

# ALINGTON ESTATE, LITTLE BARFORD

LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL POSITION STATEMENT (A3 DOUBLESIDED)  
OCTOBER 2021



# ISSUE SHEET

**JOB NAME:** ALINGTON ESTATE,  
LITTLE BARFORD  
**JOB NUMBER:** D3105  
**CLIENT:** THE EXECUTORS  
OF THE LATE NIGEL  
ALINGTON

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# 1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document has been produced in response to the request from Bedford Borough Council (BBC) officers for a landscape and visual position statement (LVPS) for land within the Alington Estate, Little Barford (hereafter referred to as the Site). The LVPS has provided the following information:

- Landscape and visual baseline, providing an overview of what the landscape is like now, including its overall character, taking into account the latest Bedford Borough Landscape Character Assessment (May 2014, updated October 2020) (BBLCA).
- Used this baseline assessment to inform the identification of the landscape and visual constraints and opportunities for the Site, having regard to the potential impacts of two Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIP) (A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet road improvement scheme and East West Rail (EWR)), should they be delivered. These constraints and opportunities have been informed by policy and the BBLCA (whilst acknowledging that this is only one part of BBC's evidence base to inform preparation of the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2040).
- Outline of initial consideration and treatment of some of the existing landscape attributes (for example the existing woodland and river area) which have informed the current masterplans (drawings 60830-PP-500 A: Highways Access and Development Parcels New Settlement (BBLP 2040 Reg 18 options 2b, 2c, 2d) and 06830-PP-501: Highways Access and Development Parcels Parish Growth (BBLP: 2040 Reg 18 option 2d)).
- Outline of next steps to be taken forward in consultation with BBC.

It is considered that, in landscape and visual terms, this Site has the potential to deliver a new settlement in line with the growth strategy options of the BBLP 2040. As with any greenfield site, there will be landscape and visual harm associated with such development. However, this LVPS identifies opportunities to deliver local enhancements for Green Infrastructure Priority Areas as part of proposed development. As such, this LVPS can form the basis for the development of a scope for any future landscape and visual impact assessment work.

It is considered that the A428 road improvement scheme and East West Rail route options would affect the existing landscape context of the Site. However, this LVPS does not go into the detail of the evidence submitted as part of the current development consent order (DCO) process for the A428 road improvement scheme. Options for EWR remain too numerous and limited in detail to consider fully in this LVPS, however, initial consideration from a landscape perspective are noted in this LVPS.

There will be landscape implications from both NSIPs. These will be considered in greater detail in future landscape assessments proportionate to the stage of local plan preparation.

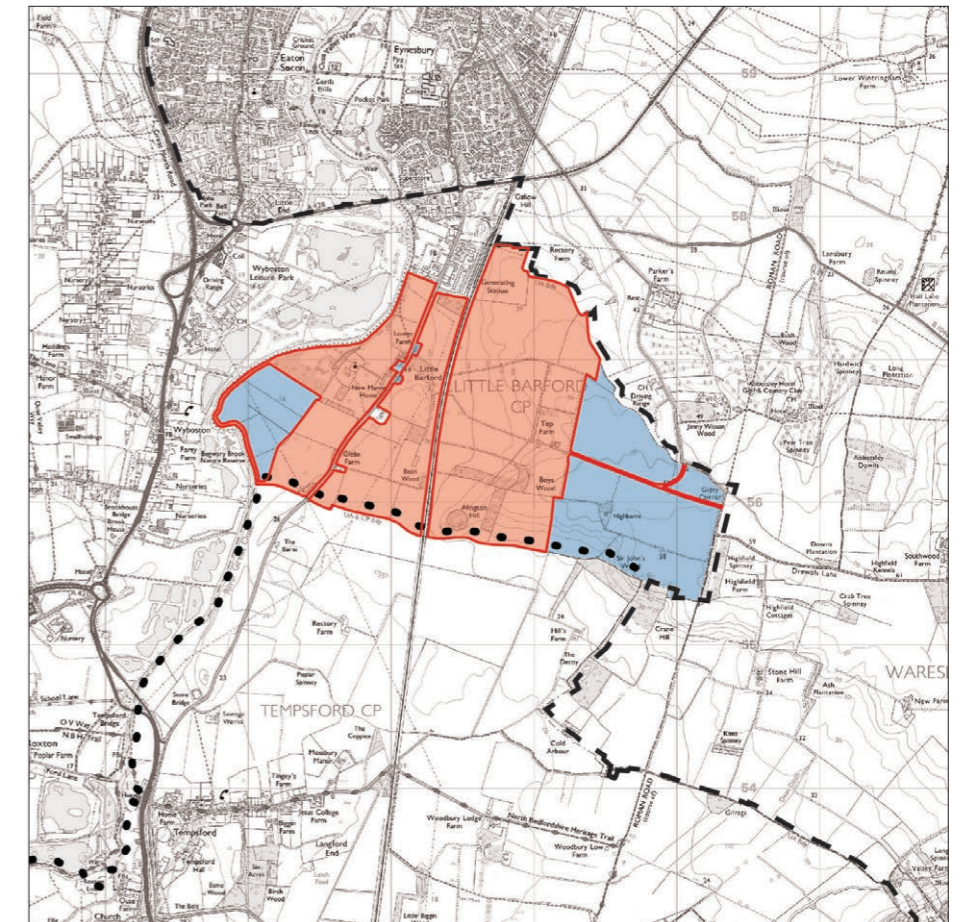


FIGURE 1.1: SITE LOCATION PLAN

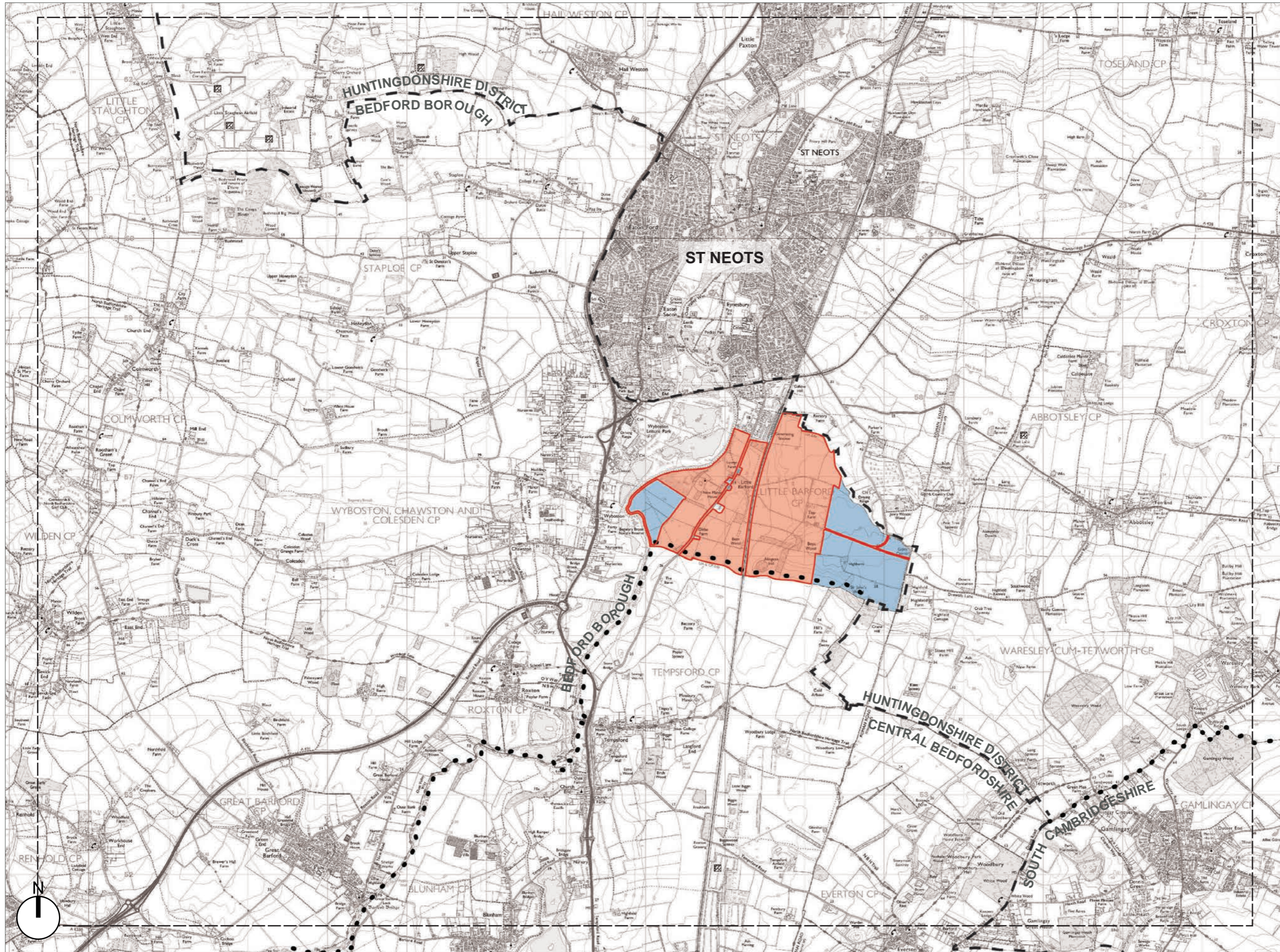


FIGURE 2.1 – EXTRACT FROM ORDNANCE SURVEY PLAN SHOWING THE LOCATION OF THE SITE WITHIN THE STUDY AREA (FABRIK, 2021)



## 2.0

# INTRODUCTION

## 2.1 INTRODUCTION

Fabrik Chartered Landscape Architects have been appointed by the Executors of the late Nigel Alington to produce a Landscape and Visual Position Statement (LVPS) for land within the Alington Estate, Little Barford (the "Site") and its surrounding area.

The Site is being promoted as a potential new settlement location through the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2040 (BBLP 2040) review process by CODE Development Planners. Representations were previously made in August 2020, September 2020 and September 2021 in respect of the Call for Sites, Issues and Options and Regulation 18 consultations. This LVPS has been produced to support the ongoing promotion of the Site.

The Site is potentially affected by the A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet road improvement scheme. This is a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP), which is currently the subject of a six month examination by the Planning Inspectorate as part of a Development Consent Order (DCO) process. The Site also lies within the area of search for a new railway station on the East Coast Main Line as part of East West Rail (EWR). This includes a number of options for the route of the railway line, some of which cross through the Site and surrounding landscape.

Due to the current uncertain nature of these projects within context of the timeframe for the preparation of the BBLP 2040, this LVPS cannot consider the NSIPs in detail. However, it is anticipated that the DCO for the A428 road improvement will have progressed sufficiently for a future landscape assessment to consider ahead of examination of the BBLP 2040.

This LVPS sets out the existing policy context (including any supporting SPG's/SPD's) relevant to landscape matters. It also notes the potential future landscape planning context in response to the NSIPs that could affect the Site. The LVPS then goes on to describe the constituent baseline landscape elements (the existing topography, drainage, land cover, vegetation pattern, public rights of way (PRoW), landscape features, detracting landscape elements, the history of the landscape and the way that landscape is experienced) which together inform landscape character. It then provides a visual appraisal of the Site, before carrying out a high-level initial scoping exercise to identify potentially sensitive visual receptors within the Study Area for future assessment (considering the visual envelope, the different groups of people, places affected, the nature of the view and the visual amenity). The LVPS concludes by identifying the next steps in the process proportionate to the next stage of local plan preparation. This LVPS is intended to inform the ongoing promotion of the Site through the BBLP 2040 process.

The location of the Site and the extent of the Study Area are shown on Figure 2.1 opposite. The red line area extends to approximately 310 ha. At this stage, the Study Area has been determined by the initial desk study and verified in the field to identify the Site's potential visual envelope. The Study Area therefore extends to up to 5km from the Site to the north, east and south, and up to 7km from the Site to the west. Refer to Figure 2.1 opposite.

The Site lies entirely within the administrative area of BBC. The northern, eastern and southern boundaries of the land under the ownership of the Alington Estate also form the administrative boundaries with Central Bedfordshire Council and Huntingdonshire District Council. An area of land in the south east of the Study Area falls under the jurisdiction of South Cambridgeshire District Council. The Study Area therefore contains areas of land within two counties and four districts.

The methodology for the LVPS is based on GLVIA3, 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' (third edition) by the Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (Routledge, 2013). Should a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment for the Site be required at a future stage, an appropriate methodology, including the selection of key representative viewpoints, based on GLVIA3, would be agreed with BBC.

## 2.2 DESKTOP RESEARCH

The desktop survey carried out as part of the LVPS included the review of Ordnance Survey maps, interactive maps, aerial photography, published landscape character assessment documents, planning policy and the Site promotion material available to date. The extent of the baseline and therefore the scoping of potential visual receptors is broadly defined by the Study Area.

The desk top assessment also identifies any likely changes to the current baseline situation which are likely to be in place, or at least confirmed prior to the proposed development proceeding. This includes the emerging A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet road improvement scheme and East West Rail (location of new station on the East Coast Main Line and associated route/track alignment).

## 2.3 FIELD WORK

The field work was carried out on 11 October 2021 and recorded the existing landscape elements within the Site; the contextual landscape elements; and identified a series of potential visual receptors. The visual appraisal element includes a photographic survey of the Site taken from a series of representative key views, chosen to represent a range of locations including both public and private views, distances and directions around the Site. The weather conditions and camera lens were also recorded.

## LEGEND

	SITE BOUNDARY		COUNTY LEVEL ADMINISTRATIVE BOUNDARY
	AREAS AVAILABLE FOR LOCAL PLAN PROMOTION		DISTRICT/BOROUGH LEVEL ADMINISTRATIVE BOUNDARY
	OTHER LAND WITHIN OWNERSHIP		STUDY AREA

## 3.0

# LANDSCAPE PLANNING CONTEXT

## 3.1 EXISTING DESIGNATIONS & POLICY RELEVANT TO LANDSCAPE MATTERS

### 3.1.1 LOCAL DESIGNATIONS

There are no landscape designations of national or local importance within the Site. The landscape of the Site is considered to be at the bottom of the “valued landscape” scale for the purposes of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). There is a County Wildlife Site (CWS) within the western part of the Site. The majority of the Site falls within Flood Zone 1. Areas of the western part of the Site fall within Flood Zones 2 and 3 associated with the River Great Ouse floodplain. There are seven nationally Listed Buildings within the western part of the Site, there are no other heritage designations within the Site boundary.

### 3.1.2 NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK (NPPF)

The July 2021 NPPF seeks the presumption in favour of sustainable development. The following issues and policies of the NPPF are pertinent to the proposed development and this LVPS.

Section 2 deals with achieving sustainable development. Paragraph 8 emphasises that the three overarching objectives of sustainable development (economic, social and environmental) are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways. Subsection c states the 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...”

Section 8 deals with promoting healthy and safe communities, para 98 under the open space and recreation sub-heading states that: “Access to a network of high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities, and can deliver wider benefits for nature and support effects to address climate change...”

Para 100 goes on to say that: “Planning policies and decisions should protect and enhance public rights of way and access, including taking opportunities to provide better facilities for users, for example by adding links to existing rights of way networks including National Trails.”

Section 12 sets out the requirements for achieving well-designed places. Para 126 states that: “The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities...”

Para 130 goes on to state that: “Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:

- a Will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
- b Are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and

effective landscaping;

- c Are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);
- d Establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;
- e Optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and
- f Create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.”

Para 131 deals with trees and states that: “Trees make an important contribution to the character and quality of urban environments, and can also help mitigate and adapt to climate change. Planning policies and decisions should ensure that new streets are tree-lined, that opportunities are taken to incorporate trees elsewhere in developments (such as parks and community orchards), that appropriate measures are in place to secure the long-term maintenance of newly-planted trees, and that existing trees are retained wherever possible. Applicants and local planning authorities should work with highways officers and tree officers to ensure that the right trees are planted in the right places, and solutions are found that are compatible with highways standards and the needs of different users.”

Para 132 sets out that: “Design quality should be considered throughout the evolution and assessment of individual proposals.”

Section 14 covers meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change. The elements relevant to landscape matters include para 154 states that: “New development should be planned for in ways that (inter alia):

- a Avoid increased vulnerability to the range of impacts arising from climate change. When new development is brought forward in areas which are vulnerable, care should be taken to ensure that risks can be managed through suitable adaptation measures, including through the planning of green infrastructure;...”

Para 141, subsection c goes on to state that: “using opportunities provided by new development and improvements in green infrastructure to reduce the causes and impacts of flooding. (making as much use as possible of natural flood management techniques as part of an integrated approach to flood risk management.”

Section 15 deals with conserving and enhancing the natural environment. Para 174 states that: “Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by (inter alia):

- a protecting and enhancing valued landscapes... (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);
- b recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland.

With regard to the sub-section on ground conditions and pollution, para 185 states

that: “Planning policies and decisions should also ensure that new development is appropriate for its location taking into account the likely effects (including cumulative effects) of pollution on health, living conditions and the natural environment, as well as the potential sensitivity of the site or the wider area to impacts that could arise from the development. In doing so they should:

- a Mitigate and reduce to a minimum potential adverse impacts resulting from noise from new development – and avoid noise giving rise to significant adverse impacts on health and the quality of life;
- b Identify and protect tranquil areas which have remained relatively undisturbed by noise and are prized for their recreational and amenity value for this reason;
- c Limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation.”

Section 16 deals with conserving and enhancing the historic environment. Para’s 199 states that: “When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation...”

Para 200 states that: “Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of:

- a grade II listed buildings, or grade II registered parks and gardens, should be exceptional;
- b assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, registered battlefields, grade I and grade II\* listed buildings, grade I and II\* registered parks and gardens, and World Heritage Sites, should be wholly exceptional.”

### 3.1.3 PLANNING PRACTICE GUIDANCE

The NPPF is supported by the on-line resource Planning Practice Guidance (PPG). There are a number of sections that relate to this LVIA as set out below.

Climate change is considered in Section ID 6-001-20140306 (revision date :15 March 2019). Paragraph 001 states that: “local planning authorities should ensure that protecting the local environment is properly considered alongside the broader issues of protecting the global environment. Planning can also help increase resilience to climate change impact through the location, mix and design of development. Addressing climate change is one of the core land use planning principles which the National Planning Policy Framework expects to underpin both plan-making and decision-taking.”

Guidance on the natural environment is set out within Section ID 8-20190721 (revision date: 21 July 2019). Paragraph 029 relates to trees and woodlands, and states that: “Well-placed and well-chosen trees on streets and in urban spaces can provide a range of benefits: encouraging walking and enhanced physical and mental health; contributing to local environmental character and distinctiveness; providing habitats for wildlife; reducing noise and excessive heat; and supporting sustainable drainage. Changing climate, in particular hotter summers and more frequent periods of dry weather, and unknown pests and diseases, will place new pressures on green infrastructure in the long-term, so trees of the right species and age profile are essential.”

Paragraph 036 of this section, ID: 8-036-20190721 (revision date: 21 July 2019) considers landscape and identifies that: *“The National Planning Policy Framework is clear that plans should recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and that strategic policies should provide for the conservation and enhancement of landscapes. This can include nationally and locally designated landscapes but also the wider countryside. Where landscapes have a particular local value, it is important for policies to identify their special characteristics and be supported by proportionate evidence...The cumulative impacts of development on the landscape need to be considered carefully.”*

Guidance on the historic environment is set out at Section ID 18a-20190723 (revision date: 23 July 2019). Paragraph 013 sets out that: *“The extent and importance of setting is often expressed by reference to the visual relationship between the asset and the proposed development and associated visual / physical considerations. Although views of or from an asset will play an important part in the assessment of impacts on setting, the way in which we experience an asset in its setting is also influenced by other environmental factors such as noise, dust, smell and vibration from other land uses in the vicinity, and by our understanding of the historic relationship between places...”*

The guidance on design is set out at Section ID: 26-20191001 (revision date 1 October 2019). Paragraph 001 under this section reiterates paragraph 130 of the NPPF and identifies that: *“permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions, taking into account any local design standards or style guides in plans or supplementary planning documents. Conversely, where the design of a development accords with clear expectations in plan policies, design should not be used by the decision-maker as a valid reason to object to development.”*

### 3.1.4 NATIONAL DESIGN GUIDE

The National Design Guide, January 2021 illustrates how well-designed places that are beautiful, enduring and successful can be achieved in practice. Paragraph 20 sets out the components of good design, including layout, form and scale, appearance, landscape, materials and detailing. The 10 characteristics of a well-designed place are described in paragraph 35 as follows:

- *“Context - enhances the surroundings.*
- *Identity - attractive and distinctive.*
- *Built form - a coherent pattern of development.*
- *Movement - accessible and easy to move around.*
- *Nature - enhanced and optimised.*
- *Public spaces - safe, social and inclusive.*
- *Uses - mixed and integrated.*
- *Homes and buildings - functional, healthy and sustainable.*
- *Resources - efficient and resilient.*
- *Lifespan - made to last.”*

### 3.1.5 NATIONAL MODEL DESIGN CODE

The National Model Design Code, July 2021 forms part of the PPG, expanding on the characteristics of good design set out in the National Design Guide.

### 3.1.6 DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICY

The development plan for the area comprises:

- Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030 (BBLP) - adopted 15 January 2020.
- Bedford Borough Allocations and Designations Local Plan (ADLP) - adopted 17 July 2013.
- Saved Bedford Borough Local Plan 2002 policies
- Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire and Luton Borough Councils Minerals and Waste Local Plan: Strategic Sites and Policies - adopted 15 January 2014.
- Saved policies of the Bedfordshire and Luton Minerals and Waste Local Plan: First Review, adopted January 2005

### 2005 - The Bedfordshire and Luton Minerals and Waste Local Plan

The policies of relevance to the Site and Study Area are:

#### Policy GE4: The Ivel and Ouse Countryside Protection Area

*“The County Council will require proposals in the Ivel and Ouse Valleys, including schemes for restoration and after use, to support, where applicable, the long term aims and objectives of the Ivel and Ouse Countryside Project.”*

*“In March 2002, the Ivel Valley Countryside Project was incorporated into a new area based countryside management initiative – the ‘Ivel and Ouse Countryside Project’ – serving the environment and communities of north and east Bedfordshire. Responsibility for the management of the Project lies with a steering group involving a range of public and voluntary sector partners, including Bedfordshire County Council, Mid Beds District Council, Bedford Borough Council, The Wildlife Trust and Environment Agency.”*

The Site lies within the project area and has the opportunity to help enhance the River Great Ouse corridor through green infrastructure enhancements, flood risk management and enhanced access where appropriate, as part of any proposed development.

#### Policy M4: Mineral Consultation Area

*“In the Mineral Consultation Areas, the MPA will make every effort to safeguard mineral resources which are, or may come to be, of economic importance, from unnecessary sterilisation by other types of development which would be a serious hindrance to their extraction. Where development is likely to result in the sterilisation of such resources, the MPA will encourage the prior extraction of the minerals where appropriate.”* The western half of the Site falls within the Mineral Consultation Area and therefore requires due consideration.

### 3.1.7 LOCAL POLICY

#### CURRENT POLICY

#### Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030 and Bedford Borough Allocations and Designations Local Plan

The policies of relevance to the Site and Study Area are shown on Figure 3.1 and are described below.

#### Policy AD24 - Green Infrastructure Network Opportunity Zones

This policy divided the green infrastructure network into six opportunity zones and states: *“The opportunity zones reflect those areas in the borough where there is the greatest potential to maintain and enhance the multi-functional nature of green infrastructure across the five themes of landscape, historic environment, biodiversity, accessible green space and access routes. Where appropriate, development will deliver or contribute to the protection, enhancement and/or creation of green infrastructure in accordance with the priorities set out for each opportunity zone.”*

Zone 3 - Lower Great Ouse River Valley is of relevance to the Site. Key opportunities include:

- *“Recreating waterside meadows, pasture and wet woodland along the river corridor, planting riverside trees, and developing wetland habitats associated with the river and the aggregate extraction sites in the river valley.*
- *Conserving parkland at Roxton and Little Barford.”*

#### Policy 30 - The impact of Development - Design Impacts

*“Development proposals should take account of the principles of good design. Planning applications should give particular attention to all of the following considerations:*

- *The relationship of the development with the context in which it is placed, including overdevelopment; the contribution buildings will make to the townscape and landscape qualities of the area; and where appropriate, the extent to which local distinctiveness is reinforced or created.*
- *The quality of the development in terms of scale, density, massing, height, materials and layout, including the provision of private space where appropriate.*
- *The quality of the public spaces created by new buildings in terms of public safety, hard and soft landscaping, and how buildings interact with public space.*

*Developers will be required to implement or contribute towards measures to mitigate adverse impacts. Planning permission will not be granted where proposals fail to improve the character and quality of an area.”*

This policy is wholly relevant to this LVPS.

#### Policy 42S - Protecting Biodiversity and Geodiversity

This policy is of relevance to the Site due to the presence of a County Wildlife Site within some of the western parts of the Site, extending into the River Great Ouse corridor. The policy states that: *“Development should be designed to prevent any adverse impact on locally important sites, species and habitats of principal importance contained within the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006. However in these circumstances where an adverse impact is unavoidable,*

### 3.0

## LANDSCAPE PLANNING CONTEXT

*the application shall demonstrate how the harm will be reduced through appropriate mitigation.”*

#### Policy 70 - Employment: Protect and Maintain

This policy states that: *“the role and function of key employment sites which contribute to the economic function of the borough will be protected and further extension of employment uses and investment in premises will be supported.”* The land immediately north of the Site, including the Little Barford Power Station is allocated under this policy.

### EMERGING POLICY

#### Bedford Borough Local Plan 2040 - Draft Options and Policies

Despite having an adopted plan to 2030, BBC are updating their local plan *“in order to reflect emerging national policies for the Oxford to Cambridge arc.”* The plan is required to be submitted to Government for examination by January 2023.

The Local Plan 2040 will be a partial update of existing policies. All relevant policies within the currently adopted Local Plan 2030 are proposed to be retained within the 2040 plan and therefore remain relevant to this LVPS.

There are four Growth Strategy Options set out within the draft BBLP 2040, three of these options (2b, 2c and 2d) include the potential allocation of a *“new settlement at Little Barford (3,085 dwellings) or Wyboston (2,500) dwellings, up to 20 ha employment.”*

In addition to the current policies, the following policy is proposed by BBC. The “weight” local planning authorities may give to relevant policies in emerging plans is governed by para 48 of the NPPF.

#### Policy NE1 - Environmental Net Gain

This emerging policy requires that: *“proposals for major development should provide an environmental net gain (in accordance with Government policy), which incorporates biodiversity net gain, through the following:*

- 1 Enhancement of the existing features of the site, particularly where these deliver significant levels of ecosystem services; or*
- 2 The creation of additional habitats on the site; or*
- 3 The linking of existing habitats to create links between ecological networks and where possible, with adjoining features. Planning applications should demonstrate how net biodiversity and net environmental gain will be achieved through the production of a supporting statement that considers the contribution the proposal could make to the borough’s natural capital.”*

#### Bedford Borough Local Plan 2040 - Supporting Evidence Base

The following evidence base documents will be tested through the examination of the BBLP 2040, therefore this LVPS, whilst guided by the evidence base, notes its status.

#### May 2021 - Bedfordshire Natural Capital Assessment

This report summarises the creation of a detailed natural capital (habitat) basemap for Bedford Borough and identifies opportunities to enhance accessible natural greenspace, biodiversity and a range of ecosystem services through a series of maps.

*“The opportunity maps can be used to assist with the development of nature recovery networks, green infrastructure strategies and planning, locating the best places for biodiversity offsetting and net gain initiatives, for agri-environment scheme targeting, woodland creation for carbon offsetting, and as an important step towards producing a local natural capital plan or natural capital investment plan for the area.”*

The findings of this report (albeit subject to examination) are relevant to the landscape opportunities for the Site.

#### June 2021 - Site Assessment Proformas

The Site is included within the Site Assessment Proformas document as three options.

- ID 872/3 page 289/90 sets out development land east and west of Barford Road for circa 270 - 340 dwellings.
- ID 892 page 307 sets out development land east and west of Barford Road for circa 1,115 - 1,305 dwellings plus employment land.
- ID 907 page 321 sets out development land at Top Farm, and east and west of Barford Road for circa 3,385 - 3,995 dwellings plus employment land.

Key considerations are identified as including a county level site of nature conservation importance, the presence of protected species on site, heritage impacts on listed buildings, potential flood risk due to the presence of flood zones 2 and 3 in the west, and access and highways considerations and the East Coast Main Line. Technical reports prepared on behalf of the Executors of the late Nigel Alington address the above elements. Other elements e.g. proximity to Little Barford Power Station will be considered as part of future landscape visual assessment work.

#### July 2021 - Bedford Borough Design Guide SPD - Scoping Document

Paragraphs 7.22 - 7.29 of the draft BBLP 2040 identify the national policy context around design, including reference to the National Design Guide and the National Model Design Code. Paragraph 7.27 states that BBC are currently preparing a Design Guide. A draft scoping document was published for consultation in July 2021 and is an important consideration for the Site.

The Scoping Document references the relevant policies within the BBLP 2030, including Policy 30, referenced above. The Scoping Document proposes to create a Design Guide for Bedford Borough that is based on the foundation set by the Bedford Borough Landscape Character Assessment (updated October 2020). The appropriateness of such an approach for new settlements, and the context of NSIP requires further considerations as part of the preparation of the BBLP 2040.

### OTHER RELEVANT POLICY















#### May 2019 - Huntingdonshire’s Local Plan to 2036

Although the Site lies entirely within the Bedford Borough boundary, parts of the northern and eastern boundaries lie on the administrative boundary with Huntingdonshire District Council. As such it is important for this LVPS to be aware of neighbouring policies that could have an influence on the Site and Study Area. Policies and designations of note include:

#### Policy LP34 Heritage Assets and their Settings

St Neots Conservation Area is located approximately 550m to the north west of the

### LEGEND

	SITE BOUNDARY		CONSERVATION AREA
	COUNTY LEVEL ADMINISTRATIVE BOUNDARY		COUNTY WILDLIFE SITE
	DISTRICT/BOROUGH LEVEL ADMINISTRATIVE BOUNDARY		SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC IMPORTANCE (SSSI)
	ANCIENT WOODLAND		GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE PRIORITY AREA
	SCHEDULED ANCIENT MONUMENT (SAM)		MINERAL POLICY
	LISTED BUILDINGS		ALLOCATED SITE
	STUDY AREA		ST NEOTS NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN BOUNDARY

Site. The Site is separated from the Conservation Area by the A428, Wyboston Lakes and the existing employment uses in Little Barford, including Little Barford Power Station.

#### Policy LP3: Green Infrastructure

Land to the north of the Site falls within the Great Ouse Valley Green Infrastructure Priority Area, which connects to the corresponding Bedford policy AD24.

#### Policy SEL2: Strategic Expansion Location: St Neots East.

226 ha of land east of Loves Farm and at Wintringham Park, St Neots is allocated for mixed use sustainable development in accordance with the St Neots Eastern Expansion Urban Design Framework 2010. The allocation is for approximately 3,820 homes and 22 ha of employment land. The allocation will extend St Neots up to the existing A428 and the B1046 approximately 600m to the north of the Site.

#### February 2016 - St Neots Neighbourhood Plan

The St Neots Neighbourhood Plan was adopted in February 2016. The southern boundary of the Neighbourhood Plan area is defined by the A428 approximately 600m to the north of the Site. The Plan includes the St Neots East allocation and any proposals for the Site need to be mindful of their relationship to St Neots and the wider Bedfordshire and Huntingdonshire landscapes.

#### July 2021 - Central Bedfordshire Local Plan 2015 - 2035

Whilst the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan 2015-2035 was Adopted in July 2021, the spatial strategy commits to undertaking a Partial Plan Review within six months of adoption so as to identify opportunities to deliver longer term economic and housing growth. The Inspectors Main Modifications to the Local Plan 2015-2035 removed Tempsford as a location for future growth. However, it is expected/accepted that the Tempsford site will be promoted through the upcoming partial plan review seeking to secure an allocation.

### 3.1.6 GUIDANCE DOCUMENTS / INFORMATIVES

#### Listed Buildings within the Site

There are seven nationally listed buildings within the Site. The Grade II\* listed Parish Church of Saint Denys dates back to Norman times and sits within the landscape between the River Great Ouse and Barford Road. The other six buildings are all Grade II listed and sit along Barford Road. These are a row of four 18th century cottages known as “1-4 The Bungalows” and the 17th century Lower Farmhouse and the Barn North of Lower Farmhouse. All seven listed buildings are located within the western half of the Site.

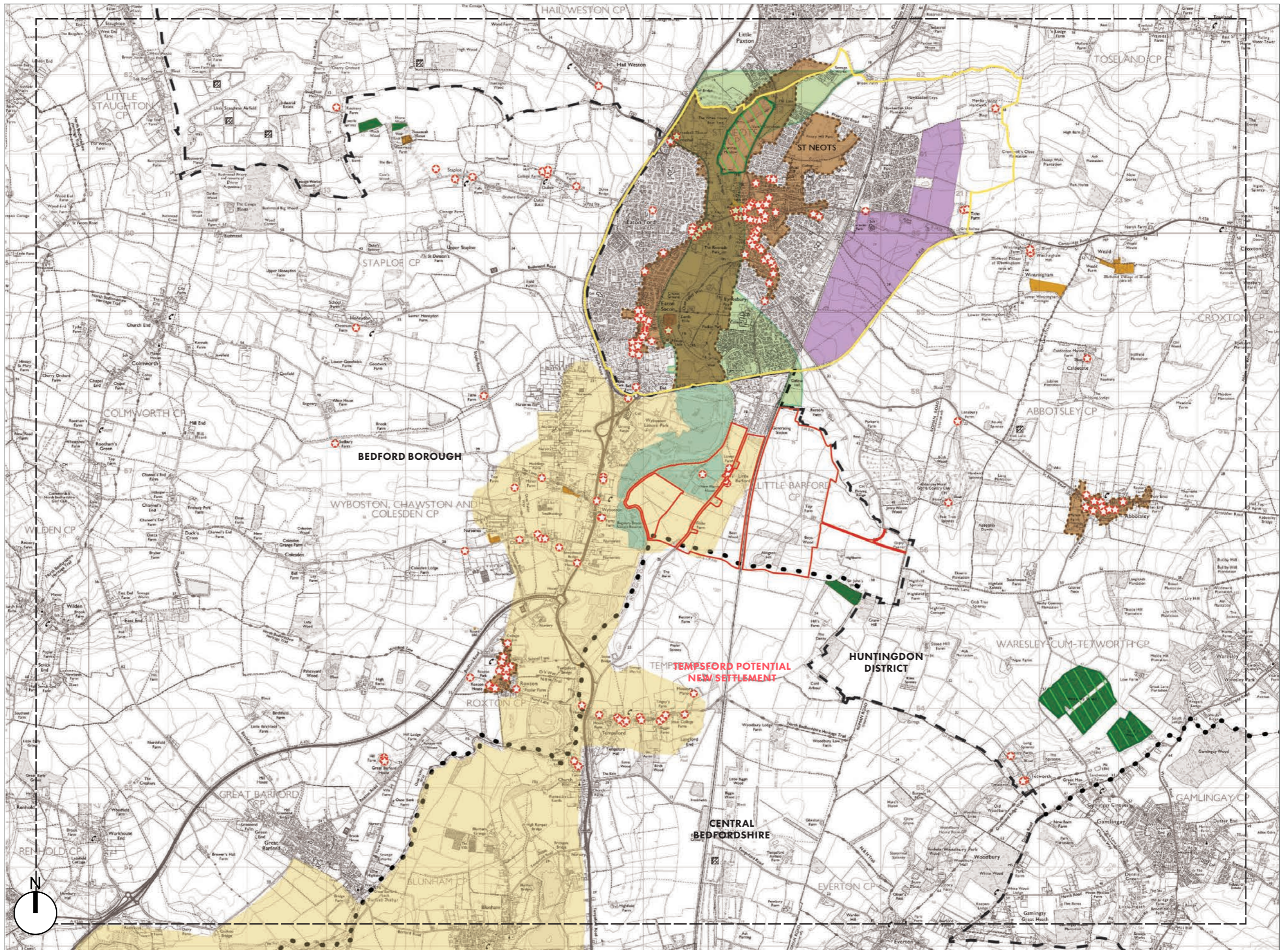


FIGURE 3.1 – PLANNING POLICIES RELEVANT TO THE SITE AND STUDY AREA (FABRIK, 2021)

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## 4.0

# FUTURE LANDSCAPE PLANNING CONTEXT

### 4.1 A428 BLACK CAT TO CAXTON GIBBET ROAD IMPROVEMENT SCHEME

#### 4.1.1 INTRODUCTION

National Highways are proposing to upgrade the route between Black Cat roundabout and Caxton Gibbet roundabout with a new 10-mile dual carriageway and a number of junction improvements.

The scheme is a NSIP, which is subject to a special planning process that seeks to gain permission through the granting of a DCO from the Planning Inspectorate. The DCO application was submitted on 26 February 2021. The examination stage commenced on 18 August 2021 and will last for a period of six months.

#### 4.1.2 RELATIONSHIP TO THE SITE

The proposed improvements to the A428 will cross land under the ownership of the Alington Estate. Figure 4.1 opposite shows the proposed alignment of the new route in relation to the Site. The proposed route would cross through the low-lying agricultural landscape to the south of the Site, before turning north between Boys Wood and Sir John's Wood within the south eastern corner of the Site and then continuing through the land under the ownership of the Alington Estate to the east of the Site.

#### LEGEND

-  SITE BOUNDARY
-  A428 HIGHWAYS IMPROVEMENTS PLAN
-  AREAS AVAILABLE FOR LOCAL PLAN PROMOTION
-  OTHER LAND WITHIN OWNERSHIP

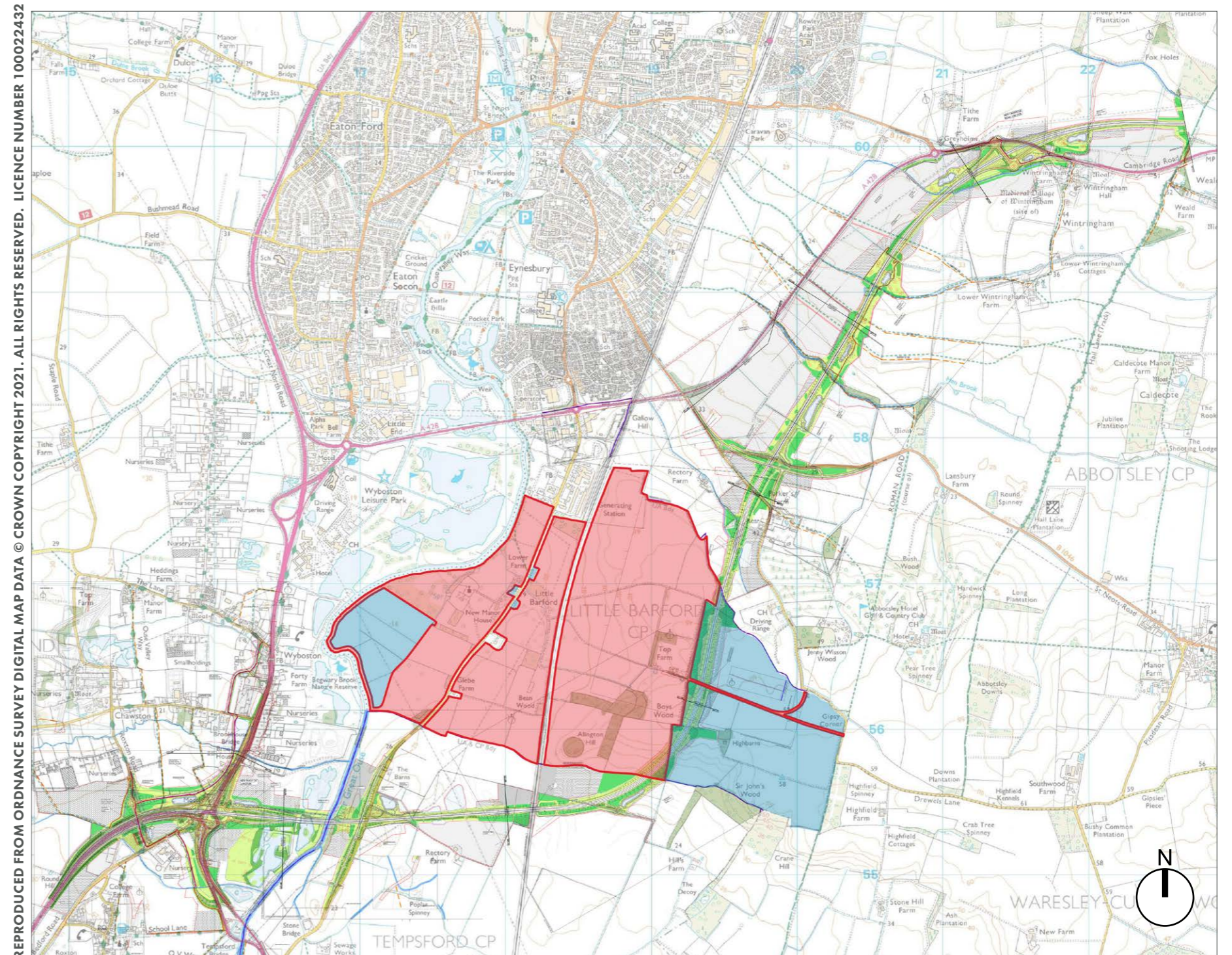


FIGURE 4.1 – PROPOSED ROUTE OF THE A428 HIGHWAYS IMPROVEMENTS AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO THE SITE (FABRIK, 2021)

### 4.1.3 LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL EFFECTS

As part of the DCO, a suite of supporting documents were submitted including an Environmental Statement (ES). Chapter 7 of the ES covers the Landscape and Visual Effects of the proposals. Extracts of Figures 7.9 and 7.10 are included opposite as Figures 4.2 and 4.3 for reference.

Figure 7.9 of the LVIA sets out the District Landscape Character Areas within the Study Area. It is notable that on Figure 7.9, the Alington Hill Clay Farmland Landscape Character Area has been included. This LCA was defined within the now superseded 2007 Bedford Borough Landscape Character Assessment. Current assessments include this land within the larger LCA 5F - Biggin Wood Clay Vale instead (See page 29 of the LVPS). Paragraph 7.6.113 of the LVIA explains the reason for this as: *“Alington Hill lies within the central sections of LCA1C: Alington Hill Clay Farmland and continues to extend to the east and west. This LCA was defined within the superseded Bedford Borough Landscape Character Assessment (Ref 7-39) published in 2007 but has been included in the assessment as it provides further detail on the character of this area.”*

Figure 7.10 of the LVIA sets out the Local Landscape Character Areas within the Study Area, which have been defined by the LVIA authors for the purposes of the assessment. The assessed landscape and visual effects of the proposed A428 Road Improvement Scheme on LLCA05: Biggin Wood Clay Vale and LLCA06: Alington Hill Clay Farmland are of relevance to this LVPS.

The Landscape and Visual Chapter of the ES determines that there would be significant adverse landscape and visual effects during construction and during year one of operation on both LLCA05 and LLCA06, with significant adverse landscape and visual effects remaining at year 15 of operation for LLCA06.

Paragraph 7.9.148 summarises the significant landscape effects at year 15 as:

*“By the summer of year 15 of operation planting proposed as mitigation would have established to limit significant effects to four of the 16 LLCAs identified. Significant effects relating to these receptors would remain due to the permanent changes to landform and landcover patterns and the presence of major infrastructure locally altering the character and reducing the tranquillity of generally more rural, less settled areas. Planting in these areas would assist in limiting the scale of these effects. Landscape effects relating to the 12 other LLCAs would not be significant. Beyond year 15 of operation planting would continue to mature to reflect and reinforce the character of the existing landscape.”*

Chapter 7.9.150 summarises the significant visual effects at year 15 as:

*“By summer of year 15 of operation, 30 of the 184 visual receptor groups identified would experience significant visual effects, reducing from 73 in year one of operation. The majority of visual receptors would experience a reduction in the significance of effect as a result of proposed planting, which would have established, and existing vegetation in leaf assisting in screening views of the Scheme. Significant adverse effects would remain for 22 residential receptor groups, generally where there would be views of the Scheme in close proximity or where a larger proportion of the view would be altered compared to the baseline. The remaining visual receptor groups*

*which experience significant effects at year 15 of operation would comprise users of public rights of way (7) and commercial receptors (1). All other receptor groups would experience visual effects which are not considered significant.”*

These potentially significant effects would impact the landscape and visual baseline for the Alington Estate Site. Any future landscape and visual impact assessment would need to consider the cumulative effects of proposed development in conjunction with the A428 road improvement scheme.

### 4.1.4 RELEVANCE TO THIS POSITION STATEMENT

Chapter 7 of the ES for the A428 Road Improvement Scheme establishes that this project would have a significant effect on the landscape within and surrounding the Site, should a DCO be granted.

Given that the determination of the DCO application is ongoing, this LVPS must present the existing landscape baseline as it is today. However, this LVPS must also acknowledge that the landscape of the Site and Study Area could potentially experience significant future landscape and visual changes should this NSIP be granted a DCO, and understand the effects this could have on the existing landscape and visual baseline for the Site. It is important to note that the landscape and visual baseline for the Site could potentially be altered by *“permanent changes to landform and landcover patterns and the presence of major infrastructure locally altering the character and reducing the tranquillity of generally more rural, less settled areas,”* as stated in paragraph 7.9.148 of Chapter 7 of the ES.

As part of the BBLP 2040 supporting evidence base, Bedford Borough have published an updated Bedford Borough Landscape Character Assessment (October 2020). This document replaces the 2014 version, which superseded the previous 2007 version. The 2007 document has been referenced in the Landscape and Visual Chapter of the A428 ES for the Alington Hill Clay Farmland LCA. BBC have requested that the updated October 2020 Landscape Character Assessment is used for the purposes of this LVPS. The updated LCA does not include the Alington Hill Clay Farmland LCA, but instead considered this land to fall within the larger Biggin Wood Clay Vale LCA. As a result, this LVPS may present different results in baseline terms due to the difference in scale of the LCAs and the nature of the proposals being considered.

The relationship between the Site and the A428 road improvement scheme will be considered in future landscape assessment work proportionate to the stage of preparation of the BBLP 2040.

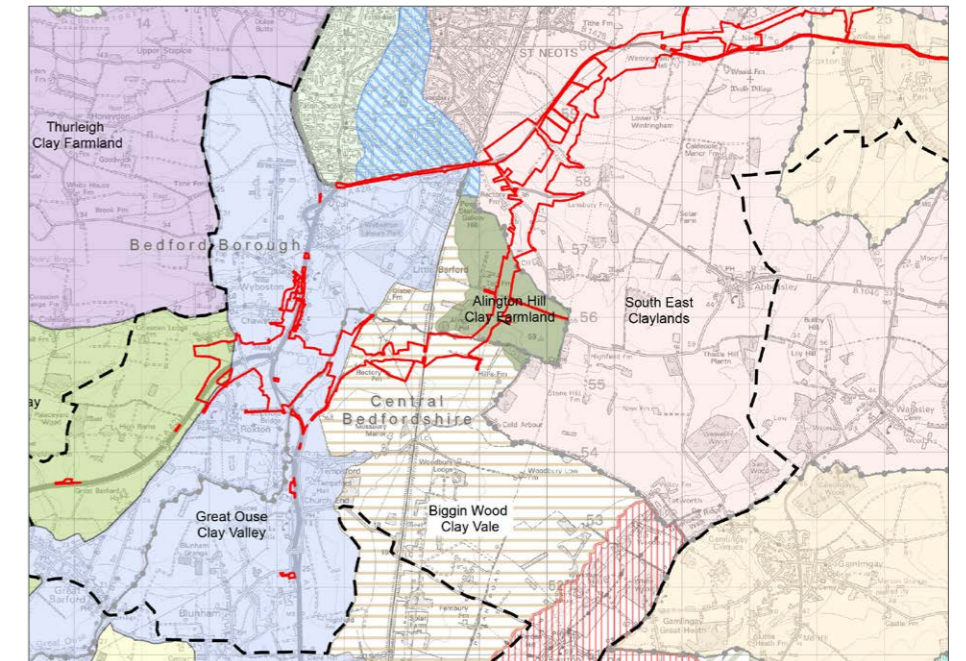


FIGURE 4.2 – EXTRACT OF LVIA FIGURE 7.9: DISTRICT LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS SUBMITTED FOR THE A428 BLACK CAT TO CAXTON GIBBET IMPROVEMENTS (AECOM, 2021)

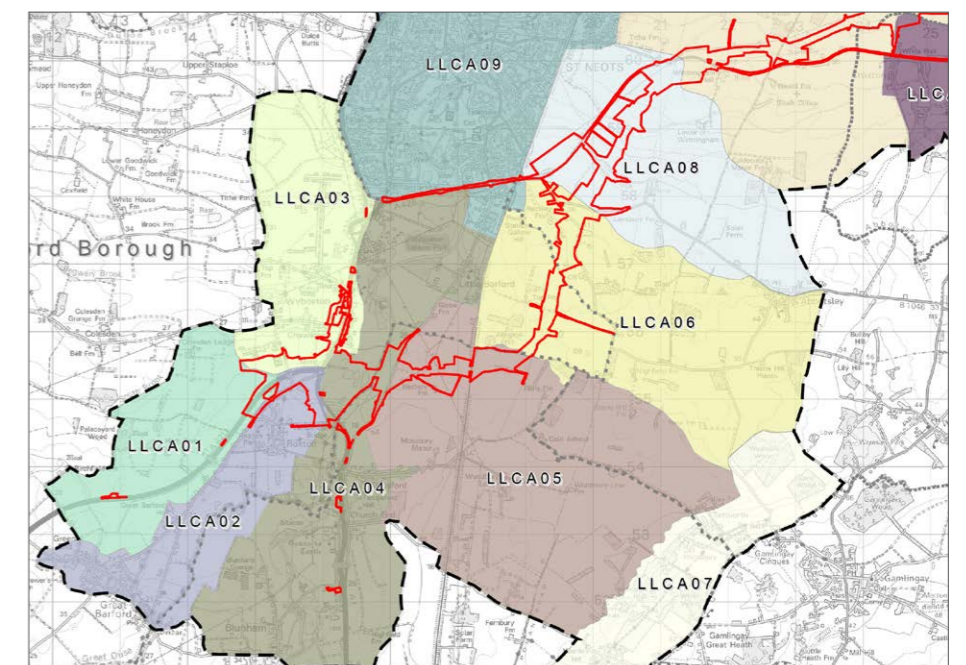


FIGURE 4.3 – EXTRACT OF LVIA FIGURE 7.10: LOCAL LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS SUBMITTED FOR THE A428 BLACK CAT TO CAXTON GIBBET IMPROVEMENTS (AECOM, 2021)

## 4.0

# FUTURE LANDSCAPE PLANNING CONTEXT

## 4.2 EAST - WEST RAILWAY STATION AREA OF SEARCH AND ROUTE OPTIONS

### 4.2.1 INTRODUCTION

In 2018, the Department for Transport created the East West Railway Company to look at plans being developed for a new railway between Oxford and Cambridge. The original plans were developed by the Department for Transport, Network Rail and the East West Rail Alliance.

Currently, a series of options for the route have been looked at within an area of search. The Bedford to Cambridge section of the route falls under Section D - Clapham Green to Great Eversden, and includes potential new stations at St Neots/Sandy area and Cambourne. Section D is split into a series of sub-sections. The sub-section of the route that runs through the Study Area is known as the "Section between Great Barford and Eltisley". Five shortlisted potential options for this section of the route are being considered, with some of those crossing through land under the ownership of the Alington Estate (see Figures 4.4 - 4.8 opposite). The emerging proposals also suggest a number of potential locations for the new St Neots/Sandy station. The new station would sit at the intersection with the existing East Coast Mainline.

### 4.2.2 RELATIONSHIP TO THE SITE AND THE A428 ROUTE

The five shortlisted options for the potential route of the Great Barford to Eltisley section of East West Rail are shown on Figures 4.4 - 4.8, which also include the A428 route for reference. These five routes consider two potential locations for a new station at either St Neots South or Tempsford. There are two options (A and B) for each of these locations.

#### Route Alignment 1

This alignment broadly follows the corridor of the proposed A428 Road Improvement Scheme to the south west and north east of the Site. It diverts away from the A428 to cross directly through the Site along a south-west to north-east alignment to the west of Alington Hill and Boys Wood. A new station for St Neots South (Option A) is proposed, which sits centrally along the section of the East Coast Main Line that divides the Site in two.

#### Route Alignment 2

This alignment follows the same path as Route Alignment 1 through the Site and Study Area, including proposing Option A for a new station at St Neots South. This alignment is considered as a different option by East West Rail due to differences in alignment around Cambourne and the approach to Cambridge, which are not relevant to this LVPS.

#### Route Alignment 6

This alignment broadly follows an east - west alignment through the Study Area, travelling through the landscape to the south of the Site and Abbotsley. The proposed route runs separate to the route of the proposed A428 Road Improvement Scheme,

with the exception of the section through the lower lying landscape to the south of the Site. A new station for St Neots South (Option B) is proposed, which sits on the intersection of the East Coast Main Line on the southern boundary of the Site, south of Alington Hill and Boys Wood.

#### Route Alignment 8

This alignment broadly follows an east - west alignment through the southern half of the Study Area, travelling between Roxton and Tempsford and south of Abbotsley. It sits entirely separate to the A428 Road Improvement Scheme and the Site. A new station for Tempsford (Option B) is proposed, which sits on the intersection of the East Coast Main Line approximately 1.3km from the southern Site boundary.

#### Route Alignment 9

This alignment broadly follows the alignment of the A428 Road Improvement Scheme through the Study Area. The proposed alignment travels through the eastern section of the Site to the east of Boys Wood but west of the A428 corridor. To the south of the Site, the alignment travels between Roxton and Tempsford in a similar manner to Route Alignment 8. A new station for Tempsford (Option A) is proposed, which sits on the intersection of the East Coast Main Line approximately 750m from the southern Site boundary.

### 4.2.3 POTENTIAL LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL EFFECTS

The proposals for a new EWR line are at an early stage with a number of route alignments under consideration. There is no available appraisal or assessment of the potential landscape and visual effects of this scheme to date.

All options could have significant landscape and visual effects on the Site and Study Area. The introduction of another NSIP to the south of St Neots would permanently alter the landscape pattern, topography and land use of the area as well as having effects on landscape character, tranquillity and views from a wide variety of visual receptors, particularly when considered cumulatively with the proposed A428 road improvement scheme.

### 4.2.4 RELEVANCE TO THIS POSITION STATEMENT

Due to the emerging nature of the proposals for a new EWR line, this LVPS must present the existing landscape baseline as it is today. However, this LVPS must also acknowledge that the landscape of the Site and Study Area could potentially experience additional significant future landscape and visual changes should this project go ahead. The extent of work to ascertain the impact of the route options, required to support the promotion of the Site through the BBLP 2040 is currently being considered.

The extent of effects on the Site depend on the preferred route alignment for the Great Barford to Eltisley section of the route and the location of the proposed station. Route Alignment Options 1, 2 and 9 would result in significant alterations to the landscape and visual baseline of the Site itself. Route Alignment 6 would impact on the south eastern corner of the Site and Route Alignment 8 would have no impact on the landscape of the Site, although it could have some visual effects.

The relationship between the Site and the EWR route options will be considered in future landscape assessment work.



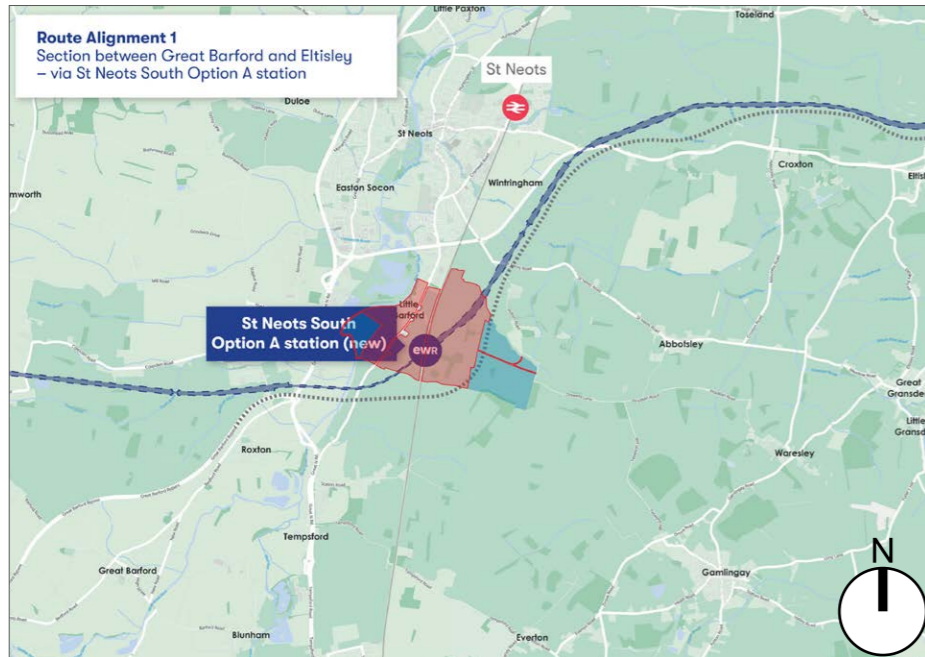


FIGURE 4.4 – RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE SITE, THE A428 ROUTE AND EAST WEST RAIL ROUTE ALIGNMENT 1 (FABRIK, 2021)



FIGURE 4.5 – RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE SITE, THE A428 ROUTE AND EAST WEST RAIL ROUTE ALIGNMENT 2 (FABRIK, 2021)

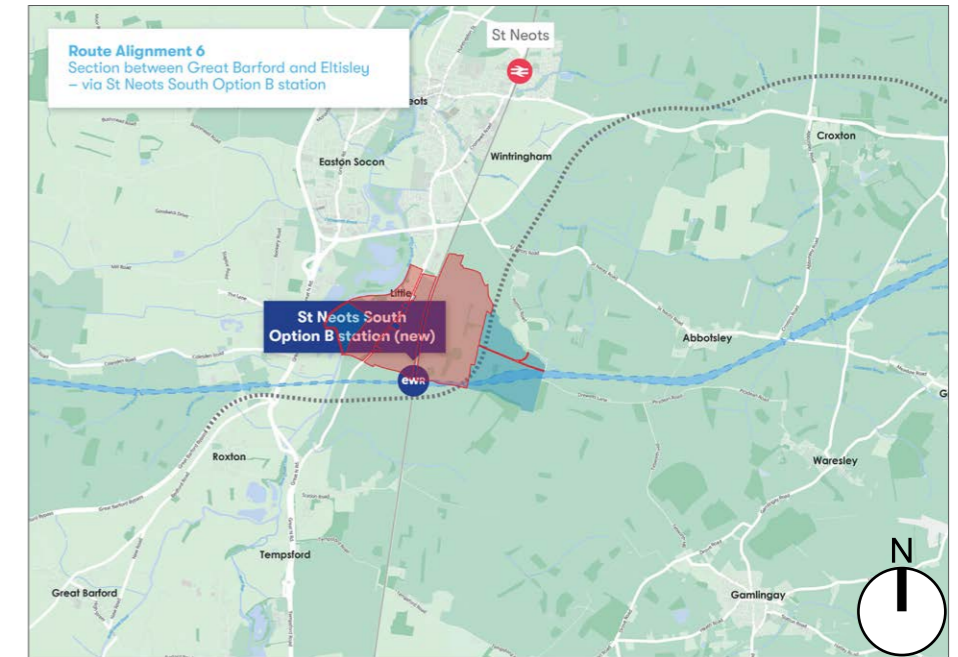


FIGURE 4.6 – RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE SITE, THE A428 ROUTE AND EAST WEST RAIL ROUTE ALIGNMENT 6 (FABRIK, 2021)

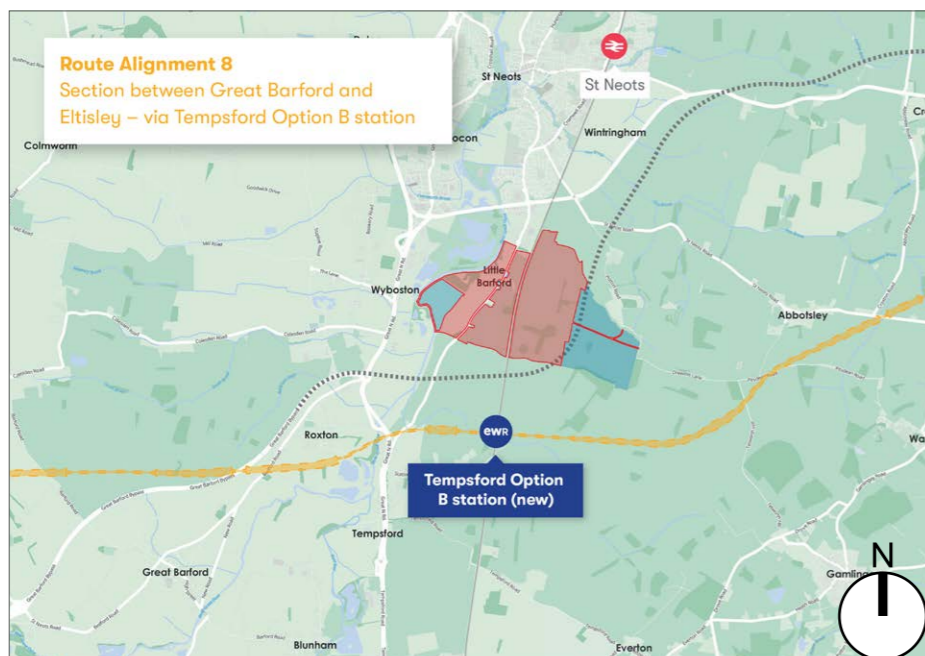


FIGURE 4.7 – RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE SITE, THE A428 ROUTE AND EAST WEST RAIL ROUTE ALIGNMENT 8 (FABRIK, 2021)



FIGURE 4.8 – RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE SITE, THE A428 ROUTE AND EAST WEST RAIL ROUTE ALIGNMENT 9 (FABRIK, 2021)

LEGEND

- SITE BOUNDARY
- AREAS AVAILABLE FOR LOCAL PLAN PROMOTION
- OTHER LAND WITHIN OWNERSHIP
- A428 ROAD IMPROVEMENT SCHEME ROUTE
- EAST WEST RAIL OPTION 1
- EAST WEST RAIL OPTION 2
- EAST WEST RAIL OPTION 6
- EAST WEST RAIL OPTION 8
- EAST WEST RAIL OPTION 9

## 5.0

# BASELINE CONDITIONS

### 5.1 TOPOGRAPHIC CONTEXT

The topography of the Study Area is heavily influenced by the River Great Ouse and its tributaries. The River Great Ouse meanders through the centre of the Study Area along a broad north to south orientation with water flowing in a northerly direction. The river valley sits at approximately 20m AOD in the south of the Study Area and falls to approximately 15m AOD in the north of the Study Area as the river passes through St Neots, an existing settlement set within the river valley.

The land in the west and east of the Study Area rise, sometimes steeply in places to localised high points and watersheds. To the east and south-east of the Site, there are two higher areas of land. The more prominent Greensand Ridge at Gamlingay is located in the south east of the Study Area. It is a notable landform within the landscape. Gamlingay Wood sits at the high point of this ridge, approximately 65m - 70m AOD.

A lower plateau stretches west from the Gamlingay Greensand Ridge, broadly along the line of Drewels Lane at approximately 60m AOD into the eastern part of the Site, where it forms a localised ridgeline, which includes Alington Hill, a small circular woodland approximately 40m AOD. To the south of this, the topography falls quickly before plateauing at approximately 25m - 15m AOD across the farmland between the Site and Tempsford.

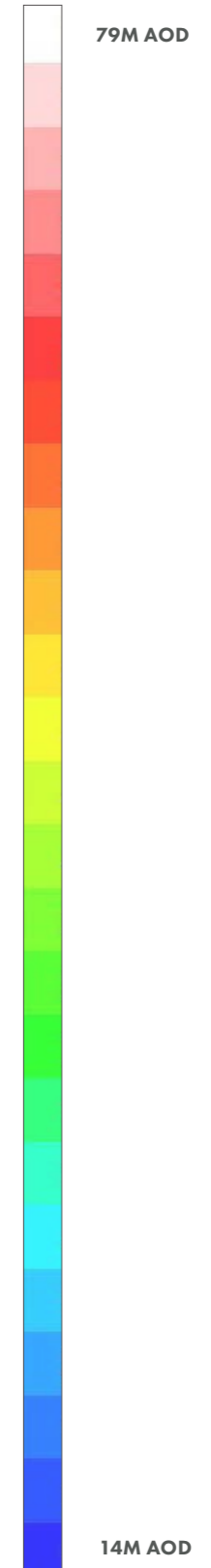
From the localised ridgeline within the eastern half of the Site, the topography begins to fall towards the River Great Ouse. The East Coast Main Line crosses this natural topography on embankments in places. The western half of the Site sits within the River Great Ouse Valley and is relatively flat, gently rising from 15m AOD along the western boundary, which is defined by the river itself, to 20-25m AOD at the boundary with the East Coast Mainline.

To the north east of the Site and north of Drewels Lane, the topography falls steeply into the vales of Hen Brook and Abbotsley Brook before rising again to Croxton on the A428 in the north east of the Study Area. These brooks are fed by a number of tributaries that all drain water from the north and east of the Study Area into the River Great Ouse.

To the west of the River Great Ouse corridor, the landform of the Study Area rises consistently to higher ground further west. A series of brooks and streams drain water into the river valley but their vales are less pronounced than those to the east of the Site.

#### LEGEND

 SITE BOUNDARY



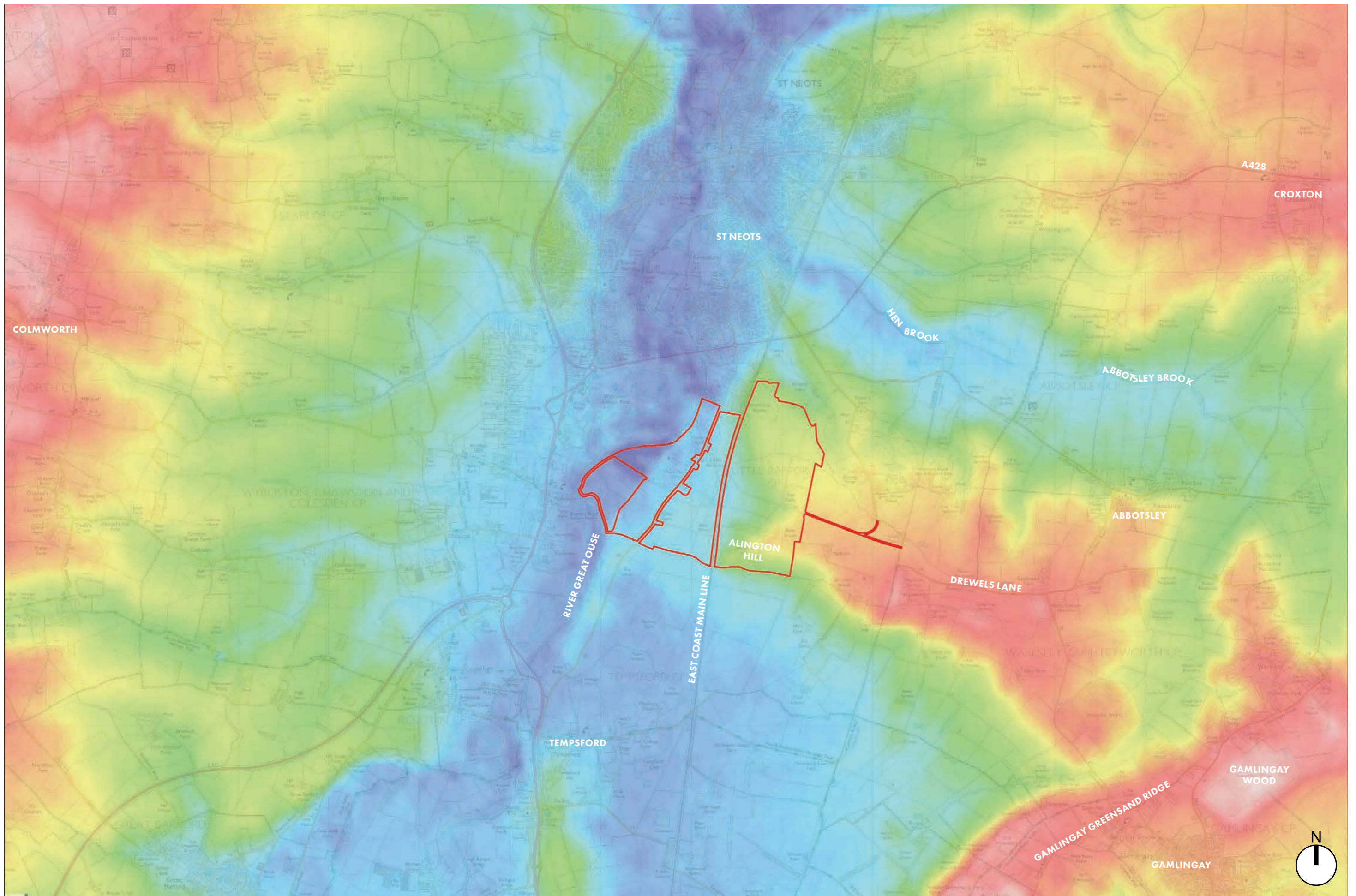


FIGURE 5.1 – PLAN ILLUSTRATING TOPOGRAPHY AND DRAINAGE (FABRIK, 2021)

## 5.0

# BASELINE CONDITIONS

## 5.2 CONTEXTUAL LANDSCAPE ELEMENTS

### Broad Land Use:

The majority of the land use within the Study Area is agriculture, both pastoral and arable. The central north - south corridor through the Study Area is dominated by the River Great Ouse and its floodplain. Recreational land uses and agriculture are found throughout the floodplain with some other recreational facilities such as golf courses found in the wider Study Area predominantly on higher ground.

St Neots is the largest settlement within the Study Area, sitting north of the Site with the river corridor dividing the town in two. The southern part of St Neots includes areas of industry and employment, most notably Little Barford Power Station, which is visible from large parts of the Study Area. The surrounding parts of the Study Area include scattered villages, hamlets and isolated farmsteads throughout.

### Woodland/Vegetation Pattern:

The Study Area is scattered with woodland blocks of varying shapes and sizes. These are generally rectilinear with some notably irregular shapes in places, of particular note are Alington Hill and Boys Wood within the Site. There are some blocks which are Ancient Woodland, including Sir John's Wood to the east of the Site. Field boundaries are primarily defined by hedgerows or linear tree belts and the field pattern is a mixture of rectilinear and irregular.

### Public/Communal Open Space:

The River Great Ouse corridor accommodates a wide range of public and private spaces for recreation. Most notably is the area around Wyboston Lakes immediately west of the Site, which includes a County Wildlife Site, Begwary Brook Nature Reserve and various private recreation opportunities including water sports and a golf course. Further north within St Neots is The Riverside Park, which provides a significant public open space alongside the river with further open space and formal sports facilities available within the town. Abbotsley Golf Club sits to the east of the Site and an extensive PRow network and woodlands open to the public offer opportunities for informal recreation.

### Settlement Pattern:

St Neots is the main settlement within the Study Area, it is a rectilinear settlement within the Huntingdonshire District of Cambridgeshire. It is nestled around the banks of the River Great Ouse. Its boundaries are broadly defined by the transport corridors of the A1, the A428 and the East Coast Mainline, although recent large scale development has extended the eastern boundary of the town beyond the confines of the East Coast mainline.

To the south of St Neots is Little Barford, which is a hamlet set along Barford Road within Bedford Borough. Barford Road divides the western part of the Site into two. Further south within the Study Area the villages of Great Barford, Roxton and Tempsford can be found. These settlements are more dispersed and have grown through ribbon development in places.

On the higher ground in the west of the Study Area are a number of small villages, hamlets and isolated properties/farmsteads. Some places of note include Wilden, Colmworth and Church End.

In the east of the Study Area, a number of small villages sit on the higher ground with Croxton, Abbotsley and Waresley forming small, linear settlements along B-roads and the larger, more nucleated Gamlingay sitting on top of the Greensand Ridge at the crossroads of the rural road network in the south east of the Study Area. Transport corridors provide defensible edges to a number of settlements within the Study Area, with St Neots being the prominent example.

### Building Heights:

Building heights throughout the Study Area are generally two to three storeys. As a result Church spires and farm buildings are notable features in the landscape in more rural locations. The largest settlement of St Neots has a mixture of uses and heights with residential uses generally ranging from two to three storeys with some localised areas of taller buildings within the town centre. The outskirts of St Neots, particularly in the lower lying land around key communication routes in the southern parts of the town and the river corridor include areas of taller industrial and employment uses. Little Barford Power Station is the most prominent of these, with two large chimneys visible from numerous locations within the Study Area, making it a local landmark.

### Settlement Setting

St Neots is set within the low lying landscape surrounding the River Great Ouse. Recent urban extensions to the east of the settlement are pushing development out towards the A428 over rising ground. The scattered villages and hamlets throughout the Study Area are generally associated with the valley floors or the higher ridges. Agricultural land forms the landscape setting to the majority of these settlements.

### Movement Corridors:

The Study Area is crossed by numerous key movement corridors on broad north - south and east - west axis. St Neots is defined to the east by the East Coast Main Line, which runs directly north - south through the centre of the Study Area, either at grade or on embankments. The rail line splits the Site in two and has a station to the north in St Neots. To the west, St Neots is defined by the A1 dual-carriageway, which also runs broadly north - south through the Study Area. This north - south road is supplemented by east - west connections in the form of the A428, which runs from the southern edge of St Neots through the north-east of the Study Area, and the A421, which connects to the A1 by Roxton and continues in a south westerly direction. The A road network is supplemented by a vast network of smaller A and B Roads which provide access to the wider more rural landscape of the Study Area.

### Skyline:

The sky line is generally rural in character with the higher ground to the west, east and north forming the backdrops to views from the unsettled areas of the Study Area. Woodland blocks on rising and higher ground, and associated with transport corridors and field boundaries also provide natural vertical elements on the skyline. From the lower parts of the Study Area, the built form of St Neots and smaller villages introduce urbanising elements in localised views, as do the various overhead power lines and pylons. Little Barford Power Station is a notable feature on the skyline from many parts of the Study Area and is locally distinctive.

### Historic & Cultural Landscape:

There is evidence of Roman and Norman settlement scattered throughout the landscape with listed buildings such as the Church of St Deny's at Little Barford

and former Roman Roads forming part of the PRow network providing examples of evidence. Early settlement and agriculture locations were chosen in relation to the River Great Ouse and have evolved over time. Numerous scheduled ancient monuments and listed buildings are found throughout the Study Area.

The settlement of St Neots is of medieval origin and has grown over time to encompass the historically independent districts of Eynesbury, Eaton Ford and Eaton Socon. The settlement continues to grow with modern developments extending the town east towards the A428. Industrial uses have long been associated with the landscape, the most notable being Little Barford Power Station, the current gas fired power station was built in 1994 but prior to that a coal fired power station had been on the site since the 1940s.

According to the Historic Landscape Characterisation Study (2006), the landscape within the Study Area generally includes areas of parliamentary enclosure and "estate fields" with large parts of the western and southern agricultural landscape demonstrating post 1950s boundary loss or boundary loss with relic features.

The former site of Tempsford Airfield in the south of the Study Area and Thurleigh in the north-west provide evidence of the landscapes use during World War II.

Industrial uses and major road and rail schemes have altered the landscape through the 19th and 20th centuries.













### Landscape Features:

The River Great Ouse is a major landscape feature within the Study Area with a number of lakes and flat, low lying agricultural floodplain associated with it. Rectilinear woodland blocks of varying shapes and sizes are notable landscape features, as are the vales and valleys associated with the tributaries of the river.

### Detracting Features:

Little Barford Power Station is a significant industrial feature within the landscape that is visible from numerous locations throughout the Study Area. Various overhead electricity lines cross through the Site and landscape to the south and west of the Study Area, including large 400KV Pylons, which are urbanising features within the landscape. The East Coast Main Line and major A-road corridors are sources of noise and reduce the sense of tranquillity from the area of the Study Area within close proximity.

## LEGEND

	<b>SITE BOUNDARY</b>		<b>EDUCATION</b>
	<b>SETTLEMENT</b>		<b>GOLF COURSE</b>
	<b>WOODLAND</b>		<b>ALLOTMENTS</b>
	<b>AGRICULTURE LAND</b>		<b>INDUSTRIAL / COMMERCIAL</b>
	<b>WATER BODIES / RIVER</b>		<b>SPORT / LEISURE</b>
	<b>FARM BUILDING / NURSERIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE</b>		<b>ELECTRICITY POWER STATION</b>

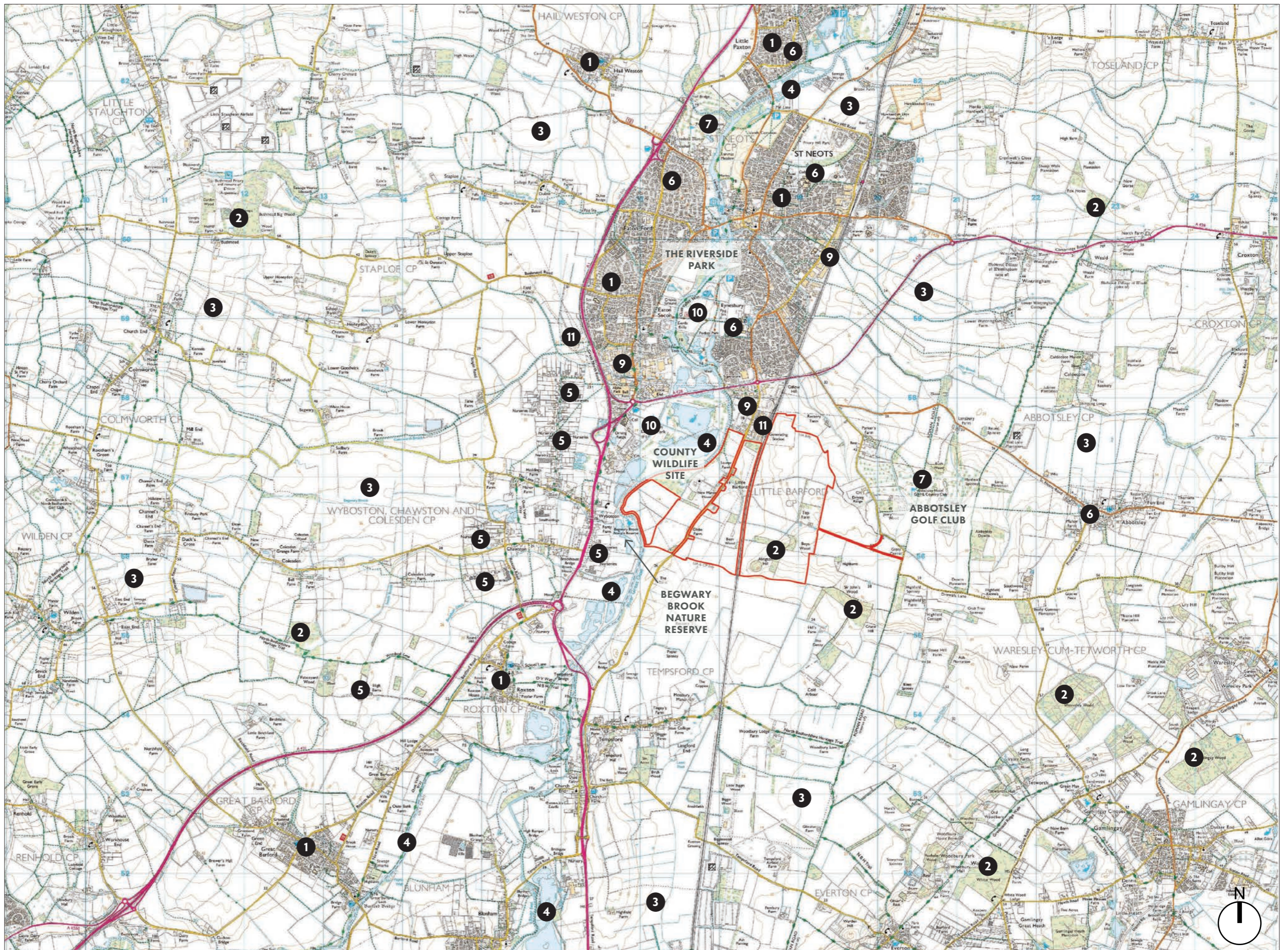


FIGURE 5.2 – OS PLAN SHOWING LAND COVER (FABRIK, 2021)

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## 5.0

# BASELINE CONDITIONS

### 5.3 PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY CONTEXT

There is an extensive network of Public Rights of Way (PRoW) throughout the Study Area. The North Bedfordshire Heritage Trail travels through the southern and western parts of the Study Area, forming part of a wider, circular trail within the County. The route includes the Greensand Ridge Walk at Gamlingay in the south east of the Study Area, before descending into the River Great Ouse floodplain, crossing the river via Tempsford and Roxton and climbing the rising landform to the west via Wilden and Colmworth. Other long-distance routes of note within the Study Area include the Ouse Valley Way, which broadly follows the River corridor through St Neots and to the west of the Site.

A long bridleway following the former path of a Roman Road is a linear feature in the landscape to the east of the Site, which joins up with the North Bedfordshire Heritage Trail in the south of the Study Area. Hail Lane is another linear PRoW in the east of the Study Area that has a strong, linear character.

These routes are connected by a series of PRoWs throughout the landscape, often associated with field boundaries or watercourses. The PRoWs on higher ground in the west, east and north of the Study Area often have far reaching, panoramic views of the wider landscape if woodland blocks do not intervene.

A single PRoW (Little Barford FP 1) is located within the Site. This route runs through the north western part of the Site, connecting Barford Road to the River Great Ouse and wider PRoW network along the river corridor. There are no other PRoWs within the Site.

#### LEGEND

-  SITE BOUNDARY
-  STUDY AREA
-  FOOTPATH
-  BRIDLEWAY
-  BYWAY
-  LONG DISTANCE WALKING ROUTE



FIGURE 5.3 – PLAN SHOWING PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY NETWORK (FABRIK, 2021)

## 5.0

# BASELINE CONDITIONS

## 5.4 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER CONTEXT

### 5.4.1 INTRODUCTION

The term 'landscape' commonly refers to the view or appearance of the land as perceived by people. Landscape applies to any natural, rural, urban, peri-urban areas, in land water and seascape areas.

Landscape character is the combination of both natural / physical, cultural / social and perceptual / aesthetic influences, which give rise to a distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse and which define the 'sense of place'. The landscape is not therefore simply a visual phenomenon.

The following sections set out the landscape character framework of the Study Area from the national and regional level through to county and district scale based upon existing character assessments undertaken by Natural England, Bedford Borough Council, Central Bedfordshire Council and Huntingdonshire District Council.

### 5.4.2 NATIONAL LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

The general character of the English countryside has been described at a national level by Natural England. At this level, the Study Area comprises two character areas, NCA 88: Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands (published April 2014) and NCA 90: Bedfordshire Greensand Ridge (published September 2013).

The Site lies wholly within NCA 88: Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands, with the significant ridgeline within NCA 90: Bedfordshire Greensand Ridge within the wider study area being apparent from the Site, and forming the backdrop to views to the south-east.

The following sections set out the key characteristics of each of the national level character areas pertinent to the study area and therefore the contextual landscape to the Site, with features of particular relevance to the Site highlighted in bold text.

The key characteristics pertinent to the Study Area are described as:

#### NCA 88: Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands

- *Gently undulating, lowland plateau divided by shallow river valleys that gradually widen as they approach The Fens NCA in the east.*
- **The River Great Ouse and its tributaries meander slowly across the landscape, and the River Nene and the Grand Union Canal are also features.**
- **Variable, scattered woodland cover comprising smaller plantations, secondary woodland, pollarded willows and poplar along river valleys, and clusters of ancient woodland, particularly on higher ground to the northwest representing remnant ancient deer parks and Royal Hunting Forests.**
- **Predominantly open, arable landscape of planned and regular fields bounded by open ditches and trimmed, often species-poor hedgerows which contrast with those fields that are irregular and piecemeal.**
- *Wide variety of semi-natural habitats supporting a range of species – some notably rare and scarce – including sites designated for species associated*

*with ancient woodland, wetland sites important for birds, great crested newt and species of stonewort, and traditional orchards and unimproved grassland supporting a rich diversity of wild flowers.*

- *Rich geological and archaeological history evident in fossils, medieval earthworks, deserted villages and Roman roads. A number of historic parklands, designed landscapes and country houses – including Croxton Park – combine with Second World War airfields to provide a strong sense of history and place.*
- *Diversity of building materials including brick, render, thatch and stone. Locally quarried limestone features in villages such as Lavendon, Harrold and Turvey on the upper stretches of the River Great Ouse.*
- **Settlements cluster around major road and rail corridors, with smaller towns, villages and linear settlements widely dispersed throughout, giving a more rural feel. Small villages are usually nucleated around a church or village green, while fen-edge villages are often in a linear form along roads."**

The opportunities and landscape changes identified in the assessment pertinent to the Site are set out below.

*"The majority of the Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands NCA is sparsely populated. Settlements are generally located along the river valleys and more recently along major road and rail corridors. A feeling of urbanisation is brought by the numerous large towns, including Milton Keynes, Bedford, Cambridge, Huntingdon and Peterborough, and major transport routes, including the M1, A1 and A14 and the Midlands and East Coast mainline railways.*

*Tranquillity within the NCA has declined, affected by visual intrusion, noise and light pollution from agriculture, settlement expansion and improvements in road infrastructure... Many areas, however, retain a rural feel and there are numerous opportunities for nearby urban communities to enjoy quiet, informal recreation."*

#### Statements of Environmental Opportunities

Statements of Environmental Opportunity (SEOs) are suggested within each NCA document. The SEOs offer guidance on the critical issues, which could help to achieve sustainable growth and a more secure environmental future. The SEOs of relevance to NCA 88 are:

- *"SEO 1: Maintain and manage a sustainable and productive claylands arable landscape, while managing, expanding and linking woodlands, hedgerows and other semi-natural habitats to benefit biodiversity, improve soil and water quality, and ameliorate climate change by promoting good agricultural practice.*
- *SEO 2: Protect aquifers and enhance the quality, state and structure of the River Great Ouse, its valley and tributaries, habitats, waterbodies and flood plain by seeking to enhance their ecological, historical and recreational importance while taking into account their contribution to sense of place and regulating water flow, quality and availability.*
- *SEO 3: Plan and create high-quality green infrastructure to help accommodate growth and expansion, linking and enhancing existing semi-natural habitats. Regenerate the post-industrial landscapes of the Marston Vale and Peterborough to improve and create new opportunities for biodiversity, recreation, timber and biomass provision while strengthening sense of place, tranquillity, resilience to climate change, and people's health and wellbeing.*
- *SEO 4: Protect, conserve and enhance the cultural heritage and tranquillity of the Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands NCA, including its important*

*geodiversity, archaeology, historic houses, parkland, and Second World War and industrial heritage, by improving interpretation and educational opportunities to increase people's enjoyment and understanding of the landscape."*

#### NCA 90: Bedfordshire Greensand Ridge

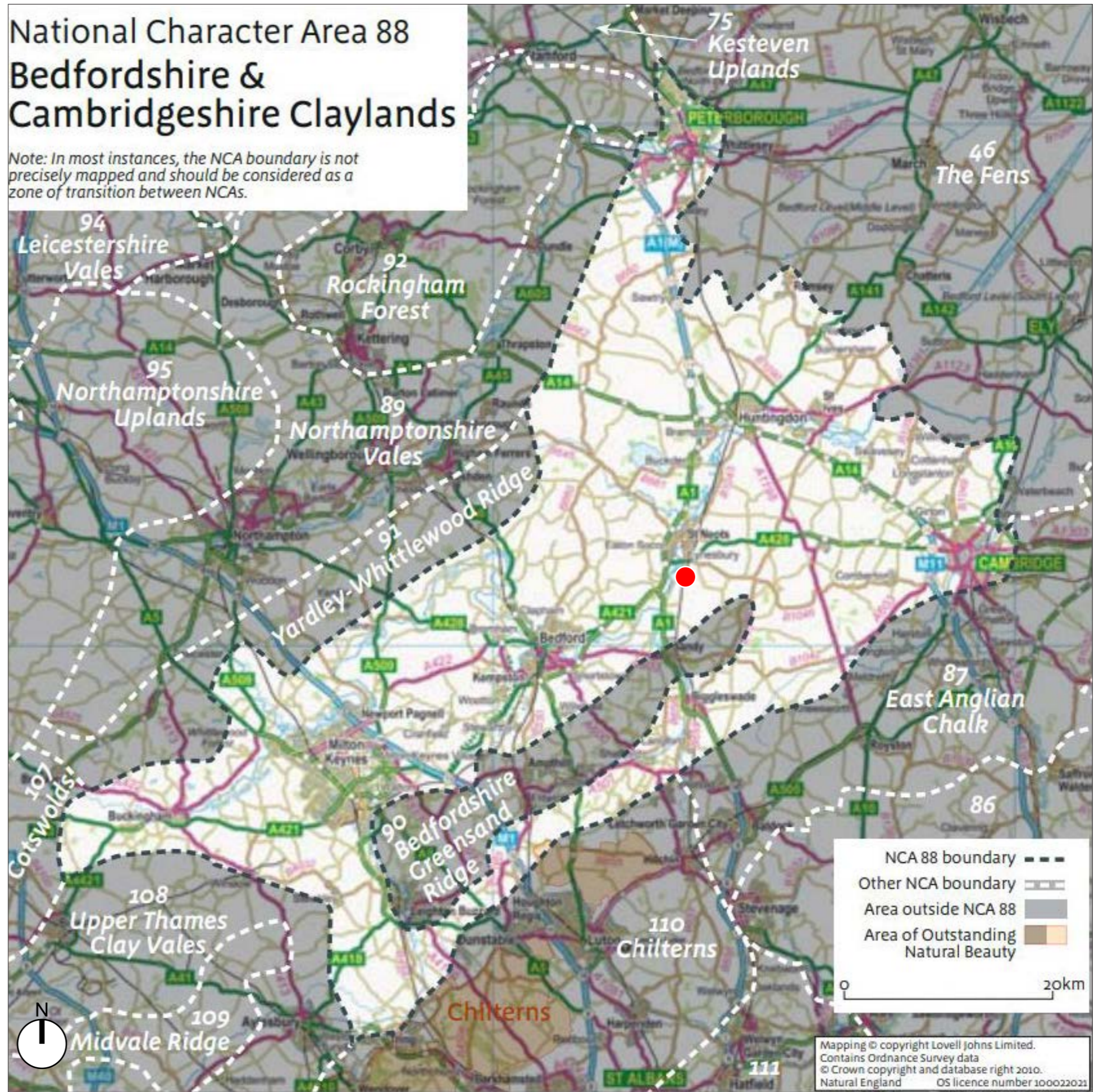
The key characteristics pertinent to the study area as described as:

- *"Narrow escarpment resulting from the erosion-resistant sediments of the Lower Greensand Group, with a distinct scarp slope to the northwest and dip slope to the south-east.*
- **The rolling and elevated Ridge provides a north-west-facing wooded skyline offering extensive panoramic views across the lower-lying Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands.**
- *Substantial blocks of ancient woodland and coniferous plantation are found on the Ridge and steeper slopes. Wood pasture and numerous hedgerow trees, copses and shelterbelts are associated with the estate farmland and parkland trees.*
- *Mixed field and roadside boundaries range from mature shelterbelts to gappy, short flailed boundaries to intact evergreen hedgerows.*
- *Commercial arable cropping within a network of large geometric fields is associated with the better soils on the dip slope.*
- *The Ridge is dissected by the rivers Ouzel and Ivel, which have carved distinct valleys with riparian habitats, and it is partially bounded to the south by the River Flit. Springs arising from the Ridge support important wetland habitats, including acid mire and wet woodland.*
- *Major communications infrastructure includes the Sandy Heath transmitter. Road and rail links cut north-south through the Ridge."*



# National Character Area 88 Bedfordshire & Cambridgeshire Claylands

Note: In most instances, the NCA boundary is not precisely mapped and should be considered as a zone of transition between NCAs.



## LEGEND

● APPROXIMATE SITE LOCATION

FIGURE 5.4 – EXTRACT FROM NATIONAL LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA MAP (NATURAL ENGLAND, 2013)

## 5.0

# BASELINE CONDITIONS

### 5.4.4 LOCAL CHARACTER ASSESSMENTS

There are three district Landscape Character Assessments relevant to the Study Area, which build on the National Character Area descriptions and provide a more detailed assessment of the landscape character. The Landscape Character Areas within the Study Area are shown on Figure 5.5 and the key characteristics are described below.

#### Huntingdonshire Landscape and Townscape Assessment SPD, June 2007

This document is currently an adopted Supplementary Planning Document and is used for development management purposes. A draft version of an updated landscape and townscape assessment is going through a consultation process until 10 December 2021. The land within the Study Area, remains within LCA 5: South East Claylands.

##### Landscape Character Area 5: South East Claylands

Located in the north east of the Study Area, some of the key characteristics of this LCA relevant to the Study Area are described as:

- “Subtle variations in topography, including valley sides, gently undulating landform and plateaux.
- Tall hedgerows with frequent hedgerow trees are a distinctive feature in the central part of the area. Woodland cover increases towards the south.
- Sparsley settled with few villages.
- Village forms may be nucleated around village greens or linear. Buildings reflect the traditional vernacular.
- Evidence of its past Medieval settlement includes green landes, moated sites and deserted villages, indicating that the landscape was once more densely populated.
- Heavy clay soils support cereal crops and arable production.”

#### Central Bedfordshire Landscape Character Assessment, January 2015

This document is an adopted Supplementary Planning Document and is used for development management purposes. The landscape character area within the Study Area include:

##### Landscape Character Area 6C: Everton Heath Greensand Ridge (Type 6: Wooded Greensand Ridge)

Located in the south east of the Study Area, some of the key characteristics of this LCA relevant to the Study Area are described as:

- An elevated landscape occurring over the solid band of Lower Greensand (running SW to NE across Central Bedfordshire). This character area forms the easternmost part of the ridge - it has a steep northwest facing ‘escarpment’ backed by an area of high undulating land forming the ridge top.
- Varied land cover pattern with large scale mosaic of plantation and deciduous woodland, open areas of heathland creation, arable cropping and set side - together creating a diverse textured landscape.

- Experience of the landscape includes filtered views through woodland opened up for heathland creation, directed views associated with parkland planting, and extensive views from the open arable ridge top.
- Strong underlying heathland character (Sandy Heath, Potton Heath, Gamlingay Great Heath (Cams)) evident in road names e.g. ‘Heath Road’, verge and woodland understorey vegetation.
- Variable field and roadside boundaries - ranging from mature shelterbelts to gappy, short flailed boundaries to intact hedges.
- Strong estate parkland character - with houses, parkland planting, formal avenues, estate woodlands and gatehouse lodges forming an important landscape element at Woodbury Park, Hazells Hall, and Everton Park.
- Limited road network with a triangle of routes connecting settlements of Everton and Potton, and the market town of Sandy - at the foot of the ridge.
- The sparse road network contrasts with the extensive unmarked tracks which cross through the area providing access. The Greensand Ridge Walk is a popular long distance route.
- Active and restored mineral extraction works are dispersed across the area including a sandstone quarry north of Potton Road and sand and gravel workings near Deepdale - undergoing progressive restoration. Workings are generally well screened within the landscape.
- Landmark churches, with distinct towers act as focal points in the landscape e.g. at Everton.
- Recreational landscape with facilities and extensive walks associated with the RSPB reserve and the long distance route of the Greensand Ridge Walk.”

#### Bedford Borough Landscape Character Assessment, updated October 2020

This landscape character assessment is an ‘evidence base document’ to the BBLP 2040 and as such has not been tested through the examination of the BBLP 2040. Therefore this LVPS, whilst guided by the evidence base, notes its status.

##### Landscape Character Area 1D: Thurleigh (Type 1: Clay Farmland)

Located in the north west of the Study Area, some of the key characteristics of this LCA relevant to the Study Area are described as:

- “Dominated by arable farmland generally with large irregular fields plus smaller fields around settlements. Remnant areas on unimproved grassland persist along road verges.
- Hedgerows are in mixed condition with some low flailed and gappy or lost leaving areas of open arable land with long views.
- Hedgerow trees are prominent in the level landscape, many of them mature, including remnant trees within fields plus substantial recent plantings lining some rural roads.
- A few scattered woods give variety to the distant views, particularly to the north and east of the area.
- Minor tributaries of the River Great Ouse cross the eastern part of the area from east to west causing subtle variations in topography.
- Thurleigh Airfield dominates the higher plateau to the west with industrial fencing and lack of field boundaries emphasising the exposed, empty character of this section of the area.
- Dispersed low density settlement, consists of scattered farmsteads and villages,

often made up of loose knit small groups of buildings known as ‘ends’, with some villages spreading along roads.

- A network of small rural roads and lanes cross the area.
- Rich heritage of earthwork sites (particularly moats), including the hillfort and moat at Bolnhurst, the Priory and moats at Bushmead, and a medieval moat, fishponds and fowling complex at Manor Farm, Colmworth.
- Network of footpaths, bridleways and green lanes particularly to the east.
- Views are generally distant over the largely level farmland with Thurleigh Airfield dominant to the west.”

##### Landscape Character Area 1E: Renhold (Type 1: Clay Farmland)

Located in the south west of the Study Area, some of the key characteristics of this LCA relevant to the Study Area are described as:

- “Dominated by arable farmland with some scattered woodlands.
- Large geometric fields are bounded by hedgerows, fences and ditches, with smaller fields immediately around historic villages.
- Hedgerows are in mixed condition with some low flailed and gappy or lost leaving areas of open, featureless, arable land.
- Hedgerow trees are prominent in the level landscape, many of them mature, including remnant trees within fields.
- Scattered woods give variety to the distant views, and include some ancient woodlands of high biodiversity interest.
- Tributaries of the River Great Ouse traverse the area from east to west and (to the west) from north to south crossed by modest bridges and forming a focus for settlement.
- Dispersed settlement, low but even in density, consists mainly of scattered farmsteads and villages, the latter often sheltered amongst mature trees.
- A network of small rural roads and lanes cross the area and the presence of the Great Barford Bypass is felt locally in new features associated with the trunk road.
- Many historic earthwork sites (particularly moats), including, Palaceyard Wood moat (Roxton), Birchfield Farm moat (Great Barford), Mowsbury hillfort and moat (Ravensden).
- Consistent network of footpaths, bridleways and green lanes.
- Views are generally distant over the subtly undulating open farmland.
- The network of brooks and minor watercourses add local character and are often lined with mature willow or poplar, as seen in Renhold and Wilden.”

##### Landscape Character Area 4A: Great Ouse (Type 4: Clay Valleys)

This LCA is located in the centre of the Study Area, with the western parts of the Site falling within it. Some of the key characteristics of this LCA relevant to the Site and Study Area are described as:

- “A shallow fairly wide valley of the River Great Ouse founded on Oxford Clay and Alluvium with deposits of Valley Gravel and small sections of Glacial Gravel. Large scale open water bodies, multiple channels and tributary streams are scattered across the floodplain. The course of the river is marked by riverside vegetation including mature willows. Shelterbelts and distinctive clusters of woodland create a semi-enclosed landscape.
- Mixed land use of arable on the shallow slopes of the valley with pasture,

quarrying and recreational uses along the valley floor.

- Large and medium scale geometric fields are bounded by hedgerows in mixed condition with some hedgerow trees.
- Restored sand and gravel workings are a recreational and ecological resource including Wyboston Leisure Park and Bedford River Valley Park, while active large scale quarrying continues for instance north of Willington.
- The importance of the area in prehistoric times as a focus for ritual sites and funerary monuments is reflected in the presence of a number of ancient monuments.
- Historic parks at Roxton and Little Barford (and Tempsford within Central Bedfordshire) contain parkland trees as well as medieval earthworks and ridge and furrow. Moated sites and remains of castles are present particularly at strategic points commanding the rivers.
- Settlement consists of medium size villages and large industrial complexes including the generating station at Little Barford, and mixed development around Wyboston Lakes, and clusters of nurseries e.g. around Wyboston.
- Building materials are varied with local stone churches and bridge at Great Barford, red brick dwellings, black painted clapboard barns, clay tile and thatch roofs along with more recent industrial buildings of brick, metal and glass.
- An urban fringe character results from the aural and visual presence of major road corridors of the A1(M) and A421, large scale industrial development, restored sand and gravel workings and large arable fields particularly close to Bedford, although with pockets of intact or restored river valley landscape.
- The Ouse Valley Way long distance route and National Cycle Route 51 cross the landscape (line of disused railway line through the Bedford River Valley Park)."

The elements of the Landscape Strategy for the Great Ouse Clay Valley relevant to the Site and Study Area include: "to enhance the landscape through restoring elements that have become degraded or been lost such as the hedgerows, pollarded willows, pastures and water meadows and conserving features such as the historic villages with their strong links to the river landscape character and the tranquil, rural sections of riverside and open water bodies fringed by woodland."

The Development Guidelines for the Great Ouse Clay Valley relevant to the Site and Study Area include:

- "Retain the separation of individual villages - avoid linear development along roads merging settlements.
- Ensure that proposals for commercial and residential development in villages are appropriately integrated into their rural setting.
- Conserve the rural settings of the towns and villages and enhance the settlement edge for instance by appropriately designed woodland planting to foil large scale development (e.g. in relation to enabling developments to deliver the Bedford River Valley Park).
- Conserve the character of secondary roads, limiting urbanising influences e.g. kerbing and widening and ensure that traffic management measures are sympathetic to those sections of the area with a rural character.
- Explore options for improving recreational opportunities and public access to the river.
- Monitor the associated development of facilities e.g. visitor centres and car parking that might impact upon the surviving sections of rural, tranquil character in the immediate river corridor.

- Retain openness and long views across the flat river valley to the gently rising slopes of the adjacent landscape types, seeking to avoid tall structures and large scale buildings which may have an adverse impact on the character of the river corridor."

#### Landscape Character Area 5F: Biggin Wood (Type 5: Clay Vales)

This LCA is located in the centre of the Study Area, with the eastern parts of the Site falling within it. This LCA extends south into the Central Bedfordshire district. Some of the key characteristics of this LCA relevant to the Site and Study Area are described as:

- "Area forms a transition between the valley of the Great Ouse Clay Valley (4A) to the west and the Everton Heath Wooded Greensand Ridge (6C) to the east.
- Clear views across the vale terminated by the backdrop of the Everton Heath Wooded Greensand Ridge (6C) providing some sense of containment. To the east the more wooded landscape of the river valley is defined by willows and poplars.
- Land use is predominantly defined by arable cropping contained within medium to large arable fields, with hedgerow boundaries in variable condition.
- Roadside hedgerows are important features and include tall overgrown mixed hedgerows creating a shaded wooded context as well as wide grass verges and mature hedgerow and roadside trees (ash, field maple and oak).
- Presence of small field ditches draining to the Great Ouse, plus occasional field pond.
- Small woodland blocks, hedgerow trees and copses provide texture, variety and enclosure in close range views, as well as forming a valuable biodiversity resource.
- Occasional small scale industrial units with associated industrial boundaries (chainlink fencing/security measures/ access splays and gates) interrupt the rural agricultural character.
- Former Tempsford airfield, now under arable cropping at Gibraltar Farm - used during wartime espionage operations. The airfield includes a memorial to WW2 pilots.
- A bridleway running north south through the area and linking to Sandy to the south preserves the line of the White Way Roman Road between Baldock and Godmanchester.
- The area is severed by the main LNER rail line which runs north south across the vale. It is crossed by two roads (bridge and level crossing) - although much of the area to the east of the railway line is isolated and 'remote' with access limited to unmarked tracks.
- Locally, the overhead electric lines associated with the railway and line of pylons which cross the area form visually dominant built elements. The transitory noise from the railway also impinges on the quiet rural character.
- Settlement is limited to occasional solitary farms and buildings - often isolated at the end of unmarked lanes. The village of Tempsford on the boundary is associated with the valley of the Great Ouse. The interface with the market town of Sandy to the south is contained by the railway line.
- The main north south route of the rail line is echoed by the line of a former Roman Road which cuts through the area preserved as a right of way link."

The elements of the Landscape Strategy for the Biggin Wood Clay Vale relevant to the Site and Study Area include to: "enhance and reinforce the patchwork pattern

of the landscape created by the integrated field boundary network. There are also opportunities to manage and enhance the woodland cover within the landscape and restore elements of floodplain character."

The Development Guidelines for the Biggin Wood Clay Vale relevant to the Site and Study Area include:

- "Conserve the sparse settlement of occasional isolated farms along narrow unmarked tracks.
- Conserve the Tempsford airfield and memory of its role in wartime history.
- Prevent further urbanisation of the roads and lanes.
- Conserve the clear views and visual relationship with the Everton Heath Wooded Greensand Ridge (6C). Retain the dramatic visual contrast between the flat vale and steep slopes."

## RELEVANCE TO THE SITE

The Site falls within two landscape character areas, as defined by the Bedford Borough Landscape Character Assessment (updated October 2020). These are Landscape Character Areas 4A - Great Ouse and 5F - Biggin Wood. In both cases, the Site consists of a small section of these character areas. The relevant Site features and character are described in Section 5.5.

Any future landscape and visual impact assessment work would need to consider the landscape character assessments identified in this LVPS and the description of the Site, to help inform professional judgements on the character and value of the Site in the context of its wider landscape character areas.

## 5.0

# BASELINE CONDITIONS

### 5.4.5 EXPERIENTIAL/PERCEPTUAL QUALITIES

The rural parts of the Study Area have varying levels of tranquillity and scenic quality. Areas of the landscape in close proximity to the major transport routes of the A1, A428 and East Coast Mainline suffer from associated noise, which impacts on the experience of tranquillity within these parts of the Study Area. The areas of the Study Area around the Site also have a mixture of influences and urbanising elements such as overhead electricity lines and large scale pylons, which contrast and detract from the settings of some listed buildings and heritage assets.

The settlement of St Neots and the urban extension to the east of the settlement are visible from the higher and more open parts of the Study Area. The extensive PRow network throughout the Study Area, particularly from higher ground allows the wider landscape to be perceived in panoramic views with the wooded Greensand Ridge or rising land in the north and west of the Study Area forming the backdrop.

The topography of the Study Area is heavily influenced by the River Great Ouse and its tributaries and a clear contrast between the flat flood plains and the undulating vales and valleys are perceived in the field, despite the consistent agricultural land use. There is a sense of activity and recreation associated with the river corridor along with the urbanising characteristics of the settlements within the valley.

The linear nature of the bridleway along the route of the former White Way Roman Road in the east of the Study Area is clearly perceived from within the Site, although some sections of the route are difficult to follow on the ground due to agricultural activity.

Woodland blocks and existing vegetation are experienced as strong features within the landscape with field boundaries defining an often irregular field pattern.

### LEGEND

 SITE BOUNDARY

 STUDY AREA

#### BEDFORD BOROUGH LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT (2020)

 TYPE 1: CLAY FARMLAND

AREA 1D - THURLEIGH

AREA 1E - RENHOLD

 TYPE 4: CLAY VALLEYS

AREA 4A - GREAT OUSE

 TYPE 5: CLAY VALES

AREA 5F - BIGGIN WOOD

#### CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT (2015)

 TYPE 6: WOODED GREENSAND RIDGE

AREA 6C - EVERTON HEATH GREENSAND RIDGE

#### HUNTINGDON LANDSCAPE & TOWNSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT (2007)

 AREA 5: SOUTHEAST CLAYLANDS

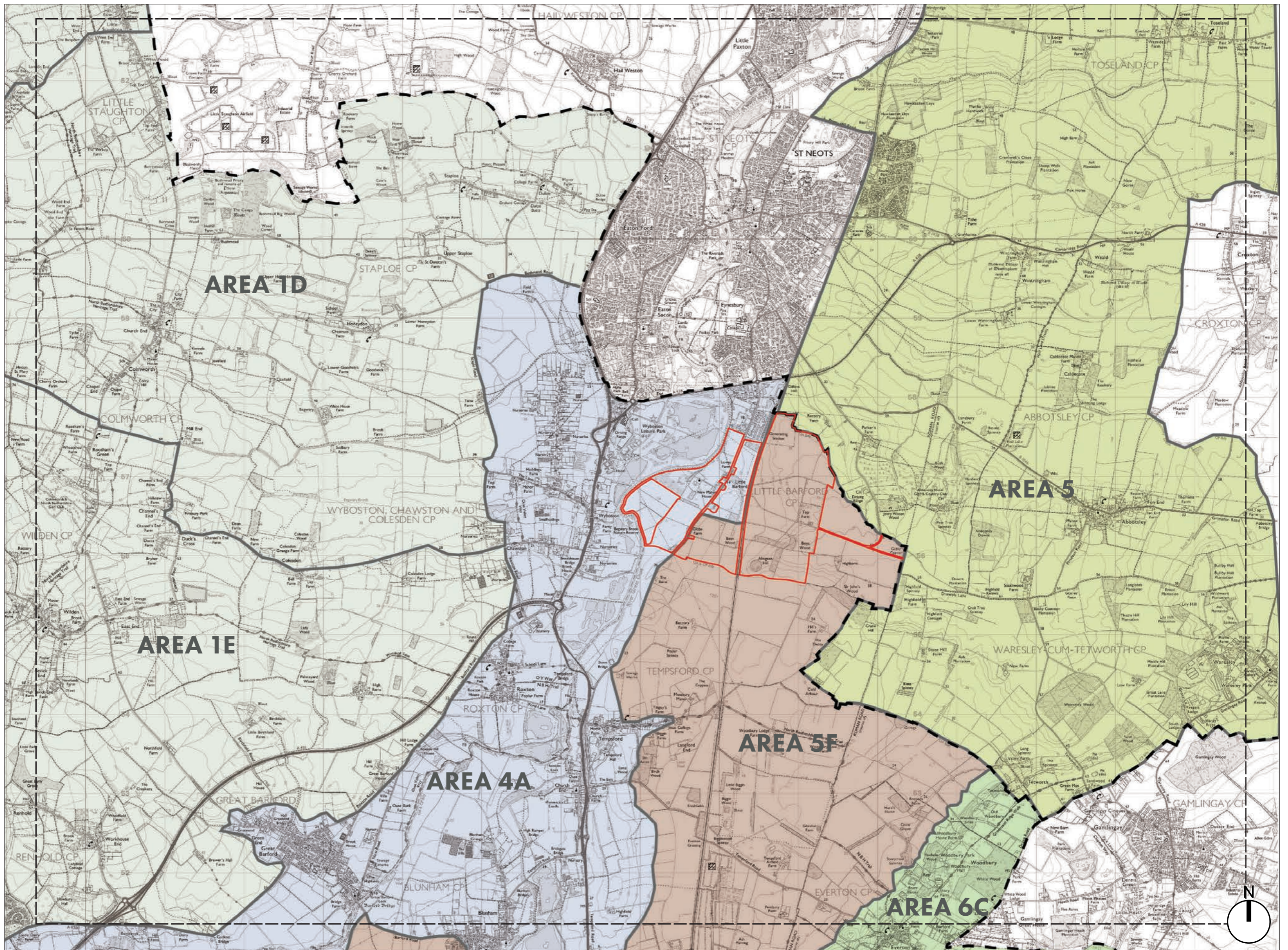


FIGURE 5.5 – LOCAL LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA MAP (FABRIK, 2021)

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## 5.0

# BASELINE CONDITIONS

## 5.5 SITE DESCRIPTION

### 5.5.1 SITE BOUNDARIES

The Site is broadly divided into three parcels of land by the north - south transport corridors of Barford Road and the East Coast Mainline. The western boundary of the Site is defined by the River Great Ouse. The southern and eastern boundaries are defined by hedgerow field boundaries within the agricultural landscape. The northern boundary is defined by a combination of hedgerow field boundaries and woodland around the edges of Little Barford Power Station.

### 5.5.2 TOPOGRAPHY

The topography of the Site broadly falls from east to west. The eastern boundary of the Site is the highest point at approximately 45m - 50m AOD as the plateau landform from the east enters the Site. The landform then gently falls to the west and north and more steeply to the south to approximately 25m AOD. To the west of the East Coast Main Line, which divides the Site on embankment in places, the topography of the Site is relatively flat due to the influence of the River Great Ouse and its flood plain. The topography in the western part of the Site gently falls from 25m - 15m AOD.

### 5.5.3 LAND USE

The Site is broadly divided in half by the East Coast Main Line. The eastern half is entirely used for agriculture associated with Top Farm. There is a small cluster of farm buildings within the central area and the woodlands around Top Farm and of Alington Hill and Boys Wood are prominent features.

The western half of the Site is primarily in agricultural use, set around the village of Little Barford and Barford Road, which divides this part of the Site into two. The Church of St Deny's is a Grade II\* Listed Building located within the western part of the Site with a rural track approach and associated parkland-style landscape contributing to its setting. Large scale overhead electricity lines cross through the landscape within and to the south of the Site.

An area of ridge and furrow is present in the south west of the Site adjacent to the River Great Ouse, this area is excluded from the Site boundary to ensure it is preserved.

Immediately west of the Site is the River Great Ouse and associated recreational land uses. To the north are industrial uses and the visually prominent Little Barford Power Station. To the east and south is agriculture.

### 5.5.4 VEGETATION

The eastern part of the Site contains a number of woodland blocks which provide strong definition to the field pattern alongside the hedgerows and linear tree belts. The circular wood of Alington Hill and the right angled Boys Wood are notable features within the landscape and sit on the skyline in views from the south. The woodland block to the north of Top Farm further compartmentalises this part of the Site.

Hedgerows and linear tree belts generally form the field boundaries within the Site where these aren't defined by woodlands.

In the western half of the Site, smaller woodland blocks are associated with farm tracks and streams. A more substantial Poplar plantation woodland is located to the west of St Deny's Church and linear woodland blocks are associated with the River Great Ouse. The woodland blocks are representative of the wider Study Area and Character Areas.

### 5.5.5 BUILT FORM / SCALE / MASS / HEIGHT / GRAIN

With the exception of the buildings associated with Top Farm, there are no buildings within the eastern half of the Site. In the western half, the village of Little Barford sits along Barford Road with properties generally backing onto the Site. These properties are generally two storeys in height and include a Grade II listed row of four cottages, and a Grade II listed former farm house and associated barn to add further heritage value to that provided by St Deny's Church. The settlement has a linear, but scattered grain along Barford Road. To the north of the Site the Little Barford Power Station is a prominent feature adjacent to the edge of the Site.

### 5.5.6 DETRACTING FEATURES

The East Coast Main Line is a regular source of noise as trains pass and the associated overhead cables are a detracting feature. Within the western half of the Site, two sets of large scale overhead power lines and pylons also detract from the scenic quality of the landscape within the Site. Little Barford Power Station immediately north of the Site is a large scale industrial use that is highly visible from the Site.

### 5.5.7 LANDSCAPE FEATURES

The existing woodlands and hedgerow/linear tree line field boundaries are the primary landscape features within the Site. Narrow gravel farm tracks provide access through the landscape and a small drainage ditch runs east to west through the Site. In the western half of the Site the landscape features are more varied, with the landscape features around St Deny's Church providing a different more parkland-like character with scattered trees and mixed grassland areas. An area of ridge and furrow is present in the south western area excluded from the Site boundary.

### 5.5.8 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

The above elements combine to inform landscape character. The key characteristics of which are:

- the woodland blocks,
- the small to medium, irregular field pattern,
- the open character of the higher eastern half of the Site with far reaching views to the north, west and south,
- the more enclosed character of the flat river valley of the western half of the Site,

- the historic character associated with the St Deny's Church and its setting, and
- the urbanising influences of the East Coast Main Line, overhead electricity lines and Little Barford Power Station.

### 5.5.9 EXPERIENTIAL / PERCEPTUAL QUALITIES:

The Site suffers from the associated noise of the East Coast Main Line and surrounding road networks, which impacts on the experience of tranquillity within it. The Site also has a mixture of influences and urbanising elements such as overhead electricity lines and large scale pylons, which contrast and detract from the settings of some of the listed buildings and heritage assets which contribute to the character of the Site.

The higher eastern half of the Site, although not publicly accessible experiences a more open character with far reaching views possible from the plateau in the east. The woodland blocks and field boundaries create a sense of enclosure and compartmentalise the landscape in places.

The western half of the Site is relatively well enclosed by the existing vegetation associated with the River Great Ouse along the western boundary, industrial uses including Little Barford Power Station to the north and the East Coast Main Line and associated vegetation/embankments to the east.

A single PRoW runs through the north western corner of the Site. This is the only publicly accessible visual receptor within the Site itself. There are no public or private visual receptors within the eastern half of the Site. More detail on potential visual receptors is provided in Section 6.

## LEGEND








-  SITE BOUNDARY
-  CONTOURS
-  FOOTPATH
-  BRIDLEWAY
-  VIEWPOINT LOCATION
-  RIDGELINE
-  WOODLAND BLOCKS



FIGURE 5.6 – PLAN SHOWING THE EXISTING SITE LANDSCAPE & SITE PHOTO LOCATIONS (FABRIK, 2021)

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## 5.0 BASELINE CONDITIONS

### 5.6 SITE PHOTOGRAPHS

The following photographs demonstrate the character of the Site. The locations of each photo can be seen on Figure 5.6.



PHOTOGRAPH – VIEWPOINT S1: VIEW FROM BARFORD ROAD, LOOKING SOUTH EAST ACROSS THE SITE TOWARDS THE EAST COAST MAIN LINE.



PHOTOGRAPH – VIEWPOINT S2: VIEW FROM A FIELD ENTRANCE TO THE SITE FROM BARFORD ROAD, LOOKING SOUTH WEST ACROSS THE SITE TOWARDS THE RIVER GREAT OUSE.





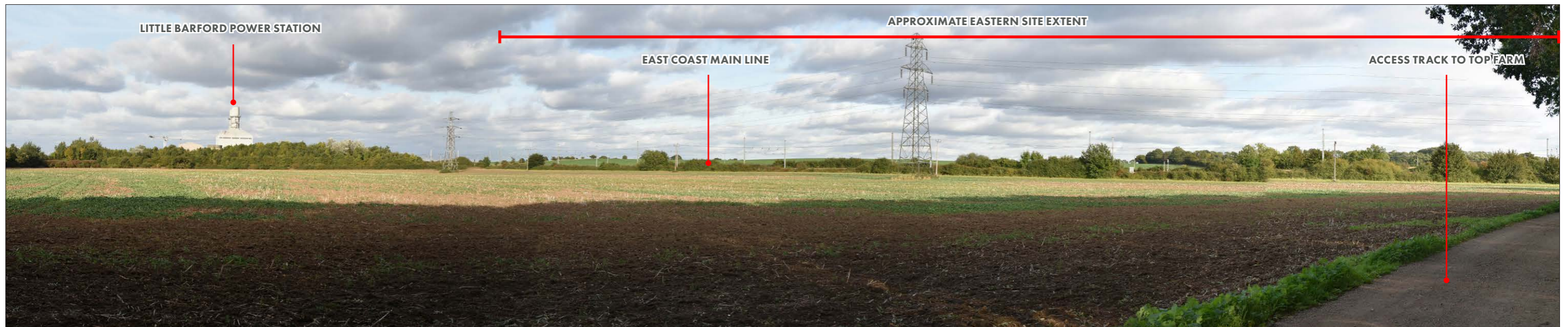
PHOTOGRAPH – VIEWPOINT S3: VIEW FROM THE ACCESS TRACK TO THE GRADE II\* LISTED ST DENY'S CHURCH, LOOKING NORTH WEST TOWARDS THE CHURCH AND THE GRADE II LISTED LOWER FARMHOUSE.



PHOTOGRAPH – VIEWPOINT S4: VIEW FROM PROW LITTLE BARFORD FP1 WITHIN THE SITE, LOOKING NORTH WEST TOWARDS THE RIVER GREAT OUSE.



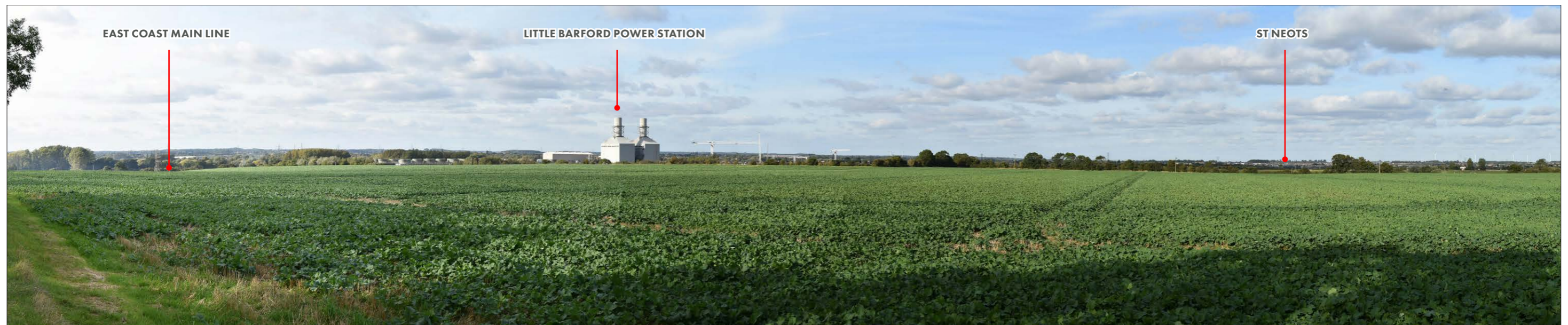
PHOTOGRAPH – VIEWPOINT S5: VIEW FROM PROW LITTLE BARFORD FP1 WITHIN THE SITE, LOOKING SOUTH EAST TOWARDS BARFORD ROAD AND THE ROW OF FOUR GRADE II LISTED COTTAGES.



**PHOTOGRAPH – VIEWPOINT S6:** VIEW FROM THE TOP FARM ACCESS TRACK FROM BARFORD ROAD, LOOKING NORTH EAST ACROSS THE SITE TOWARDS LITTLE BARFORD POWER STATION AND THE LAND WITHIN THE SITE TO THE EAST OF THE EAST COAST MAIN LINE.



**PHOTOGRAPH – VIEWPOINT S7:** VIEW FROM THE TOP FARM ACCESS TRACK FROM BARFORD ROAD, LOOKING SOUTH WEST ACROSS THE SITE TOWARDS BARFORD ROAD AND THE RIVER GREAT OUSE.



**PHOTOGRAPH – VIEWPOINT S8:** VIEW FROM THE NORTHERN FIELD BOUNDARY WITHIN THE EASTERN PART OF THE SITE, LOOKING NORTH TOWARDS LITTLE BARFORD POWER STATION AND ST NEOTS.



PHOTOGRAPH – VIEWPOINT S9: VIEW ACROSS THE FIELD IN THE NORTH EAST OF THE SITE, LOOKING SOUTH EAST.



PHOTOGRAPH – VIEWPOINT S10: VIEW FROM THE CENTRAL FIELD WITHIN THE EASTERN HALF OF THE SITE, LOOKING WEST TOWARDS THE EAST COAST MAIN LINE AND RIVER GREAT OUSE.



PHOTOGRAPH – VIEWPOINT S11: VIEW FROM THE FIELD ENTRANCE FROM THE ACCESS TRACK TO TOP FARM WITHIN THE CENTRE OF THE EASTERN HALF OF THE SITE, LOOKING SOUTH WEST.



PHOTOGRAPH – VIEWPOINT S12: VIEW FROM THE ACCESS TRACK TO TOP FARM, LOOKING SOUTH EAST.



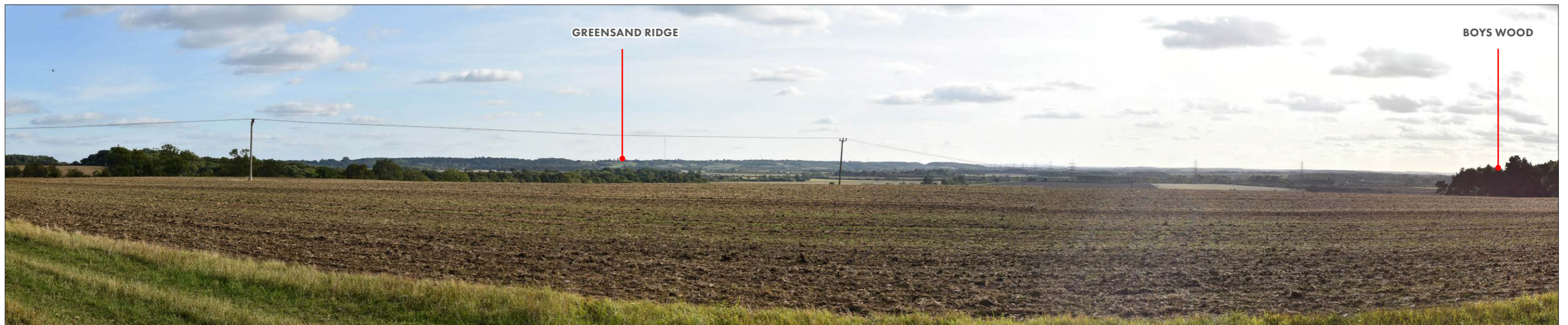
PHOTOGRAPH – VIEWPOINT S13: VIEW FROM THE ACCESS TRACK AT THE ENTRANCE TO BOYS WOOD WITHIN THE SITE, LOOKING NORTH EAST TOWARDS TOP FARM.



PHOTOGRAPH – VIEWPOINT S14: VIEW FROM THE FIELD ENTRANCE WITHIN THE SITE NEXT TO BOYS WOOD, LOOKING SOUTH WEST TOWARDS THE EAST COAST MAIN LINE.



**PHOTOGRAPH – VIEWPOINT S15:** VIEW FROM THE SOUTHERNMOST FIELD WITHIN THE EASTERN HALF OF THE SITE, LOOKING TOWARDS THE CIRCULAR WOODLAND OF ALINGTON HILL AND THE WIDER LANDSCAPE TO THE SOUTH OF THE SITE.



**PHOTOGRAPH – VIEWPOINT S16:** VIEW FROM THE SOUTH EASTERNMOST FIELD WITHIN THE EASTERN HALF OF THE SITE, LOOKING SOUTH ACROSS THE WIDER LANDSCAPE.



**PHOTOGRAPH – VIEWPOINT S17:** VIEW FROM THE SOUTH EASTERN CORNER OF THE CENTRAL FIELD WITHIN THE EASTERN HALF OF THE SITE, LOOKING NORTH WEST TOWARDS TOP FARM AND LITTLE BARFORD POWER STATION.

## 6.0

# VISUAL APPRAISAL

## 6.1 INTRODUCTION

The extent to which the Site is visible from the surrounding landscape is based on grading of degrees of visibility. It is determined from a visual inspection of the Site and its context from PRow, roads and properties.

Seasonal change in existing evergreen and deciduous plant material will affect the available views. Typically views will be different through the seasons with a greater sense of enclosure in the summer months when deciduous trees are in leaf.

The plan on the following page (Figure 6.1) illustrates the locations of the representative viewpoints taken within the Study Area. The field work and visual assessment has informed the identification of visual receptors within the Site and Study Area that could be sensitive to any potential proposed development within the Site. The representative viewpoint photographs 1-14 demonstrate the existing views from a number of potentially sensitive visual receptors within the Study Area. Potential visual receptors within the Site are identified in Section 5.5.9.

The western half of the Site is relatively well enclosed by the existing vegetation associated with the River Great Ouse along the western boundary, industrial uses including Little Barford Power Station to the north and the East Coast Main Line and associated vegetation/embankments to the east. This enclosure means that the contribution of the western half of the Site to views from the wider landscape are primarily limited to those receptors in the immediate vicinity of the Site and from the low lying landscape to the south.

The eastern half of the Site has a more open character on the higher ground along the eastern boundary. The field pattern is larger than those to the west of the railway line, and gappy hedgerow boundaries add to the sense of openness in places. Despite this open character, particularly in the north eastern part of the Site, the presence of substantial woodland blocks around Top Farm, Alington Hill and Boys Wood compartmentalise the Site and provide a strong sense of localised enclosure in combination with the topography and hedgerows. The southernmost fields between Boys Wood and Alington Hill drop down steeply to the southern boundary of the Site and the low lying floodplain beyond, meaning these southernmost fields form the skyline in views from the south of the Study Area. The eastern half of the Site contributes to views from the wider Study Area but from the majority of locations, this half of the Site is only partially visible, or it is viewed as part of a wider, complex panorama with a variety of land uses, including residential and industrial uses.

Little Barford Power Station is a dominant feature on the skyline and is highly visible from throughout the Study Area. Its distinctive towers often act as a signpost for the location of the Site in views due to its close geographical proximity to it. Without this local landmark, the Site would be more challenging to identify in longer distance views.

Field work was carried out on the 11 October 2021. Representative viewpoint photographs were taken from an approximate eye height of 1.75m with a 50mm fixed lens camera in line with the Landscape Institute's Technical Guidance on the Visual Representation of Development Proposals, Technical Guidance Note 06/19, 17 September 2019.

## 6.2 IDENTIFICATION OF POTENTIAL VISUAL RECEPTORS WITHIN THE STUDY AREA

### 6.2.1 TRANSPORT CORRIDORS

- **Barford Road:** There are views of the western half of the Site from the length of Barford Road that divides this part of the Site in two. There are also views of the Site from Barford Road to the south when travelling northwards but views from the north are blocked by the industrial uses and existing vegetation as shown by representative viewpoint 11.
- **Potton Road and St Neots Road:** Potton Road runs broadly parallel to the eastern boundary of the Site with agricultural fields in the intervening space. St Neots Road connects Potton Road to Abbotsley in the east of the Study Area. Generally views are filtered by existing hedgerows and topography but there are views of the northern parts of the Site from sections of these routes, with Little Barford Power Station forming a backdrop as shown by representative viewpoint 14.
- **East Coast Main Line:** The railway line runs north - south and divides the Site in two. Trains travel through at grade or on embankment and the intermittent vegetation alongside the railway line allows views of the Site for users of the railway line. It was not possible to obtain a representative viewpoint from this receptor during the field work.

### 6.2.2 PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY

- **PRow to the north of the Site:** There is an extensive network of PRow within the landscape to the north of the Site. These generally provide access from the eastern edge of St Neots to the wider landscape and villages within the north east of the Study Area. Topography and vegetation prevent views from a number of these routes, but where routes cross open landscape on higher ground around Toseland, the Site can form a small part of a complex panorama as shown in representative viewpoints 12 and 13.
- **PRow to the east of the Site:** Despite the plateau-like landform and rising topography further east, the presence of woodland blocks within this part of the Study Area filter the majority of views of the Site from the wider Study Area to the east. The Greensand Ridge Walk in the south east of the Study Area is a long distance walking route along a prominent ridgeline. There are far reaching views from sections of this route, the eastern parts of the Site can be visible from this part of the Study Area where topography and vegetation allow, see representative viewpoint 8. In closer proximity to the Site, the former White Way Roman Road is a bridleway that cuts straight through the landscape to the east of the Site. There are views of the southern boundary of the Site on the skyline from this route, see representative viewpoint 7. Further north along this route, the agricultural land separating the Site from Potton Road (see representative viewpoints 1 and 2) screens any views of the Site alongside the existing hedgerows and woodlands.
- **PRow to the south of the Site:** The lower lying land to the south of the site is crossed by a number of PRow, including PRow Tempsford BW6, which forms part of the North Bedfordshire Heritage Trail Long Distance Walking Route. Due to intervening topography and vegetation, views of the Site are generally limited to the southern fields around Alington Hill and Boys Wood as can be seen in representative viewpoints 3 - 6.
- **PRow to the west of the Site:** The gently rising ground in the west of the Study Area allows far reaching, panoramic views across the River Great Ouse Valley

towards St Neots in the north and the Greensand Ridge in the south east of the Study Area. An extensive network of PRow traverse through this part of the Study Area with the potential for views of the Site as part of complex, panoramas. Little Barford Power Station acts as a marker post for the Site by geographic association. In reality the Site makes a small contribution to views as shown in representative viewpoints 9 and 10.

### 6.2.3 PUBLIC OPEN SPACE AND VISITOR ATTRACTIONS

There are limited areas of public open space with views of the Site. Begwary Brook Nature Reserve and other publicly accessible spaces along the River Great Ouse corridor adjacent to the Site boundary could have glimpsed views of this part of the Site in places. Wyboston Lakes is a leisure destination within the River Great Ouse corridor adjacent to the Site boundary. There are potential views of the western part of the Site from this visitor attraction.

### 6.2.4 EMPLOYMENT AND RESIDENTIAL





Views from Little Barford Power Station and the surrounding employment uses to the north of the Site are screened by the existing built form and vegetation around these areas. A linear view along the Barford Road corridor is the only glimpse of the Site from this location.

Existing properties in Little Barford are scattered along this road and would be considered as private visual receptors for any potential development within the western half of the Site. These properties include three Listed Buildings. St Deny's Church within the Site would also be considered as a visual receptor for this area. There are scattered isolated farmsteads and properties to the east of the Site that would also be considered as potential visual receptors for any proposed development within the eastern half of the Site.

### 6.2.5 POTENTIAL FUTURE VISUAL RECEPTORS

The emerging proposals for the A428 road improvement scheme and the EWR would also potentially have views of any proposed development within the Site should they be approved and constructed.

## LEGEND

-  **SITE BOUNDARY**
-  **LOCATION OF PHOTOGRAPHIC VIEWPOINT – OPEN VIEW (AN OPEN VIEW OF THE WHOLE OF THE SITE OR OPEN VIEW OF PART OF THE SITE).**
-  **LOCATION OF PHOTOGRAPHIC VIEWPOINT – PARTIAL VIEW (A VIEW OF THE SITE WHICH FORMS A SMALL PART OF THE WIDER PANORAMA, OR WHERE VIEWS ARE FILTERED BETWEEN INTERVENING BUILT FORM OR VEGETATION).**
-  **LOCATION OF PHOTOGRAPHIC VIEWPOINT – TRUNCATED VIEW (VIEWS OF THE SITE ARE OBSCURED BY THE INTERVENING BUILT FORM AND / OR VEGETATION, OR IS DIFFICULT TO PERCEIVE).**

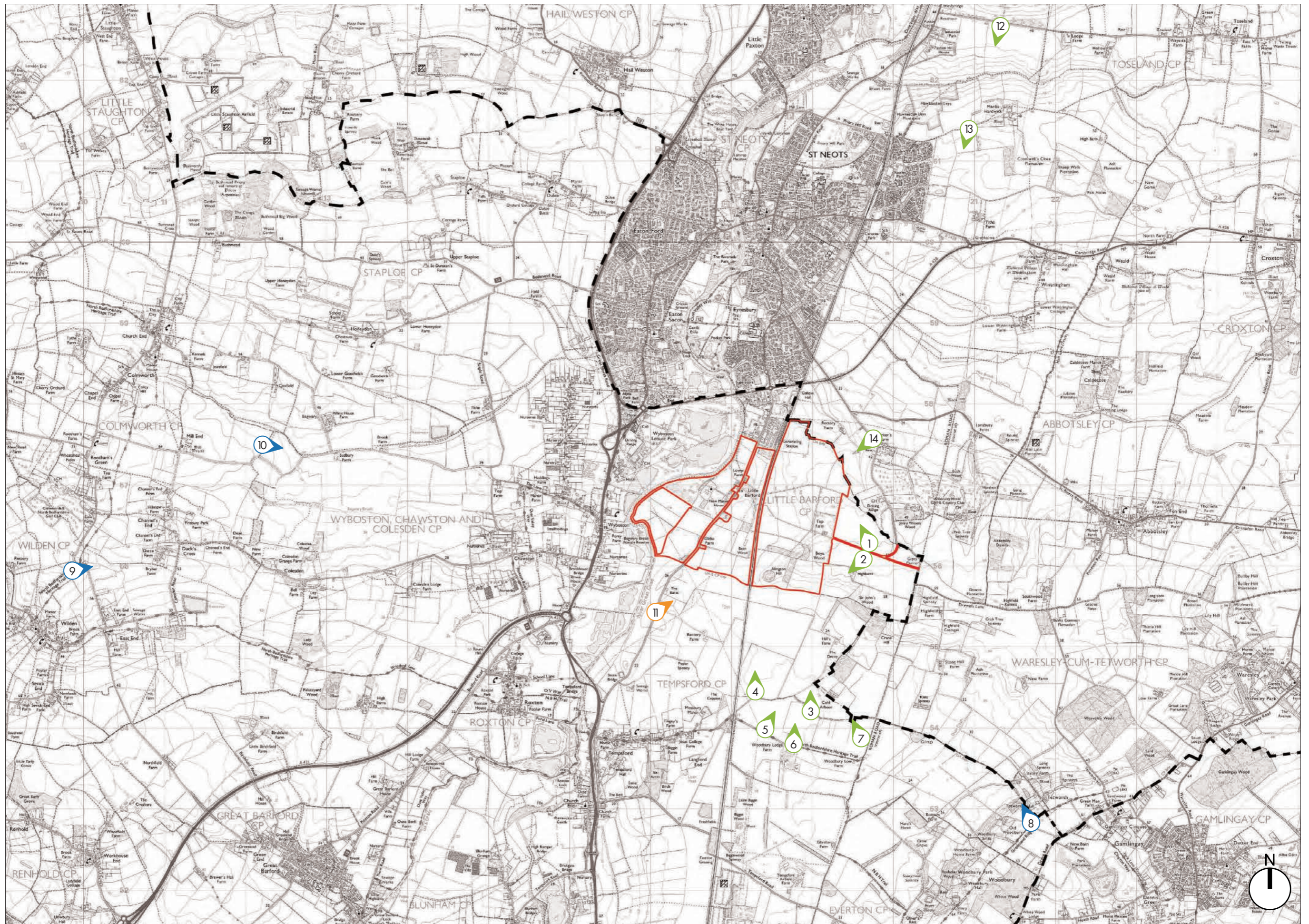


FIGURE 6.1 – LOCATION PLAN SHOWING VISUAL SUMMARY FROM THE STUDY AREA (FABRIK, 2021)



**REPRESENTATIVE VIEWPOINT SA1:** VIEW FROM THE TOP FARM ACCESS TRACK TO THE EAST OF THE SITE CONNECTING TO POTTON ROAD, LOOKING NORTH WEST TOWARDS THE SITE.



**REPRESENTATIVE VIEWPOINT SA2:** VIEW FROM THE TOP FARM ACCESS TRACK TO THE EAST OF THE SITE CONNECTING TO POTTON ROAD, LOOKING SOUTH WEST TOWARDS THE SITE.

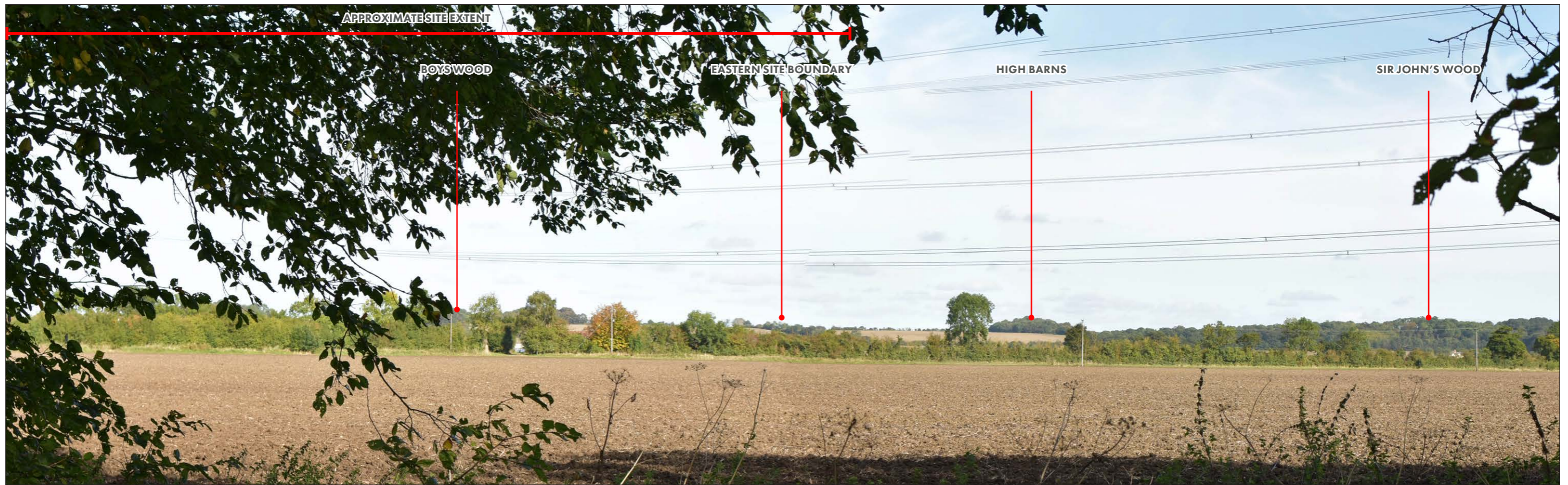




REPRESENTATIVE VIEWPOINT SA3: VIEW FROM PROW TEMPSFORD BW2, LOOKING NORTH TOWARDS THE SITE.



REPRESENTATIVE VIEWPOINT SA4: VIEW FROM PROW TEMPSFORD BW2, LOOKING NORTH TOWARDS THE SITE.



REPRESENTATIVE VIEWPOINT SA5: VIEW FROM PROW TEMPSFORD BW6, PART OF THE NORTH BEDFORDSHIRE HERITAGE TRAIL LONG DISTANCE ROUTE, LOOKING NORTH TOWARDS THE SITE.



REPRESENTATIVE VIEWPOINT SA6: VIEW FROM PROW TEMPSFORD BW6, PART OF THE NORTH BEDFORDSHIRE HERITAGE TRAIL LONG DISTANCE ROUTE, LOOKING NORTH TOWARDS THE SITE.



**REPRESENTATIVE VIEWPOINT SA7:** VIEW FROM PROW TEMPSFORD BW10, ON THE ALIGNMENT OF THE FORMER WHITE WAY ROMAN ROAD, LOOKING NORTH WEST TOWARDS THE SITE.



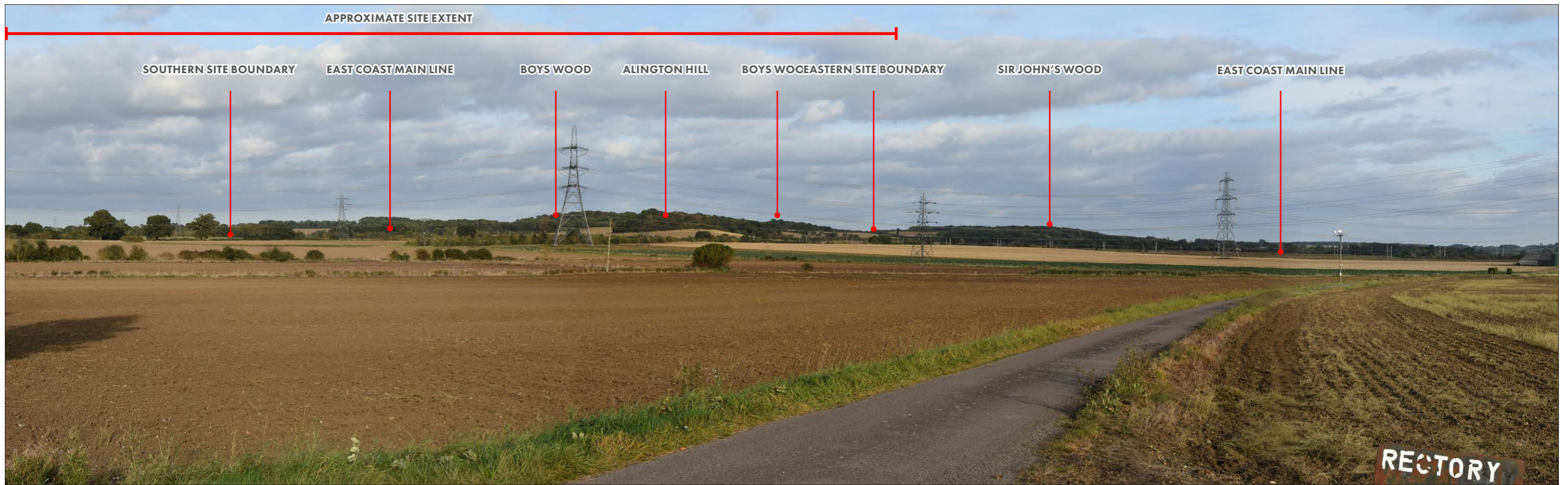
**REPRESENTATIVE VIEWPOINT SA8:** VIEW FROM PROW WARESLEY CUM TETWORTH BRIDLEWAY 283/7, PART OF THE GREENSAND RIDGE WALK LONG DISTANCE ROUTE, LOOKING NORTH WEST TOWARDS THE SITE.



**REPRESENTATIVE VIEWPOINT SA9:** VIEW FROM PROW WILDEN FP24, PART OF THE NORTH BEDFORDSHIRE HERITAGE TRAIL LONG DISTANCE ROUTE, LOOKING EAST TOWARDS THE SITE.



**REPRESENTATIVE VIEWPOINT SA10:** VIEW FROM MILL ROAD/PROW WYBOSTON, CHAWSTON AND COLESDEN FP35, LOOKING EAST TOWARDS THE SITE.



**REPRESENTATIVE VIEWPOINT SA11:** VIEW FROM BARFORD ROAD TO THE SOUTH OF THE SITE AT THE ENTRANCE TO RECTORY FARM, LOOKING NORTH TOWARDS THE SITE.



**REPRESENTATIVE VIEWPOINT SA12:** VIEW FROM THE UNNAMED ROAD CONNECTING TOSELAND HIGH STREET TO PAXTON HILL, LOOKING SOUTH TOWARDS THE SITE.



REPRESENTATIVE VIEWPOINT SA13: VIEW FROM PROW ST NEOTS FP 194/45, LOOKING SOUTH TOWARDS THE SITE.



REPRESENTATIVE VIEWPOINT SA14: VIEW FROM POTTON ROAD, LOOKING WEST TOWARDS THE SITE.

## 6.0

# VISUAL APPRAISAL

### 6.3 POTENTIAL VISUAL RECEPTORS WITHIN THE STUDY AREA

The following potential visual receptors were identified through a combination of desktop survey and field work as having full or partial views of some or all of the Site. For the purposes of this LVPS, the list below is intended to provide an indication of the visual receptors with views of any potential future development within the Study Area that would require assessment within a landscape and visual impact assessment. Potential visual receptors within the Site are listed in section 5.5.9. A scoping opinion from BBC should be sought as part of this process to confirm the full extent of visual receptors to be assessed at the appropriate time.

TABLE 6.1 – SUMMARY OF POTENTIAL VISUAL RECEPTORS WITHIN THE STUDY AREA	
VISUAL RECEPTOR TYPE	KEY VIEWPOINT REFERENCE
RESIDENTIAL - Listed buildings and properties along Barford Road - Isolated farmsteads and properties to the east of the Site	N/A N/A
PUBLIC BUILDINGS	N/A
TRANSIENT FROM ROADS AND ASSOCIATED PAVEMENTS (VEHICLES, BIKE AND FOOT) - Barford Road - Toseland High Street - Potton Road	11 12 14
TRANSIENT FROM RAILWAY - East Coast Mainline	N/A
TRANSIENT FROM PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY (FOOT, BIKE AND HORSEBACK, INCLUDING DEDICATED CYCLE ROUTES ETC) - PRoW Tempsford BW2, BW6, BW10 - PRoW Waresley Cum Tetworth 283/7 - PRoW Wilden FP24 - PRoW Wyboston, Chawston and Colesden FP35 - PRoW St Neots FP24	3, 4, 5, 6, 7 8 9 10 13
AREAS OF PUBLIC OPEN SPACE AND VISITOR ATTRACTIONS (PARKS, GARDENS, RECREATION GROUNDS, THE BEACH) - Wyboston Lakes - Begwary Brook Nature Reserve	N/A N/A

## 7.0

# LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL CONSTRAINTS, OPPORTUNITIES AND NEXT STEPS

## 7.1 INTRODUCTION

The findings of the desktop survey and field work presented in this LVPS summarise the current landscape policies and designations of relevance to the Site. The LVPS also identifies the key characteristics from the relevant landscape character assessments and establishes the range of potentially sensitive visual receptors to any proposed development within the Site.

Although some landscape features of the Site have informed the current masterplan drawings (60830-PP-500 A: Highways Access and Development Parcels New Settlement (BBLP 2040 Reg 18 options 2b, 2c, 2d) and 06830-PP-501: Highways Access and Development Parcels Parish Growth (BBLP: 2040 Reg 18 option 2d)) the information identified by this LVPS will be considered as part of evolution of the masterplan for development proposals for the Site. The LVPS concludes by identifying the landscape related tasks to progress the promotion of the Site towards the regulation 19 stage of preparation of the BBLP 2040.

## 7.2 LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL CONSTRAINTS

The following landscape and visual constraints have been identified:

- The lower lying western parts of the Site include areas of flood zone 2 and 3 associated with the River Great Ouse, which are undevelopable.
- The settings of the listed buildings require further consideration as part of any development proposals, in particular the setting of the Grade II\* Listed St Deny's Church, which has an association with the landscape immediately surrounding it. This land is also designated as a County Wildlife Site.
- The existing overhead electricity lines and high pressure gas main are major constraints for development within the western half of the Site, although the latter also provides some opportunities for the separation of specific character areas through, for example the creation of multifunctional green infrastructure in the affected areas.
- PRoW Little Barford FP1 is located within the north west of the Site and views from this route need to be considered.
- The East Coast Mainline is a source of noise and different options for mitigation measures should be explored.
- The existing trees, hedgerows and woodlands within the Site should be retained and enhanced as far as possible.
- The lower lying western half of the Site is more visually enclosed than the eastern half, which rises to the ridgeline along the eastern boundary. This presents a constraint and opportunity in the creation of a distinctive place. The southernmost fields in the eastern half of the Site form part of the skyline in views from the PRoW network to the south of the Site. The implications of the decision on the A428 road improvement DCO should be considered.
- Little Barford Power Station is a significant local landmark to the north of the Site and views of the power station and its dominance in the landscape should be considered in the design process.

## 7.3 FUTURE LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL CONSTRAINTS

The potential future construction of the A428 road improvement scheme and EWR would significantly alter the character of the landscape within the Study Area.

Some of the impacts of the road proposal are mitigated, as identified with the DCO documents, however, development proposals for the Site would need to test whether the mitigation is adequate if the neighbouring uses (those on the Site) changed.

Station and route options in respect of EWR for the section between Great Barford and Eltisle East are currently too numerous and limited in detail to consider in this LVPS.

Options 6 and 8 have the least impact on the development potential of the Site. However, all options require further investigation once the appropriate detail is available, to ascertain the impact from EWR on the development of the Site.

## 7.4 LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL OPPORTUNITIES

The baseline assessment has informed the identification of the following landscape and visual opportunities for the Site.

### Integrating existing woodland and the River Great Ouse area

The river runs along the western boundary of the Site. Areas of the Site adjacent to the River Great Ouse sit within an identified Green Infrastructure Opportunity Zone as defined by policy AD24 of the BBLP 2040. Development proposals for the Site could provide opportunities to deliver some of the objectives within the Lower Great Ouse River Valley.

The character and heritage of this part of the Site can be celebrated through the protection and interpretation of the listed buildings and areas of archaeological interest. The red line boundary for the new settlement proposals has been drawn to facilitate the creation of a linear river walk in the south west, which can continue through the Site to meet the existing PRoW and provide onward connection to the existing public open spaces and recreation areas along the river corridor to the north.

Existing blocks of woodland, trees and hedgerows should be retained as far as possible throughout the Site. The existing woodland blocks should form the backbone to the creation of a green infrastructure network with appropriate management plans to enhance their ecological value implemented. New woodland planting should strengthen landscape pattern and enhance woodland connectivity.

### Using green infrastructure to create a framework for development

The existing landscape pattern and features should be used to create a framework for development that provides good access to public open space, the existing PRoW network and the recreational opportunities of the River Great Ouse corridor, with opportunities explored to create view corridors to landmarks within the surrounding Study Area.

## The scale and character of development and its relationship to the landscape of the Site and Study Area

The Site's location to the south of St Neots, the level of housing growth and BBC's growth and spatial strategy leads to the need for bespoke design guidelines for development proposal for the new settlement options. Elements of the Site's existing landscape features should be considered in the preparation of the design guidelines.

## 7.5 NEXT STEPS

This LVPS marks a point in time. It demonstrates that the current masterplan drawings have been informed by landscape features of the Site. It provides a baseline of landscape elements within the Site and wider Study Area.

To progress the promotion of the Site towards the regulation 19 stage of preparation of the BBLP 2040, engagement is required with officers and members of BBC to establish, inter alia, a set of design guidelines for the new settlement, informed by the technical reports prepared to date and a vision for the area.

The design guidelines will need to address the significant change, in terms of the two NSIPs and the related housing and economic growth in and around Bedford Borough, and provide a framework that seeks to ensure the new settlement:

- a will function well and add to the overall quality of the area,
- b is visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
- c is sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change;
- d establishes a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create an attractive, welcoming and distinctive place to live, work and visit;
- e optimises the potential of the Site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and
- f creates a place that is safe, inclusive and accessible and which promotes health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for users and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience. (Para 130, NPPF).



## 8.0

# CONCLUSION

This document has been produced in response to the request from BBC officers for a Landscape and Visual Position Statement (LVPS) for the Site.

Although some landscape features of the Site have informed the current masterplan drawings (60830-PP-500 A: Highways Access and Development Parcels New Settlement (BBLP 2040 Reg 18 options 2b, 2c, 2d) and 06830-PP-501: Highways Access and Development Parcels Parish Growth (BBLP: 2040 Reg 18 option 2d)), the information identified by this LVPS will be considered as part of evolution of the masterplan for development proposals for the Site.

It is considered that, in landscape and visual terms, this Site has the potential to deliver a new settlement in line with the growth strategy options of the BBLP 2040. As with any greenfield site, there will be landscape and visual harm associated with such development. However, this LVPS identifies those elements of the landscape that could be utilised to create a distinctive new settlement whilst acknowledging the significant future change to the Site's landscape context that will arise from two NSIPs and BBC own housing and economic growth commitments.

The LVPS is proportionate to the stage of promotion of the Site through the BBLP 2040. To progress the promotion of the Site towards the regulation 19 stage of local plan preparation, the focus of the next stage of work will be on engagement with officers and members of BBC.

From this LVPS a scope for a future landscape and visual impact assessment can be developed.

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