

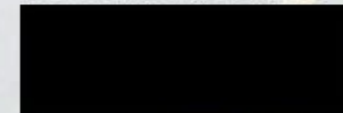


Broadfields Innovation and Business Park, East Horndon
Landscape and Visual Impact Appraisal

Client:
M+M Properties
London LTD

September 2022

Prepared by:
Neil Tully Associates



CONTENT

01 Introduction.....Page 02	
Background and Scope of Report	
Structure of the Report	
EFFECTS ON LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL CHARACTER...Page 03	
02 Appraisal Methodology.....Page 04	
Best practice guidance	
Visual effects	
Appraisal of significance	
Appraisal process	
03 Baseline Conditions.....Page 05	
Project specifications	
Planning Policy Context	
Landscape Baseline	
Visual Baseline	
Views	
04 Predicted Impacts.....Page 26	
Timescale and nature of effects	
Scope of study area	
Predicted likely impacts	
Mitigation of impacts	
Evaluation of predicted effects	
05 Monitoring.....Page 28	
06 Summary and Conclusions.....Page 28	
APPENDIX.....Page 31	
01 Landscape Character Appraisal.....Page 31	
02 Methodology.....Page 35	

FIGURES

01 Measures of significance.....Page 04
02 Regional context of the Site.....Page 05
03 Local context of the Site.....Page 06
04 Topography.....Page 08
05 Vegetational baseline.....Page 08
06 Local Landscape Designations.....Page 09
07 Photographic Viewpoint Locations - Local.....Page 12
08 Photographic Viewpoint Locations - Distance...Page 13
09 Public Rights of Way.....Page 13
10-23 Views 1-13.....Pages 12 - 25
24 Indicative layout.....Page 26
25 Landscape Strategy /ParametersPage 27
APPENDIX
01 National Landscape Character Area 111.....Page 32
02 Essex Landscape Character Assessment.....Page 33
03 Borough Character Type (images).....Page 34

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND AND SCOPE OF THIS REPORT

Neil Tully Associates (NTA) were commissioned by MM Properties (London) LTD. in August 2022 to produce a Landscape and Visual Impact Appraisal (LVIA) for a proposed innovation and business park development to be located at Broadfields, East Horndon, Essex.

1.2 STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

SECTION 2 – APPRAISAL METHODOLOGY briefly summarises the planning context in relation to landscape and visual issues and the methodology that has been used in the appraisal with reference to a more detailed method statement in Appendix 1.

SECTION 3 – BASELINE CONDITIONS describes the application site, its surrounding area, defines the landscape and visual receptors against which potential impacts resulting from the development proposals would be assessed, and briefly describes the intrinsic design measures incorporated within the scheme that are of specific relevance to landscape and visual considerations, e.g., the location and layout of the development in relation to key views, the design of any open space, planting or other measures aimed at minimising potential impacts.

SECTION 4 – PREDICTED IMPACTS, MITIGATION OF PREDICTED IMPACTS AND EVALUATION OF PREDICTED IMPACTS examines the predicted effects of the development proposals on landscape resources (landscape character and landscape designations) and visual amenity (the enjoyment of representative views by people), assessing the changes brought about by development against the baseline situation, thereby taking any relevant mitigation into account and evaluating the thus resulting overall predicted impact.

SECTION 5 – MONITORING describes maintenance and review procedures that are to be undertaken following completion of the development to maintain landscape elements as outlined in the relevant application documents.

SECTION 6 – SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS summarises the overall landscape and visual effects that are predicted to arise from this development proposal.



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EFFECTS ON LANDSCAPE
AND VISUAL CHARACTER



2 APPRAISAL METHODOLOGY

This section briefly summarises the key aspects of the appraisal methodology and the main steps in the appraisal process. Further explanation of the methodology, including the basis upon which judgements have been made on the sensitivity of receptors, magnitude of change and significance of effects, is included in APPENDIX 2.

2.1 BEST PRACTICE GUIDANCE

The methodology for undertaking this visual appraisal has been developed in accordance with relevant best practice guidance, including:

Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Appraisal (GLAVIA), Third Edition - Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management & Appraisal, 2013. Landscape Character Appraisal - Guidance for England and Scotland' - Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage, 2002.

2.2 VISUAL EFFECTS

Visual effects relate to the changes that arise in the composition of available views as a result of changes to the landscape, to people's responses to the changes and to the overall effects with respect to visual amenity.

2.3 APPRAISAL OF SIGNIFICANCE

The process of forming a judgement on the significance of an effect is based upon an appraisal of the Magnitude of change affecting the landscape or the views experienced by people, combined with the Sensitivity of the 'receptor' to change of the nature proposed, i.e. the landscape itself or the viewer. Thus, a high level of change affecting a highly sensitive receptor would be more significant than a small degree of change affecting less sensitive landscape or visual receptors (FIGURE 1).

Indicative criteria used in this appraisal to define levels of sensitivity, magnitude of change and significance of effects are set out in Appendix 2 and the diagram below. It should be emphasised that, while the methodology is designed to be robust and transparent, professional judgment is ultimately applied to determine the significance of each impact. Effects that are Major or Major-Moderate are the most significant, in that they

are, in themselves, material to the decision. Effects of Moderate significance or less are additional considerations. Predicted changes can be Positive, Neutral or Adverse.

2.4 APPRAISAL PROCESS

The main steps in the appraisal process are set out below.

DESK STUDY

- Familiarisation with development proposals, Site location, etc.;
- Review of current planning policy context relating to landscape, including designations;
- Review of existing landscape character appraisals for the area (national, regional, local).

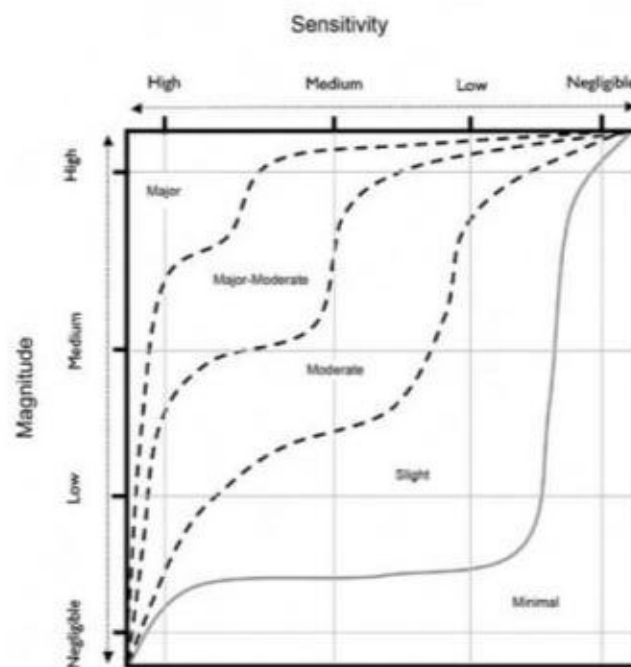


FIGURE 1. Measures of significance depending on Sensitivity and Magnitude of Impact

FIELD SURVEY

- Site-visit to record landscape character and key features on the Site and within surrounding area;
- Identification of key views to and from the site;
- Where appropriate, field checking of the Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) to confirm extent of visibility, key viewpoints and receptors, photographic record, etc.;
- Field-based identification of mitigation opportunities.

DESIGN

- Input into site design including liaison with other professionals. Identification of landscape mitigation/ creation opportunities.

Appraisal

- Appraisal of potential effects on landscape resources, of the Site itself and surrounding landscape character, and appraisal of potential effects on any landscape designations;
- Appraisal of effects on views from representative viewpoints;
- Appraisal of effects on private dwellings and public rights of way.

PRESENTATION

- Preparation of report, supported by visual material (i.e., plans and photographs) to assist understanding of the appraisal findings.

LIMITATIONS

- Information on planning policy relating to landscape, including designations, was readily available. There were no unexpected limitations experienced collecting the baseline information or whilst undertaking the field surveys in relation to availability and relevance of the hierarchy of Landscape Character Appraisals for the study area. Therefore, no supplementary landscape character appraisal work was required.
- The level of design detail and phasing associated with a proposed housing allocation can make it difficult to define, quantify and measure some of the

indirect effects that the development may have. Appraisals of indirect effects have been made where possible.

DISTANCES

- Where distances are given in the appraisal, these are approximate distances between the Site boundary and the nearest part of the receptor in question, unless explicitly stated otherwise.

3 BASELINE APPRAISAL

3.1 PROJECT SPECIFICATIONS

The site is located at Broadfields, and is accessed off Tilbury Road, in East Horndon, Brentwood Borough, Essex. It is approximately 4km south-east of Brentwood, and it is set to the south of the A127 / Southend Arterial Road and about 5km east of the M25 (see FIGURE 2). The site is currently in a brownfield condition, partly colonised with scrub vegetation and surrounded by established native hedgerows and trees (see FIGURE 3).

Outline planning permission is sought, for the Net Zero Carbon development of Broadfields Innovation and Business Park. The scheme seeks permission for up to 320,000 sqm of flexible Class E(g)), B2 and B8 floor-space including an enterprise hub of small and micro business units and an ultra-rapid electric vehicle charging station. The Broadfields Innovation and Business Park has been designed to provide a series of individual plots, contained by retained existing landscape features and new planting upon which can be developed a wide range of building types and sizes to meet the needs of occupiers in all sectors of the economy but with a particular appeal to those in the technological sector.

3.2 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

The following considers the relevant planning and legislative framework in the context of landscape and visual issues. Not all policies are referred to or listed in full but those of greatest relevance to the site and nature of the proposed development are included.

NATIONAL CONTEXT

The revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) at Section 12 seeks to achieve “well designed places” noting that:

“The creation of high quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities.”

Section 15 is concerned with “Conserving and enhancing the natural environment”. The NPPF seeks to conserve and enhance the natural environment – protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, and affording great weight to the protection of areas of natural and scenic beauty.

Natural habitats and geodiversity are also to be preserved and enhanced, the NPPF noting a requirement to”

“Identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity⁵⁶; wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them; and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation”

The landscape and green infrastructure proposals which form part of the proposed development stem from the landscape and visual appraisal undertaken and reflect the principles of Good Design which the NPPF advocates.

LOCAL CONTEXT

The Brentwood Local Plan 2016-2033 was adopted in March 2022. In the following, relevant saved policies are summarised.

STRATEGIC POLICIES

Strategic Policy MG02: Green Belt

D. For site allocations which are being released from the Green Belt, development proposals should set out ways in which the impact of removing land from the Green Belt are to be offset through compensatory improvements to the environmental quality and accessibility of the remaining Green Belt land.

Strategic Policy NE01: Protecting and Enhancing the Natural Environment

1. The Council will require development proposals to use natural resources prudently and protect and enhance the quality of the natural environment. All proposals should, wherever possible, incorporate measures to secure a net gain in biodiversity, protect and enhance the network of habitats, species and sites (both statutory and non-statutory) and avoid negative impacts on biodiversity and geodiversity. Compensatory measures will only be considered if it is not possible fully to mitigate any impacts.

2. When determining planning applications, the council will apply the principles relevant to habitats and biodiversity as set out in National Planning Policy.

STRATEGIC POLICY NE02: GREEN AND BLUE INFRASTRUCTURE

1. Brentwood’s network of green and blue infrastructure (GBI) will be protected, enhanced and managed to provide a multi-functional, high quality open space resource, capable of delivering opportunities for recreation, health and wellbeing, ecological connectivity, biodiversity net-gain as well as wider ecosystem services for climate change adaptation.

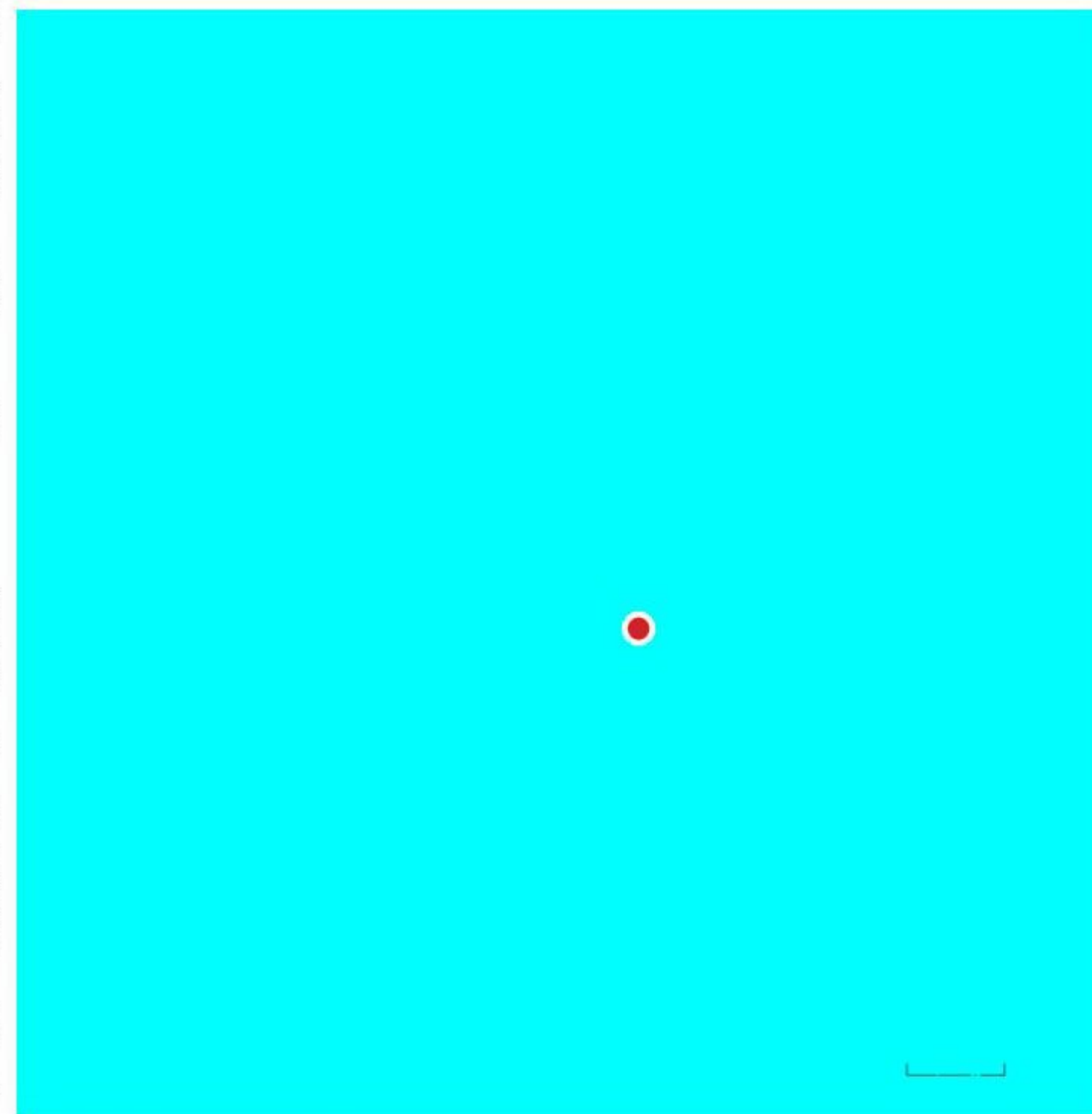


FIGURE 2. Regional context of the Site, Source: GoogleMaps.

2. New development is expected, where possible and appropriate, to maximise opportunities to enhance or restore existing GBI provision and/or create new provision on site that connects to the wider GBI network. Its design and management should also respect and enhance the character and distinctiveness of the local area.

3. Developments on sites containing or are adjacent to a water course or water

body (Blue Infrastructure) are required to ensure there is no adverse impact on the functioning or water quality of the Blue Infrastructure. Proposals that maximise opportunities to enhance or restore Blue Infrastructure and incorporate these features into the public realm of the development will be supported. An adequate undeveloped buffer zone should be applied as necessary to mitigate flood risk, in line with Policy NE09 and/or support sustainable drainage, in line with Policy BE05.

4. Proposals should provide appropriate specification and maintenance plans for the proposed green and blue infrastructure throughout the life of the development.

POLICY NE03: TREES, WOODLANDS, HEDGEROWS

1. Development proposals that would result in the deterioration or loss of irreplaceable ancient woodland and ancient and veteran trees will not be permitted other than in wholly exceptional circumstances and only if the proposals include a suitable compensation strategy. Applicants will need to demonstrate the efficacy of the strategy by reference to the value of the habitats that will be lost or harmed and provide an appropriate implementation and maintenance programme to underpin the strategy the performance of which will be subject of a condition and/or planning obligation, as appropriate.

2. In all other cases, proposals should, so far as possible and practicable, seek to retain existing trees, woodlands and hedgerows where they make a positive contribution to the local landscape and/or biodiversity or which have significant amenity value. Wherever possible and appropriate, landscaping schemes should take account of and incorporate these existing features in the scheme and where any loss is unavoidable, incorporate measures to compensate for their loss.



FIGURE 3. Local context of the Site, Source: GoogleMaps.

3.3 LANDSCAPE BASELINE

TOPOGRAPHY

FIGURE 4 illustrates the topography of the Site, East and West Horndon and surrounding areas. The Site lies between approximately 10 and 12m AOD, with the land falling towards the south.

The underlying geology of this area is varied and characterised by London Clay and alluvial deposits (Source: Essex Landscape Character Assessment, Chris Blandford Associates, 2003).

Only one local highpoint lies within the 5 km assessment radius (i.e., 109m AOD at Holden's Wood). Because Thorndon Country Park mostly comprises densely wooded areas, as can be seen in FIGURE 3, visibility from this highpoint is very limited. Lower level assessment has been undertaken to the south and east area of the park close to the Octagon Plantation at approximately 46m AOD and at All Saints' Church at approximately 31m AOD.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER BASELINE

A series of landscape character assessments, undertaken on National, County and Borough Level, are summarised below.

(A full summary of the relevant landscape character area/types can be found in APPENDIX 1):

National Level

The site is identified in National Landscape Character Area (LCA): 111, Northern Thames Basin, at County level in category D2 Brentwood Hills, which is defined as having the following key characteristics:

- Gently to strongly undulating hills/ridges.
- Semi enclosed character due to presence of numerous small woods, large interlocking blocks of woodland and frequent hedgerow trees.
- Patchwork of small irregular pasture and arable fields, opening out to medium to large regular arable fields in the centre of the area.
- Dense linear settlement pattern along major south west to north east road/rail routes.

As defined in 'Braintree, Brentwood, Chelmsford, Maldon And Uttlesford Landscape Character Assessments' (September 2006, CBA), at the borough level the site sits in character area G1 Horndon Fenland. The key characteristics of this Landscape Character Type are:

- Large arable and pasture fields.
- Predominantly flat topography.
- Mature hedgerow field boundaries (sometimes gappy), which contain several single mature trees.
- Relatively sparse settlement pattern.
- Views to surrounding wooded hills to the north.
- Long distance views to pylons and Tilbury power station to the south.

With the following Visual Characteristics:

- Long and short distance, glimpse and open views to surrounding wooded hills to the north and east.
- Long distance views to pylons and Tilbury power station to the south.
- Views to Little Warley church and East Horndon church (landmarks to the north).

The assessment concludes that 'Overall, this character area has moderate sensitivity to change'.

OPPORTUNITIES

The relatively impoverished condition of the existing landscape provides many opportunities for enhancement, both visually and in terms of biodiversity. The flat nature of the topography and the contained landscape character of the site has permitted the architects to design a rich and varied layout, intersected by green corridors and surrounded by proposed and enhanced existing landscape features. A range of new habitat types will be created, ranging from wetlands associated with the SuDS network to wide expanses of wildflower meadows throughout the interconnected green structure. The CBA Landscape Assessment (2006) notes the following Proposed Landscape Strategy Objectives

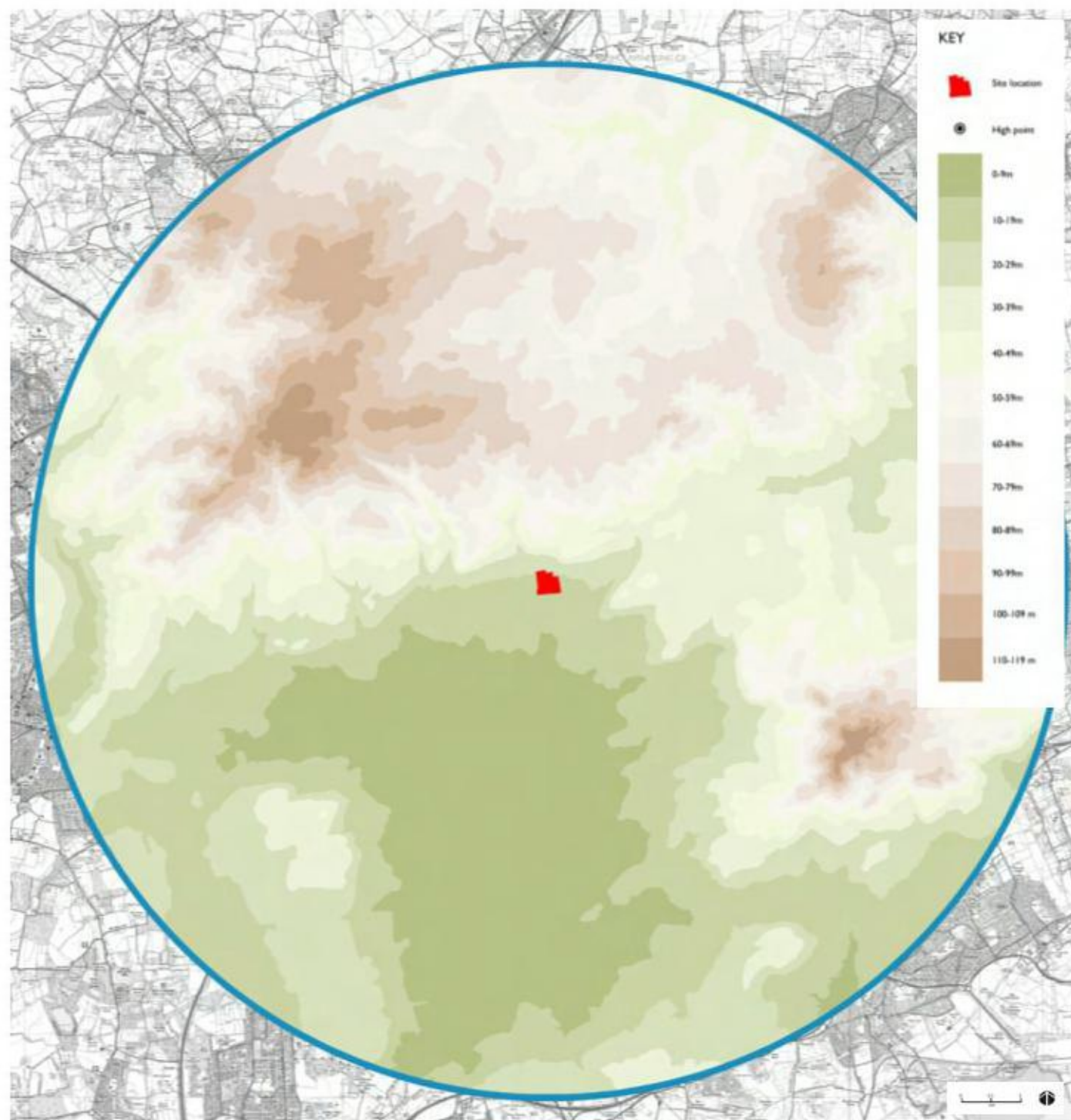


FIGURE 4. Topography, Source DEFRA/Magic

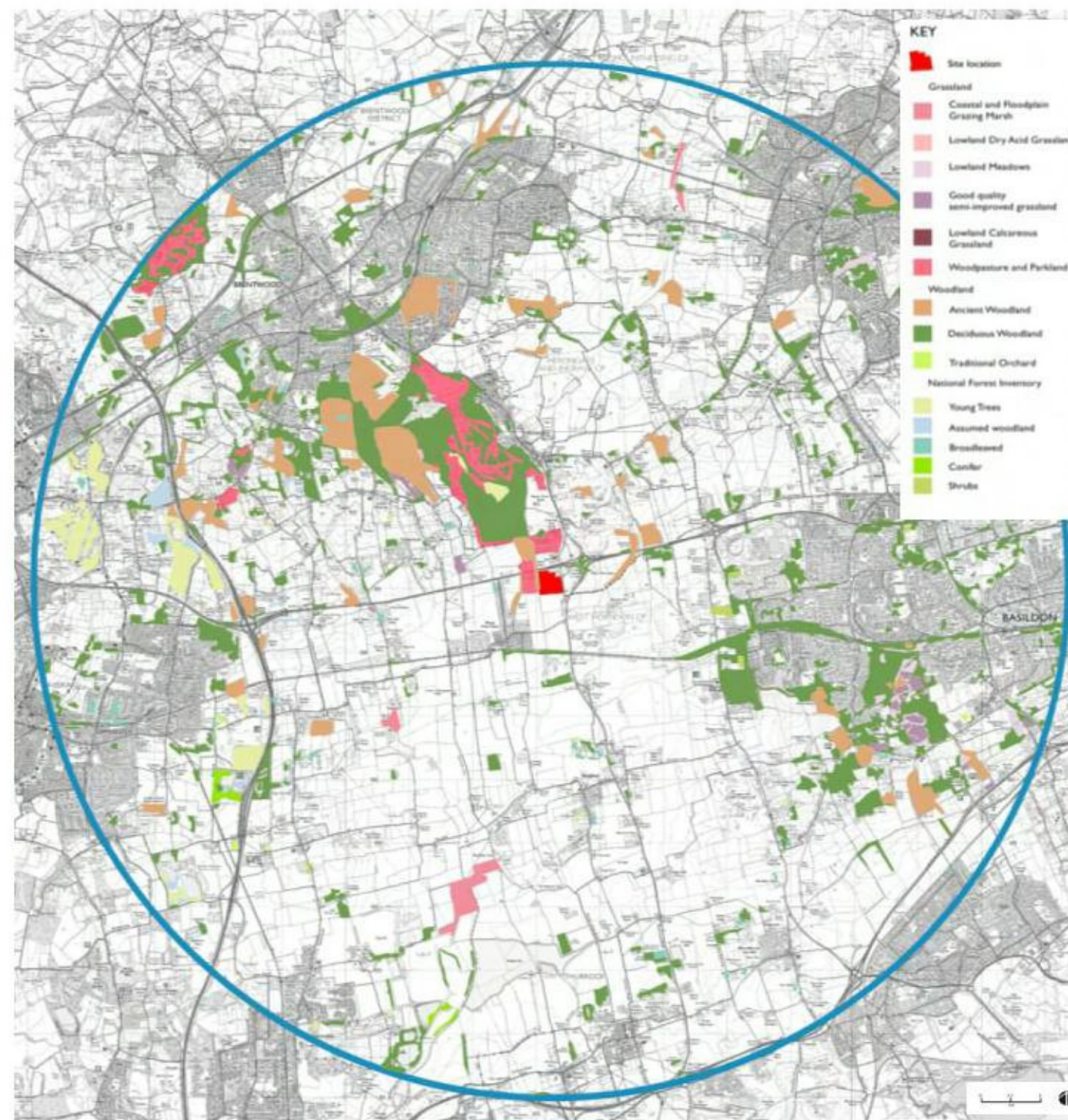


FIGURE 5. Vegetation cover, Source: DEFRA/Magic

Conserve- seek to protect and enhance positive features that are essential in contributing to local distinctiveness and sense of place through effective planning and positive land management measures.

Enhance- seek to improve the integrity of the landscape, and reinforce its character, by introducing new and/or enhanced elements where distinctive features or characteristics are absent.

Restore- seek to reinforce and/or reinstate historic landscape patterns and features that contribute to sense of place and time depth, by repairing distinctive elements that have been lost or degraded.

The Assessment goes on to suggest the following Landscape Planning Guidelines:

- 'Conserve the relatively sparse settlement pattern and generally rural character of the area.
- Ensure that any appropriate new development responds to the existing settlement pattern and uses materials which are appropriate to local landscape character.
- Conserve the setting of West Horndon, through careful consideration of the existing landscape structure.
- Conserve views to landmark churches to the north.
- Seek to screen visual detractors (such as the edges of the small industrial estate in West Horndon, and large agricultural buildings)'.

Finally, the Assessment provides the following Land Management Guidelines:

- Conserve and enhance the existing hedgerow network by planting hedgerow species appropriate to local landscape character.
- Establish arable field margins as important nature conservation habitats.
- Seek ways to mitigate the visual impact of the railway and A127 corridor through introducing new and strengthening existing parallel shelterbelts where appropriate.
- Introduce new woodland planting in the form of shaws and copses, as well as hedgerow trees.

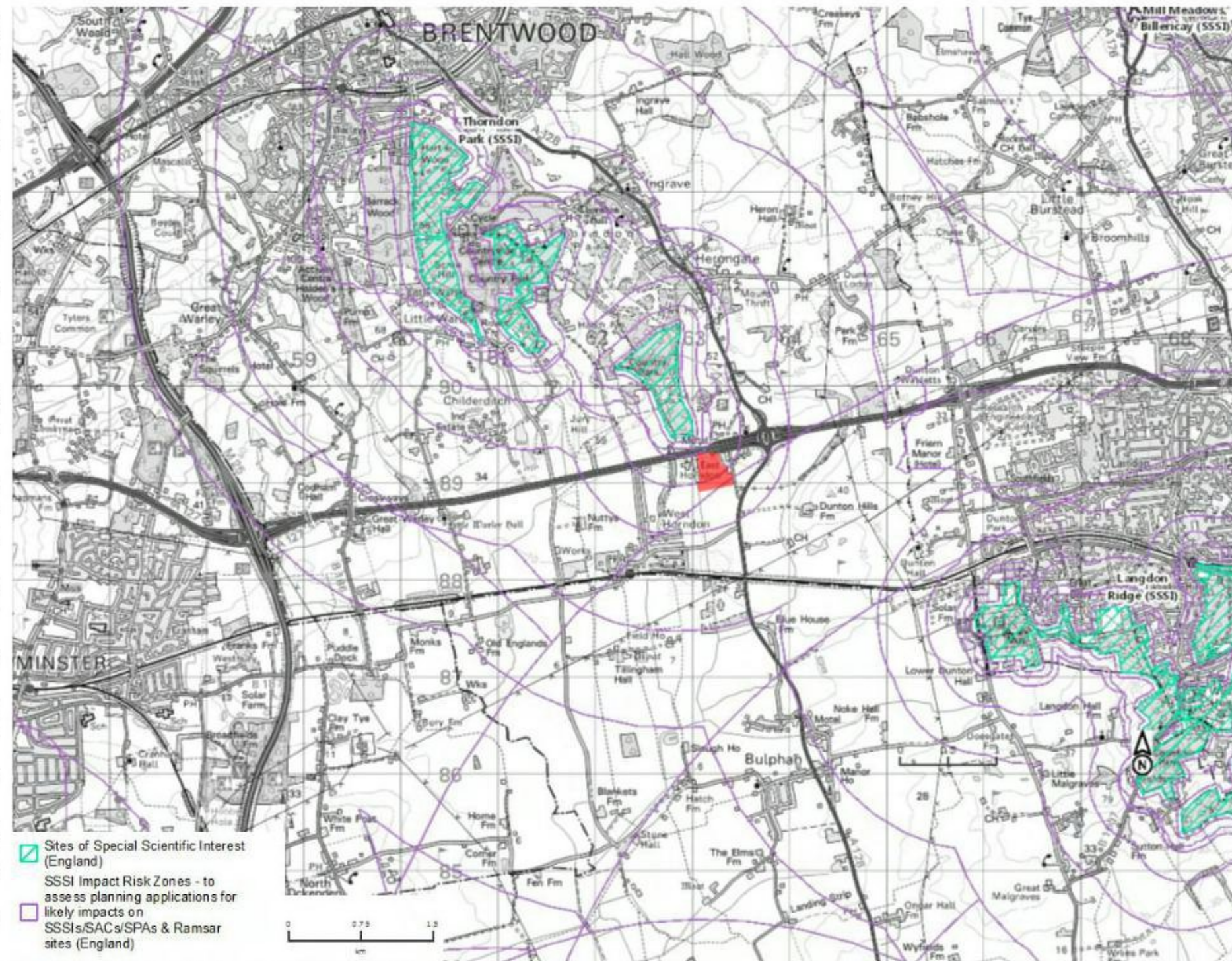


FIGURE 6. Local Landscape Designations, Source: DEFRA/Magic.

DESIGNATED AREAS

Green Belt

The Site is covered by Green Belt designation.

Site of Special Scientific Interest

There are several designated areas within the Site's vicinity, the closest of which is Thorndon Park SSSI. The SSSI is described as follows (Source: Natural England, see also FIGURE 7):

- Thorndon Park is an area of semi-natural broad-leaved woodland and ancient parkland supporting a range of habitat types developed over Claygate and Bagshot Beds and gravels to the south of Brentwood. The woodland includes the Lowland Birch-Sessile Oak and Pedunculate Oak-Hornbeam types and the site supports an outstanding assemblage of Beetles (Coleoptera) including one species which is rare and vulnerable in Britain.

LANDSCAPE CONDITION

The overall landscape at the site comprises .

Trees and Hedgerows

The site benefits from established offsite woodland (ancient) and boundary planting to the east and south with existing remnant hedgerows subdividing the site and with the intervening fields being colonised by native scrub and ruderal species. the vegetation cover is less well defined to the north and along the Tilbury Road boundary but still provides a reasonable degree of screening to the site. However, some of the boundary planting is gaping and would benefit from improved or changed management. As a receiving landscape it is potentially tolerant of change and has the potential capacity in which to absorb commercial development of good design, provided ecological features and landscape elements are implemented.

Ecology

An Ecological Appraisal has been prepared by Corylus Ecology (February 2021) and accompanies the application. This notes the significance of the adjacent ancient woodland and Local Wildlife Reserve (Hollow Bottom Shaw) and describes the on site habitats that will require further investigation. The appraisal goes on to recommend that the proposals are reviewed and a dedicated Biodiversity Enhancement Strategy is devised on completion of the protected species surveys



FIGURE 7. Photographic Viewpoint Locations - Local Views

3.4 VISUAL BASELINE

A visual appraisal has been undertaken for the proposed development. The baseline appraisal seeks to explore the nature of the existing visual amenity of the area and to establish the approximate visibility of the site from any surrounding receptors. This section provides a baseline analysis of the available views and amenity and is supported by a series of photographic viewpoints (FIGURES 10-23). An overview of viewpoint locations can be found in FIGURE 7 (left) and FIGURE 8 (following page). An appraisal of the visual effects of the proposed development upon the receptors is summarised in the subsequent effects section.

SETTLEMENTS

Existing settlements considered in the visual assessment include West Horndon, i.e., along PRoW Footpath 313_41, and East Horndon, along Tilbury Road and PRoW's Footpaths 313_63 to the north 313_66 to the east and Byway 313_67 to the south east.

PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY AND OTHER FOOT-PATHS

The existing PRoWs 312_41 (Views 1A, 1B, 3,3,4), 313_63 (View 6), 313_66 (View 7), 313_67 (View 10), were considered in the visual assessment. Additional views were taken from Tilbury Road, from the north of the A127 and from higher vantage points within the public open space at Thordon Park; see also FIGURE 9 for an overview of local footpaths, byways and bridleways).

OTHER TRANSPORT

Additional views were assessed from the Tilbury Road/A127 Junction.

The 2006 CBA Landscape Assessment notes that the Horndon Fenland area has the following Visual Characteristics:

- Long and short distance, glimpse and open views to surrounding wooded hills to the north and east.
- Long distance views to pylons and Tilbury power station to the south.
- Views to Little Warley church and East Horndon church (landmarks to the north).

The design and layout of the Proposed Development has carefully considered these important visual characteristics to preserve views to and from the surrounding areas of higher ground and also to avoid any impact on views of All Saints Church.

3.5 VIEWS

Thirteen views were assessed for this appraisal. The location of these viewpoints can be seen in FIGURES 7 and 8. In the remainder of this section, the viewpoints are described with regards to their location, main user group(s), and sensitivity. Predicted impact and resulting significance are summarised in the following SECTION 4.

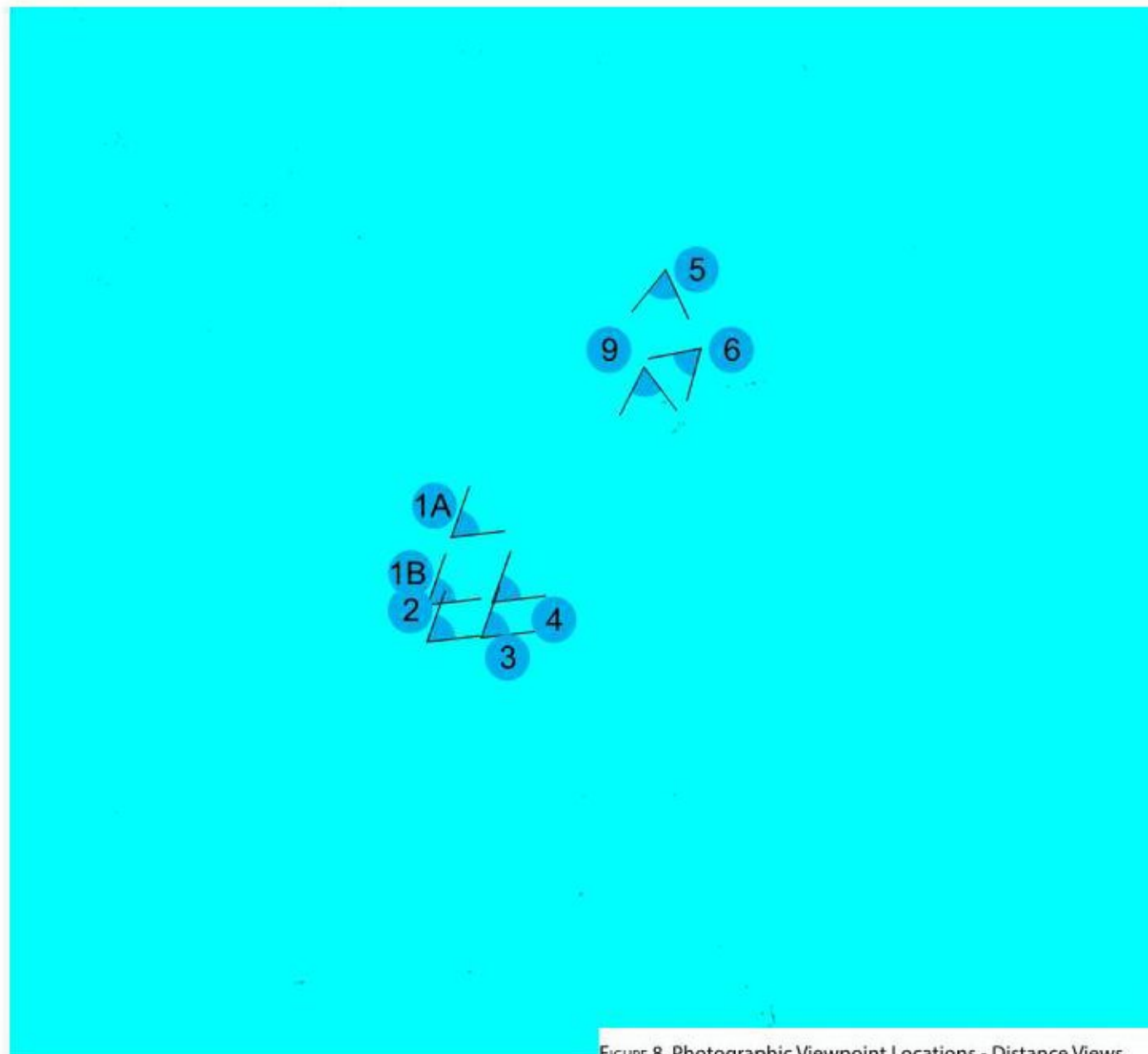


FIGURE 8. Photographic Viewpoint Locations - Distance Views

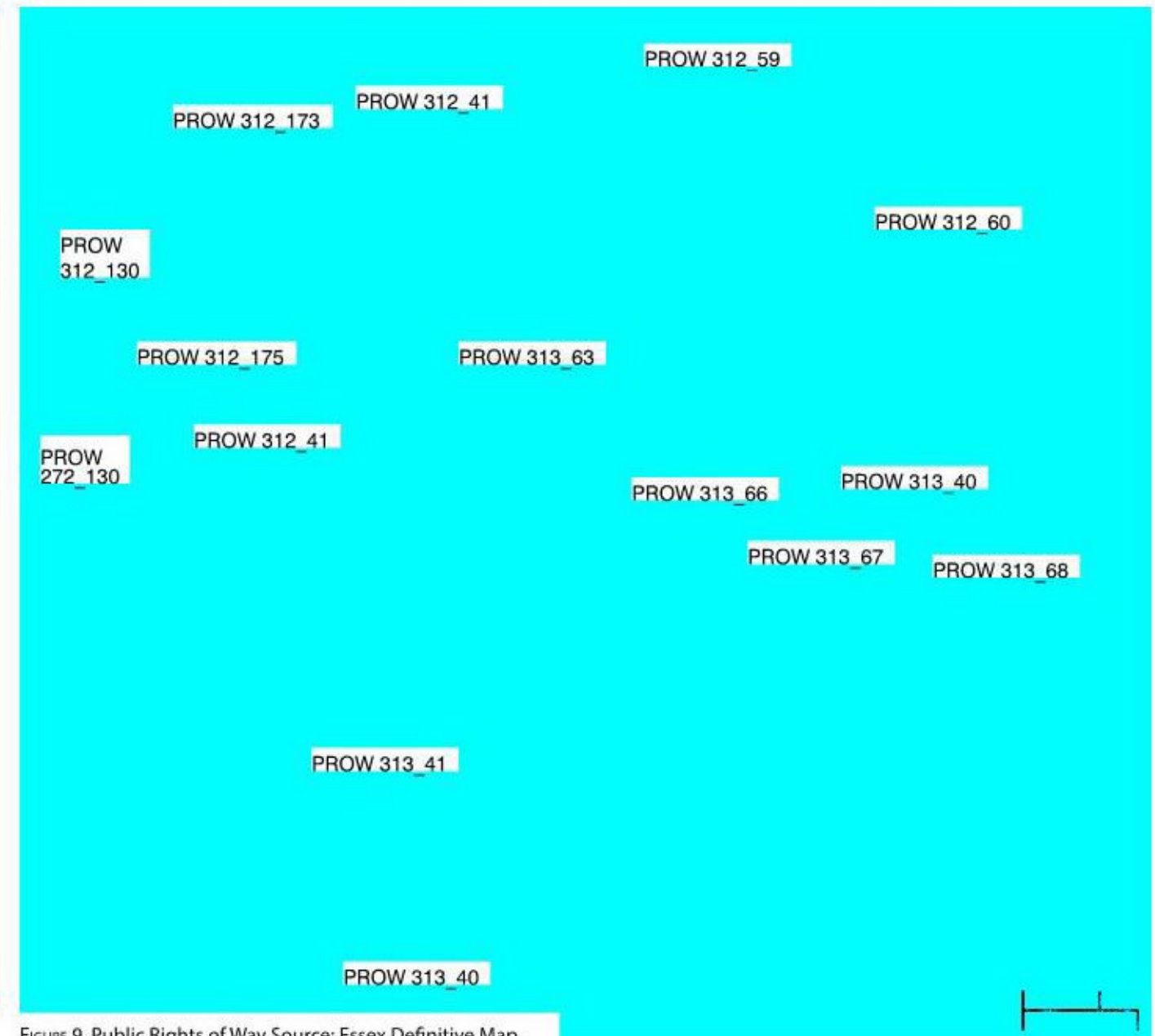


FIGURE 9. Public Rights of Way Source: Essex Definitive Map.



FIGURE 10. View 1A



FIGURE 11. View 1B

VIEWPOINTS 1A AND 1B

LOCATION

Taken from PRow, footpath 313_41, to the east of West Hordon/Thordon Avenue

DESCRIPTION

Looking towards the Application Site in a north easterly direction.

SENSITIVITY TO CHANGE

This is a well-used PRow running north across open fields and passing the public open space/recreational areas to the south. The main user groups experiencing this view are walkers using the PRow. The sensitivity of this group is regarded to be HIGH (users of the PRow) with the landscape effected of MEDIUM sensitivity.

PREDICTED IMPACT

The Proposed Development will be largely screened by the intervening boundary vegetation surrounding the open field structure and in particular, the area of dense (ancient) woodland to the immediate west and south of the site (Hollow Bottom Shaw). Glimpse views of the upper parts of the main buildings to the west of the site, if available, will be softened and screened by the existing woodland and the proposed structural planting belt along the western and southern boundaries which will reinforce the existing established vegetation cover. Accordingly, MAGNITUDE OF IMPACT will be LOW or NEGLIGIBLE.

SIGNIFICANCE

With the intervening vegetation, reinforced by new planting in place the resulting significance of change will be SLIGHT and NEUTRAL from this viewpoint assuming glimpse views of the Proposed Development are available.

MITIGATION

Once fully matured (15-20 years) the proposed structural tree, shrub and enhanced hedge planting will soften and screen any visual impact of the Proposed Development from these viewpoints.

RESIDUAL EFFECTS

Any glimpsed and filtered views of the development, particularly in winter, will continue to remain after the implementation of mitigation measures.



FIGURE 12. View 2



FIGURE 13. View 3

VIEWPOINT 2

LOCATION

Taken from the start of PRow, footpath 313_41, and further south than Viewpoints 1A and 1B, with West Horndon Park play area in the foreground.

DESCRIPTION

Looking towards the Application Site in a north easterly direction.

SENSITIVITY TO CHANGE

As noted above, this is a well-used PRow and local leisure area. The main user groups experiencing this view are walkers using the PRow and users of the park and play and sports facilities. The sensitivity of this group is regarded to be HIGH (users of the PRow) with the landscape effected of MEDIUM sensitivity.

PREDICTED IMPACT

The Proposed Development will be largely screened by the intervening boundary vegetation surrounding the open field structure and in particular, Hollow Bottom Shaw (ancient) woodland to the immediate west and south of the site. Glimpse views of the upper parts of the main buildings to the west and south of the site, if available, will be softened and screened by the existing woodland and the proposed structural planting belts along the western and southern boundaries which will reinforce the existing established vegetation. Accordingly, MAGNITUDE OF IMPACT will be LOW or NEGLIGIBLE.

SIGNIFICANCE

With the intervening vegetation, reinforced by new planting in place the resulting significance of change will be SLIGHT and NEUTRAL from this viewpoint assuming glimpse views of the Proposed Development are available.

MITIGATION

Once fully matured (15-20 years) the proposed structural tree, shrub and enhanced hedge planting will soften and screen any visual impact of the Proposed Development from this viewpoint.

RESIDUAL EFFECTS

Any glimpsed and filtered views of the development, particularly in winter, will continue to remain after the implementation of mitigation measures.

VIEWPOINT 3

LOCATION

This view is taken from a high spot on the small bridge structure to the east of West Horndon Park, the bridge crossing a ditch and leading onto an informal footpath network which meanders through an area of the park set aside for wild-life/natural regeneration.

DESCRIPTION

Looking towards the Application Site in a north easterly direction.

SENSITIVITY TO CHANGE

The main user group experiencing this view are walkers, with sensitivity of the group regarded to be HIGH with the landscape effected of MEDIUM sensitivity.

PREDICTED IMPACT

Being the only raised view available to users of the parkland, this is not representative of the general visibility of the site to users of the park area. However, it does illustrate that even from an elevated viewpoint, the Application Site is very well screened by the intervening vegetation, both local to the viewpoint, and further away, with hedgerows and shaws defining the open fields and with Hollow Bottom Shaw (ancient) woodland to the immediate west and south of the site creating layers of screening. Glimpse views of the upper parts of the main buildings to the west and south of the site, if available, will be softened and screened by the existing woodland and the proposed structural planting belts along the western and southern boundaries which will reinforce the existing established vegetation. Accordingly, MAGNITUDE OF IMPACT will be LOW or NEGLIGIBLE.

SIGNIFICANCE

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MITIGATION

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RESIDUAL EFFECTS

Any glimpsed and filtered views of the development, particularly in winter, will continue to remain after the implementation of mitigation measures.