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**Environmental  
Statement  
Volume II:  
Landscape and  
Visual  
Assessment**

Axis J9, Phase 3

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Axis J9, Bicester  
Landscape & Visual Assessment  
ES Volume II

## Revisions

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27.07.21	PL	P01	Draft issue	GD
16.08.21	PL	P02	Revised to planning consultant comments	GD
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# 1 Introduction

1.1 This Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment ('LVIA') forms volume two of the Environmental Statement (ES). The LVIA has been prepared by re-form landscape architecture and assesses the potential effects on the local landscape character and visual amenity of a further phase of employment development on land west of Howes Lane, North West Bicester (the 'Development'). Potential significant effects associated with enabling, construction activities and the completed Development are identified as appropriate and, where necessary, mitigation measures are outlined.

1.2 The volume is supported by the following appendices:

- i Appendix A: Figures
- ii Appendix B: LVIA Assessment Methodology; and
- iii Appendix C: Methodology for the production of photomontages

1.3 The ES supports a full planning application for flexible employment buildings and associated works, including parking spaces, partial delivery of the strategic link road and green infrastructure. This LVIA will refer to the relevant national guidance for:

- i the assessment of landscape character
- ii making judgements about the visual quality of landscapes and their capacity for accommodating development
- iii the siting, layout and design of general industrial buildings, and;
- iv methodology for the assessment of landscape and visual effects which is in accordance with the 'Guidelines for Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment', Third Edition<sup>1</sup>.

1.4 Drawing on this guidance, and an appraisal of the key landscape and visual issues associated with the Development, this LVIA will consider:

- i the character and sensitivity of landscapes within the vicinity of the proposed development; and
- ii the visual amenity of the receiving landscape

1.5 This LVIA will demonstrate that the Site and the local landscape within the vicinity of the Site and the study area vary in sensitivity, but has the capacity to receive development.

1.6 This LVIA is structured as follows:

- i Section 2: The Site - Description of the Site and its immediate context in general terms, identifying the location and main characteristics;
- ii Section 3: Relevant planning policy - Identification of the relevant planning policy context at national and local level that is pertinent to landscape character and visual issues;

- iii Section 4: Development proposals – Description of the Development that forms the basis of the LVIA;
- iv Section 5: Landscape baseline assessment - Identification of baseline criteria of the Site which is to be used to inform the assessment of landscape and visual effects is established;
- v Section 6: Assessment of cumulative effects – Identification of consented schemes in the Site context and the means of assessing any cumulative effects they might generate in conjunction with the Development;
- vi Section 7: Assessment of landscape effects - Description of the methodology for establishing the landscape and visual effects; this determines the assessment of the landscape and visual effects of the existing Site and the Development;
- vii Section 8: Assessment of visual effects - An assessment of the landscape and visual effects of the development in relation to the baseline conditions, and with and without landscape mitigation;
- viii Section 9: Conclusions - A summary of the findings and conclusions.

## 2 The Site

Refer to: **Figure 1.1** - Location Plan  
**Figure 1.2** – Landscape Context  
**Figure 1.3** – Landscape Designations  
**Figure 1.4** – Settlement pattern, significant vegetation & open space  
**Figure 1.5** – Landform

- 2.1 The Site is located approximately 1.8km west of Bicester town centre, on the edge of the town. The Site lies within the Cherwell District Council area, and is part of the proposed North West Bicester Eco Town which is allocated for development by Policy Bicester 1<sup>5</sup>. The Site is 7ha in area and is not situated within a 'sensitive area' (as defined in Part 1 of the EIA Regulations) (i.e. a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), National Park, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, World Heritage Site (WHS), Scheduled Monument or European Site) and is not subject to any statutory or non-statutory designations for nature conservation or heritage. The Site is not in, or within the vicinity, of any statutory or non-statutory designated landscape views.
- 2.2 The Site is currently in agricultural use, and the vegetation on the Site consists of grassland. Boundary hedgerows are present along the northern and eastern peripheries. To the west is a young, planted woodland with dense tree cover. No trees are located within the interior of the Site. No trees on the Site or in the immediate boundaries are subject to a Tree Preservation Order (TPO).
- 2.3 Howes Lane (the A4095) borders the eastern boundary of the Site, extending down to the south east. Howes Lane is bounded by the existing Greenwood residential estate which forms the current urban edge of Bicester.
- 2.4 The Site slopes gently from north west to south east, towards Howes Lane. Levels range between 85.65m AOD in the northern corner of the Site to 82.35m AOD at the low point by Howes Lane.
- 2.5 There are no public rights of way on the Site. A local cycle connection links to the corner of Middleton Stoney Road and Howes Lane. A public bridleway is located approximately 500m to the north of the Site, parallel to the railway line (Chiltern Main Line). The M40 motorway is located approximately 1.5km to the west of the Site. The Site is currently accessible informally off road via the Axis J9 development. There is no direct access from Howes Lane.

- 2.6 An arboricultural survey was undertaken for the Site<sup>2</sup>. The survey was carried out in accordance with BS5837 (2012): Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction – Recommendations. The tree survey identified the extent of hedgerows and tree planting on the Site. Most hedgerows on the Site boundary consist of common hawthorn, with some elder, elm, sycamore, blackthorn and ash planting. The large block of tree planting to the west of the Site consists of field maple, ash, goat willow, wild cherry and elm. A group of sycamore trees are found to the northern boundary of the Site. The majority of hedgerow planting is categorised as C1.2; low quality vegetation with mainly arboricultural value. There are no trees subject to Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) within the Site itself.
- 2.7 A Phase 1 Habitat Survey of the Site was carried out<sup>3</sup>. The survey finds that the Site supports several habitat types, including arable farmland, hedgerows with standard trees, field margins and ditches. Habitats surrounding the Site include residential development to the east, and arable farmland bounded by hedgerow to the north and west. There is also an area of mixed plantation woodland to the west. The data search accompanying the survey conformed that there are, however, no statutory or local designations in respect of wildlife and nature conservation.



### 3 Relevant planning policy

Refer to: **Figure 1.3** – Landscape Designations

3.1 The relevant planning policies in respect of landscape and visual issues are set out in this section.

#### **National policy – National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**

3.2 Relevant Sections within the National Planning Policy Framework<sup>4</sup> in respect of landscape and visual issues are as follows:

- i Section 12 – Achieving well designed places
- ii Section 15 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

#### **Section 12 – Achieving well designed places**

3.3 In respect of Section 12, achieving well designed places, the government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. Good design is seen as a key aspect of sustainable development. This section states at paragraph 123:

*Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities.*

3.4 It goes on to state at paragraph 127:

*Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments... are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping; ... are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting.*

#### **Section 15 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment**

3.5 At Section 15, conserving and enhancing the natural environment, the government seeks to ensure that planning decisions contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment. At paragraph 170 the NPPF states that this is to be achieved by:

*a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes...*

*d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity*

3.6 The NPPF, and in particular these sections have informed relevant planning policies at the local level, as described below.

### **Local policy**

3.7 The Site is located within the Cherwell District Council area, and therefore any development proposals must be considered in respect of policies within the Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 Part 1<sup>5</sup>. Those policies which are relevant to the Site with respect to landscape and visual issues are:

- i Policy Bicester 1: North West Bicester Eco-Town;
- ii Policy ESD 13: Local landscape protection and enhancement; and
- iii Policy ESD 17: Green infrastructure

### **Local Plan Policy Bicester 1: North West Bicester Eco-Town**

3.8 Local Plan Policy Bicester 1 seeks:

- *A well designed approach to the urban edge, which relates development at the periphery to its rural setting and affords good access to the countryside, minimising the impact of development when viewed from the surrounding countryside*
- *Development that respects the landscape setting and that demonstrates enhancement, restoration or creation of wildlife corridors to achieve a net gain in biodiversity*
- *Careful consideration of open space and structural planting around the site to achieve an overall improvement in the landscape and visual impact of the site*
- *Preservation and enhancement of habitats and species on site, particularly protected species and habitats and creation and management of new habitats to achieve an overall net gain in biodiversity including the creation of a local nature reserve and linkages with existing BAP habitats*
- *Careful design of employment units on site to limit adverse visual impact and ensure compatibility with surrounding development*

### **Local Plan Policy ESD 13: Local landscape protection and enhancement**

3.9 Local Plan Policy ESD 13 states:

*Opportunities will be sought to secure the enhancement of the character and appearance of the landscape ... through the restoration, management or enhancement of existing landscapes, features or habitats and where appropriate the creation of new ones, including the planting of woodlands, trees and hedgerows.*

*Development will be expected to respect and enhance local landscape character, securing appropriate mitigation where damage to local landscape character cannot be avoided.*

## **Local Plan Policy ESD 17: Green infrastructure**

3.10 Local Plan Policy ESD 17 states:

*The District's green infrastructure network will be maintained and enhanced through the following measures: ...*

- *Protecting and enhancing existing sites and features forming part of the green infrastructure network*

3.11 These policies are relevant to the Site and have informed the proposals for the retention and protection of existing woodland and hedgerows, as well as new planting proposals to increase tree cover in line with the character of the existing landscape context.

## **North West Bicester Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document, 2016**

3.12 The North West Bicester Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)<sup>6</sup> sets out the key principles for the future development of North West Bicester as an aid for the application and interpretation of Policy Bicester 1. The key principles within the SPD relating to landscape and visual issues are:

- i Development Principle 9: Green infrastructure and landscape
- ii Development Principle 9 (a): Tree planning
- iii Development Principle 9 (b): development edges
- iv Development Principle (c): Hedgerows and stream corridors
- v Development Principle (e): Biodiversity

3.13 Development requirements relating to each of these principles are also relevant.

3.14 These principles and requirements have informed proposals for the Site for the retention of natural features and for proposals for the planting of the Site.

## 4 Development proposals

4.1 The key elements of the proposed Phase 3 of the Axis J9 development includes:

- 17,808 sqm Gross External Area (GEA) flexible employment development (use classes E (g) (iii) and/or B2 and/or B8);
- Parking spaces for cars/light goods vehicles (LGVs) and heavy goods vehicles (HGVs)
- Temporary access into the Site via the Axis J9 development prior to the SLR being delivered;
- Delivery of part of the SLR included within the Site (in line with the OCC design) (including pedestrian and cycle links); and
- 40% provision of Green Infrastructure, which will include features for biodiversity net gain, landscape screening and drainage.

4.2 For further information refer to Cornish Architects drawing TP\_003\_Proposed Site Plan\_20019.

## 5 Landscape baseline assessment

5.1 This section describes the principal spatial and built form components which give the Site and surrounding area its particular characteristics. The relevance of these components is identified and described below.

5.2 Both a desk study and a visual Site analysis have been undertaken. Key documents include the following:

- i National Character Area Profile: 107. Cotswolds<sup>7</sup>
- ii Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study (OWLS)<sup>8</sup>

5.3 The following are key issues in respect of landscape and visual effect relating to the Site:

- i Location and character of landscape elements and components which contribute to the landscape character
- ii Identification of key receptors and their sensitivity.
- iii Determination of the existing landscape character and visual quality of the Site.
- iv The ability of the existing landscape to accommodate change.
- v The likely effects of development within the landscape – whether it is negative or positive, including:
  - i 1) Potential landscape effects on the existing landscape character of the Site and its context
  - 2) Potential visual effects on views into, out of and across the Site

5.4 For the purposes of this assessment the following elements are considered relevant in determining the character of the study area: existing urban form, open space and vegetation; topography; and existing land use.

Refer to: **Figure 1.3** – Landscape designations  
**Figure 1.4** – Settlement pattern, significant vegetation & open space  
**Figure 1.5** - Topography  
**Figure 1.6** – Landscape Character Areas

## Topography

- 5.5 The topography is an important part of the character of the area. Visually, it is relevant in defining the character of views around the Site, particularly in its only very slightly undulating character.
- 5.6 The Site very gently slopes downwards towards Howes Lane from west to east, from a high point of 86.50m AOD to a low point of 82.00m AOD along Howes Lane. The surrounding landscape is similarly very gently undulating (see **Fig. 1.5**). To the south of the Site, the natural topography has been disrupted to create development platforms. At a smaller scale the topography of Bicester has been manipulated and responds to the pattern of settlement.
- 5.7 The topography of the Site itself is susceptible to change as a result of the Development, but this would fit with the local condition. Wider patterns of landform to the south and east of the Site have been disrupted since the second half of the twentieth century. The value of the local topography is low due to the frequency and scope for substitution of local patterns. The sensitivity of this receptor is therefore medium low.

## Significant Vegetation

- 5.8 Existing vegetation is identified and assessed at two levels – firstly, the contribution it makes to the area as a whole and secondly, specific vegetation which may be physically affected by the Development. The existing vegetation has been mapped using aerial photography with supporting fieldwork.
- 5.9 The northern and eastern boundaries of the Site consist of existing native hedgerows. A block of mature woodland approximately 40m wide forms the western boundary of the Site. The Site itself was formerly agricultural land and the majority of the area remains as grassland. There is some scarring from vehicle manoeuvres and soil storage from earlier phases of the Axis J9 development.
- 5.10 The verge to both sides of Howes Lane is vegetated with a mixture of tree and hedgerow planting. The planting varies in density along the length of the road, with a typical width of 2m and a typical height of 4m (the hedge did not appear to have been cut within the last year at the time of visit). There are occasional gaps in the hedgerows to Howes Lane, including one to the Site boundary.
- 5.11 Beyond the Site, larger groups of trees are found at Bignall Park, lining Middleton Stoney Road. The woodland here is predominantly deciduous tree planting. The surrounding agricultural landscape consists of arable fields bounded with native hedgerows and occasional mature tree planting. Some small copses of trees are also found along field boundaries and to the sides of localised watercourses.
- 5.12 The local vegetation has moderate value in that it is largely undesignated (though some trees within the context are subject to Tree Protection Orders) but is of good quality with a clear pattern and limited detracting features except occasional gaps in hedgerows. Features susceptible to change are those most common and replaceable – the ungrazed grassland that forms the bulk of the Site. As proposals will affect vegetation, it has a medium susceptibility to change, resulting in a medium sensitivity to landscape effects.

## Settlement

- 5.13 The settlement is used in the assessment as a shorthand term for the pattern and inter-relationship of buildings and open space. A study of this pattern can contribute to an understanding of landscape and character to highlight the ratio of built form to open space as a precursor to defining landscape character.
- 5.14 The Site is located to the western edge of Bicester, and it is separated from existing suburban residential areas to the east by Howes Lane, which forms part of the loop road around the town. The Site itself does not contain any built form. Beyond Howes Lane, the landscape is defined by isolated farmsteads and arable pasture. Phases 1 and 2 of the Axis J9 development lie to the south of the Site and have been developed for employment use. The villages of Bucknell, Middleton Stoney and Chesterton are the largest settlements outside Bicester, all within approximately 3km of the Site (see **Fig. 1.4**).
- 5.15 The Site lies within an area allocated for mixed employment and housing development under the Cherwell District Council Local Plan (Policy Bicester 1). Additional settlement within the area therefore represents a change to the existing baseline but would be consistent with the delivery of the Local Plan.
- 5.16 Patterns of settlement have a low susceptibility to the Development as it could be accommodated without adverse consequences for the existing baseline. While it would extend employment use into an unbuilt area, this would be consistent with the delivery of the mixed use allocation covering the Site and the surrounding area. The current pattern of settlement is of low value, being relatively frequently found in the wider area, and having scope for substitution should it change. This results in a low sensitivity.

## Existing land use

- 5.17 The existing land use shows the land to the west of the Site as predominantly woodland and agricultural. The farmland is interspersed with small settlements and woodland. The land to the east of the Site is predominantly suburban residential, which also contains a mixture of public open space and parks, as well as employment land and schools. As development within the surrounding mixed use allocation comes forward, patterns of land use will change.
- 5.18 While local patterns of land use have some beneficial features as well as features with potential for improvement, the uses found on the Site are frequently found in the Site context and there is scope for substitution for any area lost. While there would be a change at Site level, the Proposed Development would align with the delivery of the mixed use allocation to North West Bicester. This results in a low sensitivity to change.

## Existing landscape character

- 5.19 Landscape assessment encompasses appraisal of physical, aesthetic and intangible attributes including sense of place, rarity or representativeness, and unspoilt appearance. The combination of landscape elements (trees, hedgerows, woodlands, settlement and buildings, their architecture and fabric) and their arrangement give the different areas a unique sense of place, or 'character'. These aspects, together with scale and character of surrounding landscapes, patterns and scale of landform, land cover and built development, need to be taken into account when assessing landscape effect.
- 5.20 Natural England has produced a National Character Area (NCA) Map for England, which identifies broad areas of distinct and individual countryside character. The character map takes account of the physical landform and the effect of human activities on the natural world. The national framework of character areas identifies and describes the diversity of landscape character across England and provides a common starting point for more detailed local assessments.
- 5.21 The development Site is located within the Cotswolds Landscape Character Area no. 107<sup>7</sup> which summarises this area as follows:

*The dominant pattern of the Cotswold landscape is of a steep scarp crowned by a high, open wold; the beginning of a long and rolling dip slope cut by a series of increasingly wooded valleys. The scarp provides a backdrop to the major settlements of Cheltenham, Gloucester, Stroud and Bath and provides expansive views across the Severn and Avon Vales to the west. Smaller towns and villages nestle at the scarp foot, in the valley bottoms and on the gentler valley sides at springlines. Scattered hamlets and isolated farmsteads are found on the higher ground. The limestone creates a strong sense of place and unity which carries through to the buildings and walls which have been built using local limestone for centuries.*

- 5.22 Key characteristics of this landscape include:

- i Open and expansive scarp and high wold dipping gently to the southeast, dissected by river valleys.
- ii Arable farming dominates the high wold and dip slope while permanent pasture prevails on the steep slopes of the scarp and river valleys with pockets of internationally important limestone grassland.
- iii The majority of the principal rivers flow south-eastwards forming the headwaters of the Thames with the exception of rivers in the west
- iv Rich history from Neolithic barrows, iron-age hill forts and Roman roads and villas to deserted medieval villages, grand country houses, cloth mills and Second World War airfields. The field patterns largely reflect both the medieval open field system, with fossilised areas of ridge and furrow, and later planned enclosures, which flow into the River Avon and then the Severn Estuary



- 5.23 The Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study (OWLS)<sup>8</sup> commissioned jointly by Oxfordshire County Council, Natural England and The Earth Trust investigated the landscape character and biodiversity of Oxfordshire. The Site is located in the Wooded Estatelands landscape type. Key characteristics of this area are summarised as:
- i Medium to large, regularly shaped hedged fields
  - ii Small, geometric plantations and belts of trees.
  - iii Large country houses set in ornamental parklands.
  - iv Small estate villages and dispersed farmsteads.
- 5.24 The Site fits to the description of Wooded Estatelands landscape character, with the regular, large field pattern, a small geometric plantation to the west and dispersed farmsteads to the locality. The Site lies within a mixed use allocation for development. Parts of the allocation have been delivered, and change is therefore underway.
- 5.25 Using these national, regional and local landscape character studies, together with our own landscape context analysis (land use, urban settlement, topography and significant vegetation) together with maps, aerial photographs and fieldwork, we have identified the following key character areas which represent the Site and its landscape context. These areas are shown on Figure 1.6.

#### **Character Area 1: Estate Parkland**

- 5.26 This character area comprises the estate of Bignell Park. The landscape character is defined by large woodland copses of deciduous trees, and with a designed landscape connected to historic estate buildings. Large areas of the landscape are used for recreation, with some agricultural fields and plantations attached. Overall, the landscape quality can be described as 'good', with a moderate landscape value as the area is undesignated but is of medium importance and rarity, in part due to the local ecological value attached to Bignell Park (non-statutory). Due to its separation from the Site by existing development and strong boundary planting, the area is not susceptible to landscape effects as a result of the Development, resulting in a medium low sensitivity.

#### **Character Area 2: Bicester suburban residential**

- 5.27 Suburban residential comprising a mix of circa late 20th century brick build houses, mainly two storeys with gardens. The massing is arranged in curvilinear forms around cul-de-sac estate roads. Rear gardens fences face towards Howes Lane and the Site. The fences are of mainly timber construction. Articulation of built form, differences in treatments to front gardens, replacement windows and conservatories as well as the high degree of frontage and roadside parking detract from the character of the area. The area has a medium susceptibility to change as it has some ability to accommodate the Development without consequences to the baseline – there is scope for the setting of the western edge of Bicester near the Site and views west to change. The value of the landscape is low as it is relatively common with some recognisable structure but also room for improvement.

### **Character Area 3: Chesterton Village**

5.28 The character area consists of a range of brick and stone buildings, with some thatched-roofed dwellings, ranging from 13<sup>th</sup> century to 20<sup>th</sup> century. The character area is defined by the linear arrangement of buildings along Alchester Road, with the landscape behind these buildings consisting of small fields and woodland areas. There are several listed buildings to the character area, including the estate of Chesterton Lodge. The landscape could accommodate the Development without adverse consequences given the strong separation from the Site of the area. The value of the landscape is high, the centre of the village having been recognised through designation as a Conservation Area. This results in a medium level of sensitivity.

### **Character Area 4: Agricultural land**

5.29 West and south of Bicester there is a recognisable pattern of agricultural land use with well vegetated field boundaries, traversed by a network of public footpaths. There are some former agricultural related buildings and detracting features such as the Bicester to Bletchley railway line and the M40 motorway. Fields are used for arable crops and some grazing pasture. Hedgerows comprise of mixed deciduous native species. The character area is traversed by a network of drainage ditches and natural brooks. The value of this landscape is moderate – it is not designated but is generally of good quality and is of value for its amenity value to those using the footpaths. The area has some ability to accommodate the Development without adverse consequences for the retention of the existing landscape baseline. This is due to the scale of the Development relative to the area, and the enclosure and separation of the Site from the wider area by earlier phases of the Axis J9 development and the woodland to the western edge of the Site. The Site itself, and areas to the north would experience landscape effects as a result of the Development, resulting in an overall medium susceptibility to change. Combined with the moderate value of the area, it therefore has medium sensitivity to landscape effects.

### **Character Area 5: Employment Site**

5.30 Built form within the Site is of a large scale, organised along access routes. Large scale drainage features including swales, and the use of bunds to the southern and eastern boundaries create distinctive landform, and are planted with groups of native trees. The boundaries are well vegetated with native woodland and hedgerow planting. Within the Site, to accessible and visible areas planting is smaller scale and more ornamental. Between buildings, further tree planting breaks up built form and strengthens patterns of Green Infrastructure. Views to the east and south are to mature tree planting to the west of Bicester or the north of Bignell Park, while views to the north and west are open over agricultural land.

5.31 The landscape can accommodate the Development with very limited consequences to the baseline (though some loss of openness to the north), and the Development represents a continuation of this character. The value of the area is low – it is not degraded or in need of recovery, but is common and has much scope for substitution. The sensitivity of the area is therefore low.

**Character Area 6: Emerging suburban residential**

5.32 To the south of Bicester lies an emerging area of suburban residential development. This has a different character from the earlier built form immediately east of the Site. A greater variety of materials has been used, with stone, brick and rendered buildings with slate and tiled roofs. Built form is arranged in connected blocks, rather than around connected cul-de-sacs, and pre-existing landscape features such as copses and hedgerows have been retained, and complemented by pocket public spaces and play areas, as well as large scale sports facilities to the south of the area.

5.33 The area is separated from the Site and not susceptible to change as a result of the Proposed Development. The value of the area is moderate as it has limited scope for substitution, and is of good to high quality. The sensitivity of the Site is therefore medium low.

**Table 5.1: Summary of Landscape Receptors**

Refer to: **Figure 1.4** – Settlement pattern, significant vegetation & open space  
**Figure 1.5** - Topography  
**Figure 1.6** – Landscape Character Areas

Landscape receptor	Susceptibility	Value	Sensitivity
Topography	Medium	Low	Medium-low
Significant vegetation	Medium	Moderate	Medium
Settlement	Low	Low	Low
Land use	Low	Low	Low
LCA 1. Estate parkland	Low	Moderate	Medium low
LCA 2. Bicester suburban residential	Medium	Low	Medium low
LCA 3. Chesterton village	Low	High	Medium
LCA 4. Agricultural land	Medium	Moderate	Medium
LCA 5. Employment Site	Low	Low	Low
LCA 6. Emerging suburban residential	Low	Moderate	Medium low

- 5.34 **Table 5.1** shows that landscape character areas well separated from the Site have a low susceptibility to change as a result of the Development, while those closer have a greater potential to experience change. Topography and significant vegetation are also susceptible to change, but settlement and land use are more able to accommodate the Development as it is in line with the delivery of local strategies that cover these receptors. Chesterton village is the only receptor with high landscape value as it includes a Conservation Area; other receptors are of moderate or low value reflecting their greater frequency and scope for substitution.
- 5.35 The combined range of susceptibilities and values across the landscape receptor results in a range of sensitivities from low to medium.

## 6 Assessment of landscape effects

- 6.1 This section of the LVIA assesses the effects on the existing landscape character – both short and long term, which will depend on the scale of the Development, and the value and significance of the wider landscape.
- 6.2 The Landscape Character Areas (**Figure 1.6**) that are potentially affected by the Development have been identified within the baseline assessment, together with the Susceptibility, Value and the resulting Sensitivity of these landscapes.
- 6.3 The ZTV for the proposals, derived from the baseline study (**Figure 1.7**) in combination with studies on vegetation and settlement determines the extent to which the new development will affect the existing landscape character of the surrounding area.
- 6.4 The effects of construction and the effects of lighting are considered in respect of predicted effects on landscape character.
- 6.5 The magnitude of change to each landscape character area will be determined by what changes are made to the various elements already described which combine to make up a landscape's character. Magnitude of change is assessed in conjunction with landscape sensitivity to produce the predicted landscape effects of the Development. These are detailed in **Tables 6.1 to 6.10**.

### Mitigation

- 6.6 The reduction or elimination of negative effects on the landscape and visual environment is a key part of the development proposals. The proposed mitigation measures and their effect in terms of reducing potential effects are detailed in **Tables 6.1 to 6.10**.
- 6.7 The mitigation strategy will follow the following principles:
- i Avoidance:  
The location of the Development proposals has been carefully considered from the inception of the project to avoid adverse effects. All proposed buildings will have a height of 16m or less. Proposed built form is located away from the hedgerow boundaries to the edges of the Site. The majority of field boundary hedgerows to the perimeter of the Site will be retained.
  - ii Reduction:  
The reduction of potential effects on the landscape has been very carefully considered. A substantial new number of trees and hedgerows are proposed to augment existing hedgerows and areas of vegetation, and also to create new blocks of woodland and new hedgerows consistent with the character of the surrounding landscape. Areas of this planting will be installed over mounds to the Site edges, raising the planting and increasing its effectiveness at screening the Development. Collectively this new planting will serve to screen, filter and soften views of the Development.

6.8 The strategies of reduction and avoidance are an important part of the Development proposals. The development principles outlined in the North West Bicester SPD emphasise the importance of green infrastructure networks, the retention and reinstatement of hedgerow patterns, and the consideration of visual and landscape effects to the existing context.

6.9 The inherent mitigation measures and their effect in terms of reducing potential landscape effects are considered as part of the assessment of the Development in Tables 6.1 to 6.10. Additional detail of the scale of proposed habitats and biodiversity is described in Chapter 10: Biodiversity.

- i 10m wide hedgerow buffers are proposed to the eastern boundary where existing hedgerows are to be retained. Along part of the eastern buffer, native hedgerow is proposed between the built form and Howes Lane to augment the existing hedgerow planting. Elsewhere, the 10m wide buffer will consist of wildflower grassland or native woodland planting with intermittent native tree planting.

**Purpose:** to protect existing hedgerows in line with objectives set out in the North West Bicester Masterplan SPD<sup>6</sup>. Additional hedgerow planting to Howes Lane filters and softens views of the proposed built form and augments existing green infrastructure. The 10m buffer retains existing important landscape features and protects existing biodiverse habitats, while reinforcing the existing character of the local landscape.

- ii Tree planting and hedgerow planting will front the Site boundary along Howes Lane.

**Purpose:** To augment the retained existing hedgerow and tree planting along Howes Lane, reinforcing existing green infrastructure and visually reinforcing the strong character of hedgerows to the Site.

- iii Within the areas of built form, trees will soften and break up the outline of the built form. Tree and hedgerow planting will also form a vegetated edge to the eastern edge of the Site along Howes Lane. The reinstatement of hedgerow and tree planting along the Howes Lane edge will strengthen the exiting green infrastructure network to the Site and its immediate context.

**Purpose:** To provide visual amenity and variety of vegetation within the residential area, and to connect to existing green infrastructure.

## Effects of construction

6.10 There will be a period of construction activity during implementation of the Development. The Site shall be subjected to following activities during construction. These will have the potential to generate effects on landscape character and visual amenity:

- i Material stockpiling.
- ii Lighting of the works.
- iii Movement and activity of construction equipment and plant.
- iv Increase of heavy traffic to Site.
- v Other Site related activities.

6.11 It is not envisaged that tower cranes will be required during the construction period.

## **Mitigation of construction effects**

6.12 The potential effects during construction already identified will be short term when compared to the effect of the completed Development discussed below, however, they need to be addressed in order to minimise any adverse effects on surrounding receptors. In addition to the mitigation of the long term effects of the Development, a number of measures will be undertaken to minimise construction phase effects. These will include:

- i screening of Site with temporary hoarding;
- ii managed working hours;
- iii controlled access points;
- iv considered location of stockpiles and equipment; and
- v considered location of temporary buildings/cabins

The CEMP will be in place for the duration of the construction works.

## **Predicted effects during construction**

6.13 Beyond activities on Site and a short term increase of heavy traffic to the Site, there are not likely to be any effects during the construction phase which affect areas or receptors not already affected by the Development itself. For this reason, no other specific mitigation measures will be required beyond the measures listed above and in the CEMP. In conclusion, the predicted overall effect of the construction phase of the Development is likely to be major adverse in terms of both landscape character and visual amenity. However, these effects will only exist for the construction period.

## **Effects of lighting**

6.14 A Lighting Assessment is submitted with the planning application. The introduction of development will increase lighting level throughout the Site and potentially within the context of the Site. There is currently no highway lighting to Howes Lane; light spill from internal and external lighting to residences to Howes Lane are the only source of light in the immediate Site context.

6.15 Generally lighting effects will be greatest on residential receptors on the edge of Bicester. Proposed lighting to the backs of buildings on the eastern edge of the Site will be visible over the top of the existing hedgerow, and will be operational throughout the night. Proposed planting to the eastern boundary may help to filter lighting visible from the east as it matures. Light levels within the Site, particularly along the access road will be higher. Woodland to the western edge of the Site will prevent lighting effects reaching west of the Site.

## Mitigating lighting effects

- 6.16 The amount of light and ‘throw’ or ‘spill’ can be mitigated and reduced through the use of appropriate shrouds, angled fittings, and low energy light fittings. Lighting is proposed only where it is necessary, limiting the area to be lit. Planting to the edge of the Site will also help to mitigate against the effects of lighting.

## Predicted effects of lighting

- 6.17 Taken within the context of these mitigation measures and the existing rural and suburban setting, it can be concluded that there will be a small encroachment of night-time lighting effects on landscape character areas 2, 4 and 4: the suburban western edge of Bicester near the Site, the earlier phases of employment development to the south of the Site, and the agricultural land within the Site and to the north. Effects on landscape character and visual amenity due to lighting are therefore to be assessed as being moderate adverse.

## Assessment of cumulative effects

- 6.18 The purpose of cumulative landscape and visual effects is to identify additional changes caused by the Site in addition to other similar developments, or as the combined effect of a set of developments taken together.
- 6.19 The assessment of cumulative effects in this LVIA focuses specifically on the *additive* landscape and visual effects of the Development with identified committed development, as opposed to the *combined* effects of all the past, present and future proposals together with the Development.
- 6.20 Quod have identified a number of planning applications in the area. Where these have the potential to cause additional effects to landscape and/or visual receptors assessed in this paper, they have been included in the relevant tables and summaries.
- 6.21 Timescales for these developments to come forward vary, and some of the applications identified have been included in the baseline, as they have been largely built. Others are subject to further planning approvals from Cherwell District Council, as well as future enabling works such as access roads and other necessary infrastructure. For the purposes of this assessment, they are considered for their future potential development in conjunction with the Proposed Development on the Site, and its resultant predicted landscape and visual effects.
- 6.22 The following Sites have been identified as having the potential to result in landscape and visual effects in addition to those caused by the Development (Chapter 3: EIA Methodology and Appendix 3.4):

1. Bicester Eco-Town Exemplar Site, Banbury Road, Bicester (10/01780/HYBRID)
2. Himley Village (14/02121/OUT)
3. Bicester Eco-Town Exemplar Site, Banbury Road, Bicester (14/01384/OUT)
4. Land adjacent to Bicester Road and South West of Avonbury Business Park, Howes Lane, Bicester (14/01641/OUT)



10. A4095 Strategic Link Road (SLR), Twenty HA of Land Proposal of New Highway Aligned with Howes Lane, Bicester (14/01967/F)

- 6.23 With respect to visual effects in particular, the level of cumulative effects is assessed with regards to what is visible within the observer's arc of vision at the same time, without moving their head, as described within the GLVIA3<sup>1</sup>. It is considered likely that all these developments will be visible in some of the assessed views, and where this is the case a statement on cumulative effects is included in the relevant visual assessment tables.
- 6.24 Similarly, the developments listed have the potential to cause additional landscape effects to a number of the receptors assessed, and this is reflected in the relevant tables.

### **Landscape effects**

- 6.25 The predicted Landscape Effect brought about by the Development on each landscape receptor are set out within the following tables:

**Table 6.1:** Assessment of Landscape Effects – Landscape Receptor 1 - Topography

<b>Receptor 1: Topography</b>	
<b>Proximity to Site</b>	Close, includes Site
<b>Landscape receptor</b>	Gently undulating topography and steady slope to south east across the Site with some disruptions to create development platforms to the south and east.
<b>Sensitivity</b>	Medium low
<b>Magnitude of Change</b>	Low  The proposed intervention would result in a minor alteration to the baseline which would be localised and at the level of the immediate landscape setting of the Site. The creation of development platforms, bunds and swales would alter the baseline topography, but this would be consistent with the earlier phases, and not uncharacteristic of the existing landscape. Ditches, cuttings and embankments are all found within the wider landscape.
<b>Predicted landscape Effects</b>	Minor moderate
<b>Nature of Landscape Effects</b>	Adverse
<b>Description of mitigation</b>	Swales have been shaped and planted to respond to features of the Site and to appear attractive and coherent with earlier phases of the Development. Bunds have similarly been planted naturalistically to help them integrate into the wider context of the landscape.
<b>Magnitude of change with mitigation in place</b>	Low
<b>Predicted landscape effects with mitigation measures in place (residual effect)</b>	Minor moderate
<b>Nature of Landscape Effects with mitigation measure in place</b>	Adverse
<b>Sites with the potential to result in cumulative effects</b>	All
<b>Additional magnitude of change</b>	Medium. The creation of development platforms, drainage features and bunds is assumed across all cumulative sites, causing widespread changes to the topography of the local landscape.
<b>Predicted additional landscape effects</b>	Moderate adverse

**Table 6.2:** Assessment of Landscape Effects – Landscape Receptor 2

<b>Landscape Receptor 2: Significant vegetation</b>	
<b>Proximity to Site</b>	Close, includes Site.
<b>Landscape receptor</b>	Coherent local patterns of native hedgerows with occasional trees to field boundaries. Blocks and small copses of woodland.
<b>Sensitivity</b>	Medium
<b>Magnitude of Change</b>	Negligible Changes to significant vegetation within the Site will be very minor and not uncharacteristic of the receiving landscape. Interventions in boundary vegetation will reduce a 31m section of mature hedgerow, while hedgerows elsewhere on the Site boundary will be reinforced.
<b>Predicted landscape Effects</b>	Negligible
<b>Nature of Landscape Effects</b>	Negligible
<b>Description of mitigation</b>	Augmentation and reinforcement of hedgerows through additional planting. Creation of copses and groups of trees around swales and linear features including roads and bunds.
<b>Magnitude of change with mitigation in place</b>	Low. The intervention would cause localised change at the level of the immediate landscape setting of the Site through minor alterations to key features of the baseline. Proposals would augment and strengthen the boundary of the Site, which introducing more varied types of vegetation through the Site, in keeping with copses and linear features found elsewhere in the landscape. Landscape proposals align with the Development Principles and Requirements in the North West Bicester Masterplan SPD <sup>6</sup> .
<b>Predicted landscape effects with mitigation measures in place (residual effect)</b>	Minor moderate
<b>Nature of Landscape Effects with mitigation measures in place</b>	Beneficial
<b>Sites with the potential to result in cumulative effects</b>	All
<b>Additional magnitude of change</b>	Medium. Development to these sites in line with the North West Bicester Masterplan SPD will strengthen Green Infrastructure, increase biodiversity and reinforce hedgerow and stream corridors.
<b>Predicted additional landscape effects</b>	Minor moderate beneficial

**Table 6.3:** Assessment of Landscape Effects – Landscape Receptor 3

<b>Landscape Receptor 3: Settlement</b>	
<b>Proximity to Site</b>	Close
<b>Landscape receptor</b>	Pattern of consistent residential development east of the site up to Howes Lane and isolated farms beyond it. Employment use development to the south of the Site. Wider mixed use allocation to NW Bicester.
<b>Sensitivity</b>	Low
<b>Magnitude of Change</b>	Low  The Development will create a small extension of the existing pattern of built form for employment uses established to the south of the Site, and in line with the mixed use allocation to NW Bicester. The change will be localised and at the level of the immediate setting of the Site.
<b>Predicted landscape Effects</b>	Minor
<b>Nature of Landscape Effects</b>	Adverse, but although the change will alter the baseline, this will be in line with mixed use allocation of the wider area
<b>Description of mitigation</b>	Built form has been located consistently with the employment development to the south, and with the Development Principles and requirements in the North West Bicester Masterplan SPD <sup>6</sup> .
<b>Magnitude of change with mitigation in place</b>	Low
<b>Predicted landscape effects with mitigation measures in place (residual effect)</b>	Minor
<b>Nature of Landscape Effects with mitigation measure in place</b>	Adverse, but although the change will alter the baseline, this will be in line with mixed use allocation of the wider area
<b>Sites with the potential to result in cumulative effects</b>	All
<b>Additional magnitude of change</b>	High. Additional built form will appear across all sites, increasing the amount of settlement in the study area. Although this will be a change from the baseline, this will be in line with the delivery of policies in the Cherwell Local Plan and will occur across several landscape character areas.
<b>Predicted additional landscape effects</b>	Moderate adverse, but although the change will alter the baseline, this will be in line with mixed use allocation of the wider area

**Table 6.4:** Assessment of Landscape Effects – Landscape Receptor 4

<b>Landscape Receptor 4: Land use</b>	
<b>Proximity to Site</b>	Close
<b>Landscape receptor</b>	Pattern of suburban residential uses east of Howes Lane, employment use to south of Site, agricultural and vacant uses elsewhere. Mixed use allocation to NW Bicester.
<b>Sensitivity</b>	Low
<b>Magnitude of Change</b>	Low  There will be a minor alteration to patterns of land use through the extension of employment uses into the Site, and the loss of an area of vacant/agricultural land. The intervention will be localised and at the level of the Site itself, but will be discernible.
<b>Predicted landscape Effects</b>	Minor
<b>Nature of Landscape Effects</b>	Adverse, but in line with mixed use allocation of the wider area
<b>Description of mitigation</b>	None relevant
<b>Magnitude of change with mitigation in place</b>	Low
<b>Predicted landscape effects with mitigation measures in place (residual effect)</b>	Minor
<b>Nature of Landscape Effects with mitigation measure in place</b>	Adverse, but in line with mixed use allocation of the wider area
<b>Sites with the potential to result in cumulative effects</b>	All
<b>Additional magnitude of change</b>	Medium. Changes in land use will appear across all sites, although some areas of woodland, field boundaries and existing farms will be retained. Although this will be a change from the baseline, this will be in line with the delivery of policies in the Cherwell Local Plan.
<b>Predicted additional landscape effects</b>	Minor moderate adverse

**Table 6.5:** Assessment of Landscape Effects – Character Area 1

<b>Character Area 1: Estate parkland</b>	
<b>Proximity to Site</b>	Close
<b>Landscape receptor</b>	Designed parkland landscape; open landscape interspersed with groups of trees
<b>Sensitivity</b>	Medium low
<b>Magnitude of Change</b>	Negligible The area is separated from the Site by existing phases of the Axis J9 development. Development on the Site would not introduce any discernible difference in the aesthetic and perceptual quality of the Site in comparison to the baseline condition.
<b>Predicted landscape Effects</b>	Negligible
<b>Nature of Landscape Effects</b>	Negligible
<b>Description of mitigation</b>	None relevant
<b>Magnitude of change with mitigation in place</b>	Negligible
<b>Predicted landscape effects with mitigation measures in place (residual effect)</b>	Negligible
<b>Nature of Landscape Effects with mitigation measure in place</b>	Negligible
<b>Sites with the potential to result in cumulative effects</b>	Proposed Development will have a negligible effect on this character area and will not therefore cause landscape effects in conjunction with those resulting from development on any other site.

**Table 6.6:** Assessment of Landscape Effects – Character Area 2

<b>Character Area 2: Bicester suburban residential</b>	
<b>Proximity to Site</b>	Close
<b>Landscape receptor</b>	Suburban residential area
<b>Sensitivity</b>	Medium low
<b>Magnitude of Change</b>	Low Minor loss or alteration to the baseline character as a result of the encroachment of built form into the existing open countryside to the area’s edge and resulting loss of openness.
<b>Predicted landscape Effects</b>	Minor moderate
<b>Nature of Landscape Effects</b>	Adverse
<b>Description of mitigation</b>	Verge hedgerow planting retained to Howes Lane and augmented with intermittent native tree planting and augmented hedgerow planting where necessary.
<b>Magnitude of change with mitigation in place</b>	Low
<b>Predicted landscape effects with mitigation measures in place (residual effect)</b>	Minor moderate
<b>Nature of Landscape Effects with mitigation measure in place</b>	Adverse
<b>Sites with the potential to result in cumulative effects</b>	3, 4, 10
<b>Additional magnitude of change</b>	These sites will further enclose the western edge of Bicester, which is currently open to the surrounding countryside, further reducing openness. This will increase the magnitude of change and the area over which it is experienced to a medium level.
<b>Predicted additional landscape effects</b>	Moderate adverse

**Table 6.7:** Assessment of Landscape Effects – Character Area 3

<b>Character Area 3: Chesterton Village</b>	
<b>Proximity to Site</b>	Long
<b>Landscape receptor</b>	Conservation Area and setting; network of small fields and tree copses,
<b>Sensitivity</b>	Medium
<b>Magnitude of Change</b>	Negligible There will be a very minor loss to the baseline character through the encroachment of built form towards the setting of the village and loss of field pattern, but this will be at site level only and would not introduce any discernible difference in the aesthetic or perceptual quality of the area.
<b>Predicted landscape Effects</b>	Negligible
<b>Nature of Landscape Effects</b>	Adverse
<b>Description of mitigation</b>	Site will be buffered by native vegetation which will integrate the built form into the surrounding landscape context and contribute to the green infrastructure of the surrounding area.
<b>Magnitude of change with mitigation in place</b>	Negligible
<b>Predicted landscape effects with mitigation measures in place (residual effect)</b>	Negligible
<b>Nature of Landscape Effects with mitigation measure in place</b>	Negligible
<b>Sites with the potential to result in cumulative effects</b>	The Development will have a negligible effect on this character area and will not therefore cause landscape effects in conjunction with those resulting from development on any other site.



**Table 6.8:** Assessment of Landscape Effects – Character Area 4

<b>Character Area 4: Agricultural landscape</b>	
<b>Proximity to Site</b>	Close/on Site
<b>Landscape receptor</b>	Existing patterns of fields and hedgerows
<b>Sensitivity</b>	Medium
<b>Magnitude of Change</b>	There will be a high level of effect within the Site itself due to the transformational nature of the Development. The existing open land will be subject to the construction of new buildings, roads and ancillary structures in addition to the drainage and soft landscape schemes. Surrounding areas will be subject to a lower level of change according to the distance from the Site. This change will entail the loss of openness and the encroachment of built form. The enclosure of the Site between existing woodland and the edge of the character area helps to create separation between it and the rest of the area, reducing the potential magnitude of change.
<b>Predicted landscape Effects</b>	Moderate major within the Site itself. Moderate elsewhere in the character area.
<b>Nature of Landscape Effects</b>	Adverse
<b>Description of mitigation</b>	Site to be buffered by native vegetation which will soften and break up the outline of buildings and contribute to the green infrastructure of the surrounding area. Existing hedgerows and woodland will be retained to the boundaries to be augmented with intermittent native tree and hedgerow planting. Parkland landscape groups of swales, groups of trees and open grassland will soften the edge of built form.
<b>Magnitude of change with mitigation in place</b>	High within the Site itself, low elsewhere
<b>Predicted landscape effects with mitigation measures in place (residual effect)</b>	Moderate major within the Site itself. Minor Moderate elsewhere.
<b>Nature of Landscape Effects with mitigation measure in place</b>	Adverse
<b>Sites with the potential to result in cumulative effects</b>	2, 3, 4, 10
<b>Additional magnitude of change</b>	These sites will further enclose the western edge of Bicester, which is currently open to the surrounding countryside, further reducing openness. This will increase the magnitude of change and the area over which it is experienced to a medium level.
<b>Predicted additional landscape effects</b>	Moderate adverse

**Table 6.9:** Assessment of Landscape Effects – Character Area 5

<b>Character Area 5: Employment development</b>	
<b>Proximity to Site</b>	Close
<b>Landscape receptor</b>	Pattern of large new build rectilinear buildings arranged along access roads. Surrounding landscape of drainage features, bunds with native hedgerow, woodland and tree planting, with smaller scale ornamental planting to internal areas. Large areas of car parking between buildings.
<b>Sensitivity</b>	Low
<b>Magnitude of Change</b>	Low The Development will cause a minor loss of openness in views to the north through the creation of additional built form and further planting to the Site edges.
<b>Predicted landscape Effects</b>	Minor
<b>Nature of Landscape Effects</b>	Adverse
<b>Description of mitigation</b>	Planting within the Site will screen and soften the appearance of new built form, but the reduction in openness to the north will remain.
<b>Magnitude of change with mitigation in place</b>	Low
<b>Predicted landscape effects with mitigation measures in place (residual effect)</b>	Minor
<b>Nature of Landscape Effects with mitigation measure in place</b>	Adverse
<b>Sites with the potential to result in cumulative effects</b>	2, 4, 10
<b>Additional magnitude of change</b>	These sites will enclose the existing development, reducing openness to the west and north though the extension of built form into existing open land. This will increase the magnitude of change to a medium level.
<b>Predicted additional landscape effects</b>	Minor moderate adverse

**Table 6.10:** Assessment of Landscape Effects – Character Area 6

<b>Character Area 6: Emerging suburban residential</b>	
<b>Proximity to Site</b>	Medium
<b>Landscape receptor</b>	Blocks of mixed material built form incorporating existing landscape features and areas of public open space. Green setting to the south.
<b>Sensitivity</b>	Medium low
<b>Magnitude of Change</b>	Negligible The Development would not result in any discernible difference in aesthetic and perceptual quality within this character area.
<b>Predicted landscape Effects</b>	Negligible
<b>Nature of Landscape Effects</b>	Negligible
<b>Description of mitigation</b>	None relevant
<b>Magnitude of change with mitigation in place</b>	Negligible
<b>Predicted landscape effects with mitigation measures in place (residual effect)</b>	Negligible
<b>Nature of Landscape Effects with mitigation measure in place</b>	Negligible
<b>Sites with the potential to result in cumulative effects</b>	The Development will have a negligible effect on this character area and will not therefore cause landscape effects in conjunction with those resulting from development on any other site.

## Summary of landscape effects

- 6.26 The Development will introduce landscape effects to seven landscape receptors; these have been identified and evaluated within the baseline study
- 6.27 The predicted Landscape Effects range from moderate adverse to minor beneficial effects on settlement and land use where the Proposed Development will alter the baseline in line with planning policy and the mixed use allocation to North West Bicester. With mitigation, the predicted Landscape Effects will be reduced to minor moderate adverse to minor beneficial. This level of effect is consistent with the allocation of the Site and surrounding area for mixed use development.
- 6.28 The predicted Landscape Effects upon the Site itself are moderate major adverse due to the transformational nature of the Development. Again, this level of effect is consistent with the allocation of the Site and surrounding area for mixed use development.
- 6.29 The most substantial Landscape Effects will be experienced by Landscape Character Area 4: Agricultural Land. This is predicted to experience moderate effects which will be adverse in nature. This is due to a medium magnitude of change acting on a landscape of moderate sensitivity.
- 6.30 The predicted Landscape Effects experienced by other landscape receptors include some beneficial effects. This is due to change which will act towards the delivery of planning policies (for settlement and land use). The sensitivity of these landscape is low, resulting in minor beneficial effects. Significant vegetation will also benefit from the Development through the implementation of Development Principles and Guidelines identified for development brought forward in the North West Bicester Masterplan SPD<sup>6</sup>.
- 6.31 Landscape mitigation measures are proposed to reduce long term Landscape Effects, short term effects relating to the construction activity, and any potential lighting effects. Mitigation measures will include the positioning of built form within the Site, the reinforcement and augmentation of boundaries through native hedgerow, tree and woodland planting, and the creation of bunds around the Site, which will elevate some of this planting making it more effective at screening new built form.
- 6.32 The effects on the landscape during construction will be limited, temporary and short term (2 years) and will be no greater than the long term effects of the Development.
- 6.33 There is the potential for long term effects during the night time periods due to additional light throw; these impacts are lessened when the amount of lighting in the current residential context and the mature block of woodland to the east of the Site is taken into consideration. Again, any form of development on Site is likely to require lighting both within buildings and externally. Lighting proposals limit the amount of lighting to the edges of the Site, reducing landscape and visual effects within the receiving landscape.
- 6.34 Cumulative landscape effects resulting from the Development have also been considered. Additional effects from consented schemes in the context of the Site have the potential to increase the magnitude of change to landscape receptors, and therefore the level of effect.

- 6.35 Where the level of effect to landscape receptors is currently negligible, additional effects from other approved sites will not cause additional effects. On all other receptors, cumulative sites will increase the level of effect. The highest level of effect occurs to LCA 4 – Agricultural land. Cumulative sites cover this character area, and development coming forward will result in a substantial alteration to key features of the baseline landscape character. Lower levels of effect will be experienced on the topography, settlement, land use and LCA 2 – Bicester suburban residential as a result of a low magnitude of change acting on a receptor of medium sensitivity.
- 6.36 The cumulative sites are likely to have a moderate beneficial effect, however, on significant vegetation. Proposals retain existing features such as hedgerows and areas of woodland, and through the development principles and requirements set out in the North West Bicester Masterplan SPD will result in the strengthening of these networks.

## 7 Assessment of visual effects

Refer to: **Figure 2.0** - Viewpoint Locations  
**Figures 2.1-2.9** - Illustrative views 1 to 9

7.1 A comprehensive visual assessment has been undertaken to determine the degree of visual effect the Development would have upon the surrounding landscape. Viewpoints were initially identified through the baseline assessment, and in the field each viewpoint was visited and recorded. Not all views identified in the field have been assessed in this LVA. This is due to the following factors:

- i The Site is not visible within the view due to intervening vegetation and landform;
- ii The viewpoint is inaccessible due to land ownership; and
- iii The demonstrable effect from the viewpoint is represented by other viewpoints identified within the vicinity.

7.2 In respect of point *i* above, the Site and the proposed Development may not be visible in all assessed viewpoints. However, the modelling exercise is undertaken in these instances to determine visual effects from this representative location. A total of 9 representative views within the established ZTV (**Figure 1.7**) have been selected for the analysis of visual effects.

7.3 In order to establish the ZTV, i.e. the area within which the development is theoretically visible, the Site is assessed in relation to survey maps. This provisional visual assessment is then refined in the field, at which stage visual receptors are also identified. These include highways, pylons, and public footpaths, as well as residential properties, work places and public open spaces.

7.4 The ZTV covers an area of up to 3km away from the Site (see **Figure 1.7**). It extends furthest to the northwest where rising ground would theoretically enable views over the Site. It is constrained in places by valleys and ridgelines. The visual envelope is narrowed by the presence of built form, intervening vegetation and hedgerows.

7.5 Viewpoint locations were tested within the ZTV, and a total of 9 representative viewpoints chosen.

7.6 For all views a block model illustrating the typical form, massing and height of the Development within the landscape setting has been produced. This has been developed based on the architect's proposals and positioned in the existing view in accordance with the methodology appended to this paper. Where the Development block model is not visible in the view, a wireframe outline of the Development is shown for location purposes.

7.7 For all views, these are shown with and without the effects of landscape mitigation. Mitigation is shown at 15 years from the Development being built.

7.8 Key views have been selected at strategic locations around the Site. It is considered 'best practice' to categorise views into 3 ranges depending on the proximity of the viewpoint. The categorisation is based on the scale and nature of the landscape, and is as follows:

Close: less than 250m

Medium: between 250m – 1km

Long: More than 1km

7.9 In addition to the key representative views assessed, at the request of Cherwell District Council, we have provided a narrative assessment of views from individual residences at Aldershot Farm, Himley Farm, Linkslade, Upper Farm, Crowmarsh Farm and Lovelynych House. This narrative follows Tables 7.1 – 7.9.

### **Sensitivity of visual receptors**

7.10 The views shown on **Figures 2.1-2.9** have been selected in order to be representative of a range of locations and distances from which the Site is visible, and for the type of occupancies (e.g. residential properties), activities (e.g. footpath users) and the expectations of potential receptors (e.g. visitors to the locality). The sensitivity of the receptor has been recorded against each view considered based upon judgements of their susceptibility to the type of intervention proposed and the value attached to the view.

### **Mitigation**

7.11 A detailed description of proposed landscape mitigation measures is provided at section 6 of this document.

### **Visual effects**

7.12 The predicted effects for each of the representative views are assessed in **Tables 7.1 to 7.9**:

**Table 7.1:** Assessment of Visual Effects – Illustrative view 1

<b>View 1 – View east along Middleton Stoney Road adjacent to entrance of Himley Farm</b>	
<b>Figure Reference</b>	2.1
<b>Distance</b>	Medium
<b>Direction</b>	East
<b>Season and Condition</b>	Summer
<b>Condition and Visibility</b>	Overcast. Good visibility
<b>Type of Receptor</b>	Highway users
<b>Reason for view selection</b>	View from farm entrance and from local road network
<b>Description of existing view</b>	View from roadside towards the Site. Middleton Stoney road and its flanking verges, hedgerow and tree planting are visible in the foreground, stretching into the centre of the view. Glimpses of the ridgelines of the Axis J9 development are visible to the left of the view above the hedgerow, obscuring views to the edge of Bicester and the Site itself.
<b>Visual Susceptibility</b>	Low
<b>Value attached to view</b>	Moderate
<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>	Medium low
<b>Proposed view</b>	There will be a very minor alteration or loss to the view  Ridgelines of the Development may be glimpsed from this point when leaf cover to the hedgerow is not present, and if it has been recently cut, but it would be unlikely that the change would be noticed.
<b>Magnitude of change</b>	Negligible
<b>Predicted visual effects</b>	Negligible
<b>Nature of Visual Effects</b>	Negligible
<b>Proposed view with landscape mitigation</b>	There will be a very minor alteration or loss to the view  Proposed planting to the Site edges will not be visible from this location at 15 years.
<b>Magnitude of Change with landscape mitigation in place</b>	Negligible
<b>Predicted Visual Effects with landscape mitigation in place (residual effect)</b>	Negligible
<b>Nature of Visual Effects with mitigation measure in place</b>	Negligible
<b>Sites with the potential to cause cumulative visual effects</b>	Cumulative site 2 – Himley Village will curtail views towards the Site, obscuring it and the existing phases of the Axis J9 development. The Development will not, therefore, be visible together with Himley Village from this point.



**Table 7.2:** Assessment of Visual Effects – Illustrative view 2

<b>View 2 – View east from road between Middleton Stoney and Bucknell, 200m north of Middleton Stoney Road</b>	
<b>Figure Reference</b>	2.2
<b>Distance</b>	Long
<b>Direction</b>	East
<b>Season and Condition</b>	Summer
<b>Condition and Visibility</b>	Overcast. Good visibility
<b>Type of Receptor</b>	Highway users
<b>Reason for view selection</b>	View from public highway
<b>Description of existing view</b>	View from Highway looking across to Site. The Site is located to the centre of the view. The foreground is occupied by ungrazed pasture. To the right of the view, dense native tree and hedgerow planting forms the edge to Bignell Park. There is a mature tree located within the hedgerow, to the centre of the view.
<b>Visual Susceptibility</b>	Medium
<b>Value attached to view</b>	Moderate
<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>	Medium
<b>Proposed view</b>	There will be no alteration or loss to the view  Local landform, earthworks to the M40 and vegetation to field boundaries obscure views to the Site.
<b>Magnitude of change</b>	Negligible
<b>Predicted visual effects</b>	Negligible
<b>Nature of Visual Effects</b>	Negligible
<b>Proposed view with landscape mitigation</b>	There will be no alteration or loss to the view  Local landform, earthworks to the M40 and vegetation to field boundaries obscure views to the Site, so that the Development and the associated planting proposals will not be visible from this position.
<b>Magnitude of Change with landscape mitigation in place</b>	Negligible
<b>Predicted Visual Effects with landscape mitigation in place (residual effect)</b>	Negligible
<b>Nature of Visual Effects with mitigation measure in place</b>	Negligible
<b>Sites with the potential to cause cumulative visual effects</b>	Cumulative site 2 – Himley Village may be visible from this point and will curtail views towards the Site. The Site is not visible from this position, and the two proposed developments will not, therefore, be visible together from this point.

**Table 7.3:** Assessment of Visual Effects – Illustrative view 3

<b>View 3 – View south east from public bridleway 148/4/10</b>	
<b>Figure Reference</b>	2.3
<b>Distance</b>	Long
<b>Direction</b>	South-east
<b>Season and Condition</b>	Summer.
<b>Condition and Visibility</b>	Overcast. Good visibility
<b>Type of Receptor</b>	Public bridleway users
<b>Reason for view selection</b>	View from local public right of way network, similar to views available from Upper Farm
<b>Description of existing view</b>	<p>View from public bridleway looking across to Site</p> <p>The Site is located in the centre of the view. There is an arable field in the foreground and low-level is visible on the distant boundary. Occasional tree planting in field boundaries is visible. To the right hand side of the view Trees on the northern boundary of Bignell Park are visible. Graven Hill to the south of Bicester is visible beyond the Site. Roofs of the built phases of the Axis J9 Development are visible just above the trees.</p>
<b>Visual Susceptibility</b>	Medium
<b>Value attached to view</b>	Moderate
<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>	Medium
<b>Proposed view</b>	<p>There will be a very minor alteration or loss to the view</p> <p>Glimpsed views of the roofs/upper limits of the Development will be possible during winter months but these will not be obvious features in the landscape.</p>
<b>Magnitude of change</b>	Low
<b>Predicted visual effects</b>	Negligible
<b>Nature of Visual Effects</b>	Negligible
<b>Proposed view with landscape mitigation</b>	<p>There will be a very minor alteration or loss to the view</p> <p>The augmentation of existing hedgerows with tree and whip planting to the Site boundaries will soften the outline of built form. Within the proposed residential areas, street trees and amenity planting will break up the massing of built form.</p>
<b>Magnitude of Change with landscape mitigation in place</b>	Negligible
<b>Predicted Visual Effects with landscape mitigation in place (residual effect)</b>	Negligible
<b>Sites with the potential to cause cumulative effects</b>	2, 3, 4
<b>Additional magnitude of change</b>	There will be a minor change to the view. Cumulative site 2 – Himley Village will curtail views towards the Site, obscuring it and the existing phases of the Axis J9 development. The two proposed developments will not, therefore, be visible together from this point.
<b>Predicted additional effect</b>	Negligible

**Table 7.4:** Assessment of Visual Effects – Illustrative view 4

<b>View 4 –View south east from public bridleway 148/4/10</b>	
<b>Figure Reference</b>	2.4
<b>Distance</b>	Long
<b>Direction</b>	South-west
<b>Season and Condition</b>	Summer
<b>Condition and Visibility</b>	Overcast. Good visibility
<b>Type of Receptor</b>	Public right of way users
<b>Reason for view selection</b>	View from local public right of way network, similar to views available from Upper Farm
<b>Description of existing view</b>	The Site is located in the centre of the view, beyond the rise in the arable fields that form the foreground. The tops of tree planting to field boundaries are visible above the horizon. The view is taken through a gap in a native hedgerow that forms the field boundary.
<b>Visual Susceptibility</b>	Medium
<b>Value attached to view</b>	Moderate
<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>	Medium
<b>Proposed view</b>	There will be a no alteration or loss to the view.  Local landform and vegetation to field boundaries obscure views to the Site from this position.
<b>Magnitude of change</b>	Negligible
<b>Predicted visual effects</b>	Negligible
<b>Nature of Visual Effects</b>	Negligible
<b>Proposed view with landscape mitigation</b>	There will be no alteration or loss to the view.
<b>Magnitude of Change with landscape mitigation in place</b>	Negligible
<b>Predicted Visual Effects with landscape mitigation in place (residual effect)</b>	Negligible
<b>Nature of Visual Effects with mitigation measure in place</b>	Negligible
<b>Sites with the potential to cause cumulative visual effects</b>	Cumulative sites 2, 3 and 4 may be visible from this point and will curtail views towards the Site. The Site is not visible from this position, and the committed development cannot, therefore, be visible together with the Development from this point.

**Table 7.5:** Assessment of Visual Effects – Illustrative view 5

<b>View 5 – View from public footpath 148/3/20 by Middleton Road</b>	
<b>Figure Reference</b>	2.5
<b>Distance</b>	Long
<b>Direction</b>	South east
<b>Season and Condition</b>	Summer
<b>Condition and Visibility</b>	Overcast. Good visibility
<b>Type of Receptor</b>	Highway users and public right of way users
<b>Reason for view selection</b>	View from public right of way network and local highways
<b>Description of existing view</b>	The public right of way runs through a field of pasture. The boundary in the middle ground of the view consists of hedge planting and scrub to the sides of the cutting through which the rail line runs. Some vegetation to field boundaries beyond the rail line is visible.
<b>Visual Susceptibility</b>	Medium
<b>Value attached to view</b>	Moderate
<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>	Medium
<b>Proposed view</b>	There will be no alteration or loss to the view  Local landform and vegetation to field boundaries obscure views to the Site from this position and the Development will not be visible.
<b>Magnitude of change</b>	Negligible
<b>Predicted visual effects</b>	Negligible
<b>Nature of Visual Effects</b>	Negligible
<b>Proposed view with landscape mitigation</b>	There will be no alteration or loss to the view  Local landform and vegetation to field boundaries obscure views to the Site from this position and the Development, including the planting scheme, will not be visible.
<b>Magnitude of Change with landscape mitigation in place</b>	Negligible
<b>Predicted Visual Effects with landscape mitigation in place (residual effect)</b>	Negligible
<b>Nature of Visual Effects with mitigation measure in place</b>	Negligible
<b>Sites with the potential to cause cumulative visual effects</b>	Cumulative sites 2, 3 and 4 may be visible from this point and will curtail views towards the Site. The Site is not visible from this position, and the two proposed developments will not, therefore, be visible together from this point.

**Table 7.6:** Assessment of Visual Effects – Illustrative view 6

<b>View 6 – View south from public bridleway 148/4/10 east of Aldershot Farm</b>	
<b>Figure Reference</b>	2.6
<b>Distance</b>	Medium
<b>Direction</b>	South south west
<b>Season and Condition</b>	Summer
<b>Condition and Visibility</b>	Overcast. Good visibility
<b>Type of Receptor</b>	Public right of way users. Similar views available from Aldershot Farm
<b>Reason for view selection</b>	View from local public right of way network, and similar to views from isolated residential receptor at Aldershot Farm.
<b>Description of existing view</b>	The view is taken through a gap in the field boundary. Beyond the arable field behind the hedgerow vegetation and a building on the derelict Gowell Farm are visible. To the right of the building, one of the units of the Phase 1 Axis J9 development may be seen.
<b>Visual Susceptibility</b>	Medium
<b>Value attached to view</b>	Moderate
<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>	Medium
<b>Proposed view</b>	<p>There will be a minor alteration or loss to the view, affecting the existing skyline.</p> <p>Built form to the Site will be visible from this location above the skyline, to either side of the trees and building to Gowell Farm, closer to the viewer than that which has already been built. This built form will be not uncharacteristic of the existing view. The building and vegetation to Gowell Farm will continue to screen the Site.</p>
<b>Magnitude of change</b>	Medium
<b>Predicted visual effects</b>	Moderate
<b>Nature of Visual Effects</b>	Adverse
<b>Proposed view with landscape mitigation</b>	<p>There will be a minor alteration or loss to the view, affecting the existing skyline.</p> <p>Planting to the northern edge of the Site will help to soften and screen the appearance of new built form, integrating it into the visual context, but the ridgelines will remain visible above the existing skyline to either side of Gowell Farm.</p>
<b>Magnitude of Change with landscape mitigation in place</b>	Medium
<b>Predicted Visual Effects with landscape mitigation in place (residual effect)</b>	Moderate
<b>Nature of Visual Effects with mitigation measure in place</b>	Adverse
<b>Sites with the potential to cause cumulative visual effects</b>	Cumulative sites 2 and 4 may be visible from this point and will curtail views towards the Site. The proposed developments will not, therefore, be visible together from this point.

**Table 7.7:** Assessment of Visual Effects – Illustrative view 7

<b>View 7 – View south west from junction of Howes Lane and Shakespeare Drive</b>	
<b>Figure Reference</b>	2.7
<b>Distance</b>	Close
<b>Direction</b>	Southwest
<b>Season and Condition</b>	Summer
<b>Condition and Visibility</b>	Overcast. Good visibility
<b>Type of Receptor</b>	Highway users
<b>Reason for view selection</b>	View from Bicester ring road
<b>Description of existing view</b>	Vegetation to the western side of Howes Lane partially obscures and filters views to the Site. A communications pole and the sky may be glimpsed through gaps in the vegetation. Howes Lane and the traffic lights to the junction with Shakespeare Drive are visible in the foreground.
<b>Visual Susceptibility</b>	Low
<b>Value attached to view</b>	Moderate
<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>	Medium low
<b>Proposed view</b>	<p>There will be a very minor alteration or loss to the view</p> <p>The Development will not be visible with leaf cover and hedge heights as shown in the baseline image. Without leaf cover, and when hedges have been more recently cut glimpses of new built form to the Site may be visible behind existing vegetation to Howes Lane. This will not be uncharacteristic of the existing view.</p>
<b>Magnitude of change</b>	Negligible
<b>Predicted visual effects</b>	Negligible
<b>Nature of Visual Effects</b>	Negligible
<b>Proposed view with landscape mitigation</b>	<p>There will be a very minor alteration or loss to the view</p> <p>The Development will not be visible with leaf cover and hedge heights as shown in the baseline image. Without leaf cover, augmented vegetation to the edges of the Site will further help to screen new built form, and to integrate it into the visual context.</p>
<b>Magnitude of Change with landscape mitigation in place</b>	Negligible
<b>Predicted Visual Effects with landscape mitigation in place (residual effect)</b>	Negligible
<b>Nature of Visual Effects with mitigation measure in place</b>	Negligible
<b>Sites with the potential to cause cumulative visual effects</b>	Cumulative site 2 – Himley Village may be visible from this point, but it is likely that the Development and the woodland to the west of the Site will screen it. Himley Village and the Development will therefore not be visible together.

**Table 7.8:** Assessment of Visual Effects – Illustrative view 8

<b>View 8 – View west from pedestrian link between Dryden Avenue and Howes Lane</b>	
<b>Figure Reference</b>	2.8
<b>Distance</b>	Close
<b>Direction</b>	West
<b>Season and Condition</b>	Summer
<b>Condition and Visibility</b>	Overcast. Good visibility
<b>Type of Receptor</b>	Residents, users of pedestrian link
<b>Reason for view selection</b>	Representative of views available to residents to the current western edge of Bicester
<b>Description of existing view</b>	Howes Lane runs across the foreground of the view. A gap in the hedgerow to the verge west of Howes Lane allows views into the Site, and to the woodland beyond. The Site currently consists of ungrazed grassland with some signs of the movement of construction traffic and soil storage .
<b>Visual Susceptibility</b>	High
<b>Value attached to view</b>	Moderate
<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>	High medium
<b>Proposed view</b>	There will be a substantial alteration to the view. Built form to the eastern edge of the Site is visible above and through the gap in the hedgerow. Views to the woodland on the far side of the Site, and to built form in Phase 1 of the Axis J9 development are blocked. The Development will occupy a large proportion of the view and will significantly break the skyline and change the character and quality of the view.
<b>Magnitude of change</b>	High
<b>Predicted visual effects</b>	Major
<b>Nature of Visual Effects</b>	Adverse
<b>Proposed view with landscape mitigation</b>	There will be a partial alteration to the view. Tree and native woodland planting to the eastern edge of the Site screens and filters the lower parts of the building elevations facing Howes Lane. The upper parts of the building elevations are still visible with planting at 15 years. The screening and filtering is most effective during the months of leaf cover.
<b>Magnitude of Change with landscape mitigation in place</b>	Medium
<b>Predicted Visual Effects with landscape mitigation in place (residual effect)</b>	Moderate major
<b>Nature of Visual Effects with mitigation measures</b>	Adverse
<b>Sites with the potential to cause cumulative visual effects</b>	Cumulative site 2, 4 and 10 may be visible from this point, but it is likely that the Development and the woodland to the west of the Site will screen them.
<b>Additional magnitude of change</b>	Development on these sites might be glimpsed from this position, but would not further raise the magnitude of change.
<b>Predicted additional visual effects</b>	Remains major adverse without mitigation, and moderate major adverse with mitigation

**Table 7.9:** Assessment of Visual Effects – Illustrative view 9

<b>View 9 – View west from Beckdale Close</b>	
<b>Figure Reference</b>	2.9
<b>Distance</b>	Close
<b>Direction</b>	West
<b>Season and Condition</b>	Summer
<b>Condition and Visibility</b>	Overcast. Good visibility
<b>Type of Receptor</b>	Residents, highway users
<b>Reason for view selection</b>	Representative view from within the western edge of Bicester
<b>Description of existing view</b>	The view looks down Beckdale Close, towards the Site. 20 <sup>th</sup> century semi-detached residential properties flank the view, which terminates at Numbers 49-55, facing the viewpoint and parallel to Howes Lane. Behind the houses, trees to the verge between the back gardens and Howes Lane are visible.
<b>Visual Susceptibility</b>	High
<b>Value attached to view</b>	Moderate
<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>	High Medium
<b>Proposed view</b>	There will be a partial alteration to the view  Glimpses of built form break the skyline in the gaps between the trees to Howes Lane, but do not rise above the highest points of the canopy.
<b>Magnitude of change</b>	Medium
<b>Predicted visual effects</b>	Moderate major
<b>Nature of Visual Effects</b>	Adverse
<b>Proposed view with landscape mitigation</b>	There will be a partial alteration to the view  At 15 years, planting to the eastern edge of the Site will not obscure the eastern elevations of new built form, and the magnitude of change remains the same.
<b>Magnitude of Change with landscape mitigation in place</b>	Medium
<b>Predicted Visual Effects with landscape mitigation in place (residual effect)</b>	Moderate major
<b>Nature of Visual Effects with mitigation measure in place</b>	Adverse
<b>Sites with the potential to cause cumulative visual effects</b>	The view looks towards cumulative sites 2, 4 and 10, but existing built form and significant vegetation will screen them from this point.



## **Narrative assessment of individual residential visual receptors**

7.13 At the request of Cherwell District Council, a narrative assessment of the visual effects on the farms found to the north and west of the Site has been provided as follows.

### **Aldershot Farm**

7.14 Aldershot Farm lies approximately 0.5km north of the Site, and immediately north of Public Bridleway 148/4/10. The farmhouse is separated from the bridleway by mature tree planting to the front garden. Bands of tree planting to the south of the bridleway add further layers of screening to open land to the south. Built form and vegetation to the derelict Gowell Farm will also obscure views to the south.

7.15 These features are likely to screen the Development from Aldershot Farm, and any change would be unlikely to be noticed. Planting to the north of the Site would help to screen any glimpses of built form as it matured.

7.16 Aldershot Farm is likely to experience visual effects as a result cumulative assessment sites 2 and 4. Site 4 surrounds the farm and is likely to result in a high level of visual effect to this receptor. Development on these sites would curtail views to the Development.

### **Himley Farm**

7.17 Himley Farm lies 0.5km west of the Site. The farm is separated from the Site by a block of existing woodland approximately 40m wide.

7.18 This existing vegetation screens views of the Site, and it is likely that the Development will not be visible above it. Where the Development is visible, this will be as glimpses of ridgelines only, above the tree tops.

7.19 Himley Farm is likely to experience visual effects as a result of cumulative assessment site 2. This site surrounds the farm, and is likely to result in transformative visual effects.

### **Linkslade**

7.20 Linkslade lies 1km west of the Site, in the angle between the eastern embankment of the M1 and Middleton Stoney Road. Substantial mature tree planting to the western, southern and eastern boundaries of the Site rises above the height of the roof, screening the house form the surrounding countryside in all directions except the north.

7.21 This substantial vegetation will screen the Site from the property, preventing visual change as a result of the Development.

7.22 Cumulative assessment site 2, Himley Farm lies between Linkslade and the Site. Development on this site is also likely to be screened by existing vegetation. To the north, where views from the property are more open, glimpses of development on cumulative sites 3 and 4 may be visible.

## **Upper Farm**

- 7.23 Upper Farm lies immediately east of Middleton Road, approximately 2km north west of the Site. Views from the farm are relatively open, and the gradual slope of the land enables views over field boundary hedgerows in the direction of the Site.
- 7.24 The belt of existing woodland to the west of the Site will screen views of the Development, and combined with the distance separating receptor and Site, it is unlikely that the Development will be noticed from this location.
- 7.25 Cumulative sites 2 and 4 lie between the receptor and the Site. Development on these sites is likely to curtail views towards the Site, meaning that there will not be additional visual effects.

## **Crowmarsh Farm**

- 7.26 Crowmarsh Farm lies approximately 1.25km north west of the Site. Mature tree planting to the south eastern boundary screens views towards Bicester. An area of woodland and trees to the watercourse running out of it further screen views to the south. The belt of mature woodland running parallel to Howes Lane, west of the Site blocks views from Crowmarsh Farm towards the Site.
- 7.27 Cumulative sites lie between the receptor and the Site. Glimpses of development on these sites may be possible, and would further curtail views towards the Site.

## **Lovelynych House**

- 7.28 Lovelynych House lies just under 1km west of the Site. Substantial mature tree planting to the southern, western and northern boundaries screen and filter views in these directions. Views east from the house are more open, though partially blocked at ground floor level by an apparently single storey ancillary structure that runs along the boundary.
- 7.29 Filtered views are likely to be possible from Lovelynych House to the phase of the Axis J9 currently under construction. Existing mature vegetation to the western boundary of the Site are likely to screen views of the Development.
- 7.30 Cumulative site 2, Himley Farm lies east of the receptor. This development will curtail views towards the Axis J9 development, screening it and preventing the schemes being visible together from this position.

## Summary of visual effects

- 7.31 The Site is visible from a range of viewpoints as identified in **Figure 2.0**. The views are representative of a range of distances, locations, occupancies and activities within the landscape.
- 7.32 Due to the terrain, surrounding vegetation and built form, long-distance views (over 3km away) from the Development are not possible.
- 7.33 The potential visible effects of the Development have been taken into account which includes for the height, massing and position of the buildings within the Site. The modelling of the Development has been based on the masterplan by Cornish Architects, and verified views prepared based on these proposals and the baseline photography. In addition, modelling of the mitigation proposals within the views have been modelled based on the planting proposals shown on drawings 0897-RFM-XX-00-DR-L-0001 and 0003 and are shown after 15 years' growth.
- 7.34 The predicted Visual Effects range from negligible to major adverse. With mitigation, the predicted Visual Effects will be reduced to between negligible and moderate major adverse. The moderate major effect is limited to the immediate proximity of the Site.
- 7.35 The most substantial Visual Effects will be experienced by view 8. This view is predicted to experience major effects which will be adverse in nature. This is due to a high magnitude of change and high medium sensitivity as a result of the proximity and residential nature and high susceptibility of the receptor. View 9 is predicted to receive moderate major adverse effects. This is also due to the high susceptibility of the receptor resulting in a high medium sensitivity to this view. Although mitigation also improves the appearance of this view, as the change to the skyline is permanent, this remains at moderate major adverse. The difference in visual effect between Views 8 and 9 illustrates that effects will reduce with greater separation of residents from the Site boundary. The highest level of effect will be experienced only by those properties on the very edge of Bicester.
- 7.36 The predicted Visual Effects upon other views include negligible and moderate effects to all other views. This is due to medium or negligible magnitudes of change and to receptors with low and medium sensitivities. Levels of effects are not dissimilar to the previously consented scheme and are consistent with the Site's allocation.
- 7.37 Proposed mitigation measures include the positioning of buildings, the augmentation and reinforcement of existing vegetation to the Site, and proposed planting to bunds around the eastern and northern edges of the Site. These mitigation measures will also better assimilate the Development into the existing landscape context. With mitigation, the highest level of effect on view 8 is reduced to moderate major adverse.
- 7.38 The potential for cumulative effects on the views has been assessed. Where effects from the Development are negligible, additional effects to views caused by other consented schemes have been discounted. There is no additional increase in the level of effects due to the addition of the cumulative sites.

## 8 Conclusions

### Site proposals

- 8.2 The Site is located approximately 1.8km west of Bicester town centre, on the edge of the town. The Site is 7ha in area and is not situated within a 'sensitive area' (as defined in Part 1 of the EIA Regulations) (i.e. a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), National Park, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, World Heritage Site (WHS), Scheduled Monument or European Site) and is not subject to any statutory or non-statutory designations for nature conservation or heritage. The Site is not in, or within the vicinity, of any statutory or non-statutory designated landscape views.
- 8.3 The Site is currently in agricultural use and slopes gently from north west to south east, towards Howes Lane on its eastern boundary. The vegetation to the Site consists of grassland, hedgerows to the northern and eastern boundaries and an area of woodland to the west. There are no public rights of way on the Site. A public bridleway is located approximately 500m to the north of the Site, parallel to the railway line (Chiltern Main Line). The Site is currently accessible informally off road via Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the Axis J9 development. There is no direct access from Howes Lane.
- 8.4 The full planning application is for a flexible employment use development of up to 17,808 sqm Gross External Area, with associated parking spaces, access from the Axis J9 development (prior to the SLR being delivered), and the delivery of part of the SLR within the Site. 40% provision of Green Infrastructure will be made, which will include features for biodiversity net gain, landscape screening and drainage. For further information refer to Cornish Architects information, and the illustrative masterplan of the development proposals is shown on drawing 0897-RFM-XX-00-DR-L-0001.
- 8.5 The masterplan for the Site includes several key mitigation proposals with regards to landscape character and appearance. These include the retention of existing boundary vegetation, and its augmentation and reinforcement with additional native hedgerow and woodland planting. Tree planting to the edges and interior of the Site associated with the boundaries will further help to screen and filter views of the Development, softening the appearance of built form and helping it to integrate into the landscape and visual context. Buildings have been carefully positioned relative to existing development and each other.

### Landscape effects

- 8.6 It is identified that the Development results in Landscape Effects that are predicted to range from minor beneficial to moderate adverse. However, major moderate effects occur, and are limited to, the Site area only. It is likely that any development on the Site would be transformational cause a substantial alteration to its character, and would be likely to occur with any form of built development.

- 8.7 The most substantial Landscape Effects will be experienced by Landscape Character Area 4: Agricultural Land. This is predicted to experience moderate effects which will be adverse in nature. This is due to a medium magnitude of change acting on a landscape of moderate sensitivity. This magnitude of change would be experienced with most types of development on a Site of this nature, and has been accepted in principle by virtue of Cherwell District Council's allocation of the Site. This landscape character area is most closely aligned with the Wooded Estate lands character identified by the Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study (OWLS), but covers a much smaller area. The area of highest value, Chesterton village will experience negligible effects as a result of the Proposed Development.
- 8.8 Landscape receptors including settlement, land use and patterns of significant vegetation and Green Infrastructure will also be affected, but local planning policies within the Cherwell Local Plan<sup>5</sup> allocate the area around the Site for mixed use development, and set principles and guidelines for its implementation. As the Proposed Development is in line with this policy, this lowers the susceptibility of this receptor to resultant change.
- 8.9 The effects on the landscape during construction will be limited and temporary (2 years) and will be no greater than the long term effects of the Development.
- 8.10 Lighting effects are not considered to be significant within the existing setting of Bicester and the area employment development to the south. Any form of development will, in all likelihood, require lighting both internally and externally. External lighting will be seen against a backdrop of other suburban and employment lighting in the immediate vicinity.
- 8.11 Landscape mitigation measures are proposed to reduce long term Landscape Effects, short term effects relating to the construction activity, and any potential lighting effects. Mitigation measures will include the careful positioning of built form within the Site, the reinforcement and augmentation of boundaries through native hedgerow, tree and woodland planting, and the creation of bunds around the Site, which will elevate some of this planting making it more effective at creating separation between the Development and the landscape context.
- 8.12 The effects on the landscape during construction will be limited, temporary and short term (2 years) and will be no greater than the long term effects of the Proposed Development.

## **Visual effects**

- 8.13 Viewpoint locations range from close to long distance, with the longest viewpoint located at 2.5km away from the centre of the Site. The Visual Sensitivity of receptors range from low to high medium.
- 8.14 The predicted Visual Effects of the Development range from negligible to major adverse. With mitigation, the predicted visual effects are reduced to negligible to moderate major adverse.

- 8.15 The views with the highest sensitivity are those that demonstrate likely effects on residential receptors on the western edge of Bicester. The high susceptibility of residents to visual change combines with a moderate value of view to give these receptors a high medium sensitivity. Their proximity to the Development will result in a high magnitude of change, giving a major visual effect. With mitigation, this effect will be reduced to moderate major adverse. Visual effects are similar to the previous consented scheme and consistent with the levels of effects expected under the Site's allocation.
- 8.16 View 1 has a low sensitivity due to the low susceptibility of highway users to visual change. The existing Axis J9 development acts as a detractor in this view, giving a low sensitivity. From this and several other viewpoints, the Development will not result in any discernible visual change, and there will be a negligible level of visual effect.
- 8.17 The proposed landscape mitigation will help to assimilate the Development into the suburban and rural context. Mitigation proposals include: the careful positioning of built form within the Site, the reinforcement and augmentation of boundaries through native hedgerow, tree and woodland planting, and the creation of bunds around the Site, which will elevate some of this planting making it more effective at screening new built form. The landscape mitigation proposals reduce the Visual Effects of the development and are characteristic of the surrounding area.

### **Planning policy & landscape-related designations**

- 8.18 The Site is located within the Cherwell District Council administrative area. There are a number of planning policies at both the national and local levels that affect the Site in relation to landscape and visual issues as identified in section 3.
- 8.19 The relevant sections of the NPPF<sup>4</sup> and the Cherwell Local Plan<sup>5</sup> seek to ensure that new developments achieve well designed places while protecting and enhancing the natural environment, increasing Green Infrastructure and biodiversity and integrating well into the local landscape. Policies to protect the surrounding environment are highly relevant in the development of proposals for this Site, and principles and principles and guidelines from the North West Bicester Masterplan SPD<sup>6</sup> have been incorporated in landscape proposals for the Site. These include policies relating to development edges, Green Infrastructure, tree planting, hedgerows and stream corridors and biodiversity.

## Summary conclusion

- 8.20 Overall it is considered that the proposals can be integrated without substantial harm to the character of the landscape context. The landscape has some capacity to accommodate change, due to the surrounding context of built form, the frequency of the landscape character and potential for substitution, the ability of the Proposed Development to deliver on the mixed use allocation within the Cherwell Local Plan and the enclosure of the Site meaning that it is well separated in landscape and visual terms from its wider context.
- 8.21 Visibility of the Site from long and close-range views demonstrate the physical and visual containment of the Site by landform, significant vegetation and existing built form. It has been demonstrated that the visual and landscape effects can be reduced through effective mitigation, which assimilates the development proposals within the surrounding landscape.
- 8.22 Summaries of Landscape Effects and Visual Effects are provided at **Table 8.1** and **Table 8.2** respectively.

**Table 8.1:** Landscape Effects Summary

<b>Landscape receptor</b>	<b>Landscape Sensitivity</b>	<b>Magnitude of Change</b>	<b>Landscape Effect and Nature</b>	<b>Landscape Effect with mitigation (residual effect) and Nature</b>	<b>Cumulative effects</b>
<b>Topography</b>	Medium-low	Low	Minor moderate adverse	Minor moderate adverse	Moderate adverse (all sites)
<b>Significant vegetation</b>	Medium	Negligible	Negligible	Minor moderate beneficial	Minor moderate beneficial (all sites)
<b>Settlement</b>	Low	Low	Minor adverse	Minor adverse	Moderate adverse
<b>Land use</b>	Low	Low	Minor adverse	Minor adverse	Moderate adverse
<b>LCA 1. Estate parkland</b>	Medium low	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	No cumulative effects
<b>LCA 2. Bicester suburban residential</b>	Medium low	Low	Minor moderate adverse	Minor moderate adverse	Moderate adverse (Sites 3, 4 and 10)
<b>LCA 3. Chesterton village</b>	Medium	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	No cumulative effects
<b>LCA 4. Agricultural land</b>	Medium	High within the Site, medium elsewhere	Moderate major within the Site, moderate elsewhere	Moderate major within the Site, minor moderate elsewhere	Moderate major adverse (Sites 2, 3, 4, 10)
<b>LCA 5. Employment site</b>	Low	Low	Minor adverse	Minor adverse	Minor moderate adverse (Sites 2, 4, 10)
<b>LCA 6. Emerging suburban residential</b>	Medium low	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	No cumulative effects



**Table 8.2:** Visual Effects Summary

<b>View</b>	<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>	<b>Magnitude of change</b>	<b>Visual Effect and Nature</b>	<b>Visual Effect with mitigation (residual effect) and Nature</b>	<b>Cumulative effect</b>
1	Medium Low	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	No cumulative effects
2	Medium	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	No cumulative effects
3	Medium	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	No cumulative effects
4	Medium	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	No cumulative effects
5	Medium	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	No cumulative effects
6	Medium	Medium	Moderate adverse	Moderate adverse	No cumulative effects
7	Medium low	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	No cumulative effects
8	High medium	High	Major adverse	Moderate major adverse	No cumulative effects
9	High medium	Medium	Moderate major adverse	Moderate major adverse	No cumulative effects

## 9 References

- 1 *Guidelines for Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment, third edition* (2013) Landscape Institute, IEMA; Routledge
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- 3 Phase 1 Habitat Survey and GCN eDNA Survey. Tyler Grange, included at Appendix 10.3
- 4 *National Planning Policy Framework* (2021) Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government  
Found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>
- 5 *Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 Part 1*, July 2015. Cherwell District Council  
Found at: <https://www.cherwell.gov.uk/info/83/local-plans/376/adopted-cherwell-local-plan-2011-2031-part-1>
- 6 *North West Bicester Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document*, February 2016. Cherwell District Council and Oxford County Council  
Found at: <https://www.cherwell.gov.uk/downloads/download/281/north-west-bicester-spd-main-document-february-2016>
- 7 *NCA Profile: 107. Cotswolds*, March 2013, Natural England  
Found at: <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5900626>
- 8 Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study (OWLS)  
Found at: <http://owls.oxfordshire.gov.uk/wps/wcm/connect/occ/OWLS/Home/Oxfordshire+Districts/>