

# Landscape & Visual Overview

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Project: Land Off Church Wood Close, Rough Common, Kent (7751)

Canterbury City Council reference SLAA 230

October 2021

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## 1 Introduction

- 1.1. Aspect Landscape Planning Ltd has been commissioned to undertake a landscape and visual analysis in relation to the promotion of private land formed of one larger and one much smaller parcel to the east of the residential cul-de-sac comprising Church Wood Close and Sydney Cooper Close for residential development. This is in response to the call for sites by Canterbury City Council (CCC) for the new Local Plan covering the period up to 2040.
- 1.2. The CCC reference for this site is SLAA 230.
- 1.3. The location and context of the site is illustrated on the attached Aspect plans **Site Location (ASP1) and Site and Setting (ASP2)**. This report is also supported by a photographic record which analyses the surrounding visual environment via a series photographic panoramas.
- 1.4. The purpose of this “Landscape and Visual Overview” (LVO) document is to provide an analysis of landscape and visual matters pertinent to the promotion of this site.
- 1.5. A site visit and desktop study have been undertaken by an experienced and chartered member (CMLI) of the Landscape Institute (chartered in 2018) with over 15 years professional experience in landscape planning and landscape architecture, currently employed at Aspect Landscape Planning Ltd.

## 2 Landscape Baseline

- 2.1. The parcels are not publicly accessible with the site comprising of two adjacent parcels of land, one small roughly rectangular area of maintained lawn to the immediate east of Church Wood Close and one longer elongated area of maintained rough grassland, scrub and mown paths extending to the north and immediate east of Sydney Cooper Close and the deep rear gardens of properties fronting onto Rough Common Road. The site is highly enclosed in character, with an extensive belt of woodland, known as The Grove, extending alongside the eastern edge of the settlement, providing a robust mature treescape along and within the full extents of the site’s eastern half. The woodland backdrop extends westwards across and into the site before gradually dissipating into the areas of maintained rough grassland and lawn, enclosing these areas. A mature treeline separates the two parcels to reinforce the prominence of these features over the site, with a mature treeline also characterising the majority of the site’s western boundary to provide a robust natural buffer to those properties backing directly onto it.

- 2.2. The southern parcel presently forms part of an extended rear garden to No.30 Church Wood Close, with the property contained within it. A formal hedgerow and treeline frames the properties rear curtilage and subdivides the internal lawn area into two component parts.
- 2.3. Rough Common has a linear settlement pattern which is separated from the north western edge of Canterbury City by a large wedge of undeveloped green space. This is characterised by an irregular patchwork of medium to large scale fields, given over to a mix of rough pasture, commercial orchards and informal open spaces and school playing grounds which encroach into the northern extent of this green wedge. The field pattern is highly contained by established hedgerows and mature treelines further enhanced by the central band of woodland associated with The Grove that runs along a central north - south alignment between the two settlements. The site forms a small part of the green wedge, which is contained by the surrounding settlement edges to the east and west and the busy A2050 trunk road to the south and extended development to the north along the A290 Saint Thomas Hill Road, which provides a contained end point to the green wedge in this direction. Whilst accessing the surrounding PRow routes that criss cross this setting, the surrounding suburban edges and mix of land uses, although well integrated via a mature and robust landscape framework, were clearly evident, reducing the sense of tranquility and remoteness within it.
- 2.4. An aerial overview obtained from Bing Maps is included below, which illustrates the well contained and mature woodland character of the site.



- 2.5. A broad area of mature woodland, known as Blean Woods, rises up within the localised landscape to the immediate west of Rough Common, containing and enclosing the settlement from this aspect. The mature woodland is noted for its ecological interest and is designated via its SSSI status. The area is also noted as comprising ancient woodland, an International Wildlife Site, Local Wildlife Site, RAMSAR and SAC, further enhancing its ecological interest.

- 2.6. The surrounding green wedge and woodland areas are well accessed via an established PRow network that extends between the two settlements and within Blean Woods. They are evidently well used and accessed by the local community.
- 2.7. The localised topography is steeply undulating, with Rough Common formed along a narrow plateaued ridgeline, that falls to the east and west of the settlement edge towards two stream tributaries. The site is typical of this feature, falling towards the eastern tributary which runs through the central woodland band. Intervisibility from the surrounding PRow routes is therefore highly contained as a result of the undulating topography and established wooded and tree lined landscape established to the east and west of Rough Common.
- 2.8. For context refer to the photosheets of viewpoints 1 – 9 and internal views A & B attached.
- 2.9. The site is not covered by any statutory landscape designation. However, it does sit within a locally designated 'Area of High Landscape Value' (AHLV). The site is well separated from Hothe Court Conservation Area which extends beyond the settlement edge to the north. Harbledown Conservation Area straddles the busy A2050 to the south meeting the site's southern boundary. However, the Conservation Area does not spread into any built up areas and is not publicly accessible within proximity to the site. As such, no intervisibility was assessed between Harbledown Conservation Area and the site.
- 2.10. The Canterbury District Local Plan (Adopted July 2017) sets out policy relating to AHLV, which washes over the site and is protected within **Policy LB2 Areas of High Landscape Value**. For location refer to Aspect's Site Location Plan (ASP1) attached.
- 2.11. **Policy LB4 Landscape Character Areas** seeks to ensure that development does not adversely affect the landscape character of an area.
- 2.12. In terms of published landscape characterisations, the site lies within the following:
- National Level – **113 North Kent Plain**. National Character Area. *Natural England*.
  - County Level – the site lies adjacent to **The Blean**. Landscape Character Area. *Landscape Assessment of Kent 2004*.
  - District Level – **F River Valleys**. Landscape Character Type (LCT) and at a finer level of detail **F2 Stour Valley Slopes** Landscape Character Area (LCA). *Canterbury Landscape Character Assessment and Biodiversity Appraisal 2020*.
- 2.13. For the purposes of this LVO the 2020 assessment is the most relevant, provides the greatest level of detail and is the more recent assessment undertaken.
- 2.14. **F River Valleys LCT –**
- “This LCT is distinguished by the Great Stour River and Little Stour River valleys, comprising the flat floodplain and rising slope above the course of the rivers. There are a variety of land uses including floodplain grazing, pasture, arable, and orchards. There are small villages on the higher ground, and some modern development close to Canterbury.”*
- 2.15. **F2 Stour Valley Slopes LCA –**

*“The Stour Valley Slopes LCA is characterised by slopes rising from the Stour Valley and forms a distinctive ridge north of Canterbury City. It is a mixed area of pasture, orchards and contains land used for landfill and quarrying as well as the University of Kent campus and other educational establishments. The ridgeline forms the northern boundary, with the settlement edges of Sturry and Canterbury City forming the eastern and southern boundaries while the western boundary is formed by the Blean Woods.”*

- 2.16. A summary of the Key Sensitivities and Values relevant to the locality of the site includes a distinct sloping topography which encloses views from and containment for Canterbury City, with undeveloped ridgelines forming a backdrop in views across the Stour Valley noted. A rural landscape between adjacent settlements, including Rough Common is noted, with recreational value established through a strong network of PRow and a transition to the more rural undeveloped Blean woodland landscape to the west.
- 2.17. In terms of natural influences, blocks of woodland occur throughout the area, many of which are ancient and priority habitat deciduous woodlands, which would have historically formed part of the adjacent Blean Woods.
- 2.18. In terms of cultural influences, modern development within Rough Common is noted as forming around scattered Grade II listed small halls and farmsteads, with generally detached and semi detached red brick houses being set within mature trees. A key aim as stated within the LCA assessment provides:
- “To protect ancient and existing woodland priority habitat and to enhance woodland connectivity as part of the wider woodland network of the Blean BOA.”*
- 2.19. The site is not within any statutory landscape designations; however, it is acknowledged that it is washed over by an Area of High Landscape Value the key characteristics of which associate with those of the F2 Stour Valley Slopes LCA reviewed above. The site is of a small scale and is highly contained, as such any changes within it are not considered to be likely to be significant in terms of altering the key characteristics of the wider LCA and AHLV. Key to this, will be the retention of the treescape components within the site and it is considered that a sensitive, high quality development, as set out within the illustrative Site Layout Plan enclosed, could be accommodated without significant harm to the key characteristics of the LCA and AHLV.
- 2.20. In summary, the site occupies a highly contained position, within a robust woodland setting off Church Wood Close, that dovetails succinctly with the broader settlement and traditional development pattern established within a mature treescape. A small scale residential cul-de-sac development on the site, within private land, would therefore represent a logical extension to the neighbouring land uses with potential access from Church Wood Close, ensuring that development could be brought forward without any significant harm to the wooded character of the site and localised context (refer Viewpoint A & B).
- 2.21. Opportunities exist to establish greater diversity with the woodland edge zones, with properties set well back and fronting onto the mature woodland, allowing for the incorporation of landscape enhancements within this zone. Development should be focused within the lower value maintained grassland and scrub areas which would protect the wider transitional function of the locality, set between Canterbury City and the undeveloped Blean Woodland.

- 2.22. Development within the site would not alter the general pattern of development within Rough Common, which will remain linear in character. Furthermore, as illustrated within the illustrative Site Layout Plan, the site could potentially benefit from enhanced access to the established woodland and brook setting to the east, taking advantage of the recreation assets of The Grove woodland, in keeping with the popular PRow routes already established within the locale.
- 2.23. Due to the sloping nature of the site, some ground modelling would be required in order to establish level building platforms for the internal road and the properties themselves. This would be focused within the western half of the site, within the developable area and would not harm the more sensitive woodland features. Any alterations would be specific to the site only and would not harm the wider distinct undulating topography, noting the contained nature of the site would ensure that this site specific modelling would not be perceived beyond the confines of the site itself.

### **3 Visual Baseline**

- 3.1. A site visit has been undertaken and a photographic record of the site and its context is attached (see photosheets of viewpoints 1-9 and internal views A & B).
- 3.2. Due to the highly contained nature of the site, arising from its position adjacent to the properties within Church Wood Close and Sydney Cooper Close and the established woodland within The Grove wood to the immediate east, any changes within the receiving visual environment will be contained to the site and some minor glimpsed views between the adjacent properties. No further publicly accessible views were found beyond this setting. The extent of visual enclosure afforded by the internal woodland is demonstrated within internal Viewpoints A & B.
- 3.3. Localised views are highly contained as a result of the steeply undulating topography, significant mature woodland settings and a relatively high density form of development pattern established within the surrounding confines of Rough Common, which restricts views from within neighbouring streetscenes and residential areas (refer Viewpoints 1 and 3). As such the visual settings within Blean Wood to the west (Viewpoint 4), Hothe CA to the north (Viewpoint 6) and Harbledown CA to the south (Viewpoint 9) are not considered likely to undergo any change. Cross valley views from the east and north east are also highly contained (refer Viewpoints 7 & 8) with an undulating topography, extensive woodland, treelines and built form characterising these settings.
- 3.4. With regards to private views and residential amenity, it is considered that views from within the setting of Church Wood Close and Sydney Cooper Close would not change to any significant degree, with any minor barely perceived glimpses, perceived within narrow framed views between properties, which would be entirely compatible given the residential character of this setting. The mature treeline which defines the majority of the site's western boundary, will assist restricting private views from the neighbouring properties, likely to be perceived from within less sensitive rear aspect first floor views, through a filagree of vegetation cover. This is particularly relevant to the northern end of the site's western boundary, where the existing treeline is well established and intact, which in addition to the deeply set elongated rear gardens which would in effect increase the development offsets, ensures that development within the site would be visually recessive. Where a more fragmented structure exists within

the boundary vegetation, there are opportunities for bolstering with native hedgerow and tree planting, which would reinforce the local treed character.

- 3.5. Whilst the site is well contained, the adjacent properties within the eastern end of Church Wood Close and the northern end of Sydney Cooper Close are visually prominent and it is considered the site already has a strong relationship with existing residential development which presents a visual baseline that can accommodate and integrate new dwellings that would be seen as a logical extension in views and would not be out of keeping. The existing boundaries provide a strong basis for increasing achievable visual mitigation, in particular along the interface with development along Sydney Cooper Close. However more generally, a high degree of inherent visual mitigation exists through the robust woodland character that pervades and compartmentalises the site.

## 4 Conclusions

- 4.1. This document confirms that in terms of landscape and visual matters the site is considered to have some capacity for residential development provided landscape and visual mitigation is provided through the strengthening of boundaries abutting Sydney Cooper Close and the eastern end of Church Wood Close. Focusing development within the western half of the site and establishing clear development offsets and a sensitive transition with the wooded parts of the site is also considered critical to achieving a sustainable high quality development.

- The site is highly contained both in visual and landscape terms as a result of the established woodland and adjacent built form which characterises the site and wider settlement edge. Any effects would therefore be highly localised.
- The addition of landscape enhancements to the western boundary that form part of a site wide landscape strategy would benefit the wider setting, provide visual screening and deliver a softening effect of development in private views from the adjacent residential settings to the west. The deep setbacks and rear gardens to the properties established on Rough Common Road are considered advantageous in protecting the residential amenity.
- The site offers potential to enhance the woodland edge creating diverse ecology zones. These zones would offer high quality settings for the development and would act as a natural buffer to the key treescape, ensuring that the proposals align with policy and published landscape character guidance (F LCT and F2 LCA).
- The site already enjoys a built context to the immediate west and development within a mature woodland setting would align with the development already established within Rough Common settlement, where built form is described as being well integrated within a mature and robust wooded setting.
- Potential formal links to The Grove woodland offers opportunities to enhance the localised PRow network and recreational provision within the locality.
- The site comprises a small well contained area within the green wedge established between Canterbury City and Rough Common. This area is of reduced tranquility and remoteness owing to the presence of the surrounding settlements, transport corridors and a varied land use. Given this context and the employment of landscape and visual

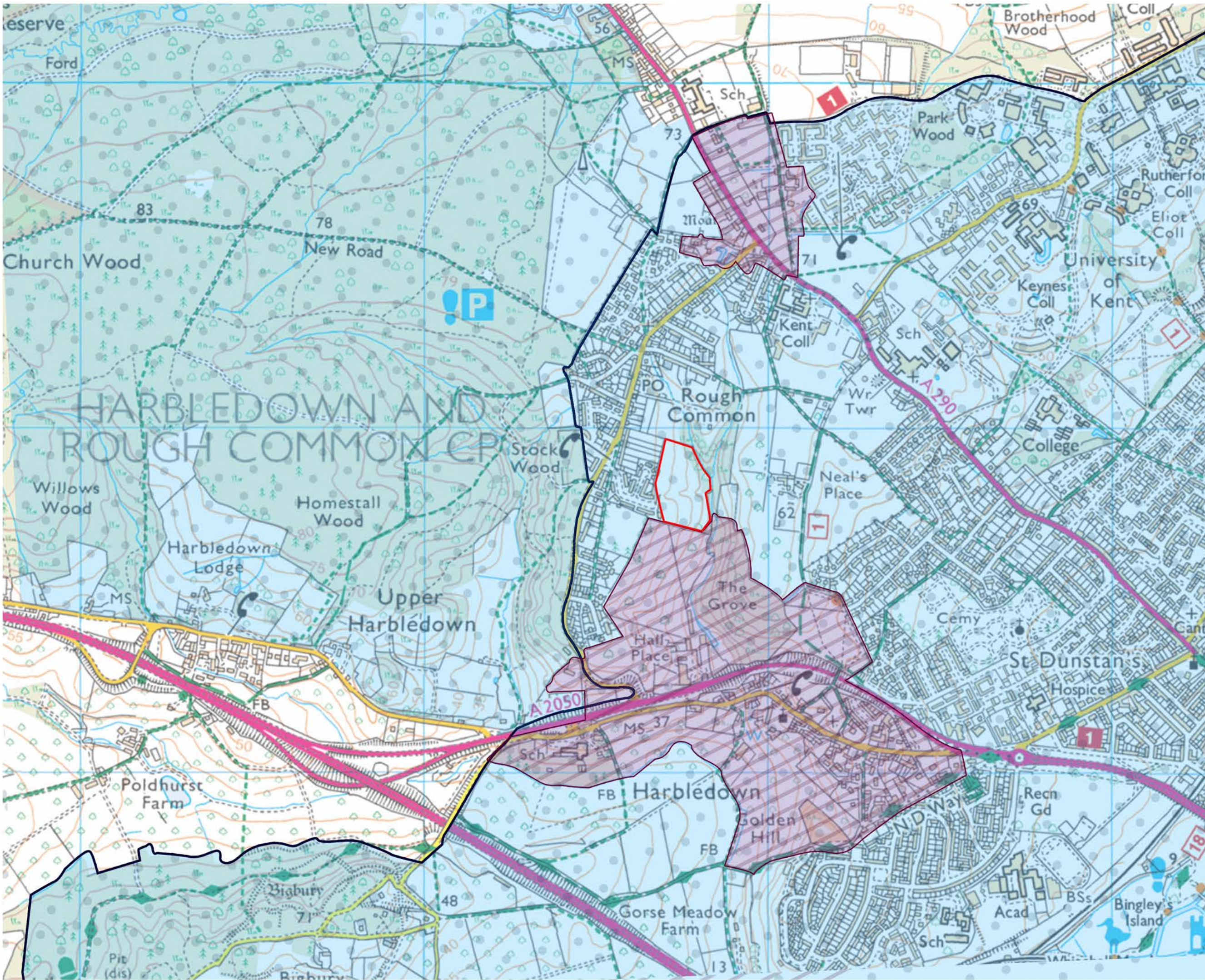
mitigation measures, the introduction of a sensitively designed residential development set within a robust landscape framework would not be out of keeping. It would not have a detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the area, and would also not have an adverse impact on the AHLV within which the site is located. This aligns with policies LB2 and LB4.

- Development within the site would be offered a mature and established landscape setting from Day One and as the landscape enhancements establish and mature, especially those areas near to the site boundaries, and the transitional woodland edge areas, the introduction of residential development at this location would nestle within this setting and would not result in unacceptable impact on visual amenity.

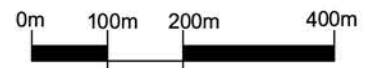
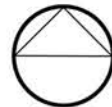
4.2. In conclusion, it is considered that residential development on this site would not give rise to harmful landscape or visual effects provided mitigation measures are employed.

Aspect Landscape Planning Ltd

October 2021



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- Key:
- Site Boundary
  - Conservation Area
  - Areas of High Landscape Value with Boundary Line Illustrated as Defined within the Current Proposal Map

# HARBLEDOWN AND ROUGH COMMON CP

REV	DATE	NOTE	DRAWN	CHK'D

**aspect** landscape planning

TITLE  
 Land at Rough Common, Canterbury  
 Site Location Plan

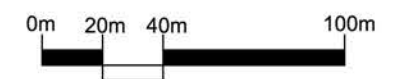
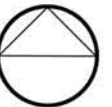
CLIENT  
 Quinn Estates Ltd

SCALE	DATE	DRAWN	CHK'D
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DRAWING NUMBER	REVISION		
7751 / ASP1 / SLP			





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- Key:
- Site Boundary
  - Public Rights of Way
  - Conservation Area

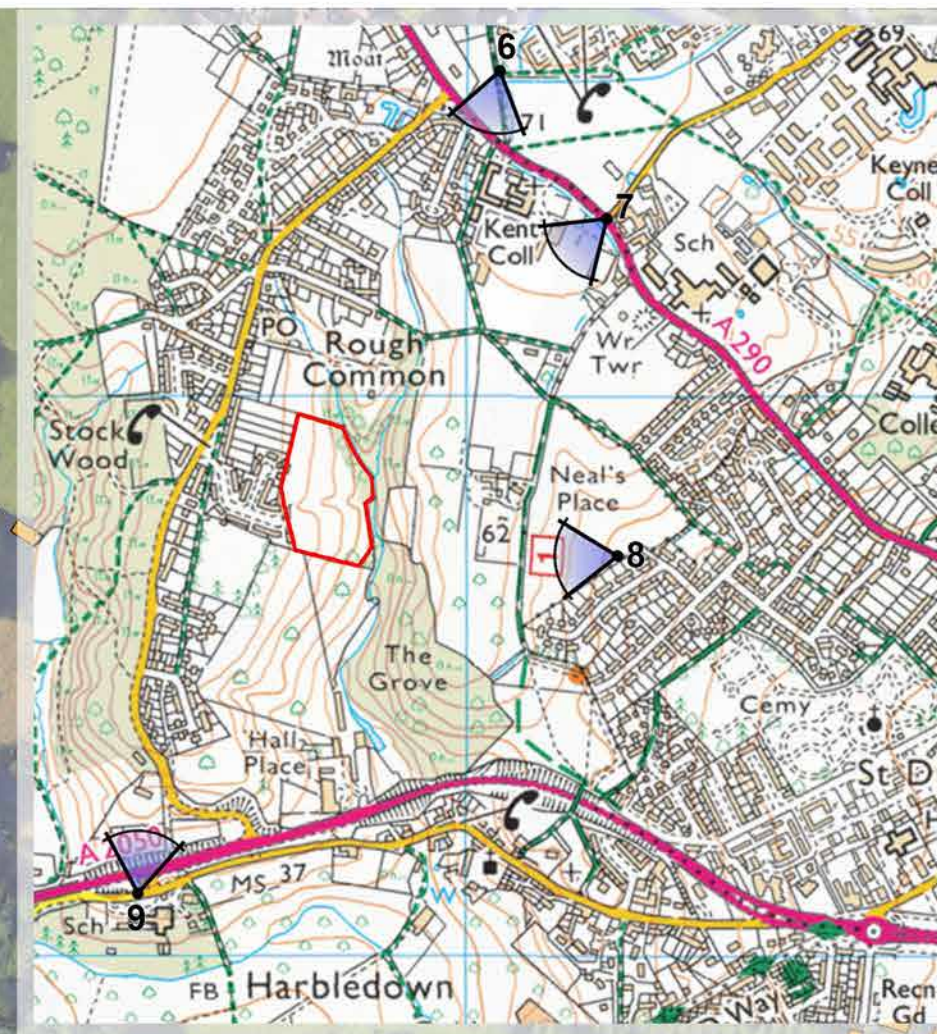
REV	DATE	NOTE	DRAWN	CHK'D

**aspect** landscape planning




TITLE  
 Land at Rough Common, Canterbury  
 Site & Setting Plan

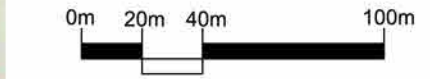
CLIENT  
 Quinn Estates Ltd

SCALE	DATE	DRAWN	CHK'D
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DRAWING NUMBER	REVISION		
7751 / ASP2			



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- Key:
-  Site Boundary
  -  Viewpoint Location
  -  Public Rights of Way



REV	DATE	NOTE	DRAWN	CHK'D
REVISIONS				

**aspect landscape planning**

TITLE  
 Land at Rough Common, Canterbury  
 Viewpoint Location Plan

CLIENT  
 Quinn Estates Ltd

SCALE	DATE	DRAWN	CHK'D
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DRAWING NUMBER  
 7751 / VLP

REVISION



Viewpoint Coordinates: E 612614, N 158796

Date & time of photograph: 15/10/2021 13:05

AOD & Viewing height: c. 70m AOD 1.6m

Weather conditions: Clear, good visibility.

**Viewpoint 1**



Viewpoint Coordinates: E 612519, N 158712

Date & time of photograph: 15/10/2021 13:11

AOD & Viewing height: c. 71m AOD 1.6m

Weather conditions: Clear, good visibility.

**Viewpoint 2**



Viewpoint Coordinates: E 612533, N 158925 Date & time of photograph: 15/10/2021 13:11 AOD & Viewing height: c. 70m AOD 1.6m Weather conditions: Clear, good visibility. **Viewpoint 3**



Viewpoint Coordinates: E 612464, N 159279 Date & time of photograph: 15/10/2021 13:57 AOD & Viewing height: c. 75m AOD 1.6m Weather conditions: Clear, good visibility. **Viewpoint 4**



Viewpoint Coordinates: E 612683, N 159084 Date & time of photograph: 15/10/2021 14:02 AOD & Viewing height: c. 66m AOD 1.6m Weather conditions: Clear, good visibility. **Viewpoint 5**



Viewpoint Coordinates: E 613058, N 159573 Date & time of photograph: 15/10/2021 14:29 AOD & Viewing height: c. 72m AOD 1.6m Weather conditions: Clear, good visibility. **Viewpoint 6**



Viewpoint Coordinates: E 613253, N 159322 Date & time of photograph: 15/10/2021 14:35 AOD & Viewing height: c. 69m AOD 1.6m Weather conditions: Clear, good visibility. **Viewpoint 7**



Viewpoint Coordinates: E 613260, N 158703 Date & time of photograph: 15/10/2021 15:03 AOD & Viewing height: c. 51m AOD 1.6m Weather conditions: Clear, good visibility. **Viewpoint 8**



Viewpoint Coordinates: E 612421, N 158115

Date & time of photograph: 15/10/2021 15:36

AOD & Viewing height: c. 35m AOD 1.6m

Weather conditions: Clear, good visibility.

**Viewpoint 9**



Internal view of Southern part of site surrounded by existing vegetation

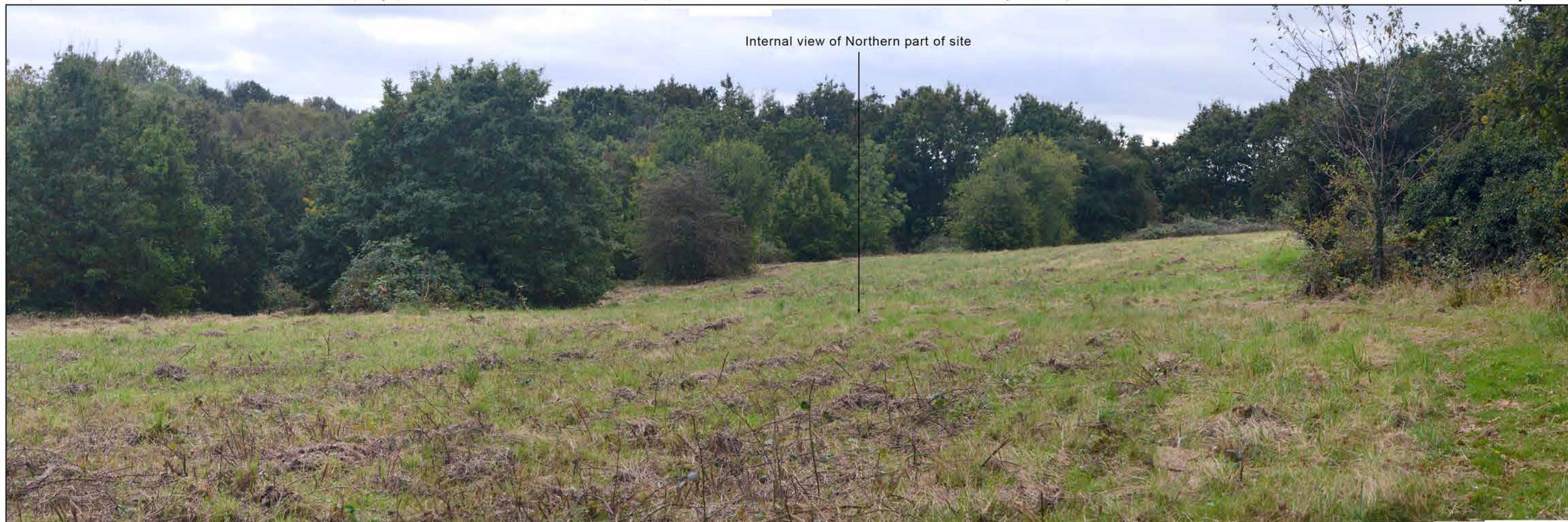
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Date & time of photograph: 15/10/2021 12:13

AOD & Viewing height: c.64m AOD 1.6m

Weather conditions: Clear, good visibility.

**Viewpoint A**



Internal view of Northern part of site

Viewpoint Coordinates: E 612716, N 158951

Date & time of photograph: 15/10/2021 12:37

AOD & Viewing height: c. 65m AOD 1.6m

Weather conditions: Clear, good visibility.

**Viewpoint B**