

# Landscape & Visual Technical Note

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Project: Land West of Ratcliffe Road, Sileby, Leicestershire (7672)

August 2021

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## 1 Introduction

- 1.1. It is understood that Redrow Homes East Midlands intends to promote the site known as Land West of Ratcliffe Road, Sileby through the Local Plan, for mixed use development.
- 1.2. Aspect Landscape Planning Ltd has been commissioned to review potential landscape and visual matters and provide an overview of any likely landscape constraints and opportunities present within the site.
- 1.3. A desktop study and site visit have been undertaken alongside a high level review of the landscape and visual situation in order to provide recommendations for developing the site and any necessary landscape mitigation that may be required.
- 1.4. This technical note provides an overview of the baseline landscape and visual situation and potential landscape and visual effects providing further information to support the associated Landscape Opportunities and Constraints Plan enclosed. This note and has informed the parameters of the proposed masterplan and has fed in to the Vision Document.

## 2 Baseline Assessment

- 2.1. The site lies to the south / south east of Sileby within Charnwood Borough and within the wider River Soar landscape.
- 2.2. The site is formed by a number of agricultural fields on gently undulating landform, located immediately adjacent to the southern settlement boundary. The site lies immediately south west of Ratcliffe Road and the main Nottingham to Derby railway line forms the western site boundary, beyond which lies further residential development. Blackberry Lane forms part of the south eastern site boundary, with the remainder of the south eastern boundary made up of field hedgerows separating the field parcels.
- 2.3. For the most part the site is formed of arable land, which is for the majority bound by mature hedgerows with occasional hedgerow trees. A localised watercourse runs in a broad north east – south west direction along part of the north eastern boundary and within the central part of the site which includes a degree of vegetation structure and trees along the banks. Due to the extensive agricultural uses of the field parcels, beyond the field boundaries and watercourse the internal components are of limited landscape value.
- 2.4. A single Public Right of Way – the Leicestershire Round Long Distance Route follows Blackberry Lane to the south east and further PROW's are located within the wider landscape north east and east.

- 2.5. The topography of the site varies from the low point at the south western edge of the site and along the watercourse, rising up to the north eastern boundary adjacent to Ratcliffe Road at approximately 65m AOD. The site and wider landscape consists of a gently undulating landscape associated with the wider Soar Valley and the topography rises up to a localised ridgeline at approximately 95m AOD, 0.5km to the south east of the site. The settlement edge of Sileby to the north is situated at circa 65-70m AOD.
- 2.6. A consented residential development currently under construction is situated just to the north of the site at Peas Hill Farm which extends the presence of the settlement edge further south east.
- 2.7. The main A46 road corridor is located within the wider landscape to the south and east, just beyond the localised ridgeline.

### **3 Landscape Related Policy**

#### Local Policy – Charnwood Borough Local Plan and Core Strategy

- 3.1. The site lies within the area covered by the adopted policies of the Local Plan 2011 to 2028 Core Strategy (2015) and saved policies of the Local Plan (2004). The site is not subject to any qualitative landscape designations.
- 3.2. It is noted that the site lies outside of the settlement boundary of Sileby and, as such, is subject to Countryside policies within the adopted plans. It is noted that “Countryside” is not a qualitative landscape designation.
- 3.3. It is considered that, within the Adopted Local Plan (2004), the following saved policies are of relevance:
  - *EV1 Design*
  - *CT1 General Principles for Areas of Countryside, Green Wedge and Local Separation*
  - *CT2 Development in the Countryside*
- 3.4. With regard to the Core Strategy (2015), it is considered that the following policies are of relevance:
  - *CS2 High Quality Design*
  - *CS11 Landscape and Countryside*
  - *CS12 Green Infrastructure*
  - *CS13 Biodiversity and Geodiversity*
  - *CS14 Heritage*
  - *CS15 Open Spaces, Sports and Recreation*

#### Landscape Character

- 3.5. In terms of the wider landscape character, within the Natural England National Character Assessment, the site is located largely within the *Trent Valley Washlands* national character area (NCA73) on the boundary with the *Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire Wolds* national character area (NCA74) which covers Ratcliffe Road and the landscape to the north.
- 3.6. The Charnwood Borough Landscape Character Assessment (2012), identifies that the site and localised setting is situated within the *Soar Valley Landscape Character Area* (LCA) and the key characteristics are identified as:
- *“Flat wide river floodplain which experiences regular flooding*
  - *Navigable River Soar and Grand Union Canal*
  - *Major engineering features are the raised landscaped embankments of A6 and mainline railway and electricity pylons*
  - *Visible built development on well-defined rising valley slopes*
  - *Restored gravel worked landscapes for recreation, farmland and wildlife benefit*
  - *Settlements are Hathern, Loughborough, Quorn, Birstall, Barrow upon Soar, Sileby, Cossington and much of Mountsorrel and Rothley, Syston and Thurmaston.”*
- 3.7. In addition to the assessment of character, the document also assesses the strength of the landscape character and concludes, in relation to the Soar Valley LCA that: *“The strength of landscape character is moderate and the landscape condition is moderate.”*
- 3.8. The assessment then sets out a series of guidelines to conserve and manage the character of this area. These guidelines include:
- *“Conserve and enhance the pastoral landscape of the floodplain*
  - *Maintain the current balance between the urban and rural character of the Soar Valley*
  - *Direct development away from prominent locations on the valley slopes. Any new built form on the valley slopes should be assimilated into its surroundings by careful scale, layout, siting, and design, and the use of materials and associated landscaping*
  - *The restoration of sand and gravel extraction pits to provide opportunities to deliver recreation will be supported where landscape and biodiversity objectives can be achieved*
  - *Encourage public access along the length and across the width of the river corridor where it is compatible with the tranquil and pastoral quality of the Soar Valley landscape*
  - *Carefully manage new leisure developments and recreational facilities to minimise the impact on the landscape in terms of built development and infrastructure such as lighting*
  - *Seek opportunities for natural water management storage within the floodplain particularly where this accords with the character of the Soar Valley and can also benefit biodiversity*

- *Conserve existing hedgerows and restore fragmented and poorly managed hedges. Encourage the planting of new hedgerows and hedgerow trees*
- *Promote the good management of trees such as the pollarding of riverside willows and replace aging trees for the next generation of trees to provide continuity of habitat resource*
- *Remove conifers that are incongruous in the waterside landscape*
- *Preference will be given to the use of tree and shrub species locally native to the Soar Valley landscape area in planting schemes*
- *Where safely allows, retain dead wood for invertebrates*
- *Seek opportunities for the creation and enhancement of the following habitat types, particularly where they strengthen the floodplain character of the Soar Valley landscape:*
  - *All wetland habitats (wet woodland, marsh, fen, ponds, shallow scrapes, etc)*
  - *Riverside trees*
  - *Hedgerows.”*

#### The Visual Environment

- 3.9. An initial site visit has been undertaken and the Photographic Record is appended to this landscape and visual technical note. Views of the site are relatively localised given the gently undulating topography of the landscape alongside the extent of built form to the north and north west. As a result, views from the north and west are largely limited and only partially available from areas in closer proximity.
- 3.10. Short distance views are available from Ratcliffe Road along the north eastern boundary and Blackberry Lane / Leicestershire Round Long Distance Route adjacent to the southern site boundary.
- 3.11. The topography rises to the east / south east and short and middle distance views of the site and existing settlement edge of Sileby are available from the elevated landscape, the approaches along Ratcliffe Road and Blackberry Lane / Humble Lane to the south. Within these views, the site is seen within context to the existing settlement edge which is located on gently rising topography to the north.
- 3.12. The landscape to the west and south west is lower lying flood plain characteristic landscape that is in closer proximity to the River Soar located approximately 1.2km to the east. Beyond the localised ridgeline approximately 0.6km to the south east, views of the site are restricted, limiting the zone of visibility to a relatively small area of the wider landscape setting.
- 3.13. Overall, as a result of undulating topography within the immediate and local area in combination with the hedgerows to the site boundaries and surrounding built form, visibility is restricted to the localised landscape and middle distance views to the south east of the site. There are clear opportunities to enhance the degree of enclosure to the site and in doing so ensuring that there is a more sensitive and sympathetic transition between the settlement edge and wider rural landscape.



## 4 Landscape and Visual Review and Opportunities & Constraints

- 4.1. Given the scale and location of the site there is a potential risk of adverse landscape and visual effects if the proposals are not carefully and sympathetically designed. However, it is envisaged that the development of this site will adopt a high quality, landscape-led approach ensuring that the proposals can be successfully integrated without significant adverse effects upon the receiving landscape character or visual environment. Refer to plan ASP3 Landscape Opportunities and Constraints Plan.
- 4.2. Any development within the site should incorporate the following elements:
- Retain and enhance the existing site boundary vegetation and hedgerows as part of the site wide green infrastructure, where possible, creating a characteristic and robust landscape setting for any new development. The site boundaries should be enhanced with additional proposed incidental internal green spaces breaking up the massing of any proposed development and reinforcing the landscape character;
  - The site wide green infrastructure, to include native structural planting, should reflect the local character and help mitigate any potential harm to the; immediate residential area to the north and west; on the overall local townscape landscape character; and the visual environment of the wider elevated landscape to the south and south east.
  - Landscape buffers to the northern, eastern and south eastern site boundaries will provide an appropriate distance between the proposed development and the existing field boundaries, this along with the proposed structural landscape planting within the public open space, would set the proposed development within a mature vegetation framework;
  - Create opportunities to increase public access and links with the existing PRoW within the layout and Public Open Spaces. The enhanced / easily accessible open spaces within the Site would not only assist in the provision of formal and informal recreation facilities but break up the built environment and assist in placemaking;
  - Create new, varied habitats that are characteristic of this landscape setting and the wider Soar Valley. In particular, native hedgerow, hedgerow trees and large canopied tree planting should be incorporated into the landscaping scheme to reinforce the presence of this characteristic local landscape feature and to increase connectivity between the existing habitats off site;
  - Existing watercourse and associated vegetation structure provides an existing landscape framework to be retained and further enhanced with native planting appropriate to the lower valley riparian character and wetland habitat. Creation of a green corridor and biodiversity enhancements through the use of species rich wildflower meadow areas, wetland grassland, structural native planting and large canopied native trees. This enhanced green link will adhere to the Charnwood LCA guidelines for strengthening the wetland habitats of the Soar Valley and ensure ecological connectivity, habitat creation and localised landscape and biodiversity enhancements are delivered.

- Adopt a positive outward looking layout to ensure that the proposals do not appear to be turning their back on the receiving landscape and create an appropriate transition between the built environment and immediate landscape;
  - Incorporate a simple palette of materials and architectural detailing that reflect the local vernacular.
  - The inclusion of an organic site layout, providing a suitable landscape buffers to the south eastern site boundaries. The layout should look to provide an enhanced settlement character, that would allow the proposals to be seen as an integrated feature within the context of the wider rural setting.
- 4.3. Overall, it is considered that the proposed landscape treatment, when combined with the existing retained vegetation structure, would ensure that the proposals benefit from a high degree of physical and visual integration, with the vegetation structure reflecting the local landscape character and providing a degree of visual containment. It is proposed that the assessment of landscape opportunities and constraints informs an emerging masterplan which will ensure that a sympathetic layout that respects its landscape and visual context can be achieved.

## 5 Summary

- 5.1. As set out above, the site is not subject to any qualitative landscape designations and is a site with limited landscape qualities beyond, located adjacent to existing built form to the north. The undulating topography, along with retained and reinforced field boundaries that characterises the site's setting will assist the integration of future proposed built form within the site. The localised ridgeline to the south east limits the zone of visual influence associated with the site.
- 5.2. In addition, the adoption of a sensitive, landscape-led approach to the design development of the proposals will ensure that the proposals can be successfully integrated in this location without significant adverse landscape or visual effects.
- 5.3. Due to the nature of the current extensive agricultural site use, the existing components within the site are of relatively limited landscape value and there are clear opportunities for landscape enhancements.
- 5.4. As part of an iterative design process the defining characteristics of the local landscape and site context will inform the development of the layout to provide a cohesive development that responds sensitively to the existing landscape character and provide localised and wider landscape and biodiversity enhancements.
- 5.5. It is considered that the site has the capacity to accommodate a sensitively designed residential development which would not give rise to significant landscape or visual effects and is in line with adopted planning policy and the Charnwood Borough Landscape Character Assessment. Proposed development would not be out of context and presents opportunities to improve access to the countryside, improve the wetland habitats associated with the watercourse, enhance the local and wider landscape and improve biodiversity through habitat creation.
- 5.6. It is considered that subject to the inclusion of the landscape elements outlined above, development on the site can be accommodated in this location without detriment to the localised or wider visual amenity and that the integrity of the receiving landscape character will be preserved, with proposed landscape features contributing positively to the identified wider landscape character.

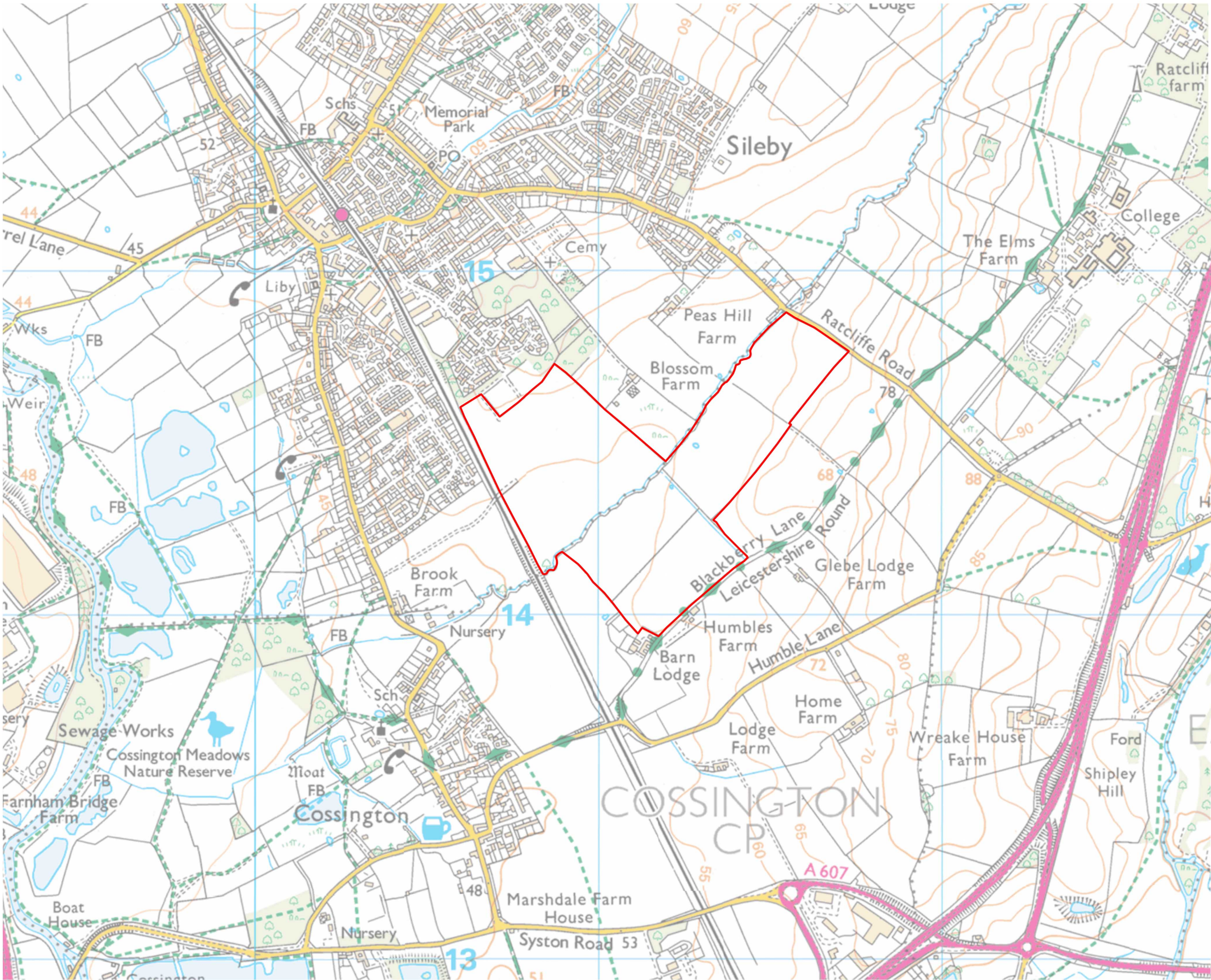
Aspect Landscape Planning Ltd

August 2021

### Enclosed:

ASP1 Site Location Plan  
ASP2 Site and Setting Plan  
ASP3 Landscape Opportunities and Constraints Plan





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0m 100m 200m 400m

Key:  
Site Boundary

REV	DATE	NOTE	DRAWN	CHK'D

**aspect** landscape planning

TITLE  
Land West of Ratcliffe Road, Sileby  
Site Location Plan

CLIENT  
Redrow Homes East Midlands

SCALE	DATE	DRAWN	CHK'D
1:10,000@A3	AUG 2021	SB	BW

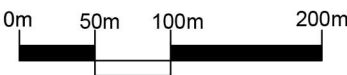
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7672 / ASP1

REVISION





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- Key:
- Site Boundary
  - Public Rights of Way
  - Leicestershire Long Distance Route

REV	DATE	NOTE	DRAWN	CHK'D

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TITLE  
Land West of Ratcliffe Road, Sileby  
Site & Setting Plan

CLIENT  
Redrow Homes East Midlands

SCALE 1:5,000@ A3	DATE AUG 2021	DRAWN SB	CHK'D BW
DRAWING NUMBER 7672 / ASP2		REVISION	



1. Retain the boundary hedgerows along the south eastern site boundary and associated with the existing field boundaries, and provide suitable development offsets for provision of linear public open space and landscaping. Inclusion of mixed native hedgerow planting and native trees will ensure the existing vegetated boundaries are reinforced, maintaining the existing landscape character and assisting in softening middle distance views of development from the rising topography to the east and south east. Outward facing development will respond to the edge of settlement location and enable a useable landscape network.

2. Provide a robust landscape buffer adjacent to Blackberry Lane and the Leicestershire Round Long Distance Route. Inclusion of substantial landscaping and public open space will ensure an appropriate interface is created with the wider rural landscape setting to the south and south east, whilst ensuring views of proposed development from the Blackberry Lane are softened.

3. Existing watercourse and associated vegetation structure provides an existing landscape framework to be retained and further enhanced with native planting appropriate to the lower valley riparian character and wetland habitat. Flood zone mapping limits development opportunities here, however there is potential for the creation of a green corridor and biodiversity enhancements through the use of species rich wildflower meadow areas, wetland grassland, structural native planting and large canopied native trees. This enhanced green link will adhere to the Charnwood LCA guidelines for strengthening the wetland habitats of the Soar Valley and ensure ecological connectivity, habitat creation and localised landscape and biodiversity enhancements are delivered.

4. Retain majority of existing internal field boundaries and hedgerows wherever possible to maintain the existing character and field pattern of the wider Soar Valley landscape and break up development parcels. Fragmented hedgerows to be restored and replanted with locally native species in accordance with the Charnwood LCA guidelines.

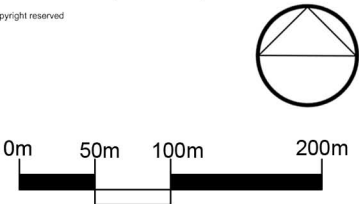
5. Main vehicular access to be taken from Ratcliffe Road. Opportunities exist for suitable setback of the development and a robust landscape scheme to be incorporated that will create a green buffer at this more elevated position and which responds to the edge of settlement location.

6. North western portion of the site is characterised by the established existing southern settlement edge of Sileby which includes predominantly 2 storey semi-detached and detached residential development. Additional planting to be included along the site boundaries and adjacent to the railway corridor to enhance green links and ecological connectivity throughout.

A landscape led masterplan which responds to the localised landscape character of the Soar Valley and immediate setting of the localised watercourse running north east – south west that will form a focal point for a site wide multi-functional green infrastructure framework. This would include informal and formal public open space, SUDS features and attenuation, native structural planting, large canopied tree planting and species rich wildflower meadows that will deliver landscape, biodiversity and ecological enhancements.

The creation of landscape buffers to the boundaries to provide an enhanced landscape setting and robust green edge to the settlement edge. These green buffers will assist in mitigating effects on close range views from Blackberry Lane and the Public Right of Way as well as mid range views from the rising topography and localised ridgeline within the localised landscape setting to the south and south east. There are opportunities for large areas of public open space to include formal and informal playspaces, community facilities including allotments or orchards, increased tree canopy coverage on site and incorporation of localised landscape enhancements.

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- Key:
- Site Boundary
  - Public Rights of Way
  - Leicestershire Round Long Distance Route
  - Railway Line
  - Ratcliffe Road Corridor
  - Proposed Landscape Buffer & Offset
  - Contours
  - Watercourse
  - Existing/Retained Vegetation
  - Mid Distance Views from Higher Ground
  - Close Range Views
  - Proposed Enhanced Green Link
  - Arable Land
  - Open Space & Landscape Zones

REV	DATE	NOTE	DRAWN	CHK'D

aspect landscape planning

TITLE  
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Opportunities & Constraints Plan

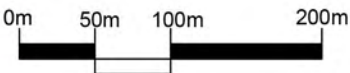
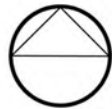
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- Key:
- Site Boundary
  - Public Rights of Way
  - Leicestershire Long Distance Route
  - Viewpoint Location

REV	DATE	NOTE	DRAWN	CHK'D

**aspect** landscape planning

TITLE  
Land West of Ratcliffe Road, Sileby  
Viewpoint Location Plan

CLIENT  
Redrow Homes East Midlands

SCALE 1:5,000@ A3	DATE AUG 2021	DRAWN SB	CHK'D BW
DRAWING NUMBER 7672 / ASP2	REVISION		



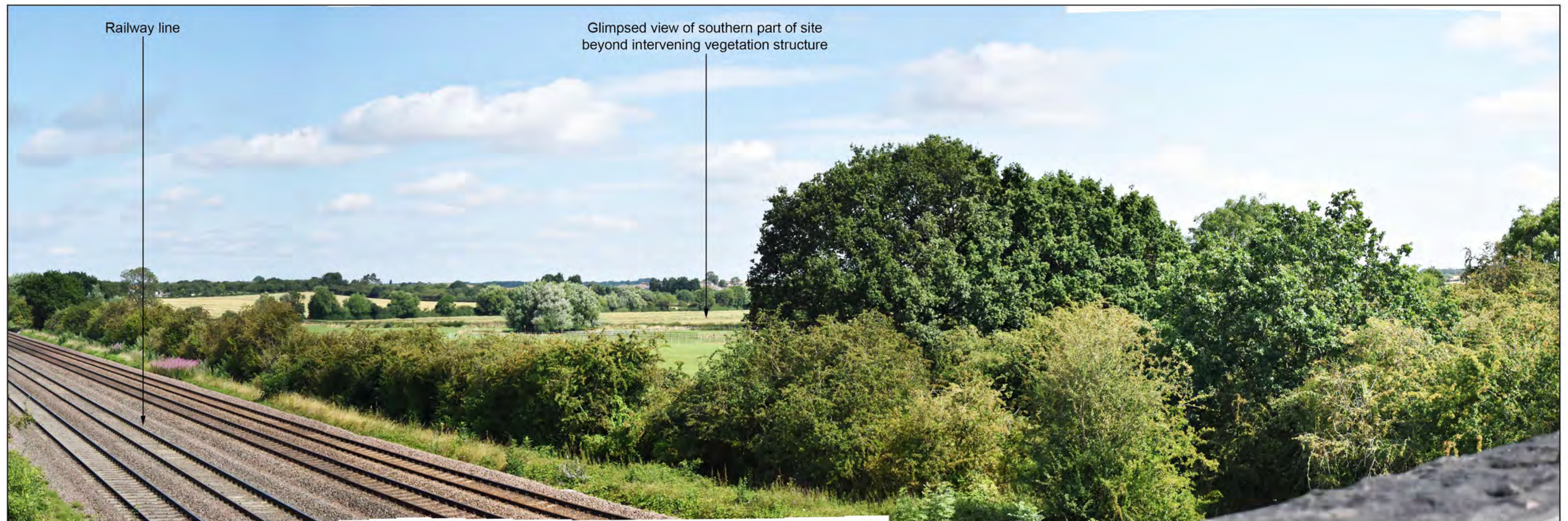


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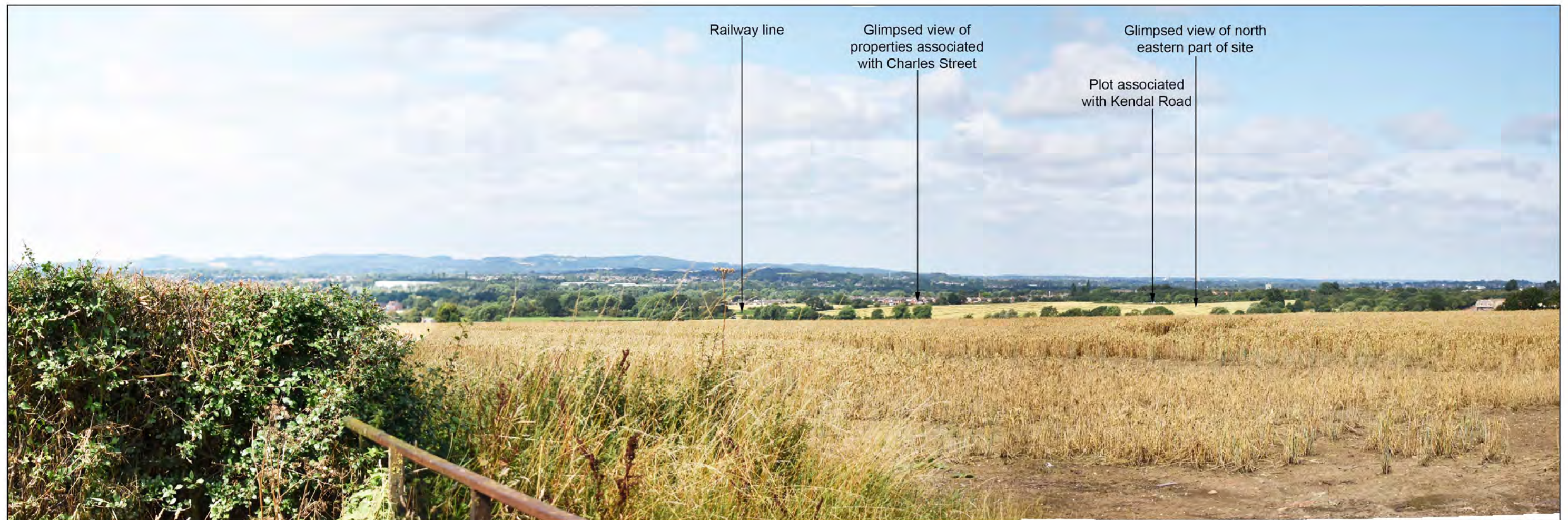


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Weather conditions: Clear, good visibility.

**Viewpoint 5**



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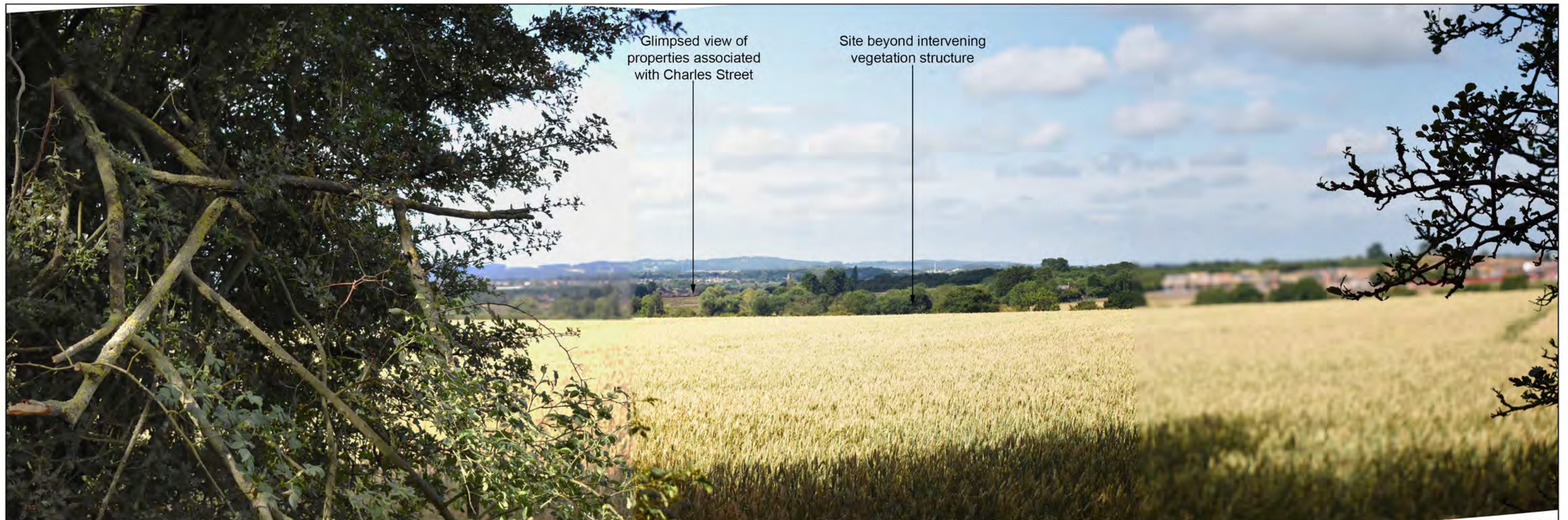
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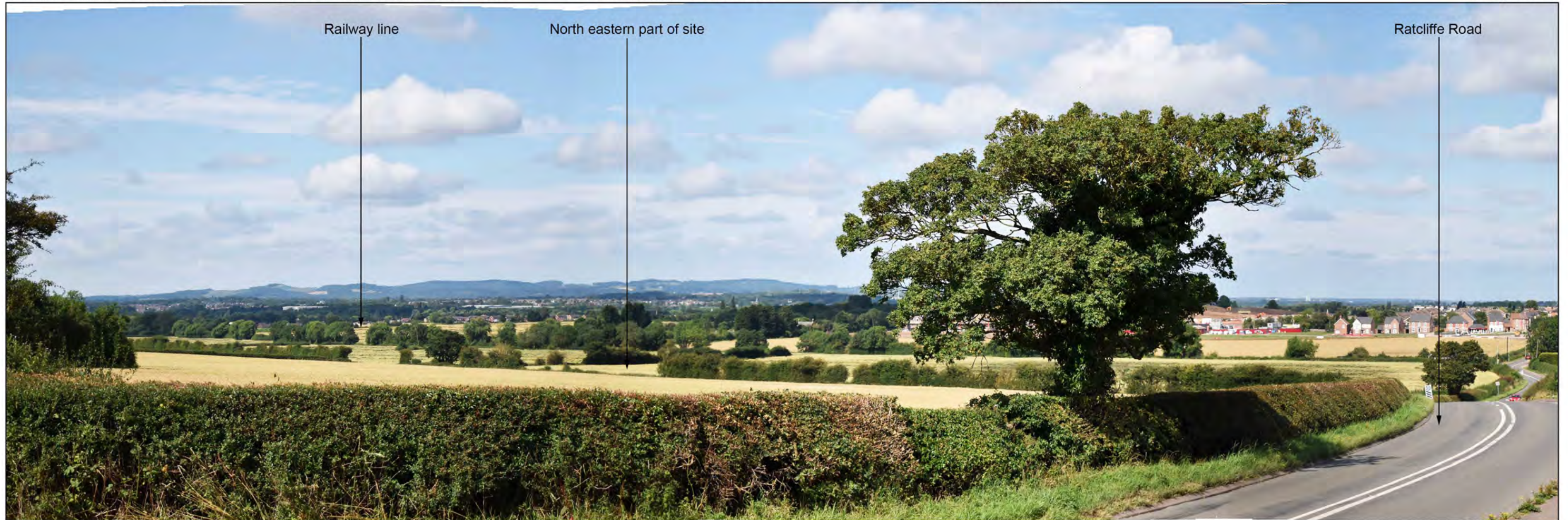
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**Viewpoint 6**





Viewpoint Coordinates: E 461727, N 314422 Date & time of photograph: 11/08/2021 10:33 AOD & Viewing height: c. 72m AOD 1.6m Weather conditions: Clear, good visibility. **Viewpoint 7**



Viewpoint Coordinates: E 461908, N 314655 Date & time of photograph: 11/08/2021 10:31 AOD & Viewing height: c. 79m AOD 1.6m Weather conditions: Clear, good visibility. **Viewpoint 8**





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