

High Rocks Lane, ROYAL BOROUGH OF TUNBRIDGE WELLS



1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 THE SITE

SITE LOCATION

Land along High Rocks Lane, Royal Borough of Tunbridge Wells.

SUBJECT OF THIS APPRAISAL

Studio Woodford have been asked to explore the development potential of land located between High Rocks Lane and the Spa Valley Railway line.

PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

This document combines information received from the client, SW's architectural site assessment & WBD's planning appraisal, and identifies those parts of the site that may be strategically suitable for development.

CLIENT

This work has been undertaken on behalf of Mr Mark Boorman of Running Rail Ltd who is the client and land owner.



2.0 LOCAL ANALYSIS

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2.1 LOCAL AMENITIES

The site is located in a natural greenbelt setting. However it is very well connected to local amenities and assets and sits adjacent to the existing settlement edge.

We have indicated the local vehicle and pedestrian routes available from the site to surrounding amenities including an approximate indication of walking distance in time from the site ranging up to 25 minutes.

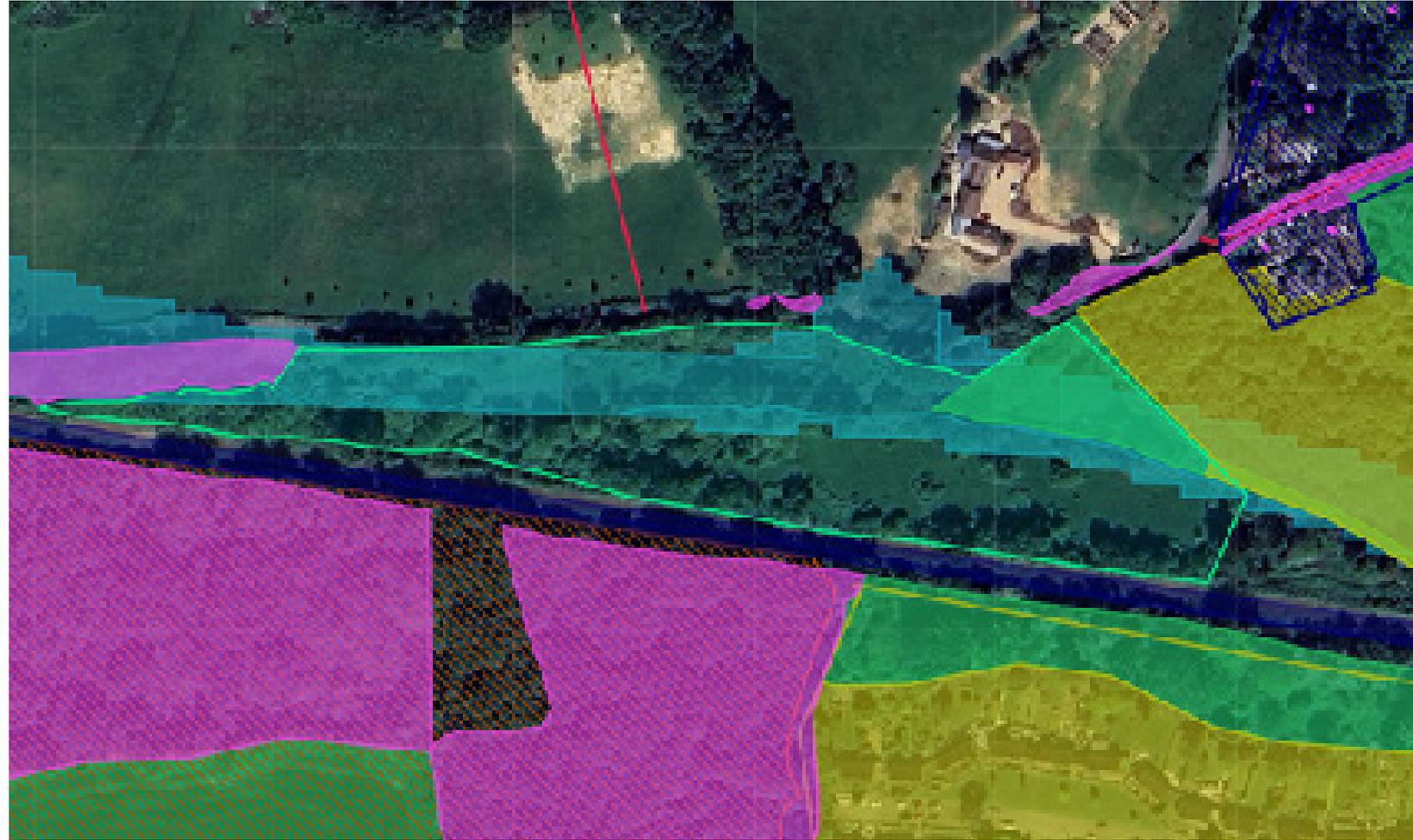
- 01 HIGH ROCKS LANE SITE
- 02 FRIEZLAND WOOD WITHIN HIGH WEALD NATIONAL LANDSCAPE
- 03 PEDESTRIAN ACCESS TUNNEL
- 04 SPA VALLEY RAILWAY & STATIONS
- 05 HIGH ROCKS LANE
- 06 CABBAGE STALK LANE
- 07 TUNBRIDGE WELLS GARDEN CENTRE
- 08 TUNBRIDGE WELLS GARDEN CENTRE FORMER NURSERY/ WOODLANDS APPROXIMATE LOCATION - NOT NATIVE
- 09 LOCAL FOOD STORES
- 10 THE PANTILES



2.0 LOCAL ANALYSIS

2.2 EXISTING SITE DESIGNATIONS

The site is covered by a number of designations as confirmed by the Policy map extract above. The whole site falls within the Green Belt which extends out to the west. This layer has been removed on the above map to assist with the ease of viewing the other designations. The Settlement Boundary abuts the eastern edge of the site. The northern half of the site falls within areas at risk of flooding Flood zones 2 and 3. There are a number of Protected Areas primarily comprising of Sites of Local Nature Conservation to the south, named Friezland Wood TW23.



- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| | Select All |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Protected Areas |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | National Landscape (AONB) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Heritage Land/Listed Buildings |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Flood Zones |
| ▼ | Flood Risk |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Very Low Risk |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Low Risk |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Medium Risk |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | High Risk |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Conservation Areas |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Employment Area |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Settlement Boundaries |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Green Belt |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Nutrient Neutrality |
| ▼ | Water Neutrality |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Offsetting allowed |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | No Offsetting |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Protected views |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Safeguarded Sites |
| ▼ | Open Land/Green Space |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Metropolitan Open Land |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Open Space |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Rights of Way |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Tree Preservation Orders |

2.0 LOCAL ANALYSIS

2.3 PROPOSED SITE DESIGNATIONS

Releasing the proposed development site from the green belt would regularise the existing settlement edge, creating a more cohesive settlement boundary, whilst still preserving the most vibrant and valuable green spaces within the main site.

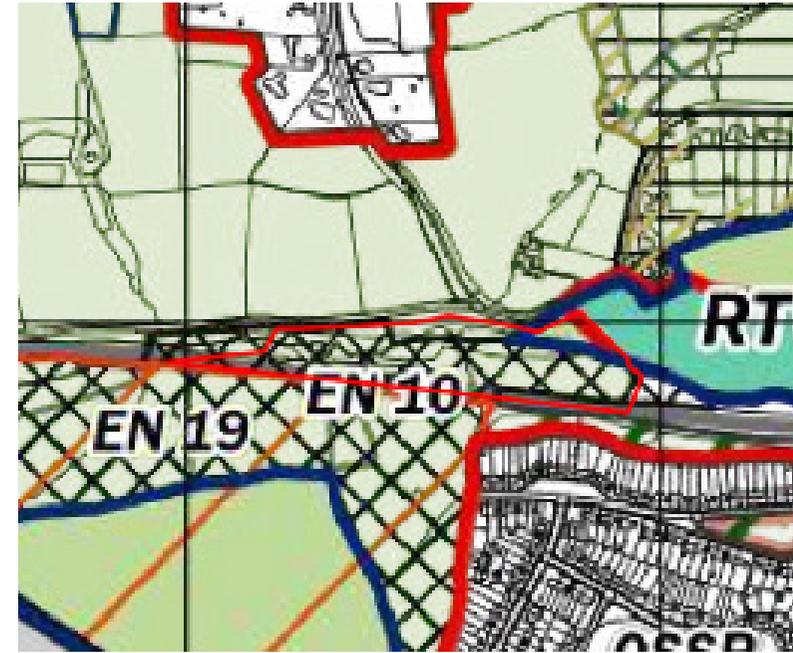
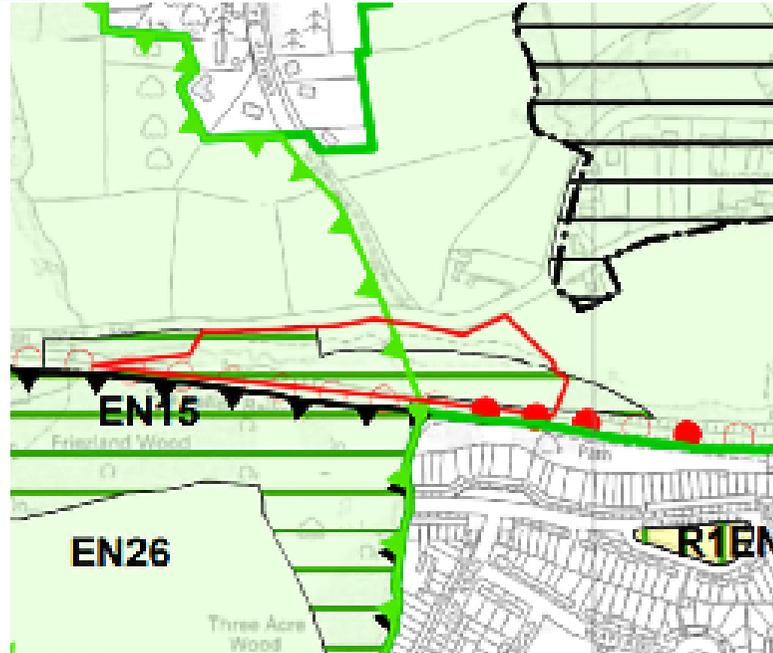
- A - The existing settlement boundary extent (orange)
- B - The proposed settlement boundary addition (yellow)
- C - The proposed development site (blue)



2.0 LOCAL ANALYSIS

2.4 CURRENT & EMERGING LOCAL PLAN

The Saved Local Plan 2006 Policy Map and the emerging Policy Map identifies that parts of the site fall within a Nature Conservation designation. Saved Policy EN15 and emerging Policy EN10 seek to protect areas with nature conservation interest. The designation appears to partially follow ownership boundaries and covers areas of thick vegetation cover and open featureless grassland alike. The emerging map also includes a designation that covers part of the site, shown in the dark blue. This is designation RTW14 which concerns the removal of the Garden Centre site from the Green Belt designation for development. This designation covers all of the wooded land to the east to the garden centre and covers the north eastern triangle of the site within the designation. The designation appears to have followed the ownership boundary and not the physical features on the ground.



3.0 SITE ANALYSIS

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3.1 OWNERSHIP BOUNDARY

OWNERSHIP BOUNDARY (1)

The red line boundary shows the site referred to in this document. This line has been taken from the land registry ownership information provided by our client.

SPA VALLEY RAILWAY LINE (2)

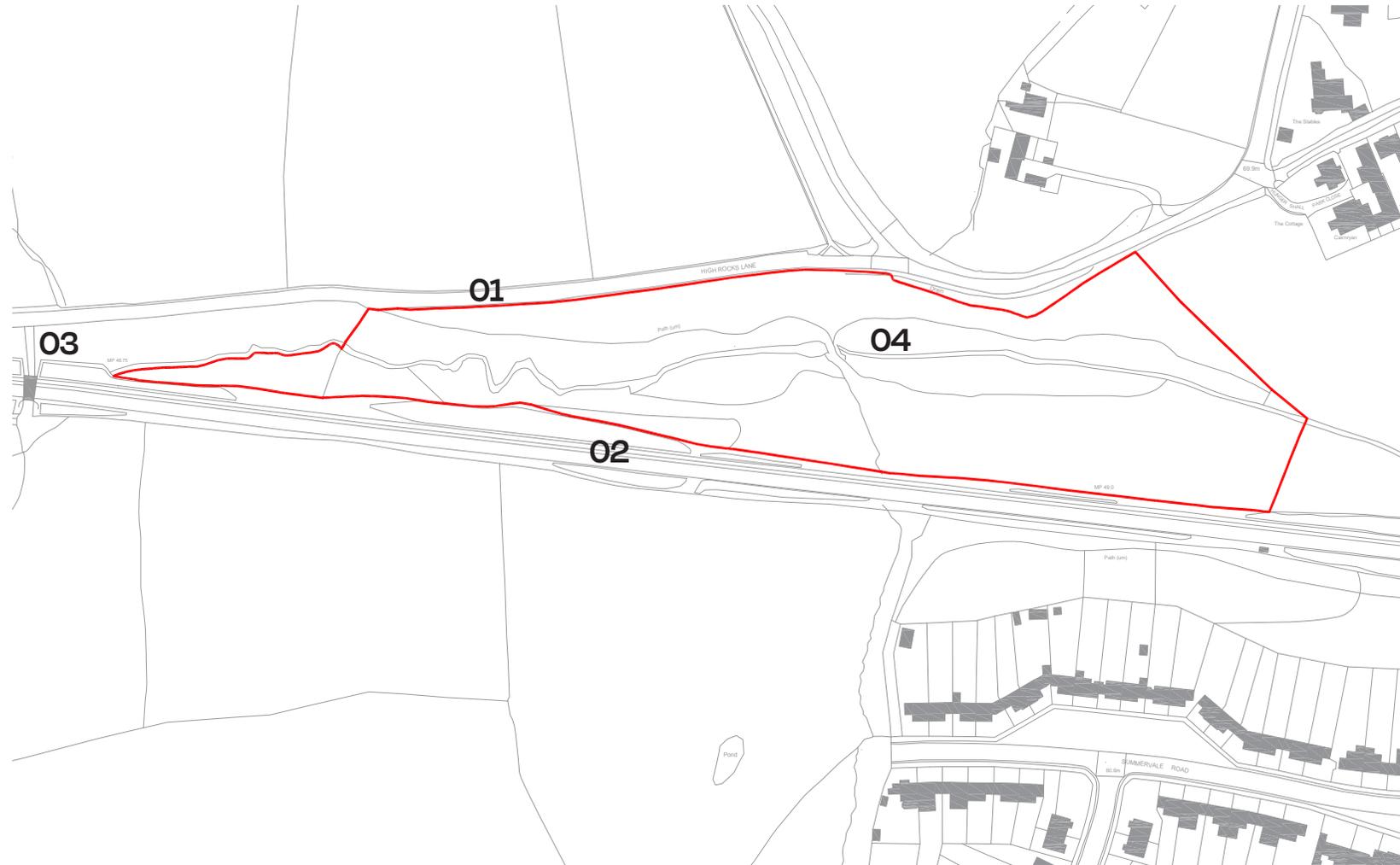
Spa Valley Railway runs along the southern edge of the site. This historic railway is active. The land for the railway is raised above the topography of the site and surrounding area.

ACCESS TUNNEL (3)

A pedestrian access to Friezland Wood is located to the west of the site and connects High Rocks Lane with these Ancient Woodlands to the south of the railway line.

WATER WAY (4)

A stream runs east - west across the site. The water course enters the site via an underground culverts at intermittent locations.



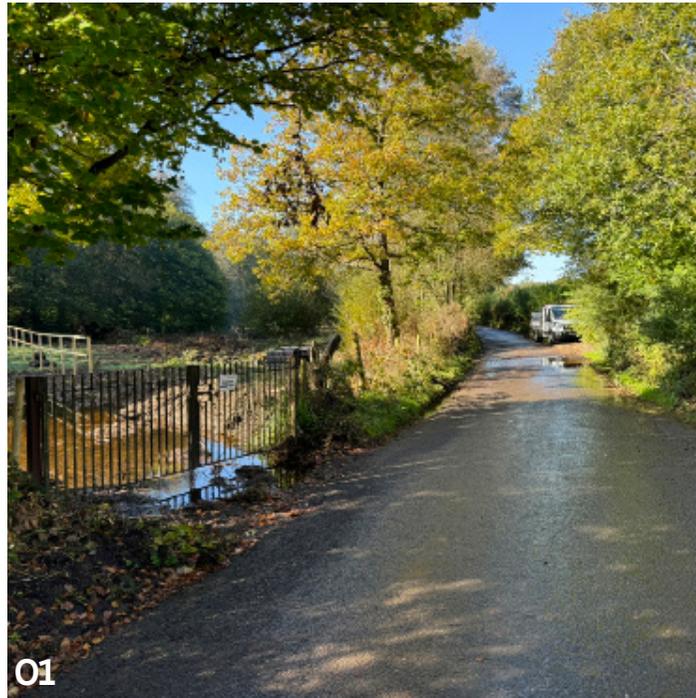
3.0 SITE ANALYSIS

3.2 HIGH ROCKS LANE

High Rocks Lane is a quiet, tree lined country lane that runs parallel with the northern edge of the site.

There is a distinct settlement to the eastern end of High Rocks Lane, including a new large family home. In contrast the western end of High Rocks is undeveloped woodland, with the entrance to Friezeland Wood creating a direct connection below the Spa Valley Railway Line.

- 01 - North east main entrance to site
- 02 - Tree lined country lane
- 03 - North west secondary site entrance
- 04 - Entrance to Friezeland Wood
- 05 - Glimpse view of Spa Valley Railway



01



02



04



03



05



3.0 SITE ANALYSIS

3.3 NORTHERN PART OF THE SITE

The site is split in half by an existing stream, which runs from east to west. The northern part of the site adjoins and is visible from, High Rocks Lane.

The northwest part of the site contains the lowest and most level topography, whilst the north east part of the site is more elevated and has a steeper topography. There are visible clearings throughout the northern portion of the site edged by mature trees and vegetation.

- 06 - North east tree lined clearing
- 07 - North entrance clearing
- 08 - North entrance culvert repairs
- 09 - North central tree lined clearing
- 10 - North west tree lined clearing



3.0 SITE ANALYSIS

3.4 SOUTHERN PART OF THE SITE

The southern part of the site, to the south of the stream, runs parallel to the Spa Valley Historic Railway line.

The south west part of the site contains the steepest gradient and densest vegetation & woodland. The south east part of the site is the most elevated part of the site and includes a large clearing surrounded by mature trees and vegetation.

- 11 - South east tree lined clearing
- 12 - Central stream through middle of site
- 13 - South east tree lined clearing
- 14 - Spa Valley Historic Railway
- 15 - South west vegetation & woodland



3.0 SITE ANALYSIS

3.5 SITE CONSTRAINTS

The site analysis revealed several key site constraints that will require careful consideration as part of the design process.

- 01** MAIN / ONLY STREET ACCESS TO SITE
- 02** HIGH ROCKS LANE
- 03** SPA VALLEY HISTORIC RAILWAY - POSSIBLE NOISE & LIKELY CONSULTEE
- 04** STEEP SLOPE ALONG SOUTHERN EDGE
- 05** EXISTING TREES
- 06** WATER WAY E-W ACROSS SITE
- 07** FLOOD ZONE
- 08** LANDBRIDGE CONNECTS 2 PARTS OF SITE
- 09** PEDESTRIAN TUNNEL UNDER RAILWAY
- 10** FRIEZLAND WOOD - ANCIENT WOODLAND
- 11** HIGH WEALD NATIONAL LANDSCAPE
- 12** OVERHEAD ELECTRIC CABLES

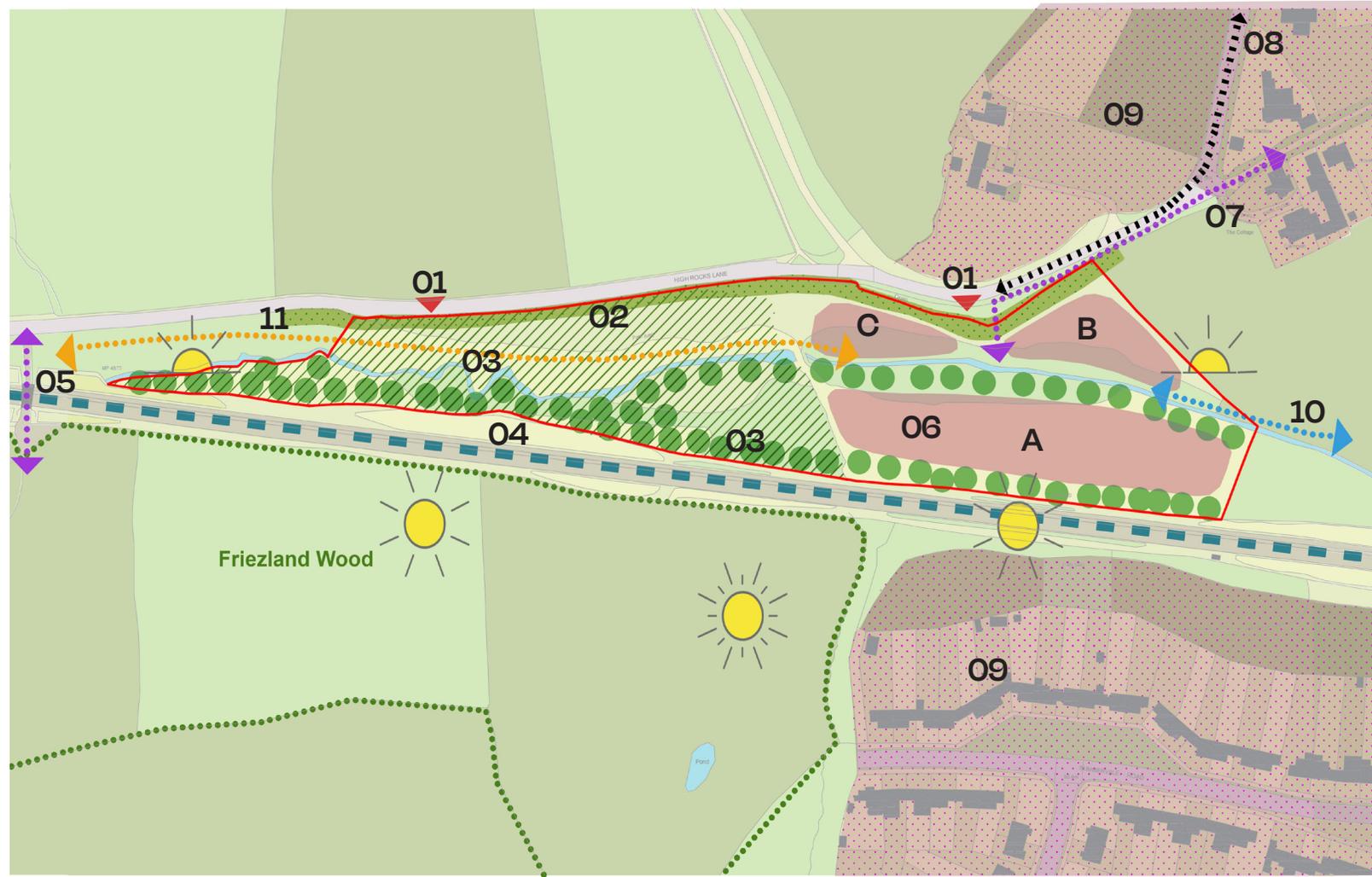


3.0 SITE ANALYSIS

3.6 SITE OPPORTUNITIES

The site analysis also revealed many opportunities for the site that will aid our design development and proposal.

- 01** SITE ACCESS FROM HIGH ROCKS LANE
- 02** IMPROVEMENTS TO EXISTING HEDGEROW FOR LOCAL WILDLIFE
- 03** RETENTION & IMPROVEMENT TO MOST NATURAL PARTS OF SITE
- 04** SPA VALLEY RAILWAY LINE - OFFERS CHARACTER & CHARM
- 05** PEDESTRIAN ACCESS TUNNEL TO ANCIENT WOODLAND
- 06** POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT PARCELS A,B,C ADJACENT TO THE EXISTING SETTLEMENT
- 07** PEDESTRIAN ACCESS FROM TOWN TO SITE VIA 'CABBAGE STALK LANE'
- 08** VEHICULAR ACCESS FROM TOWN TO SITE VIA 'HUNGERSHALL PARK'
- 09** RESIDENTIAL SETTLEMENT IN CLOSE PROXIMITY
- 10** POTENTIAL FUTURE CONNECTION TO TOWN VIA NEW TUNBRIDGE GARDEN CENTRE
- 11** POTENTIAL FUTURE PEDESTRIAN CONNECTION TO ACCESS TUNNEL & BEYOND TO HIGH ROCKS STATION



4.0 PLANNING POLICY APPRAISAL

4.0 PLANNING POLICY APPRAISAL

4.1 PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

There exists a strong Planning Policy position to resist development on the site. As demonstrated on the saved and emerging Policy maps in earlier pages, the various designations overlap and seek to protect the land for its ecological value and openness. However, there are pockets within the site that lend themselves to development. Areas marked A, B and C, in Spatial Planning terms, would fit well into the existing Settlement Boundary. Areas A and C are directly adjacent the land that is proposed to be released from the Green Belt as part of the New Local Plan. Area B is within this designation.

These areas contribute little to the Green Belt and to the Ecology value protected by the Nature Conservation designation. They are existing clearings with few features to support biodiversity when compared with the remainder of the designation area. Their linking with the development of the garden centre to the east would form a natural termination to the settlement boundary whilst delivering new homes in a sustainable location and providing opportunities to enhance access to and the quality of the

Green Belt and Nature Conservation areas to the south and west.

We extract below Policy AL/RTW 14 and its supporting text which considers the Garden Centre allocation.

Land at Tunbridge Wells Garden Centre

5.90 This site is partly inside, but mostly adjacent to, the existing LBD of Royal Tunbridge Wells towards the south of the town. The site comprises a garden centre and associated car park, as well as a wooded/scrub area, originally an area for growing nursery stock associated with the garden centre use. There is also an open car wash facility to the far east of the site.

5.91 Existing vehicular access to the site is directly from the A26 Eridge Road to the south east corner of the site, close to the bend in the Eridge Road. The Spa Valley Railway Line is located south of the site, including a bridge that crosses the Eridge Road just south of the site access.

5.92 The site was released from the Green Belt, and the Development Strategy Topic Paper and Green Belt studies set out the exceptional circumstances and compensatory improvements to the remaining Green Belt to justify the changes to the boundary in this location.

5.93 It lies adjacent to the Royal Tunbridge Wells Conservation Area and to Tunbridge Wells Common, which is a designated Local Wildlife Site. Part of the site is also covered by the Environment Agency's Flood Zone 3.

5.94 The site is located within a 250-metre buffer of a minerals and waste safeguarding area (in relation to Superficial Sub-Alluvial River Terrace deposits) and therefore advice should be sought from KCC (Minerals and Waste) in advance of submitting any planning application, as a minerals assessment may be needed.

5.95 Development would need to be sensitively designed to respect the location in proximity to the Common, the conservation area, and the

topography of the site. However, it constitutes a sustainable site on the edge of the town centre and could accommodate a mix of uses, to include the retention/expansion of the existing garden centre business and the introduction of some residential development within the site. However, Kent County Council, as the local highways authority, considers that the scale of development on the site may be limited due to the current access constraints.

4.0 PLANNING POLICY APPRAISAL

4.2 DESIGNATIONS

Policy AL/RTW14

This site, as defined on the Royal Tunbridge Wells and Southborough Policies Map (Inset Maps 1a-1d and 2), is allocated for the expansion of the existing Use Class E (a) commercial use (garden centre) with an element of residential of approximately 25-30 residential dwellings, of which 30 percent shall be affordable housing.

Development on the site shall accord with the following requirements:

1. Means of access, including secondary and emergency means of access, to be informed by a transport statement; it is likely that the scale of any development may be limited by the quality of access arrangements that can be achieved within the confines of the site. An emergency access is likely to be required to the north;
2. The provision of pedestrian and cycle access to the north and improved pedestrian and cycle access into the town;
3. Adequate servicing and parking to serve the expanded commercial use on the site;

4. Provision of a green route through the site from east to west connecting to existing Public Rights of Way on Tunbridge Wells Common and Cabbage Stalk Lane;

5. Development shall be located on the areas identified for mixed use on the site layout plan;

6. Green infrastructure shall be provided on the areas shown indicatively in green on the site layout plan, and these shall be retained and enhanced. This shall include suitable buffering and enhancements to the River Grom corridor and to the setting of the adjacent Tunbridge Wells and Rusthall Common;

7. Regard will be given to existing hedgerows and mature trees on-site, with the layout and design of the development protecting those of most amenity value, as informed by an arboricultural survey and a landscape and visual impact assessment;

8. An archaeological assessment of the site, including field evaluations;

9. A site-specific flood risk assessment shall be carried out in

support of any application, identifying whether the site is at risk of flooding from sources other than fluvial flooding, and any development shall include suitable flood mitigation measures and an overall reduction of flood risk;

10. Contributions are to be provided to mitigate the impact of the development, in accordance with Policy STR/RTW1.

5.0 SITE POTENTIAL



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5.1 REALLOCATION POTENTIAL

The AL/RTW 14 Policy and designation was written without knowledge that the land being put forward as part of this submission would be available for development. Including areas A, B and C in this designation as proposed would deliver a number of benefits:

- The pedestrian routes proposed could be better directed to link into the Friezland Wood reserve and the connection beneath the railway at the western extent of the site to create a circular loop avoiding roads, enhancing pedestrian access to the Green Belt and areas of Nature Conservation.

- The areas of green buffer can be extended and cover areas of existing mature trees. The western edge of the Map 14 Site Layout Plan which is light green to represent the Open Space and Landscape Buffer would be better pushed further west, encapsulating areas of existing dense tree cover rather than an existing clearing adjacent High Rocks Lane. This would more effectively create a buffer to development.

- The Settlement Boundary would terminate at a natural point, smoothing



rough edges so that edge formed by the Friezland and Summervale Roads links up to the north. The land could be well suited to residential development, but this team considers it most appropriate for specialist accommodation, perhaps a location for a facility providing end of life palliative care or accommodation for people suffering with dementia. The tranquil setting and attractive outlook

coupled with the proximity to services but secluded environment render the land ideal for this type of service provision. Standard care homes providers may also be interested in the location. The demand for these types of accommodation is growing exponentially as the population ages and lives longer.

01 HIGH ROCKS LANE SITE POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT PARCELS A,B,C IN CLOSE PROXIMITY TO OTHER DEVELOPMENTS

02 HIGH ROCKS LANE SITE POTENTIAL NATURE IMPROVEMENT/RETENTION

03 HIGH ROCKS LANE SITE HEDGE IMPROVEMENT/RETENTION

04 TUNBRIDGE WELLS GARDEN CENTRE - POTENTIAL CONNECTION OPPORTUNITY

05 SPA VALLEY RAILWAY & STATION

06 LOCAL FOOD STORES/ AMENITIES

07 THE PANTILES



STUDIO WOODFORD

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WBD PLANNING