



Land to the North of Possingham Farmhouse, Ashford Road, Great Chart, Kent.

PINS Reference APP/E2205/W/3345454, LPA Reference 22/00571/AS

LANDSCAPE MATTERS : PROOF OF EVIDENCE

Neil Tully MA CMLI



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QUALITY ASSURANCE

Author	Checked	Approved
NT/JB/KK	NT	NT
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1. QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

Neil Tully MA CMLI Dip UD

- 1.1 My name is Neil Tully, and I am the principal of Neil Tully Associates, (NTA). I hold a Bachelor of Arts First Class (Honours) Degree in Visual Arts obtained in 1982 from the University of Lancaster and a Master of Arts degree in Landscape Design from the University of Sheffield obtained in 1985. In 2005 I completed the University of Westminster Diploma in Urban Design. I have been a member of the Landscape Institute since 1990, and previously a member of the Academy of Urbanism.
- 1.2 I have 40 years professional experience in the private sector, working at both strategic and at more local scales covering development, conservation and regeneration issues in urban and rural areas, both in the UK and abroad. My landscape planning, strategic and development/masterplanning work is underpinned by many years' experience in the detailed design and implementation of large scale and mixed-use schemes. In particular, I have a range of experience relating to implemented mixed-use and residential schemes, and related Landscape and Visual Impact Appraisals and Assessments, including:
 - Land to the North-East of Corringham, Corringham, Thurrock, Essex;
 - Manston Green, Ramsgate, Thanet, Kent;
 - Money Hill, Ashby de la Zouch, Northwest Leicestershire;
 - Chilmington Green, Ashford, Kent;
 - Mindenhurst, Deepcut, Surrey.
- 1.3 I have been involved with the Possingham Farm scheme since September 2020. NTA have liaised closely with Clague Architects and the planning team at Hodson Developments. at each stage in the development of the current proposals.

Neil Tully Associates Practice Profile

- 1.4 NTA was formed in 2004 to promote best practice in landscape design and implementation of large-scale new settlement developments and urban mixed-use schemes. The team includes landscape architects, urban designers, horticulturalists and artists. We are based in central London but operate throughout the UK and overseas
- 1.5 As a practice, we have experience of working within, and adjacent to, the Green Belt, Conservation Areas, and have designed landscapes that complement and support the setting of listed buildings and important historical landscapes. Projects include the detail design of Neo Bankside public realm and garden areas, in Southwark, planning applications, detailed design and implementation for large mixed-use schemes at Chilmington Green, Ashford and Mindenhurst, Surrey, (former Deepcut Barracks). We have prepared LVIA's and Landscape Strategies for the redevelopment of Guildford Cathedral, the MedTech Campus in Chelmsford and a proposal for 4000+ new homes around Attleborough in Norfolk. NTA were part of the team responsible for the Chilmington Green Design Code which won the award for Best Strategic Planning at the 2014 Placemaking Awards.
- 1.6 I have worked with members of the development team on several schemes within the UK, and through this have created a close working relationship which is successful in delivering well considered, cohesive and consistent urban and semi-urban solutions

2.0 SCOPE OF EVIDENCE

- 2.1 Hodson Developments first appointed NTA to this project in September 2020. The role of NTA is to take responsibility for landscape and tree assessment matters and we have worked closely with Clague Architect's, and the planning team at Hodson Developments in the preparation of the landscape proposals.
- 2.2 My evidence relates to landscape matters of the proposed development and is concerned with the requirement to provide an attractive, practical and sustainable landscape and open space strategy for the site. The overall masterplan is the work of Clague Architects, but NTA had an important advisory role in determining the distribution of building form, buffer landscape and amenity spaces. This design advice included determining type and function of the landscape structure in order to provide the most beneficial arrangement of landscape spaces with regard to requirements specific to the qualities of the site and the type of development envisaged. The landscape scheme has been designed in response to the developing Chilmington Green master planning area and access arrangements, the Public Right of Way bounding the site to the east (AW245), and the busy A28, Ashford Road which borders the site to the west. Protection and enhancement of the setting of the listed Possingham Farmhouse to the southeast of the site has also been an important consideration in the development of the landscape strategy.

- 2.3 My evidence will illustrate how the proposed scheme is appropriate for its setting and context, and specifically relates to Reason for Refusal 1:

“The development would constitute an overly dense and urban form of development that would visually encroach on the countryside and harm the landscape character of the area. The density of the development would fail to accord with the character of the permitted adjacent Chilmington Green development and would consequently harm the setting of that development. The density of the development would also result in a failure to provide a good standard of public amenity for future residents of the development.”

Evidence provided will support that of John Collins, (DHA Planning), in this respect.

- 2.4 Matters in Dispute, as noted in the Statement of Common Ground, include Landscape and Visual impact, specifically,
- Whether the proposed indicative layout fails to accommodate a sufficient landscape buffer to be in accordance with Policy HOU5 of the LP.
 - Whether the layout is too dense and whether it respects the pattern of development in the area.
 - Whether the development would lack public open space and accord with the 'garden community' ambitions of the approved Chilmington Green development in the vicinity of the site.

- 2.5 Of these, my evidence will address the suitability of the proposed structural landscape buffers in relation to Policy HOU5:

- **Policy HOU5 - Residential Windfall Development in the Countryside**

Proposals for residential development adjoining or close to the existing built-up confines of the following settlements will be acceptable:

Ashford, Aldington, Appledore, Bethersden, Biddenden, Brabourne Lees/Smeeth, Challock, Charing, Chilham, Egerton, Great Chart, Hamstreet, High Halden, Hothfield, Kingsnorth, Mersham, Pluckley, Rolvenden, Shadoxhurst, Sarden, Tenterden (including St Michaels), Wittersham, Woodchurch and Wye. *Existing Kingsnorth village*

Providing that each of the following criteria is met: (Clauses relevant to the Reason for Refusal)

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 an appropriately sized and designed landscape buffer to the open countryside,

iv) it is consistent with local character and built form, including scale, bulk and the 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 on the site and / or adjoining area and not adversely affect the integrity of international and national protected sites in line with Policy ENV1.

- 2.6 My evidence will address Reason for Refusal 1 by illustrating that the type, quality and extent of the proposed landscape buffer planting surrounding the proposed development layout and its degree of “fit” within the existing setting would ensure that the Appeal Scheme would not cause substantial harm to the landscape character of the area, and in fact would lead to an improvement of the landscape character and setting, when compared to the existing extensive open field system.

- 2.7 The well considered design of the proposed development has resulted in landscaping being integrated in the design from the outset. This interactive approach to the development of the layout necessitates my making reference to the Design and Access Statement, (DAS), and contributions from Clague Architects in respect of design rationale, and density as noted in the DAS and accompanying Approach to Density Statement (Appendix 01).

- 2.8 My evidence is structured in the following way:

In Section 3, I provide a brief description of the existing landscape condition and character of the Appeal Site and go on to describe the Appeal Scheme and the urban design principles that the design team followed in the preparation of the outline design proposals, referring to the Design and Access Statement.

Section 4 makes reference to the relevant planning policies and design guidance which have informed the proposals, cross referring to the evidence prepared by Mr Collins.

In Section 5, I describe the landscape design principles that have informed the proposals for the Appeal Site.

Section 6 outlines the landscape issues relating to the Reason for Refusal 1.

In Section 7, I address these issues and describe how the proposed landscape buffer designs would adequately screen, green and envelop the proposed parcels, would improve the visual quality and character of the land when viewed from the selected representative viewpoints and in doing so create visual connectivity with the surrounding established and developing environment, thus benefitting the wider area. Using the density rationale provided by Clague Architects, and by referring to the Figure Ground Diagram (Figure 04), Overall Density Plan (Figure 05), and the 3D aerial view, my evidence goes on to illustrate how the proposed density respects the pattern of development in the area and forms a natural urban extension to the emerging Chilmington Green masterplan.

Section 8 sets out my conclusions and my view that the landscape buffer scheme is well considered and appropriate for the location and predicted use and that with the benefit of these buffers in place, the proposed development densities are appropriate and reflective of the adjacent patterns of development in the area.

3.0 THE APPEAL SITE AND THE APPEAL SCHEME

Brief Description of the Landscape of the Appeal Site

- 3.1 This should be read in conjunction with the detailed description found in the Statement of Common Ground which provides a description of the Appeal Site conditions.
- 3.2 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 is comprised of large open agricultural fields subdivided by short hedgerows, and 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 1).
- 3.3 **Public Rights of Way:** As noted above, Byway AW245 runs along the east of the site, and appeared to be little used at the time of site survey (2021). The PRoW is mostly contained by hedgerows and tree groups to both sides although these are patchy and poorly maintained in places. The main user groups of the surrounding PRoW's are likely to be pedestrians and horse riders with the sensitivity of this view group regarded as high. PRoW AW292 runs along the northern boundary but at the time of writing is subject to a temporary closure order until the 27th September 2024, AW239 runs in a south westerly direction from Possingham Farm, with AW220 joining AW245 to the north of Possingham Farm. Further to the south of Possingham Farm, AW237 crosses a field in a westerly direction towards Lodge Place, with The Oast house and Coach House located to the west of the A28. At the time of survey this footpath appeared unused.
- 3.4 **Trees and hedgerows:** The site comprises a series of expansive agricultural fields bounded by hedgerows of varying quality and density, with some outgrown hedgerow trees. Internal hedge partitions are degraded and patchy, following drainage ditches, broadly running east-west across the site and dividing the area into three fields. Hedgerows and associated outgrown individual trees along the northern and eastern boundaries, (following the route of PRoW AW292 to the north and AW245 to the east), and mostly dense and well developed, albeit somewhat outgrown and in need of management. Within the site and along the A28, hedgerows are generally spaced with isolated trees. To the south, relatively dense vegetation associated with Possingham Farm provides good screening and visual protection of the farm environs.
- 3.5 **Landscape Character:** The relevant study in respect of local landscape character is the Ashford Local Development Framework, Landscape Character study, (Studio Engleback, November 2005), which notes the condition of the landscape as being of a "unified pattern of elements of vast open fields with ditches – an intensively farmed landscape which has undergone substantial hedgerow loss and removal of wildlife habitats and corridors". The site topography is generally flat or lightly rolling with drainage ditches and associated hedgerows to some boundaries and traversing the site in two locations.

3.6 At a more detailed scale, certain District Landscape Types were considered in the study to be sufficiently distinctive in character to be separately described and assessed. These New District Landscape Types categorise the site as lying within 'BF5a Chilmington Open Arable with Remnants', relevant characteristics being:

- Relatively flat large open prairie style arable fields;
- Excessive loss of hedgerows and fragmentation of woodlands, particularly towards Chilmington Green Road, leaving fragments of hedgerows and trees isolated in vast fields;
- Area is crisscrossed by a network of footpaths, including a byway;
- Area has a distinctive character, but weak sense of place and continuity;
- Remnants of historic landscape character, but degraded / disturbed: sinuous drainage, woodland, hedgerows / historic boundaries.

3.7 The Studio Engleback study notes the district level landscape quality as "Ordinary" and of medium-low landscape sensitivity.

Brief Description of the Appeal scheme

3.8 Extracted from the Design and Access statement provided by Clague Architects the "...vision is to create a unique development that is sensitive to its context and uses the Kentish vernacular and a landscape led design approach to create a development that has a true sense of place. The site provides an opportunity to create a carefully considered approach from the open countryside to the southwest, north towards the new Chilmington Green AAP and Ashford to the northeast.

3.9 Key Design considerations include:

"Development Setting

The proposals need to respond to their immediate and wider context in order to respect the setting and establish a distinctive character of their own. The site is currently agricultural land with the western boundary edged by a hedgerow along the A28 Ashford Road and the southern boundary having a mature screen of vegetation centred around the (Grade II) listed building of Possingham Farmhouse. The Southeastern boundary of the site similarly has an established mature tree/hedgerow boundary. A key consideration is the Chilmington Green AAP which is currently coming forward with development started on site and which abuts the eastern and northern edges of the site.

A study of the surrounding settlements has identified the qualities that contribute to the local character. These qualities will provide a framework for the new development to reinforce local distinctiveness and integrate the new development into the existing fabric and context of the area. Key to this is the Kentish vernacular including not only the built form but also the materiality, detailing and layout of Kentish villages.

Community

Possingham Farm will create a unique place that forms a sensitively designed and careful gateway/approach to the southwest of Ashford. The landscape and urban framework has been consciously designed to create networks of open spaces linked by greenways that will provide focal points for social interaction for the new neighbourhoods and link in with the proposed new community within the Chilmington Green AAP. New landscaped areas within the development will create spaces that people will want to spend time in and the proposals will open up this area to the public for the first time.

Landscape

The design for the development has been landscape led with careful consideration of existing landscape character and the integration of green space within the layout.

Access

The access strategy encourages sustainability by linking the development to the north to the Chilmington Green AAP and the new amenities including the District Centre, Local Centres, Primary and Secondary Schools. Primary access to the Site is from the new road from the A28 opposite Old Surrenden Manor Rd. A secondary access on to the A28 is also proposed along the western boundary of the site. The existing AW245 Byway will be respected and a sensitive approach to the design of house fronting onto this edge is proposed. New pedestrian links to this and the AW220 (outwith the

site but to the southwest of the site) would increase pedestrian access to the site and link to the new communities to the north and the existing communities in Great Chart and Chilmington Green.

Environment

The current monoculture of crop planting will be replaced with a range of habitats that will seek to increase overall biodiversity whilst respecting existing habitats such as the existing hedgerows and mature tree planting to the boundaries. New permanently wet SuDS features will increase invertebrates, reptiles and amphibians on the site which in turn will increase bird populations. New landscaped spaces will feature native tree planting and wildflower planting to increase biodiversity whilst in the long run new gardens planted by owners will increase the number and variety of flowering plants encouraging bees and butterflies.

Sustainability

Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) will form an integral part of the landscape framework of the site, providing amenity for residents and natural habitats to enhance ecological opportunities.

All the homes will be built to the Government's Code for Sustainable Homes Level 3, have water efficiency devices and use sustainably sourced building materials where possible. There will be on-site recycling facilities and a minimum of 80% of construction waste will be recycled."

4.0 RELEVANT GUIDANCE AND THE LANDSCAPE DESIGN PROCESS

Relevant Policy and Guidance

- 4.1 Following the design lead provided by Clague Architects, the landscape design has been further developed within the overall framework of national and local policy and with reference to national and local planning guidance.
- 4.2 The Proof of Evidence provided by Mr John Collins contains a full appraisal of these policies and the ways in which the scheme proposals have responded to all relevant aspects of local and national planning policy as pertinent to this Appeal. Questions about policy should be directed to Mr John Collins.

5.0 LANDSCAPE DESIGN PRINCIPLES OF THE APPEAL SCHEME

- 5.1 In this section I describe the landscape design principles of the Appeal scheme.

Landscape Strategy.

- 5.2 The specific objectives for the detailed landscape strategy are to:
 - Retain the majority of the existing vegetation and boundary trees on and adjacent to the Application Site and integrate these elements with the parameter masterplan proposals.
 - Enhance existing boundaries of the Site to integrate the Proposed Development into the surrounding countryside
 - Maximise opportunities for habitat creation and wildlife preservation.
 - Protect the visual amenity of adjoining properties and integrate development into the existing and proposed townscape to the north; and
 - Maintain open areas in appropriate locations in order to maximize the contribution of greenspace to the Proposed Development and the wider visual amenity of the Site.
- 5.3 The overall Landscape Strategy comprises a network of accessible open spaces running through and around the built compartments including a linear park with ponds and amenity recreational areas to the east, a central green spine running north to south throughout the site with greenway links to the western buffer zones, in total enabling a Green Network across the site area which connects with the wider landscape and footpath networks to the south and east. This Green Network not only contributes to the creation of a sustainable scheme that can be designed in line with best practice, but it also contributes to creating a setting that is conducive to encouraging healthy living and providing for all activities as part of family life.
- 5.4 A fuller description of the proposed landscape treatments is contained in the Design and Access Statement which accompanied the application.

6.0 LANDSCAPE ISSUES RELATING TO REASON FOR REFUSAL

- 6.1 A principal landscape concern of Reason for Refusal 1, as highlighted in the SoCG in the Matters in Dispute, (Section 7), is whether the proposed indicative layout accommodates a sufficient landscape buffer to be in accordance with Policy HOU5 of the Local Plan.
- 6.2 This matter will be responded to in the following Section 7, based on the Landscape and Visual Appraisal (as previously submitted), and the Photographic Montages and illustrative sections contained in Appendix 03. For a detailed photomontage methodology refer to the description in Appendix 02.
- 6.3 Reason for Refusal 1 is also concerned with the proposed density of the scheme; whether the layout is too dense and whether it respects the pattern of development in the area and whether the proposed density will “visually encroach on the countryside and harm the landscape character of the area, and would fail to accord with the character of the permitted adjacent Chilmington Green development and would consequently harm the setting of that development.” The Approach to Density Statement prepared by Clague Architects at Appendix 1 addresses this concern and is supported by the Figure Ground Diagram (Figure 4), the Overall Density Plan (Figure 5) and the 3D Aerial View. My assessment of the selected photomontages in Section 7 indicates how the landscape treatments will aid in the assimilation of the proposed built form with the wider Chilmington Green and how the density and scale is visually appropriate in its local context and the wider setting of Chilmington Green.

7.0 Impact of proposals: Visibility and Landscape Character.

Viewpoint 05

- 7.1 This selected view is taken from byway, AW245, on the eastern edge of the Application Site boundary and looks westwards towards the core areas of the Appeal Site in a location where the intervening hedgerow is relatively short and sparse, allowing open views across the site. The main user groups are pedestrian and equestrian users of the byway, although at the time of survey, access was restricted and there was little evidence of use. The sensitivity of this view group is regarded to be high.

The proposed development will be visible in the foreground and middle distance, with the building line set back to the west of the proposed SuDS lagoons and buffer planting areas. The density of proposed development here is high, with the tallest proposed buildings, of up to 4 storeys. Mitigation measures will include substantial reinforcement of the existing hedgerow boundary, provision of structural scrub and wooded belts and riverine type vegetation associated with the SuDS lagoon margins. The Magnitude of Impact will be medium to high and there will be a direct, permanent effect on the visual amenity of this view of major negative significance prior to the implementation of mitigation measures.

The mitigation measures, including advance tree, hedgerow and marginal planting along the eastern edge of the proposed development area once established, will soften and screen the visual impact of the urban edge. The photomontage illustrates a wintertime condition with deciduous trees without leaves, and with filtered views of elements of the development remaining after the implementation of mitigation measures.

There is likely to be a direct, permanent effect on the visual amenity of the view of major-moderate magnitude and moderate adverse significance following the implementation of mitigation measures, although as indicated on the photomontage, in the longer term (15 years modelled), the intervening vegetation will significantly reduce the effect on this viewpoint.

Sections E, F and G, Figure 23, Appendix 04, illustrate the potential for effective screening and filtering of views from AW245 towards the site. Section F indicates that the buffer zone in the location of VP05 could be as wide as 50m+ in places providing ample space for creating layers of buffer planting where required. Detailed planting arrangements, in response to the developed architectural layouts would allow for the framing of views, both to green corridors running through the site, and also to emphasise elements of the built form.

Viewpoint 06

- 7.2 This view is taken from byway, AW245, on the edge of the Appeal Site boundary in a similar location to Viewpoint 05 but looking northwards, away from the Appeal Site towards the Chilmington Green development zone. The view illustrates the current landscape condition to the east of the Appeal Site, with an illustrative modelling of the approved development parcels, located to the east of the proposed greenway. Whilst currently greened fields and hedgerows, this view will be subject to significant and

irreversible change upon the implementation of the approved masterplan. The Appeal Site will be separated from the adjacent Chilmington Green development areas by a wide swath of retained natural landscape, preserved to enhance local biodiversity and to provide amenity space for the southern areas of approved development. This “green lung” is well placed to serve the Possingham Farm proposals and aids in the long-term greening of the byway. It is notable that significant change in the local landscape character, including that surrounding the Appeal Site, will be inevitable once building works are completed. This change will be evident to future users of the PRoW’s / byways and to vehicular users of the A28, further to the west.

Viewpoint 08

- 7.3 Viewpoint 8 is taken from just off the A28 Ashford Road east side, near to the junction with PRoW AW237, with Lodge Place behind and to the west of the A28. This view looks northwards to the Appeal Site with the Possingham Farm compound to the centre and east (right) of the view and the A28 to the west (left) of the view.

Potential receptors are users of the PRoW and vehicles along the A28. Current conditions indicate the PRoW’s leading to the A28 are rarely, if ever used by walkers. However, the sensitivity of potential users should still be considered high. Vehicles using the A28 are generally travelling at high speed and whilst open views to the lower lying site are readily available, vehicular users remain of low sensitivity. The intervening landscape is of medium-high sensitivity with the main site beyond the listed building of medium-low landscape sensitivity. The modelled photomontage indicates Chilmington Green building phases to the north of the Appeal Site have progressed since the earlier survey photographs, with elements of built form visible above the intervening vegetation. Future phases of development to the east of the site will also be visible from here, further urbanising the local landscape character and views.

The Proposed Development will be well set back from the site boundary and views will be partly screened by existing mature vegetation. Due to the elevated nature of the viewpoint, looking downslope to the site, it is anticipated that views over the existing vegetation will be achievable, particularly in the short term. Mitigation measures will include substantial reinforcement of the existing southern boundary, including structural scrub and wooded belts and a wide swathe of parkland landscape separating the plot zones from the A28. Magnitude of Impact will be medium to high in the early years of operation.

There will be a direct, permanent effect on the visual amenity of this view of moderate adverse significance prior to the implementation of mitigation measures. However, as indicated on the photomontage, and Section D, (Figure 23), in the longer term (15 years modelled), the intervening vegetation will significantly reduce the effect on this viewpoint with advanced tree, hedgerow, and parkland planting along the western and southern edges of the Proposed Development areas, once established, softening and screening the visual impact from this viewpoint.

The Figure Ground Diagram and Overall Density Plan, (Figures 4 and 5), along with the 360 Aerial View, illustrate how the proposed density regime across the site responds to the surrounding landform and the Chilmington Green development areas to the north and east. As noted in the Clague Approach to Density Statement:

“The broad approach to density and massing at Possingham Farm reflects the wider Chilmington Green approach with legible ‘fingers’ of development extending out southwards and corresponding ‘fingers’ of green space extending northwards between these built areas. In general, the southern tip of the development ‘fingers’ is the more lower density terminating in a range of approx. 10-25 dwellings per hectare depending on which Parcel it is in.

As the main vehicular access is from the north, there is a higher density there to properly frame the entrance and on account of the closer proximity to the proposed Secondary School to the north addressing the A28. Internally within the site there is slightly higher densities addressing the central main Avenue or spine road and at various points where key-note apartment buildings are introduced for placemaking reasons to assist with public realm character and wayfinding.

In general, the edge conditions of our masterplan for Possingham see a lowering of density compared with the northern and central zones of the illustrative layout which accompanied the Outline Planning Submission.

Considering the approach that has been taken to layout and density, we feel that the proposals are a reasonable and appropriate response to the site context and the established Parameters associated with the adjacent strategic site of Chilmington Green.”

The Figure Ground Diagram further illustrates how the pattern of development across the master plan area would be compatible with that proposed for the Appeal Site, with the illustrated site arrangement being of a more informal character. This possible site layout would form a natural addition to the wider urban area and would aid in the creation of a nucleated form of settlement, benefiting from proximity to the A28 and capable of adding to, and utilising the proposed and developing local amenities and facilities.

Viewpoint 09

- 7.4 Taken from the A28 Ashford Road east side, on the southern edge of the Application Site, Viewpoint 09 Looks northwards along the A28 and with the Application Site east (right) of the view.

Potential receptors are vehicles using the A28. Vehicles using the A28 are generally travelling at high speed and whilst extensive open views to the site are readily available over and through the patchy roadside hedgerow, these receptors are considered of low sensitivity. The site landscape, denuded of hedgerows and tree cover is also considered of low sensitivity and landscape value.

The proposed development will be well set back from the site boundary and views will be screened and softened by extensive tree, hedgerow and parkland planting forming part of the comprehensive open space network throughout the Appeal Site. Due to the relative openness of the site in this location, views to the built form will be evident in the short term. Mitigation measures, as indicated in Sections A, B and C will include substantial reinforcement of the existing poorly defined hedgerow bordering the A28 and will include structural tree and scrub planting and swathes of parkland landscape separating the plot zones from the A28. Widths of potential buffer planting vary along the length of the A28, from a short narrower section of around 13m in the northern corner to over 80m at the southern end of the site where the site is most prominent from the A28. Additional greening will be provided by garden trees and hedgerows.

The photomontage sequence includes an image indicating the likely extent of the built out Chilmington Green. As noted for Viewpoint 8 above, future phases of development to the east of the site will also be visible from here, further urbanising the local landscape character and views.

There will be a direct, permanent effect on the visual amenity of this view of major moderate and adverse significance prior to the implementation of mitigation measures, but with the proposed mitigation of advanced tree and scrub planting, enhancement and enlargement of the existing hedgerow, along with parkland planting along the western edge of the proposed development areas reaching a level of maturity, views will be significantly softened and screened from this viewpoint, as illustrated in the photomontage and indicated on Sections A, B and C, Figure 21 of Appendix 03.

Viewpoint 11

- 7.5 This viewpoint is taken from the Ribston Way, on Great Chart Ridge and was included in the submitted LVIA to illustrate potential effects on views from the established residential areas on higher ground, and looks southwards, over the emerging first phases of Chilmington Green to the centre and right (west) of the view. Whilst the earlier assessment anticipated elements of the Appeal Scheme would be visible from here, the modelled view confirms that whilst very minor elements of future Chilmington Green development parcels and secondary school might be visible, the Appeal Scheme will be obscured by the intervening built form.

- 7.6 In terms of density and effect on the local landscape character, the Figure Ground Diagram and Overall Density Plan, (Figures 4 and 5), along with the 360 Aerial View, illustrate how the proposed density regime across the site responds to the surrounding landform and the Chilmington Green development areas to the north and east. As noted in the Clague "Approach to Density Statement":

"The broad approach to density and massing at Possingham Farm reflects the wider Chilmington Green approach with legible 'fingers' of development extending out southwards and corresponding 'fingers' of green space extending northwards between these built areas. In general, the southern tip of the development 'fingers' is the more lower density terminating in a range of approx. 10-25 dwellings per hectare depending on which Parcel it is in.

As the main vehicular access is from the north, there is a higher density there to properly frame the entrance and on account of the closer proximity to the proposed Secondary School to the north addressing the A28. Internally within the site there is slightly higher densities addressing the central main Avenue or spine road and at various points where key-note apartment buildings are introduced for placemaking reasons to assist with public realm character and wayfinding.

In general, the edge conditions of our masterplan for Possingham see a lowering of density compared with the northern and central zones of the illustrative layout which accompanied the Outline Planning Submission.

Considering the approach that has been taken to layout and density, we feel that the proposals are a reasonable and appropriate response to the site context and the established Parameters associated with the adjacent strategic site of Chilmington Green."

The Figure Ground Diagram further illustrates how the pattern of development across the master plan area would be compatible with that proposed for the Appeal Site. The illustrated site arrangement could be of a more informal and organic character, reflecting location and permitting the use of "green fingers" of open space permeating the development parcels and complementing the larger green corridor to the east. This possible site layout would form a natural addition to the wider urban

area and would aid in the creation of a nucleated form of settlement, benefiting from proximity to the A28 and capable of adding to, and utilising the proposed and developing local amenities and facilities.

- 7.7 The 2005 Landscape Character study assesses the local landscape type as being of ordinary quality and of medium to low sensitivity. On this basis, the capacity of the site to accept the type of development envisaged should be considered as high, and due to the nature of the site, and its location adjacent to Chilmington Green, effects on landscape character would be localised and largely confined to the site extents, with the change from extensive agriculture to residential development. The submitted LVIA concludes that:

a) the new development would be sensitive to the emerging built environment and resulting landscape character, representing a natural extension to the Chilmington Green masterplan.

b) existing landscape features to the boundary are retained and enhanced wherever possible, as well as

c) new landscape and ecological features are implemented so that site biodiversity is increased and exchange between the site and other habitats in the site's surroundings is improved. This principle is particular pertinent in respect of the current denuded and degraded nature of the existing hedgerow structure which would be significantly improved by the proposals.

8.0 SUMMARY and CONCLUSION

- 8.1 For the following reasons I consider that with sensitive detailed design, the outline proposals for the landscape buffers containing and defining the components of the Appeal Scheme would meet the criteria set down in **Policy HOU5 - Residential Windfall Development in the Countryside** and would provide an appropriately sized and designed landscape buffer to the A28 and countryside to the south and west.

- The varying width of the buffer zones surrounding development parcels provides opportunities for a range of landscape typologies which can be tailored to suit different functions including screening, view framing and enhancement, definition of routes and waymarking, creation of wildlife corridors and covers and containment of public open space and amenity areas.
- The outline buffer proposals follow the general softworks design tenets as implemented in the first phases of Chilmington Green. These were developed and agreed with the Landscape and Tree officers at the time, to include native structural screening along with more formal hedgerow planting, and also areas of parkland which include more ornamental tree varieties set in grassed areas with bulb planting and wildflower swathes. Since the outline submission, further work assessing the biodiversity of the site and potential enhancement for wildlife promotion has been undertaken by Corylus Ecology. The BNG report submitted to Ashford Borough Council recommends wider establishment of scrub areas in association with the woodland and hedgerow buffers. This is reflected in the provided sections and indicated on the revised Landscape Parameter Plan, (Figure 03, D0410_001 Open Space Plan)

- 8.2 In terms of the acceptability of the proposed density of the scheme, the rationale provide by Clague Architects provides justification of the density profiles and how these relate to the adjacent Chilmington Green development parcels. This is supported by the Figure Ground Diagram and Overall Density Plan. By following the design principals set out in the Chilmington Green Design Code, the Appeal Scheme will create a natural and sustainable extension to the approved masterplan whilst enhancing the local landscape character and potential for biodiversity gain.

- 8.3 In the light of the above, I consider that the structural and buffer landscape strategy of the Appeal Scheme and the manner in which it addresses the issues of impact on local landscape character and views, would create adequate containment, screening and softening of the proposed urban form and density and would provide visual and ecological benefits while presenting a limited and localised effect on landscape character and visual amenity. I consider that Reason for Refusal 1 does not justify a refusal of planning permission in this appeal. Instead, I consider that the appeal proposals, whilst resulting in a change in the local landscape character of the site from agricultural to primarily residential use, will not result in substantial harm to the wider landscape character and views from local receptors.

FIGURES

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FIGURE 02	PRoW's
FIGURE 03	Landscape Parameter Plan
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FIGURE 20	Photomontage View 11, Proposed Development, Chilmington Green (ghosted)
FIGURE 21	Photomontage View 11, Proposed Development, Chilmington Green
FIGURE 22	Landscape Sections A-C A28 Ashford Road
FIGURE 23	Landscape Sections D-G PRoW AW245

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 01

Clague Architects, Approach to Density Statement

APPENDIX 02

Methodology for Photomontages / 3D Views

APPENDIX 03

Diagrams and location plan, Figures 1-5

APPENDIX 04

A3 Photomontages and supporting sectional illustrations, Figures 6-23

APPENDIX 01

Clague Architects, Approach to Density Statement, August 2024

APPROACH TO DENSITY IN THE OUTLINE PLANNING SUBMISSION FOR POSSINGHAM FARM.

The Site at Possingham Farm sits between the strategic road corridor of the A28 (Ashford Road to the west) and the Outline Approved Strategic Housing Site of Chilmington Green (to the east). To the south is located Possingham Farmhouse a Grade 2 Listed building enclosed by trees and hedgerows. These three agencies have all informed the proposed approach to layout, density and building heights.

Furthermore, the main vehicular entrance to the proposed new housing at Possingham Farm is from the north where it extends from the A28 via a previously approved roundabout approaching across one of the approved housing parcels of the Chilmington Green development (Parcel Ref A2)

The broad approach to density and massing at Possingham Farm reflects the wider Chilmington Green approach with legible 'fingers' of development extending out southwards and corresponding 'fingers' of green space extending northwards between these built areas. In general, the southern tip of the development 'fingers' is the more lower density terminating in a range of approx. 10-25 dwellings per hectare depending on which Parcel it is in.

As the main vehicular access is from the north, there is a higher density there to properly frame the entrance and on account of the closer proximity to the proposed Secondary School to the north addressing the A28. Internally within the site there is slightly higher densities addressing the central main Avenue or spine road and at various points where key-note apartment buildings are introduced for placemaking reasons to assist with public realm character and wayfinding.

In general the edge conditions of our masterplan for Possingham see a lowering of density compared with the northern and central zones of the illustrative layout which accompanied the Outline Planning Submission.

Considering the approach that has been taken to layout and density, we feel that the proposals are a reasonable and appropriate response to the site context and the established Parameters associated with the adjacent strategic site of Chilmington Green.

ENDS

APPENDIX 02

Methodology for Photomontages / 3D Views

- 1 All photographs are taken using a full frame sensor digital camera with a 50mm focal length lens at an eye line of 1,600mm above natural ground level.
- 2 Mapping and levels data used to facilitate perspective matching of modelling have been taken from existing topographic survey information and digital Ordnance Survey mapping.
- 3 All planting shown is indicative and aims to reflect planting 15 years after completion of the proposed development. New trees range from 8m to 12m in height. New hedgerows range from approximately 2m to 3m in height.
- 4 All development modelling is indicative. Scheme height and extent modelling based on Building Heights Parameter Plan, produced by Clague Architects, drawings dated April 2021.
- 5 Grey tone of development modelling is for illustration of scale only and not representative of final building materials.
- 6 View numbering is based on original numbering used within the Possingham Farm Landscape and Visual Impact Appraisal (Neil Tully Associates, dated December 2020).
- 7 Chilmington Green masterplan modelling based on Chilmington Green Design Code, by JTP, dated 2016.

APPENDIX 03

FIGURE 01 Aerial Photograph/Site location

FIGURE 02 PRow's

FIGURE 03 Landscape Parameter Plan

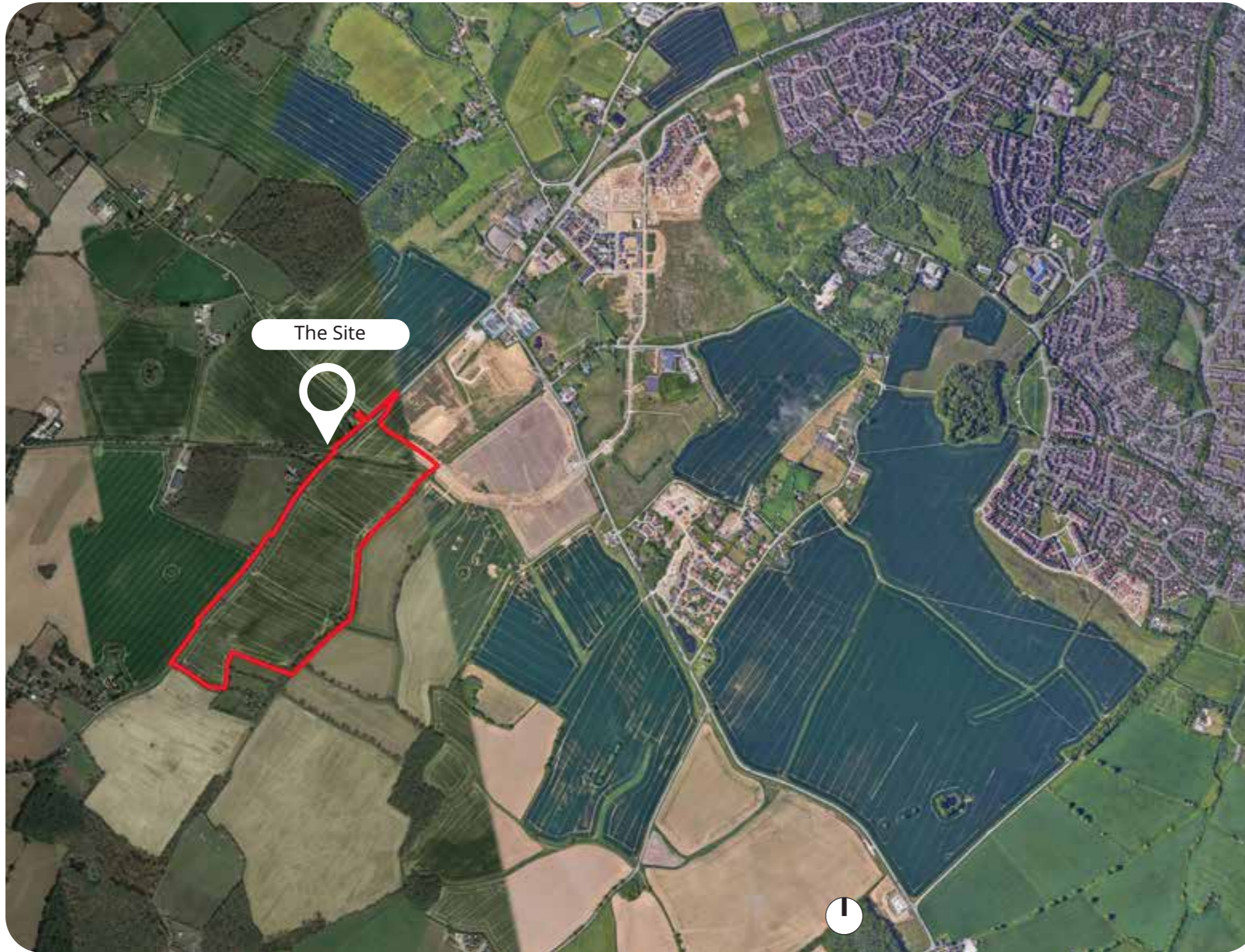
FIGURE 04 Figure Ground Diagram

FIGURE 05 Overall Density Plan

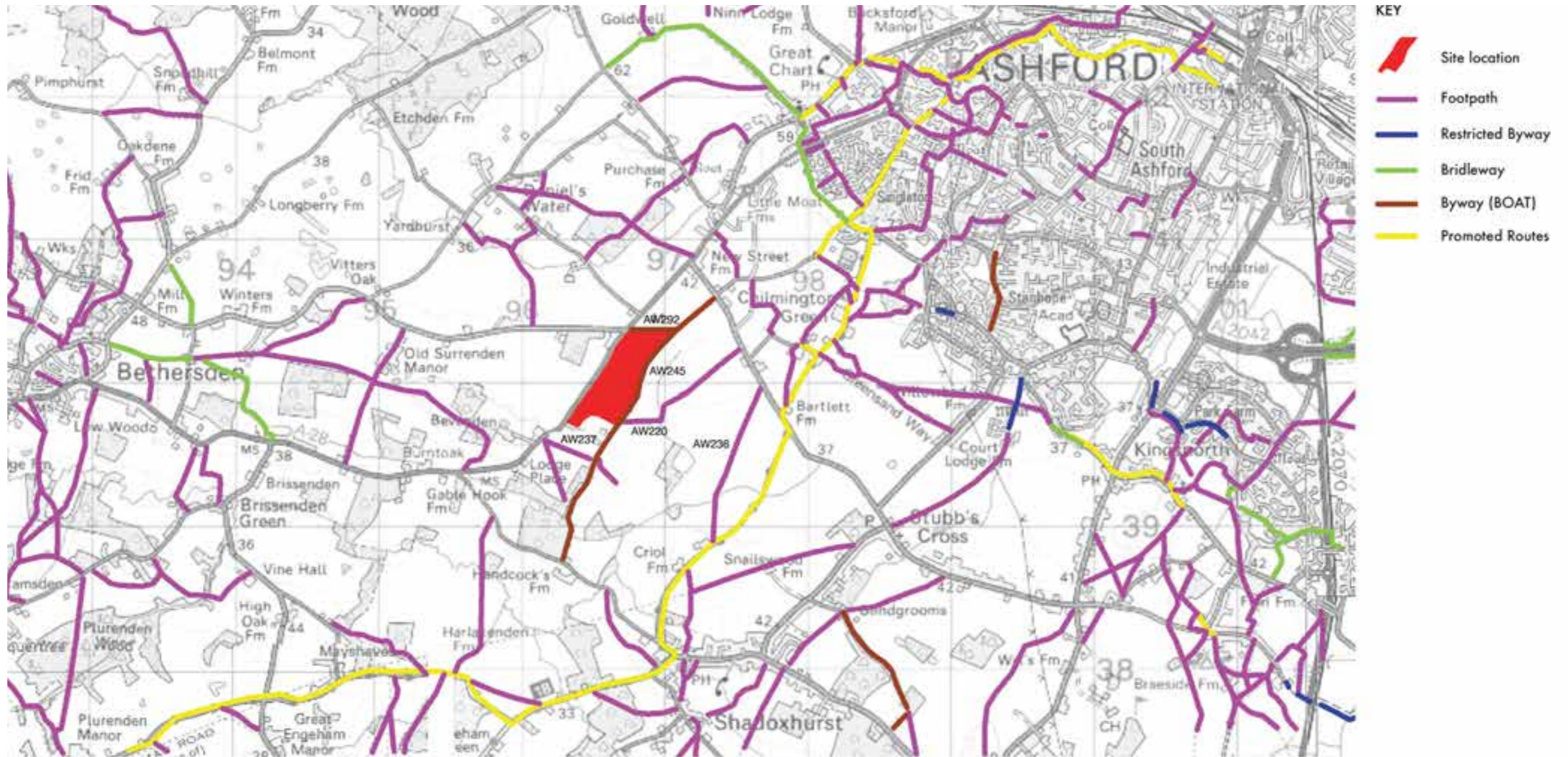
APPENDIX 04

- FIGURE 06** Location of Photomontages 01-04
- FIGURE 07** Photomontage View 05, Existing
- FIGURE 08** Photomontage View 05, Proposed Development without buffer planting
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- FIGURE 22** Landscape Sections A-C A28 Ashford Road
- FIGURE 23** Landscape Sections D-G PRoW AW245

APPENDIX 03: Site Location: Aerial Photograph



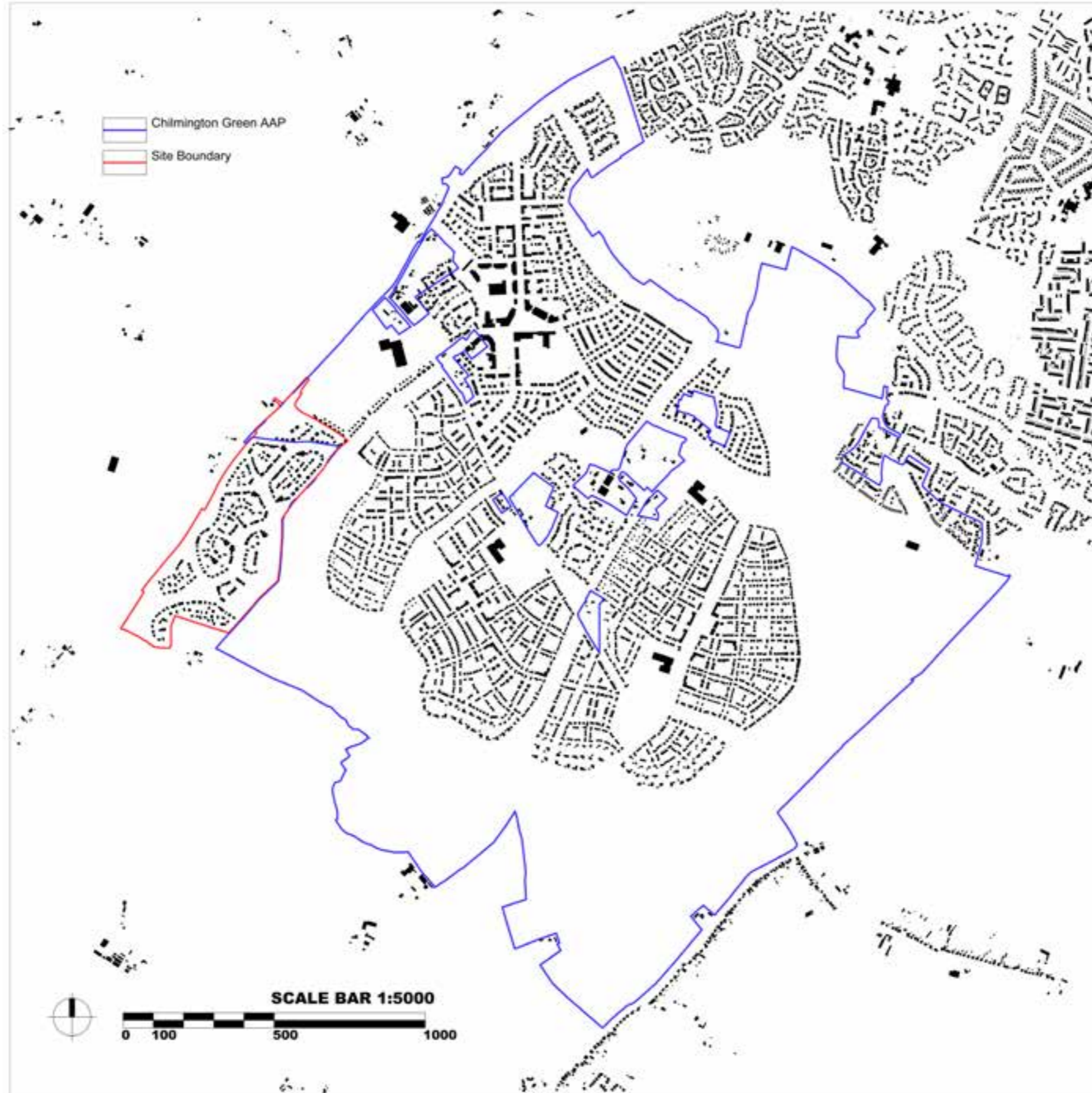
Appendix 03: Figure 1. Site Location: Aerial Photograph, Google Maps



Appendix 03: Figure 2. Public Rights of Way: Kent County Council/Magic Maps
OS Licence No. 100061134



Appendix C: Figure 3. Landscape Parameter Plan
OS Licence No. 100061134



Appendix 03: FIGURE 4. Figure Ground Diagram



Appendix 03: FIGURE 5. Overall Density Plan Source: Clague Architects



View Key

Appendix 04: Figure 06 Aerial Photograph/ Local Viewpoint Locations, Google Maps



View 05 as Existing



View 05 Indicative Scheme (with no mitigation planting)



View 05 Indicative Scheme with mitigation planting



View 06 as Existing



View 06 (No proposed scheme visible) Future Chilmington Green Development shown orange



View 08 as Existing



View 08 Indicative Scheme (with no mitigation planting)



View 08 Indicative Scheme with mitigation planting



View 09 as Existing



View 09 Existing with Chilmington Green development area and secondary school modelled



View 09 Indicative Scheme (with no mitigation planting)



View 09 Indicative Scheme with mitigation planting



View 11 as Existing



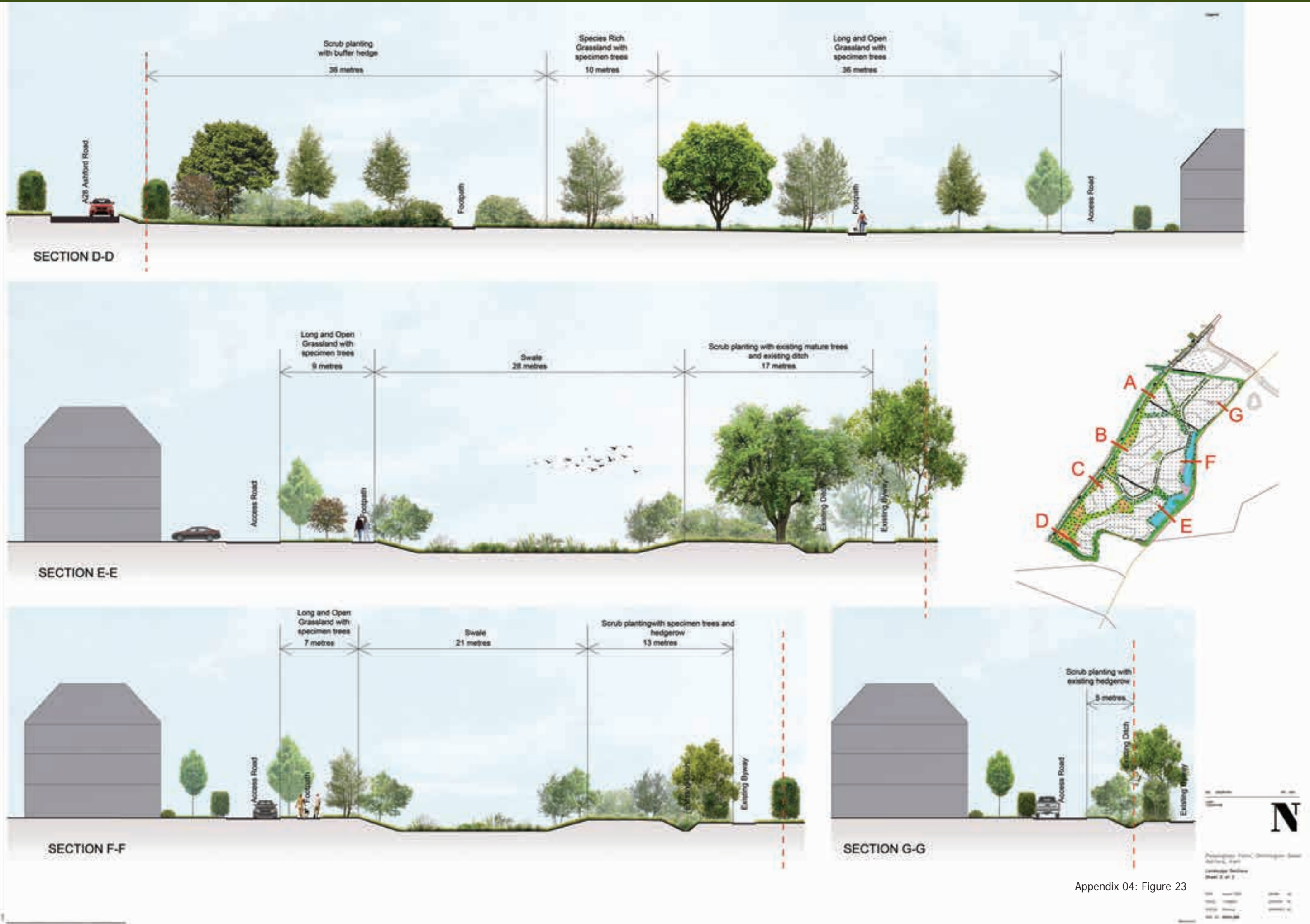
View 11 Indicative Scheme with Chilmington Green development area and secondary school modelled (shown ghosted)



View 11 Indicative Scheme with Chilmington Green development area and secondary school modelled (all barely visible)



Appendix 04: Figure 22



Appendix 04: Figure 23