Landscape Masterplan
Existing landscape & visual setting

… developing a coherent LVIA strategy

2

1

Protecting the lane/landscape setting
– views to & from the north

3

4

Protecting the lane/landscape setting
– views north/east

8

Protecting the lane/landscape setting
– views along lane to west & Crouchlands Farm

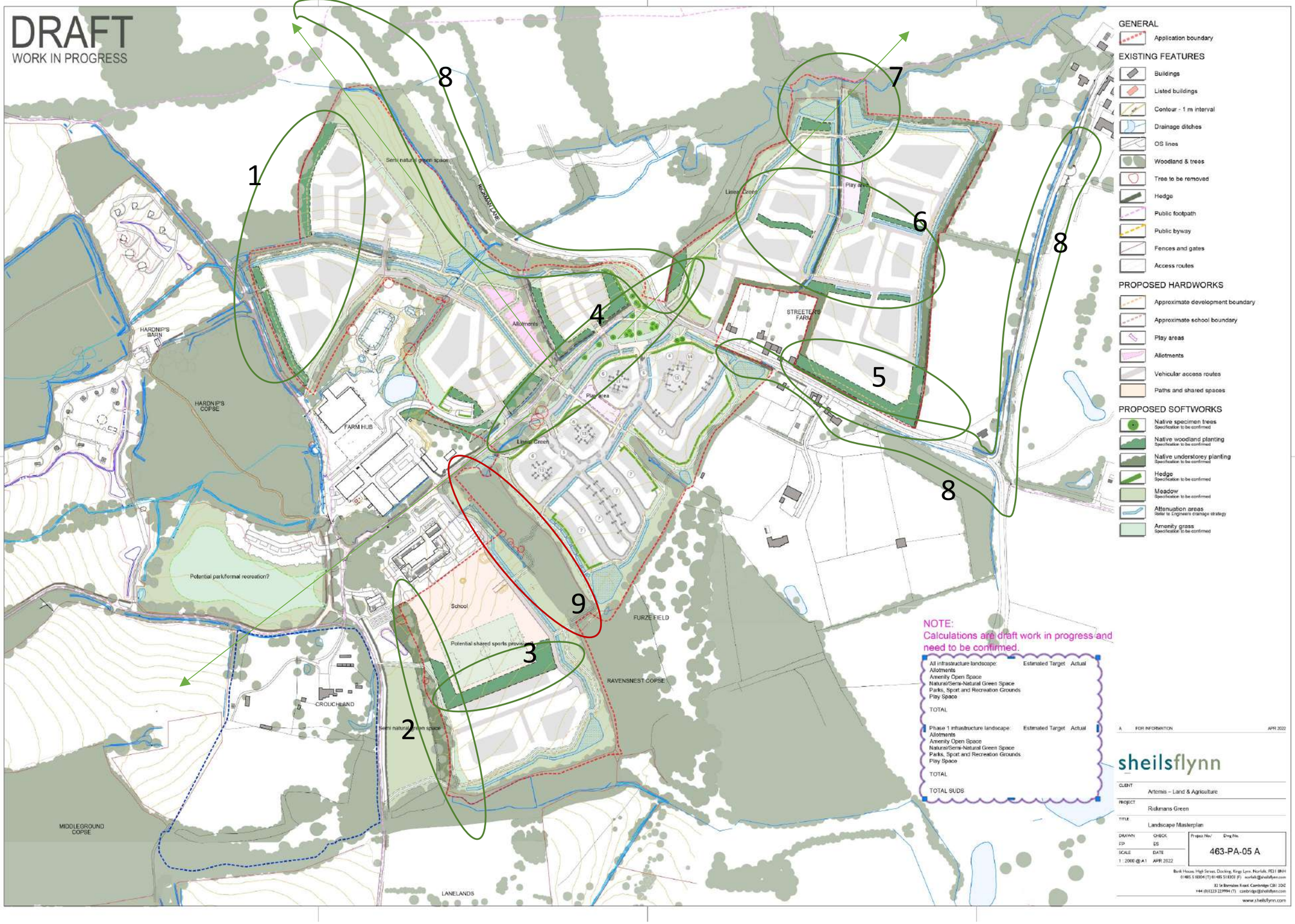
7

6

Protecting Rickman's Lane – Horizon Views

RICKMANS GREEN WIDER LANDSCAPE MASTERPLAN – responding of the existing landscape and visual setting

SK 01 - Sheils Flynn Ltd – 05/10/21



Landscape Masterplan Application Extent

… developing a coherent LVIA strategy

… initial mitigation thoughts

1 – 15 to 20m wide screening boundary woodlands. Mitigating impacts on recreational users of footpaths and glamping site.

2 – understorey planting to existing trees . Mitigating impacts on recreational users of the footpaths.

3 – internal woodland belts (referencing historic lost) breaking up development scale in horizon impacts and linking existing tree groups.

4 – linear village green. This will be a very high impact area impacting significantly on recreational users of the footpaths and existing landscape qualities. Can we reduce impacts by making sure development is fronting positively from the south but more enclosed, by woodland planting, to the north.
Preserve long view corridors.

5 – 15-20m wide screening boundary woodland. Mitigating impacts in longer views from the south and from Rickman's Lane.

6 – where opportunities allow create internal connecting corridors of native vegetation/trees in order to break up the scale of the overall development and reduce skyline impacts in longer views.

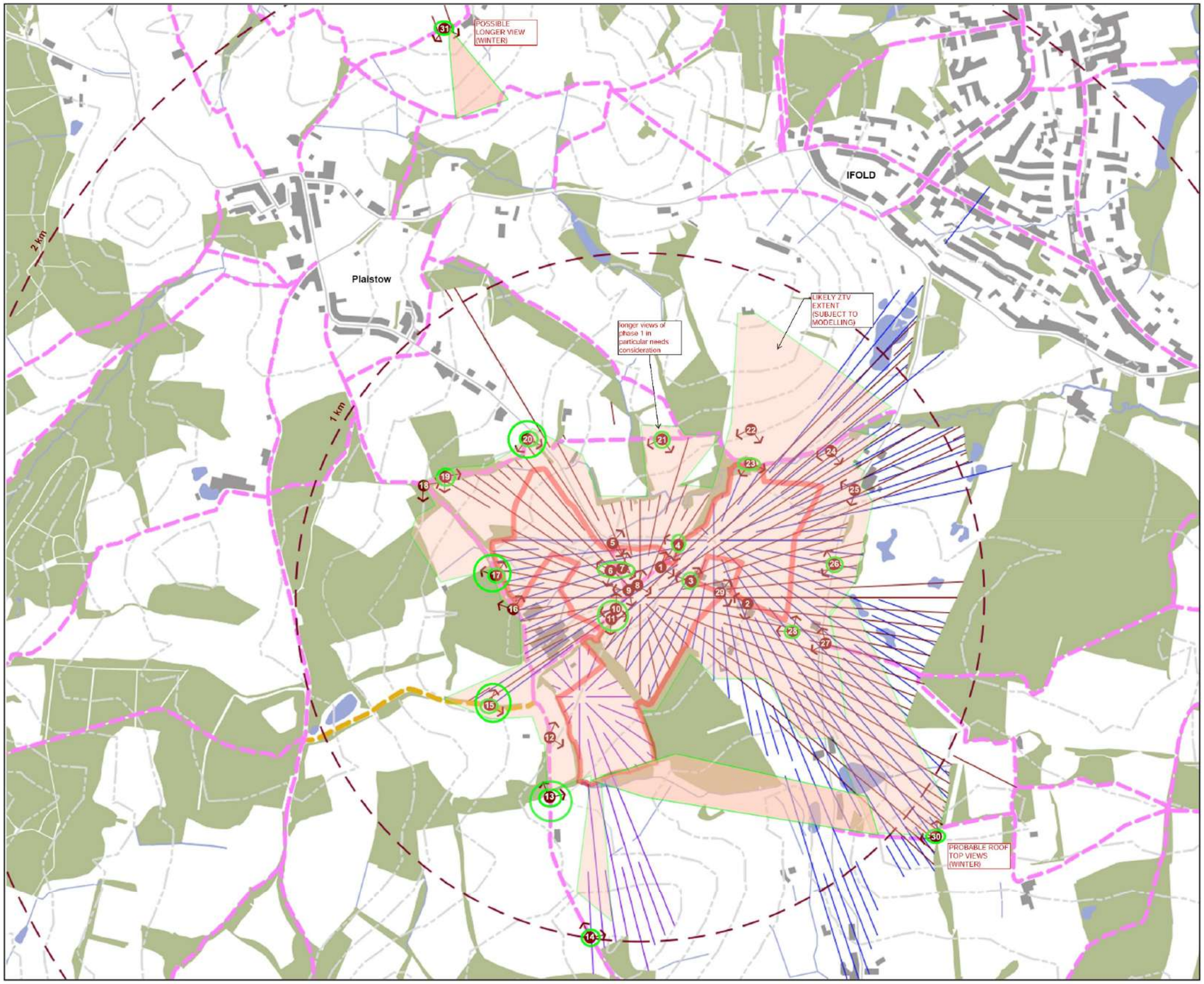
7 – set back development with woodland groups. Mitigating impacts on recreational users of the footpath which is in close proximity to the north.

8 – protect the character of the lanes.

9 – how do we protect this finger of ancient woodland as it will come under pressure

Scoping the LVIA view points and extent of ZTV

... site visit 19th May 2022



Site boundary

Water bodies

Woodland

Public footpath

Public byway

Promoted route

South Downs National Park

Zone of Theoretical Visibilty (ZTV) in the central area of the Site

Zone of Theoretical Visibilty (ZTV) in the northeast area of the Site

Zone of Theoretical Visibilty (ZTV) in the southwest area of the Site

Scoping viewpoints

Likely Final ZTV view points

Likely views with whole farm development cumulative impact (excluding the access road)

This Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) has been generated using specialist computer software and is set at 1.6 m height visibility above ground level.

This ZTV spin point height is positioned at the highest point of the proposed buildings in the central area of the Site and has been modeled using a target point on the top of the roof of the building (53.5 mAOD)

This ZTV spin point height is positioned at the highest point of the proposed buildings in the northeast area of the Site and has been modeled using a target point on the top of the roof of the building (49.5 mAOD)

This ZTV spin point height is positioned at the highest point of the proposed buildings in the southwest area of the Site and has been modeled using a target point on the top of the roof of the building (53.5 mAOD)

This ZTV considers the screening effect of existing woodland within a 10 km radius from spin point (approx. 15 m height)

0 250 500 M 1,000

Rickmans Green, Billinghurst

sheilsflynn

Figure 6-5 Zone of Theoretical Visibilty (ZTV)

494-FS-6-5

Landscape Masterplan - Mitigation Update

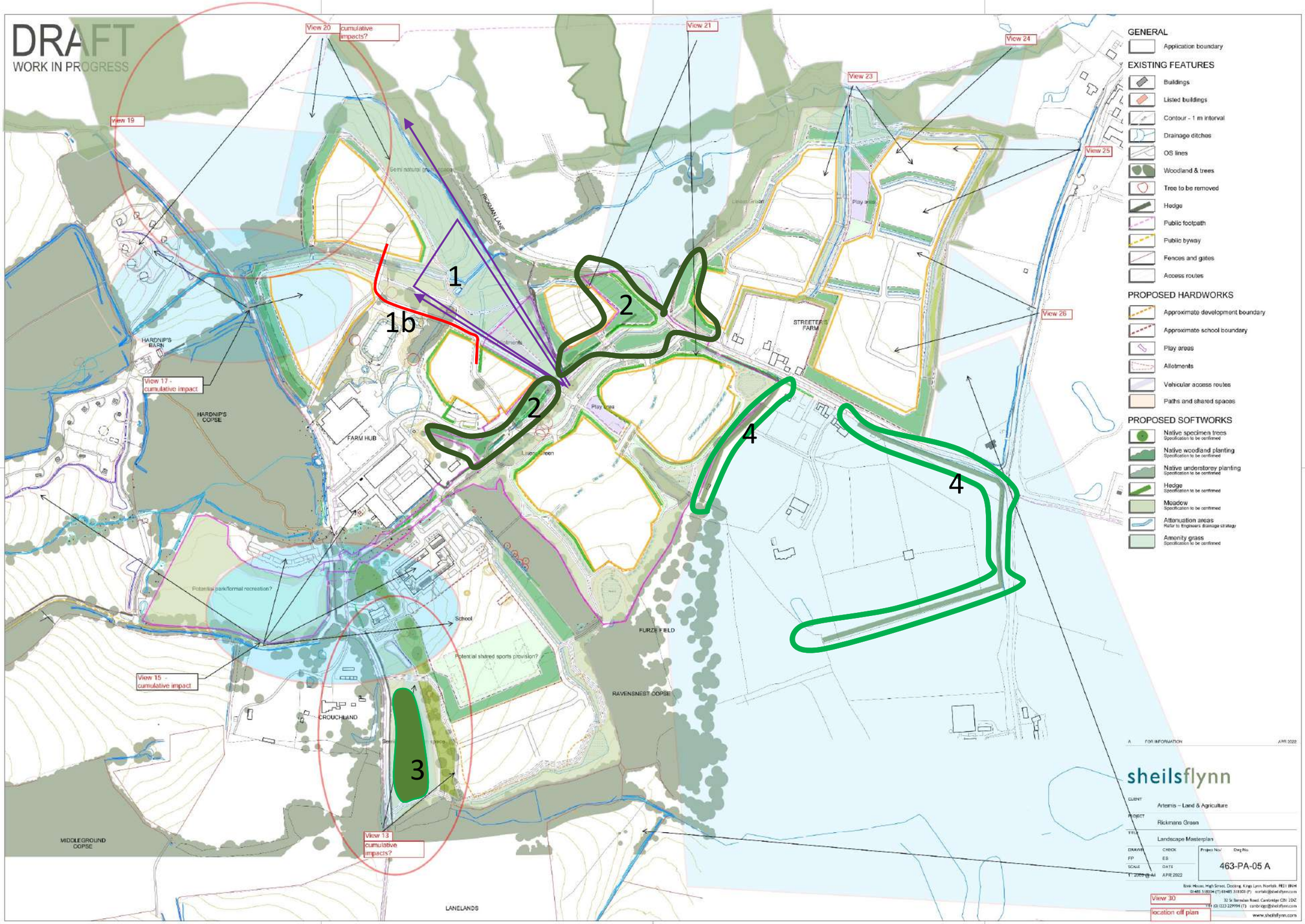
… mitigation strategy – further thoughts following site visit on the 19th May 2022

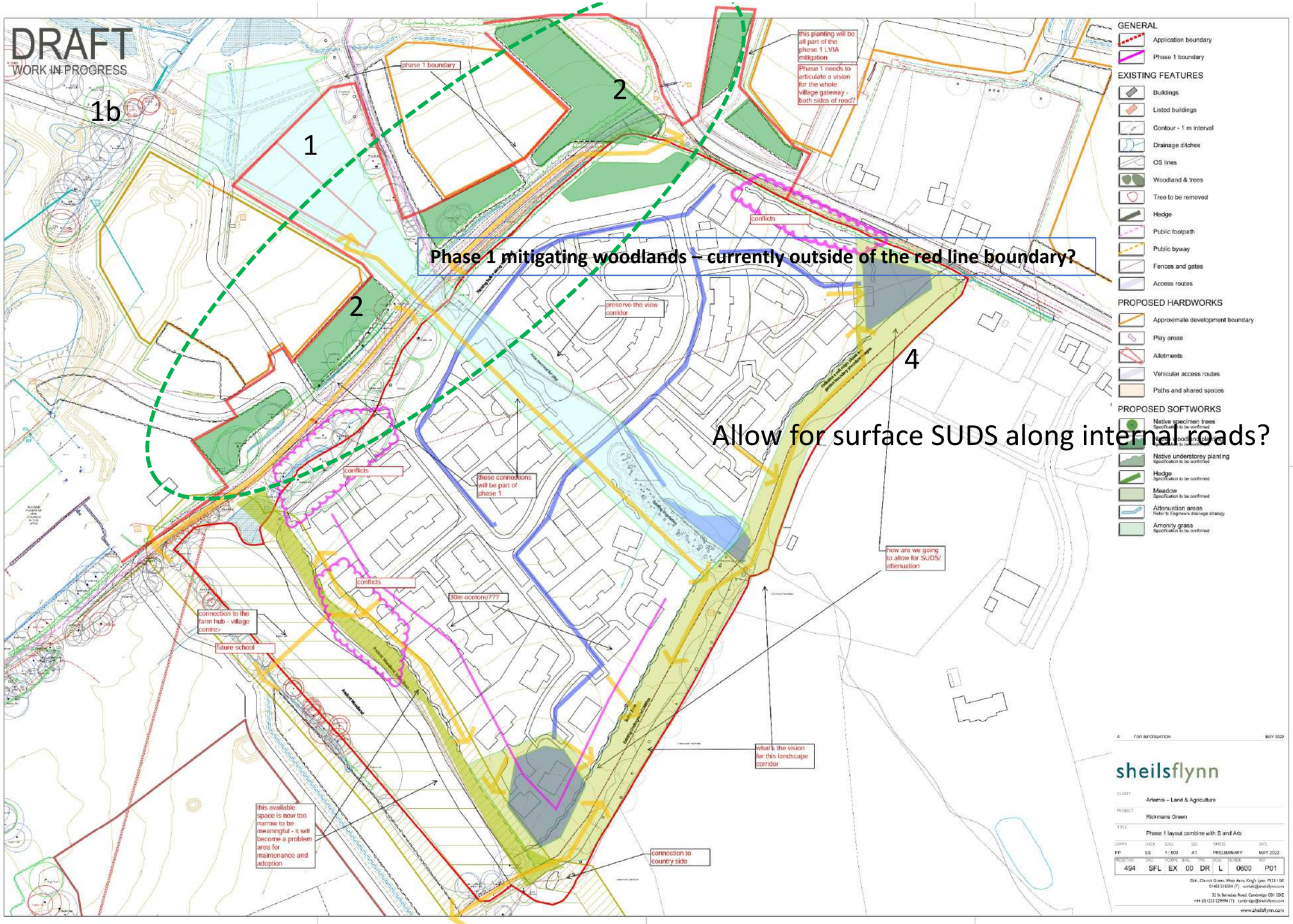
1 – ideally we need more breath to the view, looking north from the main footpath and bridleway? Perhaps reviewing the alignment of the access route as shown (1b) might assist?

2 – key to mitigation will be ensuring that we do not see large areas of new housings from the surrounding landscape. Woodland planting at these locations will assist phase 1 mitigation in the shorter term as well as serving to deliver the longer term masterplan landscape strategies.

3 – consider establishing a new orchard (many have been lost from the local landscape) adding depth of screening to this sensitive footpath/bridleway corridor.

4 – perhaps worth noting also that from the south east (elevated view 30) substantial screening of the development is currently provided by these very tall yet relatively thin lines of conifers.





Landscape Masterplan - Mitigation Update

…initial phase 1 layout comments

1 – ideally we need more breath to the view, looking north from the main footpath and bridleway? Perhaps reviewing the alignment of the access route as shown (1b) might assist?

2 – key to mitigation will be ensuring that we do not see large areas of new housings from the surrounding landscape. View 21 is a reminder that phase 1 will be located on a relatively elevated part of the site likely extensively visible in winter. Woodland planting at these locations will assist phase 1 mitigation in the shorter term as well as serving to deliver the longer term masterplan landscape strategies.

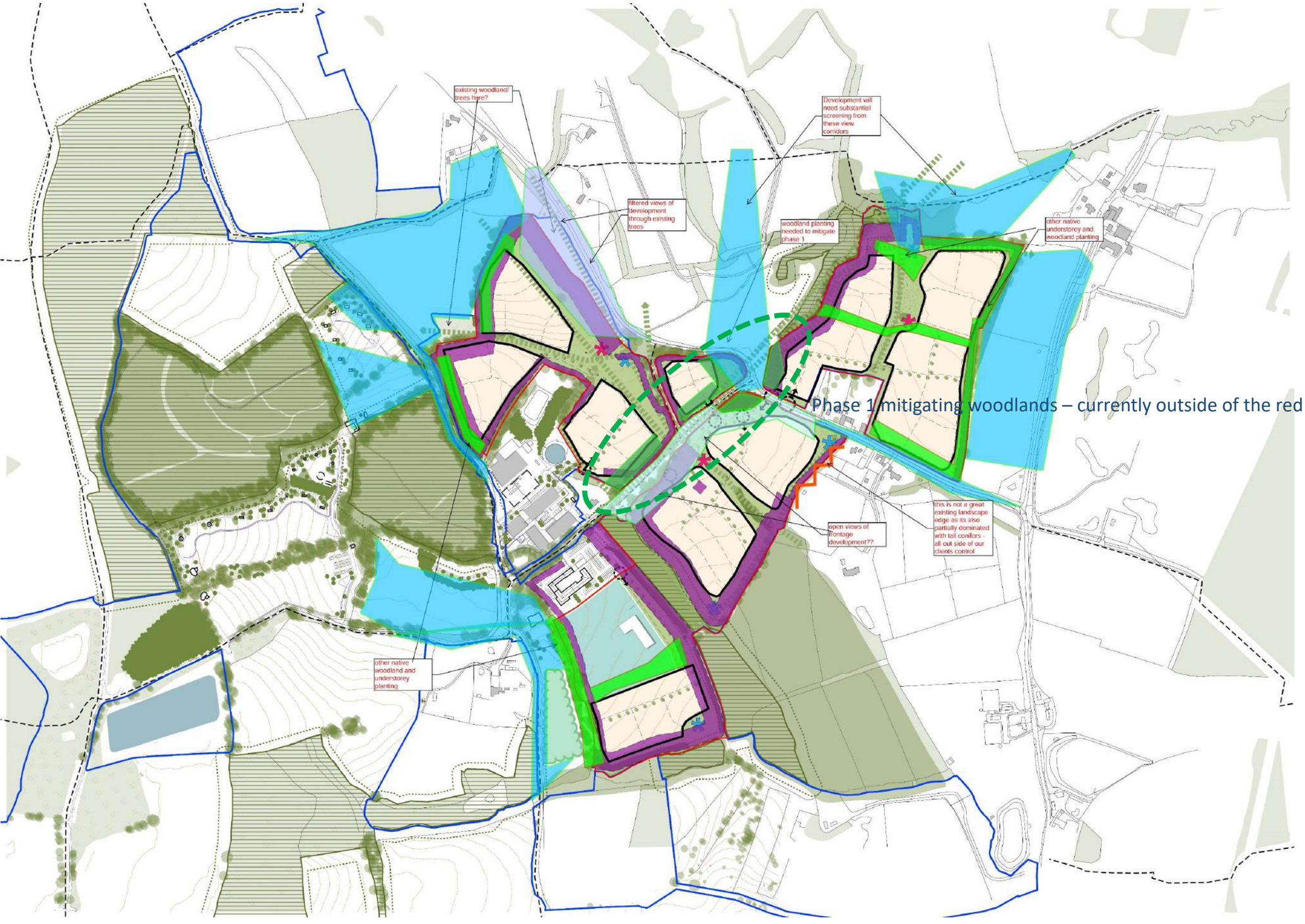
4 – perhaps worth noting also that from the south east (elevated view 30) substantial screening of the development is currently provided by these very tall yet relatively thin lines of conifers. Phase 1 in particular may be relatively open in views if these were taken down (as they are otherwise rather alien in the landscape). This boundary is rather dark and oppressive in views

Other comments on the initial layout

SUDS & attenuation will be a key driver of character.
A landscape vision for phase 1 in the context of the wider masterplan will be essential – phase 1 is also the gateway to the whole village.
Where is the village centre – the farm?
Functionality and connectivity of the landscape corridors needs to be considered.

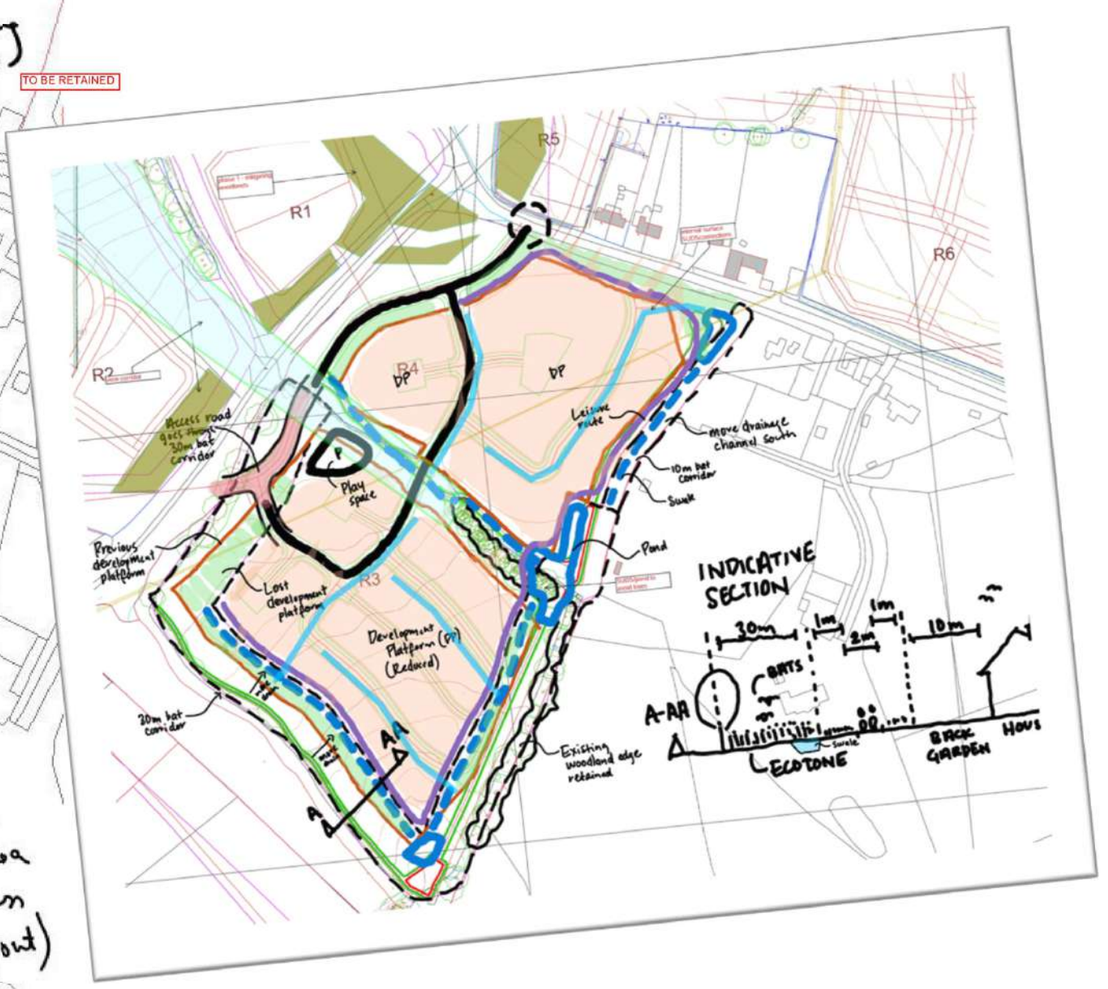
Landscape Masterplan - Mitigation Update

… mitigation woodlands integrated with Ecotones



Landscape Masterplan - Mitigation Update

...initial phase 1 layout comments



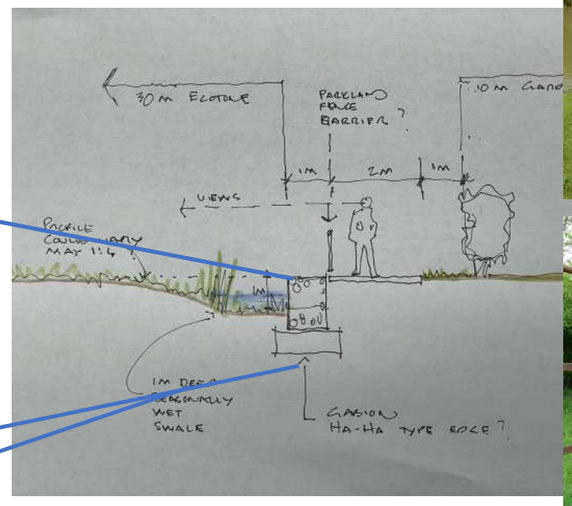
Landscape Masterplan - Mitigation Update

...initial phase 1 layout iterations & options

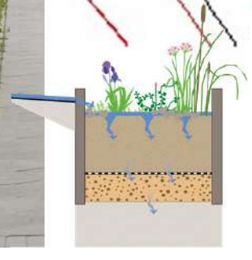
Landscape Masterplan - Mitigation Update

...initial phase 1 layout comments

...Peaslake precedent

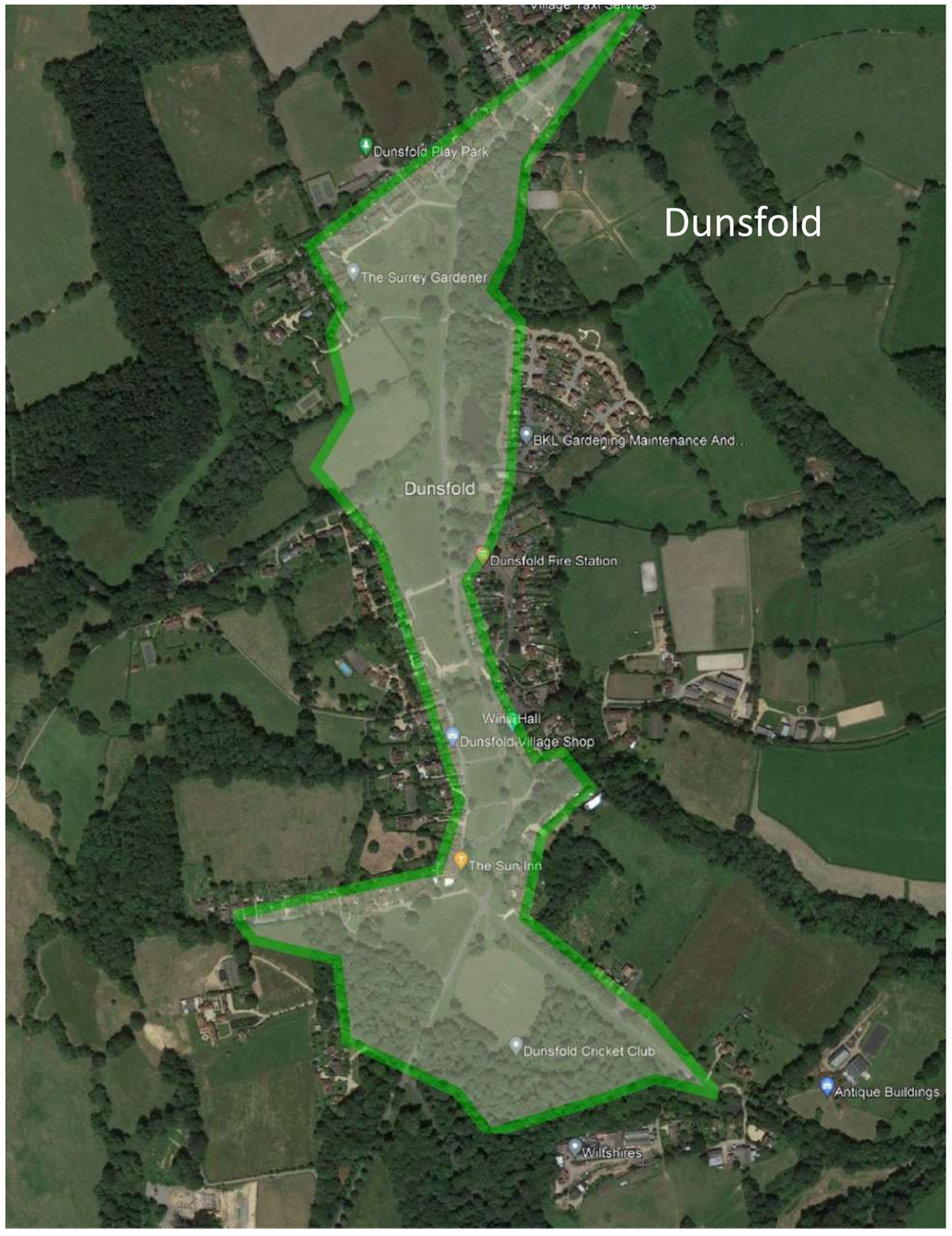


...Cobham precedent



Landscape Masterplan - Mitigation Update

... linear landscape connections - local village precedents



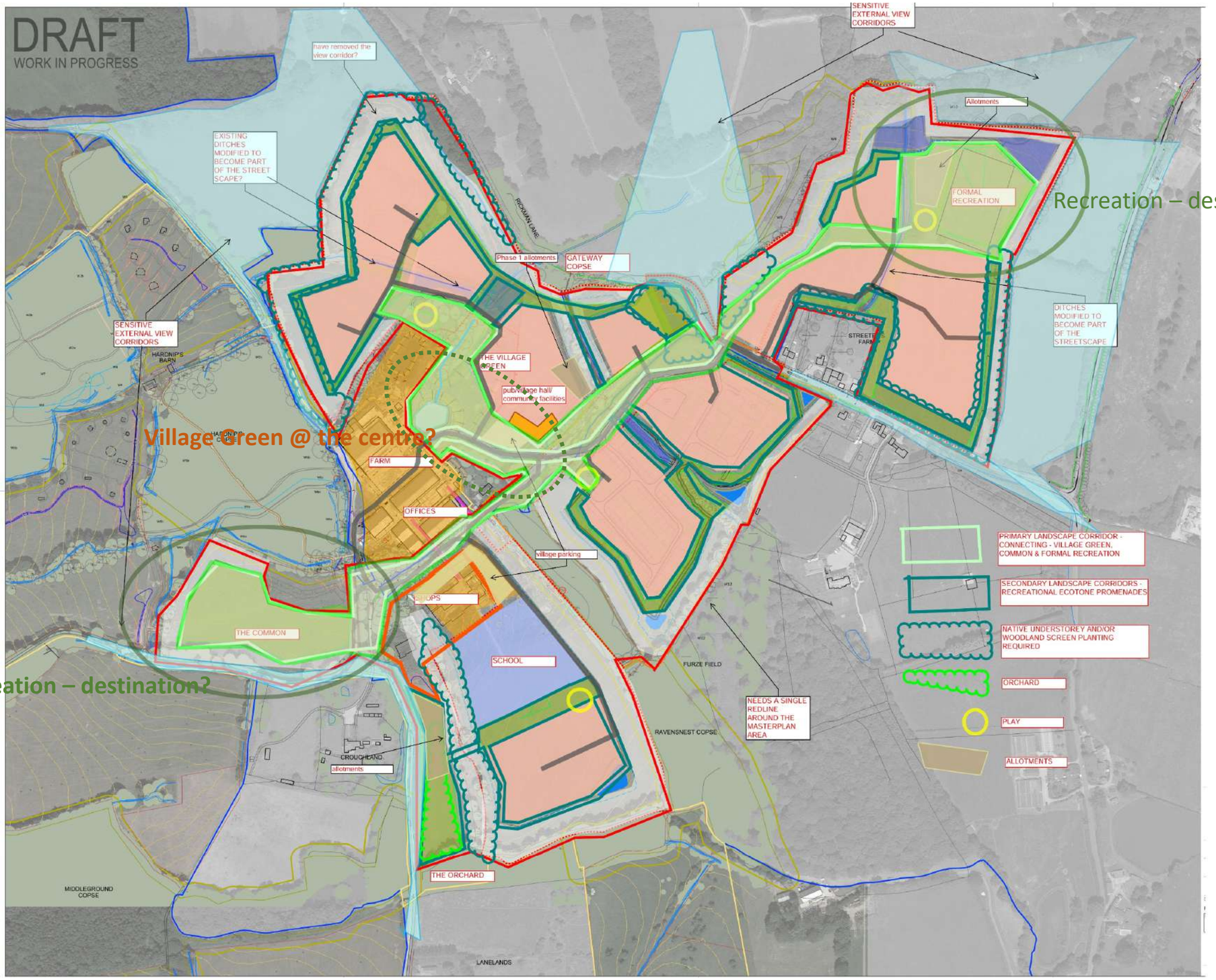
Landscape Masterplan - Mitigation Update

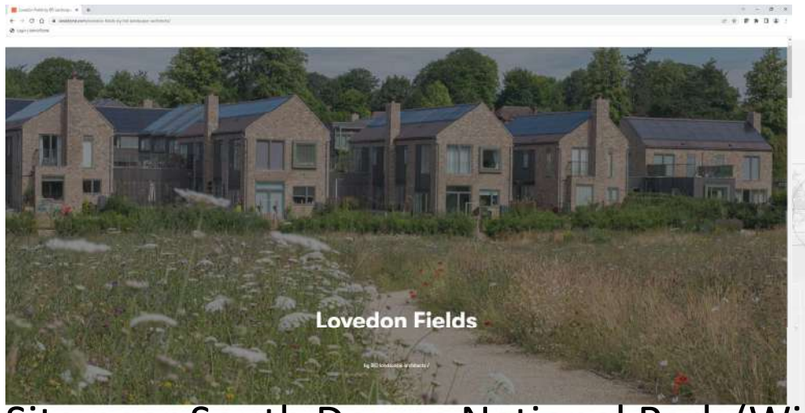
…linear and connected landscapes

Recreation – destination?

Village Green @ the centre?

Recreation – destination?





Site near South Downs National Park (Winchester)

Ridge and Furrow undulations in the Orchard

A series of interlinked rain gardens along the Spine Road

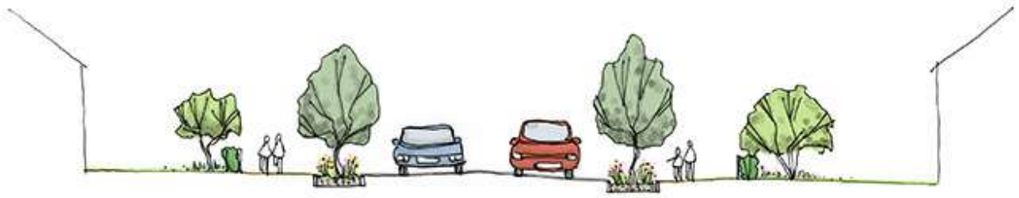
Boardwalks linking over the bioswale alongside the Grove

Porous self binding gravel for boules & incidental play

Surface water rills using dished or flat channels with kerbs

Infiltration basins within the landscape

Planting within swales & rain gardens that phytoremediate hydrocarbons



GREEN STREETS

ALLOTMENTS

ORCHARDS

CYCLE + FOOT PATH

South Downs National Park: A Landscape-led Approach to Design

Mark Waller-Gutierrez describes a unique place-based strategy

1

As defined by the government, the main purpose for a National Park is 'to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area'. Contrary to popular belief, South Downs National Park has a sizeable population (110,000) and has a very busy planning authority with constant development pressures which, if left unmanaged, threaten the essential landscape character that is so attractive to its visitors.

The South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) Local Plan is unusual in two respects. It requires that all development demonstrates positive ecosystem services impacts, and it emphasises that all new development should follow a landscape-led approach to design.

To help planners to ensure that development follows this approach, SDNPA specialists in urban design, landscape and built heritage work closely together with planning colleagues assessing and trying to improve planning applications. For developers, applicants and their consultants who are used to business as usual outside the National Park, where the political pressure for housing can collide with design quality objectives, this landscape-led approach to design demands a steep learning curve.

DEFINITIONS OF LANDSCAPE

For some, the first hurdle is to understand that the European Convention definition of landscape is what is important, and not just green bits around and between buildings. Landscape is defined as 'An area perceived by people whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors' (2009). As the draft SDNPA Design Guide says: 'Landscape is much wider in scope than simply the green elements. It consists of everything, including buildings and townscape in settlements, which comes together to produce the distinctive sense of place the South Downs National Park was designated to conserve and enhance.'

With this in mind, it becomes easier to see that the lines between urban design and landscape design are blurred. The villages or farmsteads looked down from the top of the South Downs Way are an essential part of the landscape, just as much as the field patterns, rivers and hills, and the four towns of Petersfield, Lewes, Petworth and Midhurst. The visual, historic, cultural and physical connections (for both people and wildlife) back into the open farmed and forested landscape from the streets in the centres and edges of these towns and villages, root them in the landscape and help to inform urban design objectives for new development.

This landscape-led approach to design can also translate as the more familiar concept for urban designers of good contextual design, but with the added dimension that the wider context is the nationally designated landscape, of which every site in the South Downs National Park forms a part. There should be a logical process drawn from the evidence gleaned about the site and its landscape which informs the design evolution. Central to this is the landscape strategy.

1 A CGI looking along the east-west coppice woodland green link. Image by PLUS Architecture

2

LANDSCAPE-LED DESIGN PROCESS FOR LARGE DEVELOPMENTS

Materiality, scale, form, settlement pattern and how native vegetation blurs urban edges with the countryside, all contribute to the landscape character of South Downs settlements. For new development to conserve and enhance and make positive new contributions to this protected landscape, urban design, architecture and landscape design need to work together.

This does not mean that traditional architectural styles are always the best way to get planning permission. The emphasis is on quality rather than style, and the 2019 South Downs Design Award winners can attest to a pleasing mix of traditional and contemporary architecture. One good recent example of a design outcome which demonstrates the landscape-led approach is an as yet unbuilt development of 210 new homes, with a café, small commercial unit and community hub, promoted by Comer Homes on a brownfield, mostly redundant commercial Syngenta site about a mile outside the West Sussex village of Fernhurst.

Had this site been located on the edge of Fernhurst, a very different emphasis would have resulted from applying the landscape-led approach. A greater focus on the unique character of Fernhurst informing the design of the development, the need for new development to knit well physically and psychologically with the existing settlement would have been likely. The gravitational pull of tradition would quite understandably have been difficult to resist for both the developer and the authority, probably resulting in a scale and massing of buildings and settlement pattern following parameters and patterns already established in the village. A more traditional architectural style may also have been a safer option in such a location.

But the site is physically separate from the village. It is also largely enclosed by the surrounding topography, mature trees and woodland. Part of the landscape character of the site is therefore its relative isolation and self-contained nature. A very large commercial building is also being retained in its current use. All of these factors have led to greater freedom in what a landscape-led approach might mean in this case. The distinctiveness of the site's landscape character has outweighed the more common characteristics of this part of the South Downs landscape, including a more organic settlement pattern with a large proportion of detached properties on generous plots.

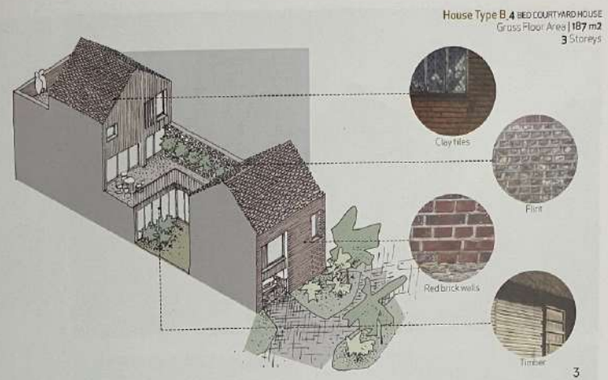
The freedom to experiment with more efficient building forms and layout has allowed the proposed scheme to create more generous green and blue infrastructure, and a greater emphasis on communally experienced open space. The achievement of the latter has helped to justify a greater building density, usually found in more urban contexts, and the reliance on more creative private outdoor spaces, such as internal courtyards, balconies and roof terraces instead of traditional rear gardens.

The landscape-led approach considered the historical and retained landscape patterns that relate to the site. Historic mapping showed thickly wooded field boundaries (shaws) running east-west and north-south which connected to ancient woodland, typical of the Low Weald; the course of the small river culverted in the last century; and, the course of the ancient turnpike road, now superseded. The direction from the authority and the dedicated South Downs Design Review Panel was that a successful scheme would need to incorporate and celebrate these local landscape characteristics. In addition, the development should work with the significant level changes (with steep drops in places and around 15m level difference from west to east) to inform the sustainable drainage strategy and find ways of reducing the visual impact of car parking areas.

The landscape strategy recreates north-south green links connecting the existing mature trees on the northern boundary across the site, with the ancient woodland to the south. The main character of these green links will be analogous to the shaws identified as historically characteristic, the conservation of which is important as they harbour many ancient woodland species and provide connectivity and resilience for people

2 Masterplan showing north-south green links, east-west coppice link, the turnpike road footpath, village green and reinstated river, all leading the development layout. Image by Terra Firma

The distinctiveness of the site's landscape character has outweighed the more common characteristics of this part of the South Downs landscape



3

and wildlife. These links also contain swales as part of the SuDS approach.

An east-west green link will be established consisting of rotation coppice with standards, so that some trees are grown as mature trees or standards over a longer rotation period, with the coppice species beneath cropped at more frequent intervals. The functional benefits of this are:

- it helps to anchor the development into its landscape context
- it provides distinctiveness to the main east-west street
- it creates a powerful invitation for wildlife to cross and inhabit the heart of the new residential neighbourhood
- it provides space for sustainable drainage from the surrounding hard surfaces
- it could potentially serve as a community project, as each coupe (or part of the coppice) is coppiced each year, as part of its management.

The applicant's design team needed to be persuaded that the coppice woodland was appropriate in the centre of a street and that an absolute minimum width of 20m (uninterrupted by roads and with private garden space not part of the calculation) was necessary to qualify for the Forestry Commission's definition of woodland. The proposals also showed a reinstated river which feeds a new pond as part of the site's SuDS and blue infrastructure strategy. Only once the landscape strategy had been agreed could the masterplan start to define the developable areas of the site and the roads that served them.

The South Downs National Park has established an International Dark Skies Reserve with clear views of the Milky Way possible, which is rare in the south of England. The development respects this through the use of minimal outside lighting, the avoidance of sky lights and the retention of a large undeveloped area at the eastern end of the site.

Some shared communal gardens are proposed between terraced streets, and the applicants successfully applied the landscape-led approach to find local precedents of village greens for a new village green space as part of the green open space network.

The developable areas were squeezed by the generous green infrastructure and shared communal spaces. As a consequence, the housing numbers have been maintained by increasing the density of development. It is characterised by a series of terraced streets with some pavilion blocks of four-storey flats in the southwest part of the site, adjacent to the large retained commercial building.

The architectural style is contemporary which is easier to justify given the site's self-contained character. The local character of gabled roofs is reflected in the design. To help make the contemporary architecture feel more like a natural evolution of the local character, the palette used reflects traditional materials such as clay roof tiles, red brick, flint and timber cladding.

A potential blight on the quality of the residential environment was the visual impact of cars serving over 200 dwellings in relatively densely built areas. The solution was to put all cars serving the flats underground, taking advantage of the existing level differences across the site and tucking most cars serving the houses between or behind the buildings.

Another important piece of evidence about this site and this part of West Sussex is its relative tranquillity. To retain this character it was important that the masterplan allowed for a completely undeveloped part of the site at its eastern end, adjacent to ancient woodland outside the planning application's red line boundary. The first and last aspect of the landscape-led approach is the need to respond to the climate change emergency. The scheme will achieve operational zero-carbon status through a combination of *Passivhaus* certification for eleven of the homes, good levels of fabric efficiency for the remainder, biomass heating systems for houses and, extensive rooftop solar panels.

COLLABORATION

A landscape-led approach is much more likely to be successful if the applicant's consultants are given the freedom to collaborate in a silo-busting manner and where possible, the planning authority can also engage with them across the professions. In this case the landscape team and the authority's landscape specialist, along with the urban designers on both sides, had key roles in developing the landscape strategy. This determined the development parcels and street pattern before the architecture was even considered. Designing blue infrastructure also required collaboration with ecologists, engineers and landscape designers, to maximise the opportunities for multi-functional sustainable drainage systems and the restoration of the culverted river.

3 Numerous roof terraces, internal courtyard gardens and balconies provide private amenity space. Image by PLUS Architecture

4

5

6

A watershed moment was when a resistant architect was persuaded by the authority that a street could indeed have a linear woodland running along the middle of it and this would bring aesthetic, amenity and ecological benefits, and provide not only an enhanced distinctiveness to the street, but also the potential for a community focus.

There were local objections to the scheme and initial misgivings from some planning committee members who questioned the high density, the contemporary nature of the architecture and its alien urban nature, in contrast to the traditional rural character found in the nearby village of Fernhurst. These objections were overcome by reference to the scheme's acres of communal green space which reduced the gross density to fairly modest levels. Had the conventional approach of detached and semi-detached houses in fairly generous plots been followed to achieve the site's allocation, it would have meant practically no green infrastructure and a much less distinctive suburban outcome.

At times there are choices to be made where the landscape evidence is conflicting. This is quite legitimate as long as the process is transparent. In this case, the importance of the design cue from the locally characteristic settlement pattern of small-scale dispersed, was not as strong as the evidence from the site. This led to a decision that the slightly remote and self-contained nature of the site lent itself to a greater freedom in designing a settlement characterised by more urban densities and forms; development parcels dictated by green infrastructure, and a wholesale contemporary approach to the architecture.

DESIGN OUTCOMES

The following design outcomes have been the result of the landscape-led approach in this case:

- a layout determined by topography, hydrology and ecology, with the aim of maximising green and blue infrastructure
- a green infrastructure (here locally native woodland) determined by what is locally characteristic
- a layout reflecting the site's history, both man-made (the route of the old toll road and the village green inspired by local precedents), natural (the resurrected river) and semi-natural (the tradition of shaws connecting woodland along field boundaries)
- an architectural style determined partly by the distinctive, separate nature of the site and the building materials selected by the evidence of what was traditional to the area.

This last point, together with the use of locally characteristic roof pitches and repeated gables, ensured that the modern architectural language was more acceptable to the traditionally minded, as the materials related to this part of West Sussex. The recognition of the local importance of tranquillity and dark night skies was important, as was the more universal need to reduce the impacts of development on the climate.

Construction has not started on site yet and as with any permission, there is always the potential for a change of circumstances for the applicant or a transfer of ownership, both of which could lead to requests to vary the permission details or to a wholesale resubmission. In that case the authority could still point to its Local Plan policies which include the need for design of the site to follow a landscape-led approach. ●

Mark Waller-Gutierrez, Lead Specialist, South Downs National Park Authority

4 A CGI without trees showing the strong gable forms. Images by PLUS Architecture
5 Changes in level accommodate parking and create outdoor spaces
6 One of the north-south green links, communal space and swales

1