



**Land South of Green Lane, Chesterton**

Urban Design and Townscape Matters

EVIDENCE OF RICHARD BURTON

AOU BA(HONS) DIPLA CMLI

FINAL

Wates Developments Ltd

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PLANNING APPLICATION

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

- 1.1.1 My name is Richard Weston Burton. I am a practicing urban designer and landscape architect. I am a chartered landscape architect and have been a Member of the Landscape Institute since 1994. In 2013 I was elected an Academician of the Academy of Urbanism. I currently sit on the placemaking steering group for Future Homes Hub, which was established in 2020 to facilitate the collaboration needed within and beyond the new homes sector to help meet the climate and environmental challenges ahead ([www.futurehomes.org.uk](http://www.futurehomes.org.uk)).
- 1.1.2 I have over 30 years of professional experience working for a number of private practices, principally on projects within the United Kingdom. Since 2012, I have been a Director of tor&co, which has offices in Bournemouth, Birmingham and London. The practice is an integrated planning, design and environmental consultancy. I jointly manage the design disciplines, specifically responsible for the masterplanning, urban design and landscape architecture departments.
- 1.1.3 I have prepared and presented evidence at local plan and public inquiries.
- 1.1.4 My project experience spans over 30 years, during which time I have been the lead designer for numerous high-profile regeneration and master planning projects. These range from large-scale strategic sites, including Northstowe new town and Tadpole Garden Village, to smaller-scale urban extensions and regeneration projects such as The Point at Bristol Harbourside, Barton Park at Oxford and Trumpington Meadows in Cambridge. Many of the projects where I have led the design approach are award winning, including all of the above examples. They have featured in publications associated with positive placemaking, or achieved designations such as Healthy New Towns status.
- 1.1.5 I have extensive experience of preparing design guidance documents, including Supplementary Planning Guidance on behalf of local authorities, or design guides and codes for developers. This includes providing advice on the approach to successful design coding, ensuring planning applications are responsive to their context, deliver high quality designs and help establish integrated, sustainable and successful new communities.
- 1.1.6 For Wates Developments Ltd I have provided urban design advice on mixed-use housing projects, including this Appeal scheme at Land at Green Lane, Chesterton. tor&co also provides masterplanning services for Wates Developments on similar scale housing-led projects.
- 1.1.7 In my capacity at this Appeal, I am acting as a professional urban design witness. I confirm that this evidence is representative of my own views and has been prepared in accordance with my professional qualifications,

experience and obligations. Before being formally appointed I reviewed the proposals in detail and visited the site.

## **1.2 SYNOPSIS OF INVOLVEMENT**

- 1.2.1 I was first instructed by Wates Developments Ltd in August 2023 to review the current planning application (ref: 23/00173/OUT). After my initial review I was subsequently appointed to provide independent urban design evidence at this Appeal. Specifically, I have been instructed to provide independent expert opinion on whether the proposals represent good quality design and are consistent with national and local planning policy and guidance, including the urban design criteria cited in Cherwell District Council's (CDC) Reasons for Refusal (RfR).
- 1.2.2 I was not involved with the design of the Appeal scheme, being appointed after the planning application was submitted.
- 1.2.3 I have visited the Appeal Site on a number of occasions, initially on 20 August 2023, followed by a subsequent visit on 29 November 2023. As such, I have experienced the Appeal Site and the surrounding area in summer and winter conditions.
- 1.2.4 I am familiar with the wider area, having been the principal masterplanner working on the Kingsmere development at south west Bicester since 2006. My involvement with that project, which comprises a 2,300 new homes urban extension and associated infrastructure, is ongoing. I visited Chesterton on a number of occasions as part of that project scope.
- 1.2.5 While at the Appeal Site I undertook a thorough townscape appraisal of Chesterton village, which, in combination with a desktop review and supporting analysis, has formed the basis of my evidence.
- 1.2.6 I inspected all of the site's boundaries and the public rights of way in the immediate vicinity.
- 1.2.7 I walked the entire length of the village from Kirtlington Road / Bignell View to Green Lane, and beyond. While doing so, I visited the majority of the housing areas to obtain an appreciation of the village's distinct morphology, pattern of growth, its essential characteristics and relationship to the adjoining countryside. I reviewed the Appeal Site's relationship with the immediate village context, including the more recent housing development to the east. I also walked between the Appeal Site and Little Chesterton to the south. I specifically considered how the village of Chesterton is perceived when approaching from the local lanes to the south and west. A comprehensive photographic survey was undertaken.
- 1.2.8 From publicly accessible areas, I also reviewed the land within the draft employment and housing allocation, proposed within CDC's 2040 Local Plan Review (ref: LPR37A).

1.2.9 In light of my independent urban design assessment, I am able to endorse the Appeal Scheme and provide expert evidence at this Appeal.

### **1.3 PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF EVIDENCE**

1.3.1 Figures 1.1 and 1.2 show the Appeal Site in the context of the wider area and the village of Chesterton.

1.3.2 My evidence specifically relates to urban design matters and the suitability, or otherwise, of the proposed development in the context of the Appeal Site and the villages of Chesterton and Little Chesterton. It addresses the alleged design impacts as set out in the Council's RfR and SoC.

1.3.3 There are three RfR in the decision notice dated 25 January 2023. RfR 1 and 2 pertain to urban design matters and state:

- *The proposals would result in a disproportionate development when considered against the scale of the existing village and the cumulative impact of growth already carried out in village within the plan period and available facilities within the village and would be predominantly reliant on the private car to carry out day-to-day activity and the application site is not well located to existing services and facilities. The proposals would cause significant adverse landscape and impacts to the settlement character which could not be avoided or mitigated by the proposed development. Further the delivery of infrastructure necessary to make the development acceptable would not be capable of being accommodated within the village and instead would need to be provided elsewhere which would be predominantly reliant by private car and would be contrary to the aims of sustainable growth of housing across the District set out in the Local Plan and sustainable travel initiatives to use sustainable modes of transport. The proposals would be harmful development to the village of Chesterton and the wider aims of Policies Villages 1 and Villages 2 and result in unsustainable growth that would not be capable of mitigation. The proposals would therefore be contrary to Policies PSD1, BSC1, ESD1, ESD13, ESD15, Villages 1 and Villages 2 of the Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 Part 1; saved Policies C28 and C30 of the Cherwell Local Plan 1996 and the aims and objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework.*
- *The proposals, by reason of the scale and impact on the overall landscape and settlement character would cause harm to the approaches along Green Lane and the unnamed lane to Little Chesterton, and to the overall character of the settlement of Chesterton and its relationship to the surrounding countryside resulting in significant extension and harm to open countryside in particular to the south and west of the existing village. This combined with developments of the Bicester Sports Association in particular would result in a potential negative impact on the individual identity of Chesterton and Little Chesterton. The proposals would therefore be contrary to Policies PSD1, ESD1, ESD13, ESD15, Villages 1 and Villages 2 of the Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 Part 1; saved Policies*

*C28 and C30 of the Cherwell Local Plan 1996 and the aims and objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework.*

- 1.3.4 RfR 1 covers a number of topics, including alleged impacts to the landscape, cumulative impacts in terms of planned growth and the principles of sustainable travel. My evidence does not directly address these aspects of the Decision Notice. It does, however, consider in full the issue of disproportionate growth compared to the scale of the existing village and the alleged impact to settlement character.
- 1.3.5 RfR 2 raises issues relevant to both urban design and landscape matters. To provide a comprehensive and thorough response, my evidence has been prepared in conjunction with the appellant's landscape witness, Mr Jeremy Smith. I focus specifically on settlement pattern and the overall character of Chesterton. I also address the approaches to the village in terms of Chesterton's defining character, whereas Mr Smith focuses on landscape character and visual amenity. In reaching my conclusions, I have taken account of the findings of the Landscape and Visual Assessment and Mr Smith's evidence.
- 1.3.6 In chapter 2, I provide an overview of the planning policy context relevant to urban design and townscape matters, focusing on those aspects germane to my evidence. Throughout my evidence I refer to the plans and documents that were submitted as part of the application and this Appeal, and where necessary I have included relevant extracts within my evidence. As noted below, I also consider the CDC Draft Local Plan 2040 (Reg 18), which includes the Appeal Site within the wider housing allocation (LPR37A).
- 1.3.7 I describe the baseline conditions in chapter 3, focusing first on the Appeal Site before considering the wider village context. In the absence of a comprehensive and up to date urban analysis of Chesterton, and in order to assess the validity of the Council's alleged harm to townscape, it has been necessary to first undertake a thorough analysis of the village's morphology, pattern of growth and distinctive characteristics, which I provide in this chapter. I reference here relevant background documents including the Conservation Area Appraisal, Cherwell Residential Design Guide SPD, July 2018 and the March 2016 'Category A' Village Analysis by WYG (Cherwell District Council Local Plan, Part 2).
- 1.3.8 In chapter 4, I describe the Appeal Scheme and the design principles that have shaped the proposals. I refer principally to the submitted Design and Access Statement, November 2022 (DAS) CD1.2, along with the supporting Landscape Strategy by Allen Pyke, August 2022 (CD1.9). This section includes a description of the housing layout, the form and scale of buildings, their appearance, materials and detailing, and associated landscape proposals. The application is in outline (save for access) for up to 147 new homes and the masterplan is illustrative. There are no parameter plans.



- 1.3.9 In chapter 5, I undertake a townscape analysis of the proposals. In addition to considering the areas of contention, as set out with the Council's SoC and RfR, I also review the Appeal Scheme design against the ten characteristics of a well-designed place, as defined within the National Design Guide and CDC's Design guidance. This analytical approach allows objective conclusions to be reached as to whether the proposals will enhance or detract from the existing village, which is at the centre of the Council's allegations regarding urban design matters.
- 1.3.10 In chapter 6, I conclude by considering how the proposals comply with national and local planning policy and assess the validity of the design issues raised by the Council.
- 1.3.11 It is important to note that since the Council refused the planning application in January 2023, the local authority have subsequently included the Appeal Site in its totality as part of larger housing allocation within the Regulation 18 Local Plan Review 2040. As part of determining that the Appeal Site is suitable for a draft housing allocation, the Council commissioned a number of independent studies to appraise the Appeal Site and adjoining land as part of a district-wide review. In reaching my own conclusion regarding the suitability of the proposals, I have reviewed the evidence base prepared on behalf of the Council in support of the draft housing allocation.
- 1.3.12 My evidence will demonstrate that the Council's allegations of harm, as set out in RfR 1 and 2, do not hold up to detailed scrutiny, and, in large part, directly contradict the evidence prepared on behalf of the Council as part of determining the suitability of including the Appeal Site within draft housing allocation LPR37A.
- 1.3.13 My evidence will show that the proposals fully meet the policy requirements and design guidelines of chapter 12 of the NPPF, the National Design Guide (CD5.5), CDC's Adopted Residential Design Guide SDP (CD3.4) and the relevant Local Plan policies noted within the RfR.

## **2 POLICY CONTEXT**

### **2.1 PLANNING HISTORY**

- 2.1.1 As set out with the SoCG, the Appeal Site has not been subject to an earlier planning application. Planning application ref: 23/00173/OUT was submitted in November 2022, with the Appeal lodged in October 2023 (ref: APP/C3105/W/23/3331122).

### **2.2 POLICY CONTEXT**

#### **National policy**

- 2.2.1 Since the application was submitted and the Decision Notice issued, the NPPF has been updated on 5 September 2023 and again on 19 December 2023. Chapter 12 of the NPPF, 'Achieving well-designed and beautiful places' is the most relevant section to my evidence and sets out the fundamentals of good design. The title now includes a reference to the word *beautiful*. Paragraph 130 has been renumbered as para.135, but is otherwise unchanged. Bullets a) - f) set out important principles of good design including optimising the potential of the site, functionality, appearance and creating a sense of place. Bullet c) emphasises the importance of design being sympathetic to the local context, which is central to my evidence and to the Council's alleged harm to settlement form and character.
- 2.2.2 Paragraphs 131 (now 136) and 134 (now 139) have not changed and are also relevant to this Appeal and the design issues raised by the Council. Additionally, I make reference to paragraphs 92 (now 96), 93 (now 97) and 124 (now 128) of the NPPF when considering establishing healthy and safe communities, serving community needs and making efficient use of land. As with paragraph 135, the content remains unchanged except for the inclusion of the word *beautiful* when referring to houses and places. Hereafter, I referred to the new NPPF paragraph numbering, rather than that used in the Decision Notice and RfR.
- 2.2.3 The design-focused policies with the NPPF are amplified and illustrated within the National Design Guide, January 2021 and National Model Design Guide, July 2021(CD5.23). My evidence refers to this supplementary planning policy guidance as part of demonstrating compliance with policy objectives. The National Design Guide already refers to the need to create *beautiful* places and I have interpreted the meaning of this requirement as expressed within this guidance document.

#### **Local policy**

##### *Adopted Local Plan*

- 2.2.4 CDC adopted Local Plan was formally adopted by the Council on 20 July 2015. Policy Bicester 13 was re-adopted on 19 December 2016.

2.2.5 Policy BSC 2 emphasises the importance of making effective and efficient use of land. It states, *“New housing should be provided on net developable areas at a density of at least 30 dwellings per hectare unless there are justifiable planning reasons for lower density development.”*

2.2.6 RfR 1 and 2 list the local plan policies that it is alleged the proposals would be contrary to, which I summarise below.

2.2.7 Policy PSD 1 expresses the Council’s presumption in favour of sustainable development. Policies Villages 1, Villages 2 and BSC1 relate to the principles of planned growth across the district. My evidence does not address these planning policies directly, other than with respect to the specific requirement of Village 2, which states that particular regard, when identifying sites, will be given to a number of criteria, including:

*“Whether development would contribute in enhancing the built environment”* (third bullet).

2.2.8 Policies ESD1 (Mitigating Climate Change) and ESD13 (Landscape Protection and Enhancement), are addressed in Mr Bevis’ and Mr Smith’s evidence, respectively.

2.2.9 Policy ESD15 relates to the *character of the built and historic environment* and is central to my evidence. With respect to the historic environment, within the Officer’s Report there is an important acknowledgement, namely:

*“It is important to note that the modern development that exists along Green Lane means that there is separation between the majority of the development site and the conservation area. Furthermore, the approach to the conservation area along Green Lane is not synonymous with the approach to the village. The village is approached through a rural landscape whereas because it is to the eastern side of the village the conservation area is approached through more modern development along Green Lane. Therefore, the direct setting and approach to the conservation area from this direction is not considered to be harmfully altered by proposed development on this site”* (para. 9.102)

2.2.10 In goes on to state in para. 9.106 that *“In heritage terms the proposal in its outline form and from the indicative plans is not considered to result in unacceptable harm to the heritage assets”*.

2.2.11 As such, it can be seen that the reference to ESD15 within the RfR relates specifically to the urban design guidance expressed within policy. I address all of these urban design matters as part of my evidence. ESD15 states, *“New development will be expected to complement and enhance the character of its context through sensitive siting, layout and high quality design.”* This specific requirement is particularly relevant when considering the Appeal Scheme. Policy ESD15 is quoted in full within appendix A.

2.2.12 Saved Policies C28 and C30 relate to the design of residential development and are provided in full within appendix B. As with Policy ESD15, the focus of the policies relates to ensuring development proposals are sympathetic to their context. Policy C30 part (i) requires:

*THAT NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENT IS COMPATIBLE WITH THE APPEARANCE, CHARACTER, LAYOUT, SCALE AND DENSITY OF EXISTING DWELLINGS IN THE VICINITY;*

2.2.13 Saved Policies C28 and C30 are over 25 years old and should be considered alongside the National Design Guide (CD5.3 and National Model Design Code (CD5.23), which represent up to date design guidance, reflecting current best practice.

2.2.14 Cherwell Residential Design Guide SPD, adopted July 2018, emphasises the importance of good design and seeks to promote high quality developments. The guide provides further explanation in relation to Policy ESD15. I reference relevant aspects of the design guidance throughout my evidence.

*Cherwell Local Plan Review 2040 Consultation Draft (Regulation 18), Sept 2023*

2.2.15 As part of preparing a new local plan, CDC prepared a (Regulation 18) Consultation Draft plan (CD3.3), which sets out emerging policies.

2.2.16 The draft plan emphasises the importance of ‘*well-designed places*’ as expressed within the National Design Guide. Core Policy 46 states “*All new development will be expected to complement and enhance its surroundings through sensitive siting, layout and high-quality design*”, and stipulates specific design criteria that developments should comply with (bullets i.- xvii.)

2.2.17 The plan proposes a draft employment and housing allocation at South of Chesterton and North West of A41 (ref: LPR37A). The allocation is shown on figure 2.1 of my evidence and relates to the opportunity to develop a new well designed, sustainable neighbourhood of approximately 500 dwellings south of Chesterton.

2.2.18 Figure 2.2 of my evidence shows that the Appeal Site lies wholly within the northern portion of the proposed draft housing allocation. This housing allocation extends some 780m further south, abutting the A41, and is proposed in conjunction with a major new employment area north and south of the Siemens development.

2.2.19 On page 253 of the draft Local Plan, a diagram is provided that sets out indicative strategic green and blue infrastructure that should be taken account of as part of developing a scheme layout. This plan is based on the findings of CDC’s A Greener Cherwell Local Plan, June 2023, prepared in support of the local plan by LUC.

2.2.20 In chapter 5 of my evidence, I review how the proposals align with the emerging policies and this draft housing allocation being promoted by CDC. I also show that the Appeal Scheme will not fetter future comprehensive development and can form a logical first phase of this draft allocation, should the draft allocation be formally adopted by the Council.

### **Consented development**

2.2.21 When considering the local context and the principle of growth at south Chesterton, it is important to acknowledge that that the local rural area is changing, with planned development in the immediate locality.

2.2.22 The approved Siemens development to the south west comprises full planning for the erection of a new high quality combined research, development and production facility comprising of Class B2 floorspace and ancillary office floorspace with associated infrastructure.

2.2.23 The Great Wolf application, allowed at appeal, is for the redevelopment of part of Bicester golf course to provide new leisure resort (sui generis) incorporating waterpark, family entertainment centre, hotel, conferencing facilities and restaurants with associated access, parking and landscaping. As detailed later in Chapter 3, off-site works associated with this development, including improvements to Green Lane immediately north of the Appeal Site, have already been implemented resulting in enhanced footpath /cycle links in the immediate vicinity.

2.2.24 The permitted BSA application comprises a change of use of agricultural land and extension of the existing Bicester Sports Association facilities for enhanced sports facilities.

2.2.25 The above three consented developments are shown on figure 2.3.

### **3 APPEAL SITE AND VILLAGE CONTEXT**

#### **3.1 THE APPEAL SITE AND ITS IMMEDIATE CONTEXT**

- 3.1.1 The Appeal Site is approximately 14.88 ha. A description of the Appeal Site is provided within the DAS (CD1.2) and SoCG; here I provide a brief overview of the key aspects relevant to my evidence.
- 3.1.2 The Appeal Site is contiguous with the existing settlement edge, bordering Green Lane, the recent housing development at Vespasian Way and Chesterton Cricket Club along its northern boundary. The western boundary abuts the unnamed lane leading to Little Chesterton, while the Appeal Site's southern and eastern edge is well defined by the mature boundary vegetation. A public right of way (PRoW 161-4-10) runs along the south-eastern most part of the Appeal Site.
- 3.1.3 The Appeal Site is generally level, dropping gently to the south from approximately 74.5m AOD along its boundary with Green Lane to approximately 71m AOD along its southern boundaries.
- 3.1.4 The western part of the Appeal Site comprises a largely featureless and open field, with a smaller eastern field separated by a ditch with a gappy hedge. Both fields are currently in arable cultivation.
- 3.1.5 The boundary hedges, trees and tree belts provide a degree of enclosure, filtering views from adjoining areas.
- 3.1.6 Along the northern boundary to Green Lane the tree belts are relatively well established either side of the road, providing a sense of enclosure along the lane. The western boundary is only partly enclosed by a mature tree belt and views across the Appeal Site to the exposed edge of the Vespasian Way development are available from the unnamed lane. Figure 5 within the submitted LVIA provides a useful summary of the Appeal Site boundaries.
- 3.1.7 Figures 3.1 and 3.2 of my evidence illustrate the planning and environmental designations. The Appeal Site is free of any designations. Chesterton conservation area lies to the east of the site and contains a number of listed buildings immediately to the east of the site. There are no listed buildings in Little Chesterton. With the exception of Chesterton conservation area, it is evident that the surrounding land is largely free of environmental or planning designations.
- 3.1.8 Figure 3.1 shows ancient woodland, a scheduled monument and flood zones 2 and 3 are located to the south and east, but these designations are some distance from the Appeal Site and in no way constraint it.
- 3.1.9 A review of the key village elements was undertaken as part of WYG March 2016 'Category A' Village Analysis of Chesterton (CD3.10). I have included in appendix F Plan 8-1C from WYG's analysis which illustrates

these features. I note that the analysis by WYG does not highlight any constraints within the Appeal Site. Nor does it highlight sensitive edges or views in the Appeal Site's immediate vicinity.

3.1.10 Based on my site visit I make the following observations in terms of how the Appeal Site interacts with Chesterton:

- Chesterton has grown principally to the west and the Appeal Site has a direct relationship with the most recent 21<sup>st</sup> Century housing, rather than the historic core.
- The pattern of growth has been to the west of the historic village core and in this respect the Appeal Site is well located.
- While the village edge is visible from the Appeal Site, the historic core feels removed, being separated by more recent housing developments.
- The recent Vespasian Way housing estate is the most visible part of the existing settlement edge in views from the Appeal Site and across it from the south. The settlement edge is abrupt in these views, and the appeal masterplan has rightly acknowledged this as a clear opportunity to improve upon.
- The threshold into the village from the south west is defined by the existing 'Welcome to Chesterton' sign along Green Lane. The Appeal Site's northern boundary is visible from this location, but views are filtered by boundary vegetation which is a feature of the approaches to the village
- Bicester golf course to the west, in combination with recent highway improvements and noise associated with the motorway, all contribute to a semi-rural character immediately adjacent to the Appeal Site and the current settlement edge.

### **3.2 GROWTH OF THE VILLAGE AND SETTLEMENT PATTERN**

3.2.1 The village appears to have its origins in Saxon times, with initial growth focused around St Mary's Church and Manor Farm before spreading northwards in a linear form along Alchester Road. The village lies on the line of the Roman road, Akeman Street, and the Oxford to Brackley Road. This is illustrated by a historic map of 1900 to 1906 (page 8, figure 8 of Chesterton Conservation Area Appraisal, Jan 2008) which shows the village focused around the church, Manor Farm and Chesterton Lodge, along with single-sided linear growth along Alchester Road which includes substantial farmhouses and other notable dwellings such as the vicarage and school building.

3.2.2 The historic core of the village retains a strong sense of place, despite the more recent houses on the western side of Alchester Road which are not included within the conservation area. Photographs 1-3 on figure 3.3a illustrate this well, with the common use of limestone for buildings, linking walls and consistency of building scale all contributing to a harmonious

street scene. Trees, hedging and grass verges/ incidental open space also contribute to the strong sense of place.

- 3.2.3 Despite more recent growth to the west, the historic core has remained legible (being mostly inward looking) and my observation from site is that this part of village is perceived as the inner linear core of the village.
- 3.2.4 The expansion of the village to the west has, however, changed the composition of the village and its character. Paragraph 7.8 of the conservation appraisal states, "*The mid 20th Century saw much infill and residential estate development, particularly to the west of Alchester Road. These developments are not considered to be of any architectural interest.*" I agree with this broad description, but that is not to say there are no attractive streets or spaces beyond the conservation area, with The Woodlands estate development (notated on figure 3.14) and some of the linking footpaths being examples of this.
- 3.2.5 The settlement form has changed over time. Figures 3.4 to 3.8 show historic mapping between 1888 and the present day. The pattern of growth is then illustrated on figures 3.9 and 3.10, which clearly show that more recent growth has been focused to the west of the village including along Green Lane.
- 3.2.6 It is evident that between 1888 and up to around the 1950's, the historic village core remained largely unchanged. Beyond this period however, new houses begin to be built along the principal roads. By the mid 1960's, a single line of housing has extended along the majority of the western side of Alchester Road and along the southern edge of Green Lane.
- 3.2.7 By the early 2000's, infill growth to the west of Alchester Road has enlarged the village considerably. The new housing is a mixture of styles, for the most part being lower density 1 and 2 storey detached units. Unlike the conservation area, building materials comprise a mixture of brick (yellow and red), limestone cladding, render and some limited timber weatherboarding. Streets are generally wide, over engineered and characteristic of the period they were designed. These housing estates can be characterised as semi-suburban in character, with little to link them to the village core in terms of their urban form. This is illustrated on figure 3.3b, which includes a collection of photographs from this area; the absence of unifying characteristics is evident, especially when compared with the preceding photographs of the village core.
- 3.2.8 Since the early 2000's the village has continued to expand west, with two principal new housing estates representing the main locations of new growth. These are shown in red on figure 3.10. Vespasian Way comprises a 44-unit housing development to the south of Green Lane. The development sits behind the single-sided 1960's housing along Green Lane, which limits the extent to which the new housing is visible from Green Lane. The second housing estate, Penrose Gardens (now known as the Paddocks), comprises 45 houses and associated open space. Unlike all of the other housing neighbourhoods within the village, this



development is not accessed directly off the principal streets through the village, but instead connects with The Hale, a lane to the west. For this reason, this housing estate has the perception of being somewhat removed from the village proper. There is a pedestrian path from this estate to the allotments and the village beyond, but having walked it, it is a little convoluted. The construction of Penrose Gardens has further reconfigured the settlement form.

3.2.9 Little Chesterton has remained largely unchanged throughout, although there has been some employment development at Grange Farm on the western side of the settlement.

3.2.10 All of the recently consented non-housing developments noted in chapter 2 of my evidence are located to the west and south of the village, as is the proposed draft employment and housing allocation in CDC's Reg 18 Local Plan – refer to figure 3.11. It is important to note that the northern and eastern settlement edge of Chesterton has remained remarkably intact, except for some limited infill housing which has not materially compromised the character of the historic core. In this respect, development at the Appeal Site is wholly consistent with the pattern of growth, which is clearly illustrated on figure 3.9 of my evidence.

3.2.11 The 2008 conservation area appraisal subdivides the historic core into three distinct zones – the Main Village, Chesterton Lodge and Northern Village. For the Main Village area the street pattern is summarised as:

*“This area is characterised by its minimal street pattern. Chesterton is a linear village, built predominantly on the east side of Alchester Road and centred on the historic core formed by the Church, Manor and The Old Vicarage. Two lanes project from Alchester Road; Tubbs Lane and Manor Farm Lane. Plot width and depth varies greatly in this area. There are few if any areas where plot sizes remain constant through more than a handful of properties.”*

3.2.12 Despite the more recent growth extending the village westwards, my observation from site is that the village is still perceived as a linear settlement, focused along the principal routes. I note that the March 2016 WYG Village Analysis refers to Chesterton as a *linear settlement* (para.3.8.10 in appendix F). The DAS also acknowledges this, stating on page 16, *“The village is characterised by its linearity within the main historic village”*. This perceived linearity does not however translate when defining its physical morphology, as illustrated by figure 3.12. The current settlement form is not easily classified using recognised urban design terms such as nucleated, linear (ribbon) or dispersed. I would describe the village form as a ribbon of development along the principal routes (Alchester Road and Green Lane), but over time evolving to have a somewhat amorphous and irregular settlement edge of varying depths. The last point regarding the irregular depths is noted in the above extract from the conservation area appraisal. When considering the suitability of the Appeal Scheme the overarching physical morphology is clearly relevant, as is how it is perceived.

- 3.2.13 An important aspect of the village's morphology is the degree to which development is set back from the principal street, i.e the depth of settlement either side of the central linear corridor. On the eastern edge of Alchester Road, the development depth is very irregular (varying from 39m to 194m), but the perception is of housing principally fronting onto the road, with occasional side lanes with lower density larger houses set in extensive ground.
- 3.2.14 West of Alchester Road, the perception of depth is greater, with set-backs varying from 138m to 357m, as illustrated on figure 3.12. The Vespasian Way estate is set back 177m from Green Lane at its widest point. The Penrose Gardens development widens the perceived depth of the village further still.

### **3.3 URBAN FORM AND MOVEMENT**

- 3.3.1 The character and identity of Chesterton is defined by a range of townscape components, including the urban grain, building heights, densities, landscape, streets and the movement network.
- 3.3.2 The 2011 census records the population of Chesterton as 850. This has since increased to 1,179 people based on the 2021 census.

#### **Urban grain, building heights and density**

- 3.3.3 Buildings heights are shown on figure 3.13. Heights are shown in metres. Generally, the 0-6m zone represents single storey buildings, 6-9m two storey buildings and 9m-12m three storey buildings (or two storey buildings with steeper roof profiles). The data is based on GIS mapping and while accurate, does not convey variations such as half storeys or the type of roof detail (i.e. flat or pitched), which can alter considerably how building heights are perceived. Nevertheless, it does provide a good guide to the pattern of building heights across the village as a whole.
- 3.3.4 While two storey housing predominates, there are also pockets of single storey bungalows or single storey outbuildings throughout the village. Three storey buildings are limited and, where present, are concentrated in the historic core. Chesterton Lodge is the tallest building along with St Mary's Church.
- 3.3.5 The Main Village character area (as defined in the conservation area appraisal) is sparse in its building density and informal, which creates a distinct sense of space. The buildings are well proportioned within what are generally large plots, often with large front gardens. Within this area, a varied roof profile is a feature of the streetscene, with a mixture of steeply pitched slate and thatch properties and single storey outbuildings (now converted). Within the older part of the village short terraces are evident and properties are often linked by 1.8m high stone walls. There is also a significant amount of infilling, with 20th century housing evident along a section of Alchester Road.

- 3.3.6 While the historic core has a distinct character, the village as a whole is strongly influenced by a variety of later housing developments reflecting the time they were built, which include a mixture of housing layouts and styles. This has resulted in an overall loose-knit and ill-defined urban grain, with no prevailing urban form, other than the distinctive conservation area.
- 3.3.7 More recent developments tend to appear more suburban and comprise two storey detached and semi-detached housing. Housing densities, while still on the lower side, are more uniform and the roofscape is more regular, as evident at the Vespasian Way estate and Penrose Gardens.
- 3.3.8 I have not undertaken a detailed analysis of building densities throughout the village, but I note with reference to figure 3.12 that the recent developments at the Vespasian Way estate and Penrose Gardens do not appear out of kilter in terms of the urban grain when compared with the wider village (especially the post 1950's housing that has occurred to the west beyond the historic core). The Penrose Gardens development is based on a perimeter block configuration.

#### *Streetscape and movement*

- 3.3.9 The street pattern is illustrated on figure 3.14. The main A-road (A4095) lies to the north and passes through the northernmost extent of the village. Alcester Road and Green Lane represent the other principal streets. All other roads within the settlement boundary are very much lower order streets or lanes, although Orchard Rise and Fortescue Drive do provide secondary north-south routes through the housing estates to the west. The prominence of the lower order streets is a positive feature of the village, as is the legibility of the principal streets.
- 3.3.10 The principal streets are characterised by variation in building setbacks, boundary walls in local stone and extensive hedging, trees and grass verges. Vistas along perpendicular side lanes are a distinct feature along Alcester Road – refer to photographs 4 and 5 on figure 3.3a. As noted in chapter 4, these distinctive 'lanes' that can be described as a 'shared space rural mews typology' have directly informed the design response.
- 3.3.11 While there are numerous cul-de-sacs, having walked through the housing areas most are connected by pedestrian links; this is positive feature of the village making walking to local facilities relatively easy. To the south, the village is accessed via a number of local lanes. As noted earlier, these lanes are currently being upgraded to provide dedicated footways and cycle route.
- 3.3.12 Along Alcester Road, intersections of routes at either end are defined by small pockets of green space – see photo 9, figure 3.3a.
- 3.3.13 Public rights of way are shown on figures 3.1 and 3.2. In combination with the local lanes, they provide a reasonably comprehensive network of routes through the local landscape. Footpaths 161-4-10 and 161-3-10

converge at the south eastern corner of the Appeal Site, linking Little Chesterton and Wendlebury to the south with Chesterton.

### **3.4 LOCAL FACILITIES**

- 3.4.1 Chesterton is identified as a 'Category A' Service Village in the current Local Plan. Therefore, it benefits from a range of existing services, including a primary school, a community centre, village hall, a public house and sports facilities. Local facilities are shown on figure 3.16 and it is evident that from the centre of the Appeal site all of these are within 800m, which equates to a 10-minute walk. Most are closer than this.
- 3.4.2 Bicester is readily accessible, via a 10-minute bike ride along a dedicated cycle route. Chesterton also lies in the vicinity of Bicester Park & Ride, from which regular bus services to Bicester and Oxford operate. The village is therefore accessible to further services and employment opportunities available at these larger settlements. Accessibility to services and facilities beyond the village is addressed separately within Mr Bevis' evidence, who is the appellant's witness on sustainability.
- 3.4.3 In chapter 4, I discuss the new facilities proposed as part of Appeal Scheme and how these complement existing facilities.

### **3.5 OPEN SPACE AND LANDSCAPE**

- 3.5.1 The principal areas of open space and landscape structure planting are shown on figure 3.15.
- 3.5.2 The extent of hedgerows, trees, copses and woodlands are a defining aspect of the village, which, in combination, create a strong and attractive green setting to the built form. Views of the settlement edge from the adjoining countryside or at the gateways into the village are not uncharacteristic, but the more attractive examples reflect the parts of the settlement edge where the landscape structure contains and frames buildings. The adopted Cherwell Residential Design Guide SPD emphasises these aspects of a positive edge in diagram 4.9, page 50 (this is discussed further in chapter 5).
- 3.5.3 The allotments and formal recreational spaces (Chesterton Cricket Pitch, Bicester Sport Association and Bicester golf course) comprise the principal areas of open land within, or in proximity to the village. Areas of informal open space or local parks are limited, and it was my experience while at site that the network of PRow and local lanes were well used by local residents for dog walking and running. The Kingsmere development to the north does however provide large areas of open space within walking distance and can be reached via PRow 161-1-20.
- 3.5.4 I do not set out here the baseline landscape character as that is covered extensively within the LVIA and Mr Smith's evidence. Below, however, under settlement character, I do discuss how the existing settlement edge is perceived when entering the village via the main approaches. The was

raised as a concern by the local authority within the Officer's Report, stating:

*"Being an extension beyond existing boundaries will alter the interpretation and approach from the open landscape and into the village which will have a detrimental impact on the settlement..."*

### **3.6 SETTLEMENT CHARACTER SUMMARY**

- 3.6.1 On figure 3.17b I have included photographs of the main approaches into the village from the highway network. The locations are shown on figure 3.17a and include the approaches from the north (Kirtlington Road and Bignell View), south east (unnamed lane) and south west (Green Lane and the unnamed lane). The most relevant to this appeal are the approaches from the south west, but I have included other locations so there is a full understanding of how the village is perceived when approached from the landscape.
- 3.6.2 The photographs mainly illustrate the key gateway locations, but it is the sequential experience along these routes that is important in terms of how the settlement is perceived. I considered this while at site.
- 3.6.3 A feature common to all the approaches is a defined threshold, often defined by a sign, railings or narrowing of the road. The approach roads and lanes tend to be enclosed by highway vegetation (or walling along the north east approach – see photograph 2) and often there are framed vistas towards the settlement edge or feature buildings – see photographs 1 and 4. Recent improvements to the footpaths and cycle network (undertaken as part of the Great Wolf development) have slightly urbanised these approaches, including Green Lane. Photographs 5, 6 and 7 illustrate the recent highway improvements to Green Lane and the level of enclosure created by the hedgerow vegetation.
- 3.6.4 Photograph 8 is from the unnamed lane. While much of the lane is enclosed by vegetation, there are gaps where views are available across the landscape. As the village is approached from the unnamed lane the edge of the village is already visible prior to entering the village. I also walked the footpaths to the south and the village edge is also visible in a number of locations. As noted earlier, the Vespasian Way estate is currently visually exposed and could be improved upon in terms of establishing a sympathetic and more harmonious edge.
- 3.6.5 Based on the above analysis, I have summarised below in table 3.1 the key 'townscape' features of Chesterton that contribute to the village's distinct character. These are mostly positive characteristic of the village, that should, in my view, inform new housing neighbourhoods including the appeal scheme.
- 3.6.6 In appendix F, I have included the relevant extracts of village analysis of Chesterton undertaken by WYG in March 2016 (CD3.10). While not as detailed as my own appraisal, I have found the description of the village

and the overall summary to be broadly consistent with my own analysis (noting at the time of the WYG survey housing at Vespasian Way was under construction and Penrose Gardens had yet to be built out).

**Table 3.1 Positive placemaking features contributing to Chesterton's distinct character.**

1	The pattern of growth of Chesterton has been to the west of the historic village core. The northern and eastern settlement edges have remained largely unchanged.
2	The historic core of the village (defined by the conservation area) retains a strong sense of place, despite the expansion of the village to the west.
3	Within the conservation area there is a unified character, and includes a common use of limestone for buildings, linking walls and consistency of building scale. Trees, hedging and grass verges/ incidental open space also contribute to the strong sense of place. All these features imbue a strong sense of character.
4	Outside the conservation area, building styles vary and materials comprise a mixture of brick (yellow and red), limestone cladding, render and some limited timber weatherboarding. Streets are generally wide, over engineered and characteristic of the period they were designed. More recent housing has tended to be more suburban in character and there is no-prevailing urban form across the village as a whole.
5	Building densities are generally at the low end of the scale, reflective of the village location. This includes the most recent housing development in the village.
6	Despite the more recent growth extending the village westwards, the village is still perceived as a linear settlement, focused along the principal routes.
7	While the village can be described as ribbon development along the principal routes, its settlement form today is somewhat amorphous with an irregular settlement edge of varying depths.
8	While two storey housing predominates, there are also pockets of single storey housing throughout the village. Three storey buildings are limited. A varied roofscape, particularly apparent in the historic core, is a positive feature.
9	The principal streets are characterised by variation in building setbacks, boundary wall in local stone and extensive hedging, trees and grass verges. A particular feature of the village are the perpendicular side lanes along Alchester Road.
10	A network of pedestrian links throughout the village encourage active travel, often linking cul-de-sac housing to increase permeability.
11	The primacy of the historic routes is evident, which play an important role in how Chesterton is perceived. The interplay of built form, landscape spaces and vegetation creates a distinctive streetscape. Almost all the housing areas are accessed off these main streets, via a network of minor streets.
12	Local facilities within the village are accessible to local residents and within a 10-minute walk.
13	The extent of hedgerows, trees, copses and woodlands are a defining aspect of the village, which, in combination, create a strong and attractive green setting to the built form

14	A feature common to all the approaches is a defined threshold, often denoted by a sign, railings or narrowing of the road. The approach roads and lanes tend to be enclosed by highway vegetation. From the south west the edge of the village is already visible prior to entering the village.
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3.6.7 In chapter 5, I consider the proposals in the context of the above townscape characteristics determined for the village. Before doing so, I provide an overview of the scheme design in the following chapter.

## **4 DESCRIPTION OF THE DEVELOPMENT**

### **4.1 OVERVIEW**

4.1.1 The proposals and Appeal Scheme design are set out in within the DAS, application plans and overall SoCG (CD6.4). Allen Pyke also prepared a Landscape Strategy document, August 2022 (CD1.) in support of the DAS. This set out the wider strategy for open space and amenity, ecological enhancements and play.

4.1.2 In this chapter, I outline the key aspects of the masterplan, focusing on positive placemaking or aspects of the proposals that are particularly relevant to the RfR and the Council's SoC (CD6.2). The illustrative masterplan is shown on figure 4.2.

4.1.3 The Appeal Scheme comprises up to 147 new homes with a mix of 1, 2, 3 and 4 bed units. The tenure mix is shown on page 38 of the DAS. The affordable provision is policy compliant at 35%, with a range of tenures as shown on page 39 of the DAS. Significant supporting landscape infrastructure is proposed including a new recreational facility in the eastern portion of the Appeal Site. A single vehicular access is proposed off Green Lane; this will be a simple priority junction.

4.1.4 There are some high-level visioning principles referenced at the beginning of the DAS. These include:

- Provision of 35% affordable homes
- Provision of local recreational facilities
- Measures to support home working and generational needs
- Sustainable development principles
- Woodland and meadow walks
- A responsive design that is sensitive to the rural context
- 30-minute links to Bicester Village and a regular 15m service from Bicester P&R.

4.1.5 I consider these overarching principles further as part of reviewing the scheme design in this chapter.

### **4.2 DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS**

4.2.1 Site constraints have been mapped and are set out within the DAS on page 18; refer to my figure 4.1. As noted in chapter 3, the Appeal Site is largely free of constraints with no obvious internal features to inform the layout, other than vegetation along the site boundaries and an existing drainage ditch that bisects the midway pinch point of the site and follows the eastern boundary with the dwellings on Vespasian Way. The ditch is proposed to be retained and is located within one of the many green corridors. As such, the layout takes account of this drainage feature. The



layout incorporates the majority of the site vegetation, the exception being where the northern site access is proposed which requires the removal of a short section of hedgerow. That aside, the proposals allow for the retention and protection of all the main arboricultural features of the Appeal Site, all individual trees of high or moderate quality, all trees that positively contribute to the character of the local area, and the group of trees that contributes to the character of the Chesterton conservation area.

4.2.2 On page 20 of the DAS the key site opportunities are noted. These are important placemaking principles underpinning the masterplan and I list these in full below:

- **A SOFTER EDGE TO THE VILLAGE** The Vespasian Way housing development adjacent to the site has created a ‘hard’ edge on the village boundary, with fenced back gardens and a lack of tree screening, which would be characteristic of a rural area. The site offers the opportunity to create a ‘softer’ edge to the village boundary and ‘knit’ into the existing housing adjacent with mature woodland planting and careful orientation of housing.
- **INTEGRATION OPPORTUNITY** The site offers an opportunity to integrate well with the recreational facilities which it borders.
- **LOCAL COMMUNITY OFFER** The site connects to the existing community centre and offers an opportunity to further establish the community facilities at the heart of the village. The promotion of pleasant open spaces and pedestrian routes can attract greater use of the spaces and subsequently greater activation of the adjacent Community Centre.
- **TOWN CONNECTION** The site is well linked to London, Oxford and Birmingham beyond via the Chiltern railway line. The park and ride is within close proximity to Chesterton, a 5 minute cycle away, providing access into the town centre.
- **HIGHWAYS INFRASTRUCTURE** The site is bound by Green Lane on its northern side, providing a substantial stretch of road on which to design a new vehicle access. Green Lane is well connected, being within a 5-minute drive of the M40/A41 junction.

4.2.3 My observation from site is that the Vespasian Way housing development, which is suburban in character, does indeed create a hard and abrupt development edge. Further, the Appeal Site is contiguous with the existing settlement edge and well located to integrate with the existing recreational facilities to the east and nearby local facilities within the village.

4.2.4 The proposed site strategy is illustrated on page 26 of the DAS. This is an important diagram as it outlines the key structuring principles that define the extent and scale of the settlement edge. The principle of containing the development with a generous perimeter landscape is undoubtedly sound, as is locating the new recreational area adjacent to Chesterton conservation area and the existing sports ground. The larger western field

parcel has no obvious internal boundaries and therefore using the proposed landscape infrastructure to establish a new 'soft' settlement boundary is a valid approach in my view. As noted later in this chapter this landscape zone broadly aligns with the strategic green space shown on LPR37A GI plan; refer to figure 2.1.

- 4.2.5 While the DAS has appraised the wider settlement form and character of Chesterton in chapter 2, in terms of the diagrams on page 26 the focus is principally on the site and the immediate context, rather than the wider settlement form. In chapter 5, I have therefore considered the scale and configuration of the layout in this wider village context, referencing important '*components of place*' such as the urban grain, scale, building heights, street pattern and landscape structure.
- 4.2.6 The DAS (pages 27 to 33) describes the different character types and areas that are proposed. These are referenced as The Lanes, Meadow Walk and Recreational Facilities. These elements are positive placemaking features and central to the design approach adopted by the masterplanner to complement and enhance the existing rural village character.
- 4.2.7 The Lanes take direct inspiration from the lanes of Alchester Road. They are designed as lower order shared lanes, encouraging community interaction and natural play, where the car will be subservient to active travel.
- 4.2.8 The Meadow Walks incorporate the natural pedestrian desire lines which connect the site to the village context (refer to diagram 03 of the Proposed Site Strategy on page 26 of the DAS). Two green corridors dissect the site into three distinct residential parcels and allow the surrounding landscape to permeate the development and incorporate existing site features. The residential parcels are bookended to the south by a third open parkland Meadow Walk and a small, roughly triangular mosaic shrub/woodland at its southern tip.
- 4.2.9 A new recreational area is proposed within the eastern field. This will include potential sports pitches, alongside new walking routes, kick-about area and open spaces for people to enjoy. The area directly south of Chesterton Community Centre will provide opportunity to extend the current sports and play provision provided there.
- 4.2.10 The illustrations are particularly appealing (refer to figure 4.4) and suggest to me that there is a clear intention to create high quality and beautiful housing parcels and public open spaces. Again, the 'design vocabulary' adopted suggests a layout that draws inspiration from the village context which I expand upon below and in chapter 5.
- 4.2.11 Physical connections back to village and the adjoining PRow also appear strong. The site is contiguous with the existing settlement edge and well located to benefit from existing facilities within the village, including the

new community centre and 'village centre'. I have shown these in figure 5.5 as part of my own appraisal.

4.2.12 The housing parcels create active frontage and a well-defined public realm. This is illustrated well by the indicative aerial view – refer to figure 4.3.

4.2.13 The heights diagram on page 40 of the DAS indicates all proposed dwellings are two storey with a typical pitch roof, approximately 9m in height to the ridge. Garages and home offices are single storey and pitch roofed, either lean-to or free-standing. The combination of two storey 'principal' buildings, secondary single storey out-buildings and linking walls replicates an important characteristic of the historic core of the village (unlike some of the more recent developments in the village that have been approved for development).

4.2.14 The net developable area is 4.9ha (12.1acres). This delivers a net residential density of 30dph.

4.2.15 The focus on flexible living spaces that include home office space is also a positive feature that captures 'village life'. As illustrated on page 34 of the DAS, the home office / garden studio, includes a detached multipurpose space in the garden. This space is intended as a permanent but flexible building which reads as part of the original built fabric, built into the garden walls, and with continuous materiality. It is intended to be used as either an office for home working or a granny annex for a visiting relative. My observation when walking around the historic core of the village is that this building typology is reflective of several streets within the historic core.

4.2.16 Proposed materials (refer to figure 4.5) clearly reflect local vernacular and suggest high quality building facades and boundary treatments. The use of local building materials is proposed, including buff local stone and slate roofs. It is noted in the DAS that:

*"Stone is also proposed for key features in the public realm, including low level garden walls along lanes, and potential integration into home office and rear garden boundaries onto tree screening and woodland. This is intended to reflect the charm of the stone walling typical of the Chesterton Conservation Area." (Page 36).*

4.2.17 Red brick is proposed as feature elements providing a subtle but attractive contrast with the lighter hues of the stone walling and cobbled paving proposed. Again, this is reflective of the village.

### **4.3 LANDSCAPE PROPOSALS**

4.3.1 The landscape proposals, ecological measures and play strategy are set out in greater detail within the Landscape Strategy document, August 2022. It describes the key design principles within each of the key landscape character zones within the site.

4.3.2 The overarching landscape principles are summarised in the introduction and include to:

- Integrate development sensitively into the landscape
- Respect the rural edge setting and create a new distinct but soft edge to the village of Chesterton
- Protect the wildlife and natural elements in the landscape
- Provide attractive streetscapes, edges and open spaces
- Improve the wildlife and amenity benefits of the site to the wider community
- Improve permeability and connectivity
- Create a high-quality development that will enhance the lives of existing and future residents.

4.3.3 The first two principles are specifically aimed at creating a sympathetic design to the rural village setting.

4.3.4 The amenity space and play provision is illustrated on figure 4.7, while figure 4.8 illustrates the landscape proposals. The comprehensive nature of the landscape proposals, that wrap around the development edge and permeate it, is self-evident on these plans. Indeed, the landscape proposals in total amount to 9.8ha (24.2acres) which equate to **66%** of the total site area.

4.3.5 The site comprises four distinct landscape character areas (refer to figure 4.6):

- The residential parcel served by shared surface lanes providing access, parking, integral traffic calming and space for socialising
- Meadow Walks amenity green spaces with an open grassland character, incorporating rainwater attenuation and play;
- Eastern Parkland with the potential for community playing pitches, open parkland and play opportunities close to the Village Green
- The woodland with its informal woodland walks and potential for incidental play and wildlife elements.

4.3.6 These areas are described in detail within the Landscape Strategy document. I do not repeat that here, other to note the following:

- The residential parcels are intended to have a strong green character overlooking green space
- Lanes are designed as mutli-functional spaces with an emphasis on community interaction and play
- The pedestrian and cycle network is more direct than vehicular movements

- Extensive planting is proposed within all character areas reflecting the ‘green streets and spaces’ of Chesterton
  - Public realm materials including the lanes have been designed to as a nod to the historic character of the lanes in Chesterton village which, now gravel lined, were thought to be originally cobbled as noted in the conservation area appraisal.
  - The Meadow walks dissect the site into three distinct residential parcels and allow the surrounding landscape to permeate the development and incorporate existing site features.
  - Comprehensive strategic landscape proposals including new woodland planting and extensive grassland will help to assimilate the new settlement edge and deliver a mosaic of new habitats.
- 4.3.7 The recreation area has been located to provide a buffer to the conservation area and complement Chesterton sports ground located to the north. As well as providing additional sports pitches including tennis and basketball courts, additional parking is proposed to serve both sport areas.
- 4.3.8 With respect to the strategic landscape infrastructure along the southern edge, I note that it broadly accords with the location shown on figure 3.6 (page 25) of CDC’s A Greener Cherwell Local Plan, June 2023 by LUC (CD3.26). This plan shows the indicative GI requirements for draft housing allocation LPR37A and is also included in Cherwell’s Regulation 18 Local Plan Review 2 2040 (refer to my figure 2.1)

#### **4.4 SUSTAINABLE DESIGN**

- 4.4.1 In addition to the significant landscape and ecological proposals, the masterplan has been developed to establish first principles of sustainable design, including orientation of buildings to optimise solar gain, efficient form factors and typologies that harness party wall efficiencies, with conceptual strategies to reduce overheating, therefore potentially minimising heating energy demand.
- 4.4.2 As noted in the DAS, indicative massing has the potential to have an airtight fabric first approach with a high performance building fabric achieving U-values in line with LETI guidance. Renewable technologies such as air source heat pumps (ASHP) and mechanical ventilation with heat recovery (MVHR) could be allowed for.
- 4.4.3 Orientation of roofs provides an opportunity for efficient generation of renewable energy with solar panels (PV), combined with green roofs to enhance biodiversity (and net gain) and increased insulation performance. Over provision of open green space contributes to carbon capture within the landscape and amenity for health and well-being.

4.4.4 Within the SoCG (CD6.4) para. 7.13, it is agreed that “*The Appeal Scheme would provide net zero carbon ready homes and the Energy Strategy provided can be secured.*”

## **4.5 CHARACTER**

4.5.1 The use of the rural lane typology to inform the development form has been an important structuring principle. In combination with the east west meadow walks this has resulted in an informal and fractured grid structure. While being informed by local context, it cannot be said to be the same as the existing village core morphology. Indeed, none of the more recent housing development that have been approved by the local authority have replicated this.

4.5.2 My reading of the DAS is that the layout aims to capture the essential characteristics of the historic core of Chesterton, rather than directly replicate its unique urban form. This is illustrated well by the figure ground and street diagrams that I have prepared in chapter 5, which show a slightly more formal layout of the proposed built form and street pattern compared to the more organic and linear settlement pattern representative of the older village. This creates a high level of permeability which is an important feature of the village and a key aspect of positive placemaking. It has not simply replicated more recent housing developments, but rather sought to distil the key characteristics of the historic core. This is explicit requirement of the adopted design guide that states on page 15 that: “*Twentieth century housing estates of a generic character and poor design should not be taken as a precedent.*”

4.5.3 The design approach is clearly complementary and positive in my view, representing a more sympathetic approach to new housing neighbourhoods than much of the recent development in Chesterton, which, while exhibiting several positive placemaking aspects, are extensively suburban in character. I now discuss the scheme design further in chapter 5, with reference to the National Design Guide and Cherwell Residential Design Guide SPD.

## 5 TOWNSCAPE APPRAISAL

### 5.1 OVERVIEW

5.1.1 The National Design Guide, January 2021, provides a useful summary of the components of good design:

*“Buildings are an important component of places and proposals for built development are a focus of the development management system. However good design involves careful attention to other important components of places. These include the context for places and buildings; hard and soft landscape; technical infrastructure – transport, utilities, services such as drainage; and social infrastructure – social, commercial, leisure uses and activities.” (para. 20)*

5.1.2 It goes on to state in para. 21:

*“A well-designed place is unlikely to be achieved by focusing only on the appearance, materials and detailing of buildings. It comes about through making the right choices at all levels, including: the layout (or masterplan); the form and scale of buildings; their appearance; landscape; materials; and their detailing.”*

5.1.3 It is important therefore when assessing how a development or place performs to ensure all of these elements are appraised as part of reaching an overall conclusion.

5.1.4 The National Design Guide’s 10 characteristics of a well-designed place are summarised in appendix C of my evidence. In para. 13 of the Design Guide it states:

*“In a well-designed place, an integrated design process brings the ten characteristics together in a mutually supporting way. They interact to create an overall character of place. Good design considers how a development proposal can make a contribution towards all of them.”*

5.1.5 In this chapter, I assess the proposals (as set out within the DAS and supporting strategy documents) against the above criteria, under the following headings:

- Urban form (layout, form, scale and density)
- Movement
- Landscape and biodiversity
- Appearance, materials and detailing
- Community and climate
- Context and character (relationship to village and draft housing allocation)

5.1.6 At the local level, CDC adopted its Residential Design Guide SPD in July 2018 (CD3.4). This sets out masterplanning and architectural design guidance specific to the district's local character. While there is no bespoke design guidance for Chesterton, there are a range of design principles that seek to raise the standard of development across the district. I summarise here the guidance that I consider to be particularly relevant to this appeal. For the most part this covers guidance relating to masterplanning principles rather than detail design matters that would be more pertinent to a detailed planning applications or RMA submission and therefore capable of being controlled by the local authority at that stage of the planning process.

5.1.7 Chapter 2 of the guide provides a summary of distinct characteristics common to the district and highlights the following overarching principles that development should promote and/or avoid:

***New development in Cherwell should promote:***

- *Development informed by an understanding of the historic evolution and character of the District*
- *The creation of new places which fit well with the pattern and character of local towns and villages*
- *Development which is locally distinctive and reinforces the different characters of the north and south of the District*
- *Development which is located appropriately in response to landscape and topography*
- *Use of appropriate local materials and detailing*
- *Or a truly innovative approach to architecture and design*

***New development should avoid:***

- *The creation of 'anywhere places' which do not reflect local character*
- *Inappropriate settlement patterns, architecture and materials*
- *An awkward relationship between new and old*
- *The use of superficial details to add character*

5.1.8 When considering new developments, the guidance states on page 15:

*Development at the edge of the larger villages and towns including Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington should reflect the distinctive characteristics of the settlement and the wider Character Area in which the settlement is located. Twentieth century housing estates of a generic character and poor design should not be taken as a precedent.*

5.1.9 Chesterton is located on the edge of the Ploughley Limestone Plateau character area. I have included a summary of distinct settlement characteristics noted for this area in appendix D. It notes that most villages are linear in form and not prominent in the landscape. Buildings are mostly two storeys with building materials most commonly limestone, red brick and slate roofs.



5.1.10 Chapter 3 of the guide sets out the importance of analysing local character, mapping constraints and responding positively to them. Chapter 4 of the design guide outline the structuring principles of the masterplan. I have listed below the overarching principles that are provided in this chapter:

***New development in Cherwell should promote:***

- *A robust masterplan structure which is grounded in a solid understanding of the constraints and opportunities of the site and its setting*
- *A clearly articulated vision for the character of the scheme to establish a locally distinctive place which sits comfortably with its surroundings*
- *Connectivity between the masterplan and the surrounding settlement.*
- *A land use mix which provides community focus, including public buildings, that directly responds to local needs and is in line with local planning policy*
- *Continued engagement with the Council and local stakeholders as the masterplan is developed*

***New development should avoid:***

- *A disconnection between analysis and masterplan layout and a lack of creativity when responding to site constraints*
- *A lack of a clear and distinctive vision for the character of place to be created*
- *Layouts which fail to connect and respond to the existing settlement pattern, street and footpath network and context*
- *Schemes which block future settlement expansion*
- *Fixing the development brief before the masterplan can be objectively tested*

5.1.11 On page 45 the guide states: “*The masterplan must be based on a connected, permeable layout of streets defining urban blocks and open spaces.*” With regards to settlement pattern, it states on page 47: “*New development should follow the historic pattern of settlement growth in the local area and read as a natural continuation of the settlement’s evolution.*”. I assess the proposals against these important criteria below.

5.1.12 On page 47 the guide also states “*The masterplan layout should also consider potential expansion of the settlement in the future in a connected manner. The developer should provide evidence as to how this criteria can be met.*” This explicit requirement is relevant when considering the draft housing allocation to the south of Chesterton and maintaining flexibility; again, I elaborate further on this important requirement below, when reviewing the Appeal Scheme.

5.1.13 On page 50 there is a section on creating a new edge and wider views. I have provided this guidance in full within appendix E. I note that on page 65 of the design guide the benefits of shared surfaces for lower order

streets are highlighted; this is a distinctive characteristic of the historic core of Chesterton and indeed is proposed as part the Appeal Scheme design.

5.1.14 Chapter 6 of the design guide covers building and plot arrangements. Much of this guidance is detailed but I note here the overarching principles referenced at the beginning of the chapter here:

***New development in Cherwell should promote:***

- *An harmonious composition of buildings that contributes to the overall legibility and character of the place and its role within the wider masterplan*
- *Traditional settlement form and character*
- *Three dimensional form as a starting point for design*
- *The use of building types which reflect local traditions and can be successfully grouped together*
- *The use of bespoke house types to address important, sensitive and tricky conditions including landmark locations and corner plots*
- *The use of terrace house types, which should be the predominant form in most developments, especially along principles routes, mixed use areas and adjacent to public open space. Limited use of detached and semi-detached houses.*
- *Design solutions that minimise the opportunities for crime and antisocial behaviours through the clear definition of the public / private boundaries and creation of active frontages*

***New development should avoid:***

- *A plan based approach to design estates with a homogenous, ‘could be anywhere’ character*
- *Architectural focus on individual buildings rather than the overall street composition.*
- *The use of inflexible, standard house types which cannot be grouped effectively*
- *The use of detached houses on small plots when a terraced form is more appropriate*

## **5.2 SETTLEMENT PATTERN AND URBAN FORM**

5.2.1 Based on my analysis within section 3.0, it is evident that the village has been gradually growing since the mid-1950s and that the pattern of growth has been to the west. The northern and eastern portion of the village (which represents the historic core) has remained largely intact. In this regard, the development at the Appeal Site is unarguably a continuation of this natural pattern of growth and fully aligns with the requirement to “*follow the historic pattern of settlement growth in the local area and read as a natural continuation of the settlement’s evolution.*” (page 47 of Cherwell Residential Design Guide SPD).

- 5.2.2 Figure 5.1 illustrates the urban grain of the Appeal Scheme superimposed onto the existing settlement form. The new neighbourhood will represent a further extension off Green Lane and will be contiguous with the existing settlement edge. The Appeal Scheme set back from Green Lane varies from approximately 242m to 293m. This is greater than at Vespasian Way, but as noted in chapter 3, a characteristic of the settlement edge is that the depth of development back from the principal streets through the village varies considerably (from around 40m to 357m). Further, the proposals would also represent a continuation of the somewhat amorphous settlement form that has evolved over time. In this respect, the proposal is complementary.
- 5.2.3 Figure 5.6 compares the Appeal Scheme footprint with the overall village footprint. The principal areas of public open space within the village have been omitted but the area calculation includes smaller pockets of public open space and private gardens. This comparison should not be viewed as an exact calculation, but rather a broad guide to the percentage increase in the village footprint. At 6.8ha the Appeal Scheme would represent around a 20% increase in the current village footprint. However, when the generous internal green corridors / attenuation areas are deducted, the actual net developable area represented by the housing reduces to 4.9ha, and this percentage increase drops to around 15%.
- 5.2.4 The generous amount of green space within the overall building footprint does inevitably enlarge the development footprint, but importantly this feature of the design contributes significantly to the appearance of a more loose-knit and lower density neighbourhood, reflective of the wider village. It provides amenity and biodiversity benefits and I view this aspect of the layout very much as a positive feature of the layout. Indeed, I note that the March 2016 WYG village analysis for Chesterton (CD3.10) commented on the Vespasian Way development stating, *"This new area of housing is a relatively large but compact housing estate, with little internal green space, atypical of the rest of the village"* (para.3.8.5). The Appeal Scheme does provide ample internal green space and therefore in this regard can be said to be typical of the rest of the village.
- 5.2.5 In terms of the settlement pattern, it is also significant that the development is clearly defined by existing village boundaries. It connects directly onto Green Lane and the unnamed lane to the west provides a distinct and recognisable boundary along this edge. It is noteworthy that the draft housing allocation, like the Appeal Scheme, does not step beyond this western boundary. The Appeal Site is physically and visually connected with the existing settlement edge, whereas the landscape to the west of the unnamed lane appears more removed. I discuss the configuration of new southern housing edge later on in this section, in the context of the comprehensive landscape proposals.
- 5.2.6 Within the National Design Guide, layout is defined as the way blocks and routes are arranged and how they relate to one another. It stresses the importance of how a development integrates with the wider settlement pattern, or the urban grain, and the wider land-uses. In terms of form, the

guide highlights the importance of the three-dimensional shape a building forms and the resultant urban spaces that it creates. This includes the size and shape of the building, along with the building lines it establishes and how this interacts with the wider built form. Scale is the height, width and length of individual buildings but also of the development as a whole.

- 5.2.7 I highlighted in chapter 4 that the layout is based on a fractured grid structure with informal urban blocks. This provides high levels of permeability and well-defined boundaries between public and private space. It accords with the CDC's Residential Design Guide SPD that states "*The masterplan must be based on a connected, permeable layout of streets defining urban blocks and open spaces.*"
- 5.2.8 There is no overall prevailing urban grain within the village, but the distinctive layout of the perpendicular lanes off Alchester Road are a particular feature of Chesterton. This rural street typology has directly informed the arrangement of blocks, streets and landscape spaces within the masterplan, with the specific design objective of emulating the essential characteristics of the village core. This is a wholly appropriate response and avoids a plan-based approach to designing a new housing estate with a homogenous, 'could be anywhere' character. The urban form has arisen directly from analysis of the village context.
- 5.2.9 A clear design principle set out within the DAS is that the proposals seek to replicate the character of the older parts of the village, rather than the more recent growth further west (which is of varying quality and more suburban in nature). On page 17 of the DAS the typology of 'lane' development behind the linear frontage is referenced and it states "*The proposals for the site have taken precedent from this local vernacular layout*".
- 5.2.10 The layout of the urban block will minimise the opportunities for crime and antisocial behaviour through the clear definition of the public and private boundaries and creation of active frontages.
- 5.2.11 All existing features of note within the Appeal Site have been acknowledged and incorporated within the layout.
- 5.2.12 As noted in chapter 4, a mix of house types have been laid out to create a legible streetscape with buildings framing views. The use of smaller irregular blocks is more in keeping with older parts of the village. The structure promotes active travel, being permeable and connected to the wider PRow network. This 'pedestrian friendly' layout is illustrated well by the visualisations within the DAS; refer to figure 4.4.
- 5.2.13 With reference to figure 5.2, it is evident that the building heights align with the wider village context, comprising mostly of two storey dwellings, up to 9m in height (to ridge line). This allows for a range of roof pitches including steeper profiles which is a positive feature of conservation area. A range of single storey dwellings are also proposed within the layout which I consider to be positive feature of the scheme design. Indeed, the

combination of two storey 'principal' buildings, secondary single storey out-buildings and linking walls will replicate an important characteristic of the historic core of the village.

- 5.2.14 At 30dph, the proposal is at the lowest end of the density range that policy BSC2 stipulates (*New housing should be provided on net developable areas at a density of at least 30 dwellings...*). In combination with the extensive areas of green space (both within the housing layout and around its edge) this is a completely appropriate density and can deliver a rural "edge of village character". Indeed, when the overall quantum of open space within the red line is factored in, the gross development density is just 9.88dph. Reference to figure 5.1 shows that the urban grain is in keeping with the wider village.
- 5.2.15 Based on the above analysis, it is my view that that the scale of development is complementary to the settlement form and completely consistent with the now established pattern of growth. In stating this, I fully acknowledge that how the development will be perceived from public areas must also be appraised and this is considered below in section 5.5.

### **5.3 MOVEMENT**

- 5.3.1 The proposed street pattern is illustrated on figure 5.3. It is entirely consistent with the wider village, with a single vehicular access point off Green Lane. The plan illustrates that this arrangement is reflective of the wider village and helps to maintain the primacy of the historic routes. While there is a single access for vehicles, there are various footpath and cycle links proposed, including three links into Green Lane (see figure 4.2 – illustrative masterplan). There is also pedestrian access across the new recreational area to connect with the lanes and footpath network to the east.
- 5.3.2 The new access arrangement onto Green Lane is shown on page 43 of the DAS. A footpath/cycleway route will link into the wider network, and benefit from the recent footway enhancements implemented as part of the Great Wolf planning consent.
- 5.3.3 The access off Green Lane into the Appeal Site is located to the east of the current 'Welcome to Chesterton' signs. The scheme access proposal includes creating a new gateway feature at the western edge of Green Lane to denote a change of speed from 40mph down to 20mph. On entering the village from the west, therefore, the threshold denoting the point of arrival into the village will be reached before the access into the development. The opposite will be true when leaving the village from Green Lane. This is important as the site entrance into the neighbourhood will be perceived as being 'within the settlement footprint' and reflective of the other gateways into the village, as noted in my analysis in chapter 3.
- 5.3.4 The proposed movement network is safe and accessible for all and connects well with the wider movement network. It incorporates green infrastructure, including the SuDs drainage and street trees to soften the

development and contribute to biodiversity. The extensive use of lower order traffic calmed 'lanes' within the development is characteristic of the village, as is the vehicular cul-de-sac arrangement connected by footpaths.

## **5.4 LANDSCAPE AND BIODIVERSITY**

5.4.1 Just as the new housing layout knits into the wider settlement form, the same can be said of the landscape proposals.

5.4.2 The proposals incorporate existing planting and augment it with new structure planting. The large new recreational area to the east has been located to form a natural extension to the existing facility, strengthening this green buffer to the conservation area.

5.4.3 The proposals have been outlined in chapter 4. Figure 5.4 illustrates the comprehensive nature of the proposals and how they complement the wider landscape structure. They will form a continuous and broad landscape belt along the southern edge of the village, much of which will be open, affording views across this new amenity area. As noted before the landscape proposals in total amount to 9.8ha (24.2acres) which equate to **66%** of the total site area. This is very significant and there is no reason why a landscape proposal of this scale cannot deliver a 'soft green edge' to the village. While the significant woodland planting along the southern edge will provide a good level of screening, its primary function is to increase the amount of woodland and help with strengthening existing landscape and ecological corridors. Framed views of the development will create a positive built edge rather than turning it back on the public open space and landscape beyond.

5.4.4 In the western field there are no internal boundaries of note and therefore new planting in combination with existing vegetation is proposed to define the southern extent of the new settlement edge. This is an appropriate response, and I note the principle of providing strategic landscaping along the southern boundary aligns with Indicative Strategic Green and Blue Infrastructure diagram prepared for the draft housing allocation - refer to figure 2.1.

5.4.5 Within the Addendum to the Landscape and Visual Appraisal, June 2023 (CD1.11), the initial landscape concept (page 7) shows a primary node / gateway along the unnamed lane. It refers to a landscape space and feature buildings to enhance a sense of arrival and legibility.

5.4.6 It is my view that this is one element of the landscape proposals that should be modified. Rather than this point being designed as a gateway, it should be seen as a location where filtered views towards the settlement edge and open space beyond are afforded. The gap in the boundary vegetation at this location is proposed to be infilled with native hedgerow plants and therefore this is how it will actually be perceived, as illustrated by Montage Viewpoint 4 from the unnamed lane (refer to Mr Smith's evidence). As proposed on the illustrative masterplan, the primary note /

gateway is better located at Green Lane, denoting the threshold into the village.

- 5.4.7 As set out within Mr Smith's evidence, the masterplan has considered how the proposals will be viewed from the wider landscape.
- 5.4.8 Montage Viewpoint 3 is from Green Lane. The new housing will be visible from this location, but views will be filtered by a combination of existing and new hedgerow planting. I note that housing along Green Lane is already a feature of the village – refer to Montage Viewpoint 2. Montage Viewpoint 5 is located at the eastern edge of the existing cricket ground. It demonstrates that, from this location, the new housing will not be visible and the view will remain extensively unchanged.
- 5.4.9 It is evident that the landscape, drainage and biodiversity strategies have been coordinated to create a multifunctional landscape with a focus on nature conservation. The Appeal Site proposals include the enhancement of the undeveloped areas through the creation of dense native scrub mix, wildflower grassland and attenuation basins seeded with appropriate wildflower mixes, including species more typical or marshy conditions. These habitat creation measures will deliver a biodiversity gain for the site and benefit a range of species, including small mammals, breeding birds, amphibians and reptiles and invertebrates. The biodiversity impact assessment calculation tool identifies that the proposed development can deliver a gain of 20.68% in habitat units, and 54.84% in hedgerow units.
- 5.4.10 The above urban form and landscape characteristics are fundamental to the scheme's overall appearance and how it will integrate with the surrounding area. I consider this next.

## **5.5 APPEARANCE, MATERIALS AND DETAILING**

- 5.5.1 The application is in outline and therefore information relating to the design of the housing, public spaces and landscape are indicative. Nevertheless, the DAS sets out important design principles and the illustrative material provides an indication of the 'look and feel' of the development. All of the montages contained in Mr Smith's evidence provide a good indication of the overall composition of the built form and landscape proposals.
- 5.5.2 The appearance of the development, as illustrated within the DAS, is to my mind appealing and portrays a village feel.
- 5.5.3 The materiality of the architecture takes inspiration from its context. Figure 4.5 illustrates the proposed material palette for the development. Local Cotswold limestone is proposed as the primary façade material for the housing to reflect the dominant buff hues of the village. Stone is also proposed for the key features in the public realm, including the low stone walls to link buildings. Again, this is reflective of the historic core.
- 5.5.4 Red brick is also proposed as feature detailing within the building facade and to provide the variation that is also apparent in the village. Slate is

proposed as the principal roofing material. Cobble sett paving and loose and resin bound gravel are proposed for the shared-surface lower order streets, reflecting the existing lanes in Chesterton.

- 5.5.5 When I compare this material palette with my site photographs of the village (refer to figures 3.3a and 3.3b) it is evident that proposals are high quality and reflective of the distinct materiality and tonal hues within the historic core.
- 5.5.6 The illustrations and precedent images in the DAS suggest the architecture will comprise traditional building forms with contemporary fenestration and detailing. In combination with the use of traditional building materials, this architectural vernacular can be very successful. The detailed design of the housing has yet to be undertaken, but I see no reason why the approach illustrated in the DAS cannot deliver a harmonious and complementary new neighbourhood. And importantly, it suggests to me a design rationale that will avoid an overly suburban and standardised housing estate.
- 5.5.7 Having reviewed the montages prepared by Mr Smith that illustrate how the settlement edge will be perceived in local views, it is evident that the existing mature landscape of the village in combination with new planting and the extensive new areas of open space will provide a green setting and frame views of the new settlement edge.

## **5.6 COMMUNITY AND CLIMATE**

- 5.6.1 As illustrated on figure 5.5, the Appeal Site is located within an 800m catchment (approximately a 10-minute walk) of all the local facilities within the village. Many of facilities, including the community centre, local sports area, the Red Cow pub and St Mary's Church are actually much closer. All facilities can be accessed via existing routes which are reasonably direct. The proximity of local village facilities will help new residents integrate with the existing community.
- 5.6.2 In addition to the new housing, the proposals will deliver a significant new area of informal open space and a new recreation area to complement Chesterton sports ground. This includes additional sports pitches and tennis and basketball courts These new facilities will be accessible to existing residents of Chesterton, again helping with community integration.
- 5.6.3 Page 32 of the DAS summarised the sustainability principles of the proposals, and I have summarised these in paras. 4.4.1 to 4.4.4 of my evidence. The approach to sustainability has been a holistic one. The masterplan has a number of important principles embedded within the layout, including a highly permeable block structure to encourage active travel, and a network of blue and green infrastructure to encourage healthy lifestyle and biodiversity.
- 5.6.4 A fabric first approach to construction and renewable technologies such as air source heat pumps (ASHP) and mechanical ventilation with heat



recovery (MVHR) are noted within the DAS and have informed the masterplanning approach.

## 5.7 CONTEXT AND CHARACTER (RELATIONSHIP TO VILLAGE AND DRAFT HOUSING ALLOCATION)

5.7.1 The above sections have assessed the ‘components of place’ that together define the identity and characteristics of a settlement. The purpose of this analysis is to determine how successfully the proposals integrate with their village context. The analysis has covered placemaking elements at the macro scale, such as the village’s overall morphology and pattern of growth, through to detailed aspects of the village such as the local vernacular (i.e. materiality and boundary treatments).

5.7.2 With respect to layout, form, scale, landscape, materials and appearance, the above analysis has demonstrated that the appeal scheme is both reflective of, and sympathetic to, the local context. While the proposals will result in a further enlargement of the village, the defining characteristics of Chesterton will remain intact and recognisable. The new neighbourhood is contiguous with the urban area and will knit into the settlement form. A feature of Chesterton is that it has incrementally growth to the west. The Appeal Scheme is appropriately scaled and represents the next stage of the natural pattern of growth.

5.7.3 Importantly, the proposals have sought to replicate the best parts of the village, taking inspiration from the urban form and character of the historic core. The proposals, as set out within the DAS, do not represent a homogeneous ‘anywhere place’. The proposals will also deliver tangible benefits to the village, most noticeable significant additional open space and outdoor sport facilities.

5.7.4 I concluded chapter 3 of my evidence by summarising the positive features of the village that contribute to Chesterton’s distinct character. Below, in Table 5.2 I appraise the Appeal Scheme against these specific features.

**Table 5.1 Compatibility with positive placemaking features contributing to Chesterton’s distinct character.**

1	The pattern of growth of Chesterton has been to the west of the historic village core. The northern and eastern settlement edges have remained largely unchanged.	The Appeal Scheme would clearly represent a continuation of the pattern of growth. It would connect directly onto Green Lane and would be contained by the unnamed lane to the west and existing and new structure planting to the south.
2	The historic core of the village (defined by the conservation area) retains a strong sense of place, despite the expansion of the village to the west.	The historic core of the village will remain intact, as would its distinct sense of place. The Appeal Scheme would be perceived in the context of the more recent housing development to the west.

3	<p>Within the conservation area there is a unified character, and includes a common use of limestone for buildings, linking walls and consistency of building scale. Trees, hedging and grass verges/incidental open space also contribute to the strong sense of place. All these features imbue a strong sense of character.</p>	<p>The masterplan is based on a thorough and robust analysis of the site and its village context. Positive features within the conservation area have unmistakably informed the design approach including the use of limestone for building, linking walls, scale of buildings, expansive use of landscaping and the street typologies. The layout captures the essential characteristics of the historic core of Chesterton, rather than directly replicate its unique urban form.</p>
4	<p>Outside the conservation area, building styles vary and materials comprise a mixture of brick (yellow and red), limestone cladding, render and some limited timber weatherboarding. Streets are generally wide and over engineered. More recent housing has tended to be more suburban in character and there is no-prevailing urban form across the village as a whole.</p>	<p>While, as in other parts of the village, the proposals will be representative of the time they are built, the design approach avoids a homogenous suburban housing design response that disregards the village's distinct characteristics.</p> <p>The proposals have re-interpreted this local settlement in a distinctive and imaginative way.</p>
5	<p>Building densities are generally at the low end of the scale, reflective of the village location. This includes the most recent housing development in the village.</p>	<p>At 30dph, the proposal is at the lowest end of the density range that policy BSC2 stipulates. In combination with the extensive areas of green space (both within the housing layout and around its edge) this is an entirely appropriate density and can deliver a rural "edge of village character".</p>
6	<p>Despite the more recent growth extending the village westwards, the village is still perceived as a linear settlement, focused along the principal routes.</p>	<p>The Appeal Scheme connects directly onto Green Lane and will be perceived as a logical new housing extension along this principal street through the village. The primacy of the historic routes and perceived linearity of the village will be maintained.</p>
7	<p>While the village can be described as ribbon development along the principal routes, its settlement form today is somewhat amorphous with an irregular settlement edge of varying depths.</p>	<p>Figure 5.1 illustrates well that the defining settlement form will remain, namely ribbon development, but with an irregular and amorphous settlement edge. The scale of development is such that Chesterton will still be perceived as a walkable connected village.</p>
8	<p>While two storey housing predominates, there are also pockets of single storey housing throughout the village. Three storey buildings are limited. A varied roofscape, particularly</p>	<p>Proposed building heights, at up to 9m to the ridge line, are fully aligned with the wider village.</p>

	apparent in the historic core is a positive feature.	
9	The principal streets are characterised by variation in building setbacks, boundary wall in local stone and extensive hedging, trees and grass verges. A particular feature of the village are the perpendicular side lanes along Alchester Road.	Proposed building setbacks are irregular along Green Lane and allow the retention of highway vegetation that provides a green, rural setting to the houses. As detailed in chapter 4, lower order streets in combination with the green and blue infrastructure replicate the distinctive perpendicular side lanes of Chesterton. Linking boundary walls are proposed. The landscape proposals have yet to be designed in detail, but it is evident that the layout provides ample space for extensive tree planting (including larger species) and hedging.
10	A network of pedestrian links throughout the village encourage active travel, often linking cul-de-sac housing to increase permeability.	The extensive use of lower order traffic calmed 'lanes' within the development is characteristic of the village, as is the vehicular cul-de-sac arrangement connected by footpaths.
11	The primacy of the historic routes is evident, which play an important role in how Chesterton is perceived. The interplay of built form, landscape spaces and vegetation create a distinctive streetscape. Almost all the housing areas are accessed off these main streets, via a network of minor streets.	The proposed street pattern is illustrated on figure 5.3. It is entirely consistent with the wider village, with a single vehicular access point connecting onto Green Lane.  The plan illustrates that this arrangement is reflective of the wider village and helps to maintain the primacy of the historic routes through the village.
12	Local facilities within the village are accessible to local residents and within a 10-minute walk.	Existing local facilities within the village would be accessible to new residents and be approximately within a 10-minute walk. Conversely, the new facilities proposed as part of the Appeal Scheme would be easily accessed by existing residents.
13	The extent of hedgerows, trees, copses and woodlands are a defining aspect of the village, which, in combination, create a strong and attractive green setting to the built form	The landscape proposals in total amount to 9.8ha (24.2acres) which equate to <b>66%</b> of the total site area. This is very significant and the blue and green infrastructure has been designed to deliver a 'soft green edge' to the village.
14	A feature common to all the approaches is a defined threshold, often denoted by a sign, railings or narrowing of the road. The approach roads and lane tend to be enclosed by highway vegetation. From the south-west the edge of the	The access off Green Lane into the Appeal Site is located to the east of the current 'Welcome to Chesterton' signs (i.e. within the village). The proposals include creating a new gateway feature at the western edge of Green Lane. On entering the village from the west, therefore, this threshold will denote the point of arrival into the village, which is

	<p>village is already visible prior to entering the village.</p>	<p>before the vehicular entrance into the appeal scheme. This helps to maintain the perception of a defined village boundary.</p> <p>The characteristic enclosure along the approach routes into the village, created by highway vegetation, will be retained and strengthened with additional planting. The gap in the boundary vegetation along the unnamed lane is proposed to be infilled with native hedgerow plants and designed to provide filtered views to the new development edge and open space. This will maintain a sense of arrival when entering the village from the west. Further, the proposals, while closer in the view, have the potential to improve upon the rather abrupt and hard settlement edge that is currently visible from the unnamed lane.</p>
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**Draft housing allocation**

- 5.7.5 I conclude this chapter by considering the Appeal Scheme in the context of the draft housing allocation. Figure 5.7 of my evidence has overlaid the Appeal Scheme onto the area designated for housing development. The draft allocation proposes a new well designed, sustainable neighbourhood of approximately 500 dwellings at south Chesterton.
- 5.7.6 I noted in chapter 2 that the Appeal Site falls entirely within the proposed housing allocated area and is therefore consistent in terms of its geographic location. Importantly, the supporting analysis undertaken by the Council has independently determined that the Appeal Site can potentially accommodate development given the absence of significant constraints.
- 5.7.7 As part of the evidence base prepared in support of CDC Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan Review 2040, LUC were commissioned to prepare a Strategic GBI Framework for Potential Sites, June 2023 (CD3.26). The analysis for LPR37A is provide on pages 24 and 25 of that study. Figure 3.5 provides a context map noting relevant constraints. None are shown within the Appeal Site. Important strategic GI objectives such as achieving BNG and augmenting green corridors are also highlighted. The Appeal Scheme not only takes account of these, but as noted below, will help to meet these strategic objectives, which in my view is a benefit of the scheme.
- 5.7.8 I noted earlier that the indicative strategic green and blue infrastructure shown on figure 2.1 is replicated within the Appeal masterplan layout. In fact, the Appeal Scheme provides a significantly larger area of structure

planting along the southern edge than that shown on figure 2.1 and will deliver a BNG enhancement well in excess of 10%. While the north-south walking /cycling route is not in the same location, the Appeal Scheme does incorporate a network of active travel routes throughout the development.

5.7.9 While at this early stage of the local plan review a comprehensive masterplan has not been prepared for the draft allocation, it seems clear that the Appeal Scheme will deliver a compatible new housing parcel that would represent a logical first phase. The retention of a green corridor along the southern edge of the Appeal Site is a strategic constraint that any proposal would need to respect. As such, this part of the draft allocation will, to some degree, be perceived as a distinct parcel. The green corridor will provide a good level of physical separation between this northern parcel and the remainder of the draft allocation further south. In terms of settlement identity, I consider this be a positive feature, with the remainder of the allocation capable of coming forward as a well-connected but distinct, sustainable neighbourhood with its own identity to the south of Chesterton.

5.7.10 My own analysis has concluded that the proposals are appropriate and sympathetic to their village context. The local authority has separately concluded that the land to the south of Chesterton is potentially capable of accommodating approximately 500 dwellings. In this context, I find it difficult to reconcile the Council's seemingly contradictory statement that *"The proposals, by reason of the scale and impact on the overall landscape and settlement character would cause harm to the approaches along Green Lane and the unnamed lane to Little Chesterton, and to the overall character of the settlement of Chesterton....."* (extract from RfR2).

5.7.11 I now consider planning policy and the RfR in chapter 6.

## 6 COMPLIANCE WITH POLICY AND CONCLUSION

### 6.1 NATIONAL POLICIES

6.1.1 The Council's RfR cites the proposed development as being contrary to the NPPF. With regard to chapter 12, 'Achieving well-designed and beautiful places', I summarise below how the proposals fully meet the guidance contained in para. 135, bullets a) to f).

**Table 6.1 Compliance with para. 135, bullets a) – f)**

a)	will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;	The layout is permeable, affording high level of accessibility. Amenity spaces within the development are easily accessible and accessible to all. New areas of open space are co-located with existing and include additional facilities, such as parking, to improve functionality and the longer-term management of local facilities in the village. The site junction has been designed in detail, with direct access onto Green Lane.
b)	are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping	<p>The design proposals within the DAS portray a high-quality development that will enhance the lives of existing and future residents. Attractive streets, edges and open spaces will create a positive new settlement edge when entering the village from the west.</p> <p>The Lanes, Meadow Walk and Recreational Facilities, as described within the DAS, are positive placemaking features, complementing and enhance the existing rural village character.</p>
c)	are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);	<p>The proposals have been informed by a comprehensive analysis of the local context. The proposals respect this rural edge setting and will create a new distinct but soft edge to the village of Chesterton.</p> <p>Building densities are reflective of the local context, being at the lowest end of the density band permitted by local plan policy BSC2</p>
d)	establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and	The urban grain, public realm, landscape and active travel routes in unison establish a legible place integral to the wider village.

	distinctive places to live, work and visit;	Materiality is reflective of the historic core and distinctive placemaking features will establish a locally apposite place.
e)	optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and	<p>The scale of development optimised the site's capacity. To achieve a green setting and deliver recreational, landscape and biodiversity benefits, 66% of the Appeal Site has been given over to green space.</p> <p>Up to 147 new homes are proposed, 35% of which will be affordable. Residents of the new neighbourhood will help support existing facilities within the village and wider transport infrastructure improvements.</p>
f)	create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.	<p>Streets are traffic-calmed shared 'lanes', while urban blocks and houses have been arranged to ensure high levels of natural surveillance, thereby minimising the potential for anti-social behaviour and crime.</p> <p>Proposed community infrastructure will help with social integration, maximising the potential for community cohesion.</p>

6.1.2 The new neighbourhood will be well connected to existing local facilities within Chesterton and will provide several new community facilities, designed to serve the whole village. The street layouts allow for easy pedestrian and cycle connections to the wider village. Active street frontages that overlook these routes is a feature of the masterplan, as is the extensive public open space (including woodland and meadow walks) that will encourage healthy lifestyles and provide areas of passive recreation for enjoyment and contemplation. The block structure minimises the opportunities for crime and antisocial behaviour through the clear definition of the public / private boundaries and creation of active frontages.

6.1.3 The proposed outdoor sports pitches and additional parking will be co-located with the existing recreational grounds. The Appeal Site connects to the existing community centre and offers an opportunity to further establish the community facilities at the heart of the village. New residents in the development will also help to support local facilities including the pub, primary school, day nursery and village hall.

6.1.4 Connections to services and facilities beyond the village are addressed separately within Mr Bevis' evidence, but I note here that the site is well

linked to London, Oxford and Birmingham beyond via the Chiltern railway line and the park and ride is within close proximity to Chesterton, a 5-minute cycle away, providing access into the Bicester Village and the railway station.

6.1.5 All of the above this will engender social interaction within the village and help to establish a fully integrated new neighbourhood. In this regard, the proposals can establish a healthy and safe new neighbourhood, in accordance with paras. 96 and 97 of the NPPF.

6.1.6 The appeal landscape proposals in total amount to 9.8ha (24.2 acres) which equate to **66%** of the total site area. The majority of existing trees and hedgerows have been retained and incorporated within the layout. While detailed landscape proposals have not been prepared given the application is in outline (save for the access), the landscape strategy as detailed in chapter 4 of my evidence, can deliver significant new areas of woodland, scrub, tree planting and areas of meadows.

6.1.7 Within the submitted Landscape Strategy, August 2023 by Allen Pyke the required open space and outdoor recreation provision is stipulated, based on Cherwell Adopted Local Plan standards (page 5 of the Landscape Strategy). This relates to green space, play space, outdoor sports and allotments. Based on 147 units and an average dwelling occupation rate of 2.4 people, the proposals in total are required to deliver 1.78ha of open space and outdoor recreation. As noted on the amenity plan (figure 4.7) the proposals will actually deliver approximately 7.5ha. This is more than four times the required area. This will provide ample space for extensive tree planting that can be a feature of the scheme design (including within the housing parcels as illustrated by figure 4.4). Also, the majority of existing trees and hedgerows have been retained and incorporated within the layout. As such, I have concluded the proposals accord with para. 136 of the NPPF.

6.1.8 I have shown that building densities, at 30dph, are appropriate in this village context, being at the lowest end of the density range permitted by the local plan policy BSC 2, which emphasises the importance of making effective and efficient use of land. I therefore conclude the proposal meet the core requirement of para. 128 of the NPPF to make efficient use of land, while also maintaining an area's prevailing character and setting (bullet d).

6.1.9 Para 139 a) of the NPPF states that significant weight should be given to:

*“development which reflects local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes;”*

6.1.10 In chapter 5, I have reviewed the proposals against the design and placemaking criteria contained within the National Design Guide, January 2021 and CDC's Residential Design Guide SPD. In respect of the local guidance, I have provided further analysis in section 6.2 below. At both



levels (national and local) I have found the design proposals align with the design guidance contained therein.

6.1.11 Accordingly, I have reached the view that the proposals do gain the benefit of the significant positive weight to which NPPF para. 139 refers, by virtue of limb (a). In reaching this conclusion, I note here relevant planning considerations which are addressed in full by Mr Ross. While the proposals are in outline (save for the access) the submitted information (most noticeably within the DAS) provides a high degree of design certainty in respect to the broad design parameters (including the extent and quantum of the development area and open space provision), and the proposed design response in terms of the urban form, appearance, street layout, public realm and landscape proposals. These design principles are capable of being secured, in full, by Cherwell District Council through the normal reserved matters application process. Further, and significantly, as part of discussion between the Appellant and local authority, there is mutual agreement between the parties that the planning conditions (currently being drafted) would include an explicit requirement that future RMA must come forward in general accordance with the illustrative masterplan layout submitted as part of the outline application.

## **6.2 LOCAL PLANNING POLICIES AND DESIGN GUIDANCE**

6.2.1 Local plan policy ESD 15 is provided in full in my appendix A, while saved local plan policies C28 and C30 are detailed in appendix B.

6.2.2 Policy ESD 15 is wide ranging in its content and covers matters relating to the historic environment; I have focused solely on the design criteria. The policy requires new developments *“to complement and enhance the character of its context through sensitive siting, layout and high quality design.”* All developments are required to meet high design standards. In chapter 5, I have shown how the Appeal Scheme complements Chesterton’s existing character. The masterplan proposals are also capable of enhancing it in several important ways, namely:

- By establishing comprehensive and connected green and blue infrastructure along the southern edge of the village
- By creating a more sympathetic southern settlement edge, as compared to the existing abrupt and hard village edge currently evident at Vespasian Way
- Through the provision of a range of new facilities, including significant new areas of formal and informal open space that complement existing facilities.
- By delivering biodiversity enhancements to the local landscape
- Through improvements to the pedestrian and cycle network

- Through the delivery of a high-quality and well-designed new, connected neighbourhood that draws inspiration from the defining placemaking features within the historic core of Chesterton.

6.2.3 All of the above will deliver tangible benefits to the village and are capable of enhancing the immediate settlement edge and village setting. The policy goes on to lists 17 specific criteria that developments should comply with. Below, I have summarised how the appeal proposals meet these design objectives.

- The proposals have been informed by analysis of context and the resultant design rationale is explained in detail within the DAS
- The overall composition of land uses is complementary to the village, with new housing (including 35% affordable homes), helping to support existing community facilities within the village. Measures to support home working and generational needs are explained within the DAS, including how the building typologies are adaptable to changing circumstance and social change.
- As noted above, the proposals have the potential to improve the appearance of the immediate locality through high quality design and extensive landscape proposals, and can become a fully integrated and appropriated scaled neighbourhood of Chesterton. It is evident from the visualisations contained within the DAS, a strong sense of place can be achieved which is legible and easily understood in the context of the wider village.
- The layout is permeable, affording high level of accessibility. The urban grain, public realm, landscape and active travel routes, in unison, establish a legible place, connected to the wider village and affording views towards landmarks within the village
- The layout represents an efficient use of land, being appropriately scaled to complement the village and at a housing density that maximises the potential of the Appeal Site while being appropriate to its edge of village location
- The Appeal Scheme accords with the guidance for the Ploughley Limestone Plateau, within which it is located, thereby contributing positively to an area's character and identity. The perceived linearity of the village will be maintained and a mix of mostly two storey detached housing is proposed
- The traditional patterns of routes, spaces, blocks, form, scale and massing have been appraised in detail and then reflected within the housing layout and landscape proposals.
- The delineation between the public and private realm is well defined and will create active frontage (based on the definition contained with the National Model Design Code: Part 2 para.156)

- The proposals have reinterpreted distinctive aspects of the village to ensure these are reinforced. The design response avoids a standard suburban ‘anywhere’ response.
- A number of sustainable principles have informed the design response, including orientation of buildings, an integrated blue and green infrastructure strategy, high levels of connectivity, biodiversity enhancements and a range of green building technologies.

6.2.4 Detailed design matters noted in the policy, such as lighting, energy efficiency and Secure by Design Accreditation, can be secured through future reserved matters applications. As such, I have concluded that the proposals comply fully with policy ESD 15.

6.2.5 Saved policy C28 requires the standards of layout, design and external appearance to be sympathetic to the character of the urban or rural context of that development. For sensitive areas, such as conservation area or AONB, development will be required to be of high standards and will normally require the use of traditional materials. While the appeal development is not located within a sensitive area, I note nevertheless that the DAS stipulates that the prevailing traditional building materials within Chesterton conservation area will be used for buildings and public spaces.

6.2.6 Saved policy C30 requires new housing developments to be “*compatible with the appearance, character, layout, scale and density of existing dwellings in the vicinity*” (bullet (i). Bullet (ii) of C30 is not relevant. Bullet (iii) requires new housing developments to “*provide standard of amenity and privacy acceptable to the local quality.*”

6.2.7 In terms the layout, design, scale, density and appearance of the proposals, my analysis in chapter 5 has demonstrated these aspects of the Appeal Scheme are compatible with existing dwellings in the vicinity (taken here to mean the whole village, including Vespasian Way) and sympathetic to the local character of Chesterton. I have also considered these very same criteria as part of my review of policy ESD 15 above.

6.2.8 No issues of privacy have been raised by the Council and I have demonstrated earlier on in this chapter that the landscape amenity and recreation provision is not only in accordance CDC’s local plan open space standards, but significantly in surplus. As such, it can be concluded that the proposals also accord with saved policies C28 and C30.

### **Cherwell Residential Design Guide SPD**

6.2.9 I have referenced the relevant design guidance within the SPD at the beginning of chapter 5 and highlighted specific design criteria throughout as part on my appraisal of the Appeal Scheme.

6.2.10 As noted earlier, chapter 2 of the guide provides a summary of distinct characteristics common to the district and highlights the following

overarching principles that development should promote and/or avoid. I repeat these below in table 6.3 and appraise the Appeal Scheme.

**Table 6.3 Overarching Design Do's and Don'ts (page 12 of SPD)**

<b>New development in Cherwell should promote:</b>	
A robust masterplan structure which is grounded in a solid understanding of the constraints and opportunities of the site and its setting	My analysis in chapter 5 has shown that the layout, scale, density, urban grain, street pattern and landscape proposals are based on an in-depth understanding of the constraints and village context.
A clearly articulated vision for the character of the scheme to establish a locally distinctive place which sits comfortably with its surroundings	The vision for the neighbourhood originates from the essential characterises of Chesterton, re-interpreted to reflect modern village living.
Connectivity between the masterplan and the surrounding settlement.	High levels of connectivity have been achieved and the new neighbourhood lies approximately within a 10-minute walkable catchment of the village.
A land use mix which provides community focus, including public buildings, that directly responds to local needs and is in line with local planning policy	The site connects to the existing sports facilities and existing community centre, offering an opportunity to further establish the community facilities at the heart of the village. The promotion of pleasant open spaces and pedestrian routes can attract greater use of the spaces and subsequently greater activation of the adjacent Community Centre.
Continued engagement with the Council and local stakeholders as the masterplan is developed	Community engagement and liaison with the local authority has informed the design response, as set out within the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)
<b>New development should avoid:</b>	
A disconnection between analysis and masterplan layout and a lack of creativity when responding to site constraints	The Appeal Scheme has drawn direct inspiration from the village's defining urban and landscape features. A positive aspect of the masterplan is that the layout has reinterpreted

	these in a creative way and avoiding a formulaic response to the site and its constraints.
A lack of a clear and distinctive vision for the character of place to be created	The DAS, on page 20, outlines five placemaking principles that have informed the masterplan and outlines complementary strategies relating to the structuring principles underpinning the design response. These are reflective of the village context.
Layouts which fail to connect and respond to the existing settlement pattern, street and footpath network and	The Appeal Site is well located to connect with the existing village and the masterplan has optimised the opportunities for pedestrian and cycle links. The urban grain is complementary.
Schemes which block future settlement expansion	As noted below, the appeal scheme will not prejudice potential future sustainable growth to the south of Chesterton.
Fixing the development brief before the masterplan can be objectively tested	N/A

6.2.11 On page 47 Cherwell Residential Design Guide SPD it states:

*“The masterplan layout should also consider potential expansion of the settlement in the future in a connected manner. The developer should provide evidence as to how this criteria can be met.”*

6.2.12 I have shown in chapter 5 that the Appeal Scheme can form a logical first phase of the draft housing allocation, should the strategic housing site be allocated within the new local plan. Further, it will not prejudice the ability to deliver a holistic and comprehensive masterplan across the whole allocation, being a connected but discrete parcel on the southern edge of Chesterton, clearly defined by the strategic blue and green infrastructure along its southern edge.

### 6.3 CONCLUSION

6.3.1 I have found that the appeal scheme, as submitted, is capable of delivering a high quality and fully sympathetic new neighbourhood in a part of the village where growth has naturally occurred over time. The scheme design responded positively to the village context, reflecting the unique characteristics of Chesterton. I have shown in chapter 5 that the components of place, as defined within the National Design Guide, have been carefully articulated within the design response. The masterplan

principles have been directly informed by the analysis of the site and local context. The Appeal Scheme has the potential to be a vibrant new neighbourhood, offering much to residents of the whole village.

6.3.2 Within RfR 1 and 2 and their SoC, the Council have alleged harm arising from the Appeal Scheme. In respect to urban design and townscape matters, the Council's assertions can be distilled into the follows:

- The proposals would result in a disproportionate development when considered against the scale of the existing village (RfR 1)
- The proposals would cause impacts to the settlement character which could not be avoided or mitigated by the proposed development (RfR1)
- The proposals, by reason of the scale and impact on the overall landscape and settlement character, would cause harm to the approaches along Green Lane and the unnamed lane to Little Chesterton, and to the overall character of the settlement of Chesterton (RfR2)

6.3.3 There is a degree of overlap across the three areas of alleged harm, but I nevertheless considered them in turn and outline my conclusions based on my preceding evidence.

***The proposals would result in a disproportionate development when considered against the scale of the existing village***

6.3.4 The Appeal Scheme footprint, at 6.8ha, represents around a 20% increase compared to the current village footprint. The increase in population referenced by the Council in their SoC is less relevant when considering settlement form, as it is the resultant physical extent and layout of the development that will be perceived by residents.

6.3.5 The actual net developable area represented by the housing is 4.9ha, which equates to around a 15% increase. Based on my analysis of the settlement pattern, urban grain, building heights, street pattern and open space, I have shown that the Appeal Scheme is not disproportionate. Indeed, I have reached the view that the Appeal Scheme is appropriately scaled and will be perceived as an integrated and sympathetic new neighbourhood, location in a part of the village where recent growth has already occurred.

6.3.6 The generous amount of green space within the overall building footprint has enlarged the development footprint, but this contributes significantly to the appearance of a more loose-knit and lower density neighbourhood, reflective of the wider village.

6.3.7 The scale of the housing blocks, building heights and densities are all sympathetic to the village connected. This appropriately scaled housing will be viewed in the context of a 'green' and generous landscape setting,

and the Appeal Site is physically and visually connected with the existing settlement edge. When all these factors are taken into account, it is my conclusion that the proposals will be perceived as logical and well-proportioned extension to the village, in a location where growth has naturally occurred.

**The proposals would cause impacts to the settlement character which could not be avoided or mitigated by the proposed development.**

6.3.8 My analysis has led me to a diametrically opposite conclusion. The essential placemaking components of the Appeal Scheme, its layout, urban grain, massing, landscape and appearance have all been derived from a thorough analysis of the site and the wider village context. Positive aspects of the settlement character had been replicated and embedded within the design response so that the Appeal Scheme is intrinsically sympathetic to its village context. My analysis in table 5.1, has objectively appraised the Appeal Scheme against the positive features that contribute to settlement character, and demonstrated a high level of compatibility. As such, the alleged harm to settlement character has been avoided through good design. Indeed, as noted before the proposals are capable of enhancing the southern settlement edge given the current abrupt interface with the countryside in this part of the village.

6.3.9 The landscape proposals do not aim to completely screen the proposals, as suggested within the Officers Report (para. 7.27), but rather provide a soft green edge, imitating other parts of the village. The scale of the landscape proposals are such that they have the potential to markedly enhance the settlement edge in this part of the village, along with providing a significant new area (9.8ha) of public open space.

**The proposals, by reason of the scale and impact on the overall landscape and settlement character, would cause harm to the approaches along Green Lane and the unnamed lane to Little Chesterton, and to the overall character of the settlement of Chesterton**

6.3.10 I have shown that the Appeal Scheme and its design is compatible with the settlement form and character. I have also assessed the way the village would be perceived when approaching along Green Lane and the unnamed lane further west.

6.3.11 I have noted that the new access off Green Lane into the appeal Site is located to the east of the current 'Welcome to Chesterton' signs and that the proposals include creating a new gateway feature at the western edge of Green Lane.

6.3.12 Therefore, on entering the village from the west this new gateway will denote the point of arrival into the village, which is before the vehicular entrance into the Appeal Scheme. This helps to maintain the perception of a well-defined village boundary.

- 6.3.13 The characteristic enclosure along the approach routes into the village, created by highway vegetation, will be retained and strengthened with additional planting. The gap in the boundary vegetation along the unnamed lane is proposed to be infilled with native hedgerow plants and designed to provide filtered views to the new development edge and open space. This will maintain the current 'sense of arrival' when entering the village from the west. Further, the proposals, while closer in the view, have the real potential to markedly improve upon the rather abrupt and hard settlement edge that is currently visible from the unnamed lane.
- 6.3.14 As such, and based on my comprehensive analysis, I have reached the conclusion that the RfR relating to urban design matters are unfounded.
- 6.3.15 Lastly, with respect to the draft housing allocation, it is my view that the Appeal Scheme can deliver a stand-alone, complementary, and appropriately scaled new western neighbourhood to Chesterton and has the potential to form a logical first phase of the new sustainable neighbourhood of approximately 500 dwellings, should the draft strategic housing allocation LPR37A be taken forward as part of CDC's local plan review.
- 6.3.16 Further, it seems to me that by including the Appeal Site within the draft housing allocation, it must be acknowledged by the Council that the evidence base prepared in support of the Draft Local Plan 2040 has not raised any in principle design related reasons why this site is not an appropriate location for a well-designed new neighbourhood. Indeed, the analysis of site constraints and green infrastructure undertaken by the Council (that I have referenced within my evidence) seems to me to be explicit in concluding that it is an appropriate location for housing.



