



The Old Racecourse & Wychwood Park, Norwich Road, Hethersett

INITIAL APPRAISAL AND VISION STATEMENT SUMMARY REPORT

January 2019

Executive Summary

Part of the site at the Old Racecourse and Wychwood Park has previously been submitted for consideration in the Greater Norwich Local Plan.

This submission aims to provide a clear vision for the site and extend it in parts to cover additional land owned by the trustees previously omitted from the submissions.

This new site area comprises some 134 hectares.

Its main point of access is off Norwich Road which forms its northern boundary. However, there are a number of other existing points of access some of which are proposed to be retained and would serve as secondary points of access, pedestrian and cycle links.

A careful study of the opportunities and constraints which the site presents has been carried out to inform this submission. The findings are summarised in this report.

The landscape has undergone a long process of evolution and change over the years - from the medieval moated farmhouse to the construction of Wychwood House, the introduction of the A11 and most recently the conversion of Thickthorn Hall into flats. The evolution is expected to continue with the Highways England planned works to the Thickthorn junction at its eastern end and the routing of the Hornsea Project Three Offshore Wind Farm power lines on its western boundary.

The proposed development would ensure the long term viability of the site and the landscape.

Other important benefits include:

- opening up the parkland for public access with new footpaths/ cycle paths
- the provision of jobs in an accessible location
- renewable energy generation
- new residential uses

- new centre for leisure
- education and research
- new catering and conference facilities
- new facilities for tourists and visitors

Eight character areas have been identified in the initial appraisal as follows.

Area 1

This is the area immediately adjacent to the park and ride. It is well contained by existing tree belts and considered suitable for possible extension to the park and ride, commercial and retail/ service uses.

Area 2

This area is located adjacent to area 1 and would be to the west of the proposed Highways England link road. Its access could be via the new link road. Similar to Area 1 it is considered suitable for commercial and retail/ service uses.

Area 3 and 4

Areas 3 and 4 are located to the west and north-west of Area 2 and east of Thickthorn Hall.

They are immediately adjacent to and connected to the core parkland landscape. They are reasonably well contained visually and considered suitable for sensitively designed, bespoke residential uses.

They could be accessed from either the B1172 or the new Cantley link road and would benefit from direct recreational links into the new public parkland landscape.

Area 5

This area is located on the north-western boundary of the site with Norwich Road (B1172) forming its northern boundary and Station Road. This site is considered suitable for further residential development. It would

benefit from direct recreational links into the new public parkland landscape.

Area 6

This area is located near the south-western boundary. It is a reasonably visually contained site. However it is along the proposed path of the power line. It was originally considered to be a good location for office, research and education uses. Careful consideration of this area would be required to take account of new easements and proposed landscape enhancement measures.

Area 7

This area located south of the A11 within the eastern half of the site presents opportunities for renewable energy generation and some limited scale education and research development.

It is an underused area with access likely off the new Cantley lane link road.

A new planted buffer is proposed to further screen the area from views to the south. The existing public footpath would be retained and enhanced by the proposals.

Area 8

Area 8 is an enclosed site. It is considered suitable for education, research and commercial uses.

It is proposed to be accessed off the new Cantley Lane link road.

For further detail please refer to the opportunities and constraints plan on page 14.



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Development + Planning



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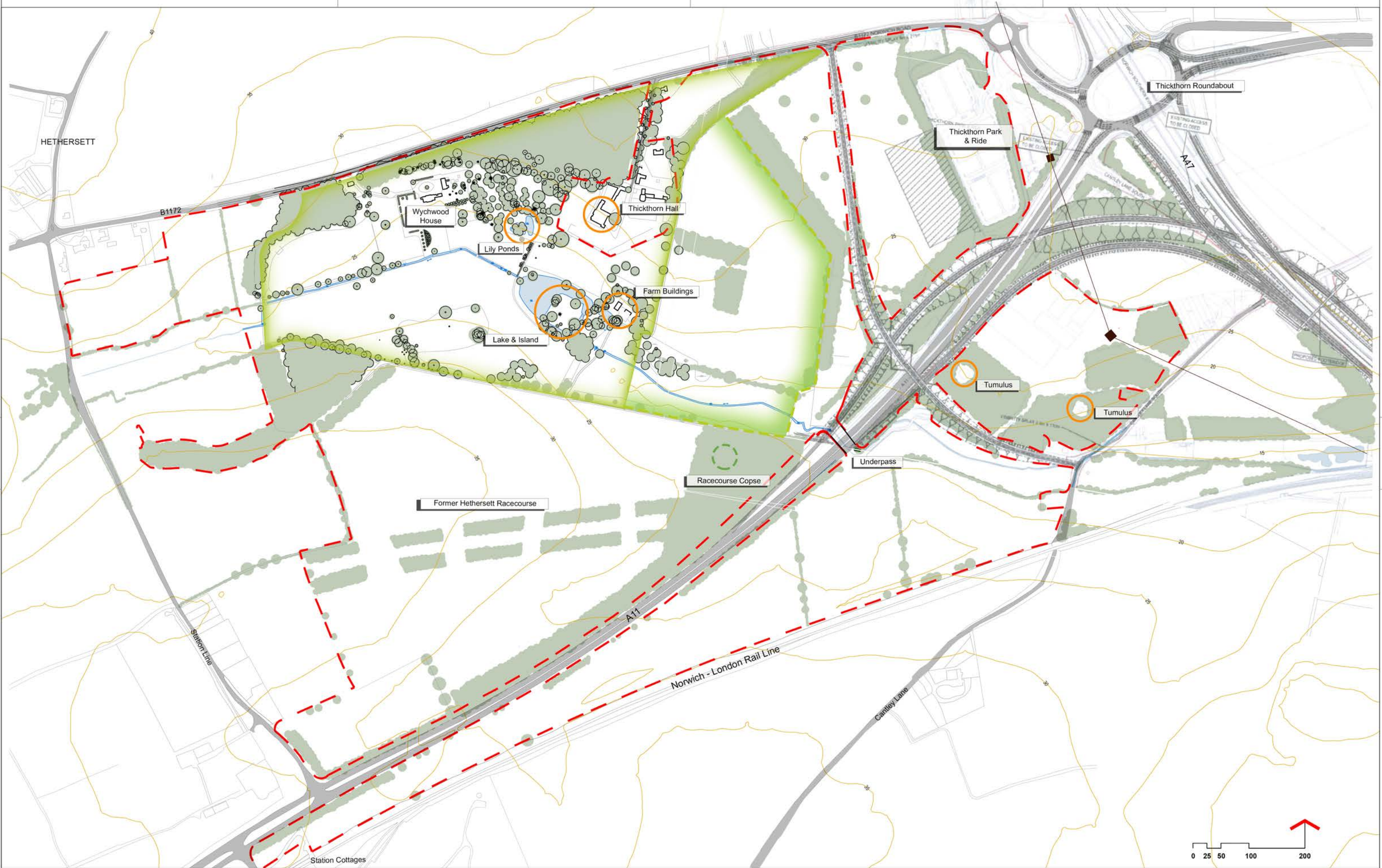
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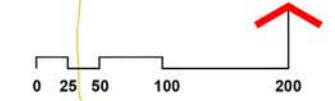
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CLIENT		THICKTHORN WYCHWOOD	
PROJECT		EXISTING SITE PLAN	
DRAWN	CHECK	Project No./	Dwg No.
MN	ES	435-FS-01 A	
SCALE	DATE		
1 : 3000 @ A1	NOV 2018		

1. BACKGROUND

Site Location

The Site covers an area extending 134 hectares with its main point of access off Norwich Road, Hethersett via Wychwood House. It includes the Old Hethersett Racecourse, Wychwood Park and Wychwood House, Thickthorn Park (excludes Thickthorn hall). The A11 divides the site into two distinct parts.

Site Area

The site separated into two parcels north and south of the A11. The two parts would be dissected further by the planned Highways England Thickthorn junction improvement works effectively creating 8 character areas in four zones as follows:

- Zone A – 88.8ha in area
- Zone B - 11ha in area
- Zone C - 20.3ha in area
- Zone D – 8.4ha in area

Further details are provided on page 19.

The site presents an excellent opportunity for growth and investment. It is adjacent to Cringleford and only 3.5 miles to the centre of Norwich. It is 1 mile from the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital, 1.2 miles from the Norwich Research Park, 1.5 from University of East Anglia (UEA) and 3.8 miles from Easton Otley College.

It is ideally situated for access to the A140, A47 and A11.



Tithe Map - Circa 1840



Ordnance Survey 1st Edition 1879-1886



Aerial Map 1944



Aerial Map - 1988

Historic Environment

Previous and Existing Uses

Hethersett Racecourse

The Hethersett Racecourse is located just outside the village of Hethersett.

The village of Hethersett is located two miles south west of Norwich and first staged racing in the latter part of the 19th century on a part of the site. The inaugural meeting was held on Friday 23rd March 1888 when organised by the Hussars. The locally based 19th and 20th Hussars Regiment enjoyed racing and the meetings continued throughout their time in the area. The course was situated approximately 2 miles from Norwich, close to the village of Hethersett and Hethersett Station. Racing returned to Hethersett in 1904 when the Norwich Hunt took over administrative duties. These meetings continued for ten years until the outbreak of World War I. In 1927 the 120 acres on which the course stood were sold by Mr Ketteringham to Mr R J Read, whose aim was to run the meetings as 'Hethersett races'. He met his target the next year when the first meeting to be organised by the Hethersett race committee was staged on Thursday 8th March 1928. Meetings continued to be well supported by the locals, and races were always competitive, often with large fields. The final meeting under rules took place on Thursday 4th May 1939, after which the War intervened. However, once the war was over racing did not make an immediate return, the course eventually being used by the Norwich Staghounds for point to point races between 1953 and 1963, and meetings ceasing in 1970.

Wychwood House

Wychwood Park was gifted to Mary Mackintosh as a wedding present in 1950. Wychwood House, designed by architect James Fletcher Watson was constructed on the land in 1957.

THICKTHORN HALL - LISTING

An early 19th century landscape park surrounding Thickthorn Hall. The park includes a medieval moat that was turned into an ornamental lake, a late 19th century kitchen garden, early 19th century lodges and concrete greenhouses from the 1930s.

The old moated hall (NHER 9352) was replaced by the present Thickthorn Hall (NHER 9417) in 1812. It is most likely that the park was created at the same time as the house and it appears on (S3). (S3) also shows a continuous belt of woodland to the north of the house. A service drive approached the north of the hall. Two other drives approached the hall from the east and the west, both with their own lodge. (S3) also shows the kitchen garden and an area to the west of the house described as 'pleasure grounds.' Grigor writing in the 1840s (S4) states these were made out of marl or gravel pits. Within the kitchen garden is an octagon shaped building which possibly had an agricultural use. By the time of an 1890s painting (see (S1) for more details) a series of terraces, borders and lawns were in place to the south of the house. Within the park there is also a rustic summerhouse which dates to the late nineteenth century. The moat was widened at some point between (S4) and (S5), to create a small lake and this is how it appears on (S5). A third lodge (NHER 42822) had also been built at the entrance to the middle drive and a north-eastern shelter belt planted. Since 1907 the area of parkland has been substantially reduced and the eastern half is now under the plough. The present glasshouses were installed in the 1930s. Wychwood House was built in 1957 and took over the pleasure gardens.

MEDIEVAL MOAT, THICKTHORN HALL

A medieval moat in the grounds of Thickthorn Hall. The moat became part of an ornamental lake created in the early 19th century. Medieval documents record that this was the site of the manor house of Alan de

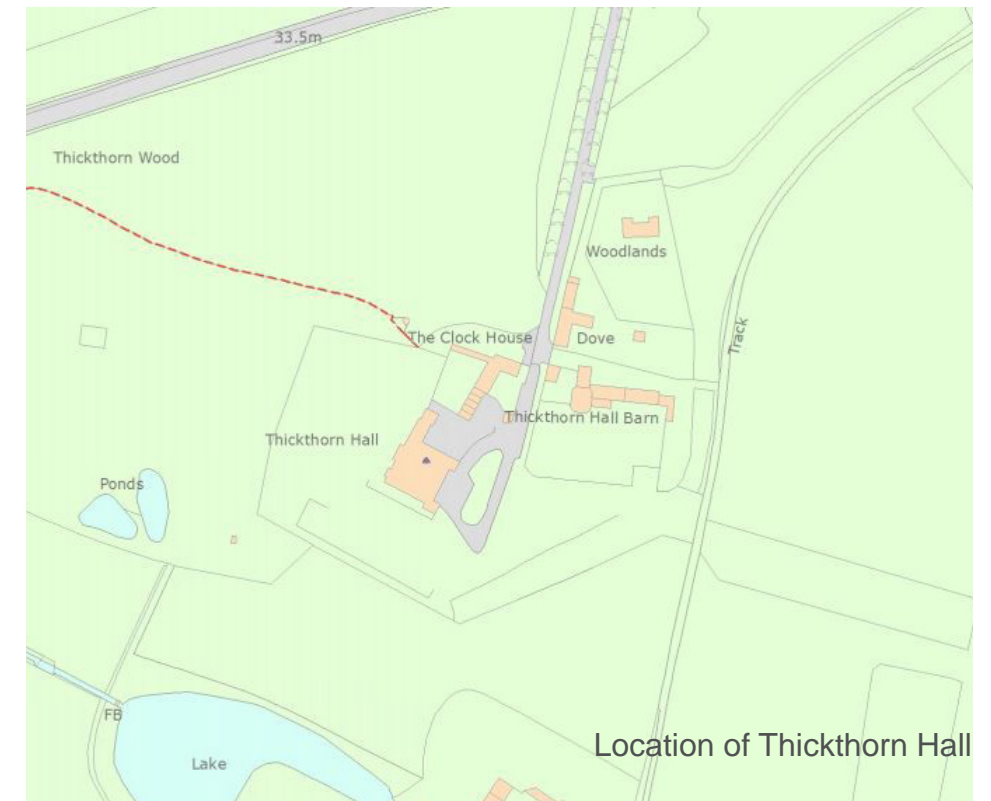
Thickthorn in the mid 13th century.

Lake in grounds shown on (S1) as moat, complete and rectangular with smaller northeast rectangular adjunct. No buildings marked except bailiff's cottage in angle between two. Ornamented into lake presumably when present hall built about 1820. Present lake bears no resemblance to moat, all that remains of the original is the rectangular island, and portion of the northeast enclosure. (S2) states that (S3) notes ruins of medieval building on island in west side lake (in fact island is to southeast of lake). (S4) notes inspectors failed to find these, and states island cultivated in 1954 producing no foundations; they conclude not a moat, but they had not seen (S1). Gardener told E. Rose (NAU) that he had never known any ruins except a small cottage and kennels of 1890 demolished in the 1930s; foundations he stated remained under heaps of dredged silt lain over island. He disputed Ordnance Survey claim that island had ever been cultivated. This latter point seems correct as island has mature trees round edge and a thicket of rubber plants in centre. No remains of medieval date at all. Compare with Roman bowls in NCM from 'moat at Hethersett Old Hall', really from here? See under NHER 9467. E. Rose (NAU)

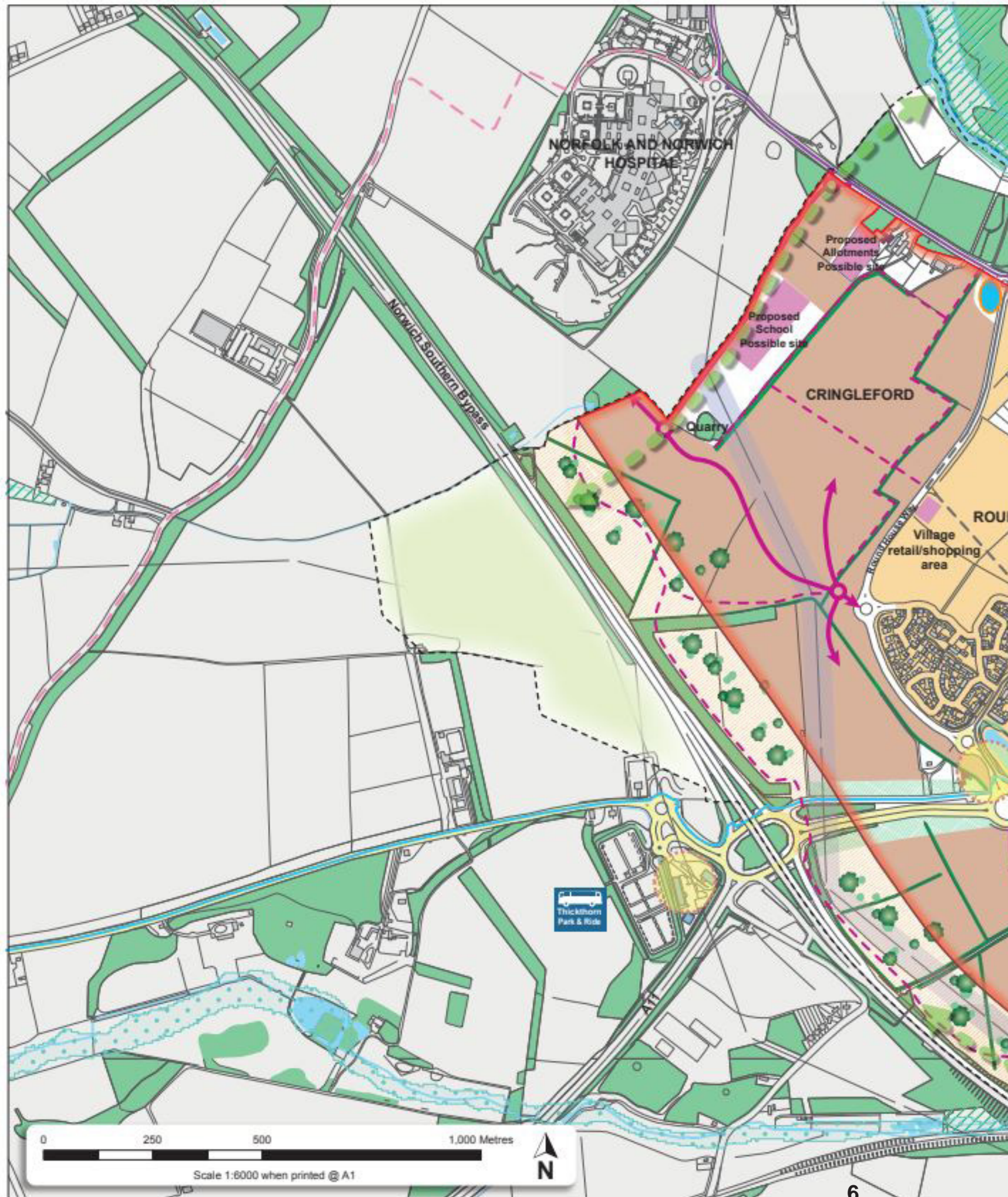
Sale advert (S5) for Thickthorn Hall (site NHER 9417) states that the record of first hall is 1240. This presumably would have stood within this moat. E. Rose (NAU) 18 September 1985.

This is confirmed by (S6) which states Alan de Thickthorn settled the estate on his son in 1240; in 1275 Daniel de Thickthorn held his court here; in 1641 Roger Ramsey died 'siesed of the capital messuage called Thickthorn'.

Chambers stated that the old hall was taken down in 1812.



Cringleford Neighbourhood Development Plan: Proposals Map



KEY

- Parish boundary & Neighbourhood Development Plan boundary
- Open water
- Woodland
- Environmentally Sensitive Areas (i.e. SSSIs & CWS)
- Open farmland/countryside and Strategic Gap
- Conservation Areas
- Buildings of Historical interest outside of Conservation Area
- Commercial area and business premises
- Community buildings
- Area under development 2012 (Round House Park)
- Yare Valley Walk
- Flood Zone
- Bus Rapid Transport route
- Proposed transport interchange
- Development Boundary

3. PLANNING CONTEXT

The developments at the Site would promote a sustainable legacy. The objective is to enhance the existing natural and built environment whilst delivering a highly sustainable place to live, work and enjoy. The developments would seek to reduce carbon emissions and where possible use energy from renewable sources.

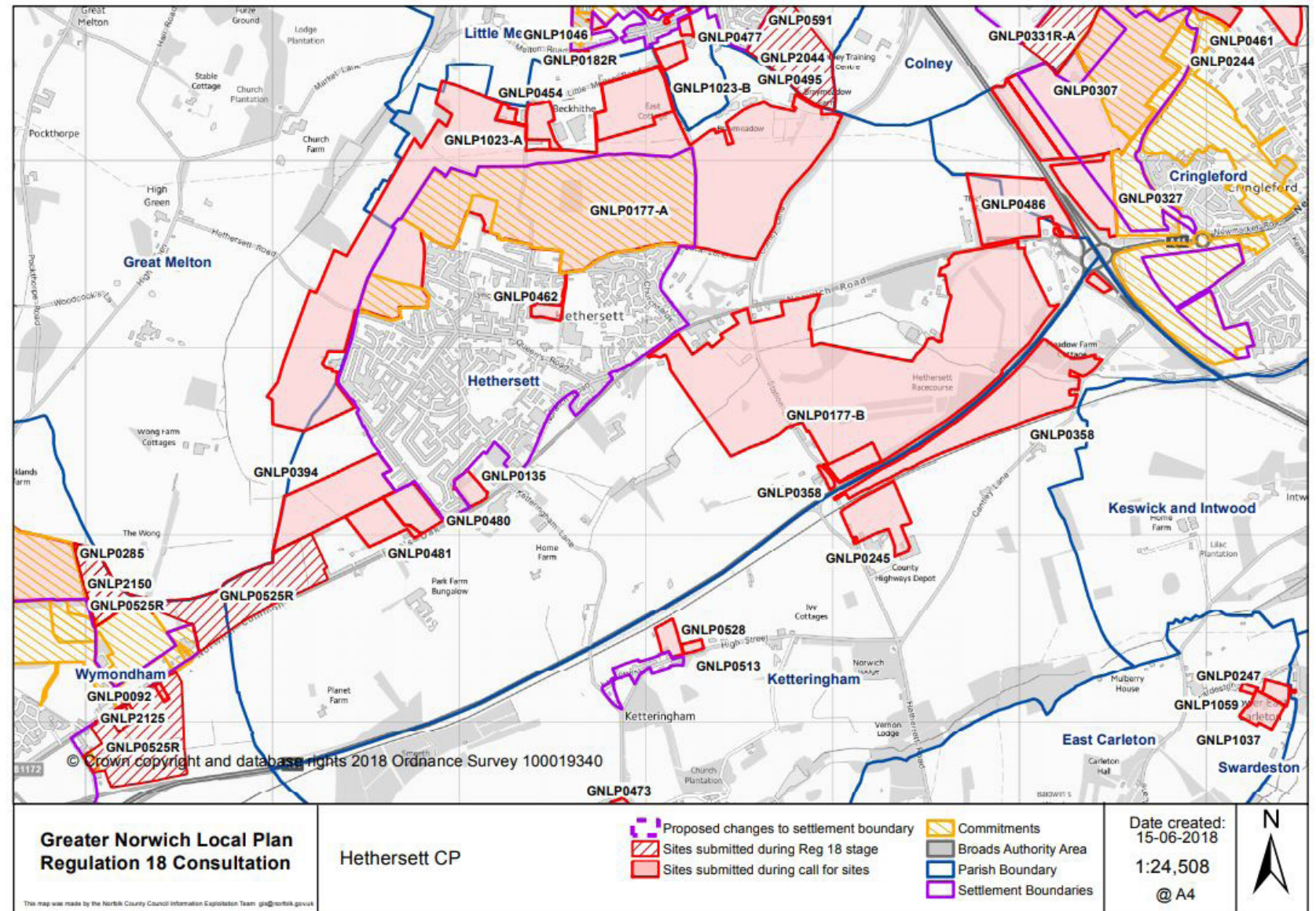
The intention is to open up the parkland to the public - creating new pedestrian and cycle links connecting the wider area. Significant areas of enhanced landscaping are proposed. A new centre for leisure would be created with a mix of facilities to be made available to residents, new and existing businesses. A few residential dwellings would be provided in key locations along the northern boundary. A new hotel and restaurant are also being considered at Wychwood. A few areas have been identified for office and commercial uses.

The development would enhance the ecological and biodiversity features at the site and provide an excellent range of accommodation for staff and visitors.

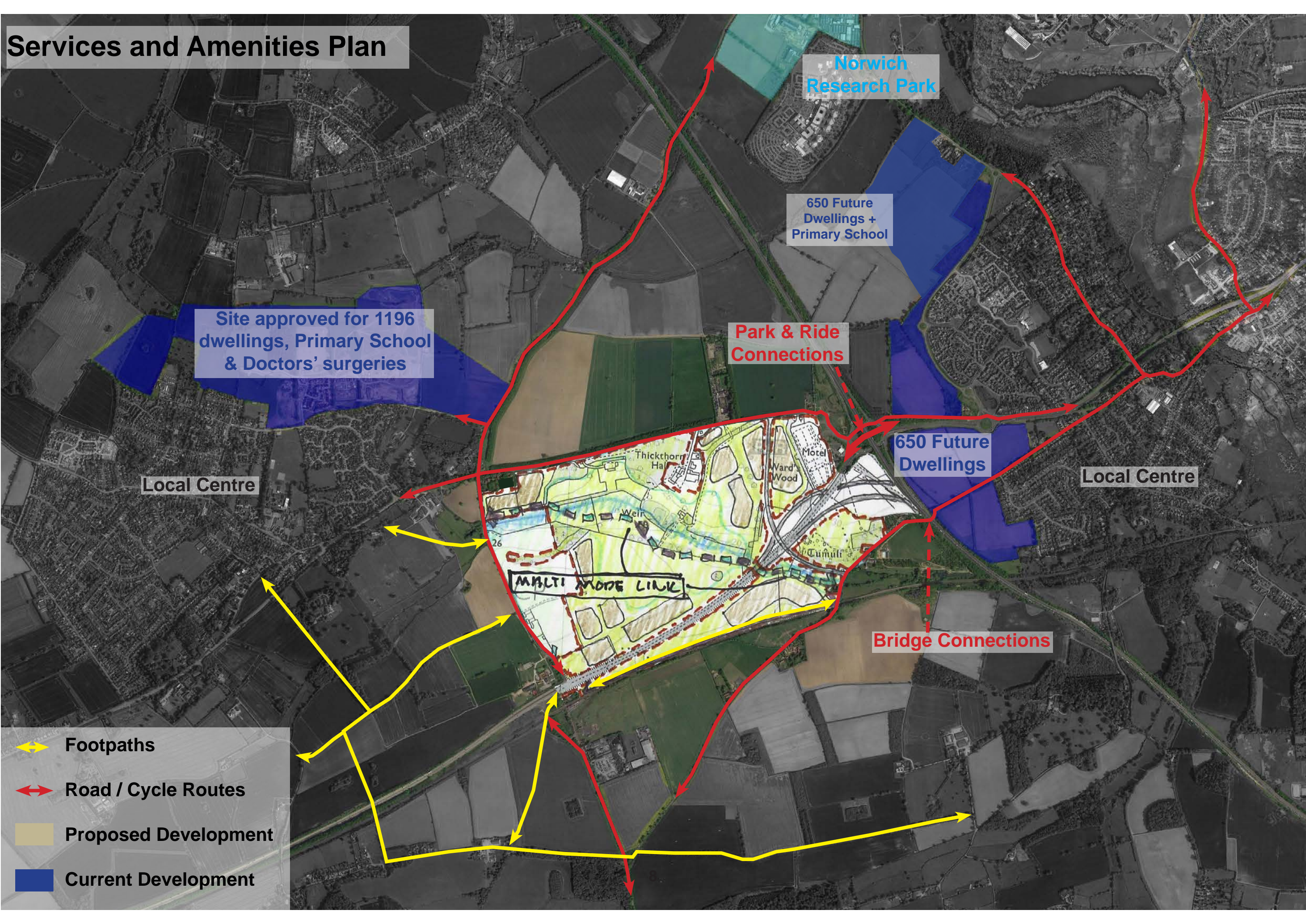
The new Campus would deliver lasting benefits to the local community, the region, and others further afield.

The aim is to:

- make best use of the site providing a more attractive and welcoming venue that has a reduced impact on the environment
- increase opportunities available to the local community to become more actively involved in sport and leisure activities
- showcase Norfolk as a place to visit for improved health and well-being
- increase job opportunities



Services and Amenities Plan



Norwich
Research Park

650 Future
Dwellings +
Primary School

Site approved for 1196
dwellings, Primary School
& Doctors' surgeries

Park & Ride
Connections

650 Future
Dwellings

Local Centre

Local Centre

MULTI MODE LINK

Bridge Connections

-  Footpaths
-  Road / Cycle Routes
-  Proposed Development
-  Current Development

4. SITE AND CONTEXT




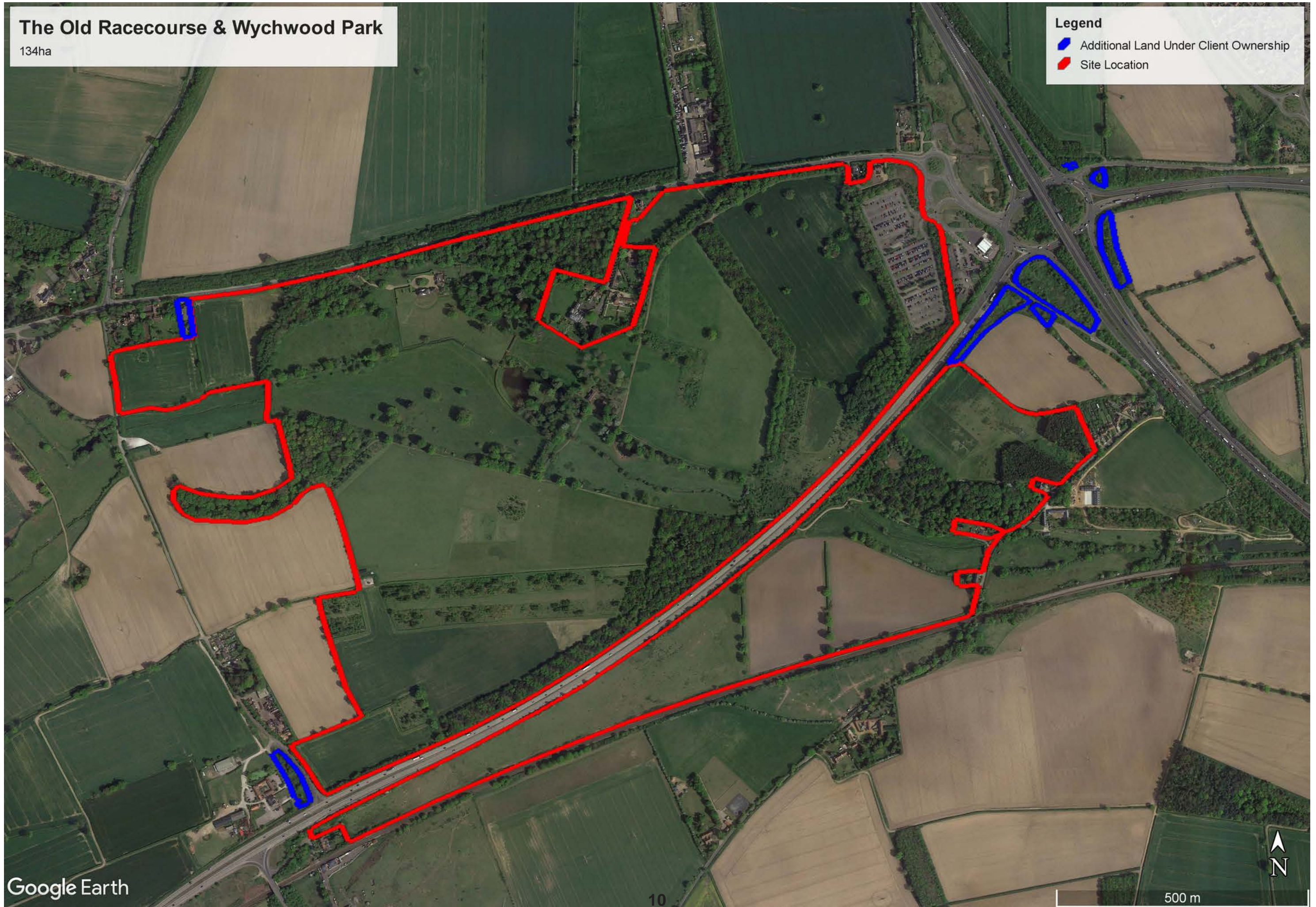
- The site lies on the eastern fringe of the village of Hethersett, bounded by the Thickthorn roundabout to the north and the Norwich to Cambridge railway line to the east. The A11 bisects the site into eastern and western portions with an under pass connecting between. For current “visioning” purposes we have assumed that the proposed Thickthorn junction improvements have been carried out - further subdividing the site. However, they are not essential for the delivery of the vision.
- It is an exceptionally accessible location; the junction of the A11 and the Norwich Southern Bypass just to the east. The historic parkland of Thickthorn Hall is contained within the western part of the site
- The landform in this part of South Norfolk is a gently rolling plateau, broken by the valleys of minor tributary streams which flow eastwards towards the River Yare to the south of Norwich. One of these tributary streams flows within a secluded valley which is the focus for the historic parkland of Thickthorn Hall – “Wychwood Valley”.
- The wider landscape has a relatively exposed large-scale landscape character with open, predominantly arable fields subdivided by prominent shelter belts and geometric blocks of woodland. The landscape within the minor valley to the southwest of the site has a smaller scale landscape character, with small pastures, winding lanes and dense hedgerows.

The Old Racecourse & Wychwood Park

134ha

Legend

-  Additional Land Under Client Ownership
-  Site Location

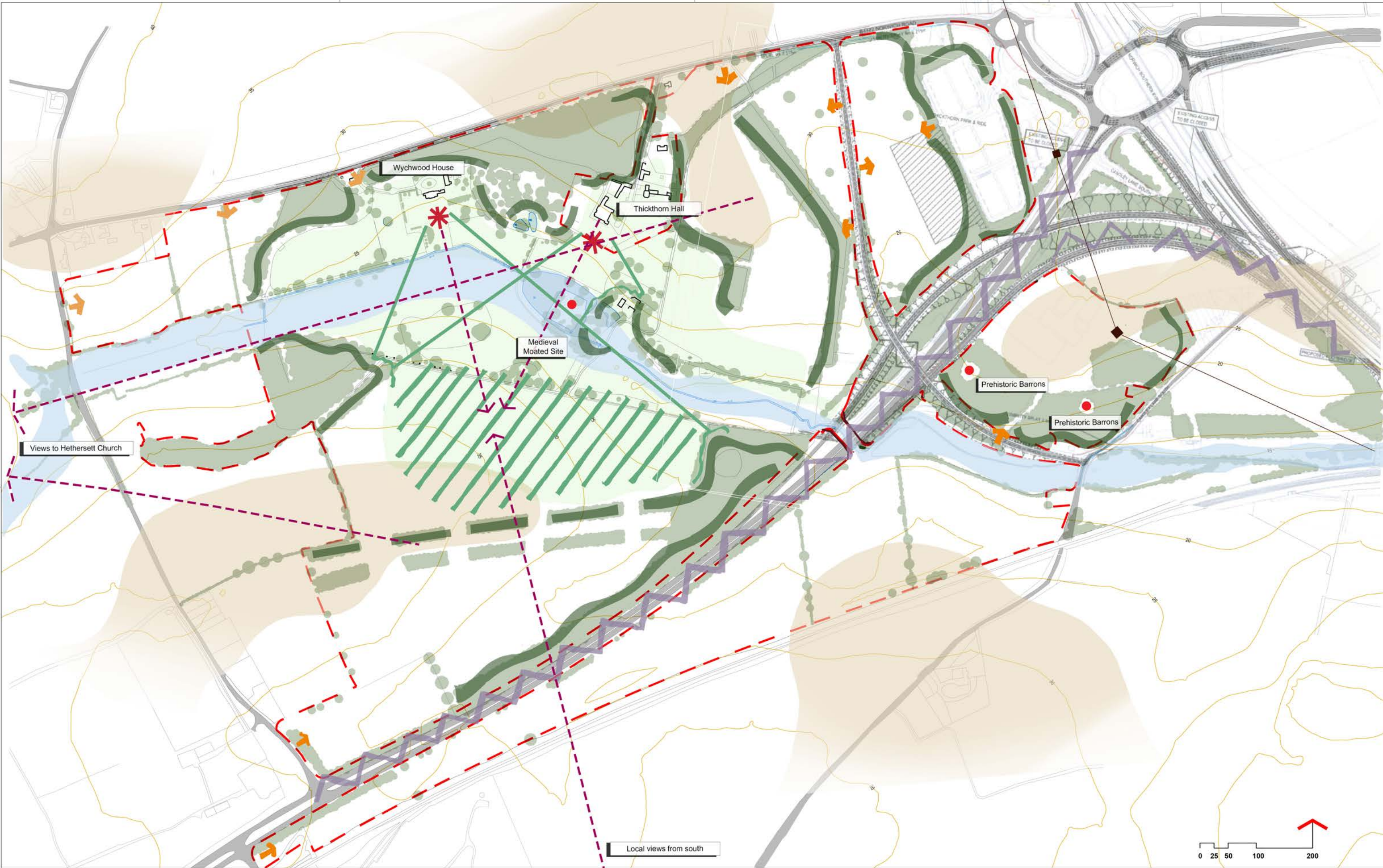


5. SITE ANALYSIS

- The site has a gently undulating topography created by the small tributary “Wychwood” valley providing a variety more intimate landscape settings.
- There is a sense of impenetrability & remoteness, despite the presence of the A11 and A47 major transport corridors. The A11 splits the site north and south introducing movement and noise in this otherwise relatively secluded landscape.
- The Historic parkland of Thickthorn Hall, is ‘hidden’ from public view within the secluded “wychwood” valley. Thickthorn Hall itself is sited on a slightly elevated promontory on the valley slope and is visible in a single view from Station Lane and there are few glimpsed views of the Hall from the surrounding country to the south - the historic parkland remains hidden.
- A belt of mature mixed woodland completely screens views into the site from the B1172. However, there are views into the group of pastures (not the historic parkland) in the North West corner of the site from the B1172 and from a farm track leading into the site from Station Lane. However, this track is not a public right of way and views from the northern part of Station Lane are generally obscured by mature hedgerows.
- The historic parkland within the valley is not visible from external views, but the sloping farmland plateau, which forms the southern part of the site, is visible in some views from the ridgetop roads to the south. The lower slopes of this plateau, which borders the A11, is densely planted with relatively recent belts of mixed woodland. This woodland is now well established and increasingly, as it matures, completely screens local views into this part of the site from the parkland to the north, the A11 corridor and further afield to the south.
- There are no public rights of way (roads or footpaths within the western part of the site. There is however a public footpath within the eastern part of the site along the railway line from which the eastern portion of the site is fully visible.

Incremental & piecemeal change is a threat to this gateway landscape;

- Including the upgrading of the Thickthorn Junction and the associated developments that could arise and which could result in a more urban and disjointed character.
- Gently shelving topography and long views make this area particularly sensitive to the location of any new development/infrastructure which is not carefully considered.
- Loss and degradation in the character of historic parkland and designed landscapes, particularly with changing uses and demands.
- Loss of mature tree boundaries (without replacement) resulting in further ‘opening up’ of views plus loss of woodland
- Suburbanisation of field and parkland boundaries



- Site Boundary
- Enclosing Landform
- Enclosing Main Woodland
- Historic Building
- Important Parkland View Lines
- High Visibility Parkland Backdrop
- Local View Lines
- Noise & Visual Severance
- Access Points
- Flood Risk Zone
- Core Parkland and Setting

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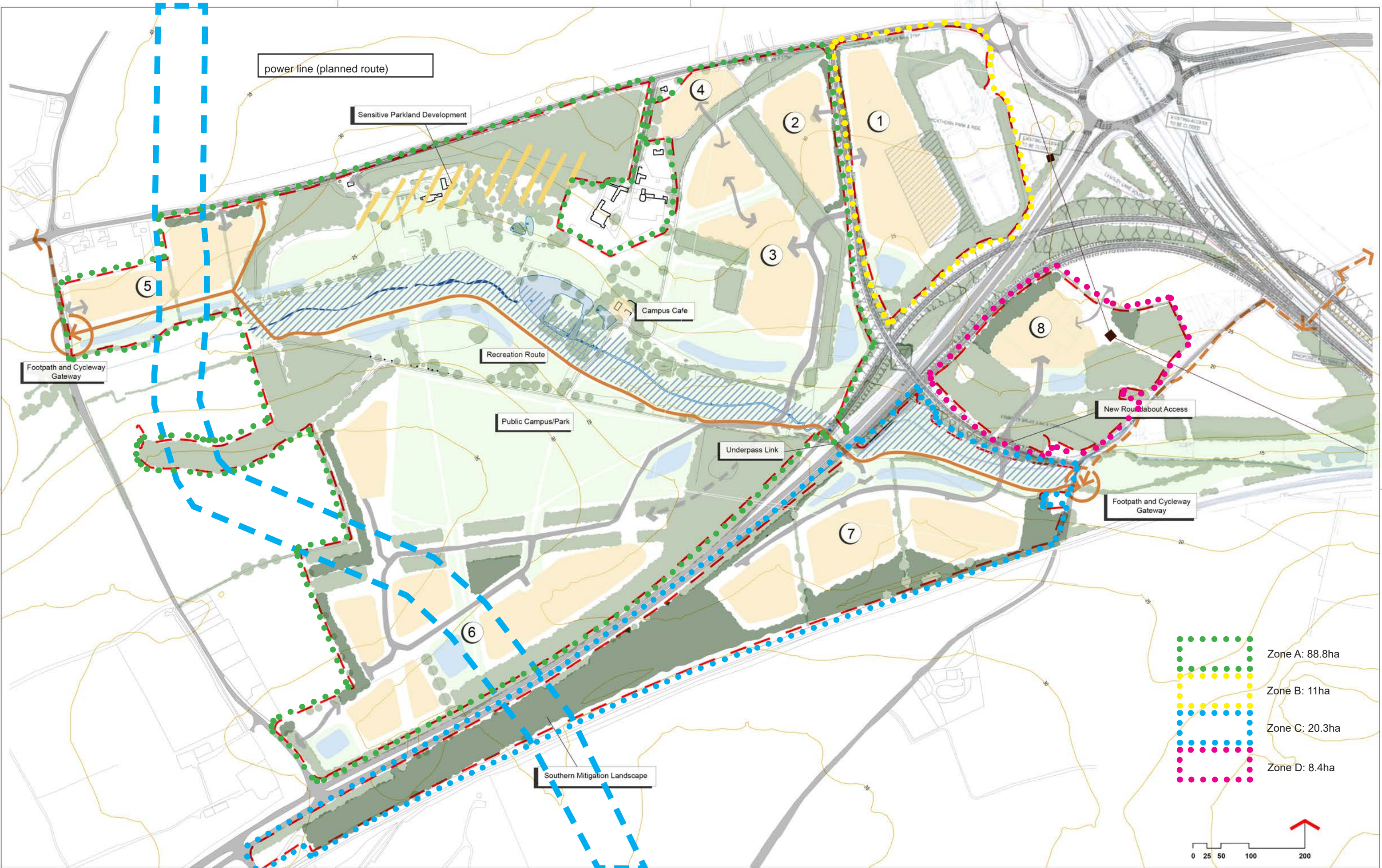
6. OPPORTUNITIES & CONSTRAINTS

Evolution of the landscape

- The landscape of the “Wychwood” valley has been through a long process of evolution and change; first the medieval moated farmhouse, then Thickthorn Hall, the change from moat to lake, the establishment of a 19th century parkland and ongoing changes to that parkland, including the new hedge around the moat, the disuse of the east and west entrance driveways and the gradual decline of specimen trees. The most recent changes are the construction of Wychwood House, which has its own landscape setting at the heart of the valley, and the conversion of Thickthorn Hall to flats, which no longer have a functional relationship with the parkland.
- The potential careful integration of development along the valley will be the latest in this ongoing sequence of landscape change. The development will ensure the long term viability of this important landscape – securing it for the future and opening it to the public for the first time.
- The setting for the new developments will be a stunning contemporary landscape which will become a premier destination for business and recreation/leisure. The landscape is conceived as an integral focus to development, but could also become an attraction in its own right – a public campus /sculpture park?
- By providing access to a contemporary parkland landscape, these developments have the potential to make a valuable contribution to the green infrastructure of Norwich’s urban fringe.
- Principle development opportunities are located around the edges of the new core parkland “campus” landscape. These development opportunities can be split into two types – those directly visually connected to the core landscape and those which are more detached and self-contained.

Other key related opportunities are;

- The redevelopment of Wychwood House – this property could be redeveloped as a hotel, recreational or educational opportunities as long as it recognises its sensitive parkland location.
- The redevelopment of the Hall Barn complexes could be developed as a “visitor” focused public hub –to include toilets and café type facilities.
- The creation of a multi-mode recreational link along the valley (linked with other circular routes) combined with a strategy to “declutter” the more ornamental aspects of the existing landscape to restore a more natural feel with enhanced biodiversity. This route will afford opportunities to link more widely with Hethersett to the east and via the new A47 pedestrian crossing to Norwich to the North West



power line (planned route)

Sensitive Parkland Development

Campus Cafe

Recreation Route

Public Campus/Park

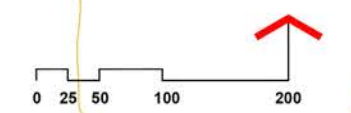
Underpass Link

New Roundabout Access

Footpath and Cycleway Gateway

Southern Mitigation Landscape

- Zone A: 88.8ha
- Zone B: 11ha
- Zone C: 20.3ha
- Zone D: 8.4ha



- Development Opportunities
- Sensitive Development Opportunities
- Mitigation Landscape
- Stream Restoration
- Drainage Attenuation
- Access Routes
- Public Recreational Route
- Access Points
- Public "Campus"

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1 : 3000 @ A1	NOV 2018		

7. SUSTAINABILITY

Social

- The creation of a small number of market and custom build homes of a high standard of design will help to provide more choice
- Providing access to the contemporary parkland for walking, cycling and quiet enjoyment will help to create new opportunities for outdoor activities and for meeting others in the local community
- The provision of a centre for leisure will create good opportunities for active lifestyles
- The provision of offices and educational and research uses within this context will encourage an active workforce
- Creation of a venue for outdoor theatre

Environmental

- A dynamic contemporary and highly marketable public landscape
- New wetland habitats along the valley floor
- Exceptional opportunities for interpretation, focusing on wellbeing, biodiversity, landscape history, culture and art
- The stream has long been an invisible element in the landscape; at present it flows in a deep, shaded trench and has limited ecological value. We suggest that the stream is once again established as the central unifying and expressive landscape element. By releasing the river from its trench, there is an opportunity to recreate a water meadow along the valley floor
- Throughout the parkland, the existing hedgerow, fences and straight lines (ditches and some trees) can be removed to create an uncluttered, unified composition which reflects the valley form and the historic parkland tradition. The parkland is extended up to the ridge on the south side of the valley and the vista draws the eye to the skyline. This new extension to the parkland responds to the scale of the new buildings and provides a wonderful asset for the wider community and works well integrated with the proposed high quality “site 6” developments – see below
- Improved connectivity and green links
- Provision of new homes and jobs within an accessible location promoting travel by walking and cycling

Economic

- Provision of a range of new employment opportunities
- Provision of office space for businesses
- Provision of facilities and amenities to support existing businesses in the area
- Provision of recreational and leisure facilities to serve visitors and local residents

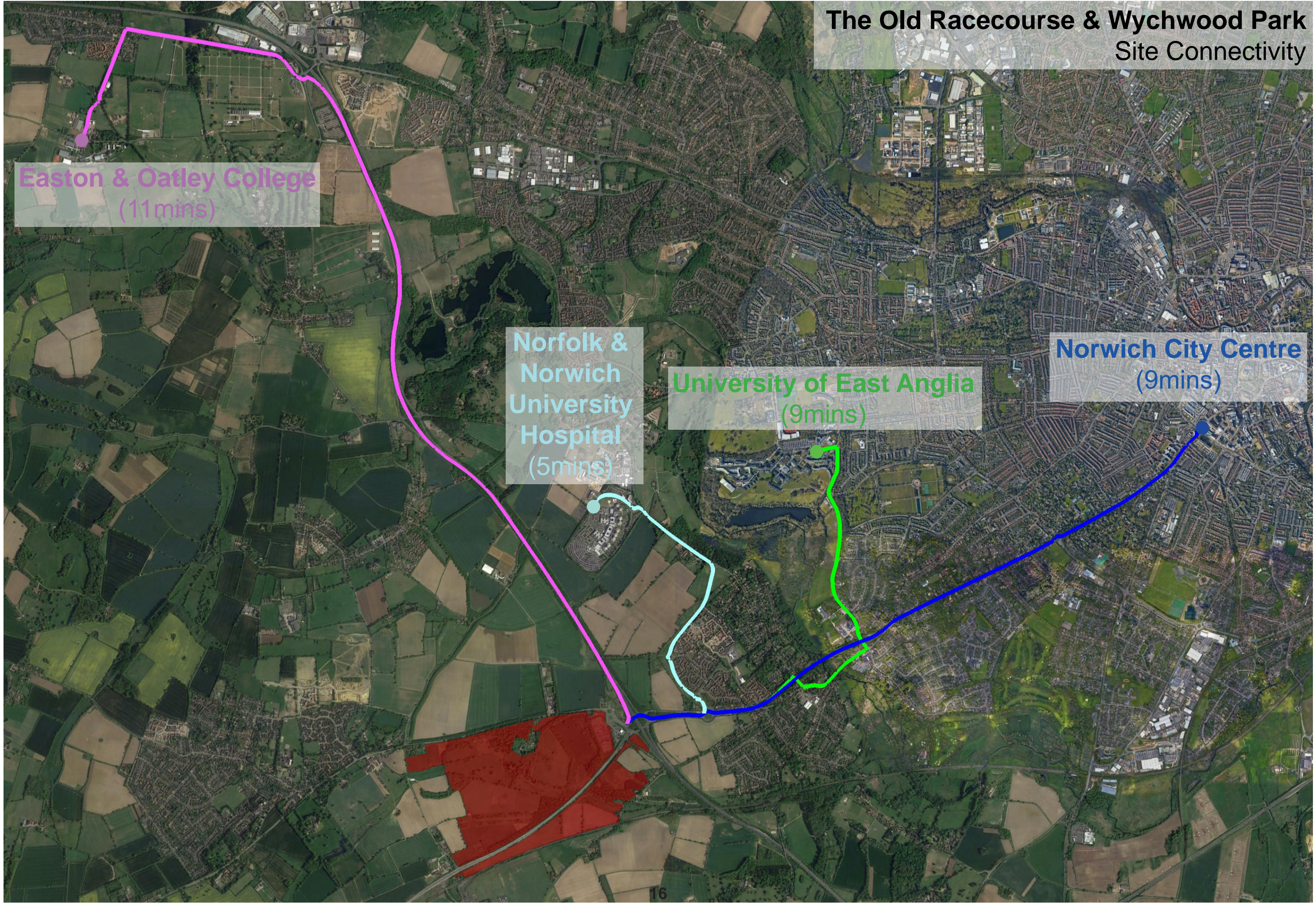
**The Old Racecourse & Wychwood Park
Site Connectivity**

**Easton & Oatley College
(11mins)**

**Norfolk &
Norwich
University
Hospital
(5mins)**

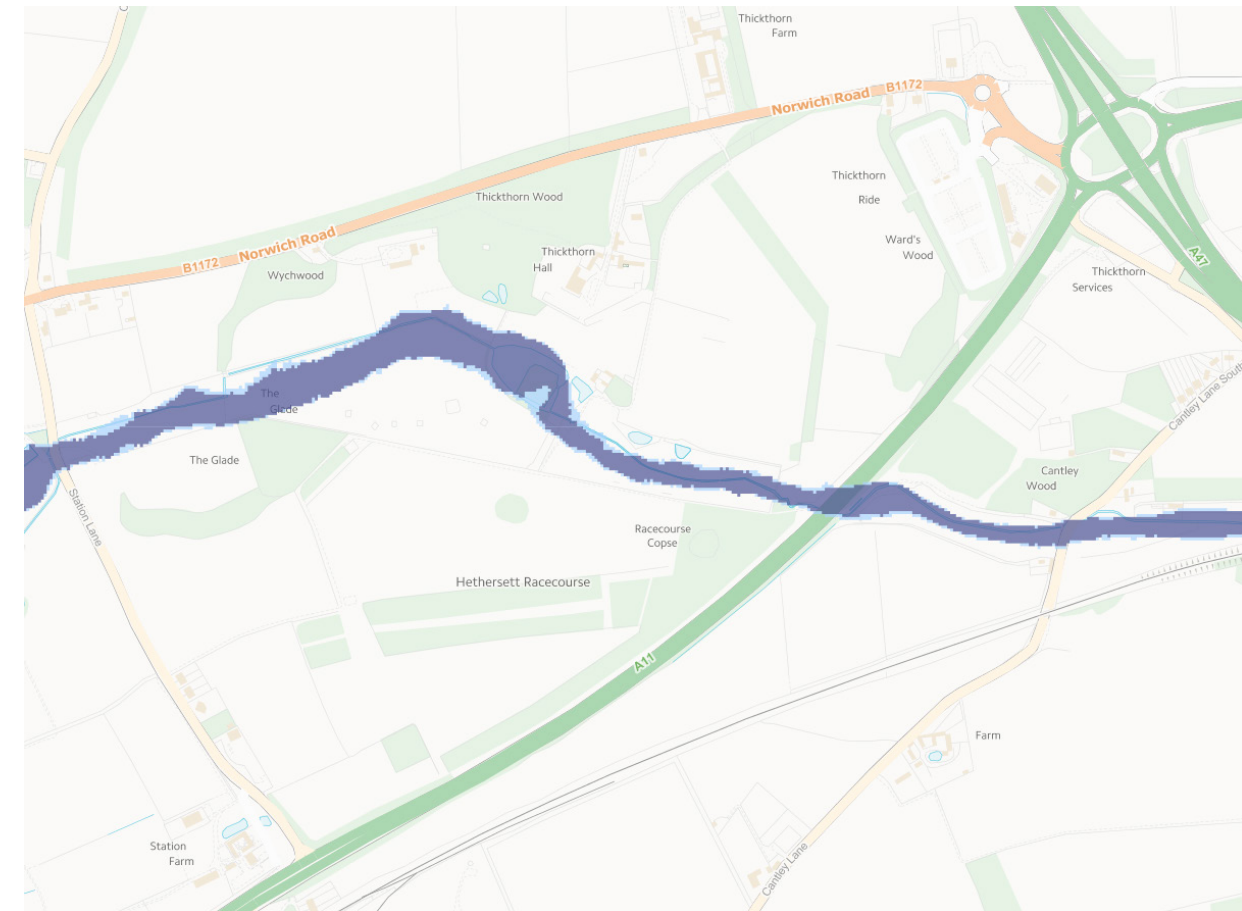
**University of East Anglia
(9mins)**

**Norwich City Centre
(9mins)**



Sustainability Indicator Table

Sustainability Indicator	Score	Comments
Public Transport Access / reduce need to travel	Green	
Access to Services and Amenities	Green	
Proximity to Settlement Boundary	Yellow	The nearest settlement boundary is 400m away.
Compatibility with Existing Land Use Allocations	Yellow	Existing land allocation east of the A47
Flood Risk	Yellow	See flood risk maps
Heritage Assets (Listing, SAMs, Con Area etc)	Yellow	Two listed buildings and a scheduled monument on site
Archaeology	Yellow	Two tumuli in Big Wood may be of archaeological interest
TPOs	Green	
Topography	Green	
Landscape Impacts	Yellow	There is an area designated as 'County Historic Parks & Gardens' within the site
Contamination/Pollution	Green	
Proximity to Environmental/Ecology Designations	Green	
Agricultural Land Grades 1/2	Green	
MOD Noise Sensitive Zone	Green	
Brownfield/Use of Vacant or Underused Buildings	Yellow	The site is partly brownfield at Wychwood House with a number of ancillary outbuildings. The planned Highways England works at the Thickthorn junction would further subdivide it at its eastern end. The Hornsea Project Three Offshore Wind Farm power be routed through the site near the western boundary.
Land Availability	Green	
Utilities	Green	
Ground Stability	Green	
Minerals/Waste Safeguarding Site	Green	





8. CHARACTER AREAS

Character Area 1

- Immediately adjacent to the park and ride with good access via the park and ride and/or the new Cantley Lane Link.
- Well contained by tree belts
- Suitable for a variety of commercial/retail/service developments as well as expansion of the park and ride itself

Character Area 2

- With good access of the new Cantley Lane link road.
- Very well contained by tree belts
- Suitable for a variety of commercial/retail/service developments.

Character Areas 3 & 4

- Immediately adjacent and connected to the core parkland landscape these sites are never the less reasonably well contained visually.
- With access options from the B1172 &/or the new Cantley link road.
- Suitable for sensitively designed/bespoke residential type development as it sits adjacent to the existing Thickthorn hall complex although separated from it visually by existing woodland groups.
- Benefiting from direct recreational links into the new public parkland/landscape

Character Area 5

- Immediately adjacent to the B1172 & Station Road – with good access options

- Discretely separated from the adjacent parkland by tree groups this site is suitable for residential development fronting the valley corridor to the south.
- Benefiting from direct recreational links into the new public parkland/campus.
- Will need careful consideration of impacts in views from station road and other public rights of way to the west.

Character Area 6

- A reasonably visually contained site just south of the ridge line contained by a number of relatively new native woodland belts which are increasingly providing a high level of visual screening as they mature.
- This is a sensitive site but never the less offers an opportunity for high quality and sustainable architecture associated perhaps with office, research or educational uses. Such developments in this location would contribute very strongly to the creation of a vibrant and active public parkland/campus whilst remaining visually discrete from it.
- The main access route is likely as an extension of site 3's access, sensitively routed across the stream and around the edges of the parkland to avoid significant visual impact. Other access options could be off Station Lane or via the A11 underpass from the south.
- This location will be further screened from the south by the opportunity of new mitigating woodland planting just to the south of the A11.

Character Area 7

- Well located just to the south of the A11 the site can be seen as a similar opportunity as site 6.

- The parkland and stream landscape corridor will extend through the underpass creating opportunities to connect the users of this development directly to the heart of the new campus
- Access is likely off the new Cantley link road but there may be an opportunity for direct connection through the underpass especially if this could be enhanced as part of the Thickthorn junction improvements.
- Woodland planting to the south along the railway line will further screen this location from views to the south. The existing public footpath will be retained along the railway corridor routed through this new woodland planting.

Character Area 8

- A very enclosed site suitable for a wide variety of development especially if needed to be visually discrete.
- Access is likely off the new Cantley Lane link – this might also help open up other adjacent development opportunities to the north between the site and A47.
- The location may be constrained by the overhead power line in terms of layout and planting.





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