



PART 3: ANALYSIS

DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS OF **THE SITE**

3.1 SITE HISTORY

Evolution of Land North of Barkham Road

- RAF photography of the site from 1967 shows it to be an open field with small trees planted along the road frontage.
- Aerial images from the early to late 2000s show a clear division on the site of the area cover with self seeded trees to the west and the open grassland areas to the east.
- By summer 2022 we see that the open area to the east has become overgrown with scrub.

- APPLICATION SITE BOUNDARY
- AREA UNDER APPLICANT OWNERSHIP



1945 to 1965 Historic OS Map
[Image Source: National Library of Scotland - GeoMapper]



Aerial Photograph - 13th June 1967
[Image Source: Historic England - Aerial Photo Explorer]

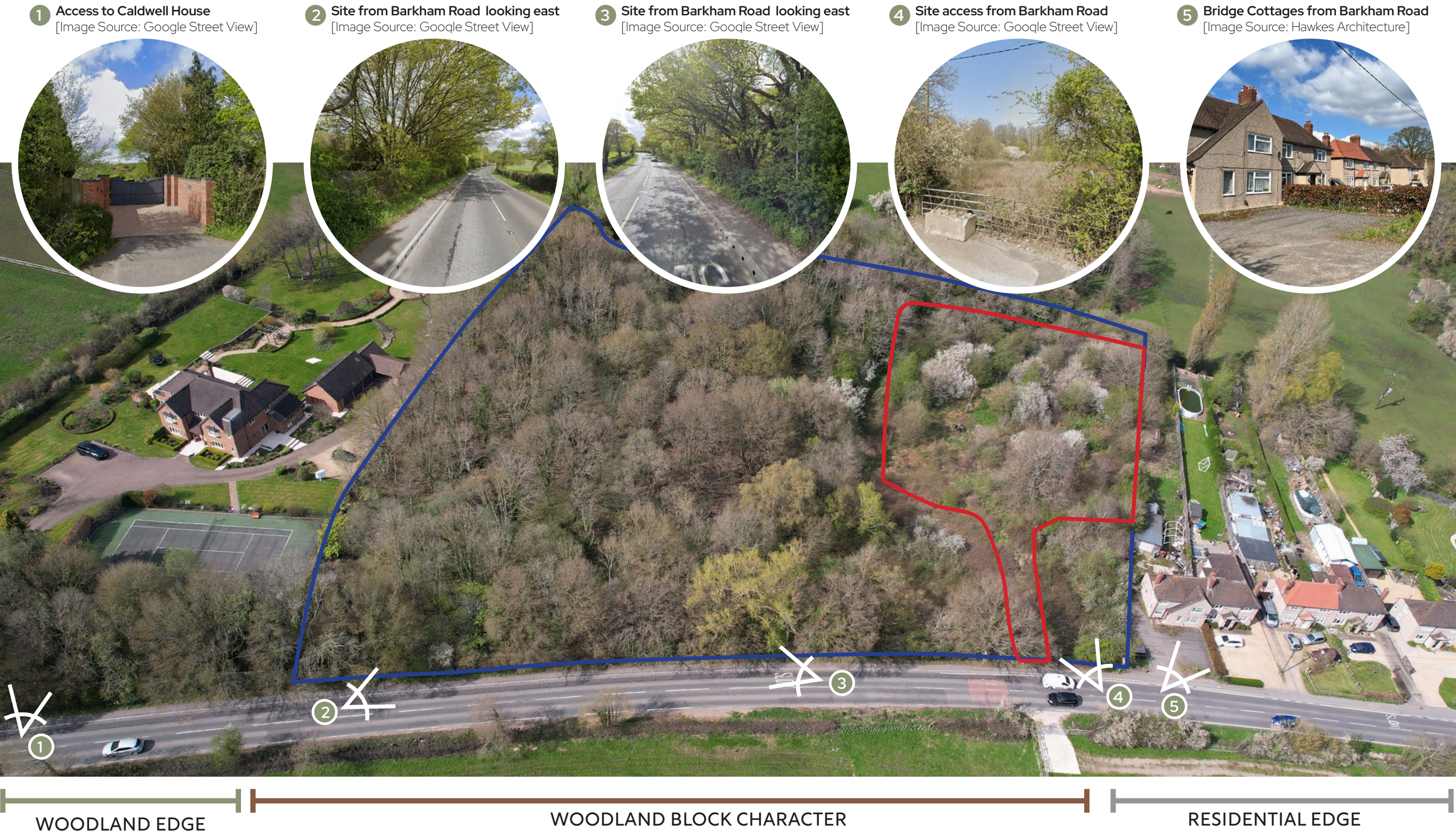


Aerial Photograph - Summer 2005
[Image Source: Google Earth Pro]

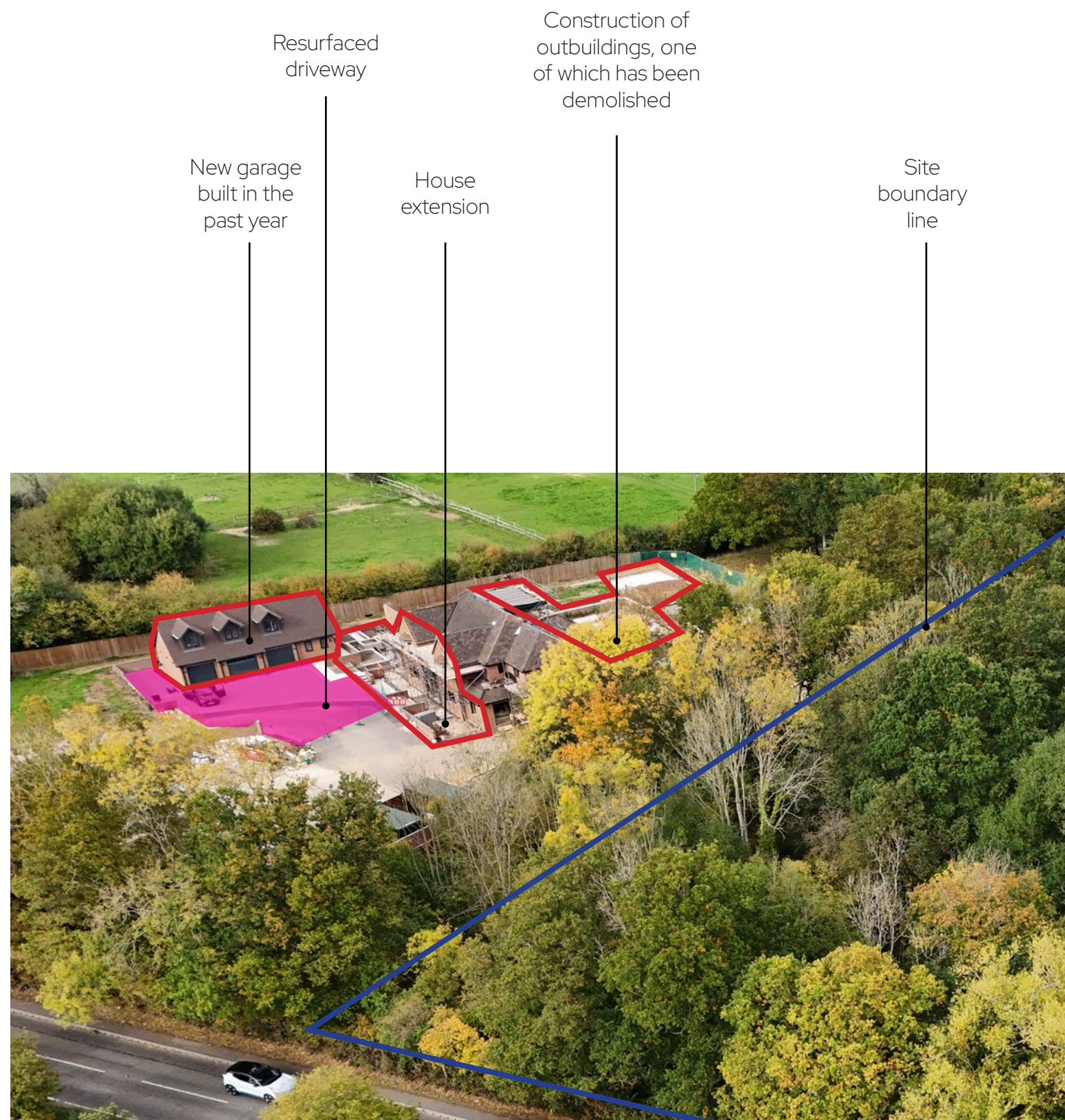


Aerial Photograph - Summer 2022
[Image Source: Google Earth Pro]

3.2 SITE CHARACTERISTICS AND IMMEDIATE CONTEXT



3.3 NEIGHBOURING DEVELOPMENT



Caldwell House: Neighbouring property left of the Site

HOUSE OF THE WOODS

Caldwell House development

2023



Existing outbuilding that has been demolished

2025



Footprint of new outbuilding / annexe

New building extension

Site area reworked, with lawn removal

Resurfaced driveway

Garage development

DESIGN STRATEGY OPPORTUNITIES

The neighbouring property, directly next to the site boundary, is currently under a lot of construction. It is gaining an extension, has a new garage with space for 3 vehicles, and is constructing a new outbuilding/annexe.

DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SITE

3.4 DRONE PHOTO FROM ABOVE



Drone Photograph courtesy of Axiom Planning – 25th November 2021

APPLICATION SITE BOUNDARY

AREA UNDER APPLICANT OWNERSHIP

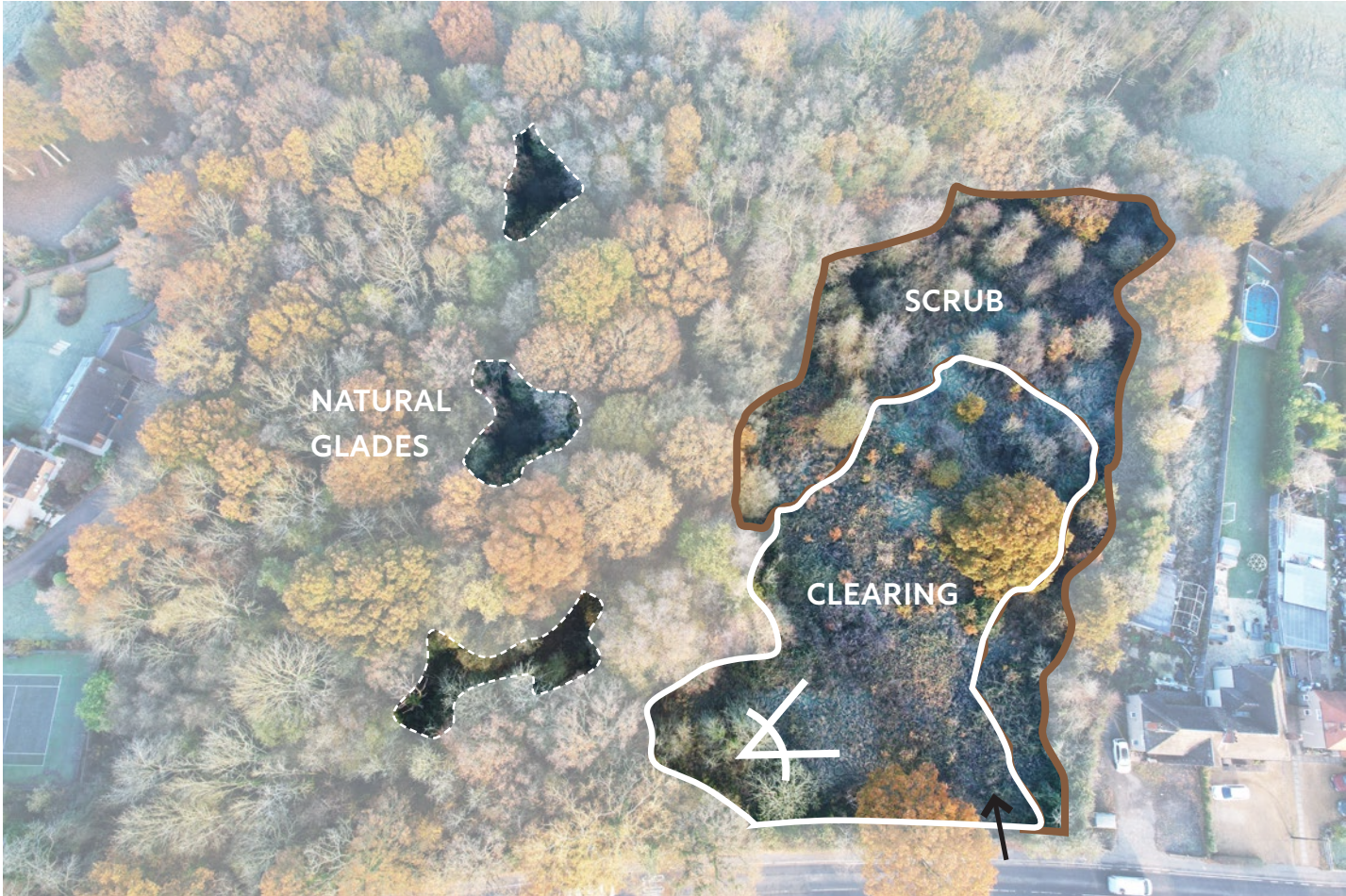
DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SITE

3.5 CHARACTER AREAS

UNMANAGED WOODLAND CHARACTER



SCRUB AND CLEARING CHARACTER



Caldwell House

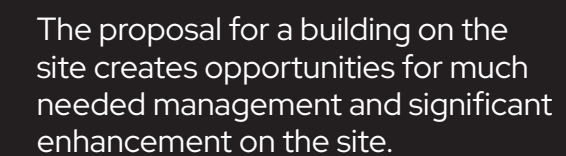


Specimen Oak Tree

Bridge Cottages

ECOLOGY SUMMARY

- Bats – the site offers numerous potential roosting sites within the mature trees in the woodland.
- Hazel dormice – the presence of dormice on the site is highly unlikely due to lack of suitable habitat.
- Amphibians – A HSI assessment was undertaken of the pond at Handpost Farm as part of un-associated survey work in 2023 and was rated poor habitat for great crested newts. It is considered there is a low risk that GCN could be present onsite.
- Reptiles – The site offers suitable habitat for grass snake which have been previously recorded on the site. Slow worms were found on the site.
- Nesting birds – it is likely that common and widespread nesting birds are using the site.
- Badgers – there is no evidence of badger activity.
- Hedgehogs – may next within the hedgerow and forage within the site.
- Otters – The woodland and scrub offer potential habitats for otters to use to shelter.
- Invertebrates – The current habitats unlikely to support an invertebrate assemblage of conservation importance beyond the scale of the site.



3.7 PREVIOUS ECOLOGICAL WORK UNDERTAKEN ON SITE

Company:	Year:	Survey undertaken	Key outcomes:
GPM Ecology in 2008	2008	Phase 1 habitat survey	The survey identified the potential for the grassland within the site to support reptiles.
John Wenman Ecological	2008	Reptile Survey	The survey showed that the site supports grass snakes (<i>Natrix natrix</i>) and the survey findings were consistent with a 'good population' being present.
John Wenman Ecological Consultancy	2010	Reptile and botanical survey and habitat management proposals	The report covered compensation for the loss of grassland in the longer term, habitat enhancement undertaken in the surrounding land including thinning secondary woodland on the western boundary, blackthorn scrub in the north eastern corner of the site and coppicing alder dominated areas of the woodland to extend grassland habitats. The report also recommended egg laying and hibernation sites for grass snakes to be constructed.
John Wenman Ecological Consultancy	2011	Updated Reptile mitigation, habitat creation and management proposals	An updated report detailing proposals for ecological enhancement of the site, and the adjacent woodland, as part of its long term management. The report adds to the report submitted with the earlier application and should be read in conjunction with the information presented there.
John Wenman Ecological Consultancy	2013	Letter report summarising wildlife mitigation and management strategy.	A summary based on the management recommendations set out in the Updated Reptile mitigation, habitat creation and management proposals (JWEC 2011). The report outlines the habitat protection/enhancement measures that were to be implemented.
Wokingham District Council	2013	Section 106 Agreement	The S106 agreement was signed off by the council in relation to proposed development on the site. mitigation management report undertaken in 2013 and signed off by the council. The agreement was based on the JWEC 2011 report and a further letter report from 2013, summarising the wildlife mitigation and management strategy.
John Wenman Ecological Consultancy	2022	Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) & Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Feasibility Assessment (Report ref: R3287/a)	The survey found the land to consist of unmanaged grassland surrounded by woodland and dense blackthorn scrub. A native hedgerow was present on the southern boundary along Barkham Road. The grassland was structurally diverse but considered to be of no special botanical interest and the woodland was an example of a habitat of principal importance for conservation (HPI). The habitats on site are of conservation value within context of the site and local level. The previous proposed development would result in the removal of 0.08ha of existing neutral grassland, a habitat of medium distinctiveness and therefore, without appropriate compensation, would have an adverse impact on the ecological value of the grassland onsite and lead to a net loss of biodiversity. Due to the nature of the site, this loss cannot be compensated with the creation of new habitat of the same or greater distinctiveness on site because of the ecological value/distinctiveness of the remaining habitats on site.
John Wenman Ecological Consultancy	2023	Updated Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) (Report ref: R3565/a)	An updated PEA undertaken by John Wenman Ecological Consultancy in August 2023 due to a new planning application. The survey found the site to have become dominated by scrub with small parcels of

Company:	Year:	Survey undertaken	Key outcomes:
John Wenman Ecological Consultancy	2023	Updated Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) (Report ref: R3565/a)	An updated PEA undertaken by John Wenman Ecological Consultancy in August 2023 due to a new planning application. The survey found the site to have become dominated by scrub with small parcels of
John Wenman Ecological Consultancy	2023	Updated reptile survey (Report ref: R3566a)	An updated reptile survey was undertaken to determine if there have been any changes in the grass snake population on site and to guide recommendations for excluding them from the development footprint. The survey found no evidence of reptiles on site, mostly likely due to the site becoming more overgrown and encroached with scrub.
John Wenman Ecological Consultancy	2024	Updated Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) (Report ref: R2354_UpPEA_a)	The survey confirmed the site to consist primarily of unmanaged, mixed scrub with areas of rank grassland dominated by tussocks of coarse grass such as tufted hair grass, with areas of tall herb and rushes, and scattered trees similar to the previous survey in 2023.
John Wenman Ecological Consultancy	Sept 2024	Supervised scrub removal	Management including the removal of sections of scrub, which was encroaching the site under ecological supervision mid-September 2024 and the removal of some sections of mixed scrub in and the relocation of several trees from the eastern side of the site to the front southern side of the site
John Wenman Ecological Consultancy	2026	Ground level tree assessment (R2354_GLTA_c)	A GLTA was undertaken of numerous trees on the land north of Barkham Road in Barkham (G12, G30, T8, T13, T18, T19, T22, T23, T27, T32, T34 – T37, T41, T44 - T47, T50, T54, T57, T66, T67, T68, T69, T81, T82, T86, T91, T93, T96, T98, T104, T109 -T111, T116, T122, T125, T142, G148 and G150). The GLTA was commissioned in relation to plans shown in the Landscape Sketchbook 06 PAD Landscapes which highlighted trees for potential removal or arboricultural works. Several trees were noted to have features suitable for bats, however, none of the highlighted trees will be removed for the development and further surveys will be undertaken if they are due to be removed in the future for the management of the woodland.
John Wenman Ecological Consultancy	2026	Updated Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) (Report ref: R2354_UpPEA_c)	The habitats within the new proposed development boundary (approximately 0.25 ha) consists primarily mostly of other neutral grassland with areas of blackthorn scrub towards the northern side of the boundary and scattered trees including ash, oak, turkey oak and hawthorn. The habitats on site are of conservation value within context of the site and local level. As the site had undergone management in 2024 the site was more open and was more suitable for reptiles to recolonize the site. Therefore, further reptile surveys were recommended. A Ground Level Tree Assessment (GLTA) was carried out for the trees that require arboricultural works or removal in order to allow the development. An endoscopic check is recommend for T122 prior to removal as it had features suitable for use by bats. .
John Wenman Ecological Consultancy	2026	Updated reptile survey	The reptile survey is currently still underway, and a maximum of one sub-adult and two juvenile slow worms have been recorded on site recorded. The survey findings indicates that the site supports a low slow worm population and therefore a programme of capture and translocation to a reptile protection zone on retained land to the north and west of the development site, to maintain the conservation status of local reptile populations.

3.8 ARBORICULTURAL SURVEY (1 OF 3)

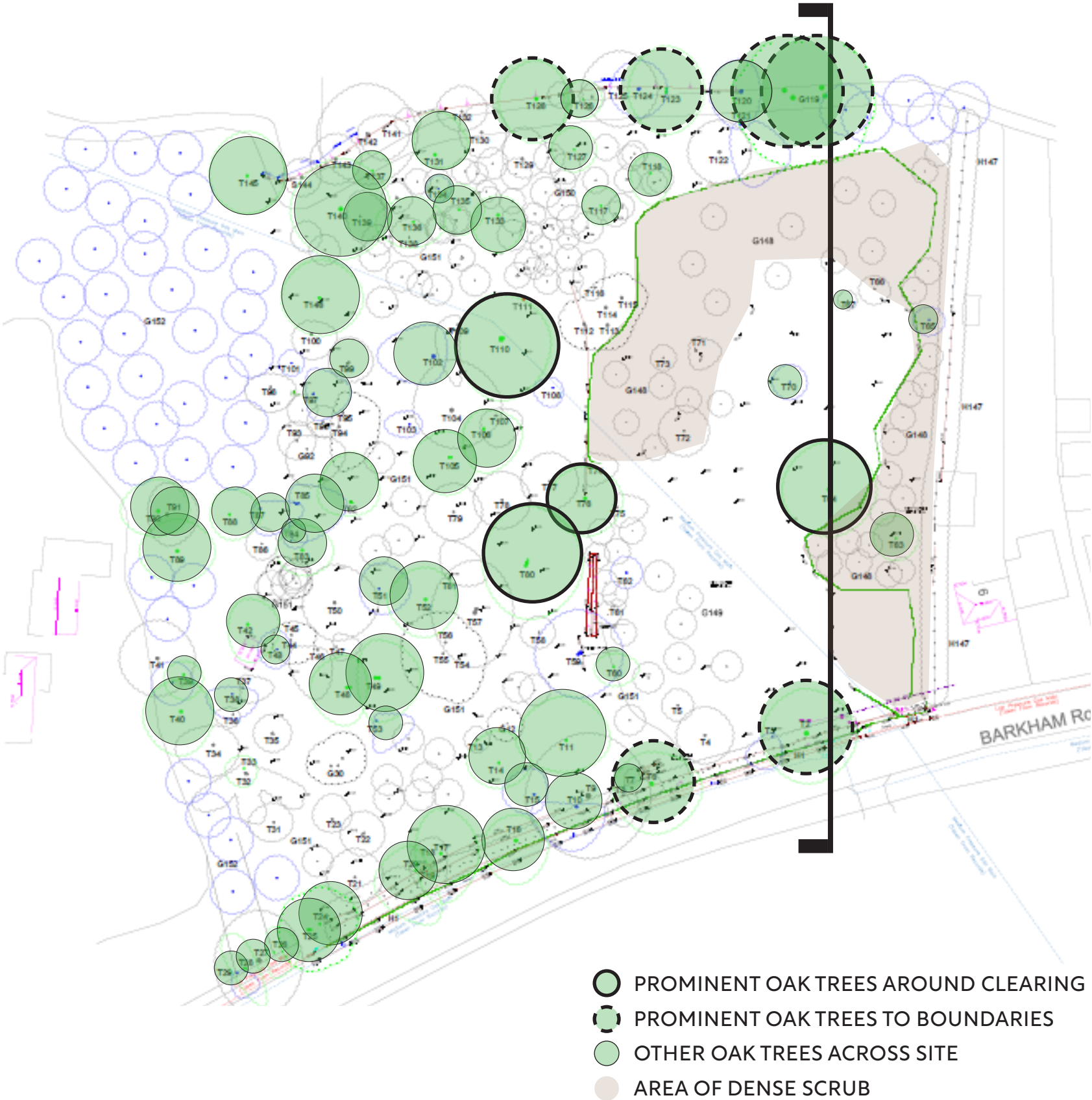
TREE SURVEY SUMMARY

An Arboricultural survey was undertaken on the site on 2nd August 2023 by BJ Unwin Forestry Consultancy:

- Pre 1945 aerial photographs of the site show it to be an open field with small trees along the road frontage.
- The western half of the site is secondary woodland, that has developed through natural processes on land previously cleared of trees, typically secondary woodland is species-poor.
- The eastern half of the site is predominantly scrub and bramble
- The pre-war trees along the road frontage are oaks
- And the trees developed within the site (from sapling to 75 years' old) comprise oaks, (some Turkey oaks) alders, ash (most with dieback disease), goat willows, birch and blackthorn/hawthorn scrub or understorey.

The site is self seeded secondary woodland and requires management including the felling of ash trees suffering from dieback and strategic removal and thinning of smaller and non-native trees in favour of the native oaks.

The proposal for a building on this site creates an opportunity for the woodland to be managed and enhanced.



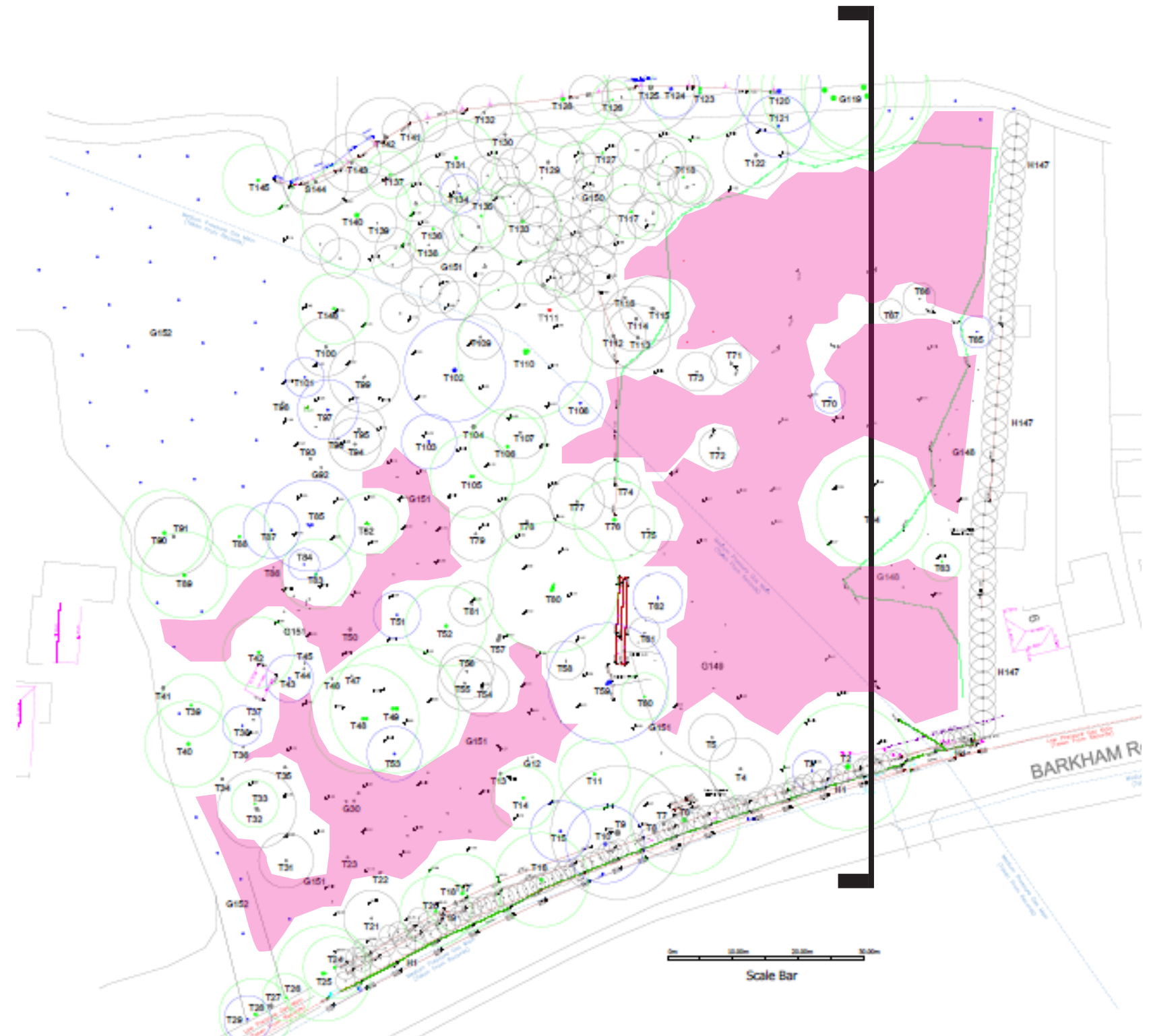
3.9 ARBORICULTURAL SURVEY (2 OF 3)

TREE CONDITION AND RPA
PROTECTION

'The estimated area rootable soil required to sustain the tree, centred on the tree's trunk. The RPA can be a varied shape enclosing the correct rootable area: but usually shown as a circle for convenience, unless obvious constraints stop rooting.'

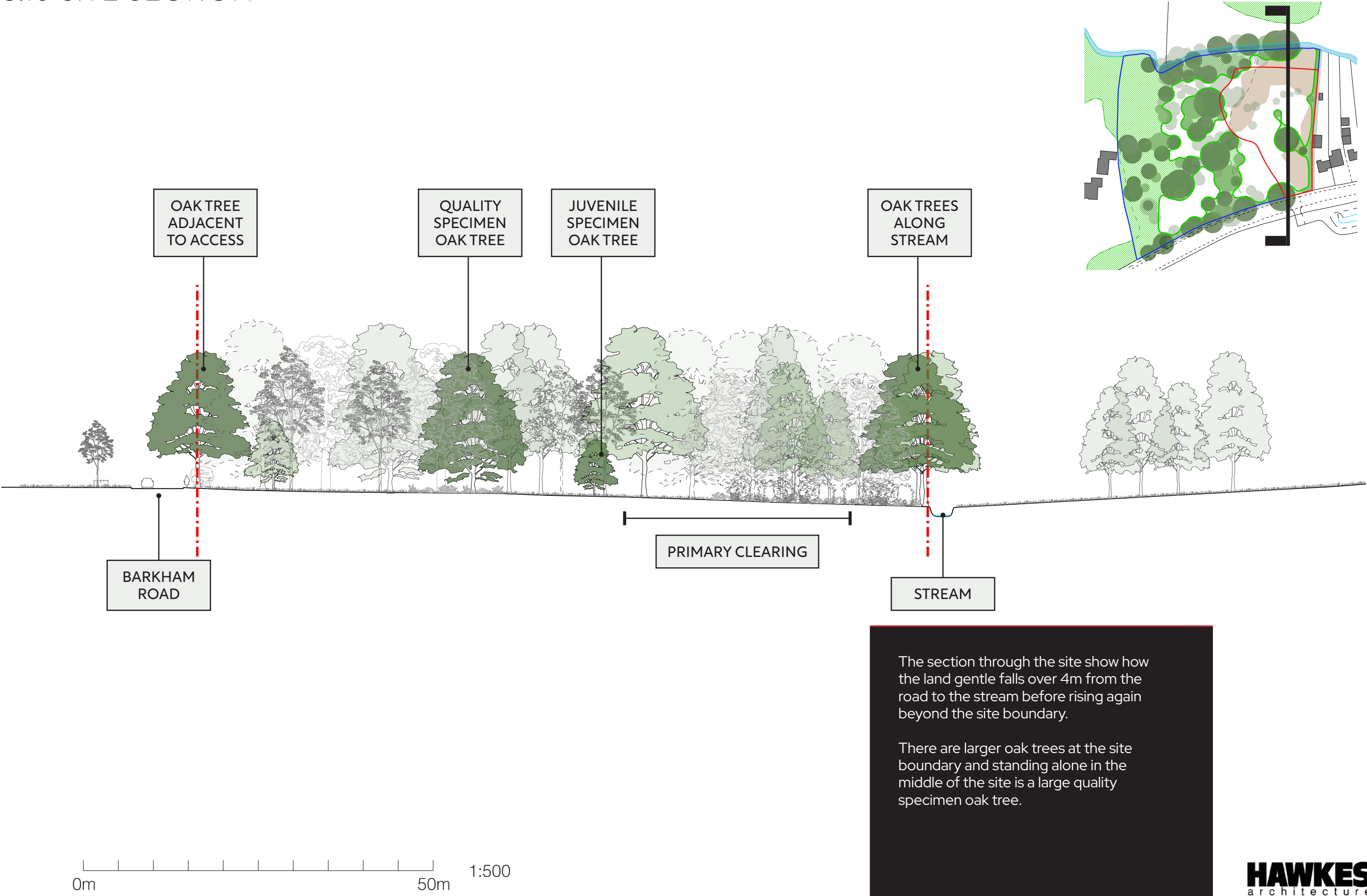
- BJ Unwin Forestry Consultancy

The western side of the site is more protected, with denser woodland towards the north west. There are a few areas/gaps with no RPA, the largest of which is the eastern side of the site. This area does feature a few small RPAs, however these are low quality and value, and are between 10-20 years of age.



- HIGH QUALITY AND VALUE (>40YRS)
- MODERATE QUALITY AND VALUE (>20YRS)
- LOW QUALITY AND VALUE (>10YRS)
- TREES TO BE REMOVED (<10YRS)
- AREA OUTSIDE RPA

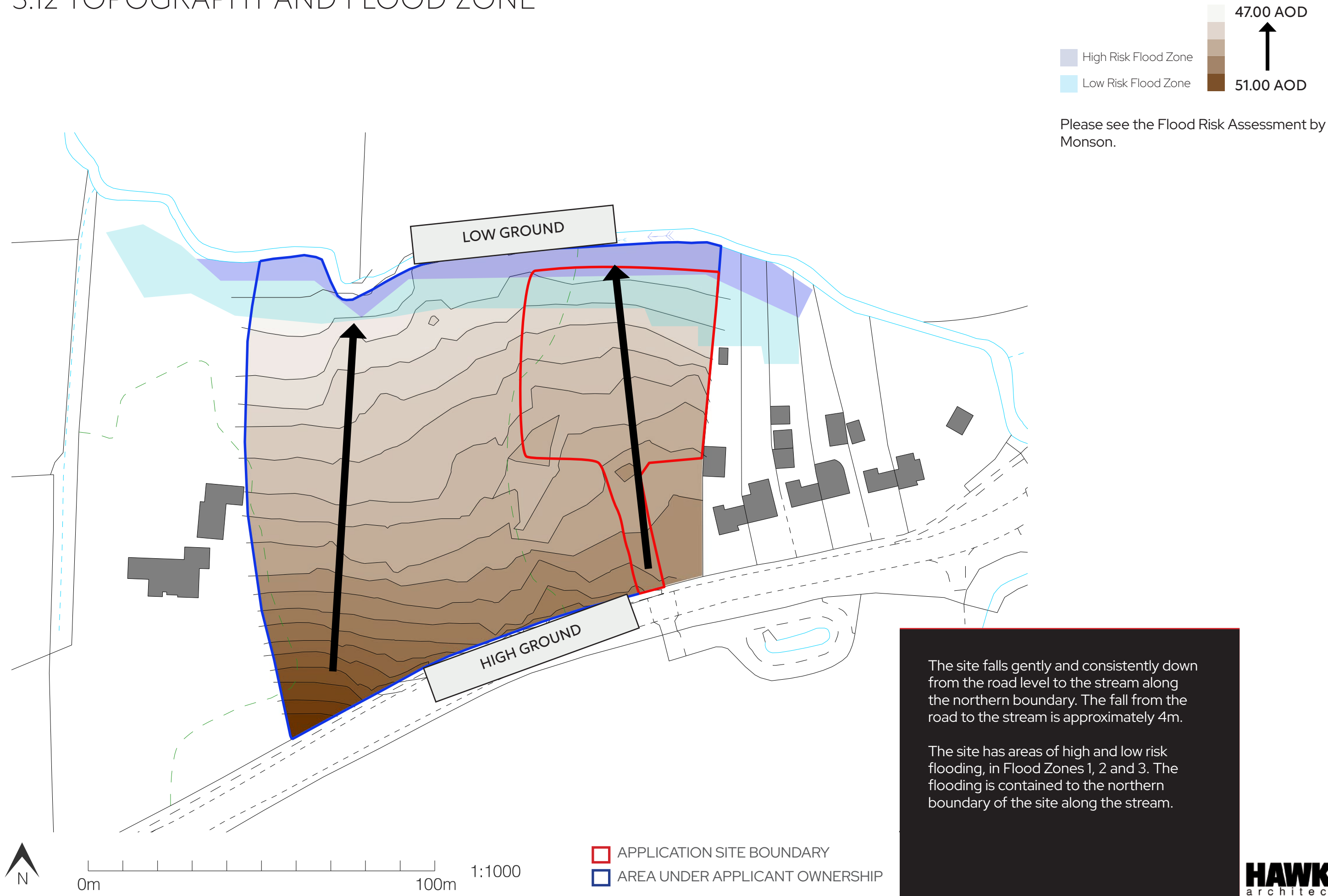
3.10 SITE SECTION



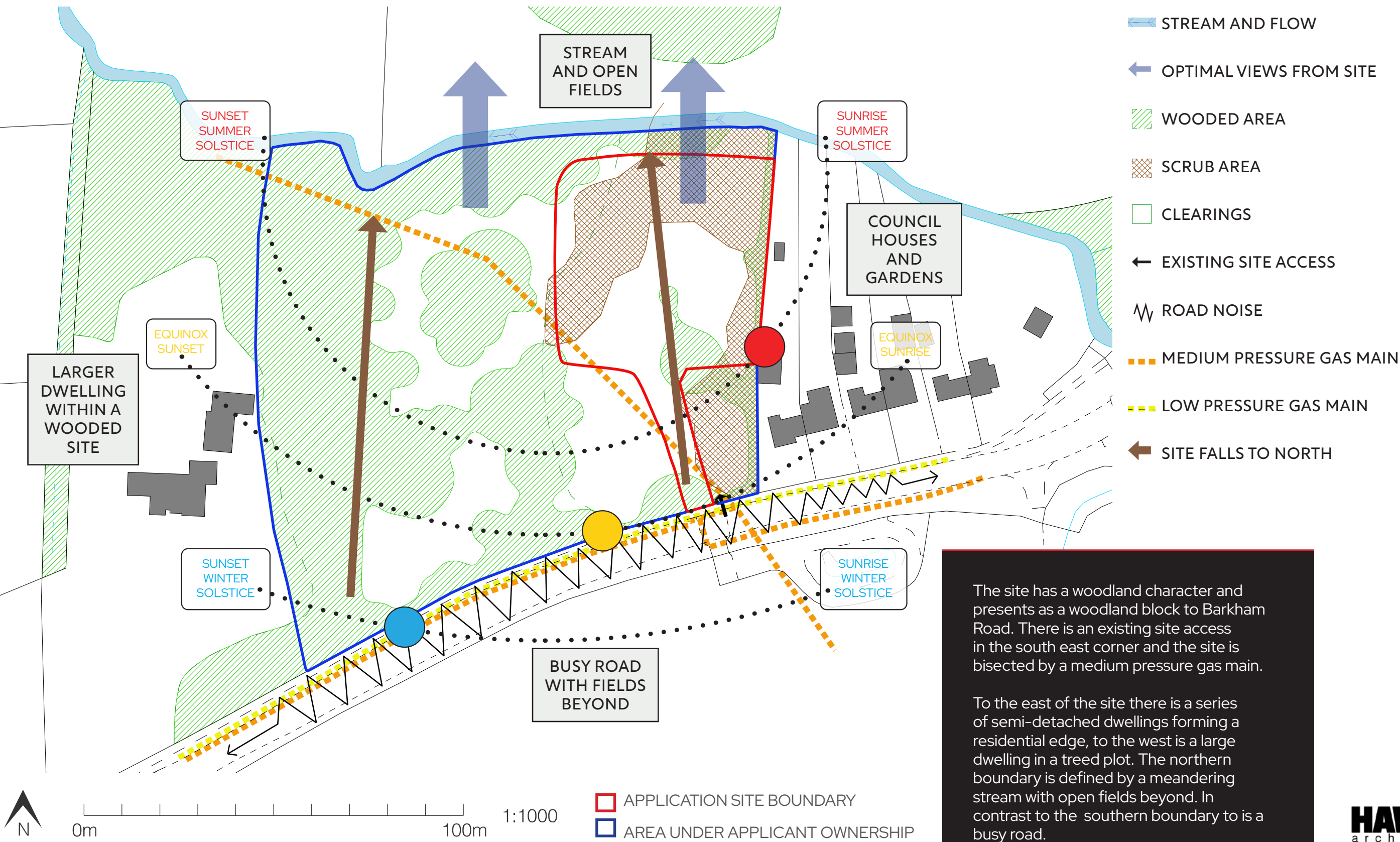
3.11 TREE CATEGORIES & PROTECTION SUMMARY



3.12 TOPOGRAPHY AND FLOOD ZONE



3.13 KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SITE



The site has a woodland character and presents as a woodland block to Barkham Road. There is an existing site access in the south east corner and the site is bisected by a medium pressure gas main.

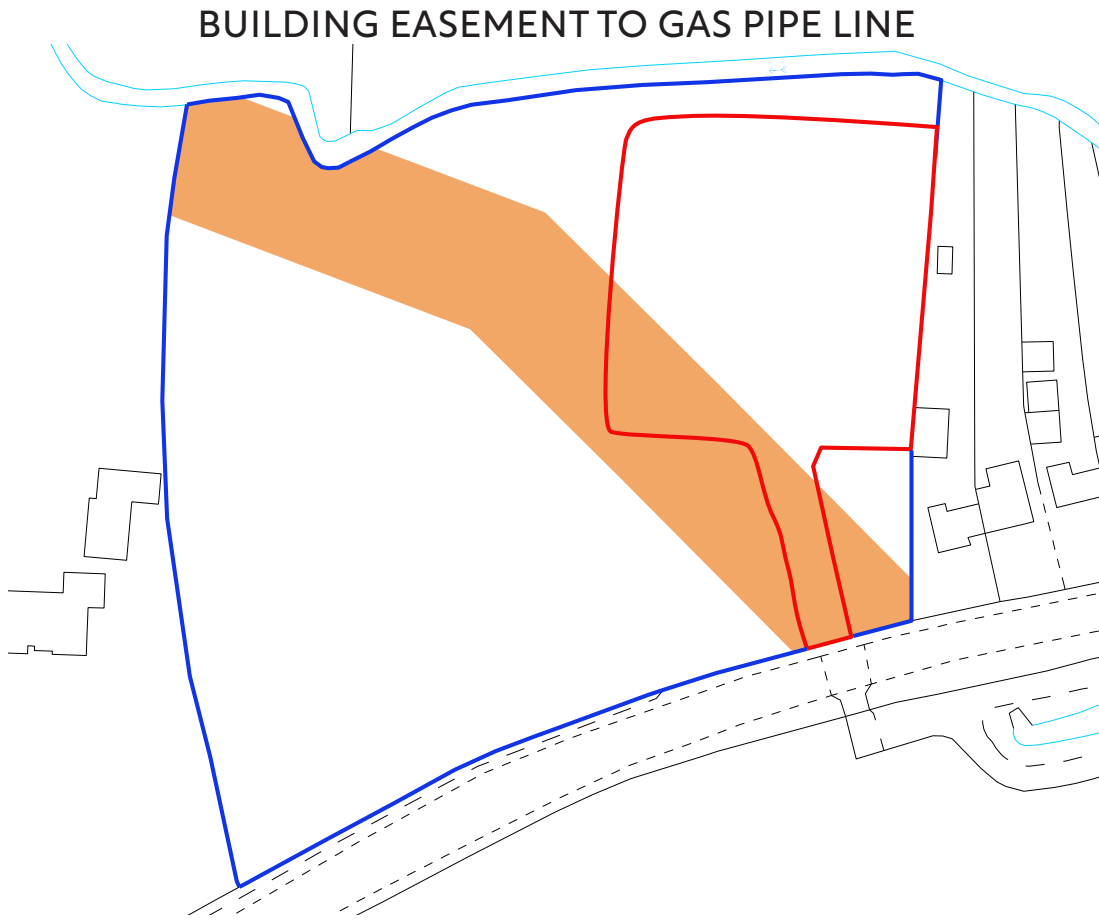
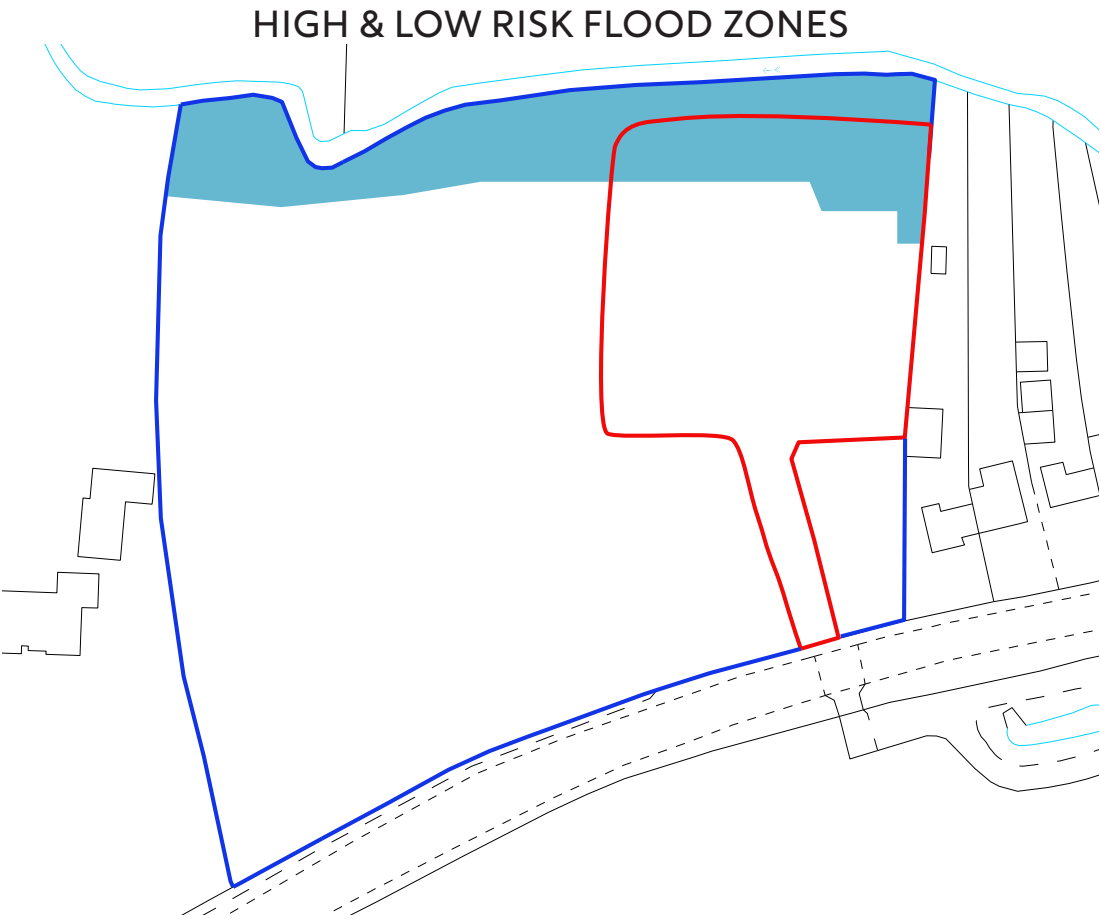
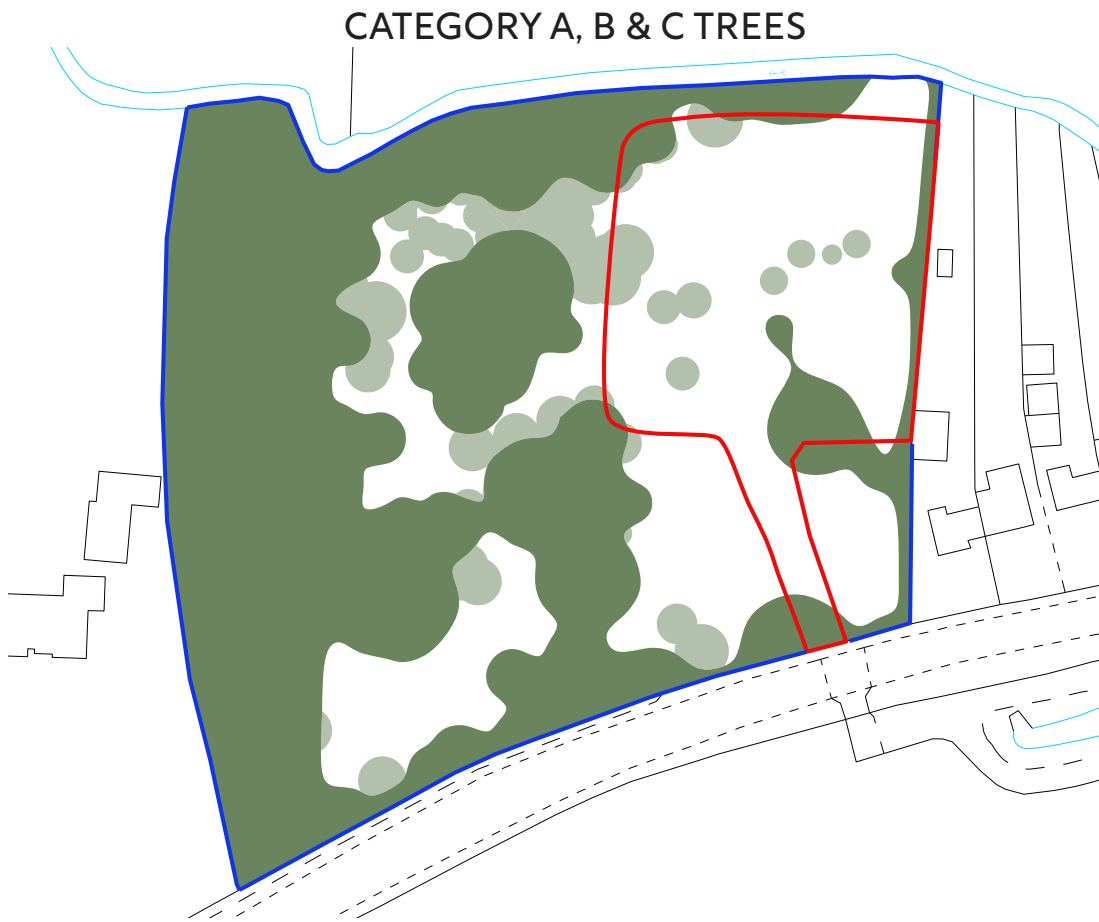
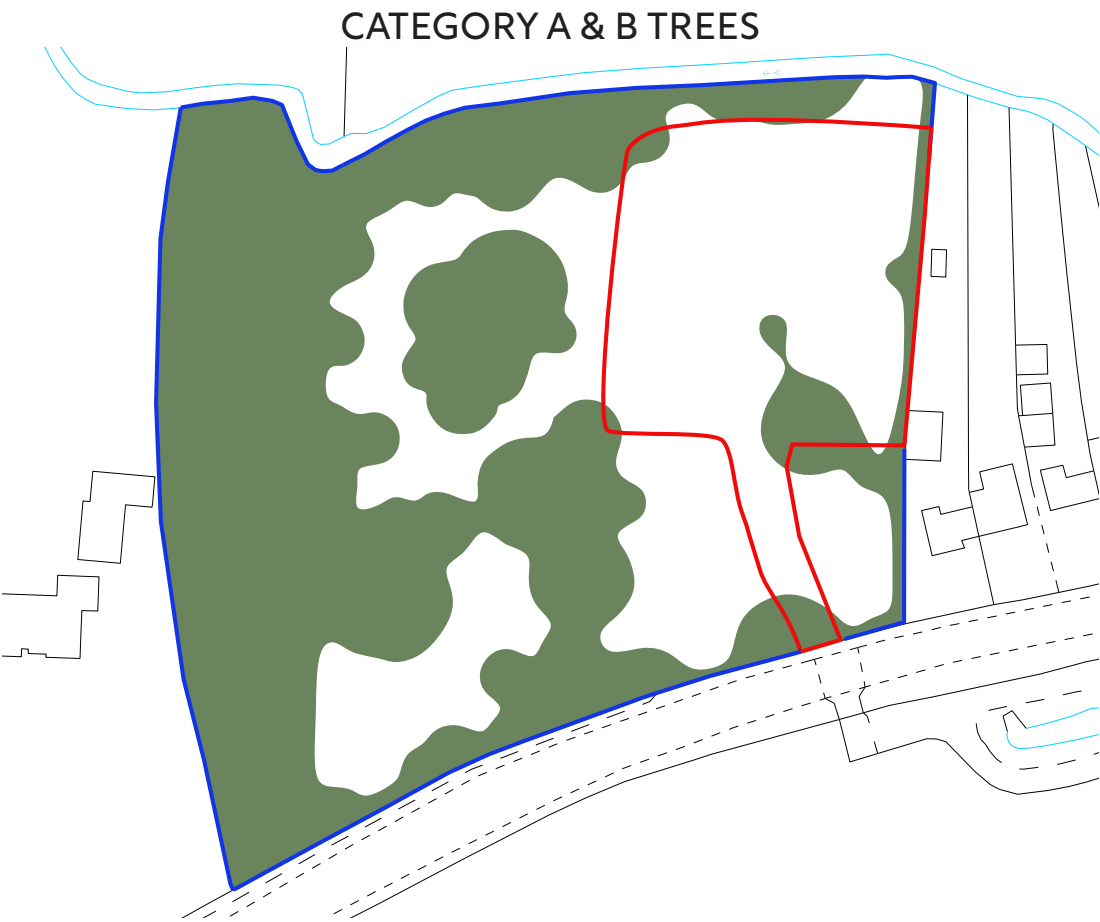
To the east of the site there is a series of semi-detached dwellings forming a residential edge, to the west is a large dwelling in a treed plot. The northern boundary is defined by a meandering stream with open fields beyond. In contrast to the southern boundary to is a busy road.

3.14 AERIAL SKETCH OF EXISTING SITE





3.15 SPACIAL CONSTRAINTS OF THE SITE

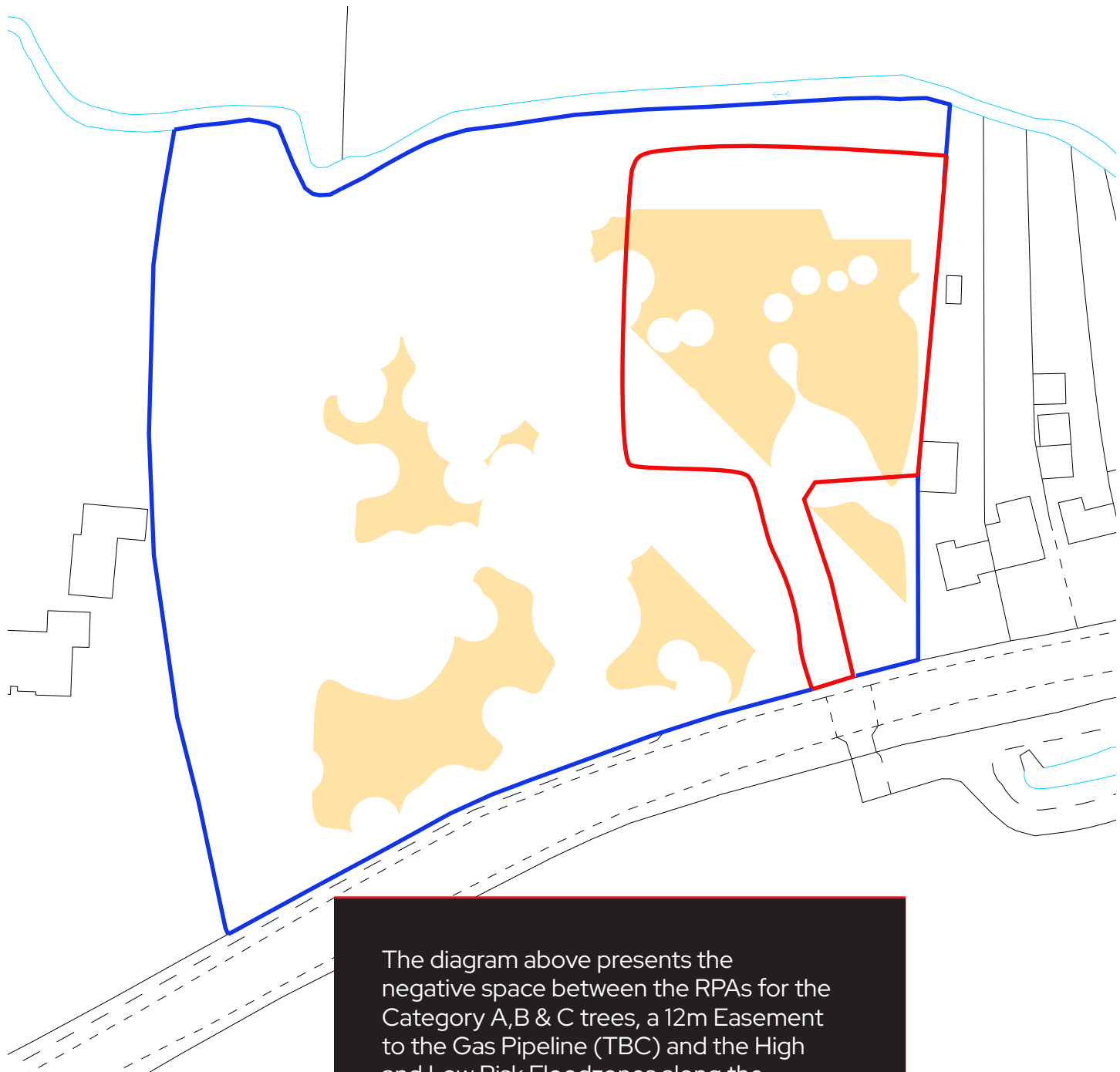


3.16 SPACIAL FRAMEWORK OF THE SITE

OVERLAY OF SPACIAL CONSTRAINTS



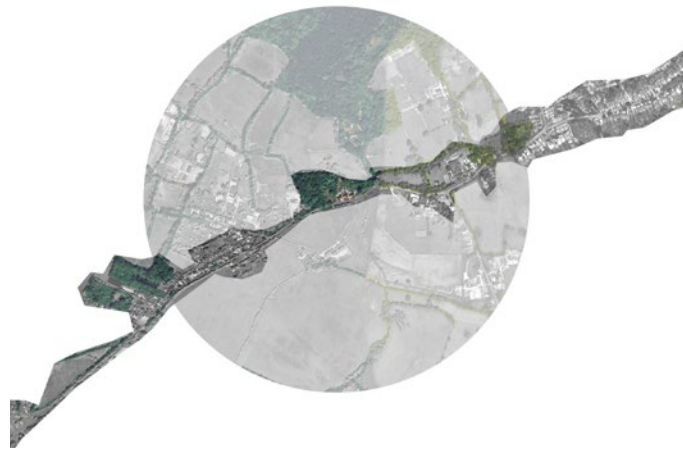
BUILDABLE AREAS OF THE SITE



The diagram above presents the negative space between the RPAs for the Category A,B & C trees, a 12m Easement to the Gas Pipeline (TBC) and the High and Low Risk Floodzones along the northern boundary.

The negative space represents the spacial frame work of the site and the potential buildable areas.

3.17 ANALYSIS SUMMARY



THE DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS OF BARKHAM

REVIEW

- Dense ancient woodland north of Barkham Road (The Coombes) defines Barkham's rural edge and forms a natural transition from suburbia to countryside.
- Scattered, largely hidden homes with varied architecture sit within wooded plots, creating a distinctive and diverse character.
- Most development occurred between the 1960s–1990s, with little change since and the ancient woodland remaining largely unchanged for over 150 years.

DESIGN STRATEGY OPPORTUNITIES

Distinctive roof forms stand out among trees; long driveways and outbuildings keep homes hidden from view. The site sits within a concealed woodland block on Barkham Road, next to more open housing. A wide variety of materials are used locally; brick is common but feels out of place in the woodland setting. The site was open field until the 1960s, then became self-seeded woodland with a defined boundary.



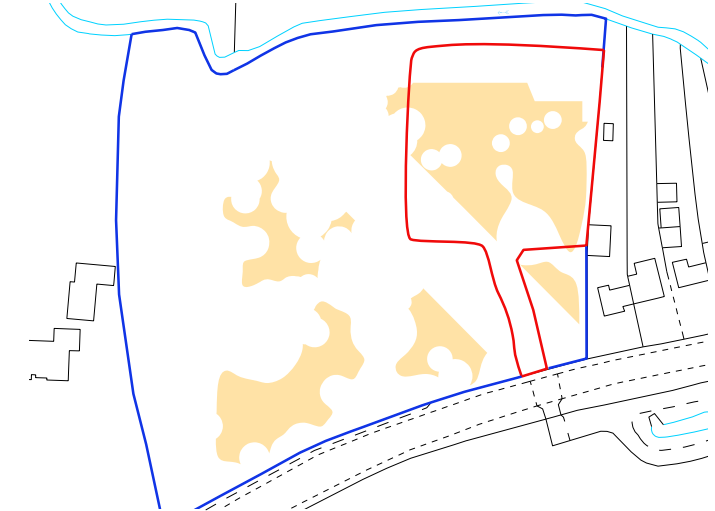
THE DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SITE

REVIEW

- Originally open field in 1967; by the 2000s, self-seeded trees dominated the west and open grassland remained to the east.
- The site is oak-dominated self-seeded secondary woodland, largely unmanaged.
- Topography: land gently falls ~4m from Barkham Road to a stream at the northern boundary, then rises beyond. Flooding: high and low-risk areas within Flood Zones 1, 2, and 3, mainly along the stream.
- Boundaries: north – stream and open fields; east – semi-detached housing; west – large dwelling in treed plot; south – Barkham Road.

DESIGN STRATEGY OPPORTUNITIES

- Woodland requires management, including removal of diseased ash and thinning of non-native species.
 - Need to preserve key oak trees and account for RPAs (Root Protection Areas) when designing.
 - Topography and drainage should guide placement of development away from flood-prone areas.
- Ensure development integrates with existing woodland character and adjacent residential edges.



SITE OPPORTUNITIES

REVIEW

- Introducing a building enables active woodland management and biodiversity enhancement.
- Opportunity to restore lost habitats and reintroduce species
- Selective thinning and replanting could strengthen native oak woodland structure.
- Woodland appearance dominates the road frontage with mature and specimen oak trees.

DESIGN STRATEGY OPPORTUNITIES

- The site's unmanaged woodland offers potential for ecological restoration.
- Areas with low-quality or younger RPAs and "negative space" present the spatial framework for potential development.
- The eastern side offers the most viable buildable area, away from dense woodland and major constraints.