

# **CALL FOR SITES RESPONSE, SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE: LAND NORTH OF ELBOURN WAY, BASSINGBOURN**

## **Landscape and Visual Statement**

JSL3290  
Call for Sites Response:  
South Cambridgeshire, Land  
North of Elbourn Way  
Bassingbourn  
1.0  
22 March 2019

**LANDSCAPE & VISUAL STATEMENT**

<b>Quality Management</b>					
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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## General

- 1.1 RPS has been commissioned by Abbey Properties Cambridgeshire Limited to provide a Landscape and Visual Statement (LVS) regarding potential effects on landscape and visual receptors of a potential housing site at Land north of Elbourn Way, Bassingbourn in South Cambridgeshire in response to the Council's 'Call for Sites'.

## Baseline Methodology

- 1.2 For this LVS a desktop review of published data, such as landscape character assessments, OS maps, Google Street View and aerial photography was undertaken. This identified potential landscape and visual resources that might be affected by the proposed development.
- 1.3 This LVS has been produced mainly as a desk-based exercise. A site visit has been undertaken, and the advice contained within this report has been produced based upon a review of available information and professional judgement.
- 1.4 The relevant planning policies are outlined in section 2. The landscape baseline is outlined at paragraphs 2.10 to 2.18 and the visual baseline is outlined at paragraphs 2.19 to 2.24 of this report.

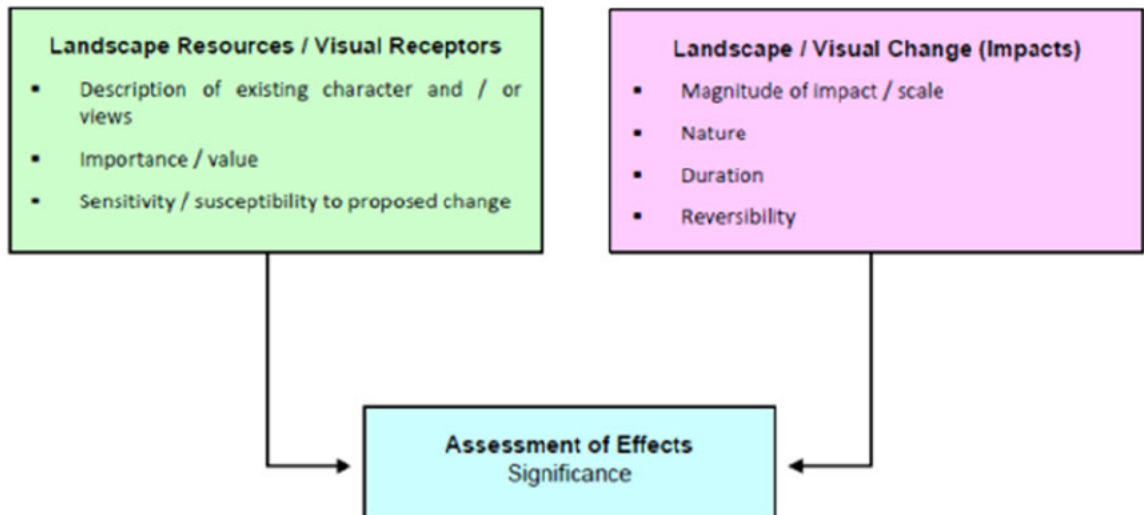
## Assessment Methodology

- 1.5 The assessment for this LVS has been undertaken based broadly on the following relevant guidance on landscape and visual assessment:
- Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2013) *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment: Third Edition (GLVIA3)*.
- 1.6 The statement reviews the existing situation, and then considers the likely effects of the proposed change of use in relation to the baseline conditions when the development is complete. The significance of the landscape and visual effects are assessed at a high level, through consideration of the sensitivity or susceptibility of the resources/receptor to the proposed change of use and the magnitude of change.

## Assessment Methodology Summary

- 2 The potential landscape and visual effects of the proposed development are assessed by considering the impact magnitude on particular landscape and visual resources and receptors,

as summarised in the diagram below. For the purposes of this LVS, sensitive landscape and visual receptors, within the immediate context of the site has been included.



## Planning Baseline

### Local Plan

- 2.1 Planning policy that is relevant to the site is contained within the South Cambridgeshire District Council’s Local Plan (adopted in September 2018).
- 2.2 The relevant landscape policies and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan are:
  1. Policy NH/2: Protecting and Enhancing Landscape Character
 

*“Development will only be permitted where it respects and retains or enhances the local character and distinctiveness of the local landscape and of the individual National Character Area in which is it located.”*

The policy goes on to say that the East of England Landscape Typology is the relevant more local and finer grain landscape assessment. The policy mentions two Supplementary Planning Documents which support policy NH/2 as follows:

*“To assist in retaining the distinctive nature of the South Cambridgeshire landscape the Council provides more detailed guidance about landscape character areas in the District Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and the Landscape in New Developments SPD to ensure that development respects both the distinctiveness of these National Character Areas and the more detailed local landscapes.”*

2. District Design Guide: High Quality and Sustainable Development in South Cambridgeshire (adopted March 2010). This SPD sets out the landscape and settlement character by Landscape Character Area (LCA) but, also goes on to describe design

principles for new development within each character area. The relevant LCAs and design principles for the potential housing sites are set out in the Landscape Baseline section later in this document.

3. The Landscape in New Developments SPD (adopted March 2010). Sets out design principles for development in Appendix 2 at the Joint Character Area (JCA)/National Character Area (NCA) scale. The relevant landscape principles within this SPD are set out in the Landscape Baseline section later in this report.
4. The Development Affecting Conservation Areas SPD (adopted January 2009) is relevant for the proposed site east of Bassingbourn. In particular Chapter 2 'New Development in Conservation Areas'.

*"Many villages include gap sites that are physically large enough to accommodate infill development. In considering proposals for such sites the District Council will consider their value as open ground and the contribution they make to Conservation Areas and their wider setting"*

## Other Material Considerations

### Statutory Landscape and Planning Designations

- 2.3 The site does not fall within or lie close to AONB or National Park landscape designations.
- 2.4 There are no registered historic parks and gardens within a 2km radius of the site.
- 2.5 The site does not fall within a Local Green Space as described in Policy NH/12 in the Local Plan.
- 2.6 The western half of the site at Bassingbourn falls within the Bassingbourn Conservation Area, which is subject to Policy NH/14 in the Local Plan.

### National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

- 2.7 The NPPF July 2018 promotes a presumption in favour of sustainable development and supports a prosperous rural economy.
- 2.8 Section 12 of the NPPF is concerned with well-designed places. Paragraph 127 b) explains that developments should be "*visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping*". Paragraph 127 c) requires that developments "*are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting. While not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities)*". Developments should also "*establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangements of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit*" (paragraph 127 d).
- 2.9 NPPF Section 15 Conserving and enhancing the natural environment, is of relevance to this appraisal. Paragraph 170 explains that "*planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by: "protecting and enhancing valued landscapes ..."*" and "*recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside*".

## Landscape Baseline

- 2.10 The site is located on the edge of the village of Bassingbourn, near the centre of the settlement. The village lies within a wider area of relatively flat open farmland, comprising an irregular pattern of predominantly arable fields defined by ditches or hedgerows. There is minimal separation with the neighbouring village of Kneesworth to the east. The site comprises two fields either side of a public right of way. The eastern field comprises arable land and includes a drainage lagoon with surrounding tree and shrub planting. The western field parcel of rough grassland is surrounded by mature hedgerows and trees and contains a large specimen of a Sycamore tree.
- 2.11 To the north lies a narrow belt of native woodland and an area of allotments beyond. To the west lies a large detached residential property within extensive grounds. To the south lies two late 20<sup>th</sup> century residential developments of two storey properties at Players Yard and Limes Close and the large rear gardens of 19<sup>th</sup> century properties on the High Street. Mature hedgerows and trees divide the two field parcels, which continues as a historic field boundary to the north and south. The southern boundary of the eastern field parcel is defined by hedgerows and garden boundary vegetation of the Elbourn Way residential development. This is a late 20<sup>th</sup> century scheme of two storey detached and semi-detached properties. The eastern boundary is defined by an unmanaged hedgerow with open arable land beyond. The northern boundary of the eastern field is partially undefined within the arable field and partially defined by vegetation around the drainage lagoon.

## Landscape Value

- 2.12 The value of the landscape of the site and surroundings is considered to be medium. The elements of rough grassland, hedgerows, trees and stream which comprise the site are not rare within the Chalklands character area and are not particularly important examples. The drainage lagoon reedbed is a typical, engineered feature of a settlement edge location and a more recent addition to the landscape. Both fields have limited scenic quality due to the close association with the development of the settlement edge, the allotments and drainage lagoon. The stream is steep sided and lacks significant vegetation and ground flora, reducing the potential for ecological importance. The most valued aspect of the site and surrounding landscape is the recreational opportunity that the public rights of way network offers the local community and the visual amenity of views out over the surrounding farmland. Walkers and dog walkers are an understandably common feature within the fields and farmland on the edge of a settlement. Therefore, whilst the proposal site has modest landscape and scenic qualities and has some wildlife interest and footpaths linking the settlement to the landscape, these are not considered sufficient to elevate the landscape to one that is highly valued.

## National Character Areas (NCAs)

- 2.13 The site lies within NCA 87 East Anglia Chalk. It is located in the central west part of the NCA. The key characteristics of NCA 87 relevant to the proposed development are:
- *“The rolling downland, mostly in arable production, has sparse tree cover but distinctive beech belts along long, straight roads. Certain high points have small beech copses or ‘hanger’, which are prominent and characteristic features in the open landscape.”*

- *“Archaeological features include; ... large numbers of later moated enclosures, park lands” the remains of Bury yard adjacent to Milldyke is located less than 150m to the west of the proposed site ....and nucleated villages that emphasise the land use change of this (early medieval) period.”*
- *“Settlement is focused in small towns and in villages. There are a number of expanding commuter villages located generally within valleys. ....”*

2.14 The SCDC Landscape in New Developments SPD, provides general landscape principles for this NCA which falls within the District. Relevant principles are as follows:

- *“Planting, conserving and enhancing Beech Hangers as focal points to reinforce the Chalk landscape as a setting for development.”*
- *“Management of existing shelter belts and creation of new shelter belts and small areas of mixed woodland linked to existing landscape features. This will break up the largest areas of open farmland while maintaining the contrast between the more open landscape and the more small-scale landscape of the river valleys.”*
- *“Enhancement of linear features in the landscape such as footpaths, ancient tracks dykes, and road corridors.”*

### **South Cambridgeshire District Landscape Character**

2.15 The following information was derived from large scale pdf maps of the landscape character areas and landscape types. A best judgement has been made from the data retrieved on line.

2.16 The site is located in the Chalklands LCA and Lowland Village Chalklands LCT.

2.17 The SCDC District Design Guide SPD sets out design principles for each LCA. The most relevant for the LCA are as follows:

#### **Chalklands LCA**

- *Maintain the distinctive, settlement pattern of the area and its local context*
- *Maintain the linear or rectilinear form of the settlements*
- *Ensure density and pattern of new development reflect that of existing villages and hamlets. Avoid backland and cul de sac developments where possible.*
- *Ensure buildings are arranged in continuous frontages within village cores and are arranged in loose knit patterns facing the street on more peripheral sites.*
- *Ensure new developments are integrated with sufficient space for garden and street tree planting where applicable.*
- *Take opportunities to create new village greens and/or wildlife areas within new developments.*
- *Ensure new developments reflect the form, scale and proportions of the existing vernacular buildings of the area and pick up on the traditional building styles, materials, colours and textures of the locality.*
- *Enclose boundaries facing the street on village peripheries with hedge and tree planting.*

- 2.18 The village of Bassingbourn has a central historic High Street with later extensive, mainly residential developments leading off to the north and south. Green space, in the form of playing fields, large private gardens, woodland, common land and remnants of agricultural land, is interspersed with built form and a high proportion of mature trees to provide a diverse settlement mosaic.

### Visual Baseline

- 2.19 Visual receptors include, people within residential properties, travelling along roads, using public rights of way, involved with other recreational activities, at their place of work and using commercial and public facilities. These groups are deemed to have different sensitivities to the proposed change of use.
- 2.20 RPS conducted the site visit on 15<sup>th</sup> March 2019 in dry, overcast weather conditions with good visibility. The actual visibility of the site is normally greater in winter (when trees and hedgerow have no leaves). On this basis the GLVIA states a preference that the ‘worst case’ winter scenario is used for visual assessment. Figure 1 illustrates photograph viewpoint locations and Figures 2 to 4 include panoramic photographs for each viewpoint.
- 2.21 The nearest residential properties lie immediately south of the site at Players Yard, Limes Close and Elbourn Way. Views from ground floor windows on the rear elevations and rear gardens would be largely obscured by timber garden fences or filtered by mature hedgerows and trees on the site boundaries (See Photo B1 Figure 2). Views from upper storey windows would be more open and less constrained by existing vegetation and garden boundary treatments.
- 2.22 Walkers using the public right of way which bisects the site are able to gain framed views, east and west, through gaps in hedgerows and mature trees into the two parcels of land (See Photo B2 Figure 2). Hedgerows and tree belts surrounding the western field form a dense backdrop to views, screening views to neighbouring houses and the allotments (See Photo B3 Figure 3). Existing houses on the edge of the village are visible through trees in more distant views when walking south (See Photo B4 Figure 3). When walking north the focus of views is the surrounding farmland. Views into the site from the public right of way beside the allotments is limited to a framed view through a gap in the vegetation (See Photo B5 Figure 4). There are no views of the church tower at St Peter and St Paul’s.
- 2.23 Occupiers of the property at Rectory Farm are able to gain mid-distance views over open farmland to the eastern parcel of land within the site on the settlement edge of Bassingbourn and a wider view of the settlement at Kneesworth.
- 2.24 People using the park at Elbourn Way are able to gain oblique views west over arable farmland of the hedgerow on the eastern site boundary and properties at Elbourn Way (See Photo B6 Figure 4).

## 3 POTENTIAL LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL EFFECTS

### General

- 3.1 Using a combination of objective evidence and professional judgement, the potentially significant effects on the landscape resource and receptors and the effects experienced by people living and travelling through the landscape during the operational phase are outlined below.

### Design

- 3.2 The proposal would comprise residential dwellings located on the eastern parcel of land within the site.
- 3.3 The scale, massing and spacing of dwellings to reflect existing residential development at Elbourn Way to the south.
- 3.4 These proposals include the following landscape mitigation features;
- Retention of the hedgerows on the southern boundary with Elbourn Way, on the northern boundary of the lagoon and to the eastern edge of the site to retain a partially defined parcel of land.
  - Native hedgerow and tree planting beside the public right of way to enhance the character of the footpath as a positive transition to the rural landscape.
  - Enhancement of the western parcel of land, including the stream corridor, for public open space and biodiversity benefits.

### Potential Landscape Effects

#### Effect on SCDC Chalklands Landscape Character Area

- 3.5 A small cluster of new housing set within the eastern parcel of land would form a small extension of the urban edge at Bassingbourn. The scheme would respond to the scale, form and density of established residential development at Elbourn Way to the south and the overall grain and pattern of the urban townscape of the village. Following removal of the drainage lagoon there would be no specific site constraints. The western field would be retained and enhanced as open space, preventing any conflict with, or adverse influence over, the conservation area within this part of the village. The proposals would take advantage of the existing hedgerows, mature trees and adjacent residential development to partly conceal new houses within this village edge location and limit intervisibility with the wider farmland of the Chalklands landscape character area. A residential scheme in this location would form a minor extension of the settlement edge, albeit part of this would be into open farmland.
- 3.6 The site would be accessed via Elbourn Way and would form a continuation of this urban character. There would be no loss of hedgerows and the field pattern would not be significantly changed. There would be a certain degree of loss of openness following development however,

the well contained parcel of land is not readily intervisible with the majority of the adjoining settlement and only partially visible from the farmland to the north.

### **Night time effects**

- 3.7 The site currently contains no lighting however, the neighbouring and nearby residential developments include street lighting and light sources within buildings which exert some influence over the site area at night. Development within the site would introduce street lighting and light sources within properties which would change the night time character of the site, extending lighting within a partly lit urban edge context into a relatively dark landscape. However, the proposals would be unlikely to result in significant harm to the night time character of the landscape.

### **Potential Visual Effects**

- 3.8 Residents at Elbourn Way would gain near, partly screened and filtered views from ground floor windows and rear gardens over and through garden and hedgerow vegetation of the new houses to the north. Views of the new development from upper storey windows would be more open, replacing views of farmland and the vegetation surrounding the lagoon. Due to the high sensitivity of the receptors and the close proximity of the development, the change in view may, initially, be significant. However, in the long term as landscape proposals mature the level of effects would reduce and long-term harm to visual amenity would not be significant.
- 3.9 Walkers using the public right of way adjacent to the new development would gain filtered views through existing and proposed hedgerow planting to the new houses immediately beyond. In the short-term effects on views may be significant however, as planting matures the levels of effect would reduce. In more distant views from the north the new houses would be visible in front of existing houses on the settlement edge, moving development slightly closer to the receptor. Retained hedgerows on the site boundary would filter and screen views of a large part of the development. The nature and character of the view would remain unchanged.
- 3.10 Views from the public right of way beside the allotments would be largely unchanged.
- 3.11 People using the park at Elbourn Way would gain views of the upper parts of houses beyond the hedgerow boundary and existing houses. Residential development would extend over a wider area of view, although the character of the view would not be changed.

## 4 CONCLUSION

### Summary of Potential Landscape and Visual Effects

#### Bassingbourn: Land north of Elbourn Way

- 4.1 A small residential development within the eastern parcel of land would form a small extension of the urban edge at Bassingbourn and the overall scale, form and density of housing at Elbourn Way to the south. There would be a certain degree of loss of openness following development however, the well contained parcel of land is not readily intervisible with the majority of the adjoining settlement and only partially visible from the farmland to the north. There would be no significant harm to the Chalklands landscape character area and no direct harm to, or significant influence over, the character of the conservation area.
- 4.2 Occupiers of approximately 11 residential properties at Elbourne Way immediately south of the site and walkers using the public right of way immediately west of the site may initially experience significant effects on views following development at the site, due to the high sensitivity of the receptors and their proximity to the proposals. In the long term as landscape proposals mature the level of effects would reduce and long-term harm to visual amenity would not be significant. Views experienced by other residents, walkers using the wider rights of way network and residents using the allotments are unlikely to result in significant effects due to screening by hedgerows, trees and existing development.

## 5 REFERENCES

Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013, *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment: Third Edition*.

### Web based resources:

National Character Area Profiles:

NCA 87; <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6417815967891456>

NCA 88; <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5091147672190976>

East of England Landscape Typology - <http://landscape-east.org.uk/east-england-landscape-typology>

South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) Local Plan and saved policies:

<https://www.scambs.gov.uk/planning/local-plan-and-neighbourhood-planning/the-adopted-development-plan/south-cambridgeshire-local-plan-2018/>

Including the following relevant SCDC SPDs

- Development Affecting Conservation Areas (adopted January 2009)
- District Design Guide: High Quality and Sustainable Development in South Cambridgeshire (adopted March 2010)
- Landscape in New Developments SPD (adopted March 2010).

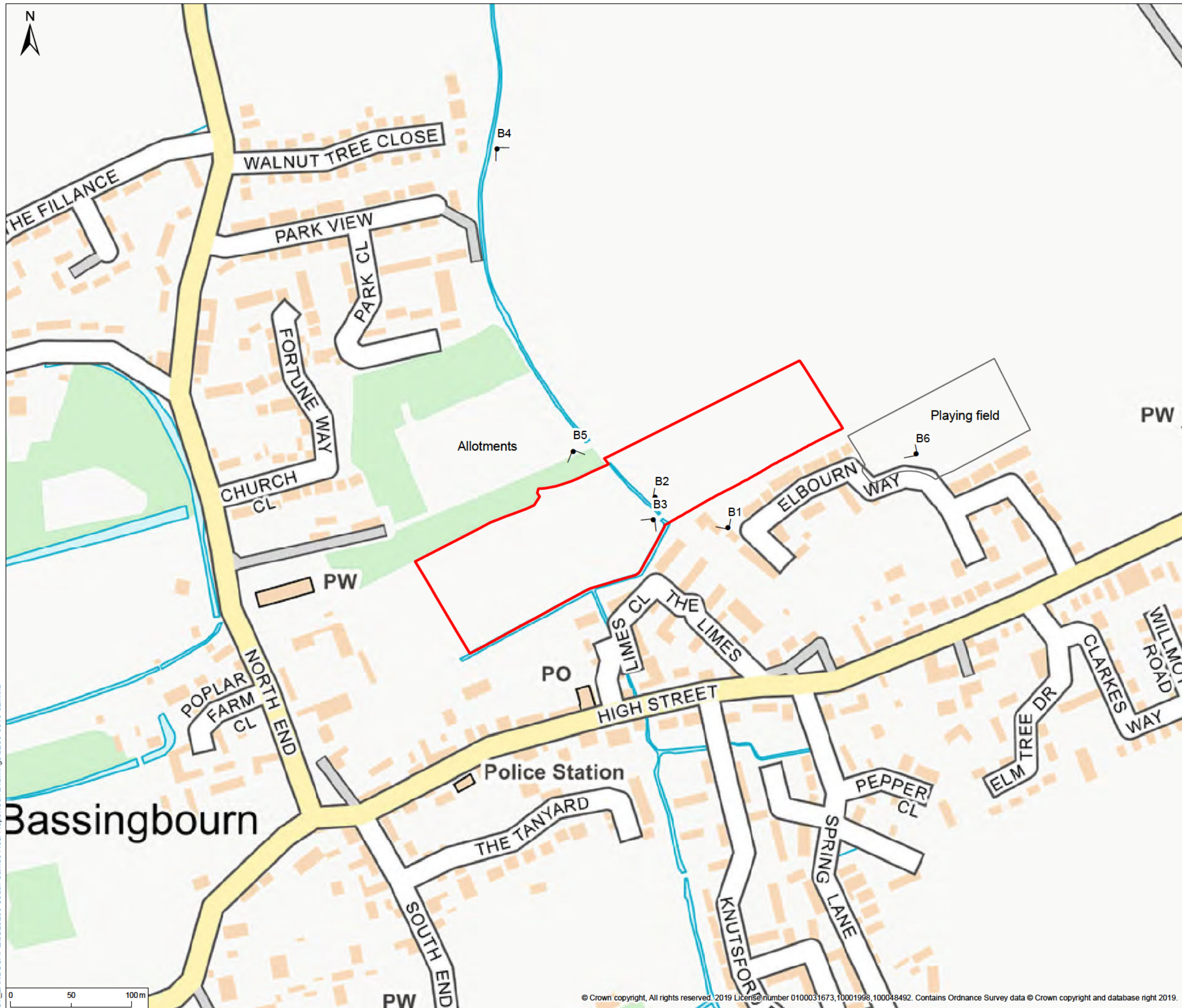
DEFRA's MAGIC Interactive Map

<https://magic.defra.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx>



All accessed March 2019



**FIGURES**



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**Legend**  
 Site Location  
 Viewpoint Locations

Rev	Description	By	CB	Date



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**Client** Abbey Properties  
 Cambridgeshire Ltd  
**Project** Call for Sites Response,  
 South Cambridgeshire:  
 Land at Elbourn Way Bassingbourn  
**Title** Viewpoint Location Plan

<b>Status</b> FINAL	<b>Drawn By</b> BG	<b>PM/Checked By</b> PE
<b>Project Number</b> JSL3290	<b>Scale @ A3</b> 1:3,000	<b>Date Created</b> MAR 2019
<b>Figure Number</b> 1		<b>Rev</b> -

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Viewpoint: B1



Viewpoint: B2



Viewpoint: B3



Viewpoint: B4

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Date of photographs: 15/03/2019  
Lens type: 50mm



Viewpoint: B5



Viewpoint: B6

3290-0009-02



Date of photographs: 15/03/2019  
Lens type: 50mm