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7th November 2023

Land West of Chilgrove  
Drive and North of  
Camp Road, Heyford  
Park

**Landscape  
Evidence of Wendy  
Lancaster PGDipLA  
PGDipUD CMLI  
FRSA**

Appeal between Richborough Estates and  
Cherwell District Council

## **Volume 1: Text**

Council Ref: 21/04289/OUT

Planning Inspectorate Ref:  
APP/C3105/W/23/3326761

Appeal Date: 5th December 2023

Report Number: 13464\_R08\_WL



Report No:	Date	Revision	Author	Checked	Approved
13464_R08	7th November 2023	C	WL	Wendy Lancaster BA(Hons) PGDipLA PGDipUD CMLI FRSA	

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# Section 1: Introduction

## Witness and Qualifications

- 1.1. My name is Wendy Lancaster, I am Director of Landscape Planning at Tyler Grange Group Ltd, and I specialise in landscape and visual planning issues associated with development.
- 1.2. I hold an honours degree and post graduate diploma in Landscape Architecture from the University of Gloucestershire. I hold a second post graduate diploma in Urban Design from the University of Westminster. I have been a Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute (LI) since 2006 and Registered Practitioner in Urban Design with the Urban Design Group since 2010. I was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of the Arts in 2016 for my contributions to the development of the understanding and review of Green Belt.
- 1.3. I have 19 years' experience in Landscape Planning, having started my career at Bidwells (formerly Carpenter Planning) in Norwich and Cambridge, where I undertook landscape planning and masterplanning work for large-scale strategic greenfield and brownfield sites as part of a multi-disciplinary practice. I spent six years as an independent consultant as Director of Landmark Landscape Planning, providing sub-consultancy to a number of prominent landscape practices, as well as consultancy on both LVIA and Green Belt review methodology, and masterplanning and urban design. I was asked to join Barton Willmore, one of my former clients, in 2006 and became an Associate in the Landscape Planning team where I provided specialist landscape planning advice on strategic and often highly sensitive greenfield and brownfield sites, including a number of large scale greenfield residential developments and Green Belt sites. I remained with Barton Willmore until early 2021 when I was offered the opportunity to join Tyler Grange to take over the operation of the Landscape Planning team where I am now a co-owner and Director of Landscape.
- 1.4. I have provided specialist LVIA and Green Belt Review methodology advice and training to public bodies and private companies in relation to LVIA and Green Belt, have been part of a small-scale working group to provide Green Belt advice to the coalition Government in 2014 and was one of the authors of the Landscape Institute's position paper on Green Belt. I spent a tenure of three years as a judge for the Landscape Institute awards in the category of Strategic Landscape Planning and appear as a speaker at Landscape Institute events on landscape planning matters.
- 1.5. I have been appointed by developers to provide professional landscape, visual and Green Belt advice and expert witness in relation to a variety of projects, including major housing-led allocations, commercial and energy schemes. I have spent the entirety of my career to-date involved in the assessment of landscape and visual effects in relation to residential, commercial and energy uses with particular speciality in sensitive and designated landscapes, including Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

## Instruction

- 1.6. Tyler Grange Ltd was instructed in August 2020 to provide landscape and visual baseline and on-site analysis to understand the capacity for, and to identify opportunities and constraints to, potential residential development on land north of Camp Road to the south-east of RAF Heyford. This was followed by a review of the ecological opportunities and constraints in September 2020.
- 1.7. In July 2021, Tyler Grange Landscape and Arboricultural teams were instructed to undertake assessments of the likely implications of proposed development within the Site. At the time, it was not considered that a full Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) was required due to the likely low level of effects on



the landscape and visual resource but, after discussions with the Council's Landscape Officer, Tim Screen, this was upgraded to a full LVIA (CDA15). The LVIA was later appended as part of the Environmental Statement (ES). No significant or near significant landscape or visual effects were identified as part of the EIA process.

- 1.8. After the Council refused permission, Tyler Grange Landscape was instructed in August 2023 to provide landscape expert witness services to the forthcoming Planning Appeal.

### **Statement of Truth**

- 1.9. The evidence I have prepared here represents my professional opinion on the aspects of landscape and visual impact assessment, responding to the Council's Reasons for Refusal. I believe the facts stated in this evidence are true, accurate and have been prepared in accordance with the guidance of my professional institution (the Landscape Institute).



# Section 2: Background, Context and Structure of Evidence

## The Planning Application and Tyler Grange Involvement

- 2.1. The outline planning application was submitted in December 2021, for the erection of up to 230 dwellings and new vehicular access from Camp Road (the Appeal Scheme). The Council reference is 21/04289/OUT.
- 2.2. Although the application was submitted in December 2021, Tyler Grange Landscape Planning and Ecological teams were instructed in August and September 2020 respectively to identify opportunities and constraints to potential residential development on the Appeal Site, as well as input to the proposed Vision Document. The initial Landscape and Visual Analysis (13464\_R01) was produced in September 2020 in order to provide guidance to the masterplanning team on the design of the layout and was followed by a Landscape and Visual Technical Note (23464\_R02), which was intended to form part of the representations to the Local Plan. Input was also provided in relation to ecology.
- 2.3. In July 2021, Tyler Grange Landscape was instructed on the production of a Landscape and Visual Appraisal, later updated in November 2021 to a full Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) (CDA15), appended as part of the ES. This was based on ongoing consultation with the Council's Landscape Officer, Tim Screen (see below).
- 2.4. On 31<sup>st</sup> March, despite officer recommendation, the application was refused.

## Agreement of LVIA Scope, Consultation and Landscape Response

### Cherwell District Council Landscape Officer

- 2.5. On 7<sup>th</sup> October 2021, the author of the LVIA (CDA15), a Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute, wrote to the Council's Landscape Officer, Tim Screen, to agree methodology, approach and receptors for the document. The full correspondence is included Appendix 2 of the LVIA (CDA15 Appendix 2). The email was accompanied by a proposed viewpoint plan (13464\_P10) which demonstrated the proposed viewpoint locations set upon a Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) model calculated on a 10m building height. The email states that *"The photoviewpoint locations have been chosen to be representative of a number of visual receptors including the local residents, users of public rights of way and local roads"* going on to state that *"the viewpoints also allow for views from a range of orientations and distances to be considered, to allow for a balanced assessment to be made of the likely landscape and visual effects arising from the proposed development"*. The email also proposed the assessment of landscape effects was limited to the 'Farmed Plateau' Landscape Type from the Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study (OWLS) (CDJ3) and the 'Upper Heyford' Landscape Character Area within the Cherwell Landscape Character Assessment (CDJ8).
- 2.6. On 7<sup>th</sup> October, Mr Screen responded, stating that the development warranted *"a full LVIA in accordance with GLVIA3 and current LI guidance"*. He also proposed a single additional representative viewpoint location (viewpoint 10) with all other viewpoints agreed. The Landscape Officer also requested a cumulative assessment of the scheme with other similar developments in the locality, and a *"written-only narrative of the landscape effects to the attractive Cherwell Valley"*.



- 2.7. On 14<sup>th</sup> October, Tyler Grange emailed Mr Screen again, confirming that the Appellant would produce a full LVIA in accordance with the GLVIA3 (CDA15 Appendix 2), attaching a copy of the Tyler Grange assessment methodology (included in CDA15 Appendix 1) and proposing that the cumulative assessment be limited to the following applications:
- Heyford Park, South of Camp Road (reference: 16/02446/F). Status: permitted.
  - Land East Of Larsen Road Heyford Park (reference: 15/01357/F). Status: permitted but not at the time of writing the LVIA – referred to in this Proof of Evidence as ‘the Pye scheme’.
  - Heyford Park, Camp Road (reference: 18/00825/HYBRID). Status: permitted but not at the time of writing the LVIA.
- 2.8. Mr Screen’s comments re the proposed landscape character areas to be assessed were also acknowledged.
- 2.9. On 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2021, Mr Screen responded, stating that he was “*happy with [the] methodology and cumulative site selection*” and going to state that the proposed Tyler Grange methodology was “*a clear and uncomplicated way forward, in accordance with GLVIA3*” and that he was happy for Tyler Grange to “*proceed on that basis*”.

#### *Landscape Officer Response to the Application*

- 2.10. In his consultation response email dated 11<sup>th</sup> May 2022 (CDD11), Mr Screen wrote in reference to the LVIA that “*having read through the comprehensive and proportionate LVIA I am in general agreement with its findings and conclusions*”. Mr Screen then went on to set out the requirements for play provision and commuted sums.

## **The Committee Report and Recommendation for Approval**

- 2.11. A Committee Report (CDC6) was produced by the Case Officer, Katherine Daniels, for the 9<sup>th</sup> March 2023 Planning Committee, setting out a **recommendation for approval**. The landscape and heritage issues were addressed by the Case Officer together in the Committee Report (CDC6)
- 2.12. Mr Screen’s response is set out in paragraph 7.9 (CDC6) which states that “*the LVIA is comprehensive and proportionate and [I] am in general agreement with its findings and conclusions*” before setting out a list of required financial contributions for different landscape features. This was reiterated in paragraph 9.39.
- 2.13. In paragraph 9.23, under the heading of ‘assessment’, the Case Officer refers to the development being within a greenfield site “*which will have a physical and visual relationship with the development at Heyford Park*” and that “*the site will be bounded by development to the west and to the north*”. The Officer also notes in paragraph 9.23 that Chilgrove Road [sic], “*which is planned to be upgraded to form the principal access route into the Upper Heyford Flying Field*”, forms a “*barrier with open countryside to the east*” The Officer also acknowledges that, although the Site was not allocated as part of PV5, “*the site adjoining is allocated land...so the development will not be a standalone development but would relate well to the established and future planned form of Heyford Park, contained between residential development to the west and Chilgrove Road to the east*”.
- 2.14. Paragraph 9.24 summarises the analysis of the Site, stating that the Appeal Scheme “*would result in a natural continuum with the existing development, and would ‘round off’ Heyford Park, given Chilgrove Road to the east, and Camp Road to the south*”.



- 2.15. Paragraphs 9.30 to 9.35 discuss the policies relevant to the landscape elements of the Appeal Scheme, including the NPPF, saved policy C8 and C30, ESD13 and ESD15, and Neighbourhood Plan policy PD4. Under the heading of ‘assessment’, the Case Officer highlights in paragraph 9.36 that the Appeal Site was considered within the 2018 HELAA (CDG8) which considered that *“the site could be developed without opening the development further into open countryside beyond”* (CDG8 Appendix 4 page 78).
- 2.16. Under the heading of ‘principle of development’, the Case Officer stated in paragraph 9.9 that *“the site is relatively contained”* and at 9.40 that *“the site is well-contained, and with appropriate landscaping **would not have an adverse impact on the character and appearance of the landscape setting**”* and, in paragraph 9.41 *“there is sufficient distance between the site and Ardley, a mile-and-a-half to the northeast”*. It then concluded in paragraph 9.45 that *“**the proposal...would blend in with the character and appearance of the locality and would be seen in conjunction with the wider Heyford Park development**”*. (All emphasis my own.)
- 2.17. In the overall assessment of planning balance and conclusion of the report, the Case Officer stated in paragraph 10.3 that *“development of the land would relate well to surrounding development and represent a natural rounding off”*, going on to state that *“other impacts would all be mitigated and controlled by condition”* and that *“overall, the balance of beneficial impacts would outweigh the identified harmful impacts, therefore planning permission ought to be granted”*.

## The Reason for Refusal and the Case Against the Appellant

- 2.18. Committee Members voted against the Officer recommendation and refused to grant outline planning permission at their planning committee on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2023. The Decision Notice (CDC10) set out two Reasons for Refusal (RfR), of which the first makes reference to landscape, design and heritage matters, stating (my emphasis):

*“The Site is located on greenfield land outside the Policy Villages 5 allocation, therefore within **an area of open countryside separate from the built-up area of Heyford Park. As a result, the development will have a poor and incongruous relationship with the form and character of Heyford Park, by reason of the site’s general openness.** The site’s relationship to the RAF Upper Heyford Conservation Area and the **views into and out of the Conservation Area** would cause harm to the setting of designated assets. Such environmental harm is considered to be less than substantial, but the harm caused is not outweighed by the public social and economic benefits. In addition, the Council is able to demonstrate a 5.4-year housing land supply, and therefore the housing strategies in the Local Plan are up to date. It is considered that the development of this site would conflict with the adopted policies in the Local Plan to which substantial weight should be attached. The principle of this development is therefore unacceptable, as contrary to Policies PSD1, ESD1, ESD13, ESD15, and Policy Villages 5 of the Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031, Policy PD4 of the Mid Cherwell Neighbourhood Plan, Saved Policies C8, C30, C33 and H18 of the Cherwell Local Plan 1996 and Government Guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework.”*

- 2.19. In order to distil the principal landscape and visual reasons for refusal and to focus the scope of my evidence, I have reviewed the Council and Rule 6 parties’ cases and the principal matters for discussion as noted at the Case Management Conference. The focus of the evidence has also been reduced in accordance with the agreed Landscape SoCG, to avoid the need to fully consider wider landscape and visual issues. It is noted that the element of RfR1 relating to views to and from the Conservation Area is a heritage point but views to and from the Conservation Area are addressed in this proof in terms of visual impact. For the overall planning balance, I will defer to the evidence of Mr David Bainbridge, and for matters relating to heritage issues, I will defer to Mr Thomas Copp.





## The Council's Case

- 2.20. The Council's Statement of Case (SoC) (CD6E3) acknowledges the recommendation for approval and that the refusal was made in the face of this, as Members of the Planning Committee considered the Appeal Scheme to *"have a detrimental impact on the character of the area and local heritage assets"*. In paragraph 3.4, the SoC states that *"the appeal site is considered to contribute to the open and loose-knit character of this edge of the village and surrounding open countryside"*. It goes on to state that the *"lack of development on the site, and **presently on the Policy Villages 5 land to the west**"* and *"its verdant nature, is perceived as open and rural particularly when travelling east and west along Camp Road when entering and leaving Heyford Park or walking along Chilgrove Drive"*. Paragraph 3.4 concludes that *"the LPA therefore contends that the site is important in contributing to the spacious rural atmosphere that is seen on the eastern end of the settlement"*.
- 2.21. Paragraph 3.7 again reiterates the openness of the Site and *"the appeal site's separation from the **current built-up area** of Heyford Park"* (my emphasis) with paragraph 3.9 referring to the Appeal Scheme as *"an extension of the settlement into open countryside where there would be resultant harm on the openness of the countryside [and] the rural setting of the village"*.
- 2.22. It is important to note that the Council's Statement of Case (CDE3) in relation to the rural character of the Site, as set out above, refers to the **current unbuilt baseline**, specifically the unbuilt PV5. However, the land to the immediate west is the subject of two consented residential schemes (the Pye schemes) which immediately abut the western boundary of the Site, and to further development within the Policy Villages 5 area to the north (under hybrid planning application 18/090825/HYBRID) and east. Both of these latter schemes were addressed within the LVIA as cumulative schemes, in agreement with the Landscape Officer (CDA15 Appendix 2). The Case Officer also confirms the relationship of the Appeal Site with the adjoining allocation *"which has a resolution to grant planning permission"* (now granted) in paragraph 9.23 of her Officer's Report. The Council's case incorrectly is based upon the baseline as currently built, rather than the consented future baseline. The GLVIA3 refers to the future baseline of projects, stating that the baseline studies *"establishes the existing nature of the landscape and visual environment in the study area, including any relevant changes likely to occur independently of the development proposals"* (CDJ1 Table 3.1 page 27).

## Mid Cherwell Neighbourhood Plan Forum's (MCNPF) Case

- 2.23. Point 1 of the MCNPF SoC states that *"the site was deliberately excluded from the designated area of the strategic development site for Heyford Park"* despite *"some green sites [being] incorporated in the designated strategic site as 'areas with potential for additional development'"*.
- 2.24. Point 2 refers to the loss of greenfield land and biodiversity, referring to Cherwell Local Plan policies ESD10 and ESD13. Neither of these policies restricts development but seek assessment and the Case Officer highlighted as paragraph 9.45 that *"overall, officers consider the scheme complies with the above-mentioned policies"*.
- 2.25. Point 3 is entitled 'loss of local landscape character' but, refers to the avoidance of coalescence with surrounding settlements, highlighting MCNP policy PD3 which raises concerns relating to the expansion of Heyford Park beyond its current boundaries. In the third paragraph under point 3, the SoC again makes reference to concerns of local communities relating to their separation from Heyford Park.
- 2.26. The second paragraph under point 3 makes reference to the damage to local landscape character, making reference to the *"loss of access to the countryside for the inhabitants of the settlement (of Heyford Park)"* as well as *"harm to the setting of and rural character of the settlement"*.



- 2.27. The issues raised are addressed in Section 4 of this Proof; however, it is important to note that the Council does not raise concerns in relation to merger and these are not raised within the RfR. The Committee Report (CDC6) states in paragraph 9.41 that *“the site is located on the eastern edge of Heyford Park, rather than the western edge which restricts development coalescing with Upper Heyford Village”*, going on to state *“there is sufficient distance between the site and Ardley, a mile-and-a-half to the northeast”*. Paragraph 8.45 of the overarching SoCG (CDE7) states that *“both parties agree that the Appeal proposals would not cause coalescence of any settlements, in accordance with Policy PD3 of the Mid Cherwell Neighbourhood Plan”*.
- 2.28. The MCNPF’s SoC also makes reference to loss of access to the countryside but there is currently no public access to the Site and the proposed masterplan (CDE5) demonstrates increased access to open space.

### Dorchester Living’s Case

- 2.29. Dorchester Living refers to heritage and landscape in its SoC (CDE4) in paragraph 6.3, stating that it considers it *“disproportionate for it to call evidence in respect of all areas upon which it has concerns”*. However, the SoC refers back to historic objections made to the scheme, which includes a review of the LVIA undertaken by Pegasus (CDD4A Appendix 2).
- 2.30. The concerns raised within the Pegasus review of the LVIA (CDD4A Appendix 2) are minor and relate primarily to the annotation of the photographs on the illustrative viewpoint photography, the lack of visualisations and the reference of the LVIA to Figure 15: Enhancement Strategy of the Cherwell District Landscape Assessment, included within the LVIA (CDA15) Appendix 3. None of these comments affect the findings of the LVIA. More detail is included below in paragraph 4.27 onwards.

### The Case Management Conference

- 2.31. The Post CMC Note (CDE6) sets out the likely main issues to be discussed at paragraph 11. The second bullet point is relevant to this Proof, referring to the *“the effect of the proposal on the landscape and local character, with particular regard to the form and character of Heyford Park”*.

## **Scope and Structure of Evidence**

- 2.32. In terms of the structure of my evidence, I refer to the baseline as set out within the LVIA (CDA15), adding commentary where appropriate and respond to the reasons for refusal and disputed matters set out within the Statements of Case and the agreed Landscape SoCG.
- 2.33. I have summarised the main matters as being:
- The relationship of the Site and the Appeal Scheme to the existing settlement, including the setting of the settlement;
  - Impacts on views to and from the Conservation Area; and
  - Effects on local landscape character.
- 2.34. I will also establish my reasoning for why the proposed development complies with the relevant landscape polices and provide an overall conclusion.
- 2.35. I note that my second point above is a heritage point but I include reference here to the visual impact on these views. Mr Copp will make the points as relevant to heritage.



- 2.36. Reason for Refusal 1 addresses matters relevant to both landscape and heritage. This Proof deals directly with the views to and from the Conservation Area but does not address issues of heritage impact or historic setting. Any references to setting in this Proof, unless stated otherwise, relate to landscape or visual setting. For issues of conservation and heritage, I defer to the evidence and expertise of Mr Copp.
- 2.37. In respect of the wider policy context and overall planning balance, I defer to the evidence and expertise of Mr Bainbridge.
- 2.38. Within my evidence, where appropriate, I refer to published best practice guidance for considering landscape and visual matters, this comprises:
- Guidance for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, third edition (GLVIA), LI and IEMA, 2013 (CDJ1); and
  - Technical Guidance Note 02/21: Assessing Landscape Value Outside National Designations, LI, 2021 (CDJ4).



## Section 3: Landscape and Visual Context and Effects

- 3.1. This section does not seek to recreate the information set out within the LVIA produced to inform the outline planning application (CDA15) but, rather, refers to it where appropriate, highlights where the baseline has changed within the intervening years and notes any disagreements with its findings, if applicable.

### Appeal Site and Context

- 3.2. The Appeal Site comprises three main areas as shown on Insert TG 1 below:
1. Eastern and largest field comprising arable farmland that has been recently left to fallow, bordered to the south, east and west by native hedgerow with some gaps in need of repair, and to the north by wire mesh fencing which separates the Site from the former RAF base to the north.
  2. North-western field comprising pastoral farmland with equestrian style buildings and drainage pond.
  3. Area of maintained amenity areas including mown grassland, ponds, hedgerow and immature tree planting with a series of ditches extending along the western boundary.



*Insert TG 1: Location of Field Parcels*







*Insert TG 2: Amenity Wetland Corridor in West of Appeal Site*

- 3.3. To the north of the agricultural fields, the land comprises part of the former RAF base. This includes areas of hardstanding, bunding and scrub, separated from the Appeal Site by a functional security fence (see Insert TG 3 below). Beyond the areas of hard standing are some of the Hardened Aircraft Shelters (HASs) which are described in the Council's evidence base as being of historic importance. These are constructed from corrugated galvanised steel and covered with concrete. More information is included within the assessment of designations below.



*Insert TG 3: View of Security Fence On Northern Boundary of Appeal Site*



*Insert TG 4: HASs and Other Buildings to the North of the Western Field*

- 3.4. To the west of the northern field and wetland corridor are Letchmere Farm and Heyford Grange. To the west of Letchmere Farm is land also forming part of the former RAF base, comprising areas of open space and hardstanding used as large areas of car parking.
- 3.5. To the west of Heyford Grange are areas of former RAF housing, with new housing within the former Technical Site on Hampden Square, forming part of Heyford Park.



- 3.6. The Site is situated within the context of the surrounding built form, with visual links to the HASs and security fence to the north and towards residential development glimpsed through the more vegetated edge to the west beyond the Pye site.

### Land Use History

- 3.7. The eastern part of the Site appears to have been in continued arable uses for some time, whereas the western areas were once part of the same field, laid out as rough grassland with some trees, the latter present on 1945 aerial photography. The westernmost part of the western parcel was separated from the main field between 2006 and 2009, judging by aerial photography, with the ponds becoming established around this point. By 2013 the fields are shown in their current arrangement with the entirety of the western area forming part of the managed amenity area, and new blocks of tree planting being established. The western part of the Site, therefore, comprises a comparatively modern and managed amenity landscape, as opposed to the arable uses in the remainder of the Site.



*Insert TG 5: 1945 Aerial Photograph © Google showing Appeal Site before amenity area established*

- 3.8. More detail regarding the history of the former RAF base and the surrounding buildings are set out within the Heritage Proof (CDE15).

### Designations

- 3.9. There are no relevant landscape designations within or in close vicinity to the Site, and it is agreed as Common Ground (CDE7 paragraph 8.29) that this is not a valued landscape as defined within the NPPF. There is no 'Non-coalescence zone' as exists to the west of the former airfield, designated under Mid Cherwell Neighbourhood Plan (CDG4) Policy PD3.
- 3.10. The land to the immediate north of the Appeal Site forms part of the RAF Heyford Conservation Area, identified as part of the Flying Field and as Area 6: Southeast HASs (CDG5 Figure 12 page 31). This includes areas of hardstanding, bunding and scrub, separated from the Appeal Site by a functional security fence. Beyond the areas of hard standing are some of the Hardened Aircraft Shelters (HASs) which are described



in the Council's evidence base as being of historic importance. These are constructed from corrugated galvanised steel and covered with concrete. These are described in the Conservation Area Appraisal (CD53 page 61) as having *"a dull appearance which is typical of this period"*. Page 68 of the Conservation Area Appraisal acknowledges that *"the base is perceived by some as having an intrusive and menacing appearance in the rural landscape"* and that *"the boundary fence, especially where it bounds public rights of way and the highway, appears menacing and intrusive"*. Page 69 acknowledges that *"parts of the site generally have a rather down-at-heel appearance."*

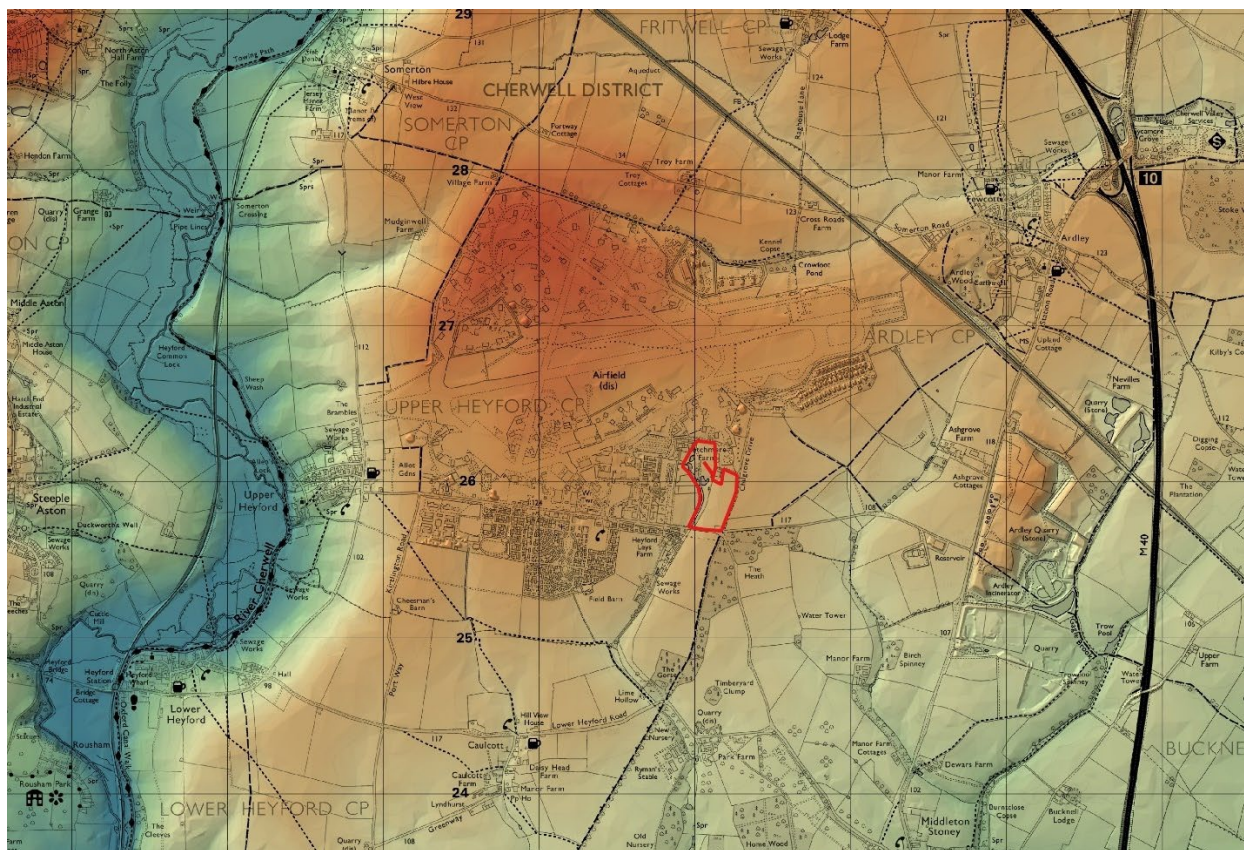
- 3.11. To the west of Letchmere Farm is land also forming part of the former Flying Field, comprising areas of open space and hardstanding used as large areas of car parking in the area identified as area 7: the Tanker Area on CD53 Figure 12 (page 31).
- 3.12. To the west of Heyford Grange is the area defined on Figure 13 of the Conservation Area Appraisal (CD53 page 32) as 10C: Airmen's housing and bungalows. Area 10C is described on page 36 of the Conservation Area Appraisal as forming part of *"a number of areas covered in prefabricated bungalows...there is a perfunctory attempt at landscaping, but the monotony of repeated structures is unrelenting"*. It goes on to state that *"the bungalows themselves are functional but have no architectural merit"*. Beyond the bungalows to the west is new housing within the former Technical Site on Hampden Square, forming part of Heyford Park.
- 3.13. South of the bungalows and west of the Pye site is the area defined on Figure 13 as 10A: RAF Officers' married residential area. This is described on page 36 of the Conservation Area Appraisal as being *"characterised by 1920s red brick buildings, in a 'leafy suburb' setting of grass and organised tree planting"* and that *"the low density setting of the original buildings is perpetuated in the buildings built adjacent in the 1950s"*.
- 3.14. The planning history of the airfield, including the approach to the HASs is set out in the planning history below.

### Topography

- 3.15. The landscape in the region of the Appeal Site and RAF Heyford forms a plateau rising very gently to the west, with the airfield being at a local high point of over 135m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD), as shown on Insert TG 6 below and on CDA15 Plan 2. The Site is situated at c. 120mAOD. The landscape undulates very gently around local streams and ditches, such as that in the west of the Site, falling away to c. 105mAOD 3km to the east. To the west of the airfield, the land drops away more notably to the valley of the River Cherwell at below 75mAOD. This results in a distinct difference between the landscape to the west of the airfield and that to the east and the associated visibility.







Insert TG 6: Topography of the Appeal Site and Surroundings (CDA15 Plan 2)

## Planning History and Context

- 3.16. The GLVIA3 makes reference to the future baseline of an area, stating that a baseline study “establishes the existing nature of the landscape and visual environment in the study area, including any relevant changes likely to occur independently of the development proposals” (CDJ1 Table 3.1 page 27). These are relevant to understand the changing nature of the landscape surrounding the Appeal Site and to better understanding the appearance of the HASs in views and the approach to addressing them.

### North Oxfordshire Consortium Planning Application (00/02291/OUT) and 2003 Secretary of State Appeal Decision (APP/C105/A/02/1082800) (Appeal dismissed 23 June 2003)

- 3.17. The 2000 application was for “about 1000 dwellings, including the demolition of all buildings and structures and removal of all hardstanding shown on the Demolition Plans (Plans 10a + 11a); the construction of dwellings (Use Class C3)”<sup>1</sup>. The appeal was called in by the First Secretary of State and dismissed in June 2003. Despite the Appeal being dismissed, the Inspector’s Report gives useful insight into the views of the Inspector and the Council as to the visual merits of the HASs.
- 3.18. Paragraph 4.48 of the Inspector’s Report to the First Secretary of State (CDN1) forms part of the case for the Council, which refers to the retained structures in the Site as “highly visible and prominent features” and

<sup>1</sup> Cherwell District Council Planning Applications online] <https://planningregister.cherwell.gov.uk/Planning/Display/00/02291/OUT> (Accessed 30th October 2023)





that their retention “will mean that the landscape remains scarred”. Paragraph 10.34 refers to the buildings that were not proposed for demolition within the scheme, including the HASs, stating “however, I consider that under the current proposal too many structures that are open to view and intrusive would remain”.

- 3.19. Paragraph 10.31 onwards deals with the ‘adequacy of landscaping and environmental improvements’. Paragraph 10.34 states that “I consider that under the current proposal too many structures that are open to view and intrusive would remain” going on to state that “these include HASs”. In paragraph 10.34 the Inspector goes on to state that “I do not consider that enough of those structures towards the periphery of the base which are most prominent from the main viewpoints in the surrounding area are proposed for removal to reduce the degree of visual intrusion to a level that could be tolerated”.

### RAF Conservation Area Designation (April 2006)

- 3.20. The Conservation Area Appraisal (CAA) was adopted in April 2006. It describes the landscape of the airbase site in section 3.4 and highlights the disparity between the functional and urban design of the airbase site with the surrounding landscape. “The density and arrangement of buildings within the flying field are indicative of modern human activity and do not replicate any of the more traditional patterns found within the villages or countryside”, going on to refer to the boundary treatments as being “modern and defined by the needs of the site”. The same section describes the gradual change in the character of the countryside as evolving over time whereas “the site of the airbase is a landscape that has come into being for one major function, the result of change over a relatively short period of time and constructed from imported materials that have been chosen for their function and bear no relationship to the locality”.
- 3.21. Figure 2 on page 8 of the CAA sets out the visual and landscape impact of the airbase. The Appeal Site is situated within an area where the airbase is noted as “a dominant visual element”. In the land to the east and south of the Appeal Site, the RAF base is noted as a noticeable element within views.



Insert TG 7: Extract from Conservation Area Appraisal showing where airbase is a dominance visual element (red), noticeable visual element (orange) and a perceptible visual element (yellow)



- 3.22. The last paragraph of page 18 of the CAA refers to the dismissed 2003 appeal, with reasons including that *“too many intrusive structures remained and the scheme did not resolve the intended future of the whole site”*.
- 3.23. Figure 8 on page 24 of the CAA demonstrates the land to the north and north-west of the Site as being in the ‘Flying Field’, with the land to the west of the Pye site as being in the ‘Residential Area’ with the ‘Technical Site’ beyond. Figure 11 on page 27 shows a view east from the edge of the residential area south of Camp Road, which is in the general direction of the Site. This is the only identified views within the CAA that potentially takes in the Appeal Site. It is also noted that, at the time of the writing of the CAA, this area of the Residential Area had not been redeveloped for housing.
- 3.24. Figure 12 on page 31 shows the area to the north of the Appeal Site as area 6: Southeast HASs. The area to the north-west is area 7: the Tanker Area. To the west of the Pye Site is area 10A: RAF Officers’ married residential area and, the north of this, area 10C: Airmen’s housing and bungalows.
- 3.25. Figure 17 on page 46 of the CAA demonstrates the location of the HASs to the north of the Appeal Site, comprising numbers 3037-3042 and 3064. Building 370, the squadron headquarters is situated to the west of these, to the north-west of the Site. Section 7.3.3 on page 41 refers to the *“monolithic design”* of the HASs, which are generally 8.3m in height, 36.5m in length and 21.5m in width.
- 3.26. Page 68 of the CAA acknowledges that *“the base is perceived by some as having an intrusive and menacing appearance in the rural landscape”* and that *“the boundary fence, especially where it bounds public rights of way and the highway, appears menacing and intrusive”*. Page 69 acknowledges that *“parts of the site generally have a rather down-at-heel appearance”*. Page 70, bullet point 5 states that *“some of the buildings on the site now proposed for retention are regarded as eye-sores by some of the local community”*.
- 3.27. The fifth bullet point under section 13.2 ‘Capacity for Change’ refers to the *“potential for creating a new boundary landscape to integrate the conserved airbase features and character with the surrounding landscape”*.

### RAF Upper Heyford Revised Comprehensive Planning Brief 2007 Adopted March 2007 (CDN2)

- 3.28. The 2007 Comprehensive Planning Brief was produced to replace the 1999 version. Page 3 of the executive summary summarises the buildings proposed for removal as part of the Brief. Paragraph iii under the heading of ‘a satisfactory living environment’ states that *“unlisted buildings 3036, 3037, 3038, 3039, 3040, 3041 and 3042 should be demolished and the footprint retained”*. These comprise the series of HASs to the immediate north of the Appeal Site.
- 3.29. In paragraph 3.4.2, under the heading of ‘striking a balance’, point v refers to the *“removal of buildings and structures that do not make a positive contribution to the special character or which are justified on the grounds of adverse visual impact”*.
- 3.30. The potential for the historic buildings to form adverse features within views is acknowledged within section 5.2 under the second paragraph which refers to the need to *“reconcile adverse landscape impacts in views from outside the site and potentially from the new settlement”* going on to reference the First Secretary of State’s decision later in relation to the 2003 appeal which referred to the ability to *“enable the site to present a more environmentally acceptable face than it does now”* (CDN2 paragraph 7).
- 3.31. Section 5.2.3 refers to the perimeter fencing of the Conservation Area, stating that *“the security fence is a feature that is not characteristic of a rural landscape, it highlights the exclusion and secretive nature of places*



*and could be considered foreboding or threatening*". Although this fencing has been replaced, security fencing still exists around the north-eastern perimeter of the Appeal Site, and the points above are still applicable to its revised state.

- 3.32. Section 5.2.9 refers to the removal of buildings, stating that the number proposed to be removed is reduced from the 1999 brief and that this has been restricted "**to two groups where the visual impact is great and landscape mitigation is difficult to achieve due to proximity of view points and landscape character**". Section 5.3.3 refers specifically to the group of HASs to the north of the Appeal Site stating that "*unlisted buildings 3036, 3037, 3038, 3039, 3040, 3041 and 3042 should be demolished and the footprint retained*". Section 5.3.3 goes on to state in its sixth paragraph that "*this area is visible from the south and the approach to the site from the east*" and that "*there are also closer views from Letchmere Farm and Chilgrove Drive*" in addition to additional views from the proposed reopening of the Aves Ditch path north of Chilgrove Drive (CDN2 page 45).
- 3.33. Section 5.3.3 goes on to state, in reference to these structures that "*they are in close proximity to Chilgrove Drive which is to be re-opened as public right of way [sic], and several other existing public rights of way to the east of the site; several of them are highly visible when approaching the site from the B430*" going on to state that "*it is therefore proposed that these 7 HASs and their associated squadron HQ buildings should be demolished and their building footprint retained*". It further states that "*English Heritage has accepted this proposal*" (CDN2 Page 47).

The Lead Appeal (08/00716/OUT and Appeal APP/C3105/A/08/2080594) (Appeal allowed 11<sup>th</sup> January 2010)

- 3.34. This appeal was for non determination of a planning application for 1075 dwellings, employment uses, school, open space and associated infrastructure. The Appeal was allowed subject to two matters, neither of which are relevant to this Proof.
- 3.35. In their Report (CDN4 paragraph 19.62), the Inspector refers to HASs to the north of the Site, acknowledging their adverse impact upon views, albeit a not significant one:
- "The sight of nationally important buildings that evoke the character of the Conservation Area should be accepted in the meantime considering that **their adverse impact in the rural landscape is not in my view significant**"*.
- 3.36. Paragraph 19.151 also makes reference to the visual impact of the HASs: "*landscaping of the site can reconcile maintenance of the Cold War landscape whilst softening the impact of the closest HASs on occupiers of existing and proposed dwellings*".
- 3.37. The Inspector concluded that the impact of the south east HASs (those to the north of the Appeal Site) was not sufficient to warrant demolition, given that the proposed landscaping was agreed to reduce these views in c. 20 years' time. However, he did acknowledge their adverse effect, albeit not to a significant degree.

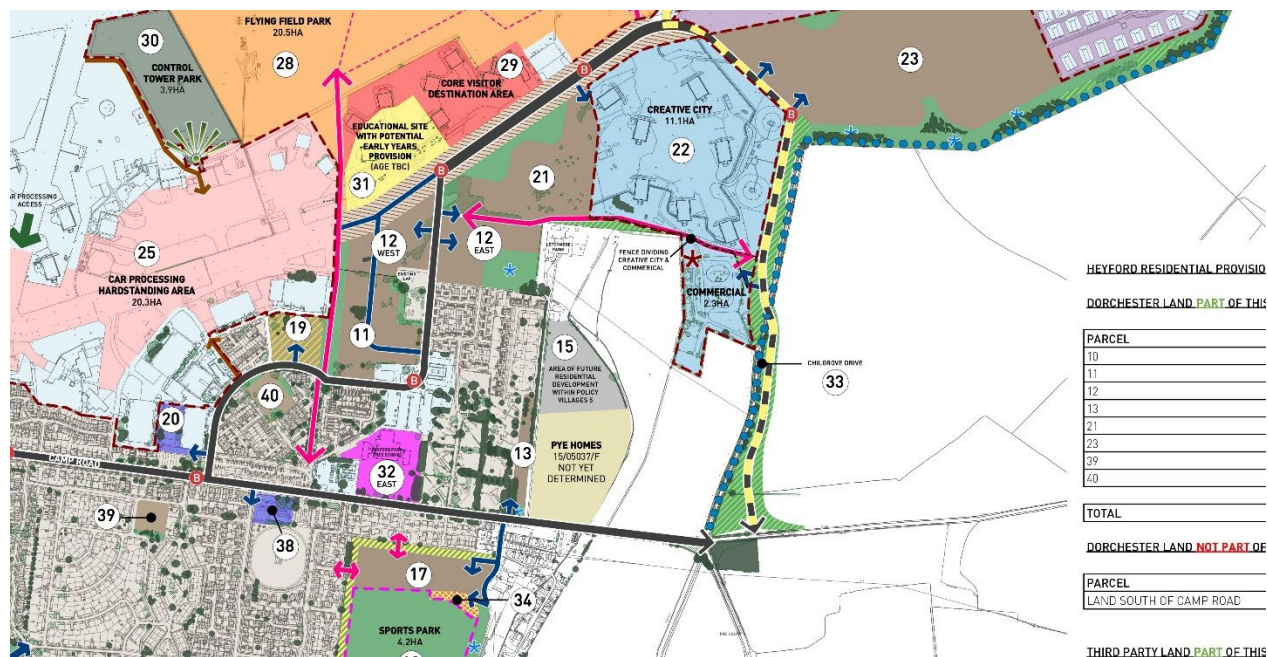
Heyford Park – the Dorchester Living Scheme (18/00825/HYBRID) (Application approved 9<sup>th</sup> September 2022)

- 3.38. The Appeal Site is situated to the immediate south and east of Heyford Park as allocated under Cherwell District Local Plan Policy Villages 5 (PV5) and subject to hybrid planning consent for 1235 dwellings, retail, commercial, energy and community uses (18/00825/HYBRID). Land to the immediate north is shown on the Heyford Park Composite Parameter Plan (CDN5) as 'Creative City/Commercial' (see Insert TG 8 below). This is shown on the heights parameter plan for the scheme (CDN6 Figure 4.3 and Insert TG 9 below) as





generally up to 18m above future ground level, with a narrow strip bordered the north-west of the Appeal Site shown as up to up to 10.5m above future ground level. The red star within the commercial area refers to the 'approximate location of energy infrastructure / facility' but no details of this appear to be noted.



Insert TG 8: Extract from Heyford Park (18/00825/HYBRID) Composite Parameter Plan (CDN5) Showing 'Creative City' Area to the North and Proposed HGV Route to the East



Insert TG 9: Extract from Consented Heyford Park (18/00825/HYBRID) Consented Parameter (CDN6 Figure 4.3) Showing Area of up to 18m in Dark Blue and Area Up to 10.5m in Pale Blue

3.39. The appearance of the Heyford Park scheme in views, calculated utilising the maximum height parameters, are shown in the photomontages included in the appendices to the ES for the hybrid application (ES Appendix 7.1a Appendix 5 included in CDE14 Volume 2 Appendix 1), the most relevant of which is Viewpoint 9 (as





shown on Insert TG 10 below), which broadly corresponds with the Appeal Site LVIA (CDA15) Viewpoint 9. No views were included in the Hybrid Application LVIA from the bridleways to the east of Heyford Park (that would correspond with CDA15 viewpoints 4 and 10) or from the south of Camp Road (corresponding with CDA15 Viewpoint 5). The photomontage demonstrates the notably increase in built form that will occur in this area; however, effects on views at viewpoint 9 were assessed within the hybrid application LVIA as neutral.



Insert TG 10: Hybrid Application LVIA Viewpoint 9 Showing 18m Parameter in Dark Blue and 10m Parameter in Light Blue

- 3.40. Pages 58 and 59 of the Design and Access Statement which accompanied the hybrid application (CDN7 pages 58 and 59) demonstrate the indicative masterplan for Heyford Park, as well as the southern Pye homes layout (see Insert TG 11 but noting the Pye schemes are now consented). It is accepted that the masterplan is indicative; however, the extract shown below demonstrates commercial development in the land to the immediate north of the Site, between the Site and the HASs, the latter of which are to remain intact. This is the area referred to as Parcel 22 – Creative City in the Officer's Report, with the HASs retained for tech uses, and also includes the commercial area and energy infrastructure facility, but with no detail for their use and design (CDN8 9.1.4.6). One such building is shown wrapped around by the Appeal Site on three sides.



Insert TG 11: Extracts from Heyford Masterplan Design and Access Statement (CDN7 Page 58 and 59)

- 3.41. The Composite Parameter Plan (CDN5 and Insert TG 8 above) for Heyford Park also shows Chilgrove Drive to be retained as a footpath/bridleway route, connecting to a new path extending north around the eastern boundary of the PV5 area and referred to as the Aves Ditch route. To the east of this is proposed a combined



'primary HGV access' and 'bus route, vehicle access and footways'. The proposed HGV route extends north from to the east of Chilgrove Drive before crossing the proposed footpath and extending along its western side to the north of the Appeal Site. The proposed HGV route is shown to be bordered on both sides by an area marked as 'strategic landscape buffer'. This extends from east of the proposed HGV access as far as Chilgrove Drive, forming a large wedge of undetermined landscaping. Taken together, the hybrid scheme proposals will result in a large increase in the amount and scale of built form, as well as road infrastructure, in the vicinity of the Appeal Site.

- 3.42. In their 6<sup>th</sup> August 2008 consultee response, English Heritage makes reference, under the heading of the 'perimeter fence' that *"the perimeter fence is an important component of the austere Cold War landscape, which is an essential characteristic of the Conservation Area"*.
- 3.43. In the Officer's Report for the hybrid application for the 5<sup>th</sup> November 2020 Committee (CDN8 paragraph 9.148), the Case Officer acknowledges that the area of the base in the Creative Hub, i.e., to the north of the Appeal Site, was **"thought to be of low historic and landscape value"**. The officer refers to the 2004 Landscape and Visual Impact and Masterplan Report, which formed part of the evidence base to the Cherwell Local Plan Part 1 (CDG1), referring to the HASs to the north of the Appeal Site as having **"various degrees of visual impact with the four outer shelters giving rise to severity of impact requiring demolition"**. The authors, LDA, went on to recommend that these buildings be demolished to provide *"an attractive and appropriate setting for the new settlement"*.

*The Pye Schemes and the David Wilson Homes Scheme*

- 3.44. Land to the immediate west of the Appeal Site is subject to two separate planning applications:
- The southern application for 89 dwellings accessed from Camp Road and association infrastructure and open space (15/01357/F) – application approved 14<sup>th</sup> September 2023; and
  - The northern application for 31 dwellings and associated infrastructure and open space (21/03513/OUT) – application approved 14<sup>th</sup> September 2023.
- 3.45. A further application has been submitted for 126 dwellings on the combined area of the above two schemes, which is currently under consultation (22/03063/F) – the David Wilson scheme.







Insert TG 12: Proposed Layout and Landscape Plan for 89 Dwelling Scheme

**The Draft Allocation**

3.46. The Cherwell Local Plan Review (CDH1) sets out its approach to the Heyford Park Area Strategy in Chapter 7. The Heyford Park Strategy Map (see Insert TG 13 below) demonstrates the preferred residential allocation of land South of Heyford Park (LPR42a). This preferred allocation includes the area of the Site and all land to the south of Heyford Park as far as the parish boundary. This indicates that the Council is content with the principal of development within the Appeal Site as well as improved public transport links along Camp Road to the east.





#### LEGEND

■ Local Plan 2040: preferred residential site allocation

① South of Heyford Park (LPR42a)

■ Saved Allocations: Local Plan 2015

② Former RAF Upper Heyford

Local Plan 2040: Settlement Hierarchy

● Main Towns

● Local Service Centre

● Large Village

*Insert TG 13: Heyford Area Strategy Map (CDH1 page 205)*

### Summary of Adjacent Consents and Emerging Allocations

- 3.47. The surrounding consented schemes in the PV5 area all demonstrate that the Appeal Site is firmly in the context of the existing and emerging built form.
- 3.48. The appearance of the HASs to the north of the Appeal Site has been the subject of much debate, as set out in the following and previous paragraphs, having been recommended for removal in the earlier development brief (CDN2) for the former RAF base, highlighted as requiring screening within the 2003 appeal Inspector's Report (CDN4) and as adverse visual elements within the Conservation Area Appraisal (CDG5). Although these HASs are no longer proposed for removal, their adverse impact upon views from the wider landscape, and their being at odds with the surrounding rural character, is acknowledged in these early documents.





## Planning Policy and Evidence Base

- 3.49. This section reiterates some of the evidence base set out within the LVIA (CDA15) where additional commentary is required, and additional evidence base that has been produced since the LVIA was written in December 2021. The studies set out below demonstrate that between 2014 and 2023 the evidence base produced by the Council showed that the Appeal Site was suitable for residential development in a way that would not result in unacceptable effects upon landscape and views, or the character and form of Heyford Park. This is in line with the proposed allocation of the Appeal Site for future residential development (CDH1). It also acknowledged the detrimental impact of the HASs on the surrounding views and landscape character.

### The Non Statutory Cherwell Local Plan 2011 (2004) (CDJ12)

- 3.50. The non-statutory Local Plan includes policies UH1, 2 and 3 which make direct reference to the former RAF base. Policy UH2 includes provision at part (i) for the ***“demolition and removal of those buildings and other structures, including the perimeter fencing, which are unacceptably intrusive”***.
- 3.51. Paragraph 2.21c makes specific references to the HASs south of the runway and, in relation to those north of the Appeal Site that ***“the eastern most group of hardened aircraft sheltered falls into a similar category but some of them also have a severe visual impact in views from outside the former airbase and their demolition is justified on those grounds alone”***.

### Upper Heyford Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment 2014 (CDJ10)

- 3.52. This assessment is referenced in the LVIA (CDA15 paragraph 3.39 onwards). This assessment identified site 146 (corresponding with the Appeal Site and the Pye sites to the west) as having ***“the potential for residential development up to the existing site boundaries defined by Camp Road to the south and Chilgrove Drive to the east and Larsen Road to the west as long as the existing site boundary vegetation is maintained”*** (CDJ10 paragraph 4.3.23). It went on to state that site 146 has medium to high capacity for residential development, ***“as long as recognition is given to protect the landscape character and visual resource of the site”*** (CDJ10 paragraph 3.8.3).
- 3.53. The capacity assessment referred to site 146 as ***“average quality arable land enclosed by hedgerows that are fragmented in places”*** (CDJ10 paragraph 4.3.7), going on to state that ***“within the south the area is greatly influenced by vehicles passing along Camp Road and the junction to the south east”*** (CDJ10 4.3.9). The same paragraph concluded that ***“the site has a low aesthetics sensitivity”***. The combined landscape sensitivity of site 146 was assessed as medium to low (CDJ10 paragraph 4.3.11).
- 3.54. Under the heading of visual mitigation, the assessment stated that ***“visibility into the site is partially obscured by vegetation on the south and eastern field boundaries”*** and that ***“from the north and west, the site is only visible from within the former RAF Upper Heyford Site and therefore views to the general public are limited”*** (CDJ10 paragraph 4.3.12). It went on to state that ***“there is reasonably good potential to provide visual mitigation along the site boundaries without altering the overall character of the area”*** and that ***“key views across the site do not exist and therefore would be unaffected”*** (CDJ10 paragraph 4.3.14).

### Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment 2018 (CDG8)

- 3.55. The 2018 draft HELAA included the eastern field of the Appeal Site, east of the amenity wetland corridor and west of Chilgrove Drive, as HELAA216. The Appeal Site was also included as part of the wider HELAA217 which included the entirety of the Appeal Site and the Pye sites to the west.



- 3.56. Appendix 4 of the draft HELAA makes reference to HELAA216 (CDG8 Appendix 4 page 77), assessing it against both residential and commercial criteria. In relation to residential development, the HELAA assesses HELAA216 as being suitable, available and achievable.
- 3.57. The draft HELAA also makes reference to HELAA217 (CDG8 Appendix 4, page 78), stating that *“The remaining part of the site (i.e. that outside the Villages 5 allocation) could potentially be suitable as it could provide a logical extension to the residential dwellings to the west subject to adequate integration with the strategic allocation, preserving the setting of Letchmere Farm and responding to the heritage, landscape and ecological priorities of the Conservation Area and the Heath DWS to the south east of the site”*. It goes on to state that *“development could be contained without opening up a wider area of countryside”*. HELAA217 was assessed as being suitable, available and achievable for both residential and commercial development.

### Cherwell Landscape Character Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment 2017 (CDJ8 and 9)

- 3.58. The Appeal Site is not featured within this document.

### Cherwell Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment 2022 (CDH8)

- 3.59. The Sensitivity Assessment includes the Appeal Site as part of assessment unit LS HEY2, which includes the Appeal Site, and a column of land extending south between the stream and the woodland belts to the east, as far south as the B4030 Lower Heyford Road (CDH8 page 284).
- 3.60. Under the heading of ‘cultural and historic associations’, LS HEY2 is assessed as having moderate sensitivity, noting the relationship to the Conservation Area to the north and the localised influence of the disused hangars on the landscape character (CDH8 page 304).
- 3.61. Under the heading of ‘settlement form and edge’, LS HEY2 is assessed as being of low to moderate sensitivity as *“the assessment unit is influenced by the existing settlement edge of Heyford Park to the west”* and that *“from the northern part of the assessment unit, to the north of Camp Road there are visual links to the RAF Upper Heyford base”* (CDH8 page 305).
- 3.62. LS HEY2 was assessed as being of low to moderate landscape value (CDH8 page 306) as it is *“influenced by cultural and historic associations including the RAF Heyford Conservation Area to the north”*. It was assessed as being of low-medium visual value (CDH8 page 306) as *“there are no known viewpoints looking across the assessment unit identified in the Local Plan, OS Maps, tourist maps or within guidebooks”*.
- 3.63. LS HEY2 is assessed (CDH8 page 307) as having low to moderate sensitivity to residential development *“due to the medium scale arable fields, limited contribution of heritage assets to landscape character and its proximity to the built development in Heyford Park”*. It goes onto state that *“Land north of Camp Road is less sensitivity to [sic] due to the proximity to existing built development”*. The document also assesses the area as having low-moderate sensitivity to informal recreation.

### Sustainability Appraisal (SA) of the Cherwell Local Plan Review: Interim SA Report (2023) (CDH5)

- 3.64. Page 47 of the Interim SA (CDH5) addresses Heyford Park, identifying the Appeal Site as part of LPR42, which also include the Pye land to the west. In paragraph 5.4.65, the document states that *“there is clear support for testing the option of allocating LPR42, LPR43 and LPR44 in combination for 1,235 homes”*. It



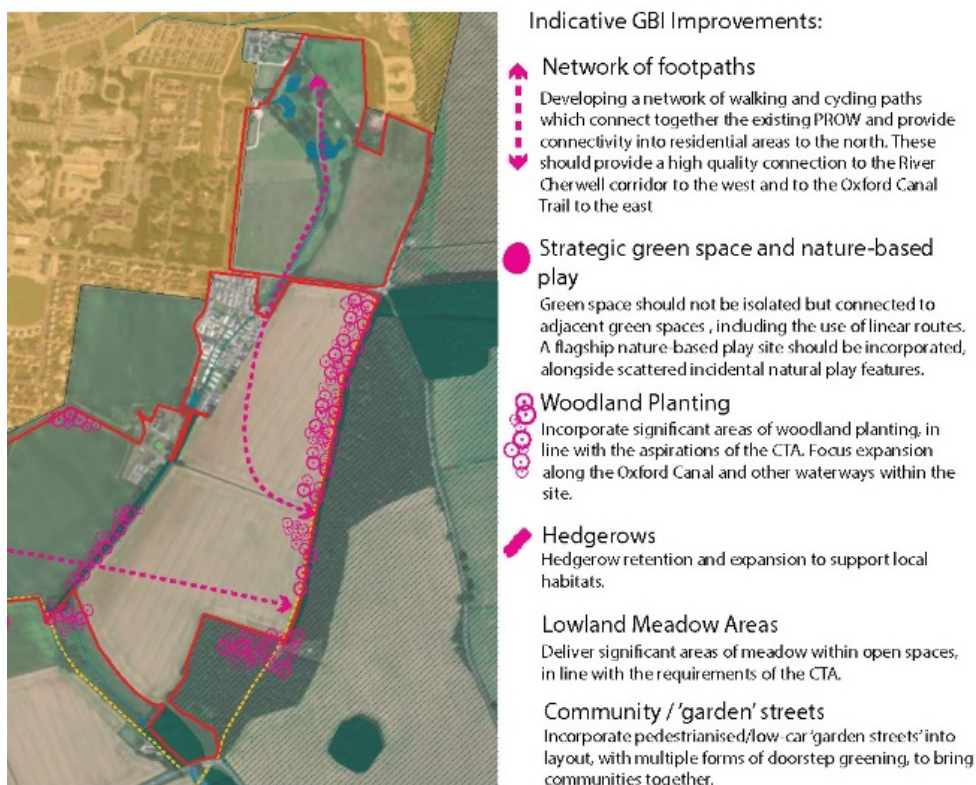
goes on to state that *“allocation of these sites in combination could achieve a new defensible long term boundary and support the adopted 2022 masterplan for the committed growth area”*.

- 3.65. Paragraph 6.2.90 refers specifically to the topic of landscape, highlighting the proposed extension to Heyford Park (and land at Wendlebury) as preferential to the other options. The document raises the concerns of development *“‘spilling’ downhill over time”* but highlights the strong boundaries around the proposed allocation, with the only concerns being in regard to the north-eastern and southern boundary which are currently less well defined.
- 3.66. Section 9.10 of the report summarises the landscape issues in relation to Heyford Park as resulting from the raised plateau landscape, with a key issue described as the landscape gap, which does not include the Appeal Site. The Sustainability Appraisal assesses the likely effects of the preferred allocations including Upper Heyford in terms of landscape as being neutral.

### A Greener Cherwell Local Plan (2023) (CDH19)

- 3.67. This document *“sets out the potential for delivering green and blue infrastructure (GBI) priorities as part of Cherwell’s emerging Local Plan 2040”* (CDH19 page 04). The document illustrates the *“indicative GBI requirement for potential development sites identified in the Draft Cherwell Local Plan 2040”*.
- 3.68. Chapter 5 of the document relates to Heyford Park, identifying on Figure 5.2, the requirements for green blue infrastructure within site LPR42A. The plan shows a footpath connection extending along the existing wetland corridor within the Appeal Site from the land to the south. This is shown as pointing towards the north but with no clear connection to the Heyford Park allocation area to the north. The document shows additional woodland planting along the eastern boundary of land to the south of Camp Road, but not within the area of the Appeal Site. No other specific GBI improvements are proposed for the Appeal Site, but a general requirement to deliver *“significant areas of meadow within open spaces”* and garden streets in the allocation as a whole.





*Insert TG 14: Extract from A Greener Cherwell Local Plan (CDH19)*

## Summary of Evidence Base

- 3.69. The Council's evidence base documents demonstrate a consistent acknowledgement of the adverse impact of the HASs on the surrounding views and landscape, and a clear indication that the Appeal Site is suitable for future residential development, as long as existing landscape infrastructure is maintained. This is supported by the draft allocation in the emerging Local Plan 2040 and the associated evidence base, including the 2014 Cherwell Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment (CDJ10 3.39), the 2018 HELAA (CDG8 Appendix 4, page 77 and 78), the 2022 Cherwell Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment (CDH8 page 307) and the Sustainability Appraisal of the Cherwell Local Plan Review Interim Report (CDH5 page 47).



# Section 4: The Appeal Scheme and Its Effects

## The Appeal Scheme, Its Evolution and Benefits

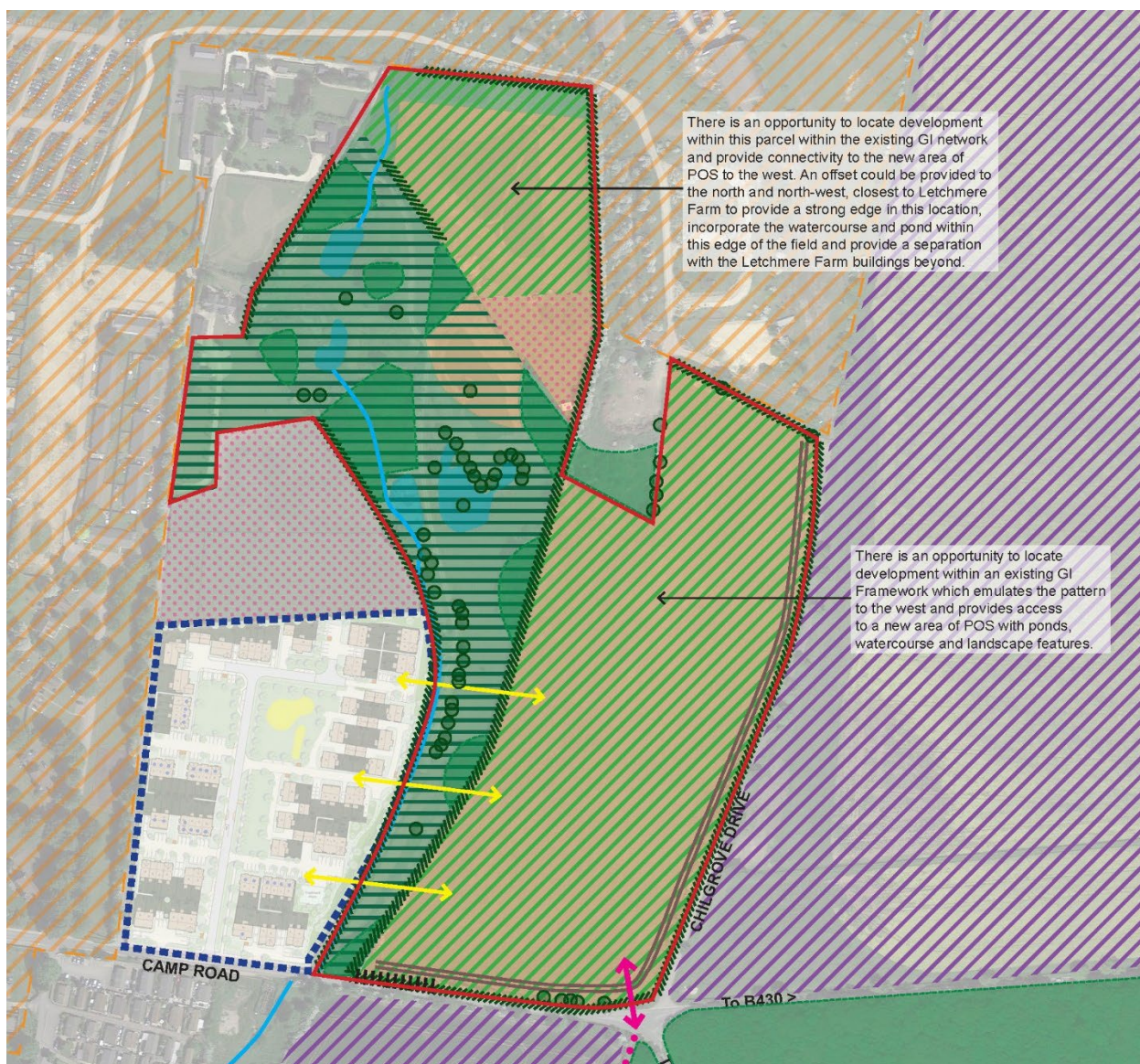
- 4.1. The Appeal Scheme is set out in five separate parameter plans (CDA4-8), which were appended to the rear of the LVIA (CDA15 Appendix 5). An illustrative masterplan was also produced (CDA9), which was appended to the rear of the LVIA (CDA15 Appendix 6). The Landscape Strategy Plan was included as Plan 6 (CDA15 Plan 6). The Illustrative Masterplan was later updated (CDB14).

### Evolution of the Masterplan and the Landscape-Led Approach

- 4.2. As set out earlier in this proof, Tyler Grange Landscape Planning and Ecology teams were instructed in late summer 2020 to identify opportunities and constraints to future residential development within the Appeal Site.
- 4.3. An initial Landscape and Visual Analysis Note (13464/R01) and later Landscape and Visual Technical Note (13464/R02) were produced, setting out the relevant policy, landscape and visual baseline to help inform a series of opportunities and constraints to development. In paragraph 5.2 of the Technical Note, it made the following recommendations:
- *“Locate the development parcels within the ‘grassland’ part of the site, with open space and recreation afforded to the ‘wet corridor’.*
  - *Carefully consider the treatment of the development parcels to the east of the site and the creation of the ‘new settlement’ edge.*
  - *Retain existing trees, hedgerows and woodland copses and set development parcels within this existing green network to provide the opportunity for a connected Green Infrastructure scheme and mature landscape framework. Retain and enhance the ‘wet corridor’ and there is an opportunity to enhance this corridor either as a recreational or ecological resource.*
  - *Promote new tree planting, replace and restock the hedgerow network and there is an opportunity to include the restoration and provision of new stone walls in accordance with the published landscape character and policy guidance.*
  - *There is an opportunity to improve the existing Public of Way network, providing new routes within open spaces/green corridors.*
  - *There is an opportunity to respond to the consented development to the west in terms of pattern, scale, materials and linkages.”*
- 4.4. Plan 4 of the Technical Note set out these recommendations visually, with a recommendation to consider the eastern and southern frontages to create a new settlement edge and approach and opportunities to connected into the offsite bridleway to the south and the consented development to the west.







*Insert TG 15: Landscape and Visual Recommendations Plan (September 2020)*

- 4.5. Initial ecological opportunities and constraints were also set out in plan form, also recommending that development be focussed into the existing agricultural fields with the existing green infrastructure in the Appeal Site retained and enhanced as part of a green corridor.







*Insert TG 16: Ecology Opportunities and Constraints*

- 4.6. Tyler Grange Landscape was retained to continue to comment on the evolution of the masterplan proposals.
- 4.7. The Design and Access Statement (CDA11 page 42) sets out the pre app discussions with the Council, including the recommendation from the Principal Planning Officer that the scheme should be landscape led and make best use of the land with a density up to 40dph. The original masterplan included a number of bungalows, but the Planning Officer felt that these were not justified in this location and that there was a justification for taller buildings in the centre of the scheme.
- 4.8. Page 43 of the DAS sets out the consultation feedback received, and the subsequent amendments made to the masterplan.

### The Appeal Scheme

- 4.9. The Illustrative masterplan demonstrates a scheme for up to 230 dwellings, 35% of which would be affordable. 5.9ha of the Appeal Site will be development for residential uses out of the total 11.68ha, leaving 5.78ha, i.e., 49.5%, as open space.







*Insert TG 17: Illustrative Masterplan (CDA9)*

- 4.10. The masterplan proposed new vehicular and pedestrian access from Camp Road (1) and (2), and further north, to Chilgrove Drive (3) on the eastern boundary. It proposed the retention of the green corridor in the west of the Site as a wet corridor open space (12), with LEAP in the north (11) and an area of central play space (10). Existing vegetation was shown to be retained and enhanced with locally characteristic and native species (15), with hedgerows gapped up and enhanced to retain the field pattern (16). New areas of native wet woodland (17) and native tree belts (18) were proposed to enhance the edge of the settlement and soften views to visually intrusive buildings. Further clusters of native trees will further be included to form a





continuation of the sylvan character of the landscape in the tree belt to the south-east (19). Blocks of development were shown to be connected and accessed by tree lined streets and drives (4) to (8)

- 4.11. Development will be primarily two storeys, with instances of 2.5 storeys and some 3 storeys in the south-west of the Appeal Site as recommended within the pre app discussions and shown on CDA6.
- 4.12. At the time of the application, it was not possible to demonstrate pedestrian connections to the west, but locations for these have since been proposed from the central wetland corridor.
- 4.13. The landscape and open space strategy is set out on page 74 of the DAS (CDA11), setting out the strategy for retaining and enhancing the existing site vegetation through the use of locally native species. These will provide landscape and ecological enhancements as well as visual mitigation to views from the south and east. Planting throughout the development will also break up the massing of the built form, softening the edge of the settlement in views and creating a soft vegetated edge to the settlement.
- 4.14. The open space in the west of the Site will be a green-blue corridor, incorporating the existing ponds, the proposed SuDS, vegetation and a series of recreational routes. Trees and hedgerows throughout the development will connect into the western corridor. The connected wetland corridor in the west of the Site is reflective of the desired connections shown in a Greener Cherwell Local Plan (CDH19) (see Insert TG 14 above).

## Landscape Effects

- 4.15. The LVIA (CDA15) did not identify any significant effects on landscape character.
- 4.16. In the email correspondence between Mr Screen and Tyler Grange (CDA15 Appendix 2), it was agreed that the LVIA would focus its assessment on effects on the Farmed Plateau Landscape Type within the Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study (OWLS) (CDJ3) and the Upper Heyford Plateau Landscape Character Areas within the Cherwell Landscape Character Assessment (CDJ11), with Mr Screen requesting a written-only narrative of the landscape effects on the Cherwell Valley. Effects on the Cherwell Valley were later scoped out due to lack of intervisibility.
- 4.17. An updated ZTV Model was produced, demonstrating development up to 13m within the Appeal Site, an extension above the original 10m sent to Mr Screen for agreement of views. The ZTV exercise undertaken, together with the on-site analysis, demonstrated that there would be no effects on the Cherwell Valley that would be caused by the Appeal Scheme. This is due to the intervening built form of Upper Heyford, the topography of the high point of the plateau and the sharper drop on the valley sides, and the intervening layers of vegetation. As a result, effects on the Cherwell Valley were scoped out in accordance with the GLVIA3 (CDJ1).
- 4.18. The effects on the identified landscape receptors are discussed in Chapter 4 of the LVIA (CDA15 page 30) and summarised within the tables in LVIA Appendix 8 and 9 (CDA15). The LVIA assessed effects on the local landscape character, represented by the Farmed Plateau Landscape Type (LCT), the Upper Heyford Plateau Landscape Character Area (LCA) and the Ploughley Limestone Plateau LCA, at Year 1 (completed development no mitigation planting) as medium/low magnitude and minor adverse significance, and at Year 15 (once mitigation has established but not necessarily matured) as low magnitude and minor beneficial significance. It similarly assessed effects on the site-specific landscape character as medium magnitude and minor adverse significance at Year 1, and low magnitude and minor beneficial at Year 15.

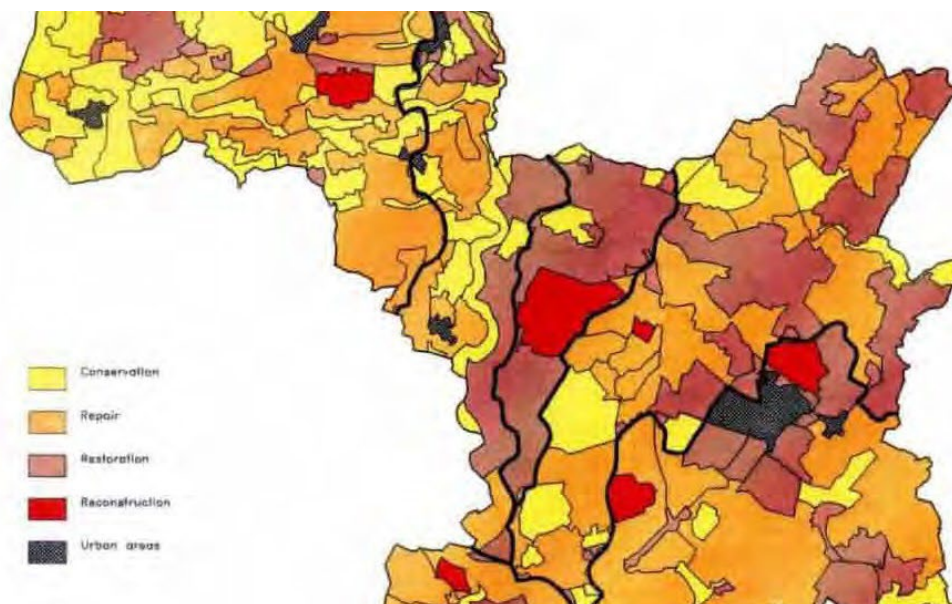


- 4.19. In his consultee response, as set out in the Committee Report (CDC6 paragraph 7.9) the Mr Screen stated that *“the LVIA is comprehensive and proportionate and [I] am in general agreement with its findings and conclusions”*.

### Value, Susceptibility and Sensitivity

#### *Published Landscape Character*

- 4.20. The published landscape character assessments set out guidance for the shaping of future development. These are set out in paragraph 2.9 of the LVIA (CDA15), with characteristics set out at paragraphs 2.7 and 2.14 (CDA15). The published baseline makes reference to the enhancement of hedgerows to strengthen the field pattern, the protection of stone walls, conserving areas of semi-improved and improved grassland, concentrating development around existing settlements and the promotion of local building materials. Within the Countryside Design Summary (CDJ13), reference is made to the comparatively extensive woodland cover, the well-defined hedgerows and copses and views being broken by woodland. This document also makes reference to the former RAF base as containing *“large and prominent features”* (CDJ13 paragraph 2.1v).
- 4.21. The Enhancement Strategy within the Cherwell Landscape Character Assessment (CDJ11 Figure 15 and Insert TG 18 below) places the former RAF base as within the area identified as requiring reconstruction. This area is shown as extending as far east as Chilgrove Drive and the adjacent character area, i.e., including the Appeal Site, although the scale of the plan is extremely small and exact boundaries unclear in detail. Paragraph 2.12 of the LVIA (CDA15) sets out the definition of reconstruction landscapes from the Cherwell Landscape Character Assessment (CDJ11) but these are essentially landscapes that are *“so modified by human activity that they no longer bear any resemblance to their former character (including airfields)”*. These areas are identified as having *“a high capacity to accommodate change because they have already lost their intrinsic character”*.



*Insert TG 18: Cherwell Landscape Character Assessment (CDJ11) Figure 15 Enhancement Strategy Showing RAF Heyford and Land to South East as Requiring Reconstruction and the Land to the East as Requiring Repair*

- 4.22. The LVIA goes on in paragraph 2.13 to refer to the land south of the former RAF base which is identified as falling within the ‘restoration’ category. These are defined as being *“seriously degraded, although they do*



*retain some discernible remnant of their former character*". Restoration areas are assessed as having "a greater capacity to accommodate positive change because their former character has already been so substantially weakened".

- 4.23. The sensitivity of landscape receptors was assessed within the LVIA (CDA15) at paragraph 4.3 onwards. The published LCAs and LCTs were assessed as being of low landscape value. These are defined within paragraph 4.12 (CDA15) as having no designation, as containing features or elements that are uncharacteristic and detract from the landscape character of an area.
- 4.24. The local landscape does not contain designations for landscape quality. The Farmland Plateau LCT is described (CDJ11 paragraph 2.7) as comprising a gently rolling landscape, with arable fields enclosed by thorn hedges and limestone walls, with rectilinear plantations and shelterbelts. The description for the Ploughley Limestone Plateau makes reference to the arable landscape with plantation belts with views "*often broken by woodlands*" but also refers to the former RAF airbase at Upper Heyford as "*a large and prominent feature situated on an exposed plateau*" (CDJ11 paragraph 2.14). Although the wider landscape does comprise a gently rolling arable landscape with tree belts, the Appeal Site appears separated from these and is influenced by the adjacent HASs and boundary fences in the former airfield, particularly in the north-east. The detracting influence of these is acknowledged in the Cherwell Landscape Character Assessment which assessed the Site and the surroundings as requiring reconstruction, and the planning history as set out above in this Proof which include multiple references to the detracting influence of the HASs and this area of the airfield. Paragraph 4.3.9 of the 2014 Upper Heyford Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment (CDJ10) refers to the south of the area as being "*greatly influenced by vehicles passing along Camp Road*", and in paragraph 4.3.11 the document states that "*the combined landscape sensitivity for the area is considered to be Medium to Low*". The 2022 Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment (CDH8 page 307) states that "*the assessment unit has a low-moderate sensitivity to residential development*" but that "*land north of Camp Road is less sensitivity to [sic] due to the proximity to existing built development*".
- 4.25. The susceptibility of the published LCAs and LCTs to the type of development proposed was assessed in paragraph 4.9 (CDA15) as being of medium to low susceptibility. Medium landscape susceptibility is defined as when the proposed development has a degree of consistency with the existing scale, pattern, grain, land use of the prevailing character, although mitigation may be appropriate, whereas low susceptibility is defined as where the proposed development is entirely consistent with the character of the local area. Paragraphs 4.8 and 4.9 of the LVIA refer to the area of the Site as falling into the reconstruction category area of the Council's assessment. These are described as having a high capacity for change but that new developments need to respond to the surrounding landscape context and that a strong landscape framework can help achieve assimilation. Paragraph 4.9 (CDA15) sets out how the Appeal Scheme has been informed by landscape character analysis and "*led by a landscape strategy which seeks to respond to both the published and site-specific context*". This is cited as incorporating the published guidelines "*such as ensuring that the proposed development is interspersed with public open space to integrate it into the landscape even at the outline application stage, locating new planting in the dips and folds of the landscape and establishment of tree belts around airfields to reduce their visual impact*".
- 4.26. The LVIA combined the susceptibility of the published landscape character areas as medium/low and low value to result in **medium/low landscape sensitivity** (CDA15 Appendix 8). This accords with paragraph 4.3.11 of the 2014 Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment which considered the combined landscape sensitivity for the area to be medium to low, and page 207 of the 2022 Sensitivity Study which assessed the assessment unit as having a low-moderate sensitivity to residential development.
- 4.27. Criticism was received from Dorchester Homes's landscape consultant in their original comments on the application (CDD4A Appendix 2) that the Tyler Grange LVIA had underplayed the sensitivity of the local





landscape, relying too heavily on the Site falling within the ‘reconstruction’ area as defined on the Enhancement Strategy within the Cherwell Landscape Character Assessment (CDJ11 Figure 15 in CDA15 Appendix 3) and the small scale and coarse grain of the map.

- 4.28. I acknowledge that the landscape to the north forms part of the Conservation Area, but this is a heritage rather than landscape designation; furthermore, the northern boundary of the Site is degraded in character and the exposed fencing and blocked off Chilgrove Drive to the east lend an air of degradation and dereliction. The detracting and ‘menacing’ nature of the former RAF buildings is acknowledged in the Conservation Area Appraisal (CDG5 page 68) and the adverse impact of the HASs is acknowledged in the Lead Appeal Inspector’s Report (CDN4) and in the RAF Upper Heyford Revised Comprehensive Planning Brief produced by the Council (CDN2). The HASs may be heritage assets but they, together with their unnatural surrounding landforms, disturbed ground, security fencing and blockaded Chilgrove Drive, detract from the rural character of the area, creating a fringe character locally. The influence of the HASs on the surrounding landscape is acknowledge in the 2022 Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment which notes the negative influence of the HASs on the landscape character (CDH8 page 304). The Case Officer also makes reference in her report (CDC6 paragraph 9.9 part 2) to the Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment’s assessment of the Site as having medium to high capacity for residential development (also at CDJ10 paragraph 4.3.23), concluding that *“the remaining part of the site could potentially be suitable as it could provide a logical extension to the residential dwellings to the west”*.



Insert TG 19: Barricade on Chilgrove Drive to North-East of Appeal Site

- 4.29. Land to the south-east of the former RAF base, within the adjacent LCA to the east of the Appeal Site, was demonstrated on the Enhancement Strategy map (Insert TG 18 above) as being in need of ‘repair’. Repair landscapes are defined in CDJ11 paragraph 4.12 onwards as *“areas where the landscape character is still reasonably strong and worthy of conservation, but where some or all of the individual features or overall structure are showing noticeable decline”*. It goes on in paragraph 4.13 that *“development in these areas must be sensitively sited, designed and maintained”* but that *“precisely because their existing structure is so strong, these landscapes should be able to absorb limited areas of sensitive development”*.
- 4.30. Even if it were felt that the boundaries between the ‘reconstruction’ and ‘repair’ landscapes was considered to be to the west of the Appeal Site, i.e., that the Appeal Site was in the ‘repair’ landscape rather than the ‘reconstruction’ category, it would still be true that the local landscape was assessed as being in partially degraded, i.e., below average condition. This is evidenced within the local landscape through the loss of field boundaries through arable farming, around the former airbase, in the degraded condition of Chilgrove Drive and the surrounding field boundaries and the presence of modern development and the static homes. At best, the local landscape is of medium/low value, which would still result in an overall sensitivity of **medium/low**. This accords with the findings of the 2014 Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment (CDJ10 paragraph 4.3.11) and the 2022 Landscape Sensitivity Study (CDH8 page 306). This is supported



by the Council's evidence base, including within the 2014 Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment (CDJ10) which states that *"the site has the potential for residential development up to the existing boundaries defined by Camp Road to the south and Chilgrove Drive to the east"*, within the 2018 HELAA (CDG8) which states that *"the remaining part of the site could potentially be suitable as it could provide a logical extension to the residential dwellings to the west"*, and in the Interim Sustainability Appraisal of the Cherwell Local Plan Review (CDH5) which recommends the allocation of LPR42 in conjunction with other local sites as able to *"achieve a new defensible long term boundary"*.

- 4.31. The proposed development to the north and west will further reduce the susceptibility of the Appeal Site, as it will be increasingly influenced by and in the context of built form, including commercial development up to 18m, and by a new access road to the east.

#### *Site Specific Character*

- 4.32. Tyler Grange undertook on-site analysis of the Appeal Site in November 2021, with the completed field survey sheet included in Appendix 4 of the LVIA (CDA15 Appendix 4). Further subsequent site visits were undertaken, with the latest undertaken by me in October 2023, together giving a good indication of the character of the Site over the last few years.
- 4.33. The LVIA (CDA15 paragraph 2.16 onwards) identified that the Appeal Site has two distinct character areas: the grassland / farmland in the north and east (areas 1 and 2 on Insert TG1), and the wetland amenity corridor in the west (area 3 on Insert TG1). It refers to the character of the wetland corridor as *"more 'designed and manicured'"* as it *"exhibits a more formalised structure, in contrast with the surrounding fields to the east and west"*. My own visit to the Site confirmed this, with the wetland corridor exhibiting ornamental ponds, mown grassland and areas of established semi-ornamental shrub planting.
- 4.34. The northern and eastern fields are identified as being bordered by overgrown and sometimes gappy hedgerows, an area of degraded stone walling and as being influenced by the adjacent built form and the movement of vehicles, including HGVs, along the local roads. This accords with the findings of the 2014 Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment (CDJ10) paragraph 4.3.7 and 9 which refer to the site areas as comprising *"average quality arable land"* and with the area *"within the south [as] greatly influenced by vehicles passing along Camp Road"*. Page 305 of the 2022 Landscape Sensitivity Study refers to the assessment unit as being *"influenced by the existing settlement edge of Heyford Park to the west"* and *"from the northern part of the assessment unit, to the north of Camp Road there are visual links to the RAF Upper Heyford base"*. The eastern field in particular is influenced by the adjacent airfield with security fencing and disturbed earth beyond forming detractors in the view, with the HASs beyond. This is referenced in the planning historic and evidence base documents, including the CAA (see 3.21 above) and the Comprehensive Planning Brief (see 3.32 above) both of which refer to the detracting character of the HASs and the 2010 Inspector's Report (see 3.37 above) which referred to the screening of the HASs.
- 4.35. The LVIA (CDA15 Appendix 8) assessed the susceptibility of the Appeal Site to residential development as **medium** as, although this would comprise a change of use, it would not be out of context with the prevailing land uses but would require mitigation to aid assimilation. Page 307 of the 2022 Landscape Sensitivity Study (CDH8) refers to the assessment unit as being of low-moderate sensitivity to residential development.
- 4.36. The value of the Appeal Site was assessed through use of the criteria set out in Landscape Institute Technical Guidance note (TGN) 02/21: Assessing the Value of Landscape Outside of National Designations (CDJ4). This is set out in Table TG1 of the LVIA (CDA15 paragraph 2.25). The Site was assessed as being of low natural heritage (based upon the ecological assessments undertaken within the Site), limited in terms of cultural heritage (making reference to the heritage assessments undertaken), of low landscape condition in



the agricultural fields but higher in the amenity area, as having no known associations, as not being notably distinctive, having no public access, being of little scenic quality or tranquillity and as providing some function in terms of the green infrastructure network. The Site was assessed in the LVIA (CDA15 paragraph 2.26) as being of **low** value.

- 4.37. These two elements were combined to give an overall sensitivity of **medium/low**, which accords with paragraph 4.3.11 of the 2014 Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment (CDJ10) and page 306 of the 2022 Landscape Sensitivity Study (CDH8).
- 4.38. I am in agreement with the findings of the LVIA, as was the Landscape Officer.

### Magnitude and Significance of Effects

- 4.39. Effects on landscape receptors are set out in the table in Appendix 9 of the LVIA (CDA15 Appendix 9) and discussed in Chapter 4 (CDA15 Chapter 4). This Proof focusses on the assessed effects at Year 1 and 15, i.e., once development has been completed but before mitigation planting has been implemented and then after mitigation planting has become established but not necessarily matured (see paragraphs 4.9 above). This Proof does not seek to replicate the text within the LVIA but refers to it where appropriate, highlighting where changes in the consented or existing baseline have changed and where difference of professional opinion occur.

#### *Published Landscape Character*

- 4.40. The LVIA assessed the effects of the Appeal Scheme on the published landscape character areas as being of medium/low magnitude and **minor adverse significance at Year 1**, i.e., immediately after the development was completed with no mitigation, and of low magnitude and **minor beneficial significance at Year 15**.
- 4.41. Paragraphs 4.33 of the LVIA (CDA15) set out the judgement for the assessment as follows:
- The development of the scheme parameters and subsequent illustrative masterplan has been informed by landscape character analysis and led by a landscape strategy to limit the effect of the proposed development within the landscape. The scale of the change is therefore considered to constitute a minor alteration to few elements, features qualities or characteristics and affects the site and immediate setting only. Although the change will be long-term and permanent, this part of the landscape is identified as having capacity to accommodate change and the proposed development has sought to provide a strong landscape framework. A low magnitude of change has been identified at year 15 where the addition of new planting will be established and assimilate the development into the wider plateau landscapes.*
- 4.42. The Appeal Scheme will not introduce elements into the wider landscape that are incongruous, i.e., 2-3 storey residential development set within the existing landscape framework. Even set within the existing landscape framework with no mitigation or enhancement, the Appeal Scheme would not change the character of the wider landscape to a notable extent. Furthermore, it will retain and enhance the existing landscape features, introduce new landscape features and increase public access, all beneficial effects.
- 4.43. This was acknowledged in the Officer's Report (CDC6) which stated that "*overall, the balance of beneficial impacts would outweigh the identified harmful impacts, therefore planning permission ought to be granted*" and in the Sustainability Appraisal for the draft allocation LPR42a which assessed effects of the proposed Upper Heyford allocations on landscape as neutral.



### Site Specific Character

4.44. The LVIA assessed the effects on the Appeal Site as of medium magnitude and **minor adverse significance at Year 1**, reducing to low magnitude and **minor beneficial significance at Year 15**.

4.45. Paragraph 4.34 of the LVIA (CDA15) sets out the explanation of the assessment of site level effects:

*At a site-specific level, the site can be split into two 'character areas'; 1. Wet Corridor and 2. Grassland. The wet corridor exhibits a more formalised and managed landscape character, whereas the grassland performs a primarily agricultural function. At year 1, a medium magnitude of change has been identified. The Proposed Development will introduce built elements into the site where there are currently none, set within an existing strong landscape framework. The type of housing proposed is not uncommon within the existing landscape and will form a continuation of the settlement. The geographical extent of this change is localised, however it is long-term and permanent. At year 15, a low magnitude of change has been identified with a reduction in the scale of change resulting from the establishment of proposed mitigation planting and weathering of materials.*

4.46. The LVIA acknowledges the differences in character across the Site, particularly between the vegetated wetland corridor (area 3 on TG Insert 1) and the remaining agricultural fields (areas 1 and 2 on Insert TG1). Whilst the introduction of built form into the Site may be considered to be adverse, the LVIA balances this against the retention and enhancement of the vegetation within the Site and the creation of a strong green edge to the east where the Site meets Chilgrove Drive. This will also result in enhancements to this edge of Upper Heyford, providing mitigation to the south of the HASs, in line with the recommendations of the 2010 Inspector's Report (see 3.37 above).

4.47. My assessment is that the residual effects on the Site at **Year 15 will be closer to neutral**, with the improvements to the existing green infrastructure and the proposed public access to the wetland corridor balancing out the introduction of the built form.

4.48. I am in broad agreement with the findings of the LVIA, as was the Landscape Officer, with the minor above difference in professional opinion.

### Cumulative Landscape Effects

4.49. The LVIA addresses the cumulative effects with the agreed developments (CDA15 paragraph 4.51 onwards). These comprised the developments set out in CDA15 Appendix 2 and agreed with Mr Screen, which comprised the 2016 application for land south of Camp Road, the Pye Sites and the hybrid application. The plan in Appendix 2 of the LVIA does not include the outline schemes to the north of the Site, which are also relevant in considering cumulative effects, as these had not yet received planning permission at the time of writing the LVIA.

4.50. The cumulative schemes that have the greatest impact upon the understanding of the effects that will arise from the Appeal Scheme are the Pye scheme to the west and the commercial area to the north with HGV access, for which detailed proposals are not yet available, although an indicative masterplan has been created. The indicative masterplan (see Insert TG 8 above) demonstrates the area to the immediate north-east of the Site as being a 'commercial area', with a 'creative city' to the north (area 22) and with residential development to the north-west. The parameters show a strip of land with potential for buildings up to 10.5m in height wrapping around part of the northern boundary of the Site, with areas rising up to 18m to the north-east of this (see Insert TG 9) above. This element of the scheme is in outline but an indicative masterplan for the commercial area and creative city is shown in the extracts from the DAS for the hybrid application (see Insert TG 11 above and CDN7), which shows large scale buildings immediately abutting the north of the





Appeal Site in the east, with further large scale buildings beyond and residential development to the north-west.

- 4.51. Both the Pye scheme and the Creative City/commercial area to the north will change the landscape context of the Appeal Site, increasing the amount of development perceived within the landscape and resulting in residential development immediately to the west. These developments will also be visible from the wider landscape to the east and south, again increasing the influence of built development and road infrastructure on these areas and changing the relationship of Upper Heyford with the wider landscape in this location. The Pye schemes will bring development east of the mature vegetation along the current eastern boundary of the Conservation Area, changing the character of the landscape to be far more influenced by residential development than is currently the case. The proposed buildings to the north shown as up to the 18m proposed in the parameters plan, if built in a similar fashion to that shown on the indicative masterplan, as shown on Insert TG 11 above, will increase the amount of commercial development within the view, and change the visual relationship of the Appeal Site with the HASs to the north. The character of Chilgrove Drive will change in its entirety, from a blocked off rural lane to a new pedestrian and cycle link with a large scale HGV compliant road established to the east, and the proposed junction will change the character of this stretch of Camp Road.
- 4.52. Both of these schemes will change the character of this edge of the existing settlement to be firmly physically and visually related to Heyford Park. Both of these schemes will result in a reduced sensitivity of the Appeal Site and local landscape to the Appeal Scheme, thus reducing the significance of effects further.

## Visual Effects

- 4.53. The visual effects are set out within CDA15 Appendix 10 and within paragraphs 4.46 to 4.50. I have not sought to repeat the information within the LVIA here and, for the sake of brevity, refer to the LVIA, making updates where there have been changes in the existing or consented baseline, or where there are differences in professional opinion. The LVIA did not identify any significant effects on views.
- 4.54. In the correspondence included in Appendix 2 of the LVIA (CDA15), a series of nine viewpoints were proposed and agreed with Mr Screen based upon a ZTV exercise undertaken at a ridge height of 10mAOD. Mr Screen proposed a single further viewpoint to the east of Viewpoint 4 (Viewpoint 10) (CDA15 Appendix 2). The ZTV model was later updated to account for a 13m ridge height (CDA15 Plan 3), which demonstrated little noticeable difference in theoretical visibility. The agreed viewpoint locations are demonstrated on LVIA Plan 4 (CDA15 Plan 4), together with the field verified zone of visual influence (ZVI).
- 4.55. The on-site assessment demonstrated that views towards the Site were localised and limited to those from:
- Chilgrove Drive immediately adjacent to the Site (Viewpoint 7);
  - Camp Road over a limited distance to the south of the Site (Viewpoint 8 and 9);
  - Raven Close and the other small number of properties along the current eastern edge of Upper Heyford (Viewpoint 6) – identified in the Conservation Area Appraisal;
  - Bridleway 109/28/10 to the east of the Site (Viewpoints 4 and 10); and
  - Bridleway 422/3/10 to the south of the Site (Viewpoint 5).
- 4.56. The 2014 Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment (CDJ10) states in paragraph 4.3.12 that “*visibility into the site is partially obscured by vegetation on the south and eastern field boundaries as users of Camp*





*Road and Chilgrove Drive pass the site” and that “from the north and west, the site is only visible from within the former RAF Upper Heyford Site and therefore views to the general public are limited”. It goes on in paragraph 4.3.14 that “there is reasonably good potential to provide visual mitigation along the site boundaries without altering the overall character of the area”.*

- 4.57. The assessment of effects on visual receptors is set out in Chapter 4 of the LVIA (CDA15) and within Appendix 10 (CDA15 Appendix 10).

### Value, Susceptibility and Sensitivity

- 4.58. Assessment of the value, susceptibility and resulting sensitivity of the identified visual receptors is set out in the LVIA (CDA15) Appendix 8.
- 4.59. The LVIA assessed receptors using the bridleways to the east (viewpoints 4 and 10) as being of medium susceptibility due to the filtered nature of the views, and of medium to low value due to the poor accessibility and condition of the path, resulting in medium/low sensitivity.
- 4.60. Receptors on the bridleway to the south (viewpoint 5) were assessed as being of medium susceptibility due to the filtered nature of the views and medium value due to the undesignated nature of the landscape of the path, resulting in medium sensitivity.
- 4.61. Users of the local road network were assessed as being of low susceptibility due to the fast moving nature of the roads, and of low value due to the undesignated nature of the routes. Pedestrians using a fast moving road would still be assessed as being of lower susceptibility. However, should Chilgrove Drive become a connected path, the susceptibility of the receptors would increase to high susceptibility, resulting in medium sensitivity of receptors. However, this connection is likely to be in the context of the creation of the commercial area to the north and the new access road to the east, which would have a corresponding reduction in the magnitude and significance of effects.
- 4.62. I agree with the findings of the LVIA in relation to its assessment of the sensitivity of identified receptors and its component parts.

### Magnitude and Significance (Importance) of Effects

- 4.63. Magnitude and importance of visual effects is discussed in the LVIA (CDA15) Chapter 4 and summarised in the tables in LVIA Appendix 10.

#### *Riders and Walkers Using the Bridleways to the East (Viewpoints 4 and 10)*

- 4.64. The LVIA assessed effects at Year 1 and of medium/high magnitude and moderate adverse significance, and those at Year 15 as medium/low magnitude and minor adverse significance.
- 4.65. The LVIA acknowledged in Appendix 10 that the current views towards the edge of Upper Heyford are generally vegetated with little development visible other than the HASs within the former RAF base to the north. The evidence base and relevant appeal decisions above also acknowledge the adverse impact of the HASs on existing views and landscape character. The Appeal Scheme would result in increased residential development visible from the bridleway, but this would be experienced over a localised extent of approximately 1km to the east and will be seen in the context of the existing HASs. Furthermore, this bridleway is poorly used and inaccessible to horse in some areas. Once vegetation along the eastern boundary and within the Appeal Scheme had become established, the built edge would be softened, reducing its impact within the view and re-establishing the soft edge to the settlement. Once the new access road to



the east is completed, together with its associated landscaping, the Appeal Scheme will form part of a wider more urbanised settlement edge before vegetation establishes and softens the view again.

- 4.66. I agree that this is a fair assessment of effects on these receptors.

*Walkers and Riders Using the Bridleway to the South (Viewpoint 5)*

- 4.67. The LVIA assessed effects on these receptors at Year 1 as of medium magnitude and moderate adverse significance, and at Year 15 as of low magnitude and minor adverse significance. The LVIA makes reference to the filtered nature of the views towards the Site, created by the vegetation either side of Camp Road. I note the presence of built form in these views, albeit to the left of the Site within the view, with the HASs in the former RAF base and some roofs from development to the north-west visible in gaps in the vegetation. I also note the limited extent over which these views are experienced, for the c. 500m south of Camp Road. The LVIA refers to the establishment of further vegetation along the Appeal Site boundaries and within the development, further softening and breaking up any development present within the view.

- 4.68. I agree broadly that this is a fair assessment of effects on these receptors, despite the minor difference in professional opinion outlined above.

*Residents on the edge of Upper Heyford (Viewpoint 6)*

- 4.69. The LVIA assessed the effects on the residents of Upper Heyford as of low magnitude and negligible significance at Year 1 and Year 15. This assessment takes into account the extremely limited extent over which the effects will be experienced, the small scale of the Appeal Site within the views, and the already developed nature of the view. The Appeal Scheme will be seen as a small element within the view, seen to the right of the buildings south of Camp Road and above the rooflines of the static homes. It will not introduce characteristics elements into the view, or notably extend the amount of development within the view. It will not change the character of the view. I agree with this assessment. It is also important to note that there is no reference to harm to residential amenity in the RfR or within the Council's Statement of Case.

*Roads Users Along Camp Road (Viewpoint 7, 8 and 9)*

- 4.70. The LVIA assessed effects on local road users as of medium magnitude and minor adverse significance at Year 1, reducing to low magnitude and negligible significance at Year 15. This takes into account the filtered nature of the views through the intervening vegetation and the set back of the development from the road, as well as the limited extent over which the changes will be experienced. The greatest change at Year 1 will be experienced at the location of the access road due to potential vegetation removal to allow for visibility splays and the creation of footways, and near the existing access into the field at the south-west corner where vegetation has been lost. Once these have been gapped up and new planting established to the rear of visibility splays then these changes will be mitigated.
- 4.71. The removal of vegetation along the southern boundary of the Appeal Site is likely to be greater than envisaged in the LVIA, with the hedgerow requiring removal for the establishment of a footway north of Camp Road. This will result in the opening up of views into the Site. However, this will be experienced over an extremely short stretch of the fast moving road, less than 200m, resulting in effects of high to medium magnitude and moderate to minor significance at Year 1, reducing to low magnitude and negligible significance at Year 15.



*Residents of the Surrounding Dwellings Including the Static Homes to the South*

- 4.72. The LVIA assessed effects on these receptors as medium/high magnitude and moderate adverse significance at Year 1 and of medium magnitude and minor adverse significance at Year 15. I do not agree with this assessment and assess the effects as being much lower due to the limited views towards the Site experienced by these receptors, and the limited number of receptors affected. I assess these as of minor significance at Year 1 and negligible significance at Year 15. It is also important to note that effects on residential amenity have not been raised within the RfR or the Council's Statement of Case.

Cumulative Visual Effects

- 4.73. The Appeal Site is mostly perceived from Camp Road to the immediate south, Chilgrove Drive to the immediate east, and over a localised extent of the PRoW to the south and east, the latter of which are difficult to access. From the south and from Camp Road, the amount of development visible will increase as a result of the cumulative schemes, with development strongly established in the view when approaching from the east along Camp Road (see Insert TG 10). The commercial area / Creative City to the north has planning permission for buildings rising up to 18m above future ground level, notably higher than the Appeal Scheme, and these will be seen rising above the surrounding vegetation in views from the south and east. The proposed commercial buildings will increase the built form in the views from the east, partially obscuring the views towards the HASs currently visible. The Pye scheme will be visible as a backdrop to the Appeal Site in views from the east, bringing development beyond the current vegetated edge of Heyford Park both physically and visually. The proposed HGV access to the east of Chilgrove Drive, together with its junction and associated lighting columns, will be visible from the PRoW to the east, and these, together with the development to the west and north, will significantly change the character of this side of Upper Heyford to be characterised by development forming part of Heyford Park. Once vegetation along the HGV route has become established, this will reduce views towards the eastern edge of Upper Heyford, including towards the Appeal Scheme.
- 4.74. The increase in development proposed to the west and north of the Appeal Site will reduce the sensitivity of receptors to the east and along Camp Road to development, as the views will be increasingly characterised by development. The Appeal Scheme will result in smaller, even negligible, effects when considered cumulatively against the agreed schemes, as it will be seen against the backdrop of new development. Once the vegetation along the HGV route has become established, the magnitude of effects on views from the east in particular will be reduced to low magnitude and negligible to neutral significance.



## Section 5: Responding to the Reasons for Refusal and Disputed Matters

### The Relationship of the Site and the Appeal Scheme to the Existing Settlement, Including the Setting of the Settlement

#### Relationship of the Appeal Site to the Existing Settlement

- 5.1. Land to the north of the Appeal Site currently comprises previously disturbed land and unnatural landforms associated with the former RAF base, as well as the HASs, which are most apparent in the north of the Appeal Site. This is acknowledged on page 305 of the 2022 Landscape Sensitivity Study (CDH8) which references that *“the assessment unit is influenced by the exiting settlement edge of Heyford Park”* and *“from the northern part of the assessment unit, to the north of Camp Road there are visual links to the RAF Upper Heyford base”*. To the west, the existing edge of Heyford Park is relatively well vegetated immediately north of Camp Road in the region of the officers’ married quarters, becoming more open towards the north around the bungalows and Hampden Square. During summer, it was possible to see existing buildings glimpsed between the existing vegetation from Chilgrove Drive and the bridleways to the east (viewpoints 4 and 10), with greater visibility during the winter (see Insert TG 20 below).



*Insert TG 20: Viewpoint 4 Towards the Site Showing Buildings visible to the North-West of the Appeal Site*

- 5.2. From within the Site and along Camp Road, the sense is of being on the edge of the settlement, albeit it a well vegetated edge in places, with housing and amenity style vegetation perceived increasingly as one travels west along Camp Road, from where it is possible to see into the static home site to the south of Appeal Site and the recent development in Heyford Park.





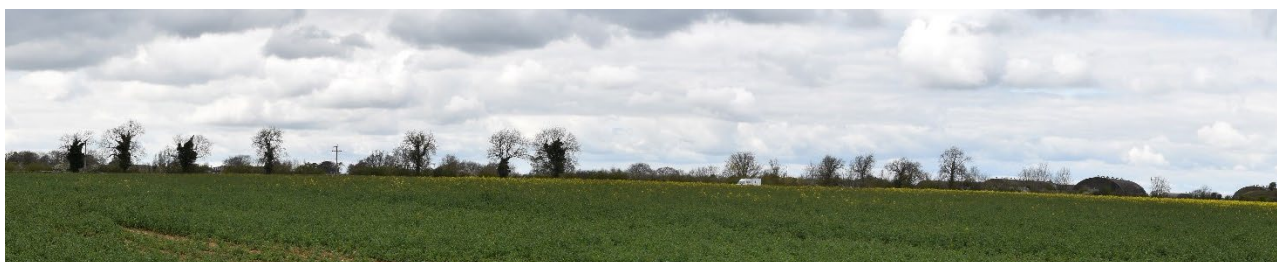


*Insert TG 21: View East Along Camp Road with Pye Site on the Left and Static Homes to the South*



*Insert TG 22: Drainage Basin Adjacent to Static Home Site*

- 5.3. Chilgrove Drive has a disused and arguably fringe character in the north, exacerbated by the temporary barriers established at the north-eastern corner of the Appeal Site, the security fencing, unnatural landforms and the poorly managed vegetation around the existing field gate (see Insert TG 3 and Insert TG 19).
- 5.4. From further east, from the poorly managed and difficult to access brideways east of the Appeal Site, the settlement edge appears more vegetated, although the HASs and associated unnatural landforms and security fencing is apparent in the view. These are referenced as detractors within the Conservation Area Appraisal, 2003 and 2010 Appeal Decisions and within the 2007 Comprehensive Planning Brief.



*Insert TG 23: View West Towards the Site Showing Buildings visible to the North-West and North of the Appeal Site*

- 5.5. The 2022 Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment (CDH8) states that LS HEY2 is “influenced by the existing settlement edge of Heyford Park to the west” and that “from the northern part of the assessment unit, to the north of Camp Road there are visual links to the RAF Upper Heyford base” (CDH8 page 305). The 2014 Upper Heyford Capacity Assessment (CDJ10) refers to the Appeal Site as part of site 146, stating that “within the south the area is greatly influenced by vehicles passing along Camp Road and the junction to the south east” (CDJ10 paragraph 4.3.7).



- 5.6. Perceptually and visually, during summer, the relationship between the Appeal Site and the adjacent settlement is reduced, although views towards the recent development to the north-west and the HASs to the north were possible.
- 5.7. The Appeal Site is currently unbuilt, as is the land to the immediate west in PV5 within the Pye site. However, the Site immediately abuts the PV5 allocation to the north and west and is immediately adjacent to man-made structures within Heyford Park to the north. Once the Pye schemes have been completed and the Creative City to the north, the Appeal Site will be even more firmly bordered by development, increasing the physical connection of the Appeal Scheme to Heyford Park. Paragraph 1.1 of the Officer's Report (CDC6) states that *"the land does however relate well to the remainder of the planned development at Heyford Park, with approved residential development immediately to the west, the planned future permanent access-way to the Flying Field commercial areas using Chilgrove Drive immediately to the east and the Flying Field area just to the north"*.
- 5.8. The proposed HGV access road to the east will create a strong physical feature to the east of the Site, creating a strong defensible boundary to development. This is referenced in the Officer's Report (CDC6 paragraph 9.23) which states that *"there is a barrier with the open countryside to the east, which is separated by Chilgrove Road [Drive], which is planned to be upgraded to form the principal access route into the Upper Heyford Flying Field"*. The 2014 Upper Heyford Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment (CDJ10 paragraph 3.39) refers to site 146 (including the Site and the Pye site to the west) as having *"the potential for residential development up to the existing site boundaries defined by Camp Road to the south and Chilgrove Drive to the east"*. The 2018 HELAA (CDG8 page 78) states that *"the remaining part of the site [i.e., the part not within PV5] could potentially be suitable as it could provide a logical extension to the residential dwellings to the west"* and that *"development could be contained without opening up a wider area of countryside"*.



*Insert TG 24: Looking Across Appeal Site to Current Vegetated Settlement Edge to West with Pye Scheme In Front and Former RAF Base to the North*

- 5.9. Once the Pye scheme is completed, development within Heyford Park will be visible in the left of this view, in front of the current vegetated edge of the settlement, changing the character of this edge of Upper Heyford to be more characterised by development. Development to the immediate north will also be strongly visible, as illustrating in Insert TG 10.
- 5.10. The Appeal Site and the surrounding location are both visually and perceptually related to the existing settlement and this relationship will strengthen once the Pye scheme to the west has been constructed, and even further once the Creative Hub and proposed HGV route are completed.

### Setting of the Settlement

- 5.11. The first point is that there is no designation in this area, or a policy in principle at national level, that protects the settings of settlements. Setting of Conservation Areas is a heritage issue and does not form the subject





of this Proof of Evidence. There is no designation in this area relating to the separation of settlements, as exists to the west of Heyford Park under Neighbourhood Plan (CDG4 Policy PD3).

- 5.12. The current boundary of the settlement to the west of the Appeal Site is well vegetated, with buildings glimpsed through the vegetation in summer, creating a softer settlement edge in this location. The influence of the former RAF base to the north is apparent, particularly in the north of the Appeal Site, as acknowledged within the evidence base documents and appeal decisions in Section 3 above.
- 5.13. It is important, however, to take into account the quickly changing nature of the baseline landscape. The GLVIA3 makes reference to the future baseline, stating that the baseline studies “*establishes the existing nature of the landscape and visual environment in the study area, including any relevant changes likely to occur independently of the development proposals*” (CDJ1 Table 3.1 page 27). The land to the immediate west of the Appeal Site is consented for residential development in the Pye scheme. This development will both bring settlement up to the western Site boundary but will also result in residential development extending beyond the current vegetated edge of Upper Heyford as exists around Larsen Road (see Insert TG 24). The context of the views from the east will change to include residential development as part of the backdrop to the Appeal Site. This will create a more developed edge to Heyford Park in this area.
- 5.14. Land to the north is subject to outline planning permission as set out in the hybrid application. Although the exact layout of these scheme is not yet known, the land use parameter (CDN5) demonstrates the creative hub/commercial development to the immediate north of the Appeal Site, rising up to 18m above future ground levels. Indicative layouts for this area demonstrate buildings immediately adjacent to the Appeal Site boundary, which is currently poorly vegetated. The agreed land use parameter also shows an access road at a scale and design to accommodate HGVs, situated immediately to the east of Chilgrove Drive. This road will bring a comparatively major piece of infrastructure to the east of the Appeal Site, further reducing any rural character.
- 5.15. The Appeal Scheme will not result in development extending any further east than the proposed Creative Hub to the north, or the draft allocation to the north and provides a consistent built edge with the defensible woodland barrier to the south. It will not extend development within Heyford Park any further south than is currently the case, and will not result in the physical, visual or perceptual merger of settlements, as agreed within the SoCG. It will also not result in residual significant effects on landscape or views.
- 5.16. The summary of evidence base in the LVIA (CDA15) and character 3 above (paragraphs 3.18 onwards) summarise a number of capacity, sensitivity and housing assessments, all of which highlight the suitability of land west of Chilgrove Drive and north of Camp Road for future residential development. This is reflected in the draft allocation LPR42a within the Regulation 18 Local Plan 2040.
- 5.17. As set out in the Committee Report (CDC6 paragraph 9.45) “*the proposal...would blend in with the character and appearance of the locality and would be seen in conjunction with the wider Heyford Park development,*” and (paragraph 10.3) that “*development of the land would relate well to surrounding development and represent a natural rounding off*”.

## Impacts On Views To And From The Conservation Area

- 5.18. The reference to the views to and from the Conservation Area in the RfR appears to relate primarily to the associated heritage issues rather than visual impact, given the lack of views from the Conservation Area towards the Appeal Site. However, for completeness, views to and from the Conservation Area are addressed here. The Conservation Area is a heritage designation, rather than a landscape one, but this can result in a subsequent increase in the value of the view within the LVIA. This Proof does not address heritage setting



issues which are covered in the Heritage Proof (CDE15), produced by Mr Copp. Visual effects are dealt with in the LVIA (CDA15) appendix 10 and within this Proof within paragraphs 4.53 onwards.

5.19. Of the views identified that feature the Appeal Site, the following are directed towards the Conservation Area:

- Views from the bridleway south of Camp Road (viewpoint 5);
- Views from the poorly accessible bridleway east of Chilgrove Drive (Viewpoints 4 and 10);
- Chilgrove Drive (Viewpoint 7); and
- Camp Road (Viewpoint 8).

5.20. Of the views identified that feature the Appeal Site, the following are directed away from the Conservation Area:

- Views from Raven Close and Willesley Drive (Viewpoint 6) – identified in the Conservation Area Appraisal; and
- Views along Camp Road (viewpoint 9).

5.21. Views from Camp Road are assessed together as they are sequential and comprise the experience of both exiting and entering the Conservation Area.

### Current Views Towards the Conservation Area

5.22. No protected views will be affected by the Appeal Scheme and no views towards or from the Conservation Area as identified in the RAF Heyford Conservation Area Appraisal or other evidence base documents will be adversely affected by the Appeal Scheme. This is echoed in the 2014 Upper Heyford Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment which states that “*key views across the site do not exist and therefore would be unaffected*” (CDJ10 paragraph 4.3.14) and within the 2022 Landscape Sensitivity Study which state that “*there are no known viewpoints looking across the assessment unity identified within the Local Plan, OS maps, tourist maps or within guidebooks*” (CDH8 page 306).

5.23. In current views towards the Conservation Area from the south (viewpoint 5), very little of the designated area to the north of the Site is discernible, other than two of the HASs rising above the intervening vegetation, and the occasional roof of recent development to the north-west around Hampden Square (see Viewpoint 5). The Conservation Area south of Camp Road is visible to the left of the Site in views, but these are characterised by the recent development south of Camp Road, and the static homes, as reflected within the 2022 Landscape Sensitivity Study which states that “*the assessment unit is influenced by the existing settlement edge of Heyford Park to the west*” (CDH8 page 305).



*Insert TG 25: View from Bridleway North of Viewpoint 5 Showing Existing View Towards Conservation Area*





- 5.24. In current views towards the Conservation Area from the east (viewpoints 4 and 10), the Appeal Site is visible as part of the green edge to Heyford Park, north of Camp Road, with the HASs and associated unnatural landforms and security fencing to the north visible in the right of the view. Although the HASs are of historical importance, they do not contribute to the quality of the view, as acknowledged in the Conservation Area Appraisal (CDG5 page 68) and the Lead Appeal Inspector's Report (CDN4). The Appeal Scheme will not obscure or obstruct views towards the HASs but will be seen in front of the current green edge of the settlement to the left of the HASs.



*Insert TG 26: View West Towards the Site Showing Buildings visible to the North-West and North of the Appeal Site (as per Insert TG 23)*

- 5.25. In views towards the Conservation Area from Chilgrove Drive, those to the west are well vegetated with rooflines glimpsed beyond the vegetation. However, the views towards the Conservation Area to the north are characterised by security fencing, a lack of vegetation, unnatural landforms and the temporary blockage at the north-eastern corner of the Appeal Site. These are all detractors in landscape terms and reduce the sensitivity of the landscape and views in this area.



*Insert TG 27: Boundary with the Conservation Area on Chilgrove Drive (location as per Insert TG 19)*

### *Emerging Visual Baseline*

- 5.26. From the south (viewpoint 5), the Pye scheme in the PV5 allocation will be visible to the left of the Appeal Site in the view, seen in the context of the existing built form south of Camp Road. It will be filtered by the intervening vegetation along Camp Road, although this filtering effect will be reduced to some extent by the removal of the vegetation north of Camp Road to accommodate the new footway. The Appeal Scheme will be seen partially in front of the Pye scheme and partially to the right in the views from this PRoW.
- 5.27. The Pye Scheme will be visible from both Chilgrove Drive (although filtered) and the bridleways to the east (viewpoints 4 and 10), forming a backdrop to the Appeal Site. It will be seen in front of the currently vegetated edge of the Conservation Area around Larsen Road, creating a more built character to views from these areas. The Appeal Scheme will be seen in front of the Pye scheme, reducing the change to the view caused by the Appeal Scheme alone. The proposed HGV route and its associated lighting columns will be seen in



front of the Appeal Scheme, further urbanising the view until vegetation around the new junction with Camp Road is established when these views will start to soften again.

- 5.28. The Appeal Scheme will not unacceptably affect views towards the Conservation Area, particularly once the Pye schemes and development to the north is established.

### Current Views out from the Conservation Area

- 5.29. Of all the views identified within the Conservation Area Appraisal on Figures 9-11 (CDG5 pages 25-27), only one has the potential to be affected by the Appeal Scheme, broadly corresponding with Viewpoint 6. The LVIA has assessed effects on receptors represented by Viewpoint 6 as being negligible at both Year 1 and Year 15. When viewed from the recently developed edge of Heyford Park, the views towards the Appeal Site are characterised by existing development in the static home park and along Camp Road. The Appeal Site is seen as a small element in the context of the existing built edge, set beyond the vegetation along Camp Road and east of Larsen Road, and the Appeal Scheme will not change the character of this view.



*Insert TG 28: View Towards the Appeal Site from the Conservation Area Showing the Appeal Site Beyond the Intervening Housing and Static Homes (CDA15 Viewpoint 6)*

### *Emerging Visual Baseline*

- 5.30. Once the Pye schemes have been completed, this built context to the Appeal Site in this view will increase. Both schemes will be barely perceptible. The Appeal Scheme will not change the character of the view as compared to the emerging baseline.

### Views from Camp Road

- 5.31. Views from Camp Road towards the Conservation Area are generally funnelled towards the west by the well-established hedgerow to the north and south. For the majority of the route, the Appeal Site is seen in the periphery of the view along the road. The main exception to this is around the junction with Chilgrove Drive, where there has been a loss of vegetation around the existing field gate into the eastern part of the Appeal





Site, and south across the static caravan site. The gap in the boundary hedgerows around Chilgrove Drive (CDA15 Viewpoint 9) allows very brief glimpsed views across the Appeal Site towards the HASs, associated fencing and unnatural landforms to the north, and the more vegetated settlement boundary to the west with its sporadic buildings. On travelling west, the road is more vegetated to the north, but is characterised by the static homes and functional drainage basin to the south. The road also becomes more engineered at this point, with a narrowing and associated signage. These elements reduce the rural character when travelling west along Camp Road.

- 5.32. On travelling east, the land to the north of the road is characterised by the hedgerow, as when travelling west, with the static homes and engineered drainage basin apparent. The gap in the hedgerow around the existing gate, and along Chilgrove Drive is less evident, but there are briefly glimpsed views towards the HAS around the junction.
- 5.33. The Appeal scheme will be set back from the hedgerow along Camp Road, reducing its appearance from the road, where receptors are already likely to be fast moving and focussed on the route ahead of them. It will be visible in the brief glimpse from the junction with Chilgrove Drive when travelling west, but the Appeal Scheme also proposes the establishment of a vegetated edge here, with the hedgerow restored and new planting established.

#### *Emerging Baseline*

- 5.34. The Pye scheme and the proposed David Wilson scheme will result in the removal of the existing hedgerow along Camp Road to the west of the Site in order to allow the establishment of a new footway. The Planting Plan for the Pye Scheme, extract below, shows a 6m wide easement north of the footway before what is described as 'native hedge transplants', implying the existing hedgerow is to be transplanted to the north of the easement. Such a strategy is likely to have a low success rate, and, in any case, the proposals will unalterably change the character and views of this stretch of Camp Road, creating a wider and more suburban character to the road. The David Wilson Homes proposal simply shows this as a replacement hedgerow.

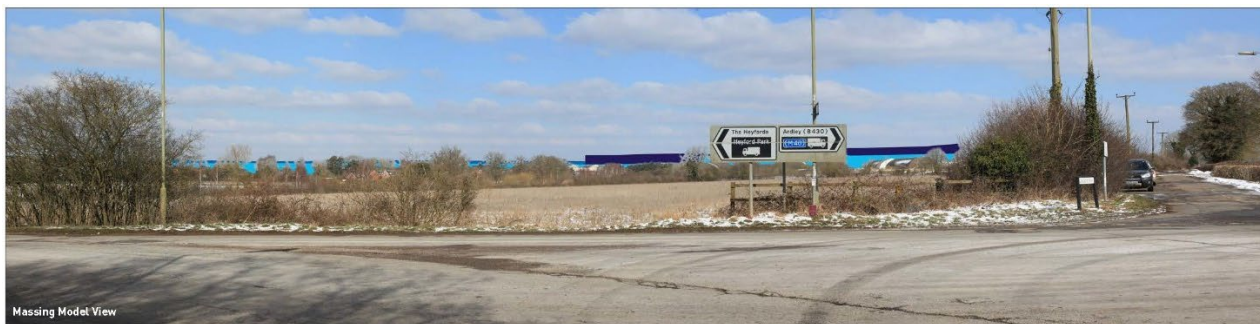


*Insert TG 29: Extract from Pye Scheme Consented Planting Plan Showing Removal of Hedgerow Along Camp Road*

- 5.35. Although the exact details of the masterplan for land north of the Appeal Site is not yet known, the consented height parameter shows buildings rising up to 18m above proposed ground levels, immediately north of the largest parcel within the Appeal Site. This is also the area of the former Flying Field which is most visible in views from the south and east. The photomontages produced to inform the ES for the hybrid application (Appendix 7.1a Appendix 5 included in CDE14 Volume 2 Appendix 1) demonstrate the comparative appearance of the parameters in views from Camp Road, which corresponds with the LVIA (CDA15) Viewpoint 9. No views towards the hybrid application site were included from the footpaths to the south.







Insert TG 30: Hybrid Application LVIA Viewpoint 9 Showing 18m Parameter in Dark Blue and 10m Parameter in Light Blue

- 5.36. It is possible to see the potential increase in built form perceived from this stretch of Camp Road. The character of this junction with Chilgrove Drive will also change with the proposed HGV route to the immediate east. The Appeal Scheme will be seen in front of the new buildings within the former Flying Field before boundary vegetation has established, and north of the new road and associated infrastructure. The emerging baseline will change the character of Camp Road notably, with urbanising influences to the east and west of the Appeal Site.

### Summary of Effect on Views To and From the Conservation Area

- 5.37. The Appeal Scheme will only appear in one identified view from the Conservation Area, that illustrated by Viewpoint 6, and will be set behind the layers of intervening vegetation and in the context of the existing and proposed built form. The LVIA (CDA15), the findings of which were agreed by the Council's Landscape Officer (CDA15 Appendix 2), assessed the effects on receptors represented by Viewpoint 6 at both Year 1 and Year 15 on the current baseline, as being negligible. This is because these views are already characterised by development in the area of the Appeal Site, and the Appeal Scheme will not change the character of these views, especially when taking into account the emerging baseline.
- 5.38. The Appeal Scheme appears in a limited number of views towards the Conservation Area, namely those from a localised stretch of the PRoW south of Camp Road, from where views are already characterised by relatively modern development, and from the east, from where development is visible in views, albeit it to a notably lesser extent than in views from the south. The nature of these views from the east, however, will change with the emerging Pye and Heyford Park schemes to the north and west, both of which will create a developed context to the Appeal Site and result in the Appeal Scheme being seen set against a more developed edge than is currently the case.
- 5.39. The 2014 Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment (CDJ10) states that "*views to the general public are limited*" (paragraph 4.3.12) and that "*there is reasonably good potential to provide visual mitigation along the site boundaries without altering the overall character of the area*" (paragraph 4.3.14).

### **Effects On Wider Landscape Character**

- 5.40. It is important to note that effects on wider landscape character were not included within the RfR. However, they were raised within the Council's Statement of Case (CDE3 paragraph 3.3) and set out as an issue within the CMC Note (CDE6).
- 5.41. The visual assessment has demonstrated that the Appeal Scheme will only be perceived within the wider landscape from a limited number of locations, namely from c. 500m of local bridleways to the south and c. 1km to the east and from Camp Road. This demonstrates that the extent of landscape that will be affected



by the Appeal Scheme will be localised. This is reflected in the 2014 and 2022 Landscape Character and Sensitivity Assessments.

- 5.42. The LVIA assessed the effects of the Appeal Scheme on the wider landscape character as being of minor adverse significance at Year 1 and minor beneficial significance at Year 15, as assessed against the current baseline. This reflected the partially degraded character of the landscape, particularly in the north of the Site near to Chilgrove Drive, where the adjacent areas of the former Flying Field and blockage of Chilgrove Drive create a somewhat fringe character. This adverse impact of the HASs is acknowledged in the Lead Appeal Inspector's Report (CDN4), the Conservation Area Appraisal (CDG5 page 68) and the RAF Upper Heyford Revised Planning Brief (CDN2). The airbase is also noted as a 'dominant visual element' on figure 2 on page 8 of the Conservation Area Appraisal (CDG5). It also reflects that the Appeal Scheme is not out of context with the wider character area, comprising low rise residential development set within the existing vegetated structure. It also took into account the proposals to retain and enhance the existing landscape infrastructure and to increase public access to the amenity wetland corridor. The Council's Landscape Officer stated that he was in broad agreement with the findings of the LVIA and considered it to be "*comprehensive and proportionate*".
- 5.43. The Pye scheme will further establish residential development as characteristic of this area, changing the edge of the Upper Heyford to the west from being more vegetated in character to residential development. The Creative City to the north will increase the number and scale of buildings perceived in the landscape to the north of the Site, again creating a more built character to the edge of Upper Heyford in this locality. The proposed HGV route to the east will introduce road infrastructure and associated structures, such as lighting columns, further urbanising the area of the Site. The emerging baseline firmly places the Appeal Site and this edge of Heyford Park in the context of notable larger than domestic scale development. Set in the context of this, the Appeal Scheme will have a negligible impact upon the wider landscape character.



## Section 6: Compliance with Policy

- 6.1. This section of my evidence deals with the landscape policy context, and those policies specifically included within the Reason for Refusal. As stated previously, in respect of the wider policy context, compliance and overall planning balance, I defer to the evidence and expertise of Mr Bainbridge.
- 6.2. As set out in the overarching Statement of Common Ground (CDE7 paragraph 8.7), there is no conflict with any policies of the Development Plan relevant to landscape and views other than those set out in the matters of disagreement and reiterated below for ease of reference:
- CLP 2011-2031 Policy ESD13: Local Landscape Protection and Enhancement;
  - CLP 2011-2031 Policy ESD15: The Character of the Built and Historic Environment;
  - CLP 1996 Policy C33: Protection of Important Gaps of Undeveloped Land; and
  - MCNP Policy PD4: Protection of Important Views and Vistas.
- 6.3. Policy ESD15 is multi layered and only the points are relevant to landscape:
- the fourth which starts ‘Contribute positively to an area’s character...’;
  - the sixteenth which starts ‘Integrate and enhance green infrastructure...’.

### Cherwell Local Plan 1996 Saved Policies

- 6.4. The only policy from the 1996 Local Plan in contention is C33: Protection of Important Gaps of Undeveloped Land. It is important to note that the Appeal Site is not within the Non-coalescence Zone under Neighbourhood Plan (CDG4 Policy PD3).
- 6.5. Policy C33 states that the Council will seek to retain undeveloped gaps which are *“important in preserving the character of a loose-knit settlement structure or...in preserving a view or feature of recognised amenity or historical value”*. The element of the policy relating to the setting of historic buildings will be dealt with separately in the Proof of Mr Copp.
- 6.6. The Appeal Site is outside the current boundary of the settlement so does not form part of the settlement structure and cannot contribute to whether that structure is loose knit. In any case, it is arguable that the built form of Heyford Park is not loose knit, having been constructed to modern density standards. The Appeal Scheme will include a large area of open space in the form of the wetland corridor, which will create a connecting area of open space between the Appeal Scheme and the Pye schemes to the west.
- 6.7. The LVIA (CDA15) has identified the views which are likely to be affected by the Appeal Scheme and only one of these is identified within the Conservation Appraisal. The LVIA has demonstrated that effects on this view (Viewpoint 6) will be negligible at Year 1 and Year 15. The 2014 Upper Heyford Sensitivity and Capacity Appraisal assessed that, in relation to the Appeal Site, as part of site 146, that *“key views across the site do not exist and therefore would be unaffected”* (CDJ10 paragraph 4.3.14). Furthermore, the planning and evidence base, including the 2007 Comprehensive Planning Brief, the Conservation Area and the 2010 Appeal Decision (see 3.37 above), all agree that the HASs within the Conservation Area are detrimental in views.





- 6.8. Effects on other views have been shown to be limited and localised, and none of these views has been identified as being of notable amenity value.
- 6.9. The Appeal Scheme is not in conflict with Saved Policy C33.

## **Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 (2015)**

- 6.10. The only policies of the 2015 Cherwell Local Plan in contention are:
- Policy ESD13: Local Landscape Protection and Enhancement;
  - Policy ESD15: The Character of the Built and Historic Environment.
- 6.11. Furthermore, only bullets 4 and 16 of ESD15 are of relevance to this Proof.

### ESD13: Local Landscape Protection and Enhancement

- 6.12. Policy ESD13 is a multipart policy in three paragraphs. It does not preclude development in greenfield locations.
- 6.13. The first paragraph of the policy refers to the seeking of opportunities to enhance the character and appearance of the landscape, particularly in fringe locations through the restoration, management and enhancement of landscape features.
- 6.14. In reference to the first paragraph, the Landscape Strategy Plan (CDA15 Plan 6) demonstrates the retention and enhancement of the existing landscape features within the Appeal Site as far as is practicable, with the opening up to public access and enhancement of the wetland corridor and new areas of native planting established around and within the Appeal Scheme. Of note is the gapping up of the hedgerows on the eastern and south-eastern boundaries and the establishment of new native tree planting along the boundaries with the Conservation Area in the north, which is currently characterised by detracting features such as security fencing and poorly vegetated bunding. It will also establish new areas of tree planting along the eastern boundary of the Appeal Site. The introduction of new areas of development will inevitably have an impact on character, but this development is not out of context with the surrounding built form within the existing and consented residential areas of Heyford Park, and the form is shown to be softened with retention of the existing landscape infrastructure and the establishment of new areas of tree and other planting throughout the proposed development. The Appeal Scheme responds to and respects the existing landscape infrastructure and character of the Site and the wider landscape and green infrastructure.
- 6.15. The second paragraph states that development will be expected to respect and enhance local landscape character and to secure of mitigation where damage cannot be avoided. It is noted that the requirement of the policy is to respect the landscape, not protect it, as set out in paragraph 174 of the NPPF. The policy then sets out a list of bullet points, stating that proposals will not be permitted where they cause undue visual intrusion, undue harm to natural landscape features, are not consistent with local character, impact upon areas of high tranquillity, harm the setting of settlements of harm the historic value of the landscape. Again, the policy would require an assessment, such as an LVIA, to demonstrate these factors but it does not preclude the development of greenfield sites.
- 6.16. The LVIA (CDA15) has demonstrated that views towards the Appeal Site are limited and localised, and that the Appeal Scheme will not cause undue visual intrusion, especially when considered in conjunction with the surrounding consented schemes. It has been shown to protect natural landscape features and will result in the introduction of new native landscape features. It will not cause undue harm to the local topography. The



Appeal Scheme is consistent with the prevailing settlement type in Heyford Park and the consented schemes to the west and has been shown to have no adverse residual effects on landscape character. The area of the Appeal Site does not contain a high level of tranquillity and no party has suggested that it does. This is echoed in the 2014 Upper Heyford Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment (CDJ10 paragraph 4.3.7) which stated that *“within the south the area is greatly influenced by vehicles passing along Camp Road and the junction to the south east”*.

- 6.17. The area of the Appeal Site is situated within the context of the edge of Heyford Park and the former RAF base to the north with its concrete HASs, security fencing and fringe character, with the adverse impacts of the HASs on views and landscape acknowledged in the baseline documents outlined in Section 3 and 4 above. Existing built form is present in views of the local area, albeit softened by vegetation when viewed from north of Camp Road. This area of the landscape surrounding Heyford Park is changing, and the consented developments will result in a significant change to the character of this part of the setting of the settlement, increasing its built character and relationship with Upper Heyford. The Appeal Scheme will not adversely impact upon the landscape setting of Heyford Park, especially in the context of the emerging developments to the north and west. It will not impact upon the visual setting of buildings, structures or other landscape features.
- 6.18. This area of the landscape is not designated for its heritage value and does not form part of the Conservation Area. The Appeal Site appears in one identified view from the Conservation Area and the Appeal Scheme has been shown to have a negligible effect on that view.
- 6.19. The third paragraph states that development proposals should have regard to the information and advice set out within the Council’s Countryside Design Summary SPG and the OWLS landscape assessment.
- 6.20. The planning application for the Appeal Scheme was accompanied by an LVIA (CDA15), which assessed the Appeal Scheme against the published landscape character assessments and guidance and was shown to have no residual adverse effects. This was agreed by the Council’s Landscape Officer (CDD11).
- 6.21. The Appeal Scheme is in compliance with ESD13.

### ESD15: The Character of the Built and Historic Environment

- 6.22. Policy ESD15 is a multipart policy relating to the design of new development and ensuring that design complements and enhances local character. A list of bullet points is set out, of which the fourth and sixteenth are relevant. During the CMC on 5<sup>th</sup> October, clarification was sought as to whether the Council was bringing a design case to which a response was required within a week of that meeting. No response was received and, despite the first draft of the Landscape Statement of Common Ground (CDE10) being sent on 10<sup>th</sup> October 2023, no response was received from the Council until 6<sup>th</sup> November 2023 when they sought to introduce additional elements in relation to ESD15, namely bullet points 1, 9 and 12. Points 1 and 9 relate purely to design issues and point 12 relates to nighttime lighting, which has not previously been raised as a concern.
- 6.23. Bullet point 1 relates to the design of new development and states that it should be designed to improve the quality and appearance of an area. The Illustrative Masterplan (CDB14) is illustrated in section 4 above, together with its benefits. The LVIA (CDA15) assessed the effects of the Appeal Scheme on local landscape as minor beneficial, with which the Landscape Officer agreed. The Appeal Scheme retains and enhances the majority of the landscape features within the Appeal Site, and proposes the addition of large areas of new native habitat. The Landscape Statement of Common Ground (CDE10) sets out the requirement in Policy for 1.53ha of open space versus the 5.65ha shown in the Landscape and Open Space Parameter Plan (CDB13). The scheme is shown to connect into Chilgrove Drive, which will be opened up as a new



Public Right of Way, and here is the potential for pedestrian connections to the west and north. Detailed design matters can be dealt with at Reserved Matters stages.

- 6.24. Bullet point 4 relates to the contribution of a scheme to an area's character and identity by reinforcing and respecting a series of features. The Appeal Scheme does not adversely affect local topography, it retains and enhances landscape features, mitigating any losses and establishing new areas of native tree and hedgerow planting. It does not impact adversely upon skylines identified within the Mid Cherwell Neighbourhood Plan (CDG4 Figure 8 page 51) or valley floors. The localised stream valley is to be retained and enhanced as an area of public open space in the west of the Appeal Scheme. No significant trees are to be removed and new tree planting is to be established throughout the Appeal Scheme. No historic boundaries or landmarks will be adversely impacted. Where landscape features are affected as an unavoidable consequence of the Appeal Scheme, these will be replaced, with additional landscape features established throughout the Appeal Scheme. Effects on views will be limited and localised and none of these have been identified as unacceptable, including the single identified view from the Conservation Area (viewpoint 6) effects on which were assessed as being negligible at Year 1 and Year 15.
- 6.25. Bullet point 9 relates to the design of the masterplan layout, which is currently in outline, and the need for connections, permeability and legibility. The Illustrative Masterplan (CDB14) demonstrates the development set out in a permeable block structure, with clear hierarchy of streets, connecting to Camp Road and Chilgrove Drive. There is also the potential to connect through the consented schemes to the west and north. The Appeal Scheme responds to the existing landscape features within the Appeal Site and its context. The road layout has been designed to address the wetland corridor and the open countryside, aiding legibility through views along roads. It also reflects the strategy set out in a Greener Cherwell Local Plan (CDH19).
- 6.26. Bullet point 12 refers to the effects of light pollution in dark landscapes and on nature conservation. There is no ecological RfR, no issues have been raised by the Council prior to the 6<sup>th</sup> November 2023 in relation to nighttime lighting and no request for a nighttime lighting assessment during the application process. The Appeal Site is currently unlit but is situated within the context of the former RAF base. The consented schemes to the west and north will introduce further lighting into this area, meaning that the Appeal Site will be experienced in the context of additional lighting than is currently the case. Furthermore, the proposed road to the east of Chilgrove Drive will likely be lit around the junction, which will result in lighting in front of the Appeal Scheme in views from the east.
- 6.27. Bullet point 16 relates to the integration and enhancement of green infrastructure and biodiversity enhancement. It goes on to state that well design landscape scheme should be an integral part of the development proposals. It is important to note that Tyler Grange landscape planning and ecology were involved with the development of masterplan proposals from the earliest stages, with recommendations for ecology set out on drawing Insert TG 16 and landscape and visual recommendations set out on Insert TG 15. These recommendations led to the integration and enhancement of the existing landscape infrastructure as part of the Appeal Scheme. The wetland corridor is to be opened to the public and will create a green connection between the Appeal Scheme, the Pye scheme to the west and any future development in the draft allocation to the south. The Appeal Scheme and its benefits are set out in paragraph 4.9 above. It is possible to see how the proposed pedestrian connections and green blue corridor in the west of the Appeal Scheme accords with the strategy set out on Figure 5.2 of the document A Greener Cherwell Local Plan (CDH19 and extract at Insert TG 14 above).
- 6.28. The Appeal Scheme is in accordance with the relevant bullet points of ESD15.





## Mid Cherwell Neighbourhood Plan (MCNP) (CDG4)

- 6.29. The only policy of the MCNP (CDG4) in contention is policy PD4 which relates to the protection of important vistas and views.
- 6.30. The first and second paragraphs of PD4 are relevant to this Proof with the third part referring to heritage matters specifically. For heritage matters, refer to the Proof of Evidence of Mr Copp (CDE15).
- 6.31. Paragraphs 1 and 2 of PD4 refers to a series of views and vistas as set out in table 4 of the MCNP and to the sensitive skylines identified in Figure 8.
- 6.32. Table 4 sets out a wide and diverse number of views, unhelpfully with no map to illustrate them, likely because some of the views specified are vague and could refer to large areas of countryside. Of the views specified in Table 4, only one is of relevance to the Appeal Site and that is the view east from the recent development edge shown on Figure 11 of the RAF Upper Heyford Conservation Area Appraisal (CDG5 page 27) which corresponds broadly with LVIA Viewpoint 6. The LVIA has demonstrated that this view is already characterised by development beyond the intervening open space and that the Appeal Scheme will result in negligible effects at Year 1 and Year 15. These effects will be further diminished once the Pye scheme has been completed.
- 6.33. The Appeal Scheme will not impact upon any of the sensitive skylines identified within the MCNP.
- 6.34. The Appeal Scheme is in accordance with the relevant parts of Policy PD4.

## National Planning Policy Framework

- 6.35. Chapter 15 of the Framework refers to 'conserving and enhancing the natural environment'. The first paragraph of the chapter, paragraph 174 states that "*planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment*" in a number of ways. The paragraph then sets out six points (a-f) of which a and b are relevant to this Proof, none of which preclude development.
- 6.36. Point a refers to valued landscapes. It is Common Ground (CDE7 paragraph 8.29) that the Appeal Site and the local area are not valued landscapes as related to paragraph 174 of the NPPF. The other relevant point is b which states that the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and natural capital, including trees and woodland should be recognised.
- 6.37. Point b refers to the recognition of the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. The Appeal Scheme has been shown to protect the majority of the landscape features within the Site, with new areas of tree, hedgerow and other planting to be established. It has been shown that the effect of the Appeal Scheme on views from the wider countryside will be limited and localised and that residual effects on landscape character will not be adverse.
- 6.38. The Appeal Scheme is in accordance with paragraph 174 of the NPPF.



## Section 7: Conclusion

- 7.1. Tyler Grange Landscape Planning, Ecology and Arboriculture were involved with the earliest stages of the development of masterplan proposals for the Appeal Site in 2020, providing contextual baseline analysis and recommendations for the future development of the masterplan.
- 7.2. The Appeal Scheme was recommended for approval with the Committee Report (CDC6) stating in paragraph 9.40 that *“the site is well-contained, and with appropriate landscaping would not have an adverse impact on the character and appearance of the landscape setting”* and, in paragraph 9.41 *“there is sufficient distance between the site and Ardley, a mile-and-a-half to the northeast”*. It then concluded in paragraph 9.45 that *“the proposal...would blend in with the character and appearance of the locality and would be seen in conjunction with the wider Heyford Park development”*.
- 7.3. The Appeal Site comprises two areas of unremarkable farmland and an area of relatively modern amenity land with ponds, which has been managed for amenity uses, but which is in private ownership. The Appeal Site is physically adjoined to the north and north-west by the former Upper Heyford RAF base, which is characterised in this area by concrete HASs, security fencing and artificial landforms. The north-west is bordered by the buildings associated with Letchmere Farm. To the west, separated by Heyford Grange, is an area of former airmen’s bungalows with modern development on Hampden Square beyond, both of which are glimpsed through the boundary vegetation from the east.
- 7.4. The current edge of Upper Heyford is more vegetated to the west, with mature vegetation situated around the former officers’ married quarters around Larsen Drive. This mature vegetation reduces the amount of built form visible to the immediate west of the Appeal Site, with development glimpsed above and between planting during summer months increasingly so during winter. The edge of the former RAF base to the north is more poorly vegetated and is characterised by security fencing and the HASs, the latter of which are acknowledged in multiple documents as having an adverse landscape and visual impact.
- 7.5. The GLVIA3 refers to the future baseline, stating that the baseline studies should *“establish[es] the existing nature of the landscape and visual environment in the study area, including any relevant changes likely to occur independently of the development proposals”* (CDJ1 Table 3.1 page 27).
- 7.6. The land to the immediate west of the Appeal Site is consented for residential development in the Pye scheme. This development will both bring settlement up to the western Site boundary but will also result in residential development extending beyond the current vegetated edge of Upper Heyford (see Insert TG 24). The context of the views from the east will change to include residential development as part of the backdrop to the Appeal Site. This will create a more developed character to the edge Heyford Park in this area.
- 7.7. Land to the north is subject to outline planning permission as set out in the hybrid application. Although the exact layout of this scheme is not yet known, the land use parameter (CDN5) demonstrates the Creative City to the immediate north of the Appeal Site, rising up to 18m above future ground levels. Indicative layouts for this area demonstrate buildings immediately adjacent to the Appeal Site boundary, which is currently poorly vegetated. The agreed land use parameter also shows an access road at a scale and design to accommodate HGVs, situated immediately to the east of Chilgrove Drive. This road will bring a comparatively major piece of infrastructure to the east of the Appeal Site, further reducing any rural character to this area.
- 7.8. An LVIA (CDA15) was produced in 2021, the scope of which was agreed with the Council’s Landscape Officer who referred to the document as *“comprehensive and proportionate”* and stated that he was in general agreement with its findings.



- 7.9. The LVIA assessed effects on both the character of the Site and the surrounding landscape character (as illustrated by the agreed published landscape character areas) as being of minor adverse significance at Year 1 and minor beneficial at Year 15. I have assessed the residual effects at Year 15 as being closer to neutral than beneficial, particularly in relation to effects on the character of the Appeal Site. These effects arise from an acknowledgement of the historic context of the Appeal Site and local landscape, their slightly degraded landscape infrastructure and historic context, balanced against the Appeal Scheme not being out of context with the surrounding land uses and built form.
- 7.10. The LVIA identified the localised and limited visual envelope of the Appeal Scheme, limited to stretches of bridleways to the south and east, Camp Road and Chilgrove Drive, and an isolated view from the edge of the Conservation Area to the south-west. The LVIA assessed residual effects on users of the bridleways to the south and east of the Appeal Site, and along Camp Road, as being of minor adverse significance, with those on residential receptors within the Conservation Area to the south-west as negligible.
- 7.11. Once the consented schemes to the west and north are completed, the context of the Appeal Site will change significantly. The Pye scheme to the west will cause the built edge to extend beyond the mature vegetation east of Larsen Road, becoming more visible in the surrounding landscape, including the Site and Chilgrove Drive. The Appeal Scheme will be seen set against this in views and will have a much lesser effect on views as a result. The Creative Hub to the north will establish tall commercial scale buildings in the view to the north of the Site, which will be visible in views from the bridleway to the south and east. The Appeal Scheme will be seen in front of these, softened by vegetation along Camp Road, and will have a much reduced effect on views from this location as a result. The Pye scheme and Creative City to the north will also change the character of Camp Road, with Pye scheme resulting in the removal of the hedgerow along the northern side of Camp Road, to be reestablished behind a large set back with new footway and bus stop. This will change the character of this stretch of Camp Road, increasing the suburban character of this area. The proposed HGV route to the east of the Appeal Site will appear in views from both Camp Road, where it will form a large junction with associated lighting columns, and from the bridleways to the east, where it will create an urbanising influence in front of the Appeal Site.
- 7.12. The Appeal Site is already situated immediately adjacent to the existing built form of the former airbase in the north, and residential development to the north-west. As such it has an existing physical relationship with Heyford Park. It also has a perceptual relationship with Heyford Park, appearing in sequential views with other development within the settlement and visually connected to surrounding buildings, albeit filtered by vegetation to the west. Once the Pye scheme has been completed, the visual relationship with the built edge of Heyford Park will be firmly established, and the physical connection complete on three sides.
- 7.13. The Appeal Site does appear in views towards the Conservation Area, but these are limited in extent and are views already characterised by modern built form. The Appeal Site appears in a single identified view from the Conservation Area, where it is set behind the vegetation on Camp Road, in a view already characterised by modern development and static homes. The Appeal Scheme will not change the character of identified views.
- 7.14. The 2014 Sensitivity and Capacity Study included the Appeal Site as part of the wider site 146, including the Pye sites to the west, stating that *“the site has the potential for residential development up to the existing site boundaries defined by Camp Road to the south and Chilgrove Drive to the east and Larsen Road to the west as long as the existing site boundary vegetation is maintained”*.
- 7.15. The 2022 Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment assessed the Appeal Site as part of the wider LS HEY2, which included land to the south, stating that it was influenced by the existing settlement edge of Heyford Park to the west and by the RAF base to the north. It went on to state that LS HEY2 was of low-





moderate sensitivity to residential development and that *“land north of Camp Road is less sensitivity to [sic] due to the proximity to existing built development”*.

- 7.16. The 2018 HELAA assessed the eastern field of the Appeal Site in isolation, and the entire Appeal Site as part of a wider area including the Pye sites. In both instances, the sites were assessed as being suitable, available and achievable for residential development (CDG8 Appendix 4 pages 77 and 78). The HELAA concluded that the sites *“could potential be suitable as it could provide a logical extension to the residential dwellings to the west”* and that development could be accommodated in this area in a way that was *“contained without opening up a wider area of countryside”*.
- 7.17. The Appeal Scheme will not have unacceptable effects on the local landscape or views, including views to and from the Conservation Area. The existing green infrastructure is to be retained as part of the scheme, with new areas of open space and native planting to be established throughout the development. None of the views identified in the Neighbourhood Plan (CDG4 page 34 table 4) will be adversely affected by the Appeal Scheme. The Appeal Scheme is in accordance with the identified policies in the Development Plan for the area.
- 7.18. The Appeal Scheme will form a logical extension to Heyford Park, extending north further east than the Creative Hub to the north or the proposed HGV route to the east, and no further south than development within Heyford Park south of Camp Road. It has been identified as a suitable location for residential development in evidence base documents dating back to at least 2014, and this is reflected in the Appeal Site forming part of draft allocation LR42a in the emerging Local Plan 2040. As set out in the Officer Report and as reflected by the Case Officer’s recommendation for approval, *“development of the land would relate well to surrounding development and represent a natural rounding off”* and should be allowed.





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