

LAND AT WARREN LANE, STANWAY, COLCHESTER

LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL ASSESSMENT

By:

CSa Environmental Planning

On behalf of the Taylor Wimpey UK Ltd

June 2007

929/11a

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 CSA Environmental Planning has been commissioned to prepare a statement on Landscape and Visual Matters to support the promotion of the Warren Lane/Dyer's Road site ('The Site'), for residential development and associated public open space, through the LDF.
- 1.2 The Site is located on the south western edge of the urban area of Colchester, within the suburb of Stanway. The Site is currently given over to arable farmland, rough pasture and woodland.

Methodology

- 1.3 This assessment is based on site visits made by a qualified and experienced Landscape Architect in May 2007.
- 1.4 Site photographs, at Appendix C, were taken using a digital camera set with a lens focal length approximating to 50mm focal length, to give a similar depth of vision to the human eye. In some instances, images have been combined to create a panorama.

2.0 SITE LOCATION AND CONTEXT

Site Location

- 2.1 The Site lies on the south western edge of Colchester, within the suburb of Stanway. It is approximately 4.5 kilometres from Colchester town centre. The location of the site is illustrated in Drawing CSA 0929/001 at Appendix A.

Site Context

- 2.2 The site occupies a broadly triangular parcel of land, encompassing an area of 8.9 hectares. Dyer's Road forms the eastern boundary, with Warren Lane forming the western boundary. Residential development at Egremont Way lies immediately to the north.
- 2.3 To the northwest, residential development at Swift Avenue and Wren Close is substantially complete (See Aerial Photograph, Drawing CSA/929/003, at Appendix E). There is a large area of open space allocated to the land immediately to the south and west of this residential development.
- 2.4 To the north east is the Five Ways retail park, with another large retail park located approximately 1 kilometre to the north.
- 2.5 To the west of Warren Lane is the worked out sand and gravel workings of Stanway Pit.
- 2.6 To the south and east is a mixed agricultural landscape of small arable fields, orchards and areas of Christmas tree production. Field parcels are typically divided by shelterbelts of trees. An area of unmanaged grassland and scrub lies to the southeast of the site.
- 2.7 Six residential properties lie to the immediate southwest of the site, in the apex of the junction of Dyer's Road and Warren Lane. Five of the properties are oriented towards, and accessed from, Warren Lane. The other property, 'Streamlines', fronts onto Dyer's Road from which it takes its access.

National Landscape Character

- 2.8 The Countryside Agency 'Character Map of England' identifies the site as lying within the Northern Thames Basin Character Area. The area extends from Colchester and Harwich in the northeast to Watford and Northwest London in the southwest and includes Epping Forest together with much of East and South Hertfordshire. Within this Character Area, the landscape in the vicinity of Colchester is identified as being part of the Essex Heathlands, an area broadly bounded by the estuary of the river Stour and the Suffolk Coast and Heaths to the north, while the London Clay Lowlands and the Essex Wooded Hills and Ridges run into the area from the west. To the east lie the coastal marshes of the Greater Thames Estuary framed by the North Sea beyond.
- 2.9 The generally light, free draining soils (derived from ancient river deposits) of this broadly flat plateau support arable farming, with horticulture and market gardening prevalent around the former heaths near Colchester. An intricate network of creeks and small valleys extends the influence of the coastal marshes inland, interspersed among a field pattern which, by reason of its straight and regular boundaries, reflects the planned characteristics of late enclosure. Despite the presence of arable farming, many of the boundary hedgerows and clusters of woodland have been retained.

Local Landscape Character

- 2.10 A Landscape Character Assessment has been prepared at a county level by Chris Blandford Associates. In this assessment, The Site is located within Character Area G4 – Colchester and Environs – with the land immediately to the east, south and west located within Character Area E2 (South Colchester Farmland). Although The Site sits at the interface between the two character areas, in reality, its character is more typical of the South Colchester Farmland. The gently undulating landform, overlain by deep permeable coarse, loamy soils, is sub-divided into a series of small, regular fields, bounded by hedgerows, creating a relatively intimate landscape where views tend to be limited to the middle- and near-distance. Arable farming, together with mixed woodland reflects the landscapes to the south and east. However,

the recent development to the northwest has exerted a significant influence on the character of the local landscape (see Aerial Photograph at Appendix E).

Local Plan Landscape Policies

- 2.11 The Adopted Review Colchester Borough Local Plan (2004-2011) has a number of landscape and nature conservation policies that recognise the intrinsic quality of the local landscape, or its function as a recreational or wildlife resource. These designations include Countryside Conservation Areas, Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation, Areas of Special Character (which relates to both the built and natural environment) and Local Nature Reserves, among others. The site is not affected by any policies for landscape quality or character. Drawing CSA/929/006, at Appendix D, shows the disposition of designated sites.
- 2.12 In addition, the Local Plan cites a number of designations of national and international importance, such as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Special Protection Areas and Ramsar sites. The site is not affected by any of these designations. Drawing 929/006 also indicates the location of these nationally important designations.

Tree Preservation Orders

- 2.13 There are a number of trees that are subject to a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) within, and adjacent to, the site. The woodland surrounding Lexden Kennels and Cattery has is the subject of a TPO that relates to both individual and groups of trees, including a number of oak and sweet chestnut. The western half of the mixed woodland, to the northern part of the site, is covered by the same TPO. There are also three oak trees located within the hedgerow that extends from the south east corner of the mixed woodland toward Dyer's Road, which are also covered by the TPO (See Drawing CSA/929/002, at Appendix B).

Listed Buildings

- 2.14 There are no listed buildings within or immediately adjacent to The Site.

3.0 SITE DESCRIPTION AND LOCAL CONTEXT

3.1 The main characteristics of The Site are illustrated on Drawing CSA 0929/002 at Appendix B, and the Aerial Photograph at Appendix E.

3.2 For the purpose of this description, The Site can be divided into four distinct parcels. These are:

- a single field, to the south, which is currently in arable production (Photograph 6);
- a central field of rough grazing which includes a small area for growing Christmas trees (Photograph 7);
- the northern section, which comprises an area of unmanaged grassland and scrub, a block of oak woodland, and the curtilage of 'Field House'; and
- Lexden Kennels and Cattery, located on the north western edge.

3.3 The kennels within the north western part of The Site are situated on the lower lying land, and benefit from vegetation growing within, and along, the boundaries. To the northeast of the kennels, accessed from Warren Lane, but set back behind the road frontage development, lies 'The Burrow'. 'Field House', a two storey residential property, lies in the northeast corner of The Site, accessed from Dyer's Road (Photograph 9).

3.4 The field in the southern section of The Site is in agricultural use, currently under arable production (Photograph 3). The central field is given over to rough grassland, with an area to the southwest, on the eastern boundary of the kennels, used for growing Christmas trees (Photograph 4).

3.5 The northern section of The Site is heavily vegetated. In the western corner, there is an area of open, unmanaged grassland that is flanked by trees and scrub on its western boundary. A block of mature oak woodland lies to the east with an overgrown orchard, unmanaged grassland and scattered colonising scrub and tree species occupying the north-eastern corner (Photograph 5).

- 3.6 The main body of The Site is gently undulating, with a slight fall from north to south. The surrounding landscape is relatively flat, falling gradually to the south and southeast to the Roman River valley, and its tributaries. The extraction of minerals from Stanway Pit has created a large area of lower lying, relatively flat land to the west of The Site (Photograph 2).

Vegetation and Boundary Conditions

- 3.7 The Site is largely enclosed by mature boundary vegetation, with small blocks of woodland and belts of trees in the northern part.
- 3.8 The northern site boundary comprises a mix of domestic fencing, walling and hedging. To the west edge of the northern boundary, scattered scrub and a mix of fencing and walling provide the boundary. Along the boundary with the Public Open Space (POS), located to the north, off Egremont Way, the boundary comprises scrub and thorn hedgerows, approximately 4-5 metres high, with timber fencing behind, facing onto the POS.
- 3.9 The south-eastern boundary, along Dyer's Road, is formed by a dense, unmanaged hedge which contains the occasional mature oak and birch. The hedge varies in height between 3 and 6 metres and becomes gappy towards the southern corner of The Site, adjacent 'Streamlines'.
- 3.10 The southern boundary comprises domestic hedges of privet, conifers and thorn (Photograph 6).
- 3.11 The southern field is bounded to the west by a gappy thorn hedge, approximately 2 metres in height (Photograph 12). A block of mature woodland to the southwest of the kennels forms a dense screen to the road, with mature trees and scrub and a short length of managed hedge occupying the balance of the road frontage.
- 3.12 A block of mature, predominantly oak, woodland lies midway along the northern boundary of The Site with a similar, smaller area of woodland located midway along the Warren Lane boundary. Substantial swathes of

mature trees and scrub are situated within the curtilage of the kennels to the northwest.

- 3.13 A significant belt of woodland and scrub runs along the eastern boundary of the kennels and The Burrow, with intermittent scrub within the unmanaged grassland to the north.
- 3.14 Two hedgerows cross The Site, the first running from the southeast corner of the larger block of woodland, eastwards towards the Dyer's Road boundary (Photograph 7). The second runs east to west, dividing the two southern fields (Photographs 3 and 8). Both hedges vary in height from 2 to 5 metres, with the occasional mature oak interspersed along their lines.

Buildings and structures within The Site

- 3.15 The main grouping of buildings on The Site is that relating to the Lexden Kennels and Cattery, situated to the west of The Site, accessed from Warren Lane. Adjacent to the kennels is the 'The Burrow', and 'Field House', located in the extreme northeast corner of The Site, is the only other built structure within The Site.

Access

- 3.16 There are no definitive public rights of way through The Site.

4.0 VISIBILITY

- 4.1 The relatively flat plateau upon which The Site is situated, and the disposition of woodland and hedgerows along the boundaries, results in limited opportunities to view The Site from the surrounding public vantage points. The locations of the main viewpoints are shown on Drawing CSA 0929/01 (Appendix A) and Drawing CSA/929/002 (Appendix B), and the viewpoints are illustrated in Photographs at Appendix C, and considered below.

Near Distance Views

- 4.2 Views into The Site from Dyer's Road, north of 'Field House', are restricted by the dense vegetation on the eastern site boundary and by the vegetation within the northern section of The Site (Photographs 9 and 10). Properties fronting onto Dyer's Road gain oblique views into The Site from upper floor windows, although such views are filtered by boundary vegetation.
- 4.3 From Dyer's Road, where it abuts The Site, views in are mostly obscured by the boundary vegetation. A break in the hedge on the southern part of Dyer's Road allows views into the southern field. Views from 'The Bungalow', which lies to the east of Dyer's Road, are substantially screened by boundary vegetation.
- 4.4 The residential properties to the south of The Site, 'Streamlines' and the cottages fronting onto Warren Lane, are also largely screened from The Site by existing vegetation (Photograph 12).
- 4.5 Views from Warren Lane, on approaching The Site from the south, are partially obscured by the two storey houses fronting onto the road, and the dense vegetation along the roadside.
- 4.6 The dense vegetation that surrounds Lexden Kennels and Cattery largely precludes views into The Site from this direction (Photographs 4 and 6).
- 4.7 Intermittent views are available from the rear of the properties along the northwest section of The Site (Photograph 5). From the POS, off Egremont Way, views are substantially screened by the dense boundary vegetation.

Middle Distance Views

- 4.8 These are extremely limited owing to a combination of landform and the density of boundary and intervening vegetation, allied with the intervention of built development in key vistas.
- 4.9 From the footpath across Stanway Pit, to the southwest, views into the body of The Site are prevented by the dense boundary vegetation.
- 4.10 From Church Lane, to the northwest, there are views towards The Site over the new residential development and the former Stanway Pit. Again, the dense vegetation along Warren Lane largely prevents views into the body of The Site (Photograph 1 and 2).

5.0 DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

5.1 An illustrative layout has been prepared to show how The Site could be developed (See Appendix F). In summary, the scheme can be seen to comprise:

- Land for approximately 250 dwellings, on a net development area of 7.7 hectares, providing a range of sizes and tenure types;
- Retention of woodland, all TPO trees and the majority of hedgerows within The Site;
- Provision of public open space towards the centre of The Site, linking with the POS at Egremont Way, via the retained oak woodland in the northern part of The Site;
- A footpath through The Site to link the Egremont Way development to the POS located on the southern edge of the new development at Swift Avenue and Wren Close; and
- Access to The Site, taken from a new junction/roundabout on Warren Lane, with the potential to connect to the proposed link road/by-pass indicated in the Local Plan, with a secondary access onto Dyer's Lane, at the northeast corner of The Site.

5.2 The illustrative plan shows how the site could be developed, however, the detailed scheme will be drawn up in consultation with the Colchester Borough Council (CBC) and the public, with the aims of:

- Providing development in accordance with current guidelines on density and provision of affordable housing;
- Creating new public open space that complements the existing provision and meets CBC's open space standards;
- Respecting the privacy of neighbouring properties;
- Retaining the character and quality of the existing landscape structure, including that of Dyer's Road; and

- Providing an attractive environment for the new houses by means of open space provision and new planting.

5.3 In the following section, the suitability of the site for development is assessed against a series of landscape criteria.

Access

5.4 There is currently no lawful public access to The Site. The development proposals will provide an important pedestrian link between the Egremont Way development to the north and the allocated POS to the west. It will also allow access to areas of POS within The Site.

Public Open Space

5.5 There is an acknowledged shortage of Public Open Space within Stanway (Adopted Review Colchester Borough Local Plan, March 2004, Table 1, Section 10 – Leisure Recreation and Tourism). Whilst it is acknowledged that the proposed POS to the west of Warren Lane will, in part, meet this shortfall, it will not particularly benefit children from the existing housing to the north of The Site, as it is too remote and involves crossing Warren Lane. The proposed POS shown in the development proposals will benefit the residents of the new development and those within the existing housing areas to the north. It will be accessible from within the development and will enjoy surveillance from the neighbouring properties.

Vegetation

5.6 The indicative development plan allows for the retention of the majority of the vegetation within The Site. The hedgerows along The Site boundaries will be retained, save for those areas that will be required to be removed to allow access from Warren Lane and Dyer's Road. Elsewhere, the hedgerows will be retained and reinforced with new planting. A management plan will be prepared for the woodland areas, and other areas of open space within the development. All TPO trees will be retained.

- 5.7 As part of the development of The Site, new planting will be carried out to ensure that proposed areas of open space are linked to the POS to the west of Warren Lane.

Landscape Policies

- 5.8 It is evident, from the Local Plan, that Colchester is highly constrained by landscape and nature conservation protection policies (see Appendix D). The western fringe of Colchester, and the western approach to the town, is one of the few areas which could accommodate development without conflicting with any strategic landscape or nature conservation designations.

Boundary Conditions

- 5.9 The Site has the benefit of clearly defined and defensible boundaries, providing both physical and visual boundaries. To the east, Dyer's Road defines the existing limit of development and clearly separates The Site from the neighbouring countryside. To the north, The Site abuts existing development, and has the potential for good integration. To the south, the existing cluster of houses that lies within the triangle of land between Warren Lane and Dyer's Road, again provides clear definition to The Site. To the west, Warren Lane also provides a defensible boundary to the development. The residential development at Swift Avenue and Wren Close also offers an opportunity to integrate new development into the urban edge of Colchester.

Visibility

- 5.10 The low lying nature of the surrounding landscape, the extent of existing development to the north and northwest and the strength and substance of existing boundary vegetation, is such that the visual impact of development will be limited and localised. In views from the northwest (Photograph 1), the new development to the west of Warren Lane is prominent, with The Site set back behind it and substantially screened by existing vegetation. In near distance views, from the east and south, existing hedgerows and tree cover will substantially screen views.

Landscape Character

- 5.11 It is evident that The Site is extremely well related to the fabric of the existing settlement, with significant areas of development to the north and northwest. Development of The Site, the character of which can be described as remnant agricultural land, would not result in development encroaching into the open countryside to the south of Colchester. Furthermore, the site is well enclosed by boundary hedge and tree planting to the south, west and east, preventing encroachment into the open countryside.
- 5.12 The Site is divided into a number of different ownerships and land uses, with only a small part of The Site in active agricultural use. The fragmentation of the land parcels, and varied uses, results in The Site having a character that is distinct from the agricultural land to the east.

Ecology

- 5.13 An ecological appraisal of The Site (submitted as a separate document) concludes that there is no over-riding ecological constraint to the development of The Site.

6.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The Site occupies a broadly triangular parcel of land extending to 8.9 hectares. Dyer's Road forms the eastern boundary with Warren Lane forming the western boundary. The housing of Egremont Way lies to the north, with a pocket of residential development to the south.
- 6.2 The Site comprises a mixed land use of woodland, unmanaged grassland, scrub, arable farmland and the curtilages of several properties including Lexden Kennels and Cattery.
- 6.3 The Site is extremely well related to the existing fabric of the settlement, with residential development to the north, north-west and south. It benefits from clearly defined and defensible boundaries.
- 6.4 Development of The Site will help to address the deficit of accessible POS in the Stanway area, and will enable pedestrian links to be created between the allocated area of open space to the west of Warren Lane and the existing housing areas to the north.
- 6.5 The Site has the capacity to accommodate approximately 250 dwellings, on a net development area of 7.7 hectares. Those existing landscape features that are of recognised value can be retained and incorporated within the development.
- 6.6 There are no landscape or nature conservation designations covering The Site. An ecological assessment has concluded that there is no over-riding constraint to the development.
- 6.7 The visual impact of the development will be limited and localised.

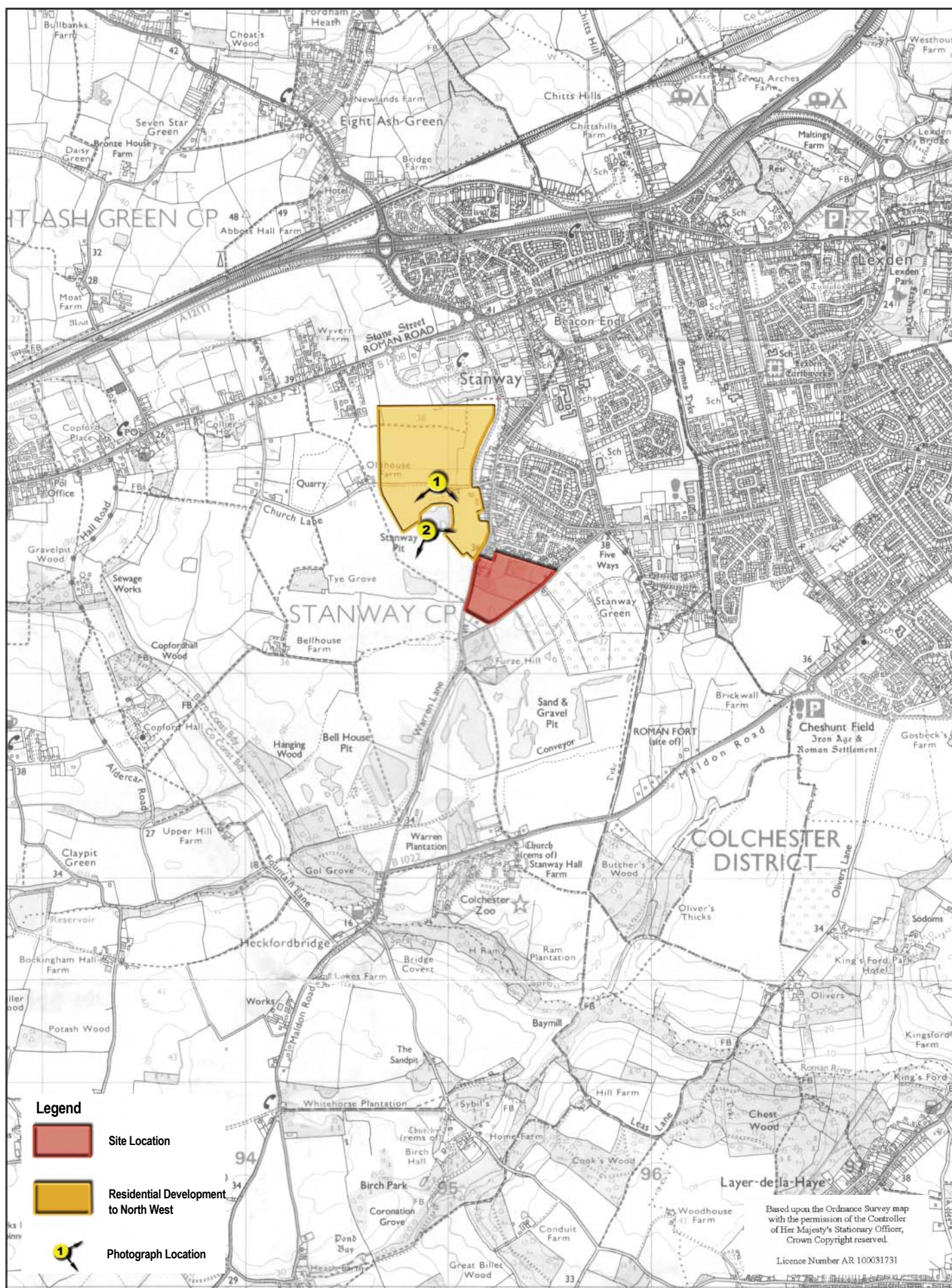
Conclusion

- 6.8 The development of land at Warren Lane/Dyer's Road, Stanway, could provide benefits to the local community, and the wider area of Stanway, with respect to POS, and could be implemented in such a way as to retain the recognised landscape elements of value. Given the lack of any over-riding

landscape constraints, as illustrated above, and the potential for any residential development to knit into the existing fabric of Colchester, there is a no landscape reason why this site should not be identified for development.

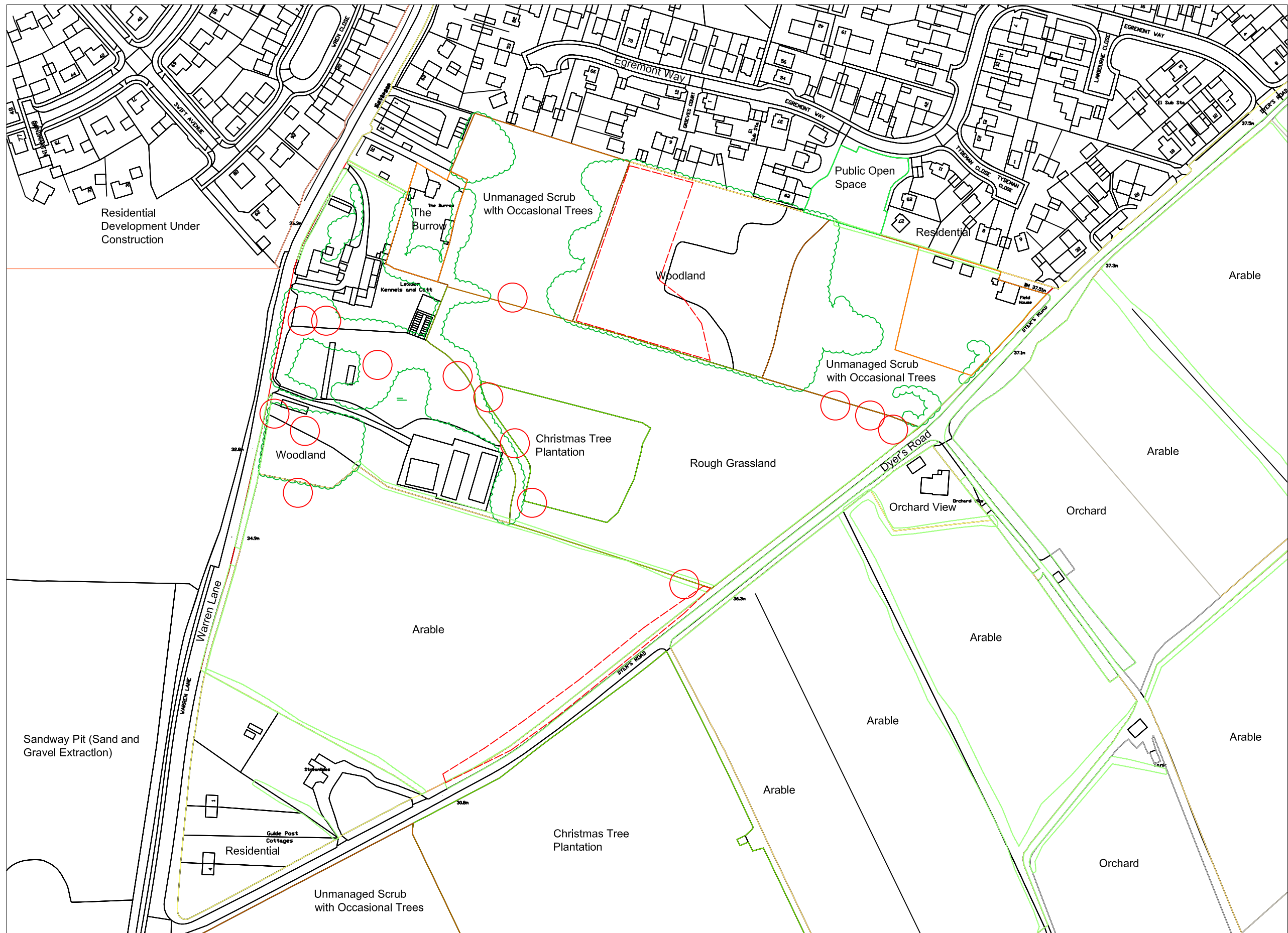
Appendix A

Site Location


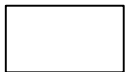
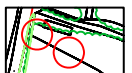
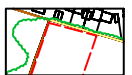


Appendix B

Site Characteristics Plan



LEGEND

-  Site Boundary
-  Photograph Locations
-  TPO - individual
-  TPO - group

Project: Land at Warren Lane, Stanway, Colchester			Drawing Number: CSA/929/002	
Title: Site Characteristics			Revision: -	
Date: June 2007	Drawn: TM	Client: Taylor Wimpey UK Ltd.		
Scale @ Size: 1:2,000 @ A3	Checked: CS			

Appendix C
Photographs



View to southeast from Church Lane, across new residential development, towards the site

Photograph Number: 001



View southeast, from within new residential development, towards the site

Photograph Number: 002



Overlap



Overlap

View to north west across arable field occupying the southern part of the site Photograph Number: 003

Hedgerow along Dyer's Road

Central field

Christmas tree planting

Lexden Kennels
and Cattery

Hedgerow connecting
mixed woodland with
Dyer's Road



View westwards across rough grassland occupying the central part of the site

Photograph Number: 004

'The Burrow'

Housing at Egremont Way

Edge of oak
woodland at
northern edge of site



View northwest, across scrub occupying north western corner of site, towards housing at Egremont Way

Photograph Number: 005



Overlap

'Streamlines'



Overlap

View to southeast, across southern field

Photograph Number: 006

Hedgerow connecting mixed woodland with Dyer's Road

Dyer's Road

Central hedgerow, running east-west

Christmas tree planting

Warren Lane

Edge of oak woodland at northern edge of site



View southwards, across central field

Photograph Number: 007

Warren Lane

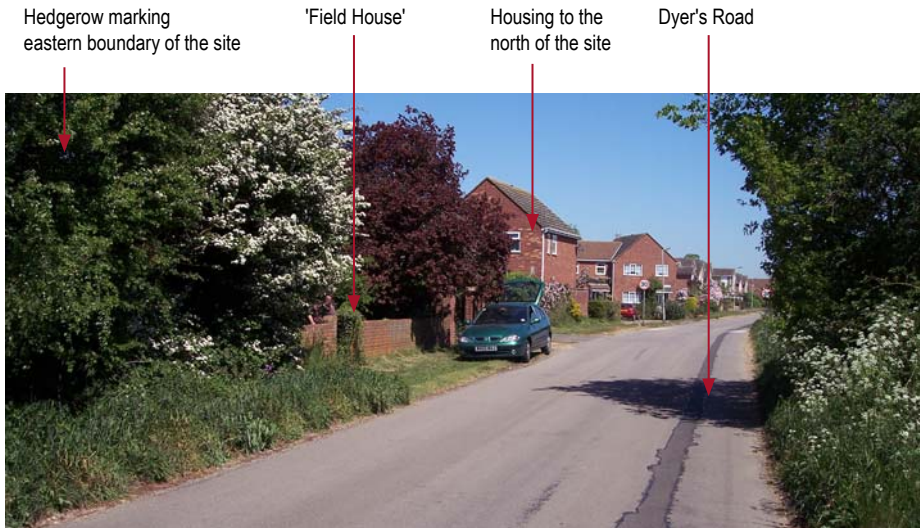
Central Hedgerow, running east-west

Dyer's Road



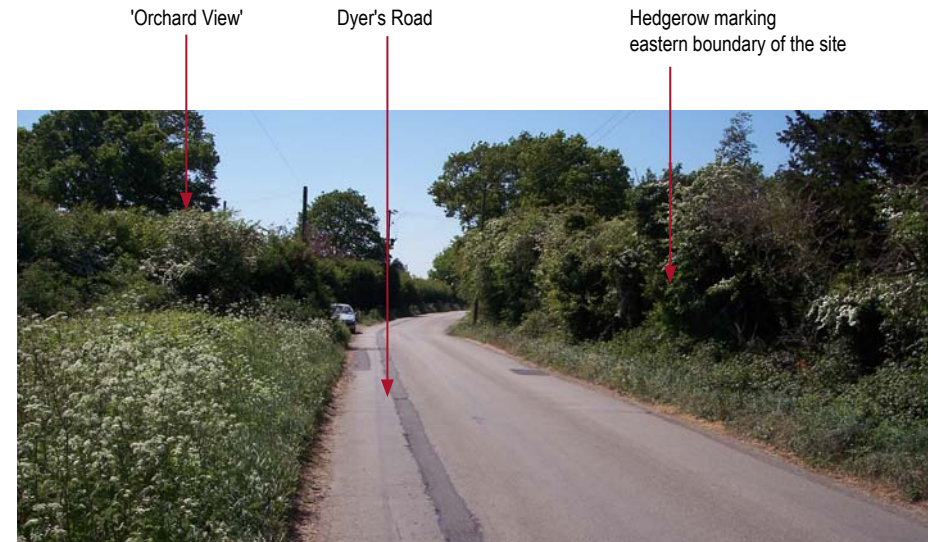
View from south east corner of southern field

Photograph Number: 008



View northwards along Dyer's Road, towards existing residential development

Photograph Number: **009**



View southwards along Dyer's Road, towards Orchard View

Photograph Number: **010**

New residential development to north west of the site

Warren Lane

Hedgerow marking western site boundary



View northwards, along Warren Lane

Photograph Number: 011

'Streamlines'

Hedgerow marking western boundary of site

'Guide Post Cottages'

Warren Lane

Hedgerow marking eastern boundary of Stanway Pit

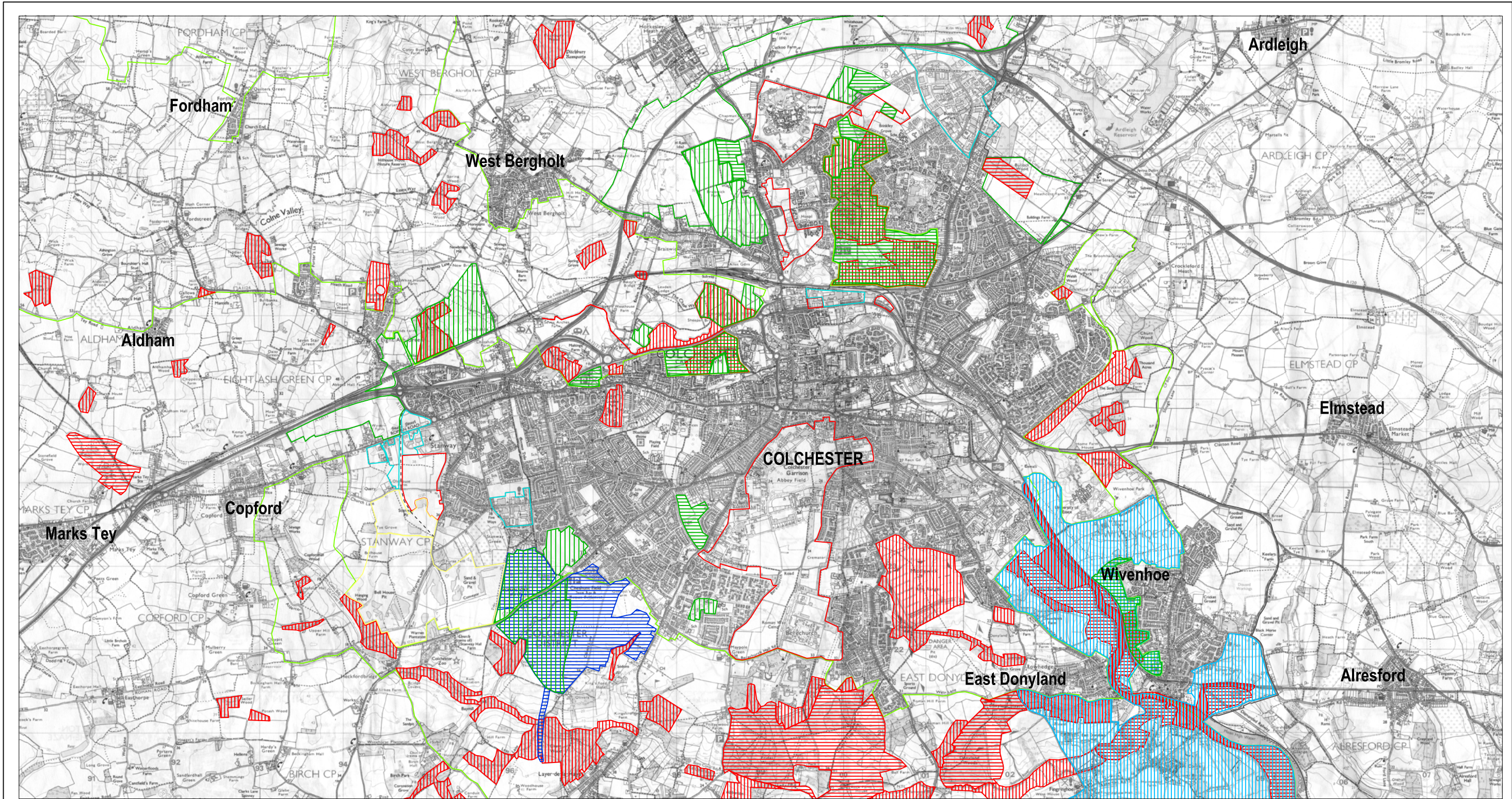


View southwards, along Warren Lane


Photograph Number: 012


Appendix D


Local Plan Landscape Policies





Policies -brought forward from the Adopted Local Plan


 Ancient Momument


 Countryside Conservation Area

 Areas for Informal Recreation


 Open Space


 Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation


 SSSI

 Area of Strategic Open Space


General


 Coastal Protection Belt


 Employment Zone

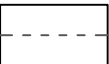
 Colchester Borough Boundary

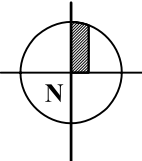
Proposals -introduced by the Adopted Review Colchester Borough Local Plan (March 2004)

 Open Space

 Residential


 Employment Zone

 Road Schemes



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 <div>Barn A, Dixies High Street, Ashwell Tel: 01462 743647 Fax: 01462 743648 Email:ashwell@csalandscape.co.uk</div>	Project: Land at Warren Lane, Stanway, Colchester			Drawing Number: CSA/929/006	
	Title: Local Plan Landscape Policies			Revision: -	
	Date: June 2007	Drawn: TM	Client: Taylor Wimpey UK Ltd.		
	Scale @ Size: Not to Scale	Checked: CS			

Appendix E

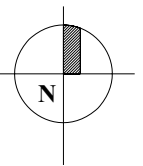
Aerial Photograph



 <div>Barn A Dixies High Street, Ashwell Herts SG7 5NT Tel: 01462 743647 Fax: 01462 743648 Email: ashwell@csaenvironmental.co.uk</div>	Project: Land at Warren Lane, Stanway, Colchester			Drawing Number: CSA/929/003	
	Drawing Title: Aerial Photograph			Revision:	
	Date: June 2007	Drawn By: MH	Client: Taylor Wimpey UK Ltd		
	Scale @ Size: Not to Scale	Checked By: CS			

Appendix F

Indicative Development Layout



LEGEND

- Site boundary
- Dwellings and road layouts shown indicatively
- Open space
- Existing trees and hedgerows
- Proposed trees
- Balancing pond/water feature
- Square
- Footpath

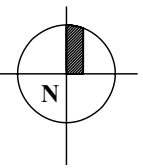
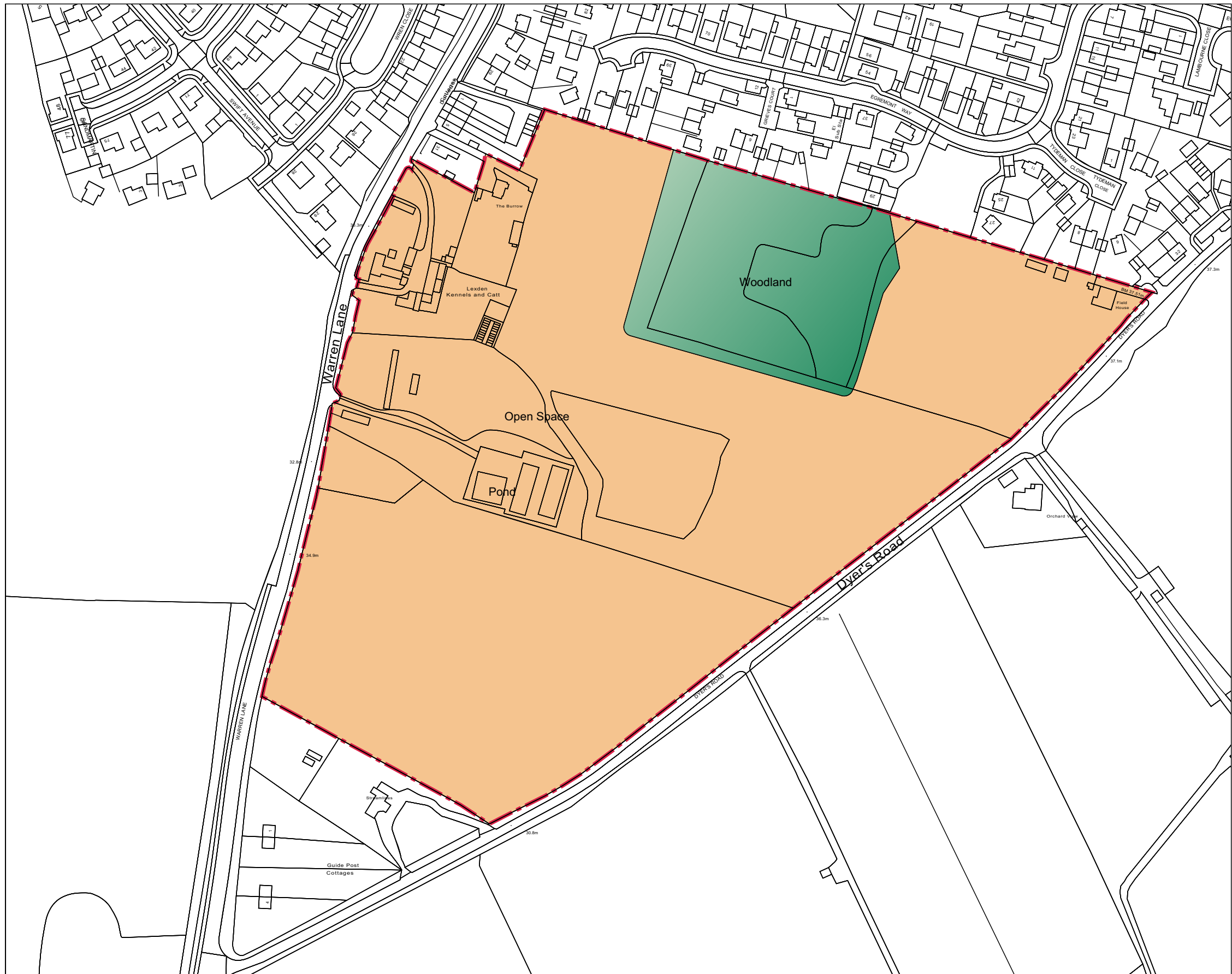


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Project: Land at Warren Lane, Stanway, Colchester			Drawing Number: CSA/929/004		
Title: Indicative Development Layout			Revision: -		
Date: June 2007	Drawn: MH	Client: Taylor Wimpey UK Ltd			
Scale @ Size: 1:2000 @ A3	Checked: CS				

Appendix G

Net Development Area



LEGEND

- Site boundary (total area = 8.9ha)
- Net development area (7.7 ha)
- Woodland (1.2 ha)

<div><div>CSa</div><div>environmental planning</div></div> <div><div>Barn A, Dixies</div><div>High Street, Ashwell</div><div>Tel: 01462 743647</div><div>Fax: 01462 743648</div><div>Email:ashwell@csalandscape.co.uk</div></div>	Project: Land at Warren Lane/Dyer's Road, Stanway			Drawing Number: CSA/929/007	
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	Date: May 2007	Drawn: MH	Client: Taylor Wimpey UK Ltd		
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