

**Pinewood Campus,
Nine Mile Ride,
Crowthorne**

**Landscape & Visual
Impact Assessment**

On behalf of Dandara Southern Limited & Legal and
General Assurance (Pensions Management) Limited

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

- 1.1.1. Align Landscape Planning are instructed by Dandara Southern Limited & Legal and General Assurance (Pensions Management) Limited to assess the landscape and visual implications arising from the proposed development of up to 136 dwellings at Pinewood Campus, Nine Mile Ride, Crowthorne ('the Site'). The Site is shown within its wider context on the **Site Location Plan** (SLP.001).

1.2. Approach

- 1.2.1. The purpose of this assessment is to objectively assess the proposed development in the context of the existing landscape character, visual environment and landscape related policy environment.
- 1.2.2. This Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) will take the following format:
- Review of the site's context in terms of landscape related policy, existing landscape character and the receiving visual environment;
 - Introduction of the proposed development, including the proposed landscape strategy;
 - Assessment of landscape and visual effects upon the existing receptors / resource and in relation to landscape related planning policy; and
 - The conclusions of the assessment will be set out.
- 1.2.3. The assessment has been prepared in accordance with the methodology that is included in Appendix 1. The methodology has been developed in line with guidance within Guidance for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third edition (GLVIA3), prepared by the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) and the Landscape Institute (LI) in 2013.
- 1.2.4. A suite of plans and photographs have been prepared to assist the assessment within this LVIA and these are referred to within the text. The photographs are included within Appendix 5.

2. BASELINE ASSESSMENT

2.1. The Site

- 2.1.1. The Site comprises the current Johnson & Johnson headquarters at Pinewood Campus, which extends to the north of Nine Mile Ride, on the northern edge of the settlement of Crowthorne.
- 2.1.2. Residential areas extend to the south of Nine Mile Ride, defining the wider settlement. The Pinewood Centre, which is managed by Wokingham Without Parish Council, lies to the east of the Site and comprises a number of buildings occupied by a variety of users and local community clubs. In addition, there are football pitches, allotments and a miniature railway. To the west of the Site lie several detached residential properties, set within mature, wooded plots. Several irregularly shaped fields lie to the north of these properties and appear to be used for the grazing of horses. A large commercial market gardening operation lies to the west, associated with Heathlands Farm. This development includes areas of polytunnels and static caravans used for employee accommodation. The irregularly shaped network of fields extends to the north of the Site. The fields are typically used for grazing, comprising areas of improved grassland. The fields are broken up by blocks of woodland and mature tree planting which follows watercourses and drains, creating a distinctly compartmentalised landscape and a high degree of visual containment. The Site is shown within its wider context on the **Site Location Plan** (SLP.001).
- 2.1.3. The Site currently comprises a large, contemporary office building which is approximately 16m high. The building is glazed to all elevations. Car parking extends to the north east and east of the building, comprising areas of hardstanding, broken up by loose lines of trees and areas of ornamental shrub planting. Areas of open air amenity space lie near to the building, with an all weather sports pitch located to the east.
- 2.1.4. The development is surrounded by woodland to the east, south and west, with a belt of mature trees separating the Site from the pastoral landscape to the north. The existing development is set well back from Nine Mile Ride, with the intervening mature woodland containing views from the public realm from the south. The woodland associated with the landholding also extends to the west of the development. A network of informal footpaths have been created by the landowners through the woodland for the use of employees as part of the wider amenity space associated with the development. The woodland to the east of the Site is associated with the Pinewood Centre and is currently not directly accessible from the Site. The existing components of the Site and its setting are illustrated on the **Site Context Plan** (SCP.002).
- 2.1.5. **Settlement Pattern** – The Site lies within a distinctly settled landscape, with established residential areas associated with Crowthorne extending to the south of Nine Mile Ride. The

residential character is reinforced by the presence of Bucklers Park, a new development which is partially complete, that extends to the south of Nine Mile Ride, and east of Old Wokingham Road and the main built up area of Crowthorne. However, the built environment is integrated into the landscape by the extensive treecover that characterises the localised setting, with blocks of woodland and belts of mature trees breaking up the various residential estates. The mature treescape reduces the perceived presence of the built environment and establishes a sylvan character. The development at Bucklers Park represents one of the most recent additions to the settlement, demonstrating how contemporary residential built form can be integrated into this wooded landscape.

- 2.1.6. To the north of Nine Mile Ride, within the context of the Site, development varies from individual residential properties, set within large wooded grounds, to the community facilities at Pinewood Centre, commercial uses at Newlands Farm Industrial Estate and park lodge developments. The settlement of Bracknell lies approximately 1.6km to the east of the Site, extending to the north of Nine Mile Ride, while Wokingham lies approximately 2km to the north west.
- 2.1.7. **Vegetation Cover** – As noted above, this is a distinctly wooded landscape, with pockets of development set amongst the mature treescape. The treescape varies in terms of a mix of deciduous and evergreen species characterising the blocks of woodland. The fieldscape to the north and west of the Site has an irregular form, with fields typically being small to medium in scale. Pasture is the primary land use, although larger arable fields extend to the north of Easthampstead Road, while the areas of market gardening associated with Heathfield Farm characterise the landscape to the west of Honey Hill.
- 2.1.8. **Topography** – The Site is broadly flat, set within a very gently undulating landscape. There is a gentle fall to the north of the Site towards a local watercourse. However, there are no distinct changes in topography.
- 2.1.9. **Public Rights of Way** – The Site is not publicly accessible and while there is a network of footpaths passing through the woodland within the Site, these are currently not publicly accessible. There is an informal network of footpaths through the woodland to the east of the Site, associated with the Pinewood Centre, however, intervisibility between these routes and the Site is limited due to the mature treescape and existing boundary features. As illustrated on the Site Location Plan (SLP.001) there is a sparse network of public rights of way across the wider landscape that surrounds the Site.

2.2. Landscape Related Policy Background

- 2.2.1. The Site is covered by the policies of the Wokingham Borough Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (February 2014), the Wokingham Core Strategy (January 2010) and the emerging Wokingham Borough Local Plan (Right Homes, Right Places Local Plan Update: Proposed Submission Plan(2024)).
- 2.2.2. The Site is not subject to any qualitative landscape designations within the Adopted Local Plan. However, it is noted that, within the Emerging Local Plan, part of the Site lies within the “Forest & Rides” valued landscape. The draft designation excludes the existing developed parts of the Site, washing over the wooded areas to the south and west of the existing built form and hardstanding. The draft designation also washes over the woodland associated with the Pinewood Centre, to the east. Wokingham Borough Council have identified several valued landscapes across the borough, informed by the published landscape character assessment. The Council have prepared the Wokingham Valued Landscapes Assessment (2024) which introduces each of the areas and identifies the special qualities of the particular landscape. This document was prepared by the Council but has not been subject to any formal review undertaken by practitioners outside of the Council. Given the draft nature of the Emerging Local Plan and this designation, it is considered that it should be afforded limited weight, however, to ensure a robust assessment, this LVIA assesses the potential effects of the proposals upon this draft designation within Section 4.4.
- 2.2.3. The Site does not lie within the Green Belt.
- 2.2.4. It is considered that the following landscape related policies are of relevance:
- *Policy CC03: Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping*
 - *Policy TB21: Landscape Character*
- 2.2.5. The aims and objectives of the NPPF and policies of the Adopted Wokingham Borough Council Local Plan have informed the design development of the proposals. Section 4 of this LVIA will assess the proposals in line with the landscape related policy.

2.3. Landscape Character

- 2.3.1. The European Landscape Convention (ELC) defines landscape as “...an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and / or human factors”.

- 2.3.2. As set out within “An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment” (Christine Tudor, Natural England; October 2014) **“landscape character may be defined as a distinct and recognisable pattern of elements, or characteristics, in the landscape that make one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse. Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) is the process of identifying and describing variation in the character of the landscape. It seeks to identify and explain the unique combination of elements and features (characteristics) that make landscapes distinctive.”**
- 2.3.3. As part of the baseline assessment, published landscape character assessments have been identified and reviewed and these form the basis of the assessment of the landscape character of the site.

Regional Landscape Character Assessment

- 2.3.4. Natural England have prepared the Character Map of England which provides a broad assessment of landscape character at a regional level. The site lies within the “Thame Basin Heaths” national character area (NCA 129). An extract of the assessment is included within Appendix 2.
- 2.3.5. It is noted that the assessment identifies a number of key characteristics, including:
- **“High woodland cover, offering an array of colour in the autumn. Conifers and large plantations on former heathland are dominant features in the east, while the west is scattered with small, semi-natural woodlands on ancient sites.**
 - **Acid, leached soils mean that farming on the plateaux is limited to rough pasture, and that alternative land uses (such as forestry, golf courses and horse paddocks) have emerged. Heather, gorse, oak and birch all thrive here. Arable land and improved pasture are found in the valleys, on alluvium.**
 - **Beyond the large areas of heathland and woodland, there is a patchwork of small to medium-sized fields with woods. The legacy of historic hunting forests includes veteran trees, ancient woods, ancient hedgerows and parklands. Historic meadows remain as fragments along watercourses.**
 - **Valley floors are wet with ditches, numerous watercourses, ponds, waterfilled gravel pits, reedbeds and carr. Historic features include mills, relict water meadows, and canals such as the River Wey Navigations.**
 - **20th-century conurbations, including Camberley, sprawl along the Blackwater Valley, with associated roads (including the M3) dissecting heathland and woodland into blocks. Elsewhere, there are winding lanes and historic dispersed villages and farmsteads of traditional, locally-made brick and tile.”**

- 2.3.6. The regional assessment is useful in introducing the wider landscape character context in which the site is set.

Local Landscape Character Assessment

- 2.3.7. At a more local level, Wokingham Borough Council have undertaken the Wokingham Landscape Character Assessment (2019) which breaks the borough down into a series of homogenous landscape types, then subdivides these into landscape character areas. These do not comprise landscape designations.
- 2.3.8. Within this published assessment, the Site lies within the “Finchampstead Forested & Settled Sands” landscape character area (LCA M1). An extract from the Council’s assessment is included within Appendix 3.
- 2.3.9. The assessment identifies a number of key characteristics associated with this LCA, including:
- **“An elevated landscape rising to 90m AOD, comprising a shelving plateau, underlain by acidic sands. The infertile sandy soils influence land cover and ecological character.**
 - **Large swathes of interconnected forestry and woodland dominate the area, which has little farmland. These consist of large coniferous plantations as well as mixed woodland with sandy heaths. Stands of Scots Pine and exotic species are particularly distinctive.**
 - **The underlying heathland character typifies areas of woodland clearings such as California Park and adjacent to roads.**
 - **Rich semi-natural habitats associated with the poorly draining acidic soils including BAP priority habitat lowland heathland and lowland dry acid grassland. Large acidic lakes or meres are surrounded by wetland and wet woodland; Longmoor Bog and Heath Lake are nationally important SSSIs.**
 - **Long straight roads such as Nine Mile Ride (which originated as historic ‘rides’ created through the historically open landscape of the Royal Forest of Windsor) give a strong linear character to the landscape. Characterised by roadside rhododendron ‘hedges’ and occasional colourful patches of gorse and heather.**
 - **Strong settlement character, with a low density pattern of detached houses lining the historic rides, which have provided a framework for settlement. Residential properties of relatively unremarkable post-war and modern suburban character in a variety of styles.**

- **Good public accessibility including formal parks such as California Country Park, LNR (including Longmoor Bog and Heath Lake) and areas of open access Forestry Commission land (such as Gorrick Plantation) connected by a network of bridleways and footpaths.**
- **Localised area of remoteness within woodlands and smaller areas of pasture, mire and heath, which provide a sense of tranquillity.**
- **A highly enclosed landscape created by the often continuous swathes of dense woodland, except for framed views along the rides.”**

2.3.10. In addition to the key characteristics, the assessment identifies a series of ‘Valuable Landscape Attributes’, which include:

- **“The elevated plateau and wooded skyline visible and forming a backdrop in the wider landscape.**
- **Large expanses of mixed woodland containing mature trees which are important ecological habitats and provide a sense of place and history as well as opportunities for recreation. Stands of Scots pine provide characteristic landmark features.**
- **The distinctive pattern of interconnected woodland and forestry, interspersed with sandy heaths, lakes, bogs and wet woodland and occasional pastoral fields which provide scenic quality and visual diversity (a variety of colours and textures and changing seasonal interest) and provide a naturalistic sense of place to the suburban development.**
- **Acid heathland, large lakes and bogs which provide nationally important BAP priority habitats, nationally recognised as SSSIs, as well as opportunities for recreation.**
- **Distinctive long straight historic roads following the route of rides through the former Royal Forest of Windsor which provide a cultural record of the past as well as allowing views into a landscape well enclosed by trees.**
- **The locally listed historic park at Ravenswood, one of only four medieval deer parks in the district.**
- **Settlement pattern of low density post-war properties in large plots along long straight rides and notably the occasional wooded gaps between areas of settlement. Integration of development in the wooded landscape and absence of commercial, industrial buildings /large or tall built structures.**
- **Valued areas for recreation including tracts of open access land and the extensive network of bridleways and public footpaths which allow enjoyment of the landscape.**
- **The continuous network of woodland and forestry which helps to provide physical and visual separation between settlements and to filter and screen views to the settlements within the area, as well as provide an attractive setting to housing.**

- **Important vistas to the Wellingtonia Avenue (within LCA M2) which provides a sense of place.**
- **Localised areas with a sense of tranquillity and even remoteness, removed from the roads and visual influence of settlement, which provide an escape in close proximity to the urban population.”**

2.3.11. The assessment identifies that the LCA is in Good Condition and sets out a series of landscape management guidelines to inform development and ensure that the positive key characteristics of the LCA are conserved and, where possible, enhanced. The guidelines include:

- **“Conserve distinctive wooded skylines. Consider the impact of any development on skylines, particularly where it would have the potential to be highly visible from adjacent character areas. Develop sympathetic fell cycles to maintain positive character, particularly phased cycles along sensitive skylines to ensure that the wooded backdrop is maintained. Particular care should be taken in the siting of communication masts or other vertical elements, which have the potential to be highly visible in this elevated landscape.**
- **Conserve and enhance the wooded character of the landscape. Increase the extent of BAP priority habitat lowland mixed deciduous woodland in the forested areas using locally occurring native species in order to create a more mixed woodland character. Retain open areas of heath, mire, lakes and pasture within the forested areas and existing views into these areas, especially from historic rides. Continue to promote appropriate management through natural regeneration, control of non-native species and coppicing as a management tool for neglected woodland.**
- **Conserve, enhance and manage heathland, grassland, and wetland habitats particularly BAP priority habitats, from development, changes in land use and encroachment by secondary woodland and scrub. An area of land centred around Gorrick Plantation, Queen’s Mere and King’s Mere is part of the Thames Basin Heaths BOA. This network of natural habitats, which extend into Bracknell Forest, has been identified as a target for habitat creation and restoration and positive management of heathland and bog habitats. An appropriate heathland management regime is critical.**
- **Enhance integration of recreation into the landscape, avoiding features which would lead to greater (sub) urbanisation of the rural character.**
- **Enhance informal recreational enjoyment of the landscape but balance this with continued conservation of valuable landscapes, heritage assets and semi-natural habitats. Consider zoning of activities to ensure ecologically valuable or more sensitive elevated landscapes are protected from damaging activities and ensure appropriate management of informal recreation, particularly in relation to the Rights of Way network.**

- **Conserve and enhance the integration of urban edges through wooded boundaries and large-species trees and maintain the important vistas along rides. In particular protect the sensitive areas of open land adjacent to Arborfield Garrison in the western part of this area.**
- **Enhance sense of place through careful planning and design (including siting, massing, scale, materials and landscape – and sensitive lighting to retain dark skies at night) to minimise the impacts of any potential new development and particularly vertical elements on valuable attributes.**
- **Conserve the rural character between adjacent towns and village centres, to protect the individual identity of settlements, and retain their sense of physical and visual separation that helps define them. In particular protect the sensitive areas of open land remaining along the B3016 and the A321 between Finchampstead and Wokingham, retain blocks of woodland along the rides and rear of properties under threat from backland development.**
- **Consider undertaking character appraisals / village design statements of key settlements in Wokingham Borough e.g. Finchampstead to identify features worthy of conservation. Maintain the small scale, low density domestic character of settlement set within large plots avoiding greater densities of development or tall/large structures.**
- **Use appropriate tree planting to help integrate roads in relation to proposed junction improvements and the extension of Nine Mile Drive to the west of the character area. Encourage retention of wooded edges and boundaries along roads, while retaining existing views to open countryside and wooded ridges. Minimise fencing and other boundary structures.**
- **Conserve and enhance historic features associated with the Royal Forest of Windsor including the medieval parkland at Ravenswood and the straight rides.**
- **Reduce and prevent further noise and light pollution through the sensitive siting of any new development, especially any proposed night-time lighting.”**

2.3.12. These guidelines have informed the design development of the proposed layout and the landscape proposals.

Site-specific Landscape Character Assessment

2.3.13. A more focussed assessment of the localised landscape character of the Site and its immediate setting has also been undertaken, and this has been informed by the published assessments prepared by Natural England and Wokingham Borough Council.

- 2.3.14. The Site comprises a campus style development, focussed on a large commercial office building with areas of hardstanding extending to the north east and east, set within the established wooded landscape to the north of Crowthorne. The wooded character extends to the east, south and west, which creates a highly compartmentalised landscape and a high degree of visual containment. While the landscape to the north of the Site does become more open, the smaller scale of the fieldscape together with the mature treescape which defines the field boundaries ensures that the sense of enclosure is maintained.
- 2.3.15. This is a settled landscape with urban areas extending to the east and south and a variety of land uses characterising the immediate setting of the Site. The wooded character reduces the perception of the urban areas, with the tall treescape assimilating development into the landscape. The limited variation in topography reinforces the sense of enclosure while the sparse network of public rights of way limits opportunities for views across the localised landscape from the public realm.
- 2.3.16. As part of the landscape character assessment, there is a need to assess the susceptibility, value and overall sensitivity of the landscape resource. These assessments will inform the objective assessment of effects within Section 4.2 and ensure that a transparent and objective approach to the assessment is achieved. GLVIA3 defines landscape susceptibility, landscape value and landscape sensitivity, as follows:

“Susceptibility: the ability of a defined landscape to accommodate the specific proposed development without undue negative consequences;

Landscape Value: the relative value that is attached to different landscape by society. A landscape may be valued by different stakeholders for a whole variety of reasons;

Sensitivity: a term applied to specific receptors, combining judgements of the susceptibility of the receptor to the specific type of change or development proposed and the value related to that receptor.”

Landscape Susceptibility

- 2.3.17. In terms of the susceptibility of the localised landscape receptor, it is considered that the developed nature of the site and its immediate setting influence the ability of the landscape to accommodate change of the type proposed. The Site lies within a distinctly wooded context that creates a compartmentalised character and a significant sense of enclosure, as identified within the published assessment. The sense of enclosure associated with the Site and its setting is elevated by the limited variation in landform and limited public access. As a result, views into

the Site are limited to glimpses from the informal network of footpaths through the woodland associated with the Pinewood Centre. Within the context of these views, built form and hardstanding are existing components associated with the Site. Despite the stature of the existing built form within the Site, the surrounding mature treescape ensures that it is not evident from the wider public realm.

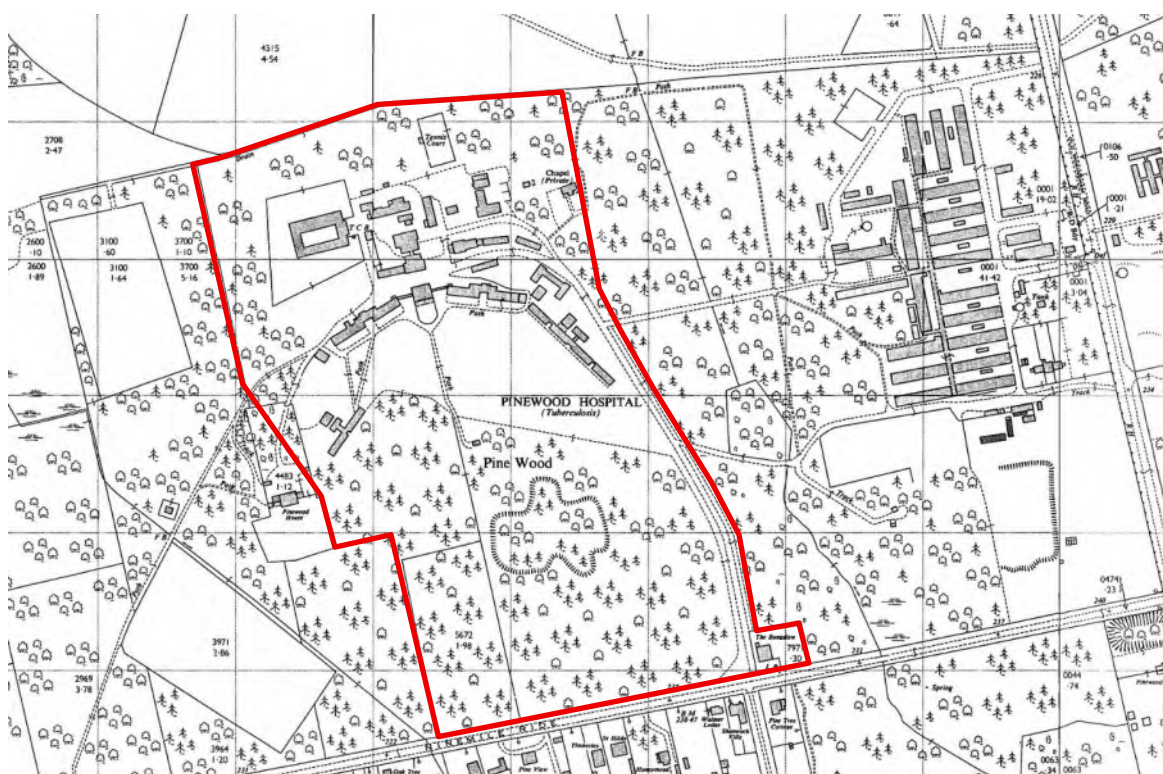
- 2.3.18. The Site is set within a settled landscape, with urban areas extending to the east and south. Contemporary residential development is present within the localised setting, with the development at Bucklers Park demonstrating how a modern development can be integrated into this wooded landscape.
- 2.3.19. The Site has a campus character, set amongst the woodland. Much of the internal treescape is associated with the use of the Site as offices. Some more established specimens are present, although these are typically located towards the edges of the developed parcel. There is some existing acid grassland within the areas of amenity space and amongst the car park, although much of the lower level landscaping comprises managed lawns or ornamental shrubs.
- 2.3.20. It is concluded that the susceptibility of the landscape, in which the site is set, to change of the type proposed, is Low.

Landscape Value

- 2.3.21. In terms of value, it is acknowledged that the Emerging Local Plan identifies that the Site and its setting lie within the “Forest & Rides” valued landscape. This excludes the built form and areas of hardstanding associated with the Site, but washes over the woodland within the southern and western parts of the Site and the wooded wider setting. An extract from the Council’s Valued Landscapes Assessment (2024) is included in Appendix 4 of this LVIA. The published assessment identifies the positive aspects of the various LCAs which are covered by the draft designation. The assessment highlights that it is the extensive woodland and historic associations that make a particular contribution to the value of this landscape.
- 2.3.22. It is acknowledged that the established woodland within the southern and western parts of the Site has a high landscape and ecological value. The wooded character also contributes to the distinctiveness of the area. However, it is also noted that the landscape of the Site has been subject to a degree of change resulting from the various developments that have occurred, and the main part of the Site is characterised by contemporary built form, areas of hardstanding and amenity landscaping.

- 2.3.23. As identified by the Council's Assessment of Valued Landscapes, the Site and the Pinewood Centre have some historic associations, having housed the Pinewood Sanatorium from the beginning of the 20th century. The sanatorium and its woodland setting were home to victims of gas warfare during the First World War and the Canadian Red Cross during the Second World War. The hospital closed in 1966 and the site was redeveloped, with Hewlett Packard developing the sites in the latter part of the 20th century. The 1965 OS mapping illustrates the extent of the development across the Site and at the neighbouring Pinewood Centre prior to its closure, refer Figure 1.

Figure 1: 1965 Ordnance Survey Map extract



- 2.3.24. As illustrated on the Site Location Plan, there is a sparse network of public rights of way within the localised setting of the Site and while there is informal access within the woodland associated with the Pinewood Centre, it is not signposted or immediately obvious. The Site is not publicly accessible. The limited public access within the setting of the Site, together with the well-wooded character ensures that the developed part of the Site is not prominent within the context of the public realm.
- 2.3.25. The well-vegetated setting of the Site creates a high degree of visual containment, with treescape forming the primary component in most views. Built form associated with the Site and adjacent built up areas is evident, influencing the perceived tranquillity of the area, however, the

mature treescape dominates the skyline and assists in breaking up the perception of the built environment within this landscape setting.

2.3.26. Overall, it is considered that the value of the site and its immediate setting is Medium.

Landscape Sensitivity

2.3.27. Overall, in terms of sensitivity, when the judgements of susceptibility and value are considered, it is concluded that the sensitivity of the landscape in which the site is set is **Medium**.

2.4. The Visual Environment

2.4.1. The site visit identified a number of representative views from publicly accessible locations which illustrate the Site in its localised and wider landscape context. The viewpoints seek to reflect the views of the Site by more sensitive receptors, such as walkers on the local Public Right of Way network, however, the viewpoints are considered representative and not exhaustive.

2.4.2. The viewpoints are illustrated on the **Viewpoint Location Plan** (VLP.003) within **Appendix 5**. The photographs were taken in September 2025. The day was bright with good visibility at longer distances.

2.4.3. The photographs were taken with a Canon 35mm equivalent digital SLR. The camera is a full frame sensor model so, in line with Landscape Institute TGN 06/19 – Visual Representation of Development Proposals, the photographs were taken at 50mm with a fixed focal length lens. The photographs are presented within **Appendix 5: Photographic Record** at a scale whereby they can be viewed at a distance of 260mm to represent the view from the particular location. The extent of the site is indicated on the photographs to assist the viewer's understanding of where the site sits within the context of the view. It must be noted that the photographs are illustrative and do not replace visiting the viewpoints in person.

2.4.4. As part of the baseline visual assessment, key receptors have been identified and this has informed the overall assessment of sensitivity of the view. Table 1, below, identifies the locations, receptors and sensitivities of the key viewpoints.

Table 1: Baseline Visual Assessment

Viewpoint	Location	Key Receptors	Receptor Sensitivity
1	Nine Mile Ride, immediately to the south of the Site	Motorists	Medium
2	Informal, unadopted footpath within the woodland associated with Pinewood Centre, immediately to the east of the site access	Walkers	Medium
3	Informal, unadopted footpath within the woodland associated with Pinewood Centre, to the east of the all weather sports pitch within the Site	Walkers	Medium
4	Informal, unadopted footpath within the woodland associated with Pinewood Centre, immediately to the east of the ancillary buildings that are located towards the north eastern corner of the Site	Walkers	Medium
5	Informal, unadopted footpath adjacent to the allotments at the Pinewood Centre, approximately 170m to the east of the Site	Walkers	Medium
6	Car park of the Pinewood Centre, approximately 240m to the east of the Site	Visitors to the Pinewood Centre	Medium
7	Easthampstead Road, approximately 560m to the north east of the Site	Motorists	Medium
8	Footpath WOKW8, approximately 585m to the north of the Site	Walkers	High
9	Honey Hill, approximately 320m to the west of the Site	Motorists	Medium

2.4.5. As illustrated by the Photographic Record, views of the Site are highly localised as a result of the extensive vegetation cover that characterises the immediate setting of the Site. Section 4.3 of this LVIA assesses the potential effects of the proposals upon these views.

3. THE PROPOSALS

- 3.1. The proposals comprise the redevelopment of the Site to deliver 136 new dwellings set within a mature woodland context. The proposals would utilise the existing access from Nine Mile Ride and would occupy the area currently characterised by the built form, car park and amenity space of the Johnson & Johnson development. The proposals are illustrated on the McBains 'Site Layout Plan' which accompanies the application and an extract is included below at Figure 2. The proposed layout forms the basis of the Landscape Strategy Plan that has been prepared. A reduced version of the Landscape Strategy is included within this LVIA.

Figure 2: Extract from McBains 'Site Layout Plan'



- 3.2. The proposals would not extend any further south or west than the existing development into the main woodland ensuring that this feature is conserved. There would be some internal tree loss within the car park and amenity areas, however, as noted by the Ruskins Arboricultural Impact

Assessment, these trees are typically of reduced arboricultural merit with the key treescape associated with the woodland and boundaries. The proposals would extend into the grassed area and younger woodland that lies to the north of the existing office building, however, as illustrated on Figure 1, this area was occupied by built form associated with the hospital during the early and mid 20th century and the proposals would respect the northern boundary, setting development back from this edge so that the mature treescape can be conserved and enhanced as part of a comprehensive scheme of landscaping.

- 3.3. The proposals present a significant opportunity to enhance publicly accessible amenity space, with the woodland to the south and west conserved and established as a SANG for the development which also benefits the local community. A network of paths through the trees and clearings already exists and this would be supplemented with additional, sensitively located routes to increase connectivity with Nine Mile Ride and establish links to the new development to reduce the creation of informal desire lines. The existing woodland presents a notable asset providing opportunities for informal recreation, allowing people to be in nature, as well as providing an educational resource.
- 3.4. An area of greenspace would be established within the development, extending north, from the woodland into the heart of the proposals. Several mature, retained trees would form the focus of this greenspace with new planting reinforcing the sylvan character. Areas of existing acid grassland would be retained and enhanced creating a naturalised character. Equipped playspaces would be located within this naturalised parkland providing formal play opportunities for new and existing residents.
- 3.5. As noted above, the proposals are supported by a comprehensive scheme of landscaping that would reinforce the sylvan character of the Site and its setting, extending treecover through the development, physically and visually linking the proposals to the surrounding woodlands. The landscape principles are illustrated on the Landscape Strategy Plan that accompanies this application. A reduced version is also included within the 'Plans' section of this LVIA.
- 3.6. The landscape proposals have been informed by discussions with the Council's landscape consultant to ensure a high quality, coordinated scheme is achieved. Native species, characteristic of the Thames Basin Heaths landscape, would be incorporated to establish a naturalised, heathland character across the Site. The proposals also ensure that appropriate mitigation for the tree removals is achieved. The Landscape Strategy Plan indicates a comprehensive scheme of replacement tree planting to ensure that treecover across the development is maintained. The Landscape Strategy Plan sets out the principles for delivering a high quality, landscaped development. It is considered that details of the planting can be secured by an appropriately worded condition.

4. ASSESSMENT OF LANDSCAPE & VISUAL EFFECTS

4.1. Background

- 4.1.1. In line with the guidance in GLVIA3, it is appropriate to assess the effect of the proposed development upon the baseline landscape character and visual environment as identified in Section 2 of the LVIA.

4.2. Effect upon Landscape Character

Regional Landscape Character Assessment

- 4.2.1. With regard to the effect of the proposals upon the “Thames Basin Heaths” national character area (NCA 129), the proposals would occupy an existing clearing within the extensive woodland cover which has been associated with development since the early 20th century. This part of the NCA is characterised by pockets of residential development associated with Crowthorne and Bracknell ensuring that the proposals would not introduce any new or alien components into this context. The proposals would conserve and enhance the existing woodlands within the southern and western parts of the Site, including the areas of acid heath that have developed in the glades. The proposals would be set back from the boundaries of the Site ensuring that containment is maintained and the proposals do not give rise to the perception of settlement extending out into the wider landscape. The northern boundary would be reinforced with additional native tree planting to enhance this edge and the interface with the landscape beyond. The comprehensive scheme of landscaping associated with the proposals would establish a more naturalised, heathland character through the development.
- 4.2.2. The proposals would not adversely affect the wooded, heathland character of the NCA and would ensure that the Statements of Environmental Opportunity can be achieved. Overall, it is concluded that the proposals could be integrated into the “Thames Basin Heaths” NCA without detriment to the character of the receiving landscape. It is concluded that the proposed development at the Pinewood Campus would give rise to an effect of Neutral significance.

Local Landscape Character Assessment

- 4.2.3. As noted within Section 2, the site is located within the “Finchampstead Forested & Settled Sands” LCA. The published assessment identifies a number of key characteristics associated with this LCA and it is considered appropriate to assess the likely effect of the proposals against each of these to understand the overall effect upon the character area, refer Table 2 below.

Table 2: Effect on Published Landscape Characteristics

Key Characteristics of the “Finchampstead Forested & Settled Sands” LCA as identified by the published assessment	Effect of the Proposals
<i>“An elevated landscape rising to 90m AOD, comprising a shelving plateau, underlain by acidic sands. The infertile sandy soils influence land cover and ecological character</i>	Neutral – The Site is broadly flat ensuring that no significant ground remodelling is required. While this landscape is elevated, the high degree of treecover contains long distance views, creating a strong sense of enclosure as well as screening the existing built environment.
<i>Large swathes of interconnected forestry and woodland dominate the area, which has little farmland. These consist of large coniferous plantations as well as mixed woodland with sandy heaths. Stands of Scots Pine and exotic species are particularly distinctive.</i>	Neutral – The proposals would not affect the established woodland that characterises the Site and its immediate setting. Nor would they affect the connectivity between the wooded areas, setting development back from the vegetated boundaries. The Site is already developed and has been for over 100 years so is not perceived as farmland. While the proposals would result in the loss of internal trees, these are typically younger specimens which could be mitigated by the comprehensive scheme of replacement planting. The key mature specimens within the Site would be maintained as part of the proposals.
<i>The underlying heathland character typifies areas of woodland clearings such as California Park and adjacent to roads.</i>	Neutral – The glades within the existing wooded parts of the Site would be maintained as part of the proposals and brought under an appropriate management regime as part of the proposed SANG. The proposals would also seek to recreate the heathland character around the interface between the woodland and the development, to ensure an appropriate transition between the areas.
<i>Rich semi-natural habitats associated with the poorly draining acidic soils including BAP priority habitat lowland heathland and lowland dry acid grassland. Large acidic lakes or meres are surrounded by wetland and wet woodland; Longmoor Bog and</i>	Neutral – The proposals would maintain the important habitats associated with the Site, setting the built form back from the well vegetated boundaries and areas of woodland. The main body of the Site, where the development would be focussed, is already developed. Areas of existing acid grassland would be conserved and extended within the central open space as part of the landscape scheme, extending the heathland

<i>Heath Lake are nationally important SSSIs.</i>	character into the development and reinforcing the links with the surrounding landscape.
<i>Long straight roads such as Nine Mile Ride (which originated as historic 'rides' created through the historically open landscape of the Royal Forest of Windsor) give a strong linear character to the landscape. Characterised by roadside rhododendron 'hedges' and occasional colourful patches of gorse and heather.</i>	Neutral – The proposals are set back from Nine Mile Ride and would not be evident from the road corridor. There are no "rides" crossing the Site that would be affected by the proposed development.
<i>Strong settlement character, with a low density pattern of detached houses lining the historic rides, which have provided a framework for settlement. Residential properties of relatively unremarkable post-war and modern suburban character in a variety of styles.</i>	Neutral – As noted by the published assessment, this is a settled landscape. While the Site is currently associated with employment uses, residential development extends to the south, with other pockets of residential development set amongst the woodland present within the localised landscape setting of the Site. As illustrated by the visual assessment, the main body of the Site is not evident from the wider public realm, ensuring that the extent to which the proposals would be perceived within this landscape is very limited. The proposals would not adversely affect the settled character of the LCA.
<i>Good public accessibility including formal parks such as California Country Park, LNR (including Longmoor Bog and Heath Lake) and areas of open access Forestry Commission land (such as Gorrick Plantation) connected by a network of bridleways and footpaths.</i>	Minor Beneficial – While the wider LCA has good accessibility, as illustrated by the Site Location Plan, there is a very sparse network of public rights of way within the context of the Site. Furthermore, the existing employment uses associated with the Site ensures that it is not currently publicly accessible. The proposals would open up the Site, with the proposed SANG accessible from Nine Mile Ride, ensuring that accessibility within the localised landscape is enhanced. The proposals would also look to open up links through to the Pinewood Centre, immediately to the east, via the existing network of informal routes through the adjacent woodland.

<i>Localised area of remoteness within woodlands and smaller areas of pasture, mire and heath, which provide a sense of tranquillity.</i>	Neutral – Away from the developed parts of the Site, there is a sense of remoteness, particularly within the southern part of the Site. This would be conserved by the proposals. The proposed development would also be set back from the well vegetated boundaries, ensuring that the sense of remoteness experienced within the wider landscape is maintained.
<i>A highly enclosed landscape created by the often continuous swathes of dense woodland, except for framed views along the rides.</i>	Neutral – As set out above, the proposals would maintain the wooded character of the Site and this landscape, locating development within the already developed parts of the Site. The proposals would not affect any framed views and would not be evident within views from the wider public realm. The proposals would conserve the enclosed character of this landscape.

- 4.2.4. In addition to the key characteristics of the LCA, the published assessment also identifies a series of valued attributes associated with this landscape. Table 3 assesses the effect of the proposals upon these features.

Table 3: Effect on Published Landscape Characteristics

Valued Attributes of the “Finchampstead Forested & Settled Sands” LCA as identified by the published assessment	Effect of the Proposals
<i>The elevated plateau and wooded skyline visible and forming a backdrop in the wider landscape.</i>	Neutral – As noted above, while this landscape is elevated, the high degree of treecover contains long distance views, creating a strong sense of enclosure as well as screening the existing built environment.
<i>Large expanses of mixed woodland containing mature trees which are important ecological habitats and provide a sense of place and history as well as opportunities for recreation. Stands of Scots pine provide characteristic landmark features.</i>	Neutral – The proposals would not affect the established woodland that characterises the Site and its immediate setting. While the proposals would result in the loss of internal trees, these are typically younger specimens which could be mitigated by the comprehensive scheme of replacement planting. The key mature specimens within the Site would be maintained as part of the proposals.

<i>The distinctive pattern of interconnected woodland and forestry, interspersed with sandy heaths, lakes, bogs and wet woodland and occasional pastoral fields which provide scenic quality and visual diversity (a variety of colours and textures and changing seasonal interest) and provide a naturalistic sense of place to the suburban development.</i>	Neutral - The proposals would not affect the connectivity between the wooded areas, setting development back from the vegetated boundaries. The Site is already developed and has been for over 100 years so is not perceived as farmland.
<i>Acid heathland, large lakes and bogs which provide nationally important BAP priority habitats, nationally recognised as SSSIs, as well as opportunities for recreation.</i>	Neutral – The proposals would maintain the important habitats associated with the Site, setting the built form back from the well vegetated boundaries and areas of woodland. The main body of the Site, where the development would be focussed, is already developed. Areas of existing acid grassland would be conserved and extended within the central open space as part of the landscape scheme, extending the heathland character into the development and reinforcing the links with the surrounding landscape.
<i>Distinctive long straight historic roads following the route of rides through the former Royal Forest of Windsor which provide a cultural record of the past as well as allowing views into a landscape well enclosed by trees.</i>	Neutral – The proposals are set back from Nine Mile Ride and would not be evident from the road corridor. There are no “rides” crossing the Site that would be affected by the proposed development.
<i>The locally listed historic park at Ravenswood, one of only four medieval deer parks in the district.</i>	Neutral – The proposals are well separated from the parkland at Ravenswood
<i>Settlement pattern of low density post-war properties in large plots along long straight rides and notably the occasional wooded gaps between areas of settlement. Integration of development in the wooded</i>	Neutral – As noted by the published assessment, this is a settled landscape. While the Site is currently associated with employment uses, residential development extends to the south, with other pockets of residential development set amongst the woodland present within the localised landscape setting of the Site. As illustrated by the visual assessment, the

<i>landscape and absence of commercial, industrial buildings / large or tall built structures.</i>	main body of the Site is not evident from the wider public realm, ensuring that the extent to which the proposals would be perceived within this landscape is very limited. The proposals would not adversely affect the settled character of the LCA.
<i>Valued areas for recreation including tracts of open access land and the extensive network of bridleways and public footpaths which allow enjoyment of the landscape.</i>	Minor Beneficial – As illustrated by the Site Location Plan, there is a very sparse network of public rights of way within the context of the Site. Furthermore, the existing employment uses associated with the Site ensures that it is not currently publicly accessible. The proposals would open up the Site, with the proposed SANG accessible from Nine Mile Ride, ensuring that accessibility within the localised landscape is enhanced. The proposals would also look to open up links through to the Pinewood Centre, immediately to the east, via the existing network of informal routes through the adjacent woodland.
<i>The continuous network of woodland and forestry which helps to provide physical and visual separation between settlements and to filter and screen views to the settlements within the area, as well as provide an attractive setting to housing.</i>	Neutral – As noted above, the well vegetated setting of the Site would ensure that the proposals could be integrated without detriment to the wider visual environment, with the woodland and treescape which wraps around the development containing views of the proposals from the wider public realm.
<i>Important vistas to the Wellingtonia Avenue (within LCA M2) which provides a sense of place.</i>	Neutral – The proposals are not located within any such vistas and are visually well separated from the public realm.
<i>Localised areas with a sense of tranquillity and even remoteness, removed from the roads and visual influence of settlement, which provide an escape in close proximity to the urban population.</i>	Neutral – Away from the developed parts of the Site, there is a sense of remoteness, particularly within the southern part of the Site. This would be conserved by the proposals. The proposed development would also be set back from the well vegetated boundaries, ensuring that the sense of remoteness experienced within the wider landscape is maintained.

4.2.5. As set out above in Tables 2 and 3, the proposals would conserve, and in some cases enhance, the characteristics and valued landscape attributes that define this LCA.

- 4.2.6. The published assessment sets out a series of landscape guidelines to inform development and ensure that the qualities of the “Finchampstead Forested & Settled Sands” are conserved. Table 4 sets out the various landscape guidelines and assesses the approach adopted by the proposals.

Table 4: Response of the proposals to the landscape management guidelines associated with the “Finchampstead Forested & Settled Sands”

Landscape management guidelines for the “Finchampstead Forested & Settled Sands” LCA as identified by the published assessment	Do the proposals comply?
<i>Conserve distinctive wooded skylines. Consider the impact of any development on skylines, particularly where it would have the potential to be highly visible from adjacent character areas. Develop sympathetic fell cycles to maintain positive character, particularly phased cycles along sensitive skylines to ensure that the wooded backdrop is maintained. Particular care should be taken in the siting of communication masts or other vertical elements, which have the potential to be highly visible in this elevated landscape.</i>	Yes – The proposals would be located within a well-wooded context, with the mature treescape creating a high degree of visual enclosure from the outset. The proposals would be lower than the existing office building associated with the Site, which does not break the skyline. The proposals would be set back from the boundaries of the Site to ensure that the mature treescape is conserved and enhanced as part of the development. The proposals would conserve the distinctive skylines of the LCA.
<i>Conserve and enhance the wooded character of the landscape. Increase the extent of BAP priority habitat lowland mixed deciduous woodland in the forested areas using locally occurring native species in order to create a more mixed woodland character. Retain open areas of heath, mire, lakes and pasture within the forested areas and existing views into these areas, especially from historic rides. Continue to promote appropriate management through natural regeneration, control of non-native</i>	Yes – The proposals would not affect any of the established woodland associated with the Site or its immediate setting. The proposals also seek to conserve existing areas of acid grassland within the Site, as well as extending the habitat as part of the proposed landscaping. The proposals would also establish a long term, comprehensive scheme of management for the retained and proposed habitats to ensure that these features are not only conserved but enhanced.

<i>species and coppicing as a management tool for neglected woodland.</i>	
<i>Conserve, enhance and manage heathland, grassland, and wetland habitats particularly BAP priority habitats, from development, changes in land use and encroachment by secondary woodland and scrub. An area of land centred around Gorrick Plantation, Queen's Mere and King's Mere is part of the Thames Basin Heaths BOA. This network of natural habitats, which extend into Bracknell Forest, has been identified as a target for habitat creation and restoration and positive management of heathland and bog habitats. An appropriate heathland management regime is critical.</i>	Yes – As noted above, the existing woodland, heath and acid grassland associated with the Site, which extends to the south and west of the development, would be conserved and enhanced by a comprehensive management regime.
<i>Enhance integration of recreation into the landscape, avoiding features which would lead to greater (sub) urbanisation of the rural character.</i>	Yes – The proposals would incorporate areas of formal equipped children's play and opportunities for informal recreation. The proposed play equipment would adopt more recessive, timber pieces to ensure that the proposals sit comfortably within the wooded setting and a sense of (sub) urbanisation is avoided.
<i>Enhance informal recreational enjoyment of the landscape but balance this with continued conservation of valuable landscapes, heritage assets and semi-natural habitats. Consider zoning of activities to ensure ecologically valuable or more sensitive elevated landscapes are protected from damaging activities and ensure appropriate management of informal recreation, particularly in relation to the Rights of Way network.</i>	Yes – The proposals would establish a SANG within the woodlands to the south and west of the development. A network of informal paths already exists within these areas, however, they are not publicly accessible. The proposals would create a new link off Nine Mile Ride, providing opportunities for informal recreation for both existing and new residents. The proposals would also establish links into the Pinewood Centre, to the east, and the network of informal paths through the wooded landscape that forms the setting of the centre.
<i>Conserve and enhance the integration of urban edges through wooded boundaries and large-</i>	Yes – As noted within Section 3 and within this assessment, the proposals would be set back from

<i>species trees and maintain the important vistas along rides. In particular protect the sensitive areas of open land adjacent to Arborfield Garrison in the western part of this area.</i>	the wooded edges of the Site ensuring that the well vegetated character of the Site and its setting is conserved. The proposals would incorporate new native tree planting to ensure that the sylvan character of the area is enhanced. The proposals would not affect any of the important vistas associated with this or neighbouring LCAs.
<i>Enhance sense of place through careful planning and design (including siting, massing, scale, materials and landscape – and sensitive lighting to retain dark skies at night) to minimise the impacts of any potential new development and particularly vertical elements on valuable attributes.</i>	Yes – The proposals would be located on a brownfield site which is already characterised by built form, hardstanding and lighting. The proposals would not give rise to the perception of development extending out into the wider landscape, beyond the existing extents, conserving and enhancing the well vegetated boundaries of the Site.
<i>Conserve the rural character between adjacent towns and village centres, to protect the individual identity of settlements, and retain their sense of physical and visual separation that helps define them. In particular protect the sensitive areas of open land remaining along the B3016 and the A321 between Finchampstead and Wokingham, retain blocks of woodland along the rides and rear of properties under threat from backland development.</i>	Yes – The proposals would conserve the areas of woodland that surround the Site and would not be evident from the wider public realm. The proposals would not compromise the sense of separation between Crowthorne and Bracknell. The proposals would reflect the settled character of the landscape, comprising a pocket of residential development, set within a mature wooded context.
<i>Consider undertaking character appraisals / village design statements of key settlements in Wokingham Borough e.g. Finchampstead to identify features worthy of conservation. Maintain the small scale, low density domestic character of settlement set within large plots avoiding greater densities of development or tall / large structures.</i>	Yes – The localised setting of the Site is characterised by more contemporary developments, which typically extend to the south of Nine Mile Ride. The proposals would not compromise the settlement character of the area or give rise to a sense of urbanisation of the LCA. The proposals would not introduce any new tall or large structures into the landscape.
<i>Use appropriate tree planting to help integrate roads in relation to proposed junction</i>	Yes – While the proposals would not require any junction improvements, they would include a

<i>improvements and the extension of Nine Mile Drive to the west of the character area. Encourage retention of wooded edges and boundaries along roads, while retaining existing views to open countryside and wooded ridges. Minimise fencing and other boundary structures.</i>	comprehensive scheme of landscaping to mitigate the loss of internal trees within the existing areas of hardstanding and employee amenity space. As set out within this assessment, the proposals have been carefully designed so as to retain the wooded edges to the Site. The Site is currently well-enclosed containing longer distance views out from the existing development. As demonstrated by the visual assessment, the proposals would not affect the wider receiving visual environment.
<i>Conserve and enhance historic features associated with the Royal Forest of Windsor including the medieval parkland at Ravenswood and the straight rides.</i>	Yes – The proposals are located well away from both the parkland at Ravenswood and the rides that characterise the wider LCA. The proposed development would not affect the historic character of the area.
<i>Reduce and prevent further noise and light pollution through the sensitive siting of any new development, especially any proposed night-time lighting.</i>	Yes – The Site is already lit, with lighting associated with the office building, all weather pitch and the car parks. While the proposals would seek to minimise lighting, any lighting required would adopt high quality, modern solutions with directional, cowled luminaires. It is considered that by adopting this sympathetic approach, the proposals could be integrated without detriment to the receiving night-time environment and this LCA.

4.2.7. As set out above, it is considered that not only would the proposals conserve, and in some cases enhance the key characteristics and valued landscape attributes associated with the LCA, they would also comply with the landscape management guidelines. While the proposals would change the character of the Site, it is already developed and represents a brownfield site. The well enclosed character of the LCA is reflected in the Sites setting, ensuring that views of the proposals from the wider public realm would be contained from Day One throughout the year. It is considered that the change of use could be integrated without detriment to the character and special qualities of the LCA and, given the sensitive approach to the design of the proposals, it is concluded that the proposed development would be compatible with the receiving landscape and would result in an effect of Neutral significance upon the “Finchampstead Forested & Settled Sands” LCA.

Site-specific Landscape Character Assessment

- 4.2.8. As set out within Section 2 of this LVIA, a more focussed assessment has also been undertaken looking at the localised landscape character of the site and its setting, and this has been informed by the published assessments prepared by Natural England and Wokingham Borough Council. The assessment within Section 2 concludes that, given the settled nature of the Site and its immediate setting, together with the high level of enclosure, the overall sensitivity of the landscape receptor in which the site is set is Medium.
- 4.2.9. As set out above, it is acknowledged that the proposals would represent a change of use within the context of the Site, however, this is a developed, brownfield site and, as such, the proposals would not represent a significant change to the character. The proposals would introduce high quality residential built form into the wooded context of the Site. The proposals would not result in the loss of any pasture, heathland or established woodland. As illustrated on Figure 1, the Site has been subject to various developments over the past 100+ years. The proposals would reflect the settled character of the area, comprising a pocket of residential development within a sylvan context. The proposals would not break the wooded skyline or give rise to the perception of the settlement extending north, out into the more open rural landscape.
- 4.2.10. It is acknowledged that the proposals would result in a degree of tree loss, however, the proposed development would be set back from the well vegetated boundaries ensuring that the key areas of woodland and treescape are not affected. As set out within the Ruskins Arboricultural Impact Assessment, the tree loss would primarily be internal to the Site and would mainly comprise younger, lower quality trees. Some key mature trees would be retained as part of the proposals and would extend the mature wooded character into and through the development. The proposals would also include a comprehensive scheme of landscaping which would mitigate for the losses. The proposed species would be informed by the surrounding woodland, with sweet chestnut, oak, birch and Scots pine all characteristic of this area.
- 4.2.11. As identified by the visual assessment, the proposals would not be evident from the wider public realm, ensuring that the development of the Site could be integrated without detriment to the receiving visual environment. Furthermore, as outlined above, in relation to the published assessments, the proposals present a significant opportunity to deliver high quality, publicly accessible, informal greenspace. At present, the Site is not publicly accessible but there is a network of informal footpaths through the woodland within the southern and western parts of the Site, associated with the former medical uses and subsequently as amenity space for employees. The proposals would establish a new link onto Nine Mile Ride, allowing the public to access the woodland, with a further link established to the east, into the Pinewood Centre. It

is considered that the informal open space provision would represent a positive addition to the Site and localised community, enhancing connectivity and access to greenspace.

4.2.12. The proposals would represent a change in character to the Site, changing it from an employment use to residential, however, as noted above, this is a settled landscape characterised by pockets of development nestled within the woodland. The proposals would conserve the wooded character and as the proposed planting matures, the sylvan character would be enhanced. The proposals would not be evident from the wider public realm, ensuring that any perception of change is limited to within the Site itself, which is not currently publicly accessible. It is considered that the additional built form and initial tree loss would result in some highly localised, low level harm. However, the proposals would conserve the key landscape features of the Site and would ensure that the enclosed character of the Site and its landscape setting is protected. Overall, it is considered that the proposals would result in a low magnitude of change upon the Site and its setting, resulting in a Minor Adverse effect at Year 1. However, as the proposed planting matures, reinforcing the sylvan character, and the public open spaces establish to create a positive addition to the localised setting, it is concluded that the adverse effects would be mitigated so that by Year 15, the proposals would represent a Negligible Beneficial effect upon the receiving landscape character.

4.2.13. In conclusion, the proposals would conserve the key characteristics and valued landscape attributes that define the landscape setting of the Site, as identified by the various published assessments. The proposals adopt a sympathetic and high quality approach to the layout and would include a comprehensive scheme of landscaping which contributes positively to landscape character and biodiversity. The proposals would also include significant enhancements to connectivity, establishing publicly accessible greenspace, while also linking through to Nine Mile Ride and the Pinewood Centre. It is concluded that the proposals can be integrated in this location without any long term, notable adverse effects upon the “Thames Basin Heaths” NCA, “Finchampstead Forested & Settled Sands” LCA” or immediate landscape setting. Indeed, the proposals present opportunities for localised benefits as the landscaping and greenspaces mature and establish.

4.3. Effect upon the Visual Environment

4.3.1. Table 5, below, assesses the effect of the proposed development upon the identified representative views which are included within Appendix 5.

Table 5: Assessment of Visual Effects

Viewpoint	Location	Sensitivity	Magnitude	Significance
1	Nine Mile Ride, immediately to the south of the Site	Medium	No Change	Neutral
Assessment: The entrance to the Site is already characterised by formal planting and an appropriate junction onto Nine Mile Ride. The access off the main road would not require any changes ensuring that the woodland and sylvan entrance to the Site is maintained. Some of the laurel hedge, adjacent to the access road would need to be cut back to enable the emergency access into the Site, however, this would not adversely affect the vegetated backdrop to the view. The removal of the security fencing, which is set back from the road frontage is considered positive, but is not prominent so would not make a marked difference to the view. The dense woodland beyond the southern boundary of the Site ensures that, even during the winter, the proposals would be visually contained from the public realm to the south.				
2	Informal, unadopted footpath within the woodland associated with Pinewood Centre, immediately to the east of the site access	Medium	Negligible	Minor Adverse at Year 1
				Negligible Adverse at Year 15
Assessment: From this location the south easternmost proposed properties would be visible beyond the retained treescape on the eastern boundary. The existing access road would be retained and the proposals set back from the eastern boundary beyond this feature. Sympathetic landscaping of the front gardens, together with additional tree planting along the access road, would create a softened edge to the built form and reinforce the vegetated setting of the Site. As this planting matures it would reinforce the landscaped context of the Site and further integrate the proposed development. The nature of this viewpoint must also be acknowledged. This is not an adopted public right of way, rather it is an informal path through the trees, accessed via the Pinewood Centre. Furthermore, receptors of this view are already aware of the existing developed nature of the site beyond the security fencing, characterised by car parking, the all weather pitch and the large office building. This is not a greenfield site. The presence of the mature treescape in both the foreground and the backdrop assimilates the existing development and this would be the same for the proposals.				

3	Informal, unadopted footpath within the woodland associated with Pinewood Centre, to the east of the all-weather sports pitch within the Site	Medium	Negligible	Negligible Adverse at Year 1
				Neutral at Year 15
Assessment: Similar to Viewpoint 2, the proposals would be visible from this location but would be set back from the eastern boundary, and this viewpoint, beyond the retained access road. Again, the receptor is already aware of the developed nature of the site beyond the security fencing, with the large office building forming the backdrop to the view, so the change is not considered significant. The proposals would also look to establish a link through to the Pinewood Centre, utilising this existing pathway, which would result in the removal of the security gate in the foreground of the view, enhancing connectivity both physically and visually. Furthermore, the proposals would incorporate a framed view through to the central greenspace and the retained Sweet Chestnut. The woodland to the west of the Site would form a backdrop to the view, with the treescape defining the skyline and assimilating the residential built form. The proposals include a comprehensive scheme of landscaping, which would include street trees and on-plot planting. As this matures it would reinforce the well-vegetated setting of the Site and also soften the perceived built form.				
4	Informal, unadopted footpath within the woodland associated with Pinewood Centre, immediately to the east of the ancillary buildings that are located towards the north eastern corner of the Site	Medium	Low	Minor Beneficial
Assessment: This viewpoint would experience a positive change as a result of the development of the Site, with the ancillary buildings removed, opening up the view of the woodland edge. While the proposals would be visible from this location, they would be set back over 20m from this viewpoint, ensuring that they do not appear prominent or overbearing. The removal of the built elements in the foreground of the view presents an opportunity to introduce some appropriate, native woodland edge planting to ensure a sympathetic transition between the woodland to the east and the proposed built form is achieved.				

5	Informal, unadopted footpath adjacent to the allotments at the Pinewood Centre, approximately 170m to the east of the Site	Medium	No Change	Neutral
<i>Assessment:</i> From this location, the proposals would be screened by the intervening treescape of the woodland associated with the Pinewood Centre, that lies to the east of the Site. The dense nature of the intervening vegetation would ensure that views remain screened, even during the winter. The scale of the trees also ensures that the proposals would not break the vegetated skyline, ensuring that the backdrop to the view remains unchanged.				
6	Car park of the Pinewood Centre, approximately 240m to the east of the Site	Medium	No Change	Neutral
<i>Assessment:</i> As with Viewpoint 5, the depth of the intervening woodland would ensure that views of the proposals are contained throughout the year. The proposals would not break the vegetated skyline or affect the setting of the Pinewood Centre.				
7	Easthampstead Road, approximately 560m to the north east of the Site	Medium	No Change	Neutral
<i>Assessment:</i> The intervening treescape to the north of the Site and the Pinewood Centre would contain views of the proposals from Day One. The depth of the intervening treescape would ensure that even during the winter, views of the proposals would remain screened.				
8	Footpath WOKW8, approximately 585m to the north of the Site	High	No Change	Neutral
<i>Assessment:</i> The intervening treescape associated with the local watercourse, together with the mature trees along the northern boundary of the Site would contain views of the proposals. The proposed development is set back from the northern boundary, ensuring that the existing treescape can be retained and reinforced as part of the proposals. The proposals would not break the vegetated skyline, ensuring that the wooded backdrop to the pasture, and sense of separation from the wider urban areas, is conserved.				

9	Honey Hill, approximately 320m to the west of the Site	Medium	No Change	Neutral
<i>Assessment:</i> The intervening treescape associated with field boundaries and the woodland within the western part of the Site would contain views of the proposals from Day One. The dense nature of the canopy structures, together with the presence of evergreen species would ensure that the visual containment is maintained throughout the year. The proposals are lower than the existing office building and, as such, would not break the vegetated skyline created by the wooded backdrop. The proposed development would not affect views out across the pasture that lies between Honey Hill and the Site.				

- 4.3.2. As an overview, the visual assessment illustrates the high degree of enclosure that characterises the landscape setting of the Site. The limited public access within the surrounding landscape also reduces opportunities for views into and across the Site. Such views are limited to the informal network of footpaths through the woodland associated with the Pinewood Centre, immediately to the east of the Site where paths abut the eastern boundary. Within the context of these views, the proposals would be glimpsed through the intervening treescape, but would be set back from the eastern boundary ensuring that they do not appear prominent or overbearing. The Site, and setting of these routes, is already characterised by development with the office and ancillary buildings, hardstanding, all weather pitch and lighting evident within views from the edge of the Pinewood Centre woodland. The proposals would also present opportunities to enhance the transition between the woodland and development with new native planting extending along the eastern boundary. As this planting matures, the already filtered views would further soften. These views would experience some low level adverse effects following completion of the development, however, these perceived effects would lessen over time and it is concluded that the proposals would result in a Negligible Adverse / Neutral effect upon views from the informal network of paths immediately to the east. Indeed, where the proposals remove ancillary buildings and fencing adjacent to the paths, the proposed development would represent a degree of betterment to the localised visual environment.
- 4.3.3. From the wider setting, the depth and stature of the treescape that surrounds the Site would contain views of the proposals from the public realm from Day One. The dense nature of the canopy structures would ensure that views remain screened even during the winter. The height of the trees also ensures that the proposals would not break the characteristic vegetated skyline. At present the 16m tall office building is not visible. The proposals would be lower than this ensuring that the sense of visual containment between the developed Site and the wider setting is conserved.

- 4.3.4. Similarly, the depth of the surrounding woodland would also ensure that no residential receptors are affected. While there are properties on Nine Mile Ride immediately to the south of the Site, as illustrated by Viewpoint 1, there are no views from this location into the main body of the Site. There are also several scattered properties immediately to the west, set within mature landscaped plots. Again, the well-vegetated setting of the Site would ensure that intervisibility between these properties and the main body of the Site is maintained.
- 4.3.5. In terms of lighting, there is already a degree of lighting associated with the Site within the car park and amenity spaces. As such, the proposals would not be introduced into a dark landscape. The proposals would introduce a sensitive scheme of landscaping, adopting modern, directional, cowled solutions that would minimise vertical light spill and impacts on the surrounding woodland. From a visual perspective, receptors are unlikely to be walking within the woodland to the east of the Site, associated with the Pinewood Centre, at night, and the surrounding treescape would contain views from the wider public realm. Overall, it is considered that the proposals could be integrated without detriment to the night-time visual environment.
- 4.3.6. It is concluded that the proposals could be integrated without any notable adverse visual effects.

4.4. Effect upon Landscape Related Policy

- 4.4.1. In terms of the effect upon national and local landscape related policy, the site and its setting are not covered by any qualitative landscape designations within the Adopted Local Plan.
- 4.4.2. It is noted that the currently undeveloped parts of the Site are washed over by the “Forest & Rides” valued landscape within the Emerging Local Plan. While this designation is currently of limited weight at most, given it is yet to be examined by the planning inspectorate at the time of writing, it is considered appropriate to assess the proposed development against the requirements of the associated draft policy to demonstrate that the proposals could be integrated without detriment to the valued landscape should it be adopted.
- 4.4.3. Policy NE6 within the Emerging Local Plan relates to valued landscapes and states:

“Development proposals located within or affecting a valued landscape should 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.

Development proposals affecting Valued Landscapes 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.”

- 4.4.4. While the Valued Landscapes Assessment (2024) does not set out a specific series of special qualities or characteristics that define the “Forest & Rides” valued landscape, it does draw on the published landscape character assessment and the valuable landscape attributes associated with the various LCAs that are washed over by the draft designation.
- 4.4.5. Table 6 assesses the proposals against the criteria outlined above in draft Policy NE6 and the attributes associated with the “Finchampstead Forested & Settled Sands” LCA M1 as identified within the Council’s Valued Landscapes Assessment.

Table 6: Effect on Published Landscape Characteristics

Criteria associated with the assignment of landscape value, as set out within draft Policy NE6	Effect of the Proposals
<i>Landscape quality (condition)</i>	Neutral – The published assessment notes that LCA M1 is overall in good condition with a distinctive pattern of built and natural elements. The assessment notes that the LCA has a suburban character but does has a strong sense of place as a result of the interconnected woodland. The proposals would maintain the wooded character of the Site and its setting and would occupy a Site already characterised by development. This is not a greenfield site and the proposals would reflect the settled character of this landscape, characterised by pockets of development set within the wider woodland.
<i>Scenic quality</i>	Neutral – The proposals would not affect any vistas or rides through the LCA and would conserve the well wooded character of

	the landscape to ensure that the proposals are integrated without detriment to the character or appearance of the area.
<i>Rarity</i>	Neutral – There are no rides associated with the Site or that would be affected by the proposals. As set out in Table 3, the proposals could be integrated without detriment to the identified valued attributes of the LCA which characterises this part of the valued landscape. The proposals would conserve the perception of the elevated, wooded plateau and would not affect the rarity of the “Forest & Rides”.
<i>Representativeness</i>	Neutral – As above, the proposals would not affect any of the historic rides that characterise this landscape, nor would they affect the remnant medieval parkland at Ravenswood. The proposals would occupy a developed parcel of land, which is already characterised by hardstanding, vehicle movements and lighting. As such, the proposed development would not adversely affect the perceived tranquillity of the landscape.
<i>Conservation interests</i>	Minor Beneficial – The proposals would retain the areas of established woodland and a number of mature trees that relate back to the Sites previous uses. The proposals would also seek to retain, and extend, areas of acid grassland within the development. In addition, the proposed development would establish a long term, comprehensive management regime of the existing and proposed habitats associated with the Site. While there are no heritage assets associated with the Site, it does have some recent historic interest associated with the sanatorium and the role that it played during the World Wars and period after, as referred to within the Council’s assessment under “Associations”. The Site already benefits from a series of interpretation boards along the woodland walk which provide background on the Sites history. As noted within this assessment, the network of paths are not publicly accessible, however, the proposals would open this area up to the public as part of the SANG enabling an appreciation of the Sites history by the local community.

<i>Recreation value</i>	Moderate / Minor Beneficial – While the published assessment identifies that the landscape has good accessibility, as illustrated on the Site Location Plan that accompanies this LVIA, there is limited public access within the immediate setting of the Site, with no public access into the existing woodlands associated with the Site. The proposals present a significant opportunity to enhance connectivity and the public's ability to access the wooded landscape, through creation of new links onto Nine Mile Ride and to the Pinewood Centre.
<i>Perceptual aspects</i>	Neutral – The proposals would not adversely affect the perceived tranquillity of the landscape. As noted above, the Site is already characterised by employment development, with associated built form, hardstanding, traffic movements and lighting. The proposals would not compromise the sense of remoteness within the wooded areas that characterise the wider LCA.
<i>Associations</i>	Neutral – As noted above, the Site is not subject to any heritage designations but does have some historic value given the uses during the first half of the 20 th century, as identified within the Council's assessment. As identified, the proposals would make the Site publicly accessible ensuring that the public can visit and appreciate the pine woodlands, with interpretation boards providing an educational resource.

4.4.6. As set out in Table 6, it is considered that the proposals could be integrated without detriment to those attributes that the Council have identified as making this a valued landscape. Indeed, the proposed development of the Site presents opportunities for enhancements in terms of ecology and recreation through the establishment of an appropriate, long term management regime of the woodland and heathland as well as making the existing network of paths through the woodland associated with the Site publicly accessible. The designation does not preclude development, but expects it to pay regard to the receiving landscape, while conserving, and where possible, enhancing the valued attributes of the area. As such, it is considered that the proposals would comply with draft Policy NE6, protecting and in some cases enhancing the valued attributes of the "Forest & Rides" valued landscape. It is also concluded that the proposals would comply with Para 187a of the NPPF.

- 4.4.7. Para 187b of the NPPF requires development to recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. As set out within this assessment, it is considered that the proposals can be integrated without long term adverse effects upon those landscape receptors which characterise the site and its wider landscape setting. It is concluded that the proposals will not harm the intrinsic character or beauty of the countryside in which the site is set.
- 4.4.8. In terms of local landscape related planning policies, Policy CC03 of the Adopted Managing Delivery Document relates to green infrastructure, trees and landscaping. The proposals would not affect any Green Routes or Green Route Enhancement Areas, being set well back from Nine Mile Ride, with the existing junction addressing the required capacity for traffic movements, ensuring that no further works are required to the road corridor.
- 4.4.9. Under part 2 of the policy, a number of criteria are identified which development proposals should consider and achieve. Table 7 assesses the proposals in accordance with these criteria below.

Table 7: Appraisal of the proposed development against the criteria set out within Policy CC03

Policy CC03 Part 2 Criteria		Do the proposals comply?
A	<i>Provide new or protect and enhance the Borough's Green Infrastructure networks, including the need to mitigate potential impacts of new development</i>	Yes – The proposals would include a comprehensive scheme of landscaping which would not only enhance the setting of the proposed dwellings but also contribute positively to the wooded setting of the Site.
B	<i>Promote accessibility, linkages and permeability between and within existing green corridors including public rights of way such as footpaths, cycleways and bridleways</i>	Yes – The proposals would open up the existing woodland walks to the public, creating new links onto Nine Mile Ride and into the neighbouring Pinewood Centre.
C	<i>Promote the integration of the scheme with any adjoining public open space or countryside</i>	Yes – As noted above, the proposals would include the creation of new publicly accessible links between Nine Mile Ride and the Pinewood Centre, enhancing the public's ability to enjoy the landscape setting of the Site.
D	<i>Protect and retain existing trees, hedges and other landscape features</i>	Yes – As identified within the Ruskins Arboricultural Impact Assessment, the proposals

		have been carefully developed to avoid adversely affecting the key treescape associated with the Site. While the proposals would result in the loss of some internal treescape, they would not affect the established woodlands and the proposed losses can be mitigated by new native tree planting across the development to ensure that the sylvan character is maintained and enhanced.
<i>E</i>	<i>Incorporate high quality, ideally, native planting and landscaping as an integral part of the scheme</i>	Yes - As noted above, the proposed development would incorporate a comprehensive scheme of landscaping which would be informed by the receiving landscape character, and would include large canopy native trees, woodland edge and heathland planting.

- 4.4.10. Part 3 of the policy requires the protection of areas of green infrastructure. As set out within this assessment, the proposals would conserve and enhance the areas of woodland associated with the Site and would incorporate a comprehensive scheme of landscaping to ensure that any tree losses within the development parcel are adequately mitigated. It is concluded that the proposals comply with Policy CC03.
- 4.4.11. Policy TB21 of the Adopted Managing Delivery Document relates to landscape character. As set out within section 4.2 and Tables 2 and 3 of this LVIA, the proposals have been informed by the Council's Landscape Character Assessment and would retain, and in some cases enhance, the condition, character and features that contribute to the "Finchampstead Forested & Settled Sands" LCA. It is concluded that the proposals comply with Policy TB21.
- 4.4.12. National and local policy seek to achieve high quality and sustainable development. It is considered that the proposals comply with the aims and objectives set out within the national and local planning policy framework from a landscape and visual perspective.

5. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1. Align Landscape Planning are instructed by Dandara Southern Limited & Legal and General Assurance (Pensions Management) Limited to assess the landscape and visual implications arising from the proposed development of up to 136 dwellings at Pinewood Campus, Nine Mile Ride, Crowthorne ('the Site').
- 5.2. The Site comprises the current Johnson & Johnson headquarters at Pinewood Campus, which extends to the north of Nine Mile Ride, on the northern edge of the settlement of Crowthorne. Residential areas extend to the south of Nine Mile Ride, defining the wider settlement. The Pinewood Centre lies to the east of the Site and comprises a number of buildings occupied by a variety of users and local community clubs. In addition, there are football pitches, allotments and a miniature railway. To the west of the Site lie several detached residential properties, set within mature, wooded plots. An irregularly shaped network of fields extends to the north of the Site. The fields are typically used for grazing, comprising areas of improved grassland. The fields are broken up by blocks of woodland and mature tree planting which follows watercourses and drains, creating a distinctly compartmentalised landscape and a high degree of visual containment.
- 5.3. The Site currently comprises a large, contemporary office building which is approximately 16m high. The building is glazed to all elevations. Car parking extends to the north east and east of the building, comprising areas of hardstanding, broken up by loose lines of trees and areas of ornamental shrub planting. Areas of open air amenity space lie near to the building, with an all weather sports pitch located to the east.
- 5.4. The development is surrounded by woodland to the east, south and west, with a belt of mature trees separating the Site from the pastoral landscape to the north. The existing development is set well back from Nine Mile Ride, with the intervening mature woodland, associated with the Site, containing views from the public realm from the south. The woodland associated with the landholding also extends to the west of the development. A network of informal footpaths have been created by the landowners through the woodland for the use of employees as part of the wider amenity space associated with the development. The woodland to the east of the Site is associated with the Pinewood Centre and is currently not directly accessible from the Site.
- 5.5. The Site lies within the "Thames Basin Heaths" NCA and, at a more local level, the "Finchampstead Forested & Settled Sands" LCA as identified by the Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment.

- 5.6. The visual assessment identifies that views of the Site are limited to the informal network of paths immediately to the east within the Pinewood Centre. The wooded setting of the Site ensures that views from the wider public realm are contained.

Effect upon Landscape Character

- 5.7. As set out above in Tables 2 and 3 (within Section 4.2 of this LVIA), the proposals would conserve, and in some cases enhance, the characteristics and valued landscape attributes that define the “Finchampstead Forested & Settled Sands” LCA. The assessment goes on to identify that the proposals would also comply with the landscape management guidelines set out within the Council’s landscape character assessment (refer Table 4).
- 5.8. It is acknowledged that the proposals would represent a change of use within the context of the Site, however, this is a developed, brownfield site and, as such, the proposals would not represent a significant change to the character. The proposals would introduce high quality residential scale built form into the wooded context of the Site. The proposals would not result in the loss of any pasture, heathland or established woodland. As illustrated on Figure 1, the Site has been subject to various developments over the past 100+ years. The proposals would reflect the settled character of the area, comprising a pocket of residential development within a sylvan context. The proposals would not break the wooded skyline or give rise to the perception of the settlement extending north, out into the more open rural landscape.
- 5.9. It is acknowledged that the proposals would result in a degree of tree loss, however, the proposed development would be set back from the well vegetated boundaries ensuring that the key areas of woodland and treescape are not affected. As set out within the Ruskins Arboricultural Impact Assessment, the tree loss would primarily be internal to the Site and would mainly comprise younger, lower quality trees. Some key mature trees would be retained as part of the proposals and would extend the mature wooded character into and through the development. The proposals would also include a comprehensive scheme of landscaping which would mitigate for the losses. The proposed species would be informed by the surrounding woodland, with sweet chestnut, oak, birch and Scots pine all characteristic of this area.
- 5.10. As identified by the visual assessment, the proposals would not be evident from the wider public realm, ensuring that the development of the Site could be integrated without detriment to the receiving visual environment. Furthermore, as outlined above, in relation to the published assessments, the proposals present a significant opportunity to deliver high quality, publicly accessible, informal greenspace. At present, the Site is not publicly accessible but there is a network of informal footpaths through the woodland within the southern and western parts of the Site, associated with the former medical uses and subsequently as amenity space for employees. The

proposals would establish a new link onto Nine Mile Ride, allowing the public to access the woodland, with a further link established to the east, into the Pinewood Centre. It is considered that the informal open space provision would represent a positive addition to the Site and localised community, enhancing connectivity and access to greenspace.

- 5.11. The proposals would represent a change in character to the Site, changing it from an employment use to residential, however, as noted above, this is a settled landscape characterised by pockets of development nestled within the woodland. The proposals would conserve the wooded character and as the proposed planting matures, the sylvan character would be enhanced. The proposals would not be evident from the wider public realm, ensuring that any perception of change is limited to within the Site itself, which is not currently publicly accessible. It is considered that the additional built form and initial tree loss would result in some highly localised, low level harm. However, the proposals would conserve the key landscape features of the Site and would ensure that the enclosed character of the Site and its landscape setting is protected. Overall, it is considered that the proposals would result in a low magnitude of change upon the Site and its setting, resulting in a Minor Adverse effect at Year 1. However, as the proposed planting matures, reinforcing the sylvan character, and the public open spaces establish to create a positive addition to the localised setting, it is concluded that the adverse effects would be mitigated so that by Year 15, the proposals would represent a Negligible Beneficial effect upon the receiving landscape character.
- 5.12. In conclusion, the proposals would conserve the key characteristics and valued landscape attributes that define the landscape setting of the Site, as identified by the various published assessments. The proposals adopt a sympathetic and high quality approach to the layout and would include a comprehensive scheme of landscaping which contributes positively to landscape character and biodiversity. The proposals would also include significant enhancements to connectivity, establishing publicly accessible greenspace, while also linking through to Nine Mile Ride and the Pinewood Centre. It is concluded that the proposals can be integrated in this location without any long term, notable adverse effects upon the “Thames Basin Heaths” NCA, “Finchampstead Forested & Settled Sands” LCA” or immediate landscape setting. Indeed, the proposals present opportunities for localised benefits as the landscaping and greenspaces mature and establish.

Effect upon the Visual Environment

- 5.13. The visual assessment illustrates the high degree of enclosure that characterises the landscape setting of the Site. The limited public access within the surrounding landscape also reduces opportunities for views into and across the Site. Such views are limited to the informal network of footpaths through the woodland associated with the Pinewood Centre, immediately to the east of the Site where paths abut the eastern boundary. Within the context of these views, the proposals would be glimpsed through the intervening treescape, but would be set back from the eastern

boundary ensuring that they do not appear prominent or overbearing. The Site, and setting of these routes, is already characterised by development with the office and ancillary buildings, hardstanding, all weather pitch and lighting evident within views from the edge of the Pinewood Centre woodland. The proposals would also present opportunities to enhance the transition between the woodland and development with new native planting extending along the eastern boundary. As this planting matures, the already filtered views would further soften. These views would experience some low level adverse effects following completion of the development, however, these perceived effects would lessen over time and it is concluded that the proposals would result in a Negligible Adverse / Neutral effect upon views from the informal network of paths immediately to the east. Indeed, where the proposals remove ancillary buildings and fencing adjacent to the paths, the proposed development would represent a degree of betterment to the localised visual environment.

- 5.14. From the wider setting, the depth and stature of the treescape that surrounds the Site would contain views of the proposals from the public realm from Day One. The dense nature of the canopy structures would ensure that views remain screened even during the winter. The height of the trees also ensures that the proposals would not break the characteristic vegetated skyline. At present the 16m tall office building is not visible. The proposals would be lower than this ensuring that the sense of visual containment between the developed Site and the wider setting is conserved.
- 5.15. Similarly, the depth of the surrounding woodland would also ensure that no residential receptors are affected. While there are properties on Nine Mile Ride immediately to the south of the Site, as illustrated by Viewpoint 1, there are no views from this location into the main body of the Site. There are also several scattered properties immediately to the west, set within mature landscaped plots. Again, the well-vegetated setting of the Site would ensure that intervisibility between these properties and the main body of the Site is maintained.
- 5.16. In terms of lighting, there is already a degree of lighting associated with the Site within the car park and amenity spaces. As such, the proposals would not be introduced into a dark landscape. The proposals would introduce a sensitive scheme of landscaping, adopting modern, directional, cowed solutions that would minimise vertical light spill and impacts on the surrounding woodland. From a visual perspective, receptors are unlikely to be walking within the woodland to the east of the Site, associated with the Pinewood Centre, at night, and the surrounding treescape would contain views from the wider public realm. Overall, it is considered that the proposals could be integrated without detriment to the night-time visual environment.
- 5.17. It is concluded that the proposals could be integrated without any notable adverse visual effects.

Effect upon Landscape Related Policy

- 5.18. In terms of the effect upon national and local landscape related policy, the site and its setting are not covered by any qualitative landscape designations within the Adopted Local Plan.
- 5.19. It is acknowledged that part of the Site lies within the “Forest & Rides” valued landscape within the Emerging Local Plan and, while this designation is currently afforded limited weight, as set out within this assessment, it is considered that the proposals could be integrated without detriment to any of the valuable attributes that define this valued landscape. It is concluded that the proposals would protect and could be integrated with the special features, characteristics and qualities of the “Forest & Rides” valued landscape and, as such, would comply with the emerging policy NE6.
- 5.20. National and local policy seek to achieve high quality and sustainable development. It is considered that the proposals comply with the aims and objectives set out within the national and local planning policy framework from a landscape and visual perspective.

Conclusion

- 5.21. In conclusion, as set out within this assessment, it is considered that the proposals can be integrated in this location without long term adverse effects upon the receiving landscape character and visual environment. It is concluded that the proposals are supportable from a landscape and visual perspective.

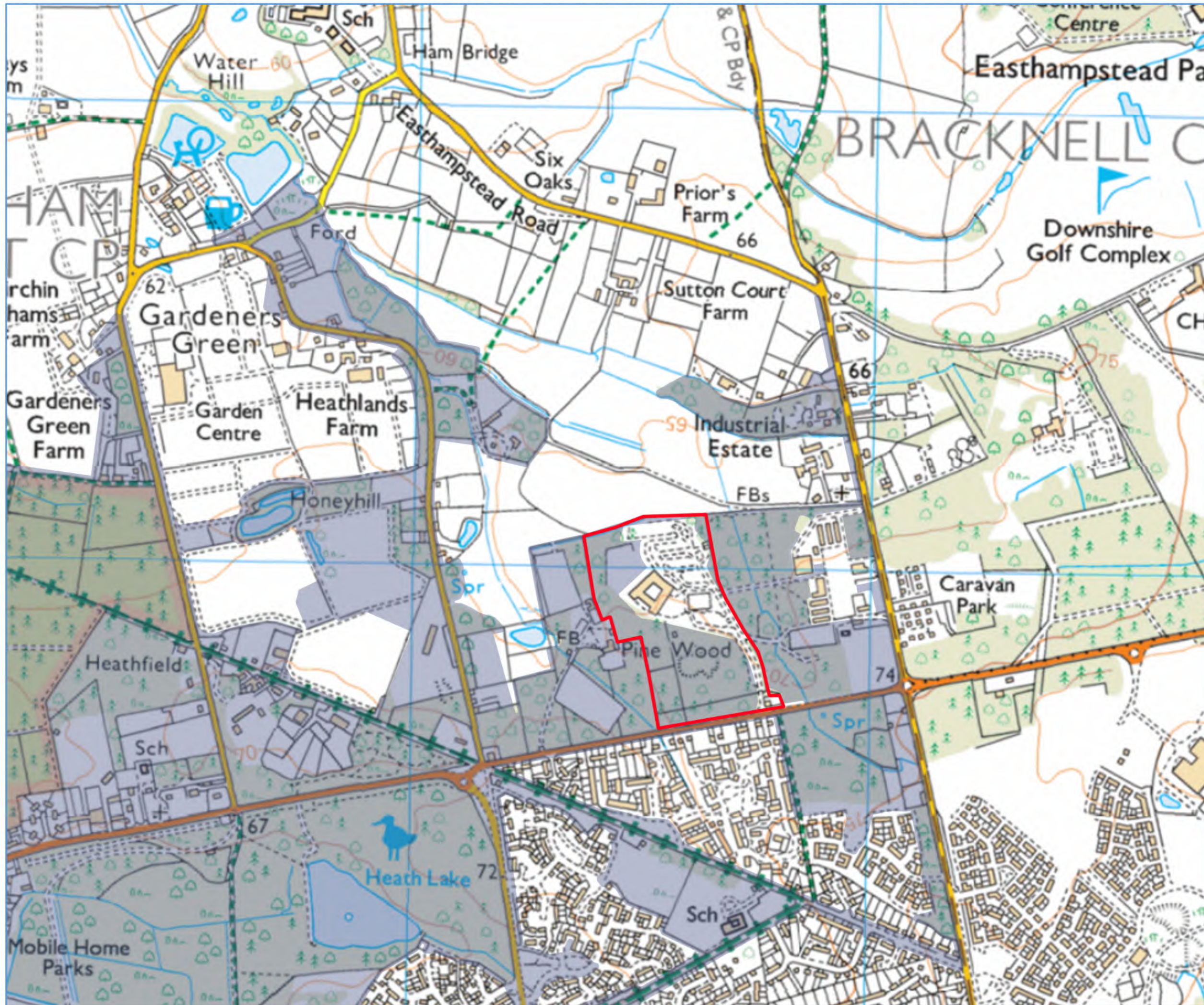
PLANS

Not to Scale



Key

-  Site Boundary
-  'Forest & Rides' draft Valued Landscape



Pinewood Campus,
Wokingham

Site Location Plan

Drawing Ref: Pr-1158.SLP.001 Rev. -
Date: September 2025 Drawn: AM



Drawing notes: Image supplied by Ordnance Survey & Google Maps
Accessed September 2025

Not to Scale



Key

 Site Boundary

Pinewood Campus,
Wokingham

Site Context Plan

Drawing Ref: Pr-1158.SCP.002 Rev. -
Date: September 2025

Drawn: AM

Central green open space - The green space extends the landscaped setting of the Site into and through the development and forms the green heart of the proposals.

The retained mature trees anchor the open space, forming prominent landscape features which draw people through the space. The retained trees create an immediate, landscaped setting for the open space and wider development. The retained Sweet Chestnut forms a focal point in approaches from the east and south.

The open space adopts a naturalised character, with loose tree planting set within species-rich grassland. Swales not only introduce further opportunities for biodiversity enhancements, but also topographic variation and informal play.

The open space would provide opportunities for informal recreation, formal children's play and more naturalised, play on the way features. A meandering path extends through the open space, connecting with the network of routes within the wider wooded setting.

Framed views - built form adopts a degree of symmetry to frame views out from the central public open space towards the wooded northern boundary.



Suggested Species Palette

Native Shrubs	Trees
Calluna vulgaris	Acer campestre
Cornus sanguinea	Araucaria araucana
Corylus avellana	Betula pendula
Crataegus monogyna	Betula utilis 'Jacquemontii'
Cytisus scoparius	Carpinus betulus
Ilex aquifolium	Carpinus betulus 'Frans Fontaine'
Ligustrum vulgare	Castanea sativa
Prunus spinosa	Fagus sylvatica 'Purpurea'
Taxus baccata	Liquidambar styraciflua
Ulex europaeus	Malus sylvestris
	Pinus sylvestris
	Prunus amonogawa
	Prunus avium
	Prunus cerasifera 'Nigra'
	Quercus ilex
	Quercus robur
	Sorbus aucuparia

Proposed tree planting - Proposed planting will utilise native species of local provenance where it abuts the woodland edge. Some ornamental species incorporated within the development to create visual interest and assist with placemaking.

Overlooking of central open space - Proposed layout adopts positive outlook over central public open space, ensuring passive surveillance and an appropriate interface between public and private spaces.

Postive outward looking layout - Properties front onto the surrounding woodland ensuring that the development does not appear to be turning its back on the wider setting as well as creating a pleasant outlook for residents.

Native shrub planting - Proposed woodland edge type native shrub mixes create a degree of physical and visual separation between the proposed development and the SANG.

Vistas - Spaces aligned to maintain intervisibility with the surrounding woodland so that there is a clear relationship between the development and the adjoining treescape.

Enhanced relationship with the wooded setting - The proposals would not only retain the existing woodland walk but would also extend the network, creating additional, meandering paths through the mature treescape. New links between the development and the woodland walk would be created where the internal streets terminate at the wooded edge, maximising the ability of residents and the public to access the established green space.

Play opportunities - The central open space will form the green heart of the development and provide formal and informal play opportunities for children of all ages. Timber play equipment provides opportunities for structured play within a landscaped setting, while scattered features provide more informal, imaginative play opportunities. The play equipment would incorporate recessive, timber pieces from manufacturers such as Kompan. Within the SANG, play provision will comprise natural features such as logs, boulders and mounds.

Seating will be scattered through the open space for parents of children using the play spaces as well as people using the wider landscaped parkland.



Pine Wood

NINE MILE RIDE

Sensitive, landscape-led layout - The proposals seek to make the most of their unique, sylvan setting. Key trees within the Site would be retained and the proposed development set back from the surrounding, wooded edges.

The proposals would include a comprehensive scheme of planting which would extend the sylvan character into and through the development. Heathland style planting will complement the local character of the Sites setting as well as contributing positively to biodiversity.

Scale 1:750 @ A1

0m 6m 12m 30m

Based on McBains Architects 'Site Layout Plan' drawing no. PIN100360-MCB-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-0230 P01

Key

- Site Boundary
- Proposed Trees
- Proposed Native Shrub Mix
- Proposed Native Woodland Understorey Mix

- Proposed Native Thorny Mix
- Proposed Ornamental Shrub
- Proposed Hedges
- Retained Acid Grassland
- Proposed Acid Grassland

- Proposed Flowering Lawn Public Open Space
- Proposed SUDS / Wet Grassland
- Proposed Residential Lawns
- Proposed Sand Banks / Mounds as part of Acid Grassland restoration

- Proposed Playspace
- Proposed Central Open Space Paths - Buff Gravel
- Woodland / SANG Paths - Bark Chip or Hoggins to ensure recessive appearance

Pinewood Campus Wokingham

Landscape Strategy Plan

Drawing Ref: Pr-1158 LSP.004 Rev. D
Date: March 2026
Drawn: AM

APPENDIX 1

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Methodology

LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

1. BACKGROUND

1.1. This methodology, and the assessment to which it applies, has been prepared in accordance with the following guidance:

- Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third Edition – GLVIA3 (2013) - Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment;
- Notes and Clarifications on aspects of the 3rd Edition Guidelines on Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA3) – LITGN-2024-01, published by the Landscape Institute (August 2024);
- Photography and Photomontage in Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (Technical Guidance Note 06/19), published by the Landscape Institute (2019).

1.2. The purpose of this methodology is to set out a clear and transparent approach to the assessment of landscape character and visual effects, in line with guidance set out by GLVIA3.

1.3. When assessing character within an urban context, this methodology can be applied to Townscape Assessments and assessing how a proposed development could affect the elements that make up the townscape and its distinctive character.

2. THE LVIA PROCESS

2.1. The main stages of the LVIA process are outlined below. The process typically comprises:

Stage 1 - the baseline assessment;

Stage 2 - the description of the proposed development; and

Stage 3 - the assessment of effects.

2.2. This process seeks to provide a clear and transparent method that will assist in identifying the potential effects of a development on the receiving landscape and the visual environment.

Stage 1 - Baseline Study

- 2.3. The baseline assessment sets out the existing landscape character and visual environment conditions against which any future changes resulting from new development can be measured or predicted and assessed.

Landscape

1. The scope of the assessment is defined.
2. Landscape related planning policy, including any landscape designations, is identified and outlined.
3. The landscape baseline is established through an initial desk study, which includes an assessment of published regional and local Landscape Character Assessments, where available, and subsequently a site visit to identify the value and susceptibility of the landscape resource (receptor) to a change of the type proposed, at community, local, national or international levels, as appropriate.

Visual

1. The scope of the assessment is defined.
2. The visual baseline is identified as the extent of visual receptors within the study area, and establishes the number and sensitivity of the representative viewpoint and/or groups of people (receptors) within the study area whose views may be altered as a result of the proposals. The use of Zones of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) models can be a useful tool, assisting in identifying the theoretical visual extent of a proposal, where appropriate. However, it must be noted that these are not definitive, and do not replace viewing the site “in the field” as set out in GLVIA3, but can assist in scoping out those areas where topography will contain views of a development. Photographs from the key viewpoints are taken and presented in accordance with best practice guidance, illustrating the baseline situation.

Stage 2 - Description of the Development / Design Proposals

- 2.4. The baseline study will highlight opportunities and constraints for the integration of the proposals into the receiving environment. The various components of the proposals at

each phase of the development process, which will potentially give rise to effects on the landscape character and the visual environment, need to be identified. At this time, the proposals can be modified to ensure that further mitigation measures are incorporated into the design in response to the local landscape and visual environment.

Mitigation of landscape and visual effects

2.5. Paragraph 4.21 of GLVIA3 states that “*measures proposed to prevent / avoid, reduce and, where possible, offset or remedy (or compensate for) any significant adverse landscape and visual effects, should be described*”. In practice, such mitigation measures are generally considered to fall into three categories:

- Primary measures, developed through the iterative design process, which have become integrated or embedded into the project design;
- Standard construction and operational management practices for avoiding and reducing environmental effects;
- Secondary measures, designed to address any residual adverse effects remaining after primary measures and standard construction practices have been incorporated into the scheme.

Stage 3 - Description of Effects

2.6. The assessment should then identify the level of effect as a result of the different components of the proposals upon both landscape and visual receptors.

2.7. In order to assess the significance of the effect on the receiving environment, it is necessary to consider the **magnitude**, i.e. the degree of change, together with the **sensitivity** of the receptor.

2.8. The assessment will identify the type of effect experienced by the receptor, as set out in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Interpretation of Effects

Type of Effect	Interpretation
Direct	A direct effect will be one where a development will affect the character of a landscape or a view, either beneficially or adversely.

Indirect	An indirect effect will occur as a result of elements associated with a development, i.e. a development may result in an increase of traffic on a particular route.
Short, medium or long term	This relates to the anticipated duration and magnitude of effects associated with a development. Within this assessment, the potential effects are typically assessed during the Construction Phase, then at Years 1 and 15, following completion of the development.
Temporary or Permanent	This relates to whether the resulting effect of a development can be mitigated or not, and whether the result of the mitigation is beneficial or adverse.
Beneficial or Adverse	<u>Beneficial effects</u> would typically occur where a development would positively contribute to the landscape character or view. <u>Adverse effects</u> would typically occur where key landscape elements are lost, or the proposal detracts from the quality and / or character of a landscape or view. <u>Neutral effects</u> can occur where changes neither add nor detract from the quality and character of a landscape or view.

Assessing cumulative effects

- 2.9. Cumulative effects are additional effects caused by a proposed development in combination with other similar developments. This can be cumulative landscape effects on the physical fabric or character of the landscape, or cumulative visual effects caused by two or more developments being visible from one viewpoint (in combination) and / or from a route where the viewer has to move to another viewpoint to see the same or a different development (sequentially). The scope of cumulative effects should be agreed at the outset to establish what schemes are relevant to the assessment, and at which planning stage this is appropriate. It is generally considered that existing and consented developments, and those for which planning applications have been submitted but not yet determined, should be included. The assessment of cumulative effects must be considered as part of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) but does not have to be assessed as part of a non-EIA project.

Stage 4 - Significance of Effects (EIA only)

- 2.10. A final judgement on whether the effect is likely to be significant will be made, as required by the EIA Regulations. These conclusions should draw out the key issues and outline the scope for reducing any negative / adverse effects.

3. ASSESSING THE EFFECT OF DEVELOPMENT

- 3.1. The purpose of the LVIA is to provide an objective assessment of the potential effects of the proposals upon the identified landscape and / or visual receptor. GLVIA3 states that *“Assessing the significance of landscape and visual effects is a matter of judgement. It is vital that the basis of such judgements are transparent and understandable, so that the underlying assumptions and reasoning can be examined by others”*.
- 3.2. This section sets out the basis for assessing landscape and visual sensitivity, the magnitude of proposed effects, and the overall assessment of significance.

LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY

- 3.3. The sensitivity of a particular landscape in relation to new development is categorised as very high, high, medium, low or negligible. This takes into account the **susceptibility** of the receptor to the type of development proposed and the **value** attached to different landscapes by society.

Susceptibility of the Landscape Receptor

- 3.4. GLVIA3 defines the **SUSCEPTIBILITY** of a receptor to change as being the ability of the landscape receptor to accommodate the proposed development without undue negative consequences upon the baseline situation.
- 3.5. A judgement as to the level of susceptibility (High, Medium, Low or Negligible) is made in relation to each criterion, and these judgements contribute to an overall judgement of susceptibility for the landscape receptor.
- 3.6. A landscape deemed to be highly susceptible is likely to be small-scale, with a mosaic of natural habitats and limited human influences, while a less susceptible landscape receptor is likely to be simpler, with noticeable human influences and fewer natural / semi-natural habitats present.

Value of the Landscape Receptor

3.7. Following the publication of GLVIA3, it is now generally agreed that the **VALUE** of a landscape receptor can be determined by a range of factors set out within Box 5.1 of GLVIA3. These include:

- Landscape quality (condition);
- Scenic quality;
- Rarity and representativeness;
- Conservation interests;
- Recreation value;
- Perceptual aspects; and
- Associations.

3.8. The Box 5.1 criteria are used to determine the value of landscape receptors. The resulting value levels under each factor are recorded, and an overall judgement of the level of value is reached.

3.9. A professional judgement as to how the landscape reflects or contributes to the various criteria is made which leads to an assessment of value in relation to each factor (High, Medium, Low or Negligible) and these judgements contribute to an overall judgement of value.

Overall Judgement of Landscape Sensitivity

3.10. Once judgements regarding the susceptibility and the value of the landscape receptor have been made, an overall judgement of landscape sensitivity is reached. The following table explains each threshold, and the factors that contribute to the degree of sensitivity.

Table 2: Definition of Landscape Sensitivity Thresholds

Sensitivity	Definition
Very High	Landscapes which would have a high susceptibility to change, and which are considered to be of high value. Such landscapes would have a high degree of intimacy, strong landscape structure, and a high sense of intactness, and contain features worthy of protection. Townscapes may include a high proportion of historic assets and be designated as a World Heritage Site.

	Typical examples may be nationally or internationally designated, e.g., World Heritage Sites, National Parks, Heritage Coasts or National Landscapes.
High	Landscapes where there is a medium - high susceptibility to change, and which are considered to be of high value. Such landscapes may be small scale, have a strong landscape structure, be relatively intact and contain features and / or elements worthy of protection. Townscapes may include a number of historic assets. Typical examples may be locally designated or within the immediate setting of National Parks, National Landscapes, World Heritage Sites etc.
Medium	Landscapes where there is a medium susceptibility to change, and which are considered to be of medium value. Such landscapes will have good landscape structure, with some detracting features or evidence of recent change. Townscapes may include a proportion of historic assets or assets of cultural value locally.
Low	Landscapes where there is a low susceptibility to change, and which are considered to be of low value. Typical landscapes will have some characteristics of interest, but human influences and some detractors will be present.
Negligible	Landscapes where there is little or no susceptibility to change, and which are of low value. Typical landscapes are likely to be characterised by extensive human influences, be of weak landscape structure, with intensive land uses present, and require landscape restoration.

VISUAL SENSITIVITY

- 3.11. As part of the assessment of visual effects, the sensitivity of the visual receptor will be assessed against the magnitude of visual change. Each receptor should be assessed in terms of both their susceptibility to change in views and visual amenity, and also the value attached to particular views. The sensitivity of receptors is categorised as very high, high, medium, low and negligible.

Table 3: Visual Sensitivity Thresholds

Sensitivity	Definition
Very High	Viewers on public rights of way, within nationally designated landscapes such as National Parks or National Landscapes, whose prime focus is on the high quality of the landscape around, and who are very aware of its value.
High	Viewers on public rights of way, whose prime focus is on the landscape around, or residential properties which lie immediately adjacent to, and look directly onto the development site. Examples may include users of the public right of way network (e.g., promoted routes, national trails, footpaths or bridleways), or the setting of a listed building.
Medium	Viewers engaged in outdoor recreation with some appreciation of the landscape, occupiers of residential properties with oblique views from which the proposals may be visible, and users of rural lanes and roads, including pedestrians, cyclists or horse riders. Examples may include viewers within moderate quality landscapes and / or local parks or recreation grounds.
Low	Viewers engaged in outdoor sports or recreation, whose prime focus is on their activity rather than their setting, or those passing through the area on main transport routes (A-roads, dual carriageways, motorways or the rail network), whose attention is focused away from an appreciation of the landscape through which they are passing.
Negligible	Viewers whose attention is focused on their work or activity, and who are not susceptible to changes in the surrounding visual environment.

MAGNITUDE OF EFFECT

- 3.12. The magnitude of change relates to the extent to which a proposed development will affect the characteristics and / or elements that define the landscape character or view. This change is categorised as high, medium, low, or negligible.

Table 4: Magnitude of Change

Magnitude	Effect Definition
High	Change resulting in a high degree of harm or improvement, such as the introduction of prominent new elements that are considered to make a major alteration to a landscape or view.
Medium	Change resulting in a moderate degree of harm or improvement, or when constitutes a perceptible change within a landscape or view.
Low	Change resulting in a low degree of harm or improvement to a landscape or view, or which constitutes only a minor component within a landscape or view.
Negligible	Change resulting in a barely perceptible degree of harm or improvement to a landscape or view.
No Change	It is also possible for a landscape or view to experience no change, due to the proposed development being totally compatible with the receiving environment or not visible due to intervening structures or vegetation.

SIGNIFICANCE THRESHOLD

- 3.13. To assess the overall significance of the effect, the magnitude of change is considered against the sensitivity of the landscape or visual receptor.
- 3.14. In formulating the significance of the potential landscape or visual effect, reasoned professional judgement, based on clear and transparent methods, suitable training and experience, and a detached and dispassionate view of the development, is required. The matrix at Table 6 should be used as a guide for consistency rather than a prescriptive tool. Where the final judgement differs from the matrix, this will be supported by a clear explanation.
- 3.15. The significance thresholds are predicted as Substantial, Major, Moderate, Minor, Negligible, and can be either beneficial or adverse. Where there is no perceptible change in terms of the magnitude, regardless of the sensitivity of the receptor, the significance of the effect on a landscape or view will be Neutral.

- 3.16. Unless otherwise stated, all effects are predicted in the winter months. The extent of mitigation measures should be clearly stated, and in the case of planting proposals, the contribution to reducing adverse effects over time should be demonstrated at different stages (typically construction stage and operational stages year 1 and year 15).

Table 5: Significance of Effect

Significance	Threshold Definition
Substantial	A very high magnitude of change that materially affects a landscape or view of national / international importance which has no ability to accommodate change.
Major	A high magnitude of change that materially affects a high sensitivity landscape or view which has some ability to accommodate change. Positive effects will typically occur in a damaged landscape or view.
Moderate	A medium magnitude of change that affects a landscape or view which may have the ability to accommodate the type of development proposed. Positive effects will typically occur in a lower quality landscape or view.
Minor	A low magnitude of change that has some effect upon a landscape or view which can integrate the type of development proposed. Positive effects will typically occur in a lower quality landscape or view.
Negligible	A negligible magnitude of change that has little effect on a landscape or view which has the ability to accommodate change.
Neutral	A significance of neutral occurs where there is no perceptible change, or where the proposals are considered compatible with local character or views.

- 3.17. The significance of the effect is measured on the ability of a landscape or view to accommodate the change. In assessing the significance of effects, the following matrix provides a guide through determining the significance of the effect based on the sensitivity of the receptor and the magnitude of change, but it is not a prescriptive tool.

Table 6: Measuring Significance of Effect

		Sensitivity of Receptors				
		Very High	High	Medium	Low	Negligible
Magnitude of Change	High	Substantial	Major	Major/ Moderate	Moderate	Moderate/ Minor
	Medium	Major	Major/ Moderate	Moderate	Moderate/ Minor	Minor
	Low	Major/ Moderate	Moderate	Moderate/ Minor	Minor	Negligible
	Negligible	Moderate	Moderate/ Minor	Minor	Negligible	Negligible/ Neutral

- 3.18. In terms of assessing whether the effects are significant or otherwise, it is noted that para 5.56 of GLVIA3 states that there are no “hard and fast rules” about what makes a significant effect. For the purposes of this methodology, and with regard to the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011 (updated 2017), “significant” landscape or visual effects are those effects considered to be of Substantial, Major or Major / Moderate significance, as set out within Table 6.
- 3.19. It is reasonable to say that, where development will result in substantial loss of or irreversible adverse effects over an extensive spatial area on features and / or aspects that are key to the aesthetic and perceptual character of nationally valued landscapes, these will be of the greatest significance. By contrast, effects which may be reversible or can be mitigated over a shorter duration, within a more restricted spatial extent, on features that contribute to but may not be key characteristics of a landscape which has some (or even limited) local value, are likely to be of lesser significance, depending on the circumstances.
- 3.20. Landscape and visual assessments must make a *professional* and *objective* judgement on the significance of the effect, and whether or not these are considered significant, providing reasoned justification as to how the conclusions have been reached.

APPENDIX 2

Extract from Natural England's Character Map of England –
"Thames Basin Heaths" NCA 129

Introduction & Summary

Description

Opportunities

Key facts
and data

Landscape
change

Analysis



www.naturalengland.org.uk



Summary

The Thames Basin Heaths National Character Area (NCA) stretches westwards from Weybridge in Surrey to the countryside around Newbury in Berkshire. The London greenbelt incorporates countryside around Chobham and the rivers Wey and Mole. West of the greenbelt, 20th-century development has given rise to large conurbations including Camberley and the 'new town' of Bracknell. Among these conurbations, gardens amount to a significant area of greenspace, with rhododendron being a particular feature, and a major road network incorporates the M25 and M3. This densely settled area can be a significant source of pollution and rapid run-off.

Further from London, in the west, the settlement pattern is a mix of dispersed hamlets, farmsteads and houses interspersed with villages, many of medieval origin. Vestiges of the historic royal hunting forests of Bagshot, Eversley, Pamber and Windsor comprise parkland, ancient woodland, and small to medium-sized fields of semi-natural grassland. Features include ancient hedgerows and veteran trees, and there are parklands at The Vyne and Highclere Castle.

Woodland accounts for a quarter of this NCA, reflecting the predominance of low-grade agricultural land. Only 20 per cent of this woodland is on ancient woodland sites, with the majority of it having grown up or been planted on former heathland – much of which is or was common land. Conifers and rhododendron are particularly distinctive in the east of the NCA. In this heavily wooded landscape, there are significant timber and biomass opportunities.

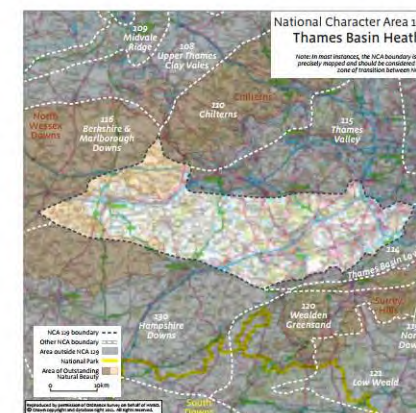
Common land is found across the NCA, with the largest commons found on raised plateaux of Tertiary sands and gravels. On these deposits, farming is largely limited to rough pasture and there are large estates. Non-agricultural land uses are widespread, and include large plantations and military bases

(including Aldershot). Formal and informal greenspace is concentrated in the east of the NCA, and includes country parks, woodlands and golf courses (such as Wentworth). The Kennet and Blackwater valleys are a focus for sand and gravel extraction.

Semi-natural habitat is extensive on the plateaux, and includes mosaics of wet and dry heathland, woodland and acid grassland. These habitats (and bird populations of nightjar, Dartford warbler and woodlark) are of international importance; they are protected by the Thursley, Ash, Pirbright and Chobham Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA), as well as being nationally designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). In the east, the close proximity of semi-natural habitats to settlements gives rise to recreation and education opportunities, as well as to problems such as fly-tipping, arson and disturbance.

To the west, international sites include the three wetland SAC of the Kennet and Lambourn Flood Plain, the Kennet Valley Alderwoods and the River Lambourn. The Kennet and Loddon catchments drain the plateaux and intervening clay valleys. Agriculture in the valleys is mixed, and there are fragments of historic meadows and reedbeds.

In the far west, the chalk scenery of the Hampshire Downs escarpment and the countryside around the River Pang are both designated as part of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), which makes up 17 per cent of the NCA.



Click map to enlarge; click again to reduce.



Volunteers constructing a boardwalk in Bowdown Woods illustrate how people can engage with the landscape sustainably.

Statements of Environmental Opportunity

- **SEO 1:** At a catchment scale, manage and create woodlands, highway verges, field margins, reedbeds and other features in urban and rural settings to intercept run-off and to filter pollutants. In the heavily developed flood plains of the Blackwater and Thames, adapt the urban environment to manage floodwaters, and restore or enhance modified watercourses.
- **SEO 2:** Maximise the variety of ecosystem services delivered by wooded features – from wet woodlands in the Kennet Valley to the large conifer plantations around Camberley and new woodlands. Conserve soils, water, biodiversity and the sense of place and history; enhance timber and biomass production; and provide for recreation and tranquillity as appropriate.
- **SEO 3:** Enhance the sense of history and biodiversity by conserving, restoring and building the resilience of long-established habitats such as heathland, ancient woodland and meadows, and of archaeology such as hill forts. Work at a landscape scale to conserve and restore key attributes of the historic hunting forests (such as Eversley) and historic common land. Engage the public in enjoying this heritage.
- **SEO 4:** With a focus on the Blackwater Valley, Newbury and nearby major settlements such as Reading, provide good-quality green infrastructure (incorporating commons, woodlands and restored gravel pits) to facilitate people's sustainable engagement with the local landscape. In doing so, also seek benefits for wildlife, water quality, flood amelioration and climate regulation.

Description

Physical and functional links to other National Character Areas

The Thames Basin Heaths National Character Area (NCA) lies in the London Basin, one of several NCAs lying within this syncline. The axis of the fold runs east–west – passing through this NCA – from the Berkshire and Marlborough Downs NCA to the Essex coast. The high rim of the London Basin is found to the west and south, where vantage points in the North Downs NCA and Hampshire Downs NCA, for example, offer views of the lower-lying Thames Basin Heaths NCA. The Chalk landscapes in the west extend from this NCA into the Berkshire and Marlborough Downs NCA and Hampshire Downs NCA, and this wider Chalk landscape is designated as the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

The Thames river system drains this basin, with major tributaries flowing through the Thames Basin Heaths NCA from the Berkshire and Marlborough Downs NCA in the west, and from the Hampshire Downs NCA, Thames Basin Lowlands NCA and other NCAs to the south. Engineered surface and groundwater supply links also exist with surrounding NCAs: the chalk aquifers in the neighbouring North Downs NCA, Hampshire Down NCA and Berkshire and Marlborough Downs NCA are notable sources of water. The Basingstoke, Wey Navigation, and Kennet and Avon canals provide a corridor for transport, recreation and wildlife – including otter, water vole, fish, and non-native species such as Himalayan balsam and American signal crayfish.

Birds make use of complexes of sites straddling the NCA boundaries. Large numbers of waterfowl (such as gadwall) flock around the South West London Waterbodies Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar site to roost and feed

in the winter. Breeding Dartford warbler, nightjar and woodlark use habitat mosaics across the Thames Basin Heaths SPA.

Transport links within this NCA include the M3, M4 and M25 motorways, as well as numerous A roads and railways linking to the wider South East and London. These all make the green spaces of the Thames Basin Heaths NCA accessible to people from numerous major settlements in nearby NCAs – including Basingstoke, Reading, Staines, Guildford and west London. Virginia Water and Chobham Common are large green spaces near to west London and just off the M3.

Distinct area

■ Blackwater Valley



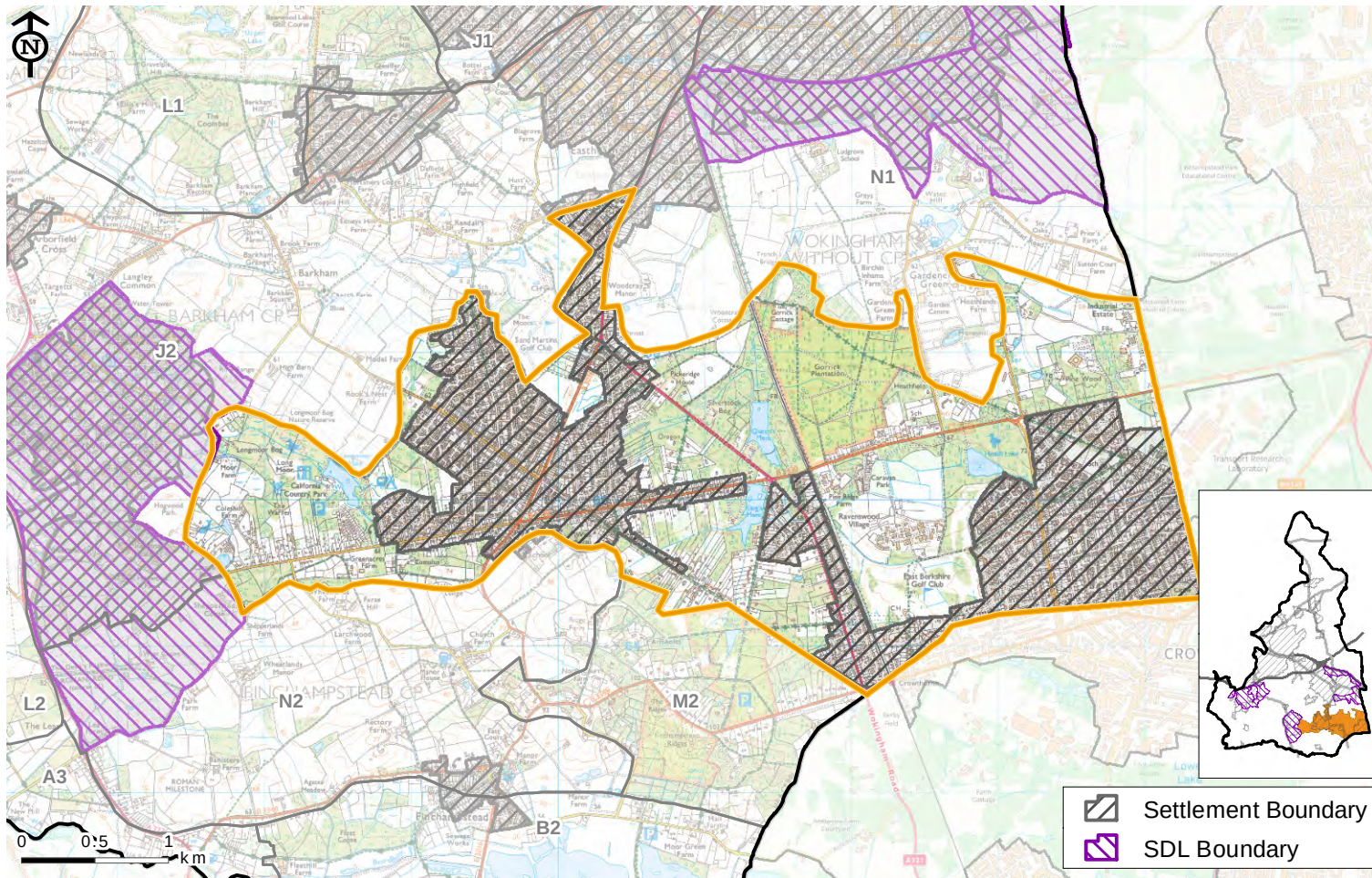
Breeding populations of woodlark (shown here), Dartford warbler and nightjar in the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area are important at a European level.

Key characteristics

- Plateaux of Tertiary sands and gravels in the London Basin, with intervening river valleys floored by London Clay. In the far west, Chalk forms the Hampshire Downs escarpment and the river beds of the Kennet and Pang.
- High woodland cover, offering an array of colour in the autumn. Conifers and large plantations on former heathland are dominant features in the east, while the west is scattered with small, semi-natural woodlands on ancient sites.
- Acid, leached soils mean that farming on the plateaux is limited to rough pasture, and that alternative land uses (such as forestry, golf courses and horse paddocks) have emerged. Heather, gorse, oak and birch all thrive here. Arable land and improved pasture are found in the valleys, on alluvium.
- Beyond the large areas of heathland and woodland, there is a patchwork of small to medium-sized fields with woods. The legacy of historic hunting forests includes veteran trees, ancient woods, ancient hedgerows and parklands. Historic meadows remain as fragments along watercourses.
- Prehistoric earthworks such as barrows and hill forts mark promontories on the plateaux. Archaeology is well preserved on historic heathland. Mosaics of open heathland and grassland with scrub, secondary woodland and plantation. Valley bogs, ponds and streams enhance diversity. Large, continuous mosaics are found in the east: they include Thursley, Ash, Pirbright and Chobham Special Area of Conservation (SAC), and Chobham Common National Nature Reserve (NNR).
- Historic commons offer tranquillity and unenclosed views, while other rights of access are enjoyed across farmland, canals and downland. Ministry of Defence ownership restricts (but does not entirely prevent) public enjoyment.
- 'Churring' nightjars, dragonflies and purple heather are all readily identified with heathland. The Thames Basin Heaths SPA protects internationally important populations of woodlark, nightjar and Dartford warbler.
- Valley floors are wet with ditches, numerous watercourses, ponds, water-filled gravel pits, reedbeds and carr. Historic features include mills, relict water meadows, and canals such as the River Wey Navigations.
- 20th-century conurbations, including Camberley, sprawl along the Blackwater Valley, with associated roads (including the M3) dissecting heathland and woodland into blocks. Elsewhere, there are winding lanes and historic dispersed villages and farmsteads of traditional, locally-made brick and tile.

APPENDIX 3

Extract from Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment (2019) –
“Finchampstead Forested & Settled Sands” LCA M1



SUMMARY

An elevated plateau characterised by its densely wooded context, which creates a strong sense of enclosure. The woodland is varied with semi-natural areas and forestry plantation interspersed with heathland. Low density settlement is arranged along linear rides or in the settlements of Finchampstead (north) and part of Crowthorne. Away from areas of settlement, the landscape has a remote character, although it is still accessible due to numerous footpaths.

The eastern boundary of this area is defined by the borough boundary, although the character area extends into Bracknell Forest District. The northern and western boundaries broadly follow the edge of the woodland or settlement and changes in the underlying geology, from sands to clay and river terrace deposits. To the south the boundary is defined by the transition to the more open and topographically varied character of M2: Finchampstead Ridges Forested and Settled Sands and N2: Finchampstead Pastoral Sandy Lowland.



Key Characteristics

- An elevated landscape rising to 90m AOD, comprising a shelving plateau, underlain by acidic sands. The infertile sandy soils influence land cover and ecological character.
- Large swathes of interconnected forestry and woodland dominate the area, which has little farmland. These consist of large coniferous plantations as well as mixed woodlands with sandy heaths. Stands of Scots Pine and exotic species are particularly distinctive.
- A number of large lakes, including Longmoor Lake, King's Mere and Queen's Mere, originally excavated in late 19th century for brick making, now form a focus for recreation.
- The underlying heathland character typifies areas of woodland clearings such as California Park and adjacent to roads.
- Rich semi-natural habitats associated with the poorly draining acidic soils including BAP priority habitat lowland heathland and lowland dry acid grassland. Large acidic lakes or meres are surrounded by wetland and wet woodland; Longmoor Bog and Heath Lake are nationally important SSSIs.
- Long straight roads such as Nine Mile Ride (which originated as historic 'rides' created through the historically open landscape of the Royal Forest of Windsor) give a strong linear character to the landscape. Characterised by roadside rhododendron 'hedges' and occasional colourful patches of gorse and heather.
- The locally listed historic park at Ravenswood, which originated as a medieval deer park within the Royal Forest of Windsor.
- Strong settlement character, with a low density pattern of detached houses lining the historic rides, which have provided a framework for settlement. Residential properties of relatively unremarkable post-war and modern suburban character in a variety of styles.
- Good public accessibility including formal parks such as California Country Park, LNR (including Longmoor Bog and Heath Lake) and areas of open access Forestry Commission land (such as Gorrick Plantation) connected by a network of bridleways and footpaths.
- Localised area of remoteness within woodlands and smaller areas of pasture, mire and heath, which provide a sense of tranquility.
- A highly enclosed landscape created by the often continuous swathes of dense woodland, except for framed views along the rides.

Natural Landscape

- M1.1 The character of the area is dominated by the presence of underlying sandy formations including the Bagshot Beds, fine to medium grained sandy deposits with clay and silt. There are localised deposits of the Camberley Sand Formation and Windlesham Formation and Sixth River Terrace at the highest elevation. These create gley-Podsols which impede drainage and create nutrient-poor acidic conditions unsuitable for arable farmland and dominated by forestry and woodland.
- M1.2 There are no watercourses. However, there are several relatively large lakes or meres and numerous small ponds located across the plateau, which originate from historic brick pits. The most significant of these are Longmoor Lake, Queen's Mere, King's Mere and Heath Lake. These water bodies tend to be acidic and are surrounded by boggy and marshy areas created by the

poorly draining soil, such as Longmoor Bog and Silverstock Bog. The largest meres contain BAP priority habitat eutrophic standing waters and mesotrophic lakes.

- M1.3 The principal land cover outside of settled areas is woodland frequently used as recreation areas. The dense woodland is varied with mixed woodland and large areas of forestry plantations which are tolerant of the underlying sandy and acidic soil conditions. It is also notable for the high incidence of conifers including Scots Pine and exotic species. The largest continuous swathe is Gorrick Plantation, owned by the Forestry Commission, located south of Gardeners Green. The plantations are managed on a commercial rotation, with public access permitted. Within woodland clearings a more colourful heathy character is evident with areas of heathland vegetation including bracken, gorse and heather. Elsewhere, much of the woodland is mixed with both coniferous and broadleaved species. BAP priority habitats lowland mixed deciduous woodland and wet woodland are both present.
- M1.4 The sandy acidic soils support a large number of sites with significant biological interest. The most characteristic are the sandy heaths, valley bogs, wet woods, and large expanses of mixed secondary woodland and includes BAP priority habitats lowland fens, lowland dry acidic grassland and lowland heathland. Longmoor Bog and Heath Lake are nationally important and designated as SSSIs and are also protected as LNR. Longmoor Bog is one of the few base-poor valley mires remaining in Berkshire, and comprises well-developed wetland carr, mire, dry acid woodland and wet heath which supports several regionally restricted plants such as round-leaved sundew and common cotton grass and several species of bog moss. Heath Lake consists of a small shallow lake, surrounded by birch and pine woodland with areas of relict heathland. The site is of interest for its populations of restricted aquatic plants.
- M1.5 The area also contains seven Wildlife Heritage Sites, the majority of which are lakes and open heath surrounded by mixed woodland. These acid woodlands are characterised by birch, pine, oak and sweet chestnut, but many have been colonised by invasive rhododendron, which also grows along the roadsides in this area

Cultural Landscape

- M1.6 Two round barrows northwest of Warren Lodge suggest there may have been Bronze Age expansion of settlement from the valleys onto less favourable sandy soils within this area. This led to the early development of commons and heathland as the ground was cleared and cultivated, and the soils depleted.
- M1.7 The Roman road between London and Calleva (Silchester) runs east-west through the area, and is known locally as the Devil's Highway. There are remains of the agger (earthen embankment) surviving in Crowthorne and Finchampstead parishes.
- M1.8 During the medieval period, this area was part of The Royal Forest of Windsor. At this time an area around the current site of Ravenswood was established as a deer park, Bigshotte Railes, one of a handful of Railes Parks in the Forest. Ravenswood Park is identified as a Local Historic Park and Garden. The Royal Forest of Windsor was enclosed in the early half of the 19th century, and the last remnants of heaths were replaced by plantations by 1857. A number of historic straight rides through this forested landscape e.g. Nine Mile Ride were created for Queen Anne (and later George III), so that when she was unable to hunt, she could follow in her carriage.
- M1.9 The built character of the landscape is one of the dominant elements affecting landscape character. Much of the settlement is characterised by long narrow land-parcels associated with individual dwellings, strung out along the long linear rides such as Nine Mile Ride (A340), Duke's Ride and Heath Ride. The scenic woodland landscape, close to London, made the heathland a popular setting for country houses surrounded by mostly small ornamental and landscaped parks. Sections of the rides have been suburbanised with kerbs, lighting, signage and roundabouts, but remain characterised by roadside rhododendron 'hedges', and occasional colourful patches of gorse and heather with occasional views into woodland or forestry plantation. The rides are interconnected, which has led to many of the linear settled areas joining and the subsequent infill of the intervening areas with more settlement. In terms of character, the settled landscape is predominantly low-density two-storey residential and bungalows set in large gardens. The buildings are set back from the road behind walls and fences and the gardens retain mature

conifers, particularly Scots Pine. Schools and shops are associated with the residential areas but there are no large-scale industrial or commercial buildings.

- M1.10 The settlement is almost entirely post-Victorian and includes a high proportion of post-war and modern estate dwelling. There is no obvious local vernacular, and generally the architecture is unremarkable, although some Victorian buildings with yellow brick and bargeboards, such as Crowthorne Station, stand out. The absence of churches or obvious centres of development is notable.
- M1.11 The woodland and wetlands provide the focus for recreational use in this area. The main 'formal' recreation area is California Country Park, first developed in the early 1950s as a holiday camp, which is focussed on Longmoor Lake and includes an outdoor swimming pool, caravan and camping park, visitor centre and café. Many of these areas are interconnected by the extensive system of bridleways and footpaths throughout this area, which permit long circular walks and also connect to the nearby town of Wokingham. In addition to the informal natural landscape there is also one golf course, the Royal East Berkshire Golf Course, on the edge of Crowthorne and well integrated into the surrounding wooded landscape.

Perceptual Landscape

- M1.12 The interconnected rides and subsequent infill of the intervening areas with settlement give the perception of an area considerably more settled than is actually the case, with an impression of extended linear ribbon development along roads.
- M1.13 Away from the areas of settlement, the landscape demonstrates a strong sense of enclosure and remoteness, with few views afforded by the often continuous swathes of large coniferous woodland, except for vistas along the historic rides, including views from this area up the avenue of giant redwoods on Wellingtonia Avenue (LCA M2). It remains a landscape highly valued for recreation and relative tranquillity.

Valuable Landscape Attributes

- The elevated plateau and wooded skyline visible and forming a backdrop in the wider landscape.
- Large expanses of mixed woodland containing mature trees which are important ecological habitats and provide a sense of place and history as well as opportunities for recreation. Stands of Scots pine provide characteristic landmark features.
- The distinctive pattern of interconnected woodland and forestry, interspersed with sandy heaths, lakes, bogs and wet woodland and occasional pastoral fields which provide scenic quality and visual diversity (a variety of colours and textures and changing seasonal interest) and provide a naturalistic sense of place to the suburban development.
- Acid heathland, large lakes and bogs which provide nationally important BAP priority habitats, nationally recognised as SSSIs, as well as opportunities for recreation.
- Distinctive long straight historic roads following the route of rides through the former Royal Forest of Windsor which provide a cultural record of the past as well as allowing views into a landscape well enclosed by trees.
- The locally listed historic park at Ravenswood, one of only four medieval deer parks in the district.
- Settlement pattern of low density post-war properties in large plots along long straight rides and notably the occasional wooded gaps between areas of settlement. Integration of development in the wooded landscape and absence of commercial, industrial buildings /large or tall built structures.

- Valued areas for recreation including tracts of open access land and the extensive network of bridleways and public footpaths which allow enjoyment of the landscape.
- The continuous network of woodland and forestry which helps to provide physical and visual separation between settlements and to filter and screen views to the settlements within the area, as well as provide an attractive setting to housing.
- Important vistas to the Wellingtonia Avenue (within LCA M2) which provides a sense of place.
- Localised areas with a sense of tranquility and even remoteness, removed from the roads and visual influence of settlement, which provide an escape in close proximity to the urban population.

Landscape Condition

The landscape is in overall good condition, with a distinctive pattern of built and natural elements, including woodland, wetland, open pasture, and heathland habitats, with large lakes, continuous interconnected forestry and a cohesive settlement character. Although much of this landscape has a 'suburban' character it does have a very strong sense of place; however there has been fragmentation of heathland and wetland habitats.

Key Issues

- Changes in deciduous woodland structure through loss of species diversity and spread of sycamore, rhododendron and other invasive/exotic species. The expansion of the coniferous content of woodlands in the past has resulted in a change in character of the woodlands and had a negative impact on the ground flora. However, there are positive signs that woodlands are being brought back into management.
- Effects on tree health or species composition of woodland and heathlands as a consequence of pathogens and climate change.
- The influence of woodland fell cycles within forestry has an influence on wider landscape character, particularly along wooded ridgelines.
- Changes in management that could result in loss and fragmentation of heathland or wetland habitats as a result of scrub encroachment or conversion to forestry.
- Drainage operations associated with development altering ground water levels and affecting wetland habitats.
- High demands for recreation due to proximity to large centres of population, particularly mountain biking and quad biking, leading to erosion and impact on tranquillity. Erosion of rights of way, special archaeological, ecological and other landscape features is a continuing concern in this well-populated area.
- Pressure for intensification of golf courses that have an impact on the character of the landscape.
- Pressure for new residential development and supporting infrastructure, both inside and outside the area, impacting on landscape character. Development of a new settlement at the Arborfield Garrison SDL and the extension of the existing Hogwood Industrial Estate immediately to the west of the LCA (in adjoining LCA J2) could potentially impact California Country Park.
- Continued pressure for expansion, infill and densification within existing settlements, particularly at Crowthorne, leading to loss of open pasture, heathland and woodland habitat and potential

amalgamation with adjacent settlements, such as development at Oakham Park (off Old Wokingham Road and Hatch Ride) and extension of the caravan site on the east shore of Longmoor Lake. There is also pressure for backland development to the rear of properties of Nine Mile Ride and unauthorised development between Nine Mile Ride and Ravenswood Park potentially eroding the landscape of the parkland.

- Continuing pressure for new roads or improvements to existing roads, in this well-populated and commercially vibrant area, impacting tranquillity, particularly in relation to the Arborfield Garrison development and the consequent increase in traffic along Nine Mile Ride.
- Continued pressure for infill development between settlements, particularly along the A321 and B3016 along the southern side of Wokingham, and where the landscape provides tranquil, distinct gaps, and 'breathing space' of rural character between built forms.
- Increasing suburbanisation including frontage development and the use of close board fencing along the rides, which is incongruous to the character of the area and also leads to tree losses which themselves harm the character of the area and the Green Rides.
- Increasing demand for communication masts, pylons and poles leading to visual intrusion of these elements in the elevated landscape and in views to the wooded backdrop from elsewhere.

Landscape Strategy

To maintain the landscape character of the *Finchampstead Forested and Settled Sands* the following strategy is required: to conserve and enhance existing character. The key aspects to be conserved and actively managed are the characteristic forestry and woodland; the rarer open landscapes of heath, mire lakes and pasture; important wildlife habitats; historic landscape features associated with the Royal Forest and recreational use. In particular there is an opportunity to consider restoration of heathland within the woodland context. The aim should be to link and connect existing heathland areas.

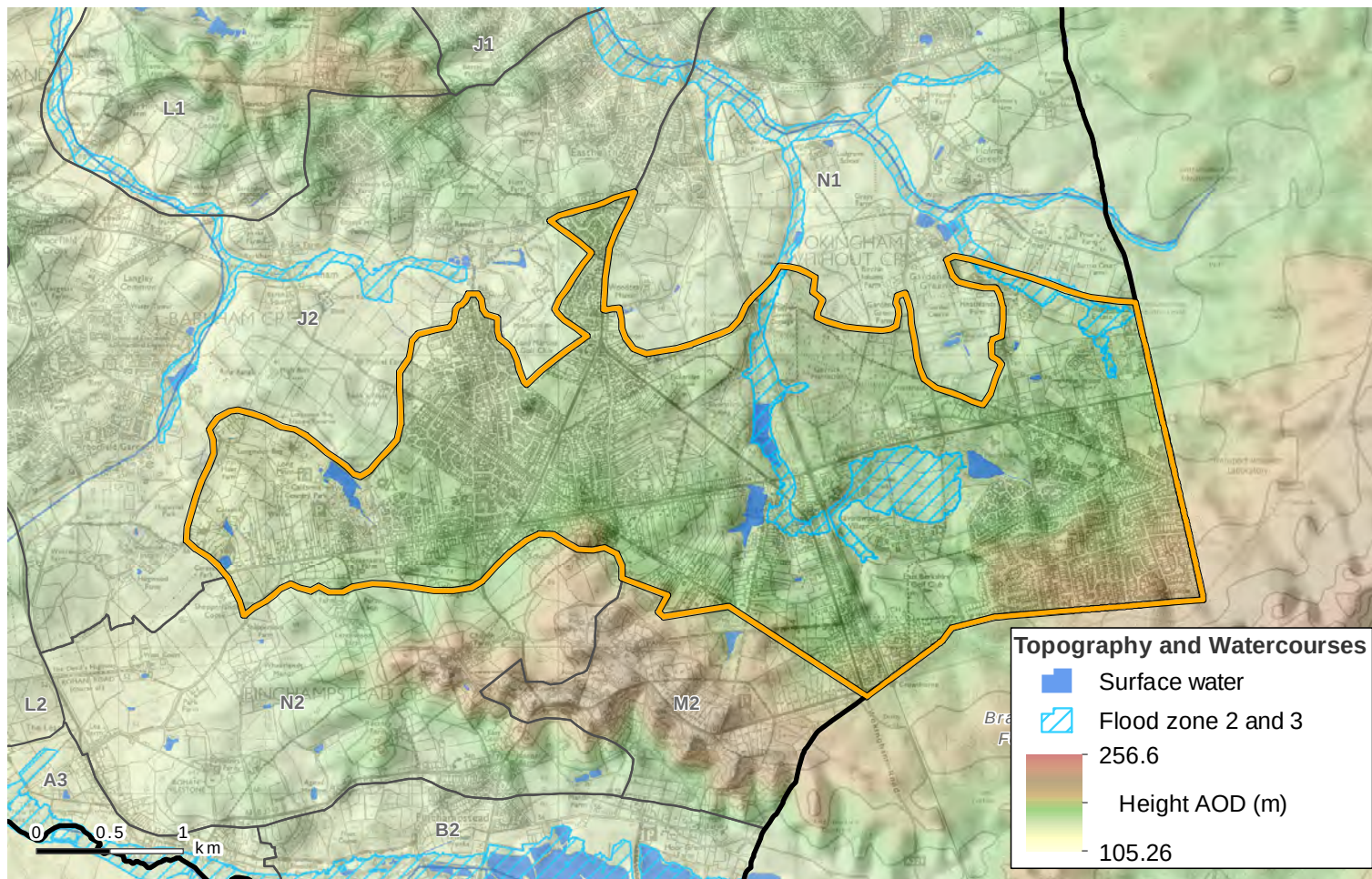
In terms of development, the aim is to conserve and enhance the rural setting and gaps between settlements and maintain the low density domestic character of development.

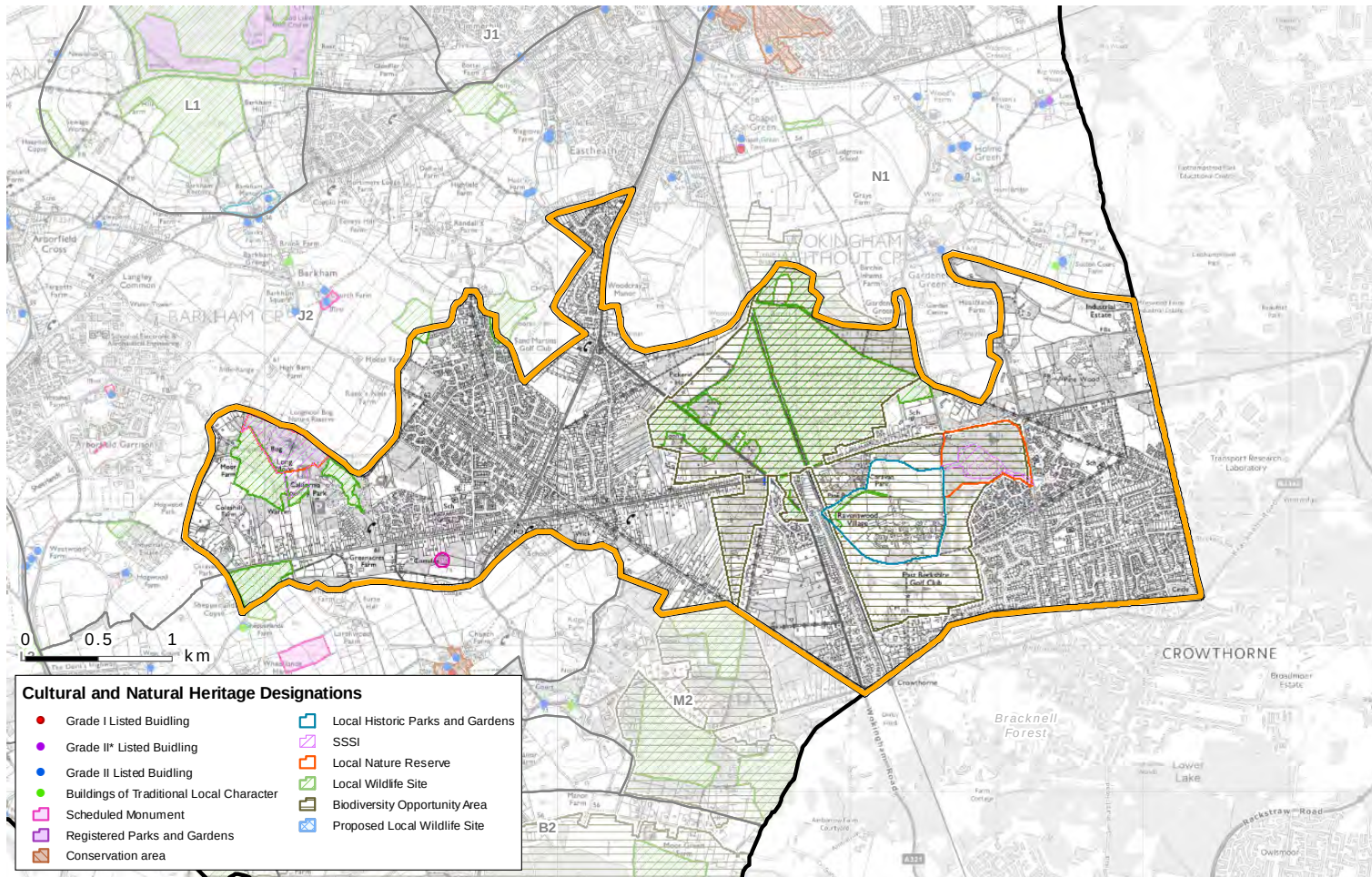
Landscape Guidelines

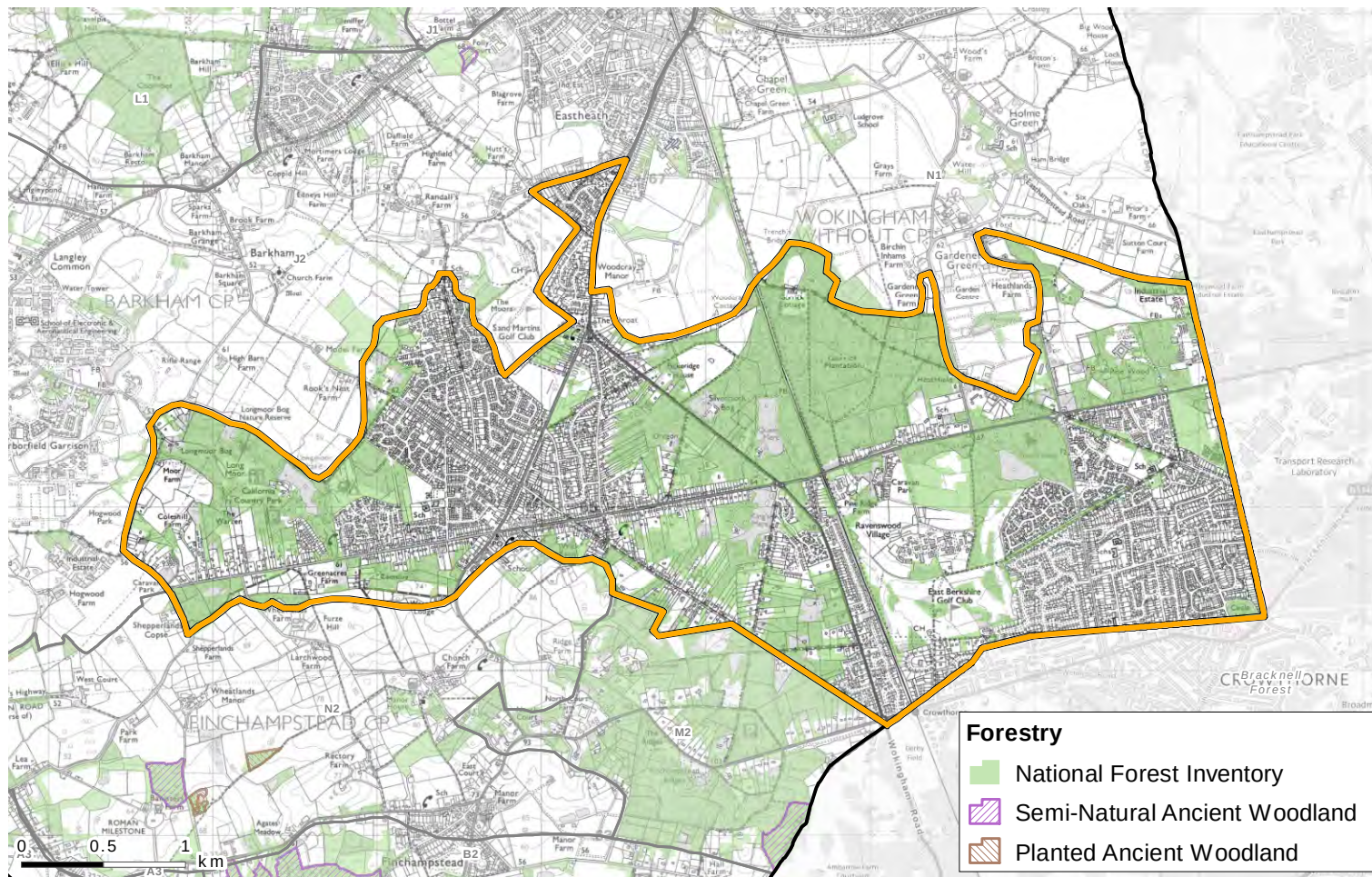
- Conserve distinctive wooded skylines. Consider the impact of any development on skylines, particularly where it would have the potential to be highly visible from adjacent character areas. Develop sympathetic fell cycles to maintain positive character, particularly phased cycles along sensitive skylines to ensure that the wooded backdrop is maintained. Particular care should be taken in the siting of communication masts or other vertical elements, which have the potential to be highly visible in this elevated landscape.
- Conserve and enhance the wooded character of the landscape. Increase the extent of BAP priority habitat lowland mixed deciduous woodland in the forested areas using locally occurring native species in order to create a more mixed woodland character. Retain open areas of heath, mire, lakes and pasture within the forested areas and existing views into these areas, especially from historic rides. Continue to promote appropriate management through natural regeneration, control of non-native species and coppicing as a management tool for neglected woodland.
- Conserve, enhance and manage heathland, grassland, and wetland habitats particularly BAP priority habitats, from development, changes in land use and encroachment by secondary woodland and scrub. An area of land centred around Gorrick Plantation, Queen's Mere and King's Mere is part of the Thames Basin Heaths BOA. This network of natural habitats, which extend into Bracknell Forest, has been identified as a target for habitat creation and restoration and positive management of heathland and bog habitats. An appropriate heathland management regime is critical.
- Enhance integration of recreation into the landscape, avoiding features which would lead to

greater (sub) urbanisation of the rural character.

- Enhance informal recreational enjoyment of the landscape but balance this with continued conservation of valuable landscapes, heritage assets and semi-natural habitats. Consider zoning of activities to ensure ecologically valuable or more sensitive elevated landscapes are protected from damaging activities and ensure appropriate management of informal recreation, particularly in relation to the Rights of Way network.
- Conserve and enhance the integration of urban edges through wooded boundaries and large-species trees and maintain the important vistas along rides. In particular protect the sensitive areas of open land adjacent to Arborfield Garrison in the western part of this area.
- Enhance sense of place through careful planning and design (including siting, massing, scale, materials and landscape – and sensitive lighting to retain dark skies at night) to minimise the impacts of any potential new development and particularly vertical elements on valuable attributes.
- Conserve the rural character between adjacent towns and village centres, to protect the individual identity of settlements, and retain their sense of physical and visual separation that helps define them. In particular protect the sensitive areas of open land remaining along the B3016 and the A321 between Finchampstead and Wokingham, retain blocks of woodland along the rides and rear of properties under threat from backland development.
- Consider undertaking character appraisals / village design statements of key settlements in Wokingham Borough e.g. Finchampstead to identify features worthy of conservation. Maintain the small scale, low density domestic character of settlement set within large plots avoiding greater densities of development or tall/large structures.
- Use appropriate tree planting to help integrate roads in relation to proposed junction improvements and the extension of Nine Mile Drive to the west of the character area. Encourage retention of wooded edges and boundaries along roads, while retaining existing views to open countryside and wooded ridges. Minimise fencing and other boundary structures.
- Conserve and enhance historic features associated with the Royal Forest of Windsor including the medieval parkland at Ravenswood and the straight rides.
- Reduce and prevent further noise and light pollution through the sensitive siting of any new development, especially any proposed night-time lighting.







APPENDIX 4

Extract from Wokingham Borough Council Valued Landscapes Assessment (2024) –
“Forest & Rides” valued landscape



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

VALUED LANDSCAPES ASSESSMENT

SEPTEMBER 2024

WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

Forest and Rides Valued Landscape Narrative

Forest and Rides Valued Landscape Narrative

'The boundary of the 19th century park which may approximate to that of the medieval one is shown on Walter's map of Windsor Forest (1823). The line of the boundary is marked by streams and field boundary banks.'

'Bigshotte Rayles' is shown in a survey by John Norden in 1607. The date of the enclosure of the park is uncertain, but Ravenswood, formerly known as Hannican's Lodge embodies part of the old house, and has been suggested to date from the early sixteenth century. The railings were pulled up during the Commonwealth but were repaired by a Keeper in 1649. In 1730 the railes and the house were ruinous, but were again repaired'

From the Wokingham Sites and Monuments record¹

Introduction

The Forest and Rides Valued Landscape gains much of its identity and cohesiveness from its role in later development, in particular of the hunting landscape from the reign of Queen Anne to that of her distant cousin King George III. The wide straight rides with deep ditches, to aid drainage on either side, were created to facilitate the carriages carrying monarchs and their courts following the royal stag hounds as they sought diversion in the forest. The link between hunting, the historic straight rides and the Bigshotte Railes, (a particular kind of deer park associated with the protection and feeding of deer for the hunt and the exclusion of domestic grazers and browsers), is clear. When the historical record is examined, the constant need for money to maintain the park and its boundaries appears to be a reflection of the monarchy's lack of sufficient funds. In the end, the cost of maintaining the Royal Forest, coupled with the gradual wearing-away of much of it through assarts² (legal and illegal), was a factor in the final sale of the forest through the Inclosures of the early 19th Century. The medieval hunting landscape can be characterised by deer, diversion and debt. This valued landscape centres on the locally listed medieval park of Ravenswood, formally Bigshotte Railes, but now the site of a charitable education facility – which lies to the south of the B3040 Nine Mile Ride; and on the Gorrick Plantation land, which lies to the north of that road.

Historic settlements were dispersed in small hamlets between the town of Wokingham and the villages of Finchampstead and Crowthorne. The woodland landscape made the heathland a popular setting for country house surrounded by mostly small ornamental and landscaped parks³. The landscape was amongst the very last parts of the Royal Forest of Windsor to be inclosed in 1817. In ancient times, the Roman road from the important Civitas of Calleva Atrebatum (the former settlement of the Atrebates tribe at modern-day Silchester) ran through the middle of the valued landscape to Londinium (now London). Nowadays the A327 runs north-south in the west and the

¹ Record entry number 00399.00.00. Bigshotte Rayles or Railes, and Hannican's or Hanekin's Lodge are synonymous of the parkland now known as Ravenswood Park. The park is classified as a medieval to post-medieval deer park.

² An assart was an enclosure of the hunting forest which was then converted to agriculture

³ Finchampstead Neighbourhood Development Plan 2022-2038 (September 2023), Appendix C History & Heritage, available at: <https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/planning-policy/adopted-development-plan/neighbourhood-development-plans>

A321 in the east of the valued landscape but generally the road network is characterised by smaller historic lanes together with the 18th Century historic straight rides which are characteristic. It is these historic straight rides, most often lined with either dense woodland or linear development, which help define the character and extent of the valued landscape. The contribution that the straight rides, such as Nine Mile Ride, make to the character and appearance of the area has been widely recognised by Inspectors conducting planning appeals, notably the decisions for Land at and to the rear of 240 Nine Mile Ride, Finchampstead⁴ and Land at Pineridge Park, Nine Mile Ride, Wokingham⁵, where, the Inspector, for the latter, stated:

*‘Nine Mile Ride is a designated Green Route and has historical landscape significance by reason of once being part of Windsor Forest. The trees and woodlands along the Ride make a strong contribution to its amenity value by creating a backdrop to built development and a prominent skyline of tree canopies. The depth of woodland blocks strengthens the remote woodland character of the area and the sense of enclosure’.*⁶

This part of the M1 ‘Finchampstead Forested and Settled Sands’ Landscape Character Area is ‘valued landscape’ and was confirmed by Inspector Wendy McKay in her Decision Letter. The Inspector said:

*‘The Council accepts that there is a hierarchy of landscape and that the appeal sites do not fall within one of the nationally designated landscapes which are specifically referred to in paragraph 115 of the Framework. Nonetheless, given the identification of this landscape as being of high quality, the reference to the LCA in MDD Policy TB21 and the location of the sites within the historic parkland, I consider that this landscape is appropriately categorised as a ‘valued’ landscape for the purposes of paragraph 109 of the Framework’.*⁷

From this, in the Inspector’s opinion, the valued landscape centres on the locally listed medieval deer park of Bigshotte Railes (now Ravenswood Park) but includes other land. Elsewhere in this judgement, and similarly to the decisions at 240 Nine Mile Ride and Land at Pineridge Park, the Inspector gives weight to the historic straight Nine Mile Ride. This assessment therefore builds on the weight afforded by the Inspectors in their decisions in determining the character and extent of the valued landscape. The historic and landscape links between the straight rides, the park and the wider landscape of the Royal Forest are what gives this valued landscape its’ cohesiveness, character and distinctive shape.

By Identifying these attributes in the Forest and Rides Valued Landscape it ensures that development will be carefully planned and sensitively designed to maintain and enhance connection of the historic straight rides with the verdant character of the wider valued landscape.

⁴ Land at and to the rear of 240 Nine Mile Ride, Finchampstead, APP/X0360/W/22/3295631, decision dated 13th December 2022, paragraph 16

⁵ Pineridge Park Homes, Nine Mile Ride, Wokingham, APP/X0360/A/14/2214855, decision dated 11th February 2015, paragraph 85

⁶ Pineridge Park Homes, Nine Mile Ride, Wokingham, APP/X0360/A/14/2214855, decision dated 11th February 2015, paragraph 85

⁷ Appeals APP/X0360/C/15/3141000 and 3141001 (paragraph 174)

Attributes of the valued landscape

Landscape quality (condition) – The bulk of the valued landscape sits within the M1 ‘Finchampstead Forested and Settled Sands’ Landscape Character Area (LCA) as defined in the Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) (2019). However, the valued landscape does cut across a number of other LCAs including J2 ‘Arborfield Cross and Barkham Settled and Farmed Clay’, L2 ‘Farley Hill Wooded Sands and Gravel Hills’, M2 ‘Finchampstead Ridges Forested and Settled Sands’ and N2 ‘Finchampstead Pastoral Sandy Lowland’. Whilst the valued landscape does not occupy the whole, or even any great part of some of these LCAs, an analysis of the condition of these landscapes does help in the assessment of the valued landscape.

The LCA (2019) discusses landscape condition. In the ‘Key Characteristics’ of the LCA it states:

For the J2 ‘Arborfield Cross and Barkham Settled and Farmed Clays’ LCA it states:

‘The landscape is in overall moderate condition, due to the pattern of arable and pastoral fields, and remnant wetland influences associated with Barkham Brook. However, the hedgerow network is fragmented and the introduction of further development through the Arborfield Garrison SDL and associated infrastructure will further fragment the rural settlement pattern altering the character of the area.’⁸

For the L2 ‘Farley Hill Wooded Sand and Gravel Hills’ LCA it states:

‘This is a distinctive hilly landscape with an intact pattern of pastures, woodland and arable farming interspersed with vernacular settlements. These provide a strong sense of place and strong perceptual qualities of seclusion and remoteness resulting in a good condition. However increasing traffic levels are affecting the tranquillity of the area. The presence of large agricultural buildings and semi-industrial uses for farms is incongruous, as is the replacement of hedgerows with fencing.’⁹

For the M1 ‘Finchampstead Forested and Settled Sands’ LCA, which together with the M2 ‘Finchampstead Ridges Forested and Settled Sand’ LCA, forms the bulk of this valued landscape, it states:

‘The landscape is in overall good condition, with a distinctive pattern of built and natural elements, including woodland, wetland, open pasture, and heathland habitats, with large lakes, continuous interconnected forestry and a cohesive settlement character. Although much of this landscape has a ‘suburban’ character it does have a very strong sense of place; however there has been fragmentation of heathland and wetland habitats’.¹⁰

⁸ Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment (2019), page 240

⁹ Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment (2019), page 296

¹⁰ Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment (2019), page 318

For the M2 'Finchampstead Ridges Forested and Settled Sand' which together with the M1 'Finchampstead Forested and Settled Sand' LCA, forms the bulk of the valued landscape, it states:

*'The landscape within the Finchampstead Ridges Forested and Settled Sands is in good condition as a result of the well-managed and maintained nature of the woodland, heathland and avenues of trees in this area.'*¹¹

For the N2 'Finchampstead Pastoral Sandy Lowland' LCA it states:

*'The landscape components, including scattered woodlands, coherent pattern of settlement and predominately pastoral land use are in good condition. However much of the original parkland character of the landscape has been lost and the mixture of field boundaries reduces the integrity of the landscape.'*¹²

Scenic Quality – The LCA (2019) identifies the following valuable landscape attributes that relate to scenic quality. The scenic quality of the valued landscape encompasses a mixture of short, enclosed views along and from the straight rides, views through the landscape from smaller meandering rural lanes, and long distance views from high points across surrounding countryside.

For the J2 'Arborfield Cross and Barkham Settled and Farmed Clays' LCA it states:

*'Views across the landscape to surrounding character areas, particularly across the river valleys to the west and to the wooded hills to the north and south provides a loose sense of enclosure.'*¹³

And also:

*'A rural character away from development and roads, with views across to adjacent character areas including across the Loddon Valley.'*¹⁴

For the L2 'Farley Hill Wooded Sand and Gravel Hills' LCA it states:

*'Views to the river valleys of the Blackwater, Broadwater and Loddon, with this area forming a wooded backdrop to views from the surrounding landscape.'*¹⁵

And also:

*'Intimate pattern of pastures, woodland and arable farmland provides scenic quality and visual diversity.'*¹⁶

¹¹ Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment (2019), page 329

¹² Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment (2019), page 351

¹³ Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment (2019), page 240

¹⁴ Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment (2019), page 238

¹⁵ Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment (2019), page 294

¹⁶ Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment (2019), page 296

For the M1 'Finchampstead Forested and Settled Sands' LCA it states:

'Important vistas to the Wellingtonia Avenue (within LCA M2) which provides a sense of place.

*The continuous network of woodland and forestry which helps to provide physical and visual separation between settlements and to filter and screen views to the settlements within the area, as well as provide an attractive setting to housing.'*¹⁷

And:

*Long straight roads such as Nine Mile Ride (which originated as historic 'rides' created through the historically open landscape of the Royal Forest of Windsor) gives a strong linear character to the landscape. Characterised by roadside rhododendron 'hedges' and occasional colourful patches of gorse and heather.'*¹⁸

For the M2 'Finchampstead Ridges Forested and Settled Sand' LCA it states:

*'Heavily enclosed character contrasts with distinctive long but framed views along historic straight rides through the trees and extensive views across the Blackwater Valley and into Surrey and Hampshire from the ridgeline at Finchampstead Ridges.'*¹⁹

*'The dramatic Wellingtonia Avenue, with its impressive 150 year old giant redwood trees which is it is an iconic feature of the borough.'*²⁰

And:

*'Long distance southerly views from the elevated ridge over the Blackwater Valley (B2) and beyond into Surrey and Hampshire, as well as framed views associated with designed landscapes, such as the view along the tree-lined Wellingtonia Avenue.'*²¹

For the N2 'Finchampstead Pastoral Sandy Lowland' LCA it states:

*'Expansive views from vantage points across the surrounding lowlands of the Blackwater River valley to the south which contrast with the wooded and enclosed character in other parts of the area and to the adjoining forested landscapes of the Finchampstead Ridges.'*²²

And:

'Rural character of the pattern of pastoral fields interspersed with scattered woods and

¹⁷ Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment (2019), page 318

¹⁸ Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment (2019), page 315

¹⁹ Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment (2019), page 328

²⁰ Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment (2019), page 326

²¹ Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment (2019), page 326

²² Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment (2019), page 348

*hedgerow oaks which provide visual diversity as well as continuity with the adjoining forested landscape of the Finchampstead Ridges.*²³

Rarity – Assessing rarity is difficult but a number of sources can assist. The LCA (2019) provides a list of ‘valuable landscape attributes’ for the M1 ‘Finchampstead Forested and Settled Sands’ LCA including:

The elevated plateau and wooded skyline, the distinctive pattern of woodland and forestry and expanses of mixed woodland; sandy heaths, lakes and bogs which provide nationally important BAP habitats, nationally recognised SSSIs and opportunities for recreation; distinctive long straight historic rides – a cultural record of the past allowing views into a landscape; vistas of the Wellingtonia Avenue; areas with a sense of tranquillity and even remoteness; the locally listed historic park at Ravenswood, one of only four medieval deer parks in the ; district; and a low-density, post-war settlement pattern along the straight rides and notably the occasional wooded gaps between areas of settlement.

The Wokingham District Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) (2004) M1 ‘Finchampstead Forested and Settled Sands’ LCA supports this and describes the following features as being ‘*unique within Wokingham District*’:

*‘The elevated plateau, the long straight rides, the important ecological habitats, the [royal] forest [of Windsor], and the perceptual qualities (which can be interpreted as meaning tranquillity and dark skies). Whilst there are straight rides in adjacent boroughs they are particularly dense in the landscape – a feature of the late enclosure of this part of the Royal Forest. They are therefore of at least regional importance’.*²⁴

The Wellingtonia Avenue is one of, if not the, finest avenues in the Country and is considered to be of both national and regional importance. Its value is recognised in Policy IRS3 of the Finchampstead Neighbourhood Plan, where it identifies it as a non-designated heritage asset.²⁵ This feature is discussed elsewhere in this narrative. There are cultural and wildlife heritage sites of national importance in the landscape and they are also discussed elsewhere.

Representativeness – The historic straight rides, being rare examples of a large-scale designed hunting landscape in one of Europe’s premier hunting forests, are both rare (as previously discussed) and representative of this valued landscape. The remnants of the hunting forest (the rides, the open undeveloped nature and the deer park with its features), coupled with remnants of the natural landscape (including persisting in the landscapes from the open forest) are important examples of features relating to a hunting forest and a ‘late inclosure’ formerly ‘natural’ landscape. Some of these features have been modified by later land uses or development, for example: Wellingtonia Avenue is now a formal avenue; some rides are now roads lined with forestry trees; and other rides are now lined with housing. The valued Landscape therefore takes the form of a ‘spider’s web’ on

²³ Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment (2019), page 350

²⁴ Wokingham District Landscape Character Assessment (2004), paragraph 17.26

²⁵ Finchampstead Neighbourhood Development Plan 2022-2038 (September 2023), available at:

<https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/planning-policy/adopted-development-plan/neighbourhood-development-plans>

the map. However, in places the close association of rides and other hunting features with the natural landscape is preserved. This is evident on the map and in wider views from the ground, where the rides sit in a more naturalistic landscape providing a glimpse of the ancient hunting forest. Whilst both the foresters lodge (Bigshott Lodge) and the mansion that replaced it have been demolished, the parkland setting and its boundaries are largely retained and a large part of the parkland remains open and undeveloped. This provides another glimpse of the ancient hunting landscape.

The historic straight rides and the locally listed medieval park are particularly important examples of such features, and are of at least local importance and, in the case of the straight rides, probably of national importance. The SSSIs are, by definition, of national importance. The areas of tranquillity and dark skies are of at least borough importance and due to their paradoxical relationship with nearby urban areas this importance is elevated, potentially to county level.

Conservation Interests – In terms of wildlife and biodiversity, the Forest and Rides Valued Landscape provides an important mix of wildlife sites and habitats.

Habitats of principal importance include:

- Blocks of scattered Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland predominate throughout the valued landscape. Although there are also areas of conifer plantation, some of these are either naturally regenerating or being actively restored to mixed deciduous woodland. As might be expected from a late inclosures hunting landscape there is a notable absence of ancient woodland.
- Pockets of Wet Woodland occur in lower lying and waterlogged areas and Traditional Orchards occur often in close association with established historic settlements
- Wood Pasture and Parkland, a generally more open habitat is reported at West Court in the far western part of the valued landscape.
- Open habitats are present to a lesser extent across the valued landscape including Rivers, Lowland Heathland, Mesotrophic Lakes, Eutrophic standing waters, Lowland Fens, Lowland Dry Acidic Grassland, and Lowland Meadows.

The Ancient Tree Inventory²⁶ shows a wide variety of Ancient and Veteran Trees with notable aggregations, as is to be, at the core of Ravenswood Park (a selection of ancient and veteran oaks and sweet chestnuts) retained amongst modern buildings in the location of the former Hannican's Lodge. The clearest aggregation of ancient and veteran trees in the valued landscape is the avenue of Wellingtonia (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*) growing either side of the historic ride, now known as Wellingtonia Avenue. These trees were planted by John Walter II, who also planted a similar but smaller avenue at his mansion at Bearwood Park. Avenues of this species are not uncommon in the borough, due to their close association with the first Duke of Wellington whose country seat, Stratfield Saye, is just across the Hampshire border and in whose honour these trees are named.

²⁶ The Ancient Tree Inventory is an online resource made available by the Woodland Trust. The Government refers developers to this resource in online planning guidance on Ancient woodland, ancient trees and veteran trees: protecting them from development – last updated 5th November 2018, available at: <https://ati.woodlandtrust.org.uk/tree-search/>

However, due to the size of the trees, the intactness and prominent position of the avenue, it has been described as one of the finest in the country.

There are two Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in the valued landscape: Heath Lake and Longmoor Bog. Heath Lake is a rare lowland example of a shallow acid lake surrounded by birch and pine woodland with relict heath. It is a long, established open water habitat and is particularly important for specialist communities of plants and animals, including some rare aquatic plant species. The site is the only acid lake left in Berkshire which still retains this characteristic flora. Longmoor Bog is one of a small number of base-poor valley mires in the County. It has a well-developed carr of alder, willow, downy birch and alder buckthorn as well as an area of wet heathland. Situated in a valley bottom, the layers of peat have accumulated to a depth of over one metre. The peat provides an almost unbroken pollen record for the last 7,500 years and cores taken from it have been used to demonstrate past changes in vegetation and land use for the surrounding area.

Nature reserves: Local Nature Reserves include Heath Lake and Longmoor Bog both of which are SSSIs. See above.

Local Wildlife Sites: There are 15 Local Wildlife Sites including a large aggregation to the west and east of the railway and north of Nine Mile Ride. This aggregation includes Gorrick Plantation which is one of a number of excellent places for informal recreation in a wildlife-rich and tranquil setting.

A Local Geological Site lies on the boundary of the valued landscape in the location of Rooks Nest Wood Country Park. The surrounding area is flat-lying and there are many drainage ditches. Some of these watercourses are orange in colour due to the amount of iron that has leached into them from the adjacent bedrock of Eocene Sands. The site is regionally important for iron-rich groundwater monitoring.

Cultural heritage and built form - the valued landscape encompasses and forms an important part of the setting of the Finchampstead Church Conservation Area, an area of high land overlooking the valleys to the south. The valued landscape also encompasses the Finchampstead Village Area of Special Character, the historic core of the village comprising small open spaces with linear development along roads. The area includes a grouping of older buildings centred around the church of St James', characterised by two-storey residential properties with tile roofs and brick / render elevations. Generally, the buildings are set back from the road and bordered by hedges and mature trees. Residential development varies in design and age, ranging from modern properties near the junction of The Village, Longwater Road and Jubilee Road, to older cottages to the west fronting The Village.

Listed buildings outside the conservation area are notably absent from the eastern part of the valued landscape and this is evident from the LCA (2019) *Figure 2.8: Cultural Heritage Designations*. This is not unexpected as this area was amongst the last parts of the Royal Forest to be inclosed.

There are just over a dozen listed buildings, ranging from the grand and ceremonial – like the Grade II listed building at West Court (a former manor house with a 17th Century core and substantial

additions and rebuilding in 1800, 1835, 1901 and 1964, and later used as an officers' mess) in the west of the valued landscape - to the more pastoral – like the Grade II listed building The Queens Oak, an early 17th Century cottage, now used as The Queens Oak public house in the south. The valued landscape forms the setting for the conservation area, as well as for the individual buildings and structures in the landscape. The form and location of many of the principal buildings is, in part, a response to the historic, geological, topological and geographical features of the landscape, in which they sit.

The Forest and Rides Valued Landscape also encompasses Ravenswood, a locally listed historic park and garden, which was acknowledged in the Inspector's decision for the planning appeal at New Acres²⁷ as one of four historic medieval parks of local importance in the whole of the district, and thereby concluded that for the purposes of the NPPF it should be categorised as a valued landscape. The Inspector recognised (in paragraph 188) of their decision that Ravenswood Park depicted the principal historic features identified on historic maps, such as the Enclosures Map of 1817 and the Walter's Map of 1823. Notable features referenced included the intact of the park's external boundaries, the driveway still being in use as a footpath and the open grassland still being predominant in the interior of the medieval park. The Inspector recognised that those key historic elements contributed to its recognition of Ravenswood Park as an asset of local importance.

The Roman Road from Calleva to London runs east-west through the valued landscape with remains of the earthed embankment (agger) still visible in some places in Crowthorne and Finchampstead²⁸.

An example of how modern development and land uses overlay ancient ones can be seen in the archaeological record. The Grade I listed 12th Century Church of St James building at Finchampstead, for example, sits in an elevated position at the centre of the medieval village, surrounded by a Roman or earlier earthwork around 200 metres to the south of the Roman Road.

Also situated on the Roman Road, is a large Roman villa complex at Wheatlands Manor in the west of the valued landscape.

The historic straight rides appear to have been built on the model of the Roman road and originally traversed an open hunting landscape affording extensive views from the rides. The rides were created primarily for Queen Anne in the early decades of the 18th Century. The inclosure of this part of the extensive Royal Forest of Windsor was carried out in the early part of the 19th Century with the last remnants of Forest around Windsor itself being lost in the inclosure of 1857. Forest - a place of forest laws (employed to protect the 'venison and the vert' or the deer and their forage) gave way to modern forestry (the science and practice of cultivating trees in plantations for timber production).

²⁷ Land at Pineridge Caravan Park Nine Mile Ride, Wokingham (APP/X0360/C/15/3141001) and Land at New Acres, Nine Mile Ride, Wokingham (APP/X0360/C/15/3141000), decisions dated 19th July 2017, paragraph 185 and 188

²⁸ Finchampstead Neighbourhood Development Plan 2022-2038 (September 2023), Appendix C History & Heritage, available at: <https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/planning-policy/adopted-development-plan/neighbourhood-development-plans>

Recreational Value - The LCA (2019) assesses public accessibility of the M1 'Finchampstead Forested and Settled Sands' LCA. The LCA (2019) notes, in a list of the 'Key Characteristics', that this area has 'good public accessibility' as follows:

Good public accessibility including formal parks such as California Country Park, LNR (including Longmoor Bog and Heath Lake) and areas of open access Forestry Commission land (such as Gorrick Plantation) connected by a network of bridleways and footpaths.²⁹

Addressing the M2 'Finchampstead Ridges Forested and Settled Sands' LCA, the LCA (2019) notes that there is:

'Open access to the woodland and heathland, much owned by the National Trust (Finchampstead Ridges and Simon's Wood) provide an important recreational resource for the adjacent settlement of Crowthorne.'³⁰

The N2 'Finchampstead Pastoral Sandy Lowland' LCA notes, in a list of the 'Key Characteristics', that the:

'Dense network of public footpaths and bridleways connect to trails in the Blackwater Valley and Finchampstead Ridges.'³¹

The J2 'Arborfield Cross and Barkham Settled and Farmed Clay' LCA notes, in a list of the 'Key Characteristics', that the:

'Provision for Formal recreation is available at the Royal East Berkshire Golf Course which the M1 LCA says is 'well integrated into the surrounding landscape' (paragraph 17.21).

The Forest and Rides Valued Landscape also encompass areas of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANGs). These are West Court SANG situated in the western part of the valued landscape and associated with the Arborfield Green Strategic Development Location (SDL).

The valued landscape also encompasses Sand Martins Golf Course, which provides a recreational facility for residents, notably in Finchampstead, Wokingham and Barkham. The golf course and field are set in a largely open area of parkland with trees and lakes. Sand Martins also comprises a network of public footpaths running along the northern, western and eastern boundary connecting the settlements of Barkham and Wokingham with Finchampstead Road and is recognised as a significant recreational resource. The area of green space is identified as a green wedge in the Finchampstead Neighbourhood Plan (2023) by virtue of the land maintaining the distinction between built-up areas and countryside and by maintaining separation between Finchampstead North and Wokingham Town.

²⁹ Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment (2019), page 315

³⁰ Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment (2019), page 326

³¹ Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment (2019), page 48

Perceptual Aspects – are addressed in the LCA (2019) which identifies areas of seclusion and remoteness, a sense of enclosure in some parts, rural tranquillity and even experience of dark skies. This is an exceptional landscape within the commuter belt of London. The LCA (2019) states:

For the L2 'Farley Hill Wooded Sand and Gravel Hills' LCA:

*'...through the woodlands, bordered by bulky hedgerows and often without kerbs or intrusive signage. Secluded, remote character of the landscape enclosed within woodland, with an experience of dark skies.'*³²

And

*'Areas with a strong sense of seclusion and rural tranquillity, with naturalistic perceptual qualities and experience of dark skies due to the lack of settlement. (Additional reference from valued landscape attributes)'*³³

For the M1 'Finchampstead Forested and Settled Sands' LCA, which with the M2 'Finchampstead Ridges Forested and Settled Sands' LCA, forms the bulk of the valued landscape:

*'Localised area of remoteness within woodlands and smaller areas of pasture, mire and heath, which provide a sense of tranquillity.'*³⁴

And:

*'A highly enclosed landscape created by the often continuous swathes of dense woodland, except for framed views along the rides.'*³⁵

For the M2 'Finchampstead Ridges Forested and Settled Sand' LCA, which together with the M1 'Finchampsptead Forested and Settled Sands' LCA, forms the bulk of the valued landscape:

*'The undeveloped character and sense of remoteness removed from the roads due to the lack of built development. The area provides an escape and chance to experience dark skies in close proximity to the urban population.'*³⁶

For the N2 'Finchampstead Pastoral Sandy Lowland' LCA, it states:

*'Peaceful and rural ambience with an experience of dark skies which provides an escape in close proximity to the urban population.'*³⁷

³² Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment (2019), page 294

³³ Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment (2019), page 296

³⁴ Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment (2019), page 315

³⁵ Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment (2019), page 315

³⁶ Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment (2019), page 328

³⁷ Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment (2019), page 351

The landscape sits just a short distance from the busy transport corridors of the A329M and M3, railway links at Crowborough, areas of dense settlement and the town of Wokingham. Notwithstanding this, the landscape is a haven of tranquillity and incorporates a sizeable area of relatively dark skies. These perceptual qualities are important and increasingly rare in the borough and the eastern part of the county.

Associations – The principal associations of this valued landscape are with Queen Anne and King George III, for whom the straight rides were created. King George III, ‘Mad King George’, is recognised as a highly important historical figure and his association with the landscape is important. However, the association of Queen Anne with this landscape is also particularly close and poignant. Queen Anne took great pleasure in following the hunt. As a monarch the need for an heir was key to her, her dynasty and the nation (something she famously struggled for many years to achieve). This effort greatly affected her health. In later years, she was unable to follow the hunt on horse-back. The rides were created for a monarch but also for a woman who, because she was queen, had suffered dreadfully. After seventeen pregnancies; resulting in miscarriages, still births and infant mortality; her heir - Prince William - the only one of her children to survive infancy, died at the age of 11 in 1700 AD.

Another close association is with the first Duke of Wellington (1769-1852) whose seat lay at Stratfield Saye, adjacent to the southern boundary of the borough near Riseley. Wellingtonia trees (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*) were first brought into cultivation the year after the Duke’s death and local landowners planted individual trees, groves and avenues which stand out amongst the other trees of the borough. In the LCA (2019) it states the following in its assessment of the M2 ‘Finchampstead Ridges Forested and Settled Sands’ LCA:

‘Nearby Crowthorne developed with the establishment of Wellington College and Broadmoor Hospital for the insane. Around this time, in the 1870s, the grand avenue of Wellingtonia sequoia known as the Wellingtonia Avenue was planted by John Walter II, owner of the Times newspaper, as a memorial to the Duke of Wellington. It remains an important landmark, providing a gateway to the borough from the south west.’³⁸

At over 40m high and out-topping native trees, such avenues are now the largest features in the landscape, apart from topography and rivers. One, at Wellington Court in Spencers Wood, is visible from a wide swathe of mid-Berkshire including parts of Reading. But the greatest of all the Wellingtonia avenues in the borough is Wellingtonia Avenue itself. Running between The Ridges in Finchampstead to Wellington College (founded 1856) in Crowthorne, it is one of, if not the finest avenue of these gigantic trees in the country, and is considered to be ‘impressive’³⁹ and of ‘national importance’⁴⁰ by National Trust. The avenue is the exception, in that, unlike others in the borough, it was not planted in private parkland but on estate land owned by John Walter III of Bearwood House, proprietor of the Times newspaper and a governor of Wellington College.

³⁸ Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment (2019), para M2.12, page 327

³⁹ National Trust, Things to see and do at Simon’s Wood and Finchampstead Ridges, available at: <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/oxfordshire-buckinghamshire-berkshire/simons-wood-and-finchampstead-ridges/things-to-see-and-do-at-simons-wood-and-finchampstead-ridges>

⁴⁰ National Trust, Finchampstead Ridges, Simon’s Wood & Ambarrow Hill

Wellingtonia Avenue is an outstanding and distinct feature of the borough's landscape that was recognised by the Inspector in their decision for Land adjacent to The Ridgeways, Wellingtonia Avenue, Crowthorne. Here, the Inspector stated in paragraph 13 of their decision letter that:

'Wellingtonia Avenue is distinctive in its character and appearance as a result of the impressive avenue of mature trees which line both sides of the road. Within the tree screening are large dwellings set back from the road, bounded to the front by mature hedging and trees. This provided a woodland feel to the immediate area and significantly screens the dwellings. The set back of the dwellings and their large plots minimise the built form and retain a heavy rural ambience to the surroundings. Although not subject to any statutory or local landscape protection, the Wokingham District Landscape Character Assessment identifies the dramatic, long and straight Wellingtonia Avenue as a key characteristic of the area, along with low-density detached houses which are enclosed and screened with large gardens containing retained woodland'.⁴¹

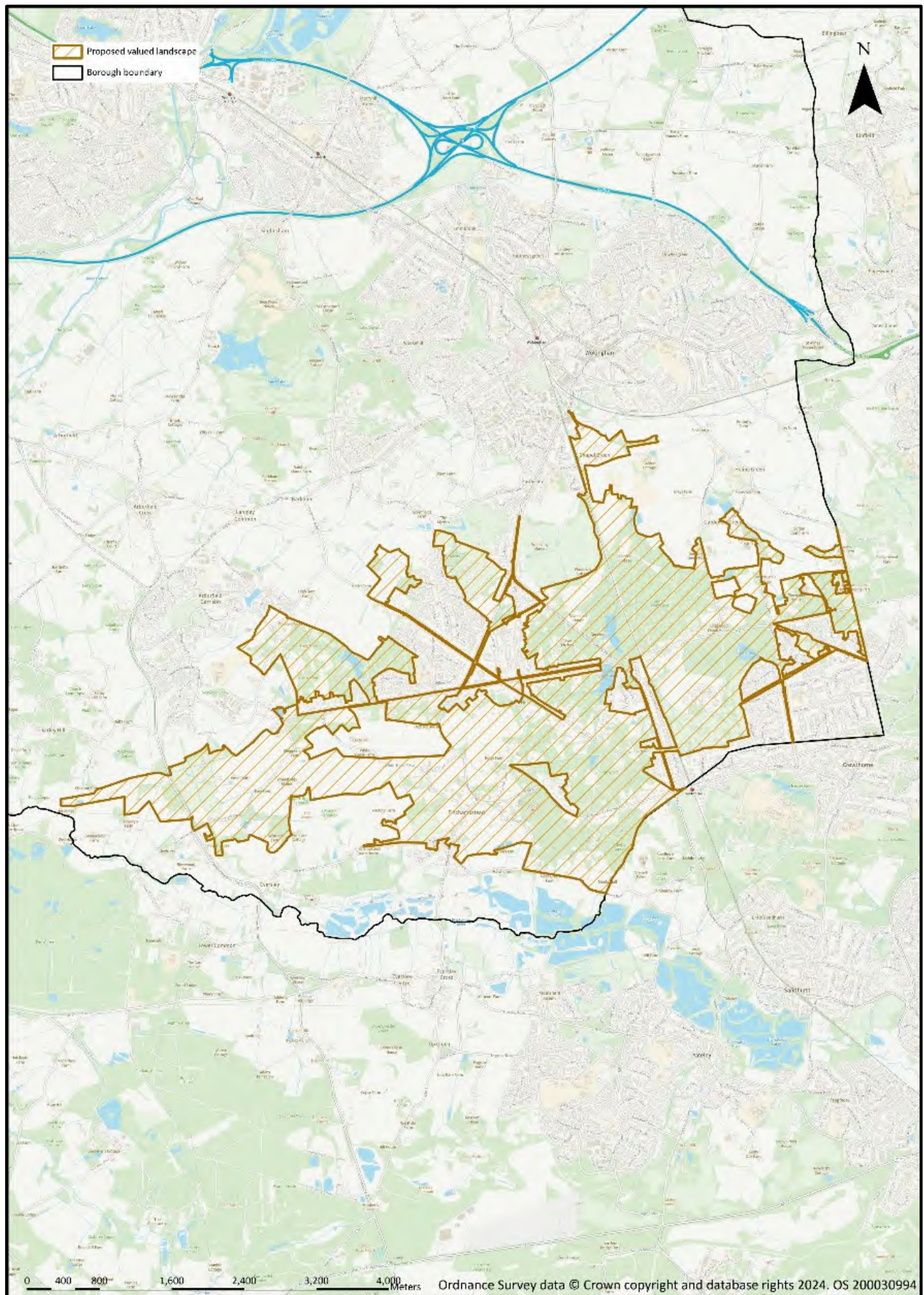
Another known association is the area of woodland surrounding Pinewood Centre, which is included in the Forest and Rides Valued Landscape. Formerly, the Pinewood Sanatorium, this facility was surrounded by tall pine trees in a woodland setting at Bagshot Sands, a key feature that was recognised by the London Medical Board for siting a tuberculosis sanatorium at the turn of the 20th Century. Whilst effective treatments had not been far advanced, the most common remedy in that era was rest, relaxation and plenty of fresh air, and ideally under a canopy of pine trees. The pine forest at Pine Wood was believed to be beneficial for sufferers of tuberculosis as the aroma from the pine trees ameliorated the effects of the lung condition⁴².

The patients were housed in prefabricated dormitories in the grounds of Pinewood, however over 70 years, the sanatorium was also home to victims of gas warfare in the First World War and servicemen and the Canadian Red Cross during the Second World War. The pine forest, known today as Pinewood, is evident on historic OS maps and remains present today.

⁴¹ Land adjacent to The Ridgeways, Wellingtonia Avenue, Crowthorne, APP/X0360/W/18/3216306, decision dated 12th November 2019

⁴² London Metropolitan Archives, Pinewood Sanatorium, 1910-1966, available at: https://search.lma.gov.uk/scripts/mwimain.dll/144/LMA_OPAC/web_detail/REFD+H69?SESSIONSEARCH

Forest and Rides Valued Landscape Map



APPENDIX 5

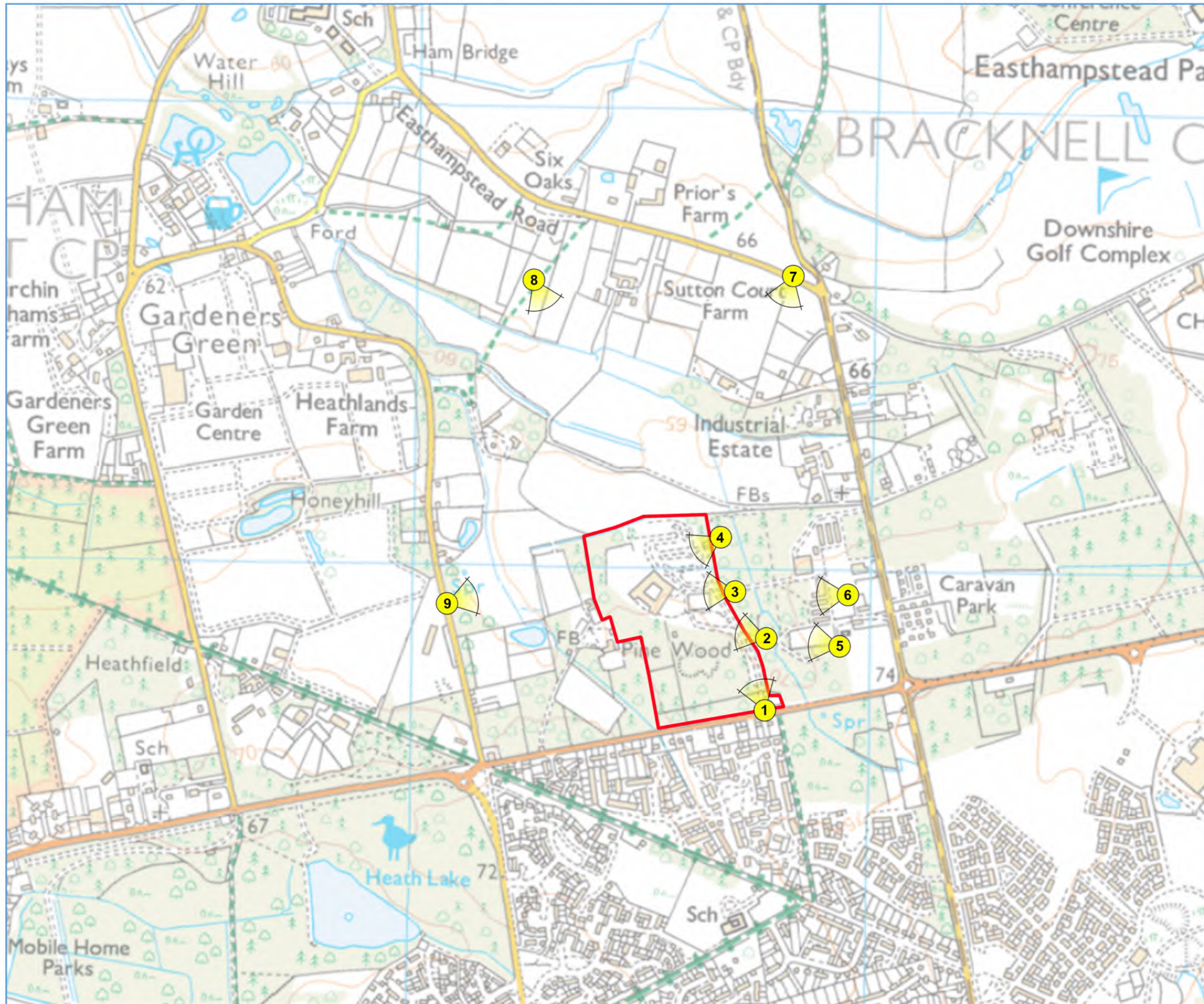
Viewpoint Location Plan (VLP.003) and Photographic Record

Not to Scale



Key

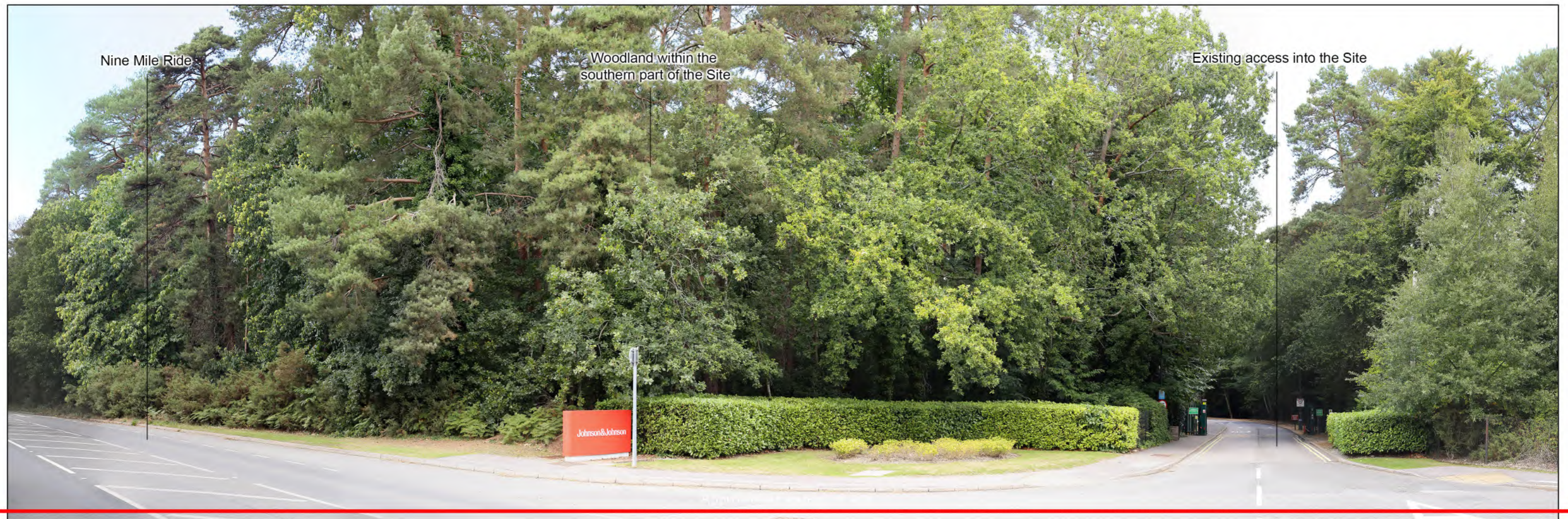
-  Site Boundary
-  Viewpoint Location



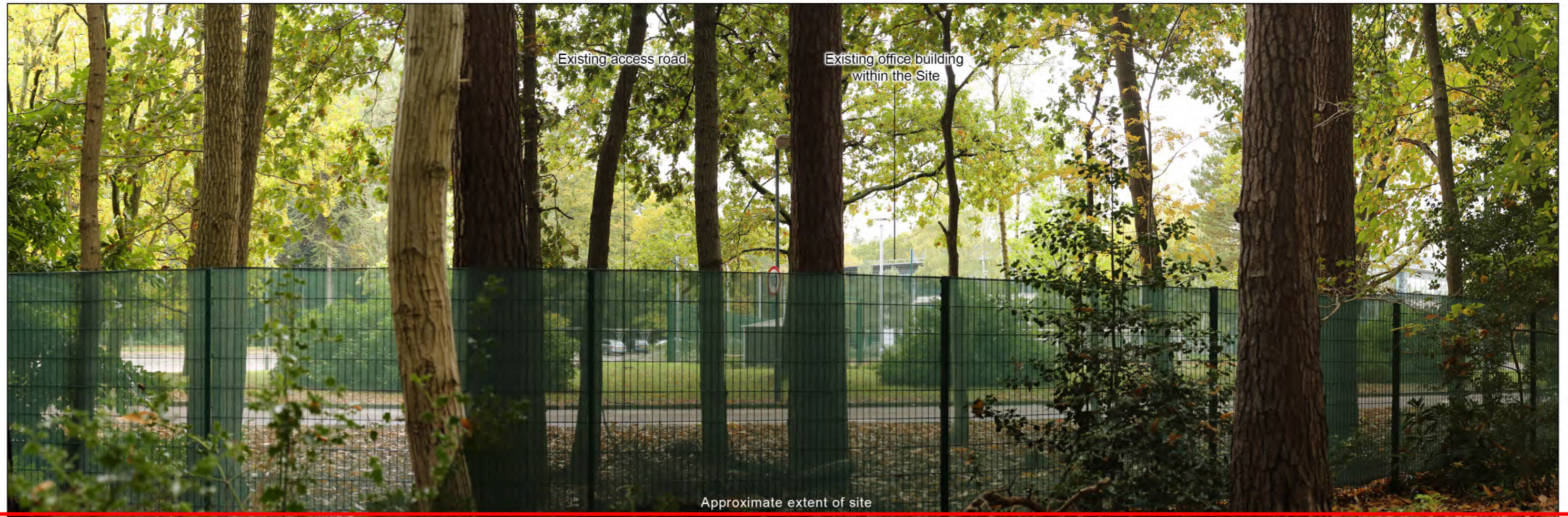
Pinewood Campus,
Wokingham

Viewpoint Location Plan

Drawing Ref: Pr-1158.VLP.003 Rev. -
Date: September 2025 Drawn: AM



Viewpoint 1



Viewpoint 2

NOTE: PHOTOGRAPHS ILLUSTRATE THE EXISTING LANDSCAPE CONTEXT ONLY AND SHOULD NOT REPLACE VISITING THE VIEWPOINTS IN PERSON TO ENSURE AN OBJECTIVE ASSESSMENT. Panoramas are created from multiple photographs which are stitched together in Adobe Photoshop. The photographs are taken using a digital equivalent of a 35mm camera in line with best practice and current guidance. The camera (Canon EOS 6D) is a full sensor DSLR model and, as such, the photographs are taken at a 50mm focal length using a fixed 50mm Canon lens. Images illustrate a horizontal field of view of 68° and, when printed at A3, should be viewed at a distance of 260mm curved through the same radius in order to most closely reflect the existing landscape context.



Viewpoint 3



Viewpoint 4

NOTE: PHOTOGRAPHS ILLUSTRATE THE EXISTING LANDSCAPE CONTEXT ONLY AND SHOULD NOT REPLACE VISITING THE VIEWPOINTS IN PERSON TO ENSURE AN OBJECTIVE ASSESSMENT. Panoramas are created from multiple photographs which are stitched together in Adobe Photoshop. The photographs are taken using a digital equivalent of a 35mm camera in line with best practice and current guidance. The camera (Canon EOS 6D) is a full sensor DSLR model and, as such, the photographs are taken at a 50mm focal length using a fixed 50mm Canon lens. Images illustrate a horizontal field of view of 68° and, when printed at A3, should be viewed at a distance of 260mm curved through the same radius in order to most closely reflect the existing landscape context.

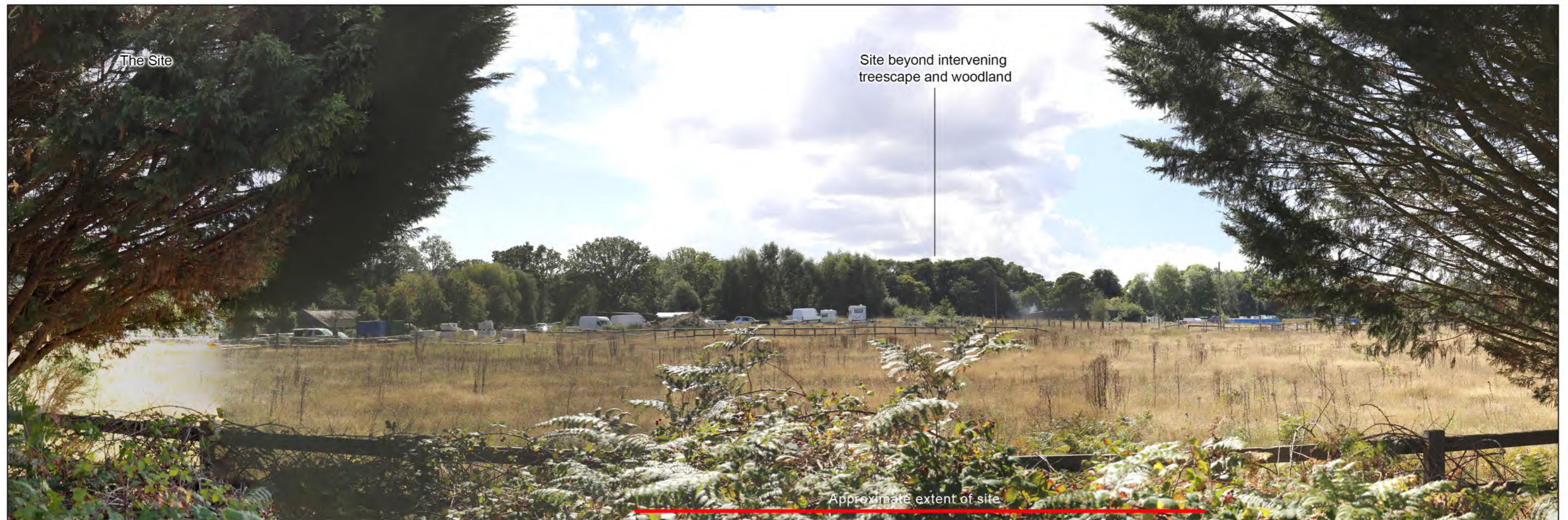


Viewpoint 5



Viewpoint 6

NOTE: PHOTOGRAPHS ILLUSTRATE THE EXISTING LANDSCAPE CONTEXT ONLY AND SHOULD NOT REPLACE VISITING THE VIEWPOINTS IN PERSON TO ENSURE AN OBJECTIVE ASSESSMENT. Panoramas are created from multiple photographs which are stitched together in Adobe Photoshop. The photographs are taken using a digital equivalent of a 35mm camera in line with best practice and current guidance. The camera (Canon EOS 6D) is a full sensor DSLR model and, as such, the photographs are taken at a 50mm focal length using a fixed 50mm Canon lens. Images illustrate a horizontal field of view of 68° and, when printed at A3, should be viewed at a distance of 260mm curved through the same radius in order to most closely reflect the existing landscape context.



Viewpoint 7



Viewpoint 8

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Viewpoint 9

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