

North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031

Examination in Public

STATEMENT OF COMMON GROUND

As agreed between North Hertfordshire District Council
And New Road Property Developments Ltd and Bovis
Homes Ltd

Concerning Strategic Allocation WY1 – Land south of Little
Wymondley and Policy CGB5 – Urban Open Land

November 2017

1. This is an agreed statement of common ground in relation to the identification of WY1 – Land south of Little Wymondley as a proposed allocation within the North Hertfordshire Local Plan at Policy SP8: Housing, and Policy CGB5 – Urban Open Land with regards to its relationship with proposed Allocation WY1. The purpose of this statement is to provide the Inspector with a summary of an area of agreement for Matters 15 - Countryside and Green Belt: the policy approach to the Green Belt, Rural Areas beyond the Green belt and Urban Open Land scheduled to be examined on 29th November 2017.
2. This statement of Common Ground (SOCG) has been prepared by North Hertfordshire District Council and is submitted jointly by DLP on behalf of New Road Property Developments Ltd and Bovis Homes Ltd. New Road Property Developments Ltd has an Option agreement for the site and Bovis Homes Ltd are their contracted developer. This SOCG is the result of collaboration between Bovis Homes Ltd acting on behalf of New Road Property Developments Ltd and the Council. Both are committed to the implementation of the Land south of Little Wymondley proposed allocation. This statement is made without prejudice to the submission and determination of any planning application made for the allocation.
3. This SOCG is provided to provide supplementary information to the statement submitted by Bovis Homes Ltd and New Road Property Developments Ltd to the Inspector on Matter 15 which included an objection to Policy CGB5.

Allocation WY1: Land South of Little Wymondley

4. All parties agree that the land identified within the proposed allocation at WY1 on the proposals map is 'suitable, available and achievable' for development, meeting the criterion of effectiveness set out in paragraph 182 of the National Planning Policy Framework. The site is able to deliver housing development in accordance with the aims of the Local Plan.
5. The Land south of Little Wymondley proposed allocation, has been the subject of a planning assessment and Sustainability Appraisal process. This is set out in the Local Plan evidence base, and is summarised in the Housing and Green Belt Background Paper (HOU1) as updated by the Partial Update on Housing Monitoring and 5 Year Supply (ED3).
6. All parties consider that the allocation of WY1 Land south of Little Wymondley for housing is an appropriate land use. All parties are committed to working together to bring forward an appropriate scheme.
7. The extent of the proposed allocation as shown in the submitted Local Plan is detailed at Appendix 1: Submitted Local Plan Proposed Allocation WY1: Land South of Little Wymondley.

8. Bovis Home Ltd have carried out a suite of baseline technical and environmental assessments to assess the site's constraints and opportunities for development, which have informed the development of a landscape-led masterplan for the site. The assessments are summarised in the 'Vision for Development' attached at Appendix 3. The Council invited formal pre-application discussions having regard to the evolution of the scheme.
9. The landscape assessment identified a shallow ridgeline to the south of the Proposed WY1 allocation boundary and the area of land north of this ridgeline is deemed developable in landscape sensitivity terms. It is agreed that this ridgeline would therefore provide a more suitable landscape boundary for built development. All parties are therefore in agreement that the boundaries of the WY1 allocation can be expanded to the south. The landscape assessment is provided at Appendix 4: 'Technical Briefing Note – Landscape'. A plan indicating the location of the ridgeline in relation to the proposed new boundary line of site WY1 is provided at Appendix 5: Drawing No. edp3781_7.
10. It is agreed that the boundaries between the Proposed Allocation WY1 and the adjacent Urban Open Land designation, as defined by Policy CGB5, will be redefined on the Proposals Map. The proposed allocation at WY1 will be moved to the south, thus reducing the area of Urban Open Land. The new proposed boundaries of the allocation are shown at Appendix 2: Proposed Change to the extent of the Allocation WY1: Land South of Little Wymondley.

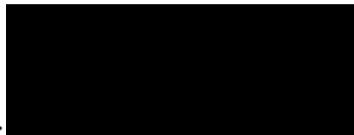
Conclusion

11. The proposed Local Plan allocation at WY1 Land south of Little Wymondley constitutes an appropriate and deliverable extension to Wymondley which supports the vision and objectives of the plan. The move of the allocation further to the south would provide a more suitable landscape boundary for built development. The proposed allocation would extend Little Wymondley to the south and provide a contribution towards the housing needs of North Hertfordshire.

Declaration

The content of this document is agreed for the purposes of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan Examination.

Signed on behalf of Bovis Homes Ltd and New Road Property Developments Ltd:

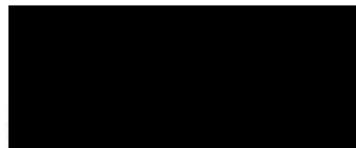


.....
Position: STRATEGIC PLANNING MANAGER

Date: 24/11/17

And

Signed on behalf of North Hertfordshire District Council

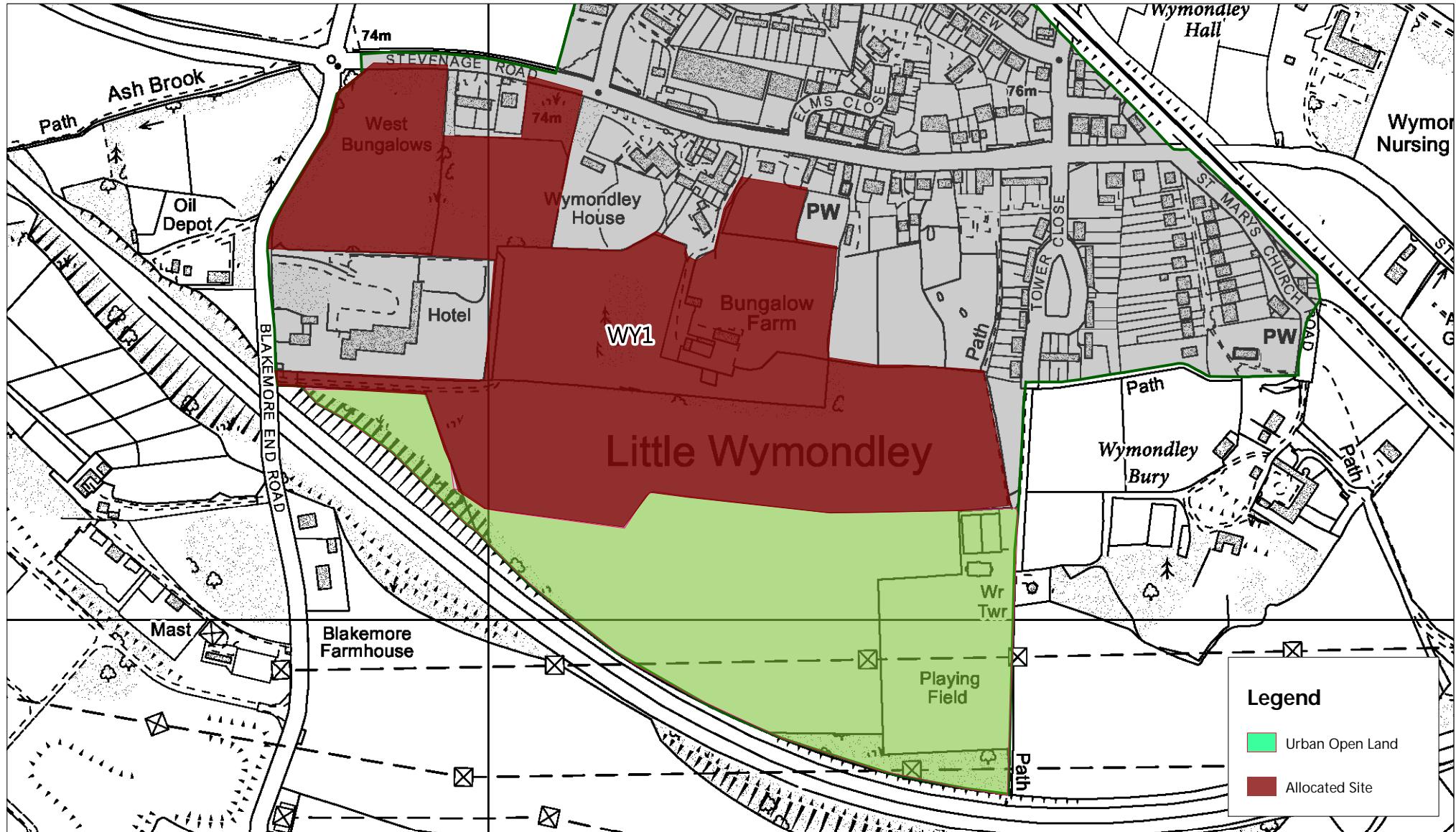


.....
Position: Executive Member for Planning and Enterprise

Date: 28th November 2017

Appendix 1

Site Boundary in Submission Local Plan



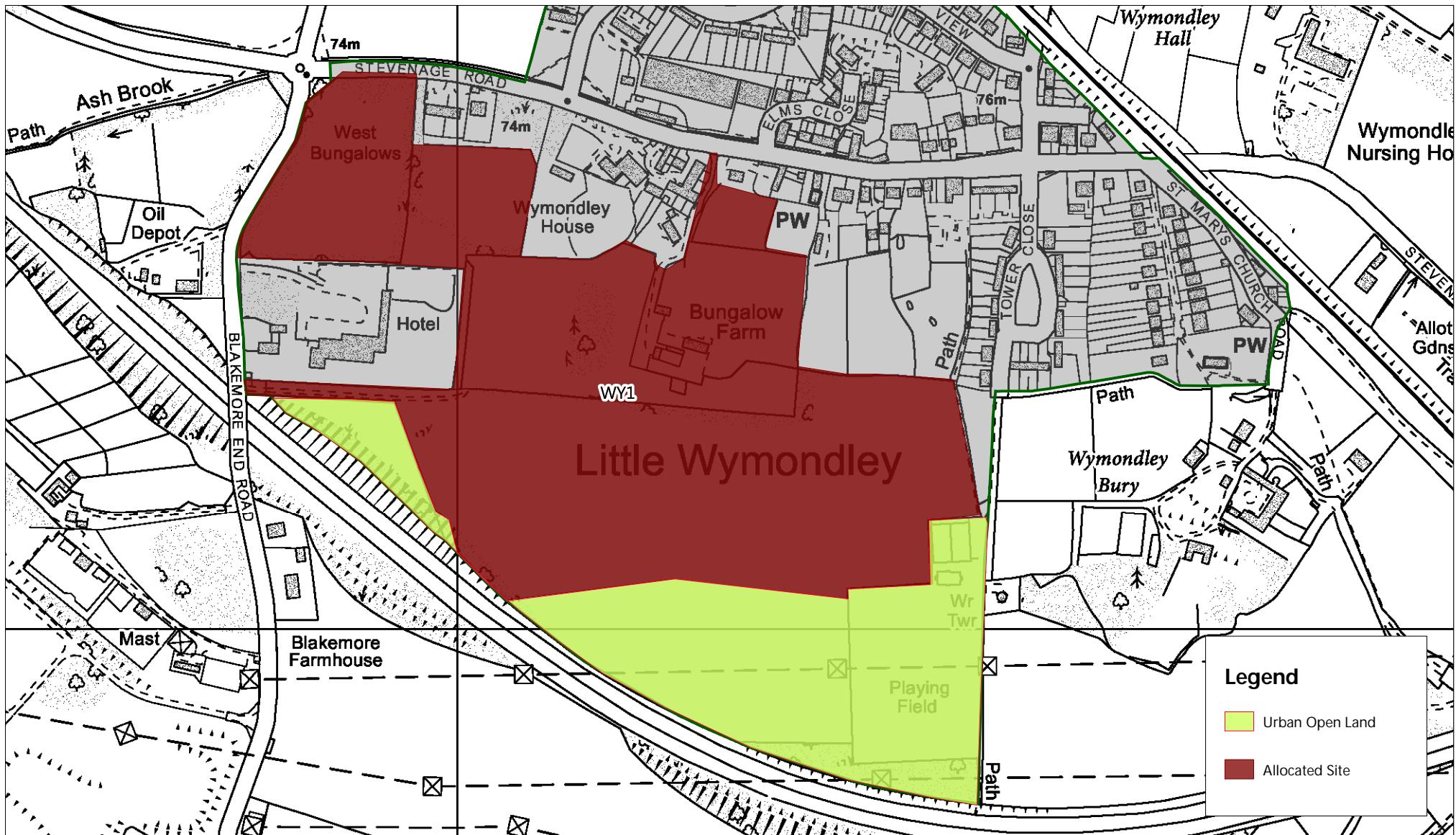
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Appendix 2

Updated Site Boundary



Scale: 1:5000
Date: 27/11/17

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Appendix 3



LAND SOUTH OF LITTLE WYMONDLEY

VISION FOR DEVELOPMENT - NOVEMBER 2017

Consultant Team



Masterplanning, Landscape, Ecology, Archaeology and Heritage, and Arboriculture



Planning



Flood, Drainage and Transport

FOR EDP USE

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1. Introduction

Bovis Homes Limited has commissioned this vision document to support the delivery of its land south of Little Wymondley, for a landscape-led residential development.

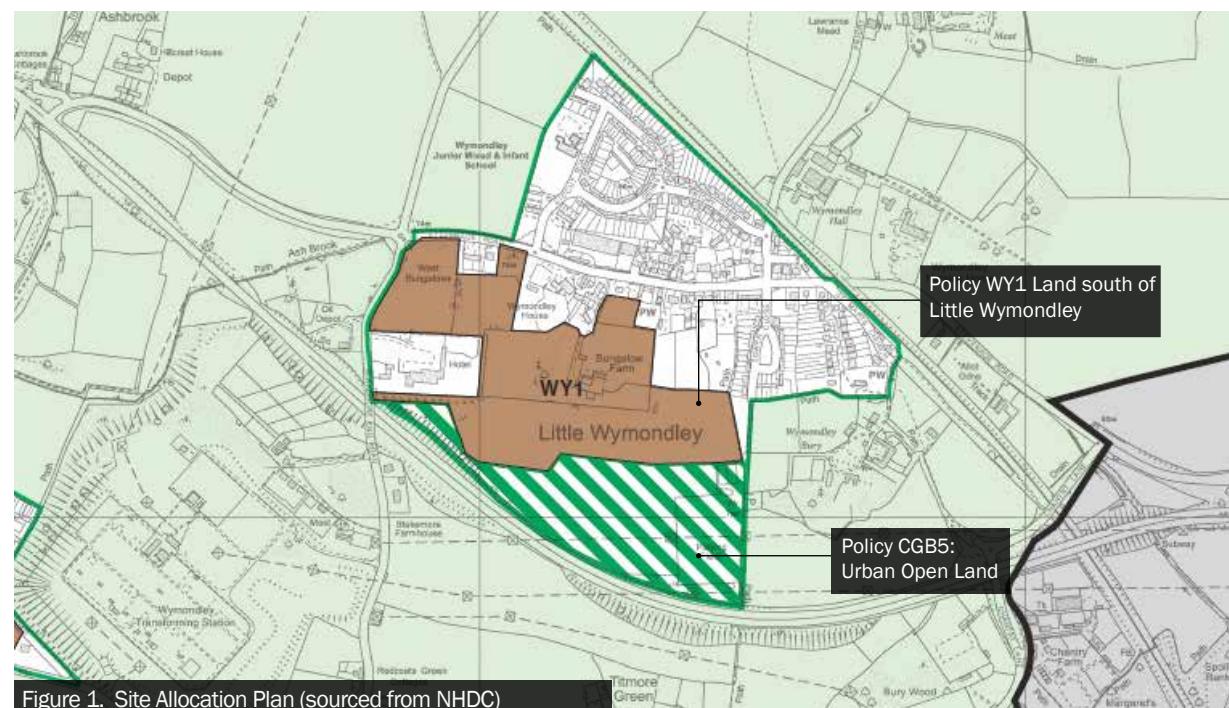
The site is allocated for development under Policy WY1 and Policy CGB5 of the North Hertfordshire District Council Local Plan 2011-2031, as submitted for Inspection. It is under the control of Bovis Homes Ltd, an experienced national housebuilder who are able to deliver the site as required to meet local housing need. It is available, suitable and achievable.

This document sets out the site-specific approach to creating a sustainable and deliverable landscape-led residential development, taking account of site features and context. It proposes a well-connected extension to the local community that is visually and physically contained within the immediate landscape south of the village, creating a new defensible Green Belt boundary.

As such it seeks to demonstrate that the criteria attached to the emerging development plan policy can be realised, especially in relation to ecology, landscape, heritage and the sensitive integration of the development into the local context. Specifically, provision is made for education through the inclusion of a site for a primary school, with enhanced landscaping and has full regard for the requirements of access and drainage infrastructure.

Further environmental and design analysis suggests the site is capable of delivering:

- Up to 350 new homes, comprising of a range of house types, sizes and tenures to cater for people with different incomes and at different stages of their lives;
- Potential to deliver a new primary school with the opportunity to include community facilities;
- A comprehensive landscape framework that could include: an expansion to the existing sports pitches; a network of open spaces retaining existing landscape features; walking trails; and new play area opportunities;
- A primary access point onto Stevenage Road with associated emergency access onto Blakemore End Road;
- Improved pedestrian and cycle connections to the village core linking to Stevenage Road and the existing Public Rights of Way (PROW) along Tower Close; and
- A suite of on-site proposals that mitigate potential heritage, drainage, transport and environmental concerns.



1.1 The Site

The site extends to approximately 20.24 hectares (ha) and currently consists of a series of grazing paddocks enclosed by mature vegetation to the north and a large single agricultural field to the south. As shown opposite, the northern boundary of the site abuts the settlement edge of Little Wymondley, which is well-screened by mature vegetation. An existing dwelling, Bungalow Farm, is located within the site near the northern boundary accessed from Stevenage Road. An existing footpath runs along the eastern site boundary adjacent to a number of village recreational facilities including Wymondley Tennis Club, sports pitches and play areas including a multi use games area. To the south, the site is bounded by the A602. A series of overhead power lines partially cross the site. To the west is Needham House Hotel and an existing access point onto Blakemore End Road. The site directly corresponds to Allocation WY1 and is fully under the control of Bovis Homes Ltd.



2. Constraints and Opportunities

The following section outlines the constraints and opportunities that have been identified from assessments undertaken by the EDP environmental team and WSP technical team.

2.1 Ecology and Arboriculture

The site is not covered by any statutory designations of international or national importance. Furthermore, there are no international statutory designations within 10km of the site, and no national statutory designations within 2km of the site. There are thirteen Local Wildlife Sites within 2km of the site (as shown in Figure 3), the nearest of which lies approximately 300m south-west of the site at the Wymondley electricity transforming station, separated by the A602 bypass.

Within 2km of the site, there are three Ancient Woodland Inventory Sites. Owing to their spatial separation from the site, the lack of any direct habitat linkage and subject to the provision of a sufficient proportion of accessible green open space within the scheme, it is considered unlikely for any direct or indirect effects to occur to any of the non-statutory designations within the site's zone of influence.

The majority of land within the site is managed as intensive agricultural land under arable cultivation, considered to be of low intrinsic ecological value. The northern portion of the site supports semi-improved grassland fields enclosed by mature tree lines, hedgerows and bands of broad-leaved semi-natural woodland and plantation woodland. Thus, considering the potential constraints the trees pose by

virtue of their presence, a tree survey will be undertaken in accordance with BS 5837:2012 Trees in relation to Design, Demolition and Construction. This baseline assessment will identify any arboricultural constraints on or adjacent to the site that should be considered in the context of the development aspirations for the site.

The network of woody habitats is considered of intrinsic ecological value in the local context, and has been retained as far as possible within the proposed concept masterplan for the site, thereby ensuring that the site remains permeable to wildlife. It is considered that, via appropriate habitat creation, restoration and enhancement measures, such as new tree, hedgerow and scrub planting, creation of informal green spaces with species-rich wildflower grassland and design of SuDS features to benefit biodiversity, the loss of low value arable habitats can be sufficiently compensated for.

Overall, studies to date have confirmed that there are no 'in principle' ecological constraints to the proposed development, and the scheme is capable of compliance with relevant planning policy for the conservation of the natural environment at all levels.

2.2 Heritage and Archaeology

The site does not contain any designated heritage assets. There are a number of listed buildings, all of which are located within Little Wymondley (see Figure 3), which has no conservation area. Of these, those to the south of Stevenage Road and west of St Marys Church Road are

closest to the site. Wymondley Bury is listed at Grade I, Wymondley House and the Church of St Mary the Virgin, Grade II* and The Croft, Boro Cottages, Blacksmith Cottage, The Bucks Head Public House and the dovecote at Wymondley Bury are all listed at Grade II. At this stage, the potential for any effect on these assets (through changes within their setting) is not considered to be sufficient to preclude development or to materially affect the site's capacity.

The northern part of the site is located within an 'archaeological alert area'. Although this is not a designation, it will require specific assessment during any planning application for the site. That said, very little is known regarding the potential for buried archaeological deposits within the site itself, with the Historic Environment Record returning only two records. These relate to the 20th century bungalow cottage and traces of former ridge and furrow cultivation, both of which are of negligible heritage potential.

More widely, the site is located within a landscape of high archaeological potential with evidence for prehistoric ritual landscape and Romano-British settlement activity. Evidence for later activity on the site, if present, is likely to be agricultural in nature.

Overall there are no 'in-principle' heritage constraints anticipated in delivery of the site.

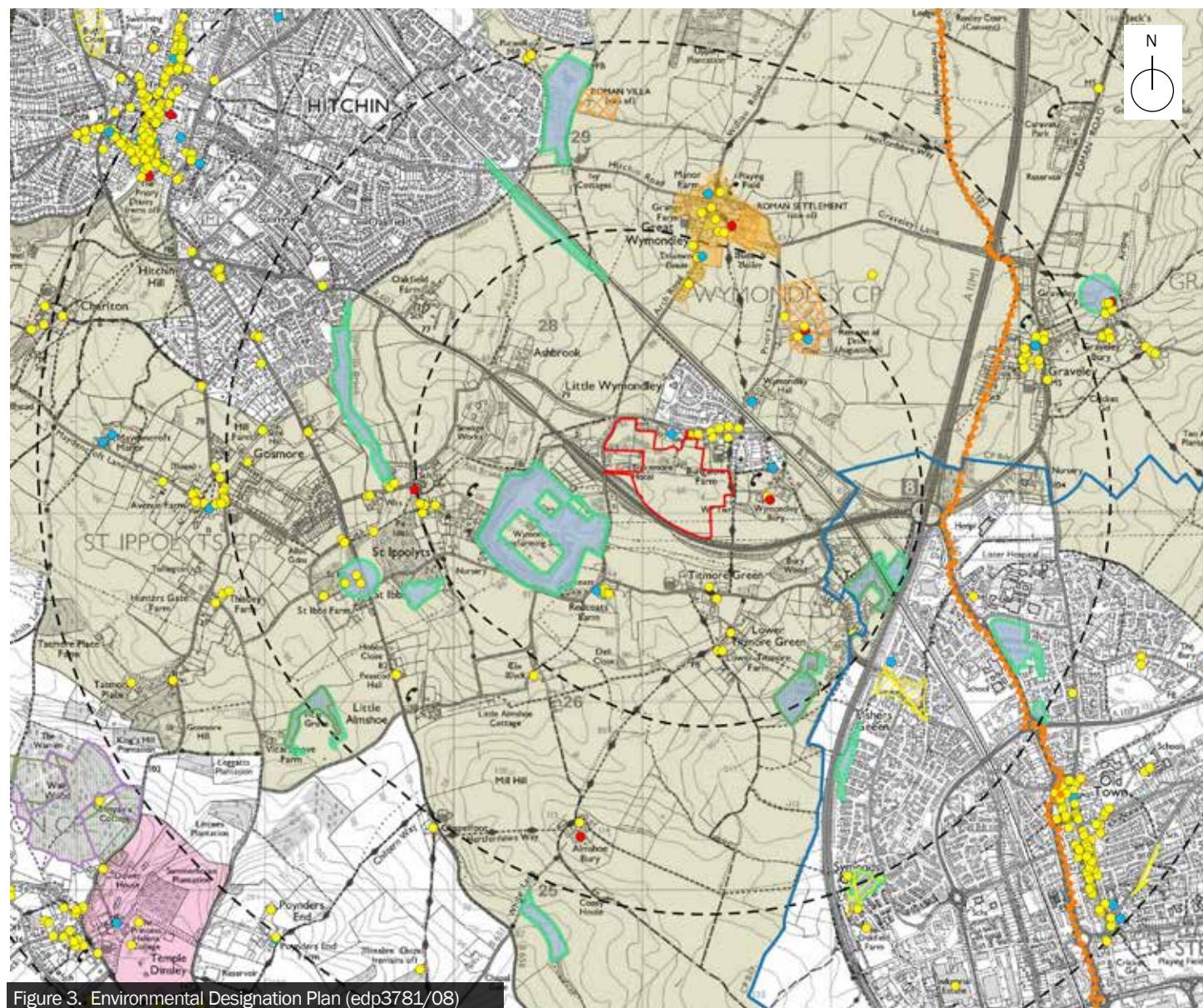


Figure 3. Environmental Designation Plan (edp3781/08)

- Site Boundary
- Range Rings (at 1km intervals)
- Local Authority Boundaries
- Landscape**
- Green Belt
- Heritage**
- Registered Parks and Gardens
- Scheduled Monuments
- Great Wymondley Conservation Area
- Grade I Listed Building
- Grade II* Listed Building
- Grade II Listed Building
- Ecology**
- Site of Special Scientific Interest
- Local Nature Reserves
- Local Wildlife Sites
- Ancient Woodland
- Public Rights of Way, Access Land and National Routes**
- ***** National Cycle Routes
- Open Access Land

2.3 Landscape

The site does not contain or fall within any designated landscape and there are no such landscapes within the 4km study area. The site does, however, currently lie within the Green Belt, which is protected by Section 9 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The proposed submission NHDC Local Plan (2011–2031) proposes to remove the site from the Green Belt and include it within the Little Wymondley settlement boundary (SP2).

In terms of the Green Belt that (currently) covers the site, the boundary has not been reviewed since the construction of the Little Wymondley bypass (A602). The ‘new’ proposed defensible boundary provides a logical, defensible edge for the Green Belt to the south of Little Wymondley, which will endure beyond the life of the forthcoming Local Plan. Specifically, development of the site would not result in coalescence or reduce the actual or perceived gap between the settlements of Stevenage and Hitchin.

The site is inherently visually and physically well contained in most areas as indicated on the plan opposite. This is due to a combination of varying topography, mature vegetation, with built form bounding the site to the north and the A602 bypass bounding it to the south. Consequently, development would not therefore encroach into open countryside or affect nearby settlements which lie to the south of the bypass.

Bovis agrees with the council’s approach of removing all of the land between the existing village edge and the

Wymondley Bypass (A602) as indicated on the Proposals Map as the bypass demonstrably forms a robust, defensible and long term future boundary which is logical and a pragmatic approach to the treatment of this area of land.

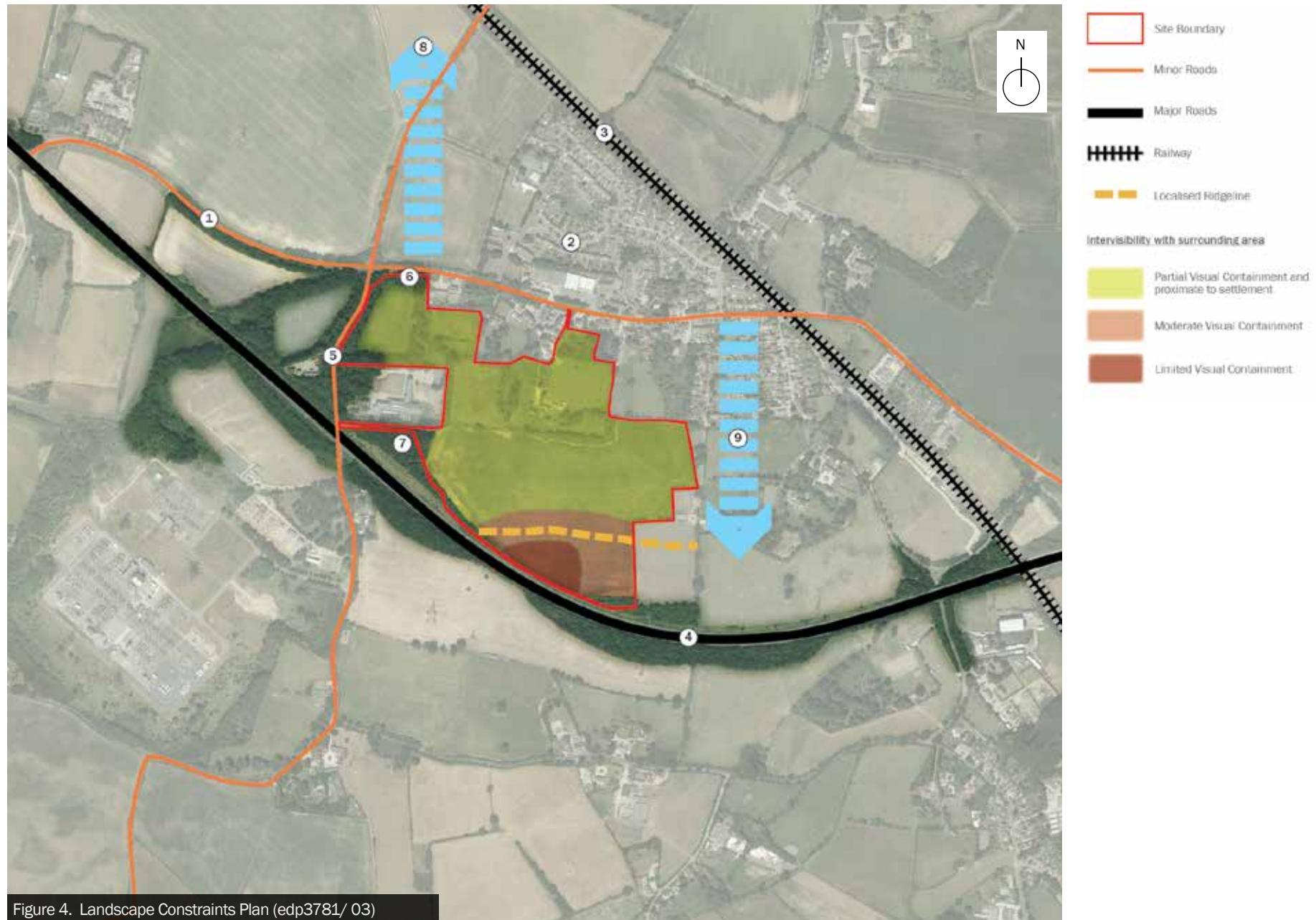
Through the proposed submission Local Plan (2011–2031), the site is covered by two allocation types: partly as a strategic housing site (WY1) and partly as Urban Open Land (CGB5). It is envisaged that these adjacent allocations within the proposed settlement boundary would combine to provide a gradual transition from urban to countryside.

The most sensitive area of the site in landscape terms is limited to the far south of the site, and the concept masterplan takes this into account accordingly, limiting to only low-impact sensitive development in the area that is well-screened by new landscape planting. The land to the south comprises one large field that rises to a shallow ridge at 95metres (aOD) that then drops away to the A602 (in cutting). This area of the site is generally physically contained to the west, south west and south east by semi-mature woodland, whilst there is a gap on the southern boundary where the A602 is in cutting. The northern portion of the site comprises a number of semi-enclosed fields that are surrounded by mature trees and understorey vegetation, which visually contains this part of the site from the surrounding area.

Development on the site would be visible from a small number of locations from the surrounding landscape. The masterplanning exercise will take account of these areas in terms of limiting views, whilst also being mindful of integrating the development into its landscape and visual context.

As shown in Figure 4, key considerations in relation to landscape and visual matters are:

1. Stevenage Road runs along the bottom of a localised valley.
2. Development north of Stevenage Road screens views from further north.
3. Railway line contains the settlement of Little Wymondley to the east and north.
4. A602 bounds the site to the south and contains Little Wymondley from open countryside.
5. Blackmore End Road contains Little Wymondley to the west.
6. Mature vegetation bounding and within the site limits inter-visibility with adjacent visual receptors.
7. Dense mature vegetation screens the site from the surrounding area.
8. Land rises to the north.
9. Land rises up to localised ridge before gently falling to the A602.



2.4 Transport and Access

The scheme will be served by a primary access point onto Stevenage Road on the northern boundary of the development site and a supporting emergency access point onto Blakemore End (as shown in Figure 6). The site frontage along Stevenage Road is subject to a 30mph speed limit. Stevenage Road is the main vehicular route through the village supporting several bus stops and includes a number of traffic calming elements.

A technical assessment has been undertaken which demonstrates that on the grounds of capacity and safety, the proposed single access can serve the proposed development of up to 350 homes.

The proposed primary access junction will include provision of pedestrian crossing points to access the northern footway that runs along Stevenage Road. Additional pedestrian and cycle connections to the village will be provided from the existing access to Bungalow Farm and onto Tower Close to the east of the site.

Public rights of way through the site will be retained within the development and the possibility of improvements and links to the site will be explored.

In terms of sustainability, the site benefits from good accessibility to the local facilities of Little Wymondley and the wider facilities of the nearby towns of Hitchin and Stevenage, both located within cycling distance of the proposed development.

The site also benefits from proximity to existing bus services that operate within Little Wymondley, providing frequent links to Hitchin, Stevenage and Luton and connections to Stevenage and Hitchin Railway Stations.

As such, the sites location is considered to accord to the relevant Local and Central Government Policy Guidelines in terms of being in a suitable location and is clearly accessible by modes other than the private car.



Figure 5. A Selection of images from the site and Little Wymondley

2.5 Site Level Constraints and Opportunities

The main opportunities and constraints to development as identified from initial environmental studies are illustrated on Figure 6. The key elements are summarised below.

Access and Connectivity

- Singular vehicular access to be taken from Stevenage Road supported by an associated emergency access from Blakemore End Road;
- Pedestrian and cycle links to connect to Stevenage Road to the north and Tower Close to the east; and
- Existing PRoW to the east of the site will be retained with the opportunity for a series of new walking and cycling routes throughout the site.

Landscape and Visibility

- The site is visually contained by areas of mature trees to the east, west and north of the site. Where the site is partially visible, a combination of landscape screening and sensitive built form treatment will mitigate any harmful impact; and
- The southern extent of development has been established through the landscape and visual assessment (see Section 2.3).

Green Infrastructure

- Wherever possible all existing woodland, hedgerows and trees will be retained and incorporated into open space areas;
- Opportunity to establish a number of green corridors connecting open spaces across and beyond the site,

providing a series of multifunctional spaces with ecological, screening, amenity and drainage purposes; and

- New open space area located to the south of the site to enhance existing village recreational facilities and create a defensible edge to development.

Local Character and Context

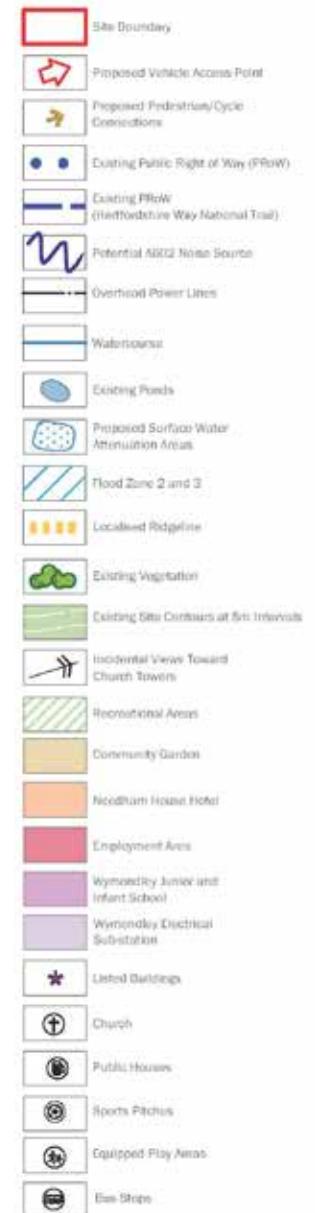
- Ensure an appropriate scale and massing of southern development area to reflect an informal village edge character;
- Utilise the best characteristics of the district to create a development of recognisable local character that integrates with its context; and
- Opportunity for incidental views towards local church towers to the north and north east.

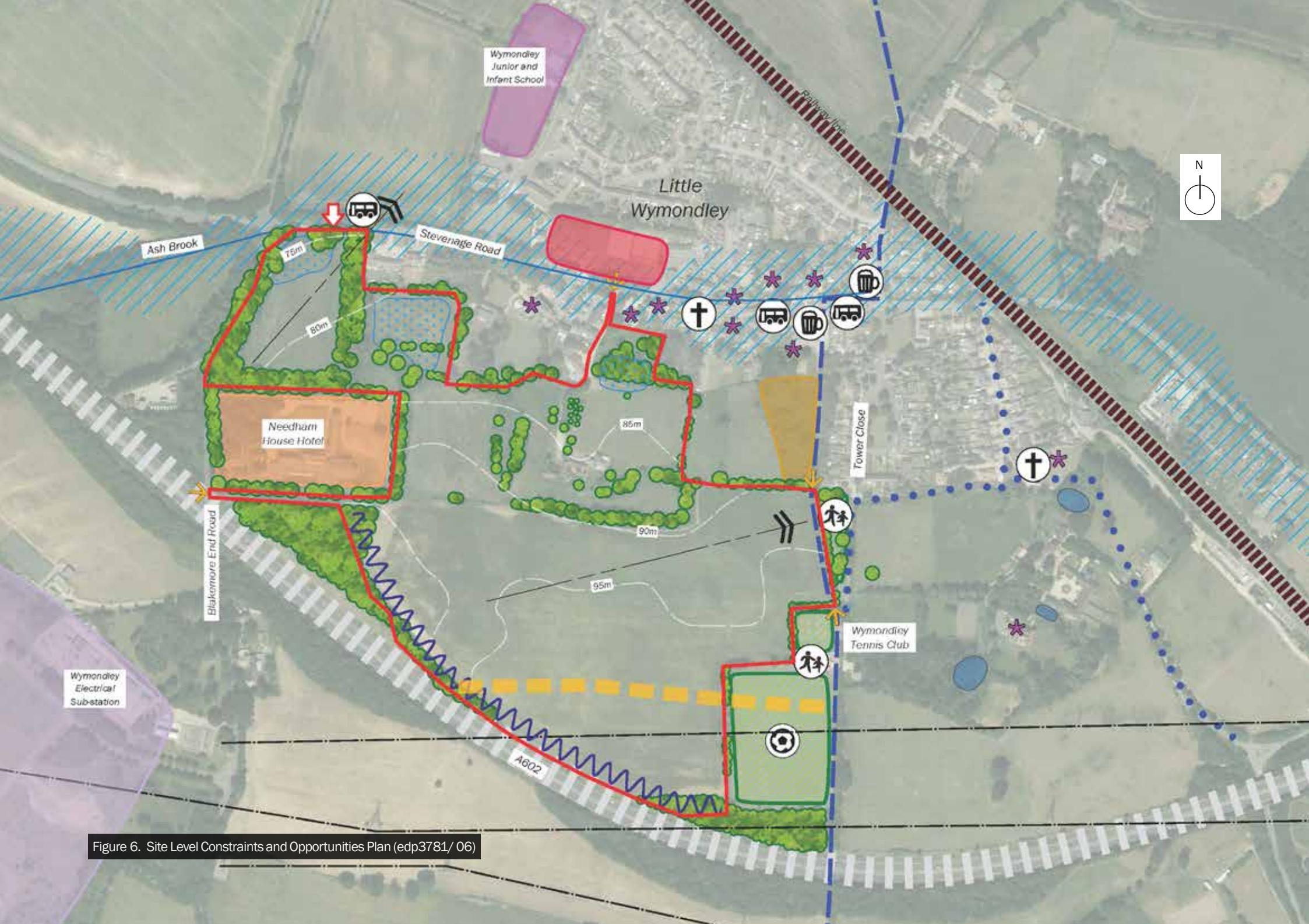
Utilities and Services:

- Development to have sufficient off sets and built form treatments to mitigate noise from A602; and
- Development to be set back from overhead pylons to the south.

Drainage

- The site is located wholly within flood zone 1. However it is immediately adjacent to the flood zones 2 and 3 associated with the Ash Brook to the north of Stevenage Road; and
- A comprehensive drainage strategy will ensure that development would attenuate surface water on site and not increase run-off above existing field rates.





3. The Concept Masterplan

3.1 The Concept Masterplan

After considering the primary constraints and opportunities for the site, a concept masterplan (see Figure 7) was prepared demonstrating the vision for development of the site. The concept masterplan illustrates a residential developable area of 9.5 hectares which could deliver approximately 350 units @ (average) 37 dwellings per hectare.

Key features of the concept masterplan are as follows:

1. Primary vehicular access from Stevenage Road;
2. Emergency and pedestrian/cycle access from Blakemore End Road;
3. Pedestrian/cycle access connecting into village centre;
4. Retention of existing vegetation (wherever possible) to create a sense of place and link open space areas with opportunity for area of play;
5. Addition of tree planting to the south and along ridge line to screen development from incidental views from the south;
6. Potential location of a new 2FE primary school and integrated community facility;
- 6a. Location of school play space and sports pitch;
7. Surface water swales to be located within areas of open spaces, integrated with biodiversity enhancements (subject to inputs from Drainage Engineer);
8. Opportunity for allotments;

9. Housing to be at a lower density and sensitively designed to create an informal edge to development with opportunities for open space areas to extend north and fragmenting built form;
10. Proposed locations of surface water attenuation areas, in accordance with the drainage strategy;
11. Informal views towards north and north-east;
12. Retained existing orchard on site; and
13. Indicative development built form extent.

Policy CGB5: Urban Open Land

The proposed boundary of the policy designation should be revised to align with the extent of the developable area as shown in the masterplan, which accords with a comprehensive landscape visual impact appraisal and secures the intended ambition of the policy to retain openness to the countryside.

The following states how the concept masterplan complies with the proposed policy criteria:

A:

- i. Sport pitches, allotments and recreational open space will be located in this area.
- ii. The proposed school building to be limited in height and be reflective of a rural edge location (i.e. possibility of a vernacular agricultural approach); and
- iii. Inclusion of landscape planting that is characteristic of surrounding area to screen development;

B: Development edge to be at a lower density and fragmented in form to make a soft transition along the settlement edge.

C: Building orientation and landscaping will create a gentle transition from village edge to rural area beyond.



Figure 7. Concept Masterplan (edp3781/ 04g)



4. Conclusion

4.1 Available, Suitable and Achievable

Overall, this vision for development illustrates how the site represents a logical development opportunity, makes efficient use of the land and is capable of being delivered in a timely manner. It can be considered to represent a sustainable form of development, benefiting from the landscape-led design evolution process brought forward by Bovis Homes Ltd.

Bovis Homes Ltd intends that the content of this document should provide a useful overview of the proposed development strategy for its land at Little Wymondley as allocated in the emerging Local Plan. Bovis Homes Ltd would welcome the opportunity to work with North Hertfordshire District Council to ensure timely and effective delivery to make a material contribution to the housing needs of the District.





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Appendix 4

Land south of Little Wymondley

Technical Briefing Note – Landscape

EDP3781_02_220917

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The following briefing note provides a summary of the key constraints and opportunities identified by a landscape and visual appraisal undertaken by the Environmental Dimension Partnership Ltd (EDP), to inform the landscape-led masterplan at Land south of Little Wymondley. The site location is illustrated below in **Figure EDP 1**.

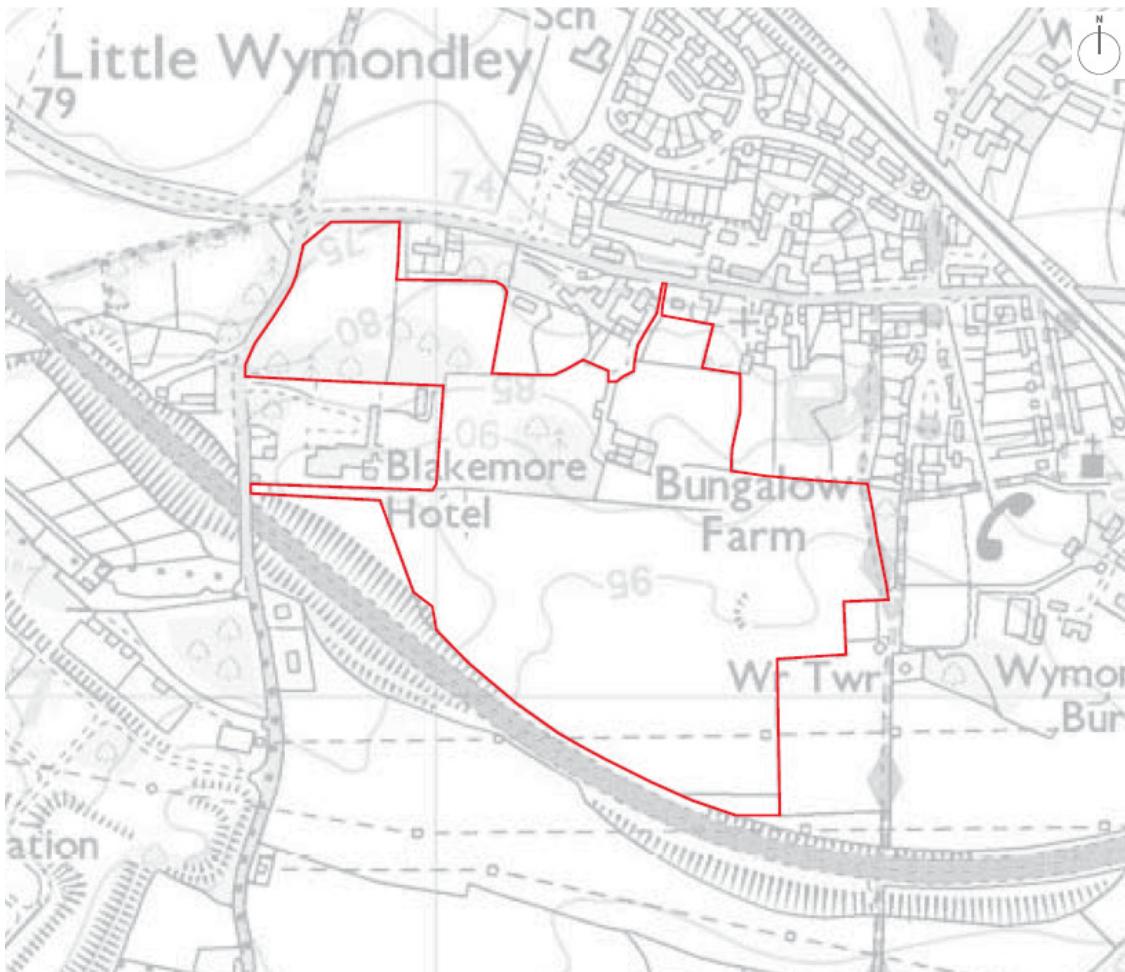


Figure EDP 1: Site Location

- 1.2 Additionally, this note advises on the development capacity on the site area (indicated in **Figure EDP 1** above) from a landscape perspective, and in particular, where the threshold of development is acceptable with regards to Policies WY1 and CGB5 of the North Hertfordshire District Council Local Plan 2011-2013, as submitted for inspection.

2. Landscape and Visual Appraisal

- 2.1 A site walkover and consideration of landscape character and visual amenity was undertaken by EDP in May 2017. A summary of the findings of the landscape and visual baseline to date, along with recommendations and input into the Concept Masterplan, is presented in **Appendix EDP 1** and below.

3. Landscape Planning Context

- 3.1 The site is located within the North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC) Local Planning Authority (LPA) area. The emerging North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031 (submitted for examination April 2017) contains three key policies in relation to the site:

- **Policy WY1 – Land South of Little Wymondley**

This allocates the site for residential development and associated infrastructure.

- **Policy SP2 – Settlement Hierarchy**

The site falls entirely within the defined settlement boundary for Little Wymondley as defined on the proposals map. The policy requires that development will be located within or adjoining a number of towns. It goes on to state that “*general development will also be allowed within the defined settlement boundaries of Category A villages*”. Little Wymondley is listed as a ‘Category A’ village; and

- **Policy CGB5 – Urban Open Land**

The southern part of the site is currently identified as ‘Urban Open Land’. This policy states that planning permission will be granted where the proposed development:

(a) “*Would provide land or limited ancillary built facilities for:*

(i) *Outdoor sport, outdoor recreation or cemeteries;*

(ii) *Rural land uses or buildings appropriate in an urban fringe location;*

(iii) *Landscaping or other earthworks associated with the development of adjoining allocated sites*

(b) *Is low intensity in nature; and*

(c) *Would maintain openness and respect the transition from the urban area to the rural area beyond.”*

4. Landscape Designations

- 4.1 The site does not contain or fall within any designated landscape, and there are no such landscapes within the 4km study area. The site does, however, currently lie within the Green Belt, which is protected by Section 9 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The proposed submission NHDC Local Plan (2011-2031) proposes to remove the site from the Green Belt and include it within the Little Wymondley settlement boundary (SP2).

5. Landscape Character Assessments

- 5.1 The landscape has been characterised at National and District levels, which have contributed to a comprehensive evidence base. The District-wide characterisation has been integrated with other districts to form the county-wide Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment. The relevant landscape character areas in which the site lies are:
- National Landscape Character Assessment:
 - NCA 87 – East Anglian Chalk; and
 - NCA 110 – Chilterns.
 - Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment (2005):
 - LCA 215 – Wymondley and Titmore Green.

Summary of Landscape Character Publications

- 5.2 At the broadest scale, the site lies within a transitional zone between the ‘Chilterns’ and ‘East Anglian Chalk’ National Character Areas (NCAs), albeit a transition that is distinguished by a discrete change in topography and land cover, from the chalk Chilterns escarpment and downland to the open, rolling chalk downland of the East Anglian Chalk. **Figure EDP 2** illustrates the location of the site within the NCAs.

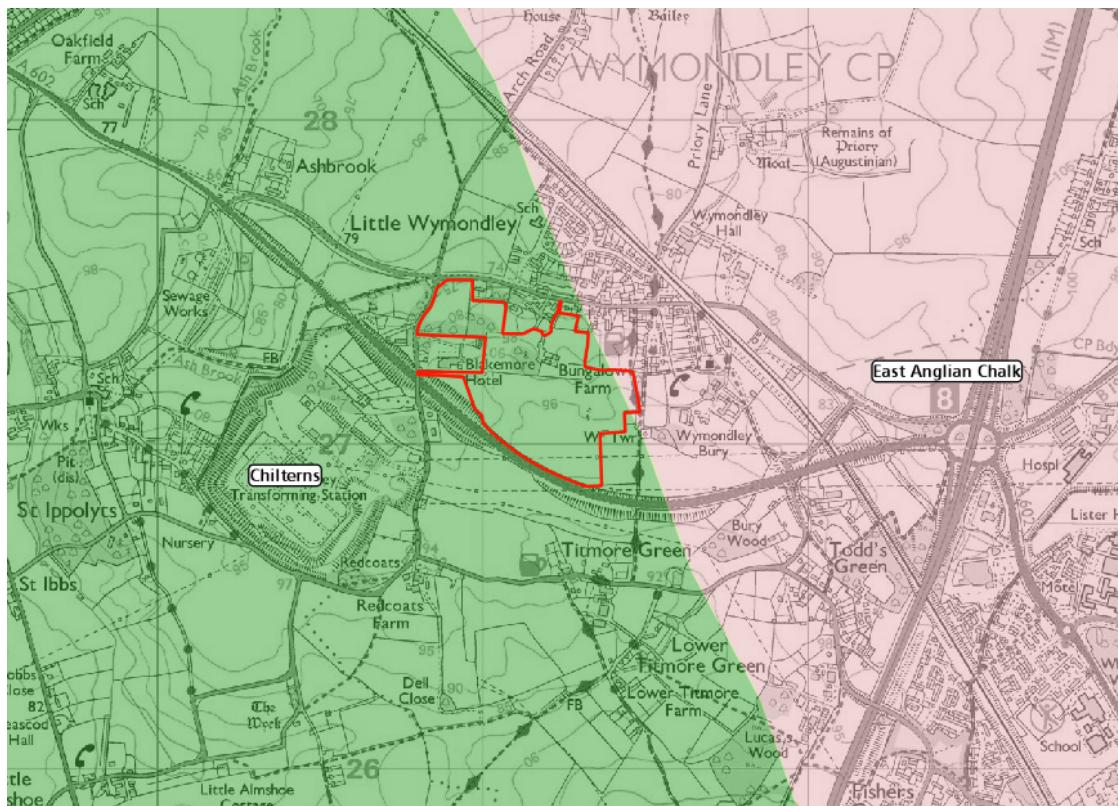


Figure EDP 2: Site Location in the transitional area of the 'Chilterns' 'East Anglian Chalk' NCAs

5.3 The Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment is the source of baseline information for the landscape character of the study area. The landscape character area (LCA) containing the site is LCA 215 'Wymondley and Titmore Green' (see **Figure EDP 3**). The LCA identifies this as a rolling chalk landscape, often of intimate scale, with a historic settlement pattern linked by winding lanes, in close proximity to strategic transport corridors such as the A1(M) and A602. A settled character is created by small scattered hamlets and farmsteads often using traditional vernacular materials.

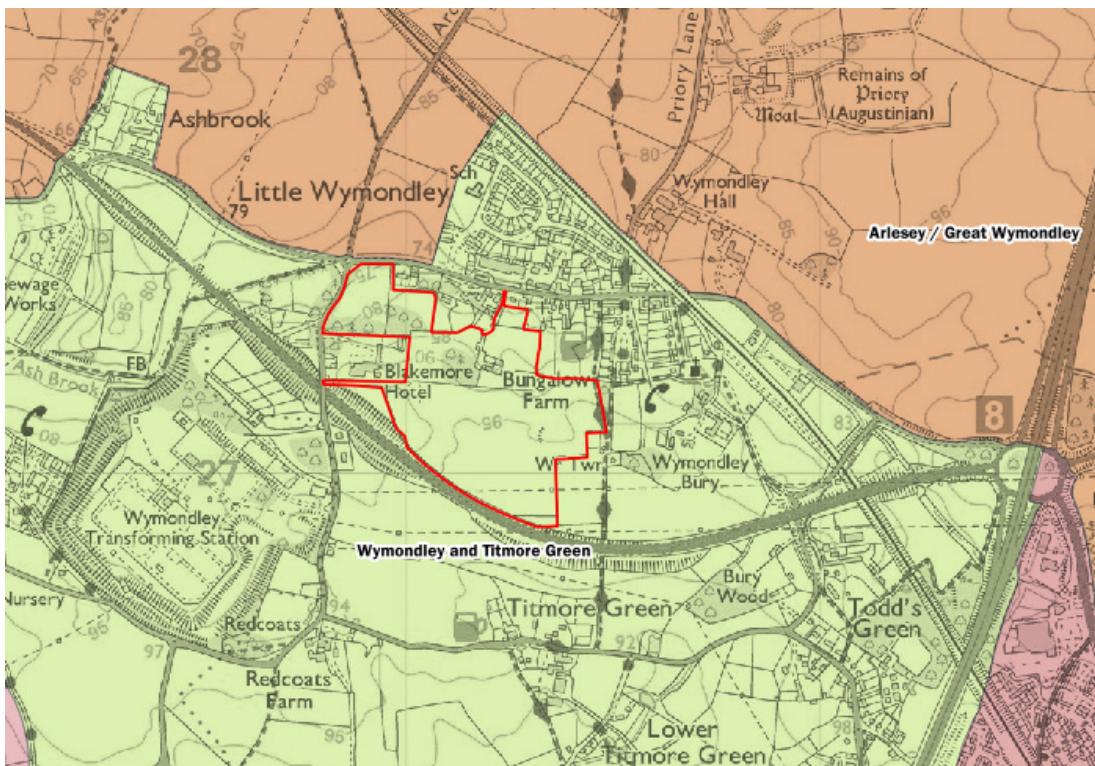


Figure EDP 3: Site Location in the Wymondley and Titmore Green LCA

- 5.4 The assessment establishes that the ‘Wymondley and Titmore Green’ LCA is of low to moderate sensitivity in terms of landscape character and that the “*gently undulating arable farmland creates an enclosed character. However, the area has been degraded by a number of factors including the infrastructure and electricity transformer station*”.
- 5.5 These conclusions go on to assign the value of the Wymondley and Titmore Green LCA as being of low landscape value.

6. Visual Receptors

- 6.1 Visual amenity is informed by the key characteristics of the Wymondley and Titmore LCA rolling chalk landscape, in combination with mature tree cover, small winding lanes and irregular enclosed fields, which create an overall enclosed character with limited opportunities for far reaching views. The site itself is inherently visually and physically well contained in most areas as indicated on the Landscape Constraints and Opportunities Plan (**Appendix EDP 2**). This is due to a combination of varying topography and mature vegetation, with built form bounding the site to the north and the A602 bypass bounding it to the south. Consequently, development would not therefore encroach into open countryside or affect nearby settlements that lie to the south of the bypass.
- 6.2 Visual receptors include vehicles travelling along the A602, Blackmore End Road and Stevenage Road, and users of the local rights of way passing east of the site.

- 6.3 One public footpath (part of the Hertfordshire Way long distance route) travels through the east of the site, and will experience clear views of the proposed development. Further afield, views from nearby public rights of way (PRoW) will be more limited due to a combination of rolling topography and mature vegetation.
- 6.4 In terms of visual sensitivity to development, the Wymondley and Titmore Green LCA is considered to be of low sensitivity, as “*Views within the character area are degraded by a number of factors including the infrastructure and electricity transformer substation*”.

7. Key Findings

- 7.1 The following summary of the findings of the baseline are considered as part of the masterplanning process.

Landscape Features and Fabric

- 7.2 The variation in exposure of the site, attributed to local topography, requires careful consideration, particularly in terms of placement of buildings and public open space within the site layout.
- 7.3 The northern portion of the site comprises a number of semi-enclosed fields that are surrounded by mature trees and understorey vegetation, which visually contains this part of the site from the surrounding area.
- 7.4 The land to the south comprises one large agricultural field that rises to a shallow ridge at 95m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) that then drops away to the A602 (in cutting). This area of the site is generally physically contained to the west, south-west and south-east by semimature woodland, whilst there is a gap on the southern boundary where the A602 is in cutting (**Photoviewpoint EDP 2**, see **Appendix EDP 3**).

Visual and Perceptual

- 7.5 With reference to the Photoviewpoints in **Appendix EDP 3** (locations identified on the Photoviewpoints Locations plan (**Appendix EDP 4**)), the proximity of the northern and eastern portions of the site to Little Wymondley creates a greater sense of association with the village, and comprises a number of semi-enclosed fields that are surrounded by mature trees and understorey vegetation, which visually contain this part of the site from the surrounding area (see **Photoviewpoints EDP 1 and 3**).
- 7.6 The most exposed area of the site in landscape terms is limited to the far south of the site, which rises to a shallow ridge of 95m aOD (illustrated by **Photoviewpoints EDP 3 and 4**), and would be more suitable for lower-density lower-lying development and education and sports provision, as per the Concept Masterplan.

- 7.7 Development on the site would be partially visible from a small number of locations from the surrounding landscape. The Concept Masterplan for the site takes into account these areas in terms of limiting views, whilst also being mindful of integrating the development into its landscape and visual context.

8. Masterplanning Principles and Discussion

- 8.1 The site is not covered by any statutory or non-statutory landscape designations, and with reference to the Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment, it is located in an area of low-moderate landscape sensitivity, low landscape value and low visual sensitivity. It is therefore considered to be relatively unconstrained or sensitive to development, particularly in the lower lying central and northern portions where new development would relate well to the existing settlement.
- 8.2 In terms of the Green Belt that (currently) covers the site, the boundary has not been reviewed since the construction of the Little Wymondley bypass (A602). The ‘new’ proposed defensible boundary provides a logical defensible edge for the Green Belt to the south of Little Wymondley, which will endure beyond the life of the forthcoming Local Plan. Specifically, development of the site would not result in coalescence or reduce the actual or perceived gap between the settlements of Stevenage and Hitchin.
- 8.3 The site is inherently visually and physically well contained due to a combination of varying topography, mature vegetation, with built form bounding the site to the north and the A602 bypass bounding it to the south. Consequently, development would not therefore encroach into open countryside or affect nearby settlements that lie to the south of the bypass.
- 8.4 EDP agrees with the Council’s approach of removing all of the land between the existing village edge and the Wymondley Bypass (A602), as indicated on the Proposals Map, as the bypass demonstrably forms a robust defensible and long-term future boundary, which is logical, and a pragmatic approach to the treatment of this area of land.
- 8.5 Through the submission Local Plan (2011-2031), the site is linked to two allocations: firstly, as a strategic housing site (WY1); and secondly, as Urban Open Land (CGB5). Whilst the ‘Urban Open Land’ policy does not preclude development in its entirety, and allows for limited development in accordance with the policy, it does indicate an area the Council (without the benefit of a detailed appraisal to identify its extent) consider might be best kept free from development.
- 8.6 However, the landscape-led Concept Masterplan (**Appendix EDP 1**), which has been informed by a site-specific landscape appraisal undertaken specifically to determine the reasonable extent of developable area, indicates a slightly different ‘non-developed’ area to that identified within policy CGB5.

- 8.7 In particular, the extent of the developable area on the masterplan that has been identified is based upon the following characteristics of the site and the wider area:
- The shallow ridgeline towards the south of the site forms a natural landscape watershed, which provides a limit to the logical extent of the proposed built-up area. Moving beyond this feature would breach this watershed, potentially opening-up wider views and effects;
 - Assuming this watershed is respected, visual enclosure provided by mature vegetation along the A602 ensures that views towards the site are limited from the surrounding local area;
 - Helpfully, public open space is more spatially and functionally suited to the shallow ridge to the south towards the A602, as this area already contains two football pitches and a number of tennis courts. This spatial arrangement also takes advantage of the walkable desire lines from the centre of the village, along Tower Close; and
 - Based upon sensitivities outlined above, and in particular the likelihood for incrementally greater visual change as one approaches the highest part of the site (i.e. the ridge), development would decrease in density, thus creating a gentle transition from village edge to rural area.
- 8.8 Based upon this analysis, and the Concept Masterplan provided, EDP considers that it is justifiable to increase the WY1 allocation area further south to the reasonable developable extent area indicated on the Concept Masterplan, and to remove the CGB5 ‘Open Urban Land’ area policy entirely.
- 8.9 Alternatively, should NHDC wish to retain the policy, EDP would suggest that the proposed boundary of the CGB5 policy designation be revised to align with the extent of the developable area as shown in the Concept Masterplan, which accords with the comprehensive landscape and visual appraisal above, and secures the intended ambition of the policy to retain openness to the countryside.
- 8.10 The following states how the Concept Masterplan complies with the proposed CGB5 policy criteria, regardless if it is retained, amended or removed from Little Wymondley:

“In areas of Urban Open Land, as shown on the Proposals Map, planning permission will be granted where the development:

- (a) *Would provide land or limited ancillary built facilities for:*
- (i) *Outdoor sport, outdoor recreation or cemeteries;”*

Sport pitches, allotments and recreational open space will be located in this area;

- (ii) “*Rural land uses or buildings appropriate in an urban fringe location; or*”

The proposed school building to be limited in height and be reflective of a rural edge location (i.e. possibility of a vernacular agricultural approach); and

- (iii) “*Landscaping or other earthworks associated with the development of adjoining allocated sites;*”

Inclusion of landscape planting that is characteristic of surrounding area to screen development.

- (b) “*Is low intensity in nature; and*”

Development edge indicated on the Concept Masterplan is to be at a lower density and fragmented in form to make a soft transition along the settlement edge; and

- (c) “*Would maintain openness and respect the transition from the urban area to the rural area beyond.*”

Building orientation and landscaping will create a gentle transition from village edge to the rural area beyond.

9. Conclusion

- 9.1 The site walkover and wider consideration of views has found that much of the site is remarkably well contained, despite its size. Local topography, off-site and on-site mature trees, hedgerows and woodland are notable features that contribute to the site's containment, and should therefore be thoughtfully integrated into the development where they will continue to offer these enhancements to local landscape character and context.
- 9.2 Overall, the potential for adverse effects can be moderated by the retention of distinctive landscape features, restriction of development to but not beyond the ridge to the south, the establishment of new boundary and internal vegetation to enhance the landscape structure and integration of sound principles underpinning a site-wide Green Infrastructure approach that contributes towards addressing the criteria of local and national policy requirements.

Appendix EDP 1
Concept Masterplan
(EDP3781/04e 21 September 2017 RB/TJ)



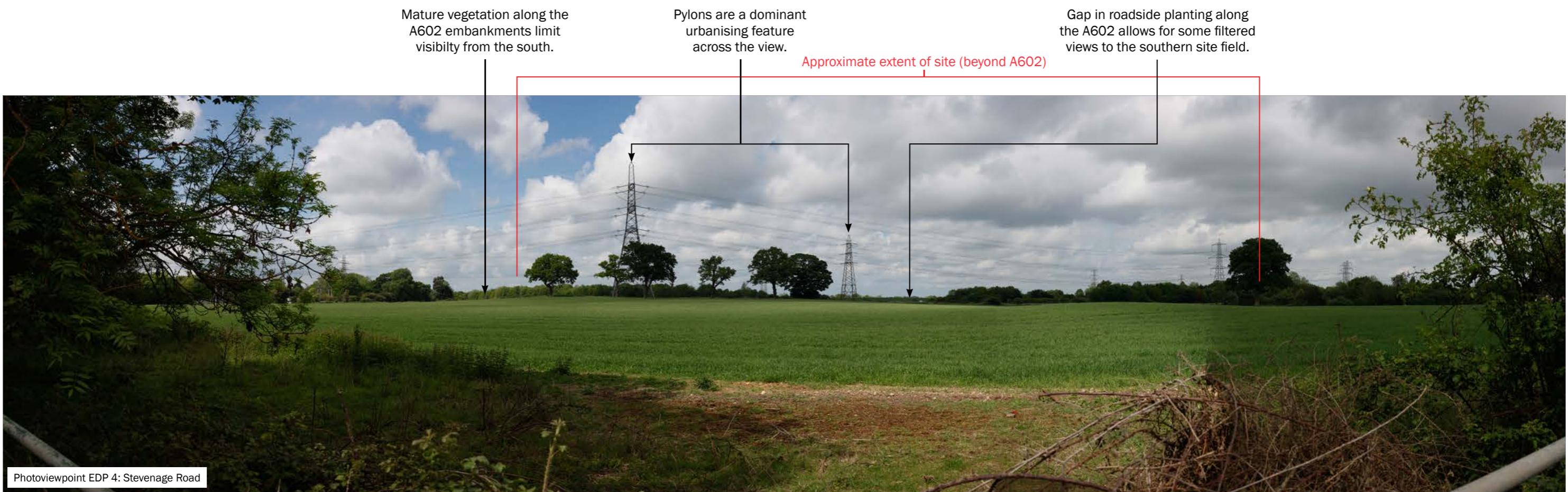
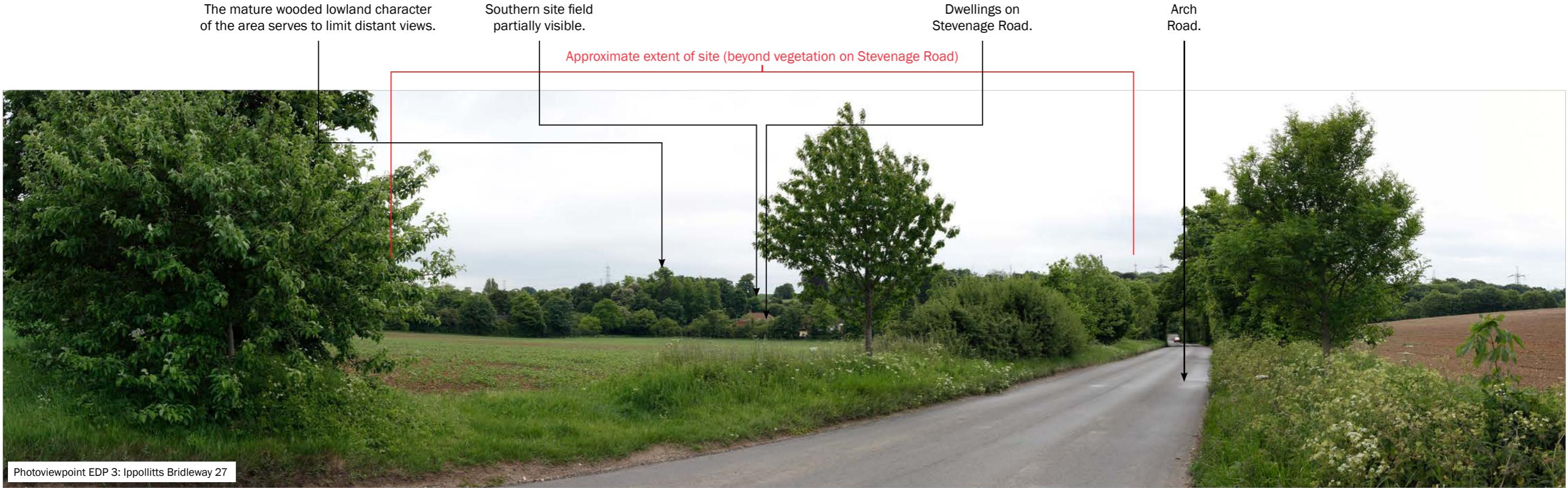
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Bovis Homes Ltd
- project title
Land south of Little Wymondley
- drawing title
Initial Concept Masterplan
- date 21 SEPTEMBER 2017 drawn by RB
drawing number edp3781_04e checked TJ
scale 1:5000@A3 QA ER

Appendix EDP 2
Landscape Constraints and Opportunities
(EDP3781/03 08 June 2017 JTF/OK)

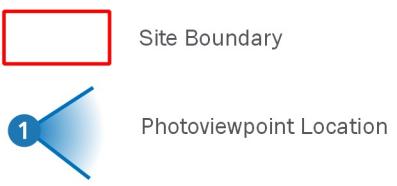
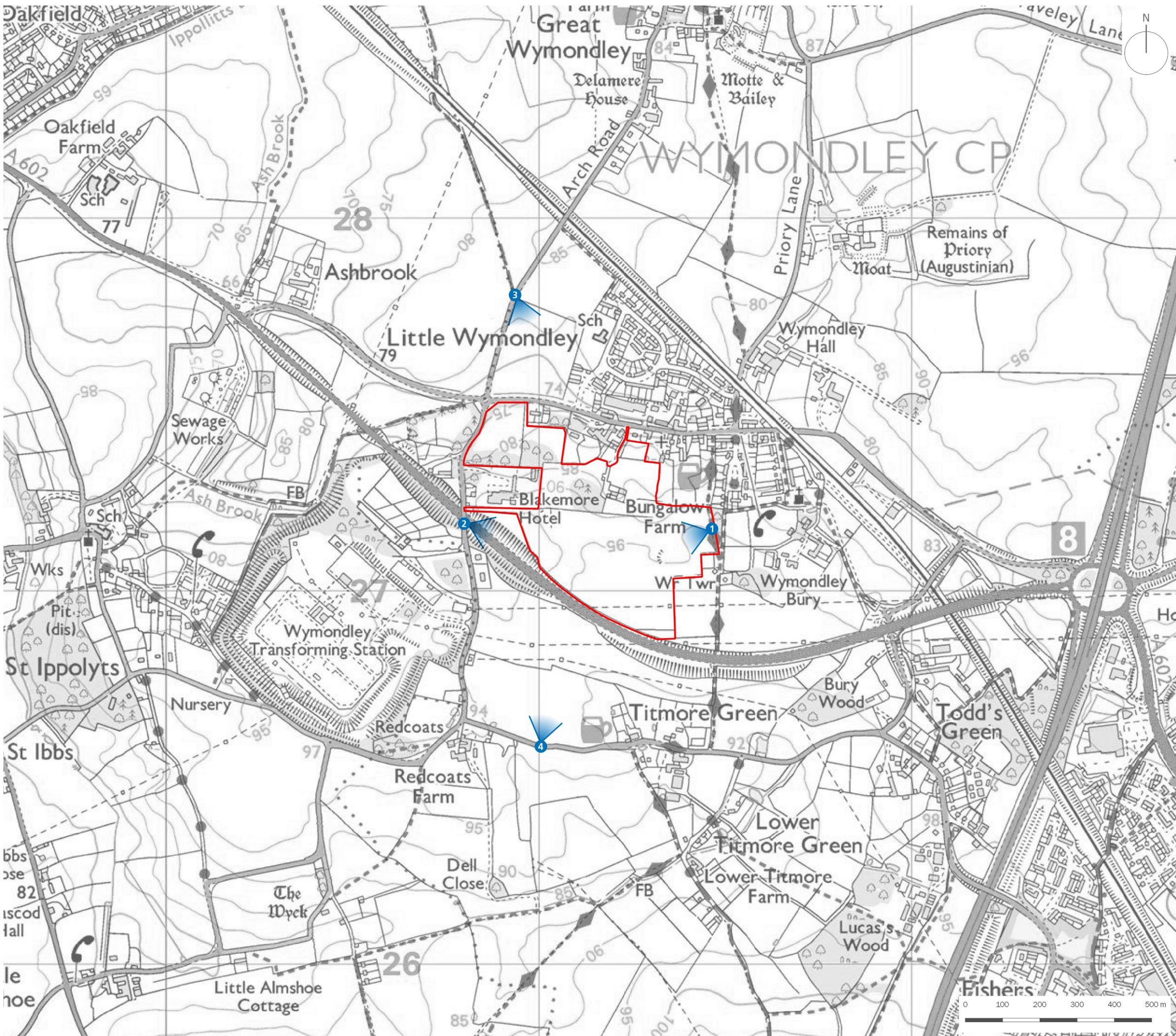


Appendix EDP 3
Photoviewpoints
(EDP3781/16 21 September 2017 MC/OK)





Appendix EDP 4
Photoviewpoint Locations
(EDP3781/15 20 September 2017 OK/CJM)



client
Bovis Homes Ltd

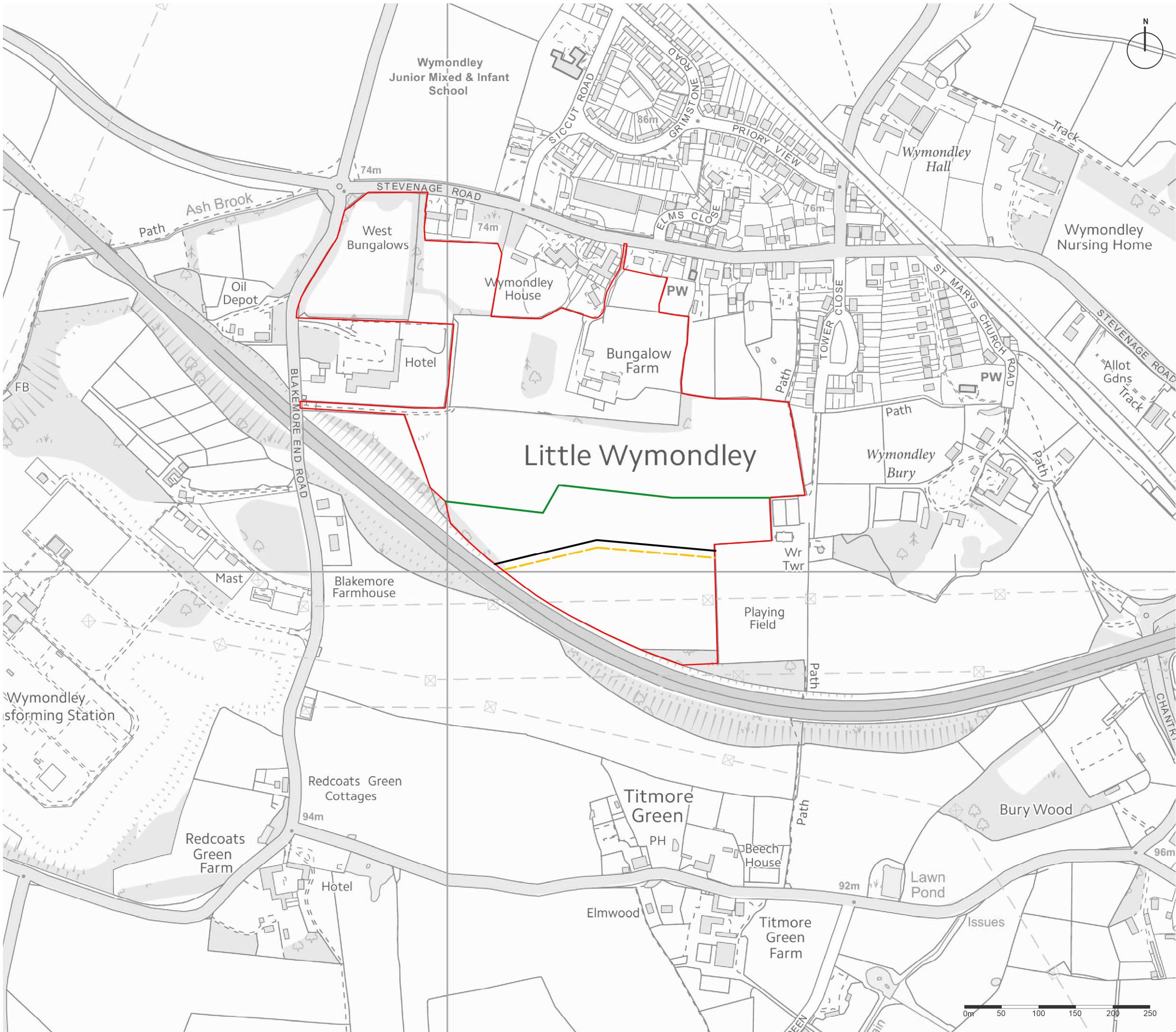
project title
Land south of Little Wymondley

drawing title
Photoviewpoint Locations

date 20 SEPTEMBER 2017 drawn by OK
drawing number EDP3781/15 checked CJM
scale 1:10,000 @ A3 QA LH

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Appendix 5



- Site Boundary
- Boundary of Existing Policy WY1
- Proposed New Boundary for Allocation Policy WY1
- Indicative Location of Localised Ridgeline

client
Bovis Homes Ltd

project title
Land south of Little Wymondley

drawing title
Little Wymondley Allocation Policy WY1

date 21 NOVEMBER 2017 drawn by RB
drawing number edp3781_07 checked CG/JB
scale 1:5000@A3 QA CG