

### 3.5 Designing with the Kent Downs AONB in mind

#### Introduction

3.5.1 Given the proximity of IPM to the Kent Downs AONB, it is essential that applicants appreciate the importance of designing within the setting of the AONB.

3.5.2 This section of the Design Code sets out guidance on understanding the environmental context of the Site in relation to the AONB to ensure buildings are integrated with their surroundings, are visually unobtrusive and make a positive contribution to the AONB.

#### Understanding Context

3.5.3 The Kent Downs AONB comprises a diverse landscape that is based on its underlying geology. A key landscape feature within this part of the AONB is the prominent chalk scarp slope rising to a ridgeline that marks the boundary between the AONB and urban area of Chatham.

#### Landscape and Visual Analysis

3.5.4 The LVIA (Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment) accompanying the LDO identified that buildings, if designed to the maximum parameters, would be visible along the ridgeline from parts of the AONB, in particular from Nashenden Down Nature Reserve, an area to the north-west of IPM (Figure 3.9).

3.5.5 Figure 3.6 to 3.8 represent views from a permissive footpath within with Nashenden Down Nature Reserve (viewpoint 9), illustrating the location and heights of the buildings, as per the parameter plans.

3.5.6 Views from Nashenden Down Nature Reserve look across the M2 road and High Speed 1 rail infrastructure corridor towards the well-treed scarp slope, with open areas of grassland and scrub, defining the edge of Rochester. Existing buildings within the urban area are visible along the ridge, either through, above or between gaps in the treeline. Visibility of these buildings, as with the proposals, varies depending on the elevation of the terrain.

3.5.7 Buildings located in proximity to IPM are predominantly industrial in use but of varying design: some are standard units, with minimal fenestration; others have more clearly legible structures, with angled roofs, clearly visible floors with windows, roof lights, and so on. There is no one defining architectural style or composition from which the proposed buildings should take their lead. However, it is worth noting that the facades of buildings that have less detail and that are less scalable, are more successful at blending with their surroundings.



Figure 3.6. Viewpoint 9 - Nashenden Down Nature Reserve - Existing View



Figure 3.7. Viewpoint 9 - Nashenden Down Nature Reserve - Photowire



Figure 3.8. Viewpoint 9 - Nashenden Down Nature Reserve - Photomontage

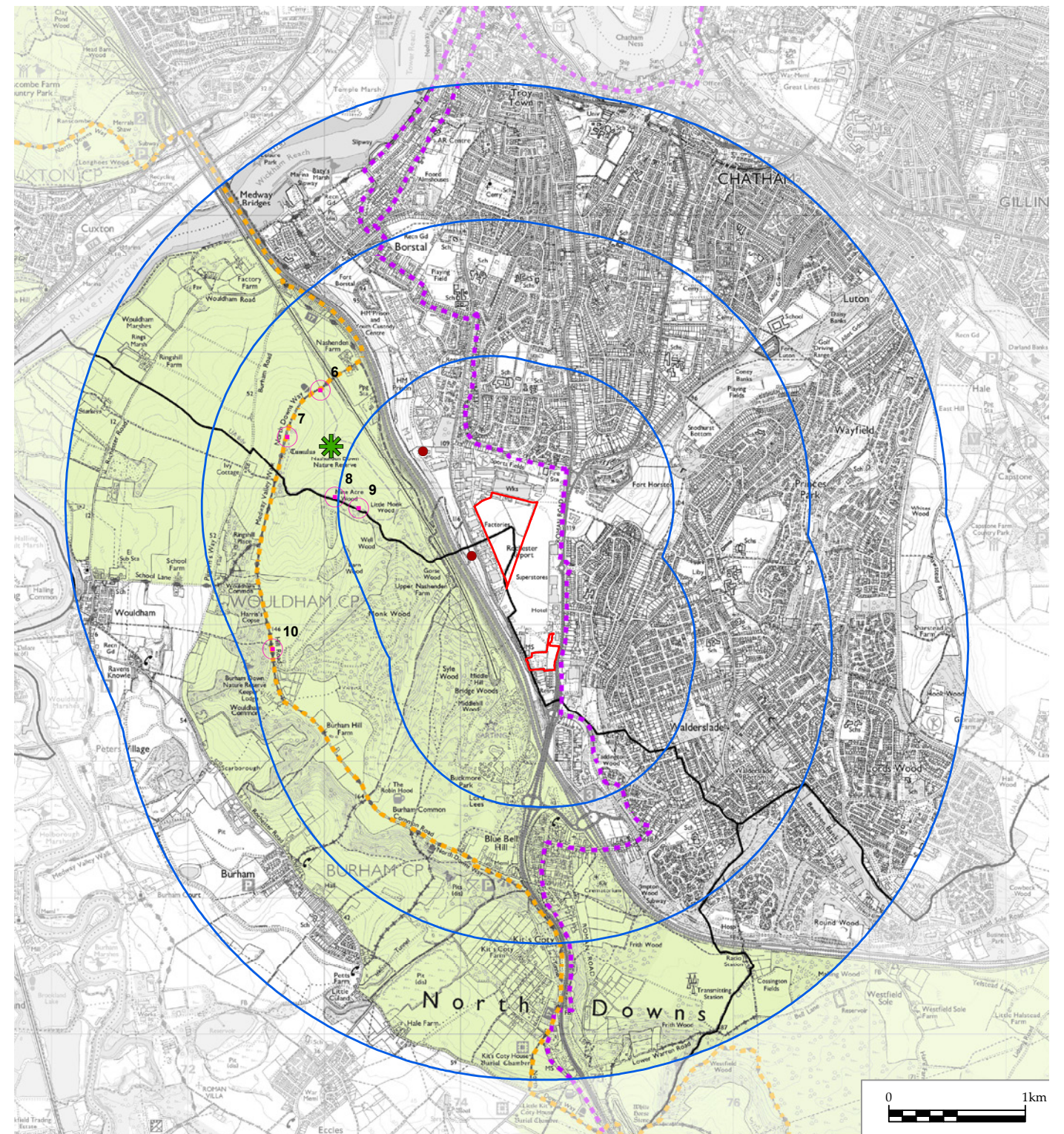
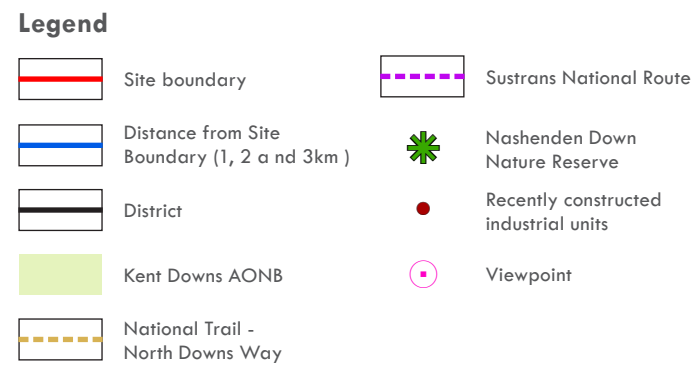


Figure 3.9. Site Location, Context and Viewpoints



**Environmental Colour Assessment**

*Introduction*

3.5.8 To gain a greater depth of contextual understanding, an environmental colour assessment has been undertaken.

3.5.9 Colour plays a significant part in the creation of landscape character, local identity and natural beauty, which can make a noticeable contribution to achieving high standards of design. It is vital therefore that due regard is given to colour and materials in managing change within the setting of the AONB.

3.5.10 The purpose of the IPM colour study is to assess the site's existing palette of tonality and hue when viewed from the AONB, in order to find a range of colours that can be applied to proposals within IPM that will help reduce the visual impact of new development. The intention is not to copy the complex palette of nature but to understand its constituent elements and to use this information to create a range of related colours, modified and extended to offer harmonious combinations which will help to integrate new structures into the landscape.

3.5.11 This section of the Design Code summarises the findings of the study. Applicants should read the full report appended to the Design Code, which should be read alongside the Kent Downs AONB "Guidance on the Selection and Use of Colour in Development".

*Landscape hue and tonality survey*

3.5.12 Colour is never seen in isolation from surrounding colours. Selecting colours for buildings or any other form of development must take account of the site context.

3.5.13 An assessment of existing tonality and hue of the receiving landscape, from the same viewpoints identified in the LVIA, has been undertaken. Allowance for seasonal changes of colour have been made with reference to the Kent Downs AONB Guidance.

3.5.14 Whilst hue changes with distance and from season to season, the tonality of the landscape remains largely consistent. Objects are recognised in the landscape in terms of the difference in lightness between the object and its surroundings. If this difference is minimised then the object becomes to a greater extent, part of the landscape.

*Building hue and landscape tonality survey*

3.5.15 Existing buildings visible on the skyline have been surveyed for hue and tonality and compared to the tonality of the landscape.

3.5.16 The review of existing buildings within and adjacent to the site points out many of the issues the colour study seeks to address.

3.5.17 Light coloured roofs and inappropriate hues make buildings visually prominent. Buildings visible on the skyline are lighter than the landscape tonality and therefore more prominent than they would be if matched to the landscape tonality. More recent buildings however are moving towards darker tones and are therefore more successful in integrating with the landscape.

*Summary*

3.5.18 The development should be viewed as a whole with colour selection supporting other strategies to reduce massing, scale and height. The developed palette presented in section 3.5.48 - 3.5.55 offers colours from all the quadrants of the colour wheel and therefore offers scope to articulate building frontages and townscape alike.



Figure 3.10 Viewpoint 9

Viewpoint 9: Landscape hue and tonality survey



Viewpoint 9: Building hue and landscape tonality survey





**Objectives**

**Western facing edge**

3.5.19 It is those plots on the western edge of IPM, that permit buildings up to three and four storeys; and plot N1.2 that permits a building up to six storeys, that are a primary consideration. Plots located further east within the core of IPM would be less visible but nevertheless should take on board this guidance.

3.5.20 The lower storeys of the buildings within IPM would be screened by units within the Laker Road industrial estate and by trees along Rochester Road.

3.5.21 It is therefore the upper storeys (three storeys and above) of western and northern facing facades that would be most visible from within the AONB and MUST employ mechanisms to reduce the visibility of buildings.

**Overarching objective**

3.5.22 The objective is to create a simple datum of buildings along the western, outward facing edge of IPM that is visually unobtrusive and integrates with the surrounding environment.

3.5.23 The design approach **must** reduce active elements and promote anonymous, passive behaviours.

**Legend**



-  Site boundary
-  Plots with potential visual impact on the Kent Downs AONB



Figure 3.11. Plots with potential visual impact on the Kent Downs AONB



**Design Principles – Framework for Good Design**

3.5.24 This section outlines a set of design principles that **must** be adhered to ensure visual impacts on the AONB are minimised as far as possible. They have been informed by the site context, project requirements and consultation feedback. The principles should be a point of departure, setting out a common understanding of the issues to be addressed.

3.5.25 During the pre-application process, applicants and case officers at the Council **must** consider the appearance of the development as a whole, rather than reviewing plot proposals in isolation.

**Height / Scale / Massing**

3.5.26 The height, scale and massing of buildings are separate but interconnected issues.

3.5.27 Variation in height, scale and mass of buildings on the western boundary of the site is required to break up the massing of buildings and ensure they are not read as a single block of built form.

3.5.28 Provision of 3D images along with sections and elevations will be helpful in understanding the height, scale and massing of proposals relative to adjacent plots and the surrounding context.

**Building heights**

3.5.29 Building heights are fixed by the parameter plans (defined as storeys) and **must** not be exceeded. This includes any additional structures that may be required for operational purposes, such as air conditioning units. The maximum height of each storey is as follows:

Storey	Height
2	8m
3	11m
4	14m
5	17m
6	20m

Applicants and case officers **must** ensure that buildings are variable in height, providing a staggered roof line. Development along the western edge should not all be provided at the maximum height set out in the building parameters.

**Building Line / Orientation**

3.5.30 Building line along the frontage with Laker Road **must** vary, with some buildings set back from others, to avoid a continuous building line and breaking up the massing of the built form.

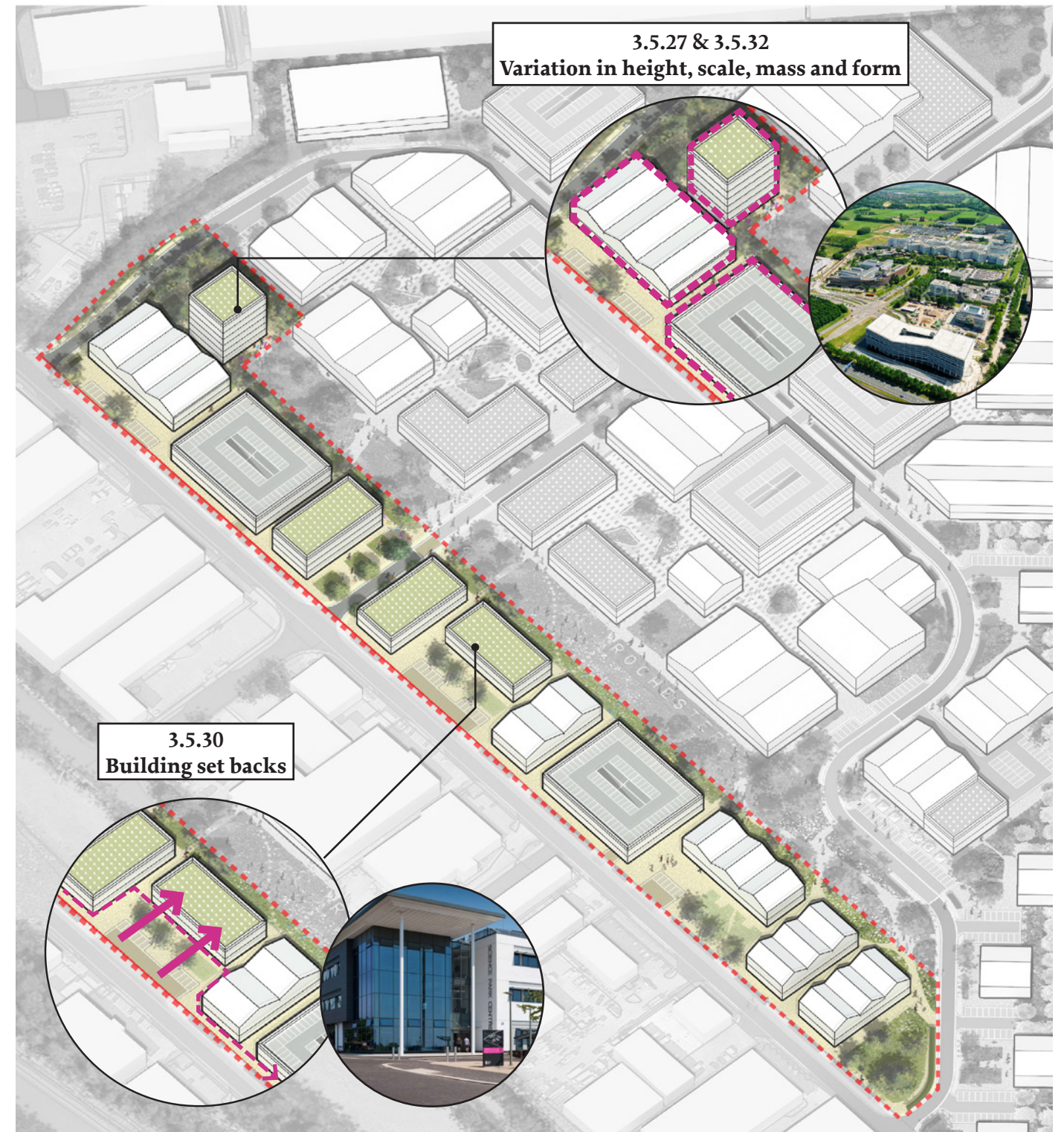
3.5.31 Orientation of buildings to prevent a continuous building line should also be employed. Buildings should be predominantly orientated east to west rather than having a long elevation parallel with the M2/AONB boundary.

**Shape / Form**

3.5.32 The shape and form of each building is likely to be driven by individual requirements. However, applicants **must** consider the design of buildings as part of a group that is complementary in form and profile.

3.5.33 Variation in form, leading to innovative design proposals that reduce the visual impact of buildings, is to be encouraged. Buildings should take the opportunity to develop an interrelated language of formal expression between groups of buildings to include the following approaches to reduce the perceived scale of buildings and legibility of storeys:

- \* Recess and projection of the volume
- \* Vertical fragmentation of the volume
- \* Emphasised purity of the volume
- \* Chamfered edge conditions and geometric manipulation of the building volume





*Roofline*

3.5.34 Ensure that roofs are not visually dominant and are broken up in views. The colour of roofs is important in achieving this.

3.5.35 Roof articulation: The use of curved or sinuous roofs can be employed but this form of articulation should aim to reduce the visual effect of the building rather than accentuate its apex.

3.5.36 Roof Colour: See section on colour

*Fenestration*

3.5.37 Designs should apply techniques to reduce the perceived scale of buildings from a distance by manipulating the size and arrangement of visible components and façade details, subject to operational requirements.

3.5.38 Windows: This may include limiting the number of windows and providing solutions that reduce the visibility of windows and legibility of storeys

3.5.39 Ancillary structures: Subject to operational requirements, all roof level plant equipment and protrusions should be concealed behind a raised building parapet as far as is reasonably practicable.

3.5.40 The need for permanent access systems, railings and other secondary structures attached to buildings will be minimised and, where visible from public viewpoints, should maintain a coordinated approach, where reasonably practicable.

*Materials*

3.5.41 The selection of materials and their potential effects should be given careful consideration early in the design process. The colour, variation, reflectivity, texture of materials and the extent and character of glazing will all influence the appearance of a building.

3.5.42 The way materials are seen and appreciated may alter under different atmospheric conditions, for example in bright sunshine and at different times of the day and night. The consideration of materials under different weather conditions should be tested through the provision of visualisations agreed during pre-application consultation.

3.5.43 Consideration of how materials will change over time, the performance life of materials and their maintenance requirements should also inform the design and material palette chosen.

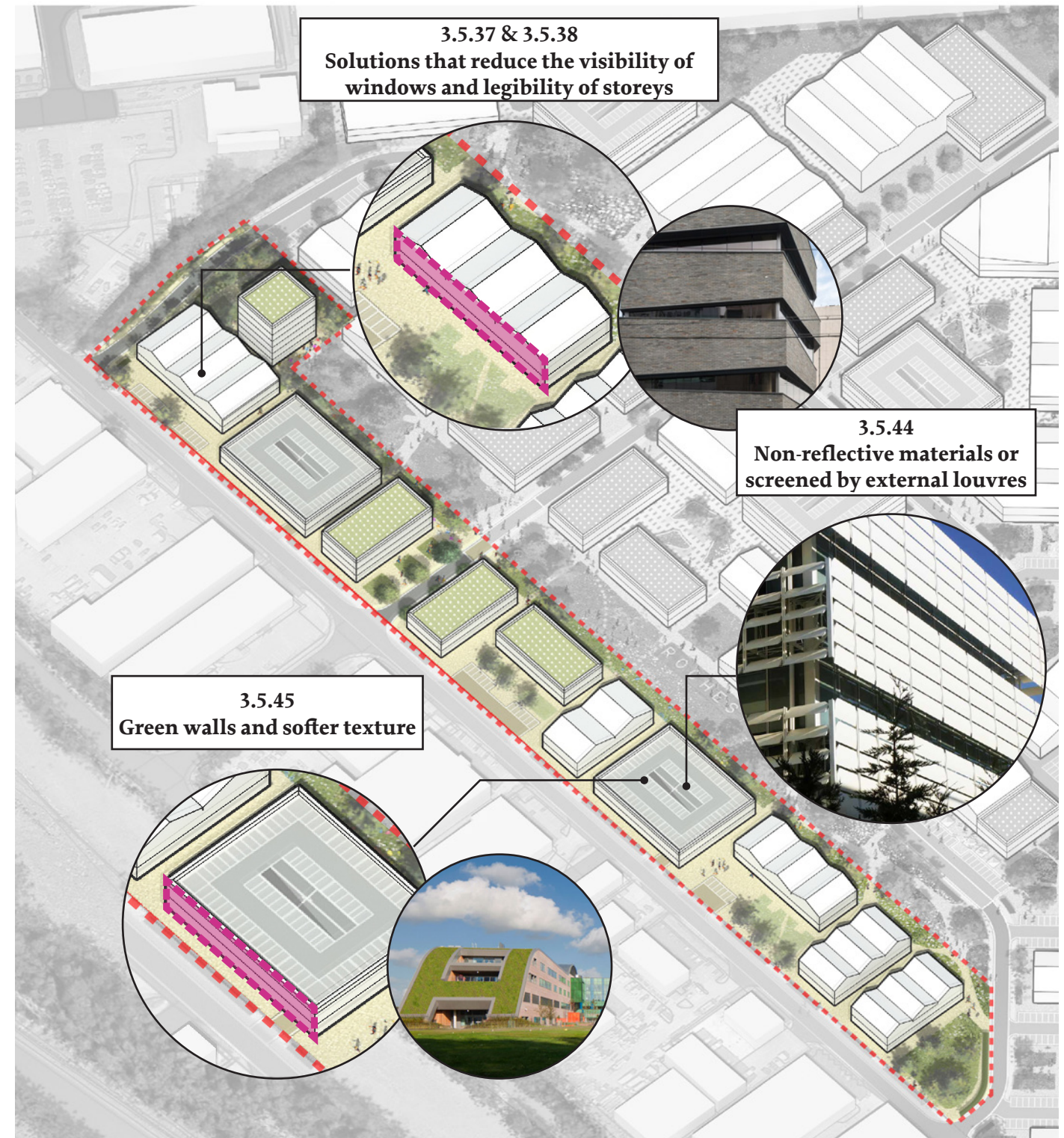
*Reflectivity*

3.5.44 Glazed elevations, particularly west facing elevation, should be avoided, and where necessary, be composed of non-reflective materials or screened by louvres. Low transmittance glass or tints to be applied and consideration of external louvres or installation of internal automatic blinds.

*Texture*

3.5.45 Use of green walls and softer texture should be promoted to reduce the perceived scale of buildings and legibility of storeys.

3.5.46 Use of texture for the western facades should be sympathetic to the setting of the AONB and can be differentiated from other facades of the buildings.





**Colour / Tone:**

3.5.47 The Environmental Colour Assessment defines a palette of tonality and colour to help mitigate visual impact. This palette forms baseline information for the detailed design of individual buildings.

3.5.48 Facades facing the AONB should be treated with an external colour palette that is responsive and integrates with the surrounding landscape.

*Developed Colour Palette*

3.5.49 The palette is based upon an analysis of site colours and tonality. The developed palette is applicable during any season, in offering colours with close tonal resemblance to the landscape, whilst still offering choice in the range of hues.

3.5.50 The palette specifies colours from the Natural Colour System, details of which can be found within the appended report.

3.5.51 Colours of completed building facades will always appear lighter and brighter than the small-scale colour samples upon which colour selections for building materials are based. This has been allowed for in the developed palette, but checks **should** be made with meaningfully sized samples on site before final decisions are taken.

*Application of colour*

3.5.52 The developed palette takes account of the need to fully integrate the IPM buildings along the western frontages by identifying colours with a tonality that is one stage darker than the general landscape tonality, to compensate for the tonal shift between inherent and perceived colours.

3.5.53 Colours are arranged vertically following the NCS colour wheel-yellow, red, blue and green and horizontally as follows:

**3.5.54 Treatment of main elevations:** Moving from left to right the first three colours are integration colours for the treatment of main elevations. These colours replicate closely the tonality of the contextual landscape and will result in the development receding into that landscape.

**3.5.55 Use of Greys to articulate form:** The next pair of colours are greys, the first a tinted grey which corresponds to the hue of the row and the second a pure grey which corresponds to the dominant tone of the landscape. These greys may be used in combination with any of the colours within the same row to articulate form. The darker grey may be useful for visible roofs as pitched roofs always appear lighter than facades and therefore some compensation of tone is required.

**3.5.56 Contrast to help influence scale, mass and height of a building:** The final pair of colours are related to the integration colours in each row. The first colour is one stop lighter and the second colour is one stop darker than the integration colours. This greater contrast between colours may be used to provide accent and form to a development, helping to influence the perceived scale, mass and height of a building. The use of lighter colours should be used sparingly in relationship to sensitive elevations.

3.5.57 All external building materials **should** have a matt or low sheen finish. Highly reflective finishes will create glare and lighten even the darkest colour.

3.5.58 Elevations with little scalable details will fit in better with the landscape but some detailing of the surface to create light and shade will help integrate the buildings into the texture of the tree lined scarp.

3.5.59 The buildings which will be visible from the AONB **should** be treated as a total composition in colour terms rather than as a series of individual properties. The developed palette offers scope to mix colours from different quadrants of the colour wheel.

**Developed palette**



**Other principles**

**Lighting**

3.5.60 Both internal and external light sources should be considered.

3.5.61 Lighting on AONB facing facades must be minimised to reduce visual effects at night from lighting and light spill, without compromising either safety or security.

3.5.62 Lighting should be kept to the minimum levels required for safety and security purposes and intelligent (or adaptive) street lighting should be used.

3.5.63 Facades facing the AONB should generally be formed of solid components without glazed openings to reduce light spill.

3.5.64 The external lighting design should respond to the maintenance and security brief but where practicable should minimise light spill.

3.5.65 Security systems and lighting must be integrated, evenly set-out and applied consistently to all facades to reduce the appearance of visual clutter as far as reasonably practicable.

**Movement**

3.5.66 IPM is likely to require multi-storey car parks, some of which are likely to be located within westernmost plots. The design of buildings on these plots **must** reduce visible movement.

3.5.67 Access to MSCP can be from Laker Road (western edge) at ground floor level but vehicle ramps to upper storeys (three and above) should be located on eastern facing edges of building.

**Vegetation**

3.5.68 Naturalistic woodland planting character along the development's northern edge – woodland typology - should act as a transition between the development and northern boundary of the site.

