



GLP

Land opposite Magna Park, Lutterworth

PRELIMINARY LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL APPRAISAL

JANUARY 2024

FPCR Environment and Design Ltd

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Preliminary Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) has been carried out by FPCR Environment and Design Ltd (FPCR). It appraises an area of land opposite Magna Park, Lutterworth. Its purpose is primarily to appraise the potential of this land, in landscape and visual terms, to be able to successfully accommodate future employment-based development.
- 1.2 This study identifies and considers the potential and relevant landscape and visual constraints, issues and opportunities through desk study and field based analysis. It appraises the potential suitability of the land for future employment-based development and the design and mitigation measures that will be beneficial to minimise any resultant adverse landscape and visual effects. It also considers the opportunities for landscape and wider green infrastructure benefits as part of a comprehensive and sustainable scheme.
- 1.3 FPCR is a multi-disciplinary environmental and design consultancy established over 60 years, with expertise in architecture, landscape, ecology, arboriculture, urban design, masterplanning and environmental impact assessment. The practice is a member of the Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment and is frequently called upon to provide expert evidence on landscape and visual issues at Public and Local Plan Inquiries.

Approach

- 1.4 The primary purpose of this report is to explore landscape and visual matters in relation to the Site and its potential to accommodate future employment based development. It considers the potential capacity for the landscape of the Site and its context to absorb change in the form of new development. The report details those landscape design and mitigation measures that should help guide future development on the Site and should also minimise any resulting landscape and visual effects.
- 1.5 This LVA has been prepared drawing upon the guidance contained within the *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment* (GLVIA3) (2013). It includes an understanding of the landscape that would potentially be affected, in terms of its constituent elements and character. For the visual baseline this includes an understanding of the area within which people experience views of the Site, and the nature of these views.

Site Location

- 1.6 Figures 1 and 2 illustrate the location and context of the Site.

2.0 BASELINE CONDITIONS

- 2.1 The baseline conditions have been determined following a review of published landscape characterisation work and other relevant studies and the results of preliminary field survey and analysis. Figures 1 – 5 support the description and appraisal of the baseline conditions.

Landscape Designations

- 2.2 The Site and the surrounding landscape are not covered by any landscape quality designations at either a national or local level.
- 2.3 In relation to other designations with relevance to landscape and visual matters, two Listed Buildings (including the Church of St Leonard) lie within the small settlement of Willey to the west of the Site. The Listed buildings are effectively visually screened from the Site by a tall mature corridor of woodland and trees along the line of a former railway. A Scheduled Monument (Bittesby deserted medieval village) lies approximately 500 metres to the north of the site beyond the A5 and existing intervening development. Newnham Paddox, a Registered Park and Garden lies approximately 1.25km to the south west of the Site beyond intervening farmland and woodland.
- 2.4 Green Belt lies to the west of the Site and the corridor of mature woodland and trees. The Site does not lie within Green Belt.
- 2.5 Designations are detailed on Figure 4.

Landscape Character

- 2.6 The following is drawn from published landscape character studies and are of most relevance to the landscape context of the Site (See Figure 3).

National Character Areas

- 2.7 National Character Area (NCA) profiles have prepared by Natural England for the 159 NCA's defined across England. This scale of assessment provides a contextual understanding of substantial landscapes areas. The Site lies within NCA 94 'Leicestershire Vales'. This extensive landscape tract stretches from the northern outskirts of Leicester in the north, to Market Harborough in the east and the edges of Rugby and Coventry in the south and south west.

- 2.8 The Summary of the 'Leicestershire Vales' NCA includes the following;

"...This is a large, relatively open, uniform landscape composed of low-lying clay vales interrupted by a range of varied river valleys. Its sense of place comes less from its overall landform and more from its visually dominant settlements and views towards surrounding higher ground...."

- 2.9 Under the heading Description the study states;

"...large- to medium-sized settlements include Market Harborough, Lutterworth and Hinckley, with many attractive small towns and villages, and buildings and features of historic interest in between. In the north of the area there is a predominance of built settlements and a general associated lack of tranquillity..

... In recent times there has been a relatively high rate of change from a more remote, rural character to an urban one..."

- 2.10 The NCA describes and evaluates the landscape character and features of the very broad context of the Site so is relevant at this scale.

County – Warwickshire Landscape Guidelines/ Project (1993)

- 2.11 Warwickshire County Council and the (former) Countryside Commission partnered to produce the Warwickshire Landscape Guidelines as part of The Warwickshire Landscape Project. This landscape assessment project identified a number of landscape types within a smaller number of primary character areas. These were mapped in non-digital format.
- 2.12 The Site lies on the northern edge of the High Cross Plateau – Open Plateau Character Area within this study. At the time of this study, the Management Strategy for this extensive landscape area was to *‘strengthen the structure and unity of the landscape through large scale woodland planting’*.

District/ Borough – Landscape Assessment of the Borough of Rugby Sensitivity and Condition Study (2006)

- 2.13 This study is described as being *‘a broad scale landscape assessment and sensitivity analysis of the Borough of Rugby, looking in more detail at the countryside around the urban fringe of Rugby itself.’*
- 2.14 The aim of the study was to examine the character of the landscape around the town, its sensitivity to change, the condition of the countryside abutting Rugby’s urban fringe and beyond, and to demonstrate how the outcomes could be used as a decision tool in the development planning process.
- 2.15 Within this study, the Site lies within the *‘High Cross Plateau – Open Plateau’* Landscape Character Type (LCT). This broad landscape tract extends across much of the north eastern part of the Borough, from Rugby in the south to the edge of Hinckley in the north. The study describes this extensive landscape as;
- “.....a remote, large-scale, open, rolling plateau dissected by broad valleys, characterised, for the most part, by wide views and a strong impression of "emptiness" and space....Field pattern is generally medium to large in scale but is often poorly defined and tends to be a relatively minor element in this landscape, as the eye is naturally drawn to distant skylines rather than to foreground views.... Shelterbelts may also form prominent features in an otherwise open and featureless landscape.”*
- 2.16 The Overall Sensitivity of the *‘High Cross Plateau – Open Plateau’* LCT is assessed in the study as *‘moderate’* and the condition for the majority of the area as either *‘weak’* or *‘in decline’*.
- 2.17 It should be noted that this study has been undertaken at a strategic scale and is also now relatively dated, including in the context of changes within this landscape since 2006.

District/ Borough – Harborough District Landscape Character Assessment (2007)

- 2.18 The Site lies on the edge of Harborough District, with the Lutterworth Lowlands and Upper Soar Landscape Character Areas extending across the broader landscape to the north of the A5 and encompassing the existing Magna Park development area. Whilst both of these Landscape Character Areas lie immediately to the north and east of the Site, these wider Landscape Character Area are also effectively separated from the Site by the existing development to the north and east.

- 2.19 Overall, this strategic study provides relevant information to the broader landscape context and setting of the Site. As advised for the Rugby Borough study above, it should also be noted that this study has been undertaken at a strategic scale and is also now relatively dated, including in the context of changes within this landscape since 2007.

Site and its Immediate Context

- 2.20 The Site comprises a small number of medium sized fields situated immediately to the west of the A5 and the existing Magna Park development. The Site is bound by the A5 road corridor to the east; the disused railway corridor and mature wooded tree belt to the west and by field boundaries to the south. It includes a number of hedgerows extending across the Site and defining the field boundaries. A relatively small number of hedgerow trees are also situated within the field boundaries within the Site.
- 2.21 Public Rights of Way (PROW) (a footpath and bridleways) cross the Site and provide links between the A5 and Willey to the west of the Site.
- 2.22 Topographically, the Site is relatively flat at around 120 - 127 metres Above Ordnance Datum (AOD), yet with a gentle fall from south to north (See Figure 5). The land to the south of the site is relatively higher and slopes up gently along the A5 to the Cross in Hand junction at around 134 metres AOD. The landform context of the site is gently rolling with small valleys situated to the north and south east of the Site.
- 2.23 To the east of the Site and the A5 lies the existing Magna Park development area. This includes a roundabout junction on the A5 providing vehicular access into the development park. The A5 is a dual carriageway to the north of the roundabout junction and alongside the Site. The existing development comprises large scale modern logistics and warehousing buildings set. A broad landscape corridor with planting lines the eastern side of the A5 at this point with an existing hedgerow and some trees extending along the western side of the road, on the eastern side of the Site.



Existing Magna Park development immediately to the east of the Site and the A5

- 2.24 The small settlement of Willey lies to the west of the Site, beyond the disused railway corridor and associated wooded belt of trees. It occupies a mature and relatively enclosed setting with limited views in and out of the settlement. The mature wooded tree belt situated between the Site and the settlement forms an effective landscape 'buffer' and visual screen and separates the settlement and its immediate surrounds from the Site and the landscape to the east of the tree belt. Any potential intervisibility between positions and properties within the settlement and the Site are very limited.



View looking across the Site (from close to the existing A5 roundabout junction), looking in the general direction of Willey (situated beyond the mature wooded tree belt)

- 2.25 Immediately to the south of the Site are a small number of further fields stretching to Coal Pit Lane. This area also includes a small group of farm buildings/ sheds, accessed via a track from Coal Pit Lane. It also includes predominantly hedged field boundaries with a small copse of mature trees. Further belts of mature trees are situated along the southern side of Coal Pit Lane.



View from Coal Pit Lane in the general direction of the Site (Site not visible; situated beyond two fields and the existing visible farm buildings)

- 2.26 These belts of mature trees in combination with the mature wooded tree belt lining the disused railway to the west of the site do visually separate the Site from the wider landscape to the west and south. The existing Magna Park also visually contains this landscape on its northern and eastern sides.
- 2.27 The general character and appearance of the Site and its immediate context is principally shaped by a combination of medium scale relatively flat fields with hedgerow boundaries generally; the presence of a strong and visually containing pattern of surrounding mature wooded tree belts; and the proximity and influence of the adjoining A5 corridor and Magna Park buildings. Whilst the Site itself is open, its more immediate context is visually well contained with larger scale building and transport influences. The Site does not include any particularly distinctive or rare landscape features or characteristics of note. At a site wide scale, the features of most landscape interest are the hedgerows and limited number of mature hedgerow trees.

Baseline Visual Analysis

- 2.28 An initial visual appraisal has been undertaken for the Site. This has explored the nature of the existing visual amenity of the area and has sought to establish the likely visibility of both the Site and any potential future development from surrounding locations and receptors.
- 2.29 Consideration of the availability of views towards the Site and any future development for visual receptors has been undertaken in parallel with the baseline landscape study. This has determined those visual receptors within the landscape that are likely to have views of the Site and any future development, considering factors such as landform, vegetation and buildings that determine the extent of actual visibility across the landscape.
- 2.30 The baseline visual analysis provides a number of reasoned conclusions in relation to the Site and potential future development, as summarised below;

- The Site occupies a visually well contained location, with wider visibility restricted by a combination of mature wooded tree belts to the west and south and by the existing Magna Park development to the north and east. The Site is not widely visible in any direction.
- Views towards the Site from positions and properties within Willey to the west are substantially screened by the mature wooded tree belt to the disused railway and the mature trees and planting within and immediately around the settlement.
- No clear views towards the Site have been identified from any properties or areas of settlement.
- Views across the Site are possible from the PROW crossing the Site yet beyond these stretches any views from PROW beyond the tree belt to the west are limited.
- Views towards the site for the road users of the A5, alongside the Site are possible yet an existing mature roadside hedgerow does visually filter some of these immediate roadside views. The existing Magna park buildings are readily apparent in these views on the opposite side of the road.
- It is likely that future employment development on the Site will be visible over a limited landscape area, largely contained by the surrounding and nearby woodland and tree belts and existing employment development.

3.0 DEVELOPMENT CONSIDERATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

- 3.1 The following provides a general commentary of the potential suitability and capacity of the Site to accommodate future employment development, in landscape and visual terms. In considering the overall suitability of the Site for potential development, other planning, environmental and technical factors will need to be appraised, alongside these matters.

Development Considerations and Appraisal

- 3.2 The Site is not within a designated landscape and it does not fall within a landscape that has been identified in any published landscape studies as being of any heightened value or sensitivity in these terms. The Site is also not identified as forming or being part of an area that performs a spatial function (e.g. an important gap or green wedge). It lies outside Green Belt which exists across the wider landscape to the west of the Site.
- 3.3 The published landscape character assessments generally indicate that the landscape of the Site and its context is varied with a mix of uses and characteristics. These studies have been prepared at a broad strategic scale and include a number that are relatively dated. They do however provide broad contextual information and indicate a gently rolling plateau landscape, with medium and larger scale farmland and the presence of shelterbelts.
- 3.4 At a more localised and detailed scale, the landscape of the Site and its immediate context comprises a combination of farmland, mature tree belts and hedgerows; the A5 road corridor and the existing Magna Park development. The Site itself is a visually well contained and does not include any features or characteristics that are particularly distinctive or rare.
- 3.5 The Site generally has a relatively close and direct relationship towards the existing Magna park development directly to the east of the A5. The existing mature wooded tree belts separate it from the more open landscapes to the west and south.
- 3.6 In landscape and visual terms, the Site has the capacity and potential to successfully accommodate new employment development. Views towards future development are likely to be relatively limited, although it will be important to further minimise and mitigate any potential visual effects as far as practicable.
- 3.7 Accommodating future employment-based development on the Site will present a number of challenges and opportunities in landscape and visual terms. It is however considered that new development can be successfully accommodated as part of a high quality sustainable development solution, including a suitably robust landscape and Green Infrastructure (GI) framework.

Landscape Strategy Principles

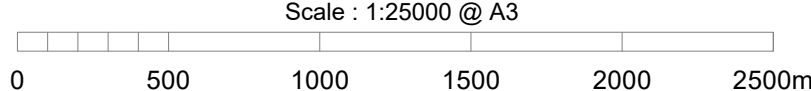
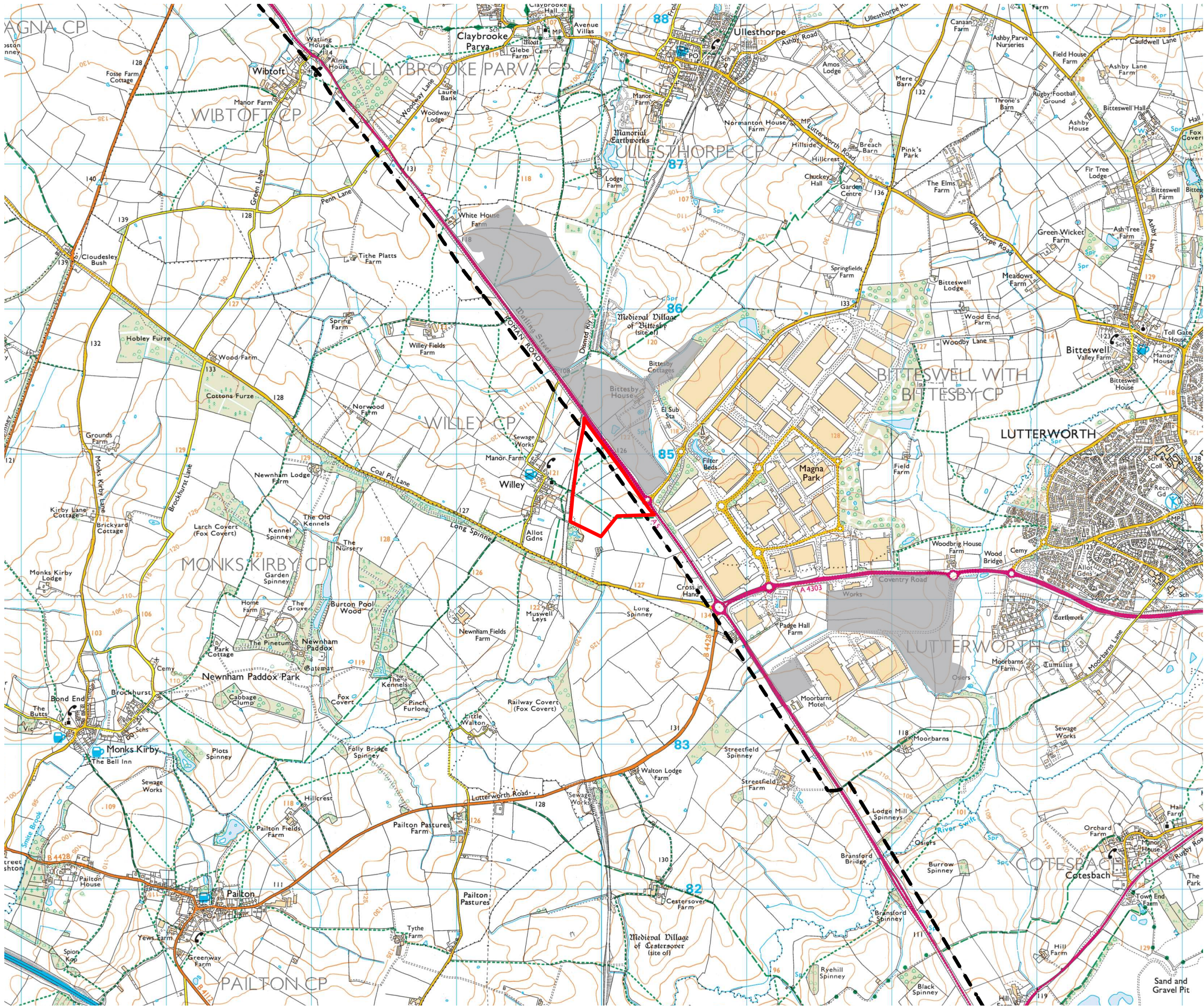
- 3.8 The following sets out the landscape principles and features that would form part of a comprehensive and high quality development scheme on the Site:
- Provide a strong landscape and Green Infrastructure (GI) framework to the development layout; including new native woodland areas and hedgerows and a mix of other habitats. This would include a tree belt 'buffer' to the southern site perimeter, comprising native and locally occurring plant species.

- Include other new native woodland, trees and hedgerow planting around the Site perimeters to reinforce the existing tree belts and hedgerows where necessary – thus strengthening existing landscape and wildlife corridors and creating a robust landscape setting to the proposed development. This would also mitigate and assist in filtering views from the immediately surrounding roads, PROW and any other receptors.
- Reinforce the existing hedgerow to the A5 roadside boundary with new trees and planting within and alongside this hedgerow; to assist in presenting a ‘green’ landscape frontage to the Site; and filtering views from the roadside towards the lower and active surrounds to the proposed employment buildings.
- Include landscape corridors extending through the built development area to incorporate the existing and/or diverted PROW routes through the Site. These landscape corridors within the development area would benefit the overall setting, amenity, biodiversity and access aspects of the scheme.
- Careful attention to the architectural and design treatment of the proposed buildings; including size/scale, heights, orientation, colours, articulation, etc – with reference paid to the relationship with the existing buildings immediately to the east of the Site.
- Establish a high quality landscape treatment to the main vehicular access and route into and through the Site and to the building frontages and surrounds.
- Maximise biodiversity opportunities, with wildlife/ biodiversity areas and corridors; including attention to the sustainable drainage proposals to deliver further landscape and wildlife benefits.

3.9 The Landscape Strategy Plan prepared for the Site responds positively to the development considerations highlighted and incorporates the landscape strategy principles and features listed above. As part of the subsequent refinement of the Landscape Strategy Plan and preparation of a more detailed development scheme for the Site, ongoing landscape and visual input would seek to further reduce any potential adverse effects and maximise the environmental opportunities and benefits of the development.




4.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 The primary purpose of this LVA is to appraise the potential of the Site, in landscape and visual terms, to be able to successfully accommodate future employment based development.
- 4.2 The landscape of the Site and its immediate context is not designated (e.g. National Park, AONB, Special Landscape Area, etc) and it does not fall within a landscape that has been identified in any published landscape studies as being of any particular heightened value or sensitivity.
- 4.3 The general character and appearance of the Site and its context is relatively varied and shaped by a combination of the gently rolling plateau landform, farmland, mature wooded tree belts, existing employment development and the A5 road corridor. The wider landscape beyond the Site to the west and south is more rural and dominated by rolling farmland with some further wooded areas and scattered settlement. The immediate landscape to the north and east of the Site is dominated by the existing Magna Park employment park, including associated landscape and country park areas.
- 4.4 Visually, the Site occupies a position that is very well-contained in all directions. Existing mature wooded tree belts immediately to the west of the Site and alongside Coal Pit Lane to the south effectively limit views from the wider and more rural landscape in these directions. The existing Magna Park employment park to the north and east restricts wider views towards the site from these directions. Consequently, there are very limited opportunities for wider or longer ranging views towards the Site and potential future development. Allied to this, any potential views towards the proposed development from positions and properties within Willey to the west of the Site are also limited due to the presence of the mature wooded tree belt along the disused railway and other mature trees and planting immediately surrounding the settlement.
- 4.5 In landscape and visual terms, the Site does have the potential to successfully accommodate proposed employment development as part of a comprehensive scheme, encompassing a robust framework of conserved and new landscape and Green Infrastructure proposals. This should include valuable new native woodland, trees, scrub and hedgerow planting, alongside other new habitats. It would also require careful attention to the design and appearance of the proposed buildings and associated infrastructure, including any earthworks.
- 4.6 New native tree belts and other areas of native woodland, scrub and hedgerow planting would aid the integration of new buildings within this landscape and assist with mitigating and filtering closer and lower level views towards the proposed development. Coupled with this, careful attention to the designs of the buildings and new landscape proposals within and around the buildings would further assist in mitigating any potential adverse landscape and visual effects.
- 4.7 The proposed development would deliver some new and beneficial landscape and Green Infrastructure (GI) measures and areas. These would encompass existing and new habitats and pedestrian routes and links across and beyond the Site. It is envisaged that these conserved and new landscape areas and proposals would also be underpinned by comprehensive and long-term Landscape and Ecological Management Plans to ensure their establishment and future success.



NOTES

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-  Site
-  County Boundaries
-  Recently constructed and consented development area (Approx and to be confirmed)



client
GLP

project
Land at Magna Park
Lutterworth

drawing title
SITE LOCATION

scale
1:25000 @ A3

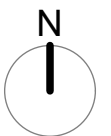
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Figure 1



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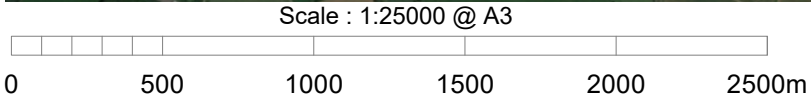





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-  Study Areas
-  Recently consturcted and consented development area (Approx and to be confirmed)





client
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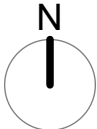
project
Land at Magna Park
Lutterworth

drawing title
AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHY

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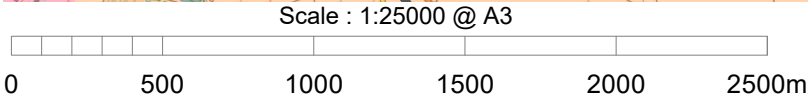
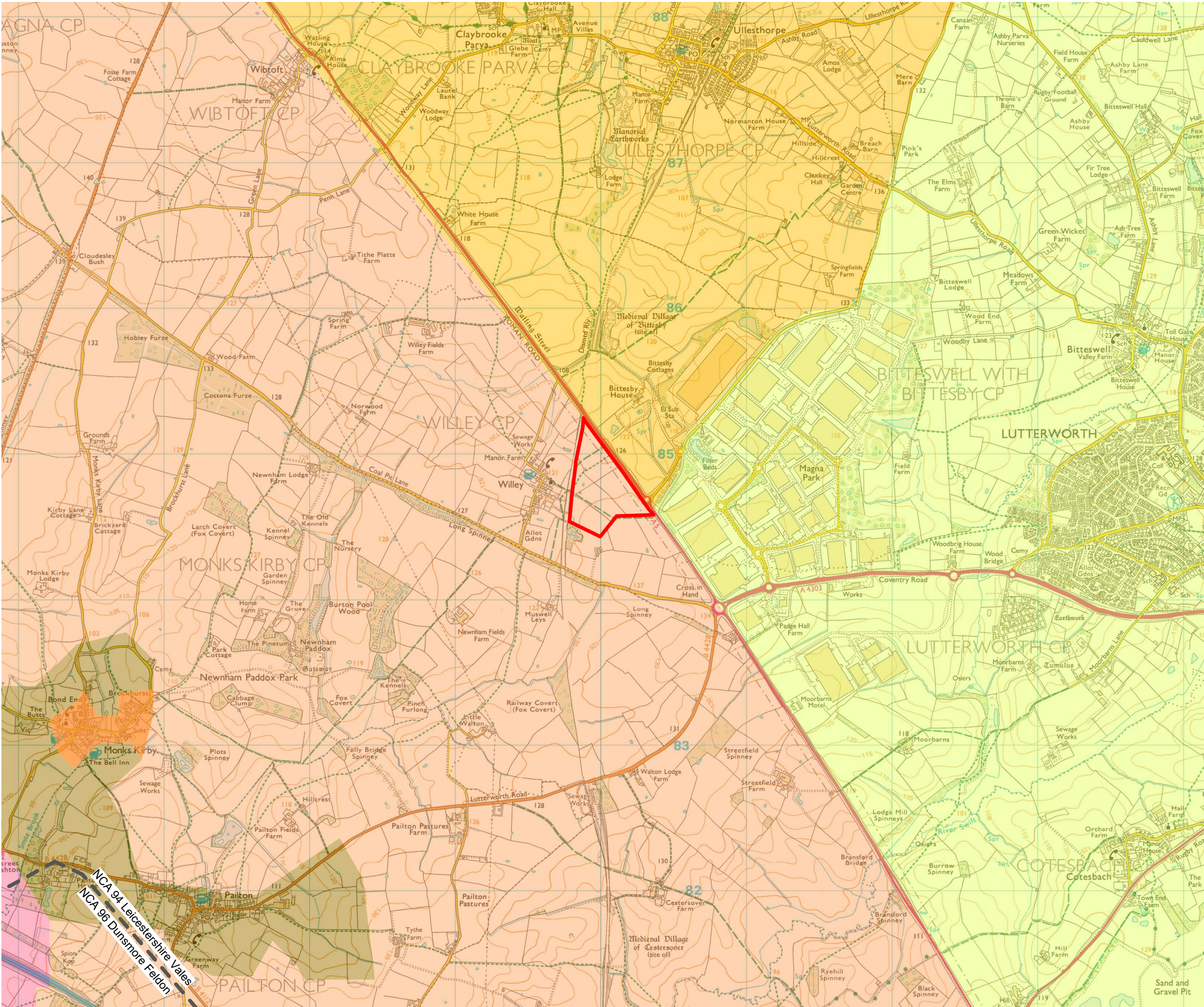
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Site

National Character Areas

Recently consturcted and consented development area (Approx and to be confirmed)

Harborough District Landscape Character Assessment (2007)

Upper Soar

Lutterworth Lowlands

Laughton Hills

Mease/ Sence Lowlands

Landscape Assessment of the Borough of Rugby (2006)

High Cross Plateau, Open Plateau

High Cross Plateau, Village Farmlands

Dunsmore, Parklands

Urban

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Land at Magna Park
Lutterworth

drawing title
LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

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1:25000 @ A3

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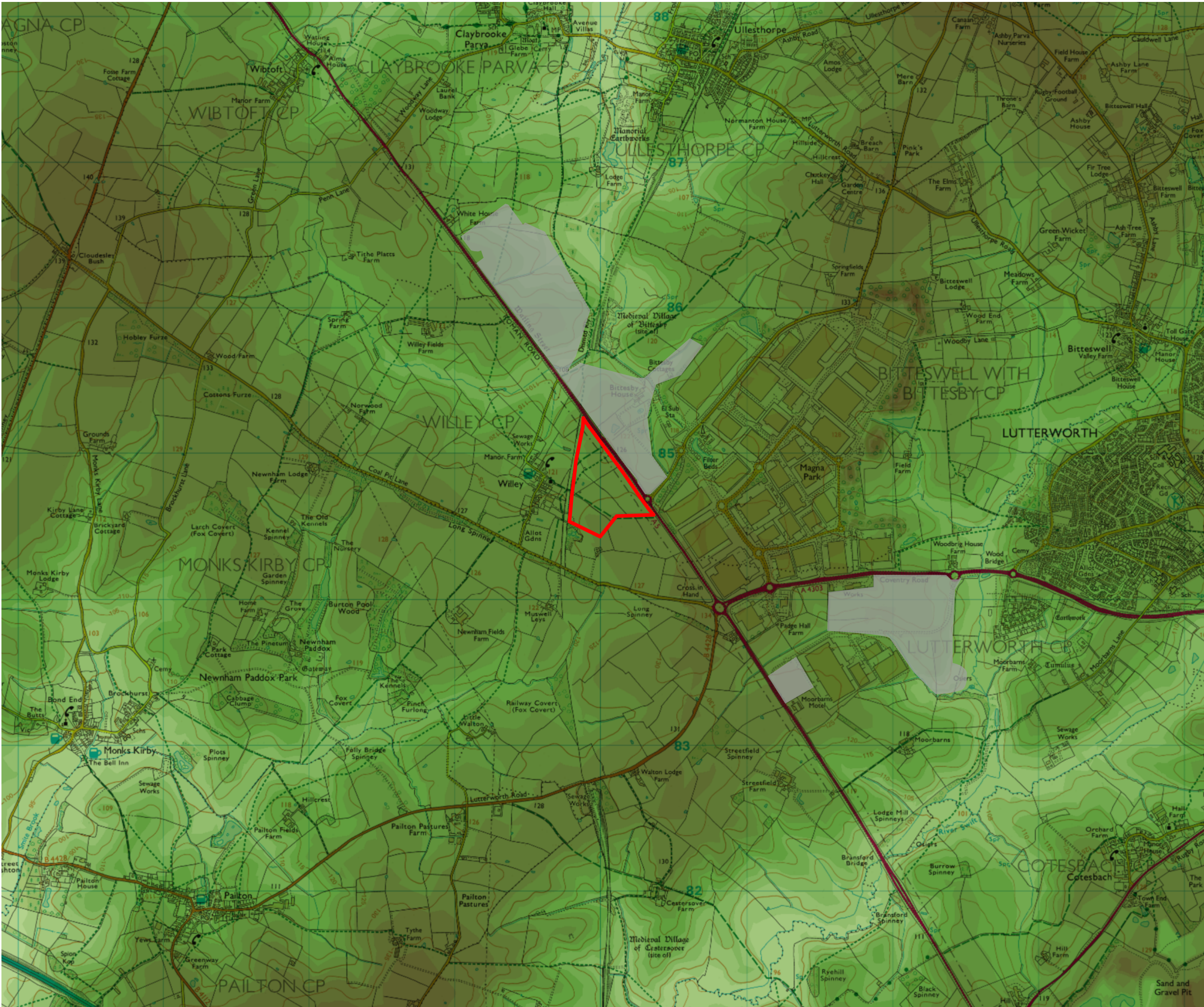
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Figure 3

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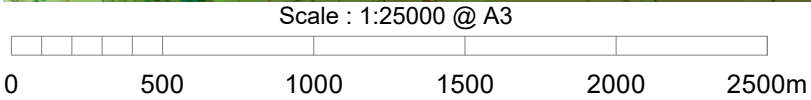
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- Site
- Recently consturcted and consented development area (Approx and to be confirmed)
- 70-75m AOD
- 75-80m AOD
- 80-85 AOD
- 85-90m AOD
- 90-95m AOD
- 95-100m AOD
- 100-105m AOD
- 105-110m AOD
- 110-115m AOD
- 115-120m AOD
- 120-125m AOD
- 125-130m AOD
- 130-135m AOD
- 135-140m AOD
- 140-145m AOD
- 145-150m AOD
- 150-155m AOD
- 155-160m AOD
- 160-165m AOD





client
GLP

project
Land at Magna Park
Lutterworth

drawing title
TOPOGRAPHY

scale
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date created
18 January 2024

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Figure 5

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