

Sandford Park, Great Baddow: Landscape and Visual Appraisal

Prepared on behalf of Hopkins Homes

November 2018

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Barton Willmore Landscape Planning and Design (BWLPD) were commissioned by Hopkins Homes in November 2016 to undertake a comprehensive assessment of the landscape and visual opportunities and constraints to development on land at Sandford Park, Great Baddow, Chelmsford (the 'Site') to inform a robust rationale for the future design of residential development and associated infrastructure and a new country park (the 'Proposed Development'). That document, of which this comprises an update, was used to promote the land within the Site for future residential development as part of the emerging Local Plan process. The residential element of the Site has since been allocated for residential development within the Chelmsford City Pre-Submission Local Plan (January 2018) under Strategic Growth Site 3a.
- 1.2 Since that original submission, considerable work has been undertaken liaising with the City Council and developing a masterplan concept for the Site, which has been based upon the information and research set out within the 2016 version of this document. The masterplan has evolved through a number of revisions, informed by a landscape led approach from the outset undertaken by the Landscape Planning team that authored the 2016 document, but also taking into account other constraints, such as utilities, ecology and drainage and through consultation with Chelmsford City Council. This updated version of the LVA document has been produced to support the Examination in Public of the Local Plan and the allocation of the Site, as well as providing evidence that the Site is capable of providing capacity of more than the 'around 250' as set out within the draft allocation under Strategic Policy S9. This is illustrated on **Figure 7: Landscape Strategy Plan** which demonstrates the resulting numbers of dwellings that the Site is able to accommodate, once the constraints have been considered, and following an extensive masterplan process.
- 1.3 The objectives of this document are to provide a robust background to the identified opportunities and constraints and to explain the rationale behind the proposed landscape strategy in terms of the landscape character of the Site and its surroundings, the landscape and visual qualities of the Site, its function within and contribution to the wider landscape. The work undertaken includes an assessment of the existing landscape features, a visual appraisal of the Site and its context, planning policy context and landscape character baseline. It outlines the rationale and details of a landscape strategy for development that accords with the aims and objectives of the Green Wedge and then assesses the broad effects that may occur on identified landscape and visual receptors as a result of the Proposed Development.
- 1.4 This document is not intended to comprise a full Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) as it has been written with regard to ensuring that a strategic masterplan showing that

principles of development are acceptable and are underpinned by a comprehensive and robust landscape-led approach, rather than a fully resolved masterplan.

1.5 The document is supported by the following plans:

- Figure 1: Site Context Plan;
- Figure 2: Topographical Features Plan;
- Figure 3: Landscape Character Plan;
- Figure 4: Site Appraisal Plan;
- Figure 5: Landscape and Visual Opportunities and Constraints Plan;
- Figure 6: Development Principles Plan;
- Figure 7: Landscape Strategy Concept Plan;
- Site Context Photographs 1-9; and
- Site Appraisal Photographs A-K.

1.6 In conjunction with this LVA, a masterplan document has also been prepared in accordance with the requirements for Strategic Growth Site 3a as set out on page 122 of the Chelmsford Local Plan Pre-Submission Document (January 2018). The masterplan document sets out the broad principles of the design, demonstrating how they have built upon the landscape baseline and other constraints identified by the technical design team, including drainage and ecology.

Proposed Development and Landscape Strategy

1.7 The proposals are for the creation of residential development in the south of the Site, and a country park in the central and northern areas of the Site. Vehicular access will be from a proposed roundabout located in the south-eastern corner of the Site at the junction of Maldon Road with Sandford Mill Lane. This roundabout will provide vehicular access to the Proposed Development, adjacent Strategic Growth Areas and the existing Sandford Mill Science Education / Visitor Centre to the north-east of the Site.

1.8 The residential development will be located on the north-sloping, southern area of the Site, where it is located outside of the flood plain and the conservation area, as well as outside of the amended Green Wedge boundary as set out within the document Green Wedges and Green Corridors: Defining Chelmsford's River Valleys, extracts of which are included within Appendix A.3 of this report. The Proposed Development will be situated adjacent to, and set back against, the Baddow Hall Crescent development to the south, and will be at a similar elevation (20-35mAOD) and northern extent as existing development within Great Baddow to the west. The proposed residential development will comprise a series of development blocks separated by areas of structural landscape, which will break up the mass of built form, soften the interface between the built development and the countryside, and will bring the country park into the settlement edge. The proposed development will be further separated by east-west green links,

which will comprise large-scale native trees and hedgerows and form soft terraced green corridors on the slope, softening and breaking up the proposed built form.

- 1.9 Further planting along the northern boundary of the proposed development will break up the mass of the built form when viewed from the river valley and aid the integration of the settlement edge with the surrounding landscape, as identified within the existing landscape character appraisal.
- 1.10 New footpath links will connect the Green Wedge and the conservation area to the north, with the existing settlement of Great Baddow to the south, providing better access to the wider river valley, the proposed country park and the Sandford Mill Science Education / Visitor Centre.
- 1.11 The enhancement of the existing landscape structure and the rights of way network within the proposed country park will provide a series of different wildlife habitats, such as reedbeds, woodland carr and aquatic vegetation, and informal open-air leisure and educational opportunities, which will complement the setting and recreational use of the existing Sandford Mill Science Education/Visitor Centre. The new green infrastructure will be based around the drainage ditches running through the Site and connecting to the River Chelmer / Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation to the immediate north of the Site. Planting proposals have been developed from the study of the published landscape character assessments at a national, regional and local level, local planning policy and advice from ecologists. The landscape strategy has evolved from a study of the variation in character across the Site, such as the more intimate character areas in the east and west of the Site, and the more visually open area in the centre of the Site.
- 1.12 The central irregularly shaped pond provides the opportunity to form a focal point within the Site, with enhanced marginal planting, location for a dipping platform for schools and interpretation boards. This is to be located within an area of meadow planting containing informal paths to complement the formal right of way network. A new cycle link is also proposed from the south-eastern corner of the Site at Sandford Mill Lane through to the north-west where there are longer distance connections to the centre of Chelmsford.
- 1.13 New areas of wet woodland are proposed in appropriate locations in the vicinity of existing areas of tree planting and along the north-eastern boundary of the Site, in order to contribute to a wider and better-connected green infrastructure network, and in accordance with local planning policy and landscape character assessments. These areas of wet woodland will be focussed within the more intimate areas of the Site where the character is already influenced by woodland and shrub planting. Areas of willow and black poplar are proposed along the

southern boundary of the River Chelmer, restoring some of the planted character of the southern side of the river whilst protecting the open views along and across the valley.

- 1.14 Reedbed planting is proposed in areas of the drainage ditches and watercourses and within the waterbodies within the Site. This will be supported by native marginal planting in appropriate locations, particularly within the central pond. The banks of the water course extending east-west through the centre of the Site are to be re-profiled and new areas of woodland carr established to provide both shade and a better water quality for fish species. These proposals are being developed in discussion with the Environment Agency.
- 1.15 Local landscape policy and character assessment has highlighted the loss of grazing meadow and, therefore, the landscape strategy proposes the creation of wildflower meadows in the central and north-eastern areas of the Site and grazing meadow in the remainder of the country park. Essentially, a minimal intervention approach is proposed for the country park with localised enhancements to biodiversity and landscape amenity, to improve on what currently exists.
- 1.16 Interpretation boards at key locations will aid the understanding of the habitats within the Site and the species that may be seen.
- 1.17 Long term management is key to the success of the country park and is detailed in the Landscape and Biodiversity Management Strategy (LBMS) tables in Appendix A.1 of this document.
- 1.18 The document will demonstrate how development may be incorporated within the Site without compromising the aims and objectives of the Green Wedge and other relevant policies and without undue substantial adverse landscape and visual effects. The Proposed Development will be in keeping with the character of the surrounding land uses and development within Great Baddow to the south and west.
- 1.19 The opportunities and constraints identified within this LVA, as produced in 2016, have been used to inform the scheme layout, together with evidence from other professional consultants, including ecology, drainage and utilities. The masterplan has undergone extensive testing and consultation with Chelmsford City Council and has, in previous iterations, demonstrated that the Site can accommodate up to 369 dwellings at densities appropriate to the local context and without causing undue harm on the local landscape, townscape, views or relevant designations such as the Green Wedge. The evidence base robustly demonstrates that the boundaries of Site 3a are justified in landscape terms and also clearly demonstrates there is capacity within the Site to accommodate a greater number of units than the 'around 250' proposed within Strategic Policy S9 in the Chelmsford Local Plan Pre-Submission Document.

Methodology

- 1.20 The methodology employed in carrying out the LVA of the Proposed Development has been drawn from the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment's Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' 3rd Edition¹ (2013) (GLVIA3). The aim of these guidelines is to set high-standards for the scope and content of Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments (LVIAs) and to establish certain principles that will help to achieve consistency, credibility, transparency and effectiveness throughout the assessment.
- 1.21 The GLVIA3 sets out the difference between Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) and Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA). The preparation of an LVA has the rigour of the EIA process but looks to identify issues of possible harm that might arise from the development proposal and offset them through change and modification of the proposals before a fix of the final design scheme. This LVA has been used as a tool to inform the design process, rather than to provide an assessment of a final proposal.
- 1.22 The assessment of landscape and visual effects, in common with any assessment of environmental effects, includes a combination of objective and subjective judgements. It is, therefore, important that a structured and consistent approach is adopted to ensure that the assessment undertaken is as objective as possible.
- 1.23 A landscape appraisal is the systematic description and analysis of the features within the landscape, such as landform, vegetation cover, settlement and transport patterns and land use that create a particular sense of place. A visual appraisal assesses visual receptors, which are the viewers of the landscape, and could include people using locations such as residential or business properties, public buildings, public open space and Public Rights of Way (PRoW).
- 1.24 A desktop assessment of the Study Area was undertaken, including an assessment of landscape character, landform, landscape features, historic evolution, policy and designations. This information was used as a basis against which to compare the findings of the Site assessment.
- 1.25 The Study Area has been confined to an area approximately 3km from the Site. This distance from the Site was chosen based on existing features such as landform and vegetation; settlement morphology and land use patterns. This is considered a sufficient area to establish the landscape and visual baseline and to allow the appraisal of the Site and its context.

¹ Landscape Institute and Institute for Environmental Management and Assessment (2013) Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3rd Edition

- 1.26 A brief description of the existing land use of the Study Area is provided and includes reference to existing settlement, transport routes and vegetation cover, as well as local landscape designations, elements of cultural and heritage value and local landmarks or tourist destinations. These factors combine to provide an understanding of landscape value and sensitivity, and an indication of key views and viewpoints that are available to visual receptors, which are then considered in the visual appraisal.
- 1.27 The Site has been considered in terms of the following:
- i) Landscape Character
i.e. land form, vegetation cover, land use, scale, state of repair of individual elements, representation of typological character, enclosure pattern, form/line and movement
 - ii) Visual Influence
i.e. land form influences, tree and woodland cover, numbers and types of residents, numbers and types of visitors and scope for mitigating potential for visual impacts
 - iii) Landscape Value
i.e. national designations, local designations, tranquillity / remoteness, scenic beauty and cultural associations

2.0 LANDSCAPE BASELINE

- 2.1 This chapter describes the landscape of the Study Area and the Site. This is used to identify landscape receptors to change, e.g. character areas and features, such as trees and hedgerows. It is also used as a basis against which to compare the published landscape character assessments, which are summarised within Chapter 5, and to assess the role that the Site plays within the wider landscape. The Study Area is centred on the Site and corresponds with the area shown on **Figure 1: Site Context Plan**. Features within the Site are illustrated by **Site Appraisal Photographs A-K** and the context is illustrated within **Site Context Photographs 1-9** included within the illustrative material of this document.

Location

- 2.2 The Site (90 hectares) is located within the administrative area of Chelmsford City Council, on the western edge of Chelmsford between Great Baddow and Chelmer, as illustrated on **Figure 1: Site Context Plan**.
- 2.3 The Site is located within the context of the existing neighbouring built form on the southern edge of the valley of the River Chelmer, as seen on **Site Context Photograph 8**. It is adjoined by residential development immediately to the south and west, by open landscape forming part of the Green Wedge to the north and north-west, with further settlement beyond, and to the east by Manor Farm, a number of cottages and the water works.
- 2.4 The northern boundary is marked by the Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation / River Chelmer. The northern part of the western boundary is formed by an existing field boundary marked by a fence with some remnant hedgerow trees. The Site boundary then turns west along one of the streams running through the site before turning south again where it meets the A1114 Essex Yeomanry Way. The boundary with the A1114 is marked by tree and shrub planting with large gaps at the western end offering views across the Site and the land beyond, as seen on **Site Appraisal Photograph D**.
- 2.5 The southern boundary extends along the northern edge of Maldon Road. The northern side of Maldon Road is marked by a native hedgerow and areas of tree planting in the region of the farm shop, as seen on **Site Context Photographs 7 and 7**. The area to the south of Maldon Road comprises residential development around Baddow Hall Crescent. The southern part of the eastern boundary of the Site extends along Sandford Mill Lane and along the stream where it runs around the rear of the properties facing onto Sandford Mill Lane, including Manor Farm and 1-6 Mill Cottages, as seen on **Site Appraisal Photograph J**.

- 2.6 The boundary then turns west along another of the streams and around the south and west of the Sandford Mill Waterworks, seen in the centre and left of **Site Appraisal Photograph J** until it meets the Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation as described above. The rear of the curtilages of Mill Cottages is marked by a panelled fence and the boundary with the waterworks is marked by individual trees for the majority of its length, with an area of woodland planting at the northern extent where the boundary meets the Chelmer and Blackwood Navigation.
- 2.7 The Site forms part of the River Chelmer East and Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation Green Wedge, which extends along the route of the aforementioned waterways, connecting the open countryside to the east with the centre of Chelmsford to the west. The flat, low-lying part of the Site is also located within the Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation Conservation Area. Both of these designations can be seen on **Figure 1: Site Context Plan**. The southern, elevated area of the Site is proposed to be removed from the Green Wedge designation, in accordance with the document 'Green Wedges and Green Corridors: Defining Chelmsford's River Valleys', extracts of which are included in **Appendix A.3**.

Topography and Hydrology

- 2.8 The main watercourse in the Study Area is the River Chelmer, which extends in an arc from the north-western corner of the Study Area to the north-eastern corner, as shown on **Figure 2: Topographical Features Plan**. The River Can joins the River Chelmer in the west of the Study Area, in the centre of Chelmsford. The Sandford Brook extends from the south-eastern corner of the Study Area to the north-western corner. Smaller brooks and drains extend into these larger watercourses, which join to the north-east of the Study Area. Further small drains and large ponds are located within the river valleys.
- 2.9 The lowest point of the Study Area is the north-eastern corner, near to the junction of the River Chelmer with the Sandford Brook, which is located at approximately 10m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD). The land rises up on moving away from the watercourses in a series of shallow ridges of approximately 60mAOD. The highest part of the Study Area is the south-western corner which is located at approximately 80mAOD.
- 2.10 As illustrated on **Figure 2: Topographic Features Plan**, the Site is located on the southern side of the valley of the River Chelmer. The central and northern part of the Site are located within the flood plains and are, therefore, generally flat and low-lying, located between 20 and 25mAOD with a small area of below 20mAOD in the north-eastern corner of the Site, as shown on **Site Appraisal Photographs C-F**. The southern part of the Site is located on the valley edge at a similar elevation to the adjacent residential areas and rises up from the flood plain to a height of 40mAOD at the edge of the built form along Maldon Road, as shown on **Site Appraisal Photograph G**. There is, therefore, a distinct change between the central and

northern areas of the Site, which relate to the river valley, and the southern area of the Site, which relates to the settled valley sides.

- 2.11 The River Chelmer/Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation runs along the northern boundary of the Site with a series of connecting drains running north-south and east-west. A separate narrow drain runs north from the end of Baddow Hall Crescent and culminates in a small pond. There are three large ponds in the Site: a large irregularly shaped pond surrounded by young tree planting in the centre of the Site (**Site Appraisal Photograph C**), a covered reservoir in the south-western corner of the Site adjacent to the A1114 and a second pond in the eastern part of the Site to the rear of Manor Farm and Mill Cottages (**Site Appraisal Photograph J**).

Settlement Pattern and Land Uses

- 2.12 The north-western area of the Study Area comprises the built settlement edge of Chelmsford and its surrounding suburbs, including Great Baddow. Chelmsford is located around the junction of the Rivers Chelmer and Can and rises up the valley sides away from the lowest areas of land. This has resulted in a green wedge of agricultural pasture land extending along the route of the River Chelmer with overlooking settlement on the valley slopes.
- 2.13 The Site comprises an area of further agricultural land, arable in the south and pastoral in the north, located on the edge of the town of Chelmsford. It is separated from the open countryside in the east of the Study Area by the route of the A12, which forms a defensible boundary to the edge of Chelmsford in the north of the Study Area. The southern area of the Site, located on the rising ground, is situated at a similar elevation to the neighbouring residential development to the west of the A1114, as seen on **Site Appraisal Photograph I**.
- 2.14 The Site is bordered to the south and south-west by the settlement of Great Baddow, which is located on the rising land on the southern edge of the valley of the River Chelmer. This settlement wraps around the edge of the Site and is seen on the skyline when viewed from the lower-lying ground of the valley floor, as seen on **Site Appraisal Photograph G**. The area to the immediate north of the Site is undeveloped but the edge of Chelmsford is visible across the flat flood plain further north.
- 2.15 There is low-density rural settlement to the immediate east of the Site in the form of Manor Farm and Mill Cottages, which are located on Sandford Mill Lane, creating a settled context to the north-eastern area of the Site. The Sandford Mill Waterworks and Sandford Mill Science Education and Visitors Centre are located to the north-east of the Site, seen **Site Context Photograph 4**.
- 2.16 There is a farm shop within the southern boundary of the Site fronting onto Maldon Road.

Vegetation

- 2.17 Much of the Study Area forms part of Chelmsford and its outlying suburbs and, therefore, contains little vegetation beyond gardens and amenity open space.
- 2.18 Vegetation within the river valley comprises small blocks of woodland and lines of trees that follow the water courses and the major roads, for example as shown on **Site Context Photograph 1**. Field boundaries, where they occur, comprise hedgerows with trees, although hedgerow loss is highlighted as an issue within the published landscape character assessments (see Chapter 5). Settlement, particularly on the edge of Chelmsford and Great Baddow, is at a density that provides space for large trees and frequent hedgerows visible above and between the built form. The built edge of Great Baddow, in particular, is visible on the skyline, set within a mature landscape structure, see **Site Appraisal Photograph D**.
- 2.19 The eastern part of the Study Area rises up beyond the river valleys and this area is more vegetated, being characterised by blocks of woodland around the village of Danbury. Much of this woodland is Ancient Semi Natural (ASNW) and some areas relate to the Grade II Registered Danbury Park, 1.9km to the south-east of the Site, and the Grade II Riffhams, 2.9km to the east.
- 2.20 The sloping southern part of the Site on the valley sides is generally more vegetated than the lower-lying flat area in the centre and north of the Site, as shown on **Site Appraisal Photographs A and B**. A tall hedgerow runs along the southern boundary with Maldon Road and extends north-west along the A1114, where it becomes a tree belt along the south-western boundary of the Site. There is a block of woodland in the south-west of the Site, adjacent to the raised reservoir and the A1114, as seen on left side of **Site Appraisal Photograph B**. Three hedgerows extend north from Maldon Road, breaking up the southern raised area of the Site into separate parcels of land. The westernmost of these is the most comprehensive, extending as far north as the valley floor.
- 2.21 Tree planting along the southern edge of the Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation (the northern boundary of the Site), and along the ditches in the central areas of the Site, is sporadic, resulting in an open character, as shown on **Site Appraisal Photographs D, E and F**. Contrastingly, there is stronger vegetation along the drains and boundaries in the west of the Site, as shown on **Site Context Photograph 1** and **Site Appraisal Photograph D**. Blocks of tree planting occur around the three large ponds. There is a block of mature woodland to the south of the covered reservoir in the west of the Site, as shown on **Site Appraisal Photograph B**, immature tree planting around the irregular pond in the centre of the Site (**Site Appraisal Photograph C**) and mature planting around the easternmost pond (**Site Appraisal Photograph J**).

- 2.22 The vegetation pattern contributes to the creation of different character areas across the Site by creating enclosure and a sense of intimacy in the easternmost and westernmost areas.

Public Rights of Way

- 2.23 There is a dense network of PRoW running along the valley of the River Chelmer, as shown on **Figure 1: Site Context Plan**. The Saffron Trail National Path runs along the northern side of the river for the entirety of the Study Area, with an additional path extending along the southern side of the river and the northern boundary of the Site. A parallel footpath extends along the north-eastern boundary of the Site from the A1114 and passes east to west through the northern part of the Site towards Sandford Mill. A third footpath extends along the foot of the sloping southern section of the Site between the A1114 in the west and Sandford Mill Road to the east.
- 2.24 A Sustrans cycle route extends along the northern edge of the valley bottom before turning south along Sandford Mill Road and then east, across the A12 towards Danbury.
- 2.25 There are a number of informal tracks that extend through the Site, as shown on **Site Appraisal Photographs G-I**, and these appear to be used informally by local walkers. Walkers were also seen using the northern part of the western boundary between PRoW 220_5 and 220_2.

Designations

- 2.26 Designations are shown on **Figure 1: Site Context Plan**.

Landscape Designations

- 2.27 There are no national landscape designations within the Study Area. ASNW occurs in the far east of the Study Area in the area of Danbury.

Spatial Designations

- 2.28 The key designation relating to the Site is the River Chelmer East and Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation Green Wedge. The Site is currently within the Green Wedge but the southern area is proposed to be removed within the Pre-Submission Local Plan and as set out within the document 'Green Wedges and Green Corridors: Defining Chelmsford's River Valleys' (see Chapter 3 below).
- 2.29 The Site Allocations DPD (2012) describes the River Chelmer East and Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation Green Wedge in the following terms:

"This Green Wedge follows the Chelmer Valley to the east of the town centre, and between Great Baddow and Chelmer Village to the A12. The River Chelmer is an important feature in the area, contributing to the setting of the Navigation. The area of Green Wedge contains nature conservation sites and areas for recreation which are linked by an existing network of footpaths and cycleways running throughout the valley. A large proportion of the area is within a Conservation Area."

- 2.30 The south-western area of the Study Area, to the south of Great Baddow, is designated as Green Belt but the Site does not impinge on this.

Cultural Heritage

- 2.31 The Site is located partly within the Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation Conservation Area, as shown on **Figure 1: Site Context Plan**. The Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation Conservation Area Appraisal states that:

"the special interest which justifies the designation of the ... conservation area derives from the following (inter alia):

- *The architectural and historic interest of the historic buildings, some of which are listed buildings;*
- *The topography of the surrounding landscape, including the flood plain water meadows and agricultural land;*
- *Views of surrounding churches, including St Mary's Cathedral, Holy Trinity Church, Danbury St John the Baptist, Little Baddow St Mary the Virgin and Boreham St Andrew;*
- *Views to the navigation-related structures, including the bridges, warehouses, gas holders and mills;*
- *Trees and hedgerows;*
- *The area's ecological value;*
- *The changing setting of the navigation from urban to rural in the waterside area."*

- 2.32 The Site is located within the Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation Green Wedge. The Chelmsford City Council Site Allocations DPD (Feb 2012) states that the key objectives of the Green Wedge are to *"maximise public enjoyment of the river valleys, protect and enhance ecological health and diversity, preserve local landscape and wildlife links between the countryside and Chelmsford's Urban Area ..."*.

Other Designations

- 2.33 The area of land to the west and north of Sandford Mill and the Sandford Mill Waterworks is a designated Local Wildlife Site (LoWS), forming part of the wider Ch101 Sandon Riverside LoWS and connecting to the Ch87 Chelmsford Watermeadows LoWS to the west. Although LoWS is not a landscape designation, this area is relevant to the development of the landscape strategy and its enhancement and creation of wildlife habitats within the Site.

Identified Receptors to Change

2.34 The following landscape receptors to change has been identified in the assessment of the landscape baseline:

- Trees and hedgerows;
- Watercourses and waterbodies, and their associated vegetation;
- Public Rights of Way;
- Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation Conservation Area; and
- Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation Green Wedge.

2.35 Potential effects on these receptors as a result of the Proposed Development are set out within Chapter 6 below.

3.0 LANDSCAPE PLANNING POLICY

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), 2012

- 3.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which was first published in March 2012 has been updated and published in July 2018. However, there is currently a period of grace until 24th January 2019 under which Local Plans are examined against the 2012 NPPF, the relevant extracts of which are included below, in accordance with paragraph 2.14 of Annexe 1 of the NPPF (2018). Much of the information in the 2018 NPPF is reflective of that within the 2012 edition. Where appropriate, the related paragraph number from the 2018 NPPF is included.
- 3.1 The NPPF aims to provide one concise document which sets out the Government's planning policies for England by replacing previous Planning Policy Guidance (PPGs) and Planning Policy Statements (PPSs). It aims to provide a planning framework within which the local community and local authorities can produce distinctive local plans which respond to local needs and priorities.
- 3.2 The NPPF promotes a presumption in favour of sustainable development, defined as *"meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"*, and providing it is in accordance with the relevant up-to-date Local Plan and policies set out in the NPPF, including those identifying restrictions with regard to designated areas.
- 3.3 Paragraph 14 describes the key theme throughout the Framework is that of 'Achieving Sustainable Development' and confirms that the *"presumption in favour of sustainable development"* should be seen as a *"golden thread running through both plan-making and decision-taking."*
- 3.4 The NPPF identifies thirteen aspects which should be considered in developing local plans and reviewing planning applications. Those of relevance to the landscape and visual considerations of the Site and proposed development include Section 7: Requiring good design. Paragraph 58 (paragraph 127 in the 2018 NPPF) states that planning policies and decisions should aim to ensure that developments, inter alia:
- *"...Establish a strong sense of place,*
 - *...respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings*
 - *...are visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping."*
- 3.5 Paragraph 61 states that:

"planning policies and decisions should address the connections between people and places and the integration of new development into the natural, built and historic environment."

3.6 Section 11: Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment notes in paragraph 109 (paragraph 170 in the 2018 NPPF) that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by inter alia ***"protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, geological conservation interests and soils"***.

3.7 Paragraph 110 (paragraph 171 in the 2018 NPPF) sets out that the aim, in preparing plans for development, should be to minimise adverse effects on the local and natural environment, and that plans should allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value.

3.8 Paragraph 114 notes that furthermore, local planning authorities should:

"set out a strategic approach in their Local Plans, planning positively for the creation, protection, enhancement and management of networks of biodiversity and green infrastructure."

3.9 Paragraph 125 states that:

"By encouraging good design, planning policies and decisions should limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation."

Planning Practice Guidance

3.10 To support the policies of the NPPF, the Government has produced Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) covering a number of topics.

3.11 Under the heading of Natural Environment, sub-heading Landscape, Paragraph 1, the PPG supports the use of landscape character assessment as a tool for understanding ***"the character and local distinctiveness of the landscape and identify[ing] the features that give it a sense of place. It can help to inform, plan and manage change and may be undertaken at a scale appropriate to local and neighbourhood plan-making"***. The PPG makes reference to Natural England guidance on undertaking landscape character assessment.

3.12 Paragraph 17 of the Natural Environment guidance notes that biodiversity enhancement should seek to include:

- ***"habitat restoration, re-creation and expansion;***
- ***improved links between existing sites;***
- ***buffering of existing important sites;***

- *new biodiversity features within development; and*
- *securing management for long term enhancement."*

3.13 Under the heading Design, Paragraph 7, the PPG states that planning should promote local character *"by responding to and reinforcing locally distinctive patterns of development, local man-made and natural heritage and culture, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation"*. The paragraph goes on to state:

"The successful integration of all forms of new development with their surrounding context is an important design objective, irrespective of whether a site lies on the urban fringe or at the heart of a town centre.

When thinking about new development the site's landform should be taken into account. Natural features and local heritage resources can help give shape to a development and integrate it into the wider area, reinforce and sustain local distinctiveness, reduce its impact on nature and contribute to a sense of place. Views into and out of larger sites should also be carefully considered from the start of the design process"

Local Planning Policy

3.14 The relevant local planning documents comprise:

- Chelmsford Borough Council Core Strategy and Development Control Policies (2008) and Focussed Review (2013);
- The Site Allocations DPD (Feb 2012)
- Chelmsford Draft Local Plan Pre-Submission Document (January 2018)

Chelmsford Borough Council Core Strategy and Development Control Policies (2008) and Focussed Review (2013)

3.15 Policy CP1 from the Focussed Review is a generally overarching policy stating that the meeting of housing and employment needs should occur *"whilst minimising damage to the environment and actively securing environmental enhancements"*.

3.16 Strategic Objective EPE1 states the need to *"Protect the Borough's natural and built resources, historic environment, biodiversity, geological diversity and countryside."*

3.17 Policy CP9 – Protecting Areas of Natural and Built Heritage and Archaeological Importance highlights the Borough Councils commitment to *"protecting and enhancing the Borough's important natural and historic environment. The Borough Council will therefore seek to sustain biodiversity, historic landscape character, archaeological and geological conservation by ensuring sites of ... importance are protected and enhanced"*. It then

goes on to state that *"the Borough Council will designate and keep under review Conservation Areas in order to protect or enhance their special architectural or historic interest... Areas of land within the Chelmsford area that have the function of maintaining the open character of river valleys and associated flood plains and afford the opportunity to protect and enhance sites of nature conservation importance are designated as Green Wedges."*

- 3.18 Strategic Objective EPE3 states that development should *"enhance environmental quality of the Borough's countryside and urban areas"*.
- 3.19 Policy CP12 – Protecting and Enhancing Recreational Provision relates to the maintenance and enhancement of *"the provision of formal and informal recreation facilities, at appropriate locations, within the Borough including the designation of new local parks and gardens, country parks and other public open spaces"*.
- 3.20 Policy CP14 – Environmental Quality and Landscape Character relates to the *"the enhancement of the environmental quality of the Borough's countryside and settlements"*.
- 3.21 Strategic Objective EPE1 relates to the protection of the *"Borough's natural and built resources, historic environment, biodiversity, geological diversity and countryside"*.
- 3.22 Policy DC9 - Green Wedges states that *"the Borough Council will seek to protect and enhance the open character of the river valleys and associated floodplains, providing a network of natural habitats to nurture biodiversity and provide areas of informal recreation between the urban areas of Chelmsford and the countryside beyond"*. It goes on to say that planning permission for development must *"preserve the open character of the Green Wedge"* and must not *"conflict with the purposes of the Green Wedge designation"*.
- 3.23 Policy DC14 relates to the protection of woodland, trees and hedgerows, of which a number occur within the Site.
- 3.24 Policy DC17 - Conservation Areas states that *"development proposals in Conservation Areas must preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Conservation Area"*.
- 3.25 Policy DC42 - Site Planning states that new development must incorporate existing site features of value as well as *"existing topography, vegetation and water of value"*.

The Site Allocations DPD (Feb 2012)

3.26 Topic 5 of the Site Allocation DPD refers specifically to Green Wedges. The DPD states that Green Wedges are ***"the basis of Chelmsford's green infrastructure network"*** and that the key objectives are to ***"maximise public enjoyment of the river valleys, protect and enhance ecological health and diversity, preserve local landscape and wildlife links between the countryside and Chelmsford's Urban Area and identify the Sandford Mill Special Policy Area"***.

3.27 The key Conservation principles for Green Wedges are:

- ***"No reduction in the area of open river valleys;***
- ***Protect the valley sides from the visual impact of new development;***
- ***Only small-scale development on valley sides, relating to existing activity, responding to landscape setting;***
- ***Conserve and enhance cross-valley views and views along the valleys;***
- ***Maintain a network of informal open space and nature conservation sites in the valleys, and increase access for recreational purposes;***
- ***Conserve and enhance areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland and the existing hedgerow pattern...enhance the ecological structure of woodland, copses and hedges; and strengthen through planting where appropriate to local character;***
- ***Conserve and manage areas of grassland, enhance the ecological structure of meadowland and strengthen their recreational role;***
- ***Conserve and manage the river banks and their margins to protect and enhance existing biodiversity, and manage wildlife habitats; and***
- ***Ensure that agricultural and landscape works are in sympathy with the natural character."***

3.28 Access and movement principles include:

- ***"Enhance existing and create new footpath and cycle routes; and***
- ***Improve access into and within Sandford Mill including use of the Navigation, which will in turn increase access to the valley."***

3.29 Visual enhancements include the following:

- ***"Promote tree and hedge planting along built edges ...***
- ***Improvement of paths and access ways ..."***

3.30 The Site Allocations DPD (2012) states the following:

"The scope for development for recreation is limited by landscape character, and any recreational use should be open air activities only. In the River Chelmer East and Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation Green Wedge, management of the landscape as countryside with enhanced walking and cycling access will be encouraged."

Emerging Local Planning Policy

Chelmsford City Council Draft Local Plan Pre-Submission Document (January 2018)

- 3.31 The emerging Local Plan outlines the strategic priorities and long-term vision for Chelmsford. It identifies locations for delivering housing and other strategic development needs such as employment, retail, leisure, community and transport development. It contains a Spatial Strategy to deliver this vision. This will set out the amount and location of new development, and how places will change and be shaped throughout the Local Plan period and beyond.
- 3.32 The plan sets out a series of strategic priorities and policies; where these are relevant to landscape and visual impact matters, they are summarised below.
- **Strategic Priority 7** - Protecting and Enhancing the Natural and Historic Environment, the Green Belt and Valued Landscapes – The River Valleys are an important local asset which contribute significantly to the local landscape character.
 - **Strategic Policy S1** – Spatial Principles – Development will protect and enhance the character of valued landscapes, heritage and biodiversity and will respect the pattern and hierarchy of existing settlements.
 - **Strategic Policy S3** – Addressing Climate Change and Flood Risk – Promotes the creation of green infrastructure.
 - **Strategic Policy S5** – Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment - Development proposals should favour preservation and enhancement of designated heritage assets and their setting.
 - **Strategic Policy S6** – Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment - the Council will plan for a multifunctional network of green infrastructure.
 - **Strategic Policy S13** – The Role of the Countryside - countryside and landscapes locally recognised and valued, whether of ecological, historic and functional importance, will be protected. The Green Belt will be maintained. The main river valleys are identified as valued landscapes and are locally designated as Green Wedges and Green Corridors
- 3.33 The Plan provides for broad locations for growth under Strategic Policy S9, including Strategic Growth Site 3a – East Chelmsford (Manor Farm). The Strategic Growth Site is within the Site red line boundary and comprises the southern part of the Site. The information for Strategic

Growth Site 3a on page 122 sets out an allocation for a landscape-led, new, sustainable neighbourhood and new Country Park. *"Development proposals will accord with a masterplan approved by the Council"*, to provide:

- Around 250 new homes;
- A new Country Park and visitors centre;
- New vehicular access road from Maldon Road into Sandford Mill; and
- pedestrian and cycle connections.

3.34 With respect to landscape and visual impact issues, the masterplan should:

- Conserve and enhance the Chelmer and Blackwater Conservation Area;
- Protect the nationally significant Bronze Age monument and its setting;
- Protect views into and through the site from across the Chelmer Valley;
- Create a network of green infrastructure, including SuDs / flood risk management;
- Ensure appropriate habitat mitigation and creation;
- Retain the WWII pillbox and provide interpretation boards;
- Provide a coherent network of public open space, formal and informal sport, recreation and community space;
- Remove electricity lines and pylons; and
- Provide a landscape strategy.

3.35 The plan sets out a series of policies; where these are relevant to landscape and visual impact matters, they are summarised below.

- **Policy CO1** – Green Belt, Green Wedges, Green Corridors and Rural Areas - In determining planning applications, the Council will consider new development within the countryside whilst upholding the planning objectives of designations, such as Green Wedges. Green Wedges will be protected and enhanced as valued and multi-faceted landscapes; their openness and function as important green networks will be protected.
- **Policy CO3** – New Buildings and Structures in Green Wedges and Green Corridors – The council will support new buildings in Green Wedges where it does not conflict with the purposes of the Green Wedge designation (openness between built-up areas, protecting biodiversity, and promoting recreation)
- **Policy CO5** – Infilling in the Green Belt, Green Wedge, Green Corridor and Rural Area - Planning permission will be granted for infilling in the Green Wedge, where the site is a small gap in an otherwise built-up frontage and does not detract from the existing character or appearance of the area"

- **Policy HE1** – Designated Heritage Assets - development affecting designated heritage assets will be weighed against any public benefits. Development will only be permitted in conservation areas where its character / appearance would be preserved or enhanced, and any harm outweighed by public benefit.
- **Policy HE2** – Non-Designated Heritage Assets – Proposals should retain the significance of non-designated heritage assets, including its setting.
- **Policy NE2** – Trees, Woodland and Landscape Features - Harm to preserved trees, trees in a conservation area, preserved woodlands or ancient woodlands (including aged or veteran trees found outside ancient woodlands) will be resisted. There may be overriding public benefits arising from development that could justify the removal of a preserved tree or trees. Planning permission will only be granted for proposals that do not result in unacceptable harm to natural landscape features that are important to the character and appearance of the area.
- **Policy MP1** – High Quality Design – Development will respond to its context through the use of materials, scale, siting and form.
- **Policy MP2** – Design and Place Shaping Principles in Major Developments – All major new developments should respond positively to local character and presence and enhance the quality of existing communities.
- **Policy PA1** – Protecting Amenity – Development must respect the amenity of occupiers of nearby properties.

Evidence Documents

Chelmsford City Council, Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment Report (2017)

- 3.36 As part of the evidence base to inform the emerging Local Plan, Chelmsford City Council have prepared a Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment, which assesses the landscape sensitivity and capacity of a number of survey locations across Chelmsford.
- 3.37 Strategic Growth Site 3a is situated within parcel SLP1 'Sandon', which is assessed as being of high landscape sensitivity, low landscape value and, therefore, of medium landscape capacity.
- 3.38 Under the heading of 'Landscape Sensitivity to Development', the document states that the parcel *"shares some characteristics with the wider valley to the north"* but goes on to state:

"the land does not exhibit any particularly special qualities per se and lies outside the designated Conservation Area of the Chelmer Valley. Whilst the field pattern has remained unchanged, the boundary hedgerows are weak and the overall character is weakening". Development at Great Baddow

immediately to the south and noise intrusion from the A1060 further compromises character."

- 3.39 Under the heading of 'Visual Sensitivity to Development', the document states that *"the parcel is largely contained visually from the north by a substantial hedgerow bordering the A1060, but exposed from the south due to its falling landform and absence of any substantive vegetation"*. Residential properties along the A1060 are described as having views across the land from their upper windows, *"although the land quickly falls away from the plateau adjacent to the A1060 limiting exposure of the land from this perspective"*.
- 3.40 The document reflects what is shown in this study, i.e. that, *"aside from the PRow immediately to the north, the greatest exposure of the land is from PRow running alongside the River Chelmer, although these are long distance views"*.
- 3.41 Under the heading of 'Landscape Value', the document acknowledges that *"there are no features of particular value, being of relatively ordinary aesthetic appeal"* and that *"there is some visual intrusion from the edge of Great Baddow across the A1060, and aural intrusion from the A1060 and to a lesser extent the A12"*.

Chelmsford Green Infrastructure Strategic Plan 2018-2036, January 2018

"The Green Infrastructure Strategic Plan provides a framework for the planning and management of Chelmsford's Green Infrastructure resources"

- 3.42 Green Infrastructure (GI) is defined as a strategically planned network of high-quality green spaces and other environmental features. It should be designed and managed as a multifunctional resource.
- 3.43 The Strategy sets out the evidence base and proposed strategy for the City's GI based upon a set of overall priorities, including:
- *"Reinforcing and extending the connectivity of, and accessibility to, Green Infrastructure resources;*
 - *Protecting and enhancing Green Infrastructure assets;*
 - *Recognising the critical role that the river valleys play as a focus for the Green Infrastructure assets across the City and its hinterland;*
 - *Paying particular attention to the integrity of protected areas;*
 - *Ensuring that existing Green Infrastructure resources are used to their best advantage;*
 - *Enhancing the quality and accessibility of Green Infrastructure resources; and*
 - *Promoting Green Infrastructure as central to the character and well-being of local communities."*

3.44 The GI strategy includes an analysis of the current level of access to natural greenspace and woodlands in the context of the Natural England Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards (ANGSt) and the Woodland Trust Woodland Access Standards. The Accessible Natural Green Space Across Chelmsford Plan identifies the Site as being within 2km of Accessible Natural Green Space with an area of between 20 and 100ha. The Woodland Accessibility Across Chelmsford Plan identifies the Site as being within a 4km buffer around woodland of 10ha+, namely Blakes Wood, located to the east of the Site.

3.45 The GI Strategy includes a Spatial Strategy: Areas for Intervention Plan which illustrates a series of broad, loosely defined zones and symbols in and around the Chelmsford area. The Site is identified as being located within Area of Significant Change A5: Sandon / Great Baddow.

3.46 The document notes the following relating to Sandon / Great Baddow:

"A principal theme of development in this location will be connectivity, ensuring integration between the new and existing community, enhancing links within and between the River Valley, using existing and new recreational resources (PRoW and cycleways) to achieve this. Detailed planning of the Country Park will need to pay particular attention to finding an appropriate balance between the increased recreational pressures and protection of existing and enhanced biodiversity assets..."

3.47 Key design parameters for masterplanning, where relevant to landscape visual impact matters, include:

- multi-functional habitat on buildings;
- Streets and roads are tree-lined or contain hedgerows;
- Introduce SuDS and avoid impermeable surfaces;
- Create high-quality town parks which offer a variety of facilities, services, experiences and community events;
- Create natural green spaces and wild or free play areas;
- Create a range of sports facilities and pitches;
- Create an extensive viable network of green and blue corridors;
- Reduce the effects of air pollution through the provision of verges of priority habitat;
- Provide wildlife-friendly allotments, community meadows, orchards and woodlands, a series of community gardens offering social and amenity space.

3.48 The plan also identifies the River Chelmer in the vicinity of the Site as Access Enhancement B3: Chelmer / Blackwater River Valley. The plan identifies the following opportunities for enhancement:

"Systematically reviewing access provision and opportunities for specific landscapes, such as the River Valleys, and between key destinations."

3.49 Finally, the GI Strategy includes a series of best-practice guidelines to incorporate principles of GI and biodiversity in new development, including the following:

- *"Create natural green spaces and wild or free play areas in the urban setting;*
- *Create a range of sports facilities and pitches designed and maintained for use by the whole community, as part of the use of the principles of Active Design;*
- *Create larger-scale natural habitat within informal open spaces, country parks and play areas;*
- *Ensure that semi-natural spaces, including designated nature reserves, combine passive recreational access and activities with biodiversity value and a variety of habitats;*
- *Create an extensive viable network of green and blue corridors and natural habitat throughout the development which connect s larger or more expansive open spaces for both people and wildlife;*
- *Create a network of streets, open spaces and parks, with safe routes linking them to homes and schools;*
- *Enhance the transport system and help further reduce the effects of air pollution through the provision of verges of priority habitat, hedgerow, wildflower- rich or rough grassland along railway lines, roads, streets, and pedestrian and cycle networks;*
- *Provide wildlife-friendly allotments, community meadows, orchards and woodlands, a series of community gardens of offering social and amenity space; and*
- *Provide public access to Green Infrastructure, except where there are sound reasons to restrict this, and facilities and services to enable".*

Green Wedges and Green Corridors: Defining Chelmsford's River Valleys (Review Report, February 2017)

3.50 The study comprises part of the evidence base for the new Local Plan and considers the rationale for Green Wedges as well as a review of the current boundaries and the provision of a reasoned justification as to where and why they should be changed.

3.51 Their purpose is summarised in paragraph 5 of the review in chapter 1.1 as being:

"to maintain and protect the open character of the landscape of the river valleys, to provide physical links between the urban area of Chelmsford and the countryside beyond, to provide an important network of natural habitats and various formal and informal leisure and recreation uses."

- 3.52 The document goes on to state in paragraph 6 that ***"the current Green Wedge designations have been successful in protecting [sic] unsustainable development and maintaining the character of Chelmsford"***.
- 3.53 The document has separated the different river valleys passing through Chelmsford into separate survey parcels, with the Site being related to Parcel CE3 within the River Chelmer (East and Blackwater Navigation). Figure 2.1 demonstrates the current extent of the Green Wedge designation in the region of the Site and the proposed extent of CE3 being reduced to remove the area covered by the draft housing allocation Strategic Growth Site 3a as set out within the emerging local plan, i.e. the residential element of the Site. Figure 3.7 demonstrates the reduced extent of CE3 to exclude the residential element of the Site.
- 3.54 Paragraph 11 of chapter 4.2 sets out the proposed changes to the Green Wedge in the vicinity of the Site, with the Green Wedge extending east from Sandford Mill to the southern extent of Chelmer Village, but moving the southern boundary north to exclude the residential element of Strategic Growth Site 3a.
- 3.55 Part of the Site, broadly the land to the north of PRoW 220_8, (i.e. the non-residential element of the proposals and outside of Strategic Growth Site 3a) is included within Land Parcel CE3 as set out in Appendix A of the above document, which sets out of the profiles of each of the proposed Green Wedge Parcels.
- 3.56 The Parcel is described as:
- Predominantly rough grazing;
 - Quarry and water treatment works;
 - Isolated dwellings and clusters of development to the east along Sandford Mill Lane/Sandford Mill Road and the north off Chelmer Village Way;
 - Predominantly open in aspect;
 - Intermittent hedgerows associated with some field boundaries;
 - Field size diminishing west to east;
 - Largely covered by the Chelmer River Conservation Area designation.

Landscape Character:

- Comprising open countryside, mixed arable and rough grassland;
- Extensive medium and long-distance views towards the built edges of Chelmsford and eastward towards Sandford Mill and the A12;
- Along the River Chelmer there is a more intimate landscape created by the bankside vegetation;

- Character of open countryside with links to the rural areas to the east (notwithstanding the barrier of the A12);
- Complex networks of public rights of way, centred on a riverbank path along the River Chelmer;
- Land to the south and east of Manor Farm, bordered by the A1060 and Public Rights of Way (PRoW), is noted as having a visual connection, particularly when observed from PRoW alongside the River Chelmer;
- Urban development at Baddow is noted as visible as rooflines; it makes an important, but not significant, contribution;
- further tree planting and biodiversity management (such as the creation of permanent semi-wet areas) could hold potential;
- The parcel creates a clear division between the built edge of Chelmsford to the north of the River Chelmer in particular, but also providing the context for the scattered dwellings in the vicinity of Sandford Mill.

3.57 Under the heading of 'Parcel Boundaries', Appendix A states that the land to the south and east of Manor Farm is part of the valley side containing the floodplain of the River Chelmer and that there is a visual connection between the two, particularly when viewed from the PRoW along the River Chelmer. It goes on to state that the connection between the land and the river corridor is one of context, making an important but not significant contribution and that, on that basis, the land can be excluded from the Green Wedge. The document goes on to say that:

"This would be consistent with exclusion of land between Sandford Mill Lane and the Park and Ride which exhibits similar characteristics. As with land adjacent to Green Wedges in this and other parts of the City, particular care would need to be paid to the type and quality of any development proposed such that the character of the river valley in this location is not compromised."

4.0 VISUAL CONTEXT

- 4.1 Barton Willmore have been undertaking research work on the Site since 2016 and we have undertaken numerous site visits during that period. Strategic viewpoints were identified from where effects on views towards the Site would require consideration as part of the design evolution for masterplan proposals. From the viewpoints visited, nine representative views towards the Site were chosen and these are represented by the **Site Context Photographs** included within the illustrative material accompanying this document. As part of any future application process, a full Zone of Theoretical Visibility mapping exercise will be undertaken to assist in identifying locations from where the Site is visible, and representative viewpoints for assessment agreed with the Local Authority, as part of a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment. The analysis of the comprehensive views undertaken as part of this LVA exercise is sufficient to identify opportunities and constraints to development within the Site.
- 4.2 The Site is located on the southern edge of the River Chelmer Valley with the northern two thirds of the Site located on the flat low-lying ground of the valley bottom, at approximately 20-25mAOD and the southern third rising up to the existing built edge of Great Baddow to the south, south-east and south-west at over 35mAOD.
- 4.3 Views from Maldon Road towards the river valley to the north are partially filtered by the tall hedgerow running along the southern side of the Site, as shown on **Site Context Photograph 7**. From the northern side of the hedgerow, inside the site, views extend north across the lower lying land to the edge of Chelmsford beyond, as shown on **Site Appraisal Photographs A and K**. The undulating nature of the Site, together with the north-south hedgerows in this southern third, results in reduced east-west views, creating smaller intimate areas of land, particularly in the south-western corner of the Site. The raised land in the south-eastern corner of the Site near the junction of Sandford Mill Lane with Maldon Road offers extensive views along the valley across the Site towards the edge of Chelmsford, as shown on **Site Context Photograph 3** and **Site Appraisal Photograph I**.
- 4.4 Views to and from the A1114 are possible, and vehicles on the road form a visual intrusion when viewed from the lower-lying ground in the centre of the Site within the conservation area, see **Site Context Photographs 1 and 2**. This central area is more open with medium-distance views possible towards the built edge of Great Baddow and Chelmsford, as shown on **Site Appraisal Photographs C, D and E**. Individual landmarks appear on the skyline and longer distance views are possible towards Danbury to the east where the land rises up to wooded hills, as shown on **Site Appraisal Photograph F**.
- 4.5 Looking south from the northern part of the Site and from the Saffron Trail to the immediate north of the River Chelmer, it is possible to see the land in the southern third of the Site rising

up to the existing built edge of Great Baddow and the A1114, as shown on **Site Context Photographs 8 and 9**. The existing built edge is seen as a strong line of development viewed behind and between tall hedgerows and areas of tree planting. Traffic on the A1114 is seen where there are gaps in the planting along the south-western boundary.

- 4.6 The eastern area of the Site is more visually enclosed due to the steeply rising topography and the woodland between the Site and the waterworks, as shown on **Site Appraisal Photograph J**. The western area of the Site is also more intimate in character due to greater instances of tree and hedgerow planting along the drainage ditches.

Identified Receptors to Change

- 4.7 The following visual receptors have been identified as a result of the visual baseline assessment:
- Views south from the Saffron Trail / course of the River Chelmer;
 - Views from Sandford Mill Lane;
 - Views west from footpaths to the east of Sandford Mill Lane;
 - Views from Maldon Road and houses to the south;
 - Views from the A1114;
 - Views from footpaths within the Site.
- 4.8 Potential effects on these receptors as a result of the Proposed Development are set out in Chapter 6.

5.0 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

- 5.1 Landscape character assessment is a descriptive approach that seeks to identify and define the distinct character of landscapes that make up the country. It also ensures that account is taken of the different roles and character of different areas. The description of each landscape character area is used as a basis for evaluation in order to make judgements to guide, for example, development or landscape management and as a basis against which to assess the character of the Site. The different layers of character are used to identify areas of land which are not reflective of wider landscape character. The extent of published landscape character areas in the vicinity of the Site are illustrated on **Figure 3: Landscape Character Plan**. In addition, a further appraisal of the character of the Site and the Study Area has been undertaken by Barton Willmore, to better understand how reflective they are of the published character assessments. Extracts from the published character assessments are included as part of **Appendix A.2**.

Published Landscape Character Assessments

National Character Areas

- 5.2 The northern and central area of the Site (i.e. that which is in the flood plain) is in National Character Area (NCA) 86 South Suffolk and North Essex Claylands whilst the southern part (that rises above the flood plain) is in NCA 111 Northern Thames Basin (See **Figure 3: Landscape Character Plan**).

NCA86 South Suffolk and North Essex Claylands (2014)

- 5.3 Key characteristics of this area, in which the lower lying parts of the Site are located, are as follows (inter alia):

- *"...Undulating...plateau dissected by numerous river valleys, giving a topography of gentle slopes in the lower, wider valleys and steeper slopes in the narrower upper parts..."*
- *South-east-flowing streams and rivers drain the clay plateau. Watercourses wind slowly across flood plains, supporting wet, fen-type habitats; grazing marsh; and blocks of cricket-bat willows, poplars and old willow pollards...*
- *Lowland wood pasture and ancient woodlands... Large, often ancient hedgerows link woods and copses, forming wooded skylines.*
- *The agricultural landscape is predominantly arable with a wooded appearance...[and]...some pasture on the valley floors... Field patterns are irregular...with much ancient countryside surviving...*

- *...Impressive churches, large barns, substantial country house estates and Second World War airfields dot the landscape, forming historical resources...*
- *Larger 20th-century development...around Chelmsford, Ipswich and the new towns of Harlow and Stevenage.*
- *Traditional timber-frame, often elaborate buildings with exposed timbers colour-washed render, pargeting and steeply pitched roofs with pegtiles or long straw thatch. Sometimes...refronted with Georgian red brick or Victorian cream-coloured bricks... Clay lump is often used in cottages and farm buildings.*
- *Winding, narrow and sometimes sunken lanes are bounded by deep ditches, wide verges and strong hedgerows...*
- *Strong network of public rights of way..."*

5.4 Changes in the landscape include the following:

- *"Loss of some structural landscape features such as hedgerows, ditches, banks, copses and lines of trees", relating to agricultural improvements, leading to a "loss of definition and texture within the landscape".*
- Losses of pasture land within the valleys (except the Stour) have affected the character of the farmed landscape.

NCA111 Northern Thames Basin (2013)

5.5 Key characteristics of this area, in which the southern higher area of the Site is located, are as follows (inter alia):

- *"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.*
- *... heavy, acidic soils, resulting in retention of considerable areas of ancient woodland.*
- *... 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.*
- *...*
- *A diverse landscape with a series of broad valleys ...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...*

- *Mixed farming... Grasslands are characteristic of the river valleys throughout. ... orchards, meadow pasture and leys following numerous narrow rivers and streams.*
- *... ancient woodland, lowland heath and floodplain grazing marsh ...*
- *Rich archaeology ... Landscape parklands surrounding 16th- and 17th-century rural estates and country houses built for London merchants are a particular feature in Hertfordshire.*
- *...*
- *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."*

County - Essex Landscape Character Assessment (2003) Chris Blandford Associates

- 5.6 The Site is located within the Urban Landscapes Character Area (G) within the Essex LCA. These are described as:

"extensive areas that are dominated by urban land uses so that they can be recognised as a distinct landscape division. They are not completely built-up, and include distinctive, but fragmented, areas of open space that help break up and give character and structure to the surrounding built form, such as formal parks and gardens, allotments, playing fields and, areas of 'encapsulated countryside'. Urban fringe countryside of mixed land use around the settlements is also included."

- 5.7 The key characteristics of this character area can be summarised as:

- *"Very large areas of 20th Century residential and commercial developments, usually surrounding a historic core, and/or enveloping former villages;*
- *Visual dominance of an urban skyline;*
- *Integral open spaces important for informal/formal recreation and/or wildlife, and which act as green lungs;*
- *Influence of water, with river valley or large coastal estuary locations, often with an associated gently undulating landform."*

- 5.8 The Site is further located within LCA G2 Chelmsford & Environs, the key characteristics of which are (inter alia):

- *"Historic town with extensive residential estate development spreading over a gently sloping valley side landform;*
- *Wide riverside corridors of green space except in the town centre;*
- *Fringe of mixed farmland with variable size hedgerowed fields, with few woods or copses."*

- 5.9 The key points from the 'Character Profile' include:

- *"Mostly gently undulating;*
- *Gentle shallow valleys of the Rivers Chelmer, Can and Wid cut through/bound the area;*
- *Relatively higher ground around Galleywood up to 70m elevation;*
- *Semi-natural vegetation;*
- *Pockets of alder carr, ancient woodland of mixed species;*
- *Pattern of field enclosure;*
- *Irregular field pattern of small, medium and large hedged fields, some on the valley floor bounded by ditches;*
- *A few scattered copses/tree belts/plantations within the urban area, in the valleys or at the edges of the area;*
- *Dense historic town centre of Chelmsford occupies a slightly elevated position above the Can and Chelmer. Mixed skyline including some larger tower blocks;*
- *Variable width of undeveloped open spaces and fields adjacent to the rivers create green corridors dividing and softening the urban form;*
- *Pylon routes in the north east and south of the area;*
- *High mast at Great Baddow;*
- *Partly canalised course of the River Chelmer with locks."*

Local

Braintree, Brentwood, Chelmsford, Maldon and Uttlesford LCA (2006) Chris Blandford Associates

- 5.10 The Site is located within Landscape Character Type A: River Valley Landscapes and Landscape Character Area A7: Lower Chelmer River Valley, the key characteristics of which are:

- *"Shallow valley.*
- *Predominantly arable farmland on the valley slopes.*
- *The Lower Chelmer where it meets the River Blackwater has*
- *gentle valley sides.*
- *Overall strong sense of place and tranquillity away from Maldon and the A12 and the railway line."*

- 5.11 The Site is further situated within Sub-Unit A7a: Lower Chelmer River Valley Floor. The key characteristics of this area are as follows:

- *"Mixture of arable and pastoral fields on the valley floor.*
- *The Lower Chelmer where it meets the River Blackwater has a wide flat valley floor.*
- *Extensive linear poplar and willow plantations are a distinctive feature in close proximity to the river."*

- 5.12 The textual description for the overall character of the area includes the following:

- The lower reaches of the River Chelmer between Chelmsford and Maldon are open in character, with a wide floodplain and gently sloping valley sides.

- Predominantly arable farmland on the valley slopes. Mixture of arable and pastoral fields on the valley floor.
- Overall strong sense of place and tranquillity away from Maldon and the A12 and the railway line.
- Extensive linear poplar and willow plantations are a distinctive feature in close proximity to the river.
- Medium to large scale arable and pastoral fields with a regular pattern dominate its length.
- Hedgerows with frequent hedgerow trees delineate their boundaries. In places the hedgerows are thick but fragmented.
- Where roads cross the river valley ditches with banks that are often vegetated with hedgerows bound them.
- Tree cover is high along the banks of the river with willow and poplar plantations common as well as pockets of wet alder/willow woodland.
- The majority of the river valley floor is sparsely populated adding to its open character.
- Within the valley floor are a character area, with several quiet rural lanes winding through the landscape.
- Views are open and occasionally panoramic in the lower reaches of the river valley where they are unconstrained by hedgerow trees.
- Views along the valley corridor are framed.

Chelmsford Landscape Capacity and Sensitivity Assessment (2017)

- 5.13 The southern part of the Site is included within the Chelmsford Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment as Land Parcel SLP1. It is described as being characteristic of the local landscape character, ***"comprising a shallow valley and predominantly large scale farmland on valley slopes"***.
- 5.14 Visually, the Land Parcel is described as an ***"exposed north-facing slope... which forms part of the southern valley side of the River Chelmer"***. The sense of exposure is described as being increased by the absence of hedgerows (other than that bordering Maldon Road).
- 5.15 The Site is described as sharing some characteristics with the wider valley to the north, ***"notably arable land use and being part of the wider visual context for the River Valley in this location where development has been kept back from the valley sides and thereby containing its visibility"***. However, the document also states that the land ***"does not exhibit any particularly special qualities per se"*** and that it lies outside of the conservation area. The document also highlights that the boundary hedgerows are ***"weak"***

and that ***"the overall character is weakening"***, further compromised by development to the south and noise intrusion from the A1060.

- 5.16 The document highlights the strong containment from the hedgerow along the southern boundary but the lack of containment from the north due to the ***"lack of any substantive vegetation"***. Views from the top floors of dwellings on Maldon Road is highlighted by the document, but it concedes that the steep fall off in the land from Maldon Road reduces exposure to views from the dwellings. The greatest visibility is highlighted as being long distance views from the PRow running alongside the river to the north.
- 5.17 In terms of landscape value, the document highlights that ***"there are no features of particular value, being of relatively ordinary aesthetic appeal"***. The intrusion from the Great Baddow and the aural intrusion from the A1060 is highlighted and, to a lesser degree, from the A12.
- 5.18 The overall Landscape Capacity of the Land Parcel is identified as 'medium', arising from a medium landscape character sensitivity, medium to high visual sensitivity, and low landscape value.

Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation Conservation Area - Conservation Area Character Appraisal (2009)

- 5.19 The special interest and reason for the designation of the conservation area is outlined above within the site context. The character of the area is described as follows:

"The character of the Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation conservation area is a mature river valley whose landscape has been modelled by commercial navigation and waterway activity. The character of the west part, where the river valley flood plain continues into the heart of Chelmsford, is derived from its physical relationship with the town and surrounding landscape, its historic economic function and transport... The open setting provided by most of the river valley and flood plain contrasts with the urban edge of the town centre."

- 5.20 The Site is located within Zone 2 – Chelmer Road – Barnes Mill, the key characteristics of which are described as follows:

- Broad shallow valley with views east towards Danbury Hill and Church;
- Views west terminated by planted edge of Chelmsford town centre and the skyline spreading across the valley floor;
- Urban edge of Great Baddow spreading over the hill, with tall elements forming focal points;

- Rough pasture is a key landscape feature, grazed on the south bank and therefore retaining its character, but ungrazed on northern bank;
- Sparse tree planting along the river and the western end of the valley, the condition of these is good but their fragmented nature results in limited impact upon the landscape;
- Further west, the hedgerows are fragmented and of varying condition;
- The urban form of Great Baddow is softened by tree planting, aiding its visual integration into its rural setting;
- Overall, buildings have a medium impact on the landscape character;
- The A138 and A414 where they cross the valley and climb the southern side intrude in to the landscape aurally and visually;
- The wooded area around Sandford Mill provides a strong visual full stop to eastern views and have a strong beneficial effect on landscape character;
- Traffic travelling along the A414 is a visual detractor;
- The modern agricultural reservoir in the centre of the Site is also a visual detractor in views across the valley and the areas of grassland surrounding this should be improved.

Localised Character Appraisal

- 5.21 The Site comprises two main areas of character: the low lying and generally flat land associated with the river valley in the centre and north of the Site and the land sloping up from the river valley to the existing settlement edge in the south of the Site.
- 5.22 The southern part of the Site is an undulating area of arable farmland, surrounded and separated by native hedgerows in varying states of repair. The undulating nature creates a variety in the character from being enclosed in the west to open with expansive views in the east. A tall hedgerow extends around the south, east and western boundaries and connects into north-south hedgerows which extend into the southern part of the Site. The combination of the topography and the field boundaries create natural semi isolated pockets within the Site.
- 5.23 The northern part of the Site is a low-lying and generally flat landscape with little vegetation, creating an open and expansive character, particularly in the central area. A series of tracks and paths run through the Site, some official PRow and some informal. These run alongside and, at various points, cross over the network of drainage ditches, which break up this area of the Site. The northern boundary of this character area is the Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation which forms the northern boundary of the Site and into which the aforementioned drainage ditches run. Three large waterbodies also occur within the Site, the largest of which is the central pond, identified within published landscape character assessments as being a visual detractor. More vegetation occurs within the western and eastern extremes of this part of the Site, creating a more intimate character that contrasts with the more open character of the central area.

- 5.24 There are views from the northern and western parts of the Site back towards the A1114 Essex Yeomanry Way and views towards the existing development within Great Baddow to the south from the valley floor in the centre and north of the Site. From the central part of the Site there are long distance views east to the higher wooded ground to Danbury Hill and the Church of St John. Throughout the Site, there are medium distance views to local landmarks including the Church of St Mary's in Great Baddow, Chelmsford Cathedral, the Marconi Tower, telecommunication towers and what appears to be a fire station. Electricity pylons pass through the southern and eastern parts of the Site and, in these areas particularly, there is a sense of the proximity to the surrounding development. There is a strong sense that this Site is at the junction between the urban area of Chelmsford and Great Baddow to the west, south and, beyond the river valley, to the north, and the open countryside to the east. It shares a strong visual connection to the surrounding development on the valley sides and is situated at a similar elevation as existing development to the west.

Guidelines and Management

National Character Areas

NCA86 South Suffolk and North Essex Claylands

- 5.25 The key strategic objectives of this character area that are relevant to this rationale are:

- *"SEO 1: Maintain and enhance the character of this gently undulating, rural landscape..."*
- *"SEO 2: Protect and enhance the area's ancient woodland cover, parkland trees, river valley plantations and ancient hedgerows..."*
- *"SEO 3: Enhance the slow-flowing, winding rivers and their pastoral valley flood plains that provide linkages through the landscape..."*

- 5.26 Landscape opportunities are identified as:

- *"Enhance the character and the mosaic of habitat networks within the farmed landscape by maximising agricultural diversity where appropriate."*
- *"Plan for a landscape depleted of ash by planting replacement hedgerow tree species such as oak, which is also characteristic of the area."*
- *"Enhance the species rich hedgerow network... Positively manage and maintain those which have become neglected, to strengthen the historical field patterns, improve wildlife networks and enhance landscape character."*
- *"Protect the pastoral river valley landscape from further fragmentation ... protecting existing pasture from conversion to arable use ... and seeking opportunities to create more permanent grassland as appropriate..."*

- *Strengthen the historic character of the river valley landscape, encouraging traditional management methods, including willow pollarding along river banks, and the planting of native rare black poplar.*
- *Reconnect rivers with their flood plains as part of integrated flood management and wildlife enhancement schemes by supporting the operation of natural processes. Link and extend existing habitats and restore or create new river valley grasslands, fens, reedbeds and wet woodland where possible, for their contribution to the historic record of traditional landscapes, their biodiversity value and contribution to the sense of place.*
- *Conserve the rural settlement pattern by ensuring that new development is complementary to intrinsic local character. Conserve rural settlement character by using traditional materials in new developments especially the use of colour-washed render and pegtiles.*
- *Raise the design quality of new and existing development. Incorporate green infrastructure that provides opportunities for wildlife and public access within urban areas and screens intrusive urban influence (especially on the periphery of settlements), with the use of substantial and appropriate landscaping, such as woodland planting, earthworks and green roofs."*

NCA111 Northern Thames Basin

5.27 Strategic opportunities for this area are listed as:

- *SEO 1: ... Conserve the riparian landscapes and habitats, for their recreational and educational amenity for their internationally significant ecological value.*
- *SEO 4: Manage and expand the significant areas of broadleaf woodland and wood pasture, and increase tree cover within urban areas...*

5.28 Landscape opportunities for this area include:

- *"Manage and significantly reinforce the distinctive and varied hedgerow pattern ... Significantly increase the population of hedgerow trees that were once a common feature across the NCA before the onset of Dutch elm disease.*
- *Manage, restore and significantly expand the wetlands of the river valleys of the NCA ... including the conservation and planting of a new generation of riverside willows.*
- *Plan for a significant expansion in the woodland cover of this NCA, conserving and re-linking areas of ancient woodland, bringing enhanced landscape structure to the open landscapes of the NCA, and providing new woodland as a recreational resource close to settlements."*

Essex Landscape Character Assessment (2003) Chris Blandford Associates

5.29 This document does not provide recommendations for future landscape management.

Local

Braintree, Brentwood, Chelmsford, Maldon and Uttlesford LCA (2006) Chris Blandford Associates

5.30 Proposed Landscape Strategy Objectives for this character area are:

- *"Conserve - seek to protect and enhance positive features that are essential in contributing to local distinctiveness and sense of place through effective planning and positive land management measures.*
- *Enhance - seek to improve the integrity of the landscape, and reinforce its character, by introducing new and/or enhanced elements where distinctive features or characteristics are absent."*

5.31 Suggested Land Management Guidelines for this area are:

- *Conserve and enhance the existing hedgerow pattern, and strengthen through planting where appropriate to local landscape character.*
- *Conserve and manage the ecological structure of hedges and ditches within the character area.*
- *Conserve and promote the use of building materials, which area in keeping with local vernacular/landscape character.*

Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation Conservation Area

5.32 Enhancement and Management Recommendations for this area are:

- *"Prevent further urban encroachment onto the valley floor.*
- *Prevent further loss of grazing on the valley floor meadows.*
- *Retain important views to key historic landmarks.*
- *Reintroduce grazing of the northern meadows.*
- *Reinstate arable land to meadows on the valley floor, especially the first 100m alongside the river to protect the character of the valley.*
- *Plant native trees to strengthen and extend the tree belts to strengthen the definition of the urban/rural edge, ensuring a continuity of mature trees.*
- *Instigate a programme of native tree planting along the riverside to ensure the continuity of mature trees.*
- *Seek to replace the paddock fences with hedges more in keeping with the character of the valley.*
- *Seek improvements to the perimeter of the reservoir area."*

6.0 POTENTIAL LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL EFFECTS

Identified Receptors to Change

- 6.1 The baseline assessment of the landscape, visual and character baseline has identified the following receptors to change:

Landscape Effects

- Landscape Character of the Lower Chelmer River Valley and of the Site;
- Landscape Features such as trees and hedgerows;
- Public Rights of Way.

Effects on Designations

- Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation Conservation Area; and
- Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation Green Wedge.

Effects on Views

- Views south from the Saffron Trail / course of the River Chelmer;
- Views from Sandford Mill Lane;
- Views west from footpaths to the east of Sandford Mill Lane;
- Views from Maldon Road and houses to the south;
- Views from the A1114;
- Views from footpaths within the Site.

- 6.2 This section assesses potential effects based upon the principles of the development in terms of scale, massing, density and extent. A detailed assessment of effects will be undertaken as part of a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment to accompany any future planning application.

Potential Effects on Landscape Character and Features

Landscape Character of the Lower Chelmer River Valley and of the Site

- 6.3 There are no landscape designations relating to the Site, although the lower lying, northern part of the Site is located within a conservation area and the Green Wedge. The published landscape character assessment undertaken by CBA states that the sensitive key characteristics and landscape elements of LCA A7 and A7a are the linear poplar and willow plantations and pockets of wet alder/willow woodland. The Landscape Capacity and Sensitivity Study undertaken in 2017 states that the landscape value of the southern part of the Site is low as

it contains some characteristic landscape features but that these are in poor condition. The character of the southern part of the Site, is described as 'declining'.

- 6.4 There will be a loss of openness on the areas of sloping land in the south of the Site, but this would be expected with any greenfield development. The Proposed Development includes the protection and enhancement of the features within the Site that contribute to local landscape character, including the hedgerows and trees within the Site. New areas of tree and hedgerow planting will be included on the higher slopes, and new areas of aquatic, marginal, wet woodland and meadow planting are proposed on the central and northern areas of the Site, which are located on the valley floor. The proposed residential areas will be within the context of the adjacent areas of residential development and in the context of the adjacent A1114 and Maldon Road, the nearby commercial buildings and pylons to the east of the Site and the remainder of the built form of Chelmsford located on the valley sides to the north and south. The Site is of low susceptibility to the type of development proposed as the key characteristic features, including trees, hedgerows and ditches, will be retained and enhanced. The Proposed Development is not uncharacteristic to its location, is appropriate to its location in the context of existing built form and infrastructure and is in keeping with the prevailing settlement pattern on the valley slopes.
- 6.5 The effects on the character of the valley floor will relate to the central and northern areas of the Site, comprising all of the area between the bottom of the valley slopes and the course of the river. The changes and enhancements will cover all of this area as can be seen on **Figure 7: Landscape Strategy Plan**. The effects on the character of the valley slopes, in the southern part of the Site will result from the introduction of new areas of residential development. These dwellings will be set within a strong landscape framework of existing landscape features, which will be retained and enhanced, and new landscape features which will contribute to local landscape character, as shown on **Figure 6: Development Principles Plan**. The proposed buildings will be designed so that they reflect and respond to the local vernacular.
- 6.6 In summary, the character of the northern and central areas of the Site, which are located within the valley floor, will be enhanced in accordance with the published landscape character guidance, resulting in beneficial effects to this area. The character of the southern area of the Site will change from arable fields to residential development, albeit residential development located in the context of adjacent residential areas and infrastructure and set within a strong landscape framework.

Landscape Features

- 6.7 The existing trees, hedgerows and marginal features are to be retained as part of the Proposed Development. New areas of tree and hedgerow planting are to be established within the southern area of the Site, emphasising the change in character from the northern valley floor and aiding the integration of the Proposed Development into the surrounding landscape and views through the softening and breaking up of the built form.
- 6.8 The three ponds within the Site are to be retained and new areas of marginal and aquatic planting proposed, together with interpretation boards and a dipping area to aid visitors and school parties.
- 6.9 New areas of meadow and flower meadow are proposed in the central and northern areas of the Site, restoring the characteristic meadow character of the valley floor which has been lost through improvement of the grassland.
- 6.10 The existing water courses are to be retained and new areas of biodiversity habitat created, including areas of reedbed, wet woodland and alder carr.
- 6.11 The Proposed Development will result in beneficial effects through the significant improvement and enhancement of the landscape and biodiversity resource and features, and the creation of new areas of wildlife habitat.

Public Rights of Way

- 6.12 The existing PRoW network within the Site is to be retained as part of the Proposed Development. In addition, new PRoW connections are proposed from Maldon Road and around the southern boundary of the Site, extending north to connect into the existing PRoW network in the valley floor. In addition, informal paths will be mown through the meadow areas and access provided to all areas of the central and northern areas of the Site as part of the Proposed country park.
- 6.13 The Proposed Development will result in beneficial effects via the extensive improvements to and extensions of the PRoW network, with improved connectivity between the existing development to the south and the River Chelmer.

Potential Effects on Designations*Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation Conservation Area*

- 6.14 The key characteristic, and the enhancement and management recommendations for the conservation area are set out within Chapter 5 above. The Proposed Development accords with

the enhancement and management recommendations of the conservation area Appraisal as set out above. No development will encroach onto the valley floor and will be concentrated on the valley sides, at a similar elevation and northern extent to the existing adjacent development to the west. Important views are to be retained and historic views towards Danbury will not be encroached upon. New areas of native tree planting will be established and the grassland in the proposed country park in the valley floor will be restored as meadow. The reservoirs within the Site are to be enhanced as part of the landscape strategy, including the creation of new areas of marginal and aquatic planting, as set out on **Figure 7**.

- 6.15 The proposed country park will result in beneficial effects on the conservation area through the retention, enhancement and creation of characteristic features and the focussing of residential development away from the valley floor so that it is located at a similar elevation and northern extent and the existing development to the west.

Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation Green Wedge

- 6.16 Topic 5 of the Site Allocations DPD, outlined above, states that the key objectives of the Green Wedges are to ***"maximise public enjoyment of the river valleys, protect and enhance ecological health and diversity, preserve local landscape and wildlife links between the countryside and Chelmsford's Urban Area and identify the Sandford Mill Special Policy Area"***.
- 6.17 The document then goes on to identify key conservation principles for the Green Wedges which are also outlined above. The Proposed Development does not impinge upon these principles as set out below. The evidence document 'Green Wedges and Green Corridors: Defining Chelmsford's River Valleys', detailed in Chapter 5 above, shows the removal of the proposed housing area of the Site (Strategic Growth Area 3a) from the Green Wedge.
- 6.18 The Proposed Development will not impinge upon the valley floor and will therefore not result in the reduction of the area of the open valley floor. The proposed landscape strategy will ensure that the Proposed Development will have the minimum effect on the views along and across the valley and will protect the identified view from the junction of Maldon Road with Sandford Mill Lane. The development will protect and enhance the woodland and hedgerows within the Site, areas of grassland and the river banks and their margins. It will also result in the improved access to the valley floor and Sandford Mill as part of the proposed country park and new footpaths proposed as part of the Landscape Strategy. The Proposed Development, therefore, accords with the principles of the Green Wedges as set out in paragraph 3.51 above.

Potential Effects on Views

- 6.19 The views towards the Site are demonstrated by the **Site Context and Appraisal Photographs** included within the illustrative material accompanying this document.

Views South from the Saffron Trail and the Valley Floor

- 6.20 Views south from the Saffron Trail and the other footpaths within the valley floor are demonstrated on **Site Context Photographs 1, 2, 8 and 9** and **Site Appraisal Photograph H**.
- 6.21 Current views from the valley floor take in the northern and central areas of the Site within the foreground, forming part of the character of the valley floor, and the rising slope to the south forming the background. In these views, it is possible to see the development surrounding Manor Farm, and the nearby pylons in the east, and the A1114 and development within Great Baddow to the south and south-west. The southern, sloping areas of the Site are therefore viewed between the flat valley floor in the northern and central part of the Site, and the vegetated and settled edge of the skyline. These areas form a relatively small part of the view due to the effects of distance, as illustrated by **Site Context Photograph 9**.
- 6.22 The Proposed Development will be seen set back against the existing settled skyline and will result in the removal of a narrow area of arable farmland in the middle ground of the view. The Proposed Development will be separated into terraces, separated by strong green links of large scale trees, planting within gardens and new tree and hedgerow planting along the northern edge of the proposed residential area. The existing hedgerows within the south of the Site, which can be seen in the view, will be retained and enhanced, forming strong north-south green links through the development, further breaking up the massing of the built form. The Proposed Development will therefore form residential areas viewed on the valley slopes set within a strong landscape framework, as per the adjacent residential development to the south and west.

Views from Sandford Mill Lane and the footpaths to the east of Sandford Mill Lane

- 6.23 From these locations, views towards the Proposed Development are screened by the intervening built form and vegetation, as illustrated by **Site Context Photographs 4 and 5**, with the exception of a single long distance view across the south-eastern corner of the Site from the southern part of Sandford Mill Lane by the junction with Maldon Road, as illustrated by **Site Context Photographs 3 and 6** and **Site Appraisal Photograph I**. The Proposed Development, including the new access roundabout, will be visible in the foreground of these views, but the long-distance view across the valley towards Chelmsford will be retained as part of the Proposed Development, as shown on **Figure 5: Landscape Strategy Plan**.

Views from Maldon Road and houses to the south

- 6.24 The majority of views from Maldon Road and from the houses along the southern side of the road will be screened by the strong hedgerow extending along the southern boundary of the Site, as illustrated by **Site Context Photograph 7**. This hedgerow is to be retained and enhanced as part of the Landscape Strategy. The Proposed Development has been set back from this southern boundary and the highest areas of ground, to reduce the impacts on views from the top storeys of buildings on Maldon Road. Views from the houses further south will be mainly obscured by the existing houses fronting onto Maldon Road and will not, therefore, be affected by the Proposed Development.

Views to and from the A1114

- 6.25 The A1114 forms the south-western boundary of the Site, offering views across the Site and is visible in views from the north. Views from the A1114 are from moving vehicles and are therefore transient and brief and are of low sensitivity to changes within the landscape. Conversely, the traffic on the A1114 forms a notable audible and visual feature within views from the valley floor. The Landscape Strategy shown on **Figure 5** demonstrates the proposed planting along the south-western boundary of the Site, which will result in the reduction of the appearance of the A1114 in views from the valley floor. This will result in a beneficial improvement to views from the valley floor.

Views from footpaths within the Site

- 6.26 Views from footpaths within the central area of the Site will be more greatly affected by the Proposed Development than those in the north of the Site, due to the effects of distance, as illustrated by the **Site Appraisal Photographs**. The most affected will be the existing PRoW along the foot of the sloping ground along the northern edge of the proposed residential areas. However, for the most part, the most important views from the footpaths are those across the valley floor towards the north and north-west. In these views, the proposed residential development will be located behind the viewer.
- 6.27 From views looking towards the south, where the proposed residential development is visible in the foreground, it will appear set within a strong landscape framework on the rising ground and as set back against the existing settled and vegetated edge of Great Baddow, once the proposed planting has become established. The Proposed Development will be designed so as to reflect local vernacular and will be of a particularly low density at the northernmost areas, to reduce visual dominance of the proposed frontage and to allow the planting of vegetation to soften the built form.

- 6.28 Views to the south will be truncated but will contain more vegetation than is currently the case. Although the foreground of the view will change from arable fields to residential development, the massing of the built form will be broken up and heavily vegetated. The important views across the valley floor will be enhanced through improved tree, marginal and meadow planting.

Summary of Potential Effects

- 6.29 The Proposed Development would result in the loss of an area of arable farmland set within the context of the adjacent A1114, the Maldon Road, electricity pylons, commercial development around Manor Farm and the adjacent residential development within Great Baddow to the south and west.
- 6.30 Beneficial landscape effects will result from the retention and enhancement of existing landscape features and the introduction of new characteristic landscape features, such as wet woodland, trees, hedgerows and meadow grassland, and the improvement of the waterbodies and watercourses through the Site.
- 6.31 The existing PRoW network will be retained and extended, with new links established from Maldon Road in the south towards the river in the north. New areas of formal and informal paths will be established within the proposed country park, in addition to the open access to the areas of meadow planting.
- 6.32 Beneficial effects on the Green Wedge will result from the improvements outlined above and the improved access and interpretation provided by the Proposed Development and as set out within the Landscape Strategy on **Figure 6**.
- 6.33 Beneficial effects on the conservation area will be achieved through the enhancement and introduction of characteristic landscape features as identified above, and the retention of the open and undeveloped nature of the valley floor. New development will be established on the valley sides which are located outside of the conservation area, but which form part of its visual setting. The effects of the proposed residential development, particularly once mitigation planting has become established, will be minimal as it will be viewed within the context of the neighbouring land uses and developed valley slopes to the south, east and west.
- 6.34 Effects on views from the valley floor will be small in scale due to the effects of distance and the Proposed Development, once planting has become established, will be viewed as set within a strong landscape framework in the context of, and seen against, the existing development to the east, west and south.

- 6.35 Views from the top storeys of the houses fronting directly onto Maldon Road will be affected by the Proposed Development. The houses within the southern area of the Proposed Development will be set back from the southern boundary of the Site to reduce this effect. Green corridors will be retained through the Site to further reduce visual impact of built form on these views. Views from Maldon Road itself will be minimal due to the robust hedgeline along the southern boundary of the Site, which will be retained and enhanced as part of the Proposed Development.
- 6.36 Effects on views from Sandford Mill Lane and the footpaths to the east will be limited, with the exception of a key view from the south-eastern corner of the Site by the junction of Sandford Mill Lane and Maldon Road. This view has been protected within the proposed Landscape Strategy through the stepping back of the proposed development edge and the lack of tree planting within the view corridor.
- 6.37 Views from the A1114 will be fleeting and any effects will be limited. Views towards the A1114 from the valley floor, however, will be improved by the proposed planting along the south-western boundary of the Site.
- 6.38 Overall, there will be the change in land use within the southern third of the Site from arable farmland to residential development. This development will be set at a similar elevation and northern extent as the existing development to the west. This change of use will be offset against the positive gains from the improved landscape infrastructure and contribution to local landscape character and to the character of the Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation Conservation Area and the Chelmer and Blackwater Green Wedge.
- 6.39 The above robust evidence base demonstrates that the boundaries of Strategic Growth Site 3a are appropriate and justified in landscape terms and that the Site is capable of accommodating around 350 dwellings, rather than the 'around 250' set out within the Draft Local Plan.

7.0 OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS

- 7.1 The opportunities and constraints identified within each chapter are summarised together here. These have been incorporated into the emerging masterplan process, along with baseline information from the wider design team, including drainage, utilities and ecological experts. These opportunities and constraints, together with those identified by other technical experts, have been used to underpin a robust rationale for future development and the creation of a landscape strategy for the Site.

Opportunities and Constraints Arising from the Site Appraisal

- Consideration of the relationship with the neighbouring built form;
- Consideration of the relationship with the A1114 Essex Yeomanry Way;
- Consideration of the relationship with the rear of properties on Sandford Mill Lane;
- Working with the grain of the topography of the Site, particularly in the south area where the land rises up from 20mAOD to 35mAOD near the junction Maldon Road with Sandford Mill Lane with subtle undulations from east to west;
- Incorporation of the River Chelmer and the drains and watercourses running through the Site;
- Protection and enhancement of the existing waterbodies, particularly the central irregularly shaped pond where there are opportunities for marginal planting and greater access to the water side;
- Protection and enhancement of existing vegetation including the protection of the substantial but fragmented hedgerows within the southern part of the Site and flanking the A1114;
- Recognition of and reinforcement of the difference in character within the Site created by existing vegetation flanking the watercourses, particularly the more intimate areas in the eastern and western areas of the Site;
- Protection and enhancement of the elements that contribute to the designation of the central and northern parts of the Site as a Green Wedge (openness, protection of cross valley views, creating a network of informal open space and nature conservation sites and increased public access, conserve and enhance trees and hedgerows, conserve areas of grassland, conserve and manage river banks, protect local character);
- Protection and enhancement of the PRow network and the incorporation of the informal paths and tracks into the existing PRow network;
- Protection of the elements that contribute to the designation of the River Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation Conservation Area, including views identified within the Conservation Area Appraisal, ecological value, trees and hedgerows and the setting of the waterbodies, in the proposed country park;

- Potential to form part of a wider green infrastructure network connecting to the River Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation and nearby areas of landscape and ecological value, such as the County Wildlife Site south of Sandford Mill.

Opportunities and Constraints Arising from the Visual Baseline

- Openness of views in the centre of the Site with long distance views towards the countryside to the east and medium distance views to landmarks, such as church spires and radio masts, within the built form of Great Baddow and Chelmsford;
- A1114 creates visual intrusion when viewed from the flat areas of the Site in the north and central thirds;
- Elevated visual corridor along the valley from the vicinity of the proposed roundabout at the junction of Maldon Road with Sandford Mill Lane looking along the valley towards the centre of Chelmsford;
- Views south towards the existing built edge and the proposed built form from the centre and north of the Site and the Saffron Trail flanking the north side of the river;
- Views north from the southern boundary within the Site but not from Maldon Road where visual permeability is reduced by the existing hedgerow;
- Visual presence of incongruous and visually intrusive elements such as electricity pylons and adjacent development along Sandford Mill Lane;
- Visual enclosure of the Site when viewed from the north-east due to the strong woodland planting between the Site and Sandford Mill.

Opportunities and Constraints Arising from Planning Policy:

- Protect and enhance the countryside including the protection and enhancement of existing landscape features, including topography, vegetation and water bodies (Chelmsford Borough Council Core Strategy DC9);
- Protect and enhance the open character of the river valleys and associated floodplains, particularly within Green Wedges (Chelmsford Borough Council Core Strategy Policy CP9, Pre-Submission Draft Strategic Policy S7);
- Provide a network of natural habitats for nature conservation (Chelmsford Borough Council Core Strategy Policy DC9, Pre-Submission Draft Strategic Policy S6);
- Provide areas of informal recreation between Chelmsford and countryside, increase public access for recreational purposes (Chelmsford Borough Council Core Strategy Policy CP12);
- Protect existing trees and the hedgerow pattern and strengthen through new planting where appropriate to reinforce landscape character (Chelmsford Borough Council Core Strategy Policy DC14, CP9);
- Promote tree and hedge planting along built edges (Site Allocation DPD Topic 5);

- Preserve and enhance the appearance of the conservation areas by retaining important views, prevent loss of grazing land, plant native trees (Chelmsford Borough Council Core Strategy Policy DC17, Conservation Area Appraisal);
- Protect the valley sides from the visual impact of new development and make sure new development responds to landscape setting (Site Allocations DPD);
- Conserve and enhance cross-valley views as well as views along the valley (Site Allocations DPD);
- Conserve and manage areas of grassland and create meadows (Site Allocations DPD and Conservation Area Appraisal);
- Conserve and enhance river banks for biodiversity and wildlife habitats (Site Allocations DPD, Chelmsford Borough Council Core Strategy Policy CP9);
- Enhance existing PRoW and create new footpath and cycle links (Site Allocations DPD, Chelmsford Borough Council Core Strategy Policy CP12, DC9).

Opportunities and Constraints Arising from the Landscape Character Assessment

- Protection of open character of river valley;
- Increase in woodland and hedgerow planting including tree planting alongside rivers;
- Protection of long-distance views across the valley;
- Create areas of grazing meadow;
- Increase public access whilst protecting landscape character;
- Enhance the rivers and ditches;
- Introduction of willow pollarding and planting of native rare black poplar;
- Incorporate Green Infrastructure into new development; and
- Improve perimeter of reservoirs.

8.0 DESIGN RATIONALE

8.1 The assessment of the landscape, visual, policy and character assessment baseline has identified a number of opportunities and constraints to future development within the Site and the creation of a country park. Many of the themes identified recur throughout national, regional and local policy and are supported by having undertaken a comprehensive appraisal of the Site and its surrounding area. The design rationale is supported by management tables, included within **Appendix A.1**.

8.2 The rationale has been formed by the key principles set out below:

- Seeking to comply with the aims of the Green Wedge and the conservation area policy and to protect and enhance the features which contribute to these designations, including the openness of the river valley, protection of the valley sides from the visual intrusion of development and the enhancement of the valley floor for open-air recreational activities that do not conflict with the protection and enhancement of local landscape character;
- Seeking to protect and enhance positive features that are essential in contributing to local distinctiveness and sense of place e.g. linear poplar and willow belts, pockets of wet alder / willow woodland, water bodies and hedgerows;
- Seeking to improve the integrity of the landscape, and reinforce its character, by introducing new and / or enhanced elements where distinctive features or characteristics are absent;
- Seeking to promote open air recreational activities / use where management of the landscape as countryside, with enhanced walking and cycling access, will be encouraged whilst conserving the landscape character and special qualities of the area;
- Opportunity to significantly enhance the use of the existing Sandford Mill Science Education / Visitor Centre by improving pedestrian, cycle and vehicular connectivity;
- Opportunities to provide a country park which will be complementary to the setting and recreational use of Sandford Mill;
- Opportunities for additional wetland carr planting adjacent to existing ditches to aid in biodiversity enhancement;
- Opportunities for additional reed bed planting along drainage ditches and watercourses;
- Opportunities for pockets of wet woodland with positive management and enhancement;
- Opportunities for reinforcement and enhancement of existing vegetation to aid in biodiversity enhancement;
- Opportunities for reinforcement of fragmented hedgerow network;
- Opportunities for retention and / or framed panoramic views to be retained;

- Opportunities for conserving and enhancing the existing hedgerow pattern and strengthen through planting where appropriate to local landscape character;
- Opportunities for conserving and managing the ecological structure of hedges and ditches within the character area;
- Opportunities to enhance the existing landscape features within the Site so that they may connect to each other and the wider green infrastructure network;
- Conserving and promoting the use of building materials which are in keeping with local vernacular / landscape character;
- Opportunities for country park to be used as an educational resource for schools / local wildlife bodies with strategically located interpretation boards.

8.3 The identified opportunities and constraints have been summarised in the table below and shown on **Figure 5: Landscape and Visual Opportunities and Constraints Plan**. A considered and appropriate design response is shown on **Figures 6: Development Principles Plan and Figure 7: Landscape Strategy Concept Plan**, the detail of which is set out in the table below.

Identified Opportunities and Constraints	Considered Design Response
Working with the topography of the Site, particularly in the southern area where the land rises up to south at the built edge but undulates from east to west, and provides an opportunity to create variety in character within the proposed development	The development blocks have been arranged to form terraces rising up the hill with key roads following the line of the contours and are separated in response to the undulations running east to west across the Site.
Constraints of the River Chelmer and the drains running through the Site which provide an opportunity for enhancement as part of the country park proposals	The proposed landscape strategy demonstrates the retention and the enhancement of these for ecological purposes, including the addition of reedbeds, woodland carr and the re-profiling of some banks to create shading and better habitat for native fish species.
Protection and opportunities for enhancement of the existing waterbodies, particularly the central irregularly shaped pond where there are opportunities for marginal planting and greater access to the water side	Proposals are to enhance the waterways running through the Site and to introduce further pockets of planting in areas identified as having a more vegetated character. The character in the centre of the Site has been identified as being more open in character and these drainage areas will be kept free of higher vegetation. Shrub and marginal planting is proposed around the central pond to provide wildlife habitat and amenity value.
Protection and opportunities for enhancement of existing vegetation including the protection of the hedgerows running around and within the southern part of the Site and along the A1114	Hedgerows within and around the Site, particularly in the southern third are to be retained as part of the proposed landscape strategy and to be improved through additional planting and appropriate maintenance. Further planting is proposed along the A1114 to reinforce the existing tree and hedgerow planting and to reduce visual intrusion of the road on the valley. Where planting occurs along the water courses and around ponds, this will be retained and enhanced as part of the wider Green Infrastructure.

Identified Opportunities and Constraints	Considered Design Response
Opportunity to build upon the differences in character within the Site created by existing vegetation, particularly the more intimate areas in the eastern and western areas of the Site	Variations in character exist with the Site particularly between the more open central area the eastern and western edges where the character is more intimate due to enclosure by vegetation surrounding water bodies and local variations in topography. Planting proposals will reflect this with further planting and areas of proposed wet woodland closer to the eastern and western edges of the Site with less planting in the central area of the Site where the character has been identified as being more open.
Protection and enhancement of the elements which contribute to the designation of the area as a Green Wedge (openness, protection of cross valley views, creating a network of informal open space and nature conservation sites and increased public access, conserve and enhance trees and hedgerows, conserve areas of grassland, conserve and manage river banks, protect local character)	The protection and enhancement of the river valley and the increase in opportunities for access to the Site by the public are discussed within this table.
Protection and enhancement of the PRow network and the opportunity for the incorporation of the informal paths and tracks into the formal network	The proposed landscape strategy identifies the existing PRow and proposed positive frontages from the neighbouring development where they pass through the proposed built form. New PRow are proposed along the existing tracks and along the new green links running through the built form. New connections are proposed from Maldon Road to the immediate south of the Site through to the country park in the north of the Site.
Protection of the elements which contribute to the designation as a conservation area, (identified views, ecological value, trees and hedgerows and the setting of the waterbodies)	These are discussed further below in this table.
Potential to form part of a wider green infrastructure network connecting to the River Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation and nearby areas of landscape and ecological value, such as the County Wildlife Site south of Sandford Mill	The landscape strategy demonstrates the creation of new areas of wetland, marginal and woodland carr habitat connected to each other and the wider green infrastructure through the use of hedgerows, tree planting and the existing waterbodies.
Consideration of the visual impact of the built edge and the proposed development when viewed from the river valley	The proposed country park extends into the proposed residential development, connecting with the existing landscape features within the Site and breaking up the areas of the built form.
Consideration of views from the neighbouring built form where they occur	The majority of views from houses along Maldon Road will be screened by the strong hedgerow extending along the southern boundary of the Site. This hedgerow is to be retained and enhanced as part of the Landscape Strategy. The Proposed Development has been set back from this southern boundary and the highest areas of ground, to reduce the impacts on views from the top storeys of buildings on Maldon Road. Views from the houses further south will be mainly obscured by the existing houses fronting onto Maldon Road and will not, therefore, be affected by the Proposed Development.

Identified Opportunities and Constraints	Considered Design Response
Opportunity to reduce the visual impact of the A1114 Essex Yeomanry Way when viewed from the river valley	Proposed enhancement of the planting along the edge of the A1114 to reduce views towards and away from the road, removing the visual intrusion of the passing traffic from the proposed country park.
Protection and enhancement of views from the centre of the Site which is more open in character and which benefits from long distance views towards the countryside to the east and medium distance views to landmarks within the built form of Great Baddow and Chelmsford to the north, west and south	There is little vegetation proposed in the central areas of the Site, away from the main pond, to ensure that the open character and open views towards the countryside to the west remain open.
Elevated visual corridor from the within the Site in the vicinity of the proposed access roundabout at the junction of Maldon Road with Sandford Mill Lane looking along the valley towards the centre of Chelmsford	The landscape strategy has identified this elevated viewing corridor providing views along the valley and proposes it be incorporated into the masterplan as the route of the access road and the new footpath running alongside the existing track.
Views south towards the existing built edge and the proposed built form from the centre and north of the Site and the Saffron Trail	The landscape strategy shows the breaking up of the built form with east-west green corridors that will provide enough space for native trees that will reach a large-scale when mature. This will break up the mass of the built form when viewed from the valley floor and soften the facades so that the proposed development integrates with the surrounding landscape. Further hedgerow planting and isolated blocks of trees will be situated along the northern edge of the proposed development to further soften views of the development. It is proposed that the new development should not be screened but be visible between trees and hedgerows, in keeping with the character of the existing built edge.
Views north from the properties to the south of Maldon Road are limited by the hedgerow along the southern boundary of the Site so views are limited. Opportunities to increase visual permeability in appropriate locations	The landscape strategy shows parkland as a series of green routes running north-south through the proposed development along the lines of the existing hedgerow boundaries. These routes provide the opportunity for view corridors from the proposed development.
Visual presence of incongruous and visually intrusive elements such as electricity pylons and adjacent development along Sandford Mill Lane	Planting within the easternmost part of the Site to the rear of Mill Cottages and Manor Farm would be in keeping with the existing intimate character of this part of the Site, would contribute to the wider green network due to its proximity to the existing woodland on the waterworks site and would reduce views towards visually incongruous elements within the built edge. Due to the scale of the pylons, views of these are unlikely to be mitigated.
Visual enclosure of the Site when viewed from the north-east due to the strong woodland planting between the Site and Sandford Mill will reduce visual impact of proposed development from the north-east	This will reduce the visual envelope of the proposed development when viewed from the north-east. No action required.
Protect and enhance the countryside including the protection and enhancement of existing landscape features, including topography, vegetation and water bodies	The existing waterways, water bodies and vegetation is to be retained and enhanced as part of the proposed country park.

Identified Opportunities and Constraints	Considered Design Response
Protect and enhance the open character of the river valleys and associated floodplains, particularly within Green Wedges	The proposed development has been isolated within the southern part of the Site where it is located outside of the conservation area and the flood plain and is therefore away from the valley floor. The northern extent of the proposed development does not extend further north than the existing edge of Great Baddow to the west.
Provide a network of natural habitats for nature conservation	The landscape strategy reconnects disparate habitat areas, connects to habitats outside of the Site and creates new areas of habitat, linked by linear features such as the drains, the river and hedgerows.
Provide areas of informal recreation between Chelmsford and countryside, increase public access for recreational purposes	The landscape strategy shows an expansion of the existing PRoW network with the potential for wider connections. The addition of new areas of meadow with informal paths will further increase accessibility. In addition, there is the opportunity to enhance the Site as an educational resource for both the public and local schools. The landscape strategy proposes the addition of interpretation boards in appropriate locations throughout the Site.
Protect existing trees and the hedgerow pattern and strengthen through new planting where appropriate to landscape character	Existing trees and hedgerows are to be retained as part of the proposed landscape strategy with new areas of woodland planting, particularly wet woodland in the area of the River Chelmer.
Promote tree and hedge planting along built edges	There is an existing tall hedgerow with trees running along the southern boundary of the Site but the proposed landscape strategy has identified further hedgerow and tree planting along the northern boundary of the proposed development and within the development itself.
Preserve and enhance the appearance of the conservation areas	The key features of the conservation area that relate to landscape are in relation to the topography and the vegetation, both of which are addressed as part of the landscape strategy and within this table.
Protect the valley sides from the visual impact of new development and make sure new development responds to landscape setting	The proposed new development has been broken up by the existing north-south green infrastructure but also through the introduction of east-west green links, which will allow space for native trees, and new hedgerows along the northern boundary of the proposed development. All of these are not intended to screen the development from views from the north but to soften the built edge, similar to the character of the existing built edge.
Conserve and enhance cross-valley views as well as views along the valley	Views along the valley have been identified from the high ground in the area of the proposed access. This open view across the country park and along the valley has been retained within the proposed development.
Conserve and manage areas of grassland, enhance meadows	The open areas within the Site are currently farmed for arable crops but the landscape strategy proposes the introduction of species rich meadow grassland.

Identified Opportunities and Constraints	Considered Design Response
Conserve and enhance river banks for biodiversity and wildlife habitats	The landscape strategy shows pockets of tree and shrub planting along the banks of the River Chelmer. These have been located so as not to block views across the Site from the Saffron Trail but so as to relate to existing areas of wildlife habitat on the north of the River Chelmer and along the drains to the west of the Site.
Enhance existing PRoW and create new footpath and cycle links	The existing PRoW network will be expanded to include the existing tracks within the Site and opportunities for further wider links have been identified.
Opportunities to enhance the Site as an education resource	The landscape strategy shows the potential location of a number of interpretation boards. The central pond offers opportunities for dipping areas and other similar resources for local schools.
Protection of open character of river valley	The landscape strategy responds to this by both proposing the new development on the higher ground away from the river valley and by protecting the open character of the centre of the Site where there is little vegetation.
Increase in woodland and hedgerow planting including tree planting alongside rivers	Opportunities for appropriate new hedgerow and tree planting have been identified within the landscape strategy.
Protection of long-distance views across the valley	Long distance views, particularly those from the highest area of ground in the south-east of the Site have been incorporated into the landscape strategy.
Create areas of grazing meadow	The landscape strategy proposes the creation of grazing meadows within all of the fields within the country park with informal access in the central area around the central pond.
Increase public access whilst protecting landscape character	The landscape strategy shows an increased PRoW network and cycle link through the Site as well as informal areas of access in the central areas of meadow. At the same time, features that contribute towards landscape character are to be protected and enhanced as outlined within this table.
Enhance the rivers and ditches	The existing ditches within the Site afford the opportunity to create new pond areas and reedbeds, particularly in the west of the Site where the ditches are more vegetated.
Introduction of willow pollarding and planting of native rare black poplar	The landscape strategy shows the introduction of appropriate new planting of local provenance along the southern bank of the Chelmer and along some of the drainage ditches within the Site, particularly in the east and west where the character of the Site is more intimate.
Incorporate Green Infrastructure into new development	The landscape strategy shows the country park extending south into the proposed development to meet the existing settlement edge. These green lungs will join the enhanced footpaths and hedgerows and the proposed east-west green links running through the proposed development to bring the country park into the built edge.

Identified Opportunities and Constraints	Considered Design Response
Improve perimeter of reservoirs	There is scope to enhance the vegetation around reservoirs, particularly the central irregularly shaped pond to create marginal planting and greater access to the water edge for educational purposes.

- 8.4 These opportunities and constraints, together with the design response, have been incorporated into the masterplanning process, resulting in the masterplan proposals demonstrated in the Masterplan Document accompanying this LVA. The masterplan design has evolved through extensive consultation with the professional team and through meetings with Chelmsford City Council. This has resulted in the proposed development blocks identified on the masterplan and on **Figure 7: Landscape Strategy Plan** accompanying this LVA. These development blocks are based upon the opportunities and constraints identified, as well as other site constraints including ecology, utilities and drainage, to ensure that the masterplan is underpinned by a robust evidence base. The LVA demonstrates that development within Strategic Growth Area 3a would be appropriate to its context in landscape and visual terms, would enhance the policy purposes and objectives of the Green Wedge, would not result in harm to the wider river valley, and that its boundaries are appropriate. It demonstrates that Area 3a can accommodate the development blocks as shown on **Figure 7**, resulting in 350 dwellings.

9.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

- 9.1 The Landscape and Visual Appraisal comprises a robust assessment of the landscape and visual baseline of the Site, together with an assessment of the available landscape planning policy, published evidence base and published landscape character assessment at a national, regional and local level. This information has been used to identify the opportunities and constraints to the development of new residential areas and a country park within the land north of Maldon Road and the development of masterplan concepts, as set out within the Masterplan Document accompanying this LVA. These are shown on **Figure 5: Landscape and Visual Opportunities and Constraints Plan**, **Figure 6: Development Principles Plan** and **Figure 7: Landscape Strategy**. A further appraisal of the potential broad landscape and visual effects has also been undertaken.

Summary of Potential Effects

- 9.2 The Proposed Development will result in the loss of an area of arable farmland set within the context of the adjacent A1114, the Maldon Road, electricity pylons, commercial development around Manor Farm and the adjacent residential development within Great Baddow to the south and west. This area has been allocated for residential development as Strategic Growth Area 3a under Strategic Policy S9 in the 2018 Pre-Submission Draft of the Chelmsford City Local Plan and, therefore, removed from the Green Wedge designation. It will also result in the development of a country park in the northern and central areas of the Site. More details of the masterplan design is included within the Masterplan Document accompanying this LVA and **Figure 7: Landscape Strategy**.
- 9.3 Beneficial landscape effects will result from the retention and enhancement of existing landscape features and the introduction of new characteristic landscape features, such as wet woodland, trees, hedgerows and meadow grassland, and the improvement of the waterbodies and watercourses through the Site; and through the introduction of new PRow, connecting Great Baddow to the south with the river valley to the north. These beneficial effects will impact upon the conservation area, the Green Wedge and the landscape character of the river valley.
- 9.4 Visual effects will be mainly experienced from the PRow within the valley floor, such as the Saffron Trail. From these locations, the proposed residential development will be seen as a small proportion of the view, set against the existing settled and vegetated skyline to the south-east, south and south-west, and once planting has matured, this development will be seen set within a strong landscape framework of improved existing and new landscape features. Views towards the A1114 from the valley floor will be improved through the addition of new planting along the south-western boundary of the Site.

- 9.5 There will be the loss of some openness in the southern part of the Site, as would be expected with such development, but this will be seen in the context of surrounding development. Once planting has matured, the effects on these views will be reduced and the introduction of new landscape features which will contribute positively to local landscape character.
- 9.6 Long distance views towards the City Centre from the highest areas of the Site in the east, particularly the cathedral, have been preserved.

Opportunities and Constraints to Development

- 9.7 The opportunities and constraints to development, together with input from ecologists, has been used to create a robust landscape strategy for the Site as shown on **Figure 7: Landscape Strategy Concept Plan**. This plan demonstrates ways in which proposed development can be accommodated without compromising the aims and objectives of the revised Green Wedge or the conservation area. Green Wedge policy seeks to protect the openness of the river valley and to protect the sides of the valley from the visual impact of new development. The proposed development will be located outside of the conservation area and the undefended 1-in-100-year flood level, as identified by the Environment Agency, and outside of the proposed Green Wedge extents as shown in the Draft Local Plan. The proposed landscape strategy demonstrates how new development can be incorporated sensitively into the existing landscape and townscape by retaining and enhancing existing features and laying out development in a way that provides the least visual intrusion. Planting within and around the Proposed Development will not seek to screen the settlement edge but to allow it to blend into the country park and sit sensitively into its surrounding landscape. Further detail regarding the masterplan proposals is included within the Masterplan Document.
- 9.8 The landscape strategy demonstrates how a new country park can provide a link between the settlement edge and the revised Green Wedge through enhanced Green Infrastructure and pedestrian connectivity, and will result in the long-term enhancement of the area of the Green Wedge that is situated within the Site boundary. The strategy demonstrates measures to provide increased low-key open-air recreational activities and improved pedestrian and cycle access whilst protecting and enhancing the existing green infrastructure and landscape character of the Site. The country park will form an educational resource for the local and wider community, in line with landscape policy, particularly the aims of the Green Wedge, whilst enhancing the setting of and access to the Sandford Mill Science Education/Visitor Centre.
- 9.9 The extensive constraints testing and masterplanning process has demonstrated that the boundaries of Strategic Growth Site 3a are justified and appropriate, and that the Site is able to accommodate 350 dwellings at a density appropriate to its context and without

compromising the purposes of the Green Wedge or the character of the wider landscape, as shown on **Figure 7**. The proposed figure in the Local Plan of 'around 250 homes' is not based upon the available evidence and would not result in the most efficient use of the land. The extensive discussions with the City Council to date have all been led by technical evidence commissioned by Hopkins Homes Ltd. All relevant evidence points to an "around 350 homes" proposal as being a reliable, appropriate and deliverable outcome for this site. The allocated part of the site is 26.7 hectares hence the gross density of the development would be 13 homes to the hectare if 350 homes were built

ILLUSTRATIVE MATERIAL

Figure 1: Site Context Plan

Figure 2: Topographical Features Plan

Figure 3: Landscape Character Plan

Figure 4: Site Appraisal Plan

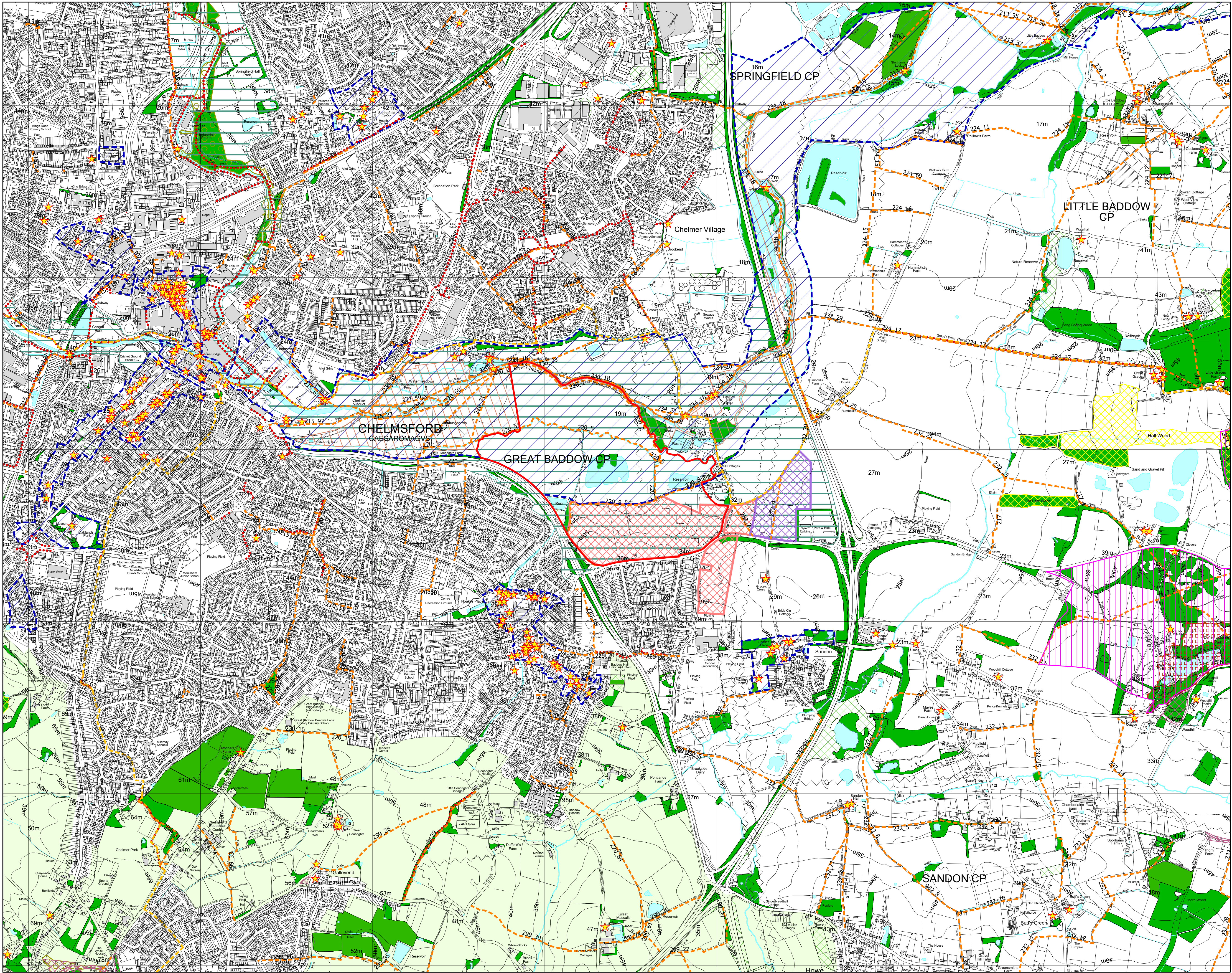
Figure 5: Landscape and Visual Opportunities and Constraints Plan

Figure 6: Development Principles Plan

Figure 7: Landscape Strategy Concept Plan

Site Context Photographs 1-9

Site Appraisal Photographs A-K



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Revision _____ Date _____ Dm _____ Cld _____

LEGEND

- Site Boundary
- Existing Woodlands, Copses and Tree Belts ^
- Existing Scrub ^
- Existing Water Courses and Features ^
- Contours/Spot Heights (Metres AOD) ^
- Ridgelines
- Valleys
- Public Rights of Way *
- Sustrans Cycle Route +
- Cycle Route ++
- Listed Buildings ~
- Registered Parks and Gardens ~
- Scheduled Monument ~
- Conservation Area ##
Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation West
- Local Nature Reserve #
Chelmsford Watermeadows / Sandon Riverside
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest #
- Ancient Woodland #
- Green Belt ^^
- Housing Allocation Site ~~~
- Employment Allocation Site ~~~
- Green Wedge ~~~
- Wildlife Site (LoWS) ~~~

Sources:
OS Mapping
National England GIS Data Set
~ Historic England National Monument Record GIS Data Set
+ Essex County Council Planning GIS Data
+ Sustrans National Cycle Network GIS Data
++ Department of Transport (DoT) GIS Cycle Network Data
^^ Department for Communities and Local Government GIS Data
Chelmsford Borough Council Conservation Area Maps
--- Site Allocations Development Plan Document Proposals Map 2012

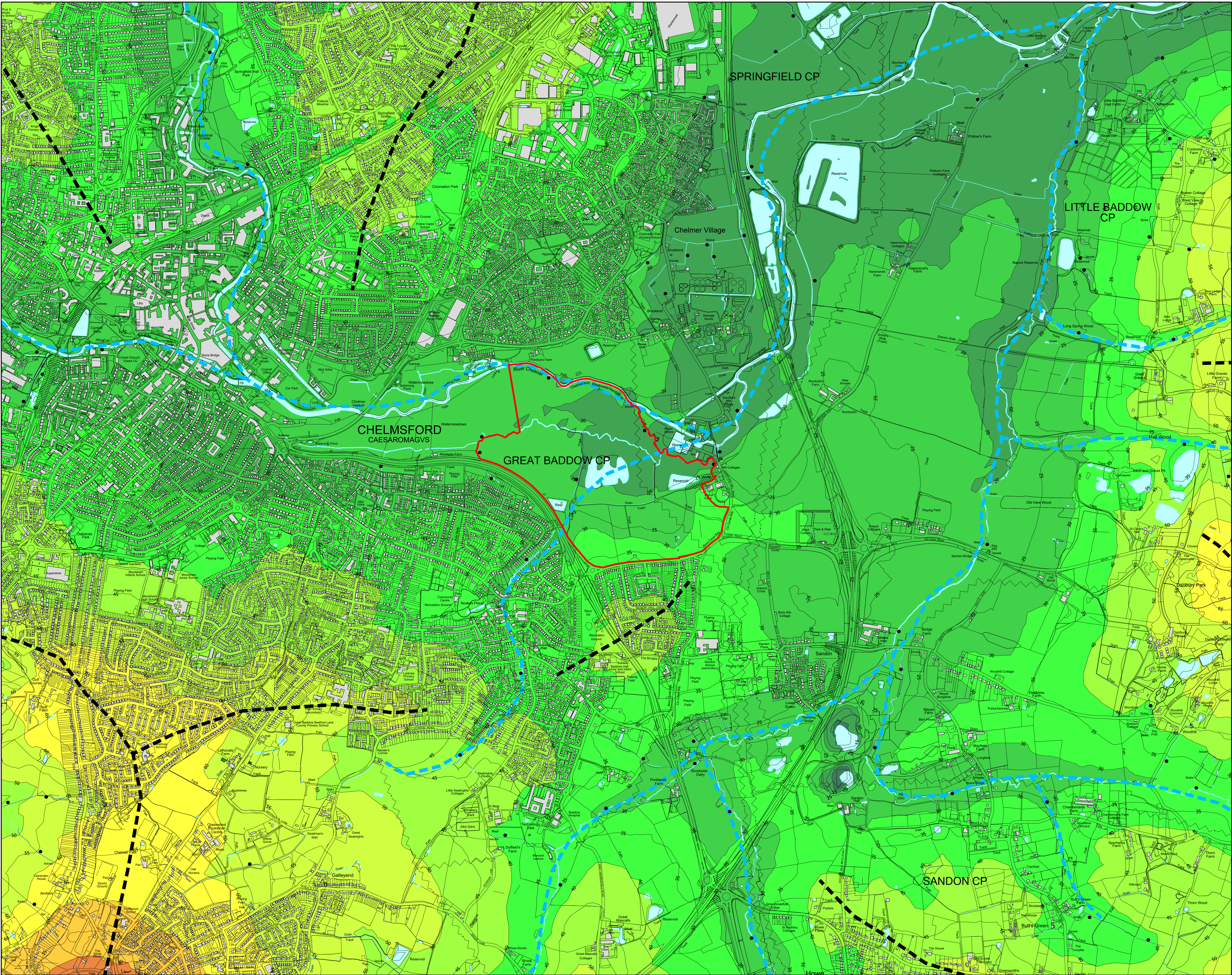
Data collected for constraints and analysis mapping is based on publicly available sources at the time of preparation inserted using the British National Grid and may itself not be accurate. Barton Willmore shall not be liable for the accuracy of data derived from external sources.

FIGURE 1

Project
**Sandford Park
Great Baddow**
Drawing Title
Site Context Plan

Date 31.10.2018	Scale 1:10,000 @A1 1:20,000 @A3	Drawn by ML	Check by WL
Project No 28593	Drawing No LN-LP-01		Revision -

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RevisionDateDrn Ckd

LEGEND

Site Boundary

Existing Water Courses and Features

Contours/Spot Heights (Metres AOD)

Ridgelines

Valleys

Elevation (m AOD)

80 to 90

070 to 80

60 to 70

50 to 60

40 to 50

30 to 40

20 to 30

10 to 20

0 to 10

Sources

OS Mapping

Data collated for constraints and analysis mapping is based on publicly available sources at the time of preparation inserted using the British National Grid and may itself not be accurate. Barton Willmore shall not be liable for the accuracy of data derived from external sources.

FIGURE 2

Project
Sandford Park
Great Baddow
Drawing Title
Topographical Features Plan

Date	Scale	Drawn by	Check by
15.10.2018	1:10,000 @A1	ML	WL
Project No	1:20,000 @A3		Revision
28593	Drawing No		-
	LN-LP-02		

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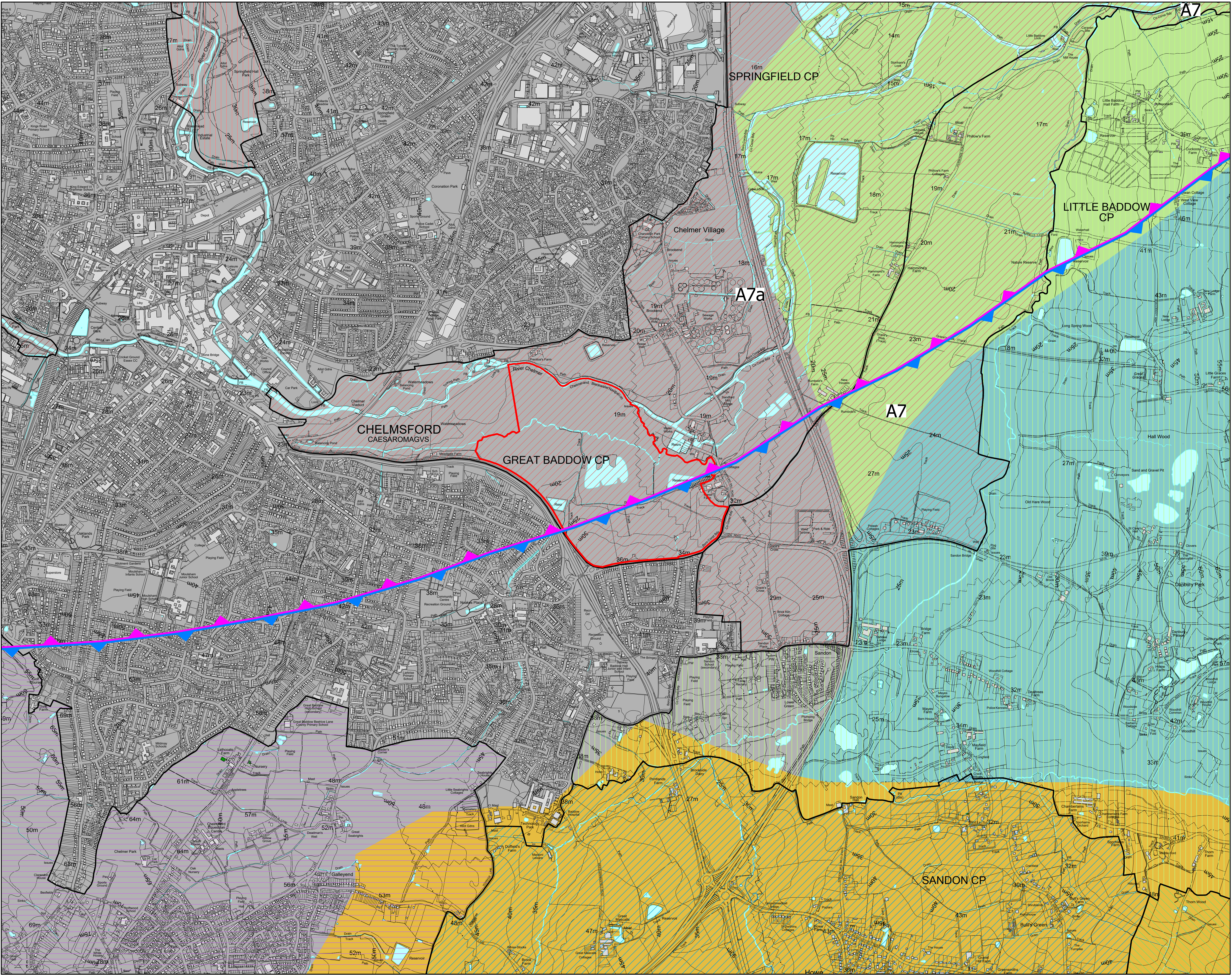
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3:128000-28999/28900-28999/28953 - Sandford Park, Great Baddow 2018/A4 - Drawings & Registers/Landscape/28953 LN-LP-02 Topographical Features Plan.dwg - A1



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Revision Date Dm Cld

LEGEND

- Site Boundary
- Existing Water Courses and Features
- Contours/Spot Heights (Metres AOD)
- National Character Area Profile #
 - Area 86, South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland
 - Area 111, Northern Thames Basin
- Essex Landscape Character Areas ~~~
 - C - River Valley Landscapes
 - C6: Blackwater/Brain/Lower Chelmer Valleys
 - D - Wooded Hill and Ridge Landscapes
 - D3: Danbury Hills
 - E - London Clay Landscapes
 - E1: South Essex Farmlands
 - G - Urban Landscapes
 - G2: Chelmsford and Environs
- Chelmsford Borough Landscape Character Areas **
 - A - River Valley Landscapes
 - A6: Upper Chelmer River Valley
 - A7: Lower Chelmer River Valley
 - A7a: Lower Chelmer River Valley Floor
 - A8: Can and Wid River Valley
 - F - Wooded Farmland Landscapes
 - F5: Little Baddow and Danbury Wooded Farmland
 - F6: Woodham Wooded Farmland
 - F12: East Hanningfield Wooded Farmland
 - F16: Galleywood Wooded Farmland

Sources:

- CS Mapping
- Natural England GIS Data Set
- Essex County Council Landscape Character Assessment, February 2003
- Brentwood, Brentwood, Chelmsford, Maldon and Uttlesford Landscape Character Assessment, September 2006

Data collated for constraints and analysis mapping is based on publicly available sources at the time of preparation. The data is not intended to be used for the accuracy of data derived from external sources.

FIGURE 3

Project
Sandford Park
Great Baddow
Drawing Title
Landscape Character Plan

Date	Scale	Drawn by	Check by
17.10.2018	1:10,000 @A1	GS	WL
Project No	1:20,000 @A3	Drawing No	Revision
28593	LN-LP-07		-

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The scaling of this drawing cannot be assured

Revision _____ Date _____ Dm _____ Ckd _____

LEGEND

- Site Boundary
- Existing Water Courses and Features ^
- Contours/Spot Heights (Metres AOD) ^
- Public Rights of Way *
- Sustrans Cycle Route +
- Cycle Route ++
- Listed Buildings ~
- Conservation Area ##
- Green Belt ^^
- Location of Photographic Viewpoints (Site Appraisal Photographs A-K)
- Location of Photographic Viewpoints (Site Context Photographs 1-9)

Sources:

- ^ OS Mapping
- # Natural England GIS Data Set
- ~ Historic England National Monument Record GIS Data Set
- ## Essex County Council PRLW GIS Data
- + Sustrans National Cycle Network GIS Data
- ++ Department of Transport (DoT) GIS Cycle Network Data
- ^^ Department for Communities and Local Government GIS Data
- ## Chelmsford Borough Council Conservation Area Maps

Data collated for constraints and analysis mapping is based on publicly available sources at the time of preparation. Inverted using the British National Grid and may itself not be accurate. Barton Willmore shall not be liable for the accuracy of data derived from external sources.

FIGURE 4

Project
**Sandford Park
Great Baddow**
Drawing Title
Site Appraisal Plan

Date 02.11.2018	Scale 1:5,000 @A1 1:10,000 @A3	Drawn by ML	Check by WL
Project No 28593	Drawing No LN-LP-03	Revision -	

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