

**FIGURE 1**  
Location of Stonham Barns



PROJECT  
1192  
Stonham Barns

**DRAFT**

CLIENT  
Mid Suffolk District Council

DATE  
September 2021

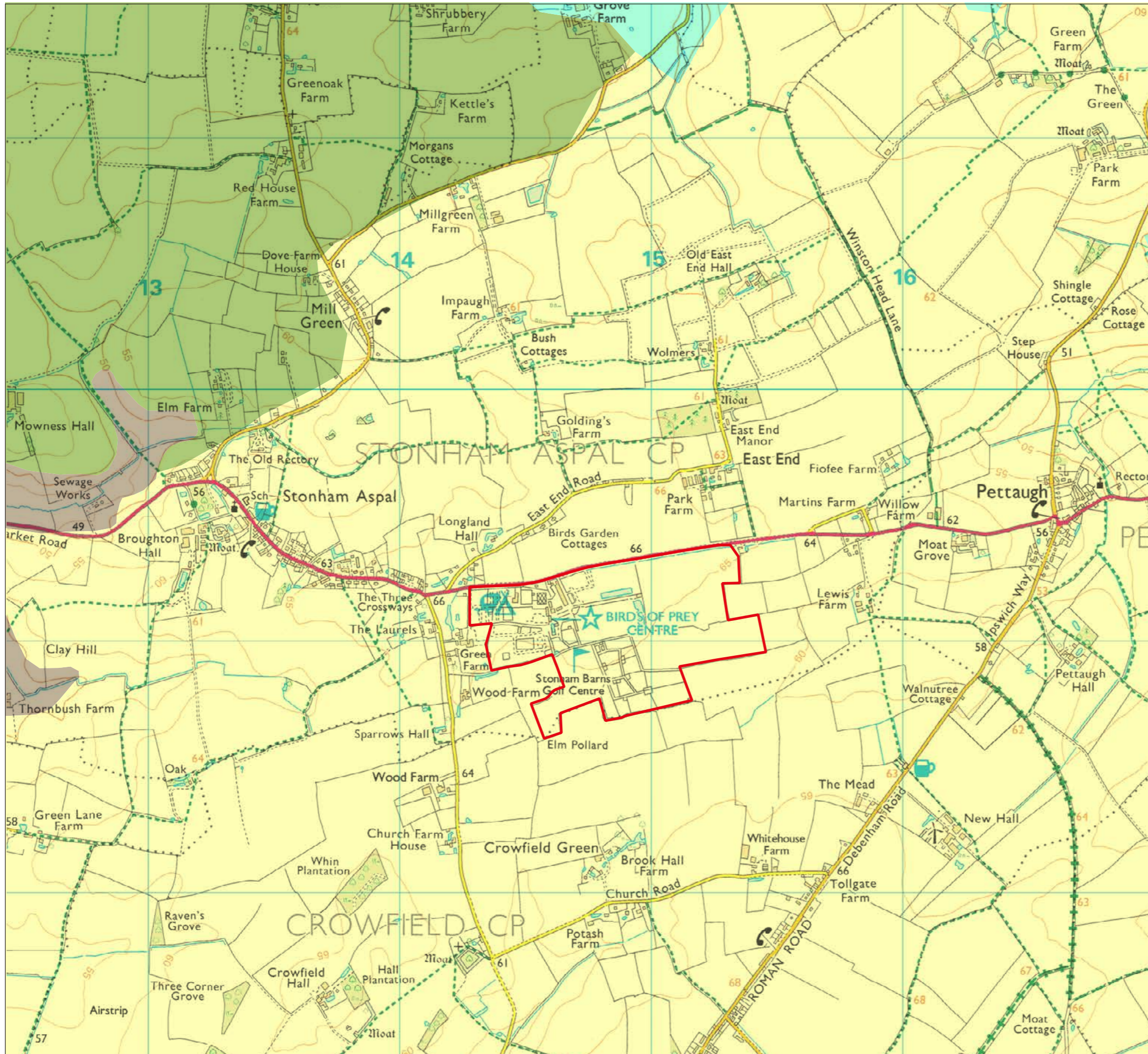
**Legend**

Stonham Barns Site



0 250 500 1000m





**FIGURE 2**  
Landscape Character Types



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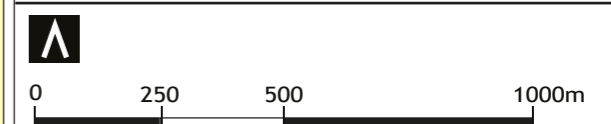
**Legend**

 Stonham Barns Site Boundary

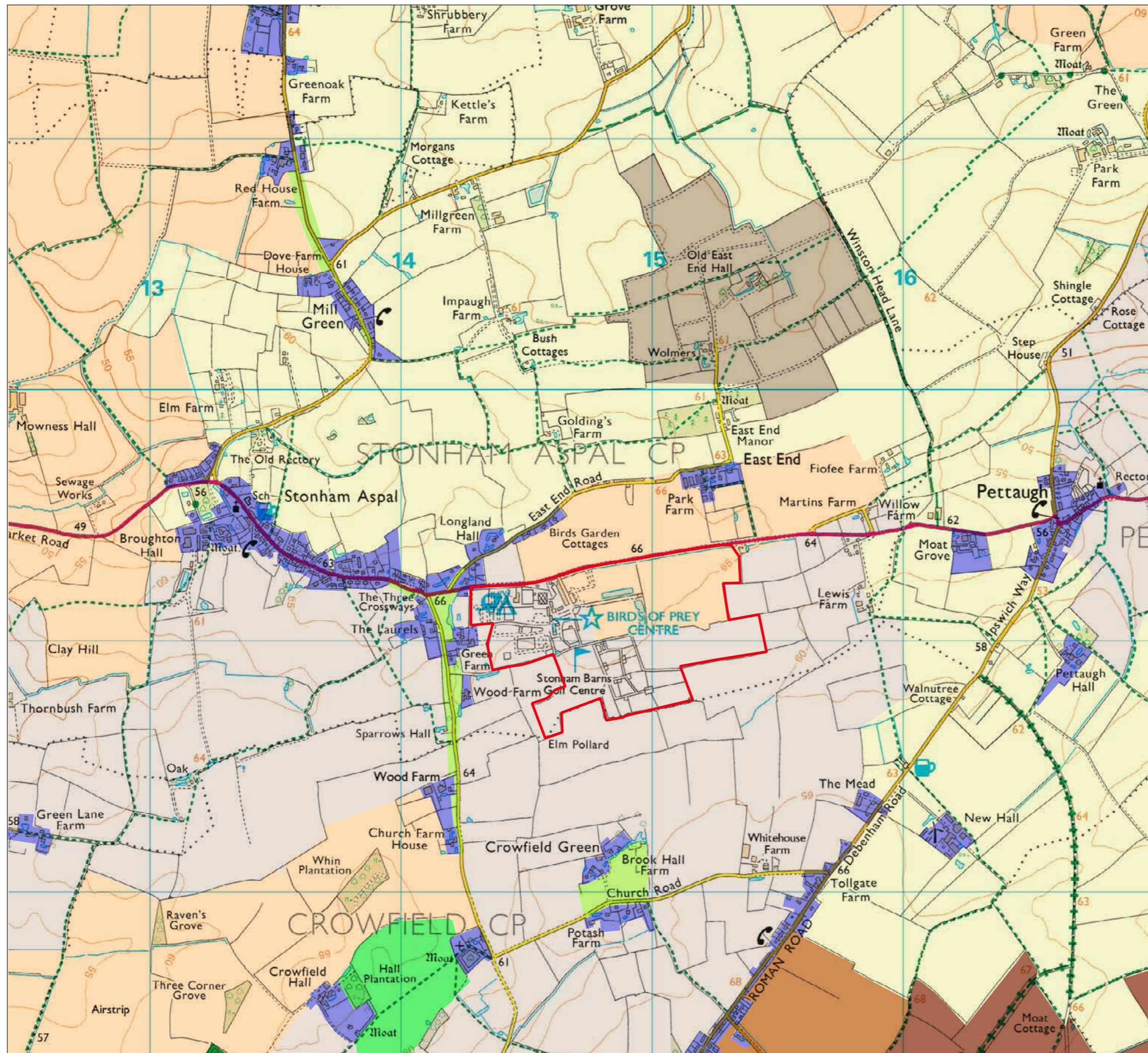
Joint Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council Landscape Guidance, 2015

Landscape Character Types

-  Ancient estate claylands
-  Rolling valley farmlands & furze
-  Plateau claylands
-  Rolling valley claylands







**FIGURE 3**  
Historic Landscape Character



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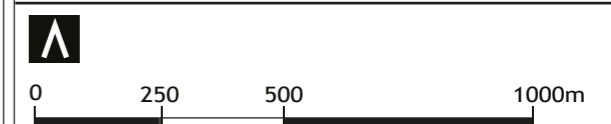
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September 2021

**Legend**

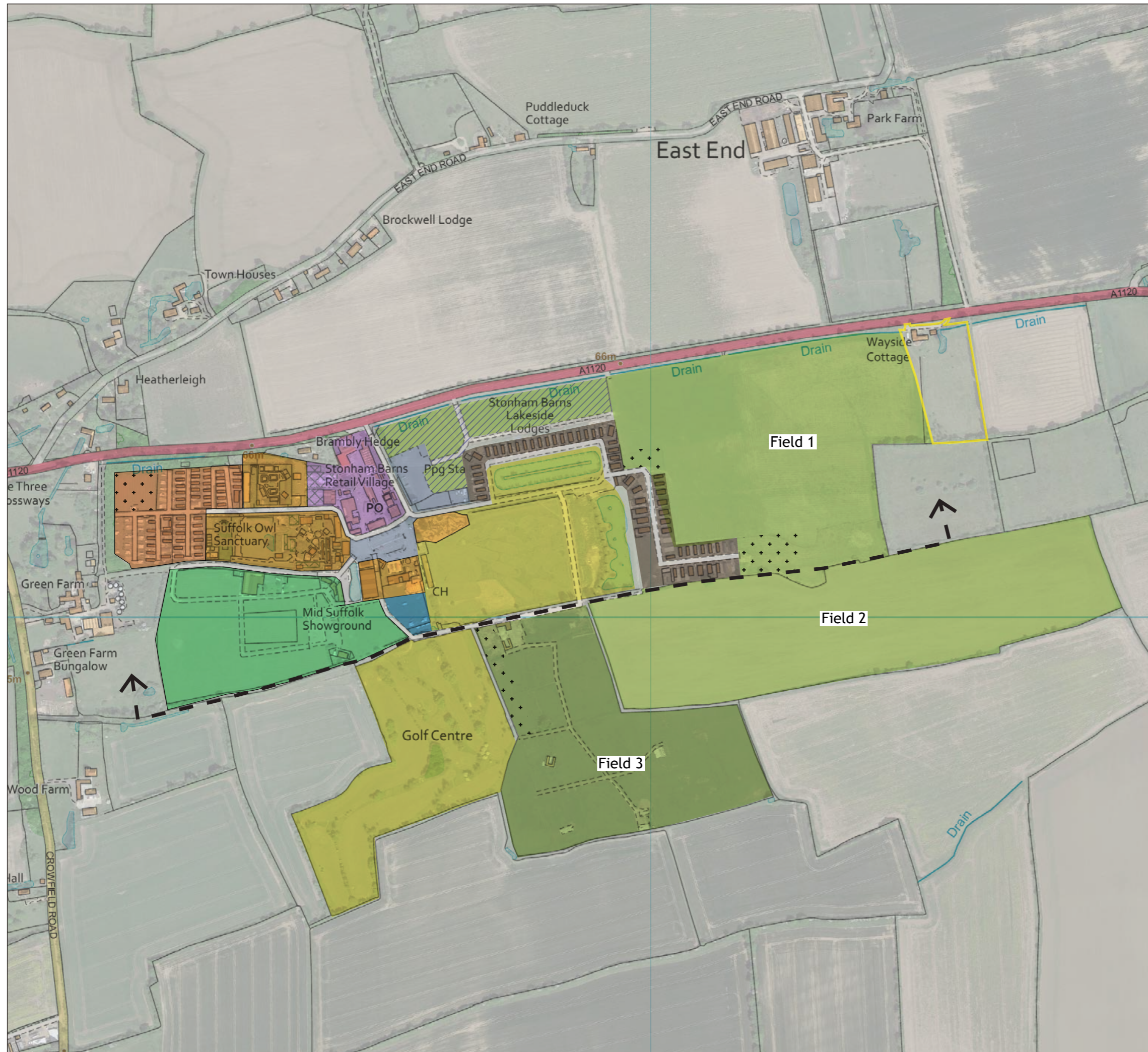
Stonham Barns Site Boundary

**The Suffolk Historic Landscape Characterisation Map, 2012**

- Type - Subtype
- 1.1. Pre-18th-century enclosure - random fields
  - 1.3. Pre-18th-century Enclosure - Long Co-axial Fields
  - 1.4. Pre-18th-century Enclosure - Irregular cCo-axial Fields
  - 2.2. 18th-century and Later Enclosure - Former Common Pasture, Built Margin
  - 2.4. 18th-century and Later Enclosure - Former Post-medieval Park
  - 3.3. Post-1950 Agricultural Landscape - Boundary Loss from Long Co-axial Fields
  - 3.4. Post-1950 Agricultural Landscape - Boundary Loss from Irregular Co-axial Fields
  - 6.1. Horticulture - Orchard
  - 7.1. Woodland - Ancient Woodland
  - 10.1. Built-up Area - Unspecified







**FIGURE 4**  
Current Land Use



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- Retail units
- 'Hard' leisure attractions (including suffolk owl sanctuary, crazy golf and children's soft play)
- Landscape based leisure attractions (including fishing lakes, 9 hole golf course, footgolf)
- Showground for events
- Static caravans
- Holiday lodges
- Permitted holiday lodges & static caravans not yet implemented
- Mobile caravan and camping
- Car parking - hard surface
- Car parking - grass overflow
- Wayside cottage & gardens (site of planning permission for hotel use)
- Agricultural fields (Fields 1 & 2)
- Land forming part of previous donkey sanctuary (facilities installed for mobile caravan and camping without permission) (Field 3)
- Current limit of significant built development





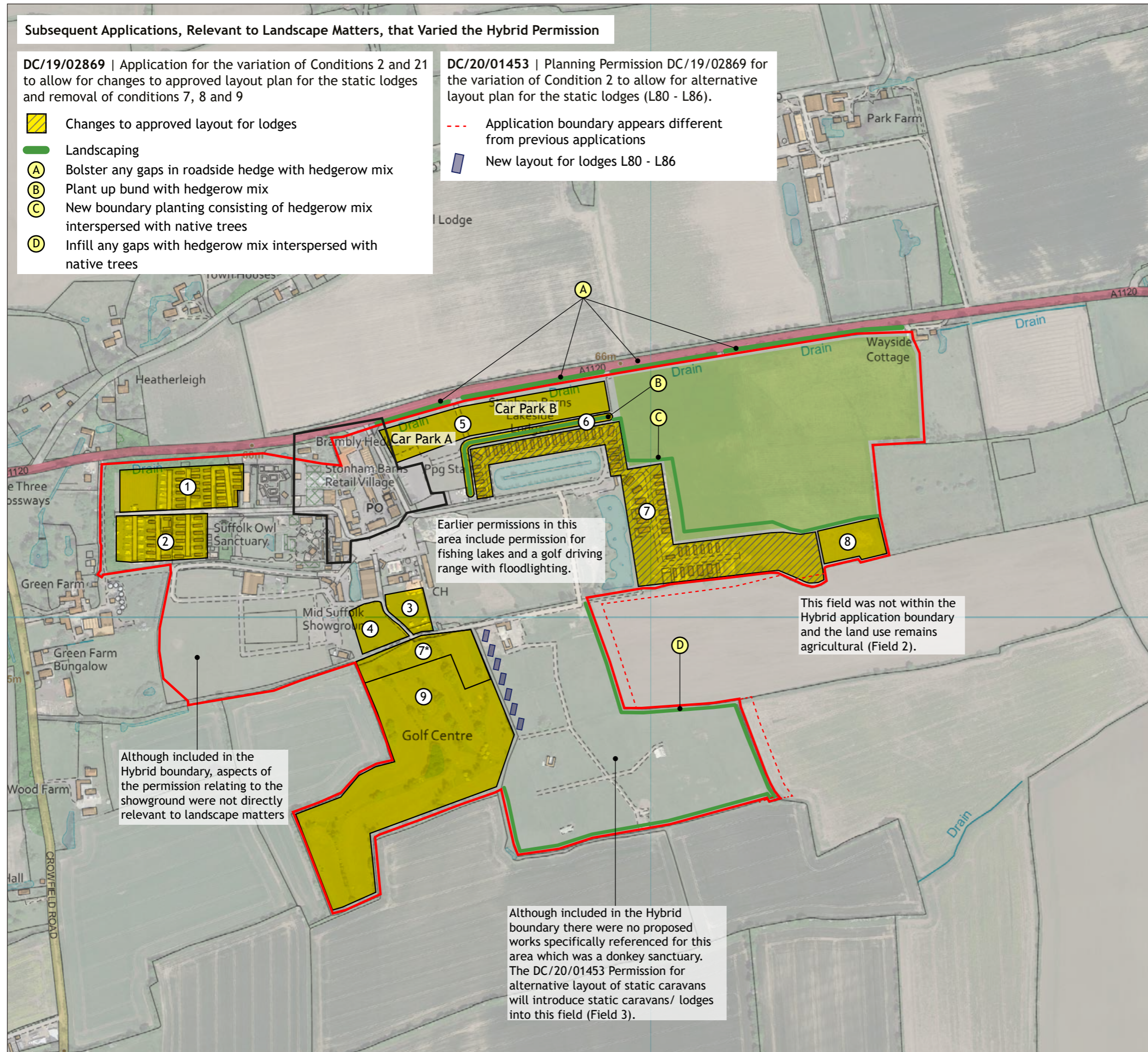
Subsequent Applications, Relevant to Landscape Matters, that Varied the Hybrid Permission

DC/19/02869 | Application for the variation of Conditions 2 and 21 to allow for changes to approved layout plan for the static lodges and removal of conditions 7, 8 and 9

- Changes to approved layout for lodges
- Landscaping
- A Bolster any gaps in roadside hedge with hedgerow mix
- B Plant up bund with hedgerow mix
- C New boundary planting consisting of hedgerow mix interspersed with native trees
- D Infill any gaps with hedgerow mix interspersed with native trees

DC/20/01453 | Planning Permission DC/19/02869 for the variation of Condition 2 to allow for alternative layout plan for the static lodges (L80 - L86).

- Application boundary appears different from previous applications
- New layout for lodges L80 - L86



Although included in the Hybrid boundary, aspects of the permission relating to the showground were not directly relevant to landscape matters

Earlier permissions in this area include permission for fishing lakes and a golf driving range with floodlighting.

This field was not within the Hybrid application boundary and the land use remains agricultural (Field 2).

Although included in the Hybrid boundary there were no proposed works specifically referenced for this area which was a donkey sanctuary. The DC/20/01453 Permission for alternative layout of static caravans will introduce static caravans/ lodges into this field (Field 3).

FIGURE 5  
Hybrid Permission



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Applications will be reviewed and updated prior to issue

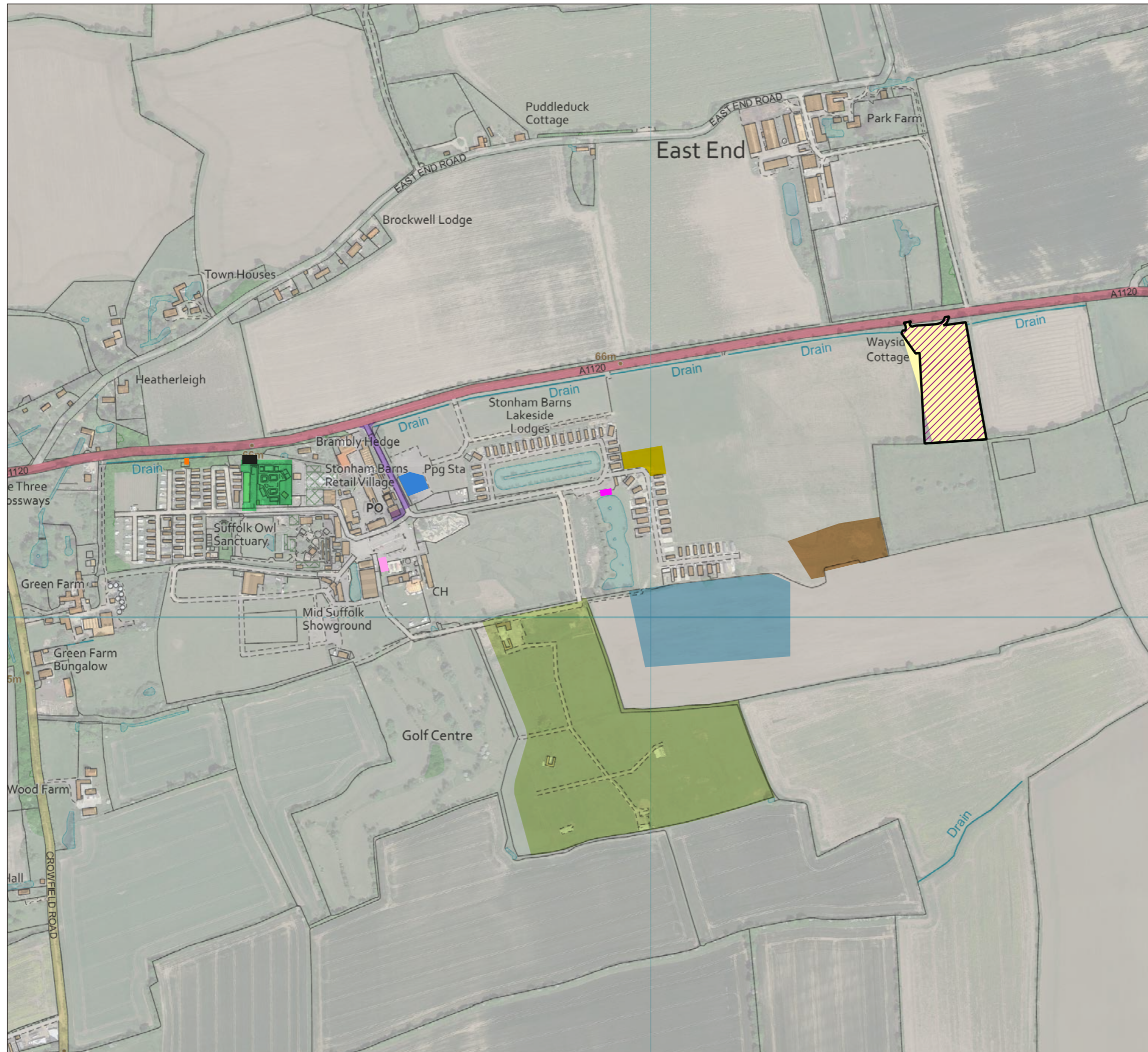
Legend

- Boundary of Hybrid Permission (Ref 3150/15)
- For details of works within this area refer to Appendix 1
- Proposed works in decision notice (works without a landscape element are omitted)
- ① Use of land for the stationing of 51 static caravans for holiday rental (subject to 28 day occupancy restriction) on land adjacent to west of dog training area.
- ② Use of land for the stationing of 34 static caravans for holiday use (owner occupied) subject to restriction preventing occupation for one month of the year, on land to west of meerkat enclosure.
- ③ Continued use of land for touring caravans
- ④ Continued use of land as an extension to the existing showground and/or for use as touring caravan site
- ⑤ Continued use of land for car parking and car boot sales on Sundays (taking place on car park 'A', car park 'B' or the showground)
- ⑥ Repositioning of earth bund on northern side of existing fishing lake No1
- ⑦ Use of land adjacent for the stationing of 76 holiday lodges (owner occupied) subject to restriction preventing occupation for one month of the year (identified as L01 to L045 and L057 to L086).
- ⑦\* Seven of the 76 holiday lodges were to be located here
- ⑧ Use of land for stationing of 11 holiday lodges for rental subject to 28 day occupancy restriction (lodges L046 to L056)
- ⑨ Use of land for pitch and putt golf course
- 3150/15 Condition 24 - Agricultural Use



0 150 300m





**FIGURE 6**  
*Planning Applications 2019-2021*



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**Legend**

Planning Applications 2019-2021 (Approved)

- DC/19/04261 Use of land for stationing of lodge for fishing warden
- DC/19/04876 Continued use of land and buildings as extension to Owl Sanctuary
- DC/20/03024 Retention of concrete pad, shed and plant associated with a bore hole
- DC/20/00761 Erection of 2 Toilet Blocks
- DC/20/01894 Erection of 2 storey office building
- DC/20/04306 Excavation of two fishing lakes & construction of parking area
- DC/20/01438 Change Use of land for the stationing of 5 holiday lodges.
- DC/21/00501 Erection of single storey extensions
- DC/19/04462 Change of use of premises from dwelling (Class C3) to boutique hotel (Class C1)
- DC/20/00121 Erection of glazed link extension and alterations to cartlodge
- DC/20/02409 Erection of extensions and alterations for hotel use

Planning Applications 2019-2021 (Awaiting Decision)

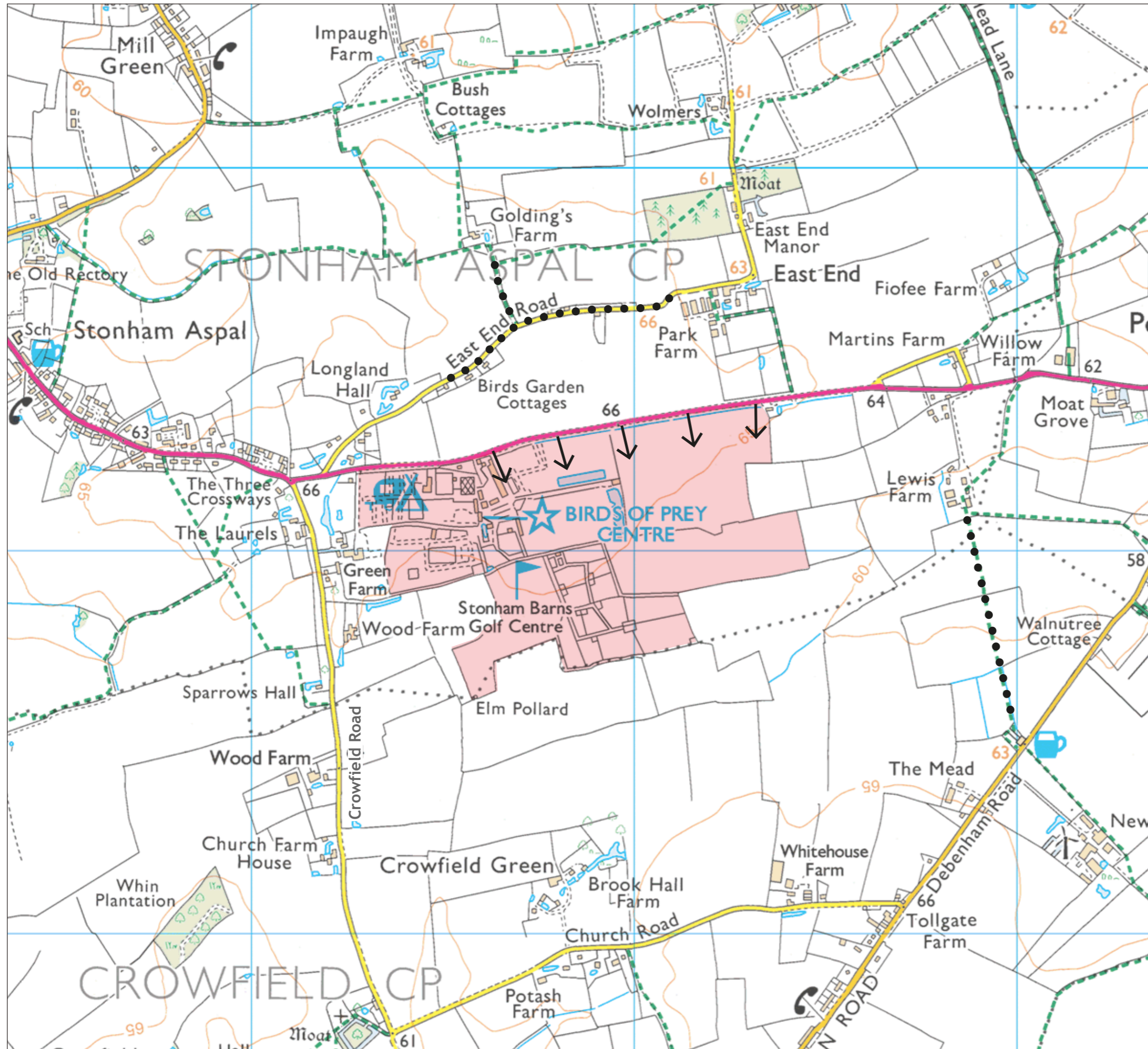
- DC/20/01547 Change of Use of former livery and agricultural land to touring caravan and camping
- DC/20/04296 Use of land for the stationing of 18 holiday lodges

Planning Applications 2019-2021 (Refused)

- DC/21/00643 Erection of workshop building







**FIGURE 7**  
 Visibility of Stonham Barns



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**Legend**

- Stonham Barns Site
- Clear visibility
- Limited or intermittent visibility



0 250 500 1000m



**FIGURE 8**  
Development Framework



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Stonham Barns

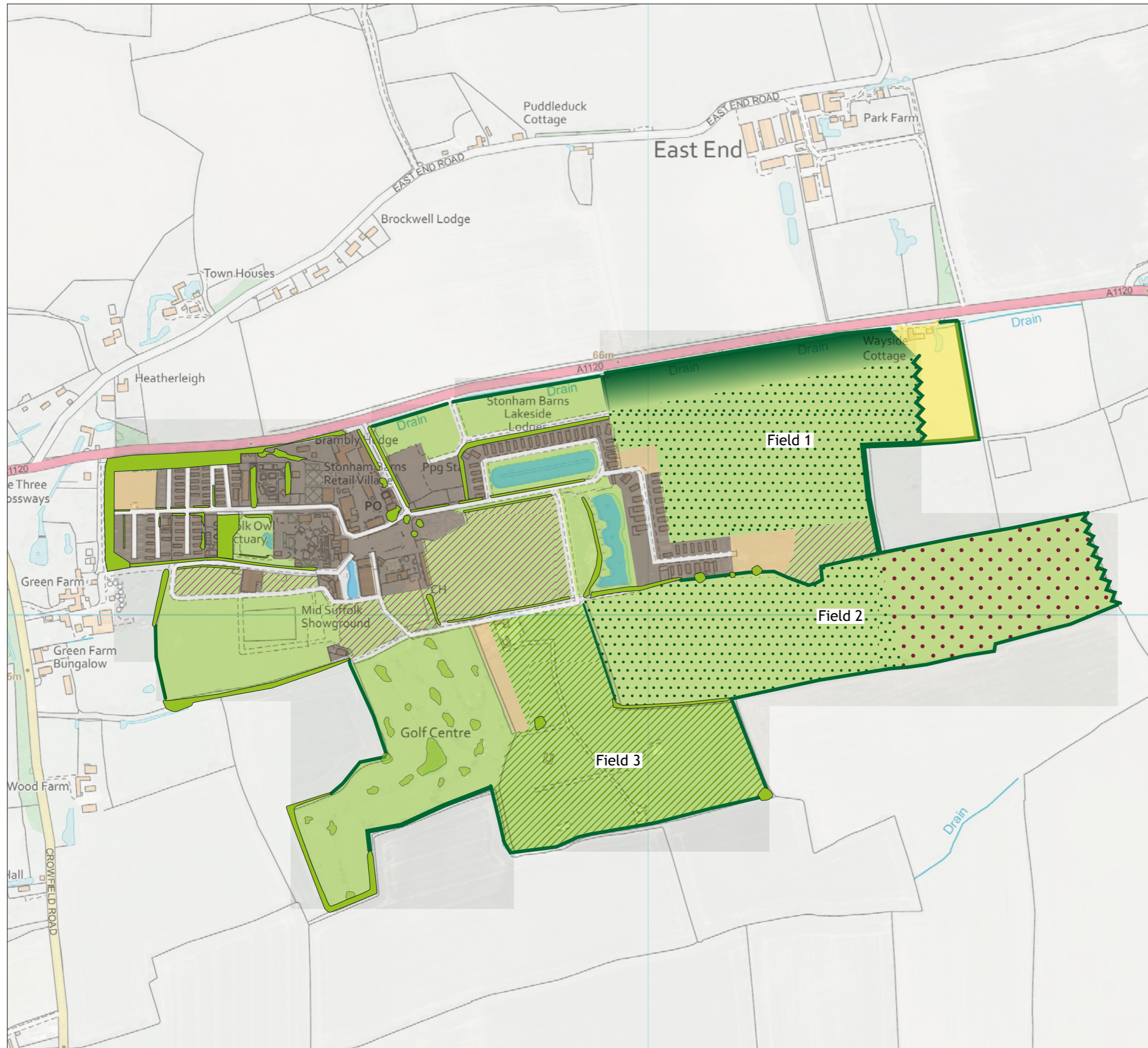
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**Legend**

- Existing development
- Permitted holiday lodges & static caravans not yet implemented
- Permitted change of use to hotel and hotel grounds
- Existing greenspace to be retained for current or similar use
- Existing greenspace with some capacity for landscape based recreational use
- Existing greenspace with some capacity for informal accommodation use (i.e. touring caravans & camping)
- Existing greenspace with some capacity for future built development (e.g. lodges)
- Existing green space with limited capacity for any form of development until perimeter planting has established
- Existing ponds
- Existing vegetation to be protected & managed
- Existing vegetation to be strengthened with additional planting & management
- New perimeter planting to screen / filter views of existing and future development from countryside
- Indicative extent of recommended woodland planting along A1120





**FIGURE 9**  
Green Infrastructure



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- Existing development
- Permitted holiday lodges & static caravans not yet implemented
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- Existing greenspace with some capacity for future built development (e.g. lodges)
- Existing green space with limited capacity for any form of development until perimeter planting has established.
- Existing ponds
- Existing vegetation to be protected & managed
- Existing vegetation to be strengthened with additional planting & management
- New perimeter planting to screen / filter views of existing and future development from countryside
- Indicative extent of recommended woodland planting along A1120
- Indicative green infrastructure corridors to be retained / provided







**MICHELLE BOLGER**  
*Expert Landscape Consultancy*

**Development Brief:  
Landscape**

*for*

**Stonham Barns Leisure and  
Retail Centre**

*Prepared for*  
**Mid Suffolk District Council**

**FINAL DRAFT**  
July 2021



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File name: 1192 Stonham Barns Development Brief FINAL DRAFT 2109.docx

Date issued: **FINAL DRAFT Sept 2021**



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## APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Figures

Appendix 2 - Planning Permissions within the Core Area

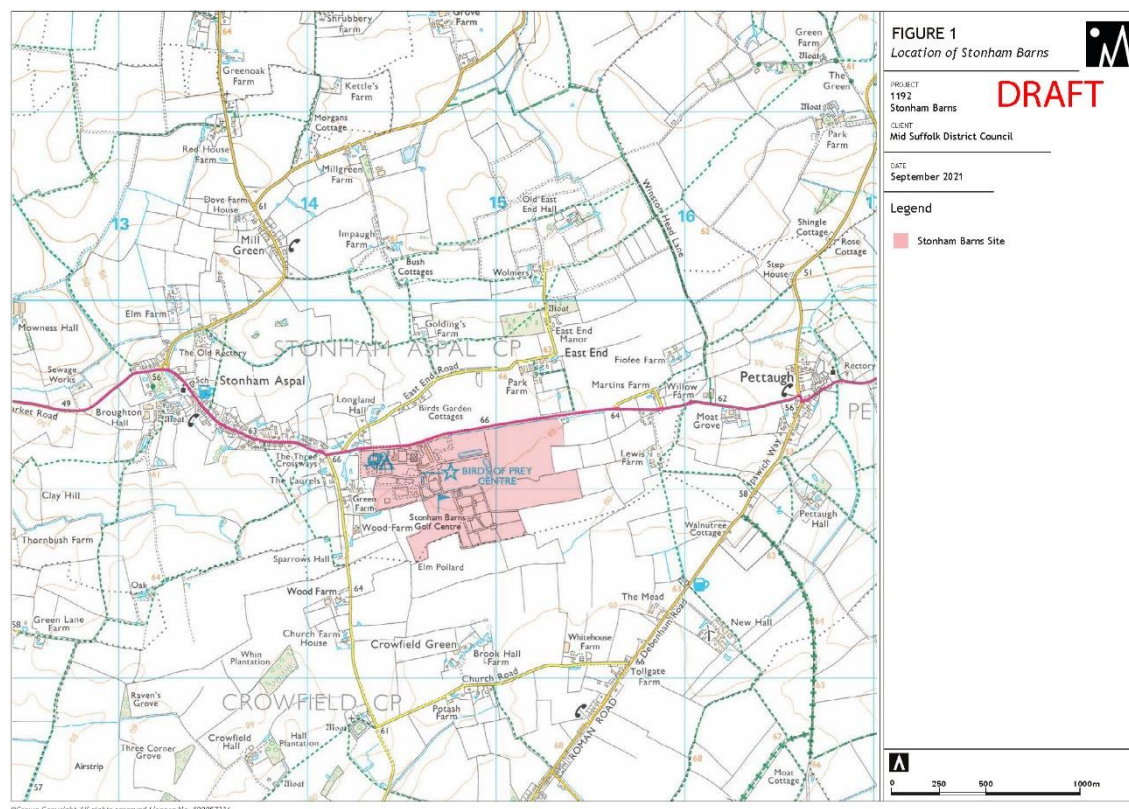
Appendix 3 - Relevant Development Plan Policies



# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background to this Development Brief

1.1.1 Stonham Barns Leisure and Retail Centre (Stonham Barns) is located in the countryside between the villages of Stonham Aspal and Pettaugh in Mid Suffolk, approximately 10km east of Stowmarket (see **Figure 1**). It contains a range of leisure uses including static caravans and holiday lodges. It is a significant contributor to the economy of the district as a visitor attraction and an employer.



1.1.2 Stonham Barns has had a number of different developments permitted in recent years and there is a desire for further growth. This Development Brief has been prepared by Michelle Bolger Expert Landscape Consultancy (MBELC) for Mid Suffolk District Council (MSDC) to consider the landscape and visual impacts of recent developments and to assess whether future development can be



accommodated without significant adverse impacts on the landscape character of the area or on public visual amenity.

1.1.3 The intended use of the Development Brief, of which this forms the landscape element, is to identify the capacity of key elements of material planning consideration, acknowledging limitations, barriers and opportunities that may be relevant to the potential future growth of Stonham Barns. Other elements relate to infrastructure capacity and ecology. It is hoped that the Development Brief will provide a reference for constructive engagement between relevant stakeholders (site operator, occupants, local residents and the wider community) and that it will inform discussions about future development and ongoing operational issues. The local authority, with the support of technical consultees, will facilitate these discussions between the stakeholders.

1.1.3.1.4The structure of this Development Brief is as follows:

- **Section 2** sets out the existing landscape character context of Stonham Barns and its setting.
- **Section 3** sets out the planning context
- **Section 4** makes an assessment of the current landscape and visual impacts of the development and considers how well recent development is integrating into the landscape.
- **Section 5** considers the landscape opportunities and constraints to future development.
- **Section 6** sets out principles for future development
- **Section 7** provides some detailed recommendations as to how the future development could be accommodated without harm to the landscape or to local visual amenity.
- **Section 8** sets out what MSDC needs to do to ensure that future development at Stonham Barns is acceptable.

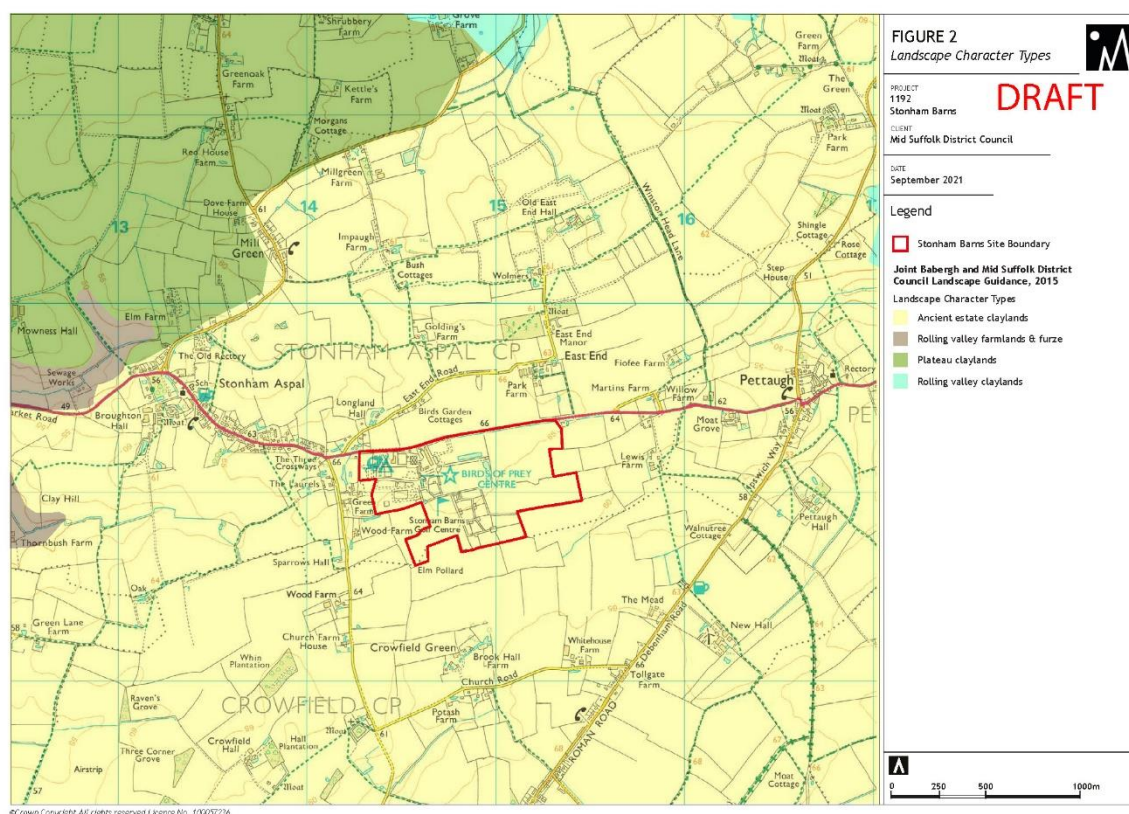
1.1.4.1.5The Figures within this Development Brief are also reproduced at A3 in Appendix 1.



## 2 Context and analysis

### 2.1 Local Landscape Character

2.1.1 Within the Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment and the Joint Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council Landscape Guidance (2015) Stonham Barns is located within the Ancient Estate Claylands Landscape Character Type (LCT), see **Figure 2**, which is characterised by gently rolling heavy clay plateaux with ancient woodlands and parklands.



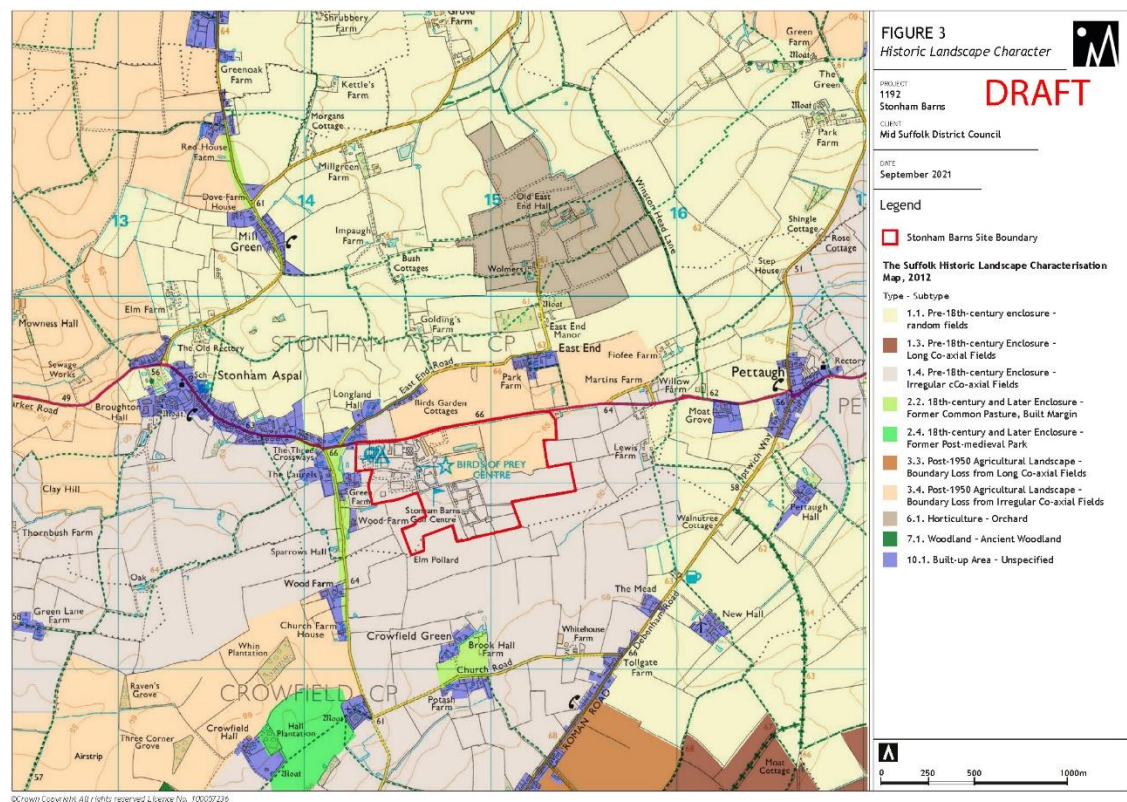
2.1.2 The settlement character of the Ancient Estate Claylands LCT is described as *‘scattered, consisting of various sized small villages, dispersed hamlets and isolated farmsteads’*<sup>1</sup> which are *‘nestled within the landscape without overly intruding on the countryside surrounding them’*.<sup>2</sup> The settlement pattern in the landscape surrounding Stonham Barns corresponds with this description.

<sup>1</sup> Joint Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council Landscape Guidance Page 71

<sup>2</sup> Joint Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council Landscape Guidance Page 72



- 2.1.3 The plateau landscape is characterised by medium to large fields and is visually open and expansive in the flatter more open areas, such as around Crowfield Green. However, the presence of blocks of woodland throughout the area, a good structure of hedges, winding lanes and some small rivers and streams create a more enclosed character elsewhere. Aside from traffic on the A roads, the Ancient Estate Claylands LCT is a tranquil landscape which, as the name indicates, has a timeless rural quality.
- 2.1.4 Within the Suffolk Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) Stonham Barns lies partly within an area of Pre-18th-century Enclosure -Irregular Co-axial Fields and partly within an area of Post-1950 Agricultural Landscape Boundary Loss from Irregular Co-axial Fields, see **Figure 3**. The irregular field pattern is clearly discernible in the three most southerly fields within Stonham Barns and in the surrounding landscape to the south. In the wider landscape, to the north and west, pre-18th-century enclosure - random fields are widespread.



- 2.1.5 The loss of field boundaries in the northern part of Stonham Barns is also evident on the current Ordnance Survey (OS) map compared to the 1905 OS map.



## 2.2 Current Land use within Stonham Barns (Figure 4)

### 2.2.1 Stonham Barns consists of a range of leisure uses including:

- Retail units;
- ‘Hard’ leisure attractions which include the Owl Sanctuary, a crazy golf course and children’s soft play;
- Landscape based leisure attractions which include fishing lakes, a 9-hole golf and footgolf course;
- A showground for events;
- Static caravans;
- Holiday Lodges (recently constructed);
- Mobile caravan and camping facilities; and
- Car parks.

2.2.2 Wayside Cottage (which includes a substantial garden) is in the same ownership as Stonham Barns. It is located at the northeastern end of Stonham Barns, south of the A1120, and has permission for change of use to a hotel (DC/19/04462). It is understood that the intention is that this use would be associated with activities taking place at Stonham Barns, such as weddings.

2.2.3 The Stonham Barns site which is considered in this Development Brief includes three fields which are currently in agricultural use. For ease of reference, they have been identified as Fields 1, 2 and 3 on **Figure 4**.

- Field 1 is adjacent to the A1120 and is in agricultural use
- Field 2 has recently been acquired by the operator of Stonham Barns and an application for fishing lakes and parking on the western half of this field has recently been granted. DC/20/04306
- Field 3 was previously a donkey sanctuary but has had facilities installed (two toilet blocks and electric hook ups) for mobile caravan and camping. A lodge at the northern end acts as a reception) There is no permission for these facilities although there is an undecided application (DC/20/01547).

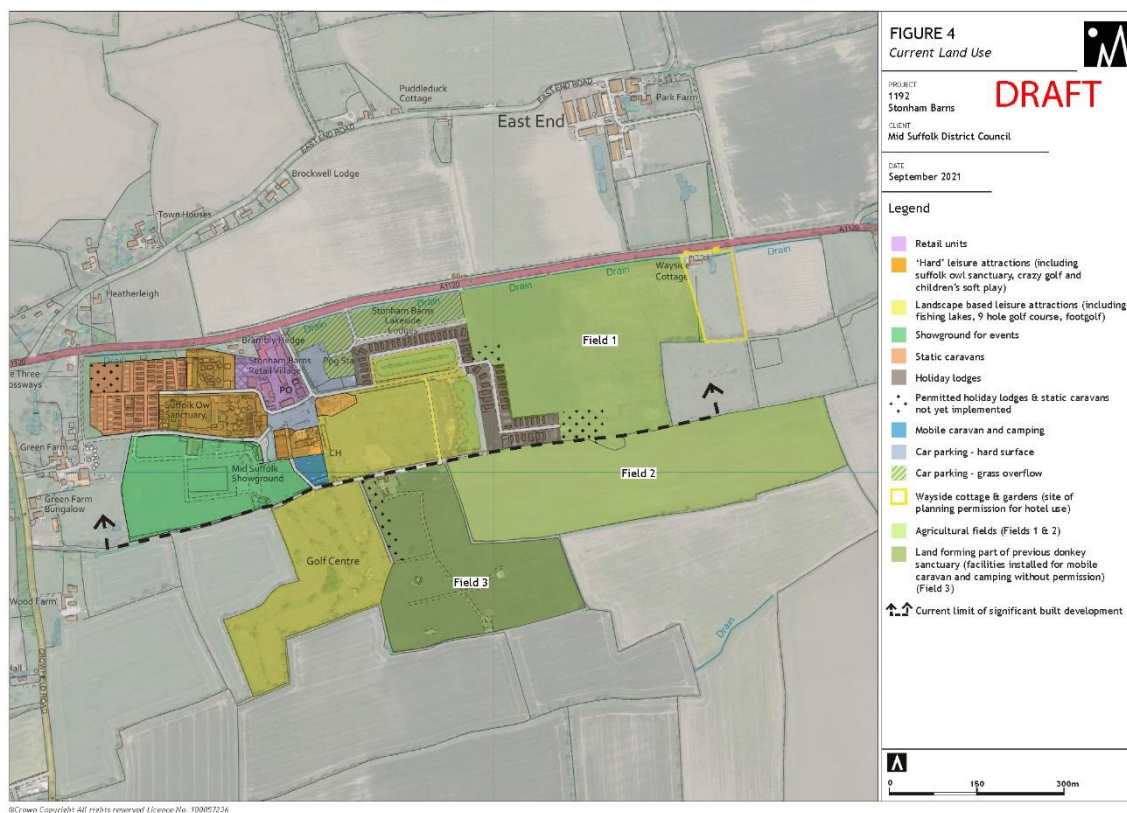
2.2.4 This Development Brief uses the term ‘built development’ to describe all structures on the site that in visual terms appear as built development. This



includes static caravans and holiday lodges that may not technically be classed as 'buildings' for planning purposes. It does not include touring caravans.

**2.2.42.2.5** Currently, there is no significant built development below a line represented by the southern boundary of the showground and the northern boundaries of the golf/footgolf course and Fields 2 & 3 as shown on **Figure 4**. However, as set out below in Planning Context, permission has been granted for seven lodges to be built in this area, extending to the south.

**2.2.6** This Development Brief is concerned with the landscape and visual effects of existing and potential future development on the site. The current retail units and 'hard' leisure attractions are principally confined to the central parts of the site and do not affect landscape and visual issues. A consideration of development within this central area has been omitted from the Landscape element of the Development Brief except where it is likely to be visible from outside the site. Other elements of the Development Brief, such as the review of infrastructure capacity, will consider the whole site.



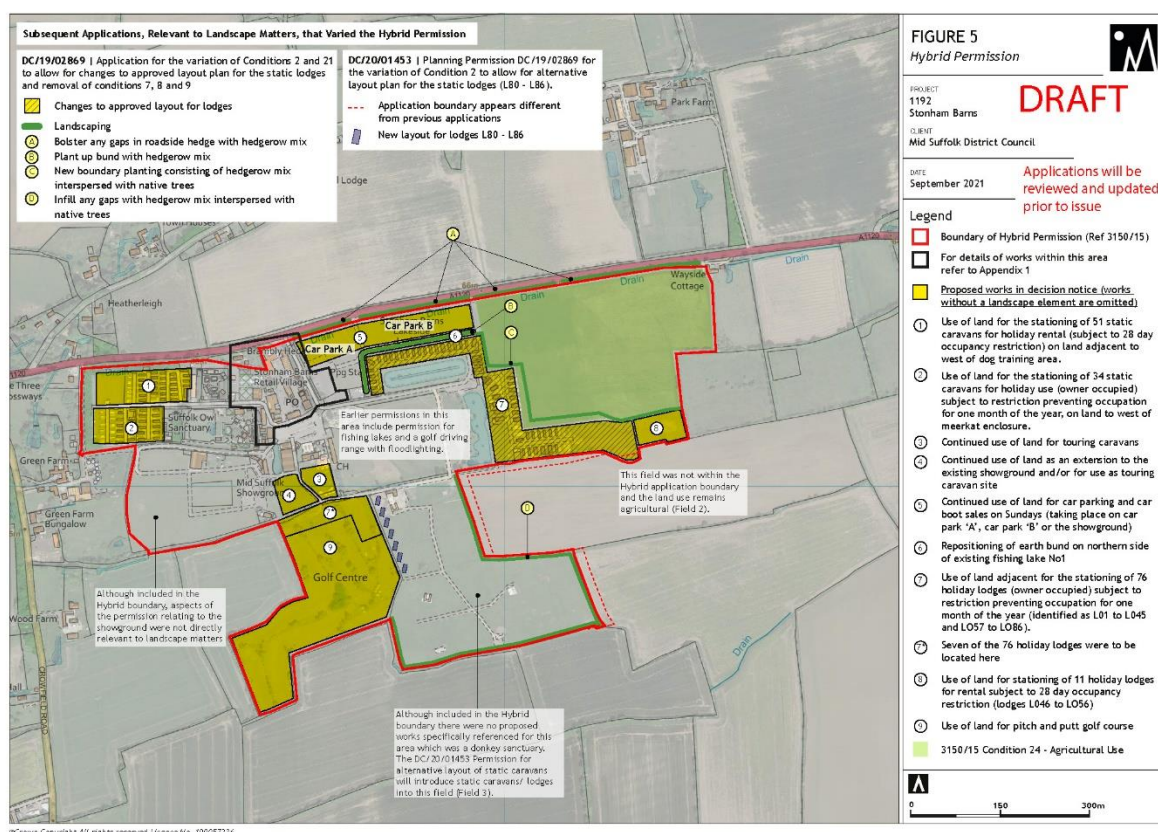


### 3 Planning Context

#### 3.1 The Hybrid Permission (2016)

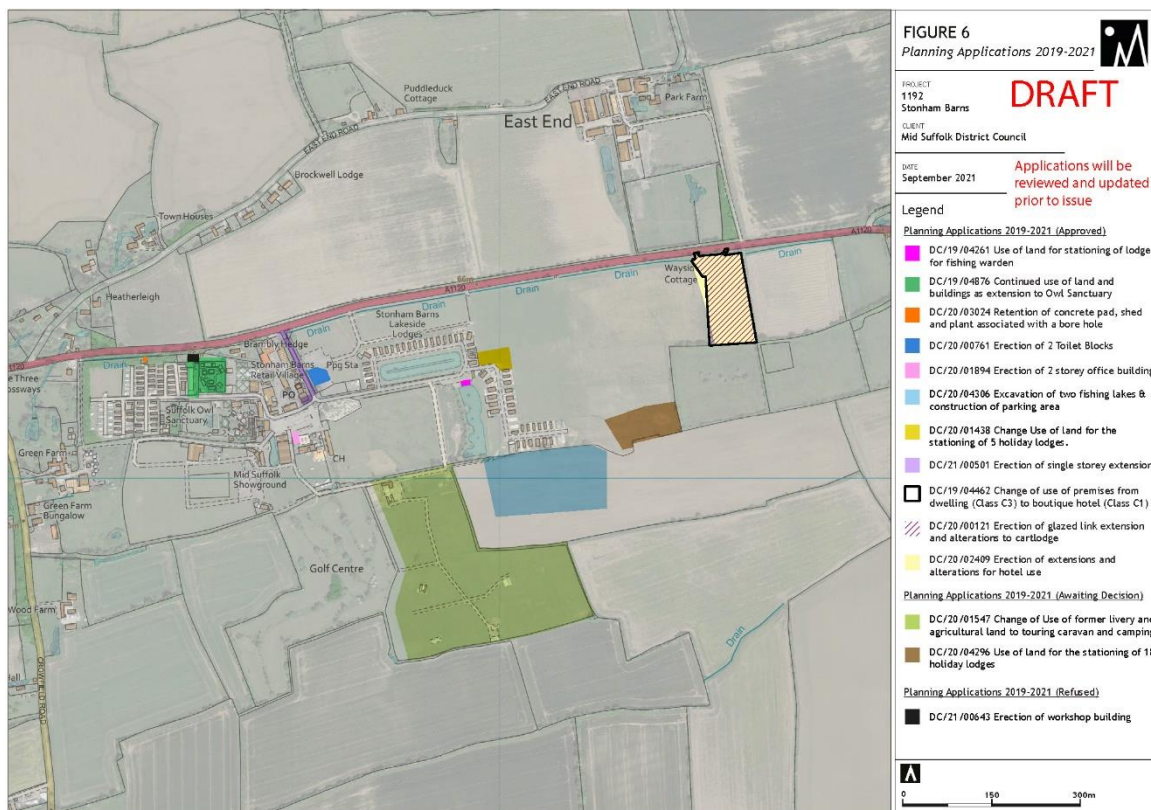
3.1.1 In 2016 the uses on the site were 'regularised' in a hybrid planning permission (Ref 3150/15) which is described in this Development Brief as the hybrid permission and illustrated on **Figure 5**. Figure 5 also includes variations to the permission that have landscape and visual implications.

3.1.2 Retail / hard leisure permissions within the central area are not shown on this plan but for completeness Appendix 2 includes a figure prepared by MSDC which illustrates permissions granted and applications made within this area.





3.1.3 **Figure 6** illustrates a number of permissions that have been granted since 2016 and also applications that have been made but at [add date of Development Brief] have been withdrawn/refused or are awaiting a decision. The status of these applications is noted on Figure 6. [Need to review prior to publication of the Development Brief.]





## 3.2 Development Plan Context

3.2.1 The development plan for MSDC includes saved policies from the Local Plan 1998 and the Core Strategy with Core Strategy Focused Review 2012. The emerging Local Plan is currently at Examination. This section lists the policies that are of relevance to the landscape and visual aspects of Stonham Barns. More details about these policies are set out in Appendix 3.

3.2.2 Saved Policies from the Local Plan 1998 of relevance are:

- Policy RT6 Sport and Recreation Facilities in the Countryside
- Policy RT11 Facilities for Informal Countryside Recreation
- Policy RT13 Water-Based Recreation
- Policy RT16 Tourism Facilities and Visitor Attractions
- Policy RT18 Touring Caravan and Camping Sites
- Policy RT19 Static Caravans and Holiday Chalets
- Policy CL5 Protecting Existing Woodland

3.2.3 Policies from the Core Strategy with Core Strategy Focused Review 2012 of relevance are:

- Policy CS 2 Development in the Countryside and Countryside Villages
- Policy CS 5 Mid Suffolk's Environment

3.2.4 Policies from the emerging Joint Local Plan of relevance are:

- Policy SP07 Tourism
- Policy LP15 Tourism and Leisure
- Policy LP16 Countryside Tourist Accommodation
- Policy LP19 Landscape



3.2.5 There are common objectives to be found in both adopted and emerging policies regarding the landscape. In particular, that any proposed development should

- take into account the existing character of the landscape, as set out in the Council's Joint Landscape Guidance;
- respect the character and appearance of the surrounding countryside;
- minimise harmful visual and landscape effects;
- not result in loss of damage to woodlands or other sites of landscape, ecological or geological value and
- Retain local distinctiveness.



## 4 Existing Landscape and Visual Issues

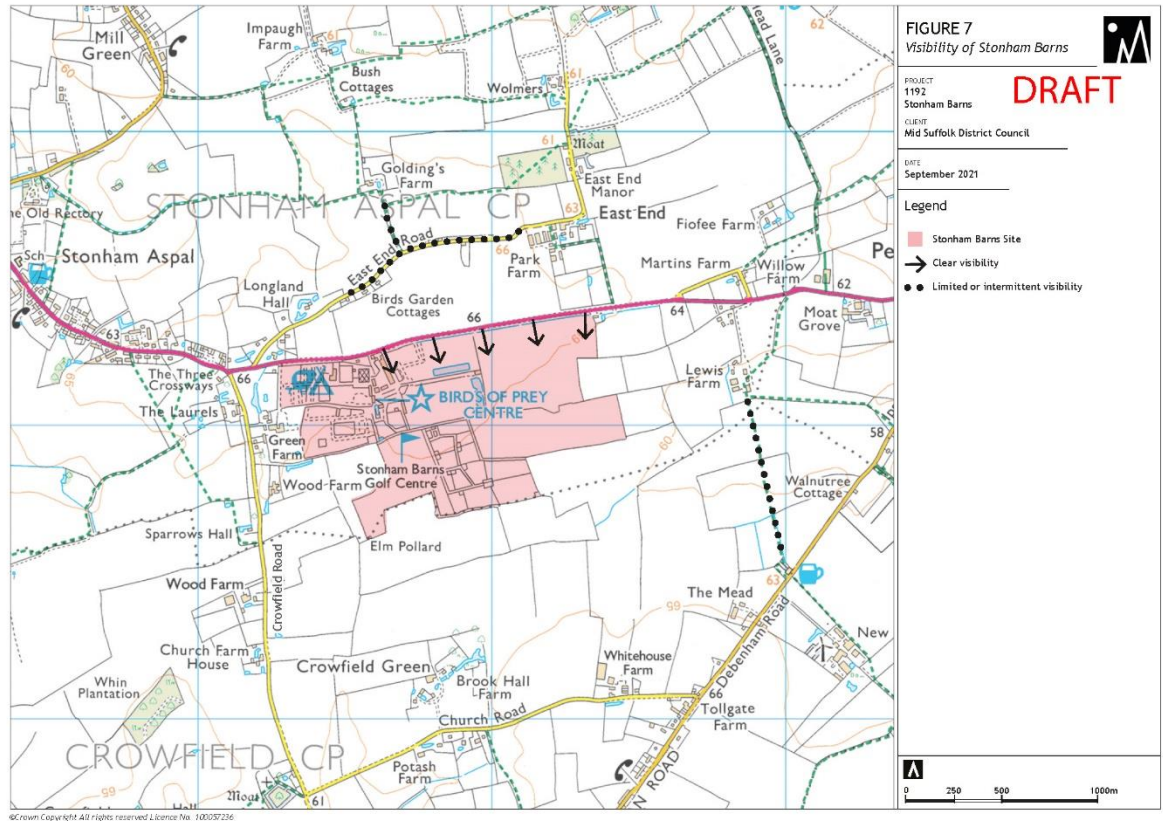
### 4.1 Current Landscape and Visual Impacts of Stonham Barns

4.1.1 Stonham Barns is incongruous within the Ancient Estate Claylands LCT due to its physical extent, the landuses and the density of development. However, considering the extent and density of development, much of the older parts of the complex are surprisingly well contained within the landscape by mature hedges and trees. This containment reflects the overall character of the Ancient Estate Claylands LCT in which built development is contained by blocks of woodland and a good structure of hedges and does not overly intrude on the wider landscape. This is not the case with some of the more recent development at Stonham Barns which does intrude on the wider landscape.

4.1.2 **Figure 7** illustrates the visual influence of the site. In summary:

- There is clear visibility from the A1120 of the site. There are views of the entrance and the entrance signage. Views of the car parks and the recent lodge development around Field 1 are available due to the gappy nature of the hedge along the A1120 and the openness of Field 1.
- There is intermittent visibility from East End Road to the north across Field 1 to the recent lodge development. There are similar views from Footpath (Fp) 23 (Stonham Aspal) which runs north from East End Road.
- There is more distant visibility from Fp 3 (Crowfield) from where there are views of the recent lodge development and also views of touring caravans on Field 3. Unimplemented permissions for further holiday lodges (See Figure 5) are also likely to be visible from here.





4.1.3 The extent to which development within Stonham Barns is visible from publicly accessible locations is limited by:

- Mature hedges and trees on the boundaries of Stonham Barns
- Mature hedges and trees within Stonham Barns
- Mature hedges and trees in the surrounding landscape, such as within Green Farm between Stonham Barns and Crowfield Road
- A lack of public rights of way (PRoW) to the immediate south and south east of the site.
- The very gently undulating character of the landscape which allows mature hedges and trees to limit views.



4.1.4 The elements which are visually intrusive due to a lack of containment by mature hedges and trees are:

- The main entrance to Stonham Barns, in particular the ‘neon orange’ signage
- The main car park which is visible from the A1120. When not in use, the impact of this car park is less, particularly those parts which are grassed and used only for overflow.
- Recent lodge development which has extended east of the core area.
- An earth bund associated with recent lodge development.



Photograph 1: View from A1120 looking towards holiday lodges and bund

4.1.5 West of the entrance a belt of deciduous trees and a recently erected close boarded fence limit views into the site. The close boarded fence limits ground-level views into the site during the winter however, it is not a characteristic feature in the countryside.



## 4.2 Landscape and Visual Issues arising from Recent Lodge Development A1120 Frontage

4.2.1 Stonham Barns is most visible from the A1120 which runs along the northern boundary of the site.

4.2.2 East of the entrance there are clear views into the site which feature the recently constructed lodges, see Photographs 1 & 2. The newly created and planted bund to the north of the lodges is quite effective in screening lower parts of the lodges but it is not characteristic in the landscape, and there is no certainty that the planting on the bund will establish successfully. Suffolk is one of the drier parts of the UK and planting on bunds is difficult to establish in dry conditions.



Photograph 2: View from A1120 looking towards holiday lodges and bund



4.2.3 The recent extension of the lodges to the east has introduced built development into a part of the landscape that was previously agricultural. Even though the existing planning permission has not yet been fully implemented these lodges are visually intrusive from the wider landscape whilst the established static caravans in the northwest corner of the site, despite their pale colours, are not. The reasons for this are:

- The lodges are not contained by existing woodland
- The lodges are arranged in a ribbon development style rather than the compact style of the static caravans
- The lodges are not contained by established hedges, the recently planted hedges have little impact and do not appear to be on a similar scale to the hedges associated with the static caravans.
- The lodges extend out into the open countryside and are not contained by other elements with Stonham Barns.



Photograph 3: View from A1120 looking towards holiday lodges

4.2.4 The dark colours of the lodges, including the roof colours have reduced their visual intrusiveness, especially in longer views.

### 4.3 Landscape and Visual Issues arising from Recent Lodge Development Landscape Proposals

4.3.1 Although landscape proposals have been implemented as part of the hybrid permission the planting has only recently been completed and as yet has had little effect. MBELC consider that the planting is not sufficient to visually contain existing development even if it was establishing well, which it is not. Consequently, implemented landscape proposals are unlikely to mitigate the visual impact of future development (in this area)



Photograph 4: New hedgerow and tree planting associated with new lodges



#### 4.4 Landscape and Visual Issues arising from Recent Lodge Development Variations to permissions

4.4.1 Two variations to the hybrid permission (DC/19/02869 and DC/20/01453) have increased the visual impact of the lodges. The first has increased the density of the lodges built around Field 1 and omitted spaces either identified for planting or having potential for planting. The second (not yet implemented) has relocated seven lodges from within the fairly enclosed golf course field into the more open Field 3. These lodges have yet to be built but they will introduce development into a field that currently has minimal built development and will be south of the line that currently marks the southernmost extent of significant built development within Stonham Barns, as shown on **Figure 4**.

4.4.2 **Field 1** is subject to Condition 24 of the hybrid permission which requires that outside of the area identified for holiday lodges the field will remain in agricultural use. Permission for holiday lodges on the southern and western edges of this field have extended built development out from the core of Stonham Barns into the agricultural landscape and it is these lodges that are visible from the wider landscape to the north and the southeast.

4.4.3 Condition 10 of the hybrid permission required a landscaping scheme which satisfied six objectives. The condition was discharged under DC/19/04243 and Dwg 2115L Masterplan approved. The Masterplan shows four types of planting to be undertaken:

- A. Gapping up of the hedge along the A1120 with hedgerow plants
- B. Planting the bund to the north of the new lodges with a hedgerow mix
- C. Planting new hedgerows to the north and east of the new lodges, interspersed with native trees (10-12 cm girth). 14 trees are shown on the plan
- D. Gapping up of hedgerow along the boundaries of Field 3 to include tree planting (10-12 cm girth).

4.4.4 With regard to the discharging of Condition 10 the following should be noted:

- There appears to be no requirement under the condition or the discharge of the condition to replace dead specimens. However, this requirement appears to have been added as a condition to a subsequent application for a variation of the hybrid permission DC/20/01453.
- Clause e of Condition 10 required '*confirmation of proposed ecological mitigation measures (including location of bird and bat boxes), and details of trees to be retained and their protection in all areas within the site east of the main access road/driving range;*' These details are not provided on Dwg 2115L Masterplan and there does not appear to be any further information with regard to them on MSDC's web page.
- Clause f of Condition 10 requires details of '*additional landscaping around lodges L80 to L86;*' and a timetable for its implementation. Lodges 80-86 are the lodges originally proposed within the golf course. No landscaping associated with these lodges is shown on Dwg 2115L Masterplan.
- An email from Ryan Mills (17/09/19), Senior Landscape Consultant at Place Services confirmed that '*Based on a site visit and the revised drawings (Ref: 2115L) we would recommend Condition 10 (is) discharged.*'

4.4.5 Planting proposals A-C have been carried out, but they are establishing slowly, and the trees as yet have very little presence. In addition, dead plants do not appear to have been replaced during the 20/21 planting season. This replanting cannot be undertaken until the winter 2021/22 planting season.

4.4.6 The subsequent application for a variation of the hybrid permission (DC/20/01453) relocates Lodges 80-86 in Field 3. The approved drawing is Dwg 0320/05/01 Masterplan. As previously noted, this variation moves Lodges out of the golf course field and into Field 3. It is not clear that this was apparent when the variation was granted because Condition 2 of the permission is as follows:

***Action Required and Restriction on Number of Golf Course Caravans Before the first siting of any caravan on the golf course land written notification shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority confirming which planning permission is to be implemented and relied***



*upon for the carrying out of this part of the approved development. The caravans shall thereafter be sited solely in accordance with the approved plans of the single planning permission identified and no more than 7 caravans shall be sited on the land entitled '9 hole pitch and putt' and shown hatched on drawing entitled 'Master Plan', numbered 0320/051/01 received 5th May 2020."*

*REASON: For the avoidance of doubt and to prevent the partial implementation of more than one separate permission.*

- 4.4.7 From this condition it would appear that when the variation was granted it was assumed that the relocated caravans/lodges were still within the land identified as the '9-hole pitch and putt'. [There is no hatching on the copy of Dwg 0320/05/01 Masterplan which I have downloaded from the webpage for this application]
- 4.4.8 Approved Dwg 0320/05/01 Masterplan shows a green line to the east of the relocated lodges which might be a hedge, however this is not clear as it is not labelled or keyed.

## 5 Opportunities and Constraints to Further Developments

### 5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 As set out in section 2 above development/ redevelopment of the central area of Stonham Barns is unlikely to have any significant landscape or visual impacts unless building heights were to increase. The current buildings, mostly single storey with some two storeys, are generally not visible beyond the complex itself.

5.1.2 The greatest potential for landscape and visual impacts will be as a result of development within Fields 1, 2 & 3, the three agricultural fields.

### 5.2 Development within Field 1

5.2.1 The extension of lodges into Field 1 has introduced built development into a part of the site that was previously undeveloped/agricultural. The development has not yet been successfully integrated into the landscape due to the intensification of the development and the limited nature of the landscape proposals implemented via the hybrid permission.

5.2.2 Any future development within Field 1 should follow the principles set out in Section 6 below. MBELC consider that installing additional lodges within the footprint originally agreed for lodge development in the hybrid permission will not result in significant adverse landscape and visual impacts over and above those that have already resulted from the consented lodges. However, an opportunity needs to be taken to mitigate some of the effects of the total lodge development. This could be achieved by:

- Introducing visual/landscape breaks within the line of lodges;
- Allowing sufficient space adjacent to the eastern Stonham Barns boundary for strengthening of boundary vegetation;
- Further strengthening the boundary between Fields 1 & 2 and
- Further strengthening planting along the A1120.



- 5.2.3 Capacity for further built development within Field 1 is limited to the footprint previously consented for built development (as shown on Figure 4). The lack of capacity for additional built development is due to visibility from the north, primarily the A1120.
- 5.2.4 Field 1 has the potential to accommodate landscape based recreational development, such as fishing ponds but this would result in a significant change in character and would require **advance** planting of a woodland belt along the A1120 as set out in Sections 6 & 7 below. Any buildings or built structures required to accommodate this use should be located adjacent to existing or permitted built development.

### 5.3 Development within Field 2

- 5.3.1 Field 2 is outside of the Hybrid permission area. Any development at the eastern end of this field would extend Stonham Barns further to the east beyond the permission for development at Wayside Cottage. The hedgerow along the eastern boundary of Field 2 is very limited, and the hedgerow along the southern boundary is gappy with dead elms. The eastern boundary allows views into the site from the footpath to the east, see Figure 7. This is exacerbated by the gappy hedgerows along the northern boundary of Field 2 (the boundary with Field 1) and the western boundary of Field 2 (the boundary with Field 3).
- 5.3.2 Substantial new planting needs to be created along the eastern boundary of Field 2, such as a linear woodland belt rather than just hedgerow planting. Relying on hedgerow planting alone for mitigation is often insufficient, as the planting implemented as part of the hybrid permission demonstrates. A linear woodland belt along the eastern boundary could be implemented as part of a permission for landscape based leisure uses in the western half of Field 2.
- 5.3.3 Any development in the eastern half of Field 2, east of the eastern boundary of Field 1 has the potential to exacerbate changes in landscape character. This could be the case even if the development proposed was a landscape based recreational use.



Photograph 5: Eastern boundary of Field 2 with views across the arable landscape beyond the site.

5.3.4 In future, when boundary planting has become fully established, there may be potential for further development within Field 2 including lodge style development along the northern edge of Field 2, west of the eastern boundary of Field 1. Establishment is likely to take around 10 years, depending on successful management of the planting. It would be considered sufficient when it screens views from the wider landscape.



## 5.4 Development within Field 3

- 5.4.1 Field 3 was previously used as a donkey sanctuary and contained stables as well as a lodge at the northern end which is currently used as a reception for the touring caravans and campsite.
- 5.4.2 Permission has been granted for 7 lodges along the western boundary of Field 3, adjacent to the golf course. In addition, electric hookups have been installed for touring caravans, two toilet blocks have been constructed and 'sheds' for glamping style tents have been installed. No permissions have been granted for the touring caravan and camping facilities.
- 5.4.3 It appears that the layout of the touring caravan site has allowed no space for internal landscape proposals such as hedges which could help to soften the impact of the touring caravan use. The hybrid proposal included proposals for gapping up of the hedgerows around Field 3 and tree planting (10-12 cm girth). Although this planting has been undertaken it has had limited impact.
- 5.4.4 Touring caravans and camping could be accommodated in Field 3 but they should be accompanied by internal landscape proposals and strengthening of the boundary vegetation as set out in the principles in Section 6 and the detailed recommendations in Section 7 below.
- 5.4.5 Ideally, built development should not have been allowed to extend south in Field 3 as this extends beyond the Stonham Barns core into the surrounding agricultural landscape. Although this has been permitted under the DC/20/01453 variation to the hybrid permission it should not set a precedent for further built development extending to the south.

[We think that if they could be persuaded to give up this permission in return for development along the northern edge, perhaps including the northern edge of the golf course this would be preferable.]

## 5.5 Opportunities for Built Development elsewhere within the site

- 5.5.1 The field at the centre of the site, north of Field 3, previously contained a golf driving range. Although it was suggested that this might be a footgolf course this seems to have been accommodated within the existing golf course. This area could accommodate further built development as it is well contained within the site. It is bounded by:
- tree lines, fishing lakes, lodges and bunds to the north and east
  - hedgerow with trees to the south; and
  - the showground to the west.
- 5.5.2 If this area were to include new development, it would be important that it was low density and that it incorporated the Green Infrastructure Corridors which are described below. We anticipate that about [25% - to be discussed] of this field could be occupied by built development.
- 5.5.3 Further built development in the areas surrounding the showground to the north and to the east could be accommodated without significant adverse landscape and visual impacts due to the contained nature of the showground.
- 5.5.4 As identified above, the A1120 edge of the site is particularly sensitive to further development and any proposals visible from the A1120 need to be accompanied by full details of their appearance and any measures taken to limit their visual impact.
- 5.5.5 A landscape based recreational facility could be accommodated in either Field 1 or 2 if the relevant principles, as set out below in Section 6 below, were followed.



## 5.6 Opportunities for Green Infrastructure Networks

5.6.1 There is an opportunity to form a strong internal green infrastructure network within Stonham Barns that would be connected to important landscape elements/features outside the site (e.g. hedgerows, trees, woodland, ponds).

This opportunity is due to:

- The location of the site in the countryside;
- The use of significant parts of the site for landscape based recreational activities that already form the basis for an internal green infrastructure; and
- The choice that residents and visitors are clearly making for a rural setting providing a commercial incentive.

5.6.2 The management of land within Stonham Barns should protect existing locally characteristic green infrastructure features within the site. Landscape proposals associated with new development should reflect such features and consciously look to create links with features outside the site. This would:

- Meet the needs of visitors to the site;
- Have the potential to improve biodiversity; and
- Help to integrate Stonham Barns with the wider landscape.

5.6.3 Some of the landscape based recreational uses will have small buildings associated with them such as warden's lodges or shelters. These should be located as close to the adjacent areas of built development as possible to limit their impact on the wider landscape and they should be accompanied by landscape proposals.

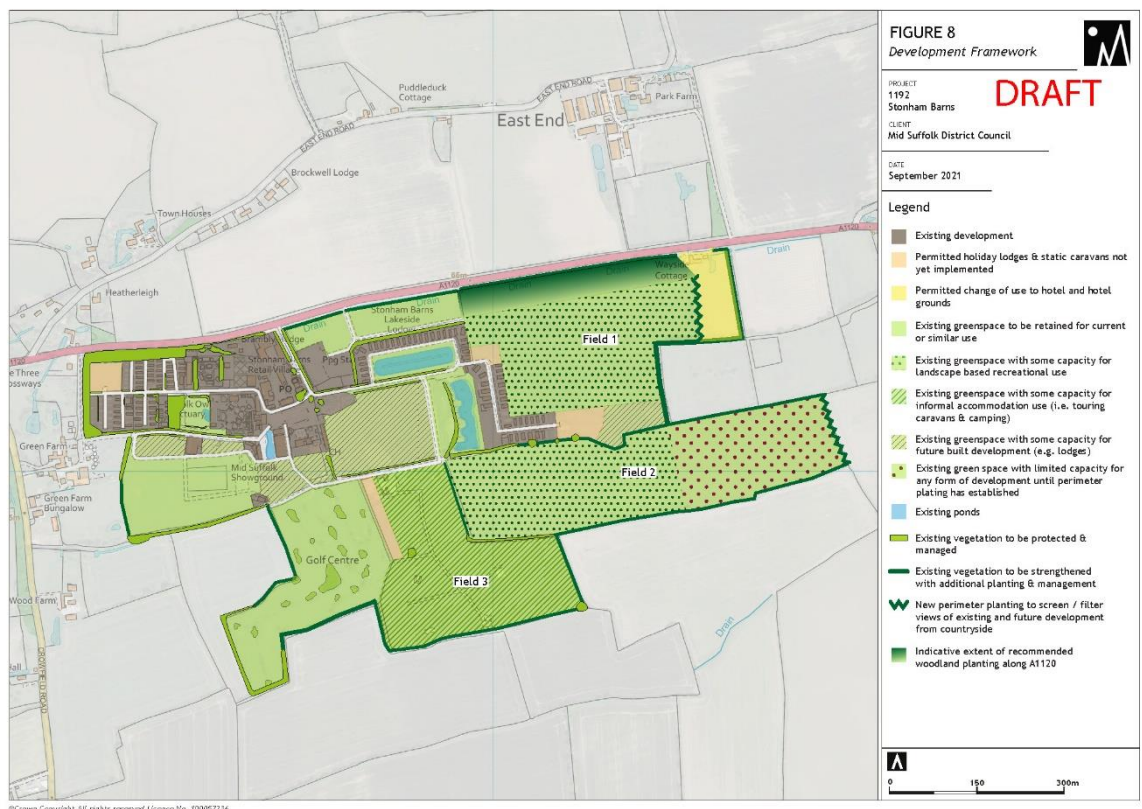
5.6.4 Internal landscape proposals have as important a role to play in integrating Stonham Barns into the local landscape character as proposals for strengthening the boundary vegetation. The key objective of strengthening the boundary vegetation is to limit views of development within Stonham Barns from the wider countryside. The creation of a strong internal landscape within Stonham Barns would not only create a desirable landscape for visitors and residents, but would in time reduce the importance of limiting views into the site.

## 6 Principles for future development

### 6.1 Development Framework

6.1.1 **Figure 8** Development Framework sets out the recommended principles for future development within Stonham Barns. Outside of the areas of existing built development the site has been divided into areas of:

- Existing greenspace to be retained for current or similar use;
- Existing greenspace with some capacity for change from agricultural use to landscape based recreational use;
- Existing greenspace with some capacity for change from agricultural use to use for touring caravans & camping; and
- Existing greenspace with some capacity for future built development (e.g. lodges)



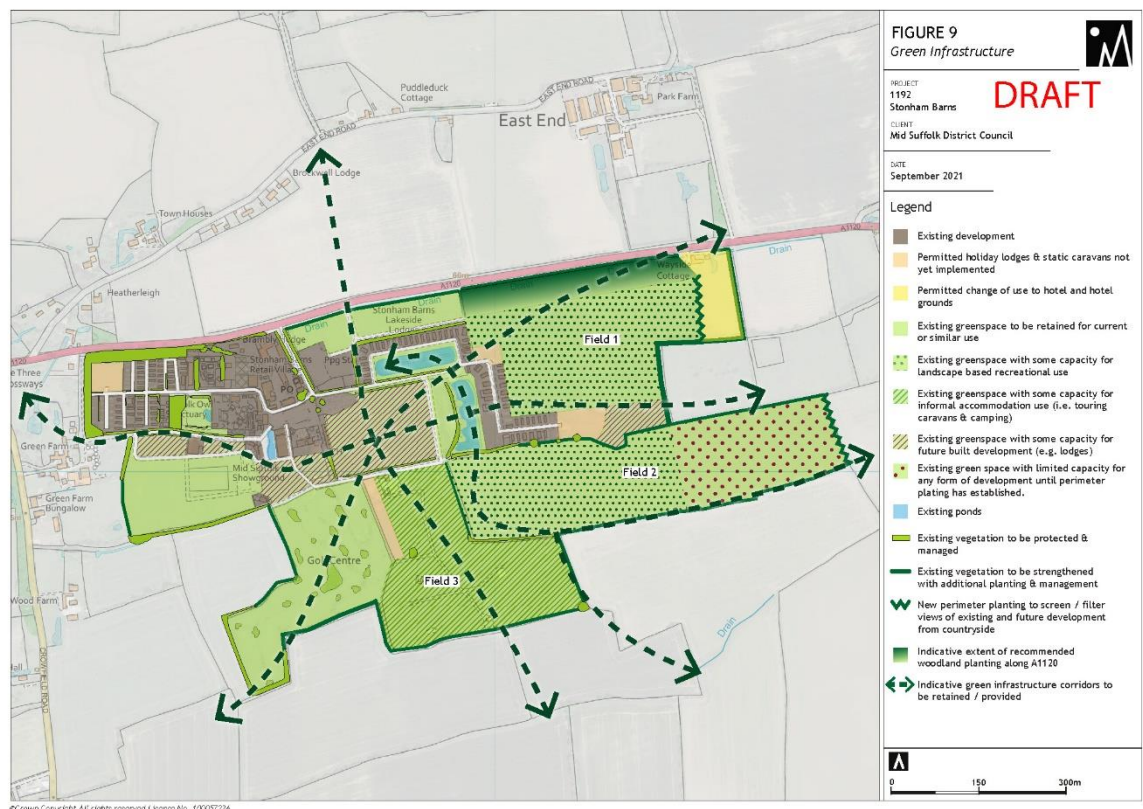


### 6.1.2 Figure 8 Development Framework also identifies

- Existing vegetation to be protected & managed;
- Existing vegetation to be strengthened with additional planting & management;
- New perimeter planting to screen / filter views of existing and future development from countryside; and
- Indicative extent of recommended woodland planting along A1120 (see Section 7 recommendations)

## 6.2 Green Infrastructure

6.2.1 **Figure 9 Green Infrastructure Framework** shows how green infrastructure corridors should be maintained across the site, linking to the green infrastructure network in the wider landscape. In some areas, recent built development will prevent these corridors from being seamless. Future built development should ensure that seamless green infrastructure corridors are maintained through internal landscape proposals. Section 7, Recommendations, includes some examples of how this might be achieved.



6.2.2 It is clear from **Figure 9** that the central field which is identified as having some capacity for future built development is also the centre of the site-wide green infrastructure network. Any proposals for built development in this area must also demonstrate how they will contribute to the site-wide green infrastructure network.

6.2.3 Internal landscape proposals should not be limited to the green infrastructure corridors shown here but should also address areas where built development faces either the wider landscape or landscape based recreational facilities within Stonham Barns.

### 6.3 Development Principles

6.3.1 All future developments should be consistent with the following development principles:

- A. Any future development, whether or not it includes built development, **should** include landscape proposals to strengthen the perimeter boundary vegetation around the site as identified on Figure 8 Development Framework. The sections of boundary vegetation that will require strengthening will depend on the area in which the development is to take place.
- B. In advance of any future change to the agricultural use of Field 1, whether or not it includes built development, woodland planting along the A1120, as identified on Figure 8 Development Framework, will be required.
- C. Any built development associated with landscape based recreational development must be located adjacent to existing areas of built development.
- D. The material and colours of built development must be muted and of a natural appearance wherever possible.
- E. Built development should be predominantly single storey although two storey buildings may be acceptable within the central part of Stonham Barns if it is demonstrated that they will not be visually intrusive from the wider landscape.



- F. Any future development in Field 2, whether or not it includes built development, will require landscape proposals that demonstrate how the development will respect the existing landscape character.
- G. Any future development must make a positive contribution to the Green Infrastructure Network within the site as shown on Figure 9 Green Infrastructure. In addition:
- Proposals for built development must be accompanied by ‘internal’ landscape proposals including planting along the edges of the development that face the wider countryside/ areas of landscape-based leisure activities.
  - Proposals for touring caravans and camping pitches must be accompanied by ‘internal’ landscape proposals e.g. between rows of pitches and surrounding buildings/ structures such as toilet blocks.
- H. Document quality is a potential barrier to transparency and understanding which may affect future decision making. To address this future planning applications should:
- Show the location of the planning application site in the context of the Development Framework Plan;
  - Include landscape proposals and a maintenance plan unless within an area already identified as built development; and
  - Include an explanation of how they demonstrate consistency with principles A, C, D, E and G.

## 7 Recommendations

### 7.1 Introduction

7.1.1 This Section includes some detailed recommendation for how the principles set out in Section 4 could be implemented.

### 7.2 A1120 Frontage

7.2.1 In order to provide long term effective screening from the A1120, the recommendation is that the vegetation along the road is strengthened. Adjacent to existing car parking close to the entrance it could take the form of a strengthening of the existing hedge with tree planting. Between the car parks and Wayside Cottage, it is recommended that it should take the form of a wide belt of woodland planted alongside the road.

7.2.2 The woodland belt should represent a significant area of woodland of sufficient depth to allow for woodland walks and the creation of glades whilst maintaining its integrity as a screening feature. The woodland belt should be designed as a recreational asset for both visitors to Stonham Barns and local people. The existing hedge along the road has wide gaps which have been gapped up under the hybrid permission however a second hedge planted to the south along the edge of the woodland would increase the level of ground level screening.

7.2.3 We do not recommend that the steeply sloping bund located north of the new lodges is continued to the east. Whilst no bund would be necessary if the depth of the woodland is sufficient, a more gently sloping bund would be acceptable and would not appear out of character. It would also not suffer from the same planting establishment issues as a steeply sloping bunds. The indicative cross-section below shows how woodland and a gently sloping bund could be incorporated.





- 7.2.4 As well as screening views from the A1120, a wide woodland belt planted with locally occurring species such as oak, field maple, hornbeam and small leaved lime, would reinforce the key characteristics for the Ancient Estate Claylands LCT thus helping to improve the integration of the site into the wider landscape character. In addition, it would screen views of development within Stonham Barns from East End Road and the PRow network to the north from where there are some occasional views.
- 7.2.5 The close boarded fence to the west of the entrance limits ground-level views into the site during the winter but is not a characteristic feature in the countryside. It would benefit from being painted black; black weatherboarding is the predominant finish within the complex.

### 7.3 Boundaries to Field 2

7.3.1 A woodland/tree belt along the eastern boundary of Field 2 is essential if the site is to be contained within the landscape and views from Footpath 3 (Crowfield). The southern boundary would also benefit from strengthening and management of the dead elm. Elm, if maintained below a certain height, can continue to form part of a hedge.



#### 7.37.4 Internal Landscape Proposals

7.3.17.4.1 There is a marked difference between the internal landscaping in the older parts of the site, in particular around the static caravans, and the more recent parts of the site, in particular the lodges. The static caravans although quite densely arranged, are surrounded by and in places interspersed with mature hedges which have a semi-ornamental character. The mature hedges, along with woodland on the site boundary, screen the static caravans from the wider landscape so that the extent of the development is not apparent.



Photograph 6: Mature hedges provide a robust framework for static caravans

7.3.27.4.2 Planting associated with the new lodges appears to be limited to the single hedge planted along the eastern and northern boundaries with no landscaping interspersed between the lodges. Space for such integral landscaping was lost when the layout was amended to increase the density of the development and reduce the footprint. As a consequence, the new lodges have a rather stark appearance both from within the site and from the wider landscape.

7.3.37.4.3 Given that many of the structures within Stonham Barns are only single storey, the use of internal landscaping could be very effective in creating the impression of a verdant site rather than a barren/harsh/hard site.

[7.3.47.4.4](#) Although it is not within the scope of this Development Brief to prescribe how those parts of the Stonham Barns which already have planning permission are treated we would strongly recommend that the principle of ‘internal planting’ should be applied wherever possible. This will be beneficial to the overall appearance of the development as well as tying in with the local landscape character, i.e. planting which extends from within the site to connect to trees and hedges in the wider landscape.

[7.3.57.4.5](#) Internal landscaping is particularly important on the edges of the built development. The current hedgerow planting along the edge of the extended lodges is insufficient to screen or integrate the development.

#### [7.47.5](#) **Recreational Routes**

[7.4.17.5.1](#) The green infrastructure network which will incorporate the landscape based recreational uses should also form a landscape recreational facility in itself for local people and visitors to the site. Routes along the corridors should be planned and respected, ensuring that where possible they avoid the harder more built areas of Stonham Barns.



### 7.57.6 Internal Edges

7.5.17.6.1 The recent lodge development has created a number of new built edges where built development meets the countryside still present within the site. These edges are visible from within the site but also from the wider landscape. Compare Photograph 7 below with the Photograph 6 above.

7.5.27.6.2 The design of new edges should aim to create a consistency of treatment and should include a consideration of elements such as sheds and shelters for gas bottles as well as fencing and planting.



Photograph 7: View of the edge of the holiday lodges

### 7.67.7 Colours and finishes

7.6.17.7.1 Control over colours and finishes is required as these aspects have a significant influence on the visibility of built elements and their impact within the wider landscape.

## 8 Future Actions by MSDC

### 8.1 Achieving Successful Development at Stonham Barns

8.1.1 The success of this Development Brief will be dependent on both the site operator and MSDC. The following actions by MSDC will be required:

- Rigorous evaluation of planning applications to check if:
  - They comply with the overall objectives of the Development Framework and the Green Infrastructure Framework;
  - Include appropriately detailed landscape proposals; and
  - Include a Maintenance Plan that addresses likely establishment issues such as extended dry spells during the growing season.
- Careful checking of the planting and other landscape proposals when completed, to ensure they have been implemented in accordance with the planning permission.
- Regular long term monitoring of the planting to ensure that it is being managed in accordance with a Maintenance Plan in particular that plants that have failed are being replaced in the appropriate season.

Ideally an Outline Ecological Enhancement, Mitigation and Management (EEMM) Strategy should be prepared to support the Development Framework and Green Infrastructure Framework. [to discuss]



**Appendix 1 - Figures**

Appendix 2 - Planning Permissions within the Core Area



Appendix 3 - Development Plan Policies





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| <i>Issues to be addressed</i>  | <i>Objectives</i>   | <i>Recommended Measures</i>  | <i>Development Principles<sup>1</sup></i>  |
|--|---|--|--|
| <b>Visual Intrusion</b>  |   |  |  |
| Recent development is visually intrusive.  | To ensure that future development does not harm the visual amenity of the local area.   | To agree a Development Framework with which new development should be consistent.  | A - Development proposals should include proposals to strengthen the perimeter vegetation.<br><br>D - Materials and colours should be muted in colour and natural in appearance.                                 |
| Landscape proposals associated with recent development are insufficient to mitigate the visual impact of the development.  | Where possible to screen the harmful impacts of existing development.   | For all new planning applications to include landscape proposals that will address potential harmful visual impacts.                           | B - Development in Field 1 will require woodland planting along the A1120 boundary.  |
| Landscape proposals associated with recent development have been poorly implemented.   |   | To implement advance planting on the boundaries of the site to visually contain development  | E Built development should be single storey  |
| Signage at the entrance is particularly visually intrusive.  | [Although this is true we don't have any recommendations to improve it because it feels like it is outside what could be achieved via new permissions]                                    |  |  |
| <b>Landscape Character</b>   |   |  |  |
| Stonham Barns is not consistent with the landscape character of the surrounding landscape.   | To lessen the uncharacteristic nature of the site by improving internal landscaping within the site and establishing a Green Infrastructure Network that connects to the wider landscape. | To agree a Development Framework with which new development should be consistent.  | G. - Any future development must make a positive contribution to the Green Infrastructure Network within the site  |
| Built development (including static caravans and holiday lodges) previously well contained within the site. Recent development has extended to the east and south (not yet implemented to the south) into parts of the landscape previously agricultural in character. | To prevent the appearance of sprawl of built development within Stonham bars  | To restrict further development to those parts of the site that are already well contained until effective boundary screening has established. | C - Built elements of landscape based recreational development must be located close to exiting built development.<br>F Future envelopment Field 2 must demonstrate how it will be integrated into the landscape |

<sup>1</sup> This table provides a summary of the Development Principles. For the full details see Section 6.