





04. CONCEPT DESIGN AND VISION

04. CONCEPT MASTERPLAN

The Concept Masterplan demonstrates the general design principles for the Site.

4.1 INITIAL CONCEPT MASTERPLAN

The vision for the Site at Colney Heath is to create a place which is well integrated with its context and responds sensitively and appropriately with the assessed constraints and opportunities. A mix of housing types and tenures will be provided that suit the needs of the local community, including first time buyer homes and family homes.

Drawing on the assessment of the Site's Opportunities and Constraints, an initial Concept Masterplan has been prepared to illustrate how a sustainable, high quality new neighbourhood can be readily assimilated into the existing community of Colney Heath.

Land Use and Density

The Site is anticipated to accommodate circa 3.85 hectares of residential development, which equates to approximately 155 new homes. This will ensure an efficient use of the Site whilst providing sufficient space to buffer the Listed Buildings at Colney Heath Farm and an appropriate offset to the River Colne. The provision of new landscape boundary planting will significantly increase the level of hedgerows and tree planting on the Site, improving wildlife connectivity and redefining the Green Belt boundary.

Movement

It is envisaged that vehicular access to serve the new homes will be provided via Tollgate Road. To create the basis for a legible new neighbourhood with a strong sense of place, a tree-lined spine street will lead off this access point and run through the heart of the development.

The vehicular access point has the potential to include a 2.0m wide footway either side of the carriageway connecting to the existing footway along the southern edge of Tollgate Road. These new footways will enable residents to access the existing bus stops located along Tollgate Road easily and safely.

Elsewhere, the design proposals provide two linkages to the existing public footpath which runs alongside the Site's north western boundary to maximise connectivity with the adjacent areas of Colney Heath. This, along with the safe and convenient access to the bus stops along Tollgate Road, will encourage more sustainable movement patterns for local trips.






















-  Site Boundary : **7.72ha**
-  Potential area for residential development: **3.85ha (155 dwellings @ 35/40 dph)**
-  Potential location for a children's play area (20m buffer required)
-  Potential open space to serve the new development
-  Potential seating/picnic area
-  Potential location for SuDS (Sustainable Drainage Systems) features
-  Dwellings frontages
-  Potential vehicular access points
-  Potential spine road throughout the development
-  Potential secondary streets
-  Potential recreational routes through the development
-  Potential mown path
-  Existing public footpaths
-  Existing vegetation
-  Green Belt
-  Existing waterbodies and water courses
-  Listed Buildings
-  Colney Heath Local Nature Reserve
-  Existing bus route and bus stops
-  Fluvial flood zone 2 (Source: Environment Agency)
-  Fluvial flood zone 3 (Source: Environment Agency)



Figure 4.1: Concept Masterplan

Green Infrastructure

The Concept Masterplan shows how a green infrastructure framework could be delivered to conserve and improve the existing landscape features, and establish a variety of new landscaped areas with recreational routes and wildlife habitats. These areas of green space include:

- **Green corridors located alongside the Site's boundaries to encompass the new homes within a large area of open space within which new landscaping will supplement the existing hedgerows to greatly improve their ecological and landscape value.**
- **Traffic-free pedestrian routes will meander through the open space, supporting active lifestyles for both new and existing residents alike. It will connect directly with the public footpath along the Site's north western boundary.**
- **Green space within the western parts of the Site will incorporate a new children's play area, located close to the existing public footpath, maximising its accessibility for new and existing residents alike. High quality new tree and hedgerow planting and street furniture will create an attractive destination and community focal point.**
- **The community focal point function of the southern part of Site will be reinforced by the creation of a picnic/seating area and access points to the River Colne, facilitated by mown paths and timber steps.**
- **New native planting throughout the open spaces, including specimen trees, thicket planting and wildflower grassland, will contribute to the Site's green infrastructure.**
- **Two large SuDS ponds are proposed within the open space, located outside the flood zones, will provide ecological benefits as well as their primary function to control the flow of heavy or persistent rainfall. The large flood zone areas have shaped the open space along the southern boundary, along with the aforementioned green infrastructure offering, to provide a destination bringing both social and environmental benefits for new, existing residents and wildlife alike.**

Policy 70 (Design and Layout of New Housing) of the City and District of St Albans District Local Plan Review 1994 and the Saved and Deleted Policies Version (July 2020) requires that developments of 100 or more new dwellings should be provided with appropriate public open space including children's playground(s) on the basis of 1.2 hectares per 1,000 persons, with an average household occupancy of 2.5 per dwelling.

The table below, demonstrates the standards set out in the St Albans City and District Emerging Local Plan **Policy L28**:

Type of Green Space	Quantity Standard (sqm/person)	Quantity required for around 155 new homes:	Quantity proposed within the new development:
Amenity Green Space	15	0.58ha	In excess of the required 0.77ha
Natural and Semi Natural Green Space	5	0.19ha	
Parks and Gardens	12	0.47ha	Off-site contribution
Allotments	4.5	0.17ha	Off-site contribution
Children's play areas	0.6	233sqm	LEAP – 400m ²
Teenage areas	0.18	70sqm	Space to provide teenager play equipment or shelter.
		TOTAL: 1.44ha	3.77ha of the Site will become Public Open Space

155 new homes require approximately **1.44ha** of public open space. The provision of **3.77ha** means the open space provided exceeds the Emerging Local Plan requirements by **2.33ha**.



The development could provide new and existing residents of Colney Heath with 3.77ha of new public open space, far exceeding policy requirements





The development could provide new areas of amenity greenspace, rich in biodiversity and attractively landscaped for residents of Colney Heath to enjoy



05. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The potential new neighbourhood at Colney Heath represents a sustainable and deliverable solution to meet St Albans City and District Council's housing needs. The new neighbourhood would generate significant economic, social and environmental benefits, whilst supplying a wide range and mix of market and affordable homes. The development would comply with the Framework's Core Planning Principles, and the three strands of sustainable development.

5.1 SOCIAL OBJECTIVE

- The delivery of around 155 market and affordable homes will deliver a wide range of tenure and dwelling types to address both the District's and Colney Heath's future housing needs.
- Increasing opportunities for walking in and around the Site, with the potential for the creation of new pedestrian connections with the adjacent public footpath. The opportunity may also exist to help improve nearby public rights of way.
- The provision of a high-quality residential development that has the potential to create an attractive and well-designed place to live.
- The delivery of informal and formal on-site green space, including equipped children's play provision and a picnic/seating area, to provide opportunities for recreation, and to support the creation of a healthy and vibrant community, which promotes a strong sense of wellbeing.

5.2 ECONOMIC OBJECTIVE

- Support for existing businesses, and opportunities for the creation of new enterprises, by attracting and retaining staff in the local area.
- Support for local construction firms and material suppliers during the construction phase of the development.
- Increased spending power and patronage to support existing services and facilities in Colney Heath and the wider surrounding area.

5.3 ENVIRONMENTAL OBJECTIVE

- The delivery of green space and the creation of a high-quality landscape framework, that has the potential to greatly diversify the existing range of on-site habitats and secure net-biodiversity gains.
- The provision of SuDS features will be used to avoid any adverse impacts in terms of flood risk and have the potential to create new habitats and ecosystems.
- At the detailed design stage, the new homes will be designed to meet national and local targets in respect of reducing energy demand, carbon emissions and energy efficiency.



Midgha Close



06. DELIVERY

Vistry Group believe that Land at Colney Heath, provides a viable, realistic and logical opportunity to help the Council fulfil its housing needs over the Local Plan period. The Council identifies the existing settlement at Colney Heath, and the proposed development as part of the Metropolitan Green Belt (Policy 1 of the Local Plan 1994 and Draft Policy S3 of the Emerging Local Plan 2019). The technical studies, undertaken in Section 3 of this Vision Document, conclude that the new houses along with the adjoining settlement could be retained wholly within the Green Belt, without significant impact to the functions of the Green Belt.

This Vision Document comprehensively demonstrates how the Site at Colney Heath has the potential to support a sustainable neighbourhood for around 155 dwellings.

- **The Site is within the control of Vistry, a national housebuilder with an established reputation and the experience and expertise to successfully guide a proposal through to implementation. Vistry is committed to delivering a viable and sustainable development as soon as possible.**
- **The Site is sustainably located in relation to Colney Heath's services and facilities, together with the nearby employment areas centred upon Hatfield, St Albans and slightly Further afield in Welwyn Garden City, Hemel Hempstead and the City of London. The Site also benefits from good access to these nearby higher order settlements by sustainable modes of transport.**
- **There are no technical impediments or environmental constraints that could not be addressed through a sensitive and successful design, to deliver a high-quality proposal in this location.**

Vistry Group and the Site owner would now welcome further discussions with the Council's officers as we look to realise this exciting development opportunity, and deliver a carefully integrated and sustainable neighbourhood for Colney Heath.

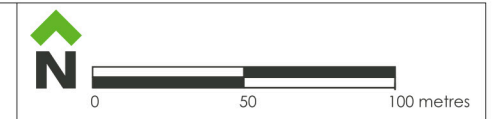
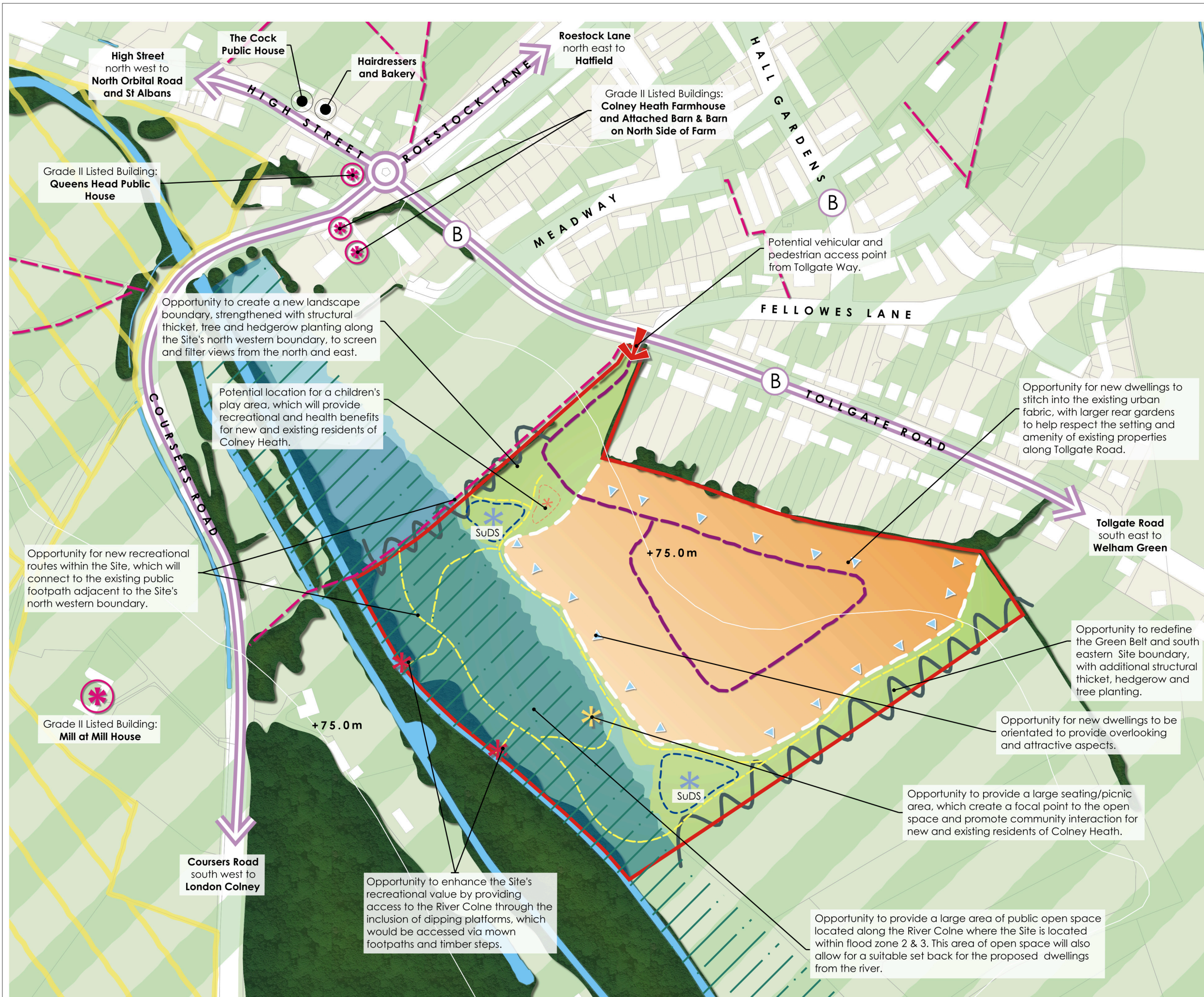
VISION STATEMENT

The Site presents an exciting opportunity to create a vibrant, well-integrated and sustainable new neighbourhood for Colney Heath. Our proposals have carefully considered the economic, social and environmental dimensions set out in the NPPF, and respond to the technical opportunities and constraints of the Site.

Our vision is to support the sustainable growth of Colney Heath without negatively impacting on the surrounding character. We will deliver high quality, mixed tenure homes in a sustainable and well-connected location to help meet the housing requirements of St Albans City and District Council.

Almost half of the Site will remain as green infrastructure but would offer public access, a new children's play area, a picnic/seating area, access to the River Colne, new circular walk and space for new landscaping and ecological enhancements.

The Site offers a key opportunity to deliver a proportionate and well-integrated housing development for Colney Heath.



- Site Boundary: **7.72ha**
- Potential area for residential development and contours: **3.85ha**
- Potential location for a children's play area (20m buffer required)
- Potential open space to serve the new development
- Potential structural landscape to define Site boundaries
- * Potential seating/picnic area
- * Potential location for SuDS (Sustainable Drainage Systems) features
- ▲ Dwelling frontages
- ➔ Potential vehicular access points
- Potential indicative vehicular route through development
- Potential recreational routes through the development
- * Potential recreational access to River Colne
- Existing public footpaths
- Existing vegetation
- Green Belt
- Existing waterbodies and water courses
- Listed Buildings
- Colney Heath Local Nature Reserve
- Colney Heath Farm Meadows Local Wildlife Site
- Existing bus route and bus stops
- Fluvial flood zone 2 (Source: Environment Agency)
- Fluvial flood zone 3 (Source: Environment Agency)

A	08.03.2021	JC	Red Line update
Rev	Date	By	Description

CSA

environmental

Dixies Barns, High Street,
Ashwell, Hertfordshire SG7 5NT

t 01462 743647
e ashwell@csaenvironmental.co.uk
w csaenvironmental.co.uk

Project	Land at Colney Heath		
Title	Opportunity & Constraints Plan		
Client	Vistry Group		
Scale	1:2500 @ A3	Drawn	JC
Date	Dec 2020	Checked	RR
Drawing No.	CSA/3925/108	Rev	A



Land south of Tollgate Road,
Colney Heath

Landscape and Visual Overview and Green Belt Assessment

Prepared by
CSA Environmental

on behalf of
Vistry Group

Report No: CSA/3925/01

September 2020

Report Reference	Revision	Date	Prepared by	Approved by	Comments
CSA/3925/01	-	24/09/2020	SG	CA	Draft Issue



CONTENTS

Page

1.0	Introduction	2
2.0	Landscape Policy Context and Character Studies	4
3.0	Site Context and Description	7
4.0	Suitability of the Site to Accommodate Development	11
5.0	Conclusion	11

Appendices

Appendix A: Site Location Plan

Appendix B: Aerial Photograph

Appendix C: Photosheets

Appendix D: MAGIC Map and Local Plan Extract

Appendix E: Extract from Green Belt Review Purposes Assessment 2013

Appendix F: Extract from Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment

Appendix G: Concept Plan

Appendix H: Potential Green Belt Boundary

Appendix I: Methodology for Landscape and Visual Assessment

Appendix J: Methodology for Green Belt Assessment

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 CSA Environmental has been appointed by Vistry Group to undertake a landscape and visual overview of land south of Tollgate Road, Colney Heath (the 'Site'). The Site lies within the Green Belt and this report also considers the impact of releasing and developing the Site in terms of the functions and purposes of the Green Belt. The report supports representations to St Albans City and District Council.
- 1.2 The Site comprises three horse grazed fields and the property known as The White Barn, and is approximately 10.8ha in size. The Site lies within the administrative area of St Albans City and District Council. The location and extent of the Site is shown on the Location Plan at **Appendix A** and on the Aerial Photograph at **Appendix B**.
- 1.3 This assessment describes the existing landscape character and quality of the Site and the surrounding area. The report then goes on to discuss the suitability of the Site to accommodate the development proposals, and the potential landscape and visual effects on the wider area. It also considers the effect of releasing the Site from the Green Belt on the Green Belt purposes.
- 1.4 A Concept Plan (contained in **Appendix G**) has been developed for the Site, along with a separate Vision Document, which form the basis of the consideration of the potential landscape and visual effects. The proposals comprise residential development of up to 194 dwellings, together with public open space and vehicular access off Tollgate Road.

Methodology

- 1.5 This assessment is based on a site visit undertaken by a suitably qualified and experienced Landscape Architect in September 2020. The weather conditions at the time were sunny, and visibility was good.
- 1.6 In landscape and visual impact assessments, a distinction is drawn between landscape effects (i.e. effects on the character or quality of the landscape irrespective of whether there are any views of the landscape, or viewers to see them) and visual effects (i.e. effects on people's views of the landscape from public vantage points, including public rights of way and other areas with general public access, as well as effects from any residential properties). This report therefore considers the potential impact of the development on both landscape character and visibility. The methodologies for both the landscape and Green Belt assessment utilised in this report, are contained in **Appendices I and J** respectively.

- 1.7 Photographs contained within this document (**Appendix C**) were taken using a digital camera with a lens focal length approximating to 50mm, to give a similar depth of vision to the human eye. In some instances images have been combined to create a panorama.

2.0 LANDSCAPE POLICY CONTEXT AND CHARACTER STUDIES

Local Policy Context

St Albans City and District Council Local Plan

2.1 The Site lies within the administrative area of St Albans City and District Council. Adopted policy relating to the District comprises the District Local Plan Review 1994. In 2007, a List of Saved Policies from the Local Plan Review 1994 was adopted.

2.2 Policies of relevance to the Site and the landscape include:

- Policy 1: Metropolitan Green Belt;
- Policy 69: General Design and Layout;
- Policy 70: Design and Layout of New Housing;
- Policy 74: Landscaping and Tree Preservation;
- Policy 93: New Areas of Public Open Space;
- Policy 97: Existing Footpaths, Bridleways and Cycleways;
- Policy 102: Loss of Agricultural Land; and
- Policy 104: Landscape Conservation.

2.3 The emerging New Local Plan for the District was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate in March 2019 for examination. Policies of relevance to the Site and the landscape include:

- Draft Policy S3: Metropolitan Green Belt;
- Draft Policy L23: Urban Design and Layout of New Development;
- Draft Policy L24: Development Amenity Standards; and
- Draft Policy L29: Green and Blue Infrastructure, Countryside, Landscape and Trees.

Local Green Belt Reviews

Green Belt Review Purposes Assessment 2013 (Extract contained in Appendix E)

2.4 The Green Belt Review Purposes Assessment was undertaken by Sinclair Knight Merz (SKM) in 2013 on behalf of St Albans City and District Council, Dacorum Borough Council, and Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council.

- 2.5 The assessment identifies strategic land parcels in the study area which are then assessed against the Green Belt purposes criteria. It then assesses the level of contribution each strategic parcel makes, or could make, towards each of the first four Green Belt purposes. The methodology used in the assessment also includes a local Green Belt purpose which is, *"Maintaining existing settlement pattern"*. The assessment states that it *"is a local purpose identified as a planning objective in the 1998 Hertfordshire Structure Plan"* (para.5.2.21). It explains that the assessment is applied to the spaces between non-1st tier settlements.
- 2.6 The Site lies within Green Belt parcel 'GB34 – Green Belt Land between Hatfield and London Colney'.
- 2.7 The assessment found that parcel GB34 makes a 'limited or no' contribution to purpose 1; a 'partial' contribution to purposes 2 and 4; and a 'significant' contribution to purpose 3 and the local Green Belt purpose. The assessment concludes: *'Significant contribution towards safeguarding the countryside and maintaining the existing settlement pattern (providing gap between Hatfield and London Colney). Partial contribution towards preventing merging (of St Albans and Hatfield) and preserving the setting of London Colney, Sleepshyde and Tyttenhanger Park...'*
- 2.8 The assessment notes that the parcel contains some built development, including ribbon development. It also notes that a minor reduction in the gap would be unlikely to compromise the separation of 1st tier settlements. It notes that the level of openness is generally high, especially in the south, but with linear built development at Colney Heath, and the A1(M) forming a major urban influence.
- 2.9 The Councils Green Belt study is however an overview, and does not take into consideration the specific Green Belt functions of smaller sites. Section 4 of this Landscape Overview assesses the Site against the five functions of the Green Belt, as set out within the NPPF.
- Green Belt Review Site & Boundaries Study 2014
- 2.10 This document was also undertaken by SKM but for St Albans City and District Council only. The main objectives of this study were to identify potential sites within the strategic sub-areas (identified in the 2013 'Part 1' study) for potential release; estimate the potential capacity of each site; and rank the sites in terms of their suitability for Green Belt release. The Site was not assessed within this study.

Landscape Character Assessments

Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment (Extract in **Appendix F**)

- 2.11 The Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment forms part of the evidence base for the St Albans City and District Local Plan. It divides the county into a series of Landscape Character Areas, with the Site lying in the Colney Heath Farmland Landscape Character Area (LCA) 30.
- 2.12 As set out within the study (extract in **Appendix F**), the LCA is located between London Colney and St Albans in the west, and Hatfield in the east. It is described as a medium-scale landscape contained by adjacent urban areas and transport routes, with visual containment provided by the good network of hedges, field trees and tree belts. The key characteristics of the Colney Heath Farmland LCA are as follows:
- 'medium-scale arable farmland;
 - *subtle gently undulating landforms;*
 - *severance by transport corridors, past and present;*
 - *areas of semi-natural restored mineral workings;*
 - *heath habitat at Colney Heath; and*
 - *urban development contains area physically but visually largely concealed.'*
- 2.13 The guidelines for change within the LCA recommend '*improving and conserving*' the landscape, and it includes a series of management strategies.
- 2.14 From our own assessment of the Site and immediate surroundings, we would note that the Site is used for horse grazing, and well contained between an area of woodland and existing housing. The character of the area is heavily influenced by the adjoining settlement.

3.0 SITE CONTEXT AND DESCRIPTION

Site Context

- 3.1 The Site is located within the south of Colney Heath, and extends to around 10.8ha. Its location and its immediate context are illustrate on the Location Plan and Aerial Photograph in **Appendices A and B**, and on the photographs contained within **Appendix C**.
- 3.2 The Site comprises three fields of horse grazing and the property known as the White Barn (east of Colney Heath Farm), and is approximately 10.8ha in size. The Site is bound by the wooded course of the River Colne to the west; Coursers Road and Colney Heath Farm to the north; Tollgate Road to the north east; the rear gardens of the linear development further south along the road to the east; and further paddocks to the south. The farmyard at Colney Heath Farm, including the Grade II Listed farmhouse and associated Listed barn, are indented in to the north of the Site, with Coursers Road beyond. The Site currently contains a stable block and manège, located roughly centrally within the Site, and accessed off Tollgate Road just to the north of the adjoining houses south of the road.
- 3.3 Public footpath Colney Heath 033 crosses the Site in a roughly east-west direction, linking the junction of Tollgate Road and Fellowes Lane in the east, to Coursers Road to the west of the river.
- 3.4 The woodland along the river to the west is dense, with tall mature trees along the river corridor. Dwellings with very large gardens lie beyond the woodland, with Coursers Road located beyond.
- 3.5 The houses which bound the Site, along Tollgate Road to the east, comprise detached and semi-detached properties, with very long rear gardens. Tollgate Farm, a working farm, lies around 120m south east of the Site, at the junction of Tollgate Road and Bullen's Green Lane.
- 3.6 Around 300m south of the Site are further detached residential properties on large grounds at and around Park Cottages, set within and adjacent to the continuation of the woodland belt along the river. There are further stables and another manège within this area.
- 3.7 The existing settlement at Colney Heath extends northwards and eastwards from the Site, with woodland and agricultural land extending to the south and west. The A1(M) motorway is around 730m east of the Site, and the M25 and London Colney are located over 2.5km to the west of the Site. The heath at Colney Heath lies to the north of Courses Road, north of the Site, with a further area located around 200m west of the Site.

Designations and Heritage Assets

- 3.8 The Multi Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside Map ('MAGIC') and the Local Adopted Policies Maps indicate that the Site is not covered by any statutory or non-statutory designations for landscape character or quality (please refer to MAGIC Map and Local Plan Extract in **Appendix D**).
- 3.9 The Site contains no trees covered by Tree Preservation Orders.
- 3.10 The farmhouse and barn to the north of it at Colney Heath Farm, are both Grade II Listed, as is the Queen's Head Public House and two London Coal Duty markers to the north of the farm.

Site Description

- 3.11 The Site comprises several areas of horse paddocks, mostly bound by fencing, although with some remnant hedgerows also occurring between the fields. In the far north east, the Site incorporates the modern barn and hardstanding at the White Barn, currently in use as a workshop/light industrial use.
- 3.12 South of the public footpath, and roughly centrally within the Site, is a linear stable block and a manège, with associated storage containers and trailers. The stables are accessed via a concrete track off Tollgate Road, just to the north of the northernmost property along the south of the road, which bounds the Site. There is a small private children's play area, as well as a timber shed, located just south of the access track, within the Site.
- 3.13 Although the Site contains some small lengths of remnant hedgerow, there is no structural vegetation of note within the Site itself. A short section of intact hedgerow and a mature tree occur in the far eastern Site boundary, with the rear garden boundaries of the adjoining properties comprising a mix of fencing and vegetation.
- 3.14 The Site's frontage along Tollgate Road is marked by a timber post and rail fence, with a footway and the road beyond.
- 3.15 The Site is relatively level, sloping down gently from the east towards the river in the west. The land around the Site is similarly very gently undulating.

Visibility

- 3.16 The Site is visually well contained. Views of the Site are mostly limited to those from the immediate surroundings, with very limited middle

distance views available, as seen on the photographs in **Appendix C**. The key views of the Site are set out below.

- 3.17 The Site is partially visible from the section of Tollgate Road and Coursers Road adjacent to it, as well as from the rear gardens of the adjoining houses (Photographs 1, 7, 8, 12, 13, 14, 17 & 18). There are further partial views from some of the houses to the north east of the Site, north of Tollgate Road, where they face onto the Site.
- 3.18 There are views of the Site from the public footpath which crosses it, although these views become filtered and then screened once the footpath exits the Site in the west, and leads through the woodland over the river (Photographs 1, 3, 4, 7 & 12). The dense woodland prevents further views from the west, although there may be winter views from the properties to the west of the woodland, east of Coursers Road.
- 3.19 Views from the heath (Colney Heath) are prevented by the intervening raised embankment along Courses Road, where it crosses the river, as well as the vegetation along this higher ground (Photograph 19).
- 3.20 In middle distance views, the Site is just visible through and over the intervening vegetation and built form, from the elevated footbridge which crosses over the A1(M) to the south east of the Site (Photograph 23).
- 3.21 The intervening hedgerow on a low bank alongside Tollgate Road to the south, prevents views towards the Site (Photographs 20 & 22), although there may be winter views through gaps in the hedge. There are partial, filtered private views towards the Site from the access track to the Park Cottage (Photograph 21).

Landscape Quality, Value and Sensitivity

- 3.22 The Site comprises horse paddocks, which are ordinary in character. The stables and barn within the Site are similarly ordinary in character, and not of any architectural or historic value or interest. There is no structural landscape features on the Site of value, with only small lengths of remnant hedgerow remaining. A public footpath does however cross the Site, with views of the Site available from it. The Site is not covered by any designations for landscape or historic character of quality.
- 3.23 The Site lies adjacent to two Listed Buildings, and the adjoining river and woodland are pleasant features within the local landscape. However, the adjoining houses which back onto the Site are ordinary in

character. The heath to the north of the Site is considered a valued landscape in relation to the NPPF paragraphs 170a.

- 3.24 Overall, the Site is assessed as being of medium to low landscape quality, and medium landscape value, with the surroundings similarly assessed as being of medium landscape/townscape quality and value, although the landscape and townscape immediate north west of the Site, are of higher value.
- 3.25 The Site is considered to have a good ability to accommodate residential development, in line with that proposed within the Concept Plan, and the Site is assessed as being of medium to low landscape sensitivity.

4.0 SUITABILITY OF THE SITE TO ACCOMMODATE DEVELOPMENT

4.1 This section provides a brief appraisal of the suitability of the Site to accommodate residential development, in terms of the landscape and visual constraints and potential effects. It also considers the potential effects of development at the Site on the purposes of the Green Belt.

4.2 As shown on the Concept Plan in **Appendix G**, the Site could be developed for around 194 dwellings. The key layout and design principles shown on the Concept Plan, include:

- Vehicular access off Tollgate Road;
- The new homes located within the east of the Site, adjacent to the existing houses, with a large green corridor along the wooded riverside retained as public open space;
- Retention of the existing public footpath across the Site, within a green corridor of open space;
- We have assumed that the new homes will be no higher than 3 storeys in height;
- Retention of an area of open space adjacent to Colney Heath Farm and the Listed Buildings there; and
- The incorporation of new structural vegetation along the Site's southern boundary, around Colney Heath Farm, along Tollgate Road, and within the new area of public open space, including adjacent to the river.

Relationship to Settlement

4.3 The proposed development will be very well related to the existing settlement at Colney Heath, and will lie adjacent to the existing houses on Tollgate Road, as well as those along Coursers Road and Roestock Lane. The proposed development would be well contained by the existing houses to the east and north, and by the wooded riverside to the east, with the woodland forming a strong boundary to further development to the west.

4.4 The proposed development will therefore form a natural rounding off of the settlement in this location. In addition, the proposed development can be designed to create an attractive, outward

facing development edge, as opposed to the current settlement edge which is formed by rear garden boundaries.

- 4.5 The proposed area of open space in the west would form a natural extension to the publically accessible heath to the north, and new recreational footways within the open space would link the public rights of way on the Site, to the open space at the heath to the north.

Visual Effects

- 4.6 As set out in Section 3, the Site is visually very well contained, with views, for the most part, limited to those from the adjoining area.
- 4.7 The new homes will be visible from a section of Coursers Road to the north, as well as from the vicinity of its junction with Tollgate Road. The new development will also be visible from Tollgate Road adjacent to the Site, and from a section of Meadway and Fellowes Lane to the north of Tollgate Road. The new homes will be seen within the context of the existing adjoining settlement, and although the views will change, the new homes will not appear out of character within the area.
- 4.8 The proposed development will also be visible from the rear windows of the properties which bound it, as well as visible in partial views from some of the nearby properties to the north east which face towards the Site (north of Tollgate Road). The existing adjoining houses on Tollgate Road mostly have very deep rear gardens, and the intervening garden vegetation will filter views of the new homes. Additional boundary planting can be incorporated along the rear property boundaries here, to further filter the new homes in these views.
- 4.9 The tops of the new homes will be partially visible from the south and south east, including from Tollgate Road south of Colney Heath. However, the new homes will be seen within the context of the existing settlement which is also partially visible from here, and will be partially screened by the intervening vegetation. The proposed new structural vegetation along the southern Site boundary will further filter and/or screen views as it matures.
- 4.10 The new houses will be visible from the public footpath which runs through the Site. The proposals show how the new homes can be set back from the footpath, and how an open view corridor can be retained along the path towards the woodland. While the view from the footpath will change, the new homes will not appear out of character within the surrounding area, and can be designed to provide an attractive and active frontage towards the footpath. New

tree and vegetation planting along the footpath will filter and soften the new homes in views, as the vegetation matures.

Landscape Effects

- 4.11 As set out in Section 3, the Site is assessed as being of medium to low sensitivity to residential development. The proposed development will be well contained by the existing settlement to the east and the woodland to the west, with views similarly contained. The Concept Plan shows how a development could come forward, which respects the adjoining wooded riverside and the heath to the north, while also connecting to the existing settlement to the north and east, and also creating an attractive, outward facing settlement edge.
- 4.12 The proposals would be capable of being well designed in terms of its layout and architectural style, with sufficient public open space to respect and reflect the existing landscape and townscape character of the area. New habitats and ecological mitigation areas could be incorporated within the open space, and the proposals would allow for an increase in native tree and structural vegetation cover. It could also provide new recreational and walking opportunities, including a children's play area.
- 4.13 While the character of the paddocks will change, the new development will be well suited to its context, and will not appear discordant.
- 4.14 As the Site is well contained, both physically and visually, the proposed development will not have a material effect on the wider townscape or countryside. The proposed structural vegetation along the southern boundary will ensure a strong, well defined edge to the settlement in this location, and will also aid in assimilating the new development into the existing landscape and townscape, in the limited instances where it is visible from the middle distance to the south.

Impact of Releasing the Site from the Green Belt

- 4.15 The following section sets out our assessment of the Site performance against purposes 1-4 of the Green Belt, as set out in paragraph 134 of the NPPF. The 5th purpose of the Green Belt is not considered, on the basis that this purpose is considered to apply equally to all areas within the Green Belt.
- 4.16 It should be noted that the existing settlement at Colney Heath is a Green Belt Settlement, and therefore lies wholly within the Green Belt. As set out earlier, the proposed development will be very well contained, and very well related to the existing adjoining settlement.

The proposed development would therefore form a logical part of the settlement, and the new houses along with the adjoining settlement could be retained wholly within the Green Belt, without significant impact to the functions of the Green Belt, as assessed in detail below.

- 4.17 The option also exists to remove the settlement from the Green Belt, with the potential Green Belt boundary following the woodland belt to the west of the Site, and then the proposed new structural vegetation along the southern Site boundary. A potential Green Belt boundary around the settlement is shown in **Appendix H**, to illustrate how it could be drawn.

1. To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas

- 4.18 The Site is well contained by the adjoining woodland to the west, and the proposed new structural vegetation along the southern Site boundary will form a strong edge to development there, which reflects the existing residential built extent along Tollgate Road to the north east.
- 4.19 As set out earlier, the Site is very well related to the existing settlement, and the proposed development at the Site will form a logical extension and rounding off of the settlement in the south west.
- 4.20 A planned development can therefore be accommodated at the Site without resulting in unrestricted sprawl and the Site is considered to make a **weak / no contribution** to this Green Belt purpose.

2. To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another

- 4.21 The settlement at Colney Heath comprises three parts, with the Site located adjacent to the south westernmost part of the settlement.
- 4.22 The nearest settlement to the west of the Site is London Colney, over 2.5k away. To the south, the nearest settlement is South Mimms, at over 4km away. There is no intervisibility between the Site and these settlements.
- 4.23 As set out before, the proposed development will be physically and visually very well contained from the wider landscape. This, in combination with the physical distance between the various settlements, means that there will be no impact on the separation of adjoining settlements or towns.
- 4.24 The Site is considered to make a **weak / no contribution** to this Green Belt purpose.

3. To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment

- 4.25 The Site comprises mostly horse paddocks, with very strong boundaries to the north, west and east, and further paddocks/pasture to the south. The woodland to the west prevents views of the Site from the west, and forms a strong barrier to the wider countryside, resulting in the character of the Site being more heavily influenced by the adjoining settlement than that of the wider landscape beyond. The Site can be described as having an edge-of-settlement character.
- 4.26 The southern Site boundary to the adjoining paddocks is proposed to be strengthened with new native structural vegetation, and this will ensure a firm edge to the settlement in this location.
- 4.27 The Site is therefore considered to make a **relatively weak contribution** to this Green Belt purpose.

4. Preserve the setting and special character of historic towns

- 4.28 Colney Heath is not defined as a 'town' within the settlement hierarchy for St Albans District. In addition, it has no Conservation Area. Although the Site adjoins Listed Buildings to the north, the vast majority of buildings adjacent to the Site date from the 20th Century and are not of historic value. We therefore consider the Site to make a **weak / no contribution** to this Green Belt purpose.

Conclusion

- 4.29 Overall, development of the Site would create a well contained extension to Colney Heath, which is very well related to the existing settlement. Colney Heath is a Green Belt Settlement, however, the proposed development at the Site would not have a material effect on the purposes of the Green Belt.
- 4.30 The potential exists to redraw the Green Belt boundaries, to exclude the adjoining settlement and the proposed development from it, with the existing woodland to the west of the Site, as well as the proposed southern vegetation belt, forming robust Green Belt boundaries adjacent to the Site.

4.31 The Site's performance against the first four Green Belt purposes is summarised in the table below. The Green Belt methodology used to inform this assessment is contained within **Appendix J**.

Purpose 1: To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas	Weak / No Contribution
Purpose 2: To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another	Weak / No Contribution
Purpose 3: To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	Relatively Weak Contribution
Purpose 4: Preserve the setting and special character of historic towns	Weak / No Contribution

5.0 CONCLUSION

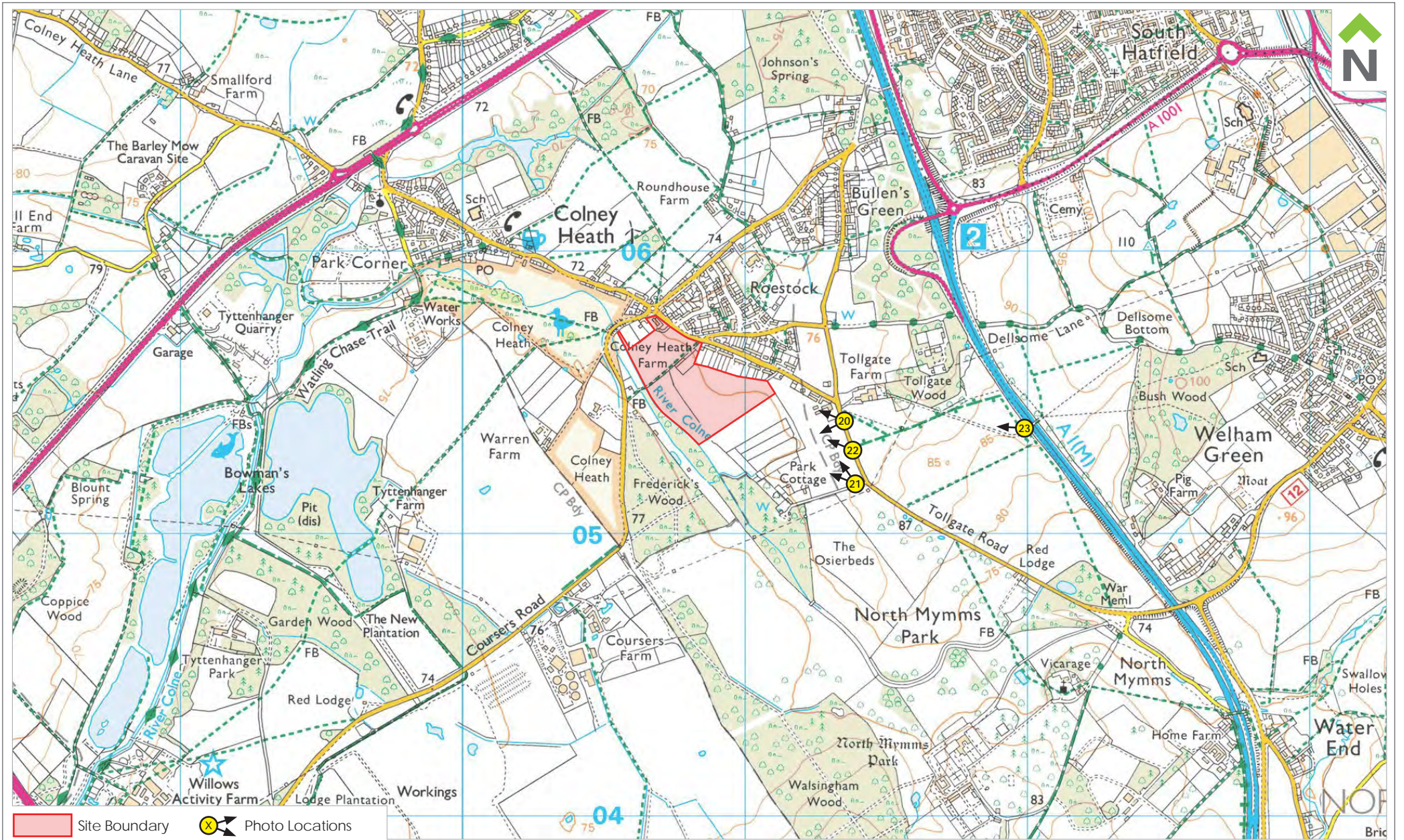
- 5.1 The Site to the south of Tollgate Road, Colney Heath, is being promoted for residential development. It comprises three fields of horse grazing and the property known as the White Barn (east of Colney Heath Farm), and is approximately 10.8ha in size. It lies within the Green Belt. The existing settlement at Colney Heath extends northwards and eastwards from the Site, with woodland and agricultural land extending to the south and west.
- 5.2 The Site is bound by the wooded course of the River Colne to the west; Coursers Road to the north; Tollgate Road to the north east, and the rear gardens of the linear development further south along the road to the east; and further paddocks to the south. The farmyard at Colney Heath Farm, including the Grade II Listed farmhouse and associated Listed barn, are indented in to the north of the Site, with Coursers Road beyond. The Site currently contains a stable block and manège, located roughly centrally within the Site, and accessed off Tollgate Road just to the north of the adjoining houses south of the road.
- 5.3 Public footpath Colney Heath 033 crosses the Site in a roughly east-west direction, linking the junction of Tollgate Road and Fellowes Lane in the east, to Coursers Road to the west of the river.
- 5.4 The Site is not covered by any designations for landscape or historic character of quality. Although the Site contains some small lengths of remnant hedgerow, there is no structural vegetation of note within the Site itself. The stables and barn within the Site, as well as the paddocks, are ordinary in character, and not of any architectural or historic value or interest. The Site lies adjacent to two Listed Buildings, and the adjoining river and woodland are pleasant features within the local landscape. However, the adjoining houses which back onto the Site are ordinary in character. Overall, the Site is assessed as being of medium to low landscape quality, medium landscape value, and medium to low sensitivity.
- 5.5 As shown on the Concept Plan in **Appendix G**, the Site could be developed for around 194 dwellings.
- 5.6 The assessment shows that the proposed development will be well contained by the existing settlement to the east and the woodland to the west, with views similarly contained. The Concept Plan shows how a development could come forward, which respects the adjoining wooded riverside and the heath to the north, well reflecting the existing settlement form to the east. As the Site is well contained, both physically and visually, the proposed development will not have a

material effect on the wider townscape or countryside. The proposed structural vegetation along the southern boundary will ensure a strong, well defined edge to the settlement in this location, and will also aid in assimilating the new development into the existing landscape and townscape, in the limited instances where it is visible from the middle distance to the south.

- 5.7 The existing settlement at Colney Heath is a Green Belt Settlement, and the proposed development would form a logical part of the settlement. The new houses along with the adjoining settlement could be retained wholly within the Green Belt, without significant impact to the functions of the Green Belt.
- 5.8 The assessment against the Green Belt functions shows that the Site can be developed without material effects on the purposes of the Green Belt.

Appendix A

Site Location Plan



Site Boundary

X Photo Locations



Dixies Barns, High Street,
 Ashwell, Hertfordshire SG7 5NT
 t 01462 743647
 e ashwell@csaenvironmental.co.uk
 w csaenvironmental.co.uk


Project Land south of Tollgate Road, Colney Heath
Drawing Title Site Location Plan
Client Vistry Group

Date September 2020 **Drawing No.** CSA/3925/101
Scale @ A4 NTS **Rev** -
Drawn SG **Checked** CA

Appendix B

Aerial Photograph



 Site Boundary  Photo Locations



Dixies Barns, High Street,
Ashwell, Hertfordshire SG7 5NT

t 01462 743647
e ashwell@csaenvironmental.co.uk
w csaenvironmental.co.uk

Project Land south of Tollgate Road, Colney Heath

Drawing Title Aerial Photograph

Client Vistry Group

Date September 2020

Scale @ A4 NTS

Drawn SG

Drawing No. CSA/3925/102

Rev -

Checked CA

Appendix C

Photosheets



Photograph 01 View from Tollgate Road towards the Site



Photograph 02 View west along existing Site access

		Dixies Barns, High Street, Ashwell, Hertfordshire SG7 5NT t 01462 743647 e ashwell@csaenvironmental.co.uk w csaenvironmental.co.uk		
		Project Land south of Tollgate Road, Colney Heath	Drawing No. CSA/3925/103	
Drawing Title Photosheets	Date September 2020			
Client Vistry Group	Drawn SG	Checked CA	Rev -	

Hedgerow between northern and southern part of Site

Public footpath 33



Photograph 03 View south west along public footpath 33

Boundary to adjoining property

Southern part of the Site

Woodland on western boundary



Photograph 04 View south from public footpath 33, through gap in the hedge



Dixies Barns, High Street,
Ashwell, Hertfordshire SG7 5NT
 t 01462 743647
 e ashwell@csaenvironmental.co.uk
 w csaenvironmental.co.uk

Project	Land south of Tollgate Road, Colney Heath	Drawing No.	CSA/3925/103
Drawing Title	Photosheets	Date	September 2020
Client	Vistry Group	Drawn	SG
		Checked	CA
		Rev	-



Photograph 05 View over southern part of the field from public footpath 33

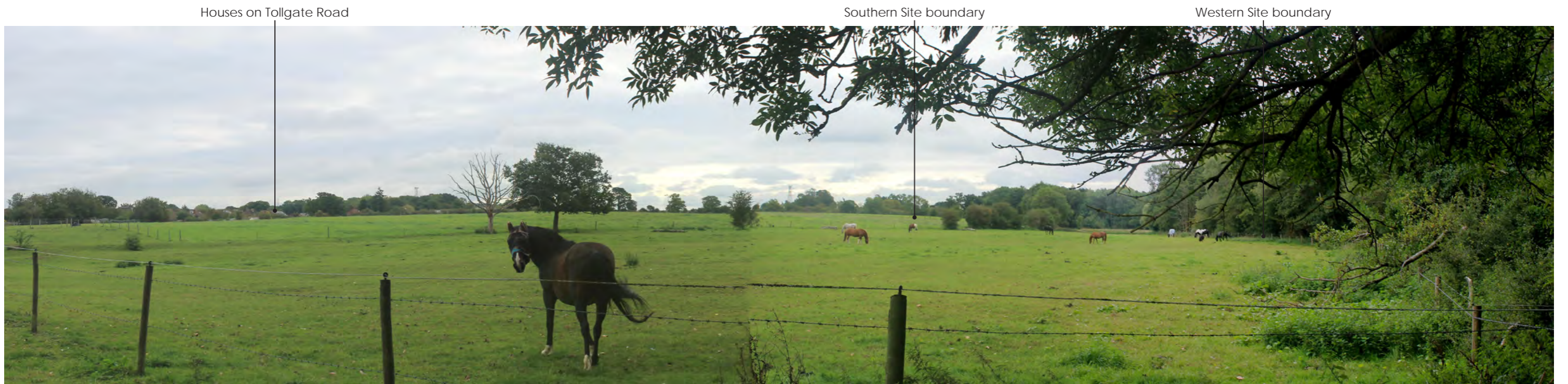


Photograph 06 View eastwards across the Site

		Dixies Barns, High Street, Ashwell, Hertfordshire SG7 5NT t 01462 743647 e ashwell@csaenvironmental.co.uk w csaenvironmental.co.uk		
Project	Land south of Tollgate Road, Colney Heath	Drawing No. CSA/3925/103		
Drawing Title	Photosheets	Date September 2020		
Client	Vistry Group	Drawn SG	Checked CA	Rev -



Photograph 07a View north east over the Site from public footpath 33



Photograph 07b View south east over the Site from public footpath 33

		Dixies Barns, High Street, Ashwell, Hertfordshire SG7 5NT t 01462 743647 e ashwell@csaenvironmental.co.uk w csaenvironmental.co.uk		
		Project Land south of Tollgate Road, Colney Heath	Drawing No. CSA/3925/103	
Drawing Title Photosheets	Date September 2020			
Client Vistry Group	Drawn SG	Checked CA	Rev -	



Photograph 08a View north east across the Site



Photograph 08b View south from the southern Site boundary

		Dixies Barns, High Street, Ashwell, Hertfordshire SG7 5NT t 01462 743647 e ashwell@csaenvironmental.co.uk w csaenvironmental.co.uk		
		Project Land south of Tollgate Road, Colney Heath	Drawing No. CSA/3925/103	
Drawing Title Photosheets	Date September 2020			
Client Vistry Group	Drawn SG	Checked CA	Rev -	

Southern Site boundary in the east

Houses on Tollgate Road



Photograph 09 View from easternmost corner of the Site, north westwards

Rear boundaries of adjoining properties on Tollgate Road

Southern Site boundary

Woodland on western boundary

Stables within Site

Tollgate Road



Photograph 10 View south west across Site from near the stables



Dixies Barns, High Street,
Ashwell, Hertfordshire SG7 5NT
t 01462 743647
e ashwell@csaenvironmental.co.uk
w csaenvironmental.co.uk

Project	Land south of Tollgate Road, Colney Heath	Drawing No.	CSA/3925/103
Drawing Title	Photosheets	Date	September 2020
Client	Vistry Group	Drawn	SG
		Checked	CA
		Rev	-



Photograph 11 View south across Site, from the access track



Photograph 12 View north westwards from public footpath 33

	Dixies Barns, High Street, Ashwell, Hertfordshire SG7 5NT t 01462 743647 e ashwell@csaenvironmental.co.uk w csaenvironmental.co.uk		
	Project Land south of Tollgate Road, Colney Heath	Drawing No. CSA/3925/103	
Drawing Title Photosheets	Date September 2020		
Client Vistry Group	Drawn SG	Checked CA	Rev -



Photograph 13 View westwards from Tollgate Road, across northern part of the Site



Photograph 14 View south across the Site from Tollgate Road

		Dixies Barns, High Street, Ashwell, Hertfordshire SG7 5NT t 01462 743647 e ashwell@csaenvironmental.co.uk w csaenvironmental.co.uk		
Project	Land south of Tollgate Road, Colney Heath	Drawing No. CSA/3925/103		
Drawing Title	Photosheets	Date September 2020		
Client	Vistry Group	Drawn SG	Checked CA	Rev -



Photograph 15 View from Tollgate Road towards the White Barn



Photograph 16 View from junction of Tollgate Road and Roestock Lane, towards the Site

		Dixies Barns, High Street, Ashwell, Hertfordshire SG7 5NT t 01462 743647 e ashwell@csaenvironmental.co.uk w csaenvironmental.co.uk		
Project	Land south of Tollgate Road, Colney Heath	Drawing No. CSA/3925/103		
Drawing Title	Photosheets	Date September 2020		
Client	Vistry Group	Drawn SG	Checked CA	Rev -



Photograph 17 View towards the Site from Coursers Road to the north



Photograph 18 View towards the Site from Coursers Road to the north west

		Dixies Barns, High Street, Ashwell, Hertfordshire SG7 5NT t 01462 743647 e ashwell@csaenvironmental.co.uk w csaenvironmental.co.uk		
		Project Land south of Tollgate Road, Colney Heath	Drawing No. CSA/3925/103	
Drawing Title Photosheets	Date September 2020			
Client Vistry Group	Drawn SG	Checked CA	Rev -	

Colney Heath Farm



Photograph 19 View towards the Site from open space adjacent to the heath

Approximate extent of Site
(hidden behind hedge)

Tollgate Farm



Photograph 20 View towards the Site from Tollgate Road south of Tollgate Farm

		Dixies Barns, High Street, Ashwell, Hertfordshire SG7 5NT t 01462 743647 e ashwell@csaenvironmental.co.uk w csaenvironmental.co.uk		
Project	Land south of Tollgate Road, Colney Heath	Drawing No. CSA/3925/103		
Drawing Title	Photosheets	Date September 2020		
Client	Vistry Group	Drawn SG	Checked CA	Rev -