



Persimmon Homes (Severn Valley)

**Land at Farleigh Farm and 54 and 56 Farleigh Road,**

**Backwell LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL APPRAISAL**

April 2021

**FPCR Environment and Design Ltd**

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) has been carried out for the proposed development by FPCR Environment and Design Ltd (FPCR). The purpose of this LVA study is to provide an assessment of the likely landscape and visual effects of the proposed development. The landscape and visual effects have been considered in relation to the proposals detailed in the planning application and Design and Access Statement (DAS).
- 1.2 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.

### **Site Location**

- 1.3 Figures 1 and 2 show the location and context of the site. The site is located within an area of agricultural land that is bound by existing development at Backwell, Somerset. The site adjoins the rear gardens of existing residential properties along Farleigh Road (A370) to the north.

### **Proposed Development**

- 1.4 The proposed development is a residential development of up to 125 dwellings, associated green infrastructure and vehicular access. The green infrastructure would comprise existing retained landscape features, new areas of public open space, tree planting, an orchard and sustainable drainage (SuDS) features. The application is made in outline with all matters reserved with the exception of the primary vehicular access, which is proposed from Farleigh Road.

## 2.0 METHODOLOGY

2.1 This LVA has been prepared based upon the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, third edition (GLVIA3), published by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, in 2013.

2.2 In summary, the GLVIA3 states:

*“Landscape and Visual impact assessment (LVIA), is a tool used to identify and assess the significance of and the effects of change resulting from development on both landscape as an environmental resource in its own right and on people’s views and visual amenity.” (GLVIA3 paragraph 1.1.)*

2.3 There are two components of LVIA:

- *“Assessment of landscape effects; assessing effects on the landscape as a resource in its own right;*
- *Assessment of visual effects: assessing effects on specific views and on the general visual amenity experienced by people.” (GLVIA3 paragraph 2.21.)*

2.4 The GLVIA3 states:

*“LVIA can be carried out either as part of a broader EIA, or as a standalone ‘appraisal’ of the likely landscape and visual effects of a proposed development...”*

- *As a standalone ‘appraisal’ the process is informal and there is more flexibility, but the essence of the approach – specifying the nature of the proposed change or development; describing the existing landscape and the views and visual amenity of the area that may be affected; predicting the effects, although not their likely significance; and considering how those effects might be mitigated – still applies”. (GLVIA paragraph 3.2)*

2.5 The components of this report include: baseline studies; description and details of the landscape proposals and mitigation measures to be adopted as part of the scheme; and identification and description of likely effects arising from the proposed development.

2.6 In terms of baseline studies, the assessment provides an understanding of the landscape that may be affected, its constituent elements, character, condition and value. For the visual baseline, this includes an understanding of the area in which the development may be visible, the people who may experience views, and the nature of views.

### **Assessment of Landscape Effects**

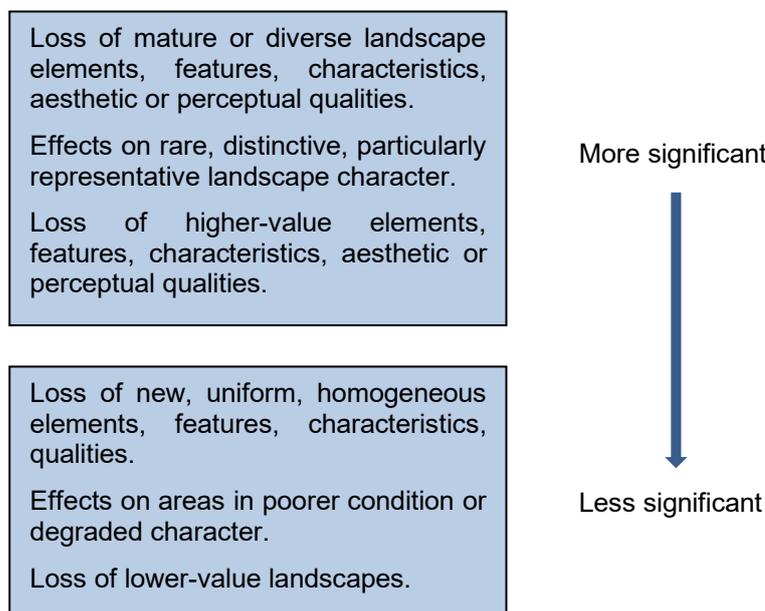
2.7 GLVIA3 states that *“An assessment of landscape effects deals with the effects of change and development on landscape as a resource” (GLVIA3 paragraph 5.1).*

2.8 The baseline landscape is described by reference to existing published Landscape Character Assessments and by a description of the site and its context.

2.9 A range of landscape effects can arise through development. These can include:

- Change or loss of elements, features, aesthetic or perceptual aspects that contribute to the character and distinctiveness of the landscape;
- Addition of new elements that influence character and distinctiveness of the landscape;

- Combined effects of these changes.
- 2.10 The characteristics of the existing landscape resource are considered in respect of the susceptibility of the landscape resource to the change arising from this development. The value of the existing landscape is also considered.
- 2.11 Each effect on landscape receptors is assessed in terms of size or scale, the geographical extent of the area influenced and its duration and reversibility. In terms of size or scale of change, the judgement takes account of the extent of the existing landscape elements that will be lost or changed, and the degree to which the aesthetic or perceptual aspects or key characteristics of the landscape will be altered by removal or addition of new elements.
- 2.12 The level of effect is determined by considering the sensitivity of the landscape receptors and the magnitude of effect on the landscape. Final conclusions on the overall landscape effects are drawn from the assessment components described. This appraisal describes the nature of the landscape effects, and whether these are adverse or beneficial, at the following stages of development; construction, completion (year 1) and longer term (year 15).
- 2.13 GLVIA3 sets out some guidance on the underlying principles, which are used in this appraisal. This includes Figure 5.10, Scale of significance. Whilst this scheme is not EIA development, and judgements on significance are not therefore required, the Figure does provide useful guidance on reaching an overall judgement on the level of effects. This is repeated below (note this includes the correction of a typo, from the published document)



- 2.14 The criteria used in the appraisal are set out in Appendix A.

### **Assessment of Visual Effects**

- 2.15 An assessment of visual effects deals with the effects of change and development on the views available to people and their visual amenity. This appraisal describes the nature of the visual effects and, whether these are adverse or beneficial, at the following stages of development; construction, completion (year 0 Winter) and longer term (year 15 Summer).

- 2.16 The first stage in the assessment is to identify approximate visibility/ visibility mapping. This is done by either a computerised Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV)<sup>1</sup>, or by manual methods using map study and field evaluation. A series of viewpoints are included within the assessment that are representative of views towards the site from surrounding visual receptors. Other views of the site are included where it supports the description and understanding of the site's landscape and visual characteristics.
- 2.17 The views also typically represent what can be seen from a variety of distances from the development and different viewing experiences.
- 2.18 It is important to remember that visual receptors are all people. For each affected viewpoint, the assessment considers both the susceptibility to change in views and the value attached to views.
- “The visual receptors most susceptible to change are generally likely to include:*
- *Residents at home;*
  - *People, whether residents or visitors, who are engaged in outdoor recreation, including use of public rights of way, whose attention or interest is likely to be focused on the landscape and on particular views;*
  - *Visitors to heritage assets, or to other attractions, where views of the surroundings are an important contributor to the experience;*
  - *Communities where views contribute to the landscape setting enjoyed by residents in the area;*
- Travellers on road, rail or other transport routes tend to fall into an intermediate category of moderate susceptibility to change. Where travel involves recognised scenic routes awareness of views is likely to be particularly high.” (GLVIA3 paragraph 6.33.)*
- “Visual receptors likely to be less sensitive to change include:*
- *People engaged in outdoor sport or recreation which does not involve or depend upon appreciation of views of the landscape;*
  - *People at their place of work whose attention may be focused on their work or activity, not on their surroundings, and where the setting is not important to the quality of working life (although there may on occasion be cases where views are an important contributor to the setting and to the quality of working life).” (GLVIA3 paragraph 6.34.)*
- 2.19 Each of the visual effects is evaluated in terms of its size or scale, the geographical extent of the area influenced and its duration or reversibility.
- 2.20 In terms of size or scale, the magnitude of visual effects takes account of:
- *“The scale of the change in the view with respect to the loss or addition of features in the view and changes in its composition, including proportion of the view occupied by the proposed development;*
  - *The degree of contrast or integration of any new features or changes in the landscape with the existing or remaining landscape elements and characteristics in terms of form, scale and mass, line height, colour and texture;*

<sup>1</sup> Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV): A map usually digitally produced, showing areas of land within which a development is theoretically visible. [GLVIA3]

- *The nature of the view of the proposed development, in terms of the relative amount of time over which it will be experienced and whether views will be full, partial or glimpses” (GLVIA3 paragraph 6.39).*
- 2.21 The geographical extent of the visual effect in each viewpoint is likely to reflect:
- The angle of view in relation to the main activity of the receptor;
  - The distance of the viewpoint from the proposed development;
  - The extent of the area over which the changes would be visible.
- 2.22 As with landscape effects, the duration of the effect could be short to long term or permanent and the same definitions apply.
- 2.23 GLVIA3 states that there are no hard and fast rules about what makes a significant effect, and there cannot be a standard approach since circumstances vary with the location and context and with the type of proposal, but the following points should be noted;
- *Effects on people who are particularly sensitive to changes in views and visual amenity are more likely to be significant*
  - *Effects on people at recognised and important viewpoints or from recognised scenic routes are more likely to be significant*
  - *Large-scale changes which introduce new, non-characteristic or discordant or intrusive elements into the view are more likely to be significant than small changes or changes involving features already present within the view. (GLVIA3 paragraph 6.44)*
- 2.24 The criteria used in this appraisal are set out in Appendix A.

### **Overall Landscape and Visual Effects**

- 2.25 The final conclusions on effects, whether adverse or beneficial, are drawn from the separate judgements on the sensitivity of the receptors and the magnitude of the effects. This overall judgement is formed from a reasoned professional overview of the individual judgements against the assessment criteria.
- 2.26 GLVIA3 notes, at paragraphs 5.56 and 6.44, that there are no hard and fast rules with regard to the level of effects, therefore the following terms have been used for this appraisal:
- **Major**
  - **Moderate**
  - **Minor**
  - **Negligible**
- 2.27 Where it is determined that the assessment falls between or encompasses two of the defined criteria terms, then the judgement may be described as, for example, Major/ Moderate or Moderate/ Minor. This indicates that the effect is assessed to lie between the respective definitions or to encompass aspects of both.

### 3.0 PLANNING POLICY

#### National Planning Policy

##### National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, February 2019)

- 3.1 The NPPF sets out the Government's economic, environmental and social planning policy and in combination these policies give the Government's vision of sustainable development. The NPPF emphasises the need for well-designed places, promoting healthy and safe communities and conserving and enhancing the natural environment.
- 3.2 Regarding landscape and green infrastructure, the Natural Environment section of the NPPF provides a policy context for the countryside and green infrastructure. The key objectives include protecting and enhancing valued landscapes and, minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures.
- 3.3 Paragraph 170 states at part a) that planning policies and decisions should protect and enhance valued landscapes and goes on to clarify that this should be in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan. Part b) states that planning policies and decisions should recognise *"the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside"*.
- 3.4 Paragraph 171 advises that:  
*"Plans should: distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites; allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework; take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure; and plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries"*.
- 3.5 Paragraph 172 goes on to add:  
*"Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues"*.
- 3.6 Whilst the site itself is an undesignated landscape with no special protected status, it is located adjacent to an area of land which has been designated as a 'Local Green Space' by the North Somerset Local Plan. Paragraphs 99-101 of the NPPF state that:  
*"The designation of land as Local Green Space through local and neighbourhood plans allows communities to identify and protect green areas of particular importance to them. Designating land as Local Green Space should be consistent with the local planning of sustainable development and complement investment in sufficient homes, jobs and other essential services. Local Green Spaces should only be designated when a plan is prepared or updated, and be capable of enduring beyond the end of the plan period.*  
*The Local Green Space designation should only be used where the green space is:*  
*a) in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;*

*b) demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and*

*c) local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.*

*Policies for managing development within a Local Green Space should be consistent with those for Green Belts”*

- 3.7 The character of the site and its immediate context is assessed within this report to help inform decisions regarding “*the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside*”. The potential to enhance green infrastructure networks is also considered.

#### Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)

- 3.8 The PPG was first published on 6th March 2014 and is a regularly updated online planning resource which provides guidance on the NPPF and the planning system. The NPPF continues to be the primary document for decision making.

#### **Local Planning Policy**

- 3.9 Backwell is located within the administrative boundary of North Somerset. Local planning policies are set out in the following documents:

- North Somerset Core Strategy (Adopted January 2017)
- Site and Policies Plan Part 1 (July 2016);
- Sites and Policies Plan Part 2 (April 2018)
- Backwell Neighbourhood Plan (Adopted March 2015)

#### North Somerset Core Strategy (Adopted January 2017)

- 3.10 The following policies are of relevance to landscape and visual matters and the proposed development:

#### *Policy CS5 Landscape and the Historic Environment*

- 3.11 Policy CS5 recognises the importance of North Somerset’s landscape and the need to protect and enhance its diversity, distinctiveness and quality. It also recognises the importance of the historic environment. In relation to landscape, Policy CS5 states the following:

*“The character, distinctiveness, diversity and quality of North Somerset’s landscape and townscape will be protected and enhanced by the careful, sensitive management and design of development. Close regard will be paid to the character of National Character Areas in North Somerset and particularly that of the 11 landscape types and 31 landscape character areas identified in the North Somerset Landscape Character Assessment.*

*The Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) will be protected by ensuring that development proposals conserve and enhance its natural beauty and respect its character, taking into account the economic and social well-being of the area.”*

#### *Policy CS9 Green Infrastructure*

- 3.12 Policy CS9 states that:

*“The existing network of green infrastructure will be safeguarded, improved and enhanced by further provision, linking in to existing provision where appropriate, ensuring it is a multi-functional, accessible network which promotes healthy lifestyles, maintains and improves biodiversity and landscape character and contributes to climate change objectives.”*

3.13 The policy goes on to set out priorities, which include the following:

- *the protection and planting of trees in woodlands and urban areas, particularly native trees, for public amenity and climate change mitigation and benefits to biodiversity, health and recreation;*
- *the promotion of the Congresbury Yeo, River Banwell, North Somerset Levels and Moors, and Grumblepill Rhyne as local corridors for biodiversity and landscape enhancement;*
- *the protection and enhancement of biodiversity;*
- *the continued development of a network of green spaces, water bodies, paths and cycleways and bridleways in and around the urban areas, recognising the value of sustainable drainage systems for green infrastructure; and*
- *the management, maintenance, upgrading and extension of the public rights of way network including improved connectivity to areas of green infrastructure within and outside North Somerset.*

*Policy CS12 Achieving High Quality Design and Place-Making*

3.14 Policy CS12 acknowledges that quality design must be accorded priority if places are to be shaped as sustainable, and socially, economically and environmentally responsive. The policy text includes the following:

*“Proposals of all scales will be required to demonstrate sensitivity to the existing local character already established in an area and should take the opportunity to enhance the sense of place and local identity through a well thought out design. Where the existing design characteristics are not considered of a high quality, new development should actively aim to enhance the area through good design. Schemes must be based on a thorough site appraisal.”*

*North Somerset Sites and Policies Plan (April 2018)*

3.15 Part 2 ‘Site Allocations’ of the Sites and Policies Plan includes the following policies:

*Policy SA5 Local Green Space*

3.16 Whilst the Site is not a designated ‘Local Green Space’, it is located adjacent to Farleigh Fields ‘Local Green Space’. Policy SA5 states the following:

3.17 Policy SA5 states the following:

*“Planning permission will not be granted except in very special circumstances for development which adversely affects a designated Local Green Space as shown on the Policies Map and set out in Schedule 3 particularly regarding the characteristics underpinning its designation, such as beauty, historic importance, recreational value, tranquillity or richness of wildlife.”*

*Policy SA6 Undesignated Green Space*

3.18 This policy will apply to areas of undesignated green space (those not identified as Local Green Space under policy SA5) within settlements with defined settlement limits, which are considered

nevertheless to be of value in making a worthwhile contribution to the townscape, character, setting and visual attractiveness of the settlement. Policy SA6 states the following:

*“Development proposals affecting undesignated green spaces will be acceptable provided they do not have a detrimental impact on green infrastructure by adversely affecting spaces which make a worthwhile contribution to amenity and/or the townscape, character, setting, visual attractiveness of the settlement.”*

Backwell Neighbourhood Plan (March 2015)

- 3.19 The following policies are of relevance to landscape and visual matters and the proposed development:

Planning Policy Highway 3

*The Parish Council will support the creation of an appropriate network of cycling and walking routes. New developments will be required to include safe walking and cycling routes where this is feasible. The objective is to work towards creating a network of cycleways/footpaths and public transport routes that ensure safe, convenient and direct access to local services and linkage with neighbouring settlements.*

Planning Policy Development 1

*Housing development in Backwell which is at a level appropriate to the size and character of the settlement will be supported. Infilling, defined as one or two additional dwellings, will also be acceptable. Commercial development, appropriate in scale and character in relation to the village, providing local employment, will be supported.*

**Other Relevant Strategies, Guidelines or Documents**

North Somerset Green Infrastructure Strategy (Consultation Document January 2021)

- 3.20 The Council have prepared a Green Infrastructure Strategy for the North Somerset landscape. The document is currently being consulted on. The document will set out the GI strategy for North Somerset and provide a framework for GI improvements for both people and wildlife. It is also intended to support and help deliver the requirements of both national and local policy and strategies.

## 4.0 BASELINE CONDITIONS

### Landscape Character

#### National Character

4.1 National Character Area (NCA) profiles have been prepared by Natural England for the 159 NCAs defined across England. These NCA profiles include a description of the natural and cultural features that shape the landscape, how the landscape has changed over time, the current key drivers for ongoing change, and a broad analysis of each area's characteristics. Figure 3 illustrates the NCAs and other defined character areas within the context of the site.

4.2 At this very broad landscape scale, the site lies within Natural England's National Character Area (NCA) 118 'Bristol, Avon Valleys and Ridges'. This NCA encompasses the City of Bristol with its historic port, and the surrounding area including the Chew and Yeo valleys, Keynsham, Clevedon, Portishead and parts of the Cotswolds and Mendip Hills Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The Key Characteristics for the NCA include the following:

- *Low-lying, shallow vales that contrast sharply with high, open downland ridges as the varied landform reflects the complex underlying geology, comprised of Carboniferous limestones with sandstones, silts and conglomerates, together with muds, clays and alluvium. Coal Measures are also present;*
- *The River Avon cuts a steep-sided valley through the area from the east, forming the 2.5 km long, c.100 m high gorge at Bristol. It is joined by the Frome at the centre of Bristol and the Chew near Keynsham. Other streams and rivers in the south-east flow eastwards to join the Avon outside the NCA, and the Yeo on the south-western edge flows directly to the sea;*
- *The most extensive areas of woodland lie between Congresbury and the Avon Gorge and on the Failand Ridge. These are internationally significant, containing rare endemic whitebeam species. Elsewhere, woodlands are smaller and fragmented and mainly confined to steeper land; the majority are broadleaf;*
- *Agriculture is predominantly livestock rearing, with arable in the flatter land to the north-east, with larger field sizes and infrequent hedgerow trees. Valleys and steeper slopes in the south-east tend to have irregular fields and overgrown, species-rich hedges;*
- *A diverse landscape important for greater and lesser horseshoe bats. Grasslands of high nature conservation interest remain on the wetter valley bottoms and dry downland slopes. Chew Valley Lake Special Protection Area (SPA) and Blagdon Lake Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) support large numbers of wildfowl, plants and invertebrates, and are surrounded by species-rich lowland meadow;*
- *A long, historic timeline, with important fossil features visible in geological exposures, Neolithic long barrows and stone circles, iron-age hill forts and historic associations with Bristol's port and parkland creating important landscape features;*
- *Settlements dating from the medieval period, clustered around springheads of the Cotswold scarp or along the springline of the Mendips. In the vales they are scattered, linked by a complex network of lanes, with linear mining villages superimposed. Settlement becomes especially dense in the southeast, with many villages enlarged as commuter settlements;*

- *Older village buildings, gentry houses and mansions of local ashlar, which includes pale yellow Jurassic oolitic limestones and grey Carboniferous and Lias limestones. Red or brown sandstone is used in the north, and Pennant Sandstone at Nailsea 'Flats' in the south-west;*
- *Bristol and its commercial, industrial and residential areas; major roads (M4 and M5 motorways); the airfields (Filton and Bristol); and reservoirs, which occupy a substantial area around Bristol. There is considerable commercial development around Cribbs Causeway, Aztec West and Abbey Wood.*

### **North Somerset Landscape Character Assessment (September 2018)**

- 4.3 This study has been undertaken at a District level. It subdivides the landscape into eleven landscape types, which are further sub-divided into component landscape character areas.
- 4.4 The site is located within the 'Rolling Valley Farmland' landscape type (J) and the 'Land Yeo and Kenn Rolling Valley Farmland' landscape character area (J5). A small area of land immediately to the south of the site forms part of the 'Cleeve Ridges and Combes' landscape character area (E6).

#### 'Rolling Valley Farmland' Landscape Type

- 4.5 In relation to location and boundaries, the assessment states that:
- "The Rolling Valley Farmland Landscape Type covers a large area of transitional, undulating topography, from 10m to 135m AOD, formed predominantly on underlying Mercia Mudstone with Head. They relate to the pastoral landscape of the valleys formed by the Rivers; Lox Yeo, Yeo, Chew, Land Yeo, Avon and Colliter's Brook which wind their way between the limestone ridges."*
- 4.6 The key characteristics of this landscape character area include the following:
- *Small to medium scale peaceful landscape, with a feeling of partial enclosure from the surrounding ridges;*
  - *Rolling landform formed by numerous rivers and tributaries;*
  - *Presence of variety of water bodies including rivers, streams, ponds, drainage ditches and reservoirs;*
  - *Pastoral landscape with views to wooded ridges;*
  - *Fields bounded by thick hedges with hedgerow trees;*
  - *Occasional belts and clumps of ancient woodland and more recent plantations;*
  - *Complex network of winding rural roads and deep sunken lanes;*
  - *Nucleated villages on higher ground and numerous isolated traditional stone and render farmsteads.*
- 4.7 In relation to settlement character, the study notes the following:
- 4.8 *"Settlement varies throughout the Rolling Valley Farmland Landscape Type from isolated farmsteads and large manor houses, to larger nucleated villages on higher ground and ribbon development along the network of winding rural roads. The majority of development is traditional, vernacular limestone buildings, often rendered either white or a dull pink, with reddish pan-tile roofs. More modern development is evident in the villages, forming a harsh edge that is often visible from the lower ground of the moors."*

- 4.9 The forces for change identified include the following:
- *Encroachment of development along roads and in villages, particularly rising up the open slopes at the bases of the adjacent limestone ridges where it is highly visible from adjacent lowland areas;*
  - *Visual impact of unsympathetic urban edges of Bristol and Weston-super-Mare and urban fringe influences within the immediately adjacent landscapes.*

*'Land Yeo and Kenn Rolling Valley Farmland' Landscape Character Area*

- 4.10 In relation to location and boundaries, the assessment states that:

*"The Land Yeo and Kenn Rolling Valley Character Area consists of two sections of land that run east to west along the valley containing the Land Yeo and Kenn Rivers to the north east of the District. In addition, a small, isolated area of land within Backwell is located within this character area...The boundaries are based on topography and follow the break of slope along the base of ridges, often along the 50m contour or roads..."*

- 4.11 The site forms part of the small, isolated area of land within Backwell referred to above.

- 4.12 The key characteristics of this landscape character area include the following:

- *Gently undulating land form based on Mercia Mudstone with Head and Alluvium;*
- *Rural pastoral landscape set in a wide valley framed by wooded ridges;*
- *Intact hedgerow network with hedgerow trees of oak;*
- *Areas of historic parkland with mature parkland trees rising up to the lower slopes of the ridges;*
- *Frequent large villages such as Long Ashton, Backwell and Claverham with historic stone buildings at centre and modern infill;*
- *Network of winding rural roads with major road and railway passing along the valley floor edge;*
- *Scattered stone farmsteads with stone outbuildings and walls.*

- 4.13 The descriptive text notes that:

*"The Land Yeo and Kenn Rolling Valley is the intermediate land (at 10m to 50m AOD) between the valley floor and the rising limestone ridges... The area is predominantly grazed with small areas of horse paddocks and some small farm orchards now in poor condition. Fields are medium and small scale with the irregular outline of medieval enclosure."*

- 4.14 The assessment notes the difference in character between the north and southern sections of the overall landscape character area:

*"The rural, peaceful ambience is strongest in the southern sections of the area and is reinforced by the thick hedgerows, frequent mature hedgerow trees and the wooded backdrop of the Limestone ridges. The north of the area is rather different in character with significant area of historic parkland belonging to grand houses sited on the rising ridges of the adjacent character area."*

- 4.15 In relation to settlement character, the study notes the following:

*"The area is settled with scattered farmsteads and frequent villages linked by winding rural lanes... Larger roads run along the base of the adjacent ridges with the A370 a dominant presence to the*

south west of the area. The villages such as Backwell, Cleeve and Flax Bourton, mainly on the higher ground at the base of the ridges, have churches and older dwellings of stone and red roof tiles, with more recent infill and ribbon development along the roads of brick and render painted pink or white.”

- 4.16 The assessment notes a number of forces for change, which include:
- *Ubiquitous development along roads such as the A370 and as infill of historic villages.*
  - *Visual impact of unsympathetic urban edges within the immediately adjacent landscapes*
- 4.17 The character of the landscape character area is assessed as ‘moderate’ “*due to the frequent villages with modern outskirts and ubiquitous ribbon development along major roads which weakens the rural character of the otherwise largely pastoral.*”
- 4.18 The condition is assessed as ‘good’ with “*large areas of intact pasture with thick hedgerows and hedgerow trees and small winding rural roads. Some elements of the landscape are declining such as the small farm orchards.*”
- 4.19 The landscape strategy area is “*to conserve the intact pastoral landscape with hedgerow network, winding rural roads and stone farmsteads while strengthening the elements of weaker character such as the village edges and restoring elements of declining condition most notably the orchards.*”
- 4.20 The landscape guidelines include the following:
- *Conserve the rural nature of the pastoral landscape;*
  - *Continue with sensitive, cyclical/rotational management of hedgerows;*
  - *Nurture new and existing hedgerow trees;*
  - *Encourage traditional methods of land management;*
  - *Promote active management and replanting of orchards using local fruit varieties;*
  - *Minimise the impact of the urban edge and the encroachment of visually intrusive land uses through design guidance and appropriate land management.*

#### ‘Cleeve Ridges and Combes’ Landscape Character Area

- 4.21 The site is located adjacent to this landscape character area. The descriptive text for the landscape character area notes that “*The 50m contour and the roads along the base of the ridge and the break of the slope along the 150m contour and the tree line determine the boundaries.*”
- 4.22 The key characteristics of the landscape area include the following:
- *Elevated ridges of Carboniferous Limestone and Mercia Mudstone;*
  - *Steep slopes forming a distinctive backdrop to the Land Yeo and Kenn Valleys and moors to the south;*
  - *Intricate enclosed wooded slopes with contrasting wide views out to the open lowlands;*
  - *Extensive areas of ancient broad-leaved woodland;*
  - *Historic parklands with woodlands and parkland trees including ancient oak pollards at Ashton Court;*

- *Settlement concentrated along roads following the foot of the escarpment ridge with some suburban interfill and ribbon development;*
- *Hidden combes with steep, winding rural lanes;*
- *Historic monuments and earthworks along the scarp top;*
- *Small limestone quarries and workings.*

4.23 The forces for change noted by the assessment include:

- *Encroachment of development along roads and in villages, particularly along the base of the ridge at Cleeve and Backwell, and rising up the open slopes where it is highly visible from adjacent lowland areas;*
- *Visual impact of unsympathetic urban edges and urban fringe influences within the immediately adjacent landscapes;*
- *Small scale incremental changes e.g. proliferation of clutter, signage associated with development, and recreational uses or increase in noise associated with transport corridors impacting on the peaceful secluded character.*

4.24 This area is considered to have a 'strong' character and in 'good' condition. The landscape strategy is to "*conserve the peaceful and remote character of the area and its rich ecological, archaeological and geological heritage.*"

#### **North Somerset Landscape Sensitivity Assessment (March 2018)**

4.25 This study has been undertaken at a District level and comprises a strategic assessment of the sensitivity of the landscape of North Somerset to housing development on the periphery of selected settlements.

4.26 The study sub-divides the landscape on the periphery of development into areas of low, medium and high sensitivity. Map 2 identifies the site as being located in an area of high sensitivity. In relation to Backwell, the assessment notes the following of relevance to the site (paragraphs 6.3.11-6.3.26:

*"Development within the village is generally nucleated, however, to the south-east, development surrounds fields located on rising topography, known locally as Farleigh Fields. Some of these fields are designated as Local Green Space and there is sense of separation from urban development to the north and west of the town. Additionally, these fields form the setting to the Grade I Listed Church of St Andrew and to a lesser extent the setting to the CA centred around Church Lane. Moreover, there are views from these fields towards land to the north-east of the village. Owing to the above, all land located within Backwell (i.e. Farleigh Fields) is of high sensitivity."*

4.27 The study provides examples of high sensitivity land as follows:

*"Land with a high susceptibility to change and/or which is of high value, e.g. land adjacent to or visually prominent from the AONB, land outside of the settlement pattern, land which has high visual prominence, land which contributes to heritage or ecological assets."*

4.28 The study also notes at paragraph 4.1.15 that:

*“The assessment of land was undertaken at a strategic level. It should be noted that where land has been categorised as being of high sensitivity to housing development there will inevitably be variations in the level of landscape impacts. Such variations could be determined by further, more detailed survey at the site or field level.”*

- 4.29 The site appraisal carried out by FPCR considers that the application site is not of high sensitivity, as it does not perform the same role as described in the sensitivity study for the wider area.

### **The North Somerset Site Allocations Plan (2006-2026) Background Paper on Local Green Space**

- 4.30 This document was produced to support the Council’s proposals for Local Green Space (LGS) in the publication version of the Site Allocations Plan (SAP). It provides some additional detail with regard to the ‘Farleigh Fields’ Local Green Space designation, which is located adjacent to the site.

- 4.31 The document considers a number of potential sites for designation as LGS in relation to the criteria set out in the NPPF. These criteria included: beauty; historical significance; recreational value; tranquillity; and richness in wildlife. Sites were also required to have a particular local significance, local in character and not an extensive tract of land. Table 1 of the document indicates that the criteria met by Farleigh Fields is ‘beauty’, which is defined as:

*“This relates to the visual attractiveness of the site, and its contribution to townscape, landscape, and/or character of the settlement, which would normally be expected to be significant.”*

- 4.32 The LGS is described as follows:

*“Two fields meeting in a T shape near St Andrew’s Church. Pasture, but considered to exceptionally warrant LGS designation because of their particular importance in terms of the setting of the grade 1 listed St Andrew’s Church, being high lying, prominent and visible from a significant distance to the south. They are also crossed by public rights of way, which lead towards and afford views of the church. On HER, there is an archaeological site within the northern field (Neolithic stone slab).”*

- 4.33 The site and another parcel of land to the west have been specifically excluded from the ‘Local Green Space’ designation.

### **Designations**

- 4.34 Figure 4 shows designations within the study area. Designations within the immediate vicinity of the site include the following:

- *Backwell Church Conservation Area is located to the south of the Site and contains a number of listed buildings and a Scheduled Monument. These include the Grade I listed Church Of St Andrew which is located on higher ground to the south of the Site;*
- *Backwell Farleigh Conservation Area is located to the north-east of the Site;*
- *The North Somerset Local Plan identifies an area of land to the west and south of the Site as ‘Local Green Space’;*

- 4.35 Other designation within the wider study area include the Green Belt, which wraps around the northern, southern and eastern extents of Backwell. The Site is located outside the Green Belt. Areas of Ancient Woodland, a Local Nature Reserve and a Registered Park and Garden area also present within the wider landscape.

## Topography

- 4.36 The following should be read in conjunction with Figure 5.

### Context – Landform

- 4.37 The study area is crossed by the valley landform of Land Yeo, from south-east to north-west. The town of Nailsea sits on slightly higher land (rising to over 40m AOD) within the valley floor where it broadens, as does the north-western part of Backwell. Above Backwell, the north-west facing valley side rises to over 160m AOD. The south-west facing valley side rises to over 150m AOD.
- 4.38 Settlement within Backwell (as defined by the settlement boundary in the North Somerset Local Plan) extends along and to the north and south of the A370. The majority of built development is located between the 5-10m contour in the north adjacent to the railway line and the 70-75m contour to the south along Church Lane. Built development in the Church Town Area to the south extends further up the slope to approximately the 90-95m contour.

### Site - Landform

- 4.39 The landform of the site itself rises from a low point of approximately 30m AOD adjacent to Farleigh Road to a high point of approximately 55m AOD along the southern boundary. The landform along the western boundary of the Site forms a noticeable ridge of higher ground. The land continues to rise to the south of the site towards existing development along Church Lane and beyond.

## Site and Immediate Context

- 4.40 An assessment of landscape character of the site and its immediate context has been carried out, providing a finer level of assessment than the published studies.
- 4.41 The site is one of six small to medium sized fields which are located within Backwell between areas of existing built development along Farleigh Road, Church Lane and Dark Lane. The site comprises a single medium-sized agricultural field, which is in pastoral use and adjoins existing residential development at Farleigh Road along its northern boundary. The northern and eastern boundaries are primarily defined by fencing and areas of scrubby vegetation. A fragmented hedgerow forms the southern boundary whilst a more continuous belt of hedgerow and trees defines the western boundary.
- 4.42 As noted above, the two fields adjoining the site to the south and west are locally designated as a 'Local Green Space' by the Local Plan. The field to the south is located on higher ground, which ascends towards existing development and the Church of St Andrew and Conservation Area. This area is noticeably more open in character with longer distance views possible across the wider landscape to the north of the village.
- 4.43 The wider landscape to the north is characterised by areas of low-lying farmland, which comprises a pattern of small-medium sized fields bound by hedgerows and occasional trees. The railway line bisects the landscape and defines the northern extents of the village. Small wooded areas, copse and tree belts are scattered across the landscape, typically around pools and along stream and river corridors. More substantial areas of woodland wrap around the quarries and upper slopes of the valley to the south of Backwell.

### Public Rights of Way (PROW)

- 4.44 No PROWs are located within the Site itself. Two PROWs cross the fields to the south and west of the Site. Footpath LA2/6 extends south-east from the Farleigh Road (A370), across the field to the west of the Site towards the Church of St Andrew. A second PROW (LA2/4) extends across the field to the north of the Site between the eastern and western ends of Church Lane.
- 4.45 A network of PROWs are located within the wider landscape surrounding Backwell and, along with the PROWs described above, form part of the walking routes identified by the Backwell Neighbourhood Plan.

### Landscape Value

- 4.46 In terms of "*landscape value*" it is appropriate to examine the role of the site and its immediate context in terms of the range of local factors set out in the GLVIA3 (Box 5.1, page 84), and summarised in the methodology. This considers the landscape in terms of a range of factors as set out below. As a starting point, landscape designations have been considered.
- 4.47 Landscape Designations: The site and its wider landscape context are not subject to any national landscape designations. The land immediately to the west and south of the site is locally designated as a 'Local Green Space'.
- 4.48 Landscape Quality (Condition): The site comprises a single agricultural field, which adjoins the rear boundaries of existing residential dwellings located along Farleigh Road. Rear boundary treatments include a combination of timber close-board, picket and post and wire fencing with some areas of scrubby vegetation at the field margins. The eastern boundary is defined by post and wire fencing. The southern boundary is defined by a post and wire fence and a fragmented section of native hedgerow and scrub. The native hedgerow and trees along the western boundary are in noticeably better condition than vegetation along the southern boundary.
- 4.49 The condition of the landscape in the immediate vicinity of the site is influenced by its location within Backwell. The area of land in which the site is located comprises a number of fields, which are crossed by Public Rights of Way and bound by native hedgerows and trees. Some of these features are in good condition whilst others are more variable such as where the fields adjoin the rear boundaries of properties along Church Lane. Overall, it is considered that the condition of the site and its immediate context is 'moderate'.
- 4.50 Scenic Quality: The site is located within an area of pastoral land within Backwell, which is surrounded by existing built development. The Church is a noticeable feature in local views being located on an area of higher ground to the south of the site. Whilst views towards the Church are possible from the two Public Rights of Way that cross the fields to the south and west of the site, the rising landform of the site and perimeter vegetation serve to restrict views into the site itself.
- 4.51 Being located on an area of lower-lying land located adjacent to existing built development, the site is also noticeably less visible than the higher ground to south in views from the wider landscape. Where partial views of the site are possible, detracting features include the residential properties which back onto the northern boundary and the A370 road corridor.
- 4.52 Rarity and Representativeness: While the site and its immediate landscape context are considered to be broadly representative of the landscape character area, local character is influenced by the existing settlement edge and the noise and intrusion of the A370 road corridor. As an area of

agricultural influenced by its location within the village, it is not considered to be a particularly rare landscape.

- 4.53 Conservation Interest: The site comprises agricultural land partially bound by native hedgerows and individual trees. The nature of development proposed means that the vast majority of existing features around the site boundaries can be accommodated within the GI proposals for the development. The site itself is not of high nature conservation value.
- 4.54 No designated heritage assets are located within the site. The Grade I listed Church of St Andrew is located along Church Lane approximately 200m away on higher ground to the south. The closest part of Backwell Conservation Area is located approximately 150m to the south.
- 4.55 Recreational Value: The site itself has no designated recreational use and there are no public footpaths within the site. There are currently views into the site from the Public Rights of Way, which cross the fields to the west and south of the site, but these are restricted to varying degrees by the topography and boundary vegetation.
- 4.56 Perceptual Aspects: The landscape area in which the site is located is largely surrounded by residential development and the busy A370 is located to the north, which detracts from any sense of tranquillity or wildness. As noted by the North Somerset Landscape Character Assessment, the A370 is a dominant presence in the southern section of the landscape character area.
- 4.57 Associations: There are no known associations with particular artists or writers or events in history that contribute to the perception of natural beauty of the site or its immediate context.
- 4.58 In conclusion and having appraised the above factors it is judged that the site and the immediate landscape is of 'Medium' landscape value. It is noted that in the appeal decision for an earlier larger application, the inspector did not consider the area to be part of a "*valued landscape*" in terms of the NPPF.

### **Visual Baseline**

- 4.59 A visual appraisal has been undertaken for the site. This has explored the nature of the existing visual amenity of the area and sought to establish the approximate visibility of the site from surrounding locations and receptors. A series of photo viewpoints have been selected which support this analysis.
- 4.60 Photographs have been taken to illustrate a view from a specific vantage point, or to demonstrate a representative view for those receptors that are moving through the landscape, e.g. rights of way users. The photographs may demonstrate varying degrees of visibility and include both short and long range views. The photographs were taken on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2021 and seasonal differences have been taken into account when determining the visual effects on these receptors.
- 4.61 'Photo Viewpoints', as referred to in this report are 'Type 1 Visualisations' or 'Annotated Viewpoint Photographs', as referred to in the Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note on 'Visual Representation of Development Proposals' (TGN 06/19).

### **Photo Viewpoints**

- 4.62 An assessment of the likely visual effects of the proposed development upon surrounding receptors is detailed in the subsequent section. Figure 6 details the location of the Photo Viewpoints and Figures 7-13 illustrates the photo viewpoints. They are briefly described below.

Viewpoints 1-3: Views from Public Right of Way LA2/6/10

- 4.63 These viewpoints represent the views of users of the PROW, which extends through the field to the west of the site between the A370 and Church Lane. Viewpoint 1 is also intended to represent the views from residential properties located along the A370, which back onto the site and wider landscape area.
- 4.64 Viewpoint 1 shows views south-east across the field to the west of the site towards the Church of St Andrew on higher ground. Vegetation along the western site boundaries restricts views of the site itself. Woodland on the upper valley slopes beyond the Church creates a wooded skyline and backdrop to the church. Partial views of residential properties at the southern edge of the village are visible through gaps in the surrounding tree-cover.
- 4.65 Viewpoint 2 shows views north from the Public Right of Way and demonstrates how the rising topography and vegetation along the western site boundary screens views. The view shows existing residential development at the northern edge of the village along Farleigh Road.
- 4.66 Viewpoint 3 is located adjacent to the Church of St Andrew. Vegetation and the area of higher ground along the southern boundary are visible from this location. The view shows how the rising landform effectively screens views towards the lower-lying northern section of the site. Longer distance views towards the wider landscape and Nailsea are possible from this location and wooded AONB ridge beyond.

Viewpoints 4-5: Views from Public Right of Way LA2/4/20

- 4.67 These viewpoints represent the views of users of the PROW, which extends through the field to the south of the site between Church Lane and the Church of St Andrew. Viewpoint 5 is also intended to represent the views from the rear gardens of residential properties located along Church Lane.
- 4.68 Viewpoint 4 shows views across the field to the south of the site towards the Church of St Andrew and existing development along Church Lane. Vegetation along the southern site boundary effectively restricts views into the site and towards existing residential development along the northern boundary from this location.
- 4.69 Viewpoint 5 shows how views of the site and existing development along the northern boundary are possible but filtered and screened to varying degrees by vegetation along the southern boundary. Longer distance views are possible from this location towards the wider landscape to the north of Backwell and wooded AONB ridge beyond.

Viewpoint 6: View from Public Right of Way LA2/56/10

- 4.70 This viewpoint represents the views of users of the PROW as located on higher ground in the wider landscape to the south of the site. Views along much of the eastern section of this Public Right of Way are screened by woodland.
- 4.71 Viewpoint 6 shows existing large residential properties along Church Lane, which back onto the agricultural field to the south of the site. The site is visible beyond the area of higher ground to the south and is seen in the context of existing built development along Farleigh Road. Longer distance views are possible from this location towards the wider landscape to the north of Backwell, Nailsea and wooded AONB ridge beyond.

Viewpoint 7: View from Public Right of Way LA2/7a/10

- 4.72 This viewpoint represents the views of users of the PROW, which is located on elevated ground to the south of the site. The view demonstrates how areas of woodland on the valley slopes effectively screen views towards the site from the PROW. Longer distance views are possible from this location towards the wider landscape to the north of Backwell, Nailsea and wooded AONB ridge beyond.

Viewpoint 8: View from Public Right of Way LA2/26/100

- 4.73 This viewpoint represents the views of users of the PROW, which extends through the lower-lying fields to the north of Backwell and the A370. The view shows existing residential properties which front onto the A370 and effectively screen views of the lower northern section of the site. The Church of St Andrew is visible on higher ground to the south. Areas of woodland on the upper valley slopes form the skyline backdrop to views of the Church. Residential development along Church Lane is also visible on higher ground to the south of the site.

Viewpoint 9: View from Public Right of Way LA2/24/10

- 4.74 This viewpoint represents the views of users of the PROW, which extends through the fields to the north of Backwell and the A370. The view shows existing residential development and tree and hedgerow cover along Farleigh Road and the rising landform and areas of woodland to the south of the village. The site is effectively screened by the intervening vegetation and housing.

Viewpoint 10: View from Backwell Bow

- 4.75 This viewpoint represents the views of users of Backwell Bow as well as longer distance views from the wider landscape to the north generally. Intervening tree and hedgerow cover entirely screens existing built development along Farleigh Road and the lower-lying northern section of the site. Views of the fields which are located on higher ground to the south are possible from this location as is the Church of St Andrew and existing built development along Church Lane.

## 5.0 LANDSCAPE PROPOSALS

### Introduction

- 5.1 The development proposals are described in the Design and Access Statement and other information accompanying the planning application. The existing landscape resource and the visual receptors and amenity of the site have been considered by the planning and design process and have informed the resultant scheme. This approach has entailed collaboration between landscape, urban design, ecological and other professionals. The landscape components of the scheme are an important integral part of the proposals.

### Landscape Design and GI Objectives

- 5.2 The key objectives of the landscape and GI proposals for the scheme are to:
- *Promote a high-quality sustainable design solution, creating a 'place' which is both safe and attractive and which positively contributes towards quality of life, health and social wellbeing;*
  - *Create a soft green settlement edge where the site adjoins the locally designated 'Local Green Space';*
  - *Retain and protect key views from Public Rights of Way and the surrounding landscape towards the listed Church of St Andrew;*
  - *Respect and relate to the character and appearance of the settlement and to the particular characteristics and features of the site landscape and context;*
  - *Conserve, restore or enhance the site's existing environmental assets and use them as part of the framework for the creation of new Green Infrastructure (GI) and public open space, which respects the existing landscape features and character, promotes bio-diversity and enhances public access and recreation.*

### Landscape and Green Infrastructure (GI) Proposals

- 5.3 The landscape and GI proposals for the scheme are detailed in the Design and Access Statement accompanying the planning application. In summary these proposals include:
- *The provision of a significant proportion of the total site area dedicated to landscape, GI, public open space, play and habitat related proposals;*
  - *Built development would be set back areas of higher ground to the south. Built development would not extend beyond the 50m contour;*
  - *Locating built development to the north would allow for the creation of a broad swathe of landscape on areas of higher ground to the south, which would comprise new areas of public open space, an informal community orchard, new tree and hedgerow planting, pedestrian routes and an equipped play area;*
  - *Provision of new pedestrian connections: from the south-eastern corner of the site to Public Right of Way LA2/4/20 towards Church Lane and the Primary School;*
  - *Retention of perimeter hedgerows and trees where feasible and reinforcement of existing vegetation with new native tree, hedgerow and scrub planting. This would include appropriate replacement planting to mitigate for any losses required to create the site access;*

- *Provision of low-level scrub planting along the northern, eastern and western boundaries;*
- *Structural tree and hedgerow planting would comprise a locally appropriate mix of native species and a degree of heavy and extra heavy standard specimens for immediate impact;*
- *The informal community orchard would incorporate a locally appropriate mix of traditional orchard species and serve to further screen and soften views of built development in the medium term;*
- *Provision of street tree and on-plot tree planting to help soften and integrate built development within its landscape setting;*
- *All surface water runoff would be fed to an attenuation basin, which would be located on lower-lying land. The basin would be designed to ensure safety and to maximise biodiversity and amenity potential;*
- *All the green infrastructure components would be designed and managed as an integrated whole. There will be an increase in both recreational resource and biodiversity as a result of the GI proposals.*

5.4 The development proposals as outlined above will deliver a high quality and sustainable development. Importantly, this will be characterised by the clearly defined limits of the built development proposals, the robust landscape framework and careful attention to the particular design and layout of new residential areas.

### **Landscape Management**

5.5 All of the landscape areas and public open space features will be managed and maintained. This would be achieved through the implementation of a comprehensive Landscape Management Plan (LMP), to ensure the successful establishment and continued thriving of the landscape proposals.

## 6.0 LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL EFFECTS

- 6.1 The following section outlines the likely landscape and visual effects that would arise from proposed development on the site. Schedules detailing these likely landscape and visual effects for the receptors are included in Appendices B and C respectively. Please refer to these in conjunction with the following descriptions.

### Landscape Effects

#### Construction

- 6.2 During the construction phase there would inevitably be some adverse visual effects arising from the temporary work and disturbance. All construction works would be carried out in accordance with best practice procedures to minimise any adverse impact on landscape character. Appropriate methods will be adopted to protect retained trees and vegetation based upon BS 5837.
- 6.3 The construction phase is likely to be over a relatively short duration and the landscape effects are judged to be no greater than **minor adverse** on the District landscape character area, but **moderate adverse** at a site level.

#### Operation (following Completion)

##### National Landscape Character

- 6.4 At a national level, the site lies within National Character Area 118 'Bristol, Avon Valley and Ridges'. The proposed development is located on a green field site which is not covered by any local or national landscape designations such as Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) or National Park. Development of the site is relatively modest in scale and nature and would result in no discernible effects on landscape character at a national scale

##### District Landscape Character

- 6.5 At a District level, the North Somerset Landscape Character Assessment (2018) locates the site entirely within the 'Rolling Valley Farmland' Landscape Type and 'Land Yeo and Kenn Rolling Valley Farmland' (J5) Landscape Character Area. A full description of this landscape type and landscape character area is provided at Section 4.0 above. The key characteristics for the character of most relevance to this LVA are repeated here for reference:

- *Rural pastoral landscape set in a wide valley framed by wooded ridges;*
- *Intact hedgerow network with hedgerow trees of oak;*
- *Frequent large villages such as Long Ashton, Backwell and Claverham with historic stone buildings at centre and modern infill;*
- *Network of winding rural roads with major road and railway passing along the valley floor edge.*

- 6.6 The site is also located adjacent to the 'Cleeve Ridges and Combes' (E6) landscape character area. It is noted that the character and strategy for the E6 character area are described as being 'strong' and 'conserve' and for the J5 character area 'moderate' and 'conserve and strengthen'.
- 6.7 In the context of Backwell, the proposed development would result in a modest expansion of the settlement in an area of landscape which adjoins existing residential development along the A370 – a highway which is described as having a "dominant presence" by the North Somerset Landscape

Character Area Assessment (2018). Whilst the proposals would result in the loss of some open farmland within the village, this would be a very small area in the context of the character area as a whole. The site is located within an existing settlement and would not intrinsically alter the pattern of development in the wider landscape, which is described as being “*mainly on the higher ground at the base of the ridges*”.

- 6.8 New housing would be located below the 50m contour, which represents the transitional boundary between the J5 and E6 landscape character areas, and well-contained by rising topography and existing built development and vegetation along the A370 and site boundaries. A broad swathe of public open space and new tree, scrub and hedgerow planting is proposed along the southern boundary. New planting would create a soft, positive settlement edge and further restrict the spread of landscape effects beyond the site and its immediate vicinity. In the wider landscape to the north and south, new housing would be perceived as a noticeable but small change that would be seen in the context of the existing settlement.
- 6.9 The GI proposals would contribute to the landscape guidelines for the landscape character area: existing hedgerows and trees would be retained and supplemented with new native planting; vegetation would be incorporated within a comprehensive site-wide landscape management plan; and an informal orchard would be created in areas of open space to the south. It is considered that this approach would ensure that the development is well-integrated with the surrounding landscape and result in some localised beneficial effects.
- 6.10 Overall, it is considered that the proposed development is likely to result in no greater than a **minor adverse landscape effect** upon the ‘*Land Yeo and Kenn Rolling Valley Farmland*’ landscape character area at completion. This would decrease to a **negligible-minor adverse landscape effect** in the medium term as proposed planting matures to further soften built form and integrate new development within its landscape setting.

#### Site and Immediate Context

- 6.11 The site and its immediate context are considered to have a medium susceptibility to change being an area of agricultural land within the existing village influenced by the surrounding built development. An analysis of landscape value has determined that the site and its immediate context has a **medium** landscape value overall.
- 6.12 The most noticeable landscape effects would occur within the site itself where built development is proposed and would replace the existing farmland. As noted above, new housing would be set back from areas of higher ground and the 50m contour to the south and located adjacent to existing residential properties along the A370. Existing built development and the A370 corridor are considered to have an urbanising effect on the site’s northern boundary. The landscape areas to the south would include new areas of species rich grassland, informal open space and new tree, hedgerows and orchard planting along the southern boundary. New pedestrian connections would also be provided around the site and towards Church Lane to the south-east and south-west. New tree and hedgerow planting and the proposed sustainable drainage features would be designed to blend with surrounding landscape character and include a locally appropriate mix of native species.
- 6.13 The proposed landscape buffers and planting would also serve to reinforce the sense of separation between areas of new housing and the designated ‘Local Green Space’, which covers the fields to the west and south. This would serve to protect existing views from PROWs towards the Church of St Andrew and longer distance views north from the areas of higher ground to the south.

- 6.14 The North Somerset Landscape Sensitivity Assessment (2018) has assessed the overall landscape area in which the site is located as being of 'high sensitivity'. The study notes that this is primarily due to the sense of separation from urban development to the north and west of the town. The study also notes that the fields form the setting to the Church of St Andrew and Conservation Area and that views are possible from these fields to the north-east of the village. It is important to note that the assessment was prepared at a strategic level and that "*where land has been categorised as being of high sensitivity to housing development, there will inevitably be variations in the level of landscape impacts...which could be determined by further, more detailed survey at the site or field level.*"
- 6.15 As demonstrated above and by the photomontages submitted with this LVA, the site itself is located adjacent to and influenced by areas of existing development along Farleigh Road. Whilst it is acknowledged that areas of higher ground to the south are of higher sensitivity to built development, land to the north is well-contained by the rising landform, built development and vegetation along the site boundaries. It is considered that the site is therefore less susceptible to the type of change proposed than areas of higher ground to the south and land to the west, which are more visually prominent and facilitate views towards the Church of St Andrew and across the landscape to the north.
- 6.16 Overall, at completion, there would be a **moderate adverse landscape effect** upon the site and its immediate context. Once planting within areas of open space has had the opportunity to establish, this would reduce to a **minor-moderate adverse landscape effect**

## Visual Effects

### Construction

- 6.17 During the construction phase there would be some temporary visual effects arising from the construction activities. All construction works would be carried out in accordance with best practice procedures to protect and to minimise, as far as possible, adverse effects upon visual amenity.
- 6.18 During the construction phase, adverse effects upon the local visual resource will occur and this depends on the actual extent of visibility of the site for receptors. Inevitably, those receptors in closest proximity that have direct views of the site will experience views of construction activity to include vehicles and associated machinery, site compounds and earthworks/ground modelling.
- 6.19 It is assessed that the overall visual effects during the construction phase would be over a relatively short duration and consequently there would be a short-term effect as a result. The most noticeable visual effects during the construction phase would be restricted to receptors located in close proximity to the site such as the adjoining residential properties and nearby PROWs.

### Operation (following Completion)

- 6.20 The following provides a summary of the visual effects assessment included at Appendix C.

#### Residential Properties and Settlement

- 6.21 The visual effects of the proposed development would be restricted to residential properties which either adjoin or are located in close proximity to the site boundaries due to the screening effects of surrounding built development and vegetation.

- 6.22 *Residential Properties at Farleigh Road* Views of the proposed development would be possible from the rear windows and gardens of approximately 20-25 residential properties along Farleigh Road, which either adjoin or are located close to the northern site boundary. Views would be obstructed to varying degrees by fencing and vegetation within rear gardens. Existing views across the open field would be largely replaced by views of new housing and GI proposals. The proposed development is set back from the northern boundary in order to create a positive frontage and landscape buffer to the existing rear gardens. It is considered that the proposed development would result in a **major/moderate adverse visual effect** on residents of properties which adjoin the northern boundary of the site at construction. Visual effects would decline to **moderate adverse** over time due to the proposed tree, scrub and hedgerow planting.

*Residential Properties at Church Lane.*

- 6.23 Views of the proposed development would be possible from approximately 20-25 residential properties, which are located along Church Lane to the north of the site. Views of the proposed development would vary as a result of the screening effects of intervening existing vegetation along the southern boundary of the site and topography. A broad swathe of new tree, hedgerow and scrub planting is proposed along the southern boundary, which would effectively screen views of the proposed housing in the medium term. A proportion of the trees would be planted as heavy and extra-heavy standards in order to provide a degree of immediate impact at completion. New hedge planting along the boundary of the properties is proposed for habitat creation, but this could be maintained at a level to retain open views from first windows, where these are possible. It is considered that the proposed development would result in a **moderate adverse visual effect** on residents of properties along Church Lane at construction. Visual effects would decline to **minor-moderate adverse** at completion due to the proposed tree, scrub and hedgerow planting and **minor adverse** at Year 15 once this vegetation has established.

Public Rights of Way (PROW) and Other Footpaths etc

*Public Right of Way LA2/6/10*

- 6.24 Views of the proposed development would be most noticeable from the northern section of the PROW where new housing would be partially visible above the existing retained hedgerow and trees along the western boundary. New housing would be set back from areas of higher ground to the south in order to avoid encroaching on the skyline. Siting development on lower-lying land would also effectively screen views of new housing from this PROW as users travel north away along the area of higher ground around the Church of St Andrew. The proposed development would result in a **moderate adverse visual effect** at completion declining to **minor adverse** at Year 15 once the GI proposals have established and matured.

*Public Right of Way LA2/4/20*

- 6.25 The most noticeable visual effects from this PROW would be experienced as users traverse along the southern boundary of the site. Whilst existing tree and hedgerow cover provides a degree of screening, the southern edge of the proposed development would initially be visible beyond areas of proposed open space. In the medium term, it is anticipated that new development, which is set back from areas of higher ground, would be effectively screened by new tree and hedgerow planting along the southern boundary. It is considered that the proposed development would result in a **moderate adverse effect** at completion declining to **minor adverse** at Year 15 once the GI has established and matured.

*Public Right of Way LA2/56/10*

- 6.26 Partial views of the southern edge of the proposed development would be possible from this section of the PROW. New housing would be seen in the context of and partially screened by intervening built development along Church Lane as well as vegetation and areas of higher ground along the southern boundary at completion. It is considered that new planting along the southern boundary would effectively screen and filter views of new housing in the medium term. Visual effects on uses of this PROW would therefore decline from **moderate adverse** at completion to **minor adverse** at Year 15.

*Public Right of Way LA2/7a/10*

- 6.27 Views of the proposed development from this PROW would be effectively screened by intervening blocks of woodland, which wrap around the upper slopes of the valley to the south of the village. It is considered that the visual effects of the proposed development would be **negligible** at completion and Year 15.

*Public Rights of Way LA/26/100 and LA2/24/10*

- 6.28 Views of the proposed development from the PROW network to the north of the village would be largely screened by intervening built development and vegetation along Farleigh Road. Whilst views of proposed development are anticipated to be possible from PROW LA2/26/100, these would be partial views of new housing and seen in the context of existing built development along Farleigh Road. New housing is sited on lower-lying land and would not encroach on views towards the Church of St Andrew. Overall, it is considered that the proposed development would result in a **minor adverse visual effect** users of PROW LA2/26/100 and a **negligible-minor adverse visual effect** on users of PROW LA2/24/10 at completion and Year 15.

Roads & Transport Users

- 6.29 Views of the proposed development from Backwell Bow would be effectively screened by overlapping belts of tree and hedgerow cover and existing built development along Farleigh Road. Whilst glimpsed views of the proposed development may be possible from Farleigh Road, this is a relatively fast-moving road and visibility would be restricted to a short section of the highway. Similarly, views towards the site from Church Lane are screened by intervening built development and tree cover. Overall, it is considered that the proposed development would result in a **negligible visual effect** upon users of the surrounding road network.

**Night-time Visual Effects**

- 6.30 The site is located adjacent to and would therefore be influenced by a degree of light spill and illumination from adjoining built development and the A370 corridor. The proposed development would follow best practice to minimise and control the effects of lighting on the surrounding landscape. Luminaires and columns would be strategically located to achieve the required lighting levels for safety and operation whilst ensuring that light spillage is minimised.
- 6.31 Inevitably, there would be some illumination and light spill from the proposed development (as there would be for any new development) but this would be observed in the context of existing lighting at the settlement edge and light-spill from within the village. The development would be set back from the northern and western site boundaries in order to allow for enhanced perimeter planting that would help to reduce illumination and light-spill.

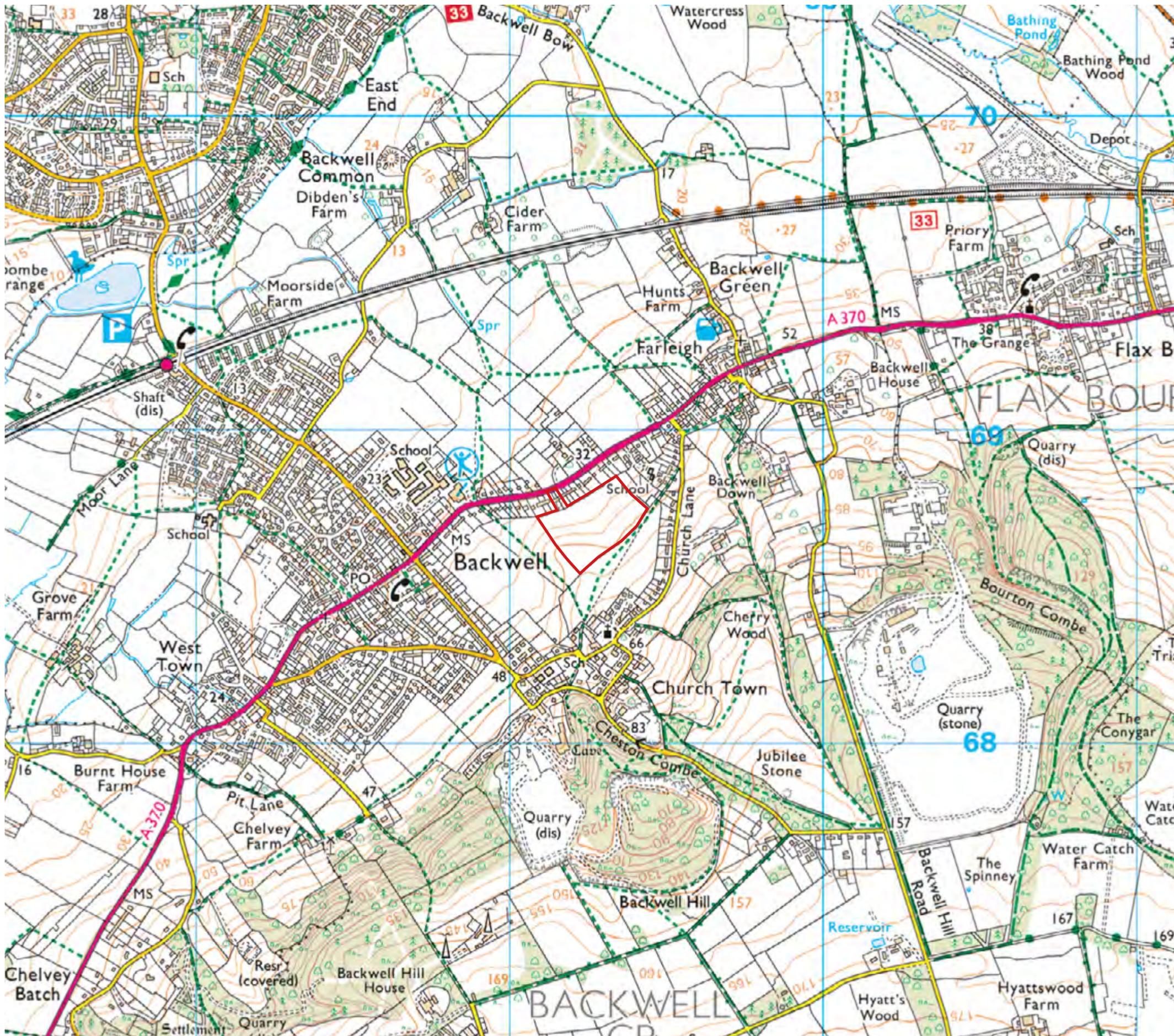
## 7.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 The proposed scheme is a residential development of up to 125 dwellings, associated green infrastructure and vehicular access. The green infrastructure would comprise existing retained landscape features, new areas of public open space, tree planting, an orchard and sustainable drainage (SuDS) features. The application is made in outline with all matters reserved with the exception of the vehicular access, which is proposed from Farleigh Road.
- 7.2 The site is one of six small to medium sized fields which are located within Backwell between areas of existing built development along Farleigh Road, Church Lane and Dark Lane. The site comprises a single medium-sized agricultural field, which is in pastoral use and adjoins existing residential development at Farleigh Road along its northern boundary. The northern and eastern boundaries are primarily defined by fencing and areas of scrubby vegetation. A fragmented hedgerow forms the southern boundary whilst a more continuous belt of hedgerow and trees defines the western boundary.
- 7.3 The two fields adjoining the site to the south and west are locally designated as a 'Local Green Space' by the Local Plan. The field to the south is located on higher ground, which ascends towards existing development and the Church of St Andrew and Conservation Area. This area is noticeably more open in character with longer distance views possible across the wider landscape to the north of the village.
- 7.4 The wider landscape to the north is characterised by areas of low-lying farmland, which comprises a pattern of small-medium sized fields bound by hedgerows and occasional trees. The railway line bisects the landscape and defines the northern extents of the village. Small wooded areas, copse and tree belts are scattered across the landscape, typically around pools and along stream and river corridors. More substantial areas of woodland wrap around the quarries and upper slopes of the valley to the south of Backwell.
- 7.5 The landscape and GI proposals for the scheme are detailed in the Design and Access Statement accompanying the planning application. In summary these proposals include:
- The provision of a significant proportion of the total site area dedicated to landscape, GI, public open space, play and habitat related proposals;
  - Built development would be set back areas of higher ground to the south. Built development would not extend beyond the 50m contour;
  - Locating built development to the north would allow for the creation of a broad swathe of landscape on areas of higher ground to the south, which would comprise new areas of public open space, an informal community orchard, new tree and hedgerow planting, pedestrian routes and an equipped play area;
- 7.6 At a national level, the site lies within National Character Area 118 'Bristol, Avon Valley and Ridges'. The proposed development is located on a green field site which is not covered by any local or national landscape designations such as Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) or National Park. Development of the site is relatively modest in scale and nature and would result in no discernible effects on landscape character at a national scale
- 7.7 At a District level, the North Somerset Landscape Character Assessment (2018) locates the site entirely within the 'Rolling Valley Farmland' Landscape Type and 'Land Yeo and Kenn Rolling Valley Farmland' (J5) Landscape Character Area.

- 7.8 In the context of Backwell, the proposed development would result in a modest expansion of the settlement in an area of landscape which adjoins existing residential development along the A370 - a highway which is described as having a "*dominant presence*" by the North Somerset Landscape Character Area Assessment (2018). Whilst the proposals would result in the loss of some open farmland within the village, this would be a very small area in the context of the character area as a whole. The site is located within an existing settlement and would not intrinsically alter the pattern of development in the wider landscape, which is described as being "*mainly on the higher ground at the base of the ridges*".
- 7.9 New housing would be located below the 50m contour, which represents the transitional boundary between the J5 and E6 landscape character areas, and well-contained by rising topography and existing built development and vegetation along the A370 and site boundaries. A broad swathe of public open space and new tree, scrub and hedgerow planting is proposed along the southern boundary. New planting would create a soft, positive settlement edge and further restrict the spread of landscape effects beyond the site and its immediate vicinity. In the wider landscape to the north and south, new housing would be perceived as a noticeable but small change that would be seen in the context of the existing settlement.
- 7.10 The GI proposals would contribute to the landscape guidelines for the landscape character area: existing hedgerows and trees would be retained and supplemented with new native planting; vegetation would be incorporated within a comprehensive site-wide landscape management plan; and an informal orchard would be created in areas of open space to the south. It is considered that this approach would ensure that the development is well-integrated with the surrounding landscape and result in some localised beneficial effects.
- 7.11 Overall, it is considered that the proposed development is likely to result in no greater than a minor adverse landscape effect upon the '*Land Yeo and Kenn Rolling Valley Farmland*' landscape character area at completion. This would decrease to a negligible-minor adverse landscape effect in the medium term as proposed planting matures to further soften built form and integrate new development within its landscape setting.
- 7.12 The site and its immediate context are considered to have a medium susceptibility to change being an area of agricultural land within the existing village influenced by the surrounding built development. An analysis of landscape value has determined that the site and its immediate context has a medium landscape value overall.
- 7.13 The most noticeable landscape effects would occur within the site itself where built development is proposed and would replace the existing farmland. The North Somerset Landscape Sensitivity Assessment (2018) has assessed the wider overall landscape area in which the site is located as being of '*high sensitivity*'. The study notes that this is primarily due to the sense of separation from urban development to the north and west of the town. The study also notes that the fields form the setting to the Church of St Andrew and Conservation Area and that views are possible from these fields to the north-east of the village. It is important to note that the assessment was prepared at a strategic level and that "*where land has been categorised as being of high sensitivity to housing development, there will inevitably be variations in the level of landscape impacts...which could be determined by further, more detailed survey at the site or field level.*"
- 7.14 The landscape analysis has demonstrated that the site itself is located adjacent to and influenced by areas of existing development along Farleigh Road. Whilst it is acknowledged that areas of higher ground to the south are of higher sensitivity to built development, land to the north is well-

contained by the rising landform, built development and vegetation along the site boundaries. It is considered that the site is therefore less susceptible to the type of change proposed than areas of higher ground to the south and land to the west, which are more visually prominent and facilitate views towards the Church of St Andrew and across the landscape to the north.

- 7.15 Overall, at completion, there would be a moderate adverse landscape effect upon the site and its immediate context. Once planting within areas of open space has had the opportunity to establish, this would reduce to a minor-moderate adverse landscape effect.
- 7.16 The visual analysis has shown that the visual effects of the scheme would be limited. The main effects would be for private residential views from properties backing onto the site along Farleigh Road, and from some more distant views for residents along Church Lane.
- 7.17 Views would also be possible from sections of footpath through the Local Green space, but these would be limited and softened by the boundary planting. Much of the development would be screened by topography or the effects of existing dwellings in any wider views from the surrounding landscape.
- 7.18 Overall, the scheme would represent a logical housing development, with minimal effects on the local landscape and opportunities for new accessible green space and landscape enhancement.



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Site Boundary

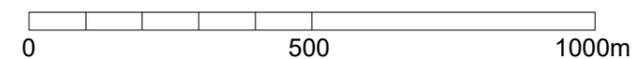
client  
Persimmon Homes  
project  
Land off Farleigh Fields,  
Backwell  
drawing title  
SITE LOCATION



scale  
1:12,500 @ A3  
drawing / figure number  
drawn  
JRR / MGH  
issue date  
21 April 2021  
rev

# Figure 1

Scale: 1:12500 @ A3





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Site Boundary

client  
Persimmon Homes  
project  
Land off Farleigh Fields,  
Backwell  
drawing title  
AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH



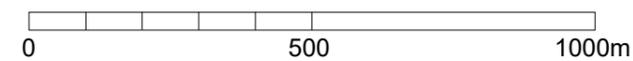
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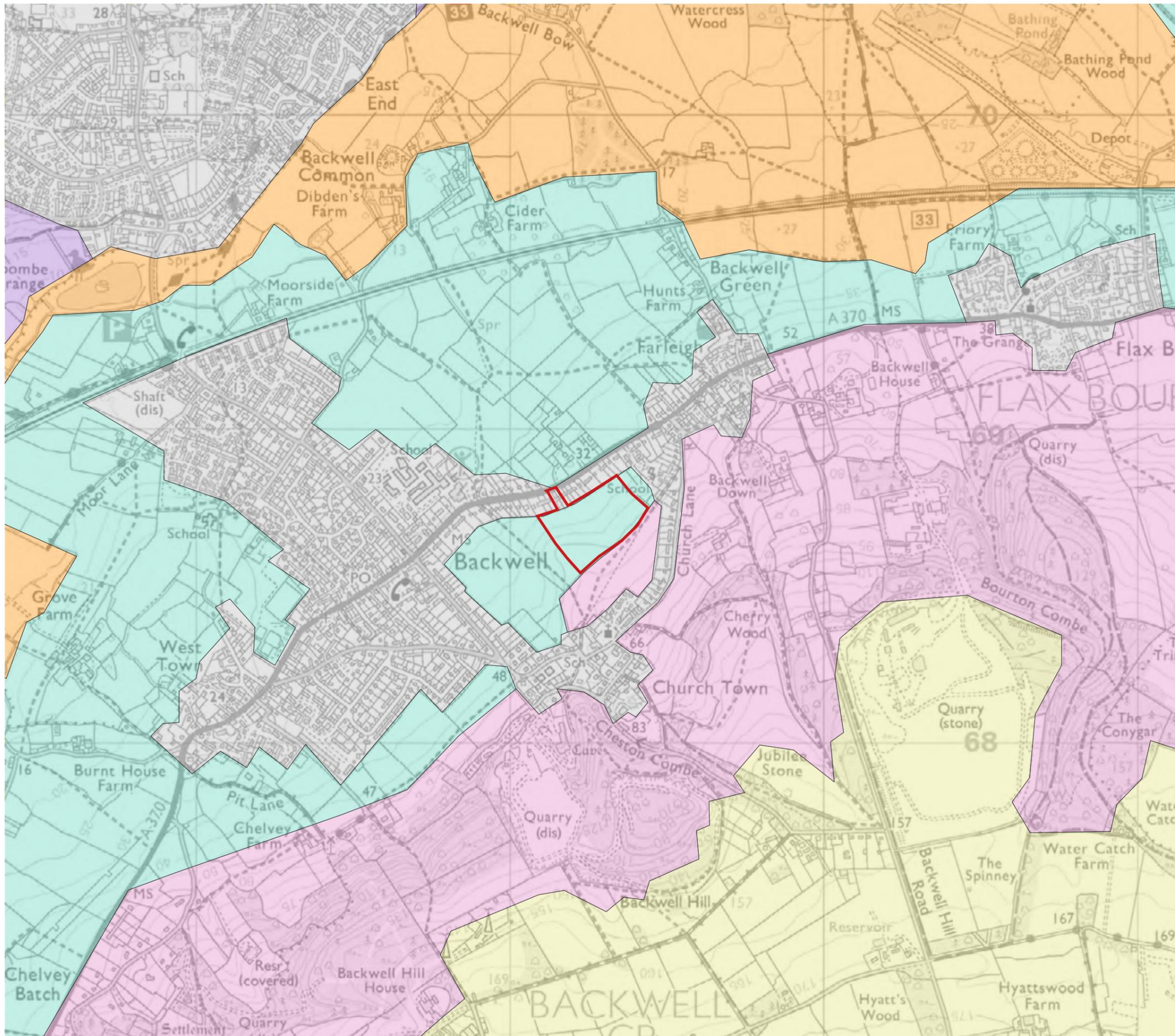
drawn  
JRR / MGH

issue date  
21 April 2021  
rev

# Figure 2

Scale: 1:12500 @ A3





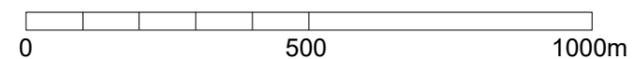
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 Site Boundary

North Somerset Landscape Character Assessment:

-  B - River Floodplains
-  E - Limestone Ridges and Combes
-  G - Settled Limestone Plateau
-  J - Rolling Valley Farm Land
-  Urban



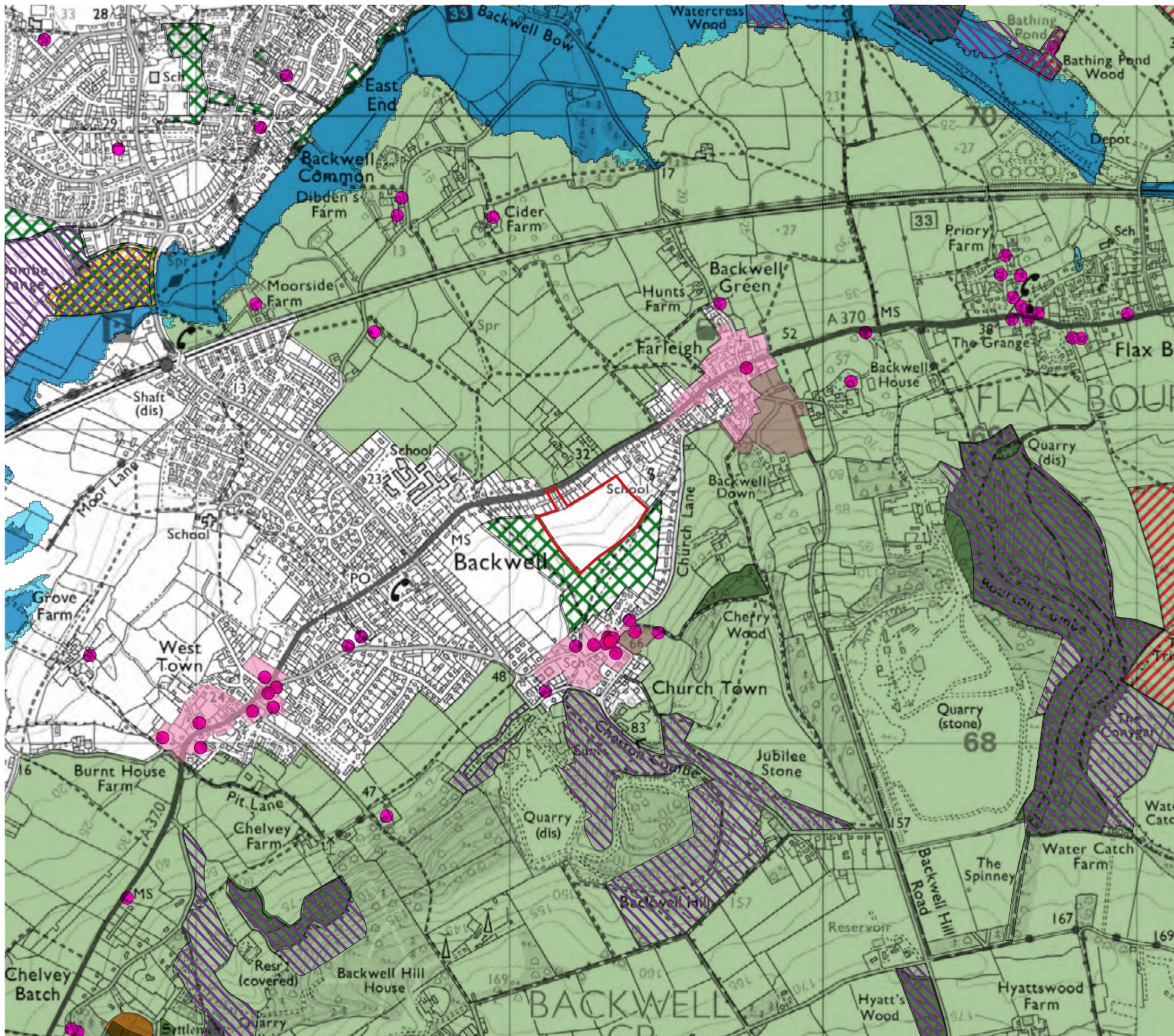
client  
 Persimmon Homes  
 project  
 Land off Farleigh Fields,  
 Backwell

drawing title  
 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

scale  
 1:12,500 @ A3  
 drawing / figure number  
 drawn  
 JRR / MGH  
 issue date  
 21 April 2021  
 rev



**Figure 3**



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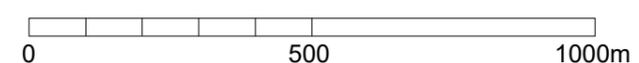
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  -  Greenbelt
  -  Ancient Woodland
  -  Parks and Gardens
  -  Local Nature Reserves
  -  Flood Zone 2
  -  Flood Zone 3
  -  Listed Buildings
  -  Scheduled Monuments
- North Somerset Local Plan (adpoted 2012)
-  Local Green Space
  -  Conservation Areas
  -  Sites of Conservation Interest

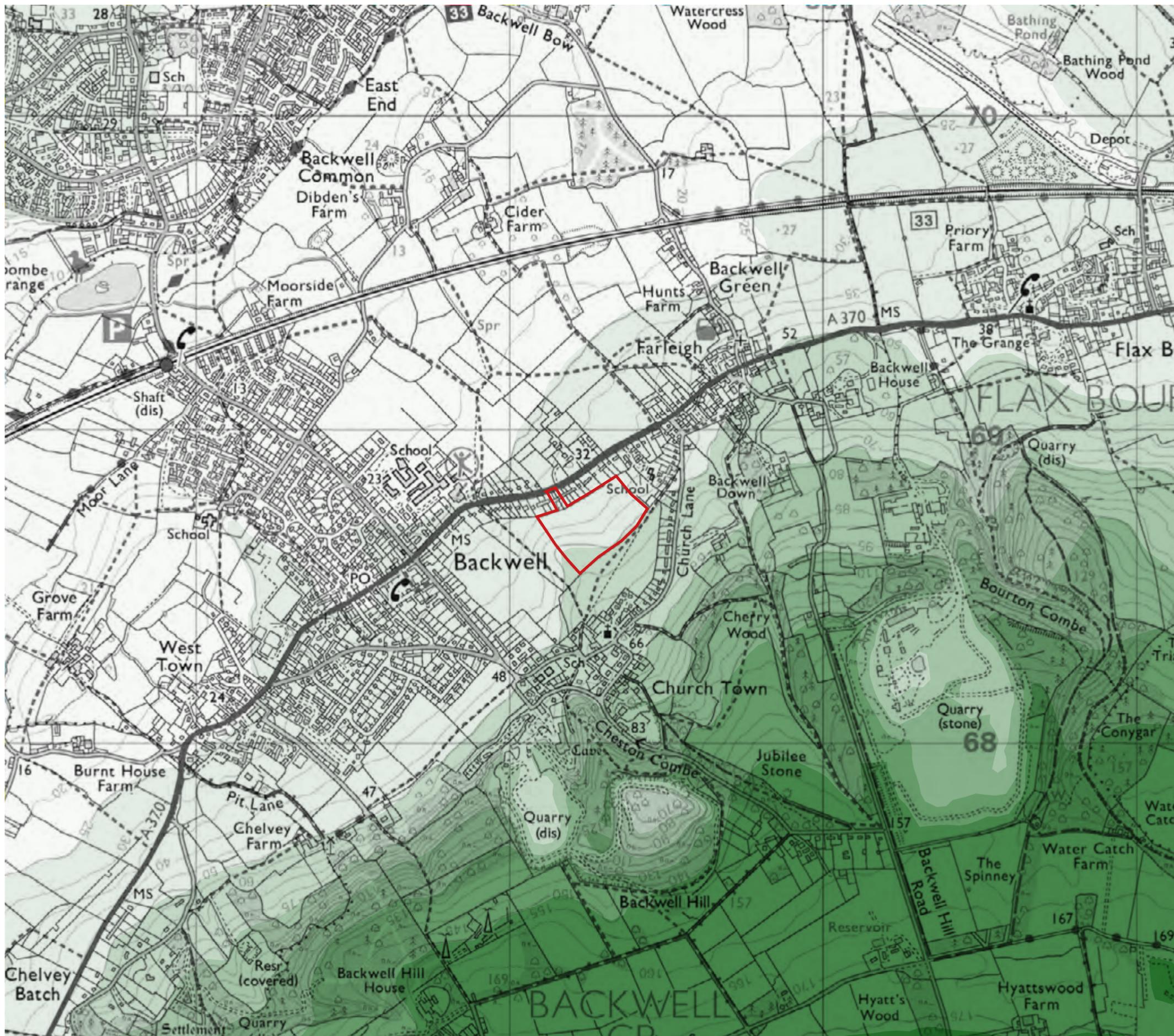
client  
**Persimmon Homes**  
 project  
**Land off Farleigh Fields, Backwell**  
 drawing title  
**DESIGNATIONS**

scale  
 1:12,500 @ A3  
 drawing / figure number  
**Figure 4**  
 drawn  
 JRR / MGH  
 issue date  
 21 April 2021  
 rev



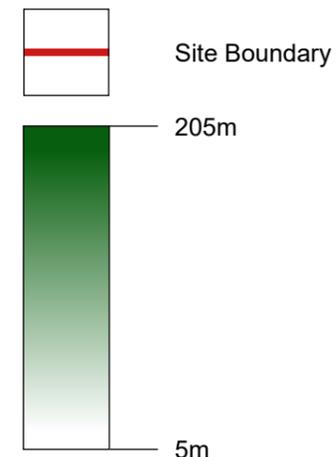
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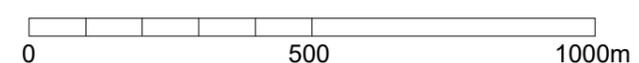


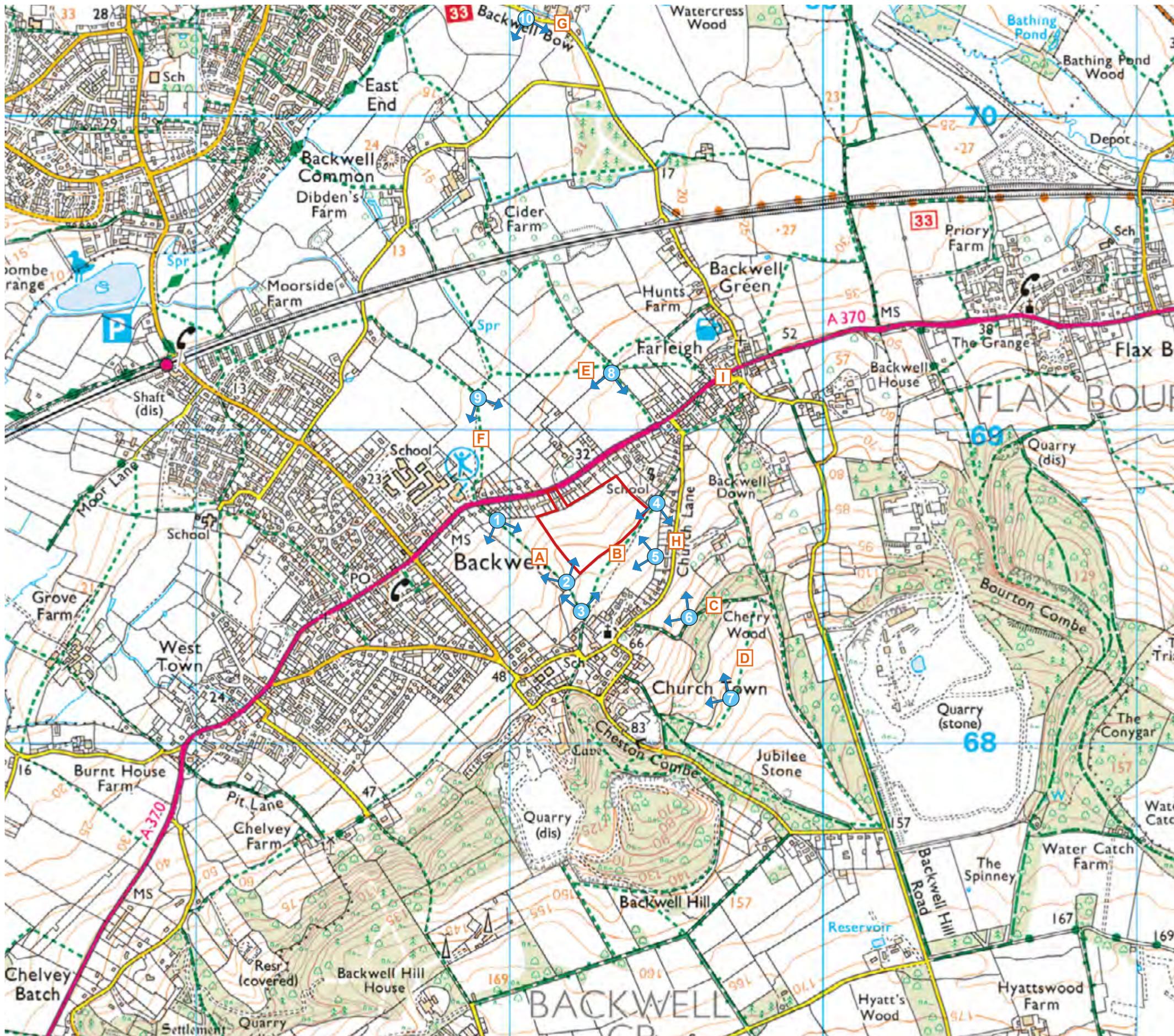
client  
Persimmon Homes  
project  
Land off Farleigh Fields,  
Backwell  
drawing title  
TOPOGRAPHY

scale  
1:12,500 @ A3  
drawing / figure number  
**Figure 5**  
drawn  
JRR / MGH  
issue date  
21 April 2021  
rev



Scale: 1:12500 @ A3





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-  Site Boundary
-  Viewpoint locations
-  Visual receptors

client  
Persimmon Homes

project  
Land off Farleigh Fields,  
Backwell

drawing title  
VISUAL APPRAISAL

scale  
1:12,500 @ A3

drawn  
JRR / MGH

issue date  
21 April 2021

rev



# Figure 6

Scale: 1:12500 @ A3

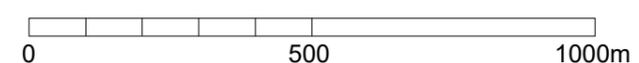




Photo Viewpoint 1: View south from footpath LA2/6/10



Photo Viewpoint 2: View north east from footpath LA2/6/10

**Photo Viewpoint 1**  
 Date & time of photo: 24 Feb 2021, 10:46  
 Camera make & model, & sensor format:  
 Canon EOS 6D, FFS  
 Horizontal Field of View: 87°  
 Direction of View: 140°, bearing from North

**Photo Viewpoint 2**  
 Date & time of photo: 24 Feb 2021, 10:52  
 Camera make & model, & sensor format:  
 Canon EOS 6D, FFS  
 Horizontal Field of View: 87°  
 Direction of View: 335°, bearing from North

Printing note: To give the correct viewing distance the sheet should be printed at a scale of 1:1 on A1. To be viewed at comfortable arms length.  
 Visualisation Type: Type 1  
 Projection: Cylindrical  
 Enlargement factor: 100%

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client  
 Persimmon Homes  
 project  
 Land off Farleigh Fields,  
 Backwell  
 drawing title  
 PHOTO VIEWPOINTS 1 + 2

fpcr

drawn  
 JR / GH  
 issue date  
 21 April 2021  
 drawing / figure number  
 Figure 7



Extent of site

Photo Viewpoint 3: View north from footpath LA2/6/10



Properties on Church Lane

St Andrews Church

Site behind hedge

Photo Viewpoint 4: View south from LA2/4/20

**Photo Viewpoint 3**  
 Date & time of photo: 24 Feb 2021, 10:57  
 Camera make & model, & sensor format:  
 Canon EOS 6D, FFS  
 Horizontal Field of View: 87°  
 Direction of View: 355°, bearing from North

**Photo Viewpoint 4**  
 Date & time of photo: 24 Feb 2021, 11:14  
 Camera make & model, & sensor format:  
 Canon EOS 6D, FFS  
 Horizontal Field of View: 87°  
 Direction of View: 190°, bearing from North

Printing note: To give the correct viewing distance the sheet should be printed at a scale of 1:1 on A1. To be viewed at comfortable arms length.  
 Visualisation Type: Type 1  
 Projection: Cylindrical  
 Enlargement factor: 100%

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client  
 Persimmon Homes  
 project  
 Land off Farleigh Fields,  
 Backwell  
 drawing title  
 PHOTO VIEWPOINTS 3 + 4  
 fpcr  
 drawn  
 JR / GH  
 issue date  
 21 April 2021  
 drawing / figure number  
 Figure 8



Extent of site

Photo Viewpoint 5: View west from rear of properties on Church Lane



Church Lane

Farleigh Road

Extent of site

Extent of site

Photo Viewpoint 6: View north from footpath LA2/56/10



**Photo Viewpoint 5**  
 Date & time of photo: 24 Feb 2021, 11:11  
 Camera make & model, & sensor format:  
 Canon EOS 6D, FFS  
 Horizontal Field of View: 87°  
 Direction of View: 290°, bearing from North



**Photo Viewpoint 6**  
 Date & time of photo: 24 Feb 2021, 12:24  
 Camera make & model, & sensor format:  
 Canon EOS 6D, FFS  
 Horizontal Field of View: 87°  
 Direction of View: 305°, bearing from North

Printing note: To give the correct viewing distance the sheet should be printed at a scale of 1:1 on A1. To be viewed at comfortable arms length.

Visualisation Type: Type 1  
 Projection: Cylindrical  
 Enlargement factor: 100%

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Direction of the site



Photo Viewpoint 7: View north from footpath LA/7a/10

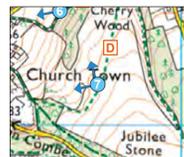


Farleigh Road

St Andrews Church

Extent of site

Photo Viewpoint 8: View south from footpath LA2/26/100



**Photo Viewpoint 7**  
 Date & time of photo: 24 Feb 2021, 12:09  
 Camera make & model, & sensor format:  
 Canon EOS 6D, FFS  
 Horizontal Field of View: 87°  
 Direction of View: 305°, bearing from North



**Photo Viewpoint 8**  
 Date & time of photo: 24 Feb 2021, 12:54  
 Camera make & model, & sensor format:  
 Canon EOS 6D, FFS  
 Horizontal Field of View: 87°  
 Direction of View: 185°, bearing from North

Printing note: To give the correct viewing distance the sheet should be printed at a scale of 1:1 on A1. To be viewed at comfortable arms length.

Visualisation Type: Type 1  
 Projection: Cylindrical  
 Enlargement factor: 100%

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Photo Viewpoint 9: View south from footpath LA2/24/10



Photo Viewpoint 10: View south from Backwell Bow



**Photo Viewpoint 9**  
 Date & time of photo: 24 Feb 2021, 13:09  
 Camera make & model, & sensor format:  
 Canon EOS 6D, FFS  
 Horizontal Field of View: 87°  
 Direction of View: 145°, bearing from North



**Photo Viewpoint 10**  
 Date & time of photo: 24 Feb 2021, 13:54  
 Camera make & model, & sensor format:  
 Canon EOS 6D, FFS  
 Horizontal Field of View: 87°  
 Direction of View: 175°, bearing from North

Printing note: To give the correct viewing distance the sheet should be printed at a scale of 1:1 on A1. To be viewed at comfortable arms length.  
 Visualisation Type: Type 1  
 Projection: Cylindrical  
 Enlargement factor: 100%

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## **APPENDIX A**

## **Appendix A**

### **Landscape and Visual Appraisal – Methodology and Assessment Criteria**

#### **Introduction**

- 1.0 The methodology for the Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) undertaken for the proposed development is detailed in the LVA report. The following information should be read in conjunction with this methodology.
- 1.1 As advised in the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (3rd Edition) (GLVIA3), the judgements made in respect of both landscape and visual effects are a combination of an assessment of the sensitivity of the receptor and the magnitude of the landscape or visual effect. The following details the definitions and criteria used in assessing sensitivity and magnitude for landscape and visual receptors.
- 1.2 Where it is determined that the assessment falls between or encompasses two of the defined criteria terms, then the judgement may be described as High/ Medium or Moderate/ Minor etc. This indicates that the assessment lies between the respective definitions or encompasses aspects of both.

#### **Landscape**

##### **Landscape Sensitivity**

- 1.3 Landscape receptors are assessed in terms of their 'Landscape Sensitivity'. This combines judgements on the value to be attached to the landscape and the susceptibility to change of the landscape from the type of change or development proposed. The definition and criteria adopted for these contributory factors is detailed below.
- 1.4 There can be complex relationships between the value attached to landscape receptors and their susceptibility to change which can be especially important when considering change within or close to designated landscapes. For example, an internationally, nationally or locally valued landscape does not automatically or by definition have a high susceptibility to all types of change. The type of change or development proposed may not compromise the specific basis for the value attached to the landscape.

##### Landscape Value

- 1.5 Value can apply to a landscape area as a whole, or to the individual elements, features and aesthetic or perceptual dimensions which contribute to the character of the landscape. The following criteria have been used to categorise landscape value. Where there is no clear existing evidence on landscape value, an assessment is made based on the criteria/ factors identified below (based on the guidance in GLVIA3 paragraph 5.28, Box 5.1).

- Landscape quality (condition)
- Scenic quality
- Rarity
- Representativeness
- Conservation interest
- Recreation value
- Perceptual aspects
- Associations

<b>Landscape Value</b>	<b>Definition</b>
High	Landscape receptors of high importance based upon factors of quality, rarity, representativeness, conservation interest, recreational value, perceptual qualities and associations.
Medium	Landscape receptors of medium importance based upon factors of quality, rarity, representativeness, conservation interest, recreational value, perceptual qualities and associations.
Low	Landscape receptors of low importance based upon factors of quality, rarity, representativeness, conservation interest, recreational value, perceptual qualities and associations.

#### Landscape Susceptibility to Change

- 1.6 This means the ability of the landscape receptor (overall character type/ area or individual element/ feature) to accommodate the change (i.e. the proposed development) without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline position and/ or the achievement of landscape planning policies and strategies. The definition and criteria for the assessment of Landscape Susceptibility to Change is as follows:

<b>Landscape Susceptibility to Change</b>	<b>Definition</b>
High	A highly distinctive and cohesive landscape receptor, with positive characteristics and features with no or very few detracting or intrusive elements. Landscape features intact and in very good condition and/ or rare. Limited capacity to accept the type of change/ development proposed.
Medium	Distinctive and more commonplace landscape receptor, with some positive characteristics/ features and some detracting or intrusive elements. Landscape features in moderate condition. Capacity to accept well planned and designed change/ development of the type proposed.
Low	Landscape receptor of mixed character with a lack of coherence and including detracting or intrusive elements. Landscape features that may be in poor or improving condition and few that could not be replaced. Greater capacity to accept the type of change/ development proposed.

#### **Magnitude of Landscape Effects**

- 1.7 The magnitude of landscape effects is the degree of change to the landscape receptor in terms of its size or scale of change, the geographical extent of the area influenced and its duration and reversibility. The table below sets out the categories and criteria adopted in respect of the separate considerations of Scale or Size of the Degree of Change and Reversibility. The geographical extent and duration of change are described where relevant in the appraisal.

### Scale or Size of the Degree of Landscape Change

<b>Scale or Size of the Degree of Landscape Change</b>	<b>Definition</b>
High	Total loss of or substantial alteration to key characteristics / features and the introduction of new elements totally uncharacteristic to the receiving landscape. Overall landscape receptor will be fundamentally changed.
Medium	Partial loss of or alteration to one or more key characteristics / features and the introduction of new elements that would be evident but not necessarily uncharacteristic to the receiving landscape. Overall landscape receptor will be obviously changed.
Low	Limited loss of, or alteration to one or more key characteristics/ features and the introduction of new elements evident and/ or characteristic to the receiving landscape. Overall landscape receptor will be perceptibly changed.
Negligible	Very minor alteration to one or more key characteristics/ features and the introduction of new elements characteristic to the receiving landscape. Overall landscape receptor will be minimally changed.
None	No loss or alteration to the key characteristics/ features, representing 'no change'.

### Reversibility

<b>Reversibility</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Irreversible	The development would be permanent and the assessment site could not be returned to its current/ former use.
Reversible	The development could be deconstructed/ demolished and the assessment site could be returned to broadly its current/ historic use (although that may be subject to qualification depending on the nature of the development).

## **Visual**

### **Sensitivity of Visual Receptors**

- 1.8 Visual sensitivity assesses each visual receptor in terms of their susceptibility to change in views and visual amenity and also the value attached to particular views. The definition and criteria adopted for these contributory factors is detailed below.

#### Visual Susceptibility to Change

- 1.9 The susceptibility of different visual receptors to changes in views and visual amenity is mainly a function of; firstly, the occupation or activity of people experiencing the view at particular locations; and secondly, the extent to which their attention or interest may therefore be focussed on the views and visual amenity they experience.

<b>Visual Susceptibility to Change</b>	<b>Definition</b>
High	Residents at home with primary views from ground floor/garden and upper floors. Public rights of way/ footways where attention is primarily focussed on the landscape and on particular views. Visitors to heritage assets or other attractions whose attention or interest is likely to be focussed on the landscape and/ or on particular views. Communities where views make an important contribution to the landscape setting enjoyed by residents. Travellers on recognised scenic routes.
Medium	Residents at home with secondary views (primarily from first floor level). Public rights of way/ footways where attention is not primarily focussed on the landscape and/ or particular views. Travellers on road, rail or other transport routes.
Low	Users of outdoor recreational facilities where the view is less important to the activities (e.g. sports pitches). Travellers on road, rail or other transport where views are primarily focussed on the transport route. People at their place of work where views of the landscape are not important to the quality of the working life.

#### Value of Views

- 1.10 The value attached to a view takes account of any recognition attached to a particular view and/ or any indicators of the value attached to views, for example through guidebooks or defined viewpoints or references in literature or art.

<b>Value of Views</b>	<b>Definition</b>
High	A unique or identified view (e.g. shown as such on Ordnance Survey map, guidebook or tourist map) or one noted in literature or art. A view where a heritage asset makes an important contribution to the view.
Medium	A typical and/ or representative view from a particular receptor.
Low	An undistinguished or unremarkable view from a particular receptor.

#### **Magnitude of Visual Effects**

- 1.11 Magnitude of Visual Effects evaluates each of the visual effects in terms of its size or scale, the geographical extent of the area influenced and its duration and reversibility. The table below sets out the categories and criteria adopted in respect of the Scale or Size (including the degree of contrast) of Visual Change. The distance and nature of the view and whether the receptor's view will be stationary or moving are also detailed in the Visual Effects Table.

Scale or Size of the Degree of Visual Change	Definition
High	The proposal will result in a large and immediately apparent change in the view, being a dominant and new and/ or incongruous feature in the landscape.
Medium	The proposal will result in an obvious and recognisable change in the view and will be readily noticed by the viewer.
Low	The proposal will constitute a minor component of the wider view or a more recognisable component that reflects those apparent in the existing view. Awareness of the proposals will not have a marked effect on the overall nature of the view.
Negligible/ None	Only a very small part of the proposal will be discernible and it will have very little or no effect on the nature of the view.

### **Level of Effect**

- 1.12 The final conclusions on effects, whether adverse or beneficial, are drawn from the separate judgements on the sensitivity of the receptors and the magnitude of the effects. This overall judgement is formed from a reasoned professional overview of the individual judgements against the assessment criteria.
- 1.13 GLVIA3 notes, at paragraphs 5.56 and 6.44, that there are no hard and fast rules with regard to the level of effects, therefore the following descriptive thresholds have been used for this appraisal:
- **Major**
  - **Moderate**
  - **Minor**
  - **Negligible**
- 1.14 Where it is determined that the assessment falls between or encompasses two of the defined criteria terms, then the judgement may be described as, for example, Major/ Moderate or Moderate/ Minor. This indicates that the effect is assessed to lie between the respective definitions or to encompass aspects of both.

## **APPENDIX B**

APPENDIX B: LANDSCAPE EFFECTS TABLE (LET)									
Landscape Receptor and Reference	Judged Sensitivity of Landscape			Judged Magnitude of Landscape Effect		Description/ Notes	Overall Effect at Construction Phase	Overall Effect Upon Completion	Overall Effect at 15 Years Post Completion
	Susceptibility to Change	Landscape Value	Overall Sensitivity	Scale or Size of the Degree of Change including degree of contrast/ integration) at Stages of Project	Where applicable, are the Effects Reversible?		Major Moderate Minor Negligible None	Major Moderate Minor Negligible None	Major Moderate Minor Negligible None
	High Medium Low	High Medium Low	High Medium Low	High Medium Low Negligible None	Yes No N/A		Adverse Beneficial	Adverse Beneficial	Adverse Beneficial
<b>National Landscape Character</b>									
Natural England, National Character Area Profile (NCA)  NCA 118 – Bristol, Avon Valley and Ridges	Medium	Medium	Medium	Construction: Negligible Completion: Negligible Year 15: Negligible	No	Geographically, the site forms a very small part of the overall NCA, which covers an extensive tract of land. The site is located adjacent to the existing settlement edge with new housing set back from areas of more sensitive higher ground along the southern boundary. The GI proposals would reinforce existing retained vegetation along the site boundaries and assist in assimilating built development within its landscape setting.	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible
<b>Landscape Character Assessment (LCA): County/District</b>									
County/ District LCA Character Area and/ or Type  'Rolling Valley Farmland' Landscape Type (J)  'Land Yeo and Kenn Rolling Valley Farmland' Landscape Character Area (J5)	Medium	Medium	Medium	Construction: Low Completion: Low Year 15: Low	No	In the context of Backwell, the proposed development would result in a modest expansion of the settlement in an area of landscape which adjoins existing residential development along the A370 – a highway which is described as having a “dominant presence” by the North Somerset Landscape Character Area Assessment (2018). Whilst the proposals would result in the loss of some open farmland within the village, this would be a very small area in the context of the character area as a whole. The site is located within an existing settlement and would not intrinsically alter the pattern of development in the wider landscape.  New housing would be located below the 50m contour, which represents the transitional boundary between the J5 and E6 landscape character areas, and well-contained by rising topography and existing built development and vegetation along the A370 and site boundaries. A broad swathe of public open space and new tree, scrub and hedgerow planting is proposed along the southern boundary. New planting would create a soft, positive settlement edge and further restrict the spread of landscape effects beyond the site and its immediate vicinity. In the wider landscape to the north and south, new housing would be perceived as a noticeable but small change that would be seen in the context of the existing settlement	Minor adverse	Minor adverse	Negligible- Minor adverse
<b>Landscape Character: Site and Immediate Context</b>									

APPENDIX B: LANDSCAPE EFFECTS TABLE (LET)									
Landscape Receptor and Reference	Judged Sensitivity of Landscape			Judged Magnitude of Landscape Effect		Description/ Notes	Overall Effect at Construction Phase	Overall Effect Upon Completion	Overall Effect at 15 Years Post Completion
	Susceptibility to Change	Landscape Value	Overall Sensitivity	Scale or Size of the Degree of Change including degree of contrast/ integration) at Stages of Project	Where applicable, are the Effects Reversible?		Major Moderate Minor Negligible None	Major Moderate Minor Negligible None	Major Moderate Minor Negligible None
	High Medium Low	High Medium Low	High Medium Low	High Medium Low Negligible None	Yes No N/A		Adverse Beneficial	Adverse Beneficial	Adverse Beneficial
Site and Immediate Context	Medium	Medium	Medium	Construction: Medium Completion: Medium Year 15: Low-Medium	No	The most noticeable landscape effects would occur within the site itself where built development is proposed and would replace the existing farmland. As noted above, new housing would be set back from areas of higher ground and the 50m contour to the south and located adjacent to existing residential properties along the A370. Existing built development and the A370 corridor are considered to have an urbanising effect on the site's northern boundary. The landscape areas to the south would include new areas of species rich grassland, informal open space and new tree, hedgerows and orchard planting along the southern boundary. New pedestrian connections would also be provided around the site and towards Church Lane to the south-east and south-west.	Moderate adverse	Moderate adverse	Minor-Moderate adverse
<b>Site Landscape Features/ Characteristics</b>									
Site Landscape Features <i>Landform</i>	Medium	Medium	Medium	Construction: Low-Medium Completion: Low Year 15: Low	No	Whilst there will be some modification of the existing landform required to create the site road and provide compliant access and attenuation basins, the proposed development would not result in any significant changes to the overall landform of the site.	Minor adverse	Minor adverse	Minor adverse
Site Landscape Features <i>Woodland, Trees, Hedgerows and Vegetation</i>	Low-Medium	Medium	Low-Medium	Construction: Negligible Completion: Negligible Year 15: Low-Medium	No	It would be necessary to remove some vegetation to create the primary vehicular access. It may also be necessary to remove some scrub or hedgerow to create the proposed pedestrian links to the existing Public Rights of Way network.  New tree, scrub, woodland and hedgerow planting is proposed within areas of public open space and includes an area of orchard planting within the area of public open space to the south. Overall, it is considered that development of the site represents an opportunity to increase tree cover on site and contribute to the well treed character of the settlement edge and surrounding area.	Minor adverse	Negligible	Minor beneficial
Site Landscape Features <i>Water Features and Watercourses</i>	Low	Medium	Low-Medium	Construction: Negligible Completion: Negligible Year 15: Low	No	The proposed sustainable drainage basin would be designed to maximise amenity and biodiversity benefits.	Negligible	Negligible	Minor beneficial

## **APPENDIX C**

APPENDIX C: VISUAL EFFECTS TABLE (VET)												
Ref	Receptor Type, Location and photographs <small>(including approx no. of dwellings where applicable)</small>	Judged Sensitivity of Visual Receptor			Judged Magnitude of Visual Effects				Description/ Notes	Overall Effect at Construction Phase	Overall Effect Upon Completion (Winter)	Overall Effect at 15 Years Post Completion (Summer)
		Susceptibility to Change	Value	Overall Sensitivity	Distance from Site Boundary (or Built Development where stated) <small>(approx. m/km)</small>	Nature of View	Is the View Temporary or permanent?	Size/Scale of Visual Effect (including degree of contrast/integration) at Stages of Project		Major Moderate Minor Negligible None	Major Moderate Minor Negligible None	Major Moderate Minor Negligible None
		High Medium Low	High Medium Low	High Medium Low		Full Partial Glimpse None		High Medium Low Negligible/ None		Adverse or Beneficial	Adverse or Beneficial	Adverse or Beneficial
A	Pedestrian users of Public Right of Way LA2/6/10 (VPs 1-3)	High	Medium	Medium-High	60-120m	Partial	Permanent	Construction: Medium Completion: Low-Medium Year 15: Low	Views of the proposed development would most noticeable from the northern section of the PROW where new housing would be partially visible above the existing retained hedgerow and trees along the western boundary. New housing would be set back from areas of higher ground to the south in order to avoid encroaching on the skyline. Siting development on lower-lying land would also effectively screen views of new housing from this PROW as users travel north away along the area of higher ground around the Church of St Andrew.	Moderate adverse	Minor-Moderate adverse	Minor adverse
B	Pedestrian users of Public Right of Way LA2/4/20 (VPs 3-5)	High	Medium	Medium-High	5-50m	Partial	Permanent	Construction: Medium-High Completion: Medium Year 15: Low	The most noticeable visual effects from this PROW would be experienced as users traverse along the southern boundary of the site. Whilst existing tree and hedgerow cover provides a degree of screening, the southern edge of the proposed development would initially be visible beyond areas of proposed open space. In the medium term, it is anticipated that new development, which is set back from areas of higher ground, would be effectively screened by new tree and hedgerow planting along the southern boundary.	Moderate-Major adverse	Moderate adverse	Minor adverse
C	Pedestrian users of Public Right of Way LA2/56/10 (VP6)	High	Medium	Medium-High	340m	Partial	Permanent	Construction: Medium Completion: Medium Year 15: Low	Partial views of the southern edge of the proposed development would be possible from this section of the PROW. New housing would be seen in the context of and partially screened by intervening built development along Church Lane as well as vegetation and areas of higher ground along the southern boundary at completion. It is considered that new planting along the southern boundary would effectively screen and filter views of new housing in the medium term.	Moderate adverse	Moderate adverse	Minor adverse

<b>D</b>	Pedestrian users of Public Right of Way LA2/7a/10 (VP7)	High	Medium	Medium-High	600m	Glimpse	Permanent	Construction: Negligible Completion: Negligible Year 15: Negligible	Views of the proposed development from this PROW would be effectively screened by intervening blocks of woodland, which wrap around the upper slopes of the valley to the south of the village.	Negligible	Negligible	<b>Negligible</b>
<b>E</b>	Pedestrian users of Public Right of Way LA2/26/100 (VP8)	High	Medium	Medium-High	350m	Partial	Permanent	Construction: Low Completion: Low Year 15: Low	Views of the proposed development from the PROW network to the north of the village would be largely screened by intervening built development and vegetation along Farleigh Road. Whilst views of proposed development are anticipated to be possible from PROW LA/26/100, these would be partial views of new housing and seen in the context of existing built development along Farleigh Road. New housing is sited on lower-lying land and would not encroach on views towards the Church of St Andrew	Minor adverse	Minor adverse	<b>Minor adverse</b>
<b>F</b>	Pedestrian users of Public Right of Way LA2/24/10 (VP9)	High	Medium	Medium-High	400m	Partial	Permanent	Construction: Negligible-Low Completion: Negligible-Low Year 15: Negligible-Low	Views of the proposed development from this PROW would be largely screened by intervening built development and vegetation along Farleigh Road. Any glimpsed views of the proposed development would be seen in the context of existing built development along Farleigh Road. New housing is sited on lower-lying land and would not encroach on views towards the Church of St Andrew	Negligible- Minor adverse	Negligible- Minor adverse	<b>Negligible- Minor adverse</b>
<b>G</b>	Users of Backwell Bow (VP10)	High	Medium	Medium-High	1.5km	Partial	Permanent	Construction: Negligible Completion: Negligible Year 15: Negligible	Views of the proposed development would be effectively screened by overlapping belts of tree and hedgerow cover and existing built development along Farleigh Road.	Negligible	Negligible	<b>Negligible</b>
<b>H</b>	Residential properties along Church Lane (VP5)	High	Medium	Medium-High	40-170m	Partial	Permanent	Construction: Medium Completion: Low-Medium Year 15: Low	Views of the proposed development would be possible from approximately 20-25 residential properties, which are located along Church Lane to the north of the site. Views of the proposed development would vary as a result of the screening effects of intervening vegetation along the southern boundary of the site and topography. A broad swathe of new tree, hedgerow and scrub planting is proposed along the southern boundary, which would effectively screen views of the proposed housing in the medium term. A proportion of the trees would be planted as heavy and extra-heavy standards in order to provide a degree of immediate impact at completion.	Moderate adverse	Minor-Moderate adverse	<b>Minor adverse</b>

I	Residential properties along Farleigh Road	High	Medium	Medium-High	5m	Full	Permanent	Construction: High Completion: High/Medium Year 15: Medium	Views of the proposed development would be possible from the rear windows and gardens of approximately 20-25 residential properties along Farleigh Road, which either adjoin or are located close to the northern site boundary. Views would be obstructed to varying degrees by fencing and vegetation within rear gardens. Existing views across the open field would be largely replaced by views of new housing, infrastructure and GI proposals.  The proposed development is set back approximately 10m from the northern boundary in order to create a landscape buffer to the existing rear gardens, which would be planted with low-level scrub and occasional trees, softening views .	Major adverse	Major/ moderate	Moderate
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