

Preliminary Landscape and Visual Appraisal

Land between Coach Road and Old House Road

On behalf of Bloor Homes

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Contents.

1. INTRODUCTION	3
Terms of Reference.....	3
The Site and the Development Proposals.....	3
Approach.....	4
Level of Assessment	4
Collating Baseline Information	5
Consideration of Effects.....	5
2. LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL CONTEXT	6
Site Description	6
Site Context	6
Landscape Related Designations	6
Landscape Character	6
Visual Amenity.....	12
3. LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL APPRAISAL	15
Overview.....	15
Analysis	15
Preliminary Development and Landscape Strategy.....	16
4. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION.....	18

Figures.

Figure 1: Site Location Plan and Planning Designations

Figure 2: County Landscape Character

Figure 3: Borough Landscape Character

Figure 4: ZTV, Viewpoint Locations and PRoW

Figure 5: Viewpoint Photographs



1. INTRODUCTION

Terms of Reference

- 1.1. Pegasus Group have been instructed by Bloor Homes to undertake a preliminary appraisal of landscape and visual matters, in relation to proposed residential development on land to the north of Coach Road, Great Horkesley, Essex (the 'Site').
- 1.2. This report comprises a preliminary landscape and visual appraisal (PLVA) by a Chartered Landscape Architect, which sets out an initial review of considerations pertaining to landscape and visual matters. The appraisal process determines the Site's various landscape and visual constraints and opportunities and its local landscape context in relation to the potential for development.
- 1.3. The PLVA considers existing landscape and visual receptors in the study area, including physical landscape resources; landscape character; and, views / visual amenity experienced by residents, recreational users (including visitors and tourists) and road users.
- 1.4. Having determined the various constraints and opportunities, the PLVA proceeds to consider how these might serve to influence the development potential of the wider site area, how the design approach to a masterplan for the site might be informed, and the implications of the constraints and opportunities upon an inherent landscape strategy as part of that masterplan.
- 1.5. The potential for development within the wider Site area is then refined in respect of an emerging development framework plan, focusing built form within parts which are considered to have greater capacity and omitting areas which are considered less suitable for development in respect of landscape and visual matters, consequently demonstrating the adoption of a 'landscape led approach'.

The Site and the Development Proposals

- 1.6. The Site comprises approximately 20.5 hectares (ha) of predominantly agricultural land located on the western edge of Horkesley Heath directly adjacent to the western edge of the existing settlement area of Great Horkesley (refer to **Figure 1: Site Location and Planning Designations**). Horkesley Heath itself is located ca. 5 km to the north-west of the centre of Colchester and ca. 1.75 km northwest of the A12 bypass.
- 1.7. The Site comprises two broad parcels of land between Coach Road and Old House Road. The southern parcel (land north of Coach Road) has received resolution to grant outline planning permission (all matters reserved, except for access) for up to 150 dwellings (including affordable housing), a car park, public open space, landscaping, children's play area, sustainable drainage, infrastructure and all other associated (LPA Ref: 250545).
- 1.8. The northern parcel (land south of Old House Road) is connected with the southern parcel via a ca. 35 m long strip of land to the west of Spartan Close. The northern parcel eastern boundary abuts public open space associated with the village hall and the southern parcel adjoins a residential area. The northerly, westerly and southerly site context is predominantly rural in character.

- 1.9. The Development Proposals are shown on Development Framework Plan (P19-0982_DE_O31_B_01) and comprise ca. one third of the site area as public open space (POS) inclusive of attenuation and two thirds as built form.

Approach

- 1.10. The approach and methodology used for this PLVA has been developed using best practice guidance, as set out in the following documents:
- Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (April 2013) Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3rd Edition;
 - Natural England (October 2014) An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment;
 - Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 06/19: Visual Representation of Development Proposals; and
 - Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 02/21: Assessing Landscape Value Outside National Designations.
- 1.11. Additional sources of data and information have also been used, such as published character assessments, aerial imagery, and Ordnance Survey (OS) base mapping. These are referenced in the relevant sections of the baseline information.

Level of Assessment

- 1.12. Principles and good practice for undertaking landscape and visual impact assessment are set out in the Landscape Institute (LI) and the Institute of Environmental Management (IEMA) Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition (2013).
- 1.13. The third edition of the Guidelines for Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA3) acknowledges that landscape and visual impact assessment (LVIA) can be carried out either as a standalone assessment or as part of a broader EIA. The GLVIA3 notes that the overall principles and core steps in the process are the same but that there are specific procedures in EIA with which an LVIA must comply.
- 1.1. This report has been prepared as a 'preliminary' landscape and visual appraisal, whereby judgements on landscape and visual matters are drawn at a high level, with the process and resultant outcomes used to inform the design development of an indicative masterplan for the site.
- 1.2. While this report does not constitute an assessment of the impacts upon the landscape and visual resources, it nevertheless follows and applies the principles defined within GLVIA3, notably the study's scope, processes, baseline review, identification of potential receptors, and presentation of findings.
- 1.3. Landscape features and elements provide the physical environment for flora and fauna and the associated importance of biodiversity assets. This PLVA does not consider the value, susceptibility or importance on ecology and biodiversity, nor does it consider impacts from an ecological stance.

- 1.4. Heritage assets such as Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas all contribute to the overall present-day landscape character, context and setting of an area. These aspects have been given consideration in the PLVA in terms of physical landscape resources (for example trees and hedgerows) and landscape character. However, this PLVA does not address the historic significance, importance or potential impacts on heritage assets and designations; these assets are assessed in the context of landscape and visual matters only.

Collating Baseline Information

- 1.5. To capture a comprehensive description of the baseline position for landscape and visual receptors, information has been collated using a process of desk study and field survey work. Field survey work was completed during November 2025.

Consideration of Effects

- 1.6. Having established the relevant baseline position, the PLVA process then considers uses professional judgements in relation to the sensitivity of the landscape receptors and visual receptors, specifically in response to the nature of the proposed development; the nature of potential impacts; and consequently, how these can inform an iterative approach to design.

2. LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL CONTEXT

Site Description

- 2.1. The Site is located on the northwestern edge of Horkesley Heath and is enclosed by existing residential development along its eastern and parts of its southern boundary.
- 2.2. The northern parcel extends to ca. 12.8 ha and consists of two irregular fields divided by a sparse windbreak. There is a public right of way aligned east–west and bisecting the northern Site parcel: footpath GH36 (see **Figure 4, Viewpoint Locations and Public Rights of Way**). The triangular shaped southern parcel extends to ca. 7.86 ha and there is resolution to grant outline planning permission for up to 150 dwellings.

Site Context

- 2.3. The residential edge of Horkesley Heath lies to the east, with built form and associated uses occupying land between the site and the A134 Nayland Road to the north–east and south–east. Residential development to the north of Coach Road is located immediately adjacent to the southeastern Site boundary. There is an area of public open space adjacent to the northeastern Site boundary bordered by a landscaped bund with a distinctive semicircular form. Established built development near the eastern boundary of the Site includes residential development, St. Johns Church, Great Horkesley Village Hall and Car Park, and the Bishop William Ward School.
- 2.4. The A134 road corridor runs through the settlement of Horkesley Heath on a broadly north to south alignment, with the bulk of the existing settlement pattern located to the west of this route. The A134 links to the A12 which forms one of the main transport corridors in the area and is just 900m to the south of the site and existing settlement. Linear residential development extends along the southern edge of Coach Road opposite the southern site boundary through to a cluster of properties around the junction with Woodhouse Lane.
- 2.5. Land to the west and northwest of the Site is predominantly rural in character and includes winding lanes, scattered farmsteads and residential properties within a countryside setting. The wider landscape context to the south includes agricultural field enclosures, orchards and areas of woodland that extend towards the A12 road corridor.

Landscape Related Designations

- 2.6. The Site is not subject to any specific statutory or non–statutory designations of relevance to landscape and visual matters, nor are any such designations present adjacent to the Site or in its immediate landscape context.

Landscape Character

- 2.7. Reference has been made to published guidance on landscape character for the area. The site is located in the following landscape character types/areas (refer to **Figure 2, Landscape Character – County**, and **Figure 3, Landscape Character – Borough**):
 - National level – NCA 111: Northern Thames Basin (Natural England, 2013);



- County level – Essex County Council Landscape Character Assessment (2003), ‘Glacial Till Plateau LCT/North Colchester Farmlands LCA’; and
- District level – Colchester Landscape Character Assessment (2024), ‘B. Farmland Plateau LCT/ B6 Great Horkesley Farmland Plateau LCA’.

2.8. Summaries of the profiles of the relevant landscape area, relevant to the site and study area, are set out in the following.

National Landscape Character

2.9. At a national level, the site is situated within the National Character Area (NCA) 111: Northern Thames Basin, described as an area of diverse landscapes from the wooded Hertfordshire plateaux and river valleys to the west and the predominantly arable Essex Heathlands in the east with areas of urbanisation throughout. There is a wide variety of semi-natural habitats – albeit often fragmented.

2.10. Given the scale of the NCA the physical components and characteristics recorded provide an overall characterisation across the wider context of the NCA, and, as identified in the NCA’s Summary, will notably vary in prevalence across the NCA

2.11. The key characteristics of NCA 111 are as follows, with those of most relevance to the Site and local context underlined:

- *“The landform is varied with a wide plateau divided by river valleys. The prominent hills and ridges of the ‘Bagshot Hills’ are notable to the northwest and extensive tracts of flat land are found in the south.*
- *Characteristic of the area is a layer of thick clay producing heavy, acidic soils, resulting in retention of considerable areas of ancient woodland.*
- *Areas capped by glacial sands and gravels have resulted in nutrient-poor, free-draining soils which support remnant lowland heathlands, although these are now small. Areas that have alluvial deposits present are well drained and fertile.*
- *The water bearing underlying Chalk beds are a main source of recharge for the principal London Basin Chalk aquifer.*
- *A diverse landscape with a series of broad valleys containing the major rivers Ver, Colne and Lea, and slightly steeper valleys of the rivers Stour, Colne and Roman. Numerous springs rise at the base of the Bagshot Beds and several reservoirs are dotted throughout the area*
- *The pattern of woodlands is varied across the area and includes considerable ancient semi-natural woodland. Hertfordshire is heavily wooded in some areas as are parts of Essex, while other areas within Essex are more open in character. Significant areas of wood pasture and pollarded veteran trees are also present.*
- *The field pattern is very varied across the basin reflecting historical activity. Informal patterns of 18th-century or earlier enclosure reflect medieval colonisation of the heaths. Regular planned enclosures dating from the Romano-British period are a subtle but nationally important feature on the flat land to the south-east of the area. In the*

Essex heathlands 18th- and 19th-century enclosure of heathlands and commons followed by extensive 20th-century field enlargement is dominant.

- Mixed farming, with arable land predominating in the Hertfordshire plateaux, parts of the London Clay lowlands and Essex heathlands. Grasslands are characteristic of the river valleys throughout. Horticulture and market gardening are found on the light, sandy soils of former heaths in Essex, particularly around Colchester, along with orchards, meadow pasture and leys following numerous narrow rivers and streams.
- *The diverse range of semi-natural habitats include ancient woodland, lowland heath and floodplain grazing marsh and provide important habitats for a wide range of species including great crested newt, water vole, dormouse and otter.*
- *Rich archaeology including sites related to Roman occupation, with the Roman capital at Colchester and City of St Albans (Verulamium) and links to London. Landscape parklands surrounding 16th- and 17th-century rural estates and country houses built for London merchants are a particular feature in Hertfordshire.*
- *The medieval pattern of small villages and dispersed farming settlement remains central to the character of parts of Hertfordshire and Essex. Market towns have expanded over time as have the London suburbs and commuter settlements, with the creation of new settlements such as the pioneering garden city at Welwyn and the planned town at Basildon.*
- *Brick-built dwellings are characteristic from the late 17th century onwards. Prior to this dwellings and farm buildings tended to be timber built with weatherboarding, now mainly painted white but traditionally black or tarred, and whitewashed plaster walls."*

Essex Landscape Character Assessment (February 2003)

- 2.12. At a county level, reference is made to the 'Essex Landscape Character Assessment' 4 (ELCA) as published by Essex County Council.
- 2.13. The ELCA provides a description of the landscape character of Essex and Southend-on-Sea and identifies 7 Landscape Character Types (LCT) which are sub-divided into 35 Landscape Character Areas (LCA) (refer to Figure 2, Landscape Character - County).
- 2.14. The site is located within the 'Glacial Till Plateau' LCT. The LCT is described within the ELCA as:
- "dominates the north and west of the study area, and is part of the extensive claylands that stretch from north Essex into south Suffolk and beyond. It is heavily dissected by the River Valley landscapes that cut into the boulder clay".*
- 2.15. The key characteristics of the LCT, relevant to the site and study area, are described within the ELCA as:
- *"Gently undulating, glacial boulder clay ('till') plateau dissected by major river valleys;*
 - *Predominantly arable, with some wooded areas and an irregular field pattern;*
 - *Scattered farmsteads, hamlets and large villages, and relatively few towns;*

- *Historic buildings are frequent features in the landscape...;*
- *...Woodland blocks and hedgerows visually link together to form an often wooded skyline; and*
- *Winding road pattern away from major routes, with verges and strong hedgerows”.*

2.16. The site is located within the ‘E4: North Colchester Farmlands’. The key characteristics of the LCA, relevant to the site and study area, are described within the ELCA as:

- *“Flat arable farmland, with regular fields and low trimmed hedgerows;*
- *Isolated linear woods;*
- *Generally wide views;*
- *Large apple orchards introduce interest and variety; and*
- *Many smallholdings and glasshouses”.*

2.17. In its overview description, the ELCA highlights the strong patterns of regular arable fields and straight lanes, occasionally reinforced by lines of poplar trees. It notes that some wider views are possible due to the general lack of substantial hedgerows/hedgerow trees, but that localised enclosure is created by extensive orchards such as those near Langham and Great Horkesley. With regard to settlement pattern the ELCA notes the influence of the dispersed settlement, characterised by small villages, hamlets and farmsteads along lanes.

2.18. In relation to the condition of the ‘North Colchester Farmlands LCA’, the ELCA notes that the condition of the hedgerows is mixed, with some poorly managed. The ELCA goes on to note that the ‘sensitivity evaluation’ in relation to ‘major urban extensions’ (i.e. over 5ha) and also ‘small urban extensions’ (less than <5ha) is ‘medium’ sensitivity.

2.19. In reaching this judgement the ELCA considers issues including the ‘moderate to high inter-visibility; hedgerow field patterns; islands of tranquillity; and that the northern part of the LCA is situated within the AONB’.

2.20. The Site forms only a small proportion of the wider LCA considered at a county level. Impacts and effects are not likely to be a material consideration at this scale. The county assessment has informed consideration of the likely landscape effects and subsequent development of mitigation.

District Landscape Character

2.21. At a more local level, reference is made to the ‘Colchester Landscape Character Assessment’¹ (CLCA), prepared by LUC in 2024 on behalf of Colchester City Council.

¹ Colchester City Council, The Colchester Landscape Character Assessment (LUC, November 2024)

2.22. The CLCA describes the landscape character within Colchester and identifies six landscape character type profiles (LCTs) which are sub-divided into 28 Landscape Character Areas (LCAs).

2.23. The Site is located within an LCT defined as 'B: Farmland Plateau' and the 'B6: Great Horkesley Farmland Plateau' LCA.

2.24. The guidance describes LCA B6 as follows:

"This LCA is located to the north of Colchester and comprises a gently undulating plateau lying between the valleys of the Colne River to the south and River Stour to the north. Land to the north lies partly within the Dedham Vale National Landscape (formerly an AONB). It is a predominantly arable landscape featuring a pattern of medium to large-scale regular fields interspersed with occasional small woodland blocks, tree belts and orchards."

2.25. The key characteristics of the LCA are described within the CLC as set out below:

- *"Gently undulating plateau forming a watershed between the River Stour to the north and Colne River to the south.*
- *Predominantly arable landscape organised into a regular pattern of medium to large scale fields of parliamentary enclosure origin with later amalgamations; some smaller scale field pattern in places.*
- *Field boundaries are largely defined by low trimmed hedgerows with occasional mature hedgerow trees.*
- *Scattered woodland and tree belts and tree cover along watercourses; poplar belts defining field boundaries are a striking feature in the landscape.*
- *Large area of orchards in close proximity to Great Horkesley and West Bergholt are distinctive landscape features.*
- *Traversed by a regular network of roads and lanes radiating from two main routes – The Causeway (A134) and Straight Road/Boxted Road – which connect with the northern edge of Colchester.*
- *Good levels of public access via several public rights of way (PRoW), including the Essex Way long distance path.*
- *Historic settlement pattern of dispersed small villages, hamlets and farmsteads along lanes is largely retained although with some modern development around settlements and ribbon development along roads.*
- *A generally open landscape with occasional long distance framed views across the Stour Valley slopes to the north; some localised sense of visual enclosure near woodland and tree belts.*
- *An overriding rural character albeit with influence of modern development and adjoining urban area of Colchester and A12 to the south."*

2.26. The guidance sets out several key sensitivities and values, which include:

- *“The north of the LCA lies partly within, and forms the immediate setting to the south, of the Dedham Vale National Landscape and demonstrates the following special qualities of the nationally designated landscape: gentle valley sides with scattered woodlands; remains mostly free of incongruous development and retains a rural charm and tranquillity; and a predominantly open character, affording long distance views over the shallow valleys.*
- *Ecological value and landscape diversity is provided by scattered habitats, including Ancient Woodland at Pitchbury Wood, woodland blocks and belts, grassland habitats at Langham Road and Great Horkesley Churchyard, and an extensive mosaic of habitats along the Black Brook which provides a valuable wildlife corridor.*
- *Sense of time–depth and landscape interest provided by historic settlement pattern and several historic features, including Listed Buildings, the Iron Age Pitchbury Ramparts Scheduled Monument, the route of a Roman Road, and remnant parklands.*
- *Recreational value provided by several PRow, including the Essex Way long distance path, which provide green infrastructure connections and recreational access between settlements and the surrounding countryside.*
- *Distinctive angular network of roads and lanes which link the various areas of settlement and the northern edge of Colchester.*
- *The rural character of much of the landscape which provides a setting for the Essex Way and other PRow, and settlements/villages.*
- *Visual interest and landscape variety provided by poplar belts and remnant orchards.*
- *Sense of visual openness; areas to the north are also inter-visible from parts the adjacent Stour River Valley Floor LCA which lies within the Dedham Vale National Landscape.”*

2.27. Issues and changes include reference to hedgerow condition, noting some are poorly managed, along poorly integrated settlement edges which can be exposed in parts of the landscape which are considered relatively open; expansion of Great Horkesley is also noted.

2.28. In response to the various sensitivities and pressures identified in the guidance, the LCA sets out a landscape strategy which encourages conservation and enhancement of the rural landscape by increasing woodland cover, increasing the extent and quality of field boundaries and re-introducing traditional orchards. It also notes that development should be sensitively integrated into the landscape. Overall, it is considered that the proposed development can respond positively to these aspects of the LCA guidance.

2.29. Reference to the identified landscape components informs the analysis of constraints and opportunities in relation to the site. The matters identified in character guidance at both the county and borough levels can be incorporated into a landscape and visually led site masterplan. This approach will respond appropriately to the context of the local landscape character.

Visual Amenity

Context

- 2.30. This section provides a description of the nature and extent of the existing views from within, towards and between the Site and the surrounding area. It also includes reference to specific locations or receptors that are predicted to have potential views of proposed development across the Site.
- 2.31. Establishing the specific nature of these views provides an understanding of the context and setting of representative viewpoints and the nature of views in terms of distance, angle of view, and seasonal constraints associated with specific visual receptors.
- 2.32. The identification of key sensitive receptors and links to illustrative viewpoints are carried forward to the appraisal process and supported by **Figure 4 ZTV, Viewpoint Locations and PRoW** and **Figure 5: Viewpoint Photographs**.

Visual Envelope

- 2.33. The visual envelope is the area of landscape from which a given site or proposed development will potentially be visible. It accounts for general judgements on the theoretical visibility of a site or proposed development and can be used to set a broad context for the study area within which to address landscape and visual impacts.
- 2.34. The extent of a visual envelope is influenced by the physical landscape components of an area, such as topography, vegetation, and buildings and can also be influenced by distance from a site. As such, within the broad coverage of a visual envelope there can be variability in terms of the opportunity for views, whereby a greater or lesser degree of visibility may or may not be evident in a particular part or at certain locations within the envelope.
- 2.35. As previously noted, the nature of the local topography, presence of hedgerows, occurrence of woodland and tree lines, and distribution of settlement influences the potential visibility of the site within its local landscape context. These factors also contribute to the degree of containment, both physically and visually. Consequently, the visual envelope of the site is defined as follows:
- To the north, by the immediate and wider network of field hedgerows, shelterbelts, and woodland. As illustrated in **Figure 5 (Viewpoint 1 and Viewpoint 2)** medium and long views into the Site from the north are truncated and the visual envelope extends only a short distance to the north with partial, glimpsed and heavily filtered short range views of the Site from locations in the vicinity of Old House Farm;
 - To the northeast, by the existing settlement edge of Horkesley Heath where built form is set back slightly from the Site due to the presence of an area of green open space. There is a semicircular bund and line of juvenile vegetation to the northeastern site boundary that truncates views of the Site interior from the northeast. As illustrated in **Viewpoint 2** there are filtered short to mid-range views between PRoW GH36 within the Site and the upper parts of contemporary residential properties within the Horkesley Green development to the northeast;

- As illustrated in **Viewpoint 2 and VP 16** there is a narrow east-west view corridor into the Site orientated along a public right of way that connects the Site with the new Great Horkesley village hall. Along this corridor there are glimpsed, partial views of the Site at close range only;
- Mid and long distance of the Site from the east and south-east are truncated by built form and vegetation associated with recent residential development at Braeburn road as illustrated in **Figure 5 (Viewpoint 15)**;
- To the south, by linear residential development along the southern edge of Coach Road, located immediately opposite the Site truncating medium and long range views of the Site with partial, glimpsed and heavily filtered short range views of the Site from locations along Coach Road as illustrated in **Figure 5 (Viewpoint 12)**;
- To the southwest, by linear tree belts and woodland and low density residential development truncating medium to long range views. The visual envelope extends only a short to medium distance to the southwest of the Site with partial, glimpsed and filtered short to mid-range views of the Site from locations along Coach Road and Old House Road as illustrated in **Figure 5 (Viewpoints 8, 9, 10 and 11)**; and
- To the northwest of Old House Road, by dense roadside vegetation, built form and layers of field boundary vegetation that provide heavy filtering to views of the Site from the public right of way network as illustrated in **Figure 5 (Viewpoints 4, 5, and 6)**.

2.36. While there may be occasional locations from where proposed residential development on the Site may additionally be perceived (marginally or partially) beyond the defined visual envelope described above that represents the Site's primary area of influence.

Visual Receptors

2.37. Receptors of the highest sensitivity include people engaged in outdoor recreation whose attention is likely to be focused on the landscape (for example, users of PRow in the open countryside; and visitors to heritage or tourist attractions where views of the landscape are important to their setting or experience) and views from settlements.

2.38. Receptors of intermediate sensitivity include users of local roads where fleeting views of the landscape are likely to be of lesser importance than would be experienced by users of the local PRow network.

2.39. Receptors of lowest sensitivity include people where an appreciation of the landscape is of lower importance to the activity, such as people engaged in outdoor sport; people who are focused on their job; and road and rail users travelling through a landscape at speed.

2.40. Based on the approximate visual envelope, the principal visual receptors are likely to include:

- Local residents in properties along the northeastern, eastern, southern and part of the western site boundaries, including those along Coach Road, Old House Road, Gala Close, Spartan Close, Jonagold Drive and Tile House Lane;
- Users of PRow, including public footpaths within the north of the Site and the Essex Way recreational route which runs to the east and south of the site and the settlement of Horkesley Heath; and

- Road users along Coach Road to the south and west, Old House Road to the north, and from within the settlement edge of Horkesley Heath to the east of the Site, including Gala Close, Spartan Close, Jonagold Drive and Tile House Lane.

2.41. The following viewpoints have been included as representative locations (refer to **Figure 5, Viewpoint Locations and PROW** and **Figure 6, Viewpoint Photographs**).

- Viewpoint 1: 360 degree view, from public footpath GH36 within the north of the site.
- Viewpoint 2: 360 degree view, from public footpath GH36 within the northwest of the site.
- Viewpoint 3: View looking south-east, from public footpath GH36 within the site close to its junction with Old House Road.
- Viewpoint 4: View looking south, from public footpath GH26 just north Old House Road.
- Viewpoint 5: View looking south-east, from public footpath GH26 north of Ponders Farm.
- Viewpoint 6: View looking south-east, from public footpath GH26 east of London Road.
- Viewpoint 7: View looking east, from Coach Road adjacent to Pitchbury Wood.
- Viewpoint 8: View looking north-east, from Coach Road close to the junction with Old House Road.
- Viewpoint 9: View looking east, from Old House Road.
- Viewpoint 10: View looking east, from Coach Road.
- Viewpoint 11: View looking north-east, from Coach Road on the western edge of the site.
- Viewpoint 12A and 12B: View looking north, from the junction between public footpath GH37 and Coach Road.
- Viewpoint 13: View looking north, from a relative high point along the Essex Way/public footpath GH38.
- Viewpoint 14: View looking north, from the Essex Way/public footpath GH37 close to the settlement edge.
- Viewpoint 15A and 15B: View looking west, from the open space on the western edge of the existing settlement.
- Viewpoint 16: View looking west, from the existing area of formal public open space at Horkesley.

3. LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL APPRAISAL

Overview

- 3.1. This section analyses the landscape and visual attributes of the site, including its role and contribution to the local landscape context. The analysis highlights pertinent points where relevant; and the subsequent identification of the key (development) constraints and opportunities in landscape and visual terms.
- 3.2. The analysis of landscape and visual matters has informed the strategic design process for the Site. This approach ensures that the masterplan respects the surrounding landscape and draws on this to create a sense of place and identity.

Analysis

- 3.3. The Site has an irregular shape due to historical field amalgamation, land ownership and previous settlement expansion. The landform and pattern is simple comprising relatively flat fields bound by hedgerows with occasional hedgerow trees and small patches of woodland. Landcover within the Site consists of grassland and linear sparse tree belts including locally characterising poplar. There are riparian influences throughout the Site due to the presence of ditches alongside the windbreak planting.
- 3.4. The overall character of the Site is rural albeit the presence of residential development to the east of the Site exerts urban influences including views of built form and noise from urban activities.
- 3.5. Opportunities from a landscape and visual perspective for the Proposed Development include:
 - The relatively flat landform of the Site which will require minimal ground works to provide suitable build platforms, consequently limiting impacts in relation to local topography and landform;
 - The immediate context of the existing settlement edge of Horkesley Heath offers containment from the wider agricultural landscape and context for the type of development being proposed;
 - The existing settlement pattern extends west along Coach Road through to a cluster of properties around the junction with Woodhouse Lane, presenting a residential context and gradual transition to the wider landscape south and west of the Site;
 - Existing mature tree belt to the northern site boundary which offers visual and physical containment from the wider agricultural landscape to the north;
 - Fragmented hedgerows and tree belts within the Site able to be retained and enhanced;
 - Reference to former historic field boundary alignments can inform the internal layout, including alignment of green infrastructure corridors; and

- The relatively 'ordinary' and unremarkable nature of the Site in landscape terms, highlighted by the lack of landscape features and absence of any overriding landscape designations.

3.6. Constraints for the Site are considered to be:

- Existing agricultural land use;
- Existing landscape components on the Site, including boundary vegetation consisting of mature tree belts and hedgerows with hedgerow trees;
- Poplar tree belts within the Site (although opportunities to enhance this planting);
- Partially exposed boundaries, particularly to the southwest and northwest, where hedgerows have been removed/fragmented; and
- Direct/partial views from the local PROW network and adjacent residential dwellings.

Preliminary Development and Landscape Strategy

3.7. Based on the analysis of landscape and visual constraints and opportunities, there are considered to be two important issues regarding the Site's strategic development potential.

3.8. Firstly, is the need to identify the extent of an appropriate 'development envelope' that can accommodate built form and infrastructure. This is defined by considerations including the scale and pattern of the landscape in terms of field boundaries and vegetation, existing landscape features, topography, and the character and land uses immediately adjoining the Site.

3.9. Secondly, there is a need to establish a robust and enduring green infrastructure framework to balance the new built development and provide appropriate public open space, flood attenuation and biodiversity.

3.10. Both built development and landscape enhancement can co-exist in response to the local landscape context which will in turn will help to avoid or reduce adverse impacts. The landscape strategy can comprise both existing and proposed green infrastructure.

3.11. The overarching principles for the landscape strategy aim to:

- Take into consideration and carefully respond to the landscape character in the local context and the surrounding landscape;
- Identify existing features and opportunities that can or could provide protection of visual amenity for identified receptors, including new or enhanced screening or visual filtering benefits;
- Retain and engage existing landscape elements and features defining the Site within a new landscape structure for development; and
- Avoid loss or damage to retained landscape elements and features, maintaining and strengthening the connectivity of the existing green infrastructure framework including that which meets and extends beyond the site boundary.

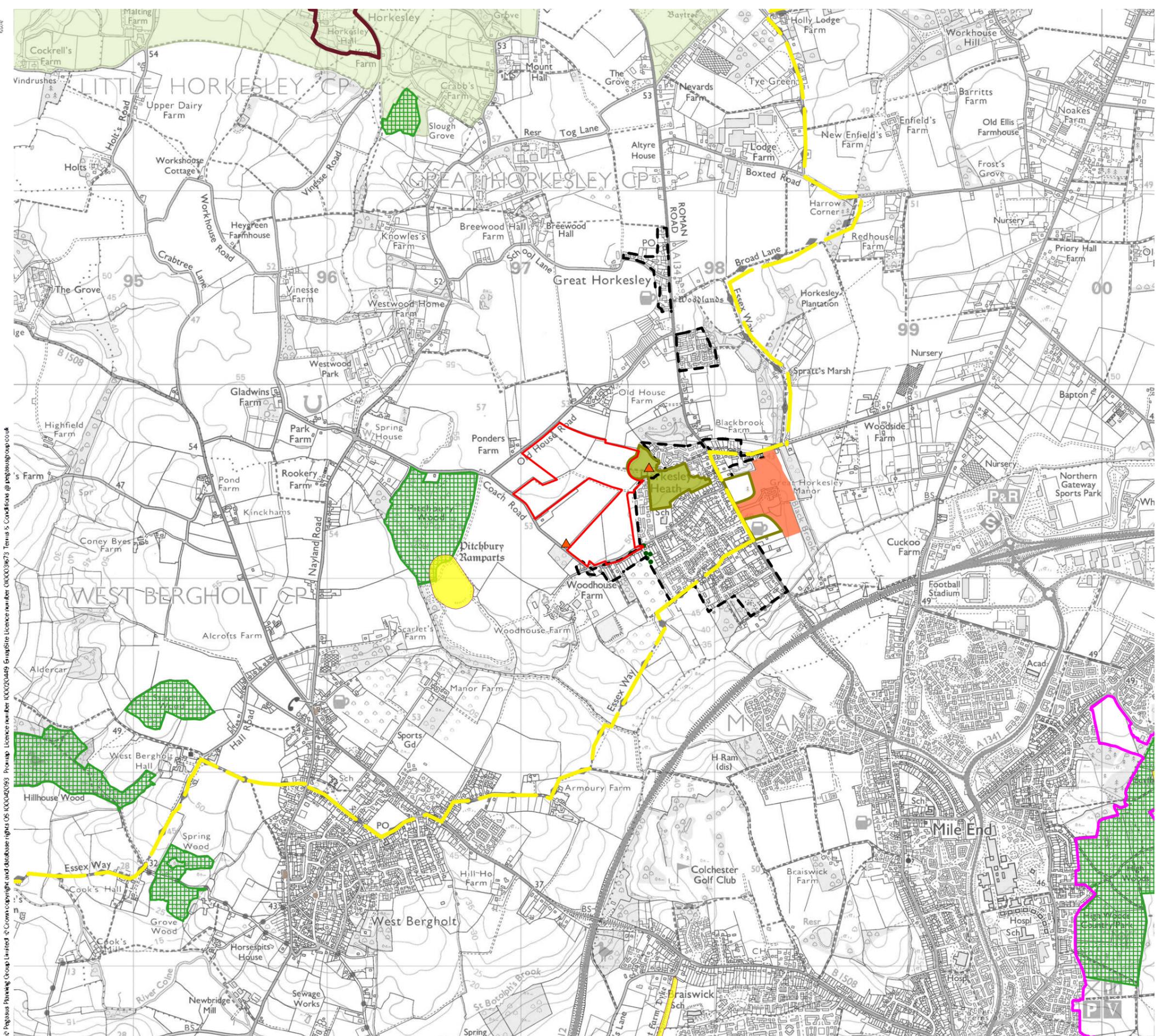
- 3.12. Consideration of the constraints and opportunities can direct development to specific areas of the Site and guide recommended mitigation measures to avoid or reduce potential adverse effects. There will remain some degree of anticipated impacts (as would be expected for all greenfield sites) yet there would also be positive effects in respect of both environmental matters and good design.
- 3.13. This places a particular emphasis on green infrastructure across the Site (including strategic or structural landscape planting and open space distribution) and the role that landscape characteristics and green infrastructure have in determining the spatial parameters and connections within the proposed development.
- 3.14. In reference to the identified constraints and opportunities associated with potential development of the Site, the key considerations to enable landscape integration and deliver appropriate mitigation are as follows:
- The development envelope has been set back from existing vegetation, notably along the internal shelterbelts and boundary hedgerows of the Site, in order to help ensure that they can be retained and enhanced as part of a landscape strategy (where possible and appropriate) and reinforce wildlife corridors and green infrastructure.
 - Existing tree belts to be protected and managed to ensure 10m wide high density woodland planting with 5m offsets within the site boundary to any earthworks to ensure safe and healthy rooting zones.
 - The preferred location for the attenuation basins are to the outer eastern and southern site extents reflecting natural topography, within landscape buffers or along green links.
 - Potential to define the central and eastern part of the Site with higher density/taller development to provide legibility and unify the two site parcels.
 - Provision of a hierarchy of open spaces reflecting existing and future provision and densities locally.
 - Potential for a community facility e.g. orchard and public open space within the northern development parcel.
 - Maintain a broad green corridor within which the PRoW can be retained along its existing alignment.
- 3.15. The landscape and visual considerations have been used to shape the overall development envelope, which will be refined with reference to other technical constraints and environmental/design disciplines as the proposals progress.
- 3.16. It is considered that, with an appropriate approach to mitigation and the implementation of a robust green infrastructure strategy, residential proposals within the site can be accommodated within a responsive framework of existing retained and proposed landscape features which reflect the landscape and visual characteristics of the site and its local landscape context.

4. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

- 4.1. This report has been prepared by Chartered Landscape Architects as a preliminary appraisal of landscape and visual matters (PLVA) in relation to land between Coach Road and Old House Road, near Great Horkesley, Colchester.
- 4.2. The PLVA identifies the key constraints and opportunities in respect of the site and surrounding landscape context. The analysis considers the specific nature of the type of development being considered and informs the inherent proposals for an indicative development strategy. The preliminary development form consequently incorporates a landscape mitigation strategy which seeks to avoid, reduce or remedy adverse impacts.
- 4.3. In terms of delivering housing growth in an area, any site will result in some impact in relation to landscape and visual matters. However, the analysis undertaken for this PLVA shows that the site benefits from a notable degree of enclosure within the local landscape, and that there is some existing influence upon the Site from the immediately adjacent residential settled edge. The Site has the potential to accommodate development whereby both the masterplanning exercises to date, and further design evolution going forward, can aim to effectively avoid or reduce identified potential impacts through effective mitigation.
- 4.4. The preliminary landscape mitigation strategy responds to local landscape characteristics such as public access, field boundaries, tree belts and topography,
- 4.5. Consequently, residual landscape and visual effects would be limited and occur at a localised level, and the use of existing landscape components to guide the landscape strategy and subsequent augmentation of these components can set an appropriate and robust edge to the settlement in the longer term.
- 4.6. These landscape and visual considerations have been used and will continue to shape the overall development extents and distribution, which will be subsequently refined with reference to other technical constraints and environmental/design disciplines.
- 4.7. In this context – and given that potential development within the Site would seek to limit landscape and visual impacts at a local level wherever possible through a careful design process – it is considered that a residential scheme of this scale could be successfully accommodated in landscape and visual terms.



FIGURES.



- KEY**
- Site boundary
 - Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty***
 - Ancient Woodland***
 - Country Parks***
 - Tree Preservation Order (within 100m of site)***
 - Open Space*
 - Public Open Space**
 - New Residential Allocation**
 - Great Horkeley Village Settlement Boundary*
 - Conservation Area Boundary*
 - Scheduled Monument***
 - Listed Buildings (within 200m of site)***
 - Essex Way recreational route***

Sources:
 * Colchester Borough Council Proposals Maps (adopted 2010)
 ** Colchester Borough Council Emerging Local Plan Publication Draft (June 2017)

06/01/2026	E	Site boundary updated
30/10/2025	D	Site boundary updated
DATE	NO	REVISION NOTE

Figure 1: Site Location Plan and Planning Designations

Land to the north of Coach Road, Great Horkeley

CLIENT: Bloor Homes

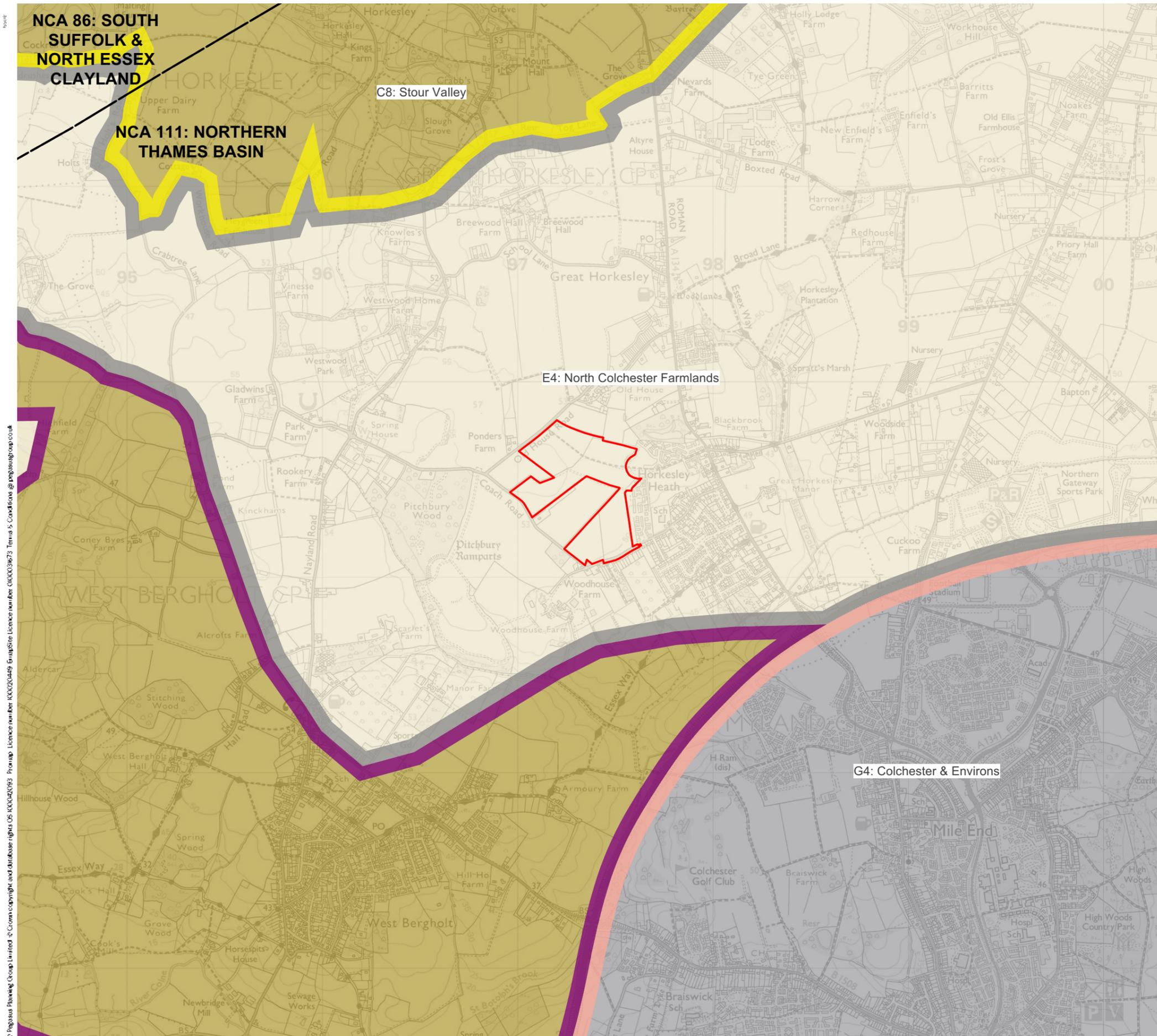
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TEAM: SL

APPRVD: JWA

DATE	SCALE	TEAM	APPRVD
16.01.2025	1:20000 @A3	SL	JWA

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KEY

-  Site boundary
-  National Character Area boundary

Essex County Council Landscape Character Assessment (February 2003)

Landscape Character Types:

-  River Valley Landscapes
-  Glacial Till Plateau
-  Urban Landscapes

Landscape Character Areas:

-  C8: Stour Valley
-  E4: North Colchester Farmlands
-  G4: Colchester & Environs
-  C7: Colne Valley

DATE	NO	REVISION NOTE
06/01/2026	E	Site boundary updated
30/10/2025	D	Site boundary updated
20/08/2025	C	Site boundary updated.
26/02/2025	B	Site boundary updated.
16/01/2025	A	Updated to revised site boundary.

Figure 2: County Landscape Character

Land to the north of Coach Road, Great Horkesley

CLIENT: Bloor Homes



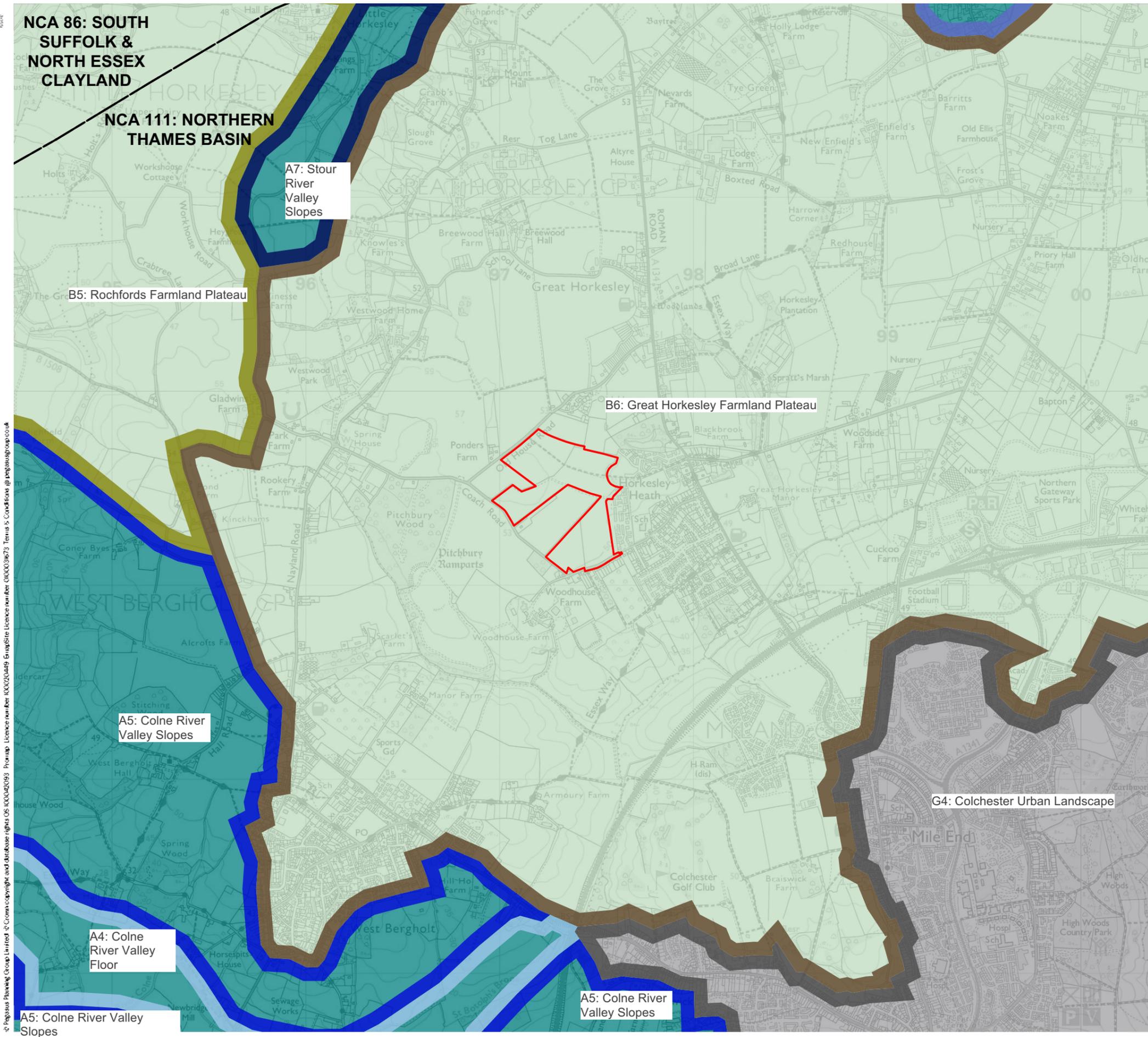
DATE: 16.01.2025 | SCALE: 1:20000 @A3 | TEAM: SL | APPRVD: JWA

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KEY

- Site boundary
- National Character Area boundary

Colchester Borough Council Landscape Character Assessment (November 2005)
Landscape Character Types:

- A: River Valley
- B: Farmland Plateau
- G: Principal Urban Areas

Landscape Character Areas:

- A4: Colne River Valley Floor
- A5: Colne River Valley Slopes
- A7: Stour River Valley Slopes
- B5: Rochfords Farmland Plateau
- B6: Great Horkeley Farmland Plateau
- G4: Colchester Urban Landscape

DATE	NO	REVISION NOTE
06/01/2026	E	Site boundary updated
30/10/2025	D	Site boundary updated
20/08/2025	C	Site boundary updated.
26/02/2025	B	Site boundary updated.
16/01/2025	A	Updated to revised site boundary.

Figure 3: Borough Landscape Character

Land to the north of Coach Road, Great Horkeley

CLIENT Bloor Homes	SCALE 1:20000 @A3	TEAM SL	APPRVD JWA
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DRAWING NUMBER
P19-0982_EN_0003_E_S1

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