

Landscape and Visual Appraisal

Loddon Garden Village/Thames Valley Science Park Link Road



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1. Introduction

- 1.1. This Landscape and Visual Appraisal ('LVIA') has been prepared on behalf of the University of Reading (UoR) in support of a full application for the delivery of a new section of Link Road with footway and cycle path, providing an extension of the existing spine road; together with a new access track to a Foul Pumping Station ('FPS'). The new section of road would connect to the existing TVSP Spine Road close to where a new access is to be provided for a new building by the Natural History Museum (NHM), located to the east of the Thames Valley Science Park (TVSP). It is located at approximate grid reference SU 74547 69403.
- 1.2. This report considers the potential landscape and visual effects of the proposed FPS and new section of link road. It has been prepared by Savills Urban Design Studio for the University of Reading and carried out by a Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute. It follows methodology set out in the *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment* (3rd edition) (GLVIA3) (Landscape Institute and IEMA, 2013) and subsequent Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note LITGN-2024-01 *Notes and Clarifications on Aspects of Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third edition* (GLVIA3).
- 1.3. The application is defined as: "Full planning permission for the construction of a Spine Road between the Thames Valley Science Park and Loddon Garden Village to support delivery of Local Plan Update Policy SS13, landscaping, surface water attenuation and other associated works." This is described as the 'Proposed Development' within the report.
- 1.4. The main objectives of this Landscape and Visual Impact Appraisal (LVIA) are as follows:
 - Establishment of the baseline landscape and visual conditions, including the sensitivity/ value of receptors
 - Identification and assessment of the magnitude of any potential effects
 - Appraisal of the significance of any effects
- 1.5. The term 'Site' is used throughout the report to describe the area within the red line boundary, as shown in the figures provided in Appendix Two. This comprises the proposed road, foul pumping station compound and the access to this.

2. Scope of the Assessment and Methodology

Proposals

- 2.1. This review assumes a development would take place in accordance with the drawings produced by Savills (see Appendix Three):
- 498048-LA0450 – TVSP Link Road & FPS – Landscape Planting Plan Sheet 1 of 10
 - 498048-LA0451 – TVSP Link Road & FPS – Landscape Planting Plan Sheet 2 of 10
 - 498048-LA0452 – TVSP Link Road & FPS – Landscape Planting Plan Sheet 3 of 10
 - 498048-LA0453 – TVSP Link Road & FPS – Landscape Planting Plan Sheet 4 of 10
 - 498048-LA0454 – TVSP Link Road & FPS – Landscape Planting Plan Sheet 5 of 10
 - 498048-LA0455 – TVSP Link Road & FPS – Landscape Planting Plan Sheet 6 of 10
 - 498048-LA0456 – TVSP Link Road & FPS – Landscape Planting Plan Sheet 7 of 10
 - 498048-LA0457 – TVSP Link Road & FPS – Landscape Planting Plan Sheet 8 of 10
 - 498048-LA0458 – TVSP Link Road & FPS – Landscape Planting Plan Sheet 9 of 10
 - 498048-LA0459 – TVSP Link Road & FPS – Landscape Planting Plan Sheet 10 of 10
 - 498048-LA0460 – TVSP Link Road & FPS – Site Wide landscape Layout & Schedule
- 2.2. These drawings set out the following development parameters which have enabled the landscape and visual effects to be appraised.

Site Location

- 2.3. The new section of Link Road and the FPS and associated access track would be located on agricultural land south of the M4 motorway, approximately 800m to the east of TVSP.
- 2.4. An existing 30m landscape buffer of mature trees separates the FPS compound from the M4 motorway carriageways.
- 2.5. The route of the new section of road and access to the FPS is located to the east of Cutbush Lane East and crosses an area of agricultural land. The settlement of Shinfield lies to the west and Reading is located to the north of the M4. Here, construction work is currently underway on a new storage facility for the Natural History Museum ('NHM') to the west of New Covert. Part of the Site comprises the previously approved spine road which also provides access to the Natural History Museum (planning application reference: 232995) and includes the road and associated landscaping (the 'spine road').
- 2.6. A separate application is proposed to be submitted for a herbarium on land to the north of the spine road. The Proposed Development would include a roundabout and road which would provide access to the new herbarium facility.
- 2.7. To the east of the NHM is an existing farm track which extends out to the triangular piece of land which would accommodate the FPS. The existing farm track would be crossed by the proposed road extension, close to New Covert.

Proposed Development

- 2.8. The red line partially corresponds with the consented spine road that was included in planning application 232995, enabling the proposed link road to provide an extension to the public highway. The Proposed Development makes changes to the cycleway to the north and a new access road off the previously consented roundabout, including roadside footways and verges to the east of the consented roundabout. This includes six alder trees to the west of the roundabout which were also shown within planning application 232995.
- 2.9. A proposed northern arm to the consented roundabout (which did not form part of the planning application 232995) would provide access to the proposed herbarium. This stretch of new road would include footways on each side of the carriageway together with an area of road edge wildflower mix (Emorsgate EM3 or equivalent). It would also include an alder tree within the verges to each side of the roundabout, but no trees on the proposed northern arm to the roundabout. These two alders were not shown on planning application 232995. A proposed Sustainable Drainage Basin would be located adjacent to the eastern side of the proposed northern arm of the roundabout. This would be seeded with a wetland meadow mix (Emorsgate EM8 or equivalent).
- 2.10. To the east of the consented roundabout a further five alders are proposed to the north of the spine road/ consented Natural History Museum within an area of road edge wildflower mix. The footway/cycleway associated with the northern side of the spine road is to be extended along the length of the proposed link road. This is an increase of one tree to the north of the road compared to the consented scheme.
- 2.11. Two alder trees are proposed to the south of the proposed road within an area of verge adjacent to the road. South of this there is a footway adjacent to the boundary of the consented NHM.
- 2.12. Immediately to the east of the consented NHM, the approved spine road is to be extended through the construction of the proposed link road, which will match the width and materials of the spine road. The link road is approximately 570m long in total and extends to a point to the south of the proposed FPS with a new access track providing a link to the FPS enclosure for future maintenance. The new section of Link Road is to include street lighting and planting in the form of twenty seven new trees in verges, a section of new native species hedge planting approximately 240m in length and areas of native species thicket planting. Verges are to be seeded in a range of Emorsgate, or equivalent, grass and wildflower mixes selected to relate to the ground conditions. New Sustainable Drainage Basins and ditches are proposed, these would be located to the south of the proposed Link Road and comprise a linear ditch that runs along north-western edge of New Covert. A second basin is proposed to the east of New Covert close to the overhead cables and pylons that run through this part of the site, these features would be seeded with a wetland meadow mix (Emorsgate EM8 or equivalent) and would take surface-water run-off from the road.
- 2.13. The access track to the FPS is to be constructed of granular material and would be constructed 'at grade', merging in with the adjacent existing agricultural land. The proposed track would not be accompanied by any new planting, but its edges would be allowed to regenerate with natural grass and herbaceous species. A 1m strip would be managed as a 'verge' to each side of the track. Beyond this, land would either also be mown as a wider verge, or continued to be farmed.

- 2.14. Visible elements of the Link Road would include Street lighting columns associated with new section of highway.
- 2.15. Visible elements of the pumping station within the compound would include:
- Motor Control Centre (MCC) Kiosk: The MCC Kiosk would be rectangular in shape and would be 2.0m in length and 1.2m in width. The MCC Kiosk would contain electrical control equipment necessary to operate the pumping equipment.
 - Chemical Dosing Plant: The Dosing Plan would be rectangular in shape and would be 3.0m in length and 3.0m in width.
 - Below ground Wet Well and Pumping Equipment: Below ground with an access cover at ground level and an associated switch box to house pump controls. A 4m steel gantry is also proposed above the wet well chamber.
 - A 6m lighting column would be located along the northern boundary of the compound.
 - A tanker hardstanding area would be located on the southern boundary with concrete bollards around the perimeter.
 - A new access gate and perimeter security fencing around the boundary of the compound.

Methodology

Introduction

- 2.16. The appraisal has been informed by the *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3rd Edition* (GLVIA3) (Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013). The guidelines suggest that impacts are assessed from a clear understanding of the development proposed and any related landscape mitigation measures.
- 2.17. GLVIA3 calls for an understanding of the visual form of the existing landscape, its quality and sensitivity to change, considering the nature of the development. It further calls for an evaluation of the value of the views and susceptibility to change (overall sensitivity) of the potential landscape and visual receptors (viewers). For there to be a visual impact, there is the need for a viewer (receptor). Visual receptors include users of residential properties, workplaces, recreational facilities and other outdoor sites used by the public, roads, railways and footpaths, which would be likely to experience a change in existing views as a result of the construction and operation of the proposed development. This baseline identification of landscape and visual receptors is provided in Sections 4 and 6 respectively.

Desk-based Surveys

- 2.18. The desk study included a review of the 1:25,000 Ordnance Survey maps for the area, GIS data, aerial photographs, and relevant landscape related designations and published landscape character assessments. The documents reviewed included:
- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (December 2024)
 - National Character Areas within the study area
 - Wokingham Borough Local Development Framework: Adopted Core Strategy Development Plan Document January 2010

- Wokingham Borough Development Plan Adopted Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (MDD) Plan (February 2014)
- Shinfield Parish Neighbourhood Plan (February 2017)
- Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment (November 2019)

2.19. In addition, we reviewed relevant site-specific technical reports and drawings, including the arboriculture assessment.

Site Visit

2.20. A site visit was undertaken by a Chartered Landscape Architect and Urban Design Group Recognised Practitioner on 28 January 2026, 11 December 2023 and 15 August 2023. The most recent site visit confirmed the information arising from the desk study, produced an updated photographic record of the site, highlighted any landscape features not already apparent from the desk study and enabled potential views into and out of the site to be appraised. As the site visit was completed in winter leaves were no longer present, enabling the maximum extents of visibility to be assessed.

Photography

2.21. Photographs were taken with either a Canon EOS 5D digital full frame SLR camera with a 50mm lens. This is compliant with Landscape Institute *Technical Guidance Note 06/19 Visual Representation of Development Proposals*. Photographs are presented as 'Type 1' Visualisations, namely Annotated Viewpoint Photographs. These are presented as panoramas to give a more realistic representation of the wider context. Locational data was surveyed with a Garmin GPS.

Landscape Appraisal Evaluation Methodology

2.22. The appraisals are based on an evaluation of the 'sensitivity' of the landscape and visual receptors and the 'magnitude' of the changes. These are clearly defined within the tables set out in Appendix 1.

2.23. The overall 'sensitivity' of the landscape receptor is based on an evaluation of their 'value' (see definitions in Appendix 1, Table A) and their 'susceptibility to change' (Table B) caused by the proposed development, (Table C).

2.24. 'Value' refers to the value that is attached to different landscapes by society, bearing in mind that a landscape may be valued by different stakeholders for a whole variety of reasons (GLVIA3 paragraph 5.19). The baseline review considers the individual elements and aesthetic and perceptual aspects of the landscape and the condition/ quality and 'representativeness' of its elements and features. Judgements are based on a review of the following, as set out in GLVIA3 paragraphs 5.20 to 5.31 and 5.44 to 5.45:

- National designations, and how the site relates to the criteria for its designation.
- Local designations and policies.
- Information on the status of individual or groups of features such as, for example, Conservation Areas, listed buildings, Tree Preservation Orders, important hedgerows, cultural heritage elements such as historic landscapes of various forms, archaeological sites of importance and other special historical or cultural heritage sites such as battlefields or historic gardens.

- Art and literature associations, including tourism literature and promotional material which may indicate the value attached to the identity of particular areas.
- Material on landscapes of local or community interest, such as local green spaces, village greens or allotments.

- 2.25. 'Susceptibility to change' refers to the ability of the landscape receptor (the overall character or quality/condition of a particular landscape type or area, or an individual element and/or feature, or a particular aesthetic and perceptual aspect) to accommodate the proposed development without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline situation and/or the achievement of landscape planning policies and strategies (GLVIA3 paragraph 5.40). In this instance, the 'proposed development' is the new section of Link Road, the proposed access track and FPS plant and compound, as shown on the ALP engineering layout drawings and Savills landscape plans.
- 2.26. The 'magnitude' of the impact of the proposals on the receptors is then judged (Appendix 1, Table D). This considers the scale and geographical extent of the effect. It is assumed that the changes would be permanent and irreversible for this development.
- 2.27. Finally, the overall 'significance' of the effects is judged by considering both the magnitude of the change and the sensitivity of the receptor together (Appendix 1, Table E). As recommended by the GLVIA3, the rationale for this decision-making process is also based on professional judgement, rather than relying solely on matrices. These tables are provided to give a consistent framework to how decisions relating to the changes are made and clarify what the definitions mean.
- 2.28. Once the potential landscape receptors were identified, the magnitude of change likely to result from the implementation and use of the development was identified and, in turn, the significance of these effects, based on the sensitivity of the receptors. This appraisal of effects on landscape receptors is provided in Section 5.
- 2.29. Given the limited nature of associated planting the assessment appraises the proposals at Winter of Year 0. This is effectively the 'worst-case' scenario in terms of landscape and visual effects.
- 2.30. For the purposes of this assessment, impacts of **moderate and above** are considered to be significant.

Visual Appraisal Evaluation Methodology

- 2.31. Like the landscape appraisal, the visual appraisal was based on the identification of potential visual receptors, evaluating their sensitivity, and considering this in combination with the magnitude of the changes to their views.
- 2.32. The preliminary survey work highlighted the main areas where impacts could occur. The 'value' of the views was judged, based on the definitions set out in Appendix 1, Table F and the 'susceptibility to accept change' of the visual receptors was based on the definitions set out in Table G. These were then combined to give an overall indication of the 'sensitivity' of the receptors, based on the matrix set out in Table H as well as professional judgement.
- 2.33. The anticipated magnitude of change to the views of the identified receptors was then considered, based

on the definitions set out in Table I which has been adapted from GLVIA3 methodology. Magnitude of change considers the extent of development visible, the extent of the existing view that would be occupied by the development, the influence of the development within the view and the viewing distance from the receptor to the development. The appraisal has therefore been carried out in accordance with best practice, by assuming the 'worst-case' scenario, that is, on a clear, bright day in winter in Year 0.

- 2.34. Finally, as with the landscape appraisal, the overall 'significance' of the effects is judged by considering both the magnitude of the change and the sensitivity of the visual receptor together (Table E). Again, the rationale for this decision-making process is also based on professional judgement, rather than relying solely on matrices. These tables are provided to give a consistent framework to how decisions relating to the changes are made and clarify what the definitions mean.
- 2.35. For the purposes of this assessment, impacts of **moderate and above** are considered to be significant.

3. Policy and Designation Review

- 3.1. This section sets out relevant policies and designations relating to landscape and visual amenity. The relevant designations are shown on Figure 1 (see Appendix 2).

Landscape and Visual Amenity Designations

- 3.2. The site is not covered by any adopted landscape amenity designations.
- 3.3. The spine road, roundabout and proposed access road to the north of the roundabout are not covered by any landscape designations. The eastern part of the link road and south-eastern part of the FPS track (east of New Covert) and the FPS compound is covered by the draft 'River Loddon Valued Landscape' designation as shown in the Wokingham Borough Council Valued Landscapes Assessment (September 2024) and covered by draft Policy NE6 in the Wokingham Borough Council Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update 2023-2040 (2025).
- 3.4. Draft Policy NE6 states that:
- *"Development proposals must take into account key characteristics, sensitivities and strategies, including key issues and guidelines of the landscape, in order to safeguard intrinsic character, scenic beauty and perceptual qualities, for example tranquillity and dark skies, as set out in the Landscape Character Assessment.*
 - *Valued landscapes are identified on the Policies Map. Development proposals will only be permitted where they protect and enhance features that contribute to the character, quality and interpretation of valued landscapes and specifically the criteria set out in the Guidance for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA) Box 5.1: a. Landscape quality (condition) b. Scenic quality c. Rarity d. Representativeness e. Conservation interests f. Recreation value g. Perceptual aspects h. Associations..."*
- 3.5. Relevant features of the draft Valued landscape, as reflected in the Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment area summarised and considered as part of our landscape baseline review, in Table 4.1 below, under 'Character Area A2 Loddon River Valley.'
- 3.6. None of the trees on the Site are covered by Tree Preservation Orders and the site is not included within the boundary of any Conservation Areas.

International Planning Context

- 3.7. The UK signed and ratified the European Landscape Convention (ELC) in 2006-2007. This international convention focuses specifically on landscapes, promoting the importance of policies relating to their protection, management and creation. It applies to all landscapes, towns, open countryside, coast and inland areas, and includes ordinary and degraded landscapes as well as those afforded protection. The ELC does not confine itself to cultural or man-made landscape elements alone, but to all elements and the way they interact. The use of Landscape Character Assessment to inform policymaking is a well-established example of the implementation of the convention in the UK.

- 3.8. The ELC recommends that landscape policies should aim to 'protect, manage or plan' as defined below:
- *"Landscape protection: action to conserve and maintain the significant or characteristic features of a landscape, justified by the landscape's heritage value derived from its natural configuration and/or human activity.*
 - *Landscape management: action from a perspective of sustainable development, to ensure the regular upkeep of a landscape, so as to guide and harmonise changes which are brought about by social, economic and environmental processes.*
 - *Landscape planning means: strong forward looking action to enhance, restore or create landscape."*

National Planning Policy

A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment (HM Government, 2018, updated 2019)

- 3.9. The 25 Year Plan sets out strategic environmental policy covering a range of aspirations. Goal 6 'enhancing beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment' sets out the commitments to ensure we conserve and enhance the beauty of the natural environment, and make sure it can be enjoyed, used by and cared for by everyone. It sets out the following measures as ways to achieve this goal:
- a) *"Safeguarding and enhancing the beauty of our natural scenery and improving its environmental value while being sensitive to considerations of its heritage.*
 - b) *Making sure that there are high quality, accessible, natural spaces close to where people live and work, particularly in urban areas, and encouraging more people to spend time in them to benefit their health and wellbeing.*
 - c) *Focusing on increasing action to improve the environment from all sectors of society."* (Page 28)
- 3.10. This goal, along with the other seven presented in the 25 Year Plan, are supported by the National Planning Policy Framework (see below).

National Planning Policy Framework

- 3.11. The National Planning Policy Framework (updated December 2024) (NPPF) is a material consideration in dealing with planning applications for development. The Framework sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied and provides a framework within which locally prepared plans for housing and other development can be produced.
- 3.12. The NPPF describes how the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to achieve sustainable development through three overarching objectives. Objective c), the 'environmental objective', is to:
- "protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment, including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy" (NPPF paragraph 8).*

- 3.13. Policy sections that are particularly relevant to landscape and visual amenity and placemaking are:
- Section 15 'Conserving and enhancing the natural environment'.
- 3.14. Paragraph 187 states that Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:
- "[...] a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan).*
- b) recognising 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;[...]"*

National Planning Practice Guidance

- 15.1.1 The NPPF is supplemented by Planning Practice Guidance (PPG). The Natural Environment PPG (published 2016, updated February 2025) explains the key issues in implementing policy to protect biodiversity and natural environment and provides advice on how the character of landscapes can be used to inform planning decisions and what green infrastructure is and why it is important in delivering sustainable developments.
- 3.15. The PPG refers to the National Planning Policy Framework, stating:
- "it is clear that plans should recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and that strategic policies should provide for the conservation and enhancement of landscapes".*
- 3.16. The Natural Environment PPG also goes on to state, *"the cumulative impacts of development on the landscape need to be considered carefully"* (Paragraph: 036 Reference ID: 8-036-20190721, Revision date: 21 July 2019).
- 3.17. At paragraph 037, the PPG identifies that landscape character assessments can be prepared, as well as Landscape and Sensitivity and Capacity Assessments, to help assess the type and scale of development that may be accommodated without compromising landscape character (Paragraph: 037 Reference ID: 8-037-20190721, Revision date: 21 July 2019). The PPG also states that a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment can be used to demonstrate the likely effects of a Proposed Development.

Adopted Local Planning Policy

Wokingham Borough Local Development Framework: Adopted Core Strategy Development Plan Document (January 2010) and Wokingham Borough Managing Development Delivery Plan (February 2014)

- 3.18. The primary policies relating to landscape and visual amenity are set out below.
- 3.19. Core Strategy Policy CP1 Sustainable Development requires planning proposals to:

“maintain or enhance the high quality of the environment”.

3.20. Core Strategy Policy CP3 General Principles for Development requires planning proposals to:

- a) *“Have no detrimental impact upon important ecological, heritage, landscape (including river valleys) or geological features or water courses.*
- b) *Maintain or enhance the ability of the site to support fauna and flora including protected species;”*

3.21. Delivery Plan Policy CC03: Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping seeks to include green infrastructure networks within developments. Supporting paragraph 2.19 sets out the need for landscape and visual impact studies where the site is located on or adjacent to development limits or where it may have an impact on the surrounding townscape. Relevant requirements of this policy are:

“Development proposals should demonstrate how they have considered and achieved the following criteria within scheme proposals:

- a) *Provide new or protect and enhance the Borough's Green Infrastructure networks, including the need to mitigate potential impacts of new development*
- b) *Promote accessibility, linkages and permeability between and within existing green corridors including public rights of way such as footpaths, cycleways and bridleways*
- c) *Promote the integration of the scheme with any adjoining public open space or countryside*
- d) *Protect and retain existing trees, hedges and other landscape features*
- e) *Incorporate high quality, ideally, native planting and landscaping as an integral part of the scheme.*

3. *Development proposals which would result in the loss, fragmentation or isolation of areas of green infrastructure will not be acceptable.”*

3.22. Delivery Plan Policy TB21: Landscape Character requires that:

“Proposals must demonstrate how they have addressed the requirements of the Council's Landscape Character Assessment, including the landscape quality; landscape strategy; landscape sensitivity and key issues.

Proposals shall retain or enhance the condition, character and features that contribute to the landscape.”

3.23. Amongst other requirements, Delivery Plan Policy TB23: Biodiversity and Development requires that development proposals:

- a) *“Provide opportunities, including through design, layout and landscaping to incorporate new biodiversity features or enhance existing*
- b) *Provide appropriate buffer zones between development proposals and designated sites as well as habitats and species of principle importance for nature conservation*
- c) *Ensure that all existing and new developments are ecologically permeable through the protection of existing and the provision of new continuous wildlife corridors, which shall be integrated and linked to the wider green infrastructure network”*

Emerging Local Planning Policy

- 3.24. The Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update: Proposed Submission Plan 2023-2040 has policies relating to the Site.
- 3.25. Policy C4: 'Green and Blue Infrastructure and Public Rights of Way' requires green and blue infrastructure to be protected and enhanced for their biodiversity, recreational, amenity, health, townscape and landscape value, and their contribution towards mitigating and adapting to climate change. It requires development proposals to plan for a network of publicly accessible green and blue infrastructure from the outset as appropriate and avoid the loss, fragmentation, isolation or other adverse impacts on networks of habitats and existing green and blue infrastructure unless replacement provision can be provided
- 3.26. Policy NE4: Trees, Woodland, Hedges and Hedgerows seeks to protect existing trees, woodland, hedges and hedgerows and ensure they are well integrated within the public realm, in a suitably landscaped setting.
- 3.27. Policy NE5: Landscape and Design supports development proposals that adopt a landscape led approach which protects and enhances the character and distinctiveness of landscapes using the most up-to date landscape studies (including the Landscape Character Assessment and Design Guide and any successor document). It requires development proposals to be *"demonstrably informed by, and respond to, the distinctive characters set out in the Landscape Character Assessment and other relevant assessments, which provide an understanding of the valued characteristics, features and quality of local landscape character areas."*
- 3.28. Policy NE5 also requires development proposals to be accompanied by a landscape and visual impact assessment proportionate to the scale and nature of the development proposed. Landscape schemes should be set within an overall masterplan for the proposed development, and should incorporate landscape spaces, public realm and green and blue infrastructure to achieve a sense of place, improve health and wellbeing and mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change.
- 3.29. Policy NE6 Valued Landscapes covers the protection of a number of proposed Valued Landscapes across the borough. The Site includes parts of the 'River Loddon' Valued Landscape. Policy NE6 requires development proposals located within or affecting a valued landscape to have particular regard to the following attributes:
- "a) Landscape quality (condition); b) Scenic quality; c) Rarity; d) Representativeness; e) Conservation interests; f) Recreation value; g) Perceptual aspects; and h) Associations."*
- 3.30. It states that development proposals affecting Valued Landscapes:
- d) "will only be supported where they protect, and where appropriate, integrate with and/or enhance the special features, characteristics and qualities of the landscape, unless the benefits of the development in that location clearly outweigh the harm."*

Shinfield Parish Neighbourhood Plan Made Version February 2017

- 3.31. The Site lies within the north-east part of Shinfield Parish. Not all of the guidance is relevant to the proposed development, however the following Policies relate to landscape matters:

Policy 2: General Design Principles

4. *"Allowance of appropriate space for hard and soft landscape works, particularly at settlement boundaries, in the public realm and along designated green routes and green route enhancement areas;*
5. *Provision of appropriately high quality and high specification sustainable landscape works and tree planting, particularly at settlement boundaries, in the public realm and along designated green routes and green route enhancement areas (existing and proposed); ...*
7. *Design of road and service layouts to ensure the sustainable retention, where appropriate, of existing landscape features, including trees and historic landscape features, and to allow space for new sustainable landscape works without the need for maintenance and upgrades to services damaging landscape works, as they mature."*

Policy 6: Trees, hedgerows and Woodland

"New build development will be supported where it can be demonstrated that:

1. *Hedgerows which are appropriate for retention, as determined by the assessment of a survey of affected hedgerows to be carried out by the developer, due to their age or ecological value or in order to screen other development or land use, will have a buffer zone of sufficient width to ensure that the value provided by that hedgerow (as determined by the survey) is adequately preserved. Any buffer zone will be measured from the central stem of the hedge and will be comprised, usually on both sides, of soft landscaping that excludes any residential curtilage;*
2. *Habitats of Principal Importance in England (Section 41 Habitats under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006)), which are appropriate for retention and which are shown to have significant ecological importance as determined by the assessment of a survey of affected habitats to be carried out by the developer, will have a buffer zone of sufficient width to preserve that ecological value (as determined by the survey). This will be comprised of soft landscaping that excludes any residential curtilage. Where habitats meet the description of a section 41 Habitat type and are being retained but do not currently support significant ecological value, the developer should, where possible, put forward proposed management or other enhancement measures to improve the future ecological value of that habitat;*
3. *Ancient Woodlands, Local Wildlife Sites and ponds which are appropriate for retention, as determined by the assessment of a survey of affected woodlands, wildlife sites or ponds to be carried out by the developer, will have a buffer zone of sufficient width to preserve the ecological value of that feature. For Ancient Woodlands, buffers should normally be of a minimum 15m width in accordance with Natural England's Standing Guidance for Ancient Woodlands, except where surveys identify the need for additional width to address a particular sensitivity, or where an alternative width can be justified under paragraph 118 of the NPPF. The optimal composition of buffers will vary depending on the feature being*

protected, but for Ancient Woodland will normally include an element of native woodland and scrub planting that grades into other habitats such as tall flower-rich grasslands, which excludes any residential curtilage;

- 4. All buffer zones should consist of appropriate native species and where appropriate should be designed in such a way as to encourage public access and enjoyment of the zone and with appropriate provision for its maintenance."*

4. Landscape Baseline

National Landscape Character

- 4.1. The study area is covered by two tiers of landscape character assessments, the national Landscape Character Assessment (Natural England), and the district-level *Wokingham Landscape Character Assessment* (2019). The character area boundaries in these respective assessments are shown on Appendix 2, Figure 3.

NCA 115 Thames Valley

- 4.2. The site is situated at the south-western edge of **National Character Area 115 Thames Valley** (Natural England, 2015). This is described as a low lying area where the River Thames provides a unifying feature through a very diverse landscape of urban and suburban settlements, infrastructure networks, fragmented agricultural land, historic parks, commons, woodland, reservoirs and extensive minerals workings. The area is typified by much development, both in the past and planned for the next 20 years, and with 'virtually no undisturbed land'.
- 4.3. Key characteristics of the Thames Valley described in the assessment that are relevant to the study area are:
- *"Flat and low-lying land*
 - *The underlying geology is dominated by the London Clay which, over much of the area, is overlain by river-lain sands and gravels.*
 - *The numerous hydrological features provide unity to an area which otherwise lacks homogeneity; these features include the River Thames and its tributaries...*
 - *The field pattern is medium-scale and irregular, with smaller fields to the west...*
 - *The area has an urban character, and there are very few villages of more traditional character..."*
- 4.4. Statements of Environmental Opportunity (SEO) are generally not relevant to the proposed development and its surrounding landscape, however SEO4 seeks to ensure the protection of the area's ancient woodland and restore and increase woodland more generally.
- 4.5. Due to the availability of a more detailed local landscape character assessment, the effects of the Proposed Development upon NCA 115 Thames Valley are not assessed within the LVIA.

Local Landscape Character

Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment (2019)

- 4.6. The most recent local level Landscape Character Assessment was prepared in 2019. This was published as part of the evidence base for the Draft Local Plan consultation in 2020. The document supersedes the previous Landscape Character Assessment (LUC, 2004).
- 4.7. All but the western end of the Site lies within Area A2 Loddon River Valley. The eastern end lies within Area J3 Spencers Wood Settled and Farmed Clay.

- 4.8. The level topography of the Site is typical of **Area A2 Loddon River Valley**, and is influenced by its floodplain location. Unlike other parts of the character area, the Site is not tranquil or remote-feeling, but instead is influenced by the proximity of the M4 to the north and views towards the Shinfield Studios and the Natural History Museum building, currently under construction, to the west. Character Area A2 is judged by the Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment (page 57) to have a 'moderate' landscape condition, although the fragmenting effects caused by views to the large scale development and busy infrastructure corridors are noted.

Table 4.1: Relevant Key Characteristics to be Tested (Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment, Land Use Consultants, 2019)

Landscape Character Area
A2 Loddon River Valley
Key Characteristics ▪ Broad, flat alluvial floodplain ▪ Wooded backdrops with semi-natural woodland with ancient woodland (all designated as LWSs) ▪ Pasture and arable farmland in medium and large irregular geometric fields; pasture and wet meadow closest to the river ▪ Little public access to the floodplain; busy roads cross the flood plain, including the A33, M4 and Winnersh and Shinfield Eastern Relief Roads, and create physical and visual severance along the floodplain ▪ Pylons, residential and commercial development are distinctive visual features in this open and flat landscape Valuable Landscape Attributes ▪ The naturalness of the meandering course of the River Loddon and wide floodplain landscape which provide a strong sense of place ▪ The wooded backdrop of mature broadleaved woodland copses and natural riparian corridors, including ancient woodland which provides scenic quality and a sense of place, as well as framing views across, into and out of the area ▪ Important wetland features/ habitats including BAP priority habitats wet woodland and floodplain grazing marsh remnants designated as LWSs, and the nationally important Stanford End Mill and River Loddon SSSI that are uncommon in the borough and provide important ecological habitats ▪ Sparse settlement pattern of farmsteads characterised by a strong local vernacular which contributes to the scenic quality of the area and imparts a sense of time depth
J3 Spencers Wood Settled and Farmed Clay
Key Characteristics ▪ Rolling clay ridge above the Loddon Valley to the east and the lowlands to the west, rising to a flat sandy plateau at 66m AOD ▪ Small scattered mixed deciduous woodland blocks and copses including some of ancient origin, many designated as LWS, most located on the steep west and south facing slopes of the ridge ▪ Fragmented unimproved meadow habitats, with BAP priority habitat lowland meadow, are found on lower slopes, for example Clare's Green Road LWS ▪ Densely settled landscape, with new large-scale residential estate development around the substantially 20th century settlements of Shinfield, Spencers Wood and Three Mile Cross, as part of South of the M4 SDL

Landscape Character Area

- Network of rural lanes bordered by water-filled ditches connect the original settlement pattern; some B roads have urbanised features including kerbs and pavements; the A33 forms the western border and is very busy, while the M4 crosses the area north of Shinfield, and introduces noise and movement

Valuable Landscape Attributes

- Strong hedgerow network with standard oaks provides a wooded character and visual interest within the rural landscape

- 4.9. The site and wider landscape is typified of some of these features set out in Table 4.1, including the broad alluvial flood plain of the River Loddon, the arable and pasture farmland and woodland. The urbanising influences mentioned are also highly typical, especially the visual and aural presence of the busy M4, the lack of public access and the visual intrusion of pylons.
- 4.10. The WBC *Landscape Character Assessment* notes that there are opportunities for improvement and particular enhancement to habitat interconnectivity. Relevant key issues include loss of species-rich grassland and hedgerows and effects on woodland as a consequence of pathogens and climate change. In particular, pressure for commercial development and increased use of the road network is considered to potentially impact the rurality and tranquillity (page 57) with the new settlement at Shinfield and the Eastern Relief Road specifically highlighted. The importance of dark skies are also noted, however these are related particularly to the south of the area.
- 4.11. The WBC *Landscape Character Assessment* proposes that the landscape character of the A2 Loddon River Valley should be 'conserved' and 'enhanced', especially its rural character with "*typical river valley components and sense of remoteness.*" Relevant key aspects to be conserved and actively managed are the "*natural habitats including areas of wet woodland and wet meadow. Restore or reinstate hedgerow boundaries with native species...*" (page.58). Other relevant landscape guidelines comprise:
- Conserving the scenic quality and naturalistic character of the river corridor
 - Increase the extent of native deciduous woodland including locally native species
 - Reinstate/ repair hedgerows with native species
 - Conserve, enhance and manage wetland habitats
 - Conserve the rural character of the river corridor
 - Maintain the rural character and sparse settlement pattern
 - Enhance sense of place through careful design
 - Resist proposals that introduce extensive or obtrusive elements
 - Use appropriate tree planting to help integrate roads
- 4.12. The proposed development has sought to meet these guidelines. The new section of Link Road has been aligned to minimise the need to removal existing trees or hedgerows although will require the removal of sections of hedgerow H4, H6, H7 and H9, together with a section of group G7 and 3 nr trees. The landscape proposals associated with the new Link Road seek to mitigate this through new planting this is to comprise the following:
- Planting of 42 new trees, including trees in hedgerow
 - Planting 240 linear metres of mixed native species hedgerow

- Planting of blocks of mixed species native understorey along the edge of New Covert to create a more diverse woodland edge
 - Seeding of new verges with a range of mixes relating to the site conditions and context
 - Seeding of wetland grass mixes to the proposed drainage basins
- 4.13. The track to the FPS has been designed to reflect a typical farm track and would not result in the removal of any stretches of hedgerows or trees, although the new enclosure would require removal of a small section of hedge and the possible localised removal of a small section of group G7. New planting adjacent to the eastern boundary of the proposed FPS pumping station would also help visually and physically integrate the compound within the wider landscape. This is covered further in Section 5 below.
- 4.14. The western part of the Site lies within **Area J3: Spencers Wood Settled and Farmed Clay**. This is a diverse area, with an undulating rural landscape to the south but urbanising influence at the north. The site is strongly influenced by this urban development, especially the adjacent Shinfield Studios and British Museum developments immediately adjacent to it. The character of Spencers Wood is also affected by the recent developments at Thames Valley Science Park and on the eastern edge of Shinfield.
- 4.15. The WBC Landscape Character Assessments consider that the survival of former field patterns, the remnants of historic parklands, woodland blocks and the hedgerow network are in **'good' condition**, however closer to the M4 and edge of Reading the rural character is fragmented and the major transport corridors introduce noise and movement. Other relevant key issues include loss of trees and hedgerows, poorly managed fields, loss of wetland habitats, lack of young trees, pressure for commercial premises (with the Thames Valley Science Park specifically named, page 253), and new roads and light pollution.
- 4.16. The WBC Landscape Character Assessment proposes that the landscape character of the J3 Spencers Wood Settled and Farmed Clay should be 'conserved' and 'enhanced', including the rural character of the agricultural landscape and lanes, hedgerow patterns, trees and avenues and parkland. In general, the features to be conserved do not apply to the landscape of the Site however, which has already been compromised by the adjacent development sites and Cutbush Lane. The WBC Landscape Character Assessment does however also recognise the opportunities for woodland planting *"to integrate the M4, busy roads and expanding urban fringes of Reading, in particular around the expanding settlements of Shinfield"* (page 253) and the need to *"conserve and enhance the integration of urban edges"* (page 254).
- 4.17. Of particular relevance, the Landscape Character Assessment also proposes the need to *"Use appropriate woodland, hedgerow and tree planting to help integrate roads into the landscape... Encourage retention of wooded edges and boundaries along roads and minimising fencing and other boundary structures."*

Landscape Features and Characteristics

Land Use and Vegetation

- 4.18. The Site comprises three arable fields and part of a pasture field to the north, west and east of New Covert, a woodland to the east of the Thames Valley Science Park (see Appendix 2, Figure 5). In total, the site covers an area approximately 5.83 Hectares in size. A run of pylons and associated overhead power cables is situated close to the south-eastern side of the site.
- 4.19. To the west of the site the large buildings associated with Shinfield Studios has resulted in a change in the

semi-rural character of this area, however prior to this the M4 corridor has also detracted from any sense of remoteness and tranquillity. To the north of the M4, the suburb of Earley further reinforces the urban character of the wider area, albeit there is no visual interconnectivity of this area with the site.

- 4.20. At the southern side of the western end of the Site, the British Museum buildings with associated car parking and security fencing comprise further large scale buildings which erodes the rural character of this area.
- 4.21. The consented Natural History Museum building will form a further large scale building to the south of the site, situated between the woodland areas of St John's Copse and New Covert. This proposed building will be accompanied by a comprehensive landscape plan, including planting to the south which would soften its interface with the rural landscape of the Loddon Valley. Planting along the northern boundary, adjacent to the spine road will provide further visual softening and reinforce it as a green corridor.
- 4.22. The 1871, 6 inch mapping for the area shows that the existing arable fields were subdivided into a series of smaller fields at this time and that New Covert did not exist as a woodland, instead comprising a field. The location of the proposed FPS compound formed part of a wider field that historically extended to the north, but has since been bisected by the M4 motorway. The south-western boundary of the FPS compound area formed part of an access track connecting with Cutbush Lane to the north (at Lower Earley) and a farm (now demolished) within the floodplain of the River Loddon to the south. The historic structure of the landscape here has therefore been significantly eroded due to the construction of the M4 and suburban development of Lower Early to the north of the Site and the intensification of farming to the south of the M4.
- 4.23. An Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Preliminary Method Statement has been undertaken by RPS Group (extract drawing at Appendix 4). With regards to individual trees, this shows that there are 12 no. Category A trees, 18 Category B trees and 18 Category C trees within the Site. With regards to groups of trees, there are a further 2 no. Category A groups, 2 no. Category B Groups and 4 no. Category C groups. There are also 9 no. category C hedgerows within the Site.
- 4.24. All of the Category A trees are Common Oaks. The category B trees comprise oak, field maple, ash and aspen.
- 4.25. To the south of the Site there are two woodlands close to the site boundary. St John's Copse to the south and west of the site is an ancient woodland and Local Wildlife Site, whilst New Covert is a more recent woodland that is only shown on mapping in the 20th century. Neither woodland is situated within the Site boundary.

Landform and Water Features

- 4.26. Landform is shown on Figure 4. The site is generally level, reflecting its proximity to the flood plain of the River Loddon and lying between 40m and 45m Above Ordnance Datum. The M4 motorway occupies a slightly elevated position to the north.
- 4.27. The site has no permanent water features, but stretches of hedgerow ditches are located along field boundaries. Within the wider area to the south there are areas of wet grassland associated with the Loddon floodplain. The River Loddon lies approximately 450m east of the site's nearest boundary. This is a

tributary of the River Thames which lies to the north. This water course is bounded by fields to its sides and is characterised by areas of woodland and trees along its length.

Access and Movement

- 4.28. Public rights of way are shown on Figure 2. There are no Public Rights of Way (PRoW) within the site boundary, however PRoW SHIN Footpath 39 Link 1 runs to the north-west of the site, along the route of Cutbush Lane. Cutbush Lane continues to the west of the site, linking with Thames Valley Park and on to the Shinfield Eastern Relief Road. To the north, the M4 motorway is a physical barrier to movement within the area.
- 4.29. Despite its relatively close proximity to Earley and the M4 to the north and Cutbush Lane/ Thames Valley Science Park to the west, the Site is situated within a relatively extensive area that remains inaccessible to the public. This would change once the consented spine road has been completed. Currently a private farm track leads to the proposed FPS compound. This runs parallel to the southern boundary of New Covert. The western end of this track has recently been curtailed by the creation of a ditch adjacent to St John's Copse, meaning that it no longer provides vehicular access to the proposed compound site.

Landscape Character – Landscape Sensitivity Conclusions

- 4.30. Based on the findings of the site visit, the Wokingham Borough Council Landscape Character Assessment and the definition set out in Tables A and B in Appendix 1 below, the landscape 'value' of the Site is judged to be '**medium-low**'. This part of the character area is dominated by the existing carriageway of Cutbush Lane and associated buildings of the Thames Valley Science Park to each side. The consented Natural History Museum would further detract from this. It is not within an area designated for its landscape value and lies outside of the boundary of the draft locally designated 'Valued Landscape'. Noise from the M4 motorway detracts from any potential rural tranquillity and the majority of landscape characteristics have been removed, although remnant areas of hedgerow and a few Category A and B oak trees lie to the sides of Cutbush Lane and close to the British Museum.
- 4.31. Given the screening effects of existing buildings and St John's Copse, the general lack of characteristic landscape features, and consented spine road, the western part of the site is judged to have a '**low**' susceptibility to change. The eastern part of the Site also has a '**low**' susceptibility to change relating to the screening vegetation adjacent to the M4, and New Covert and the presence of pylons as a detractor to the rural land uses.
- 4.32. When considered using Table C (Appendix 1), the overall landscape sensitivity for the Site is judged to be '**low**'.
- 4.33. The effects of the proposals on landscape designations, character and features are considered in Section 5.

5. Landscape Appraisal

Summary of Landscape Proposals and Mitigation

- 5.1. The proposed development would introduce a stretch of new link road, forming an extension to the existing NHM spine road; pumping station infrastructure and associated access track into an area of farmland. In total, the link road and associated footway would result in the loss of 1.07ha of arable land, whilst the FPS compound would result in the loss of 0.19ha of pasture. The spine road (including land already consented within planning application 232995), the new link road and associated planting would result in the loss of 5.64ha of arable land.
- 5.2. Whilst there would be the loss of some agricultural land, the proposals would be accompanied by new areas of planting and regeneration. These are shown on the Savills Planting Plans (see Appendix C), and comprise:
- Extensive areas of new meadow and amenity grass adjacent to the link road
 - 42 new native trees and additional non-native street trees
 - Adjacent arable land would be left to regenerate and managed as a 1m wide trackside verge
 - 225 sq m native scrub would be planted to the south-east of FPS compound
 - 532 sq m of mixed native woodland understorey would be planted adjacent to New Covert
 - Areas of amenity grass would be planted within the FPS compound
 - Areas of proposed SuDS basins and conveyance ditch to north and east of New Covert to be seeded with a wetland mix
 - The arable land to each side of the track would be left to regenerate with native grass and herbaceous species and regularly mown or put back to agricultural use
- 5.3. In addition, the proposed road is associated with new native planting and SuDS features that have been consented outside of the red line, as part of the original, wider NHM spine road consent.

Geographical Extent of Effects

- 5.4. All effects on landscape features and character would be experienced at site level and within the local area.

Duration of Effects

- 5.5. Upon maturity of the proposed planting the effects on all of the landscape receptors would be long term and permanent.

Effects on Landscape Designations

- 5.6. No trees covered by Tree Preservation Orders would be affected by the proposed development.
- 5.7. The site is not covered by any current landscape or visual amenity designations (See Section 3).
- 5.8. The eastern part of the Site is covered by the draft 'River Loddon Valued Landscape' designation covered by Policy NE6 in the *Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update 2023-2040 (2025)*. If this designation is

confirmed, the development would need to “*protect and enhance features that contribute to the character, quality and interpretation*” of the landscape.

- 5.9. Based on these requirements and the landscape surveys undertaken to inform this landscape appraisal and using the characteristics highlighted in the Wokingham Borough Council Landscape Character Assessment (2019), we consider that the following site features contribute to the landscape character of the River Loddon Valued Landscape:
- Broad, flat alluvial floodplain.
 - Wooded backdrops with semi-natural woodland with ancient woodland (all designated as LWSs).
 - Arable farmland in medium and large irregular geometric fields.
- 5.10. With regards to the ‘flat alluvial floodplain’, the proposals for the Site illustrate that the general flat floodplain terrain would not be affected. The new track and FWP compound would be constructed to marry in with the existing levels. Whilst a new conveyance ditch would be introduced, this would be a typical characteristic of the area and left to regenerate with native grass and herbaceous plants.
- 5.11. With regards to ‘the wooded backdrops’, the proposals would benefit from the backdrop and screening effects of New Covert and St Johns Copse, but would not result in any effects on them given that they lie outside of the Site boundary. Hedgerows and hedgerow trees within the Valued Landscape would be retained, other than the removal of one Category C tree and one stretch of Category C native hedgerow. The removal of these hedgerows would be compensated for by the planting of 240 linear m of native hedgerow with hedgerow trees, 225 sq.m of native scrub vegetation around the eastern boundary of the FPS compound and 532 sq.m of mixed native understorey planting adjacent to New Covert.
- 5.12. Whilst there would be the loss of arable farmland to accommodate the construction of the FPS track and link road as shown within the red line, the proposed track would be typical of agricultural tracks in the area and not appear out of place. The link road would be consistent with the existing spine road around Cutbush Lane, including Shinfield Studios and the consented Natural History Museum.
- 5.13. In summary, we therefore do not consider that the proposals would result in the loss of any important features that typify the draft ‘River Loddon Valued Landscape’ designation.
- 5.14. Whilst the FPS compound would introduce a new element to the landscape, we do not consider that this would result in a significantly adverse effect on the overall character of the draft Valued Landscape. The compound comprises approximately 0.19 Ha of pasture and sits adjacent to the M4 motorway and a run of pylons with overhead cables. As such, the landscape value of this area is already low and its rural character significantly eroded. The proposed scrub planting can instead help to integrate the proposed infrastructure with the wider landscape.
- 5.15. In summary then, we therefore consider that the proposed development would comply with draft policy E6, if it were to be confirmed.

Effects on Landscape Character

- 5.16. The site is primarily located within the WBC *Landscape Character Assessment* Area A2 'Loddon River Valley'. A small section at its western end is within Area J3 Spencer's Wood Settled and Farmed Clay.
- 5.17. Whilst the proposals would result in the replacement of 3.86 Ha of arable farmland with a new link road, and a further 1.94 Ha of pasture with the eastern extent of the link road and the new compound with associated infrastructure (including hardstanding and amenity grass), this would be accompanied by a landscape approach which would be informed by the guidelines set out in the *Wokingham Borough Landscape Assessment*.
- 5.18. Table 5.1 sets out responses to the Landscape Guidelines relating to Area A2, describing how the proposals either are not relevant to the Guidelines, or comply with their aspirations.

Table 5.1: Responses to Wokingham Borough Council Landscape Guidelines for Area A2 Loddon River Valley

Guideline	Development Response
Character Area A2 Loddon River Valley	
Conserving the scenic quality and naturalistic character of the river corridor. Conserve the rural character of the river corridor.	The development would not be visible from the River Loddon itself. Nearby woodland (New Covert and St John's Copse) would be retained, providing visual screening when seen from the west and conserving the naturalistic character of the corridor. As the proposed road and access track would be constructed at grade, it would not be visible from the wider river valley. Whilst the security fencing and new plant would be introduced to the FPS compound, the existing 'scenic quality' and 'rural character' of the Site is not judged to be as high as other parts of this character area, given the visual and aural effects of the adjacent TVSP and M4 motorway. New planting adjacent to the eastern site boundary would help to integrate the new structure with the wider landscape.
Increase the extent of native deciduous woodland including locally native species.	Whilst the site is not large enough to include woodland, the proposals do include 225 sq.m of native scrub and 532 sq.m of understorey planting adjacent to new Covert, comprising locally native species which would be typically found at the woodland edge.
Reinstate/repair hedgerows with native species.	Whilst three short sections of hedgerow would be removed to accommodate the road and track, the overall alignment of the track has been selected to avoid the unnecessary loss of trees and hedgerows. Two further sections of hedge require removal to provide drainage features and the FPS compound. The loss of these areas of vegetation is compensated for by the planting of 240 linear.m of mixed native hedgerow with trees and 225 sq.m of native scrub adjacent to the proposed compound. It is not possible to plant trees within/ close to the FPS compound due to the proximity of the existing overhead power cables. A further 532 sq.m of mixed native understorey species are to be planted adjacent to New Covert to create a more varied and natural edge to this woodland
Conserve, enhance and manage wetland habitats.	The site currently has no apparent ponds. The proposed development would introduce a new ditch and several SuDS basins which would be seeded with a appropriate wetland meadow mix.

Landscape and Visual Appraisal

Loddon Garden Village/Thames Valley Science Park Link Road



Guideline	Development Response
Maintain the rural character and sparse settlement pattern. Enhance sense of place through careful design.	The proposed development would not introduce any new settlement to the area, which in any event is already characterised by the TVSP to the west and Earley beyond the M4 to the north. The proposed link road and FPS compound would introduce a new 'urban' element to the landscape, the new section of road would be consistent with the existing spine road and the FPS would not form a dominant element with both benefitting from existing and proposed screening around the majority of the site boundaries.
Resist proposals that introduce extensive or obtrusive elements.	The proposed link road would not be obtrusive, being situated at grade and benefitting from screening by New Covert and existing hedgerows in places. The proposed lighting columns are the only vertical features associated with the road and these would be consistent with the existing spine road and benefit from new street tree planting. The FPS infrastructure rises to a 4m gantry and a single lighting column, but generally comprises smaller elements. Given the general lack of public views towards the infrastructure, it would not form an obtrusive element in the wider landscape, and instead, at most, would be glimpsed from the M4 (see Sections 6 and 7 below.)

- 5.19. As concluded in Section 4, the landscape sensitivity of the Site is judged to be 'Low', reflecting the existing aural and visual influence of the adjacent M25, the loss of historic hedgerows, the urbanising effects of the adjacent pylons, the lack of public accessibility and the (more distant) views to/from the Thames Valley Science Park to the west. The introduction of the new link road, FPS compound and associated access track would introduce a new element into a relatively small part of this wider urban fringe landscape. Based on the definitions set out in Appendix 1 Table D, this change is judged to be of a '**low adverse**' magnitude. When considered alongside the sensitivity of the landscape, the overall significance of this change is therefore judged to be '**minor adverse**' (Appendix 1, Table E).

Effects on Landscape Features

Vegetation and Land Use

LOSS OF 5.83 HA overall

- 5.20. The development would result in the loss of approximately 3.86 Ha of arable land and 1.94 Ha of pasture. It would also be necessary to remove two category A oak trees (T27 and T28) and a Category B oak tree (T24) to accommodate the construction of the western end of the spine road, and a Category C field maple (T54) to accommodate the construction of the track (see Appendix 4: *Loddon garden Village/Thames Valley Science Park Link Road Arboricultural Impact Assessment & Preliminary Method Statement*). There is also a requirement to partially remove a Group of Category B ash and oak trees to the north of the pumping station compound (G7), three Category C mixed native hedges to accommodate the proposed spine road (H4, H6 and H9) and one category C mixed native hedge to accommodate the FPS compound (H7).
- 5.21. The hedgerow to be removed is approximately 84 linear metres in total, comprising 31 lin.m (H4), 27 lin.m (H6) and 26 lin.m (H9).

- 5.22. The FPS compound may also necessitate the trimming back of up to 110 lin.m of an existing Category C3 hawthorn hedgerow (H7) along the south-western and northern edges of the compound area, to facilitate the construction of the security fencing.
- 5.23. Given that the proposals would be accompanied by 22 new native trees, 240 linear.m of mixed species native hedge planting, 225sq.m of native scrub and 532 sq.m of understorey planting and extensive areas of amenity and meadow planting, these changes are considered to result in a '**neutral**' effect on vegetation in landscape terms. This is reflected by the *Thames Valley Science Park - Foul Pumping Station & Access Track Biodiversity Net Gain Final Report* (EPR, August 2025).

Landform and Water Features

- 5.24. With regards to landform, the proposals would respect the existing site topography. The link road, FPS compound and access track would generally be constructed to grade with existing levels and would result in **no change** to this landscape feature.
- 5.25. The new SuDS ditch would be typical of other field ditches in the wider area and would be seeded with an appropriate mix which, once established, will provide a permanent area of vegetation in comparison to the current arable land use here. The new SuDS basins would be seeded with meadow grass and provide an opportunity for a new water feature during periods of wet weather. Overall, these would have a **negligible beneficial effect** on this type of water features.

Accessibility and Movement

- 5.26. There would be **minor changes** to accessibility and movement within the landscape. This area is currently inaccessible to the public and the new section of Link Road would extend the consented NHM spine road, albeit this would not provide a complete route until future sections of road are implemented. The track to the pumping station would remain inaccessible following the implementation of the development.

6. Visual Baseline

Changes to Views

6.1. The key changes to views would be:

- The removal of a linear strip of arable farmland and associated construction of the new Link Road with street lighting and access track to the FPS.
- Two attenuation basins and an attenuation ditch.
- The construction of a relatively small compound including security fencing and engineering plant, the largest of which would be a 4m high gantry; the eastern side of the compound would be accompanied by native scrub planting.
- The introduction of 15 new native trees and additional street trees.
- New native species hedge, scrub and understorey planting.

Potential Visual Receptors

- 6.2. As well as visiting the site itself, the survey work included driving the roads and walking public rights of way (PRoWs) that could potentially have views of the site. Given that the site and immediate area is not publicly accessible, these potential views were limited. This survey extended as far as Lower Earley Way to the north, a public footpath to the south of Oldhouse Farm to the south (SHIN Footpath 4 Link 2), a PRoW to the east of the River Loddon (ARBO 3) to the east and a public right of way/ greenway along Cutbush Lane (EARL12) to the west.
- 6.3. Due to the inaccessibility of the site and the flat nature of the topography, the numbers of **'visual receptors'** with views of the site is relatively minimal. This section highlights potential visual receptors who would experience changes to their views, and makes judgements relating to their **'value'**, **'susceptibility to change'** and overall **'sensitivity'**.
- 6.4. All of the potential views of the site are considered to be of **'low'** or **'medium' value** (see Appendix 2, Table F). Whilst they may contain rural characteristics, the majority are all compromised by highway infrastructure or buildings within the foreground that screen views of the site or significantly erode its rural setting.
- 6.5. Generally, views from the M4 towards the site are screened by a 30m wide buffer of mature trees situated to the immediate south of the road. To the immediate north of the proposed FPS compound there is a gap in this planting however, reflecting the safety requirements of the overhead power cables. This totals approximately 19m in length. These visual receptors would therefore have a quick glimpsed view towards the FPS compound as they passed. To the west and east, the existing woodland buffer screens views towards the proposed access track and compound.
- 6.6. Given that these views from the M4 are dominated by the highway infrastructure in the foreground and, in the vicinity of the Site include the existing pylons and cables, they are judged to be **'low'** value (see Appendix 1, Table F). Users of the M4 motorway are also judged to have a **'low'** susceptibility to change (see Appendix 1, Table G) as these users are on roads principally for passage, when the attention of the receptor is not necessarily focussed on the view. Overall, views from the M4 are therefore judged to be **'low'**

sensitivity.

- 6.7. Due to access limitations it was not possible to take a photograph from the M4, however a view was taken from within the northern part of the site (View K, Figure 11, Appendix 2). This indicates what the glimpsed view of the Site looks like from this direction, but excludes the urbanising effects of the M4 infrastructure in the foreground.
- 6.8. At the central and western end of the Site, the value of views is currently '**low**', reflecting the rural context of the fields and wooded backdrop of New Covert and St John's Copse. The construction of the new NHM building has a strong influence on the view as although New Covert provides a backdrop to this building it is a dominant feature due to its scale and massing. The site itself is predominantly only visible to agricultural workers, as well as forming part of the distant views from a short section of Cutbush Lane where it crosses the M4 motorway to the north-west off the Site. This is also a PRoW (SHIN Footpath 39 Link 1) (see View 1, Figure 13). With regards to the susceptibility of visual receptors to change, users of this PRoW are the only potential visual receptors with '**high**' susceptibility to change. These receptors are generally choosing to walk, cycle or ride these routes for recreational purposes. Views from much of Cutbush Lane to the south of the motorway bridge are screened by vegetation however (see View 2, Figure 13), or existing buildings (see View 3, Figure 14).
- 6.9. In addition, there would be 'private views' of the site from the work places in the wider area, namely workers at Shinfield Studios, the British Museum and the NHM, once completed, at the northern end of Cutbush Lane and agricultural workers and employees of the University of Reading within and adjacent to the site. These private views are from places of work and these visual receptors are categorised as having a 'low' susceptibility to change given that they are not in the area for any recognised visual amenity. The 'value' of the views around Cutbush Lane is judged to be 'Low', reflecting the urban infrastructure of the TVSP, pylons and the M4. The overall sensitivity of these private views is therefore also judged to be '**low**'. Views from within and close to the site are shown in Figures 6 to 12 (Appendix 2).
- 6.10. As part of the wider appraisal, photographs were taken from Cutbush Lane (EARL12) (see Appendix 2, Figure 13, View 2), Lower Earley Way (Figure 14, View 4 and Figure 15 View 5) and a footpath to the south-west of Carter's Hill on the eastern side of the River Loddon (ARBO3) (Figure 15 View 6). These photographs showed that the Site (including a structure reflecting the proposed 4m high gantry within the proposed FPS compound) would not be visible from these areas. The existing pylon immediately adjacent to the Site provided a good landmark feature and was not visible from any of these public areas, even during the winter months.
- 6.11. In summary, the visual baseline survey showed that the Site and proposals would only be visible from a short stretch of the M4, with further private views from within the site itself and a relatively small area of countryside immediately surrounding the site. In addition, there may also be distant glimpsed views from the Shinfield Studios and Natural History Museum buildings at the northern end of Cutbush Lane.
- 6.12. The visual effects on these receptor groups are considered in Section 7.

7. Visual Appraisal

- 7.1. This section appraises potential impacts upon the visual amenity of receptor groups that could result from the proposals. It describes and evaluates the potential change in existing views and the extent to which the visual receptors may be affected.

Views from within the site

- 7.2. There is currently no public access to the Site although this would change with the completion of the consented spine road which also forms part of this application and the proposed extension of this through the proposed Link Road. The only visual receptors from within the site are therefore currently agricultural workers and university employees. All of these users have a **'low'** sensitivity as reviewed in Section 6. Users of the consented spine road would also have a **'low'** sensitivity.
- 7.3. The new road would introduce a further urban feature into an area that is currently predominantly rural in character, albeit increasingly influenced by the edge of the Thames Valley Science Park as well as the M4 motorway. Given that this western end of the Site is already influenced by views of the Shinfield Studios, British Museum and now the NHM which is under construction, the value of these views is **'low'**. The introduction of the new arm to the roundabout and section of Link Road would result in a change to the view that is of **'low adverse'** magnitude, given that the spine road is already under construction within this area. Overall, based on the definitions set out in Table E (Appendix 1), changes within the western part of the site would therefore be **'minor adverse'**.
- 7.4. The track to the FPS would appear as a typical rural feature. It would not be elevated above the existing landform and would be bounded by grass verges. The FPS compound would be visually more apparent in views from the south-east and east, including security fencing and a 4m gantry, however as the proposed scrub planting establishes adjacent to the eastern side of the compound, this would integrate with the wider landscape, especially during the winter months. From the west and south-west, an existing double-hedgerow close to the Site's boundary, including trees, already provides a good degree of screening to the area of the proposed compound.
- 7.5. Overall, the visual changes to receptors at the eastern end of the Site are judged to be of 'High adverse' magnitude, reflecting the clear changes to foreground views. Given their low sensitivity however, the overall significance of this change would be **'minor adverse'**.

Views from the north

- 7.6. To the north of the Site, the only public views are from a short stretch of the M4 motorway, immediately to the north of the FPS compound area, where there is a break in the existing roadside vegetation. A very small part of this vegetation could also be further cleared to allow for construction (see Appendix 4, AIA drawings). Given that the compound and associated plant would be glimpsed, usually at speed, in conjunction with the existing pylon and with the M4 motorway infrastructure and existing pylons in the foreground, the overall magnitude of the change to the view would be 'low' adverse. Given the 'low' sensitivity of these visual receptors, the overall significance of this change would be **'minor adverse'**.

- 7.7. Further to the west, users of the M4 would not perceive the new farm track or proposed access road due to its low lying, distant nature and the presence of a thick buffer of existing mature foreground tree along the southern side of the carriageway.
- 7.8. The only other views from the north are from the SHIN Footpath 39 Link 1 PRoW, which comprises the northernmost part of Cutbush Lane as it rises to the pedestrian bridge over the M4. Views of the Site from SHIN Footpath 39 Link 1 are generally screened by mature scrub vegetation (see View 2, Figure 13) and would be further supplemented by consented planting associated with the spine road and proposed planting to the Link Road extension.
- 7.9. From the bridge over the motorway (Figure 13, View 1) there is a slightly more open view towards the site from this PRoW. From here, the new road would be glimpsed as a slightly elevated carriageway with meadow to the north and avenue tree planting to the south. Given that this would be seen with the M4 motorway and built form of Upperwood Farm in the foreground, and the consented NHM building and spine road beyond, the changes to the view would not be dominated by the new road, however. The FPS would be screened by vegetation adjacent to the M4 and around distant field boundaries beyond New Covert. Changes would therefore be '**low adverse**', resulting in an effect of '**minor adverse**' significance.
- 7.10. Further proposed development to the north of the spine road, immediately beyond Upperwood Farm, (including the proposed herbarium), would further limit views of the proposed road and track once consented and constructed and may fully screen the proposed development once complete.

Views from the south and east

- 7.11. There are no public views of the Site from the south and east due to the lack of public access. Views of the spine road from this area of wider countryside are screened by the St John's Copse and New Covert woodlands, with further screening by the NHM facility (currently under construction).
- 7.12. To the south-west of the site there are private views from the British Museum. Whilst the British Museum was not accessed as part of this assessment, the foreground of these views would include the parking, access roads and security within the British Museum, with some new hedgerow and tree planting associated with the new road beyond. The views from this area are changing given the construction of the spine road and NHM building and given the 'low' sensitivity of the existing visual receptors, the overall change to these visual receptors resulting from the Proposed Development would be of '**negligible adverse**' significance.
- 7.13. There would be private views towards the eastern part of the Site, including the FPS compound, from within the farmland to the east and south of the Site. At most, the effects on these agricultural/ university workers would be '**minor adverse**' as described in paragraph 7.2 above.

Views from the west

- 7.14. To the west, the only changes to public views would be from a short section of Cutbush Lane immediately adjacent to the western side of the Site. Beyond this, the Shinfield Studios building screens views.
- 7.15. Users of Cutbush Lane have a medium sensitivity here, however the proposed road would be scarcely

noticeable, given that they would be seen in the context of the British Museum and consented spine road in the foreground.

- 7.16. The employees and visitors to the Shinfield Studios would potentially have private views of the spine road and proposed Link Road. Whilst this area was not accessed as part of the visual assessment, it is apparent that any views would be dominated by parking and landscape areas associated with the Studios in the foreground, with the enhancements to Cutbush Lane beyond. It is also likely that the NHM buildings (currently under construction) would be visually prominent in views. At most, this would also result in a **'negligible adverse'** change to the views here, given the presence of existing construction and buildings on Cutbush Lane. The FPS track and compound would not be visible from this area.

8. Summary

Landscape Appraisal

- 8.1. An appraisal has been undertaken of the likely effects on the landscape, including landscape-related designations, landscape features and landscape character.
- 8.2. The site is not covered by any landscape designations, however part of the eastern side of the Site lies within the draft River Loddon Valued Landscape, covered by draft Policy NE6 in the *Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update 2023-2040* (2025). Whilst this is only an emerging designation, following our landscape appraisal we do not consider that the proposals would result in the loss of any important features that typify this draft Valued Landscape.
- 8.3. With regards to effects on landscape character, our appraisal (Table 5.1 above) shows how the proposed development and associated landscape mitigation proposals relate well to a series of Landscape Guidelines set out in the *WBC Landscape Character Assessment*. This shows that the proposed development is either not relevant to these specific Guidelines, or complies with their aspirations. Overall, the proposals would have a minor adverse effect on the character of Area 2A River Loddon character area.
- 8.4. With regards to effects on specific landscape features, our appraisal shows that there would be no significant change to the overall landform or movement within the Site or wider area. Whilst there would be the loss of 3.86 Ha of arable and 1.94 Ha of pasture farmland, three individual trees, part of a further group of trees and approximately 84 lin.m of hedgerow, these would be compensated for with new planting. This would comprise approximately 225 sq.m new native scrub, 532 sq.m of native understorey planting, 240 linear.m of native hedge planting and 21,325 sq.m of meadow and amenity grass, 15 new street trees and areas of land that are left to regenerate with native grass and herbaceous plants and/or returned to agricultural use. Overall, we consider that this would have a neutral effect on vegetation within the Site.

Visual Appraisal: Summary

- 8.5. There would be no significant adverse effects resulting from the Proposed Development. Few visual receptors would be affected by the proposals, given the lack of public accessibility within the area, together with the screening provided by existing features such as New Covert and St John's Copse to the west and south, roadside trees adjacent to the M4 to the north and existing buildings on Cutbush Lane to the west.
- 8.6. The only public views would be from a short stretch of the M4 motorway close to the northern side of the FPS compound, where there is a short break in the existing tree planting and from the users of SHIN Footpath 39 Link 1 over the M4 motorway bridge to the north-west, which is used by pedestrians and cyclists. Users of the motorway are 'low sensitivity' visual receptors, and this glimpsed view of the proposed compound area, seen in conjunction with the wider highway infrastructure would at most result in a 'minor adverse' change to the view.
- 8.7. Whilst users of the SHIN Footpath 39 Link 1 footpath have a higher sensitivity, they would also benefit from screening by trees on the M4 and the buildings at Upperwood Farm, and would only see distant views of the access road proposals. The FPS compound would not be visible from here. Views from here would

diminish further with the construction of later stages of the Thames Valley Science Park to the immediate south of the M4 motorway and this is evident with the NHM building currently under construction which forms a dominant feature in this view.

- 8.8. The only other changes to views may relate to the small number of agricultural workers that access the site and surrounding farmland to the west, east and south-east and workers at the northern part of Cutbush Lane within the Thames Valley Science Park. Given the low sensitivity of the agricultural workers' receptors, these changes are only judged to be of 'minor adverse' significance.
- 8.9. Visitors/ employees to the Shinfield Studios, British Museum and Natural History Museum (currently under construction) buildings would only experience negligible adverse changes to their views, with potential views of the new northern arm to the consented roundabout and western end of the proposed FPS track. Due to their distance from the FPS compound and presence of existing field boundary trees, this part of the Proposed Development would not be visible from this area to the west of the Site.



Appendices

Appendix One Assessment Definitions

Landscape and Visual Appraisal

Loddon Garden Village/Thames Valley Science Park Link Road



Table A: Landscape Value Criteria

Landscape Value	Criteria
High	▪ A landscape/townscape element or area of high scenic/perceptual qualities ▪ Good condition. ▪ Highly valued for its quality and/or Landscape character, and may be designated at international or national level, such as World Heritage Sites, Listed Buildings and Registered Parks and Gardens.
Medium	▪ A landscape/townscape element or area of medium scenic/ perceptual qualities ▪ At least moderate condition. ▪ Valued at a local level, for example, Areas of Great Landscape Value, Conservation Areas and Locally Listed Buildings. ▪ May also include undesignated landscapes with some of the following: - o High scenic quality - o Intact Landscape character - o Presence of distinctive elements/ features in the landscape - o Features of particular landscape or cultural heritage importance - o Recreation value - o Historical associations
Medium-Low	▪ An undesignated landscape/townscape that has some landscape features that contribute to its sense of place and are of value to the local community, but that may be in mixed condition and include some detractors that weaken its overall character and scenic quality. ▪ Common landscape type
Low	▪ Degraded landscape/townscape with small number of characteristic elements and a high number of detractors. ▪ Very common

Table B: Landscape Susceptibility to Change Criteria

Landscape susceptibility to change	Criteria
High	An area where landscape/townscape character would be noticeably changed by the proposed scheme, either due to the loss of important landscape features, or due to the introduction of new features that are not typical of the area. The potential for intrusive development may also be due to a relatively open character with few elements that could screen the proposed development.
Medium	A landscape/townscape which is partially tolerant to change of the type proposed. This may be due to the presence of existing landscape detractors or the relative lack of a strong concentration of typical landscape characteristics. The capacity of the landscape to accept change may also be due to the presence of some elements that may screen the proposed scheme, such as vegetation, buildings or landform features.

Landscape and Visual Appraisal

Loddon Garden Village/Thames Valley Science Park Link Road



Landscape susceptibility to change	Criteria
Low	An area that is tolerant of substantial change of the type proposed. This may be due to a lack of existing distinctive landscape elements or characteristics, the presence of a number of landscape detractors, or the presence of elements that may screen the proposed scheme.

Table C: Overall Landscape Sensitivity

Landscape susceptibility to change (from Table B)	Value (from Table A)			
	High	Medium	Medium-low	Low
High	High	Medium-High	Medium	Medium-low
Medium	Medium-High	Medium	Medium-low	Medium-low
Low	Medium	Medium-low	Low	Low

Table D: Magnitude of Landscape Effect

Landscape Scale/ Size of Change	Criteria
High adverse/beneficial	The proposals would be at total variance (adverse) or totally accord (beneficial) with the key characteristics of the existing landscape, and/or there would be a very noticeable loss or change in landscape/townscape elements, features or characteristics. Beneficial effects would restore, recreate, or permanently benefit the condition or character of the landscape.
Medium adverse/beneficial	The proposals would noticeably be at odds (adverse) or fit well (beneficial) with the key characteristics of the existing landscape, would noticeably improve or harm the condition or character of the landscape, and/or would result in the partial loss or alteration to one or more key landscape elements, features or characteristics.
Low adverse/beneficial	The proposals would not quite fit (adverse) or have a degree of fit (beneficial) with the key characteristics of the existing landscape, and/or there would be minor loss or alteration of landscape elements, features or characteristics. Beneficial effects would go some way towards improving the condition or character of the landscape.
Negligible adverse/beneficial landscape impact	The proposals would create a just discernible loss/change, or improvement to the key characteristics of the existing landscape. The proposals may not be uncharacteristic of the existing landscape.
Neutral	Where the development would cause a change to the landscape, but would be in keeping with its existing elements, thus having neither an adverse nor beneficial effect.

Landscape and Visual Appraisal

Loddon Garden Village/Thames Valley Science Park Link Road



Landscape Scale/ Size of Change	Criteria
No change	The proposals would not cause any change to the key characteristics of the existing landscape/townscape.

Table E: Overall Significance of Landscape and Visual Effects

Sensitivity of Landscape/Visual Receptor (from Table C)	Magnitude of Landscape/Visual Change (from Table D)			
	High	Medium	Low	Negligible
High	Major	Major/moderate	Minor	Negligible
Medium-high	Major/moderate	Moderate	Minor	Negligible
Medium	Moderate	Moderate	Minor	Negligible
Medium-low	Moderate	Minor	Minor	Negligible
Low	Minor	Minor	Minor	Negligible

Table F: Visual Receptor – Value Criteria

Value	Criteria
High	Views with high scenic value, views to heritage assets or valued landscape features. Recognition of value shown through planning designations or in relation to heritage assets. Views may be referenced in tourist guides or maps and accompanied by facilities to facilitate their enjoyment, such as parking or interpretation boards.
Medium	Views of medium scenic value. Views not necessarily promoted widely for their value but may be appreciated by the local community as a popular place to walk/visit.
Low	Views are of low value, for example, due to landscape detractors, and may only be seen for periods of shorter duration such as visibility from roads or railways.

Table G: Visual Receptor – Susceptibility to Change Criteria

Susceptibility to Change	Criteria
High	Residents at home. People engaged in outdoor recreation whose attention is likely to be focused on the landscape and particular views. Visitors to heritage assets or other attractions where views are an important contributor to the experience. Communities where views contribute to the townscape setting enjoyed by residents.
Medium	Travellers on road, rail or other transport, where travel involves recognised scenic routes. People at their place of work where views are an important contributor to the setting and quality of working life.
Low	Vehicle users on roads used principally for passage, where the attention is not necessarily focused on the view. People engaged in outdoor sport or recreation which does not involve or depend upon appreciation of views of the townscape. Occupants of places of work whose attention may be focused on the work and where the setting is not important to the quality of working life.

Table H: Visual Receptor – Overall Sensitivity

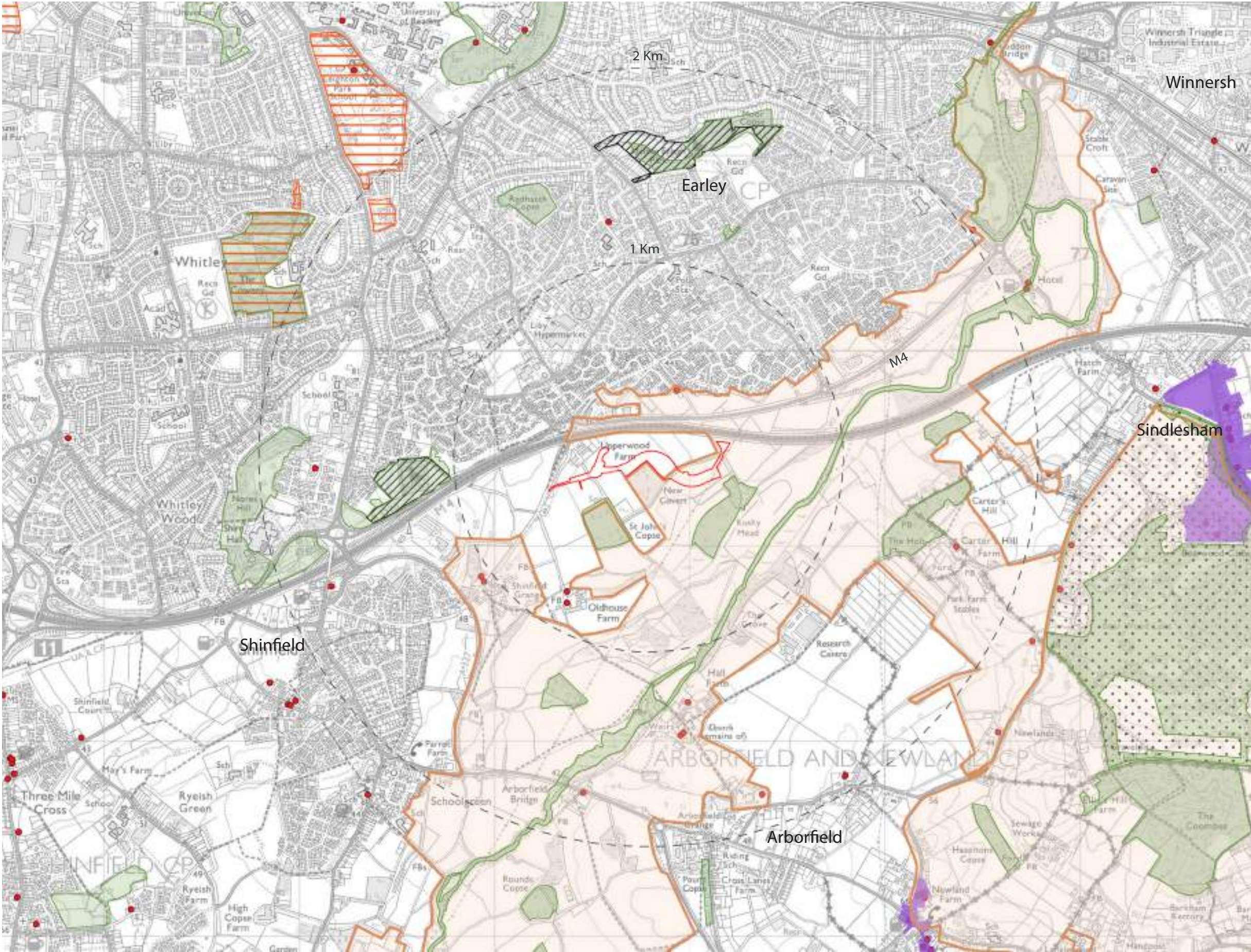
Susceptibility to change (from Table G)	Value (From Table F)		
	High	Medium	Low
High	High	Medium-high	Medium
Medium	Medium-high	Medium	Medium-low
Low	Medium	Medium-low	Low

Table I: Magnitude of Visual Change – Definitions

Size/Scale of Effect	Criteria
High	Where the development would cause a dominant or complete change to the composition of the view, and the appreciation of landscape/townscape character, contrasting in terms of form, scale and mass, height, colour and/or texture. Views of the scheme are unlikely to be screened to any extent.
Medium	Where the development would cause a clearly noticeable change in the existing view, which would have some effects on its composition, and/or the appreciation of landscape/ townscape character. It would not result in a dominant change to the view however and the overall effect is likely to be mitigated either due to distance from the viewer, complementary colours and textures, or the presence of some screening elements.
Low	Where the development would cause a perceptible change in the existing view, but would not materially affect its composition, or the appreciation of landscape/townscape character, either due to its distance from the viewer, the presence of screening elements or complementary colours and textures. Views of the proposals are more likely to be glimpsed rather than full.
Negligible	Where the development would cause a barely perceptible change in the existing view, either due to the presence of screening elements or distance from the viewer. Whilst the development would be visible, it would not result in a change to the overall composition of the view or landscape character of the area.
Neutral	Where the development would cause a change to the view but would be in keeping with its existing elements thus having neither an adverse nor beneficial effect.



Appendix Two: Figures



Red Line Boundary

Townscape Designations

Listed Building

Conservation Area

Landscape Designations

Major Landscape Feature - Policy EN13

Registered Park and Garden - Bearwood College

Wokingham Borough Council Draft 'Valued Landscape'

Local Nature Reserve

Local Wildlife Site

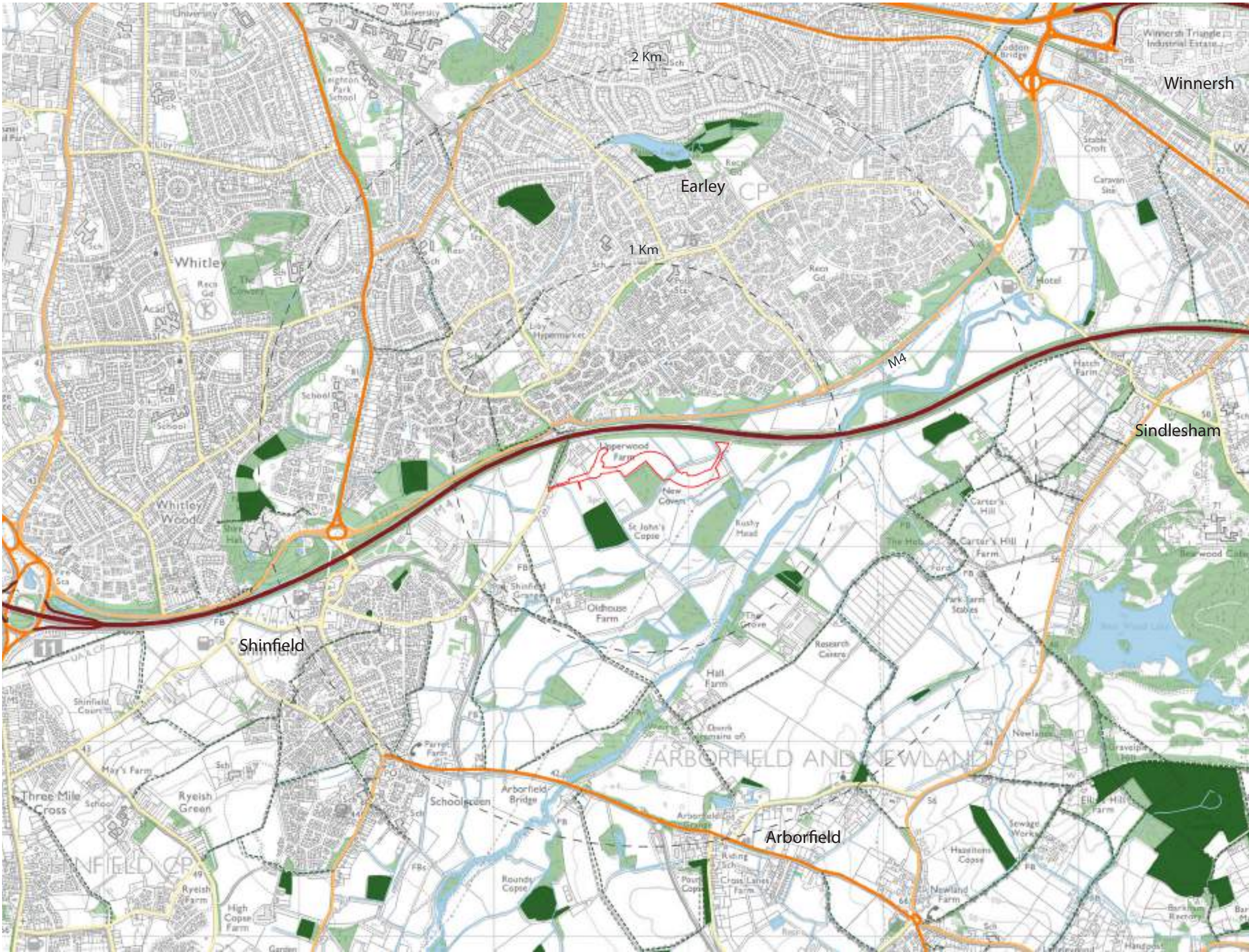
Link Road and Foul Pumping Station Access

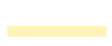
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Drawing no. LA400
Revision B (16.01.26)
Drawn by JM / MS
Date 01.09.2025

Drawing Scale
Checked by RA / RB
Job no. 498048



-  Red Line Boundary
- Landscape Context
 -  Water Body
 -  Woodland
 -  Ancient Woodland
- Movement & Access Context
 -  Public Right of Way
 -  Motorway
 -  A Road
 -  B Road
 -  Primary Road
 -  Minor Road



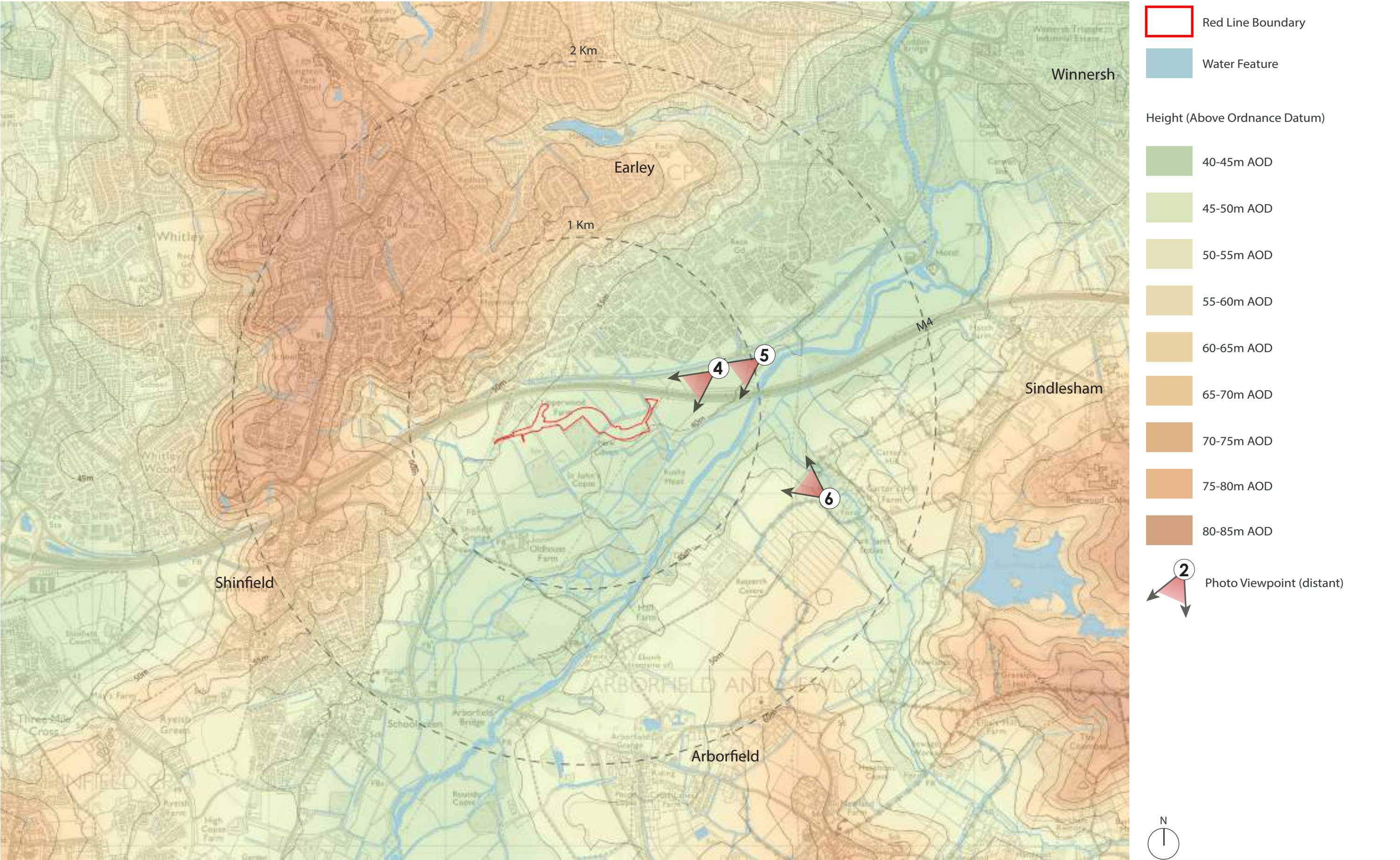
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Drawing no.	LA401	Drawing	Figure 2: Landscape and Movement Context
Revision	B (16.01.26)	Scale	1:20,000 @ A3
Drawn by	JM / MS	Checked by	RA / RB
Date	01.09.2025	Job no.	498048





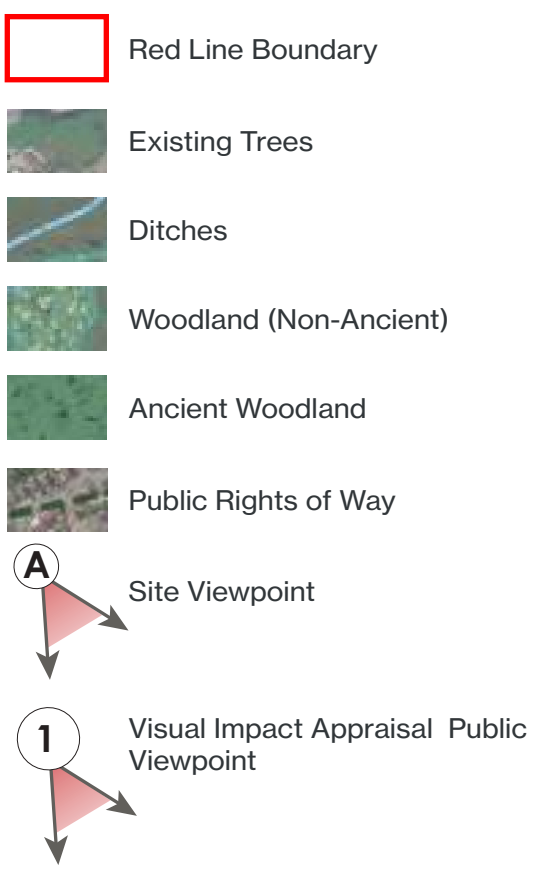
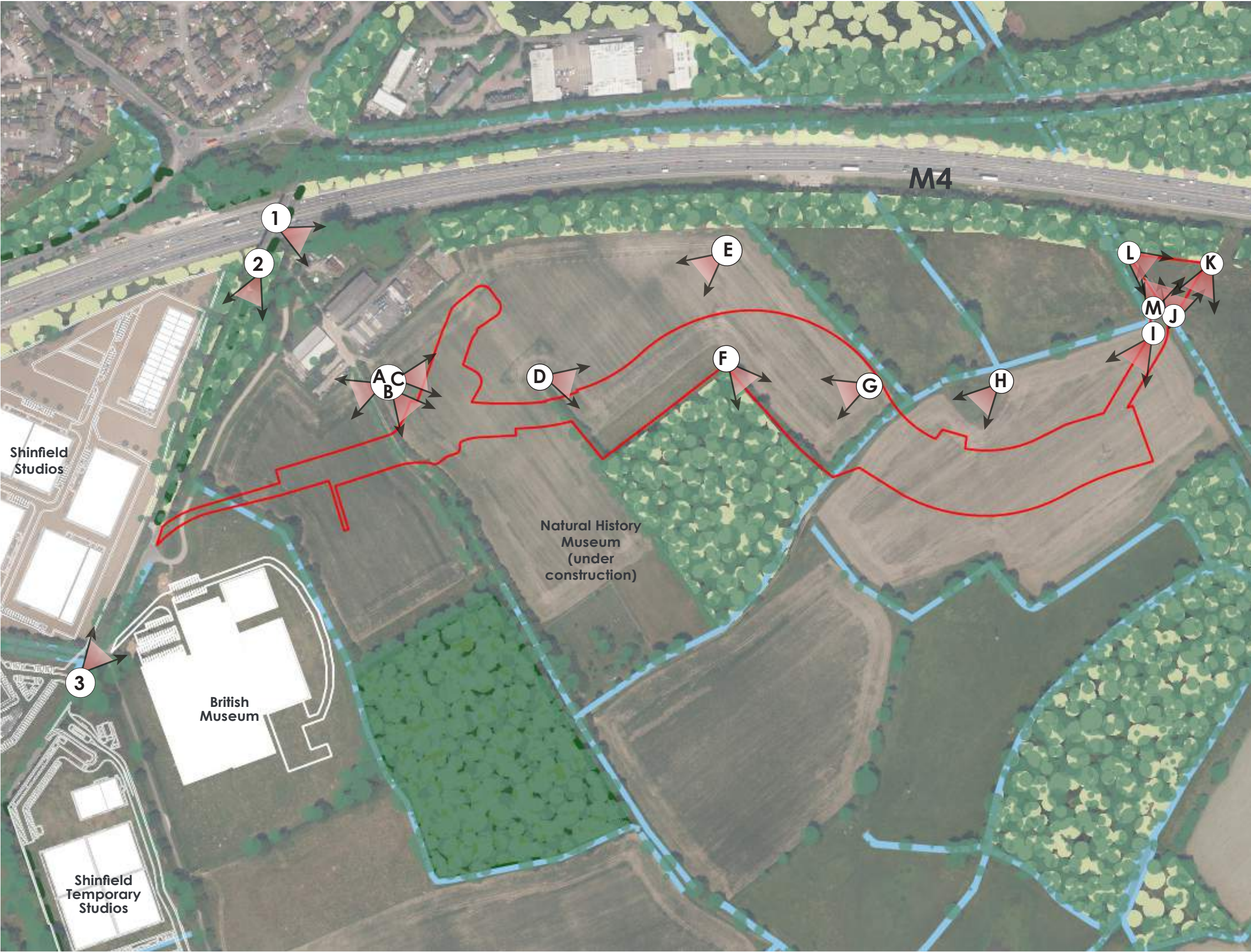
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Drawing no. LA403
Revision B (16.01.26)
Drawn by JM/MS
Date 01.09.2025

Drawing Figure 4: Landform, Water Feature and Distant Viewpoints
Scale 1:20,000@A3
Checked by RA/RB
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Drawing no.	LA404	Drawing	Figure 5: Site Photographic Viewpoints
Revision	B (16.01.26)	Scale	NTS
Drawn by	JM / MS	Checked by	RA / RB
Date	01.09.2025	Job no.	498048



View A: From western field of the site looking south-west towards British Museum and Shinfield Studios. The new Spine Road link to The NHM building is visible in the foreground, although new planting will soften this over time.



View B: From western field of site, looking south towards St. John's Copse. The new Spine Road associated with the NHM building is visible in the foreground, although new planting withh soften this over time.

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Drawing no.	LA405	Drawing	Figure 6: Site Photographs
Revision	A (04.02.26)	Scale	-
Drawn by	RA	Checked by	RA
Date	15.08.25	Job no.	498048



View C: From western field of site, looking east towards New Covert. The new track would run through the field in the middle distance, wrapping around New Covert. The NHM building under construction is a dominant feature in the view.



View D: From north-west of New Covert, looking towards western end of the proposed track. The track would run close to the boundary of New Covert before turning south towards the pumping station.

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Drawing no.	LA406	Drawing	Figure 7: Site Photographs
Revision	A (04.02.26)	Scale	-
Drawn by	RA	Checked by	RA
Date	15.08.25	Job no.	498048



View E: From north-east of New Covert, looking towards the western end of the proposed track. The track will run close to this northern boundary of New Covert, with the NHM building iunder construction a dominant feature in the view.



View F: From north-eastern corner of New Covert, looking towards the pumping station. A new SuDS basin and the track will run through the foreground field. .

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Drawing no.	LA407	Drawing	Figure 8: Site Photographs
Revision	A (04.02.26)	Scale	-
Drawn by	RA	Checked by	RA
Date	15.08.25	Job no.	498048



View G: Looking across proposed route of track towards eastern side of New Covert, and adjacent site of attenuation basin.



View H: From existing farm track, looking south-west towards the centre the proposed Link Road.

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Drawing no.	LA408	Drawing	Figure 9: Site Photographs
Revision	A (04.02.26)	Scale	-
Drawn by	RA	Checked by	RA
Date	15.08.25	Job no.	498048



View I: From existing farm track, looking south-west towards the centre of the proposed farm track. Tower cranes associated with the NHM building construction works are visible above the tree line



View J: Looking across the site of the pumping station towards the M4 motorway. There will be a glimpsed view from the motorway in the winter months due to the gap in the existing vegetation beneath the overhead power cables.

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Drawing no.	LA409
Revision	A (04.02.26)
Drawn by	RA
Date	15.08.25

Drawing	Figure 10: Site Photographs
Scale	-
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Job no.	498048



View K: From the site of the proposed pumping station looking south. Photograph taken close to the gap in the northern hedgerow to indicate what the view may be like for users of the adjacent M4 motorway.



View L: Looking south-east across the site of the proposed pumping station to the immediate south of the M4 motorway.

Link Road and Foul Pumping Station Access

on behalf of the University of Reading

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Drawing no.	LA410
Revision	A (04.02.26)
Drawn by	RA
Date	15.08.25

Drawing	Figure 11: Site Photographs
Scale	-
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View M: From the site of the proposed pumping station looking north-west. Glimpsed view to the M4, but the Site is generally well enclosed by existing roadside trees and hedgerows, even during the winter months.

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Drawing no.	LA411	Drawing	Figure 12: Site Photographs
Revision	A (04.02.26)	Scale	-
Drawn by	RA	Checked by	RA
Date	15.08.25	Job no.	498048