

# NICHOLSONS

## Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

M Scott Properties Ltd

Land East of High Road, High Cross, Hertfordshire

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### Instruction

- 1.1 In July 2023 Nicholsons was instructed by M Scott Properties Ltd to offer landscape architecture services in relation to a proposed residential development on land located east of High Road, High Cross, Hertfordshire (hereinafter referred to as the 'Site').

### Scope

- 1.2 The assessment was undertaken using an established methodology, derived from the Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment jointly published Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third Edition (GLVIA3).
- 1.3 A copy of this assessment methodology is included within **Appendix 2** of this report.
- 1.4 The purposes of this report are as follows:
- To assess the baseline landscape and visual characteristics of the Site, including desk survey information and first-hand field evidence.
  - To identify and assess the potential landscape and visual impacts of the proposed development upon the established baseline.
  - To provide, where appropriate, recommendations of further landscape and visual mitigation requirements to reduce significant adverse impacts to a non-significant level.
- 1.5 A number of plans and photographs have been prepared to illustrate the character and visual environment of the application site and its context, and these are appended to this report.
- 1.6 This report should be read in conjunction with all other information submitted in relation to the proposals.

### Site Location

- 1.7 The application site (hereafter referred to as the 'Site') is located on the eastern edge of the village of High Cross, between High Road to the west and the A10 dual carriageway to the east. The Site's central grid reference is TL 365 187 and it extends to an approximate area of 7.75 hectares. The Site boundary is presented on the Baseline Information Map at **Appendix 1**.

## 2. PLANNING POLICY BACKGROUND

### National Planning Policy Background

#### *National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)*

- 2.1 The latest version of the NPPF was published in September 2023, replacing a previous version of this document. It sets out the Government's planning policies for England, and how these should be applied, as well as setting out a framework for the production of locally prepared housing and development plans.
- 2.2 Chapter 8 of the NPPF relates to the promotion of healthy and safe communities. It states at Paragraph 92 that planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places that promote social interaction, are safe and accessible, and enable and support healthy lifestyles. Measures to achieve these objectives include street layouts enabling easy pedestrian and cycle connections, active street frontages, clear and legible pedestrian and cycle routes, high quality public spaces that encourage active and continual use, and the provision of safe and accessible green infrastructure.
- 2.3 Paragraph 98 recognises the importance of access to a network of high-quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity for the health and well-being of communities.
- 2.4 Paragraph 100 states that planning policies and decisions should protect and enhance Public Rights of Way and access, including taking opportunities to improve users' facilities and to create additional connections to existing networks.
- 2.5 Chapter 12 of the NPPF relates to the achievement of well-designed places. In particular, it recognises that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps to make development acceptable to communities, and it establishes the creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable places as a fundamental goal of the planning and development process.
- 2.6 Paragraph 130 sets out a number of positive design criteria that planning policies and decisions should ensure. These include contributing to the overall character of an area in the long term, being visually attractive, being sympathetic to local character and history, establishing or maintaining a strong sense of place, and creating safe, inclusive and accessible places that promote health and well-being.
- 2.7 Paragraph 131 recognises the importance of trees in creating high quality places, and contributing to climate change adaptation and mitigation. It recommends that planning policies and decisions ensure that new streets are tree-lined unless there are clear, justifiable and compelling reasons why this is not appropriate, and also promotes the incorporation of trees elsewhere in developments. To ensure the sustainability of these benefits, it recommends that appropriate measures should be in place to secure the long-term maintenance of newly-planted trees, and that existing trees are retained wherever possible.
- 2.8 Paragraph 134 states that development that is not well designed should be refused, and it attributes significant weight to development that is in compliance with local design guidance, and/or which is outstanding or innovative, promoting high levels of sustainability.

- 2.9 Chapter 15 of the NPPF relates to the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment. Paragraph 174 states that planning policies should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by a range of measures including protecting and enhancing valued landscapes (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan) and recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.

**National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)**

- 2.10 Paragraph 034, Reference ID: 8-034-20190721 of the PPG presents the national guidance for landscape and planning. It states that:

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

*Where landscapes have a particular local value, it is important for policies to identify their special characteristics and be supported by proportionate evidence. Policies may set out criteria against which proposals for development affecting these areas will be assessed. Plans can also include policies to avoid adverse impacts on landscapes and to set out necessary mitigation measures, such as appropriate design principles and visual screening, where necessary. The cumulative impacts of development on the landscape need to be considered carefully.”*

- 2.11 Under the heading Light Pollution, paragraph 001 (Ref ID: 31-001-20140306), PPG refers to the risk of artificial lighting undermining enjoyment of the night sky in the countryside and, in paragraph 2, considers the potential effect on protected areas of dark skies or intrinsically dark landscapes. PPG then provides guidance for mitigation-by-design of artificial lighting, including location, timing and extent of lighting.

**Local Planning Policy Background**

**East Herts District Plan 2018**

- 2.12 East Herts District Plan was adopted on 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2018, and it covers the period 2011 to 2033. It contains both the ‘Part 1’ and ‘Part 2’ Local Plans for the district, providing both strategic and site-specific policies.

- 2.13 Chapter 17 of the District Plan is titled ‘Design and Landscape’ and it sets out 17 Design Objectives for the district, including the following:

*“Respect, improve and enhance the existing surrounding environment.”*

*“Respond to existing patterns of development and the local context.”*

*“Incorporate appropriate Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessments and Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments in the consideration of location and design of new development.”*

- 2.14 Policy DES2 within the District Plan specifically relates to landscape character, and it reads as follows:

*“I. Development proposals must demonstrate how they conserve, enhance or strengthen the character and distinctive features of the district’s landscape. For major applications, or applications where there is a potential adverse impact on landscape character, a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment and/or Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment should be provided to ensure that impacts, mitigation and enhancement opportunities are appropriately addressed.*

*II. Appropriate mitigation measures will be taken into account when considering the effect of development on landscape character/landscaping.*

*III. Where relevant, development proposals will have regard to the District Council’s currently adopted Landscape Character Assessment Supplementary Planning Document.”*

**Relevant Supplementary Planning Policy**

2.15 East Herts District Council has adopted its 2007 Landscape Character Assessment as a Supplementary Planning Document.

2.16 Further details of this document are given in Section 4 below.

**Neighbourhood Plan**

2.17 Thundridge Neighbourhood Plan 2018-2033 was prepared by Thundridge Parish Council and approved by referendum in 2021. The Neighbourhood Plan area covers High Cross.

2.18 The Neighbourhood Plan includes the following overarching objectives:

*“Preserve and enhance the character of the built environment in the villages and recognise the significance of heritage assets including landscapes, conservation areas, listed buildings and other historic features and areas.”*

*“Maintain important views, green corridors and local wildlife areas and provide extra protection for the most special green spaces for future generations to enjoy.”*

*“Ensure that new development is built to a high standard of design which reinforces local distinctiveness and character.”*

2.19 Policy THE4 within the Neighbourhood Plan relates to important views, based upon 11 identified views within the plan area that are predominantly set within the Rib Valley and The Bourne. The Site is not present within any of these important views.



### 3. BASELINE ASSESSMENT

#### Study Area

- 3.1 For the purposes of this assessment, a study area of 2.5km has been used. It is judged that beyond this distance, the influence of the proposed development will reduce to the extent that significant effects are unlikely.

#### Site Overview

- 3.2 The Site largely comprises an open arable field located on the eastern edge of the village of High Cross, although the northern part of the Site also contains an access track leading to a historic farmstead and a small area of vegetated waste ground.
- 3.3 The Site is generally devoid of internal features, although its western part is crossed by low voltage power lines supported by timber poles and a field tree is located near to the area of scrubby waste ground on the northern boundary.
- 3.4 The Site exhibits a level topography, being located on a plateau between the minor valleys of The Bourne to the west and the River Rib to the east.
- 3.5 The majority of the Site is not publicly accessible, although Public Footpath Thundridge 045 runs through the southernmost part, parallel and adjacent to the boundary. This route connects High Cross with a network of Public Rights of Way to the east, beyond the A10, including the Harcamlow Way and Hertfordshire Way Long Distance Recreational Routes.
- 3.6 The northern boundary of the Site is undefined, crossing largely open arable land. It crosses the access track to Sutes Farm and it also crosses an area of scrubby waste ground associated with the farmstead that extends into the northern part of the Site.
- 3.7 The eastern boundary of the Site is similarly undefined, crossing open arable land.
- 3.8 The southern Site boundary comprises a mature hedgerow with hedgerow trees. A grassed margin runs along the Site boundary, supporting Public Footpath Thundridge 045 along the length of the boundary. The hedgerow has been clipped at its eastern end, providing intervisibility with the upper stories of the dwellings on North Drive immediately south of the Site.
- 3.9 The southern part of the Site's western boundary comprises a dense hedgerow, where the Site adjoins playing fields associated with the primary school at High Cross. The central part of this boundary is formed by rear garden boundaries associated with the existing ribbon development properties along High Road, with a variety of boundary treatments and domestic paraphernalia and structures visible. The northernmost part of this boundary, north of the access track to Sutes Farm, comprises the grassed roadside verge of High Road, permitting clear intervisibility between the Site and its surroundings.

#### Site Context

- 3.10 To the immediate north of the Site lies the historic farmstead of Sutes Farm, including the Grade II\* Listed Sutes Farmhouse and its associated Grade II Listed barn. A number of more modern and substantial farm buildings are located between the Listed farmhouse and the main body of the Site, and some of these host light industrial businesses including a small sawmill and furniture manufacturing company. The eastern part of the farmstead lies an

area of waste ground that supports scrub and ruderal vegetation and several piles of waste, and it therefore possesses an untidy appearance.

- 3.11 Beyond the farmstead, a corridor of arable land is located between Ermine Street and the A10 dual carriageway, with occasional small patches of woodland, extending to the edge of the study area. To the west of Ermine Street, however, the countryside is pastoral in nature with more frequent woodland and treed hedgerows, surrounding the villages of Standon Green End and Colliers End. To the east of the A10 are more substantial areas of woodland, most of which is ancient, set within a context of arable fields.
- 3.12 Directly to the east of the Site is an area of retained arable land and beyond this lies the vegetated bund that forms part of the corridor of the A10 dual carriageway. Open views are available to the bund, and glimpsed views can be obtained of the traffic on the road. This is a busy public highway, and the traffic provides a constant background noise across the Site.
- 3.13 The wider landscape to the east of the Site, beyond the A10 corridor, comprises woodland set within arable fields on the plateau top and valley of the River Rib that lies beyond. A proportion of this woodland is ancient. The countryside possesses a generally rural and undeveloped character (albeit with the A10 and a private airstrip as sources of disturbance), and it is well-served by Public Rights of Way.
- 3.14 Directly to the south of the Site lies an area of existing residential development associated with the village of High Cross. These are 20<sup>th</sup> Century dwellings on Poplar Close and North Drive arranged in a cul-de-sac pattern. Further to the west lies a large private dwelling set within extensive grounds, and the Parish Church of St John the Evangelist. To the south-east of the Site, between the village edge and dual carriageway, lies a small area of woodland and an arable field.
- 3.15 The village of High Cross continues to the south, with residential dwellings and a small area of light industry on the edge of the village. A large arable field separates this industrial area from the conjoined Conservation Area villages of Thundridge and Wadesbury. To the east of these villages is the Grade II\* Registered Park and Garden at Youngsbury, which largely comprises parkland and woodland, divided by the corridor of the A10 public highway. To the west of the villages is arable land with scattered woodland, including the ancient Wade's Wood. At the very southern edge of the study area lies Poles Park, a Grade II Registered Park and Garden that largely comprises a golf course.
- 3.16 Directly to the west of the Site lies ribbon development of a mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century utilitarian character, on the eastern side of High Road, although some more recent development has also occurred. The Puller Memorial C of E Primary School adjoins the southern part of the Site's western boundary.
- 3.17 To the west of High Road, an area of pastoral land lies on the village edge between Pest House Lane to the north and Marshall's Lane to the south. Beyond this lies rolling arable land interspersed with woodland, and the wooded corridor of The Bourne, a tributary of the River Rib. With the exception of Dilly Wood, this woodland is not ancient.

### **Topography & Landform**

- 3.18 The Site sits at approximately 92m AOD and expresses a relatively level topography. It is located on a plateau between the valleys of the River Rib to the east and The Bourne to the west.
- 3.19 To the south of the Site the landform also drops towards the valley of the River Rib, which turns to the west as it heads towards its confluence with the River Lee, and beyond this the landform rises again towards the settlement of Ware.
- 3.20 The landform to the north of the Site is formed of complex local undulations, as a number of minor tributaries of the River Rib cut through the landscape, although there is a general rise in topography in this direction, towards a high point west of Roughground Wood .

### **Public Rights of Way**

- 3.21 Public Footpath Thundridge 045 connects with High Road at its western end, north of the parish church, and it passes within the southern boundary of the Site before passing through a hedgerow gap and an arable field to terminate at a junction with Public Footpath Thundridge 056 next to the A10 dual carriageway.
- 3.22 Other Public Rights of Way outside of the Site from which the proposed development is anticipated to be visible are as follows:
- Public Bridleway Thundridge 043.
  - Public Bridleway Thundridge 048.
  - Public Byway Thundridge 050.
  - Public footpath Thundridge 056.
  - Public Bridleway Standon 089.
- 3.23 Whilst other Public Rights of Way have been identified within the Study Area, field survey has determined that the proposed development is highly unlikely to be visible from these routes due to the presence of intervening features.

### **Designations**

#### ***Statutory***

- 3.24 There are no statutory landscape designations within the study area.
- 3.25 There are a number of Listed Buildings surrounding the Site, most notably the Grade II\* Listed Sutes Farmhouse. Views to the tower of the Grade II Listed Church of St John have also been identified as a notable feature within the landscape.

#### ***Non-Statutory***

- 3.26 There are two Registered Parks and Gardens within the study area, both of which are located to the south of the Site.
- 3.27 The nearest is the Grade II\* parkland at Youngsbury, which is located to the south of North Drive, approximately 250m from the Site boundary. Despite the relatively close proximity, there is very little perceptual relationship between the park and the Site due to the presence

of intervening woodland and dwellings, and the corridor of the A10 dual carriageway with its flanking bunds.

#### **Illustrative Viewpoints**

- 3.28 To assist in understanding the character and composition of the Site and the landscape in which it is located, a series of illustrative views are presented at **Appendix 3**.
- 3.29 These views have been taken from a number of locations within the Site, and within the applicant's wider land holding. A plan showing the location of the various views is also presented at **Appendix 3**.

#### ***Illustrative View 1: North of the Site, looking south towards the Site***

- 3.30 This view was taken from the applicant's wider land holding to the north of the small part of the Site that extends to the north of the access track to Sutes Farm. It serves to illustrate the relationship between the Site and its wider landscape setting to the north.
- 3.31 The Sutes Farm complex occupies the centre of the view, sitting upon a topographic ridge that prevents visibility of the wider Site at ground level. In the foreground lies arable land that is currently populated with ruderal vegetation.
- 3.32 The Grade II\* Listed Sutes Farmhouse, a historic moated dwelling, is partially hidden by vegetation, but it is identifiable by its bright white rendered walls. It is set within an immediate context of more modern dwellings and ancillary farm buildings, although these are again partially screened by existing trees.
- 3.33 To the right of the view, the side and rear elevations of the ribbon development dwellings along High Road are visible.

#### ***Illustrative View 2: Adjacent to access track to Sutes Farm, looking south***

- 3.34 This view was taken from the small part of the Site that extends to the north of the access track to Sutes Farm. It illustrates the current residential context of the Site.
- 3.35 In the centre of the view is the row of mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century semi-detached and terraced dwellings on High Road. These express a typical utilitarian character with brick and tile construction and hipped roofs. Some dwellings have had more modern extensions added to their frontages. An access road runs along the frontages of the dwellings, separated from High Road by a vegetated verge. The ground floors of the dwellings are largely screened from the Site by the garden boundary hedgerow of the northernmost dwelling.
- 3.36 The access road to Sutes Farm and the Site is present in the foreground of the dwellings, but the surfaced road is not visible as it sits below a shallow grassed bank in this view.
- 3.37 To the left of the view, the farm buildings associated with Sutes Farm can be seen behind trackside trees that are in relatively poor condition.

***Illustrative View 3: Adjacent to access track to Sutes Farm, looking north***

- 3.38 This view was taken from the same location as Illustrative View 2 but looking northwards. It illustrates the character of the part of the Site located to the north of the access track to Sutes Farm, and also that of the wider countryside to the north of the Site.
- 3.39 The arable land of the Site is visible in the foreground, currently overgrown with ruderal vegetation. The Site boundary is unmarked, and the field extends beyond this.
- 3.40 Beyond the boundary of the field in which the Site is located, gently rolling arable countryside continues, interspersed with treed hedgerows and mature broadleaved woodland.
- 3.41 In the centre of the view, a small cluster of dwellings associated with the hamlet of Mott's Wood are visible.

***Illustrative View 4: Western Site boundary, looking west***

- 3.42 This view was taken from the western boundary of the Site, adjacent to the boundary of the primary school grounds, looking west towards the rear aspects of the dwellings on High Road.
- 3.43 At the left-hand edge of the view, the dense hedgerow separating the Site from the primary school can be seen, whilst the arable land of the Site occupies the remainder of the foreground of the view. Behind this sits the rear gardens of the properties on High Road, although two prominent new dwellings have been constructed directly adjacent to the Site, on former commercial premises.
- 3.44 The Site boundary displays a wide variety of landscape treatments, including domestic timber fencing of varying styles, and coniferous and broadleaved hedgerows. Some properties have outbuildings adjoining the Site boundary. Many of these elements serve to prevent ground floor views across the Site, although first floor views appear to be available from most dwellings. The properties present a strong roof line and unity of materials, which is at odds with the highly variable nature of the garden structures and boundary treatments.

***Illustrative View 5: Southern Site boundary, looking east***

- 3.45 This view was taken from the southern Site boundary, at the point at which Public Footpath Thundridge 045 enters the Site through a hedgerow gap. It was taken looking towards the A10 dual carriageway and the landscape beyond.
- 3.46 The foreground of the view comprises the arable land of the Site and adjacent area, which currently supports ruderal vegetation. Beyond this, the vegetated bund on the western flank of the A10 can be seen, preventing views of the traffic on the dual carriageway.
- 3.47 In the background of the view, the mature broadleaved woodland of Great Southey Wood and Ash Plantation rises above the surrounding arable fields. This woodland serves to separate the Site from much of the landscape to the east.
- 3.48 At the right-hand edge of the view, a field boundary hedgerow can be seen, along with low voltage power lines supported on timber poles.

***Illustrative View 6: Northern Site boundary, looking south towards High Cross***

- 3.49 This view was taken from the northern boundary of the Site, adjacent to the farmstead at Sutes Farm. The foreground of the view demonstrates the open, arable character of the Site, with boundary oak trees visible to the left of the view.
- 3.50 The village edge of High Cross forms the backdrop of the view. At the right-hand edge of the view is the tower of the Grade II Listed Church of St John, partially obscured by trees. To the left of this, a line of mature trees separates the Site from the garden of a large private dwelling.
- 3.51 To the left of the view, a length of the Site boundary hedgerow has been clipped, allowing views of the upper storeys of dwellings on North Drive, which are of a similar character to those on High Road to the west of the Site.

## 4. LANDSCAPE BASELINE

### Overview

- 4.1 In order to accurately define the baseline sensitivity of the receiving landscape to any type of proposal, it is important to identify and assess the specific physical elements and perceptual qualities, and assemblages of these, that are likely to be affected. These are commonly referred to as landscape receptors.
- 4.2 Landscape receptors are defined in paragraph 3.21 of the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third Edition as *“including the constituent elements of the landscape, its specific aesthetic or perceptual qualities and the character of the landscape in different areas.”*
- 4.3 The identification of these features will be informed through:
- Review of Ordnance Survey mapping, historical map data and aerial and other remote sensing imagery where appropriate.
  - Review of relevant published landscape character assessment at national, regional, sub-regional and local levels as appropriate.
  - Identification of landscape-based designations.
  - Identification and description of individual elements, features, aesthetic and perceptual aspects of the landscape which contribute to its character.
  - Assessment of the general condition of the receiving landscape.
- 4.4 Once a list of landscape receptors has been established, the sensitivity of each will be assessed through:
- Assessment of the relative value of each receptor.
  - Assessment of the relative susceptibility of the receptor to a change of the type proposed.
  - Combination of relative value and susceptibility scores to derive an overall relative sensitivity score.
- 4.5 A full methodology for this assessment is presented at **Appendix 2**.

### Review of Published Landscape Character Assessments

#### *National Level Assessment*

- 4.6 Natural England’s National Character Assessment places the Site and the entire study area within the South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland National Character Area (NCA 86). This is broadly described as an ancient landscape of wooded arable countryside with a distinct sense of enclosure. The overall character is of a gently undulating, chalky boulder clay plateau, the undulations being caused by the numerous small-scale river valleys that dissect the plateau. There is a complex network of old species-rich hedgerows, ancient woods and parklands, meadows with streams and rivers that flow eastwards.

4.7 The key characteristics of the South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland National Character Area are as follows, with those representative of the Site and its setting highlighted in bold text:

- **An undulating chalky boulder clay plateau is dissected by numerous river valleys, giving a topography of gentle slopes in the lower, wider valleys and steeper slopes in the narrower upper parts.**
- Fragments of chalk give many of the soils a calcareous character, which also influences the character of the semi-natural vegetation cover.
- **South-east-flowing streams and rivers drain the clay plateau.** Watercourses wind slowly across flood plains, supporting wet, fen-type habitats; grazing marsh; and blocks of cricket-bat willows, poplars and old willow pollards. Navigation locks are present on some rivers.
- **Lowland wood pasture and ancient woodlands support the dormouse and a rich diversity of flowering plants on the clay plateau. Large, often ancient hedgerows link woods and copses, forming wooded skylines.**
- **The agricultural landscape is predominantly arable with a wooded appearance. There is some pasture on the valley floors. Field patterns are irregular despite rationalisation, with much ancient countryside surviving. Field margins support corn bunting, cornflower and brown hare.**
- Roman sites, medieval monasteries and castles and **ancient woodlands contribute to a rich archaeology.** Impressive churches, large barns, substantial country house estates and Second World War airfields dot the landscape, forming historical resources.
- There is a dispersed settlement pattern of scattered farmsteads, parishes and small settlements around ‘tyes’ (commons) or strip greens and isolated hamlets. **The NCA features a concentration of isolated moated farmsteads and numerous well-preserved medieval towns and large villages.**
- Larger 20th-century development has taken place to the south and east around Chelmsford, Ipswich and the new towns of Harlow and Stevenage.
- Traditional timber-frame, often elaborate buildings with exposed timbers, colour-washed render, pargeting and steeply pitched roofs with pegtiles or long straw thatch. Sometimes they have been refronted with Georgian red brick or Victorian cream-coloured bricks (‘Suffolk whites’). Clay lump is often used in cottages and farm buildings.
- Winding, narrow and sometimes sunken lanes are bounded by deep ditches, wide verges and strong hedgerows. Transport infrastructure includes the A14, A12, M11 and Stansted Airport.
- **A strong network of public rights of way provides access to the area’s archetypal lowland English countryside.**



4.8 Based on the above appraisal, the Site and its setting are considered to be moderately representative of the South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland National Character Area.

**Local Level Assessment: East Herts Landscape Character Assessment 2007**

4.9 East Herts District Landscape Character Assessment was adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document, forming part of the Development Plan for the district. It divides the district into a number of geographically specific Landscape Character Areas, providing description, analysis and strategy for each.

4.10 The assessment places the Site within the 'High Cross Plateau B' Landscape Character Area (Area 73B), representing the eastern expression of the plateau. The summary description of this area is as follows:

*"A two-speed landscape. Open undulating clay plateau bisected by fast A-road along ancient route with several wayside settlements. In arable cultivation with several ancient woodlands. Noticeably larger field pattern to the east of the A10, without settlements; more ancient, smaller scale to the west, with settlements. The narrow linear area west of The Bourne shares some of the characteristics of the Sacombe estate farmland but does not lie within it, relating rather to the wooded farmland to its north."*

4.11 The key characteristics of the High Cross Plateau B Landscape Character Area are as follows, with those representative of the Site and its setting highlighted in bold text:

- **Undulating arable upland.**
- **Filtered views out from and along A10.**
- **Limited views elsewhere, filtered by hedgerow vegetation.**
- **Isolated blocks of woodland, some large, especially east of A10.**
- Ancient buildings in roadside settlements.
- Place names with 'green' or 'end' in small, remote settlements.
- Irregular or sinuous lanes and field boundaries.

4.12 Based upon the above analysis, the Site and its setting are considered to be moderately representative of the Landscape Character Area.

4.13 The assessment concludes that this landscape is in 'Moderate' condition and of 'Moderate' strength of character, leading to an overall strategy of improvement and conservation.

4.14 A number of specific guidelines for this landscape are given, although these relate to rural land management as opposed to development. They do, however, recommend the conversion of arable land to grassland where possible and the creation and improvement of habitat links to reverse habitat fragmentation.

**Appraisal of Site Character and Local Representation**

4.15 The Site represents an area of open arable land on the eastern edge of the village of High Cross that is currently supporting ruderal vegetation. Other minor uses within the Site boundary include an access track and area of waste ground associated with the Sutes Farm Complex, directly to the north of the Site.

- 4.16 The combination of the immediate village edge, commercial farmstead and dual carriageway means that the Site exhibits a ‘fringe’ character, with strong suburban influences and a general lack of tranquillity. Whilst Sutes Farm supports a Grade II\* Listed moated farmhouse and a Grade II Listed barn, these are surrounded by a number of more modern structures, some of which support separate businesses, which separate them from the main body of the Site.
- 4.17 Public Footpath Thundridge 045 follows the Site’s southern boundary, as part of a wider Public Right of Way network providing access between High Cross and the surrounding countryside. No other part of the Site is accessible.
- 4.18 The Site generally exhibits a level topography, being located on a plateau between the minor valleys of the River Rib to the east and its tributary The Bourne to the west. A slight rise to the north of the Site, upon which Sutes Farm is located, limits visibility to the Site at ground level from the countryside to the north.
- 4.19 The A10 dual carriageway, located to the east of the Site beyond a small area of arable land, is a source of considerable audible disturbance. The vegetated bunds that flank the highway corridor form a strong separating feature within the landscape and associate the Site with the adjacent village as opposed to wider countryside.
- 4.20 With the exception of the adjacent village and dual carriageway, the landscape setting of the Site is typical of the High Cross Plateau Landscape Character Area. It is characterised by gently rolling arable land interspersed with woodland, some of which is ancient. The woodland blocks serve to limit the visual relationship of the Site with its wider setting, particularly to the east. These combine with the adjacent settlement to place the Site within a relatively limited visual envelope.
- 4.21 For the purposes of this assessment, the following physical and perceptual elements are considered to be relevant receptors in terms of landscape character:
- Arable land use, currently supporting ruderal vegetation.
  - Urbanising influences from adjacent village edge and dual carriageway.
  - Strong presence of trees and woodland within wider setting.
  - Overall character of the Site.
  - Overall character of the setting of the Site.

#### **Assessment of Receptor Sensitivity**

##### ***Assessment of Receptor Value***

- 4.22 In absence of formal landscape designations, an accepted approach to assess value is to consider landscape receptors against the criteria set out in the Landscape Institute’s Technical Guidance Note 02-21: Assessing Landscape Value Outside National Designations, which are as follows:
- Natural heritage.
  - Cultural heritage.

- Landscape condition.
- Associations.
- Distinctiveness.
- Recreational.
- Perceptual (scenic).
- Perceptual (wildness and tranquillity).
- Functional.

4.23 With regard to the individual landscape receptors listed above, the relative value of each characteristic is judged to be as follows:

- *Arable land use, currently supporting ruderal vegetation:* The Site largely comprises a cultivated arable field, which has been left to develop ruderal vegetation. It therefore possesses an open and intensively managed character, with narrow grassed margins and low conservation value. It is not distinctive and is typical of the arable land present within the wider landscape, and the adjacent village edge and dual carriageway serve to reduce its scenic value and eliminate any sense of rural tranquillity, as well as separating it from its wider countryside setting. The public footpath running along part of the southern boundary of the Site lends it a degree of recreational value, as part of a wider countryside access network, but the remainder of the Site is not accessible. The overall value of this receptor is therefore judged to be **Low**.
- *Urbanising influences from adjacent village edge and dual carriageway:* The Site is located directly adjacent to the existing village edge, with the rear aspects of mostly mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century utilitarian brick and tile dwellings facing the Site. The variety of domestic paraphernalia within rear gardens and garden boundary treatments lends the urban edge an untidy appearance. The A10 dual carriageway is visually screened from the Site by vegetated bunds, but the constant traffic noise reduces any sense of tranquillity within the landscape. The value of this receptor is therefore judged to be **Low**.
- *Strong presence of trees and woodland within wider setting:* Whilst there are very few trees within the Site itself, its immediate and wider settings are strongly treed, supporting the character of the High Cross Plateau Landscape Character Area. In particular, the ancient woods of Great Southey Wood, Ash Plantation and Sutes Wood contribute to the natural and cultural heritage of the landscape, as well as providing a range of functional values. These historic areas of surviving woodland also contribute to the overall condition of the landscape. Taking these factors into account, the value of this receptor is judged to be **Medium**.
- *Overall character of the Site:* The overall character of the Site is that of an area of open arable land within an urbanised context. There is a clear relationship with the adjacent settlement and the dual carriageway to the east encases the Site within a corridor between the settlement edge and major public highway. The intensively managed

nature of the Site is such that its natural heritage and functional value is likely to be low, whilst the presence of the Grade II\* Listed Sutes Farm and Grade II Listed barn, and Church of St John the Evangelist with its prominent tower contribute some cultural heritage value, albeit these are encased within more modern structures. The urbanising influences upon the Site are such that it is not considered to be distinctive, wild or tranquil, and its recreational value is limited to a stretch of public footpath along part of its southern boundary. The value of the Site as a whole is therefore judged to be **Low**.

- *Overall character of the setting of the Site:* The setting of the Site represents a combination of the adjacent village and dual carriageway, and the wider countryside in which this is set. High Cross is a historic settlement exhibiting a degree of cultural heritage value, and it includes three Listed Buildings in the immediate vicinity of the Site, although the dwellings that adjoin the Site are mostly of a mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century utilitarian character, and the Listed Buildings at Sutes Farm are set within more modern structures. The A10 dual carriageway beyond the Site is a public highway that provides relief to local villages but forms a barrier between the Site and its wider setting to the east. Beyond these urbanising features, the countryside is typical of the High Cross Plateau, consisting of rolling arable land interspersed with woodland, much of which is ancient in origin and therefore of notable conservation value. This is therefore a relatively intact landscape with a reasonable degree of tranquillity away from settlements. The landscape is well-served by public rights of way, particularly to the east of the Site, but there are no notable areas of land for recreation outside of the settlements. Taking these factors into account, the value of the Site's landscape setting is judged to be **Medium**.

#### ***Assessment of Receptor Susceptibility***

4.24 The susceptibility of each receptor to the type of change proposed is judged to be as follows:

- *Arable land use, currently supporting ruderal vegetation:* The Site's arable land use reflects an intensive use of the land, and it is largely isolated from the wider arable farmed landscape by the combination of the settlement to the west and south and the dual carriageway to the east. The change of land use to a residential development would change the character of the Site from a farmed to a residential land use, although the Site is currently subject to strong urbanising influences that provide a degree of existing precedent. It is also likely that a significant proportion of the Site would be given over to green infrastructure, including grassland and trees, which would be in keeping with the local published landscape strategy. Taking these factors into account, the susceptibility of this receptor is judged to be **Low**.
- *Urban influences from adjacent village edge and dual carriageway:* The Site is subject to a range of urbanising influences, which generally detract from its potential to exhibit a rural character. The type of development proposed would be in keeping with these existing influences and would therefore represent an increase in existing influences as opposed to the introduction of new, unprecedented influences. The susceptibility of this receptor to the type of change proposed is therefore judged to be **Low**.

- *Strong presence of trees and woodland within wider setting:* The tree and woodland elements within the setting of the Site lend the local landscape a strong sense of character, structure and time depth. Whilst there is relatively little in terms of tree resources within the Site, any disruption of this as a result of the conversion of the Site to residential development would harm a key element of this landscape, whereas any reinforcement would have a notable beneficial effect. The susceptibility of this receptor is therefore judged to be **Medium**.
- *Overall character of the Site:* The Site represents an area of land that has been intensively managed, with existing residential and commercial influences from its immediate setting. The type of change proposed is likely to reflect local precedents and also to involve the creation of areas of green infrastructure that are more environmentally beneficial than the existing arable fields. The susceptibility of the Site to the type of change proposed is therefore judged to be **Low**.
- *Overall character of the setting of the Site:* The immediate setting of the Site has seen gradual change since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century, culminating in the construction of the dual carriageway. Beyond this, however, the countryside is predominantly rural and expresses a reasonable degree of intactness. The perceptual relationship between the Site and its setting is limited somewhat by the intervening presence of the settlement and highway bunds in its immediate vicinity, and of mature woodland in the wider setting. The susceptibility of this receptor to the type of change proposed is therefore judged to be **Low**.

#### ***Defining Receptor Sensitivity***

4.25 Based upon the judgements of susceptibility and value set out above and in Table 3 at **Appendix 2**, the overall sensitivity of the identified landscape receptors to the type of change proposed is judged to be as follows:

- Arable land use, currently supporting ruderal vegetation: **Low sensitivity**.
- Urbanising influences from adjacent village edge and dual carriageway: **Low sensitivity**.
- Strong presence of trees and woodland within wider setting: **Medium sensitivity**.
- Overall character of the Site: **Low sensitivity**.
- Overall character of the setting of the Site: **Low/Medium sensitivity**.

## 5. VISUAL BASELINE

### Overview

- 5.1 The visual baseline study commences with a process of desk study to generate a Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) using 3D terrain modelling software, which shows the 'bare earth' visibility of the proposed development based upon local topography, i.e. devoid of structures and vegetation. The extent of the visual envelope is then refined through field investigation. The ZTV Plan is presented at **Appendix 1**.
- 5.2 The baseline assessment is used to identify the likely visual receptors of the proposals. These are defined as individuals and/or defined groups of people who have the potential to be affected by a proposal.
- 5.3 For each confirmed visual receptor, a viewpoint photograph or series of photographs will be taken from the point of greatest visibility. A description is provided below of each viewpoint, whilst the viewpoints themselves, along with a plan showing their location, are presented at **Appendix 3**.
- 5.4 This description will then be used to assess the sensitivity of each receptor, in line with the criteria presented within Table 6 at **Appendix 2**.

### Description of Representative Views

#### ***Viewpoint 1: Public Footpath Thundridge 045, looking west***

*Grid reference: TL 36587 18640*

*Distance from Site: Within Site*

*Nature of receptor: Users of Public Footpath Thundridge 045, occupants of dwellings on High Road*

- 5.5 This view was taken from Public Footpath Thundridge 045 as it passes through the Site, following its southern boundary. The Site's southern boundary hedgerow is visible to the left of the view.
- 5.6 The arable land of the Site is visible in the foreground and beyond this lies the existing settlement edge, which consists of residential dwellings as well as the village primary school. These elements are set within a context of mature trees.
- 5.7 With regard to the users of Public Footpath Thundridge 045, these will be seeking a recreational experience in the countryside, although views from this route are already influenced by residential development and other urbanising features. The sensitivity of this receptor is therefore judged to be **Medium**.
- 5.8 With regard to the occupants of the private dwellings on High Road, ground floor views are likely to be screened by existing garden boundary treatments and structures within rear gardens, but first floor views are likely to be available across the open arable land of the Site. The sensitivity of this receptor is therefore judged to be **Medium**.

**Viewpoint 2: Public Footpath Thundridge 045, looking north-west**

*Grid reference: TL 36800 18559*

*Distance from Site: Adjacent to Site boundary*

*Nature of receptor: Users of Public Footpath Thundridge 045*

- 5.9 This view was taken from the eastern point of Public Footpath Thundridge 045, adjacent to the A10 highway corridor and the Site's southern boundary.
- 5.10 The Site boundary hedgerow, which occupies the right hand side of the view, is clipped in this location, although it is still sufficiently tall to prevent views to the existing settlement edge.
- 5.11 To the left of the view, a small area of woodland can be seen, through which the footpath passes to enter the Site. This also serves to obscure the existing settlement edge.
- 5.12 With regard to the users of public footpath Thundridge 045, these have been judged above to be of **Medium** sensitivity, and this viewpoint supports this judgement.

**Viewpoint 3: Public Footpath Thundridge 056, looking north**

*Grid reference: TL 36679 18358*

*Distance from Site: 236m*

*Nature of receptor: Users of Public Footpath Thundridge 056*

- 5.13 This view was taken from Public Footpath Thundridge 056 as it enters the arable fields to the east of High Cross. The route of the footpath runs parallel and adjacent to the A10 highway corridor.
- 5.14 The foreground of the view is occupied by arable land of a similar character to the Site.
- 5.15 To the left of the view, existing dwellings on North Drive can be seen, set within mature conifer trees. The centre of the view is occupied by the small area of broadleaved woodland located next to the Site's southern boundary. The Site is located behind this area of woodland, and also behind the managed hedgerow to the right of it, which marks the Site boundary. In the distance to the right of the view, Sutes Wood is visible on rising land.
- 5.16 With regard to the users of Public Footpath Thundridge 056, these currently experience views of the existing settlement edge, as well as disturbance from the adjacent dual carriageway, and therefore they are judged to be of **Medium** sensitivity.

**Viewpoint 4: Public Byway Thundridge 050, looking north-west**

*Grid reference: TL 37324 17979*

*Distance from Site: 787m*

*Nature of receptor: Users of Public Byway Thundridge 050*

- 5.17 This view was taken from Public Byway Thundridge 050 as it passes through wooded arable countryside to the east of the Site.
- 5.18 The view is framed by areas of mature woodland, and its foreground is arable, typical of the published character of the High Cross Plateau.

5.19 Whilst the Site is not visible at ground level, it can be identified by the Sutes Farm complex and also the existing dwellings on High Road, whose uppermost parts are visible above existing vegetation.

5.20 With regard to the users of Public Byway 050, these are likely to be seeking an attractive and tranquil experience in the open countryside and they are therefore judged to be of **High** sensitivity.

***Viewpoint 5: Public Bridleway Thundridge 048, looking north-east***

*Grid reference: TL 37114*

*Distance from Site: 238m*

*Nature of receptor: Users of Public Bridleway Thundridge 048*

5.21 This view was taken from Public Bridleway Thundridge 048, looking north-east along the corridor of arable land between High Road and the A10, towards the Site.

5.22 To the left of the view, the rear gardens of existing properties on North Drive can be seen, and to the right of these is the small area of woodland directly to the south of the Site.

5.23 The Site's southern boundary hedgerow can be seen in the backdrop of the view, with Sutes Wood rising behind it. To the right of this is the vegetated bund that lines the A10 dual carriageway.

5.24 With regard to the users of Public Bridleway Thundridge 048, they are likely to be seeking a recreational experience in the countryside but are adjacent to the existing settlement and subject to urbanising influences. The sensitivity of this receptor is therefore judged to be **Medium**.

***Viewpoint 6: Public Bridleway 043, looking south-west***

*Grid reference: TL 36630 18371*

*Distance from Site: 1,347m*

*Nature of receptor: Users of Public Bridleway Thundridge 043*

5.25 This view was taken from Public Bridleway Thundridge 043, which follows the access road to Plashes Farm, looking towards the Site.

5.26 Panoramic views of the surrounding countryside are available from this elevated location, although as the view shows, the Site and village of High Cross are largely obscured by Sutes Wood, to the extent that only the uppermost parts of the tower of the Church of St John are visible.

5.27 With regard to the users of Public Bridleway Thundridge 043, these are likely to be seeking a recreational, and enjoy panoramic views from this location, therefore their sensitivity is judged to be **High**.



**Viewpoint 7: Public Bridleway Standon 089, looking south**

*Grid reference: TL 37270 20080*

*Distance from Site: 1,209m*

*Nature of receptor: Users of Public Bridleway Standon 089*

- 5.28 This view was taken from Public Bridleway Standon 089, which runs adjacent to the western edge of the A10 dual carriageway corridor in the rolling countryside between High Cross and Colliers End.
- 5.29 The village of High Cross is distantly visible within this view, mainly identifiable by the tower of the Church of St John the Evangelist.
- 5.30 To the left of the view, traffic on the A10 can be seen above the roadside vegetation, whilst to the right of the view the cluster of dwellings at Mott's Wood are visible.
- 5.31 With regard to the users of Public Bridleway Standon 089, these are likely to be seeking a recreational experience in the countryside, although the visible traffic on the A10 is likely to detract from the overall experience. The sensitivity of this receptor is therefore judged to be **Medium**.

**Viewpoint 8: Marshall's Lane, looking north-east**

*Grid reference: TL 34991 19107*

*Distance from Site: 1,495m*

*Nature of receptor: Users of Marshall's Lane*

- 5.32 This view was taken from Marshall's Lane in an elevated location to the west of High Cross, south of Dilly Wood.
- 5.33 The foreground of the view consists of rolling arable countryside framed by woodland, which is typical of the High Cross Plateau.
- 5.34 The existing dwellings on High Road can be seen in the distance, against the backdrop of Great Southey Wood and Ash Plantation. The Site is located behind these dwellings and is therefore not visible at ground level.
- 5.35 With regard to the users of Marshall's Lane, this is a rural public highway that affords long views over the surrounding countryside, and therefore this receptor is judged to be of **Medium** sensitivity.

**Summary of Visual Environment**

- 5.36 The Site occupies a relatively narrow visual envelope, with very few views available of its ground level outside of the Site boundaries. This is principally due to the presence of structures and mature woodland within its immediate and wider setting, and the local rolling topography.
- 5.37 The existing settlement edge to the south and west provides immediate screening to views from these directions. Whilst some elevated views are available towards the Site from the west, the presence of the ribbon development along High Road means that much of the Site is not visible.

- 5.38 The A10 dual carriageway with its vegetated bunds provides a strong visual separation between the Site and the wider countryside to the east, and this combines with the presence of large woods such as Sutes Wood, Ash Plantation and Great Southey Wood to further limit visibility in longer views.
- 5.39 The rolling countryside to the north and the general absence of human features in this direction affords some views towards the Site, but these are filtered by field boundary trees and framed by woodland blocks, to the extent that only the uppermost parts of the church tower at High Cross and ribbon development on High Road are visible from these locations.
- 5.40 It is therefore the case that the only public receptor with a clear view of the Site is likely to be the users of Public Footpath Thundridge 045, which runs through the Site itself.

## 6. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSALS

### Overview

- 6.1 The proposals broadly comprise an outline planning application for up to 95 residential dwellings and associated infrastructure, including green infrastructure. The development description also includes provision for extensions to the existing school grounds and cemetery, and the creation of allotments.
- 6.2 A series of parameter plans have been produced for the development, showing the general layout, building parameters and internal access and movement routes. These are reproduced at **Appendix 1** for reference.

### Design Development and Mitigation

- 6.3 The Land Use and Landscape Parameter Plan (see Figure 1 below) shows the built development concentrated within the central area of the Site.

Figure 1: Extract from Land Use and Landscape Parameter Plan



- 6.4 The development is proposed to be accessed via a new junction on High Road/Ermine Street, with an access road passing southwards between the existing dwellings on High Road and Sutes Farm. A public connection is to be maintained along the existing access to Sutes Farm and an informal recreation path is proposed around the perimeter of the Site, connecting with Public Footpath Thundridge 045. The footpath is to be maintained on its current alignment and set within a corridor of green infrastructure.
- 6.5 As the parameter plan shows, a significant proportion of the Site is given over to green infrastructure. The proposed access road is set within a context of public open space and new structural planting to the north, and a belt of new public open space is proposed between the built area and Site boundary. The structural planting on the outside of this area provides the opportunity to deliver against the published landscape strategy of improving habitat links and reversing fragmentation. Play areas are also proposed within the perimeter open space.
- 6.6 In the north-eastern corner of the Site, a viewing mound is proposed to enable views of the spired tower of the Church of St John the Evangelist, retaining the visual connection with this distinctive historic feature.
- 6.7 On the western boundary of the Site, new hedgerow planting is proposed to filter views in time from the existing dwellings on High Road, and an area of allotments is proposed in the space between the boundary and proposed new dwellings. This will not only provide a new community asset, but also serve to set the proposed dwellings back from the existing residences. Further to the south, an area has been set aside to extend the village school, again providing a greater offset whilst benefitting the local community.
- 6.8 Along the Site's southern boundary, an open space corridor is proposed to contain an extension to the village cemetery at the western side of the boundary, and an area of public open space and sustainable drainage features further east. This corridor will therefore serve to maintain the route of the public footpath within an open setting, with the built development set back to preserve the amenity of users.
- 6.9 In terms of the built elements, the Building Heights and Density Parameter Plan shows a medium density area within the centre of the scheme (maximum 35 dwellings per hectare) and a low density area on the periphery (maximum 30 dwellings per hectare), in line with good master planning principles. The medium density areas have a maximum building height of 11.5m and the low density areas 9m.
- 6.10 It is therefore the case that the proposed design parameters have responded to their context, being based upon a constraints and opportunities analysis process that included input from landscape architects as well as other technical professionals.
- 6.11 Further opportunities exist to increase the landscape value of the development during the detailed design phase, for example through the selection of locally prevalent and native species, and the inclusion of structural planting and trees within the built development areas.

**Summary of Embedded Mitigation**

6.12 The positive design measures enshrined within the development design to reduce the scheme's impact upon landscape character and identified public views are as follows:

- Involvement of a Chartered Landscape Architect at the early design phase.
- Restriction of built development to the central part of the Site, with a belt of green infrastructure around the periphery.
- Profiling of the built development parcel to include taller and higher density buildings in the central area.
- Inclusion of structural planting around the periphery of the scheme, particularly to the north, to filter views and create habitat connections that are a local landscape priority.
- Inclusion of an informal access path around the periphery path, providing a recreational route and connection to the local Public Rights of Way network.
- Retention of important views to the Church of St John the Evangelist, with a viewing mound created to add local interest.

## 7. ASSESSMENT OF LANDSCAPE EFFECTS

### Overview and Summary of Baseline Sensitivity

- 7.1 This section will assess the anticipated effects upon the baseline landscape character as identified in Section 4 above.
- 7.2 For each of the identified landscape receptors, and the Site and its setting as complete elements, the effect of the proposed development will be described, and its magnitude determined in line with the methodology at **Appendix 2**. This will then be combined with the sensitivity of the receptor as derived in Section 4 above to give an overall assessment of the significance of the effect.
- 7.3 It is important to note that this set of receptors is an examination of the interaction of the proposed scheme with its setting from a variety of facets, and therefore some degree of repetition and cross-over is inevitable. As such, the results of this assessment should not be aggregated, but rather considered individually as a comprehensive examination of the potential impacts.
- 7.4 The relevant baseline characteristics of the Site, which form the landscape receptors for the purposes of this assessment, and their respective sensitivity judgements are as follows:
- Arable land use, currently supporting ruderal vegetation: **Low sensitivity**.
  - Urbanising influences from adjacent village edge and dual carriageway: **Low sensitivity**.
  - Strong presence of trees and woodland within wider setting: **Medium sensitivity**.
  - Overall character of the Site: **Low sensitivity**.
  - Overall character of the setting of the Site: **Low/Medium sensitivity**.

### Assessment of Effects in Relation to Identified Receptors

#### *Arable land use, currently supporting ruderal vegetation*

- 7.5 The baseline assessment in Section 4 above has identified this receptor to be of **Low** sensitivity.
- 7.6 The proposed development consists of the conversion of currently arable land to other uses, and this will therefore impact upon this characteristic. It is notable, however, that a belt of arable land is proposed to be retained within the applicant's wider land holding to the east of the Site.
- 7.7 The development design includes a significant proportion of green infrastructure, the majority of which will comprise grassland and structural planting. This presents the opportunity to increase the biodiversity value of the Site through species-rich grassland creation and the use of a range of native tree and shrub species. These measures are considered to be positive change, and will deliver against the published landscape strategy.
- 7.8 Taking these factors into consideration, the magnitude of change upon this receptor is judged to be **Low**.

7.9 The overall impact upon this receptor is therefore judged to be an adverse impact of **Minor** significance.

***Urbanising influences from adjacent village edge and dual carriageway***

7.10 The baseline assessment in Section 4 above has identified this receptor to be of **Low** sensitivity.

7.11 The proposed development would increase these detracting factors within the landscape by introducing additional residential development, although this is within a parcel of land contained against the village edge by the dual carriageway. The existing dwellings, along with the light industrial activity at Sutes Farm, create a strong precedent for human activity within this parcel.

7.12 The proposed green infrastructure would serve to integrate the development into its landscape setting by creating new treed areas and extending existing habitat areas. The building parameters have also considered this by profiling the development to set low density areas on the outer edges.

7.13 The magnitude of change upon this receptor is therefore judged to be **Low**.

7.14 The overall impact upon this receptor is therefore judged to be an adverse impact of **Minor** significance.

***Strong presence of trees and woodland within wider setting***

7.15 The baseline assessment in Section 4 above has identified this receptor to be of **Medium** sensitivity.

7.16 The proposed development is not anticipated to result in the loss of any existing trees within the Site.

7.17 The green infrastructure proposals for the scheme include the creation of areas of new structural planting of native trees and shrubs around the perimeter of the development area, and in particular in the area to the north of the access track. This is anticipated to reinforce this characteristic within the landscape, and it is likely that the detailed design phase of the development can enshrine more trees within the built up area.

7.18 The magnitude of change upon this receptor is therefore judged to be **Low** and beneficial.

7.19 The overall impact upon this receptor is therefore judged to be a beneficial impact of **Moderate/Minor** significance.

***Overall character of the Site***

7.20 The baseline assessment in Section 4 above has identified this receptor to be of **Low** sensitivity.

7.21 The proposed development would introduce new residential dwellings and their associated infrastructure, including green infrastructure, to this currently arable parcel of land.

7.22 Whilst character change is inevitable, the Site has been selected because it is directly adjacent to the existing village and in a parcel of land separated from the wider landscape by the A10 dual carriageway. The development design parameters have been informed by a multi-disciplinary constraints and opportunities process, which have resulted in the

restriction of the built elements to the central part of the Site, the setting of the access road and the public footpath within green corridors, and the preservation of views to the parish church.

7.23 Taking these factors into account, the magnitude of change upon this receptor is judged to be **Low**.

7.24 The overall impact upon this receptor is therefore judged to be an adverse impact of **Minor** significance.

***Overall character of the setting of the Site***

7.25 The baseline assessment in Section 4 above has identified this receptor to be of **Low/Medium** sensitivity.

7.26 The proposed development is anticipated to increase the urbanising effect of the existing village upon its setting through an increase in the overall settlement mass, although the built area will not extend any further east and north than the current settlement.

7.27 The proposed to include a belt of green infrastructure around the outer edge of the development is anticipated to improve the overall relationship between the village and its setting, by introducing trees and shrubs that will filter inward views in a similar manner to the woodland areas south of the Site, which reduce the influence of the dwellings on North Drive.

7.28 The additional of trees and woodland to the Site will also reinforce a key characteristic of the High Cross Plateau, and an area of arable land will be maintained between the development edge and A10 dual carriageway corridor.

7.29 The magnitude of change upon this receptor is therefore judged to be **Low**.

7.30 The overall impact upon this receptor is therefore judged to be an adverse impact of **Minor** significance.

**Summary of Landscape Effects**

- Arable land use, currently supporting ruderal vegetation: **Minor adverse**.
- Urbanising influences from adjacent village edge and dual carriageway: **Minor adverse**.
- Strong presence of trees and woodland within wider setting: **Moderate/Minor beneficial**.
- Overall character of the Site: **Minor adverse**.
- Overall character of the setting of the Site: **Minor adverse**.



## 8. ASSESSMENT OF VISUAL EFFECTS

### Overview and Summary of Baseline Sensitivity

- 8.1 This section will assess the anticipated effects of the proposed development upon the visual receptors identified in Section 5 above.
- 8.2 For each of the identified visual receptors, the effect of the proposed development will be described, and its magnitude determined in line with the methodology at **Appendix 2**. This will then be combined with the sensitivity of the receptor as derived in Section 4 above to give an overall assessment of the significance of the effect.
- 8.3 The identified visual receptors and their respective sensitivity judgements are as follows:
- Users of Public Footpath Thundridge 045: **Medium sensitivity**.
  - Occupants of dwellings on High Road: **Medium sensitivity**.
  - Users of Public Footpath Thundridge 056: **Medium sensitivity**.
  - Users of Public Byway Thundridge 050: **High sensitivity**.
  - Users of Public Bridleway Thundridge 048: **Medium sensitivity**.
  - Users of Public Bridleway Thundridge 043: **High sensitivity**.
  - Users of Public Bridleway Standon 089: **Medium sensitivity**.
  - Users of Marshall's Lane: **Medium sensitivity**.

### Visual Assessment

#### *Users of Public Footpath Thundridge 045 – Viewpoints 1 & 2*

- 8.4 Users of this route pass through the southern part of the Site and therefore experience clear views across the Site, which encompass the existing village edge. When travelling westwards along this route east of the Site, they will experience views of the Site above the managed hedgerow that lines the footpath.
- 8.5 The proposed development will introduce additional dwellings into the outlook from the public footpath, but the submitted concept plan sets this route within a corridor of public open space, with dwellings set back approximately 30 metres from the footpath. A new cemetery extension will also separate the footpath from dwellings at its western end.
- 8.6 As part of the detailed design of the scheme, the opportunity also exists to further improve the amenity of users by surfacing and widening the route, permitting greater capacity and year-round use by users of all ability.
- 8.7 The magnitude of change upon this receptor is therefore judged to be **Low**.
- 8.8 As identified in Section 5 above, this is a **Medium** sensitivity receptor and therefore the overall impact upon this receptor is judged to be an adverse impact of **Moderate/Minor** significance.

***Occupants of dwellings on High Road – Viewpoint 1***

- 8.9 The occupants of the private dwellings on High Road currently experience views across the Site from the first-floor windows on the rear of their properties. It is likely that these views also encompass the A10 dual carriageway and its associated traffic.
- 8.10 The proposed development will introduce new residential dwellings into this view, although they will be set back behind a new hedgerow and allotments, with a resulting separation of approximately 50 metres between the existing and new dwellings. It is therefore likely that once established, the intervening green infrastructure will heavily filter distant views of the new dwellings.
- 8.11 The magnitude of change upon this receptor is therefore judged to be **Low**.
- 8.12 As identified in Section 5 above, this is a **Medium** sensitivity receptor and therefore the overall impact upon this receptor is judged to be an adverse impact of **Moderate/Minor** significance.

***Users of Public Footpath Thundridge 056 – Viewpoint 3***

- 8.13 Users of this route currently experience heavily filtered views of the Site via the existing woodland to the south of the Site.
- 8.14 The inclusion of a belt of green infrastructure on the eastern edge of the scheme means that the proposed dwellings will be obscured by the existing woodland and dwellings for much of this route. The structural planting on the Site's eastern boundary is also likely to further obscure views towards the development as it matures.
- 8.15 The magnitude of change upon this receptor is therefore judged to be **Negligible**.
- 8.16 As identified in Section 5 above, this is a **Medium** sensitivity receptor and therefore the overall impact upon this receptor is judged to be an adverse impact of **Minor** significance.

***Users of Public Byway Thundridge 050 – Viewpoint 4***

- 8.17 Users of this route currently experience distant views of the existing village edge, which are filtered by the vegetation on the bunds flanking the A10 dual carriageway, to the extent that only the rooftops of the existing dwellings on High Road are visible.
- 8.18 The proposed development is anticipated to introduce further rooftops into this view, in the foreground of the existing dwellings. The belt of structural tree and shrub planting on the eastern edge of the development will further filter these views as it matures.
- 8.19 The magnitude of change upon this receptor is therefore judged to be **Low**.
- 8.20 As identified in Section 5 above, this is a **High** sensitivity receptor and therefore the overall impact upon this receptor is judged to be an adverse impact of **Moderate** significance.

***Users of Public Bridleway Thundridge 048 – Viewpoint 5***

- 8.21 Users of this route currently experience heavily filtered views of the northern part of the Site via a small block of mature woodland, with the southern part currently obscured by the existing dwellings on North Drive.
- 8.22 The retention of the built elements of the proposed development behind a belt of perimeter green infrastructure is such that clear views of the proposed dwellings are unlikely from this bridleway, and most will be entirely obscured by the intervening properties on North Drive.
- 8.23 The magnitude of change upon this receptor is therefore judged to be **Negligible**.
- 8.24 As identified in Section 5 above, this is a **Medium** sensitivity receptor and therefore the overall impact upon this receptor is judged to be an adverse impact of **Minor** significance.

***Users of Public Bridleway Thundridge 043 – Viewpoint 6***

- 8.25 Users of this route currently experience distant views towards High Cross, with the majority of the village obscured by the existing mature woodland at Sutes Wood.
- 8.26 It is likely that the proposed development would be fully obscured by the woodland, but possible that the uppermost parts of rooftops could be distantly visible above the trees, seen in context with the existing village.
- 8.27 If visible, the proposed development would be barely discernible from the village at this distance and in this context, and therefore the magnitude of change upon this receptor is judged to be **Negligible**.
- 8.28 As identified in Section 5 above, this is a **High** sensitivity receptor and therefore the overall impact upon this receptor is judged to be an adverse impact of **Moderate/Minor** significance.

***Users of Public Bridleway Standon 089 – Viewpoint 7***

- 8.29 Users of this route currently experience distant views towards the village across rolling countryside, with the traffic on the A10 dual carriageway in the foreground. Views towards the village are filtered by scattered mature trees.
- 8.30 The proposed development has the potential for the uppermost parts of its rooftops to be visible in context with the existing village. The magnitude of change upon this receptor is therefore judged to be **Negligible**.
- 8.31 As identified in Section 5 above, this is a **Medium** sensitivity receptor and therefore the overall impact upon this receptor is judged to be an adverse impact of **Minor** significance.

***Users of Marshall's Lane – Viewpoint 8***

- 8.32 Users of this route currently experience distant views of the village edge over rolling countryside, with the Site largely obscured by the existing dwellings on High Road.
- 8.33 The proposed development is anticipated to be mostly obscured by the existing dwellings, although it is possible that rooftops may be visible above these. The magnitude of change upon this receptor is therefore judged to be **Negligible**.

8.34 As identified in Section 5 above, this is a **Medium** sensitivity receptor and therefore the overall impact upon this receptor is judged to be an adverse impact of **Minor** significance.

**Summary of Visual Effects**

- Users of Public Footpath Thundridge 045: **Moderate/Minor adverse**.
- Occupants of dwellings on High Road: **Moderate/Minor adverse**.
- Users of Public Footpath Thundridge 056: **Minor adverse**.
- Users of Public Byway Thundridge 050: **Moderate adverse**.
- Users of Public Bridleway Thundridge 048: **Minor adverse**.
- Users of Public Bridleway Thundridge 043: **Moderate/Minor adverse**.
- Users of Public Bridleway Standon 089: **Minor adverse**.
- Users of Marshall's Lane: **Minor adverse**.

## 9. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

### Summary of Landscape Impacts

- 9.1 The Landscape Impact Assessment concluded that the Site represents an area of open arable land on the eastern edge of the village of High Cross, separated from the wider countryside by a combination of existing structures and the A10 dual carriageway. It is therefore subject to a range of 'fringe' influences that reduce its tranquillity and perceptual qualities.
- 9.2 The wider setting of the Site is characterised by rolling arable land interspersed with mature woodland, much of which is ancient.
- 9.3 The development design has been influenced by a consideration of landscape and visual factors from the outset, alongside other technical disciplines. It has resulted in the restriction of built development to its current extent and the inclusion of open space and structural planting following a linear corridor on the periphery of the scheme, connecting with the existing public footpath. It has also resulted in the profiling of the layout of the built components and the reinforcement of existing characteristics through the creation of new tree and woodland areas in conjunction with retained arable land to the east of the Site.
- 9.4 The results of the assessment were that there would be no adverse impact of greater than Minor significance, and that the most significant impact would be a beneficial impact of Moderate/Minor significance upon the established characteristic of trees and woodland within this landscape.

### Summary of Visual Impacts

- 9.5 The Visual Impact Assessment concluded that the Site occupies a relatively restricted visual envelope due to the presence of structures and woodland within its immediate setting, and that all longer views towards the Site were largely obscured by these elements.
- 9.6 The majority of visual receptors were found to be the users of local Public Rights of Way, but they also included the users of Marshall's Lane and the private occupants of the existing dwellings along High Road.
- 9.7 The assessment concluded that the proposed development would not result in any adverse impacts greater than Moderate significance, relating to the users of Public Byway 050 to the east of the Site due to their high inherent sensitivity.
- 9.8 The positive design measures enshrined within the submitted development layout were such that those receptors within and directly adjacent to the Site would only experience adverse impacts of Moderate/Minor significance.

### Conclusion

- 9.9 It is the conclusion of this Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment that the proposed development will not result in any adverse effects of greater than Moderate significance, and that its most significant landscape effect will be beneficial. It is therefore considered that the development is acceptable on landscape and visual grounds.

**10. APPENDICES**

**Appendix 1: Plans**

Baseline Information Map

Zone of Theoretical Visibility Map

Parameter Plan 1- Land Use & Landscape

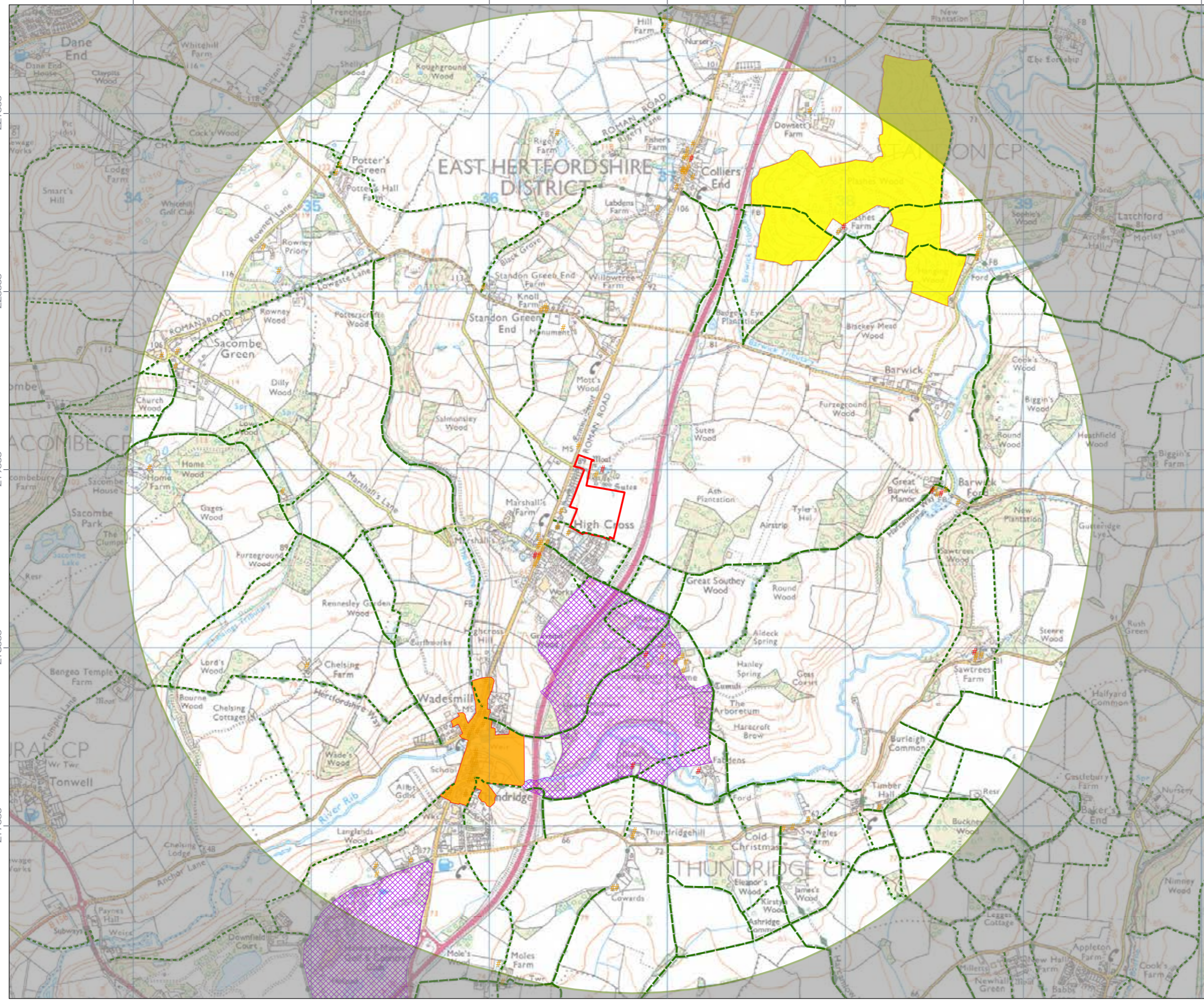
Parameter Plan 2- Access & Movement

Parameter Plan 3- Building Heights and Density



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218000  
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**LEGEND**

- Site Boundary
- Study Area
- Conservat on Area
- Registered Park and Garden
- Site of Special Scient f c Interest
- # Listed Building (Grade II\*)
- # Listed Building (Grade II)
- Public Rights of Way (Footpath)
- Public Rights of Way (Bridleway)
- Public Rights of Way (Other)



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TITLE:	Baseline Study
PROJECT/SITE:	Land at High Cross
CLIENT:	M Scot Properties
MAP REF:	4064 29
VERSION:	v1
DATE:	30/11/2023
SCALE:	1:20,000 @ A3
APPROVED BY:	PRODUCED BY:
ID	SM

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219000  
218000  
217000



- LEGEND**
- Site Boundary
  - Study Area
  - Contour
  - Public Right of Way
  - Footpath
  - Bridleway
  - Public Rights of Way - Other



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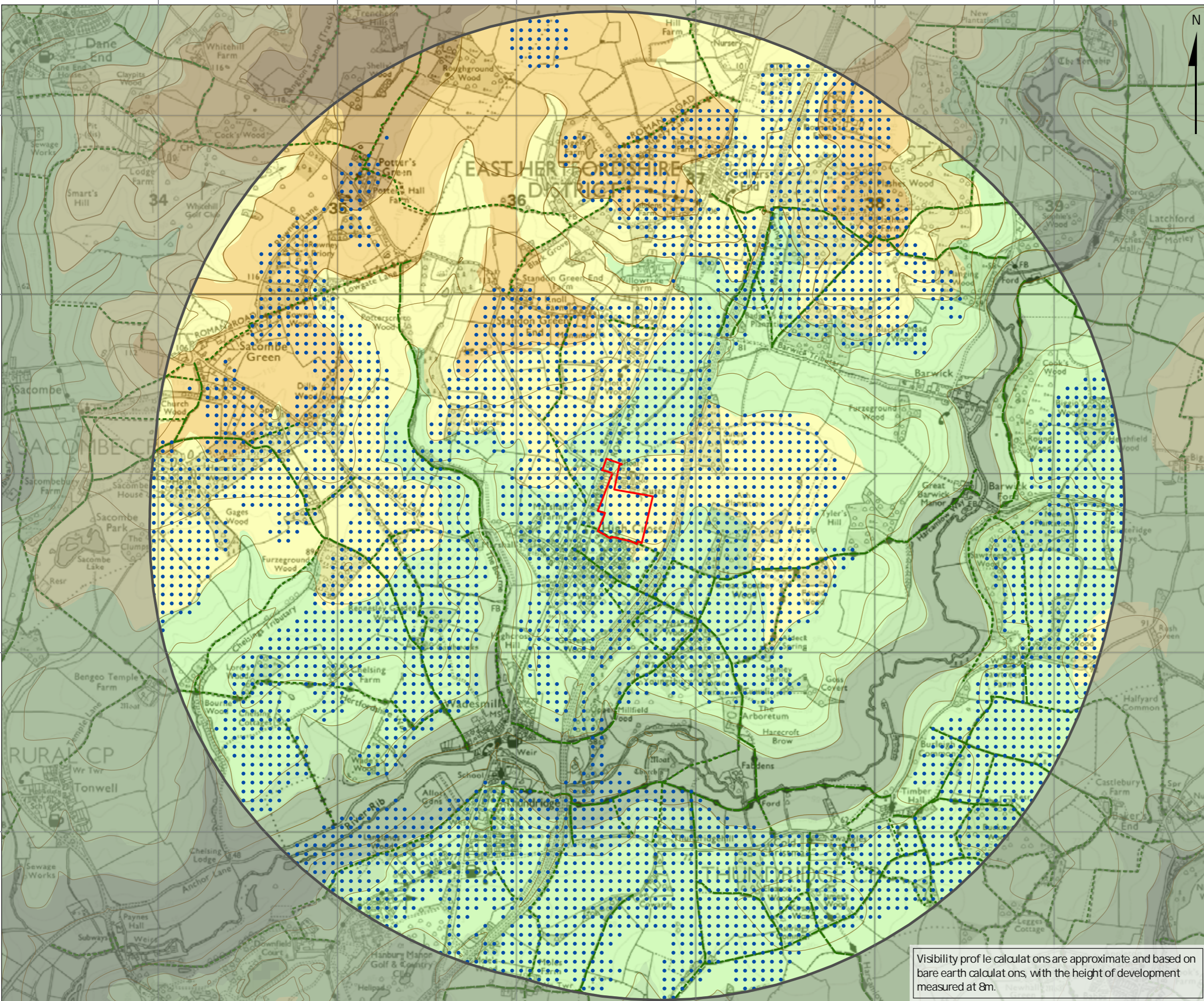
TITLE:		Zone of Theoretical Visibility	
PROJECT/SITE:		Land at High Cross	
CLIENT:		M Scot Properties	
MAP REF:		4064 29	
VERSION:		v1	
DATE:	30/11/2023	SCALE:	1:20,000 @ A3
APPROVED BY:	ID	PRODUCED BY:	SF

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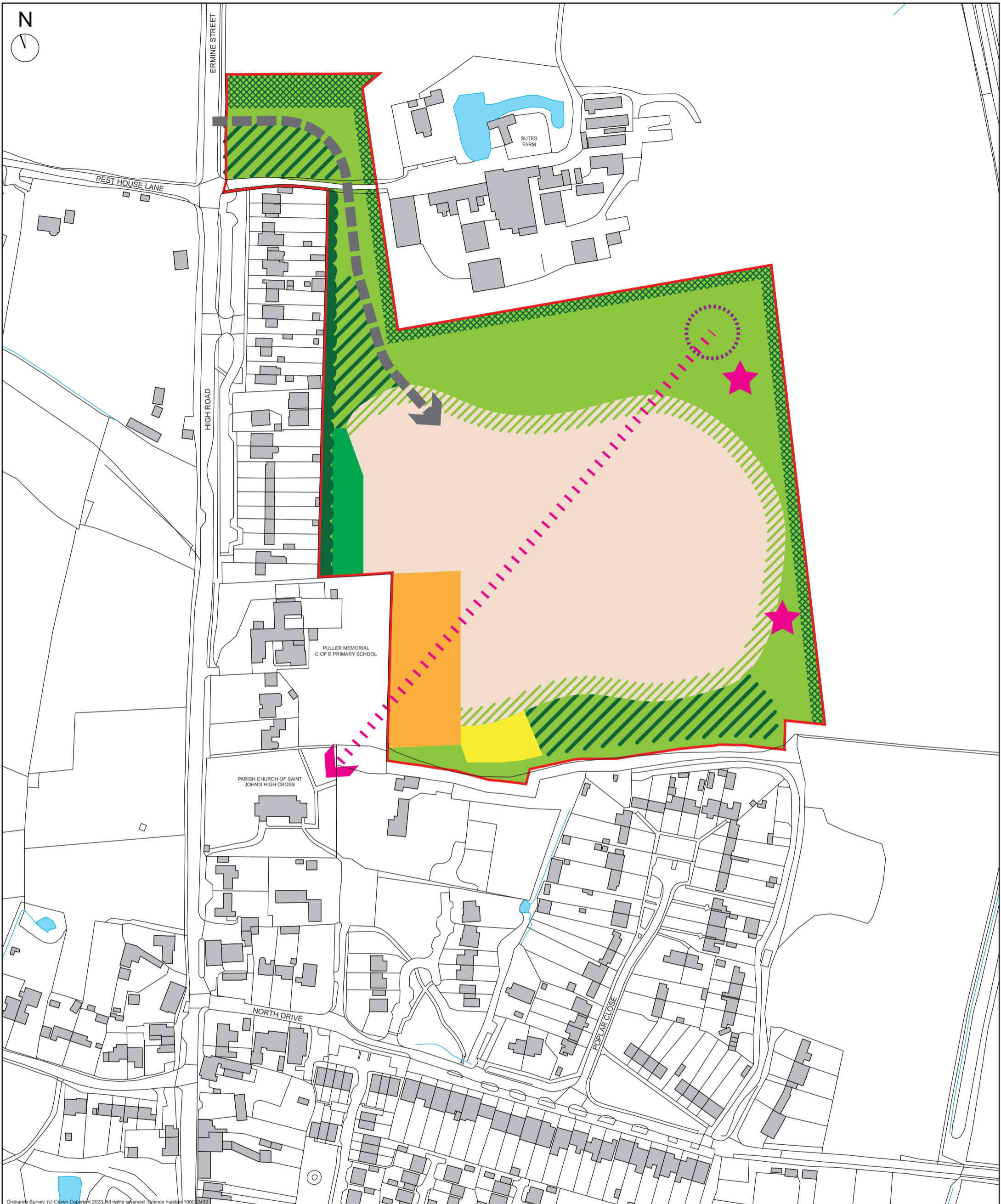
The Park North Aston Oxfordshire OX25 6HL 01869 340342	7 - 8 Melbourn House Corbygate Business Park Weldon, Corby Northamptonshire NN17 5JG 01536 408840
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Visibility profile calculations are approximate and based on bare earth calculations, with the height of development measured at 8m.







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KEY	
	SITE BOUNDARY
	VEHICULAR ACCESS ROAD
	RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT AREA (USE CLASS C3)
	RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT EDGE EXACT BUILT FORM BOUNDARY TO BE CONFIRMED AT RESERVED MATTERS STAGE
	ALLOTMENT AREA (ALLOTMENTS & PARKING)
	SCHOOL EXTENSION AREA
	CEMETERY EXTENSION AREA
	PUBLIC OPEN SPACE INCLUDING STRATEGIC AND BOUNDARY LANDSCAPING, AMENITY AREAS AND RETAINED FEATURES
	LANDSCAPE AREA TO INCLUDE SUDS PROVISION AND OPEN SPACE
	LANDSCAPE BUFFER TO EXISTING PROPERTY BOUNDARIES ALONG HIGH ROAD
	INDICATIVE LOCATION OF PLAY AREA (LOCATION TO BE CONFIRMED AT RESERVED MATTERS STAGE)
	INDICATIVE LOCATION & SIZE OF CHURCH SPIRE VIEWING MOUND
	VIEW OF CHURCH SPIRE TO ENABLE LINE OF SIGHT FROM PUBLIC OPEN SPACE WITHIN DEVELOPMENT
	INDICATIVE LOCATION OF STRATEGIC STRUCTURAL PLANTING

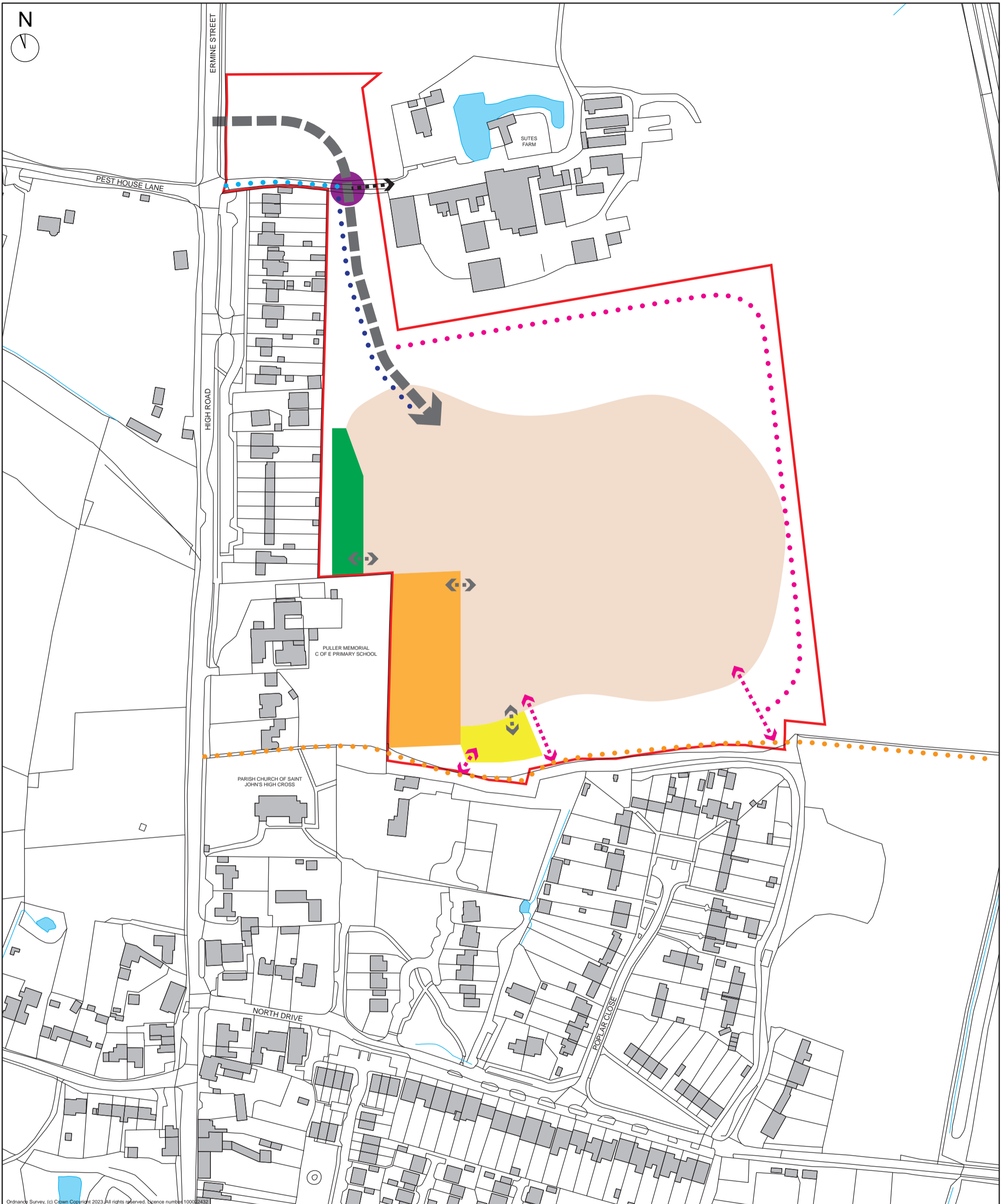
**PARAMETER PLAN 1 - LAND USE & LANDSCAPE**  
 LAND EAST OF HIGH ROAD, HIGH CROSS

DATE : 20.11.2023  
 SCALE: A3 1:2,000  
 DRAWING NO: 70-10

DRAWN : DW  
 REV : -

0m 20m 40m 60m 80m 100m

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KEY					
	SITE BOUNDARY		EXISTING TRACK TO BE CONVERTED TO SHARED CYCLE / FOOTWAY		INDICATIVE ROUTE OF INFORMAL FOOTPATH THROUGH PUBLIC OPEN SPACE
	VEHICULAR ACCESS ROAD		SHARED CYCLE / FOOTWAY		SUTES FARM ENTRANCE DETAIL
	PUBLIC RIGHT OF WAY		RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT AREA (USE CLASS C3)		ALLOTMENT AREA (ALLOTMENTS & PARKING)
	INDICATIVE LOCATION OF VEHICULAR ACCESS		SCHOOL EXTENSION AREA		CEMETERY EXTENSION AREA
	INDICATIVE LOCATION OF PEDESTRIAN CONNECTION				
	VEHICULAR & PEDESTRIAN CONNECTION TO SUTES FARM				

**PARAMETER PLAN 2 - ACCESS & MOVEMENT**  
 LAND EAST OF HIGH ROAD, HIGH CROSS

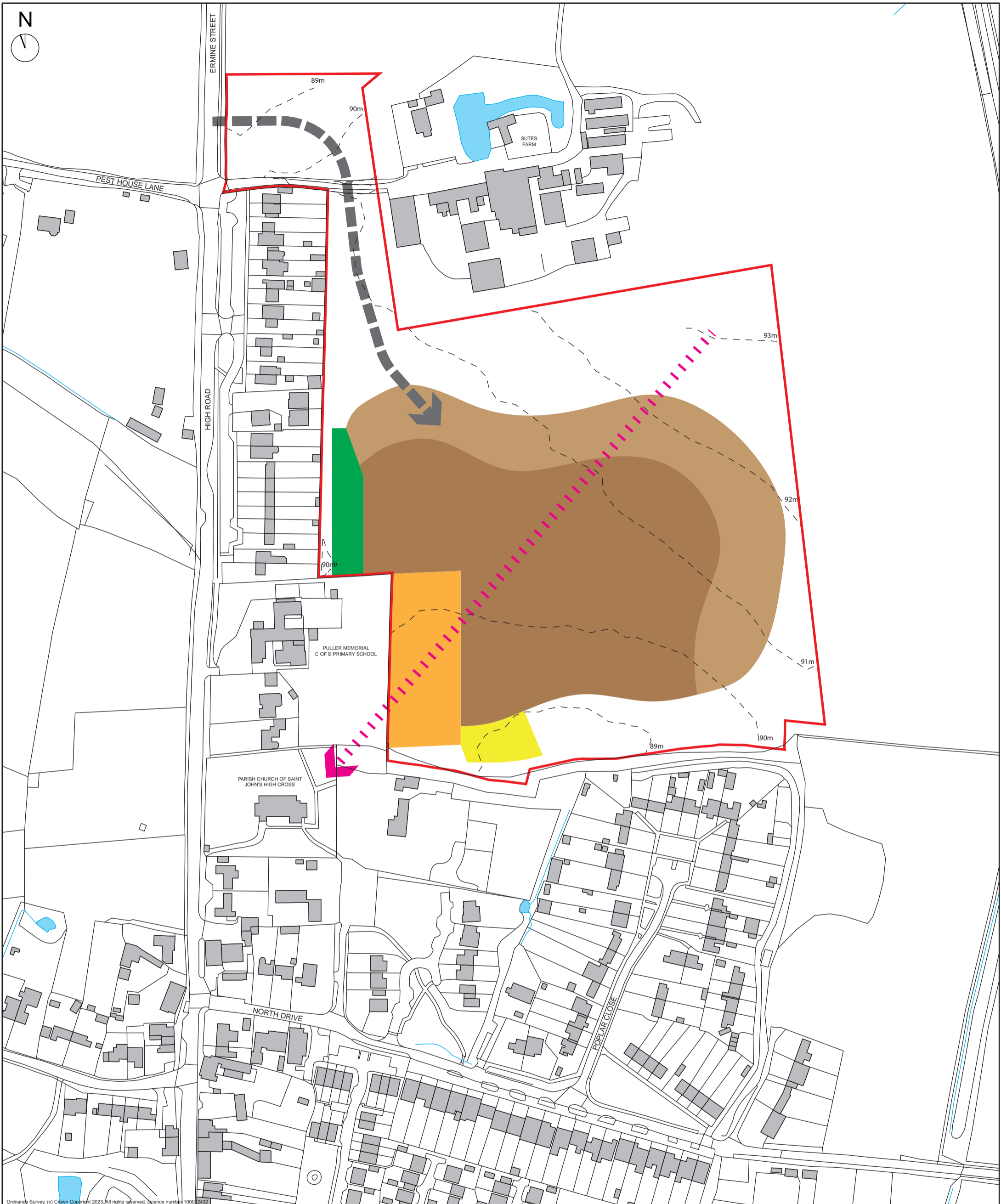
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 DRAWING NO: 70-11

DRAWN : DW  
 REV : -

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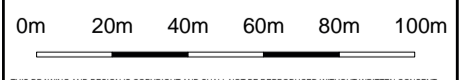
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**KEY**

- SITE BOUNDARY
- CEMETERY EXTENSION AREA
- CONTOURS
- ALLOTMENT AREA (ALLOTMENTS & PARKING)
- SCHOOL EXTENSION AREA
- VIEW OF CHURCH SPIRE TO ENABLE LINE OF SIGHT FROM PUBLIC OPEN SPACE WITHIN DEVELOPMENT
- LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT AREA (20-30 DPH)  
UP TO 2 STOREY - MAX RIDGE HEIGHT OF 9M (EXCLUDING CHIMNEYS AND FLUES)
- MEDIUM DENSITY RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT AREA (30-35 DPH)  
UP TO 2 1/2 STOREY - MAX RIDGE HEIGHT OF 11.5M (EXCLUDING CHIMNEYS AND FLUES)
- VEHICULAR ACCESS ROAD
- NOTE - EXACT BUILT FORM TO BE CONFIRMED AT RESERVED MATTERS STAGE

**PARAMETER PLAN 3 - BUILDING HEIGHTS & DENSITY**  
LAND EAST OF HIGH ROAD, HIGH CROSS

DATE : 20.11.2023  
SCALE: A3 1:2,000  
DRAWING NO: 70-12  
DRAWN : DW  
REV : -



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**Appendix 2: Methodology**

# NICHOLSONS

## Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment Methodology

2021

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1. This methodology is derived from the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third Edition (2013) (GLVIA 3), jointly published by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment. This publication gives guidance on carrying out a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA), either as a standalone appraisal or part of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).
- 1.2. In the context of this methodology, the term “landscape” should be taken to include townscape and seascape considerations where relevant.

## **2. DEFINING THE STUDY AREA**

- 2.1. Prior to any assessment being undertaken, it is important to consider the scope and extent of the study area. Typically the study area will be defined through the preparation and assessment of a Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) and/ or desk based study and site assessment. This process will allow the identification of a delimited visual envelope, one which is defined by the prevailing topography, vegetation and built form.
- 2.2. A landscape study may extend beyond a relatively confined visual envelope, where there is clear evidence that the site is part of, or intrinsically linked to a wider character area. The detail of such studies will be appropriate to the scale of the development, for instance where tall structures such as wind turbines may have an influence over a larger distance, the assessment will take this into account.

### **3. DESCRIPTION OF EFFECTS**

- 3.1. The level of effect on both landscape and visual receptors should be identified in respect of the different components of the proposed development. In order to assess the significance of the effect upon a receiving environment, it is necessary to consider the effect magnitude, i.e. the degree of change, together with the sensitivity of the receptor.
- 3.2. This assessment will identify whether the effects are:
- Adverse, Beneficial or Neutral - Adverse effects would typically occur where there is loss of landscape elements, or the proposal detracts from the recognised landscape quality and character of an area or view. Neutral effects would include changes that neither add to nor detract from the quality and character of an area or view, but which nonetheless result in an identifiable change. Beneficial effects would typically occur where a development could positively contribute to the landscape character or view, for example through the replacement of incongruous elements with more appropriate uses.
  - Direct or Indirect – A direct effect will be one where a development will affect a view or the character of an area, either beneficially or adversely. An indirect effect will occur as a result of associated development i.e. a development may result in an increase of traffic on a particular route.
  - Short, Medium or Long Term – this relates to the expected duration and magnitude of a development. Within this assessment the potential effects are assessed during the Construction Phase, then at Years 1 and 15, of the Operational Phase.
  - Reversible or Irreversible – this is the assessment of whether the resulting effect of a development can be mitigated or not, and the effectiveness of the proposed mitigation at reducing the effect.

#### **Significance of Effects (EIA only)**

- 3.3. A final judgment is then made as to whether the identified effect is likely to be significant, as required by the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations 2011. In summarising the effects consideration should be given to the key issues, and an identification of the scope for reducing any negative/adverse effects will be undertaken. Mitigation measures should be identified in order to reduce, where possible, the final judgement on the significance of any residual adverse effects in the long term.

## 4. METHODOLOGY FOR ASSESSING LANDSCAPE EFFECTS

### Identifying and Assessing the Landscape Baseline

- 4.1. In order to accurately define the quality and character of the receiving landscaping it is important to identify and assess those landscape receptors and/or features that form part of the landscape and help to characterise it.
- 4.2. The identification of these features will be informed through:
  - Review of Ordnance Survey mapping, historical map data and aerial and other remote sensing imagery where appropriate;
  - Review of relevant published landscape character assessment at national, regional and local levels as appropriate;
  - Identification of landscape-based designations;
  - Identification and description of individual elements, features, aesthetic and perceptual aspects of the landscape which contribute to its character;
  - Assessment of the general condition of the receiving landscape;
  - Assessment of the relative value of the receiving landscape (see below);
  - Judgement of the susceptibility of the receiving landscape to a change of the type proposed (see below).
- 4.3. Where appropriate, and where the published character assessments do not reflect the specific characteristics of the receiving environment at a relevant scale, the LVIA will identify local landscape character areas for assessment. These character areas are determined through the site assessment, and will make reference to published landscape character assessments and the application of sound professional judgement based upon the evidence at hand.
- 4.4. Criteria for the selection of local landscape character areas within the likely study area include:
  - Proximity and influence on the site;
  - Physical connections with the site (for example public rights of way, roads, vegetation and vegetation belts); and
  - Visual connection with the site (particularly where the view is a key characteristic of the local area).

### Assessing Landscape Sensitivity

- 4.5. The sensitivity of the landscape is determined by combining the value of the landscape with its susceptibility to the type of change proposed.
- 4.6. **Susceptibility** is defined as the inherent sensitivity of the landscape and its ability to accommodate a particular change, and can apply to specific landscape features, the character of the site as a whole, or the character of the surrounding landscape, and other Landscape Character Areas defined within the published assessments or similar.

**Table 1: Landscape Susceptibility to Change**

Susceptibility	Assessment Criteria
<b>Very High</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No or very few detracting features;</li> <li>• Townscapes are likely to include a high proportion of historic assets;</li> <li>• Typical examples may be nationally designated e.g. World Heritage Sites, National Parks, Heritage Coasts, AONB's etc.</li> </ul>
<b>High</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Landscapes would be considered to have a high degree of intimacy, generally strong landscape structure, a high level of intactness and contain features worthy of protection;</li> <li>• Few detracting features;</li> <li>• Has some potential to accommodate change which is in keeping with the positive aspects of local character.</li> <li>• Townscapes may include a high proportion of historic assets;</li> <li>• Typical examples may be of Regional or County importance e.g. within the setting of National Parks, AONB's, Conservation Areas etc.</li> </ul>
<b>Medium</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Landscapes would be considered of good landscape structure, with some detracting features or evidence of recent change.</li> <li>• Townscapes may include a proportion of historic assets or of cultural value locally.</li> <li>• Demonstrates some potential to accommodate change through appropriate mitigation.</li> </ul>
<b>Low</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Landscapes that contain strong evidence of previous landscape change and little representation of their former character;</li> <li>• Degraded landscape structure, characteristic patterns and combinations of landform and land cover are compromised by land use.</li> </ul>
<b>Negligible</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Typical landscapes are likely to be heavily degraded, of weak landscape structure, support intensive land uses, and require landscape restoration.</li> </ul>

### **Landscape Value**

- 4.7. The value of a landscape is derived from the value or importance given to the area by society, statutory bodies, local and national government, local communities and society at large. National designations include National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- 4.8. At a local level, Local Planning Authorities may have local landscape designations in their Local Plans. However, GLVIA 3 notes that the fact that an area is not covered by such a designation does not mean that it is not valued and in this case reference should be made to published character assessments, local planning policies and guidance. GLVIA 3 also notes that there should not be an over-reliance on designations, favouring a process of assessment and the application of sound, evidence-based professional judgement.
- 4.9. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) however, places greater weight on the importance of National level designations such as AONB's and National Parks. At a local level, any assessment of local value should be supported by a prescriptive, criteria based, NPPF compliant assessment (NPPF para 170). In the absence of such an assessment it is the role of the professional as part of the LVIA process to objectively assess the value of the receiving landscape in relation to a set of appropriate criteria, such as those suggested in Box 5.1 of GLVIA3.

**Table 2: Landscape Value**

Value	Typical Criteria	Typical Scale	Examples
<b>Very High</b>	Landscape is recognised as an area of great importance, quality and rarity.  Almost always recognised by national or international designation.	International  National	World Heritage Sites  National Parks  Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty
<b>High</b>	Landscape is recognised as being of high quality, importance and rarity, representing a number of recognised value criteria.  Often identified through local landscape designations.	Regional  Local	Wild or picturesque landscapes.  Settings of designated landscapes.  Areas whose value is expressed through published assessments or cultural celebration, e.g. art, history or literature.
<b>Medium</b>	Landscape is recognised as being of medium quality, importance and rarity.  Typically undesignated but value may be expressed through published assessment.  Represents some recognised value criteria.	Regional  Local	Generally intact rural landscapes.  Landscapes that are representative of published character.
<b>Low</b>	Landscape is of low quality, importance and rarity.  Typically degraded with detracting features and in poor condition, but with some potential for restoration or improvement.	Local	Intensive arable landscapes.  Landscapes with strong human influence or intensive management, e.g. golf courses.
<b>Negligible</b>	Landscape is of very low quality, importance and rarity.  Typically degraded with many detracting features, and poorly managed.  Change is likely to improve these landscapes.	Site	Unrestored mineral workings.  Industrial landscapes.

**Table 3: Overall Landscape Sensitivity**

Vs.		Identified Landscape Value				
		Very High Value	High Value	Medium Value	Low Value	Very Low Value
Identified Susceptibility	Very High Susceptibility	Very High	High	High / Medium	X	X
	High Susceptibility	High	High	Medium / High	Medium / Low	X
	Medium Susceptibility	High / Medium	Medium / High	Medium	Low / Medium	Low
	Low Susceptibility	X	Medium / Low	Low / Medium	Low	Low / Negligible
	Negligible Susceptibility	X	X	Low	Low / Negligible	Negligible
		Sensitivity				

**Landscape Magnitude of Change**

4.10. The magnitude of change relates to the degree in which proposed development alters the fabric of the receiving landscape. This change is characterised as high, medium, low, negligible or none.

**Table 4: Magnitude to Change to Landscape Receptors**

Magnitude	Definition
<b>High</b>	Change resulting in a high degree of deterioration or improvement, or introduction of prominent new elements that are considered to fundamentally change the character of a landscape.
<b>Medium</b>	Change resulting in a moderate degree of deterioration or improvement, or constitutes a perceptible change within a landscape.
<b>Low</b>	Change resulting in a low degree of deterioration or improvement to a landscape or view, or constitutes only a minor component within a landscape.
<b>Negligible</b>	Change resulting in a barely perceptible degree of deterioration or improvement to a landscape.



4.11. When assessing the magnitude of change consideration will be given to:

- **The size or scale of the development:** the extent of the change to existing landscape receptors is considered, with weight given to the proportion of the total extent of the site that this represents and the contribution that the receptor makes to the overall character of the landscape;
- **The extent of the development** – consideration is given to the geographical area within which the landscape effects may be perceived. This is assessed at:
  - Site level;
  - Immediate setting;
  - At the scale of the local landscape character area; and
  - On a larger scale affecting a number of local landscape areas or National Character Areas (if required).
- **The permanency of the development:** consideration is given to whether the proposals will result in a long term or short term effect; whether the development is reversible or changes the status of the site (for example to previously developed land); and whether for example restoration to baseline conditions is envisaged at the end of this term;
- **The change to the key characteristics of the receiving landscape:** taking into account:
  - Changes to the appearance of the site;
  - Changes to identified landscape features;
  - Changes to key or special qualities or characteristics of the landscape; and
  - Changes in the landscape setting of heritage assets and landscape-related designations.
- **The proposed mitigation:** consideration should be given to the extent to which the development effects can be mitigated, through positive design, the provision of replacement or enhanced landscape features, or limiting effects on the wider landscape.

#### **Significance of Landscape Effect**

4.12. The level of effect upon the receptor should be identified in respect of the different components of the proposed development. In order to assess the significance of the effect on the receiving environment, it is necessary to consider the magnitude, i.e. the degree of change, together with the sensitivity of each identified receptor.

4.13. This will identify whether the effects are:

- **Adverse or Beneficial** - beneficial effects would typically occur where a development could positively contribute to the landscape character. Neutral effects would include changes that neither add nor detract from the quality and character of an area or view. Adverse effects would typically occur where there is loss of characteristic landscape elements, or the proposal detracts from the landscape quality and character of an area or view;
- **Direct or Indirect** – A direct effect is where a development will affect the character of an area either beneficially or adversely. An indirect effect would be associated with a development, i.e. an increase of traffic on a particular route.
- **Short, Medium or Long Term** – this relates to the expected duration and magnitude of a development. Within this assessment the potential effects are assessed during the construction phase, then at years 1 and 10 following completion of the development.

- **Reversible or Irreversible** – This is the judgement of whether the resulting effect of a development can be mitigated or not, and whether the result of the mitigation is beneficial.

4.14. The significance of landscape effect is determined by cross-referencing the sensitivity of the receptor with the magnitude of change expected as a result of the development. Table 5 below outlines how the assessment of significance is undertaken.

**Table 5: Landscape Significance of Effect\***

Vs.		Sensitivity of Landscape Receptor				
		Very High	High	Medium	Low	Negligible
Magnitude of Change	High	Substantial	Major	Major / Moderate	Moderate	Moderate / Minor
	Medium	Major	Major / Moderate	Moderate	Moderate / Minor	Minor
	Low	Major / Moderate	Moderate	Moderate / Minor	Minor	Negligible
	Negligible	Moderate	Moderate / Minor	Minor	Negligible	Negligible / None
		Significance of Landscape Effect				

\* To be read in conjunction with Table 9 below.

## **5. METHODOLOGY FOR THE ASSESSMENT OF VISUAL EFFECTS**

- 5.1. As set out within section 2 above, the visual baseline is identified through a process of desk study, Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV), the extent of the visual envelope is then defined and tested through field assessment.
- 5.2. On the basis of the baseline assessment and field survey analysis, visual receptors are identified and classified as to their sensitivity to change. This will involve the identification of the visual receptors through:
  - Identification of the area in which the development may be visible (the visual envelope;
  - Identification of publicly accessible, representative, viewpoints where views will be affected and the nature of those views;
  - Identification of any recognised viewpoints (i.e. known viewpoints from a key landmark or local feature);
  - Identification of those views which can be considered characteristic of the landscape character area;
  - Identification of the different groups of people who may experience views of the development.

### **Sensitivity of Visual Receptors**

- 5.3. The sensitivity of a visual receptor should be established. This sensitivity will be dependent on the value attached to the view and the susceptibility of the visual receptor(s) to a change of the type proposed. This may be linked to the type of activity that the person is engaged in – for example someone walking in the countryside would be more sensitive to a change to the view than a person working in an office.

**Table 6: Visual Sensitivity Thresholds**

Visual Sensitivity	Threshold Definition
<b>Very High</b>	Viewers on public rights of way or accessible land whose prime focus is on the high quality of the surrounding landscape, and who are often very aware of its value. Examples include viewers within nationally designated landscapes such as National Parks or AONB's and users of National Trails.
<b>High</b>	Viewers on public rights of way whose prime focus is on the landscape around, or occupiers of residential properties with primary views affected by the development. Examples include viewers within regional/local landscape designations, users of Long Distance Routes or Sustrans cycle routes, or the setting of a listed building.
<b>Medium</b>	Viewers engaged in outdoor recreation with some appreciation of the landscape, occupiers of residential properties with oblique views affected by the development, and users of rural lanes and roads. Examples include viewers within moderate quality landscapes, local recreation grounds, and outdoor pursuits.
<b>Low</b>	Viewers engaged in outdoor sport or recreation whose prime focus is on their activity, or people passing through the area on main transport routes whose attention is focused away from an appreciation of the landscape.
<b>Negligible</b>	Viewers whose attention is focused on their work or activity and not susceptible to changes in the surrounding landscape.

**Magnitude of Change of Visual Receptors**

5.4. The following definitions are used to assess the magnitude of change to visual receptors. As with the assessment of the magnitude of change for landscape receptors, consideration is given to:

- **The size or scale of the development:** taking into account:
  - The mass and scale of the development visible and the change experienced from an identified location; and
  - The loss or addition of features within the view and the changes to the view's composition (including the proportion of the view occupied by the proposed development and the degree of contrast or integration of the proposed development within the context of the existing landscape elements) and the nature of the view in terms of duration and degree of visibility.
- **The extent of the development** – the extent of the development will vary between each identified viewpoint and will likely reflect the extent of the development visible in the view alongside the distance of the viewpoint from the proposed development.
- **The permanency of the development:** considering whether:

- The proposals will result in a long term or short term effect;
- The development is reversible or changes the status of the site (for example to previously developed land); and
- Restoration to baseline conditions is envisaged at the end of this term.
- **The proposed mitigation:** Judging the extent to which the landscape proposals will be able to mitigate the visual effects of the development by screening, or through design of the development (e.g. siting, use of visually recessive colours and materials and location of open space).

**Table 7: Magnitude of Change to Visual Receptors**

Magnitude	Definition
<b>High</b>	Change resulting in a high degree of deterioration or improvement, or introduction of prominent new elements that are considered to make a major alteration to a view.
<b>Medium</b>	Change resulting in a moderate degree of deterioration or improvement, or constitutes a perceptible change within a view.
<b>Low</b>	Change resulting in a low degree of deterioration or improvement to a landscape or view, or constitutes only a minor component within a landscape.
<b>Negligible</b>	Change resulting in a barely perceptible degree of deterioration or improvement to a view.
<b>No Change</b>	It is also possible for a view to experience no change due to it being totally compatible with the character of the visual environment or not visible due to intervening structures or vegetation.

### Significance of Visual Effect

5.5. The significance of visual effect is determined by cross referencing the sensitivity of the receptor with the magnitude of change expected as a result of the development. Table 8 below outlines how the assessment of significance is undertaken.

**Table 8: Visual Significance of Effect\***

Vs.		Sensitivity of Visual Receptor				
		Very High	High	Medium	Low	Negligible
Magnitude of Change	High	Substantial	Major	Major / Moderate	Moderate	Moderate / Minor
	Medium	Major	Major / Moderate	Moderate	Moderate / Minor	Minor
	Low	Major / Moderate	Moderate	Moderate / Minor	Minor	Negligible
	Negligible	Moderate	Moderate / Minor	Minor	Negligible	Negligible / None
	No Change	None	None	None	None	None
Significance of Landscape Effect						

\* To be read in conjunction with Table 9 below.

## 6. UNDERSTANDING SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS

- 6.1. For the purposes of the impact assessment beneficial or adverse effects of substantial, major and major/moderate effects are considered to be significant and to be of key importance in decision making. Moderate adverse effects should also be taken into account when considering the overall effects of the development in decision making.
- 6.2. It is important to consider that change does not necessarily result in an adverse effect or harm to a particular landscape or visual environment.
- 6.3. The landscape assessor, in determining the significance of effect, will apply a defined assessment methodology, in combination with sound professional judgement upon which the identification of significant effects should be based.

### Definition of Significance Thresholds

Table 9: Significance Thresholds

Significance	Threshold Definition
<b>Substantial</b>	A very high magnitude of change that materially affects a landscape or view of national / international importance that has little or no ability to accommodate change.
<b>Major</b>	A high magnitude of change that materially affects a landscape or view that has limited ability to accommodate change.
<b>Moderate</b>	A medium magnitude of change that materially affects a landscape or view that may have the ability to accommodate change. Positive effects will typically occur in a lower quality landscape.
<b>Minor</b>	A low magnitude of change that materially affects a landscape that has the ability to accommodate change. Positive effects will typically occur in a lower quality landscape or view.
<b>Negligible</b>	A negligible magnitude of change that has little effect on a landscape that has the ability to accommodate change.
<b>None</b>	It is also possible for a magnitude of change to occur that results in an effect of neutral significance due to the change being compatible with local character or not visible.

**Appendix 3: Illustrative Viewpoints**

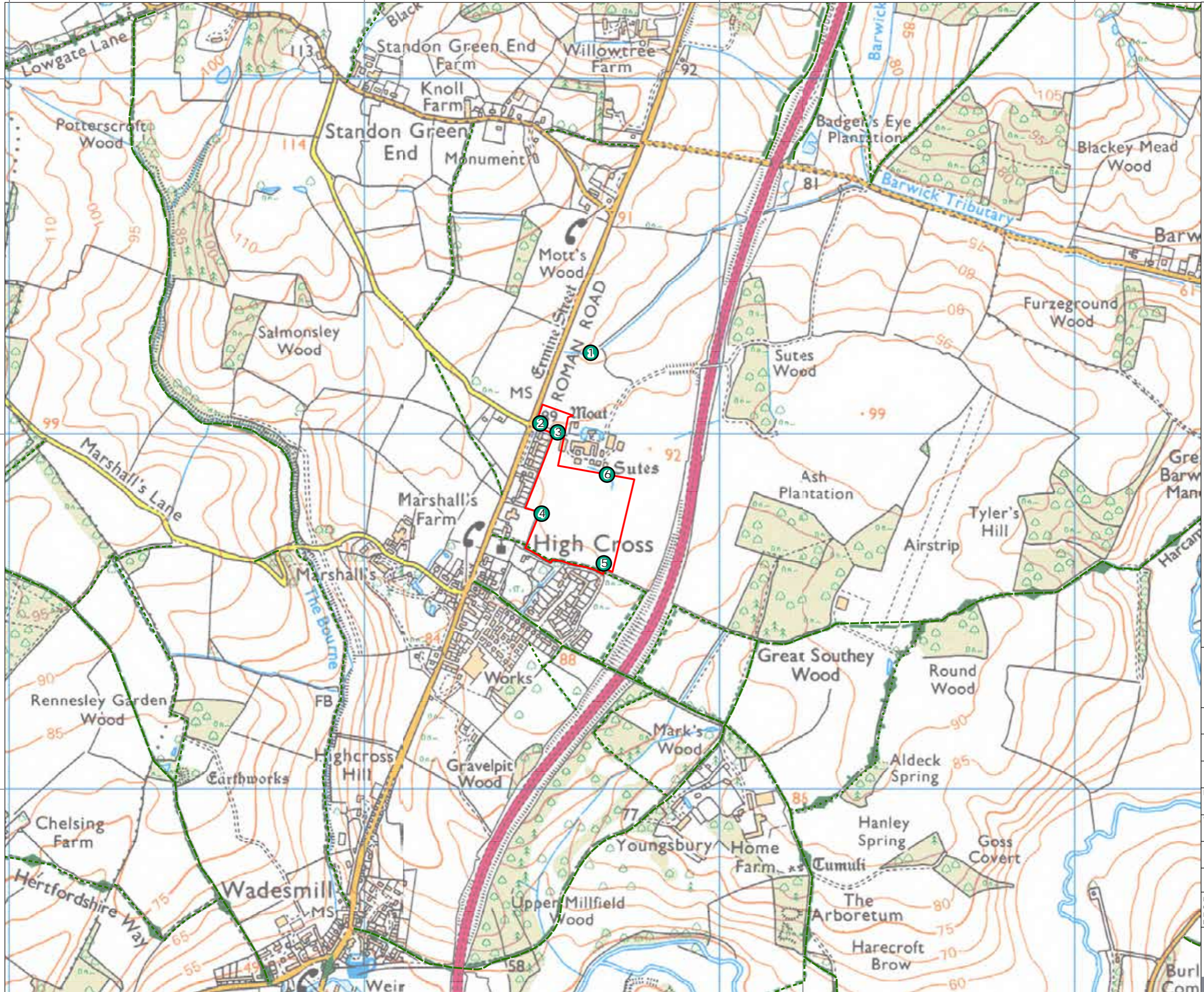


535000 536000 537000 538000

22000

219000

218000



### LEGEND

- Site Boundary
- Viewpoint Location
- Public Right of Way
- Footpath
- Bridleway
- Public Rights of Way - Other



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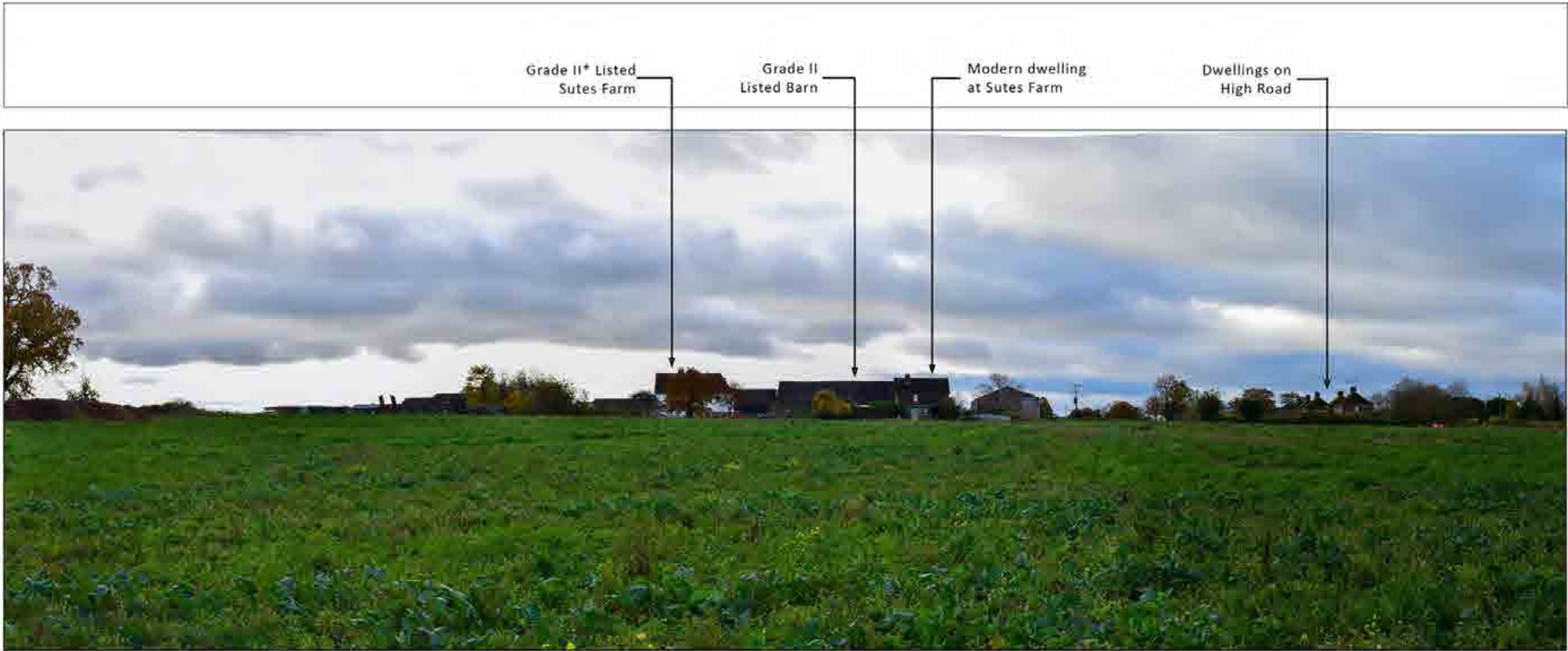
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PROJECT/SITE:	Land at High Cross
CLIENT:	M Scot Properties
MAP REF:	4064 29
VERSION:	v1
DATE:	30/11/2023
SCALE:	1:10,000 @ A3
APPROVED BY:	ID
PRODUCED BY:	SF

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Location: View from North of the Site, looking south towards the Site.

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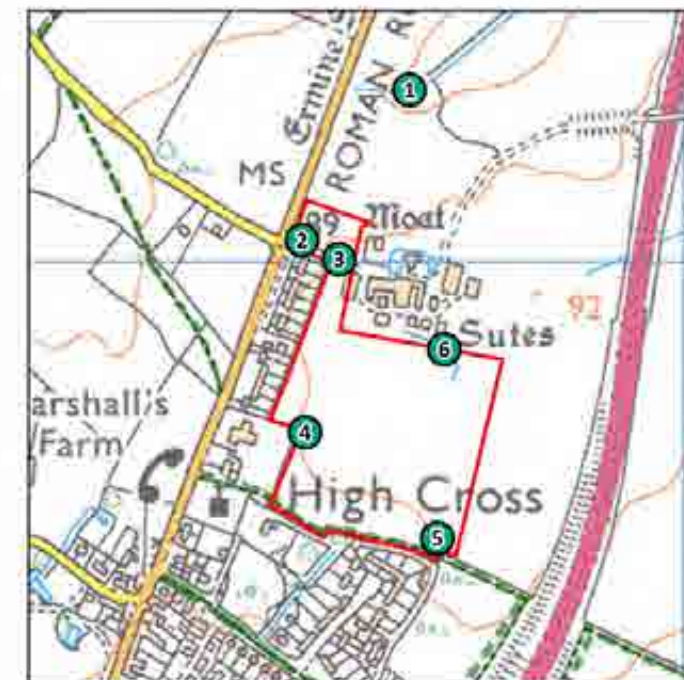
Access to Sutes Farm

Dwellings on High Road



Location: View from adjacent to access track to Sutes Farm, looking south.

Grid Reference: TL 36495 19030



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Land East of High Road, High Cross

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Location: View from adjacent to access track to Sutes Farm, looking North.

Grid Reference: TL 36544 19005



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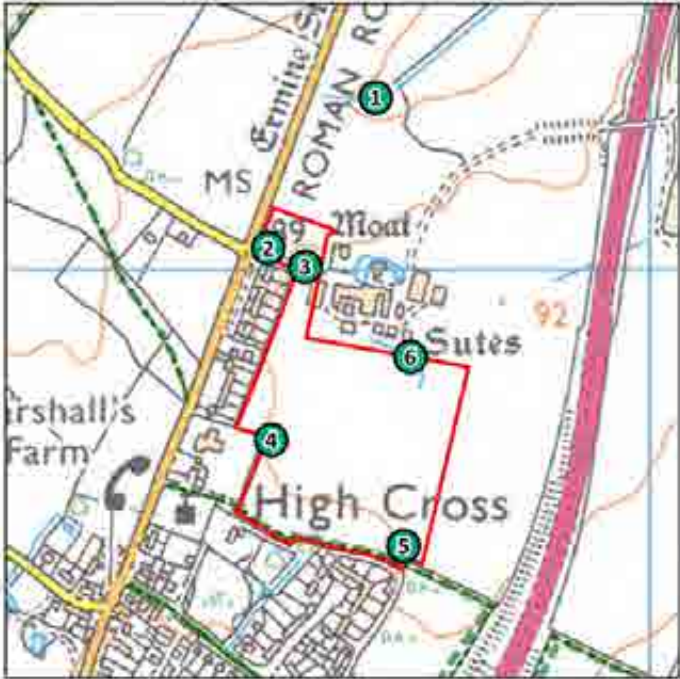
Dwellings on North Drive

Grade II Listed Church of St John's



Location: View from Northern Site boundary, looking south towards High Cross.

Grid Reference: TL 36683 18886

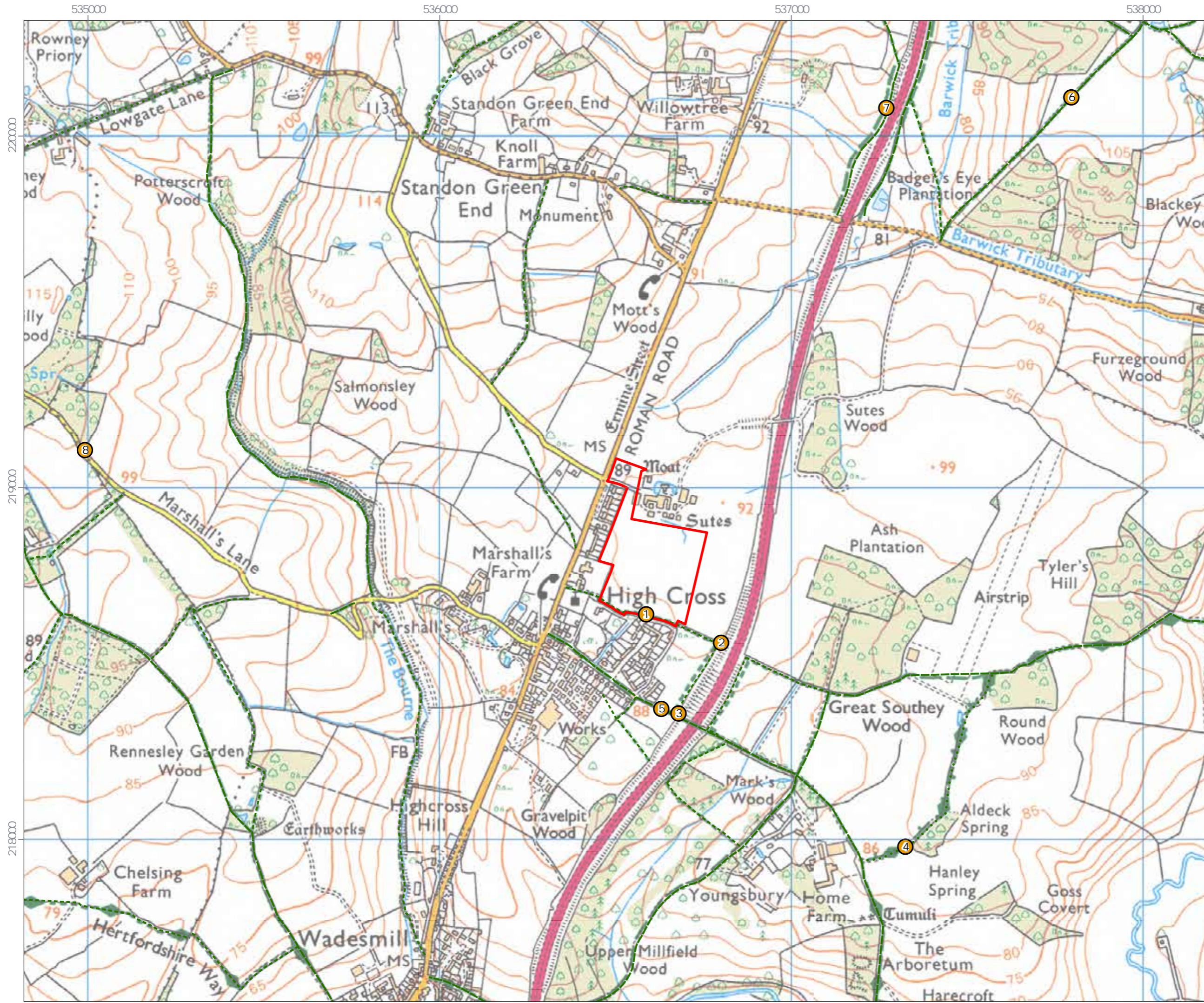


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**Appendix 4: Assessed Viewpoints**





- ### LEGEND
- Site Boundary
  - Viewpoint Location
  - Public Right of Way
  - Footpath
  - Bridleway
  - Public Rights of Way - Other



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PROJECT/SITE:	Land at High Cross	
CLIENT:	M Scot Properties	
MAP REF:	4064 29	
VERSION:	v1	
DATE:	01/12/2023	SCALE: 1:10,000@ A3
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Location: Public Footpath Thundridge 045, looking West..

Grid Reference: TL 36587 18640



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Approximate extent of Site



Location: View from Footpath Thundridge 045, looking North-West.

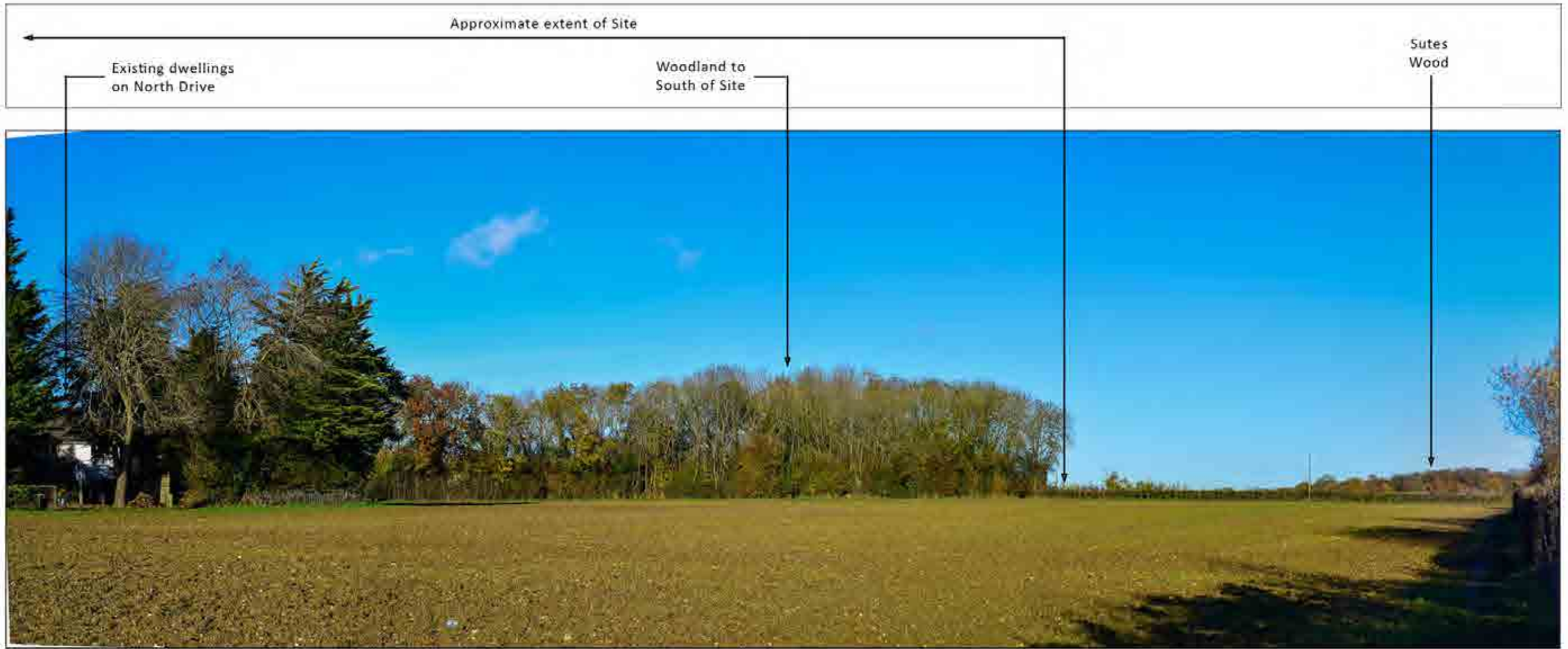
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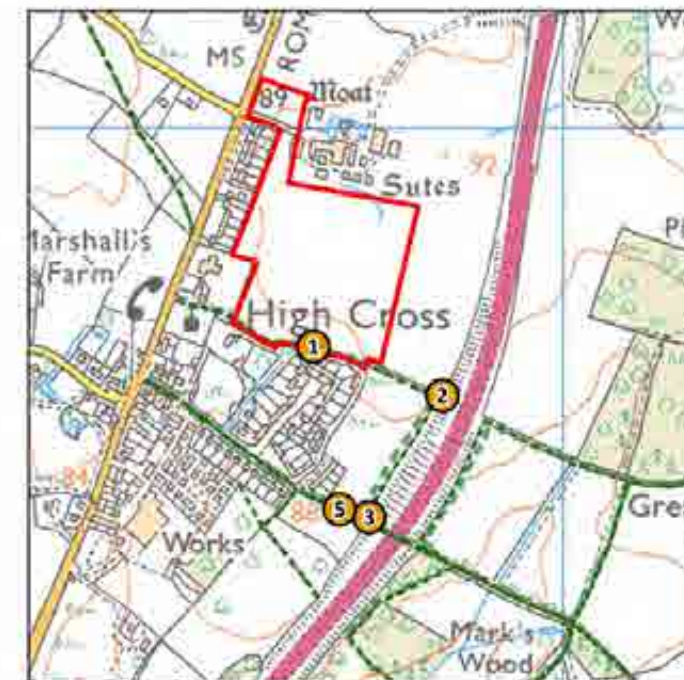
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Location: View from Footpath Thundridge 056, looking North.

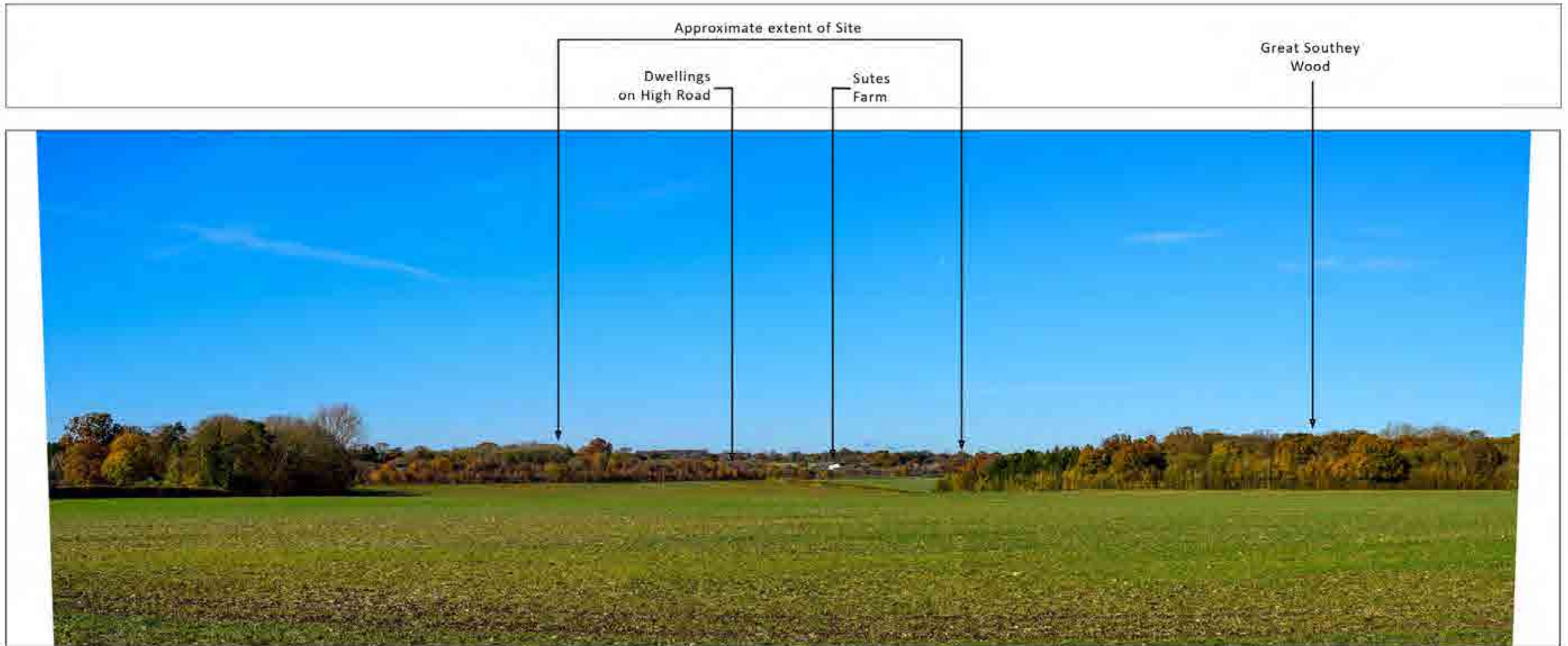
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Location: View from Restricted Byway Thundridge 050, looking North-West.

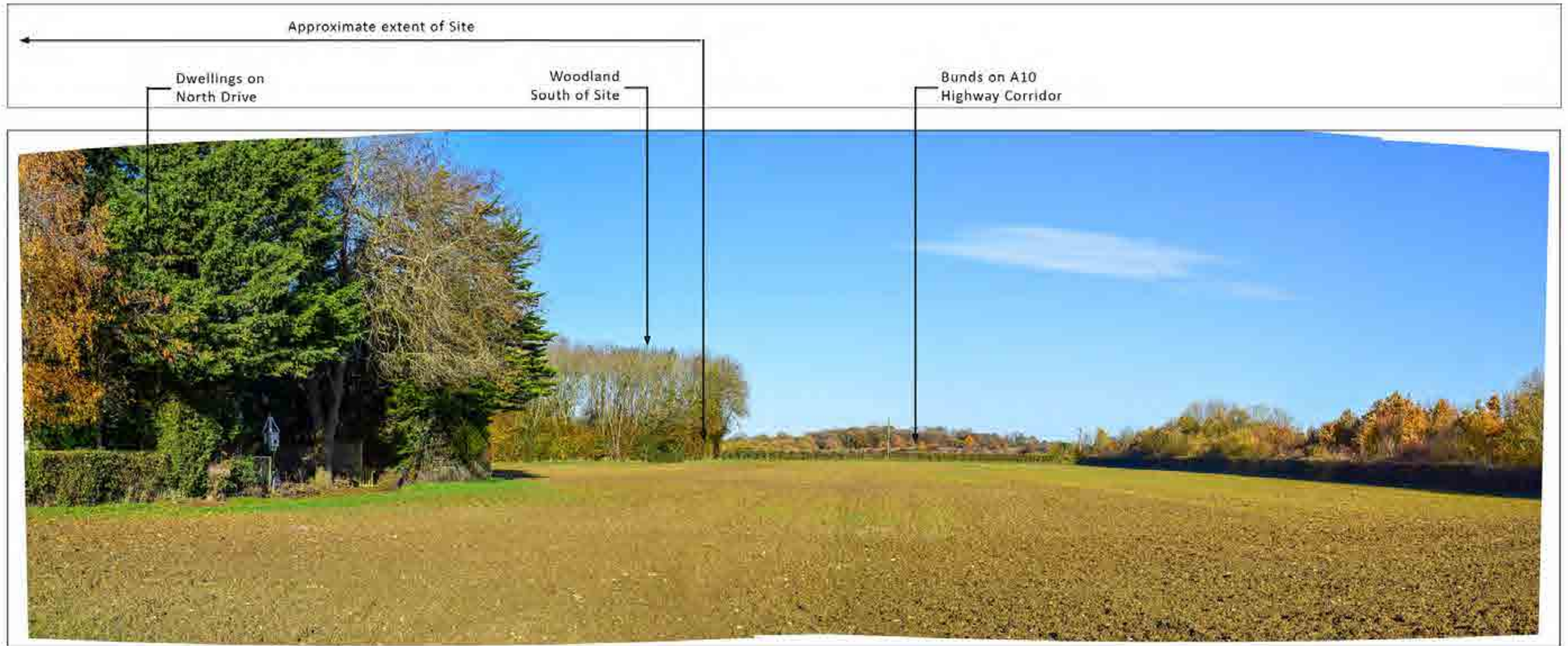
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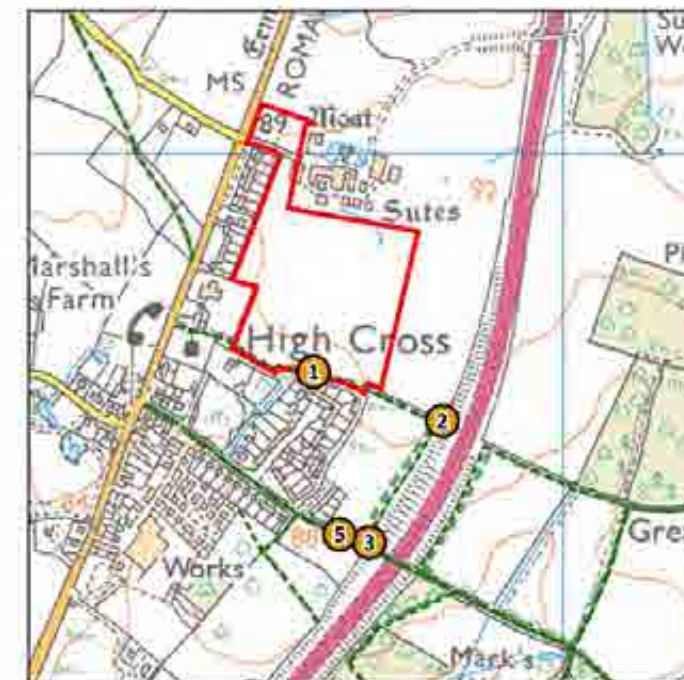
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Location: View from Bridleway Thundridge 048, looking North-East.

Grid Reference: TL 36630 18371



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Location: View from Bridleway Thundridge 043, looking South-West.

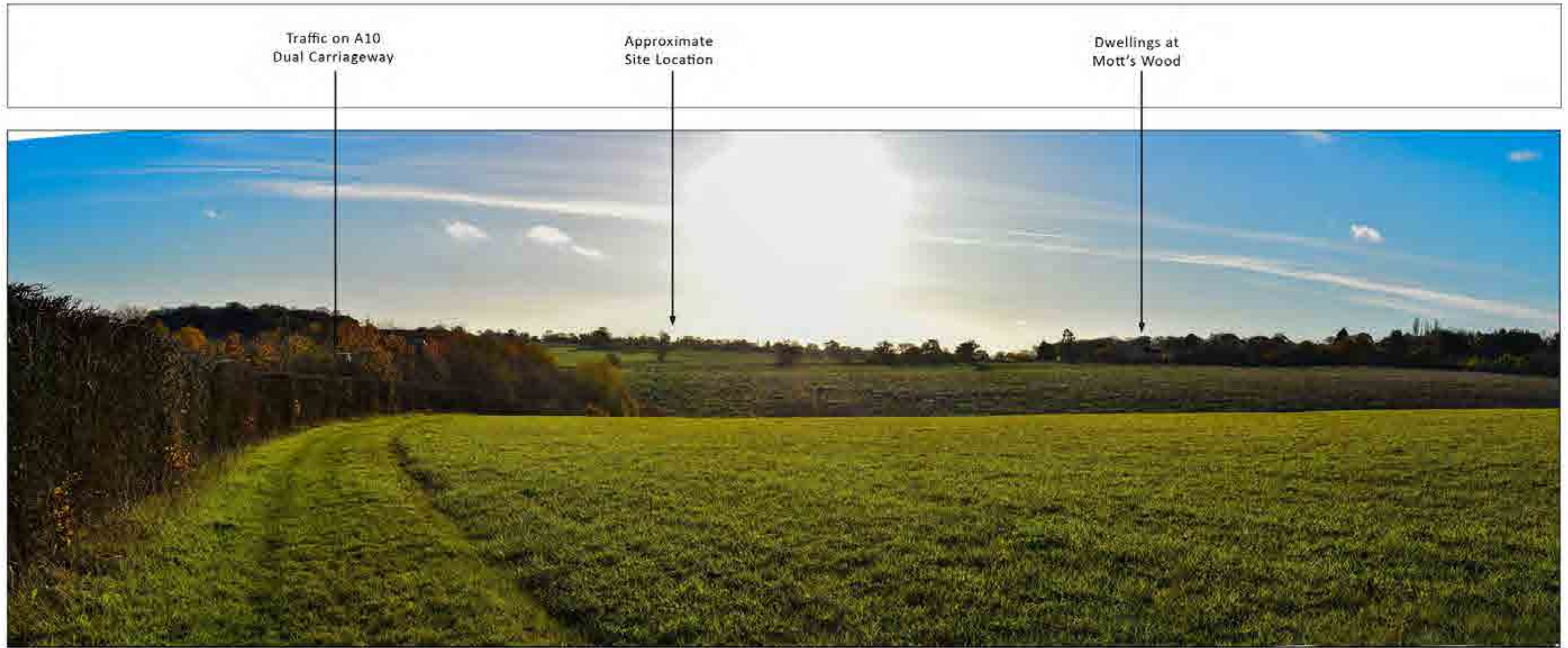
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Traffic on A10  
Dual Carriageway

Approximate  
Site Location

Dwellings at  
Mott's Wood

Location: View from Bridleway Standon 089, looking South.

Grid Reference: TL 37270 20080



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Viewpoint 7

Land East of High Road, High Cross

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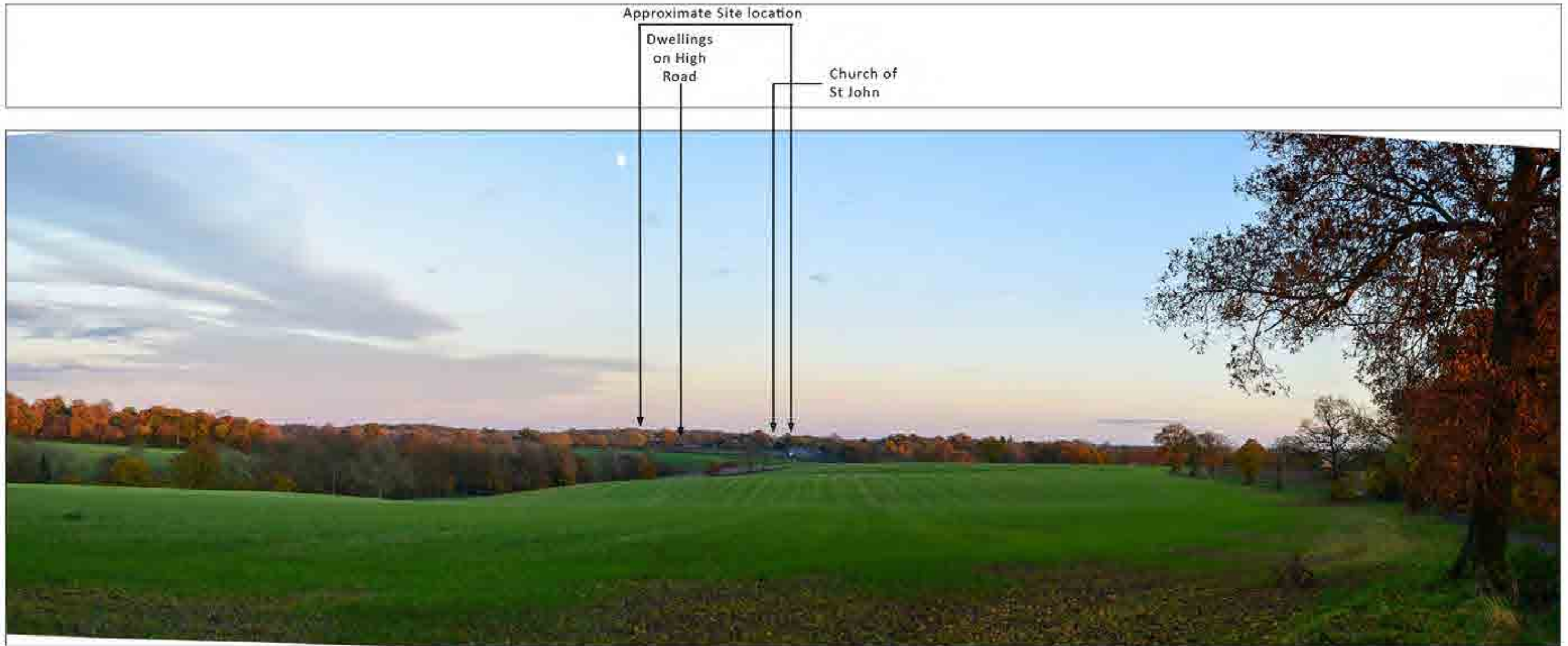
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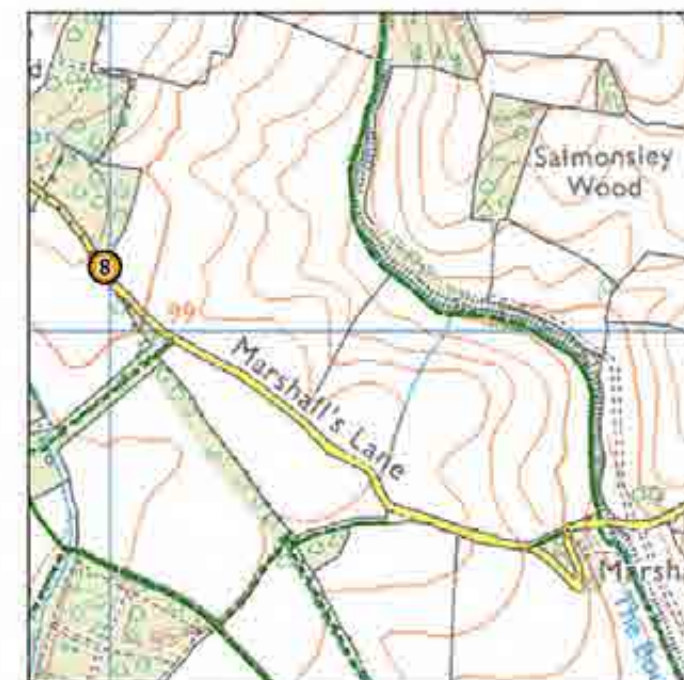
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Location: View from Marshall's Lane, looking North-East

Grid Reference: TL 34991 19107



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## **Forestry, Woodland and Tree Management**

Forestry  
New Woodland Design and Creation  
Tree Risk Survey and Management Advice  
Vacant & Derelict Land  
Tree Surgery

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