

# ASSESSING THE SITE

*"Well-designed new development is integrated into its wider surroundings, physically, socially and visually. It is carefully sited and designed, and is demonstrably based on an understanding of the existing situation..."*

(Para. 43, NDG 2021)

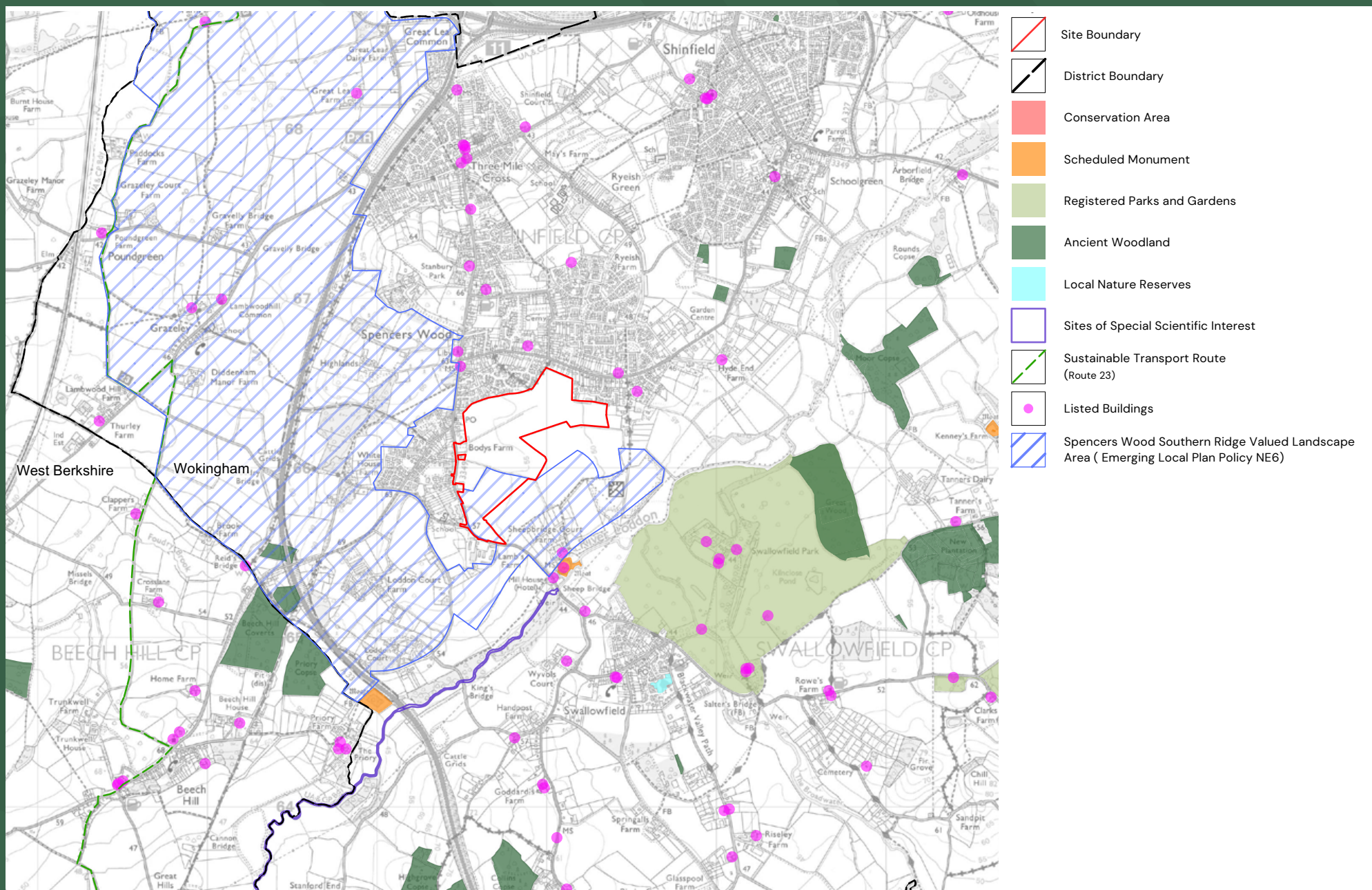


## LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT

- 4.1 The application is accompanied by a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA). The LVIA addresses the potential landscape and visual impacts of the proposed development.

### Landscape Context

- 4.2 The site comprises a parcel of five fields of agricultural land situated to the south of the main settlement area of Spencers Wood, and east of the B3349 (Basingstoke Road).
- 4.3 The surrounding landscape within the valley of the River Loddon is a mix of farmland (arable and pastoral, and of varying scale), existing development (predominantly residential but with some commercial/light industrial), and transport infrastructure (the M4 motorway to the north and the A33 dual carriageway to the west).
- 4.4 The site lies outside of any landscape designation, either national/statutory or local/non-statutory. Swallowfield Park, a Grade II Registered Park and Garden (RPG), lies approximately 675m to the south-east of the site, on the south-east side of the River Loddon. Policy NE6 of the emerging Local Plan Update identifies Valued Landscape Areas (VLAs) within Wokingham Borough. The proposed Spencers Wood Southern Ridge VLA and the associated 50m VLA buffer includes parts of the site.



## LANDSCAPE DESIGNATIONS | Not to scale

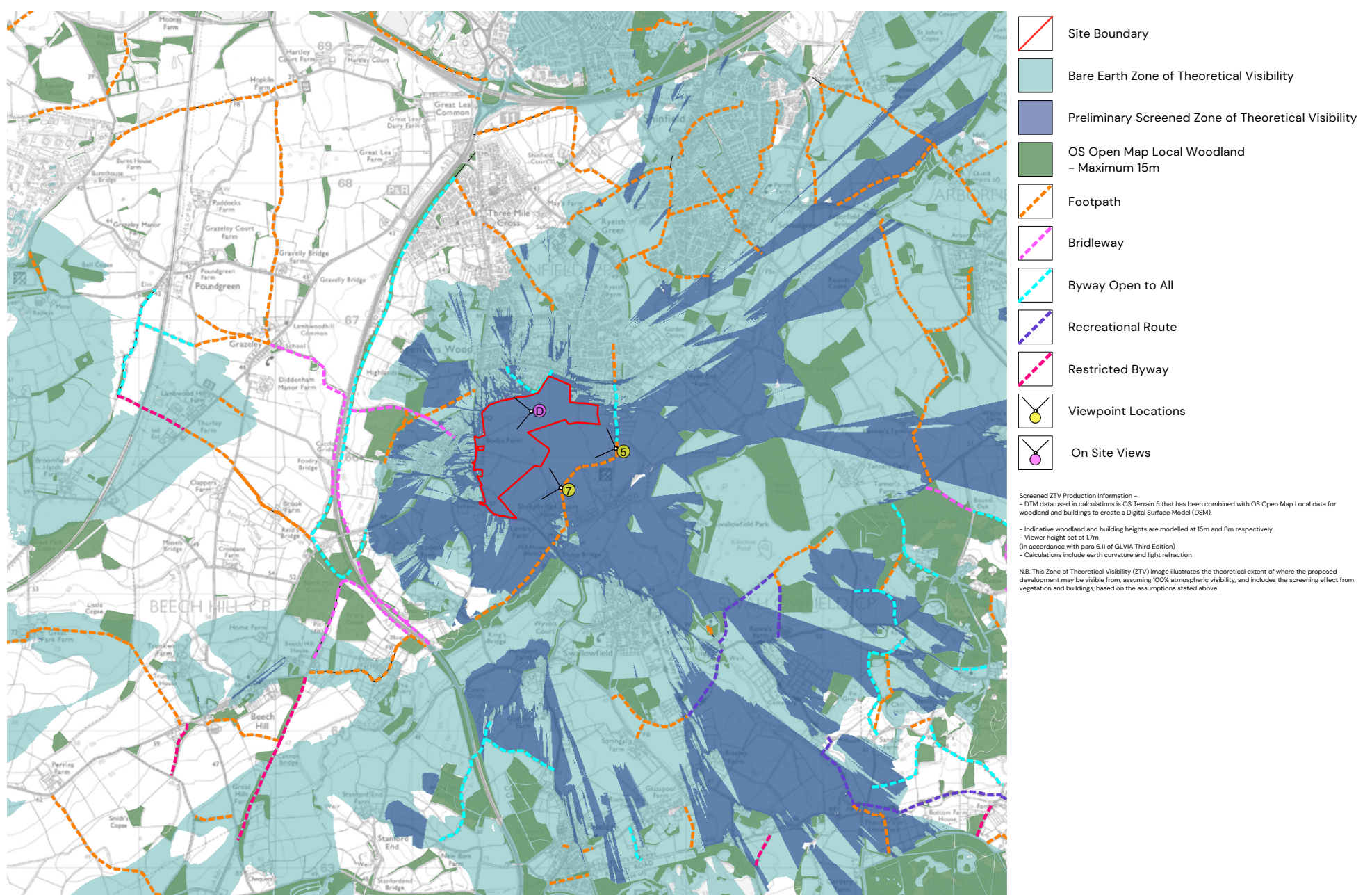
Plan produced by Pegasus Group – Drawing No. Figure 4 in accompanying LVIA document

## Landscape Character

- 4.5 As set out in the LVIA, the site lies within the following published landscape character areas:
- National Character Area (NCA) 129: Thames Basin Heaths;
  - Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment 2019:
  - Site: Landscape Character Area (LCA) J3 – Spencers Wood Settled and Farmed Clay, within the Settled and Farmed Clay Landscape Character Type (LCT);
  - Surrounding area where landscape and visual effects may occur: LCA A2: Loddon River Valley, within the River Valley LCT.
- 4.6 The immediate context to the site shares many of the characteristics identified in the baseline landscape character assessment of LCA J3. Those considered to be of particular relevance include:
- Densely settled landscape, with new large-scale residential estate development around the substantially 20th century settlements of Shinfield, Spencers Wood and Three Mile Cross, as part of South of the M4 Strategic Development Location (SDL).
  - Large arable fields with some pasture, with an intact hedgerow network and hedgerow oaks, interspersed with scattered small woodlands and copses. Horse paddocks feature on the edge of settlements or around large farmsteads e.g. Sheepridge Court.
  - Sense of elevation from the ridgeline and good views over surrounding lowlands including to the Loddon valley.

## Visual Amenity

- 4.7 Based on a Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) and informed by subsequent site surveys, the visual envelope for the site and the proposed development is broadly defined by the LVIA as follows:
- To the north, the visual envelope is restricted by existing development and boundary vegetation along the majority of the northern site boundary. There may be occasional restricted views of the built form within the Proposed Development from properties on the settlement edge, and from certain locations where gaps between the built form align.
  - To the north-east, there are narrow bands of theoretical visibility to the south of Shinfield, out to approximately 3–3.5km
  - To the east, the visual envelope extends as far as the woodlands at Moor Copse and Rounds Copse, with a more limited band of visibility as far as the western side of Arborfield Green, and a further restricted area to the west of the woodlands at Farley Hill.
  - To the south-east, there would visibility across much of the Loddon Valley, with some limited visibility from some western parts of the Swallowfield Park RPG. There would also be a band of visibility extending to Rowe's Farm and along the south side of The Broadwater as far as the edge of the Bramshill Plantation.
  - To the south, the visual envelope extends as far as the River Loddon, with a further area of visibility around Handpost farm and Goddard's Farm.



- To the south-west, the visual envelope extends approximately 750m out to Loddon Court Farm.
- To the west and north-west, the visual envelope is restricted by existing built form on the B3349 Basingstoke Road, with limited areas of visibility to the east of the woodlands at White House Farm, and to the east and north-east of Highlands.

### Potential landscape and visual impacts

- 4.8 Overall, the LVIA finds that the proposed development would result in limited effects on landscape character and visual amenity, restricted to the site and its immediate environs. The proposed development would be seen in the context of the existing settlement edge of Spencers Wood, with existing development to the north, west and south. The proposed development would not result in the expansion of Spencers Wood into the base of the Loddon valley, or the convergence of settlements.
- 4.9 The LVIA considers a range of landscape and visual receptors and impacts have been identified for both landscape character and for visual receptors. This is part of an iterative process whereby potential impacts have informed the design of the proposed development and the associated landscape strategy. Mitigation has therefore been made integral to the design of the proposals, including limiting the development envelope to the northern and western parts of the site.



Filtered views into the site from Barracks Lane





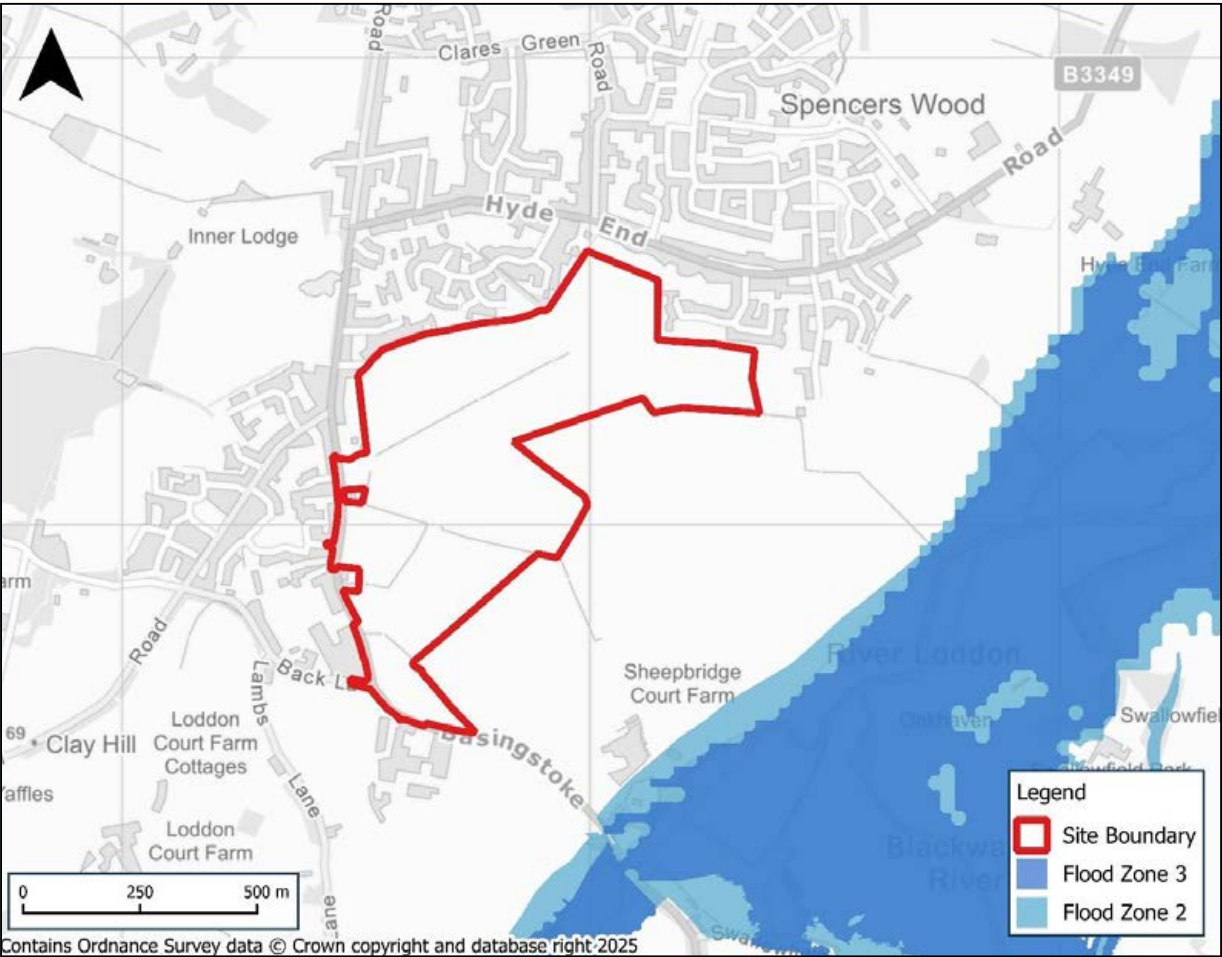
**VIEWPOINT D:** View looking East from the boundary between Field 1 and Field 2



**VIEWPOINT 5:** View looking west from Footpath SHIN22A to the south of Sussex Lane.



**VIEWPOINT 7:** View looking west/north-west from Footpath SWAL18 to the south-east of the site.



**FLOOD MAP FOR PLANNING** | Not to scale

**TOPOGRAPHY & FLOOD RISK**

- 4.10 A specialist consultant has reviewed the hydrology and drainage issues pertinent to the development, and mitigation measures if necessary.
- 4.11 The site is situated within Flood Zone 1 (Low Risk of Flooding from Rivers & Sea). Due to the existing topography any surface water routes which currently run through the site, will be accommodated either within proposed green spaces or within the proposed new drainage system. This will ensure that the site controls any flow from the proposed development to mirror existing Qbar greenfield flow rates, to ensure that there is no increased risk of any flood event post development. All the proposals will also be to the approval of all relevant drainage bodies, including the Lead Local Flood Authority and the local Drainage Undertaker (Thames Water).



Drainage ditch through the site looking west



Drainage ditch through the site looking east

## HIGHWAYS & ACCESS

4.12 A transport assessment (TA) has been carried out by Hub Transport Planning Ltd and submitted with this application. This report considers the transport impact of the proposed development and how accessible the site is via sustainable and active modes of transport.

4.13 The TA concludes that safe and suitable vehicular access can be provided to the proposed development for all modes of transport via two new vehicular accesses from the B3349 Basingstoke Road.

4.14 There would also be other segregated pedestrian/cycle accesses connecting to B3349 Basingstoke Road, the existing PRow off Hyde End Road and the park via Century Drive to make the site as permeable as possible for pedestrians and cyclists.

4.15 The proposed development is considered to be highly sustainable because:

- It will be accessible by different modes of transport and close to bus services and local facilities that are accessible via walking and cycling routes; and
- The proposed development would provide a 2FE primary school and a local centre comprising a local supermarket and a GP surgery. These facilities would help provide additional capacity for primary education and also improve access to healthcare.



Barracks Lane



Byway access from Larchside Close



Proposed roundabout access location from Basingstoke Road



Hyde End Road (byway)



Proposed shared pedestrian/cycle path access



Proposed access location from Basingstoke Road