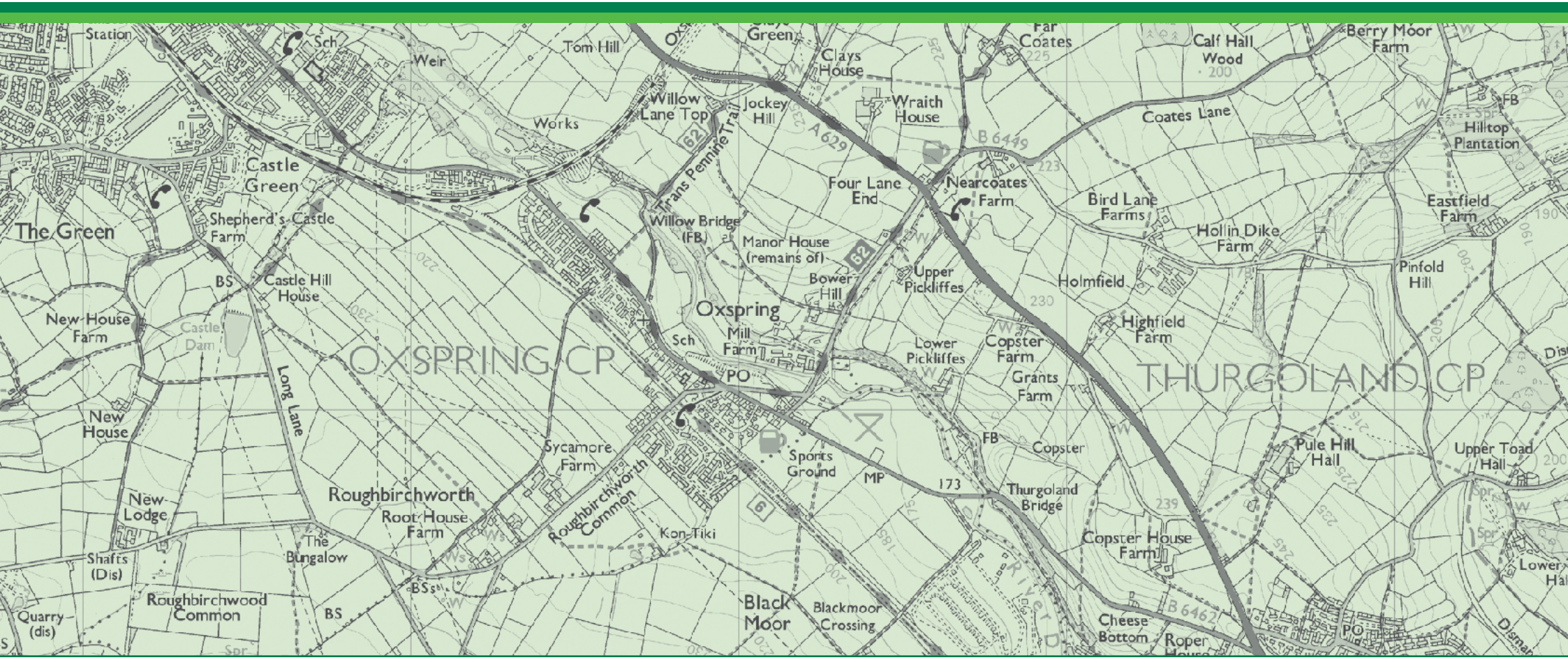
SMEEDEN FOREMAN

OXSPRING FIELDS



Landscape statement, May 2014 - Yorkshire Land Ltd


LDI0 PROPOSED SITE
OXSPRING FIELDS
PROPOSED SITE
MITIGATION AREA

CONTENTS

SMEEDEN FOREMAN

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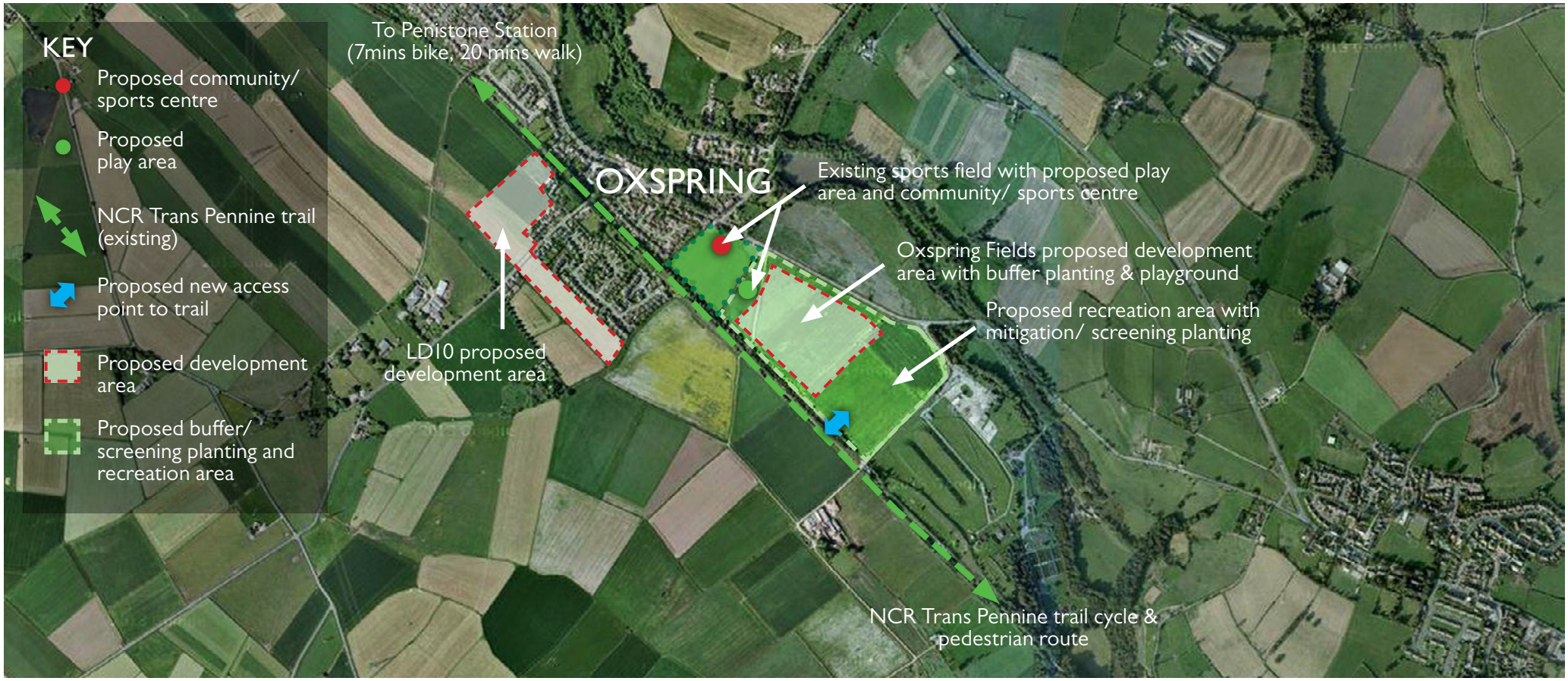


Introduction

Smeeden Foreman Ltd has been commissioned to produce a landscape statement for Yorkshire Land Ltd, which sets out the landscape opportunities and constraints for housing within a site adjacent to the B6462 Sheffield Road, at the southeastern edge of Oxspring, known as Oxspring fields.

This document aims to provide information about the condition of the existing landscape and to indicate whether housing would be appropriate for the proposed site.

A landscape strategy plan has also been produced which illustrates the potential extent and nature of housing and possible landscape benefits and mitigation. This is enclosed at the back of this document.

Landscape architects and ecologists have carried out a site survey on the 09.04.2014 to ascertain the local conditions and record site conditions and key views into and out of the site.

An appraisal of the site LD10 was also undertaken to allow a comparison with Oxspring Fields.

Proposals

The following pages outline the current plans for development of the site, including sports/community facilities and habitat improvement, mitigation and recreation areas.

Proposed sketch plan, access and mitigation

Fig A: Proposed site plan, access and mitigation

Proposed buffer zone and entrance adjacent to Sheffield Road

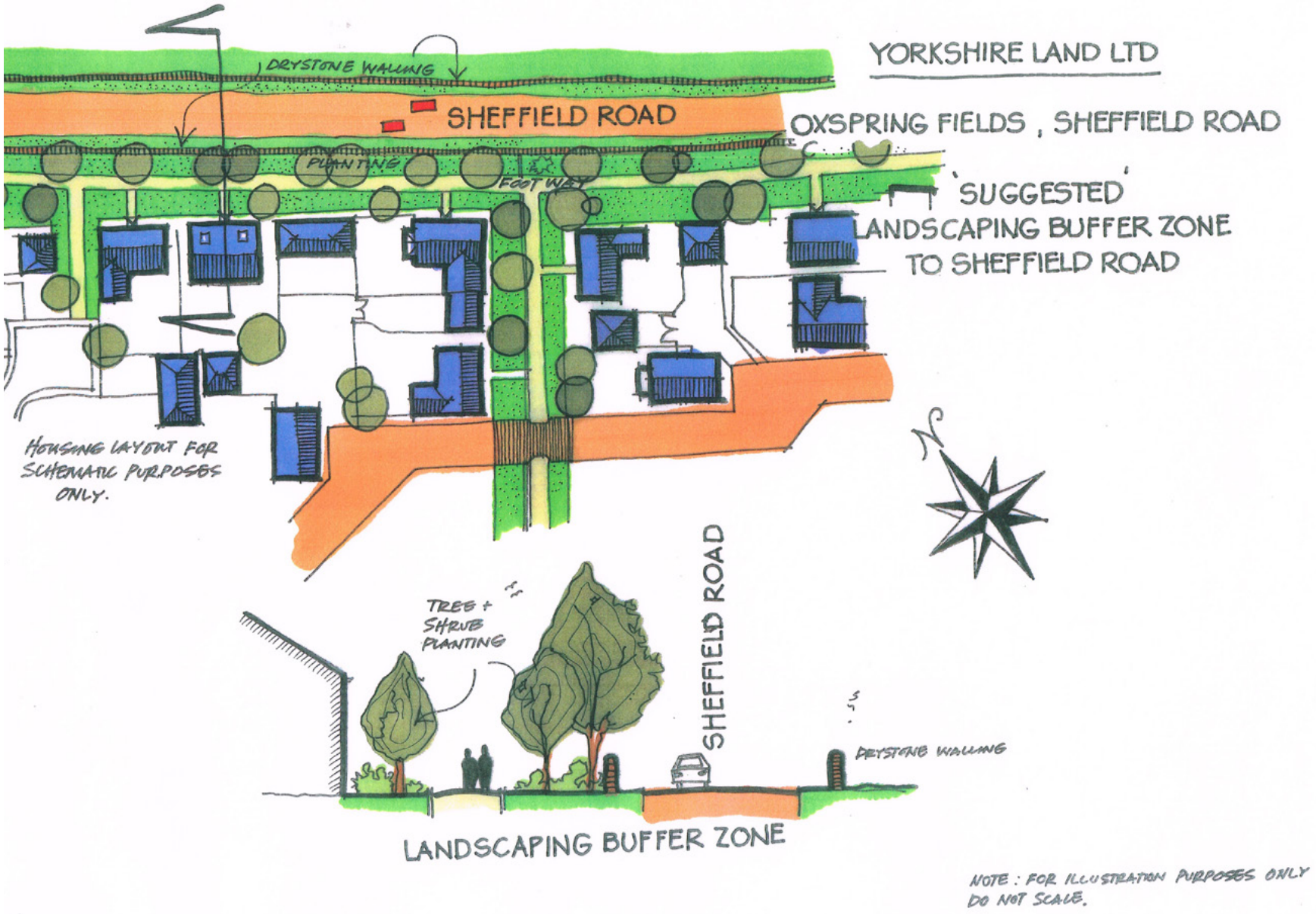


Fig B: Proposed buffer zone and entrance adjacent to Sheffield Road

Proposed community/sports centre and improvements to playing fields area

Fig C: Proposed community/sports centre and improvements to playing fields area

Context

The following pages outline the context of the site and proposed allocation LD10, including an introduction and relevant landscape planning context and proposed site.

Planning context

National planning policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in March 2012 replacing Planning Policy Statements (PPS) and Planning Policy Guidance (PPG). Sustainable development is a target in which the environment can play a key role.

'Contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy.' Para 7 p2 [6].

The overarching emphasis on sustainable development sets out principles which Local Planning Authorities must reflect in local policy. The following paragraphs from the NPPF are most relevant to landscape and the proposed housing location'.

'Paragraph 58 - Requiring Good Design

The NPPF places an emphasis on good design as a key factor to providing sustainable development. It sets out a list of design objectives.

'Planning policies and decisions should aim to ensure that developments:

will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;

establish a strong sense of place, using streetscapes and buildings to create attractive and comfortable places to live, work and visit;

optimise the potential of the site to accommodate development, create and sustain an appropriate mix of uses (including incorporation of green and other public space as part of developments) and support local facilities and transport networks;

respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation;

create safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine quality of life or community cohesion; and

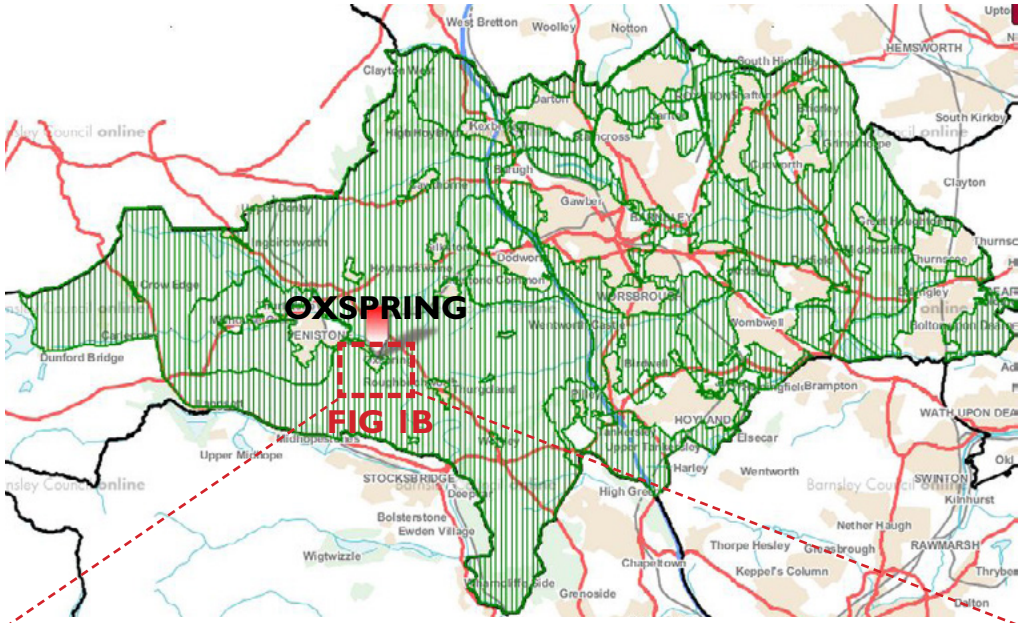
are visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping'.

'Paragraph 80 - Green Belt

Green Belt serves five purposes:

- *to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;*
- *to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;*
- *to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;*
- *to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and*
- *to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land'.*

Fig1a: extract from Barnsley council's online map showing current extent of greenbelt in the Barnsley area. (available online: https://stratus.pbondemand.eu/connect/barnsley/?mapcfg=udp)



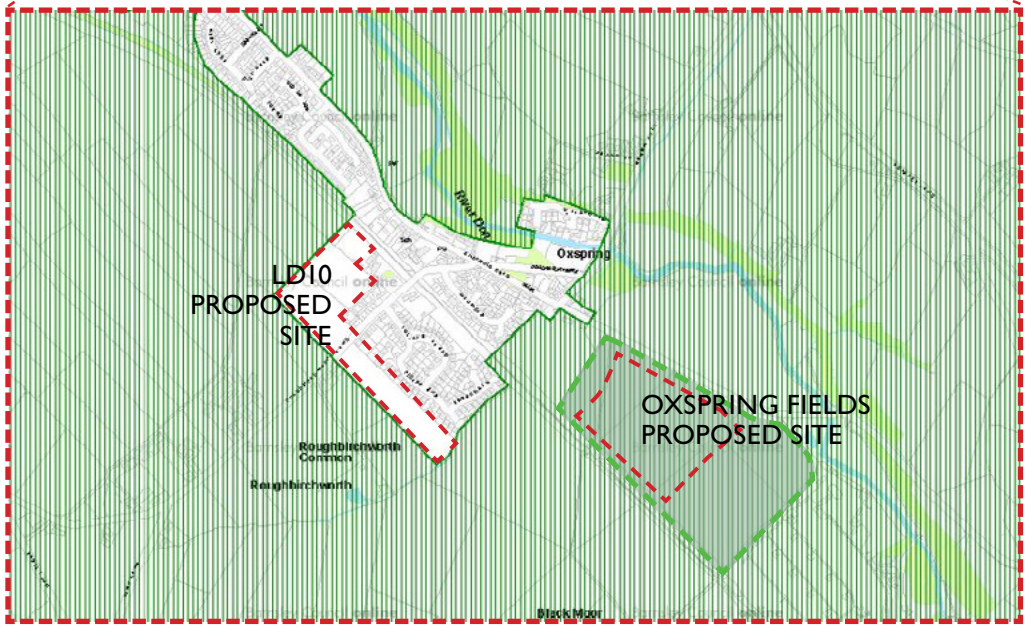


Fig1b: extract from Barnsley council's online map showing current extent of greenbelt around Oxspring. (available online: https://stratus.pbondemand.eu/connect/barnsley/?mapcfg=udp)

Local green belt context

Core strategy was adopted by the Council in September 2011, however 9 months later a Council report to Cabinet dated the 4th July 2012 stated:

> *"Since the adoption of the Local Development Plan (LDF) core strategy, a member led Economy Working Group supported by senior officers has been discussing key priorities for the Borough and these priorities have now been agreed by Cabinet within the Economic Strategy (2012-2033)."*

> *"The Core Strategy was developed between 2008 and 2010 in a very different Economic Climate to now. In terms of land use framework, the Development Sites and Places Development Plan Document (DPD) will play a major role in creating the conditions for Economic growth within the Borough and will underpin delivery of the Councils Economic Strategy."*

The Council published the Consultation Draft DPD in July 2012.

This document confirmed the Council needed to identify sites, suitable to accommodate up to 1200 Low Density Dwellings and advised that it would consider the potential of Green Belt sites for Low Density, High Value Housing, it also confirmed that the Council had already Allocated sites in the West of the Borough for Low Density Homes on land that was previously allocated as Safeguarded land in the Unitary Development Plan. The DPD map identified site ref LD10 (Land North and South of Roughbirchworth Lane, Oxspring) with a gross site area of 5.53 Hectares (13.67 Acres) and capable of accommodating 111 Low Density Dwellings.

The Council affirmed, in the Consultation Draft DPD, that at this stage of the process, it had not allocated any Green Belt land for Housing Purposes; however The Council invited Landowners to:

> *"Let us know if you have a Green Belt Site that may be suitable for low Density Housing. We will consider sites put forward."*

> *"The Green Belt sites that will be considered most favourably for low density housing are likely to have the following characteristics:*

- *Their Development would enable the borough to achieve the ambitions of the Economic Strategy in respect of delivering a broader housing mix*
- *Their Development would not harm the functions of the Green Belt particularly in respect of checking unrestricted sprawl and preventing settlements merging into each other*
- *Development of the site would result in a defensible Green Belt boundary*
- *The site has a good relationship with a settlement, has access to facilities and is sustainable, edge of settlement is likely to be preferred*
- *The Development represents infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed sites whether redundant or in continuing use, which would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt and the purpose of including land within the Green Belt than the existing Development*
- *Will contribute to the viability of the settlement.*

The Consultation Draft DPD affirmed

> *"Landowners will have to demonstrate that the site put forward is viable for Low Density Housing. Where a proposal for High Quality, High Value well designed, individual or Low Density dwellings is proposed in Green Belt, the need for that type of property may be considered as a very special circumstance..."*

Furthermore the DPD sets out:

> *"The proposal in the housing section to consider green Belt sites for Low Density Housing will be in conflict with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The justification for considering this departure from National Planning Policy is to enable implementation of our Economic Strategy..."*

> *"In Respect of achieving the ambitions in the Economic Strategy, the need for Low Density, High Value Housing in Green Belt may be considered as a very Special Circumstance."*

Local development framework core strategy policies

Barnsley's Local development framework core strategy document was adopted in September 2011 and sets out policies that outline the council's long term vision for the region. Policies that relate to landscape are as follows:

9.9 Green Infrastructure

The Challenge

Maintaining and strengthening our networks of natural habitats and creating a network of Green Infrastructure assets Using Green Infrastructure to promote sustainable growth, improve health and well being and adapt to and mitigate climate change and maximise biodiversity

- *Protecting the Green Belt and green space*
- *Enhancing the appearance, character and quality of countryside and protecting it from development*
- *Conserving biodiversity and geological features and mitigating any impacts on them*
- *Maximising biodiversity opportunities in and around new developments through the adoption of good design*
- *Protecting what is distinctive about Barnsley's landscape*

CSP 33 Green Infrastructure

We will protect, maintain, enhance and create an integrated network of connected and multi-functional Green Infrastructure assets that:

- *provides attractive environments where people want to live, work, learn, play, visit and invest*
- *meets the environmental, social and economic needs of communities across the borough and the wider City Regions*
- *enhances the quality of life for present and future residents and visitors*
- *helps to meet the challenge of climate change*
- *enhances biodiversity and landscape character*
- *improves opportunities for recreation and tourism*
- *respects local distinctiveness and historical and cultural heritage*
- *maximises potential economic and social benefits*
- *At a strategic level Barnsley's Green Infrastructure network includes the following corridors:*

River Dearne Valley Corridor, River Dove Valley Corridor, ***River Don valley Corridor,*** *Dearne Valley Green Heart Corridor, Historic Landscape Corridor.*

The network of Green Infrastructure will be secured by protecting open space, creating new open spaces as part of new development, and by using developer contributions to create and improve Green Infrastructure.

CSP 35 Green Space

We will work with partners to improve existing green space to meet the standards in our Green Space Strategy.

Green space refers to any land within or close to towns and village that has or could have demonstrable value for recreation or wildlife.

We will only allow development proposals that result in the loss of green space where:

- *an assessment shows that there is too much of that particular type of green space in the area which it serves and its loss would not affect the existing and potential green space needs of the borough; or*
- *an appropriate replacement green space of at least an equivalent community benefit, accessibility and value is provided in the area which it serves; or*
- *the development is for small scale facilities needed to support or improve the proper function of the green space.*

We will assess the need for green space against the standards in our Green Space Strategy.

CSP 36 Biodiversity and Geodiversity

Development will be expected to conserve and enhance the biodiversity and geological features of the borough by:

- *protecting and improving habitats, species, sites of ecological value and sites of geological value with particular regard to designated wildlife and geological sites of international, national and local significance, ancient woodland and species and habitats of principal importance identified in Section 74 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and in the Barnsley Biodiversity Action Plan*
- *maximising biodiversity and geodiversity opportunities in and around new developments*
- *conserving and enhancing the form, local character and distinctiveness of the river corridors of the Dearne and Dove as natural floodplains and important strategic wildlife corridors*

Development which may harm a biodiversity or geological feature will not be permitted unless effective mitigation and/or compensatory measures can be ensured.

CSP 37 Landscape Character

Development will be expected to retain and enhance the character and distinctiveness of the individual Landscape Character Area in which it is located (as set out in the Landscape Character Assessment of Barnsley Borough 2002).

Landscape Character

Oxspring is located within the ***'Barnsley Borough Landscape Character Assessment character area: F2: Penistone UPLAND FARMLAND'.***

The areas' character is describes in the document as:

'Landscape Character

Key Characteristics

Stepped landform rising to 364m at Hartcliffe Hill.

Fields of pasture comprising small to medium geometric field units strongly defined by distinctive stone walls.

Linear or circular beech plantations stand out on the skyline, sometimes enclosed by stone walls.

Unimproved pasture with scrub on steeper slopes.

Scattered farmsteads of local light coloured stone.

Penistone is the largest settlement in the area, lying on the edge of the Don valley.

Isolated trees form silhouettes against the skyline.

Pylons and power lines are visually prominent on the skyline.

Single lane rural roads criss-cross the open countryside, bounded by stone walls.

Disused industrial quarries, shafts and mines indicate the historical importance of the area for the extraction of coal and stone.

Panoramic views over adjacent river valleys and towards the open moorland of the Peak District National Park.'

'Forces for change

Decline in intactness of stone walls resulting in decline in distinctive field pattern and strength of character.

Conversion of rural stone barns to other uses, including residential dwellings.

Pressure for new built development around Penistone.

Declining tree cover as a result of over maturing of existing stock and limited replacement through planting or natural regeneration.

Replacement of traditional stone gate posts with metal or wooden equivalents.

Introduction of large scale agricultural buildings of modern materials that stand out in the landscape'.

Landscape Management Issues and Opportunities

The overall landscape strategy objective should be to conserve the intact nature of the agricultural landscape and restore features in decline.

Conserve the network of stone walls that are strong features of the landscape and promote the restoration and re-building of declining stone walls.

Conserve the rural stone buildings and barns as features of the landscape, restoring these in favour of building new properties.

Maintain the low density development pattern of rural farmsteads and hamlets.

Ensure any new development is well placed within areas screened by landform and trees.

Consider a tree planting strategy to enhance tree cover and provide shelter for wildlife, encouraging natural regeneration of trees where possible.

Conserve stands of beech on the skyline as features of the landscape.

Conserve traditional stone gate posts as features of the agricultural landscape and consider replacement of those that have been lost.

Care should be taken in introducing new agricultural buildings into the landscape - attention to scale, materials and colour will be crucial to their successful integration.

Consider opportunities to develop the network of footpaths for recreation, and to study and interpret the wildlife habitats through nature trails and interpretative centres.

Consider opportunities to interpret and explain the area's rich history in the form of heritage trails, together with a programme of identifying and restoring significant local landmarks and historic artefacts including stone walls.

Consider new opportunities for farmers to diversify into recreation and other land uses.

Landscape Guidelines for Development
(Barnsley Borough Landscape Character Assessment)

Landscape guidelines relate to the following areas that are considered as having some potential for development:

- *Western edge of Penistone*
- *Northwestern edge of Penistone and;*
- *Southern edge of Penistone, due east of Cubley*

It is recommended that a more detailed landscape assessment and design exercise be carried out to inform precise locations for development, and design of the development and the urban edge. This will minimise potential adverse effects on landscape character. Change/ built development can be positive if it respects local character. Key objectives in integrating new built development are given below (right).

Conserve natural features such as stone walls, trees and natural landform in any new development.	PP DC
Ensure that new development does not turn its back on the landscape, but maintains a visual and physical connection with its rural context.	PP DC
New development should take advantage of its setting, for example by making the most of views over the valley of the River Don.	PP DC
Consider views from the north side of the valley of the River Don in planning any new development - colours and materials will need to be chosen carefully to integrate the development into the landscape. Muted colours, particularly on roofs, will be important in successfully integrating new development.	PP DC
Conserve `The Green' as a central open space within area F2c.	PP DC
Conserve the Coal Pit Dike corridor as a natural feature of the town and enhance public access to it.	PP DC
The scale of built development will be crucial to its successful integration. Low rise two storey properties are likely to be most successfully accommodated into this rural landscape.	PP DC
Maintain views to existing landmark buildings such as church towers and spires in planning new development.	PP DC
Maintain strategic views out from settlements across the surrounding countryside and **conserve public access** to the wider landscape.	PP DC
New development should be accompanied by native tree and shrub planting to soften the urban edge.	PP DC
Consider the use of local stone for boundary features.	PP DC

PP = Planning Policy DC = Development Control

Above: Extract from *'Barnsley Borough Landscape Character Assessment F2: Penistone UPLAND FARMLAND.'*

Opportunities and Constraints

The following observations are made in regards to landscape, ecology and the suitability of the site for housing.

Access and connectivity

The proposed development represents an opportunity to create a well connected and natural residential extension to the linear settlement pattern along this area of the River Don valley. Transport links, local services and recreational facilities are all easily accessed from the site due to it's close proximity to key cycling, walking and road routes.

Local services, such as the post office, village store, school, playing fields, playground, church, and village pub are all easily accessed within a 7 minute walk or a 2 minute cycle. The new sports/ community centre would be located within this zone.

Beyond the village, the Trans Pennine cycle and pedestrian trail connects the proposed site to Penistone and it's railway station (less than 30 mins walk or a 7 minute cycle).

From Penistone station, trains connect to:

- Barnsley (15mins)
- Huddersfield (30mins)
- Wakefield (43mins)
- Sheffield (45 mins)
- Leeds (60mins)

Barnsley (43mins) and Sheffield (63mins) are also easily reached by cycle along the two Transpennine cycle routes that lead from the site.

Penistone also has many other facilities including schools, sports clubs, cinema, local shops, supermarket, providing a large number of services within easy cycling or walking distance of the proposed site.

Furthermore, the fact that the site is situated along the B6462 Sheffield Road, enables this site to directly connect to the key road route in the area without drawing additional traffic through existing residential areas.

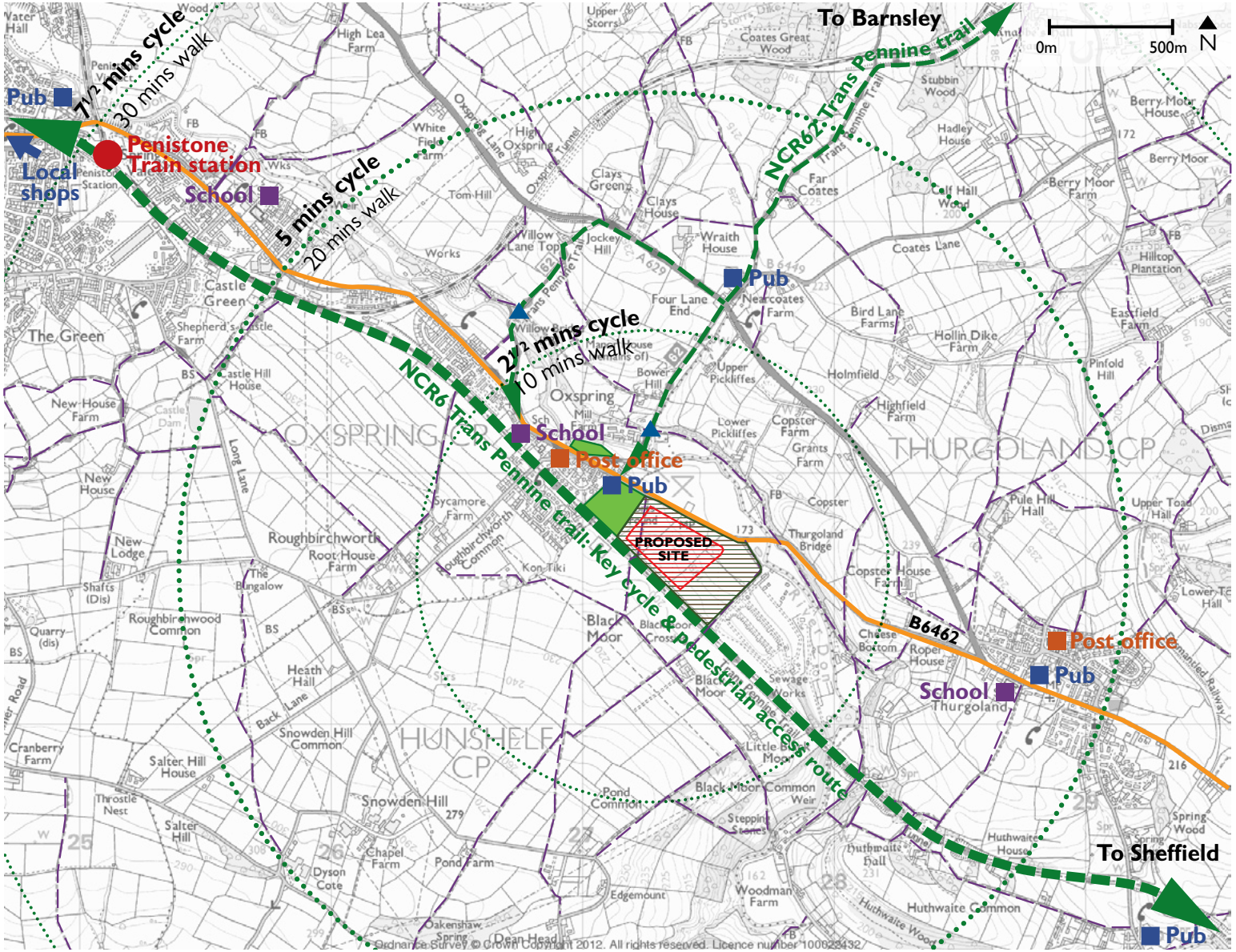


Fig 2: Map showing connectivity to local services and key pedestrian and cycle routes in the area

The proposed site will have a positive impact on the area's connectivity and facilities including:

- New connectivity to and from the site and Trans Pennine trail
- Direct connectivity to the B6462 from the site, drawing traffic along the main road route rather than through residential areas
- The local community will benefit from access to improved recreational facilities, including a sports/ community centre and improved sports grounds, play area, and new recreational opportunities through the proposed woodland area adjacent to the southeast site boundary.

Historic settlement pattern

Over the last two centuries, settlement has been mostly linear, focused along the River Don valley, with isolated rural farmsteads and small hamlets scattered over the remaining landscape.

Mills have been part of the local economy since the middle ages and have helped to form the basis of settlement along the sloping valley of the River Don, which provides a natural boundary to development.

When the Railway arrived in the mid 19th century, it provided another strong boundary to the southwest providing another force to influence the linear syntax of the River Don valley's development.

The combination of river and railway has thus provided the syntax and framework for a strong linear pattern of development along this section of the River Don valley over the last two centuries.

More recently, in the late 20th century and early 21st century, development has contravened this historic development pattern, by moving to the southwest towards Roughbirchworth.

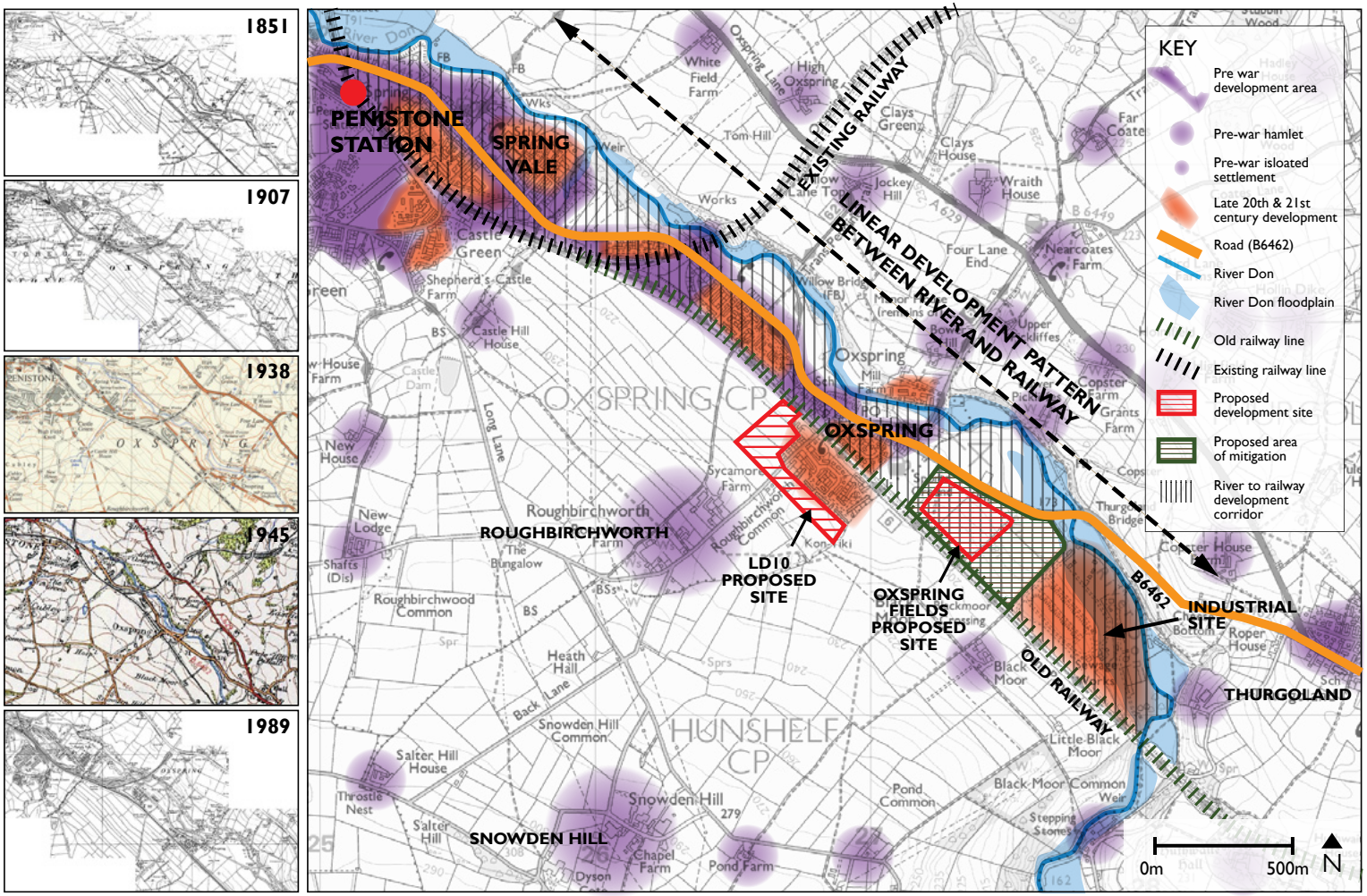


Fig 3: Map showing the historic settlement pattern in the area surrounding Oxspring

Future proposals (Oxspring fields site)

This development site represents a natural extension of the historic settlement pattern along the River Don valley between two clear, strong and defensible boundaries; the River Don and the old railway line and embankment. Furthermore, the site is also sandwiched between two existing areas of development; Oxspring village to the northwest and the largely disused industrial site to the southeast, creating clear, well defined barriers to prevent further expansion.

Future proposals (LD10 site)

Further development to the southwest would both ignore and conflict with the historic linear pattern of development in the Don valley area.

Development to the southwest of Oxspring, toward Roughbirchworth is already beginning to encroach upon the rural nature of the hamlet. Further development towards Roughbirchworth is likely to have a profound impact on the rural nature of this hamlet and effectively begin a coalescence between these two settlements. In addition, this site clearly has a more arbitrary boundary with no natural or clear edges which could help define a barrier for future development.

Topography and landform

The site is situated on a lower slope of the River Don valley. The existing levels on the site fall from southwest to northeast, between approximately 190m to 170m. The site therefore has a northeast facing aspect, with panoramic views northeast towards the opposing side of the River Don valley, which rises from 150m up to 230m.

There is also an embankment, part of the old railway line with established woodland running along the proposed southwest boundary of the site. It screens the majority of views to the site from the south or west, shielding it from view in both local and wider contexts to the west and south (see fig 8).

To the south east of the site, the adjacent largely unused industrial land continues as part of the linear extension of development along the River Don valley.

Land to the northwest is adjacent to Oxspring village and forms part of the River Don valley.

Sensitive low level ground modelling proposals around the woodland mitigation area adjacent to the southwest of the proposed site could help to provide a visual screen to the development and ensure none of the cut made during construction is transported off site, ensuring that this project is more sustainable.

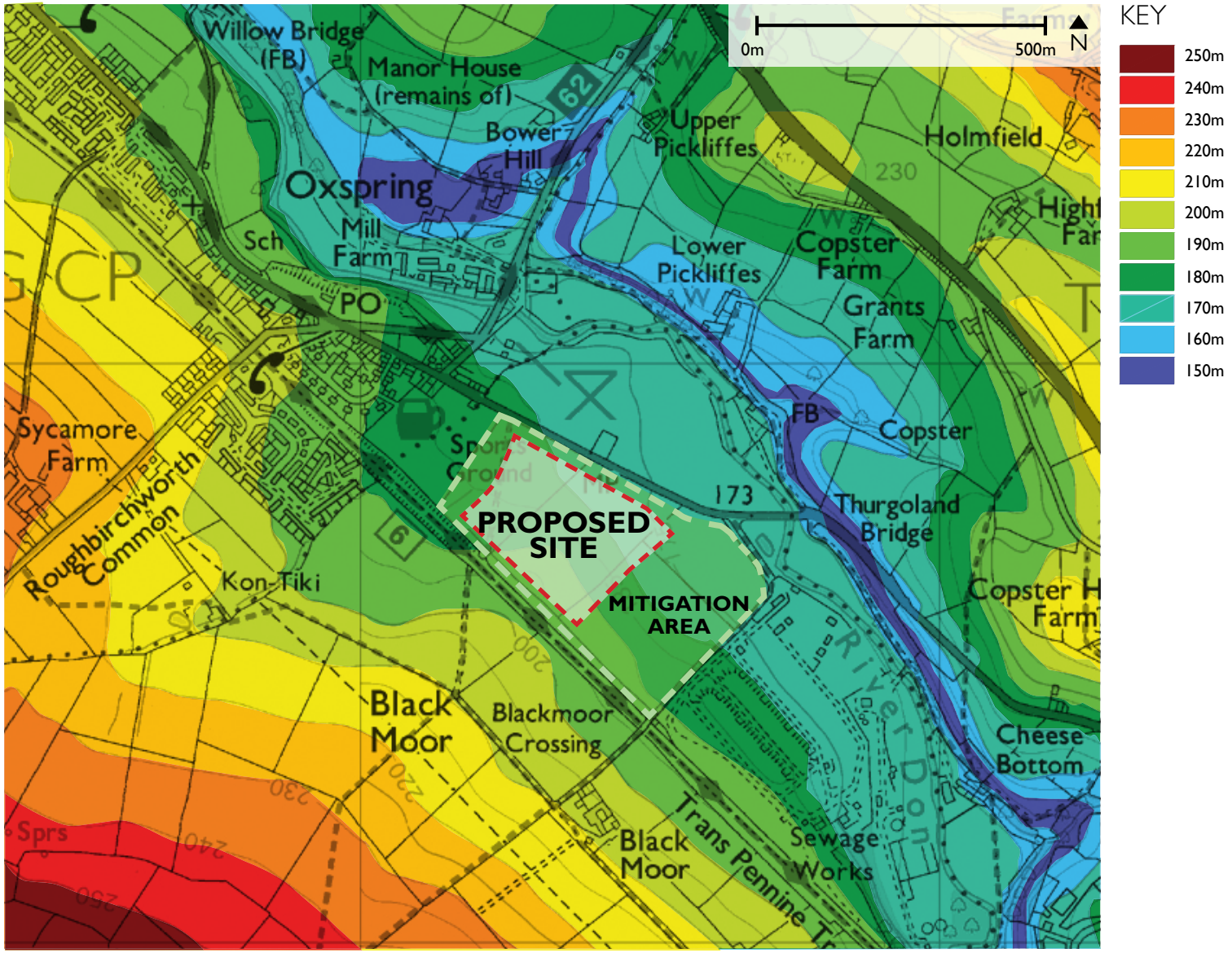


Fig 4: Map of landform in the area surrounding Oxspring

Ecology

Oxspring Fields proposed site (Sheffield Road, southeast side of Oxspring)

A preliminary ecology walkover of the site was undertaken with the aim of identifying any features or sites of ecological interest which may be affected by the development of the site. The assessment considered the following information gathered by desk study, consultation with local record holders and a site walkover:

- Proximity to statutory and non-statutory designated sites.
- Proximity to existing records for protected species.
- Site habitat appraisal and potential to support protected species.

Designated Sites

Within a 2km radius of the proposed development site there are no statutory but one non-statutorily designated nature conservation site. Black Moor Common is a Natural Heritage Site (NHS) and is approximately 500 metres south of the site. However the habitats present within the development site do not compliment those at the NHS, and the distance between the two sites is such that it is considered that the development would have no adverse effects on the NHS.

Habitats

The site comprises dry stone walls, arable crop land and species poor semi-improved grassland. It is bound: to the northeast by Sheffield Road (B6462), the southeast by a track alongside a drystone wall and largely unused industrial site, the southwest by a line of trees and the Trans Pennine Trail, and the northwest by playing fields. The site is considered to be of low ecological value owing to the limited habitats present. Consequently the development offers the opportunity to significantly enhance the site for local wildlife.

Mitigation and enhancement measures which will be incorporated into the development to promote biodiversity at the site includes:

- Planting trees and shrubs of appropriate native species throughout the site;
- Enhancement of grassland areas with plug planting or seeding with appropriate native wildflowers; and
- Bolstering of existing tree line adjacent to the site along the Trans Pennine Trail.

Protected Species

From existing biological records data provided by Sheffield Environmental Records Centre, a Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) assessment for breeding Great Crested Newt (GCN) of the adjacent pond, and an assessment of the habitats present on and adjacent to the site, it is considered that following species, enhancements and further survey is relevant to the site.

- Bats (UK and Barnsley BAP) – the southern boundary of the site presents potential foraging and commuting habitat for bats at the woodland edge along the Trans Pennine Trail. The proposed development includes planting of trees and shrubs around all of the site boundaries, this will significantly enhance the opportunities for foraging and commuting bats at the site. Furthermore the inclusion of bat boxes within trees along the boundaries and bat panels within new houses would further enhance the site for this species.
- Badger – although there are no local records or any evidence of this species that was detected within the site, evidence was found within the local area and suitable habitat found adjacent. Precautionary survey of adjacent habitats plus measures to prevent accidental harm or injury during the construction of the development would need to be implemented.
- Birds – existing habitats within the site offer very limited opportunities for breeding and foraging birds including multiple UK and Barnsley BAP priority and Birds Of Conservation Concern Red List species for which there are records in the local area, such as Yellowhammer, House Sparrow, Tree Sparrow and Swallow. The inclusion of native tree and shrub planting and nest boxes at the site will therefore significantly enhance the site for these species.
- GCN – There are records of GCN at approximately 500 metres northwest of the site, the HSI assessment of the adjacent pond resulted in a score of 'Below Average', and terrestrial habitats at the site are of low to moderate value to GCN. Consequently presence of GCN at the site is reasonably discounted, no further survey is considered necessary.
- Presence of no other protected species is considered likely at the site.

Notable Species

There are records for Brown Hare (UKBAP) and Pink-footed Goose in the local area, which the arable crop land present at the site may be of some value, but due to the abundance of this habitat within the local area it is considered that the proposed development will have no adverse effects on these species.

Summary

As a result of the preliminary assessment of the site, it is considered that the development will have no adverse effects on protected species provided precautions listed above are implemented. Furthermore the development offers the opportunity to make significant enhancements to the ecological value of the site for wildlife, including bats and multiple UKBAP, Barnsley BAP and BOCC 'priority' and 'Red List' species.

Proposed site LD10 (Roughbirchworth Lane site, west side of Oxspring)

A preliminary ecology walkover of the site was undertaken with the aim of identifying any features or sites of ecological interest which may be affected by the development of the site. The assessment considered the following information gathered by desk study, consultation with local record holders and a site walkover:

- Proximity to statutory and non-statutory designated sites.
- Proximity to existing records for protected species.
- Site habitat appraisal and potential to support protected species.

Designated Sites

Within a 2km radius of the proposed development site are no statutory but one non-statutorily designated nature conservation site. Black Moor Common is a Natural Heritage Site (NHS) and is present approximately 1km southeast of the site. However the habitats present within the development site do not compliment those at the NHS, and the distance between the two sites is such that it is considered that the development would have no adverse effects on the NHS.

Habitats

The site comprises only dry stone walls and arable crop land. It is bound to the northeast by existing housing and unmanaged grassland, and to the southwest, northwest and southeast by dry stone walls and arable fields. The far north and northwest boundary is an arbitary line between arable fields and thus has no intervening character or habitat. The site is considered to be of low ecological value owing to the limited habitats present. Consequently the development offers the opportunity to significantly enhance the site for local wildlife.

Mitigation and enhancement measures which could be incorporated into the development to promote biodiversity at the site includes:

- Planting trees and shrubs of appropriate native species;
- Protection and retainment of existing boundary trees;
- Enhancement of grassland areas with plug planting or seeding with appropriate native wildflowers; and
- Planting of native hedgerows.

Protected Species

From existing biological records data provided by Sheffield Environmental Records Centre and an assessment of the habitats present on and adjacent to the site, it is considered that following species, enhancements and further survey is relevant to the site.

- Bats (UK and Barnsley BAP) – the tree on the northwest boundary of the site may have some bat potential but further survey is required. Planting of trees and shrubs at the site would enhance the opportunities for foraging and commuting bats at the site. Furthermore the inclusion of bat panels within new houses would further enhance the site for this species.
- Badger – although there are no local records or any evidence of this species that was detected within the site, what is considered evident of a currently active main Badger sett was found to be present immediately adjacent to the to the northeastern boundary of the site. As a result construction would need to be excluded from within 30 metres of the sett or further survey conducted, which may lead to the requirement of a Badger licence to close the sett and move any Badgers present, plus mitigation prior to construction.
- Birds – existing habitats within the site offer very limited opportunities for breeding and foraging birds including multiple UKBAP and Barnsley BAP priority and Birds Of Conservation Concern Red List species for which there are records in the local area, such as Yellowhammer, House Sparrow, Tree Sparrow and Swallow. The inclusion of native tree and shrub planting and nest boxes at the site will therefore significantly enhance the site for theses species.
- Water Vole (UK and Barnsley BAP) – There are records for Water Vole at the pond 150m south of the site. The ditch running along the southern boundary of the site should be subjected to a Water Vole survey and assessment to determine if the development could have an adverse effect on this species.
- Presence of no other protected species is considered likely at the site.

Notable Species

There are records for Brown Hare (UKBAP) and Pink-footed Goose in the local area, which the arable crop land present at the site may be of some value, but due to the abundance of this habitat within the local area it is considered that the proposed development will have no adverse effects on these species.

Summary

As a result of the preliminary assessment of the site, it is considered that further survey is required to determine the potential effects the development may have on local wildlife. It should be highlighted that it is quite likely that a main and active Badger sett is present immediately adjacent to the site, therefore development at the site has the potential to a have an adverse effect on this species, but further survey is required. Further survey is also required for bats and Water Vole to determine if the development could have an adverse effect on these species.

Ecology map

The Oxspring fields proposed site presents an opportunity to transform an area of low ecological value into an ecologically important and biodiverse area that supports and strengthens existing habitat areas and creates new ones.

Multiple habitats listed in the national and local Biodiversity action plans including woodland (wet & mixed deciduous), hedgerow, arable field margin, pond and reedbed areas are proposed for the site.

Once established, the proposed mitigation area could then be returned back to the green belt, safeguarding this new area of habitat and public amenity for the future.

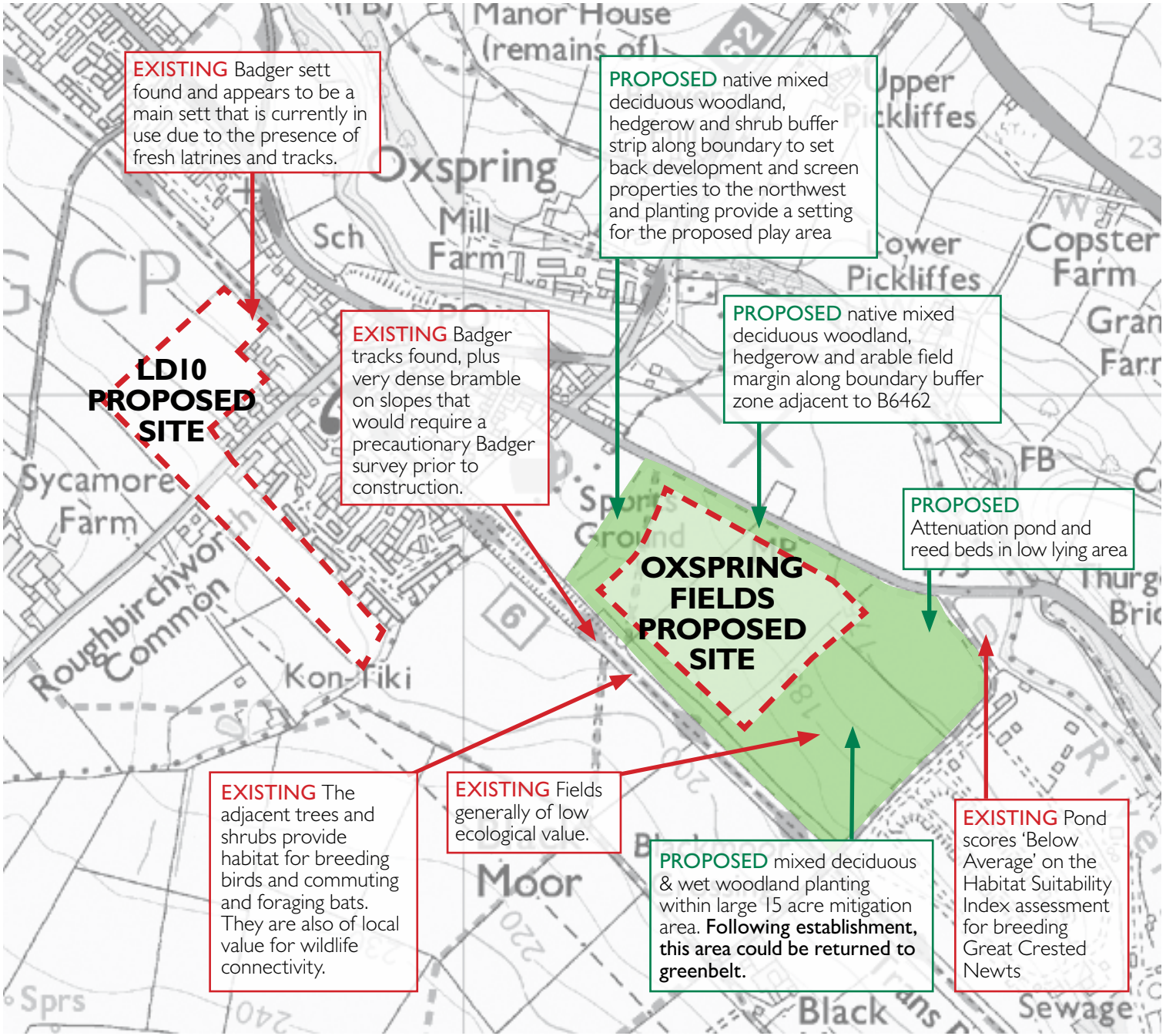


Fig 5: Existing ecology and proposed habitat creation

Existing vegetation

The site itself is predominantly open and is made up of arable farmland separated by dry stone walls in poor condition.

The northeastern, southeastern boundaries have little or no vegetation.

The northwestern boundary also has little vegetation except for a few scattered shrubs along the boundary line.

Beyond the northwestern boundary, there is a turf covered sports field with some intermittently placed trees along it's boundary line.

Conversely, The southwestern boundary has an abundance of trees and scrub planting forming part of the green corridor along the Transpennine trail cycle and walking route. The Transpennine green corridor forms part of the local green infrastructure that connects the Penistone area to Sheffield, linking other habitat areas such as the River Don green corridor, and Spring, Huthwaite, Wharncliffe, Todwick, Hagues and Great Hollins Woods.

Beyond the northwest boundary, a green corridor of woodland, scrub and riparian snakes past the site, skirting the northeast boundary area.

The woodland character and green infrastructure of the river valley and hillsides can be reinforced by integrating a new generation of woodland as part of the proposed mitigation strategy.

In addition, introducing more tree coverage to the Don River valley will help to decrease runoff and add to wider flood alleviation in the River Don valley catchment.

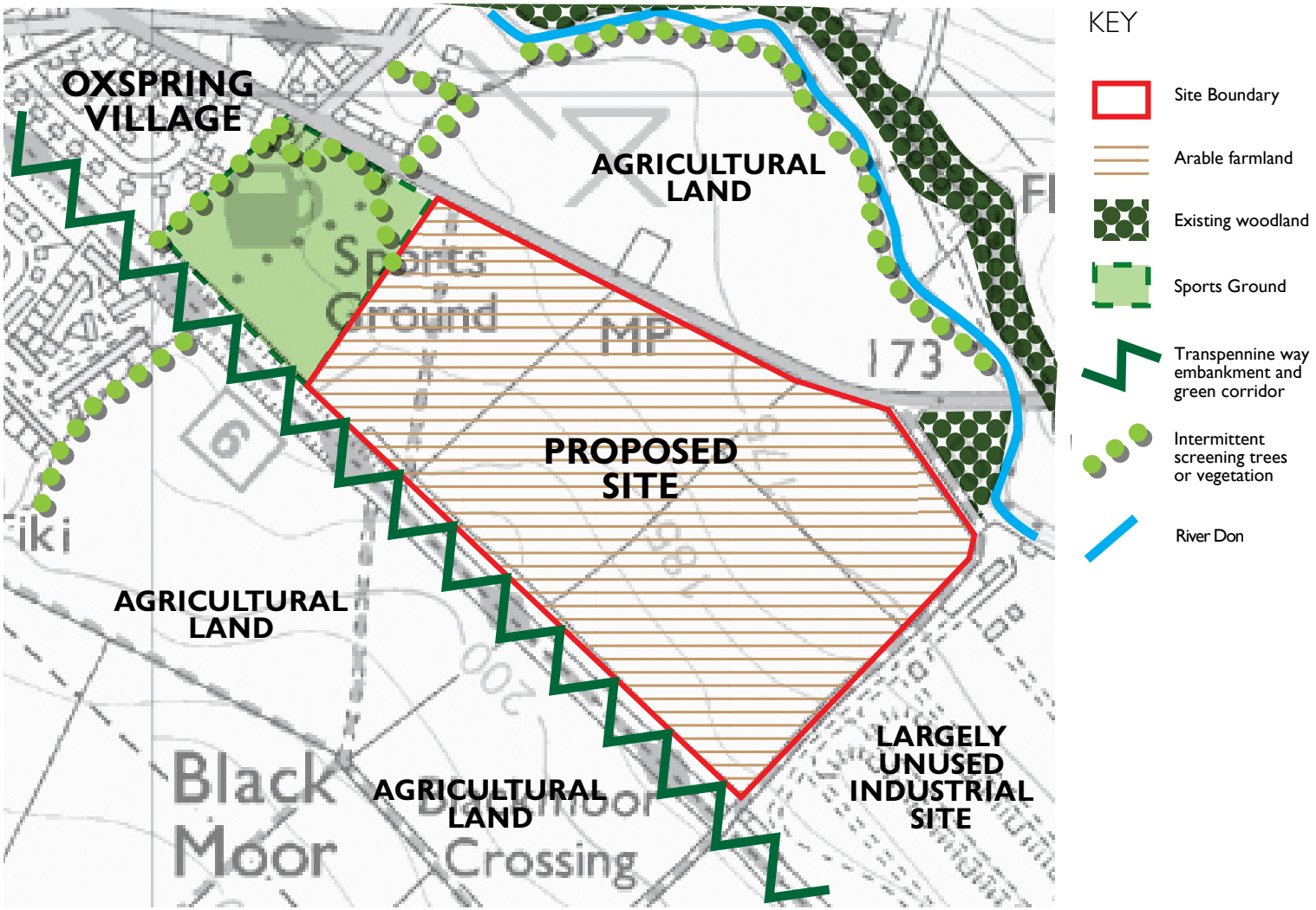


Fig 6: Existing vegetation

Analysis of visual amenity, existing screening and proposed mitigation

This section aims to provide an overview of key views, screening elements and the effects of proposed mitigation and screening

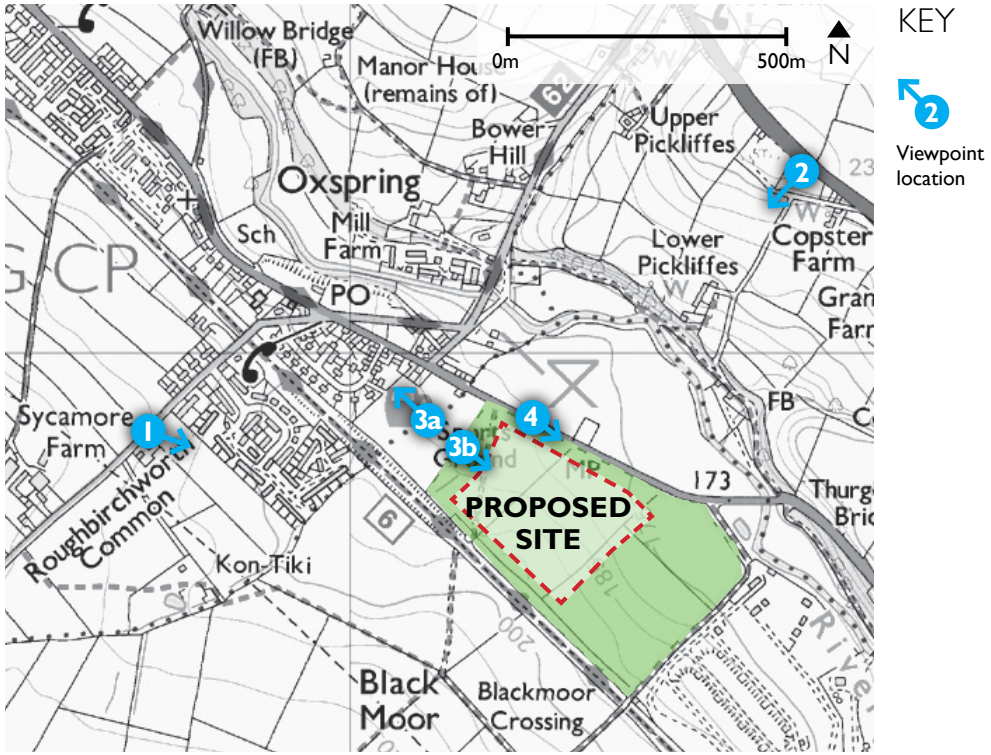


Fig 7: Map of viewpoints

Viewpoint 1 analysis

Existing screening features

The existing railway embankment runs along the proposed southwest boundary of the site and screens the majority of views of the site from the south or west.

Proposed screening features

It is unlikely any additional screening will be necessary to screen the site from the south or west due to the existing railway embankment and associated vegetation and trees.

However current proposed mitigation and screening plans will add to the vegetation and tree cover alongside the embankment, contributing to an overall net gain to green infrastructure the proposed development brings to the area.

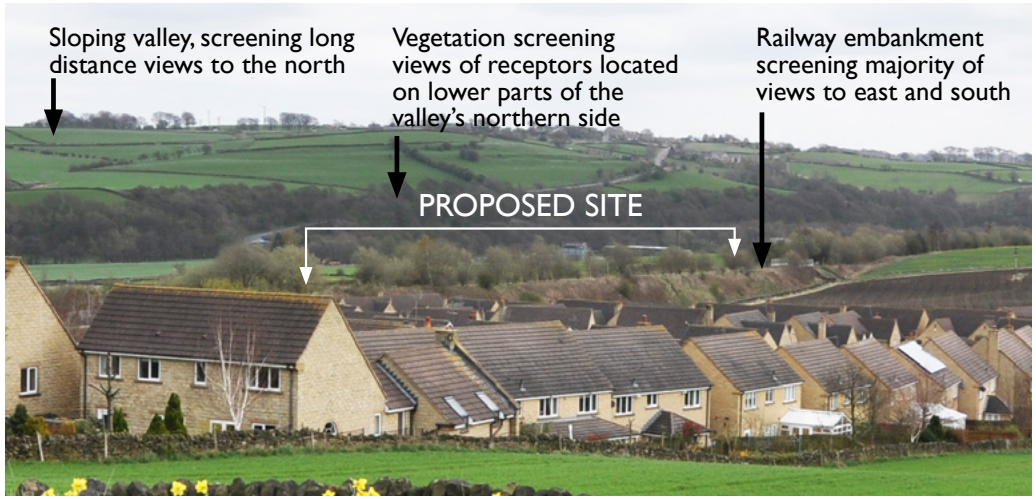


Fig 8: VIEWPOINT 1

Viewpoint 2 analysis

Existing screening features

The site may be visible from a handful of scattered, isolated receptors located in the upper north side of the River Don valley. However, existing landform, buildings and vegetation play a role in softening views toward the site. In addition, the low lying nature of its location; within the confines of the River Don valley ensures the site does not feature as a prominent component on the horizon.

Receptors located lower down on the valley on the northern side are less likely to have clear views toward the site due to intervening trees, vegetation and a shallower angle of view.

Proposed mitigation and screening features

Proposed mitigation screening will result in the replacement of arable farmland with a generous amount of mitigation tree cover being introduced to the River Don valley.

This tree cover and associated ground modelling will help to blend the development into the landscape, creating a view of shrubs and mixed woodland and rooftops in the site area and shrubs and mixed woodland in the mitigation/ recreation areas.

The proposed mitigation will improve biodiversity, increase habitat and create new recreation opportunities. Increased tree cover will also help to decrease runoff along this part of the valley, contributing to wider flood alleviation in the River Don valley catchment.

Where possible, habitats identified in the Barnsley Biodiversity Action Plan will be introduced, including: Wet and mixed deciduous woodland, field margin planting, and hedgerows. (see fig 5)

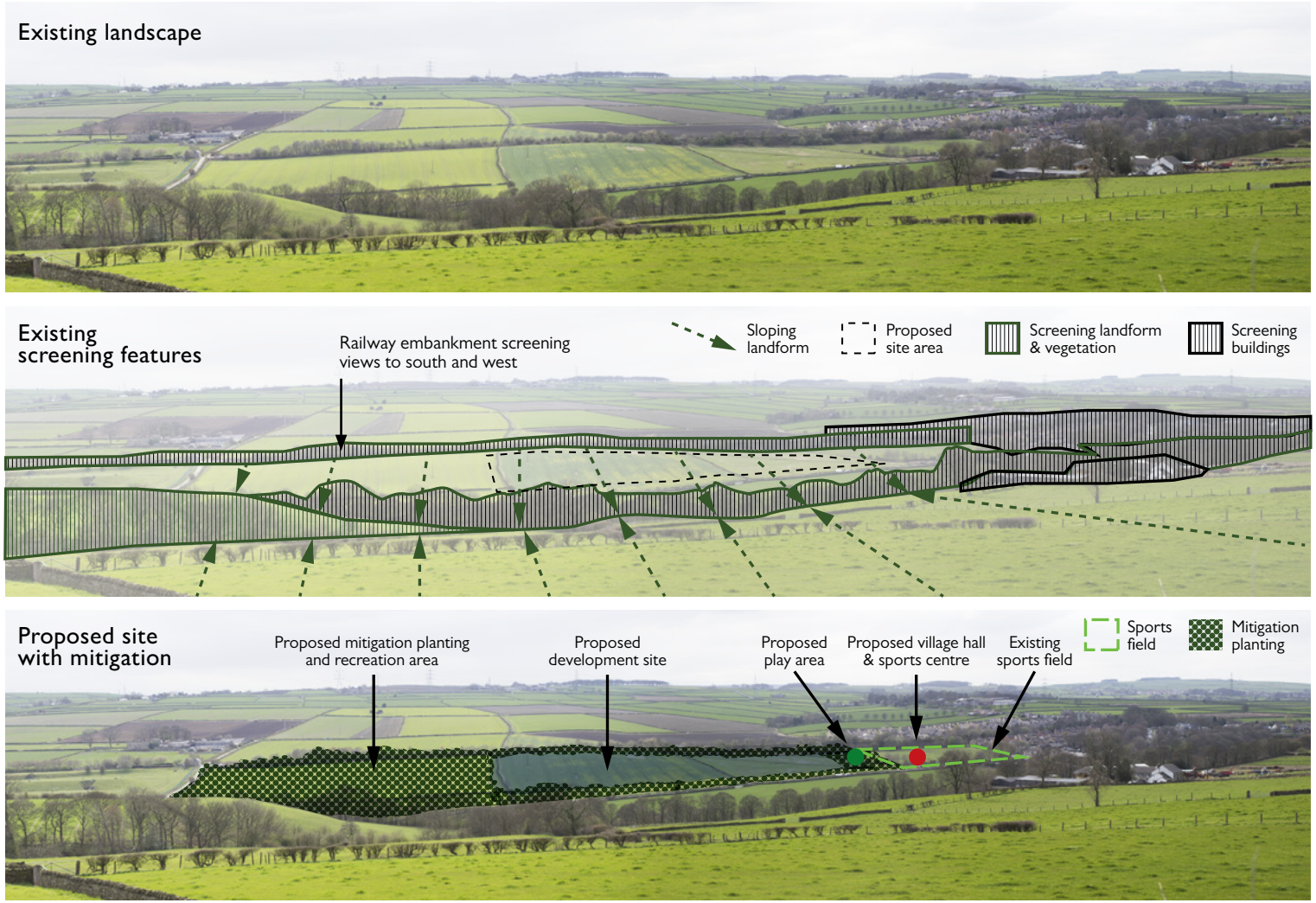


Fig 9: VIEWPOINT 2

Above: *'Wet woodland'* planting as shown in the Barnsley Biodiversity action plan

Above: *'Mixed deciduous woodland'* planting as shown in the Barnsley Biodiversity action plan

Above: *'Hedgerow'* planting as shown in the Barnsley Biodiversity action plan

Viewpoint 3 analysis

Existing screening features

It is clear from fig 10 - viewpoint 3a that there are a small number of houses from which the site may be visible.

However, there is existing vegetation and trees which partially screen these views toward the site.

Furthermore, all of these properties will retain relatively open views due to the intervening playing fields.

Consistent topography between the village and the proposed site, allows potential views of the site from properties in Oxspring village to the northwest to be screened by shrub and tree buffer planting.

Fig 10: VIEWPOINT 3a

Proposed screening features

Proposed mitigation shown in fig 11 is likely to screen any of the proposed development from the southeastern edge of the village. Consistent topography ensures that neither area of development will be overlooked by the other once the mitigation has been realised.

Increased tree and shrub cover in this area will help to blend the development into the wider landscape.

Furthermore, residents of Oxspring village will benefit from improved facilities in this location including a play area, community and sports centre and woodland and recreation area.

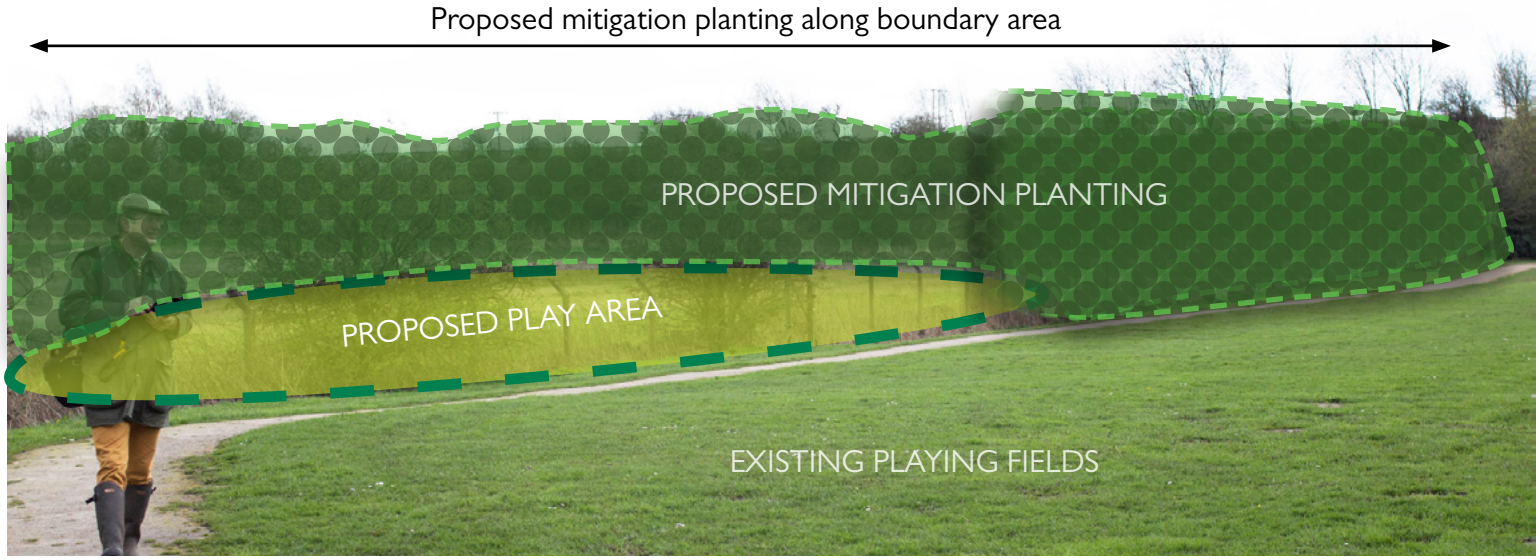


Fig 11: VIEWPOINT 3b : Site boundary with approximate mitigation and play areas

Viewpoint 4 analysis

Existing screening features

The B6462 road currently runs adjacent to the northeastern boundary of the site. There is an existing dry stone wall which is in a poor state of repair.

Proposed screening features

The existing network of dry stone walls will be repaired and restored. A proposed buffer zone of shrub and tree planting will screen the road from views toward the proposed development. The roadside approach will be further improved with a *'field margin'* approach (as identified in the Barnsley Biodiversity Action Plan) along the grass verge adjacent to the roadside.

The view will be improved with trees and shrubs lining the approach to Oxspring village. Repaired dry stone walls and field boundary strip will represent an net improvement in the overall quality of experience along the approach/ exit from/ to the southeast.

Above: *'Field margin'* planting as shown in the Barnsley Biodiversity action plan

Fig 12: VIEWPOINT 4 (existing)

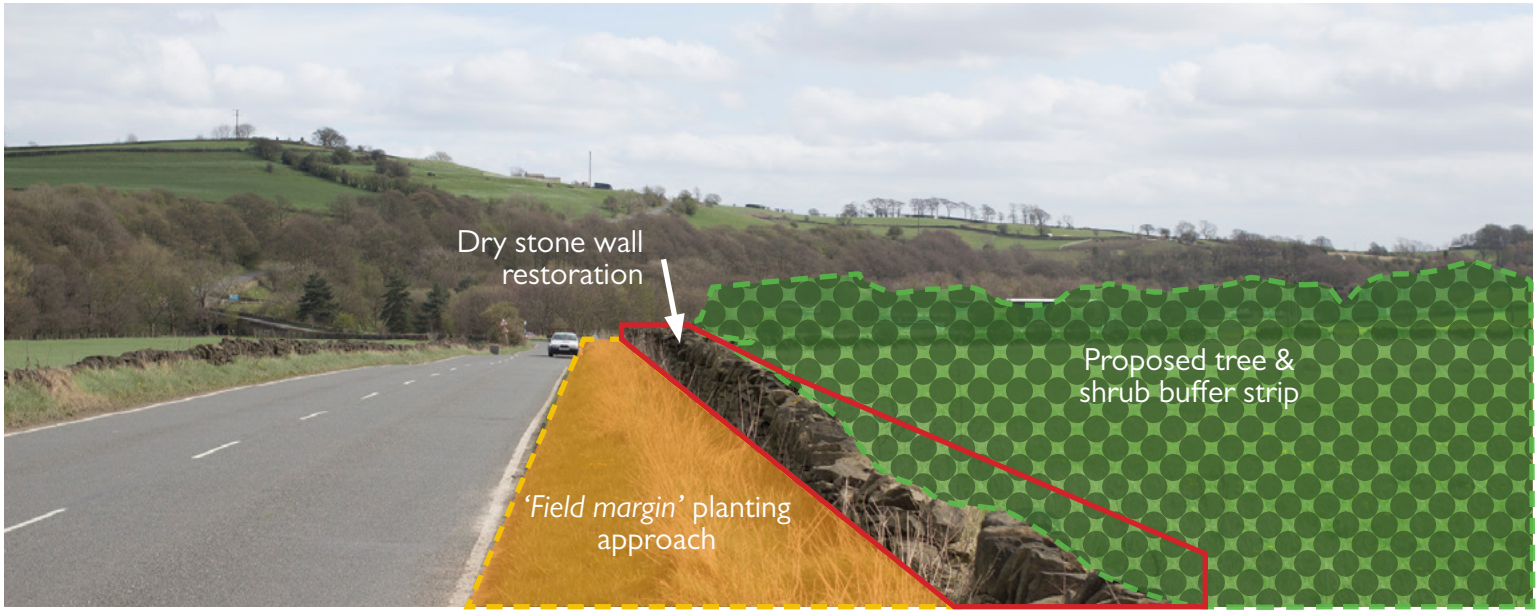


Fig 13: VIEWPOINT 4 (proposed) with approximate mitigation and restoration areas

Landscape strategy and conclusions

Mitigation and restoration

The proposed site is already afforded some screening from existing landform, vegetation and urban development (see figs 8-13). This could be strengthened by shrub and woodland mitigation and ground modelling adjacent to the southwest site boundary, screening views from receptors that may overlook the site (see fig 14).

Repairs and restoration to dry stone walls and boundary strips adjacent to the B6462 will help further improve the experience along the approach to Oxspring for users of the road and receptors to the northeast.

Ecology and green infrastructure

The proposed mitigation provides a net improvement in habitat, recreational and visual amenity to the area. Furthermore new habitat areas will connect to and help strengthen the existing green infrastructure network that links South Yorkshire with the Peak District and beyond. Proposed buffer strips will widen and improve the section of the Transpennine green corridor adjacent to the southwest boundary, and the proposed woodland planting will add and connect to an increasing matrix of woodland in the area.

Transport and local services

New foot/cycle and road connections to the Transpennine trail and B6462 ensures that residents would be able to take full advantage of the myriad of walking routes in the valley, local services, and excellent road and rail connections to nearby regional centres. Furthermore direct access from the proposed site to the key road route (B6462) minimises additional traffic flow through residential areas.

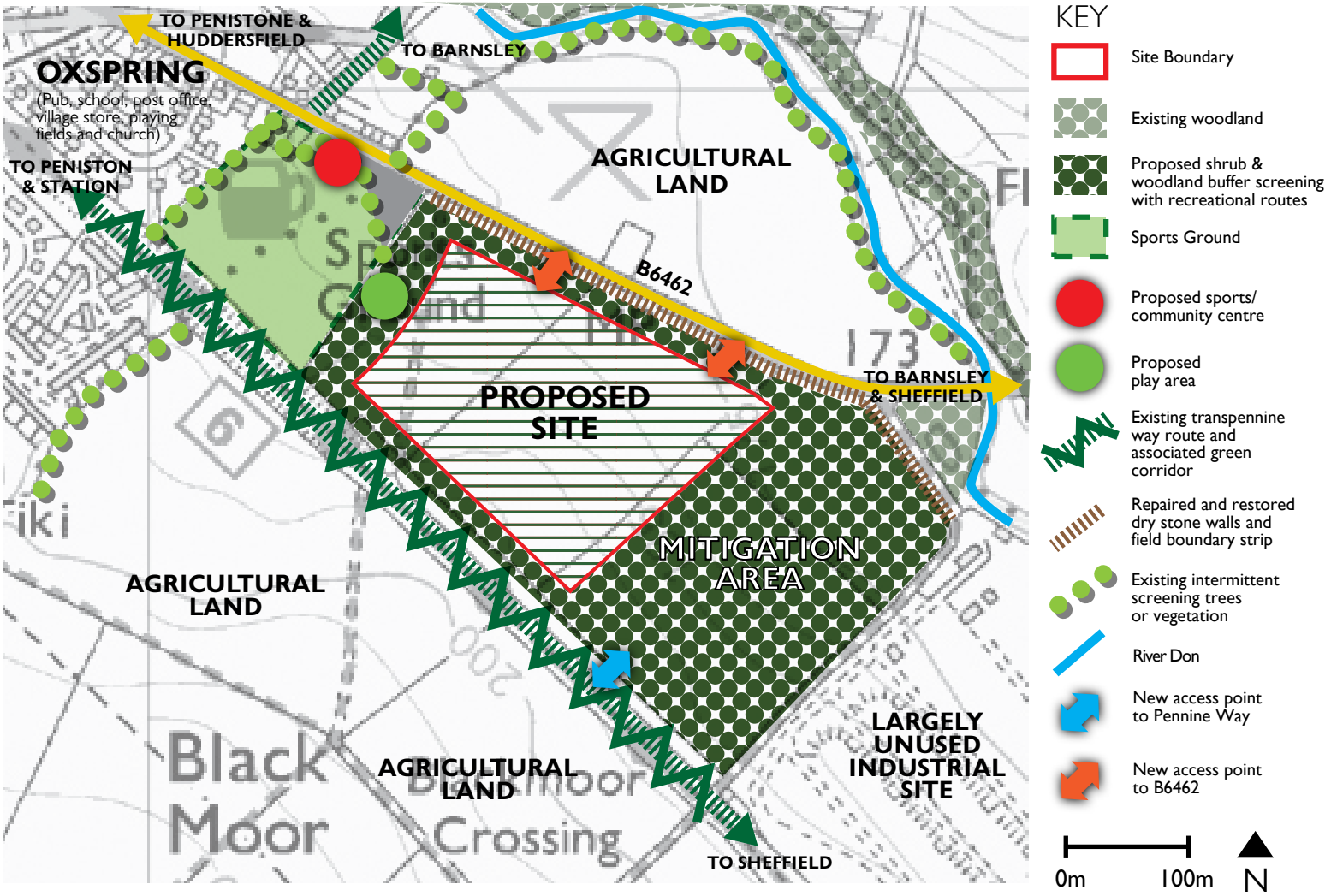


Fig 14: Landscape strategy plan

Leisure and recreation

Oxspring residents would benefit from improved community/ sports centre, play facilities and associated improvements proposed for the sports ground area. In addition, the proposed woodland area and connecting footpath to the southeast would provide an additional recreational facility for local residents, with increased opportunities for circular walks and connectivity to the wider network of existing local walking and cycle routes. These proposals would combine to create a high provision of linked recreational facilities which would service this proposed development and local area.

Settlement pattern

The proposed site sits within clear and well defined boundaries (the old railway line and River Don) and lies between two existing areas of development (Oxspring and the industrial site). This development respects the linear settlement pattern which has evolved over the last two centuries (see fig 3). Furthermore, the site will not encroach on any neighbouring settlements such as Roughbirchworth, which is currently in danger of coalescence if the proposed LD10 site is developed to the west of Oxspring.

Summarised comparison of the proposed sites LD10 and Oxspring fields

	LD10	OXSPRING FIELDS
Mitigation and restoration	The size of LD10 provides limited opportunities for additional mitigation planting or restoration of boundary walls.	Oxspring fields provides a generous mitigation area with proposals to plant significant screening vegetation. Proposals also include ground modelling and restoration of derelict dry stone walls. Furthermore, the site is well screened by existing landform and topography; the visual screen provided by the old railway embankment and it's location at the lower part of a valley.
Ecology and green infrastructure	Initial ecology assessment suggests high badger activity with what appears to be a main sett within the site which could be impacted by development. There are not currently any plans for this site that would suggest any consideration for ecological improvements or green infrastructure.	Initial ecology assessment suggests some badger activity adjacent to the site, although there was no evidence of a main sett nearby. Furthermore, this site represents an opportunity to create an overall net gain in terms of habitat and biodiversity due to generous mitigation areas and introduction of a number of habitats defined by the local Biodiversity Action Plan. Site proposals would also contribute to the wider green infrastructure and flood alleviation in the Don Valley area.
Transport and local services	This site would rely on minor roads running through a residential area to connect to the main road through the village, the B6462. Thus creating unnecessary intrusions in to the lives of residents in this area. No bus stops adjacent to site.	This site would connect directly to the B6462 Sheffield Road, minimising potential intrusions on local residents. Proposals also connect the site directly to the Pennine way cycle and pedestrian route and local bus routes. There is a bus stop adjacent to the site.
Settlement pattern	This development contradicts the existing centuries old linear settlement pattern that has developed and would impact upon the rural nature and identity of the adjacent hamlet of Roughbirchworth, forming the beginnings of a coalescence with this neighbouring settlement. Furthermore, there are no strong or well defined boundaries to this development that might help to define a clear interface between settlement and green belt.	This site respects the existing historic linear settlement pattern between the well defined existing boundaries of the river and old railway line. It is further defined by the B6462 Sheffield Road, and adjacent, largely disused industrial site.
Leisure and recreation	The size and location of this site would severely limit the possibilities for the introduction of, or improvements to, leisure and recreation facilities. There are not currently any plans for this site that would suggest any consideration for leisure or recreation improvements.	The Oxspring fields Leisure & recreation proposals include: • Improvements to the existing sports field by creating a community/ sports centre and associated play area • Additional woodland recreational area and walking routes • New and improved connectivity to existing walking & cycling routes • Additional walking route and connection to Transpennine trail

GREENBELT 5 PURPOSES CHECKLIST	LD10	OXSPRING FIELDS
1) Checks the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas	**NO** - Increases potential for sprawl due to poorly defined and arbitary boundaries	**YES** - Decreases potential for sprawl being contained within well defined, strong boundaries
2) Prevents neighbouring towns merging into one another	**NO** - This development will begin a coalescence with the neighbouring hamlet of Roughbirchworth	**YES** - Does not encroach on any neighbouring settlements
3) Assists in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	**NO** - Increases potential for encroachment due to poorly defined and arbitary boundaries, exposed position and lack of provision for mitigation	**YES** - Due to strong physical boundaries, this site is a natural end to development in this area. Significant provision for mitigation proposals will help to blend the site in to the landscape
4) Preserves the setting and special character of historic towns	**NO** - Contradicts historic development pattern of Oxspring. No provision for character improvements	**YES** - Preserves historic development pattern of Oxspring, improves village approach, restores drystone walls and includes a generous amount of woodland, mitigation planting and habitat development
5) Assists in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land	**NO** - There are no current plans for this site to encourage the regeneration of any derelict urban land	**YES** - Provides partial assistance with regeneration of derelict land around Penistone station through funds generated from the development of this site

Further studies

Landscape

We assess that the Oxspring fields site (and relevant local area) would require the following landscape reports:

- A full Landscape and visual impact assessment
- Tree survey
- Detailed masterplan including landscape mitigation proposals

Ecology

A initial walkover of the site at Oxspring Fields found the site to be of low ecological value, being comprised of only arable crop land and species poor grassland.

Habitats adjacent to the site were deemed suitable during initial assessment for foraging bats, breeding birds and sheltering badger

As a consequence the following surveys are considered necessary to more accurately inform a planning application for development of the site.

- Phase 1 habitat survey;
- Precautionary Badger survey; and,
- Habitat Suitability Index assessment of ponds within 500m.

Landscape Architects ■ Urban Designers ■ Ecologists ■ Horticulturists

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