

Uttlesford District Council
Land West of Braintree
Landscape & Visual Appraisal

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Approved

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'D. Watkins' with a large, circular flourish at the end.

Dominic Watkins

Position

Director

Date

13th June 2017

Revision

Final

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 General

1.1.1 Chris Blandford Associates (CBA) was appointed by Uttlesford District Council to undertake a Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) of land west of Braintree (the Site).

1.1.2 The Site is being promoted by developers and landowners as a location for a new settlement.

1.2 The Appraisal

1.2.1 The purpose of the Landscape and Visual Appraisal is to provide a preliminary high-level appraisal of the development potential of the Site in landscape and visual capacity terms.

1.2.2 The Landscape and Visual Appraisal was undertaken in accordance with the principles of the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (The Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 3rd Edition, 2013). The Landscape and Visual Appraisal was informed by desk top research and a field survey undertaken in May 2017.

1.2.3 The findings of the Landscape and Visual Appraisal are set out in this report as follows:

- Appraisal of the relevant planning policy context for the Site (**Section 2.0**).
- Appraisal of the landscape character context for the Site (**Section 3.0**).
- Appraisal of the Site's landscape character/features and key viewpoints/visual receptors (**Section 4.0**).
- Appraisal of the Site's landscape sensitivities/constraints and opportunities for development (**Section 5.0**).
- Conclusions as to the development potential of the Site in landscape and visual capacity terms (**Section 6.0**).

1.3 Site Location

1.3.1 As illustrated within **Figure WB1**, the Site is 950 hectares and is located 2.6km to the west of Braintree, and to the north of the A120 and B1417 (the B1417 defines the southernmost extents of the Site boundary).

1.3.2 Numerous hamlets / villages are present within proximity of the Site, including:

- Rayne: located 740m to the south-east of the Site;
- Stebbing Green: adjoining the south-westernmost extents of the Site (north-west of Stebbing Green is Stebbing);
- Great Saling: adjoining the Site to the north;
- Blake End: adjoining the Site to the south (located between the Site and the B1417);
- Panfield: located 1.1 km to the east of the Site.

2.0 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

2.1 General

2.1.1 An appraisal of the relevant planning policy context for the Site in relation to landscape and visual considerations has been undertaken, and the main findings are outlined in this section.

2.2 Landscape Planning Designations

2.2.1 Landscape planning designations within and in the vicinity of the Site are shown in **Figure WB1** and described below.

Ancient Woodland

2.2.2 Three of the woodlands present within the Site are classified as ancient woodland, namely Boxted Wood in the western part of the Site, Golden Grove and Rumley Wood both of which are in the eastern half of the Site.

2.2.3 There is potential for development to result in landscape effects on these features. Ancient woodlands should be retained and taken into account during the design stages of any development proposals, with appropriate measures incorporated.

Registered Historic Parks and Gardens

2.2.4 Saling Hall and Saling Grove at Great Saling are both Grade II RPGs, present to the north of the Site (Saling Grove adjoins the northern boundary of the Site).

2.2.5 Given the presence and proximity of PRGs to the Site, there is potential for development within the Site to result in landscape and visual effects on the RPGs, and therefore this should be taken into account during the design stages of any development proposals, and appropriate measures incorporated.

Strategic Gaps / Green Belt

2.2.6 The Site is not subject to any planning policies relating to strategic gaps or Green Belt designation.

Conservation Areas

- 2.2.7 There are no Conservation Areas within the Site, however, there is a Conservation Area adjoining the northern boundary of the Site at Great Saling.
- 2.2.8 Given the proximity of the Conservation Area to the Site, there is potential for development within the Site to affect the setting of the Conservation Area and therefore consideration should be given to the potential siting of development to maintain the setting of the Conservation Area, and heritage advice sought.

Listed Buildings

- 2.2.9 Listed buildings within the Site include properties at Blake House Farm, Onchor's Farm, Parkes and Mount's Farm. Listed buildings adjoining / within proximity to the Site include properties at Stebbing Green to the south-west, properties at Great Saling to the north, properties associated with Braintree to the east and scattered properties to the south of the A120.
- 2.2.10 Given the presence and proximity of listed buildings to the Site, there is potential for development within the Site to result in landscape and visual effects on the listed buildings, and therefore this should be taken into account during the design stages of any development proposals, and appropriate measures incorporated.

Tree Preservation Orders

- 2.2.11 It is not known whether there are Tree Preservation Orders are present within the Site.

2.3 Planning Policy Context

- 2.3.1 The relevant landscape planning policy framework for the Site is outlined below.

National Planning Policy Framework

- 2.3.2 The Government's current planning policies on land use planning in England are set out in the National Planning Policy Framework² (NPPF). The following NPPF policies are relevant to consideration of landscape and visual matters:
- 2.3.3 The core planning principles that underpin plan-making and decision-taking are set out in NPPF paragraph 17. With regard to landscape and visual considerations, the relevant principles are that planning should always seek high quality design, take into account the roles and

character of different areas, contribute to enhancing the natural environment and reduce pollution, and conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance.

National Planning Practice Guidance

2.3.4 The following National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) documents are relevant to the consideration of landscape and visual matters:

- Design - provides advice on key points to take into account in good design (including the importance of creating distinctive places and promoting local character)¹
- Natural environment - provides advice on how the character of landscapes can be assessed to inform planning decisions²
- Light pollution - provides advice on the factors to be considered in assessing the light pollution effects of development (effects on use or enjoyment of nearby buildings/open spaces and on enjoyment of the night sky in areas of intrinsically dark landscape)³
- Conserving and enhancing the historic environment - provides advice on the factors to be considered in assessing the effects of development on the setting of a designated heritage asset⁴

Local Plan

2.3.5 The western part of the Site lies within the district of Uttlesford, the eastern part of the Site lies within the district of Braintree.

Uttlesford District Council Local Plan Adopted 2005⁵

2.3.6 The Local Plan includes the following policies, relevant to landscape and visual considerations:

2.3.7 **GEN2:** Design: states that development will not be permitted unless it has regard to adopted supplementary design guidance and its design meets criteria including that it safeguards important environmental features in its setting helping to reduce visual impact of new buildings and that it provides an environment which meets the reasonable needs of all potential users.

2.3.8 **GEN7:** Nature Conservation: states that development that would have a harmful effect on wildlife or geographical features will not be permitted unless need outweighs importance, that

¹ Planning Practice Guidance – Design (Updated 6 March 2014, DCLG)

² Planning Practice Guidance – Natural Environment (Updated 21 January 2016, DCLG)

³ Planning Practice Guidance – Light pollution (Updated 6 March 2014, DCLG)

⁴ Planning Practice Guidance – Conserving and enhancing the historic environment (Updated 10 April 2014, DCLG)

⁵ <http://www.planvu.co.uk/udc/> (Interactive map), http://www.planvu.co.uk/udc/contents_written.htm (link to Local Plan written statement 2005)

mitigation and compensation measures will be required, and enhancement through the creation of new habitats will be sought.

- 2.3.9 **ENV2:** Development affecting Listed Buildings: states that development affecting a listed building should be in keeping with its scale, character and surroundings.
- 2.3.10 **ENV3:** Open Spaces and Trees: states that the loss of traditional open spaces, other visually important open spaces, groups of trees and fine individual tree specimens will not be permitted unless development need outweighs their amenity value.
- 2.3.11 The Agricultural Land Classification identifies land within the Site as being of Grade 2 (Very Good) and 3 (Good to Moderate) agricultural value⁶. **ENV5:** Protection of Agricultural Land: states, amongst other things, that where development of agricultural land is required, developers should seek to use areas of poorer quality land.
- 2.3.12 **ENV7:** The Protection of the Natural Environment: states, amongst other things, that development proposals likely to affect local areas of nature conservation significance such as ancient woodlands will not be permitted unless the need for the development outweighs the local significance.
- 2.3.13 **ENV8:** Other Landscape Elements of Importance for Nature Conservation: states that development that may affect landscape elements such as hedgerows, linear tree belts, woodlands, river corridors will only be permitted if the need for development outweighs the need to retain the elements and mitigation measures are provided to compensate for the harm and reinstate the nature conservation value of the locality.
- 2.3.14 **ENV9:** Historic Landscapes: states that development proposals likely to harm significant local historic landscapes, historic parks and gardens and protected lanes will not be permitted unless the need for development outweighs the historic significance of the Site.

New Local Plan for Uttlesford⁷

- 2.3.15 Uttlesford District Council are currently compiling a new Local Plan and supporting evidence base.

⁶ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/127056?category=5954148537204736>

⁷ <https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/article/4134/About-the-new-Local-Plan>

2.3.16 The information on the UDC website states that *“The new Local Plan for Uttlesford will bring together all major planning policy for the District into a single document. It will also need to meet the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).”*

Braintree Core, Adopted Strategy 2011⁸

2.3.17 The Core Strategy includes the following relevant policies:

2.3.18 **CS8:** Natural Environment and Biodiversity: states that all development proposals will take account of the potential impacts of climate change and ensure protection and enhancement of the natural environment, habitats and biodiversity and geodiversity of the District, including appropriate protection from, amongst other things, light pollution. It also states that development must have regard to the character of the landscape and its sensitivity to change and where development is permitted it will need to enhance the locally distinctive character of the landscape in accordance with the Landscape Character Assessment. The policy states that the natural environment, in particular designated sites, will be protected from adverse effects, and the restoration and enhancement of the natural environment will be encouraged through a variety of measures, including, amongst other things, maximising opportunities for creation of new green infrastructure networks in sites allocated for development, creating green networks to link urban areas to countryside, and creating and enhancing the biodiversity value of wildlife corridors.

2.3.19 **CS9:** Built and Historic Environment: states that the council will promote the highest standards of design in all new development and the protection and enhancement of the historic environment in order to, amongst other things, respect and respond to local context where development affects the setting of historic or important buildings, conservation areas and areas of highest archaeological and landscape sensitivity.

2.3.20 **CS10:** Provision for Open Space, Sport and Recreation: states that the Council will ensure that there is good provision of high quality and accessible green space.

New Local Plan for Braintree⁹

2.3.21 Braintree District Council are currently compiling a new Local Plan and supporting evidence base.

⁸ https://www.braintree.gov.uk/info/200230/ldf_and_planning_policy/250/core_strategy_and_proposals_map

⁹ https://www.braintree.gov.uk/info/200230/planning_policy/701/new_local_plan

2.3.22 The information on the BDC website states that *“The New Local Plan will include all major planning policy for the District in a single document and will need to meet the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Once complete it will replace both the Core Strategy (2011) and the Local Plan Review (2005).”*

3.0 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER CONTEXT

3.1 General

3.1.1 A review of the following published Landscape Character Assessment information has been undertaken within a 2.5km study area to understand the Site's landscape character context:

- National Character Areas: Natural England's National Character Area Profiles (2014)¹⁰
- County Landscape Character Areas: Essex Landscape Character Assessment (2003)¹¹
- District Landscape Character Areas: Landscape Character Assessment of Uttlesford District / Landscape Character Assessment of Braintree District (2006)¹²

3.2 National Character Areas (NCA)

3.2.1 The Site is located within NCA Profile 86: South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland. Key characteristics include:

- Undulating clay plateau dissected by numerous river valleys, giving a topography of gentle slopes in the lower, wider valleys;
- Lowland woodland pasture and ancient woodlands support a rich biodiversity;
- Large, often ancient hedgerows link woodlands and copses forming wooded skylines;
- The agricultural landscape is predominantly arable with a wooded appearance, with some pasture on the valley floors, and an irregular field pattern;
- There is a dispersed settlement pattern of scattered farmsteads, parishes and small settlements around 'tyes' (commons) and isolated hamlets;
- Lanes are described as narrow, winding and sometimes sunken; and
- A strong network of public rights of way (PRoWs).

3.2.2 Landscape opportunities identified on page 53 and 54 include:

- Enhance the character and mosaic of network habitats;
- Manage and enhance deciduous ancient woodland and parkland landscapes for their contribution to sense of place, biodiversity and recreational value;
- Protect the pastoral valley landscape from further fragmentation by resisting inappropriate development and use;
- Conserve the rural settlement pattern by ensuring that new development is complementary to intrinsic local character;

¹⁰ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/509567797335040>

¹¹ https://www.essex.gov.uk/AnalyticsReports/CB_LCA_Essex_2002.pdf

¹² https://www.braintree.gov.uk/downloads/file/2522/landscape_character_assessment_-_section_7_landscape_character_of_uttlesford_district_september_2006

- Conserve the strongly nucleated character of settlements by encouraging new development to take place within the existing curtilage of settlements;
- Raise the design quality of new and existing development. Incorporate green infrastructure that provides opportunities for wildlife and public access within urban areas and screens intrusive urban influence (especially on the periphery of settlements), with the use of substantial and appropriate landscaping, such as woodland planting, earthworks and green roofs.

3.3 County Landscape Character Areas

3.3.1 As illustrated within **Figure WB1**, the Site is predominantly located within LCA B1: Central Essex Farmland. Key characteristics include:

- *“Irregular field pattern of mainly medium size arable fields, marked by sinuous hedgerows and ditches;*
- *Many small woods and copses provide structure and edges in the landscape.*
- *Scattered settlement pattern, with frequent small hamlets, typically with greens and ponds.*
- *A concentration of isolated moated farmsteads.*
- *Network of narrow, winding lanes.*
- *Mostly tranquil character away from major roads and Stansted Airport”*

3.3.2 Under ‘overall character’ (page 46), the LCA states that in long views, scattered small woods, copses and hedgerow trees coalesce to sometimes create the illusion of a wooded horizon and that the dispersed settlement pattern is characterised by small, isolated hamlets and farmsteads with a few widely separated towns and larger villages.

3.3.3 The landscape condition is described on page 49. The condition of hedgerows and woodlands overall is moderate, with some hedges lost or fragmented; the LCA identifies a localised erosion of character occurring due to sand and gravel workings; and the condition of the small settlements is described as good however, it notes that farmsteads have large visually intrusive modern sheds and / or conifer planting out of character.

3.3.4 The Sensitivity Evaluation on page 51 identifies that the landscape sensitivity of the LCA to major urban extensions and new settlements is ‘moderate’. Key landscape sensitivity and accommodation of change notes include moderate intervisibility; integrity of hedgerow and woodland pattern; tranquil character away from existing major road corridors / Stansted; distinctive settlement pattern / form.

3.3.5 The easternmost part of the site, which forms part of the valley slopes of a river corridor is within LCA C6: Blackwater / Brain / Lower Chelmer Valley. Key characteristics include shallow valleys and predominantly arable farmland.

3.3.6 The Sensitivity Evaluation on page 100 identifies that the landscape sensitivity of the LCA to major urban extensions and new settlements is 'high'. Key landscape sensitivity and accommodation of change notes include integrity of valley floors; some visually exposed valley sides / open valley floors / intrinsic small scale character of most of the valleys; tranquil character in parts.

3.4 District Landscape Character Areas

3.4.1 As illustrated within **Figure WB1**, the Site is predominantly within LCA B13: Rayne Farmland Plateau. Key characteristics on page 314 include:

- *“Irregular field pattern of mainly medium and large arable fields, marked by sinuous fragmented hedgerows and ditches.*
- *Many small woods and copses provide structure and edges in the landscape.*
- *Scattered settlement pattern, with a few small hamlets.*
- *A concentration of isolated farmsteads, some with moats.*
- *A comprehensive network of rural lanes and Public Rights of Way.”*

3.4.2 Under 'overall character' the assessment states that the LCA is an area of gently rolling hills with wide flat tops and valleys and that away from the valleys there are long distance wide views over the large fields with the field boundaries generally delineated by hedges which are often fragmented. The LCA references the open view south-west of Sebbing to Andrewsfield Airstrip (within the Site) and its associated hangar and aircraft. It identifies the settlement pattern as including several small, often linear settlements scattered across the landscape dominated by 20th century brick houses. The LCA notes that overall there is a sense of tranquillity throughout the area away from the A120 with a comprehensive network of quiet rural lanes and byways winding through the landscape.

3.4.3 On page 316, the character area is identified to have a moderate – high sensitivity to change, taking into account the mosaic of woods, copses and wet meadows, the network of quiet rural lanes and skyline of the valley slopes, sense of historic integrity resulting from a dispersed historic settlement pattern, and presence of important wildlife habitats (including ancient woodland).

- 3.4.4 Suggested Landscape Planning Guidelines and Land Management Guidelines include considering the visual impact of new residential development and farm buildings on the farmland plateau; maintain cross-valley views and characteristic views across the farmland; ensure development is small scale, responding to the historic settlement pattern and landscape setting; conserve and enhance the local hedgerow and woodland patterns, and their ecological structure; and conserve and promote the use of building materials in keeping with the local vernacular / landscape character.
- 3.4.5 The easternmost part of the Site is located within A12: Pods Brook River Valley. Characteristics include:
- Narrow shallow valley;
 - Predominantly pastoral and heavily wooded
 - Wet meadows;
 - Sparsely populated;
 - Pod's Brook is lined by deciduous trees which mark its course; and
 - There are open views into the valley.
- 3.4.6 Land management issues and sensitivities to change include erection of farm buildings that would be conspicuous on the skyline and increased traffic; the overall sense of tranquillity and skyline of the valley slopes could be affected by new development in the area; there is a sense of historical integrity; and that the LCA A12 has a high sensitivity to change.
- 3.4.7 Landscape Guidelines include maintaining cross-valley views and characteristic views across the valley; conserve the hedgerow pattern and strengthen planting where appropriate to local landscape character.

4.0 SITE APPRAISAL

4.1 General

4.1.1 A preliminary appraisal of the Site's landscape character and features and representative views within and into the Site has been undertaken, and the main findings are outlined in this section.

4.2 Site Landscape Context

Landform and Land Use

4.2.1 As illustrated within **Figure WB2**, the Site is broadly within and surrounded by gently undulating landform with gentle slopes, wide flat tops and wide valley sides. Levels within the Site range from 70 to 85m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) across most of the Site, accommodating an airstrip in the north-western part of the Site due to the gentle landform changes ('Andrewsfield Aerodrome'). Land within the eastern part of the Site falls eastwards towards a stream (Pod's Brook), to a low point of 60m AOD.

4.2.2 This predominantly arable landscape has a wooded appearance due to the presence of woodland, hedgerows, tree belts and hedgerow trees, which in combination, results in the perception of a largely wooded skyline. Other land uses within the Site include Andrewsfield Aerodrome, agricultural buildings, farmsteads and scattered residential properties.

4.2.3 Waterbodies within the Site include Pod's Brook along the eastern boundary of the Site, the River Ter and associated lake which extend through the south-western part of the Site (near to Stebbing Green), the two lakes in the north-eastern part of the Site and the lakes associated with Old Hall in the eastern part of the Site. Other smaller waterbodies present within the Site include drains and ponds associated with the agricultural land use and properties.

Settlement Pattern and Access

4.2.4 The settlement pattern largely comprises scattered farmsteads, parishes, small villages and isolated hamlets, in the vicinity of / within the Site, with the village of Rayne to the south-east of the Site and beyond this, the town of Braintree 2.6km east.

4.2.5 Roads present to the south of the Site in the form of the A120 and the B1256 detracting from any sense of tranquillity in the southern-most part of the Site. Roads elsewhere within and around the Site are typically narrow lanes lined with hedgerows and trees.

- 4.2.6 A network of public rights of way (PROW) extend through the northern, north-western and eastern parts of the Site. The southern and south-western parts of the Site do not contain and PROW.

Vegetation

- 4.2.7 The vegetation structure locally comprises mature hedgerows, blocks of woodland (some of which is ancient woodland), tree belts and rectilinear blocks of conifers which are uncharacteristic of the wider landscape character.
- 4.2.8 Species present include native species trees and shrubs such as oak, ash, hawthorn, hornbeam, with some scattered coniferous tree blocks. Scattered belts of poplar trees are also present locally which are a useful orientating feature within the landscape.

Local Character

- 4.2.9 The Site is broadly consistent with the features identified within the published landscape character assessments at national, county and district level, namely a gently undulating landscape with shallow hill tops and river valleys, with a network of hedgerows, tree belts and woodland which in combination form the perception of a wooded skyline, and set within which is a dispersed settlement pattern. Views across the majority of the Site are typically restricted due to a combination of the gentle topography and vegetation structure.
- 4.2.10 The eastern part of the Site varies to the rest of the Site due to it forming part of a valley slope formation and therefore there is potential more open views to the eastern part of the Site, in the form of cross valley views.
- 4.2.11 The landscape sensitivity to development is assessed to be moderate to high, varying across the Site, with the highest sensitivity to development in the easternmost part of the Site associated with the valley slopes of Pod's Brook corridor, reducing in sensitivity towards the southern edge of the Site adjoining local road infrastructure.

4.3 Visual Baseline

4.3.1 A selection of representative viewpoints is appended to this Appraisal, to record the existing baseline characteristics of the Site, and potential visibility of the Site. The locations of the viewpoints are identified within **Figure WB1**.

4.3.2 Photographs WB 1-6 are located within and along the boundaries of the Site from PROWs and lanes within the Site, to demonstrate the landscape characteristics and extent of views within the Site. The photographs demonstrate the gently undulating topography comprising agricultural fields and scattered farmsteads, set within a network of hedgerows. Woodlands, tree belts and coniferous blocks which in combination, result in the perception of a wooded skyline and limit views out from the Site to the wider landscape. The exception to this is from the eastern part of the Site, from which cross valley views to the east are obtained.

4.3.3 Photographs WB 7-11 demonstrate the potential visibility towards the Site:

- WB 7 is taken from 1.1km west of the Site along Stebbing Green (road), and demonstrates the open view obtained towards the western part of the Site within which the aerodrome is located;
- WB 8 is taken from Porters Hall Road 700m west of the Site, and demonstrates that the view towards the Site is screened by intervening vegetation and built form associated with Stebbing Green;
- WB 9 is taken 1.4km north of the Site from the vicinity of Bardfield Saling and demonstrates that views into the Site are screened due to the intervening topography and vegetation structure;
- WB 10 is taken from 600m east of the Site along Hall Road in the vicinity of the settlement of Panfield. Open, reciprocal, cross-valley views into the eastern part of the Site (including part of Shalford Road) are obtained from elevated land to the east.
- WB 11 is taken from the most elevated point locally, on a bridge over the A120. The photograph illustrates the open fields set within a network of vegetation structure.

4.3.4 The visual appraisal demonstrates that views into the Site are typically limited due to a combination of topography and vegetation structure. Exceptions to this include open views into western part of the Site from Stebbing Green to the west, and cross valley-views of the eastern part of the Site are obtained from the east in the vicinity of Panfield. The visual sensitivity of the Site is moderate to high, varying across the Site, with the highest visual sensitivity in the eastern part of the Site, due to the open cross-valley views obtained from the east.

4.4 Summary

4.4.1 The key landscape and visual characteristics of the Site and the wider context can be summarised as follows:

- The Site comprises a gently undulating arable landscape with shallow hill tops and river valleys, with a network of hedgerows, tree belts and woodland which in combination form the perception of a wooded skyline, set within which is a dispersed settlement pattern.
- The eastern part of the Site varies to the rest of the Site due to it forming part of a valley slope formation and therefore there is potential for cross valley views.
- The A120 and B1256 are present to the south of the Site, reducing the sense of tranquillity in the southernmost part of the Site. Elsewhere with the Site, the road network comprises narrow lanes lined with hedgerows and trees;
- There is a network of PROW within the Site, however, there are no PROW within the southern / south-western part of the Site;
- The characteristics of the Site are broadly consistent with the published landscape character guidelines at a national, county and district scale, and the landscape sensitivity of the Site to development is assessed to be moderate to high, varying across the Site, with the highest sensitivity in the eastern part of the Site; and
- The visual appraisal demonstrates that views into the Site are typically limited due to a combination of topography and vegetation structure. Exceptions to this include open views into western part of the Site from Stebbing Green to the west, and cross valley-views of the eastern part of the Site are obtained from the east in the vicinity of Panfield. The visual sensitivity of the Site is moderate to high, varying across the Site, with the highest visual sensitivity in the eastern part of the Site, due to the open cross-valley views obtained from the east.

5.0 LANDSCAPE CONSTRAINTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

5.1 General

5.1.1 Taking into account the planning policy framework, landscape character context and findings of the Site appraisal work, the landscape sensitivities/constraints and opportunities for potential development of a new settlement within the Site have been outlined in this section.

5.2 Landscape Sensitivities / Constraints and Opportunities

5.2.1 Landscape sensitivities / constraints and opportunities for potential development of a new settlement, taking into account planning policy context, published landscape character guidance and observations during the site visits are set out below and are illustrated within **Figure WB3**:

- **PROW network:** There is an existing network of PROW within the Site which should be retained and provision enhanced through the introduction of additional connecting footpaths. In particular, consider the introduction of an enhanced network of footpaths in the south-western and southern parts of the Site where there is currently a lack of PROW;
- **Woodland structure including ancient woodlands:** The landscape within the Site includes pockets of woodland (some of which is ancient woodland), tree blocks and copses. These features should be retained, enhanced and reinforced through a strategic evaluation of green infrastructure locally, with the potential for introduction of substantial new woodland blocks and tree belts, linking existing features. Maintain the perception of the wooded skyline formed by a combination of the topography and the layering effect of tree belts, woodland, hedgerow trees and copses;
- **Conifer blocks:** The presence of conifer blocks are a detracting and unsympathetic feature within the Site. Consideration should be given to the long term replanting of these blocks with native species woodland that would enhance biodiversity and contribute positively to local landscape character;
- **Water courses, lakes and ponds:** Existing watercourses, ponds and lakes should be maintained and opportunities sought to enhance the biodiversity value of these features where appropriate;
- **Tranquillity of the Site:** Due to the dispersed settlement pattern, lanes and land use, much of which is agricultural land, there is a sense of tranquillity within the Site and its surroundings, away from the A120. This characteristic should be retained within any development proposal;

- **Registered Parks and Gardens and Conservation Areas:** There is a Conservation Area and two Registered Parks adjoining the northern edge of the Site. The setting of these features and their approaches should be maintained and heritage advice sought with any proposals.
- **Listed Buildings:** There are scattered / clustered listed buildings within and around the Site. In accordance with planning policy, any development would need to be in keeping with its scale, character and surroundings;
- **Settlement pattern:** The nucleated settlement pattern within and in the vicinity of the Site comprises clusters of properties, small villages and hamlets. Any development should be considerate of the existing nucleated development pattern locally and opportunities explored to reflect this within any new development. The height of development is to be restricted in order to be set below the wooded skyline;
- **Landscape sensitivity to development:** The sensitivity of the Site to a new settlement varies across the Site, with the land in the easternmost part of the Site being of highest sensitivity, decreasing in sensitivity in the southernmost part of the Site where it is influenced by the A120 and adjoining B1417; and
- **Potential visibility into the Site:** views into the Site are typically limited due to a combination of topography and vegetation structure, however, open views into the western part of the Site from the vicinity of Stebbing Green can be obtained, as well as open cross-valley views into the eastern part of the Site from the vicinity of Panfield. Consider the introduction of new tree planting and woodland structure within the western part of the site to filter views from the west, and restrict development proposals in the easternmost part of the Site (which also has the highest landscape sensitivity).

6.0 CONCLUSIONS

6.1 General

6.1.1 This section sets out the conclusions of the Landscape and Visual Appraisal with respect to the development potential of the Site in landscape and visual terms.

6.2 Landscape and Visual Sensitivity

6.2.1 The character of the landscape within which the Site is located has been assessed at national, county and district level within published assessments. The landscape is characterised by a predominantly agricultural landscape with a gently undulating landform with gentle slopes, wide flat tops and wide valley sides. The landscape has a wooded appearance due to the presence of woodland, hedgerows, tree belts and hedgerow trees, which in combination, results in the perception of a largely wooded skyline. The vegetation structure locally comprises mature hedgerows, blocks of woodland (some of which is ancient woodland), tree belts and rectilinear blocks of conifers which are uncharacteristic of the wider landscape character.

6.2.2 This Landscape Appraisal concludes that the landscape sensitivity to a new settlement within the Site would be moderate to high, varying across the Site, with the highest sensitivity to development in the easternmost part of the Site associated with the valley slopes of Pod's Brook corridor, reducing in sensitivity towards the southern edge of the Site adjoining the B1256 and A120 road corridor.

6.2.3 A visual appraisal was undertaken in May 2017, representative photographs from which are appended to this Appraisal. The Visual Appraisal demonstrates that views into the Site are typically limited due to a combination of topography and vegetation structure. Exceptions to this include open views into western part of the Site from Stebbing Green to the west, and cross valley-views of the eastern part of the Site are obtained from the east in the vicinity of Panfield. The Appraisal concludes that the visual sensitivity of the Site is moderate to high, varying across the Site, with the highest visual sensitivity in the eastern part of the Site, due to the open cross-valley views obtained from the east.

6.3 Landscape Constraints and Opportunities

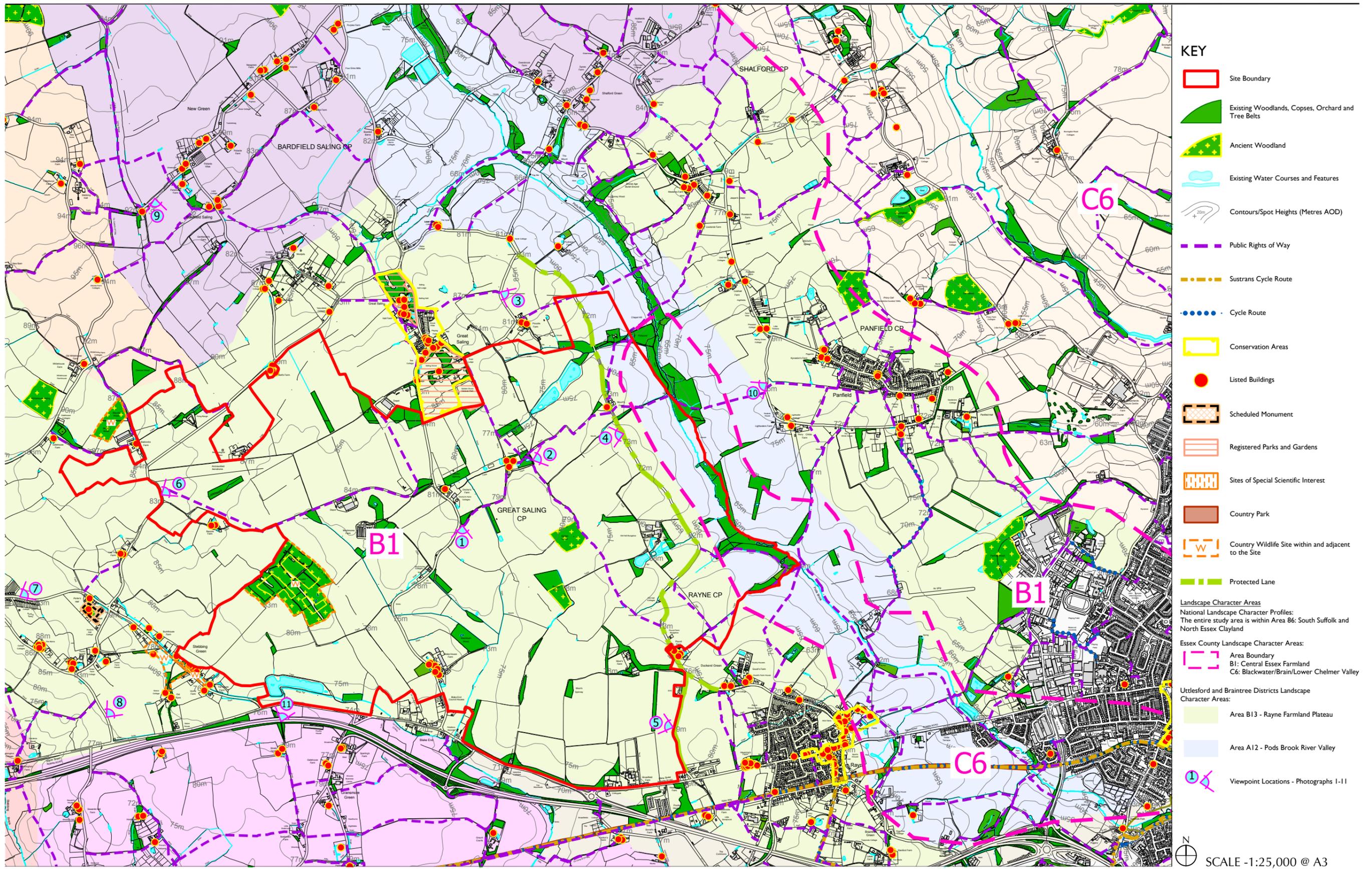
6.3.1 Key landscape constraints and opportunities for potential development are set out within **Figure WB3**, and include:

- the existing PROW network (opportunities include enhancing footpath connectivity within the Site);
- the existing woodland and tree belt structure (opportunities include retaining and enhancing these features through the introduction of new woodland structure to improve connectivity between existing features and reinforce the perception of a wooded skyline);
- consider the long term replacement of the conifer blocks with native species woodland to enhance biodiversity and reinforce landscape character;
- existing water courses and water bodies (existing features to be retained and opportunities sought to enhance the biodiversity value where appropriate);
- the sense of tranquillity within the Site away from the A120;
- the setting of heritage features including the Registered Parks and Gardens and Conservation Area to the north of the Site;
- the need to take into consideration the protection of the listed buildings and their settings within and adjoining the Site; and
- the need to take into consideration the nucleated settlement pattern in the vicinity of the Site within any new settlement form, and ensure that new development is set below the wooded skyline.

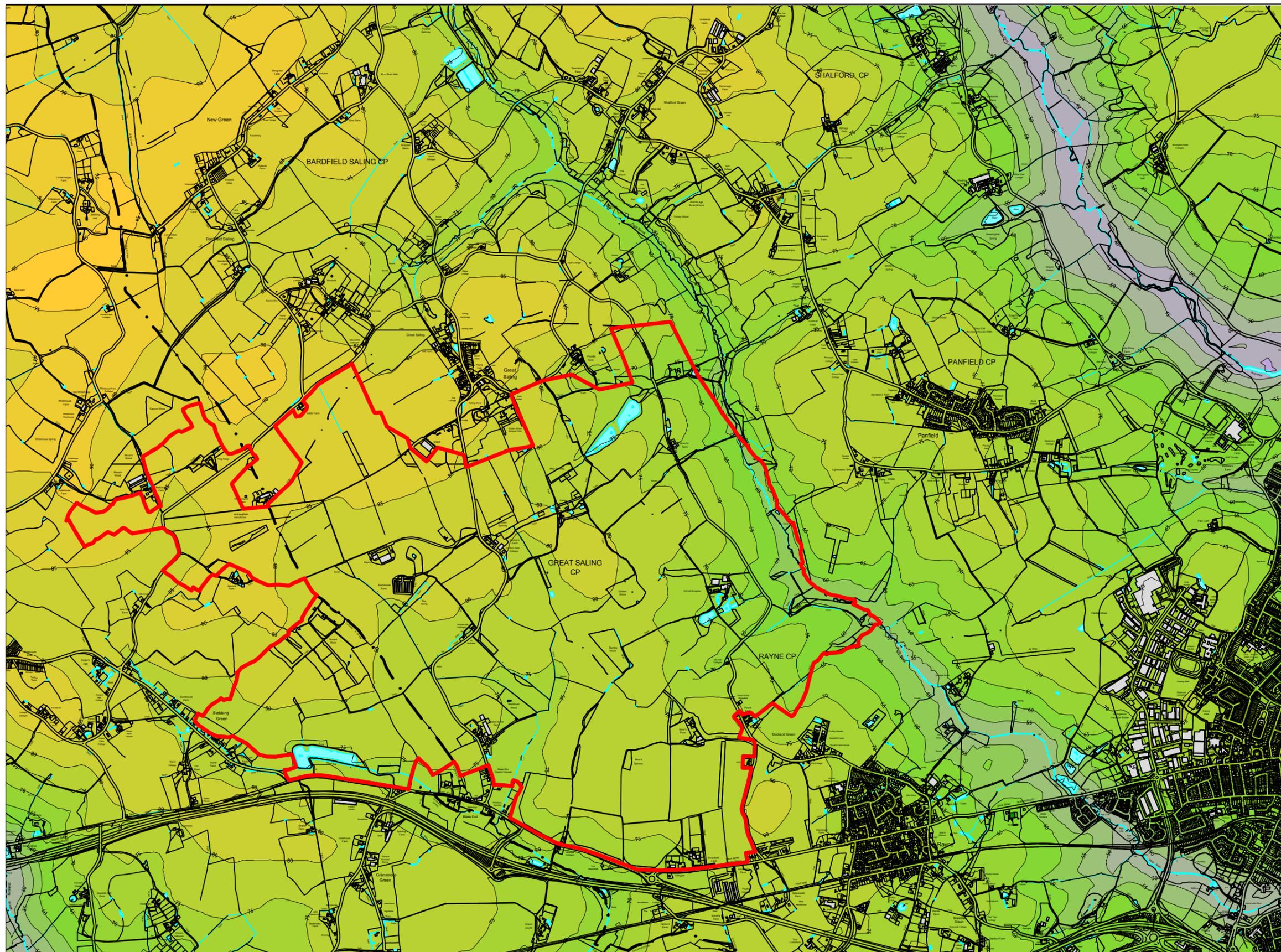
6.4 Suitability of the Site for Development

6.4.1 Overall, this Appraisal finds that land to the west of Braintree is of moderate to high landscape and visual sensitivity, varying across the Site, and concludes that there is potential for part of the Site to accommodate development, subject to appropriate mitigation developed in accordance with published landscape character guidelines, planning policy and the opportunities and constraints identified in this Appraisal. This Appraisal finds that the easternmost part of the Site (as illustrated within **Figure WB3**) is the most sensitive part of the Site and therefore it is desirable for development in this location to be limited on landscape and visual grounds.

FIGURES



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KEY

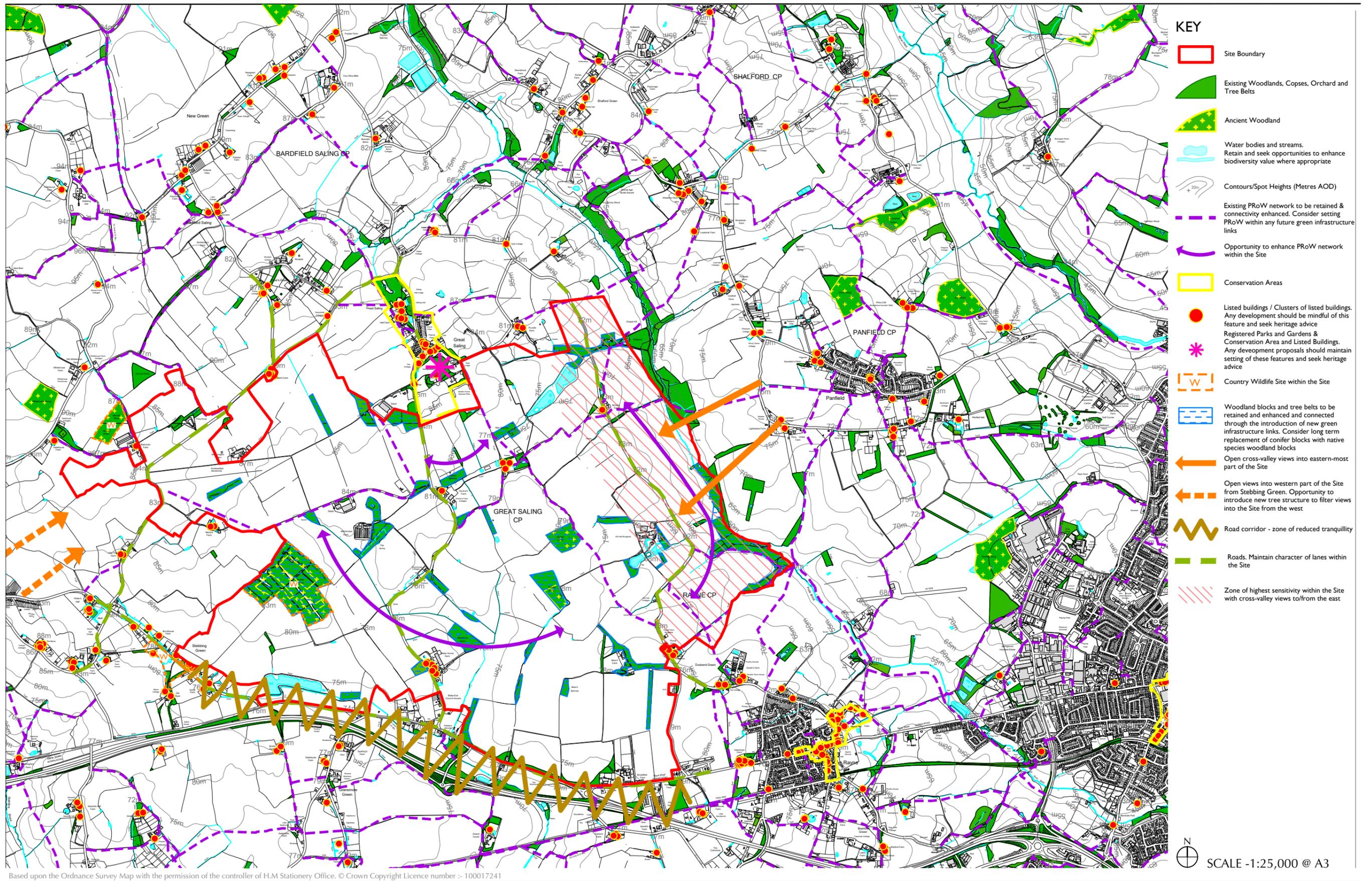
- Site Boundary
- ~ Existing Water Courses and Features
- ~ Contours/Spot Heights (Metres AOD)

Elevation (AOD Metre)

	95 to 100
	90 to 95
	85 to 90
	80 to 85
	75 to 80
	70 to 75
	65 to 70
	60 to 65
	55 to 60
	50 to 55
	45 to 50
	40 to 45
	35 to 40

SCALE -1:25,000 @ A3

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APPENDIX

Conifer blocks within the Site

Conifer blocks within the Site

Public Right of Way



Site Photograph WB1: along PROW looking south and west

Distinctive row of poplars in the vicinity of Panfield, east of the Site



Site Photograph WB2: along PROW looking east. Partial, long distance views to wider landscape to the east can be obtained

Distinctive row of poplars in the vicinity of Panfield, east of the Site

Piccotts Farm



Site Photograph WB3: along the lane to the east of Great Saling looking south-east, in the vicinity of the northernmost extent of the Site.



Site Photograph WB4: along Shalford Road in the eastern part of the Site, looking south and west.



Site Photograph WB5: along Pods Lane, in south-eastern part of the Site, looking west



Site Photograph WB6: along New Pasture Lane, in the western part of the Site in the vicinity of Andrewsfield Aerodrome, looking east and north-east

Andrewsfield Aerodrome



Site Photograph WB7: along Stebbing Green (road) in the vicinity of properties within Stebbing Green, looking eastwards towards the Site

Roof profiles of properties within Stebbing Green



Site Photograph WB8: along Porters Hall Road, looking eastwards towards the Site (Site not visible)



Site Photograph WB9: from the vicinity of Bardfield Saling, looking southwards towards the Site (Site not visible)

Conifer block within Site
Shalford Road within eastern part of Site



Site Photograph WB10: along Hall Road in the vicinity of Panfield, looking west towards the Site.



Site Photograph WB11: along bridge over the A120 looking northwards towards the Site



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