

# LANDSCAPE, VISUAL & GREEN BELT STUDY

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Land West of Duxford Road, Whittlesford



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## FIGURES & APPENDICES

### Appendix A.1: Figures:

- Figure 1: Site Location Plan;
- Figure 2: Designations Plan;
- Figure 3: Landscape Character Plan;
- Figure 4: Viewpoint Location Plan;
- Figures 5-9: Viewpoint Photography; and
- Figure 10: Development Principles Plan.

### Appendix A.2: GCGBA Extracts.

### Appendix A.3: Criteria for the Assessment of the Contribution of Land to Green Belt Purposes.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Landscape, Visual and Green Belt Study has been prepared on behalf of Croudace Homes to appraise the capacity of Land West of Duxford Road, Whittlesford in South Cambridgeshire District (the Site), for residential development. The Study has been prepared on the basis of a desk-based review of planning policy and relevant evidence base including published landscape character assessments, and field surveys carried out in December 2025 determine its visibility and to appraise the character of the Site and its landscape context.
- 1.2 A series of design principles and recommendations have subsequently been identified to respond sensitively to the landscape and visual characteristics of the Site and its context. These recommendations are preliminary, based on current baseline conditions, and have been prepared to inform an initial landscape-led masterplan for the Site. The proposals for the Site will naturally evolve as part of an iterative design process with input from other specialist disciplines and in consultation with key stakeholders.
- 1.3 This Study does not include an assessment of effects as part of a full Landscape and Visual Appraisal / Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment. However, the principles employed in appraising the Site and developing design recommendations are in accordance with the guidance set out in the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition.
- 1.4 The location of the Site is shown on Figure 1: Site Location Plan, included within Appendix A.1. The Site comprises two separate parcels, hereafter referred to as the Northern Parcel and the Southern Parcel.

# 2. POLICY & DESIGNATIONS

## NATIONAL POLICY

### *National Planning Policy Framework, December 2024*

- 2.1 Paragraph 7 of the NPPF defines the purpose of the planning system as achieving sustainable development, defined as *'meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs'*.
- 2.2 In order to achieve sustainable development, Paragraph 8 of the NPPF includes three overarching objectives, including an environmental objective:  
  
*'to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.'*
- 2.3 Paragraph 105 of the NPPF states that Public Rights of Way (PRoW) should be protected and enhanced *'including taking opportunities to provide better facilities for users, for example by adding links to existing rights of way networks including National Trails.'*

2.4 Section 12 relates to *'achieving well-designed places'* with Paragraph 131 stating:

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

2.5 Paragraph 135 states that developments should be *'visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping'* and *'sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting'*, whilst they should also *'establish or maintain a strong sense of place'*, and *'optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space)'*.

2.6 Paragraph 136 states that *'trees make an important contribution to the character and quality of urban environments'* and that new streets should be tree-lined with opportunities taken to *'incorporate trees elsewhere in developments (such as parks and community orchards)'*.

2.7 Section 13 of the NPPF relates to the Green Belt, with paragraph 143 setting out the five purposes of Green Belt:

- a) 'to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;*
- b) 'to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;*
- c) 'to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;*
- d) 'to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns;*  
*and*
- e) 'to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.'*

2.8 With respect to existing Green Belt land, Paragraph 151 states:

*'local planning authorities should plan positively to enhance their beneficial use, such as looking for opportunities to provide access; to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation; to retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity; or to improve damaged and derelict land.'*

2.9 The glossary of the NPPF (Annex 2) defines Grey Belt as follows:

*'For the purposes of plan-making and decision-making, 'grey belt' is defined as land in the Green Belt comprising previously developed land and/or any other land that, in either case, does not strongly contribute to any of purposes (a), (b), or (d) in paragraph 143. 'Grey belt' excludes land where the application of the policies relating to the areas or assets in footnote 7 (other than Green Belt) would provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development.'*

- 2.10 NPPF Paragraph 155 states that the development of homes within the Green Belt should not be regarded as inappropriate where:
- a) *'The development would utilise grey belt land and would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan;*
  - b) *There is a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed;*
  - c) *The development would be in a sustainable location, with particular reference to [paragraphs 110 and 115 of this Framework]; and*
  - d) *Where applicable the development proposed meets the 'Golden Rules' requirements set out in paragraphs 156-157 below.'*
- 2.11 The 'Golden Rules' are defined in Paragraph 156 of the NPPF as including the following contributions:
- a) *'affordable housing which reflects either: (i) development plan policies produced in accordance with paragraphs 67-68 of this Framework; or (ii) until such policies are in place, the policy set out in paragraph 157 below;*
  - b) *necessary improvements to local or national infrastructure; and*
  - c) *the provision of new, or improvements to existing, green spaces that are accessible to the public. New residents should be able to access good quality green spaces within a short walk of their home, whether through onsite provision or through access to offsite spaces.'*

*Green Belt Planning Practice Guidance, February 2025*

- 2.12 Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) for the assessment of Green Belt land was published by the government in February 2025 and provides criteria for the considerations involved in assessing the contribution land makes to Green Belt Purposes A, B and D where relevant to identifying Grey Belt land. These criteria are set out in Appendix A.3.
- 2.13 Under the heading '*Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment*', Paragraph 187 of the NPPF states that '*planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by ... protecting and enhancing valued landscapes*' and by '*recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services*' and by '*minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures*'.

## LOCAL POLICY

### *South Cambridgeshire Local Plan, Adopted September 2018*

- 2.14 The South Cambridgeshire Local Plan contains the current adopted spatial planning policy for the district. It includes the following policies of relevance to landscape matters:
- 2.15 Policy S/2 sets out the objectives of the local plan, including:
- b) 'To protect the character of South Cambridgeshire, including its built and natural heritage, as well as protecting the Cambridge Green Belt. New development should enhance the area, and protect and enhance biodiversity.*
  - c) 'To provide land for housing in sustainable locations that meets local needs and aspirations, and gives choice about type, size, tenure and cost.*
  - d) 'To deliver new developments that are high quality and well-designed with distinctive character that reflects their location... '*
- 2.16 Policy S/4: Cambridge Green Belt states that *'New development in the Green Belt will only be approved in accordance with Green Belt policy in the National Planning Policy Framework.'*
- 2.17 The local plan defines the settlement hierarchy for the district beyond the city of Cambridge as comprising Rural Centres, Minor Rural Centres, Group Villages and Infill Villages. Whittlesford is defined as a Group Village.
- 2.18 Policy CC/8: Sustainable Drainage Systems states that developments *'must incorporate appropriate sustainable surface water drainage systems (SuDS) appropriate to the nature of the site. Development proposals will be required to demonstrate that ... Opportunities have been taken to integrate sustainable drainage with the development, create amenity, enhance biodiversity, and contribute to a network of green (and blue) open space.'*
- 2.19 Policy HQ/1: Design Principles states:
- 1) 'All new development must be of high quality design, with a clear vision as to the positive contribution the development will make to its local and wider context. As appropriate to the scale and nature of the development, proposals must:*
    - a) Preserve or enhance the character of the local urban and rural area and respond to its context in the wider landscape;*
    - b) Conserve or enhance important natural and historic assets and their setting;*
    - c) Include variety and interest within a coherent, place-responsive design, which is legible and creates a positive sense of place and identity whilst also responding to the local context and respecting local distinctiveness;*
    - d) Be compatible with its location and appropriate in terms of scale, density, mass, form, siting, design, proportion, materials, texture and colour in relation to the surrounding area;*
    - e) Deliver a strong visual relationship between buildings that comfortably define and enclose streets, squares and public*

*places, creating interesting vistas, skylines, focal points and appropriately scaled landmarks along routes and around spaces;*

...

*m) Include high quality landscaping and public spaces that integrate the development with its surroundings, having a clear definition between public and private space which provide opportunities for recreation, social interaction as well as support healthy lifestyles, biodiversity, sustainable drainage and climate change mitigation; ... '*

- 2.20 Policy NH/2: Protecting and Enhancing Landscape Character states that *'Development will only be permitted where it respects and retains, or enhances the local character and distinctiveness of the local landscape and of the individual National Character Area in which is it located'*.
- 2.21 Policy NH/6: Green Infrastructure (GI) states the council will support proposals that *'Reinforce, link, buffer and create new green infrastructure'*; *'Promote, manage and interpret green infrastructure and enhance public enjoyment of it'*; and *'deliver the strategic green infrastructure network and priorities set out in the Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy, and which deliver local green infrastructure'*.
- 2.22 Policy NH/8 relates to the Green Belt, and states that development proposals in the Green Belt *'must be located and designed so that they do not have an adverse effect on the rural character and openness of the Green Belt'*. Policy NH/8 also requires that development proposals *'on the edges of settlements which are surrounded by the Green Belt must include careful landscaping and design measures of a high quality'*.
- 2.23 Policy NH/13: Important Countryside Frontage defines Important Countryside Frontages as *'land with a strong countryside character [that] either: a. Penetrates or sweeps into the built-up area providing a significant connection between the street scene and the surrounding rural area; or b. Provides an important rural break between two nearby but detached parts of a development framework'*.
- 2.24 Policy NH/14: Heritage Assets states that the council will support development proposals when:
- a) 'They sustain and enhance the special character and distinctiveness of the district's historic environment including its villages and countryside and its building traditions and details;*
  - b) They create new high quality environments with a strong sense of place by responding to local heritage character including in innovative ways.'*

## DESIGNATIONS

- 2.25 The Site is not subject to a landscape designation; however the following designations are of note as shown on Figure 2: Designations Plan:
- The Site is within the southern extent of the Cambridge Green Belt. The southern limit of the Green Belt is broadly defined by the A505 to the south of Whittlesford;
  - Several Listed Buildings are located within the village of Whittlesford to the north of the Site, the closest of which are The Shrubbery and Sheads House (both Grade II

listed), located approximately 80m north-west and 90m north-west of the Site respectively;

- Whittlesford Conservation Area encompasses the historic core of the village, located within 20m of the Site's northern boundary at its closest point; and
- National Cycle Network Route 11 extends along Duxford Road to the east of the Site.

## EVIDENCE BASE

### *South Cambridgeshire Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA), 2013*

2.26 The SHLAA includes an assessment of land around Whittlesford for residential development. The Northern Parcel is identified as Site 009: Scutches Farm, while the Southern Parcel is not assessed.

2.27 With respect to Green Belt, Site 009 is noted as being:

*'within an area where development would have some adverse impact on Green Belt purposes and functions:*

- *Prevents coalescence between settlements and with Cambridge*
- *The distribution, physical separation, setting, scale and character of Green Belt villages.*
- *A landscape which retains a strong rural character.'*

2.28 With respect to Townscape and Landscape impact, the following is noted:

*'Development of this site would have a significant adverse effect on the landscape and townscape setting of Whittlesford. Development of this large site is out of scale with the existing village and would create a large backland development in a sensitive location which is characterised by largely linear development.'*

### *Greater Cambridge Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA), 2021*

2.29 The HELAA assesses a range of sites across the Greater Cambridge area for suitability for development with a Red, Amber, Green (RAG) rating for a number of assessed issues for each parcel. The Site is within Site Reference 40332, which encompasses a significantly larger area and is assessed for approximately 1200 homes, thereby limiting its relevance to this study.

2.30 Landscape and Townscape Issues are assigned a red rating on the basis of the following:

*'The sheer size of this site would merge both village ends and result in an out of scale proposal which would not replicate the rectilinear form of the settlement. Development of this site would have a significant adverse effect on the landscape setting of Whittlesford, creating a large back land development in an exposed area.'*

### *Greater Cambridge Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA), 2025*

2.31 The 2025 HELAA provides an assessment of suitability and availability of the Site for housing development with a proposed residential capacity of 300-350 units.

2.32 With respect to Adopted Development Plan Policies, the following is noted:

*'Development of the site has some potential policy constraints, but these could be overcome through the planning application process.'*

2.33 With respect to landscape, a red rating is provided, with the following commentary (dated from 2023) set out:

*'The site has a visually open character making it clearly visible from areas. Development upon this site would have a significantly adverse impact to the wider and local landscape character and views. It would be an encroachment into the landscape, permanent and urbanisation of the open rural landscape. Even with landscape mitigation the harm would still be significant.'*

2.34 In terms of heritage, a red rating is provided and the following recent comments are set out:

*'The site sits to the south of the Whittlesford Conservation Area and the northern section of the site is adjacent to the rear of several heritage assets. This site forms part of the rural approach to the village of Whittlesford and large scale development of the site would change this character. A comprehensive HIA has been provided, which has identified the level of harm of the site on these assets as less than substantial and includes mitigation measures. These measures include keeping residential development away from the northern part of the site, introducing further landscape measures and designing houses to an appropriate scale. Fewer houses and landscape mitigation measures may reduce the harm to the historic environment.'*

2.35 Whilst it is acknowledged that the Site has an open character, and that it lies in close proximity to heritage assets to the north, its visibility in the local and wider landscape should be informed by a comprehensive visual appraisal, as has been carried out as part of this LVA.

2.36 Whilst it is likely that development of the Site would result in negative effects on landscape and views, as is the case with most developments on green field land, it is considered that there is good potential to incorporate mitigation that sensitively deals with the potential harm, such that adverse effects can be reduced to a level that would be acceptable in the overall planning balance.

2.37 Furthermore, it should be noted that:

- The Site is not designated for landscape reasons, and whilst it is open agricultural land, it is not considered to be a valued landscape or have characteristics which would lead to elevated landscape sensitivity compared with other open agricultural land within the plan area;
- The Site is not publicly accessible, and public views of the Site are typically partial/filtered or at considerable distance. Furthermore, the Site is typically seen in the context of existing residential built form; and
- A comprehensive, landscape-led masterplan can be developed with stakeholder engagement which minimises landscape and visual effects and maximises long term benefits in terms of the Site's landscape features.

- 2.38 Further details on the visibility of the Site and the potential mitigation strategy are set out in subsequent sections of this Study.

### 3. SITE CONTEXT

- 3.1 As shown by Figure 1, the Site is located on agricultural land adjacent to Whittlesford, a village that comprises two parts: the historic core to the north of the Site, and a more recent area of settlement to the south that has grown around Whittlesford Parkway Railway station, known as Whittlesford Bridge. Duxford Road extends north-south between these two areas of existing development and largely defines the eastern edges of the Northern and Southern Parcels.
- 3.2 Linear residential development extends southwards from the northern part of Whittlesford along Duxford Road, enclosing the eastern boundary of much of the Northern Parcel. Further south, a line of existing houses fronts Duxford Road and abuts the eastern edge of the Southern Parcel. The presence of existing housing along Duxford Road imparts urbanising influences on the otherwise open landscape to the south of the historic core of Whittlesford.
- 3.3 The wider landscape is strongly settled, with the settlements of Sawston and Duxford located approximately 950m east and 700m south of the Site respectively. Duxford Airfield is located approximately 1.5km south-west of the Site.
- 3.4 Settlement in Sawston extends along High Street towards Pampisford in the south, with a large industrial/commercial park at the southern edge of the settlement and approximately 970m east of the Site at its closest point. There are also large commercial units on the southern and eastern edges of existing settlement around Whittlesford Parkway railway station, to the south of Duxford, and to the north of Duxford Airfield.
- 3.5 The Site's context is strongly influenced by transport routes, most notable including the M11 Motorway and the West Anglia Mainline railway, located approximately 1.3km west and 500m east of the Site respectively.
- 3.6 Royston Road extends broadly east-west through the southern extents of the study area, with the A505 bypassing to the south of existing settlement around Whittlesford Parkway Railway Station. The A1301 bypasses to the west of Sawston, emphasising the strong pattern of north-south transport routes that characterises the area.
- 3.7 The Site is located within the gently undulating landscape of the River Cam valley, with levels typically between varying between 20m and 40m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD). To the south, land begins to rise gently to approximately 65m AOD to the south of Duxford as part of a landscape of low chalk hills that defines the southern extent of Cambridgeshire. The River Cam itself flows along the eastern boundary of Whittlesford and is located approximately 450m from the Site at its nearest point.
- 3.8 Outside of settlement areas, land use is predominantly under arable use, with an irregular patchwork of rectilinear fields defined by hedgerow field boundaries resulting in a dispersed vegetation pattern, albeit there are substantial blocks of woodland to the north of Whittlesford and south of Sawston.
- 3.9 As shown on Figure 1, a number of PRoW are present within the landscape around Whittlesford, including PRoW 257/8 which links Whittlesford with Royston Road and passes as close as approximately 385m of the Site, and PRoW 257/7 (The Drift) which extends

westwards from Hill Farm Road, crossing the M11 Motorway approximately 1.4km west of the Site.

## 4. LANDSCAPE CHARACTER BASELINE

### PUBLISHED CHARACTER ASSESSMENTS

- 4.1 The extent of Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) from published character assessments within the Site's context is shown on Figure 3: Landscape Character Plan.

#### *National Character Area Profile: 87. East Anglian Chalk*

- 4.2 At a national level, the Site is within National Character Area (NCA) 87. East Anglian Chalk, which is described as *'a visually simple and uninterrupted landscape of smooth, rolling chalkland hills with large regular fields enclosed by low hawthorn hedges, with few trees, straight roads and expansive views to the north.'*

- 4.3 The key characteristics of NCA 87 include the following:

- *'The rolling downland, mostly in arable production, has sparse tree cover but distinctive beech belts along long, straight roads. Certain high points have small beech copses or 'hanger', which are prominent and characteristic features in the open landscape...;*
- *Remnant chalk grassland, including road verges, supports chalkland flora and vestigial populations of invertebrates...;*
- *Settlement is focused in small towns and in villages. There are a number of expanding commuter villages located generally within valleys.'*

- 4.4 NCA 87 is also noted as *'a visually continuous, open landscape, with occasional long views over the lower land to the north and west.'*

- 4.5 The Statement of Environmental Opportunity for NCA 87 are summarised below:

- Expanding and connecting semi-natural chalk grassland;
- Minimising impacts on tranquillity by *'ensuring developments are appropriate to their setting and incorporate suitable mitigation measures, including tree planting or green buffers'*;
- *'improving links between recreational assets and settlements, particularly where growth is planned'*; and
- *'Improving green infrastructure within settlements and through new development'*.

#### *Greater Cambridge Landscape Character Assessment, February 2021*

- 4.6 As demonstrated by Figure 3: Landscape Character Plan, the Site is partially within LCA 3D: Cam & Granta Tributaries of Landscape Character Type (LCT) 3: Lowland Farmlands, and partially within LCA 8B: Morden to Duxford of the Lowland Chalklands LCT.

- 4.7 The key characteristics and landscape guidance identified for these LCTs and LCAs are set out below where relevant to the Site.

- 4.8 LCT 3 Lowland Farmlands is described as *'a gently undulating, intensively farmed arable landscape encompassing densely settled, wide, flat river valleys and their tributaries'* with the following key characteristics also noted:

- *'Low-lying, gently rolling topography crossed by river corridors and drained by small streams*
- *Open character and often extensive views*
- *Productive, intensively farmed, predominantly arable landscape that has experienced significant modification during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, resulting in amalgamation of fields*
- *Generally sparse woodland cover and fragmented network of hedge boundaries*
- *Woodland and traditional orchards often define the edge of settlements*
- *Scattered Medieval moated sites and stone churches are characteristic features*
- *A well settled landscape with a relatively dense rural settlement pattern comprising large and small villages and outlying farmsteads.'*

4.9 With respect to Settlement Form and Character, the LCT is noted as *'a well settled landscape'* with *'a relatively dense, largely nucleated, rural settlement pattern composed of large and small villages, and outlying farmsteads'*. The LCT is also described as *'a busy, rural landscape'* as a result of *'the high density of settlement, intensive agriculture and major transport routes'*.

4.10 Historic villages in the LCT are described as *'mostly linear in form, with modern infilling and expansion evident'*.

4.11 The LCT notes the following as a Force for Change:

*'Development pressures, particularly for new housing which would affect the rural character of the existing village settlements and could result in settlements appearing to coalesce along main transport routes.'*

4.12 The condition of LCT 3 is assessed as moderate as it is intensively farmed and maintains *'a tranquil and rural character'*, while strength of character is described as moderate due to the *'often busy rural landscape with areas of tranquillity away from major transport routes ... with few distinguishing features'*. Rural tranquillity and the dispersed rural settlement pattern are noted as key landscape sensitivities.

4.13 Landscape guidelines for LCT 3 of relevance to this study are:

- *'Conserve and enhance existing hedgerows and consider opportunities for re-planting hedgerows where these have been lost/become fragmented*
- *Encourage opportunities to expand and link woodland, hedgerows and other semi-natural habitats to benefit biodiversity and managing key views across the rural landscape.'*

4.14 Guidance for Integrating Development into the Landscape

- *'Conserve the historic villages through avoidance of ribbon development and coalescence with nearby settlement*
- *Manage the scale, siting and design of settlement expansion to avoid incongruous development in the rural landscape*

- *Maintain the distinctive settlement pattern of the area and its local context*
- *Ensure density and pattern of new developments reflect that of existing villages and hamlets*
- *Avoid backland and cul-de-sac developments where possible*
- *Ensure buildings are arranged in continuous frontages within village cores and are arranged in loose knit patterns facing the street on more peripheral sites*
- *Ensure new developments are integrated with sufficient space for garden and street tree planting where applicable*
- *Enhance village gateways and, where appropriate, consider provision of appropriate planting on village approaches*
- *Take opportunities to create new village greens and/or wildlife areas within new developments.*
- ...
- *Ensure new developments reflect the form, scale and proportions of the existing vernacular buildings of the area and pick up on traditional local building styles, height, materials, colours and textures*
- *Retain hedges along roads*
- *Enclose boundaries facing the street on village peripheries with hedge and tree planting.*

4.15 LCA 3D: Cam & Granta Tributaries Lowland Farmlands is noted as being *'distinguished by its wooded appearance, which makes it more visually enclosed than the other Lowland Farmlands, and by the relatively built up and suburban character of its villages.'*

4.16 Key characteristics for LCA 3D are as follows:

- *'Wider floodplain of the River Cam or Rhee and River Cam or Granta*
- *Shelterbelts and scattered blocks of deciduous woodland including historic parkland at Sawston Hall provide visual enclosure*
- *Dense pattern of large commuter villages with a suburban character and industrial influences, eroding rural character*
- *Transport networks including railway and major road networks fragment the area*
- *Green corridor including Hobson's Park and the rising foothills of the Gog Magog Hills to the east contributes to the setting of Cambridge.'*

4.17 LCA 3D is also described as comprising *'medium to large, generally rectangular fields in an irregular pattern with low trimmed, fragmented hedgerows and few trees. Occasional pockets of small-scale fields, including fragments of orchards, southeast of Sawston and East of Harston have a localised intimate character and visual enclosure. Shelterbelts and blocks of woodland throughout the LCA, including woodland associated with designed parkland at Sawston Hall, combine to create a wooded appearance and provide visual enclosure.'*

4.18 The villages within LCA 3D are noted as typically having *'strong, historic linear form, though the majority ... have expanded through cluster or ribbon development, and this has led to a more suburban feel.'*

4.19 The following is noted as a characteristic of LCA 3D:

*'Woodland within the landscape, and shelterbelts around settlements and industrial developments give an overall relatively enclosed character, increase the "greenness" of the landscape setting, and screen views.'*

4.20 Specific landscape guidelines for LCA 3D are as follows:

- *'Ensure development enhances existing landscape features, creates links between villages and recreational assets and is in keeping with the rural character*
- *Conserve and manage woodland to maintain a visually enclosed character and separation*
- *Conserve parkland and enhance the specific features that give character and its context within the wider landscape in areas where it has been fragmented.'*

4.21 LCT 8: Lowland Chalklands is described as *'an intensively farmed arable landscape forming the gently rising transition between the Lowland Farmlands and the Chalk Hills. It is well settled, due to historic and modern communication links'* with the following key characteristics also identified:

- *'Gently rolling landscape, occasionally dissected by small streams in shallow valleys*
- *Productive, predominantly arable landscape with limited woodland cover*
- *Vegetation cover comprises scattered copses and shelterbelts of deciduous woodland with occasional hawthorn hedge field/roadside boundaries*
- *The landscape is dominated by late enclosures, resulting in field patterns which are generally rectilinear and occasionally sinuous*
- *A wealth of historic and archaeological features including ancient routes, earthworks and Roman sites/features*
- *Settled rural landscape characterised by dispersed historic, nucleated villages on lower landform*
- *Generally strong rural character, locally interrupted by major roads cutting across the landscape.'*

4.22 With respect to settlement form and character, the LCT is described as having:

*'a distinctive pattern of historic, nucleated villages. A number of these have expanded through the 20<sup>th</sup> century and Royston contributes to an urbanising influence on the edge of the Study Area. Villages along the rivers and main road network, in particular have expanded as commuter settlements to the south of Cambridge.'*

- 4.23 Forces for Change for LCT 8 include the following:
- *'Pressures for development to expand village settlements, particularly those along main transport routes*
  - *'Ad hoc woodland and shelterbelt planting that would alter the open character of the landscape.'*
- 4.24 The condition of LCT 8 is assessed as moderate as it is *'a productive agricultural landscape with limited ecological value. Within the farmed landscape there are fragments of chalk grassland and scattered, small woodlands that are linked by hedges that are particularly intact in proximity to settlements.'*
- 4.25 With respect to strength of character, LCT 8 is also assessed as moderate owing to it being *'a settled, rural landscape comprising dispersed, historic villages separated by open countryside with little tree cover and a sense of tranquillity. There is localised intrusion from major transport routes and larger, expanded villages along them.'*
- 4.26 The key landscape sensitivities for LCT 8 are as follows:
- *'Low-lying, gently rolling landform dissected by small streams in shallow valleys*
  - *Medium to large sized fields enclosed by hedges*
  - *Strong sense of historic integrity, with several visible historic earthworks, routes and buildings*
  - *Tranquil, often remote rural landscape away from major roadways and extended villages.'*
- 4.27 Landscape guidance of relevance to this study for LCT 8 includes:
- *'Conserve and enhance existing hedge boundaries and restore where possible*
  - *Conserve the tranquil and uninterrupted rural character*
  - *Protect the sites and features of archaeological and historic interest*
  - ..
  - *Manage planting of new trees and woodland in order to conserve open views of the undulating chalkland and emphasise landforms whilst improving biodiversity.'*
- 4.28 Under the heading 'Guidance for Integrating Development into the Landscape', the following is noted for LCT 8:
- *'Maintain the distinctive settlement pattern of the area and its local context*
  - ...
  - *Maintain the linear, or rectilinear form of the settlements*
  - *Ensure density and pattern of new developments reflect that of existing villages and hamlets.*
  - *Avoid backland and cul-de-sac developments where possible*
  - *Ensure buildings are arranged in continuous frontages within village cores and are arranged in loose knit patterns facing the street on more peripheral sites*
  - *Ensure new developments are integrated with sufficient space for garden and street tree planting where applicable*

- *Enhance village gateways and, where appropriate, consider provision of appropriate planting on village approaches, and retain hedges along roads*
- *Take opportunities to create new village greens and/or wildlife areas within new developments.*
- ...
- *Ensure new developments reflect the form, scale and proportions of the existing vernacular buildings and pick up on traditional local building styles, height, materials, colours and textures*
- ...
- *Enclose boundaries facing the street on village peripheries with hedge and tree planting.'*

4.29 LCA 8B: Morden to Duxford Lowland Chalklands is described as a *'large scale, open, arable landscape with historic villages at the edges of the River Valleys and distinctive linear features including roads, tracks and earthworks'* with the following key characteristics:

- *'Low hedges and few trees create a large-scale, open and simple landscape*
- *Occasional copses of trees on high ground are a distinctive feature*
- *Sparse settlement pattern with small villages elevated from the River Valleys on lower ground, interspersed with isolated farms and cottages*
- *Long distance views across arable fields towards the rising chalk hills to the northeast and south*
- *Historic linear features include roads, ancient trackways and earthworks.'*

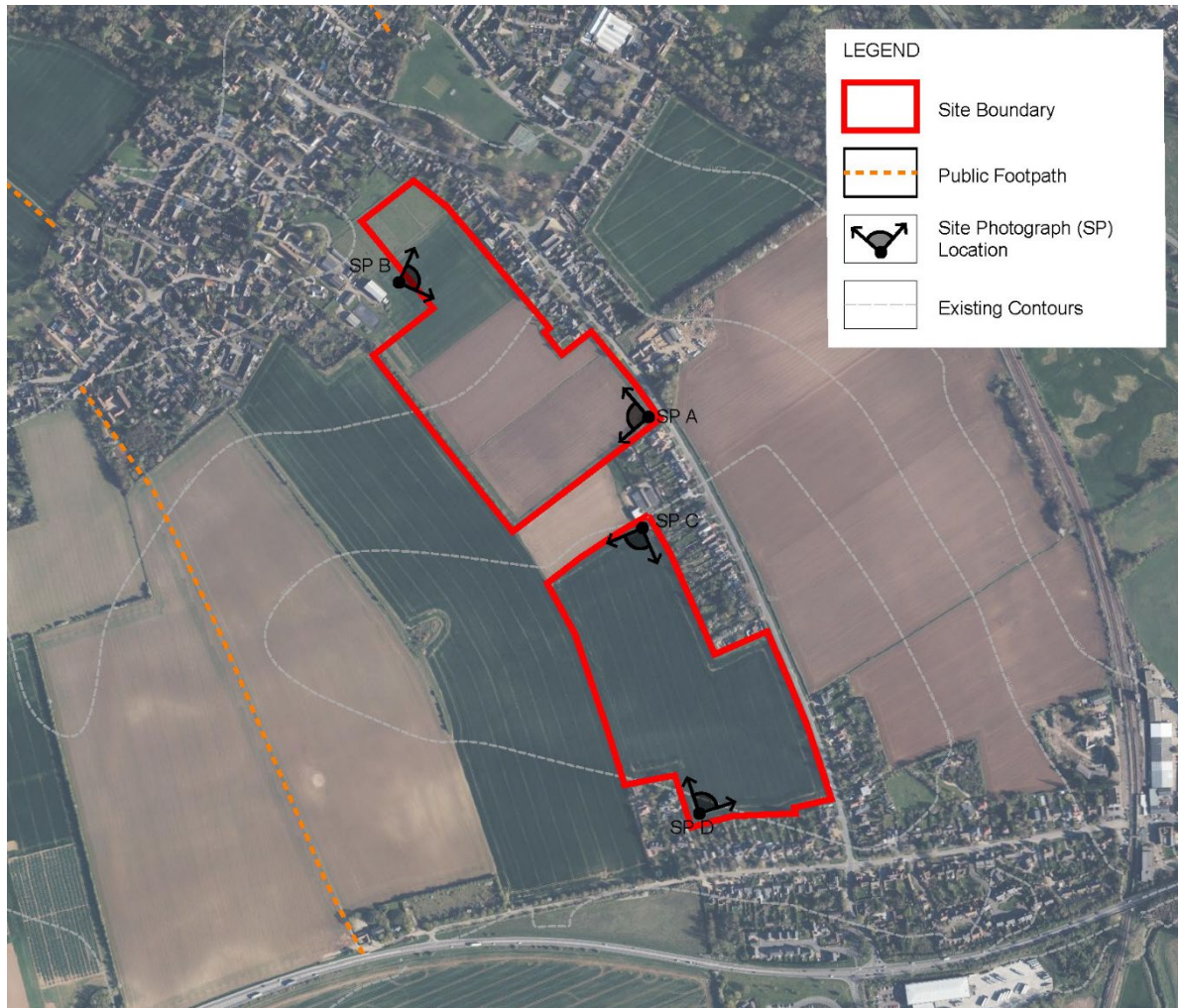
4.30 The strong rural character of LCA 8B is described as *'locally disrupted by the A505 and M11 major roads which converge east of Duxford Airfield'*, while *'Limited vegetation, open skylines and long distance views'* are noted as specific landscape sensitivities.

4.31 Guidance of LCA 8B is limited to conserving *'the open, expansive landscape and long distance views through careful consideration for location of new development and particularly tall/vertical structures'*.

## SITE CHARACTER

- 4.32 The character of the Site has been appraised below with reference to Site Photographs taken from within the Site's boundaries. These views are not publicly accessible and are included to demonstrate particular characteristics of note within the Site. The locations of Site Photograph viewpoints are shown on Figure 4.1 below.

Figure 4.1: Site Photograph Viewpoint Plan



- 4.33 The Site comprises two separate fields of farmland with a combined area of approximately 18.6 hectares (both parcels being approximately 9.3ha). The northern extent of the Northern Parcel encompasses a paddock.
- 4.34 The Northern Parcel is bounded to the east and south by strong tree belts and hedgerows as illustrated by Site Photograph A. To the north, the Site's limits are delineated by a fenced field boundary however agricultural land continues a short distance further north to the settlement edge of Whittlesford, which is defined by large, well treed residential back gardens, with a cluster of farm buildings at Scutches Farm adjacent to the Site.
- 4.35 The majority of the eastern boundary is bounded by the back gardens of houses on Duxford Road as seen in Site Photograph B, with the southern section abutting the road itself and bounded by an established hedgerow. The landform of the Northern Parcel slopes gently northwards from a high point of approximately 36m AOD in the south-western corner to as low as 26m AOD in the north.

- 4.36 As demonstrated by Site Photographs A and B, the nature of boundary vegetation is such that the Northern Parcel is well-contained with little intervisibility with the wider landscape, albeit there are built form influences as a result of intervisibility with adjacent residential development to the north and south.

Figure 4.2: Site Photograph A – Northern Parcel



Figure 4.3: Site Photograph B – Northern Parcel



- 4.37 The Southern Parcel is bounded by the back gardens of existing houses adjacent to the southern and north-eastern edges of the Site. The remainder of the eastern boundary is defined by robust hedgerow along Duxford Road. The northern boundary is lined by a post and rail fence as shown by Site Photograph D, while fragmented hedgerow defines the western boundary.
- 4.38 The Southern Parcel occupies gently elevated land between the two parts of Whittlesford with levels sloping from a high point of approximately 39m AOD on the eastern boundary in the location of Site Photograph B to as low as 34m AOD in the Site's south-western extent.
- 4.39 As a result of the subtly elevated landform and relatively weak containment of the Southern Parcel's western edge, this part of the Site has a stronger visual connection with the wider landscape, with views towards the A505 and the chalk hills to the south of Duxford. However, owing to the falling levels and greater enclosure by the existing settlement edge to the south, the southern extent of the Site is more contained, with some urbanising influence due to visibility of adjacent houses. The eastern boundary is strongly contained by robust hedgerows and the elevated landform along Duxford Road.

Figure 4.4: Site Appraisal Photograph C – Southern Parcel



Figure 4.5: Site Photograph D – Southern Parcel



- 4.40 On the basis of the above, the Site is considered to be rural in character, however its character is also influenced by intervisibility with the existing fragmented residential settlement pattern which encompasses the Site to the north, east and south.
- 4.41 In terms of wider intervisibility, the Northern Parcel and southern part of the Southern Parcel are more strongly contained as a result of a combination of landform, vegetation and existing built form. However, the northern part of the Southern Parcel is more open, with a stronger visual connection with the wider agricultural landscape to the west. The Site is generally tranquil, albeit intermittent road noise associated with Duxford Road is perceptible.

## 5. VISUAL BASELINE

- 5.1 The visibility of the Site has been appraised and is summarised below with reference to viewpoint photography. The photographs have been taken in winter conditions and are therefore representative of a worst-case scenario in terms of visibility.
- 5.2 The location of viewpoints is shown on Figure 4: Viewpoint Location Plan and the photographs are presented on Figures 5-9.
- 5.3 Views towards the Northern Parcel from Duxford Road are demonstrated by Viewpoints 1 and 2, looking south and north-west respectively. Existing hedgerow on the eastern boundary provides strong, but low-level containment with occasional gaps allowing glimpsed framed views into the Site interior as demonstrated by Viewpoint 1. These views are experienced within a context influenced by existing residential development to the north and south on Duxford Road.
- 5.4 Close range views (Viewpoints 3 and 4) of the Southern Parcel are available further south from Duxford Road, where the Site's existing hedgerows provide strong containment of

- the Site's ground plane as shown by Viewpoint 4. Glimpsed views are available where gaps in the hedgerow provide access to the field as shown by Viewpoint 3, where the large scale open agricultural landscape allows views towards the A505 and beyond.
- 5.5 Further north and south of these viewpoints, visibility of the Site within the existing settlement pattern diminishes due to intervening built form, albeit there are likely to be private views from adjacent houses overlooking the Site. Viewpoint 5 demonstrates a strongly filtered partial glimpse of the northernmost part of the Site beyond intervening vegetation and built form.
- 5.6 From the west, there are open views towards the Site from PRoW 257/8 at a range in excess of 400m as shown by Viewpoint 6. The distance, gently undulating landscape and intervening, albeit fragmented hedgerows combine to render the Site difficult to perceive. Existing built form along Duxford Road is notable on the skyline beyond the Site.
- 5.7 Views of the Site from locations to the east of Duxford Road are unlikely due to a combination of vegetation and intervening landform.
- 5.8 There are isolated glimpsed views towards the Southern Parcel from Royston Road to the south-west of the Site as demonstrated by Viewpoint 7, approximately 250m from the Site, albeit dense tree belts provide strong intervening containment elsewhere on the road. Due to the gently rising landform, the Site interior is difficult to perceive beyond the extensive open intervening fields.
- 5.9 Further west, there are open views from the A505 towards the Site as demonstrated by Viewpoint 8, at a range of approximately 750m. The intervening, large scale open agricultural landscape dominates the view, with the Southern Parcel barely perceptible beyond intervening hedgerows and the Northern Parcel screened.
- 5.10 Strong hedgerows and tree belts preclude views from the majority of Hill Farm Road to the west of the Site. However, there are views (Viewpoint 9) eastwards from higher ground on PRoW 257/7 where the Southern Parcel can be seen (albeit barely perceptible) in the context of existing houses at a distance of approximately 1.5km, while the lower lying Northern Parcel is largely screened by intervening vegetation.
- 5.11 Rising landform to the south of Duxford Airfield allows views across the gently undulating landscape towards the Site, where the elevated part of the Southern Parcel is perceptible at a distance of approximately 2km. Existing houses on Duxford Road and in Whittlesford can also be seen behind robust vegetation on the western boundary of the Northern Parcel.
- 5.12 In summary, the Site is visible in occasional glimpsed close-range views from Duxford Road, where existing hedgerows provide otherwise strong albeit low level containment of views, and there are likely to be views from a small number of adjacent residential properties.
- 5.13 Further afield, there are views of the elevated part of the southern parcel from the PRoW and roads to the south-west and west, as well as longer distance views from higher ground to the south of Duxford. The Northern Parcel is generally well contained as a result of the pattern of vegetation and underlying landform.
- 5.14 The Site is not readily perceived in public views from within the northern and southern parts of Whittlesford, including Whittlesford Conservation Area.

## 6. GREEN BELT

- 6.1 The Green Belt study comprises two parts: a review of published Green Belt evidence base where relevant to the Site; and an assessment of Site's contribution to the purposes of the Green Belt.

### GREEN BELT EVIDENCE BASE

*Greater Cambridge Green Belt Assessment Final Report, August 2021*

- 6.2 The Greater Cambridge Green Belt Assessment (GCGBA) identifies a series of parcels throughout South Cambridgeshire and assesses them against the purposes of the Cambridge Green Belt, which are linked to the NPPF purposes as set out in Table 6.1. The assessment also assesses the harm likely to arise from releasing land from the Green Belt.

Table 6.1: Inter-relationship between Cambridge Purposes and NPPF Purposes

CAMBRIDGE PURPOSE	NPPF PURPOSE
1: Preserve the unique character of Cambridge as a compact, dynamic city with a thriving historic centre.	1: To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas.
2. Maintain and enhance the quality of its setting	3. To assist in the safeguarding of the countryside from encroachment 4. To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns.
3. Prevent communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging into one another and with the city.	2. To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another.

- 6.3 The Site is identified as being for the most part within a much larger parcel identified as WH10 which has an area of 83.32ha. Parcel WH10 extends as far as 950m further east of the Site, and 450m further west. The northernmost extent of the Northern Parcel falls within WH13, while a small part of Southern Parcel is within WH12.
- 6.4 The relevant sections of the GCGBA showing the location of Parcels WH10, WH12 and WH13 are included in Appendix A.2: GCGBA Extracts.
- 6.5 Parcel WH10 is described as being *'largely contained by inset development to the north and south'* whilst also noting that *'the size of the area limits the urbanising influence.'*
- 6.6 Despite the presence of approximately 23 houses on Duxford Road within the Green Belt, the parcel is described as being *'open' with 'no development of a scale, character or form that has a significant impact on Green Belt openness'*. Nonetheless, these houses are labelled within the assessment's key plan as 'No Openness'.

6.7 Notwithstanding the above, the GCGBA notes that:

*‘the garden hedgerow boundaries to the northeast and northwest create little boundary separation between the parcel and the inset area so there is some urbanising visual influence.’*

and:

*‘The landform and land cover within the parcel do not create any additional distinction from the settlement.’*

6.8 The findings for Parcel WH10 are summarised in Table 6.2.

Table 6.2: Parcel WH10 Assessment Findings

		CONTRIBUTION	COMMENTARY
PL	Cambridge Purpose 1 – to preserve the unique character of Cambridge as a compact, dynamic city with a thriving historic centre.	Limited/No Contribution	<i>‘Land is not close enough to the main urban area of Cambridge to be associated with it; the land is closely associated with the settlement of Whittlesford. It therefore makes no contribution to Cambridge Purpose 1’</i>
	Cambridge Purpose 2 – to maintain and enhance the quality of Cambridge’s setting.	Relatively limited	<i>‘Land has a moderate distinction from the edge of Whittlesford and Whittlesford Bridge ... there is some development to the east on Duxford Road that weakens its rural character, the parcel predominantly comprises open farmland and therefore has some rural character.’</i>
	Cambridge Purpose 3 – to prevent communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging into one another and with the city.	Relatively significant	<i>‘There is a narrow gap between Whittlesford and Whittlesford Bridge. Urbanising development on Duxford Road reduces the gap but expansive open agricultural landscape maintains separation between the two settlements. The parcel has some relationship with the inset area, but also a degree of distinction from it.’</i>

6.9 The GCGBA concludes that the release of the whole of Parcel WH10 from the Green Belt would have a moderate impact on the Green Belt as development would:

- *‘reduce the narrow gap between the two settlements.*
- *Increase urbanising containment and urbanising visual impact on land to the southwest from the settlement.*
- *weaken the strong boundary distinction of land to the west from the settlement.’*

6.10 However, the GCGBA also notes that the *‘release and development of land only within the northern part of this parcel as an expansion of Whittlesford would still reduce the narrow gap between Whittlesford and Whittlesford Bridge but would not impinge on the narrowest part of the settlement gap, close to Duxford Road’*, and release of this part of the parcel is assessed as resulting in a minor-moderate impact on the Green Belt. The northern part of Parcel WH10 is defined as the area to the north of the southern limit of the Whittlesford settlement boundary.

- 6.11 The overall harm to the Green Belt for Parcel WH10 is identified as likely to be very high for the whole parcel and high for the northern part of the parcel.
- 6.12 Parcel WH12 is noted as having *‘some degree of containment by inset development to the south and west as well as some residential development to the north and east so there is some urbanising visual influence. The landform and land cover within the parcel do not create any additional distinction from Whittlesford Bridge. Overall, there is weak distinction between the parcel and the inset area.’*
- 6.13 The findings of the assessment for Parcel WH12 are set out in Table 6.3.

Table 6.3: Parcel WH12 Assessment Findings

		CONTRIBUTION	COMMENTARY
PL	Cambridge Purpose 1 - to preserve the unique character of Cambridge as a compact, dynamic city with a thriving historic centre.	Limited/No Contribution	<i>‘Land is not close enough to the main urban area of Cambridge to be associated with it; the land is closely associated with the settlement of Whittlesford Bridge.’</i>
	Cambridge Purpose 2 - to maintain and enhance the quality of Cambridge’s setting.	Relatively limited	<i>‘Land has a weak distinction from the edge of Whittlesford Bridge, meaning it has a strong relationship with the inset area. However, it comprises open farmland and therefore has some rural character. It contains no features/aspects that contribute specifically to the quality of Cambridge’s setting.’</i>
	Cambridge Purpose 3 - to prevent communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging into one another and with the city.	Moderate	<i>‘Land is open and lies in a gap between Whittlesford and Whittlesford Bridge which is narrow and urbanising development between the two reduces perceived separation and increases the fragility of the gap. There is weak distinction between the parcel and the inset area, which reduces the extent to which development would be perceived as narrowing the gap.’</i>

- 6.14 The assessment concludes that the release of the whole of parcel WH12 from the Green Belt would have a minor-moderate impact on the Green Belt as development would:

*‘broaden the development frontage of Whittlesford Bridge at the narrowest part of the settlement gap between Whittlesford and Whittlesford Bridge further weakening separation between the two settlements, in addition to urbanising development on Duxford Road.’*

- 6.15 The overall harm to the Green Belt for the release of Parcel WH12 is assessed as high.
- 6.16 Parcel WH13 is noted as being *‘in close proximity to the inset area and is largely contained by inset development. The hedgerows to the northeast create little boundary separation between the parcel and Whittlesford and so there is some urbanising visual influence.’*

6.17 The findings of the assessment for Parcel WH13 are set out in Table 6.4

Table 6.4: Parcel WH13 Assessment Findings

	CONTRIBUTION	COMMENTARY
Cambridge Purpose 1 - to preserve the unique character of Cambridge as a compact, dynamic city with a thriving historic centre.	Limited/No Contribution	<i>'Land is not close enough to the main urban area of Cambridge to be associated with it; the land is closely associated with the settlement of Whittlesford.'</i>
Cambridge Purpose 2 - to maintain and enhance the quality of Cambridge's setting.	Relatively limited	<i>'Land has a weak distinction from the edge of Whittlesford... it largely comprises open agricultural land and therefore has some rural character.'</i>
Cambridge Purpose 3 - to prevent communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging into one another and with the city.	Relatively limited	<i>'Land is open and is peripheral to a narrow gap between Whittlesford and Whittlesford Bridge. There is weak distinction between the parcel and the inset area, which reduces the extent to which development would be perceived as narrowing the gap.'</i>

6.18 The assessment concludes that the release of the whole of parcel WH12 from the Green Belt would have a minor impact on the Green Belt as development *'would result in further urbanising containment of land in the field to the south'*, resulting in moderate overall harm.

6.19 The GCGBA also identifies a number of suggested mitigation measures to mitigate harm to the Green Belt, including:

- *'Use landscape to help integrate a new Green Belt boundary with the existing edge, aiming to maximise consistency over a longer distance ...*
- *Strengthen boundary at weak points ...*
- *Define Green Belt edge using a strong, natural element which forms a visual barrier ...*
- *Create a transition from urban to rural, using built density, height, materials and landscape to create a more permeable edge ...*
- *Enhance visual openness within the Green Belt ...*
- *Improve management practices to enhance countryside character. This can help to increase the strength of countryside character. Landscape character assessment can help to identify valued characteristics that should be retained and where possible strengthened ...*
- *Design and locate buildings, landscape and green spaces to minimise intrusion on settlement settings analysis of settlement settings ...*
- *Lessen the sense of intrusion on the countryside by designing buildings to incorporate local vernacular ...'*

- 6.20 A series of potential enhancements to the Green Belt are also set out reinforcing paragraph 150 of the NPPF, including:
- Improving access;
  - Landscape and visual enhancement; and
  - Increasing biodiversity.

## GREEN BELT ASSESSMENT

- 6.21 The following section sets out an assessment of the contribution the Site makes to Green Belt purposes in accordance with the FINC Green Belt Assessment Methodology included in Appendix A.3 Criteria for the Assessment of the Contribution of Land to Green Belt Purposes.
- 6.22 The assessment identifies the contribution the Site makes to the NPPF Green Belt purposes, based on the criteria and guidance set out in Green Belt PPG.

### *Purpose A: Check the Unrestricted Sprawl of Large Built Up Areas*

- 6.23 The Site lies adjacent to the village of Whittlesford which is by definition not a large built up area. Therefore, the Site is not capable of contributing to this purpose.
- 6.24 Notwithstanding the above, the Site is partially enclosed by existing development, including houses to the north and south, as well as fragmented linear settlement along the eastern boundary. The interface between the Site and these areas of settlement is typically characterised by rear gardens resulting in an abrupt and weakly contained settlement edge which results in considerable urbanising influences perceived throughout the Site.
- 6.25 Furthermore, due to the partial containment of the Site by existing settlement on three sides (albeit fragmented to the east), development on the Site would be largely contained by existing settlement and would not result in an incongruous settlement pattern, or extend in an incongruous way into the wider Green Belt.
- 6.26 On the basis of the above, the Site makes **no contribution to this purpose**.

### *Purpose B: To Prevent Neighbouring Towns Merging into One Another*

- 6.27 The Site lies adjacent to the village of Whittlesford and does not lie adjacent to a town. The southern edge of Cambridge lies approximately 6.5km north of the Site, while the southern edge of the Green Belt is located in the vicinity of the southern extents of the Site, with the nearest town being Saffron Walden, located approximately 10km further south of the designated area. The intervening landscape between these settlements and the Site is undulating, resulting in no intervisibility. On this basis, whilst the Site forms a very small part of a gap between towns, it makes no contribution to visual separation between these settlements, one of which is far removed from the Green Belt designation.
- 6.28 Therefore, the Site makes **no contribution to this purpose**.

### *Purpose C: To Assist in Safeguarding the Countryside from Encroachment*

- 6.29 The Site is free from existing built form and has a large scale, agricultural character which is influenced to a degree by intervisibility with adjacent existing residential development, which partially encloses the Site to the north, east and south. The existing settlement

pattern is fragmented, with linear development partially containing the eastern extents of the Site. The settlement edge is typically delineated by rear garden boundaries, resulting in an abrupt and weakly contained settlement edge.

- 6.30 The Northern Parcel benefits from strong containment as a result of existing hedgerows and the nature of the landform, which results in this part of the Site being well contained in views from the wider landscape. The Southern Parcel is less well contained as a result of more fragmented field boundaries and the elevated landform which results in a higher degree of intervisibility with the wider landscape to the west and south-west.
- 6.31 As a result, development of the Southern Parcel (and to a lesser degree the Northern Parcel) would be visible from viewpoints to the west and south-west, resulting in wider impacts on the perception of openness. However, these changes would be perceived in views already influenced by existing built form in Whittlesford. Furthermore, considerable intervening open agricultural land would be retained in views from the PRoW and road network identified in the visual appraisal. It is also considered that a landscape mitigation strategy can be brought forward as part of a development proposal for the Site which would mitigate visual impacts in the longer term, in accordance with published landscape guidance.
- 6.32 On balance, the Site is considered to make a **moderate contribution to Purpose C**.

#### *Purpose D: To Preserve the Setting and Special Character of Historic Towns*

- 6.33 The Site has no physical, visual or experiential relationship with the historic aspects of a town and therefore makes **no contribution to this purpose**.

#### *Grey Belt*

- 6.34 The Site does not strongly contribute to NPPF Green Belt Purposes A, B or D and therefore meets the criteria for Grey Belt as set out in national planning policy.

## 7. CONCLUSION

### SUMMARY

- 7.1 The Site is not designated for landscape or scenic beauty, although it is within the Green Belt with nearby heritage designations. It is agricultural in character, with a simple pattern and no recreational value. It is subject to localised urban influences, particularly in the northern and southern extents, and the wider landscape is strongly influenced by settlement and infrastructure routes.
- 7.2 The Site is predominantly well contained, albeit due to the undulating landform there are views of the elevated parts of the Southern Parcel from the wider landscape to the south-west, and the Site's eastern boundary hedgerows form an important visual component along Duxford Road and provide strong, albeit low level screening. The Site is not readily perceptible from within nearby settlement, including public viewpoints within Whittlesford Conservation Area.
- 7.3 Where the Site is visible, it is typically seen in the context of existing residential development, often weakly contained, which influences the perception of character at a local and wider scale.

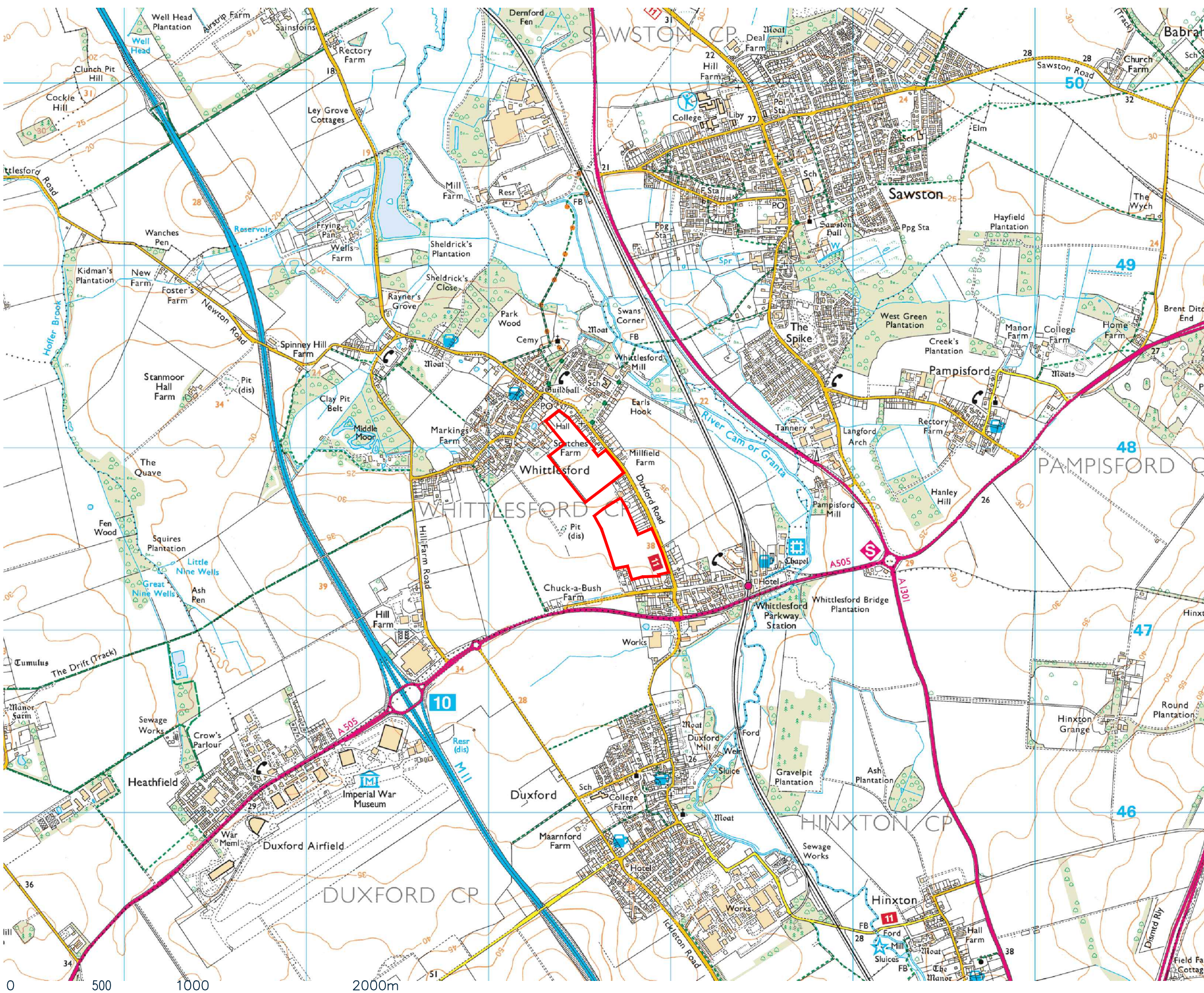
- 7.4 The Site makes no contribution to Green Belt Purposes A, B or D and therefore is considered to meet the criteria for Grey Belt as set out in national planning policy. The Site does contribute to Purpose C (To Assist in Safeguarding the Countryside from Encroachment), however it is considered that a mitigation strategy can be provided to minimise the visual impact of development on the Site, such that encroachment would be limited to the Site itself, and the extension of urbanising influences on the wider landscape would be limited, in turn limiting wider Green Belt harm. As such, development on the Site can be accommodated without fundamentally undermining the Purposes of Green Belt taken together, across the plan area.
- 7.5 On this basis, the Site is considered to have the capacity to accommodate residential development, subject to a sensitive landscape-led design approach.

## DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.6 A series of design principles have been identified based on the baseline analysis, policy and evidence base. These principles are illustrated on Figure 10: Development Principles Plan.
- Reinforce the western boundaries of the development parcels as robust and defensible Green Belt boundaries with new native tree planting as part of a Site-wide Green Infrastructure strategy;
  - Set back built form from the eastern and western edges to allow space for Green Infrastructure and minimise visual impact;
  - Set back development from the northern edge to provide a sensitive offset to Listed Buildings and the Conservation Area;
  - As far as possible allowing for access, retain and reinforce existing hedgerows and hedgerow trees along Duxford Road to retain the character of the streetscape;
  - Where hedgerow removals are required to provide access, create an open landscape corridor across the southern parcel allowing the retention of views across the wider landscape;
  - Within development parcels, provide a layout and architectural detailing that respects the density, form, layout, materials and architectural vernacular of the existing village;
  - Provide space within housing areas for substantial planting, including new trees and hedgerows to soften and assimilate built form within the landscape as well as open space and SuDS;
  - Seek opportunities to connect the Northern and Southern Parcels together in terms of Green Infrastructure and sustainable transport;
  - Explore opportunities to provide a sustainable transport link between the northern parcel and Whittlesford; and
  - Maximise opportunities to provide sustainable transport links to Whittlesford Parkway Railway Station.

# APPENDIX A.1

Figures 1-10



LEGEND

Site Boundary

P2	Jan 26	Updated issue	JM
P1	June 24	Preliminary issue	CLB
Rev	Date	Amendment	Initials

Project:  
LAND WEST OF DUXFORD ROAD,  
WHITTLESFORD

Client:  
CROUDACE HOMES

Drawing:  
FIGURE 1: SITE LOCATION PLAN

Drawing no: 24.1943.L001 Rev: P2

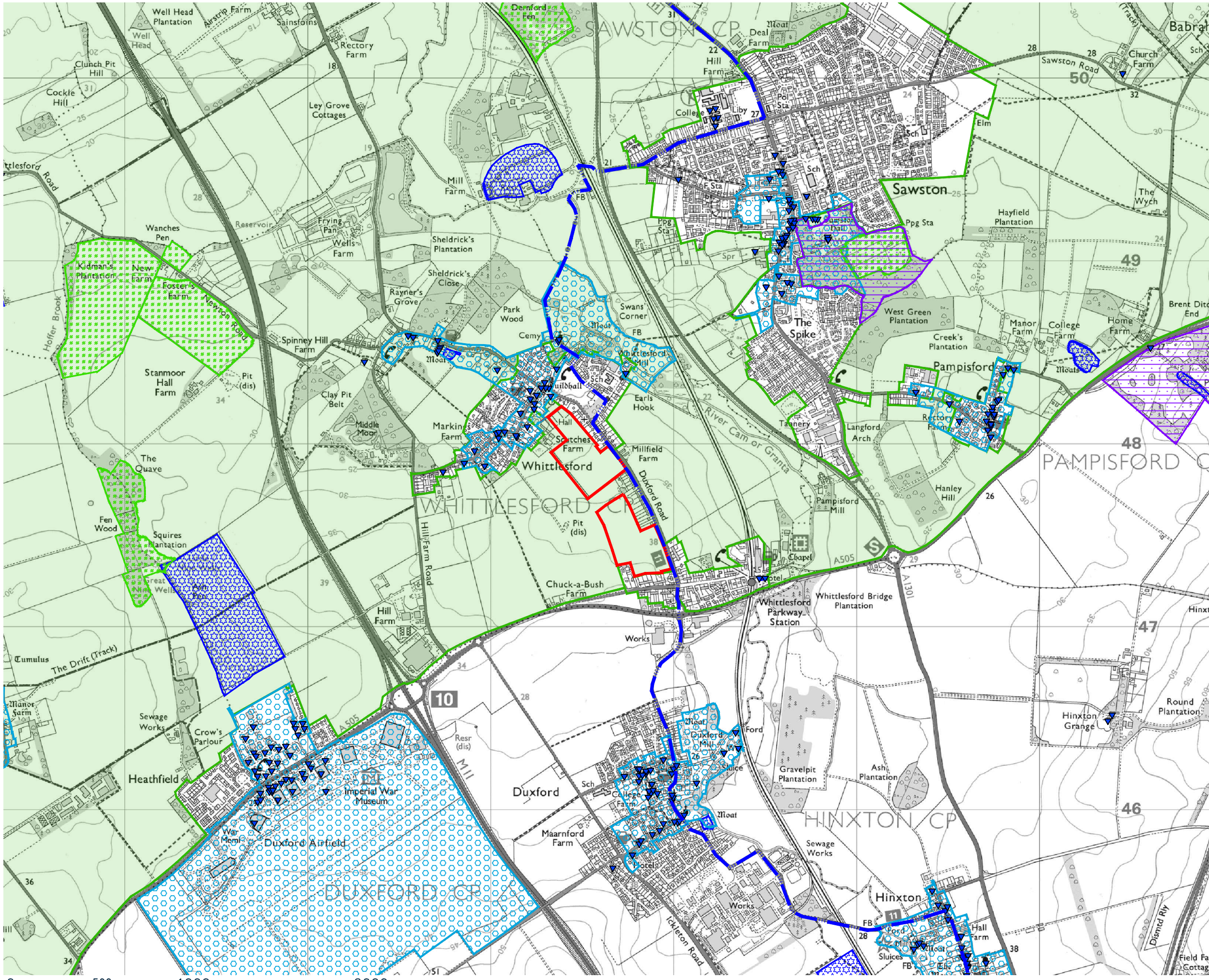
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SCALE  
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- LEGEND**
- Site Boundary
  - Green Belt
  - Conservation Area
  - Registered Parks and Gardens
  - Scheduled Monuments
  - Listed Buildings
  - Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
  - National Cycle Route 11

P2	Jan 26	Updated Issue	JM
P1	June 24	Preliminary issue	CLB
Rev	Date	Amendment	Initials

Project:  
**LAND WEST OF DUXFORD ROAD**  
 WHITTLESFORD

Client:  
 CROUDACE HOMES

Drawing:  
 FIGURE 2: DESIGNATIONS PLAN

Drawing no: 24.1943.L002 Rev: P2

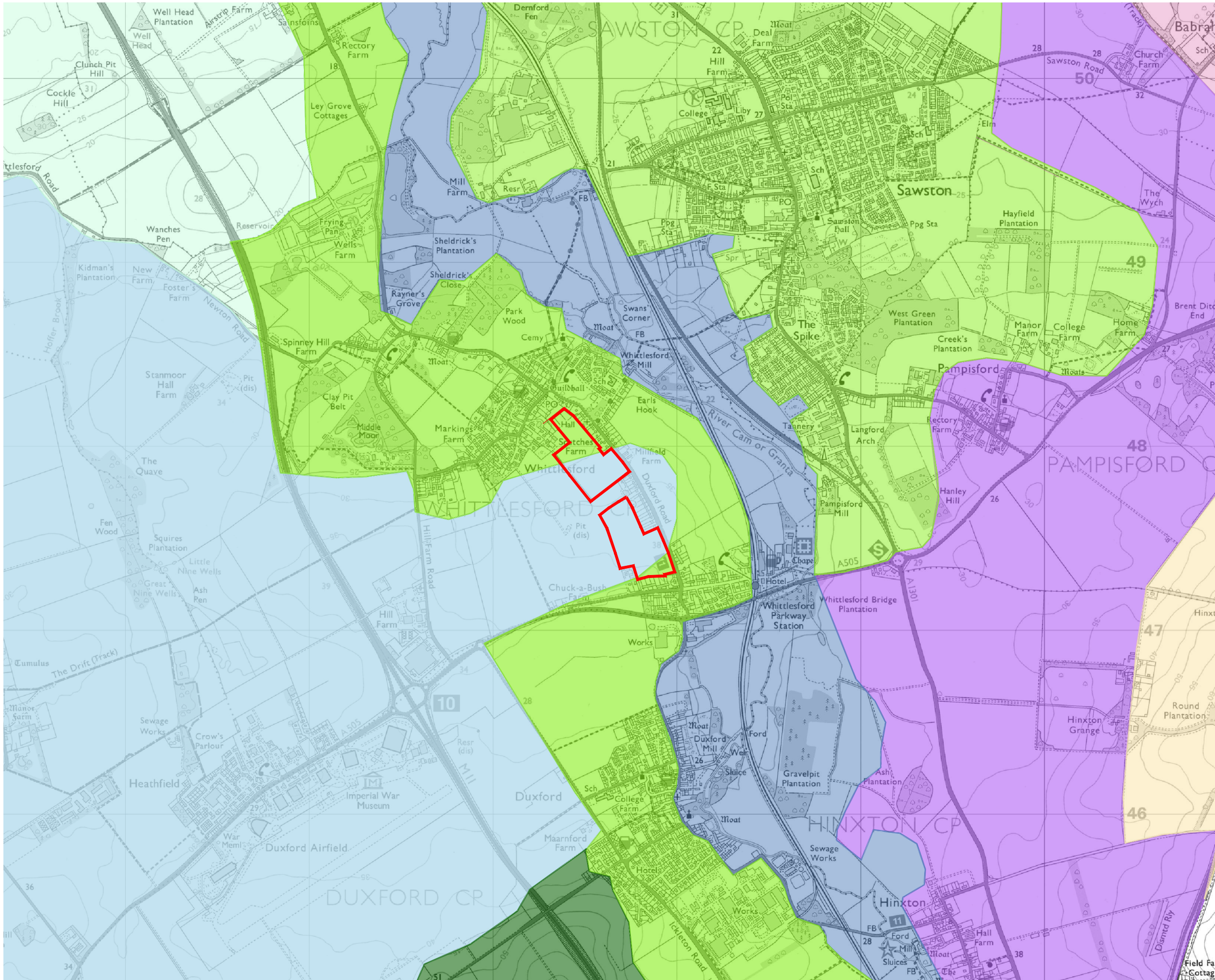
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0 500 1000 2000m

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 1: 20,000



- LEGEND**
- Site Boundary
  - LCA 3D - Cam & Granta Tributaries Lowland Farmlands
  - LCA 7C - Linton Chalk Hills
  - LCA 7D - Newton Chalk Hills
  - LCA 7F - Southern Chalk Hills
  - LCA 8A - Pampisford Lowland Chalklands
  - LCA 8B - Morden to Duxford Lowland Chalklands
  - LCA 9B - Cam River Valley
  - LCA 9D - Granta River Valley

P2	June 24	Updated issue	JM
P1	June 24	Preliminary issue	CLB
Rev	Date	Amendment	Initials

**Project:**  
**LAND WEST OF DUXFORD ROAD, WHITTLESFORD**

**Client:**  
**CROUDACE HOMES**

**Drawing:**  
**FIGURE 3: LANDSCAPE CHARACTER PLAN**

**Drawing no:** 24.1943.L003 **Rev:** P2

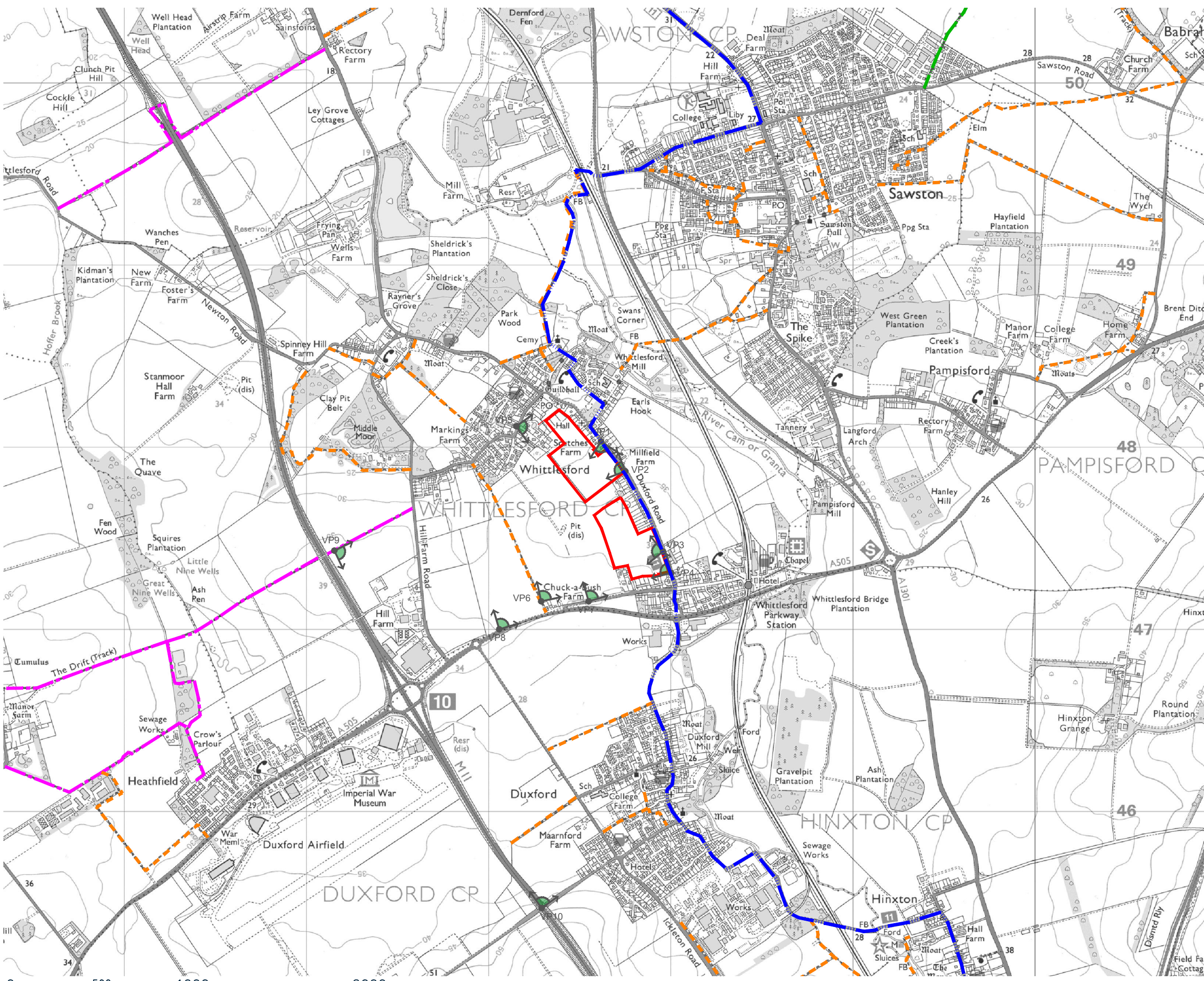
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**SCALE**  
**1: 20,000**

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**LEGEND**

-  Site Boundary
-  Viewpoint Location (VPs 1-10)
- Public Rights of Way**
-  Public Footpath
-  Bridleway
-  Restricted Byway
-  National Cycle Route 11

P2	Jan 26	Updated issue	JM
P1	June 24	Preliminary issue	CLB
Rev	Date	Amendment	Initials

**Project:**  
 LAND WEST OF DUXFORD ROAD,  
 WHITTLESFORD

**Client:**  
 CROUDACE HOMES

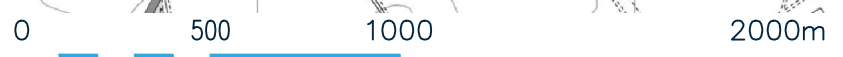
**Drawing:**  
 FIGURE 4: VIEWPOINT LOCATION PLAN

**Drawing no:** 24.1943.L004 **Rev:** P2

**Scale@A3:** 20,000 **Date:** June'24 **Drawn:** CLB **Checked:** JM

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**SCALE**  
 1: 20,000



**VIEWPOINT 1:** View south from Duxford Road

Visualisation Type:	Type 1	Date:	11 December 2025
Orientation:	South	Field of View:	Up to 90°
Camera & Lens:	Canon R6II/RF 50mm f/1.8	Enlargement:	96% @ A1



**VIEWPOINT 2:** View north-west from Duxford Road

Visualisation Type:	Type 1	Date:	11 December 2025
Orientation:	North-West	Field of View:	90°
Camera & Lens:	Canon R6II/RF 50mm f/1.8	Enlargement:	96% @ A1

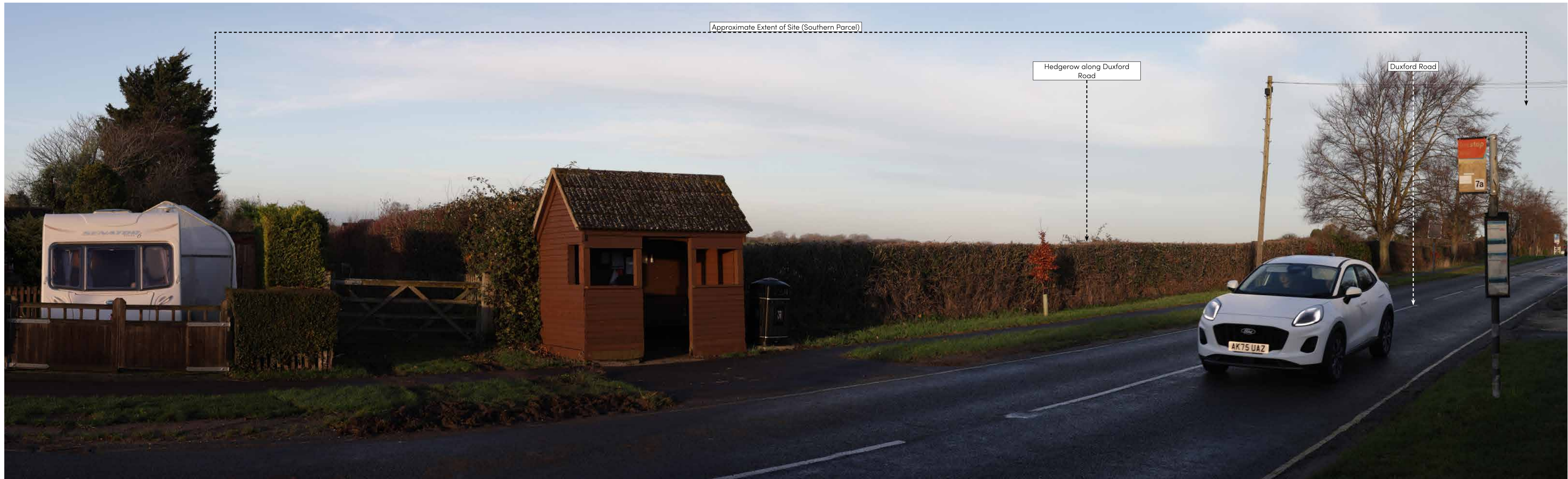
Project:	Whittlesford, South Cambridgeshire	Client:	Croudace Homes
Project Reference:	24.1943	Drawn By:	JM
Status:	Preliminary	Issued:	JM
Drawing Reference:	Figure 5	Issued:	January 2026





**VIEWPOINT 3:** View west from Duxford Road

<b>Visualisation Type:</b>	Type 1	<b>Date:</b>	15 May 2024
<b>Orientation:</b>	West	<b>Field of View:</b>	Up to 90°
<b>Camera &amp; Lens:</b>	Canon R6II/RF 50mm f/1.8	<b>Enlargement:</b>	96% @ A1



**VIEWPOINT 4:** View north-west from Duxford Road

<b>Visualisation Type:</b>	Type 1	<b>Date:</b>	11 December 2025
<b>Orientation:</b>	North-West	<b>Field of View:</b>	90°
<b>Camera &amp; Lens:</b>	Canon R6II/RF 50mm f/1.8	<b>Enlargement:</b>	96% @ A1

<b>Project:</b>	Whittlesford, South Cambridgeshire	<b>Client:</b>	Croudace Homes
<b>Project Reference:</b>	24.1943	<b>Drawn By:</b>	JM
<b>Status:</b>	Preliminary	<b>Approved By:</b>	JM
<b>Drawing Reference:</b>	Figure 6	<b>Issued:</b>	January 2026



**VIEWPOINT 5:** View south-east from High Street


<b>Visualisation Type:</b>	Type 1	<b>Date:</b>	15 May 2024
<b>Orientation:</b>	South-East	<b>Field of View:</b>	Up to 90°
<b>Camera &amp; Lens:</b>	Canon R6II/RF 50mm f/1.8	<b>Enlargement:</b>	96% @ A1

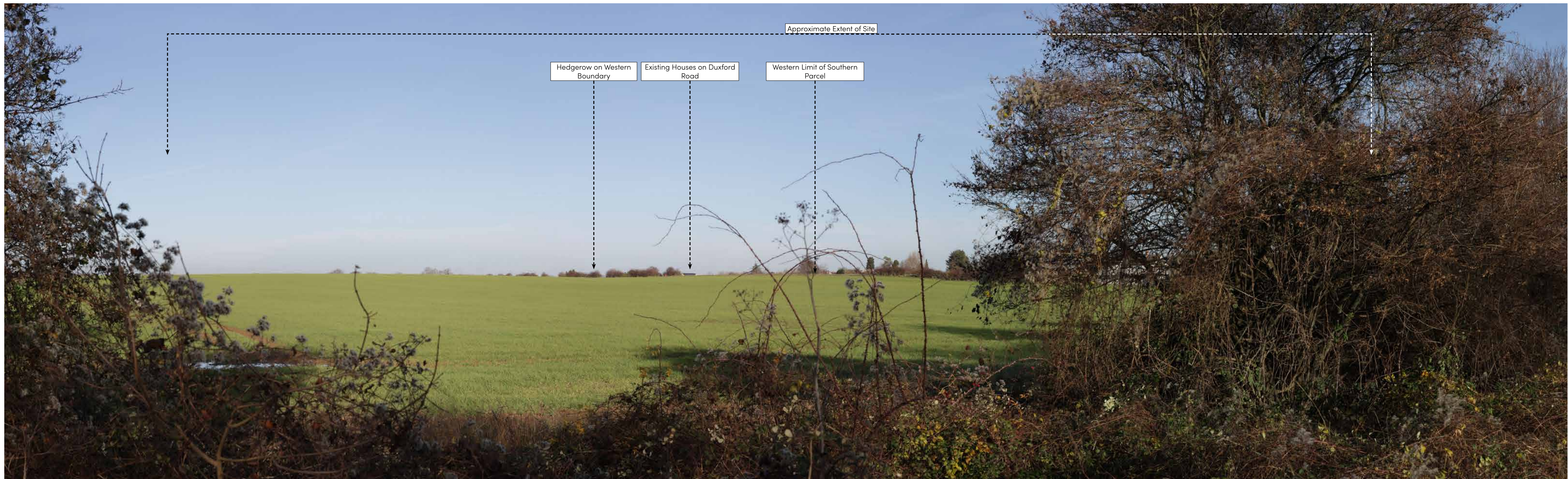


**VIEWPOINT 6:** View north-east from PROW 257/8

<b>Visualisation Type:</b>	Type 1	<b>Date:</b>	11 December 2025
<b>Orientation:</b>	North-East	<b>Field of View:</b>	Up to 90°
<b>Camera &amp; Lens:</b>	Canon R6II/RF 50mm f/1.8	<b>Enlargement:</b>	96% @ A1

<small>Project</small> Whittlesford, South Cambridgeshire	<small>Client</small> Croudace Homes
<small>Project Reference</small> 24.1943	<small>Drawn by</small> JM
<small>Status</small> Preliminary	<small>Approved by</small> JM
<small>Drawing Reference</small> Figure 7	<small>Issued</small> January 2026





**VIEWPOINT 7:** View north-east from Royston Road

<b>Visualisation Type:</b>	Type 1	<b>Date:</b>	15 May 2024
<b>Orientation:</b>	North-East	<b>Field of View:</b>	Up to 90°
<b>Camera &amp; Lens:</b>	Canon R6II/RF 50mm f/1.8	<b>Enlargement:</b>	96% @ A1



**VIEWPOINT 8:** View North-East from the A505

<b>Visualisation Type:</b>	Type 1	<b>Date:</b>	11 December 2025
<b>Orientation:</b>	North-East	<b>Field of View:</b>	Up to 90°
<b>Camera &amp; Lens:</b>	Canon R6II/RF 50mm f/1.8	<b>Enlargement:</b>	96% @ A1

<b>Project:</b>	Whittlesford, South Cambridgeshire	<b>Client:</b>	Croudace Homes
<b>Project Reference:</b>	24.1943	<b>Drawn By:</b>	JM
<b>Status:</b>	Preliminary	<b>Issued:</b>	January 2026
<b>Drawing Reference:</b>	Figure 8		





**VIEWPOINT 9:** View east from PROW 257/7

<b>Visualisation Type:</b>	Type 1	<b>Date:</b>	11 December 2025
<b>Orientation:</b>	East	<b>Field of View:</b>	Up to 90°
<b>Camera &amp; Lens:</b>	Canon R6II/RF 50mm f/1.8	<b>Enlargement:</b>	96% @ A1



**VIEWPOINT 10:** View north-east from Grange Road M11 Motorway overbridge


















<b>Visualisation Type:</b>	Type 1	<b>Date:</b>	11 December 2025
<b>Orientation:</b>	North-East	<b>Field of View:</b>	Up to 90°
<b>Camera &amp; Lens:</b>	Canon R6II/RF 50mm f/1.8	<b>Enlargement:</b>	96% @ A1

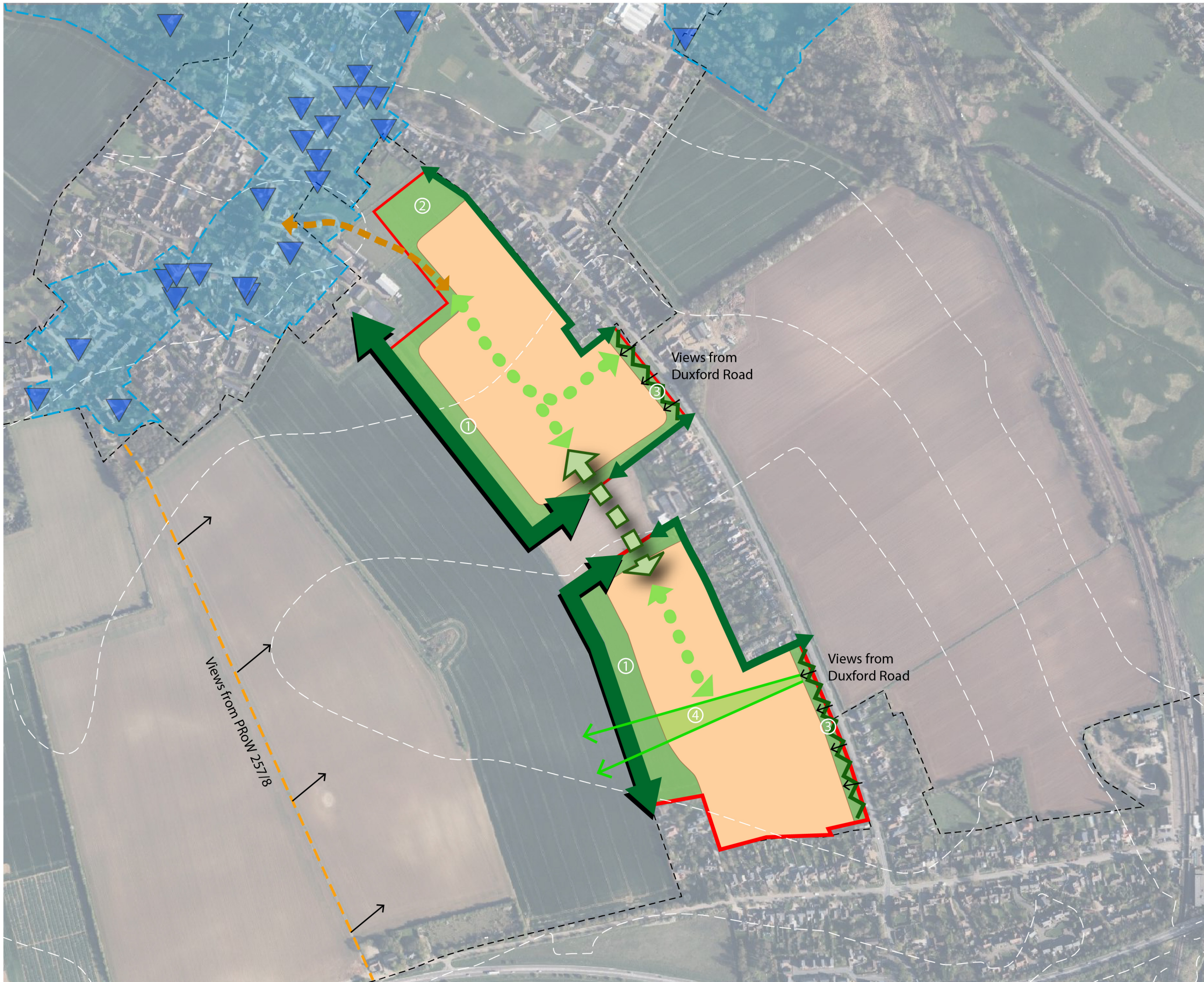
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<b>Project Reference:</b>	24.1943	<b>Drawn By:</b>	JM
<b>Status:</b>	Preliminary	<b>Issued:</b>	January 2026
<b>Drawing Reference:</b>	Figure 9		





**LEGEND**

-  Site Boundary
-  Contours
-  Conservation Area and Listed Buildings
-  Existing settlement boundaries (Adopted Policies Map for Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire)
-  Key Views
-  Retain and enhance existing hedgerows along Duxford Road.
-  Reinforce existing hedgerows along rear garden.
-  Provide strengthened western boundary with new native woodland and understorey planting
-  Potential Development Parcel
-  Potential Open Space comprising SuDS, amenity/play opportunities and habitat improvements.
-  ① Buffer to western boundary to minimise visual impact and provide space for habitat links
-  ② Buffer to Conservation Area/Listed Buildings in Whittlesford
-  ③ Buffer to eastern boundary to limit visual effects from Duxford Road
-  ④ Potential view corridor to break up built form and preserve views from Duxford Road
-  Indicative Green Infrastructure route within layout to include tree planting, SuDS and open space
-  Potential Green Infrastructure route between the parcels to be explored
-  Potential pedestrian/cycle link to Whittlesford



P3	Jan 26	Final Issue	JM
Rev	Date	Amendment	Initials

Project:  
**LAND WEST OF DUXFORD ROAD, WHITTLESFORD**

Client:  
 CROUDACE HOMES

Drawing:  
 FIGURE 10: DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES PLAN

Drawing no:	Rev:
24.1943.L010	P3

Scale@A3:1:5,000 Date: June'24 Drawn: CLB Checked: JM

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0 50 100 200 300 400 500m  
 SCALE  
 1: 5,000

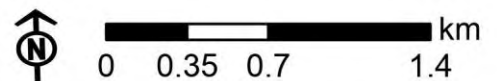
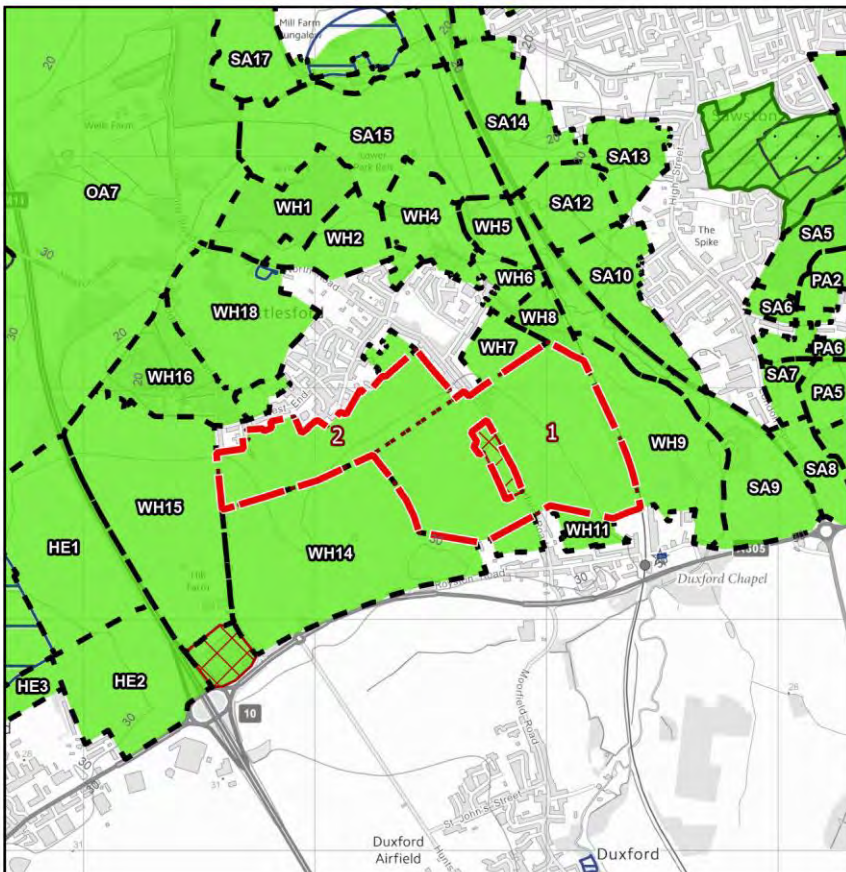
# APPENDIX A.2

GCGBA Extracts

# WH10



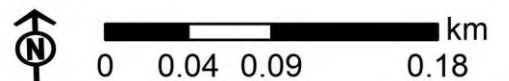
- WH10
- Harm scenario
- Neighbouring parcel
- No openness
- Green Belt
- Scheduled monument
- Site of Special Scientific Interest
- Registered park & garden



# WH12






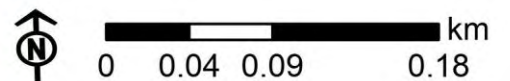
-  WH12
-  Neighbouring parcel
-  No openness
-  Green Belt



# WH13



-  WH13
-  Neighbouring parcel
-  Green Belt



## APPENDIX A.3

### Criteria for the Assessment of the Contribution of Land to Green Belt Purposes

# 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This document sets out the criteria for the assessment of the contribution land makes to Green Belt purposes as set out in national planning policy, and whether Green Belt land can be identified as Grey Belt.

## GREEN BELT ASSESSMENT GUIDANCE

- 1.2 Under the heading *'Advice on the role of the Green Belt in the planning system'*, Planning Practice Guidance<sup>1</sup> (PPG) for Green Belt was published by the government in February 2025 setting out *'the considerations involved in assessing the contribution Green Belt land makes to Green Belt purposes, where relevant to identifying grey belt land'*. This guidance is relevant to local authorities performing reviews of Green Belt boundaries to meet housing or other development needs, however it is also important guidance for the assessment of Green Belt land and the identification of Grey Belt land as part of specific development proposals.
- 1.3 The PPG includes guidance on how the contribution land makes to Green Belt Purposes should be assessed for purposes a, b and d. Purposes c and e are not included in the scope of the PPG.
- 1.4 Paragraph 005 (Reference ID: 64-005-20250225) of the PPG confirms the following:
- Purpose a *'relates to the sprawl of large built up areas. Villages should not be considered large built up areas'*
  - Purpose b *'relates to the merging of towns, not villages'* and
  - Purpose d *'relates to historic towns, not villages. Where there are no historic towns in the plan area, it may not be necessary to provide detailed assessments against this purpose.'*
- 1.5 Paragraph 008 (Reference ID: 64-008-20250225) of the PPG sets out guidance for the assessment of the impact of development on the remaining Green Belt. It states:
- 'A Green Belt assessment should also consider the extent to which release or development of Green Belt land (including but not limited to grey belt land) would fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the plan area as whole.'*
- 'In reaching this judgement, authorities should consider whether, or the extent to which, the release or development of Green Belt Land would affect the ability of all the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan from serving all five of the Green Belt purposes in a meaningful way.'*
- 1.6 Paragraph 006 (Reference ID: 64-006-20250225) of the PPG states that *'grey belt excludes land where the application of policies relating to the areas or assets in footnote 7 to the NPPF (other than Green Belt) would provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development. In reaching this judgement, authorities should consider where areas of grey belt would be covered by or affect other designations in footnote 7. Where*

---

<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (2025). *Planning practice guidance*. [online] GOV.UK.

*this is the case, it may only be possible to provisionally identify such land as grey belt in advance of more detailed specific proposals.*

## DEFINITIONS

### *Openness*

- 1.7 Openness is defined as having both spatial and visual aspects. The spatial or volumetric aspect of openness is in effect a lack of built development, where harm to the Green Belt arises due to increased quantity of built form. However, various legal judgements (Turner v SSCLG [2016] EWCA Civ 466) have established that openness has a clear visual dimension, in that it is 'open-textured'. As such openness can be affected by the degree of visibility of built form, and in some cases also urbanising activities such as traffic.
- 1.8 The visual dimension to openness, is also relevant to other aspects of Green Belt as set out below.

### *Sprawl (Purpose a)*

- 1.9 The uncontrolled or unplanned extension of large built up areas into open countryside. This includes consideration of the relationship a parcel has with the edges of a large built up area (e.g. abutting, separated, surrounded) and the relationship it has with the wider green belt including the presence of physical features that could restrict and contain development is also considered. The nature of the existing settlement edge is also considered, as poorly defined existing boundaries may result in strong existing urbanising influences which may in turn reduce sprawl associated with development. The nature of the settlement pattern that would arise as a result of development of the land is also considered, and whether it would result in an incongruous pattern of settlement.

### *Large Built up Areas (purpose a)*

- 1.10 The Green Belt PPG confirms that the identification of large built-up areas should not apply to villages. For the purposes of the assessment, the status of a settlement will be assessed based on the local authority's evidence base including settlement hierarchies.

### *Coalescence (purpose b)*

- 1.11 Coalescence is the merging or joining together of existing settlements. Assessing the potential for coalescence involves consideration of the nature of a gap between settlements and the contribution of a particular parcel to that gap. The character of a parcel, particularly with respect to existing urbanising influences that may be perceived, is also an important consideration.
- 1.12 The Green Belt PPG confirms that Green Belt applies to the merging of towns, and that villages should not be included.

### *Encroachment (purpose c)*

- 1.13 The extension or spread of development into open countryside constitutes encroachment. In order to be most effective in preventing encroachment, a parcel would typically be free from existing built form and free from existing urbanising influences, as

well as having strong boundaries that prevent the extension of urbanising influences into the wider countryside.

#### *Setting of Historic Towns (purpose d)*

- 1.14 Historic towns are typically defined with reference to the presence of heritage designations (e.g. Conservation Areas), and considering published evidence base. Parcels are assessed in terms of their location and contribution to the setting of historic towns. The extent of interaction between a given parcel and the historic core of a settlement is an important consideration.
- 1.15 The Green Belt PPG confirms that this criterion applies to historic towns and not villages.

#### *Assisting in Urban Regeneration (purpose e)*

- 1.16 This purpose is non site specific, in that all land within the Green Belt contributes to this purpose equally.

## 2. ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

### PARCEL IDENTIFICATION

- 2.1 The first step of this assessment is to identify parcels of land as assessment units. This may include a particular development site, or may be based on parcels identified in published evidence base such as Local Authority Green Belt Reviews. Circumstances may arise where a finer grain of detail is appropriate, and smaller parcels of land may be assessed within a development site.
- 2.2 Parcels are typically identified on the basis of clear and identifiable physical features (e.g. robust boundary vegetation, watercourses, transport routes).

### CONTRIBUTION TO GREEN BELT PURPOSES

- 2.3 The contribution land makes to Green Belt purposes is assessed as follows:
- Strong contribution;
  - Moderate contribution; and
  - Weak contribution or No contribution.

## ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

### Assessment Criteria for Purposes a, b and d

2.4 The criteria for the assessment of the contribution land makes to Green Belt purposes a, b and d is on the basis of the criteria set out in Paragraph 005 (Reference ID: 64-005-20250225) of the PPG, drawing from professional judgement.

#### Purpose a – to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas

Table 2.1: Criteria for assessing contribution to Purpose a

		ILLUSTRATIVE FEATURES
<b>CONTRIBUTION</b>	Strong	<p>Assessment areas that contribute strongly are likely to be free of existing development, and lack physical feature(s) in reasonable proximity that could restrict and contain development.</p> <p>They are also likely to include all of the following features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- be adjacent or near to a large built up area</li> <li>- if developed, result in an incongruous pattern of development (such as an extended “finger” of development into the Green Belt)</li> </ul>
	Moderate	<p>Assessment areas that contribute moderately are likely to be adjacent or near to a large built up area, but include one or more features that weaken the land’s contribution to this purpose a, such as (but not limited to):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- having physical feature(s) in reasonable proximity that could restrict and contain development</li> <li>- be partially enclosed by existing development, such that new development would not result in an incongruous pattern of development</li> <li>- contain existing development</li> <li>- being subject to other urbanising influences</li> </ul>
	Weak or None	<p>Assessment areas that make only a weak or no contribution are likely to include those that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- are not adjacent to or near to a large built up area</li> <li>- are adjacent to or near to a large built up area, but containing or being largely enclosed by significant existing development</li> </ul>

#### Purpose b – to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another

Table 2.2: Criteria for assessing contribution to Purpose b

		ILLUSTRATIVE FEATURES
<b>CONTRIBUTION</b>	Strong	<p>Assessment areas that contribute strongly are likely to be free of existing development and include all of the following features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- forming a substantial part of a gap between towns</li> <li>- the development of which would be likely to result in the loss of visual separation of towns</li> </ul>
	Moderate	<p>Assessment areas that contribute moderately are likely to be located in a gap between towns, but include one or more features that weaken their contribution to this purpose, such as (but not limited to):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- forming a small part of the gap between towns</li> <li>- being able to be developed without the loss of visual separation between towns. This could be (but is not limited to) due to the presence or the close proximity of structures, natural landscape elements or topography that preserve visual separation</li> </ul>
	Weak or None	<p>Assessment areas that contribute weakly are likely to include those that:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- do not form part of a gap between towns, or</li> <li>- form part of a gap between towns, but only a very small part of this gap, without making a contribution to visual separation</li> </ul>
--	---

*Purpose d – to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns*

**Table 2.3: Criteria for assessing contribution to purpose d**

		ILLUSTRATIVE FEATURES
<b>CONTRIBUTION</b>	<i>Strong</i>	<p>Assessment areas that contribute strongly are likely be free of existing development and to include all of the following features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- form part of the setting of the historic town</li> <li>- make a considerable contribution to the special character of a historic town. This could be (but is not limited to) as a result of being within, adjacent to, or of significant visual importance to the historic aspects of the town</li> </ul>
	<i>Moderate</i>	<p>Assessment areas that perform moderately are likely to form part of the setting and/or contribute to the special character of a historic town but include one or more features that weaken their contribution to this purpose, such as (but not limited to):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- being separated to some extent from historic aspects of the town by existing development or topography</li> <li>- containing existing development</li> <li>- not having an important visual, physical, or experiential relationship to historic aspects of the town</li> </ul>
	<i>Weak or None</i>	<p>Assessment areas that make no or only a weak contribution are likely to include those that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- do not form part of the setting of a historic town</li> <li>- have no visual, physical, or experiential connection to the historic aspects of the town</li> </ul>

*Assessment of Purposes C and E*

*Purpose c - To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment*

2.5 Parcels are assessed based on consideration of:

- The nature of the land in terms of use and openness, and the extent to which it has rural or urban/suburban characteristics;
- The extent to which the land contributes to the perception of openness;
- The nature of the existing settlement boundary, and the extent to which the land is influenced by existing settlement; and
- The potential for development of the Parcel to extend urbanising influences into the wider open countryside.

*Purpose e - assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land*

2.6 All Green Belt land contributes to this purpose equally irrespective of location; therefore this purpose is not assessed.