



Landscape and Visual Statement

**Water Lane, Melbourn,
Royston**

**October 2021
INF-N0829**

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1 Introduction

Outline

- 1.1 This Landscape and Visual Statement (LVS) has been prepared in support of a call for sites submission, promoting the Site for allocation through the local planning process for residential development. The Site is currently an agricultural field and is accessed from the bridleway known as Water Lane, which is a continuation of a made public road which is directly connected to the High Street.
- 1.2 The LVS has been undertaken as a stand-alone report based upon the guidance contained within the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third Edition (GLVIA)¹. It provides an appraisal of the proposed development within the identified application site and surrounding study area.

Project Description

- 1.3 This report has been prepared to assess the landscape and visual sensitivities of the Site and the potential resulting landscape and visual effects of the proposed development upon the receiving landscape and visual resource.
- 1.4 The proposed development on the site is residential at this stage is for residential development
- 1.5 The call for sites process enables areas of land to be put forward for allocation through the local development plan. All submitted sites are assessed by the local planning authority through the preparation and publication of a Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA).
- 1.6 This report provides supporting information on the landscape and visual impacts of the development of the Site for residential use, in order to aid and inform the assessment carried out by the local planning authority through the SHELAA process.

¹ Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013

2 Planning Context

Introduction

- 2.1 Aspects of planning guidance and policy, which are of particular relevance to the LVS, are examined below. Relevant statutory, non-statutory and planning designations within the LVS study area are shown on figure INF_N0829(08)001.

International Legislation

- 2.2 The European Landscape Convention (ELC)², which was signed by the UK in February 2006 and became binding in 2007, is the first international convention to focus specifically on landscape issues and aims to protect, manage and plan landscapes in Europe.
- 2.3 The ELC highlights the importance of developing landscape policies dedicated to the protection, management and creation of landscapes, and establishing procedures for the general public and other stakeholders to participate in policy creation and implementation.
- 2.4 The 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”*³.

National Legislation

- 2.5 This report takes into account the legislation and policy relevant to landscape and visual amenity, and the relevant ecology and cultural heritage including the following.

Public Rights of Way

- 2.6 Legislation with regard to Public Rights of Way (PRoW) is in the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, Countryside Act 1968, Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, Highways Act 1980, Rights of Way Act 1990 and Countryside Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW 2000).
- 2.7 PRoW are recorded on Definitive Maps by the County Council and are protected under the above legislation. Applications and consultation are required for any works that would affect a PRoW, for example a temporary diversion during construction works, a permanent diversion as the result of a proposed development or any other changes to the routes.

National Planning Policy Framework

- 2.8 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)⁴ is a material consideration and provides guidance for regional and local planning. At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which forms the basis of plan-making and decision-taking.
- 2.9 The NPPF sets out three objectives in order to achieve sustainable development – economic, social and environmental. The environmental objective is relevant to this report. Particularly

² Council of Europe, 2004

³ Council of Europe, 2004

⁴ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, July 2021

relevant is the requirement to “contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment”.

- 2.10 The NPPF provides guidance on how to deliver sustainable development. The planning principles of relevance to this LVS are summarised as:
- Section 12 Achieving Well-Designed Places⁵, which addresses the creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and place. Developments should add to the overall quality of an area, should be visually attractive with regards to architecture, layout and landscaping, should be sympathetic to local and historic character, respond to the surrounding built environment and landscape setting and establish or maintain a sense of place. In the July 2021 NPPF update a paragraph was added into Section 12 identifying the importance that trees play in the environment; and
 - Section 15 Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment⁶, which states (inter alia) that the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside should be recognised. Valued landscapes such as National Parks and AONB should be conserved and enhanced, with the scale of development limited in these areas.

National Design Guide

- 2.11 The National Design Guide (NDG)⁷ has been published to further expand the design policies set out in the NPPF providing a framework to assess proposals against in terms of achieving well designed places.
- 2.12 One of the key components identified in the NDG that needs to be considered to ensure good design is landscape. When addressing the identity of a place, characteristic I1 identifies the importance of landscape setting and backdrop in order to respond effectively to local identity.
- 2.13 A key part of the NDG assessment relates to context and how well-designed places need to be integrated into their surroundings so they relate well to them along with being influenced by and influencing their context positively⁸. Characteristic C1 emphasises the need to respond appropriately to landscape character in order to provide positive new developments.

Local Planning Policy

- 2.14 The Site is located adjacent to the village of Melbourn, a settlement within the administrative area of South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC). SCDC is part of a strategic partnership with Cambridge City and the two authorities form the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service.
- 2.15 The South Cambridgeshire Local Plan was adopted in September 2018 and sets out the planning policies to guide the future development of South Cambridgeshire up until 2031.
- 2.16 Both Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire District Council have committed to prepare a joint Greater Cambridge Local Plan, however this is at the early stages of plan production with

⁵ Section 12, paras 124-132 NPPF, 2018

⁶ Section 15, paras 170-183 NPPF, 2018

⁷ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, National Design Guide, January 2021

⁸ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, National Design Guide, January 2021, p10

Preferred Options Consultation being set out in the Local Development Scheme as commencing in summer/autumn 2021.

- 2.17 There is currently no made neighbourhood plan for the parish of Melbourn.
- 2.18 The relevant local planning policies are therefore contained within the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018 and are identified below.

South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018

- 2.19 The vision set out in the adopted Local Plan is contained in Policy S/1 and states the following:
- 'South Cambridgeshire will continue to be the best place to live, work and study in the country. Our district will demonstrate impressive and sustainable economic growth. Our residents will have a superb quality of life in an exceptionally beautifully, rural and green environment.'
- 2.20 Six objectives are set out in the Local Plan under Policy S/2. Two of these objectives are relevant to landscape and visual amenity:
- To protect the character of South Cambridgeshire, including its built and natural heritage, as well as protecting the Cambridge Green Belt. New development should enhance the area, and protect and enhance biodiversity.
 - To deliver new developments that are high quality and well-designed with distinctive character that reflects their location, and which respond robustly to the challenges of climate change.
- 2.21 The following policies identified in the Local Plan are relevant.
- 2.22 **Policy S/3: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development** This policy identifies the Council's approach to delivering sustainable development, in line with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 2.23 **Policy HQ/1: Design Principles** This policy sets out the approach to securing high quality design. At paragraph 5.5 it is identified that all new development will have an impact on its surroundings and that development needs to be of appropriate scale, design and materials for its location and conform to design principles set out within Policy HQ/1.
- 2.24 The introduction to the policy states that 'all new development must be of high-quality design, with a clear vision as to the positive contribution the development will make to its local and wider context'. The relevant criteria in relation to this assessment are:
- a. Preserve or enhance the character of the local urban and rural area and respond to its context in the wider landscape;
 - b. Conserve or enhance important natural and historic assets and their setting;
 - c. Include variety and interest within a coherent, place-responsive design, which is legible and creates a positive sense of place and identity whilst also responding to the local context and respecting local distinctiveness;
 - d. Be compatible with its location and appropriate in terms of scale, density, mass, form, siting, design, proportion, materials, texture and colour in relation to the surrounding area;

- e. Deliver a strong visual relationship between buildings that comfortably define and enclose streets, squares and public places, creating interesting vistas, skylines, focal points and appropriately scaled landmarks along routes and around spaces;
- m. Include high quality landscaping and public spaces that integrate the development with its surroundings, having a clear definition between public and private space which provide opportunities for recreation, social interaction as well as support healthy lifestyles, biodiversity, sustainable drainage and climate change mitigation.

2.25 **Policy NH/2: Protecting and Enhancing Landscape Character** This policy sets out the approach to landscape and states that:

'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 it is located'.

- 2.26 The policy text goes on to refer to the five distinct National Character Areas identified by Natural England and identifies the pressures on the landscape as a result of changes in agricultural practice and the impact of new development for housing and employment. In response to these pressures a District Design Guide and Landscape in New Development Supplementary Planning Documents have been prepared in support of the Local Plan. These are discussed in more detail below.
- 2.27 **Policy NH/6: Green Infrastructure** Policy NH/6 sets out the approach to conserving and enhancing green infrastructure within South Cambridgeshire. Criteria 4 of the policy requires all new development to contribute towards the enhancement of the green infrastructure network.

South Cambridgeshire District Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document 2010

- 2.28 The District Design Guide seeks to ensure that design is an integral part of the development process and provides further guidance on achieving sensitive and appropriate developments. Whilst adopted prior to the Local Plan in 2018, it is still considered to be a material planning consideration where the guidance is consistent with the NPPF and the Local Plan.
- 2.29 Within the Design Guide, a description of the settlement patterns found in the different landscape character areas are identified. Melbourn is identified as being within the Chalklands area. Design principles that relate to landscape in this particular area are identified as:
- Maintain the distinctive settlement pattern of the area and its local context.
 - Ensure any extensions to springline villages are located along the bottom of steeper slopes and along lanes.
 - Ensure any extensions to river valley villages are located along the line of the river, or at right angles to it, depending on the direction of the main transport route.
 - Maintain the linear, or rectilinear form of the settlements.

South Cambridgeshire Landscape in New Development Supplementary Planning Document 2010

- 2.30 The Landscape in New Development SPD has been produced to ensure that landscape is not peripheral to the planning process but fully integrated into the design stages of the development process. Whilst adopted prior to the Local Plan in 2018, it is still considered to be a material planning consideration where the guidance is consistent with the NPPF and the SCLP.

Melbourn Draft Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan January 2021

- 2.31 Whilst currently in draft form, the Conservation Area Appraisal seeks to provide ways of enhancing the designated area of the settlement. The Site is not located within or adjacent to the Conservation Area but given views in to and out of Conservation Areas are considered as part of such assessments it is important to identify if the Site is included in the report.

Designations & Registered Sites

- 2.32 There are no designated heritage assets located within or adjacent to the Site. The conservation area boundary lies approximately 568m to the north west of the site along Water Lane. The nearest listed buildings are located within the conservation area also, so are a significant distance from the Site.
- 2.33 A Scheduled Monument (1020397), Square Barrow 170m north east of Summer House Farm is located approximately 620m to the south east of the Site. Approximately 1km to the north west are two Scheduled Monuments, Bowl Barrow known as Grinnel Hill (1011719) and Bowl Barrow 205m SSE of Lodge Cottage (1011720).
- 2.34 Four further Scheduled Monuments, Bran Ditch (1410907), Bowl Barrow (1011715), Prehistoric Barrow (1020396) and Causewayed Enclosure and two ring ditches (1009237) are located further afield at least 1.5km away from the Site.
- 2.35 A Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and woodland block is located approximately 1.76km to the north east of the Site at the closet point.

Public Rights of Way

- 2.36 There are no public rights of way across or within the Site, however running along the western boundary is Water Lane, a Public Byway (159/15), which connects the Site into the village of Melbourn. This route running north west connects into further public bridleways and footpaths.
- 2.37 Approximately 185m to the north east (as the crow flies) is the Harcamlow Way, a long distance public footpath in a finger of eight arrangement which mainly utilises tracks and green lanes. This long distance footpath provides links between Standon, Manuden, Newport, Saffron Walden, Horseheath, Cambridge, Melbourn, Chrishall, Debden, Thaxted, Takeley and Hatfield Forest.

3 Methodology

Guidance

- 3.1 The format of this LVS is based on the principles set out in the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third Edition⁹, the Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland¹⁰ and An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment¹¹. A detailed methodology can be provided.
- 3.2 Viewpoint photographs have been presented in accordance with the Landscape Institute's Advice Note TGN Visual Representation 06/19 (Landscape Institute 2019).

Study Area

- 3.3 A ZTV was not run for this project due to the nature of the potential development. Following the initial desktop study, a site visit was carried out and the actual visibility of the site and the proposed development, where landscape and visual impacts could potentially occur, was found to be considerably restricted by the surrounding landform combined with intervening vegetation. Based on this information the study area of the LVS has been defined as a maximum of 2 km from the application site.
- 3.4 Only landscape and visual receptors within the LVS study area have been considered in the assessment, as there is no potential for any significant landscape and/or visual effects to be incurred beyond that area.

⁹ Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013

¹⁰ Former Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage, 2002

¹¹ Natural England, 2014

4 Landscape and Visual Baseline

- 4.1 This section reviews the landscape and visual baseline of the Site and its surroundings and sets out the overriding landscape character of the study area¹².

National Character Area

- 4.2 At the national level there are 159 Character Areas which are broad divisions of landscape character. The Site sits entirely within the National Character Area 87 (NCA) East Anglian Chalk.
- 4.3 The East Anglian Chalk NCA is characterised by the 'narrow continuation of the chalk ridge that runs south-west-north-east across southern England'.
- 4.4 The area is identified as 'distinctive, open variable topography of rolling Chalk hills, some with distinctive beech belts along roads or featuring hilltop or scarp slope beech woodland (hangers)'.

Landscape Observation

The Site

- 4.5 The Site is located directly south of the New Cemetery which is accessed from Victoria Way. Planning permission was granted, in conjunction with the housing to the north in 2010 for new gates, arch and railings to serve the cemetery, so the use has been established for some years.
- 4.6 To the north of the cemetery is Victoria Way, a housing allocation (H/1(e)) which has been built out under planning permission S/2048/14/FL as amended by S/0763/15/VC for 64 dwellings. Victoria Way is accessed from New Road to the east.
- 4.7 The Site itself is a single agricultural field bound to the east by orchards, to the north by the cemetery and residential development and to the west and south by open farmed fields. A PRoW runs half the length of the field and then terminates, although it is apparent on site that routes are being used as an extension to the designated path. Further to the south is a solar farm.
- 4.8 The Site lacks internal features, the boundary to the cemetery on the north is a mature hedgerow but the boundaries to the south are more open and comprise lower, gappy hedges with some individual trees.

The Landscape Character of the Surrounding Area

- 4.9 The topography of the area is generally flat but notably rises from 40m AOD at the site to 80m AOD at Goffers Knoll, a tumulus to the south. The southern edge of Melbourn is inherently agricultural, comprising of medium to large fields with low native hedgerow boundaries. Historic mapping shows that the edge of Melbourn has crept southwards, Beck Lane originally forming

¹² The East of England landscape typology is set out on an interactive map East of England Landscape Typology | Landscape East (landscape-east.org.uk) however at the time of writing this report the map is not accessible online

the southern boundary, with the addition of a relatively large light industrial estate and particularly to the east of New Road, modern housing developments.

- 4.10 The landscape beyond the village to the south is expansive and views are long to the distance ridgeline, curtailed slightly by Goffers Knoll. There is a clear separation between the countryside and the built edge, however as set out below, often the edge of the settlement is visible when looking back to the north.

Visual Observations

- 4.11 This section summarises the key viewpoints which have been recorded to understand the existing baseline position and the potential impact of the proposals.

Visual Character

- 4.12 Views were recorded from the surrounding roads, residential streets, the cemetery, and the PRoWs.
- 4.13 The main part of the cemetery is separated from the Site by the robust hedgerow boundary and the users and visitors have an acceptance and expectation of residential development which currently overlooks them (View 04). However, to the north west edge is a mound which was designed into the New Road Cemetery to reference the similar barrows and mounds. At the foot of the mound are buried an Anglo Saxon 'family'¹³ and located on the crown of the mound are two benches, one positioned looking south over the Site. There is no reference to these views, however it can be assumed that the benches have been placed to enjoy this typical countryside view (View 05).

¹³ In a unique project the remains of a man, woman and infant were chosen for a reburial in Melbourn to symbolically represent a family group.



- 4.14 Some of the residents on the adjacent housing development have balconies which overlook the cemetery and allow for views to the surrounding countryside.
- 4.15 Users of Water Lane, a bridleway which connects into the southern edge of the settlement are the closest to experience focused views of the Site as they approach, leaving the village, however there is an awareness of housing flanking this route. Once the route opens up, on the edge of the Site, there are clear views across the field and onwards over the countryside to the south (View 01). In views back towards the settlement the most recent development defines the built edge clearly (View 02).
- 4.16 The Harcanlow Way, a long distance walk¹⁴, follows the route of New Road, however there is no highway footpath and nowhere for pedestrians to walk, and therefore despite being a national route the sensitivity of the users is considered low.

¹⁴ 114 miles



- 4.17 From locations to the south, in the wider countryside (View 06) the settlement edge is discernible but does not detract from the wider landscape qualities and features and the agricultural character of the countryside is dominant. From the south west, from the bridleway to the Solar Farm at Muncseys Farm, the high hedgerows mean views are only achieved through breaks in the road side boundary (View 07). These are fleeting views through small gaps.

Summary

- 4.18 To summarise, the application site is it is a typical agricultural field on the edge of the settlement with no redeeming qualities or features other than being countryside. The boundaries to the north are good but the quality of the southern and western is poor, however it is in keeping with the location, contributes to the openness of the wider landscape and allows views from the PRoWs. The landscape surrounding the application site is dominated by agriculture, across a large open landscape with little vegetative cover although there are some mature hedgerow trees. Overall, the landscape of the site and surrounding countryside is considered to have a low - medium sensitivity to the proposals.
- 4.19 The proposals will change the Site itself but not the settlement edge which is residential. The landscape beyond is so expansive that residential development can be easily absorbed provided there are good quality boundary treatments.
- 4.20 Visually, the most sensitive receptors are those within the cemetery and the users of the local PRoWs. The visitors to the cemetery are seeking some quiet and contemplation but understand that they are currently overlooked by residents. There is a feeling of 'edge of settlement' however from the ground the robust hedgerows enclosing the cemetery do afford some separation from the countryside beyond. Benches have been positioned on the constructed burial mound presumably to enjoy the view. This is a view over the countryside, it is an incidental view though and not designed and does not capture a specific feature and from these benches the

surrounding residential areas are also visible. It does have value though, locally, and the proposals will change the view. Residential development would now form a part of the open aspect of the view however the longer-range views would be maintained. These receptors are sensitive but overall the proposals have a limited effect, for those viewers on the mound there will be a moderately adverse effect.

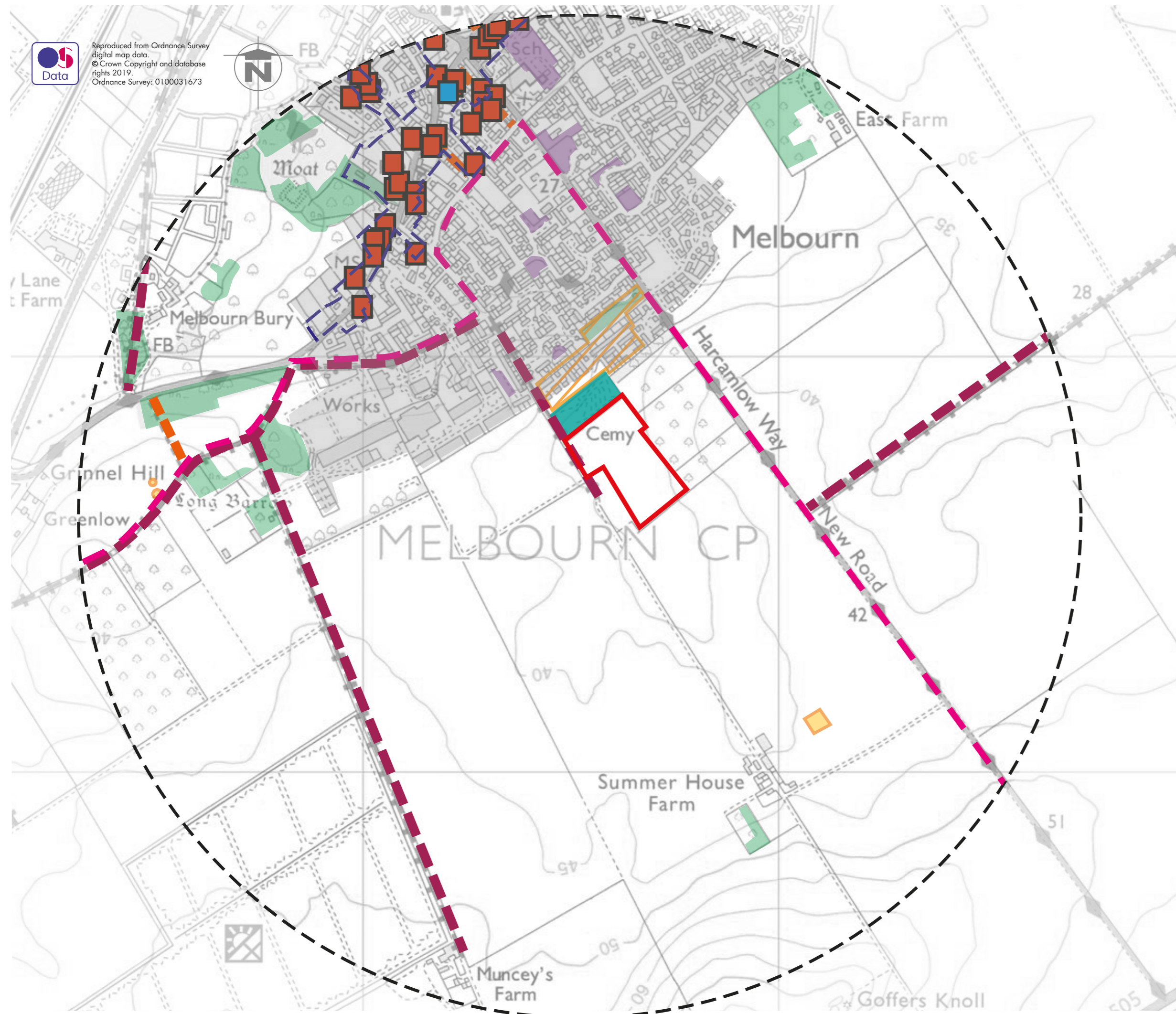
- 4.21 Users of the bridleway on the western side of the Site will also experience a change in the view when they are alongside the Site. A considered layout incorporating open space and connecting public routes through can mitigate the change in some of the views and provide an extension to the bridleway.
- 4.22 Walkers, workers and road users in the wider landscape to the south will barely notice the introduction of residential development in this location.

Conclusion

- 4.23 Considering the findings from the field survey, the identification of the potentially sensitive receptors and an early appraisal of the potential impacts on those receptors it is considered that in landscape and visual terms that this site can accommodate one and two storey residential development whilst addressing the views into and out from the site from the adjoining PRoW and the cemetery and enhancing the southern boundary.



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Legend

- Application Site
- Radius 1.25km Study Area
- Listed Buildings
Red - Grade II
Blue - Grade II*
- Scheduled Monument
- South Cambridgeshire District Council**
- Protected Village Amenity Areas (Policy NH/11)
- Conservation Areas (Policy NH/14)
- Local Nature Reserve (Policy NH/5)
- Site of Special Scientific Interest (Policy NH/5)
- Housing Allocation (Policy H/1 (a-h))
- PRoW Footpath
- PRoW Bridleway
- PRoW Byway open to all traffic
- Harcamlow Way Long Distance Path (traversing along roads and PRoW)
- A Road
- Railway
- Settlement Area
- Woodland Block
- Water Body
- Cemetery



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PROJECT
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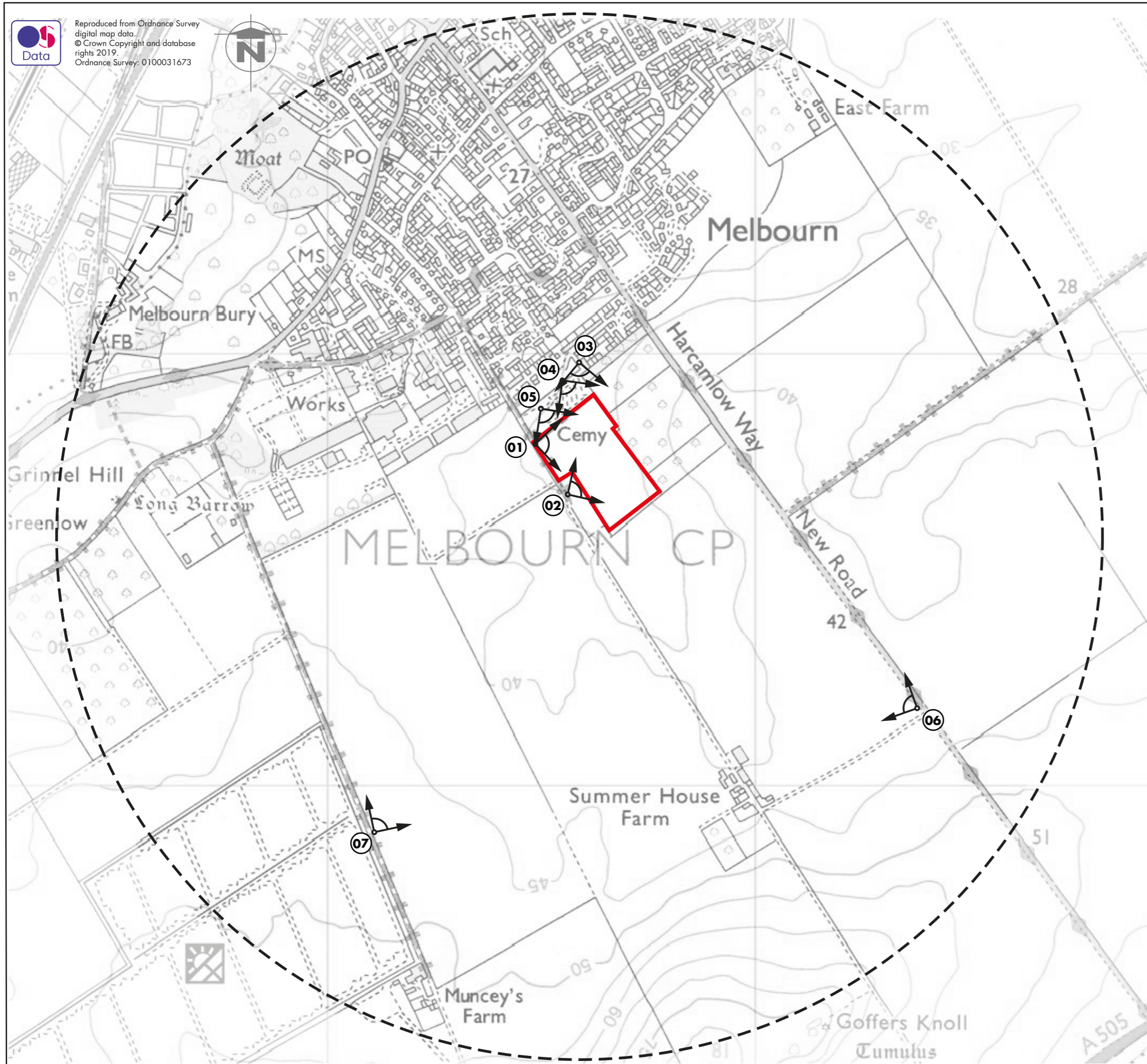
CLIENT
Tim Sills

TITLE
Context and Designations

STATUS	FINAL	DATE	26.07.21
SCALE	NTS	CHECKED	SB
DRAWN	HE	REV NO:	-
JOB NO:	DWG NO:	REV NO:	ORIGINAL SIZE
N0829	(08)001	-	A3



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Legend

- Application Site
- Radius 1.25km Study Area

Representative Viewpoint Locations



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PROJECT
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CLIENT
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TITLE
Viewpoint Location Plan

STATUS Final
SCALE NTS
DRAWN HE

DATE 04.08.21
CHECKED MM

JOB NO: N0829	DWG NO: (08)002	REV NO: -	ORIGINAL SIZE A3
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Representative Viewpoint 01



Representative Viewpoint 02

Drawing Number:
N0829(08) 003

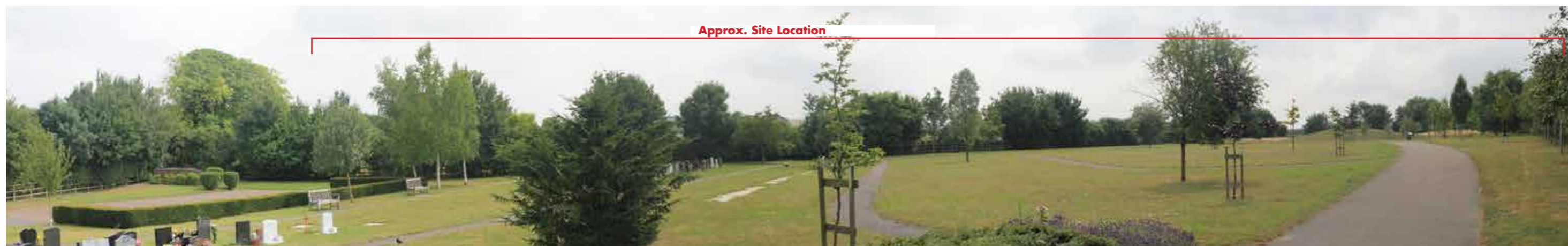
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Representative Viewpoints

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Representative Viewpoint 03



Representative Viewpoint 04

Drawing Number:
N0829(08) 004

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Representative Viewpoint 05



Representative Viewpoint 06

Drawing Number:
N0829(08) 005

Water Lane, Melbourn, Cambs

Representative Viewpoints

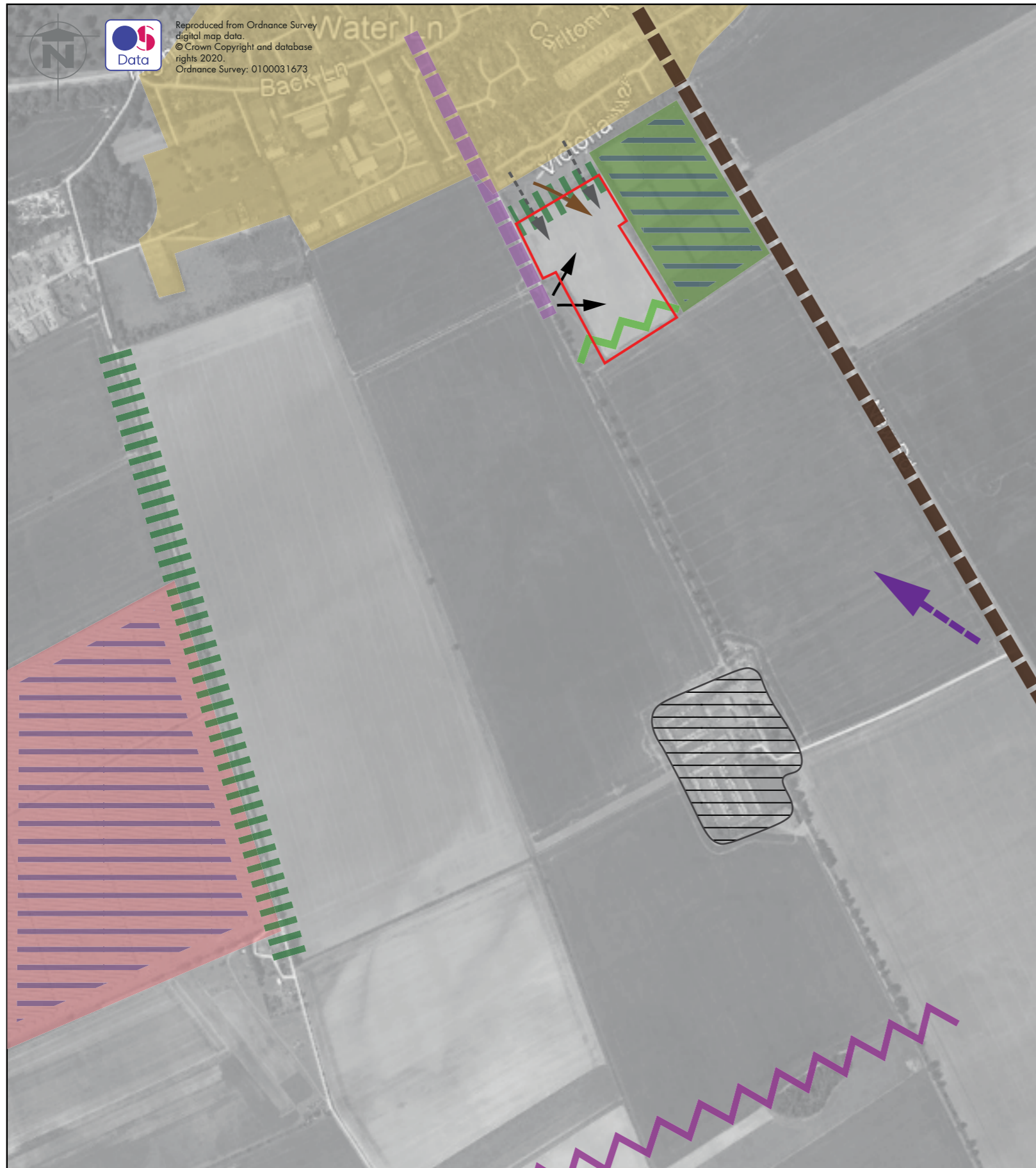


Representative Viewpoint 07

Drawing Number:
N0829(08) 006

Water Lane, Melbourn, Cambs

Representative Viewpoint



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Constraints

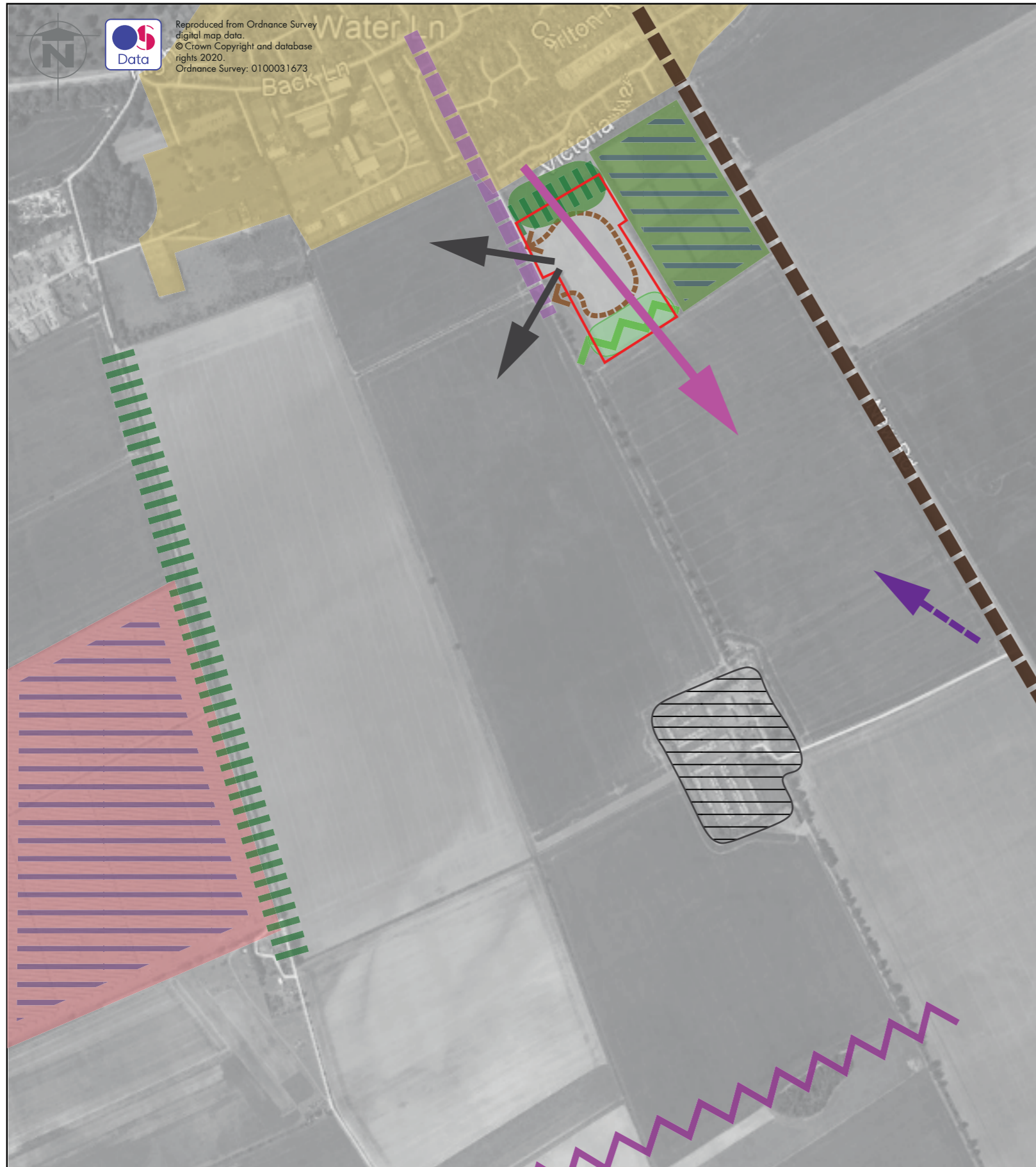
- Sensitive views from higher ground in the 'Anglo-Saxon' Cemetery adjacent to the northern site boundary. Visitors of the cemetery are sensitive receptors to new development and must be considered.
- Exposed views from PRoW Byway Melbourn 15 adjacent to the western site boundary. However, the byway does not connect to any designated routes.
- Sensitive residential receptors north of the site should also be considered.
- Potential views from the Harcamlow Way Long Distance Footpath traversing along New Road, although limited by topography and vegetation.
- Potential views of the site from the solar farm southwest, however restricted by a robust vegetated boundary.
- The openness of the southern vegetated boundary exposes views into the site, increasing the visual impact on surrounding receptors, including pedestrians on the Harcamlow Way.

Key

- Application site
- Orchard planting, strong vegetated boundary
- Solar Farm (Muncey's Farm)
- Existing adjacent residential housing
- Existing caravan storage site, Summer House Farm and few commercial buildings
- Localised ridge restricting views
- Open, more sensitive boundary
- PRoW Byway Melbourn 15
- Harcamlow Way Long Distance Footpath
- Robust vegetated boundary
- Sensitive view from 'Anglo Saxon' Cemetery
- Limited views from the south, restricted by topography and vegetation
- Open views from PRoW Byway Melbourn 15
- Sensitive views from nearby residents

Drawing Number:
N0829 (03) 001

Water Lane, Melbourn, Cambs - Constraints



Opportunities

- Opportunity to retain existing boundary vegetation to enhance wildlife habitat and screen development from the south. Native boundary planting will mitigate potential visual impact on surrounding receptors.
- Potential to enhance biodiversity and landscape quality through native species reinforcement planting within the site boundary.
- The existing PRoW contiguous with the western site boundary provides opportunity for enhanced connectivity between the site and existing residential area to the north. There is opportunity to provide extended routes around the development.
- Allow, if possible, for views from the mock Anglo-Saxon burial mound over the development to the south.
- Opportunity to visually connect with the PRoW with some dwellings orientated west.

Key

- Application site
- Orchard planting, strong vegetated boundary
- Solar Farm (Muncey's Farm)
- Existing adjacent residential housing
- Existing caravan storage site, SummerHouse Farm and few commercial buildings
- Localised ridge restricting views
- Open, more sensitive boundary
- PRoW Byway Melbourn 15
- Harcamlow Way Long Distance Footpath
- Robust vegetated boundary
- Limited views from the south, restricted by topography and vegetation
- Allow for some open views from the 'Anglo Saxon' Cemetery
- Allow for some views out and connection to the PRoW
- Opportunity to reinforce southern boundary hedgerow
- Opportunity to create circular public routes within the development
- Opportunity to retain northern boundary

Drawing Number:
N0829 (03) 002

Water Lane, Melbourn, Cambs - Opportunities **influence**[®]
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