

# DEFINE

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FRINGFORD ROAD, BICESTER  
LANDSCAPE VISUAL APPRAISAL

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JULY 2013



## CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION .....	2
2. METHODOLOGY .....	4
3. THE SITE AND SURROUNDINGS.....	12
4. LANDSCAPE CHARACTER BASELINE.....	17
5. VISUAL AMENITY BASELINE.....	22
6. CONCLUSIONS.....	37
APPENDIX 1 – FIGURES & REPRESENTATIVE VIEWPOINT APPRAISAL .....	39

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1. Project**

1.1.1. This Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) has been prepared in relation to the proposed development at Caversfield, to the north of Bicester. The proposals are for residential development, including public open space, retained vegetation and water attenuation, as detailed within the Design and Access Statement and application plans.

### **1.2. The Site and Surroundings**

1.2.1. The site is located to the north of Bicester, Oxfordshire, on the westerly edge of Caversfield (see Figure 1). The total site area is approximately 6.94 hectares.

1.2.2. The existing site is principally pasture, made up of a number of small pony paddocks which are defined by fences. South Lodge sits on the northern edge of the site, and consists of a residential dwelling, riding stables and associated barns and outbuildings. An avenue of trees lead up to these buildings from the lane to the south. There are a number of trees dotted around the farm buildings.

1.2.3. Mature trees and hedges are located to the rear gardens and boundaries along the southeast of the site; an overgrown hedgerow is located along the south-western boundary; Caversfield House woodland lies on the north-western edge. An agricultural fence defines the northern half of the north-eastern boundary, with no vegetation present.

1.2.4. The site and surrounding area is relatively level, with little change in undulation within 2km of the site. The land rises gently to the north.

### **1.3. The Proposed Development**

1.3.1. It is proposed that the site is developed for residential purposes, providing up to 200 dwellings, together with associated infrastructure, open space and structural landscaping. Within the centre of the site, to the north and southeast, the site would be dedicated to

natural public open space including play provision, drainage and ecology features, retained trees and structural landscaping.

1.3.2. Vehicular, pedestrian and cycle access to the proposed development would be via a new junction with Fringford Road on the south-eastern boundary. A further pedestrian and cycle access would be provided from the existing Fringford Road driveway, which provides a pedestrian link with the existing public right of way.

## **1.4. Landscape and Visual Appraisal**

1.4.1. This report is not a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA), as can be found within a chapter of an Environmental Statement. It is a Landscape and Visual Appraisal that records the baseline condition of the surrounding landscape character and visual amenity, and how proposed development would relate to this baseline condition. It does not assess in detail the impact of the proposed development, but does appraise the nature of the landscape and visual receptors (in terms of their sensitivity to the proposed development) to guide an appropriate form of development. It is, therefore, a tool to inform and shape the proposed development as part of the iterative design process, predicting key issues and identifying mitigation where required.

1.4.2. This appraisal follows the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition (2013) as published by the Landscape Institute and Institute for Environmental Management & Assessment (GLVIA3), although it is recognised that the nature of this appraisal is more informal and flexible in how it relates to the GLVIA.<sup>i</sup>

## **1.5. Document structure**

1.5.1. This document is structured to clarify the methodology applied to the study area (Section 2), describe the baseline conditions of the site and its surroundings (Section 3), establish the baseline landscape character (Section 4), establish the existing visual baseline relating to the applications site (Section 5), and concludes with a summary appraisal of the relationship of the proposed development with the baseline conditions, along with identifying any mitigation required (Section 6).

## 2. METHODOLOGY

### 2.1. General approach

- 2.1.1. The extent and depth of the appraisal should be appropriate and proportionate to the scale of the project that is being assessed and the nature of its likely effects.<sup>1</sup> A study area based on a 3km distance from the centre of the application site has been identified. This reflects the limit of everyday visibility and incorporates the general extent of the Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) verified through the fieldwork (see below) taking account of the local topography and urban and landscape features.
- 2.1.2. This appraisal relies on professional judgement. To ensure a consistent and transparent approach, all judgements made are discussed and debated with at least one other Chartered Landscape Architect prior to being fixed. This methodology sets out a concise and transparent method, with matrices used to guide, not determine, professional judgements, and to provide transparency.
- 2.1.3. Where there is reference to both 'impact' and 'effect'. 'Impact' is used in reference to the action being taken (such as vegetation loss), whereas the 'effect' is defined as the change (positive or negative) that results from that action, or from the whole development.<sup>2</sup>
- 2.1.4. The appraisal process considers the 'nature of the receptor', specifically its "sensitivity", whether the receptor is a landscape element or a person experiencing a view. The judgement is based on consideration of both the susceptibility of the receptor to the specific nature of change arising from the proposed development on the site, and the value that can be attached to the receptor.<sup>3</sup>
- 2.1.5. To provide clarity in the appraisal, the terms negligible, low, medium and high are used on a 4 point scale. In combining the assessments of susceptibility and value, there is a strong likelihood that a consistent judgement in those regards will result in the same conclusion in respect of overall sensitivity (e.g. medium susceptibility and medium value will result in

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<sup>1</sup> Para 1.17 GLVIA3

<sup>2</sup> Para 1.15 GLVIA3

<sup>3</sup> See Box 3.1, page 37 of the GLVIA3

medium sensitivity). However where there is a differential judgement and there is no compelling case to conclude one way or the other a split judgement will be given.

2.1.6. The appraisal considers 'worst case' conditions, applied to the type of development, viewpoint locations and seasonal conditions. Thus, the maximum potential form and height of development parameters are considered as part of the appraisal. Viewpoint locations will demonstrate worst case (such as through gaps in hedgerows) but will identify if this 'worst case' location is not representative of the typical visual experience. Similarly, in respect of seasonal effect, the seasonal effect is predicted on the basis of the likely change to the view from an increase or decrease in vegetation cover.

## **2.2. Landscape and Visual Baseline**

2.2.1. The landscape and visual baseline appraisal has been informed by a desktop appraisal of existing national, regional and local character assessments, and other relevant published reports.

2.2.2. The appraisal benefits from the approach Cherwell District Council (CDC) have undertaken with regard to the categorisation and assessment of landscape character contained within the Cherwell District Landscape Assessment (November 1995). This document provides a well-researched, thorough approach to landscape character in the area and forms a background to the landscape character baseline. Reference is also made to National Landscape Character Areas. However, due to the scale of the proposed development and the detail provided within this broader landscape study, this appraisal has focussed on the Cherwell District Landscape Assessment.

2.2.3. The desktop exercise was followed by fieldwork to fully consider the baseline condition, and test the accuracy and relevance of the published character assessments to the site specifically<sup>4</sup>. This exercise included an appraisal of the site's landscape elements and characteristics, and how these relate and contribute to the wider landscape character and visual amenity.

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<sup>4</sup> Para 5.15 GLVIA3

2.2.4. The visual work was undertaken between March and April 2013, resulting in the appraisal photographs reflecting reduced vegetation cover that will contain increased vegetation cover and screening ability in a number of locations during the late spring, summer and early autumn months.

### **2.3. Appraising Landscape Character**

2.3.1. The appraisal of the landscape resource initially considered the susceptibility of the landscape. This term is interpreted as the relative ability of a landscape (whether it be the overall character, a particular area, or a specific element<sup>5</sup>) to accommodate the proposed development without undue consequences. . This was considered by exploring the landscape's characteristics, elements and patterns. The specific landscape receptors are identified (such as woodland / hedgerows) together with the potential changes to them that would arise from the proposed development. The ability of the landscape character to receive the type of change proposed is identified as being low, medium or high (see Matrix 1).

2.3.2. Following the appraisal of landscape susceptibility, the value of the landscape resource has been established. The appraisal of landscape value considered the relative merits of the condition of the landscape and elements within it, its scenic quality, rarity, representiveness, conservation interest, recreational value, perceptual aspects and any other associations. It also considered any formal designations or status the landscape has, and any emphasis placed within such designations. This judgement relied on a balanced and non-formulaic approach, with reference to the written explanation of low, medium or high value below (see Matrix 1).

2.3.3. Once the nature of the receptor had been appraised, the type of development proposed was considered against these judgements, and an overall conclusion in respect of sensitivity made (refer to para. 2.1.5 above). Key issues for further consideration within the design solution are identified together with primary mitigation measures (key features

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<sup>5</sup> Para 5.40 GLVIA3



and constraints essential to the design solution), and secondary mitigation measures where appropriate (post design measures).

## 2.4. Appraising Visual Amenity

2.4.1. The starting point for appraising visual amenity was to identify the study area, and the likely zone of (theoretical) visual influence of the type of development proposed. A Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) was created using Ordnance Survey LIDAR DSM (Digital Surface Model) data for a 5km<sup>2</sup> area around the site, which includes terrain features, buildings and vegetation, therefore providing a topographical model of the earth's surface. Selected key points within the site were chosen, based of the site's form and topography, and terrain building software was used to produce the ZTV mapping. This was used to confirm the general extent of the site's visibility from points taken at both viewing height (1.5m above ground) and a theoretical point above ground level to represent development on the site (assumed 8.5m ridge height of 2-storey dwelling).

2.4.2. This exercise was supplemented by a desktop review of local policies and guidance to identify any key viewpoints in the area that need to be specifically considered.

2.4.3. That process was followed by fieldwork to confirm the extent of the site's visibility as shown in the ZTV and to test and confirm the viewpoints to be appraised. Each view was identified in its relevant category as being:

- **Representative viewpoints** – these are selected to represent the experience of different types of user, for example a viewpoint representative of views from a certain public footpath, or number of public footpaths. This is often the most common type of viewpoint appraised.
  
- **Specific viewpoints** – these are chosen because they are key and sometimes promoted viewpoints within the landscape, such as visitor attractions or stand out views of noteworthy landscape features.

- **Illustrative viewpoints** – these are chosen to demonstrate limited and specific issues that are neither representative of a typical public view, or a specific viewpoint.

2.4.4. In this case 12 representative viewpoints have been selected from public locations within the ZTV (there are no specific or illustrative views recorded). The viewpoints represent the available views of residents close to the site, travellers (using a variety of modes) entering and leaving Caversfield and Bicester, leisure travellers using public rights of way and users of community facilities in the area (e.g. recreation and play facilities).

2.4.5. Views from private residences are often a matter raised in respect of visual amenity. For private views to be considered in an appraisal, they must be: from rooms occupied during daylight hours; more than views by people passing through an area, and; representative of a wider community, not reflective of individual, private views.<sup>6</sup> As is usually the case, in this instance the impact on private residences is better addressed through a residential amenity assessment focussed on standard residential amenity factors such as building separation, gardens sizes etc. The relationship of the site and the proposed development to the existing residences along its eastern edge has been addressed by providing a 5m landscape strip with planting, and by setting back properties back from the site boundary by 15m, as outlined in the Design and Access Statement that accompanies the planning application.

2.4.6. The susceptibility of the viewer to changes in the view and visual amenity arising from the development was then appraised taking account of their activity in each location and their focus on the view or visual amenity<sup>7</sup>. This is not a case of reviewing susceptibility to change per se, it must be specific to the development proposed on the site. For example, a leisure walker is a highly susceptible receptor, but when walking along a sunken, tree lined corridor with few references or views towards a particular site, the susceptibility to the type of change proposed on the site is very different from a leisure walker experiencing a more direct view. Therefore, in considering susceptibility, the type of

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<sup>6</sup> Para 6.17/6.36 GLVIA

<sup>7</sup> Paras 6.32-6.35 GLVIA3

viewpoint, receptor and activity are considered, along with the visual expectation and its popularity or volume of use were taken into account. These factors lead to a conclusion of low, medium or high, or negligible where susceptibility to change would be barely perceptible (see Matrix 2).

2.4.7. The value of each view was then established. The assessment of viewpoint value considered the status of the view, whether it is identified in any formal documentation, including planning or heritage studies or designations, but also within general literature such as tourist guides, informal leisure based information (local signage) or in other cultural guides. This judgement relied on a balanced and non-formulaic approach, with a reference to the written explanation of value (see Matrix 2).

2.4.8. Once the nature of the receptor had been appraised, the type of development proposed was considered against these judgements and an overall conclusion in respect of sensitivity made (refer to para. 2.1.5 above). Key issues for further consideration within the design solution are identified together with primary mitigation measures (key features and constraints essential to the design solution), and secondary mitigation measures where appropriate (post design measures).

## **2.5. Site Photography**

2.5.1. In accordance with current guidance, on-site photography records the position (as a grid reference), height of camera lens, camera used, lens type and focal length, field of view, date, time, weather and light condition. Photographs were recorded at 1.6 metres above ground level to reflect the pedestrian eye height. Photographs are taken with a fixed 50mm focal length lens fitted to a digital camera (Canon EOS 5D MKII SLR) with a full frame sensor and focal length multiplier of x1. Once the panorama is produced a viewing distance can be calculated. This is the distance the viewer should hold the image, from eye to paper, to gain a true representation of the image.

2.5.2. For this appraisal, a single image has been taken and presented with a gauge representing the horizontal angle with key indicators showing the field of view (FOV) for a 50mm lens (slightly short of 40° as advised in the Landscape Institute Advice note 01/11).

The size of the image was calculated to reflect a viewing distance of 30cm. Extended panoramas are also provided so that the reader can clearly see and understand the location of the site and proposed development within its setting. These were stitched together using photo correction software.

## 2.6. Appraisal Matrices

2.6.1. The following matrices summarise the appraisal considerations and judgements made in respect of sensitivity and value for both landscape character and visual amenity.

### 2.6.2. Matrix 1 - Landscape

	<b>Susceptibility</b>	<b>Value</b>
<b>High</b>	Consideration of the landscape structure, including its characteristics and elements, to identify the capacity of the landscape to receive change without undue consequences leads to the conclusion that the landscape has high susceptibility to the type and degree of change proposed on the site.	Consideration of the condition of the landscape, its scenic quality, rarity, representiveness, conservation interest, recreational value, perceptual aspects and other associations leads to the conclusion that the landscape has high value. These landscapes are expected to have national designation, or demonstrate very high local value.
<b>Medium</b>	Consideration of the landscape structure, including its characteristics and elements, to identify the capacity of the landscape to receive change without undue consequences leads to the conclusion that the landscape has medium susceptibility to the type and degree of change proposed on the site.	Consideration of the condition of the landscape, its scenic quality, rarity, representiveness, conservation interest, recreational value, perceptual aspects and other associations leads to the conclusion that the landscape has medium value. These landscapes are expected to have a local designation/policy or notable landscape elements of recognised value.
<b>Low</b>	Consideration of the landscape structure, including its characteristics and elements, to identify the capacity of the landscape to receive change without undue consequences leads to the conclusion that the landscape has low susceptibility to the type and degree of change proposed on the site.	Consideration of the condition of the landscape, its scenic quality, rarity, representiveness, conservation interest, recreational value, perceptual aspects and other associations leads to the conclusion that the landscape has some value but it is categorised as being low. These landscapes are not expected to have formal, character or quality based designations.

<b>Negligible</b>	Consideration of the landscape structure, including its characteristics and elements, to identify the capacity of the landscape to receive change without undue consequences, leads to the conclusion that the landscape has negligible susceptibility to the type and degree of change proposed.	Consideration of the condition of the landscape, its scenic quality, rarity, representiveness, conservation interest, recreational value, perceptual aspects and other associations leads to the conclusion that the landscape has negligible or no value.
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## 2.6.3. Matrix 2 – Visual

	<b>Susceptibility</b>	<b>Value</b>
<b>High</b>	Consideration of the receptor type, activity and expectation, and frequency of use leads to the conclusion that the viewer would have high susceptibility to the type and degree of change proposed to the view.	Consideration of the formal status of the view, reference to the view in published literature and visitor information leads to the conclusion that the view has high value. Such views are expected to be specifically identified in planning documentation or local guides.
<b>Medium</b>	Consideration of the receptor type, activity and expectation, and frequency of use leads to the conclusion that the viewer would have medium susceptibility to the type and degree of change proposed to the view.	Consideration of the formal status of the view, reference to the view in published literature and visitor information leads to the conclusion that the view has medium value. Such views might be located within a designated area identified in planning documentation or local guides or be subject to policies that indicate their value.
<b>Low</b>	Consideration of the receptor type, activity and expectation, and frequency of use leads to the conclusion that the viewer would have low susceptibility to the type and degree of change proposed to the view..	Consideration of the formal status of the view, reference to the view in published literature and visitor information leads to the conclusion that the view has some value but it is categorised as being low. Such views are unlikely to be identified in planning documentation or local guides.
<b>Negligible</b>	Consideration of the receptor type, activity and expectation, and frequency of use leads to the conclusion that the viewer has negligible susceptibility to the type of change proposed to the view.	Consideration of the formal status of the view, reference to the view in published literature and visitor information leads to the conclusion that the view has negligible or no value. Such views are highly unlikely to be identified in planning documentation or local guides.

### **3. THE SITE AND SURROUNDINGS**

#### **3.1. Introduction**

3.1.1. Agricultural arable fields lie to the northeast and southwest of the site, with clumps of woodland, copse, and coverts breaking up the field edges and boundaries. An unnamed lane runs along the southwest boundary of the site. The residential community of Caversfield lies to the east of the site, as a northern outlying settlement of Bicester. A number of detached residential dwellings along Fringford Road back onto the site, along the south-eastern boundary, whilst the remainder of the boundary abuts this road. Caversfield House and its cluster of historic buildings lie to the northwest of the site and sit in a walled parkland setting with lake.

#### **3.2. Land Use**

3.2.1. As stated previously, the site is predominantly open pasture used as pony paddocks, with residential dwelling and an assortment of stables and outbuildings.

3.2.2. The 1881 historic map on Figure 2 shows the parkland / estate qualities and its relationship with Caversfield House with tree-lined boundaries and open. No evidence of the quarry located in the south-western corner remains.

3.2.3. As illustrated on Figure 3, the site is surrounded by agricultural and residential uses. Land to the east and further to the south is residential. Land to the west and north is predominantly arable agricultural use and stands of woodland with outlying farmsteads and individual house.

#### **3.3. Movement and Transportation**

3.3.1. The Bicester ring road A4095 is located less than 500m of the site with radial roads leading away from Bicester. Two of these radial roads, the B4100 Banbury Road and Fringford Road pass along the west and east of the site, heading in a north-westerly and north-easterly direction respectively. An unnamed road runs along the south-western boundary of the site and connects these two roads.

3.3.2. Local bus 22 and 23 pass along Fringford Road every 30 minutes (at peak times), connecting Caversfield with Bicester and pick up 250m from the site.

3.3.3. There are no public rights of way within the site. Public footpath 133/1 passes within 250m of the north-eastern boundary. This footpath route passes through open fields, alongside hedges and areas of woodland from Caversfield to the hamlet of Bainton some 2km to the north. A number of footpaths criss-cross the fields around Bainton, including public bridleway 367/8. Further to the west, 2km from the site, public footpath 148/2 passes north-south around the edge of the village of Bucknell. Public Footpath 148/7 connects with this footpath and heads east-north-east broadly towards Banbury Road. On higher ground 2.5-3km to the northeast, a number of footpaths lead towards the village of Stratton Audley, including public footpath 371/1.

#### **3.4. Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings**

3.4.1. Two listed buildings are located within 200m of the development boundary (as shown on Figure 3). The first of interest is St Lawrence Church, located within the grounds of Caversfield House, to the northwest of the site and is Grade II\* listed. It contains parts that date back to the 10<sup>th</sup> / 11<sup>th</sup> centuries and a 13<sup>th</sup> century bell tower which is considered to be one of the oldest in the country. The second is Home Farm house, located to the west of the site on Banbury Road and is Grade II listed and has parts which date back to the 17<sup>th</sup> / 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

3.4.2. Further listed buildings lie >250m east of the site within the RAF Bicester Conservation Area and include many of the former RAF barracks and mess buildings which are Grade II listed. RAF Bicester is a site of national importance in the context of 20th century military aviation, and this is reflected in its designation as a conservation area, and the recommendations by English Heritage to protect many of the structures on the site by listing and scheduling. The Conservation Area boundary passes along part of the opposing side of Fringford Road and includes a number of married airmens housing, which the Conservation Area Appraisal describe as 'Buildings making a positive contribution'. These are shown on Figure 3.

### 3.5. Topography

- 3.5.1. The application site is relatively flat, with a 2m level change along its north-south axis, from 87.50 AOD to 85.50 AOD, with a gradient of ~1:150. This is evident on the countours shown on as Figure 3.
- 3.5.2. The surrounding countryside is also relatively flat, as illustrated on Figure 4, with little change in level to the west, south and east, where land rises ~15m over 3km from the site. The River Bure and its tributaries carve small channels through the landscape, however these are largely hidden and undistinguished. To the north, beyond 1.5km land begins to rise steadily up to 120m AOD.

### 3.6. Vegetation

- 3.6.1. Within the site, an avenue of mixed (in quality, age and species) trees is aligned with the existing drive leading from the Lane up to the cluster of buildings, as shown on Figure 5. Associated with the buildings here, there is also a cluster of young ornamental trees within the garden of the residential property. A group of mature Poplars and Leylandii hedge are located adjacent to the driveway off Fringford Road and neighbouring property.
- 3.6.2. Surrounding vegetation can be seen on Figure 3 and 5.
- 3.6.3. The south-western boundary is defined by a dense / overgrown hedgerow with trees which extends along its length, apart from where it is broken by the driveway, and where it becomes weaker and open towards to the eastern corner. The vegetation here is between 6m and 8m in height, and circa 10m deep.
- 3.6.4. The north-western boundary is defined by a mature woodland which forms part of the Caversfield House estate. The mixed woodland is up to 15m in height, and some 70m in depth.



- 3.6.5. The western section of the north-eastern boundary is defined by a block of young mixed woodland which extends up Fringford Road to the north. It is circa 8m in height and >15m in depth. No vegetation exists along the northern half of this boundary.
- 3.6.6. The northern block of young woodland block continues further to the north, behind an overgrown hedgerow which borders Fringford Road. This hedgerow extends down the south-eastern boundary of the site and stops before at the existing entrance. The vegetation is a hedgerow mix of trees and scrub and is up to 10m in height and circa 12m in depth. There is a break in the planting around the entrance drive off Fringford Road.
- 3.6.7. Hedgerow trees and scrub with some breaks, follow the rear garden boundaries of the residential properties which back onto the site to the southeast of the site.
- 3.6.8. Beyond the site, to the south and west, well maintained hedges with hedgerow trees define the majority of the neighbouring field and road boundaries. A number of mature woodland copses, coverts and spinneys are dotted around the landscape to the northwest, north, and northeast. Trees are also located within the residential areas to the east and south, located within front and back gardens and within roadside verges.

### **3.7. Bicester Masterplan**

- 3.7.1. The Bicester Masterplan SPD (draft) 2012 and the Local Plan, sets out the long term vision for the town and integrate committed and planned schemes with new proposals to contribute to the creation of a sustainable town. Part of this masterplan includes the North-West Bicester 'Eco-Town', located to the north of Bicester and in close proximity to the application site. North-West Bicester was announced as one of the Government's four designated eco-town developments in July 2009.
- 3.7.2. Proposals for North West Bicester include the development of 5,000 homes as a showcase 'eco-development'. The exemplar scheme received full planning permission in July 2012 and is located within 100m to the west of the site. Figures 6 illustrates the extent of the North-West Bicester SPD (draft) Masterplan in the context of the application site. Figure 7 includes the approved detail masterplan for the Phase 1 Exemplar.

3.7.3. The Exemplar includes 393 zero carbon homes, a primary school, a local shop, an eco-pub and a community centre, and 40% of the site will retained or transformed into natural green space and/or public open space.

## 4. LANDSCAPE CHARACTER BASELINE

### 4.1. Introduction

4.1.1. This landscape character baseline appraisal identifies that the proposed development site is located between two Natural England: National Character Areas, namely NCA107 Cotswolds and NCA108 Upper Thames Vale.

4.1.2. The strategic information forms a background to the landscape character of the site; however this study focuses on the landscape characteristics at a more local level.

4.1.3. The site is located within the Cherwell District Landscape Assessment landscape character type “Oxfordshire Estate Farmlands”, and borders that of “Otmoor Lowlands”. As such both character areas are summarised here. Figure 8 illustrates the position of these character areas.

### 4.2. Oxfordshire Estate Farmlands

4.2.1. The Oxfordshire Estate Farmlands are “*characterised primarily by the extensive remains of eighteenth century parklands and estate farmland which lies in a band across Oxfordshire and continues into Northamptonshire, which was favoured by the gentry since it was within easy travelling distance from London.*”.

4.2.2. It is typified by:

- *Considerable plantations which are associated with extensive areas of parkland.*
- *Much of the land is in arable cultivation where the woodland character persists, with woodlands which divide and enclose the landscape on a larger scale, there are also long views across rolling open fields where there are substantial breaks in tree cover.*
- *Towards the north, woodland cover decreases and the countryside opens out. This is typical English landscape scene of gently rolling hills clothed with a patchwork of fields punctuated by hedgerows trees and copses.*

4.2.3. A number of sub-variations are defined; **'18<sup>th</sup> Century enclosed farmland'** (*"surrounded by limestone walls, containing a pastoral scene with scattered trees and small woods"*); **'estate farmlands'** (*"display estate farm characteristics such as metal railing, post and rail fences, and regular patterns of roadside avenue trees"*); **'large scale arable farmland enclosed by woods and copses'** (*"where the landscape is structured on a large scale by woodland belts. The fields tend to be large and open, without any boundary"*); and **'rolling arable landscape with strong field pattern copses and trees'**. This character has particular reference as its location is defined as 'north of Bicester' and is described further here:

*"The patchwork of arable and pasture is given definition by well maintained hedges. Many of the hedges contain regular spaced mature hedgerow oaks, some of which are in excellent health although substantial numbers are beginning to die back. Road verges are generous widths, and often have a ditch and hedge on either side.*

*Views over the rolling countryside are punctuated by numerous small copses and coverts, a well maintained asset in an area where hunting and shooting are still regular features of rural life. However, in places the structure of the landscape is disappearing as intensive arable use has resulted in the removal of field boundaries so that only lines of hedgerow trees remain."*

4.2.4. A special feature of the Oxfordshire Estate Farmlands character area are the eighteenth century parklands, and specifically those at Middleton Stoney, Kirtlington and Bletchingdon where Capability Brown is known to have influenced the parkland character.

### **4.3. Otmoor Lowlands**

4.3.1. The Otmoor Lowland character area follows that of Fringford Road and lies to the south and east of the site. This character area is *"essentially a flat, wet, low lying landscape, but it displays considerable variation owing to particular landform features and built development."* Particular characteristics are summarised below:

- Most of the area lies on Oxford Clay with outcrops of Corallian Beds and Cornbrash creating distinctive local hills isolated from the main ridge of rising ground.
- Owing to its poor drainage, traditional land cover has consisted of grazed wet meadows, with willow pollards lining streams and drainage ditches. Much of the grassland is now divided into fields with hedge and ditch boundaries.
- Fields are large with weak boundaries, giving rise to an open exposed landscape.

4.3.2. The variations in landscape type are defined as; '**pastoral landscape with willow lined watercouses**' ("*countryside crossed with water-filled ditches lined with hedges and willows*"); '**low lying flat arable farmland with weak structure**' ("fields are large, regular and open, surrounded by ditches and hedges"); '**isolated hills with wooded crests and mixed/military uses**' ("*prominent and curious focal points within an otherwise flat and uneventful landscape*"); and '**urban fringes**' ("*associated with MoD high security fences and housing development*").

4.3.3. A special feature of this character area is the outstanding ecological interest, much of which is of international importance, particularly its unimproved neutral grassland, and clay pasture.

#### 4.4. North-West Bicester

4.4.1. The baseline character does need to be considered in relation to the pending development of North-West Bicester, primarily in the first instance the consented Phase 1 Exemplar scheme.

4.4.2. This scheme has been developed with considerable open space and landscape corridors, and residential set-backs and those edges will presumably be planted with structure tree and hedgerow planting. This structure landscape element will further contribute to the landscape character of tree and woodland blocks of the local area. However, until these

reach full maturity it is likely the development of North-West Bicester will alter the immediate character of the application site, principally to the south and west from that of a rural setting, to that of an urban setting.

#### **4.5. Conclusion**

4.5.1. The site and its immediate context, particularly to the north is typified by arable and pasture defined by well-maintained hedgerows containing mature oak trees, set within a gently sloping countryside punctuated by copses and coverts. The adjoining Caversfield House estate also gives the characteristic of the enclosed estate with its limestone walls defining the boundary to Banbury Road.

4.5.2. Land to the south and west is flatter and more open, with less blocks of woodland but still defined by strong hedgerow boundaries and trees. This area of the landscape is subject to considerable change as a result of the North-West Bicester masterplan and its impact on character can only be presumed to emphasise the urban fringe characteristics of this edge of town/village site. The proximity to the settlement of Caversfield and the adjoining properties which back onto the south-eastern boundary, already does give the site some urban fringe characteristics.

#### **4.6. Susceptibility and Value Appraisal**

4.6.1. From a review of existing landscape character assessment it is considered that information contained within the Cherwell District Landscape Assessment (1995) is appropriate for providing the landscape character baseline for the site. Of the two character areas which are applicable to the site, the "Oxfordshire Estate Farmlands" lends itself more to the site and its context to the north, with that of "Otmoor Lowlands" being more applicable to the south. The site itself is too small to be considered to have any defining characteristics other than it contributes to the overall defining character of the surrounding countryside and urban fringe.

4.6.2. The character of the landscape setting is likely to undoubtedly change to that of an urban fringe location should the plans for Bicester North-West go-ahead, and the site would be

considered within a residential context. However, for the purposes of this appraisal, the character has been assessed as an assumed worst case scenario; in its existing rural landscape setting.

4.6.3. The characteristics of this landscape is that of strong vegetation forms through hedgerows and tree blocks, enclosing the landscape and providing limited opportunities for expansive views. This sense of enclosure and strong vegetation is demonstrated by the following which are all applicable to the site or its immediate context:

- Blocks of woodland copses and coverts;
- Hedgerow boundaries, both well maintained and not;
- Stands of tree groups, and trees within hedgerows; and
- Limestone walls defining boundaries to estates and farms; and
- Properties backing onto the site.

4.6.4. These strong landscape features contain the landscape and restrict views over the wider landscape.

4.6.5. The site is not subject to any landscape designation and does not contain any landscape features of acknowledged importance. The landscape character is not rare and the site has no particular scenic quality or recreation or conservation value.

4.6.6. Based on the character assessments and appraisal of the site characteristics outlined above, the landscape character of the site and its immediate surrounds is considered to have an overall susceptibility of “medium” and value of “low”. The overall **sensitivity to change is considered to be low/medium**. This judgement reflects the proximity of the adjacent settlement edge, the ability of the site’s existing landscape structure to absorb and remain unaffected by the potential development (notably the woodland to northwest and northeast, and established hedgerow boundaries to southeast and southwest) and the lack of any significant landscape features of importance within the site.

## **5. VISUAL AMENITY BASELINE**

### **5.1. Introduction**

5.1.1. The visual amenity of the site and its surroundings has been appraised through the preparation of a ZTV of the existing site (Figure 9) and the proposed development (Figure 10) and the identification of 12 representative views (Figures 11 to 23). Each view is examined below and within the attached figures, with a description of the existing view, clarification of the relevant receptors, consideration of the sensitivity and value of the view and confirmation of any key issues relating to the proposed development site.

### **5.2. Zone of Visual Influence**

5.2.1. The Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) identified using the method described in Section 2.4. This has been verified through site visits, where it was apparent that the site's ZTV generated an accurate representation of the visibility of the site, particularly as a result of the vegetation and build form which contained views.

5.2.2. The existing urban form of Caversfield and Bicester effectively limits views of the site from the east and south, i.e. the adjacent residential properties. The ZTV indicates that theoretically some views are obtainable from deeper within the settlement and beyond but these are not apparent on the ground.

5.2.3. The open aspect of part of the north-eastern boundary creates a visual opening across the immediate adjoining fields until it hits a block of woodland to the north. There are a number of small locations on higher ground to the north from where the site is theoretically visible, but, in reality, the extent of the area of visibility is limited by vegetation cover. Where views are available, the site can be seen at distances of up to 1.5-2.5km, but at this point it becomes difficult to discern the site itself from its surroundings with the naked eye, as the existing built form and woodland blocks and vegetation on the horizon blend together.

5.2.4. The Caversfield House woodland contains views immediately to the west and northwest of the site.



5.2.5. To the southwest only the immediate field has clear views of the site. Beyond this there are theoretically filtered views between hedges and woodland blocks.

5.2.6. It is apparent that the vegetation which borders the site and within the surrounding fields effectively contains and limits views to the site from only immediate locations to the south and north. In addition, the apparent flatness of the surrounding countryside to the west and south does not afford any vantage points from which to view the site.

### **5.3. North-West Bicester**

5.3.1. For the purposes of this assessment reference is made within each of the relevant viewpoints on where the North-West Bicester masterplan will be visible from. The new masterplan will likely have an impact on not only the visibility of the site and where it can be seen from but also affecting the susceptibility and value of each of the views.

5.3.2. However, for the purposes of this assessment the visual appraisal is based on what is considered to be a worst-case scenario of the landscape in its current setting.

### **5.4. Representative Viewpoints**

**Viewpoint 01:** Public footpath 153/1 (see Figure 12)

5.4.1. This viewpoint has been selected as it is located on public footpath 153/1, a route which runs around the northern fringes of Caversfield towards Bainton to the northwest. The footpath runs at an oblique angle to the site boundary, some 200m to the north. Whilst the view to the site is at an angle of travel, the landscape does open up at this location allowing the user to take in and appreciate the openness of the landscape from all angles. The only receptors here are leisure walkers using the right of way. The view towards site passes over arable fields in the foreground, with clumps of trees and woodland to the fringes. The site is located in the centre of the view with South Lodge clearly visible on the northern edge of the site, and the far hedgerow boundary set into the horizon. This is essentially a rural view, typifying the local landscape character of hedgerow boundaries and clumps of trees and woodland, set within flat landscape setting.

5.4.2. Due to the openness of the northern half of this boundary and the proximity of the viewpoint to the site it is clear that without mitigation any development within the site would be clearly visible from this location. The effectiveness of the block of young woodland located to the eastern half of this boundary clearly helps to reduce the visibility of South Lodge and its assortment of outbuildings and it would be conceivable that similar planting measures along the remainder of this boundary would help to reduce the effect of any development here.

5.4.3. This viewpoint's susceptibility is derived from the fact that at present, an open rural character defines the leisure walkers experience with little/no built form to be seen. It is for these reasons that there is likely to be high susceptibility to change.

5.4.4. The value of this view is influenced by the nature that it is an easily accessible footpath located on the edge of Caversfield. It also defines the character of the village and its setting, therefore it is considered that this location has a medium value.

5.4.5. Taking the above factors into account it has been concluded that this representative view has an overall **medium to high sensitivity**.

**Viewpoint 02:** Caversfield playing fields (see Figure 13)

5.4.6. This viewpoint has been selected as it is located within an area of public open space with play area, some 350m due east of the site. The key receptors here are active recreation users and pedestrians moving within the residential areas of Caversfield. The view towards the site from this viewpoint is a combination of the open playing field and playground, enclosed by residential dwellings and garden/street trees. The site cannot be seen from this location as it is hidden behind the trees and dwellings.

5.4.7. This viewpoint's susceptibility is derived from fact that it set within a residential context, and that the site if visible at all will be considered in its residential context. Therefore, there is likely to negligible susceptibility to change.

5.4.8. Despite not being a view of any recognised importance, the value of this view is viewed in the context that this is an important and frequently used public open space within Caversfield and therefore it is considered to have medium value.

5.4.9. Taking these factors into account, it can be concluded that this viewpoint has a **negligible sensitivity**.

**Viewpoint 03:** Public footpath 153/1 (see Figure 14)

5.4.10. This viewpoint has been selected as it is located on public footpath 153/1, a route which runs around the northern fringes of Caversfield towards Bainton to the northwest. The footpath runs at almost perpendicular to the site, some 500m to the northwest. Whilst the view is directed towards the site, the site is only visible at this location for a stretch of circa 50m where there is a gap in the hedgerow. The only receptors here are leisure walkers using the right of way. The view towards the site passes over pastoral fields in the foreground, with woodland and hedgerows to the fringes. The site is located in the centre of the view with South Lodge discernible set amongst trees. This view typifies the local landscape character of hedgerow boundaries and clumps of trees and woodland.

5.4.11. This viewpoint's sensitivity is derived from the fact that the view is set between hedgerows and blocks of woodland and that the site is only partially visible. It could be anticipated that without mitigation, some of the development fronting the north-eastern boundary could be seen at an oblique angle. Planting along the northern boundary of the site as described earlier will undoubtedly help to enclose the site and restrict views of any development within. The planting here will also reinforce the surrounding woodland character.

5.4.12. Any visible development here would clearly change the character of this rural view. It is for these reasons that there is likely to be medium susceptibility to change.

5.4.13. The value of this view is defined by the nature that it is an important footpath located on the edge of Caversfield and is easily accessible. It also defines the character of the village and its setting, therefore it is considered that this location has a medium value.

5.4.14. Taking these factors into account, this representative view has been given an overall **medium sensitivity**.

**Viewpoint 04:** Public footpath 148/9 (see Figure 15)

5.4.15. This viewpoint has been selected as it is located along public footpath 148/9 on the fringes of Bucknell, some 1.8km from the site. The key receptors here are leisure walkers using the right of way. The site is orientated against the direction of travel, however due to the openness of the landscape on this side of the footpath, it can be presumed the user will be taking the wider landscape setting. The view towards site from this viewpoint is a combination of the large arable fields with strong hedgerow boundaries with a wooded backdrop. This views typifies the character of the landscape to the southwest of the site where it is flat, larger open fields of influenced by the intensification of farming, with strong hedgerow boundaries and less woodland cover.

5.4.16. It is difficult to discern whether any features of the site are visible from this location as the layers of hedges and woodland blend into each other.

5.4.17. It should be noted that the North-West Bicester masterplan will be clearly visible in the middle-ground between the viewpoint and the site and will effectively close off the view to the site.

5.4.18. This viewpoint's susceptibility is seen in context of this rural agricultural landscape and any development visible within this setting would be detrimental to the walker's experience. However the site is barely visible and therefore it is considered to have a low susceptibility.

5.4.19. The footpath is located on the edge of Bucknell and whilst it does not connect with wider footpaths, it allows for a loop walk on the edge of the village and defines its rural character. It passes through large open arable fields, which do not merit a high landscape value. Therefore it is considered to have a medium value.

5.4.20. Taking the above factors into account, it has been concluded that this representative view has an overall **low sensitivity**.

**Viewpoint 05:** Public bridleway 367/9 (see Figure 16)

5.4.21. This viewpoint has been selected as it is located on public bridleway 367/9 where it meets the public bridleway 367/8. The view is located 2km to the northwest, and on higher ground 25m above the site. The key receptors here are leisure walkers, cyclists and horse riders using the public bridleway. The view towards the site from this viewpoint is a combination of pastoral fields, tree belts, and woodland. Whilst this location is on higher ground, it is difficult to discern the site from this location due to its distance from the site and the tree belts which frame the field boundaries.

5.4.22. The susceptibility of this view is defined by the nature that it is some 2km from the site and blocks of significant vegetation interrupt views. Despite being a bridleway and available to a range of users it is considered to have negligible susceptibility.

5.4.23. The bridleway is located on the edge of the hamlet of Bainton and does not appear to be used frequently, it also does not appear to have great value in landscape terms due to the prominence of unnatural landscape features such as the leylandii hedge and line of poplars. Therefore it is considered that this view has a low value.

5.4.24. Taking the above factors into account, it has been concluded that this representative view has an overall **negligible sensitivity**.

**Viewpoint 06:** Public footpath 371/1 (see Figure 17)

5.4.25. This viewpoint has been selected as it is located on public footpath 371/1, on an open, elevated position. It is some 3.5km distant and 25m above the site. The key receptors here are leisure walkers using the right of way passing towards the village of Stratton Audley to the southeast. The view towards the site from this viewpoint is at an angle to travel however due to the openness and prominent position over the landscape users are likely to appreciate and take in the wider views. Arable fields are seen throughout and

defined by hedgerow boundaries, with blocks of woodland framing the edges of the view. The A4421 can be seen in the centre of the view with hedgerow and oak trees to its edges. Due to the distance from the site and the prominence of vegetation it is difficult to make out the site from this location.

5.4.26. Depending on the building heights within Bicester North-West some development may break the woodland backdrop and be visible on the horizon line.

5.4.27. Despite offering a pleasant view over open countryside, the susceptibility of this view is determined by the fact that it is >3km from the site. As such leisure walkers are likely to be unaffected by any development on the site and therefore a low susceptibility is applicable.

5.4.28. The view is dominated by a typical English landscape scene of blocks of woodland and trees, set within an undulating landscape, and representative of the local character to the north of the site. Despite being used infrequently, as evident through the non-existent path across the ploughed field, it is considered to have a medium value due to the quality of the view available.

5.4.29. Taking the above factors into account, it has been concluded that this representative view has an overall **low sensitivity**.

**Viewpoint 07:** Fringford Road (see Figure 18)

5.4.30. This viewpoint has been selected as it is located on Fringford Road on the approach to Caversfield from the Bicester ring road. It is located some 200m from the site to the south. The key receptors here are motorists, pedestrians and cyclists. The view is important as it sets the character and setting of the entrance experience into Caversfield. The site can be clearly seen at an oblique angle to the road, over well-maintained hedges, and an arable field, with the woodland backdrop of Caversfield House estate. The dense hedgerow along its south-western boundary can be made out as can the roof of South Lodge, set within the site. Home Farm grade II listed building can be seen to the

left of the site, and the residential properties which back onto the site south-eastern boundary come into view on the right.

5.4.31. The ridge of South Lodge can be seen over the overgrown hedgerow and it can be anticipated that any future development will be visible over the same hedge until it has grown to a height to provide full screening. The western half of this boundary, beyond the group of leylandii is more open, it is lower and there are sections with large open gaps. Without mitigation, development in these locations would clearly be visible.

5.4.32. The effect of the existing hedgerow in screening South Lodge and its associated outbuildings is demonstrated here. It could easily be conceived that by using hedge and supplementary specimen tree planting to reinforce this boundary that this would effectively filter any views of development beyond.

5.4.33. Under the plans for the North-West Bicester masterplan, the field in the foreground will become playing pitches and residential will be set behind Home Farm.

5.4.34. The susceptibility of this view is determined by two main factors - its close proximity to the site and the effectiveness and ineffectiveness of the site's southwestern hedgerow boundary to screen the site. However this is not a direct view from the road and the majority of the users will be travelling by car. Therefore it is considered to have a medium susceptibility.

5.4.35. The value of this view is considered in its context to the village of Caversfield and its relationship with open countryside. This is an important entrance route into the village and is considered to have a high value.

5.4.36. Taking the above factors into account, it has been concluded that this representative view has an overall **medium sensitivity**.

**Viewpoint 08:** Banbury Road (see Figure 19)

5.4.37. This viewpoint has been selected as it is located along Banbury Road, adjacent to Home Farm, located 100m from the nearest corner of the site. The key receptors here are motorists and cyclists travelling from Bicester towards Banbury and outlying villages to the north. An arable field can be seen in the foreground, with a well-maintained hedge defining its boundary. The dense hedgerow and trees of the site south-western boundary can be clearly seen within the centre of the view, with South Lodge behind. Residential properties along Fringford Road can be seen to the right of the site, whilst Caversfield House estate woodland clearly defines the north-western boundary of the site.

5.4.38. Similar to its relationship to Viewpoint 7, this view showcases the southeastern boundary of the site and particularly the openness of the northern half of this boundary with filtered views continuing beyond this boundary. Without mitigation, any development fronting this boundary would be clearly visible. Supplementary planting as part of the development is planned along this boundary to reinforce and fill the gaps with hedgerow and trees with the intention of softening the visual effect of the development beyond.

5.4.39. Under the plans for the North-West Bicester masterplan, the field in the foreground will become playing pitches and there will be undoubtedly new footpaths links, boundary treatments and pedestrian crossings associated with this.

5.4.40. Despite having a high exposure due to its proximity it will mainly affect motorists as there is no footpath / cycleway provision. The Home Farm listed farmhouse is set back from the road and the other converted properties do not front the road, thereby offering little / no opportunity to view in this direction. Therefore this view is considered to have a medium susceptibility.

5.4.41. Again this view is important in establishing the setting and character of the edge of Caversfield. As such, this rural view is considered to have a medium value when viewed in context of the limestone walls of the farm buildings, the open fields, hedgerows and woodland.



5.4.42. Taking the above factors into account, it has been concluded that this representative view has an overall **medium susceptibility**.

**Viewpoint 09:** Fringford Road (see Figure 20)

5.4.43. This viewpoint has been selected as it is located on Fringford Road on the approach into Caversfield and is only 80m from the site. The key receptors here are motorists, pedestrians and cyclists. The view takes in the rural lane characteristics of Fringford Lane and the dense hedgerow that follows a ditch along its outer edge. The young woodland can be seen behind the hedgerow acting as an additional screening element between the viewpoint and the site.

5.4.44. The susceptibility of this viewpoint is influenced by the overgrown hedgerow and young woodland behind. The site is effectively screened by this planting and it is unlikely that any development on the site will be visible at all. However, this viewpoint is only 80m from the site, and therefore chimneys and / or aerials are potentially visible and is therefore given a low susceptibility.

5.4.45. The value of the view is established by the nature that Fringford Road acts as one of the access routes and entrances into Caversfield from the north and is characterised by being hemmed in by dense hedgerows and trees. As such it is considered to have a medium value.

5.4.46. Taking the above factors into account, it has been concluded that this representative view has an overall **low sensitivity**.

**Viewpoint 10:** Banbury Road (see Figure 21)

5.4.47. This viewpoint has been selected as it is located on the B4100 Banbury Road, leading southeast towards Bicester, adjacent to the entrance to Caversfield House, 400m to the northwest. The key receptors here are motorists and cyclists, and less so pedestrians. Limestone walls are seen to the entrance to Caversfield House, containing woodland, with a dense hedgerow framing the edge of the road. St Lawrence Church a Grade II\*

listed building is set within the same woodland and is not visible. The site is also not visible from this location as it is hidden behind the woodland within Caversfield House.

5.4.48. The block of woodland located within the estate / garden of Caversfield House, directly to the northwest of the site, effectively closes off views of the site from the west and northwest. Therefore this view is given a negligible susceptibility.

5.4.49. The value of the view is considered in its relationship with the important landscape elements that characterise this area: the limestone walls, blocks of woodland and dense hedgerows. As a result it is considered to have a medium value.

5.4.50. Taking the above factors into account, it has been concluded that this representative view has an overall **negligible sensitivity**.

**Viewpoint 11:** Fringford Road (see Figure 22)

5.4.51. This viewpoint has been selected as it is located on Fringford Road, on the approach to Caversfield, some 750m to the north. The key receptors here are motorists and cyclists, and less so pedestrians. Dense trees and hedgerows line the road and tunnel views and its length. Due to the height and density of the planting here it is not possible to see the site from this location.

5.4.52. Located along the same road as viewpoint 9, albeit located some 500m further from the site, this location and others along the road offer little / no opportunity to view the site due to the dense hedgerows and tree planting. Therefore it is considered to have a negligible susceptibility.

5.4.53. This view of road hemmed in by hedges characterises northern approaches to Caversfield along Fringford Road and therefore is given a medium value.

5.4.54. Taking the above factors into account, it has been concluded that this representative view has an overall **negligible sensitivity**.

#### 5.4.55. **Viewpoint 12:** Bucknell Road (see Figure 23)

5.4.56. This viewpoint has been selected as it is located on Bucknell Road, 1.5km from the site to the west. The view is not typical of the views available along this road as for the majority of its length hedgerows screen views over the wider landscape. In addition the view is at an oblique angle to the direction of travel. Views over pastoral fields can be seen in the foreground with overgrown hedges and trees defining field boundaries. Woodland defines the horizon. It is difficult to discern the site from this location due to its distance from the site and the presence of vegetation.

5.4.57. It should be noted that the North-West Bicester masterplan and 5,000 homes will be located between this location and the site.

5.4.58. The susceptibility of the view to change is based on the fact that Bucknell Road is predominantly used by motorists, with no provision for pedestrians or cyclists and that for the majority of the road a dense hedgerow screens the views. It is only in a couple of isolated locations where field gates provide clear views over the surrounding fields. However it could be argued that a motorist would never actually have the opportunity to appreciate this outlook and alongside the fact that it is 1.5km from the site and screened by vegetation, this view is considered to have a negligible susceptibility.

5.4.59. The quality of the landscape is low, underlined by the unmanaged nature of the hedgerows and trees, and it is not accessible to the public. Therefore a low value is appropriate.

5.4.60. Taking the above factors into account, it has been concluded that this representative view has an overall **negligible sensitivity**.

### 5.5. Visual Amenity Sensitivity

5.5.1. The individual viewpoints have been considered with regard to their sensitivity of the viewpoint and receptor to change resulting from the proposed development. This process is summarised in tabular form below:

Viewpoint	Location	Distance from centre of site	Receptor	Susceptibility	Value	Sensitivity
1	Public footpath 153/1	225m	Leisure walkers	High	Medium	Medium to high
2	Caversfield playing fields	350m	Pedestrian, active recreation	Negligible	Medium	Negligible
3	Public footpath 153/1	500m	Leisure walkers	Medium	Medium	Medium
4	Public footpath 148/9	1.8km	Leisure walkers	Low	Medium	Low
5	Public bridleway 367/9	2km	Leisure walker, cyclist, horse rider	Negligible	Low	Negligible
6	Public footpath 371/1	3.5km	Leisure walker	Low	Medium	Low
7	Fringford Road	200m	Motorist, pedestrian, cyclist	Medium	High	Medium
8	Banbury Road	100m	Motorist,	Medium	Medium	Medium

			pedestrian, cyclist			
9	Fringford Road	80m	Motorist, pedestrian, cyclist	Low	Medium	Low
10	Banbury Road	400m	Motorist, pedestrian, cyclist	Negligible	Medium	Negligible
11	Fringford Road	80m	Motorist, pedestrian, cyclist	Negligible	Medium	Negligible
12	Bucknell Road	1.5km	Motorist, pedestrian, cyclist	Negligible	Low	Negligible

5.5.2. Analysis of these individual viewpoints has identified a number of repetitive themes and conclusions, these being:

- Locally, the woodland blocks located to the northwest and northeast of the site effectively close any views of the site from the west and northeast. The strong perimeter vegetation along the south-western and south-eastern boundaries helps to filter any views into the site from these directions. The existing residential dwellings that back onto the site effectively close off the south-eastern corner of the site. It is only the open boundaries (the western section of south-western boundary and the northern section of the north-eastern boundary) where views into the site are available. Here the boundary planting is weak and requires additional planting to improve the visual enclosure of the site.
- From more distant locations of greater than 300m, views of the site are limited due to the flatness of the surrounding topography and the lack of prominent locations to

view the site. Vegetation cover further accentuates the limited visibility of the site, with the patchwork of many blocks of woodland coverts and copses, and network of strong hedgerow boundaries and trees, which line roads and define field boundaries. Land rises to the north and does offer potential to see the site, however these locations are >2km and the visibility of the site in its wider context is limited.

## **6. APPRAISAL CONCLUSIONS AND MITIGATION RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **6.1. Landscape Character Appraisal**

6.1.1. Of the two local character areas which are applicable to the site, the “Oxfordshire Estate Farmlands” lends itself more to the site and its context to the north, with that of “Otmoor Lowlands” being more applicable to the south. The site itself is too small to be considered to have any defining characteristics other than it contributes to the overall defining character of the surrounding countryside and urban fringe.

6.1.2. The characteristics of the existing landscape is that of strong vegetation forms through hedgerows and tree blocks, enclosing the landscape and providing limited opportunities for expansive views. This sense of enclosure and strong vegetation is demonstrated by the following which are all applicable to the site or its immediate context:

- Blocks of woodland copses and coverts;
- Hedgerow boundaries, both well maintained and not;
- Stands of tree groups, and trees within hedgerows; and
- Limestone walls define the boundary of the adjoining private estate; and
- Properties backing onto the site.

6.1.3. Therefore, further enclosure of the site by strengthening the site’s weaker boundaries would not be detriment to the character of the local area.

### **6.2. Visual Amenity Appraisal**

6.2.1. Due to the topography of the study area, in combination with the extensive vegetative cover, views of the site are restricted to a number of locations. These limited locations tend to be within 300m of the site and where the site’s boundaries are weaker. Longer, more distant views are almost non-existent or where available, development of the site would have little impact on the visual amenity.

### 6.3. Mitigation Recommendations

6.3.1. As illustrated on Figure 23, a number of measures should be taken to reduce any visual impact of the development:

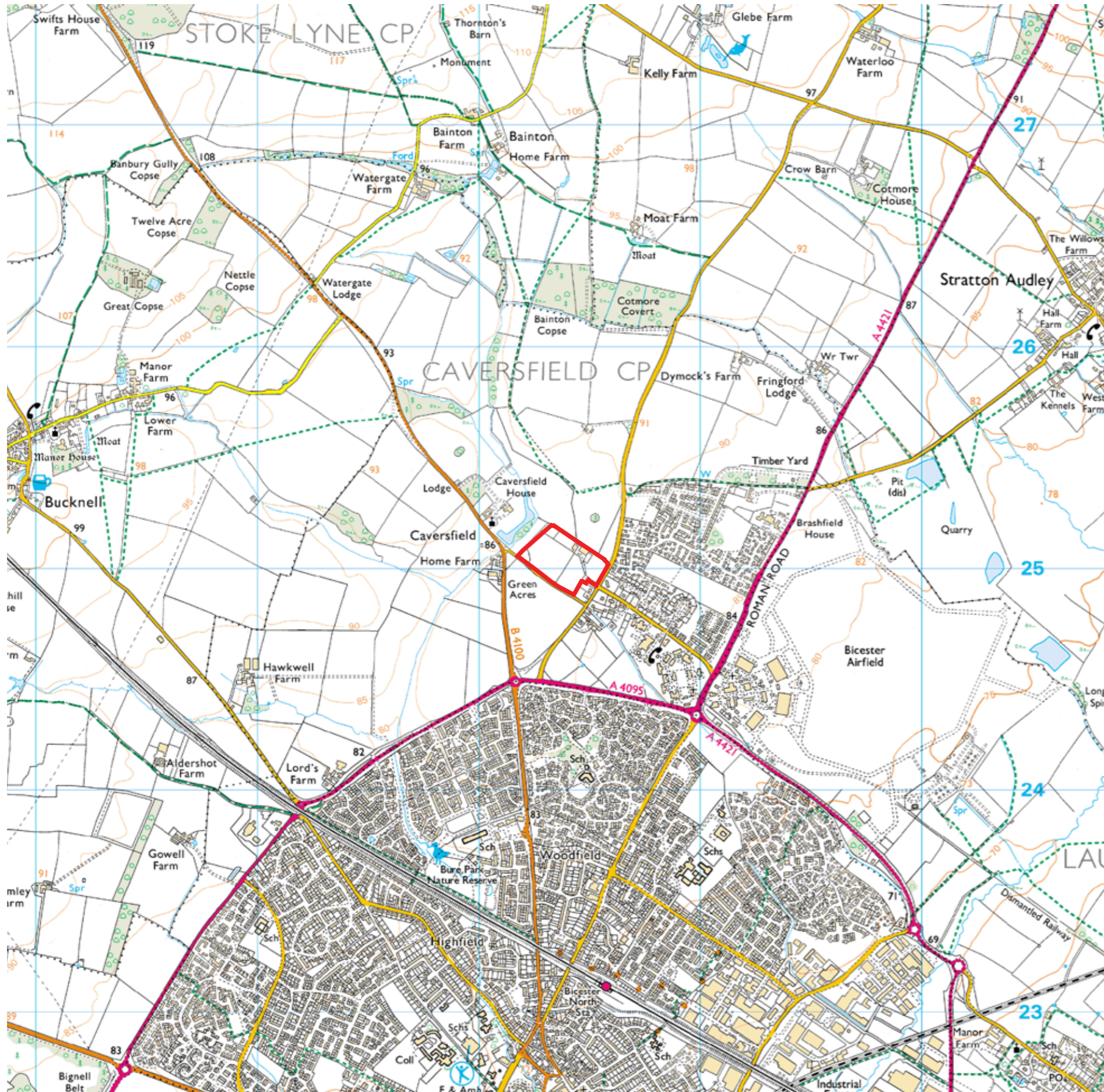
- Existing vegetation to the site boundaries is to be retained;
- The existing gaps to the south-western boundary should be reinforced with specimen oak trees (characteristic of the local character) and native hedgerow tree and shrub species;
- The existing gap to the north-eastern boundary should be reinforced with specimen estate tree planting which will help to reduce the visual impact of the likely development roofscape, whilst providing glimpse views from the properties over the northern fields;
- Retain a number of existing avenue trees within the central open space to provide instant structure and help to visually separate the development;
- Plant specimen trees within the heart of the development scheme to streets, open space areas, and front and rear gardens;
- Properties should be set back from boundaries by a distance of 7.5-10m to reduce their dominance over the boundary and allow space for additional specimen tree planting; and
- Buildings heights restricted to 2-storey, with occasional 2.5-storey buildings if required to provide variety in specific locations.

6.3.2. The above mitigation recommendations have all been incorporated within the proposed development masterplan (see plan ref CALA130117 CMP-01).



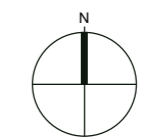
## **APPENDIX 1 – FIGURES & REPRESENTATIVE VIEWPOINT APPRASIAL**

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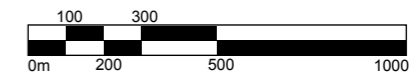


**Legend**

 Site boundary



SCALE 1:20,000



**Figure 1** Drg No  
**Cala Homes** Client  
**Caversfield, Bicester** Project  
**Site Location** Title  
**1:20,000** Scale

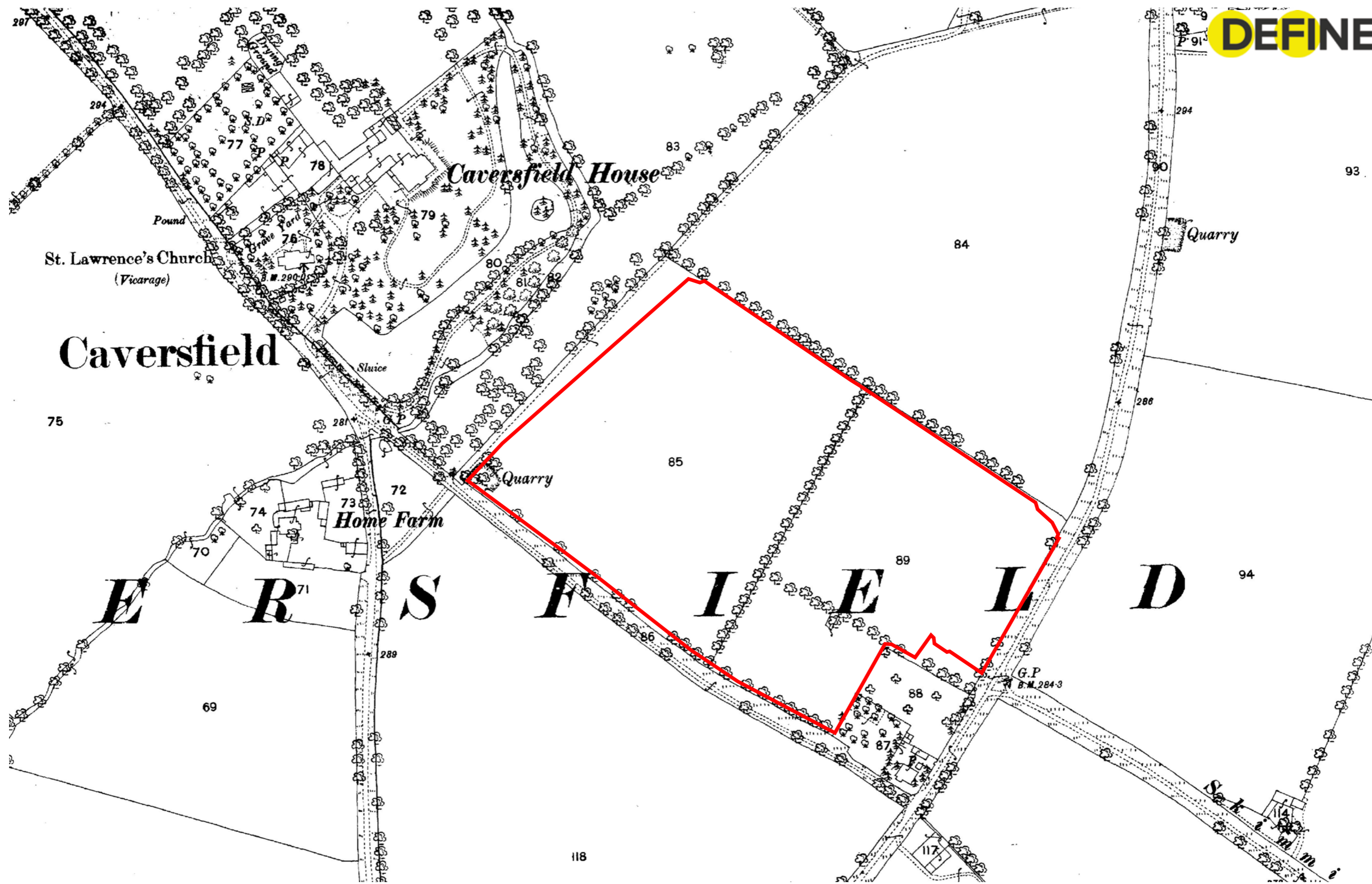


Figure 2 | Drg No  
Cala Homes | Client  
Caversfield, Bicester | Project  
Historic Mapping (1881) | Title  
1:2,500 | Scale

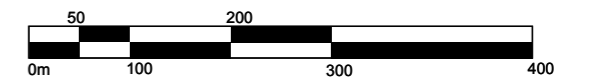


**Legend**

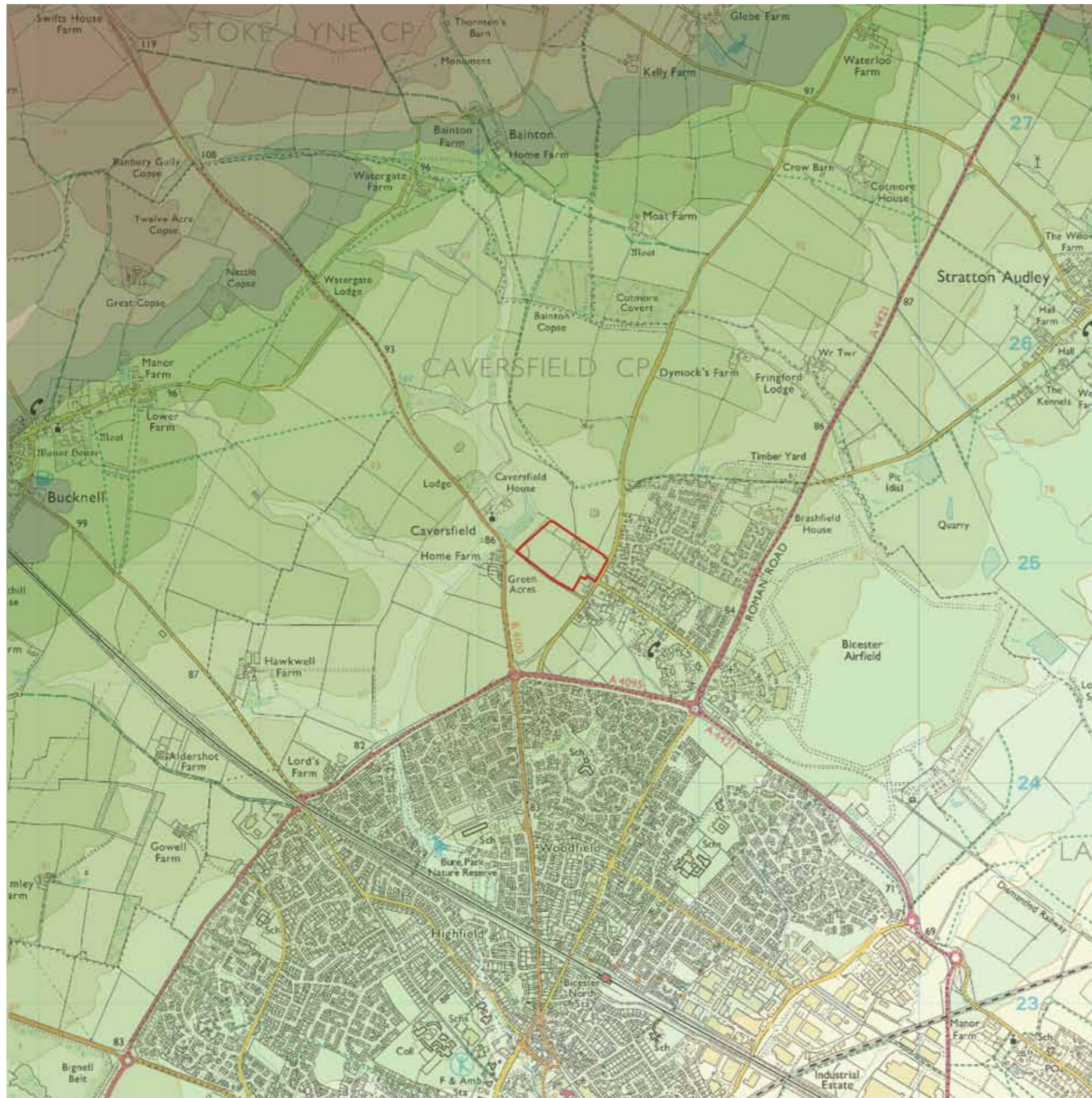
-  Site boundary
-  Existing vegetation
-  Water body
-  Drainage ditch
-  Existing Public Right of Way
-  Contour
-  Conservation Area boundary
-  Listed Building
-  "Buildings making a positive contribution" to the conservation area
-  Built form















SCALE 1:7,500

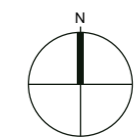


**Figure 3** Drg No  
**Cala Homes** Client  
**Caversfield, Bicester** Project  
**Landscape features** Title  
**1:7,500** Scale

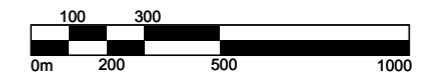


**Legend**

-  Site boundary
- Height AOD**
-  65 - 70m
-  70 - 75m
-  75 - 80m
-  80 - 85m
-  85 - 90m
-  90 - 95m
-  95 - 100m
-  100 - 105m
-  105 - 110m
-  110 - 115m
-  110 - 115m



SCALE 1:20,000

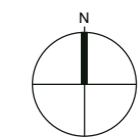


**Figure 4** Drg No  
**Cala Homes** Client  
**Caversfield, Bicester** Project  
**Topography and Hydrology** Title  
**1:20,000** Scale

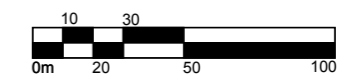


**Legend**

-  Site boundary
-  Existing site entrances
-  Existing trees and hedgerows
-  Weak edges
-  Walls
-  Maintained hedgerows
-  Residential
-  RAF Bicester Conservation Area
-  Listed building
-  "Buildings making a positive contribution" to the conservation area
-  Public footpath
-  Landowner legal right of way

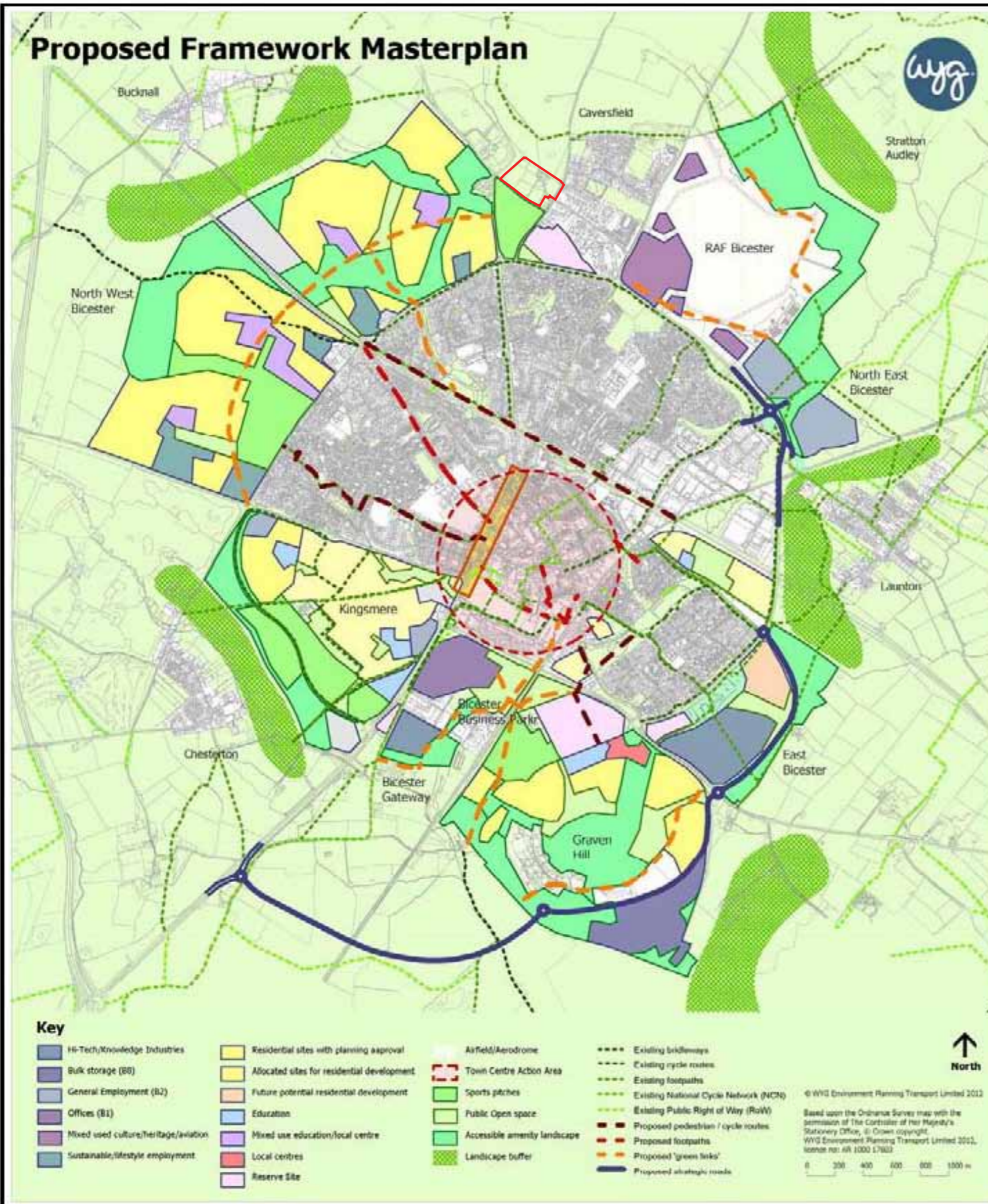


SCALE 1:2,500



**Figure 5** Drg No  
**Cala Homes** Client  
**Caversfield, Bicester** Project  
**Site analysis** Title  
**1:2500** Scale

# Proposed Framework Masterplan



### Legend

Site boundary

### Key

- |                                      |   |                              |                                       |
|--------------------------------------|---|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Hi-Tech/Knowledge Industries         | Residential sites with planning approval    | Airfield/Aerodrome           | Existing sideways                     |
| Bulk storage (B0)                    | Allocated sites for residential development | Town Centre Action Area      | Existing cycle routes                 |
| General Employment (B2)              | Future potential residential development    | Sports pitches               | Existing footpaths                    |
| Offices (B1)                         | Education                                   | Public Open space            | Existing National Cycle Network (NCN) |
| Mixed used culture/heritage/aviation | Mixed use education/local centre            | Accessible amenity landscape | Existing Public Right of Way (RoW)    |
| Sustainable/lifestyle employment     | Local centres                               | Landscape buffer             | Proposed pedestrian / cycle routes    |
| Reserve Site                         |   |                              | Proposed footpaths                    |
|                                      |   |                              | Proposed 'green links'                |
|                                      |   |                              | Proposed strategic roads              |


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 Based upon the Ordnance Survey map with the permission of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationary Office, © Crown copyright. WYG Environment Planning Transport Limited 2012. Licence no: AR 1000 17963  
 0 200 400 600 800 1000 m

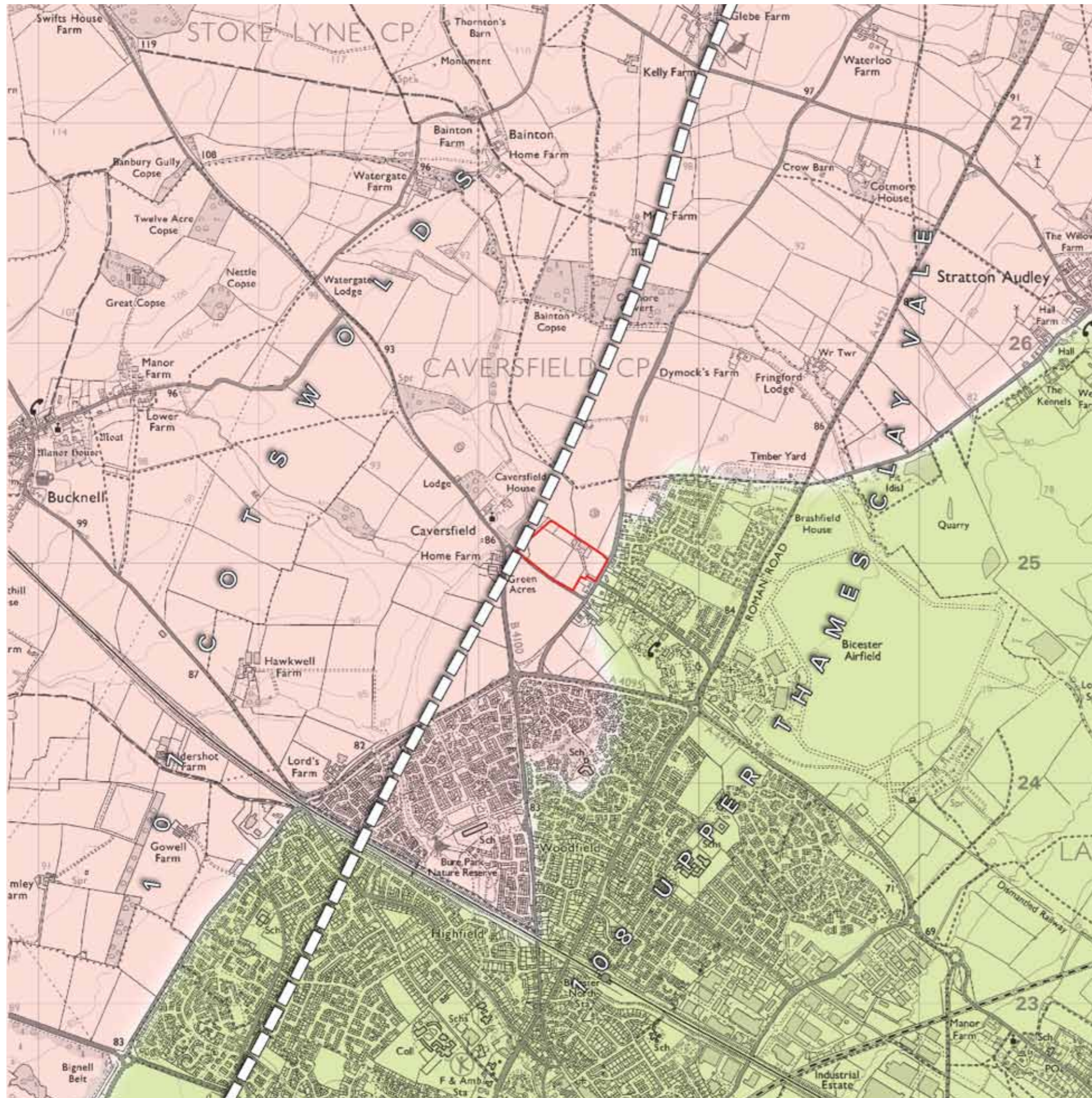
Figure 6 Drg No  
 Cala Homes Client  
 Bicester Framework Masterplan Project  
 (Draft SPD 2012) Title  
 n/s Scale









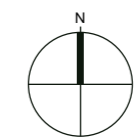
**Legend**

 Site boundary

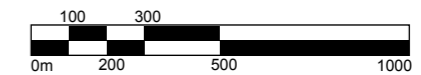


**Legend**

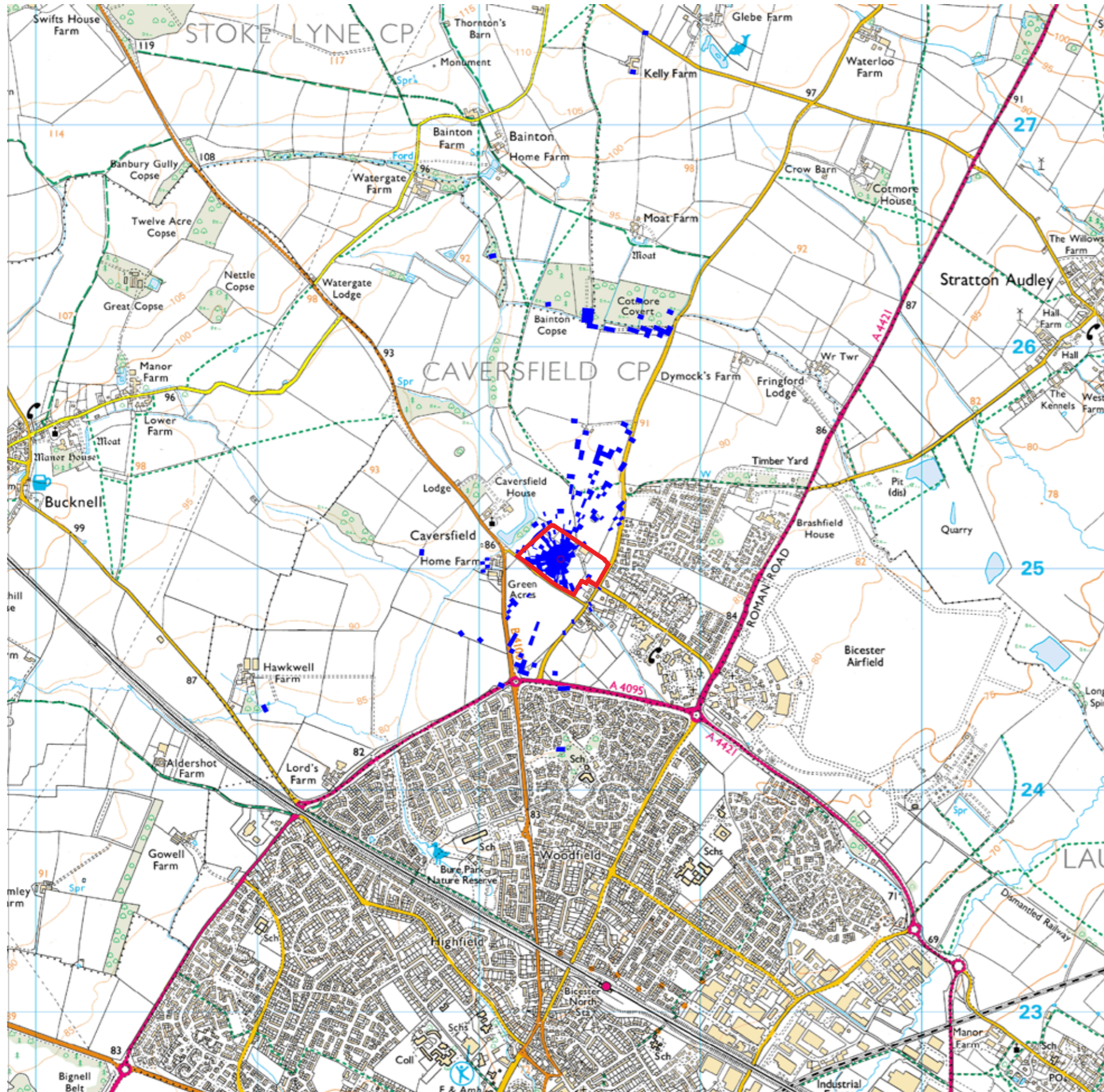
-  Site boundary
-  National Landscape Character Area
- Local Landscape Character**
-  Oxfordshire Estate Farmlands
-  Otmoor Lowlands





SCALE 1:20,000

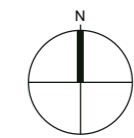


**Figure 8** Drg No  
**Cala Homes** Client  
**Caversfield, Bicester** Project  
**Landscape Character Areas** Title  
**1:20,000** Scale

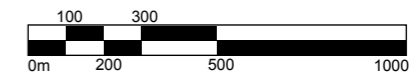


**Legend**

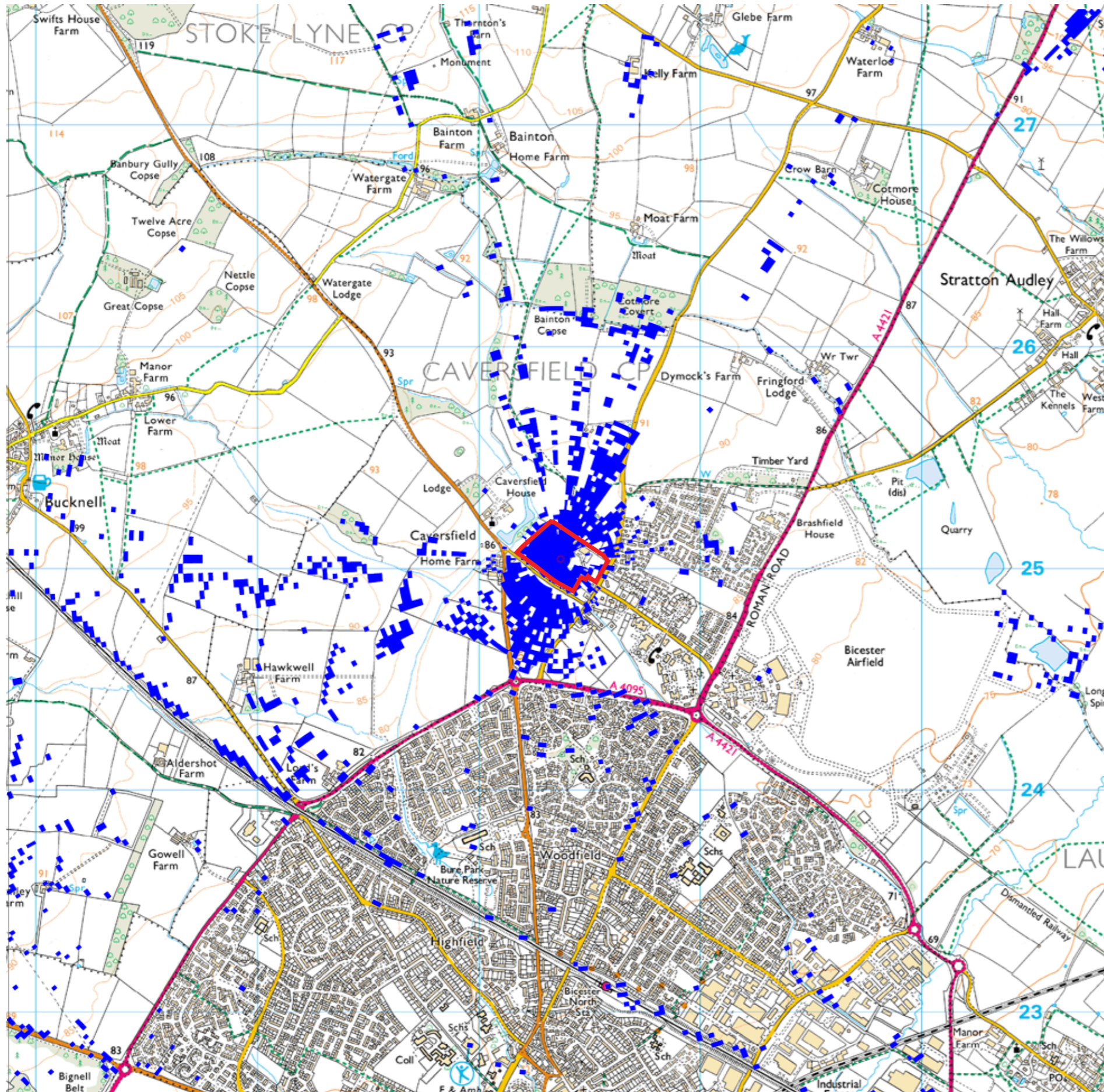
-  Site boundary
-  Zone of Theoretical Visibility of existing site (eye level at 1.5m height)





SCALE 1:20,000

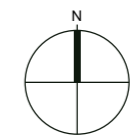


**Figure 9** Drg No  
**Cala Homes** Client  
**Caversfield, Bicester** Project  
**Zone of Theoretical Visibility (1.5m height)** Title  
**1:20,000** Scale



**Legend**

-  Site boundary
-  Zone of Theoretical Visibility of proposed development (development at 8.5m height)



SCALE 1:20,000

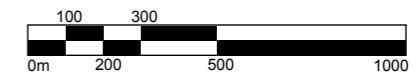
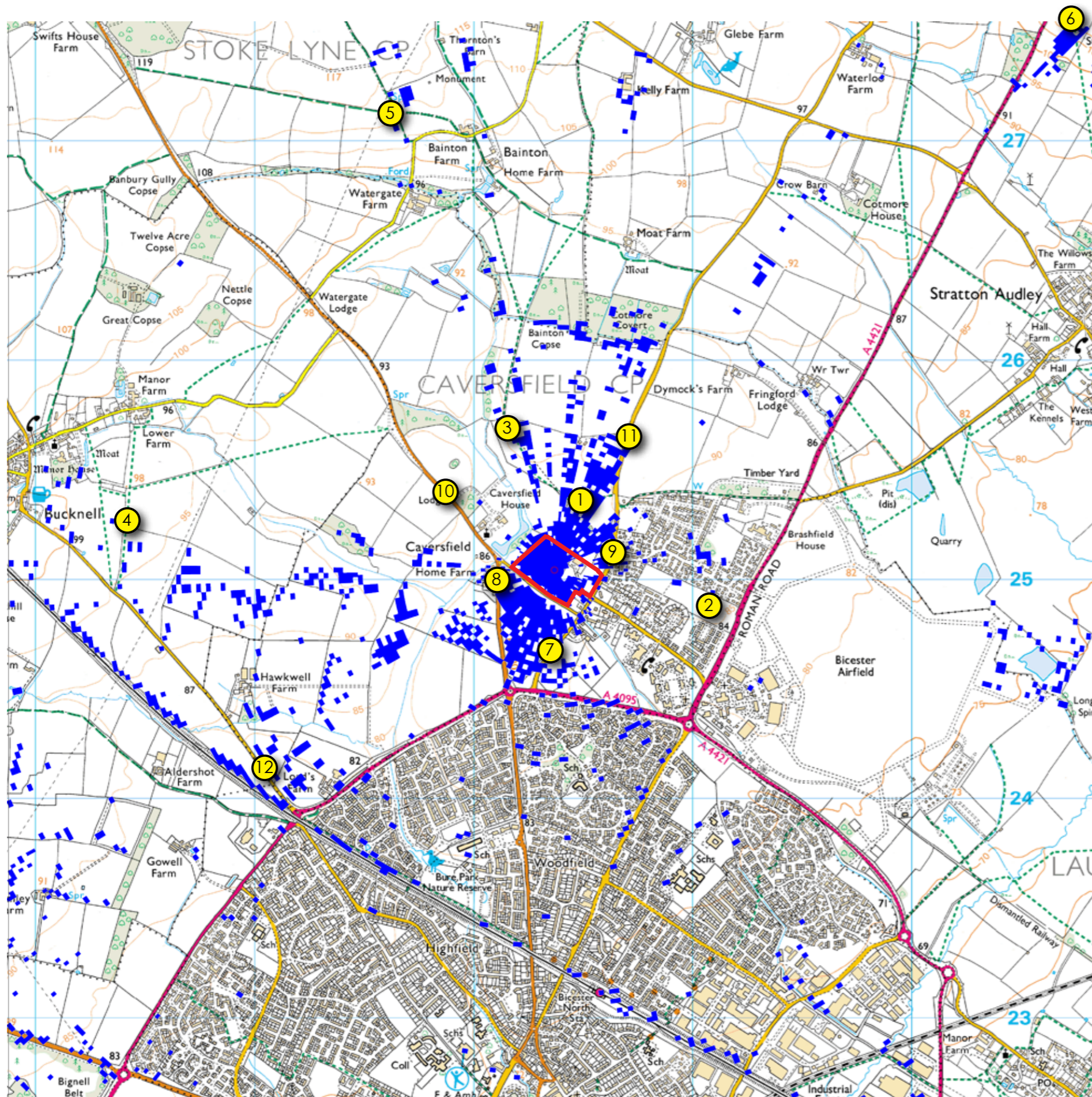
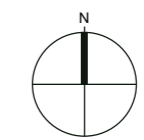


Figure 10 Drg No  
 Cala Homes Client  
 Caversfield, Bicester Project  
 Zone of Theoretical Visibility (8.5m height) Title  
 1:20,000 Scale

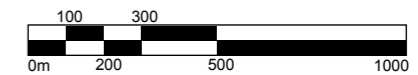


**Legend**

- Site boundary
- X Viewpoint location



SCALE 1:20,000



<p>Figure 11</p> <p><b>Cala Homes</b></p> <p><b>Caversfield, Bicester</b></p> <p><b>Viewpoint locations</b></p> <p><b>1:20,000</b></p>	<p>Drg No</p> <p>Client</p> <p>Project</p> <p>Title</p> <p>Scale</p>
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Extended panorama

Viewpoint 1 - Public footpath 153/1

Co-ordinates: 458477, 225355 (+-5m)  
 AOD: Approx. 91.6m  
 Distance to site: 225m  
 Camera: Canon EOS 5D MKII  
 Lens: Fixed 50mm  
 Horizontal field of view: 40°  
 Date: 05.03.13  
 Time: 15.42  
 Weather: Sunny  
 Light conditions: Bright



Viewing Distance - This is the distance from eye to paper to gain a true representation of the image. **VD at 30cm**

SUSCEPTIBILITY							VALUE				SENSITIVITY
Motorists	Pedestrian	Leisure Walker	Cyclist	Horse Rider	Active Recreation	Overall	Importance/value	Popularity	Status	Overall	
N/A	N/A	High	N/A	N/A	N/A	High	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium / High



Extended panorama

**Viewpoint 2 - Caversfield playing fields**

Co-ordinates: 459063, 224876 (+5m)  
 AOD: Approx. 85.6m  
 Distance to site: 350m  
 Camera: Canon EOS 5D MKII  
 Lens: Fixed 50mm  
 Horizontal field of view: 40°  
 Date: 05.03.13  
 Time: 11.11  
 Weather: Sunny  
 Light conditions: Bright



Viewing Distance - This is the distance from eye to paper to gain a true representation of the image. **VD at 30cm**

SUSCEPTIBILITY							VALUE				SENSITIVITY
Motorists	Pedestrian	Leisure Walker	Cyclist	Horse Rider	Active Recreation	Overall	Importance/value	Popularity	Status	Overall	
N/A	Negligible	N/A	N/A	N/A	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	High	Low	Medium	Negligible

**Figure 13** Drg No  
**Cala Homes** Client  
**Caversfield, Bicester** Project  
**Viewpoint 2** Title  
 - Scale



Extended panorama

Viewpoint 3 - Public footpath 153/1

Co-ordinates: 458177, 225674 (+-5m)  
 AOD: Approx. 91.6m  
 Distance to site: 500m  
 Camera: Canon EOS 5D MKII  
 Lens: Fixed 50mm  
 Horizontal field of view: 40°  
 Date: 05.03.13  
 Time: 15.27  
 Weather: Sunny  
 Light conditions: Bright

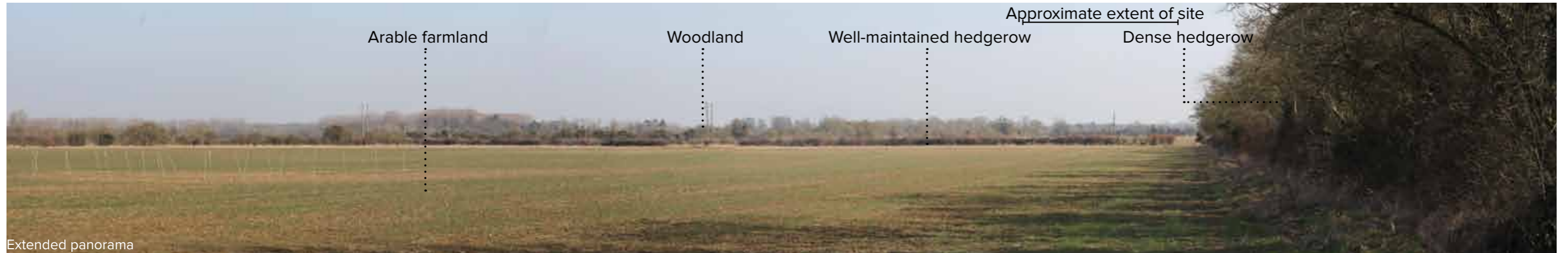
-20° (50mm) 0° 20° (50mm)



Viewing Distance - This is the distance from eye to paper to gain a true representation of the image. **VD at 30cm**

SUSCEPTIBILITY							VALUE				SENSITIVITY
Motorists	Pedestrian	Leisure Walker	Cyclist	Horse Rider	Active Recreation	Overall	Importance/value	Popularity	Status	Overall	
N/A	N/A	Medium	N/A	N/A	N/A	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium





Extended panorama

**Viewpoint 4 - On public footpath 148/9**

Co-ordinates: 456416, 225234 (+-5m)  
 AOD: Approx. 97.6m  
 Distance to site: 1.8km  
 Camera: Canon EOS 5D MKII  
 Lens: Fixed 50mm  
 Horizontal field of view: 40°  
 Date: 05.03.13  
 Time: 13.28  
 Weather: Sunny  
 Light conditions: Bright



Viewing Distance - This is the distance from eye to paper to gain a true representation of the image. **VD at 30cm**

SUSCEPTIBILITY							VALUE				SENSITIVITY
Motorists	Pedestrian	Leisure Walker	Cyclist	Horse Rider	Active Recreation	Overall	Importance/value	Popularity	Status	Overall	
N/A	N/A	Low	N/A	N/A	N/A	Low	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium	Low



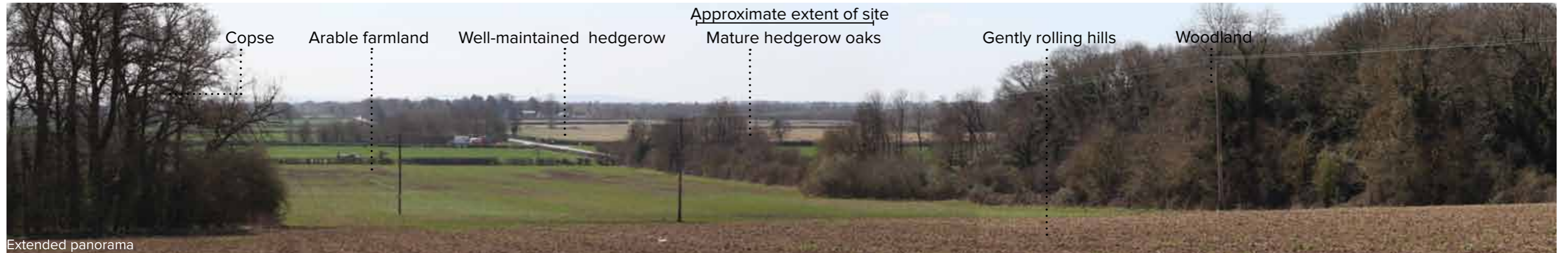
Viewpoint 5 - On public bridleway 367/9, adjacent to Bainton Farm

Co-ordinates: 457636, 227120 (+-5m)  
 AOD: Approx. 111.6m  
 Distance to site: 2km  
 Camera: Canon EOS 5D MKII  
 Lens: Fixed 50mm  
 Horizontal field of view: 40°  
 Date: 05.03.13  
 Time: 15.30  
 Weather: Sunny  
 Light conditions: Bright



Viewing Distance - This is the distance from eye to paper to gain a true representation of the image. **VD at 30cm**

SUSCEPTIBILITY							VALUE				SENSITIVITY
Motorists	Pedestrian	Leisure Walker	Cyclist	Horse Rider	Active Recreation	Overall	Importance/value	Popularity	Status	Overall	
N/A	N/A	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	N/A	Negligible	Low	Low	Medium	Low	Negligible



Extended panorama

Viewpoint 6 - On public footpath 371/1 north west of Stratton Audley

Co-ordinates: 460718, 227478 (+-5m)  
 AOD: Approx. 111.6m  
 Distance to site: 3.5km  
 Camera: Canon EOS 5D MKII  
 Lens: Fixed 50mm  
 Horizontal field of view: 40°  
 Date: 23.04.13  
 Time: 12.10  
 Weather: Sunny  
 Light conditions: Bright



Viewing Distance - This is the distance from eye to paper to gain a true representation of the image. **VD at 30cm**

SUSCEPTIBILITY							VALUE				SENSITIVITY
Motorists	Pedestrian	Leisure Walker	Cyclist	Horse Rider	Active Recreation	Overall	Importance/value	Popularity	Status	Overall	
N/A	N/A	Low	N/A	N/A	N/A	Low	Medium	Low	Medium	Medium	Low



Extended panorama

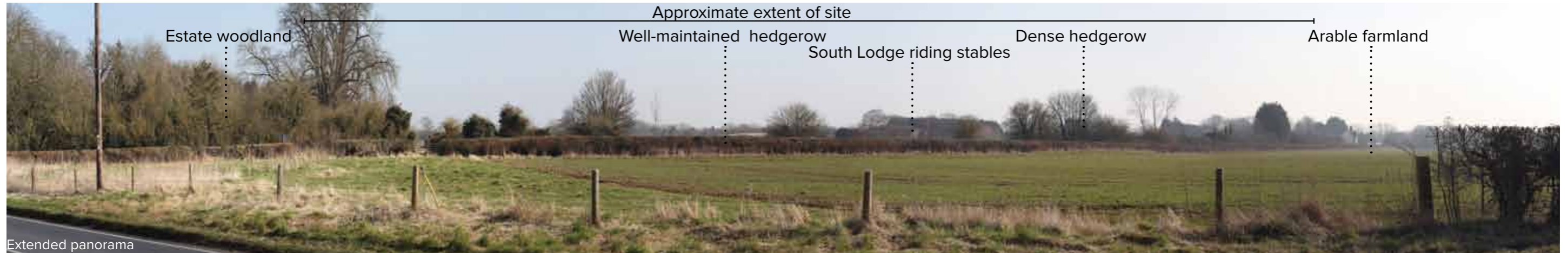
**Viewpoint 7 - Fringford Road south of site**

Co-ordinates: 458350, 224663 (+5m)  
 AOD: Approx. 86.6m  
 Distance to site: 200m  
 Camera: Canon EOS 5D MKII  
 Lens: Fixed 50mm  
 Horizontal field of view: 40°  
 Date: 05.03.13  
 Time: 10.49  
 Weather: Sunny  
 Light conditions: Bright



Viewing Distance - This is the distance from eye to paper to gain a true representation of the image. **VD at 30cm**

SUSCEPTIBILITY							VALUE				SENSITIVITY
Motorists	Pedestrian	Leisure Walker	Cyclist	Horse Rider	Active Recreation	Overall	Importance/value	Popularity	Status	Overall	
Low	Medium	N/A	Medium	N/A	N/A	Medium	High	Medium	Low	High	Medium



Viewpoint 8 - Banbury Road B4100 adjacent to Home Farm

Co-ordinates: 458113, 225004 (+-5m)  
 AOD: Approx. 86.6m  
 Distance to site: 100m  
 Camera: Canon EOS 5D MKII  
 Lens: Fixed 50mm  
 Horizontal field of view: 40°  
 Date: 05.03.13  
 Time: 10.33  
 Weather: Sunny  
 Light conditions: Bright



Viewing Distance - This is the distance from eye to paper to gain a true representation of the image. **VD at 30cm**

SUSCEPTIBILITY							VALUE				SENSITIVITY
Motorists	Pedestrian	Leisure Walker	Cyclist	Horse Rider	Active Recreation	Overall	Importance/value	Popularity	Status	Overall	
Low	Medium	N/A	Medium	N/A	N/A	Medium	Medium	Medium	Low	Medium	Medium



Extended panorama

Viewpoint 9 - Junction of Thompson Drive and Fringford Road

Co-ordinates: 458628, 225116 (+-5m)  
 AOD: Approx. 86.6m  
 Distance to site: 80m  
 Camera: Canon EOS 5D MKII  
 Lens: Fixed 50mm  
 Horizontal field of view: 40°  
 Date: 05.03.13  
 Time: 11.34  
 Weather: Sunny  
 Light conditions: Bright

-20° (50mm) 0° 20° (50mm)



Viewing Distance - This is the distance from eye to paper to gain a true representation of the image. **VD at 30cm**

SUSCEPTIBILITY							VALUE				SENSITIVITY
Motorists	Pedestrian	Leisure Walker	Cyclist	Horse Rider	Active Recreation	Overall	Importance/value	Popularity	Status	Overall	
Low	Low	N/A	Low	N/A	N/A	Low	Medium	Medium	Low	Medium	Low



Viewpoint 10 - Banbury Road B4100 adjacent to Caversfield House

Co-ordinates: 457890, 225380 (+5m)  
 AOD: Approx. 91.6m  
 Distance to site: 400m  
 Camera: Canon EOS 5D MKII  
 Lens: Fixed 50mm  
 Horizontal field of view: 40°  
 Date: 05.03.13  
 Time: 14.15  
 Weather: Sunny  
 Light conditions: Bright



Viewing Distance - This is the distance from eye to paper to gain a true representation of the image. **VD at 30cm**

SUSCEPTIBILITY							VALUE				SENSITIVITY
Motorists	Pedestrian	Leisure Walker	Cyclist	Horse Rider	Active Recreation	Overall	Importance/value	Popularity	Status	Overall	
Negligible	Negligible	N/A	Negligible	N/A	N/A	Negligible	Medium	Medium	Low	Medium	Negligible



Extended panorama

Viewpoint 11 - Fringford Road approx. 750m north of site

Co-ordinates: 458709, 225649 (+-5m)  
 AOD: Approx. 92.6m  
 Distance to site: 750m  
 Camera: Canon EOS 5D MKII  
 Lens: Fixed 50mm  
 Horizontal field of view: 40°  
 Date: 05.03.13  
 Time: 15.57  
 Weather: Sunny  
 Light conditions: Bright



Viewing Distance - This is the distance from eye to paper to gain a true representation of the image. **VD at 30cm**

SUSCEPTIBILITY							VALUE				SENSITIVITY
Motorists	Pedestrian	Leisure Walker	Cyclist	Horse Rider	Active Recreation	Overall	Importance/value	Popularity	Status	Overall	
Negligible	Negligible	N/A	Negligible	N/A	N/A	Negligible	Medium	Medium	Low	Medium	Negligible





Viewpoint 12 - Bucknell Road approx. 1.5km south-west of site

Co-ordinates: 457033, 224151 (+5m)  
 AOD: Approx. 86.6m  
 Distance to site: 1.5km  
 Camera: Canon EOS 5D MKII  
 Lens: Fixed 50mm  
 Horizontal field of view: 40°  
 Date: 05.03.13  
 Time: 13.03  
 Weather: Sunny  
 Light conditions: Bright







Viewing Distance - This is the distance from eye to paper to gain a true representation of the image. **VD at 30cm**

SUSCEPTIBILITY							VALUE				SENSITIVITY
Motorists	Pedestrian	Leisure Walker	Cyclist	Horse Rider	Active Recreation	Overall	Importance/value	Popularity	Status	Overall	
Negligible	Negligible	N/A	Negligible	N/A	N/A	Negligible	Low	Low	Low	Low	Negligible



**Legend**

-  Site boundary
-  Retained vegetation
-  Proposed tree planting
-  Proposed edge planting

<b>1</b>	Retained vegetation	
<b>2</b>	New hedgerow and tree planting	
<b>3</b>	Existing woodland	
<b>4</b>	'Estate' tree planting	

**Figure 24** Drg No  
**Cala Homes** Client  
**Caversfield, Bicester** Project  
**LVA mitigation** Title  
**1:1,500** Scale



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**DEFINE**

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