

**HIGGINS BROOK, EAST OF CHIPPING LANE, LONGRIDGE**

**APPENDIX E**

**Preliminary Landscape and Visual Overview (Tyler Grange)**

# The Promotion of Land at Higgins Brook, Longridge

## Preliminary Landscape & Visual Overview

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### 1.0 Introduction

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- 1.1 This overview note has been compiled by Tyler Grange LLP (TG) in response to desktop analysis and preliminary fieldwork undertaken in September 2013 and February 2014, in order to advise a strategy for the proposed residential development of the site. It is to be read alongside **Plan 1 (2001/P43)** and **Plan 2 (2001/P44)**, as well as the accompanying **Photoviewpoints (2001/P45)**.
- 1.2 The work does not constitute a full Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) and is intended to inform EIA Screening Opinion and requirements for planning application (see Conclusions and Recommendation as Section 7.0).

### 2.0 Site Context

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- 2.1 Longridge is a small town and civil parish in the borough of Ribble Valley in Lancashire, England. It is situated 8 miles (13 km) north-east of the city of Preston, at the western end of Longridge Fell, a long ridge line located above the River Ribble. Its nearest neighbours are Grimsargh and the Roman town of Ribchester (Bremetennacum), which are located approximately 3.5 miles (6 km) to the southeast. The parish of Longridge had a population of 7,546 recorded in the 2001 census.
- 2.2 Longridge is largely a 19th century town, mostly built after the new railway allowed greater industrial development from the 1840's onwards. There is a mixture of late 18th and 19th century stone buildings, in a variety of uses.
- 2.3 The site itself is located to the immediate north of the settlement, to the east of Chipping Lane and the Longridge Cricket Club, centred on national OS grid reference SD 60377 38045, and to the west of Willows Farm. The site extends to 25 hectares (61 acres) and is subdivided by generally gappy hedgerows and a network of field ditches. The land itself is currently used as pasture.
- 2.4 The land has localised undulations, but rises gently from west to east (from approximately 103m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) to 118m AOD).

### 3.0 Planning Context & SPD

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#### Policy Context

- 3.1 The Site is located within the Ribble Valley Borough Council (RVBC) administrative area, beyond the existing Settlement Boundary (Policy G2 and G5) and within Open Countryside (Policy ENV3); however, it is not subject to any qualitative landscape designations (i.e. it is not covered by Policy G6 (Essential Open Space) and is not designated as an Area of

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Outstanding Natural Beauty (Policy ENV1) which covers over 70% of the Borough. The Site is also beyond the Green Belt (Policy ENV4) boundary and not listed as 'Open Land' (Policy ENV5)).

- 3.2 Within the Plan, Longridge is described as being a 'main settlement' and 'key service centre'.
- 3.3 Policies that relate to landscape character and visual amenity that do need to be considered as part of the site promotion include:
- ENV3 – Forest of Bowland;
  - ENV13 – Landscape Protection; and
  - H2 – Dwellings in Open Countryside.
- 3.4 Principally, in relation to Policy ENV3, the Borough Council has set out within the Plan no wish to unnecessarily restrict development, although it is essential that only development which has benefits to the area is allowed. Even when such development is accepted it must acknowledge the special qualities of the area by virtue of its size, design, use of materials, landscaping and siting.
- 3.5 The Council will ensure the protection and enhancement of those areas outside both the AONB and areas immediately adjacent to it with an approach to conservation which gives a high priority to the protection and conservation of natural habitats and traditional landscape features. It will continue to encourage the improvement and quantity of the tree cover and associated flora / fauna throughout the open countryside. The Borough Council is also committed to protecting key elements of the landscape character of any site affected by proposed development and would make the siting, scale and form of any landscape proposal that forms part of any planning application a priority.
- 3.6 Consideration of the Regulation 22 – Draft Core Strategy: 2008-2028 (A Local Plan for Ribble Valley) will also be necessary, including policies:
- DMG1 – General Principles;
  - EN2 – Landscape; and
  - DME2 – Landscape and Townscape Protection

#### Draft Neighbourhood Plan

- 3.7 Longridge Town Council has embarked upon the process to achieve a Neighbourhood Plan (NP) and has agreed, subject to ratification by RVBC, the area to be subject to the NP as the 3 town wards of Alston, Dilworth and Hothersall.

The working group estimated preparation of the NP to reach a publication date spring 2014. However, since initiating the process no further progress has been reported and the estimated timescales set out in summer 2013 must now be considered unattainable.

#### Longridge Conservation Area

- 3.8 The site is located beyond the defined Conservation Area (approximately 60 metres to the south of the site), which was first designated on 20th December 1979 and extended on 7 October 2003.



3.9 The special interest that justifies the designation of the Longridge Conservation Area derives from the following features:

- Good example of a Lancashire industrial town;
- Former cotton mills and local stone quarries were important to the town's development in the 19th century;
- Tootle Heights quarries to north of Longridge supplied prestigious 19th century buildings in Preston, Liverpool and elsewhere;
- The conservation area is based on three main streets which all contain good quality 19th century stone building;
- Long terraces of mill workers' housing of the mid to late 19th century;
- Survival of Sharley Fold Farmhouse from the early 17th century;
- Listed late 18th century handloom workers cottages;
- Towneley Gardens and bowling green in the centre of the town; and
- Location near to the Forest of Bowland.

3.10 The Longridge Conservation Area is essentially urban in character with the three principal streets being lined with buildings, mostly without any front gardens. This restricts views out of the streets although there are some notable long views along each, especially southwards along Berry Lane to The Dog Inn. Views down the steep slope to the south and east of Longridge can be glimpsed from the Market Place and down Fell Brow. These qualities and views have no relationship with the site.

3.11 St Paul's Church is notable for the vista up Church Street from Berry Lane. St Wilfred's RC Church is another focal building, this time in Derby Road. These features are visible from the site.

#### Lancashire Historic Town Survey - Longridge

3.12 The Lancashire County Council document dated June 2006, sets out re-evaluate the national archaeological resource and to provide comprehensive, rigorous and consistent baseline information against which research, regeneration and land use planning objectives may be set. The survey also provides commentary on topics such as 'landscape setting' and 'spaces, vistas and panoramas'.

3.13 Whilst the site is located outside of the defined study area, the analysis confirms that:

*"Longridge is situated below the southern end of the Longridge Fell, a five kilometre long ridge which ends in Jeffrey Hill, and which marks the northern side of the rolling landscape of the valley of the River Ribble. Longridge lies within the Bowland Fringe and Pendle Hill Countryside Character Area as defined by the Countryside Commission in 1998. More recently, the Lancashire Landscape Characterisation Study identified the area as forming part of the "Moorland Hills" and "Moorland Fringe". The surrounding countryside is a transitional area leading up to the dramatic uplands of the Bowland Fells, and comprises a diverse area of rolling land with plentiful supplies of water, provided by streams which drain the fells above."*

3.14 The growth of Longridge was primarily organic and unplanned. In the 20th century, the traditional industries of Longridge largely ceased. The railway continued as a passenger facility until 1930 and for goods only until 1967, since then the former railway line has largely been built over. More reservoirs were built on the outskirts of the town in 1906, 1931 and 1956. The last quarry closed just after World War II although one opened briefly to supply stone for motorway building in the 1970s.





3.15 In terms of views and panoramas, the survey notes that:

*“its elevated position gave its inhabitants the chance to enjoy scenic vistas from Tootle Height. Later the Preston and Longridge Railway was utilised for holiday and Sunday outings. It brought parties from industrial Preston out to the countryside, to enjoy the views from Longridge.*

3.16 No specific views across the site are noted and no survey information presented to suggest that the post-medieval enclosed landscape associated with the site beyond the post-war and later 20<sup>th</sup> century housing is of particular historic merit.

#### **4.0 Landscape Character**

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4.1 At a national level the Site is located with the Natural England NCA Profile 33 Bowland Fringe and Pendle Hill'. At a district level, the Site is considered to represent 'Undulating Lowland Farmland' (as set out within both the Lancashire County Council Landscape Character Assessment and the Forest of Bowland Landscape Character Assessment).

4.2 The Undulating Lowland Farmland forms a transitional zone between the low lying plains of soft glacial deposits and the high fells of Bowland, formed from Mill stone Grit. To the west of the Forest of Bowland, running along the line of the M6, a substantial fault separates the soft Triassic rock of the lowlands from the harder Carboniferous rocks of the fells.

4.3 More specifically, it is referred to as 'Type 5c – Lower Ribble', with the following description:

*“The Lower Ribble is an area of lowland gritstone farmland between Longridge Fell to the north and Mellor Ridge to the south. It has a distinctive broad valley landform; the north and south valley sides are separated by a flood plain which contains the meandering course of the River Ribble. There is a particularly distinctive pattern of wooded cloughs which descend the valley sides, their streams emptying into the Ribble. A complex pattern of hedges and woodland form links to these wooded cloughs, giving an overall impression of a well wooded landscape.*

*Although a rural valley, the area is well settled; a dense network of winding country lanes and tracks link the large number of stone farm buildings. Other features of this area are the country houses and designed landscapes, for example Stonyhurst College, Huntingdon Hall and Showley Hall. The Roman settlement of Ribchester is sited at an historic crossing point of the Ribble, a tranquil village in the centre of the valley.”*

4.4 In accordance with the Lancashire County Council Landscape Strategy SPD, any new development proposals and associated landscaping should:

- Encourage the use of the appropriate local limestone or gritstone to ensure new buildings and materials reflect the local architecture of the area;
- Ensure new development on the edges of villages reflects the characteristic clustered form; development should be sited to retain views to landscape features and landmarks, such as church towers on the approaches to villages;
- Encourage continued hedgerow management, re-planting gaps and planting of a new generation of hedgerow saplings to conserve the hedgerow network;
- Encourage conservation management techniques, grazing and cutting regimes, which promote unimproved grassland;

- Encourage tree planting as an integral part of new development, creating links with existing farm woodlands and the network of hedgerows;
- Promote the planting of new woodland to link existing woods and hedgerows, aiming for a continuous network of trees, hedgerows and woods where this does not conflict with other habitats of biodiversity significance;
- Encourage planting of small farm woodlands which are a feature of the lowland agricultural landscape and provide 'stepping stones' for wildlife between larger woodlands; and
- Encourage use of species which are typical of the area such as lowland oak woods, alder in wetter places and ash woodland where the soils are moist and/or base-rich.

## **5.0 Visual Circumstances**

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- 5.1 The location of the site within a settled, yet transitional landscape between the existing settlement edge and the rising moorland slopes associated with the Longridge Fell, presents potential for significant visibility. However, the enclosure offered by the existing built form, the intervening layers of hedgerow vegetation and the wooded nature of the surrounding rising land restricts the extent of visibility.
- 5.2 The approximate extent of the visual envelope (VE) is set out below:
- To the north, views do extend across the undulating lowland farmland towards the distant rising land associated with the Forest of Bowland and the outlying Bleasdale Moors. Layers of hedgerow, farmland copse plantations and scattered farmsteads filter views and increase the capacity of the landscape to absorb sensitive development;
  - To the east, views are limited by the rising wooded slopes associated with Longridge Fell and Jeffrey Hill;
  - To the south, the visual envelope is defined by the existing 20<sup>th</sup> century development that occupies gently rising slopes; and  
To the west, views are available across the cricket pitches and football training pitches towards the ribbon development along Inglewhite Road. Again, the layers of hedgerow vegetation reduce the inter-visibility and distance of principal views.
- 5.3 Whilst the residents immediately adjoining the site to the south will experience a change in amenity, it has to be recognised that much of that development is late 20<sup>th</sup> century. No public footpaths traverse the site itself, although any redevelopment of the cricket pitch would result in an inevitable high magnitude of change on users of the cricket ground and pavilion.
- 5.4 As set out above, there is very limited visibility from the settlement core and Conservation Area of Longridge. Views from the elevated public park (John Smith's Playing Field) are also filtered heavily by surrounding vegetation.
- 5.5 It is evident from fieldwork, that the northern portion of the site (beyond the cricket pavilion) has a more rural character with uninterrupted views towards the AONB. There is an increased sense of being within open countryside and less visual connectivity with the settlement to the south. This relationship is also visible from Longridge Fell itself, where panoramic views clearly illustrate the transition from settlement to lowland farmland, and then lowland farmland to moorland beyond.

## **6.0 Landscape Opportunities & Constraints (Strategy)**

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- 6.1 In response to the desktop and fieldwork undertaken, a landscape strategy response has been set out as guidance for the appropriate development of the site. The landscape principles to be used to shape emerging masterplan proposals include:



- The utilisation of the field parcels adjoining the existing 20<sup>th</sup> century settlement edge of Longridge to accommodate higher density residential development, with the retention and enhancement of existing hedgerows as green infrastructure and connecting pedestrian/cycle routes. These field parcels have a more evident association with the adjoining residential environment and the rising land acts as a backdrop, avoiding the placement of new skyline development;
- The creation of a higher quality gateway in association with Chipping Lane and the existing cricket ground. A village green could be created and dwellings orientated to maximise views out towards the Forest of Bowland AONB;
- The land parcels to the north have a much greater association with the transitional lowland fringe landscape and inter-visibility with the rising slopes of Longridge Fell. This northern portion of the site would best be retained as green infrastructure and a safeguarded buffer to the development parcels beyond;
- Localised strengthening of field boundaries will be required in accordance with SPD, particularly the weaker boundaries along the eastern edge of the site; and
- Opportunities exist to create vistas from within the site towards the prominent spire of St. Wilfred's church and the tower of St. Paul's.

## **7.0 Conclusions and Recommendations**

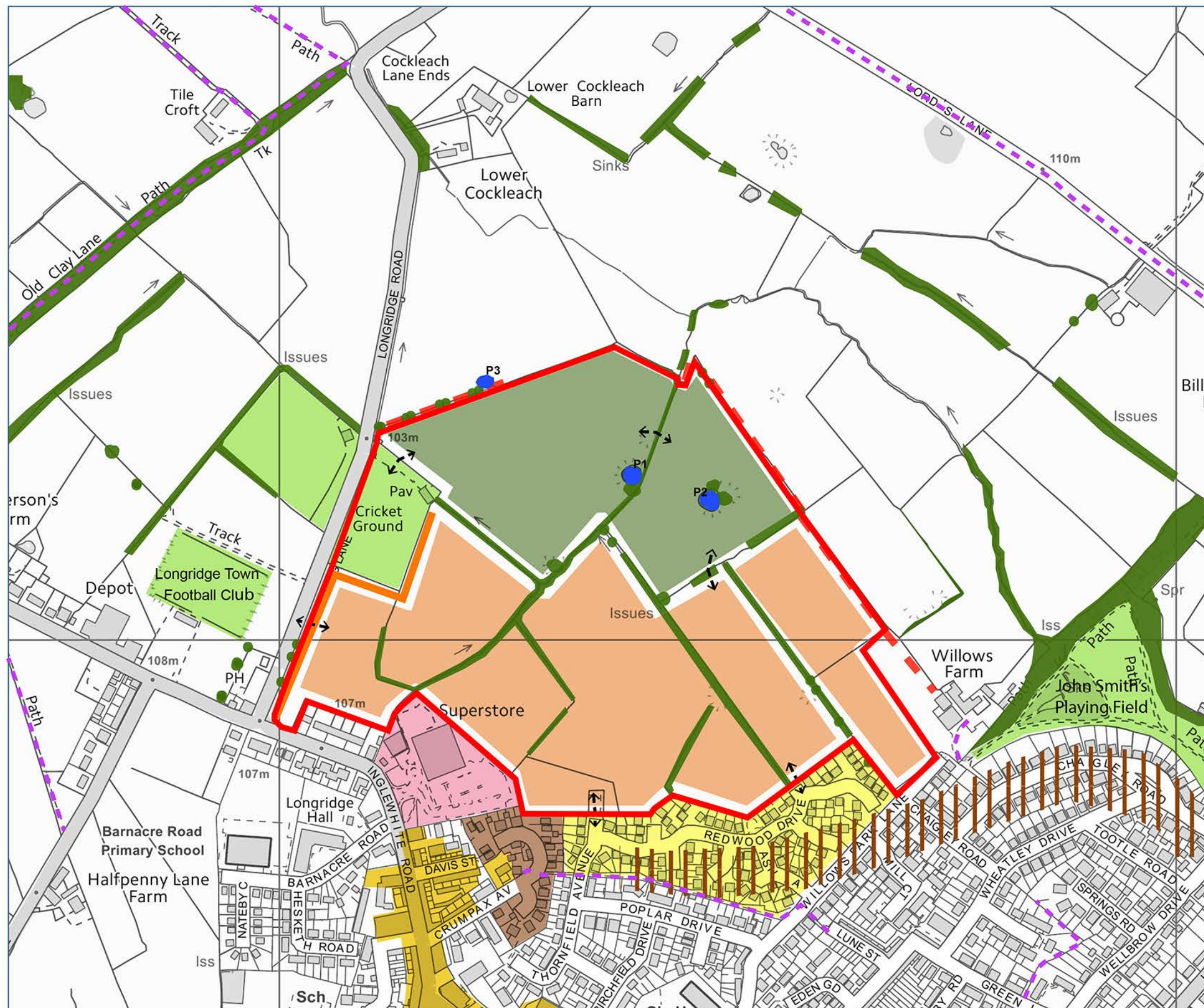
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- 7.1 A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) will be required to accompany a planning application for the proposed development. This will follow preparation of the masterplan and detailed proposals.
- 7.2 The strategy for the site demonstrates that there is the opportunity to provide a residential development that would fit within the existing residential edge of Longridge, whilst also offering the potential to fulfil other SPD and character requirements through the reinforcement of green infrastructure. The LVIA will include a full assessment of the impacts of the proposed development from all landscape and visual receptors.
- 7.3 It is considered that in matters relating only to landscape and visual impact that the proposed LVIA can successfully assess impacts from the development and identify potential mitigation measures without need of formal EIA. This conclusion is made caveat to recommendations herein and EIA screening of other technical matters.

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BA(Hons) DipLA CMLI AIEMA M.Arbor.A





-  Site Boundary
-  Public Right of Way
-  Conservation Area
-  Existing principle trees and hedgerows
-  Existing open space and recreation
-  Retail
-  More recent residential development
-  Single storey development
-  Developed backdrop on rising ground
-  Opportunity for high quality gateway development, orientated to maximise retention of views over the cricket pitch to the AONB
-  Suggested development parcels that have a more apparent relationship with adjoining townscape
-  Informal open space & ecological mitigation area that has a visual relationship with the undulating lowland farmland and retains open views towards the Longridge Fells
-  Hedgerows / boundaries requiring restoration and/or strengthening
-  Possible access points / linkages required from private spaces to public spaces (via green infrastructure)
-  Pond



Project | Land at Higgins Brook, East of Chipping Lane, Longridge

Drawing Title | **Plan 1: Preliminary Landscape Analysis**

Scale | As Shown (Approximate)

Drawing No. | 2001/P43

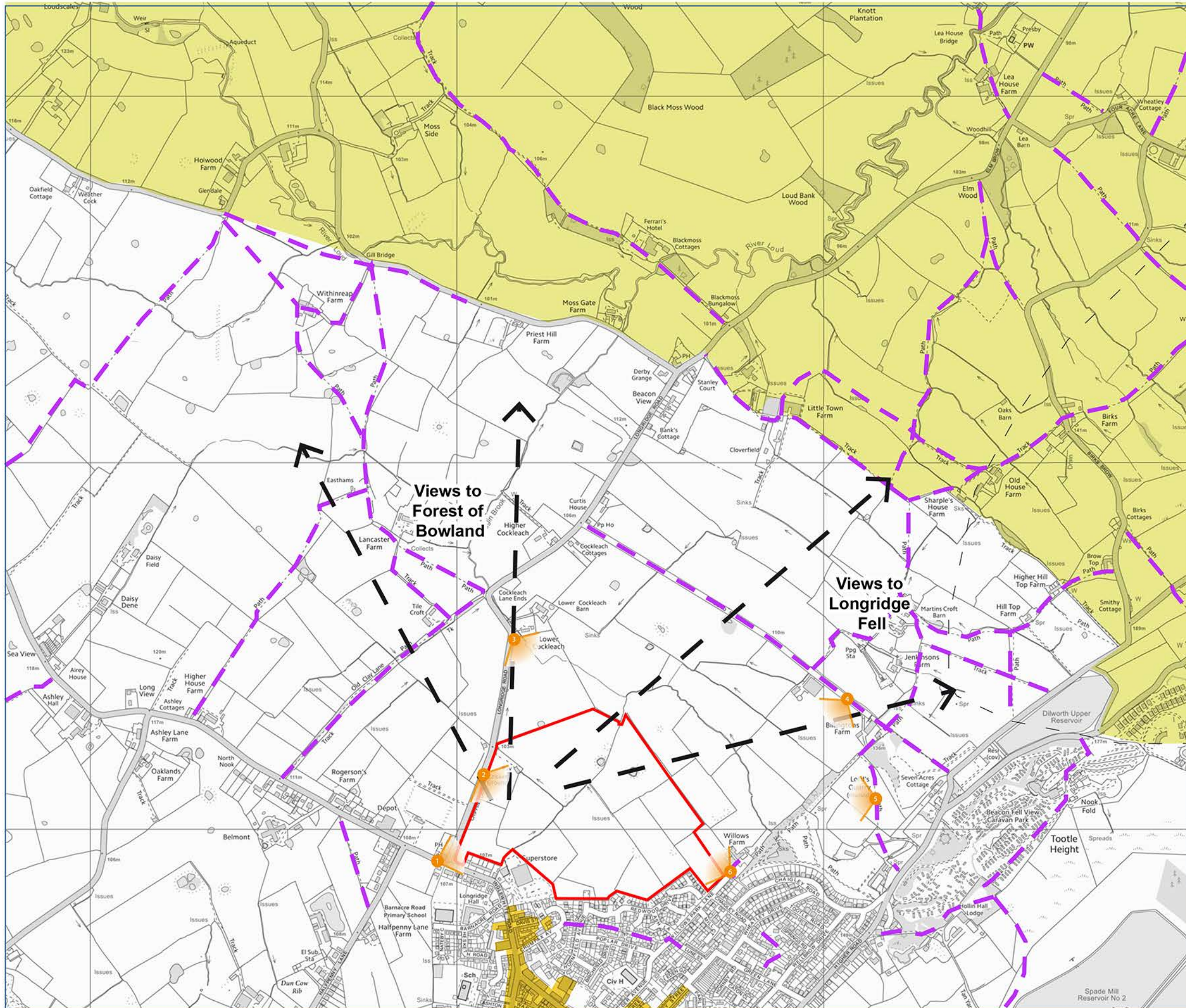
Date | August 2014

Checked | JBL/G



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-  Site Boundary
-  Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
-  Conservation Area
-  Public Right of Way
-  Photoviewpoint locations



Project Land at Higgins Brook, East of Chipping Lane, Longridge

Drawing Title **Plan 2: Preliminary Landscape Analysis**

Scale As Shown (Approximate)

Drawing No. 2001/P44

Date August 2001

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Photoviewpoint 1:



Photoviewpoint 2:





Photoviewpoint 3:



Photoviewpoint 4:





Photoviewpoint 5:



Photoviewpoint 6:



**HIGGINS BROOK, EAST OF CHIPPING LANE, LONGRIDGE**

**APPENDIX F**

**Preliminary Ecological Overview (Tyler Grange)**

# The Promotion of Land off Crumpax Avenue, Longridge, Ribble Valley

## Preliminary Ecology Overview

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### 1.0 Introduction

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- 1.1 This overview note has been compiled by Tyler Grange LLP (TG) in response to desktop analysis and preliminary fieldwork undertaken in September 2013, in order to advise a strategy for the proposed residential development of the above site.
- 1.2 The work does not constitute a full Phase 1 Habitat Survey, it is intended for the purpose of determining potential ecological constraints to development and is not sufficient to inform a planning application.

### 2.0 Site Context

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- 2.1 Longridge is a small town and civil parish in the borough of Ribble Valley in Lancashire, England. It is situated 8 miles (13 km) north-east of the city of Preston, at the western end of Longridge Fell, a long ridge line located above the River Ribble. Its nearest neighbours are Grimsargh and the Roman town of Ribchester (Bremetennacum), which are located approximately 3.5 miles (6 km) to the southeast.
- 2.2 The site itself is located to the immediate north of the settlement, to the east of Chipping Lane and the Longridge Cricket Club, centred on national OS grid reference SD 6033 3807. The site extends to approximately 20.8 hectares and is subdivided by generally gappy hedgerows and a network of field ditches. The land is currently in use as pasture.
- 2.3 The land has localised undulations, but rises gently from west to east (from approximately 103m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) to 118m AOD).

### 3.0 Preliminary Data Search

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#### Preliminary Data Search

##### *Methodology*

- 3.1. An internet based desk study was undertaken to identify statutory and non-statutory nature conservation designations and relevant planning policies in relation to the site. The following sources were used:

- Multi-Agency Geographical Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) Website<sup>1</sup> was used to search for statutory sites, non- statutory sites and other designations within 2 to 5 km of the site;
- Local Planning policies from the Ribble Valley Borough Council District Wide Local Plan were checked to identify policies which need to be considered as part of the development of the site; and
- Natural England's website (www.naturalengland.org.uk) was checked to identify the National Area<sup>2</sup> within which the site is located.

#### Statutory Nature Conservation Designations

- 3.2. The site does not have any statutory nature conservation designations. The Bowland Fells Special Protection Area (SPA) and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) lies within 6 km of the site to the north. Table 3.1 below provides details of each designation.

Site Name and Designation	Distance and Direction from Site	Description/ Summary
Bowland Fells SPA & SSSI	6 km north	<p>The major habitats are heather-dominated moorland and blanket mire. It is important for its upland breeding birds, especially breeding merlin <i>Falco columbarius</i> and hen harrier <i>Circus cyaneus</i>.</p> <p>This site qualifies under Article 4.1 of the Habitats Directive (79/409/EEC) by supporting populations of European importance of the following species listed on Annex I of the Directive:</p> <p><b>During the breeding season;</b> Hen harrier, 13 pairs representing up to 2.6% of the breeding population in Great Britain (three year mean 1995-1997);Merlin, 20 pairs representing up to 1.5% of the breeding population in Great Britain (three year mean, 1994-1996).</p> <p>This site also qualifies under Article 4.2 of the Directive (79/409/EEC) by supporting populations of European importance of the following migratory species:</p> <p><b>During the breeding season;</b> Lesser Black-backed Gull <i>Larus fuscus</i>, 13,900 pairs representing up to 11.2% of the breeding Western Europe/Mediterranean/Western Africa population (Minimum 1998; 13,900-16,300 pairs)</p>

**Table 3.1 Statutory sites of Nature Conservation Designations within 6 km of Site**

<sup>1</sup> www.magic.defra.gov.uk

<sup>2</sup> NCAs divide England in to 159 Natural Areas. Natural Area boundaries are based on the distribution of wildlife and natural features, and on the land use pattern and human history of each area. Natural Areas inform local priorities for nature conservation.

### *Non-statutory Nature Conservation Designations*

- 3.3. Non-statutory nature conservation designations are not afforded legal protection. However they are recognised as being of Borough wide importance because of their significance as wildlife habitats in the urban environment, their value to communities or other reasons relating to their Borough context and receive protection through local planning policy.
- 3.4. The site has no non-statutory nature conservation designations. Three County Biological Heritage Sites (BHS) and one Important Bird Area (IBA) are outlined on the Ribble Borough Council District wide Local Plan Map as being within 2km of the site boundary. Table 3.2 below provides details.

<b>Site Name and Designation</b>	<b>Distance and Direction from Site</b>	<b>Description/ Summary</b>
Bowland Fells Important Bird Area (IBA)	1.30km north and north east at nearest point	Area of importance for a range of upland bird species
Spade Mill Reservoirs BHS	970m south east	Two reservoirs with associated managed grassland. Used as an angling site. It is designated for the bird species present.
Alston Reservoirs BHS	1.25km south	Three reservoirs surrounded by agricultural land with residential to the west and college wood to the east. It is designated for the birds and grassland present.
College Wood BHS	1.60km south east	Ancient woodland surrounded by fields of grassland pasture. It is designated for its ancient woodland and scrub habitats and bird species present.

**Table 3.2 Non-statutory sites of Nature Conservation Designations within 2 km of the Site**

### *National Planning Policy*

- 3.5. Relevant policies to ecology and nature conservation within the National Planning Policy Framework is cited below.
- 3.6. The planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:
- protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, geological conservation interests and soils;
  - recognising the wider benefits of ecosystem services;
  - minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity where possible, contributing to the Government's commitment to halt the overall decline in biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;
  - preventing both new and existing development from contributing to or being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability; and
  - remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.



3.7. The planning system is required to contribute to protecting and enhancing the natural environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity. When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should aim to conserve and enhance biodiversity by applying the following principles:

- if significant harm resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;
- proposed development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest likely to have an adverse effect on a Site of Special Scientific Interest (either individually or in combination with other developments) should not normally be permitted. Where an adverse effect on the site's notified special interest features is likely, an exception should only be made where the benefits of the development, at this site, clearly outweigh both the impacts that it is likely to have on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest;
- development proposals where the primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be permitted;
- opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around developments should be encouraged;
- planning permission should be refused for development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats, including ancient woodland and the loss of aged or veteran trees found outside ancient woodland, unless the need for, and benefits of, the development in that location clearly outweigh the loss; and the following wildlife sites should be given the same protection as European sites:
  - potential Special Protection Areas and possible Special Areas of Conservation;
  - listed or proposed Ramsar sites; and
  - sites identified, or required, as compensatory measures for adverse effects on European sites, potential Special Protection Areas, possible Special Areas of Conservation, and listed or proposed Ramsar sites.

3.8. To minimise impacts on biodiversity and geodiversity, planning policies should:

- plan for biodiversity at a landscape-scale across local authority boundaries;
- identify and map components of the local ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity, wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them and areas identified by local partnerships for habitat restoration or creation;
- promote the preservation, restoration and re-creation of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species populations, linked to national and local targets, and identify suitable indicators for monitoring biodiversity in the plan;
- aim to prevent harm to geological conservation interests; and



- where Nature Improvement Areas are identified in Local Plans, consider specifying the types of development that may be appropriate in these Areas.
- 3.9. The presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply where development requiring appropriate assessment under the Birds or Habitats Directives is being considered, planned or determined.

*Local Planning Policy*

- 3.10. The Ribble Valley Borough Council District Wide Local Plan was consulted to identify saved policies which need to be considered as part of the development of the site. The following policies are considered to potentially relevant in connection with any future planning application:

- Policy ENV7 - Species Protection - Development proposals which would have an adverse effect on wildlife species protected by law will not be granted planning permission, unless arrangements can be made through planning conditions or agreements to secure the protection of the species;
- Policy ENV 8 - Sites of Special Scientific Interest - Development proposals likely to adversely affect the nature conservation of Sites of Special Scientific Interest will not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that other material considerations outweigh the special interest of the site. Designated or potential sites of international importance will be accorded the same protection as Sites of Special Scientific Interest. Proposals likely to have a significant effect on such sites will only be permitted if there is no alternative and if there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest. Where such a site hosts a priority habitat or species (as listed in the EC Habitats Directive) permission will only be granted for reasons of human health or safety or for beneficial environmental reasons.
- Policy ENV9 - Other Important Wildlife Sites - Development proposals within or adjacent to a County Biological Heritage Site or other site of local nature conservation importance identified on the proposals map will be permitted, provided the development would not significantly harm the features of interest which led to the identification of the site or other material factors outweigh the conservation interests of the site.
- Policy ENV10 – Nature Conservation - Where permission is granted for development affecting the nature conservation value of sites, including those referred to in Policies ENV8 and ENV9, conditions may be imposed or agreements sought:
  - a) to avoid damage to wildlife habitats or physical features of the nature conservation interest;
  - b) to secure the retention or enhancement of wildlife habitats; and
  - c) in appropriate cases, to require the re-creation of habitats once the development has ceased.
- Policy ENV13 - Landscape Protection - The Borough Council will refuse development proposals which harm important landscape features including traditional stone walls, ponds, characteristic herb rich meadows and pastures, woodlands, copses, hedgerows and individual trees other than in exceptional circumstances where satisfactory works of mitigation or enhancement would be achieved, including rebuilding, replanting and landscape management.

## 4.0 Findings of Ecology Walkover Survey

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- 4.1 A walkover survey of the site was undertaken on the 24th September 2013, by Simon Holden an experienced ecologist and full member of the Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management. The purpose of the survey was to identify habitat features which may be either of ecological value in their own right or have the potential to support protected species or other species of nature conservation concern.
- 4.2 The site consists of a series of improved pasture fields used for cattle grazing. The ground is mainly flat, but there are a few small areas which look to become periodically waterlogged, though this is not reflected by any major changes in the floral composition of the grassland sward.
- 4.3 The fields are bounded by hedges which are predominantly hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, with a few additional woody species such as blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*, hazel *Corylus avellana*, elder *Sambucus nigra*, ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, and oak *Quercus sp.* Some mature trees are also present within hedgerows. Where these contain cracks cavities they may have the potential to support bat roosts. Hedgerows are also considered to potentially provide foraging and commuting routes for bats and are likely to support a range of common woodland bird species. Given the presence of several ponds within the site (see below), hedgerow bottoms and their associated overgrown margins may provide suitable terrestrial habitat for great crested newts (GCN) *Triturus cristatus*, if present within the ponds.
- 4.4 Ditches are associated with some hedgerow sections in the central portion of the site. Though some of these contained water, over-shading by the hedgerows has reduced bankside vegetation and they are unlikely to be suitable for water vole *Avicola amphibious*. Given the presence of ponds within the site there is, depending on the whether or not ditches flow regularly, the potential for them to provide additional aquatic habitat for GCN and other amphibians.
- 4.5 There are two ponds situated centrally within the site and a further two situated on the northernmost site boundary. Although the ponds are likely to be subject to periodic drying, they are considered to have the potential to provide suitable breeding habitat for GCNs and other amphibians.
- 4.6 No signs indicating the presence of badgers on site were found during the survey and they are unlikely to be using the site at present. However, if populations are present locally, hedgerows could potentially provide suitable locations for setts in the future as patterns of badger colonisation often change rapidly.
- 4.7 No other habitats were noted on site that would be likely to support any other protected or priority species.

## 5.0 Opportunities & Constraints

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- 5.1 The site is not covered by any statutory or non-statutory nature conservation designations. Given the physical distances between the site and conservation designations in locality (see Tables 3.1

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and 3.2) it is considered that development would not trigger any planning policies relating to the protection of nature conservation designations.

5.2 Given the habitats on site, if present the following protected species may pose a constraint to development and could potentially trigger planning policies and legislation relating to protected species:

- **GCN** - the possible presence of GCN has the greatest potential to influence the development layout and quantum of development possible. This is because GCN presence could necessitate the provision of compensatory aquatic and terrestrial habitat, with the area of habitat required dependent on the quality of that which is present and affected and the size of the population. With this in mind a GCN survey of ponds within the site and those occurring on adjacent land within 250m is recommended in order to identify potential impacts and whether compensatory habitat provision would be necessary;
- **Bats** - may use mature trees present in hedges for roosting and hedgerows may also provide suitable foraging habitat and commuting routes for bats. Further detailed survey work for bats would be required in advance of a planning application to determine the scale and extent of use of these habitat features by bats. However, it is considered that bat presence and the corresponding requirement to mitigate any impacts arising from habitat loss would not be likely to significantly affect the amount of development which could be achieved and could be accommodated through sensitive development design and implementation of multi-functional green infrastructure;
- **Badgers** – although no evidence was found during the walkover survey a more detailed survey of suitable habitats along hedges should be undertaken before submission of a planning application as patterns of badger activity can be subject to rapid change. If active setts are discovered mitigation to prevent killing / injury of badgers or disturbance of active setts may be required and a licence from Natural England (NE) would be needed to implement works.
- **Breeding birds** – hedgerows are likely to support a range of common woodland species, but given the grazed nature of the improved pasture the site is unlikely to be of particular importance for farmland species such as skylark and lapwing. A breeding bird survey should not be necessary to inform planning, but this should be agreed with relevant consultees in advance of a planning application. Mitigation in the form of native woodland and hedge planting would be required to offset any habitat losses arising from development. Any site clearance works would need to be timed to avoid the bird nesting season (March to August inclusive).

## 6.0 Conclusion

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6.1 Further detailed survey work is required in advance of a planning application to confirm whether protected species are present. However it is considered that through the adoption of appropriate design principles to accommodate protected species (should their presence be confirmed) and inclusion of multi-functional green infrastructure within the masterplan, there is every reason to infer that future development of the site could accord with relevant planning policies and legislation that seeks to protect and enhance ecological resources.



**HIGGINS BROOK, EAST OF CHIPPING LANE, LONGRIDGE**

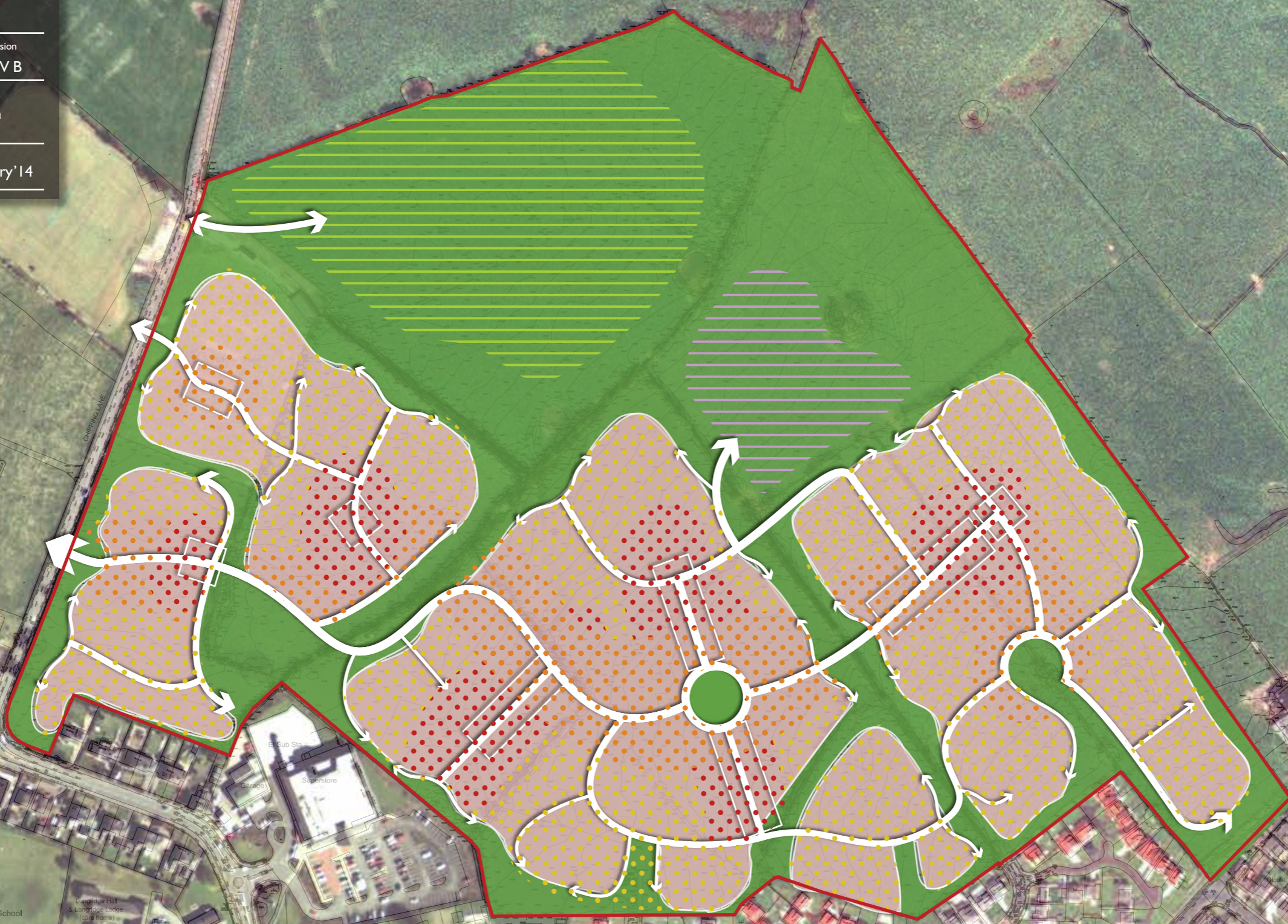
**APPENDIX G**


**Parameters Plan (E\*scape)**



**Key**

-  Site Boundary
-  Green Infrastructure
-  Proposed Primary School
-  Proposed Replacement Cricket Club
-  Residential Development Parcels
-  Village Avenue
-  Village Street
-  Village Lane
-  Squares & Mews
-  >45 units/ha
-  Circa 35-45 units/ha
-  < 35 units/ha



 n\*ORTH

0m 20m 40m 60m 80m 100m

Scale 1:2500 (@A3)

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