



Kier Ventures Ltd

Land North of Thaxted Road, Saffron Walden

LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL APPRAISAL

December 2023

FPCR Environment and Design Ltd

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CONTENTS

1.0	INTRODUCTION	2
2.0	METHODOLOGY.....	3
3.0	PLANNING POLICY	7
4.0	BASELINE CONDITIONS.....	11
5.0	LANDSCAPE PROPOSALS	21
6.0	LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL EFFECTS	22
7.0	SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS	28

FIGURES

Figure 1: Site Location Plan

Figure 2: Aerial Photograph

Figure 3: Topography Plan

Figure 4: Designations

Figure 5: Landscape Character

Figure 6: Visual Appraisal

Figures 7-17: Photo Viewpoints

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) has been carried out for land to the north of Thaxted Road, Saffron Walden by FPCR Environment and Design Ltd (FPCR). The purpose of this LVA study is to provide an assessment of the likely landscape and visual effects of the proposed development. The landscape and visual effects have been considered in relation to the proposals detailed in the Design and Access Statement (DAS) and Design Code submitted for the planning application.
- 1.2 FPCR is a multi-disciplinary environmental and design consultancy established over 60 years, with expertise in architecture, landscape, ecology, arboriculture, urban design, masterplanning and environmental impact assessment. The practice is a member of the Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment and is frequently called upon to provide expert evidence on landscape and visual issues at Public and Local Plan Inquiries.

Site Location

- 1.3 Figures 1 and 2 show the location and context of the site. The site is located to the north of Thaxted Road, adjacent to existing developments at the southeastern edge of Saffron Walden.
- 1.4 The site's northern parcel abuts the Bellway Homes Poppy View development. A range of other residential and commercial developments are situated to the west of the site by Thaxted Road. Other residential development has been approved on land situated to the west of Thaxted Road (s62A/2022/0014).
- 1.5 The site area is currently in agricultural use occupied by arable fields. Vegetation cover within the site itself is restricted to hedgerows and trees, present along site perimeters. A public right of way off Tiptofts Lane bisects the site.

Proposed Development

- 1.6 The proposed development of the site is for up to 55 dwellings, associated landscaping and open space, with access from Knight Park.

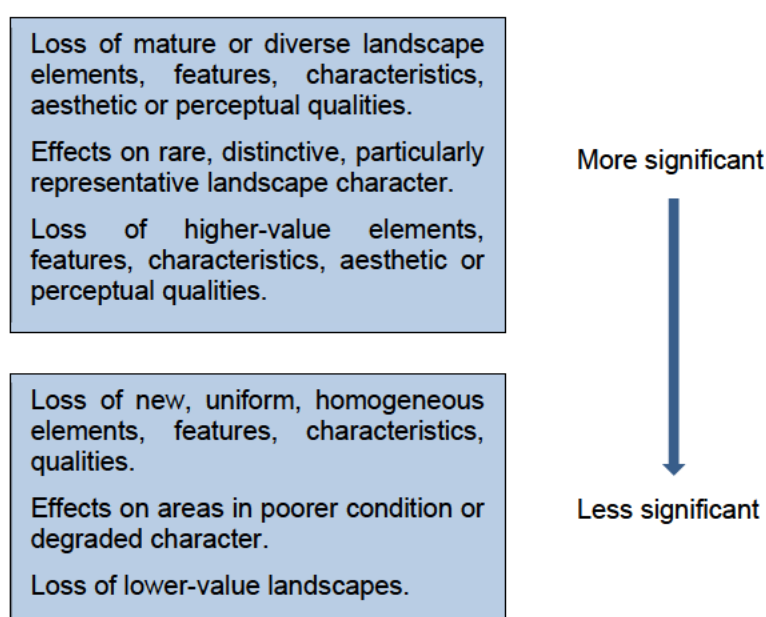
2.0 METHODOLOGY

- 2.1 This LVA has been prepared based upon the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, third edition (GLVIA3), published by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, in 2013. The assessment of Landscape Value also takes account of guidance in Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 02-21 "Assessing landscape value outside national designations".
- 2.2 In summary, the GLVIA3 states:
- "Landscape and Visual impact assessment (LVIA), is a tool used to identify and assess the significance of and the effects of change resulting from development on both landscape as an environmental resource in its own right and on people's views and visual amenity."* (GLVIA3 paragraph 1.1.)
- 2.3 There are two components of LVIA:
- *"Assessment of landscape effects; assessing effects on the landscape as a resource in its own right;*
 - *Assessment of visual effects: assessing effects on specific views and on the general visual amenity experienced by people."* (GLVIA3 paragraph 2.21.)
- 2.4 The GLVIA3 states:
- "LVIA can be carried out either as part of a broader EIA, or as a standalone 'appraisal' of the likely landscape and visual effects of a proposed development..."*
- *As a standalone 'appraisal' the process is informal and there is more flexibility, but the essence of the approach – specifying the nature of the proposed change or development; describing the existing landscape and the views and visual amenity of the area that may be affected; predicting the effects, although not their likely significance; and considering how those effects might be mitigated – still applies".* (GLVIA paragraph 3.2)
- 2.5 The components of this report include: baseline studies; description and details of the landscape proposals and mitigation measures to be adopted as part of the scheme; and identification and description of likely effects arising from the proposed development.
- 2.6 In terms of baseline studies, the assessment provides an understanding of the landscape that may be affected, its constituent elements, character, condition and value. For the visual baseline, this includes an understanding of the area in which the development may be visible, the people who may experience views, and the nature of views.

Assessment of Landscape Effects

- 2.7 GLVIA3 states that *"An assessment of landscape effects deals with the effects of change and development on landscape as a resource"* (GLVIA3 paragraph 5.1).
- 2.8 The baseline landscape is described by reference to existing published Landscape Character Assessments and by a description of the site and its context.
- 2.9 A range of landscape effects can arise through development. These can include:
- Change or loss of elements, features, aesthetic or perceptual aspects that contribute to the character and distinctiveness of the landscape;

- Addition of new elements that influence character and distinctiveness of the landscape;
 - Combined effects of these changes.
- 2.10 The characteristics of the existing landscape resource are considered in respect of the susceptibility of the landscape resource to the change arising from this development. The value of the existing landscape is also considered.
- 2.11 Each effect on landscape receptors is assessed in terms of size or scale, the geographical extent of the area influenced and its duration and reversibility. In terms of size or scale of change, the judgement takes account of the extent of the existing landscape elements that will be lost or changed, and the degree to which the aesthetic or perceptual aspects or key characteristics of the landscape will be altered by removal or addition of new elements. Geographical extent is considered by reference to the extent of the area over which there will be a change. Duration is considered for the landscape effects, with short term effects being defined as those lasting less than 5 years, medium term effects lasting between 5 and 10 years and long-term effects being defined as anything over 10 years in duration.
- 2.12 The level of effect is determined by considering the sensitivity of the landscape receptors and the magnitude of effect on the landscape. Final conclusions on the overall landscape effects are drawn from the assessment components described. This appraisal describes the nature of the landscape effects, and whether these are adverse or beneficial, at the following stages of development; construction, completion (year 1) and longer term (year 15).
- 2.13 GLVIA3 sets out some guidance on the underlying principles, which are used in this appraisal. This includes Figure 5.10, Scale of significance. Whilst this scheme is not EIA development, and judgements on significance are not therefore required, the Figure does provide useful guidance on reaching an overall judgement on the level of effects. This is repeated below (note this includes the correction of a typo, from the published document)



Assessment of Visual Effects

- 2.14 An assessment of visual effects deals with the effects of change and development on the views available to people and their visual amenity. This appraisal describes the nature of the visual effects and, whether these are adverse or beneficial, at the following stages of development; construction, completion (year 0 Winter) and longer term (year 15 Summer).
- 2.15 The first stage in the assessment is to identify approximate visibility/ visibility mapping. This is done by either a computerised Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV)¹, or by manual methods using map study and field evaluation. A series of viewpoints are included within the assessment that are representative of views towards the site from surrounding visual receptors. Other views of the site are included where it supports the description and understanding of the site's landscape and visual characteristics.
- 2.16 The views also typically represent what can be seen from a variety of distances from the development and different viewing experiences.
- 2.17 It is important to remember that visual receptors are all people. For each affected viewpoint, the assessment considers both the susceptibility to change in views and the value attached to views.

"The visual receptors most susceptible to change are generally likely to include:

- *Residents at home;*
 - *People, whether residents or visitors, who are engaged in outdoor recreation, including use of public rights of way, whose attention or interest is likely to be focused on the landscape and on particular views;*
 - *Visitors to heritage assets, or to other attractions, where views of the surroundings are an important contributor to the experience;*
 - *Communities where views contribute to the landscape setting enjoyed by residents in the area;*
- Travellers on road, rail or other transport routes tend to fall into an intermediate category of moderate susceptibility to change. Where travel involves recognised scenic routes awareness of views is likely to be particularly high."* (GLVIA3 paragraph 6.33.)

"Visual receptors likely to be less sensitive to change include:

- *People engaged in outdoor sport or recreation which does not involve or depend upon appreciation of views of the landscape;*
- *People at their place of work whose attention may be focused on their work or activity, not on their surroundings, and where the setting is not important to the quality of working life (although there may on occasion be cases where views are an important contributor to the setting and to the quality of working life)." (GLVIA3 paragraph 6.34.)*

- 2.18 Each of the visual effects is evaluated in terms of its size or scale, the geographical extent of the area influenced and its duration or reversibility.
- 2.19 In terms of size or scale, the magnitude of visual effects takes account of:

¹ Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV): A map usually digitally produced, showing areas of land within which a development is theoretically visible. [GLVIA3]

- *“The scale of the change in the view with respect to the loss or addition of features in the view and changes in its composition, including proportion of the view occupied by the proposed development;*
 - *The degree of contrast or integration of any new features or changes in the landscape with the existing or remaining landscape elements and characteristics in terms of form, scale and mass, line height, colour and texture;*
 - *The nature of the view of the proposed development, in terms of the relative amount of time over which it will be experienced and whether views will be full, partial or glimpses” (GLVIA3 paragraph 6.39).*
- 2.20 The geographical extent of the visual effect in each viewpoint is likely to reflect:
- The angle of view in relation to the main activity of the receptor;
 - The distance of the viewpoint from the proposed development;
 - The extent of the area over which the changes would be visible.
- 2.21 As with landscape effects, the duration of the effect could be short to long term or permanent and the same definitions apply.
- 2.22 GLVIA3 states that there are no hard and fast rules about what makes a significant effect, and there cannot be a standard approach since circumstances vary with the location and context and with the type of proposal, but the following points should be noted;
- *Effects on people who are particularly sensitive to changes in views and visual amenity are more likely to be significant*
 - *Effects on people at recognised and important viewpoints or from recognised scenic routes are more likely to be significant*
 - *Large-scale changes which introduce new, non-characteristic or discordant or intrusive elements into the view are more likely to be significant than small changes or changes involving features already present within the view. (GLVIA3 paragraph 6.44)*

Overall Landscape and Visual Effects

- 2.23 The final conclusions on effects, whether adverse or beneficial, are drawn from the separate judgements on the sensitivity of the receptors and the magnitude of the effects. This overall judgement is formed from a reasoned professional overview of the individual judgements against the assessment criteria.
- 2.24 GLVIA3 notes, at paragraphs 5.56 and 6.44, that there are no hard and fast rules with regard to the level of effects, therefore the following terms have been used for this appraisal:
- **Major**
 - **Moderate**
 - **Minor**
 - **Negligible**
- 2.25 Where it is determined that the assessment falls between or encompasses two of the defined criteria terms, then the judgement may be described as, for example, Major/ Moderate or Moderate/ Minor. This indicates that the effect is assessed to lie between the respective definitions or to encompass aspects of both.

3.0 PLANNING POLICY

National Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF September 2023)

- 3.1 The NPPF sets out the Government's economic, environmental and social planning policy and in combination these policies give the Government's vision of sustainable development. The NPPF emphasises the need for well-designed places, promoting healthy and safe communities and conserving and enhancing the natural environment.
- 3.2 Regarding landscape and green infrastructure, the Natural Environment section of the NPPF provides a policy context for the countryside and green infrastructure. The key objectives include protecting and enhancing valued landscapes and, minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures.
- 3.3 Paragraph 174 states at part a) that planning policies and decisions should protect and enhance valued landscapes and goes on to clarify that this should be in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan. Part b) states that planning policies and decisions should recognise *"the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside"*.
- 3.4 Paragraph 175 advises that:

"Plans should: distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites; allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework; take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure; and plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries".
- 3.5 Paragraph 176 goes on to add:

"Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues". And

"The scale and extent of development within all these designated areas should be limited, while development within their setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas."
- 3.6 The site is not in the setting of a nationally designated landscape. The character of the site and its immediate context is assessed within this report to help inform decisions regarding *"the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside"*. The potential to enhance green infrastructure networks is also considered.

Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)

- 3.7 The PPG was first published on 6th March 2014 and is a regularly updated online planning resource which provides guidance on the NPPF and the planning system. The NPPF continues to be the primary document for decision making.

- 3.8 Guidance on open space, sports and recreation facilities and how should open space be taken into account in planning for new development is provided. Extracts relating to open space are provided below:

Open space should be taken into account in planning for new development and considering proposals that may affect existing open space (see National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 96). Open space, which includes all open space of public value, can take many forms, from formal sports pitches to open areas within a development, linear corridors and country parks. It can provide health and recreation benefits to people living and working nearby; have an ecological value and contribute to green infrastructure, as well as being an important part of the landscape and setting of built development, and an important component in the achievement of sustainable development.

Paragraph: 001 Reference ID: 37-001-20140306

- 3.9 Guidance on the natural environment explains key issues to protect and enhance the natural environment. Extracts from the guidance on green infrastructure are provided below:

Green infrastructure can embrace a range of spaces and assets that provide environmental and wider benefits. It can, for example, include parks, playing fields, other areas of open space, woodland, allotments, private gardens, sustainable drainage features, green roofs and walls, street trees and 'blue infrastructure' such as streams, ponds, canals and other water bodies. References to green infrastructure in this guidance also apply to different types of blue infrastructure where appropriate.

Paragraph: 004 Reference ID: 8-004-2019072

Green infrastructure is a natural capital asset that provides multiple benefits, at a range of scales. For communities, these benefits can include enhanced wellbeing, outdoor recreation and access, enhanced biodiversity and landscapes, food and energy production, urban cooling, and the management of flood risk. These benefits are also known as ecosystem services.

Paragraph: 005 Reference ID: 8-005-20190721

Local Planning Policy

Uttlesford Local Plan – Adopted January 2005

- 3.10 The current local plan was adopted in 2005. It provides the basis for all planning decisions within the district. It contains policies relating to the location of development and protection of environmental features.
- 3.11 The following policies are of relevance to landscape and visual matters and the proposed development:
- **Policy S7 – The Countryside**
 - **Policy GEN2 – Design**
 - **Policy ENV8 – Other Landscape Elements of Importance for Nature Conservation**

Saffron Walden Neighbourhood Plan 2021-2036

- 3.12 This Neighbourhood Plan covers the period from 2016-2031 and will be used by councillors and officers at Uttlesford District Council in assessing planning applications and by developers when preparing planning applications for submission.
- 3.13 The following policies are of relevance to landscape and visual matters and the proposed development:
- ***Policy SW3 Design***
 - ***Policy SW12 Promoting walking and cycling***
 - ***Policy SW17 Open space for informal recreation***
 - ***Policy SW18 Public rights of way***

Other Relevant Strategies, Guidelines or DocumentsBuilding for a Healthy Life (November 2021)

- 3.14 This design guidance sets the standard for well-designed homes and neighbourhoods. It has been adopted by Uttlesford District Council and was endorsed by the Local Plan Leadership Group on 28 October 2021.
- 3.15 The guidance is based on 'Building for a Healthy Life', a government-endorsed industry standard, and will be used to inform decisions on planning applications.

The Essex Design Guide

- 3.16 The Essex Design Guide (EDG) provides contemporary socio economic, environmental, and best practice guidance to planners and those interested in the provision of new housing developments. design guidance sets the standard for well-designed homes and neighbourhoods.

Supplementary Planning Documents

- 3.17 Uttlesford District Council has produced Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) to provide more detailed advice or guidance on how policies in the Local Plan should be implemented. SPDs are a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.
- 3.18 The following SPDs are of relevance to the proposed development:
- ***Urban Place Supplement to the Essex Design Guide (March 2007)***
 - ***Accessible Homes and Playspace (November 2005)***

Green Infrastructure Framework, Natural England (January 2023)

- 3.19 Natural England published a Green Infrastructure Framework in January 2023, setting out best practice guidance aimed at planners and developers, to help increase the amount of green infrastructure (GI) in urban residential areas. It includes principles covering why, what and how to incorporate good green GI.
- 3.20 Extracts outlining the attributes for what good GI should look like are provided below:

Varied: GI includes a mix of types and sizes that can provide a range of functions and benefits to address specific issues and needs.

GI should comprise a variety of types and sizes of green and blue spaces, green routes and environmental features (as part of a network) that can provide a range of different functions, benefits and solutions to address specific issues and needs.

- 3.21 Guidance is also provided on the targets for the provision of Greenspace close to people's homes. Extracts from Appendix 2 – Accessible Greenspace Standards are provided below.

The Green Infrastructure Headline Standards states everyone should have access to good quality green and blue spaces close to home for health and wellbeing and contact with nature, to meet the Accessible Greenspace Standards, with an initial focus on access to green and blue spaces within 15 minutes' walk from home.

The Accessible Greenspace Standards define good provision based on different size-proximity, capacity and quality criteria as set out below. .

Size Proximity Criteria

Within 15 minutes' walk

EITHER a Doorstep or Local Accessible Greenspace

- *A doorstep greenspace of at least 0.5ha within 200 metres, or*
- *A local natural greenspace of at least 2ha within 300 metres walk from home.*

4.0 BASELINE CONDITIONS

Landscape Character (Figure 5)

National Character

- 4.1 National Character Area (NCA) profiles have been prepared by Natural England for the 159 NCAs defined across England. These NCA profiles include a description of the natural and cultural features that shape the landscape, how the landscape has changed over time, the current key drivers for ongoing change, and a broad analysis of each area's characteristics.
- 4.2 At this very broad landscape scale, the site lies at the northern edge of Natural England's National Character Area (NCA) 86 'South Suffolk & North Essex Clayland'. This NCA covers the four counties of Suffolk, Essex, Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire. It stretches from Bury St Edmunds in the north-west to Ipswich in the north-east, roughly following the line of the A14 trunk road through the Gipping Valley. It then embraces the Colchester hinterland before encompassing the urban areas of Braintree and Chelmsford in the south and stretching to Bishop's Stortford and Stevenage in the west. The Key Characteristics for the NCA are:
- *An undulating chalky boulder clay plateau is dissected by numerous river valleys, giving a topography of gentle slopes in the lower, wider valleys and steeper slopes in the narrower upper parts.*
 - *Fragments of chalk give many of the soils a calcareous character, which also influences the character of the semi-natural vegetation cover.*
 - *South-east-flowing streams and rivers drain the clay plateau. Watercourses wind slowly across flood plains, supporting wet, fen-type habitats; grazing marsh; and blocks of cricket-bat willows, poplars and old willow pollards. Navigation locks are present on some rivers.*
 - *Lowland wood pasture and ancient woodlands support the dormouse and a rich diversity of flowering plants on the clay plateau. Large, often ancient hedgerows link woods and copses, forming wooded skylines.*
 - *The agricultural landscape is predominantly arable with a wooded appearance. There is some pasture on the valley floors. Field patterns are irregular despite rationalisation, with much ancient countryside surviving. Field margins support corn bunting, cornflower and brown hare.*
 - *Roman sites, medieval monasteries and castles and ancient woodlands contribute to a rich archaeology. Impressive churches, large barns, substantial country house estates and Second World War airfields dot the landscape, forming historical resources.*
 - *There is a dispersed settlement pattern of scattered farmsteads, parishes and small settlements around 'tyes' (commons) or strip greens and isolated hamlets. The NCA features a concentration of isolated moated farmsteads and numerous well-preserved medieval towns and large villages.*
 - *Larger 20th-century development has taken place to the south and east around Chelmsford, Ipswich and the new towns of Harlow and Stevenage.*
 - *Traditional timber-frame, often elaborate buildings with exposed timbers, colour-washed render, pargeting and steeply pitched roofs with pegtiles or long straw thatch. Sometimes they have*

been refronted with Georgian red brick or Victorian cream-coloured bricks ('Suffolk whites'). Clay lump is often used in cottages and farm buildings.

- *Winding, narrow and sometimes sunken lanes are bounded by deep ditches, wide verges and strong hedgerows. Transport infrastructure includes the A14, A12, M11 and Stansted Airport.*
- *A strong network of public rights of way provides access to the area's archetypal lowland English countryside*

4.3 The 'Statement of Environmental Opportunity' includes the following of relevance for the site and proposed development:

4.4 *SEO 2: Protect and enhance the area's ancient woodland cover, parkland trees, river valley plantations and ancient hedgerows, through the management of existing woods and the planting of new woods, hedgerows and hedgerow trees to benefit landscape character, habitat connectivity and a range of ecosystem services, including timber provision, the regulation of soil erosion and the strengthening of the sense of place and history. For example, by:*

- *Restoring traditional orchards, once a feature of many settlements, which contribute to the area's sense of place and genetic diversity.*
- *Conserving, managing and replanting hedgerows, especially those that are ancient and species rich, in a manner consistent with the historical patterns, particularly in areas that will help to regulate soil erosion.*
- *Encouraging the planting of characteristic hedgerow trees from existing hedgerow stocks; that is, oak in Suffolk and field maple and hornbeam in Essex. This will enhance landscape diversity and ecosystem services, including carbon storage. It will also help to counteract the threats to landscape character and biodiversity from tree diseases such as ash die-back.*
- *Ensuring that new hedgerow planting on the plateau does not block important views and overly enclose the landscape. Planting characteristic species mixes will support biodiversity and landscape character and should include hawthorn, blackthorn, hazel, field maple, dogwood, spindle and small-leaved lime (derived from woodland).*
- *Extending and linking woodland sites, including orchards, through the expansion and enhancement of semi-natural linear features such as hedgebanks, streams, sunken hedged lanes, grass verges and farm woodlands, enhancing biodiversity and landscape character.*

Braintree, Brentwood, Chelmsford, Maldon and Uttlesford Landscape Character Assessments. September 2009 Chris Blandford Associates

4.5 This study provides a comprehensive assessment of the landscape character within the study area to inform land use planning and land management decisions. The study was jointly commissioned from Chris Blandford Associates by Uttlesford, Braintree, Chelmsford, Maldon and Brentwood Councils and the study covers all these district/borough areas.

4.6 The site falls within the Character Area A1 Cam River Valley. Key characteristics for this area are provided below:

- *Rolling, open landscape of chalky boulder clay with wide views from higher ground.*
- *Well vegetated riverbanks with shrubs, trees and water meadows along the winding narrow river corridor.*
- *Large-scale downland reflecting late enclosure, with rectilinear field pattern .*
- *Low hedges and few trees mainly in small copses.*
- *Ancient town of Saffron Walden.*
- *Dispersed settlements on valley sides connected by busy B roads.*

4.7 Further analysis of the Character Area A1 Cam River Valley is provided below:

Overall Character

The Cam River Valley extends from the Cambridgeshire-Essex boundary south to Newport where the M11 and the B1383 roads converge. It is a broad rolling landscape that drains the River Cam and its tributaries, Debden Water and Wicken Water. The eastern slopes are dominated by the historic settlement of Saffron Walden, with its imposing church. This side of the river valley is characterised by large farms and small villages connected by small lanes. In contrast, the western slopes are more diverse, with small quiet villages, and many busy roads. The eastern slopes are a large-scale landscape of primarily arable fields, with some grazing pastures. Dense blocks of trees, including some ancient woodland, punctuate the western slopes where the field boundaries are typically organic in shape. The M11, the railway line and the B1383 run north-south through the western slopes of the Cam River Valley. Disused clay pits and chalk pits can be seen in places on the lower slopes. On the eastern slopes, the settlement pattern is dispersed, with isolated farmsteads and nucleated villages such as Little Walden and Little Chesterford. Colour-washed thatched or mellow red brick houses are found throughout the valley which enhance its visually rich heritage, and there are some outstanding old barns. Great Chesterford is a larger village, with business parks and significant commercial areas. Field pattern is regular, bounded by gappy hedgerows, drainage ditches and occasional trees. Views from the higher ground are often framed by distant patches of woodland and scattered copses. The narrow course of the River Cam meanders within its floodplain between Great Chesterford and Shortgrove Bridge. The river corridor is fringed by trees which delineate its shape within the patchwork of pasture and plantation woodlands that line the valley floor. Audley End - an outstanding Jacobean manor set in its eighteenth century Capability Brown landscape park is a distinctive area of local character. In the upper reaches, arable farmland covers steep slopes descending almost to the river's edge. The village of Littlebury, with its picturesque setting along the River Cam and its historic houses in many shades of colour-washed plaster, also possesses the former King's Mill - an old watermill that bridges the river behind the village.

Visual Characteristics

- *Attractive panoramic views from the eastern slopes to western valley slopes framed by distant blocks of trees.*
- *Views of towns and villages from higher ground.*
- *Valley sides descend quite steeply from rolling arable fields to the river and its tributaries and dramatic views are possible from the ridges.*

- *Large ancient town of Saffron Walden, and its distinctive church spire can be seen from many directions due to its position on the higher slopes.*
- *Intimate views on the lower slopes of wooded river valley floor.*
- *Intimate scale of villages and towns contrasts with large-scale modern agriculture.*
- *Hedgerow loss is visible in the landscape.*
- *Urban fringe settlement often not well integrated into the landscape.*

Sensitivities to Change

Sensitive key characteristics and landscape elements within this character area include the patchwork pattern of pasture and plantation woodlands, which would be sensitive to changes in land management. The open skyline of the valley slopes is visually sensitive, with new development potentially being highly visible within panoramic inter and cross-valley views. Intimate views from lower slopes to the wooded river valley floor and views to the valley sides from adjacent Landscape Character Areas are also sensitive. Historic integrity is relatively strong with a dispersed historic settlement pattern and several winding lanes, greens and ancient woodlands...

Proposed Landscape Strategy Objectives

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

Suggested Landscape Planning Guidelines

- *Conserve and enhance the landscape setting of settlements.*
- *Maintain cross-valley views.*
- *Consider the landscape pattern and structure of large woodland areas and the role that they have in the composition of views to and from the area.*
- *Ensure that new woodland planting is designed to enhance landscape character and that species composition reflects local character.*
- *Ensure any new development on valley sides is small-scale and that it responds to historic settlement pattern, form and building materials.*
- *Encourage the re-use of redundant agricultural farm buildings, especially red brick or black timber-framed and boarded barns.*

Suggested Land Management Guidelines

- *Develop strategies to deal with peak flows of traffic in tourist season, particularly near Audley End.*
- *Conserve and enhance existing hedgerows and restore where possible.*
- *Establish arable field margins.*
- *Conserve and manage areas of ancient woodland as historical landscape and nature conservation features.*

- *Consider the visual impact of new farm buildings on the valley slopes and encourage the planting of tree groups around visually intrusive buildings.*

Designations

- 4.8 Figure 4 illustrates the location of the designations within the immediate context of the site.
- 4.9 Neither the site or its immediate context are situated within a nationally or locally designated area of landscape value eg. National Park, National Landscape, Special Landscape Areas, Area of Great Landscape Value.

Topography

- 4.10 The following should be read in conjunction with Figure 3.

Context – Landform

- 4.11 The site sits on gently undulating land associated with the Cam Valley. Within the southern corner of the site land rises to the south at approximately 95m AOD. Land falls towards the northern corner of the site at approximately 78m AOD. Other variations in topography within the site include ditches as well as embankments present along field boundaries and the interface with Knight Park.
- 4.12 Topography within the wider landscape is varied, with gently undulating hills and narrow shallow valley slopes along the River Cam and associated tributaries. Localised landform includes a series of low hills and ridgelines which surround Saffron Walden. Shire Hill Farm (at approximately 100m AOD) is situated to the north of the site, beyond the Bellway Homes Poppy View development. Further away to the south and east of the site, undulating hills lie at around 115m AOD.

Site and Immediate Context

- 4.13 The site is located to the north of Thaxted Road, adjacent to existing developments at the southeastern edge of Saffron Walden. A public right of way off Tiptofts Lane bisects the site. The site's northern parcel abuts the Bellway Homes Poppy View development. A corridor of public open space including an equipped children's play area, attenuation basin and new planting is located between the northern site boundary and residential properties situated off Cardamon Road.
- 4.14 A range of other residential and commercial developments are situated to the west of the site by Thaxted Road. These include the Kilns apartments, terraced properties and other residential dwellings by Tiptoft Lane. Various commercial developments at Knight Park include an Aldi supermarket, Pets at Home store, B&M Garden centre store, Pure Gym, Howdens, a Premier Inn and Saffron Walden household waste recycling centre. Developments backing onto the site's western boundary include the Pets at Home store, B&M Garden centre store, Pure Gym, Saffron Walden household waste recycling centre and an access road.
- 4.15 It is also noted that residential development has been approved on land situated to the west of Thaxted Road (s62A/2022/0014).
- 4.16 Bus stops and pedestrian crossing points are located on Thaxted Road by Knight Park.
- 4.17 The wider landscape to the south and east of the site is characterised by gently undulating agricultural fields along the Cam Valley. Vegetation cover along field boundaries, lanes and track varies, typically including hedgerows, with occasional copses, tree belts and woodland. Scattered

farmsteads and detached properties are also present, including at Cole End, Brickkiln Leys Farm, Gunters and The Old Pig & Whistle.

- 4.18 Settlements within the surrounding area to the north east of the site include the village of Swards End, approximately 1.2km away.

Site Features

- 4.19 Fields within the site are currently in agricultural use occupied by arable fields. Vegetation cover within the site itself is restricted to hedgerows and trees, present along parts of the site perimeter. Hedgerows along parts of the boundaries are degraded and have become gappy in places. Ditches are also present along some field boundaries.
- 4.20 Public rights of way include a byway open to all traffic along Tiptofts Lane which crosses the site, a public footpath and a public bridleway which run along the site's eastern boundary. The public rights of way provide connections to the wider countryside from Saffron Walden's settlement edge.
- 4.21 Agricultural fields within the site are situated at the urban fringe of Saffron Walden. Views of the site are seen within the context of farmland along the Cam valley as well as various residential and commercial developments situated at the edge of Saffron Walden and by Thaxted Road.

Landscape Value

- 4.22 In terms of "landscape value" it is appropriate to examine the role of the site and its immediate context in terms of the range of local factors set out in LI TGN 02-21, and summarised in the methodology. This considers the landscape in terms of a range of factors as set out below. As a starting point, landscape designations have been considered.
- 4.23 Landscape Designations: The site and its wider landscape context (including its Visual Envelope) (Figure 6) are not subject to any national, local or other landscape designations.
- 4.24 Natural Heritage: The site is not designated for nature conservation value. Habitats of ecological interest are limited to the periphery of the site and along Tiptofts Lane. The proposed development would offer the potential to enhance wildlife corridors along the site boundaries as part of a cohesive green infrastructure framework.
- 4.25 Cultural Heritage: There are no listed buildings, conservation areas or monuments within or adjacent to the site. Within the historic town of Saffron Walden and wider landscape are a number of heritage assets including listed buildings, a conservation area, scheduled monuments, as well as as registered park and gardens. These heritage assets have no notable inter visibility with the site.
- 4.26 Landscape Condition: The site is in reasonable condition and is in use as farmland. Landscape features include field hedgerows and trees, situated along site perimeters and along Tiptofts Lane.
- 4.27 Associations: There are no known associations within the site itself.
- 4.28 Distinctiveness: The site includes gently sloping agricultural fields along the Cam valley. There are no unusual features within the site.
- 4.29 Recreational Value: Public rights of way include a byway open to all traffic along Tiptofts Lane which bisects the site, and a public footpath runs along the site's eastern boundary. The public rights of way provide connections to the wider countryside from Saffron Walden's settlement edge.

- 4.30 Bellway Homes Poppy View development situated immediately to the north of the site provides a corridor of public open space including an equipped children's play area.
- 4.31 Perceptual (Scenic): Views of the site are seen within the context of farmland along the Cam valley as well as various residential and commercial developments.
- 4.32 Perceptual (Wildness and tranquillity): The site is not particularly wild or tranquil as it is located adjacent to various residential and commercial developments.
- 4.33 Functional aspects: Fields within the site currently have a limited function other than its use for agriculture. Development of the site would provide opportunities for the creation of residential dwellings and green infrastructure enhancements. Existing public rights of way situated within and adjacent to the site provide footpath connections from the settlement edge. Existing field hedgerows provide some potential for wildlife corridors.
- 4.34 In conclusion and having appraised the above factors it is judged that the site and the immediate landscape is overall of medium landscape value.

Visual Baseline

- 4.35 A visual appraisal has been undertaken for the site (Figure 6). This has explored the nature of the existing visual amenity of the area and sought to establish the approximate visibility of the site from surrounding locations and receptors. A series of photo viewpoints have been selected which support this analysis. Photographs have been taken to illustrate a view from a specific vantage point, or to demonstrate a representative view for those receptors that are moving through the landscape, e.g. rights of way users. The photographs may demonstrate varying degrees of visibility and include both short and long range views. The majority of views have been selected to represent the maximum potential visibility of the site and the potential future development. The photographs were taken in November 2023 and seasonal differences have been taken into account when determining the visual effects on receptors.
- 4.36 'Photo Viewpoints', as referred to in this report are 'Type 1 Visualisations' or 'Annotated Viewpoint Photographs', as referred to in the Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note on 'Visual Representation of Development Proposals' (TGN 06/19).

Photo Viewpoints

- 4.37 An assessment of the likely visual effects of the proposed development upon surrounding receptors is detailed in the subsequent section. Figure 6 details the location of the Photo Viewpoints. Photographs for key viewpoints are provided at Figures 7 - 20 and briefly described below.

Viewpoint 1: View from Thaxted Road by the junction with Tiptofts Lane

- 4.38 This viewpoint is taken from Thaxted Road by the junction with Tiptofts Lane. The view is semi-enclosed due to a combination of existing vegetation cover and built development. Hedgerow and trees are present along the eastern side of Thaxted Road and channel views along the road corridor. Highways infrastructure along the road corridor includes the main carriageway, grass verges, a footpath/cycleway, lighting columns and highways signage. Apartments and terraced properties by Tiptofts Lane are situated on higher ground, set further back from Thaxted Road

behind grass embankments and timber fencing. There are also commercial developments within view including at the Old Cement Kilns and at Knight Park.

Viewpoints 2A & 2B: Views from Tiptoft Lane (Ref Saffron Walden 18) by the site

- 4.39 Views from Tiptoft Lane by the site are largely enclosed due to the presence of existing hedgerows on both sides of the lane. There are glimpsed views of the site to the north of Tiptoft Lane, filtered by vegetation cover (Viewpoint 2A).
- 4.40 A localised gap in the hedgerow allows views across the site to the south of Tiptoft Lane (Viewpoint 2B). Views are across a sloping agricultural field which rises to the south and forms the near horizon. Field hedgerows are present along the site perimeter and appear gappy in places. An embankment and timber fencing are present along the site's western boundary with the B&M Home store and Garden Centre prominent within the view. Hedgerow vegetation partially screens the waste recycling centre from view.

Viewpoint 3: Southerly view from a public footpath (Ref Saffron Walden 36) adjacent to the site's eastern boundary

- 4.41 Southerly views from the public footpath are available across the site where gaps in the vegetation cover occur. The existing view is across sloping agricultural field which rises to the south and forms the near horizon. Field hedgerows are present along the perimeter of the site and alongside Tiptoft Lane. Gaps in the vegetation cover along the site's western boundary allow relatively open views towards various developments within Knights Retail Park including the Premier Inn, the B&M Home store and Garden Centre and Pets at Home. Glimpsed views of the waste recycling centre are partially screened by hedgerow vegetation cover.

Viewpoint 4: Northerly view from the Knight Park

- 4.42 This viewpoint taken within the Knight Park, is along an access road towards agricultural fields situated within the site. Developments including Puregym Local and the household waste recycling centre are set back from the road behind footpath, landscape embankments and retaining walls. Car parking for the retail park and the Premier Inn also occupy the foreground view. Partial views into the site include a sloping agricultural field with hedgerow boundaries, which are gappy in places.

Viewpoint 5: Westerly view from public byway (Ref Saffron Walden 18) to the east of Knight Park, Thaxted Road

- 4.43 Longer distance views towards the site from Tiptoft Lane are largely restricted due to the presence of hedgerows situated along the lane and field boundaries. This localised view towards the site is available where a gap in the hedgerow vegetation occurs. Partial filtered views into the site are across sloping agricultural field. Various built developments situated by the site's western boundary include the B&M Home store and Garden Centre and Pets at Home.

Viewpoint 6: Westerly view from public bridleway (Ref Saffron Walden 19) by the Bellway Homes Poppy View development

- 4.44 Views from the public bridleway are dominated by the Bellway Homes residential development, seen at close range. Glimpsed partial views of the site are seen within the close context of the Bellway Homes residential development. Other developments within view are situated to the east of Thaxted Road including residential developments by Tiptofts Lane and larger scale buildings within Knight Park, including the B&M Home store and Garden Centre, Pets at Home and the Premier Inn.

Viewpoint 7: Westerly view from public footpath (Ref Saffron Walden 36) to the east of Thaxted Road

Viewpoint 8: Westerly view from public footpath (Ref Saffron Walden 36) to the east of Thaxted Road

- 4.45 Views from the public footpath (Viewpoints 7 and 8) are across arable fields towards various existing developments situated at the south eastern edge of Saffron Walden. Developments within view include large scale buildings within Knight Park and residential development situated at Bellway Homes Poppy View development. Residential roofscape of other properties within the Saffron Walden are also visible. A church spire forms a notable landmark within the view. From Viewpoint 7 a distance partial view of the site (the field to the south of Tiptofts Lane) is backdropped by existing residential developments within Saffron Walden, and seen within the close context of other developments within Knight Park, including the B&M Home store and Garden Centre, Pets at Home and the Premier Inn.
- 4.46 Longer distance views towards the site from the public footpath (Viewpoint 8) are more restricted. The site is screened from view due to localised landform situated within the intervening landscape.

Viewpoint 9: Southerly view from Cardamon Road, Bellway Homes Poppy View development

- 4.47 This southerly view from Cardamon Road is situated at the edge of Bellway Homes Poppy View development, to the north of the site. Existing foreground views are obstructed in places by constructions works associated with the Bellway Homes Poppy View development. Beyond the Bellway development, the view overlooks an agricultural field to alongside Tiptofts Lane situated within the northern part of the Site. Established hedgerow vegetation along Tiptofts Lane screens the wider Site from view. Existing developments within view include upper parts of commercial buildings within Knight Park as well as residential properties alongside Tiptofts Lane.

Viewpoint 10: Easterly view from the Green Mile public open space by Peal Road

- 4.48 Viewpoint 10 is taken from the Green Mile public open space situated to the south of Tukes Way and Peal Road. Foreground views are available across the public open space towards the adjacent field which has been approved for residential development (s62A/2022/0014). This viewpoint is taken from an elevated vantage point which enables long-distance views across the wider landscape to the east, including developments situated to the east of Thaxted Road, and the countryside beyond. Hedgerows and trees situated along field boundaries and Thaxted Road soften views of various built developments including residential properties at Bellway Homes Poppy View, and elsewhere alongside Tiptoft Lane, as well as the Aldi, Premier Inn and other commercial developments at Knight Park. Partial glimpsed views of the site (the field to the north of Tiptofts Lane) are seen within the close context of existing residential developments.

Summary of Visual Baseline

- 4.49 The baseline analysis results in a number of reasoned conclusions which are summarised below:
- The site has a restricted visual envelop, being generally well contained due to the combined screening effects of topography and vegetation cover along the Cam valley, as well as existing urban fabric at the south eastern edge of Saffron Walden.
 - The site occupies gently sloping land situated along the Cam valley and is visually contained to the north and west by existing settlement including various commercial and residential developments situated adjacent to the site. An undulating landscape of low ridgelines and shallow valleys associated with tributaries of the River Cam, along with tree belts and hedgerows restricts potential views of the site from the wider landscape.
 - The majority of views of the site are close range from users of the public rights of way network and Knights Retail Park situated adjacent to the site. Residential properties with clear views of the site are limited to dwellings situated to the north of Tiptofts Lane and from the Bellway Homes Poppy View development.
 - Longer distance views of the site from surrounding areas are more restricted. Partial views of the site occur from the public footpath to the south east, as well as from higher ground on the Green Mile, to the west of Thaxted Road. However, such views of the site are seen within the close context of existing developments at edge of Saffron Walden including the Knights Retail Park and Bellway Homes Poppy View development.

5.0 LANDSCAPE PROPOSALS

- 5.1 The existing landscape resource and the visual receptors and amenity of the site have been considered by the planning and design process and have informed the resultant scheme.

Landscape Design and Green Infrastructure (GI) Proposals

- 5.2 Analysis of local landscape character and visual resources has informed the design principles for the Illustrative Masterplan (Dwg No 3119-C-SK Rev J) prepared by Omega Architects. Considerations which form an important part of the Projects design are outlined below.
- 5.3 The proposed development will provide at the southeastern edge of Saffron Walden, to the north of Thaxted Road and adjacent to existing built developments. A main access into the site will be provided from Knight Park. The proposed development, comprising of up to 55 residential dwellings, will also include landscaped buffers along the boundaries, belts of new trees, green links and open green space along with new pedestrian routes and existing vegetation being retained where possible. A 3m high acoustic fence is also proposed by the site boundary / interface with the household waste recycling facility.
- 5.4 A high quality cohesive, multi-functional green infrastructure is proposed across the site to provide a rich and distinctive character. The following guidance underpins the landscape strategy:
- An appropriate relationship with the existing settlement edge and wider rural character will be achieved.
 - Open space to the north of Tiptofts Lane will create an attractive interface with the Bellway Homes Poppy view residential development.
 - Appropriate landscape buffers will be provided along the site's western boundary to the existing commercial developments and household waste recycling centre.
 - Development will be set back from the northeast and southeast site boundaries to minimise the visual impact upon the public rights of way network situated adjacent to the site and elsewhere within the surrounding countryside.
 - Existing hedgerow and trees along Tiptofts Lane would be retained and bolstered with additional planting to soften views of the proposed built development from the byway.
 - Key areas of focal open space and greenways would be actively fronted onto by adjacent streets, lanes and residential properties.
 - Where feasible existing hedges and trees by the site perimeter and along field boundaries will be retained within an enhanced green infrastructure framework. New planting will utilise a select planting palette including locally characteristic indigenous native tree varieties.
 - Vegetation cover along the site boundaries will be strengthened, with additional trees and hedgerow planting which will soften and filter views of the proposed built development.
 - Proposed footpaths will be provided to enhance opportunities for recreational uses. A choice of convenient and attractive routes will ensure connectivity both to the existing settlement and to the wider countryside.
 - All of the landscape areas and public open space features will be managed and maintained. This would be achieved through the implementation of a comprehensive Landscape Management Plan, to ensure the successful establishment and continued thriving of the landscape proposals.

6.0 LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL EFFECTS

- 6.1 The following section outlines the likely landscape and visual effects that would arise from proposed development on the site.

Landscape Effects

Construction

- 6.2 The approaches and methodologies to be adopted during the construction of the proposed development would endeavour to minimise any unnecessary effects upon the environment and surrounding receptors. For example, the location and design of temporary site compounds associated lighting, signage and screen fencing would all take these issues into account. Combined with effective project management and close liaison and communication with the relevant authorities, the potential effects of construction would be mitigated and minimised. It is anticipated that the construction working methods would adopt best practices wherever practicable.
- 6.3 The landscape character of the site would inevitably change during the construction period and would include the active presence of plant and machinery and the increasing presence of new built development and infrastructure.
- 6.4 Impacts upon the character of the site itself and the surrounding landscape during construction will typically be transitory in nature ie. views towards machinery, materials storage, contractors compound etc. However the effects arising from the construction period will be temporary and will therefore not cause any significant long-term harm.

Operation (following Completion)

- 6.5 This section details the landscape effects arising from the proposed development within the site. The assessment details the effects of the proposed development upon completion and the longer-term effects arising as the landscape/ planting matures.
- 6.6 The introduction of a residential development, associated infrastructure and open space would result in permanent changes in the landscape.
- 6.7 Permanent changes include:
- Change of land use from agricultural to residential;
 - The creation of a main vehicular access into the site off an access road from Knight Park;
 - Introduction of up to 55 new houses, access roads, lighting and their associated activity; and
 - Introduction of new Green Infrastructure including public open space, children's play area, footpaths, multi-use bridleway, structural trees/hedgerow boundary planting and Sustainable Drainage System features including an attenuation basins and swales.
- 6.8 The predicted effects are considered with reference to landscape character assessments and landscape features and components.

- 6.9 In terms of the National Character Area (NCA) 30 86 'South Suffolk & North Essex Clayland'. The effects are considered to be **Negligible** as the scheme would be a very small part of an extensive area that encompasses several existing settlements.
- 6.10 The proposals have been designed taking consideration of environmental opportunities, including the provision of green infrastructure across the site, along with access improvements and the creation of semi-natural habitats and enhancement of biodiversity. For example existing retained hedgerows will be enhanced with characteristic hedgerow trees including field maple, hornbeam and other native species.
- 6.11 The Braintree, Brentwood, Chelmsford, Maldon and Uttlesford Landscape Character Assessment places the site within Character Area A1 Cam River Valley. The Cam River Valley extends from the Cambridgeshire-Essex boundary south to Newport. The eastern part of the Cam River Valley is dominated by the settlement of Saffron Walden, whilst the wider landscape to the south and east of the site is characterised by arable agricultural fields. The field pattern is regular, bounded by gappy hedgerows, drainage ditches and occasional trees and woodland copses.
- 6.12 Within the site proposed built development would create a high-quality scheme that relates well to the adjacent settlement edge and local landscape. The proposed development would be well contained by a combination of existing urban fabric and field hedgerows which would limit any harm upon the character of wider Cam River Valley.
- 6.13 The proposed development would protect and enhance key features of the Cam River Valley. There are no notable cross-valley views towards the site, and those views of the site that do occur are seen within the close context of the existing settlement. Existing hedgerows would largely be retained for enhancement with additional tree planting to filter views to the urban fringe and reinforce the rural character.
- 6.14 The scale of the change across the Cam River Valley character area as a whole would be low and the landscape effects at outset is considered to be **Minor adverse**. At year 15, when the landscape around the site perimeter and within the public open space matures, it would help to further assimilate the development into the surrounding landscape. The landscape effect at year 15 is assessed as **Minor adverse / Negligible**.
- 6.15 Within the context of the site there are a range of existing influences from the settlement of Saffron Walden. The site is located to the east of Thaxted Road, adjacent to existing developments at the southeastern edge of Saffron Walden. The site boundary (north of Tiptofts Lane) adjoins land adjacent to the Kilns (Ref UTT/20/0864/FUL) proposed for residential development, and the Bellway Homes Poppy View residential development. The site boundary (south of Tiptofts Lane) adjoins various developments at Knight Park including Pets at Home, B&M Garden centre store, Pure Gym and the Saffron Walden household waste recycling centre.
- 6.16 A range of other residential and commercial developments are situated to the west of the site by Thaxted Road. These include the Kilns apartments, terraced properties and other residential dwellings by Tiptoft Lane, as well as an Aldi supermarket and a Premier Inn within Knight Park.
- 6.17 Proposed development would be read as a logical extension to the existing settlement, situated in close proximity to existing residential and commercial developments, and contained within the framework of existing hedgerows and tree present along field boundaries and Tiptofts Lane.
- 6.18 Proposed development is well-located in relation to the existing public rights of way network. Proposed footpath routes will link onto Tiptofts Lane, the public footpath adjacent to the site and

also into Knights Park which will ensure connectivity both to the existing settlement and to the wider countryside. Elsewhere within the site other footpath routes will be accommodated within proposed open space.

- 6.19 A change to the site and immediate landscape would arise as result of the replacement of agricultural land with residential development and associated infrastructure. Whilst built development would alter the physical fabric and character of the site, the proposal will retain and enhance existing landscape features wherever feasible. The majority of existing hedges and trees by the site perimeter and along Tiptofts Lane and other field boundaries will be retained and supplemented with additional tree planting. Existing field hedgerows along the site boundaries will be protected with the proposed development set back behind landscape buffers. The retained hedgerows will be enhanced with additional native species hedgerow trees to ensure a soft edge to the proposed built development. This will ensure that the proposed development achieves an appropriate interface with both the existing settlement and the wider Cam Valley. Green infrastructure includes the provision of open space and wildlife habitat creation. Proposed native tree planting, species rich grassland and SuDS wetland areas will enhance the retained landscape features and increase biodiversity.
- 6.20 At the year of completion, it is considered that the direct impact of the development to the site and the immediate landscape would be **Moderate adverse**. Whilst there would be an initial adverse effect, it is considered that these effects would reduce over time as the proposed green infrastructure becomes established. By year 15, the site would benefit from a maturing landscape of new hedgerow and tree planting and it is therefore assessed that the long term effects would be **Minor adverse**.

Visual Effects

Construction

- 6.21 Construction activities will result in temporary, phased, adverse effects on the viewing experience of all visual receptors that have views of the works. ie. views towards machinery, materials storage, contractors compound etc.
- 6.22 Effects will be greater for receptors directly adjacent to the site with unimpeded views. In general, the effects upon other receptors are of lower impact where longer distance views towards the site will see construction in context with of the existing settlement immediately adjacent to the site.
- 6.23 The visual receptors that will be the most noticeably affected will be those receptors with direct, close range views of the proposed building works. These will primarily be:
- Users of the public rights of way including Tiptofts Lane (Ref Saffron Walden 18) which bisects the site, a public footpath (Ref Saffron Walden 38) and bridleway (Ref Saffron Walden 19) situated along eastern perimeter of the site;
- 6.24 The visual receptors identified above have a range of views of the existing agricultural fields within the site, situated adjacent to the existing settlement edge. Within such views, land within the site would be replaced by views of construction works. The visual effects on the public rights of way situated immediately adjacent to the site boundary are assessed as **Major/Moderate adverse** during the construction of the works.

- 6.25 The following visual receptors would experience **Moderate adverse** effects as a result of partially screened views of the construction works and/or longer distance views.
- Residents of properties and users of public open space situated within the Bellway Homes Poppy View development situated to the north of the site;
 - Future residents of properties situated within the development proposed on land adjacent to the Kilns (Ref UTT/20/0864/FUL) to the northwest of the site.
 - Users of Knights Park situated to the west of the site;
 - Public rights of way including Tiptofts Lane (Ref Saffron Walden 18) to the east of the site, and a footpath (Ref Saffron Walden 38) to the south of the site.
- 6.26 Opportunities for other longer distance views are limited, as demonstrated in the photo viewpoints and are typically screened by a combination of existing vegetation, localised topography and urban fabric situated within the intervening landscape.
- 6.27 Effects upon the wider highways and public rights of way network would be limited to localised vantage points where glimpsed views of construction activities would result in **Minor adverse** effects.

Operation (following Completion)

Residential Properties and Settlement

- 6.28 The vast majority of existing properties within Saffron Walden will be screened from the proposed development by the combined screening effects of existing built form, localised topography and vegetation cover situated adjacent to the site. There would be no significant views of the proposed development from other settlements within the surrounding landscape.
- 6.29 Upon completion of the development there would be filtered views of proposed roads and properties from properties situated within the Bellway Homes Poppy View development to the north of the site (Ref Viewpoint 9). There would be filtered / glimpsed views of upper parts of residential properties, situated to the south of Tiptofts Lane, behind a substantial landscape buffer proposed for open green space. Existing hedgerow vegetation would be retained and supplemented by additional tree and shrub planting. Upon completion the effects on the users of the properties at Poppy View have been assessed as **Moderate adverse** with the potential for relatively close range filtered views from windows and gardens facing the site. Planting proposed within open space will assist in softening views of the development over time, and the effects would reduce to **Minor adverse**.
- 6.30 Views of the proposed development from existing residential properties on Tiptofts Lane would be more restricted. Glimpsed partial views of the development would be seen within the context of existing development at Knight Park and the Bellway Homes Poppy View residential development. It is also noted that land situated within the intervening landscape is proposed for residential development (UTT/20/0864/FUL). Upon completion the effects of the proposed development on the existing properties have been assessed as **Minor adverse / Negligible**, reducing to **Negligible** as tree planting within the site establishes.
- 6.31 Partial glimpsed longer distance views of the proposed development are available from a locally elevated vantage point to the west of Thaxted Road including from properties situated on Tukes

Way and Peal Road (Ref Viewpoint 10). Such views would be seen within the context of existing developments at edge of Saffron Walden including the Knights Retail Park and Bellway Homes Poppy View development. It is also noted that land situated within the intervening landscape is proposed for residential development (UTT/20/0864FUL). Upon completion the effects of the proposed development on the existing properties have been assessed as **Minor adverse / Negligible**, reducing to **Negligible** as tree planting within the site establishes.

- 6.32 There would be no significant views of the proposed development from other residential properties situated within the wider landscape.

Public Open Space & Public Rights of Way (PROW)

- 6.33 Views towards the proposed development from a byway open to all traffic (Ref Viewpoints 2A, 2B & 5) will be filtered by existing hedgerow and trees alongside Tiptofts Lane. Users of the byway would experience partial filtered views of proposed residential development situated to the south of Tiptofts Lane and a proposed acoustic fence by the household waste recycling facility. Existing hedgerow and trees alongside Tiptofts Lane would be retained where feasible, softening and filtering views of the built development. Glimpsed views of the proposed development would be seen within the close context of Knights Park. Upon completion the visual effect has been assessed as **Minor adverse**. Tree planting proposed within the site will assist in further softening views of the development over time, and the visual effects would reduce to **Negligible**.
- 6.34 Partial views of the proposed development would be available from a public footpath alongside the site's eastern boundary (Ref Viewpoint 3) and from a public bridleway to the north of the site (Ref Viewpoint 6). Such views would be seen within the close context of existing developments within Knight Park and the Bellway Homes Poppy View development. Upon completion the visual effects upon the public footpath have been assessed as **Moderate adverse**, whilst visual effects upon the bridleway have been assessed as **Minor adverse**. Tree planting proposed along the eastern edge of the site will assist in softening views of the development over time, and the visual effects upon the public footpath would reduce to **Minor adverse**, whilst visual effects upon the bridleway would reduce to **Negligible**.
- 6.35 Longer distance glimpsed views from the wider public rights of way network would be more restricted. Partial views of the proposed development would occur from the public footpath to the south of the site (Ref Viewpoints 7 & 8). Views of the proposed development would be backdropped by existing residential developments within Saffron Walden, and seen within the close context of other developments within Knight Park, including the B&M Home store and Garden Centre, Pets at Home and the Premier Inn. Upon completion the visual effect has been assessed as **Minor adverse**. Trees proposed within the landscape buffer along the perimeter of the site will soften views of the development overtime and the visual effects would reduce to **Negligible**.
- 6.36 Glimpsed longer distance views of the proposed development are available from higher ground on the Green Mile, to the west of Thaxted Road (Ref Viewpoint 10). Glimpsed views of proposed residential development would be seen within the close context of existing developments at edge of Saffron Walden including the Knights Retail Park and Bellway Homes Poppy View development. It is also noted that land situated within the intervening landscape is proposed for residential development (UTT/20/0864FUL). Upon completion the effects of the proposed development on the existing properties have been assessed as **Minor adverse / Negligible**, reducing to **Negligible** as tree planting within the site establishes.

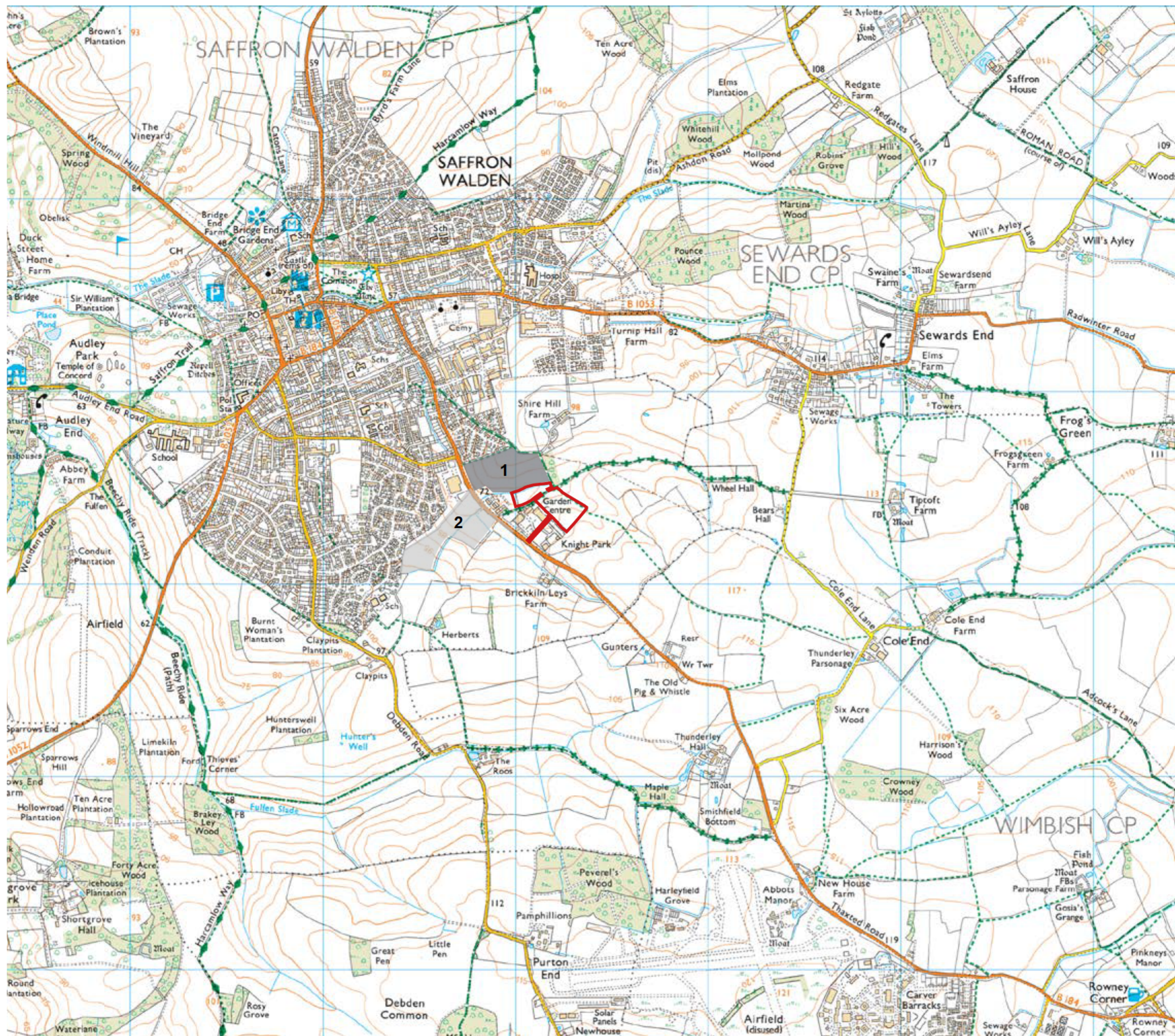
Roads

- 6.37 For users of Thaxted Road (Ref Viewpoint 1), the proposed residential development would be screened from view due to a combination of established vegetation cover and various existing built developments situated along the eastern side of Thaxted Road. Consequently, there would be no adverse visual effects upon users of Thaxted Road.
- 6.38 For users of Cardamon Road (Ref Viewpoint 9), there would be filtered / glimpsed views of residential development, situated to the south of Tiptofts Lane, behind a substantial landscape buffer proposed for open green space. Existing boundary hedgerow vegetation would be retained and supplemented by additional tree and shrub planting. Upon completion the effects on the road users have been assessed as **Minor adverse**. Planting proposed within the open space will assist in softening views of the development over time, and the effects would reduce to **Negligible**.
- 6.39 Users of the access road within Knights Park (Ref Viewpoint 4), would experience partial glimpsed views of the proposed residential development and a proposed acoustic fence by the household waste recycling facility. Existing views towards the site from Knights Park are dominated by various developments including Puregym local and the the Saffron Walden household waste recycling centre. Upon completion views of the proposed access road and residential development within the site would result in **Minor adverse** visual effects. A proposed landscape buffer adjacent to the site's western boundary, along with tree planting by the access road would screen or soften the proposed built development, and the visual effects would reduce to **Negligible**.
- 6.40 There would be no other significant visual effects upon the wider highways network as a result of the proposed development.

7.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS




- 7.1 The site is located to the north of Thaxted Road, adjacent to existing developments at the southeastern edge of Saffron Walden. The site boundary (north of Tiptofts Lane) adjoins land adjacent to the Kilns (Ref UTT/20/0864/FUL) proposed for residential development, and the Bellway Homes Poppy View residential development. The site boundary (south of Tiptofts Lane) adjoins various developments at Knight Park including Pets at Home, B&M Garden centre store, Pure Gym and the Saffron Walden household waste recycling centre.
- 7.2 A range of other residential and commercial developments are situated to the west of the site by Thaxted Road. These include the Kilns apartments, terraced properties and other residential dwellings by Tiptoft Lane, as well as an Aldi supermarket and a Premier Inn within Knight Park.
- 7.3 The wider landscape to the east and south of the site is characterised by gently undulating agricultural fields along the Cam Valley. Vegetation cover along field boundaries, lanes and track varies, typically including hedgerows, with occasional copses, tree belts and woodland. Scattered farmsteads and detached properties are also present, including at Brickkiln Leys Farm, Herberts, Gunters and The Old Pig & Whistle.
- 7.4 The proposed development would be located at the southeastern edge of Saffron Walden, to the north of Thaxted Road and adjacent to existing built developments. A main access into the site will be provided from Knight Park. The proposed development, comprising of up to 55 residential dwellings, will also include landscaped buffers along the site boundaries, belts of new trees, open green space to the north of Tiptoft's Lane, along with new pedestrian routes and existing vegetation being retained where possible.
- 7.5 It is considered that the site and the immediate landscape is one that could accommodate change as presented by the proposed development and the consequential effects would not result in any unacceptable harm to landscape character or visual resources.
- 7.6 The site has been sensitively designed with consideration given to the baseline information including the Saffron Walden Neighbourhood Plan 2021-2036 along with other guidance including the Essex Design Guide and Natural England's Green Infrastructure Framework. The proposed layout ensures that the development relates well to the adjacent settlement and minimises impacts upon the surrounding River Cam Valley.
- 7.7 An appropriate relationship with the existing settlement edge and wider rural character will be achieved:
 - Open space to the north of Tiptofts Lane will create an attractive interface with the Bellway Homes Poppy View residential development.
 - Appropriate landscape buffers will be provided along the site's western boundary to the existing commercial developments and household waste recycling centre.
 - Development will be set back from the northeast and southeast site boundaries to minimise the visual impact upon the public rights of way network situated adjacent to the site and elsewhere within the surrounding countryside.
 - Existing hedgerow and trees along Tiptofts Lane would be retained and bolstered with additional planting to soften views of the proposed built development from the byway.


- 7.8 The vast majority of existing properties within Saffron Walden will be screened from the proposed development by the combined screening effects of existing built form, localised topography and vegetation cover situated adjacent to the site. There would be no significant views of the proposed development from other settlements within the surrounding landscape.
- 7.9 The visual receptors that would potentially be affected will be those experiencing close to medium range views of the proposed built development. These will primarily be from:
- Users of public rights of way including Tiptofts Lane (Ref Saffron Walden 18) which bisects the site, a public footpath (Ref Saffron Walden 38) and bridleway (Ref Saffron Walden 19) situated along eastern perimeter of the site.
 - Residents of properties and users of the roads and open space situated within the Bellway Homes Poppy View development to the north of the site.
 - Users of Knights Park situated to the west of the site.
- 7.10 Longer distance views from the wider public rights of way network would be restricted, with views of the proposed development largely screened by a combination of existing vegetation, localised topography and urban fabric situated within the intervening landscape. Partial glimpsed views of the proposed development would be seen within the close context various existing residential and commercial developments situated at the edge of Saffron Walden.
- 7.11 As proposed a well-designed residential development situated to north of Thaxted Road and Knights Park, and to the south of the Bellway Homes Poppy View development can be accommodated within the local landscape with minimal adverse impact upon the wider landscape character and visual resources. Within the site proposed built development would create a high-quality scheme that relates well to the adjacent settlement and does not harm Saffron Walden's character. A cohesive green infrastructure framework is proposed, providing an attractive setting to the proposed development and ensuring that the proposed built development would be well integrated within the local landscape.



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-  Site Boundary
-  1 Bellway Homes Development
-  2 Residential Development (s62A/2022/0014)



client
Kier Ventures Ltd

project
Saffron Walden
Land north of Thaxted Road

drawing title
SITE LOCATION

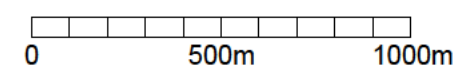
scale
1:20,000 @ A3

drawn
SDP

issue date
December 2023

rev
-

Scale: 1:20000 @ A3



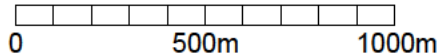



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-  Site Boundary
-  Residential Development (s62A/2022/0014)
-  Bellway Homes Development
-  Knight Park

Scale: 1:20000 @ A3





client
Kier Ventures Ltd

project
Saffron Walden
Land north of Thaxted Road

drawing title
AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH

scale
1:20,000 @ A3

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SDP

issue date
December 2023

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-


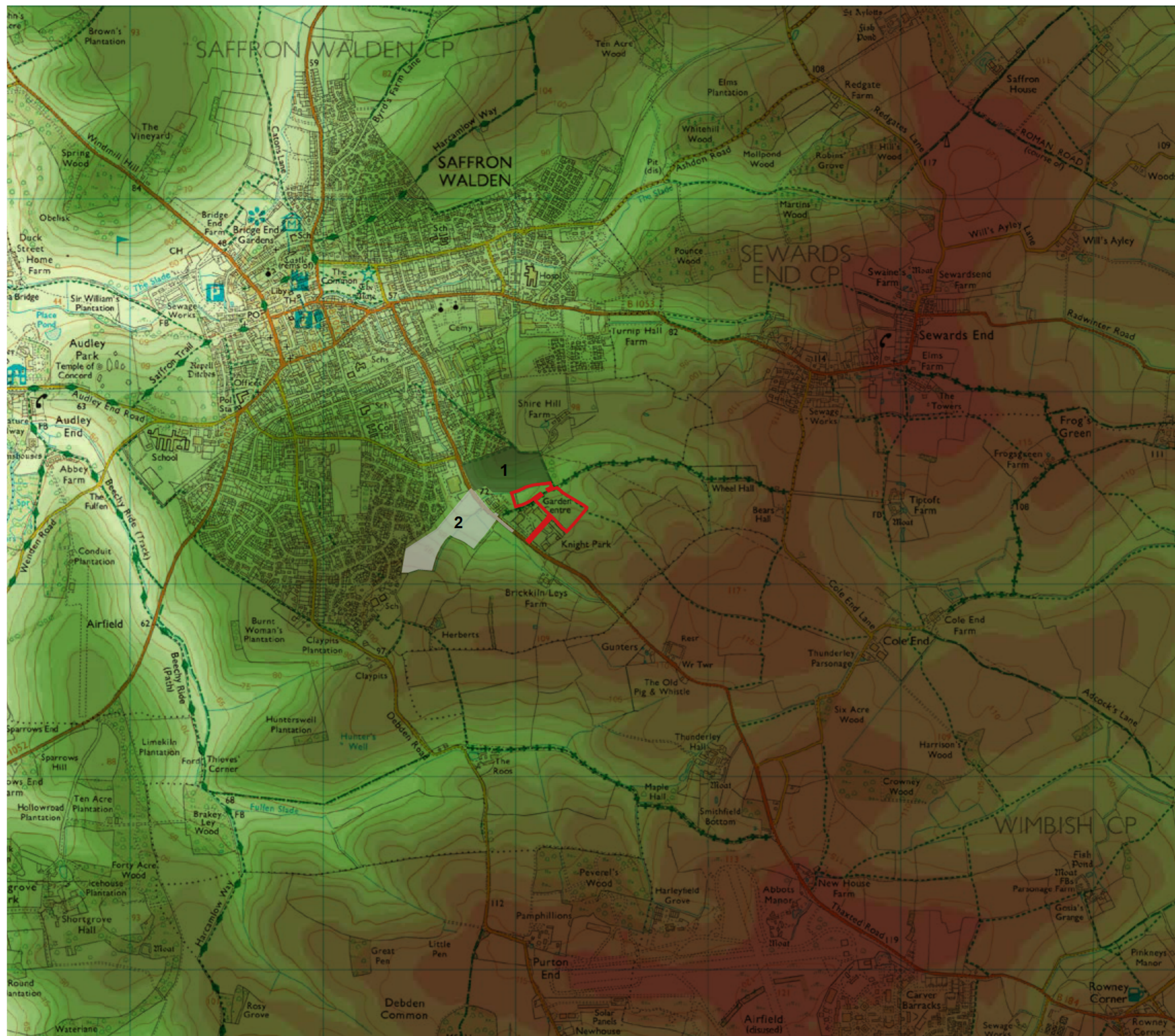


Figure 2



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- Site Boundary
- 1 Bellway Homes Development
- 2 Residential Development (s62A/2022/0014)

- 35m - 40m AOD
- 40m - 45m AOD
- 45m - 50m AOD
- 50m - 55m AOD
- 55m - 60m AOD
- 60m - 65m AOD
- 65m - 70m AOD
- 70m - 75m AOD
- 75m - 80m AOD
- 80m - 85m AOD
- 85m - 90m AOD
- 90m - 95m AOD
- 95m - 100m AOD
- 100m - 105m AOD
- 105m - 110m AOD
- 110m - 115m AOD
- 115m - 120m AOD

client
Kier Ventures Ltd

project
Saffron Walden
Land north of Thaxted Road

drawing title
TOPOGRAPHY

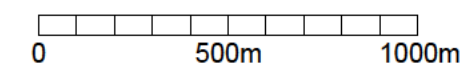
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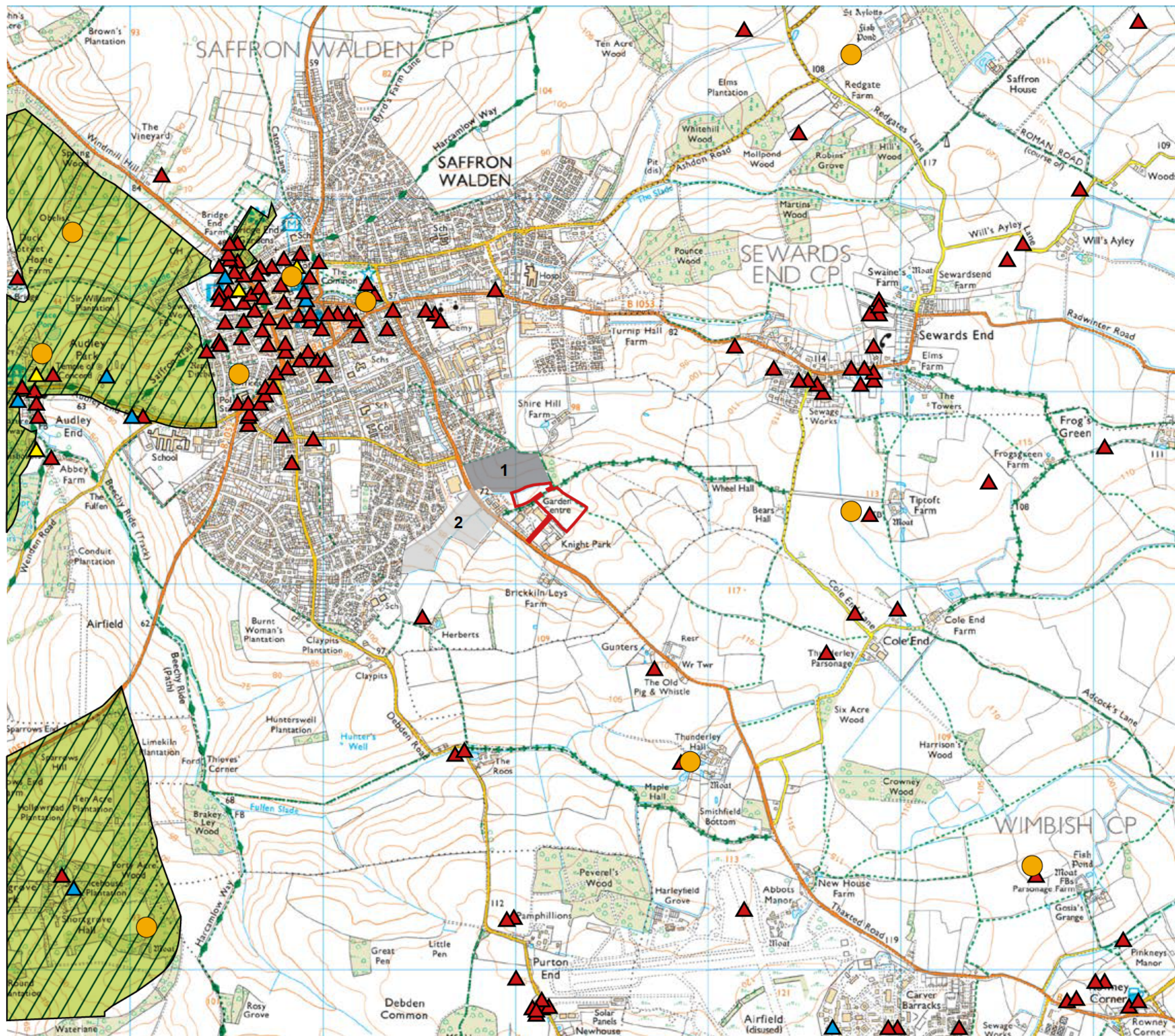
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SDP

issue date
December 2023

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Scale: 1:20000 @ A3





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-  Site Boundary
-  Bellway Homes Development
-  Residential Development (s62A/2022/0014)
-  Registered Parks and Gardens
-  Grade I Listed Building
-  Grade II Listed Building
-  Grade II* Listed Building
-  Scheduled Monuments

client
Kier Ventures Ltd

project
Saffron Walden
Land north of Thaxted Road

drawing title
DESIGNATIONS

scale
1:20,000 @ A3

drawn
SDP

issue date
December 2023

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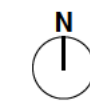
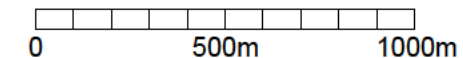
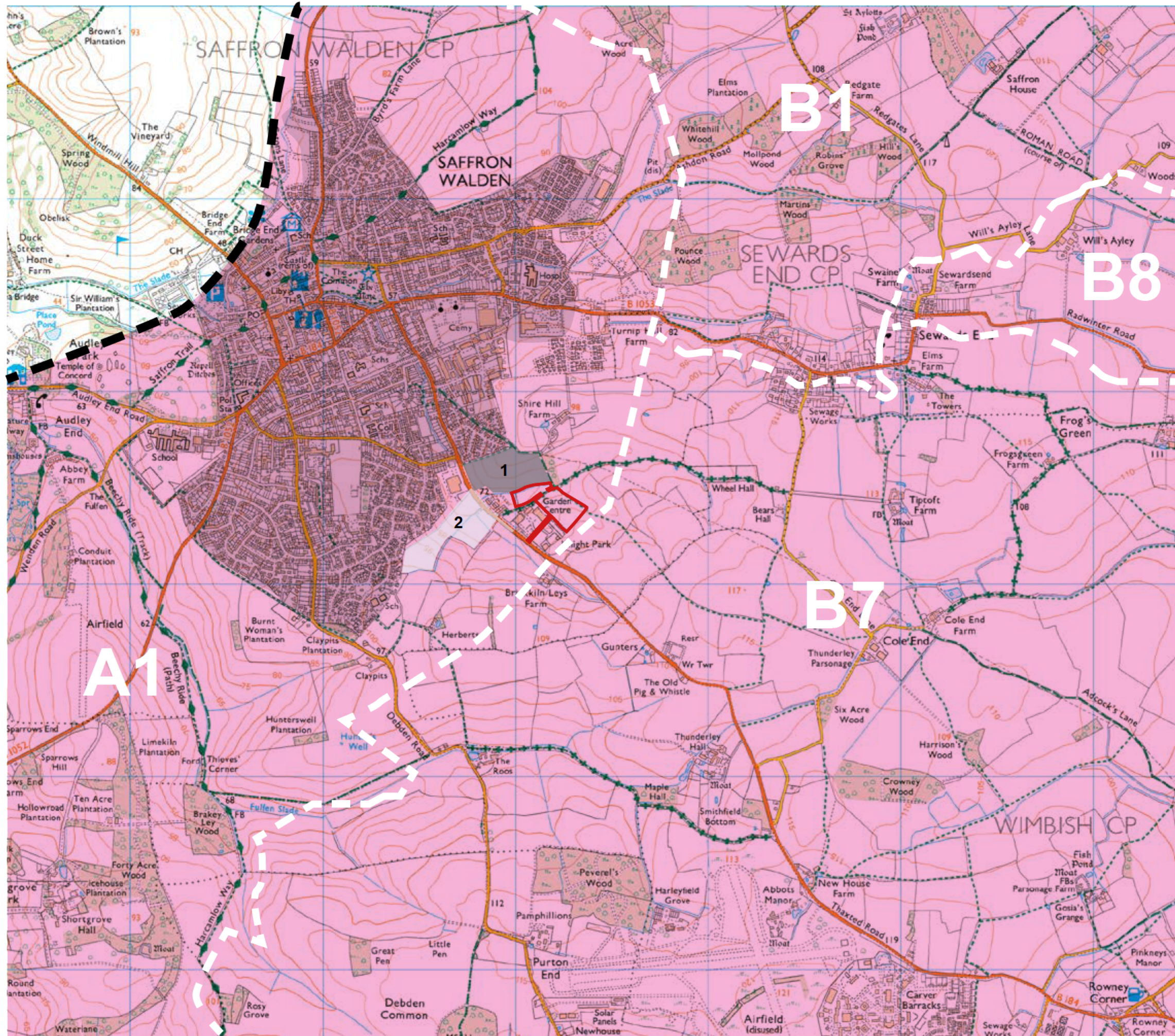


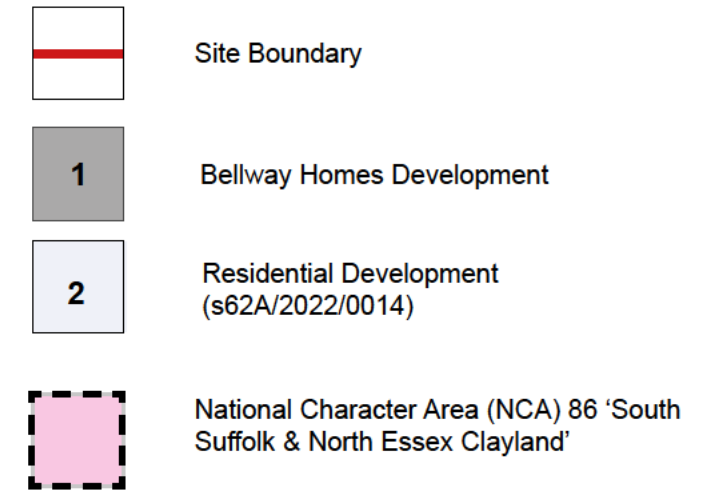
Figure 4





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District Landscape character: Braintree, Brentwood, Chelmsford, Maldon and Uttlesford Landscape Character Assessments. September 2009 Chris Blandford Associates



A - River Valley Landscapes

A1 - Cam River Valley

B - Farmland Plateau Landscapes

B1 - Ashdon Farmland Plateau

B7 - Debden Farmland Plateau

B8 - Thaxted Farmland Plateau

client
Kier Ventures Ltd

project
Saffron Walden
Land north of Thaxted Road

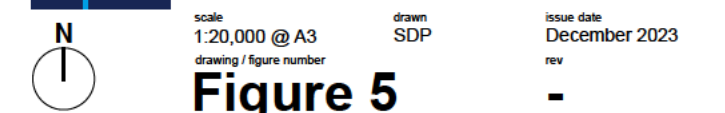
drawing title
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scale
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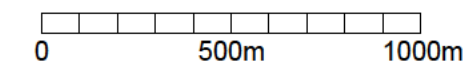
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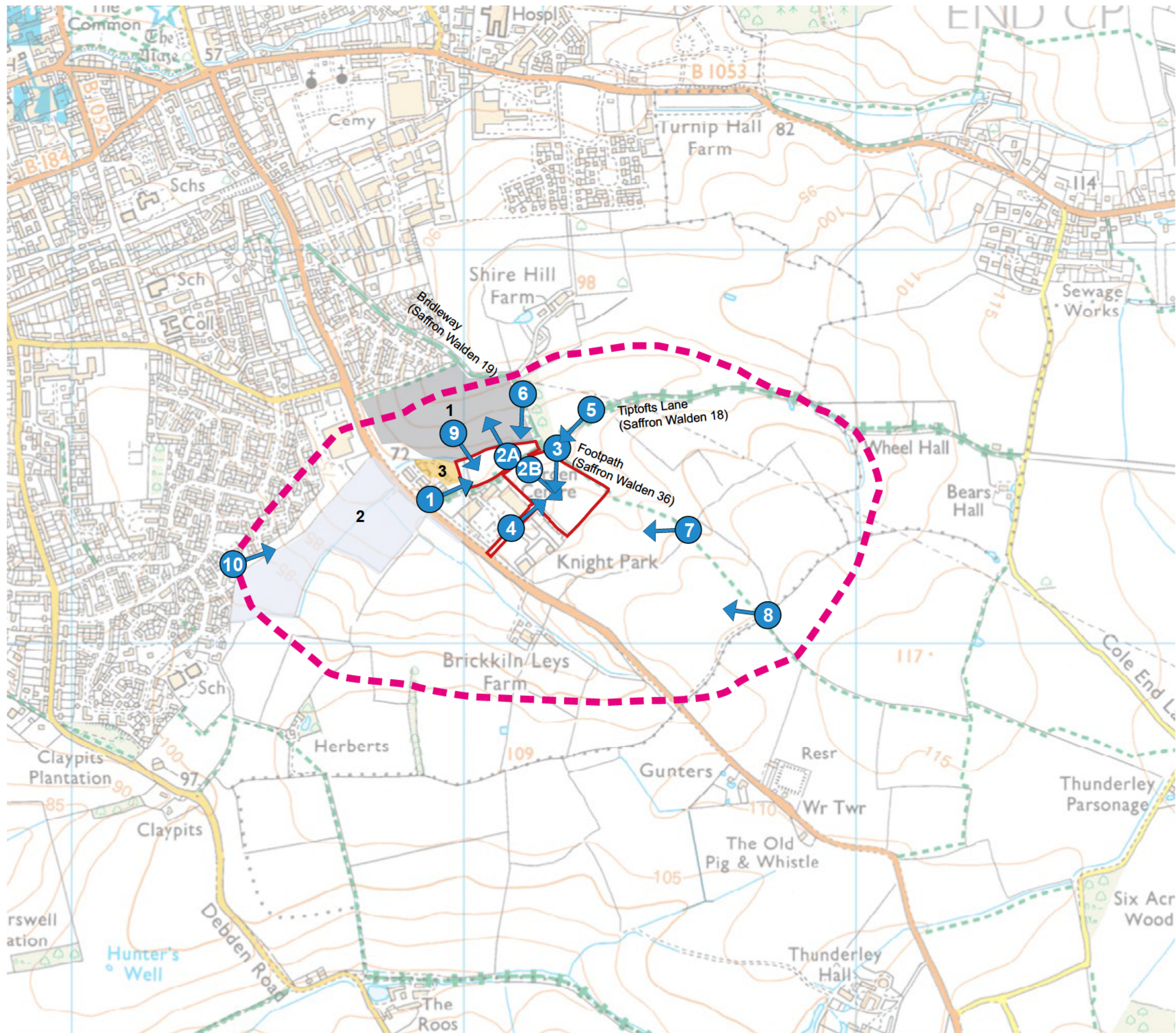
issue date
December 2023

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Scale: 1:20000 @ A3





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- Site Boundary
- 1 Bellway Homes Poppy View Residential Development
- 2 Residential Development (s62A/2022/0014)
- 3 Residential Development (UTT/20/0864/FUL)
- Photo Viewpoint Locations
- Visual Envelope (VE)

Notes:

The Visual Envelope (VE) provides a representative area from within which part(s) of the proposed development would be visible. Given the nature of the existing site and surrounding landscape this can only be approximate and should only be used as an aid to understanding the potential visible extent of the proposals.

The VE for the proposed development has been prepared based upon site based analysis and review of topography and cross sections.

Other locations beyond the VE as shown would potentially have view to part(s) of the proposed development. However, where present these would be distant and/or greatly restricted and would not result in any significant adverse effects.

client
Kier Ventures Ltd

project
Saffron Walden
Land north of Thaxted Road

drawing title
VISUAL APPRAISAL

scale
1:10000 @ A3

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December 2023

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Figure 6

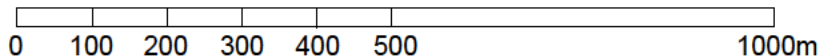




Photo Viewpoint 1: Easterly view from Thaxted Road oppositeTiptofts Lane



Photo Viewpoint 1: Easterly view from Thaxted Road oppositeTiptofts Lane continued

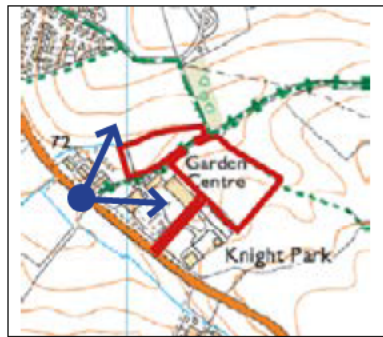


Photo Viewpoint 1
Date & time of photo: 13 November 2023, 11:19
Camera make & model, & sensor format: Canon EOS 6D, FFS
Horizontal Field of View: 87°
Direction of View: 48°, bearing from North

Printing note: To give the correct viewing distance the sheet should be printed at a scale of 1:1 on A1. To be viewed at comfortable arms length.
Visualisation Type: Type 1
Projection: Cylindrical
Enlargement factor: 100%

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Glimpse of site



Photo Viewpoint 2A: Northerly view from public byway off Tiptofts Lane

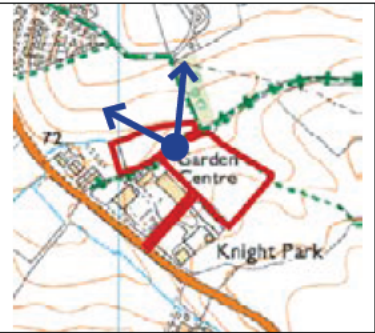


Photo Viewpoint 2A
Date & time of photo: 13 November
2023,11:19 Camera make & model, & sensor
format: Canon EOS 6D, FFS
Horizontal Field of View: 87°
Direction of View: 47°, bearing from North

Printing note: To give the correct viewing distance the sheet should be printed at a scale of 1:1 on A1. To be viewed at comfortable arms length.

Visualisation Type: Type 1
Projection: Cylindrical
Enlargement factor: 100%

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Viewpoint 2B: Southerly view from public byway off Tiptofts Lane



Viewpoint 2B: Continued



Photo Viewpoint 2B
Date & time of photo: 13 November 2023, 11:19
Camera make & model, & sensor format: Canon EOS 6D, FFS
Horizontal Field of View: 87°
Direction of View: 135°, bearing from North

Printing note: To give the correct viewing distance the sheet should be printed at a scale of 1:1 on A1. To be viewed at comfortable arms length.

Visualisation Type: Type 1
Projection: Cylindrical
Enlargement factor: 100%

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Viewpoint 3: Westerly view from public footpath to the east of Knight Retail Park, Thaxted Road



Viewpoint 3: Continued

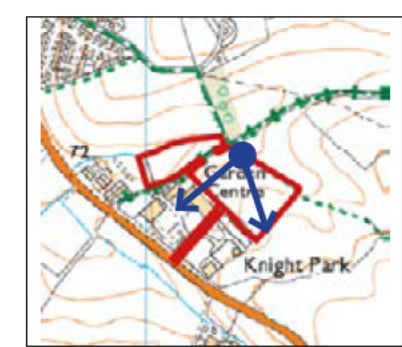
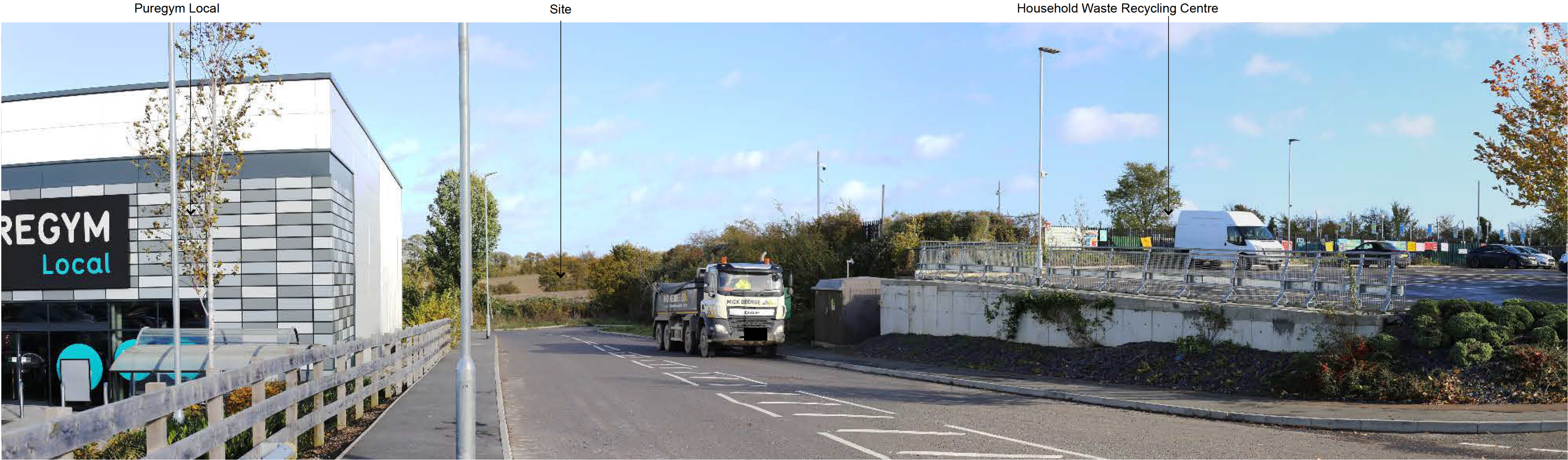


Photo Viewpoint 3
Date & time of photo: 13 November 2023, 11:23
Camera make & model, & sensor format: Canon EOS 6D, FFS
Horizontal Field of View: 87°
Direction of View: 190°, bearing from North

Printing note: To give the correct viewing distance the sheet should be printed at a scale of 1:1 on A1. To be viewed at comfortable arms length.

Visualisation Type: Type 1
Projection: Cylindrical
Enlargement factor: 100%

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Viewpoint 4: Northerly view from Knight Retail Park



Viewpoint 4: Continued



Photo Viewpoint 4
Date & time of photo: 13 November 2023, 12:57
Camera make & model, & sensor format: Canon EOS 6D, FFS
Horizontal Field of View: 87°
Direction of View: 50°, bearing from North

Printing note: To give the correct viewing distance the sheet should be printed at a scale of 1:1 on A1. To be viewed at comfortable arms length.

Visualisation Type: Type 1
Projection: Cylindrical
Enlargement factor: 100%

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Viewpoint 5: Westerly view from public byway to the east of Knight Retail Park, Thaxted Road



Viewpoint 5: Continued

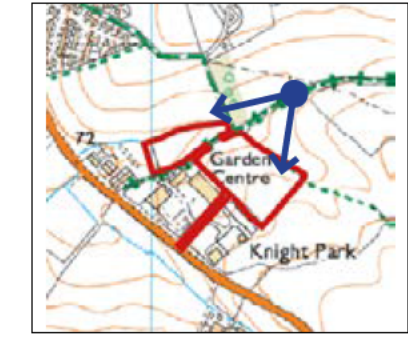


Photo Viewpoint 5
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Camera make & model, & sensor format: Canon EOS 6D, FFS
Horizontal Field of View: 87°
Direction of View: 220°, bearing from North

Printing note: To give the correct viewing distance the sheet should be printed at a scale of 1:1 on A1. To be viewed at comfortable arms length.

Visualisation Type: Type 1
Projection: Cylindrical
Enlargement factor: 100%

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Viewpoint 6: Westerly view from public bridleway by the Bellway development, to the east of Thaxted Road



Viewpoint 6: Continued

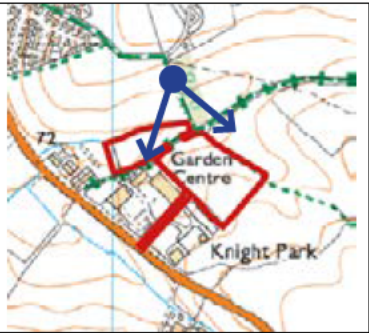


Photo Viewpoint 6
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Camera make & model, & sensor format: Canon EOS 6D, FFS
Horizontal Field of View: 87°
Direction of View: 160°, bearing from North

Printing note: To give the correct viewing distance the sheet should be printed at a scale of 1:1 on A1. To be viewed at comfortable arms length.

Visualisation Type: Type 1
Projection: Cylindrical
Enlargement factor: 100%

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fpcr

client
Kier Ventures Ltd
project
Saffron Walden
Land north of Thaxted Road
drawing title
PHOTO VIEWPOINT 6
drawn
SDO
drawing / figure number
issue date
December 2023
rev



Viewpoint 7: Westerly view from public footpath to the east of Thaxted Road



Viewpoint 7: Continued




Photo Viewpoint 7
Date & time of photo: 13 November 2023 1x, 12:09
Camera make & model, & sensor format: Canon EOS 6D, FFS
Horizontal Field of View: 87°
Direction of View: 270°, bearing from North

Printing note: To give the correct viewing distance the sheet should be printed at a scale of 1:1 on A1. To be viewed at comfortable arms length.

Visualisation Type: Type 1
Projection: Cylindrical
Enlargement factor: 100%

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Viewpoint 8: Westerly view from public footpath to the east of Thaxted Road



Viewpoint 8: Continued




Photo Viewpoint 8
Date & time of photo: 13 November 2023,12:21
Camera make & model, & sensor format: Canon EOS 6D, FFS
Horizontal Field of View: 87°
Direction of View: 300°, bearing from North

Printing note: To give the correct viewing distance the sheet should be printed at a scale of 1:1 on A1. To be viewed at comfortable arms length.

Visualisation Type: Type 1
Projection: Cylindrical
Enlargement factor: 100%

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PHOTO VIEWPOINT 8
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-
Figure 15

Bellway Homes Poppy View residential development (under construction)

Hedgerow vegetation along Tiptofts Lane



Viewpoint 9: Southerly view from Cardamon Road, Bellway Homes Poppy View development

site

B&M Home Store with Garden Centre

Residential properties alongside Tiptofts Lane



Viewpoint 9: Continued

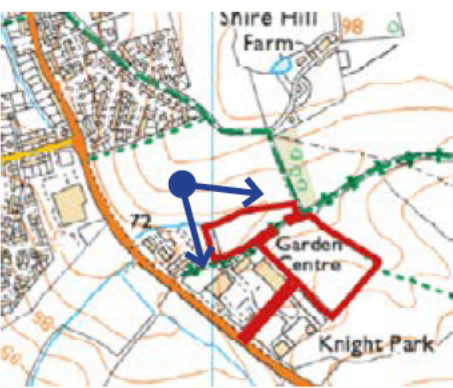


Photo Viewpoint 9
Date & time of photo: 13 November 2023, 12:23
Camera make & model, & sensor format: Canon EOS 6D, FFS
Horizontal Field of View: 87°
Direction of View: 130°, bearing from North

Printing note: To give the correct viewing distance the sheet should be printed at a scale of 1:1 on A1. To be viewed at comfortable arms length.

Visualisation Type: Type 1
Projection: Cylindrical
Enlargement factor: 100%

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Viewpoint 10: Easterly view from the Green Mile public open space by Peal Road



Viewpoint 10: Continued





Photo Viewpoint 10
Date & time of photo: 13 November 2023, 12:53
Camera make & model, & sensor format: Canon EOS 6D, FFS
Horizontal Field of View: 87°
Direction of View: 75°, bearing from North

Printing note: To give the correct viewing distance the sheet should be printed at a scale of 1:1 on A1. To be viewed at comfortable arms length.

Visualisation Type: Type 1
Projection: Cylindrical
Enlargement factor: 100%

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PHOTO VIEWPOINT 10

drawn	SDO	issue date	December 2023
drawing / figure number	Figure 17	rev	-