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# Land East of London Road Shenley

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(HEELA ref 236a and 236b)

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## 1. Summary

- 1.1. This report considers the land at Rectory Farm, off the London Road and north east of Shenley. This site is shown at Appendix 1 and owned by Comer Group, which incorporates Comer Homes - a national housebuilder.
- 1.2. This site is an opportunity to provide:
- Sensitively designed landscape led development;
  - Development Shenley - a sustainable location, with public transport links to Radlett and Elstree/Borehamwood;
  - A development of up to 500 homes and affordable homes;
  - The delivery of a primary school, or potentially to relocation and expansion of the existing primary school in Shenley;
  - Potential improvement of traffic issues associated with schools and businesses in Shenley and Shenleybury;
  - New open space and improved access to the wider countryside for existing residents in the locality;
  - Improved biodiversity.
- 1.3. This report sets out the reasons why the site is considered to be appropriate for housing. Appendix 2 is a Landscape and Visual Context Review which concludes that the site lies within an area of 'poor' landscape condition and 'weak' strength of landscape character. As such development would not result in the loss of an important area of landscape, instead providing the opportunity for enhanced recreational connectivity with the wider rural area, provision significant areas of woodland planting and a denser network of wildlife corridors.
- 1.4. The proposed site is within the least sensitive part of Shenley. Development here has little direct effect on existing residential properties. It avoids the more sensitive Landscape Character Area to the south. It avoids the Conservation Area that is at the core of the original Shenley village. It also avoids the potential for merging with Radlett or Borehamwood (to the west and south).

- 1.5. Appendix 3 is a Highways, Flood Risk, Drainage and Utilities Note. It finds that there are no technical reasons why the site should not be an appropriate and deliverable allocation. There appears to be appropriate utilities capacity in the locality.
- 1.6. As the site is owned by a housebuilder with a proven local and national track record, all of these benefits can be delivered immediately and without land assembly or land transaction. This report demonstrates that there are no significant constraints to development.
- 1.7. It is important that Hertsmere allocates houses to be built in areas that people want to live. Shenley is a popular village with a range of facilities. There is no question that housing delivery here is achievable.

## 2. Shenley

- 2.1. A significant scale of housebuilding is required in Hertsmere to meet the established need. It is clear that a 'brownfield only' approach will not yield sufficient sites to meet that need. Therefore the Council will need to make greenfield allocations in the Local Plan. Given that the Borough falls entirely within the Green Belt, it is inevitable that Green Belt land will need to be considered.
- 2.2. Shenley has developed over time as a settlement. The original residential core is to the south of Radlett Lane (and technically remains within the Green Belt). The population was increased following the residential redevelopment of the former hospital site, to the east of London Road. This part of Shenley was removed from the Green Belt in the latest revision to the local development framework.
- 2.3. Shenley is identified in the Core Strategy as a "Service Village". Shenley has a range of shops and services that can provide for the day to day needs of local residents, including a Tesco Express, primary school, health care centre and dentist, and post office. It is a sustainable location. The Council's recent Issues and Options report recognises that Shenley is a 'more sustainable place' for growth than the smaller villages and hamlets, given that they already contain a number of local services. Nearby settlements of Radlett, Borehamwood and St. Albans provide access to an additional range of facilities.
- 2.4. Shenley is served by two regular bus services; the 602 and 658. Both these services offer links to the nearby Thameslink stations at Radlett and Elstree & Borehamwood.
- 2.5. Shenley is therefore an entirely sustainable and appropriate location for development. It is a place where people want to live and a location where residential development can be delivered.

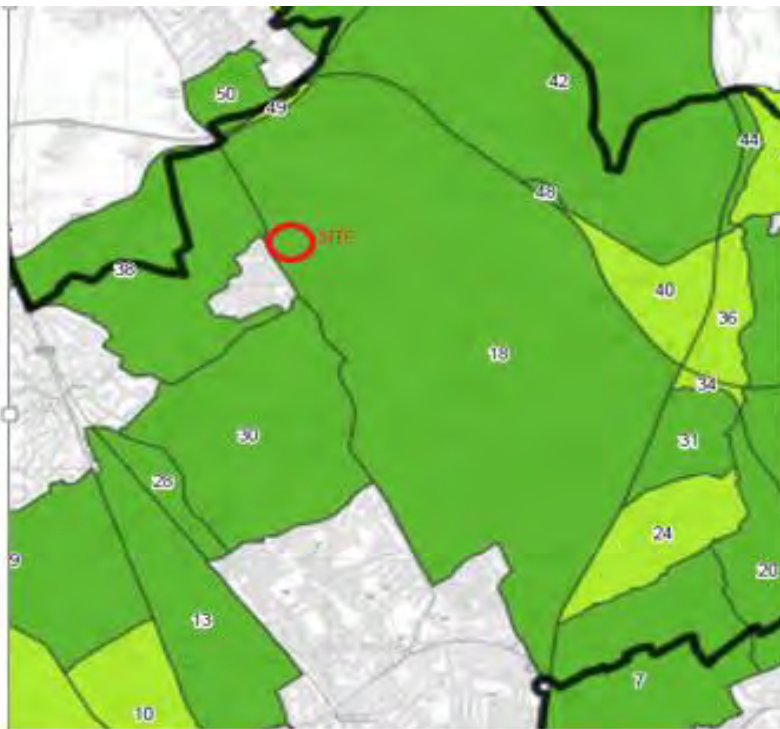
### 3. Proposal Site

- 3.1. Plan SK001 (Appendix 1) shows how residential development could be a logical expansion of Shenley that would be well located for the village centre. Depending on residential densities the site could accommodate between 400-500 homes.
- 3.2. The site would fit well within the established grain of Shenley. As a result of the development of this part of Shenley originating from the former hospital site, there has been no development east of London Road. Therefore development could be accommodated on the east side of London Road without causing direct traffic generation through or loss of amenity to the rest of the village. It would lead to a more typical form of village development, with built form on both sides of the main carriageway through the village.
- 3.3. The site nestles between the established built form of Shenleybury (which already extends east of London Road) and the heavily wooded areas and eastward extension of Shenley to the south. Therefore development would read as infill development rather than an expansion. The existing built form and trees would reduce the apparent eastwards extension by setting it against established development and a thick band of trees. The trees would create a defensible boundary to the edge of the site.
- 3.4. The site is well located for local facilities. It would be within easy walking distance of the existing local centre at Porters Park Drive and local bus stops.
- 3.5. Comer Group has a wider land holding than shown on the submitted plan. Therefore further tree planting could be established along the edge of the site. Biodiversity improvements could be made to Combe Wood. The existing tracks and leisure potential of Combe Wood could also be improved and formalised (provided this is consistent with the biodiversity improvements).
- 3.6. The submitted plan demonstrates that a primary school could be delivered within the site. Alternatively, the existing school in Shenley (which we understand gives rise to traffic issues) could be expanded and relocated to this site. If this was not considered to be necessary, then alternative land uses could be brought forward, including employment development or community facilities.

## 4. Green Belt

- 4.1. We have considered the 2017 Stage 1 Green Belt Review. The submitted site falls within Parcel 18 (on the very western edge, adjacent to Shenley). The Green Belt Review states:

*“The parcel overall meets purposes 1 and 2 moderately and purpose 3 strongly. However, the west of the parcel at Shenley village is more densely developed and plays a limited role in terms of preventing encroachment into the countryside, and to ensure consistency with the area of the village to the north of Radlett Lane this area should be considered further.”*



- 4.2. It is clear that the Green Belt Review has (necessarily) taken a very broad approach to the Borough. Parcel 18 is a very large area of land (1480 ha). The nuances and landscape features of particular areas cannot be properly considered at this scale.
- 4.3. Nevertheless, the Green Belt Review states at page C7 (Summary of Purpose Scores, Findings and Recommendations) that “the west of the parcel [18] at Shenley village is more densely developed and plays a limited role in terms of preventing encroachment into the countryside, and to ensure consistency with the area of the village to the north of Radlett Lane this area should be considered further. (The second half of this sentence is not understood – no part of Parcel 18 is north of Radlett Lane.)
- 4.4. Therefore the assessment of Parcel 18 clearly identifies that the site falls within an area of land that should be considered further.

4.5. Our assessment of the site against the purposes of including land in the Green Belt is as follows:

<b>To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas</b>	The site would be to the east of the existing settlement of Shenley. The western edge of the site is contiguous with the main road through Shenley and is therefore very much contiguous with the existing village. To the north of the site, there is already an eastward incursion because the Clore Shalom School and adjacent employment building extend eastwards beyond the main road. This established built development helps integrate the proposed site to the north. To the south is a heavily wooded area and, beyond that, the built form of the original Shenley village extends outwards around the subject site. Development of this size would inevitably lead to some outward extension of Shenley but existing built development around this site would minimise the impact and effect.
<b>To prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another.</b>	There are no towns on this side of Shenley that are close enough to cause concern of 'merging'. The land is predominately open out to the M25 and beyond. Therefore a small loss of Green Belt would have no significant impact on the separation of settlements.  Development here would protect this 'purpose' far better than on other sides of Shenley. Development to the south and east of Shenley would potentially cause merging with Radlett. Development to the south would potentially cause merging with Borehamwood.
<b>To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.</b>	Development of this size would inevitably lead to some encroachment on the countryside. As set out above, existing built development around this site would minimise the effects.  Given the scale of housebuilding needed in Hertsmere, some effect on the countryside is inevitable.
<b>To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns.</b>	The Shenley Conservation Area is predominately the original Shenley settlement which is to the south of the subject site. Development on the subject site has no effect on the Conservation Area. In order to preserve and enhance the Conservation Area, development on the subject site is to be preferred to development around the south of Shenley.
<b>To assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.</b>	The scale of housebuilding required in Hertsmere will ensure that recycling of derelict and urban land is encouraged.

4.6. Given the existing and established built form to the north and south and the existing landform and landscape features, the level of harm to the green belt is considered to be relatively minor for a development of this scale.



## 5. Landscape

- 5.1. A full Landscape and Visual Context Review is attached as Appendix 2. This states that

*“The appraisal shows that the site lies within an area of ‘poor’ landscape condition and ‘weak’ strength of character. As such development would not result in the loss of an important area of landscape, instead providing the opportunity for enhanced recreational connectivity with the wider rural area, provision of significant areas of woodland planting and a denser network of wildlife corridors. Whilst the southern and eastern parts of the site are relatively elevated and offer some long distance panoramic views to the north and east, the impacts on visual receptors in these directions would not be significant, given the distance of the receptors from the site. Views from the immediate network of public footpaths to the north and east generally benefit from the screening effects of existing woodland and hedgerows, and with new woodland planting on these edges of the site, any current views could be significantly reduced/eliminated. Views from the west and south are already well screened by the existing Combe Wood to the south and mature hedgerows and rising land levels to the west. An existing area of woodland within the site, Dellholes, is covered by a Tree Preservation Order, and would be retained, providing further visual enclosure to the site from the east...”*

- 5.2. In summary, the Comer Homes site provides a highly suitable location to provide additional homes in the village Shenley. It would not compromise the relatively narrow rural gap between Radlett and Shenley to the west with its recreational importance, instead enhancing accessibility and connectivity to the wider countryside to the east. Whilst there are some long distance views from the site to the north and east, impacts on footpath users within this wider area would not be significant due to their distances from the site.”
- 5.3. It is clear therefore that development on this site can be readily accommodated within the landscape. The site falls within an area of poor landscape, whereas potential sites to the south of Shenley fall within the more sensitive High Cannons Landscape Character Area, which is more sensitive to change. It also avoids the sensitive conservation area at the core of the original village.
- 5.4. The masterplan has been developed to reflect the findings of the Landscape and Visual Context Review. Green open space is provided to the north of the site to allow for the enhancement of existing footpaths and hence accessibility and connectivity to the wider countryside to the east. This would be a real benefit for the existing residents of Shenley.
- 5.5. A tree buffer is provided to the businesses to the north of the site (Shenleybury). There is space within this area to provide additional facilities (including parking) for this area if appropriate.
- 5.6. The potential new school is provided to the south of the site so that the elevated southern area will be playing fields. This reduces the visibility of development from longer range views. It also provides a 15m buffer against ancient woodland.

- 5.7. New woodland planting will soften the western edge of the site. This can be strengthened and increased in area if desired as Comer Homes land ownership extends eastwards from the masterplan area.
- 5.8. Overall the proposed site and wider landholding is large enough to sympathetically integrate development into Shenley village, whilst providing open space for new residents and better connectivity into the countryside for existing residents. The masterplan is landscape led and will ensure that integration into the landscape can be successfully achieved, which has the added benefit of reducing the impact upon the green belt.

## 6. Highways

- 6.1. Access to the site is proposed to be via the existing roundabout at Porter Park Drive. The roundabout is at present a standard mini roundabout. The access to the site would include the improvement of this to a standard roundabout, increasing the theoretical capacity and offering a betterment to the existing situation.
- 6.2. The site is in a sustainable location, and offers access to both everyday facilities and opportunities further afield. The site is served by frequent public transport.

## 7. Flood Risk and Drainage

- 7.1. The site is entirely within Flood Zone 1 (low risk), with less than 1 in 1,000 annual probability of river or sea flooding (<0.1%). In accordance with Table 3 of the Planning Practice Guidance, residential dwellings are considered to be an appropriate form of development within Flood Zone 1.
- 7.2. The anticipated ground conditions should support the use of infiltration drainage which will significantly reduce the peak rate and volume of runoff from the site, actively reducing downstream flood risk.
- 7.3. The site would deliver best practice SuDS for the management of runoff, throughout the developments 100 year lifetime, whilst also taking account of the impacts of climate change and seeking to reduce flood risk elsewhere.

## 8. Utilities

- 8.1. The site also benefits from having existing electricity services which can be utilised to provide future connectivity, without the need for any off-site disruption and is also located in close proximity to Affinity Waters' 9" distribution main and Cadent Gas Ltd's medium pressure gas main (both beneath Black Lion Hill).

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## Appendices

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## Appendix 1 - Masterplan

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project	Shenley, Hertfordshire
client	Comer Homes
date	JUNE 18
drawn by	CO
checked by	-

drawing	Shenley Illustrative Masterplan
job no.	SNUDXXXXXX
drawing no.	SK001
rev	-

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## Appendix 2 – Landscape and Visual Context Review

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# Landscape & Visual Context Review

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Land at Rectory Farm, Shenley, Herts



# Landscape & Visual Context Review

Land at Rectory Farm, Shenley

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Appendix One    Figures

## 1. Introduction and Methodology

- 1.1. This summary appraisal report has been prepared by Savills Urban Design Studio on behalf of Comer Homes, to gain a greater understanding of any landscape and visual constraints relating to potential housing development on the site. It has been carried out by a Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute and Urban Design Group Recognised Practitioner.
- 1.2. The report has been prepared following both desk-based on site survey work to gain an understanding of the site and its wider context, as well as other potential development sites around the village. It is informed by methodology set out in the *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment* (3<sup>rd</sup> edition) (Landscape Institute and EIMA, 2013), highlighting potential landscape and visual receptors that could be affected by any development, together with the level of their sensitivity. It does not, however, constitute a full landscape and visual appraisal, given that this is an early stage in the potential design of the scheme.
- 1.3. The desk-based survey has included a review of:
  - Aerial photography
  - OS mapping
  - GIS database of landscape and heritage designations
  - National and local planning policy relating to landscape and visual matters
  - National and local landscape character assessments:
    - Natural England's National Landscape Character Areas
    - Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment
- 1.4. A site visit was undertaken on 12 June 2018. This allowed the condition and location of landscape features such as vegetation, water features, land use and footpath to be ascertained as well as key views. The site visit included walking the area within the red line boundary of the site as well as Black Lion Hill and adjacent built area of Shenley to the west and south, and footpaths to the north and east as far as Bell Lane and Footpath 'Shenley 21' to the east of Dell Grove respectively. Whilst on site, photographs of key features, characteristics and views were taken. These were taken with a 50mm full format SLR digital camera in line with Landscape Institute guidance (*Photography & Photomontage in landscape and visual impact assessment Advice Note 01/11*)
- 1.5. As the survey was undertaken in the summer, the trees and hedgerows were in full leaf providing the maximum amount of visual screening. If possible, it is recommended that a further site visit be undertaken in the period December – March, to gain a more accurate idea of the maximum extents of visibility when foliage is at a minimum.

## 2. Landscape Designations

- 2.1. Landscape related designations are shown on Figures 1 and 6. This shows that the only national designation covering the site itself is the London Green Belt.
- 2.2. The group of trees within the north-eastern part of the site, known as Dellholes, is covered by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO/29/209) protecting any tree from being cut down, topped, lopped, uprooted, wilfully damaged or wilfully destroyed (see Figure 6). This woodland order covers 'all species, including hawthorn, blackthorn, ash and oak'. A significant proportion of the woodland consists of scrub vegetation, however it is of value in terms of wildlife habitat and provision of visual enclosure from the wider area to the north-west. Any proposals for the site should retain this area of woodland and connectivity with the wider countryside.
- 2.3. To the immediate south of the site, Combe Wood is a semi-natural ancient woodland that is also covered by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO/230/1990). This woodland order describes the woodland as including ash, beech, birch, hazel, hornbeam, maple, oak, pine, rowan, thorn, wild service tree and willow. As the Combe Wood is an ancient woodland, it is protected from harm by the National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 118. Recommended mitigation includes "*leaving an appropriate buffer zone of semi-natural habitat between the development and the ancient woodland or tree, depending on the size of the development, a minimum buffer should be at least 15 metres*" ([www.gov.uk/guidance/ancient-woodland-and-veteran-trees-protection-surveys-licences](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/ancient-woodland-and-veteran-trees-protection-surveys-licences)). Any proposals for the site should therefore retain this minimum width of 15m semi-natural habitat from the edge of the woodland.
- 2.4. There are few listed buildings/structures within Shenley, with the only two that could potentially be affected by development being St Botolphs (Grade II\*) (formerly Church of St Botolph) and Nicholas Hawksmoor Memorial (Grade II) in Shenleybury. These are situated 20-40m from the north-west boundary of the site respectively. The church was deconsecrated in 1972 and both the church and memorial stone are on private land. Mature vegetation within the churchyard screens both structures from the site within the summer, however there may be some glimpsed intervisibility in the winter months. Whilst the listed buildings would not be directly affected, it will be important to conserve their settings, including the churchyard. It is proposed that the development of the site should retain an open area adjacent to the churchyard to allow for the planting of additional trees to reinforce the existing screening and retain an open gap around the hamlet of Shenleybury.
- 2.5. The centre of Shenley is covered by a Conservation Area. At its closest point to the site, the boundary of the Conservation Area is to the south of Combe Wood, approximately 0.33 km to the south. Part of the site's south-eastern boundary, adjacent to Black Lion Hill, can just be glimpsed from this point, meaning that the effects of any development on the Conservation would be scarcely appreciated.

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## Land at Rectory Farm, Shenley

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- 2.6. The site lies within the Watling Chase Community Forest, one of 12 Community Forests around England, an initiative by the Countryside Agency and the Forestry Commission in the 1990s to assist planting, woodland management, habitat maintenance and creation, and access. The Forest covers an area of approximately 18,840 hectares of land in Hertfordshire and the northern fringe of London, from St. Albans in the north to Stanmore in the south. The majority of the Forest is within the area covered by Hertsmere Borough Council. The Forests are '*intended to be 'a rich mosaic of landscape, within which land uses include farmland, woodland, villages, leisure enterprises, nature areas and public open space.'*' (Watling Chase Community Forest Plan Review 2001, p5).
- 2.7. Hertsmere Local Plan Core Strategy Objective 15 is 'To promote rural diversification and through the Watling Chase Greenways Strategy, sustainable access to the wider countryside' Paragraph 7.25 of the Local Plan states:
- "In implementing a network of routes in the Greenways Strategy, there has been a focus on improving links both within and between towns, as well as on improving access to the countryside. Almost the entire Borough lies within the boundary of Watling Chase Community Forest including large areas within the urban fringe between north London and the wider countryside. Continuing to promote opportunities to walk, cycle or ride in the countryside will help increase opportunities for recreation and improving access to the countryside, a key objective of the Community Forest and consistent with the Hertsmere Community Strategy aim of creating opportunities to engage in healthy, active lifestyles."*
- 2.8. The Watling Chase Timberland Trail runs immediately adjacent to the site's northern boundary. The proximity of the site to the existing community of Shenley and the wider countryside to the north-east, (which also lies within the control of Comer Homes) provides the opportunity to help deliver these aspirations for enhanced access to the countryside.

### Summary

- 2.9. The site is not covered by any landscape designations, but does lie within the green belt. One group of trees within the northern part of the site is covered by a woodland, Dellholes, is covered by a Tree Preservation Order. The site does not lie within a conservation area or contain any listed buildings. Whilst there are two listed buildings close to the north-western site boundary, St. Botolph's and the Hawksmoor memorial, these are concealed from the site by existing mature vegetation within the churchyard. During the winter months there may be some glimpsed views of the former church from the site so any development should ensure any potential effects are mitigated.
- 2.10. The site lies adjacent to the Watling Chase Timberland Trail and also includes 3 public rights of way within its boundary (see paragraph 3.8). It therefore provides the opportunity to further enhance accessibility to the countryside for new and existing residents of Shenley and Shenleybury.



### 3. Landscape Features and Characteristics

#### Landform

- 3.1. The landform of the site and its wider area is shown on Figure 3. The site occupies a sloping area of land that falls from approximately 105m Above Ordnance Datum along in its south-western corner, adjacent to Black Lion Hill/Combe Wood, down to 81m on its northern boundary. A minor dry valley runs through the centre of the site in a north-south direction. To the south of the site, the landform continues to rise up towards the historic centre of Shenley, which occupies a localised hill. To the south-west of the site, the more recent area of housing, north of Radlett Lane also occupies a localised spur. West of this, the land drops down to a minor valley between Shenley and the small town of Radlett.
- 3.2. Immediately to the north of the site, the landform is much flatter, forming part of the floodplain of the River Colne. North of the M25, the settlement of London Colney (1.5km from the site) occupies a floodplain site, whilst north of this the land begins to rise up again at St. Albans and Harpenden (approximately 3.8km and 11km from the site respectively). East of the site, towards South Mimms there is a plateau on a similar level as the site itself. North of this, to the north-east of the site, this slopes down, parallel to the site itself.

#### Water features

- 3.3. There are no streams or rivers within the site. The OS Explorer map shows a small pond within the area of vegetation close to the western side of the site, however this was not surveyed on site, appearing to be surrounded by a small group of mature woodland vegetation. This area should be retained as part of the green infrastructure of the site.

#### Land Use and Vegetation

- 3.4. The site and its immediate context is shown on Figure 4. The site is currently occupied by improved grassland with some scrub species in places. The wider area to the north and east also consists of improved agricultural grassland. Beyond Dell Grove woodland there is an area of arable farmland that also incorporates two grass aircraft runways. Further to the north and east, south of Bell Lane (min 0.42km from the site), there is an extensive area of football pitches, occupied by the Arsenal Football Club training ground. To the west of the site there is a large housing estate occupying land north of Radlett Lane. This also includes some earlier housing on Black Lion Hill as well as a landmark water tower, Shenley Tower (now in residential use). To the north-west of the site, the hamlet of Shenleybury includes some one and two storey business units immediately adjacent to the site as well as an independent one form entry primary school and a few houses.
- 3.5. The site has mature native hedgerows along its northern and western boundaries which include some areas of woodland tree species adjacent to Black Lion Hill. This provides a good degree of visual enclosure, especially when they are in leaf. To the south, the Combe Wood ancient woodland provides a further area of native vegetation providing an attractive backdrop to the site and visual screening from the wider area. A clipped native hedgerow runs within the site, close to its north-eastern boundary. This provides a natural boundary with the adjacent countryside although, as the site boundary lies beyond this, there is the opportunity for incorporating the hedgerow in a new wider native woodland buffer strip.

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## Land at Rectory Farm, Shenley

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- 3.6. Within the site there are also three areas of scrub woodland; the largest being Dellholes, a small area of woodland that wraps around an apparent pit close to the north-eastern edge of the site. This is covered by a Tree Preservation Order. Two further areas lie closer to the site's eastern boundary. All three areas contribute to the visual enclosure of the site.
- 3.7. It is recommended that all native hedgerows and scrub/woodland vegetation in and around the site be retained, ideally as part of the open space network, or within private gardens.

### Rights of Way

- 3.8. Three public footpaths run through the site. Footpath 'Shenley 029' connects Black Lion Hill to the west of the site through Dellpits area of woodland within the site and then north through the site towards the Arsenal training ground and Bell Lane. 'Shenley 030' connects with the St. Botolphs Churchyard to the west of the site, running in a broadly east-west direction, via the Dellpits woodland, and the wider countryside to the east, where it becomes part of the Hertfordshire Way recreational trail.
- 3.9. Immediately adjacent to the site's northern boundary Footpath, 'Shenley 13' forms part of the Watling Chase trail, leading towards the main road through Shenleybury to the west and continuing in a north-easterly direction to the wider countryside to the north of the site.
- 3.10. There are also a number of other footpaths to the north-east of the site, forming a loose grid of paths connecting Bell Lane to the north with Rectory Lane to the south. The closest of these, 'Shenley 21' is approximately 0.4km from the site's north-eastern boundary.

### Summary

- 3.11. The site occupies a sloping position, forming the slope of a ridgeline occupied by the village of Shenley. The elevated nature of the southern part of the site means that there are some long distance views towards London Colney to the north and countryside to the east. Any development can be located so as to avoid these eastern and southern edges and allow space for woodland planting. The only waterbody on the site appears to be a small pond which can be retained within the public open spaces within the development, as can the small groups of woodland adjacent to the western and north-eastern boundaries of the site (including that covered by the Dellholes Tree Preservation Order).
- 3.12. The site benefits from mature native hedgerows on all sides and these can also be retained as part of the development, other than where breaks are required to allow for access. Combe Wood to the south of the site is ancient woodland and also covered by a Tree Preservation Order. A minimum 15m wide strip of semi-natural habitat will need to be incorporated adjacent to the site's southern boundary to protect this woodland.
- 3.13. Three footpaths run through the northern and western parts of the site, with further footpaths running adjacent to its northern and eastern boundaries. These can all be retained within the development, set within areas of green space to retain their rural settings.



## 4. Landscape Character

- 4.1. The site is covered by two published landscape character assessments, Natural England's national landscape character assessment and the Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment. The relevant character areas are shown on Figure 3.

### National Landscape Character Assessment

- 4.2. The site lies at the western end of National Landscape Character Area 114 North Thames Basin. This is described as "a diverse area which extends from Hertfordshire in the west to the Essex coast in the east". It is "rich in geodiversity, archaeology and history and diverse landscapes ranging from the wooded Hertfordshire plateau and river valleys, to the open landscape and predominantly arable area of the Essex heathlands, with areas of urbanisation mixed in throughout". Relevant key characteristics for this wider character area that are reflected in and around the site are:

- The prominent hills are ridges of the landform is one of the key characteristics
- Considerable areas of ancient woodland
- Diverse landscape with a series of broad river valleys
- Mixed farming with arable predominating in the Hertfordshire plateau.

- 4.3. The pressure for development and industrial scale farming within the area and their resultant impacts on tranquility and habitat fragmentation are recognized within the assessment and Statements for Environmental Opportunity focus on the management of river valleys, water quality, agricultural landscape, the historic environment and the significant areas of broadleaf woodland and wood pasture which are not generally relevant to the site. As such, these SEOs are not always relevant to the site. There is, however, a focus on the need to enhance recreational access to the countryside, and as mentioned in Section 3, the site provides an ideal opportunity to achieve these requirements:

- *"Preserving and enhancing current public access sites including nature reserves, common land, country parks and public footpaths and rights of way to attract the wider community"*
- *"Creating better access to the countryside with an increased number of public footpaths and rights of way so that more of the area is open access. Enhancing current public access paths would also be beneficial to make the experience of the countryside more inviting and enjoyable."*

### Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment

- 4.4. Within the Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment, the site lies within the **Vale of St Albans landscape character area**. This area also includes Shenleybury and the area to the north-west and north-east of Shenley is described as *"a broad and shallow basin of the upper River Colne, with some extensive panoramas over arable fields, both along the Vale and up towards Shenley Ridge to the south. Mixed land uses include arable, extensive areas of active and restored mineral extraction and urban fringe development."*

4.5. Relevant key characteristics include:

- Extensive views along the Vale and up to Shenley Ridge
- A predominantly arable landscape with few small or medium copses, and with some grazing on restored land
- M25 corridor, overhead pylons and associated urban fringe development.

4.6. Other supporting text describes the area as “having lost a large part of its historic character and is now an open and disjointed area with road and rail noise being a detracting feature.”

4.7. Overall, the assessment judges the impact of built development and land-use change to be ‘high and ‘visual unity’ to be ‘incoherent’. Semi-natural habitat is ‘fragmented’ and there is ‘widespread’ land cover change. The area is judged to be ‘widely visible’ from the outside with an ‘open’ sense of enclosure. The assessment judges the condition of the landscape to be ‘poor’ and its ‘strength of character’ to be ‘weak’. The proposed management strategy is to ‘reconstruct’ the landscape. To achieve this reconstruction, relevant ‘strategies and guidelines for change’ listed for the landscape character area can be supported through the development of the site, in particular:

- Provide ecological and visual linkage via a substantial network of hedges between woodlands and hedgerow trees
- Encourage the development of a network of small woods, copses and hedges on the lower slopes of the Shenley Ridge
- Maintain framed views to attractive natural and built features, including Shenley Ridge
- Develop the network of rights of way within the area and improve accessibility from local settlements
- Ensure that any new built development is visually integrated into the landscape with minimal impact.

4.8. Immediately beyond the site’s south-eastern boundary is the **Shenley Ridge landscape character area**, a south-west/north-east ridge between Radlett and Redwell Woods, which includes the main village as well as countryside to the south-west and north of the village. This is described as “*a broad and shallow basin of the upper River Colne, with some extensive panoramas over arable fields, both along the Vale and up towards Shenley Ridge to the south. Mixed land uses include arable, extensive areas of active and restored mineral extraction and urban fringe development.*”

4.9. Relevant key characteristics for the Shenley Ridge landscape character area include:

- South-west/north-east elevated ridge with steeper northern slopes
- Extensive woodland areas, notably Combe Wood on horizon
- Areas of grazing in small/medium fields with hedged enclosure, locally mixed with arable and ‘set-aside’ fields
- Prominent ridge-top residential development within grounds of former Shenley Hospital
- Historic settlement of Shenley and scattered farms set on narrow plateau and relatively concealed panoramic views to and from ridgeline, particularly to the north
- Intrusive impact of M25 and pylon lines as they rise over ridge.

- 4.10. Shenley Park is listed as a distinctive local rural parkland and Shenley water tower is a major landmark.
- 4.11. Overall, the assessment judges the impact of built development change to be 'moderate' and 'visual unity' to be 'incoherent'. Semi-natural habitat is 'fragmented'. The area is judged to be 'widely visible' from the outside with an 'open' sense of enclosure. The assessment judges the 'condition and 'strength of character' of the landscape to be 'moderate' and the management strategy is to 'improve and conserve' the landscape. Relevant strategies to help achieve this include:
- Reinforce and emphasise the strong ridgeline topography and existing pattern of woodland and tree cover by planting new belts and woodlands to provide visual and ecological linkage between isolated woodlands
  - Encourage further planting to the west to provide additional screening of residential development at Shenley, on both the skyline and the lower slopes
  - Within parklands, including Shenley Park, ensure new planting is encouraged to maintain age diversity. Ensure landscape improvements respect the historic context of existing features and the form and character of parkland and gardens.
  - Identify key public views across the Vale of St. Albans. Ensure that woodland is managed to retain and frame these views.
- 4.12. South of Radlett Lane and south-east of Shenley, the landscape forms part of the 'High Canons Valleys and Ridges' character area. This is described as *"an undulating series of close ridges and valleys. The ridges have a well-treed character due to a combination of woodland blocks, scattered trees and tall hedges. Individual houses, farms and small settlements occupy the narrow fingers of plateau overlooking the surrounding slopes of both arable and pastoral landscapes, which often have a contained character."*
- 4.13. Overall, the assessment judges the impact of built development change to be 'high'. Semi-natural habitat is 'fragmented'. There is 'limited' visibility from the outside with a 'partial' sense of enclosure. The assessment judges the 'condition and 'strength of character' of the landscape to both be 'moderate' and the management strategy is to 'improve and conserve' the landscape. Relevant strategies to help achieve this include:
- Reinforce and emphasise the topography and pattern of woodland and tree cover to the fingered ridgeline by new planting.
  - Improve public access arrangements to woodlands and links with rights of way.

### Summary

- 4.14. According to the *Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment*, of the three landscape character areas relating to Shenley, the 'Vale of St Alban's' area, in which the site is located, has the poorest quality ('poor') landscape condition and sense of character and the greatest opportunity for restoration. Development here must respect the open views across the vale to the north and has the potential to enhance recreational and wildlife/habitat links to the wider countryside. The Shenley Ridge landscape character area to the south is also recognised for the open nature of its views and requires a similar sensitive approach to change. The higher ('moderate') sense of character and condition of its landscape mean that overall it could be sensitive to change however. The High Canons Valleys and Ridges landscape to the south-east of the village also

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has a 'moderate' sense of character and condition and is therefore also potentially of relatively high sensitivity to change, however the area does benefits from a greater degree of visual enclosure from woodlands and valley landform for example.

## 5. Visual Context

- 5.1. The site visit to the wider area surrounding the site enabled the extents of its visibility to be appraised. This approximate Visual Envelope is shown on Figure 4. Given that this was based on a summer site survey, there is the potential for this approximate Visual Envelope to be slightly wider during the months when trees and hedgerows have less foliage.

### Views from the south

- 5.2. Immediately to the south-eastern boundary of the site, Combe Wood provides a strong visual buffer, limiting views from this direction. There is no public access to the wood, meaning that there are few visual receptors affected in this area.
- 5.3. From Black Lion Hill, which runs immediately adjacent to the site's south western boundary, there are glimpsed views into the site, especially in the vicinity of the southern tip of the site and further south, between the site and the junction of Black Lion Hill and Radlett Lane (see View 1). The native hedgerow along this southern boundary provides some screening, meaning that the site does not form a significant part of the view. If this southern part of the site is retained as open space, the changes to the view would be scarcely appreciated, and given the relatively low sensitivity of the visual receptors (road users), any changes would be insignificant.

### Views from the east

- 5.4. The eastern part of the site forms part of a wider pasture field which has a public footpath, the Hertfordshire Way, running through it. Views from this stretch of the Hertfordshire Way would see a recognisable change to their view, which is currently dominated by large improved grassland fields, clipped hedgerows, small copses and wider expanses of woodland on the ridgelines. Without mitigation, new development would be clearly visible, albeit set against a backdrop of existing housing in the northern part of Shenley. With the incorporation of strip of mitigation woodland planting along the north-eastern side of the site however, new development could be screened. Whilst this would result in a change to the view, new woodland would reflect the existing landscape character which is typified by woodland blocks, thus retaining the rural character of the public right of way.
- 5.5. Beyond the field immediately to the north-east of the site, Combe Wood continues to wrap around the southern part of the field providing further visual enclosure as does Dell Grove to the north. Further to the north-west, there are more distant views from parts of Footpath Shenley 21 and Shenley 025, which run broadly parallel to the eastern boundary of the site at a distance of 0.68km and 0.96km respectively. Dell Grove and Dellholes woodlands provides some screening from these paths, however, Footpath 21 in particular does allow glimpses of the site against a backdrop of some existing housing in the northern part of Shenley, including the water tower. The topography of the site means that the central valley that runs through the centre of it is concealed from view by the localised ridge to the east of the site. (See Views 3-7.)

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- 5.6. Whilst the elevated nature of parts of the site means that there are some long distance views to the north-east, the impact on potential visual receptors by developing the site would be minimal. Beyond Footpaths 021 and 025 described above, there are no obvious visual receptors that would be affected by development other than farmers and users of the private runways within the fields close to Footpath 021. Whilst there are a number of public footpaths to the south of the Arsenal Football Club training ground, these are enclosed by strong, well-managed native hedgerows which prevent long distance views towards the site.

### Views from the north

- 5.7. The visit showed that there are some long distance panoramic views from the site to the north (see Views 2, 3A and 3B), and from the highest points of the site (close to its boundary with Combe Wood) there are views to the ridgeline in the vicinity of London Colney and St Albans and Harpenden beyond. However, given the distances involved (approximately 2-13km+), any development on the site would be scarcely noticeable when viewed from these areas. Any potential impacts of new 2 storey housing development would be more noticeable within a distance of up to 2km and within this study radius such visual receptors would be limited to users of the Watling Chase Trail where it passes immediately to the north of the site, between Shenleybury and Dell Grove and users of the business units on Form Close adjacent to the site's north-western boundary. Whilst there are further footpaths that run to the north of the site, connecting with Bell Lane, the flat nature of the river floodplain landform here and presence of intervening hedgerows mean that the site is well screened from this area. Similarly, strong hedgerow buffers around the football training ground area mean that views are also restricted, although there may be glimpses of new housing in the winter months.
- 5.8. With the incorporation of an area of public open space in the northern part of the site, the setting of the footpaths to the north and north-east of the site can remain rural, with new housing screened by intervening trees. This new open space, between St. Botolph's Church and Dellholes woodland could incorporate forest-scale native trees within a woodland or park and would also be a suitable site for a community orchard.

### Views from the west

- 5.9. To the north-west of the site, at Shenleybury, views of the site from the wider area are well concealed by the existing vegetation within the churchyard of St Botolphs and grounds of St Botolphs house (former church). The main views from this area are from the eastern side of the churchyard where a field appears to be providing an extension to the churchyard and from footpaths Shenley 029 and 030, which run through the site, connecting with Black Lion Hill and the churchyard respectively. Currently, views here are of the grass field with a backdrop of Dellholes woodland area and the field beyond, enclosed by Dell Grove to the north and Combe Wood to the south. It is recommended that any development retain the rural setting of this part of the church-yard and public footpaths, providing the opportunity for a continued open space and green link between Shenleybury and the wider countryside (see paragraph 5.8).
- 5.10. Where Black Lion Hill runs immediately adjacent to the site's south-western boundary there are a small number of properties on the western side of the road which would have direct views over the site (see View 3a). Further north along Black Lion Hill, the site's hedgerow boundary thickens and includes

woodland trees, meaning that views into the site from the road and adjacent housing area to the west (in the vicinity of the eastern end of Porters Park Drive) are extremely limited (see Views 13A and 13B). Further west of Black Lion Hill, as the land rises within the western part of Shenley, a few properties on Laxton Gardens and Blenheim Mews have views of the site, as does the water tower here (converted to residential use).

### Summary

- 5.11. The site occupies a sloping site up the side of the north facing side of the Shenley ridge. At its southern, elevated end, there are some long distance views to the north, whilst from its eastern boundary there are some distant views to the east. Whilst this gives the site an open, exposed feel in places, there is the potential for the visual impact of any development to be well mitigated. There are no residential properties or roads to the north and east that would have their views changed by new development and whilst there are distant views towards Colney London and beyond, views from these areas are too distant to result in a noticeable change or significant harm to any wider panoramic views. The main receptors that could be affected in these northern and eastern areas surrounding the site are users of a number of public footpaths, including stretches of the Watling Chase Trail to the immediate north and Hertfordshire Way through/adjacent to the eastern edge of the site, as well as two footpaths that run through the site. Effects on the rural settings of these footpaths could be reduced/eliminated by the incorporation of structural woodland planting along the north-eastern edge of the site as well as an open space running through the northern part of the site, which could also incorporate forest scale trees. By incorporating woodland strips of at least 15m in width, any new development could be well screened from the immediate northern and eastern areas even during the winter months. Whilst the footpaths running through the site would inevitably have new views including housing, this could be designed and laid out so as to respect the traditional form of local Hertfordshire villages, incorporating village greens and informal lanes for example.
- 5.12. To the south and west of the site, views are extremely well contained by the existing vegetation of Combe Wood to the south and wide hedgerow/woodland strips on Black Lion Hill to the west. The rising landform of Shenley to the west also screens the site from the wider area beyond, meaning there would be no significant impacts on visual receptors in this direction.



## 6. Mitigation Recommendations

- 6.1. The preliminary landscape and visual surveys show that the site occupies an urban fringe location and whilst occupied by improved grassland, elements such as housing on the edges of Shenley and Shenleybury detract from this rural land use. If developed, there is the opportunity to provide a new softer edge to Shenley as well as a comprehensive green infrastructure which can connect existing trails and footpaths with the wider countryside to the east as well as providing new north-south routes through the site. This green infrastructure can also help maintain a physical gap between Shenleybury and Shenley and enhance biodiversity.
- 6.2. Given the site's general lack of visibility from the wider area to the west and south, the main mitigation requirements will be to provide some visual enclosure to the footpaths that run close to the northern and eastern sides of the site. This can be achieved by incorporating generous areas of open space, incorporating woodland trees around the northern and eastern boundaries of the site.
- 6.3. A landscape and visual mitigation strategy is provided at Figure 7. This shows principles that are then taken forward into the Illustrative Masterplan. The key proposals shown within the Mitigation Strategy are summarised below:
- The internal and boundary hedgerows can be conserved, forming part of a series of wider landscape corridors. These will particularly help retain the rural setting of Black Lion Hill and screen views from the west.
  - Existing groups of woodland can be retained within the network of green spaces, including those covered by the Dellholes Tree Preservation Order and surrounding the pond.
  - A minimum buffer of 15m natural green space can be included adjacent to the site's southern boundary, adjacent to the Combe Wood ancient woodland. This complies with government recommendations for protecting ancient woodland and will reduce the amount of development within this relatively elevated part of the site.
  - A corridor of open space can be incorporated along the site's north-eastern boundary, allowing sufficient space for a minimum 15m wide woodland belt. This will screen new development from nearby footpaths to the north.
  - Further new green corridors can run through the site in a south-west to north-east direction, connecting Black Lion Hill with the wider countryside, enhancing wildlife connectivity and providing space for SUDS and public rights of way.
  - The central dry valley can remain undeveloped to incorporate a north-west to south-east corridor of open space and SUDS drainage features.
  - A wide area of open space can remain at the northern part of the site, to accommodate the existing footpath routes and visually protect the setting of St Botolphs listed building and church-yard. This open area will also retain a physical gap between Shenleybury and Shenley. This space can also accommodate a variety of open space uses, including sports pitches, allotments, a community orchard and play areas.
  - Development can avoid the southern, most elevated part of the site, to reduce the visibility of new housing from the distant views to the north. This can also be achieved by locating a school and associated pitches within this area rather than housing.



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- Internal open spaces and avenue tree planting can be incorporated within the main developed part of the site, ensuring it has a leafy character. This will also soften and screen any distant views of housing from footpaths to the north and east.

## 7. Other HELAA sites

- 7.1. The Comer Homes site is one of a number of sites proposed around the village of Shenley in the HELAA. This section gives a brief comparison with some of the other sites, as shown on Figure 8.

### **NORTH-WEST OF SHENLEY:**

#### **HEL 174a, HEL350a, HEL350d and HEL350e (Bloor Homes + some land owned by HCC) and HEL 174a and HEL 174c (Department of Health)**

- 7.2. These sites all lie within the same landscape character area as the Comer Homes site, the Vale of St Albans. As such, they occupy the low lying flood plain and lower ridge slopes to the north of the village of Shenley. They consist of large open arable fields and are of relatively poor landscape condition and weak character. The influence of the M25 immediately to the north affects the tranquillity of the sites. There are no existing buildings within the sites, however the western boundary of site HEL350e lies close to two Grade II listed buildings, the farmhouse at Wild Farm (White House) and the 'stable buildings to the south of Harperbury Hospital'. A further grade II listed structure, 'London coal duty marker on district boundary' lies within the site HEL350e. Any development would need to address their settings.
- 7.3. Two small areas of (non-ancient) woodland within the western side of the sites, together with mature vegetation within the Kingsley Green Hospital grounds, help screen the site from the wider area to the west, however the northern parts of the sites are visible to users of Shenleybury Road to the east and the B556 Harper Lane to the north. Residents adjacent to the sites' boundaries would also potentially have views of new development, namely Hadleigh Close to the north-west (adjacent to HEL174a/HEL350a), Shenleybury Cottages to the east (adjacent to HEL350a, HEL350c HEL350d, HEL350e and HEL174c) and Queens Way, Boswell Close and North Avenue to the south-east (adjacent to HEL350c, HEL350e and HEL174c).
- 7.4. Three public footpaths cross the sites, including part of the Watling Chase Trail which runs along the boundaries of all of the above sites except HEL350d. These footpaths appear to be very popular with local walkers, forming part of a network of circular routes around Shenley and the visually sensitive users of these paths would be the most adversely affected by development in the area, losing their rural settings.
- 7.5. Given the proximity of these site to Kingsley Green Hospital to the west, their development would result in the village of Shenley effectively joining up with the Hospital. This would have a significant impact on the physical and visual connection that the existing residents have with the countryside to the west of the village. West and south of Kingsley Green Hospital, the remaining rural gap between the edge of the sites and the eastern edge of Radlett would only be 1km wide. Given the designation of the area as part of the Watling Chase Community Forest, with its focus on recreational access, this impact would be particularly detrimental.
- 7.6. In summary, whilst these sites are of relatively low landscape value, they play an important role in providing a rural setting and recreational access to the countryside for residents of Shenley. If developed, the rural gap between Shenley and Kingsley Green Hospital would be virtually eliminated, and the gap between Shenley and Radlett significantly reduced.

### WEST OF SHENLEY: HEL370 (Heron'slea)

- 7.7. This site lies within the Shenley Ridge landscape character area, which, like the Vale of St Alban's area is characterised by relatively open views (Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment). This area is recognised by the Assessment as having a landscape of 'moderate' condition and strength of character and, as such, is of greater sensitivity than the Vale of St Albans area. The site indeed has some open views, occupying west and north facing slopes as it wraps around the north-western edge of Shenley. These provide panoramic rural views to the north and west from the eastern parts of the site. There is one small area of (non-ancient) woodland along the site's north-western boundary, plus some strong hedgerow belts around most of its boundaries. Other than this, the site is currently dominated by arable food production. There are no listed buildings adjacent to the site, however it lies immediately adjacent to Shenley Park (public park) and Shenley Cricket Centre. The development of this site would therefore have an adverse effect on an area of moderate landscape sensitivity and condition and the sloping nature of the site would potentially constrain accessibility/development.
- 7.8. With regards to visibility, the Watling Chase Trail public footpath runs immediately adjacent to the site's eastern boundary. While there is a strip of mature trees along this edge of the site there are glimpses through to the site in the summer and will be clearer visibility in the winter. If the site is developed, this has the potential to remove the rural context of the path, separating it from the wider countryside to the west. During the winter there is also the potential for glimpsed views of the site from housing on the north western edge of Shenley. To the west of the site, users of the Porters Park Golf Club will also have glimpses of any development beyond existing mature vegetation, with more open views in the winter although this . To the immediate south of the site, users of the Shenley Cricket Centre have some clear views through to the site. If developed, the remote, rural nature of these views could result in significantly change.
- 7.9. In summary, this is a relatively sensitive landscape that provides an important rural setting and recreational function to existing residents of Shenley and users of the Cricket Centre, Porters Park Golf Club and Watling Chase Trail. Given that the western edge of the site immediately abuts the edge of the Golf Course, (which lies adjacent to the eastern edge of the town of Radlett) the development of this site would significantly erode the character and width of the rural gap between Shenley and Radlett. As part of the designated Watling Chase Community Forest this would not be consistent with the Core Strategy's Objective 15 of promoting *"sustainable access to the wider countryside"*.

### SOUTH & WEST OF SHENLEY:

**HEL350b (Bloor Homes), HEL174b (Department of Health), HEL196 (Mr and Mrs Monk), HEL360 (Wood Hall Estate/ Fairfax) and HEL348 (Eddie McGuire)**

- 7.10. The above sites all lie within the Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessments 'High Canons and Ridges' Landscape Character Area. Landscape here is judged to be of 'moderate' condition and character and is therefore more sensitive than the sites within the Vale of St Albans area. The leafy rural character of the sites has been less harmed by the influence of adjacent development than those in the Vale of St Albans and therefore any development has the potential to have a greater influence on landscape character, both within the sites and the wider character area. All of the sites are enclosed at least in part by mature hedgerow boundaries which will need to be conserved and respected if any future development takes place. All are currently in agricultural use, either for pasture or arable food production.

- 7.11. Site HEL348 is of particular landscape sensitivity, consisting of a small historic parkland associated with a house on London Road, Shenley. This site contains a large number of mature trees and woodland groups, including along the London Road frontage. These provide an important element within the London Road streetscene. This part of the site also lies within the Shenley Conservation Area. If a vehicular access to the site is proposed in this area it could particularly harm both the trees and wider character to this part of the Conservation Area and visual amenity of London Road. This site also includes some existing buildings which may be of historic interest.
- 7.12. HEL360 and HEL196 both lie to the south of Radlett Lane, a relatively busy rural road. HEL360 in particular has relatively poor pedestrian and physical connectivity to the rest of the village, being separated by Shenley Park to the north. In the summer months both are well screened by existing vegetation along the Radlett Lane boundaries (and existing properties on HEL196), however in the winter, views into the sites from Radlett Lane would be more apparent, affecting the rural character of the lane and western edge of Shenley.
- 7.13. Whilst Sites HEL350b and HEL174b have the characteristics of the High Canons and Ridges landscape character area, they are physically connected to the other Bloor sites to the north-west of the village. There is no obvious direct access to the sites from Radlett Lane and due to their distance from Shenley it is presumed that they could only come forward in conjunction with the other potential development sites to their east. The sites are well concealed by mature vegetation around their boundaries, however a public footpath runs through the middle, meaning that sensitive visual receptors using the path would have their views significantly affected. As described in paragraph 7.5, the development of these sites would have a significant effect on the recreational value and rural setting of the countryside to the west of Shenley and contribute to the erosion of the rural gap between Radlett and Shenley.

## 8. Summary and Conclusion

- 8.1. A landscape and visual review has been undertaken of the land owned by Comer Homes (HEL236a and HEL236b). This has been undertaken by a Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute and Urban Design Group Recognised Practitioner. The review included a desk based review of relevant planning designations, OS mapping, and aerial photography and published landscape character assessments. A site visit was also undertaken, including the site itself and footpaths in the wider area around Shenley. This included walking public footpaths through or adjacent to the other HELAA sites to the west and south of the village.
- 8.2. The appraisal shows that the site lies within an area of 'poor' landscape condition and 'weak' strength of character. As such development would not result in the loss of an important area of landscape, instead providing the opportunity for enhanced recreational connectivity with the wider rural area, provision significant areas of woodland planting and a denser network of wildlife corridors. Whilst the southern and eastern parts of the site are relatively elevated and offer some long distance panoramic views to the north and east, the impacts on visual receptors in these directions would not be significant, given the distance of the receptors from the site. Views from the immediate network of public footpaths to the north and east generally benefit from the screening effects of existing woodland and hedgerows, and with new woodland planting on these edges of the site, any current views of the site could be significantly reduced/eliminated. Views from the west and south are already well screened by the existing Combe Wood to the south and mature hedgerows and rising land levels to the west. An existing area of woodland within the site, Dellholes, is covered by a Tree Preservation Order, and would be retained, providing further visual enclosure to the site from the east.
- 8.3. Whilst there are two listed buildings close to the western boundary of the site, they have no visual connectivity with the site during the summer, and only the potential for glimpsed views (from St Botolphs only) in the winter. Again, any views of new development could be screened or avoided by retaining an open space adjacent to this edge of the site and incorporating new tree planting.
- 8.4. A brief landscape and visual review of the other HELAA sites surrounding Shenley was carried out. This showed that according to the Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment, sites to the south-west and south of the village both lie within areas of higher landscape value and condition than the Comer Homes site, and as such, their loss to development would be more significant. The site to the south of London Road (HEL348) also partially lies within the Shenley Conservation Area and contains a significant number of mature trees associated with its historic parkland character. If developed this could result in tree loss along the London Road to accommodate vehicular access, having an adverse effect on the Conservation Area and visual amenity of the road.
- 8.5. The development of the proposed sites to the west of Shenley would all result in the loss of a well-used part of the Watling Community Forest, as the rural setting of existing rights of way are replaced by housing. Compared to the Comer Homes site, this is of particular concern, as this would result in a significant erosion of the rural area between Shenley and Radlett, significantly reducing the accessibility to rural walks on this side of the village. This would be in particular contravention to Hertsmeire Local Plan's Core Strategy Objective 15 of promoting "*sustainable access to the wider countryside*".
- 8.6. In summary, the Comer Homes site provides a highly suitable location to provide additional homes in the

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village Shenley. It would not compromise the relatively narrow rural gap between Radlett and Shenley to the west with its recreational importance, instead enhancing accessibility and connectivity to the wider countryside to the east. Whilst there are some long distance views from the site to the north and east, impacts on footpath users within this wider area would not be significant due to their distances from the site.

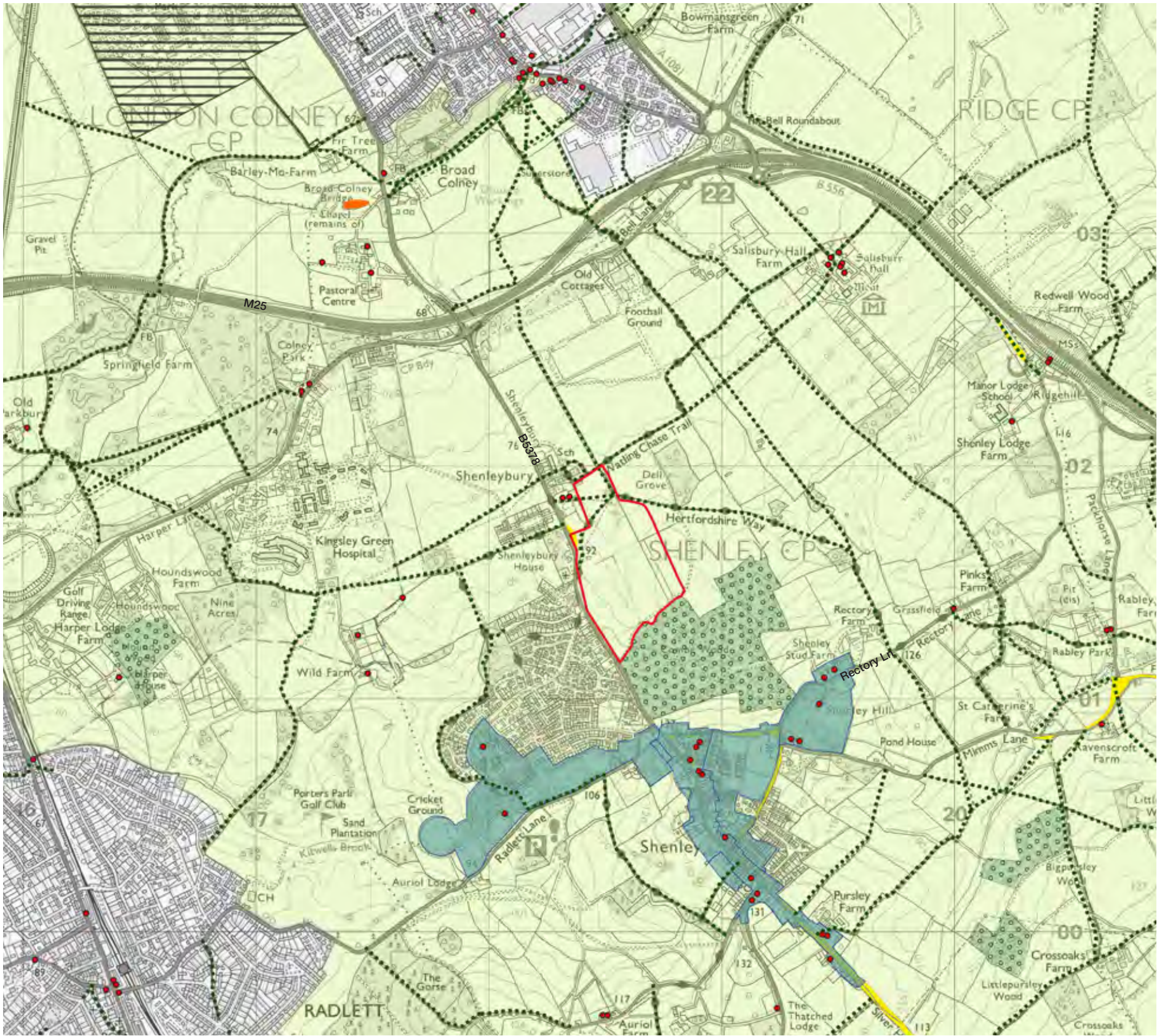
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## Appendix One Figures

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Figure1: Landscape Designations



- Public Rights of Way
- Ancient Woodland
- Green Belt
- Conservation Area
- Listed Buildings
- Open Access Land (Countryside and Rights of Way Act)
- Scheduled monument
- Site Boundary

title	Figure1: Landscape Designation	1:20000 @ A3	
client	Comer Homes	revision	-
project	Rectory Farm, Shenley	date	14 June 2018
job no	MSBN 405813	drawn by	SM
drawing no	SA001	checked by	RB

urban design studio

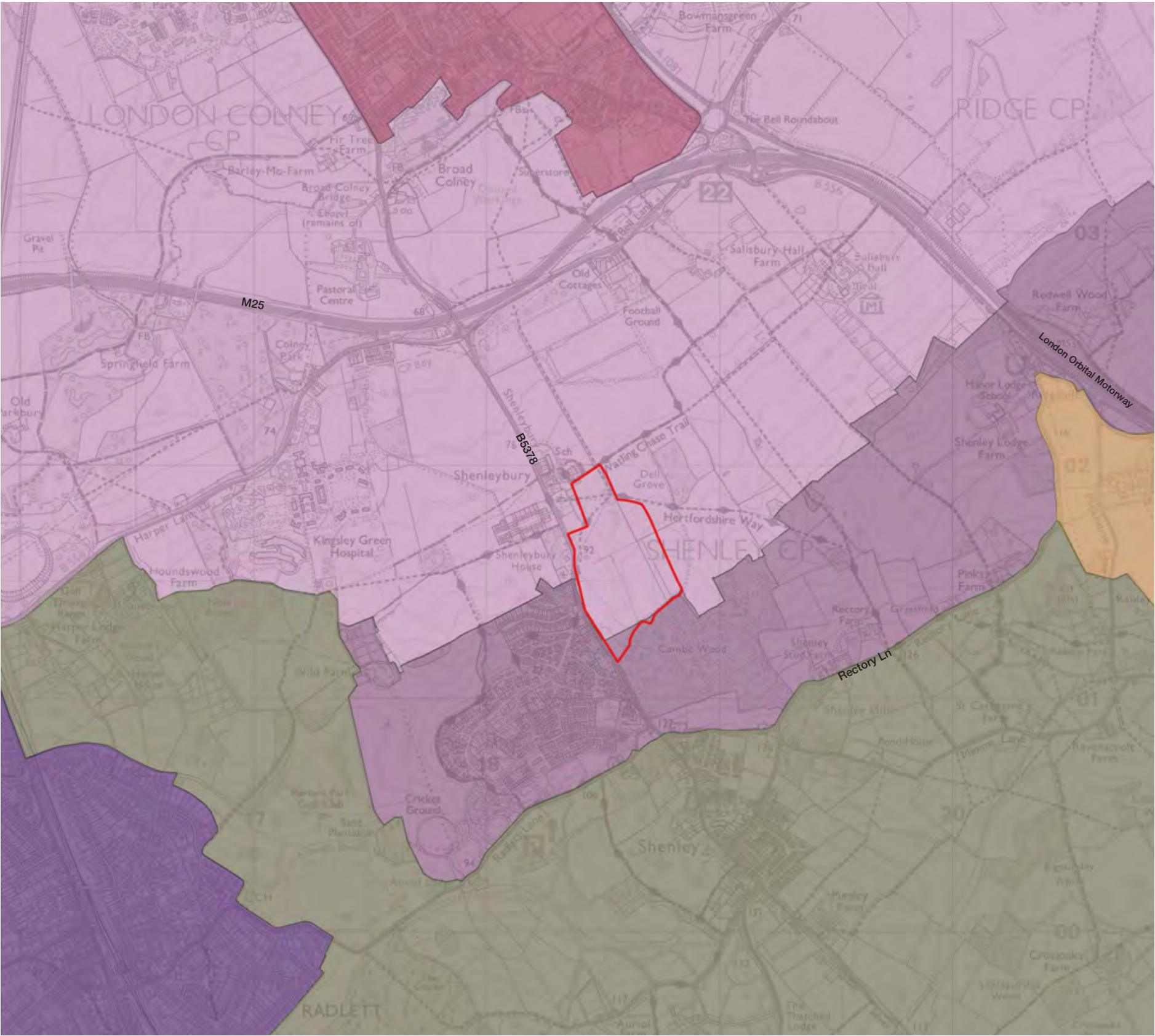
Southampton  
Birmingham  
Cambridge  
London  
Oxford

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Figure 2: Hertfordshire Landscape Character Areas



- St Albans (No LCA)
- Vale of St Albans
- Shenley Ridge
- Catherine Bourne Valley
- High Canons Valleys and Ridges
- Arkley Plain
- Site Boundary

Note: The entire study area has within National Character Area III Northern Thames Basin


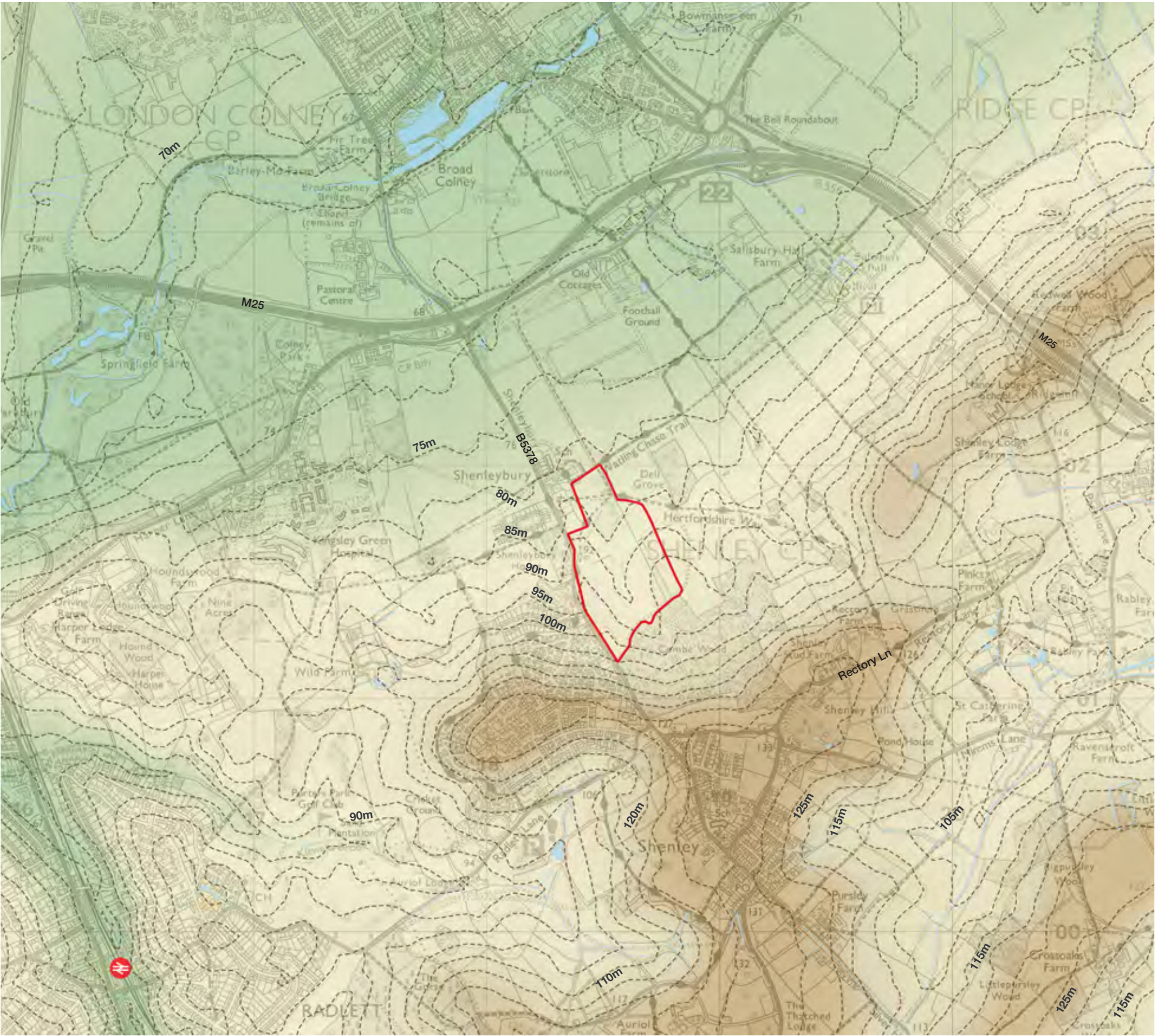



title	Figure 2: Hertfordshire Landscape Character Areas	1:20000 @ A3	
client	Comer Homes	revision	-
project	Rectory Farm, Shenley	date	12 June 2018
job no	MSBN 405813	drawn by	SM
drawing no	SA002	checked by	RB



Figure 3: Landform & Water Features



-  Height Above Ordinance Datum (AOD)
-  Water Bodies
-  Site Boundary


title	Figure 3: Landform & Water Features	1:20000 @ A3	
client	Comer Homes	revision	-
project	Rectory Farm, Shenley	date	12 June 2018
job no	MSBN 405813	drawn by	SM
drawing no	SA003	checked by	RB



Figure 4: Site Context

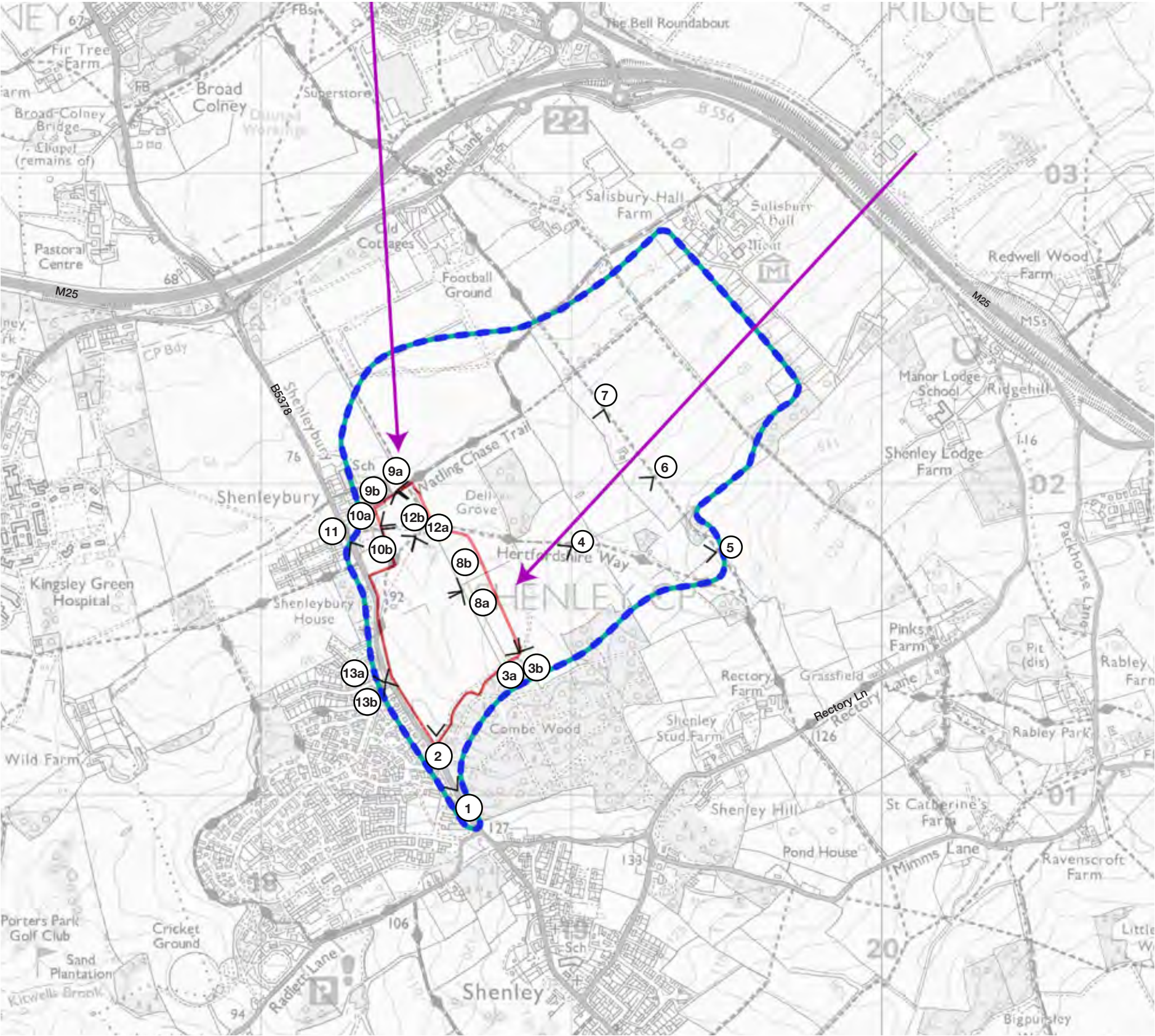


- Built Form
- Motorway
- A Roads
- B Roads
- Minor Roads
- Public Rights of Way
- Woodland
- Ancient Woodland
- Water Bodies
- Railway
- Train Station
- Site Boundary

title	Figure 4: Site Context	1:20000 @ A3	
client	Comer Homes	revision	-
project	Rectory Farm, Shenley	date	12 June 2018
job no	MSBN 405813	drawn by	SM
drawing no	SA004	checked by	RB



Figure 5: Visual Appraisal



- Primary Visual Envelope (assuming no mitigation)
- Distant views
- Photo viewpoint location
- Site Boundary

title	Figure 5: Visual Appraisal	1:15000 @ A3	
client	Comer Homes	revision	-
project	Rectory Farm, Shenley	date	12 June 2018
job no	MSBN 405813	drawn by	SM
drawing no	SA005	checked by	RB

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