



Gilston Area

Landscape and Visual Appraisal

August 2016

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1 Introduction

1.1 Preamble

- 1.1.1 Places for People (PfP) and City & Provincial Properties (CPP) are jointly promoting a strategic development of 10,000 new homes on land to the north of Harlow, referred to as the 'Gilston Area' in the draft East Herts District Plan. This strategic development is being promoted in order to assist in meeting the housing and regeneration needs of both East Hertfordshire and Harlow.
- 1.1.2 The Gilston Area has been identified as a Broad Location for New Development within the Preferred Options version of East Hertfordshire District Council's District Plan.

1.2 Purpose and Scope of Report

- 1.2.1 This Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) has been prepared by Capita to support the evidence base for the Gilston Area development.
- 1.2.2 This LVA provides a high level description of landscape character and visibility within the Gilston Area and commentary on the potential effects of the proposed development on the landscape character of the Gilston Area and on key viewpoints within the Gilston Area and its surroundings.
- 1.2.3 The report is structured as follows:
- Section 2 explains the methodology employed for this appraisal;
 - Section 3 describes the existing landscape and visual conditions within the Gilston Area;
 - Section 4 describes the proposals for the Gilston Area, including any landscape and visual mitigation measures;
 - Section 5 describes the key landscape and visual changes likely to occur as a result of the proposals for the Gilston Area;
 - Section 6 provides a summary and conclusions of the report.

2 Methodology

2.1 General

- 2.1.1 The methodology employed for this appraisal is based on the *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (Third Edition)*¹ and *An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment*².
- 2.1.2 The work carried out for this appraisal comprises of a desk based study and field work.
- 2.1.3 The desk based study comprises a review of published documents relating to landscape character and an analysis of local mapping to identify potentially significant viewpoints, taking into account topography, built development and significant vegetation features such as woodland.
- 2.1.4 The field work was carried out in August 2015 and included the walking of roads, public rights of way and permissive paths. The field work sought to verify the desktop work and also determine the extent to which the proposed development would be capable of being seen (in whole or in part).

2.2 Study Area

- 2.2.1 A study area has been defined by reviewing relevant Ordnance Survey maps, aerial photographs and material obtained from field surveys. The study area encompasses a zone based on a 5km radius from a central point within the site and takes into account the pattern and scale of landform, land cover, land use and built form in the vicinity of the site. The study area is shown on Figure 1.

¹ Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (Third Edition), Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013

² An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment, Natural England, October 2014

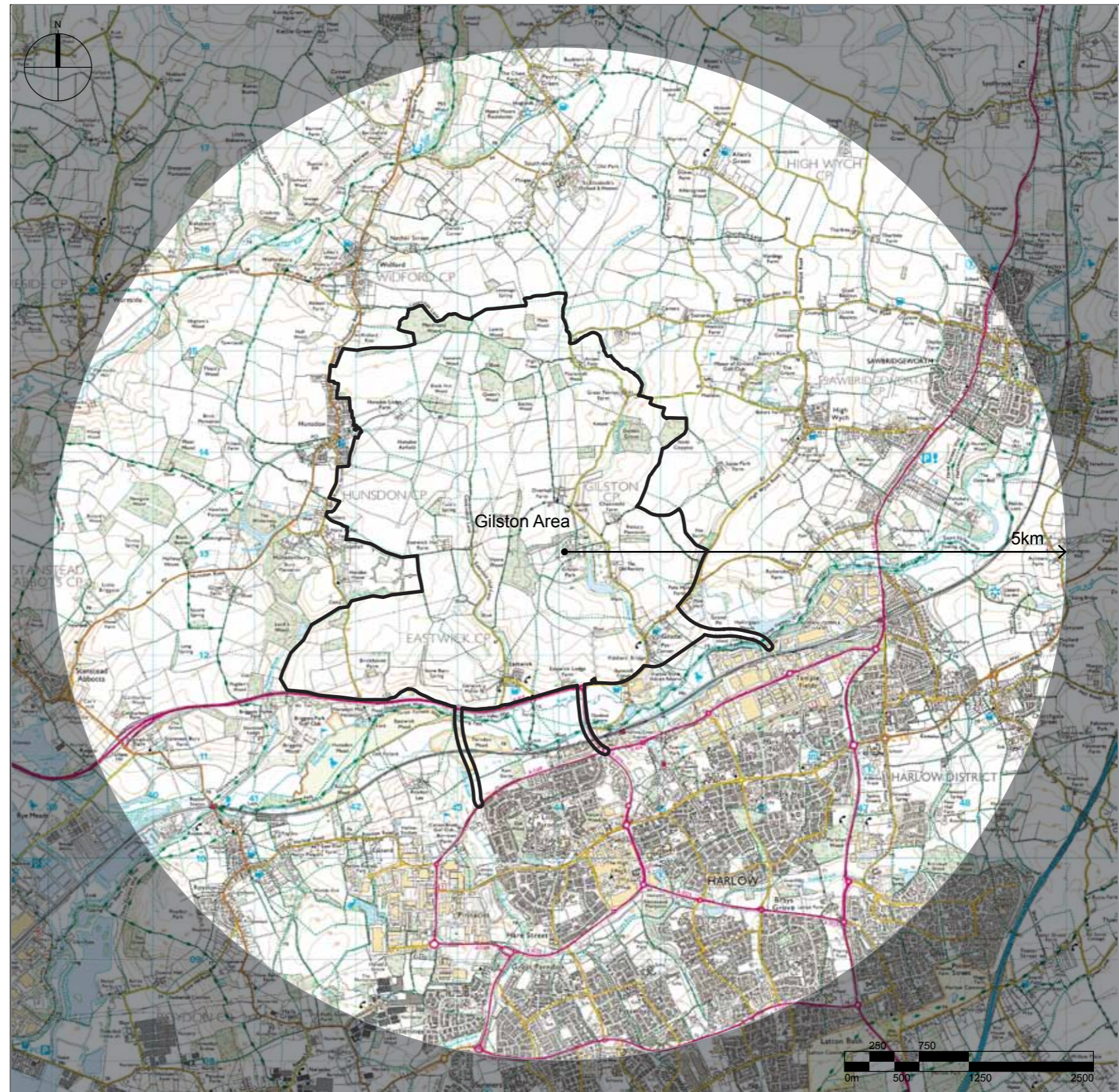


Figure 1: Study Area

2.3 The Main Stages of the Appraisal

2.3.1 This landscape and visual appraisal comprises three main stages.

2.3.2 The first stage is the baseline survey, which records the existing situation, including:

- An overview of the landscape within the study area (including topography, development and land use patterns, vegetation, open space and water bodies);
- Landscape designations (for example listed buildings, conservation areas);
- Review of landscape character documentation (with on-site corroboration); and
- General visibility and key views within the study area.

2.3.3 The value of the landscape and key views within the study area are considered as part of the baseline reporting. Factors which influence landscape and visual value include:

- landscape or visual designations that may apply;
- importance to users;
- the presence of intrinsic aesthetic characteristics such as scenic quality or sense of place;
- physical state and condition;
- the extent to which it displays a distinctive character;
- size;
- historic or cultural associations;
- accessibility; and
- existing detractors.

(extracted from the LI and IEMA Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment)

2.3.4 The second stage describes the proposed development and most particularly those aspects that are likely to affect landscape and visual amenity. It also describes key

landscape and visual mitigation that has been incorporated into the scheme, including the avoidance and reduction of effects.

2.3.5 The third stage considers the potential effects of the proposed development on the landscape and on key views in the study area.

2.3.6 Potential effects on the landscape include:

- loss or gain of landscape elements and features;
- change in landscape character; and
- change to perception of landscape.

2.3.7 The visual effects of the proposals are described by considering the potential effects on views experienced from several representative viewpoints within the study area.

2.3.8 Evaluation of the key landscape and visual effects of the proposals involves consideration of:

- the size or scale of effect;
- the geographical extent; and
- the duration/reversibility of the effect.

2.3.9 In order to assist with evaluating the visual effects of the proposals, illustrative wireline or 'block' photomontages have been prepared as part of the visual impact assessment. These are intended to indicate the location and the degree to which the development is likely to be visible from each key viewpoint.

2.3.10 The basic process for creating these photomontages is set out below.

- Create basic 3d block model from existing terrain and extrude to development block parameter heights;

- Set up virtual cameras and reference points;
 - Render out proposal and align in baseline photographs; and
 - Draw wireline or apply foreground clipping for block model photomontages.
- 2.3.11 For the purposes of this exercise it has been assumed that the height of each storey within development blocks is 2.8m.

3 Baseline Conditions

3.1 Overview

3.1.1 This section of the report describes the existing landscape and visual conditions within the study area. The existing visual conditions at each of the representative viewpoint locations are described as part of the appraisal of visual effects in Section 5 of this report, in order to enable comparisons to be easily made between the existing view and that with proposed development.

3.2 Landscape Conditions

Overview

3.2.1 The study area includes the central and northern parts of Harlow town together with land to the north of the town. The majority of the area is undulating countryside with Gilston Park located in the central part of the area.

3.2.2 The town of Harlow is located to the south of the Stort Valley with higher land and woodland visually containing it on the southern, western and eastern boundaries. A network of open space corridors penetrate the town which soften and provide a setting for the urban form.

3.2.3 The River Stort traverses the southern half of the study area. The character of the river corridor is largely defined by the relationship to the natural features of the watercourse and the 'navigation' elements (e.g. locks). The valley floor is generally flat with gentle side slopes and has a predominantly rural character though has become urban where industry is located alongside the water's edge.

3.2.4 The villages of Hunsdon and Widford are located in the north western part of the study area whilst the villages of Eastwick and Roydon are located in the south western part of the study area.

3.2.5 The town of Sawbridgeworth is located in the eastern part of the area, as is the neighbouring village of High Wych.

3.2.6 Other settlements include the village of Gilston (near the centre of the area) and the hamlets of Allens Green and Perry Green (towards the northern part of the area).

3.2.7 The large-scale arable field pattern creates an open character across the plateau in the northern part of the area. A former World War II airfield located to the south-east of Hunsdon contributes to this open character where vegetation has been removed. Smaller fields and woodlands located to the north-east and south-west of Hunsdon form a sense of enclosure and remoteness.

3.2.8 The urban area of Harlow is mainly characterised by post war residential neighbourhoods and commercial development. There are several tower blocks within the town which can be seen from the surrounding area, including the Gilston Area.

Landscape Designations

3.2.9 There are several statutory and non statutory designations within the study area including:

- County Wildlife Sites;
- Local Nature Reserves;
- Conservation Areas;
- Listed Buildings;
- Special Landscape Areas; and
- Scheduled Ancient Monuments

3.2.10 The location of these designations are shown on Figure 2.

3.2.11 The centres of High Wych, Hunsdon and Widford are designated as Conservation Areas (see Figure 2). In addition Gilston Park is a locally listed historic park and garden.

3.2.12 There are several areas of Ancient Woodland within the study area (notably Home Wood, Golden Grove, Sayes Coppice and Markhall Wood). The River Stort corridor also contains many surviving areas of historic fields and woodland and several important nature conservation designations.

3.2.13 Many of the 19th century and earlier roads in the study area have remained intact. A network of historic tracks and lanes is visible which provide access to the various isolated farmsteads and dwellings. In addition there are several key pedestrian routes in the area, notably Harcamlow Way, Stort Valley Way and the Towing Path which are important landscape resources in terms of their recreational value.

Landscape Character Areas

3.2.14 For the purpose of this high level appraisal, the baseline description of the landscape character of the study area is based on the Landscape Character Assessment carried out by East Hertfordshire District Council³. This Assessment was adopted as Supplementary Planning Document by EHDC in October 2007 and forms part of the evidence base for the emerging East Hertfordshire District Plan. The Landscape Character Assessment commissioned by Essex County Council⁴ has also been used to inform the description of the urban characteristics of Harlow.

3.2.15 The landscape character areas which fall within the study area are shown on Figure 3. A description of those character areas which have the potential to be affected is provided on pages 7 to 9 of this report.

³ Landscape Character Assessment Supplementary Document, East Hertfordshire District Council, 2007.

⁴ Essex Landscape Character Assessment, Chris Blandford Associates, 2003.

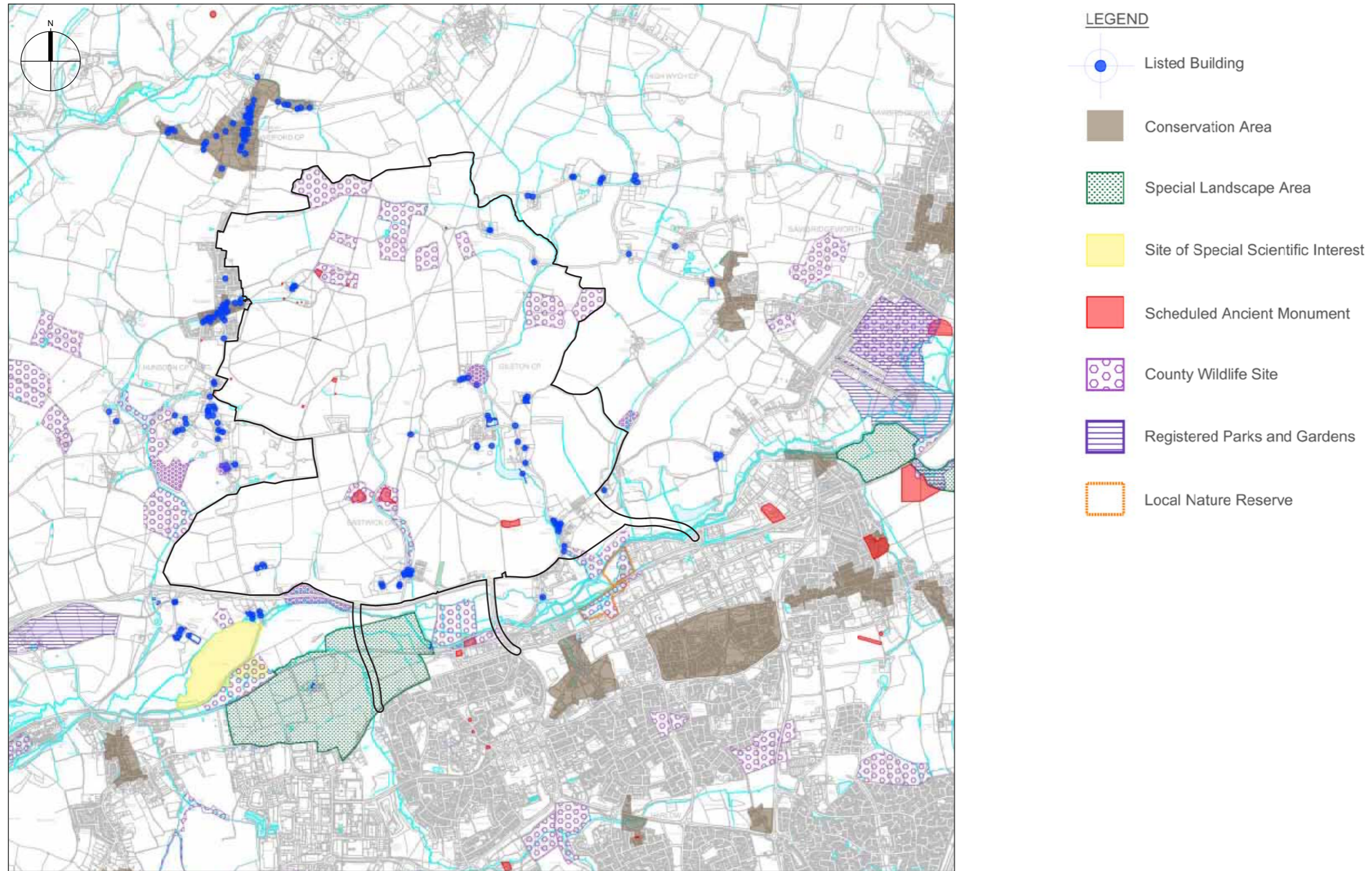


Figure 2: Gilston Area - Key Landscape Designations

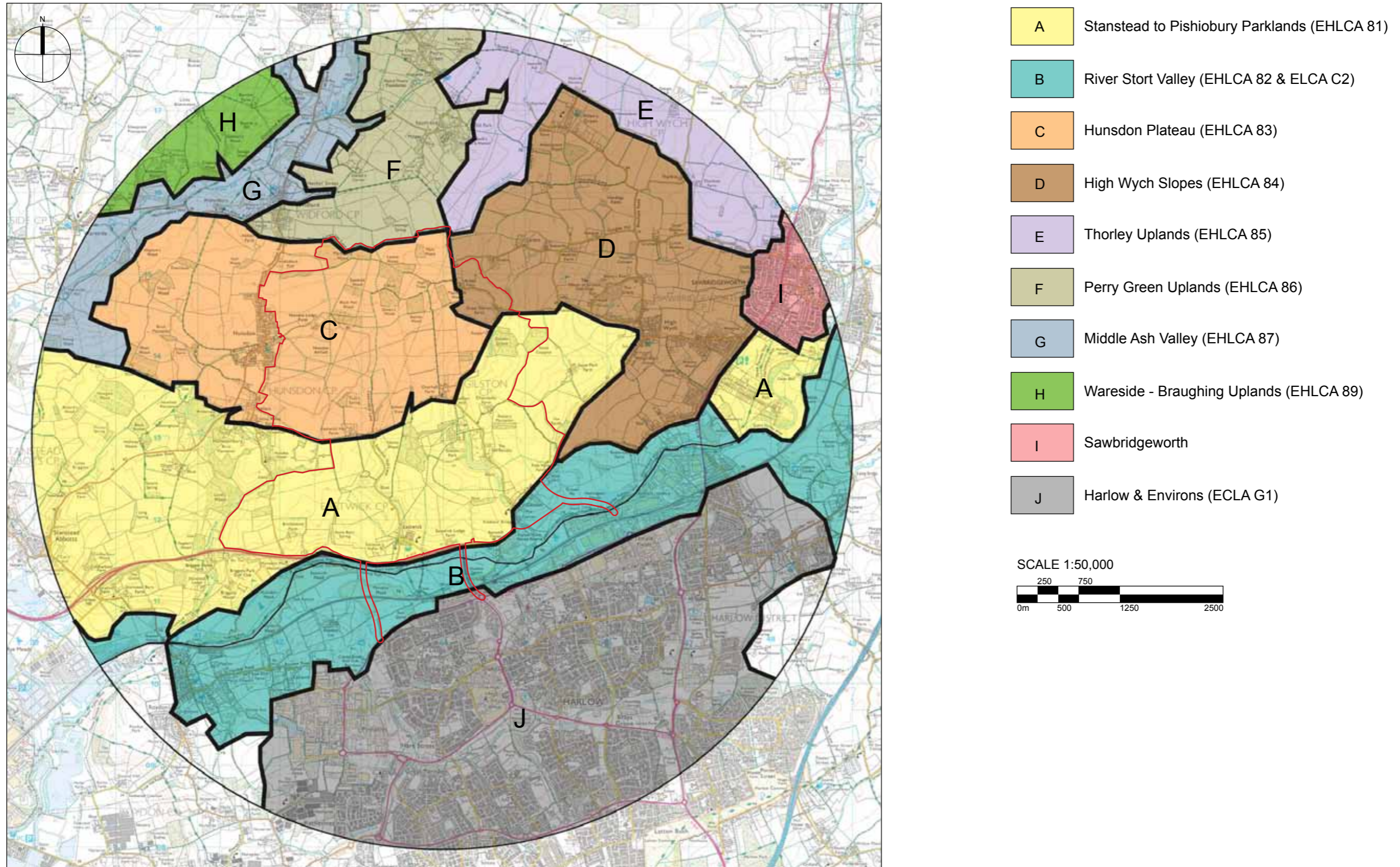


Figure 3: Landscape Character Areas

Stanstead to Pishiobury Parklands (East Herts. Landscape Character Assessment - Area 81)

3.2.16 This area is located on the north bank of the River Stort (between Stanstead Abbots and Sawbridgeworth). The land cover within the area includes open arable farmland, parkland, woodland and water meadow. There are a number of established settlements within the area and the north east of the Character Area contains several important isolated blocks of woodland. There are extensive views from the area across the Stort floodplain to the industrial edge of Harlow. Views towards the southern edge of the Character Area are apparent from several locations along the A414.



Gilston Park



Briggens

3.2.17 Landscape Designations in this area include Scheduled Monuments at Eastwick Moats and in Gilston Park. Pishiobury and Stansteadbury are Grade II listed. Gilston Park and Briggens are referred to in Hertfordshire County Council documentation on historic parks and gardens.

3.2.18 Key landscape characteristics and features of this area are:

- Historic parkland including Stanstead Bury, Bonnington, Hunsdonbury and Briggens Park, Eastwick (relic), Gilston Park and former deer park around Sayes Park Farm, and Pishiobury;
- Large-scale arable farmland with little woodland out of the valleys;
- Views of Harlow across river valley with taller buildings nestling in trees;
- Change from floodplain to rounded slopes is apparent throughout the area;
- Noise from cars near main roads;
- Aircraft noise from time to time;
- Open round slopes above Stort flood plain
- Relic cultural pattern reflecting topographic change and different landcover, e.g. Hunsdon Mead - Hunsdon Mill - Hunsdonbury;
- Dovecote water tower at Briggens; and
- Historic moats at Eastwick.

3.2.19 The Harcamlow Way extends along various routes in this area through the river valley, but is not extensive on the slopes. There is little access to the parklands. This area is relatively tranquil away from the main roads but has lost unity because of the parkland being put to different land uses. Noise from planes also reduces tranquillity from time to time.

3.2.20 The area is unusual in having so many associated parklands though not all are in good condition. The landscape flow between Gilston and Pishiobury has been broken by mineral workings and suburban development around High Wych and near Sawbridgeworth.

3.2.21 Despite the aircraft noise and mineral workings, the landscape value and quality of this area is considered to be relatively high as it has retained much of its historic parkland character and includes several landscape designations.

River Stort Valley (EHLCA Area 82 & Essex Landscape Character Assessment Area C2)

3.2.22 This area comprises the relatively flat valley of the River Stort and its gentle side slopes. The valley lies outside the urban areas of Harlow and Sawbridgeworth but in places is heavily influenced visually by them.

3.2.23 The floodplain contains a mixture of pasture and wetland vegetation, with some arable. Traditionally grazing marshland for the historic parkland estates to the north, it still retains its natural landform and in parts its historic land use.

3.2.24 Landscape designations within this area include SSSI's at Hunsdon Mead, Sawbridgeworth Marsh and Thorley Flood Pound. The Stort Valley is also designated as a High Biodiversity Area for its grasslands and wetlands.

3.2.25 In terms of accessibility, footpaths and towpaths are widespread in the river valley (notably the Harcamlow Way) but absent elsewhere. Recreational land uses within the area include walking, boating and fishing.



River Stort Navigation (1)

3.2.26 The EHLCA also notes that *“this area is highly valued in its entirety for its distinctive and accessible landscape spanning the county boundary and with added value to out-of-county visitors”*.

3.2.27 The landscape value and quality of this area is considered to be relatively high where it is unaffected by mineral extraction. Landscape value and quality is lower in those parts of the area affected by mineral extraction and the western extremity of the area (in the vicinity of Terlings Park).



River Stort Navigation (2)

Hunsdon Plateau (EHLCA 83)

3.2.28 This area comprises a flat upland plateau focussed around the village of Hunsdon. It includes an expanse of intensive arable farmland and a former airfield to the east of Hunsdon with several groups of ancient woodland to the north east of the village. The area has a large scale field pattern which creates an open character across the plateau. Smaller fields and woodlands located to the north-east and south-west of Hunsdon form a sense of enclosure and remoteness.

3.2.29 Key landscape characteristics and features of this area are:

- few settlements (Hunsdon, Widford);
- significant woodland groups clustered in north east and south west;
- fragmented hedgerows;
- quite remote;
- large-scale arable fields;
- heavy wet clay - ditched;
- Hunsdon airfield - bleak and lacking in features;
- homogenous style of villages;
- pylons and overhead power lines;
- historic links down to River Stort.

3.2.30 Landscape designations within this area include several Scheduled Monuments at Hunsdon airfield. There are also several groups of Ancient Woodland within this area.

3.2.31 In terms of accessibility, the EHLCA notes that footpaths and waymarked routes are extensive throughout the area but ‘unwelcoming’ across the airfield.

3.2.32 The lack of significant landscape elements or features means the area’s aesthetic value is limited though it improves when seen in the context of the wider landscape. As with the other areas, regular aircraft noise is perceptible throughout the area. The landscape value and quality of this area is therefore considered to be relatively low.

High Wych Slopes (EHLCA 84)

3.2.33 This area is located to the west of Sawbridgeworth and comprises a south facing slope of mixed (predominantly arable) farmland, small areas of parkland, transport corridors and suburban development. This area has irregular field patterns which are generally divided by ditches as opposed to hedgerows and which gradually increase in size away from the more built up areas.



Hunsdon Plateau - View towards Black Hut Wood



High Wych Slopes

3.2.34 The village of High Wych is the only settlement in this character area although 'ribbon development' spreading southwards along the A1184 encroaches into the eastern part of the area. Elsewhere a number of isolated farms and houses create an overall small-scale open farmed landscape with discrete blocks of woodland and a tight network of lanes. Views into the area are generally concealed by topography but extensive views are possible from the area, particularly over the Stort valley to the industrial edge of Harlow.

3.2.35 The EHLCA notes that *"The scale of landscape elements [in this area] is mixed and there is little visual unity, giving an appearance of incoherence, despite the openness."* It also states that *"this is not a tranquil area, with commuter through routes and the constant noise of traffic."*

Thorley Uplands (EHLCA 85)

3.2.36 The western half of this area constitutes a primarily arable upland plateau of extensive flat farmland lacking in vertical elements and fragmented only by infrequent blocks of woodland and associated farm outbuildings. The eastern half of this area is gradually undulating around a tributary stream on the west bank of the River Stort. The overall character is extremely open and rural with few settlements or buildings allowing extensive views from within.

Perry Green Uplands (EHLCA 86)

3.2.37 This area comprises a gently undulating upland with a number of hamlets and villages connected by narrow winding lanes. The medium scale arable landscape is defined by neat hedgerows and trees. A Henry Moore sculpture at Perry Green is a distinctive feature in the area. Views into the area are generally concealed by topography and vegetation but extensive views within the area are possible, particularly to the northwest and the Ash Valley.

Middle Ash Valley (EHLCA 87)

3.2.38 This area comprises a river valley located south of Wareside and north of Hadham Cross. The overarching character is narrow and flat with land falling gradually to the south; steep undulating slopes are situated on either side of the corridor.

Distinctive wetlands can be found in the valley and dense woodland blocks are sited along the valley sides extending towards adjacent character areas. The field pattern is irregular and organic, following the base of slopes and the meandering river. Views from within the area are contained by vegetation and landform which create a strong sense of enclosure.

Harlow & Environs (ELCA G1)

3.2.39 This area comprises the planned new town of Harlow and a surrounding fringe of farmland. The town wraps over low hills with higher land and woodland visually containing it on the southern, western and eastern boundaries. It has a distinctive network of open space corridors that follow the valleys and which in combination with the areas of woodland soften and provide a setting for the urban form.

3.2.40 Commercial development tends to be located on the lower valley sides and these are sometimes screened by thick belts of trees which avoid more visually prominent slopes. Views over the Stort valley are possible from the northern edge of the area and some of the larger road corridors which align north south through the town.

3.2.41 There are relatively few historic landscape features within the area whilst much of the historic settlement pattern has been subsumed into modern development. Accordingly the landscape value of this area is considered to be relatively low.

Summary of Landscape Conditions

3.2.42 Much of the landscape within and surrounding the site comprises historic parkland and farmland, interspersed with blocks of woodland. There are several landscape designations within the study area including Special Landscape Areas, Conservation Areas and County Wildlife Sites. The value and quality of the landscape along and north of the Stort Valley is varied, though is generally higher where historic landscape elements and features remain intact. Conversely landscape quality and value is lower in the urban area of Harlow.

3.3 Visual Conditions

3.3.1 The visual effects of the proposed development are described by considering the effects on several key views within the study area. A description of these existing views, as experienced from key viewpoints within the study area, is provided in Section 5 of this report. A summary of visibility generally within the study area is provided below.

3.3.2 Visibility within the study area varies. Views are available towards the Gilston area across the Stort Valley from Harlow and across the Hunsdon Plateau. Visibility in other parts of the landscape is generally restricted by localised variations in topography, dense vegetation and built form.

3.3.3 The majority of views across the Stort Valley from Harlow are from Elizabeth Way on the northern edge of the town. Glimpsed views are also available from some of the larger road corridors which align north south through the town (notably from the A1019 and A414). Additional to these, some properties aligning Harlow Road (near Roydon) and the Stort Valley itself (notably Parndon Mill) also experience views over the valley and towards the Gilston area.

3.3.4 Hunsdon and the nearby airfield are located on a raised and open plateau enabling panoramic views across the area to the east. To the south the settlement of Hunsdonbury is more enclosed with open views only apparent at its northern edge. Further north, the settlement of Widford similarly is visually enclosed and sits on the far side of a ridgeline from the site.

3.3.5 Some raised and open fields are present in the vicinity of South-end and Allen's Green but longer views from these areas towards the site are generally curtailed by mature field boundaries and stands of established vegetation. Similarly to the east of the site (notably from High Wych) longer views tend to be limited to the tops of ridgelines with views into the Stort tributaries generally screened by established vegetation. Further east, a ridgeline visually separates Sawbridgeworth from the site.

4 The Proposed Development

4.1 Overview

- 4.1.1 The development proposals for the Gilston Area comprise up to 10,000 new homes with associated infrastructure. The proposed development would be distributed across a necklace of 7 linked villages (of varying character and densities) wrapping around Gilston Park.
- 4.1.2 The design for each of the individual villages within the proposed development has been informed by topography, heritage features, ecological constraints, landscape character, existing settlements and open spaces. The proposals seek to adopt a 'landscape centred' design approach which preserves existing parkland and seeks to create new public open spaces and enhanced green infrastructure where possible. Figure 4 shows the indicative Masterplan for the Gilston Area.

4.2 The Villages

Village 1

- 4.2.1 Village 1 would be located on a south facing slope overlooking the Stort Valley to the south of Gilston Park. The most 'urban' of all the proposed villages, the majority of the development would be 2-3 storeys (circa 7-10m) in height, although some areas may be up to 5 storeys (circa 16m) in places. Reflecting its proximity to Harlow, this village would include a substantial proportion of the shops and amenities planned within the proposed development.

Villages 2 and 3

- 4.2.2 Villages 2 and 3 would be located to the east and north east of Gilston Park, on the far side of Fiddlers Brook (a tributary to the River Stort) and would be positioned on either side of a ridgeline.
- 4.2.3 Village 2 would abut High Wych Road and the settlement of Gilston along its southern boundary and Village 3 would abut Golden Grove on its northernmost boundary.

- 4.2.4 More mixed in their character than Village 1, the majority of the development in these villages would be 2-3 storeys (circa 7-10m) in height, although some areas may include built form of up to 4 storeys (circa 13m) in places.

Village 4

- 4.2.5 Village 4 would be located to the north of Gilston Park. Located on the east facing slopes above Fiddlers Brook the western boundary would extend onto (and follow) a ridgeline. The northern boundary of the village would abut Maplecroft Wood and Battles Wood whilst its eastern boundary would sit just over the valley from Golden Grove. Most development in Village 4 is anticipated to be between 1 and 3 storeys (approximately 5 to 10m) in height, although some areas may be up to 4 storeys (approximately 13m) in places.

Village 5

- 4.2.6 Village 5 would be located to the south west of Gilston Park on the steep west facing slope above Eastwick Hall Lane and immediately to the south of Home Wood. Closely affiliated with Village 1 (which immediately abuts its eastern boundary), most of the development in this village would be 2 to 3 storeys (approximately 7 to 10m) in height, although some areas may include built form of up to 4 storeys (circa 13m) in places. A predominantly residential settlement this village would include few amenities, relying to some extent on those facilities to be provided within Village 1.

Village 6

- 4.2.7 Village 6 would be located further to the south west of Gilston Park (beyond Eastwick Hall Lane) and on the south facing slope to the north west of Eastwick. Diverse in its character it is anticipated to include areas of both high and low density housing. Most development will be 2 to 3 storeys (circa 7 to 10m) in height, but some areas are anticipated to include built form of up to 4 storeys (circa 13m high) in places. Steeply sloping in places, this village

would be partially enclosed from views along its western and northern boundary by mature vegetation aligning the adjacent fields.

Village 7

- 4.2.8 Village 7 is located to the west of Village 6 and straddles Church Lane which links Hunsdon with the A414. The site slopes gently to the south, offering wide views over Harlow and the Stort River Valley.
- 4.2.9 At the centre of the village lies the existing ensemble of historic Brickhouse Farm buildings, which will accommodate a mix of uses and village amenities, with a primary school to the north.
- 4.2.10 Most of the built form within this village is anticipated to be 2 to 3 storeys (circa 7 - 10m in height) but may include up to 4 storeys (circa 13m) in places.

4.3 Landscape Proposals

- 4.3.1 The Masterplan seeks to retain and enhance the existing and valued landscape features within the area, such as designated wildlife sites, ancient woodlands and watercourses. The landscape strategy includes several strategic parks located throughout the development, which are intended to create new habitats and provide amenity space. These parks will be connected by green corridors providing habitat linkages and footpath connections to the wider green infrastructure context of the surrounding area.
- 4.3.2 The landscape strategy for the site demonstrates how a managed estate could provide important habitat enhancements and access for all. A key objective is to improve access to the Stort Valley and countryside north of this area for informal recreation, natural play and discovering/access to nature.

4.3.3 Key landscape enhancements proposed as part of the Masterplan for the Gilston Area include:

- Lime Avenue and Boulevard enhancement;
- Hedgerow enhancements throughout the development;
- Enhancements to Gilston Park;
- Creation of landscape buffers to Eastwick village and Gilston;
- Landscape enhancements to Home Wood;
- Improvements to Parndon Mill link;
- Eastwick valley corridor; and
- Woodland Parks.

4.3.4 A detailed description of the measures outlined above is contained in the Landscape and Open Space Strategy which accompanies the representations submitted to EHDC.

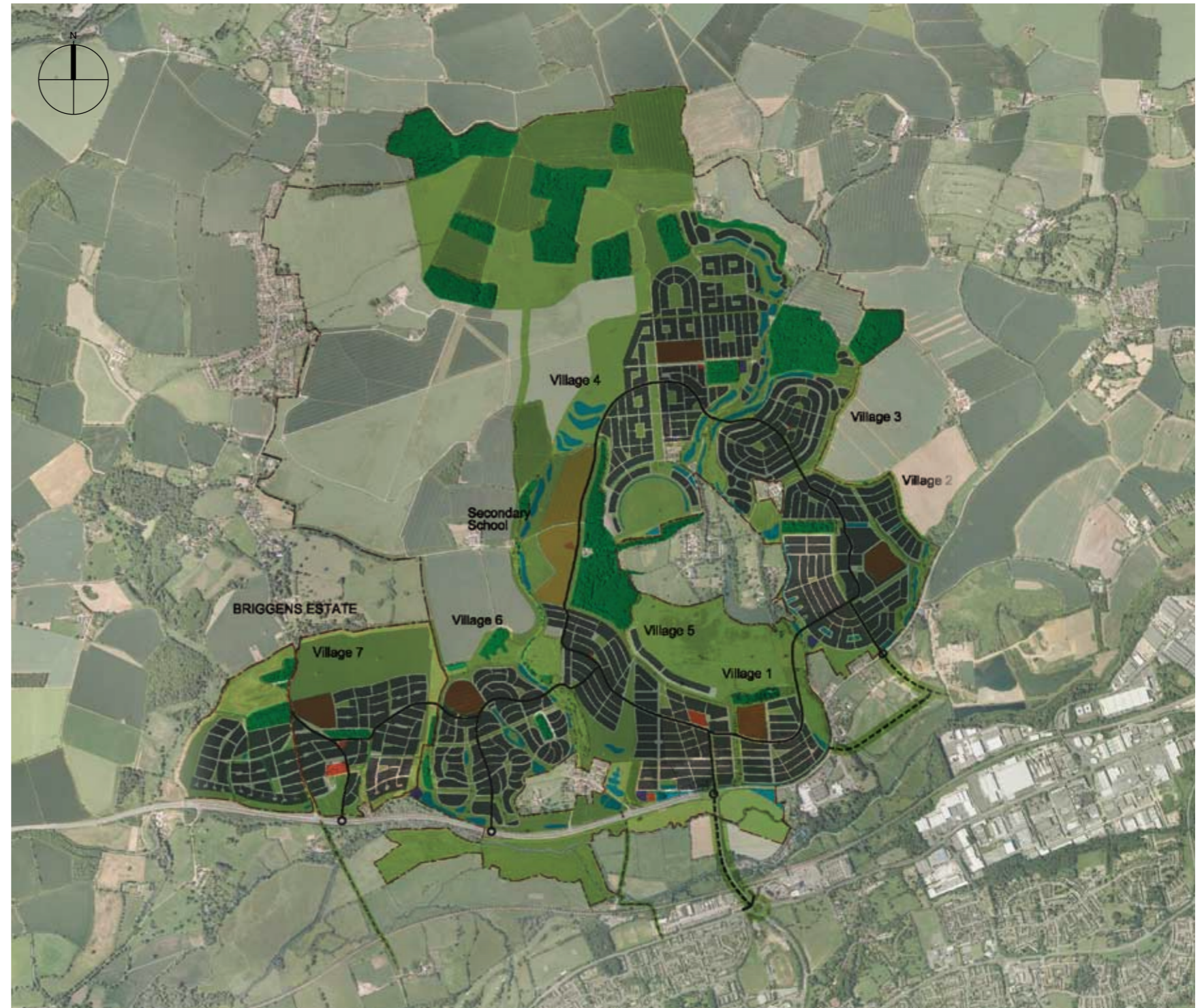


Figure 4: Indicative Masterplan for the Gilston Area

5 Potential Landscape and Visual Effects

5.1 Overview

- 5.1.1 This section of the report provides some commentary on the key landscape and visual effects which are anticipated to arise as a result of the proposals for the Gilston Area.
- 5.1.2 Key effects on the landscape are discussed by considering the likely effects of the proposed development on each of the landscape character areas defined in section 3 of this appraisal.
- 5.1.3 The visual effects of the proposals are considered via the key viewpoints appraisal on pages 15 to 31 of this report.

5.2 Landscape Effects

Stanstead to Pishiobury Parklands (EHLCA 81)

- 5.2.1 The proposed development would substantially alter the physical landscape of this area, increasing the presence of built form and transport routes and resulting in the loss of open arable farmland and parkland. The changes would be focused in the area surrounding Gilston Park, Gilston and Eastwick, but would be perceptible to some extent from other parts of the character area, notably Sayes Park and the Hunsdon Road (north of Brickhouse Farm).
- 5.2.2 The proposed villages would be considerably larger than the existing villages. Whilst visually detached to some extent from these settlements by topography and vegetation, the proposed development is anticipated to affect the wider setting of these villages. The physical changes to adjacent landscape character areas (specifically the River Stort Valley and Hunsdon Plateau) would also be perceptible from this LCA, but would be unlikely to further alter the character of this LCA.

River Stort Valley (EHLCA 82 & ELCA C2)

- 5.2.3 The proposed development would to some extent alter the physical landscape of this area as a consequence of the proposed Stort Crossing(s) to be constructed to the south of Eastwick and/or south east of Gilston. These changes are expected to be localised and affect a relatively limited part of the LCA. The physical changes to Area 81 would also be perceptible from this LCA (for example in the vicinity of Parndon Mill, Parndon Mead and Eastwick Mead).

- 5.2.4 Whilst the changes resulting from the development are anticipated to locally affect this LCA, these changes are not considered to be so substantial as to materially alter either the physical or perceptual characteristics of the wider LCA.

Hunsdon Plateau (EHLCA 83)

- 5.2.5 The development would alter the physical landscape to the south east of this LCA, increasing the presence of built form, reducing the openness of views from this area to the east and resulting in the loss of open arable farmland. The development would also increase accessibility to this part of the LCA by vehicles and improve pedestrian connections to the various footpaths which connect across the wider LCA, beyond the development itself.

- 5.2.6 The proposed built form would be perceptible to some extent from other areas within this LCA (notably the eastern edge of Hunsdon and the WWII Airfield) but views will be largely contained from the north by existing vegetation. The physical changes to Area 81 would also be perceptible from this LCA and would likely further reduce the openness of views from this LCA.

High Wych Slopes (EHLCA 84)

- 5.2.7 The development would introduce new built form and transport routes which would alter the physical landscape at the far west of this LCA, in the vicinity of Actons Farm and Great Penny's Farm. The physical changes to adjacent

LCAs (specifically Area 81 and Area 83) would also be perceptible from this LCA, notably in the vicinity of Carter's Farm. Whilst the changes resulting from the development would be substantial locally (and measures should therefore be taken to mitigate for these local effects where possible), the changes would be barely perceptible from the majority of the LCA and too small to substantially alter either the physical or perceptual characteristics of the wider LCA.

Harlow & Environs (ELCA G1)

- 5.2.8 The development would to some extent alter the physical landscape of the LCA where the Stort Crossings connect to the north of this area. This change would be localised and visible only from certain parts of the LCA (for instance the landscape effects of the Western crossing would largely be confined to Elizabeth Way and its immediate environs).

- 5.2.9 Whilst these changes would be evident locally, they would be unlikely to substantially alter the physical characteristics of this area. Glimpsed views towards the development in other areas (notably Areas 81 and 82) may also be perceptible from a few places within the area but these changes are considered too insubstantial to significantly alter the perceptual characteristics of the area.

Thorley Uplands (EHLCA 85) & Perry Green Uplands (EHLCA 86)

- 5.2.10 The proposed development will be located outside of these LCAs and are not anticipated to alter the physical characteristics of these areas. Glimpsed views towards the development may be perceptible from areas within these LCAs but the changes are considered too insubstantial to significantly alter the perceptual characteristics of these LCAs.

- 5.2.11 The proposed development is considered unlikely to change the physical or perceptual aspects of any of the other LCAs within the study area.

5.3 Visual Effects

- 5.3.1 Visibility towards the proposed development from the surrounding area would be relatively limited. Views from most surrounding settlements would be entirely (or almost entirely) curtailed by intervening landform and vegetation.
- 5.3.2 The development would not be visible from the settlements of Widford, Sawbridgeworth, and Hunsdonbury and would result in a very limited change to views from the settlements of Hunsdon and High Wych. Isolated views (predominantly towards Villages 1, 6 and 7) will also be apparent from several locations within Harlow when looking across the Stort Valley. Also, some of the small farms and hamlets to the east and north east of the development will experience changes to their view, notably Carter's, Fryar's, Acton's Farm, Great Penny's Farm, Sayes Park Farm and Redericks Farm. There will also be substantial changes in the views from Brickhouse Farm and Eastwick Hall Farm.
- 5.3.3 Views from parts of the historic villages of Gilston and Eastwick will be changed substantially as a result of the proposed development. Villages 1 and 2 will affect areas within Gilston and Villages 5 and 6 will affect areas within Eastwick. Furthermore, in the heart of the development, there will be substantial changes in the views from farms, settlements and estate properties surrounding Gilston Park notably Gilston Rectory and Channoeks Farm.
- 5.3.4 Views would be available from a number of public rights of way and routes within the study area. In particular users of the Harcamlow Way / Stort Valley Way to the south of the development are anticipated to experience changes where vegetation permits views towards the southern edges of Villages 6 and 7. Changes will also be apparent along this route where the proposed access road(s) crosses the Stort Valley and bridges over the canal. Villages 6 and 7 will be apparent from the listed buildings of Parndon Mill (located on the southern edge of the Stort Valley).

- 5.3.5 Other views towards the development will be available from Eastwick Hall Lane / Cock Robin Lane, public footpaths within the wider setting of Gilston Park and from other minor footpaths elsewhere within the local environs (including those within Hunsdon Airfield).

Key Views

- 5.3.6 The remainder of this section of the report provides a description and evaluation of the potential effects of the proposals on key views within the study area. The location of the views is shown on Figure 5.



Viewpoints

01	Turtle Farm
02	Carters Farm
03	High Wych
04	High Trees
05	Hunston
6	Gilston Park Lodge
7	Gilston Village
8	Redricks Farm
9	Maymeads Marsh
10	Town Park
11	Little Parndon
12	Hunston Mead
13	St Botolph's Church
14	Parndon Lock
15	Harcamlow Way (Square Spring)
16	Public Footpath near Eastwick Hall Farm

SCALE 1:50,000

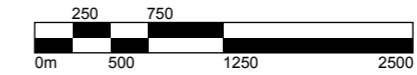
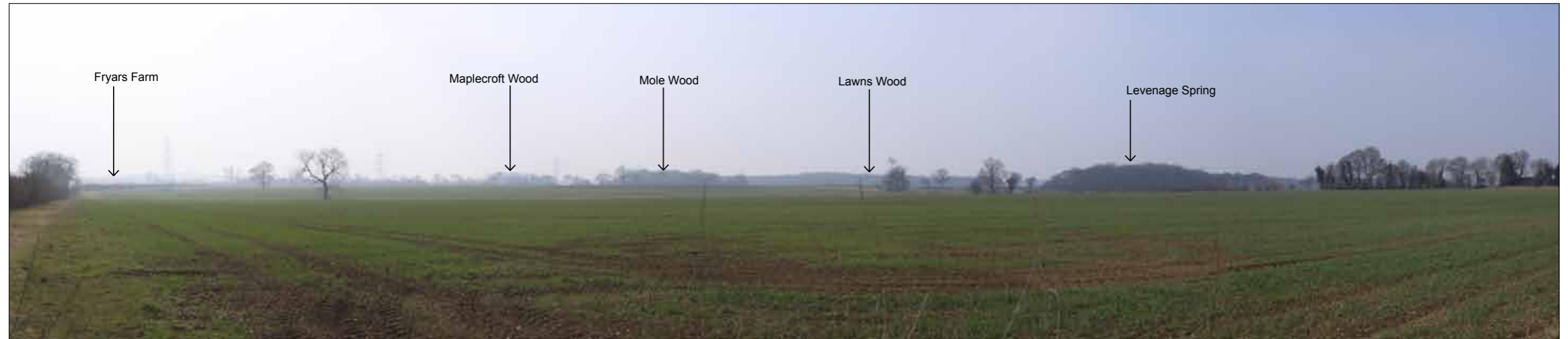
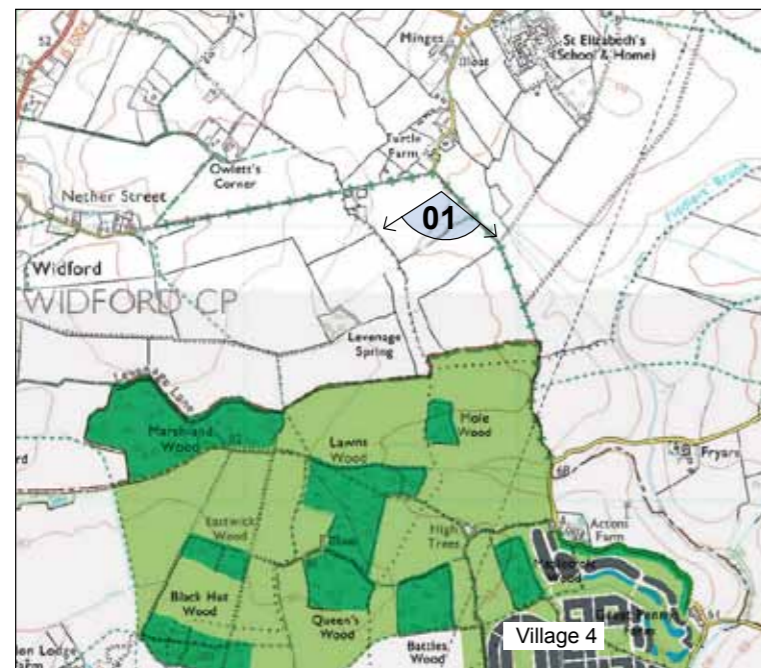


Figure 5: Location of Key Viewpoints

Viewpoint 1: Turtle Farm



Existing View



Location

5.3.7 This viewpoint is located approximately 1.3km north of the development site on a public byway to the south of Turtle Farm. The view is orientated south towards the development site and is intended to represent views south from this route.

Existing View

5.3.8 An open arable field with occasional trees dominates the foreground of view and extends into the distance. The field is framed to the far left of the view by a tree lined hedgerow which aligns a public byway. A number of woodlands combine to contain views across the horizon in the background of view. A line of electricity pylons are decipherable in the left of view extending into the distance between Maplecroft Wood and Mole Wood.

5.3.9 This viewpoint is located on a public byway where the attention of users would be focussed on the landscape or view around them. The view exhibits some scenic characteristics but also includes a few detracting features; notably the electricity pylons in the background of the view. Views from this location are not recognised as being of specific importance but are considered to be of value to certain people (e.g. recreational walkers).

Viewpoint 1: Turtle Farm

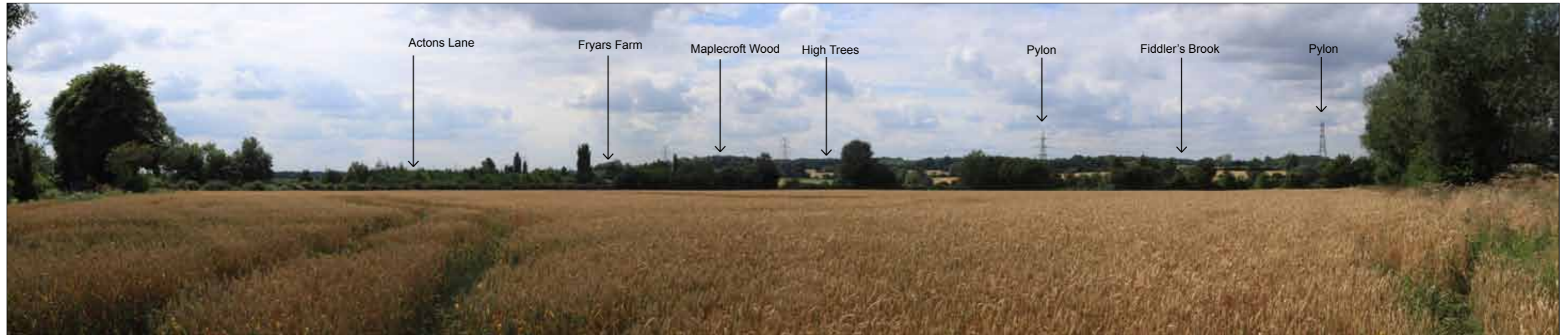
View with Proposed Development

(Location and extent of Proposed Development indicated by wireline, dashed wireline indicates development located beyond intervening foreground vegetation)

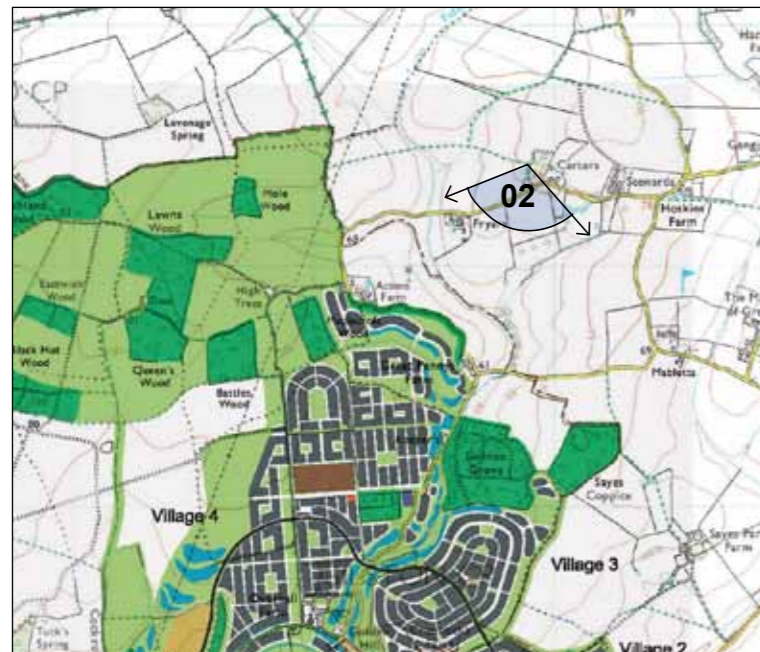
View with Proposed Development

- 5.3.10 Village 4 will be located approximately 1.3km from this viewpoint in the distant background left of view to the far side and left of Maplecroft Wood and Mole Wood. Largely screened by intervening vegetation, glimpses of this village may be evident in this portion of the view. Taller vehicles involved in the construction of the development may be evident from this viewpoint.
- 5.3.11 Due to the distance, landform and presence of existing intervening vegetation very little of the proposed development would be visible from this viewpoint. Moreover Eastwick Wood Park would further reduce visibility of the development from this viewpoint.

Viewpoint 2: Carters Farm



Existing View



Location

5.3.12 This viewpoint is located approximately 800m north of the development site on a public footpath to the west of Carters Farm. The view is orientated south towards the development site and is intended to represent views from this route.

Baseline Description

5.3.13 An arable field dominates the foreground of view and extends into the middle distance. The field slopes gently from left to right across the view and is enclosed on all sides by mature tree planted hedgerows. More arable fields are visible in the right of the view (beyond Fiddler's Brook) together with a line of electricity pylons which punctuate the horizon across this part of the view. The Grade II listed property of High Trees is barely perceptible in the distance.

5.3.14 The attention of users is likely to be focussed on the landscape or view around them. The view exhibits some scenic characteristics but also includes a few detracting features notably the electricity pylons. Views from this location are not recognised as being of specific importance but are anticipated to be of value to certain people (e.g. recreational user groups).

Viewpoint 2: Carters Farm



View with Proposed Development

(Location and extent of Proposed Development indicated by wireline, dashed wireline indicates development located beyond intervening foreground vegetation)

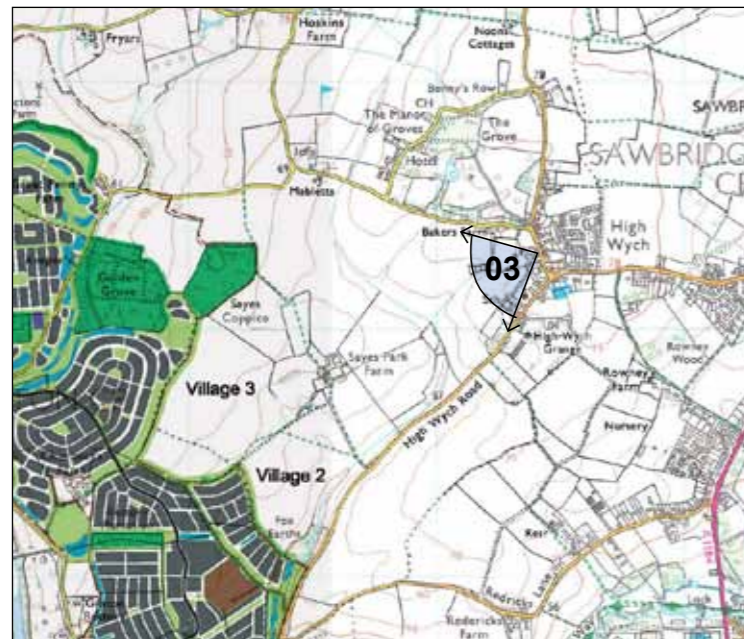
View with Proposed Development

- 5.3.15 Village 4, located approximately 800m from this viewpoint would be visible from this location. The majority of this village would be screened (particularly during summer months) by intervening vegetation in the foreground of the view, but glimpsed views may be apparent beyond vegetation in this part of the view.
- 5.3.16 Village 4 would introduce built form into an area currently occupied by farmland would introduce built form of a scale and type that will contrast with the characteristics of the existing view. However it would constitute an incidental feature in the view both during its construction and immediately following completion.

Viewpoint 3: High Wych



Existing View



Location

5.3.17 This viewpoint is located approximately 1.4km east of the development site in a recreation area within the settlement of High Wych. The view is orientated west towards the development site and is representative of views from the western edge of High Wych.

Baseline Description

5.3.18 A post and strained wire fence defines the edge of a recreation area across the centre of view, immediately beyond which can be seen an area of pastureland. This pastureland extends down a slope and is punctuated by a number of individual and groups of trees.

5.3.19 A number of fields are visible in the background through vegetation and to the far side of the valley, across the centre of the view. Sayes Park Farm and Sayes Coppice are notable features on the ridgeline in this part of the view. Some areas of woodland located within the site (notably Home Wood and Maplecroft Wood) can also be made out in the far distance beyond the ridgeline.

5.3.20 This viewpoint is located in an area where appreciation of the view contributes to the experience of people using this area. Views from this location are not recognised as being of specific importance but do exhibit some scenic characteristics and are considered to be of value locally, most notably to the community of High Wych.

Viewpoint 3: High Wych



View with Proposed Development

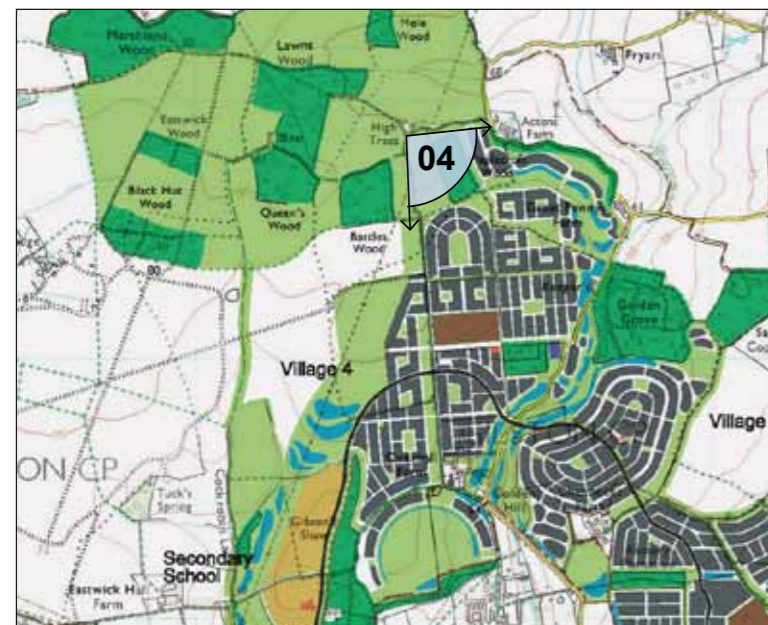
View with Proposed Development

- 5.3.21 Villages 2 and 3 of the development would be visible from this viewpoint. These villages would be located approximately 1.4km from this viewpoint in the background of the view (to the far side of the ridgeline upon which lies Sayes Park Farm and Sayes Coppice) and would extend left across the view to the stand of vegetation at Fox Earths. It is anticipated that the taller buildings within these villages would be visible above the intervening vegetation in this part of the view.
- 5.3.22 Village 4 is also likely to be visible from this viewpoint. It would be largely screened by intervening landform and vegetation but the upper storeys are anticipated to be visible in the background of the view, beyond and to the right of Village 3 and extending right across the view towards Maplecroft Wood. This village is anticipated to punctuate the horizon to either side of Sayes Coppice.
- 5.3.23 The development would be an appreciable distance away from this viewpoint. It would be partially screened by intervening vegetation and landform and would affect a relatively small proportion of the view.

Viewpoint 4: High Trees



Existing View



Location

5.3.24 This viewpoint is located approximately 200m northwest of the development site on a public byway near the Grade II listed property of High Trees. The view is orientated south east towards the development site and is intended to represent views from this byway and from High Trees.

Baseline Description

5.3.25 An arable field is visible across much of the foreground of view and extends into the distance.

5.3.26 Maplecroft Wood is a dominant features in the middle distance. Electricity pylons, which align to the left of this viewpoint and extend into the distance to the right of view, are a detractor within the view.

5.3.27 This viewpoint is located on a public byway where the attention of users would be primarily focussed on the landscape or view around them. It has been included to represent the effect from the Grade II listed property of High Trees. The view exhibits some scenic characteristics but also includes a few detracting features. Views from this location are not recognised as being of specific importance but are considered to be of value locally.

Viewpoint 4: High Trees



View with Proposed Development

View with Proposed Development

- 5.3.28 The only built form within the development capable of being seen from this viewpoint would be located within Village 4. This village would be located approximately 200m from this viewpoint and would be visible on the horizon of Maplecroft Wood.
- 5.3.29 It is anticipated that the northern and western edge of this village would be visible in this part of the view. This village would screen views to the plantation woodland (visible on the horizon to the right centre of view) and Harlow in the distance.
- 5.3.30 Village 4 would be evident from this viewpoint and would introduce built form of a scale and type that will contrast with the characteristics of the existing view.

Viewpoint 5: Hunsdon



View with Proposed Development

View with Proposed Development

- 5.3.35 Village 4 of the proposed development (including the Secondary School) would be visible from this viewpoint, in the background of the view between Battles Wood and Home Wood. The southern part of the village would be screened by Home Wood. This village would screen views to the plantation woodland (visible on the horizon to the right centre of the view) and reduce the sense of openness in this part of the view.
- 5.3.36 Tuck's Spring and the planting surrounding Eastwick Hall Farm will largely screen the proposed Secondary School from this viewpoint. However any outlying buildings located within the proposed sports grounds of this school may be evident in the background centre of the view, to either side of Tuck's Spring and immediately in front of Home Wood.
- 5.3.37 Villages 5 and 6 would be entirely screened from this viewpoint by the intervening vegetation surrounding Eastwick Hall Farm and Hunsdon House. The change will be an appreciable distance away but will punctuate the horizon and will reduce the sense of openness to some extent. This change will introduce elements which are discordant with and which detract from the existing landscape and characteristics of the view.

Viewpoint 6: Gilston Park Lodge



Location

5.3.38 This viewpoint is located on a public footpath in close proximity to Gilston Park Manor, outside the site boundary but at the heart of the development. The view looks south and is representative of views from the listed buildings and setting of Gilston Park Manor.



Baseline Description

5.3.39 The foreground of view comprises an open field with occasional mature parkland trees. A stand of native planting is visible in the immediate foreground to the left of view and a grass footpath is decipherable in the centre right of view. The open field extends down a slope to a broken field hedgerow, which is visible in a valley in the middle distance and comprises the site boundary.

5.3.40 An arable field is visible across the centre of the view on the rising slope to the far side of this field hedgerow; as too is Home Wood to the right of view. The far edge of the arable field is contained in the distance and on the horizon by a further broken field hedgerow, connecting between Home Wood to the west and The Chase to the east.

5.3.41 This viewpoint is located on a public footpath within the wider setting of a listed building and where the attention of users would primarily be focussed on the landscape or view around them. The view exhibits some scenic characteristics and has some heritage value by virtue of its location within the grounds of Gilston Park.

View with Proposed Development

5.3.42 The northern edges of Villages 1 and 5 would be located approximately 400m from this viewpoint and would be visible in the centre background of the view. Recreational parkland associated with the development would also be apparent on the rising slope, visible in the middle distance.

5.3.43 The proposed development will introduce elements which are discordant with and which detract from the existing landscape and characteristics of the view. However, the intervening vegetation will screen some of the development. The proposed landscape enhancements to Gilston Park will also be apparent in this view which will further mitigate the visual impact of Villages 1 and 5.



Existing View



Existing View



Existing View



View with Proposed Development



View with Proposed Development



View with Proposed Development

Viewpoint 7: Gilston Village



Existing View



Location

5.3.44 This viewpoint is located to the southeast of the Gilston Area development site on the footpath adjacent to Eastwick Road, opposite the Plume of Feathers public house. The view looks north towards the southeast corner of the development site and is representative of views from Gilston Village and the Grade II listed building (the Plume of Feathers).

Baseline Description

5.3.45 Eastwick Road is visible in the foreground right of view. The Plume of Feathers car park is to the left of Eastwick Road defined by concrete bollards and scattered vegetation in the centre right of the view. The Plume of Feathers pub features in the far left of view enclosed by a vehicular barrier and formal vegetation.

5.3.46 The Plume of Feathers garden and outdoor sitting area occupies the centre of the view in the middle distance adjacent to the car park. The pub's garden area is contained by a dense tree and hedgerow boundary which encloses wider views.

Viewpoint 7: Gilston Village

View with Proposed Development

View with Proposed Development

- 5.3.47 Village 2 would be located in close proximity to this viewpoint but would be screened to some extent by the belt of trees on the edge of the garden area. The degree of visibility will depend on the height of the buildings within village 2.
- 5.3.48 Whilst views of village 2 from this location will be screened to a certain extent, the proposed development will introduce elements which are discordant with the characteristics of the view and the semi rural landscape.

Viewpoint 8: Redricks Farm



Existing View



Location

5.3.49 This viewpoint is located approximately 500m east of the development site, at a private parking lay-by opposite Redricks Farm Cottages on Redricks Lane. The view looks southwest over the Stort Valley and towards Harlow.

Baseline Description

5.3.50 An open arable field dominates the foreground of view and extends down a slope into the right middle distance. The field is enclosed by dense woodland to the far left of view, but screening becomes increasingly fragmented in the left, centre and right of view; where thicket and then meadow grassland are visible leading down into the valley. The field is enclosed to the far right of view by a mature hedgerow which screens views from elsewhere along Redricks Lane.

5.3.51 Scrub vegetation and woodland vegetation are visible on the lower lying slopes of the valley (beyond the field and meadow grassland) and these combine to reduce visibility towards the landfill site and much of the river corridor itself. The industrial and urban edge of Harlow is visible through vegetation in the distance and the mature woodland blocks and south facing slopes of the development site are visible in the far distance to the right of view.

Viewpoint 8: Redricks Farm

View with Proposed Development

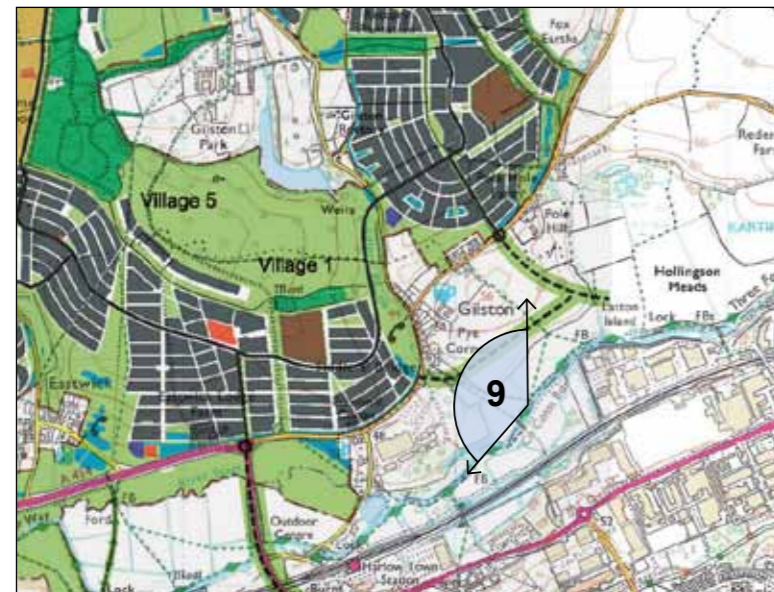
View with Proposed Development

- 5.3.52 The Eastern Stort Crossing may be visible from this location, depending on the alignment and height of the route. Views of the crossing will also be screened either partially or wholly by the intervening vegetation in the middle ground of the view.
- 5.3.53 In the right of the view Village 2 is likely to be visible though again the intervening vegetation in the vicinity of Pole Hill is likely to limit views of the development.
- 5.3.54 Village 2 and the Stort Crossing would introduce development into a view where the urban influence of Harlow is evident. The form and appearance of the proposed development is unlikely to be incongruous with the characteristics of the view.

Viewpoint 9: Maymeads Marsh



Existing View



Location

5.3.55 This viewpoint is located approximately 400m south of the development site on a nationally designated public footpath to the south of Gilston Village. The viewpoint is representative of views from the River Stort waterway and Maymeads Marsh Local Nature Reserve.

Baseline Description

5.3.56 An open meadow dominates the foreground of the view and extends into the middle distance. A public footpath is located in the far left of view and leads to a pedestrian footbridge which provides access over the River Stort. Several telegraph poles are also visible and extend into the middle distance leading to Gilston Village.

5.3.57 The meadow is enclosed by a stand of trees which follows Fiddlers Brook and defines the boundary of Terlings Park. The meadow is enclosed to the far right of the view by scrub vegetation, beyond which the pasture land can be seen on the south facing slopes, which rise towards High Wych Road in the distance.

Viewpoint 9: Maymeads Marsh

View with Proposed Development

View with Proposed Development

- 5.3.58 The Eastern Stort Crossing is likely to be visible on the rising ground in the right of the view. The extent of visibility will depend on the alignment and height of the route. Views of the crossing will also be screened either partially by the intervening vegetation in the middle ground of the view.
- 5.3.59 It is likely that Village 1 would be visible in the background left of the view beyond the belt of trees in the middle distance. The trees would screen the development to some extent though visibility would increase during the winter months when the trees are not in leaf. The proposed development would occupy only a small proportion of the view but would be incongruous with the nature and character of the view.
- 5.3.60 Part of the proposed Eastern Access Road would also be visible in the centre right of the view, though again most of this would be screened by the intervening belt of vegetation.
- 5.3.61 Village 2 would be located beyond the ridgeline visible in the right of the view and is likely to be screened by this elevated landform.

Viewpoint 10: Harlow Town Park



Existing View



Location

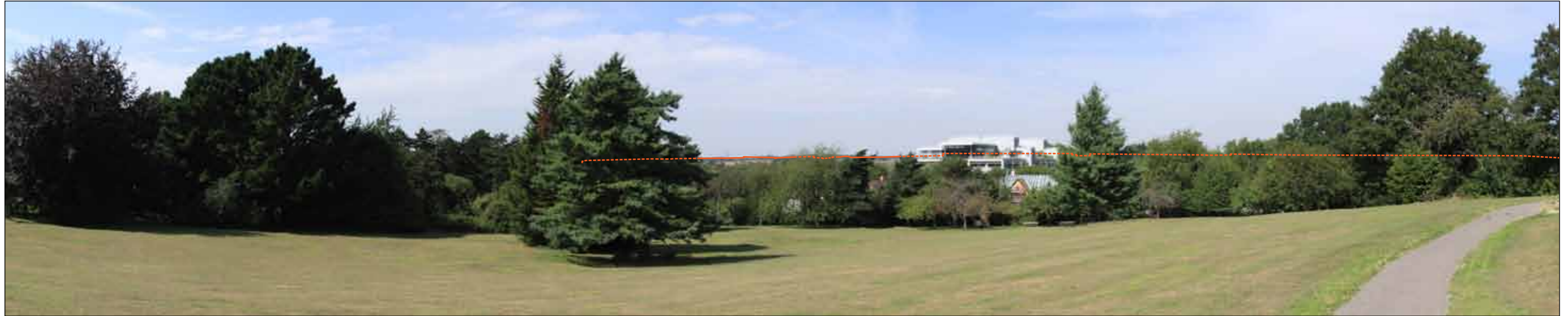
5.3.62 This viewpoint is located within Harlow Town Park, outside the site and approximately 700m to the south east of the site boundary. The view looks north towards the development site from an elevated location within the Park. The viewpoint is in close proximity to the Town Park Conservation Area.

Baseline

5.3.63 A footpath cuts through the grassed area in the foreground and runs across the slope to the right of view. A mature standard tree is visible in the immediate foreground to the far left of view, beyond which can be seen a border of mature shrub and tree planting which carries across into the centre of the view. Informal parkland tree planting is visible to the right of view and extends towards the centre of view in the middle distance.

5.3.64 Residential properties are decipherable at the bottom of the grassed slope to the right centre of view, beyond which the upper storeys of the Pearson Education Building is visible in the background. Woodland planting within the Stort Valley is visible in the far distance beyond.

5.3.65 The attention of users would largely be focused on the landscape or view around them. The view exhibits a number of scenic characteristics alongside a few detracting features notably the Pearson Education Building. Views within the park are considered to be of some value but views from this location towards the site are not recognised as being of specific importance.

Viewpoint 10: Harlow Town Park

View with Proposed Development

(Location and extent of Proposed Development indicated by wireline, dashed wireline indicates development located beyond intervening foreground vegetation)

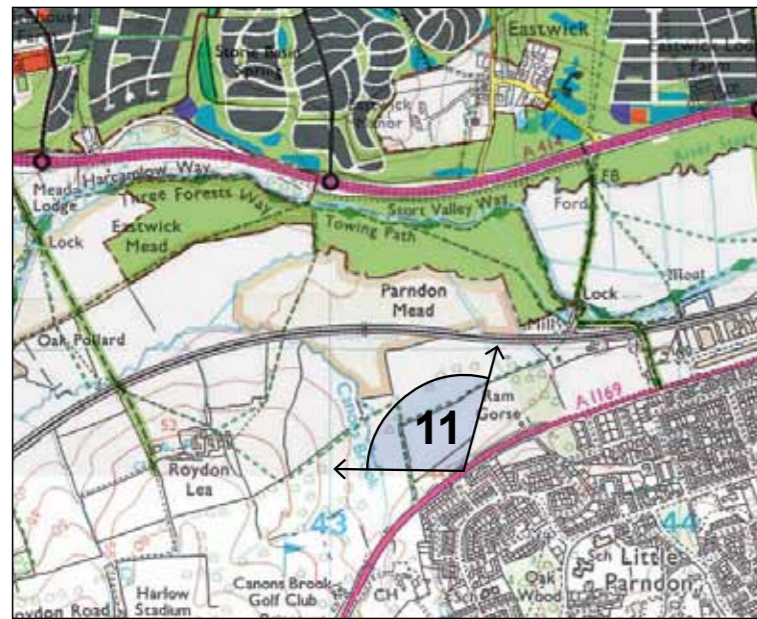
View with Proposed Development

- 5.3.66 Village 1 is likely to be visible in the background of the view to the left of the Pearson building. The extent of visibility will depend on the height of the buildings in village 1. The belt of vegetation in front of the Pearson building will screen the proposed development to some extent, as will any new structural planting located along the southern edge of village 1.
- 5.3.67 The proposed development would introduce buildings into the background of the view but this would be screened to a considerable degree by intervening vegetation. The Pearson building will continue to be the dominant building in the view. Accordingly it is likely that the proposed development would be comfortably assimilated into the view.

Viewpoint 11: Little Parndon



Existing View



Location

5.3.68 This viewpoint is located on a Footpath / cycleway on Elizabeth Way (A1169) at the junction with Canons Gate on the north edge of Little Parndon. The view looks north west towards the proposed western crossing and is representative of views from the north of Little Parndon residential area.

5.3.71 The playing fields with the wooded slopes rising towards Hunsdonbury in the background provide a pleasant setting but views from this location are not considered to be of special value or importance.

Baseline Description

5.3.69 The photograph shows Ash Tree Fields, with Harlow town cricket Club pavillion to the right of the photograph. Just beyond the field masked by a hedge is Canons Brook Golf Course with the railway line just beyond that.

5.3.70 The open grassland of the Ash Tree Fields Cricket Pitches dominates the view from left to right broken up by the boundary trees in the foreground. The Ash Tree Fields are enclosed by a mature woodland to the northeast just outside of the right of the photograph and mature hedgerows to the north seen on the left and centre of the photograph. Just beyond there are pockets of mature woodland around the edges of the Canons Brook Golf Course fairways and putting greens masking the view of the railway line and A414 in the distance.

Viewpoint 11: Little Parndon

View with Proposed Development

(Location and extent of Proposed Development indicated by wireline, dashed wireline indicates development located beyond intervening foreground vegetation)

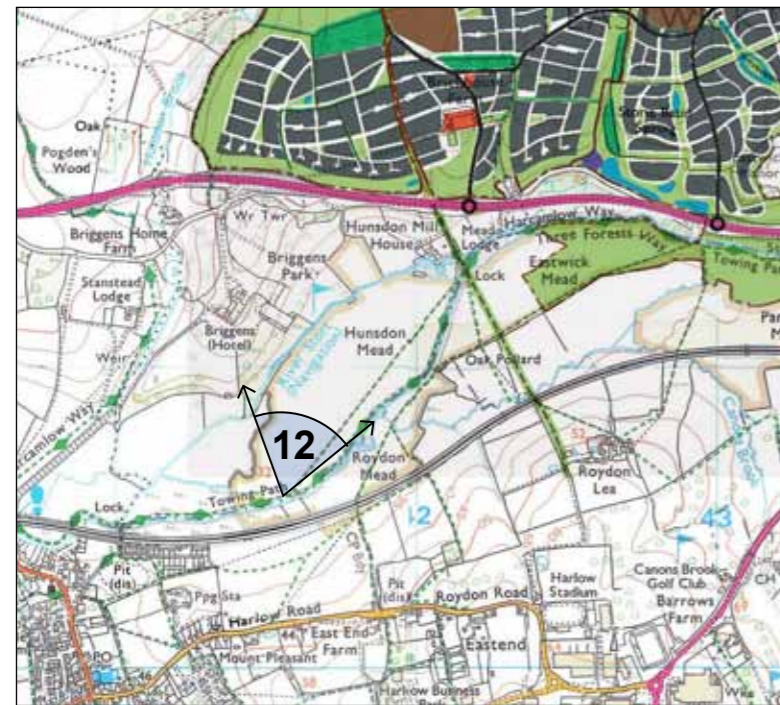
View with Proposed Development

- 5.3.72 Parts of villages 6 and 7 are likely to be visible in the background of the view, to the left of Canon's Brook Golf Course whilst glimpse views of village 1 may be possible in the extreme right of the view. Views of the woodland in the distance will be precluded by the proposed development.
- 5.3.73 The belts of vegetation within the Stort Valley in the middle distance will screen some of the proposed development including most of village 6 and village 7 in the right of the view. The proposed development is unlikely to be visually prominent and would therefore be unlikely to detract from this view.

Viewpoint 12: Hunsdon Mead



Existing View



Location

5.3.74 This viewpoint is located approximately 1.5km southwest of the development site on a nationally designated public footpath to the north east of Roydon.

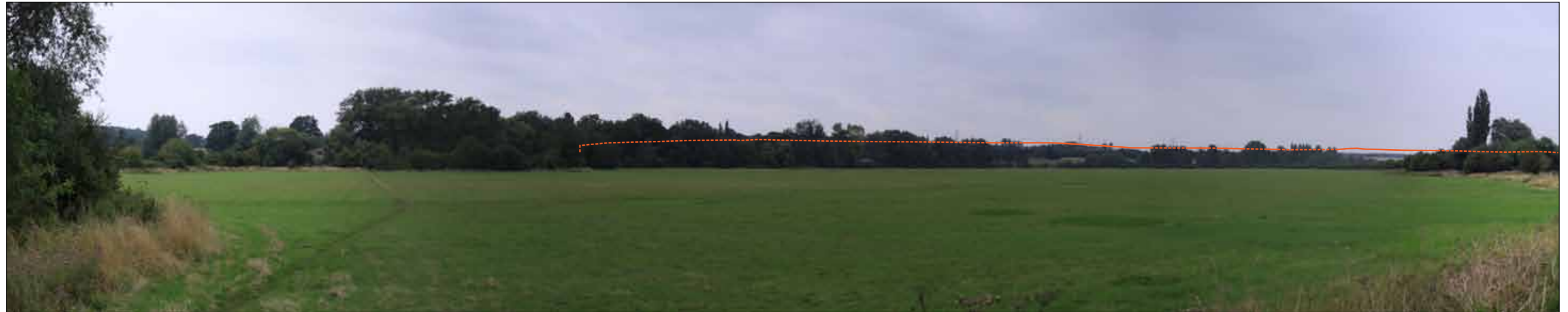
Baseline

5.3.75 The view looks north towards the development site and is representative of views from the River Stort waterway and Hunsdon Mead Nature Reserve (a designated SSSI).

5.3.76 The open meadow grassland of Hunsdon Mead dominates the foreground of the view and extends into the middle distance. The meadow is enclosed by mature woodland visible across the left of view and is bordered by the public footpath and River Stort and wraps around the meadow in the background of view.

5.3.77 A group of buildings (including the Grade II listed Hunsdon Mill House) are visible in the background of the view - to the far side of the meadow – beyond which the Grade II listed property of Brickhouse Farm can be seen amongst woodland planting on the south facing slope. A line of electricity pylons and an arable field (located close to Eastwick Manor) are visible on the horizon.

Viewpoint 12: Hunsdon Mead



View with Proposed Development

(Location and extent of Proposed Development indicated by wireline, dashed wireline indicates development located beyond intervening foreground vegetation)

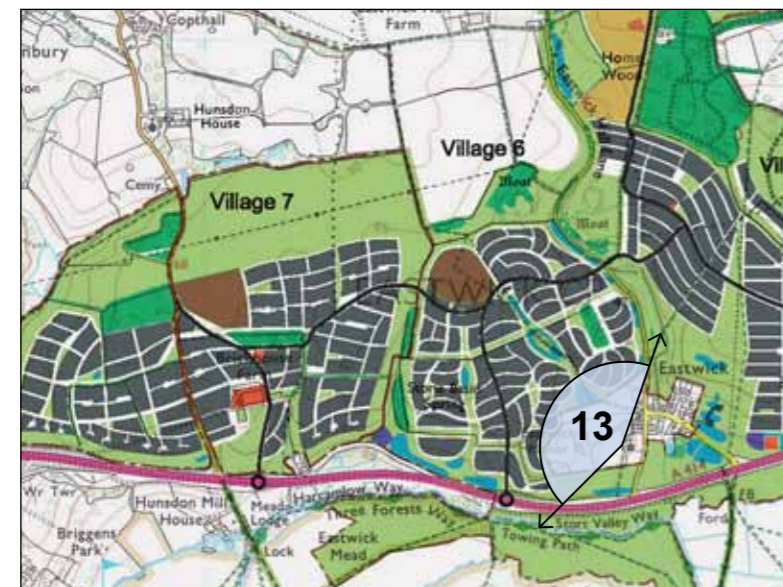
View with Proposed Development

- 5.3.78 Much of village 7 would be screened by the belts of vegetation in the middle ground of the view beyond Hunsdon Mead. Part of this village is likely to be visible in the vicinity of Brickhouse Farm and Hunsdon Mill House where the vegetation is less dense. Part of village 6 is also likely to be visible in the background right of view.
- 5.3.79 Villages 6 and 7 are unlikely to be visually prominent from this viewpoint as they will appear in the background of the view and be screened in the main by intervening vegetation. The form and nature of the proposed villages must however be considered to be atypical of the rural characteristics of this view.

Viewpoint 13: St Botolph's Church



Existing View



Location

5.3.80 This viewpoint is located to the southwest of the development site on a public footpath within St Botolph's Church grounds. The view looks north northwest towards the southwest corner of the development site. The viewpoint is representative of views from the Grade II listed building of St Botolph's Church.

Baseline

5.3.81 A metal fence is visible in the left and centre foreground of the view and defines the churchyard boundary. Mature tree planting, gravestones and clipped demarcation planting are visible within the churchyard grounds to the right of view.

5.3.82 Pastureland is visible beyond the fence in the foreground left of the view and extends up a slope to the Grade II listed building of Eastwick Manor (decipherable through vegetation in the far left of view). A timber fence aligned driveway leading to Eastwick Manor can be seen in the middle distance; beyond which a hedgerow (which demarcates the site boundary and partially screens views to the arable fields beyond) is visible in the middle distance. A glimpsed view of an electricity pylon is decipherable in the background, above the hedgerow to the right of view.

Viewpoint 13: St Botolph's Church

View with Proposed Development

View with Proposed Development

- 5.3.83 Village 6 would be located approximately 200m northwest of this viewpoint on the rising slope in the background of the view, beyond Eastwick Manor and the hedgerow which is visible to its right.
- 5.3.84 The proposed development would be partially screened by the hedgerow and built form, but would nonetheless comprise a substantial change to this part of the view. It should be noted that these changes would be less apparent from the grounds of the church, due to the vegetation which encloses views from within this area.

Viewpoint 14: Parndon Lock



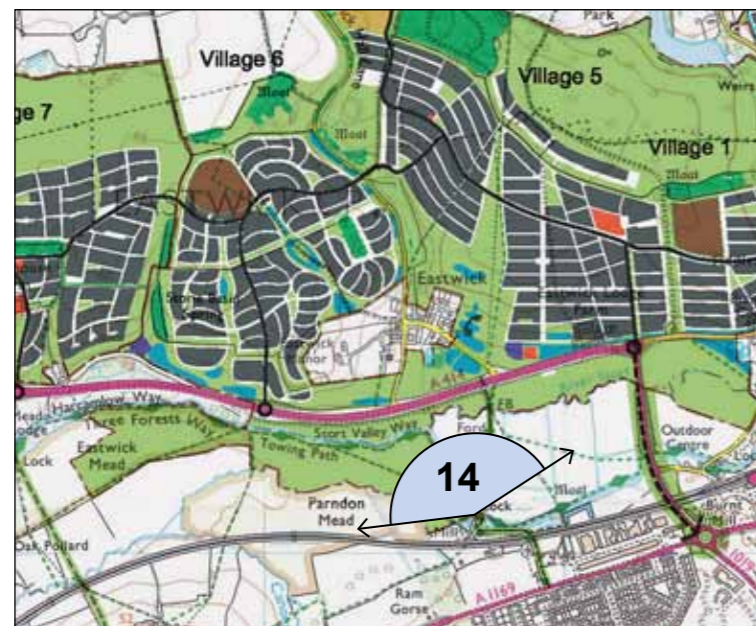
Existing View



View with Proposed Development

Location

5.3.85 This viewpoint is located within the Stort Valley and on the southern boundary of the site and in the vicinity of Parndon Lock. The view looks northwest and is representative of the effects from the wider setting of the listed building of Parndon Mill.



Existing View

5.3.86 The River Stort is visible in the foreground to the left of view. A public footpath aligns the River to its immediate left, before bridging over adjacent to the viewpoint in the right foreground of view. A canal lock which provides access to the River is visible to the far right of view. Thicket vegetation aligns a public footpath in the centre right of view and in places along the River in the centre left of view.

5.3.87 A Mill Stream defined by thicket and reed planting is visible beyond the grazing marsh in the left middle distance and partially screens views to further grazing meadow beyond. A telegraph mast is visible in the centre left middle distance; to the far side of which can be seen the planting near Eastwick Manor.

5.3.88 This viewpoint is located adjacent to a Special Landscape Area and County Wildlife Site on a nationally designated public right of way where the attention of users is primarily focussed on the landscape or view around them. The view exhibits a number of scenic characteristics alongside a few detracting features. Views from this location are recognised to be valued by a number of users.

View with Proposed Development

5.3.89 Village 6, located approximately 600m from this viewpoint, would be visible to the centre left of view, beyond Eastwick Manor. Partially screened by intervening vegetation this development is anticipated to be visible on the horizon where the landform rises to the left behind Eastwick. Village 1, located approximately 500m from this viewpoint, is also anticipated to be visible beyond vegetation and in the background to the far right of view.

Viewpoint 14: Parndon Lock



Existing View



View with Proposed Development

Viewpoint 14: Parndon Lock



Existing View

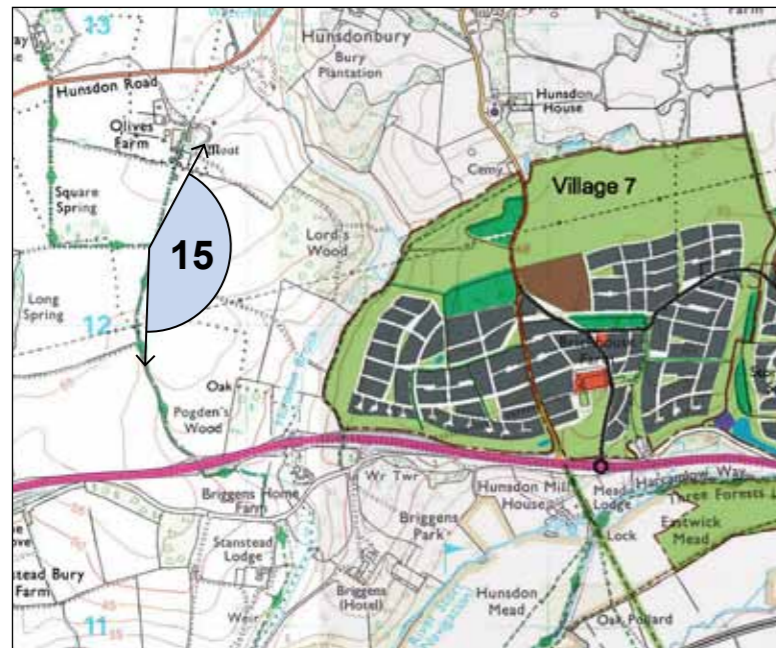


View with Proposed Development

Viewpoint 15: Harcamlow Way (Square Spring)



Existing View



Location

5.3.90 This viewpoint is located on the Harcamlow Way near the block of woodland known as Square Spring. The viewpoint is located approximately 500m west of the site and is representative of the views experienced by people walking along this footpath.

Existing View

5.3.91 This view is characterised by gently undulating farmland, interspersed by blocks of woodland and vegetation.

5.3.92 The foreground of the view comprises an arable field which extends into the middle distance. Lords Wood, an ancient woodland, dominates the left centre of the view with a line of electricity pylons crossing the field and extending beyond Lords Wood. Several stands of woodland vegetation are visible to the right of Lords Wood which combine to screen most of the site.

5.3.93 This viewpoint is located on a nationally designated public right of way where the attention of users is primarily focussed on the landscape or view around them. There is a strong sense of openness at this viewpoint, though the pylons tend to detract from the view.

Viewpoint 15: Harcamlow Way (Square Spring)

View with Proposed Development

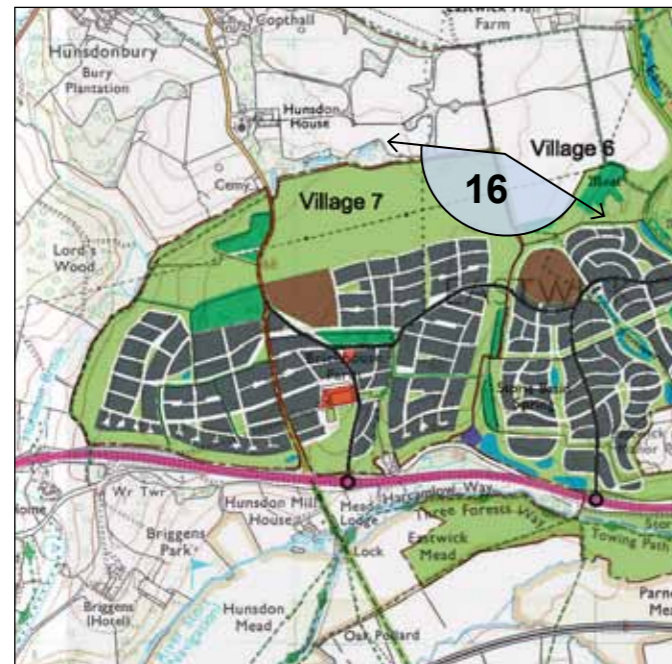
View with Proposed Development

- 5.3.94 The western edge of village 7 is likely to be evident in this view. The development would be located approximately 500m from this viewpoint, in the centre right of the view beyond Lord's Wood. However the belt of vegetation extending across the right of the view will screen some of the development.
- 5.3.95 Whilst the pylons are notable detractors in this view, the form and nature of village 7 would be incongruous with the rural character of this view.

Viewpoint 16: Public Footpath, Eastwick Hall Farm



Existing View



Location

5.3.96 This viewpoint is located on a public footpath which runs south from Eastwick Hall Farm. The viewpoint is located approximately 500m west of the site and is representative of the views experienced by people walking along this footpath.

Existing View

5.3.97 This view is characterised by gently undulating farmland, interspersed by blocks of woodland and stands of vegetation. The foreground of the view comprises an arable field which extends into the middle distance, and electricity pylons which are prominent features in the view.

5.3.98 Several stands of vegetation are visible in the middle distance with the urban area of Harlow visible on the horizon.

5.3.99 This viewpoint is located on a public right of way where the attention of users is primarily focussed on the landscape or view around them. There is a sense of openness at this viewpoint although this diminishes in the right of the view as the hedgerow becomes more prominent. The pylons are notable detractors in the view.

Viewpoint 16: Public Footpath, Eastwick Hall Farm

View with Proposed Development

View with Proposed Development

- 5.3.100 The hedgerow in the right of the view would screen views of village 7 from this location. However views of this village would become available as one moves further south towards the pylon in the right of the view.
- 5.3.101 Village 6 would be visible from this viewpoint but the belt of vegetation in the middle distance would break up the scale and mass of development. Village 6 would also be located on a south facing slope and would therefore fall away in the view.
- 5.3.102 The proposed development would urbanise the view but would be seen in the context of the pylons and Harlow town in the background. The extent to which Village 6 affects the view will depend on the height and density of the development, particularly the northern part of the village.

6 Summary

6.1 Overview

- 6.1.1 This report provides a high level description of landscape character and visibility within the Gilston Area and commentary on the potential effects of the proposed development on the landscape character of the Gilston Area and on key viewpoints within the Gilston Area and its surroundings.

6.2 Landscape Appraisal

- 6.2.1 Much of the landscape within and surrounding the site comprises historic parkland and farmland, interspersed with blocks of woodland. There are several landscape designations within the study area including Special Landscape Areas, Conservation Areas and County Wildlife Sites. The value of the landscape along and north of the Stort Valley is generally considered to be medium to high, and of lower to medium value in the urban area of Harlow.
- 6.2.2 The development would result in substantial changes to parts of Landscape Character Areas 81 and 83 (as defined in the EHLCA,) reducing the extent of arable farmland and parkland in these areas. The character of parts of these areas would change from rural to predominantly urban/suburban as a consequence of the proposed development.
- 6.2.3 The proposed new villages are also likely to affect the wider setting of historic villages present within these character areas, notably Eastwick and Gilston.
- 6.2.4 The development would physically change areas 82 and 84 (as defined in the EHLCA) and area G1 (as defined in the Essex Landscape Character Assessment). However the landscape effects resulting from these changes are likely to be relatively small in terms of scale and more localised than those anticipated in areas 81 and 83.

6.3 Visual Appraisal

- 6.3.1 Visibility towards the proposed development from the surrounding area would be relatively limited. Views from most surrounding settlements would largely be curtailed by intervening landform and vegetation.
- 6.3.2 The development would not be visible from the settlements of Widford, Sawbridgeworth, and Hunsdonbury and would result in a very limited change to views from the settlements of Hunsdon and High Wych. Isolated views will also be apparent from several locations within Harlow when looking across the Stort Valley. Some of the small farms and hamlets to the east and north east of the development will experience changes to their view. There will also be substantial changes in the views from Brickhouse Farm and Eastwick Hall Farm.
- 6.3.3 Views from parts of the historic villages of Gilston and Eastwick will be changed substantially as a result of the proposed development. Villages 1 and 2 will affect areas within Gilston and Villages 5 and 6 will affect areas within Eastwick. Furthermore, in the heart of the development, there will be substantial changes in the views from farms, settlements and estate properties surrounding Gilston Park notably Gilston Rectory and Channoeks Farm.
- 6.3.4 Views would be available from a number of public rights of way and routes within the study area. In particular users of the Harcamlow Way / Stort Valley Way to the south of the development are anticipated to experience changes where vegetation permits views towards the southern edges of Villages 6 and 7. Changes will also be apparent along this route where the proposed access road(s) crosses the Stort Valley and bridges over the canal.
- 6.3.5 To conclude, it is inevitable that the proposed development is likely to have significant effects on the landscape of the site and its immediate environs. However the visual impacts of the development are likely to be relatively limited. Whilst views will change substantially from viewpoints close to

the site, longer distance views of the site will generally be affected less than might be expected. This is due to many longer distance views of the site being obstructed or partially obstructed by intervening built form, vegetation or undulating landform (or a combination of these factors).

