



2.0

UNDERSTANDING  
THE CONTEXT

## 2.1 Planning Policy Context

### SWINDON'S URBAN EXTENSIONS

The Council recognises that not all of Swindon's development needs can be met within the existing urban area. Swindon therefore has an ambitious agenda for growth, including five strategic urban extensions to provide new homes, services and infrastructure (Figure 2.1). This includes the New Eastern Villages, which is the largest in the UK. The challenge for Swindon is to deliver this growth in a sustainable way, which requires a long-term vision and plan to achieve balanced, sustainable and inclusive growth.

Swindon's location on the M4 corridor means it has excellent strategic transport links to other areas of the UK which makes it an attractive business location for a number of global company headquarters. Beyond the urban area, Swindon has an attractive natural setting with rural village clusters on the periphery of the settlement.

The proposals for Lotmead Farm villages have been prepared within the framework of the planning policy context. Compliance with adopted planning policy is demonstrated in the accompanying Planning Statement. The key planning context is set out within:

- The NPPF - which sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied, with a strong focus on sustainable development.
- The adopted Swindon Borough Local Plan (2026) - this provides the policy framework to secure Swindon's future growth, including Policy NC3 New Eastern Villages – including Rowborough and South
- A number of adopted New Easter Villages SPDs covering topics such as transport, green infrastructure and drainage.

### NEW EASTERN VILLAGES

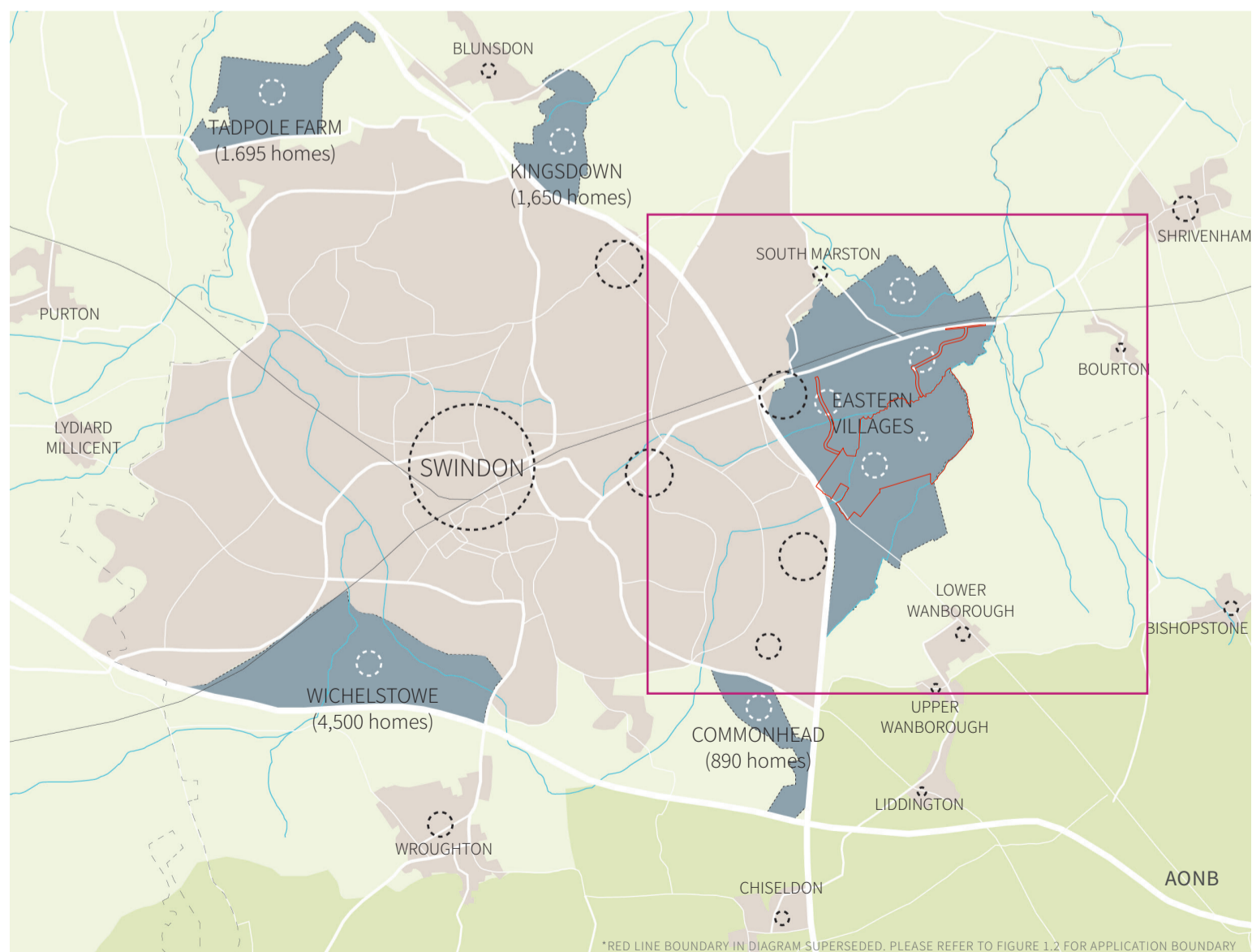


FIGURE 2.1 SWINDON'S URBAN EXTENSION AS ALLOCATED FOR DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE ADOPTED LOCAL PLAN

*“The NEV development will create sustainable well-designed places*

*where people want to live, work and spend time.”*

- New Eastern Villages Travel Plan SPD, October 2016

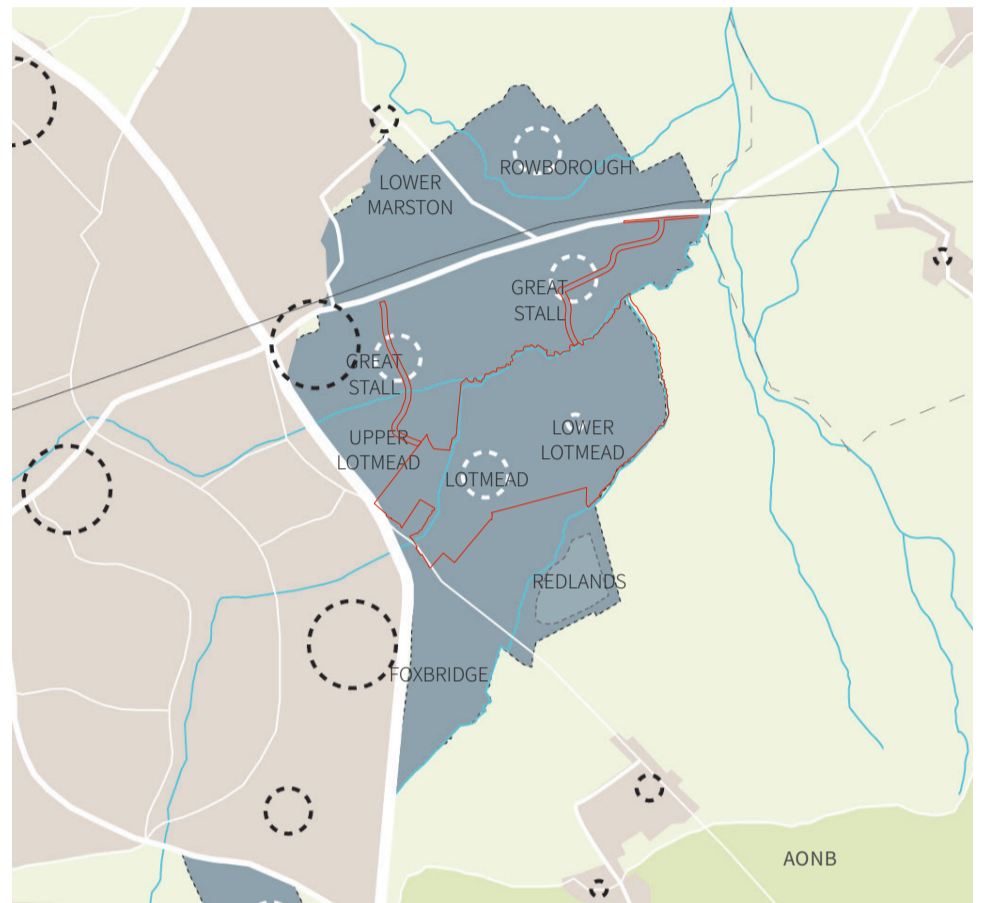


FIGURE 2.2 SWINDON'S PROPOSED EASTERN VILLAGES

The Lotmead Farm villages include the two villages of Lotmead and Lower Lotmead and form part of the wider New Eastern Villages development (Figure 2.2). Together, these make up the largest of Swindon's urban extensions, forming a cluster of connected villages (the "archipelago") with separate but complementary identities and functions. This idea was introduced within the Eastern Villages Framework, 2009.

The Swindon Borough Local Plan, 2026, sets out the vision for the New Eastern Villages to significantly strengthen Swindon's role as a regional key player and a desirable place to live, work and visit. This vision is supported by ten key principles, which are summarised on the right hand side of this page.

**The unique qualities of the existing character of the site is recognised and has been drawn upon to inform the development proposals. The Site benefits from an already established leisure and employment destination with the farm at the heart, and this will be retained as part of the proposals. This sits within an existing rural village context around east Swindon, including a strong relationship with Wanborough - the closest existing village.**

**The Eastern Villages also have a visual relationship with the AONB to the south east. The proposals for Lotmead Farm villages draw on this sensitive landscape setting, along with the relationship to the SM close to Wanborough Road and the rich habitats within the Site.**

The Site stands out from the other Eastern Villages in that it already has many of the features required to engender a sense of character and place. Lotmead Farm, the Business Village, the Pick Your Own, the scheduled monument and the Rural Avenue are key elements from which to start to expand a village. On this basis, the names 'Lotmead and Lower Lotmead' should be used to define two villages.

The analysis over the following pages provides a detailed understanding of the wider context surrounding the Site and the various factors that have influenced the development proposals.

## KEY PRINCIPLES

Swindon Borough local plan 2026

**Strategic Objective 1: High Quality Sustainable Development** - to improve the image of Swindon, enable inclusive communities and address climate change by the provision of high quality, well designed and sustainable development.

**Strategic Objective 2: Infrastructure** - to meet the infrastructure needs for and arising from the growth of Swindon (including health and community needs) in a timely and co-ordinated manner and being adequately funded.

**Strategic Objective 3: Economy** - to meet the needs of local businesses and the forecast growth in the local economy, and to enhance Swindon's position as the UK's best business location.

**Strategic Objective 4: Housing** - to meet the Borough's housing needs by the provision of well-designed sustainable housing, at sustainable locations and at a range of types and densities according to local needs and circumstances, and that promotes the effective use of land.

**Strategic Objective 5: Education** - to meet the need for education provision arising from the anticipated growth in population and to enable an improvement in skills and qualifications, particularly through the provision and support of tertiary education opportunities.

**Strategic Objective 6: Community and Health** - to promote healthy lifestyles and to meet the need for community and health facilities arising from growth and demographic change in the Borough.

**Strategic Objective 7: Transport** - to support Swindon's growth through the provision of a comprehensive and sustainable transport network that is efficient, safe, affordable, accessible and easy to understand, and offers a genuine choice of modes.

**Strategic Objective 8: Culture and Leisure** - to enable the provision of cultural and leisure facilities commensurate with Swindon's size and growth in population and realise Swindon's potential as a regional leisure destination.

**Strategic Objective 9: Green Infrastructure** - to provide an attractive and inspirational environment to live, work, learn and play, by the provision of a far-reaching network of connected and multi-functional green spaces linked to the wider countryside.

**Strategic Objective 10: Natural, Built and Historic Environment** - to ensure that development respects, enhances, and conserves the best of the existing built, historic and natural environment in the Borough.

## 2.2 Swindon Area Context

### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

The National Character Areas are illustrated in Figure 2.4. The Site sits within NCA 108 Upper Thames Clay Vales, which is described as a broad belt of open, gently undulating lowland farmland.

The Swindon Borough Landscape Character Areas SPG provides a more detailed breakdown of landscape character types in the vicinity of the Site. These are shown in Figure 2.3.

The Site lies predominantly within the Vale of the White Horse character area. This is a broad flat, low lying valley with numerous small streams flowing across the vale from south to north, joining the River Cole. There are numerous ponds, two of which are located on the Masterplan Site. It is an open landscape with very few woodlands. Fields are bounded by hedgerows with scattered trees. This relatively open landscape allows for moderate distant views in an east west direction along the Vale floor. The extensive views to the ridge of the North Wessex Downs to the south is an important characteristic of the landscape.

The northern part of the study area lies in the Mid Vale Ridge character area. It is an area of rolling landform with valleys, ridges, hills and plateau tops ranging in heights of between 90 and 140m AOD. There are some open views southwards from the higher ground across the Vale of the White Horse towards the High Downs. Numerous streams and ditches run southwards to feed into the River Cole and they form field and woodland boundaries giving rise to a small to medium scale, somewhat fragmented landscape.

**The landscape features on the Site associated with these character areas have helped to shape the development and incorporating them where possible ensures that the development has a sensitive response to its landscape setting.**

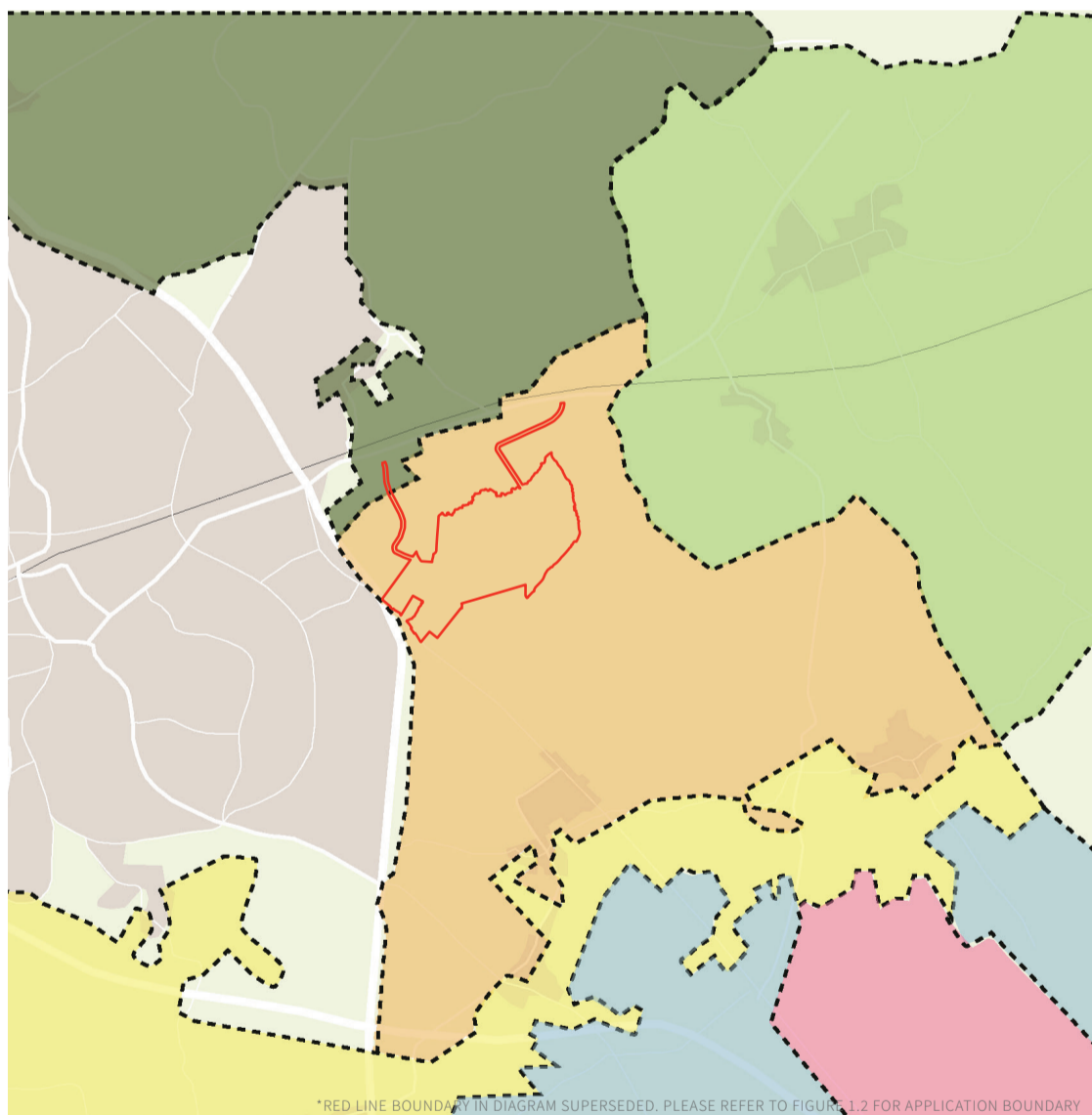


FIGURE 2.3 SWINDON BOROUGH LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

- KEY**
- Site boundary
  - Swindon urban area
  - Vale of the White Horse
  - Scarp
  - Down Plains
  - High Downs
  - Western Clay Vales
  - Mid Vale Ridge

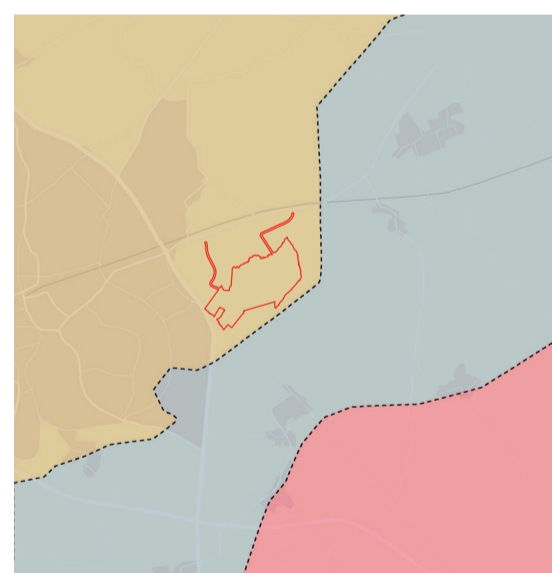


FIGURE 2.4 NATIONAL LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

- KEY**
- Site boundary
  - NCA 108 Upper Thames Clay Vales
  - NCA 109 Midvale Ridge
  - NCA 110 Berkshire and Malborough Downs



## LANDFORM AND FLOODING

Figure 2.5 shows that the Site, along with much of the surrounding area, is relatively flat but there are low hills to the north of the A420 and the Ridgeway is a prominent topographic feature approximately 2kms to the south of the Site. The land rises up relatively sharply above the villages of Wanborough, Idstone, Hinton Parva, Bishopstone and Ashbury.

The Site itself tends to gently fall from approximately 94 – 95m AOD to approximately 90 - 91m AOD around the River Cole on the northern boundaries of the Site.

The Site lies partially within the flood zones of the River Cole and its tributaries, as shown in Figure 2.6. This has influenced the form of the development parcels and distribution of green space across the Site.

The approach to managing flooding and drainage has been discussed closely with the Environment Agency and Local Lead Flood Authority.

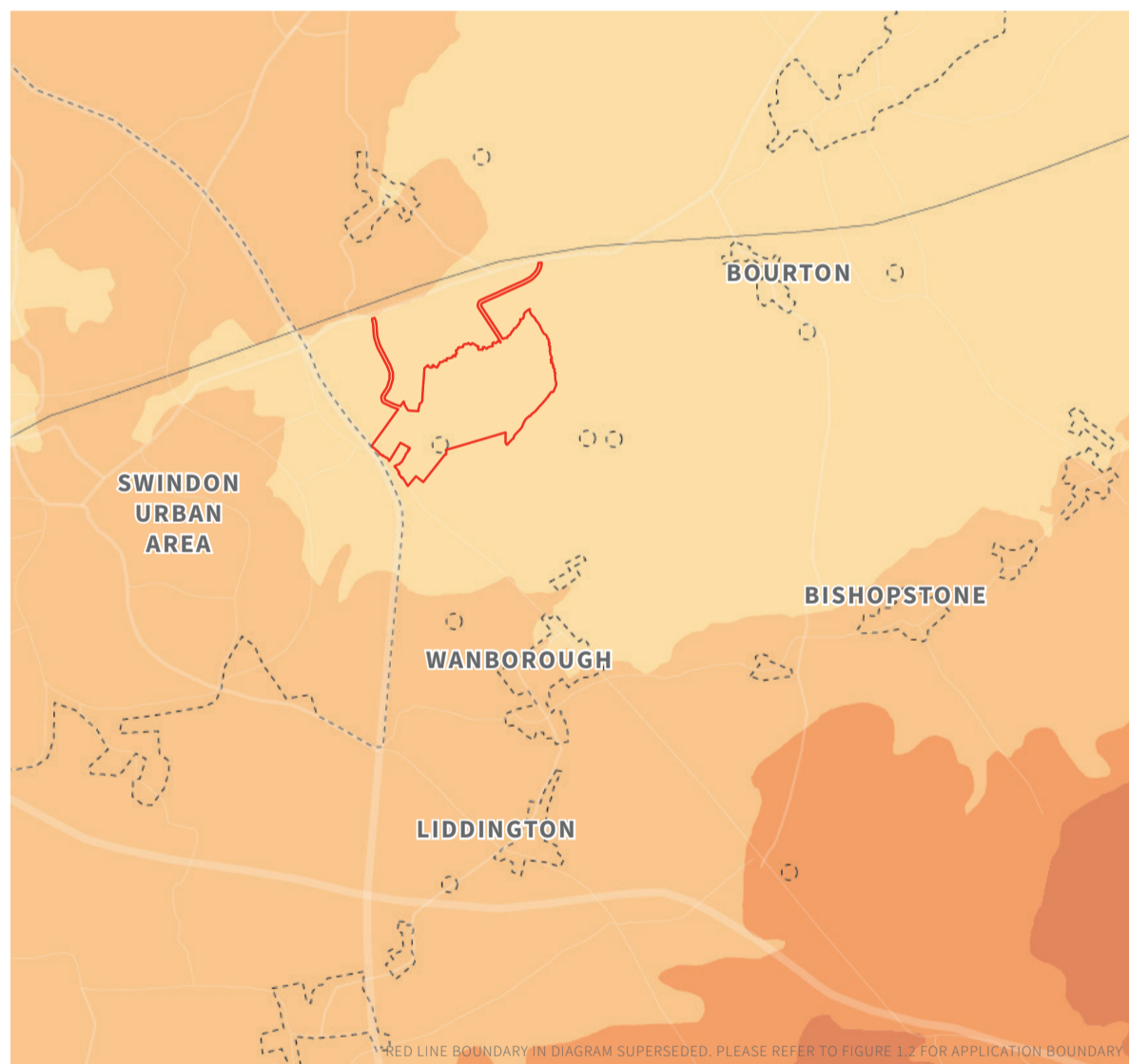


FIGURE 2.5 TOPOGRAPHY

### KEY

- Site boundary
- Existing settlement area
- <100m
- 100-150m
- 150-200m
- >200m



FIGURE 2.6 FLOODING

### KEY

- Site boundary
- Swindon urban area
- Main rivers
- Flooding from rivers
- Extent of extreme flood

## ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGNATIONS

There are a number of environmental designations within the vicinity of the Site (Figure 2.7), notably including the high quality landscape of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in the south of the study area.

Within the Masterplan Application Site itself, the areas of the scheduled monument (SM) will not be physically affected by the development further to this any effects on its significance derived from changes to its setting will be treated sensitively. This is particularly important for the development in the Wanborough Road area of the site which borders the SM.

The Local Plan seeks the re-instatement of the Wilts-Berks Canal and identifies an indicative alignment which crosses the southern and eastern edge of the Masterplan Site. The proposals will not prejudice the future alignment of the Canal and, indeed, the proposed floodplain reinstatement within that part of the site will help to support its delivery.

The development is designed to minimise impacts on sensitive landscapes, including those designations shown above. The Landscape chapter of the Environmental Statement (including LVIA) accompanying the application provides further details. The SM and the AONB are recognised as important features, therefore the development will incorporate mitigation measures where necessary to minimise any potential impacts.

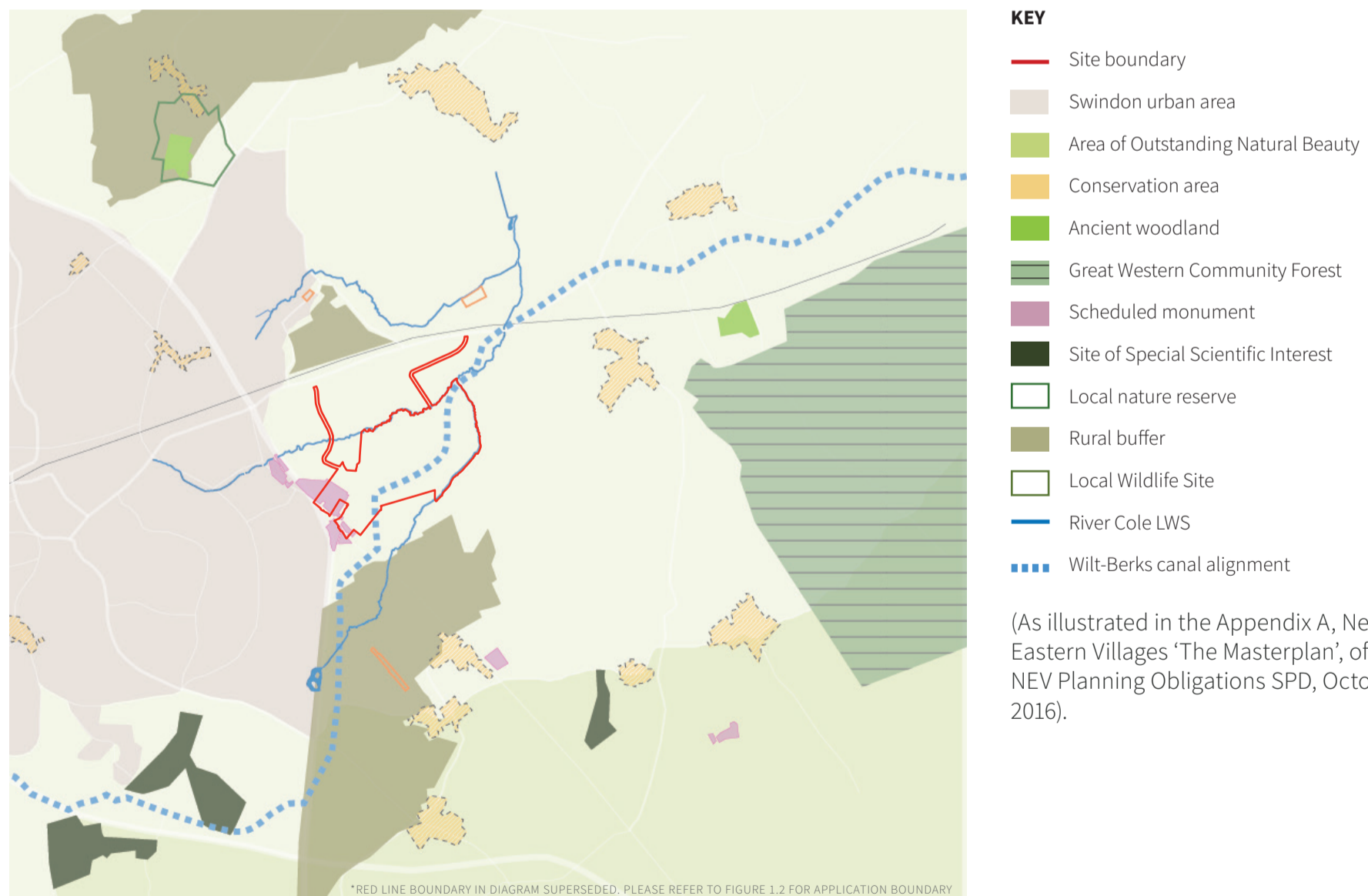


FIGURE 2.7 ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGNATIONS

## LAND USE

The town of Swindon is a well established urban area, driven by the introduction of the railways but which also underwent considerable growth in 1950s and 60s. A number of small discrete rural pockets of residential development can be found in the collection of villages to the east of Swindon including Wanborough, Bishopstone, Shrivenham, Bourton, Liddington and Hinton Parva.

The development Site lies within a large area of agricultural land adjacent to the Swindon urban area (Figure 2.8).

As well as large expanses of open countryside / agricultural land surrounding the town, the urban settlement contains smaller local recreational green spaces.

Swindon's popularity as an industrial / business location has resulted in some large areas of employment use.

Two retail / leisure parks are situated within the study area as well as shopping and leisure within the town centre itself.

In summary, the Masterplan Application Site is located close to a plethora of existing facilities located in nearby neighbourhoods. Schools and green spaces serving the local population are distributed throughout the urban area. Similarly, the proposals will provide a mix of local amenities to serve the new communities, based on the critical mass of housing which makes such facilities viable. In addition, the development will connect to strategic employment and facilities within the existing settlement.

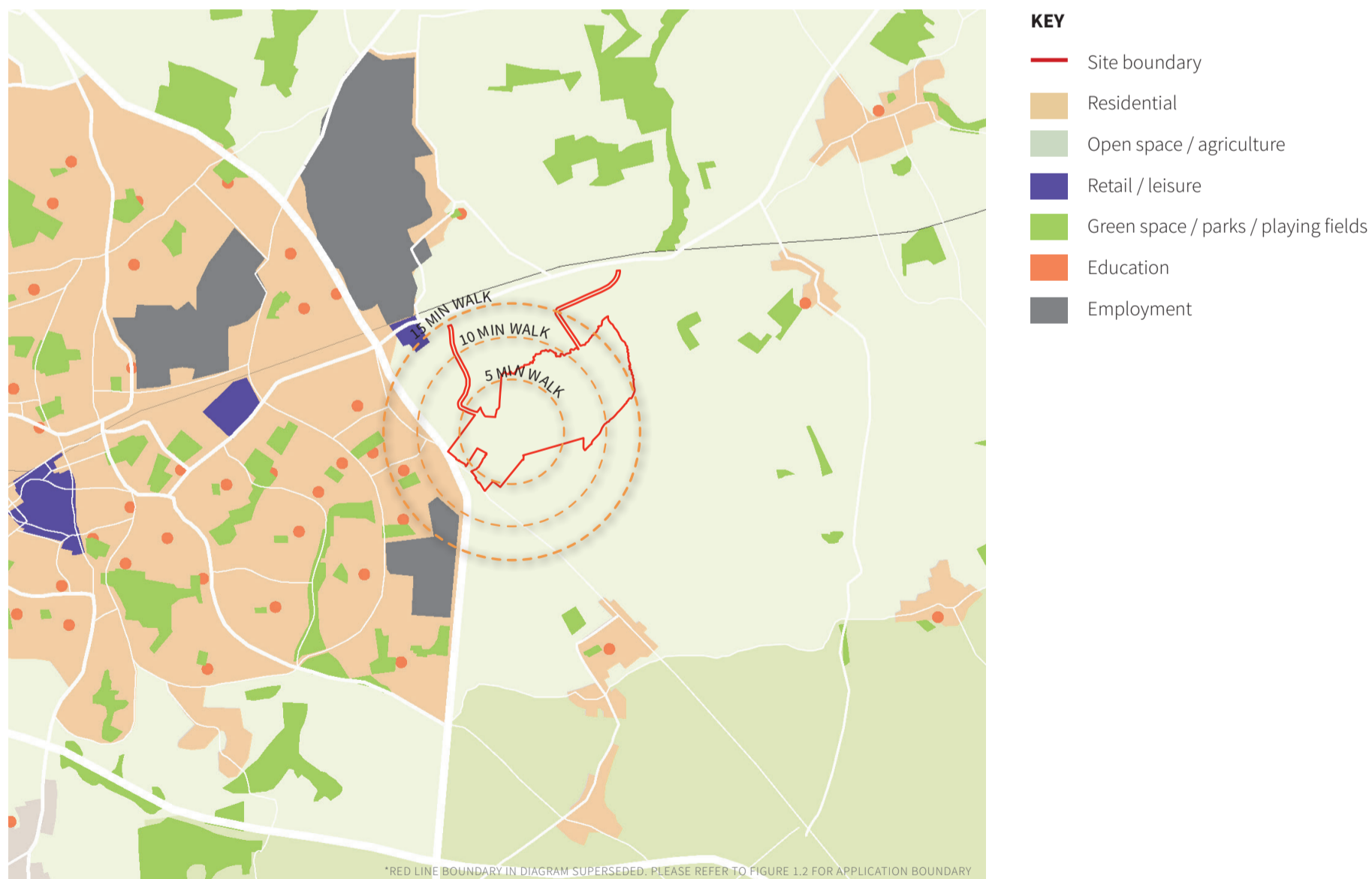


FIGURE 2.8 LAND USE



## VISUAL IMPACT

A full Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) has been carried out as part of the planning application and should be read in conjunction with this Design and Access Statement.

The theoretical Zone of Visual Influence (ZVI) identifies the approximate area of land from which there would be potential views of the proposed development. This has helped to identify a number of potential views within the study area, as shown in Figure 2.9.

Views toward the Site from the north west, west and south west are generally curtailed by the eastern edge of Swindon and the industrial areas north east of Swindon. Where views do exist, these tend to be partially screened by intervening layers of boundary vegetation and road and rail infrastructure.

The key viewpoints are predominantly taken from Public Rights of Way on the high ground of The Scarp and North Wessex Downs AONB, which is visually highly sensitive. These views are included on page 18.

## SUMMARY OF VIEWS

Viewpoint reference	Location of view point
1	Entrance to Lotmead Farm
2	Footpath in field just south
3	Footpath north of Earls court Manor
4	Bridlepath at edge of Nightingale Wood
5	Footpath at junction with Highworth Road
6	Railway bridge at Lower Bourton
7	Footpath at junction with Idstone Road
8	Footpath through Home Farm, Hinton Parva
9	Wanborough Rd close to junction at Callas Hill
10	Footpath through residential area in Wanborough
11	Charlbury Hill
12	B4192, at junction with Ridgeway and Aldbourne Circular Trail

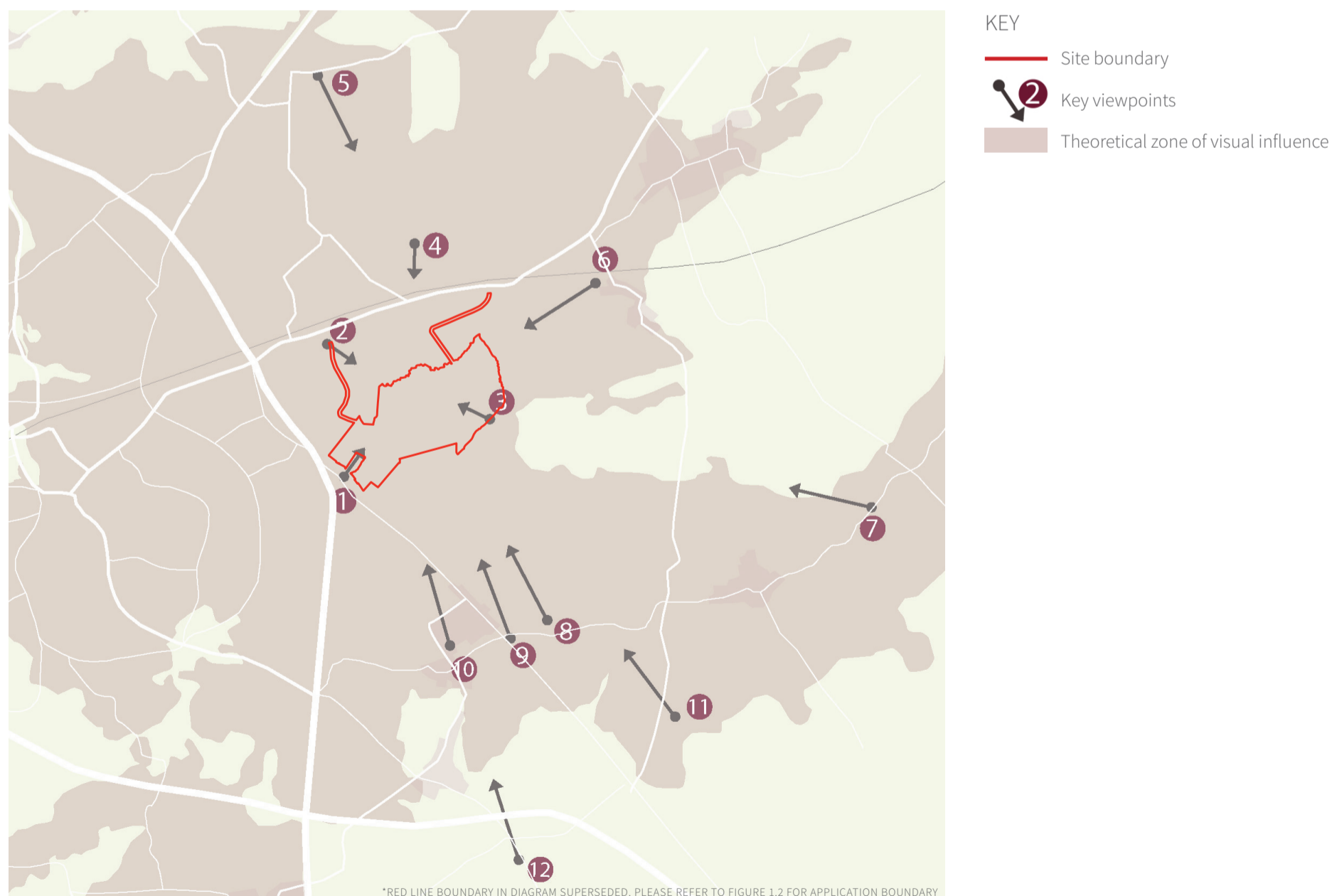


FIGURE 2.9 VIEWPOINTS

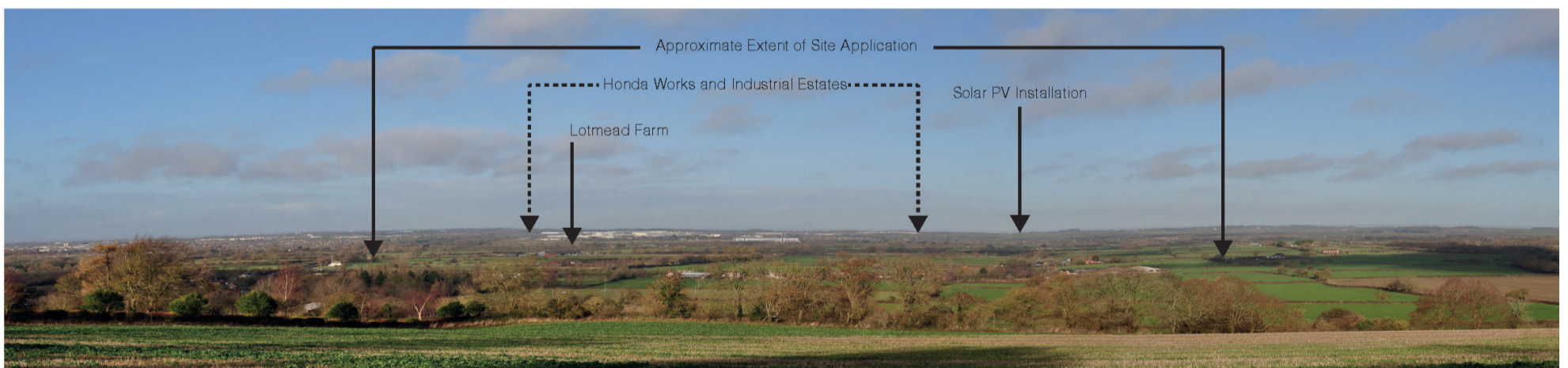




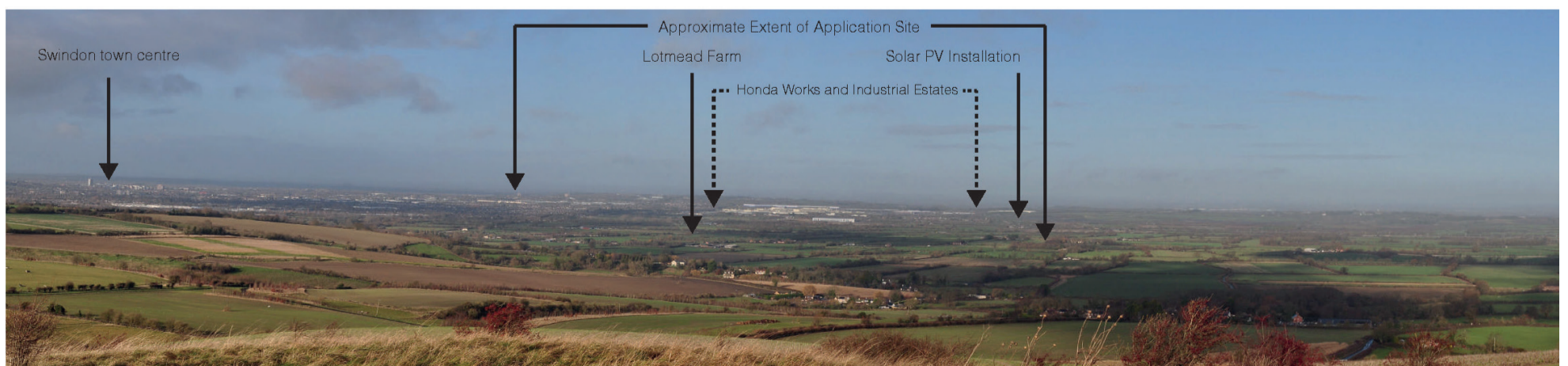
VIEW 7 - VIEWS FROM THE NORTH WESSEX HIGH DOWNS



VIEW 8 - VIEWS FROM THE HIGH GROUND OF THE SCARP



VIEW 9 - VIEWS FROM THE HIGH GROUND OF THE SCARP



VIEW 11 - VIEW FROM HIGH GROUND OF THE HIGH DOWNS



## HERITAGE

The south west portion of the site contains a scheduled monument known as durocornovium, a former Roman town. The nature and extent of this settlement, which includes buildings, streets and boundaries, was established through a series of archaeological investigations in the later 20th century. The programme of geophysical surveys and trial trenching, undertaken in respect of the Lotmead Farm villages has confirmed that the Roman settlement is for the most part limited to the extent of the scheduled area. As a heritage asset of national importance any potential effects on the monument have been fully considered within the masterplanning of the site.

Other than the scheduled monument, the site contains no additional designated heritage assets. Within the sites wider zone of influence are five Grade II listed buildings including (referenced in Figure 2.11):

1. LOCK KEEPER'S COTTAGE Designation Type: Listing Grade: II List UID: 1355939
2. MARSTON FARMHOUSE Designation Type: Listing Grade: II List UID: 129972
3. THE PRIORY Designation Type: Listing Grade: II List UID: 1299706
4. LONGLEAZE FARMHOUSE Designation Type: Listing Grade: II List UID: 1299729
5. LOWER EARLSCOURT FARMHOUSE Designation Type: Listing Grade: II List UID: 1023277
6. EARLSCOURT MANOR Designation Type: Listing Grade: II List UID: 1023276

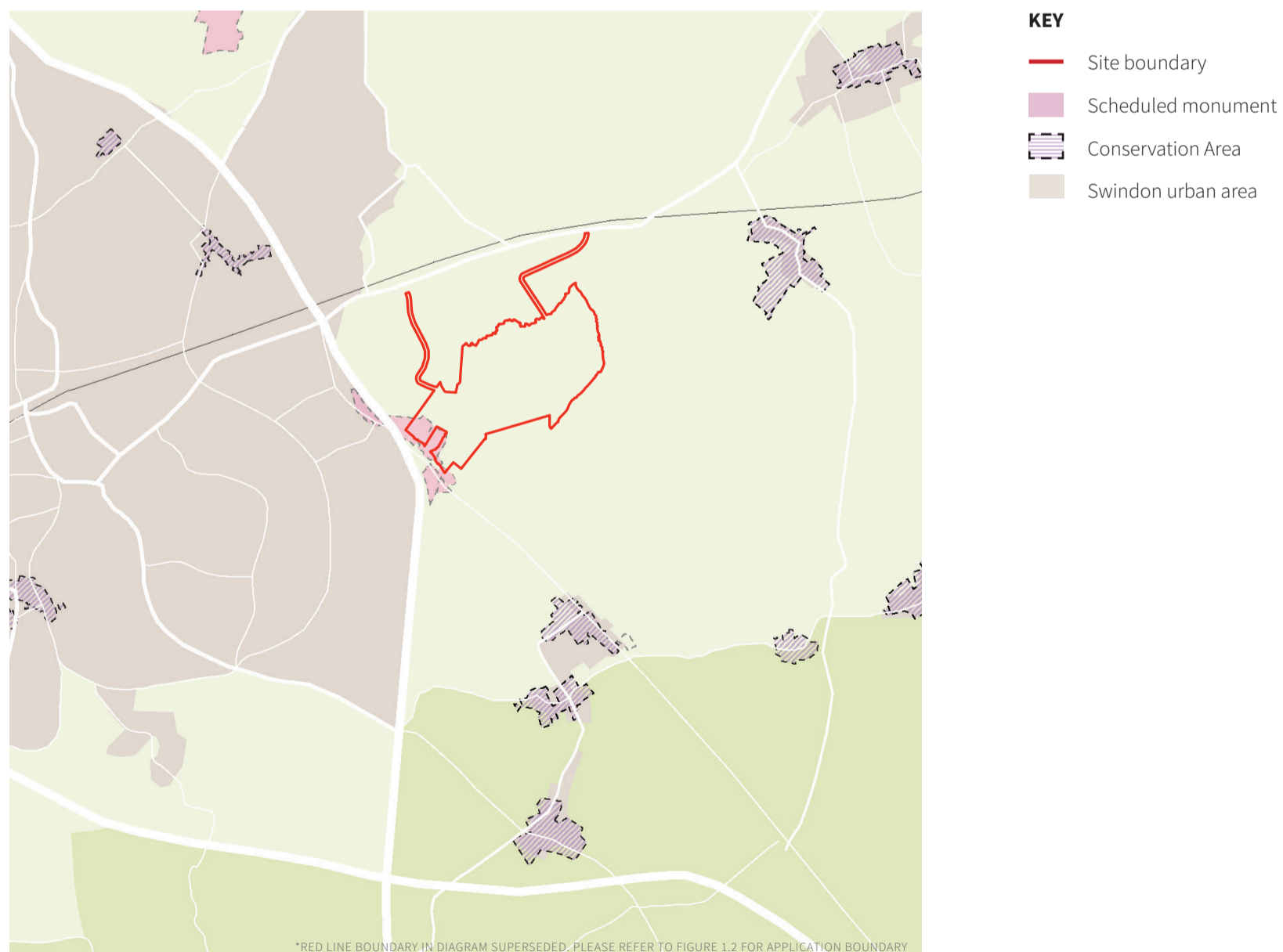


FIGURE 2.10 HERITAGE DESIGNATIONS

Further to detailed assessment of these, it has been established that none will have their significance affected through changes within their setting as the site forms no part of this. Within the site itself is the 18th / 19th century Lotmead Farm farmhouse, it is considered to have some local heritage value and as such has been fully considered within the masterplanning of the site.

Prior to the suite of archaeological surveys undertaken within the site the Wiltshire HER had recorded three findspots comprising two areas where sherds of Roman pottery were recovered and a third comprising a Roman coin. The fieldwork surveys identified three discrete concentrations of late iron age settlement, focusing on the braided river channels of the river cole and the dorcan stream. Possible bronze age features were also identified immediately adjacent to the north east edge of the scheduled monument. The work identified little additional evidence for roman activity outside of the scheduled monument, but human remains of possible Roman date were identified close to its edge. The site was in agricultural use throughout the medieval to modern periods and the surviving buried remains of this, as represented by furrow bases and field boundaries are of little archaeological value. The archaeological deposits identified will require mitigation ahead of the development on the site.

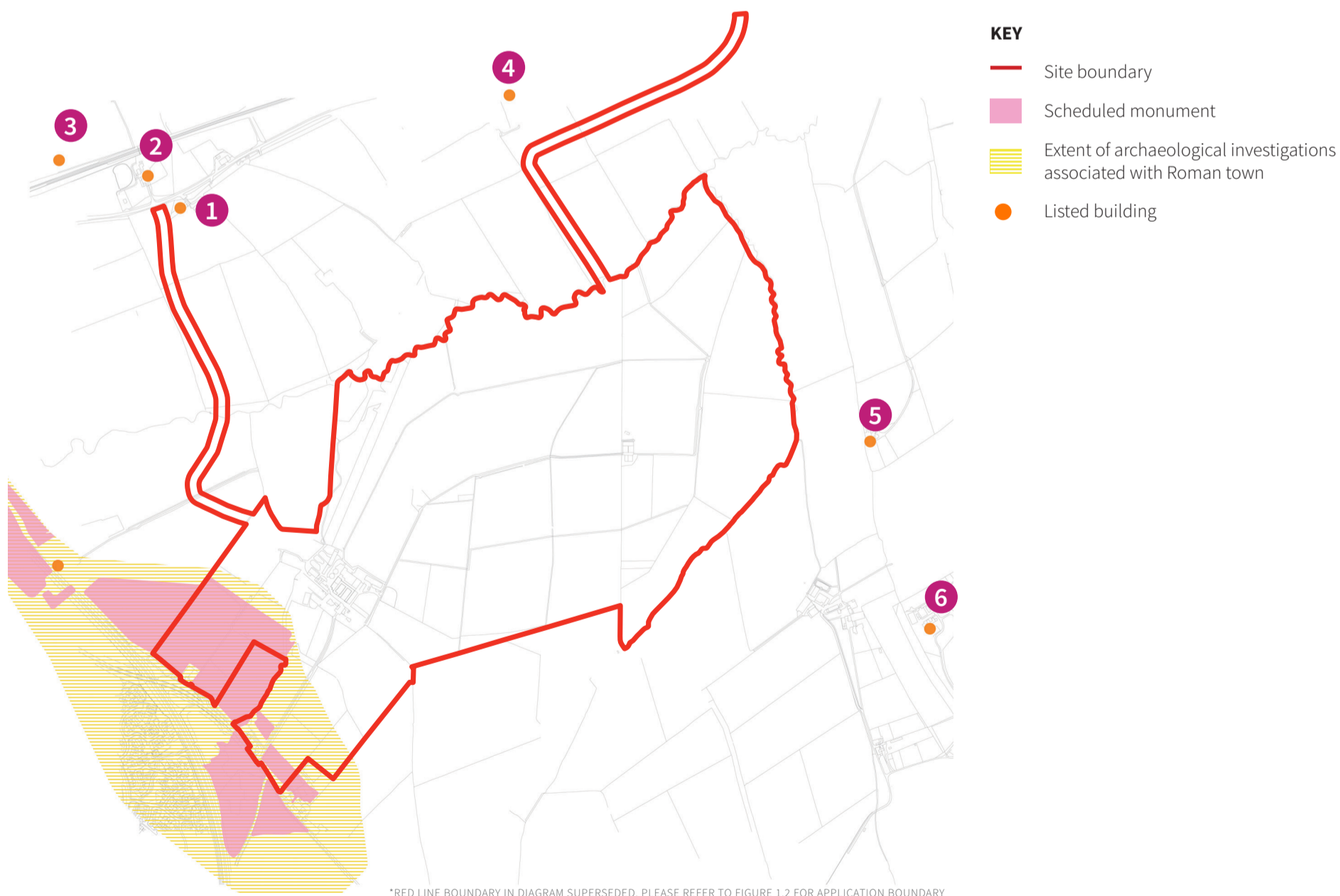


FIGURE 2.11 LISTED BUILDINGS



## MOVEMENT NETWORKS

Figure 2.12 illustrates Swindon's excellent location within the strategic highway network.

The Site is less than 10 minutes drive from the M4 motorway which provides good connections to London (approximately 1hr 30mins) and other areas of the UK. The main A-roads include the A420 (Oxford, approximately 40mins) and the A419 linking to Cirencester in the north and the M4 in the south.

The impact of the New Eastern Villages, including Lotmead Farm villages, has been assessed as part of Swindon Borough Council's and the Highways Agency's Transport Mitigation Strategy.

The wider NEV strategy proposed a number of significant wider improvement schemes to serve the new development, including:

- a gateway junction at the White Hart roundabout;
- Improvements to nearby roads and junctions as far as the M4;
- a park and ride facility;
- Improved bus, pedestrian and cycle routes.

Swindon rail station is located in the town centre. Journey time to London is approximately 1 hour.

There are multiple bus services in the vicinity, however, bus routes to the town centre are relatively indirect. As a result, the Council is proposing a new rapid transit route as part of the strategic plan for the New Eastern Villages.

There is a network of Public Rights of Way and Bridleways running through the open green spaces surrounding the New Eastern Villages.

National Cycle Route 45 passes through parts of south Swindon, and continues north towards Cirencester.

**The Site sits close to the strategic highway network where future transport improvements are proposed. The site is currently accessed from Wanborough Road. However, this will only serve the first phase of the development (up to 200 units). Therefore, to ensure the Site is well connected, the Masterplan ensures that the future alignment of the Southern Connector Road to and through the Site is an integral part of the proposals and the red line for the application also incorporates two strategic routes linking to the A420 to the north, which are required to serve later phases of development.**

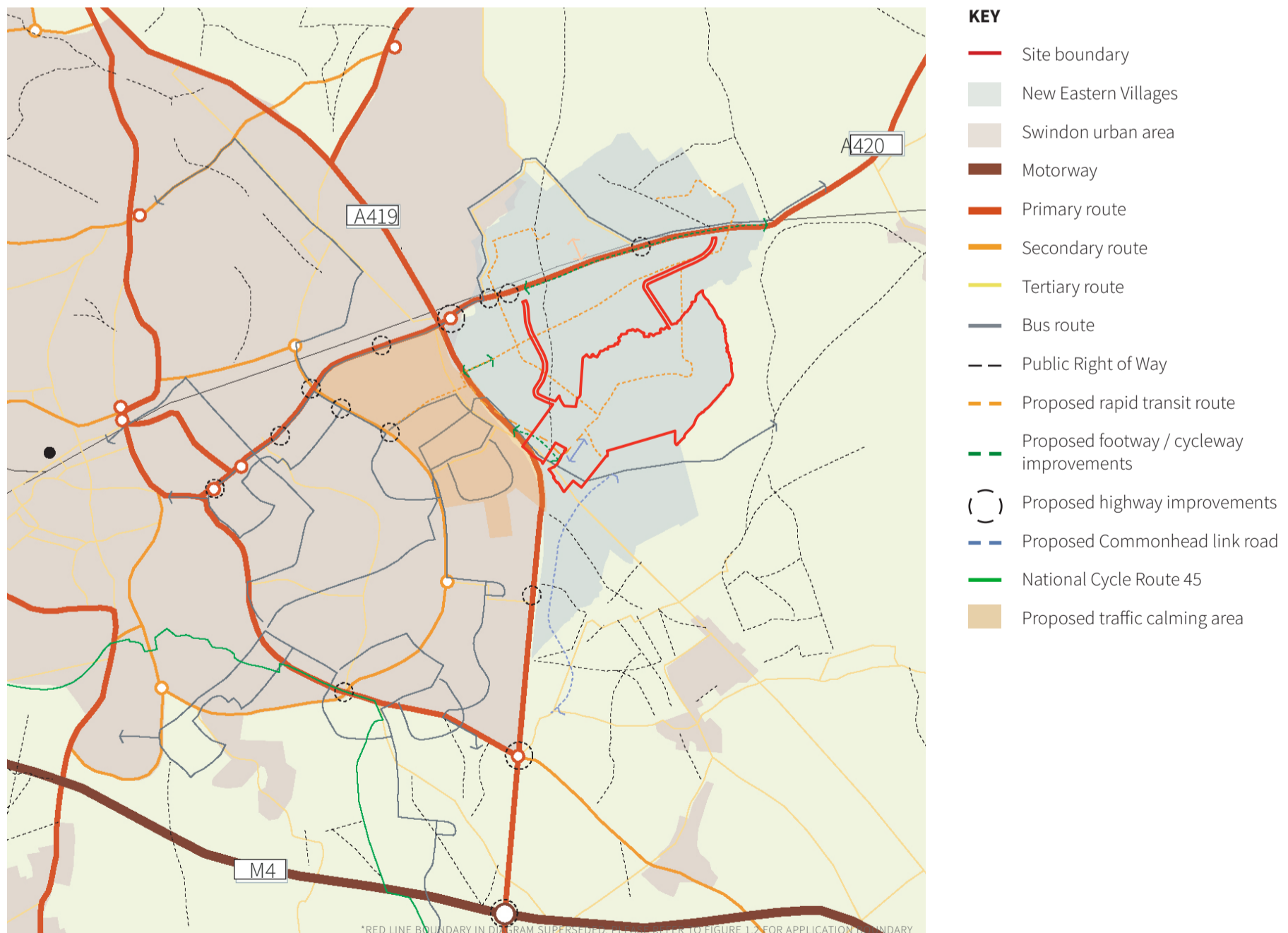


FIGURE 2.12 STRATEGIC MOVEMENT NETWORK

## URBAN STRUCTURE

### Town centre

The town centre has a historic core (Swindon Old Town) which has a tight knit pattern of streets and terraces. The town centre is heavily influenced by mid 20th century infill and expansion to the north, represented by larger roads and coarser urban grain.

### Suburban

The suburban settlement pattern reflects Swindon's fragmented growth. Post war and late 20th century neighbourhoods sprawl out from the town centre to the east at uniformly low densities. These areas are also characterised by large swathes of open land including wide road corridors and green space. The suburban residential settlement provides limited townscape reference as the development is looking to reflect a more organic pattern of growth with rural influences, which is more evident in the outlying villages.

### Industrial

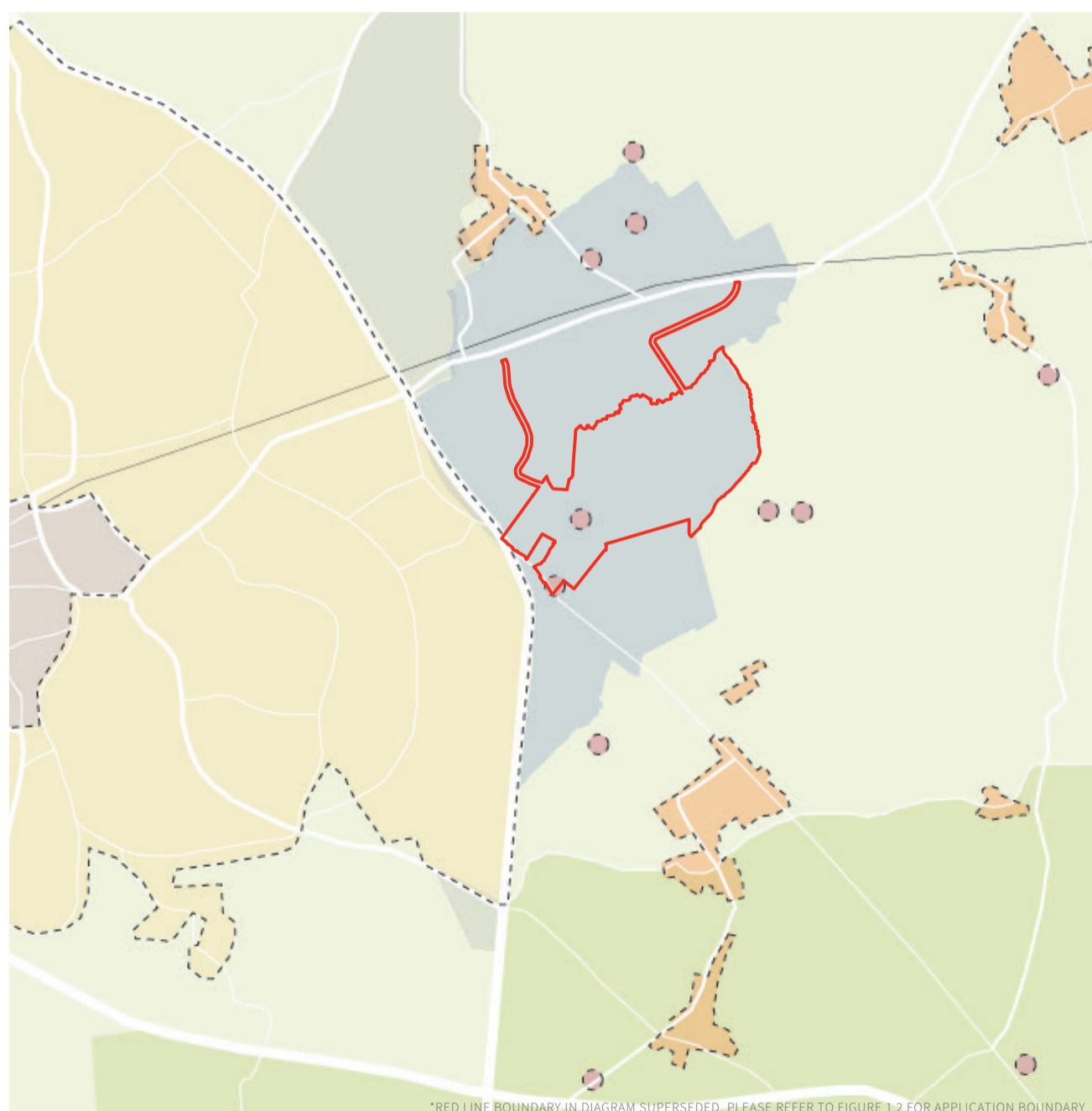
Typically large scale development of stand-alone buildings on large plots accessed by broad distributor roads. Buildings are commonly single storey, while some have double height spaces. They are loosely arranged in cul-de-sacs. Open space is divided between large car parks and designed landscape features.

### Village

To the east, beyond the existing urban boundary are a series of dispersed rural settlements, some of which sit on the slopes of the North Wessex Downs. The villages are generally centred around conservation areas to protect their architectural character and historic street patterns. A more detailed assessment is provided in the local townscape study within Section 3 of this report and in Appendix A.

### Rural

These are commonly farmsteads placed along country lanes. Each consisting of a cluster of buildings, a farm house and ancillary agricultural buildings. The buildings often loosely arranged around a central yard. Mature trees and hedgerows conceal the private spaces. The existing rural cluster around Lotmead Farm has provided a strong townscape reference for the proposals.



#### KEY

-  Site boundary
-  New Eastern Villages
-  Town Centre
-  Suburban
-  Industrial
-  Village
-  Rural

\*RED LINE BOUNDARY IN DIAGRAM SUPERSEDED. PLEASE REFER TO FIGURE 1.2 FOR APPLICATION BOUNDARY

FIGURE 2.13 URBAN STRUCTURE

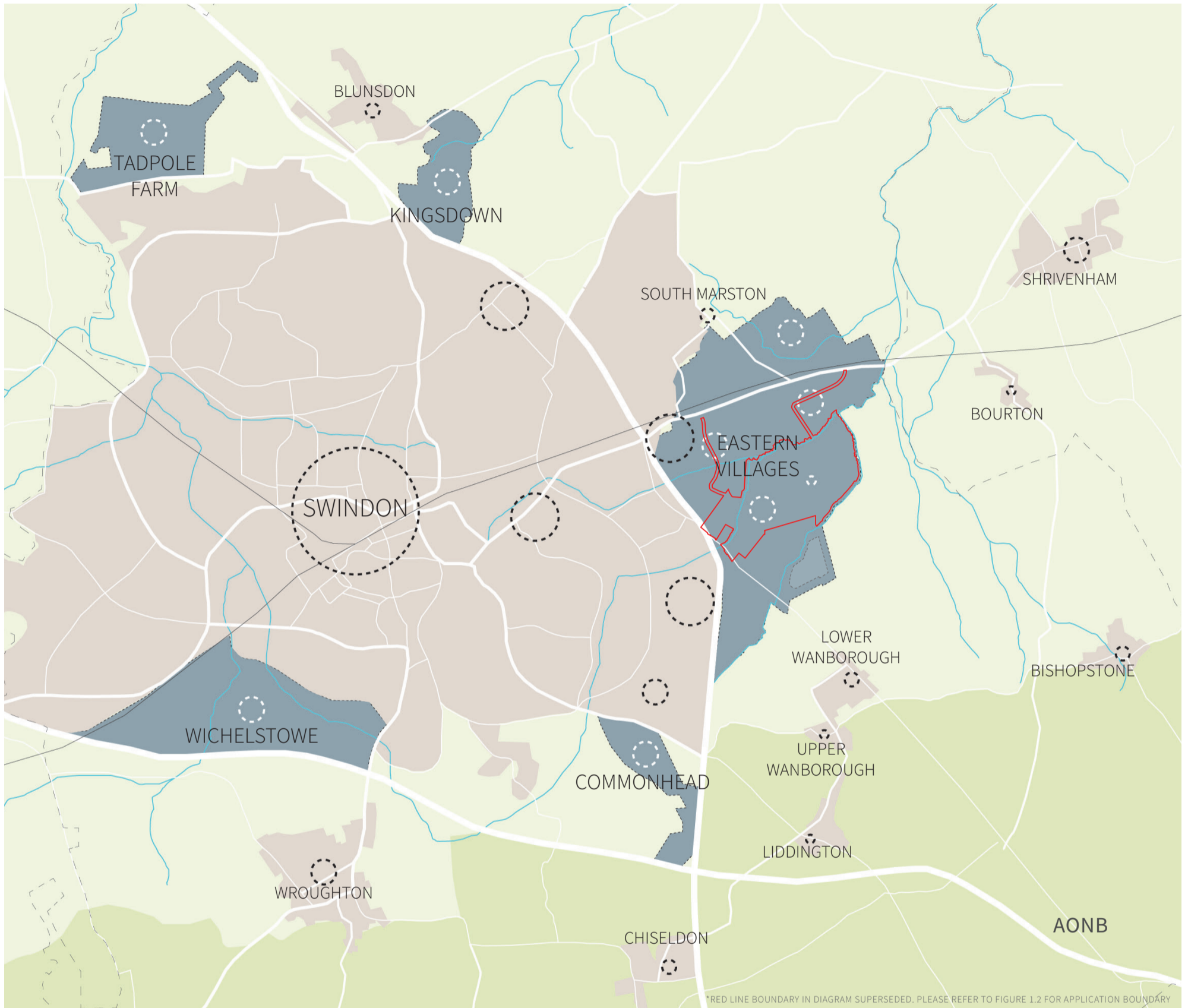
## CONCLUSIONS

It is clear from the analysis of the local context that the masterplan must respond to the sensitive surrounding landscape, taking account of visual impact, the setting of designated assets, landscape character and features of biodiversity value. As part of the context analysis, the project team has worked closely with statutory bodies such as the Environment Agency to determine mitigation measures and management strategies for the Site. A key feature of the approach will be to draw on the positive aspects of the local built and landscape context found in and around the existing villages to the east of Swindon.

Understanding the context also provides an appreciation of the strategic role the New Eastern Villages will play within the wider Swindon area. The Lotmead Farm Villages development has potential to make a significant contribution to delivering Swindon's sustainable growth objectives, offering a choice of housing style and providing an opportunity to raise design quality.

Provision of a mix of uses within the new village cores and strong connections to the existing transport network for access to the wider Swindon area will further support this agenda for sustainable communities.

The Wanborough Road area of the site is located within close proximity to existing services and the existing rural cluster of Lotmead Farm buildings. It also benefits from the existing Site access leading directly into the Site. These factors make it a logical and highly sustainable location for the first phase of development and from which the village can continue to expand.



SWINDON'S URBAN EXTENSIONS AS ALLOCATED FOR DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE ADOPTED LOCAL PLAN

**KEY**

- Site boundary
- Existing development
- Urban extensions
- Open space / agriculture
- AONB
- Existing local centres