

**Landscape Character Assessment
for
Land South of Warwick and Leamington
2014 Addendum**



Prepared for
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Landscape Character Assessment for Land South of Warwick – 2014 Addendum.

1.0 Background.

- 1.1 The Joint Green Belt Study (JGBS) was prepared on behalf of Coventry City Council, Rugby Borough Council, Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council and Warwick District Council in 2008. The study reviewed land parcels to see whether they served the purposes and functions of the West Midland Green Belt and if urban expansion into segments of the Green Belt would have adverse impacts on such purposes.
- 1.3 Areas south of Warwick are not in the Green Belt and in December 2008, Warwick District Council (WDC) appointed Richard Morrish Associates (RMA), who assisted the JGBS study, to provide a preliminary landscape assessment of a number of land parcels in that area, using a similar landscape assessment approach. This report has subsequently being used as evidence in the LDF process.
- 1.4 In February 2014 WDC requested RMA to review an additional land parcel not previously included in the 'LCALSW' report. WDA have referred to the land parcel as 'land west of St Mary's and north of Hampton Road'. For the purposes of this addendum it is referred to as 'land west of Warwick racecourse'

2.0 Method of Assessment.

- 2.1 The study has been undertaken using desk-top studies and a field visit in February 2014. Although this time of year has some limitations for landscape assessment, reduced vegetation cover does often allow unrestricted views over the landscape.
- 2.2 The landscape assessment methodology employed has followed advice set out in the published *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA)* produced by the Landscape Institute in conjunction with the Institute for Environmental Management and Assessment and now reflects guidance in the third addition (published 2013).
- 2.3 The addendum follows other reports and guidance on landscape in the locality as per the original report – as well as more recent LDF evidence prepared by WDC.
- 2.4 In order to avoid lengthy description in this report the findings of the landscape assessment are presented as a tabulation (see Appendix A). Annotated plans of the sites are also presented in this appendix. More information about local landscape character is provided as Appendix B.

3.0 The Study Areas.

- 3.1 The original study assessed nine areas as follow. (Note that there is no 'Area I' to avoid confusion on plans.)

- Site A: Land adjacent Stratford Road (approximately 5 hectares)
- Site B: Home Farm, Longbridge (approximately 30 hectares)
- Site C: Europa Way triangle (approximately 70 hectares)
- Site D: Land south of Gallows Hill (approximately 130 hectares)

Site E: Land south of Harbury Lane (approximately 130 hectares)
Site F: Land at Woodside Farm (approximately 9 hectares)
Site G: Land east of Sydenham (approximately 50 hectares)
Site H: Land south of Sydenham (approximately 45 hectares)
Site J: Land south of Fieldgate Lane (approximately 4 hectares)

New area for 2014 addendum:

Site K: Land west of Warwick racecourse (approximately 56 Ha)

All areas are indicated on the revised plan Figure 1.

4.0 The Information Gathered.

4.1 The tabulated information included in Appendix A provides the following data.

- A general description of the study area and its boundaries.
- A description of the principal landscape character types and landscape components. (Refer also to Figure 2.0.)
- General remarks about visual issues. Consideration of the extent to which a development on the site might be seen from other localities.
- Any historical or cultural information about the site that has been available through brief internet research. We recommend further work is undertaken. The *Warwickshire Historic Landscape Characterisation Project* may assist this research when published (see Appendix B).
- Any ecological data that has been available after brief internet research and the field visit. (A Habitat Biodiversity Audit undertaken on behalf of Warwickshire County Council has been reviewed in which potential SINC sites were identified. These have been mapped – see Appendix A.)
- A general statement on landscape condition.
- A summary of principal planning policy constraints that have been identified.
- Conclusions.

5.0 Summary of Conclusions.

- 5.1 Conclusions on the previous sites are repeated below – with the summary / conclusion for the new ‘Site K’ added in. For all other background refer to the original LCALSW report (2009).

Study Area	Relative value as the setting for Warwick and Leamington	Comments
A: Land off Stratford Road	Low to Medium	These paddocks are unlikely to be possible to retain as viable agricultural land in an increasingly urban context. Good quality development here could enhance an important approach to Warwick. However constraints include Gog Brook and flood risk, the <i>cordon sanitaire</i> , access to Leafield Farm and proximity to Castle Park.
B: Home Farm, Longbridge	Low to Medium	We would score this area as ‘Low’ at the north end, where well-considered development that met with the site constraints could enhance the approach to Warwick. However at the south end we feel the meadows and farmland setting are important in views of Warwick from the M40. Development that retained this setting would be beneficial.
C: Europa Way Triangle	Low to Medium	Although this wedge of undeveloped land has been a strategic break between ‘Warwick’ and ‘Leamington’, we feel its value to the setting of the towns has been greatly diminished by surrounding land use. We feel that carefully considered development here could enhance the setting of the towns and provide a better transition from rural to urban land.
Site D: Land south of Gallows Hill	High	This is generally an area of well maintained agricultural land that is important to the setting of Castle Park and prominent in approaches to Warwick. We feel it should be safeguarded from development. However the former landfill site at Turnbull’s Gardens is an anomaly in the landscape that needs additional consideration.
Site E: Land south of Harbury Lane	Medium to High	This area is on a ridge of higher ground that is prominent in some views from the south. Development here would be a relatively prominent urban extension. However sensitive development could at least be contained ‘naturally’ by Tach Brook, and it would be reasonably easy to integrate to existing development.
Site F: Land at Woodside Farm	Medium	Although this site is partly on high ground, if sensitively developed it could be a relatively discreet urban extension.
Site G: Land east of Sydenham	Medium to High	We feel that retention of this ‘green wedge’ is essential for the character of Radford – but that small-scale urban expansion on the Radford boundary could be achieved without harming the overall landscape setting. Sensitive design will be essential.
Site H: Land south of Sydenham	Medium	The railway line makes a definitive edge to Whitnash and there are constraints for development of this area. However, as it is relatively hidden from the main towns and their approaches, in theory this area could be developed without significant harm to the landscape setting of Warwick or Leamington.
Site J: Land south of Fieldgate Lane	Medium	This small site is well contained and development here would not have a major impact on the overall setting of the towns. However it has some historical value and could set a precedent for further expansion south.

<u>2014 Addendum:</u> Site K: Land west of Warwick Racecourse	Medium to High	We feel that extensive development here would be significant in the setting of Warwick, partially visible from the A46 and the positions to the West and prominent from the racecourse and potentially parts of historic Warwick including the castle. However there could be some scope for partial development of the area of land adjacent Hampton Road.
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- 5.2 As in the original report – it is important to stress the importance of promoting high quality sustainable development for any large urban expansion. Site specific design guidance and specific conditions to ensure long-term sustainable management of landscape assets and green infrastructure will ideally be sought and enforced. This will help to ensure the protection of the character and appearance of Warwick and Leamington.

Figures with the 2014 addendum:

Figures:

Figure 01 Study Areas. (Amended)

Figure 02 Landscape Character Types (Amended)

Figure 03 Topographical Analysis (Amended)

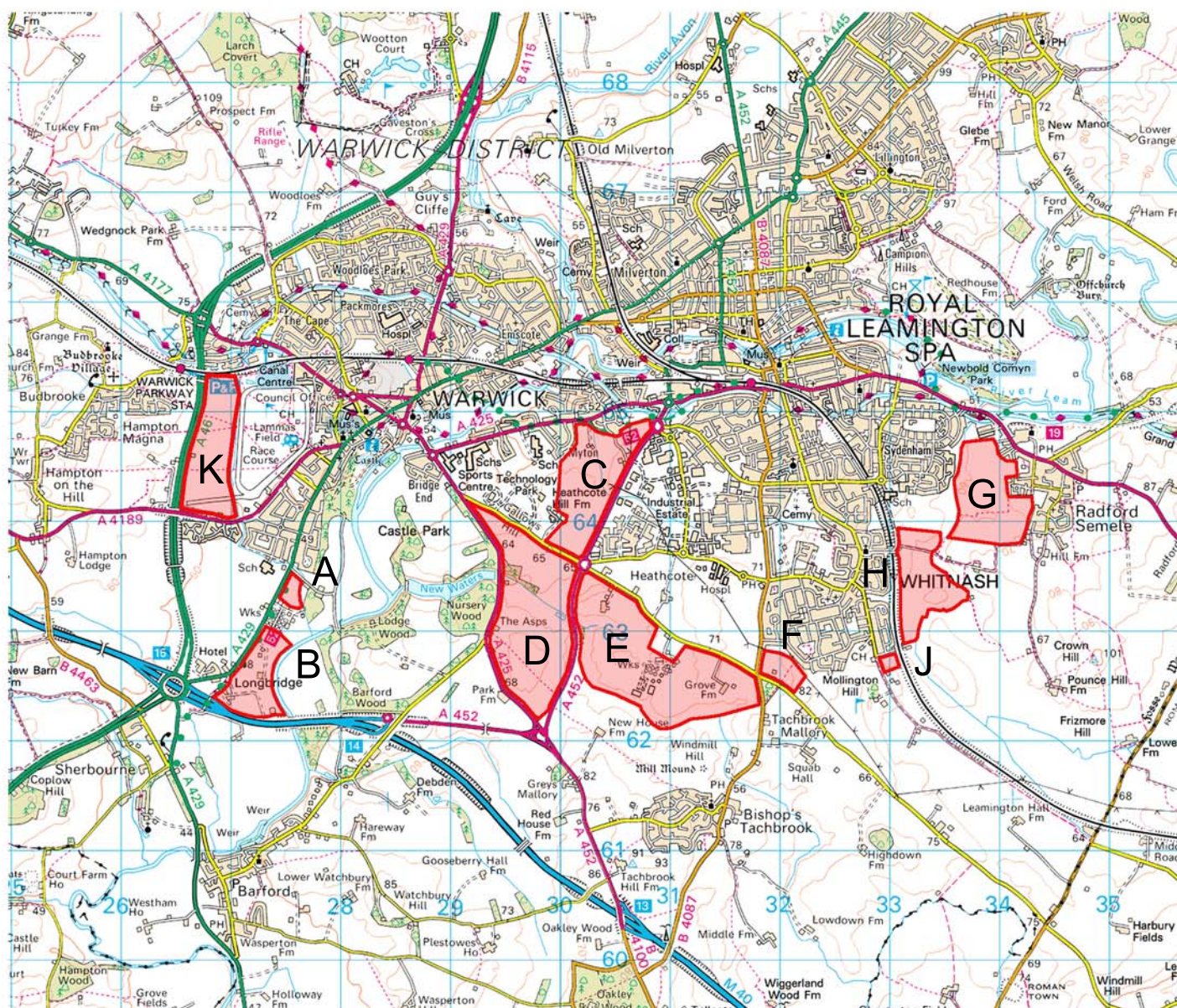
Appendices:

Appendix A: Tabulated assessment of 'Site K' – Land west of Warwick racecourse.

Figure K1 – Photographs i

Figure K2 – Photographs ii

Figure K3 – Site Plan.

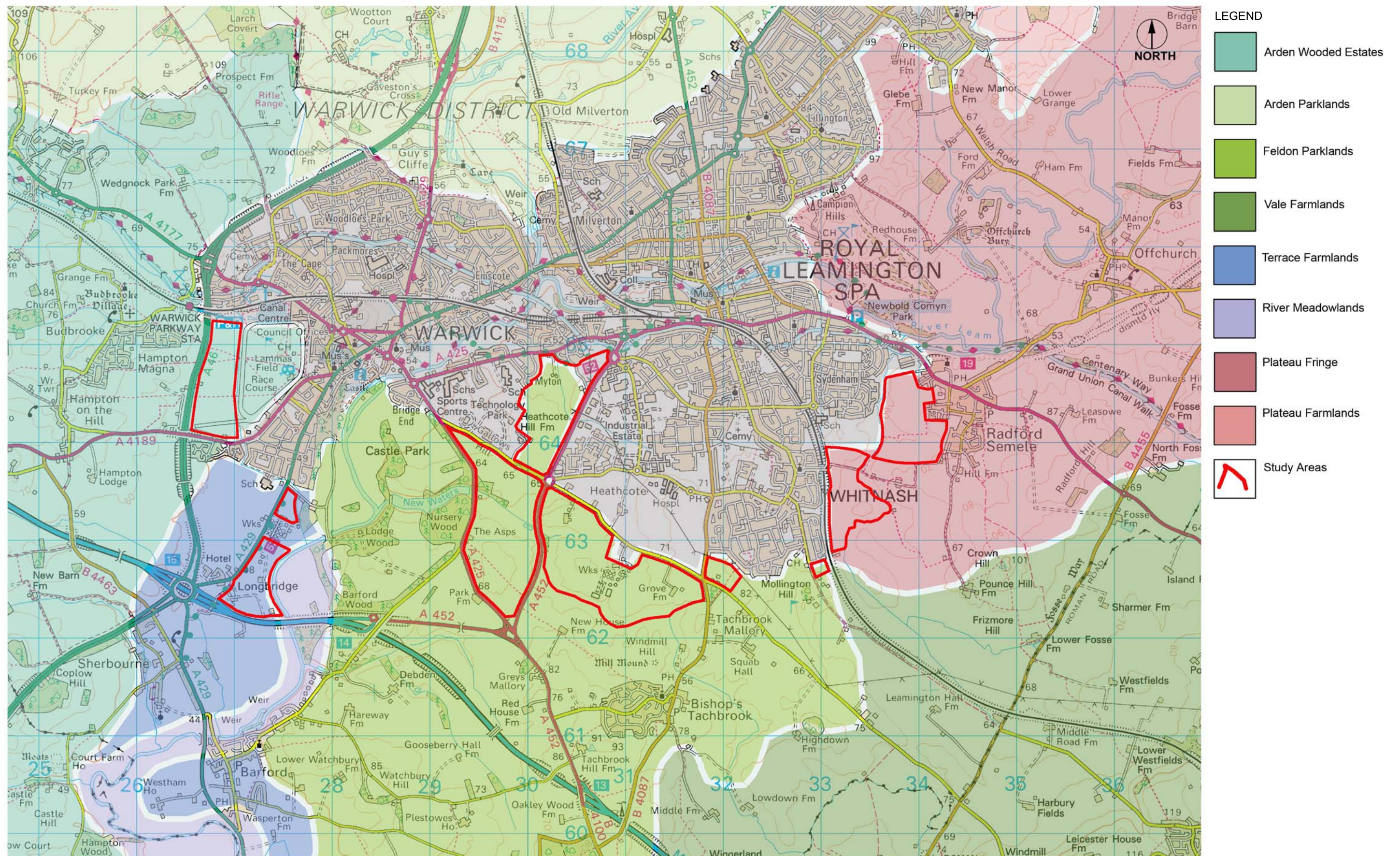


- A - Land at Stratford Road
- B - Home Farm, Longbridge
- C - Europa Way triangle.
- D - Land south of Gallows Hill
- E - Land south of Harbury Lane
- F - Land at Woodside Farm
- G - Land east of Sydenham
- H - Land south of Sydenham
- J - Land south of Fieldgate Lane

- K - Land west of Warwick racecourse.

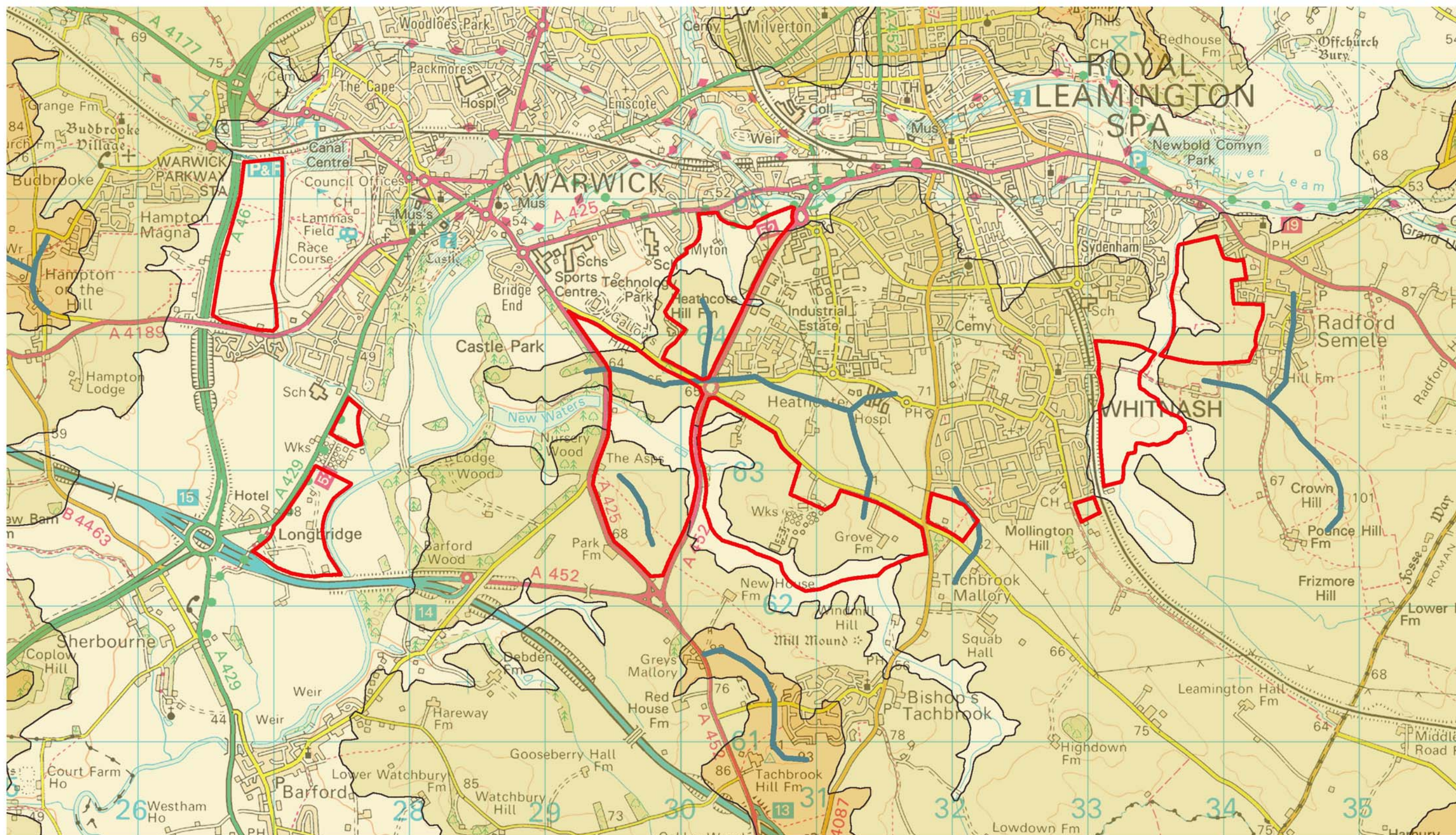
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South Warwick Landscape Study.
 2014 Addendum.
 Figure 1.0 - Location Plan



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South Warwick Landscape Study
 2014 Addendum
 Figure 2. Landscape Types



Legend

100-80m AOD

80-60m AOD

>60m AOD

Study Areas

Indicative ridge lines



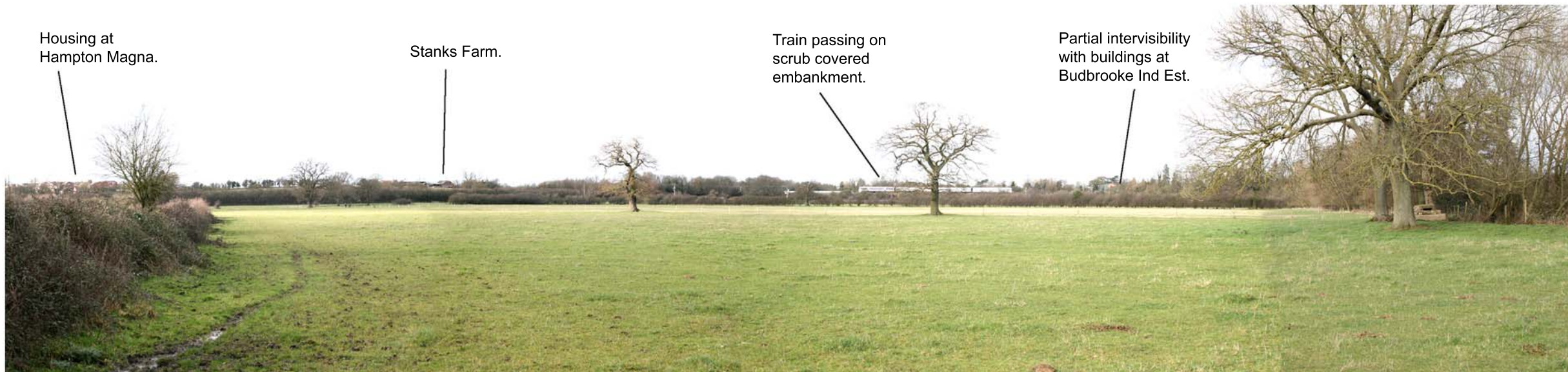
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South Warwick Landscape Study.
2014 Addendum
Figure 3.0 - Topographic Analysis

Appendix A: Landscape Assessment

Study Area Reference	Site K: Land west of Warwick racecourse.
Study Area Description	An area of approximately 56 Ha of mainly agricultural land lying at the western edge of urban Warwick. The study area is principally defined by the A46 to the west, the Warwick/Leamington to Birmingham rail line to the north, Warwick racecourse to the east and Hampton Road (A4189) and the Chase Meadow neighbourhood to the south. The area is primarily farmland but three public rights of way are indicated crossing the site. An 'arm' of Warwick racecourse divides the southern end of the study area from the other farmland.
Landscape Character	<p>The land lies within the 'Arden Wooded Estates' regional landscape character area (refer to Figure 2). The site is not especially indicative of the character type being essentially flat and mostly lying below 55m AOD. The site is divided into over a dozen small or medium-sized rectangular fields, mostly defined by remnant gappy hedges (predominantly hawthorn). Many of these boundary lines have veteran trees (mainly oak and ash), some of which are clearly several hundred years old, indicating that the landscape is likely to be historic. Along the eastern boundary the study site is defined by Gog Brook, with mature willow, alder, ash and sycamore to 15-20m high which partially screen the adjacent racecourse. At the north end of the study area and in narrow paddocks beside the A46, the fields are improved pasture – not thought to be permanent. Towards the southern end of the site the fields are in arable use. As noted above, a flat race straight bisects the last 200m of the study area with a mown grass 'corridor' approximately 30m wide and 500m long. South of this in a small triangular shaped area of mainly arable land lies Budbrooke Lodge Farm, which is accessed from Hampton Road. To the east, trees along Gog Brook divide the farm from the racecourse depot area and car parks and other flat roofed buildings between Hampton Road and the racecourse. To the south-west the Hampton Road passes over the A46 on a grade separated bridge, and the embankments have maturing woodland that encloses this corner of the study site. To the west there is a variety of hedge and tree cover along both sides of the A46 corridor, with mainly open agricultural land retained on rising ground towards Hampton Magna and Hampton-on-the Hill (although there is also a rugby club adjacent the A4189). A BP service station has premises on both sides of the A46. At the rear of the premises on the east side of the road and within the study area, there appears to be around 1Ha of derelict land with maturing woodland scrub. In the north-west corner of the study site there is an access track with a bridge over the A46 providing a farm connection to Stanks Farm (Hampton Magna). The farm and the eastern side of Hampton Magna are intervisible with the study site, but not the nearby Warwick Parkway Station. There is some intervisibility with warehouse buildings at Budbrooke Industrial Estate, north of the railway line, but these are large warehouses and sensitive views from this direction are unlikely. Apart from the racecourse and golf course there are sports pitches, a caravan park, a variety of footpaths, a community woodland (<i>Northern Enclosure</i>) and other public access areas that make up 'St Mary's lands' to the east of the site, with the topography rising towards Shire Hall and historic core of Warwick. In general the study site can still be described as strongly rural in character, in spite of many types of landuse in the wider setting.</p>
Visual Issues	The flat landscape coupled with mature vegetation along boundaries provides some local enclosure. However future development at this site is likely to be notable from the A46 to the west, from Hampton Road and adjacent properties to the south, from the railway line to the north, and from the public access areas within St Mary's lands / Warwick racecourse site to the east. Development would be visible from public access areas and buildings with westerly views in Warwick (including, it is anticipated, parts of the castle battlements), and from Hampton Magna and other elevated ground to the west. As noted, part of the racecourse extends into the site and three public footpaths cross the site. Although transient, potential visual receptors on the footpaths and at St Mary's lands are likely to be regarded as sensitive receptors to any notable landscape change at the study site, whilst the historic setting of the racecourse and old Warwick would also merit special consideration in any assessment of landscape and visual impact. Views of the castle and the spire of St Mary's should be regarded as important to the setting of Warwick.

Historic and Cultural Issues	<p>St Mary's Lands was originally common land that began to be used for horse racing in the late 18th century. The race course became more formalised in the 19th century and a public golf course was also established in the 1890s. Commoners rights were extinguished in the 1940s and the land has since been owned and managed for public recreation by the District Council. Parts are rented to the Jockey Club, a football club, and as farmland, but the area is still widely regarded as an important open space and public asset in Warwick. The setting of the racecourse requires special consideration (including access management). The footpaths across the study site appear to be used – albeit crossings of the A46 appear dangerous. As noted – the field pattern appears to be historic. No indications of ridge and furrow were noted. Warwick Conservation Area lies 1.2 km to the east. Further heritage assessment will be required.</p>
Ecological Features	<p>The Gog Brook appears to be a reasonably clean and ecologically intact watercourse and other ecological assets at the site will include hedgerows, veteran trees, blocks of scrub woodland around the boundaries and the areas of pasture. Preserving a viable ecological corridor along the watercourse, including a sufficient buffer for future management, and mitigating impacts or losses to other assets would be a prerequisite of a sustainable development plan. A detailed ecological survey of the site is recommended. Much of St Mary's lands is known as 'Lammas meadows', featuring species rich grassland that is a potential local nature reserve.</p>
Landscape Condition	<p>The over-mature hedges and hedgerow trees give a general impression that the landscape is declining. It is likely that there has been some hedge loss. However perhaps protected by the racecourse and the road and rail 'barriers', the overall landscape pattern is, as noted above, probably historic, and the overall condition can probably be considered fair to good.</p>
Planning Issues	<p>The site is partly within a flood risk area (Gog Brook). It is within a <i>Dap 2</i> Area of Restraint. It is outside the Green Belt, the boundary of which is defined by the A46 to the west. It is understood that there are presently a range of plans for development at Warwick Racecourse including a hotel, an enlarged caravan park, an enlarged golf driving range and sports pitch facilities. One possible site for the hotel is at the present racecourse maintenance depot off Hampton Road (immediately adjacent the site). There is a preferred option site for residential development at Hampton Magna, (4.2 Ha south of Arras Boulevard), approximately 400m west of the site. Cumulative impact assessment will be necessary if any of these plans come to fruition. Significant issues for development at this site will be access (which would appear to only really be practicable from Hampton Road to the south), and the adverse impact of the very busy A46 to the west. The road is at or slightly above the level of the site and traffic noise is a significant feature of the character of this site.</p>
Conclusion	<p>Because of the many different land-uses around this site, it might be considered an 'urban fringe' location. However, the site is relatively large and the open character of the racecourse and agricultural land to the west help it retain a predominantly rural character (and conversely this site enhances the open character of the adjoining lands). If the site was developed, even with low-rise, low-density residential development, it is considered there would be considerable landscape and visual impacts to the setting of the racecourse, to outlooks from Warwick and to perceptions of the setting of the town from adjacent transport corridors. There would also be constraints from flood risk and drainage, intrusion from the A46 and ecology. It is anticipated that service provision might also be problematic. Because access is only likely to be possible from the south, the flat race straight of the racecourse effectively segregates most of the site north of Budbrooke Lodge Farm. It is therefore considered that the only area that might be developable is that lying immediately adjacent the farmstead (approximately 4.5 Ha). Notwithstanding that this area still has constraints (flood risk / traffic noise) there could be potential for some residential development here. Design would have to consider the Hampton Road frontage (an important gateway to Warwick) and the northern boundary with the racecourse (which would ideally include a substantial landscape buffer). Landscape and visual impacts to the wider setting might be minimised if only this area was brought forward for development.</p>



Veteran oak, ash and willow trees on the site indicate the longevity of this landscape.

View 1 - Looking north west across the north end of site from near Gog Brook. Established pasture with hedgrow and veteran trees. Distant intervisibility with Hampton Magna.



View 2 - Looking south from paddocks at north end of site - from position near A46. Intervisibility with the elevated parts of Warwick, east of the racecourse. Trees along Gog Brook generally filter views to the racecourse.



View 3 - Looking east from bottom of Gould Road, Hampton Magna. Intermediate trees and tall hedges generally screen the A46 road corridor, but there are filtered views of Warwick racecourse, development along Hampton Road (A4189) and the elevated parts of Warwick. Two storey development at the study site would be likely to be partially visible from this position.



View 4 - Looking east near the boundary with A46 towards south end of study site. The land is predominantly arable in this area.



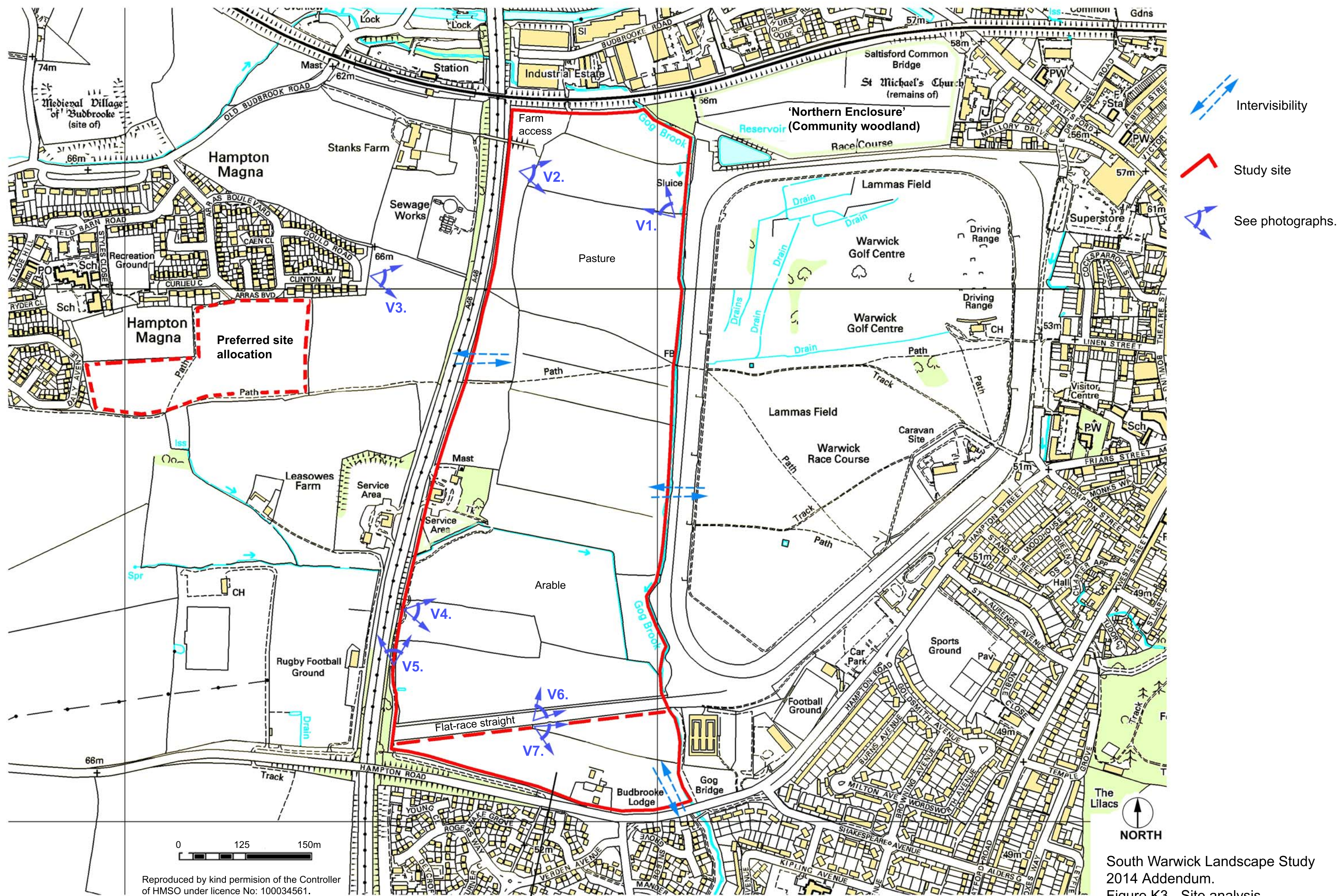
View 5 - Looking north on farm access track adjacent A46. Note BP garage further along road.



View 6 - Looking north-east from the flat race straight at Warwick racecourse. Long views to Warwick and St Mary's.



View 7 - Looking south-east from the flat race straight - towards Budbrooke Lodge Farm and Hampton Road (A4189). Small arable fields with low hedges.



Area that might have some potential for development.