

**Brighton and Hove City Council
Kings House
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**Analysis of Landscape and Visual Impacts
Associated with Three Shortlisted
Permanent Traveller Sites**

Final Report

February 2012

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1: Introduction

1.1 Appointment

This report has been prepared by Alison Farmer Associates at the request of Brighton and Hove City Council. The brief was to advise the City Council on landscape issues associated with three sites identified as having some potential for the development of a permanent traveller site.

1.2 Brief and Scope of Work

Brighton and Hove City Council identified the three possible sites through an assessment and site selection process. The sites are located to the north of the main built up area of Brighton and Hove, close to the A27 and are shown on drawing numbers 1 and 2. They include Hangleton Bottom, land at Sweet Hill, Waterhall and Horsdean. All three sites lie either adjacent to the South Downs National Park (SDNP) boundary or within the National Park.

The Council requested advice on the sensitivity and possible landscape and visual impacts associated with the proposed development in order to inform site design, layout and mitigation and to inform the selection of a preferred site.

This assessment has included a review of landscape character, landscape sensitivity, key views from the surrounding area including the National Park, opportunities to mitigate any existing development on the sites and advice on how mitigation planting and site layout may respond to issues raised. In accordance with best practice the assessment of impacts has been based on a worst case scenario and visual impacts assessed in winter.

Preliminary indicative site layout plans were used in the assessment including desk study and site assessment on the 7 and 8 February 2012. Following this, and as part of the iterative design process, site layout plans were amended to take on board issues raised. Predicted landscape and visual impacts are based on the revised layout plans which are shown on drawings 3, 4 and 5.

The advice given in this report relating to landscape mitigation measures should be used as a basis for developing a site design and more detailed planting proposals.

1.3 Nature of Permanent Traveller Sites

The proposed development and indicative arrangements used to inform this assessment have been provided by Brighton and Hove City Council and are in general accordance with the standards set out in 'Designing Gypsy and Traveller Sites: Good Practice Guide' (DCLG May 2008).

The proposed traveller sites would be permanent and would comprise 16 pitches. The individual pitches would include a site suitable for a mobile home/touring caravan, single storey amenity building and space for parking. For the purposes of this assessment the mobile homes and caravans are assumed to be white in colour with areas of hard standing being concrete.

In accordance with the Good Practice Guide the following characteristics associated with permanent traveller sites have been considered in this assessment:

- The provision of sufficient night lighting on the site to enable safe access and movement through the site at night for both pedestrians and vehicles - often located on the amenity buildings;
- Demarcation of each individual plot with close board fencing;
- Demarcation of the site boundary to prevent nuisance for existing residents created by others seeking to move on to the site without permission. Boundaries should be sympathetic to, and in keeping with, the surrounding area;
- Gated access onto the site;
- Provision of a small play area.

1.4 Format of Report

The remainder of this report covers the following:

- **Section 2** assessment of the Hangleton Bottom site.
- **Section 3** assessment of Sweet Hill, Waterhall site.
- **Section 4** assessment of the Horsdean site.

2: Hangleton Bottom

2.1 Location and Context

This site is located to the south of the A27 and just off the A293 Hangleton Link Road. It lies adjacent to the existing urban edge and just outside of the South Downs National Park. This site is allocated for waste development in the adopted East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Waste Plan.

2.2 Site Description

Topographically the site forms a valley or hollow comprising gentle slopes which drop to a low point along the southern boundary. To the west the land rises steeply to form an area of remnant downland, while to the east it is bounded by the A293 before rising to form part of Benfield Hill. The site is enclosed to the north by the step grass embankments of the A27.

Land use of the site is pasture, divided into a number of paddocks by post and wire fencing, associated stables along the western boundary and an area of hard standing (remaining from the construction of the A27) in the northeast.

The site is defined to the south by a mature hedgerow beyond which is existing housing along Thornbush Crescent. To the east is a mature hedgerow/tree belt along the A293 which continues into planting around the junction with the A27. Other vegetation in the area lies behind the stables to the west of the site.

There is vehicle access to the site via Thornbush Crescent and a disused access from the A293.

2.3 Designations

The South Downs National Park boundary follows the western edge of the potential development site extending westwards to include the steep slopes and ridgeline along which is Foredown Road and a bridleway. The SDNP also lies to the north along the outer embankments of the A27.

This potential development site was excluded from the South Downs National Park on the basis that it was allocated for development and formed lower lying land which was not visible from the wider landscape and related more closely to the urban area. The ridge of land to the west was included in the SDNP because it formed part of a wider tract of downland to the north, and the foreground in the outstanding views available from the Monarchs Way. This land therefore forms an important link between urban area and the wider downs landscape.

Open Access Land lies to the northeast of the potential site, north of the A27, and on the northern part of the Benfield Valley Golf Course. This area also comprises the Benfield Local Nature Reserve designated for its chalk grassland and scrub and population of glow worms.

Within 1.5km of the site there is a scheduled monument to the north west beyond West Hove Golf Course (within the National Park) and a listed building (Grade II) at Benfield Barn, outside of the National Park.

2.4 Landscape Character

This site lies outside of the South Downs National Park and is therefore not covered by the Integrated Landscape Character Assessment for the South Downs. However, the land immediately north and west of the site does form part of Landscape Character A2 - Adur to Ouse Open Downs.

The site itself lies within Mile Oak and Portslade Village landscape character area as defined in the Brighton and Hove Urban Characterisation Study 2009. The urban character area to the south is described as "*late 20th century, low density residential development in a cul-de-sac street pattern set high on the valley slope with mixed low rise housing types*".

2.5 Proposed Indicative Development

The proposed indicative layout is illustrated on drawing no 3. Vehicular access would be directly off the A293. There would be some removal of vegetation along the A293 in creating this access.

The proposed permanent traveller site would occupy the northeast part of the site (over part of the existing hard standing) and would be arranged with a central access road off which the 16 pitches would be arranged in two rows orientated east-west. A small play area would be located in the southwest corner.

2.6 Visual Assessment

Views from within the South Downs National Park

From Foredown Road there are views of the eastern and central parts of the site. Closer to Foredown Tower these views are deflected by topography but as one moves northwards more of the site becomes visible. The site is seen in the context of the existing urban area and views along Foredown Road/Monarch's Way Long Distance Route tend to focus outwards towards the wider downs.

Views are possible from the footbridge over the A27 looking southwards towards the site. Again, in these views only the eastern half of the site is visible due to angle of view and topography. In these views the site provides a landscape context to existing built development.

Beyond the footbridge the land drops sharply down towards New Barn Farm and associated buildings. Although it rises again along Monarch's Way, views into the site are deflected by the A27 embankments and topography, such that there are no views of the site from these wider areas of the National Park.

There are however views of the site from Open Access Land on Benfield Local Nature Reserve and West Hove Golf Course. There are also views from the access track leading to the Club House and from the footbridge across the A27 to the south. These views are towards the western half of the site only due to the embankments of the A27, existing vegetation and topography. Views are seen in the context of the A27 and moving vehicles and the urban edge.

There would be no views of the proposed development from the Scheduled Monument to the northwest due to topography and existing vegetation.

Views from outside of the South Downs National Park

The A293 is bounded by a mature belt of trees and scrub and is at a lower elevation than the potential development site - there are therefore currently no views into the site from this

route. Even the gap in the hedgerow which previously formed the access to the area of hard standing is at an angle and this, along with existing vegetation, restricts direct views.

There are clear views of the site from the slip road linking the A293 onto the A27 westbound, however these views are oblique and from moving vehicles.

There would be views of the proposed development from houses along the southern edge of the proposed development site and from the top end of Thornbush Crescent where there is a turning head and access to the stables west of the site. From these locations the whole of the site is visible and the gently sloping valley topography is evident.

There would be no views of the proposed development from Benfield Barn listed building due to topography and existing vegetation.

2.7 Summary of Key Sensitivities and Opportunities

The following landscape sensitivities exist for this site:

- Different parts of the site are visible from different areas of the National Park - the eastern and central part of the site are sensitive from Foredown Road, while the western part of the site is sensitive from the northeast.
- The site reflects a valley landscape - its sloping topography places limitations on site layout and would require some terracing of pitches.
- All of the views of the site are seen in the context of the existing urban edge and or the A27.
- Existing night lighting associated with residential development to the south and the A293 and A27 currently affect this area.
- The views to the development from Foredown Road are elevated and therefore the roofing colour on the amenity buildings of the proposed development will be an important consideration.
- The site forms an area of green space connecting the elevated Foredown Road ridge to Benfield Hill.
- Opportunities exist to soften the existing urban edge with planting.
- Opportunities exist to simplify the current post and wire fencing which divides the area into small paddocks.

2.8 Mitigation

The following mitigation is proposed:

- Restricting development to the northeastern part of the site would mitigate impacts on views from the north and east within the National Park.
- Ensuring the site access connects to the A293 at an angle, would prevent direct views to the proposed development from the A293.
- The removal of the existing hard standing would visually improve the site.
- The provision of limited night lighting on the site and, the use of low level lighting where required, would help keep cumulative effects of night light spill to a minimum.
- The use of dark colours for amenity building roofs would help reduce their visual impact from elevated views to the west.
- Mitigation planting along the southern edge of the site would help restrict and filter views to the site from existing residential dwellings along Thornbush Crescent and would visually soften the existing urban edge.
- Mitigation planting along the western edge of the site would help restrict and filter views to the site from Foredown Road and bridleway.

- The introducing a band of tree planting mid way through the site would help to screen pitches on the higher levels of the site when seen from elevated views to the west.
- Retention of open paddocks surrounding the development would help to maintain the visual 'green space' connectivity between Foredown Road and Benfield Hill.

2.9 Overall Conclusions

This site could accommodate the type of development proposed. Views of the development from the National Park would be seen in the context of the urban area and A27. With mitigation planting the development would not extend built development into the wider National Park and is unlikely to significantly adversely affect National Park Purposes. Proposed perimeter and on site planting would help visually integrate the proposed development into areas of existing planting associated with the A27, A293 and urban edge.

3: Sweet Hill, Waterhall

3.1 Location and Context

This site lies to the west of the A23/railway line, to the north of the A27, and is within the South Downs National Park.

3.2 Site Description

This site forms the lower slopes of Sweet Hill and forms part of a wider area of downland landscape. As such it comprises gentle slopes which extend down in a southeasterly direction with the highest area of the site in the northwest corner. To the west of the site are farm buildings associated with South View which are located on more steeply rising land above the site.

The site forms a single pasture field defined by hedgerows to the north, west and east and by post and rail fencing to the east along a small country lane (Watershall Road). Immediately adjacent to this lane is a railway line in cutting and then the A23. Both the embankments of the railway cuttings and A23 are well vegetated.

3.3 Designations

The boundary of the South Downs National Park runs along the eastern edge of this site including the whole of the site within the National Park. This land was included in the National Park as it formed part of a wider sweep of downland which extends up to the edge of the A23 and A27 corridors. Although the A23 corridor is excluded from the National Park the designation in effect surrounds this site including rising land to the east and west as well as elevated land to the south of the A27 at Coney Hill.

Waterhall Road is important for recreation and forms part of a cycle route and the Sussex Border Path. There is an area of Open Access Land to the south of the site on Coney Hill.

3.4 Landscape Character

Within the Integrated Landscape Character Assessment for the South Downs this site lies within Landscape Character Type A: Open Downland and Landscape Character Area A2 - Adur to Ouse Open Downs.

Key aspects of landscape character to note in this particular area include:

- Large scale open elevated landscape of rolling chalk downland, with dry valleys and scarp slopes;
- Over much of the downland visually permeable post and wire boundaries are typical, however on this side of Sweet Hill the land is divided into small pasture fields defined by hedgerows and hedgerow trees. As such the area has a smaller and settled character than much of the wider downland;
- Urban development beyond the National Park is apparent in views - particularly the linear development which has extended along the A23 corridor;
- The sharp edge between the urban area and Downs along the A27 is blurred because the South Downs National Park boundary flows over the A27 onto Coney Hill to the south.

The landscape assessment also notes in relation to development considerations that *"Planting should recognise and reveal the subtleties in the landscape and avoid a*

standardised approach. Woodland is usually confined to lower slopes while isolated woodland clumps are features of some ridgetops."

It goes on to state that:

"Secondary effects such as light spill, noise and increased traffic will have an impact on the special qualities of remoteness and tranquillity associated with the Open Downs."

3.5 Proposed Indicative Development

The proposed indicative layout is illustrated on drawing no 4. The proposed permanent travellers site would be laid out as a row of pitches on the lower slopes, although some terracing of pitches is still likely to be required due to site topography. Vehicular access would be directly off the Waterhall Road to the east, with two access point - one at either end. The 16 pitches would be laid out in pairs orientated north south. A small play area would be located along the southern boundary.

3.6 Visual Assessment

Views from within the South Downs National Park

Views of the site from within the National Park are confined to those from Waterhall Road immediately adjacent to the site. In the north they are filtered by an existing hedgerow while to the east they are open, the site being defined by a post and rail fence only. There are no views of the site from the upper slopes of Sweet Hill, Ewebottom Hill to the east and from Coney Hill to the south due to topography and vegetation.

Views from outside the South Downs National Park

There are views into the whole of the site from the A23 slip road heading north which are fleeting and from moving vehicles only. There are also views of the site from the footbridge over the A23 and from the RSPCA car park and adjacent playing fields as well as from residential properties along Braypool Lane. All of these latter views are at a lower elevation or similar elevation to the site and the site is seen across the A23 and through associated vegetation which helps to filter and screen views, even in winter. The most visible parts of the site are its upper slopes in the northwest corner and western edge.

3.7 Summary of Key Sensitivities and Opportunities

The following landscape sensitivities exist for this site:

- The western edge and north western corner of the site is most visually sensitive to development due to elevation;
- The topography of the site presents issues in relation to site layout - cut and fill would be required to create level platforms;
- There are opportunities to reinstate the rural character of Waterhall Road adjacent to the site;
- Existing night lighting associated with residential development to the east and the A23 and A27 currently affect this area.

3.8 Mitigation

The following mitigation is proposed:

- Restricting development to the eastern and lower level parts of the site would mitigate impacts on views from the east.
- Introducing new hedgerow planting along Waterhall Road and setting development slightly back from the road would help filter views from the east and also reinstate a traditional field boundary and rural character to this route which is also a cycle route and Sussex Border Path/right of way.

- Providing only limited night lighting on the site and, the use of low level lighting where required, would help keep cumulative night light spill to a minimum.
- Ensuring the use of dark colours for amenity building roofs would help reduce their visual impact from views to the east.
- Planting along the southern edge of the site would help restrict and filter views to the site from the A23 slip road.
- Introducing new planting in the northwestern part of the site would help reinforce existing hedgerows and vegetated character of the area.
- Ensuring field gate access into the site and avoiding urban fencing or barriers would protect the rural character of these lower slopes.
- Ensuring internal fencing divisions between pitches are dark in colour would help reduce visual impacts and screen caravans/mobile homes.

3.9 Overall Conclusions

This site could accommodate the type of development proposed. Any views of the development from the National Park would be contained and limited to immediately adjacent to the site. Mitigation planting would enhance the rural character of Waterhall Road improving this recreational route. Although within the National Park the proposed development would not extend built development character into the wider National Park and is unlikely to significantly adversely affect National Park purposes. The proposed perimeter planting would help visually integrate the proposed development with existing planting associated with the A27, A23 and field enclosures found in this areas of downland.

4: Horsdean

4.1 Location and Context

This site comprises former playing fields which were cut off from the urban area to the south by the construction of the A27. It lies to the north of the A27 and includes an existing authorised transit traveller site comprising 20 pitches and a site office in its southwest corner. The site lies within the South Downs National Park.

4.2 Site Description

This site is relatively flat forming the bottom of a valley surrounded by rising rounded chalk downland in agricultural use. The site therefore forms part of a typically sinuous dry chalk valley which extends northwards into the National Park and which is truncated to the south by the embankments of the A27. The head of the valley is defined by Holt Hill and Poor Brow while the valley sides to the west and east of the site rise to Scare Hill and Tegdown Hill respectively.

The A27 and associated vegetated embankments separate the site from the urban areas immediately to the south of the road.

The site is defined by intermittent boundary vegetation comprising mature trees and as such it is clearly visible from surrounding areas in both winter and summer. Along the western edge of the site is a slight embankment and to the south of the site there is a small depression/hollow which is vegetated with scrub.

Access to the existing transit traveller site is off Braypool Lane. Beyond the access to the existing site the road becomes a track and public right of way leading to Tegdown Hill.

4.3 Designations

The boundary of the South Downs National Park lies immediately to the south of the existing transit traveller site along the northern embankments of the A27. This area of land was included within the National Park on the basis that it formed part of a wider sweep of downland which extends up to the edge of the A27.

There are two scheduled monuments within 1km of this site. The first immediately to the north is Ewe Bottom Entrenchment, Patcham and the second, is a Saucer Barrow and three Bowl Barrows on Tegdown Hill, to the northeast.

The Sussex Border Path runs along the higher land to the west and north of the site and to the south and east is a public right of way which leads to Tegdown Hill. Approximately 1.5km north of the site is the Chattri Indian War Memorial and on the steep slopes below the memorial is an area of Open Access Land.

4.4 Landscape Character

Within the Integrated Landscape Character Assessment for the South Downs this site lies within Landscape Character Type A: Open Downland and Landscape Character Area A2 - Adur to Ouse Open Downs.

Key aspects of landscape character to note in this particular area include:

- Large scale open elevated landscape of rolling chalk downland, with dry valleys and scarp slopes

- Visually permeable post and wire boundaries and few visible hedgerow boundaries and woodland cover
- On steep slopes which have been more difficult to farm there are areas of chalk grassland and scrub which creates strong visual lines and emphasises the line of sinuous valleys and coombes
- Urban development beyond the National Park is apparent in views from the National Park.
- There is a sharp edge between the urban area and Downs defined by the A27.

The landscape assessment also notes in relation to development considerations that *"Planting should recognise and reveal the subtleties in the landscape and avoid a standardised approach. Woodland is usually confined to lower slopes while isolated woodland clumps are features of some ridgetops."*

It goes on to state that:

"Secondary effects such as light spill, noise and increased traffic will have an impact on the special qualities of remoteness and tranquillity associated with the Open Downs."

4.5 Proposed Indicative Development

The proposed indicative layout is illustrated on drawing no 5. Vehicular access would be directly off Braypool Lane.

The pitches would be laid out in two north south slightly curved rows arranged around a play area and landscaped area. The northern part of the site would remain free from development and the pitches would be pulled away from the eastern boundary except in the south. The existing small depression/hollow would be retained to create a reed bed.

The existing transit site would retain its own separate access of Braypool Lane.

4.6 Visual Assessment

Views from within the South Downs National Park

This site is visible from the surrounding chalk landscape which lies within the National Park to the west, north and east. The rising valley sides offer views into and over the site and include elevated close proximity views as well as level close proximity views. In particular there are elevated views from much of the Sussex Border Long Distance Path as it extends from the A27 up to the Chattri (Indian War Memorial) to the north. There are also views from the Public Right of Way leading onto Tegdown Hill to the east of the site. These views are represented in the photographs provided at the end of this report.

From the north (including views from Sussex Border Path, Chattri Memorial and Open Access Land), elevated views are up to 1.5 km from the site and are panoramic with the built up area of Brighton seen beyond the A27. In these views the planting along the A27 forms a strong line separating the urban area from the wider downland landscape. The existing transit traveller site is not visible as it is located in the southern part of the site and topography screens views from these locations. However the northern part of the site is visible and the sinuous lines of the dry valley, of which it is a part, lead the eye to the intermittent planting on the boundary of the site. From lower lying land to the north there are no views of the site due to topography and vegetation.

From the Sussex Border Path closer to the site and from the access track to the west of the site there are elevated close proximity views where the white caravans of the transit traveller site are clearly visible. The intermittent boundary planting to the site does not screen the caravans which are seen as an urbanising element within a wider rural context. From these

locations the noise influence of traffic on the A27 is evident and the built up areas of Brighton clearly visible beyond the A27.

Similarly from the public right of way leading to Tegdown Hill there are elevated views in close proximity to the site. Again the white caravans of the existing transit traveller site are clearly visible as is the intermittent boundary planting. However, before reaching Tegdown Hill the topography of the rolling chalk downland deflects views such that there are no views from the Scheduled Monument on Tegdown Hill.

Views from outside the South Downs National Park

There are no views of the site from outside of the South Downs National Park due to the vegetated embankments of the A27 and low elevation of the site.

4.7 Summary of Key Sensitivities and Opportunities

The following landscape sensitivities exist for this site:

- The flat topography of the site means that any development would require little to no cut and fill or alternation of topography.
- The northern part of the site is particularly visible from the wider National Park both in relation to near and more distant views.
- Without mitigation the development would extend urbanising influences into areas currently with no views of the existing travellers site.
- The sinuous flow to the valley in which the site sits is most evident from the north. From elevated views to the north, (including the Chattri Memorial), the eye is drawn along the valley to the site.
- The vegetated embankments of the A27 act as a strong visual line beyond which there is the built up area of Brighton. Unmitigated the proposed development would appear to jump this perceived dividing line.
- Recreational routes in close proximity to the site are affected by noise from the A27 and views of the built up areas of Brighton beyond the A27.
- There are opportunities to retain the existing pond/depression on site and improve the existing access to the transit traveller site which is currently urban in character.
- Existing night lighting associated with urban areas to the south and the A27 affect this area.

4.8 Mitigation

The following mitigation is proposed:

- Pulling development back away from the northern edges of the site would mitigate impacts on views from the east, north and west.
- Removal of some of the transit traveller pitches in order to accommodate the required number of permanent pitches would help to keep the area of development compact.
- Planting of a significant woodland copse in the north of the site would help reduce visual impacts from within the National Park.
- Ensuring a significant belt of planting along the eastern and western edges of the site would help mitigate near views from public rights of way.
- Planting along the southern edge of the site, on the A27 embankments, would help restrict and filter views from the footpath to the south of the site.
- Ensuring field gate access into the site and avoiding urban fencing or barriers would prevent cumulative urbanising influences in association with the existing access to the transit traveller site.

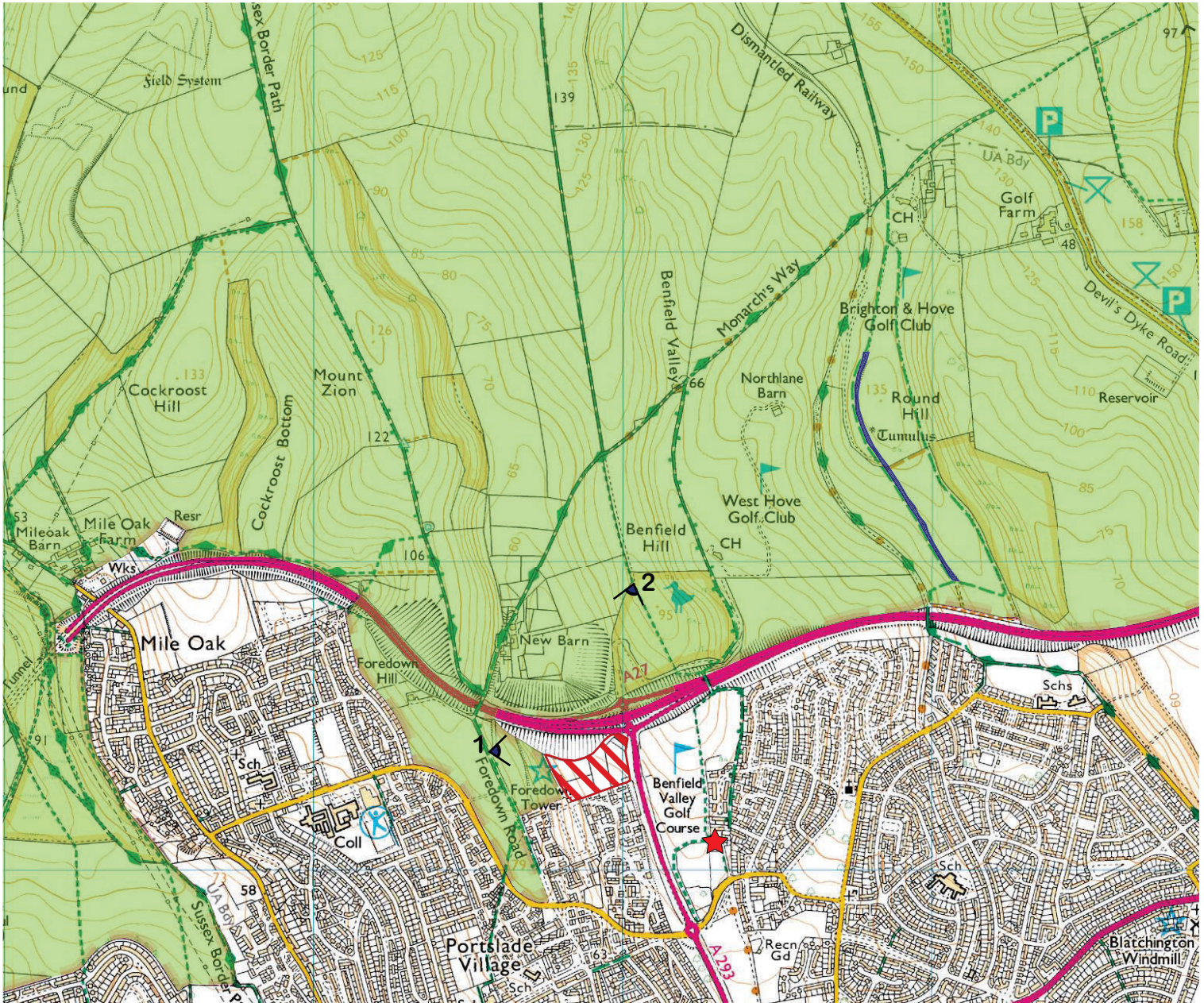
- Providing only limited night lighting on the site and the use of low level lighting where required, would help keep night light spill to a minimum and avoid loss of tranquillity.
- Retention and enhancement of the existing hollow and creation of a reed bed would help to retain landscape features and enhance biodiversity interest.

Planting of the sort proposed although reducing views of the proposed development and therefore minimising urbanising influences on the National Park, will however result in a change in character by creating a wooded floor to the chalk valley in this area. This is not typical of chalk valleys, however given its proximity to the A27 vegetated embankments, it is likely to read as an extension of this band of vegetation which marks the edge of the National Park.







4.9 Overall Conclusions

It is unlikely that this site could accommodate the proposed development without significant mitigation planting. This is because this site would introduce a type of development which would be visible from significant parts of the South Downs National Park and extent this influence into areas currently devoid of overt development.

However the proposed mitigation planting would significantly screen views of the proposed development and the existing transit traveller site from within the National Park. As a result it is likely that significant impacts would be limited to the immediate vicinity of the site and that current impacts of the existing transit site could be lessened as part of the development proposal.



KEY

-  Site Boundary
-  South Downs National Park Boundary
-  Open Access Land
-  Scheduled Monument
-  Listed Building
-  Photograph Locations

**Landscape Assessment
Hangedon Bottom**

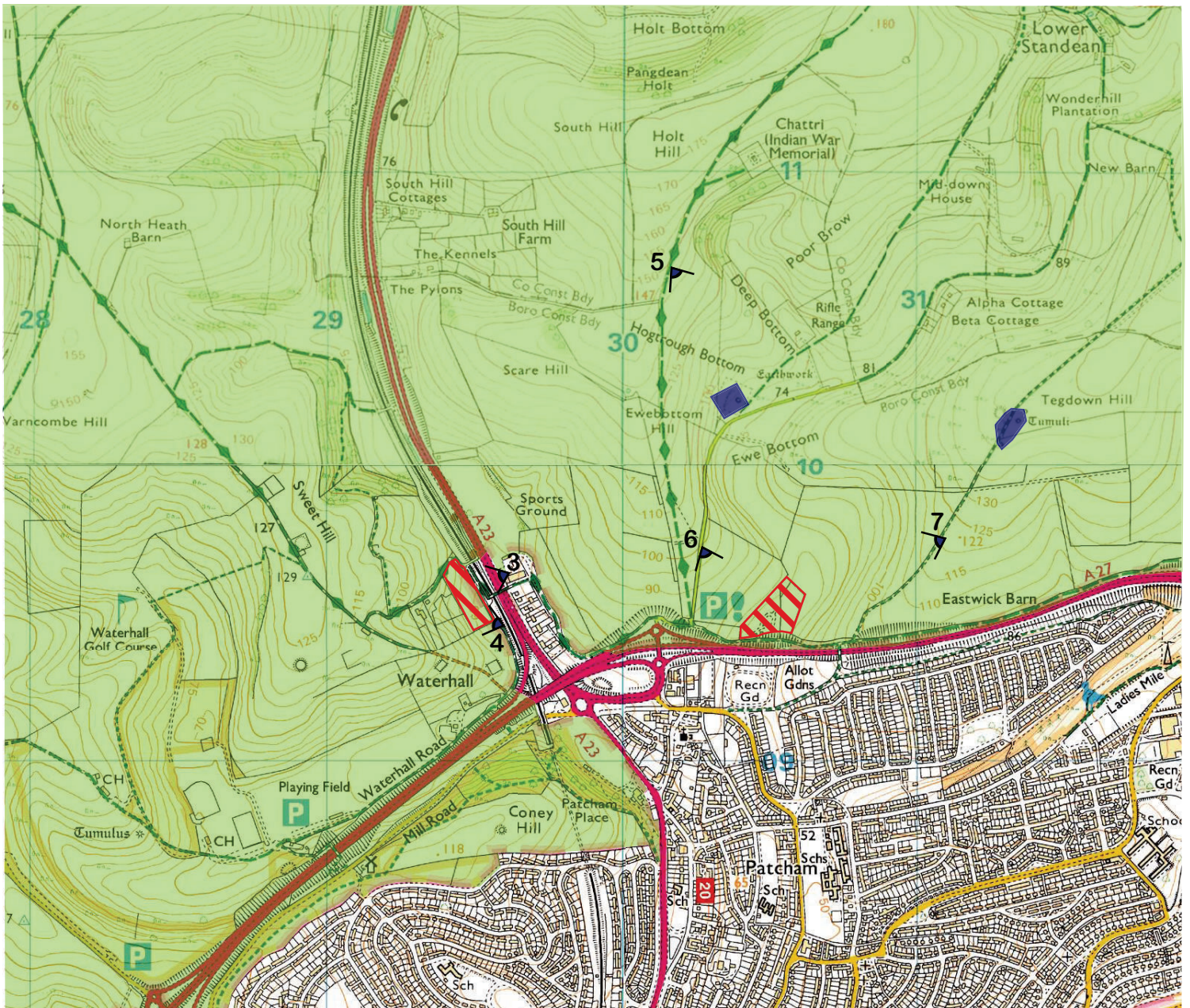
February 2012

Drawing Number 1








Scale 1:25,000

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KEY

-  Site Boundary
-  South Downs National Park Boundary
-  Open Access Land
-  Scheduled Monument
-  Photograph Locations

**Landscape Assessment
Waterhall and Horsdean**

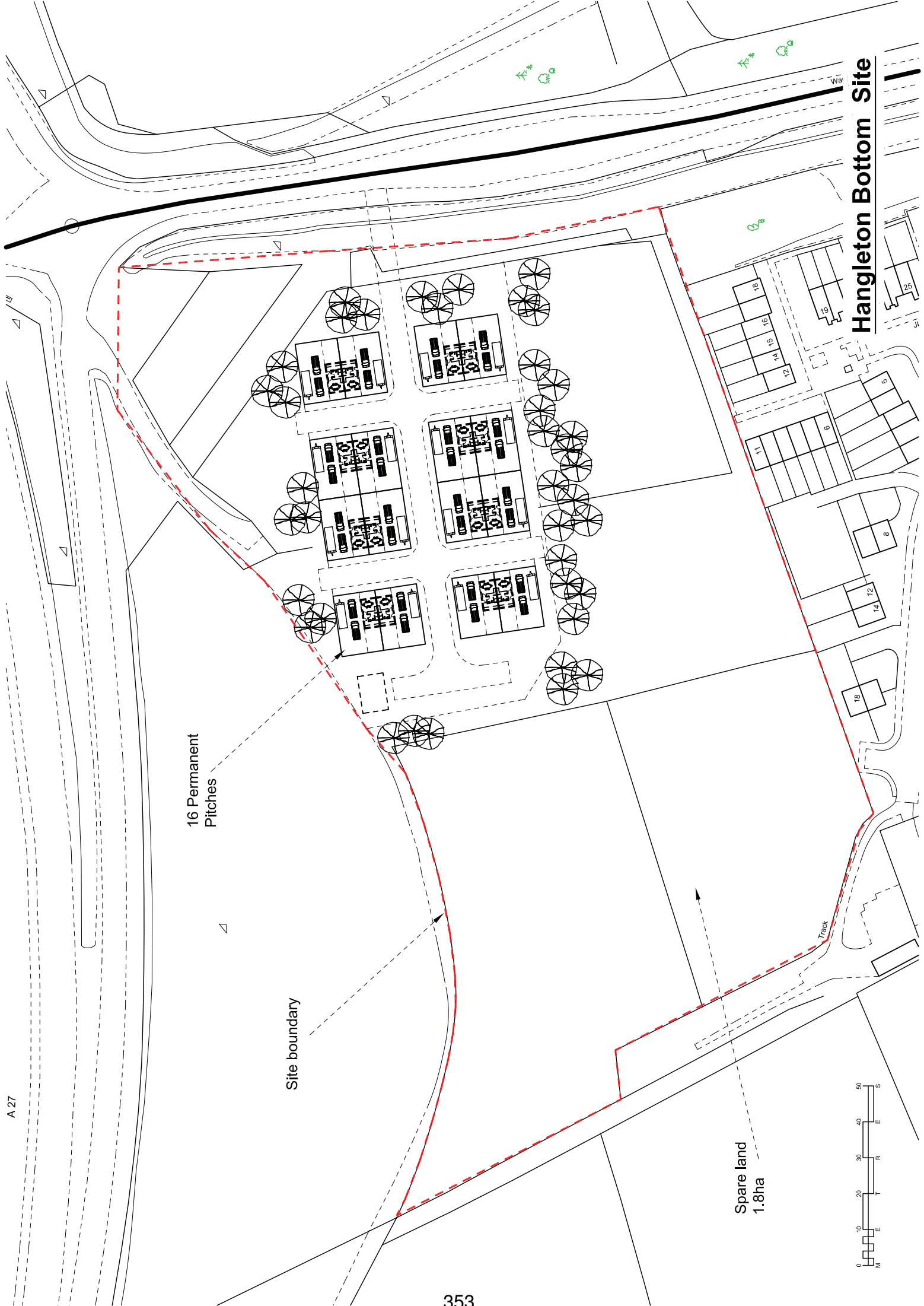
February 2012

Drawing Number 2



Scale 1:25,000

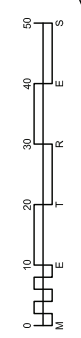
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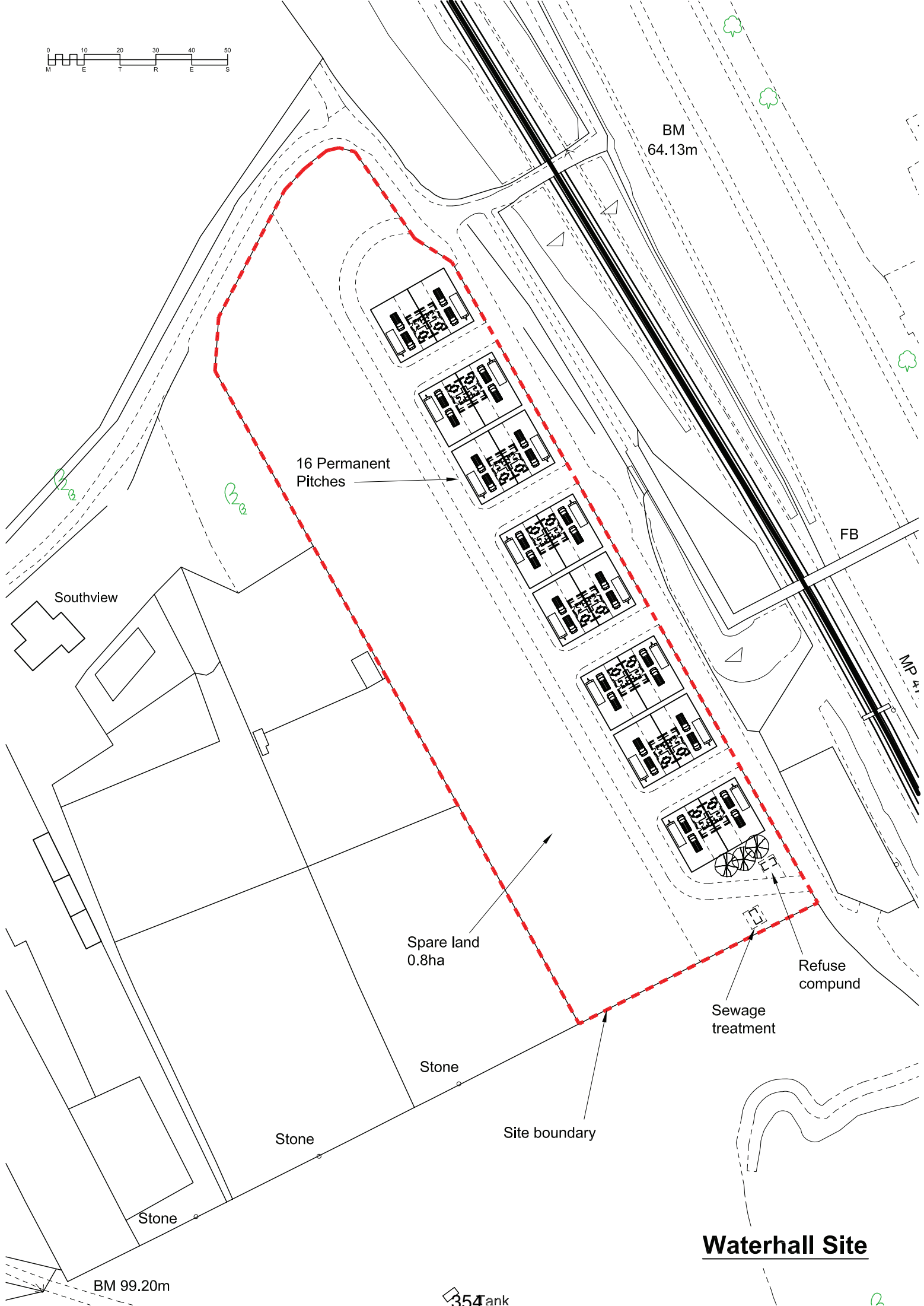
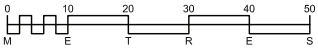
16 Permanent Pitches

Site boundary

Spare land 1.8ha



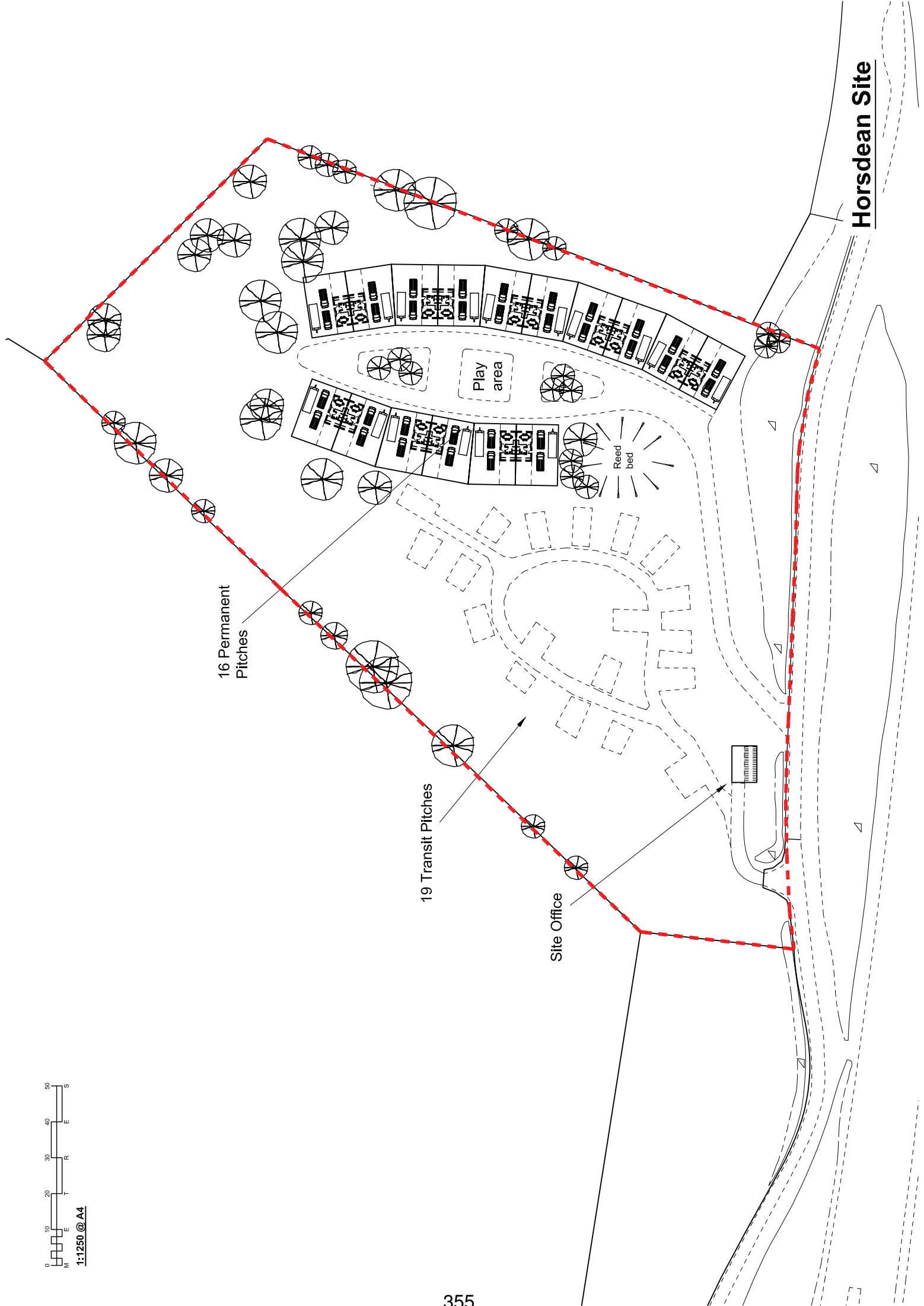
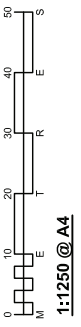
Hangleton Bottom Site



Waterhall Site

354 tank

2



16 Permanent Pitches

19 Transit Pitches

Site Office

Horsdean Site

Hangedon Bottom



Viewpoint 1: Foredown Road looking southeast.



Viewpoint 2: Open Access Land, Benfield Hill Local Nature Reserve looking southwest.

Waterhall Lane



Viewpoint 3: RSPCA car park looking west over A23.



Viewpoint 4: Waterhall Road looking northwest across site.

Horsdean



Viewpoint 5: Sussex Border Path close to Chattri Memorial looking south



Viewpoint 6: Access lane to west of site looking southeast.



Viewpoint 7: Public right of way leading to Tegdown Hill looking southwest across site.

