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# Bodkin Farm, Chestfield, Whitstable: Landscape and Visual Note for Representations to the Draft Canterbury Local Plan to 2045

Prepared on behalf of Parker Strategic Land

January 2023



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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

### Overview

- 1.1 This Landscape and Visual Appraisal (**Appendix C**) has been prepared to establish the landscape and visual sensitivity of the land at Bodkin Farm, Chestfield, Whitstable (the 'Site') and to identify the potential suitability of the Site to accommodate mixed use development of circa 300 residential dwellings, a secondary school and associated sports pitch provision, and a local centre, set within a landscape strategy, as set out in the Vision Document (**Appendix A**), accessed from the north off Thanet Way, in support of draft Canterbury District Local Plan to 2045, and in particular Policy W8: Bodkin Farm.
- 1.2 The Site is located in the District of Canterbury, Kent, on the eastern edge of the urban area of Whitstable, as illustrated on **Figure 1: Site Context Plan**. The land in the vicinity of the Site comprises a settled landscape, with the coastal settlements of Whitstable and Herne Bay located on the generally low-lying coastal plain, with land rising inland to the south, as illustrated on **Figure 2: Topography Plan**.
- 1.3 The Site is located immediately to the south of the A2990 Thanet Way and to the north of the residential properties along Maydowns Road. The residential areas of Whitstable, that are Chestfield and Swalecliffe, lie to the south-west and to the north-west of the Site, respectively. Molehill Solar Farm is located on the eastern boundary of the Site; with Herne Bay located further to the east of the Site, beyond the wider agricultural landscape.
- 1.4 The Site is currently located in a Green Gap as designated in the Adopted Canterbury District Local Plan (2017), with reference to Policy OS6: Green Gaps, and in particular, Policy OS7: Herne Bay and Whitstable Green Gap. However, it should also be noted that a Green Gap designation is related to the function of land, being predominantly informed by land use, that is whether it is developed or not, and the degree to which attributes or components of the land contribute to actual or perceived separation between settlements or areas of built development. As such, a Green Gap designation is not a qualitative designation of the landscape and is not a reflection of attributes of landscape value such as landscape quality, scenic quality, rarity or representativeness, opportunities for recreation, or conservation interests or cultural associations.
- 1.5 Furthermore, the Site, being covered by Policy W8: Bodkin Farm in the draft Canterbury District Local Plan to 2045, is identified for release from the Green Gap, and is promoted for development.

1.6 A Landscape and Visual Appraisal of the Site was previously undertaken in August 2021, for Parker Strategic Land, to consider the landscape and visual sensitivity of the Site and to identify the potential suitability of the Site to accommodate, in principle, predominantly residential development across the full extent of the Site, in support of representations to the Issues and Options consultation for the emerging Canterbury Local Plan.

1.7 The Landscape and Visual Appraisal concluded that:

***"The Site has the capacity to successfully accommodate residential development set within an appropriate landscape framework, being informed by, and sympathetic to, the immediate and wider landscape; and without, whether or not retained within the Green Gap, a significant effect on the open character or separating function of the Green Gap between Whitstable and Herne Bay."***

1.8 The findings of the 2021 Landscape and Visual Appraisal regarding the suitability of the full extent of the Site to accommodate residential development remain valid. The objectives of this 2023 landscape and visual appraisal, to support representations to the draft Canterbury District Local Plan to 2045, in particular Policy W8: Bodkin Farm, are:

- To appraise the landscape character of the Site, its context and the function of the Site within the wider landscape, particularly in relation to existing landscape designations and policies;
- To appraise the visibility of the Site; and
- To identify the suitability of the Site to accommodate residential development of circa 300 dwellings, mixed use development, and a secondary school and associated sports pitch provision, as illustrated by the Vision Document (**Appendix A**).

1.9 The Landscape and Visual Appraisal also identifies how residential development of circa 300 dwellings, a local centre, publicly accessible open space, and a secondary school and associated sports pitch provision, as illustrated in the Vision Document (**Appendix A**), would accord with the policies of the draft Canterbury District Local Plan to 2045.

1.10 This Landscape and Visual Appraisal also considers the potential effect on the existing designated Green Gap between Whitstable and Herne Bay, as defined in the Canterbury District Local Plan, adopted July 2017, and the remaining Green Gap between Whitstable and Herne Bay Green Gap, with reference to Policy W8: Bodkin Farm and Policy HB4: Land to the West of Thorndean Wood Road, as set out in the draft Canterbury District Local Plan to 2045.

## 2.0 LANDSCAPE POLICY CONTEXT

### National Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), 2021

- 2.1 The NPPF promotes a presumption in favour of sustainable development, defined as "*meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*", and providing it is in accordance with the relevant up-to-date Local Plan, and policies set out in the NPPF including those identifying restrictions with regard to designated areas.
- 2.2 The NPPF states that "*the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development*".
- 2.3 Chapter 12 of the NPPF provides guidance on ensuring the delivery of good design. The NPPF requires development proposals to respond to local character and be visually attractive, as well as emphasising the need to integrate development proposals into the natural environment.
- 2.4 Chapter 15 of the NPPF provides guidance on conserving and enhancing the natural environment, such as by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan); and recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. It notes that plans should distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites; allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value; and take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure; and plan for the enhancement at a landscape scale.
- 2.5 The Site is not covered by landscape related designations identified in the NPPF which would restrict the overall scale, type or distribution of development, such as Green Belt, Local Green Space, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, or a National Park.

### Canterbury City Council Policy

Canterbury District Local Plan (adopted July 2017)

- 2.6 The Canterbury District Local Plan was adopted by the Council in 2017 and sets out the key planning policies for the area whilst aiming to:
  - "*Create well-designed new communities, with good access to jobs and services*"

- *Make sure there is enough housing, and different types of housing, to meet the needs of local people and support new job creation*
- *Protect sensitive landscape and wildlife areas, and other key environmental assets such as the World Heritage Site, the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Conservation Areas*
- *Make certain that new infrastructure, such as transport, schools and health facilities, are provided in parallel with development*
- *Protect and strengthen town and village centres*
- *Support the growth of the Universities and Colleges*
- *Support development of new and improved cultural and leisure facilities."*

2.7 The Site is located on the edge of Whitstable, which is identified in **Policy SP4: Strategic approach to location of development**, as one of the three urban areas which are the principal focus for development, provided that it would be acceptable in terms of environmental, transport and other planning factors, and would not result in the loss of sites identified for business and other specific uses.

2.8 Policy LB4: Landscape Character Areas, states that:

*"Proposals for development, and associated land use change or land management, should demonstrate that they are informed by, and are sympathetic to, the landscape character of the locality. In considering development proposals, the City Council will take every opportunity to reinforce, restore, conserve or improve, as appropriate, the landscape character of the area in which development is proposed.*

*Development will be permitted if the following criteria are satisfied:*

- a. Development would be appropriate to the economic and social wellbeing of the area;*
- b. The site selection can be adequately justified, with the siting of development minimising the impact;*
- c. Development would safeguard or strengthen tranquillity, features and patterns that contribute to the landscape character and local distinctiveness of the area;*
- d. The scale, design, materials and landscaping measures are appropriate and would lead to an enhancement of the character of the landscape; and*
- e. Development will promote maintenance, enhancement, and restoration of biodiversity as appropriate in accordance with policy LB9.*

*All development should take into account the sensitivity of the particular landscape to accommodate change. Development, or associated land use change or land management, which does not significantly adversely affect the landscape character of an area, will normally be allowed. The development should have regard*

***to the Canterbury Landscape Character and Biodiversity Appraisal to identify the character areas and features affected."***

2.9 Policy OS6: Green Gaps, states that:

***"Within the Green Gaps identified on the Proposals Map (see also Insets 1,3 and 5) development will be permitted where it does not:***

- a. Significantly affect the open character of the Green Gap, or lead to coalescence between existing settlements;***
- b. Result in new isolated and obtrusive development within the Green Gap.***

***Proposals for open sports and recreational uses will be permitted subject to there being no overriding conflict with other policies and the wider objectives of the Plan. Any related built development should satisfy criteria (a) and (b) above and be kept to a minimum necessary to supplement the open sports and recreation uses, and be sensitively located and of a high quality design."***

2.10 Policy OS7: Herne Bay and Whitstable Green Gap, states that:

***"Within the Herne Bay and Whitstable Green Gap identified on the Proposals Map (Insets 3 and 5), development will be permitted where it does not:***

- a. Result in a material expansion of the built up confines of the urban areas of Herne Bay or Whitstable; or***
- b. Significantly affect the open character or separating function of the Green Gap; and***
- c. Result in new isolated development within the Green Gap***

***In those areas within the green gap where education, outdoor leisure uses or allotments are promoted, planning permission will be granted where in addition to the considerations set out in (a) to (c) above, built development shall be incidental, necessary to the function of those uses and located to have a minimal impact upon the open character of the green gap and provided there is no overriding conflict with other Policies of this Local Plan."***

2.11 Other landscape related Policies, relevant to the Site include:

- Policy DBE3: Principles of Design
- Policy DBE8 Public Open Space
- Policy DBE9: Outdoor Lighting
- Policy LB2: Areas of High Landscape Value
- Policy LB8: Landscape Scale Biodiversity Networks

- Policy LB10: Trees, Hedgerows and Woodland
- Policy OS12: Green Infrastructure

Draft Canterbury District Local Plan to 2045, October 2022

- 2.12 A review has been undertaken of the draft local plan and policies relevant to the Site or the landscape have been listed below. Policies with reference in part to the general landscape have also been selected and landscape content summarised.

Policy SS2 – Sustainable design strategy for the district

- 2.13 New development should be responsive to the local character such as the landscape and townscape setting, while incorporating suitable, innovative design to create new places. The landscape must be attractive and function well, establishing a sense of place.

- 2.14 Open spaces should be designed in line with Policy DS24 and ought to be located certain distances from highways to promote healthy lifestyles. This includes sports and leisure facilities, inclusive play, food growing opportunities in the form of planters, trees, hedgerows, orchards, and allotments.

Policy SS3 – Development strategy for the district

- 2.15 Priority will be given to protecting the rural character outside of urban settlement boundaries. New Community facilities and business spaces will be permitted where the need for development outweighs the harm, and new housing development will only be supported in very limited circumstances. Existing community facilities and services within the countryside will be protected.

Policy Policy W8 – Bodkin Farm.

- 2.16 The Site is allocated in the draft local plan for mixed use development. This will include a secondary school, and new retail and community facilities. Specific criteria and a Bodkin Farm concept masterplan for the Site are set out under Policy W8. 250 dwellings, open space and multi-use school sports facilities are requirements of the Site, and the design should incorporate a long-term management plan. Development should be assimilated into its existing context reflecting local character and design. The secondary school is to be sited in the eastern part of the Site with community facilities being located in the west. There is to be a green-blue infrastructure strategy achieving 20% BNG, creating opportunities for landscape and biodiversity, connecting the Site and the proposal to the existing landscape context, retention of native hedgerows and incorporating buffer zones, and a landscape buffer located in both the east and south of the Site, adjacent to the woodland and creating a distinct divide between the Site and the countryside.

## Policy R28 – Countryside

- 2.17 The council will safeguard the network of green spaces, green infrastructure, sports and recreation opportunities within the countryside, and will discourage development which impacts the openness of designated Green Gaps whereby their key function is to retain the separation between individual settlements.

## Policy DS6 – Sustainable design

- 2.18 Proposals for development should promote social interaction through legible open spaces and tree-lined streets, promote healthy lifestyles through incorporating safe opportunities for walking and cycling. Proposals should incorporate or enhance blue-green infrastructure networks, contribute towards a hierarchy of open spaces, be designed with the local context in mind, and integrate and positively respond to the context and local character, including in terms of landscape and visual impact. Parking should be suitably landscaped and sensitively integrated into the built form, so it does not dominate the street scene.

## Policy DS9 – Education and associated development

- 2.19 Proposals should be informed by the design, landscape and masterplanning principles set out in the Canterbury Campus Framework Masterplan (2019).

## Policy DS19 – Habitats, landscapes and sites of local importance

- 2.20 Proposals which do not diminish the unspoilt scenic quality of the undeveloped coast will be permitted.
- 2.21 Within designated Green Gaps, only proposals for sports and recreation uses will be permitted. Development must be kept to a minimum to support the primary use and must not affect the openness of the Green Gap or affect the function of the Green Gap in deterring coalescence. Development must be sensitively designed and located in terms of lighting and isolated/obtrusive development. The Herne Bay and Whitstable Green Gap is subject to the conditions of this policy, however, education and outdoor leisure uses may also be considered, as long as proposals do not result in a material expansion of Herne Bay or Whitstable.

## Policy DS22 – Landscape character

- 2.22 Proposed development should be informed by the local landscape character. Proposals should reinforce, retain, restore, conserve or improve local landscape character where applicable. Proposals will be permitted where certain criteria of this policy have been met, such as sensitivities and values of the distinct landscape character areas informing the design; location, scale and design considering how the landscape can accommodate change; and conforming to

relevant Landscape Guidelines. The proposal should not have any adverse impacts on long distance views and should avoid harm to the landscape. Any opportunities for conservation or enhancement should be met. Proposals that would cause significant harm will be refused.

Policy DS23 – The Blean Woodland Complex

- 2.23 The site does not form part of the Blean Woodland Complex, but it is a large and distinct habitat, south of the Site which is visible on **Figure 1: Site Context Plan**. The council will support projects that restore, enhance, expand and connect this habitat.

Policy DS24 – Publicly accessible open space and sports

- 2.24 As per the Green Gap policies OS6 and OS7, open sport or recreational uses will be permitted within a Green Gap area. This policy specifies standards of hectares per person for each distinct typology. Quality standards for open space are also specified such as proposals must be designed as part of the local green infrastructure network, should contribute to local landscape character, connect with routes and green corridors and provide multi-functional benefits. There ought to be inclusive play for all ages, an emphasis on encouraging physical activity for mental wellbeing purposes. The provision of safe and accessible design incorporating natural surveillance, clearly defined boundaries for safety, and a range of planting with predominantly native species.

Policy DM18 – Light pollution and dark skies

- 2.25 All development proposals should seek to minimise light pollution. Proposals for external lighting schemes will be permitted if they meet the criteria of this policy which includes designing in minimal light glare or spill, the lighting scheme must not be visually detrimental to the local or wider landscape, especially dark landscapes. Proposals also must not have an adverse impact on long distance views or vantage points.

Green Gaps and Local Green Spaces Review, April 2021

- 2.26 Canterbury City Council have prepared a review of Green Gaps and Local Green Spaces, as part of the evidence base for the new Local Plan. The introduction sets out the following:

***"The green gap policies were originally formulated in 2002 reflecting national objectives to restrain built development outside urban areas and in the countryside. Within the Canterbury District there has been a gradual erosion of the open countryside and coalescence between built up areas due to development. Gradual coalescence can not only harm the character of the open countryside, but can also adversely impact the setting and special character of villages and the separate identity of the coastal towns.***



***The Green Gaps are intended to retain the separate identities of existing settlements by preventing their coalescence through development. The locations identified are considered to be important 'pinch points' where settlements are at particular risk of coalescence."***

2.27 Appendix A sets out a description of the Green Gap between Herne Bay and Whitstable (Policy OS7), noting that the Green Gap is:

***"263.8ha formed of various land uses:***

- *Open fields, green spaces, playing fields, playground and ball court*
- *Multiple roads including Thanet Way and Whitstable Road*
- *Railway line*
- *Wastewater Treatment Works*
- *Waste and recycling facilities*
- *Caravan / Holiday Park - Coast and ponds*
- *Commercial / market space*
- *Dispersed dwellings*
- *Solar panels"*

2.28 Whilst the review provides a commentary on the "Intersection of LCA (Landscape Character Areas) and planning policies, recommendations", "Changes to boundary or built environment", and "Other Evidence / Documents", the review does not provide any justification for the specific boundary alignment or extent of the Green Gap, nor how, considering the variety of land uses and development within the Green Gap, how the Green Gap functions or is perceived.

2.29 Therefore, whilst the Green Gaps and Local Open Spaces Review recommends that the Green Gap between the urban areas of Herne Bay and Whitstable, as defined by Policy OS7, is retained as existing, there is no further evidence to substantiate this finding.

Natural Environment and Open Space Topic Paper, Draft Canterbury District Local Plan to 2045 (October 2022)

Green Gap between Herne Bay and Whitstable

2.30 Paragraph 3.11 notes that

***"It was identified at an early stage that new secondary schools, ideally coastal, would be required in the district to meet the growing demand. As set out in the Development Topic Paper (2022), SLAA240 Thornden Close and SLAA247 Bodkin Farm were both identified as suitable locations for new secondary schools."***

2.31 Paragraph 3.12 notes that:

***"Due to the limited sites of sufficient size, and the growing needs of both Herne Bay and Whitstable, it has been proposed that both sites be allocated for a new secondary school with supporting residential development. Therefore, it is proposed that the green gap be drawn around the sites. It should be noted that both sites have been encouraged to have landscape buffers and greenery adjacent to the green gap to prevent settlement coalescence."***

## 3.0 EXISTING LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL CONTEXT

### Landscape Baseline

- 3.1 The landscape character assessment approach is a descriptive approach that seeks to identify and define the distinct character of landscapes that make up the country. This approach recognises the intrinsic value of all landscapes, not just 'special' landscapes, as contributing factors in people's quality of life, in accordance with the European Landscape Convention. It also ensures that account is taken of the different roles and character of different areas, in accordance with the NPPF Core Principles. The description of each landscape is used as a basis for evaluation in order to make judgements to guide, for example, development or landscape management. The various levels of Landscape Character Assessment are shown on **Figure 3: Landscape Character Plan.**

#### National Landscape Character

- 3.2 As part of Natural England's responsibilities in delivering the Natural Environment White Paper, Biodiversity 2020 and the European Landscape Convention, Natural England has developed a series of National Character Area (NCA) profiles. These NCA profiles include an outline of the key characteristics that define broad landscape character areas. The Site is located within NCA 113: North Kent Plain. The NCA is described as meeting "*the sea between Whitstable and Deal, changing from a north-facing to an east - or south-facing shore. There is a great diversity of coastal habitats, including chalk cliffs around Thanet...*," and that "*the area has a strong urban influence, with several built-up areas, including coastal towns and these occupy a substantial part of the area ...*".
- 3.3 The key characteristics of the NCA 113: North Kent Plain most relevant to the Site and its surroundings are:
- "*A diverse coastline (both in nature and orientation), made up of cliffs, intertidal sand and mud, salt marshes, sand dunes and shingle beaches. Much of the coastal hinterland has been built on, and the coast itself has been modified through the construction of sea walls, harbours and piers. ...*
  - "*Woodland occurs on the higher ground around Blean and in smaller blocks to the west, much of it ancient and of high nature conservation interest. ...*
  - "*Large settlements and urban infrastructure (including lines of pylons) are often visually dominant in the landscape, with significant development around Greater London and the Medway Towns, as well as around towns further east and along the coast. Major rail and road links connect the towns with London.*"

## County Landscape Character

*The Landscape Assessment of Kent (2004)*

3.4 The Site is located within the area covered by the North East Kent Character Area Assessment and is identified as forming part of The Blean. The characteristic features of The Blean are described as:

- ***"Densely wooded, rounded hilltops with sparse nucleic settlements and few roads within the woodland.***
- ***Flat coastal plain.***
- ***Haphazard seaside and leisure development.***
- ***Neglected pasture near the coast - a high proportion of unfarmed land.***

## District Landscape Character

*Draft Canterbury Landscape Character and Biodiversity Appraisal (2012)*

3.5 The Site is located within the Urban Edge Landscape Character Type, as identified in Figure 12 of the draft Canterbury Landscape Character and Biodiversity Appraisal. More specifically, the Site is situated within Landscape Character Area 9: Chestfield Gap. The key characteristics of the district LCA are set out below:

- ***"Important area of open space separating the settlements of Swalecliffe, Chestfield, Studd Hill and Greenhill.***
- ***Gently undulating London Clay overlain with poorly drained heavy soils.***
- ***Open arable landscape mixed farming on Grade 3 agricultural land with small plots managed as pasture.***
- ***Occasional small blocks of woodland (some ancient), plantation and mature tree belt associated with minor valley feature of West Brook.***
- ***Crossed by transport corridors for London to Ramsgate Railway and the old Thanet Way A2990.***
- ***Key designations comprise a Local Wildlife Site."***

3.6 As identified within the draft Canterbury Landscape Character and Biodiversity Appraisal, the Chestfield Gap is considered to exhibit a poor condition due to the high level of fragmentation caused by transport corridors and the incoherent enclosure pattern with fragmented and poorly maintained hedgerows. The Chestfield Gap is considered to have a Moderate sensitivity due to its importance as a strategic buffer between the towns of Whitstable and Herne Bay, as well as being a highly visible landscape. Guidelines for the district LCA are to Restore and Improve.

The guidelines set out in the draft Canterbury Landscape Character and Biodiversity Appraisal are:

- *"Improve the overall visual quality of the area and promote its value as a green buffer between Herne Bay and Whitstable.*
- *Develop an improvement strategy to create a positive image to the area itself, whilst separating and creating distinctive identities to the neighbouring urban areas of Chestfield, Greenhill and Studd Hill.*
- *Assess new building proposals within and adjacent to the area to ensure that attractive edges are formed.*
- *Improve the appearance of the transport corridor of the old Thanet Way and London to Ramsgate Railway.*
- *Improve and enhance the visual and nature conservation interest of West Brook.*
- *Enhance declining hedgerows with sustainable native species to replace dead or dying elm in the longer term.*
- *Seek opportunities to create new woodlands around Purchas Wood."*

#### Landscape Character of the Site

- 3.7 The Site is located on land between the A2290, Thanet Way, to the north and existing residential properties along Maydowns Road to the south. To the west of the Site, there is an area of small pasture fields associated with horsiculture and separated by post and wire fences, set between Thanet Way, and the residential areas of Swalecliffe and Chestfield on the eastern edge of Whitstable. To the east of the Site, an area of Ancient Woodland, Purchas Wood, adjoins the eastern Site boundary in part, along with Molehill Solar Farm, which also adjoins the eastern boundary in part, and encompasses Purchas Wood. The South-eastern Railway Line runs to the north of, and parallel with, Thanet Way, with Chestfield and Swalefield Rail Station located approximately 700m to the west of the Site, as illustrated on **Figure 1: Site Context Plan**.
- 3.8 The Site comprises the former farmstead of Bodkin Farm and associated buildings, many of which are derelict or in a poor state of repair, surrounded by existing mixed ornamental and native vegetation; several pastoral fields, of varying size and set within a framework of boundary vegetation, and a small woodland plantation to the south, as illustrated on **Figure 4: Site Appraisal Plan**.
- 3.9 The eastern and western boundaries of the Site are well contained by boundary vegetation, including existing hedgerows, scrub, tree belts and woodlands. Along the southern boundary of the Site adjoining the rear of residential properties on Maydowns Road there has been some clearance of boundary vegetation at the rear. Vegetation along the northern boundary of the Site and on the southern side of Thanet Road is more intermittent, with lengths of hedgerow and scrub, and some mounding.

- 3.10 Within the Site, there is a strong north-south hedgerow and tree belt running through the centre of the Site, with further subdivision in the eastern part of the Site reinforced by field boundary hedgerows.
- 3.11 The Site is located on the coastal plain, with land rising inland to the south, as illustrated on **Figure 2: Topography Plan**. The Site is located on the northern end of a gentle spur, running north from higher land to the south. The central part of the Site is located generally at an elevation of 15m AOD, dropping to the west to below 10m AOD, and more gently to between 15m – 10m AOD to the east, as shown on **Figure 2: Topography Plan**. The land in the vicinity of the Site is generally quite flat due to its coastal location, although some more elevated land is located approximately 2km to the south at Shrub Hill.
- 3.12 A public footpath passes east to west along the southern boundary of the Site, running along the southern edge of Bodkin Farm, along the northern edges of the rear gardens to properties along Maydowns Road, and the running along the edge of fields in the eastern part of the Site. This local route connects the settlement of Whitstable to the north-west of the Site with Molehill Road to the south-east of the Site and is heavily overgrown with little sign of use.
- 3.13 A drainage ditch and farm pond are situated on the western Site boundary, both are overgrown and surrounded by scrubby vegetation, drainage ditches run along the eastern boundary, and along the field boundaries within the Site.
- 3.14 The Site is located approximately 240m north of the Blean Woods Area of High Landscape Value.
- 3.15 The Site is located in the Herne Bay and Whitstable Green Gap, but is identified for removal from the Green Gap, and for development in accordance with Policy W8 of the draft Canterbury District Local Plan for 2045.
- 3.16 The Site is not covered by any other designations.

### **Visual Baseline**

- 3.17 A visual appraisal has been undertaken to determine the relationship of the Site with its surroundings and its approximate extent of visibility within the wider landscape. The visibility of the Site is largely determined by the intervening landform, as topographic features such as ridgelines and subtle undulations block or curtail views towards the Site, especially where existing development, vegetation and landform contribute to visual screening or filtering of views.
- 3.18 Views in the vicinity of the Site are relatively constrained by the flat landscape where slight undulations in topography, the existing built form and existing vegetation, limit the extent of

many views. Further south of the Site, from more elevated land, some longer views are available, extending north over the Site towards the coast, and these views are characterised by the high level of built development within the view.

- 3.19 There are views of the Site from the PRoW that runs along the southern boundary and through the eastern part of the Site. The views are characterised by views across arable fields, to surrounding field boundary vegetation, with glimpses to existing commercial and residential development on the edge of Whitstable, set within the surrounding framework of vegetation.
- 3.20 There are varying glimpsed views of the Site from Thanet Way, where there are breaks in the roadside/northern Site boundary vegetation.
- 3.21 The slightly more elevated land in the western part of the Site is partially visible, through roadside vegetation, but generally seen set below vegetation crossing and surrounding the Site, as illustrated by **Site Context Photographs 1, 2 and 3**, the locations of which are shown on **Figure 1: Site Context Plan**.
- 3.22 Notably, the eastern part of the Site, being of a lower elevation, more gently sloping, and being subdivided by field boundary vegetation and partially screened by roadside mounding, is afforded greater screening from views. Where glimpses of the eastern part of the Site are obtained, they are contained by field boundary and surrounding vegetation, as illustrated by **Site Context Photographs 4, 5 and 6**, the locations of which are also shown on **Figure 1: Site Context Plan**.
- 3.23 To the east of the Site, where the land is generally flat there are open views across the landscape to the south, as illustrated by **Site Context Photographs 7, 8 and 9**, the locations of which are also shown on **Figure 1: Site Context Plan**.
- 3.24 Views from much of the other surrounding roads are limited by the foreground screening provided by roadside hedgerow and tree belt vegetation. As a result, where views over the surrounding landscape are available, they are generally limited to transient, brief glimpsed views of the landscape.

### **Summary**

- 3.25 The Site adjoins the existing western settlement edge of Whitstable, set between Thanet Way to the north and residential properties along Maydowns Road to the south, with the residential areas of Whitstable, that is Chestfield and Swalecliffe, to the south-west and to the north-west, of the Site respectively.
- 3.26 The Site is, therefore, located in an area which is distinctly influenced by existing development in all directions. It is adjacent to the existing urban settlement edge of Whitstable and adjoins

Thanet Way along with development to the north of Thanet Way, and exhibits limited landscape quality, scenic quality, or tranquillity; and is subject to increased noise and activity.

- 3.27 The Site is well-contained along its eastern boundary by robust vegetation and a block of Ancient Woodland at Purchas Wood, and the Site is already separated from the remainder of the Green Gap further east by sizeable development at Molehill Solar Farm.
- 3.28 Visibility of the Site is very limited, with views generally limited to views from the PROW and the rear of properties of Maydowns Road, immediately along the southern boundary of the Site; and transient, fleeting glimpses of the Site through intervening roadside boundary vegetation and mounding from Thanet Way, immediately on the northern boundary of the Site.
- 3.29 The Green Gap to the east of Molehill Solar Farm comprises land that is generally flat, with more open views across the landscape to the south, as illustrated by **Site Context Photographs 7, 8 and 9**, the locations of which are also shown on **Figure 1: Site Context Plan**, and which provides a tangible green gap, with views of the intervening landscape, between Whitstable and Herne Bay.



## 4.0 LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL CONSIDERATIONS

4.1 Following the landscape and visual appraisal of the Site and its context, the key landscape and visual opportunities of the Site with regard to successfully accommodating mixed use development on the Site, with reference to the attributes of the Site, published landscape character assessment and relevant national and local plan policy, have been identified; with the key landscape and visual considerations in terms of accommodating development on the Site including:

- Provision of a sympathetic response to landscape character, including the North Kent Plains NCA; and The Blean LCA and the Chestfield Gap LCA as set out in the draft Canterbury Landscape Character and Biodiversity Appraisal (2012), as required by Adopted Policy LB4: Landscape Character and draft Policy DS22 - Landscape Character
- An appropriate response to the sensitivities of the relevant landscape in terms of accommodating change, as required by Adopted Policy LB4: Landscape Character and draft Policy DS22 - Landscape Character
- Retention of a physical and perceived Green Gap between Whitstable and Herne Bay
- Retention and enhancement of existing trees, hedgerows and woodlands, to safeguard and strengthen features and patterns that contribute to landscape character and local distinctiveness, as required by Adopted Policy LB4: Landscape Character and draft Policy DS22- Landscape Character
- Provision of a Green Infrastructure Network that incorporates the existing retained trees, hedgerows and woodlands, and contributes to a Landscape Scale Biodiversity Network
- Consideration of the scale, design, materials, and landscape measures appropriate to the Site and its immediate and wider landscape character
- Incorporation of the existing PRoW along the southern boundary of the Site within a green corridor
- Consideration of views from existing residential properties along Maydowns Road

4.2 The key landscape and visual considerations have informed the proposals for the Site, as set out in the Vision Document (**Appendix A**), along with the following Landscape Strategy for the Site:

- Existing landscape features on the Site to be retained where possible, including hedgerows, treebelts and trees which form the landscape framework of the Site
- Purchas Wood Ancient Woodland adjoining eastern boundary of the Site to be protected by a minimum 15m buffer, where it adjoins formal sports pitch provision, and a 50m buffer of open green space offset to built development

- Existing landscape framework to be strengthened, so as to assimilate development on to the Site, creating development parcels with physical and visual enclosure
- Existing boundary vegetation on the northern and eastern boundaries to be strengthened to assist in screening potential development in views from Thanet Way and the wider landscape to the east
- Secondary School and associated sports provision to be located on the eastern part of the Site, on relatively flatter part of the Site, and to locate more open uses on the most eastern part of the Site and provide a transition from built form to open countryside and Green Gap to the east of the Site
- Prevention of physical and visual coalescence, with the retention of the physical and visual perception of separation between Herne Bay and Whitstable, maintaining the function of the Green Gap.

### **Response to draft Policy W8: Bodkin Farm**

4.3 Specific criteria for the Site are set out under Policy W8: Bodkin Farm of the draft Canterbury District Local Plan to 2045. The landscape proposals for the Site, as illustrated in the Vision Document (**Appendix A**), take account of draft Policy W8 in that:

- Open space will be provided on Site in accordance with Policy DS24. Open space will comprise natural and semi-natural space, green corridors and amenity areas, parks and gardens, play facilities (including LAP, LEAP, and NEAP), outdoor sports provision and allotments.
- Multi-use of the school's sports facilities within the community will be considered, as well as a long-term landscape management plan for the Site. Development will be of high quality, in line with Policy DS6, and will respond sensitively to its context in regard to local pattern, scale and character. The school and any associated facilities are to be located in the far eastern part of the Site and are not dissected by any public footpaths. Community facilities, services and residential development are to be located west of the secondary school, with no development located within flood zones 2 & 3.
- A comprehensive green and blue infrastructure for the Site will ensure it achieves 20% Biodiversity Net Gain in line with Policy DS21; encompassing opportunities for landscape and biodiversity as identified within the local landscape character guidelines, establishing ecological connectivity across the Site and with the wider landscape context; retention of native hedgerows outside of residences with adequate buffer zones, delivery of a substantial landscape buffer in the form of natural/semi natural open space located east of the Site and adjacent to Purchas Wood Ancient Woodland; and the delivery of a substantial landscape buffer along the southern Site boundary to

create a distinct visual separation between development on the Site, the surrounding countryside, and existing development on Maydowns Road.

- Provision of safe modes of transport that encourage physical activity such as pedestrian and cycle connections including new and enhanced walking and cycling routes and connections to the surrounding areas; and improvements to the public footpath network surrounding the Site.

- 4.4 As noted in the visual appraisal, the eastern part of the Site is of a lower elevation and more gently sloping compared with the western part of the Site, and being partially screened by roadside mounding along Thanet Way, is afforded greater screening from views than the western part of the Site. Where glimpses of the eastern part of the Site are obtained, they are contained by field boundary and surrounding vegetation, as illustrated by **Site Context Photographs 4, 5 and 6**, the locations of which are also shown on **Figure 1: Site Context Plan**. The eastern part of the Site is therefore suitable for accommodating development, as acknowledged by Draft Policy W8.
- 4.5 Draft Policy W8 reserves the eastern extent of the Site, to the east of the central hedgerow running through the Site, solely for development of the secondary school.
- 4.6 However, the assessment of the suitability of the entire Site to accommodate development, based on the landscape and visual appraisal of the Site, and consideration of a site-specific Landscape Strategy for the Site, as set out above, demonstrates that a comprehensive green-blue infrastructure/landscape strategy, as required by draft Policy W8, alongside further residential development, up to overall circa 300 residential dwellings, could also occupy the eastern extent of the Site, as illustrated in the Vision Document (**Appendix A**).
- 4.7 As illustrated, this would still retain a suitable extent of more open land uses related to the secondary school on the most eastern edge of the Site, to provide a transition from development to the remaining Green Gap to the east of the Site.
- 4.8 This would be beneficial in that it would soften the impact of a lone sizeable secondary school building, where views may be experienced from the local landscape. An equal spread of development across the Site would convey cohesion and ensure connectivity across the entire Site. Landscape and biodiversity would be a priority, creating a landscape framework to assimilate development on the Site within the landscape, through linking new and existing habitats, creating green spaces through the retention of existing hedgerows and buffers, and the implementation of landscape proposals, whilst meeting BNG expectations.
- 4.9 With regard Herne Bay and Whitstable Green Gap, as the Site adjoins the existing western settlement edge of the urban area of Whitstable, proposed residential development would be set between Thanet Way to the north and residential properties along Maydowns Road to the

south, with the proposed school to the east of the residential development, in an area already influenced by existing development.

- 4.10 The Site is, and development on it would be, both physically and visually, well-contained along the eastern boundary by vegetation, and by Purchas Wood Ancient Woodland, which is protected, to the immediate east of the Site. The Site is, and development on it would be, separated from the remainder of the Green Gap to the east of the Site by Molehill Solar Farm. The Green Gap to the east of Molehill Solar Farm comprises land that is generally flat, with more open views across the landscape to the south, as illustrated by **Site Context Photographs 7, 8 and 9**, the locations of which are also shown on **Figure 1: Site Context Plan**, and which provides a tangible green gap, with views of the intervening landscape, between Whitstable and Herne Bay.
- 4.11 Therefore, considering the existing landscape and visual context of the Site, it has previously been demonstrated that the Site could be removed from the Green Gap, as justified by the inclusion of Policy W8: Bodkin Farm in the draft Local Canterbury District Local Plan to 2045, and these findings remain valid.
- 4.12 Furthermore, an additional area of residential development could be delivered on the Site, to the east of the central hedgerow running through the Site, and to the west of the proposed secondary school and associated sport pitch provision, with very limited extension of development of Whitstable to the east, beyond that existing to the south along Maydowns Road or north of Thanet Way, such that there would be no greater harm to the remaining Green Gap arising from the increase in the quantum of residential development from 250 dwellings, as set out in Policy W8: Bodkin Farm, to 300 dwellings as illustrated in the Vision Document (**Appendix A**).

#### **Response to draft Policy HB4: Land West of Thorndean Wood Road**

- 4.13 The draft Canterbury District Local Plan to 2045 also allocates a site for a secondary school and supporting residential development on the western edge of Herne Bay, extending into the western extent of the Green Gap between Whitstable and Herne Bay, with reference to Policy HB4: Land to the West of Thorndean Wood Road.
- 4.14 The western extent of site for Policy HB4: Land to the West of Thorndean Wood Road, in contrast to the Site (Policy W8), is open where it extends into the Green Gap between Whitstable and Herne Bay, and is not contained by any substantial boundary vegetation, currently allows views out across the intervening landscape between Whitstable and Herne Bay from Thanet Way, and therefore currently contributes to the openness of the Green Gap, providing tangible separation between the two settlements, as illustrated by **Site Context**

**Photographs 7, 8 and 9** in the Landscape and Visual Appraisal, the locations for which are shown on **Figure 1: Site Context Plan**.

- 4.15 The Land to the West of Thorndean Wood Road – concept masterplan accompanying Policy HB4 identifies the western extent of the site as “open space/biodiversity opportunities”, to west of a green corridor, thus maintaining this part of the site as open and green. Considering the existing landscape and visual attributes of this part of the Site (Policy HB4), there is no further capacity to accommodate development in this area, without adverse harm to the actual and perceived physical and visual separation of the settlements of Whitstable and Herne Bay. Therefore, this is an essential requirement of proposals for the development of Policy HB4: Land to the West of Thorndean Wood Road.
- 4.16 This would ensure that the most open part of the Green Gap between Whitstable and Herne Bay, located east of the Site, would be maintained; and not only school development, but also additional residential development on the Site, broadly in accordance with Policy W8, would not lead to coalescence between existing settlements, such that not only a 6FE secondary school with 6th form provision on the Site, but also additional residential development east of the central hedgerow running through the Site, as illustrated in the Vision Document (**Appendix A**) could be successfully accommodated on the Site, without a significant effect on the open character or separating function of the Green Gap between Whitstable and Herne Bay, and with no greater harm to the remaining Green Gap.

#### **Other Draft Policy Considerations**

- 4.17 The Site would comply with draft Policy SS2 – Sustainable design strategy for the district, in that new development would be responsive to the local character such as the landscape and townscape setting, while incorporating suitable, innovative design to create new places. The landscape would be attractive and function well, establishing a sense of place.
- 4.18 Open spaces would be designed in line with Policy DS24 and would be located certain distances from highways to promote healthy lifestyles. This includes sports and leisure facilities, inclusive play, food growing opportunities in the form of planters, trees, hedgerows, orchards and allotments.
- 4.19 The proposals for the Site will safeguard the network of green spaces, green infrastructure, sports and recreation opportunities within the countryside, and will discourage development which impacts the openness of designated Green Gaps whereby their key function is to retain the separation between individual settlements, such that the proposals will comply with Policy R28 – Countryside.

- 4.20 Proposals for development will promote social interaction through legible open spaces and tree-lined streets, promote healthy lifestyles through incorporating safe opportunities for walking and cycling, in accordance with Policy DS6 – Sustainable design. Proposals will also incorporate or enhance blue-green infrastructure networks, contribute towards a hierarchy of open spaces, be designed with the local context in mind, and integrate and positively respond to the context and local character, including in terms of landscape and visual impact. Parking should be suitably landscaped and sensitively integrated into the built form, so it does not dominate the street scene.

### **Landscape Character**

#### National Landscape Character

- 4.21 The extensive NCA 113: North Kent Plain varies in landscape value as it includes part of the Kent Downs AONB, and International and European designated sites associated with main coastal habitats; whilst the character of large areas in the north, in which the Site is located, is predominantly urban, and contains numerous components along the diverse coastline which provide a positive contribution to landscape character but are not designated for their scenic beauty. The North Kent Plain therefore has areas of high landscape value; but is of medium to low landscape value in the locality of the Site.
- 4.22 The relatively in-tact character of the extensive NCA means that it is likely to have some capacity to accommodate potential development without undue consequences upon the naturalistic features of the NCA such as the diverse coastline or the woodland of the higher ground, and where settlement is a frequent component and characteristic of the NCA. The North Kent Plain therefore has a low susceptibility to the type of development proposed, and a medium-low sensitivity to change in the locality of the Site.
- 4.23 Potential development on the Site would not introduce any new or uncharacteristic elements into the extensive North Kent Plain where settlement is a frequent characteristic; where potential development would adjoin the existing settlement of Whitstable, one of the three settlements on the District of Canterbury identified for the focus of development, and where it would reflect the character and pattern of settlement within the northern part of the North Kent Plain. Potential mixed-use and residential development on the Site would replace an area of small irregular pasture fields without causing the loss of any characteristic naturalistic landscape aspects of the North Kent Plain, such as the diverse coastline in the north of the NCA or the wooded higher ground in the south of the NCA.

## County Landscape Character

- 4.24 The Blean has been assessed in The Landscape Assessment of Kent (2004) as having a condition described as 'Good', as although it presents a coherent pattern of landscape elements, development in the south of the area is piecemeal and unsympathetic land use interrupts woodland that is located on the rounded hills. The extensive areas of coastal development in the north of The Blean, in the locality of the Site, also detract from some views and there are few links between the areas of stronger ecological value along the coast and the woodland, where access is noted as limited. The unfarmed land near the coast illustrates that land use in the area is not intensive with areas of land neglected pasture, and with haphazard seaside and leisure development and other development having a moderately negative impact on the area as a whole. The southern part of The Blean, to the south of the Site, south of Molehill Road is designated as Area of High Landscape Value. The value of The Blean therefore varies, being higher to the south of the Site and medium to low in the north, including the Site, where there is a higher incidence of haphazard leisure uses and neglected farmland, and Molehill Solar Farm.
- 4.25 The Blean also assessed as having a 'Moderate' sensitivity, as it contains one of the largest areas of ancient woodland within Kent. Although the tree cover is widespread on the hilltops, it stops abruptly on the lower slopes, allowing a moderate level of visibility. The type of tree cover in The Blean is distinctive but other historic features such as wet-fenced pastures on the coastal strip are becoming less distinct with recent built form also indistinct.
- 4.26 The Landscape Actions for The Blean are set out to be Conserve and Reinforce. The ancient characteristics of the woodland and limited access of the woodland lanes should be conserved, while the landscape pattern of the hedged farmland on the lower slopes should be reinforced with improved links to the woodland on higher ground so that the woodland character extends towards the coastal plain, encompassing the route of Thanet Way. Similarly, the natural features of the coastal plain such as open grassland and wet fencing should be reinforced and linked with the wooded characteristics of the southern Blean where there is natural drainage.
- 4.27 Development on the Site would not introduce any uncharacteristic elements into The Blean where **"haphazard seaside and leisure development"** and **"neglected pasture near the coast"** form the setting for the Site. Development on the Site would be well planned, relate well to existing surrounding development, and form a cohesive component in, and well assimilated into, the surrounding landscape. Development on the Site would not affect ancient characteristics of The Blean identified for conservation, such as woodland and limited access to the woodland lanes, and could positively contribute to reinforcing the landscape pattern of The Blean, through enhancing the existing hedges crossing and bordering the Site, located on the lower slopes of The Blean, and by improving links to the woodland on higher ground so

that the woodland character extends towards the coastal plain, and encompasses the route of Thanet Way.

#### District Landscape Character

##### *Draft Canterbury Landscape Character and Biodiversity Appraisal (2012)*

- 4.28 As set out within the draft Canterbury Landscape Character and Biodiversity Appraisal, the Chestfield Gap LCA is considered to exhibit a 'poor' condition due to the high level of fragmentation caused by transport corridors and the incoherent enclosure pattern with fragmented and poorly maintained hedgerows.
- 4.29 Potential development, being located on the western and eastern central parts of the Site, would adjoin the existing western settlement edge of Whitstable, set between Thanet Way to the north and residential properties along Maydowns Road to the south. The secondary school development and associated sports pitch provision located on the eastern part of the Site, along with a buffer of open green space, accommodating the associated sports provision for the school, on the most eastern part of the Site, to provide a buffer to the Purchas Wood Ancient Woodland, would provide a transition from residential development in the west and the wider landscape to the east of the Site. Development on the Site would be well-contained along the eastern boundary by existing retained and enhanced vegetation on the Site boundary, and by Purchas Wood Ancient Woodland, which is protected, to the immediate east of the Site.
- 4.30 As illustrated by **Site Context Photographs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6**, the locations of which are shown on **Figure 1: Site Context Plan**, whilst the Site is visible from Thanet Way, due to the combination of landform and vegetation, these are predominantly short-range views, limited to the Site, and do not extend over the wider landscape. However, to the immediate east of the Site, where the landform is shallower, there are open views across the wider landscape, as illustrated by **Site Context Photographs 7, 8 and 9**, the locations of which are also shown on **Figure 1: Site Context Plan**.
- 4.31 Development would be accommodated on the Site, both on the western and eastern parts of the Site, set within an enhanced landscape framework, with enhancement to the boundary vegetation along Thanet Way, to provide additional screening to views from Thanet Way.
- 4.32 Built form would be set back into the Site from the eastern boundary, such that the combination of the open character of sport pitch provision, the open green space buffer to the Ancient Woodland, and the strengthened eastern boundary, combined with the screening provided by Purchas Wood, which being Ancient Woodland is protected, would largely screen views of development in views from east of the Site, as illustrated by **Site Context Photograph 9**. This demonstrates the eastern part of the Site has capacity to accommodate further residential



development in addition to a secondary school, and in addition to that suggested by Policy W8: Bodkin Farm, without greater harm to the Green Gap between Whitstable and Herne Bay.

- 4.33 Whilst potential development on the Site would extend the settlement of Whitstable to the east, into the Chestfield Gap LCA; development would be set between existing development to the north of Thanet Way and existing residential development along Maydowns Road; but would retain an open buffer on the most eastern edge of the Site, to provide a transition from development to the wider Chestfield Gap LCA to the east of the Site.
- 4.34 The Landscape Strategy associated with development would also positively contribute to many of the guidelines for the Chestfield Gap LCA, in that it would create an attractive edge to Whitstable, improve the appearance of the transport corridor of Thanet Way, enhance declining hedgerows, and provide opportunities to create new woodland around Purchas Wood. Potential development would not affect the visual and nature conservation interest of West Brook, which is physically and visually separated from the Site by Molehill Solar Farm.
- 4.35 The proposals for the Site would be informed by, and would be sympathetic to, the landscape character of the locality. The proposals would consider the sensitivity of the Chestfield Gap Landscape Character Area (LCA) to accommodate change, such that potential residential development, set within an appropriate landscape and blue/green infrastructure framework, would be successfully assimilated into the immediate and wider landscape, taking account of the key characteristics of the Chestfield Gap LCA.
- 4.36 Proposals for the Site would therefore accommodate consideration of the existing features and patterns that contribute to the landscape character and local distinctiveness of the area, such that they would be informed by local character. Proposals would promote a scale of development, design and materials and landscaping measures which would be appropriate to, and would lead to, an enhancement of the character of the landscape and its relative value and sensitivities, such that they would reinforce, retain, restore, conserve or improve landscape character; would promote the maintenance, enhancement, and restoration of biodiversity; and would have no adverse impact on long distance views. Potential development, and an associated landscape strategy on the Site, including with residential development located east of the central hedgerow as illustrated in the Vision Document (**Appendix A**), could positively contribute to the objectives of Policy DS22 – Landscape Character, in accordance with the draft Canterbury District Local Plan to 2045.
- 4.37 Therefore, whilst there would be a change in character to this part of the Chestfield Gap LCA on the Site, and an extension of settlement into the Chestfield Gap LCA, the extent of development would not extend significantly further east than that of existing development to the north and south of the Site, and there would be an appropriate open/green buffer on the

eastern edge of the Site, adjoining the remaining Green Gap between Whitstable and Herne Bay.

- 4.38 With regard to the remaining Green Gap to the east of the Site, Policy HB4: Land West of Thorndean Wood Road also promotes a secondary school site and supporting residential development, on the western edge of Herne Bay, into the Chestfield Gap LCA. Policy HB4: Land West of Thorndean Wood Road – concept masterplan promotes residential development to the south of the Herne Bay settlement, without extending residential development further west than the existing residential development of Herne Bay. It then promotes secondary school and associated sports pitch provision to the west of that; but reserving the most western extent of the site for “open space/biodiversity opportunities”.
- 4.39 The western extent of site for Policy HB4: Land to the West of Thorndean Wood Road, is open, not contained by any substantial boundary vegetation, and therefore currently contributes to the openness of the Green Gap, affording views out over the intervening landscape between Whitstable and Herne Bay and providing tangible separation between the two settlements, as illustrated by **Site Context Photographs 7, 8 and 9** in the Landscape and Visual Appraisal, the locations for which are shown on **Figure 1: Site Context Plan**.
- 4.40 Therefore the HB4 Site can accommodate secondary school development and supporting residential development, due to the existing attributes and characteristics of the eastern extent of the site, immediately adjoining Herne Bay, as covered by Policy HB4, but the most western extent of the site, with reference to Policy HB4, and as illustrated on Policy HB4: The Land to the West of Thorndean Wood Road – concept masterplan accompanying Policy must be retained as “open space/biodiversity opportunities”, to west of a green corridor, to maintain this part of the site as open and green, and maintain the separation between the settlements of Whitstable and Herne Bay.
- 4.41 If this approach was adopted, the perception of a gap between Whitstable and Herne Bay would be maintained to the east of the Site, where the most open views across the wider landscape separating the two settlements are currently obtained, as illustrated by **Site Context Photographs 7 and 8**, the locations of which are shown on **Figure 1: Site Context Plan**. Furthermore, from the edge of the settlement of Herne Bay, residential development on the Site, including on the eastern part of the Site, would not be noticeable in views looking west across the remaining gap, towards Whitstable, as illustrated by **Site Context Photograph 9**, being set behind the proposed secondary school, and with both being set beyond the open space buffer associated with the sport provision for the secondary school, such that the perception of separation between the settlements of Whitstable and Herne Bay would also be maintained.

## 5.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

- 5.1 The Site is located on the eastern edge of Whitstable, as illustrated on **Figure 1: Site Context Plan**. The land in the vicinity of the Site comprises a settled landscape, with the coastal settlements of Whitstable and Herne Bay located on the generally low-lying coastal plain, with land rising inland to the south, as illustrated on **Figure 2: Topography Plan**.
- 5.2 The Site is located immediately to the south of the A2990 Thanet Way and to the north of the residential properties along Maydowns Road and Molehill Road to the south. The residential areas of Whitstable, that is Chestfield and Swalecliffe, lie to the south-west and to the north-west, of the Site respectively. Molehill Solar Farm is located on the eastern boundary of the Site; with Herne Bay located further to the east of the Site, beyond the wider agricultural landscape.
- 5.3 The Site is located within NCA 113: North Kent Plain, and within The Blean LCA as defined in the North East Kent Character Area Assessment. The Site is located within the Urban Edge Landscape Character Type, as defined in the draft Canterbury Landscape Character and Biodiversity Appraisal, and more specifically, the Site is within Landscape Character Area 9: Chestfield Gap, as illustrated on **Figure 3: Landscape Character Plan**.
- 5.4 The Site is located in a Green Gap as designated in the Adopted Canterbury District Local Plan (2017), with reference to Policy OS6: Green Gaps, and, in particular, the Herne Bay and Whitstable Green Gap, with reference to Policy OS7. The Site is covered by Policy W8: Bodkin Farm of the Draft Canterbury District Local Plan to 2045, and is identified for release from the Green Gap, and promoted for mixed use development, broadly comprising residential development, a local centre, publicly open space, and secondary school and associated sports provision.
- 5.5 However, it should also be noted that a Green Gap designation is related to the function of land, being predominantly informed by land use, that is whether it is developed or not, and the degree to which attributes or components of the land contribute to actual or perceived separation between settlements or areas of built development. As such, a Green Gap designation is not a qualitative designation of the landscape and is not a reflection of attributes of landscape value such as landscape quality, scenic quality, rarity or representativeness, opportunities for recreation, or conservation interests or cultural associations.
- 5.6 With regard Herne Bay and Whitstable Green Gap, as set out in the Landscape and Visual Note previously submitted with the representations to the Canterbury District Local Plan Preferred Options Consultation, the Site, adjoining the existing western settlement edge of the urban

area of Whitstable, is in an area already influenced by existing development, including Thanet Way, residential properties along Maydowns Road and Molehill Solar Farm.

- 5.7 The Site was noted as being, physically and visually, well-contained along the eastern boundary by vegetation; and by Purchas Wood Ancient Woodland, which is protected, to the immediate east of the Site. The Site is separated from the remainder of the Green Gap to the east of the Site by Molehill Solar Farm. The Green Gap to the east of Molehill Solar Farm comprises land that is generally flat, with more open views across the landscape to the south, as illustrated by **Site Context Photographs 7, 8 and 9**, the locations of which are also shown on **Figure 1: Site Context Plan**, and which provides a tangible green gap, with views of the intervening landscape, between Whitstable and Herne Bay. It is these attributes that contribute to the suitability of the Site to accommodate development and be released from the Green Gap.
- 5.8 Therefore, considering the existing landscape and visual context of the Site, it has previously been demonstrated that the Site could be removed from the Green Gap, which is justified by the inclusion of Policy W8: Bodkin Farm in the draft Local Canterbury District Local Plan to 2045. Policy W8: Bodkin Farm provides a Concept Masterplan which broadly illustrates development being located on the western and eastern central parts of the Site, which would adjoin the existing western settlement edge of Whitstable, set between Thanet Way to the north and residential properties along Maydowns Road to the south. The school development and associated sports pitch provision, along with a buffer of open green space, accommodating the associated sports provision for the school, on the eastern part of the Site, would provide a buffer to the Purchas Wood Ancient Woodland, and a transition from residential development in the west and the wider landscape to the east of the Site. Development on the Site would be well-contained along the eastern boundary by existing retained and enhanced vegetation on the Site boundary, and by Purchas Wood Ancient Woodland, to the immediate east of the Site.
- 5.9 Development would be accommodated on the Site, both on the western and eastern parts of the Site, set within an enhanced landscape framework, with enhancement to the boundary vegetation along Thanet Way, to provide additional screening to views from Thanet Way.
- 5.10 Built form would be set back into the Site from the eastern boundary, such that the combination of the open character of sport pitch provision, the open green space buffer to the Ancient Woodland, and the strengthened eastern boundary, combined with the screening provided by Purchas Wood, would largely screen views of development in views from east of the Site, as illustrated by **Site Context Photograph 9**.
- 5.11 Whilst potential residential development on the Site would extend the settlement of Whitstable to the east, into the Chestfield Gap LCA; residential development would be set between existing

development to the north of Thanet Way and existing residential development along Maydowns Road; but would retain an open buffer on the most eastern edge of the Site, to provide a transition from development to the wider Chestfield Gap LCA to the east of the Site.

- 5.12 The Landscape Strategy associated with development would also positively contribute to many of the guidelines for the Chestfield Gap LCA, in that it would create an attractive edge to Whitstable, improve the appearance of the transport corridor of Thanet Way, enhance declining hedgerows, and provide opportunities to create new woodland around Purchas Wood. Potential development would not affect the visual and nature conservation interest of West Brook, which is physically and visually separated from the Site by Molehill Solar Farm.
- 5.13 Draft Policy W8 reserves the eastern extent of the Site, to the east of the hedgerow running through the Site, solely for development of the secondary school.
- 5.14 However, as noted in the visual appraisal, the eastern part of the Site is of a lower elevation and more gently sloping compared with the western part of the Site, and being partially screened by roadside mounding along Thanet Way, is afforded greater screening from views, than the western part of the Site. Where glimpses of the eastern part of the Site are obtained, they are contained by field boundary and surrounding vegetation, as illustrated by **Site Context Photographs 4, 5 and 6**, the locations of which are also shown on **Figure 1: Site Context Plan**. The eastern part of the Site is therefore suitable for accommodating development, as acknowledged by Draft Policy W8.
- 5.15 The assessment of the suitability of the entire Site to accommodate development, based on the landscape and visual appraisal of the Site, and consideration of a site-specific Landscape Strategy for the Site, demonstrates that a comprehensive green-blue infrastructure/landscape strategy, as required by draft Policy W8, alongside further residential could also occupy the eastern extent of the Site, east of the hedgerow running through the centre of the Site, as illustrated in the Vision Document (**Appendix A**).
- 5.16 This would still retain a suitable extent of more open land uses related to the secondary school on the most eastern edge of the Site, to provide a transition from development to the remaining Green Gap to the east of the Site. This demonstrates the eastern part of the Site has capacity to accommodate further residential development in addition to a secondary school, and in addition to that suggested by Policy W8: Bodkin Farm, without greater harm to the Green Gap between Whitstable and Herne Bay.
- 5.17 Therefore, whilst there would be a change in character to this part of the Chestfield Gap LCA on the Site, and an extension of settlement into the Chestfield Gap LCA, the extent of development would not extend significantly further east than that of existing development to the north and south of the Site, and there would be an appropriate open/green buffer on the

eastern edge of the Site, adjoining the remaining Green Gap between Whitstable and Herne Bay.

- 5.18 Furthermore, from the edge of the settlement of Herne Bay, residential development on the Site, including on the eastern part of the Site, would not be noticeable in views looking west across the remaining gap, towards Whitstable, as illustrated by **Site Context Photograph 9**, being set behind the proposed secondary school, and with both being set beyond the open space buffer associated with the sport provision for the secondary school, such that the perception of separation between the settlements of Whitstable and Herne Bay would also be maintained. This also demonstrates the eastern part of the Site has capacity to accommodate further residential development in addition to a secondary school.
- 5.19 With regard to the remaining Green Gap to the east of the Site, Policy HB4: Land West of Thorndean Wood Road also promotes a secondary school site and supporting residential development, on the western edge of Herne Bay, into the Chestfield Gap LCA. Policy HB4: Land West of Thorndean Wood Road – concept masterplan promotes residential development to the south of the Herne Bay settlement, without extending residential development further west than the existing residential development of Herne Bay. It then promotes secondary school and associated sports pitch provision to the west of that; but reserving the most western extent of the site for “open space/biodiversity opportunities”.
- 5.20 The western extent of site for Policy HB4: Land to the West of Thorndean Wood Road, is open, not contained by any substantial boundary vegetation, and therefore currently contributes to the openness of the Green Gap, affording views out over the intervening landscape between Whitstable and Herne Bay and providing tangible separation between the two settlements, as illustrated by **Site Context Photographs 7, 8 and 9** in the Landscape and Visual Appraisal, the locations for which are shown on **Figure 1: Site Context Plan**.
- 5.21 Therefore the Policy HB4 Site can accommodate secondary school development and supporting residential development, due to the existing attributes and characteristics of the eastern extent of the site, immediately adjoining Herne Bay, as covered by Policy HB4, but the most western extent of the site, with reference to Policy HB4, and as illustrated on Policy HB4: The Land to the West of Thorndean Wood Road – concept masterplan accompanying Policy must be retained as “open space/biodiversity opportunities”, to west of a green corridor, to maintain this part of the site as open and green, and maintain the separation between the settlements of Whitstable and Herne Bay.
- 5.22 If this approach was adopted, the perception of a gap between Whitstable and Herne Bay would be maintained to the east of the Site, where the most open views across the wider landscape separating the two settlements are currently obtained, as illustrated by **Site**

**Context Photographs 7 and 8**, the locations of which are shown on **Figure 1: Site Context Plan**. Furthermore, from the edge of the settlement of Herne Bay, residential development on the Site, including on the eastern part of the Site, would not be noticeable in views looking west across the remaining gap, towards Whitstable, as illustrated by Site **Context Photograph 9**, being set behind the proposed secondary school, and with both being set beyond the open space buffer associated with the sport provision for the secondary school, such that the perception of separation between the settlements of Whitstable and Herne Bay would also be maintained.

- 5.23 The proposals for the Site, covered by Policy W8, would be informed by, and would be sympathetic to, the landscape character of the locality. The proposals would consider the sensitivity of the Chestfield Gap Landscape Character Area (LCA) to accommodate change, such that potential residential development, set within an appropriate landscape and blue/green infrastructure framework, would be successfully assimilated into the immediate and wider landscape, taking account of the key characteristic of the Chestfield Gap LCA.
- 5.24 Proposals for the Site would therefore accommodate consideration of the existing features and patterns that contribute to the landscape character and local distinctiveness of the area, such that they would be informed by local character. Proposals would promote a scale of development, design and materials and landscaping measures which would be appropriate to, and would lead to, an enhancement of the character of the landscape and its relative value and sensitivities, such that they would reinforce, retain, restore, conserve or improve landscape character; would promote the maintenance, enhancement, and restoration of biodiversity; and would have no adverse impact on long distance views. Therefore, potential development, and an associated landscape strategy on the site, including with residential development located east of the central hedgerow as illustrated in the Vision Document (**Appendix A**), could positively contribute to the objectives of Policy DS22 – Landscape Character, in accordance with the draft Canterbury District Local Plan to 2045.
- 5.25 Furthermore, this landscape and visual appraisal demonstrates the an additional area of residential development could be delivered on the Site, to the east of the central hedgerow running through the Site, and to the west of the proposed secondary school and associated sport pitch provision, with very limited extension of development of Whitstable to the east, beyond that existing to the south along Maydowns Road or north of Thanet Way, such that there would be no greater harm to the remaining Green Gap arising from the increase in the quantum of residential development from 250 dwellings, as set out in Policy W8: Bodkin Farm, to 300 dwellings as illustrated in the Vision Document (**Appendix A**).






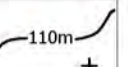
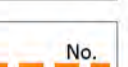




















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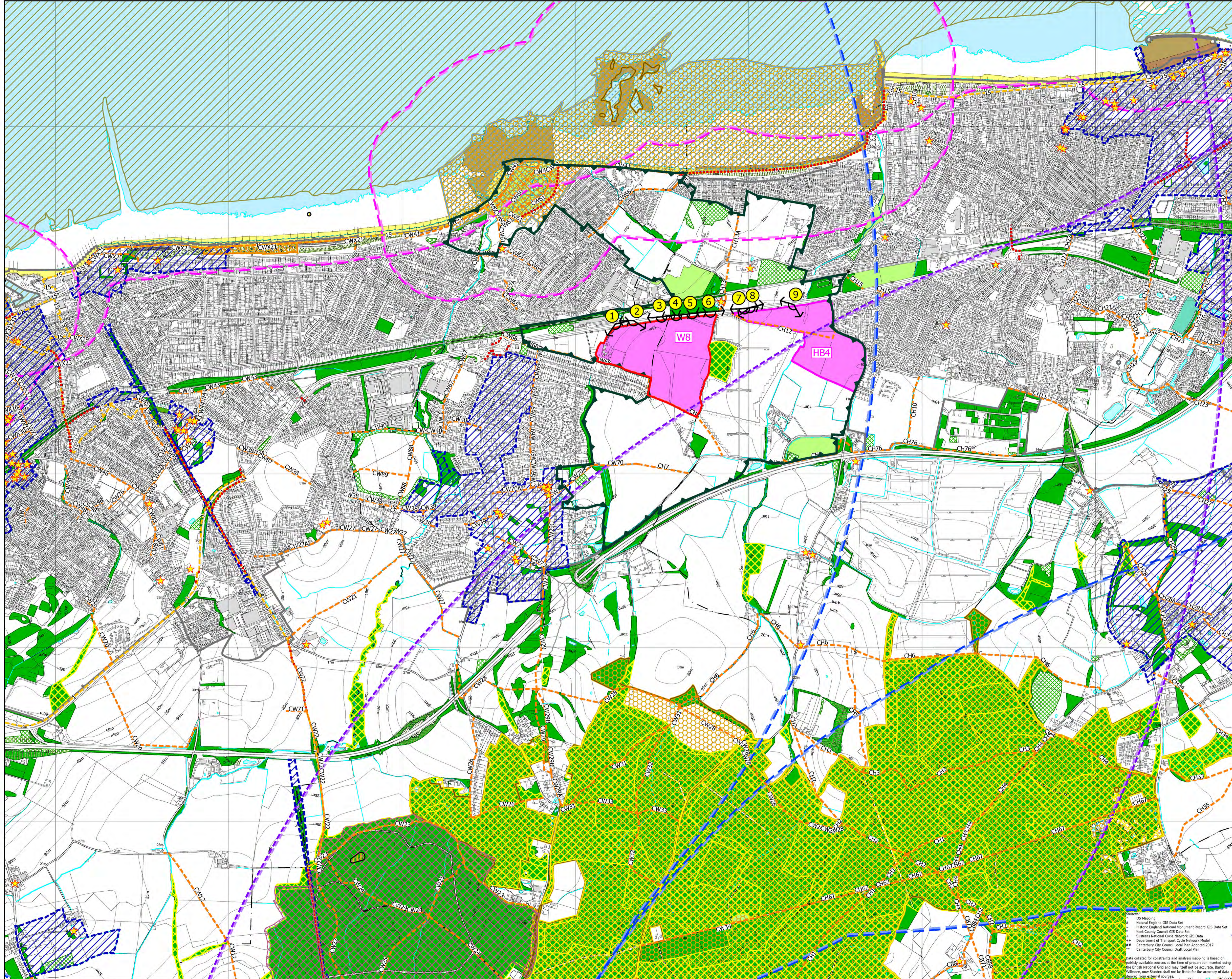
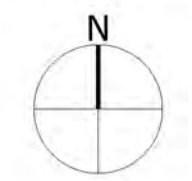
**FIGURE 1  
SITE CONTEXT PLAN**

The figure area is currently blank, indicating that the site context plan content is missing or has not been rendered. The page is otherwise empty, with horizontal lines at the top and bottom.



# Legend

-  Site Boundary
-  Existing Woodlands, Copses and Tree Belts ^
-  Existing Scrub ^
-  Existing Water Courses and Features ^
-  Contours/Spot Heights (Metres AOD) ^
-  Public Rights of Way \*
-  Coastal Path # / Long Distance Walks ^
-  Countryside Rights of Way Access Areas #
-  Sustrans Cycle Route +
-  Cycle Route
-  Listed Buildings ~
-  Scheduled Monument ~
-  Conservation Area ~
-  Sites of Special Scientific Interest #
-  Special Protection Area #
-  Special Protection Area, 400m Buffer #
-  Special Protection Area, 5km Buffer #
-  Special Protection Area, 7km Buffer #
-  Special Area of Conservation #
-  Ramsar Site #
-  Ancient Woodland #
-  National Nature Reserve #
-  Traditional Orchards #
-  Green Gap ##
-  Boundary of Urban Area ##
-  Draft Allocations \*\*  
 W8: Bodkin Farm  
 HB4: Land to the West of Thorden Wood Road
-  Location of Photographic Viewpoints  
 (Site Context Photographs: 1-9)



**FIGURE 1**  
 Project: Bodkin Farm, Whitstable  
 Drawing Title: Site Context Plan

Date: 13.01.2023	Scale: 1:10,000 @A1 1:20,000 @A3	Drawn by: OF/WD	Check by: LT
Project No: 33568	Drawing No: LN-LP-01	Revision: -	Revision: -

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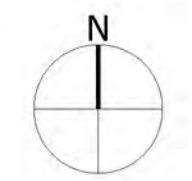


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**FIGURE 2  
TOPOGRAPHY PLAN**

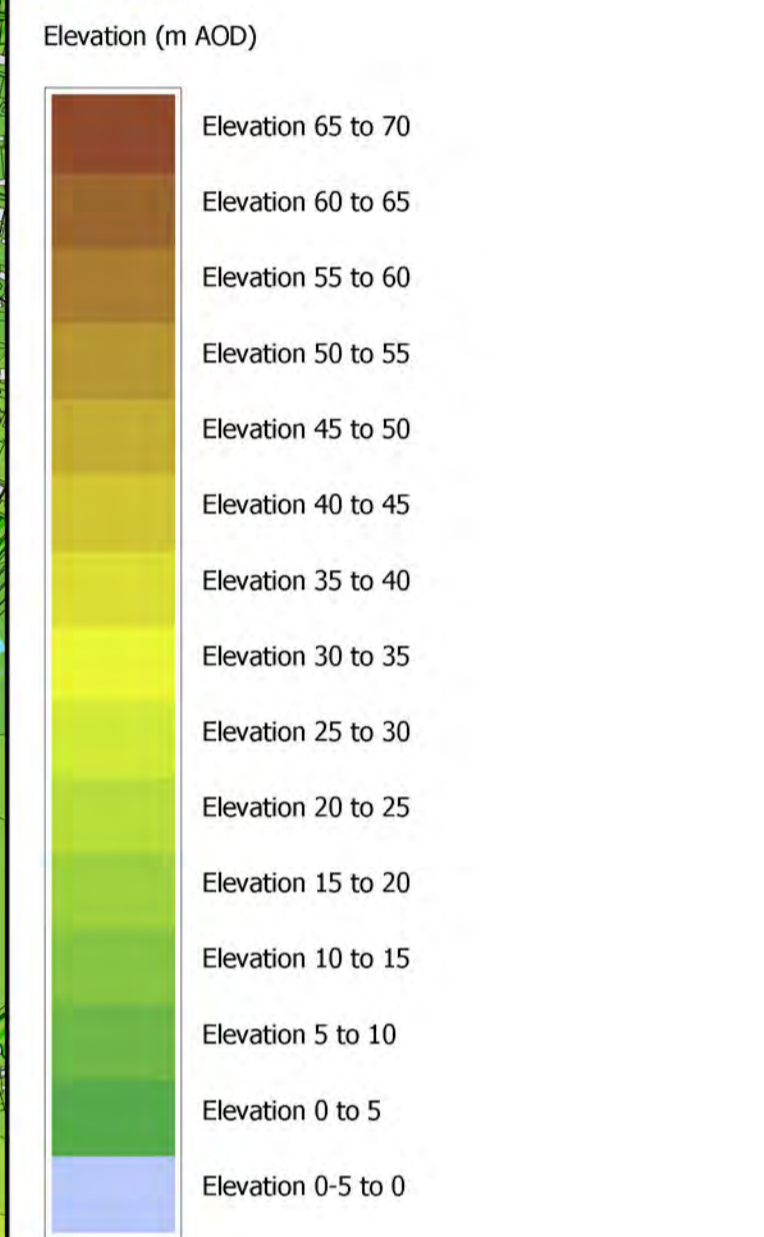
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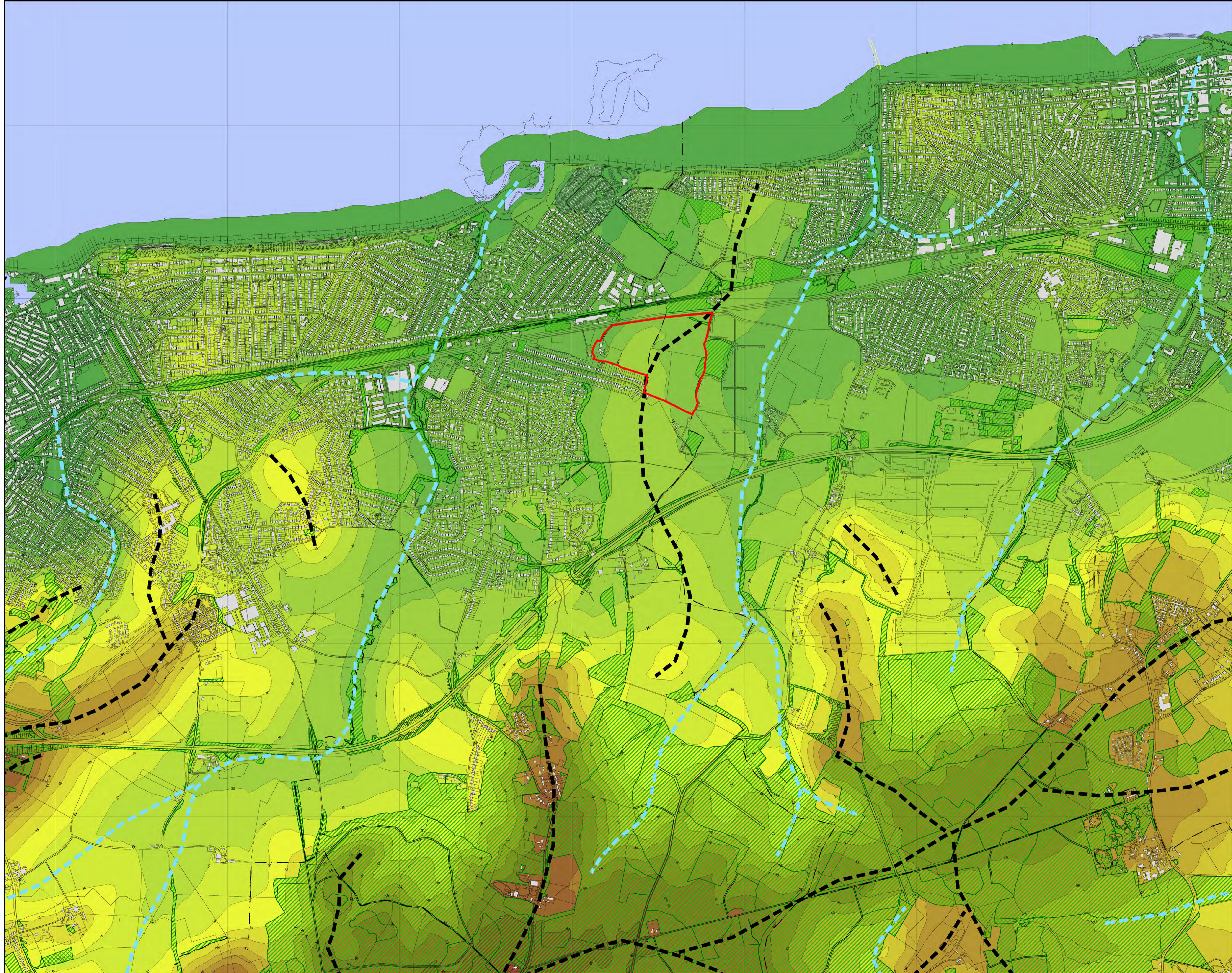


### Legend

- Site Boundary
- Existing Water Courses and Features ^
- Contours/Spot Heights (Metres AOD) ^
- Ridgelines
- Valleys
- Existing Woodlands, Copses and Tree Belts ^



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



## FIGURE 2

Project  
**Bodkin Farm,  
 Whitstable**  
 Drawing Title  
**Topography Plan**

Date 13.01.2023	Scale 1:10,000 @A1 1:20,000 @A3	Drawn by OF/WD	Check by LT
Project No 33568	Drawing No LN-LP-02	Revision	



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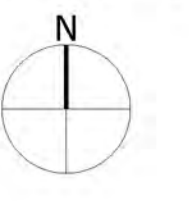
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**FIGURE 3**  
**LANDSCAPE CHARACTER PLAN**

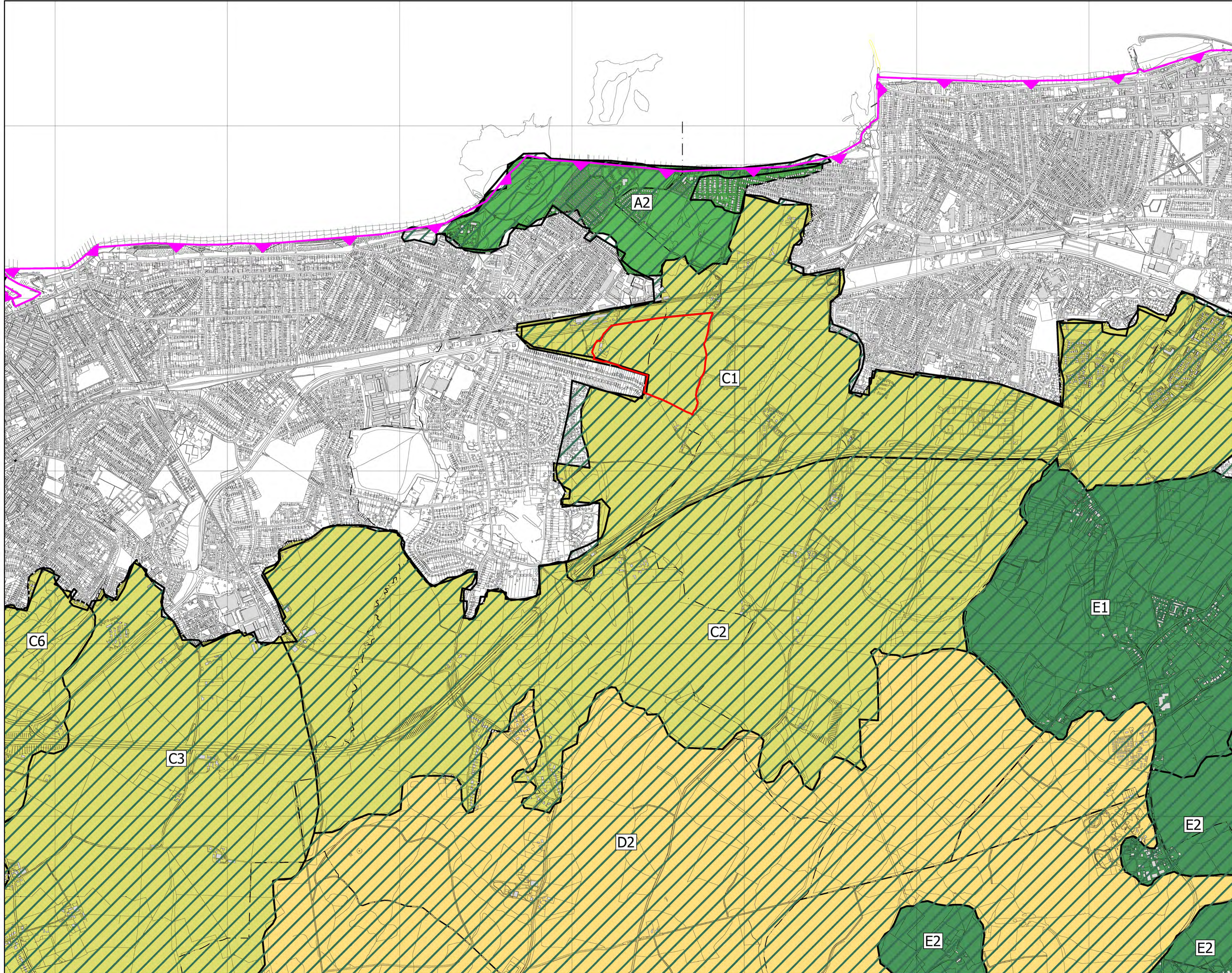




### Legend

- Site Boundary
- National Character Area Profiles #**
- Area 113, North Kent Plain
- Kent Landscape Character Area ~**
- The Blean
- Canterbury Landscape Character Areas \***
- A: Open Coastal Edge  
A2: Swalecliffe Coast
- C: Coastal Hinterland  
C1: Chestfield Gap and Greenhill  
C2: Chestfield Farmland  
C3: Court Lees and Millstrood Farmlands  
C6: Wraik Hill
- D: The Blean - Woodland  
D2: Thornden
- E: The Blean - Farmland  
E1: Herne Common  
E2: Sarre Penn Valley

Sources:  
 # Natural England GIS Data Set  
 \* Canterbury Landscape Character and Biodiversity Appraisal Draft 2020  
 ~ The Landscape Assessment of Kent, Kent County Council 2004  
 Data collated for constraints and analysis mapping is based on publicly available sources at the time of preparation inserted using the British National Grid and may itself not be accurate. Barton Willmore, nor Stantec shall not be liable for the accuracy of data derived from external sources.



### FIGURE 3

Project:  
**Bodkin Farm,  
 Whitstable**  
 Drawing Title:  
**Landscape Character Plan**

Date	Scale	Drawn by	Check by
13.01.2023	1:10,000 @A1 1:20,000 @A3	OF/WD	LT
Project No	Drawing No	Revision	
33568	LN-LP-03	-	



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**FIGURE 4  
SITE APPRAISAL PLAN**

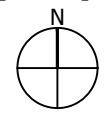
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The scaling of this drawing cannot be assured

Revision \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Drn \_\_\_\_\_ Ckd \_\_\_\_\_



### LEGEND

-  Site Boundary
-  Contours/Spot Heights (Metres AOD)
-  Public Rights of Way \*
-  Ancient Woodland #
-  Green Gap +
-  Open Space +
-  Protection of Open Space +
-  Flood Defences
-  Flood Zone 3, 1 in 100 year risk
-  Flood Zone 2, 1 in 1000 year risk

Sources:  
 \* Kent County Council GIS Data Set  
 + Canterbury City Council Local Plan Adopted 2017  
 # Natural England GIS Data Set  
 ~ Environment Agency GIS Data Set

Note:  
 GE Aerial Photograph dated 30 March 2021

## FIGURE 4

Project  
**Bodkin Farm,  
 Whitstable**  
 Drawing Title  
**Site Appraisal Plan**

Date	Scale	Drawn by	Check by
13.01.2023	1:5,000 @A3	OF/WD	LT
Project No	Drawing No	Revision	
33568	LN-LP-04	-	



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**SITE CONTEXT PHOTOGRAPHS 1 – 9**

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**SITE CONTEXT PHOTOGRAPH 1: VIEW FROM THANET WAY, LOOKING SOUTH-EAST ACROSS THE WESTERN FIELD OF THE SITE**



**SITE CONTEXT PHOTOGRAPH 2: VIEW FROM THANET WAY, LOOKING SOUTH-WEST ACROSS THE WESTERN FIELD OF THE SITE**



**SITE CONTEXT PHOTOGRAPH 3: VIEW FROM THANET WAY, LOOKING SOUTH ACROSS THE WESTERN FIELD OF THE SITE**



Approximate extent of the Site

Thanet Way

Purchas Wood



SITE CONTEXT PHOTOGRAPH 4: VIEW FROM THANET WAY, LOOKING SOUTH ACROSS THE EASTERN FIELDS OF THE SITE

Approximate extent of the Site

Thanet Way



SITE CONTEXT PHOTOGRAPH 5: VIEW FROM THANET WAY, LOOKING SOUTH ACROSS THE EASTERN FIELDS OF THE SITE

Approximate extent of the Site

Solar Farm

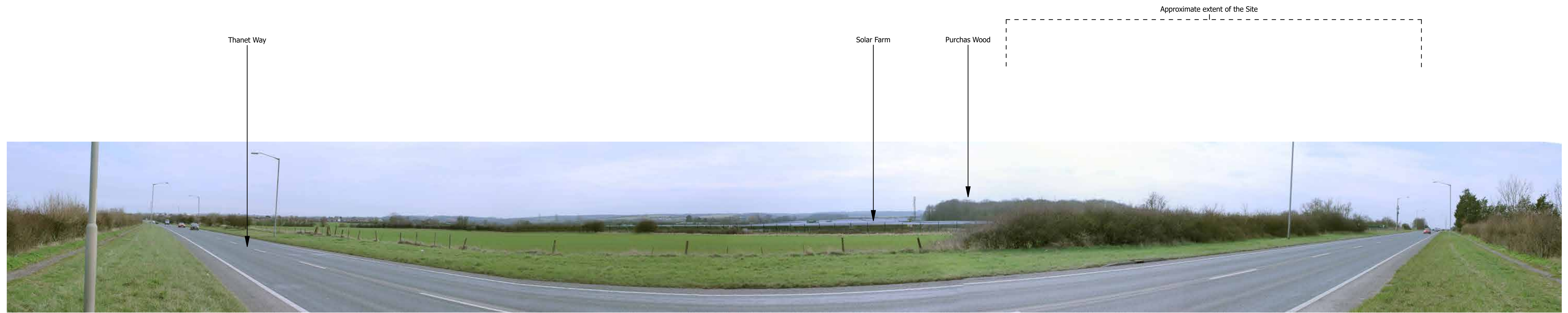
Purchas Wood

Thanet Way



SITE CONTEXT PHOTOGRAPH 6: VIEW FROM THANET WAY, LOOKING SOUTH ACROSS THE EASTERN FIELDS OF THE SITE

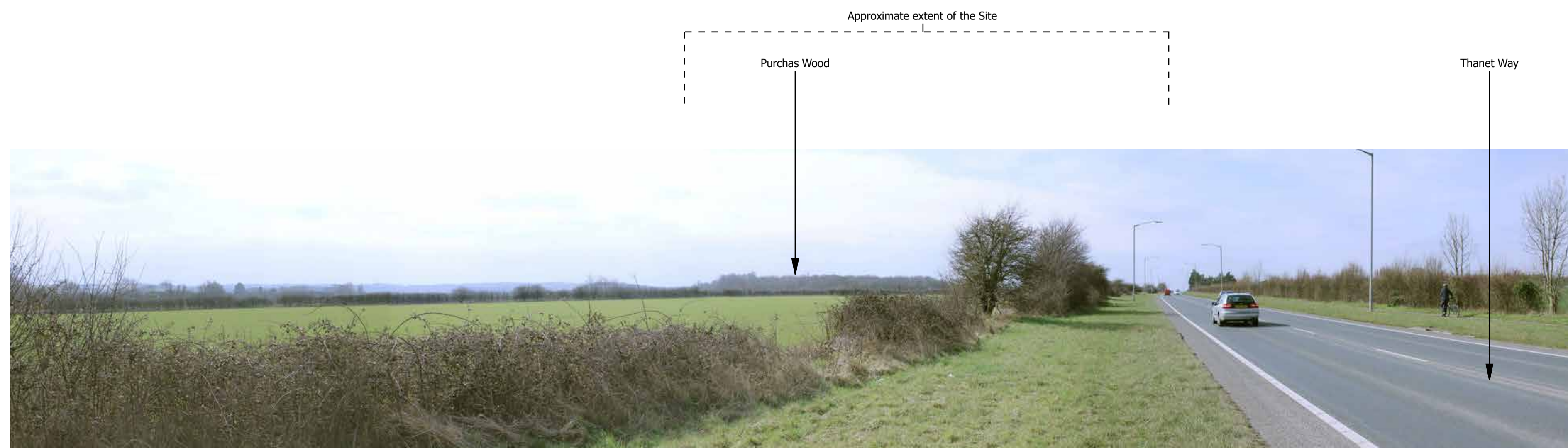




SITE CONTEXT PHOTOGRAPH 7: VIEW FROM THANET WAY, LOOKING SOUTH



SITE CONTEXT PHOTOGRAPH 8: VIEW FROM THANET WAY, LOOKING SOUTH



SITE CONTEXT PHOTOGRAPH 9: VIEW FROM THANET WAY, LOOKING SOUTH-WEST