



Possingham Farm, Ashford
Landscape and Visual Impact Appraisal

Client: Hodson Developments
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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND AND SCOPE OF THIS REPORT

Neil Tully Associates (NTA) was commissioned by Hodson Developments in November 2020 to produce a Landscape and Visual Impact Appraisal (LVIA) in support of an outline planning application for the erection of 655 dwellings (including 30% affordable housing, the creation of a network of roads, footways, cycleways through the site, sustainable drainage, landscaping buffers, public open space and biodiversity enhancements. The site is a natural extension to the Chilmington Green Garden Village

1.2 STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

SECTION 2 – APPRAISAL METHODOLOGY briefly summarises the planning context in relation to landscape and visual issues and the methodology that has been used in the appraisal with reference to a more detailed method statement in Appendix 1.

SECTION 3 – BASELINE CONDITIONS describes the application site, its surrounding area, defines the landscape and visual receptors against which potential impacts resulting from the development proposals would be assessed, and briefly describes the intrinsic design measures incorporated within the scheme that are of specific relevance to landscape and visual considerations, e.g., the location and layout of the development in relation to key views, the design of any open space, planting or other measures aimed at minimising potential impacts.

SECTION 4 – PREDICTED IMPACTS, MITIGATION OF PREDICTED IMPACTS AND EVALUATION OF PREDICTED IMPACTS examines the predicted effects of the development proposals on landscape resources (landscape character and landscape designations) and visual amenity (the enjoyment of representative views by people), assessing the changes brought about by development against the baseline situation, thereby taking any relevant mitigation into account and evaluating the thus resulting overall predicted impact.

SECTION 5 – MONITORING describes maintenance and review procedures that are to be undertaken following completion of the development to maintain landscape elements as outlined in the relevant application documents.

SECTION 6 – SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS summarises the overall landscape and visual effects that are predicted to arise from this development proposal.



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EFFECTS ON LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL CHARACTER



2 APPRAISAL METHODOLOGY

This section briefly summarises the key aspects of the appraisal methodology and the main steps in the appraisal process. Further explanation of the methodology, including the basis upon which judgements have been made on the sensitivity of receptors, magnitude of change and significance of effects, is included in APPENDIX 2.

2.1 BEST PRACTICE GUIDANCE

The methodology for undertaking this visual appraisal has been developed in accordance with relevant best practice guidance, including:

Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Appraisal (GLAVIA), Third Edition - Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management & Appraisal, 2013. Landscape Character Appraisal - Guidance for England and Scotland' - Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage, 2002.

2.2 VISUAL EFFECTS

Visual effects relate to the changes that arise in the composition of available views as a result of changes to the landscape, to people's responses to the changes and to the overall effects with respect to visual amenity.

2.3 APPRAISAL OF SIGNIFICANCE

The process of forming a judgement on the significance of an effect is based upon an appraisal of the Magnitude of change affecting the landscape or the views experienced by people, combined with the Sensitivity of the 'receptor' to change of the nature proposed, i.e. the landscape itself or the viewer. Thus, a high level of change affecting a highly sensitive receptor would be more significant than a small degree of change affecting less sensitive landscape or visual receptors (FIGURE 1).

Indicative criteria used in this appraisal to define levels of sensitivity, magnitude of change and significance of effects are set out in Appendix 2 and the diagram below. It should be emphasised that, while the methodology is designed to be

robust and transparent, professional judgment is ultimately applied to determine the significance of each impact. Effects that are Major or Major-Moderate are the most significant, in that they are, in themselves, material to the decision. Effects of Moderate significance or less are additional considerations. Predicted changes can be Positive, Neutral or Adverse.

2.4 APPRAISAL PROCESS

The main steps in the appraisal process are set out below.

DESK STUDY

- Familiarisation with development proposals, Site location, etc.;
- Review of current planning policy context relating to landscape, including designations;

- Review of existing landscape character appraisals for the area (national, regional, local).

FIELD SURVEY

- Site-visit to record landscape character and key features on the Site and within surrounding area;
- Identification of key views to and from the site;
- Where appropriate, field checking of the Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) to confirm extent of visibility, key viewpoints and receptors, photographic record, etc.;
- Field-based identification of mitigation opportunities.

DESIGN

- Input into site design including liaison with other professionals. Identification of landscape mitigation/ creation opportunities.

Appraisal

- Appraisal of potential effects on landscape resources, of the Site itself and surrounding landscape character, and appraisal of potential effects on any landscape designations;
- Appraisal of effects on views from representative viewpoints;
- Appraisal of effects on private dwellings and public rights of way.

PRESENTATION

- Preparation of report, supported by visual material (i.e., plans and photographs) to assist understanding of the appraisal findings.

LIMITATIONS

- Information on planning policy relating to landscape, including designations, was readily available. There were no unexpected limitations experienced collecting the baseline information or whilst undertaking the field surveys in relation to availability and relevance of the hierarchy of Landscape Character Appraisals for the study area. Therefore, no

supplementary landscape character appraisal work was required.

- The level of design detail and phasing associated with a proposed housing allocation can make it difficult to define, quantify and measure some of the indirect effects that the development may have. Appraisals of indirect effects have been made where possible.

DISTANCES

- Where distances are given in the appraisal, these are approximate distances between the Site boundary and the nearest part of the receptor in question, unless explicitly stated otherwise.

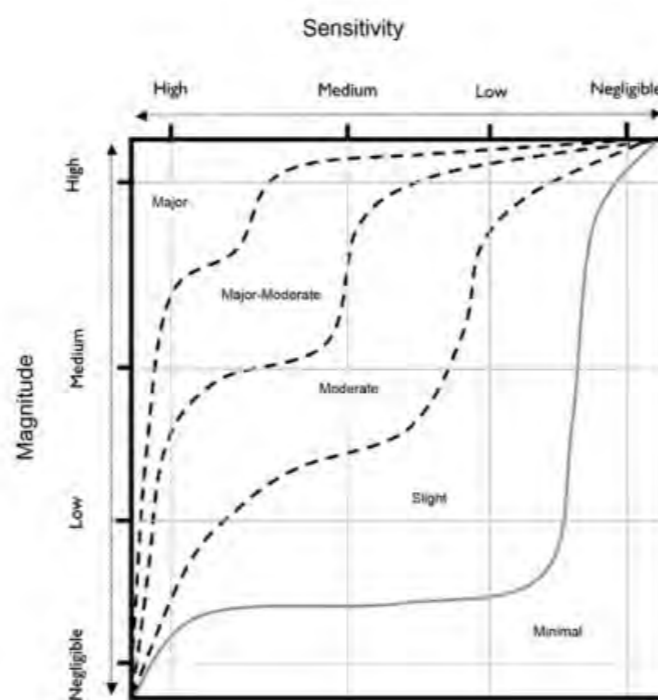


FIGURE 1. Measures of significance depending on Sensitivity and Magnitude of Impact

3 BASELINE APPRAISAL

3.1 PROJECT SPECIFICATIONS

The site is located to the south of Chilmington Green, to the north of Possingham Farm (a Grade II listed building), to the east of the busy Ashford Road, (A28), and to the west of the Public Right of Way (Byway AW245). The site large open agricultural fields subdivided by short hedgerows, is lightly wooded to the southern boundary, with a more established hedging running north to south along the byway. The boundary with the A28 is mostly hedged with isolated trees in places, (see FIGURE 3).

3.2 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

A full description of the policy context of the site is included in the Planning Statement prepared by Hodson Developments which accompanies the application.

In brief the Development Plan for the area consists of the following:

- Ashford Borough Council Local Plan 2030

The Ashford Borough Local Plan 2030 was adopted on 21 February 2019 and cover the period from 2011 to 2030.

The following considers the relevant planning and legislative framework in the context of landscape and visual issues. Not all policies are referred to or listed in full but those of greatest relevance to the site and nature of the proposed development are included.

NATIONAL CONTEXT

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) at Section 12 is concerned about development 'Achieving well-designed places' and under paragraph 127 it states that 'planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:

a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;

b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;

c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);

Paragraph 124 notes: *"The creation of high quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities."*

Section 15 is concerned with "Conserving and enhancing the natural environment". The NPPF seeks to conserve and enhance the natural environment – protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, and affording great weight to the protection of areas of natural and scenic beauty.

Natural habitats and geodiversity are also to be preserved and enhanced, the NPPF noting a requirement to:

"Identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity⁵⁶; wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them; and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation"

The landscape and green infrastructure proposals which form part of the proposed development stem from the landscape and visual appraisal undertaken and reflect the principles of Good Design which the NPPF advocates.

LOCAL CONTEXT

Policies relevant to landscape within the Ashford Borough Council Local Plan 2030 include;

Policy SP6 - Promoting High Quality Design

Development proposals must be of high quality design and demonstrate a careful consideration of and a positive response to each of the following design criteria:



FIGURE 2. Regional context of the Site, Source: GoogleMaps.

- a) Character, distinctiveness and sense of place
- b) Ease of movement
- c) Legibility
- d) Mixed use and diversity
- e) Public safety and crime
- f) Quality of public spaces and their future management
- g) Flexibility and liveability
- h) Richness in detail
- i) Efficient use of natural resources

Development proposals should show how they have responded positively to the design policy and guidance, including national and local design guidance, relevant

Neighbourhood Plans, Village Design Statements and site specific development briefs.

Policy HOU5

Policy HOU5 – Residential Windfall Development in the Countryside is the policy that this application meets the set criteria (a to f). The policy states:

Providing that each of the following criteria is met:

- a) The scale of development proposed is proportionate to the size of the settlement and the level, type and quality of day-to-day service provision currently available, and commensurate with any planned allocations in this Local Plan and committed development, in liaison with service providers;
- b) The site is within easy walking distance of basic day to day services in the nearest settlement, and/or has access to sustainable methods of transport to access a range of services;
- c) The development is able to be safely accessed from the local road network and the traffic generated can be accommodated on the local and wider road network without adversely affecting the character of the surrounding area;
- d) The development is located where it is

possible to maximise the use of public transport, cycling and walking to access services;

e) The development must conserve and enhance the natural environment and preserve or enhance any heritage assets in the locality; and,

f) The development (and any associated infrastructure) is of a high-quality design and meets the following requirements: -

- i. It sits sympathetically within the wider landscape,
- ii. It preserves or enhances the setting of the nearest settlement,
- iii. It includes the appropriately sized and designed landscape buffer to the open countryside,
- iv. Is consistent with local character and built form, including scale, bulk and materials used,
- v. It does not adversely impact on the neighbouring uses or a good standard of amenity for nearby residents,
- vi. It would conserve biodiversity interests in the site and / or adjoining area and not adversely affect the integrity of international and national protected sites in line with Policy ENV1.

Policy ENV1 – Biodiversity

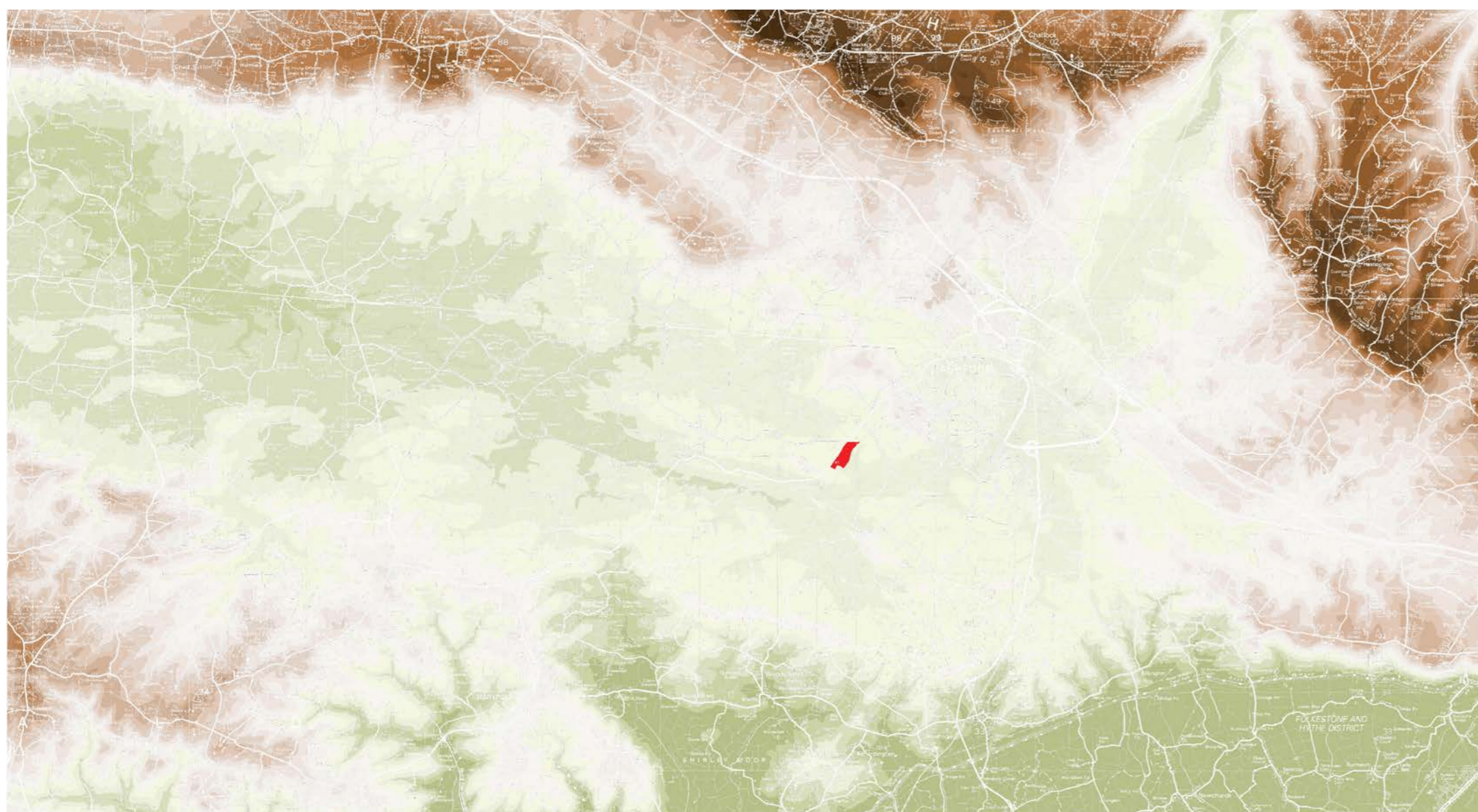
Proposals that conserve or enhance biodiversity will be supported. Proposals for new development should identify and seek opportunities to incorporate and enhance biodiversity. In particular, development should take opportunities to help connect and improve the wider ecological networks.

Proposals should safeguard features of nature conservation interest and should include measures to retain, conserve and enhance habitats, including BAP (Priority) habitats, and networks of ecological interest, including ancient woodland, water features, ditches, dykes and hedgerows, as corridors and stepping stones for wildlife.

Development that will have an adverse effect on the



FIGURE 3. Local context of the Site, Source: GoogleEarth.



KEY

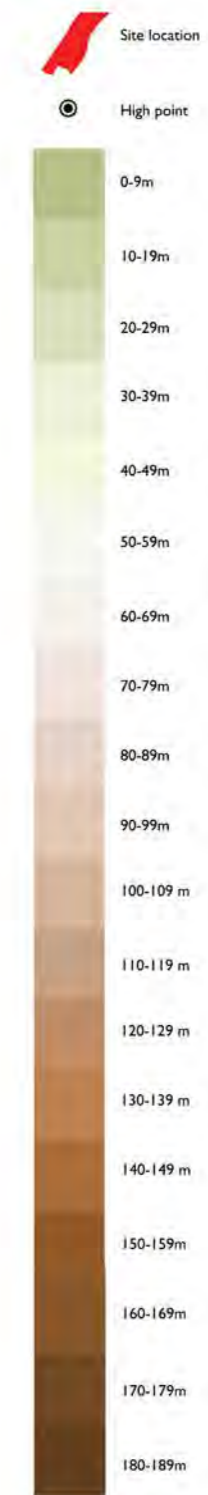


FIGURE 4. Topography. Source: DEFRA/Magic

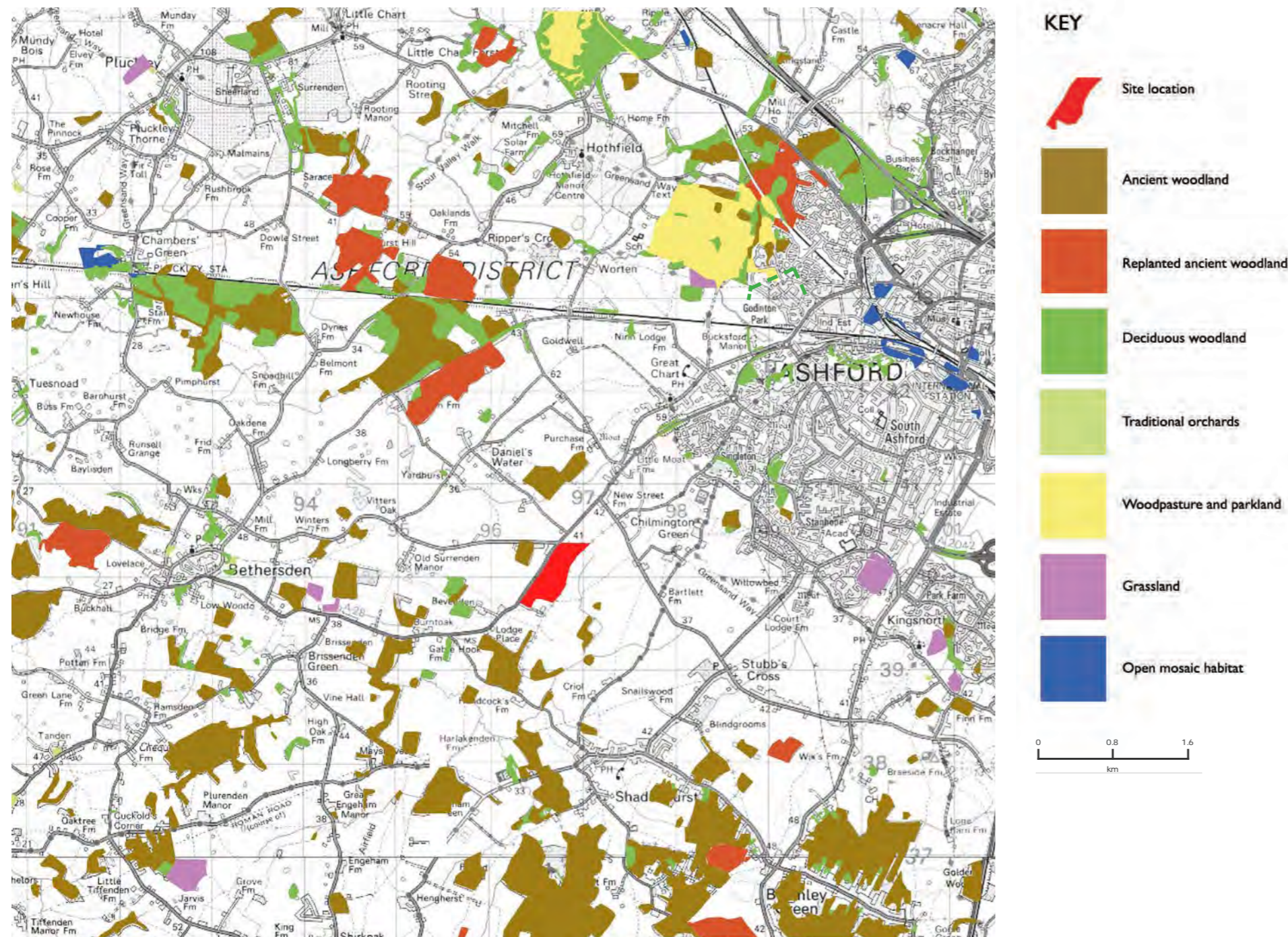


FIGURE 5. Vegetation cover. Source: DEFRA/Magic

integrity of European protected Sites, including the Wye and Crundale Special Area of Conservation and the Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay Ramsar and SPA sites, alone or in combination with other plans or projects, will not be permitted. Any proposal capable of affecting designated interest features of European sites should be subject to Habitats Regulations Assessment screening.

Development that will have an adverse effect on nationally designated sites, including the borough's Sites of Special Scientific Interest and National Nature Reserves, will not be permitted unless the benefits, in terms of other objectives including overriding public interest, clearly outweigh the impacts on the special features of the site and broader nature conservation interests and there is no alternative acceptable solution.

Development should avoid significant harm to locally identified biodiversity assets, including Local Wildlife Sites, Local Nature Reserves and the Ashford Green Corridor as well as priority and locally important habitats and protected species. The protection and enhancement of the Ashford Green Corridor is one of the key objectives of the Plan and therefore all proposals coming forward within or adjoining the Ashford Green Corridor should comply with Policy ENV2 in the first instance.

Where harm to biodiversity assets cannot be avoided, appropriate mitigation will be required in line with a timetable to be agreed with the Local Authority. Normally any mitigation measures will be required to be delivered on-site, unless special circumstances dictate that an off-site model is more appropriate. A financial contribution - in lieu of on-site mitigation - will only be considered in very exceptional circumstances and where it is demonstrated that the proposed mitigation is deliverable and effective.

Opportunities for the management, restoration and creation of habitats in line with the opportunities identified for the Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs) and targets set out in the Kent Biodiversity Strategy will be supported.