

Uttlesford District Council  
**Land at Easton Park**  
Landscape & Visual Appraisal

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Approved

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Watkins', enclosed within a circular scribble.

Dominic Watkins

Position Director

Date 16th June 2017

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## CONTENTS

<b>1.0</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2.0</b>	<b>PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>LANDSCAPE CHARACTER CONTEXT</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>SITE APPRAISAL</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>5.0</b>	<b>LANDSCAPE CONSTRAINTS AND OPPORTUNITIES</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>6.0</b>	<b>CONCLUSIONS</b>	<b>17</b>

### Figures

**EP 1: Site Context Plan**

**EP 2: Topography Plan**

**EP 3: Landscape Opportunities and Constraints Plan**

### Appendix

**Site Photographs**

## 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 at Easton Park.

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 EP1**, the Site is **573** hectares and is located 1.3km to the north-west of Great Dunmow and 1.5km to the east of Stansted Airport. Part of the A120 extends east-west through the southern part of the Site.

1.3.2 In addition to Great Dunmow, the following hamlets / villages are present within proximity of the Site, including:

- Little Easton: located to the east of the Site;
- Great Easton: located 500m north-east of the Site;
- Molehill Green: located 850m north-west of the Site; and
- Little Canfield and Takeley: located 2 km and 2.4 km respectively south-west 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 EP1** and described below.

#### **Ancient Woodland**

2.2.2 There are four parcels of ancient woodland present within the Site and High Wood, a large area of ancient woodland adjoining the south-eastern boundary 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.

2.2.4 There are also areas of Important Woodland within and adjacent to the Site, which are identified within Policy ENV8 of the Local Plan, which states that development would only be permitted if need for development outweighs need for retention / suitable mitigation measures are provided to compensate and reinstate.

#### **Registered Historic Parks and Gardens**

2.2.5 Easton Lodge, a Registered Park and Garden (RPG) is present within the northern part of the Site. Easton Lodge includes a red brick water tower (grade II listed) which is a tall, visible feature within the landscape.

2.2.6 Given the presence of an PRG within the Site, there is potential for development within the Site to result in landscape and visual effects on the RPG and its setting and approach, and therefore this should be taken into account during the design stages of any development proposals, and appropriate measures incorporated.

### **Strategic Gaps / Green Belt**

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

### **Conservation Areas**

- 2.2.8 The Conservation Area of Little Easton, designated in 2015, adjoins the Site to the east.
- 2.2.9 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**

- 2.2.10 Seven listed buildings are present within the Site; 5 in the northern part of the Site including those within Easton Lodge, and 2 in the southern part of the Site.
- 2.2.11 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**

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

### **Countryside Protection Zone**

- 2.2.13 An area identified as a Countryside Protection Zone extends across land to the west of the Site, however does not extend into the Site. The Countryside Protection Zone relates to a planning zone around Stanstead Airport to impose a strict control on new development.

## 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 Framework<sup>2</sup> (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)<sup>1</sup>
- Natural environment - provides advice on how the character of landscapes can be assessed to inform planning decisions<sup>2</sup>
- 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)<sup>3</sup>
- 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 asset<sup>4</sup>

### Local Plan

2.3.5 The Site lies within the district of Uttlesford.

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<sup>1</sup> Planning Practice Guidance – Design (Updated 6 March 2014, DCLG)

<sup>2</sup> Planning Practice Guidance – Natural Environment (Updated 21 January 2016, DCLG)

<sup>3</sup> Planning Practice Guidance – Light pollution (Updated 6 March 2014, DCLG)

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



## Uttlesford District Council Local Plan Adopted 2005<sup>5</sup>

- 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 or 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 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 the majority of land within the Site as being of Grade 2 (Very Good) and a narrow section of the north-eastern part of the Site as Grade 3 (Good to Moderate) agricultural value<sup>6</sup>. **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.

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

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

- 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<sup>7</sup>**

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

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

## 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)<sup>8</sup>
- County Landscape Character Areas: Essex Landscape Character Assessment (2003)<sup>9</sup>
- District Landscape Character Areas: Landscape Character Assessment of Uttlesford District (2006)<sup>10</sup>

### 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:

- Careful management of extraction of sand and gravel deposits, including the creation of new wetland habitats and site restoration;
- 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;

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<sup>8</sup> <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5095677797335040>

<sup>9</sup> [https://www.essex.gov.uk/AnalyticsReports/CB\\_LCA\\_Essex\\_2002.pdf](https://www.essex.gov.uk/AnalyticsReports/CB_LCA_Essex_2002.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> [https://www.braintree.gov.uk/downloads/file/2522/landscape\\_character\\_assessment\\_-\\_section\\_7\\_landscape\\_character\\_of\\_uttlesford\\_district\\_september\\_2006](https://www.braintree.gov.uk/downloads/file/2522/landscape_character_assessment_-_section_7_landscape_character_of_uttlesford_district_september_2006)

- 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;
- 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 The Site is predominantly located within LCA B1: Central Essex Farmland as illustrated within **Figure EP1**. 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.

### 3.4 District Landscape Character Areas

3.4.1 As illustrated within **Figure EP1**, the Site is predominantly within LCA B10: Broxton Farmland Plateau. Key characteristics on page 305 include:

- *“Gently undulating farmland...*
- *Large open landscape with tree cover appearing as blocks on the horizon or as scattered trees along field boundaries, with intermittent hedgerows.*
- *Higher ground where plateau broadens and flattens is expansive and full of big sky views.*
- *Dispersed settlements and few villages of any size.*
- *Some sunken lanes.*
- *Moats, halls and historic farmsteads scattered over the area.”*

3.4.2 Under ‘overall character’ the assessment describes the landscape as being open with few trees except in blocks or near settlements, with intermittent hedgerows and the field pattern delineated mainly by ditches or grass tracks, occasionally with trees or scrub. Tree cover is described as appearing in blocks and often seen as a distant framework in the horizon or appears to link into a continuous backdrop. The settlement pattern is described as nucleated, with Great Dunmow the largest town in the character area. Stansted Airport is described as having an urbanising influence on the area, with its tower visible within the wider landscape, however elsewhere, roads are largely still winding lanes and minor roads accessing scattered farmsteads. Away from the airport, tranquillity is described as moderate to strong.

3.4.3 On page 307, the LCA B10 is identified to have a moderate to high sensitivity to change, taking into account sensitive key characteristics and landscape elements which include blocks of woodland; the open nature of the skyline of higher areas of plateau which are visually sensitive with new development potentially visible within expansive views across the plateau; sunken often tree lined lanes sensitive to new development; and a sense of historic integrity, resulting from a dispersed historic settlement pattern.

3.4.4 Suggested Landscape Planning Guidelines and Land Management Guidelines include strengthening and enhancement of hedgerows; conserve and manage areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland; and conserve historic lanes.

## **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 EP2**, the Site is broadly within and surrounded by gently undulating landform with gentle slopes, plateaus and wide valley sides. Levels within the Site range from 105m AOD in the north-western part of the Site to 90m AOD in the southern part of the Site, to 75m AOD in the north-eastern part of the Site. Due to the plateau and very gently undulating landform within the majority of the Site, the central part of the Site accommodates a former WWII airstrip<sup>11</sup>.

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 wooded skyline. Other land uses within the Site include agricultural buildings, a former airstrip, farmsteads and scattered residential properties, an aggregate quarrying site and Easton Lodge.

4.2.3 Waterbodies within the Site include those within woodland and at Easton Lodge.

#### **Settlement Pattern and Access**

4.2.4 The settlement pattern largely comprises linear development and clusters of villages and scattered farmsteads, with the town of Great Dunmow to the south-east.

4.2.5 The A120, part of which extends through the southern part of the Site, detracts 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.

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.abct.org.uk/airfields/airfield-finder/great-dunmow>

- 4.2.6 A well-connected network of public rights of way (PROW) extend through Site, connecting to the wider landscape. At the time of the site visit, there was a PROW diversion in the vicinity of the aggregate quarry site.

### **Vegetation**

- 4.2.7 The vegetation structure locally comprises mature hedgerows, blocks of woodland (some of which is ancient woodland), and tree belts.
- 4.2.8 Species present include native species trees and shrubs such as oak, ash, hawthorn and hornbeam.

### **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 plateaus and shallow 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. Visibility across the Site is in part restricted due to a combination of the gentle topography and vegetation structure.
- 4.2.10 The northern part of the Site is more sloping in nature than the rest of the Site, and therefore the potential for views into this part of the Site is greater than elsewhere within the Site, and is more heavily constrained due to the presence of Easton Lodge RPG and woodland structure.
- 4.2.11 The landscape sensitivity to development would therefore vary, and is assessed to be moderate to high, with the highest sensitivity to development in the northern part of the Site which is the most constrained part of the Site due to the landscape features and designations present within this part of the Site, reducing in sensitivity towards the southern part of the Site which comprises an aggregate quarrying site and is influenced by the presence of 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 EP1**.
- 4.3.2 Photographs EP 1-4 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. EP 1 and 2 illustrate the open and plateau landscape in the central part of the Site, in the location of the former airstrip and Easton Lodge (the water tower is visible above the tree structure). EP 3 illustrates the aggregates quarry which is a detracting feature within the landscape, and EP 4 provides an elevated view of the Site from the bridge over the A120.

Photographs EP 5 - 10 demonstrate the potential visibility towards the Site:

- EP 5 is taken from Stortford Road which adjoins the southern boundary of the Site and demonstrates that views into the Site are screened by the existing boundary vegetation present;
- EP 6 and EP 7 are taken from the lane to the west of the Site which extends through Bambers Green, 450m and 950m from the Site respectively. They illustrate that the tower at Easton Lodge is a visible feature on the wooded skyline;
- EP 8 is taken from Water Lane, 300m to the north of the Site. The sloping topography in this location allows for open views into the northern part of the Site to be obtained from this location;
- EP 9 is taken from a PROW 700m to the east of the Site and illustrates relatively flat topography locally and the church at Little Easton is visible from this location. The vegetation structure in combination forms a largely vegetated skyline in views towards the Site; and
- EP 10 is taken from High Cross Lane West, 1km south of the Site. The Site is screened from view by intervening vegetation.

4.3.3 Overall, the visual appraisal and accompanying photographs demonstrates the gently undulating topography comprising agricultural fields and scattered farmsteads, set within a network of tree belts and woodlands, which in combination, result in the perception of a wooded skyline and in many instances, restrict long distance views to the wider landscape. The visual sensitivity is assessed to be moderate to high, varying across the Site.

## 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 plateaus and shallow 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;
- Visibility across the Site is in part restricted due to a combination of the gentle topography and vegetation structure;



- The northern part of the Site is more sloping in nature than the rest of the Site, and therefore the potential for views into this part of the Site is greater than elsewhere within the Site, and is more heavily constrained due to the presence of Easton Lodge RPG and woodland structure.
- The landscape sensitivity to a new settlement would vary, and is assessed to be of moderate to high sensitivity, with the highest sensitivity to development in the northern part of the Site which is the most physically constrained, reducing in sensitivity towards the southern part of the Site which comprises an aggregate quarrying site and is influenced by the presence of road infrastructure; and
- The visual appraisal undertaken finds that visibility into the Site is in part restricted by the intervening vegetation structure which in combination forms the perception of a wooded skyline. The water tower at Easton Lodge is a prominent landmark locally. The visual sensitivity of the Site to development is assessed to be moderate – high, varying across the Site.

## 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 EP3**:

- **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;
- **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 and reinforce 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;
- **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 northern part of the Site and its surroundings, reducing in the southern part of the Site in the vicinity of the A120, Stortford Road and the aggregates quarry;
- **Registered Parks and Gardens and Conservation Areas:** Proposals should have due regard to the setting of the Little Easton Conservation Area. There is a RPG in the northern part of the Site. The setting of this feature and its approach 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 and scattered villages. Any development should be sympathetic to the existing dispersed settlement 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 northern 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 Stordford Road and the aggregates quarry; and
- **Potential visibility into the Site:** views into the Site are typically limited due to a combination of topography and vegetation structure, however as with the example of views to Little Canfield, the roof profiles of development on the Site are likely to be visible through breaks in vegetation and set within the context of the wooded skyline. The water tower at Easton Lodge is a prominent feature visible from the wider landscape surrounding the Site. Consider the introduction of new tree planting and woodland structure throughout the Site to filter views into the Site.

## 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 in relation to published character assessments at a national, county and district scale. In summary, characteristics identified include an undulating clay plateau landscape; with woodlands, hedgerows and copses in combination forming the perception of a wooded skyline; a dispersed settlement pattern and narrow sometimes sunken, winding lanes; a mostly tranquil character; a moderate to moderate-high sensitivity; and expansive views from plateaus.

6.2.2 This Landscape Appraisal concludes that landscape sensitivity to a new settlement within the Site would be moderate to high, with the highest sensitivity to development in the northern part of the Site (which is the most constrained part of the Site due to the landscape features and designations present within this part of the Site), reducing in sensitivity towards the southern part of the Site (which comprises an aggregate quarrying site and is influenced by the presence of the A120 road corridor and Stortford Road).

6.2.3 A visual appraisal was undertaken in May 2017, representative photographs from which are appended to this Appraisal. The Visual Appraisal demonstrates the gently undulating topography comprising agricultural fields and scattered farmsteads, set within a network of tree belts and woodlands, which, in combination, result in the perception of a wooded skyline and, in many instances, restrict long distance views to the wider landscape. The Appraisal concludes that the visual sensitivity of the Site is moderate to high, varying across the Site. The water tower at Easton Lodge is a prominent landmark locally.

### 6.3 Landscape Constraints and Opportunities

6.3.1 Key landscape constraints and opportunities for potential development are set out within **Figure EP3**, and include:

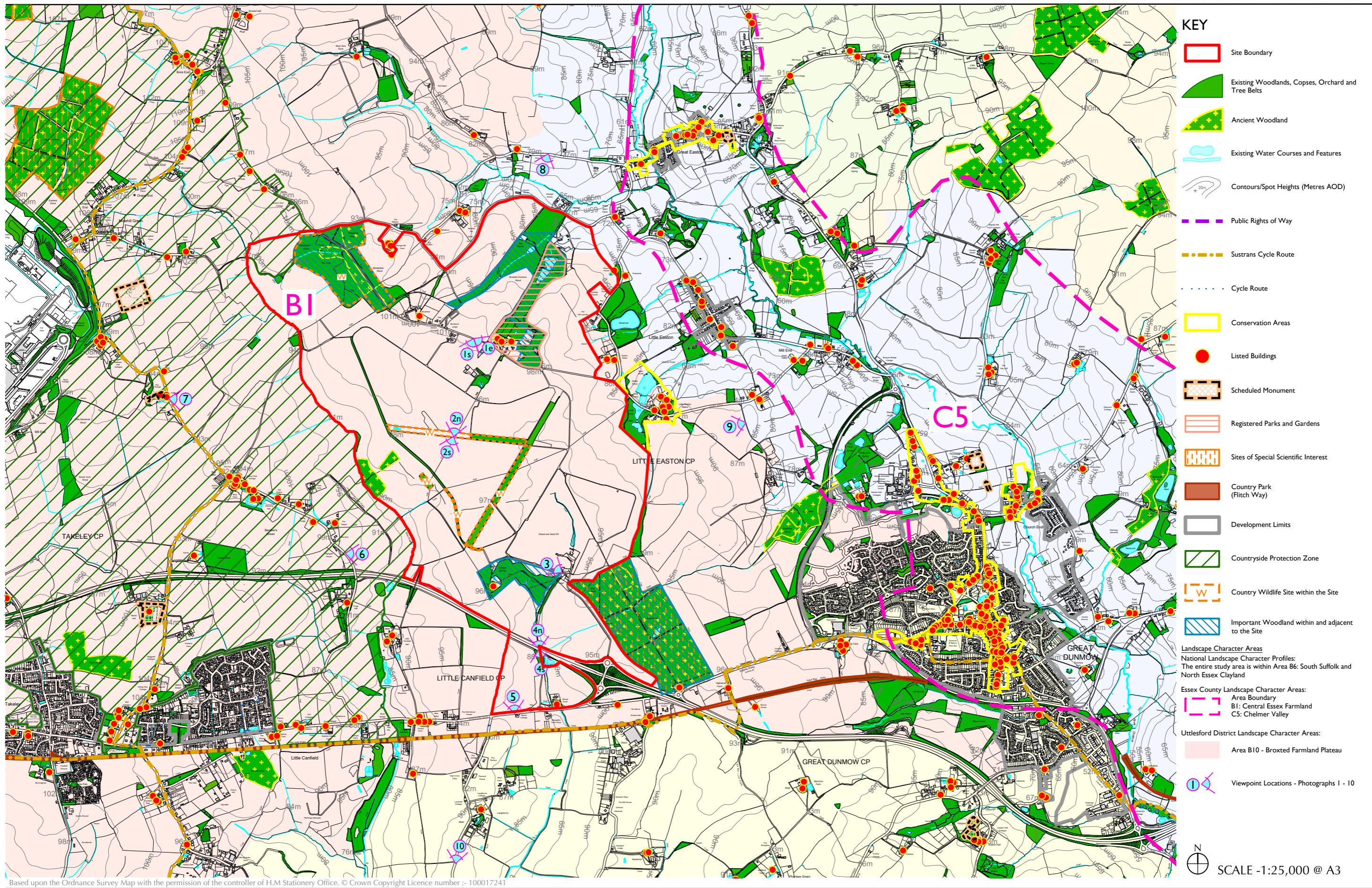
- the existing PROW network (opportunities include enhancing footpath connectivity within the Site);

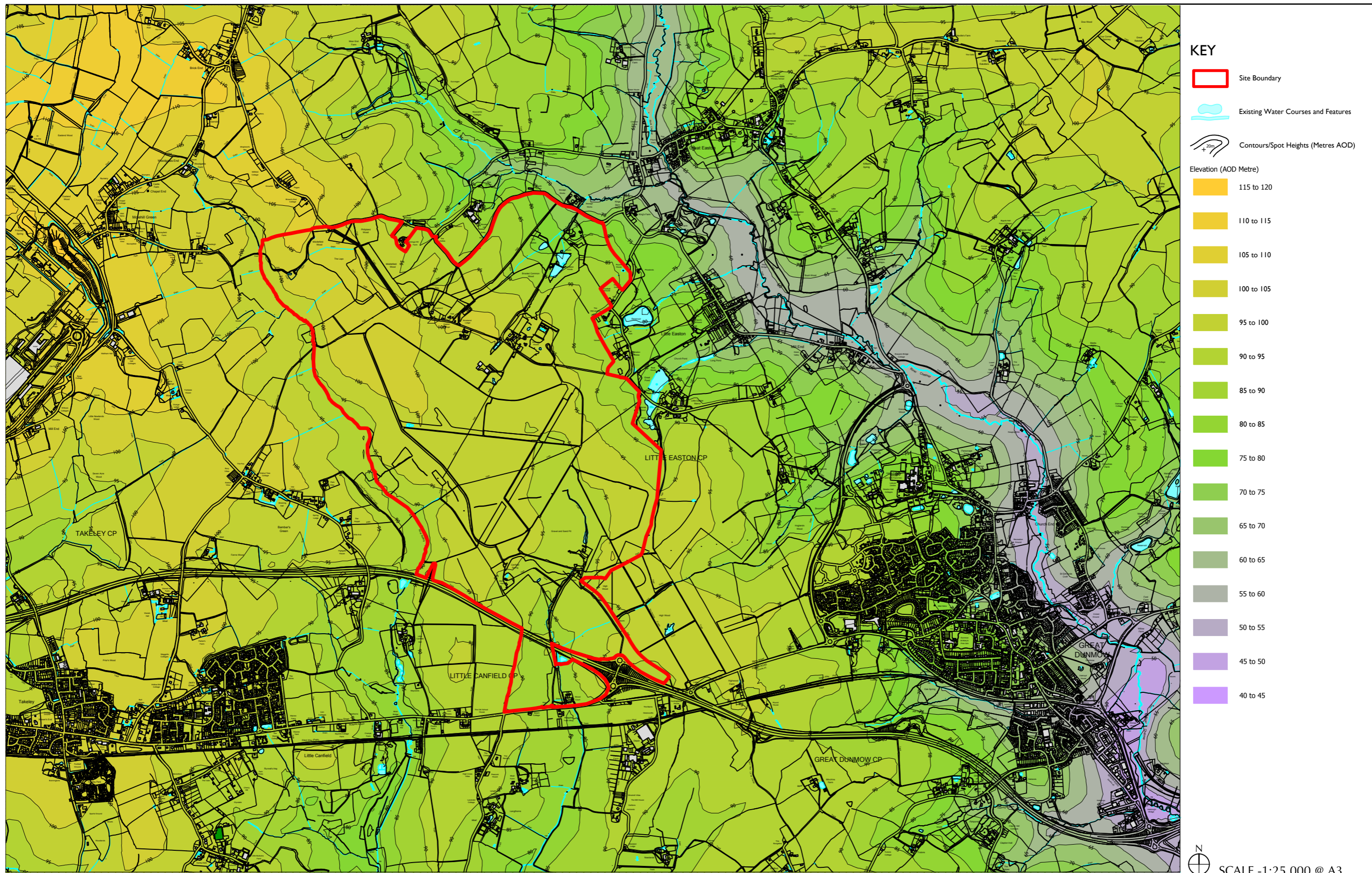
- the existing woodland and tree belt structure (opportunities include retaining and enhancing these features through the introduction of new woodland structure to improve connectivity between existing features and reinforce the perception of a wooded skyline);
- existing water courses and water bodies (existing features to be retained and opportunities sought to enhance the biodiversity value where appropriate);
- maintain the sense of tranquillity within the Site away from the A120, Stortford Road and the aggregates quarry;
- the setting and approach to Easton Lodge, a Registered Park and Garden in the northern part of the Site, and seek heritage advice;
- the need to take into consideration the protection of listed buildings and their settings within and adjoining the Site; and
- the need to take into consideration the nucleated settlement pattern within 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

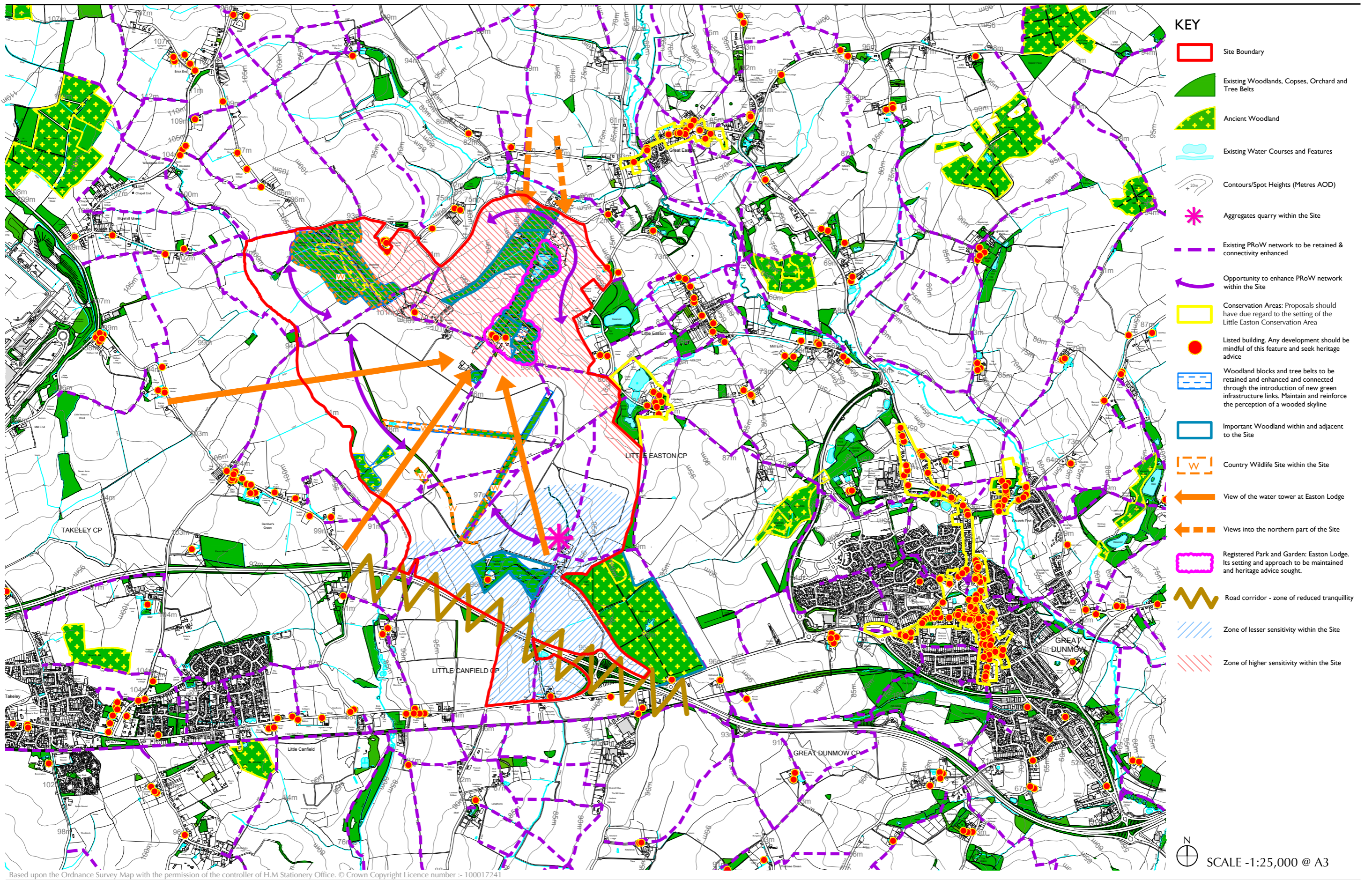
6.4.1 Overall, this Appraisal finds that land at Easton Park is of moderate to high landscape and visual sensitivity, varying across the Site, and concludes that there is potential for part of the Site to accommodate development, subject to appropriate mitigation developed in accordance with published landscape character guidelines, planning policy and the opportunities and constraints identified in this Appraisal. The Appraisal finds that the northern part of the Site (as illustrated within **Figure EP3**), 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. The southern part of the Site (as illustrated within **Figure EP3**) is of lesser sensitivity to development, given the range of land uses which include an aggregates quarry, the A120 and Stortford Road, all of which reduce the sense of tranquillity and landscape quality in this area.

## FIGURES









## APPENDIX

Water Tower at Easton Lodge



Photograph EP1 (East): in the northern part of the Site, in the vicinity of Easton Lodge, looking east

Field within which former airstrip is located



Photograph EP1 (South): in the northern part of the Site, in the vicinity of Easton Lodge, looking south

Water Tower at Easton Lodge



Photograph EP 2 (North): in the central part of the Site, in the location of the former airstrip, looking north



Little Canfield

Photograph EP 2 (South): in the central part of the Site, in the location of the former airstrip, looking south



Water Tower at Easton Lodge in distance beyond lighting column

Photograph EP 3: in the southern part of the Site, in the vicinity of the aggregates quarrying site, looking north-west



Aggregates quarry within Site

Photograph EP 4 (north): in the southern part of the Site, on bridge over the A120, looking north

A120



Photograph EP 4 (south): in the southern part of the Site, on bridge over the A120, looking south



Photograph EP 5: along Stortford Road, looking north

Water tower at Easton Lodge



Photograph EP 6: on the road connecting to Bambers Green, south-west of the Site

Water Tower at Easton Lodge



Photograph EP 7: on the road connecting to Bambers Green, west of the Site

Woodland in northern part of Site Northern-most field within Site



Photograph EP 8: on the road connecting to Bambers Green, west of the Site

Church at Little Easton (St Marys)



Photograph EP 9: from PROW east of the Site



Photograph EP 10: from High Cross Lane West, south of the Site



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