

WEST BERKSHIRE COUNCIL

**LANDSCAPE CAPACITY ASSESSMENT OF POTENTIAL HOUSING SITES WITHIN AND ADJACENT TO THE
NORTH WESSEX DOWNS AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY IN WEST BERKSHIRE**

FINAL PHASE 2 REPORT: BRADFIELD SOUTHEND

BRADFIELD SOUTHEND

Settlement	Bradfield Southend
North Wessex Downs AONB Character areas:	
LCA 8A Hermitage Wooded Commons	
Date of site survey	12 June 2014
Surveyor	AG

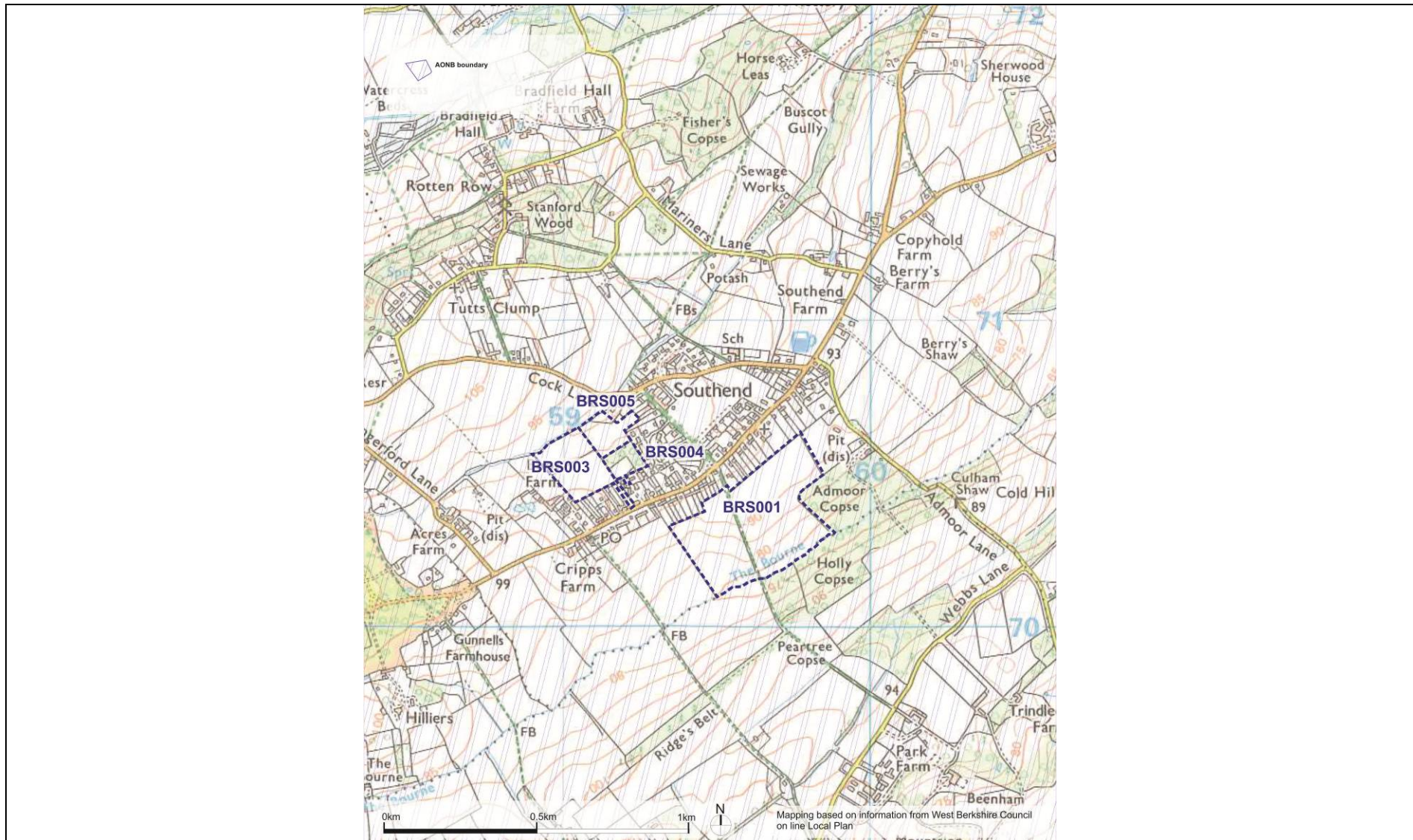


Figure BRS.1: Bradfield Southend potential housing sites

Key landscape characteristics of LCA8A

- Broad undulating plateau
- Intricate mosaic of woodland, pasture and small areas of remnant heathland
- Large interconnected woodland blocks (along river Bourne)
- Strong hedgerow pattern with mature trees
- Enclosed and intimate character
- Small irregular fields of informal and piecemeal enclosures
- Intricate network of rural lanes, many sunken and overhung with woodland
- Ancient and semi-natural woodland
- Reorganised fields and paddocks, formerly pre18th C irregular fields (HLC)
- Blurring of the urban/rural boundary as result of introduction of paddocks (HECZ)
- Network of lanes with old hedgebanks (NDLCA LCT15)
- Linear woodland (NDLCA LCT15)

Key visual characteristics of LCA8A

- Low wooded horizons

Key settlement characteristics of LCA8A

- Dispersed settlement pattern characteristic of encroachment into woodland and commons
- Linear roadside settlements as at Southend
- Development has extended beyond the settlement boundary
- Original centred on two drove roads
- Mix of farmhouses and poly-focal hamlets with several nuclei clustered around road junctions at Southend (HECZ)
- Housing developments from the 1960s concentrated around the historic settlements of South End, typified by small housing estates and developments constructed around the historic nuclei. Development at South End has shifted the settlement's focus to the south-west and away from the historic core (HECZ)
- Ridgetop roads and settlements (NDLCA LCT15)
- Insensitive modern infill development (NDLCA LCT15)

Summary of the key characteristics of the settlement and landscape constraints on the extent and location of development

The whole of Bradfield Southend and its hinterland lies within the AONB landscape character area LCA 8A Hermitage Wooded Commons. The village extends along a low ridge at 95 to 100m AOD above the River Bourne valley to the south and the River Pang valley to the north. A minor stream in a shallow valley defines the northern edge of the village. The settlement is largely linear in character, as the historic nucleated hamlets have been linked through more modern housing along Cock Lane and South End Road, although these are linked by development along Heath Road. The settlement edge is fragmented but much more clearly defined at the west end of the village on Cock Lane and at the top of Aldmoor Lane. The village has few open views; with framed views into adjacent fields. The Bourne valley is a local feature and the local tree and hedgerow cover helps to contain the village.

The village still maintains its ridgetop character and largely retains a linear pattern. The impact of modern infill development is partly mitigated by the lack of large or medium sized housing estates and by the open space between Cock Lane and South End Road. The village would benefit from a greater sense of containment and clearer definition to the main approaches into the village. This is already in evidence at Cock Lane and further development beyond the existing boundary here should be resisted. The character of Aldmoor Lane should be conserved and development should not extend down the ridgeline slopes. Minor extensions at each end of South End Road might be achieved without harm to the AONB provided that an opportunity was sought to enhance the settlement edge and the village did not expand beyond any well-defined landscape features.

Sources:

North Wessex Downs AONB Integrated Landscape Character Assessment 2002

Additional information from:

- Berkshire Landscape Character Assessment 2003 (BLCA)
- Newbury District Landscape Character Assessment 1993 (NDLCA)
- Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC)
- Historic Environment Character Zoning (HECZ)

A. Assessment of Potential Housing Site: BRS001: Land to the south of South End Road

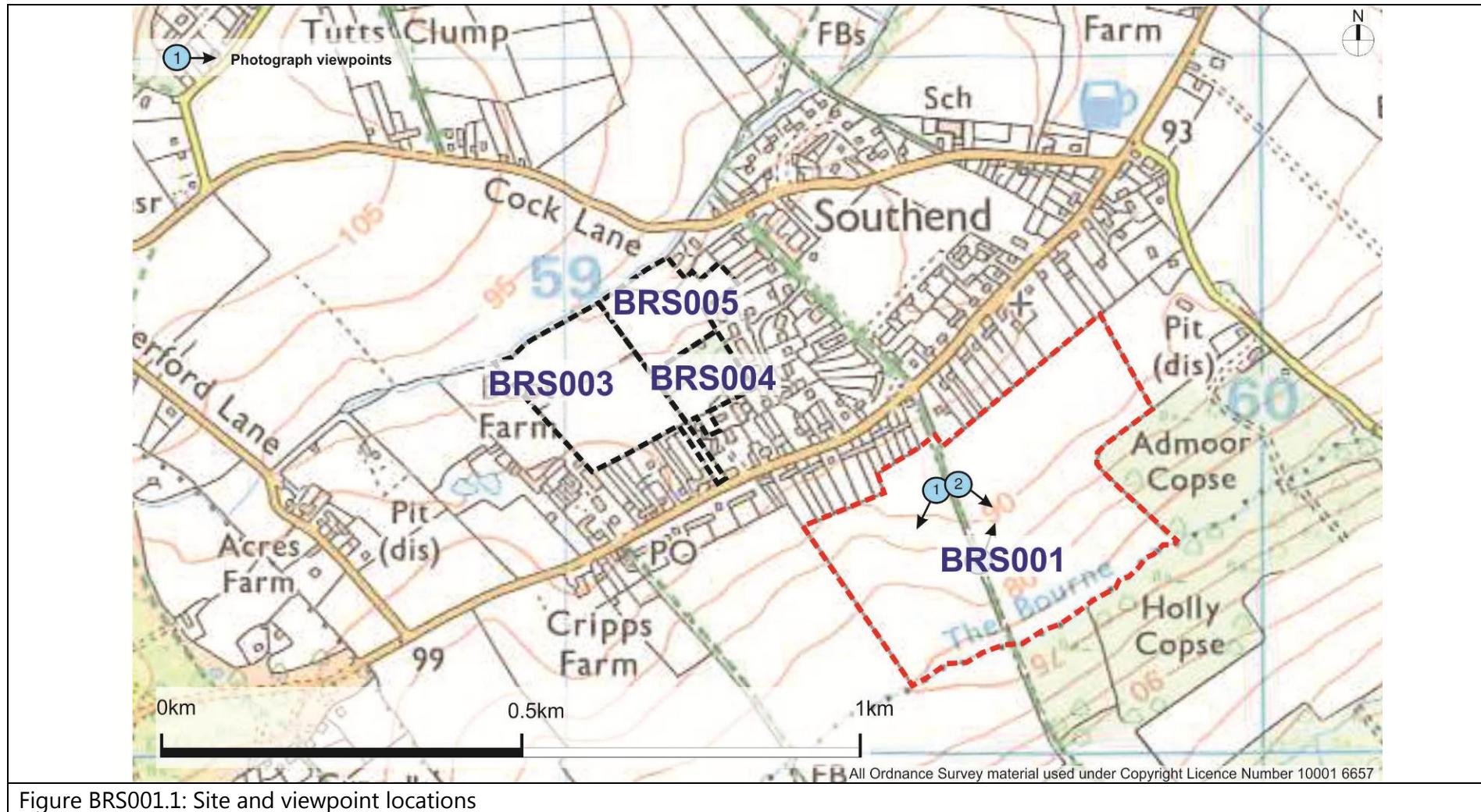


Figure BRS001.1: Site and viewpoint locations

PHOTOGRAPHS



Viewpoint 1: Long views south west to the wider AONB from the high ground



Viewpoint 2: View to Aldmoor Copse in the valley bottom, from north end of bridleway



Viewpoint 3: View north from bridleway in the centre of the site showing the strong tree belt screening the village

Site description

Site BRS001 lies to the south of Bradfield Southend, entirely within the North Wessex Downs AONB. The site is defined on the north western and part of the north eastern side by the settlement, and to the eastern side by semi-natural woodland of Holly Copse and Admoor Copse. The north western edge of the site is at the edge of the low ridge on which the settlement lies and the rest of the site continues down the valley side to the Bourne River along the southern boundary. The site is divided into two sections by a bridleway contained by hedges which runs north / south down the slope. There is a strong tree belt containing the settlement to the north of the eastern field, with more sparsely treed northern boundary to the western field. Both fields are currently under arable crops. There are long views across the AONB to the south and south west from the high ground, but little intervisibility with the village.

Relationship with adjacent settlement

- North western boundary adjacent to linear development along South End Road
- North eastern boundary adjacent to sparse development along Aldmoor Lane
- Much of site extends well beyond settlement envelope away from the low ridge and down the slope into the Bourne Valley
- Much of southern edge of Bradfield Southend is well vegetated, including the north western and north eastern boundaries

Relationship with adjacent wider countryside

- Strong relationship with the wider AONB and valley landscape to the south west
- Part of the intricate mosaic of woodland, pasture and larger arable fields
- Strong pattern of hedgerows and woodland
- Part enclosed / part open landscape – more open than typical in wider LCA

Impact on key landscape characteristics

- Loss of matrix of woodland, pasture and arable which has strong links with the wider landscape
- Topography would require major modification to enable housing development
- Loss of visual and aural tranquillity
- Potential impact on River Bourne corridor and Admoor Copse / Holly Copse (semi-natural ancient woodlands) on south eastern / eastern edge of site
- Impact on bridleway crossing site
- South eastern edge of site is within flood zones 2 and 3

Impact on key visual characteristics

- Site is largely well screened from Bradfield Southend
- Potential visual impact on a wide area south and west of the site within the AONB
- Impact on the skyline in views from the south

Impact on key settlement characteristics

- Development of the site would extend the settlement down the slope into the Bourne Valley
- Development of the site would fail to respect the traditional linear pattern of development of much of the village
- Poor landscape and visual connections with the existing built form

Summary of compliance with NPPF

Development on this site would result in harm to the natural beauty and special qualities of the AONB.

Recommendations

The site should not be pursued further as a potential housing site on landscape grounds.

B. Assessment of Potential Housing Site: BRS003: Land to the north of South End Road

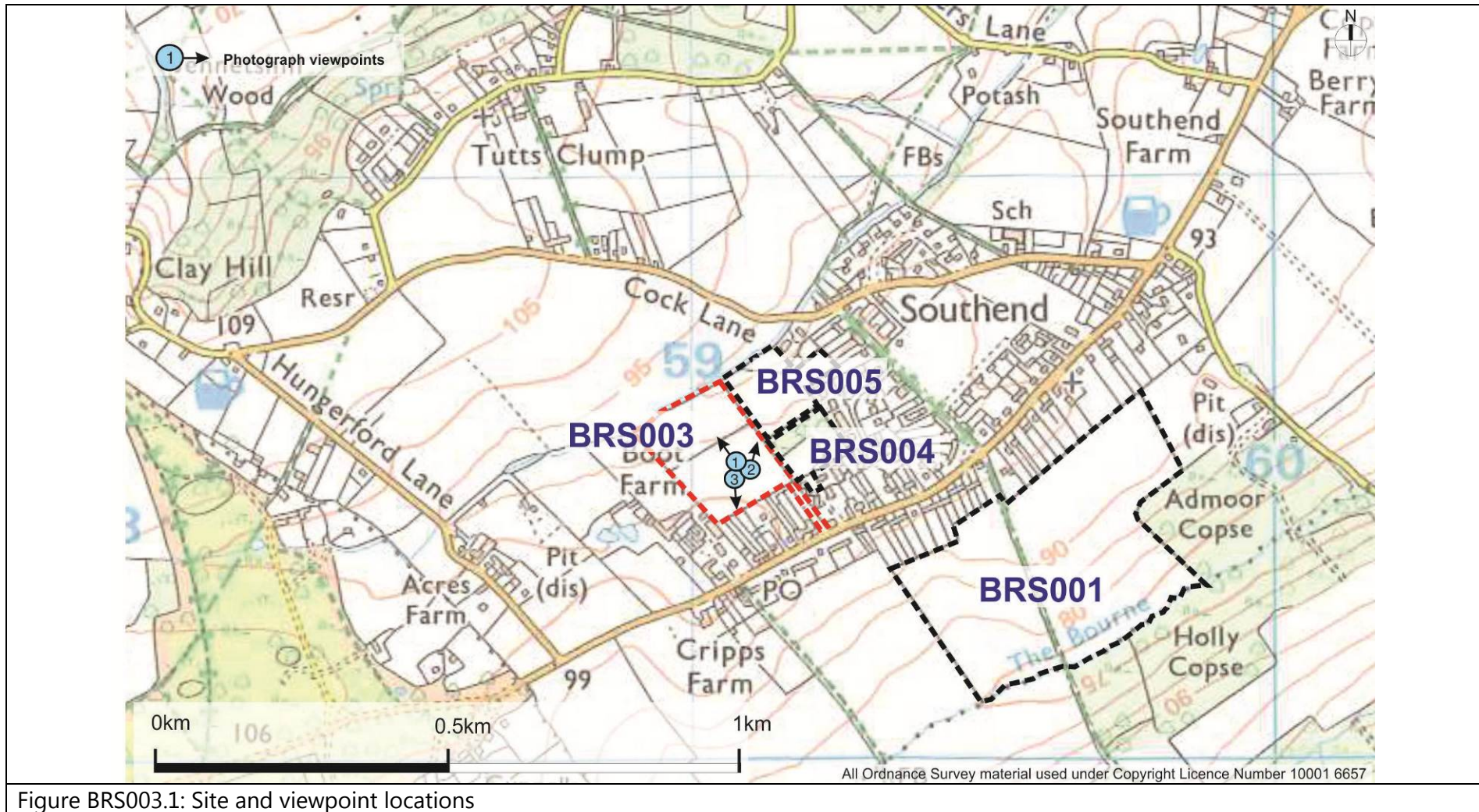


Figure BRS003.1: Site and viewpoint locations

PHOTOGRAPHS



Viewpoint 1: View north west from centre of southern field. Glimpsed views to wider countryside are possible through tree belt dividing north and south fields.



Viewpoint 2: View north east towards tree belt separating site from BRS004 and BRS005.



Viewpoint 3: View south towards well vegetated edge of settlement.

Site description

Site BRS003 is located on the north western side of Bradfield Southend, accessed via a small industrial estate and is entirely within the North Wessex Downs AONB. The site is defined on the southern edge by the settlement, and is otherwise adjacent to the surrounding countryside which slopes away from the low ridge on which Bradfield Southend sits towards the River Pang tributary valley, which forms the northern boundary. Sites BRS004 and BRS005 are adjacent to the eastern boundary. The site is divided into two sections by a tree belt which runs east / west across the slope. There are also strong tree belts containing the site to the east and north, with a partial hedgerow to the western boundary. The southern field is currently unused except for storage of a disused vehicle, and areas of scrub are emerging within the grassland. There are glimpsed views north west across the valley, through the tree belts, otherwise both sites are well contained and with little intervisibility.

Relationship with adjacent settlement

- Site is contained on the southern edge by the settlement
- Much of site extends well beyond the settlement envelope
- The site extends down the slope towards the River Pang tributary valley
- Very little intervisibility with the urban edge
- Settlement along the north side of South End Road has been infilled with small scale developments increasing the width of the built form but generally retaining the linearity

Relationship with adjacent wider countryside

- Some relationship with the wider AONB landscape to the north
- Part of the woodland/pasture mosaic on the north and west sides of Bradfield Southend
- Enclosed landscape
- Part of the tranquil landscape north of Bradfield Southend
- No public rights of way across the site or links to the wider countryside

Impact on key landscape characteristics

- Potential impact on significant tree belts, including TPO'd trees
- Loss of matrix of woodland and pasture which has links with the wider landscape
- Topography would require modification to enable housing development
- Loss of visual and aural tranquillity
- Impact on stream corridor to northern boundary

Impact on key visual characteristics

- The site is well screened from within Bradfield Southend and generally from the wider countryside
- Some potential visual impact on views from the north

Impact on key settlement characteristics

- Development of the whole site would extend the settlement down the slope towards the Pang valley
- Development of the whole site would result in substantial extension to the existing 'backland' development north of South End Road and erosion of the linear pattern of much of the village
- Poor landscape and visual connections with the existing built form
- If adjacent site BRS004 remains undeveloped the site would be poorly connected to the rest of the settlement

Summary of compliance with NPPF

Development on part of this site could be accommodated due to its visual containment subject to important measures to conserve and enhance the natural beauty and special qualities of the AONB

Recommendation

Part of the site could be pursued further as a potential housing site subject to adjacent site BRS004 being developed. Development should be adjacent to the settlement edge as indicated in Figure BRS003.2, contained on the edge of the low ridge on which the village sits, and not extend down the valley side. Development of the recommended area would result in some further 'backland' development but the settlement pattern would be generally retained. Development would be subject to:

- The provision of a substantial tree belt along the northern boundary, linking to the existing tree belt on the eastern boundary and with new tree planting in BRS004 beyond
- The preferred access is from South End Road, via the small industrial estate, subject to an assessment of the impact on existing trees
- A full detailed landscape and visual impact assessment will be required to inform the final capacity of the site

Cumulative effect of development with BRS004 and BRS005

There is limited intervisibility with the above sites which are adjacent to the eastern boundary of BRS003. If BRS004 and BRS005 remained undeveloped the site would be very poorly connected to the rest of the settlement and development on BRS003 would be unacceptable. If all these sites were to be developed as recommended the traditional form of Bradfield Southend would be largely retained.

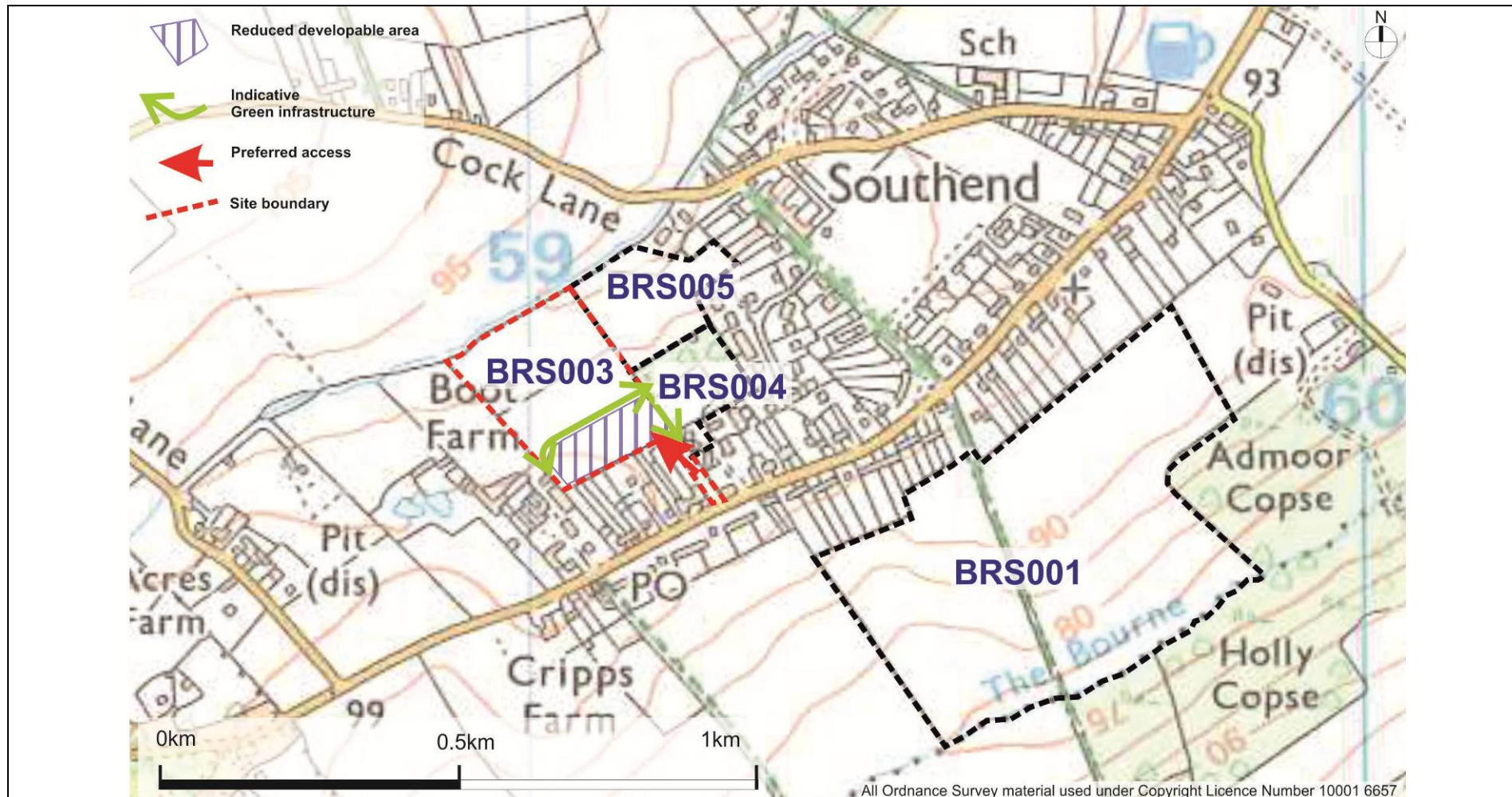


Figure BRS003.2: Potential development area, Green Infrastructure and preferred access

C. Assessment of Potential Housing Site: BRS004: Land off Stretton Close

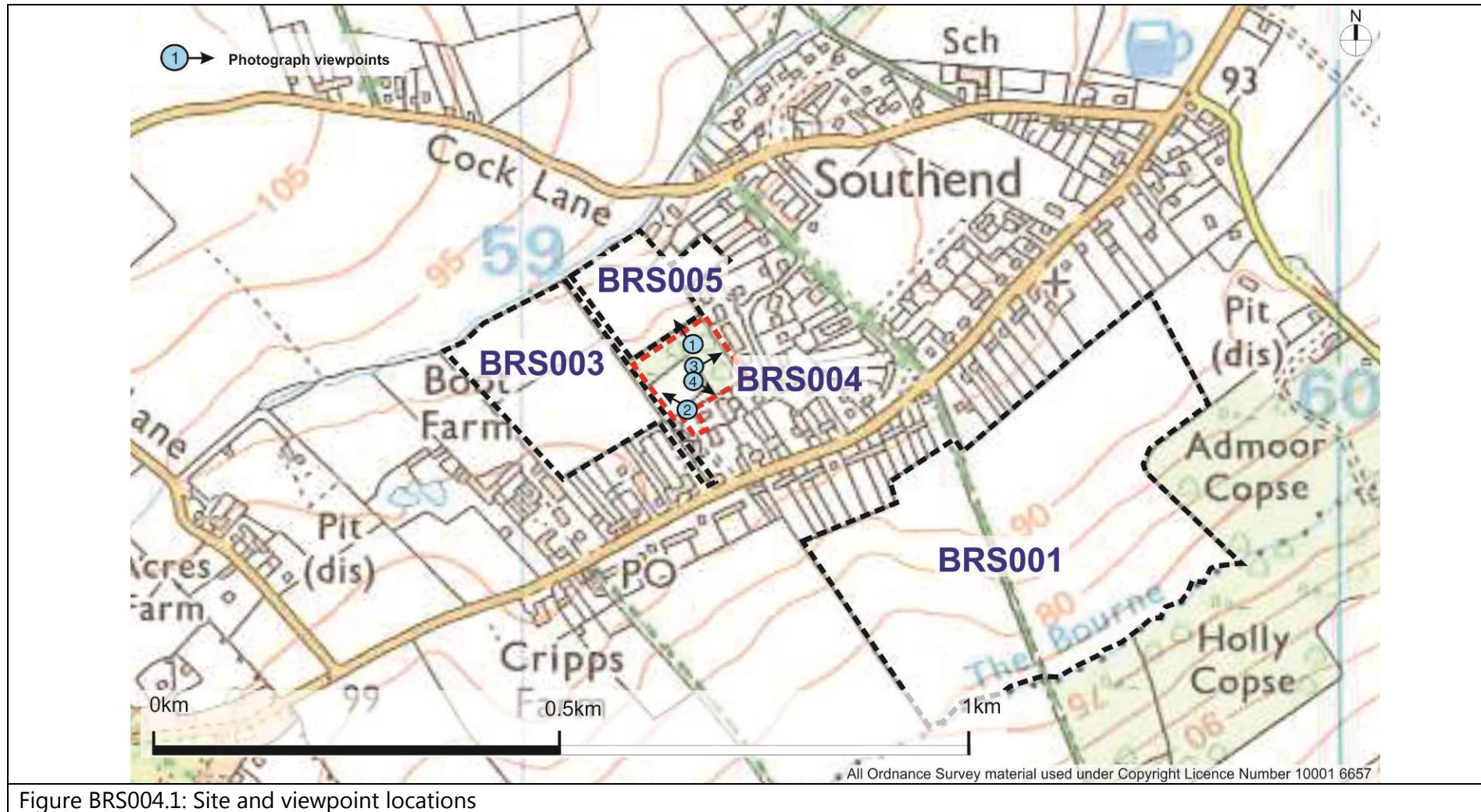


Figure BRS004.1: Site and viewpoint locations

PHOTOGRAPHS



Viewpoint 1: View north west from northern edge of site, across BRS005 to Cock Lane on the far side of the Pang tributary valley.



Viewpoint 2: TPO tree belt / woodland to western boundary and north west corner of site, with BRS003 beyond to the left and BRS005 beyond to the right



Viewpoint 3: Houses along eastern boundary fairly well screened by garden and on-site vegetation



Viewpoint 4: Houses along southern boundary open to views of site.

Site description

Site BRS004 is located on the north western side of Bradfield Southend, entirely within the North Wessex Downs AONB and is part of the low ridge on which much of the settlement sits. The site is contained on the southern and eastern edges by the settlement, is accessed off Stretton Close and otherwise adjacent to the surrounding countryside (BRS003 to the west, BRS005 to the north). The western boundary is formed by a strong tree belt which continues part way along the northern boundary and widens into a small woodland group in the north west corner. There is another group of trees towards the south east corner. Most of the trees are TPO'd oaks. The field is currently used for horsiculture, and there are areas of scrub emerging within the grassland. There are views north west across BRS005 to the north side of the local valley, from the open north east boundary. Otherwise the site is well contained with little intervisibility within the village, except with houses immediately adjacent to the site.

Relationship with adjacent settlement

- Site is contained on the southern and eastern edges by the settlement
- The site sits on the low ridge typical of the settlement
- Very little intervisibility with the wider village
- Urban edge largely well vegetated, but open along the southern boundary
- Settlement along the north side of South End Road has been infilled with small scale developments increasing the width of the built form but generally retaining the linearity

Relationship with adjacent wider countryside

- Some relationship with the wider AONB landscape to the north west
- Part of the woodland/pasture mosaic on the north and west sides of Bradfield Southend
- Enclosed landscape
- Part of the tranquil landscape north of Bradfield Southend
- No public rights of way across the site or links to the wider countryside

Impact on key landscape characteristics

- Potential loss of significant tree belts, including TPO'd trees
- Loss of matrix of woodland and pasture which has links with the wider landscape
- Loss of visual and aural tranquillity

Impact on key visual characteristics

- The site is well screened from within Bradfield Southend and generally from the wider countryside
- Some potential visual impact on views from the north west

Impact on key settlement characteristics

- Development of the site would contain the settlement on the low ridge
- Development of the whole site would result in substantial extension to the existing 'backland' development north of South End Road and erosion of the linear pattern of much of the village
- Some landscape and visual connections with the existing built form

Summary of compliance with NPPF

Development on this site could be accommodated subject to important measures to conserve and enhance the natural beauty and special qualities of the AONB

Recommendation

The site is recommended for further consideration as a potential housing site as indicated in Figure BRS004.2 whilst maintaining the small woodland group in the eastern corner as a public open space. Development of the recommended area would result in some further 'backland' development but the settlement pattern would be generally retained. Development would also be subject to:

- The retention and enhancement of the existing tree belt and woodland group in the northern corner, linking to new tree planting in BRS003 to the west and BRS005 to the north
- The preferred access is via Stretton Close
- A full detailed landscape and visual impact assessment will be required to inform the final capacity of the site.

Cumulative effect of development with BRS003 and BRS005

There is limited intervisibility with the above sites which contain BRS004 to the north and west. There is potential for reduced areas of BRS003 and BRS004 to be developed together, creating a new strongly vegetated edge to the settlement. If these sites were to be developed as recommended, the traditional form of Bradfield Southend would be retained.

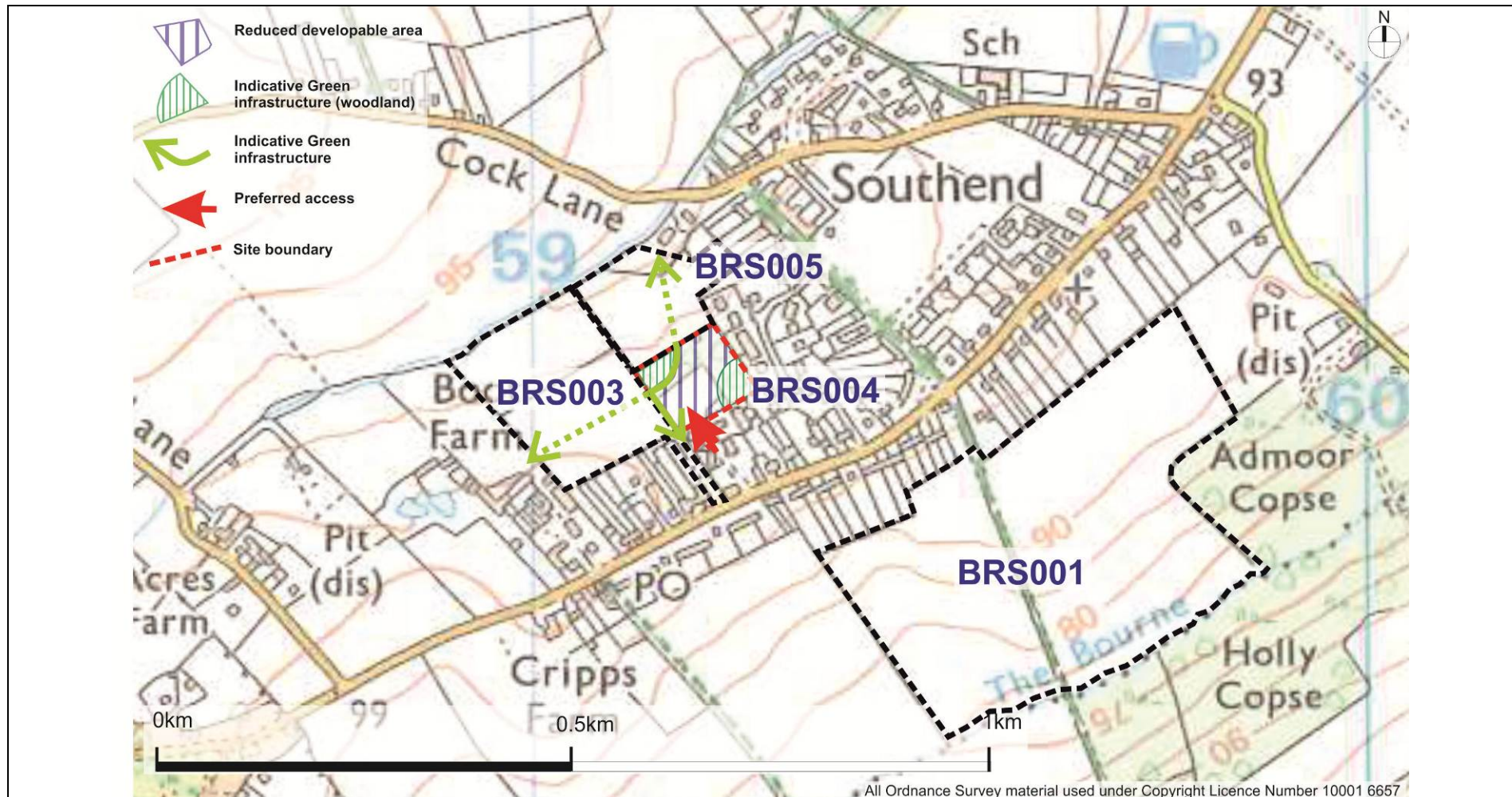


Figure BRS004.2: Potential development area, Green Infrastructure and preferred access

D. Assessment of Potential Housing Site: BRS005: Land at Crackwillow, Cock Lane

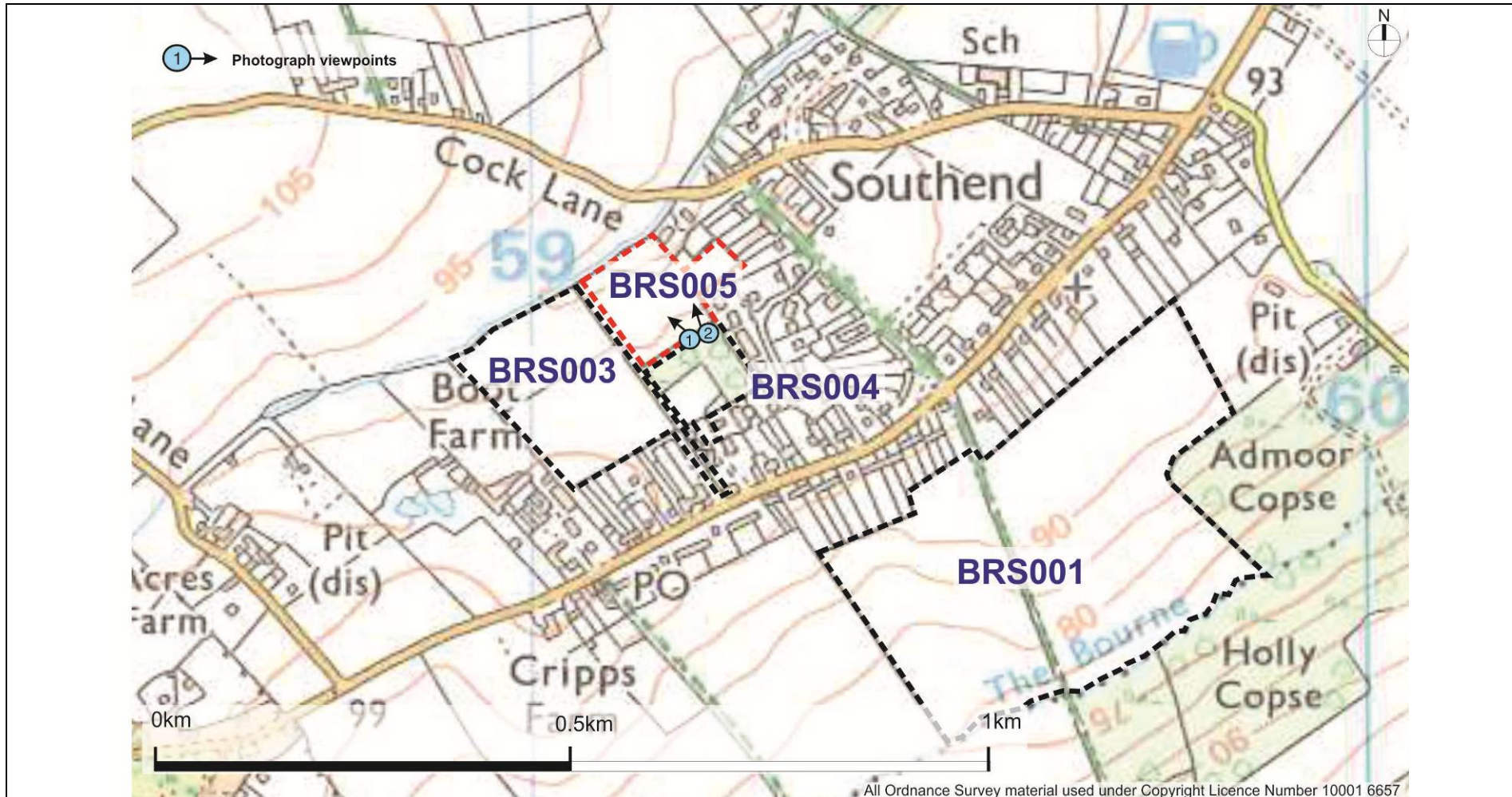


Figure BRS005.1: Site and viewpoint locations

PHOTOGRAPHS



Viewpoint 1: View north west from the southern edge of site, to Cock Lane on the far side of the Pang tributary valley.



Viewpoint 2: The eastern part of the site is contained by the settlement, which is partly well vegetated but with some visual and landscape connection

Site description

Site BRS005 is located on the north western side of Bradfield Southend, entirely within the North Wessex Downs AONB. The site is contained on the eastern and north eastern edges by the settlement, is accessed off Cock Lane and is otherwise adjacent to the surrounding countryside (BRS003 to the west, BRS004 to the south). The western boundary is formed by a tree belt, which continues along the northern boundary along the Pang tributary stream corridor. The south western boundary shared with BRS004 is formed of TPO oak trees. The field is under meadow. There are views north west to the north side of the local valley. Otherwise the site is well contained with little intervisibility within the village, except with houses immediately adjacent to the site.

Relationship with adjacent settlement

- Site is contained on the eastern and north eastern edges by the settlement
- The site extends down the slope towards the River Pang tributary valley
- The northern and western parts of the site extend well beyond the current settlement edge
- Very little intervisibility with the wider village
- Urban edge largely well vegetated, but partially open along the eastern boundary
- Settlement between Heath Road and South End Road has been infilled with small scale developments increasing the width of the built form but generally retaining the linearity
- The northern edge of the settlement either side of Cock Lane is clearly defined by the stream corridor

Relationship with adjacent wider countryside

- Some relationship with the wider AONB landscape to the north west
- Part of the woodland/pasture mosaic on the north and west sides of Bradfield Southend
- Largely enclosed landscape
- Part of the tranquil landscape north of Bradfield Southend
- No public rights of way across the site or links to the wider countryside

Impact on key landscape characteristics

- Potential loss of significant tree belts, including TPO'd trees
- Loss of matrix of woodland and pasture which has links with the wider landscape
- Loss of visual and aural tranquillity
- Loss of meadow
- Impact on the stream corridor to the northern boundary
- Topography would require modification to enable housing development

Impact on key visual characteristics

- The site is well screened from within Bradfield Southend
- Visual impact on views from the north west

Impact on key settlement characteristics

- Development of the whole site would extend the settlement down the slope towards the stream corridor
- Development of the whole site would result in substantial extension to the existing 'backland' development north of South End Road and erosion of the linear pattern of much of the village
- Some landscape and visual connections with the existing built form
- If the adjacent site BRS004 remains undeveloped the site as a whole would be very poorly connected to the rest of the settlement and would extend beyond the main area of the settlement. The small eastern section of the site would be the only part of the site that would be well connected to the settlement, though access would need to be across land outside this small section

Summary of compliance with NPPF

Development on the majority of this site would result in harm to the natural beauty and special qualities of the AONB. However there is scope for a very limited amount of development as shown in BRS005.2 without harm to the AONB.

Recommendations

A small part of the site is recommended for further consideration as a potential housing site subject to the retention of existing trees. Development should be contained within the eastern part of the site, not extending down the valley side to the north and west, and adjacent to the settlement edge as indicated in Figure BRS005.2. Development of the recommended area would result in a small area of further 'backland' development but the settlement pattern would be generally retained. Development would be subject to:

- the provision of a substantial tree belt to contain the housing in the eastern part of site, linking to the existing stream corridor trees on the northern boundary and with the tree belt and woodland group in the north west corner of BRS004.
- Sensitive treatment of built development in relation the sloping site would be important.
- The preferred access is from Cock Lane, subject to an assessment of the impact on existing trees
- A full detailed landscape and visual impact assessment will be required to inform the final capacity of the site.

Cumulative effect of development with BRS003 and BRS004

There is some intervisibility with the above sites which contain BRS005 to the south and west. If all these sites were to be developed as recommended the traditional form of Bradfield Southend could still be retained.

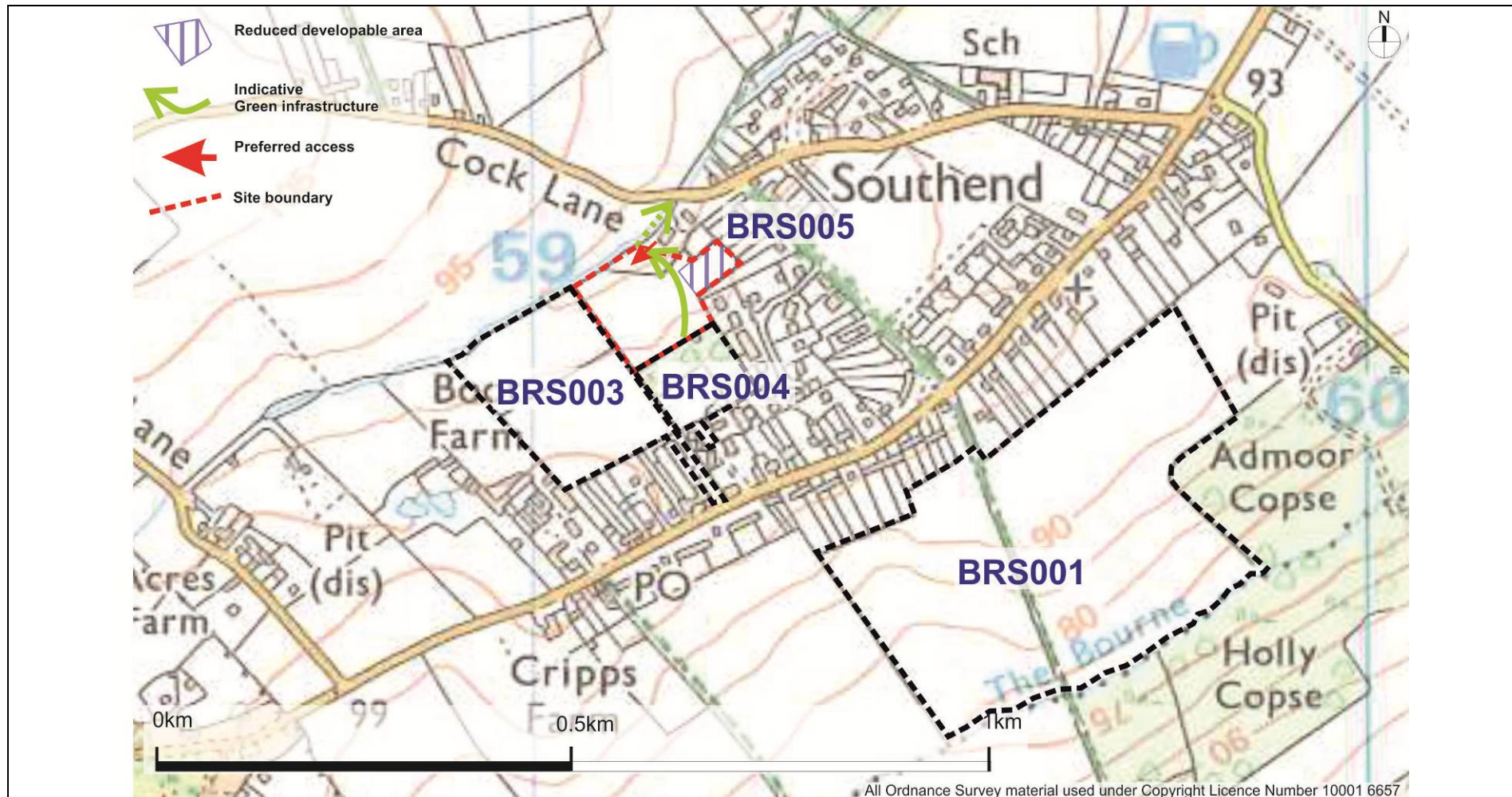


Figure BRS005.2: Potential development area, Green Infrastructure and preferred access

Conclusion and cumulative effect

The above analysis recommends three potential areas for housing on landscape and visual grounds. All are heavily constrained by the following:

- The need to retain local landscape features,
- The need to avoid land that lies above or below the local settlement pattern in terms of the topographical spread
- The need to avoid any landscape intrusion on or into the wider landscape
- The need to avoid the creation of an exposed urban edge
- The need to conserve and enhance landscape links and patterns that are characteristic of the AONB
- The need to take advantage of enclosed and screened sites that relate well to the modern built form
- The need to seek the opportunity to mitigate existing visual intrusion from the settlement where this is not in conflict with the above.

The three sites are reduced parts of BRS003, BRS004, and BRS005. The areas considered suitable for development have been reduced from the greater site areas to avoid significant adverse impacts on the AONB and the wider landscape.

The recommended reduced areas on the northern side of Bradfield Southend are part of a smaller scale, enclosed landscape and are themselves largely well contained. They also confine development to the ridge and avoid the land sloping away from it. The development of the reduced areas would require careful assessment of impacts on significant landscape features and wider visibility, and sensitive design to mitigate any impacts. Mitigation includes the retention and enhancement of existing tree belts and woodland groups. Development as shown on BRS004 would be the preferred option for the settlement in landscape terms and BRS003 would be unacceptable if BRS004 were not developed. There is potential for reduced areas of BRS003 and BRS004 to be developed together, creating a new strongly vegetated edge to the settlement. Only development of the eastern part of BRS005 would be acceptable due to landscape, visual and settlement pattern constraints and is the least preferred option due to the potential difficulty in accessing the site and the need to cross the more sensitive part of site to reach the reduced area.