



Milton Keynes City Council
Planning and Building Control
Civic Centre
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Central Milton Keynes
MK9 3EJ

22 December 2025

BY EMAIL

Dear Sir / Madam,

RESPONSE TO THE REGULATION 19 CONSULTATION ON THE MK CITY PLAN 2050 – NORTH MILTON KEYNES

On behalf of Urban&Civic PLC, Taylor Wimpey Strategic Land and The Society of Merchant Venturers (“the Consortium”), Iceni Projects is pleased to submit representations to Milton Keynes City Council’s (“MKCC”) Regulation 19 Consultation on the MK City Plan 2050.

The Consortium are jointly promoting land known as North Milton Keynes (“the Site”) for a strategic extension to the city as part of the New Towns programme delivering around 16,000 homes and strategic employment land. The Site covers 1,045ha to the north of Milton Keynes and comprises the land parcels identified in the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (“SHLAA”) (November 2025) under site references 110093, 110097 and 110127.

a. Submission to the Regulation 18 Consultation

Stantec, on behalf of the Consortium, submitted representations to the Regulation 18 Consultation on the MK City Plan 2050 in October 2024. The comments made within these representations, as well as the extensive technical work undertaken to support them, remain and we would refer the Council to these as part of this submission. These representations to the Regulation 19 build on the comments made to the Regulation 18 Consultation.

b. North Milton Keynes as a New Town

Following its manifesto pledge, the Labour government set up the New Towns Taskforce in July 2024. Its commission was to identify a list of specific locations for New Towns as well as making recommendations on how these new communities may be designed and delivered.

The Government sees this new wave of New Towns as a route to unlocking significant economic growth as well as making a substantial contribution towards much needed housing delivery. It sees New Towns as a vehicle towards addressing labour immobility, improving public health and educational prospects, thereby improving economic productivity.

In November 2024, the Taskforce launched a “Call for Evidence” for locations for New Towns. The Consortium submitted North Milton Keynes as a potential location for a New Town, highlighting it as an opportunity for transformational growth of the City. We are pleased that in September 2025, Milton Keynes was identified on the shortlist for a New Town, including the redevelopment of the city centre and expanding the city to the north and east. A further update from the New Towns Task Force is expected in early 2026.

The New Towns Taskforce report to Government in September 2025 clearly highlights the economic benefits which New Towns can bring. Not only helping to address the shortage of housing through

providing a range of housing typologies, sizes and tenures, New Towns are recognised as adding social value and driving innovation, attracting investment and talent to places which are already growing.

The report notes Milton Keynes as a nationally high performer in terms of housebuilding, with the New Towns initiative an opportunity to support increased delivery and to “*reinvigorate an already highly productive local economy*”. It goes on to state that Milton Keynes is a city with an “*entrepreneurial business identity*”. The city’s “*strong economic base*” could help deliver significant job growth, taking advantage of its location along the Oxford-Cambridge Growth Corridor.

The report concludes that Milton Keynes City Council is an “*enthusiastic agent*” for the next phase of New Towns.

The Consortium are continuing to engage with relevant stakeholders to bring forward North Milton Keynes as part of the vision for a “Renewed Town”.

North Milton Keynes will deliver a multitude of benefits, including around 16,000 new homes, including up to 40% affordable and strategic employment served by a new motorway junction on the M1. This part of the New Town will connect to the existing community of Milton Keynes through a new Mass Rapid Transit (“MRT”) line and a new landmark bridge to connect Wolverton railway station and the wider city. The new Great Ouse City Park will enable c.45% of the site to be brought forward as green infrastructure, providing a new linear park for the city. North Milton Keynes will also build upon Milton Keynes as an economic area of regional and national importance, delivering strategic employment which will allow the city to take advantage of its location and key transport links.

It is likely that North Milton Keynes will be brought forward outside of the Local Plan process, although the exact route is yet to be confirmed. However, it is essential that the emerging Local Plan, and the policies contained within it, align with both the Council’s and Government’s ambitions for a New Town at Milton Keynes and to ensure that North Milton Keynes can be delivered without impediment.

Milton Keynes has a history and proud heritage as one of the original New Towns in the 1960s, and at the Council meeting of 19th November 2026, the Council resolved to welcome the publication of the New Town Taskforce report which names Milton Keynes as one of the twelve potential sites for the next generation of new towns. MKCC’s enthusiasm to be a fundamental contributor to the next phase should now be articulated within the emerging Local Plan.

It is important that the emerging MK City Plan 2050 reflects paragraph 22 of the NPPF, responding to long term requirements and opportunities, noting that where larger scale developments are proposed (e.g. through national objectives as well as local), policies should be set within a vision which looks at least 30 years ahead. It is important, therefore, that should North Milton Keynes be confirmed as a part of a New Town is recognised as part of the Vision of Milton Keynes as it looks forward to 2050 and beyond. The New Towns Task Force report has recommended that the Government should immediately commit to interim planning policy to protect New Town locations. Given this, it is important that emerging plans do not seek to usurp this recommendation by including planning policies which frustrate this process.

It is within this context which these representations are made and in the knowledge that the current proposed housing allocations are soundly based.

c. Policy GS1 (Our Spatial Strategy) and Policy GS6 (Open Countryside)

As set out above, the Consortium is broadly supportive of the Council’s spatial strategy (Policy GS1: Our Spatial Strategy), on the understanding that North Milton Keynes can come forward outside of this Local Plan process through an alternative consenting regime.

Reference should be included to the potential identification of Milton Keynes as a recommended location for a New Town by the Taskforce, and North Milton Keynes’s role in delivering this. This will ensure alignment between national policies and the development plan. The NPPF at paragraph 11a) requires plans to meet the development needs of their area and align growth and infrastructure. This

“growth” also should take into consideration aspirations of government. On 12 October 2025, Matthew Pennycook MP made a Statement to the House of Commons regarding the next generation of New Towns and reaffirmed the Government’s commitment to increase housing supply through new large settlements. Therefore, it is essential that MKCC recognises this national policy context within the emerging Local Plan.

Similarly, Policy GS6 (Open Countryside) states that land outside of settlement boundaries is designated as Open Countryside, and permission will only be granted where proposals maintain the openness and character of the landscape, in accordance with Policy CEA12 (please refer to the following section for full comments on this policy). The Consortium does not object in principle to Policy GS6, however, we consider that reference should be included to the potential for a New Town which will come forward outside of the existing settlement boundaries. This will ensure consistency between national policy objectives and the development plan.

d. Ouse Valley Special Landscape Area

The Consortium **strongly objects** to Ouse Valley being designated as a Special Landscape Area (“SLA”) within the emerging Local Plan under Policy CEA12 (Conserving and enhancing landscape character / Special Landscape Areas). As set out within the Regulation 18 representations, it is considered that the principal landscape feature which identifies the Ouse Valley Special Landscape Area is the Ouse Valley floor. This is already designated as a Linear Park through the adopted Plan:MK (2019), in which proposals would be subject to robust development management controls that protect its character. Therefore, the inclusion of additional land, which extends much further north, is deemed unnecessary and unjustified.

Whilst paragraphs 20 and 187 of the NPPF require planning policies to contribute to and enhance the natural environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, paragraph 20 also requires strategic policies to make sufficient provision for homes and employment development. Further, paragraph 36 of the NPPF requires plans to be positively prepared (with a strategy which provides for objectively assessed needs as a minimum) and be justified, i.e. based on proportional evidence.

We consider that local landscape designations within the administrative boundaries of MKCC are not required as they do not fully take into account the balance of the requirement to meet need whilst protecting valued landscapes, and are not supported by the appropriate evidence. Character-based approaches to proposals can be utilised effectively to manage landscape change in a sensitive and appropriate manner, in accordance with Policy CEA12 (Conserving and enhancing landscape character/Special Landscape Areas).

Whilst the Consortium is strongly of the position that the Ouse Valley SLA is not justified, if, however, the Council considers that the Ouse Valley SLA is indeed necessary, the portion of the SLA which covers the Site should be removed, and in the vicinity of the Site be consistent with the extent of the River Floodplains Local Character Type (“LCT”) as defined in the MKCC Landscape Character Assessment (2022). A detailed response to the Candidate SLA Evidence Base is set out within Section 8 of the Landscape Visual Assessment (“LVA”), prepared by Stantec, and submitted in support of the representations to the Regulation 18 consultation (and included again here at **Appendix A**). It is considered that the land within the Site exhibits few of the Special Qualities which are attributed to the Ouse Valley SLA. The special landscape qualities of the proposed Ouse Valley SLA relate to the low-lying shallow valley, with the emerging Local Plan evidence base providing no justification for extending the proposed extent into the upper valley slope and wold landscape that characterises the Site.

As demonstrated through the concept masterplan developed by the Consortium to support the promotion of North Milton Keynes, the proposals include the establishment of the Ouse Valley Park, protecting the key landscape feature of the Ouse Valley as identified through the Milton Keynes Review of Local Landscape Designations (2024). The masterplan has also been developed to retain views of locally distinctive features in the landscape, include structural planting along ridgelines and use valleys as blue-green infrastructure corridors to accentuate the legibility of the landform. This sympathetic design response respects the key characteristics and special qualities of the Ouse Valley, recognising it as an important landscape in the context of Milton Keynes and contributing to positive placemaking.

Furthermore, the Government has been clear that local authorities should not seek to inhibit the bringing forward of New Towns through policies within Local Plans. This policy and designation of the Ouse Valley as an SLA relates to the emerging MK City Plan 2025 and the lack of reference and acknowledgement of Milton Keynes as a recommended location for a New Town. It is imperative that the emerging Local Plan is in line with the ambitions of national government and does not inadvertently delay or frustrate the commencement of New Towns. Based upon the evidence, the Consortium believes that in order for Policy CEA12 to be found sound, in terms of being consistent with national policy, positively prepared and evidenced, as a minimum, the extents of the Ouse Valley SLA be refined and restricted to that of the Linear Park.

e. Supporting Economic Prosperity

Objective 12 of the Local Plan sets out the ambition to “*enable better access to...economic opportunities to strengthen our regional and national economic role...*” In aiming to support this objective, Policy GS3 (Strategy for economic prosperity) sets out the locations where the development of employment land will be directed towards and the employment land supply position as of September 2025.

At paragraph 26, the Local Plan identifies Milton Keynes as an “*economic powerhouse*”. However, it goes on to warn at paragraph 30 that whilst the M1 corridor and proximity to large markets in London and Birmingham has meant that Milton Keynes has experienced strong growth in the logistics industry and this demand remains strong, “*opportunities for further growth are diminishing due to the lack of suitable sites to accommodate the specific needs of this section*”.

The level of unmet need will restrict Milton Keynes’ economic growth potential and lead to the leakage of employment activity to other areas. The supporting text to Policy GS3 (Strategy for economic prosperity) highlights that the accompanying evidence base to the Local Plan identifies a shortfall of between 331 to 402ha of industrial and warehousing floorspace¹. A total of 207.5ha of land is proposed as supply through allocations, leaving a shortfall of 124 to 198ha which will not be met through this emerging Local Plan.

The scale of this unmet need identified through the emerging Local Plan is significant and fails to chime with Milton Keynes’ role as an “*economic powerhouse*”. Without an adequate strategy to seek to meet this need, there remains a clear risk of Milton Keynes’ growth and regional position stagnating through this Local Plan. Icen Projects has prepared an Employment Land Issues and Opportunities document, which provides further detail and analysis and is submitted in support of these representations and can be found at **Appendix B**.

Furthermore, this evidence base, perhaps understandably at present, focuses solely on the level of employment required in the context of the housing delivery proposed in the MK City Plan 2050 i.e. without a New Town – although this acknowledges a shortfall in labour supply to meet projected higher levels of growth. Should Milton Keynes come forward as a New Town, this could further compound the unmet need position. This greater emphasises the need to, as a minimum, meet the employment need identified in the Milton Keynes Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment Update 2025.

The NPPF is clear at paragraph 11 that plans should promote a sustainable pattern of development which seeks to meet the development needs of the area and that strategic policies should “*as a minimum, provide for objectively assessed needs for housing and other uses*”. This is echoed at paragraph 20, with paragraph 86 requiring planning policies to “*set out a clear economic vision and strategy which positively and proactively encourages sustainable economic growth, having regard to the national industrial strategy*”.

As the emerging Local Plan fails to meet its identified need for warehousing and logistics floorspace, it cannot be considered positively prepared, effective or consistent with national policy in its current form.

¹ Milton Keynes City Council: Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment 2024 and Update 2025

Notwithstanding, North Milton Keynes has ability to make a very substantial contribution to this need. As previously noted, North Milton Keynes potentially may come forward outside of the Local Plan process in line with the New Towns initiative. However, at present, the consenting regime for New Towns is not confirmed and MKCC needs to ensure that its Local Plan is not inconsistent with the New Towns initiative and delivers against its identified need. The New Towns Task Force report, as part of its recommendations, stated that New Towns should connect people to skills, jobs, services and amenities (Recommendation 10) and that they should provide jobs for residents, enabling businesses to grow – thereby supporting the Government’s economic growth objectives (Recommendation 11). It is important that the emerging Plan takes these recommendations into account.

Whilst, understandably, the main focus has been on housing delivery, the scale and importance of North Milton Keynes means that this strategic employment element of the proposals, alongside the associated infrastructure necessary to deliver it can help plug the severe gap in employment land supply in Milton Keynes. The immediate proximity of Hanslope Park, owned and operated by HMGCC, also provides an immediate and complementary employment base to North Milton Keynes. North Milton Keynes has the potential to deliver a significant amount of employment of at least 30 ha but potentially towards 100 ha or more, effectively largely fulfilling the employment shortfall in the emerging Local Plan. This will help ensure that Milton Keynes remains an economic powerhouse, promoting its regional importance and help sustain ongoing growth and skills for the foreseeable future.

The majority of the built-up area within MKCC lies within the southern portion of its administrative boundaries, i.e. the city of Milton Keynes. The M1 corridor cuts through the authority area, passing north of the current city edge. The area to the north of the district is more rural in nature, made up of small towns and villages connected via A and B roads, making them unsuitable for large-scale employment schemes. The emerging Plan seeks to direct housing and smaller areas of employment to the east, south and west of the city.

The proposed Eastern City Expansion on its south western boundary directly adjoins the M1 extending from the A442/A509 and Newport Pagnell, to the administrative boundary with Central Bedfordshire. Essentially, this allocation means that there are limited opportunities to utilise the M1 corridor and the city’s connection to it in order to meet the future need for industrial and logistics warehousing. Existing allocations, notably Milton Keynes East and Caldecotte, are likely to provide a good level of strategic supply in the early part of the plan period, however, there will remain a substantial gap in the middle and latter years of the plan based on past take up rates. As such, the only reasonable location for delivering the outstanding employment growth which can take full advantage of the M1 corridor is north of the city: at North Milton Keynes.

As a new premium employment location on the UK’s central highway corridor, this part of the development will help to facilitate the delivery of a new junction on the M1 at North Milton Keynes which will in turn enable for the remainder of the North Milton Keynes New Town to come forward for residential-led development. This employment provision will be a prime location for attractive the “best in class” employment occupiers across the industrial, logistics, tech and advance manufacturing sectors. Beyond Milton Keynes East, which is already advanced, there are limited locations for large-scale industrial and logistics warehousing, of the type needed to realise MKCC’s growth potential. North Milton Keynes, therefore, offers the only location for such large-scale development which will help make a significant contribution to the identified shortfall. The provision of a new junction on the M1 will provide resilience in the strategic road network, relieve pressure on the existing junctions and have sub-regional benefits to the wider economy.

With MKCC’s ambition to increase its population to 500,000 by 2050, it will be essential that there are sufficient jobs for these new residents, to increase the city’s economic resilience and reduce outward commuting. Furthermore, with an increased population and significant new development proposed, a new junction will to be required in any event to provide resilience in the strategic road network, relieve pressure on the existing junctions and have sub-regional benefits to the wider economy. A new junction at North Milton Keynes will deliver the additional benefits of significant high quality and sought after employment floorspace as well as future proofing the delivery of Milton Keynes North outside of the Local Plan process.

f. Conclusions

In conclusion, the Consortium **supports the overall direction** of the MK City Plan 2050 but considers that it should acknowledge the Government's New Towns agenda. Explicit recognition of Milton Keynes' role in the next generation of New Towns, and of North Milton Keynes' strategic contribution to housing and employment delivery, will robustly support the Council's formal resolution made on 19th November 2025.

Based on evidence, the Consortium **strongly opposes** the designation of the Ouse Valley Special Landscape Area, and considers that this should be removed in its entirety, or as a minimum, reduced in coverage to exclude land within the land known as North Milton Keynes.

At present, the spatial strategy fails to plan for the significant level of unmet employment need identified. In particular, it fails to provide sufficient allocations for logistics and warehousing, meaning that the Plan cannot take full advantage of Milton Keynes' national location on the Strategic Road Network. North Milton Keynes offers a unique opportunity to plug this gap and help maintain the city's status as a prime location for high quality employment. Therefore, **the Site should be allocated for development**, particularly in recognition of its ability to meet the significant level of unmet employment need or in the alternative not be subject to designations which restrict its ability to come forward outside of the local plan process.

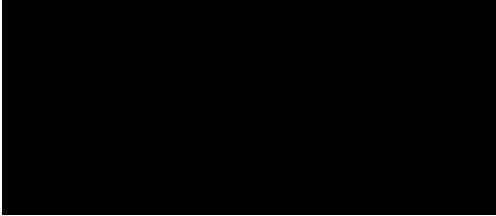
North Milton Keynes offers a transformational opportunity to deliver a new community which supports Milton Keynes' short and long-term growth aspirations as well as national objectives. It will deliver numerous benefits including:

- **Significant housing delivery:** Around 16,000 new homes, including up to 40% affordable housing, making a substantial contribution to meeting local and national housing need.
- **Major economic growth:** Provision of strategic employment land capable of making a substantial contribution to addressing the identified shortfall in logistics, industrial, advanced manufacturing and technology sectors, reinforcing Milton Keynes' role as an economic powerhouse.
- **Strategic infrastructure investment:** Delivery of a new M1 motorway junction, improving connectivity, supporting employment growth and enabling wider development, alongside ensuring enhanced resilience of the local and regional road network.
- **Sustainable transport connections:** Integration with the existing city through provision of a new Mass Rapid Transit line and a landmark bridge linking to Wolverton railway station and the city beyond.
- **High-quality green infrastructure:** Delivery of approximately 45% green and blue infrastructure across the Site, including the creation of the Great Ouse City Park, creating a major new linear park and enhancing landscape, biodiversity and providing public amenity.
- **Placemaking and quality of life:** A well-planned New Town that supports public health, access to jobs and services, and long-term social value through high-quality design and community infrastructure.
- **Alignment with national policy:** Directly supports the Government's New Towns programme, enabling accelerated housing delivery, economic productivity and inward investment in a nationally significant growth location.

The Consortium consider that without the changes proposed through these representations, the Plan risks constraining this transformational growth, failing to meet identified development needs, and undermining Milton Keynes' long-term economic potential.

The Consortium remain committed to engaging positively with the Council through the Local Plan process and reserve the right to attend at the relevant hearing sessions at the Examination in Public of the MK City Plan 2050, once the Plan has been submitted to the Secretary of State.

Yours sincerely,



Lucy Morris
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

APPENDIX B – EMPLOYMENT LAND ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES – ICENI PROJECTS

APPENDIX C – LAND CONTROL PLAN



North Milton Keynes

Landscape and Visual Appraisal

On behalf of **Urban & Civic plc, Taylor Wimpey Strategic Land and The Society of Merchant Venturers**

Project Ref: 333101403 | Rev: - | Date: September 2024

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For and on behalf of Stantec UK Limited				

Revision	Date	Description	Prepared	Reviewed	Approved

This report has been prepared by Stantec UK Limited ('Stantec') on behalf of its client to whom this report is addressed ('Client') in connection with the project described in this report and takes into account the Client's particular instructions and requirements. This report was prepared in accordance with the professional services appointment under which Stantec was appointed by its Client. This report is not intended for and should not be relied on by any third party (i.e. parties other than the Client). Stantec accepts no duty or responsibility (including in negligence) to any party other than the Client and disclaims all liability of any nature whatsoever to any such party in respect of this report.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Published Landscape Character Assessment Extracts

1 Introduction

1.1 Scope

- 1.1.1 Stantec's specialist Landscape Planning and Design group (Stantec) has been commissioned by Urban & Civic plc, Taylor Wimpey Strategic Land and The Society of Merchant Venturers to provide Landscape and visual advice to inform the potential for primarily residential development ('the Proposed Development') north of Milton Keynes (the 'Site'); and to provide a Landscape and Visual Appraisal of the Proposed Development.
- 1.1.2 The principal elements of the LVA are an analysis of the landscape context of the Site, including landform, vegetation, transport features and settlement pattern; identification and summaries of relevant landscape planning policy; analysis of published landscape character assessments encompassing the Site; an appraisal of the character of the Site itself; and a description of the visual characteristics of the Site in its context in the surrounding landscape.
- 1.1.3 The LVA process has been used to develop a series of landscape development principles based on a robust analysis of the landscape and visual characteristics of the Site and its context, with the aim of avoiding or reducing adverse effects on landscape character and visual amenity and optimising beneficial change in the landscape and in views. The methodology used for the LVA is drawn from principles of good practice in Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd Edition (Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013).

2 Site Context

2.1 Location

2.1.1 As shown in **Figure 1**, the Site is located on the north-western edge of Milton Keynes, broadly between the M1 motorway to the north-east and the Milton Keynes to Rugby section of the West Coast Main Line to the south-west.

2.2 Topography

2.2.1 As shown in **Figure 2**, the overriding topographical pattern of the local landscape is that of a low-lying, undulating clay plateau, dissected by the course of the meandering River Great Ouse and its tributaries in broad, shallow valleys. The River Great Ouse runs broadly south-west to north-east through the local landscape.

2.2.2 The Site lies between the River Great Ouse (immediately to the south-east) and its tributary, the River Tove (approximately 1 kilometre (km) to the west, and their broad valleys; and traverses a central south-west – north-east ridgeline at between approximately 95-100m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD). The north-west of the Site is crossed by a smaller, unnamed tributary stream, hereafter referred to as the Tathall Brook.

2.2.3 The broad valley floor of the River Great Ouse lies at an elevation of approximately 60m AOD. Within the valley floor north of Milton Keynes there are several large ponds and lakes formed by gravel extraction.

2.2.4 The landform rises to a broad plateau north of the Site, reaching a height of approximately 115m AOD near Hanslope, a spur of the south-west – north-east orientated Yardley-Whittlewood Ridge.

2.2.5 South of the River Great Ouse, the gentle valley slopes are incised by the tributary valleys of the Loughton Brook and the River Ouzel. Between these valleys is a spur of more elevated land on which the city centre of Milton Keynes is situated, at an elevation of approximately 110m AOD.

2.2.6 Beyond the Site to the west, the landform rises, forming the western valley slopes of the River Tove. Landform also rises beyond the Site to the east, comprising the eastern valley slopes of a meander in the River Great Ouse.

2.3 Transport, Settlement Patterns and Land Use

2.3.1 The M1 extends on a north-west – south-east axis through the area, and the West Coast Mainline railway extends broadly parallel to the M1, along the eastern flank of the Tove Valley. These strong linear transport features, in combination with the north-west – south-east route of Watling Street Roman road and the north-easterly flow of the River Great Ouse, have informed the orientation of the loose grid pattern in which the planned city of Milton Keynes is set.

2.3.2 The very large urban area of Milton Keynes lies immediately south-east of the River Great Ouse. The city of Milton Keynes was established as a new town in 1967. The city centre lies approximately 3.5km south-east of the Site. The city enveloped several small settlements, including industrial towns, coaching towns and smaller villages.

2.3.3 Watercourses passing through the city lie within wide (up to 1km), undeveloped valley floors forming linear parks. The main road network reinforces the grid structure of the settlement, creating blocks in which the grid pattern is followed to a varying degree depending on the land form, land use, development type and density. The main roads are usually wide and typically

lined by trees. Now that the roadside trees have become established, these wide boulevards form a strong vegetated framework and softens views of the city from the wider landscape.

- 2.3.4 To the north-west of the River Great Ouse, land use is predominantly agricultural, including scattered settlements and clusters of properties. At the centre of the plateau to the north-west of the Site, lies the village of Hanslope. To the west of the Site, beyond a further side valley and on the eastern flanks of the valley of the River Tove, lies the village of Castlethorpe. Directly to the north of the Site lies the hamlet of Tathall End. The villages of Little Linford and Haversham (separated into eastern and western parts), as well as sporadic intervening properties, are located at the north-western edge of the River Great Ouse valley floor beyond the south-eastern boundary of the Site. A network of minor roads extends between these smaller settlements. Other built forms in the vicinity of the Site include a small number of isolated properties and farm buildings, some of which have been adapted/extended for small-scale commercial activities.
- 2.3.5 The HM Government Communications Centre (HMGCC) is a substantial complex of offices and infrastructure including some taller modern buildings and communications masts, which has developed around Park House at Hanslope Park, immediately to the north of the Site.

2.4 Vegetation

- 2.4.1 Within the local landscape, more extensive woodland areas tend to be situated on higher ground, including Little Linford Wood within the Site and Gayhurst Wood and The Grove immediately beyond the Site boundaries to the north-east. The Yardley-Whittlewood Ridge, approximately 5km to the north of the Site is heavily wooded, including Salcey Forest and Yardly Chase. Similarly to the west of the Site, on the upper valley slopes of the River Tove, the Whittlewood Forest provides extensive woodland cover. In these areas, collectively, woodland on more elevated land creates wooded skylines. Within the city of Milton Keynes, there is an extensive green infrastructure network, particularly along road corridors. As a result, the city has a well-wooded character, within which only taller buildings, typically in the city centre, appear above the treeline. There is also extensive tree cover along the low-lying valley floors, as well as smaller woodland copses throughout the local landscape.

2.5 Access

- 2.5.1 Numerous public rights of way (PRoW) traverse the Site and the surrounding area, including several waymarked routes, of which the Three Shires Way, Hanslope Circular Ride, Ouse Valley Way and Swan's Way pass through the Site.
- 2.5.2 Little Linford Wood in the northern part of the Site is a publicly accessible Local Nature Reserve (LNR) with a managed path network. The valley floor of the River Great Ouse also includes some areas of publicly accessible open space and comprises part of the Ouse Valley Linear Park.

2.6 Landscape Planning Designations

- 2.6.1 The Draft Local Plan for Milton Keynes (Milton Keynes City Plan (2050)) identifies a Candidate Special Landscape Area (SLA) along the Ouse Valley supported by draft Policy CEA12 Conserving and Enhancing Landscape Character/Special Landscape Areas. The extent of this proposed designation is illustrated in **Figure 1** and includes south-eastern parts of the Site.
- 2.6.2 Other relevant designations shown in **Figure 1**, include:
- A Scheduled Monument, Moated site 70m south of Long Plantation, Hanslope Park on the north-western edge of the Site.

- The Moated site, fishponds and associated earthworks 150m south-east of Haversham Manor Scheduled Monument, adjacent to the south-eastern edge of the Site.
- Conservation Areas, including at Castlethorpe and Hanslope;
- Ancient Woodland, including at Little Linford Wood in the centre of the Site and three woodlands bisected by the M1, namely Hoo Wood, Stocking Wood and Gayhurst Wood;
- A Linear Park in the Great Ouse valley to the south-east;
- Two adjacent Registered Parks and Gardens (RPGs) on the eastern side of the M1 at Gayhurst Court (Grade II) and Tyringham (Grade II*). The citations for these two sites on the National Heritage List for England do not reference views in the direction of the Site;
- The Tove Valley SLA lies approximately 1.4km to the west of the Site at its nearest point, within the neighbouring South Northamptonshire District; and
- Listed buildings, concentrated within the local villages but also including a small number of farmhouses within the Site.

3 Landscape Character

3.1.1 Published Landscape Character Assessments at the National and Borough levels have been reviewed, in addition to the Historic Landscape Character Assessment undertaken by Buckinghamshire County Council. The extent of relevant character areas at National and District levels is shown in **Figure 3**. Extracts from the National and Borough-level assessments are included in **Appendix A**. Characteristics and guidelines noted in these assessments of relevance to the Site and Proposed Development are summarised below.

3.2 National

3.2.1 The Site lies within National Character Area 88: Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands. The Key Characteristics include the following of relevance:

- *“Gently undulating, lowland plateau divided by shallow river valleys that gradually widen to the east.*
- *Variable, scattered woodland cover comprising smaller plantations, secondary woodland, pollarded willows and poplar along river valleys, and clusters of ancient woodland, particularly on higher ground to the northwest representing remnant ancient deer parks and Royal Hunting Forests.*
- *Predominantly open, arable landscape of planned and regular fields bounded by open ditches and trimmed, often species-poor hedgerows which contrast with those fields that are irregular and piecemeal.*
- *A number of historic parklands, designed landscapes and country houses combine with other features to provide a strong sense of history and place.*
- *Settlements cluster around major road and rail corridors, with smaller towns, villages and linear settlements widely dispersed throughout, giving a more rural feel.*
- *Major transport routes cross the area.”*

3.2.2 With regard to ‘ecosystem services’ it is noted that recreation is a significant service in the NCA and that this is generally low key, close to the main urban populations and associated with features including river valleys. The document notes that positive management offers opportunities to cater for increased demand.

3.2.3 A number of the Statements of Environmental Opportunity (SEO) are relevant to the Proposed Development. These include:

- SEO 1: (among other points) managing, expanding and linking woodlands, hedgerows and other semi-natural habitats. Examples provided include: active woodland management, including for wood fuel; and management and expansion of traditional orchards.
- SEO 3: (among other points) high-quality green infrastructure to accommodate growth and expansion, linking and enhancing existing semi-natural habitats. Examples provided include: creating new woodland on urban fringes to help screen and integrate new developments; retaining and enhancing the contrast in landscape character between the clay plateau and river valleys, aiming to maintain and enhance the balance between urban and rural landscapes; and providing recreational access.

3.3 County

- 3.3.1 The Landscape Plan for Buckinghamshire, Part 1: Landscape Character Assessment (Hyder Consulting, 2000) has been superseded by District level assessment. However, the Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Historic Landscape Characterisation (Buckinghamshire County Council, 2006) provides a summary of the historic character of Milton Keynes on page 11, noting that the area is dominated by the new city, including the absorption of pre-existing settlement into the planned settlement pattern; and that built industrial development is concentrated in the new city, particularly in proximity to the M1 and West Coast Main Line, which are themselves significant landscape features.

3.4 Borough

Milton Keynes Landscape Character Assessment (2022)

- 3.4.1 The 2022 Milton Keynes Landscape Character Assessment forms part of the evidence base for the Draft Local Plan. The Landscape Character Assessment identified Landscape Character Types (LCTs) and Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) based on those outlined in the former 2016 Landscape Character Assessment. The Site lies across parts of three LCTs: LCT 1: Wooded Wolds; LCT 2: Undulating Valley Slopes; and LCT 3: River Floodplains. Consequently, the Site lies across parts of three LCAs: LCA 1b: Gayhurst and Stokepark Wooded Wolds; LCA 2a: Ouse Northern Undulating Valley Slopes; and LCA 3c: Ouse Lakes and Parkland Floodplains.

LCT 1: Wooded Wolds

- 3.4.2 More elevated parts of the north of the Site, surrounding Little Linford Wood and Hanslope Park lie within the southernmost extent of LCT 1: Wooded Wolds. The Key Characteristics of LCT 1: Wooded Wolds are as follows:
- *“Gently undulating plateau landscape, between 90m and 120m AOD forming part of a wider plateau to the north. A limestone bedrock with considerable till deposits, gives rise to soils with a high clay content.*
 - *Small streams and springs, which drain into the Ouse and Tove, create topographic interest.*
 - *Large to medium scale broadleaved or mixed woodland blocks, including many ancient or ancient replanted woodlands, The Yardley Chase SSSI extends into this LCA, and contains broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland.*
 - *Medium to large arable fields bound by clipped hedges and occasional mature trees with smaller-scale fields and areas of pasture located closer to the settlements.*
 - *A sparsely settled rural landscape crossed by minor roads, although the M1 is locally dominant and audible across the LCT.*
 - *Public Rights of Way cross the landscape, connecting to settlements in the Undulating Valley Slopes (LCT 2) and the wider countryside.*
 - *An open expansive landscape with long panoramic views over valleys to the south, east and west.*

- *The scenic and distinctive woodland backdrop that the LCT provides to adjacent landscape.*
- *A rural landscape, with limited modern influences, and some areas of inaccessible land.”*

3.4.3 Landscape Qualities of LCT 1: Wooded Wolds are as follows:

- *“The ecologically important semi-natural woodlands including extensive areas of ancient woodland and hedgerows that support biodiversity, and provide carbon capture.*
- *Small streams and springs that support biodiversity and provide nutrient and sediment filtration enhancing water quality.*
- *The heritage features of the landscape particularly the connection to the Royal hunting forests and historic field patterns that provide a connection to history, cultural identity, and aesthetic value.*
- *The historic settlement pattern, including the linear village of Hanslope and its satellite 'End' villages, with their high concentration of historic buildings built from local limestone as well as historic farmsteads that provide a connection to history and cultural identity.*
- *The elevated rural and sometimes remote character of the landscape, with a strong sense of openness that contributes to mental well-being and health.*
- *The pattern of hedged fields, woodland areas and panoramic long views across the neighbouring valley landscapes that contribute to a distinctive sense of place.*
- *The scenic and distinctive wooded backdrop that the LCT provides to adjacent landscapes.*
- *The network of PRow, including the Milton Keynes Boundary Walk, that connect to the wider countryside and settlements, provide recreational value and contribute to well-being and health.”*

3.4.4 Under Landscape Condition the document states:

“The Wooded Wolds LCT is generally in good condition, with intact hedgerow field boundaries and a strong historic field pattern. There has been some modern amalgamation of fields, and some use of post and wire fencing for horse grazing, particularly on the edge of Hanslope. Semi-natural habitats are in good condition, with a mixed age structure, although woodlands are scattered.”

3.4.5 Development management points outlined in the guidance section for LCT 1: Wooded Wolds, of relevance to the Site and the Proposed Development, are as follows:

- *“Conserve the open landscape and avoid the introduction of large-scale elements which would have a visual impact over a wide distance.*

- *Retain views from the elevated plateau across the wider landscape of the borough, and consider the impact on views from the surrounding landscape in relation to any proposed change.*
- *Retain views of local landmarks, including Hanslope church spire.*
- *Conserve the distinctive vernacular of historic buildings and their rural setting, including within Hanslope Conservation Area. Reference the pattern of local building materials and local identity in any new development or boundary treatments.*
- *Integrate new development at Hanslope and Hanslope Park into the landscape through the use of native hedgerows and woodlands.*
- *Where built development is considered appropriate, consider the visual relationship with the wooded skyline in West Northamptonshire.*

...

3.4.6 Northern parts of the Site around Hanslope Park and Little Linford Wood lie in the southern extent of LCA 1b: Gayhurst and Stokepark Wooded Wolds. Unique characteristics of LCA 1b: Gayhurst and Stokepark Wooded Wolds of relevance to the Site and the Proposed Development include:

“Woodlands are larger, but less connected than LCA 1a. Stokepark Wood and Little Linford Wood are designated as LWS for their species-rich ancient woodland...

The majority of the land is in use for arable cropping, with smaller areas of pasture. Hedgerows are variable, with some gapping and reinforcement with post and wire.

...

A parkland character remains at Hanslope Park, which was originally a deer park within the Royal Forest of Salcey.

Minor roads connect Hanslope to other settlements both within the borough and north into Northamptonshire. The lanes are generally lined by intact hedgerows, although there has been some replacement with post and rail fencing. The landscape is very well connected by PRow, with a number of long-distance routes including the Milton Keynes Boundary Walk, Three Shires Way, Midshires Way and Hanslope Circular Ride.

There are panoramic views from the PRow across the Ouse valley to the south and the Tove valley to the west. The built edge of Milton Keynes city is also visible to the south, although views to the south-east are partly screened by Little Linford Wood and Gayhurst Wood. Yardley Chase and Salcey Forest woodlands within Northamptonshire form a wooded backdrop to the north.

Modern influences on the landscape include new development in Hanslope, office buildings, radio masts, security fencing and floodlighting at Hanslope Park, and a solar farm at Salcey Green. The M1 and west coast mainline railway are intrusive influences on the LCA, reducing tranquillity.

Despite these, the landscape retains a highly rural character, and dark skies are experienced in the north of the LCA and within the larger woodlands.”

LCT 2: Undulating Valley Slopes.

3.4.7 The more sloping landform in the south and south-west of the Site lies within the south-eastern extent of LCT 2: Undulating Valley Slopes. The Key Characteristics of this LCT are as follows:

- *Undulating valley slopes, rising from the Ouse and Tove rivers, from 50m to 105m AOD.*
- *A varied bedrock of sandstones, limestones and mudstone result in diverse soils, with well-drained calcareous clays at the top of slopes and seasonally waterlogged loamy soils at the base of slopes.*
- *Secondary valleys of small streams and springs where the landform provides a localised sense of enclosure.*
- *Woodland cover is limited to small copses, some recorded as ancient woodlands and mature parkland trees associated with historic estates.*
- *A mixed field pattern dominated by large-scale arable fields with unclipped hedges. Smaller pasture fields are common on lower slopes with those near settlements often used for horse grazing. There are some surviving areas of ridge and furrow earthworks.*
- *Historic settlement pattern of nucleated villages, with numerous listed buildings and often designated as Conservation Areas. Traditional buildings materials include local limestone and roofs in thatch, slates or red tiles. Isolated farmsteads are located on the narrow rural lanes.*
- *A network of PRoW allows recreational access to the landscape, including the promoted routes Three Shires Way, Ouse Valley Way and Milton Keynes Boundary Walk.*
- *Panoramic views over the meandering valley floodplain, with a wooded backdrop provided by the Wooded Wolds (LCT 1) to the north. Village church towers provide local landmarks.*
- *A rural and peaceful landscape with an experience of dark skies away from larger settlements. However, electricity pylons, wind turbines and busy trunk roads in the east (LCA 2a and 2b) and the west coast mainline in the west (LCA 2c) reduces the sense of remoteness.”*

3.4.8 Landscape Qualities of LCT 2: Undulating Valley Slopes are as follows:

- *“The tributary streams and small ponds which feed into the Ouse and Tove, that provide freshwater habitats, regulate water quality and water flow.*

- *The semi-natural habitats including woodland copses, mature trees and hedgerows that support biodiversity and provide carbon capture.*
- *The historic field patterns of pre-18th century enclosure and assarts, and surviving ridge and furrow earthworks, which provide time depth to the landscape.*
- *The settlement pattern of historic villages, with numerous listed buildings from the 17th and 18th century constructed from local limestone that provide cultural identity and aesthetic value.*
- *The 18th century landscape parks laid out around country houses, most notably at Gayhurst and Tyringham, that provide a connection to history, cultural identity and aesthetic value.*
- *Panoramic views of the meandering rivers and across the undulating landscape of the valleys, with tall church towers and spires, and clock towers as local landmarks, that contribute to a strong sense of place.*
- *The network of PRow, including the Three Shires Way, Ouse Valley Way and Milton Keynes Boundary Walk, that connect the settlements and wider countryside, and provide recreational value, and contribute to well-being and health.*
- *The pleasing combination of landscape elements, strong sense of tranquillity and experience of dark skies in this rural landscape which contribute to the sense of place.”*

3.4.9 The condition of the landscape in LCT 2: Undulating Valley Slopes identified in the assessment as the following:

“Generally a landscape in good condition, with a strong rural character. Fragmentation of historic field patterns, and lack of connectivity between woodlands and hedgerow field boundaries reduces the condition in some areas. Modern influences on the landscape include electricity pylons in the east, Petsoe Manor wind farm, and some unsympathetic modern extensions to settlements, including residential and commercial development to the north of Olney.”

3.4.10 Development management points outlined in the guidance section for LCT 2: Undulating Valley Slopes of relevance to the Site and the Proposed Development are as follows:

- *“Conserve the nucleated village settlement pattern and restrict built development away from the villages to retain the agricultural and recreational landscape.*
- *Integrate new development and improve the suburban edges of settlements such as Olney through the use of native hedgerows and woodlands.*
- *Conserve the distinctive vernacular of historic buildings and their rural setting, particularly within the numerous Conservation Areas within the LCT and ensure that landscape continues to provide a rural setting to these areas.*

- *Where new development is planned encourage the use of limestone with thatch, slate or red brick roofs, to maintain a strong local identity.*
- *Resist proposals for highway upgrading to retain the rural character of the narrow rural lanes and conserve the grass verges which provide an important biodiversity resource.*
- *Identify, retain and manage key viewpoints to appreciate the undulating valley slopes. Consider the landmark churches and clocktowers and panoramic views across the river floodplains in development both within the LCT and in adjacent LCTs.*
- ...
- *Protect the valued recreational use of the landscape, seeking opportunities to further enhance opportunities for access and enjoyment.”*

3.4.11 Parts of the Site lie in the western extent of LCA 2a Ouse Northern Undulating Valley Slopes. Unique characteristics of 2a Ouse Northern Undulating Valley Slopes of relevance to the Site and the Proposed Development include:

“This is an open landscape, with fine panoramic views, including to the heavily wooded skyline of Yardley Chase to the north, south-east to the wooded Greensand Ridge (LCA 6a), and over the historic parklands at Gayhurst and Tyringham which lies on the opposite bank of the River Ouse (within LCA 2b).

... Traffic noise from the M1 and West Coast Mainline railway reduce tranquillity, and there are views across the river valley to the Petsoe Manor wind farm.”

LCT 3: River Floodplains

3.4.12 Limited parts of the lower-lying southern edges of the Site lie within LCT 3: River Floodplains. The Key Characteristics of this LCT are as follows:

- *A flat landscape with slow flowing rivers on sinuous valley floors, underlain by a varied bedrock with alluvium deposits.*
- *Riparian woodland lines the meandering river channels, some recorded as priority habitat deciduous woodland and wetland habitats lie on the floodplains, many of which are designated as LWS.*
- *Open pasture fields lie adjacent to the river channel, bound by ditches and post and wire fencing.*
- *Historic and current mineral extraction have impacted the landscape, including the creation of extensive large lakes and ponds.*
- *Heritage assets are limited to historic mills, bridges and occasional isolated farmsteads. Archaeological evidence of Neolithic, Bronze Age, Iron Age, Roman and medieval communities is often designated as Scheduled Monuments.*

- *An open undeveloped floodplain, with restricted settlement, although there are views to villages and towns on adjacent higher ground.*
- *Recreationally important landscape with good access on PRow, parks on former mineral extraction sites, cycling routes and fishing (particularly within LCAs 3c and 3d).*
- *Rural character, away from the urban settlement edges and major transport corridors.”*

3.4.13 Landscape Qualities of LCT 3: River Floodplains are as follows:

- *“The semi-natural habitats including floodplain grazing marsh, lowland meadows and deciduous riparian woodland that support biodiversity, and provide carbon capture.*
- *The river channels which provide water, and the underlying aquifers which maintain springs and base flows into rivers. The floodplains also regulate water flows, and provide flood protection.*
- *The riverside meadows which provide a connection to the historic land uses and provide a highly scenic quality to the landscape.*
- *The heritage features of the landscape particularly the historic mills and bridges, farmhouses and parklands, and archaeological earthwork features that provide a connection to history, cultural identity and aesthetic value.*
- *The largely undeveloped rural character of the flat low-lying floodplain, with a strong sense of openness, which provides a sense of place.*
- *The expansive, uninterrupted long-distance views across the floodplain which provide a sense of place.*
- *The recreational opportunities provided by PRow including the Ouse Valley Way, cycle routes, country parks, fishing and water sports which connect the settlements and wider countryside, provide recreational value and contribute to well-being and health.”*

3.4.14 The Condition of the landscape in LCT 3: River Floodplains is identified in the assessment as the following:

“The landscape is variable across the River Floodplain LCT, influenced by proximity to Milton Keynes city, and other recent development. The landscape is still largely in agricultural land use, and has a good cover of semi-natural habitats. There has been some fragmentation of hedgerow boundaries, and tranquillity and rural character are influenced by land uses in adjacent LCTs, such as wind turbines at Petsoe Manor, electricity pylons and noise from major road and rail routes.”

3.4.15 Development management points outlined in the guidance section for in LCT3: River Floodplains of relevance to the Ste and the Proposed Development are as follows:

- *Conserve the undeveloped nature of the landscape, to provide a rural floodplain setting to Milton Keynes city.*
- *Consider views from the floodplains landscape when planning development in adjacent landscapes, enhancing the integration of development through native wooded boundaries and mature trees to provide visual screening and to reduce the impact of built development on the floodplain.*
- *Conserve and enhance the historic bridges and mills, and archaeological evidence of earthworks.*
- *Ensure a comprehensive restoration plan is in place for any future mineral extraction, to restore habitats and land cover pattern. This should include wet woodland as part of a mosaic of habitats.*

...

- 3.4.16 Lower-lying southern parts of the Site lie in the central extent of LCA 3c Ouse Lakes and Parkland Floodplains. Unique characteristics of LCA 3c Ouse Lakes and Parkland Floodplains of relevance to the Site and the Proposed Development include:

“The former gravel workings have been restored into established recreational areas for walking, riding, cycling and swimming, although most are privately owned with restricted public access. The landscape is crossed by a number of public rights of way, including promoted routes Grafton Way, Ouse Valley Way, and Milton Keynes Boundary Walk and National Cycle Route 6. The Grand Union Canal also crosses the river floodplain. There is greater access to the river in this LCA than the rest of the LCT.

Modern influences on the landscape include recreational facilities including static caravans at Cosgrove Leisure Park, the major transport corridors of the M1, A6 and west coast mainline railway and solar farm north of Newport Pagnell. The road corridors and proximity to Milton Keynes city and Newport Pagnell reduce tranquillity and dark skies.”

4 Policy

4.1 National

National Planning Policy Framework (2023)

4.1.1 Paragraphs 131-141 focus on achieving well-designed places and promoting good design of the built environment. Paragraph 135 states:

"Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:

- a. Will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;*
- b. Are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;*
- c. Are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);*
- d. Establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;*
- e. Optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and*
- f. Create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience."*

4.1.2 Paragraph 136 relates to trees and states:

"Trees make an important contribution to the character and quality of urban environments, and can also help mitigate and adapt to climate change. Planning policies and decisions should ensure that new streets are tree-lined, that opportunities are taken to incorporate trees elsewhere in developments (such as parks and community orchards), that appropriate measures are in place to secure the long-term maintenance of newly-planted trees, and that existing trees are retained wherever possible. Applicants and local planning authorities should work with highways officers and tree officers to ensure that the right trees are planted in the right places, and solutions are found that are compatible with highways standards and the needs of different users."

4.1.3 Paragraph 139 is concerned with the quality of design and states:

"Development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning

documents such as design guides and codes. Conversely, significant weight should be given to:

- a. development which reflects local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes; and/or*
- b. outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability, or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, so long as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings..."*

4.1.4 Section 15 relates to the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment. Paragraph 180 sets out that:

"Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

- a. Protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);*
- b. Recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland.*

..."

4.1.5 Paragraph 181 states:

"Plans should: distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites; allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework⁵⁸; take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure; and plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries."

Planning Practice Guidance

4.1.6 To support the policies of the NPPF, the Government has produced Planning Practice Guidance (PPG).

4.1.7 Under the heading of Natural Environment, Paragraph 5 of 'Green infrastructure', focuses on the way in which natural capital green infrastructure can add to communities including, "...enhanced wellbeing, outdoor recreation and access, enhanced biodiversity and landscapes...". Paragraph 6 states:

"Green infrastructure can help in:

- Achieving well-designed places;*
- Promoting healthy and safe communities;*
- Mitigating climate change, flooding and coastal change; and*
- Conserving and enhancing the natural environment."*

- 4.1.8 Under the sub-heading ‘Landscape’, paragraph 37, PPG supports the use of landscape character assessment as a tool for understanding the character and local distinctiveness of the landscape and identifying the features that give it a sense of place, as a means to informing, planning and managing change. PPG makes reference to Natural England guidance on landscape character assessment.

4.2 Borough

Plan Milton Keynes 2016-2031 (2019)

- 4.2.1 The Local Plan for Milton Keynes (Plan:MK) was adopted in March 2019 and will remain extant until the Draft Local Plan (Milton Keynes City Plan) is adopted. Plan:MK policies relevant to the Site and the Proposed Development are detailed below.
- 4.2.2 A very small part of the south-east of the Site, south of Hill Farm House, lies within an area designated in the Local Plan as a Linear Park, as shown in **Figure 1**.
- 4.2.3 Policy DS6: Linear Parks, states:
- A. *“The following areas are defined as Linear Parks on the Policies Map:*
1. *The Ouse Valley, from the Borough boundary at Passenham to the M1 motorway.*
 - ...
- B. *Development proposals in the Linear Parks should contribute to achieving the following objectives:*
1. *Protecting and improving the landscape.*
 2. *Protecting and enhancing features of nature conservation value.*
 3. *Retaining and improving public access to land and water areas for countryside recreation.*
 4. *Flood control.*
 5. *Minimising any adverse impact on local residents and agriculture.*
 6. *Protecting and interpreting areas of archaeological interest”*
- 4.2.4 Policy NE4: Green Infrastructure, states;
- A. *“The network of green infrastructure throughout the Borough will be protected, extended and enhanced for its biodiversity, recreational, accessibility, health and landscape value and for the contribution it makes towards combating climate change. This is in accordance with the vision and principles (and the large-scale zone maps of Green Infrastructure Opportunity (39)) set out by the Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes NEP.*
- B. *Development proposals will provide new green infrastructure or, if it is not possible, will contribute to the enhancement and strengthening of existing green infrastructure to provide wellbeing benefits to people through access to nature.*
- ...

- D. Green infrastructure protection, improvements and creation must be prioritised in locations where it can deliver most benefits. It should be multi-functional to deliver as many ecosystem services as the Site requires, for example flood mitigation, access to nature (wellbeing benefits), plants for pollinators, carbon sequestration, and habitat for wildlife.*
- E. The existing network of linear parks and linked parks and green spaces will be extended into the urban extensions and along the Ouse and Ouzel Valleys to the north to provide a well connected network of green infrastructure that:*
- 1. Is strategically planned*
 - 2. Is attractive and enhances the surrounding landscape.*
 - 3. Is safe and well used for recreation.*
 - 4. Meets the needs of existing and future residents.*
 - 5. Is designed to provide a range of ecosystem services eg. Manage flood risk or provide flower rich habitats that supports a diverse range of pollinators.*
 - 6. Is designed to support mitigation and adaptation to climate change e.g. through vegetation for carbon uptake (carbon sequestration).*
 - 7. Achieves a net gain in biodiversity.*
 - 8. Is managed into the long-term.*
 - 9. Where possible improves connectivity with other green infrastructure networks e.g. by linkages to the urban parks.*
 - 10. Where appropriate explores economic opportunities that will support the network's sustainability—for example in conservation, agriculture, renewable energy or outdoor environmental education or recreation; such activity must not result in a negative impact to the integrity of the network, the ecosystem services provided or on biodiversity.*
- F. Where green infrastructure is provided outside the linear parks system, applicants should detail how it will address the above requirements.”*

4.2.5 Policy NE5: Conserving and Enhancing Landscape Character, states:

- A. “Where development in the open countryside is acceptable in principle under other policies in this plan, it will need to be undertaken in a manner that respects the particular character of the surrounding landscape.*
- B. In particular, development proposals will need to demonstrate that the following aspects of landscape character have been conserved and where possible enhanced through sensitive design, landscape mitigation and enhancement measures:*

1. *The locally distinctive natural and man-made features that contribute towards the landscape character and its quality.*
 2. *The historic setting and structure of the villages and hamlets.*
 3. *Important views e.g. of local landmarks.*
 4. *Tranquillity and the need to protect against intrusion from light pollution, noise, and motion.*
- C. *Development proposals should take into account the findings of the Milton Keynes Landscape Character Assessment (2016) and any other relevant landscape and visual assessments or studies. Where appropriate a site specific landscape and visual impact assessment (LVIA) will be required as part of a planning application and it must be demonstrated that the development proposal has been informed by a LVIA written in accordance with the standard method, Guidance for LVIA version 3 from the Landscape Institute.”*

4.2.6 Policy SD1: Place-making Principles for Development, states:

“Proposals for new strategic urban extensions, strategic scale development and, where relevant, other development within or adjoining the Milton Keynes urban area should demonstrate that the following place-making principles have been considered:

1. *Development promotes good physical and mental health, with places and routes that are safe and perceived to be safe by creating passive surveillance and active frontages.*
2. *Development integrates well with the surrounding built and natural environments to enable a high degree of connectivity with them, particularly for pedestrians and cyclists and for access to connected green infrastructure for people and wildlife.*
3. *The structure and layout of development within or adjoining the urban area of Milton Keynes is based on the principles that have shaped the original city, especially the grid road system, redways, linear parks and strategic, integrated flood management with employment incorporated as part of the development or located nearby.*
4. *Development relates well to the surrounding area in terms of density, scale and materials, with positive Site features, views and vistas incorporated into and used to structure the new development.*
5. *...Existing natural assets including green infrastructure features connections and functions should be identified prior to development; and enhanced, extended, protected and connected appropriately – i.e. designed and planned for so it provides multiple benefits to the environment and wildlife, also to the health and wellbeing of residents and to supporting the local economy.*
6. *Development takes a strategic, integrated and sustainable approach to water resource management (including SUDS and flood risk mitigation).*
7. *Development enhances the character of the area within which it is located. Where existing discernible or positive characteristics are lacking, new development creates positive character and identity*

through high quality and forward looking architecture and urban design to avoid nondescript and 'anywhere' development.

...

- 10. *Housing is generally arranged according to perimeter block principles so that the fronts of houses overlook streets and other public spaces, and private spaces are located securely within the block.*
- 11. *Where appropriate, different character areas are created through the use of varied densities, high quality landscaping, block and building layouts, architecture and the framing and treatment of open spaces and the public realm as informed by the surrounding context.*
- 12. *...Developments must identify existing green infrastructure assets and the benefits they provide and could provide for future needs, and build in the need to protect, enhance, improve and connect green infrastructure for multiple benefits to biodiversity and wildlife, access, health and well-being as a necessary component of sustainable place-making.*

..."

4.2.7 Although the Site is not within a strategic urban extension area, it is of a strategic scale, and therefore principals of Policy SD1 are of relevance to the Proposed Development.

4.2.8 Policy SD9: General Principles for Strategic Urban Extensions, states the following of relevance to landscape and visual considerations:

"Proposals for Strategic Urban Extensions, and the documents required under SD10 to guide their development, should be prepared in accordance with the principles set out below. This policy will also be applied to any planning application(s) for unallocated strategic development sites.

...

- 2. *To provide the necessary social, grey and green infrastructure ...*
- 3. *To be supported by or incorporate:*

...

- v. *A green infrastructure and open space strategy to improve biodiversity, provide advanced structural planting, extend the "forest city" concept, create green road and street scenes, and incorporate public art and leisure and recreation facilities.*
- vi. *A management and maintenance strategy for open space and landscaping, outlining details of the owner, the responsible maintenance body, and how long term maintenance will be funded.*

..."

4.2.9 Chapter 15 of the Local Plan includes design-related policies of which the following are relevant to landscape and visual considerations.

4.2.10 Policy D1: Designing A High Quality Place, states:

- A. *“Development proposals will be permitted if they meet the following objectives/principles:*
1. *The development proposals as a whole respond appropriately to the site and surrounding context.*
 - ...
 5. *Soft and hard landscaping that continues the verdant and green character of Milton Keynes...*
 6. *Landscape and boundary treatments integrate with and/or enhance those of the surrounding area.*
 - ...

4.2.11 Policy D2: Creating A Positive Character, states:

- A. *“Development proposals will be permitted if they meet the following objectives/principles:*
1. *The layout, massing/scale, boundary treatments and landscaping of a development and appearance of buildings exhibit a positive character or sense of place for a development.*
 2. *The character of the development is locally inspired where appropriate (for example in or adjacent to conservation areas, or in existing areas with a strong positive character).*
 3. *Where there is no positive built form character on the site or surrounding area, new development is designed to create its own distinctive character or sense of place using existing site features, the layout of the development and the appearance of buildings.*
 - ...

Supplementary Planning Documents

Milton Keynes New Residential Development Design Guide

4.2.12 The Milton Keynes New Residential Development Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) (adopted 2012) sets out guidance on high quality development. Section 2.2 Context Appraisal states:

“The character of the new development should also be developed from an understanding of the context of the surrounding built and natural forms.”

4.2.13 Under 2.6, Design Aspirations, Vision the following is stated:

“As a general rule, a limited palette of materials is believed to lead to the creation of a stronger character for a development.

...

The landscape framework must provide a structuring element and framework for the entire development;”

4.2.14 Section 3.5, Landscape, Public Space and Biodiversity, states:

- *“The masterplanning of new developments particularly on the periphery of the city must ensure that where appropriate and achievable, existing linear open space corridors are extended into new developments. Where these do not occur, large new developments in particular should be structured around open space corridors that serve to integrate development rather than divide them and that accommodate the multifunctional uses required of modern development;*
- *The retention and use of existing landscape assets as part of new developments should be a guiding principle. This not only enhances the biodiversity where the long established features are often the richest assets, but provides a sense of maturity to developments. Using elements of former landscape character and land use helps to integrate new development within their locality;*
- *Good landscape design can help legibility, create focal and reference points, enhance biodiversity and enhance the overall quality of the external environment. The form, texture and colour of plant material can complement and enhance new and existing building materials. To help establish identity for a new neighbourhood, a palette of tree species which are predominantly native or of local provenance should be established at the design code stage of the process. Non-native species, where used, should be selected for known wildlife value;*
- *Developers should integrate landscape within the built development, rather than viewing it as a separate entity confined solely to areas of public open space. The green character of the city can be reinforced in a variety of other ways, including street trees, verges, green front gardens, green roofs and green walls;”*

Milton Keynes Green Infrastructure Strategy (2018)

- 4.2.15 The Milton Keynes Green Infrastructure (GI) Strategy is in part informed by the work of the Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Natural Environment Partnership, which sets out Strategic Green Infrastructure Priorities in Figure 5 on page 29, as shown in **Image 1** below. This includes parts of the Site as part of the broad landscape scale opportunity areas 6. Great River Ouse Corridor.

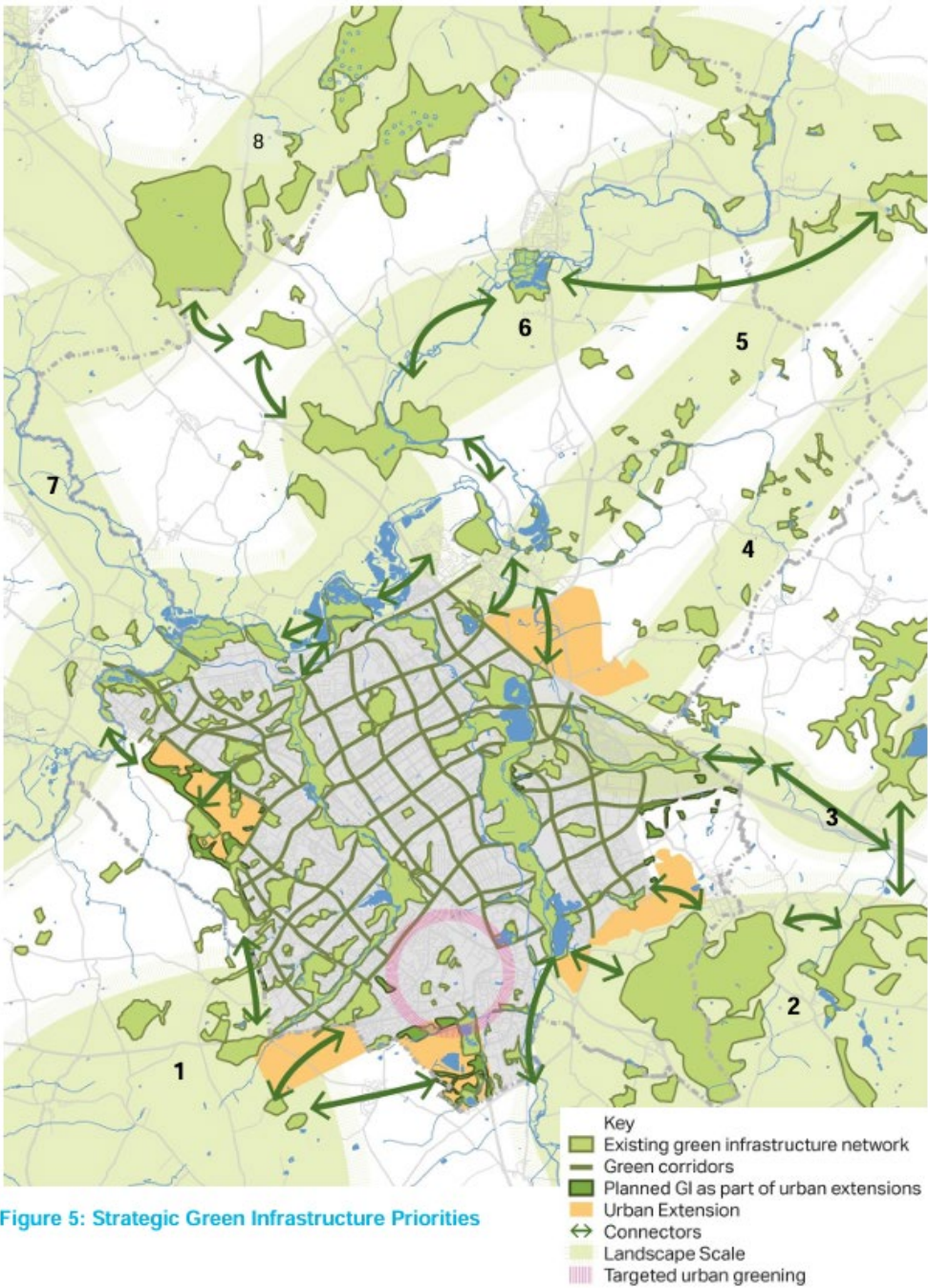


Figure 5: Strategic Green Infrastructure Priorities

Image 1: Extract of Figure 5 of the Milton Keynes Green Infrastructure Strategy (2018).

4.2.16 Under 8.4 Protecting Landscape Value, the following is stated:

“...there is a need to protect the qualities that contribute to the rural landscape character in MK. The Milton Keynes Landscape Character Assessment³³ highlights the extensive views over the valleys from the clay plateau farmland in the north, the tranquil character of the rural river valley, to the open agricultural landscape of the clay lowland farmland to the south east that provides a ‘visually important setting for the Greensand Ridge’. ...

Meeting the need: Protect the tranquil and open nature of the rural landscape. Identify opportunities for historic restoration and GI enhancement. Improve access to the countryside and maintain the existing

paths, cycle and bridle ways, as well as identifying potential for strategic open spaces.”

4.2.17 These landscape-scale opportunity areas are set out as areas to focus GI growth. Under 9.4, ‘Preparing for longer term growth’, the following is stated: about the landscape-scale GI opportunity area:

4.2.18 6: Great River Ouse Corridor

“The Great River Ouse flows down from Bedfordshire and meanders through the Borough and past Emberton Country Park from which the river valley widens and flows into the city. This area includes some areas of high quality habitat including calcareous grassland and grazing marsh, although overall habitat diversity could be enhanced. Enhancement of the corridor could provide an important water management function, helping store water upstream to reduce downstream flood risk, and help reduce the nitrification resulting from surface water flowin [sic] off agricultural land. Although there are a number of riverside walks that can be accessed from Stoney Stratford access to the river for recreation could be improved. Linking existing habitats and restoring riverine habitats could provide the opportunity for the creation of a large scale ecological reserve of national significance. This area would be primarily for ecological benefit, but could also attract visitors to the area for eco-tourism.”

“...All new development in MK should also demonstrate how it provides a net gain in green infrastructure to support a net gain in biodiversity, manage drainage and improve movement. Furthermore GI in the urban extensions will have an important role to play in transitioning from the strong post-war urban GI character of the city into the rural and frequently historic countryside beyond. They will also provide opportunities for enhancing connections between existing GI assets.’

Technical studies and background documents for Plan:MK

Landscape Sensitivity Study to Residential Development in the Borough of Milton Keynes and Adjoining Areas (2016)

4.2.19 The Landscape Sensitivity Study to Residential Development in the Borough of Milton Keynes and Adjoining Areas assessment seeks to consider the sensitivity of landscape areas within and adjacent to the Borough of Milton Keynes for residential development. The assessment considers sensitivity to residential development at a density of 35 dwellings per hectare, typically 2-storey, with some 2.5-storey buildings. The assessment identifies the Site to fall across parts of two different landscape areas identified in this assessment, namely 27: Castlethorpe and 28: Haversham Plateau.

4.2.20 A very small amount of the Site lies within the eastern edge of the landscape sensitivity study assessment area 27: Castlethorpe, which surrounds the village of Castlethorpe. The part of the assessment area within the Site is on the eastern edge, near the course of the brook. Overall, this area’s sensitivity is considered ‘medium’ to residential development. Landscape attributes with a greater sensitivity rating include the intervisibility, which states:

“A river valley landscape, with intermittent views across the river valley to the opposite valley slopes, more open to the south of the area where the river valley opens up around Cosgrove Leisure Park. The incised valleys to the east are visually contained, but there are extensive views to the built edge of Milton Keynes/Wolverton across the floodplain landscape of the Ouse River from higher ground.”

4.2.21 The perception/experience attribute also has a higher sensitivity rating and states:

“Despite its proximity to Milton Keynes, and the modern intrusion of the busy West Coast main line, the land area has a strong sense of tranquillity and a sense of separation from Milton Keynes because of the peaceful river valley landscape that meanders around it.”

- 4.2.22 Overall relating to capacity, the assessment of area 27 states the following of relevance to the Site and the Proposed Development:

“A small scale extension of Castlethorpe village may be possible without a significant adverse change in landscape character. However, the historic village is vulnerable to change from development in this area as extensive residential development has the potential to affect the setting of the village. Large scale development in this area would be constrained by the potential impact on the landscape character of the Tove and Ouse River valleys and also on the setting of Cosgrove. The village is vulnerable to change from development to the north because of the potential for coalescence with the village of Hanslope. The more open and relatively flat landscape to the south east of Castlethorpe is more suitable for development.”

- 4.2.23 The assessment area 28: Haversham Plateau encompasses most of the Site. The following commentary was provided regarding the susceptibility to residential development of area 28 was provided for each of the landscape attributes as follows:

- 4.2.24 Scale was concluded to be ‘medium sensitivity’, stating:

“A large scale regular landscape on the south east facing slopes falling to the Ouse river valley. Smaller and more irregular to the north and west.”

- 4.2.25 Enclosure was concluded to be ‘medium sensitivity’, stating:

“A strong sense of openness within the land area. There is boundary containment from the higher plateau to the north and woodland block along the M1 and to the north. The southern periphery is partially contained by the heavily wooded river valley.”

- 4.2.26 Landform was concluded to be ‘low sensitivity’, stating:

“Valley slopes of the River Great Ouse rise to a flatter plateau around Little Linford Wood.”

- 4.2.27 Landcover pattern was concluded to be ‘low sensitivity’, stating:

“Largely open arable fields with some larger woodland block such as Little Linford Wood.”

- 4.2.28 Built Environment was concluded to be ‘medium sensitivity’, stating:

“Along the southern boundary, the settlement edges of the small villages of Haversham and Little Linford are well integrated with the surrounding landscape. The isolated 20th century development of Haversham off the Wolverton Road adds a more suburban element. Milton Keynes/Wolverton, including new residential areas on the settlement edge, are visible across the river valley floodplain.”

- 4.2.29 Historic landscape character was concluded to be ‘low sensitivity’, stating:

“There are areas of Ancient Woodland at Little Linford Wood, Hoo Wood and Dairy Farm. Small area of ridge and furrow near the Hanslope Circular Ride.”

- 4.2.30 Intervisibility was concluded to be ‘low sensitivity’, stating:

“There are local views over the wooded river valley. There are some longer views over the river valley to the residential areas and industrial buildings on the settlement edge of Wolverton/Milton Keynes to the south.”

4.2.31 Perception/ experience was concluded to be ‘medium sensitivity’, stating:

“The land area retain a tranquil rural character despite its proximity to Milton Keynes. However, views across the river valley towards Milton Keynes, introduces an urban influence although this is indirect from settlement edges outside the land area. The M1 to the east, is an aural intrusion although it is largely hidden by a woodland corridor.”

4.2.32 Landscape Value was concluded to be ‘medium sensitivity’, stating:

“Recreational value from long distance paths in including Hanslope Circular Ride, Swan’s Way, Midshire’s Way. Area of Attractive Landscape (MK) along the Ouse valley. and Open Countryside (MK)”

4.2.33 Overall, based on the sensitivity of the above attributes, the assessment concluded that the area has ‘medium sensitivity’ to residential development.

4.2.34 Under the heading ‘capacity’ the assessment concluded the following for area 28:

“There are likely to be opportunities to accommodate residential development without a significant adverse change in landscape character. This land area is separated from adjoining areas by strong boundaries created by the M1 and the wooded river valley of the River Great Ouse. The relatively flat topography on the lower south east facing slopes and the wooded areas north of the River Great Ouse reduces the visibility of the landscape area. Despite the sparsely settled landscape, the landscape is influenced by the urban edge of Wolverton which is visible across the floodplain landscape of the Ouse.

Development should be located on the lower slopes facing Milton Keynes, and adjacent to the 20th century settlement edge of Haversham. Development should enhance integration of this area of Haversham with the surrounding landscape.

Avoid development on the higher plateau landscape which has more intervisibility with the surrounding landscape and contains a network of PRow, and ancient woodland. Maintain existing green corridors to woodland along the M1 corridor. The closer grained landscape along the Ouse tributary to the west of the land area is more sensitive to residential development.

Avoid development to the south of the High Street, which could impact the setting of the Ouse River Valley and the Linford Lakes Linear Park, where existing woodland provides screening for the river valley. The old village of Haversham and the hamlet of Little Linford are vulnerable to change from development through coalescence ”

4.2.35 A medium sensitivity rating is defined in Table 2 of the assessment as:

“Medium sensitivity

There are likely to be opportunities to accommodate residential development without a significant adverse change in landscape character. However there are likely to be key sensitivities or values that must be respected in relation to development. Proposals must follow the guidance on siting, and cumulative impacts.”

Draft Milton Keynes City Plan: Regulation 18 Plan for Consultation (2024)

4.2.36 The draft Milton Keynes City Plan 2050 will form the new Local Plan for Milton Keynes, replacing Plan:MK (2019). The draft Local Plan is currently in the 'Regulation 18 Plan for Consultation' stage, and the final draft will be consulted upon in early 2025. Draft policies of relevance to the Site and the Proposed Development are set out below.

4.2.37 Draft Policy CEA8: Provision and protection of accessible open space, states:

- A. *"All new development proposals, where appropriate, must maintain and enhance the quality and connectivity of access networks, integrating with active travel routes and recreation routes, into the wider nature, green and blue infrastructure network.*
- B. *New residential development proposals must provide new open spaces and formal outdoor playing pitches and/or provide contributions towards improving existing open spaces and formal outdoor playing pitches...*
- C. *The provision, management and maintenance of open spaces and formal outdoor playing pitches must be an integral part of the new residential development proposals where provision is required...*

...

Development within Linear Parks

- H. *Development for leisure and recreation uses, or related ancillary uses, within Linear Parks will be supported unless they would:*
 - 1. *Lead to an unacceptable visual impact;*
 - 2. *Detract from the principal use of the Linear Park as publicly accessible open space;*
 - 3. *Be incompatible with any existing use of lakes or other water areas;*
 - 4. *Have an adverse impact on the flood plain; or*
 - 5. *Undermine opportunities to link wildlife areas and provide for biodiversity corridors."*

4.2.38 Draft Policy CEA11: Urban greening, trees and woodland, states:

- A. *"All new development proposals must meet the Urban Greening Factor (UGF) standard to achieve or assist in maintaining or reaching an average green cover of 40% in the applicable residential neighbourhood.*
- B. *All new development proposals must not result in the net loss of green cover in urban neighbourhoods.*
- C. *All new major development proposals must meet the core Urban Greening Factor (UGF) Target Score outlined in the Urban Greening Factor Standard...*

Urban tree canopy cover

- D. *All new residential and commercial development proposals within defined settlement boundaries must meet the urban tree canopy cover standard of at least 19%.*
- E. *Development proposals resulting in the creation of new residential or commercial floorspace, or hard surfaces, must seek to retain existing landscape features and trees unless it can be demonstrated that replacement tree planting elsewhere on the site would be preferable.*

Protection and creation of woodland

- F. *All new development proposals must protect and, where possible, enhance existing woodland within the site.*
- G. *Major residential development proposals must contribute to meeting the Woodland Trust's Woodlands Access Standard in line with the Milton Keynes Nature, Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy, through either provision on site or offsite contributions that:*
 - 1. *Increases the provision of accessible woodland that is greater than two hectares in size within 500 metres of the proposed development site; and/or*
 - 2. *Increases provision of accessible woodland that is greater than 0 hectares in size within 4 kilometres of the proposed development site."*

4.2.39 Draft Policy CEA12: Conserving and Enhancing Landscape Character/Special Landscape Areas, states:

"Conserving and Enhancing Landscape Character

- A. *"Development proposals must demonstrate that the following aspects of landscape character have been conserved and, where possible, enhanced through sensitive design, landscape mitigation and enhancement measures. Proposals should take into account:*
 - i. *The key natural and man-made characteristics and features that contribute towards the landscape character and its quality;*
 - ii. *The historic setting and structure of the villages and hamlets;*
 - iii. *Important views, including local landmarks; and*
 - iv. *The tranquillity of the area and the need to protect against intrusion from light pollution, noise, and motion.*
- B. *Where a site-specific landscape and visual impact assessment is required as part of a planning application, this must be prepared in accordance with the standard method set out in Landscape Institute guidance."*

Special Landscape Areas

- A. *"Development affecting Special Landscape Areas, as defined on the Policies Map, will only be permitted where it:*

1. *Conserves and, where possible, enhances the special character and key landscape qualities of the area;*
 2. *Safeguards important views, features and landmarks;*
 3. *Safeguards the tranquillity of the area; and*
 4. *Retains and, where possible, improves public access to the countryside.*
- B. *Development proposals will be expected to incorporate appropriate measures to mitigate landscape and visual impacts. Proposals should have regard to the Milton Keynes Landscape Character Assessment and the Statements of Significance for each of the Special Landscape Areas, and any other relevant landscape and visual assessments or studies.*
- C. *A site-specific landscape and visual impact assessment will be required for development within Special Landscape Areas to show how the proposed change will conserve and enhance the special character and qualities of the landscape, including conservation and protection of valued views.”*

4.2.40 The evidence base for the Draft Milton Keynes City Plan 2050 includes a green and blue infrastructure study and a review of valued landscape designations, as detailed below. The updated landscape character assessment also forms part of the evidence base for the emerging Local Plan and is referenced in the landscape character section of this report.

Technical studies and background documents for Milton Keynes City Plan

Milton Keynes Nature Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy (2023)

4.2.41 Section 20, identifies the Location of Future Country Parks, and states that land in the vicinity of the Site is a potential option for a future Country Park:

‘To the north west of Newport Pagnell there exists a large area (approximately 67ha) of broadleaved and mixed woodland including Gayhurst Wood and Bunsty Wood. Longland’s Wood is also connected to the north west.

The entire woodland is Ancient Woodland. This woodland is also designated as a Biological Notification Site (BMERC). The northern boundary meets a road linking the villages of Gayhurst with Tathall End. Part of the southern boundary meets the M1 motorway. A PRoW (footpath) runs adjacent to the southern boundary of the woodland. This area of woodland is located within 2km from residential development, notably the villages of Gayhurst to the east and Tathall End to the west.’

4.2.42 Appendix D: The context for Green Infrastructure in Milton Keynes states that:

“the original landscape design policy, devised in 1971, had four objectives:

- *To achieve a visual character consistent with the vegetation of lowland UK*
- *To create species zones in the city to create a sense of place and for zones to have comprehensible boundaries aiding navigation through the zones*
- *To achieve a plant mixture within each zone which is capable of responding to the full range of situations that might arise, as envisaged at the time*

- *To make it possible to forecast plant requirements with reasonable accuracy for years to come.*

4.2.43 The appendix also states that *“the city aspires to be a unique ‘City in a Forest’ with 40% green space and more biodiversity in the modern city than was found in the agricultural land it replaced”*.

Valued Landscapes Policy Review (2022)

4.2.44 The Valued Landscapes Policy review was conducted in 2022 to “review the effectiveness of current landscape policy in relation to valued landscapes within the borough, and to provide recommendations towards new policies which would allow for the protection of these valued landscapes.” Local landscape designations were first recognised in 1995 by Milton Keynes Local Plan as ‘Areas of Attractive Landscape’ (AAL). They were supported in Local Plan policy until the designation was dropped in the 2019 Local Plan. The Review of Local Landscape Designations (2024) states the following regarding the Council’s decision not to retain the AAL Policy in the 2019 Local Plan:

“This was in line with government guidance at the time, which directed local authorities away from using local landscape designations to protect landscape towards a criteria-based approach to the assessment of the impact of development on landscape character (see para 2.1 above). MKC decided that the updated 2016 Landscape Character Assessment (LCA)5 could provide sufficient evidence by which development could be assessed. However, the 2016 LCA did not set out landscape qualities for each of the identified Landscape Character Types as part of the evaluation stage of the assessment, as suggested in later LI guidance published in 2021 (see para 1.4). This has subsequently been addressed in the current Milton Keynes LCA (2022).”

4.2.45 The review drew upon previous planning decisions to assess the effectiveness of the former AAL designation in upholding Milton Keynes Local Plan 2001-2011 Policy S11 VS the landscape character approach in upholding Policy NE5L Conserving and Enhancing Landscape Character, of Plan: MK (2016-2031). From this, recommendations were made on the council's future approach to local landscape designations.

4.2.46 It should, however, be noted that conclusions drawn in several of the cases note the effectiveness of the local landscape designation in ‘protecting the landscape from development’. Whilst in these cases, the SLA designation prevented development, protecting the landscape from development was not mentioned in the relevant Policy S11 of the Milton Keynes Local Plan (2016) in place at that time, which stated:

“Within these areas, development should:

- 7. Not damage the special character of the areas*
- 8. Enhance important landscape features where possible*
- 9. Protect and enhance features of nature conservation value*
- 10. Retain and improve public access and opportunities for countryside recreation.”*

4.2.47 The policy does not state that development should not take place within an AAL; therefore, the fact that a Site was not developed cannot be used to conclude the effectiveness of the policy.

4.2.48 The recommended option to the council was *“creating a new local landscape designation broadly based on the existing evidence from the 1999 LDA study. This should be developed with reference to the 2022 landscape character assessment”*. The review also gave input to

the suggested policy wording to be included in the Milton Keynes Local Plan. The wording used in the Draft Local Plan Regulation 18 Plan for Consultation (2024) is not the same as the suggested wording, but does reflect its principles.

Milton Keynes Review of Local Landscape Designations (2024)

4.2.49 LUC undertook a review of the existing local landscape designations in 2024. The scope of the assessment sought to provide recommendations on landscapes that could merit local landscape designation. The merit of each LCA identified in the 2022 LCA was considered against the following local landscape designation criteria: natural heritage, cultural heritage, recreation, landscape quality (condition and intactness), local distinctiveness, perceptual and scenic and functional.

4.2.50 The following extract from the Review of Local Landscape Designations states the following outlines how LCA 1b: Gayhurst and Stokepark Wooded Wolds perform against the local landscape designation criteria, where relevant to the Site and the Proposed Development:

- *“Natural heritage: Ancient woodlands are concentrated in the east, with Stokepark Wood and Little Linford Wood designated as a Local Wildlife Site (LWS). These woodlands and hedgerow boundaries provide some evidence of ecological interest which contribute positively to landscape character.*
- *Cultural heritage: A landscape with important cultural features. Historically the LCA formed part of Yardley Chase and Salcey Forest which provides cultural time depth. The Royal Forest was incorporated into the parkland character of Hanslope Park, originally a deer park within Salcey Forest. There is a strong historic field pattern with assarts and pre-18th century co-axial enclosure. Historic features are clustered at Hanslope, which has a designated Conservation Area and includes the Grade I listed St James the Great, which has the tallest church spire in Buckinghamshire. These features all contribute to the cultural interest of the landscape. There are no known associations with notable people, events or the arts.*
- *Recreation: The LCA has excellent recreational access, with a number of long-distance routes including the Milton Keynes Boundary Walk, Three Shires Way, Midshires Way and Hanslope Circular Ride.*
- *Landscape quality (condition and intactness): The parkland character at Hanslope Park has been negatively impacted by 20th century development, including floodlighting and security gates. Major transport routes and a solar farm, and the variable condition of hedgerows, also detract from landscape quality.*
- *Local distinctiveness: The strong elevated plateau landform and wooded backdrop are distinctive features, and relatively rare within Milton Keynes district, contributing to local distinctiveness and sense of place. The landscape provides an important rural setting to Hanslope village.*
- *Perceptual and scenic: Views to woodland within the LCA and to the north, and long views over adjacent river valleys results in a strong visual character. The contrast between enclosure within woodlands and openness in the arable fields contributes to the scenic quality of the landscape. Overall, this is a strongly*

rural landscape although the busy transport corridors reduce tranquillity locally.”

4.2.51 In Table 3.2 of the assessment, the extent to which LCA 1b meets the criterion states: “Take forward”.

4.2.52 The following extract from the Review of Local Landscape Designations describes how 2a Ouse Northern Undulating Valley Slopes perform against the local landscape designation criteria, where relevant to the Site and the Proposed Development:

- *“Natural heritage: A landscape with a few areas of natural heritage importance. Small woodlands, often recorded as priority habitat and some of ancient origin, and areas of semi-improved grassland and meadow are designated as a Local Wildlife Site (LWS). These, along with hedgerows with mature hedgerow trees, provide some evidence of ecological interest which contributes positively to landscape character. A number of tributary streams and ponds are also important natural features and contribute to landscape character.*
- *Cultural heritage: The landscape includes many important historic features and cultural associations. Historic villages and the market town of Olney, designated as Conservation Areas due to their numerous historic buildings and landmark church spires and towers, contribute to the sense of place and scenic quality of the landscape. The field pattern is mixed, although remaining pre-18th century and Parliamentary field patterns contribute to the time-depth of the landscape. Historic houses and parklands also contribute to the cultural interest of the landscape...*
- *Recreation: The LCA has excellent recreational access including the Milton Keynes Boundary Walk and Three Shires Way promoted routes.*
- *Landscape quality (condition and intactness): Hedgerows are in variable condition, and the area has many characteristic and valued features...*
- *Local distinctiveness: The river valley landform is a distinctive feature forming a recognisable area...*
- *Perceptual and scenic: An open landscape with fine panoramic views which contribute positively to the scenic qualities of the landscape, including views to the wooded skyline of Yardley Chase to the north, wooded Greensand Ridge (LCA 6a) to the south-east and over the River Ouse to historic parklands (LCA 2b). However, the Petsoe Manor wind farm is intrusive in views across the Ouse river valley and detracts from scenic qualities. Although the area is rural, tranquillity is impacted by the transport corridors of the M1 and West Coast Mainline railway.*
- *Functional: The woodlands and meadows contribute to the healthy functioning of the landscape, and contribute to the multifunctional green infrastructure network, although there are gaps in the network.”*

4.2.53 In Table 3.3 of the assessment, the extent to which LCA 2a meets the criterion states: “Take forward”.

4.2.54 The following extract from the Review of Local Landscape Designations states the following outlines how 3c Ouse Lakes and Parkland Floodplains perform against the local landscape designation criteria, where relevant to the Site and the Proposed Development:

- *“Natural heritage: An area with important natural features. The River Ouse is locally designated as a Wildlife Corridor. Although former mineral workings considerably altered this landscape, these have been restored and contain wetlands and plantations designated as LWS. Significant areas of wetland and floodplain grazing marsh habitat are found across the floodplain. The two Local Geological Sites show the importance of the underlying geology to the character of the landscape. These features provide evidence of ecological interest which contribute positively to landscape character.*
- *Cultural heritage: Mineral extraction has removed traces of historic field patterns. However, a number of historic listed buildings and sites (Scheduled Monuments) relating to priories and monasteries, as well as river crossings, provide time-depth to the landscape...*
- *Recreation: The area has considerable local value for recreation. The former gravel workings have been restored to provide recreational facilities, while there are a number of public rights of way including the promoted Grafton Way, Ouse Valley Way and Milton Keynes Boundary Walk, and National Cycling Route 6. The Grand Union Canal, an important recreational feature, runs through the floodplain.*
- *Landscape quality (condition and intactness): Transport corridors including the M1, A6 and West Coast mainline are detracting features within the landscape... However, the restoration and flooding of the former gravel pits have created a new landscape structure.*
- *Local distinctiveness: This riverside landscape forms a recognisable sense of place which is distinctive within Milton Keynes, and an important riverside approach to Newport Pagnell.*
- *Perceptual and scenic: The open character of the floodplains has a strong visual character adding to the perceptual qualities of the landscape. There is limited settlement within the LCA, with built features generally limited to farmsteads and recreational facilities. However, the road corridors and proximity to Milton Keynes city and Newport Pagnell reduce tranquillity.*
- *Functional: The floodplain landscape contributes to the healthy functioning of the landscape and is an important part of the multifunctional green infrastructure network connecting to Milton Keynes.”*

4.2.55 In Table 3.8 of the assessment, the extent to which LCA 3c meets the criterion states: “Take forward”.

4.2.56 The assessment of each LCA against the local landscape designation criteria was used to help inform the location and extent of the candidate Special Landscape Areas. Part of the Site lies within the Candidate Special Landscape Area 'Ouse Valley', which broadly follows the extent of a former Milton Keynes AAL. The extent of the proposed SLA is defined in the assessment as *"The candidate SLA encompasses the valley floodplains and rural valley slopes of the River Great Ouse."* Boundary changes within the Site from the extent of the former AAL designation include a slightly greater proportion of the valley slopes including land to the south-west of Little Linford Wood. Text within the report supporting the decision to include these valley slopes within the Site as part of the new SLA are limited, stating in Figure 4.14: 'Extend the Ouse valley slopes'

4.2.57 The summary of special landscape qualities for the Ouse Valley candidate SLA comprises:

- *"The low-lying shallow valley of the winding River Great Ouse and its tributaries which confer a recognisable sense of place and provide a key gateway to Olney and Milton Keynes city.*
- *Extensive woodland, sinuous water bodies and floodplain meadows provide visual contrast and ecological interest which contribute to landscape character. These provide a contrast with the more intensively farmed land on the valley sides.*
- *Historic field patterns of pre-18th century and Parliamentary enclosure retain a good network of hedgerows. Small areas of assarts on higher ground indicate a past landscape with higher woodland cover.*
- *The medieval settlement pattern of nucleated villages on the valley sides with distinctive limestone vernacular provide time depth and cultural identity.*
- *Parkland landscapes at Gayhurst and Tyringham, with their associated stone bridges over the river, are distinctive landscape features, that provide a connection to the local history of the area.*
- *Panoramic views of the meandering river, the undulating valley sides and views to distinctive tall church towers and spires provide a strong sense of place.*
- *The network of Public Rights of Way including the Ouse Valley Way and Milton Keynes Boundary Walk provide recreational access to the landscape, and connections between neighbouring settlements."*

4.2.58 The Full evaluation of the SLA states the following of relevance to the Site in relation to each of the SLA assessment criteria:

"Natural heritage qualities:

There is considerable natural heritage interest associated with the meandering river valley of the River Great Ouse. The river is lined by mature riparian vegetation, much designated as priority habitat deciduous woodland. Extensive wetland habitats are found across the floodplain meadows, including priority habitat floodplain grazing marsh and chalk grassland. The whole river channel is designated as the River Ouse Wildlife Corridor. In the west, former mineral workings considerably

altered this landscape. However, these have been restored and contain wetlands and plantations designated as a Local Wildlife Site (LWS). Konik ponies have recently been introduced to graze these areas for conservation management. These all provide evidence of ecological interest which contributes strongly to landscape character.

Small areas of woodland are found on the valley sides, often recorded as priority habitat and some of ancient origin. Hedgerows also contribute positively to the structure and habitat connectivity of the landscape.

Cultural heritage qualities:

The area has considerable historic interest. Historic villages and the market town of Olney contribute positively to the landscape. Many are designated as Conservation Areas due to their numerous historic buildings. Church spires and towers provide local landmarks, particularly the spire of St Peter and St Paul, Olney. The open floodplain forms an important landscape setting to the historic towns of Newport Pagnell and Olney.

Ridge and furrow earthworks within pasture fields, and considerable areas of pre-18th and 18th century and Parliamentary field patterns contribute to the time depth of the landscape. However, mineral extraction has removed traces of historic field patterns in the west of the area. The landscape is characterised by a number of historic buildings (Listed Buildings) and sites (Scheduled Monuments) relating to former priories, monasteries and manor houses, established in the Ouse Valley in the early Medieval period. Historic stone bridges (designated as Scheduled Monuments and Listed Buildings) cross the river at several points and contribute positively to the character of the landscape.

Historic houses and associated parklands at Tyringham Hall and Gayhurst Court (Registered Parks and Gardens) contribute to the cultural interest of the valley landscape. Tyringham Hall was designed by Sir John Soane, with gardens laid out by Humphry Repton and later Edwin Lutyens. Repton was also involved with the design of gardens at Gayhurst Court. The parklands lie next to each other, taking advantage of the valley sides either side of the River Great Ouse.

...

Recreation value:

The LCA has excellent recreational access, with a number of long-distance routes including the promoted Milton Keynes Boundary Walk and Ouse Valley Way. Appreciation of the landscape is an important part of the experience along these routes. Although access to the river is sometimes limited, a series of public parks on sites associated with former mineral extraction provides excellent recreational opportunities in the west. Emberton Country Park was the first dedicated Country Park in England. Part of the Grand Union Canal also crosses this area, with recreational opportunities both along the canal

and its tow path. Bury Field is a valued area of Open Access Land on the edge of Newport Pagnell.

Landscape quality (condition and intactness):

Overall the landscape structure is strong although it is influenced locally by expanding settlements and infrastructure development. Hedgerows are in variable condition, with some replacement by post and rail or post and wire, but new planting of hedgerows is a sign of active management in the area. In the east historic field patterns are largely intact, except around Sherington and Filgrave. Horse grazing on the edges of villages also reduces landscape condition locally.

Former gravel extraction has removed the historic field pattern in the west, but the restoration and flooding of the former gravel pits have created a new landscape structure. Some larger structures such as weirs and pipes along the river are evidence of human intervention.

Detractors within the landscape include major transport corridors including the M1 and West Coast Mainline railway. A solar farm north of Newport Pagnell, and electricity pylons west of Lavendon and Newton Blossomville are also incongruous features within the landscape. Residential and commercial development on the edge of Olney and at Cosgrove Park, and the wind farm at Petsoe End introduce urban features into views from the valley.

Local distinctiveness:

The shallow river valley of the Great Ouse is a distinctive feature within Milton Keynes. The main river channel and its tributaries in localised shallow valleys confer a recognisable sense of place. The water filled former gravel pits along the River Great Ouse are also a characteristic feature of this area. Parklands at Gayhurst and Tyringham are distinctive, and provide a link to the history of large estates in the area. The river and valley form an important 'gateway' and contributes positively to the character of Olney, and an important approach to Newport Pagnell.

Perceptual and scenic: The open valley landscape has a strong visual character. There are fine panoramic views from the valley to the wooded skyline of Yardley Chase to the north and the wooded Greensand Ridge to the south east, and open views across the valley floor to the historic parklands at Gayhurst and Tyringham, with their distinctive stone bridges. The church spire of St Peter and St Paul, Olney provides a landmark feature. Views of the Petsoe Manor wind farm, tall buildings and warehouses within Milton Keynes city to the south, and electricity pylon routes are modern influences on the landscape, but largely do not detract from its scenic rural character.

Areas of rural character, particularly along the river corridor in the east where there is more limited access, are relatively tranquil. There is also a perception of naturalness, even within

the flooded former gravel pits. The busy transport corridors which cross the area are locally audible.

Functional: The floodplain landscape of grasslands, streams and ponds, combined with the woodland on the valley slopes and riparian woodland contribute to the healthy functioning of the landscape. This includes supporting biodiversity and stabilising soil quality. These all contribute to the multifunctional green infrastructure network connecting to Milton Keynes city.”

4.2.59 Management guidelines for the Ouse Valley SLA of relevance to the Site and the Proposed development are as follows:

“Protect

- *Manage and enhance floodplain meadows. Protect existing meadows from ploughing, grassland improvement or further mineral extraction.*
- *Conserve and enhance the biodiversity interest of wetland habitats and watercourses. Ensure a whole valley approach is taken, identifying opportunities for green infrastructure enhancement.*
- *Protect and restore boundary hedges by coppicing, laying and gapping up to improve links between habitats and improve landscape structure.*
- *Protect the valued recreational use of the rural landscape through public rights of way, exploring opportunities for informal access and enjoyment.*
- *Conserve the open landscape and avoid the introduction of large-scale or very tall elements, both within the rural and urban areas of the borough, which would have a visual impact over a wide distance.*
- *Conserve and reinforce the parkland /estate character of Tyringham and Gayhurst, particularly planning the succession of veteran trees which form an integral part of the historic landscape.*
- *Conserve the distinctive vernacular of historic buildings and their rural setting, particularly within Conservation Areas, and ensure that landscape continues to provide a rural setting to these areas.*
- *Conserve the medieval settlement pattern of nucleated villages with surrounding open fields. Restrict built development away from the villages to retain the agricultural landscape setting.*
- *Protect the important undeveloped landscape setting to Milton Keynes, Newport Pagnell and Olney.*
- *Identify, retain and manage key viewpoints across the river floodplain and to the surrounding undulating valley slopes. Consider these views and those to the landmark churches and clocktowers in any future development.*

Manage

...

- *...Identify opportunities for green infrastructure enhancements, as set out in the Milton Keynes Green Infrastructure Strategy and Green Infrastructure Opportunity Mapping.*
- *Promote improvements to the river and lake habitats to encourage increased biodiversity value through marginal planting and localised bank profiling and sympathetic maintenance of drainage ditches.*
- *Manage recreational access and infrastructure to minimise the erosion of habitats and negative impacts on the tranquillity and remoteness of the landscape.*

Plan

- *Plan the introduction of new hedges following roads, public rights of way and historic boundaries. Plant individual hedgerow trees to provide replacement for mature and over mature stock.*
- *Maximise opportunities from the restoration of mineral extraction sites for recreation and biodiversity. Develop diverse mixed age woodland communities to retain a balance between screening recreation, wildlife and public safety.*
- *Plan to increase the extent of native deciduous woodland on the valley slopes, using locally occurring species to link the existing small woodland blocks, copses and hedgerows, as set out in the Milton Keynes Green Milton Keynes 94 Chapter 4 Evaluation and Recommendations Infrastructure Strategy. Encourage progressive removal of conifer hedgerows and shelter belts where appropriate.*
- *Plan for climate change, researching appropriate species mixes and designing woodland to minimise damage as a result of increased storms.*
- *Consider intervisibility of views when planning large-scale or very tall development in areas outside of the Ouse Valley SLA.”*

Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (2024)

4.2.60 In the 2024 Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA), the Site is identified as SHLAA Site 110093 ‘North of Milton Keynes’, which states the following regarding the suitability of the Site for housing:

“Unsuitable - suitable site area is significantly reduced by constraints...”

4.2.61 Under Policy Constraints, the assessment states:

“Site is designated as open countryside and a small proportion of the south eastern part of the site is designated as Linear park. 25% of the site falls within a minerals primary focus area and a significant proportion of the site is within the Ouse Valley proposed Special Landscape Area.”

4.2.62 Under the constraints summary section, the assessment states:

“... Consideration of constraints posed by the Special Landscape area would also be required and may further reduce the suitable area of the site. Any development would also need to protect the existing settlements within and around the site area to ensure coalescence is avoided...”

4.2.63 The overcoming constraints section of the assessment states:

“A positive allocation of the site either in a Local Plan or neighbourhood Plan would be required to overcome the open countryside designation. Numerous physical constraints would however still exist which limit the suitable area of the site.”

South Northamptonshire Local Plan

4.2.64 The neighbouring borough of South Northamptonshire lies 1.4km to the west of the Site at its nearest point. As part of the South Northamptonshire Part 2 Local Plan 2011-2019 (adopted 2020), a series of Special Landscape Areas were identified. These include the Tove Valley SLA, which follows the south-eastern borough boundary along the course of the Tove Valley to the west of the Site. The extent of the Tove Valley SLA is shown in **Figure 1**. The Local Plan states the following regarding SLAs, which may be of relevance to the Site and the Proposed Development:

“Any development proposal within or affecting an SLA will be expected to be sympathetic in terms of its siting, form, scale, materials and design and to contribute positively to the conservation, restoration or enhancement of the area’s character and appearance.”

4.2.65 Due to the Site's proximity to this local landscape designation, the landscape and visual impacts of the Proposed Development on the SLA should be considered as a potential sensitive landscape receptor.

4.3 Neighbourhood Planning

4.3.1 There are ‘made’ local plans for Hanslope, broadly comprising land north of the Tathall Brook, and Haversham-cum-Little Linford, broadly comprising land south of the Tathall Brook. There is no ‘made’ neighbourhood plan policy for land in the east of the Site surrounding the M1 (beyond Little Linford Wood). Neighbourhood Plans set out local planning policies for the area.

Hanslope Parish Neighbourhood Plan 2016-2031

4.3.2 The Hanslope Parish Neighbourhood Plan was ‘made’ in 2019. Policies of relevance to the Site and the Proposed Development are detailed below.

4.3.3 Policy HAN:4 Design and Development Principles in the Parish, states:

“Development proposals will be supported, provided they have full regard to the following design and development principles and to the guidance set out in the Hanslope Character & Design Statement:

...

- *All proposals must protect and reinforce, where appropriate, the existing green spaces*
- *All proposals should maintain key views (as shown on Key Views map) both within and from the village and respect the wider landscape*

- *No proposal should exceed two and a half storeys in building heights*
 - *All proposals should protect and, where appropriate improve, local paths and bridleways and any existing natural features on the site such as trees, hedges and ponds*
- ...

4.3.4 Policy HAN9: Green Infrastructure, states:

“Proposals for new development that is of a scale to require the provision of on-site open space will be supported especially if the design of open space is integral to the scheme and is effectively connected to any adjoining green infrastructure assets...

Where appropriate, developers will be expected to enter into a planning obligation to secure satisfactory arrangements for the long-term management of this open space.

...New development will also be required to retain trees and hedgerows and to secure opportunities to create connected habitats suitable for species adaption to climate change. Where they are unavoidably lost, replacement trees and hedgerows using indigenous species must be planted. All proposals for development in the Plan area must ensure that any potential impacts upon rare and threatened species are fully assessed, and that, where necessary, mitigation measures are incorporated to safeguard and protect those species.

...”

Haversham-cum-Little Linford Neighbourhood Plan (2022-2031)

4.3.5 The Hanslope Parish Neighbourhood Plan was ‘made’ in 2023. Policies of relevance to the Site and the Proposed Development are detailed below.

4.3.6 Policy HLL1: Settlement Boundaries, states:

“...

- D. Proposals for development outside the settlement boundaries will only be supported if they accord with development plan policies managing the Open Countryside.”*

4.3.7 Policy HLL5: High Quality Design, states:

- A. “Development proposals should acknowledge and respond to the Neighbourhood Character Appraisal, attached as Appendix B.*
- B. Development proposals, including alterations and extensions to existing buildings, will be supported, provided their scale, density, massing, height, landscape design, layout and materials reflect and enhance the architectural and historic character and scale of the surrounding buildings and landscape in the parish and its settlements:*

- C. *Development proposals in New Haversham should specifically demonstrate regard for the following design principles, as appropriate:*

Legibility

- *Proposals should have full regard, where appropriate, to the importance of the distinct and prominent Wolverton Railway Viaduct as a landmark building, a distinguishing landscape feature, on the edge of the parish.*

Layout

- *Proposals should maintain the pattern of grass verges between buildings and the road providing a sense of space and openness.*

Open space/landscape

- *Mature trees along prominent roads, particularly Wolverton Road, and mature hedgerows of the surrounding countryside, should be retained as a distinctive feature of the village. Where loss is unavoidable, replacement planting should be created.*

Building form

- *Proposals should sustain the pattern of a mix of predominantly semi-detached properties, and some detached, short terraces and bungalows.*
- *Proposals should include the use of a variety of architectural styles and traditional building materials.*

- D. *Development proposals in Old Haversham should specifically demonstrate regard for the following design principles, as appropriate:*

Legibility

- *Proposals should have full regard, where appropriate, to the importance of the distinct and prominent St Mary's Church, The Greyhound, The Old School, and The Grange as landmark buildings, distinguishing landscape features, in the village.*

Layout

- *Proposals should sustain the pattern of linear development with frontages to the High Street on either side of the road, including retaining or providing gaps between buildings that provide glimpses to open countryside and lakes beyond. Proposals should retain or re-provide as necessary limestone boundary walls, hedges and front gardens to match the existing arrangement on the same alignment.*

Open space/landscape

- *Mature trees along prominent roads, the horse chestnut tree at the entrance to the High Street, should be retained as a distinctive feature of the village.*

Building form

- *Proposals should sustain the pattern of a mix of detached, semi-detached, terraced properties, and bungalows.*

Style

- *Proposals should include the use of limestone in facing or cladding materials and slate roofs.”*

4.3.8 Policy HLL6: Non-designated Heritage Assets, states:

- A. *“The Neighbourhood Plan defines two Local Areas of Special Character as non-designated heritage assets, as shown on the Policies Maps, and outlined below:*
 - i. *Building group at Old Haversham;*
 - ii. *Haversham Mill.*
- B. *Development proposals located within or significantly affecting a Local Area of Special Character should demonstrate that they have paid full regard to the characteristics that contribute to the significance of its local architectural, historic and archaeological interest.”*

4.3.9 Policy HLL7: Local Green Spaces, states:

- A. *“The Neighbourhood Plan designates Local Green Spaces in the following locations, as shown on the Policies Maps*
 - i. *The Recreation Ground*
 - ii. *The Green within the Crescent*
 - iii. *The Allotments off Brookfield Road*
- B. *Proposals for inappropriate development in a Local Green Space will only be supported in ‘very special circumstances’.”*

4.3.10 Policy HLL8: Walking, Cycling and Equestrian Routes, states:

- A. *“Development proposals that lie within or adjacent to the existing network of walking, cycling and equestrian routes should, where possible, enhance access by connecting with existing or proposed routes and optimise use through appropriate design and landscaping.*
- B. *Proposals affecting the existing network shall seek to retain the existing route unless an alternative would significantly enhance the public enjoyment of using the route. Development proposals that will lead to the extension of the network will be supported, provided they are consistent with all other relevant policies of the development plan.”*

4.3.11 Policy HLL9: Green and Blue Infrastructure, states:

- A. *“Development proposals that lie within or adjoining the Green and Blue Infrastructure Network as shown on the Policies Map should maintain and improve the Network, including delivering a net gain to general biodiversity assets, in the design of their layouts, landscaping schemes and public open space provisions.*
- B. *Proposals that would undermine the integrity of the Network will not be supported unless other material considerations outweigh the harm to the Network. Development proposals that will lead to the extension of the Network will be supported, provided they are consistent with all other relevant policies of the development plan.”*

4.3.12 Policy HLL10: Important Views, states:

“Development proposals should conserve, and where possible enhance, the local character of the landscape, as identified in Appendix C and the 2022 Milton Keynes Landscape Character Assessment and, through sensitive design, landscape mitigation and enhancement measures, not cause adverse impacts on the Important Views identified on the Policies Maps.”

4.3.13 Appendix C Policy HLL10: Important Views includes the following schedule:

<i>View</i>	<i>Location and direction</i>	<i>LCA</i>	<i>Key characteristics</i>
1	From footpath 43 in the field behind the old school looking south, west and northeast	5a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited impact from built urban development • Landmark church towers/spires • Historic limestone villages • Paddocks in association with village margins
2	From footpath 43 in the field west of the kissing gate and stream looking south to southwest	5a, looking over 2c	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large scale arable fields with unclipped hedges • Low proportion of woodland and hedgerow trees • Panoramic views over meandering valley floor • Limited impact from built urban development • Tranquil and remote
3	From footpath 39 looking east to southeast	5a, looking over 2c	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sparsely settled rural landscape crossed by minor roads • Pasture on lower slopes and near settlements • Historic limestone villages • Paddocks in association with village margins • Panoramic views over meandering valley floor • Valley floor widens with extensive areas of open water due to mineral extraction
4	From field at end of Brookfield Road looking south to southwest	5a, looking over 2c	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Panoramic views over meandering valley floor • Large scale arable fields with unclipped hedges • Landmark railway viaduct (see <i>Description and photographs</i>)
5	From footpath 40, north of View 4, on the corner of four fields, 360° view	5a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large scale arable fields with unclipped hedges • Undulating lowland landscape with slopes down towards the river valley floor • General absence of visual detractors
6	From southern end of Wolverton Road looking north	5a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Iconic avenue of silver birch trees (see <i>Description and photographs</i>)
7	From southern end of Mill Road looking northeast to southeast	5a, looking over 2c	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undulating lowland landscape with slopes down towards the river valley floor • Low proportion of woodland and hedgerow trees • Limited impact from built urban development • Tranquil and remote
8	From the road towards Little Linford, near the end of footpath 16, looking south to east and northwest	5a, looking over 2c	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undulating lowland landscape with slopes down towards the river valley floor • Large scale arable fields with unclipped hedges • Large to medium scale mixed woodlands • Limited impact from built urban development
9	From the north end of Little Linford Lane looking north to northwest	5a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large scale arable fields with unclipped hedges • Large to medium scale mixed woodlands • General absence of visual detractors
10	From footpath 31 looking south to east	5a, looking over 2c	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undulating lowland landscape with slopes down towards the river valley floor • Landmark church towers/spires • Paddocks in association with village margins
11	From St Leonard's Church, Little Linford looking south to east	5a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historic parkland • General absence of visual detractors

Image 2: Extract of Haversham-cum-Little Linford Neighbourhood Plan (2022-2031), Appendix C: Policy HILL10

5 Site and Visual Appraisal

5.1 Site Appraisal

- 5.1.1 The Site is illustrated in **Figure 4** and representative **Site Appraisal Photographs A-M**. The Site comprises approximately 1042 hectares (ha).
- 5.1.2 A broad south-west – north-east orientated ridgeline lies in the centre of the Site (**Site Appraisal Photograph K**). At its highest point at Little Linford Wood, the elevation reaches 100m AOD. Spurs of elevated landform extend from the ridgeline to valleys of the Great Ouse to the south-east and to the shallower course of the Tathall Brook to the north-west, with narrow tributary valleys between them. Tributary valleys on the south-east facing valley slopes of the River Great Ouse are generally dry valleys oriented perpendicular to the main river. The tributary valleys have steeper gradients and more varied and intricate landform patterns than the upper slopes (**Site Appraisal Photograph I**).
- 5.1.3 The course of the Tathall Brook extends south from Tathall parallel to the M1 and then crosses the Site in a south-westerly direction, north of and parallel to the main ridgeline through the Site (**Site Appraisal Photograph M**). Beyond the Tathall Brook in the north-west of the Site, the landform rises gently to approximately 100m, culminating in the vicinity of Hanslope Park (**Site Appraisal Photographs J, K and M**).
- 5.1.4 In the east of the Site, the landform slopes gently down to the east towards the valley of the River Great Ouse, comprising part of the shallow promontory of land extending east from the Site between a pronounced meander in the River Great Ouse (**Site Appraisal Photograph E**).
- 5.1.5 Parts of the Site extend south beyond the route of High Street, at which point the landform drops steeply onto the lower valley slopes and broad valley floor of the Great Ouse. Areas of the Site on the valley floor are situated between Hill Farm and Little Linford (**Site Appraisal Photograph G**) and between Haversham and Old Haversham (**Site Context Photograph 9**).
- 5.1.6 A large block of Ancient Woodland, Little Linford Wood, straddles the ridgeline, forming a distinctive feature on the skyline (**Site Appraisal Photographs B, K and L**). Woodland cover is limited elsewhere, but includes some smaller woodlands and copses on the valley slopes such as The Spinney, Stocking Wood, Hoo Wood and Brownleys Spinney. The Tathall Brook is flanked by an almost continuous line of riparian trees, which ranges in width from a single tree line to narrow woodland belts (**Site Appraisal Photographs L & M**). A line of poplars marks the access drive of Pineham Farm (excluded from but surrounded by the Site) and forms a distinctive feature on the skyline in some views (**Site Appraisal Photograph L**).
- 5.1.7 A largely open area of flat, elevated agricultural land occupies the ridgeline in the centre of the Site and on the upper valley slopes. In parts, the large-scale field pattern creates a denuded 'prairie' landscape (**Site Appraisal Photographs F and J**), but where boundaries are marked, they comprise trimmed hedgerows and sporadic hedgerow trees. Land use here is mostly arable with localised occurrences of pasture. Field patterns in the tributary valleys tend to be slightly smaller; the associated hedgerow boundaries, combined with the steeper landform, offer a greater sense of enclosure.
- 5.1.8 In the north of the Site adjacent to Hanslope Park and Park Farm, field trees reinforce the parkland character of the adjoining Hanslope Park (**Site Appraisal Photograph B**). Gayhurst House RPG lies beyond the Site to the east. From eastern parts of the Site, there are some views of this heritage asset (**Site Appraisal Photographs C and D**).
- 5.1.9 Development within the Site is limited to occasional large-scale farm complexes and isolated barns on the valley slopes, as well as remains of the derelict Wood Farm on the ridgeline. Old Haversham, Little Linford and a small cluster of built form at Hill Farm lie at the foot of the

narrow tributary valleys, beyond the Site boundary. These settlements create a sense of intimacy in scale, creating contrasts from the more expansive valley slopes on movement corridors such as High Street (**Site Appraisal Photograph G**).

- 5.1.10 A series of lanes, trafficked by often fast-moving vehicles, surround the Site, including High Street crossing through southern/ south-eastern parts of the Site and Wolverton Road passing between western parts of the Site. The M1 motorway cuts across the varying topography in the east of the Site, at grade, in cutting or elevated. Structural planting along the motorway is typically linear (although it extends further where the motorway passes through existing woodland), thereby reinforcing the dominant pattern of the roadway through the landscape, albeit largely screening the roadway, infrastructure and vehicle movements. The traffic is prominent on the more elevated section between Stocking Wood and Hoo Wood (**Site Appraisal Photograph C**) and near Tathall End (**Site Appraisal Photograph A**). In the south-east of the Site, dense vegetation encloses both sides of the M1 creates a strong sense of containment of the roadway (**Site Context Photograph 4**).
- 5.1.11 The elevated ridgeline has an expansive feel and offers panoramic views across the intervening valley landscapes, including the Great Ouse Valley and development within Milton Keynes (**Site Appraisal Photographs F, I, J and K**), wind turbines at Petsoe Manor wind farm to the east of the M1 (**Site Appraisal Photographs E**), existing villages and the distinctive spire of Hanslope church (**Site Appraisal Photographs J and K**). Despite its partially-wooded setting, development at the adjacent Hanslope Park, including some taller buildings and a mast, is visually prominent from various parts of the Site (**Site Appraisal Photographs B, J, K and M**).
- 5.1.12 Views of existing built form within Milton Keynes are limited in summer conditions owing to the extent of canopy vegetation throughout the city - only distant taller buildings in the city centre, larger industrial estates such as that at Wolverton and newer development on the north-western settlement edge near the valley floor are readily distinguishable (**Site Appraisal Photographs F, J & K**).

5.2 Character of the Site Vicinity

The character of the Site vicinity, comprising broadly the land between Hanslope to the north-west, Tyringham to the north-east and Milton Keynes to the south, as shown in **Figure 4**, has also been assessed, and the following conclusions have been drawn.

Landform and Hydrology

- 5.2.1 The landform of the Site vicinity comprises the broad valley floor of the Great Ouse, its valley slopes, the associated tributary valleys that incise it and the rising landform of the plateau reaching a height of approximately 115m AOD near Hanslope to the north.

Pattern, Texture and Line

- 5.2.2 The north-west – south-east axis of major transport routes that formed the basis of the grid pattern in Milton Keynes continues to the north of the settlement, including the broadly parallel routes of the M1 and mainline railway line. Other features that coincidentally follow and strengthen this linear pattern or lie perpendicular to it (creating a loose grid) in the local landscape include the valley floor of the River Great Ouse, the main ridgeline through the Site, the Tathall Brook and PRow along the ridgeline (including part of the Midshires Way and PRow along the contours of the Tathall Brook and parts of the Hanslope Circular Ride), which follow a south-west – north-east axis. Whilst the route of the River Tove and many of the existing hedgerows and PRow ascending the valley slopes in the south-east of the Site and parts of the Three Shires Way crossing the Tathall Brook, are oriented on a north-west - south-east axis.

Scale and Enclosure

- 5.2.3 The landform of gentle slopes and valleys with wide valley floors and broad ridgelines allows for long-distance views and big open skies, creating the perception of a larger-scale landscape, although a more intimate enclosed character is evident in parts of the Tathall Brook valley. Most field patterns are large-scale and often amalgamated, enclosed by intermittent hedgerow trees and woodland copses. This, in combination with the larger farm complexes and tall barns, accentuates the scale of the landscape.
- 5.2.4 Within the heavily vegetated valley floor of the River Great Ouse, containment offered by the steep lower valley slopes and dense vegetation both within the valley floor and enclosing the north-western edge of Milton Keynes, creates a smaller scale character with a greater sense of intimacy.
- 5.2.5 The heavily vegetated character of the north-western extent of Milton Keynes in the Site vicinity creates a strong sense of enclosure. Views from the settlement to the local landscape are limited, usually only found on the settlement edge. The presence of mostly 2-3 storey residential development within the city and a high concentration of street trees creates a distinctly human-scale townscape.

Built Form and Activity

- 5.2.6 The north-western settlement edge of Milton Keynes comprises mostly residential development, which extends to the foot of the south-eastern valley slopes. The nearest districts of Milton Keynes to the Site include New Bradwell, on the south-eastern edge of the Site; Newport Pagnell to the east; and Wolverton to the south-west. There are also areas of large-scale industrial use at Wolverton to the west of the railway line. Dense vegetation enclosing the main roads and rail connections into Milton Keynes from the north softens the sense of arrival within the settlement.
- 5.2.7 Several small settlements lie on the lower north-western slopes of the Great Ouse Valley, directly beyond the Site of the south along High Street, namely (west-east), New Haversham, Old Haversham, a cluster of properties at Hill Farm and Little Linford; and some more isolated farms. The linear village of Old Haversham comprises traditional properties and some modern infill; and includes several listed buildings such as the Grade I listed Parish Church of St Mary. Some properties in the village immediately abut the High Street, whilst others are set back within gardens, usually enclosed by stone walls. New Haversham takes the form of an orthogonal pattern, suburban estate built in the mid-20th century, situated to the west of Old Haversham. The settlement pattern here comprises straight streets of mostly semi-detached properties. Little Linford is a small hamlet within a former parkland estate.
- 5.2.8 Immediately north of the Site, within the gentle valley of Tathall Brook, lies the small hamlet of Tathall End. The Tathall Brook passes through the village along the road in a channel. Properties are typically set behind the stream and accessed by private bridges.
- 5.2.9 Clusters of properties, including numerous listed buildings, are found within the neighbouring Gayhurst and Tyringham RPGs to the east of the Site. These buildings are set designed within parklands, characterised by extensive woodland and in-field parkland trees.
- 5.2.10 Hanslope is situated on the elevated plateau north of the Site. The settlement originally followed a linear pattern on a north-west – south-east axis but expanded outward in the late 20th and early 21st century. The settlement has a Conservation Area and contains the Grade I listed Church of St James the Great. The church's distinctive spire is a prominent landmark throughout much of the local area.
- 5.2.11 Castlethorpe is also a Conservation Area, situated west of the Site and passed by the mainline railway. This settlement has a nucleated pattern located at the site of a former castle.

- 5.2.12 Traditional building materials within the villages usually comprise local stone, with some occurrences of brick and render. Stone walls enclosing the curtilage of properties are commonplace. Newer developments, including most of Haversham, often use red brick and white render.
- 5.2.13 There is a substantial complex of offices and infrastructure at the HMGCC to the north of the Site. This large-scale built form and associated security fencing appear incongruous with its parkland setting and larger buildings, and the mast features in local views despite its wooded setting. This large employment centre results in considerable localised commuter traffic.
- 5.2.14 In addition to Watling Street/A5, the West Coast Mainline and the M1 pass through the Site vicinity. These are nationally significant communication routes, which extend in and out of Milton Keynes at the point of crossing the Ouse valley. Their bridges across the valley therefore provide significant gateway features as perceived from this area. In this respect, the West Coast Mainline rail viaduct, between Wolverton and Haversham is featured on the Haversham village sign and the front cover of the Haversham-cum-Little Linford Neighbourhood Plan and Neighbourhood Plan Policy HLL5: High Quality Design, sets out the *'importance of the distinct and prominent Wolverton Railway Viaduct as a landmark building, a distinguishing landscape feature'*. As such, this bridge is recognised publicly as an iconic and locally-distinctive feature of the landscape in this vicinity.

Historical Development and Time Depth

- 5.2.15 The Site vicinity includes a range of heritage associations, notably the historic parklands, including Gayhurst Court and Tryingham RPGs. Hanslope Park is also a historic parkland, which retains some of its traditional planted characteristics despite not being an RPG. The sense of time depth at Hanslope Park is degraded by its use as an HMGCC, including large-scale modern buildings and security fencing.
- 5.2.16 As shown in historic mapping (**Image 3** below), there was historically a greater extent of woodland along the ridgeline landform, as well as hedgerows which have since been removed for field consolidation. The assart field pattern of this area mentioned in character assessment also indicates a landscape that was once more wooded.



Image 3: Extract of historic Ordnance Survey 1:10,000 (SP84SW – A Surveyed / Revised: Pre-1930 to 1957, Published: 1958) Held by the National Library of Scotland.

Vegetation

- 5.2.17 The most extensive woodland area within the site vicinity is Gayhurst Wood, which lies immediately to the north-east of the Site.
- 5.2.18 There are also considerable areas of interconnected woodland and scrub within the broad valley floor of the River Great Ouse, including riparian trees and scrub along watercourses and more extensive areas of woodland surrounding lakes and, to a lesser extent, riparian vegetation along the River Tove.
- 5.2.19 Within Milton Keynes, to the south is an interconnected network of tree-lined streets and small woodlands. There is dense tree cover along most of the north-western settlement edge on the lower valley slopes.
- 5.2.20 Smaller woodland blocks, shelterbelts and copses are relatively common in the local landscape. There is a higher concentration of woodlands around former parkland estates at Hanslope Park, Little Linford and RPGs at Gayhurst and Tyringham.
- 5.2.21 Field boundaries are typically marked by hedgerows, including occasional canopy trees, small woodland blocks and tree lines.
- 5.2.22 Woodlands are generally formed of native canopy species, including oak, ash, wild cherry, hornbeam, aspen and field maple species, with an understorey including hazel, hawthorn and blackthorn species. Whilst on the broad valley floors, species also include willows and alder.

6 Visual Appraisal

- 6.1.1 The visual appraisal was undertaken from publicly accessible viewpoints within the surrounding landscape, primarily roads and footpaths, to determine the approximate extent of the area from which the Site is visible from the eye level of a person standing on the ground. The visibility of any Site is predominantly influenced by landform, the extent and type of vegetation cover, and built elements within the Site and the surrounding landscape.
- 6.1.2 Fieldwork was informed by Zone of Theoretical Visibility mapping (ZTV), as shown in **Figure 5**, which identified areas where there is theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development (assumed at up to 12m in height), based on existing built form (assumed 8.5m tall) and significant woodland blocks (assumed 12m tall). As the ZTV demonstrates, at long-distances, built form within the Site would not be seen from land at long distances to the north/north-west of the Hanslope plateau; and from within the majority of Milton Keynes. The Site is theoretically visible from points on the western flank of the Tove valley and the eastern flank of the valley of the River Great Ouse.
- 6.1.3 Areas identified as having potential for views of the Site and/or the Proposed Development were then visited to consider the nature of visibility on the ground. Representative views were chosen and illustrated by **Site Context Photographs 1-20**, the locations of which are shown in **Figure 5**. The photographs were taken in July 2024 in summer conditions.
- 6.1.4 From the immediate edge of the Site along High Street in the south, open views are obtained up the open valley slopes. The steep valley sides in the immediate vicinity form short, stark horizons (**Site Context Photograph 5**) often views lacking locally-characteristic structural planting on the skyline.
- 6.1.5 In the broad valley floor to the south-east of the Site, vegetation in combination with the steep lower valley slopes provides localised screening, partially limiting views north-west towards the Site as shown in **Site Context Photographs 2, 6 and 9**). In the east, there are views along this more open section of the valley floor and to the valley slopes within the Site surrounding Mill Farm (**Site Context Photograph 2**).
- 6.1.6 From Bury Field open space at Newport Pagnell to the south-east of the Site, dense vegetation within the valley and intervening development prevents intervisibility with the Site (**Site Context Photograph 3**).
- 6.1.7 From the north-western edge of the urban area on the valley slopes, partial views of south-east-facing valley slopes of the Site and woodland on the ridgeline are possible (**Site Context Photographs 4 & 7**). From Stanton Low Park, these views are more open and include views of the church spire at Hanslope (**Site Context Photograph 7**). There are also some longer-distance views along the broad valley floor, including those to the south-western part of the Site extending south of New Haversham, as shown in **Site Context Photograph 6**.
- 6.1.8 The high concentration of vegetation within Milton Keynes limits the number of views toward the Site from the urban area. However, from elevated parts of Stantonbury Park, there are glimpsed views of the elevated landform of the Site, set in front of the wooded skyline of the Hanslope Plateau in which the spire of Hanslope Church forms a distinctive landmark (**Site Context Photograph 8**).
- 6.1.9 From near the settlement edge at Wolverton, in Ouse Valley Park, views are obtained along the Tathall Brook valley. Dense vegetation on the valley floor filters views in this direction, albeit there are some glimpsed views towards the ridgeline within the Site and Little Linford Wood upon it, as well as the poplars at Pineham Farm and the mast at HMGCC Hanslope Park. (**Site Context Photograph 10**).

- 6.1.10 Views from the edge of Castlethorpe to the west are screened by the localised ridgeline near Bartholomew Farm (**Site Context Photograph 12**), although from this ridgeline, partial views are obtained to the north-western part of the Site (**Site Context Photograph 11**).
- 6.1.11 The gently rising landform to the north-west of the Site at Hanslope, in combination with the vegetation cover, notably around HMGCC Hanslope Park, limits the visibility of the Site from the north. This limited intervisibility is illustrated in near-distance views from the vicinity of Manor Farm to the north-west of the Site (**Site Context Photograph 13**) as well as in longer-distance views from the vicinity of Hanslope (**Site Context Photograph 14** and from north of the M1 at Yew Tree Farm (**Site Context Photograph 1**).
- 6.1.12 From limited elevated locations, long-distance views from the north-east and east, beyond the valley of the River Great Ouse, are obtained to the ridgeline in the centre of the Site on which Little Linford Wood lies. These include views from elevated parts of Chicheley Hill Road (**Site Context Photograph 17**) and elevated land near North Crawley (**Site Context Photograph 18**). From the west-facing valley slopes above Tyringham (**Site Context Photograph 15**), framed views to the east-facing sloping fields in the east of the Site and Little Linford Wood on the skyline are possible. Similarly, in distant views from the vicinity of Olney the mast at Hanslope Park HMGCC is discernible, as well as wooded skylines in the Site vicinity (**Site Context Photograph 16**).
- 6.1.13 From the viewpoint at the elevated Campbell Park within the centre of Milton Keynes, views towards the Site are curtailed by intervening vegetation in the city (**Site Context Photograph 19**).
- 6.1.14 In distant views from more elevated land to the west, including in the vicinity of Cosgrove and Yardley Gobion, intervening vegetation largely screens views of the Site. However, glimpses are obtained from limited locations (**Site Context Photographs 20** and **21**). Similarly, in very long-distance view from the vicinity of Whaddon to the south-west of the Site and west of the urban area of Milton Keynes views towards the Church in Hanslope (**Site Context Photograph 22**).

7 Landscape and Visual Mitigation/Optimisation by Design

7.1 Landscape and Visual Opportunities and Constraints

Extension of Milton Keynes

- 7.1.1 Based on the above analysis and with reference to published character assessments and associated guidelines, the Site has the potential in landscape and visual terms to integrate a expansion of Milton Keynes. This is subject to a sensitive approach responding to landscape and visual opportunities and constraints, as set out below and illustrated in **Figure 7**. This accords with the findings of Landscape Sensitivity Study to Residential Development in the Borough of Milton Keynes and Adjoining Areas (2016), which notes that for the area including the majority of the Site:

“There are likely to be opportunities to accommodate residential development without a significant adverse change in landscape character.”

- 7.1.2 Opportunities to integrate a substantial extension into the landscape by echoing the fundamental design principles used to integrate the planned city into what was previously a predominantly rural landscape.
- 7.1.3 Mirror the approach of development on higher ground between river corridors as evident in the existing city, the centre of which lies at a slightly higher elevation than the highest points of the Site, at approximately 110m AOD.
- 7.1.4 As seen elsewhere around the city, the Ouse Valley Linear Park presents opportunities to provide shared amenities, between urban areas. The principal example is the corridor of the Ouzel Brook, which extends up to approximately 1km in width and, amid areas of multi-functional green and blue infrastructure, provides pockets of relative tranquillity within the city.
- 7.1.5 Opportunity to continue the south-east to north-west alignment on which the loose grid of the city is based, founded on and framed by Watling Street Roman Road, the West Coast Mainline Railway and the M1 motorway.
- 7.1.6 An extension of the city following these principles can be comprehensively integrated into the landscape by replicating the fundamental landscape characteristic of Milton Keynes as a ‘city in a forest’. Notably, there are opportunities with the protracted built time of such a long-term development to establish substantial canopy-level planting as a framework in which to set built form.

Structural Planting

- 7.1.7 To this end, the framework of development should include spines of structural planting extending along the ridgelines to:
- provide well-integrated development parcels and soften the perception of built form in views from the wider landscape.
 - add to the continuity of the characteristic wooded skylines in longer distance views.
 - emphasise the legibility of the landform.
 - strengthen the character of Milton Keynes ‘Wooded Wolds’ LCT, which acknowledges the area’s role in forming distinctive wooded backdrops for the adjacent landscapes.

- provide greater connectivity between existing fragmented areas of woodland, reinstating previously wooded areas as shown in historic mapping and addressing the lack of connectivity highlighted in relation to LCA 1b.
- visually enclose the existing infrastructure associated with HMGCC Hanslope Park and the M1 and maintain a sense of separation between the visually intrusive infrastructure and the Proposed Development. In particular, introduce additional woodland on the ridgeline to the north-east of Little Linford Wood, thereby perceptually linking woodlands severed by the M1 and diminish the dominance of the motorway, particularly in views from the east.
- Provide visual enclosure at the edge of the Hanslope Plateau to the north, complementing and extending existing structural vegetation in the vicinity.
- Reinforce the role of the Lathbury ridgeline north of Mill Farm in providing a structural and character distinction between the valley flanks to the south, more closely associated with the M1 and wider urban influences; and the valley flanks to the north, rural in character and dominated by the RPGs at Gayhurst and Tyringham.

Valleys and Watercourses

- 7.1.8 Use the framework of tributary valleys as blue and green infrastructure corridors (including SuDS) to accentuate the legibility of the landform and retain their localised sense of enclosure (identified as a Key Characteristic of the Undulating Valley slopes LCT).
- 7.1.9 Opportunity to place waterbodies on the lower valley slopes, creating landscaped wetlands and lakes that reflect the character of the former gravel pit lakes along the River Great Ouse and, in particular, seek to create a diverse wetland character in broader parts of the Tathall Brook valley floor.

Views

- 7.1.10 Retain opportunities for views of the locally distinctive spire of the Church of St James the Great in Hanslope from both within the Site and from the edge of Milton Keynes, including creating view corridors through the Proposed Development, in accordance with guidance for LCT1.
- 7.1.11 Provide opportunities for views north-west and south-east over the valleys of the River Great Ouse and Tathall Brook from more elevated parts of the Site as well as views south-west and north-east along the broad valley floors, in accordance with guidance for LCT1.

Movement

- 7.1.12 Retain the routes of PRow and provide sensitive and appropriate settings to these routes, including reinforcing existing vegetation along key routes and adding new hedgerows and trees to enhance green corridors for network connectivity, structural diversity and landscape legibility.

Urban Grain and Planting

- 7.1.13 The combination of these points provides the potential for a logical extension of the loose grid of Milton Keynes by accentuating and working with existing features within the Site that follow this pattern, including;
- Landform;
 - watercourses

- Structural planting, including existing grain of field patterns
- PRoW
- Key view corridors

7.1.14 The grid pattern within the Site should be reinforced by extensive green infrastructure, notably opportunities for canopy tree planting, emulating the character of Milton Keynes.

7.1.15 These opportunities for tree planting within the townscape should include along movement routes, wetland corridors and streets. Wherever possible, existing structure including hedgerows and trees, should be used as a basis, particularly where this aligns with and supports the grid pattern.

Key Open Spaces

7.1.16 Aside from the areas of strategic green and blue infrastructure, as noted above, key open spaces within the Site should include:

- Open space on the central ridgeline to maintain a perception of the open, expansive character of the ridgeline plateau and facilitate informal recreation. This area should include designed breaks in the ridgeline vegetation to allow for framed views out of the open space to the wider landscape, such as those to key landmark features including Hanslope Church, the River Great Ouse Valley floor and the tall built form in the city centre of Milton Keynes.
- Provide access and connectivity to the Tathall Brook corridor as part of the extended Linear Parks network (the extension of Linear Parks is sought by adopted Local Plan policy).

7.1.17 Provide opportunities to facilitate further access to the River Great Ouse valley floor as an important interface between the extended urban area and the existing Linear Park.

Landmarks

7.1.18 There is the opportunity for a locally characteristic landmark feature on the elevated ridgeline, replicating the role of the church spire in Hanslope; and the centre of Milton Keynes, in which taller built form is found on the higher ground. For example, this feature could be a clock tower, landform or public art installation replicating the character of the 'Light Pyramid' (found at the highest point of Cambell Park in the centre of Milton Keynes).

7.1.19 Similarly, there is the opportunity for a further landmark feature in the form of a crossing of the Great Ouse valley. The existing West Coast Mainline and M1 bridges are nationally significant communication routes in and out of the city and provide visually interesting gateway features to the city across the valley. There is similarly potential for a crossing offering a similarly iconic and visually interesting feature, juxtaposed with the natural landscape of the valley floor.

Development extents and character

7.1.20 Areas of particular landscape and visual sensitivity where development should be avoided are detailed below:

- Maintain an undeveloped setting to Gayhurst and Tyringham RPGs in the bowl of landform to the north-east of the M1 and on the sloping land to the north of the Lathbury ridgeline.
- Maintain a sensitive setting to existing settlements, notably Old Haversham and Tathall End, to retain local identity and sense of place (in line with the identified

characteristic for LCT1 around Hanslope satellite 'End' villages). This could be achieved by using locally appropriate combinations of open space and structural planting, including the potential for wetland features, parkland and/or orchards reflecting examples in the surrounding landscape.

- Maintain a perception of tranquillity and containment within the broad valley floor of the River Great Ouse by avoiding built development and using additional structural planting, notably in association with any infrastructural elements.

7.1.21 Any proposed built form on the lower valley slopes south of High Street and away from the suburban pattern and character of New Haversham should have a lower density and echo the character of the existing villages and hamlets on the north-western lower valley slopes, including Old Haversham and Little Linford.

7.1.22 The extent of the proposed built form should be carefully managed in the most elevated plateau areas to avoid the appearance of a continuous urban ridgeline in views from the wider landscape and maintain important view corridors, notably views from the south-east to Hanslope Church.

7.1.23 Larger-scale employment buildings could be accommodated on more level areas between the proposed M1 junction and Little Linford Wood, providing the following conditions are upheld:

- This type of built form in this area would need to be carefully integrated within a wooded setting that permeates and ultimately exceeds the height of the built form, to ensure the character of the ridgeline is wooded. This will ensure that the built form appears well-absorbed into the landscape and does not form long, abrupt skylines.
- Landform manipulation to accommodate this built form should be avoided where possible so that the legibility of the Tathall Brook Valley slopes is retained. The landform variation in the area is a Key Characteristic of published assessments.
- Careful colour mitigation should be stipulated on the facades of the built form, utilising darker tones to ensure it recedes into the predominantly wooded backdrops.
- The scale of the built form should be carefully managed to enable: potential for woodland integration in terms of height, minimisation of landform manipulation resulting from very large footprints; avoidance of an appearance of overbearing massing and long abrupt skylines; and potential to break up between massing with woodland planting.

7.1.24 Consider the use of local vernacular building materials within the proposed development, including limestone with thatch, slate, or red brick roofs, as identified in the Landscape Character Assessment.

7.1.25 There is an overall need to provide positive management of existing and proposed landscape features, including the potential for community involvement in this, in the form of community gardens, orchards and woodlands. As part of a multi-functional green infrastructure, provision should also be considered for the educational use of various natural habitats, including involvement in their management.

8 Response to Candidate SLA Evidence Base

8.1 Introduction

- 8.1.1 This commentary responds to published documents, primarily examining the extent to which the Candidate SLA designation in the vicinity of the Site and its associated policy are needed. The omission of reference to any part of the 'Milton Keynes Review of Local Landscape Designations' (RLLD) and/or 'Milton Keynes Valued Landscapes Policy Review' should not be interpreted as agreement with it.

8.2 Need for designation and supporting policy

- 8.2.1 First and foremost, the Ouse Valley floor, which is the principal feature of value in the Candidate SLA, is already designated as a Linear Park and therefore subject to robust controls on development in relation to the landscape, governed by Plan:MK Policy DS6 and draft Policy CEA8. Therefore, there is no need for further designation of the landscape in this vicinity.
- 8.2.2 In any case, local landscape designations in Milton Keynes are unnecessary as a character-based approach can be used to sensitively manage change in the landscape.
- 8.2.3 The Valued Landscapes Policy Review considered previous planning decisions to assess the effectiveness of the former Area of Attractive Landscape (AAL) designation in upholding Milton Keynes Local Plan 2001-2011 Policy S11, versus the landscape character approach in upholding Policy NE5L Conserving and Enhancing Landscape Character of Plan: MK (2016-2031). From this, recommendations were made on the council's future approach to local landscape designations.
- 8.2.4 It should, however, be noted that the previous Policy S11 of the Milton Keynes Local Plan 2001-2011, which underpinned the then AAL designation, stated:
- “Within these areas, *development* should:
- *Not damage the special character of the areas*
 - *Enhance important landscape features where possible*
 - *Protect and enhance features of nature conservation value*
 - *Retain and improve public access and opportunities for countryside recreation.*”
- 8.2.5 It is clear that the test of the 'effectiveness' of the policy was not that development be prevented by default but that development, if it took place, be accommodated appropriately within the landscape (mindful that there may be other significant reasons in the planning balance which affect whether or not development takes place. With the exception of National Landscapes, any one policy related to landscape cannot reasonably be expected to prevent development in any case if other benefits outweigh any harms to the landscape).
- 8.2.6 It is therefore erroneous in the Valued Landscapes Policy Review to have set the test of the effectiveness of the local landscape designation to be 'protecting the landscape from development'. Whilst in the cases mentioned, the AAL designation prevented development, preventing development was not the object of Policy S11.
- 8.2.7 The policy does not state that development should not take place within an AAL; therefore, the simple fact that a proposal was not consented for development should not be used to conclude the effectiveness of the policy.

8.2.8 Valued Landscapes Policy Review Chapter 4, Paragraph 4.6 states:

“...local designation is a long established and well-regarded means of identifying areas with particular landscape value, as has been shown in some (but not all) of the appeals illustrated Chapter 3 above, such as the appeal at Eaton Leys which was successfully dismissed within AV (but not within MK) and the appeal at Linford Lakes which was dismissed by the Inspector due to its location within both the Ouse Valley AAL and Ouse Valley Linear Park.”

8.2.9 As well as being factually incorrect (there was no appeal in relation to land at Eaton Leys – as paragraph 3.11 on p.10 makes clear, the application was consented in Milton Keynes and withdrawn in Aylesbury Vale), this commentary highlights that the clear line of thinking within the document that the prevention of development is the measure of effectiveness of the former AAL designation.

8.2.10 Instead of this approach, the assessment should have looked at the design of proposed schemes and the extent to which they had conserved the special qualities of the AAL and if the design incorporated any features that would strengthen the character of these special qualities to determine the effectiveness of the policy in protecting valued landscapes. However, the LUC assessment did not provide any commentary on the landscape quality of any proposed development design within the AAL.

8.2.11 Three future approach options were provided in Chapter 4 of the Valued Landscapes Policy Review (2022), as follows: ‘Option 1: Set out a criteria-based policy relating to information in the updated MK LCA 2022’ (a landscape character-based approach without SLA designation), ‘Option 2: Retain and refresh the existing AALs’ and ‘Option 3: commission a new local landscape designation study’. The Valued Landscapes Policy Review (2022) recommended Option 2 was followed, albeit the rationale for why this option was preferable was unclear. However, the council instead opted for ‘Option 3’ and commissioned a new local landscape designation study.

8.2.12 The resulting Review of Local Landscape Designations (2024) (RLLD) assesses the landscape on an LCA-level (as per the LCAs defined in the 2022 Landscape Character Assessment), evaluating the extent to which each area meets the AAL designation criteria. The review document utilises the information collected within the 2022 landscape character assessment to help identify the extent of the Candidate SLAs.

8.2.13 Neither part of draft Policy CEA12 seeks to prevent development, but instead relies on understanding key characteristics (a character-based approach) to consider how change can be managed.

8.2.14 In fact, the potential for landscape character improvements as set out in draft Policy CEA12 in the draft Local Plan is predicated on the policy enabling development which can deliver such changes, whilst also mitigating any harm arising from the development.

8.2.1 Given that a character-based approach is proposed to be used for land subject of SLA designation in any case, there is limited, if any, benefit in the underlying SLA designation relating to the second part of the policy.

8.2.2 To cover any specific features or characteristics of particular sensitivity, the limited additional detail in the RLLD could be incorporated into the LCA to provide further clarity on such points.

8.3 Ouse Valley Candidate SLA

8.3.1 As noted above, it is not considered that there is a need for an SLA designation, as a comprehensive character-based approach would suffice.

- 8.3.2 However, if the Council deemed the designation appropriate, consideration should be given to the extent of that designation.
- 8.3.3 The candidate Ouse Valley SLA broadly follows the extent of the former Ouse Valley AAL, albeit there have been some additions and removals, as outlined in Figure 4.14 of the report. Much of the south, south-east and east of the Site lies within the extent of the Ouse Valley Candidate SLA. This includes several large arable fields on the south-east facing valley slopes (south-west of Little Linford Wood) that were not included in the previous AAL designation.
- 8.3.4 The extent of the Candidate SLA encompasses parts of LCAs 2a, 2b,3b and 3c.
- 8.3.5 As the River Ouse is the unifying feature of this Candidate SLA with a range of identified Special Qualities, the broad valley floor (LCA 3c) should reasonably be included within the extent of any Candidate SLA designation. The identified Special Qualities include extensive woodland, floodplain meadows, historic field patterns, historic bridges, views of the river, access land and PRoW. However, the south-east-facing valley slopes, within the Site (included within LCA 2a), are subject of very limited commentary within the RLLD. In terms of local distinctiveness, the document mentions the *'valley landform is a distinctive feature'*. This places a value on the underlying form of the landscape but makes virtually no reference to any other physical or perceptual qualities of that landscape. The Proposed Development would make no material change to landform and through being structured to accentuate valley and ridgeline corridors as part of the proposed green and blue infrastructure, would retain a clear perception of the distinctive landform of the vicinity.
- 8.3.6 The Candidate SLA Special Qualities note that: *[valley floor features] provide a contrast with the more intensively farmed land on the valley sides.'* This does not suggest that the valley sides themselves provide any particular value other than being contrasted from the valley floor.
- 8.3.7 In fact, apart from being commonplace in the local landscape, it is this intensive farming which has resulted in the identification for LCA 2a of *'fragmentation of historic field patterns'*; and *'lack of connectivity between woodlands and hedgerow field boundaries'*. Furthermore, the RLLD notes that LCA 2a includes *'few areas of natural heritage importance'*; *'hedgerows in variable condition'*; and *'gaps in the green infrastructure network'*.
- 8.3.8 The fields included in the designation within the Site are notably large-scale, and there is clear evidence of historic field boundary removal. This creates a barren character (as shown in **Site Appraisal Photographs F, I, J & K** and **Site Context Photograph 7**).
- 8.3.9 Furthermore, despite mentioning the quality of small areas of woodland on the valley sides, the RLLD proposes the management planning of increasing woodland in this area. This is as much an indicator of depleted landscape structure to be renewed, as of an existing value to be protected.
- 8.3.10 The report notes long-distance panoramic views obtained in this LCA. Such views can readily be retained in a development layout on sloping land through the provision of views over open space and rooflines; or promontory viewpoints, such as seen in Campbell Park and proposed in the centre of the Proposed Development. It is noted that within the Site, these views are currently obtained over the wider urban area of Milton Keynes. In contrast, to the north-east of the M1 and Lathbury ridgeline, views are obtained over the river valley without any urban development. These north-east-facing valley slopes and the valley landform beyond this point to the north-east have a notably more rural character and are less influenced by the urban area and the route of the M1 and West Coast Mainline Railway which are identified as detracting features to the tranquillity of LCA 2a.
- 8.3.11 This distinction between north-east and south-west of the M1 and Lathbury ridgeline is a critical factor in determining the extent of the Candidate SLA. As well as the urbanising influences on land within the Site, the land to the north-east is identified in the description of

landscape qualities of LCA 2a as including landscape parks at Gayhurst and Tyringham. These provide a valuable landscape character influence, emphasising the distinctiveness of this more tranquil landscape, separated by the local ridgeline and motorway from the influence of the urban area. This conclusion is borne out by the Landscape Character Assessment (2022) description of LCA 3b (which lies north of the Lathbury ridgeline), which states in paragraph 5.105:

“The boundary with the Ouse Lakes and Parkland Floodplains (LCA 3c) marks where the urban influences of Newport Pagnell and Milton Keynes city become more apparent, and is defined by Sherington Road.”

8.3.12 Paragraph 5.111 of the same document notes:

“There are views across the floodplain to the rising valley slopes, with the villages and towns within the adjacent LCAs (LCA 2b and 2c) visible, especially the church spire of St Peter and St Paul and Olney. This is a peaceful and rural landscape, with few modern intrusions...”

8.3.13 In terms of the more elevated land in the centre of the Site, whilst the pattern woodlands and the skyline backdrop that they provide is distinctive, this is not mentioned in the Special Qualities of the Candidate SLA, which makes reference only to woodland on the valley flanks.

8.3.14 While it is noted that the woodland in the ridgeline at Little Linford Wood is of value as a Local Nature Reserve, the necessity for it to be included within a Candidate SLA designation is limited as it will already be protected for its ecological importance, regardless of whether it is included as part of the Candidate SLA or not. The description of LCA 1b notes the limited connections of woodland in this area, which the Proposed Development has the potential to address. The RLLD mentions the wooded backdrop as a distinctive feature of LCA 1b. However, it is notable that within the Site, there has been extensive historic removal of woodland, which has the opportunity to be replaced. Whilst this may contribute to the noted contrast between enclosure and openness, in reality, aside from Little Linford Wood, the ridgeline plateau is markedly depleted of woodland within the Site.

8.3.15 The land beyond the ridge on which Little Linford Wood is set has a very limited association with the rest of the Candidate SLA, sloping down to the north, away from the River Great Ouse. This area does not appear to be a notable example of the other Special Qualities of the Candidate SLA. It is unclear why this area has been included as part of the Candidate SLA.

8.3.16 On this basis, it is considered that the Candidate SLA should exclude land within the Site as, in the terms of the RLLD, it provides little distinctiveness and landscape quality. Land to the north of the M1 and Lathbury Ridge shows more of the special qualities of the Candidate SLA, reflecting its distinct position separated from the urban area by the Lathbury ridgeline. The inclusion of all of the north-western valley flanks of the River Ouse in LCA 2a has resulted in a lack of consideration of the distinct qualities of these different areas in the RLLD.

8.4 Development within Candidate SLA

8.4.1 Even in the event that an SLA was adopted by the Council, including land within the Site, it is considered that the Site could be sensitively developed (as set out in section 7 above) to ‘incorporate appropriate measures to mitigate landscape and visual impacts’, in accordance with draft Policy CEA12.

8.4.2 The Proposed Development, while ultimately changing the setting of the River Great Ouse valley floor from rural to developed would respond in the following ways to the Special Qualities of the Candidate SLA:

- The Proposed Development will maintain the legibility of the landform within the valley of the River Great Ouse and the rolling valley flanks, by creating wetland corridors within existing valley forms and extending the existing character of woodland on

higher ground, thereby accentuating the distinction between these two aspects of landform.

- The Proposed Development would increase woodland cover and connectivity between the existing woodland resources, extending and linking these features. It would also introduce new areas of naturalistic wetlands. The Proposed Development will not extend into the existing floodplain meadows.
- The introduction and extension of woodland on elevated areas would reinstate the past character of woodland on higher ground in this area.
- The Proposed Development would allow for sensitive settings to existing settlements and seek to use vernacular materials where feasible.
- The Proposed Development would be arranged to retain and accentuate key views to the valley floor, as well as providing panoramic views from some elevated locations and framed corridor views of key features such as Hanslope church from both within and adjacent to the Site.
- The Proposed Development will seek to increase public access to the landscape by introducing a linear park into the Tathall Brook Valley as part of a network of strategic green corridors.
- Whilst the existing West Coast Mainline and M1 bridges are identified as detracting elements in the Ouse Valley, it is considered that these nationally significant communication routes in and out of the city are a core part of the identified 'important gateway' quality of the valley in this vicinity. It is noted that the existing West Coast Mainline rail bridge is featured on the Haversham village sign and the front cover of the Haversham-cum-Little Linford Neighbourhood Plan. As such, this bridge is recognised publicly as an iconic and locally-distinctive feature of the landscape in this vicinity. It is therefore surprising that the RLLD failed to recognise this in considering the character of the Candidate SLA. The proposed bridge offers potential for a similarly iconic and visually interesting crossing of the river corridor, forming a dynamic juxtaposition of elegant built form with the natural landscape.

8.4.3 It is furthermore noted that a draft allocation as a Strategic City Extension area south of Milton Keynes lies entirely within a Candidate SLA, indicating in principle that the Council is comfortable that land within an SLA can be developed without harm to the valued characteristics of the SLA, which the Candidate SLA and allocation policies allow for.

8.4.4 Overall, it is considered that, whilst fundamental change from undeveloped to developed land would take place, this can be done in a sensitive way that would mitigate landscape and visual impacts and maintain the most important elements of the Candidate SLA.

8.5 Conclusions on SLA Evidence Base

8.5.1 In conclusion, the Ouse Valley floor, which is the principal feature of value in the Candidate SLA, is already designated as a Linear Park and therefore subject to robust controls on development in relation to the landscape. Therefore, there is no need for further designation of the landscape in this vicinity.

8.5.2 In any case, local landscape designations in Milton Keynes are unnecessary as a character-based approach can be used to sensitively manage change in the landscape, as draft Policy CEA12 sets out. Furthermore, the policies for the former landscape designation and the Candidate SLA do not seek to prevent development, contrary to the basis for the designation, as set out in the Valued Landscapes Review (2022), which mistakenly focused on prevention of development as a test of effectiveness of the policy.

- 8.5.3 If the Council deemed that the Candidate SLA designation was necessary, consideration should be given to the extent of that designation. The Site itself exhibits few of the Special Qualities of the Candidate SLA and should be excluded from any Candidate SLA.
- 8.5.4 Finally, in the event that a Candidate SLA were adopted by the Council, including land within the Site, it is noted that development can be accommodated within the Site in a way that sensitively mitigates impacts on the Special Qualities, in accordance with draft Policy CEA12.

9 Summary and Conclusion

- 9.1.1 The Site is located on the north-western edge of Milton Keynes, broadly between the M1 motorway to the north-east and the Milton Keynes to Rugby section of the West Coast Main Line to the south-west. The Site comprises part of the north-western valley slopes of the River Great Ouse; and a ridgeline and tributary valley beyond it.
- 9.1.2 Published character assessments include the following key characteristics of this area:
- Undulating plateau crossed by tributaries of the Great Ouse
 - Scattered woodland blocks, in places providing a wooded backdrop to views.
 - Medium to large scale, largely open arable landscape
 - Sparsely settled
 - Some historic parkland estates including RPGs
 - Panoramic views available from elevated areas
 - Passed by a well-connected network of PRoW.
 - Crossed by major transport routes
- 9.1.3 Key guidelines set out in published assessments include:
- Manage, expand and connect woodlands
 - Retain open views from elevated areas, notably those experienced from PRoW
 - Retain views of the landmark Hanslope Church
 - Visually integrate new developments at Hanslope park
 - Use locally distinctive building materials in new development
- 9.1.4 Key themes of relevant policy include the need for green infrastructure network enhancement, including extending the Milton Keynes ‘forest city’ concept; and respecting landscape character in the countryside, especially natural features, the historic setting and structure of villages, important views and tranquillity. However, the Milton Keynes Landscape Sensitivity Study (2016) concludes that the land, assessment area 28: Haversham Plateau (which included the majority of the Site) is of medium sensitivity to residential development and states that, *‘there are likely to be opportunities to accommodate residential development without a significant adverse change in landscape character.’*
- 9.1.5 The Review of Local Landscape Designations (2024) identifies a considerable proportion of the south-east of the Site within the proposed Ouse Valley SLA (a local landscape designation), supported by draft Policy CEA12 in the Draft Milton Keynes City Plan 2050.
- 9.1.6 The Site comprises a predominantly arable, largely undeveloped landscape beyond the valley of the River Great Ouse. Woodlands and some tree and hedgerow cover break up the large scale landscape which has been subject of removal of field boundary hedgerows and woodland. Open long distance views are obtained from the ridgeline in the centre of the Site, but a more intimate enclosed character is evident in parts of the Tathall Brook valley and on the edge of the Great Ouse valley floor.

- 9.1.7 From the valley floor of the River Great Ouse, there are very few publicly accessible views into the Site. Enclosure provided by built form and the strong GI network within the city of Milton Keynes to the south prevents views into the Site from most of the city. There are, however, some views toward the south-eastern valley slopes within the Site from the settlement edge, notably from Low Stanton Park. Visibility of the Site from mid-distance locations are limited to the west and north of the Site due to the intervening landform and vegetation. However, views are obtained from the southern edges of the Hanslope Plateau and south of Castlethorpe. There are views towards the elevated ridgeline of the Site and Little Linford Wood from some elevated parts of the west-facing valley slopes east and north-east of Milton Keynes. Wooded skylines in the Site vicinity are also visible in longer distance views from the north-east in the vicinity of Olney. From the distant elevated land to the west in the vicinity of Yardley Gobion only glimpsed views toward the Site are possible owing to intervening vegetation.
- 9.1.8 Opportunities to integrate a substantial extension into the landscape by echoing the fundamental design principles used to integrate the planned city of Milton Keynes into what was previously a predominantly rural landscape. The Proposed Development would mirror the approach within the city in which development on higher ground between river corridors is evident. As is the case for other linear parks within the city, the Ouse Valley Park could be used as an area of shared amenities between two urban areas. The alignment of the M1 and railway line through the Site vicinity presents the opportunity to continue the south-east to north-west alignment on which the loose grid of the city is based. An extension of the city following these principles can be comprehensively integrated into the landscape by replicating the fundamental landscape characteristic of Milton Keynes as a 'city in a forest'. Notably, there are opportunities with the protracted built time of such a long-term development to establish substantial canopy-level planting as a framework in which to set built form.
- 9.1.9 To this end, the framework of development should include spines of structural planting extending along the ridgelines to: connect development parcels, soften the perception of built form, add continuity of characteristic wooded skylines, emphasise the legibility of the landform, increase connectivity of woodland habitats, visually enclose Hanslope Park and reinforce the role of the Lathbury ridgeline.
- 9.1.10 The framework of tributary valleys should be used as blue and green infrastructure corridors to accentuate the legibility of the landform and retain their localised sense of enclosure, as well as provide a strong sense of place and provide biodiversity and water management benefits.
- 9.1.11 Views of the locally distinctive spire of the Church of St James the Great in Hanslope should be retained from both within the Site and from the edge of Milton Keynes; as should opportunities for the panoramic views currently experienced from parts of the Site.
- 9.1.12 The Proposed Development will seek to retain the routes of PRow through the Site and provide sensitive and appropriate settings to these routes, notably through the introduction of vegetation along parts of them (mindful of important view corridors).
- 9.1.13 The combination of these points provides the potential for a logical extension of the loose grid of Milton Keynes by accentuating and working with existing features within the Site that follow this pattern. The grid pattern within the Site should be reinforced by extensive green infrastructure, notably opportunities for canopy tree planting, emulating the character of Milton Keynes.
- 9.1.14 Key open spaces should include an area on the central ridgeline to maintain a perception of the open, expansive character of the ridgeline plateau and facilitate informal recreation. This open space could accommodate characteristic landmark or public art feature accentuate the highest point of the ridgeline and echo examples of where this happens in the local landscape (such as Hanslope Park and 'Light Pyramid' of Cambell Park). There is an opportunity to extend the Linear Parks network along the Tathall Brook and provide access to this valley corridor.

- 9.1.15 Areas of particular landscape and visual sensitivity where development should be avoided include land comprising the setting to the adjacent RPGs, the setting of existing settlements, and the tranquil valley floor of the River Great Ouse. Any development on the elevated plateau area of the Site should be carefully managed to avoid the appearance of a continuous urban ridgeline in views from the wider landscape. Proposed built form throughout the Site should consider the use of local vernacular materials. Larger-scale employment buildings could be sensitively integrated into more level areas of the Site surrounding the proposed M1 junction, subject to management of sensitive integration including: scale being accommodated within a wooded setting, the minimisation of landform manipulation and carefully-considered colour mitigation.
- 9.1.16 In relation to the SLA evidence base, the Ouse Valley floor, which is the principal feature of value in the Candidate SLA, is already designated as a Linear Park and therefore subject to robust controls on development in relation to the landscape. Therefore, there is no need for further designation of the landscape in this vicinity.
- 9.1.17 In any case, local landscape designations in Milton Keynes are unnecessary as a character-based approach can be used to sensitively manage change in the landscape, as draft Policy CEA12 sets out. Furthermore, the policies underpinning the former landscape designation and the Candidate SLA do not seek to prevent development, contrary to the basis for the designation, as set out in the Valued Landscapes Review (2022), which mistakenly focused on prevention of development as a test of effectiveness of the policy.
- 9.1.18 If the Council deemed that the Candidate SLA designation was necessary, consideration should be given to the extent of that designation. The Site itself exhibits few of the Special Qualities of the Candidate SLA and should be excluded from any Candidate SLA.
- 9.1.19 Finally, in the event that a Candidate SLA were adopted by the Council, including land within the Site, it is noted that development can be accommodated within the Site in a way that sensitively mitigates impacts on the Special Qualities, in accordance with draft Policy CEA12.



Introduction

As part of Natural England's responsibilities as set out in the Natural Environment White Paper,¹ Biodiversity 2020² and the European Landscape Convention,³ we are revising profiles for England's 159 National Character Areas (NCAs). These are areas that share similar landscape characteristics, and which follow natural lines in the landscape rather than administrative boundaries, making them a good decision-making framework for the natural environment.

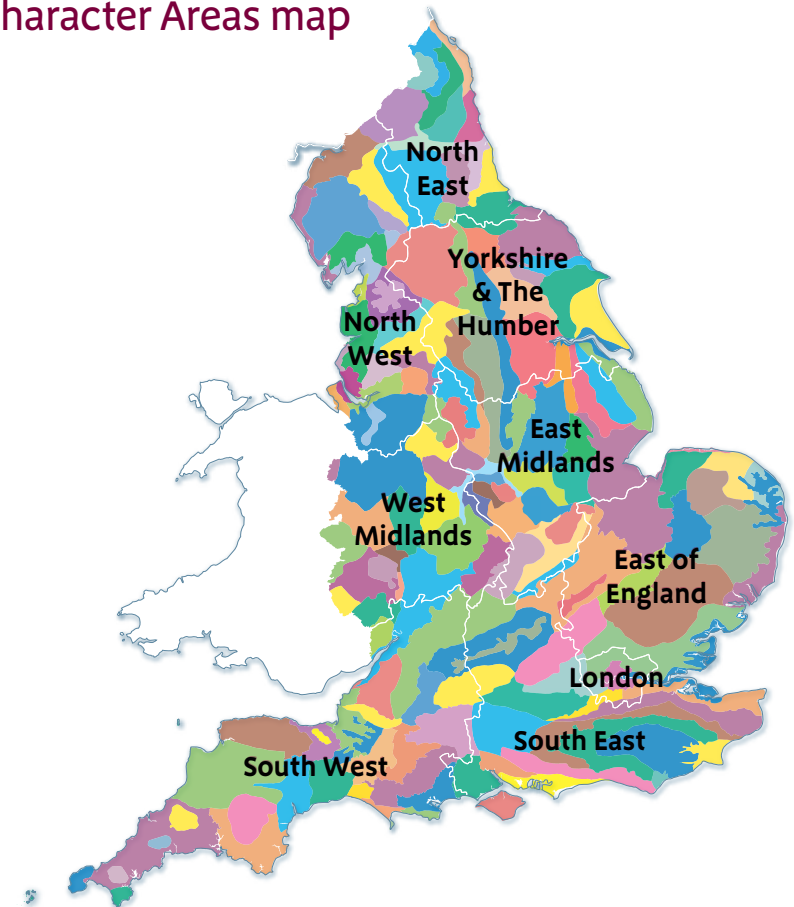
NCA profiles are guidance documents which can help communities to inform their decision-making about the places that they live in and care for. The information they contain will support the planning of conservation initiatives at a landscape scale, inform the delivery of Nature Improvement Areas and encourage broader partnership working through Local Nature Partnerships. The profiles will also help to inform choices about how land is managed and can change.

Each profile includes a description of the natural and cultural features that shape our landscapes, how the landscape has changed over time, the current key drivers for ongoing change, and a broad analysis of each area's characteristics and ecosystem services. Statements of Environmental Opportunity (SEOs) are suggested, which draw on this integrated information. The SEOs offer guidance on the critical issues, which could help to achieve sustainable growth and a more secure environmental future.

NCA profiles are working documents which draw on current evidence and knowledge. We will aim to refresh and update them periodically as new information becomes available to us.

We would like to hear how useful the NCA profiles are to you. You can contact the NCA team by emailing ncaprofiles@naturalengland.org.uk.

National Character Areas map



¹ The Natural Choice: Securing the Value of Nature, Defra (2011; URL: www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/cm80/8082/8082.pdf)

² Biodiversity 2020: A Strategy for England's Wildlife and Ecosystem Services, Defra (2011; URL: www.defra.gov.uk/publications/files/pb13583-biodiversity-strategy-2020-111111.pdf)

³ European Landscape Convention, Council of Europe (2000; URL: <http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/en/Treaties/Html/176.htm>)

Summary

The Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands National Character Area (NCA) is a broad, gently undulating, lowland plateau dissected by shallow river valleys that gradually widen as they approach The Fens NCA in the east. Within it, but distinct from it, is the Bedfordshire Greensand Ridge, a contrasting narrow and elevated outcrop of Greensand, with its associated habitats on acidic soils such as grassland, heathland and woodland. Views of the Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands NCA and its large-scale arable farmland can be seen in most directions, from the elevated ground of the Yardley Whittlewood Ridge, Bedfordshire Greensand Ridge, East Anglian Chalk and Chilterns NCAs.

The NCA contains the Forest of Marston Vale – one of 12 Community Forests in England – and to the south, around Luton, a small proportion of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). While predominantly an arable and commercially farmed landscape, a wide diversity of semi-natural habitats are also present within the NCA, including a number of internationally important and designated sites that support a range of species – some rare and scarce – and offer opportunities for people to have contact with the natural environment. The River Great Ouse and its tributaries meander slowly and gently across the landscape.

The Marston Vale and Peterborough areas have been subject to extensive clay extraction for brick making. Subsequent restoration has provided opportunities for recreation and biodiversity aided by new woodland planting and other green infrastructure initiatives. Extensive quarrying of sand and gravel within the river valleys has also left its mark with a series of restored and flooded waterbodies that benefit biodiversity and recreation.

The majority of the Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands NCA is sparsely populated. Settlements are generally located along the river valleys and more recently along major road and rail corridors. A feeling of urbanisation is brought by the numerous large towns, including Milton Keynes, Bedford, Cambridge, Huntingdon and Peterborough, and major transport routes, including the M1, A1 and A14 and the Midlands and East Coast mainline railways.

Tranquillity within the NCA has declined, affected by visual intrusion, noise and light pollution from agriculture, settlement expansion and improvements in road infrastructure. Mineral extraction and landfill activities, particularly within the Marston Vale and around Peterborough, have affected local tranquillity. Many areas, however, retain a rural feel and there are numerous opportunities for nearby urban communities to enjoy quiet, informal recreation.

A sense of place and history provided by the area's rich geology and archaeology as well as historic features such as Stowe House, Wimpole Hall, Wrest Park, Bletchley Park, the Cardington Hangars, the Grand Union Canal and the post-industrial landscapes of the brickfields.

is

[Click map to enlarge; click again to reduce](#)

[Click map to enlarge; click again to reduce](#)

Key ecosystem services include food provision, including unique genetic diversity found in local varieties of fruit; and the ability of the area's rivers and wetlands to provide water, regulate water quality and flow, as well as providing benefits for biodiversity and recreation. The NCA faces significant challenges around accommodating levels of future growth and managing water resources, both within the NCA and the impacts that this can have further downstream in other NCAs while, at the same time, protecting and enhancing its character and increased demand for leisure and recreation.



View of the Bedfordshire Claylands with Bedfordshire Greensand Ridge in the distance.

Statements of Environmental Opportunities:

- **SEO 1:** Maintain and manage a sustainable and productive claylands arable landscape, while managing, expanding and linking woodlands, hedgerows and other semi-natural habitats to benefit biodiversity, improve soil and water quality, and ameliorate climate change by promoting good agricultural practice.
- **SEO 2:** Protect aquifers and enhance the quality, state and structure of the River Great Ouse, its valley and tributaries, habitats, waterbodies and flood plain by seeking to enhance their ecological, historical and recreational importance while taking into account their contribution to sense of place and regulating water flow, quality and availability.
- **SEO 3:** Plan and create high-quality green infrastructure to help accommodate growth and expansion, linking and enhancing existing semi-natural habitats. Regenerate the post-industrial landscapes of the Marston Vale and Peterborough to improve and create new opportunities for biodiversity, recreation, timber and biomass provision while strengthening sense of place, tranquillity, resilience to climate change, and people's health and wellbeing.
- **SEO 4:** Protect, conserve and enhance the cultural heritage and tranquillity of the Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands NCA, including its important geodiversity, archaeology, historic houses, parkland, and Second World War and industrial heritage, by improving interpretation and educational opportunities to increase people's enjoyment and understanding of the landscape.

Key characteristics

- Gently undulating, lowland plateau divided by shallow river valleys that gradually widen as they approach The Fens NCA in the east.
- Underlying geology of Jurassic and Cretaceous clays overlain by more recent Quaternary glacial deposits of chalky boulder clay (till) and sand and gravel river terrace deposits within the river valleys. Lime-rich, loamy and clayey soils with impeded drainage predominate, with better-drained soils in the river valleys.
- The River Great Ouse and its tributaries meander slowly across the landscape, and the River Nene and the Grand Union Canal are also features. Three aquifers underlie the NCA and a large manmade reservoir, Grafham Water, supplies water within and outside the NCA.
- Brickfields of the Marston Vale and Peterborough area form distinctive post-industrial landscapes with man-made waterbodies and landfill sites. Restoration of sand and gravel workings has left a series of flooded and restored waterbodies within the river valleys.
- Variable, scattered woodland cover comprising smaller plantations, secondary woodland, pollarded willows and poplar along river valleys, and clusters of ancient woodland, particularly on higher ground to the north-west representing remnant ancient deer parks and Royal Hunting Forests.
- Predominantly open, arable landscape of planned and regular fields bounded by open ditches and trimmed, often species-poor hedgerows which contrast with those fields that are irregular and piecemeal.
- Wide variety of semi-natural habitats supporting a range of species – some notably rare and scarce – including sites designated for species associated with ancient woodland, wetland sites important for birds, great crested newt and species of stonewort, and traditional orchards and unimproved grassland supporting a rich diversity of wild flowers.
- Rich geological and archaeological history evident in fossils, medieval earthworks, deserted villages and Roman roads. A number of historic parklands, designed landscapes and country houses – including Stowe House and Park, Kimbolton Park, Croxton Park, Wimpole Hall and Wrest Park – combine with Bletchley Park, Second World War airfields, the Cardington Airship Hangars and brickfields to provide a strong sense of history and place.
- Diversity of building materials including brick, render, thatch and stone. Locally quarried limestone features in villages such as Lavendon, Harrold and Turvey on the upper stretches of the River Great Ouse.
- Settlements cluster around major road and rail corridors, with smaller towns, villages and linear settlements widely dispersed throughout, giving a more rural feel. Small villages are usually nucleated around a church or village green, while fen-edge villages are often in a linear form along roads.
- Major transport routes cross the area, including the M1, M11, A1, A6, A5 and A14 roads, the East Coast and Midlands mainline railways, and the Grand Union Canal.
- Recreational assets include Grafham Water, the Grand Union Canal, Forest of Marston Vale Community Forest, Chilterns AONB, woodland and wetland sites, an extensive rights-of-way network and two National Cycle Routes. The cities of Cambridge and Peterborough and several of the historic market towns in the NCA are popular tourist destinations.

Statements of Environmental Opportunity

SEO 1: Maintain and manage a sustainable and productive claylands arable landscape, while managing, expanding and linking woodlands, hedgerows and other semi-natural habitats to benefit biodiversity, improve soil and water quality, and ameliorate climate change by promoting good agricultural practice.

For example, by:

- Managing the arable landscape to retain the value of food provision through employing sustainable farming practices.
- Working with local farmers, landowners and managers to promote best practice such as the appropriate management of hedgerows, reducing herbicide and pesticide use, buffering field margins and woodland edges, and retaining winter stubble to support farmland birds and pollinators.
- Promoting good soil management to avoid compaction and maintain good soil structure.
- Encouraging the conservation and management of existing woodlands and the replacing of introduced species with native species, as well as undertaking new tree and woodland planting to link existing sites in order to enhance biodiversity and recreational opportunities.
- Seeking opportunities to develop biomass production through active woodland management and promote and stimulate local markets for wood products, biomass and wood fuel to support sustainable timber production.
- Ensuring that populations of wild deer are managed to reduce damage caused to the natural regeneration of trees and woodland.
- Preparing and implementing plans to control or limit the spread of new pests or disease – for example, ash die-back.
- Extending where appropriate the semi-natural vegetation cover, especially on steeper slopes where the Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands National Character Area (NCA) meets the

Bedfordshire Greensand Ridge, Chilterns, and East Anglian Chalk NCAs, to improve soil quality and reduce run-off and erosion.

- Enhancing and expanding the network of semi-natural habitats through targeted environmental enhancements, including ponds, hedgerows, hedgerow trees and species-rich grasslands (such as areas found along road verges, green lanes and field margins) to support biodiversity.
- Encouraging the appropriate management and expansion of traditional orchards, bringing them back into active management to conserve their genetic diversity, biodiversity value and cultural heritage; and promoting and encouraging local markets for locally grown orchard produce.



Species-rich roadside verges and hedges.

SEO 3: Plan and create high-quality green infrastructure to help accommodate growth and expansion, linking and enhancing existing semi-natural habitats. Regenerate the post-industrial landscapes of the Forest of Marston Vale and Peterborough to improve and create new opportunities for biodiversity, recreation, timber and biomass provision while strengthening sense of place, tranquillity, resilience to climate change, and people's health and wellbeing.

For example, by:

- Supporting the creation and expansion of native woodlands, orchard, parkland, grasslands, and hedgerows to improve habitat connectivity within the landscape and provide increased benefits for biodiversity and recreation.
- Ensuring that areas of designated land remain in favourable condition, and improving their condition where possible.
- Promoting awareness of, and providing advice to landowners and managers on, managing habitats of biodiversity interest.
- Supporting initiatives that include well-planned green infrastructure that will increase people's access to and contact with the natural environment to benefit their health and wellbeing.
- Creating new woodland as appropriate on urban fringes to help screen and integrate new developments, and provide biodiversity and green infrastructure benefits.
- Managing recreational sites to accommodate visitor pressure and demand without conflict between different users, and without causing adverse effects on the natural environment.
- Maintaining, extending and promoting the use of the National Cycle Routes and the rights-of-way network.
- Conserving and managing traditional orchards, hedgerows, parkland, and ancient and veteran trees for the benefit of fauna (such as specialist invertebrates dependent on dead or decaying wood, pollinators and pest regulators).
- Protecting and conserving existing traditional orchards from inappropriate development and changes in land use.
- Retaining and enhancing the contrast in landscape character between the clay plateau and river valleys, aiming to maintain and enhance the balance between urban and rural landscapes.
- Preventing inappropriate development and promoting the use of local building stone to maintain the character of villages and historic buildings.
- Ensuring that any new developments incorporate well-designed green infrastructure, to include improved access and recreation opportunities for local communities and visitors.
- Supporting the work of the Forest of Marston Vale Community Forest to regenerate the area and repair the landscape, using trees and woodland to provide social, economic and environmental benefits.
- Supporting the work of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) to conserve and enhance the landscape and special qualities of the AONB.
- Ensuring that geodiversity sites continue to be protected, monitored and managed.
- Ensuring that mineral extraction sites are restored to contribute to local landscape character and offer opportunities to enrich people's understanding of landscape, and enhance biodiversity, recreation and geodiversity.

Milton Keynes Council

Milton Keynes Landscape Character Assessment

Final report
Prepared by LUC
May 2022



Milton Keynes Council

Milton Keynes Landscape Character Assessment

Version	Status	Prepared	Checked	Approved	Date
1.	Pilot	A Knight	K Davies	R Knight	20.10.2021
2.	Draft report	A Knight A Breen	K Davies	K Davies	18.02.2022
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4.	Final report	A Knight	K Davies	K Davies	20.05.2022

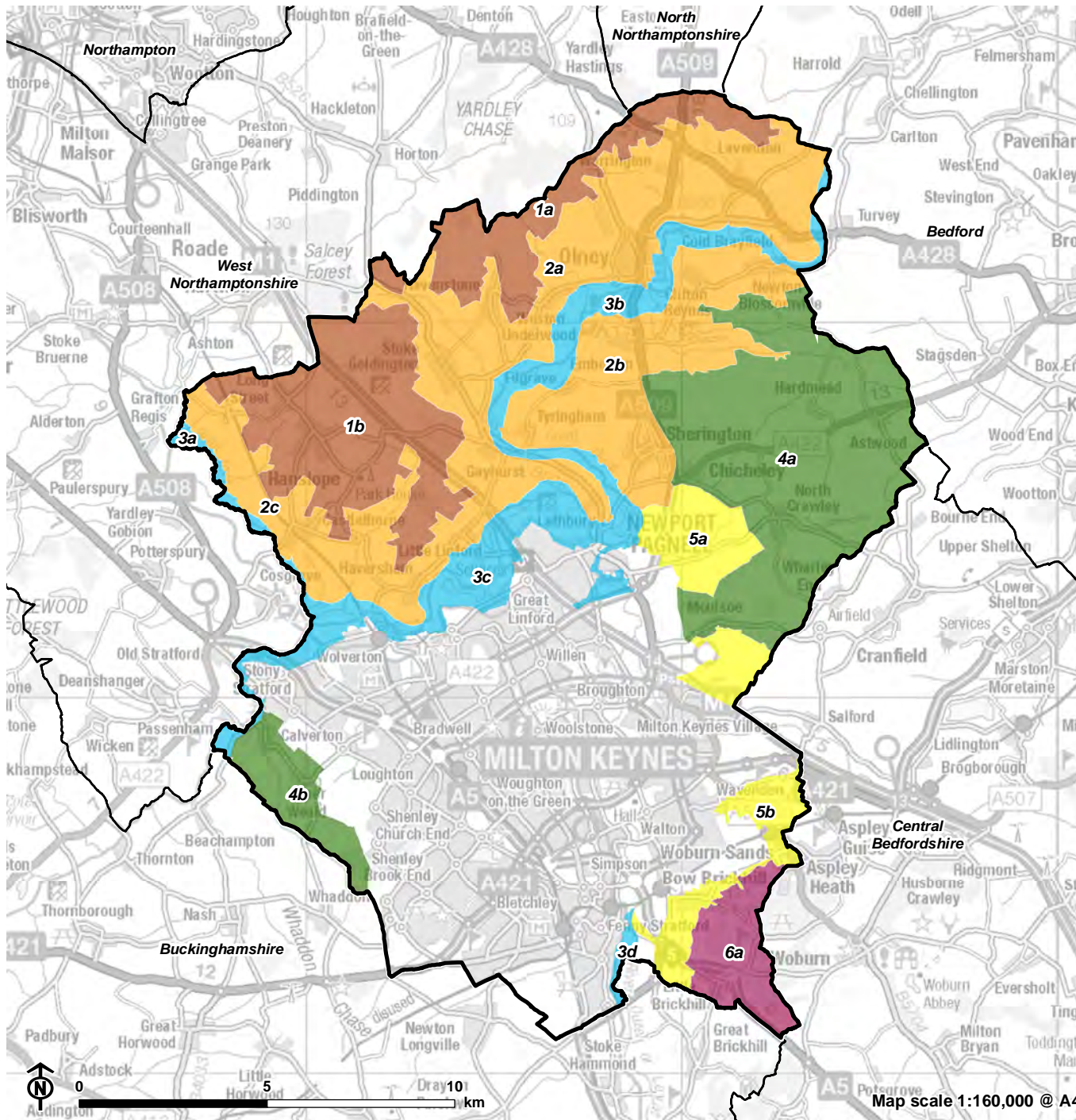
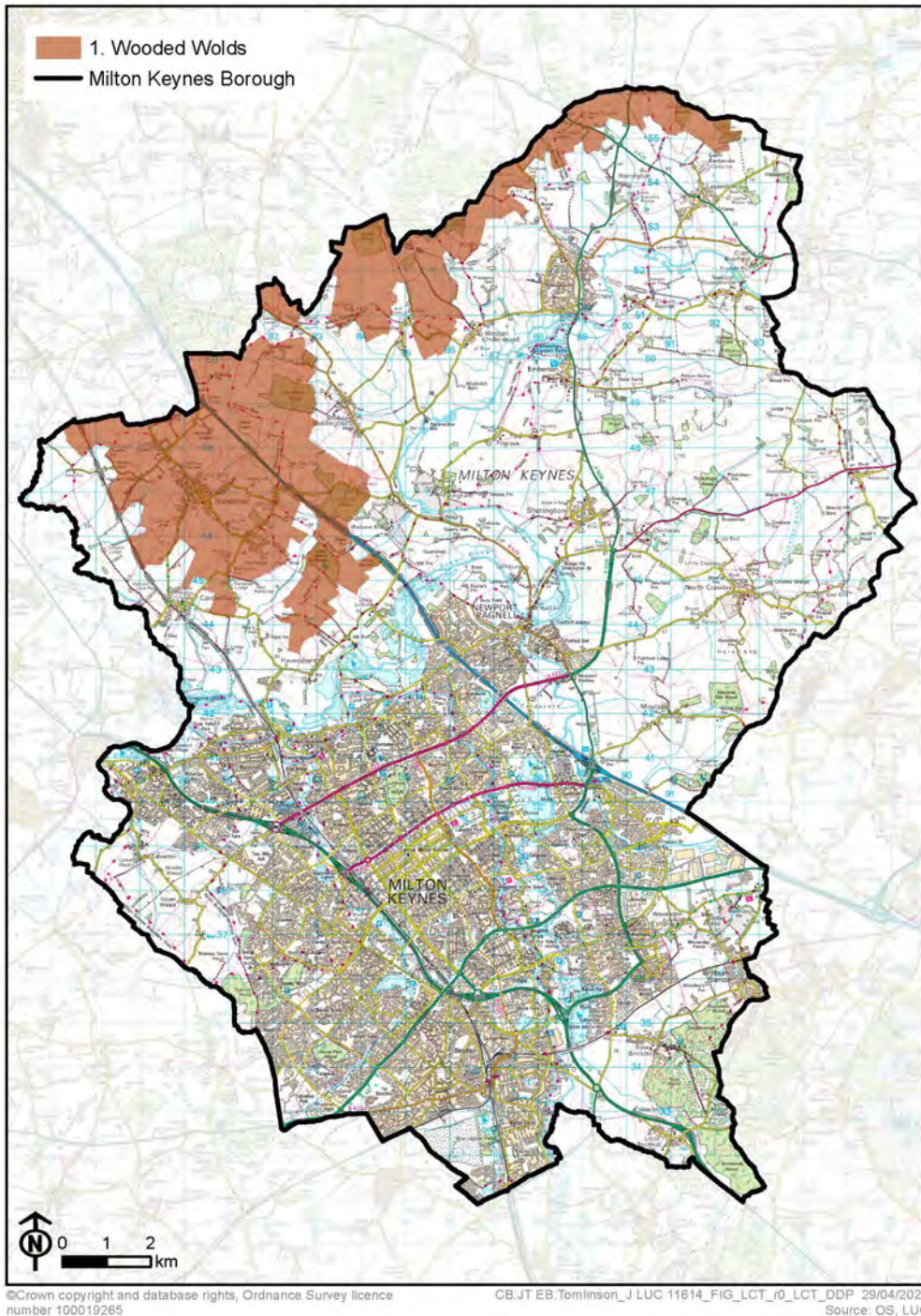


Figure 4.2: Landscape Character Areas

-  Milton Keynes Borough
-  Neighbouring local authority
- Landscape Character Area (by type)**
-  1. Wooded Wolds
 - 1a. Yardley Chase Wooded Wolds
 - 1b. Gayhurst and Stokepark Wooded Wolds
-  2. Undulating Valley Slopes
 - 2a. Ouse Northern Undulating Valley Slopes
 - 2b. Ouse Southern Undulating Valley Slopes
 - 2c. Tove Undulating Valley Slopes
-  3. River Floodplains
 - 3a. Tove Floodplains
 - 3b. Ouse Floodplains
 - 3c. Ouse Lakes and Parkland Floodplains
 - 3d. Ouzel Parkland Floodplains
-  4. Undulating Clay Plateaux
 - 4a. North Crawley Undulating Clay Plateau
 - 4b. Weald Undulating Clay Plateau
-  5. Clay Vales
 - 5a. Lower Ouzel Clay Vale
 - 5b. Upper Ouzel Clay Vale
-  6. Wooded Greensand Ridge
 - 6a. Brickhill Wooded Greensand Ridge

Chapter 5
Milton Keynes Landscape
Character Profiles

LCT 1: Wooded Wolds



Landscape Character Areas

The Wooded Wolds LCT is subdivided into two LCAs:

- 1a Yardley Chase Wooded Wolds
- 1b Gayhurst and Stokepark Wooded Wolds

Location and summary

The Wooded Wolds LCT comprises an open plateau located in the north and north west of the borough. The northern boundaries are defined by the borough boundaries with West Northamptonshire, North Northamptonshire and Bedford. The southern and western boundaries are defined by the 90m contour line as the landscape falls to the valley sides of the Ouse and Tove (LCT 2 Undulating Valley Slopes).

The gently undulating plateau landscape is predominantly in arable use, with large woodland blocks which are linked to more extensive woodlands in West Northamptonshire. It retains its rural character and has limited settlement, although is crossed by large road corridors. The elevated landscape provides open views to the south, while woodland in West Northamptonshire provides a strong wooded backdrop to the north.



A gently undulating plateau landscape of ancient woodland and arable fields, interrupted by the M1 major transport corridor.

Key Characteristics

- Gently undulating plateau landscape, between 90m and 120m AOD forming part of a wider plateau to the north. A limestone bedrock with considerable till deposits, gives rise to soils with a high clay content.
- Small streams and springs, which drain into the Ouse and Tove, create topographic interest.
- Large to medium scale broadleaved or mixed woodland blocks, including many ancient or ancient replanted woodlands, The Yardley Chase SSSI extends into this LCA, and contains broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland.
- Medium to large arable fields bound by clipped hedges and occasional mature trees with smaller-scale fields and areas of pasture located closer to the settlements.
- A sparsely settled rural landscape crossed by minor roads, although the M1 is locally dominant and audible across the LCT.
- Public Rights of Way cross the landscape, connecting to settlements in the Undulating Valley Slopes (LCT 2) and the wider countryside.
- An open expansive landscape with long panoramic views over valleys to the south, east and west.
- The scenic and distinctive woodland backdrop that the LCT provides to adjacent landscape.
- A rural landscape, with limited modern influences, and some areas of inaccessible land.

Physical and natural characteristics

5.1 A simple, gently undulating plateau on the edge of a much larger and more prominent plateau running south-east to north-east, that continues over the borough boundary into West and North Northamptonshire. The plateau lies between 90m and 120m AOD, with localised steeper slopes around streams and springs. The streams and springs have their source close to the edge of the LCT, and flow into the River Great Ouse to the south and east and the River Tove to the west. Ponds and small agricultural reservoirs are common throughout.

5.2 The geology is dominated by Jurassic Oolitic limestone, with the east of LCA 1a Yardley Chase Wooded Wolds underlain by Kellaways Formation and Oxford Clay Formation mudstones and sandstones. The underlying geology has formed the distinctive plateau present today. Limestone is more porous than some of the surrounding geology, resulting in aquifers under parts of the ridgeline. Glacial activity subsequently eroded and smoothed out the original limestone and left behind substantial, irregular deposits of boulder clay (till). This results in variable soils, mostly with a high clay content, which are slowly permeable and subject to seasonal waterlogging, with a higher calcareous content on some of the slopes. These soils have resulted in land graded in the ALC as 3 (moderate-good) with areas of 4 (poor).

5.3 As a result of the relatively poor soils and plateau topography there has been less woodland clearance in the Wooded Wolds LCT than elsewhere in the borough and woodland cover is an important characteristic of the landscape. The woods are mainly priority habitat deciduous woodlands of ancient origin, for example Great Wood, Little

Linford Wood, Gayhurst Wood and Stokepark Wood. There are a number of replanted ancient woodlands, such as The Grove, Longland's Wood and Great Wood, which contain mixed broadleaved and conifer trees. The woodlands link with the more extensive woods of Yardley Chase and Salcey Forest in West Northamptonshire, which are designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) for their woodland habitats. The Yardley Chase Biological Opportunity Area extends across much of the LCT.



Woodland blocks at Hanslope Park with Gayhurst Wood and Little Linford Wood in the distance.

Historic and cultural characteristics

5.4 The LCT was part of the extensive Yardley Chase and Salcey Forest medieval hunting forests or 'chases', a series of lands across England designated by the Normans. Strict forest

laws were imposed to protect the land for royal hunting. Royal forests were never fully wooded, but contained woodland, pasture and parkland. This landscape pattern is retained within Yardley Chase (predominately in West Northamptonshire). Hanslope Park (LCA 1b) was originally a deer park within the Royal Forest of Salcey, with formal parkland and grounds laid out in the 18th century. The parkland character has been retained.



Hedgerow-lined arable fields with the landmark spire of St James the Great, Hanslope.

5.5 The landscape pattern of remnant woodlands and irregular field boundaries is a result of assarting, the conversion of areas of woodland to agricultural fields that took place before the 18th century. Pre-18th century enclosure fields are common across the landscape, and include both irregular and co-axial forms. There are also areas of regular Parliamentary enclosures north of Hanslope, and the LCT has a higher incidence of 19th century enclosure than the rest of the borough. There has also been considerable 20th century field amalgamation, as a result of modern farming techniques, creating large scale fields.

5.6 Land is predominately under arable cultivation. There are smaller areas of pasture near settlements or on the edges of woodland. Field boundaries are generally low, clipped hedgerows with occasional mature hedgerow trees. Hedgerows along the minor roads are in better condition than field hedgerows.

5.7 Settlement is concentrated in LCA 1b, in the historic villages of Long Street and Hanslope, along with dispersed satellite settlements. Isolated farmsteads, which are often Grade II listed buildings, are found across the LCT. Although major roads pass through the landscape, large areas remain inaccessible. LCA 1a has few roads, except for the busy A428 and A509, while LCA 1b is crossed by minor lanes generally lined by low hedgerows. The M1 passes through LCA 1b.

5.8 There is good footpath access through the LCT, including the Milton Keynes Boundary Walk, although there are more connections within LCA 1b between settlements.

Visual and perceptual characteristics

5.9 A rural landscape, accessible only by minor roads, lanes and PRoW. There is a good experience of dark night skies in the north, particularly around Yardley Chase. LCA 1a has a more remote character, due to the more restricted public access and dense wooded horizon to the north.

5.10 Road noise is prevalent throughout the LCT, but concentrated around the M1 which cuts through LCA 1b, resulting in visual intrusion, noise and light pollution. Electricity pylons run through the east of LCA 1a.

5.11 From the elevated plateau there are long panoramic views to the south over the Ouse valley, over Milton Keynes city and to the Greensand Ridge (LCA 6a) to the south. There are also long views across the Tove valley to the west, and north to the wooded clay ridge in West and North Northamptonshire.



Panoramic views across the Ouse valley to the Greensand Ridge from Weston Road.

Landscape evaluation

Landscape qualities

- The ecologically important semi-natural woodlands including extensive areas of ancient woodland and hedgerows that support biodiversity, and provide carbon capture.
- Small streams and springs that support biodiversity and provide nutrient and sediment filtration enhancing water quality.
- The heritage features of the landscape particularly the connection to the Royal hunting forests and historic field patterns that provide a connection to history, cultural identity, and aesthetic value.
- The historic settlement pattern, including the linear village of Hanslope and its satellite 'End' villages, with their high concentration of historic buildings built from local limestone as well as historic farmsteads that provide a connection to history and cultural identity.
- The elevated rural and sometimes remote character of the landscape, with a strong sense of openness that contributes to mental well-being and health.
- The pattern of hedged fields, woodland areas and panoramic long views across the neighbouring valley landscapes that contribute to a distinctive sense of place.
- The scenic and distinctive wooded backdrop that the LCT provides to adjacent landscapes.
- The network of PRoW, including the Milton Keynes Boundary Walk, that connect to the wider countryside and settlements, provide recreational value and contribute to well-being and health.

Landscape condition

5.12 The Wooded Wolds LCT is generally in good condition, with intact hedgerow field boundaries and a strong historic field pattern. There has been some modern amalgamation of fields, and some use of post and wire fencing for horse grazing, particularly on the edge of Hanslope. Semi-natural habitats are in good condition, with a mixed age structure, although woodlands are scattered.

Forces for change

5.13 Key forces for change include:

- Potential changes in woodland and tree species composition as a result of climate change. Wind damage due to increases in severe gales could result in damage to woodland edges, and ancient woodlands may be particularly susceptible to damage from storms and drought.
- Previous replacement of broadleaved woodland with conifer and mixed plantations, and use of coniferous species in hedgerows, which are out of keeping with the character of the local landscape.
- The ongoing decline in woodland management including a loss or reduction of traditional coppicing techniques and increasing fragmentation of woodlands.
- Changes in agricultural practices to large-scale arable cropping, with consequent field boundary loss, which has fragmented the landscape pattern.
- Increasing fragmentation of the traditional landscape pattern due to the loss of unimproved grassland and natural field ponds.
- Potential changes in flora and increase in pests and diseases as a result of climate change, with ash die back becoming increasingly apparent in the local landscape.
- Impact of the M1 corridor through LCA 1b, and increasing noise from traffic on major roads surrounding the LCT.
- Increasing pressure for expansion of residential development at Hanslope, and increasing development at Hanslope Park, affecting the rural character of the landscape, increasing traffic and resulting in changes to roads and land uses in the area, as well as levels of tranquillity.
- Recreational pressure on the landscape, including erosion of unsurfaced routes due to increasing use by walkers, horses, bicycles and 4-wheel drive vehicles.
- Potential pressure for further renewable energy infrastructure including wind turbines and solar farms, both within the LCT and seen in views from the LCT e.g. Petsoe Manor wind farm.

Landscape strategy

5.14 The landscape strategy for the Wooded Wolds LCT is to conserve and enhance the rural qualities of the landscape, and enhance the habitat potential and connectivity as part of the wider wooded wolds which extend into West and North Northamptonshire and Bedford.

Guidance

Landscape Management

- Manage and increase the biodiversity of agricultural fields by creating uncultivated margins to arable fields, or converting some arable land to permanent pasture where suitable.
- Monitor water quality in streams, and minimise water pollution from agriculture through sensitive land management practices, including the restoration of buffer strips along watercourses to minimise run off.
- Retain and enhance existing small field ponds for wildlife, and encourage creation of new ponds.
- Manage and protect existing woodlands, using traditional techniques including coppice with standards and wood pasture. Promote extensions and connectivity between woodlands, as set out in the Green Infrastructure Strategy⁴.
- Encourage progressive conversion of conifer plantations within existing woodlands to indigenous native broadleaved tree and shrub species using local provenance stock, particularly in semi natural ancient woodland of Great Wood, Little Linford Wood, Gayhurst Wood and Stokepark Wood.
- Protect and restore boundary hedges by coppicing, laying and gapping up to improve the network of linkages between habitats. Promote the introduction of new hedges following roads, PRoW and historic boundaries. Plant individual hedgerow trees to provide replacement for mature and over mature stock.
- Protect the valued recreational use of the rural landscape through PRoW, exploring opportunities for informal access and enjoyment. Enhance recreational routes through the woodlands, providing connections to neighbouring Yardley Chase and Salcey Forest, as set out in the Green Infrastructure Opportunity Mapping⁵.
- Extend interpretation of the historic heritage of the area including medieval hunting forests.
- Protect and enhance heritage assets within the LCT, including the historic parkland at Hanslope Park.

Development Management

- Conserve the open landscape and avoid the introduction of large-scale elements which would have a visual impact over a wide distance.
- Retain views from the elevated plateau across the wider landscape of the borough, and consider the impact on views from the surrounding landscape in relation to any proposed change.
- Retain views of local landmarks, including Hanslope church spire.
- Conserve the distinctive vernacular of historic buildings and their rural setting, including within Hanslope Conservation Area. Reference the pattern of local building materials and local identity in any new development or boundary treatments.
- Integrate new development at Hanslope and Hanslope Park into the landscape through the use of native hedgerows and woodlands.
- Where built development is considered appropriate, consider the visual relationship with the wooded skyline in West Northamptonshire.
- Ensure any renewable energy generation is compatible with the guidance above, and as set out in the Renewable Energy Landscape Sensitivity Assessment⁶. Renewable energy should be in scale with the landscape where possible, acknowledging that wind turbines may transcend the scale of existing features in the landscape. Electricity infrastructure associated with renewable energy generation should be efficiently planned to minimise the number of lines required, routing in accordance with the Holford Rules⁷.

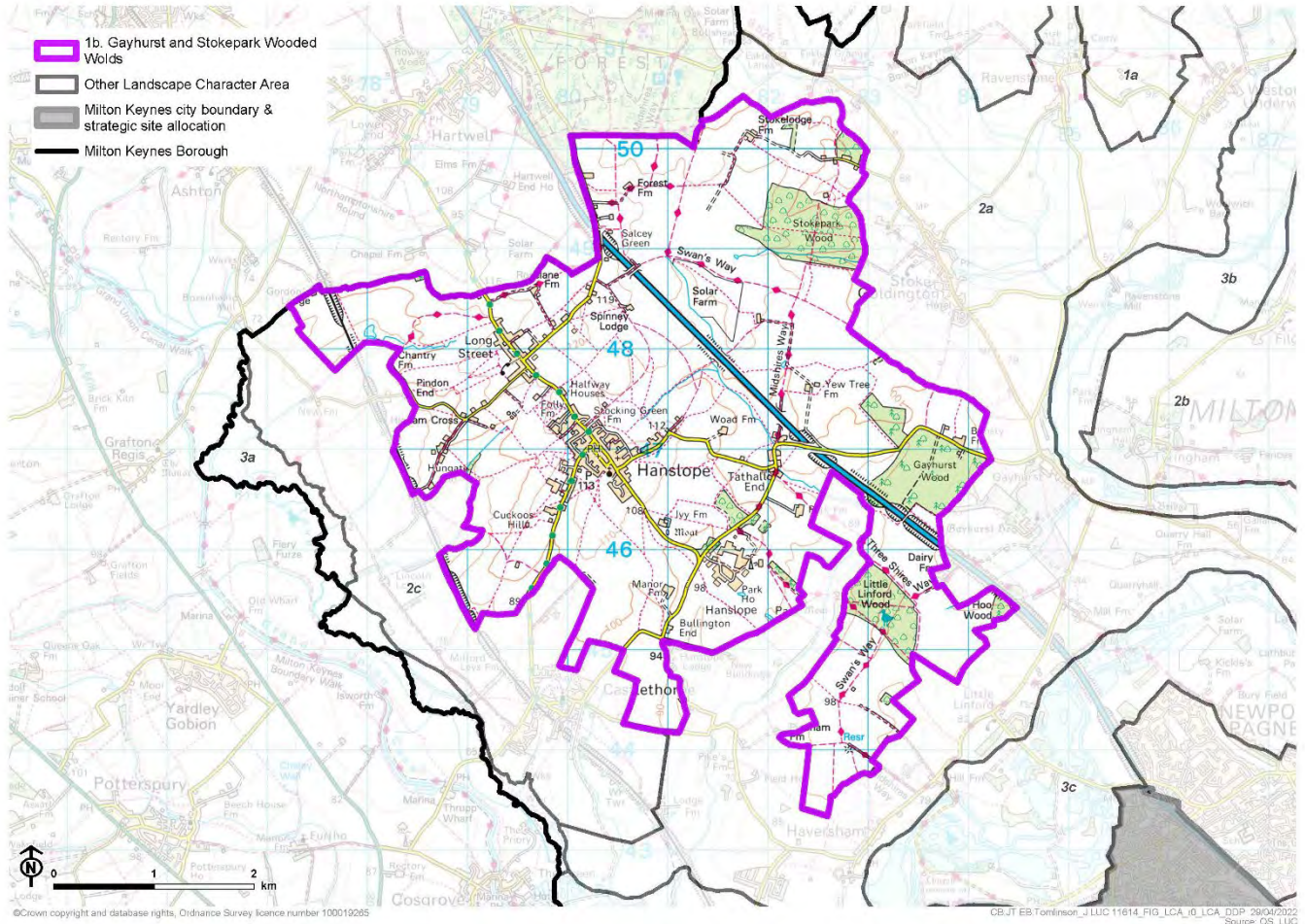
⁴ AECOM, Milton Keynes Green Infrastructure Strategy (2018)

⁵ <https://bucks.mknep.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Green-Infrastructure-Opportunity-Zone-07.pdf>

⁶ Gillespies, Landscape Sensitivity to Wind Turbine and Solar PV Development (2016)

⁷ <https://www.nationalgrid.com/sites/default/files/documents/13795-The%20Holford%20Rules.pdf>

1b Gayhurst and Stokepark Wooded Wolds



Location and unique characteristics

5.24 The Gayhurst and Stokepark Wooded Wolds is a wider and more open undulating landscape than LCA 1a, ranging from 85m above the slopes of the Tove valley to 122m AOD near the border with Northamptonshire.

5.25 Woodlands are larger, but less connected than LCA 1a. Stokepark Wood and Little Linford Wood are designated as LWS for their species-rich ancient woodland. The M1 and mainline railway line Wildlife Corridors extend through the LCA, and the land east of the M1 and at Hanslope Park is part of the Yardley Chase Biological Opportunity Area.

5.26 The majority of the land is in use for arable cropping, with smaller areas of pasture. Hedgerows are variable, with some gapping and reinforcement with post and wire.

5.27 The LCA has a more varied historic field pattern than LCA 1a, with assarts indicating previously more extensive woodland cover, and pre-18th century co-axial enclosure around Long Street and Hanslope. A parkland character

remains at Hanslope Park, which was originally a deer park within the Royal Forest of Salcey. The existing house (Grade II listed) was built in the later 17th century, and the grounds and park laid out in the 18th century, partially advised by Humphrey Repton. The house and park were requisitioned by the government during World War II, and has continued in government ownership, currently occupied by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

5.28 Settlement is concentrated at Hanslope and the linked linear settlement of Long Street. Hanslope is a large village with a historic core set around the Grade I listed 12th century church of St James the Great, which has the tallest spire in Buckinghamshire at 57m. This perpendicular 15th century tower is an iconic landmark and visible from great distances across the landscape. Hanslope has many listed buildings, mostly from the 17th and 18th centuries, often built from the local limestone, with tiled or thatched roofs. The historic character of the village is recognised through its designation as a Conservation Area. Residential development on the

western edge of Hanslope at the time of writing is increasing the village size considerably.

5.29 Away from Hanslope the settlement pattern consists of small farmsteads, and hamlets which developed as satellite settlements to Hanslope. These 'End' villages include Bullingdon End, Pindon End and Tathall End with its thatched cottages, many of which include listed buildings.

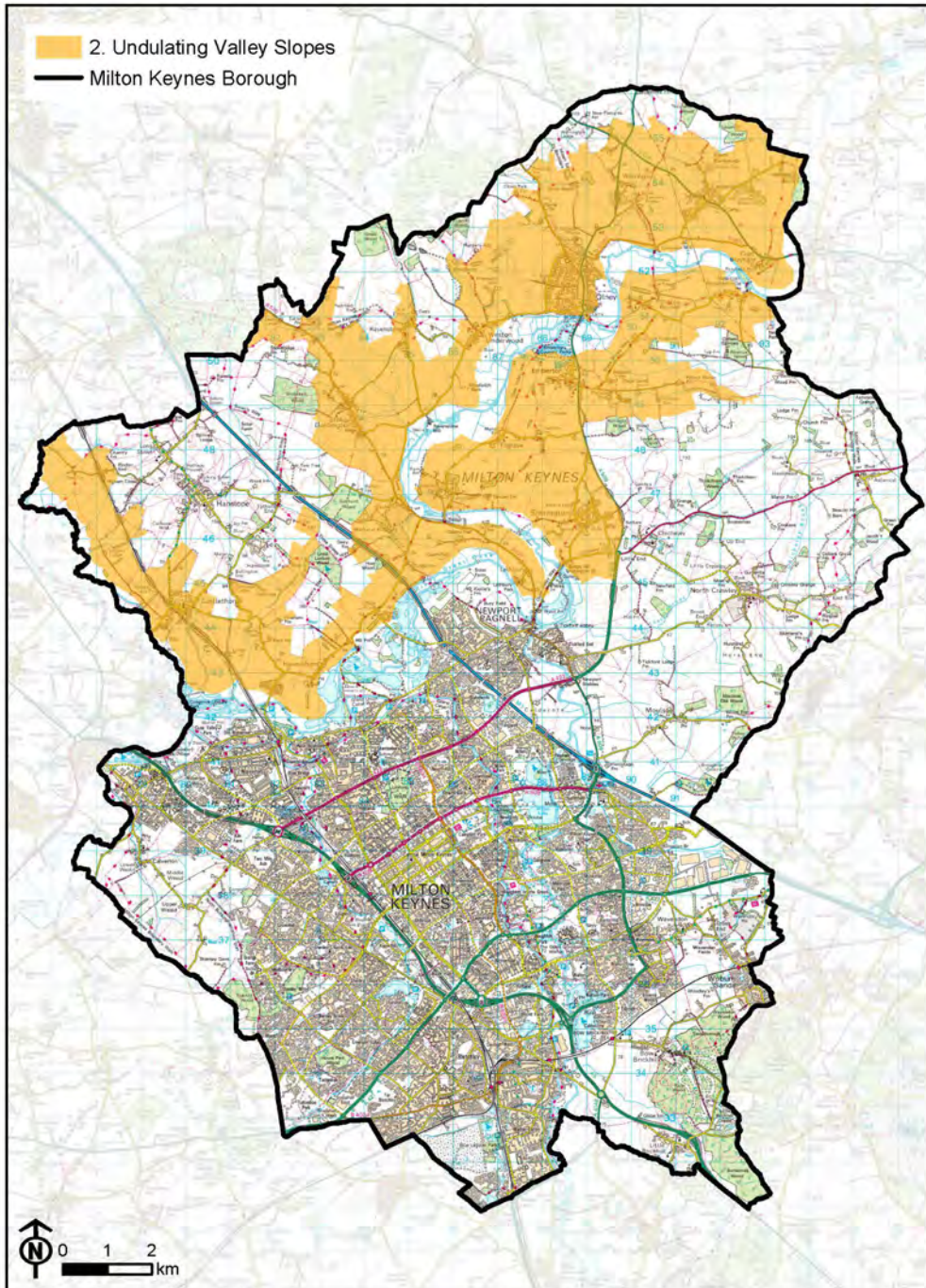
5.30 Minor roads connect Hanslope to other settlements both within the borough and north into Northamptonshire. The lanes are generally lined by intact hedgerows, although there has been some replacement with post and rail fencing. The landscape is very well connected by PRow, with a number of long-distance routes including the Milton Keynes Boundary Walk, Three Shires Way, Midshires Way and Hanslope Circular Ride.

5.31 There are panoramic views from the PRow across the Ouse valley to the south and the Tove valley to the west. The built edge of Milton Keynes city is also visible to the south, although views to the south-east are partly screened by Little Linford Wood and Gayhurst Wood. Yardley Chase and Salcey Forest woodlands within Northamptonshire form a wooded backdrop to the north.

5.32 Modern influences on the landscape include new development in Hanslope, office buildings, radio masts, security fencing and floodlighting at Hanslope Park, and a solar farm at Salcey Green. The M1 and west coast mainline railway are intrusive influences on the LCA, reducing tranquillity.

5.33 Despite these, the landscape retains a highly rural character, and dark skies are experienced in the north of the LCA and within the larger woodlands.

LCT 2: Undulating Valley Slopes



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Landscape Character Areas

The Undulating Valley Slopes LCT is subdivided into three LCAs:

- 2a Ouse Northern Undulating Valley Slopes
- 2b Ouse Southern Undulating Valley Slopes
- 2c Tove Undulating Valley Slopes

Location and summary

The Undulating Valley Slopes LCT is located across the north of the borough. It comprises the valley landscapes along the course of the River Ouse and the River Tove. The boundary with LCT 3 River Floodplains is marked by the rise in topography of the valley slopes above the floodplain, either to the boundary of flood zone 2 or the 50-55m contour line. The boundary with LCT 1 Wooded Wolds marks the change to the elevated and more wooded plateau and is defined along the 90m contour line.

This is an open and gently sloping landscape, predominantly in arable use. It is generally a quiet and picturesque rural landscape with limited impact from modern development, except in proximity to the urban edge of Milton Keynes city.



A gently undulating landscape rising from the River Ouse with large-scale arable fields and limited modern intrusions.

Key Characteristics

- Undulating valley slopes, rising from the Ouse and Tove rivers, from 50m to 105m AOD.
- A varied bedrock of sandstones, limestones and mudstone result in diverse soils, with well-drained calcareous clays at the top of slopes and seasonally waterlogged loamy soils at the base of slopes.
- Secondary valleys of small streams and springs where the landform provides a localised sense of enclosure.
- Woodland cover is limited to small copses, some recorded as ancient woodlands and mature parkland trees associated with historic estates.
- A mixed field pattern dominated by large-scale arable fields with unclipped hedges. Smaller pasture fields are common on lower slopes with those near settlements often used for horse grazing. There are some surviving areas of ridge and furrow earthworks.
- Historic settlement pattern of nucleated villages, with numerous listed buildings and often designated as Conservation Areas. Traditional buildings materials include local limestone and roofs in thatch, slates or red tiles. Isolated farmsteads are located on the narrow rural lanes.
- A network of PRow allows recreational access to the landscape, including the promoted routes Three Shires Way, Ouse Valley Way and Milton Keynes Boundary Walk.
- Panoramic views over the meandering valley floodplain, with a wooded backdrop provided by the Wooded Wolds (LCT 1) to the north. Village church towers provide local landmarks.
- A rural and peaceful landscape with an experience of dark skies away from larger settlements. However, electricity pylons, wind turbines and busy trunk roads in the east (LCA 2a and 2b) and the west coast mainline in the west (LCA 2c) reduces the sense of remoteness.

Physical and natural characteristics

5.34 A gently undulating landscape, rising from the floodplains of the slow flowing and meandering River Ouse and the Tove, with slopes ranging from 50m to 105m AOD. There are localised steeper escarpments or 'bluffs' close to the valley floor of the Ouse, and valleys associated with tributary streams which flow into the main rivers. Many of the farms on the valley slopes have ponds associated with them.

5.35 Much of the LCT is underlain by sandstone, limestone and argillaceous rocks of the Great Oolite Group, with areas in the north-east underlain by Kellaways Formation and Oxford Clay Formation. The Tove Undulating Valley Slopes (LCA 2c) are underlain by Lias Group mudstone, siltstone, limestone and sandstones. Glacial till drift deposits lie in the west and north of the LCT, while river terrace deposits and some alluvium are found adjacent to the Ouse river floodplain.

5.36 This variety in geology is reflected in the soils. The majority consist of calcareous clayey or loamy soils that are well drained but can be shallow or fragmented. Soils tend to be calcareous clayey soils over chalky till towards the tops of the slopes. Soils towards the base of the slopes tend to be slowly permeable and seasonally waterlogged loamy soils.

5.37 Woodland is limited to small isolated woods and copses, many recorded as priority habitat deciduous woodland and with some of ancient origin. The woods are often associated with parklands and settlements, especially at Tyringham Hall and Gayhurst Court, either side of the River Ouse, which also contain a number of mature parkland trees. A number of

Wildlife Corridors and Wildlife Sites are found across the LCT. The Ouse Valley and Yardley Chase Biological Opportunity Areas extend into this LCT.

5.38 Land use is predominantly arable and generally occurs in large open fields, with smaller pasture fields on the lower slopes. Pasture and horse keeping is also apparent in proximity to settlements. Hedgerow cover is variable, with few hedgerow trees and some reinforcement by post and wire fencing, although shelterbelts are more intact along the minor lanes. Conifer shelterbelts and hedgerows are out of character in the landscape.



Open arable farmland at Pindon End looking west towards the Tove Floodplains (LCA 3a) and beyond.

Historic and cultural characteristics

5.39 Large 20th century amalgamated fields, the result of modern farming techniques, are common. Historic field patterns shown in the Buckinghamshire HLC include pre-18th century enclosures, both planned and irregular, with some areas of straight-edged 18th and 19th century Parliamentary enclosure. Areas of assarted enclosure are found on higher ground, indicating a more wooded landscape in the past.

5.40 Pockets of ridge and furrow are found within the LCT. The straight furrows suggest some of these features may have been created by steam plough rather than traditional ox-drawn plough.

5.41 Roman sites at Olney and a villa near Clifton Reynes provide evidence of the Roman occupation. Motte and bailey castles at Lavendon and Castlethorpe and a number of moated sites on the slopes of the rivers Tove and Ouse reflect the increasing settlement of the area in the Middle Ages.

5.42 A large number of historic villages, many originating from this period, are located on the valley slopes. Local warm limestone, often used as rubblestone, is the most prominent building material, with roofs of thatch, slate or red tiles. The villages, including Castlethorpe, Clifton Reynes, Emberton, Lavendon, Newton Blossomville, Ravenstone, Sherrington, Stoke Goldington and Weston Underwood, contain a high number of listed buildings often dating from the late 17th and 18th centuries. The historic cores are designated as Conservation Areas, often centred around the church. Clock towers at Emberton and Filgrave provide local landmarks. Many of the villages have expanded in the 20th and 21st centuries, although new developments are generally sympathetic, using local materials and styling. Haversham is the only example of a new settlement within the LCT, built between the original village and Wolverton in the 1930s.



St Peter's church in Stoke Goldington.

5.43 The small market town of Olney is the largest settlement in the LCT, with a wide High Street lined by fine stone town

houses dating from the 18th century (most listed Grade II) when the town expanded as a staging post for travellers on the Newport Pagnell Turnpike and as centre for lace making. The historic interest of the high street is reflected in its designation as a Conservation Area. The parish church of St Peter and St Paul's marks the end of the settlement and is a notable landmark within the Ouse valley. Olney expanded considerably in the late 20th century, which has had an adverse visual impact on the adjacent rural areas, and there is considerable on-going development.

5.44 Away from the villages, settlement is generally limited to occasional isolated farmhouses or mills, accessed off tracks or narrow twisting lanes.

5.45 Parkland landscapes are found across the LCT, including Tyringham Hall with its Grade I stately home designed by Sir John Soane and Grade II* Registered Park and Garden, and Gayhurst Court, also a Grade II Registered Park and Garden. Both landscape parks were designated by Lancelot Brown, with later alterations by Humphrey Repton and reflect the increasing wealth of local landowners in the 18th century. There are also undesignated landscape parks at Weston Underwood and Hanslope Park. Mature parkland trees in singles and clumps are characteristic of all these parklands, with some exotic trees noted at Tyringham.

5.46 The LCT is crossed by narrow, hedged and winding country roads lined by mature hedgerows. A number of the minor roads follow the valleys slopes. Major transport links include the West Coast Main Line, a strong linear element in the Tove valley, and a short section of the M1. Busier A roads cross the landscape to the east of Milton Keynes, including the A509 and A428. A disused railway between Northampton and Bedford crosses the valley north of Olney.

5.47 A strong network of PRoW crosses the LCT, including promoted routes Ouse Valley Way, Hanslope Circular Route, Three Shires Way and Milton Keynes Boundary Walk. National Cycling Route 6 connects Hanslope, Castlethorpe and Milton Keynes.

Visual and perceptual characteristics

5.48 The Undulating Valley Slopes LCT has a remote character with few modern detractors. Historic villages with landmark churches, winding country lanes and historic parklands at Tyringham and Gayhurst combine to make this an attractive, rural landscape.

5.49 There are panoramic views of the meandering rivers, and across and along the river valleys, both from PRoW and roads. Views to the adjacent wooded ridge of the Wooded Wolds to the north are also common. Elevated views from local escarpments over the floodplain, from example from Clifton Reynes, are also possible.

5.50 Modern influences within the landscape are mostly located close to urban areas, including industrial units on the north-east of Olney. Proximity to the major transport corridors of the M1, West Coast Mainline and to the urban edge of Milton Keynes reduces tranquillity and remoteness locally. A number of solar farms are located in the LCT, and there are views to the wind farm at Petsoe Manor (within LCA 4a). Electricity pylons run north-south direction across the Ouse valley, which also impact the rural character of the landscape.



Deer grazing on the Grade II* registered parkland surrounding 18th century Tyringham Hall.

Landscape evaluation

Landscape qualities

- The tributary streams and small ponds which feed into the Ouse and Tove, that provide freshwater habitats, regulate water quality and water flow.
- The semi-natural habitats including woodland copses, mature trees and hedgerows that support biodiversity and provide carbon capture.
- The historic field patterns of pre-18th century enclosure and assarts, and surviving ridge and furrow earthworks, which provide time depth to the landscape.
- The settlement pattern of historic villages, with numerous listed buildings from the 17th and 18th century constructed from local limestone that provide cultural identity and aesthetic value.
- The 18th century landscape parks laid out around country houses, most notably at Gayhurst and Tyringham, that provide a connection to history, cultural identity and aesthetic value.
- Panoramic views of the meandering rivers and across the undulating landscape of the valleys, with tall church towers and spires, and clock towers as local landmarks, that contribute to a strong sense of place.
- The network of PRoW, including the Three Shires Way, Ouse Valley Way and Milton Keynes Boundary Walk, that connect the settlements and wider countryside, and provide recreational value, and contribute to well-being and health.
- The pleasing combination of landscape elements, strong sense of tranquillity and experience of dark skies in this rural landscape which contribute to the sense of place.

Landscape condition

5.51 Generally a landscape in good condition, with a strong rural character. Fragmentation of historic field patterns, and lack of connectivity between woodlands and hedgerow field boundaries reduces the condition in some areas. Modern influences on the landscape include electricity pylons in the east, Petsoe Manor wind farm, and some unsympathetic modern extensions to settlements, including residential and commercial development to the north of Olney.

Forces for change

5.52 Key forces for change include:

- Increasing periods of drought and increased temperatures as a result of climate change may result in a change in water levels and tributary stream flows.
- Increase in frequency and severity of seasonal flooding in the tributary stream valleys as a result of climate change.
- Potential changes in woodland and tree species composition as a result of climate change, including wind damage due to increases in severe gales (with ancient woodland being particularly susceptible to storm damage), drought, and an increase in pests and diseases, such as ash dieback.
- Maturing parkland trees on estates, which are vulnerable to pathogens and limit the ability of woodland to regenerate.
- Introduction of out of character conifer shelter belts and hedgerows.
- Changes in agricultural practices resulting in the loss of pasture and associated hedgerows, and increase in arable cropping.
- Increasing traffic on rural roads, leading to demands for road 'improvements' introducing urban clutter on rural roads.
- Potential for upgrades to major road corridors including the A509, and corresponding reduction in rurality and tranquillity locally.
- The church of St Peter, Gayhurst is on the Heritage at Risk register due to timber decay of the cupola and tower.
- Pressure for housing and commercial development in the villages, and associated upgrades to infrastructure.
- Pressure for further renewable infrastructure (e.g. wind turbines on elevated ridges and solar farms on south-facing slopes or in open areas, and associated grid connections). Several solar farms have already been developed in the LCT.

Landscape strategy

5.53 The landscape strategy for the Undulating Valley Slopes LCT is to conserve and enhance the rural character and the exiting pattern of rolling arable landscape interspersed with contrasting woodland copses, parkland and small historic villages, retaining a separate character to urban areas of Milton Keynes.

Guidance

Landscape Management

- Minimise water pollution from agriculture through sensitive land management practices, including restoration of buffer strips along watercourses to minimise run off, which will also improve biodiversity and connectivity.
- Conserve and enhance the existing farm ponds for wildlife, and promote the creation of new ponds where appropriate.
- Conserve and enhance the ancient woodland and deciduous woodland through appropriate woodland management.
- Increase the extent of native deciduous woodland, using locally occurring species to link the existing small woodland blocks, copses and hedgerows, as set out in the Milton Keynes Green Infrastructure Strategy⁸. Encourage progressive removal of conifer hedgerows and shelter belts where appropriate.
- Manage and increase the biodiversity of agricultural fields by creating uncultivated margins to arable fields, including along PRoW, or converting some arable land to permanent pasture.
- Conserve and strengthen the traditional landscape pattern and structure, as well as increasing biodiversity interest through the maintenance or restoration of hedgerows with native species. Consider the addition of hedgerow trees to provide additional structure in the landscape.
- Manage and monitor invasive native or harmful species in woodlands and the impact of pathogens, pests and diseases as a result of climate change.
- Conserve and reinforce the parkland /estate character of Tyringham, Gayhurst, Weston Underwood and Hanslope Park, particularly planning the succession of veteran trees which form an integral part of the historic landscape.

⁸ AECOM, Milton Keynes Green Infrastructure Strategy (2018)

- Protect the valued recreational use of the landscape (PRoW), further enhancing opportunities for informal access and enjoyment through well maintained linked routes through farmland, providing connections between the settlements, wooded wolds and river floodplains, and identifying opportunities for green infrastructure enhancements.

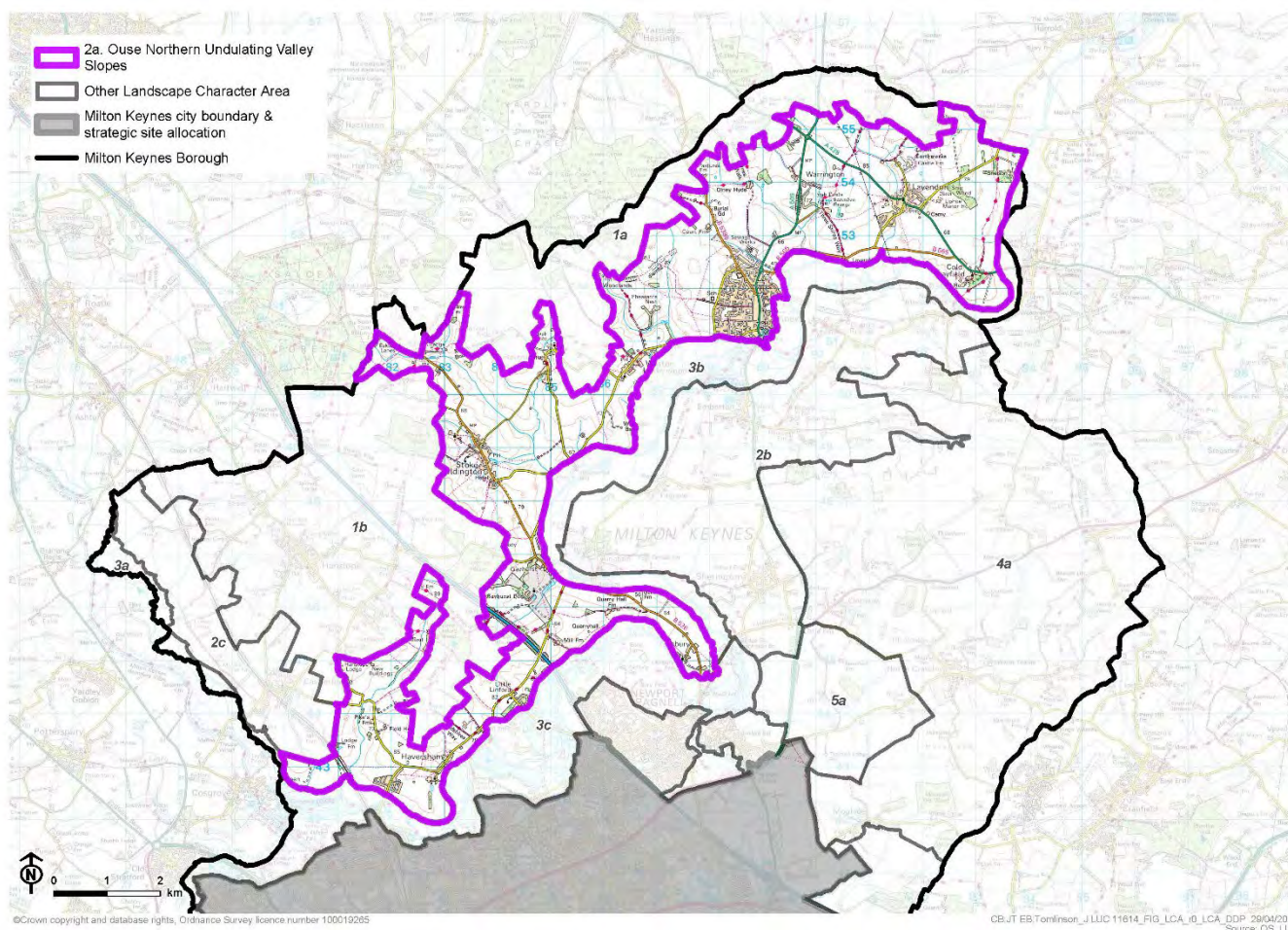
Development Management

- Conserve the nucleated village settlement pattern and restrict built development away from the villages to retain the agricultural and recreational landscape.
- Integrate new development and improve the suburban edges of settlements such as Olney through the use of native hedgerows and woodlands.
- Conserve the distinctive vernacular of historic buildings and their rural setting, particularly within the numerous Conservation Areas within the LCT and ensure that landscape continues to provide a rural setting to these areas.
- Where new development is planned encourage the use of limestone with thatch, slate or red brick roofs, to maintain a strong local identity.
- Resist proposals for highway upgrading to retain the rural character of the narrow rural lanes and conserve the grass verges which provide an important biodiversity resource.
- Identify, retain and manage key viewpoints to appreciate the undulating valley slopes. Consider the landmark churches and clocktowers and panoramic views across the river floodplains in development both within the LCT and in adjacent LCTs.
- Ensure any renewable energy generation is compatible with the guidance above, and with guidance set out in the MK Renewable Energy Landscape Sensitivity Assessment⁹. Renewable energy should be in scale with the landscape where possible, acknowledging that wind turbines may transcend the scale of existing features in the landscape. Electricity infrastructure associated with renewable energy generation should be efficiently planned to minimise the number of lines required, routeing in accordance with the Holford Rules¹⁰.
- Protect the valued recreational use of the landscape, seeking opportunities to further enhance opportunities for access and enjoyment.

⁹ Gillespies, Landscape Sensitivity to Wind Turbine and Solar PV Development (2016)

¹⁰ <https://www.nationalgrid.com/sites/default/files/documents/13795-The%20Holford%20Rules.pdf>

2a Ouse Northern Undulating Valley Slopes



Location and unique characteristics

5.54 Ouse Northern Undulating Valley Slopes LCA is located to the north of the River Ouse, and stretches from the east to the west of the borough, ranging from 50m AOD where it meets the Ouse floodplain to the south and rising to 105m AOD on the boundary with the plateau of the Wooded Wolds to the north and west.

5.55 The LCA is underlain by Great Oolite Group sandstone, limestone and argillaceous rocks, with small areas of Kellaways Formation and Oxford Clay Formation in the north-east. Glacial till is found in the north, with river terrace deposits in the east marking former courses of the River Ouse, which has resulted in clay-loam soils, which provide Grade 3 (moderate-good) agricultural land in use primarily for arable cultivation.

5.56 Areas of woodland are often recorded as priority habitat deciduous woodland, and some of ancient origin including Snip Wood and Overbrook Spinney.

5.57 Pockets of semi-improved grassland is found on the lower edges of the valley slopes, and also around Court Farm.

Meadow habitat has survived west of Olney and is designated as the Barn Field Long Lane LWS, while a small area of priority habitat lowland fens along a tributary spring is designated as the Valley Fen, Ravenstone LWS. A disused railway line west of Olney is designated as a Wildlife Corridor. The Ouse Valley and Yardley Chase Biological Opportunity Areas extend into this LCA.

5.58 There is a mixed field pattern with pre-18th century regular enclosure, regular Parliamentary enclosure fields and larger 20th century fields, enclosed with hedgerows or local limestone walls. Fields are large and in arable cropping use, with areas of sheep grazing on the edges of settlements, for example at Haversham. Hedgerows are in variable condition, with mature hedgerow trees.

5.59 Historic villages, with listed buildings mostly constructed from the local limestone and landmark church spires and towers, are designated with Conservation Areas at Lavendon, Olney, Weston Underwood, Ravenstone and Stoke Goldington. A number of Scheduled Monuments lie around Lavendon including 12th century earthworks relating to the motte and bailey castle.

5.60 Olney is situated at an important crossing point of the River Ouse. There is evidence for a substantial Roman settlement to the north at Ashfurlong (now a Scheduled Monument), and a smaller settlement to the south in the area now covered by Emberton Park. Olney is one of the earliest documented settlements in the borough, first named in a charter of 979 CE as 'Ollanege', as well as in the later Domesday Book. The spire of the 14th century church of St Peter and St Paul, now Grade I listed, stands on the banks of the Ouse and dominates the southern approach to Olney. Olney was home to radical Christians in the 18th century, including the poet William Cowper and his friend and curate of Olney, John Newton, who wrote the words to 'Amazing Grace'.

5.61 Historic houses and parklands are distinctive features of this LCA. Gayhurst Court is a late 16th century house (listed at Grade I) set within an 18th century landscape park laid out by Lancelot (Capability) Brown, with alterations by Humphry Repton. The parkland and 19th century formal gardens are a Grade II Registered Park and Garden. Repton also worked on the park and pleasure grounds for Hanslope Park, which partially lie in this LCA (the remainder in LCA 1a). Weston Park is an unregistered garden and park associated with a demolished manor house, which retains its parkland character, and contributes to the rural setting of Weston Underwood. Weston Underwood is also associated with the poet William Cowper.

5.62 This is an open landscape, with fine panoramic views, including to the heavily wooded skyline of Yardley Chase to the north, south-east to the wooded Greensand Ridge (LCA 6a), and over the historic parklands at Gayhurst and Tyringham which lies on the opposite bank of the River Ouse (within LCA 2b).

5.63 Modern influences on the landscape include a solar farm, new residential and commercial development at Olney and an aggregates quarry north of Lathbury. Traffic noise from the M1 and West Coast Mainline railway reduce tranquillity, and there are views across the river valley to the Petsoe Manor wind farm.

LCT 3: River Floodplains



Landscape Character Areas

The River Floodplains LCT is subdivided into four LCAs:

- 3a Tove Floodplains
- 3b Ouse Floodplains
- 3c Ouse Lakes and Parkland Floodplains
- 3d Ouzel Parkland Floodplains

Location and summary

The River Floodplains LCT comprises the river valley floodplains of the River Ouse, and its main tributaries the Ouzel and the Tove. The boundaries of the LCT are defined by the extent of Flood Zones 2 and 3, and the 50-55m contour line, where the valley slopes begin to rise.

This is a flat, open landscape with meandering river channels. The rivers tend to be slow flowing, with a variable depth and height of surrounding banks. The LCAs within the LCT are divided into rural and largely recreational floodplains.



The wide River Ouse running under the Grade I listed bridge at Tyringham, with parkland landscape on the river floodplain.

Key Characteristics

- A flat landscape with slow flowing rivers on sinuous valley floors, underlain by a varied bedrock with alluvium deposits.
- Riparian woodland lines the meandering river channels, some recorded as priority habitat deciduous woodland and wetland habitats lie on the floodplains, many of which are designated as LWS.
- Open pasture fields lie adjacent to the river channel, bound by ditches and post and wire fencing.
- Historic and current mineral extraction have impacted the landscape, including the creation of extensive large lakes and ponds.
- Heritage assets are limited to historic mills, bridges and occasional isolated farmsteads. Archaeological evidence of Neolithic, Bronze Age, Iron Age, Roman and medieval communities is often designated as Scheduled Monuments.
- An open undeveloped floodplain, with restricted settlement, although there are views to villages and towns on adjacent higher ground.
- Recreationally important landscape with good access on PRoW, parks on former mineral extraction sites, cycling routes and fishing (particularly within LCAs 3c and 3d).
- Rural character, away from the urban settlement edges and major transport corridors.

Physical and natural characteristics

5.82 A flat floodplain landscape, between 45m and 75m AOD. The landscape is dominated the river channels and floodplains of the Ouse, Ouzel and Tove, and associated tributaries. Streams and springs which drain the adjacent valley slopes (LCT 2) cross the floodplain to join the main river channels. The width of the floodplains varies; the Ouse is generally wider, while the Tove and Ouzel are narrower and less defined.

5.83 The geology is dominated by the superficial alluvium deposits formed by the meandering river corridors, while the bedrock geology is varied. This gives rise to stoneless clay soils, with some sandier loams away from the river channels. Seasonal flooding is common within the landscape in winter and spring.

5.84 Riparian vegetation along the river corridor includes willows and black poplars which mark the course of the river and plantations of cricket bat willow such as at Newton Blossomville. Many of the woodland areas are recorded as priority habitat deciduous woodland. Wetland habitats associated with the floodplain include priority habitat floodplain grazing marsh and good quality semi-improved grassland. Many of these woodland and wetland habitats are designated as LWS, and the River Ouse and Ouzel are designated as Wildlife Corridors.



The narrow channel of the River Tove with flat pastoral fields.

Historic and cultural characteristics

5.85 The field size and historic pattern varies between the urban and rural areas of the floodplain. Rural areas have small to medium fields of pre-18th century regular enclosure and later Parliamentary enclosure. There are a number of historic enclosed meadows along the Ouse, such as Bury Field at Newport Pagnell which has been common land since the Middle Ages. Historic field patterns in the more urban areas, around Milton Keynes city, have largely been lost due to mineral extraction.

5.86 Land use is still predominantly pasture, with open irregular fields bound by drainage ditches, post and wire fencing and occasional over-mature hedgerows. Closer to the urban edges of Milton Keynes city and Newport Pagnell, fields which historically would have been used as riverside pasture still retain much of their original landscape structure.

5.87 Historic assets are limited to historic bridges and mills at crossing points, although historic parkland extends into the Ouse floodplain at Gayhurst and Tyringham (LCA 3b). Archaeological evidence of Neolithic ritual or ceremonial landscapes in the valley floor, Bronze Age and Iron Age ring ditches and pit alignments, Roman sites and medieval villages and associated fish ponds is found on the river floodplains, including at Old Wolverton and Tyringham. Many of these sites are now Scheduled Monuments.

5.88 The LCT is largely uninhabited, with the majority of villages located in the adjacent LCT on higher land beyond the floodplain. Settlement within the floodplain is limited to bridging points along the course of the rivers and occasional isolated historic farmhouses and mills, many of which are listed buildings.

5.89 Gravel extraction, particularly north of Milton Keynes city, has resulted in large lakes and ponds, which are now managed for nature conservation and/or recreation. Gravel extraction is still taking place, particularly along the lower reaches of the River Ouse (LCA 3b and 3c).

5.90 The LCT is crossed by a number of major roads, including the M1 and A5 which cross both the Ouse and the Ouzel. In contrast, there is limited access to the Tove floodplain, which is crossed by only small country roads.

5.91 Despite limited access to the floodplain in some locations, particularly along the Tove (LCA 3a) and the north of the River Ouse (LCA 3b), the River Floodplains LCT provide considerable opportunities for recreation. These include PRow such as the Ouse Valley Way, National Cycling Route 6, and leisure parks with fishing and water sports at Emberton and Cosgrove. The Grand Union Canal and its towpath also cross the floodplain.



A variety of recreational opportunities on the Ouse, Stony Stratford.

Visual and perceptual characteristics

5.92 Views within the LCT are relatively open, across the river floodplain to the surrounding higher ground. In areas of former

gravel extraction, along the Ouse north of Milton Keynes city and Newport Pagnell, the river channel is a less visually unifying feature.

5.93 Modern influences on the floodplain landscape include the major road corridors of the M1 and A5, and the west coast mainline railway. Noise from these transport corridors disrupts tranquillity across the LCT. Some buildings associated with recreational facilities, particularly the holiday park at Cosgrove Leisure Park, are out of keeping with the generally unsettled landscape, although generally hidden from view by vegetation. The built edges of Milton Keynes city and Newport Pagnell are also apparent in some views, with a number of large commercial and residential developments dominant in some views.

5.94 Away from the urban edges the river floodplains are rural with some areas of dark skies on the eastern and western borough edges.



New development at Eaton Leys features prominently in the foreground of views from the River Ouzel at Waterhall Park.

Landscape evaluation

Landscape qualities

- The semi-natural habitats including floodplain grazing marsh, lowland meadows and deciduous riparian woodland that support biodiversity, and provide carbon capture.
- The river channels which provide water, and the underlying aquifers which maintain springs and base flows into rivers. The floodplains also regulate water flows, and provide flood protection.
- The riverside meadows which provide a connection to the historic land uses and provide a highly scenic quality to the landscape.
- The heritage features of the landscape particularly the historic mills and bridges, farmhouses and parklands, and archaeological earthwork features that provide a connection to history, cultural identity and aesthetic value.
- The largely undeveloped rural character of the flat low-lying floodplain, with a strong sense of openness, which provides a sense of place.
- The expansive, uninterrupted long-distance views across the floodplain which provide a sense of place.
- The recreational opportunities provided by PRoW including the Ouse Valley Way, cycle routes, country parks, fishing and water sports which connect the settlements and wider countryside, provide recreational value and contribute to well-being and health.

Landscape condition

5.95 The landscape is variable across the River Floodplain LCT, influenced by proximity to Milton Keynes city, and other recent development. The landscape is still largely in agricultural land use, and has a good cover of semi-natural habitats. There has been some fragmentation of hedgerow boundaries, and tranquillity and rural character are influenced by land uses in adjacent LCTs, such as wind turbines at Petsoe Manor, electricity pylons and noise from major road and rail routes.

Forces for change

5.96 Key forces for change include:

- Changes in agricultural practices to reduce grazing and increase arable cropping.
- The spread of invasive, non-native species including Himalayan Balsam and signal crayfish along river valleys, displacing native plants and habitats.
- Increasing periods of drought resulting in the drying of grazing floodplain as a result of climate change and demand for water extraction.
- Changes to flood management as a result of climate change, including increased pressure for tree planting to attenuate flash flooding, which could impact on the open character of the floodplain.
- Agricultural run-off and discharge of sewage into the waterways, causing pollution and impacting on wildlife.
- Continuing and future gravel extraction, and the management of the restoration of former extraction sites.
- Expansion of Milton Keynes city and Newport Pagnell affecting the rural character of the landscape adjacent to these settlements.
- Increased traffic on major transport corridors including the M1 and West Coast Mainline disrupting tranquillity.
- Pressure for additional renewable energy infrastructure e.g. solar farms.
- Recreational pressure, including demand for additional facilities, could alter the sense of rurality.

Landscape strategy

5.97 The landscape strategy for the River Floodplains LCT is to conserve the rural undeveloped character of the floodplains and support opportunities to increase and connect semi-natural floodplain habitats, while increasing informal recreational access.

Guidance

Landscape Management

- Encourage sustainable management of traditional meadows by introducing sensitive grassland management such as late hay cutting or low-density livestock grazing.
- Manage and enhance floodplain meadows. Protect existing meadows from ploughing, grassland improvement or further mineral extraction. Draw on the advice of the Upper and Bedford Ouse Catchment Partnership on the management of floodplain meadows and implementation of natural flood management schemes. Identify opportunities for green infrastructure enhancements, as set out in the Milton Keynes Green Infrastructure Strategy¹¹ and Green Infrastructure Opportunity Mapping¹².
- Monitor water quality in the rivers, and seek to reduce surface water flow off agricultural land. Support the production of nutrient, manure and crop protection management plans where appropriate.
- Conserve and enhance the biodiversity interest of wetland habitats and watercourses. Ensure a whole valley approach is taken, identifying opportunities for green infrastructure enhancement.
- Promote the management of existing floodplain pollards and plant new specimens such as Black Poplar. Where appropriate extend areas of wet woodland.
- Promote improvements to the river and lake habitats to encourage increased biodiversity value through marginal planting and localised bank profiling and sympathetic maintenance of drainage ditches.
- Encourage reversion of arable fields to pasture where possible, and increase the biodiversity of arable fields by creating uncultivated margins.
- Promote the use of ditches and hedges in place of post and wire as a means of stock enclosure on pasture fields.
- Promote increased recreational opportunities which respect the landscape character. Improve PRoW connections and signage on well-maintained linked riverside routes, particularly adjacent to urban areas, and encourage use of the river for appropriate recreation, identifying opportunities for green infrastructure enhancement.
- Maximise opportunities from the restoration of mineral extraction sites for recreation and biodiversity. Develop diverse mixed age woodland communities to retain a balance between screening recreation, wildlife and public safety.

Development Management

- Conserve the undeveloped nature of the landscape, to provide a rural floodplain setting to Milton Keynes city.
- Consider views from the floodplains landscape when planning development in adjacent landscapes, enhancing the integration of development through native wooded boundaries and mature trees to provide visual screening and to reduce the impact of built development on the floodplain.
- Conserve and enhance the historic bridges and mills, and archaeological evidence of earthworks.
- Ensure a comprehensive restoration plan is in place for any future mineral extraction, to restore habitats and land cover pattern. This should include wet woodland as part of a mosaic of habitats.
- Ensure any renewable energy generation is compatible with the guidance above, and with guidance set out in the MK Renewable Energy Landscape Sensitivity Assessment¹³. Renewable energy should be in scale with the landscape where possible, acknowledging that wind turbines may transcend the scale of existing features in the landscape.

¹¹ AECOM, Milton Keynes Green Infrastructure Strategy (2018)

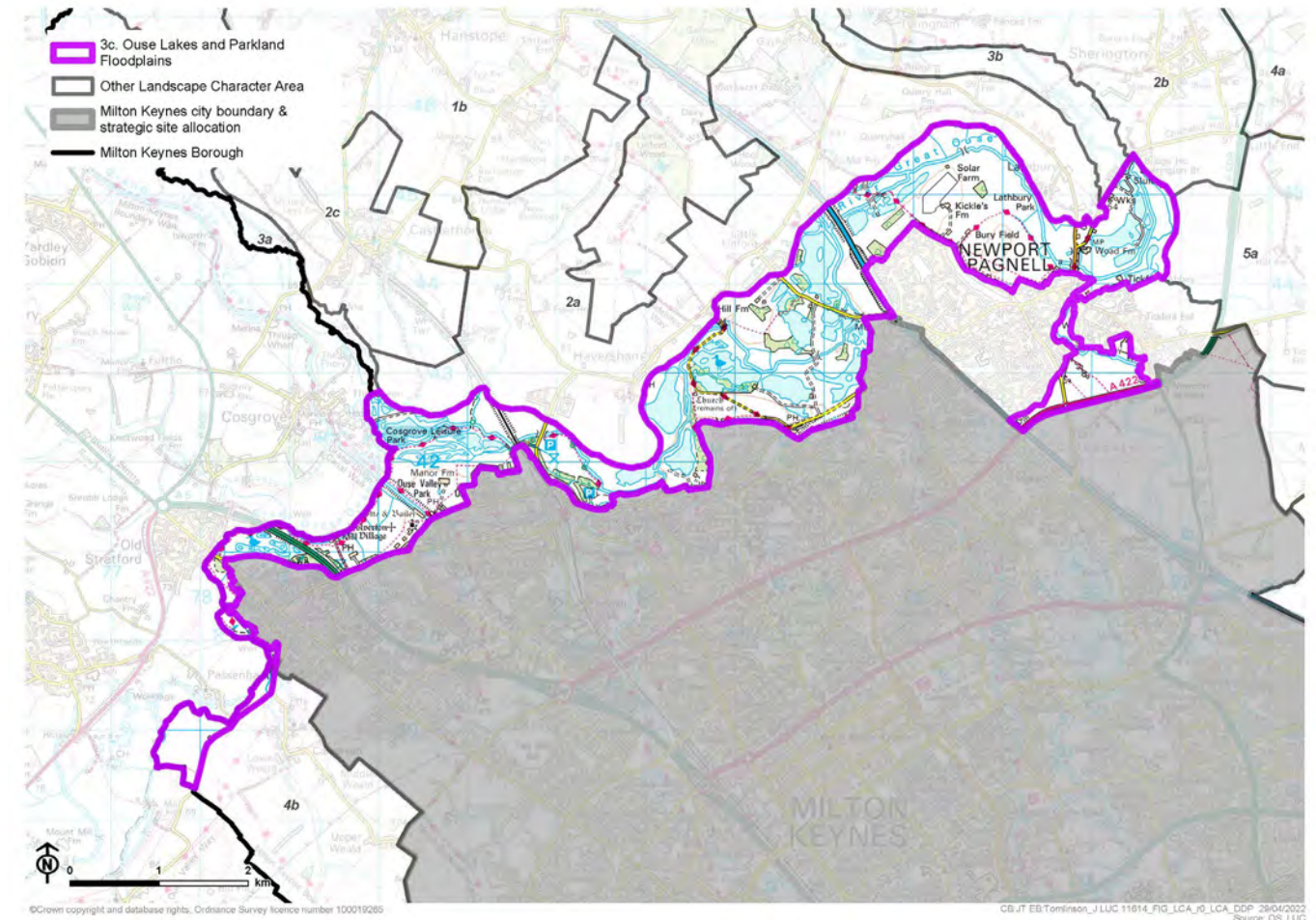
¹² <https://bucks.mknep.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Green-Infrastructure-Opportunity-Zone-08.pdf>

¹³ Gillespies, Landscape Sensitivity to Wind Turbine and Solar PV Development (2016)

Electricity infrastructure associated with renewable energy generation should be efficiently planned to minimise the number of lines required, routeing in accordance with the Holford Rules¹⁴.

¹⁴ <https://www.nationalgrid.com/sites/default/files/documents/13795-The%20Holford%20Rules.pdf>

3c Ouse Lakes and Parkland Floodplains



Location and unique characteristics

5.114 The Ouse Lakes and Parkland Floodplains LCA extends from Passenham in the west and skirts the northern edge of Milton Keynes city towards Newport Pagnell and Tickford, where it runs south, to the confluence of the Ouse and the Lovat.

5.115 The river floodplain is underlain by a variety of bedrock geology consisting of mudstones, siltstones, sandstones and some limestones— Kellaways Formation and Oxford Clay Formation in the east, Great Oolite Group in the south and Lias Group in the west. Two Local Geological Sites are present at Stony Stratford Nature Reserve and Haversham Mill River Bank.

5.116 The floodplain contains significant areas of ecologically important good quality semi-improved grassland and floodplain grazing marsh. The floodplain is well-treed, and much of the woodland is recorded as priority habitat deciduous woodland. Cricket bat willows, with a mixed age

structure, form a strong element of the riverside landscape, and are still harvested for cricket bat production.

5.117 Restored mineral workings contain lakes, scrapes, wetlands, scrub and plantations, and are home to many bird species. Kickle's Pits and Gayhurst Quarry is designated as LWS for its standing water habitats, and Manor Farm and Stony Stratford Nature Reserve LWS for its lowland meadow and extensive wetland habitats, while much of the River Ouse is a Wildlife Corridor and covered by the Ouse Valley Biological Opportunity Area. Some pasture fields used for sheep and horse grazing remain.

5.118 The riverside approaches to Newport Pagnell provide important open spaces, and separate the town from Tickford End, built around a now demolished 12th century priory. The Newport Pagnell Conservation Area extends into the LCA and marks the importance of these open spaces and the confluences of the Ouse and Lovat to the town's development. Bury Field is an open area of common land north of Newport Pagnell, first recorded as a common in 1276, and contains earthworks relating to Civil War defences built by

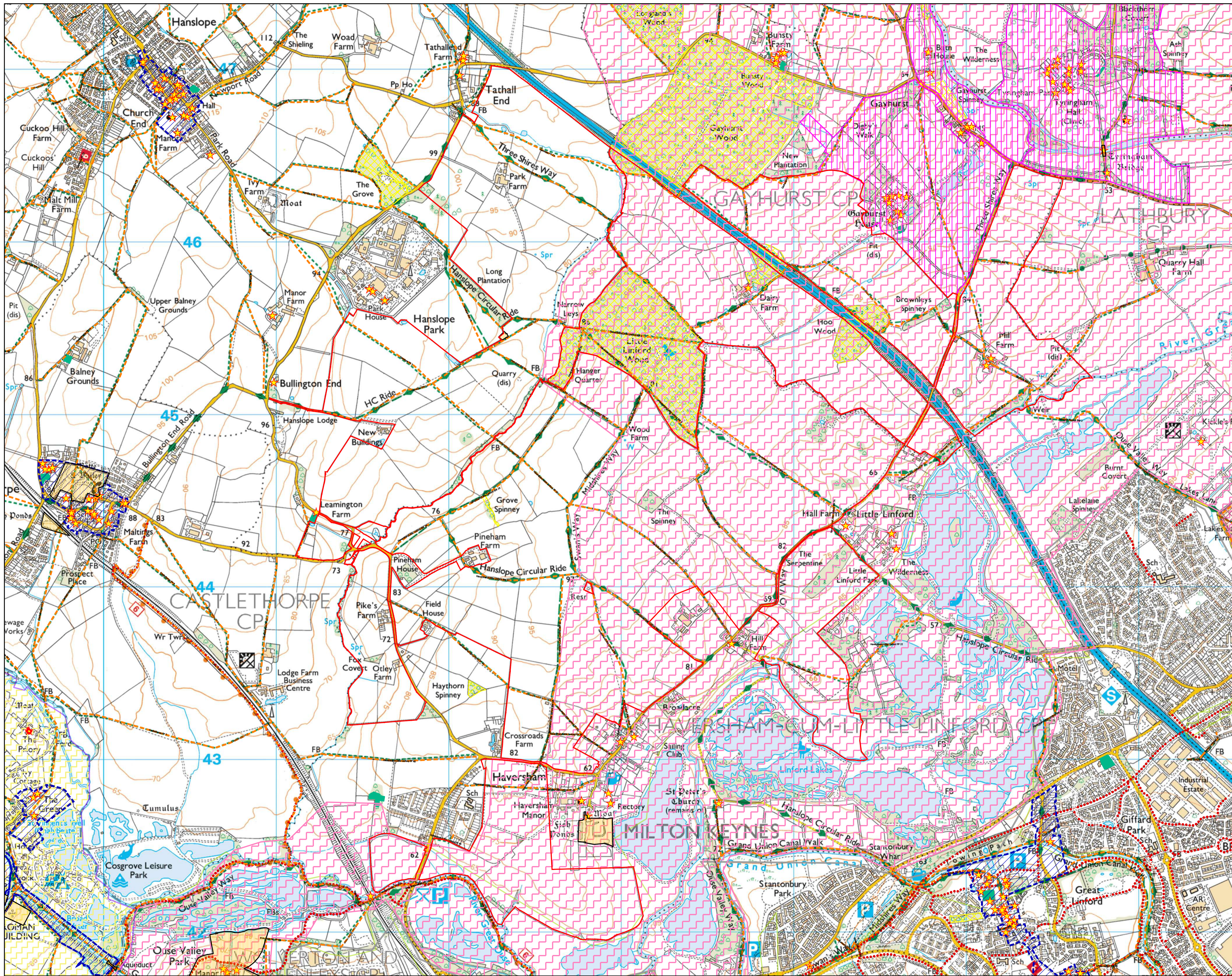
Parliamentarians in 1643. Historic crossing points including the 'Iron Trunk' canal aqueduct north of Old Wolverton and Tickford Bridge in Newport Pagnell over the River Ouzel, which was built in 1810 and is the only iron bridge in Britain that still carries main road traffic.

5.119 Old Wolverton was an important parish in the Norman and medieval eras. The motte and bailey castle, deserted medieval village, and monastic grange are now a Scheduled Monument, and there are a number of listed buildings including the Grade II* listed Church of the Holy Trinity. Settlement within the LCA is now limited to a few farmsteads.

5.120 This LCA has been impacted by mineral extraction, which has removed the traces of historic field patterns. Great Linford gravel and sand pits were opened in the 1940s, and used for the construction of the M1 motorway followed by construction of Milton Keynes city. The former gravel workings


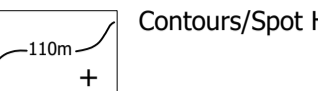
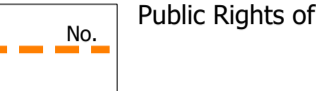

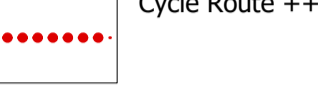
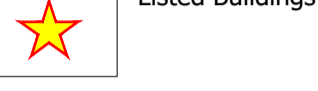








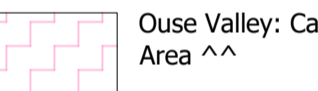
have been restored into established recreational areas for walking, riding, cycling and swimming, although most are privately owned with restricted public access. The landscape is crossed by a number of public rights of way, including promoted routes Grafton Way, Ouse Valley Way, and Milton Keynes Boundary Walk and National Cycle Route 6. The Grand Union Canal also crosses the river floodplain. There is greater access to the river in this LCA than the rest of the LCT.

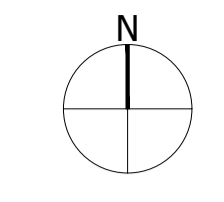
5.121 Modern influences on the landscape include recreational facilities including static caravans at Cosgrove Leisure Park, the major transport corridors of the M1, A6 and west coast mainline railway and solar farm north of Newport Pagnell. The road corridors and proximity to Milton Keynes city and Newport Pagnell reduce tranquillity and dark skies.



The scaling of this drawing cannot be assured
 Revision _____ Date _____ Dm _____ Cld _____

LEGEND

-  Site Boundary
 -  Contours/Spot Heights (Metres AOD) ^
 -  Public Rights of Way *
 -  Countryside Rights of Way Access Areas #
 -  Cycle Route ++
 -  Listed Buildings ~
 -  Conservation Area ~/##
 -  Registered Parks and Gardens ~
 -  Scheduled Monument ~
 -  Ancient Woodland #
 -  Traditional Orchards #
 -  Linear Parks **
 -  Settlement Boundary **
 -  Tove Valley Special Landscape Area ##
- Draft Landscape Designations/ allocations
-  Ouse Valley: Candidate Special Landscape Area ^^



Sources:
 * OS Mapping
 # Natural England GIS Data Set
 ~ Historic England National Monument Record GIS Data Set
 <County Council> GIS Data Set / Definitive Map
 + Southern National Cycle Network GIS Data
 + Department of Transport Cycle Network Model
 ++ MK City Plan 2050, draft Policy areas
 ## <District Council> Interpolated from South Northamptonshire Local Plan Policy Mapping (2020)
 ** Milton Keynes Local Plan (PlanMK(2019)) policy areas, extrapolated from Milton Keynes City Council interactive mapping


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

FIGURE 1

Project
 North Milton Keynes

Drawing Title
 Site Context Plan

Date	Scale	Drawn by	Check by
25.07.2024	1:10,000 @A1 1:20,000 @A3	DW	IK/PC
Project No	Drawing No	Revision	
333101403	BL-LP-01	-	



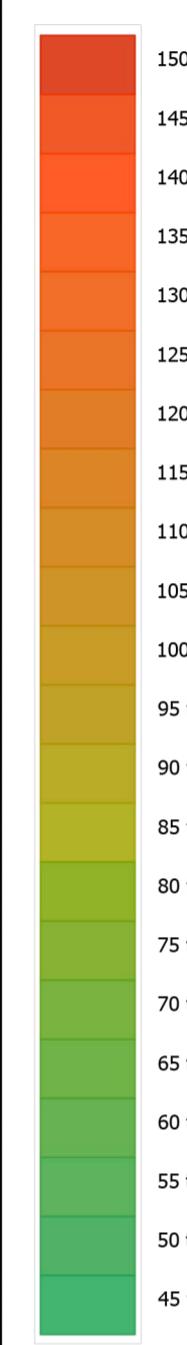
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LEGEND

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

Elevation (m)



Sources: ^
© Mapping

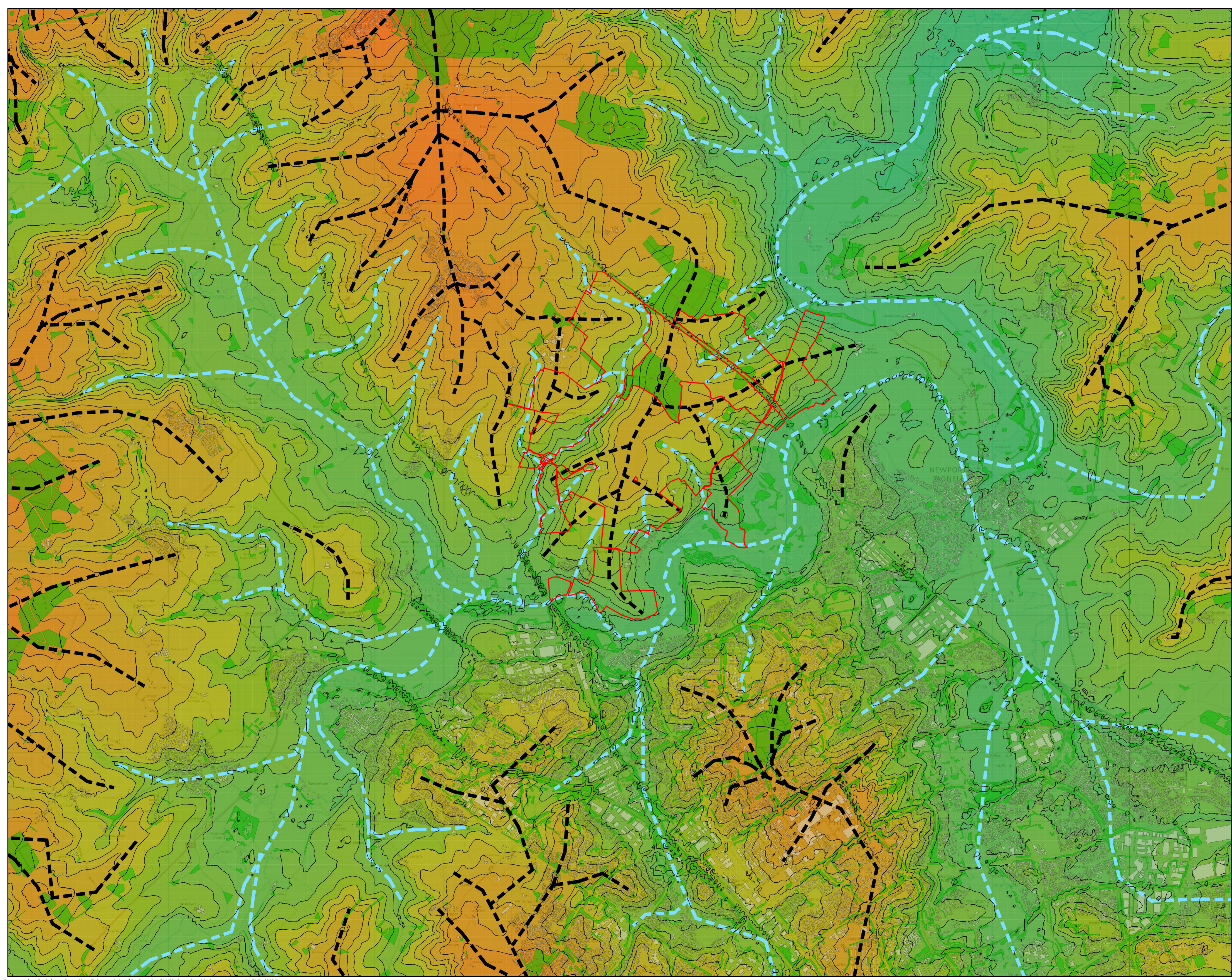
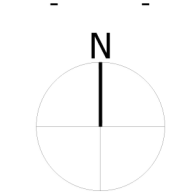


FIGURE 2

Project
North Milton Keynes

Drawing Title
Topographic Features Plan

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Project No	1:50,000 @A3		Revision
333101403	BL-LP-02		-



LEGEND

- Site Boundary
- Landscape Character**
- National Character Areas #**
 - NCA 88: Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands
 - NCA 89: Northamptonshire Vales
 - NCA 91: Yardley Whittlewood Ridge
- Milton Keynes Character Areas ***
 - 1. Wooded Wolds
 - 1a. Yardley Chase Wooded Wolds
 - 1b. Gayhurst and Stokepark Wooded Wolds
 - 2. Undulating Valley Slopes
 - 2a. Ouse Northern Undulating Valley Slopes
 - 2b. Ouse Southern Undulating Valley Slopes
 - 2c. Tove Undulating Valley Slopes
 - 3. River Floodplains
 - 3a. Tove Floodplains
 - 3b. Ouse Floodplains
 - 3c. Ouse Lakes and Parkland Floodplains
 - 4. Undulating Clay Plateaux
 - 4a. North Crawley Undulating Clay Plateau
 - 4b. Weald Undulating Clay Plateau
 - 5. Clay Vales
 - 5a. Lower Ouzel Clay Vale
 - 5b. Upper Ouzel Clay Vale
 - Milton Keynes Urban Area
- West Northamptonshire Character Areas +**
 - 6a. The Tove Catchment Undulating Claylands
 - 6b. Hackleton Claylands Undulating Claylands
 - 8a. Whittlewood Plateau Low Wooded Clay Ridge
 - 8b. Salcey Forest and Yardley Chase Low Wooded Clay Ridge
 - 17b. River Tove Floodplain River Valley floodplain
- Central Bedfordshire Character Area ##**
 - 5c. Salford - Aspley Clay Vales
- Buckinghamshire Character Area ****
 - 3.1 Lower Great Ouse Valley

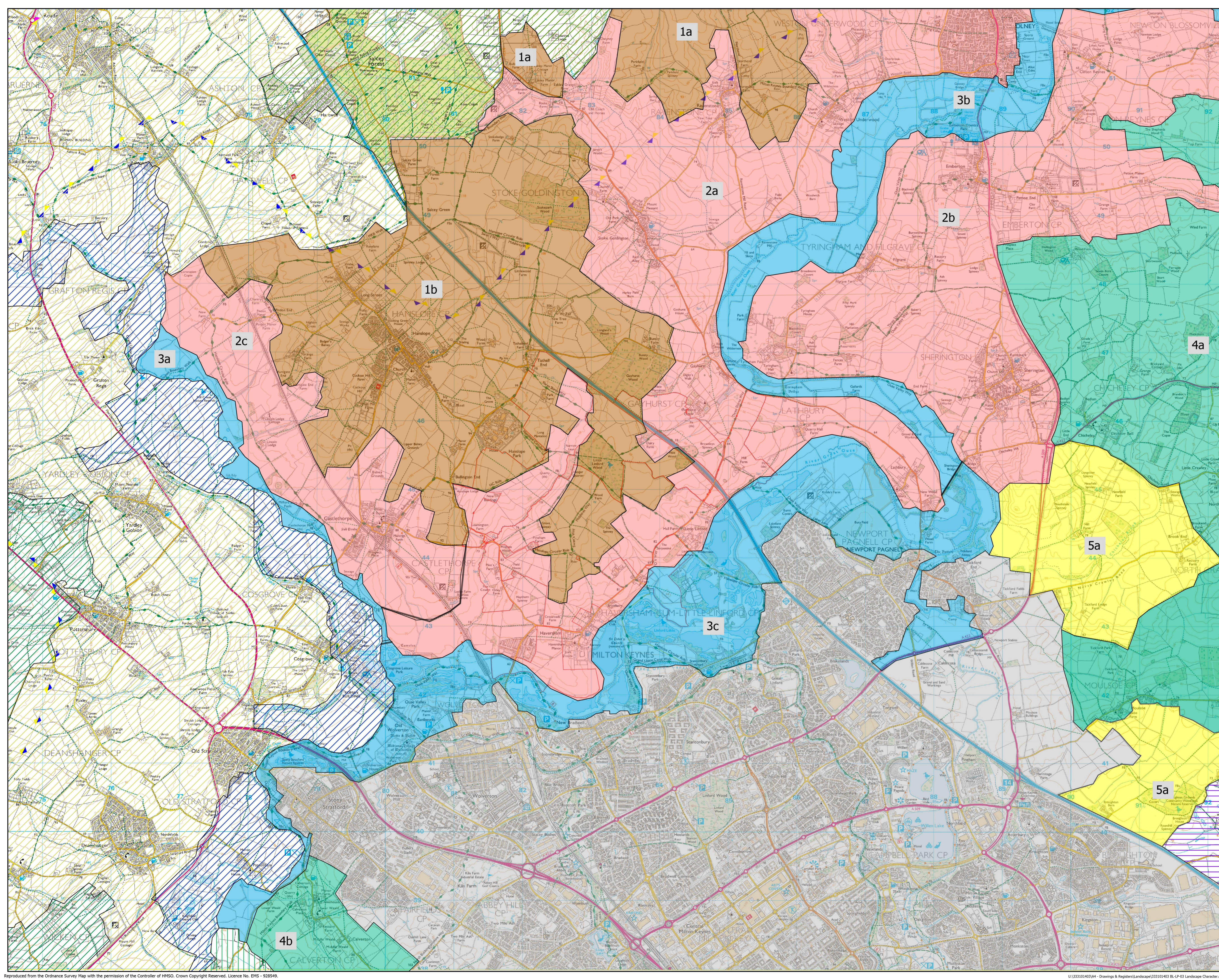
NOTES:

- # Natural England (2024)
- * Milton Keynes Landscape Character Assessment (2022)
- + South Northamptonshire Character Assessment (2020)
- ## Central Bedfordshire Landscape Character Assessment (2015)
- ** Aylesbury Vale Landscape Character Assessment (2008)


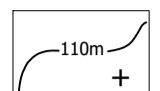
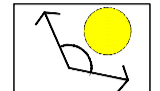
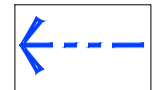


FIGURE 3
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North Milton Keynes

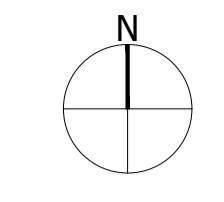
Drawing Title
Landscape Character Plan

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Project No	Drawing No	Revision	
333101403	BL-LP-03	-	



LEGEND

-  Site Boundary
-  Contours/Spot Heights (Metres AOD) ^
-  Location of Photographic Viewpoints (Site Context Photographs: 1-23)
-  Partial Views
-  Truncated/No Views
-  Open Views



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

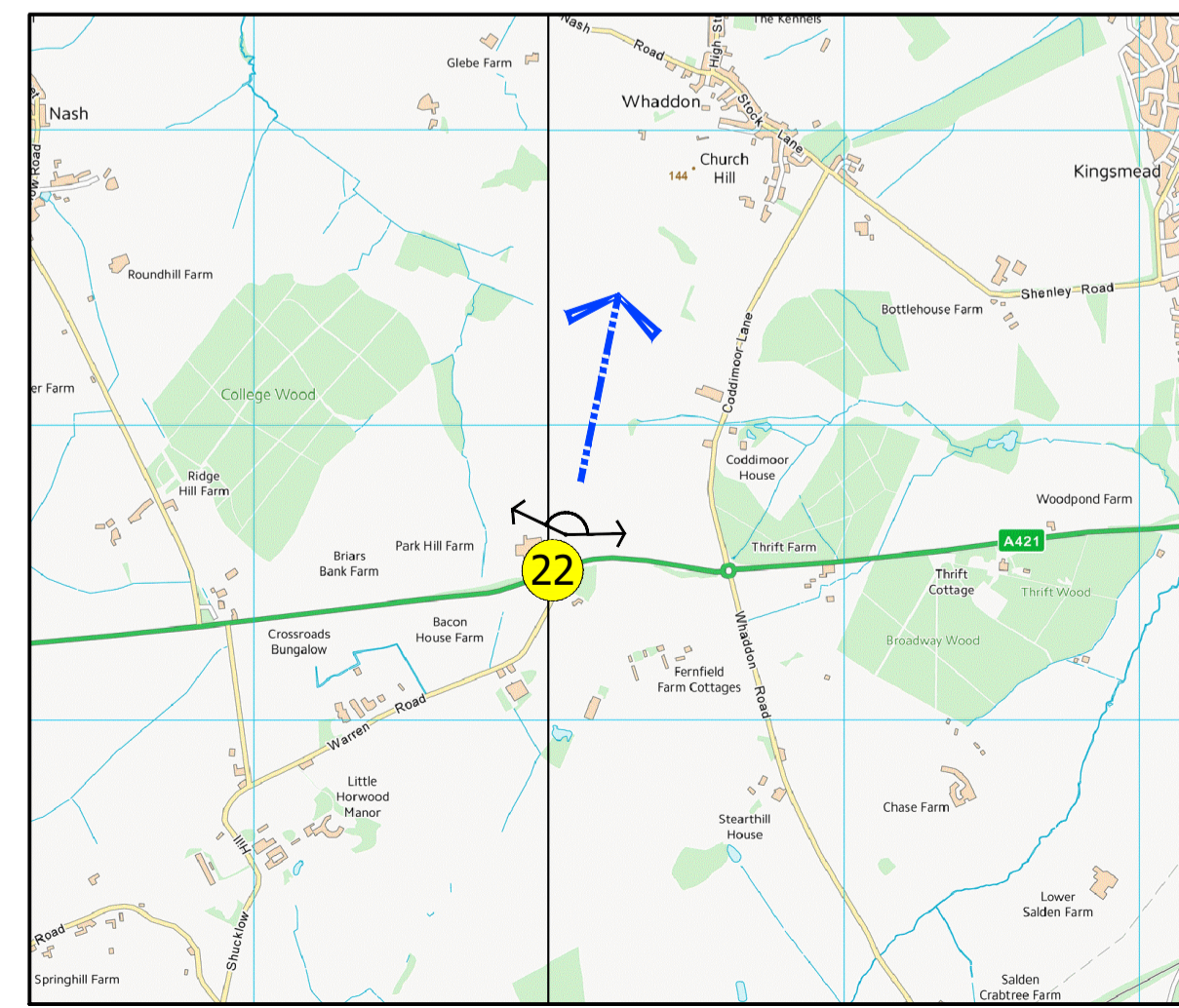
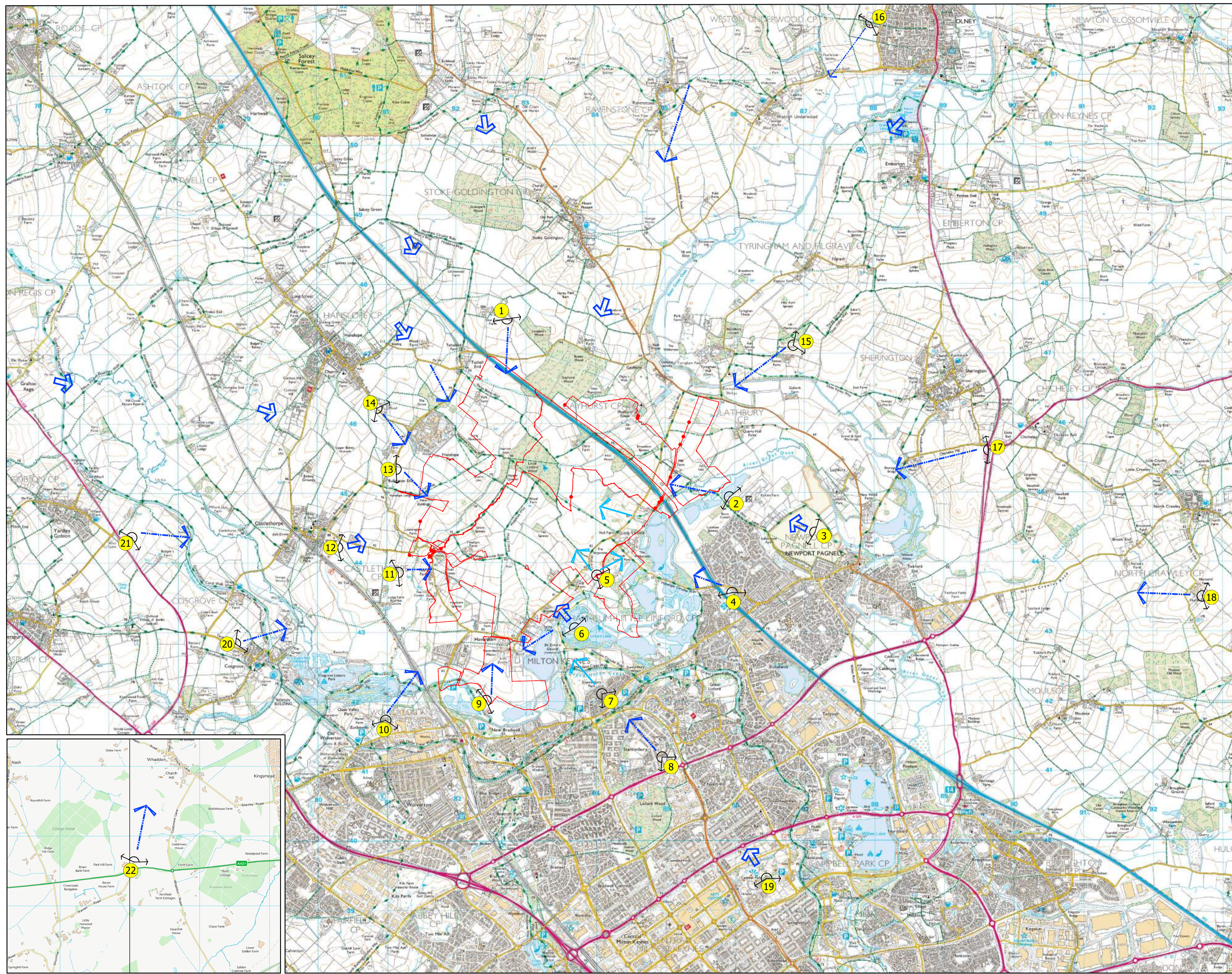



FIGURE 6
 Project
 North Milton Keynes
 Drawing Title
 Visual Appraisal Plan

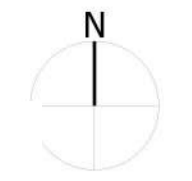
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Project No	Drawing No	Revision	
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LEGEND



-  Existing Woodlands, Copses and Tree Belts ^
-  Existing Water Courses and Features ^
-  Contours/Spot Heights (Metres AOD) ^
-  Milton Keynes framing infrastructure
-  Registered Parks and Gardens ~
-  Hanslope Church

Elevation

-  High
-  Medium
-  Low

Sources:
 ^ GIS Mapping
 # Natural England GIS Data Set
 ~ Historic England National Monument Record GIS Data Set
 + County Councils' GIS Data Set / Definitive Map
 * Sustrans National Cycle Network GIS Data
 ++ Department of Transport Cycle Network Model
 ^^ Department for Communities and Local Government GIS Data
 ## "District Councils" Interpolated from West Northamptonshire and Milton Keynes Council Mapping
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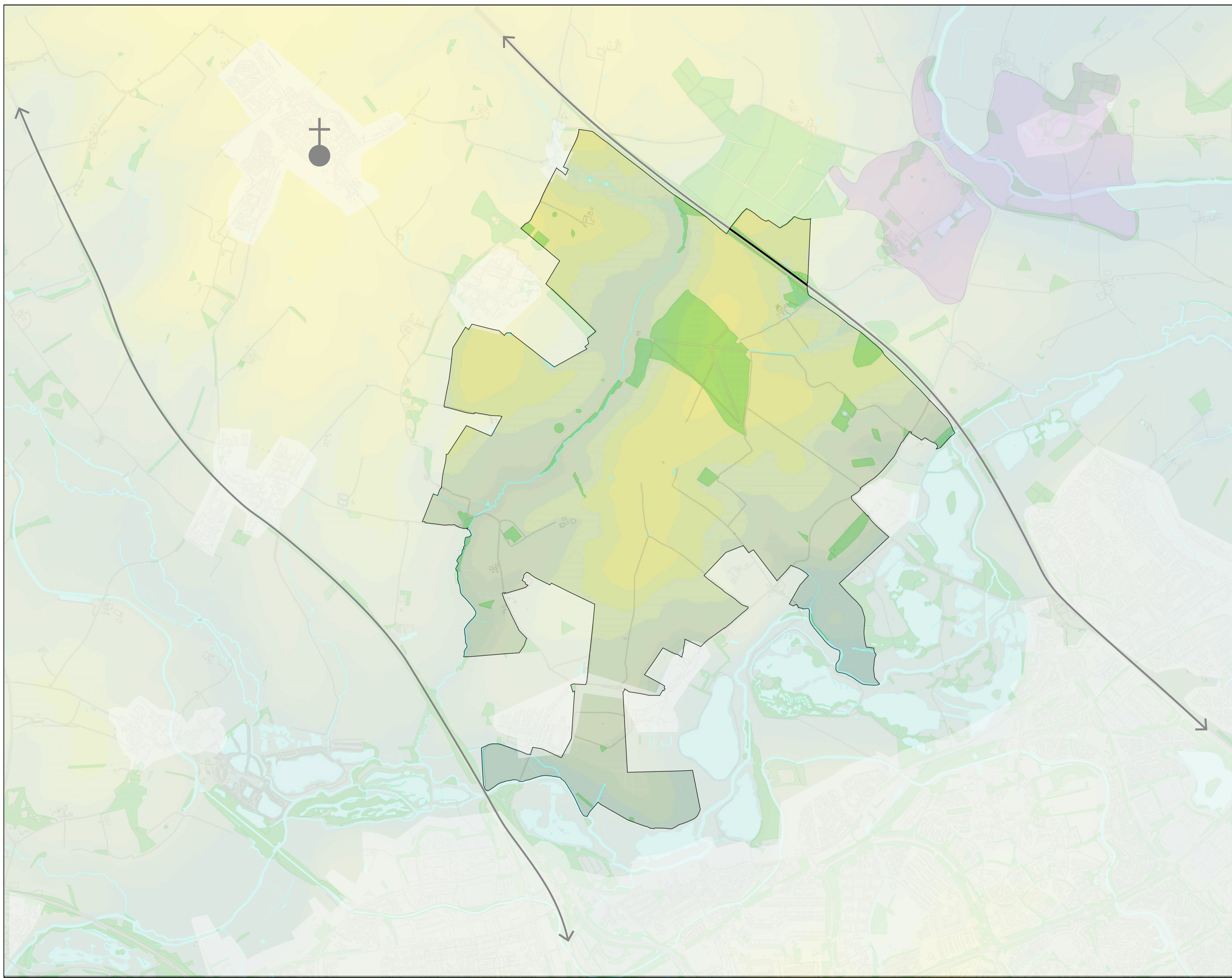
FIGURE 7
 Project
North Milton Keynes

Drawing Title
**Landscape and Visual
 Development Principles**

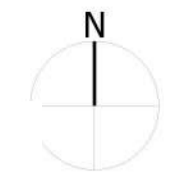
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Project No	Drawing No	Revision	
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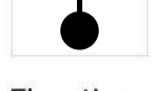

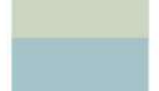




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LEGEND



-  Existing Woodlands, Copses and Tree Belts ^
-  Existing Water Courses and Features ^
-  Contours/Spot Heights (Metres AOD) ^
-  Milton Keynes framing infrastructure
-  Registered Parks and Gardens ~
-  Hanslope Church
- Elevation**
 -  High
 -  Medium
 -  Low
- Landscape and Visual opportunities and constraints**
 -  Proposed Structural Planting (indicative)

Sources:
^ GIS Mapping
Natural England GIS Data Set
~ Historic England National Monument Record GIS Data Set
+ County Councils' GIS Data Set / Definitive Map
+ Sustrans National Cycle Network GIS Data
++ Department of Transport Cycle Network Model
^^ Department for Communities and Local Government GIS Data
"District Councils" Interpolated from West Northamptonshire and Milton Keynes Council 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. Stantec shall not be liable for the accuracy of data derived from external sources.

FIGURE 7

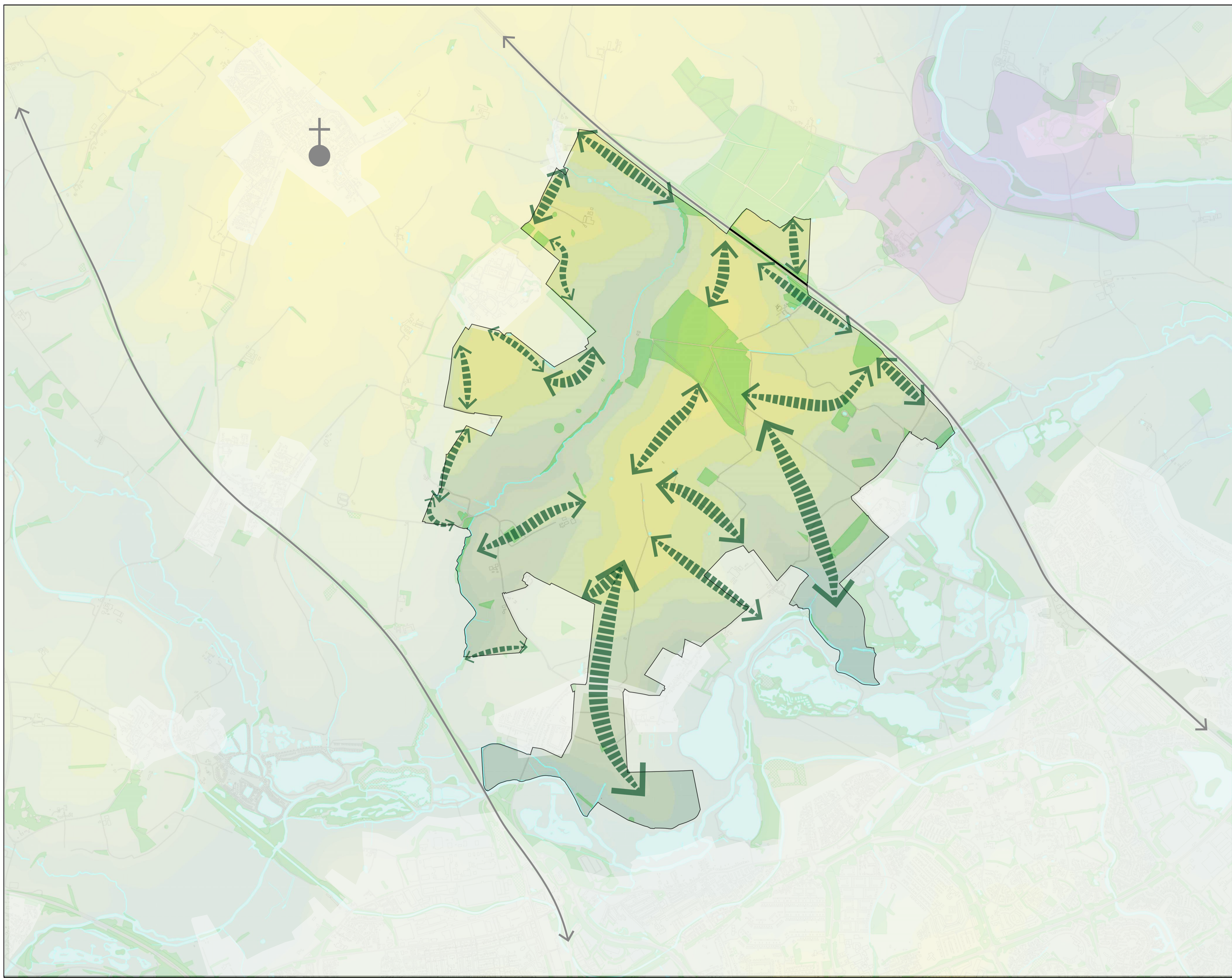
Project
North Milton Keynes

Drawing Title Landscape and Visual Development Principles

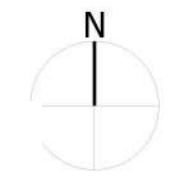
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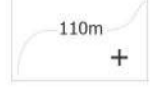


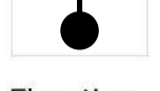

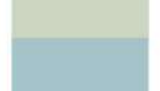





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LEGEND



-  Existing Woodlands, Copses and Tree Belts ^
-  Existing Water Courses and Features ^
-  Contours/Spot Heights (Metres AOD) ^
-  Milton Keynes framing infrastructure
-  Registered Parks and Gardens ~
-  Hanslope Church
- Elevation**
-  High
-  Medium
-  Low
- Landscape and Visual opportunities and constraints**
-  Proposed Structural Planting (indicative)
-  Proposed Wetland Corridors (indicative)

Sources:
 ^ GIS Mapping
 # Natural England GIS Data Set
 ~ Historic England National Monument Record GIS Data Set
 + County Councils' GIS Data Set / Definitive Map
 * Sustrans National Cycle Network GIS Data
 ++ Department of Transport Cycle Network Model
 ^^ Department for Communities and Local Government GIS Data
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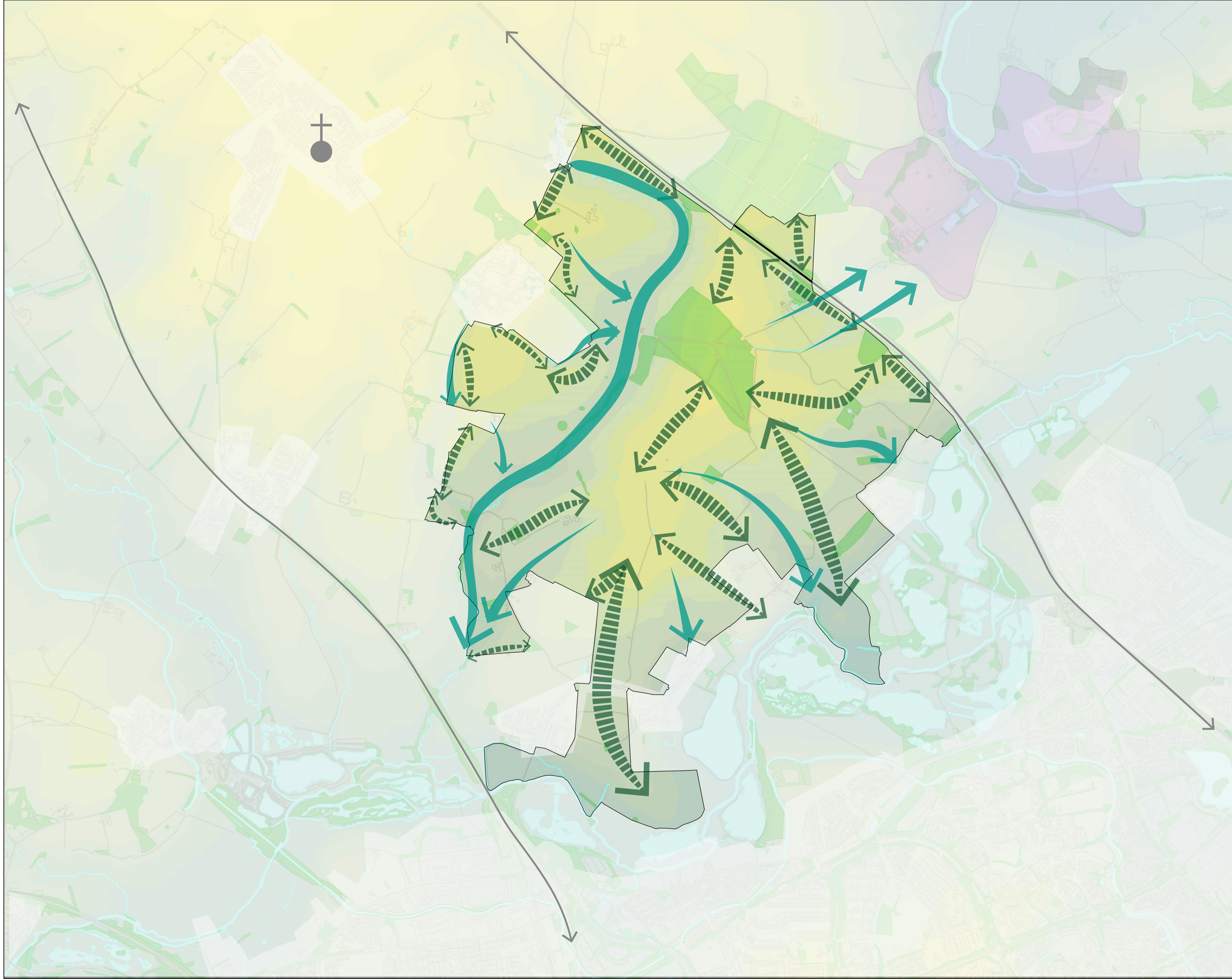


FIGURE 7
 Project
 North Milton Keynes

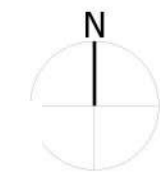
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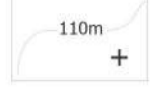


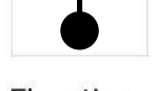






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LEGEND

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-  Key views

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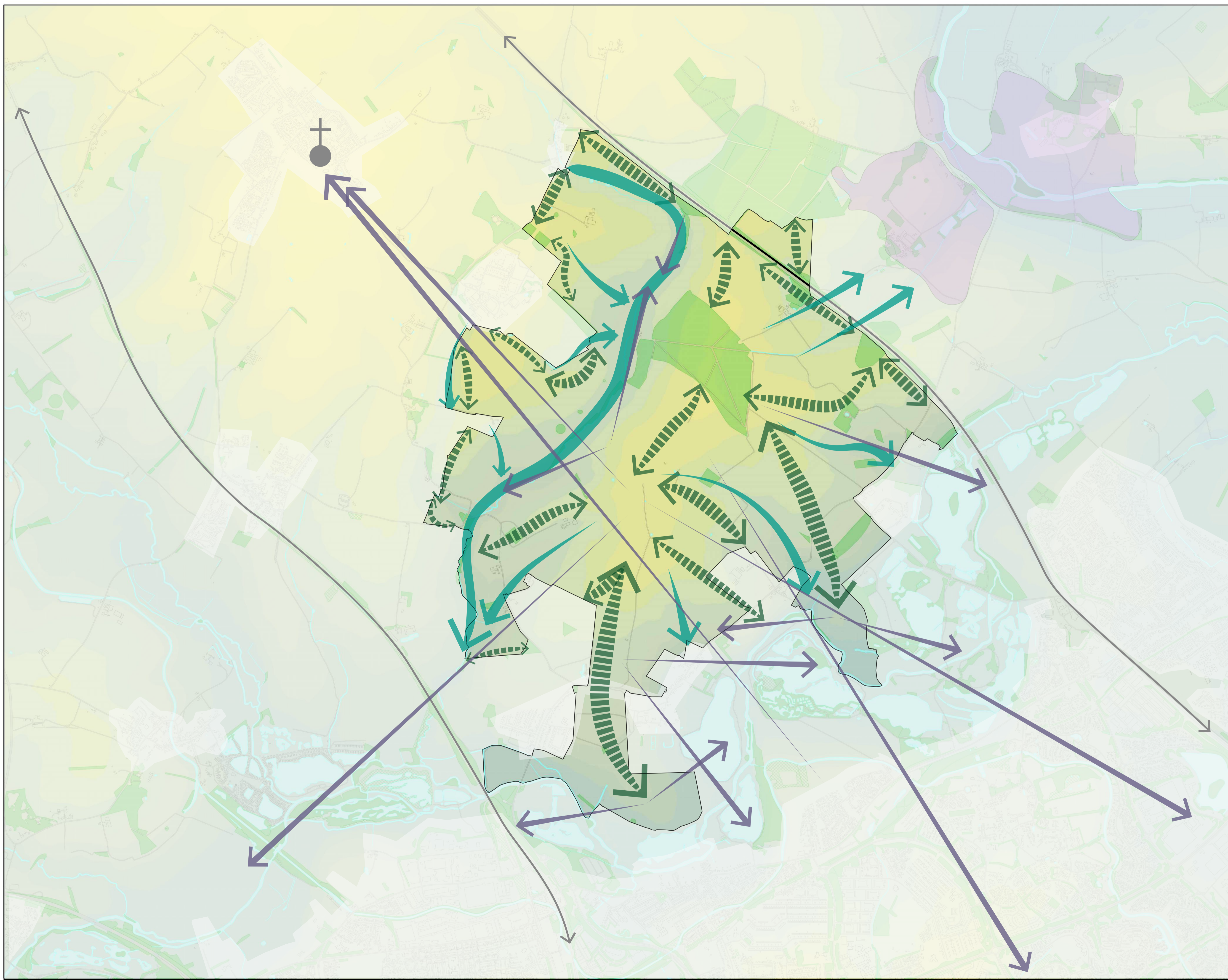


FIGURE 7
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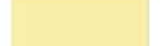
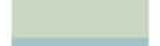







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-  Proposed Structural Planting (indicative)
-  Proposed Wetland Corridors (indicative)
-  Key views
-  Potential for locally characteristic landmark feature
-  Areas of particular landscape and visual sensitivity - development to be avoided
-  Potential location of new junction

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FIGURE 7
 Project
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Drawing Title
Landscape and Visual Development Principles

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DECEMBER
2025

MK City Plan 2050 Regulation 19 Consultation

Employment Land Issues and Opportunities

Iceni Projects Limited on behalf of
Urban&Civic PLC, Taylor Wimpey
Strategic Land and The Society of
Merchant Venturers

ICENI PROJECTS LIMITED
ON BEHALF OF
URBAN&CIVIC PLC, TAYLOR
WIMPEY STRATEGIC LAND
AND THE SOCIETY OF
MERCHANT VENTURERS

December 2025

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**MK City Plan 2050 Regulation 19
Consultation**
EMPLOYMENT LAND ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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1. HEADLINES

- 1.1 The NPPF clearly emphasises the importance of the **freight and logistics sector** and expects authorities to plan accordingly for needs.
- 1.2 The Milton Keynes Plan evidence on employment reports a combined industrial and warehousing land shortfall of 331 to 405ha. The emerging Plan identifies a further supply of 207.5ha of available supply however, assuming all of this is delivered, **there is still a resulting significant shortfall of 124h to 198ha** for the Plan.
- 1.3 Milton Keynes remains a priority area for industrial and logistics occupiers, being able to reach most of the UK within four hours, due to its strategic location on the M1. There is market preference for modern, high-quality space, with Grade A space. Recent increases in vacancy are supply driven rather than a lack of demand – with positive absorption anticipated.
- 1.4 North Milton Keynes New Town will deliver major infrastructure including a new M1 junction, at least 16,000 new homes and minimum of 460,000 sqm / 5msqft of new employment space. The proposal is uniquely placed to deliver transformational change that will fulfil the existing Milton Keynes employment requirements as part of a wider range benefits. North Milton Keynes creates a multi platform opportunity in the context of employment need:
- **Delivering a new M1 junction**, a nationally important infrastructure investment on the country's central highway corridor, and a prime location for attracting best in class employment occupiers across the industrial, logistics and tech / advance manufacturing sectors.
 - There is an interrelated benefit of the junction and employment land opportunity, with infrastructure delivery facilitating a new premium employment location (as well as wider new town) and in doing so helping to fund the junction itself. Allocating and delivering employment land therefore creates an **investment platform** for unlocking and delivering the road infrastructure, which also facilitates residential development. The nature of the build out and return on investment for the employment land provides early receipts to contribute to the motorway junction and unlock the wider new town opportunity.

-
- North Milton Keynes will deliver a significant amount of employment of at least 30 ha but potentially towards 100 ha or more, effectively largely fulfilling the employment shortfall in the Plan. The scale of the shortfall requires a strategic level site solution that has M1 access as other land options are now exhausted. The current supply in the Plan, particularly for strategic sites, will only last for the early part of the Plan. In reality, North Milton Keynes is the **only deliverable response to this shortfall** given it provides a new M1 junction opportunity.
 - The site is optimally located on the M1 accessing the strategic road network and national coverage serving the Midlands but also London population.
 - The scale and accessibility are suitable for a mix of employment types but will include national and regional distribution centres.
 - Delivering employment land creates an investment platform for delivering the road infrastructure to unlock residential development.
 - Residential proposals would supply a significant workforce to support the new employment as well as the growth of the existing Milton Keynes city, and it is acknowledged in the Plan evidence that more workforce is required to support growth. Equally, the North Milton Keynes New Town will also generate demand for further industrial and employment development.

2. POLICY & EVIDENCE REVIEW

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) December 2024

- 2.1 The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies and how these should be applied.
- 2.2 Para 86 emphasises that planning policies should 'pay particular regard to facilitating development to meet the **needs of a modern economy**, including by identifying suitable locations for uses such as laboratories, gigafactories, data centres, digital infrastructure, **freight and logistics.**'
- 2.3 Para 87: 'planning policies and decisions should recognise and address the specific locational requirements of different sectors. This includes making provision for:
- storage and distribution operations** at a variety of scales and in suitably accessible locations that allow for the efficient and reliable handling of goods, especially where this is needed to support the supply chain, transport innovation and decarbonisation;
- 2.4 Overall the NPPF clearly emphasises the importance of the freight and logistics sector and expects authorities to plan accordingly for needs.

South East Midlands Warehousing and Logistics Study 2022

- 2.5 This report was commissioned by the South East Midlands Local Economic Partnership and produced by Icen Projects. Amongst other objectives, this forecast scenarios for future demand and growth in the logistics sector in the South East Midlands (including Milton Keynes), to 2030, 2040 and 2050. Requirements were not broken down by authority area and it is of note that the work was produced mid COVID-19 pandemic.
- 2.6 Findings of relevance include:
- Around 13% of employment in Milton Keynes is in the logistics and related sectors (2020).
 - Milton Keynes has around 1m sqm of large scale (100,000 sqft+) warehousing, whereas North and West Northants have around 2m sqm each (2021).
 - The residual need for warehousing across the market area for 2021-2040 was 237 ha to 576 ha, with the higher end seeing a need for around 1m sqm of additional floorspace.

-
- There is a major restructuring underway as occupiers respond to e-commerce, automation and decarbonisation. The logistics sector is undergoing significant change leading to more skilled job opportunities and growing productivity.

Milton Keynes City Council: Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment 2024 and Update 2025

- 2.7 The 2025 HEDNA Update was prepared by Opinion Research Services (ORS) and Hardisty Jones Associates (HJA) and provides an update to the HEDNA 2024 in light of comments received, new data and the updated 2024 NPPF.
- 2.8 The report concludes that Milton Keynes FEMA is primarily focused on the local authority boundary of the district, however acknowledges strategic linkages to the South East Midlands region, London, Oxford, Cambridge and Birmingham.
- 2.9 Modelling of future needs is reliant on a labour demand models (Low, Medium High), translating forecasted jobs growth into floorspace requirements. Over the 2022-50 period, a jobs growth of 43,600 to 75,700 is forecast across the scenarios. Sensitivities involve:
- 10% margin for flexibility (applied to all models)
 - Replacement demand: baseline equivalent to 2% of stock per annum; high replacement scenario ran at 2.2% (reduced from 3% in HEDNA 2024)
 - On site redevelopment: High replacement scenario assumes 40% of requirement is delivered on existing sites
- 2.10 The modelled scenarios indicate a gross floorspace requirement of 430,000 to 480,000 sq.m and a net requirement ranging from 260,000 to 320,000 sq.m for general industrial (E(g)(iii)/B2), equating to 78 to 87ha.
- 2.11 The requirement for warehousing and logistics floorspace is considerably higher at a gross requirement of 2 million to 2.1 million sq.m and a net requirement of 1.2 million to 1.4 million sq.m, equating to 370 to 410ha.

Table 2.1 Gross and Net Future Estimated General Industrial Floorspace Requirements 2022-50 (sq.m) (Figure 27)

Note ¹²	Mid	High replacement	High on-site redevelopment	Combined sensitivity testing
(E) Gross requirement	430,000	480,000	430,000	480,000
Per annum (gross)	15,500	17,300	15,500	17,300
(G) Net requirement	290,000	320,000	260,000	290,000
Per annum (net)	10,400	11,600	9,300	10,400

Source: Milton Keynes HEDNA Update 2025

Table 2.2 Gross and Net Future Estimated Warehousing and Logistics Floorspace Requirements 2022-50 (sq.m) (Figure 28)

Note ¹³	Mid	High replacement	High on-site redevelopment	Combined sensitivity testing
(E) Gross requirement	2,000,000	2,100,000	2,000,000	2,100,000
Per annum (gross)	70,800	76,000	70,800	76,000
(G) Net requirement	1,300,000	1,400,000	1,200,000	1,300,000
Per annum (net)	47,000	51,000	42,000	46,000

Source: Milton Keynes HEDNA Update 2025

2.12 Analysis of supply indicates an industrial supply position of 108,800 sq.m and a warehousing supply of 324,400 sq.m. Deducting this from the net requirement shows an industrial shortfall of 51 to 65ha and a warehousing shortfall of 280 to 340ha. **Combined, there is an industrial and warehousing shortfall of 331 to 405ha.**

2.13 The report identifies a further supply of 207.5ha of available supply on allocations and proposed allocations as set out below. This includes the following commitments as set out in the Reg19 consultation Plan.

Table 2.3 MK City Plan 2050 employment land supply, September 2025

Location	Amount (hectares)	Permissible uses within Class E and Classes B2 and B8
Crownhill	1.4	Research and development and industrial processes, General industrial, storage or distribution and ancillary office floorspace.
Fox Milne	1	
Kiln Farm	2.3	
Knowhill	2.9	
Milton Keynes East	18	
West of London Road	68.1	
Land either side of Newport Road		
Walton	1.8	
Western Expansion Area	9	
Fairfields	6.5	
Whitehouse		
Wolverton	2.6	
Wolverton Mill East and South		
Blackhill & Harnett Drive	1.9	
Off Harnett Drive	1.2	
Elfield Park	6.8	Research and development and general industrial, storage or distribution and ancillary office floorspace
Pineham	10.9	General industrial, storage or distribution
South Caldecotte	23.6	
Linford Wood	1.4	Research and development and industrial processes and ancillary office floorspace
North of Rockingham Drive South & East of Rockingham Drive	1.3	
Shenley Wood	3.7	Research and development, industrial processes, general industrial, storage or distribution,
		training centre, provision of education, ancillary office floorspace
Snelshall West	3.1	Research and development and industrial processes, general industrial, storage or distribution and ancillary office floorspace.
Eastern Strategic City Extension	40	Research and development, industrial processes and ancillary office floorspace, Storage or distribution.
Total	207.5	

MK City Plan 2050 FINAL VERSION (Regulation 19) (Table 4)

2.14 However, assuming all of this supply is delivered, there is still a resulting significant shortfall of 124 to 198ha for the proposed Plan.

2.15 It is of note that strategic sites are limited to the following:

- Milton Keynes East 86.1 ha
- Eastern Strategic City Extension 40 ha

-
- South Caldecotte (although not direct access to the M1) 23.6 ha
 - Pineham 10.9 ha

2.16 There are a number of additional key points to consider resulting from the HEDNA:

- Milton Keynes **does not have enough labour supply** to support jobs growth – the HEDNA 2025 (para 101) states that the “LHN [Local Housing Need] jobs scenario is above the lower end of the range of scenarios considered, but well below the upper end of the range. In order to achieve the upper end of the MK 2050 job ambition would require additional workforce, either through adjustments to commuting patterns, increasing economic activity rates, or supporting **additional growth in the local working age population**.
- Whilst acknowledging the above, IcenI considers that the employment scenarios may also see a further uplift from an expanded population. For example, independent IcenI research¹ finds that in new towns generally, there is a relationship of 21sqm of commercial development per dwelling of which 82% or 17 sqm is industrial. Another New Town at North Milton Keynes of 10,000 homes (for example) could lead to demand for a further 168,000 sqm or 1.9m sqft of employment land in the long term.

¹ https://issuu.com/jamesbompas/docs/ild_research_2025?fr=sNmViNzg4MDQ4NzQ

3. COMMERCIAL MARKET REVIEW

- 3.1 The following section considers the industrial market dynamics for Milton Keynes and beyond, considering both the local (<9,300 sq.m) and strategic unit (+9,300 sq.m) markets.

UK Industrial Market Overview

- 3.2 The UK national logistics market in 2025 shows rising supply and vacancy rates stabilising at a higher rate than previous years, but demand remaining robust, driven by e-commerce, near-shoring, and sustainability needs, with occupiers seeking modern, efficient Grade A space, with the market shifting from pandemic-driven expansion to optimization. Key trends include high demand for large units, automation investment by retailers, and a flight to quality space, alongside challenges from rising costs and skills gaps.
- 3.3 Demand is being supported by the return of larger leasing deals, particularly from third-party logistics providers and expanding retailers. The defence sector represents a growing demand driver. Around 3m sq.ft has been committed to by defence related occupiers in 2025. Appetite from Chinese firms has also surged in recent months from the likes of JD.com, Super Smart Service and Top Cloud Logistics.

South East / East Midlands Industrial Overview

- 3.4 Milton Keynes sits between the East Midlands and the South East logistics property markets, in a prime location to serve both markets, as technically it falls under the wider South East region.
- 3.5 Savills² reported in July 2025, that in London and South East, requirements data shows an upward trend. Take-up of logistics units in the first half of 2025 totalled 1.4 million sq.ft, of which nearly 60% of space was Grade A speculative development, with a further 33% second-hand Grade A space, reinforcing an occupier preference for best-in-class assets.
- 3.6 In the East Midlands, it is reported³ that the region remains the bedrock of transactional activity across the UK, with 3.4 million sq.ft leased in the first half of 2025. The development

² https://www.savills.co.uk/research_articles/229130/378748-0

³ https://www.savills.co.uk/research_articles/229130/378749-0

pipeline has decreased by 93% over the past 12 months following the completion of speculative units.

- 3.7 Knight Frank⁴ report that following a slower start to the year, the Midlands industrial and logistics market saw a sharp rebound in Q3 2025, with take-up reaching 5.2 million sq.ft, the strongest quarterly take-up since Q3 2022. This demand was driven by several large-scale lettings amid continued demand from distribution and retail occupiers.

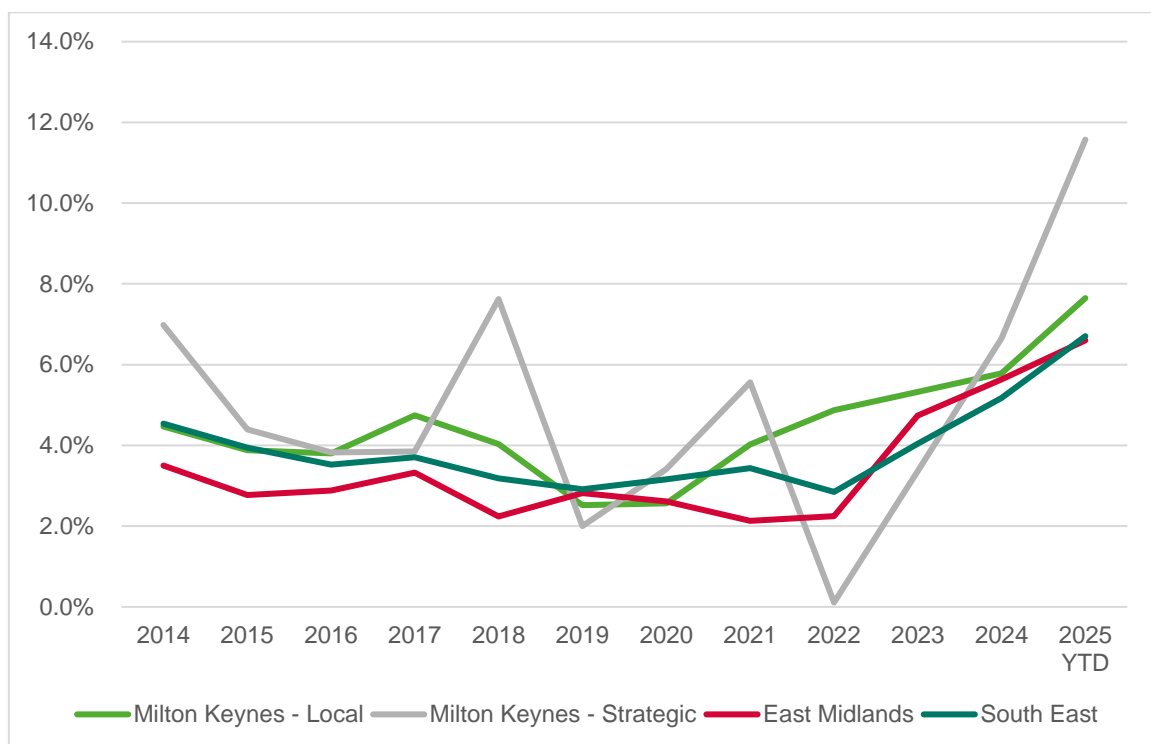
Milton Keynes Industrial Market

- 3.8 The following section provides analysis for both the small and mid-box (local) and the strategic ('big-box' +9,300 sq.m/100,000 sq.ft) unit market.
- 3.9 CoStar reports that Milton Keynes stands out as a compact but nationally significant industrial hub. Whilst vacancy rates are high at 10%, this is largely a function of recent completions rather than a collapse in occupier appetite. The area's strategic locations enabling access to most of the UK within 4 hours continues to underpin its appeal.
- 3.10 Recent lettings suggest the influx of new supply will be digested well. In 2025, JD.com, the Chinese equivalent of Amazon, took 530,000 sq.ft across two buildings at PLP Milton Keynes. MK220 and MK330 were developed in 2023 and 2024 in response to unmet demand for prime logistics space in the area.
- 3.11 Leasing activity has surpassed 1.5 million sq.ft in the year to Q3 2025. This marks a return to the demand levels seen when the UK was in lockdown. The market only needs a handful of large deals to bring about a meaningful decline in availability.
- 3.12 The defence as well as automotive sector and its supply chain likely represent a growing source of demand. Industry forecasts expect the number of electric vehicles on UK roads to swell 10-fold in the next decade, supporting demand from carmakers and battery technology specialists.

⁴ <https://www.knightfrank.co.uk/site-assets/research/report-pdfs/logic/q3-2025-midlands-industrial.pdf>

- 3.13 The figure below shows the vacancy rates for local and strategic industrial units in Milton Keynes and the South East and East Midlands. Historically, vacancy rates for local industrial stock Milton Keynes have been low, below 5% for much of the past decade, only recently rising to 7.6%.
- 3.14 Vacancy rates for strategic industrial units (over 9,300 sq.m / 100,000 sq.ft) have been more volatile, representing the delivery of schemes and subsequent take-up of units. Vacancy for such units plummeted to 0.1% in 2022 but has since risen to 11.6%. This is considered to be temporary, following the completion of two large units (MK345 and MK450) at Pannattoni Park – once these are occupied vacancy would fall to 7.9%.
- 3.15 The rise in vacancy rates since 2022 is in line with regional drivers, as a result of an injection of supply following a period high market demand during the pandemic outstripping supply.

Figure 3.1 Benchmark Industrial Vacancy Rates

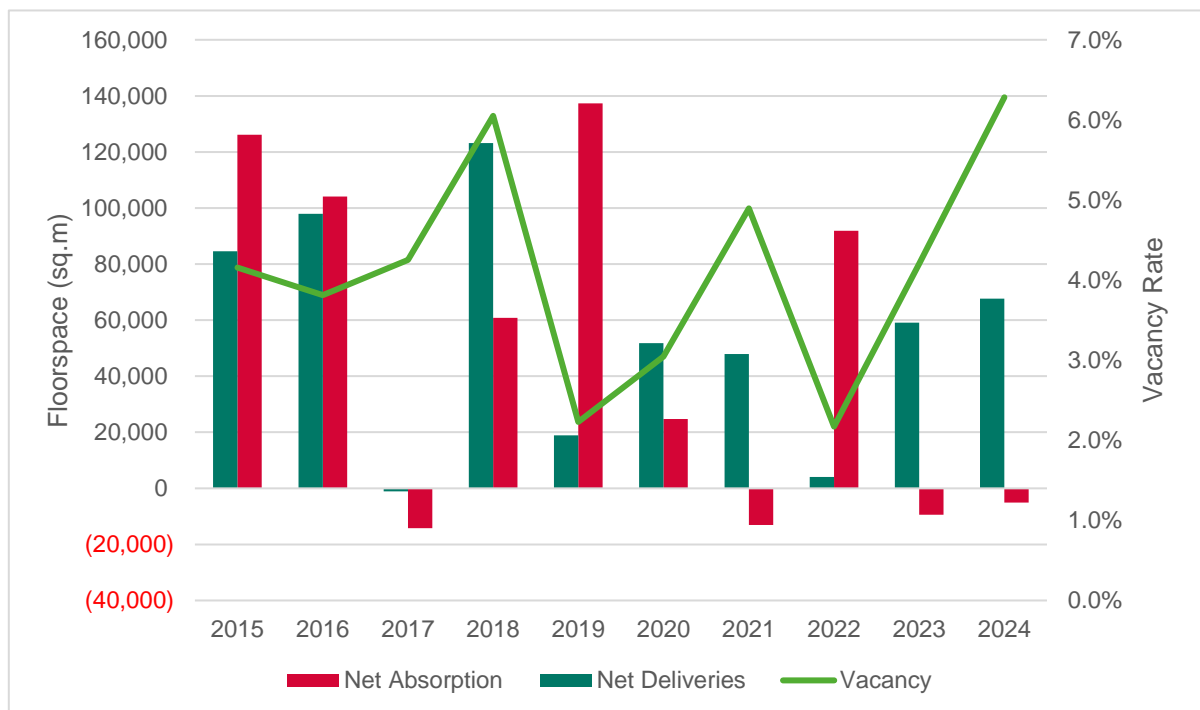


Source: Icen analysis of CoStar (September 2025)

- 3.16 The figure below shows the net absorption (total space occupied) and delivery rate for industrial units against the vacancy rate in Milton Keynes over the past decade. Years of significant delivery are typically of high take-up, indicating a normal lag in leasing activity.

- 3.17 Net absorption reached a high in 2019 at 137,000 sq.m, following the delivery of 123,200 sq.m of floorspace in 2018. A similar trend occurred in 2022 following two years of delivery 2020-21. This supports the case that although net absorption has been negative for the past two years, it is expected the market will absorb this newly delivered space going forward.
- 3.18 Over the past decade, net absorption of floorspace has been on average 55,300 sq.m per annum or around 500,000 sq.ft. This average rose to 74,300 sq.m over the 2018 to 2020 period.

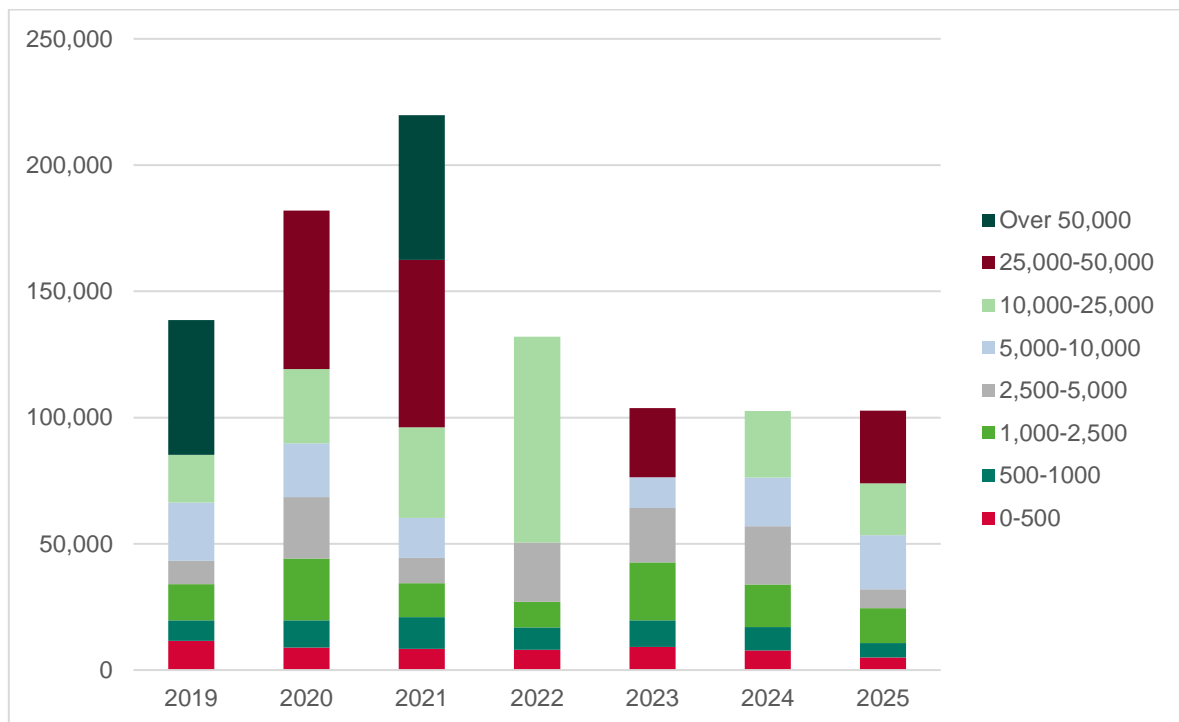
Figure 3.2 Milton Keynes Industrial Market - Net Absorption, Net Deliveries and Vacancy Rate (sq.m)



Source: CoStar (2025)

- 3.19 The figure below shows the industrial leasing activity in Milton Keynes by unit size. On average, since 2019, 140,200 sq.m has been leased per annum (gross absorption). Around 52% of floorspace leased has been within strategic units (+10,000 sq.m), an average of 72,700 sq.m per annum.

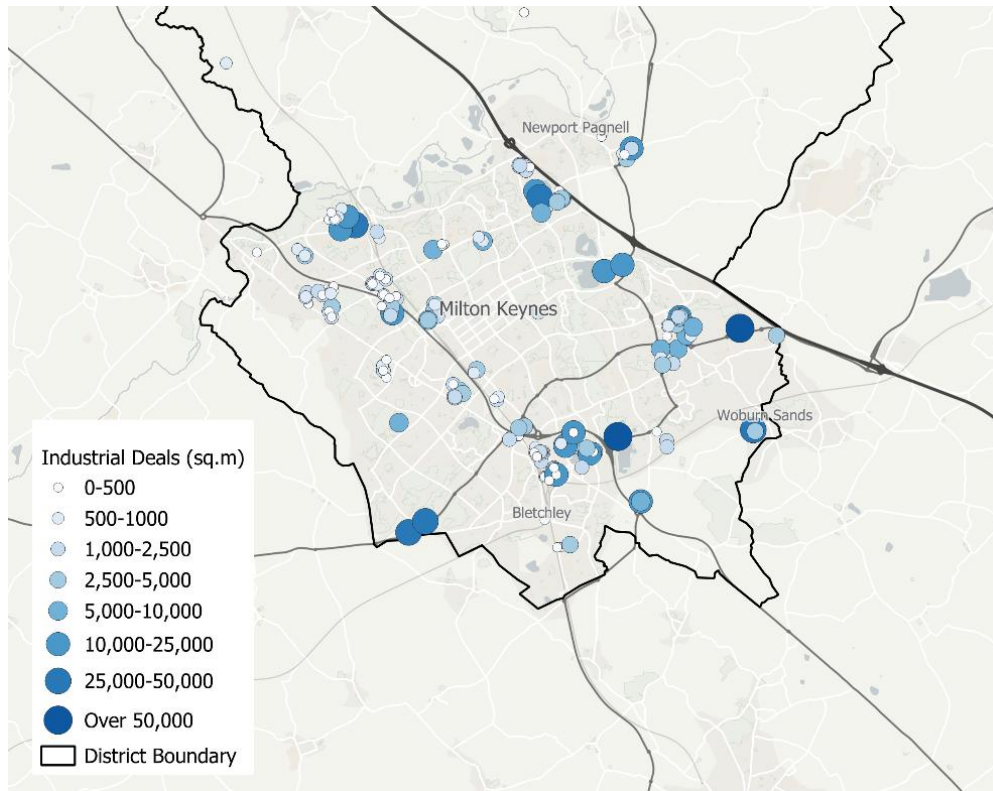
Figure 3.3 Industrial Leasing Activity by Size Band 2019-25 YTD (sq.m)



Source: CoStar 2025

3.20 The figure below shows the spatial distribution of industrial and warehousing deals across Milton Keynes since 2019. There is a clustering of larger unit deals along the M1 corridor, in particular over 10,000 sq.m units, indicating larger occupiers preference for strategic road accessibility, providing access to the Midlands and London.

Figure 3.3 Industrial Deals by Size Band 2019-25 YTD



Source: CoStar 2025

3.21 The table below shows the availability of industrial stock by size band. There is 378,700 sq.m of available floorspace within strategic units (+10,000 sq.m), however based on average leasing activity discussed above, this is only equivalent to 5.2 years' worth of supply.

Table 3.1 Milton Keynes Availability by Size Band (sq.m) (Dec 2025)

Size Band	Floorspace (sq.m)	No. of Properties
0-500 sq.m	12,058	48
500-1000 sq.m	13,730	19
1,000-2,500 sq.m	29,177	21
2,500-5,000 sq.m	39,074	10
5,000-10,000 sq.m	66,212	10
10,000-25,000 sq.m	191,786	13
25,000-50,000 sq.m	102,922	3
Over 50,000 sq.m	83,984	1
Total	538,942	125

Source: CoStar, December 2025

Conclusions

- There is market preference for modern, high-quality space, with Grade A space driving 80% take-up in the South East;
- Milton Keynes' ability to reach most of the UK within four hours, due to its strategic location on the M1, underpins persistent demand from regional and national operators;
- Historically Milton Keynes has seen a tight industrial market with vacancy rates below 5%, highlighting a long-term undersupply. Recent increases in vacancy are supply-driven rather than a lack of demand – attributed to recent completions of strategic units;
- On average 140,000 sq.m of industrial space is leased per annum, indicating that there is only 5.2 years of supply based on currently availability.

4. NORTH MILTON KEYNES – THE OPPORTUNITY

4.1 North Milton Keynes New Town will deliver major infrastructure including a new M1 junction, at least 16,000 new homes and minimum of 460,000 sqm / 5msqft of new employment space. The proposal is uniquely placed to deliver transformational change that will fulfil the existing Milton Keynes employment requirements as part of a wider range benefits.

4.2 This section considers how North Milton Keynes creates a multi platform opportunity in the context of employment need:

- Delivering a new M1 junction, a nationally significant infrastructure investment on the country's central highway corridor, and a prime location for attracting best in class employment occupiers across the industrial, logistics and tech / advance manufacturing sectors.
- Providing a significant amount of employment of at least 30 ha but potentially towards 100 ha or more, effectively largely fulfilling the employment shortfall in the Plan and ensuring new strategic supply for the medium term.
- The M1 access to the strategic road network providing national coverage serving the Midlands - but also the London population.
- The scale and accessibility are suitable for a mix of employment types but will include national and regional distribution centres.
- Delivering employment land creates an investment platform for delivering the road infrastructure to unlock residential development.
- Residential proposals would supply a significant workforce to support the new employment as well as the growth of the existing Milton Keynes city.

Considering the scale of the employment shortfall

4.3 As set out in the Milton Keynes EDNA 2025, there is an **industrial and warehousing shortfall of 331 to 405ha**. The emerging Plan identifies a further supply of 207.5ha of available supply on allocations and proposed allocations, as set out in Table 4 of the MK City Plan 2050. Of the supply, only a limited number are larger scale proposals over 10ha, and have access to the strategic road network, being:

Milton Keynes East - West of London Road, Land either side of Newport Road: 18 & 68.1 ha (86ha)- industrial / logistics developers Stoford were recently appointed to bring forward a large element of the site at J14 M1 and advertise a delivery time of 18 months⁵.

- South Caldecotte: 23.6 ha. Strategic Employment Allocation primarily access onto the A5 rather than M1. Phase 1 has been delivered by PLP. The remainder of the site has outline permission and is being advertised as a design and build opportunity.
- Eastern Strategic City Extension 40 ha - Draft strategic allocation policy states the employment element has a 'focus upon the provision of small to medium scale business premises to support SMEs and start-ups associated with R&D and professional services'.
- Pineham 10.9 ha - allocation rolled forward from the previous plan and owned by the City Council, some uncertainty regarding delivery.

4.4 Assuming all of the Plan supply is delivered, there is still a resulting significant shortfall of 124ha to 198ha for the proposed Plan. North Milton Keynes can fulfil this shortfall providing a range of employment types including industrial and logistics.

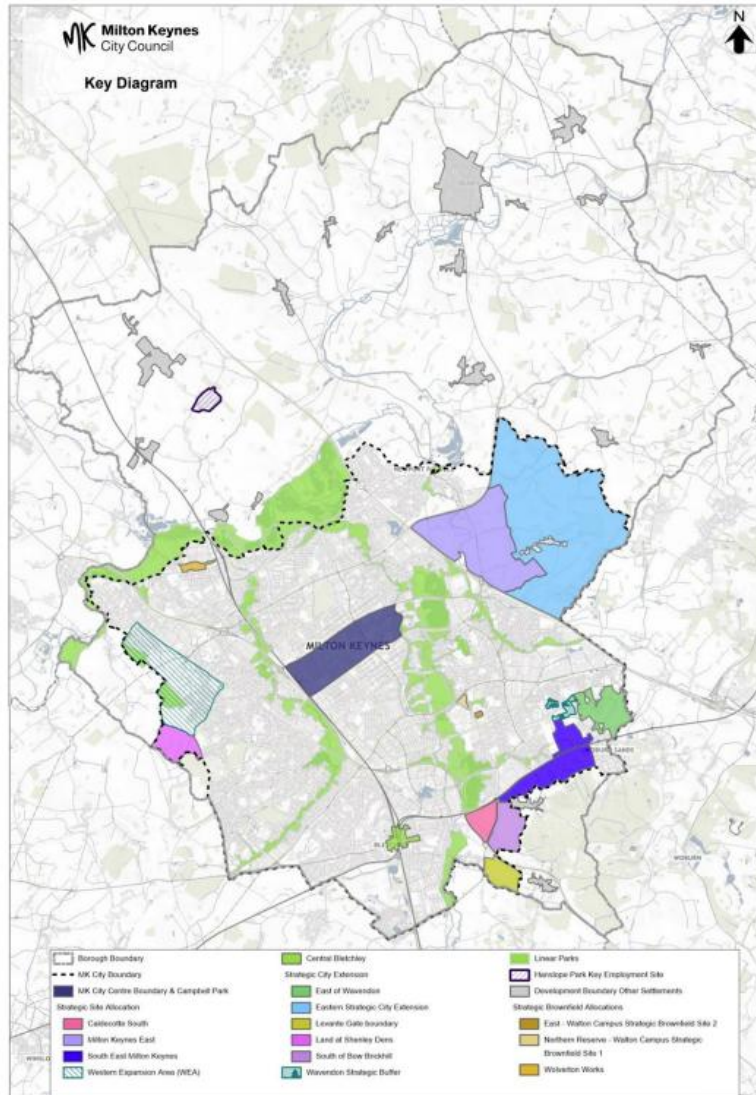
4.5 Given the advanced status of the Milton Keynes East and South Caldecotte sites, a significant quantum of industrial and warehousing development is likely to come forward in the short-term at the front end of the Plan period. Based on the 5 year annual average gross absorption (leasing activity) of 140,200 sqm or around 40ha per annum, of which around half for the largest units, the first 110 ha of sites at Milton Keynes East and South Caldecotte could be taken up within 3-5 years of completion, with the entirety of the 207.5ha supply absorbed by the market within around 5 years based on gross absorption or 10-15 years based on the most conservative net absorption rate. It is clear that the Plan lacks supply to 2050 and that for strategic scale sites these are likely to be exhausted by 2030-35 at the latest.

4.6 The map below shows the allocations in the regulation 19 Plan. Allocations are now maximising the City boundary, particularly on the M1. Effectively the Milton Keynes East employment area has captured the remaining land for strategic employment based on the existing infrastructure arrangement. Given the scale of the shortfall in need, it will be very

⁵ <https://stoford.com/availability/view/milton-keynes-east/>

challenging for the authority to meet its requirements without major infrastructure investment – **which is the solution offered by North Milton Keynes.**

Figure 4.1 Draft MK City Plan 2050 Plan Key Diagram

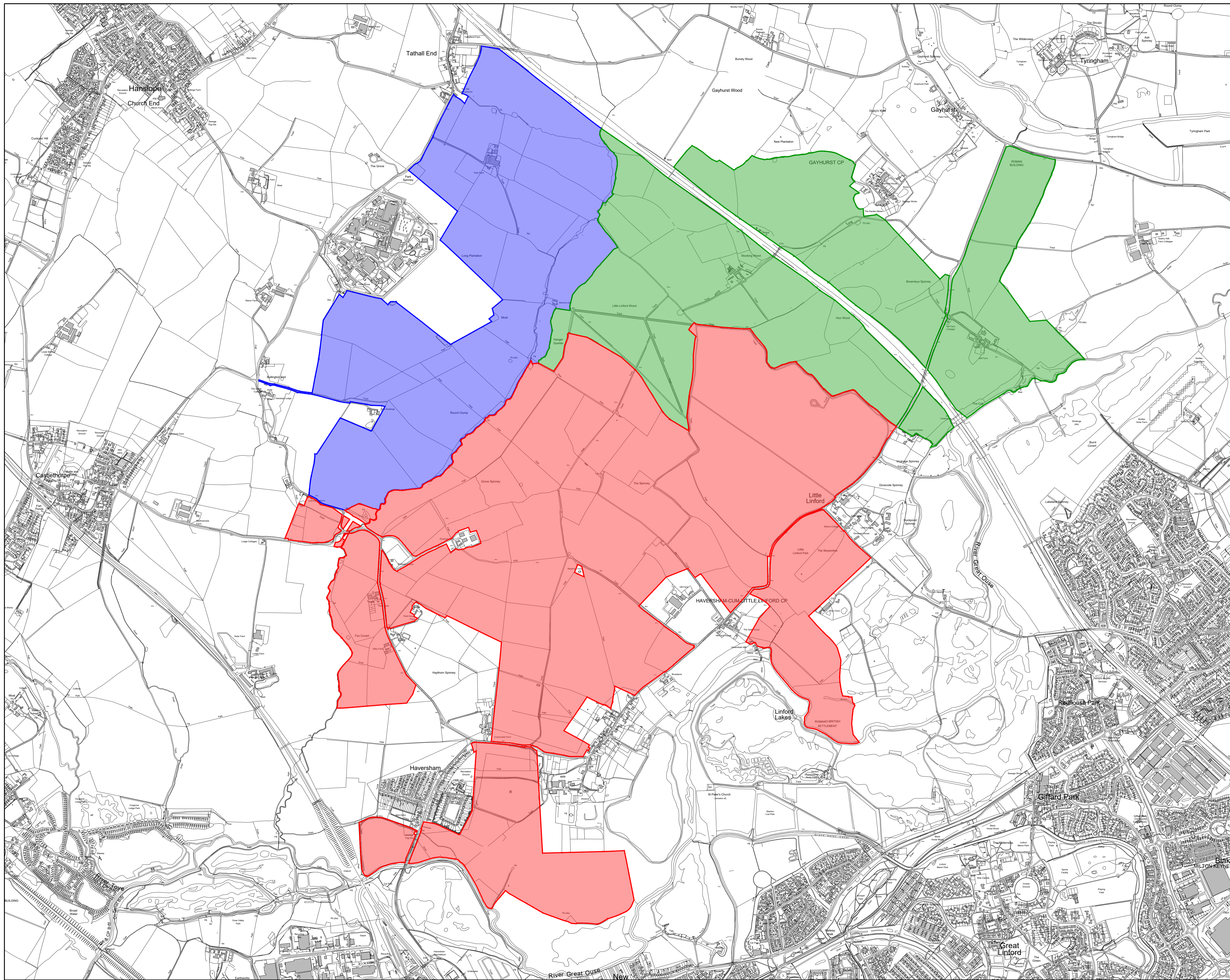


Considering the case for North Milton Keynes

- 4.7 **Delivering a new M1 junction**, which would be nationally significant infrastructure investment on the country's central highway corridor. There is an interrelated benefit of the junction and employment land opportunity, infrastructure facilitating a new premium employment location (as well as wider new town) and in doing so helping to fund the junction. Allocating and delivering employment land creates an **investment platform** for unlocking and delivering the road infrastructure to facilitate residential development. The nature of the build out and return on investment for the employment land provides early receipts to contribute to the motorway junction and unlock the wider new town opportunity.

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- 4.8 **Delivering the employment:** ongoing capacity work is testing the scale of the North Milton Keynes site employment offer which is at least 30 ha but potentially towards 100 ha or more, effectively largely fulfilling the employment shortfall in the Plan. As set out in the SEMLEP Logistics Study, motorway junctions are prime locations for attracting best in class occupiers across the logistics and other industrial related sectors. The employment floorspace would not solely be targeted at industrial and logistics but this does form an important element of proposals that maximise the utilisation of the proposed motorway junction. It is clear that the Plan does not have a long term supply of strategic floorspace which North Milton Keynes can fulfil.
- 4.9 The site is **optimally located on the M1** accessing the strategic road network (SRN) and national coverage serving the Midlands but also London population. The current Milton Keynes East site will deliver and potentially be absorbed in the first five years of the plan creating a supply gap in later years, which North Milton Keynes can fulfil. For logistics, access to the SRN is a key site attribute alongside others which this site provides including separation from sensitive uses and access to labour.
- 4.10 The scale and accessibility of the site is suitable for a **mix of employment types** but will include national and regional distribution centres. Milton Keynes East could provide a good initial strategic supply for the first part of the Plan but a further major opportunity is required to fulfil the whole Plan requirement. Larger units would take advantage of the SRN access but the whole New Town provides an opportunity for mixed employment types to support the wider science and technology sector in Milton Keynes and the wider South Midlands and Oxford to Cambridge Corridor.
- 4.11 New town residents would supply a **significant workforce** to support the new employment as well as the growth of the existing Milton Keynes city – since it is acknowledged that higher level growth ambitious cannot be supported by the current housing allocations alone. The North Milton Keynes New Town will also create additional demand for employment, including industrial, that its employment component can respond to. A mix of employment types creates a sustainable community offering diverse roles, skills and occupation requirements. As set out in the SEMLEP logistics study, the industrial and warehouse workforce has strongly transitioned towards more technical roles in recent years, alongside other industry trends including decarbonisation.

- Urban&Civic Land Boundary
(534.52Ha / 1320.82Ac)
- Taylor Wimpey Land Boundary
(221.14Ha / 546.44Ac)
- Society of Merchant Venturers' Land Boundary
(286.47Ha / 707.88Ac)



Project
**NORTH MILTON KEYNES
 SITE PROMOTIONS**

Drawing Title
**TW, U&C & SOMV LAND CONTROL
 PLAN**

Date 06.08.24 Scale 1:10,000@A1 Drawn by J.W. Check by N.T.
 Project No 333101403 Drawing No RG-M-01 Revision A



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