and transport hubs has been integral to the development of northern reaches of Hitchin and therefore the site has good links to bus services, the train station is half an hours walk or bus ride from the bus stops on Bedford Road. As discussed, the railway lines have good links to the main employment towns and cities in the region. Although the town has few rights of way within the built up areas, the network of streets allow for pedestrian movement, and the centre of town and main shopping area is accessible by foot. Numerous PRowS circulate out of town into the countryside and Westmill is adjacent the nature reserve at Oughtonhead Common. Local footpaths link to the named long distance trail Icknield Way. Employment centres are within walking distance of the site.
- 4.5.4 The road network includes Bedford Road as a main thoroughfare linking to settlements north of Hitchin including the large town of Bedford. The A1(M) junction is 6km to the southeast linking to the north and south of England. Individual homes will have ample parking on site.



Photograph 3 Redevelopment of Westmill maintains low rise accommodation at medium density .

- 4.5.5 Architecture is varied within Hitchin reflecting development over the 20th century from the original medieval core centred around the market place 4km to the south of the site. The centre of town has an abundance of listed buildings which date from 16th and 17th century. Typically straight streets of terraced Victorian housing lies close to the town centre. Generally the 20th century expansion of the town has seen different architectural styles, the earlier part

of the century, large brick or stucco semi-detached residences set in large gardens gives way to smaller, low density semidetached homes of brick or render with concrete or clay tiled roofs. Modern developments replacing older buildings within Westmill with some infill development typically is a mixed style with no overall local vernacular.



Photograph 4 Typical late 20th century infill at Westmill where the original layout was lower density.

- 4.5.6 New development to the north within Ickleford at Ansell Grange is characterised by large, detached dwellings with small gardens set around a central green. The vernacular is soft hued bricks and red or grey tiled roofs and executive styles homes.
- 4.5.7 The is within the Green Belt, however the site does appear to be uncharacteristic of the land to the north along the River Oughton that does provide a green break between settlements. The site itself is an abrupt break into the settlement line, and due to the urbanising presence of housing along Burwood Way, Bedford Road and the school , the site feels neglected and of no specific function. It does not appear to be used for grazing or crops, however it appears to have little ecological function. The boundary trees and hedgerow plants however do have green infrastructure value, linking to green spaces within the school grounds and King George's Park to the south.

- 4.5.8 Bedford Road has regular traffic and therefore despite the edge of settlement location there is little sense of tranquillity on the site. The further north within the site there is a sense of distance from the built edge of town.

4.6 **Topography**

- 4.6.1 The topography of the immediate area of the site is slightly undulating, rolling land form with slight valleys to water courses.
- 4.6.2 The geology of the site is Gault Formation – Mudstone bedrock. Superficial deposits are Lowestoft Formation - Diamicton (British Geological Survey website, accessed Augst 2025).
- 4.6.3 The application site is generally level with a fall to the north from 59m AOD to 57m AOD on the northern edge.

4.7 **Water and drainage**

- 4.7.1 The site is on land in Flood Zone 1 that has a low probability of flooding from rivers and the sea. However the River Oughton does lie to the north. There is no additional flooding due to climate change according to the Environment Agency Flood Map for Planning.
- 4.7.2 The land has a low chance of surface water flooding (Environment Agency website, date accessed August 2025).

4.8 **Existing Rights of Way (PRoWs) and access land**

- 4.8.1 In general, the use of the PRoWs will vary according to their proximity to a settlement, and then according to the size of that settlement, such that the footpaths closest to the largest settlements will be those most frequently used. Footpaths appeared well used in this location.
- 4.8.2 There is a strong network of Public Rights of Way ("PRoW") within 2km of the site in countryside areas.
- 4.8.3 **Footpath 5** a bridleway is the named trail 'Icknield Way' to the north of the site.

4.9 **Landscape and other designations**

- 4.9.1 The site is within the local landscape designation, the Green Belt , which forms a settlement gap between Ickleford and Hitchin.

4.10 **Sites of Special Scientific Interest ("SSSI")**

4.10.1 Oughtonhead Lane SSSI lies 1km to the southwest.

4.11 **National Nature Reserves (“NNR”)**

4.11.1 There are no NNRs within 2km of the site.

4.12 **Local Nature Reserve (“LNR”)**

4.12.1 Oughtonhead Common LNR lies 50m to the northwest.

4.13 **Listed buildings**

4.13.1 There are numerous listed buildings within the town centre of Hitchin and village centre of Ickleford. No listed buildings are thought to be affected by the proposals.

4.14 **Scheduled Monuments**

4.14.1 There are no scheduled monument within 2km of the site.

4.15 **Conservation areas (“CA”)**

4.15.1 The site is within 600m of Ickleford CA to the northeast. There are several areas of heritage assets in Hitchin, the closest is Butts Close CA, 900m to the south.

4.16 **Registered Parks and Gardens**

4.16.1 There are no registered parks and gardens within 2km of the site.

4.17 **Published Landscape Character Assessments/ Landscape Effects**

4.17.1 National Character Areas:

4.17.2 The site is located within the **National Character Area Profile: 110 Chilterns (‘NCA 110’)**. The landscape of NCA 110 is described as *‘countryside is a patchwork of mixed agriculture with woodland, set within hedged boundaries’* and *‘Arable farming is concentrated on deep, well drained soils found in the valleys, along the scarp foot and beneath the hills in the north. Nucleated settlements, often featuring historic buildings dating back to medieval times, are found in the valleys and along the scarp foot, as are the major routes. Chalk streams are found only in the main valleys and can be dry in their upper reaches’* (NCA 110: 3).

4.17.3 Key characteristics are:

- *'The chalk plateau is incised by parallel branching valleys gently shelving to the south-east into the London Basin. The large chalk aquifer is abstracted for water to supply London and its surrounds and also supports flows of springs, chalk streams and the River Thames.*
- *There are several chalk streams. Features associated with a history of modification include historic mills, watercress beds, culverts and habitat enhancements.*
- *The north-west-facing escarpment is an abrupt relief feature beside low-lying vales, breached notably by the Thames at the Goring Gap. The escarpment lowers northwards, terminating as distinct hills. The Chiltern ridge offers panoramic views.*
- *Within the Chilterns, views are enclosed within branching valleys, sunken routeways and extensive woodland and hedgerow-enclosed fields. There are hidden, tranquil pockets along single track lanes and rights of way.*
- *.. mixture of arable, grassland and woodland and the numerous commons reflects the dominance of Grade 3 agricultural land. Ancient woodland has remained on extensive clay-with-flint deposits, while very steep slopes are rarely cultivated. There are, however, not inconsiderable areas of Grade 1 and 2 land that are associated with lower-lying areas and river valleys*
- *The Chilterns are one of the most wooded lowland landscapes in England. The area is particularly renowned for its extensive native beechwoods*
- *Pre-18th-century fields defined by ancient, often sinuous hedged boundaries are scattered throughout, including co-axial fields. Parliamentary enclosure fields are limited.....*
- *Remnants of various historic land use types can combine rich and diverse habitats and archaeology. Many key places are publicly accessible, including Registered Parks and Gardens, historic downland and common land. Traditional flood plain landscapes and orchards are the most restricted in extent. Historic routeways, hedged boundaries and watercourses provide connectivity.*
- *Historic downland preserves prehistoric archaeology and supports high numbers of rare and scarce chalk grassland vascular plants, mosses and liverworts. Diversity is enhanced by a mosaic of chalk grassland, scrub and woodland, with Hartslock Wood SAC being one example.*

- *Species strongly associated with the Chilterns include the red kite, pasque flower, stag beetle, Chiltern gentian, shepherd's needle, chalk hill blue butterfly and native box.*
- *Nucleated settlements of medieval origin and land farmed since prehistory are found alongside watercourses and springs in the through-valleys and at the foot of the scarp. Elsewhere, dispersed farmsteads dating from the medieval period and mid-19th-century development around commons are characteristic of the plateau.*
- *The River Thames and its flood plain mark a distinctive area in the south. The river is a focus for settlement, abstraction and recreation.*
- *Major transport routes, including motorways, radiate from adjacent Greater London, associated with significant 20th-century development and extensive urban fringe areas.*
- *Brick and flint are the dominant traditional building materials, with Totternhoe Stone (clunch) being less common, but still distinctive*
- *Numerous parkland landscapes define large, historic estates. Designs by Humphry Repton and Lancelot 'Capability' Brown are represented, and the houses, follies and wooded features provide local landmarks.*
- *Extensive rights of way, commons, open access downland, woodland and some parklands provide access to the countryside. The Thames Path, the Ridgeway and the Grand Union Canal are high-profile recreation routes; locally promoted routes include the Chilterns Cycleway. Private leisure land uses, including golf courses and horse paddocks, are common near urban centres' (NCA 110: 7-8).*

4.17.4 Identified environmental opportunities relevant to the site include:

- *'SEO2 In pockets of historic land use where natural and cultural heritage are both particularly rich, aim to restore and strengthen the historic landscape, ecological resilience and heterogeneity, and to conserve soils. Ensure that species-rich habitats are conserved and extended, including internationally important species-rich Chiltern downland. Secure environmentally and economically sustainable management to ensure conservation in the long term.*
- *SEO 4 Enhance local distinctiveness and create or enhance green infrastructure within existing settlements and through new development, particularly in relation to the urban fringe and growth areas such as Luton. Ensure that communities can enjoy good access to the countryside' (NCA 110: 19-28).*

4.17.5 Key habitats include native beech woodland; chalk downland; chalk grassland; Chalk rivers and streams; wet meadow; and farm landscapes (NCA 110: 36-7).

4.17.6 Settlement is described proximity of the area to London meant that many of the towns along major road and rail corridors expanded greatly in the 19th and 20th centuries, (NCA 110: 38).

4.18 **Landscape Character Assessment (District level)**

4.18.1 The North Herts Landscape Study (Character, Sensitivity & Capacity) (NHLS 2011) places the site in the Area 217 'River Oughton and Purwell Valleys' landscape character area.

4.18.2 The main and distinctive characteristics are:

- *'Mainline railway on embankment*
- *Public parkland at Ickleford*
- *Oughtonhead Common Nature Reserve*
- *Purwell Mill Nature Reserve (NHLS 2011: 109).*

4.18.3 Sensory perception is described as *'mature water meadow landscape enclosed over part of its length by urban development. North of Hitchin the river flows across an open large scale arable landscape. The tree cover and pastureland provide a welcome contrast with the surrounding landscape. Railway noise is an issue'* (NHLS 2011: 111).

4.18.4 The landscape condition is described as 'moderate' with good and widespread semi-natural habitat; high impact of the built environment. The landscape robustness is described as 'moderate' due to prominent impact of land form locally visible; visual unity and a contained sense of enclosure; and a distinct landscape type. The landscape character area's evaluation is to 'improve and conserve' in regard to the landscape condition and robustness (NHLS 2011: 112).

4.18.5 The overall landscape sensitivity of River Oughton and Purwell Valleys is 'moderate' (NHLS 2011: 113).

4.18.6 Visual sensitivity is considered 'moderate', and the landscape value is considered 'moderate low' (NHLS 2011: 113).

4.18.7 In regard to small urban extensions less than 5 hectares, the landscape capacity is considered 'low' due to existing floodplain (NHLS 2011: 114). However this does not apply to this site, which is outside of the flood plain.

4.18.8 Built development guidelines include:

- *'Avoid any development in the flood plains of the rivers;*
- *Retain the character of the River Oughton and Purwell Valleys, ensuring any new development is appropriately sited, and of a scale, form and style appropriate to the character area;*
- *Planting should reflect existing patterns to mitigate building;*
- *Avoid location of new development in visually intrusive locations;*
- *Ensure that lighting association with new development does not create additional urbanising influences on the character area;*
- *Manage and enhance river valley as a corridor of green infrastructure proposals and habitat creation;*
- *Create new and enhanced landscapes in visually prominent urban fringes softening the interface between urban and rural landscapes' (NHLS 2011: 113c).*

4.19 Value

4.19.1 The value attached to the landscape is based on national and local landscape protection; status of the elements within the landscape including natural and cultural heritage; landscape condition; associations; distinctiveness; recreation; scenic and tranquillity perceptual value; and landscape functional value (LI Technical Advice Note 02/21 – 2021). The site is in a landscape that has no statutory protection.

- Natural Heritage – the site is within a pasture field with established boundary hedgerow plants and trees. Although there is some ecological value in the boundary vegetation, the interior pasture has limited value. However there is some connectivity to the river corridor and local nature reserve at Oughtonhead Common. There is a **medium** sensitivity to change.

- Cultural Heritage – the site is in the locally protected landscape Green Belt. The site itself does not fit the pattern of the green belt in that it is limited in habitat value and bears a stronger relationship to the urban settlement edge. The Cultural Heritage value is **low**.
- Landscape condition – as previously discussed the immediate landscape condition is moderate, there is strong tree and hedge lines on the boundary edges however the pasture is subject to some fly tipping and lacks a strong link to agricultural landscapes. The landscape character area landscape condition is described as moderate. The landscape condition is **low** value.
- Associations – the site is not strongly associated with any event or figure. There is a **low** association value.
- Distinctiveness – the landscape character area as having high distinctiveness. However, the site location on the urban edge and poor links to semi-natural landscapes leads to a **low** distinctiveness value.
- Recreation – the landscape to the northwest has good recreational use, with a strong network of PROWs within a local nature reserve. The site itself invites informal recreational use such as dog walking due to lack of enclosure. The footpaths in this location appear to be well used. There is a **medium** recreational value within the landscape.
- Perceptual (Scenic) – the landscape is settlement edge and long views are reduced due by hedgerows and tree belts. The landscape views are intimate. The site offers some openness due to the lack of built structures. There is **medium** perceptual (scenic) value.
- Perceptual (Wildness and Tranquillity) – the landscape has little remoteness due to location adjacent the settlement. It is an active landscape in terms of recreation and road use. There is **low** perceptual (wildness and tranquillity) value.
- Function – the site is unused at present. The small pasture field appear to be regularly mown, site has a **low** functional value.

4.19.2 The overall value that would be placed on the site's landscape would be **low**.

5 **DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT**

- 5.1.1 The proposed 1.7 hectare development consists of fifty dwellings. A small access road enters the site at the northwest, and an access route along eastern edge circulates in the southern portion of the site. The homes will feature a mix of detached and semi-detached properties, of medium density reflecting existing patterns. An area of public open space will link with the existing river corridor to the north. Green verges on the western and southern edge will be retained in the public realm. See Opportunities and Constraints plan at Appendices.
- 5.1.2 An informal play area located immediately north of the built edge in the public realm will provide timber fixed farm animals and tractor for pre-school set in mown grass and connected to the wider POS.
- 5.1.3 The site boundary hedgerows and trees will be retained within the scheme. Only some trees will be removed to accommodate access in the north western corner of the site and where drainage is required. The POS on the northern edge offers an opportunity to enhance the river corridor setting with scattered trees and species rich grassland.
- 5.1.4 The access spurs off the main routes on site will be permeable paving, additionally the parking bays will be part of the SuDs system.
- 5.1.5 The proposals offer 50% affordable housing meeting local authority requirements.
- 5.1.6 The proposals will lead a greater area of public open space in the suburb whilst providing homes well integrated into the existing northern extents of the town.

5.2 **Proposed Mitigation**

- 5.2.1 Mitigation is defined as the 'measures proposed to prevent, reduce and where possible offset any adverse effects (or to avoid, reduce and if possible, remedy identified effects), including landscape and visual effects' (GLVIA3: 41).
- 5.2.2 It is recommended that existing and retained boundary vegetation be protected in accordance with "Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction – Recommendations" (BS5837:2012).

- 5.2.3 No permanent external night lighting should be used and lighting for the dwelling should be timed, down lit and follow the Bat Conservation Trust Guidelines (GN08/23) and the CIE 150:2017 Guide on the Limitation of the Effects of Obtrusive Light from Outdoor Lighting Installations to avoid effects on night skies.

5.3 **Proposals for new landscape planting:**

- 5.3.1 The proposals should seek to follow the design principles within the North Herts Design SD (NHD 2011) which include:

'The Key Design Principles are

- *Character (sense of place and history)*
- *Continuity and Enclosure (distinguish between public/private space)*
- *Quality of the Public Realm (sense of well-being and amenity)*
- *Ease of movement (connectivity and permeability)*
- *Legibility (ease of understanding)*
- *Adaptability (ease of change)*
- *Diversity (ease of choice)*
- *Quality of Private Space (usability)*
- *Sustainability (reducing carbon and increasing efficiency) (NHD 2011: 13).*

- 5.3.2 The scheme will retain boundary vegetation where possible however there is capacity for enhancement along the western and northern edges. The eastern and southern vegetation boundaries are strong and should be retained within the scheme. In regard to mitigation there is a 6m easement in the POS which restrict trees planting and species.

- 5.3.3 New planting within the POS on the northern edge should be layered to retain some visual permeability in keeping with the river corridor landscape to the north. The proposals offer an opportunity for '*softening the interface between urban and rural landscapes*' which is a guideline for development in this landscape character area. The Landscape Strategy is provided under separate cover.

- 5.3.4 Generally views are not affected by the scheme, the built settlement edge means that only some dwellings will experience a change to views, and this does not penetrate further than the first row of dwellings to the west. The retaining wall to the north is softened by native planting that will also deter graffiti.
- 5.3.5 All existing boundaries except the break for access and swales will be retained for landscape value and biodiversity. The scheme provides extensive new tree planting in keeping with a settlement edge location.
- 5.3.6 It is recommended that all new tree planting avoids ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) which is dominant in the boundaries due to ash dieback, *Chalara fraxinea*, and include species that are resilient to climate change and disease.
- 5.3.7 Careful design and visual impact consideration has been applied at the detailed planning stage to reduce the landscape and visual impacts. The main issue arising is the establishment and maintenance of new hedgerows and trees, and lighting designed not to reduce dark skies. Any lighting scheme should be designed to reduce light pollution, including motion sensor lighting which is down lit to reduce effect on dark skies and movements of mammals.
- 5.3.8 Proposed hedgerow species:
- Hawthorn – *Crataegus monogyna*
 - Dogwood – *Cornus sanguinea*
 - Hazel – *Corylus avellana*
 - Blackthorn – *Prunus spinosa*
 - Field maple – *Acer campestre*
- 5.3.9 Proposed tree species:
- Field maple – *Acer campestre*
 - Hornbeam - *Carpinus betulus*
 - Silver birch – *Betula pendula*
 - English oak – *Quercus robur*
 - Rowan – *Sorbus aucuparia*
 - White willow – *Salix alba*

5.3.10 Proposed tree species for climate resilience:

- River birch – *Betula nigra*
- Hackberry - *Celtis australis*
- Hop hornbeam - *Ostrya carpinifolia*

6 **ASSESSMENT OF LANDSCAPE EFFECTS**

6.1 **Overview**

6.1.1 In an assessment of **landscape effects**, the effects of the development are assessed on the landscape as a resource in its own right (GLVIA3: 70). They consist of the key characteristics of the landscape which contribute to its character; any individual elements or features and specific aesthetic or perceptual aspects of the landscape (*Ibid.*: 86).

6.1.2 This section describes first the landscape effects of any changes the proposed development will have on the nature of the landscape of the site and its environs; and then district and wider landscape character. By combining the understanding of the landscape baseline situation with the details of the proposed change, i.e. the development. In particular, the landscape is assessed according to its sensitivity to change, the proposed development is assessed according to the magnitude of change imposed on the landscape by it, and then the effects upon the landscape can be determined. Therefore, in the case of development of a small housing estate, the **landscape effects** are the likely results the proposal might have on the existing fabric and character of the landscape.

6.2 **Assessment of Landscape Effects on the Site and its Environs: Operational Stage**

6.2.1 The individual elements which are found in the immediate surroundings of the site, and which are all judged to be intact, are:

- (i) Pasture fields
- (ii) Boundary hedge and tree lines;
- (iii) Settlement edge
- (iv) Surrounding playing fields.

6.2.2 The landscape receptors upon which there would be landscape effect caused by the proposed development at site scale are:

- (i) Pasture fields;
- (ii) Boundary hedge and tree lines;
- (iii) Settlement edge.

- 6.2.3 The landscape elements identified above (in section 6.2.1) are judged to be representative of the immediate and wider landscape character type of the area; the wider landscape elements are described in the regional landscape assessment as in 'moderate' condition. The same report, the landscape is considered to have a low capacity in receiving small urban extensions due to flood risk, however it has been established this development is not at risk. Additionally, the site overall has a 'low' value in regard to the existing landscape elements (Table 4.1). The site however is also on the settlement edge, and has development to the west and south, with school grounds to the east and is therefore integrated into the fabric of the town. This report considers that landscape to have a **low** sensitivity due to the landscape elements; location; local landscape designation value and lack of connectivity to protected features.
- 6.2.4 The long term change to the fabric of the site will be an introduction of the built form, including access routes and parking. Although this affects the land cover and land use of the site, it does not change the landform or field pattern within the wider landscape. The development would introduce new elements into the landscape at close scale and owing to site conditions, including the visible settlement edge, this would be an extension to the settlement. The site is in a rural location; however the site relates strongly to its suburban surroundings. It is therefore judged that the proposal does introduce some new built elements into the landscape, however these will be in the context of the existing settlement. The sensitivity of the site receptor is **low** due to the overall evaluation.
- 6.2.5 The magnitude of change for the site itself is considered to be **medium**. The site sits comfortably within the settlement edge and although there will be an introduction of the built form, important landscape elements will be retained. The proposals are an adverse change due to loss of open ground.
- 6.2.6 The **low** magnitude nature of the operational effects on the **medium** sensitivity of the landscape elements, would therefore be **slight/moderate adverse** effect on the immediate site.
- 6.3 **Assessment of Landscape Effects on the Local Townscape Character**
- 6.3.1 The suburb of Westmill has developed over the 20th century as local authority housing with additional infill and replacement buildings adding to a mixed of housing types. Some dwellings are likely to have passed into private hands. As described, there is no distinct vernacular to housing local to the site. There are no structures of heritage importance within influencing distance of the site. There are no listed or protected structures with a visual relationship to the

site. Conservation Areas have no visual relationship to the site. Therefore the sensitivity of the townscape receptor is **low** due to the overall evaluation.

6.3.2 The magnitude of change for the site itself is considered to be **medium**. The site sits comfortably within the settlement edge. The housing type has been designed to reflect local housing densities. Heights of buildings will reflect those dwellings on the western edge of Bedford Road.

6.3.3 The **medium** magnitude nature of the operational effects on the **low** sensitivity of the landscape elements, would therefore be **slight/moderate** and **neutral** effect on the local townscape.

6.4 Assessment of Landscape Effects on the District/Local Landscape Character

6.4.1 The proposals are within the North Herts Landscape Study (Character, Sensitivity & Capacity) (NHLS 2011) places the site in the Area 217: 'River Oughton and Purwell Valleys' landscape character type. The key building management guidance relevant to the site are integration of proposals by avoiding the flood plain; ensuring development is appropriately sited, and of a scale, form and style appropriate to area, use of unobtrusive locations and vegetation similar to existing, and enhance green infrastructure along river corridor, all of which can be achieved on site.

6.4.2 The local landscape character is intact although the landscape assessment describes the character area as 'moderate'; a 'moderate' landscape value and a 'moderate' visual sensitivity (NHLS 2011). However, the site itself has visual permeability with the settlement edge, despite being enclosed from the east and south. In regard to value beyond the statutory designations the site and locale is judged to be **medium**.

6.4.3 The site is located in the Green Belt. The site appears to be to be an aberration, in that it does not follow the line of settlement and bears little landscape relationship to the river corridor. The settlement gap will be maintained as would the openness of the Green Belt. The site would not fundamentally undermine the purpose of the Green Belt and presents as an opportunity to utilise 'Grey Belt' land. The location of the site is sustainable for travel; employment; services and access to the national environment without putting undue pressure of the Green Belt.

6.4.4 In this regard the local landscape character is judged to have **medium** sensitivity to change.

- 6.4.5 The proposals do constitute a **low** magnitude of change to the local landscape, the site is unlikely to have a landscape effect on the rurality of the landscape to the north of the settlement extending the suburban edge to the east, the landscape to the north is already settled despite the river corridor. The proposals do not affect the setting of protected structures, however the landscape is Green Belt. There will be some increase in activity within the local landscape. The proposals are an adverse change to local landscape character.
- 6.4.6 Due to the **medium** sensitivity of the local landscape character and **low** magnitude of change, there would therefore be a **slight/moderate adverse** effect on the immediate landscape. However, the proposals would see underused land on the settlement edge providing housing without visual intrusion into the countryside.

6.5 Assessment of Landscape Effects on Wider Landscape Character

- 6.5.1 The proposals lie in the **National Character Area Profile: 110 Chilterns** as previously described. On the basis of the study area being representative of the NCA, it is considered that the overall sensitivity of the landscape character type is **medium** (see Appendix 3). The site has few features of the character type, and the proposals lie beyond influencing distance of the Chilterns AONB. Although in the wider landscape long views are possible, the site is within the urban fabric of Hitchin and therefore discreet. Therefore, the wider landscape character has a **medium** sensitivity, however there is a **negligible** magnitude of change.
- 6.5.2 There is a **negligible** magnitude of change on the **medium** sensitivity of the landscape elements, which would therefore have a **slight neutral** effect on the wider landscape due to the sensitivity of the landscape, however there will be no perceived change to wider landscape due to the urban location.

6.6 Assessment of Landscape Effects on the Site and its Environs: Construction Stage

- 6.6.1 During construction of the development, expected to be of medium to extensive duration, the potential area from where the development may be seen is the same as the existing and operational visibility. Delivery lorries and other plant and equipment are likely to be visible from the immediate boundaries although there will continue to be enclosure by the existing vegetation. Construction traffic are likely using the field entrance on the south western edge until the new access point is engineered. Given the temporary nature of the construction phase and medium size of the proposals it is considered that the magnitude of change during construction would be **medium** for landscape receptors.

6.6.2 The landscape receptors that would be affected by the proposed development at site scale are the same as those discussed above, and walking routes which does include sensitive receptors.

6.6.3 Both the development and construction area fit within the property boundaries.

6.6.4 The construction of the development will be a **medium** magnitude of change to the immediate landscape which is considered to have **low** sensitivity to change.

6.6.5 The construction effects of the proposals to the fabric of the site's landscape would be **slight/moderate** and **adverse**.

6.7 Cumulative Landscape Effects

6.7.1 Consideration has been given to the potential cumulative landscape effects of the proposed housing development. For the purposes of this report, this assessment has been limited to other major developments which could be considered as having cumulative effects within the 1km study area on the landscape character.

6.7.2 The site is located on the settlement edge. The development of the site will not lead to a reduction in the settlement gap, or be a major intrusion into the countryside because the site bears a strong relationship the urban extents of the town. There are no other applications within the planning system other than small domestic extensions that would lead to a cumulative effect. The proposals, if permitted are unlikely to lead to further development in the area.

6.7.3 The local landscape has a **medium** sensitivity to change. The introduction of new built elements to the landscape is a **low** magnitude due to retention of landscape elements. Therefore, there is **slight/moderate** and **neutral** cumulative effect.

Landscape Receptors	Nature of Effect	Sensitivity	Value	Magnitude	Potential Effect	Additional Mitigation	Magnitude	Residual Effect
Effects on Site Landscape Receptors								
The site	Construction Localised	Low	Medium	Construction Medium	Construction Moderate/ Adverse	Hoarding CEMP	Construction Low	Construction Slight-moderate/ Adverse
	Operation Limited			Operation Medium	Operation Slight-moderate/ Adverse	Maintain/enhance boundary vegetation in public realm/ POS	Operation Low	Operation Slight / Neutral
Effects on Local Townscape receptor								
Westmill	Construction Localised	Low		Construction Medium	Construction Slight-moderate/ Adverse	Hoarding CEMP	Construction Medium	Construction Slight-moderate/ Adverse
	Operation Limited			Operation Medium	Operation Slight-moderate/ Neutral	Maintain/enhance boundary vegetation in public realm/ POS	Operation Low	Operation Slight / Neutral
Effects on Local Landscape Character								
Area 217: River Oughton and Purwell Valleys	Construction Localised	Medium		Construction Low	Construction Slight-moderate/ Adverse	Hoarding CEMP	Construction Low	Construction Slight-moderate/ Adverse
	Operation Limited			Operation Low	Operation Slight-moderate /Adverse	Maintain/enhance boundary vegetation in public realm	Operation Negligible	Operation Slight /Neutral
Effects on Wider Landscape Character								
National Character Area Profile: 110 Chilterns	Construction Localised	Medium		Construction Negligible	Construction Slight/Adverse	Hoarding CEMP	Construction None	Construction None
	Operation Limited			Operation Negligible	Operation Slight/Neutral	Maintain/enhance boundary vegetation in public realm	Operation Negligible	Operation Slight/Neutral
Cumulative Landscape Effect								
Settlement edge of Hitchin/Westmill	Construction Localised	Medium	Medium	Construction Low	Construction Slight-moderate /Adverse	Hoarding CEMP	Construction Low	Construction Slight-moderate /Adverse
	Operation Limited			Operation Low	Operation Slight-moderate /Neutral	Maintain/enhance boundary vegetation in public realm	Operation Negligible	Operation Slight/Neutral

7 **ASSESSMENT OF VISUAL EFFECTS**

7.1 **Overview**

- 7.1.1 In this section, **visual effects** are considered by assessing both the views which specific receptors are likely to see, and the general visual amenity experienced by people. These are then considered in conjunction with the baseline situation and the proposals for the development to enable the assessment of likely extent of visual effects (GLVIA3: 98).
- 7.1.2 Thus, the section describes the visual effect of the development where there are views towards the site, and any factors that limit or prevent views. The desktop studies and field surveys have identified viewpoints regarded as representative of the range of views and receptors from around the site. The selected viewpoints are not intended to cover every possible view, but rather are representative of a range of receptor types e.g. residents, walkers and road users from various directions and distances from the site boundary. Some viewpoints were selected from which the ZTV indicated that there would be a view of the site, however, at a number of these locations, no views of the site were possible. This illustrates the conservative nature of the ZTV process, as it does not include the screening effects of smaller trees and hedgerows. Conversely, it is possible that some views which are not highlighted by the ZTV mapping analysis become clear during the field study, these are discussed if relevant below. The ZTV analysis is located in the A3 Figures Volume submitted under separate cover.
- 7.1.3 A visual analysis from the representative viewpoints has been carried out to determine how the proposed development might influence the visual amenity of the surrounding landscape. The assessment was carried out as part of the site survey, with the photographic assessment recording the character of the view and the existing visibility of the site. It should be noted that there are no long distance views of the site whilst vegetation is in leaf and visual receptors were limited to those adjacent the site.
- 7.1.4 The site survey and photographic assessment were undertaken on a day of light cloud on 14 August 2024. The locations of the representative viewpoints are shown at Figure 2.

Assessment of visual effects on the site and its environs: Operational stage**7.2 Transport routes**

7.2.1 The site will be accessed from Bedford Road. The busy carriageway is generally existing built form of Hitchin. The site's western edge does come within view approaching from the south (**Viewpoint e**) however the interior is only visible from alongside the site. Approaching from the north, the current tree lines screens the site until drivers are alongside the western boundary, however this is likely to become more open when trees are removed for access (**Viewpoint a**). The visual receptors would have a **low** sensitivity, with drivers usually focused on the road, and the context in an urban environment with housing all along the western edge of Bedford Road. The magnitude of change is judged to be **low**, as changes on site will be new built elements in the context of urban surroundings. The visual effect is therefore judged to be **slight** and **adverse** for drivers only. The proposals for tree and boundary planting will reduce the magnitude of change over time however the changes will remain **slight** but neutral.

7.2.2 Views from Burford Way open up as drivers approached the junction with Bedford Road (**Viewpoint c**) with partial views of the interior of the site. The visual receptors would have a **low** sensitivity as drivers are usually focussed on the road, with only partial views being affected. The magnitude of change is judged to **low**, as views of changes on site will be within the context of the built up settlement edge of Hitchin. The visual effect is therefore judged to be **slight adverse** for drivers only. Over time the effect is likely to remain the same

7.3 Settlements, residential and commercial properties

7.3.1 Distances in this section are approximate. Properties and settlements have been mapped and approximate distances measured from the closest boundary of the site to the closest development boundary of the village, town, group of properties or property in a straight line unless otherwise stated. Site analysis and visit has been used to select those properties likely to have a visual relationship with the site. The main settlements around the site are marked for completeness.

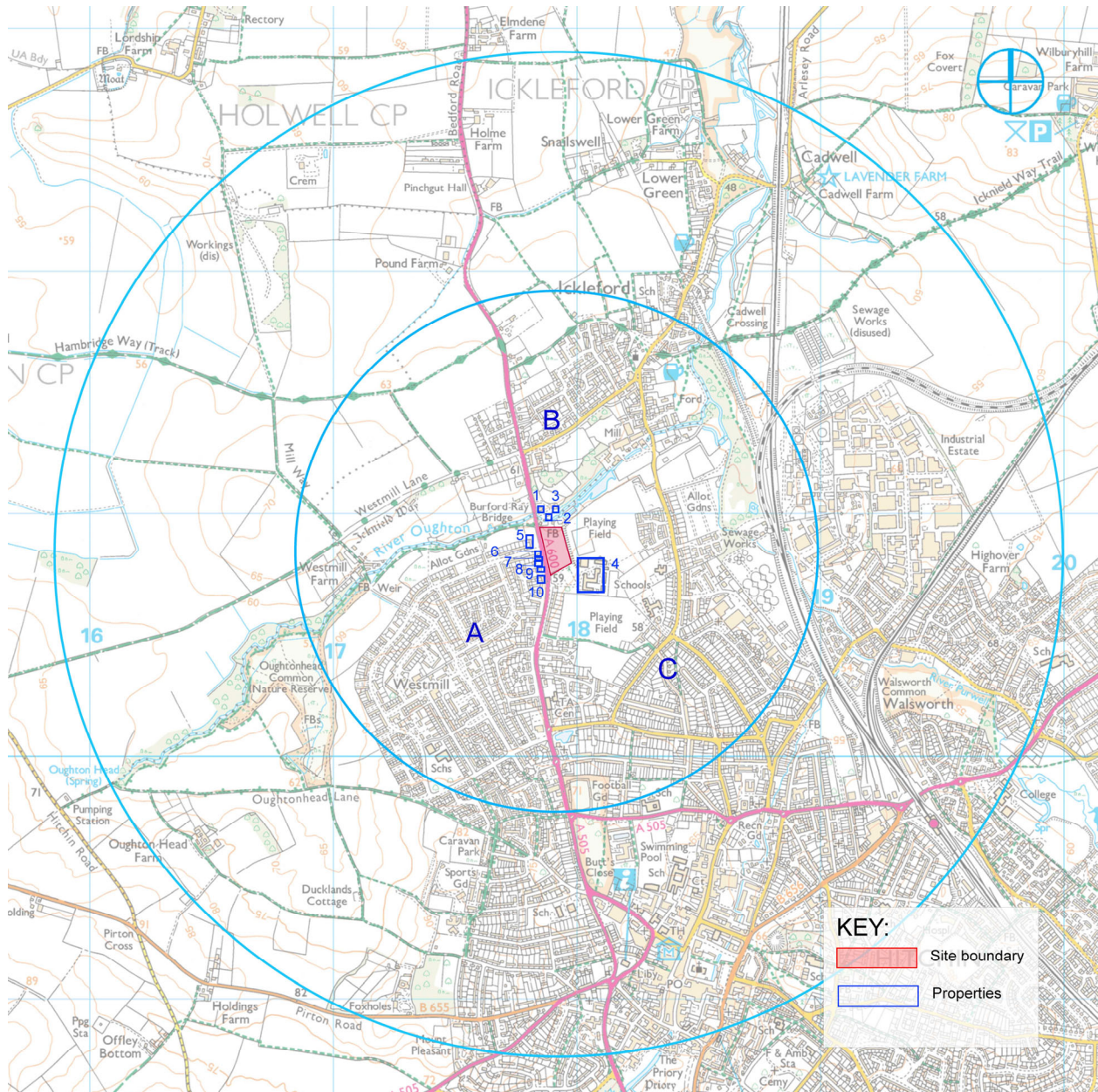


Figure 5: Map showing the location of settlements and properties. Blue circles indicate 1km and 2km from the centre of the site. Noted properties indicated in blue, each numbered. Settlements are denoted by letter. (OS Map provided by www.centremaps/live.com at scale 1:25,000)

7.3.2 Figure 5 (above) shows the locations of the settlements (marked with letters), and the dwellings, other properties or groups thereof (marked with numbers). Dwellings and settlements within the study area include:

7.3.3 **The Cottage (1)** lies 65m to the north beyond the course of the River Oughton. The cottage is over one floor with accommodation in the roof and in a slightly elevated position above the river. Views are very limited due to the intervening trees and hedge plant, however when not in leaf views may open up. The visual receptors would have a **medium** sensitivity due to

primary views being seasonally screened. The magnitude of change is judged to be **low**, as changes on site will not be clearly visible and there is significant gap between the built edge of the development and the cottage. The visual effect is therefore judged to be **slight/moderate** and **adverse** change. The proposals for tree and boundary planting will increase the screening potential of vegetation even when not leaf although this is likely to become a **slight/moderate neutral** change .

7.3.4 **Burford Ray Lodge (2)** lies 45m to the north beyond the course of the River Oughton. The garden area appear to share the northern boundary, and a large timber shed lies between the cottage and the site. The cottage is over one floor with accommodation in the roof. Views will be very limited due to the garden shed. The visual receptors would have a **medium** sensitivity due to primary views being mainly screened. The magnitude of change is judged to be **low**, as changes on site will not be clearly visible and there is significant gap between the built edge of the development and the cottage. The visual effect is therefore judged to be **slight/moderate** and **adverse** change. The proposals for tree and boundary planting will not reduce the magnitude of change due to the interrupted views already existing.

7.3.5 **Oughton Barn (3)**, building line lies 70m to the north of the site. The dwelling is screened by dense vegetation including conifer and views are likely to be very limited. The visual receptors would have a **medium** sensitivity due to primary views being mainly screened and seasonal. The magnitude of change is judged to be **negligible**, as changes on site will barely perceptible. The visual effect is therefore judged to be **slight** and **adverse** change

7.3.6 **The Priory School (4)** has several buildings over two to three floors to the south of the site. The main school buildings are over 60m to the southeast of the site beyond tree groups. Views are likely to be limited from most buildings with only seasonal views from the closest buildings. The boundary is enclosed by substantial hedgerow however this only screens views from lower floors open (**Viewpoint b**). The visual receptors would have a **low** sensitivity due to most visual receptors being engaged in study, and teachers engaged in work. The magnitude of change is judged to be **medium**, as changes on site will be visible and extensive from elevated positions. The visual effect is therefore judged to be **slight/moderate** and **adverse** change. The proposals for boundary planting is not likely reduce the magnitude of change over time in views from the south.

7.3.7 **2 -8 Burford Way (5)** are a terrace of dwellings facing the site adjacent Burford Way. The dwellings are over two floors, the building line is approximately 40m west of the site although living spaces within the houses may be to the rear. Views are partially obscured by a tree line

on Bedford Road and Site boundary vegetation, however this is seasonal screening only. The visual receptors would have a **medium** sensitivity due to only secondary views or views through small windows being affected. The magnitude of change is judged to **medium**, as changes on site will be visible but not dominant at this settlement edge location (**Viewpoint c**). The visual effect is therefore judged to be **moderate**. This is a **significant, adverse** change to partial and seasonal views only. Tree and hedgerow planting will reduce the effect of the development over time to **low** in this suburban context leading to a **slight/moderate** and **adverse** visual effect.

- 7.3.8 **1a to 1c Burford Way (6)** lies approximately 20m to the west on Burford Way. The terraced dwellings are orientated to the north, and no windows overlook the site. Only oblique upper storey views are possible. The visual receptors would have a **medium** sensitivity due to secondary views being affected. The magnitude of change is judged to be **low**, as changes on site will be barely perceptible and not dominant at this settlement edge location. The visual effect is therefore judged to be **slight/moderate** and **adverse** change.
- 7.3.9 **321 -325 Bedford Road (7)** are terraced, two story dwellings orientated towards the site, approximately 20m to the west. The visual receptors would have a **medium** sensitivity due to only secondary views or views through small windows being affected. The magnitude of change is judged to **medium**, as changes on site will be visible but not dominant at this settlement edge location. The visual effect is therefore judged to be **moderate**. This is a **significant, adverse** change to views. Tree and hedgerow planting will reduce the effect of the development over time to **low** in this suburban context leading to a **slight/moderate** and **adverse** visual effect.
- 7.3.10 **Carling Place (8)** is a cul de sac to the west of Bedford Road. Entrance properties lie approximately 20m from the site boundary. All dwellings possibly have living areas orientated towards the site, however windows are small, and the dwellings are partially enclosed by evergreen shrubbery. The visual receptors would have a **medium** sensitivity due to only secondary views or views through small windows being affected. The magnitude of change is judged to **medium**, as changes on site will be visible but not dominant at this settlement edge location. The visual effect is therefore judged to be **moderate**. This is a **significant, adverse** change to views. Tree and hedgerow planting will reduce the effect of the development over time to **low** in this suburban context leading to a **slight/moderate, adverse** visual effect.
- 7.3.11 **313 – 315 Bedford Road (9)**, are semi-detached properties approximately 30m off the site boundary, set back from the building line of Carling Place. Living room windows have partial

views of the southern portion of the site. The visual receptors would have a **high** sensitivity due to primary views being affected. The magnitude of change is judged to **low**, as changes on site will be visible but not dominant at this settlement edge location. The visual effect is therefore judged to be **moderate/slight** and **adverse** change to views. Tree and hedgerow planting are unlikely to change the visual effect because the magnitude of change will remain low.

7.3.12 **307 – 311 Bedford Road (10)** lie approximately 30m to the southwest of the site. The dwellings are detached and over two floors with oblique views to the northeast and the site. Views will be partial, seasonal and changes viewed within the suburban context (**Viewpoint e**). The visual receptors would have a **medium** sensitivity due to limitation on the views possible. The magnitude of change is judged to be **low**, as changes on site will be perceptible but not dominant at this settlement edge location. The visual effect is therefore judged to be **slight/moderate** and **adverse** change.

7.3.13 **Westmill (A)** is the extensive suburb of Hitchin to the west of the site. Views are limited by the built form along Bedford Road to dwellings within the suburb. Other than those views described, it is unlikely that any other property will be affected by the proposals.

7.3.14 **Ickleford (B)** lies 160m to the north along Bedford Road and extends to the northeast. The tree'd course of the River Oughton is a visual barrier to views from slightly higher ground to the north of the site (**Viewpoint f**). This will persist even when vegetation is not in leaf due to the density of cover.

7.3.15 **Hitchin (C)** lies immediately to the south of the site. Other than those views described, views are obscured by tree lines and dwellings along Bedford Road orientated away from the site.

7.3.16 There are no other settlements within 2km of the site.

7.4 **Public Rights of Way, other paths, and public open spaces**

7.4.1 There is an extensive number of PRoWs within 2km of the site, however these are mainly outside of the settlement. Please refer to Figure 6 for the locations of the identified footpaths and Figure 3 for the locations of the images within A3 Figures Volume submitted under separate cover.

7.4.2 **Footpath 1**, (Hertfordshire County Council ("HCC") reference Restricted Byway Hitchin 001) 50m to the northwest of the site on Bedford Road along the northern boundary of the site.

The route heads west along the course of the River Oughton and within the Oughtonhead Common Local Nature Reserve. The density of the tree cover is high with an understorey of the hedgerow plants. The route appears well used and links to other routes to the north. Views will be highly unlikely even when vegetation is not in leaf due to the density of cover. Only when emerging onto Bedford Road and no longer on the footpath will walkers have views of the site (**Viewpoint a**).

- 7.4.3 Similarly to the vegetation cover of **Footpath 1**, users of Oughtonhead Common will not have views of the site.
- 7.4.4 **Footpath 2** (HCC ref. Bridleway Hitchin 011), lies 250m to the south on the southern edge of King George's Park. The built edge of Bedford Road and intervening vegetation screens the site as it will do even when trees are not in leaf. Similarly to the vegetation cover of **Footpath 2**, users of King George's Park will not have views of the site.
- 7.4.5 **Footpath 3** (HCC ref. Bridleway Pirton 028 & Westmill Lane) starts 300m northwest of the site leaving Bedford Road and heading southwest. The built edge of Westmill Lane and intervening tree and hedge lines screen views of the site, as they will do all times of the year.
- 7.4.6 **Footpath 4** (HCC ref. Bridleway Ickleford 016) lies 420m to the northwest leaving **Footpath 3** and linking the Icknield Way in the north. Despite being on higher ground intervening trees will obscure the site and due to high density of vegetation this will continue at all times of the year.
- 7.4.7 **Footpath 5 'Icknield Way'** (HCC ref. Bridleway Pirton 021) This national trail links walking routes to the southwest 'The Ridgeway' to routes in the northeast including 'Peddars Way'. Icknield Way is 180km of footpaths from Ivinghoe Beacon in Buckinghamshire to Knettishall Heath in Suffolk. The local route is a bridleway, Hertfordshire County Council ("HCC") reference BW Pirton 021. There are no views of the site from the trail.

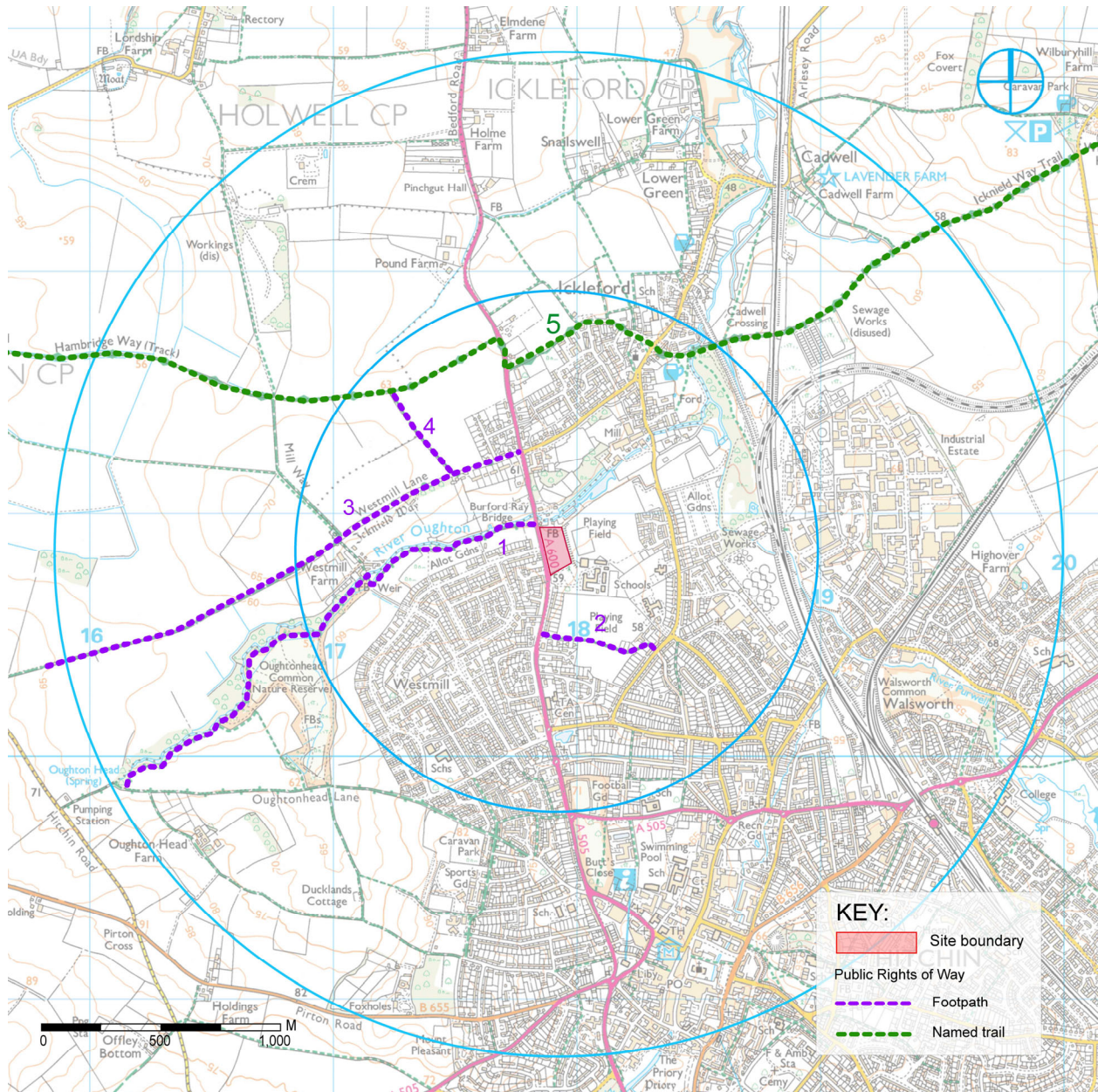


Figure 6: Map showing the locations of public rights of way of relevance to the site. Blue circles indicate 1km and 2km from the centre of the site. (OS Map provided by www.centremaps/live.com at scale 1:25,000)

7.4.8 Other footpaths are not considered likely to have a visual relationship with the site due to the tree cover and built form.

No./ Ref	Location	Approx Distance (m) and Direction (N, S, E, W)	Scale of Effect Adverse / Neutral / Positive		Scale of Effect Post Mitigation Adverse / Neutral / Positive
			Construction Medium Term	Operation Permanent	Operation Permanent
Representative Viewpoints					
a	Bedford Road	45m SE	Slight <i>Adverse</i>	Slight <i>Adverse</i>	Slight <i>Neutral</i>
b	Burford Ray Lodge (2)	SW	Moderate <i>Adverse</i>	Slight/moderate <i>Adverse</i>	Same
c	Burford Road	35m E	Moderate <i>Adverse</i>	Slight <i>Adverse</i>	Same
	2 - 8 Burford Road (5)	35m E	Moderate <i>Adverse</i>	Moderate <i>Adverse</i>	Slight/moderate <i>Adverse</i>
d	307 – 311 Bedford Road (10)	25m NNE	Moderate <i>Adverse</i>	Slight/moderate <i>Adverse</i>	Same
e	Bedford Road	200m SSE	Effectively no change <i>Neutral</i>	Effectively no change <i>Neutral</i>	Same

7.5 **Conclusions: Visual Effects – Operational phase**

- 7.5.1 The greatest effect on visual amenity is likely to be experienced from dwellings on the western edge of Bedford Road. The changes will be viewed through existing hedgerows and tree lines that are likely to be managed for better structure and screening. Only brief views from two roadways are affected. No PRowS are affected.
- 7.5.2 However, the properties on the western edge and along the northern edge will have seasonal views from upper storey windows and some of these are **significant** changes to visual amenity judged by standard criteria used in this report. These are views that can be mitigated by additional planting in some circumstances due the seasonal screening that trees offer. However, these are only seasonal changes.
- 7.5.3 Beyond these receptors, the site is screened by the tree cover and the built form within **Hitchin** and the River Oughton Valley tree'd landscape, and in wider views by land form.

7.6 **Assessment and Conclusions of Visual Effects on the Site: Construction Stage**

- 7.6.1 The construction of the development will take place within defined boundaries. The visual effects of construction activity during this phase would be temporary, however the activity may be more visible during construction.
- 7.6.2 Some transport vehicle and equipment may be visible above the boundaries or seasonally when vegetation is not in leaf. Some visual effects will be experienced from the adjacent boundaries.
- 7.6.3 Vehicular movement to and from the site would be confined to the access route from Bedford Road when established.
- 7.6.4 Given the existing context and the temporary nature of the effects which are, the magnitude of change is **medium**. The visual receptors are likely to be properties on Bedford Road, some of whom that have a **medium** sensitivity to change. The visual effect is therefore judged to be **moderate** and **adverse** which is significant.

7.7 Cumulative Visual Effects

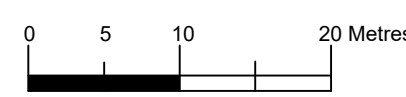
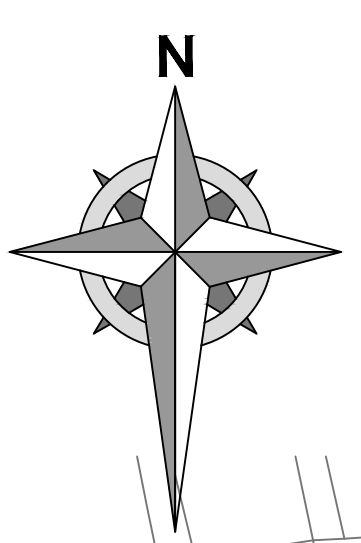
- 7.7.1 Consideration has been given to the potential cumulative visual effects of the proposed development. There are no current planning applications for development within the vicinity of the proposals of a size that would lead to a cumulative effect.
- 7.7.2 However, the settlement edge would be infilled at this location, albeit contained to the north by the settlement gap between Hitchin and Ickleford.
- 7.7.3 Given the local landscape sensitivity is **medium**, and the magnitude of change is cumulatively **negligible**, the cumulative landscape effect is **slight** and **adverse**.

8 CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 Based on an assessment of the landscape character area of the application site and its surroundings, and using the North Herts Landscape Study (Character, Sensitivity & Capacity), and North Herts District Council's Local Plan, national classification and field study, the proposals are considered in regard landscape effect and is not thought to be significant (Appendix 2 Assessment Criteria). However, the proposals would have a significant effect on secondary, seasonal views from some of the surrounding properties according to the assessment criteria.
- 8.2 The landscape elements identified at site scale and its immediate environs, and considered affected by the proposed development are limited by some boundary vegetation that will be retained. Given the condition of the landscape elements identified, these landscape receptors are judged as having a **low** sensitivity to change. The overall magnitude of change as a result of the development at the site scale is considered to be **medium** due to the introduction of built elements, site location and the current site condition. Therefore, for site landscape receptors the effect is **slight/moderate** and **adverse**.
- 8.3 The district landscape of character area is considered to have a **medium** sensitivity to change. The site is within the Green Belt, however the site does meet the criteria to be considered Green Belt according to the National Planning Policy Framework, paragraph 155. The site does not contribute to the openness of the green belt, is not necessary to the settlement gap, and does provide a setting for historical or protected landscape features on or adjacent the site. The introduction of new built elements is considered a **low** magnitude of change to the receiving local landscape character. This judgement is based on the change in land cover which sits comfortably on the settlement edge and the boundary vegetation that will be retained. The result is therefore considered to be **slight/moderate** and **adverse** effect on the immediate surroundings in the long-term.
- 8.4 The wider landscape is considered to have a **medium** sensitivity. The proposals are considered a **negligible** magnitude of change at the wider landscape scale due to the minor change and location of the site. Therefore, this is a **slight** and **neutral** effect on the wider landscape.
- 8.5 It is judged that there would be **slight/moderate** and **adverse** cumulative landscape effects caused by the proposal which is an extension to the settlement edge.

- 8.6 The greatest effect on visual amenity is likely to be experienced immediately adjacent to the site by properties to the west. Twenty-four properties and a school may experience changes to visual amenity, with **moderate** visual effect to views from some ground floor living spaces. However this due to the **high** sensitivity of the visual receptors in some cases, generally there is a **low to medium** magnitude of change. In regard to footpath users, there is unlikely to be any visual effect.
- 8.7 There is a **slight** cumulative visual effect due to the location of the site on the settlement edge.
- 8.8 Mitigation planting would include reinforcing the existing vegetation to the site's northern and western boundaries, including infill mixed species hedgerow and trees. New interior hedgerows should include mixed species hedgerows to create connectivity across the site. Most site boundary trees and hedgerows will be in the public realm and therefore subject to a management plan to ensure their retention and enhancement. A large POS has been included in the scheme on the northern edge to reinforce the settlement gap, have a greater flood zone than is necessary; provide sustainable drainage; biodiversity enhancement and maintain the existing built northern edge to Hitchin.
- 8.9 The site is within a landscape that exerts an intact character, however the site is characterised by the surrounding settlement, is private and underused. The site can provide a positive landscape in which to site new housing.

Appendix 1



Legend

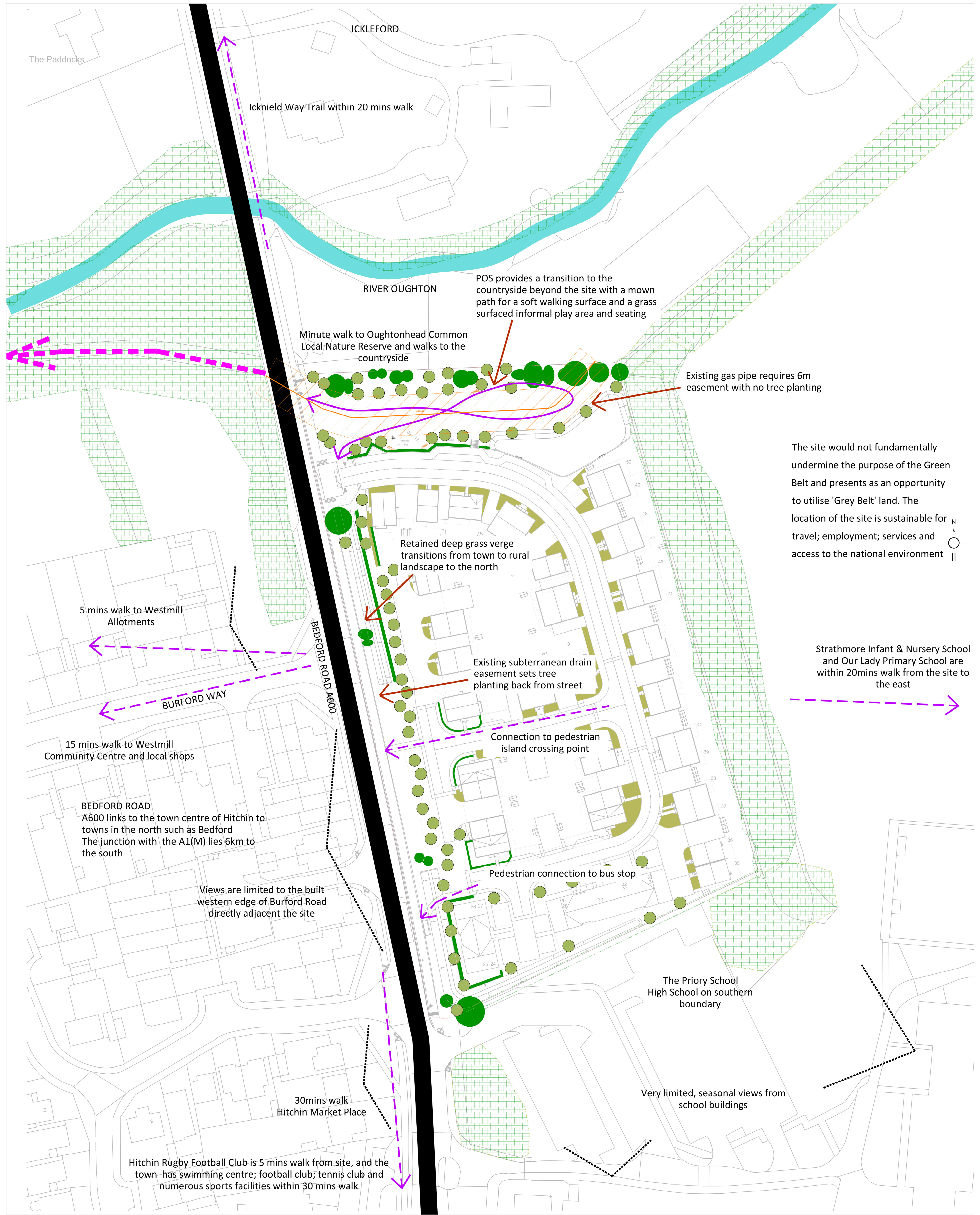
- 26 Private plot number
- 26 Affordable plot number
- Vp Visitor Parking Space
- 6 Allocated parking space
- CSa House Type Reference
- 2.5m x 5.0m Parking space
- 3.3m x 5.5m Parking space
- 3 Disable parking
- EV charging point
- Timber Shed, cycle parking (2 spaces)

Project:-
Bedford Road Hitchin

Description:-
Parking Layout

Date:- August 2025	Drawing Scale:- 1 / 500 @ A1
Drawing number:- AC001-PL-04	Revision:- D

Appendix 2



Notes
Plan to be read in conjunction with the engineer and landscape drawings.

No measurements to be scaled off drawing. Worked from figured dimensions only.

All dimensions shown on drawing are shown in millimetres unless otherwise stated.

All dimensions and levels to be checked on site. Landscape Architect to be notified immediately of any discrepancies prior to the commencement of works.

- LEGEND
- New tree planting on site in the public realm to ensure retention
 - Species rich grass
 - Gardens shrub planting and lawns
 - New native hedgerow planting on site
 - Major road road route
 - Public Right of Way
 - Walking routes to services
 - Views likely to be affected by development
 - Existing retained mature vegetation
 - Informal footpaths
 - Existing gas line



Arborterra Ltd

Date 18.06.2026	Reason for revisions Changes to southeastern edge; cycle route; add EV; add steps; Plot 50	By JW
Client Arte Construction Ltd		
Project: Land to east of Bedford Road, Hitchin, Hertfordshire, SG5 2UR		
Drawing Title: Opportunities and Constraints		
Scale: 1:500 @ A1	Date: September 2025	
Drawing Number: 1496-03	Revision Number: E	

Appendix 3

Assessment Criteria

In accordance with the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Guidelines, 3rd edition (2013) the significance of effects is ascertained with the aid of cross-referencing the sensitivity of the baseline landscape or visual receptor and the magnitude of change as a result of the development. However this report is not part of an Environmental Statement ("ES"), in line with Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations 2017.

Sensitivity of Landscape Character

The sensitivity of landscape character is a measure of a landscape's capacity to accommodate change. It varies depending on factors such as the scale and form of the landscape, landscape pattern, sense of enclosure, sense of tranquillity and remoteness, the settlement pattern and transport network etc. We used our professional judgement to determine the sensitivity of the character areas, based on relevant regional and local landscape character studies.

Table 1 Levels of sensitivity for landscape character

Low	Areas that exhibit a neutral or negative character. May have a strong sense of enclosure that reduces visual sensitivity, are likely to be already affected by man-made elements, have reduced tranquillity, are likely to have little inter-visibility with adjacent landscapes and exhibit a low density of sensitive landscape elements. Includes detractors such as power-lines, industrial derelict or inappropriate built forms with no aesthetic value or evidence of strategic planning. There is a lack of mature vegetation cover, and no landscape designations apply
Medium	Areas that exhibit a positive character. May have some sense of enclosure, or be affected by some man-made elements, or have little inter-visibility with adjacent landscapes and exhibit a moderate density of sensitive landscape elements. There is a reasonable

	distribution of semi-natural vegetation, trees and shrub cover and the overall view of the area is pleasant. Local landscape designations of cultural and historic value may be present.
High	Areas that exhibit a strong positive, character. May be open or exposed with a remote character and an absence of man-made elements. They are often highly visible from adjacent landscapes and exhibit a high density of sensitive landscape elements. Includes landscapes highly valued for their scenic quality, e.g. nationally designated areas such as National Parks, AONB.

Sensitivity of landscape elements

The sensitivity of an individual landscape element reflects factors such as its quality, value, contribution to landscape character and the degree to which the particular element can be replaced. We used our professional judgement to determine the magnitude of direct physical impacts on individual existing landscape elements as follows:

Table 2 Levels of sensitivity for landscape elements

Low	Landscape elements in below average or poor condition which detract from landscape character, such as obtrusive man-made structures such as power lines or large areas of hard standing.
Medium	Landscape elements in good condition but with no statutory protection. Locally distinctive but commonplace features.
High	Landscape elements with statutory protection, which are unique or scarce, for example ancient woodland or feature parkland trees, national trails or cycle routes.

Table 3 Criteria for magnitude of change for landscape character and landscape elements

Negligible	No notable introduction of new elements into the landscape or change to the scale, landform, land cover or pattern of landscape. The proposals would be apparent as a landscape feature without being conspicuous. In addition, the proposals are short to medium term in duration and reversible.
Low	Introduction of minor new elements into the landscape or some minor change to the scale, landform, land cover or pattern of landscape. In addition, the proposals are medium to long term in duration and reversible
Medium	Introduction of some notable elements into the landscape or some notable change to the scale, landform, land cover or pattern of landscape. The balance of the landscape characteristics are not altered but the proposals would be a conspicuous feature of the make-up of the character area. In addition, the proposals are medium to long term in duration and reversible or permanent.
High	Introduction of major elements into the landscape or some major change to the scale, landform, land cover or pattern of landscape. The proposals would be a prominent feature in the make-up of the character area. In addition, the proposals are long term to indefinite in duration and permanent.

Sensitivity of Visual Receptors

We used representative viewpoints in the assessment to represent different visual receptor groups at various distances and directions from the site. Generally speaking, residential receptors, recreational users of Public Rights of Way or people at recognised vantage points have a higher sensitivity to change than people travelling along roads or conducting their daily business e.g. at their place of work.

Table 4 Levels of sensitivity for visual receptors

Low	Includes people at place of work e.g. industrial and commercial premises, public rights of way with low levels of use and road users
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	engaged in commuting or commercial travel and people engaged in outdoor sporting activities.
Medium	Includes non-strategic footpaths or other rights of way, secondary or oblique views from residences, and people travelling through the landscape on roads and trains engaged in tourism or journeys of a recreational nature.
High	Includes principal views by occupiers of residential properties and users of strategic recreational footpaths or other rights of way. Important landscape features with physical, cultural or historic attributes. Views from beauty spots and picnic areas.

Table 5 Criteria for magnitude of change for visual receptors

Negligible	No notable change in the view. In addition, the proposals are short to medium term in duration and reversible.
Low	Some change in the view that is not prominent / few visual receptors affected. Proposals would be visible but not eye-catching or noticeably distinct. In addition, the proposals are medium to long term in duration and reversible.
Medium	Some change in the view that is clearly visible and forms an important but not defining element in the view. The proposals would be conspicuous and form a noticeably distinct feature. In addition, the proposals are medium to long term in duration and reversible or permanent.
High	Major change in the view that has a defining influence on the overall view / many visual receptors affected. A fundamental change in the view with proposals being dominant. In addition, the proposals are long term to indefinite in duration and permanent.

Significance of Effect

The significance of the landscape and visual effects is determined by considering the sensitivity of the landscape element, landscape character or view in conjunction with the magnitude of change. The significance of effects is described as substantial, moderate or slight, as guided by the matrix in Table 6 below. Those effects identified as being of substantial, substantial/moderate and moderate may be regarded as having the greatest significance.

Significance of effect may be affected by factors such as the potential for weather conditions to restrict views, the principal aspect of the viewpoint/viewer, the proportion of a view affected, or the potential for the development to attract the eye or become the focal point in the view to the detriment/benefit of competing visual elements.

Visual effects may be either adverse or beneficial in nature, and relate to the individual perceptions of the assessor. If no material effect is experienced, this may be seen as being neutral.

The term 'significant'

The term 'significant' is specifically used when considering developments with the greatest effect on the environment. These developments are considered as set out in the European Parliament Directive 2011/92/EU and require an Environmental Impact Assessment ("EIA"). Where it has been agreed with the LPA that the development does not require an EIA, or where the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment is being submitted as a stand-alone document, this term will not be used.

Table 6 Visual and Landscape Assessment Matrix

	Magnitude of change (grey shading shows greatest effect)			
Sensitivity	Negligible	Low	Medium	High
High	Slight/Moderate	Moderate/Slight	Substantial/Moderate	Substantial
Medium	Slight	Slight/Moderate	Moderate	Substantial/Moderate
Low	Effectively no change	Slight	Slight/Moderate	Moderate/Slight

Duration of effects

For the purposes of this assessment the following time scales have been used:

Short term: 0 to 10 years;

Medium Term: 10 to 25 years;

Long term: 25 to 50 years;

Indefinite: more than 50 years and permanent.

Appendix 4

Methods for Visualisations

Introduction

The photomontage methodology conforms to the latest Landscape Institute (LI) Technical Guidance Note 06/19 Visual Representation of Development Proposals (December 2019) for photography and photomontage in landscape and visual impact assessment. This document outlines the process by which all photomontage images have been produced.

Data Collection

The viewpoints for photomontage are selected by a Landscape Architect. Consideration to safety and legal access is also given when electing the viewpoint positions for the photomontages. The team conducting the site-work consists of both a photographer and a surveyor who will be responsible for the entire process from image capture to final photomontage. When collecting visual data, relevant control points within the photo are surveyed to a high level of accuracy to ensure that the proposed development accurately correlates to the photo.

Equipment

Relevant camera settings such as focal point are also noted in the document. These settings are selected in accordance with the LI guidance, and are set for the conditions at the time of the photo. When appropriate, surveying equipment is used to establish the position of the photo.

Image Processing

Each panoramic image is produced by the stitching together of a number of individual photographs using industry standard software. The images are then individually checked to ensure both that the original photographic quality is maintained and that the resulting image is clear and realistically stitched together. An overlap of 30% is applied for each image.

Photomontage

Industry standard image-handling software is used to produce the final photomontage image. The

stitched image is the base for the photomontage viewpoint, with additional images captured from the survey or previous surveys introduced where relevant. As per the LI Advice Note, the photomontage composition process includes the digital manipulation of these images. Final images are saved as .jpg format.

Presentation

Industry standard drafting software is used to produce the final deliverable drawing. Both existing and proposed images are shown at the same size and scale, with all required details displayed in the title block of the drawing.

Appendix 5

Data sources:

Accessed between 12.08.2025 and 08.06.2026

An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/396192/landscape-character-assessment.pdf

Bing maps: <https://www.bing.com/maps>

Biodiversity 2020:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/69446/pb13583-biodiversity-strategy-2020-111111.pdf

British Geological Survey:

https://geologyviewer.bgs.ac.uk/?_ga=2.191637357.692369165.1661159011-199718199.1661159011

British Standards: BS5837:12 Trees in relation to design, Demolition and Construction – Recommendations BSI Standards Ltd April 2012

English Heritage listed buildings entries: <http://list.english-heritage.org.uk/results.aspx>

Environment Agency Flood Map for Planning: <https://flood-map-for-planning.service.gov.uk/flood-zone>

Google Earth

Google Earth Pro

Hertfordshire County Council:

Footpath map: <https://webmaps.hertfordshire.gov.uk/row/row.htm>

Hitchin Historical Society: <https://www.hitchinhistoricals.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/HHS-potted-history-for-website-April-2020.pdf>

Icknield Way: <https://icknieldwaypath.co.uk/>

Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013. *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge

Landscape Institute website: Visual Representation of Development Proposals- Technical Guidance Note 06/19– 2019.

Listed buildings: <http://www.britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/map>

Magic Map: <http://www.magic.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx>

National Library of Scotland: [View map: Ordnance Survey, Hertfordshire VII.13 \(Hitchin Urban; Ickleford; Pirton\) - Ordnance Survey 25 inch England and Wales, 1841-1952](#)

National Planning Policy Framework (2023): <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>

Natural England Publications:

National Character Area ("NCA") 110 Chilterns:

<https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/4977697>

Provisional Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) (England):

<https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/127056?category=5954148537204736>

North Hertfordshire District Council:

General Council Map:

<https://maps.north-herts.gov.uk/Maps/Map.aspx?&initialDialog=layersDialog>

Interactive Planning Map:

<https://maps.northherts.gov.uk/Maps/Map.aspx?MapName=LocalPlan&initialDialog=layersDialog>

Design SPD: https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/default/files/files/design_spd_july_2011a-2.pdf

North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031 (2022): <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2022-12/North%20Hertfordshire%20Local%20Plan%202011-2031.pdf>

North Herts Landscape Study (2011): <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-cms/files/CG16%20NHerts%20Landscape%20Study%202011%20-%20Part%201.pdf>

Urban Design Assessment for Hitchin 2007: <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Hitchin%20Urban%20Design%20Assessment%20Sep%202007.pdf>