

2. Landscape and Visual Context

2.1 Introduction

- 2.1.1 Pegasus Design has undertaken a preliminary appraisal of the landscape and visual constraints and opportunities for the land at Home Farm, Sandhills Site. A summary of this landscape and visual work is provided below.

2.2 Site Context and Description

- 2.2.1 The site is located on the eastern edge of Brownhills. Open countryside extends to the north and east, which is also designated Green Belt. It is generally characterised by large arable field enclosures, but also populated by a number of elements of built form, and in particular major highways infrastructure including the M6 Toll and the A5. Chasetown lies further to the north. To the south lies further development, typically residential, extending down towards Aldridge. To the east is the urban area of Brownhills, including the Wyrley and Essington Canal.
- 2.2.2 The site itself also lies within Green Belt land and forms part of land covered by the Forest of Mercia community forest. Within the wider landscape there is an area of open access land to the south at Shire Oak Hill and to the north at Brownhills Common. Public rights of way are limited in the local landscape, although there is a tow path along the eastern edge of the canal.

2.3 Site Description

- 2.3.1 The site is irregular in plan form and comprises approximately 12 no. field enclosures of different sizes. It is defined to the north-west by the canal, including a mature hedgerow with the occasional tree; and to the south-west by the rear garden curtilages of residential properties on the eastern side of the A452 Chester Road. It is defined to the south-east by the A461 Lichfield Road (A461), which includes a number of private properties fronting on to it. This boundary is also characterised by some mature vegetation infrastructure along its length, including a small woodland copse. It is defined to the north-east by a number of elements including farm tracks, a water course and topographical change. The district boundary between Walsall Council and Lichfield District Council, which is coincidental with this boundary, follows a track that extends across the north-eastern section of the site.
- 2.3.2 There are two building groupings on site, both in close proximity to the A461 Lichfield Road. To the north is Sandhills Farm, including a number of small brick buildings and some large agricultural sheds. Access to it is from Lichfield Road. Slightly further south is Home Farm, including the red brick Farmhouse itself, with other associated farm buildings behind. Access to it is from the Lichfield Road,

and the access track extends past Home Farm to a series of other buildings, in private residential use. A farm track links these two groups of buildings. No elements of the built form are listed.

- 2.3.3 In terms of topography, the site is located on an area of gently sloping agricultural land between approximately +170m AOD at the junction of the Chester Road and Lichfield Road, to approximately +140m AOD beyond the district boundary of Walsall. Beyond this, the landform rises to approximately +150m AOD to the north.
- 2.3.4 Land on site is currently in arable production, with the exception of two small field enclosures at the eastern end off Barracks Lane that remain in pasture. The field enclosures vary in size and shape. On the southern, eastern and northern parts, the enclosures are generally small to medium sized and rectangular; in the central part of the site and extending west of the canal, there is a much larger, irregularly shaped enclosure that occupies the lowest lying land.
- 2.3.5 Vegetation is generally confined to the southern and eastern parts of the site. This includes a triangular shaped woodland copse just west of the private buildings behind Home Farm; a treed hedgerow just south of Home Farm; and a mature woodland copse just south of Home Farm on the Lichfield Road frontage. Both the access tracks to Home Farm and Sandhills Farm are tree lined, and the track that links the two buildings groupings is also tree lined. There is also some vegetation associated with the back gardens of properties fronting Chester Road on the south-western site boundary.
- 2.3.6 The site is currently included as part of the West Midlands Green Belt. There are no landscape specific designations which cover the site or the immediate area. A site location and planning designations plan is contained at the end of this Chapter, which provides further details.

2.4 Landscape Character

- 2.4.1 In terms of national landscape character, the site is located within National Character Area Profile 67: Cannock Chase and Cank Wood, as published by Natural England (2012). At a more local level, Walsall Council does not have a published landscape/townscape character assessment. The site is located at the boundary of Walsall and Lichfield District and displays many similarities to the Sandstone Estatelands: Farmland Landscape Character Type/Subtype of the Staffordshire Landscape Character Assessment, 'Planning for Landscape Change' Supplementary Planning Guidance (2001).

2.5 Views and Visual Receptors

- 2.5.1 Several representative viewpoint photographs from local visual receptors have been taken from the surrounding landscape. The location of these is shown on **Figure 2.1** on the following page. The photographs taken from these viewpoints are contained at the end of this Chapter.

Figure 2.1- Viewpoint Photographs



- 2.5.2 The following section describes the visual relationship between the site and the surrounding landscape in relation to the inter-visibility of the area and the nature and extent of potential views. In visual terms the site and its context are relatively well contained with views towards it generally being of short distance. Whilst inter-visibility across the site is possible, it is well contained by the surrounding built form and topography.
- 2.5.3 From the north, the visual envelope of the site is limited by local undulations in landform combined with adjacent built form along the B4155, Lichfield Road and Barracks Lane. From areas to the east, the visual envelope is contained by Barracks Lane and the localised ridgeline that lies between Whitacre Lane and Cartersfield Lane. From the south rising landform and existing properties along the A461 (Lichfield Road) and along Chester Road (which line the south-western site boundary) limit views across the site. From the west, the existing settlement area of Brownhills lies immediately adjacent to the Wyrley and Essington Canal which follows the north-western site boundary and serves to limit views of the site from beyond those available immediately adjacent to it.
- 2.5.4 From the north, there are views available from Barracks Lane however these are limited by boundary vegetation and topography. Views from the east are both public and private and look across the site from the A461 Lichfield Road, from where the Home Farm and Sandhills Farm buildings are visible, together with their tree lined access tracks. In these views, the combination of farm buildings and mature trees is characteristic, with more extensive views looking northwards beyond the site across

open countryside. Views from the southern end of Barracks Lane are more limited as the agricultural sheds within the Sandhills Farm complex serve to screen views in combination with rising topography. However, there are views from the central parts of Barracks Lane, with the urban edge of Brownhills in the background.

- 2.5.5 From the north-east, the site is not visible from where the A5 and M6 toll roads cross over at the Boat Lane junction. This is mainly due to the rising topography and existing vegetation in the direction of Brownhills to the south. Views from the Muckley Corner area are similarly limited.
- 2.5.6 From the south, there are both public and private views from Lichfield Road looking into the southern part of the site, and further across it to the north with more elevated countryside in the distance including the south-east fringes of Cannock Chase. There will also be private views from the residences backing on to the site from Chester Road. From the west, there are views looking across the site from the path alongside the Canal, notably where the localised elevation of this path rises and where the hedgerow is absent. In these views, the central parts of the site can be seen, with the urban edge of Brownhills on rising land beyond, characterised in part by mature vegetation.
- 2.5.7 Overall, views towards the site are limited to a number of localised visual receptors that include residential receptors at the existing settlement edge of Brownhills, users of the canal tow path, and users of the local road network.

2.6 Landscape and Visual Analysis

- 2.6.1 The contextual landscape and visual analysis can be summarised as follows:
- The context comprises a functional landscape, generally consistent with local landscape character studies, however heavily influenced by urban areas and elements of built form, notably major highways infrastructure;
 - The local landscape character is also degraded in part, primarily showing the effects of the removal of hedgerows following intensification of arable farming practices;
 - It well visually contained to the north and west by built form. The only exception to this are the views from the towpath along the canal which runs along the western site boundary; and
 - In contrast, the site is more visually open to the south and east although many of these views are limited to short and mid distance views, typically influenced by the urban edge;
- 2.6.2 The site landscape and visual analysis can be summarised as follows:
- The site topography is such that it forms a localised 'topographical bowl' in its central and northern parts, formed by rising topography both to the north and south;

- This 'bowl' is more visually contained in the wider landscape;
- The southern part of the site adjacent to Brownhills gives the perception of being more enclosed, notwithstanding its higher elevation, primarily due to the vegetation structure on and adjacent to it;
- The central and northern parts of the site contrast with this, and retain a distinct lack of vegetation infrastructure;
- The triangular copse, in combination with the Home Farm buildings complex serve to define a 'threshold' between the differing characters of the south and central/northern parts of the site;
- The Farm buildings complexes, in combination with mature tree planting, generate a pleasant visual composition when viewed from the A461 Lichfield Road corridor; and
- The Wyrley and Essington Canal corridor retains pleasant amenity value and good visual connectivity with the site where the adjacent hedgerow is absent and does not channel views along the corridor.

2.6.3 A contextual Landscape and Visual Analysis drawing is contained at the end of this Chapter.

2.7 Impact on the Green Belt

- 2.7.1 The site is located in part of the Green Belt that extends between Lichfield to the north-east, with Burntwood, Brownhills and Aldridge to the south-west forming a more or less continuous ribbon of development extending south towards Walsall. It is also bisected by the M6 Toll; the A5; the A5190 and the A461; and includes the Villages of Shenstone, Wall and Hammerwich together with numerous elements of 'ribbon' development along highways routes.
- 2.7.2 Extending across and around these elements, the majority of the landscape is in arable production and is very gently undulating. The land is not covered by any other form of amenity planning designation. Openness therefore in this instance comprises combinations of this agricultural landscape populated quite consistently with development in terms of both highways infrastructure and built form to a greater or lesser degree. Various combinations of these elements will vary in views across the Green Belt.
- 2.7.3 In accordance with the NPPF, Green Belt boundaries should be defined clearly, using physical features that are readily recognised and likely to be permanent. It is considered that the north-eastern and south-eastern boundaries of the site, in combination with the existing triangular woodland and proposed woodland belts this could form a clearly defined Green Belt boundary by the nature of them being defined by mature vegetation. The landscape and green infrastructure strategy for the site also proposes new planting throughout the site area, ~~and~~ particularly along the south-eastern boundary where there is an interface with the existing ribbon development along the A461 Lichfield Road. These

mitigation measure will help to establish and enhance a robust landscaped edge to the proposed development and provide a definitive new Green Belt boundary.

2.7.4 **Table 2** on the following page sets out a summary of the likely impacts on Green Belt purpose, in landscape and visual terms, using the five purposes set out by the NPPF.

Table 2: Summary of Likely Impacts on Green Belt Purpose – Green Belt Review Criteria

NPPF Purposes of the Green Belt	Summary
<p>To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.</p>	<p>The site is located on the eastern edge of the settlement of Brownhills. An area of which extends as ribbon development along the A461 Lichfield Road, running in parallel with the majority of the south-eastern boundary. There are a number of built elements already existing within the site and these combine with an area of triangular woodland copse to contribute to the definition of the boundary of Brownhills, and serve to contain it both physically and visually. Development of the site will not lead to unrestricted sprawl of the built-up area as it will be contained within this framework. The extent of development will not project built form further into the countryside as it sits directly adjacent to the existing settlement edge and includes new landscape infrastructure planting along its boundaries. The proposals outline the intention to provide strong green infrastructure along the eastern boundaries of the development envelope that will provide a closed edge to the development that extends no further east than the existing settlement along the A461 (Lichfield Road) to the south-east and along the B5011 and the B4155 to the north and north-east. The development will also serve to rationalise in part the existing ribbon development along the A416, Lichfield Road, to better incorporate it into the settlement pattern of Brownhills.</p>
<p>To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another.</p>	<p>The closest settlement to the eastern edge of Brownhills is the small village of Stonnall, located ca. 1.2km to the south-east of the site. The ribbon development along the A461 Lichfield Road, lies closer to the village of Stonnall than the proposed development. The next closest settlement is the village of Shenstone that lies ca. 4.45km to the east. Development of the site will represent a relatively small scale extension on the eastern edge of Brownhills which will not extend further east than the existing settlement pattern. Overall, development of the site will not lead to coalescence ('merging') of neighbouring settlements.</p>
<p>To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.</p>	<p>Development of the site will result in a small loss of open land in the context of the edge of Brownhills. However, the majority of the existing vegetation will be retained, and together with a robust green infrastructure strategy, development can be located within a comprehensive landscape setting which would be located along, and consistent with, the existing settlement edge. Furthermore, development of the site will not extend the existing settlement edge further east than the alignment of the settlement pattern created by the A461 (Lichfield Road) to the south-east and along the B5011 and the B4155 to the north and north-east. The site has already been encroached upon by built development, including large scale agricultural buildings and</p>

	<p>individual residential properties. There is no public access on site, nor is there any evidence to suggest informal use of the site for recreation.</p>
<p>To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns.</p>	<p>There are no conservation areas within the study area and the closest scheduled monument is the fort located in Shire Oak Park Nature Reserve, ca .1.4km to the south. The park and fort form a local hill characterised by woodland that prevents any visual relationship between it and the site. As such, the appropriate design of development on the site is unlikely to cause undue effect to any historic features within or surrounding the town.</p>
<p>To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.</p>	<p>The site is influenced by a number of urbanising features such as the settlement edge of Brownhills; a number of major transport routes and their associated infrastructure, including the M6 Toll road, A461 Lichfield Road and the A5; and existing built form on site. It is considered that all areas of Green Belt by their nature and designation should contribute to the recycling of derelict and urban land as Green Belt is generally a prohibitive designation where development is rarely acceptable, thus development is focused into urban areas.</p>

2.8 Landscape and Visually Led Development Process

2.8.1 With respect to development proposals on site, a landscape and visually led process has been adopted in order to identify the initial parameters for development. This includes the formulation of a comprehensive Green Infrastructure (GI) strategy and the identification of a Development Envelope, the details of which are outlined below.

Development Envelope

2.8.2 The initial landscape and visual analysis has identified areas which retain good capacity for development. It essentially comprises two overall parts. The highways analysis has identified two points of access: a primary one from the A461; linking to a secondary access off the Chester Road. These will serve the first part of the development envelope which extends across the south-western part of the site. Although the land is slightly elevated in this location, it remains quite well enclosed and relates well to the existing urban edge. This part of the envelope is again broken down into two parcels, with a significant area of open space between them, which may function in part as primary school/community use, and will offer long distance views northwards.

Green Infrastructure (GI) strategy

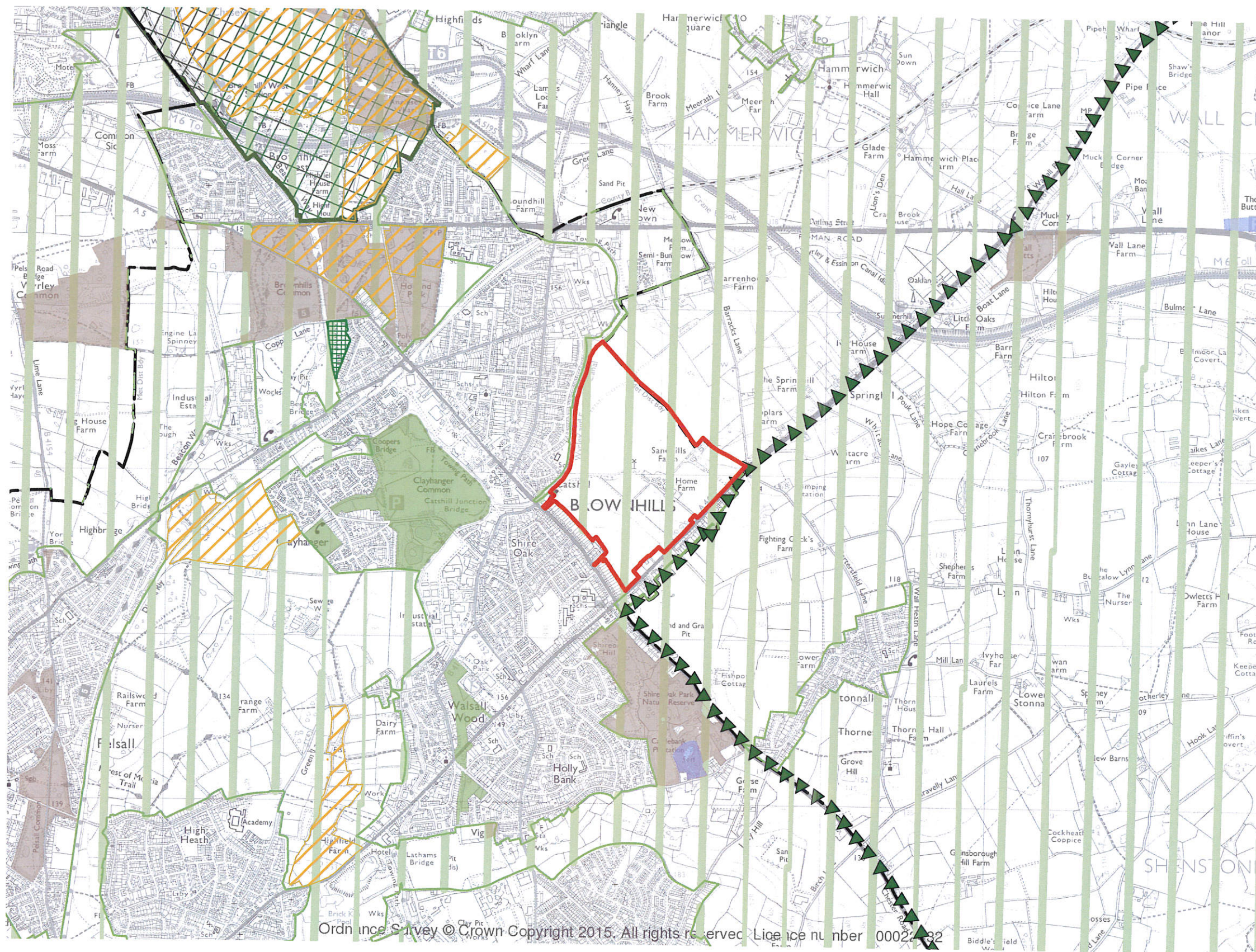
2.8.3 The development envelope has been identified integrally with a comprehensive GI strategy. Creation of a robust green infrastructure (GI) network across the site is a key component of the proposed development and will not only provide landscape and visual mitigation, but will also enhance the landscape resource and add value to it.

2.8.4 The analysis identified the general lack of GI across the site and it is considered important to build on the existing elements of vegetation and consider more opportunities in terms of access and permeability, as well as the recreational and biodiversity benefits that extend from this.











2.8.5 The green infrastructure strategy will be robust, including links to existing and proposed vegetation belts, and will include the following:

- Creation of a comprehensive open space hierarchy, including a linear park along the canal, and a series of three large linked linear open spaces between the development parcels;
- Retention of all the vegetation across the site, in particular that along the A461 Lichfield Road frontage, with supplementary planting where necessary;
- Creation of a series of new, linked woodland belts which are consistent in character with the existing ones on site and in the local area. These include:
 - The A461 frontage, south of Home Farm, to reinforce the visual enclosure in this area;

- Supplementary planting adjacent to the retained triangular copes to extend a green link down towards the secondary site access on Chester Road;
 - Along the eastern edge of the northern section of the development envelope, behind Home Farm, for both visual containment and to enhance the setting and amenity of the Farm;
 - Along the north-eastern edge of the southern section of the development envelope, again for visual containments and setting and amenity value; and
 - To the north of the northern edge of the northern section of the development envelope, up to circa, 10 metres in width, that will provide a robust and well defined edge to the Green Belt.
- Safe and easy public access through the series of newly created spaces;
 - Provision of open spaces with drainage features in appropriate locations, including the north-eastern corner of the site; and
 - Creation of a natural parkland landscape design in the open space that will be created along the canal frontage.
- 2.8.6 The introduction of woodland belts along the eastern edge of the development envelope, combined with the remaining agricultural parcels around existing built form and localised undulation in topography will serve to continue views of open space when approaching Sandhills along the A461 Lichfield Road and filter views of the proposed development.
- 2.8.7 The proposed, indicative Green Infrastructure Strategy is shown on a Plan contained at the end of this Chapter.



KEY

-  Site boundary
-  LPA boundary*
-  Urban Open Space (LC1)*
-  Green belt**
-  SSSI**
-  Ancient Woodland**
-  Scheduled Monuments**
-  CROW land **
-  Country parks **
-  Forest of Mercia ***

Sources:
 * Walsall Council UDP (2005)
 ** www.magic.gov.uk
 *** www.forestry.gov.uk

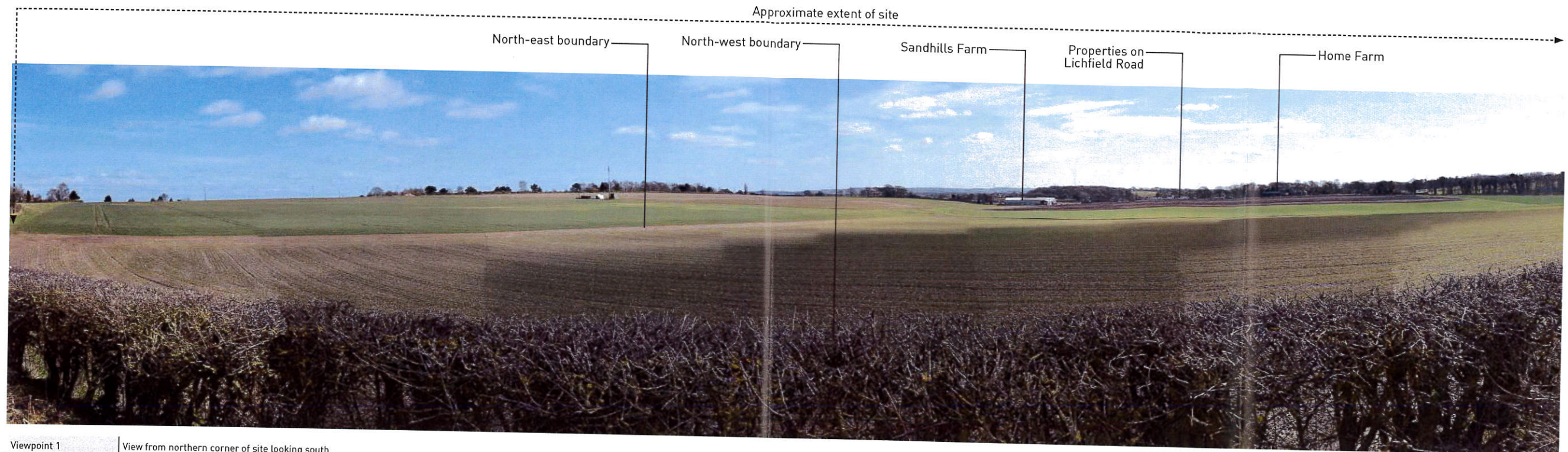
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Home Farm, Sandhills, Walsall

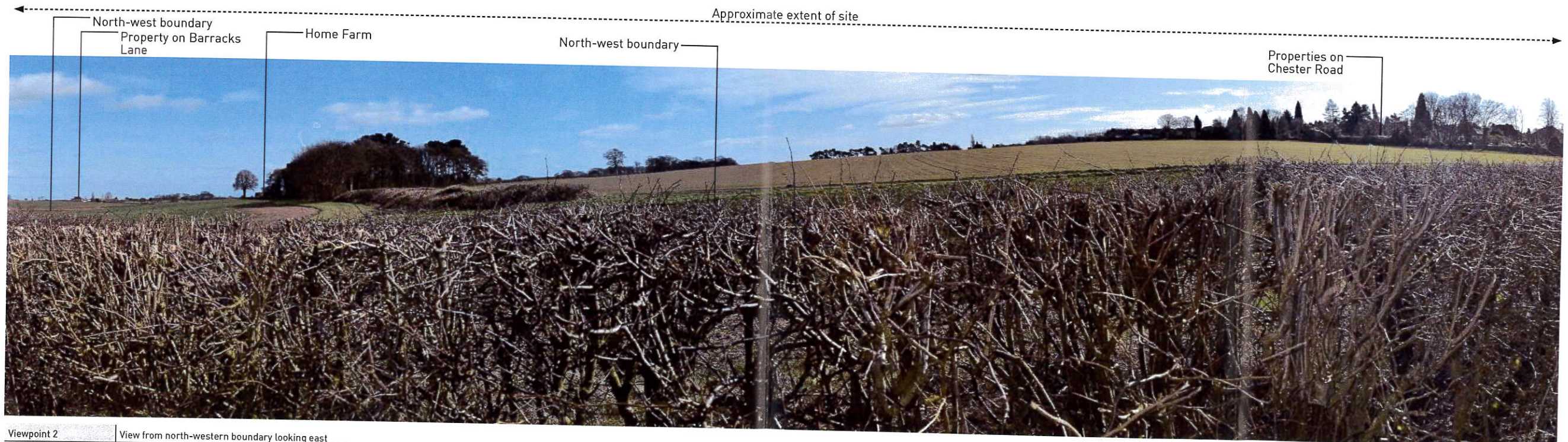
Fig. 1 Site Location and Planning Designations

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 Client : Gallagher Estates
 Date : 09/03/2017
 Drawn by : LG
 Checked by : KM
 Scale : 1:25000 @ A3





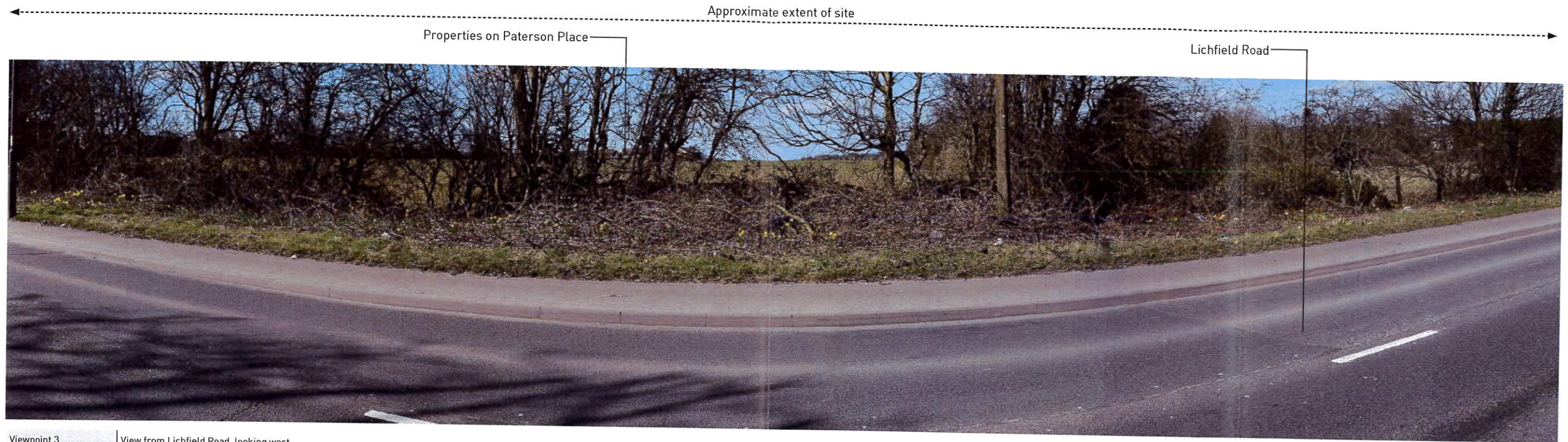
Viewpoint 1	View from northern corner of site looking south
Camera type	Nikon D3300 with 50mm lens (equivalent focal length)
Date	9th March 2017
Approx grid ref	SK 05468 05325
Approx elevation	+143m AOD
Distance to site	c. 2m



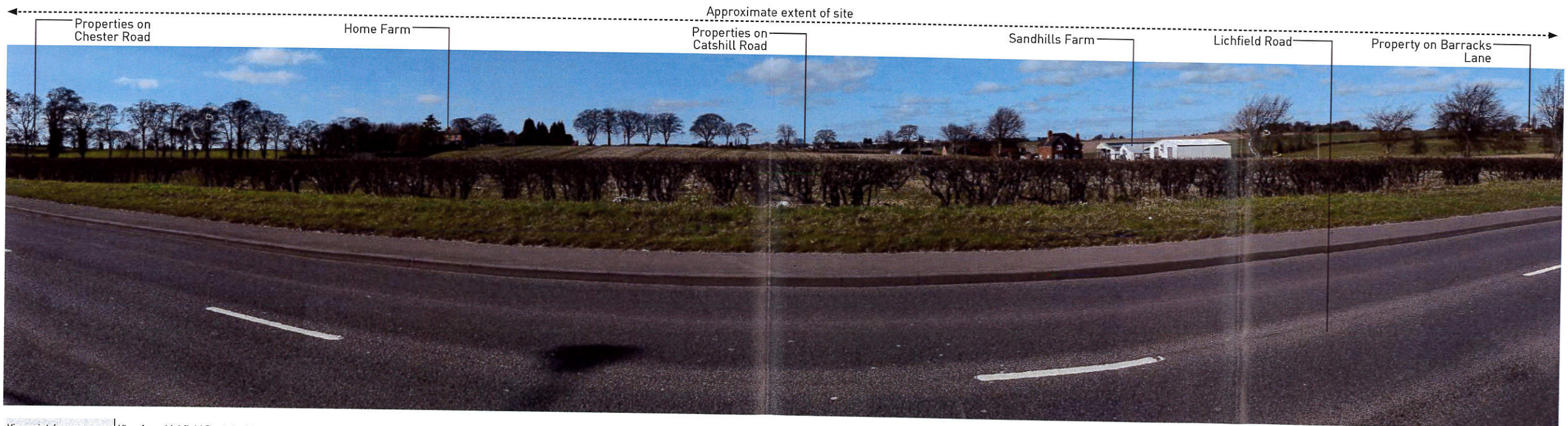
Viewpoint 2	View from north-western boundary looking east
Camera type	Nikon D3300 with 50mm lens (equivalent focal length)
Date	9th March 2017
Approx grid ref	SK 05405 04975
Approx elevation	+146m AOD
Distance to site	c. 2m

Home Farm, Sandhills, Brownhills
 Fig. 3: Viewpoint Photographs

Drawing Ref: BIR.4327_07A
 Client: Gallagher Estates
 Date : 24/08/17
 Drawn by : LWE/LG/CW
 Checked by : KM



Viewpoint 3	View from Lichfield Road, looking west
Camera type	Nikon D3300 with 50mm lens (equivalent focal length)
Date	9th March 2017
Approx grid ref	SK 05686 04350
Approx elevation	+161m AOD
Distance to site	c. 21m

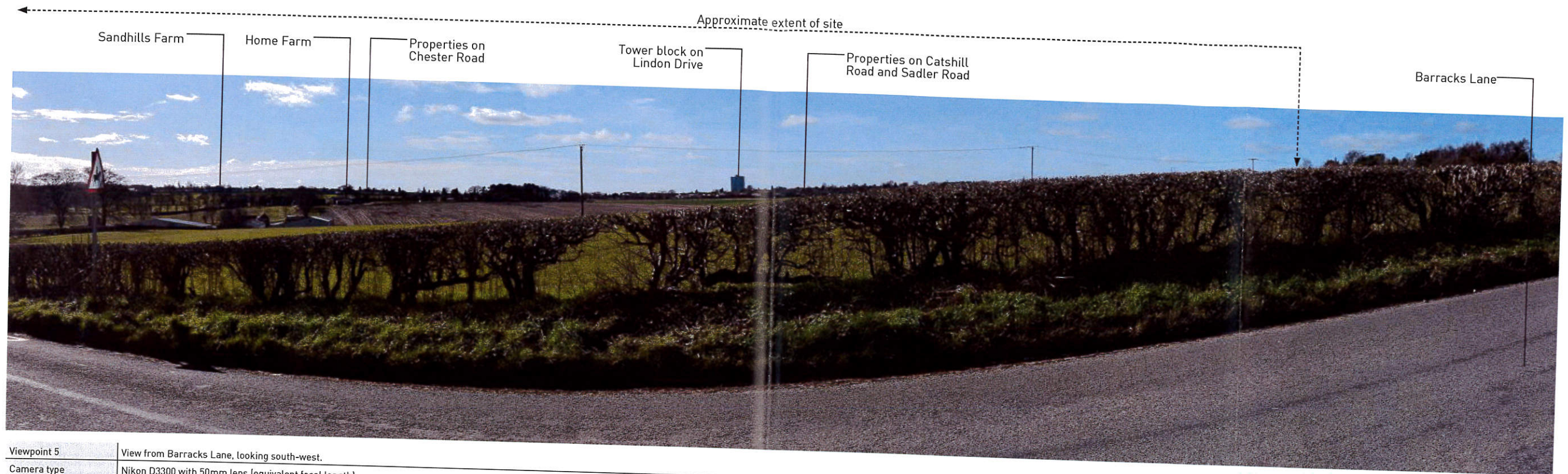


Viewpoint 4	View from Lichfield Road, looking west
Camera type	Nikon D3300 with 50mm lens (equivalent focal length)
Date	9th March 2017
Approx grid ref	SK 06347 04846
Approx elevation	+130m AOD
Distance to site	c. 20m

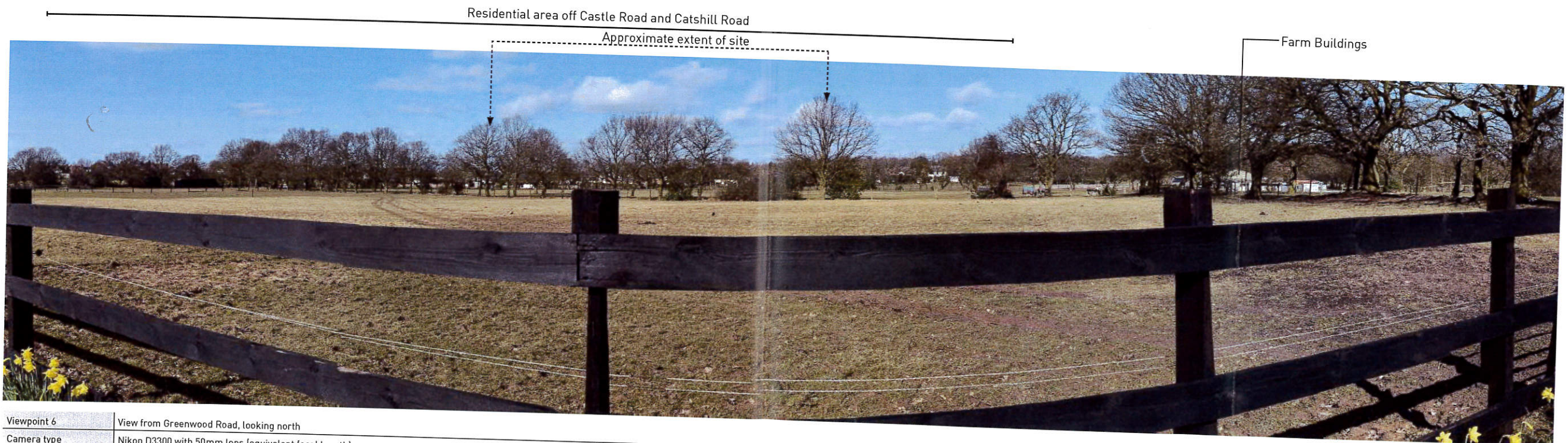
Home Farm, Sandhills, Brownhills
 Fig. 3: Viewpoint Photographs

Drawing Ref: BIR.4327_07A
 Client: Gallagher Estates
 Date : 24/08/17
 Drawn by : LWE/LG/CW
 Checked by : KM





Viewpoint 5	View from Barracks Lane, looking south-west.
Camera type	Nikon D3300 with 50mm lens (equivalent focal length)
Date	9th March 2017
Approx grid ref	SK 06473 05454
Approx elevation	+137m AOD
Distance to site	c. 340m

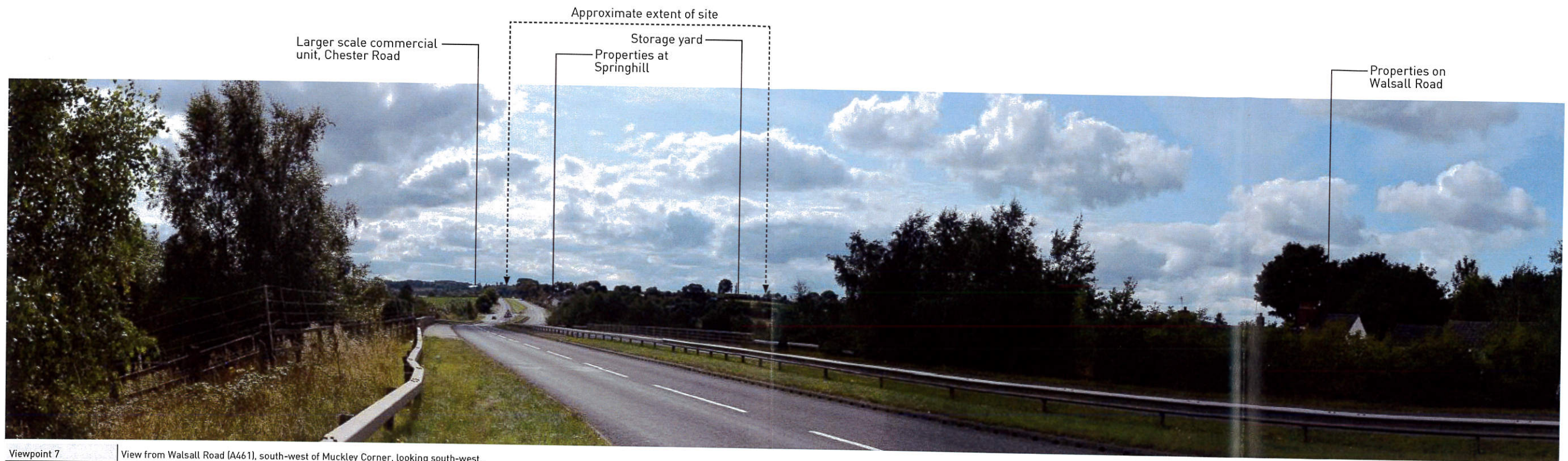


Viewpoint 6	View from Greenwood Road, looking north
Camera type	Nikon D3300 with 50mm lens (equivalent focal length)
Date	9th March 2017
Approx grid ref	SK 05818 02761
Approx elevation	+170m AOD
Distance to site	c. 1.5km

Home Farm, Sandhills, Brownhills
 Fig. 3: Viewpoint Photographs

Drawing Ref: BIR.4327_07A
 Client: Gallagher Estates
 Date : 24/08/17
 Drawn by : LWE/LG/CW
 Checked by : KM





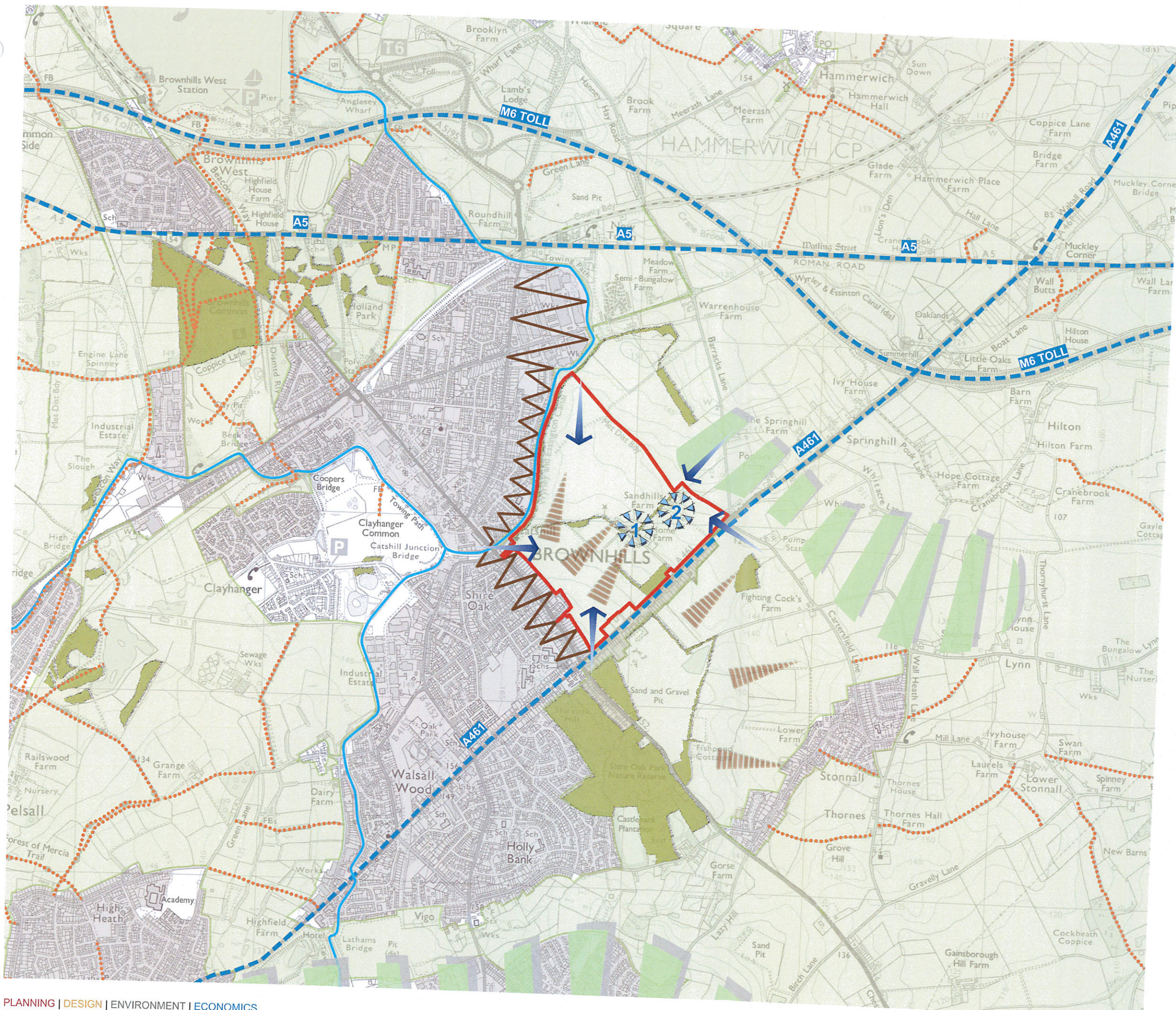
Viewpoint 7	View from Walsall Road (A461), south-west of Muckley Corner, looking south-west.
Camera type	Nikon D3300 with 50mm lens (equivalent focal length)
Date	23rd August 2017
Approx grid ref	SK 07633 06005
Approx elevation	+122m AOD
Distance to site	c. 1.32km

Home Farm, Sandhills,
Brownhills
Fig. 3: Viewpoint Photographs

Drawing Ref: BIR.4327_07A
Client: Gallagher Estates

Date : 24/08/17
Drawn by : LWE/LG/CW
Checked by : KM

















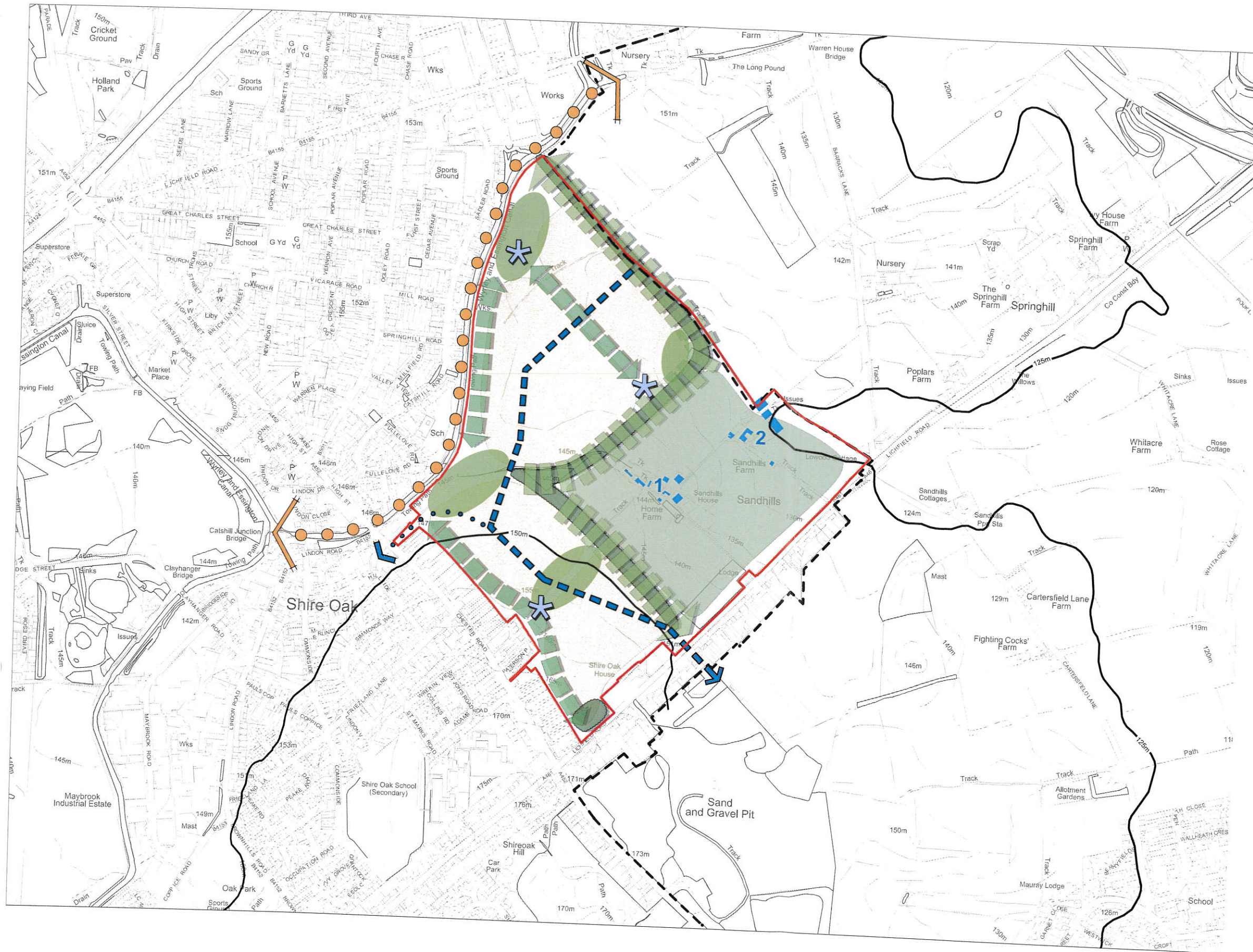
- KEY**
-  Site boundary
 -  Existing settlement area
 -  Green Belt
 -  Existing vegetation providing containment
 -  Public rights of way
 -  Visually exposed edge of Brownhills
 -  Localised Ridgeline
 -  Sloping landform
 -  Transport corridors
 -  Existing farm buildings on-site
1. Home Farm
2. Sandhills Farm
 -  Wyrley and Essington Canal
 -  Local/short distance views across site















Fig. 4 Contextual Landscape and Visual Analysis

Drawing Ref: BIR.4327_06
 Client : Gallagher Estates
 Date : 15/03/2017
 Drawn by : JT
 Checked by : KM
 Scale : 1:20000 @ A3





KEY

-  Site boundary
-  Existing farm buildings on site
1. Home Farm
2. Sandhills Farm
-  Proposed development cells
-  Retained and enhanced woodland with additional proposed infrastructure planting
-  Proposed green infrastructure corridor network
-  Proposed key open spaces
-  Potential location for play areas
-  Proposed main access
-  Potential secondary access
-  Existing Wyrley and Essington Canal towpath
-  Existing contours
-  Proposed new green belt boundary
-  LPA boundary
-  Retained agricultural land

Home Farm, Sandhills, Walsall
 Fig 5. Green Infrastructure Strategy

