

# LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL STUDY

FINC Architects

[landscape@fincarchitects.com](mailto:landscape@fincarchitects.com)

Land at Station Hill, Botley



Reference:	24.1942
Prepared by:	John Markwell CMLI Director
Checked by:	John Markwell CMLI Director
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FINC Architects Ltd  
32 London Road | Guildford | Surrey | GU1 2AB  
T: +44 (0)1483 230375  
W: [www.fincarchitects.com](http://www.fincarchitects.com)  
E: [landscape@fincarchitects.com](mailto:landscape@fincarchitects.com)

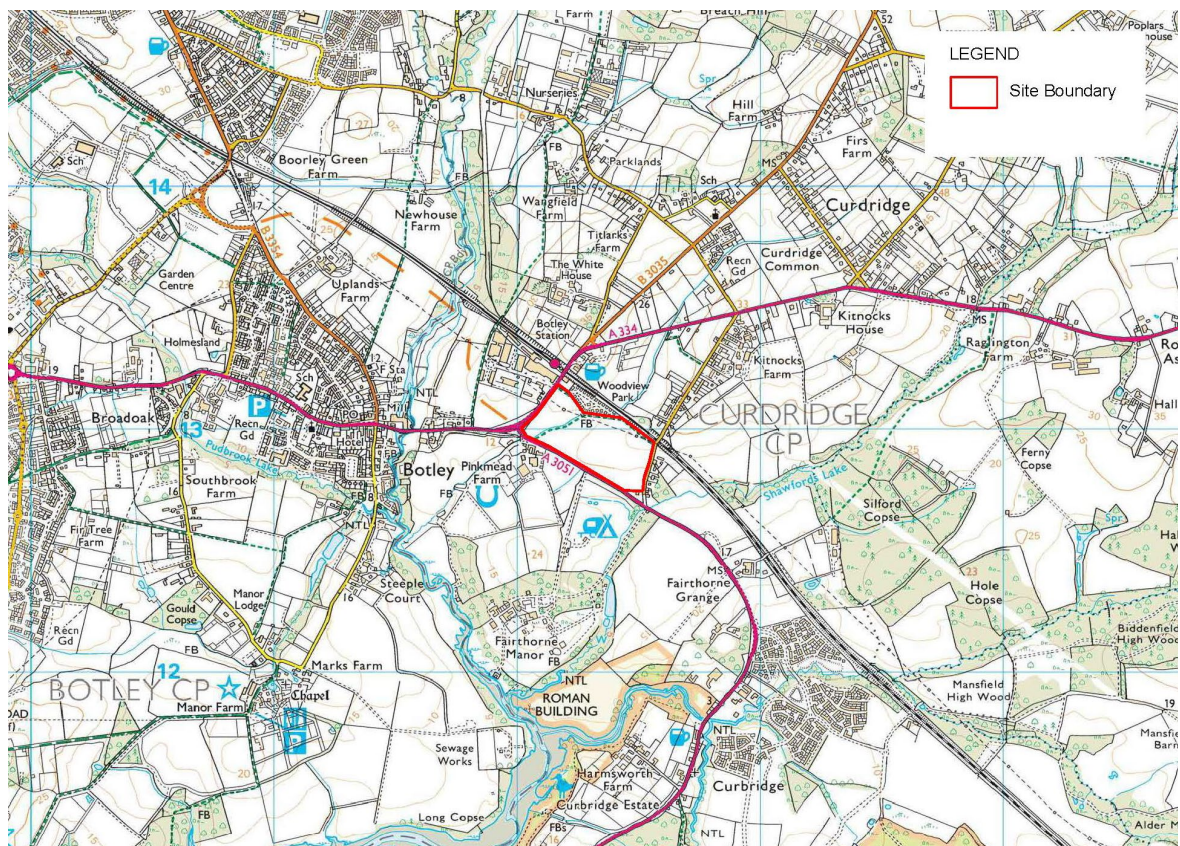
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# 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Landscape Study has been prepared on behalf of Foreman Homes Ltd to appraise the capacity of Land at Station Hill, Botley (the Site), for residential development. The Study has been prepared on the basis of a desk-based review of planning policy and relevant evidence base including published landscape character assessments, and a field survey carried out in May 2024.
- 1.2 A series of design principles and recommendations have been identified to respond sensitively to the landscape and visual characteristics of the Site and its context. These recommendations are preliminary, based on current baseline conditions, and have been prepared to inform an initial landscape-led masterplan for the Site. The proposals for the Site will naturally evolve as part of an iterative design process with input from other specialist disciplines and in consultation with key stakeholders.
- 1.3 This Study does not include an assessment of effects as part of a full Landscape and Visual Appraisal / Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment. However, the principles employed in appraising the Site and developing design recommendations are in accordance with the guidance set out in the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition.
- 1.4 The location of the Site is shown in Figure 1.1 below:

Figure 1.1: Site Location Plan



## 2. POLICY & DESIGNATIONS

### NATIONAL

#### *National Planning Policy Framework, December 2023*

- 2.1 Paragraph 7 of the NPPF defines the purpose of the planning system as achieving sustainable development, defined as *'meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs'*.
- 2.2 In order to achieve sustainable development, the NPPF includes three overarching objectives, including an environmental objective:

*'to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.'*

- 2.3 Paragraph 104 of the NPPF states that Public Rights of Way (PRoW) should be *'protected and enhanced including taking opportunities to provide better facilities for users, for example by adding links to existing rights of way networks including National Trails'*.
- 2.4 Under the heading *'Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment'*, Paragraph 180 of the NPPF states that *'planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by ... protecting and enhancing valued landscapes'* and by *'recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures.'*

### LOCAL

#### *Winchester District Local Plan, March 2013 (Part 1) & April 2017 (Part 2)*

- 2.5 The current adopted local plan for Winchester is formed of two parts. Part 1, the Joint Core Strategy, sets out the overall development strategy for the district. Part 2 contains the detailed development management policies that apply to the district outside of the South Downs National Park. These include a series of policies that relate to environment and the design of developments. Those most relevant to the Site are summarised below.
- 2.6 Policy DM15 Local Distinctiveness: *'Developments should respect the qualities, features and characteristics that contribute to the distinctiveness of the local area.'* This includes conservation and enhancement of key characteristics identified in character assessments, public views, features or skylines and *'trees, hedgerows, water features and corridors which contribute to local distinctiveness.'*
- 2.7 Policy DM16 Site Design Criteria: Development will be permitted if (among other things) it *'responds positively to the character, appearance and variety of the local environment'*, and it *'maintains permeability and access throughout the site and improves connections within the public realm.'*

- 2.8 Policy DM17 Site Development Principles: Development will be permitted if (among other things) it *'does not have unacceptable effects on ... key townscape or landscape characteristics, or on heritage assets'* and *'provides sufficient amenity and recreational space for users'*.
- 2.9 Policy DM24 Special Trees, Important Hedgerows and Ancient Woodlands: *'Development should not result in the loss or deterioration of ancient woodlands, important hedgerows, special trees, distinctive ground flora and the space required to support them in the long term.'*

*Winchester District Local Plan 2019 – 2039 (Reg 18 Consultation Plan, November 18)*

- 2.10 The emerging local plan is progressing towards Regulation 19 stage. It contains a number of policies which will be of relevance to the Site. These are summarised below where relevant.
- 2.11 Policy SP2 Spatial Strategy and Development Principles: Development proposals will be expected to make efficient use of land and they must achieve *'high standards of design and sensitivity to character, setting and cultural heritage'*.
- 2.12 Policy CN1 Mitigating and Adapting to Climate Change: Opportunities for local food production and composting should be incorporated within residential development. Developments should also *'reduce surface water run off through the use of SuDS and Rainwater gardens'* and incorporate *'multi-functional areas of open space, tree planting, biodiversity net gain'*.
- 2.13 Policy D1 High Quality, Well Designed and Inclusive Places states that *'Development should make a positive contribution to the area and be the result of a process which considers and responds to the immediate and wider context of the development site in order to achieve good design'*.
- 2.14 Policy NE1 Protecting and Enhancing Biodiversity and the Natural Environment in the District states that *'development will only be permitted where it demonstrates that it will protect and enhance the natural environment and biodiversity including the natural beauty of the landscape, all natural resources, habitats and species'*.
- 2.15 Policy NE4 Green and Blue Infrastructure states that development must *'maintain, protect and enhance the function or the integrity of the existing green infrastructure network identified at a district and sub district level, including strategic blue and green corridors and spaces'* and *'Provide a measurable net gain of well managed, multifunctional green infrastructure'*. Policy NE4 also requires that *'Watercourses are safeguarded and improved for quality, amenity, biodiversity and quantity'*.
- 2.16 Policy NE5 Biodiversity states that *'biodiversity can be retained, protected and enhanced through its design and implementation, for example by designing for wildlife'*.
- 2.17 Policy NE9 Landscape Character states that the Council will permit development(s) where it *'protects and enhances the district's distinctive landscape character as defined in the Landscape Character Assessment 2022'* and where they *'are informed by the existing landscape character and respond positively to the landscape type within which they are located'*.



2.18 Policy NE9 also states that development proposals must evidence:

*'Local distinctiveness, especially in terms of trees, other landscape features, tranquillity, sense of place and setting has been taken into account;*

*New planting is consistent with local character, enhances biodiversity, contributes to the delivery of green infrastructure and uses native species, unless there are appropriate and justified reasons to select non-native species;*

*The settlement pattern and individual identity of settlements and the integrity of predominantly open and undeveloped land between settlements will not be undermined.*

*Green and blue corridors will be safeguarded. Development proposals should identify and take opportunities to create and connect green and blue corridors.'*

2.19 Policy NE7 identifies a series of settlement gaps which are described as *'generally undeveloped and open land which help to define and retain the separate identity of settlements, an aspect highly valued by many communities'*. The Site is not within any of the identified gaps.

2.20 Policy NE11 Open Space Provision for New Developments states that developments must *'Contribute to maintaining or enhancing the visual and environmental character of the area and supporting increase permeability and connection to existing areas of open space and wildlife corridors'*.

2.21 Policy NE17 Rivers, Watercourses and their Settings states:

*'Development proposals that affect rivers, watercourses or their settings will be permitted where they conserve and enhance the following; iii. Biodiversity; iv. Character, appearance and setting; v. Public access to and along the waterway for recreational opportunities.'*

2.22 Policy SH6 relates to the proposed Botley Bypass, safeguarding land to the west of the Site for a road infrastructure scheme. The route of the proposed bypass runs north-west from the Site's south-western corner, as shown on Figure 2.1 overleaf. As part of the proposed bypass, Policy SH6 requires that a *'structural landscaping scheme is prepared and implemented, which effectively mitigates any adverse visual impacts on the surrounding area'*.

## EVIDENCE BASE

### *Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) 2023*

2.23 The SHELAA provides a high-level appraisal of various sites as part of the evidence base for the emerging local plan. Each assessment site is rated on a RAG (Red, Amber, Green) basis for various constraints, including landscape.

2.24 The site is identified as site reference CU08 Land at Botley Road, which identifies the site as being unlikely to be sensitive from a landscape perspective (Green rating), and that

there are few other constraints to development. The Site is also assessed as having capacity for 177 dwellings.

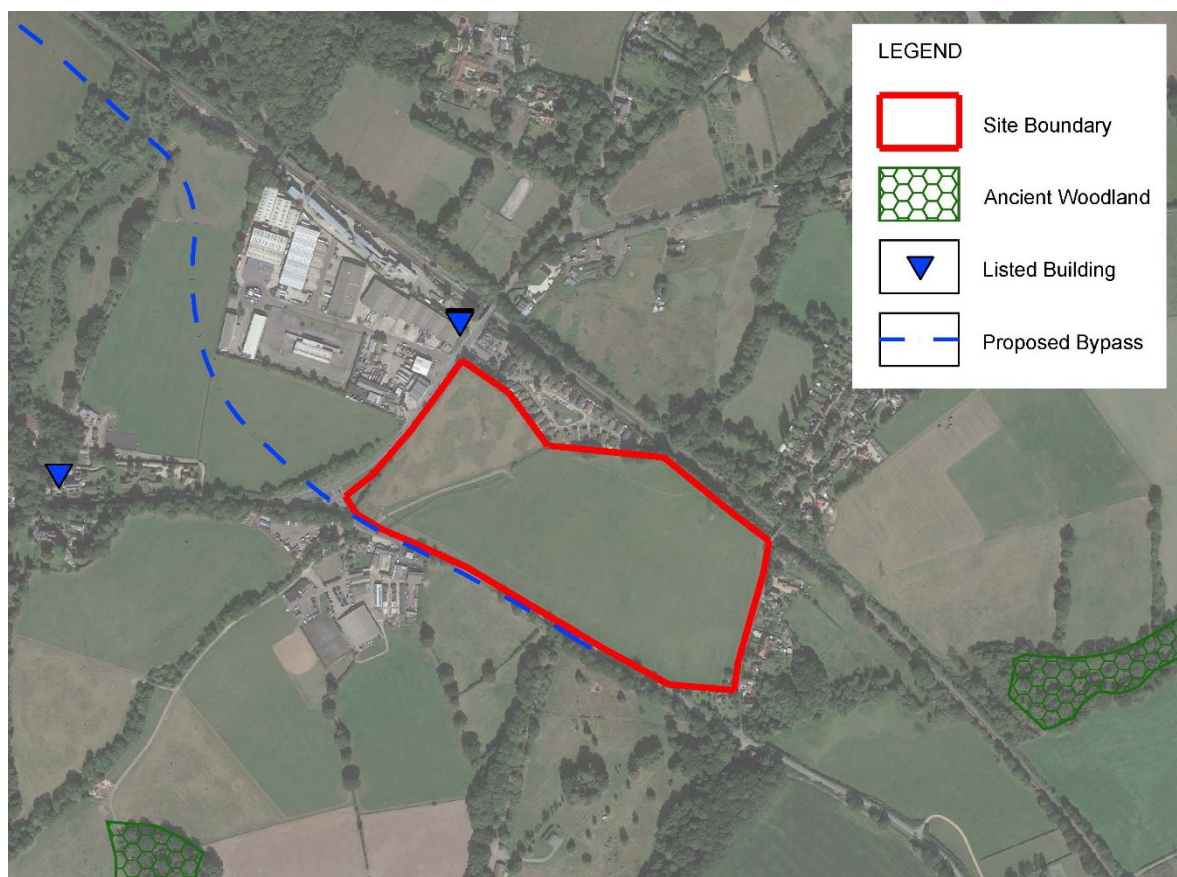
## DESIGNATIONS

2.25 The Site is not subject to any landscape or landscape related designations. The following designations are noted in the wider area:

- The South Downs National Park is approximately 4.8km east at its nearest point. To the north it is over 5km away from the Site;
- There are numerous blocks of ancient woodland in the wider landscape containing the site, the closest of which is Silford Copse, approximately 370m to the south-east of the Site; and
- A cluster of three listed buildings are located approximately 40m north of the Site's north-western corner: a drinking fountain, a monument and an inscribed stone. These three features are located within the grass verge adjacent to an industrial unit on Botley Road.

2.26 The positions of the designations present in the local area are shown in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1: Designations Plan





### 3. SITE CONTEXT

- 3.1 As shown on Figure 1.1, the Site occupies a broadly rectangular parcel of land bounded by the A3051/Botley Road to the south-west, the A334/Station Hill to the north-west, the Eastleigh to Fareham Line railway to the north-east and Outlands Lane to the south-east.
- 3.2 Existing commercial/industrial units are present in the Site's immediate vicinity, located on Botley Road at Pinkmead Farm and Station Hill (Bottings Industrial Estate), while the northern site boundary abuts a public house (The Railway Inn) and a residential park home (Woodview Park). Residential development extends along Outlands Lane north and south of the railway line, including several dwellings that face towards the Site's south-eastern boundary.
- 3.3 Further afield, Botley is located approximately 500m to the south-west of the Site, and there is an extensive area of dispersed, ribbon development at Curdrige to the north of the railway line. A new residential development comprising approximately 3,500 dwellings is under development at North Whiteley, the nearest of which is approximately 580m south-west of the Site, extending along Botley Road as far as the settlement of Burrige.
- 3.4 The Site sits within the broad, gentle valley of the River Hamble, which flows southwards past within approximately 500m of the Site's western boundary at its nearest point. A gentle ridgeline is located to the north of the Site, with settlement in Curdrige occupying the high ground and the landform generally sloping down to the south-west.
- 3.5 The vegetation pattern in the Site's context is strong, with tree belts following watercourses, roads and railway lines. However local industrial development fragments the vegetation pattern. Further east, the network of tree belts merges to form large tracts of woodland to the east of Burrige over 2.5km from the Site.
- 3.6 Sporadic PRow are present in the Site's context. The Site itself is crossed by a public footpath along the northern boundary and a linked route south-west towards Pinkmead Farm.

### 4. LANDSCAPE CHARACTER BASELINE

#### PUBLISHED CHARACTER ASSESSMENTS

##### *Landscape Character Assessment, April 2022*

The Site is within the northernmost extent of Landscape Character Area (LCA) 21 Whiteley Woodlands, an area which is described as having '*a far less wooded and more settled character*' to the north. Its key characteristics of relevance to the Site can be summarised as follows:

- Gently undulating lowlands with poor agricultural quality;
- Minor streams drain the area into the River Hamble to the west;
- Predominance of woodland, including areas of ancient woodland, often protected by national and local wildlife designations;
- Strong hedgerow field boundaries with varied species, often on banks;
- Occasional long views, but generally enclosed by woodland, with settlement edges generally well-wooded;

- A strong sense of landscape history is created by the mature hedgerows and oaks, pasture and woodland; and
  - Sparse, settlement, mostly occurring at the edges of the LCA with a predominance of woodland in the centre.
- 4.1 The LCA is described as having '*escaped large-scale woodland loss*' and very little remaining species rich grassland is also noted, with remaining areas vulnerable to further loss.
- 4.2 Recommended strategies for landscape management and development in the LCA are summarised as follows:
- Conserve and restore the structure of woodlands by planting new woodland to link ancient woodland remnants;
  - Conserve and enhance existing hedgerows through appropriate management. Restore landscape pattern through hedgerow restoration/replanting using native shrubs and trees;
  - Conserve variation of enclosed views and occasional long views
  - Conserve and enhance species-rich grassland;
  - Secure increased public access and create footpath links;
  - Protect the landscape structure of hedges, tree lines, woodland, streams ditches and banks;
  - Enhance existing urban edge through hedgerow planting; and
  - Integrate new buildings and infrastructure into the well-treed rural setting through careful siting and the appropriate use of locally indigenous tree and hedge planting. Create strong landscape frameworks within and around existing and proposed development.

## SITE CHARACTER

- 4.3 The Site has an area of approximately 11.8ha and comprises two fields of agricultural land laid to pasture separated by a tributary of the River Hamble which flows south-west through the Site.
- 4.4 The landform of the Site rises from approximately 12m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) in the south-west to a high point of approximately 20m AOD in the north-east, with the watercourse running within a gentle valley.
- 4.5 The larger eastern parcel is strongly contained by mature woodland along the railway cutting to the north, with hedgerow bounding the Site to the east adjacent to Outlands Lane and south along Botley Road. The elevated north-eastern corner of the Site allows longer distance views across the River Hamble valley, creating a sense of exposure.
- 4.6 The smaller western parcel is triangular and defined to the west by robust hedgerow along Station Road, which in combination with the lower landform results in a stronger sense of containment in this part of the Site.
- 4.7 Existing residential development on Outlands Lane and at Woodview Park to the north is visible throughout the Site, as well as agricultural/commercial development at Pinkmead Farm. Existing built form to the west is strongly screened by boundary vegetation, however road noise from Station Hill and the adjacent industrial estate is notable and reduces the

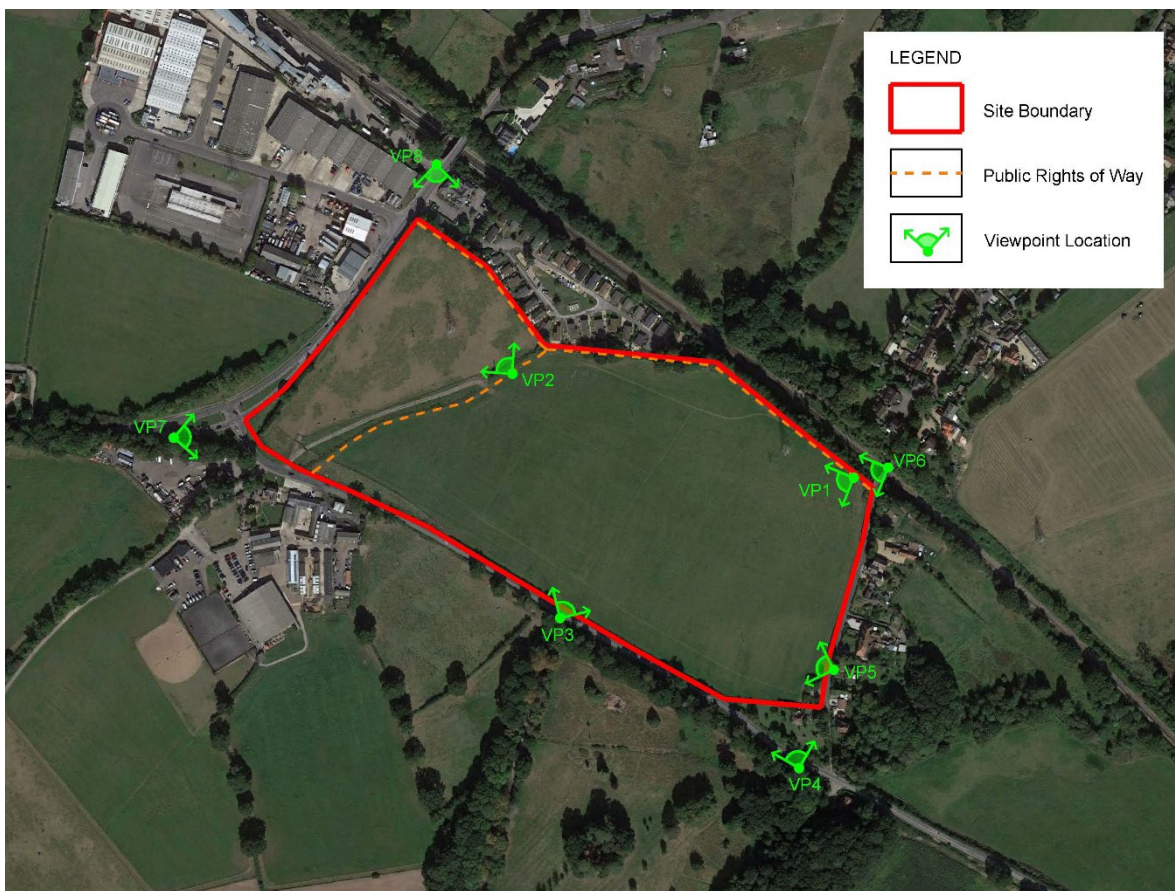
sense of tranquillity. Existing overhead power lines are prominent features on the Site, crossing broadly east to west with pylons in each field.

## 5. VISUAL BASELINE

5.1 The visibility of the Site has been appraised and is summarised below with reference to illustrative viewpoint photography. The photography is indicative and not intended to conform to the Landscape Institute guidance for viewpoint photography. The photographs have been taken in condition of full leaf and therefore do not present a worst-case scenario in terms of visibility.

5.2 The location of the illustrative viewpoints are shown on Figure 5.1 below:

Figure 5.1: Viewpoint Plan





- 5.3 Open views across the Site are experienced from the PRoW that pass through the Site, as shown by Views 1 and 2 below. As shown by View 1, there are open views towards across the River Hamble valley from the elevated north-eastern corner, seen beyond the foreground context overhead power lines.

Figure 5.2: View 1



- 5.4 View 2 shows the watercourse that extends through the Site, with existing built form at Woodview Park notable beyond the northern boundary. Residents in Woodview Park are likely to have open views from ground floor rooms across this part of the Site.

Figure 5.3: View 2



- 5.5 Views from Botley Road are partially truncated by existing hedgerow along the southern boundary as demonstrated by View 3. The low height of the hedgerow and rising landform of the Site results in a higher level of visibility from road, as demonstrated by View 3.

Figure 5.4: View 3



- 5.6 Further east on Botley Road, the Site rapidly disappears from view due to landform and intervening vegetation as shown by View 4.

Figure 5.5: View 4



- 5.7 There are partial views of the Site from Outlands Lane, where existing hedgerow is of inconsistent height, allowing views above and beyond the boundary vegetation. Existing houses on Outlands Lane are generally set back within their plots, however views of the Site are likely to be experienced by residential receptors in these houses.

Figure 5.6: View 5



- 5.8 Further north along Outlands Lane, the Site is screened by vegetation along the railway line, evident in View 6

Figure 5.7: View 6





- 5.9 From Station Hill, views of the Site are strongly filtered by robust existing hedgerows on the Site's north-western boundary as seen by View 7. The southern part of the Site is glimpsed at the junction of Botley Road.

Figure 5.8: View 7



- 5.10 Further north on Station Hill, the Site is also glimpsed through gaps in otherwise strong boundary vegetation, with The Railway Inn public house seen in the foreground, as seen in View 8.

Figure 5.9: View 8



- 5.11 All of the views are within, or in close proximity to the Site, with strongly vegetated Site boundaries providing substantial screening or filtering (particularly in winter) of the Site's open interior. Further afield, visibility diminishes rapidly as a result of a combination of landform and the strong wider framework of vegetation.

## 6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The Site is not designated for landscape reasons, and it is within an area that is strongly influenced by existing built form, including infrastructure and residential, commercial and industrial uses. These aspects result in urbanising influences on the underlying agricultural character of the Site.
- 6.2 The Site has a restricted visual envelope and is unlikely to be visible from the South Downs National Park. No visual receptors of high sensitivity are likely to experience views of the Site.
- 6.3 On this basis, the Site is considered to have the capacity in landscape terms to accommodate residential development, subject to a sensitive landscape-led design approach.

### DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS
















- 6.4 A series of design principles have been identified based on the baseline analysis, policy and evidence base. These principles are illustrated on Appendix A: Development Principles Plan.
- 6.5 The recommendations are based on the assumption that existing low voltage overhead power lines will be undergrounded as part of a development proposal, but that the high voltage overhead power lines will remain in place, with a suitable landscape buffer.
- 6.6 The following design principles have been identified:
- Retain and reinforce the existing structure of site boundary hedgerows and trees, including strengthening the eastern boundary;
  - Strengthen existing planting on the south-eastern boundary to sensitively address views from existing houses on Outlands Lane;
  - Provide a landscape buffer on the northern boundary to sensitively address views from Woodview Park;
  - Provide a Green and Blue Infrastructure corridor following the course of the watercourse and PRoW within the Site;
  - Provide a landscape buffer to the existing high voltage overhead power lines. Include design measures to reduce the linearity of this corridor, with reference to the National Grid's design guidance document 'A Sense of Place - Design Guidelines for Development Near High Voltage Overhead Lines';
  - Create a wetland landscape in the Site's south-western corner, forming a bookend to the watercourse landscape corridor;
  - Incorporate open space on the elevated north-eastern corner to retain long views across the River Hamble valley;
  - Create a Green Infrastructure link between the Site and the existing vegetation pattern to the south to break up the extent of the proposed eastern parcel and reinforce the wider vegetation pattern; and
  - Seek opportunities to provide positive frontages and pedestrian connectivity with Botley Railway Station / the Railway Inn public house.

# APPENDIX A

## Development Principles Plan





- LEGEND**
-  Site Boundary
  -  Public Rights of Way
  -  Retained and Reinforced Vegetation
  -  Views from Neighbouring Houses
  -  View Across River Hamble Valley
  -  Public Open Space under Overhead Power Line
  -  Green Blue Infrastructure Corridor
  -  SUDS Zone / Features
  -  Development Parcel (approximate 5.78 hectares)
  -  Key Destination / Gateway
  -  Potential Green Infrastructure Link to Wider Landscape Pattern
  -  Opportunity to Provide Visual / Pedestrian Connection with Railway Station / Pub
  -  Proposed Boundary Planting as Part of Proposed Botley Bypass
  -  Potential Site Access (to be confirmed by highway engineer)
  -  Extent of Proposed Botley Bypass (Refer to Winchester Local Plan 2019-2039, Policy SH6)



Rev	Date	Amendment	Initials

Project:  
**STATION HILL, BOTLEY**

Client:  
 FOREMAN HOMES LTD

Drawing:  
 LANDSCAPE DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES PLAN

**PRELIMINARY**

Drawing no: **24.1942.L001** Rev: -

Scale@A3: 1:2500 Date: May 2024 Drawn: CLB Checked: JM

**finc** FINC Architects Ltd  
 61-63 New London Road | Chelmsford | Essex | CM2 0ND  
 T: +44 (0)1245 933988  
 W: www.fincarchitects.com  
 E: company@fincarchitects.com

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