The Churchmanor Estates Company and Churchmanor Ltd

A12 Chelmsford to A120 widening scheme

Deadline 7 Submission to the Examining Authority post CAH3 hearing, 27th June 2023

These representations are made The Churchmanor Estates Company plc (ref A12C-AFP355) and Churchmanor Ltd (A12C-AFP354) (related group companies, and hereinafter referred to together as "Churchmanor") in respect of its interest in development land at Gershwin Park, Witham. The representations are made further to our previous representations, and our appearance at the CAH3 hearing on 27th June 2023. Churchmanor has been the landowners' consortium development partner since 2010, and has a legal interest in the land by way of a development agreement which, subject to certain conditions being satisfied, gives it a contractual right to acquire land for development from the landowners as required. This legal interest is registered on the various Land Registry titles over which the development agreement applies. Accordingly, Churchmanor is understood to be an Affected Person, and not merely an Interested Party. A copy of the development agreement can be supplied to the Planning Inspectorate on request, but is not submitted herewith due to the fact it contains confidential commercial information, and therefore it would not be appropriate to publish it on the Examination website.

Gershwin Park is a strategic westwards extension to Witham. It is located to the north of the existing A12 and to the east of the existing A12 Witham South junction 21. Several outline planning permissions for a combination of residential, commercial, and community uses have been granted in the past, with the latest outline permission (12/01071/OUT) granted by Braintree District Council in July 2013. The approved masterplan is attached at **Appendix 1**. This consent has been partially implemented via several reserved matters applications; in addition, other full permissions have also been granted for related development not strictly in accordance with the outline permission.

The undeveloped parts of Gershwin Park are also allocated in Section 2 of the Braintree District Local Plan (2013-2033), which was adopted in July 2022. These are broadly in accordance with the outline permission, with the areas of the site remaining to be developed variously allocated for retail and town centre uses, retail warehousing, business park, residential, and informal recreation. The relevant part of the adopted Local Plan map covering Witham South is at **Appendix 2**.

The area affected by the DCO application is clearly allocated for "Business Parks" (blue dots), and part of the "Employment Policy Area" (blue tinting). In the south west corner of Gershwin Park, this allocation directly abuts the current extent of the A12. The site is referred in policy LPP2 of the Local Plan as site reference "h", and is known therein as the "Maltings Lane Business Park (Gershwin Park)". By way of explanation, the reference to "Maltings Lane" is a historic one, on the basis the north eastern extent of Gershwin Park (when originally proposed) abutted Maltings Lane, and therefore (at the time) was the point at which the strategic extension to Witham commenced. Policy LPP2 sets out the new strategic employment sites within the District, and it is clear Gershwin Park forms an important contribution to the total land supply. It is also specifically referred to in policy LPP6, again as "Maltings Lane".

From our engagement with National Highways' agent to date, we do not believe the planning status of the land as outlined above is in dispute.

Specifically, the red line around the draft compulsory purchase order and DCO application affects the following developable parts of Gershwin Park within the area allocated in the Local Plan for Business Parks:

- an area known as "plot 1", and extending to approximately 1.27 hectares, immediately to the north of the existing A12, west of Gershwin Boulevard, and south of Griggs Way. On National Highway's land acquisition plans, plots 7/14a, 7/16h, and 7/16f (part) are to be permanently acquired from plot 1, together with 7/16e (required for the acquisition of service rights only). The plots to be acquired amount to approximately 0.39 hectares, or 30% of plot 1.
- an area of land known as "plot 28" extending to approximately 0.8 hectares, immediately to the south of Chipping Hill Primary School, the north of Gershwin Boulevard, and west of Owers Road. On National Highway's land acquisition plans, plots 7/16b, 7/16c, and 7/17c are to be acquired for temporary occupation as a recovery yard. For the avoidance of doubt, this area is not included within Churchmanor's development agreement.

The above are shown on the extract from National Highway's latest Land Plan, submitted to the Examination as REP6-015, at **Appendix 3**.

In addition to the above, the landowners also own further plots of land affected by the DCO application (7/16a, 7/16d, 7/16f (remainder), 7/16g, 7/17a, and 7/17d). These comprise verge/public access land alongside Gershwin Boulevard. For the avoidance of doubt, they are not regarded as developable land, and are also not included within Churchmanor's development agreement.

The red line also borders a developable part of Gershwin Park (known as "plot 18") to the south Hatfield Road, west of Gershwin Boulevard, north of Griggs Way, and east of the Motus Mercedes premises. It appears to us that the red line stops at the back of the existing footway, and therefore plot 18 is not affected by the DCO proposals. However, this is being raised at the Examination now due to a holding objection now made by National Highways until 29th September 2023 in relation to a planning application Churchmanor has made to Braintree District Council (23/00827/FUL) on plot 18. National Highways have not yet commented on whether they have any actual objection to the proposed development on plot 18, and therefore the landowners and Churchmanor need to reserve their position in this regard.

It is important to reiterate Churchmanor understands the importance of the A12 widening scheme, and do not object to the principle of the development. As a result, Churchmanor (along with the landowners' representatives Strutt & Parker, and Ceres Property) has engaged with National Highways' agents in a positive and constructive manner as soon as the original s48 notices were issued in June 2021, in order to identify and attempt to mitigate potential conflicts with the allocated and consented development land as early as possible. Our detailed plans for the development of plot 1, including drainage arrangements, were shared in full electronic form with National Highways well before the DCO process commenced in December 2021/January 2022, to allow them to be overlaid onto the A12 proposals and conflicts identified.

However, despite that engagement, and repeated undertakings from National Highways that they would investigate mitigation options, no meaningful response was received from National Highways until a brief confirmation on 24th April 2023 that <u>no</u> changes to the design of the DCO scheme would be made. As a result of the extended period of uncertainty, Churchmanor has had no option (due to its contractual obligations to the landowners under the development agreement, which National Highways were warned about on numerous occasions) to draw up and submit a detailed planning application to Braintree District Council for the development of plot 1 as it currently stands, within the

current extent of the Business Park allocation for this part of Gershwin Park as shown on the Local Plan map, and before confirmation of the DCO. This has been registered by Braintree District Council with reference 23/00836/FUL, for the development of 18 no. business and light industrial units, totalling 33,900 sqft gross internal area on the ground floor.

A plan showing the location of plot 1 and the layout of this application overlaid with the DCO red line boundary is attached at **Appendix 4**. From this it is clear that:

- 5 units totalling 13,000 sqft (38% of the floorspace of proposed scheme) are directly affected.
- When the site is redesigned to take account of the DCO boundary, it is likely that once boundary landscaping and surface water drainage is considered, the loss will be closer to 45-50% of floorspace, resulting in a significant injurious affection claim for the retained land, on top of compensation for land acquired compulsorily. Churchmanor will in addition have a separate claim for loss of development profit.

Accordingly, we must continue to object to the scheme insofar as it affects Plot 1, for the reasons stated below:

- The proposals would substantially impact on consented and allocated development land, firstly by compulsorily acquiring land, and secondly by way of injurious affection, as a result of the remaining land being very irregularly shaped, and some being rendered undevelopable. In particular, the eastern end of plot 1 would taper into a triangular point, and the southern boundary would feature several "steps". This is we are told by National Highways as a result of the need to a) provide an emergency refuge on the northbound carriageway, resulting in the land required "stepping in", and b) the need to provide drainage to prevent run off onto the A12 from the surrounding land. These features are shown at **Appendix 5** on the extract from National Highway's latest General Arrangement Plans (Part 3), presented to the Examination as REP6-019.
- The above matter was highlighted to National Highways over 18 months ago, well before the DCO application was made. Despite extensive engagement with National Highways, regular undertakings from them to investigate the matter, and chasing for updates, no change to the design of the scheme has been made. This was only confirmed to Churchmanor on 24th April 2023, almost two months after the CAH1 hearing, and 3 days before the CAH2 hearing. Whilst it is appreciated space needs to be made for drainage to capture run off from the adjacent land, together with the proposed emergency refuge, no proper explanation has been provided as to why:
 - the current design requires such a large buffer between the road alignment and edge of the land take
 - the retaining wall proposed immediately to the west cannot be extended eastwards to reduce the extent of embankment around the emergency refuge (and therefore land take) needed, as per our suggestion to mitigate the impacts of the scheme
 - the emergency refuge cannot be moved a very short distance to the east where it would run alongside, and make use of, otherwise undevelopable land, as per our suggestion to mitigate the impacts of the scheme
 - as appears to be the case with adjoining parcels of land, the drainage cannot be run much "tighter" to the boundary, as per our suggestion to mitigate the impacts of the scheme

Essentially, the only response we have received was simply that National Highways had decided it would not make those changes.

- No assessment appears to have been made of the costs of making such an adjustment, versus
 the compensation that would need to be paid for land purchase, injurious affection, and loss
 of development profit. Without this, it is impossible to say whether best value is being
 obtained for public money.
- No account appears to have been taken of the economic effects of the loss of consented development land, nor the need to replace it to maintain a suitable supply within Braintree District.
- We have asked for National Highways to confirm it will make an on account payment of reasonable professional fees to allow a re-design of the plot 1 layout and resubmission of the planning application to be made if the proposed land take boundary is confirmed, but to date no such confirmation has been received. These costs will include fees for the architect, civil engineer, landscape architect, mechanical and electrical engineer, BREEAM assessor, air quality assessor, ecologist, acoustician, and highway engineer. We would anticipate these costs to be in region of £50,000, plus the cost of the new planning application fee.
- Despite requests for confirmation, no detail has been provided to date of the extent of services acquisition needed in parcel 7/16e, so we are unable to understand whether this parcel is in fact capable of beneficial use once the services are installed, or is effectively sterilised and therefore should be included within the land required for permanent acquisition.
- We note and do not disagree with the comments made in the CAH3 hearing by the Valuation Office that the parties are in broad agreement informally as to the rate per unit area proposed to be paid for any development land that is to be compulsorily acquired. However, compulsory purchase should always be a final fallback following all attempts to mitigate the quantum of land needed, and we object on the basis that the land take proposed still appears to be excessive and unnecessary.

We have a further objection to make in respect of Plot 18. Plans showing the location and layout of the proposed development for which the planning application referred to above is attached at **Appendix 6**.

 This site is not within the red line of the DCO. We have submitted a planning application to Braintree District Council (23/00827/FUL) for the development of 3 no. retail units, 2 no. drive thru units, and an ultra-rapid electric vehicle charging station. National Highways made a holding objection on 15th May 2023 that the application should not be determined before 29th September 2023, noting that:

"We are currently reviewing the documentation supporting this planning application and have not yet reached a view if the development proposals will have a material impact on the operation of the Strategic Road Network. Consequently, it is requested that this application is not determined before 29 Sept 23. If we are in a position to provide a formal response earlier we will withdraw this recommendation accordingly. It is noted that the A12 construction red line boundary is close to this site."

National Highways should be capable now of confirming the development proposals on this plot do not fall within the red line of the DCO, nor affect the DCO proposals. If that is the case, there is no justification for a response time of up to four and a half months — it is not uncommon for National Highways to require a little extra time to consider applications, but the time proposed is excessive. We would be very concerned if National Highways now regard

any part of plot 18 as falling within the DCO boundary, as they have not raised this point at any point in the last 2 years since the issue of the original s48 notices.

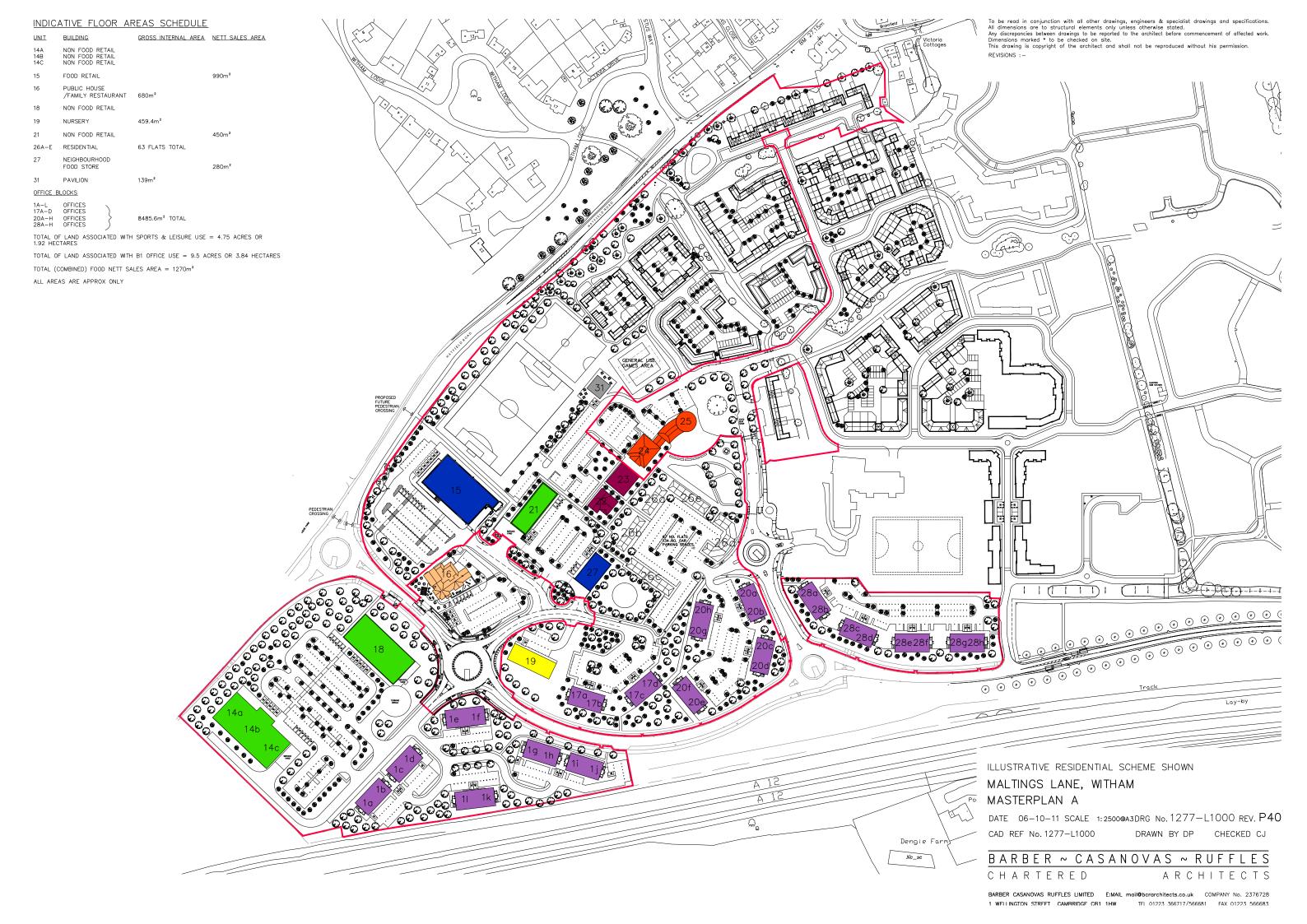
We trust these comments set out our current objections clearly to the Inspector, but we would be pleased to expand further or clarify any point which remains unclear.

Matt Cloke

Development Director

3rd July 2023

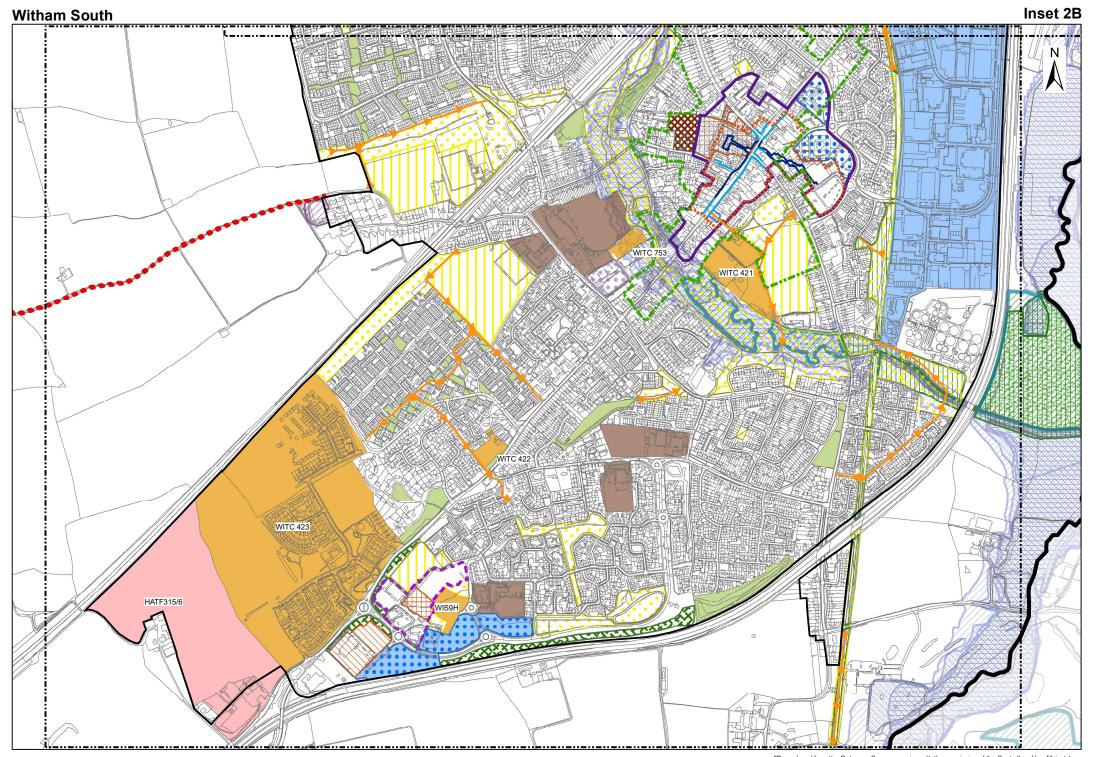
Appendix 1 – approved masterplan for Gershwin Park (planning consent 12/01071/OUT)



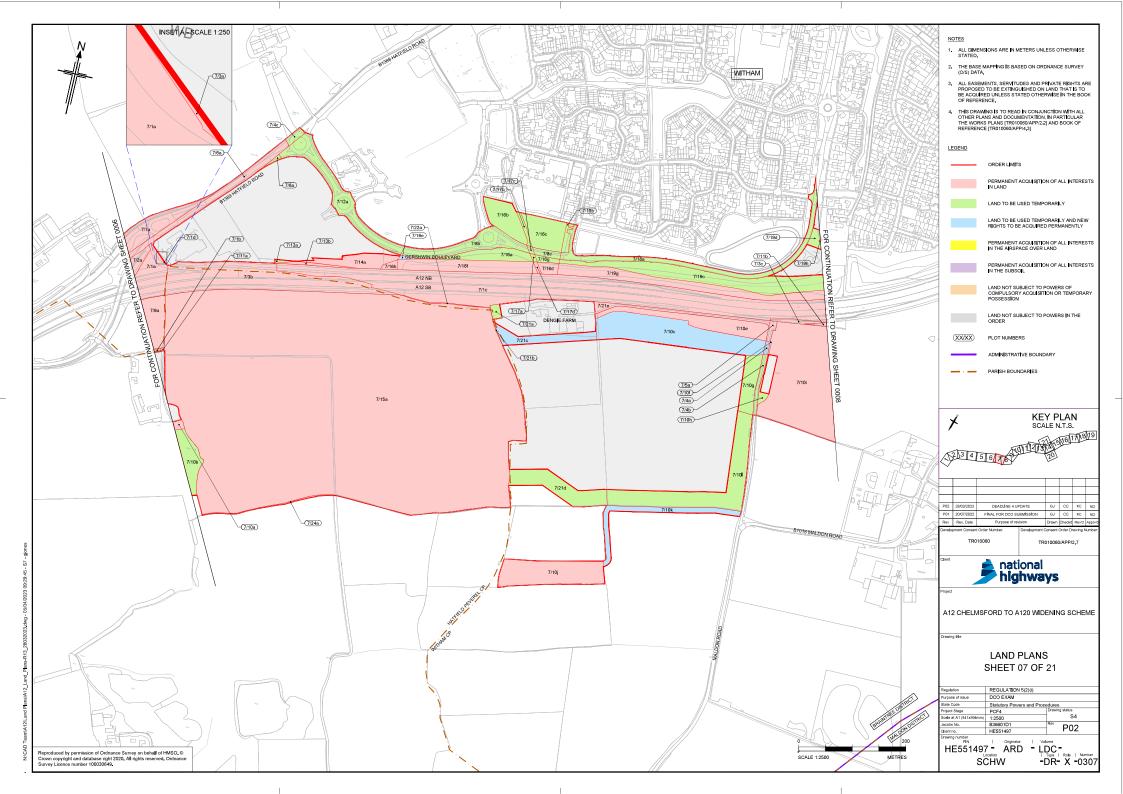
Appendix 2 – Braintree Local Plan Part 2, policies map for Witham South

Key: Local Plan 2013-2033

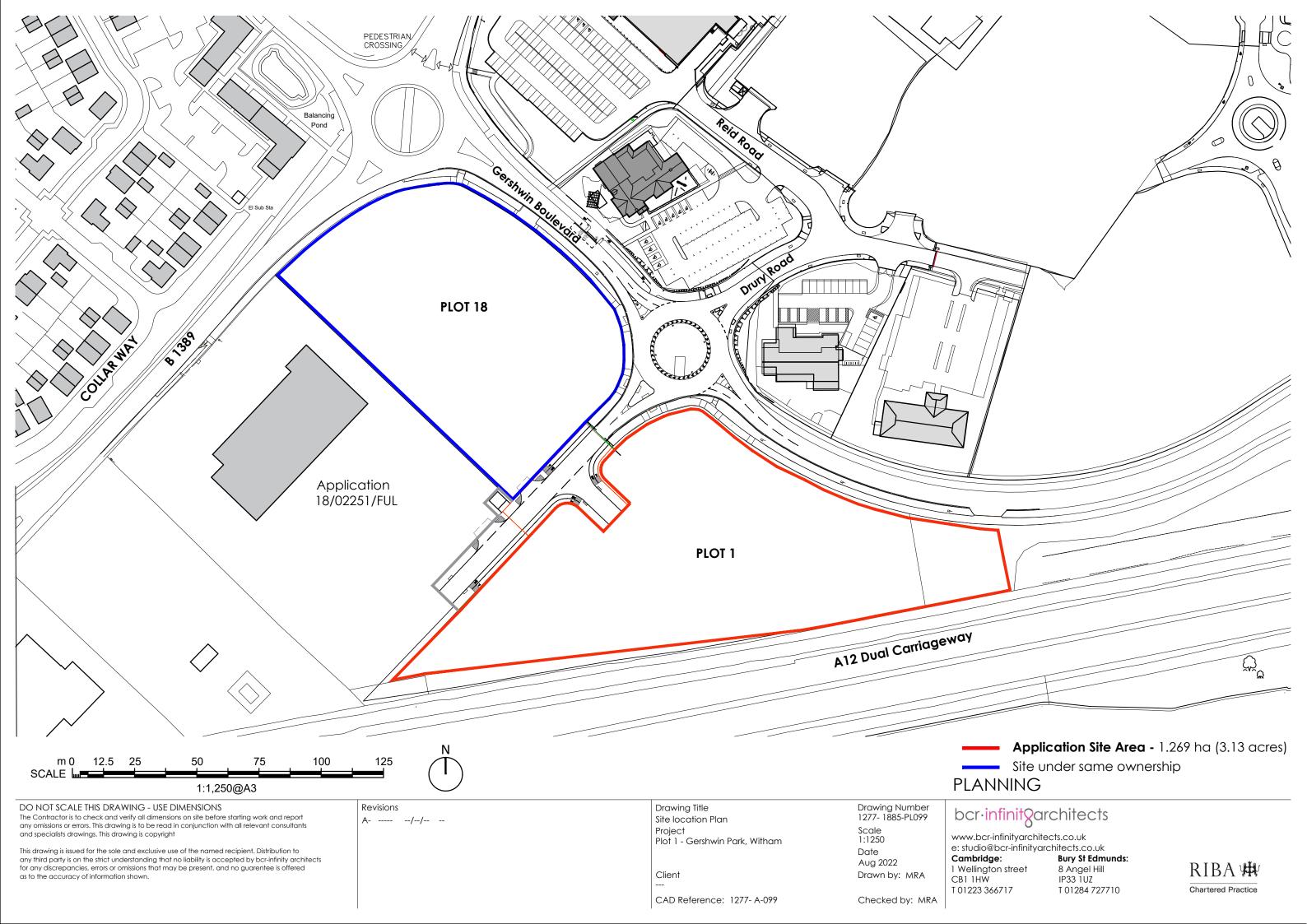
District Boundary	Designer Outlet Centre		Formal Recreation
Inset Map	Strategic Growth Location		Informal Recreation
Development Boundary	Residential Site 10 or more Dwellings		Visually Important Space
Conservation Area	Specialist Housing		Structural Landscaping
Road Proposal	Proposed Gypsy/Travellers Site		Local Wildlife Site
Halstead Bypass Corridor	Business Parks		Cemetery/Churchyard
Protected Lanes	Employment Policy Area		Local Nature Reserve
Cycleway	Comprehensive Development Area		Green Buffer
Local Centre	Special Employment Area		Suitable Accessible Natural Greenspace
District Centre	Vehicle Storage	1	Site of Special Scienticic Interest (SSSI)
Town Centre	Transport Related Policy Area		Historic Parks and Gardens
Primary Shopping Area	Education		Scheduled monument
Primary Frontage	Car Park		Flood Zone 2
Secondary Frontage	Community Uses		Flood Zone 3
Retail & Town Centre Uses	Leisure and Entertainment		Flood Zone 3B
Retail Warehousing	Allotments		

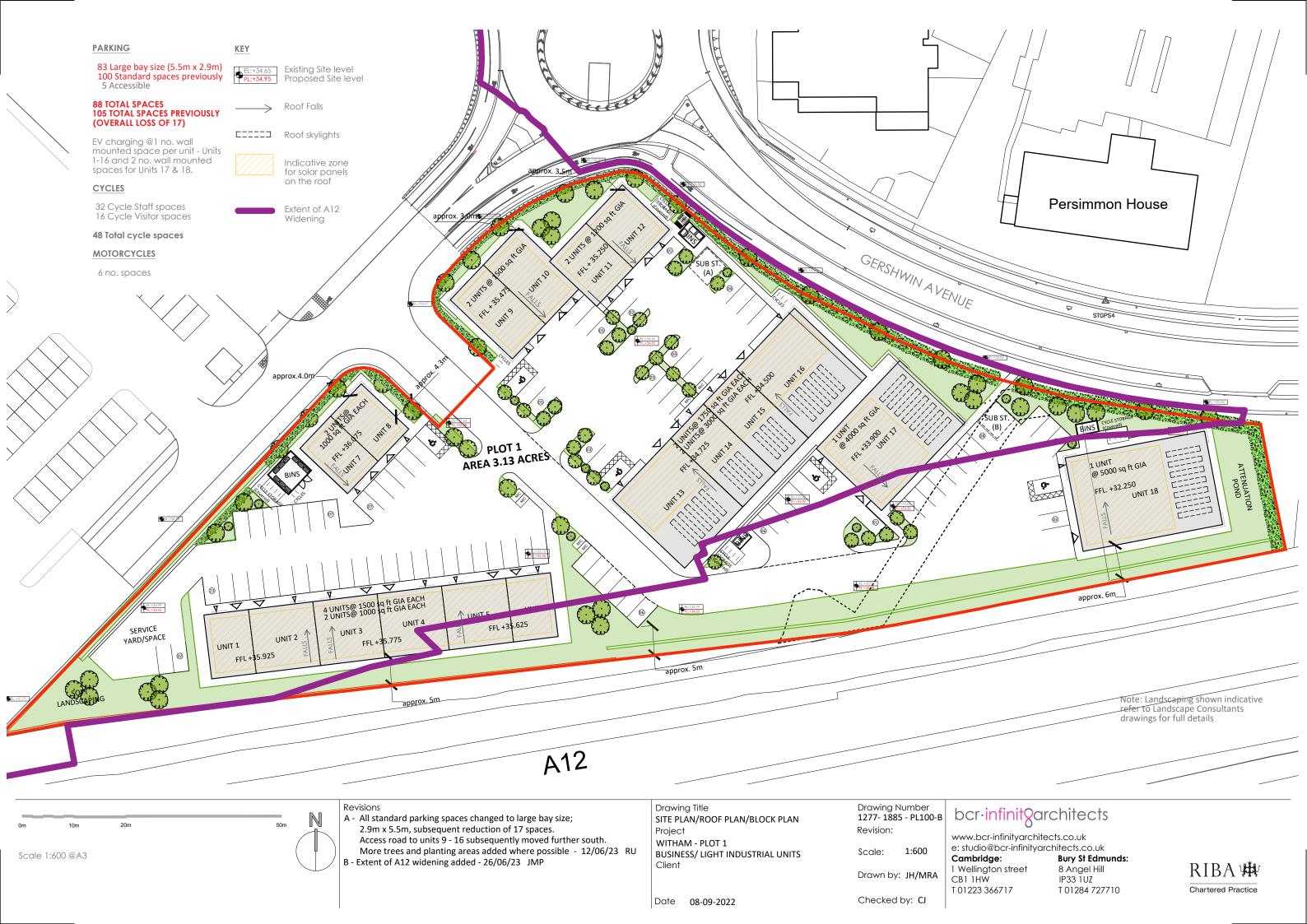


Appendix 3 – Extract from National Highway's latest Land Plan, REP6-015

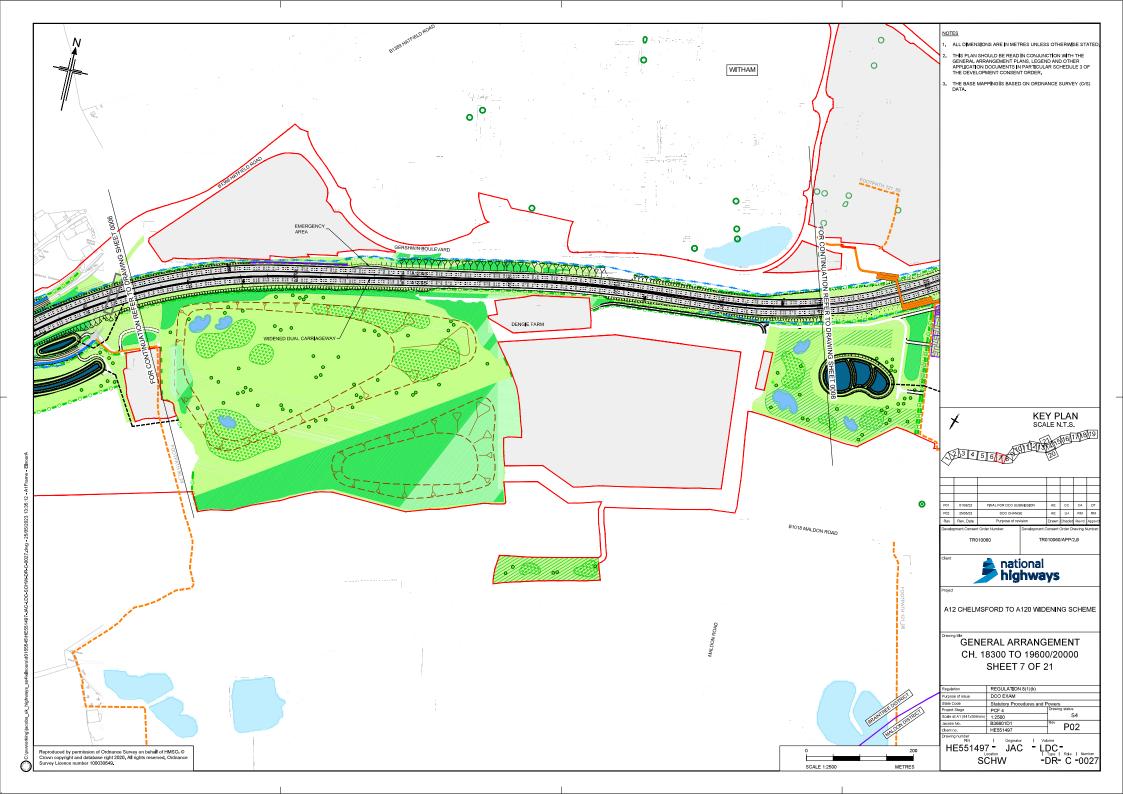


Appendix 4 – plot 1, Gershwin Park – location plan, and submitted planning application layout with DCO boundary overlaid





Appendix 5 – Extract from National Highway's latest General Arrangement Plans (Part 3), REP6-019



Appendix 6 – plot 18, Gershwin Park – location plan, and submitted planning application layout

