

OLD ASHFORD ROAD, LENHAM
LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Brief

This is a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) for Old Ashford Road, Lenham. The site is on the north side of Old Ashford Road, midway between Lenham Square and the junction with the A20, Ashford Road. The urban edge of Maidstone, at Bearsted, is 10.5km to the west and the urban edge of Ashford is 11.5km to the south east. Access is gained from Old Ashford Road. The location is shown on drawing no. 2378/16/B/5.

1.2 LaDellWood LLP has been commissioned by John Bailey and Rogate to prepare this Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment for the planning application to Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) for some 150 new dwellings. The site is some 5.01 hectares.

1.3 The Site

The site is an agricultural field between Old Ashford Road and the A20. It is on the eastern edge of Lenham, between the housing, medical practice and community centre on Groom Way to the west and the group of industrial units to the east. The boundary of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is on the north side of the A20 and the land to the south is agricultural. The site slopes from north to south by about 5 metres.

1.4 Objectives

The objectives of this landscape and visual impact assessment are to:

- Define the landscape setting and landscape character of the site and its surrounding area;
- Review of the landscape designations and landscape policy context related to the proposed development on the site;
- Describe the site features and evaluate the landscape that exists within and in the surrounding areas of the site;
- Prepare a desk study to identify the significant external viewpoints;
- Take photographs from the worst-case viewpoints for views of the site for analysis and assessment;
- Assess the ability of the landscape to accommodate the proposals for new buildings for residential uses in the short and long term;
- Propose any mitigation for any landscape or visual impacts and any long term enhancement;

2.0 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Assessment

This LVIA is based on the principles and procedures described in Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (Third edition, Routledge, 2013). This revises and expands on the methodology in the Second Edition (Spon, 2002). Many sections of the text distinguish between procedures for whether or not the LVIA is part of an Environmental Impact Assessment, which is presented in a document, the Environmental Statement.

2.2 This LVIA is not part of an EIA and the appropriate methodology in this situation is followed in the report. The principal guidance in the book relevant to this LVIA is quoted below. There is a greater distinction in the Third Edition between Landscape Impact and Visual Impact and this is reflected in this report.

2.3 The photographs in this report have been taken using a length of lens at 33mm on a digital camera, to reflect the required 50mm focal length lens, with a single lens reflex camera. This is accepted as being the closest photographic representation to that of the human eye. The panoramas have been created by aligning series of single shots put together using computer software. This generates the most accurate representation of human vision.

2.4 **Scale**

It is emphasised that:

“Identifying significant effects stresses the need for an approach that is in proportion to the scale of the project that is being assessed and the nature of its likely effects”. (1.17)

The approach and methodology for the LVIA have been selected to be appropriate to the proposals and the landscape. The viewpoints have been determined with reference to OS contour maps and extensive knowledge of the area. They were submitted to Maidstone Borough Council for comments and approved by Andrew Jolly of Maidstone Planning on 10 June 2016 and at a meeting with Katie Miller of the Kent Downs AONB unit on 24 April 2016.

2.5 **Landscape**

The definition of ‘landscape’ is important and the one in the European Landscape Convention (20 October 2000) defines it as:

“Landscape is an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors”. (2.2)

It is expanded in Landscape Character Assessment for England and Scotland (2002):

“Landscape is about the relationship between people and place. It provides the setting for our day-to-day lives. The term does not mean just special or designated landscapes and it does not only apply to the countryside. Landscape can mean a small patch of urban wasteland as much as a mountain range, and an urban park as much as an expanse of lowland plain. It results from the way that different components of our environment – both natural (the influences of geology, soils, climate, flora and fauna) and cultural (the historical and current impact of land use, settlement, enclosure and other human interventions) – interact together and are perceived by us. People’s perceptions turn land into the concept of landscape.” (2.2)

2.6 Sustainable Development

Sustainable Development can be part of an LVIA and the most widely accepted definition is that in the Brundtland report (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987):

‘development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’. (2.14)

This is considered in the extent of the impacts of the proposed development and the duration of the impacts.

2.7 Landscape and Visual Impact

The new (2013) guidance separates the role of the landscape itself in the LVIA process from the visual impacts:

“LVIA must address both effects on landscape as a resource in its own right and effects on views and visual amenity”. (2.18)

It details this as:

“Reflecting this distinction the two components of LVIA are:

- 1. **assessment of landscape effects:** assessing effects on the landscape as a resource in its own right;*
- 2. **assessment of visual effects:** assessing effects on specific views and on the general visual amenity experienced by people. (2.21)*

LVIA must deal with both and should be clear about the difference between them.” (2.22)

2.8 Role of the Landscape Architect

The role of the professional in preparing an LVIA is made clear:

“It is always the primary responsibility of any landscape professional carrying out an assessment to ensure that the approach and methodology adopted are appropriate to the particular circumstances.” (1.20)

The standards in 2.26 are:

“In carrying out an LVIA the landscape professional must always take an independent stance, and fully and transparently address both the negative and positive effects of a scheme in a way that is accessible and reliable for all parties concerned.”

This guidance is followed in this report.

2.9 Scoping

The scope of the LVIA has been determined by:

“For LVIA, scoping should be expected to consider the extent of the study area(s); sources of information; the possible effects that might occur; the main receptors to be considered; the extent and the appropriate level of detail for the baseline studies; methods to be used in assessing significance; and the approach to assessment of cumulative landscape and visual effects”. (p.46)

2.10 The scoping has been submitted to MBC the scope and location of viewpoints have been agreed with MBC planning officer Andrew Jolly and Katie Miller of the Kent Downs AONB Unit as required in the Guidelines.

2.11 **Alternative Proposals**

Alternative proposals may need to be considered but usually only if the LVIA is part of an EIA.

“It is not a requirement that alternatives should be identified and considered. However, if they have been (and it is considered that they should be, as a means of achieving potentially more sustainable development) then an outline description should be provided of any alternatives considered, together with an indication of the main reasons (including environmental reasons) for the final choice”. (4.11)

In this case alternatives are not relevant to these proposals and have not been considered.

2.12 **Landscape Effects**

It is stated in 5.37 that:

“One of the more challenging issues is deciding whether the landscape effects should be categorised as positive or negative. It is also possible for effects to be neutral in their consequences for the landscape. An informed professional judgement should be made about this and the criteria used in reaching the judgement should be clearly stated. They might include but should not be restricted to:

The degree to which the proposal fits with existing character;

The contribution to the landscape that the development may make in its own right, usually by virtue of good design, even if it is in contrast to existing character.”

2.13 **Visual Effects**

‘Receptors’ are the locations from where the proposed development may be visible. However it is also stated that:

“It is important to remember at the outset that visual receptors are all people. Each visual receptor, meaning the particular person or group of people likely to be affected at a specific viewpoint, should be assessed in terms of both their susceptibility to change in views and visual amenity and also the value attached to particular views.” (6.31)

This distinguishes visual effects (on people) from the effects on the intrinsic value of the landscape itself.

2.14 The selection of final viewpoints for the LVIA should include:

- *“The accessibility to the public;*
- *The potential number and sensitivity of viewers who may be affected;*
- *The viewing direction, distance (i.e. short-, medium- and long-distance views) and elevation;*
- *The nature of the viewing experience (for example static views, views from settlements and views from sequential points along routes);*
- *The view type (for example panoramas, vistas and glimpses);*
- *The potential for cumulative views of the proposed development in conjunction with other development. (6.20)*

2.15 In some cases lighting is included in the proposals.

“For some types of development the visual effects of lighting may be an issue. In these cases it may be important to carry out night-time ‘darkness’ surveys of the existing conditions in order to assess the potential effects of lighting and these effects need to be taken into account in generating the 3D model of the scheme. Quantitative assessment of illumination levels, and incorporation into models relevant to visual effects assessment, will require input from lighting engineers, but the visual effects assessment will also need to include qualitative assessments of the effects of the predicted light levels on night-time visibility. The visibility survey and definition of ZTVs may need to be reviewed and updated as siting, layout and design proposals are progressively refined and lighting effects become clearer”. (6.12)

Lighting is not considered to be a landscape or visual issue with this proposal.

2.16 In assessing Landscape and Visual effects, cumulative effects may need to be considered and these are:

“impacts that result from incremental changes caused by other past, present or reasonably foreseeable actions together with the project”. (7.1)

2.17 In an EIA cumulative landscape and visual effects must be considered in LVIA and the effects of other proposed developments may need to be considered.

Cumulative effects are defined as those that:

“Result from additional changes to the landscape or visual amenity caused by the proposed development in conjunction with other developments (associated with or separate to it), or actions that occurred in the past, present or are likely to occur in the foreseeable future” (7.2).

2.18 This LVIA is not part of an EIA and this and the location of the development in the landscape

and in relation to built up areas do not have to be considered.

- 2.19 The report follows and complies with the 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' by The Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment (Routledge, 2013) as well as with the LI Advice Note 01/2011: Use of photography and photomontage in landscape and visual assessment.
- 2.20 The photographs in this report have been taken using a length of lens at 33mm on a digital camera, to reflect the required 50mm focal length lens, with a single lens reflex camera. This is accepted as being the closest photographic representation to that of the human eye. The panoramas have been created by aligning series of single shots put together using computer software. This generates the most accurate representation of human vision.

3.0 DESK STUDY

- 3.1 A desk study was carried out to review available information and produce a more detailed assessment by analysis of documents and maps.

The following maps and documents were consulted:

- OS 1:10,000 with contours
- Geological survey
- Magic (Magic, internet online resource - www.magic.gov.uk)
- MBC Planning documents

3.2 Selection of viewpoints

The viewpoints were established from the desktop assessment of contour maps. Drawing no. 2378/16/B/1 shows the OS 1:10,000 contours with coloured infills to highlight the landform and level changes and woodlands have been highlighted. 2378/16/B/2 shows the viewpoints on a similar map without the colour infills but with Public Rights of Way indicated. The viewpoints are all accessible to the public from highways, other public rights of way and public open spaces. Their locations were selected to give the greatest possibility of views over the site. These viewpoints were agreed with MBC during the scoping opinion of the first stage of the LVIA (paragraph 2.4).

3.3 Landscape designations

The site is just south of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The AONB sets one of the contexts against which development should be assessed in this LVIA. It also guides the potential form and character of the development in its relationship the landscape.

3.4 Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

The Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is designated as a landscape that has a value for its own sake. The protection, and where possible, enhancement of it are key national and local planning policies.

3.5 Green Belt

The site is not in the Green Belt.

3.6 Landscape Character Assessment

The location of the site is shown on 2378/16/B/5. The desk study shows the site to be in the Maidstone Borough Landscape Character Area 17, East Lenham Vale (Annex 1).

3.7 The key features relevant to this site and the surrounding landscape are:

“This is a unified landscape where the consistently undulating topography, frequent woodland blocks and hedgerow enclosed fields provide a coherent pattern of elements. There are few visual detractors, An d warehouses and a business park along the A20. Despite significant loss of historic hedgerow boundaries and shaws, a good hedgerow network and frequent woodland blocks remain.” *“Whilst some trees are over mature and there are some gaps in hedgerows, the overriding condition of the remaining hedgerows, woodland and the built environment is good.”* The Summary of Actions includes the objectives to:

- *Conserve the undeveloped foreground and rural setting of the Kent Downs AONB.*
- *Conserve and enhance hedgerows and tree belts and restore hedgerow boundaries and field headlands where practicable.*
- *Restore historic hedgerow and shaw pattern where opportunities arise.*
- *Conserve the defined boundary between Lenham’s compact settlement and the surrounding rural area.*

Maidstone Landscape Capacity Study January 2015

3.8 This study was prepared for the Borough Council as part of the evidence base for the preparation of the new Local Plan (Annex 4). The site is in area 17. East Lenham Vale. The area is described as:

This is a unified landscape where the consistently undulating topography, frequent woodland blocks and hedgerow enclosed fields provide a coherent pattern of elements. There is a good hedgerow network, frequent woodland blocks Whilst some of the trees are overmature and there are some gaps in hedgerows, the overriding condition remaining hedgerows, woodland and the build environment is good.

The Landscape Character Sensitivity and the Visual Sensitivity are both described as High.

Planning policies

3.9 The NPPF states in paragraph 115 that great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty.

- any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated.

3.10 The MBC pre-application advice letter (Annex 4) states that the relevant Local Plan policies are: ENV 28 and ENV 34.

POLICY ENV28 states that:

THE COUNTRYSIDE IS DEFINED AS ALL THOSE PARTS OF THE PLAN AREA NOT WITHIN THE DEVELOPMENT BOUNDARIES SHOWN ON THE PROPOSALS MAP. IN THE COUNTRYSIDE PLANNING PERMISSION WILL NOT BE GIVEN FOR DEVELOPMENT WHICH HARMS THE CHARACTER AND APPEARANCE OF THE AREA OR THE AMENITIES OF SURROUNDING OCCUPIERS, AND DEVELOPMENT WILL BE CONFINED TO: (1) THAT WHICH IS REASONABLY NECESSARY FOR THE PURPOSES OF AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY; OR (2) THE WINNING OF MINERALS; OR (3) OPEN AIR RECREATION AND ANCILLARY BUILDINGS PROVIDING OPERATIONAL USES ONLY; OR (4) THE PROVISION OF PUBLIC OR INSTITUTIONAL USES FOR WHICH A RURAL LOCATION IS JUSTIFIED; OR (5) SUCH OTHER EXCEPTIONS AS INDICATED BY POLICIES ELSEWHERE IN THIS PLAN. PROPOSALS SHOULD INCLUDE MEASURES FOR HABITAT RESTORATION AND CREATION TO ENSURE THAT THERE IS NO NET LOSS OF WILDLIFE RESOURCES.

It 'seeks to prevent development which would harm the character and appearance of the area or the amenities of surrounding occupiers and confines development to certain listed exceptions'.

POLICY ENV34 states that:

IN THE NORTH DOWNS, GREENSAND RIDGE, LOW WEALD AND HIGH WEALD SPECIAL LANDSCAPE AREAS, AS DEFINED ON THE PROPOSALS MAP, PARTICULAR ATTENTION WILL BE GIVEN TO THE PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION OF THE SCENIC QUALITY AND DISTINCTIVE CHARACTER OF THE AREA AND PRIORITY WILL BE GIVEN TO THE LANDSCAPE OVER OTHER PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS.

The site is at the foot of the Kent Downs AONB.

3.11 These National and Local Planning Policies have been fully considered in this LVIA.

4.0 LANDSCAPE SETTING AND LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

4.1 Landscape baseline

The site is on the eastern boundary of the built area of Lenham village. It is 10.5km east south east of the eastern boundary of the urban edge of Maidstone and 11.5km north west of the western boundary of the urban edge of Ashford. The village of Harrietsham is 3km to the west, along the A20 and Charing is 5km to the east south east along the A20.

4.2 The form of the surrounding landscape is due to the steeply rising scarp slope of the Chalk underlying the North Downs and the flatter land of the Gault Clay. Both these geological Formations run west to east. The site is at the foot of the scarp slope of the North Downs, at the transition between the two which is on a mixture of chalk and clay called marl. The

River Stour runs east from Lenham and the River Len runs west along the Gault Clay but neither makes a significant valley in the clay. The land to the north is agricultural and rises gently to the north for some 400m up to the Pilgrim's Way and then steeply to the top of the scarp slope of the Downs. Lenham village is on the western boundary of the site and the small business park is on the eastern boundary. There is open countryside to the east of the business park and to the south of the site.

- 4.3 The site is approximately 5.1ha. It is approximately rectangular in shape with the A20 London Road on the northern boundary, Old Ashford Road on the southern boundary, Groom Way with the doctors' surgery, community centre and housing on the western boundary and the business park on the eastern boundary. There are scattered trees on the northern boundary, which are mainly within the wide highway verge. There is a low hedge on the eastern end of the southern boundary. The landscape context is shown with the site location on drawing no. 2378/16/B/1.
- 4.4 The town of Maidstone is to the north west and Ashford is to the east. The villages closest to the site are shown on 2378/16/B/5.
- 4.5 The site lies on the eastern boundary of the built up area of the village of Lenham, between the housing and community services on the western boundary and the industrial estate to the east. The northern and southern boundaries are with roads and beyond them lies agricultural land.
- 4.6 The roads in the area are dominated by the A20 London Road. The roads on The north Downs are mostly narrow lanes and in steep sided cuttings up the scarp slope. To the south the lanes are a mixture of narrow two lane roads and single track roads. All the local public rights of way are shown on 2378/16/B/2.
- 4.7 The northern boundary of the site is with the A20 London Road and beyond this is the southern boundary of the North Downs AONB.
- 4.8 The Landscape Character Area is the East Lenham Vale and this is in Annex 1.

5.0 VISUAL SETTING AND LOCATION OF VIEWPOINTS

5.1 Visual Setting

The 'visual effects' are described in 3.21 of GLVIA 3rd ed. as:

"Effects on views and visual amenity."

And the 'visual receptors' are:

"People who will be affected by changes in views or visual amenity at different places."

- 5.2 The visual effects are principally from public viewpoints and judgement is required if viewpoints from private land should be considered. The landscape setting is described in the previous section. It is dominated by the steeply rising scarp slope of the North Downs to the north of the site.

- 5.3 Around the site there are scattered woodlands on the scarp slope and on the more level ground around the site, with the closest woodland some 0.5km from the site. The topography and woodlands are shown on 2378/16/B/1.
- 5.4 The site, contours, woodlands, settlements, roads, railways and public rights of way are shown on 2378/16/B/2, together with the locations of the viewpoints. These show that only public viewpoints need to be considered for assessment of possible impacts.

Selection of Viewpoints

- 5.5 The viewpoints have been selected by analysis of the surrounding topography on the 1:10,000 map together with the surrounding woodland. When visiting the site to take photographs the location of each viewpoint was walked and the photograph was taken from the location where the site was most conspicuous in the view and the landscape. It is considered that there are no significant views from private land.
- 5.6 The proposed viewpoints were submitted to MBC and the Kent Downs AONB Unit and agreed with them as detailed in 2.4 above. No additional viewpoints were requested by them.

6.0 ASSESSMENT OF LANDSCAPE IMPACTS

6.1 Landscape Setting

The landscape is well defined by the steep scarp slope of the North Downs to the north and the generally flat land to the east, south and west. The site is at the foot of the scarp slope and some 0.7km south of the highest point of the slope. The land rises gently by some 10m to a small ridge to the east of the site. To the south the land falls gently and to the east rises to a low ridge west of Lenham village.

- 6.2 The site is in a landscape with one, non-statutory statutory designation. This is:

- East Lenham Vale Landscape Character Area.

The Kent Downs AONB is north of the A20 and is significant as there are extensive views to the south as far as the High Weald some 15km to the south. One of the principal aims of the AONB is to maintain the character of the landscape.

- 6.3 The site is in the views from the scarp slopes of the Downs. To the east and south the views over the site are short due to the undulating topography and scattered woodlands and the small business park on the eastern boundary. To the west views from the wider landscape are obscured by the built area of Lenham Village.

- 6.4 The site is surrounded to the north by rural land uses of mainly arable land with large, open fields. To the south and east there is mixed pasture and arable on the clay soils. In the latter areas it is in a small scale rural landscape.
- 6.5 The landscape impact of the site is neutral in the wider landscape and this is the baseline against which new development proposals should be considered.
- 6.6 The development proposals are for some 151 dwellings. The western and southern part of the site is covered by a detailed application and the north eastern part of the site by an outline application. The main access is from Old Ashford Road and there are six further shared private drive accesses from this road. The layout is shown in 2378/16/B/4
- 6.7 There is a mix of detached, semi-detached and terrace houses. They are all two storeys and with pitched roofs. An open space runs north to south through the site on the route of the existing bridleway. This starts at Old Ashford Road and aligns with the First World War memorial cross in the chalk of the slope of the North Downs. The landscape strategy is shown on 2378/16/B/4. The principal tree planting is along the northern boundary with the A20. This complements the existing trees and shrubs on this boundary. There is a mature hedge on the western boundary with the medical centre and the community centre. The southern boundary has a low hedge at the eastern end and this will be supplemented with new hedges and trees on this frontage. A new hedge with trees is proposed on the eastern boundary. There are two proposed tree belts which run west to east through the site. The principal belt is south of the main access road where the main shading will be across the access road. The development of this proposed planting has been taken in to account in the assessment of the long term impacts of the development from the North Downs and surrounding areas.
- 6.8 The assessment of the landscape effects complies with the guidance in 8.8 of GLVIA 3rd Ed. in identifying describing and assessing the landscape effects. It can thus be concluded that the proposed development will have an impact on the local landscape and in the context of the statutory landscape designations but this will reduce to a neutral impact within ten years, with the development of the proposed planting.
- 6.9 The table of Landscape Impacts follows 7.18, with the Visual Impacts.

7.0 ASSESSMENT OF VISUAL IMPACTS

- 7.1 The Visual Assessment has been carried out by taking photographs at viewpoints agreed with MBC planning and Kent Downs AONB Unit officers. The locations of the viewpoints are shown on 2378/16/B/2. Each viewpoint is walked to determine the site in the locality where the site would be most visible and the photograph is taken from that location.
- 7.2 The photographs are under Figures in this report. They were taken in February, March and June 2016 in weather conditions to ensure that the clearest photographs could be included in the report. The photographs were taken in winter with no leaves remaining on the trees

and shrubs and some selected viewpoints in summer when the trees and shrubs are in leaf. The site is visible or partly visible in many of the views. In almost all the views of the site the proposed buildings and paving will be partly screened from views when the trees and shrubs are in leaf. There are 16 viewpoints. All the viewpoints are from publically accessible locations.

- 7.3 Each photograph has a caption describing both the view and if any or all of the site is visible from the viewpoint. Each caption describes the view and the visibility of the site (the Visual Baseline Conditions). The visual impacts of the proposed development are described in the paragraphs below. The proposed development is shown in drawing no. 2378/16/B/4. An Assessment is made of the visual impact of the proposed development from each of the views. The visual and landscape impacts before the proposed tree and shrub planting and 10 years after its establishment are shown in Table 1.
- 7.4 The visual impact of the completed development will be mitigated by the retained trees and mature shrubs, which will ensure that the site will not be entirely open. The proposed structural planting will ensure that the site can be appropriately screened so that there will be an immediate visual impact from the new trees, if they are planted 4 to 6 metres tall, as is proposed. In the areas of shared ownership, with the benefit of a long term management plan, these trees will develop in to significant screens and will be entirely appropriate to the local landscape. Accordingly the long term the visual impact of development can be neutral or slightly beneficial in the landscape compared to the existing views.
- 7.5 Views 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 are taken from significant viewpoints north of the site at a distance at 0.53 to 0.83km from the site. The views all show that the ground level of the site is visible between the trees and mature shrubs on the northern boundary of the site. The line of trees at the western end of the northern boundary can be effective in screening the site and the housing, medical centre and community centre to the west of the site. The industrial estate to the east of the site is clearly visible in all the views.
- 7.6 In View 1 the ground level of the site is visible in winter in the gaps between the trees and mature scrub. The western site is mostly screened by the trees. The car park is visible between the trunks of the trees. In the summer view the site is still visible in the gaps between the trees and mature scrub but the western development is almost entirely screened by the trees in leaf..
- 7.7 View 2 is to the east of View 1 and the site becomes more visible between the trees and shrubs. The angle of the view means that the site is slightly less visible in summer and the western development is not visible.
- 7.8 In View 3 the site is visible in winter between the gaps in the trees and shrubs. The western development is just visible between the branches on the right. In summer the site is still visible and the western development is not visible.

- 7.9 View 4 shows the site to be clearly visible between the trees and shrubs and the new housing of the western development is clearly visible. In summer the site is less visible and the housing is partly screened by the hedge on the eastern side of Groom Way.
- 7.10 View 5 shows the site to be visible between the trees and shrubs and over the tops of the shrubs. The western development is visible and so is the housing on the western boundary of Lenham, to the south west of the site. The site is somewhat less visible in summer
- 7.11 View 6 is from further east where a short stretch of the Pilgrim's Way is a public road. There is a dense hedge along the south side of the road and the views are taken from a field entrance. The winter view shows the site and the western development clearly visible. The summer view shows only part of the site as a beehive had been placed in the field entrance, blocking access beyond the hedge.
- 7.12 Views 7 and 8 are from the east and south east of the site. In View 7 the site is obscured by the existing industrial estate. In View 8 from the south east the industrial estate is clearly visible and so are Burnside Cottages. The site is though obscured by the accumulated density of the trees and shrubs, even in winter.
- 7.13 Views 9 to 16 are taken from close to the site. View 9 shows that the site is visible on the approach from the east, in front of the new houses at the junction of Old Ashford Road and Groom Way. View 10 shows that from this view from the south the site is largely obscured by the accumulated density of the trees and shrubs even in winter. Further west the site becomes more visible as there are fewer trees and hedges between the view and the site.
- 7.14 View 12 shows that the site is visible when approaching from the east along Old Ashford Road. The existing hedge along the eastern boundary of the western development in View 13 partially screens the site in winter. The wide panorama in View 14 shows the relatively open southern boundary of the site with Old Ashford Road. There are no trees or hedges on the site. The view from Old Ashford Road up to the cross on the North Downs is in View 16.
- 7.15 View 15 is along the A20 Ashford Road from the west. It shows the trees at the western end of the northern boundary of the site. Beyond these the frontage is largely open and there are mature hawthorns and three trees at the eastern end of this boundary.
- 7.16 The visual assessment shows that the site is largely open to views from the North Downs to the north. The analysis of the views and the existing trees, hedges and shrubs shows that trees, hedges and shrubs are effective in screening the developments along the A20 west and east of the site. The trees between the western development and the A20 are effective in screening them from the North Downs, even in winter. The open views to this area where the housing, medical centre and community centre are visible are of its eastern boundary where there is a recent, native hedge of a single row of shrubs.

- 7.17 The characteristics of the views from the North Downs are that the foreground is of the open fields of the scarp slope of the Downs and the middle distance is dominated by the accumulated density of the woodlands, copses, trees and hedgerows and open fields of the Gault Clay vale and the dip slope of the Greensand Ridge. Few building and settlements are visible. The exception is the industrial estate east of the site which is open and without significant or appropriate planting to screen it. The long distance views are of the High Weald as the Low Weald is largely obscured by the greensand Ridge.
- 7.18 It is thus clear that the visibility of the proposed development from the North Downs can be reduced in the short term by substantial tree and shrub planting on the northern boundary, supplemented by tree and hedge planting through the site and on the southern boundary. In the medium to long term the proposed development and the existing western development will be screened and integrated in the characteristic, and valued, middle distance views from the North Downs.

TABLE 1 - Impacts of proposed development on the site



Job name: Old Ashford Road, Lenham
 Job no: 2378

Date: 10 June 2016

Viewpoint no.	Location	Description		Predicted impact	Nature of impact	Predicted impact after 10 years
1	530m north west of the site at 150m AOD.	The site is clearly visible between the trees and shrubs.	V	Adverse	Reversible	Slight adverse
			L	Adverse	Reversible	Slight adverse
2	570m north of the site at 145m.	The site is clearly visible between the trees and shrubs.	V	Adverse	Reversible	Slight adverse
			L	Adverse	Reversible	Slight adverse
3	470m north of the site at 140m.	The site is clearly visible between the trees and shrubs.	V	Adverse	Reversible	Slight adverse
			L	Adverse	Reversible	Slight adverse
4	500m north east of the site at 150m.	The site is clearly visible between the trees and shrubs.	V	Adverse	Reversible	Slight adverse
			L	Adverse	Reversible	Slight adverse
5	830m north east of the site at 170m.	The site is clearly visible between the trees and shrubs.	V	Adverse	Reversible	Slight adverse
			L	Adverse	Reversible	Slight adverse
6	830m north east of the site at 155m.	The site is clearly visible between the trees and shrubs.	V	Adverse	Reversible	Slight adverse
			L	Adverse	Reversible	Slight adverse
7	500m east of the site at 120m.	The site is mostly screened by the industrial units to the east of the site and the northern boundary is screened by the existing trees.	V	Neutral	None	None
			L	Neutral	None	None
8	360m south east of the site at 108m.	The site is not visible due to the accumulated density of the vegetation.	V	Neutral	None	None
			L	Neutral	None	None
9	60m south east of the site at 110m.	The site is clearly visible between the trees and shrubs.	V	Moderate adverse	Reversible	Slight adverse
			L	Moderate adverse	Reversible	Slight adverse
10	145m south of the site at 107m.	The site is partly visible and partly screened by trees.	V	Moderate adverse	Reversible	Slight adverse
			L	Moderate adverse	Reversible	Slight adverse
11	150m south of the site at 107m.	The site is visible through large gaps in the trees and hedges.	V	Moderate adverse	Reversible	Slight adverse
			L	Moderate adverse	Reversible	Slight adverse
12	View from near the south western boundary of the site at 110m.	The site is partly screened by the hedge on the eastern side of Groom Way. The frontage onto Old Ashford Road is mainly open.	V	Adverse	Reversible	Slight adverse
			L	Moderate adverse	Reversible	Slight adverse
13	View from near the north west corner of the site at 115m.	The hedge on the east side of Groom Way partly screens the site in winter.	V	Moderate adverse	Reversible	Neutral
			L	Neutral	Reversible	Neutral
14	Long Panorama of the southern boundary of the site at 110m.	The site is clearly visible. The North Downs and The Cross are on the skyline above the site.	V	Adverse	Reversible	Slight adverse
			L	Adverse	Reversible	Neutral
15	View from 30m north west of the site at 117m.	The trees are at the western end of the northern boundary and partly screen the site. The northern boundary to the east of the trees	V	Adverse	Reversible	Neutral
			L	Moderate adverse	Reversible	Neutral
16	View from Old Ashford Road on the southern boundary of the site looking north along the footpath to The Cross at 110m.	The site is clearly visible.	V	Adverse	Reversible	Slight adverse
			L	Adverse	Reversible	Neutral

V - Visual
 L - Landscape

Predicted impact: **Substantial adverse or beneficial impact** - where the scheme would cause a significant deterioration or improvement in the existing view;
Moderate adverse or beneficial impact - where the scheme would cause a noticeable deterioration or improvement in the existing view;
Slight adverse or beneficial impact - where the scheme would cause a barely perceptible deterioration or improvement in the existing view;
Neutral - No discernable deterioration or improvement in the existing view.

Nature of impact:
 Short Term; Long Term; Reversible; Irreversible; None

8.0 MITIGATION AND ENHANCEMENT

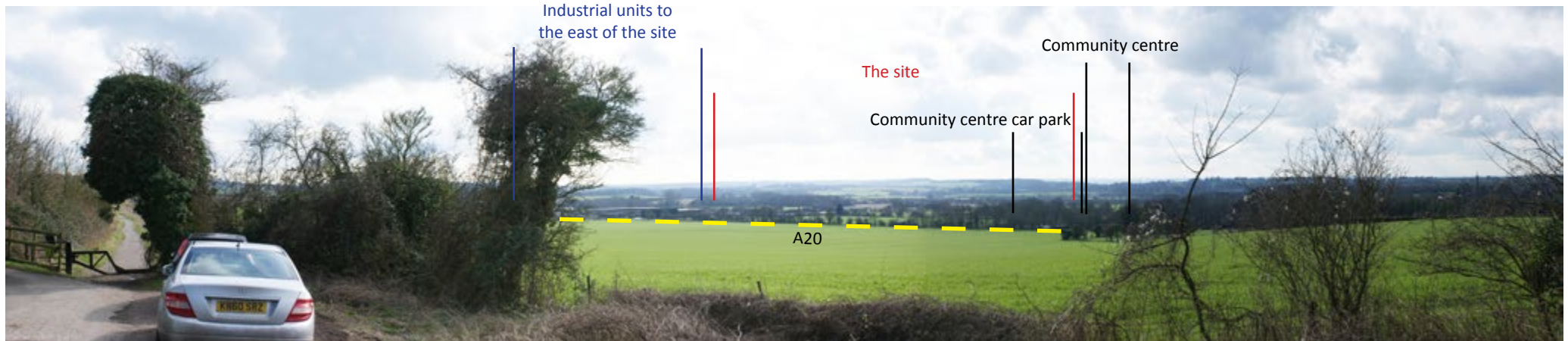
- 8.1 The need for mitigation of the visual and landscape impacts of the proposed development in most views towards the site is shown in this assessment. The effectiveness of the screening by the existing trees and shrubs on the northern boundary is shown in the assessment. They largely screen the site and the western development in winter and the screening effect is fuller in summer. It is thus clear that a dense planting of locally native specimen trees and densely planted shrubs on the northern boundary will effectively screen the development and maintain the current qualities of the views from the North Downs. This new broad hedgerow and tree belt will reflect the character of the hedges and trees in the landscape as described in the Landscape Capacity Study for East Lenham Vale. It will complement the 'good hedgerow network' and plant the hedgerow gaps as described in the report.
- 8.2 Further tree and hedge planting on a west / east axis through the site and on the southern boundary will ensure full integration of the development in to the rural views from the North Downs. The proposals are shown on Landscape strategy drawing 2378/16/B/4. These are supplemented by the detailed analysis of the proposed planting in relation to the development in the supporting details in 2378/16/B/7. The proposals are supported by the Visualisations for Views 1 and 2. These show that with trees planted some 4 to 6 metres tall there will be immediate visual and landscape benefits from the planting. Within ten years this will have almost entirely screened the development and this will increase in future years. The planting will be entirely in character with the woodland, copses, trees and hedges in the landscape to the south of the site.
- 8.3 These proposals will provide long term screening of the proposed development and its integration in to the landscape from key views from the AONB and other views over the site. The management of this planting will be on land in shared ownership and is all outside private gardens. This will secure its effective establishment and the long term management as a significant feature in the landscape.

9.0 CONCLUSIONS

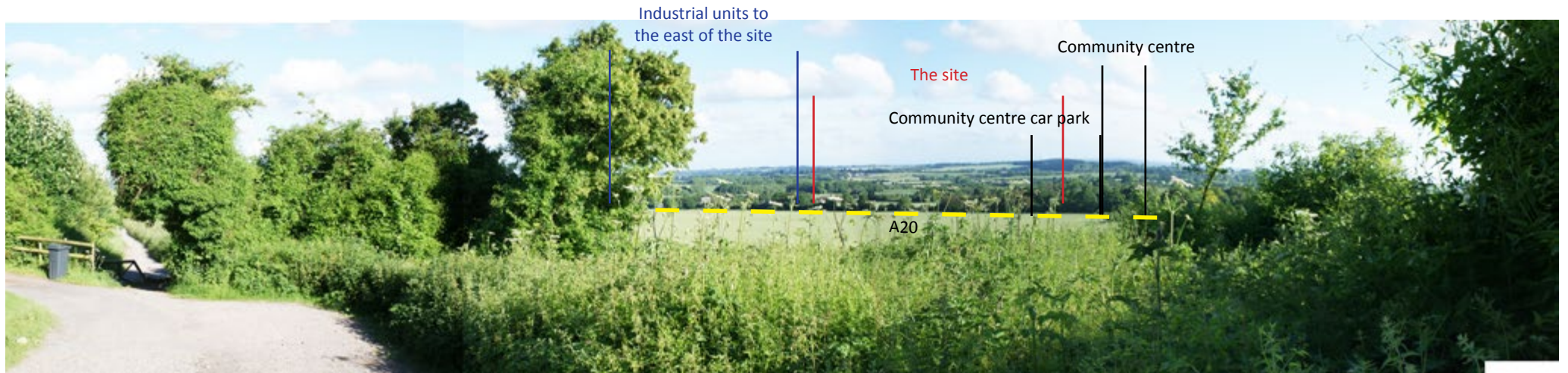
- 9.1 The desk top survey has assessed the topography of the area, vegetation, the geology, public highways, including PRoWs, and areas of settlements. The most prominent viewpoints for each area for a landscape and visual importance were identified through this process. The viewpoints were accessible via public roads or footpaths, except for View 5 which was located just off the public footpath for a better assessment of the landscape and visual impacts.
- 9.2 The existing site is an arable field with poor hedgerows on some boundaries and scattered trees on the northern and southern boundaries. The North Downs are to the north of the site and covered by the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which is a national

landscape designation. Lenham village is to the west of the site and there is an industrial estate to the east. The landscape to the south is the gentle slopes of the Gault Clay vale.

- 9.3 The proposed development is for housing, access roads and gardens. There will be areas of planting in key landscape locations which will be in shared ownership. The housing will be two storey with pitched roofs and traditional construction.
- 9.4 The thorough analysis of the views from 16 carefully selected viewpoints shows that the site and the adjacent developments are visible from the North Downs. The existing trees, shrubs and hedges demonstrate their effectiveness in screening development from views from the North Downs and shorter views from other viewpoints. Based on this evidence, planting proposals have been carefully designed to screen significant views over the site and not to be in conflict with the residential amenities of the proposed dwellings. The proposed planting will provide some immediate screening of the development and will effectively screen it within ten years. There will also be increased screening of the Groom Way development and more limited screening of the adjacent industrial development to the east. While there will be short term visibility of the proposed development from surrounding views, in the medium to long term the impacts will be neutral and in the long term there will be landscape and visual enhancement of the views from the North Downs and the surrounding countryside.



View 1 - WINTER - This is taken some 530m north west of the site at some 150m AOD. (The site lies between the 115m and 110m contours). The site is visible in the gap between the trees at the western and eastern ends of the northern boundary. The scattered trees in front of the site are on the side of the A20. The rising ground seen below the horizon, is the land south of Lenham. The industrial units are clearly visible to the east of the site, particularly their white roofs. The community centre car park is visible through the trees and shrubs south of the A20 and the Community Centre itself is just visible through the trees and shrubs to the south of the A20.



View 1 - SUMMER - The site is still visible between the trees and shrubs with their summer foliage.



View 2 - WINTER - This is taken some 470m north of the northern boundary of the site from the Public Right of Way Pilgrims Way, just south of the cross at a height of some 145m. The site is visible between the trees and gappy hedgerow running along the northern boundary in the highway verge of the A20. The industrial units to the east are clearly visible with their reflective white roofs. The medical centre, community centre and new residential development on Groom Way are partly visible through gaps in the trees and shrubs to their north. They are completely obscured in summer when there are leaves on the trees and shrubs.



View 2 - SUMMER - The site is still visible between the trees and shrubs and their summer foliage.



View 3 - WINTER - Taken from the northern end of the PROW running through the site and leading towards the Cross on the Pilgrims Way. This is some 470m north of the site at a height of some 140m. The site is visible at the bottom of the slope through the gaps in the trees and shrubs running along the northern boundary of the A20.



View 3 - SUMMER - The site is still visible through the trees and shrubs summer foliage.



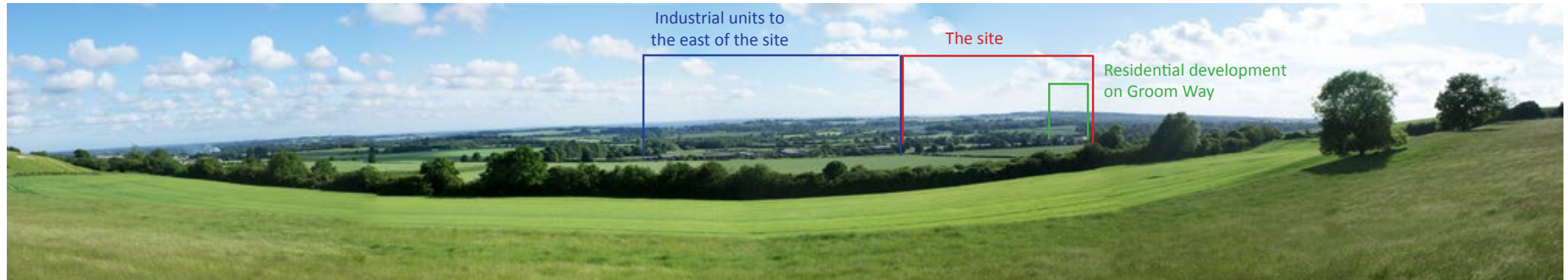
View 4 - WINTER - Taken some 500m north of the site at a height of 150m on the Pilgrims Way PRoW. Looking south towards the site, the site is visible at the bottom of the slope and to the south of the trees and shrubs running along the boundary of the A20. The recent residential development on Groom Way is visible to the west of the site. The industrial units to the east of the site are also clearly visible. The rising ground to the south of the site allows long distance views beyond Headcorn and to the High Weald.



View 4 - SUMMER - The site is still visible through the trees and shrubs summer foliage.



View 5 - WINTER - This is taken from just east of the public footpath north east of the site at some 170m high and 830m from the northern boundary. The view towards Lenham is clear at this height looking down the slope of the North Downs AONB towards the village. The industrial units to the east of the site are clearly visible and the recent residential development to the west of the site on Groom Way are also visible. This is a worst case view, as the photograph was taken in winter, when there is no foliage on any of the trees or shrubs. The wider extent Lenham housing is also visible with housing on Old School Close and Mill Close visible directly above the recent development on Groom Way.



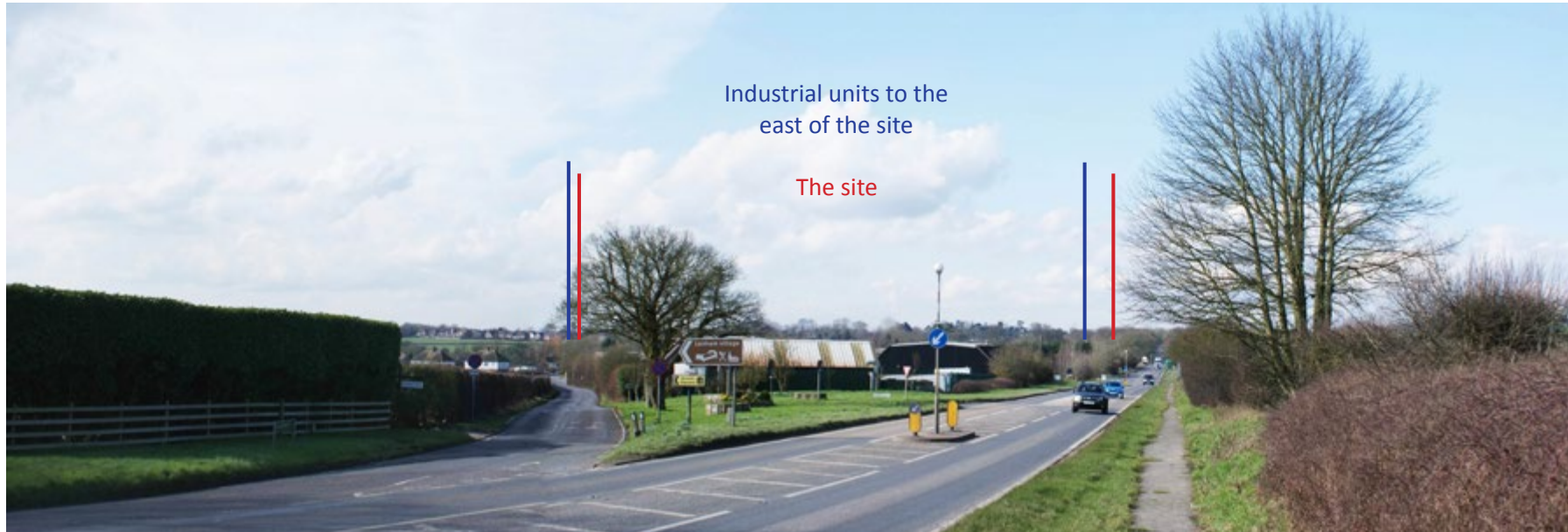
View 5 - SUMMER - The site is still visible through the trees and shrubs summer foliage.



View 6 - WINTER - This is taken from a field entrance off Hubbards Hill which is some 830m north east of the site, at a height of 155m. Looking south west towards the site, the industrial units are clearly visible east of the site, part of the site is visible between the trees, the recent residential development west of the site is visible and the existing residential properties off Mill Close and Old School Road are also visible on the rising land south of the site.



View 6 - SUMMER - The site is still visible between the trees and shrubs summer foliage.



View 7 - Taken from the junction of the A20 Ashford Road with Hubbards Hill. This is some 500m east of the site at a height of 120m which is some 5m higher than the highest point on the site. This view is looking west towards the site, with the Old Ashford Road to the left of centre joining the Ashford Road A20 in the foreground. The industrial units to the east of the site obscure all significant views of the site. Trees and shrubs along the southern verge of the A20 obscure any views of the northern boundary of the site.



View 8 - This view is taken from a PRow, some 360m south east of the site at a height of 108m. The North Downs AONB is visible to the right with the cross visible just above the industrial unit on the left. The properties to the left of the centre are Burnside Cottages which are located just south east of the site. The site is not visible due to the accumulated density of trees, shrubs and hedgerows.



View 9 - This view is taken from the Old Ashford Road, some 60m to the south east of the site. The site is in the middle distance to the west of the residential property on the right of this view. The recent residential development off Groom Way is visible in the middle distance with the Medical and Community Centres to its right. The site is clearly visible to the left of the cottage in the foreground.



View 10 - This view is taken from a PRoW, some 145m south of the site at a height of 107m. The site is just visible through gaps in the overgrown hedgerow of the arable field to the south of the site, and through gaps in trees and shrubs along the northern boundary of Tanyard Farm. The medical centre is visible in the gaps of the hedgerow. The North Downs AONB is visible due to the rising ground of the scarp slope. This view will be obscured in summer due to the foliage on the trees, shrubs and hedgerows.



View 11 - This view is taken from a PRoW, some 150m south of the site at a height of 107m. The site is visible through large gaps in the trees and hedges along the southern boundary of the site and the northern boundary of Tanyard Farm. The cross is visible above the trees and shrubs along the southern and northern boundary of the site. Large vehicles using the A20 Ashford Road are also visible in gaps of the trees and shrubs. The north downs scarp slope is clearly visible on the horizon and particularly to the right of the view where the land is higher. The site is visible in the gaps between the trees and shrubs.



View 12 - This is taken from the junction of Old Ashford Road and Groom Way. The site is clearly visible along the southern frontage due to the open boundary. The western boundary is more restricted in its view due to the existing hedge. This is a stronger visual screen in summer when the hedge is in leaf. The industrial units are visible to the right of the leylandii hedge and the North Downs AONB is visible to the left of the hedge. The Cross is also visible in a break in the trees and shrubs, this is not visible in summer when the trees are in leaf.



View 13 - This is taken from the north west corner of the site from the Community Centre Car Park. The hedge in winter allows view of the site. The foliage in summer would mainly obscure any views of the site.



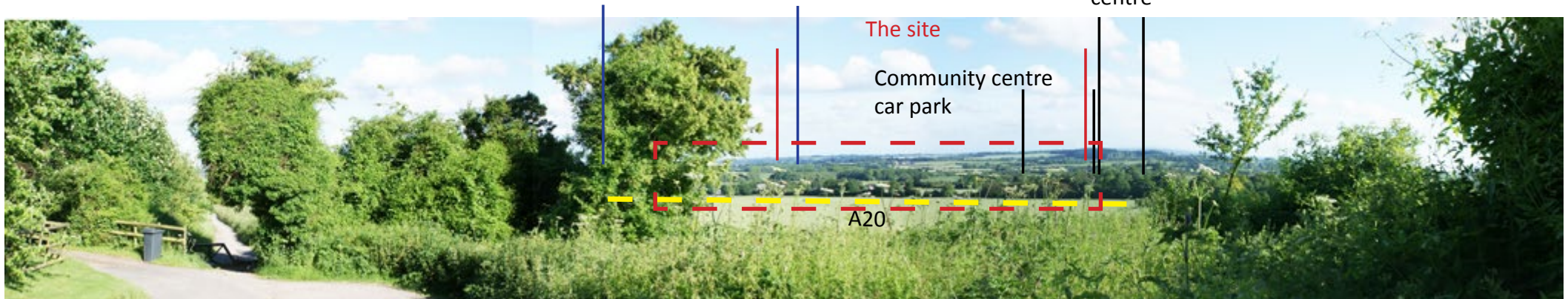
View 14 - This is a full panorama of the southern boundary of the site taken on the southern footway of the Old Ashford Road directly south of the PRoW running north south through the site. The Cross is visible above the trees and shrubs along the northern boundary of the site and to the north of the A20 Ashford Road. This would be restricted in summer when the trees and shrubs are in leaf. The site is mainly open from the Old Ashford Road and allows views across it to the North Downs AONB. The Community and Medical Centre is visible, alongside the recent development on Groom Way, to the west of the site, as well as the Industrial Units to the east of the site. Large vehicles using the A20 Ashford Road are also visible at the bottom of the scarp slope to the North Downs AONB.



View 15 - This view is taken some 30m from the north west of the site, at a height of 117m. The trees, scrub and shrubs on the southern boundary of the A20 Ashford Road, screen the Community Centre Car Park. The large gap in this screen allows views in to the site from the north and the A20. It also opens the view of the alien Leylandii hedge on the western boundary of the Industrial Units.



View 16 - This is taken at the southern end of the PRoW running through the site. The Cross is visible above tree and shrubs on the northern and southern boundary of the A20 Ashford Road. This would be restricted in summer when the trees and shrubs are in leaf. The North Downs Scarp Slope is clearly visible.



View 1 - as existing



View 1 - enlarged image of site area



View 1 - with proposed development



View 1 - enlarged image of site area

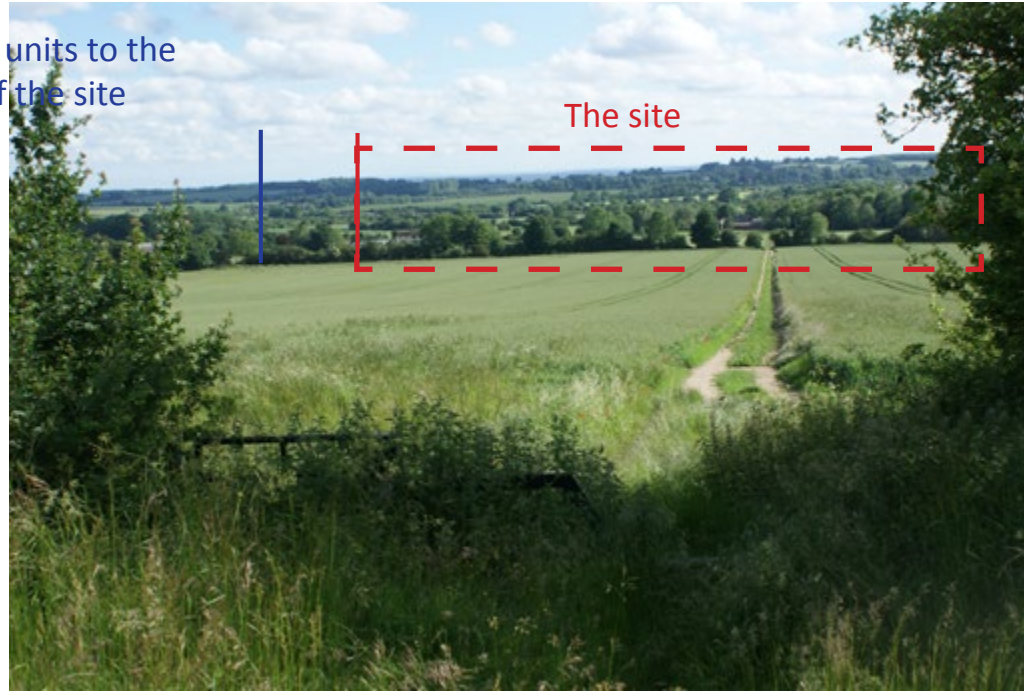


View 1 - with proposed development and mitigation planting with 5-10 years establishment



View 1 - enlarged image of site area

Industrial units to the
east of the site



View 3 - Site as existing



View 3 - enlarged image of site area



View 3 - Site with development and mitigation planting 1 year on



View 3 - enlarged image of site area



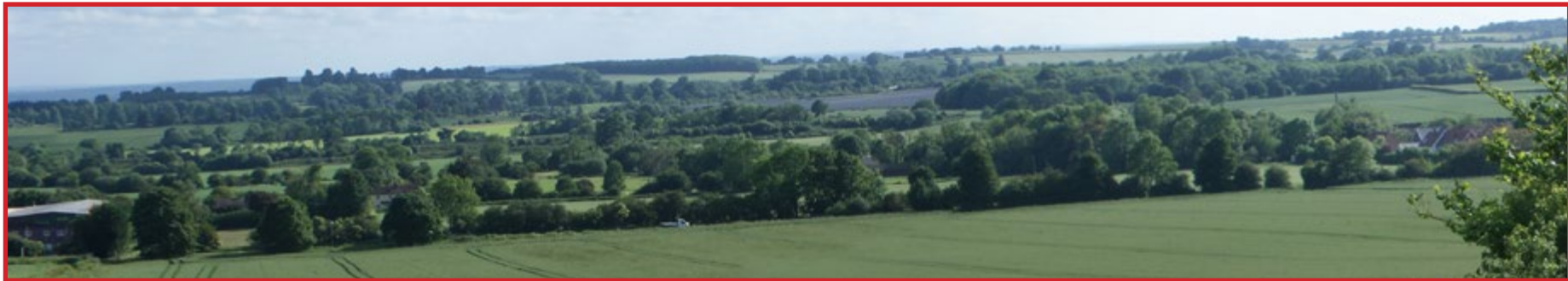
View 3 - Site with development and mitigation planting 10 years on



View 3 - enlarged image of site area



View 4 - as existing



View 4 - enlarged image of site area



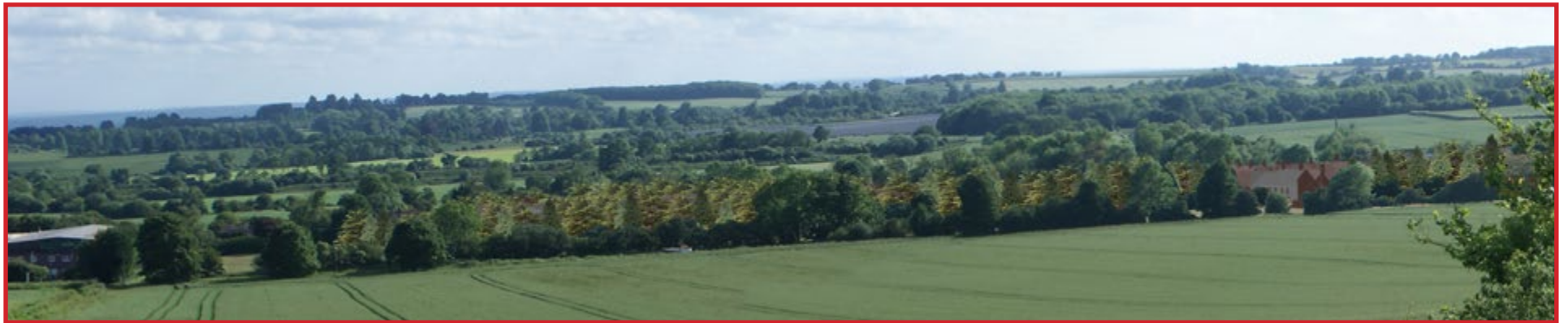
View 4 - with proposed development 1 year mitigation planting



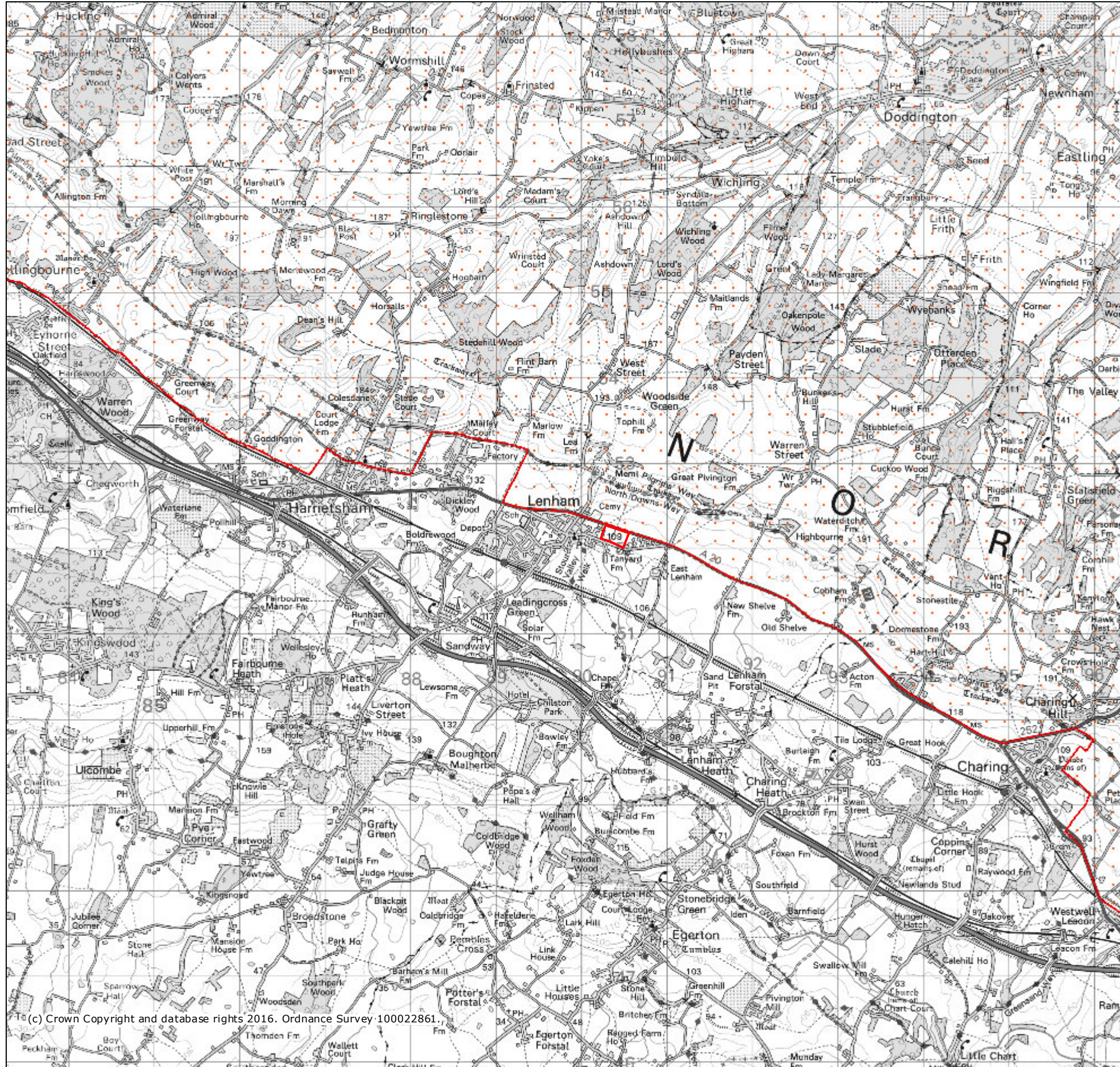
View 4 - enlarged image of site area



View 4 - with proposed development and mitigation planting with 5-10 years establishment

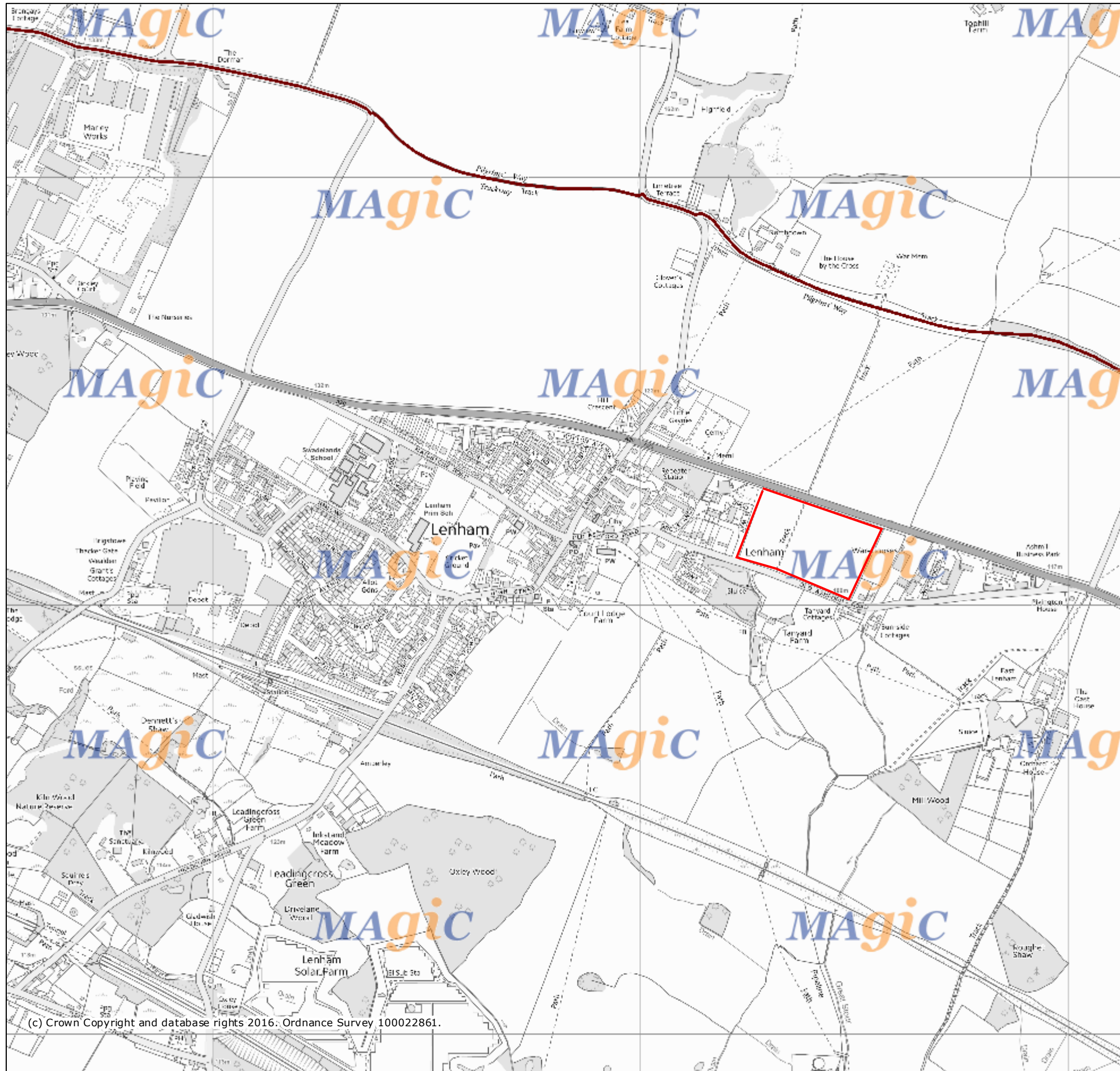


View 4 - Enlarged image of site area



Legend

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (England)



Legend

— National Trails (England)

Projection = OSGB36
xmin = 588200
ymin = 150900
xmax = 591500
ymax = 153400

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