

BLADE

LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL APPRAISAL

LAND OFF CHALK ROAD, HIGHAM, KENT, ME3 7JY

ON BEHALF OF

RICHBOROUGH

JULY 2025

V2

BIODIVERSITY
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ARBORICULTURE
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ECOLOGY

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Introduction

- 1.1. BLADE Landscape Architects Limited ('BLADE') were commissioned on behalf of Richborough (the 'Applicant') to undertake a Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) and contribute to the iterative development of the Masterplanning for a new residential development.
- 1.2. The site cover 1.68 Hectares (Ha) and is located at OS Grid Reference: TQ 71162 72966 (site centre). The Applicant is seeking Outline Planning Permission for new homes to be situated on land situated off Chalk Road, Higham, Kent, ME3 7JY (the 'Site'); see Appendix BLA 1.
- 1.3. Higham is a village that is located south-east of Gravesend and just north-west of Strood, in Medway. The civil parish had a population of 3,938 at the 2011 Census, increasing slightly to 3,962 at the 2021 Census. The Site is in the county of Kent, and found within the administrative authority of Gravesham Borough Council (the 'LPA').

The Proposed Development

- 1.4. The Applicant is submitting an Outline Planning Application for the demolition of existing buildings and erection up to 40 residential dwellings, public open space and associated works. Approval is sought for the principal means of vehicular access from Chalk Road and all other matters are reserved (the 'Proposed Development'); see Appendix BLA 2 of this LVA.
- 1.5. This LVA is part of a suite of documents accompanying a planning application for the Proposed Development. The Site and Proposed Development are described later within this LVA, with further Site details given in the Planning Statement which accompanies the planning application.

The Purpose of this Landscape Visual Appraisal

- 1.6. This report has been prepared by a Chartered Landscape Architect with experience in landscape design and planning in the development sector. All drawings referenced within this assessment are in Appendices of the LVA.
- 1.7. The purpose of this LVA is to identify the baseline conditions of the Site and surrounding area and to determine those landscape and visual characteristics that might inform the design of the development proposals, including recommendations for mitigation. It then provides an appraisal of the landscape and visual effects predicted to arise from the development of the Site as follows:
 - Landscape fabric, when there is physical change to components of the landscape; landform, land use or a land cover.
 - Landscape character, caused by changes in the key characteristics and qualities of the landscape; and
 - Visual amenity caused by changes in the appearance of the landscape as a result of Development.
- 1.8. A detailed Methodology is provided within the final appendix of this Landscape Visual Appraisal.

2.0 THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The Site

- 2.1. The Site measures 1.68 Hectares and is in mixed use with the existing buildings being used for a mix commercial and domestic purposes and the surrounding land being used for temporary storage and animal grazing
- 2.2. The whole quantum of the site is within the control of the Applicant. This will form the basis of the planning application. A survey of the Site was undertaken by BLADE's Landscape Team in July 2025 during dry weather conditions and clear visibility. BLADE has identified the following features:

Topography

- 2.3. The landform within the Site very gently undulating from the north to the south circa 6m AOD to 5m AOD respectively.

Recreation

- 2.4. The Site is privately owned and is not open to the public. There are no PRW which pass through the Site or along (but outside) its boundaries. There is wider network of PRow but these are found to be within the wider environment of the village and the open countryside beyond – mainly found the northeast and east of the Site's location, and not directly link to these routes.

Scenic Quality

- 2.5. The site is situated on the northwestern periphery of Higham village and is not considered especially distinctive nor is it particularly remarkable in terms of scenic quality. The site contains an existing built stable block, herds standing an access route from Chalk Road.

Tranquillity

- 2.6. Limited tranquillity. The Site is partially overlooked by neighbouring residential development giving the Site a village context with the Site experienced as having a spatial equivalence to these neighbouring village land uses i.e.; the Site is experienced as within the village rather than the wider open countryside of medium scale fields and open views due to a lack of tree cover.

Historic Landscape Character

- 2.7. The site is located within the 'Original Saxon village of Lower Higham' with 'more recent development to the south.' However, the Site is not situated within or adjoining a Conservation Area, and whilst the Site contains built form these buildings are not listed for historical significance. The site is situated outside of any National or local Heritage designations.

3.0 THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

3.1. The application is made in outline and therefore a site layout will be agreed at reserved matters. The DAS supporting this application provides details of the development proposals and includes an Illustrative Masterplan to demonstrate how a scheme of 40 dwellings could be accommodated onsite. The Land Use Parameter Plan is provided at Appendix BLA 2. A summary of the proposed development is detailed below:

- The demolition of the existing mixed-use buildings and yard area.
- Up to 40 no. new dwellings are proposed.
- Dwellings of two storey in height, with some 'pepper-potting' of up to 2.5 storey at nodal points within the scheme.
- Access to the development will be via individual vehicle and pedestrian access from Chalk Road (southern Site edge).
- The integration of the built scheme with extensive green infrastructure, retained and new landscaping.
- Formal public open space through the scheme, as well as semi-natural and natural green space.
- SuDs attenuation basin.

3.2. The DAS supporting this application provides full details of the development proposals, and proposed schedule of implementation, and the proposed Illustrative Site Masterplan is contained in Appendix BLA 2 of this LVA report.

4.0 MITIGATION MEASURES

- 4.1. In siting the proposed development, the physical constraints of the site and its topography have been taken into consideration to minimise the potential for the proposed development to not break skylines or represent a series of prominent new structures in views towards the site.
- 4.2. The landscape and visual sensitivities of the site have been influential in the development of the Site Layout contained in the DAS and as shown in the Land Use Parameter Plan (Appendix BLA 2). This layout of the Site was developed iteratively with the Site Masterplanner through the findings of BLADE's field-based assessment, and ongoing advice since the undertaking of the initial review of the site.

Imbedded Mitigation

- 4.3. With consideration of the foregoing, recommendations for the architectural form and vernacular of the proposed development have been integrated into the architectural design and the overall layout of the site (N.B. Landscaping and landscape mitigation is considered further in this section of the LVA).
- 4.4. The prescription of the building heights for each proposed dwelling, and the relative finished floor level ('FFL') for each proposed unit have been tested through on-site assessment, so that the proposal is not substantially greater, and is reflective of built context of the site.
- 4.5. The mitigation measures embedded through the layout and arrangement of the site are as following:
 - Dwellings of two storey in height, with some 'pepper-potting' of up to 2.5 storey at nodal points within the scheme. The scheme is proposed at a similar density to the existing settlement pattern neighbouring the Site to its south on Chalk Road, as well as residential built form found locally in this area of the village along Chalk Road and street there off.
 - The proposed new residential dwellings have been deliberately arranged within the body of the site area, which is predominantly arranged in the area of the existing buildings (mixed commercial and domestic uses) and hard standing.
 - Development is concentrated where it is most appropriate in environmental terms to do so, with some 45% of the overall 1.68 Hectares site is proposed for some form of open space including landscape, green infrastructure and natural/semi-natural landscapes.
 - The proposed with an area of Public Open Space and habitat enhancement area to the north of the Site (on the 'outside' of the scheme), retaining new built form on the inner side of the Site so that it marries with the existing environment of built form along Chalk Road, with then wider village related land uses beyond.
- 4.6. This green infrastructure is an integral part of the proposed site layout, which in turn, will deliver the enhancement of the local landscape and betterment of ecological habitat value. The proposed landscape strategy contained within Appendix BLA 4, has been designed to best integrate the development at the site through new landscaping, as well as the conservation and enhancement of typical landscape fabric, rather than simply filtering and screening views.

Landscape Mitigation

- 4.7. Landscape mitigation measures have been developed through consideration of the host landscape character for the proposed development. These provide an appropriate solution for a development that offsets and / or reduces landscape and visual effects, and if practicable, enhances the local landscape fabric. The site is located adjoining the northwestern edge of the village and is managed as a series of individual fields and buildings, hard standing and car parking.
- 4.8. The Local Planning Authority advises the priorities for managing the landscape within which the Site is situated is to *'Restore and Create'*, which defined by the County Council as *'actions that restore distinctive features and the removal or mitigation of detracting features, whilst creating new features or areas where they have been lost or are in poor condition.'*
- 4.9. Additionally, the LPA has published a number of recommendations as part of the landscape strategy for the host landscape character area, and whilst the Proposed Development at the Site would not fulfil one of the LPA's objectives to *'restore pockets of small scale farmland in the area and, where it is appropriate, around existing settlement'* the scheme as proposed would ensure that new development would not *'introduce extensive or obtrusive elements within visually sensitive areas of the open landscape'*.
- 4.10. Notwithstanding the above, the Proposed Development has been designed to enable 'new landscape elements similar to that found locally, with planting of native species of local importance (and potentially local provenance) to encompass the Proposed Development. These measures respond to the LPA's recommendation of *'new landscape elements may need to be created around new settlements, using characteristic elements adapted to developing uses of the land - to include large-scale agriculture, transport and residential uses'* and 'create new ecological bases within the farmland which may also act as recreational resources for residential areas.'
- 4.11. From the outset of the masterplanning process, BLADE has iteratively fed into the design process to optimise the retention of the existing field hedgerow and field pattern, allowing for the bolstering of existing hedgerows and hedgerow trees to ensure the continuity for field pattern and structure of the landscape along the northwestern edge of the village.
- 4.12. Additionally to this, BLADE notes that the proposed development would retain the existing landform (except for the minor-remodelling for new homes, roadway and the proposed attenuation pond), and therefore, the general pattern of the Site's landform would be retained.
- 4.13. New planting would be of native species of local importance, and if available, local provenance. The detailed landscape design proposal would be confirmed at the reserved matters stage. However, the Illustrated Landscape Masterplan (Appendix BLA 4) defines the landscape enhancement and mitigation principals for this outline planning application submitted by the Applicant.
- 4.14. This strategy optimises the retention of existing trees and hedgerows, which can be further enhanced and integrated into the proposed development. Further measures to address local sensitivities include the following:
- The landscape strategy proposed optimises the retention of existing trees and provides opportunity for new hedge line tree and hedgerow planting. The development proposals

have been developed iteratively to retain the typical landform of the Site, and to ensure that new development is not experienced as prominent with the low-lying landform typically locally, and which characterises the setting to the village, and will preserve the perception of openness along this swathe of land.

- The proposals create opportunities for further native tree planting and create a setting for the new neighbourhood, structural landscaping within the buffer areas is proposed with a mix of native trees, shrubs and meadow grassland for diversity of ecosystems and habitat creation as well as strengthening of screening and protection of visual amenity.

4.15. The combination of these factors has iteratively guided the site layout, as well as the landscape proposals for the development. This is illustrated on the drawn Illustrative Landscape Masterplan in Appendix BLA 4. Furthermore, these principles will be instrumental in developing the detailed design for the discharge of planning conditions post approval.

4.16. In collaboration with the consulting Arboriculturist and Ecologist for this proposal, several green and blue infrastructure initiatives, and ecological enhancements have been integrated into the proposed development. The focus of these measures is less about screening and filtering views, rather, the enhancement of the local landscape and habitat value, as well as the better integration of development at the Site through new landscaping and the conservation and enhancement of existing trees and hedgerows within the Site.

4.17. In combination, the establishment of these measures serves to reduce the potential for landscape and visual effects on the identified baseline receptors. The focus of these measures is less about screening and filtering views, rather, these measures are about enhancing the existing landscape resources and integrating the proposal well within its setting.

Construction Phase

4.18. It is envisaged that the Development Proposal would be delivered in one phase. Consequently, given the foregoing, the following activities and elements have the potential to cause a temporary direct effect on the landscape fabric of the application Site, and an indirect effect, on the landscape and visual amenity of the study area:

- The demolition of the existing building (mixed and domestic uses), hard standing, vehicle access and car parking.
- Erection of, and visual effect, of temporary site hoarding / fencing to enclose the Site, and tree protection fencing (to accord to BS 5837: 2012) within the Site, and along its boundaries.
- Temporary portacabin structures for site welfare and office, and vehicle parking area.
- Earthworks excavation for the formation of construction levels.
- Utility of Site access off Chalk Road to the southern edge of the Site.
- Excavations for the construction of the proposed dwellings, garages, roads and drives.

- 4.19. All ground disturbances would be confined as far as practicable and working widths during construction operations would be restricted resulting in a minimal interference with existing soil structures and habitats.

Construction Mitigation

- 4.20. The details of construction methods, timing and phasing are not known at this stage; however, this appraisal has assumed a reasonable worst-case scenario. The following measures could be implemented and adhered to during the temporary construction phase:
- An approved Arboriculture Method Statement (AMS) incorporating best practice guidance set out in British Standard 5837: 2012 Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction could be adopted, which would ensure retained trees and hedgerow are not adversely affected during the construction process.
 - Visual screening, such as hoardings, could be adopted around sections of the Site boundary to protect more sensitive visual receptors in proximity, including residential receptors and users of the Public Right of Way as appropriate.
 - Construction works that create dust would be kept to a minimum within proximity of residential receptors and receptors near the Site; and
 - Mitigation measures for construction lighting are likely to include directional fittings and restricted hours of operation, and if requested by the LPA, could be outlined within the Lighting Strategy for the project.

5.0 FINDINGS OF THE BASELINE APPRAISAL

- 5.1. This LVA has involved a desk study, field work, data processing and analysis as well as interpretation using professional judgement undertaken by a Landscape Architect in June 2025 and based on best practice guidance¹. Prior to this, the assessing Landscape Architect has iteratively worked on the assemblance of the Proposed Development through the development of an emerging masterplan, and the eventual application.
- 5.2. Typically, a 15-year time horizon is used as the basis for conclusions about the residual levels of effect. 15 years is a well-established and accepted compromise between assessing the shorter-term effects (which may often be rather 'raw' before any proposed mitigation has had time to take effect) and an excessively long time.
- 5.3. An assessment of the visibility of the Site was undertaken and a series of photographs taken from public vantage points, rights of way and public highways. The assessment was undertaken in May and the deciduous vegetation was in leaf. In winter, the filtering effect of the surrounding vegetation will be reduced (which we have been mindful during this appraisal).

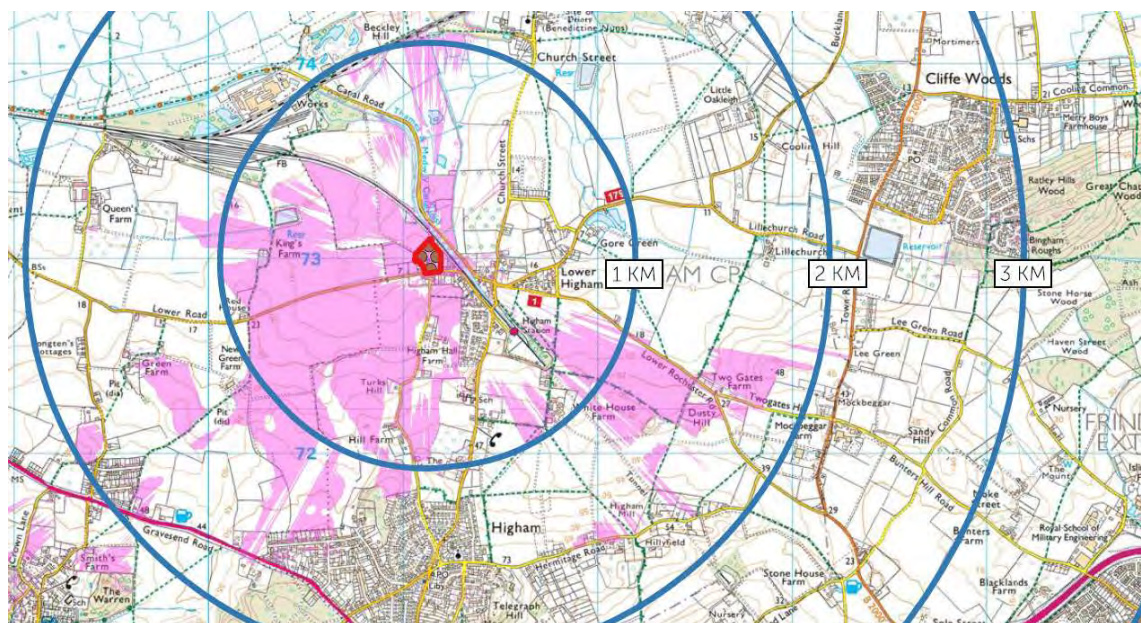
Definition of Study Area

- 5.4. To establish the baseline context of the Site and its surrounding, and to assess the potential limit of material effects, the study area was informed through a plotted Zone of Theoretical Visibility ('ZTV'). This ZTV was plotted over a radius of 5km distance from the Site's boundary.
- 5.5. For brevity and accuracy of the likely potentially affected by the Proposed Development, the ZTV was prepared using LIDAR data, rather than a more simplistic bare earth model. The use of LIDAR data enables the influence of more than landform to be considered and plotted; see Appendix BLA 3.
- 5.6. For instance; the effect of built development, walling, hedgerows, hedge line trees, tree groups, woodland and other features is mapped, and this plotted to determine how these feature would restrict the visibility of the Proposed Development.
- 5.7. The ZTV study area enabled the geographical scope of the appraisal to be defined based on the Site's environmental planning context and the extent of views to and from the Site. This informed the field-based assessment to the land area most likely to experience the effects of the Proposed Development.
- 5.8. Through on-site observations, a Zone of Primary Visibility (ZPV) was also identified. The ZPV is where representative viewpoints are assessed, and whilst there may be views from the wider area beyond this primary zone, views are less open, and likely to be filtered, or to an extent screened by existing landscape features, built development or landform.
- 5.9. The primary zone of visibility is where representative viewpoints are assessed, and whilst there may be views from the wider area beyond the primary zone, views are less open, and likely to be filtered, or to an extent screened by existing landscape features, built development or landform.

¹ *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition (Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment 2013)*

- 5.10. As demonstrated by Appendix BLA 3, the Zone of Primary Visibility is situated relative to the Site and its neighbouring area, and given the Site's location at the edge of the village, there is potential see the Site from the area south and west across low lying, relatively flat landform.
- 5.11. Existing residential development to the east, as well as the route of the main railway line (with its extensive tree lines and tree groups) is sufficient to restrict the discernibility of the Site to within the local, neighboring area of the Site (within Higham, or around the edges of the Site. The open fields south of Chalk Road and the wider village of Higham (to the east) allow open views to the Site area from where the landform rises and there is sight between the existing residential dwellings along Chalk Road. Given this, there is scope to see the Site from the setting of the village, whereby the Site is not seen wholesale and is generally glanced with filtered views.
- 5.12. Beyond this, there is potential to see the Site from those higher landform areas outlying to the village. These occur to the west and north of the Site – on the open countryside on the outskirts of Gravesend and along the River Thames to the west and north respectively.
- 5.13. In many situations, the Site is not seen whole, it is seen between neighbouring residential built form, or across a marginal geographical areas, or glimpsed through or above the Site's field hedgerows, scattered hedge line trees or tree lines.
- 5.14. Consequently, the Zone of Primary Visibility is predominantly from within the edge of village nearest to and neighbouring the Site, as well as extending across the relatively flat landform to the south and west to southwest within the initial 1k m distance of the Site respectively.
- 5.15. To demonstrate the foregoing, Image BLA 5.1 contains an extract from the plotted Zone of Theoretical Visibility (Appendix BLA 3):

Image BLA 5.1: Extract from the Zone of Theoretical Visibility plotted by BLADE; see Appendix BLA 3



- 5.16. In summary, the Appeal Site's Zone of Primary Visibility (ZPV) extends barely beyond the boundaries of the Site itself (when considered in terms of the broader visual context). In my experience, this is an extraordinarily limited zone of visibility for a land parcel of this size so close to a relatively small-scale village settlements such as Higham. Together these features provide a very well contained context for a development of new homes.

Viewpoint Selection

- 5.17. Given the foregoing, representative viewpoints have been selected. In selecting these viewpoints, BLADE has been conscious of appraising the Site from all points of the compass, as well as within a range of distances to the Site, as well as testing the development proposals from a range of receptor types.
- 5.18. A list of the selected viewpoints and their reasons for selection is provided in Table BLA 5.2 overleaf. The location of representative viewpoints is illustrated on the Site Context Plan (Appendix BLA 1).
- 5.19. Viewpoint Sensitivity is defined as high, medium or low based on an interpretation of a combination of parameters, as follows and defined in Table BLA 5.1:
- Location and context of the viewpoint;
 - Land use or main activity at the viewpoint;
 - Frequency and duration of use;
 - Landscape character and quality of the intervening landscape; and
 - Value attached to view.

Table BLA 5.1: Visual Sensitivity in relation to Main Activity at Viewpoint

Visual Sensitivity	Land Use
Very High	<i>Value/Susceptibility to Change:</i> View is: designed/has intentional association with surroundings; recorded in published material; from a publicly accessible heritage asset/designated/promoted viewpoint; nationally/internationally designated right of way; protected/recognised in planning policy designation.
High	<i>Value/Susceptibility to Change:</i> View of clear value but may not be formally recognised e.g. framed view of scenic value or destination/summit views; inferred that it may have value for local residents; locally promoted route or PRoW.
Medium	<i>Value/Susceptibility to Change:</i> View is not widely promoted or recorded in published sources; may be typical of those experienced by an identified receptor; minor road routes through rural/scenic areas.
Low	<i>Value/Susceptibility to Change:</i> View of clearly lesser value than similar views from nearby visual receptors that may be more accessible.
Negligible	<i>Value/Susceptibility to Change:</i> View may be affected by many landscape detractors and unlikely to be valued.

Table BLA 5.2 – Summary of Representative Viewpoints

View	Location	OS Grid Ref	Approx Distance from the Closest Site Boundary	Reason for Selection (Site Topography: c. 5-6m AOD)
1	View from Public Footpath (PRoW LPA ref: NS318) situated to the north looking across open countryside towards Higham	570752, 174786	1.85km N/0 degrees looking S/180 degrees	PRoW route passing along the River Thames corridor and afford broad, wide open views across open countryside to the village of Higham. PRoW users would have high expectation of visual amenity. Topography: 2m AOD.
2	View from the King Charles III England Coast Path (PRoW LPA ref: NS138) situated to the northeast looking across open countryside towards Higham	570944, 175651	2.7km N-NE/15 degrees looking S-SW/ 195 degrees	PRoW route passing along the River Thames corridor and afford broad, wide open views across open countryside to the village of Higham. PRoW users would have high expectation of visual amenity. Topography: 2m AOD.
3	View from Public Footpath (PRoW LPA ref: NS144) progressing through open countryside on the outskirts of Higham near Chequers Street	571494, 172773	0.35km SE/125 degrees looking NW/325 degrees	Viewpoint from a PRoW entering the village of Higham from the wider open countryside to the east of the Site. Landform is similar to that of the Site and the wider village area around this location. This viewpoints demonstrates the discernibility of the Site within its setting and against the wider village backdrop. PRoW Users would have a medium expectation of visual amenity. Topography: 11m AOD.
4	View from Chalk Road to the south of the Site as it passes through Higham	571443, 172741	0.35km SE/135 degrees looking NW/315 degrees	Viewpoint from local minor route passing through the village with Road Users travelling to and from home in Higham or to the wider area passing through Higham. This viewpoints demonstrates the discernibility of the Site within its setting and against the wider village backdrop. Road Users would have a medium expectation of visual amenity. Topography: 10m AOD
5	View from Public Footpath (PRoW LPA ref: NS143) passing through open countryside to the east of Higham	571786, 172628	0.7km SE/120 degrees looking NW/330 degrees	PRoW passing through open countryside beyond the village of Higham. The route affords broad, open views across the intervening countryside to Higham. PRoW users would have high expectation of visual amenity. Topography: 17m AOD.

6	View from Public Footpath (PRoW LPA ref: NS151) passing through open countryside to the south east of Higham on locally elevated landform	572460, 172274	1.45km SE/120 degrees looking NW/330 degrees	PRoW passing through open countryside beyond the village of Higham. The route affords broad, open views across the intervening countryside to Higham. PRoW users would have high expectation of visual amenity.. Topography: 18m AOD.
7	View from Public Footpath (PRoW LPA ref: NS144) passing through the village of Higham on locally elevated landform to the south of the Site	571235, 172801	0.15km SE/160 degrees looking NW/340 degrees	Viewpoint from a PRoW passing around the village of Higham and is situated on elevated landform looking across the villages and out towards the River Thames river corridor. This viewpoints demonstrates the discernibility of the Site within its setting and against the wider village backdrop. PRoW Users would have a medium to high expectation of visual amenity. Topography: 20m AOD.
8	View from Taylors Lane, local minor route passing through Higham village on locally elevated landform to the south of the Site	571117, 172917	Opposite Site S/180 degrees looking N/0 degrees	Viewpoint from a local minor route travelling to and from the village passing across landform elevated above the village's position nearest the Site. Road Users would be travelling to and from home in Higham or to the wider area passing through Higham. This viewpoints demonstrates the discernibility of the Site within its setting and against the wider village backdrop. Road Users would have a medium to high expectation of visual amenity. Topography: 31m AOD.
9	View from Chalk Road nearest to the Site as the roadway passes through the village of Higham	571000, 172357	0.65km, S-SW/205 degrees looking N-NE/35 degrees	Viewpoint situated nearest the site on Chalk Road. Road Users would be travelling to and from home in Higham or to the wider area passing through Higham. This viewpoints demonstrates the discernibility of the Site within its setting and against the wider village backdrop. Road Users would have a medium expectation of visual amenity. Topography: 31m AOD
10	View from Chalk Road to the east of the Site area situated in open countryside approaching Higham village nearest the Site	570680, 172850	0.45km, W/260 degrees looking E/80 degrees	Viewpoint from local minor route to the east of Higham village. Road Users would be travelling through open countryside to and from the village. This viewpoints demonstrates the discernibility of the Site within its setting and against the wider village backdrop. Road Users would have a medium expectation of visual amenity. Topography: 8m AOD
11	View from Public Footpath (PRoW LPA ref: NS156) passing through open countryside west of the village locally elevated landform	570213, 172437	1km SW/235 degrees looking NE/45 degrees km	PRoW route passing through open countryside to the southwest of the village. This viewpoint demonstrates the discernibility of the Site against one of the nearby large fruit growing fields (common land use locally). PRoW users would have high expectation of visual amenity. Topography: 24m AOD

12	View from Public Footpath (PRoW LPA ref: NS156) passing open countryside northwest of Higham village	570308, 172989	0.8km, NW/320 degrees looking SE/130 degrees	Viewpoint from PRoW passing through open countryside to the northwest of Higham affording PRoW passing along the route typically broad, open views across the intervening countryside west of Higham. PRoW users would have high expectation of visual amenity. Topography: 16m AOD
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- 5.20. As demonstrated by the plotted Zone of Theoretical Visibility (appendix BLA 3), the effect of the residential built form neighboring the Site, as well as the wider village related land uses and built form is sufficient to restrict the discernibility of the Site. In combination, this built form screens the Site from view across the wider village and open countryside beyond to the north, east and south east.
- 5.21. Surrounding the Site, land is open and not developed beyond the village, and between the outlying settlement of Cliiffe Wood to the east and Gravesend to the west, the village of Higham nearest the Site is situated within a shallow bowl landform; see Appendix BLA 3. This physical feature contains views of the Site to within the initial 1km distance of the Site.
- 5.22. With landform gently sloping northwards to the river estuary, there is scope for broad, open views along the estuary and its landscape between Higham and the river.
- 5.23. To the south, landform rises to the wider residential area of Higham, as seen along Taylors Lane, and the wider area of Higham is situated between this shallow rise and offers limited intervisibility between Chalk Road (and the Site) and the wider village itself.
- 5.24. Given the foregoing, visibility of the Site is very limited, and not seen wholesale within this geographical area. In many situations, views of the Site are predominantly from Chalk Road as one passes the Site, or from the rising land south of Chalk Road (within close range of the Site), or glimpsed between extensive tree components from the west (along Chalk Road) or between existing residences from the south east. Consequently, it is judged, that where the Site is seen it is experienced against its setting within Higham and the wider residential development along Chalk Road.
- 5.25. Representative viewpoints demonstrate the nature of views from various compass orientations and distances across the immediate study area. The key characteristic to the setting of each viewpoint and the associated PRoW is the layering effect of intervening tree groups, robust field hedgerows, as well as the effect of typically rolling landform to the south of Chalk Road, and the more flattish landform to the north between Higham and the River Thames estuary landscape.

6.0 THE PLANNING CONTEXT AND RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

The Planning Context of the Application Site

- 6.1. With consideration of the current adopted Local Plan and its supporting Policy Map, the Site is situated outside of the adopted Settlement Boundary. In terms of Landscape-related designations, the following is noted (see also Appendix BLA 1):
- **National landscape designations:** The site does not lie within, adjoin, or is close to a Nationally designated landscape such as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or National Park. The site is situated within the (London) Green Belt.
 - **Local landscape designations:** The site does not lie within, adjoin, or is close to a locally designated landscape, such as a Significant Gap or Green Space. The site is found within Countryside on the southwestern edge of the settlement overlooked by neighbouring residential development. It is judged that the Site has a previously development nature on the edge of a village scale settlement.
- 6.2. Consequently, given the foregoing the site is not afforded elevated protection under National and local planning policy in Landscape terms.

National Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)²

- 6.3. The NPPF was updated on the 12th December 2024 and sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development.
- 6.4. The NPPF Paragraph 131 states that the 'creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities'.
- 6.5. Paragraph. 136 states that 'new streets [should be] tree-lined', and 'that opportunities are taken to incorporate trees elsewhere in developments (such as parks and community orchards), that appropriate measures are in place to secure the long-term maintenance of newly-planted trees, and that existing trees are retained wherever possible'.
- 6.6. Paragraph 187 notes that the need to recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital, with subsection a stating:

'.....protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan).'

² Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. (2024) NPPF. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework>

- 6.7. Paragraph 187 makes it clear that there is a hierarchy to the importance and value attributed to landscapes, and that the development plan should identify the quality of particular landscapes that are not subject to statutory protection, stating at subsection b:

‘recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland.’

- 6.8. The site is situated inside the West Midlands Green Belt. Section 13 of the NPPF relates to protecting Green Belt land and states that *‘the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence’*.
- 6.9. The NPPF sets out five purposes which the Green Belt serves and at paragraph 143 states that *‘inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances’*. The NPPF lists exceptions where construction of new buildings within the Green Belt would not be inappropriate at paragraph 154.
- 6.10. *‘Openness’* and *‘permanence’* are essential characteristics of the Green Belt and they contribute to the fundamental aim of the Green Belt policy, to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open.
- 6.11. Given the site’s location on the periphery of the Green Belt, it would appropriate to consider the likely effect on these characteristics of the wider Green Belt, even if it to only demonstrate, that any resulting effect would be indirect, and benign its magnitude.
- 6.12. Paragraph 156 sets out how the NPPF’s *‘Golden Rules’* relative to major development within the Green Belt, and states the following:

‘Where major development involving the provision of housing is proposed on land released from the Green Belt through plan preparation or review⁵⁸, or on sites in the Green Belt subject to a planning application, the following contributions (‘Golden Rules’) should be made:

a. affordable housing which reflects either: (i) development plan policies produced in accordance with paragraphs 67-68 of this Framework; or (ii) until such policies are in place, the policy set out in paragraph 157 below;

b. necessary improvements to local or national infrastructure; and

c. the provision of new, or improvements to existing, green spaces that are accessible to the public. New residents should be able to access good quality green spaces within a short walk of their home, whether through onsite provision or through access to offsite spaces.’

- 6.13. Paragraph 158 continues to recognise development which complies with the Golden Rules should be 'given significant weight in favour of the grant of permission' and improvements to green spaces required as part of the Golden Rules should 'contribute positively to the landscape setting of the development, support nature recovery and meet local standards for green space provision where these exist in the development plan'
- 6.14. Relevant Planning Policy Guidance that accompanies the NPPF includes that relating to Green Infrastructure, Landscape, and Design (including the National Design Guide).

Local Planning Policy

- 6.15. The Site is situated within the administrative area of Gravesham District Council. The Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy was adopted in 2014 and is the main document in the Gravesham Local Plan with the purpose to '*set out a long-term vision for the future of Gravesham based on evidence of need to support communities and outline what makes Gravesham a distinctive and attractive place to live and work*' and '*support and inform via sustainable development via investment in infrastructure, economic development, and regeneration proposals within the borough, while promoting healthy communities*' and facilitate a '*consistent basis for planning application decisions.*'
- 6.16. The main Landscape pertinent policy of the adopted Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy Policy CS12, which is detailed below:

Policy CS 12

- 6.17. Policy CS12 is entitled 'Green Infrastructure' and states:

'The overall landscape character and valued landscapes will be conserved, restored and enhanced. The greatest weight will be given to the conservation and enhancement of the landscape and natural beauty of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and its setting. Proposals will take account of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan, the Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment, and the Cluster Studies where relevant.'

- 6.18. The supporting text to this policy states (N.B. Underlining added by BLADE for emphasis):

'The Council can only make informed and responsible decisions on the management and planning of landscapes if it pays proper regard to their existing character. A Landscape Character Assessment for the urban fringes and rural area of Gravesham has been produced.'

This sets out 11 local landscape character areas. For each area, there is an assessment of condition and sensitivity and guidelines for appropriate actions to protect and enhance the landscape. In addition, it contains generic guidelines for different types of landscape and development. This will be used to inform future decisions on proposals affecting the urban fringes and rural area.'

- 6.19. The LPA continues (N.B. Underlining added by BLADE for emphasis):

'The Council's strategy is to conserve and enhance the landscape character and valued landscapes of the Borough, giving greatest weight to conserving and enhancing the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and its setting.'

- 6.20. For a point of clarity, the Site is situated 4km from the National Landscape (Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty). Consequently; BLADE does not consider, that given this distance that the Site is located within the setting of the national Landscape.

Summary

- 6.21. BLADE summaries the planning policy background for this site as follows:

- The NPPF shows a clear presumption in favour of sustainable development.
- The site is situated outside of, but neighbouring, the Settlement Boundary formally recognised within the adopted Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (adopted in 2014). The Site has a village edge location.
- With consideration of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (was adopted in 2014; the Site is not found within a Special Landscape Area, Green Wedge, Local Green Space or Special Protection Area (or adjoining such local designations).
- The Site is found within the (London) Green Belt; albeit on the peripheral edge of the Green Belt as it meets the village edge at Higham. The Site has a village edge setting and represent an existing developed land use with existing built form, hardstanding car parking and access.
- The site does not fall within, or adjoin, any National or local landscape designation, and consequently, is not afforded elevated protection under national or local planning policy in landscape terms. It is judged that due to the effect of distance, the Site is not considered to be within the 'setting' of the National Landscape.
- The Site contains built form with hard standing, car parking and an access route from Chalk Road; however, there are no heritage assets within, or adjoining the quantum of the site.
- There are arboriculture and ecological features within the site and are considered in this LVA only in so far as, they contribute to the landscape character of the site context.

- 6.22. In summary, the Local Planning Policies contain a number of overarching policies of relevance to this study. The main themes of these policies, against which the proposed development could be tested, have been summarised here for convenience:

- Development proposals should consider the latest Landscape Character Assessment and its guidelines to retain and manage landscape features that contribute to wider landscape character and the setting of development;
- New development should seek to protect and restore the primary characteristics defined in character assessments and important features of the host landscape character area;
- The location, materials, scale and use of any proposed development should be sympathetic to and complement local landscape character; and

- An assessment of landscape and visual effects is required to support a planning application where there is possibly a detrimental effect on landscape as a resource.

7.0 BASELINE CONDITIONS

Landscape Character

Existing Landscape Character Assessment

- 7.1. This section appraises the existing, or baseline conditions of the character of the Site, and its landscape context through consideration of published landscape assessments.
- 7.2. Such an assessment is worthwhile in enabling a better understanding of the site, and its context, but rarely delivers sufficiently site-specific or contemporary information to enable robust conclusions about the significance of any change through the proposed development. As such, BLADE has also undertaken its own field-based assessment of the site and its context, which is included later in this section.

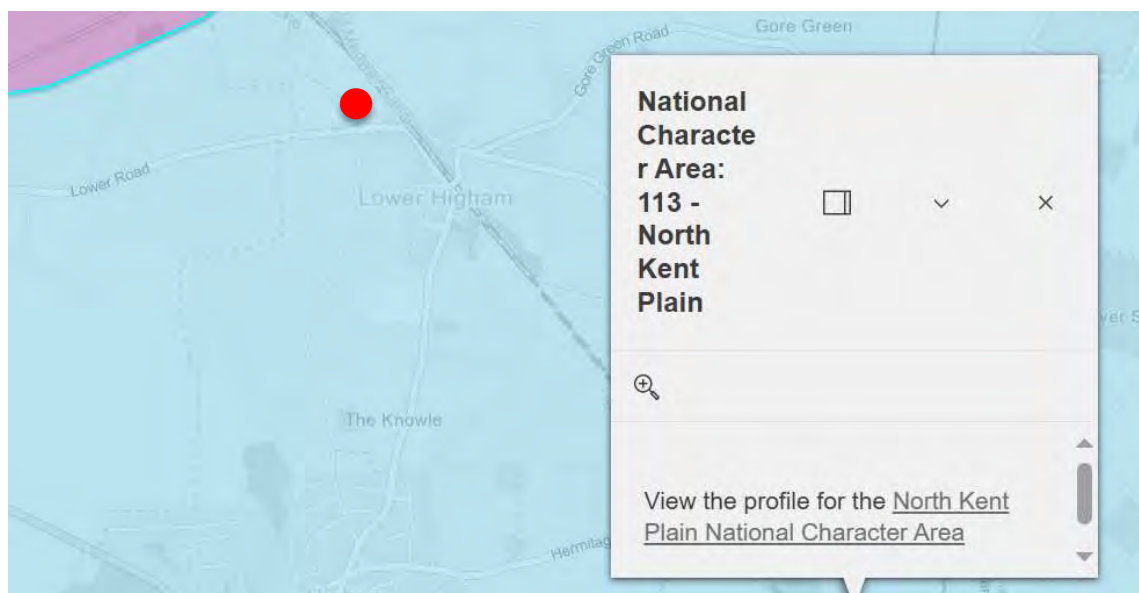
Background Published Evidence Base Documents

- 7.3. The following documents are relevant and will be discussed as appropriate later in this LVA:
- Natural England National Character Assessment (published, and updated, on line at www.nationalcharacterareas.co.uk); and
 - Landscape Assessment of Kent (2004).

National Character Assessment

- 7.4. Natural England has described and classified landscape character areas across large, broad regional area. These are published in the National Character Area (NCA) profiles. Natural England finds the site to be situated in the National Character Area: 113: North Kent Plain. The North Kent Plain forms a strip of land between the Thames Estuary and the Kent Downs; see Image BLA 7.1:

Image BLA 7.1: Extract from Natural England's National Character Area: 113: North Kent Plain N.B. BLADE has marked the approximate location of the site with a red circle



7.5. Natural England describe this National Character Areas as follows:

'The Thames Estuary to the north and the chalk of the Kent Downs to the south. The area is open, low and gently undulating. It is a very productive agricultural area with predominantly high-quality, fertile loam soils characterised by arable use. Traditional orchards, soft fruits and other horticultural crops exist in central and eastern areas giving rise to the use of the title 'Garden of England'.....r, it is generally an open landscape: characteristic shelterbelts occur within the fruit-growing areas, but the agricultural land is mostly devoid of hedgerows.'

7.6. And continues:

'The area has a strong urban influence, with several built-up areas, including coastal towns and these occupy a substantial part of the area with significant development around London and the Medway towns, which has a strong influence in the west of the NCA.'

7.7. Natural England recognises a number key characteristics for this National scale landscape area, including the following:

- *'An open, low and gently undulating landscape, characterised by highquality, fertile, loamy soils dominated by agricultural land use.*
- *A diverse coastline (both in nature and orientation), made up of cliffs, intertidal sand and mud, salt marshes, sand dunes and shingle beaches. Much of the coastal hinterland has been built on, and the coast itself has been modified through the construction of sea walls, harbours and piers.*
- *Large arable/horticultural fields with regular patterns and rectangular shapes predominating, and a sparse hedgerow pattern.*
- *Orchards and horticultural crops characterise central and eastern areas, and are often enclosed by poplar or alder shelterbelts and scattered small woodlands*
- *Woodland occurs on the higher ground around Blean and in smaller blocks to the west, much of it ancient and of high nature conservation interest.*
- *The Stour and its tributaries are important features of the eastern part of the NCA, draining eastwards into the North Sea, with associated wetland habitats including areas of grazing marsh, reedbeds, lagoons and gravel pits. The River Medway cuts through the NCA as it flows into the Thames Estuary.*
- *Large settlements and urban infrastructure (including lines of pylons) are often visually dominant in the landscape, with significant development around Greater London and the Medway Towns, as well as around towns further east and along the coast. Major rail and road links connect the towns with London.'*

- 7.8. NCA 113 extends across a total area of nearly 85,000 Hectares. With consideration of BLA's field-based assessment, while NCA 113 is broadly representative of the Site's landscape, and its context, the description is far too generic to robustly inform an assessment of the suitability of the development proposals at the site.
- 7.9. The national level assessment gives a broad brush impression of a region and provides a useful contextual overview of the character of the wider landscape. However, the proposed development is not considered to have the potential to result in any perceptible effects on landscape character at this national scale and - to remain proportionate to the small scale of the Site in relation to the NCA - focus is placed upon the local landscape character.
- 7.10. For the scale of the Site and potential developable area the description of landscape character undertaken at a more localised level is more relevant in establishing the landscape resource baseline.

Kent County Landscape Character Assessment

- 7.11. Published in 2004, the Kent Landscape Assessment ('KLA') is a landscape character study that draws together existing landscape character assessments of the county. This is the most up-to-date County-wide landscape character assessment.
- 7.12. It has been used to develop character-based strategies that will ensure the continued distinctiveness of our landscape. The assessment can be used in a variety of strategies, in land management schemes and planning control. The objective is to make sure that decisions on the rural landscape are backed up by a robust and widely accepted assessment of the landscape character.
- 7.13. The KLA locates the Site wholly within the Hoo Peninsula Landscape Character Area, which is described by the County Council as follows (N.B. BLADE has underlined those elements common to the site's context):

'The Hoo Peninsula is a discrete tract of landscape lying between the Thames and Medway estuaries and bounded at its western end by the urban edge of Gravesend and the North Downs at Shorne. Land uses are generally typical of other parts of the North Kent Agricultural Belt but a distinctive character results from its relative geographical isolation and the pervading influence of the coast and sea. The extensive coastal marshes and significant industrial landmarks of Grain and Kingsnorth are also influences on the character of this otherwise predominantly agricultural area.'

- 7.14. And continues (N.B. BLADE has underlined those elements common to the site's context):

'Farmland is the predominant landcover but its character varies quite markedly..... To the west of the ridge, the farmed landscape has a more traditional pattern of orchards, shelterbelts, hedgerows and mixed cropping. However, the effects of Dutch Elm disease and the progressive loss of orchards are changing the landscape to a more simple, open character. This is more marked at the far west of the zone where open arable farmland once again becomes the predominant landcover type.'

- 7.15. In terms of settlement patterns, the County Council notes the following (N.B. BLADE has underlined those elements common to the site's context):

'Settlement comprises scattered farms, small, rural villages (with some more recent extensions) and the larger settlement of Hoo St. Werburgh. The army barracks at Chattenden have a distinctive campus style character. Industrial land uses lie mainly within adjacent marshland areas and have significant influence on landscape character.'

- 7.16. The characteristic features of the Hoo Peninsula Landscape Character Area are as follows (N.B. BLADE has underlined those elements common to the site's context):

- *'Prominent hills and low-lying alluvial marshes.'*
- *Flat/undulating farmland.*
- *Decline in orchards and mixed farmland with shelterbelts.*
- *Intensive, open farmed arable land.*
- *Intrusive influence of industrial development.'*

- 7.17. Under the sub-heading of 'Landscape Analysis', the County Council notes the following (N.B. BLADE has underlined those elements common to the site's context):

- *'There is very little coherent landscape pattern here.'*
- *Visual detractors in the landscape occur on a large scale (industrial horizon) and detailed scale (industrial farm buildings).*
- *Isolated patches of woodland provide clusters of semi-natural habitat, but there is very little opportunity for ecological interest within the open arable fields.*
- *The occasional large brick farmhouse and the nature of the alluvial marshland augments the cultural and functional integrity of the area, but overall it is considered to be weak.'*

- 7.18. Under the sub-heading of 'Sensitivity', the County Council notes the following (N.B. BLADE has underlined those elements common to the site's context):

- *'The historic framework to this landscape is mainly indistinct. The highways retain some characteristic features.'*
- *Brick farmsteads, and isolated development associated with the railways contribute to local distinctiveness in a minor capacity.*
- *The sense of place is considered to be weak.*

- *The contrast of the low hills against the surrounding marshland is an apparent feature in the open view. Views are long and visibility is high.*

7.19. The strategy for managing the future of the Hoo Peninsula Landscape Character Area is summarised as 'Restore and Create', and the County Council states the following vision:

- *'Create new ecological/recreational resources such as regenerative woodland in farmland;*
- *Restore small pockets of heritage landscape around existing settlement; and*
- *Restore the physical coherence of the coastal marshland.'*

7.20. In their Methodology section of the aforementioned KLA, the County Council defines these management objectives as follows:

'Restore and create - actions that restore distinctive features and the removal or mitigation of detracting features, whilst creating new features or areas where they have been lost or are in poor condition.'

7.21. Guidance for managing landscape change within the Hoo Peninsula Landscape Character Area includes the following as relevant to the Site and the Proposed Development:

- *'Restore pockets of small scale farmland in the area and, where it is appropriate, around existing settlement.*
- *New landscape elements may need to be created around new settlements, using characteristic elements adapted to developing uses of the land - to include large-scale agriculture, transport and residential uses.*
- *Create new ecological bases within the farmland which may also act as recreational resources for residential areas.*
- *Create woodland links within the farmland in order to develop wider networks with the existing hilltop woodland areas.*
- *Restore the integrity of the coastal fringe by linking the remaining undeveloped flatlands together, finding design opportunities within the peripheral built areas to reflect the ecological and visual qualities of the surrounding marshland.'*

7.22. The County Council concludes their study of this landscape character area determining the landscape is (generally) in poor landscape condition and of moderate landscape sensitivity. Where relevant, these matters were considered in the analysis of constraints and opportunities undertaken for this assessment.

- 7.23. BLADE considers that the description of the Hoo Peninsula Landscape Character Area is broadly consistent with the landscape character and typical features of the Site's receiving environment.

Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment

- 7.24. The Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment was published in May 2009. The aim of the assessment is to identify and describe the local landscape character areas throughout the Borough to 'ensure that decisions on the rural landscape are underpinned by a robust and widely accepted assessment of the landscape character.'

- 7.25. The Site is located on the periphery (but wholly within) of the Higham Arable Farmland Landscape Character Area, which is described by the LPA as follows (N.B. BLADE has underlined those elements common to the site's context):

'Higham Arable Farmlands are located east of Gravesend and south of Shorne and Higham Marshes....The landform is very gently undulating, and generally rises from north to south. Adjacent to the marshes the land levels out, although inland it retains a Downs dipslope character for example the distinctive dry valley feature east of Higham. There are extensive views across open arable land from within the character area and views out of the character area, towards the marshes and the River Thames in the north, from some higher vantage points and areas near the boundary line.

- 7.26. And continues (N.B. BLADE has underlined those elements common to the site's context):

'The gentle topography and good soils, combined with the relative proximity to London and the River Thames means there has historically been a rich agricultural landscape. As a consequence there is little tree cover, allowing extensive views across an arable landscape. There are some remnant areas of orchards indicating a former agricultural use, often overgrown with trees in poor condition.

- 7.27. Within the location of the Site and Higham village, the following is noted (N.B. BLADE has underlined those elements common to the site's context):

'Shelterbelts, fence lines, gappy hedgerows and ditches provide an element of enclosure. Despite these features, there is an open character as a result of the extensive views and lack of tree cover. There is a regular pattern of medium to large fields throughout the area, with some smaller paddocks adjoining properties east of Higham.

- 7.28. The LPA recognises settlement within this landscape character area is mainly situated around Higham which is noted as follows (N.B. BLADE has underlined those elements common to the site's context):

'Higham and Lower Higham are the main settlements in the area. Higham has developed as two parts, with the original Saxon village of Lower Higham to the north and a more recent development to the south around the main road linking Gravesend to Rochester. Isolated farmsteads and scattered properties throughout the remaining area contribute towards local distinctiveness, with oast houses, thatch roofs and converted timber barns.

- 7.29. In terms of roadways and railways, the LPA recognises the following (N.B. BLADE has underlined those elements common to the site's context):

'In general, few roads cross the area. There is a contrast in scale of road size and use. Gravesend Road, the A226, severs the character area in part. This provides a busy route in contrast with some of the other roads in the area. The Wainscott bypass follows the valley floor and edge of the character area to the east of Higham. The Thames and Medway Canal (disused) and railway line run through the northern part of the character area to Lower Higham. Several footpaths and roads used as public paths cross the arable farmland.'

- 7.30. The LPA recognises the following key characteristics within this landscape character area (N.B. BLADE has underlined those elements common to the site's context):

- *'Very gently undulating topography;*
- *Open arable farmland;*
- *Views out to the marshes and the River Thames in the north;*
- *Original Saxon village of Lower Higham and more recent development to the south;*
- *Marsh side hamlets and settlements;*
- *Isolated farmsteads and scattered properties with locally distinct styles and materials;*
- *Pockets of orchards and garden nurseries;*
- *Historic sites including a Priory and Gad's Hill, once home to Charles Dickens; and*
- *Thames and Medway Canal (disused) runs to Lower Higham.'*

- 7.31. In terms of landscape management guidelines, like the County Council, the LPA recommend that the Higham Arable Farmland Landscape Character Area is also managed to Restore and Create, with the following recommended guidelines:

- *'Restore and create ecological networks by linking existing isolated woodland clumps and orchards.*
- *Resist proposals that introduce extensive or obtrusive elements within visually sensitive areas of the open landscape.*
- *Create areas of regenerative woodland within farmland to create woodland links.*

- *Restore small pockets of heritage landscape around existing settlement.*
- *Improve footpaths and access throughout the area to link woodlands to marshlands.*
- *Raise awareness and promote awareness of the cultural associations of the landscape.'*

7.32. Given the foregoing, BLADE considers that the published analysis and assessment of landscape character provides a contextual appreciation of the wider landscape. When on site, one is aware of the presence of the surrounding village related land uses, albeit on the edge of the village, and one sense that the Site is not located in open countryside and divorced from the village. Given this the Site is experienced as within the 'built limits' of the northwestern village edge, and in its current use represents an existing built development situated on Chalk Road.

Site Specific Landscape Condition and Landscape Sensitivity

- 7.33. To independently assess the likely level of landscape and visual effects which the development proposals might incur will require an appropriately detailed assessment of the Site itself and its immediate surroundings.
- 7.34. Recognising that 'landscape' is a multi-dimensional concept embracing 'what we see', its time-depth and physical attributes, this LVA reviews and assesses change to landscape character in terms of the physical landscape and the Site's character. The Site context has been described in Section 2, and earlier in this section.
- 7.35. With consideration of the localised landscape character areas (as appraised in the District-level landscape character assessment in 2009), the LPA finds a similar degree of landscape condition as that appraised by the County Council in their earlier 2044 assessment.
- 7.36. It considered by the LPA that the Higham Arable Farmland Landscape Character Area is generally of poor condition. From their own examination, the LPA observed the following (N.B. BLADE has underlined those elements common to the site's context):

'The main physical elements of the landscape, such as the topography and general field pattern, are consistent. However land use provides an element of fragmentation, such as small areas of orchards and garden nurseries set within the dominating context of open arable farmland. Large pylons to the north, rail sidings, poly tunnels and polythene covering nursery stock provide some visually detracting features. Overall, visual unity is coherent.'

- 7.37. Given this, BLADE concurs with the County Council and the Local Planning Authority, and finds the landscape condition of the area neighbouring the Suite, and that of the Site to have a poor landscape conditions, with a lower level of landscape intactness present within the Site area (due to its current land use and existing built form).

Landscape Susceptibility and Sensitivity

- 7.38. Landscape sensitivity, the susceptibility of the landscape to change, is defined as the ability of the receptor (whether the overall character, individual fabric elements or perceptual aspects) to accommodate the proposed development without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline situation.
- 7.39. Reflecting similar findings as the earlier 2004 County Council Landscape Character Assessment, the LPA's own assessment also considers that the Higham Arable Farmland Landscape Character Area has a moderate landscape sensitivity, with their findings stating (N.B. BLADE has underlined those elements common to the site's context):

'Much of the modern landscape comprises gappy hedgerows, limited woodland and indistinct recent buildings and, on average, features and elements within the landscape are indistinct and the sense of place is weak. The open character of the landscape and gently undulating landform provide high visibility across the character area.'

- 7.40. For this host landscape character area, the LPA recognises the siting of future developments within this relatively flat landform along the western edge of the Higham Arable Farmland Landscape Character Area (between Higham and the eastern edge of Gravesend) can lead to the intrusion of development, and the siting of new build form should focus on the lower lying landform and integrated within locations where the existing landscape fabric is more intact and less gappy and degraded, and so conserve the open and unobstructed views typical of this landscape area.
- 7.41. The susceptibility of the landscape and townscape resource is defined as the ability of the receptor (whether the overall character, individual fabric elements or perceptual aspects) to accommodate the proposed development without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline situation.
- 7.42. It is clear that the nature of the Proposed Development is consistent with the existing scale, pattern and land use of the prevailing character within the wider village, and the immediate built up area along Chalk Road. There is scope for mitigation which would be in keeping with the local landscape character, as well as proposing new landscaping to reduce the long term concerns for landscape surrounding the Site's location, and the current detracting features. Given this, BLADE considers that the (overall) receiving environment of the Site has a medium sensitivity to change, with the Site also having a medium sensitivity.

Landscape Value

- 7.43. As set out within GLVIA version 3, when analysing the landscape baseline, it is necessary to establish the relative value of the potentially affected landscape. Para. 5.19 of the GLVIA version 3 states that: *'A review of existing landscape designations is usually the starting point in understanding value, but the value attached to undesignated landscapes also needs to be carefully considered and individual elements of the landscape such as trees, buildings or hedgerows may also have a value. All need to be considered where relevant.'*

- 7.44. The Site does not lie within a designated landscape. TGN 02/21: Assessing Landscape Value Outside National Designations identifies a range of factors that can be considered when identifying landscape value. Table 3 is derived from TGN 02/21 and provides a description as to the extent the valued factors are present within the Site based upon both the published landscape character and Site specific character; see Table BLA 7.1 overleaf:

Table BLA 7.1 - Site Specific Landscape Appraisal by BLADE

Aspect	Definition	Observations
Natural Heritage	Landscape with clear evidence of ecological, geological, geomorphological or physiographic interest which contribute positively to the landscape.	<p>As set out in the Preliminary Ecological Assessment for the Site, the Site consists of a range of habitats including scrub, native hedgerow and hedge line trees. However, the majority of the Site is managed as grassland pasture.</p> <p>There are no trees within the Site's interior, and there are no Veteran trees within the site, or adjoining its quantum. Hedgerows are of native species commonly found locally to the Site.</p> <p>The natural heritage of the Site is therefore considered to be medium to low.</p>
Cultural Heritage	Landscape with clear evidence of archaeological, historical or cultural interest which contribute positively to the landscape.	<p>There are no designated heritage assets within the Site, the Site is not situated within or adjoining a Conservation Area, or a Registered Park or Garden, Registered Battlefield or World Heritage Site.</p> <p>The cultural heritage of the Site is therefore considered to be very low.</p>
Landscape Condition	Landscape which is in a good physical state both with regard to individual elements and overall landscape structure.	<p>The Site is in mixed use with the existing buildings being used for a mix commercial and domestic purposes and the surrounding land being used for temporary storage and animal grazing. The Site has a mixture of robust hedgerows trees and fencing with domestic curtilages to the eastern site boundary. The Site contains built form and also hard standing associated with its mixed and domestic uses.</p> <p>The combination of the hedgerow, hedge line trees, gentle level change and surrounding tree cover is typical of the host landscape where '<i>shelterbelts, fence lines, gappy hedgerows and ditches provide an element of enclosure</i>' where '<i>smaller paddocks adjoining properties east of Higham</i>' beyond which, there are '<i>regular pattern of medium to large fields throughout the area.</i>'</p> <p>The Site is located within the northwestern edge of the village within this smaller, more intimate scaled area that is less open with broad, long views across larger scaled fields, which outlie the village.</p> <p>The condition of the Site is therefore considered to be medium.</p>
Associations	Landscape which is connected with notable people, events and the arts.	<p>The Site itself has no known notable cultural associations with art, literature or events in history.</p> <p>Associations are therefore considered to be very low.</p>
Distinctiveness	Landscape that has a strong sense of identity and whether it contains rare character or features which are considered particularly important examples.	<p>The Site is situated within the lower lying part of Higham village and inside such features as '<i>shelterbelts, fence lines, gappy hedgerows and ditches provide an element of enclosure</i>'. The landscape fabric of the Site is impoverished through a long established land use and the Site contains built form and hard standing. These landscape featured are neither rare nor distinctive locally.</p> <p>The distinctiveness of the Site is therefore considered to be low.</p>

Recreational	Landscape offering recreational opportunities where experience of landscape is important.	<p>The Site is privately owned and is not open to the public. There are no PRW which pass through the Site or along (but outside) its boundaries. There is wider network of PRoW but these are found to be within the wider environment of the village and the open countryside beyond – mainly found the northeast and east of the Site's location.</p> <p>The recreational value of the Site is therefore considered to be low.</p>
Perceptual (Scenic)	Landscape that appeals to the senses, primarily the visual sense.	<p>The Site is partially overlooked by neighbouring residential development to the west and northwest. The Site is perceived to have a village edge location, and is situated physically adjoining residential built form at a location which already contains built development. Consequently, the Site is situated within the influence of the built form of the village, rather than being wholly within the open countryside, and is considered to have a spatial equivalence to these neighbouring land uses.</p> <p>There are limited locations (particularly within the wider landscape) and from within lower lying landform to the north along the River Thames estuary where the Site is visible in public views given the existing vegetation <i>6'shelterbelts, fence lines, gappy hedgerows and ditches provide an element of enclosure' which are seen along the edge of Higham when viewed across the open countryside from the riverside.</i></p> <p>The perceptual quality of the Site is therefore considered to be medium to low.</p>

- 7.45. The Site contains no features or attributes of rarity and there appear to be no associations connecting the Site with notable people, historical events or the arts. The Site has a limited degree of remoteness or tranquillity due to its position in the lower part of Higham.
- 7.46. The Site does not form part of a valued landscape for the purposes of the NPPF, and taking this into account the few value attributes of the Site features on the open land, the Site itself is recognised as having some value overall, which is considered to be medium-low.
- 7.47. Overall, the Site is considered to be of medium-low landscape value. When combined with the susceptibility of the landscape (medium), the Site is considered to exhibit and medium landscape sensitivity.

8.0 POTENTIAL LANDSCAPE EFFECTS

Potential Effect on the Site's Landscape Resources

- 8.1. The construction of the Proposed Development would have a degree of adverse effects, but these would be for a temporary time-period and would cease on completion of the construction phase. However, as already demonstrated within Section 4 earlier in this appraisal, the Zone of Primary Visibility is very limited with the Site being seen predominantly from within the village setting rather than the wider open countryside, or from the limited road network, or seen by PRoW users walking the network of routes including the King Charles III National Trail England Coastal Path National Trail passing along the River Thames to the north of Higham.
- 8.2. Consequently, these effect would not be detrimental to the enjoyment and appreciation of the wider landscape, and should not, in and of itself, be a reason to raise an objection either by the Local Planning Authority or consultees.
- 8.3. The construction works will result in changes to the landscape of the Site by way of the demolition of existing built form and hard standing, site clearance, removal of pasture, sections of hedgerow plus topsoil stripping. This will be followed by the construction work including the bulk earthworks required to accommodate the proposed development platforms and access roads, plus the construction of the new buildings themselves.
- 8.4. Boundary hedgerows and trees will be protected in accordance with BS 5837:2012 – Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction – Recommendations, prior to commencement and retained throughout the construction phase. A proposed landscape scheme, indicated by the Illustrative Landscape Masterplan (Appendix BLA 4) will be implemented during the first available planting season, with the emphasis on achieving ecological enhancement and integration into the surrounding landscape, which would have a beneficial effect on landscape resources as well as visual amenity.

Potential Effects during the Construction Stage

- 8.5. During construction, the principal effects as a result of the proposed scheme will be the transition of the site from an agricultural landscape with a setting of strong hedgerow and scattered hedge line trees within field boundaries with land managed for agriculture to a new residential development. For the purposes of this assessment, activities that could cause landscape and visual effects include:
 - Demolition of the existing built form and hard standing;
 - Clearance of vegetation within the construction area, where appropriate;
 - Erection of site hoarding and fencing around vegetation (tree protection scheme);
 - Earthworks and temporary storage of topsoil;
 - Removal of unwanted waste from the site;

- Erection of temporary structures within the main contractor's construction compound, plus materials stockpiling and lay-down areas;
- Potential lighting of the works (particularly during winter months);
- Erection of scaffold structures;
- Movement of construction vehicles;
- Formation of a new access point to the southwestern boundary (pedestrian and vehicular) and construction of the internal access/road circulation routes;
- Formation of SUDs drainage system including excavation for open-air attenuation;
- Works associated with the implementation of the landscape scheme; and
- Removal of temporary construction facilities.

Changes to the landscape character of the Site ('Direct Effects')

- 8.6. Construction activities, movement of site traffic, lighting, noise, and sound would be present during the construction process. This would be carefully controlled by a conditioned construction method statement. Recommendations for protection of the retained trees and hedgerows, in accordance with relevant British Standards such as BS 5837: 2012, would ensure the rooting areas of the trees and hedge-rows are not adversely affected by the construction process.
- 8.7. The construction stage is a temporary phase, and the effects generated through the building out of this new housing would cease after the development has been completed. The development proposed would change the character of the site from a green field and alter the landscape fabric at the Site.
- 8.8. Within the Site, construction activity will inevitably result in a high magnitude of change on the existing nature of the agricultural field, however this is a discrete geographical unit of the wider landscape. The existing field boundary vegetation and hedge line trees would be retained with the exception of limited section of the hedgerow removed to accommodate the Site access off the Chalk Road to the southern boundary.
- 8.9. Given the presence of construction activities (including movement of site traffic, lighting, noise and sounds), and the conversion of the Site from agricultural to new houses, a noticeable adverse change upon the perceptual and sensory dimension of the Site's character is not surprising during the construction stage.
- 8.10. The sensitivity of the landscape character of the Site is considered to be medium. The magnitude of change is considered to be very high. Therefore, there are likely to be direct, temporary, short-term, adverse effects which are considered to be **Major/-moderate adverse**. Effects are adverse and significant. These are direct effects within the quantum of the Site area only and experienced on a temporary base during the construction stage.

- 8.11. The impacts identified above at the construction stage will be carefully controlled by the Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP) which will form as part of the additional mitigation strategy.

Changes to the Higham Arable Farmland Landscape Character Area (District)
(‘Indirect Effects’)

- 8.12. During the temporary construction period, construction activities (including movement of Site traffic, lighting, noise and sounds) will be present during the construction process.
- 8.13. Construction activities, movement of site traffic, lighting, noise and sounds will be ever-present during the construction process. This is not unusual and will be carefully controlled by a conditioned construction method statement. During construction, the proposed scheme will not directly affect the wider landscape context as the physical effects of construction (i.e. changes to fabric and character) will be contained within the Site (a ‘direct effect’).
- 8.14. There will be localised excavation of land, ground remodelling and the storage of topsoil, and removal of vegetation where required to facilitate the Site access. Additionally, movement and machinery associated with the site operations will introduce additional localised activity. In the wider context, higher-level construction activities may be visible, and experienced.
- 8.15. The sensitivity of the landscape character of the immediate Site context within the host landscape is considered to be medium. For the Higham Arable Farmland Landscape Character Area, the key sensitivities (identified by the LPA in their Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment, 2009) are highlighted as the need to *‘resist proposals that introduce extensive or obtrusive elements within visually sensitive areas of the open landscape’*, *‘visual detractors in the landscape occur on a large scale (industrial horizon) and detailed scale (industrial farm buildings)’* and *‘industrial land uses lie mainly within adjacent marshland areas and have significant influence on landscape character.’*
- 8.16. Whilst the scheme would not *‘restore small pockets of heritage landscape around existing settlement’* partially down to its long established land use and associated built form, the scheme would *‘encourage the restoration and creation of ecological networks’* and *‘pockets of orchards.’*
- 8.17. From the outset of realising the Development Proposals, it was imperative that the scheme retains the typically *‘very gently undulating topography’* of the Site, its enclosure by native hedgerows and hedge line trees, and through the design, siting and mass of new built form in the scheme preserves the typically *‘extensive views across open arable land from within the character area and views out of the character area, towards the marshes and the River Thames in the north’* with views itself being a sensitivity which is recognised by BLADE through its own field-based assessment.
- 8.18. The scheme would protect the existing landscape fabric for the best integration of the scheme. Recommendations for protection of retained trees and hedgerows, in accordance with relevant British Standards such as BS5837, will ensure that the rooting areas of trees and hedgerows are not adversely affected by the construction process. This would enable the existing landscape structure of the Site to be retained at the Site, which in itself would inherently mitigate effects from the scheme at this Construction Stage.

- 8.19. The magnitude of change is considered to be high. Therefore, there is likely to be a direct, temporary, short-term, adverse effect which is considered to be **Moderate, adverse** and will extend for only the duration of the construction stage.

Changes to the Hoo Peninsula Landscape Character Area (Regional)

- 8.20. The key characteristic features which make up this area will remain unaffected by the proposed development across this regional scaled area; **Negligible/Imperceptible**.

Changes to the National Character Area NCA 113: North Kent Plain. (National)

- 8.21. The key characteristic features which make up this area will remain unaffected by the proposed development across this regional scaled area; **Negligible/Imperceptible**.

Potential Effects at Year 1 ('Occupation')

- 8.22. The main changes to the Site which would influence the landscape resources and visual amenity at the initial occupation stage (Year 1) are as follows:
- New buildings and structures engaged in a non-agricultural land use;
 - Car vehicle movement into and out of the site.
 - Juvenile landscaping (prior to establishment and maturation);
 - Flood attenuation and habitat areas.

Changes to the landscape character of the Site (Direct Effects)

- 8.23. Following construction and the establishment of the landscape strategy, existing landscape fabric and new landscaping will be managed in accordance with an appropriate landscape management plan, or similar, to ensure the longevity of the green infrastructure as part of the development.
- 8.24. The implementation of the proposed development would become part of the built settlement along on the northwestern edge of the village, and the scheme would adopt similar characteristics of built form along Chalk Road with some 'wayside' buildings and new homes within the Site itself, where the scheme would 'union' with the existing village-related built form.
- 8.25. The scheme would retain and bolster the existing field pattern and would not physically extend beyond these limits which are defined by the existing (external) field hedgerows and scattered trees, with new residential built form set within field structure and what along the northwestern edge of the village are likely to be lost or remnant areas of former 'agricultural use, often overgrown with trees in poor condition' typically found on the edges of smaller villages within the host landscape.
- 8.26. The landscape mitigation measures integrated within the Illustrative Landscape Masterplan (Appendix BLA 4) would establish new landscape infrastructure across the wider site area enhancing existing weak fabric, enhancing existing hedgerow and tree planting and providing new tree planting and open space areas of semi-natural and natural green space through the scheme.

- 8.27. However, this new planting would be too juvenile to offset and reduce effects, with the character of the Proposed Development at Year 1 being a recently built collection houses with associated infrastructure (set within the retained mature landscape fabric).
- 8.28. In the first year, the prevailing characteristic will be the new dwellings, roads and lighting, whilst the proposed trees, ground cover and hedgerow will still be in relative infancy. There may be some establishment of meadow grassland within the public open space, but overall the magnitude of change will reduce only slightly from very high to high, due to the cessation of the construction activities. This will yield a moderate to **Moderate, adverse** level of effect when combined with the low/medium sensitivity of the site.

Changes to the Higham Arable Farmland Landscape Character Area (District) ('Indirect Effects'))

- 8.29. At Year 1, the magnitude of change across the site would be tempered by the following considerations:
- Apart from minor ground remodelling the scheme would preserve landform pattern within the Site area. Locally to the Site landform is typically recognised as 'very gently undulating' and where land areas are defined by '*shelterbelts, fence lines, gappy hedgerows and ditches provide an element of enclosure*', rather than a inclines and elevated landform. Given this approach, the scheme of new hoes would nestle within its location reflecting the approximate FFL's and building heights of existing residences along Chalk Road.
 - (Excluding the removal of the part of the southern hedge line which interfaces with the village), the proposed scheme would protect and retain the existing landscape structure of the Site's location, bolstering existing field hedgerow and trees as well as new landscape planting and habitat along the Site's boundaries to further strengthen the structure of the landscape which is typically found to have tree lines, shelterbelts, hedgerows and vegetation to the outline of smaller settlements within this landscape area.
 - The scheme would be integrated within the single field of the Site, and would not necessitate the removal of the 'outer' hedgerow and trees, which would otherwise result in a discordant fieldscape scale locally to the settlement edge which is typically small to medium sized fields reflecting the '*remnant areas of orchards indicating a former agricultural use, often overgrown with trees in poor condition*'. Beyond this setting, there is typically a 'regular pattern of medium to large fields throughout the area' which is experienced as one passes along Chalk Road to the west of the village.
 - The proposed dwellings should be arranged to enable opportunities for green infrastructure, ecological / habitat enhancement as well as amenity for residents throughout the scheme. Typically, the Higham Arable Farmland Landscape Character Area is noted for its very gently rolling landform, which near to the Site creates a more intimate landscape influenced by hedgerows, tree belts and wider village related planting. This approach protecting the characteristics of the village within the wider setting which is noted by the LPA as '*Higham and Lower Higham are the main settlements in the area. Higham has developed as two parts, with the original Saxon village of Lower Higham to the north and a more recent development to the south around the main road linking Gravesend to Rochester.*'

- Green infrastructure is an integral part of the proposals which will deliver the enhancement of the local landscape structure of the Site, and betterment of ecological habitat value, as well as the better integration of development through new landscaping and the conservation and enhancement of typical landscape fabric, rather than simply filtering and screening views.
 - The scheme is not experienced as prominent within views from the open countryside setting, and not from those locations within elevated landform (mainly to the south and west of the Site's location) where typically views are experienced as having little tree cover, allowing '*extensive views across an arable landscape*' with '*open arable farmland.....views out to the marshes and the River Thames in the north.*'
 - The scheme is designed to be of limited scale and density to integrate within the core of the Site area and interfacing with Chalk Road (along the 'inner' part of the Site), retaining significant part of the site as new green corridors and spatial buffers for green infrastructure within which the intended built form would be integrated (along the 'outside' of the Site).
 - The proposed development would be consistent – in land use terms – with the neighbouring residential development of the village and would not constitute a land use that is neither un-neighbourly nor incongruous in the settlement context. This is demonstrated by our field-based assessment, whereby, BLADE determined that the Site has a minor Zone of Primary Visibility, and where seen it is experienced in combination with the village built form and land uses area along this northern edge of Higham.
- 8.30. The focus of these measures is less about screening and filtering views, rather, the enhancement of the local landscape and habitat value, as well as the best integration of development at the Site. This is done through new landscaping and the conservation and enhancement of the local landscape character, and the creation of new planting of hedgerows and trees as part of the green infrastructure at the Site.
- 8.31. In the first year, the prevailing characteristic will be the new dwellings, roads and lighting, whilst the proposed trees, ground cover and hedgerow will still be in relative infancy. There may be some establishment of meadow grassland within the public open space, but overall the magnitude of change will reduce only slightly from very high to high, due to the cessation of the construction activities.
- 8.32. This would lead to a medium magnitude of change and a **Moderate/-minor, adverse** effect at Year 1 where neighbouring the site, but this level of effect would diminish rapidly with distance from the site, and the establishment and maturation of new landscaping.

Changes to the Hoo Peninsula Landscape Character Area (Regional)

- 8.33. The key characteristic features which make up this area will remain unaffected by the proposed development across this regional scaled area; **Negligible/Imperceptible**.

Changes to the National Character Area NCA 113: North Kent Plain. (National)

- 8.34. The key characteristic features which make up this area will remain unaffected by the proposed development across this regional scaled area; **Negligible/Imperceptible**.

Residual Effects on Landscape Character (Yr 15 Long Term Onwards)

Changes to the landscape character of the Site (Direct Effects)

- 8.35. Between 0 and 15 years, with good maintenance and longer term management, bolster/enhancement planting as well as new hedgerow and tree planting and ecological enhancements would be establishing, providing a greater degree of filtering and screening of built development overtime.
- 8.36. This would ensure a strong landscape framework and appropriate setting for the proposed development, which would assist in minimising the adverse impacts of proposed development on local landscape character and on views from the surrounding landscape.
- 8.37. This would result in a reduction of the perceived magnitude of change to medium and the residual significance of effect to direct, permanent, long-term, **Moderate/Minor, adverse** by Year 15.

Changes to the Higham Arable Farmland Landscape Character Area (District) ('Indirect Effects')

- 8.38. Maturation of landscape buffer mitigation planting and new characteristic tree and hedgerow planting will further enclose the Site and aid in filtering views of the Proposed Development by Year 15. After 15 years, new tree planting shown on the Illustrative Landscape Masterplan (Appendix BLA 4) would reach a height of up to 12m.
- 8.39. This planting would comprise deciduous trees and understorey, compatible with the existing local landscape character of hedge line trees and occasional woodland blocks in the wider open countryside.
- 8.40. This planting would also bolster the existing hedgerow lines, as well as create a tree'd environmental internally within the site (with streetscape and on-plot landscaping) and would connect with the existing field hedgerows and tree shelter belts along Chalk Road on the northwestern edge of then village, reinforcing the landscape framework for the Proposed Development.
- 8.41. Given the two storey built form being proposed (predominantly), it is not possible to mitigate entirely the landscape effects of the proposed development. However, the existing boundary hedgerows and trees will be retained, buffered, strengthened and appropriately managed for longevity. Additional tree planting around and within the proposed development will add to the landscape fabric and biodiversity value.
- 8.42. Given that the site will remain generally consistent with the wider village character, and there will continue to be a provision of mature trees (and new tree planting), the key change will be the loss of the land to new housing, however, the part of the Higham Arable Farmland Landscape Character Area bordering the village is already influenced by the built form and village edge. The addition of the proposed two-storey dwellings will be seen against the existing immediate backdrop and context of the settlement edge, with new way-side homes built along Chalk Road to marry the scheme to its setting.

- 8.43. By year 15 the growth of new hedgerows and trees, ongoing management of existing hedgerows and trees and encouragement of species diversity through gapping up, is expected to strengthen the contribution these features make to intimate tree shelterbelt and vegetated edge and more intimate scale along the village edge of Higham.
- 8.44. This would lead to a low magnitude of change, which when combined with the medium overall sensitivity, will reduce the level of effect on this small part of the LCA, to **Minor, adverse**. There will however be an incremental reduction in the level of effect as these features – the trees in particular – mature and make a more noticeable contribution to local landscape character.
- 8.45. This level of effect would diminish rapidly with distance from the Site due to the effect of intervening landform, and how the new scheme would be experienced within the village edge (where ‘shelterbelts, fence lines, gappy hedgerows and ditches provide an element of enclosure’) rather than in the wider open countryside beyond which has an *‘open character as a result of the extensive views and lack of tree cover’*.

Changes to the Hoo Peninsula Landscape Character Area (Regional)

- 8.46. The key characteristic features which make up this area will remain unaffected by the proposed development across this regional scaled area; **Negligible/Imperceptible**.

Changes to the National Character Area NCA 113: North Kent Plain. (National)

- 8.47. The key characteristic features which make up this area will remain unaffected by the proposed development across this regional scaled area; **Negligible/Imperceptible**.

9.0 POTENTIAL VISUAL EFFECTS

Potential Effects on Visual Amenity

- 9.1. An assessment of effects on each representative viewpoint carried forward to this analysis has been undertaken, and a summary of the result contained in Table BLA 9.1; and the representative viewpoints are contained in Appendix BLA 5.
- 9.2. This assessment was undertaken in June 2025. The selection of these viewpoints was agreed with the Local Planning Authority in advance of the assessment; see the final Appendix of this LVA.

Table BLA 9.1 - Summary of Visual Effects on Representative Viewpoints

View	Location	Visual Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change	Level of Effect
1	View from Public Footpath (PRoW LPA ref: NS318) situated to the north looking across open countryside towards Higham	PRoW Users would have a high susceptibility to change and a high visual sensitivity. High visual sensitivity	Indiscernible (Con) Indiscernible (Yr1) Indiscernible (Yr15)	Imperceptible Imperceptible Imperceptible
2	View from the King Charles III England Coast Path (PRoW LPA ref: NS138) situated to the northeast looking across open countryside towards Higham	PRoW Users would have a high susceptibility to change and a high visual sensitivity. High visual sensitivity	Indiscernible (Con) Indiscernible (Yr1) Indiscernible (Yr15)	Imperceptible Imperceptible Imperceptible
3	View from Public Footpath (PRoW LPA ref: NS144) progressing through open countryside on the outskirts of Higham near Chequers Street	PRoW Users nearing the village edge passing close to existing residential built form and village related land uses. PRoW Users would have a medium susceptibility to change and a medium visual sensitivity. Medium visual sensitivity	Low (Con) Negligible (Yr1) Indiscernible (Yr15)	Minor, adverse Minor/-negligible, adverse Imperceptible
4	View from Chalk Road to the south of the Site as it passes through Higham	Village edge setting with users passing through the village and to/from Higham into the wider open countryside. Road Users would have a medium susceptibility to change and a medium visual sensitivity. Medium visual sensitivity	High (Con) Medium(Yr1) Low (Yr15)	Moderate, adverse Moderate/-minor, adverse Minor, adverse
5	View from Public Footpath (PRoW LPA ref: NS143) passing through open countryside to the east of Higham	PRoW Users would have a high susceptibility to change and a high visual sensitivity. High visual sensitivity	Negligible (Con) Negligible (Yr1) Indiscernible (Yr15)	Minor, adverse Minor, adverse Imperceptible
6	View from Public Footpath (PRoW LPA ref: NS151) passing through open countryside to the south east of Higham on locally elevated landform	PRoW Users would have a high susceptibility to change and a high visual sensitivity. High visual sensitivity	Negligible (Con) Negligible (Yr1) Indiscernible (Yr15)	Minor, adverse Minor, adverse Imperceptible

7	View from Public Footpath (PRoW LPA ref: NS144) passing through the village of Higham on locally elevated landform to the south of the Site	<p>Passing through the village edge and between residential built form (along part of the route) PRoW Users would have an elevated view across the Thames and river corridor. PRoW Users would have a medium susceptibility to change and a high visual sensitivity.</p> <p>High visual sensitivity</p>	<p>Medium (Con)</p> <p>Low (Yr1)</p> <p>Negligible (Yr15)</p>	<p>Moderate, adverse</p> <p>Moderate/-minor, adverse</p> <p>Minor, adverse</p>
8	View from Chalk Road nearest to the Site as the roadway passes through the village of Higham	<p>Village edge setting with users passing through the village and to/from Higham into the wider open countryside. Road Users would have a medium susceptibility to change and a medium visual sensitivity.</p> <p>Medium visual sensitivity</p>	<p>High (Con)</p> <p>Medium (Yr1)</p> <p>Low (Yr15)</p>	<p>Moderate, adverse</p> <p>Moderate/-minor, adverse</p> <p>Minor, adverse</p>
9	View from Taylors Lane, local minor route passing through Higham village on locally elevated landform to the south of the Site	<p>Village edge setting with users passing through the village and to/from Higham into the wider open countryside. Road Users would have a medium susceptibility to change and a medium visual sensitivity.</p> <p>Medium visual sensitivity</p>	<p>Negligible (Con)</p> <p>Negligible (Yr1)</p> <p>Indiscernible (Yr15)</p>	<p>Minor/-negligible, adverse</p> <p>Minor/-negligible, adverse</p> <p>Imperceptible</p>
10	View from Chalk Road to the east of the Site area situated in open countryside approaching Higham village nearest the Site	<p>Road users passing through open countryside would have a medium Open countryside setting. PRoW Users would have a medium susceptibility to change and a medium visual sensitivity.</p> <p>Medium visual sensitivity</p>	<p>Medium (Con)</p> <p>Low (Yr1)</p> <p>Indiscernible (Yr15)</p>	<p>Moderate/-minor, adverse</p> <p>Minor, adverse</p> <p>Imperceptible</p>
11	View from Public Footpath (PRoW LPA ref: NS156) passing through open countryside west of the village on locally elevated landform	<p>Open countryside setting. PRoW users would have high expectation of visual amenity. Route passes through open countryside.</p> <p>High visual sensitivity</p>	<p>Indiscernible (Con)</p> <p>Indiscernible (Yr1)</p> <p>Indiscernible (Yr15)</p>	<p>Imperceptible</p> <p>Imperceptible</p> <p>Imperceptible</p>
12	View from Public Footpath (PRoW LPA ref: NS156) passing open countryside northwest of Higham village	<p>Open countryside setting. PRoW users would have high expectation of visual amenity. Route passes through open countryside.</p> <p>High visual sensitivity</p>	<p>Low (Con)</p> <p>Negligible (Yr1)</p> <p>Indiscernible (Yr15)</p>	<p>Moderate/-minor, adverse</p> <p>Minor, adverse</p> <p>Imperceptible</p>

PRoW Users

- 9.3. For PRoW Users, the greatest level of effect from the Proposed Development at the Site would be experienced from PRoW User walking through the Site, or along its boundaries. In this instance, there are no PRoW passing through the Site, or along (outside of) its boundaries.
- 9.4. Beyond this, to the north of Higham is the very gently undulating, flat landscape of the estuary landscape along the River Thames. A PRoW network passes through this environment, including the King Charles III England Coast Path National Trail Long Distance Walking Route. As demonstrated by the plotted Zone of Theoretical Visibility (Appendix BLA 3), there is very limited opportunity to see the Site from along these PRoW routes.
- 9.5. As demonstrated by Viewpoint 1 and 2 (Appendix BLA 5), the shelterbelts, trees and vegetation along the edge of Higham and its landform is sufficient to screen views of Higham, whilst the route of the mainline railway north of the Site within its tree belts and tree groups also restricts discernibility of the Site. Given these features and the intervening distance, BLADE considers that the Proposed Development would have an **Imperceptible effect** on the visual amenity of PRoW Users passing through this estuary environment.
- 9.6. To the east and southeast of Higham, the potential to see the Site is very limited. The effect of the intervening built form within Higham beyond the Site's eastern boundary, as well as the landform beyond the village restrict the discernibility of the Site area to the southeast within the initial 1km distance. None the less, the Site is not seen wholesale, and those PRoW Users passing along the three closest PRoW (PRoW LPA ref: NS143, NS144 and NA151) are unlikely to see the scheme once the new houses are built, leading to an **Imperceptible** effect residually.
- 9.7. Similarly for those PRoW passing through open countryside beyond Higham to the southwest and northwest. The PRoW (PRoW LPA ref: NS156) passing across the rising land to the west, which at its peak (circa 20m AOD) creates a shallow ridgel beyond which landform falls lower and there is no discernibility of the Site beyond this initial 1km distance from the Site; see Appendix BLA 3.
- 9.8. As demonstrated by Viewpoint 11 (Appendix BLA 5), there is no scope to see the Site as the PRoW passes through a large field managed for fruit production which screens views of the Site, and the Proposed Development, leading to an Imperceptible effect residually. None the less, if Viewpoint 12 (Appendix BLA 5) is considered this would demonstrate the discernibility of the Site at times when the fruit trees are not in crop and in leaf.
- 9.9. As demonstrated by Viewpoint 12, the long term residual effect of the scheme would be **Imperceptible**, with any new roof lines being seen likely to be experienced in combination with the existing roofline already seen from this location. Whilst this would be a chance, these new residential dwellings would be experienced within the existing shelter belt and tree groups retained along the northwestern edge of the village.

- 9.10. Given the quantum of new homes being proposed by the Applicant, this change would not be unneighbourly, out of context or unexpected in the view as these new rooflines would be experienced inside the village setting rather than the typically *'regular pattern of medium to large fields throughout the area'* where there is an *'open character as a result of the extensive views and lack of tree cover.'*
- 9.11. A PRoW pass through the southern edge of the village, between the location of the 'original Saxon village of Lower Higham' around Chalk Road at lower landform than the 'more recent development to the south,' In between these two parts of the village landform rises and the route of PRoW (PRoW LPA ref: NS144) passes across locally elevated landform to the south of the Site; see Viewpoint 7 (Appendix BLA 5).
- 9.12. From this route, the construction site would be seen including the demolition of the existing built stable and open, hard standing area. The site clearance and the construction of the new homes would be readily seen and would for this temporary phase change the character of the baseline view. The resulting magnitude of change would be medium resulting in a Moderate, adverse level of effect. This level of effect would be predominantly down to the effect of noise and lights, the movement of plant and machinery and nature of building houses.
- 9.13. On cessation of the construction stage, the character of the Site would change from a greenfield site (albeit pasture, stable block and yard) at the edge of the village to that of a collection of new homes with supporting infrastructure, retained landscape fabric, and a newly planted landscape scheme.
- 9.14. The new landscape would be too juvenile to offset and reduce effects, but the ending of the construction stage, would reduce the magnitude of change to high, resulting in a **Moderate/-minor, adverse** effect at Year 1.
- 9.15. By Year 15, the bolstered landscape fabric, tree planting and wider landscaping within the green infrastructure of the Site would have established and on maturing reducing the magnitude. The magnitude of change is expected to reduce to negligible as the new homes at the Site would not be experienced as out of context or unexpected in views, and the scheme would be set well within the physical enclosures along the northwestern edge of the village. The long term residual effect would be **Minor, adverse**.
- 9.16. In this instance, it is worthwhile note that this PRoW is less than 200 metres in length from which the Site can be seen, having travelled a further 100 metres or so between a narrow, alleys between timber close boarded fencing. Consequently, the predicted level of effect is only likely to effect a small geographical area and is fleeting as one walks the local network of PRoW, rather than being a constant effect along a longer distance of PRoW and/or across a greater number of PRoW. This PRoW does not direct link with wider PRoW and only provides access along the existing settled, village area, whereby housing and built form is part of this context.
- 9.17. As demonstrated by the viewpoints appraised by BLADE on PRoW passing elevated through landform within long to very long range distance of the Site, the effect of the scheme Year 1 and residually would be imperceptible.

- 9.18. Additionally, given the intervening distance between these PRow routes and the Site, the construction effects described in Section 8 paragraph 8.4, are very unlikely to be experienced. However, might the effect of construction lighting be discernible, this effect is likely to be indistinguishable from the effect of street lighting and urban lighting from the village, or outlying settlements. This effect is likely to be **Imperceptible** by the casual observer.

Road Users and Pedestrians

- 9.19. The potential effect of the scheme on Road Users and Pedestrians is likely to be **Imperceptible**. This is largely due to the location of the Site, as well as the effect of the intervening landform and wider built form of the village screening views; and how there is very limited scope to see the Site from within the initial 1km distance of the Site; see the plotted Zone of Theoretical Visibility (Appendix BLA 3).
- 9.20. As for Road Users and Pedestrians passing along Chalk Road, the proposed site access is likely to lead to a change to the existing baseline and visual amenity throughout the lifetime of the scheme; see Viewpoint 8 (Appendix BLA 5).
- 9.21. The view will be changed over a very short stretch by the introduction of the new access into the development. Given the existing context, which contains recent and some older residential dwellings as a baseline context, there would be a worst case high magnitude of change during the construction stage, which, when combined with the medium level of effect, results in a **Moderate, adverse** level of effect.
- 9.22. Given the existing character of the road, proposed new hedgerow planting is not intended to try to hide the new dwellings, but it is designed to provide better integration of the new built form, and reflect the existing village character. In the longer term, the residual effect of the scheme at this location would be **Minor, adverse**.
- 9.23. The effect on Road Users and Pedestrian is likely to be **Imperceptible** as the land use and the site access at this location would not be experienced as out of context or unexpected to the edge of the village, and the Proposed Development perceived within the environment of the village and set within the 'shelterbelts, fence lines, gappy hedgerows and ditches (that) provide an element of enclosure' to the settlement edge nearest the Site. The proposed land use is near unneighbourly or out of context, or unexpected as one passes through the village along Chalk Road.

National Cycle Route Users

- 9.24. As demonstrated by the plotted Zone of Theoretical Visibility (Appendix BLA 3), there is no intervisibility between the Site and this route because of intervening landform, built form and landscape fabric along the main railway line to the north of Higham. It is considered that there would be no perceived effect from the Proposed Development at the Site.

Residential Receptors

- 9.25. Those dwellings directly adjacent to the Site or overlooking it on Chalk Road would experience an elevated magnitude of change, up to high. This would lead to worst case effects of major, although this level of effect must be considered in the light of the existing context of these dwellings (which is residential) and in respect of the design intention of the proposals which look to address these

curtilages in a sensitive and appropriate manner. This effect is therefore a function of change and sensitivity, rather than acceptability.

- 9.26. On balance, and given the settlement edge character of the Site, the extent of dwellings affected to an elevated degree is proportionally small, with only a small handful experiencing a prominent change to outlooks from the rear of their properties. In all instances, the design of the proposals has sought to ensure the change is within acceptable parameters when considering residential amenity.
- 9.27. With regard to settlements outlying to Higham, BLADE's Zone of Primary Visibility (Appendix BLA 3) demonstrates where the Proposed Development at the Site would be screened by intervening landform, built form and landscape fabric as hedgerows, hedge line trees and woodland plantations.

Summary of Visual Effect

- 9.28. With respect to the impacts on visual openness, it is not considered that any specific views valued highly by the general public or essential to the appreciation of the area (in terms of openness or otherwise), would be unduly harmed by the proposed development.
- 9.29. Whilst the development would evidently impact openness at the site level, when the proposals are viewed in the context of the wider landscape, there remains an open character which is typically characterised as a 'regular pattern of medium to large fields throughout the area, with some smaller paddocks adjoining properties east of Higham', with built development (including the proposals) appearing spatially appropriate given current development patterns.

10.0 CONCLUSION

- 10.1. BLADE Landscape Architects Limited were commissioned on behalf of the Applicant to undertake a Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) and contribute to the iterative development of the Masterplanning for a new residential development.
- 10.2. The Applicant is submitting an Outline planning application for the demolition of existing buildings and erection up to 40 residential dwellings, public open space and associated works. Approval is sought for the principal means of vehicular access from Chalk Road and all other matters are reserved.
- 10.3. The site cover 1.68 Hectares and is situated on the northwestern edge of Higham, within the lower lying lower part of the village. The Site is in the county of Kent, and found within the administrative authority of Gravesham District Council, who are the Local Planning Authority.
- 10.4. Through the undertaking of this Landscape Visual Appraisal it is clear that this is a Site with relatively few intrinsic landscape constraints to the Proposed Development, especially given its proximity neighbouring the edge of the village:
 - The Site contains the existing built form with hard standing, and the Site is not designated at a local or National level for its landscape or scenic qualities, nor does it adjoin or neighbour any such designation.
 - Through BLADE's own Site-specific assessment, it is considered that the site does not qualify as a Valued Landscape.
 - There are no Veteran trees within the Site or affecting its boundaries.
 - There are no listed buildings on the site.
 - The Site is not located within any Conservation Area.
 - No part of the Site lies within or close to any parks or gardens listed on English Heritage's Register of Parks and Gardens of Historic Interest.
 - The Site is privately managed, has no public access such as Public Right of Way, and from our research appears to have no cultural significance locally.
 - The landscape fabric has been impoverished through the Site's utility, and whilst there are mature hedgerows and trees, neither the condition of the site, or its character, are unique or rare locally, with the Site neighboured and overlooked by existing residential built form enclosing the Site eastern and southern edges.

10.5. The main determinants of visibility to the site can be summarised as follows:

- BLADE finds the Zone of Primary Visibility to be extensively limited to the immediate setting of the Site, or from where the Site is experienced against the wider backdrop of the village, as well as within the 'shelterbelts, fence lines, gappy hedgerows and ditches (which) provide an element of enclosure' to the northwestern edge of Higham.
- Beyond this, there is potential to see the Site from those higher landform areas outlying to the village. These occur to the west and north of the Site – on the open countryside on the outskirts of Gravesend and along the River Thames to the west and north respectively. In many situations, the Site is not seen whole, it is seen between neighbouring residential built form, or across a marginal geographical areas, or glimpsed through or above the Site's field hedgerows, scattered hedge line trees or tree lines.
- Given the foregoing, the Site is not prominent in views and is experienced as part of the existing environment of the village rather than situated obtusely outside of the village where there are '*extensive views across open arable land from within the character area and views out of the character area, towards the marshes and the River Thames in the north, from some higher vantage points and areas near the boundary line.*' Consequently, the scheme would conserve wide panoramic views across the landscape from elevated areas and through the open countryside fields to the River Thames estuary to the north.
- The Site is experienced as nestled with in Consequently, as demonstrated by this appraisal, the scheme would not lead to an unacceptable level of impacts of visual amenity, landscape resources and landscape character. For the Higham Arable Farmland Landscape Character Area, the key sensitivities (identified by the LPA in their Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment, 2009) are highlighted as the need to '*resist proposals that introduce extensive or obtrusive elements within visually sensitive areas of the open landscape*', '*visual detractors in the landscape occur on a large scale (industrial horizon) and detailed scale (industrial farm buildings)*' and '*industrial land uses lie mainly within adjacent marshland areas and have significant influence on landscape character.*'
- Whilst the scheme would not 'restore small pockets of heritage landscape around existing settlement' partially down to its long established land use and associated built form, the scheme would 'encourage the restoration and creation of ecological networks' and 'pockets of orchards.'
- As demonstrated by this appraisal, there is limited, if no scope to see the Site and its future development from the settlements outlying to Higham; leading to an imperceptible effect from development.

10.6. Due to the change in land use from pasture to residential, there will be a significant change to the character of the site. However, where possible, existing landscape features have been retained and this serves to moderate the effects. Over the duration of the assessment period, there will be diminishment in effects with the reduction being a direct result of the landscape strategy designed for this site.

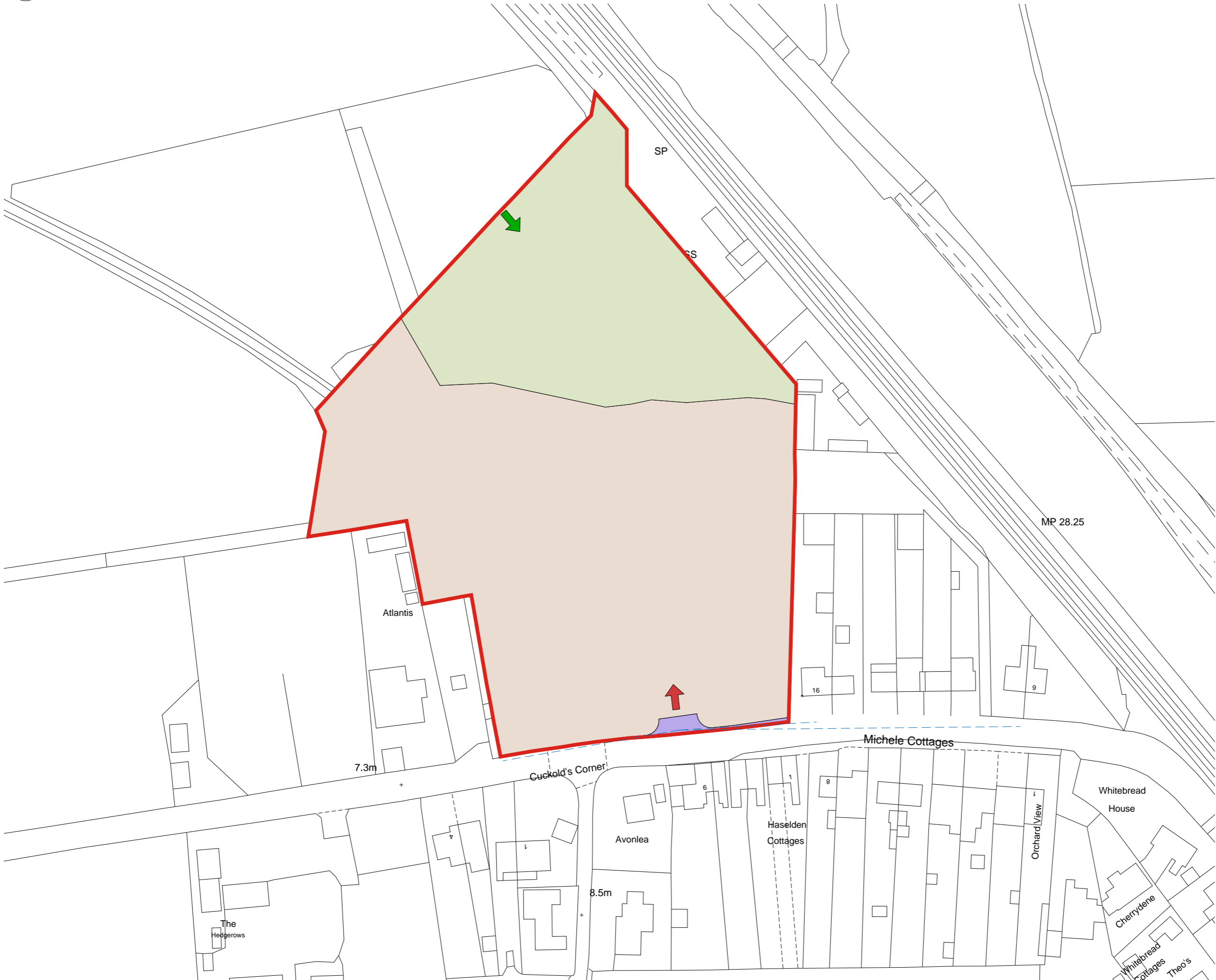
- 10.7. Given the undertaking of this appraisal by BLADE, there is no landscape ‘watersheds’ here – no topographical or watercourse feature separating the Site from the village of Higham (as the Site is experienced as part of the village spatially) so as to preclude the successful integration of the scheme within the adjacent village edge land uses and built form, and is not seen as prominent in views into or out of the village.
- 10.8. In neither a topographic, landscape character or a spatial sense, does the site appear in conflict with established patterns of development, nor does it threaten coalescence with neighbouring settlements, especially as given the scheme is unlikely to result in a significant change to the character of the wider landscape, and would maintain the characteristics of the *‘open character as a result of the extensive views and lack of tree cover’*.
- 10.9. For the reasons amplified within this appraisal, the Site’s context situated within the existing *‘shelterbelts, fence lines, gappy hedgerows and ditches (which) provide an element of enclosure’* to the northwestern edge of Higham, and the qualities of the new landscape proposed, as well as the proposed layout delivering new homes within a location neighbouring built development - the Site is intrinsically suited to accommodate new residential development (should the needs of the current planning system dictate).
- 10.10. In landscape terms, the Site is entirely well suited to such a purpose, subject to appropriate design and sensitive mitigation measures, which the Applicant’s proposals has developed through iterative working with wider disciplines, including Landscape through the undertaking of the Landscape Visual Appraisal. Given this, BLADE judges that there are no matters of such over-riding landscape importance that they outweigh the logic and suitability of this site.
- 10.11. For these reasons, the proposed residential development represents an appropriately-scaled feature, which is designed to be in keeping with the local landscape character and landscape setting. It would result in a very limited number of material landscape or visual effects, which would be highly localised to the existing settlement edge location predominantly, or where the location of the scheme would already be experienced as part of the village setting, its residences and village-related land uses. Consequently, it is considered that the Proposed Development would not result in any policy contraventions.

APPENDIX BLA 1

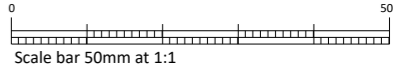
Site Context Plan

APPENDIX BLA 2

Land Use Parameter Plan



This drawing to be read in accordance with the specification/Bills of Quantities and related drawings. No Dimensions to be scaled from this drawing. All stated dimensions to be verified on site and the Architect notified of any discrepancies.



- KEY**
- Site Boundary
 - Visibility Splays

- LAND USE PARAMETERS**
- Indicative area of land required for the proposed access, not within the residential land use (subject to detailed design)
 - Proposed residential development (Use Class C3) (including roads, footpaths, private drives, amenity, pumpset, parking provision for existing Chalk Road residents, incidental open space and other associated infrastructure)
 - Proposed Public Open Space (including amenity green space, , children's play provision, landscaping, footpaths, community orchard, drainage, route for agricultural access and other associated infrastructure)

- ACCESS PARAMETERS**
- Proposed access/egress for all modes (subject to detailed design)
 - Proposed access/egress for agricultural vehicles only. Alignment of route through POS subject to detailed design.

Project

**LAND OFF CHALK ROAD
LOWER HIGHAM
GRAVESHAM**

Title

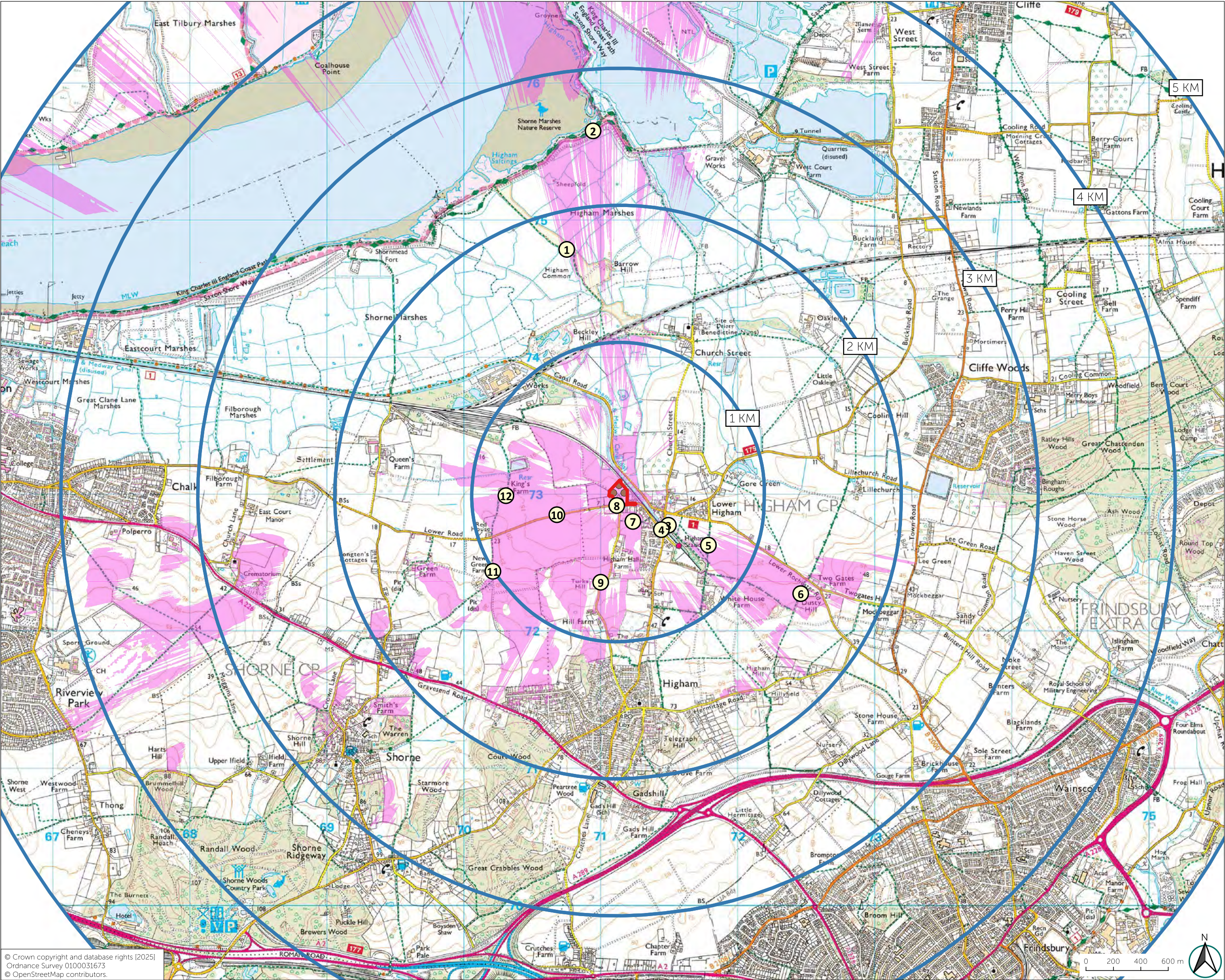
LAND USE PARAMETER PLAN

Scale 1:1000 @ A3	Date JULY 2025
Drawn KB	Checked MB
Drawing Number 8990/P101	Revision A

Saunders
Architecture + Urban Design

APPENDIX BLA 3

Plotted Zone of Theoretical Visibility



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- KEY
- Application Site
 - Distance Intervals (1km)
 - ZTV Reference Points
- ZTV 11.5m
- Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) calculated at 11.5 metres above ground level within the quantum of the site
 - Viewpoint Locations 1-12



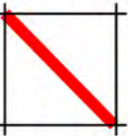
30 St. Georges Square, Worcester, WR1 1HX 01905 947 558 www.weareblade.co.uk	
CLIENT Richborough	
PROJECT Chalk Lane, Higham	
DRAWING TITLE Theoretical Visibility (11.5m)	
DRAWING STATUS Planning	
DRAWING NO. 1733-L-RP-LVA-PL-102	REVISION V1
SCALE @ A3 1:25,000	DATE JULY 2025


APPENDIX BLA 4

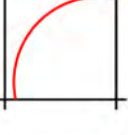
Illustrative Landscape Masterplan

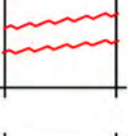



LEGEND

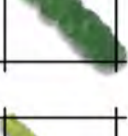
Boundary

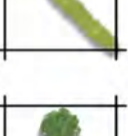
Existing trees retained


Existing trees removed


Existing hedgerows to be removed

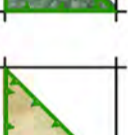
Existing pond to be retained


Proposed species-rich native hedgerow


Proposed single species native hedgerow


Proposed trees


Proposed orchard trees


Proposed broadleaved woodland


Proposed mixed native scrub


Proposed modified grassland

Proposed other neutral grassland (EM8 Meadow Mixture for seasonally wet soils)

Proposed other neutral grassland (EP1 Pond Edge Mixture)

Proposed other neutral grassland (EM3 Meadow Mixture)

Proposed vegetated gardens

Proposed marginal planting



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CLIENT Richborough				
PROJECT Chalk Road, Lower Higham				
DRAWING TITLE Illustrative Landscape Strategy (BNG)				
DRAWING STATUS Planning				
DRAWING NO. 1733-L-D-PL-200				REVISION V1
DRAWN KC	CHECKED JB	SCALE 1:500	PAPER SIZE A1	DATE JULY-2025

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0 10 20 35m

V2	Amended to updated layout 8990/PI04 rev B	28/07/25
V1	First Issue	07/07/25
REV	Description	Date

APPENDIX BLA 5

Representative Viewpoints

APPROXIMATE LOCATION OF THE SITE



WIDE ANGLE BASELINE PANORAMA OF EXISTING VIEW TOWARDS THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

THIS IMAGE PROVIDES LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL CONTEXT ONLY

VIEWPOINT 1:
View from Public Footpath (PRoW LPA ref: NS318) situated to the north looking
across open countryside towards Higham

Grid Reference	570752, 174786
Elevation	2m AOD
Distance to nearest Site Boundary	1.85km N/O degrees
View Direction	S/180 degrees
Paper Size	420 x 297 mm A3
Camera	Sony A7 II
Lens	Sony E-mount E50mm F1.8oss
Projection	Cylindrical
Photograph Date and Time	16/07/2025 @ 15.25 (24HR CLOCK)

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CLIENT Richborough	
PROJECT Chalk Road, Higham, Kent	
DRAWING TITLE Viewpoint 1	
DRAWING STATUS Planning	DATE July 2025

APPROXIMATE LOCATION OF THE SITE



WIDE ANGLE BASELINE PANORAMA OF EXISTING VIEW TOWARDS THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

THIS IMAGE PROVIDES LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL CONTEXT ONLY

VIEWPOINT 2:
View from the King Charles III England Coast Path (PRoW LPA ref: NS138)
situated to the northeast looking across open countryside towards

Grid Reference	570944, 175651
Elevation	2m AOD
Distance to nearest Site Boundary	2.7km N-NE/15 degrees
View Direction	S-SW/ 195 degrees
Paper Size	420 x 297 mm A3
Camera	Sony A7 II
Lens	Sony E-mount E50mm F1.8oss
Projection	Cylindrical
Photograph Date and Time	16/07/2025 @ 15.08 (24HR CLOCK)

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CLIENT Richborough	
PROJECT Chalk Road, Higham, Kent	
DRAWING TITLE Viewpoint 2	
DRAWING STATUS Planning	DATE July 2025

APPROXIMATE LOCATION OF THE SITE



WIDE ANGLE BASELINE PANORAMA OF EXISTING VIEW TOWARDS THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

THIS IMAGE PROVIDES LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL CONTEXT ONLY

VIEWPOINT 3:
View from Public Footpath (PRoW LPA ref: NS144) progressing through open countryside on the outskirts of Higham near Chequers Street

Grid Reference	571494, 172773
Elevation	11m AOD
Distance to nearest Site Boundary	0.35km SE/125 degrees
View Direction	NW/325 degrees
Paper Size	420 x 297 mm A3
Camera	Sony A7 II
Lens	Sony E-mount E50mm F1.8oss
Projection	Cylindrical
Photograph Date and Time	16/07/2025 @ 14.19 (24HR CLOCK)

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CLIENT Richborough	
PROJECT Chalk Road, Higham, Kent	
DRAWING TITLE Viewpoint 3	
DRAWING STATUS Planning	DATE July 2025

APPROXIMATE LOCATION OF THE SITE



WIDE ANGLE BASELINE PANORAMA OF EXISTING VIEW TOWARDS THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

THIS IMAGE PROVIDES LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL CONTEXT ONLY

VIEWPOINT 4:
View from Chalk Road to the south of the Site as its passes through Higham

Grid Reference	571443, 172741
Elevation	10m AOD
Distance to nearest Site Boundary	0.35km SE/135 degrees
View Direction	NW/315 degrees
Paper Size	420 x 297 mm A3
Camera	Sony A7 II
Lens	Sony E-mount E50mm F1.8oss
Projection	Cylindrical
Photograph Date and Time	16/07/2025 @ 13.04 (24HR CLOCK)

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CLIENT Richborough	
PROJECT Chalk Road, Higham, Kent	
DRAWING TITLE Viewpoint 4	
DRAWING STATUS Planning	DATE July 2025

APPROXIMATE LOCATION OF THE SITE



WIDE ANGLE BASELINE PANORAMA OF EXISTING VIEW TOWARDS THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

THIS IMAGE PROVIDES LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL CONTEXT ONLY

VIEWPOINT 5:
View from Public Footpath (PRoW LPA ref: NS143) passing through
open countryside to the east of Higham

Grid Reference	571786, 172628
Elevation	17m AOD
Distance to nearest Site Boundary	0.7km SE/120 degrees
View Direction	NW/330 degrees
Paper Size	420 x 297 mm A3
Camera	Sony A7 II
Lens	Sony E-mount E50mm F1.8oss
Projection	Cylindrical
Photograph Date and Time	16/07/2025 @ 14,32 (24HR CLOCK)

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CLIENT Richborough	
PROJECT Chalk Road, Higham, Kent	
DRAWING TITLE Viewpoint 5	
DRAWING STATUS Planning	DATE July 2025

APPROXIMATE LOCATION OF THE SITE



WIDE ANGLE BASELINE PANORAMA OF EXISTING VIEW TOWARDS THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

THIS IMAGE PROVIDES LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL CONTEXT ONLY

VIEWPOINT 6:
View from Public Footpath (PRoW LPA ref: NS151) passing through open countryside to the south east of Higham on locally elevated landform

Grid Reference	572460, 172274
Elevation	18m AOD
Distance to nearest Site Boundary	1.45km SE/120 degrees
View Direction	NW/330 degrees
Paper Size	420 x 297 mm A3
Camera	Sony A7 II
Lens	Sony E-mount E50mm F1.8oss
Projection	Cylindrical
Photograph Date and Time	16/07/2025 @ 14.26 (24HR CLOCK)

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CLIENT Richborough	
PROJECT Chalk Road, Higham, Kent	
DRAWING TITLE Viewpoint 6	
DRAWING STATUS Planning	DATE July 2025

APPROXIMATE LOCATION OF THE SITE



WIDE ANGLE BASELINE PANORAMA OF EXISTING VIEW TOWARDS THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

THIS IMAGE PROVIDES LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL CONTEXT ONLY

VIEWPOINT 7:
View from Public Footpath (PRoW LPA ref: NS144) passing through the village of Higham on locally elevated landform to the south of the Site

Grid Reference	571235, 172801
Elevation	20m AOD
Distance to nearest Site Boundary	0.15km SE/160 degrees
View Direction	NW/340 degrees
Paper Size	420 x 297 mm A3
Camera	Sony A7 II
Lens	Sony E-mount E50mm F1.8oss
Projection	Cylindrical
Photograph Date and Time	16/07/2025 @ 14.04 (24HR CLOCK)

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CLIENT Richborough	
PROJECT Chalk Road, Higham, Kent	
DRAWING TITLE Viewpoint 7	
DRAWING STATUS Planning	DATE July 2025

APPROXIMATE LOCATION OF THE SITE



WIDE ANGLE BASELINE PANORAMA OF EXISTING VIEW TOWARDS THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

THIS IMAGE PROVIDES LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL CONTEXT ONLY

VIEWPOINT 8:
View from Taylors Lane, local minor route passing through Higham village on locally elevated landform to the south of the Site

Grid Reference	571117, 172917
Elevation	31m AOD
Distance to nearest Site Boundary	Opposite Site S/180 degrees
View Direction	N/0 degrees
Paper Size	420 x 297 mm A3
Camera	Sony A7 II
Lens	Sony E-mount E50mm F1.8oss
Projection	Cylindrical
Photograph Date and Time	16/07/2025 @ 13.46 (24HR CLOCK)

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CLIENT Richborough	
PROJECT Chalk Road, Higham, Kent	
DRAWING TITLE Viewpoint 8	
DRAWING STATUS Planning	DATE July 2025

APPROXIMATE LOCATION OF THE SITE



WIDE ANGLE BASELINE PANORAMA OF EXISTING VIEW TOWARDS THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

THIS IMAGE PROVIDES LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL CONTEXT ONLY

VIEWPOINT 9:
View from Chalk Road nearest to the Site as the roadway passes through the village of Higham

Grid Reference	571000, 172357
Elevation	31m AOD
Distance to nearest Site Boundary	0.65km, S-SW/205 degrees
View Direction	N-NE/35 degrees
Paper Size	420 x 297 mm A3
Camera	Sony A7 II
Lens	Sony E-mount E50mm F1.8oss
Projection	Cylindrical
Photograph Date and Time	16/07/2025 @ 13.58 (24HR CLOCK)

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PROJECT Chalk Road, Higham, Kent	
DRAWING TITLE Viewpoint 9	
DRAWING STATUS Planning	DATE July 2025

APPROXIMATE LOCATION OF THE SITE



WIDE ANGLE BASELINE PANORAMA OF EXISTING VIEW TOWARDS THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

THIS IMAGE PROVIDES LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL CONTEXT ONLY

VIEWPOINT 10:
View from Chalk Road to the east of the Site area situated in open countryside approaching Higham village nearest the Site

Grid Reference	570680, 172850
Elevation	8m AOD
Distance to nearest Site Boundary	0.45km, W/260 degrees
View Direction	E/80 degrees
Paper Size	420 x 297 mm A3
Camera	Sony A7 II
Lens	Sony E-mount E50mm F1.8oss
Projection	Cylindrical
Photograph Date and Time	16/07/2025 @ 13.12 (24HR CLOCK)

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DRAWING TITLE Viewpoint 10	
DRAWING STATUS Planning	DATE July 2025

APPROXIMATE LOCATION OF THE SITE



WIDE ANGLE BASELINE PANORAMA OF EXISTING VIEW TOWARDS THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

THIS IMAGE PROVIDES LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL CONTEXT ONLY

VIEWPOINT 11:
View from Public Footpath (PRoW LPA ref: NS156) passing through open countryside west of the village locally elevated landform

Grid Reference	570213, 172437
Elevation	24m AOD
Distance to nearest Site Boundary	1km SW/235 degrees
View Direction	NE/45 degrees km
Paper Size	420 x 297 mm A3
Camera	Sony A7 II
Lens	Sony E-mount E50mm F1.8oss
Projection	Cylindrical
Photograph Date and Time	16/07/2025 @ 13.32 (24HR CLOCK)

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CLIENT Richborough	
PROJECT Chalk Road, Higham, Kent	
DRAWING TITLE Viewpoint 11	
DRAWING STATUS Planning	DATE July 2025

APPROXIMATE LOCATION OF THE SITE



WIDE ANGLE BASELINE PANORAMA OF EXISTING VIEW TOWARDS THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

THIS IMAGE PROVIDES LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL CONTEXT ONLY

VIEWPOINT 12:
View from Public Footpath (PRoW LPA ref: NS156) passing open countryside northwest of Higham village

Grid Reference	570308, 172989
Elevation	16m AOD
Distance to nearest Site Boundary	0.8km, NW/320 degrees
View Direction	SE/130 degrees
Paper Size	420 x 297 mm A3
Camera	Sony A7 II
Lens	Sony E-mount E50mm F1.8oss
Projection	Cylindrical
Photograph Date and Time	16/07/2025 @ 13.26 (24HR CLOCK)

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PROJECT Chalk Road, Higham, Kent	
DRAWING TITLE Viewpoint 12	
DRAWING STATUS Planning	DATE July 2025

APPENDIX BLA 6

Methodology

This methodology is specific to developments determined by the Local Planning Authority as not requiring a full Environmental Impact Assessment. The Third Edition of the GLVIA3 provides clarification that the same principles and processes apply for EIA and non-EIA assessments however there is no requirement for establishing whether the effects are significant given this development falls out with the formal requirements of Environmental Impact Assessment.

The methodology sets out the approach for the core steps in describing the baseline conditions, identifying where potential impacts may occur and evaluating the subsequent effects. In accordance with GLVIA3, the appraisal reflects the clear distinction between the landscape as a resource and visual amenity. The steps of the methodology used in the LVA are set out below:

- Illustrative Tools
- Baseline Conditions:
 - Landscape Baseline
 - Visual Amenity Baseline
- Potential Effects - including magnitude of change and nature of change:
 - Assessment and Evaluation of Landscape Effects
 - Assessment and Evaluation of Effects on Visual Amenity

ILLUSTRATIVE TOOLS

In accordance with The Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 06/19, Visual Representation of Development Proposals, a proportionate approach has been applied to determine the visualisation type appropriate for this project. It is considered annotated viewpoint photographs are sufficient level of detail to support the appraisal.

The viewpoint assessment is illustrated by photographs taken to represent a maximum visibility scenario. Photographs have been annotated to show the extent of the Site within the view, its context and highlight key features. The photographs used have been taken using a full frame sensor digital camera with a 50 mm lens equivalent mounted on a tripod, which conforms to the GLVIA guidance since this lens size is considered to most closely represent the view obtained by the human eye. The photographs have been taken to most represent a maximum visibility scenario during the season in which the assessment is undertaken.

It should be noted that whilst photography is a valuable tool to assist in the visualisation process, it cannot be expected to replicate the actual view or predicted view which would be attained on the ground. The photographs provide the viewer with a fair representation of the proposed development Site within its setting.

BASELINE CONDITIONS

Desktop Survey Work

The following desktop sources were consulted in order to compile the baseline information:

- Existing Landscape Character Assessments;
- Register of Parks and Gardens;
- Ordnance Survey Maps; and
- Aerial photography.

Landscape Baseline

Landscape receptors comprise the landscape fabric of the site, landscape character areas/ types and designated landscapes which may be affected either directly or indirectly by the proposed Development.

Existing Landscape Character Assessments have been reviewed and interpreted for use within the appraisal based on field work and further desktop survey work. A description is provided of the existing landscape elements, features, characteristics, designations and the value, condition and importance of the landscape and resources within the study area which are likely to have potential impacts as a result of the proposed Development.

An evaluation is required for each landscape character area/ type and landscape receptor which has the potential to interact with the development on:

Landscape value – It is often regarded in association with landscape designations however other more local factors have been considered such as local heritage or community interest. Key factors in regard to landscape value include landscape condition, scenic quality, rarity, recreational value, tourism, local heritage and community interest.

Susceptibility to change – Landscapes are constantly changing and evolving. The current pressures in the landscape have been clearly stated in the absence of the proposal for each landscape character area/ type.

Landscape sensitivity to changes has been defined as high, medium, low or negligible based on professional interpretation of a combination of parameters including:

- The value placed on the landscape as defined by designation/other identifiable form of recognition;
- The scale and pattern of the landscape and its elements/features;
- The simplicity or complexity of the landscape;
- The nature of skylines;
- Landscape quality or condition;
- Existing land-use;

- Visual enclosure/openness of views and distribution of visual receptors; and
- The scope for mitigation, which would be in character with the existing landscape.

Table A.2: Sensitivity of The Landscape Baseline

Landscape Sensitivity	Land Use
Very High	<p><i>Value:</i> Nationally/internationally designated/valued countryside and landscape features; strong/distinctive landscape characteristics; absence of landscape detractors.</p> <p><i>Susceptibility to Change:</i> Strong/distinctive landscape elements/aesthetic/perceptual aspects; absence of landscape detractors; landscape receptors in excellent condition. Landscapes with clear and widely recognised cultural value. Landscapes with a high level of tranquillity.</p>
High	<p><i>Value:</i> Locally designated/valued countryside (e.g. Areas of High Landscape Value, Regional Scenic Areas) and landscape features; many distinctive landscape characteristics; very few landscape detractors.</p> <p><i>Susceptibility to Change:</i> Many distinctive landscape elements/aesthetic/perceptual aspects; very few landscape detractors; landscape receptors in good condition. The landscape has a low capacity for change as a result of potential changes to defining character.</p>
Medium	<p><i>Value:</i> Undesignated countryside and landscape features; some distinctive landscape characteristics; few landscape detractors.</p> <p><i>Susceptibility to Change:</i> Some distinctive landscape elements/aesthetic/perceptual aspects; few landscape detractors; landscape receptors in fair condition. Landscape is able to accommodate some change as a result.</p>
Low	<p><i>Value:</i> Undesignated countryside and landscape features; few distinctive landscape characteristics; presence of landscape detractors.</p> <p><i>Susceptibility to Change:</i> Few distinctive landscape elements/aesthetic/perceptual aspects; presence of landscape detractors; landscape receptors in poor condition. Landscape is able to accommodate large amounts of change without changing these characteristics fundamentally.</p>
Negligible	<p><i>Value:</i> Undesignated countryside and landscape features; absence of distinctive landscape characteristics; despoiled/degraded by the presence of many landscape detractors.</p> <p><i>Susceptibility to Change:</i> Absence of distinctive landscape elements/aesthetic/perceptual aspects; presence of many landscape detractors; landscape receptors in very poor condition. As such landscape is able to accommodate considerable change</p>

Visual Amenity Baseline

Visibility Analysis concentrated on publicly accessible areas and key receptors including residential and outdoor recreational areas, as well as road and public footpath networks. The aim is to identify the interactions between the proposal and the visual receptors.

The study area is based upon analysis of the natural landform, using contours from the 1:25k Ordnance Survey map and a desktop review of intervening structures which are predicted to screen views of the Development such as buildings on mass and block woodland from the aerial.

Fieldwork is undertaken to establish the extent of available views towards the Site and to establish the extent of views from the Site.

Visual receptors comprise those individuals or groups of people who may have views of the Proposed Development. The main groups of visual receptors are usually defined as follows:

- Residents;
- Tourists or visitors, which includes users of outdoor recreational facilities including strategic recreational footpaths, cycle routes or public rights of way whose attention would be focused on the landscape; important landscape features with physical, cultural or historic attributes; principal views from residential buildings; beauty spots or picnic areas;
- Hill walkers, which includes those walking on unmarked footpaths; and
- Road users.

Viewpoint Assessment - A selection of viewpoints was identified and considered to be representative of the main sensitive receptors in the study area for the purposes of assessing the proposed Development. The viewpoints have been numbered in a clockwise direction starting in the north and were chosen to be representative such as a promoted visitor attraction or illustrative to demonstrate a particular effect or theme from the appraisal.

Viewpoint Description - The extent and nature of the existing views are described by reference to the following and illustrated though annotated photographs:

- Composition of the view, landscape character, features, visual amenity and quality of the landscape;
- nature of the view;
- elevation;
- direct or indirect/ angled;
- full or partial;
- open or filtered;
- seasonal variation; and
- extent.

The extent of view and proportion of the development which is visible is categorised as follows:

Full views - Where greater than 75% of the proposed Development is visible

Partial views - Where less than 75% of the proposed Development is visible

Restricted views - Where less than 50% of the proposed Development is visible and/ or very limited views of the proposed Development

Distance: The distance of the views towards the application and development is categorised below:

Short distance - less than 0.25km

Medium distance - between 0.25 and 0.5km

Long distance - Greater than 0.5km

Viewpoint Sensitivity is defined as high, medium or low based on an interpretation of a combination of parameters, as follows and defined in Table A.1:

- Location and context of the viewpoint;
- Land use or main activity at the viewpoint;
- Frequency and duration of use;
- Landscape character and quality of the intervening landscape; and
- Value attached to view.

Table A.2: Visual Sensitivity in relation to Main Activity at Viewpoint

Visual Sensitivity	Land Use
Very High	<i>Value/Susceptibility to Change:</i> View is: designed/has intentional association with surroundings; recorded in published material; from a publicly accessible heritage asset/designated/promoted viewpoint; nationally/internationally designated right of way; protected/recognised in planning policy designation.
High	<i>Value/Susceptibility to Change:</i> View of clear value but may not be formally recognised e.g. framed view of scenic value or destination/summit views; inferred that it may have value for local residents; locally promoted route or PROW.
Medium	<i>Value/Susceptibility to Change:</i> View is not widely promoted or recorded in published sources; may be typical of those experienced by an identified receptor; minor road routes through rural/scenic areas.
Low	<i>Value/Susceptibility to Change:</i> View of clearly lesser value than similar views from nearby visual receptors that may be more accessible.
Negligible	<i>Value/Susceptibility to Change:</i> View may be affected by many landscape detractors and unlikely to be valued.

POTENTIAL EFFECTS

The text below provides an analysis of the potential direct/ indirect impacts based on site reconnaissance to make a professional judgement on the magnitude and evaluation of effects of the main landscape and visual receptors identified in the study area as outlined in the Baseline Conditions.

Assessment of Landscape Effects

Magnitude of Landscape Effects - The effect on landscape character as a result of the proposed Development is largely dependent on; the characteristics of the receiving landscape, the consistency of the proposed development in relation to the receiving landscape and the perceptions of the proposed development influenced by distance, weather and appearance.

Landscape effects are classified as substantial, moderate, slight, negligible and none based on a professional judgement which combines landscape sensitivity, value, susceptibility to change and the level of interaction with the proposed Development.

The criteria utilised in ascribing magnitude of change of landscape effects throughout this assessment are as follows:

Very High: Total loss or considerable alteration to key elements/ features/characteristics of the view that is directly visible resulting in a substantial change to the baseline condition;

High: Notable loss/alteration/addition to one or more key receptors/-characteristics of the baseline; or addition of prominent conflicting elements

Medium: Partial loss or alteration to one or more key elements/features/characteristics of the view. Change perceived as a partial or localised change within a broader, unaltered context which may be noticed directly or obliquely;

Low: Limited loss or small alteration to one or more key elements/features/characteristics of the view. Change is discernible but underlying composition of the view would be similar to baseline;

Negligible: Barely discernible loss or alteration to key components; addition of elements not uncharacteristic within the existing landscape

Indiscernible: In some circumstances, changes to key landscape components will be lower than negligible and changes will be described as 'Imperceptible'. This will lead to an imperceptible effect i.e., less than negligible.

Landscape effects also consider whether the Development:

- Reinforces the landscape elements, structure and key landscape characteristics (positive). Or would it include low or negligible changes that maybe considered part of the baseline condition (neutral). Or an adverse effect which may include the loss of landscape elements such as mature trees and hedgerows as part of construction leading to a reduction in the landscape quality and character of an area.
- Would have a physical change to landscape fabric (direct) or consequential change (indirect).
- Results in short term (up to 5 years), medium term (up to 25 years) or long-term changes (25+ years).
- Would have reversible or irreversible effects on the landscape.

Assessment of Effects on Visual Amenity

Magnitude of the Visual Effects - The magnitude of change arising from the proposed development at any particular viewpoint is described as substantial, moderate, slight or negligible based on the interpretation of a combination of largely quantifiable parameters, as follows:

- Distance of the viewpoint from the development;
- Duration of the predicted impact;
- Extent of the development in the view, e.g. the horizontal angle subtended by the development;
- Angle of view in relation to main receptor activity;
- Degree of contrast;
- Visual permeability of proposed Development, i.e. extent to which views would be blocked or would be restricted;
- Background to the Development; and
- Extent and nature of other built development visible.

In the case of magnitude of change occurring within designated areas or along roads or recreational routes, the proportion of the designated area or length of the route affected by the proposals is also a consideration.

The criteria utilised in ascribing visual magnitude of change throughout this assessment are as follows:

- Very High: Substantial change to the baseline, forming a new, defining focus and having a defining influence on the view
- High: Additions are clearly noticeable and part of the view would be fundamentally altered.
- Medium: Moderate alteration to one or more key characteristics of the baseline view.
- Low : Proposed development will form a minor constituent of the view being partially visible or at sufficient distance to be a small component.
- Negligible: Barely discernible loss or alteration to key components; addition of elements not uncharacteristic within the existing landscape.
- Indiscernible: In some circumstances, changes at representative viewpoints will be lower than negligible and changes to the existing baseline of the view will be described as 'Imperceptible'. This will lead to an imperceptible effect i.e., less than negligible.

Visual effects also consider whether the Development:

- Results in short term (up to 5 years), medium term (up to 25 years) or long-term changes (25+ years).
- Would have reversible or irreversible effects on the visual amenity.

EVALUATING LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL EFFECTS

Landscape or visual effects have been assessed as major, major/moderate, moderate, moderate/minor, minor or minor/negligible. These categories have been based on combining viewpoint sensitivity and predicted magnitude of change (Table A.2).

Table A.2: Evaluation of Landscape and Visual Effects

	MAGNITUDE OF CHANGE				
Receptor Sensitivity	Very High	High	Medium	Low	Negligible
Very High	Substantial	Major	Major/-moderate	Moderate	Moderate/-minor
High	Major	Major/-moderate	Moderate	Moderate/-minor	Minor
Medium	Major/-moderate	Moderate	Moderate/-minor	Minor	Minor/-negligible
Low	Moderate	Moderate/-minor	Minor	Minor/-negligible	Negligible
Negligible	Moderate/-minor	Minor	Minor/-negligible	Negligible	Negligible/-none

The matrix is not used as a prescriptive tool, and the methodology and analysis of potential effects at any particular location must allow for the exercise of professional judgement. Thus in some instances a particular parameter may be considered as having a determining effect on the analysis.

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