



South Newington Road,
Bloxham

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

Prepared by
CSA Environmental

on behalf of
Gladman Developments Ltd

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 CSA Environmental has been appointed by Gladman Developments Ltd to undertake a landscape and visual impact assessment of land at South Newington Road, Bloxham ('the Site'). The report supports a planning application for up to 95 residential dwellings, public open space and associated infrastructure. This assessment has informed the preparation of a Development Framework Plan (**Appendix F**).
- 1.2 The Site is located on the south western edge of Bloxham, and comprises two pastoral fields and a barn with a farm access road on the southern edge. For descriptive purposes, the land parcels are labelled Areas A and B. The location and extent of the Site is shown on the Location Plan in **Appendix A** (which shows the land parcels) and on the Aerial Photograph in **Appendix B**.
- 1.3 This assessment describes the existing landscape character and quality of the Site and the surrounding area. The report then goes on to discuss the ability of the Site to accommodate the proposed development and the landscape and visual effects on the wider area.

Methodology

- 1.4 This assessment is based on a Site visit undertaken by a suitably qualified and experienced Landscape Architect in January 2017. The weather conditions at the time were clear and visibility was good in near, middle and long distance views.
- 1.5 In landscape and visual impact assessments, a distinction is drawn between landscape effects (i.e. effects on the character or quality of the landscape irrespective of whether there are any views of the landscape, or viewers to see them) and visual effects (i.e. effects on people's views of the landscape from public vantage points, including public rights of way and other areas with general public access, as well as effects from any residential properties). This report therefore considers the potential impact of the development on both landscape character and visibility. The methodology utilised in this report is contained in **Appendix G**.
- 1.6 Photographs contained within this document (**Appendix C**) were taken using a digital camera with a lens focal length approximating to 50mm, to give a similar depth of vision to the human eye. In some instances images have been combined to create a panorama.

2.0 LANDSCAPE POLICY CONTEXT

National Planning Policy Framework (February 2019)

- 2.1 National policy is set out in the Revised National Planning Policy Framework ('NPPF') and those parts relevant to this assessment are summarised below.
- 2.2 Paragraph 10 and 11 of the NPPF state that at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should be applied in relation to both plan-making and decision-taking.
- 2.3 Paragraph 20 of the NPPF states that strategic policies should set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and quality of development, and make sufficient provision for, among other elements, the '*(d) conservation and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment, including landscapes and green infrastructure, and planning measures to address climate change mitigation and adaptation.*'
- 2.4 Section 12 of the NPPF sets out that planning policies and decisions should support the creation of high quality buildings and places. Paragraph 125 states that '*... design policies should be developed with local communities so they reflect local aspirations, and are grounded in an understanding and evaluation of each area's defining characteristics.*'
- 2.5 Paragraph 127 states that planning policies and decisions, should ensure that developments, amongst others:
 - '*will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;*
 - '*are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and effective landscaping;*
 - '*are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change...*'
- 2.6 Section 15 of the NPPF deals with conserving and enhancing the natural environment. Paragraph 170 of the document states that the planning system should contribute to the protection and enhancement of the natural and local environment through, among other things, protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, '*... (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan)*'.

The paragraph also outlines that the planning system should recognise the, '*...intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland.*'

Planning Policy Guidance

- 2.7 As set out on the Planning Policy Guidance ('PPG') website, the PPG will in due course be updated to reflect the changes following the publication of the Revised NPPF, and any hyperlinks to NPPF 2012 should be disregarded. The PPG paragraphs as set out on the website will therefore remain relevant until they are updated, insofar as they are consistent with the Revised NPPF 2019. The guidance as relevant to this assessment covers landscape and the natural environment and the design of new developments.
- 2.8 The Design section of the guidance describes the importance of good design as an integral part of providing sustainable development. Paragraph 6 (ID: 26-006-20140306) states:
- 'Design impacts on how people interact with places. Although design is only part of the planning process it can affect a range of economic, social and environmental objectives beyond the requirement for good design in its own right. Planning policies and decisions should seek to ensure the physical environment supports these objectives.'*
- 2.9 Paragraph 7 of the Design section notes that the successful integration of all forms of development with their surrounding context is an important consideration.
- 2.10 Paragraph 001 of the Natural Environment Section of the Guidance states, among other things that, '*Local Plans should include strategic policies for the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment, including landscape. This includes designated landscapes but also the wider countryside.*'

Local Policy Context

- 2.11 The Cherwell District Council adopted development plan consists of a number of documents, with the policies shown on the Interactive Adopted Policies Map. The documents of relevance to this assessment are the Local Plan 2011-2031 Part 1 incorporating the re-adopted Policy Bicester 13 (adopted in December 2016), which sets out the Council's strategic planning policy and site allocations to 2031 and the 'saved' (retained) policies from the Adopted Cherwell Local Plan 1996.

- 2.12 In addition, the Council is preparing their new Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 (Part 2) which will contain non-strategic site allocations and development management policies. Adoption is currently planned for February 2020, however until such time as the new Local Plan has been formally adopted, the Cherwell Local Plan Part 1 and the 'saved' policies within the Adopted Cherwell Local Plan 1996 remain relevant, insofar as they are compliant with the NPPF.
- 2.13 In 2004, the Council began preparation of the Cherwell Local Plan 2011. Given the changes to planning law, they did not continue with its preparation, but they approved this document as a non-statutory plan. It is relevant in relation to the Council's approach to Areas of High Landscape value, under policy EN34 as detailed below.
- 2.14 The other planning document of relevance is the Bloxham Neighbourhood Development Plan which was 'made' (brought into legal force) in December 2016.

The Cherwell Local Plan 2011 – 2031 Part 1 Adopted 20 July 2015 (incorporating Policy Bicester 13 re-adopted on 19 December 2016)

- 2.15 Those parts of the Local Plan relevant to the Site for the purpose of this assessment are summarised below.
- 2.16 The Plan sets out the Council's vision for Cherwell District which includes among other aims the protection and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environments, maintaining the distinctiveness of its rural character, as well as its natural and built heritage and market towns.
- 2.17 **Policy BSC 10: Open Space, Outdoor Sport and Recreation Provision** states that the Council will encourage partnership working such that there will be a sufficient quantity and quality of, and convenient access to open space, sport and recreation provision, by among other measures, ensuring that new development contributes to the provision of open space and recreation facilities according to the need it generates.
- 2.18 **Policy BSC 11: Local Standards of Provision – Outdoor Recreation** sets out the District's quantitative and qualitative standards of provision for open space, sport and recreation according to the size and nature of the development, and requires a financial contribution for off-site provision where this cannot be met on site.
- 2.19 **Policy ESD 7: Sustainable Drainage Systems ('SuDS')** requires that all development uses SuDS to manage surface water run-off.

2.20 **Policy ESD 10: Protection and Enhancement of Biodiversity and the Natural Environment** seeks to protect and enhance biodiversity and the natural environment by achieving the following aims:

- A net gain in biodiversity will be sought by protecting, managing, enhancing and extending existing resources and creating new ones;
- An increase in the number of trees in the District, and the protection of existing ones;
- Where significant harm as a result of a new development cannot be avoided, or the development relocated to an alternative site with less likely harm, or adequately mitigated, or compensated for, it will not be permitted; and
- The incorporation, retention and where possible enhancement of features of nature conservation value, and those that encourage biodiversity; existing ecological networks to be identified and maintained to avoid habitat fragmentation and form an essential component of green infrastructure.

2.21 **Policy ESD 13: Local Landscape Protection and Enhancement** states that the character and appearance of the landscape, its features or habitats, in particular those on the urban fringe, should be restored, managed or enhanced, and where appropriate new ones created, including the planting of woodlands, trees and hedgerows. The policy goes on to require development to respect and enhance the local landscape character, mitigating the effect where damage cannot be avoided, and lists circumstances where proposals will not be permitted, where:

- There is undue visual intrusion into open countryside;
- There is undue harm to important natural landscape features and topography;
- The development is inconsistent with local character;
- There is impact on areas judged as having a high level of tranquillity;
- There is harm to the setting of settlements, buildings, structures or other landmark features; or
- There is harm to the historic value of the landscape.

2.22 Finally, policy ESD 13 requires proposals to have regard for the information contained in the Council's Countryside Design Summary Supplementary Planning Guidance and the Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study, and require proposals to be accompanied by a landscape assessment where appropriate.

2.23 **Policy ESD 15: The Character of the Built and Historic Environment** states that the Council considers successful design to be founded on an

understanding of, and respect for, the area's unique built, natural and cultural context. The policy requires new development to follow this principle, by complementing and enhancing the character of its context through sensitive siting, layout and high quality design, and by complementing any distinctive natural or historical assets in its vicinity.

2.24 **Policy ESD 17: Green Infrastructure** states that the green infrastructure network will be maintained and enhanced by among other measures:

- Pursuing opportunities for joint working to maintain and improve the green infrastructure network, whilst protecting sites of nature conservation importance;
- Protect and enhance the features of existing green infrastructure network, and improve the connectivity between sites; and
- For all new development ensure that green infrastructure network considerations are integral to their planning, maximising the opportunity to maintain and extend the green infrastructure links to form a multi-functional network of open space.

2.25 **Policy Villages 1: Village Categorisation** places Bloxham within Category A, Service Villages and states that Category A and B villages will be considered suitable for minor development in addition to infilling and conversions.

2.26 **Policy Villages 2: Distributing Growth across the Rural Areas** states that 750 homes will be delivered at Category A villages, alongside the rural allowance for small site 'windfalls' and planning permissions for 10 or more dwellings already in process. The policy goes on to state that sites will be identified in the preparation of the Local Plan Part 2, Neighbourhood Plans and through determination of applications for planning permission. The policy lists criteria which will be considered when identifying and considering sites, of which the following are relevant to the Site:

- Significant adverse impact can be avoided to heritage or wildlife assets;
- The development could contribute to enhancing the built environment; and
- Significant adverse landscape impacts can be avoided.

2.27 **Policy Villages 4: Meeting the Need for Open Space, Sport and Recreation** addresses deficiencies by area, and states that in the Rural North sub-area, provision of 6.38ha of amenity open space to 2031 should be prioritised to five villages including Bloxham, and then goes on to list the quantum of playing pitches and open, natural and semi-

natural green space by Sub Area that was assessed as required to meet the need to 2026.

Cherwell Local Plan 1996 – ‘saved’ policies

- 2.28 Those ‘saved’ policies which are of relevance to the Site are listed below.
- 2.29 **Saved Policy H18 New dwellings** in the countryside states that new dwellings beyond the built-up limits of settlements will not be permitted; aims to protect the countryside and identified the only permitted forms of development as those that are essential for agriculture and forestry.
- 2.30 **Saved Policy C28 Layout, design and external appearance of new development** states that all new development will be required to be sympathetic to the character of the rural or urban context, ensuring standards of layout design and external appearance support this aim, and in designated areas, whether nationally or locally, development is to be of high standard using traditional local building materials.
- 2.31 **Saved Policy C30 Design Control** requires that new housing development is compatible with the appearance, character, layout, scale and density of existing dwellings in the vicinity and that any proposals respect standards of amenity and privacy acceptable to the Local Planning Authority.
- 2.32 **Saved Policy C31 Compatibility of proposals in residential areas** requires that any development be compatible with the residential character of the area; and goes on to state that nuisance or visual intrusion as a result new development will not be permitted.
- 2.33 **Saved Policy C33 Protection of important gaps of undeveloped land** states that among other things that any undeveloped gaps of land which are considered important to preserving the character of the loose-knit settlement structure, or in preserving a view or a feature of recognised amenity or historical value will be retained and protected.

Bloxham Neighbourhood Plan 2015 – 2031 (‘made’ December 2016)

- 2.34 The Neighbourhood Plan contains four themes, with parts B and C of the second theme, to **Protect and enhance our rural heritage** being relevant to this assessment. This states that development outside the Conservation Area of the village should protect, enhance and contribute to the rural character of the village as a whole. It goes on to require that developments recognise and protect the significant components of rural character which they identify as lower density housing, the role of public and private open space and key views from

within the village and from significant viewpoints on public rights of ways around the village. The document notes that views of the parish church and certain parts of Bloxham School are of particular significance.

2.35 **Policy BL11 Contributing to the Rural Character of the Village** states that all development should be encouraged to respect, and make a positive contribution to, the local character and the historic and natural assets of the area, and goes on to require that the design and materials chosen should preserve and enhance their rural heritage, landscape and sense of place. The document then lists more specific requirements, and among other things requires good use of trees, garden space, hedgerows and green space to soften the street scene; to preserve existing and create new areas of open space to retain the rural character; and to protect and wherever possible to enhance biodiversity and habitats.

2.36 Three key views are identified in the document:

- Area fronting Bloxham School main buildings, at the northern approach into the village;
- Views to and from Hobb Hill to the northwest of the village; and
- Views to and from the Red Lion Garden which lies between the High Street and Old Bridge Road in the centre of the village.

2.37 In relation to the Site, there are no views to or from the Site from the northern approach, or from the Red Lion Garden. There are however views to and from the higher elevations of Hobb Hill, as discussed in the Visibility section in Chapter 3.

2.38 **Policy BL17 Protect Important Recreation Spaces** lists three areas, designated as Local Green Spaces where development not related to their current use will be resisted, including the Recreation Ground to the northeast of the Site. It goes on to state that public rights of way will be protected and that vehicular traffic will be, where possible, kept away from routes through green landscaped or open space areas.

3.0 SITE CONTEXT

Site Context

- 3.1 The Site is located on the south western edge of Bloxham. The village is located approximately 5.5km to the southwest of Banbury, in the northern part of Cherwell District. The Site consists of two pastoral fields with a barn and farm access track on the southern boundary. The Site extends westwards, with the south eastern corner of the Site fronting onto South Newington Road and the rest of the eastern boundary adjacent to nos. 11 and 12 South Newington Road. The Site location and its immediate context are illustrated on the Location Plan and Aerial Photograph in **Appendices A** and **B**, and on the photographs contained within **Appendix C**.
- 3.2 Indented into the north eastern edge of the Site is the South Newington Recreation Ground, which contains a small sports pavilion, playing fields, a children's playground in the north eastern corner and some trees along the western edge close to the boundary with the Site. The southern built edge of the village abuts part of the northern boundary of the Site and the northern boundary of the Recreation Ground. Adjoining the Site's northern boundary to the northwest and extending to the west is a tree lined disused railway part of which forms the southern edge of the small, undesignated Slade Nature Reserve which extends to the northwest of the Site.
- 3.3 The majority of the village stretches to the northeast, although there is some development along Barford and Milton Roads on higher ground to the southeast. A large proportion of the village consists of the Conservation Area, with buildings dating from the 11th century to the present day. Beyond this, to the north and south of the Conservation Area the village is characterised by a small amount of pre-war, and mainly post-war housing. On the outer edges to the north, southwest and southeast there are 21st century developments, some of which are under construction at the time of writing. The housing immediately to the north of the Site comprises properties which date from the 1960's and 1970's.
- 3.4 The village is situated within a landscape of complex topography, with rounded hills, often with steep sides rising from numerous streams and larger watercourses which cut through the area. Trees are a strong feature of the landscape. They line streams, mark the course of the disused railway, are a feature of the hedgerows and comprise a limited number of scattered woodland blocks. Beyond the village, the landscape consists of a mix of arable and pastoral fields, bound by a network of strong hedgerows with hedgerow trees, scattered villages and to the southeast, a large MOD Wireless Station.

National Landscape Character

- 3.5 Natural England has produced profiles for England's National Character Areas ('NCA'), which divides England into 159 distinct natural areas, defined by a unique combination of landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity, cultural and economic activity. The Site lies within the north eastern part of the Cotswolds National Character Area (NCA 107) which borders on the Northampton Uplands NCA (NCA 95).
- 3.6 The Cotswolds area is defined by its underlying geology which is predominantly limestone, and the key characteristics are identified as:
- Rolling, open, high wold plateaux moulded by physical and human influences, with arable fields and large blocks of woodland, divided by small, narrow valleys;
 - Incised landscapes with deep wide valleys;
 - Flat, open dip slope landscape with extensive arable farmland;
 - Prominent outliers within the lowlands;
 - Honey-coloured Cotswold stone in walls, houses and churches; and
 - Attractive stone villages with a unity of design and materials.
- 3.7 The landscape in the wider area around the Site contains some of the features described above, but the landscape is smaller scale, and is more contained than the description suggests. In addition, although there is a strong unity in many of the villages, the materials of the traditional buildings are of ironstone, rather than of Cotswolds Stone.

County Landscape Character

- 3.8 Oxfordshire County Council has undertaken a landscape and biodiversity appraisal of the County, the Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study ('OWLS') which was completed in 2004. The purpose of the study is to assess the landscape and wildlife resources of the County and to use the results to help safeguard, maintain and enhance this resource. The study identifies the Site as situated within the 'Upstanding Village Farmland' landscape type ('LT').
- 3.9 The 'Upstanding Village Farmland' landscape type covers the elevated landscapes in the north of the county, to the north and south of Banbury, around Claydon and Kidlington, Great Bourton, Bloxham and Deddington. The study describes the landscape type as '*a hilly landscape with a strong pattern of hedgerows and nucleated villages characteristically built from the local ironstone*'. The key characteristics of this landscape type are identified as:
- '*a steep-sided, undulating landform*;

- *a well-defined geometric pattern of medium-sized fields enclosed by prominent hedgerows; [and]*
- *a strong settlement pattern of compact, nucleated villages of varying sizes with little dispersal in the wider countryside.'*

3.10 The study goes on to identify and describe local character areas and identifies Bloxham as falling within Character Area NU/9. This area is described as being characterised by regularly-shaped, small-sized grass fields and larger arable fields with ridge and furrow pasture being common. Fields are enclosed by a prominent network of intact hawthorn and elm hedges which, in places, are overgrown and gappy. Mature ash, oak and sycamore trees are scattered throughout the area becoming denser where there is more grassland, along roadsides, country lanes and the disused railway line.

3.11 The landscape strategy for the landscape type is to conserve and enhance the strong landscape pattern of hedgerows and hedgerow trees, the nucleated settlement pattern and the strong vernacular character of the villages.

3.12 The landscape guidelines to support the landscape strategy for the Upstanding Village Farmland LT which are relevant to the Site are as follows:

- Field pattern to be strengthened and enhanced by planting up gappy hedgerows with characteristic species including hawthorn, oak and ash;
- Environmentally sensitive maintenance of hedgerows to be promoted in particular along roadsides, including coppicing and layering;
- Permanent and ridge and furrow pasture on steeper slopes and hillsides to be conserved; and
- Enhance tree cover through small-scale woodland planting next to stream sides and on steeper hillsides, to retain the feeling of openness and avoiding blocked off views.

3.13 From our own assessment of the Site and its surroundings we broadly concur with this assessment of the landscape in the vicinity of the Site, although its character is influenced by the recreation ground and edge of settlement location.

District Landscape Character

3.14 Cherwell District Landscape Character Assessment was undertaken on behalf of Cherwell District Council by Cobham Resource Consultants in November 1995. The assessment identifies the Site as lying within the

Ironstone Hills and Valleys landscape character area ('LCA'), and within rural landscape type R2 - large-scale undulating farmland. The Site lies within a further sub-divided landscape type, sub-area R2b which is described as a rolling arable landscape with a strong field pattern, copses and hedgerow trees.

3.15 The document describes the Ironstone Hills and Valleys as an upland area which forms part of the northern extent of the Cotswold Hills. The main distinguishing features are identified as the extremely complex topography and the style of the vernacular buildings. In some areas medium and large arable fields are still surrounded by hedges and boundaries are marked by hedgerow trees. However, much of the higher land and gentler slopes now have a fairly open arable landscape. The area also includes a number of steep sided valleys and narrow valley floors with a pattern of smaller fields and mixed farming. The dominant species of hedgerow trees are oak, ash and beech, while the hedges also include young elm trees.

3.16 The document identifies four strategies for the District's landscapes: conservation, repair, restoration and reconstruction. The Site lies within an area identified for repair. Repair landscapes are described as areas where the landscape structure is still reasonably strong and worthy of conservation, but where some or all of the individual features or overall structure are showing noticeable decline. The report states that:

“Development in these areas must be sensitively sited, designed and integrated to ensure that the rural, unspoilt character of the landscape is maintained. However, precisely because their existing landscape structure is so strong, these landscapes should be able to absorb limited areas of sensitive development.”

3.17 The report lists specific enhancement measures to consider, and those relevant to the Site include:

- Good hedgerow management to ensure removal is avoided and thin hedgerows are gapped up;
- Continued renewal of hedgerow trees to ensure successive planting, using appropriate trees according to soil type, i.e. oak and ash on heavier soils and beech on limestone outcrops;
- Development to be permitted only where it is sensitively sited, and its character should be designed to blend in with the spatial structure of the village; and
- Care to be taken with the design of road improvement schemes to avoid urbanisation of the road's character.

- 3.18 In our own assessment of the landscape in the vicinity of the Site, we broadly concur with the above character assessment, however the Site is influenced by the urbanising effect of its proximity to the settlement edge, and the recreation ground which adjoins the north eastern boundary.

Countryside Design Summary June 1998

- 3.19 Cherwell District Council have produced a 'Countryside Design Summary' (June 1998), which aims to guide development in the rural areas of the district to maintain and enhance the distinctive character of the countryside and the settlements within it. The document identifies four distinct landscape areas within the District.
- 3.20 Bloxham is located within the Ironstone Downs area, which is described as a strongly undulating landscape, with steeply sided, narrow valleys containing small brooks dissecting the area. Quarrying is a feature, while extensive woodland is not characteristic. The farmland is mixed, with large-scale arable farmlands on the more open uplands, and intimate small-scale pastoral fields in the valleys.
- 3.21 The landscape section sets out a series of implications for new development within the area, of which the following are of relevance:
- Retain existing trees and hedgerows. New planting should reflect local landscape structure and character, helping development to integrate into the landscape; and
 - All forms of development should be carefully sited to avoid locations which would be visually prominent, intrusive or out of character or would harm a feature or site, which is important to the character of the area.

Statutory and Non-Statutory Designations

- 3.22 The Multi Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside Map ('MAGIC') and the Cherwell District Interactive Adopted Policies Map shows that the Site is not covered by any statutory or non-statutory designations for landscape character or quality.

Conservation Area, Scheduled Monument and Listed Buildings

- 3.23 The Bloxham Conservation Area, which is situated approximately 0.3km to the northeast of the Site, contains a large number of listed buildings and structures most of which are Grade II listed, although it also contains the Church of St Mary (Grade I), and opposite it, Rectory Farmhouse (Grade II*). There are no views of the Site from these designated heritage

assets. There are further Grade II listed buildings to the northwest and southwest between 1km and 2km of the Site, but given the intervening vegetation and the undulating topography, there is no intervisibility between these and the Site (please refer to **Appendix D**).

Public Rights of Way

- 3.24 A public footpath (136/5/10) runs along part of the northern boundary of the Site and then cuts across the north western corner, linking Bloxham to Milcombe. This footpath is connected to a network of public footpaths and bridleways in the wider landscape.
- 3.25 The details of this network of footpaths are shown on the Definitive Rights of Way Map at **Appendix E**.

Tree Preservation Orders ('TPO')

- 3.26 There are no TPOs which cover the Site, however the poplar trees in the neighbouring Bloxham Recreational Ground, close to the boundary of the Site are covered by TPOs 06/2008/T1, 06/2008/T2, 06/2008/T5 and 06/2008/T6. This was confirmed by an email from the Council dated 03 January 2017.

4.0 SITE DESCRIPTION AND VISIBILITY

Site Description

- 4.1 The Site comprises two pastoral fields (referred to as Areas A and B) divided by a mature, low cut hedgerow, a barn and a farm access road to the south of Area B as shown on the Aerial Photograph in **Appendix B**.
- 4.2 Area A comprises a roughly rectangular pastoral field, with a small extension to the north eastern corner which wraps around the north western corner of Area B. Area A is bound on the western side of the northern boundary by a disused railway line, lined with tree belts. The eastern part of the northern boundary is bound by some post and wire and post and rail fencing, garden fences and hedges all associated with housing on the southern sides of Colesbourne Road and at the southern end of Hyde Grove. For most of the eastern boundary the Area is bound by the mature hedgerow which divides Area A and B, while to the north east, the Area is bound by a post and wire fence which separates the Site from the Recreation Ground. For the majority of the southern boundary, the Area is bound by a neatly clipped hedgerow, while in the south western corner and along the full length of the western boundary, the Area is bound by a narrow strip of woodland and a ditch.
- 4.3 Area B comprises a roughly rectangular pastoral field, with a barn on the southern boundary. A field access road runs along the length of the southern boundary, lined on each side by neatly clipped hedgerows. A barn is situated roughly in the centre of the southern boundary of the Area. To the west and on the north western corner is the mature hedgerow which divides Areas A and B. A storm damaged white willow marks the north western boundary, while further east, the post and wire fence of the adjoining Recreation Ground comprises the remainder of the northern boundary to the Area. The Area is bound on the east by a garden fence, a wall and a stretch of domestic hedge associated with the semi-detached houses adjacent to the eastern boundary, while to their south, the eastern boundary is marked by a short stretch of unmanaged hedgerow with a lower clipped hedgerow at the south eastern corner.

Topography

- 4.4 The topography of the Site falls gently by up to 5m from a slight dome at approximately 116m Above Ordinance Datum ('AOD') which is situated towards the southern boundary of Area A. The fall is to the corners of the Site: the north western corner is the lowest at approximately 111m AOD,

while south western and south eastern corners are at approximately 114m AOB, and the north western corner at approximately 113m AOD.

- 4.5 The landscape around Bloxham in particular to the northwest and west consists of closely undulating landform, with fairly steep sided hills cut through by numerous water courses. Hobb Hill to the northwest of the village, which has a spot height of 166m AOD plays a strong part in the setting of the village, while close by other hills reach heights of between 148m and 174m AOD, with valleys typically at 120m AOD. The disused railway embankment at the north western edge of the Site forms a distinct feature within the local landform.

Visibility

- 4.6 An assessment of the visibility of the Site was undertaken and a series of photographs taken from public vantage points, rights of way and public highways. The assessment was undertaken in mid-January when the vegetation is fully out of leaf and the Site is at its most visible in views from the surrounding area. The viewpoints are illustrated on the Location Plan and Aerial Photograph contained in **Appendices A** and **B** and on the photographs in **Appendix C**.
- 4.7 From our assessment it is apparent that the Site is partially visible from the immediate area both from public vantage points and from some residential properties on the southern edges of the settlement. Intervening hedgerows in the immediate vicinity, and further from the Site, the undulating topography and the woodland associated with The Slade Nature Reserve and the tree belts which line the disused railway line prevent further views of the Site. The key representative views of the Site are described in the tables contained in **Appendix G** and are summarised below.

Near Distance Views

- 4.8 Views from South Newington Road are limited to those adjacent to the Recreation Ground and the Site, while further to the southwest, intervening hedgerows prevent views of the interior of the Site. There are some views of the roof of the sports pavilion in the Recreation Ground as the topography of the road rises to the southwest (**Photographs 21, 22** and **24**).
- 4.9 There are partial, filtered views of the interior of the Site from the eastern end of Bloxham Road, but for most of the road the intervening vegetation and farm buildings prevent views (**Photograph 23**).
- 4.10 Views of the Site are possible from the public footpath which crosses the Site (136/5/10) and from the Recreation Ground. These are partially

limited by the internal hedgerow within the Site and the small dome in the topography within Area B. Beyond the Site to the west, the unmanaged western boundary hedgerow prevents all but partial, filtered views, while further west, the successive field boundary hedgerows prevent views (**Photographs 02, 07, 09 and 26**).

- 4.11 For most of the public bridleway to the west of the Site (136/9/30, and continuing as 298/1/10, 136/9/20 and 136/9/10), views are prevented by the intervening topography and vegetation. There is however, a partial and highly filtered view of the Site from just south of the disused railway line, although the interior in this view is not distinct (**Photographs 27, 28 and 29**).
- 4.12 Views of the Site from Hobb Hill on the public footpath (136/6/20) are possible from the highest elevation, where the southern part of the Site is seen across the existing housing within the village, although it does not comprise a large component of the view (**Photograph 30**).
- 4.13 The footpaths discussed above are all part of the Bloxham Circular Walk.
- 4.14 There is an informal footpath within The Slade Nature Reserve and along the disused railway which extends to the west. Due to the wooded nature of both of these features, there are few opportunities for views. Where views are possible, these are limited to a partial view of Area A from the entrance to the Nature Reserve from the northern Site boundary and views of Area A and filtered views of Area B from a few gaps in the trees and thicket between the Site and the footpath along the disused railway line (**Photographs 07 and 07a**).
- 4.15 There are no views of the interior of the Site from the public footpath (298/9/10 and 136/8/10) to the southwest of the Site (**Photograph 25**).
- 4.16 There are views of Area B and filtered views of Area A from the pavilion and within the Recreation Ground indented into the north eastern corner of the Site (**Photograph 12**).
- 4.17 With regards to residential views, there are views from properties to the north of the Site and to the north of the Recreation Ground on Colesbourne Road, Hyde and Orchard Groves and Ludford Gardens. These are mainly limited to first and some ground floor views, with those adjacent to the Recreation Ground set back from the Site. There are views from the first floor windows of the pair of semi-detached houses on the eastern Site boundary, filtered by the internal hedgerow into Area A. There are some limited views, and where these are possible they are highly filtered from the properties on the western edges of Barford Road, Manning Close and Gascoigne Way. The majority of houses along these roads do not have views of the Site (**Photograph 12**).

4.18 There are no medium or longer distance views of the Site.

Landscape Quality, Value and Sensitivity

4.19 The Site is not covered by any statutory or non-statutory designation for character or quality. The Site and the surrounding landscape is broadly characteristic of the 'Ironstone Hills and Valleys' Landscape Character Area as detailed in the Cherwell District Landscape Character Assessment. In the immediate vicinity of the Site the landscape comprises a series of small-scale fields of mixed agriculture, with steep-sided undulating hills cut through with watercourses. The Site's landscape features, with the exception of the internal hedgerow are contained to the boundaries. The unmanaged hedgerow along the western boundary and on the south western corner in particular are of notable landscape value, contributing to the wider wooded character around the village. The interior of the Site comprises relatively undistinguished farmland at the edge of the village and is considered to be of medium landscape quality.

4.20 In relation to landscape value, the Site is not statutorily or non-statutorily designated, nor does it contain heritage assets. It is crossed by a public footpath, and given its proximity to the settlement, it could not reasonably be considered wild or tranquil. The Site is assessed as being of medium landscape value. In respect of paragraph 170 of the Revised NPPF, it is not covered by any statutory designation and is not identified in the Cherwell Council's development plans for its landscape quality and value, and therefore it is not a 'valued' landscape.

4.21 In terms of sensitivity, the Site is bound by existing housing to the centre of the northern boundary and by the South Newington Recreation Ground to the northeast which has existing housing on its northern edge. Given this proximity to the settlement, the Site is considered well related to it on its central and north eastern edges. Residential development in this location would therefore not appear discordant with the general pattern of development in the area and therefore the Site is considered to have a medium sensitivity to housing.

4.22 The adjoining 20th century housing in proximity of the Site is generally pleasant and is considered to be of medium townscape quality, sensitivity and value, while the Conservation Area containing several listed buildings further to the northeast is considered locally higher.

4.23 The wider landscape consists of a mix of arable and pastoral fields, bound by a network of strong hedgerows with hedgerow trees, scattered villages. It comprises a complex topography of rounded hills, often with steep sides rising from numerous streams and larger watercourses which cut through the area. Trees are a strong feature;

they line streams, mark the course of the disused railway, are a feature of the hedgerows and comprise a limited number of scattered woodland blocks. The wider landscape is assessed as being of medium to high landscape quality, sensitivity and value, given its undulating nature.

5.0 ABILITY OF THE SITE TO ACCOMMODATE THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

5.1 The following section assesses the ability of the Site to accommodate the proposed development with associated infrastructure, and then considers potential impacts on the character of the landscape and visual amenity.

5.2 The proposals, which are in outline, are for a residential development of up to 95 new dwellings, with associated infrastructure and a large area of public open space. The new housing will be up to two storeys in height. The findings of this appraisal have informed the preparation of a Development Framework Plan (**Appendix F**), and the landscape principles which are included are as follows:

- Retention of existing mature landscape features and vegetation where possible on all boundaries;
- Housing to extend no further west than the existing housing on Hyde Grove on the western edge of the settlement, and to be set back behind an area of public open space;
- Large area of public open space to the west of the development which is aligned with the south eastern edge of The Slade Nature Reserve, and the public open space to the south of the Woodlands development on Tadmarton Road;
- Structural tree planting along the boundaries of, and within the public open space to add to the screening of the development from the west, setting it back from the Nature Reserve with a community pond in the north western corner;
- Planting around a sustainable drainage feature ('SuDS') within the landscaped area between the new and the existing housing on the northern boundary of the development, to respect the privacy and visual amenity of the existing residents;
- New tree and structural planting within the development between the Areas A and B either side of the retained internal hedgerow, and between Area B and the houses on the eastern boundary;
- Vehicular access off South Newington Road, with tree planting alongside the southern boundary adjacent to the access road and further to the west to assist in integrating the development into the landscape from the southwest;

- Recreational route around the Site linking to the public footpath which crosses the Site and in so doing, connects the Site to the footways of Orchard Grove and the wider village; and
 - An area for formal and informal children's play, and a trim trail.
- 5.3 The key landscape and visual effects are summarised in the tables in **Appendix G** and described in the relevant section below.

Relationship to Existing Settlement

- 5.4 The Site is bound by existing residential development and by the South Newington Recreational Ground to the north. Development would extend the envelope of the village to the southwest, however the new housing within the development would extend no further than the western edge of the existing housing on Hyde Grove. It would be set back from the southernmost edge of the settlement behind public open space, but would be in close proximity to existing housing and community facilities. In addition, the public open space on the western side of the Site will round off the edge of the settlement making a contribution to the open space network on the south western side of the settlement. Accordingly development at the Site would be consistent with the existing pattern of the settlement.
- 5.5 In addition, the Site is well contained by mature boundary vegetation in particular to the west, and the rest of the boundaries can be further strengthened to provide a robust edge to the settlement which is consistent with the well treed character of the village on the approach from the southwest.

Impact on Landscape Features

- 5.6 The landscape features of the Site are located at the field boundaries and divide Areas A and B. The Development Framework Plan shows how the Site can be developed, while retaining the vast majority of the existing boundary vegetation. Additional planting within the public open space to the west and north, between the two Areas and on the rest of the boundaries would complement the woodland within The Slade Nature Reserve, the tree belts along the disused railway line and the well treed south western entrance to the village.
- 5.7 There will be limited losses of hedgerows to facilitate the access into the development off South Newington Road and between the internal hedgerow for vehicular and pedestrian access. However, the Development Framework Plan shows that these losses, can be compensated for by the proposed planting within the development, with the result that there will be a net increase in tree cover and species

diversity, and therefore the green infrastructure of the area as a result of the proposals.

Public Rights of Way

- 5.8 The Site is capable of being developed while retaining the existing public right of way which crosses Area A along its current alignment. There will therefore be no direct effect on the alignment of the footpath, although there will be indirect visual effects to the route as discussed in the Visibility section below.
- 5.9 The Development Framework Plan shows the potential for new pedestrian linkages to the footpath through the development, and in so doing, connects the Site to the Recreation Ground to the north and the village beyond.

Visual Impact and Effects

- 5.10 The visual appraisal in Section 4 identified that the Site is well contained by virtue of the closely undulating landscape, the well treed area to the north of the Site and village to the northeast. Views of the development from public vantage points and from some residential properties would therefore be contained to the immediate vicinity of the Site, and from the highest elevations on Hobb Hill. A summary of the impact of the proposals on the key views of the Site is contained in **Appendix G** and these are discussed briefly below.
- 5.11 There will be partial views of the new housing for a short section of South Newington Road across the South Newington Recreation Ground, over the south eastern boundary hedgerow and at the new access. Further to the north views are prevented by the existing village, while to the south there will be views of the upper storeys and rooftops over the hedgerows for a short stretch before the road falls in elevation, seen in the context of the rest of the village. The proposals however will retain the majority of the eastern boundary vegetation, and the proposed tree planting along the southern boundary and the strengthening of the northern and eastern boundaries will assist in integrating the development into the landscape and the edge of the village.
- 5.12 A view is possible for a short section of Bloxham Road and from the public footpath (136/8/10 and 298/9/10) to the southwest of the development where rooftops and upper storeys of the southern part of the development will be visible over the intervening hedgerows and filtered by trees. Tree planting on the southern boundary will assist in screening the development further as it matures.

- 5.13 There will be inevitable changes to the part of the public footpath (136/5/10) which runs along the northern edge of the Recreation Ground, and through the Site. From this part of the footpath there will be views of the new housing, either set back behind the Recreation Ground or set back behind the new public open space. The Development Framework Plan that there will be a change to the footpath for a short distance on the edge of the village, however, the public open space through which it runs and the planting within it will assist in mitigating these views. Beyond the development the footpath continues to the west (becoming 298/2/10). Although views of the new housing across the public open space will be possible close to the Site to the west, they will be well filtered by the dense western boundary hedgerow, and will become less and less distinct further to the west due to the intervening field boundaries.
- 5.14 There will be views of the new housing from the Recreation Ground, partly filtered as the planting along the boundary between it and the development matures.
- 5.15 There will be a partial, highly filtered view of the new housing from the public bridleway (136/9/30) to the west of the Site, just south of the disused railway line, seen through the intervening hedgerows. The proposed planting on the northern and western parts of the public open space will in due course screen these views.
- 5.16 There will be a partial view of the development from the public footpath (136/6/20) on the highest part of Hobb Hill. From here a panoramic view of the village is possible, with the southern part of the development visible, seen in the context of the rest of the village, partially screened by the trees along the disused railway line and within the village. The retention of the internal field boundary and new planting within and on the boundaries of the development will assist in integrating it into the rest of the wooded village character.
- 5.17 The above public footpaths and bridleways are part of the Bloxham Circular Walk, which is formed by a number of linked public footpaths and bridleways to the northwest of Bloxham. Apart from those sections described above for the rest of the walk the development will not be visible due to the topographical undulation of the area and intervening vegetation.
- 5.18 There will be some views of the new housing from the footpath along the disused railway line and a partial view from the entrance into The Slade Nature Reserve which is at the northern boundary of the development. The Development Framework Plan shows that the housing is set back from the edge of the northern edge of the development, with planting alongside disused railway line and within the public open space, which

in due course will screen the development from the footpath and soften the view from the entrance to the Nature Reserve.

- 5.19 In relation to residential properties close to the development, on the south western edge of the village and along the western edges of Barford Road, Manning Close and Gascoigne Way, there will be views of the new housing from first and some ground floor windows. To the east these will be highly filtered, while views from properties on the south western edge will be more open. The planting along the northern and eastern boundaries, and within the northern part of the public open space will assist in softening these views as it matures.

Landscape Change and Effects

- 5.20 As set out in Section 4 the Site is not covered by any statutory designations for landscape character or quality. Overall the Site is assessed as being of medium landscape quality, sensitivity and value.
- 5.21 Development at the Site will result in the loss of two pastoral fields, which will be replaced with residential development, a large area of public open space and infrastructure. Extending the housing no further than the western edge of the village, and developing the western part of the Site as public open space will be consistent with the settlement pattern on the south western side of the village. Planting along the northern and eastern parts closest to South Newington Road, along the southern side of the development and within the public open space will further soften its effects and connect the development to the treed character of the south western approach into the village. The proposed planting will further assist in integrating the development into the village in views from the public footpath on Hobb Hill, and from here will be seen as a small incremental addition to the settlement and will be seen in the context of the rest of the village.
- 5.22 Given the topography and the woodland in the area around the village, there will be little impact on the wider landscape character as a result of the development.
- 5.23 Accordingly, it is considered that a residential scheme which follows the principles shown on the Development Framework Plan can be accommodated at the Site without causing significant harm to the adjoining countryside or townscape. A summary table detailing the anticipated Landscape Effects can be found in **Appendix G**.

Compliance with Published Landscape Guidance

- 5.24 The Cherwell District Landscape Character Assessment, identified the Site as falling into the Ironstone Hills and Valleys LCA, which was further

subdivided into landscape types and sub-types. The assessment provides a series of landscape guidelines for the landscape sub-type in which the Site lies, and to which the proposals respond in the following ways:

- The proposals include the retention and new tree planting along the internal field boundary; and
- The proposed tree and small-scale woodland planting within the public open space to the northwest will add to the overall wooded cover in the area, without blocking off views, or planting on steeper slopes.

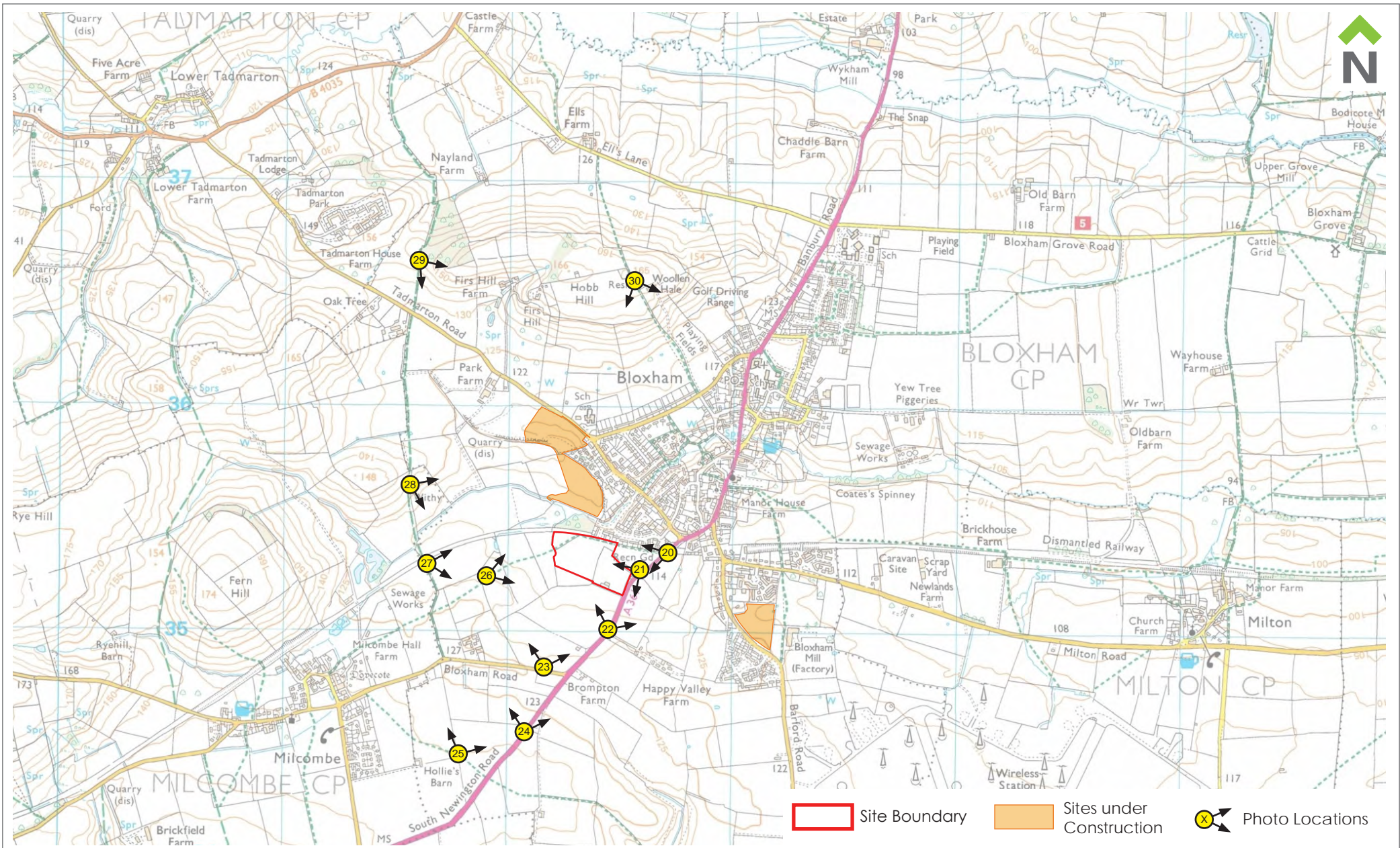
6.0 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The Site comprises two pastoral fields with a barn and a farm access road. The Site is situated on the south western edge of Bloxham, with the South Newington Recreation Ground indented into the north eastern Site boundary. South Newington Road runs along the southern part of the eastern Site boundary.
- 6.2 Neither the Site nor the immediate landscape is covered by any statutory or non-statutory designations for landscape quality. The Site is bound to the north by the built edge of the village which extends to the northeast, and in all other directions by farmland. The western mature boundary which extends to the southwest contributes to the wider landscape character, supported by the well treed disused railway line alongside the north western boundary and the woodland within adjoining Slade Nature Reserve. The Site is assessed as being of medium landscape quality, value and sensitivity.
- 6.3 The visual assessment found that the Site is well contained by existing residential development to the northeast, and by the western and south western Site boundary. The tree belt along the disused railway line and the woodland within the Nature Reserve provide further screening of the Site, assisted by the undulating topography around the village. Views of the Site are therefore restricted to public vantage points and residential properties in the near vicinity, and from the highest elevations of the public footpath on Hobb Hill.
- 6.4 The Development Framework Plan shows how an appropriate development can be accommodated at the Site which respects the existing landscape features within and on the Site boundaries, and provides a sensitive edge to the adjoining countryside. Planting on the boundaries and within the new public open space will assist in integrating the development into the fabric of the village, while setting the housing back from the northern boundary will respect the visual amenity of the existing housing.
- 6.5 For the reasons set out in this assessment, it is considered that development in accordance with the Development Framework Plan and the principles set out in Section 5, can be accommodated without giving rise to significant landscape / townscape or visual effects.

Appendix A

Site Location Plan
(Showing middle to long distance photo locations)

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Drawing Title Site Location Plan

Client Gladman Developments Ltd

Date Dec 2016

Scale @ A4 NTS

Drawn QD

Drawing No. CSA/3114/102

Rev A

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Appendix B

Aerial Photograph
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 Site Boundary

 Photo Locations



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Appendix C

Photosheets

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Poplar trees along South Newington Recreation Ground western boundary



View from north western corner of Area A looking southeast **Photograph 01**

Church of St Mary



View from entrance into Area A on public footpath 136/5/10 looking east **Photograph 02**



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Tree belt along northern boundary



overlap



overlap

View from the south western corner of Area A looking northeast **Photograph 03**



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View from the south eastern corner of Area A looking northwest **Photograph 04**



View from the north eastern corner of the internal hedgerow between Areas A and B looking west **Photograph 05**



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View from the north eastern corner of the internal hedgerow between Areas A and B looking north to houses on Hyde Grove and Colesbourne Road **Photograph 06**

Barn within Area B



View of Area A from the entrance to The Slade Nature Reserve **Photograph 07**



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View of Area A towards Area B from the informal footpath along the disused railway **Photograph 7a**



View from Hyde Grove looking south into Area B **Photograph 08**



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Properties on eastern boundary

Sports pavilion

Barn within Area B



overlap



overlap

View from public footpath 136/5/10 at entrance to Area A from South Newington Recreation Ground **Photograph 09**



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Sports pavilion

Properties on eastern boundary

Barn within Area B

View from north western corner of Area B looking southeast **Photograph 10**



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Sports pavilion

Barn within Area B



overlap



overlap

View from boundary of South Newington Recreation Ground in Area B looking west **Photograph 11**



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Houses on Barford Road

Houses on Gasciogne Way



View from internal hedgerow within Area B looking east **Photograph 12**



View from south western corner of Area B looking northwest **Photograph 13**



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overlap



overlap

View from edge of Barn within Area B looking north **Photograph 14**



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View from south eastern corner of Area B looking northwest **Photograph 15**



View from eastern edge of Area B looking southwest **Photograph 16**



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View looking over the garden of no. 11 South Newington Road into Area B **Photograph 17**



View from the entrance into the South Newington Recreation Ground on public footpath 136/5/10 **Photograph 18**



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View from the junction of Colebourne Road and Orchard Grove across the South Newington Recreation Ground towards Area B **Photograph 19**



View from the play area at the north eastern corner of the South Newington Recreation Ground looking southwest **Photograph 20**



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View from South Newington Road looking towards the Site across the Recreation Ground **Photograph 21**



View from South Newington Road to the southwest of the Site looking north **Photograph 22**



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Hobb Hill



View from Bloxham Road to the southwest of the Site **Photograph 23**

Roof of sports pavilion in Bloxham Recreation Ground



View from South Newington Road to the southwest of the Site **Photograph 24**

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View from public footpath (136/8/10 and 298/9/10) to the southwest of the Site **Photograph 25**



View from public footpath 136/5/10 to the west of the Site **Photograph 26**



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Poplar trees on western edge of Bloxham Recreation Ground



View from public bridleway 136/9/30 to the northwest of the Site **Photograph 27**



View from high point of public bridleway 298/1/10 (continuing as 136/9/20) to the northwest of the Site **Photograph 28**



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View from public bridleway 136/9/10 to the northwest of the Site **Photograph 29**



View from public footpath 136/6/20 looking towards the Site **Photograph 30**



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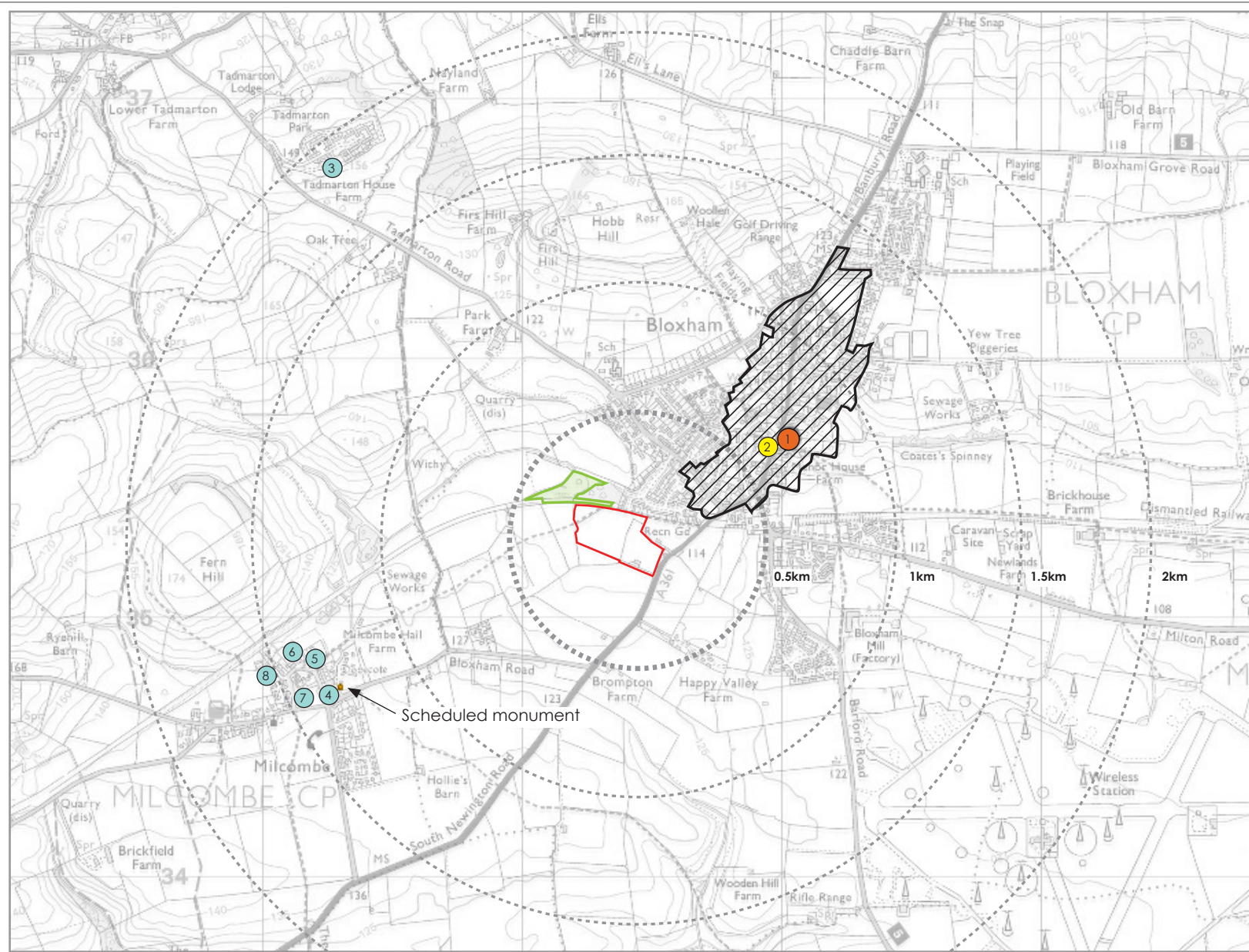
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Appendix D

MAGIC Map Extract and Heritage Plan

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- Site Boundary
- Registered Parks and Gardens
- Scheduled Monuments
- District Wildlife Site
- Conservation Area
- x Listed Buildings (Grade I)
Within 2km
- 1. Church of St Mary
- x Listed Buildings (Grade II*)
Within 2km
- 2. Rectory Farmhouse
- x Listed Buildings (Grade II)
Within 2km
- 3. Tadmarton House
- 4. Dovecote at Milcombe Hall
- 5. Two Gatepiers at Milcombe Hall
- 6. The Old Vicarage
- 7. Hall Farm Cottage
- 8. Manor Farm House



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Project South Newington Road, Bloxham

Drawing Title MAGIC Map with Heritage Information

Client Gladman Developments Ltd

Date Dec 2016

Scale @ A4 NTS

Drawn QD

Drawing No. CSA/3114/104

Rev -

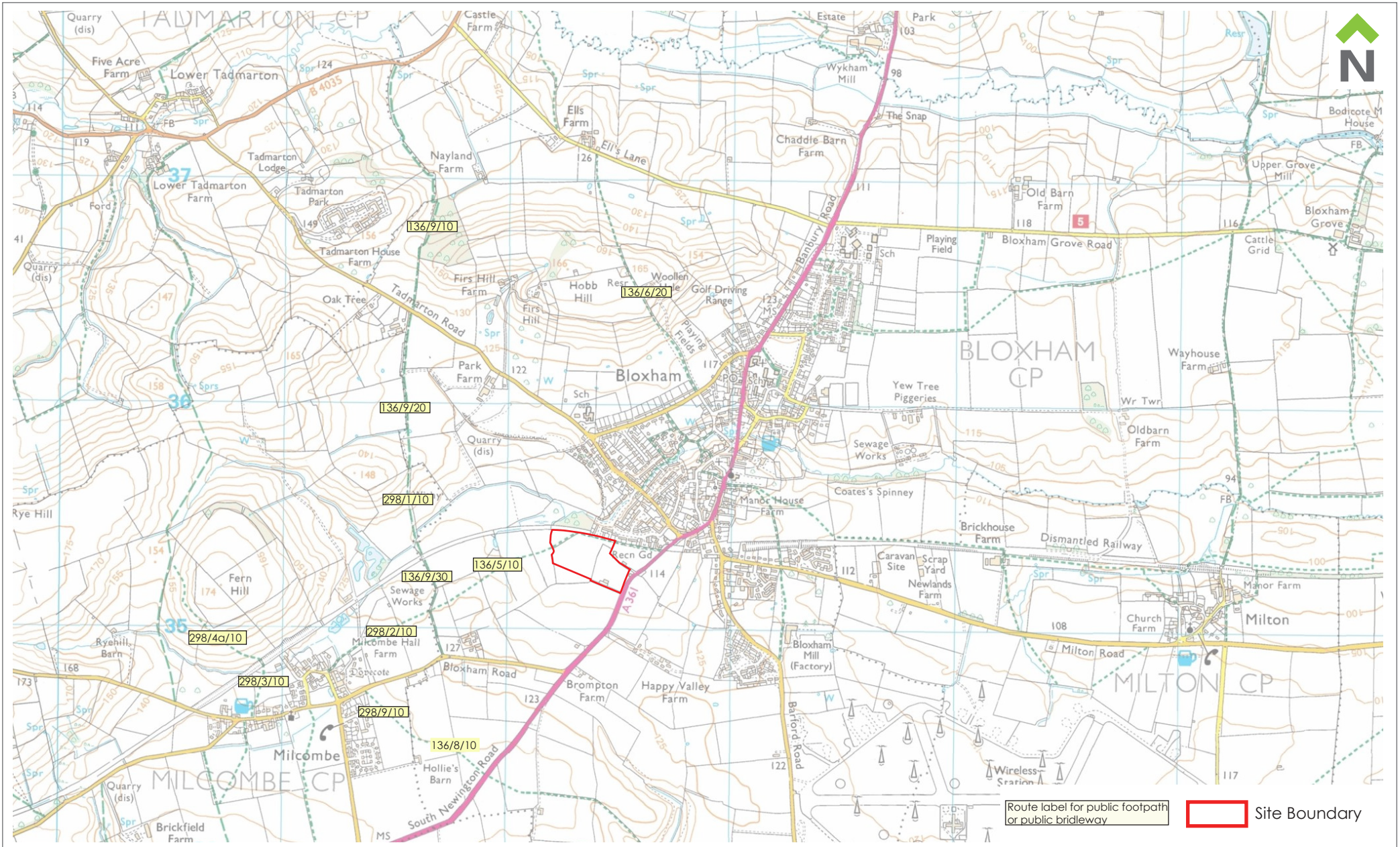
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Appendix E

Definitive Public Rights of Way Map

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Project South Newington Road, Bloxham
Drawing Title Definitive Public Rights of Way Plan
Client Gladman Developments Ltd

Date Jan 2017
Drawing No. CSA/3114/108
Scale @ A4 NTS
Rev A
Drawn JJ
Checked CA

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Appendix F

Development Framework Plan

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