



**Land North of  
Gavray Drive,  
Bicester**

**Technical  
Appendix 8.1:  
Landscape and  
Visual Appraisal  
Baseline**

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On behalf of:  
**L&Q Estates Ltd**

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## Executive Summary

- S1 This Baseline Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) has been prepared by The Environmental Dimension Partnership Ltd (EDP), on behalf of L&Q Estates Ltd to inform planning proposals for the development of up to 250 residential dwellings on land to the north of Gavray Drive, Bicester.
- S2 The site is identified as Policy Bicester 13 within the Cherwell Local Plan, 23 hectares of land allocated for 300 dwellings and referred to as 'Gavray Drive'.
- S3 This baseline report establishes the current baseline condition of the site and surroundings both in terms of landscape character and visual amenity, through desktop and on-site analysis. The baseline can be summarised as follows:
- The site does not lie within any nationally or locally designated landscape;
  - Two arable fields lie at the site's western extent, separated from the rest of the site by Langford Brook, where the central and eastern sections comprise meadow grassland and woodland/scrub planting;
  - The site is identified as an urban area within the Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study, however, it shares similar characteristics with the adjacent Clay Vale Landscape Character Type, such as low-lying landform, mixed land uses and tree lined streams; and
  - Visually, the surrounding built form, transport infrastructure, vegetation and undulating topography heavily restrict available views into the site to the immediate surroundings, including Bicester Footpaths 3 and 4 as well as users of Gavray Drive to the south.
- S4 This information helps to establish the sensitivity of the baseline receptors, allowing the baseline appraisal to help identify key principles to be included within the landscape strategy as the framework masterplan develops, to ensure the proposals can be successfully assimilated into the receiving landscape.
- S5 As a result, the landscape strategy incorporates the following:
- The retention and enhancement (where possible) of existing trees and hedgerows to the site perimeter with preference for those of greatest value;
  - Detailed masterplanning of the site to retain and integrate existing hedgerows and trees succinctly into the residential and/or public open space areas with preference for those of greatest value and connectivity;

- The design of the proposed development to reflect the current topography of the site to ensure that any new built form is either screened or filtered by the existing mature landscape setting as far as practicable;
- Formation of green corridors along main arterial routes from Gavray Drive with ancillary and buffer planting;
- Utility of existing access points used for main vehicular routes into the site negating the need to remove existing tree groups and hedgerows to the southern site boundary (retaining mitigation and mature landscape setting);
- Provision of access to new dwellings from access routes running inside the existing southern boundary to reduce the need for installing new access points within the existing tree groups and vegetation (retaining mitigation and mature landscape setting);
- Provision of sight lines from Gavray Drive to focus on new public open space within the proposed development with ancillary and mitigation planting;
- The establishment of new landscape mitigation planting which would become expediently established over the initial 15 years of the proposed development.; and
- Landscape planting including buffer shrub and tree planting to the northern site boundary where applicable to further filter and eventually screen views from the adjacent railway line.

## **Section 1**

### **Introduction, Purpose and Methodology**

#### **Introduction**

- 1.1 This Landscape and Visual Baseline Report has been prepared by The Environmental Dimension Partnership Ltd (EDP). It sets out the technical detail which has informed both the design of, and the impact assessment of, development proposals on 22.7ha of land north of Gavray Drive, Bicester, Oxfordshire (the 'Application Site'). This report has been prepared on behalf of the landowners of the Application Site, namely: L&Q Estates ('the Applicant'); Charles Brown & Simon Digby; and London & Metropolitan International Developments. The site falls within the Cherwell Local Planning Authority (LPA) area, extends to 23 hectares (ha), and is briefly described in **Section 2** of this LVIA. Full site details are given in the Design and Access Statement (DAS) accompanying the planning application.
- 1.2 EDP is an independent environmental planning consultancy with offices in Cirencester, Cardiff and Cheltenham. The practice provides advice to private and public sector clients throughout the UK in the fields of landscape, ecology, archaeology, cultural heritage, arboriculture, rights of way and masterplanning. Details of the practice can be obtained at our website ([www.edp-uk.co.uk](http://www.edp-uk.co.uk)). EDP is a Registered Practice of the Landscape Institute<sup>(1)</sup> specialising in the assessment of the effects of proposed development on the landscape.
- 1.3 This LVIA is part of a suite of documents accompanying an outline planning application for the proposed development summarised in **Section 6** of this LVIA. The site is allocated for 300 residential dwellings under the Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 under Policy Bicester 13: Gavray Drive. The outline application (with all matters reserved except for access) is for residential development of up to 250 dwellings, new access points and vehicular, cycle and pedestrian links, strategic landscaping and green infrastructure including areas of informal and public open space and other associated site infrastructure.

#### **Purpose and Structure of this LVIA**

- 1.4 The purpose of this LVIA is to identify the baseline conditions of the site and surrounding area and to determine those landscape and visual characteristics that might inform the design of the development proposals, including recommendations for mitigation. It then provides an assessment of the landscape and visual effects predicted to arise from development on the site with reference to the baseline analysis.
- 1.5 In undertaking the assessment described in this LVIA, EDP has:

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<sup>1</sup> LI Practice Number 1010

- Undertaken a thorough data trawl of relevant designations and background documents, described in **Section 3**;
- Assessed the existing (baseline) condition and character of the site and its setting, described in **Section 4**;
- Assessed the existing visual (baseline) context, especially any key views to and from the site (**Section 5**); and
- Analysed the findings of the above sections and set out a number of key principles to establish a robust and effective landscape strategy (**Section 6**).

### **Methodology Adopted for the Assessment**

- 1.6 This Landscape and Visual Baseline has been undertaken in accordance with the 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment – Third Edition (LI/IEMA, 2013)' (GLVIA3) as relevant to EIA schemes. The criteria referred to, but not defined within the guidelines, have been defined by EDP as set out in **Annex EDP 1**, with terms clearly defined within the Glossary at **Annex EDP 2**.
- 1.7 **Familiarisation:** EDP's study has included reviews of aerial photographs, web searches, LPA publications and landscape character assessments. EDP has also obtained, where possible, information about relevant landscape and other designations such as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs), conservation areas and gardens and parks listed on Historic England's 'Register of Historic Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England' (RPG).
- 1.8 **Consultation:** The location of photoviewpoints were agreed with the Landscape Architect within the Environmental Services for Cherwell District Council (CDC) on 09 July 2020.
- 1.9 **Field Assessment:** EDP has undertaken a comprehensive field assessment of local site circumstances, including a photographic survey of the character and fabric of the site and its surroundings, using photography from a number of representative viewpoints. The field assessment was undertaken by a qualified landscape architect in clear weather conditions in March and April 2020 and April 2021.
- 1.10 **Design Inputs:** EDP's field assessment has informed a process whereby the development proposals have been refined to avoid, minimise or compensate for landscape effects. Such measures are summarised in **Section 6**.

### **Study Area**

- 1.11 To establish the baseline and potential limit of material effects, the study area has been considered at two geographical scales:



- First, a broad 'study area' was adopted, the extent of which is illustrated on **Figure 8.1**. Based mainly on desk-based study, this broad study area allowed the geographical scope of the assessment to be defined based on the extent of views to/from the site, extent of landscape effects and the site's environmental planning context; and
- Second, following initial analysis and subsequent fieldwork, the broad study area was refined down to the land that is most likely to experience landscape effects. The extent of this detailed study area is 2km from the site boundary, although occasional reference may be made to features beyond this area where appropriate. This is illustrated on **Figure 8.1**.

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## Section 2 The Site

- 2.1 **Figure 8.1** illustrates the location of the site and the broad and detailed study areas for the LVIA. The site is located to the south-east of Bicester, bound to the north by a railway line, and roads to the east and south.
- 2.2 The site's character and local context is illustrated on the aerial photograph contained as **Figure 8.2**.
- 2.3 The site forms a linear strip of land immediately north of Gavray Drive and can be generally split by land use. To the west are two arable fields (**Image EDP 2.1**), separated by a north-south aligned hedgerow with trees (**Image EDP 2.2**). These fields are bounded by hedgerow and Langford Brook to the east, a hedgerow to the south, adjacent to Gavray Drive, with the embankment of the London-Birmingham railway forming its northern perimeter. The northern and western boundary comprise security fencing separating the site from the recently constructed Bicester-London line.



**Image EDP 2.1:** Arable fields across western section of site, with elevated railway line in middle distance



**Image EDP 2.2:** Hedgeline separating arable fields in site's western extent, with trees running left to right along Gavray Drive in the middle distance

- 2.4 The eastern section comprises a mixture of large areas of heathland, scrub, woodland and grassland in varying conditions. The northern boundary comprises a security fence to the railway line, with the eastern boundary formed by a mature tree belt running alongside the A4421 (**Image EDP 2.3**). Gavray Drive, running along the southern boundary is separated from the site by a number of groups of mature trees, interspersed with two bell mouth road junctions and a number of informal pedestrian accesses.



**Image EDP 2.3:** Mature tree belt running along the site's eastern boundary adjacent to the A4421

- 2.5 Two rectilinear meadows lie towards the eastern half of the site, which are generally bound by mature hedgerows with occasional hedgerow trees. Informal routes have established through and around the perimeters of the meadows (**Image EDP 2.4**).



**Image EDP 2.4:** Informal route through meadow grasslands central to the site

- 2.6 The site forms part of a broadly rectangular wedge of undeveloped open space between a large area of residential development (Langford Village) to the south and the railway and industrial/commercial land uses to the north. To the east lies the A4421, forming part of the ring road, which girdles Bicester.
- 2.7 The application site is therefore very well contained, both visually and in landscape terms.
- 2.8 The western section of the site is internally open (other than the dividing hedgerow) and is strongly influenced by the wide railway corridor to the north and west. Gavray Drive at this point forms a dead-end route, but traffic using it to gain access to or from local residential areas to the south is audible, if not always visible (**Image EDP 2.5**).



**Image EDP 2.5:** Gavray Drive running parallel to the southern boundary, with occasional gaps in boundary hedgerow affording a visual and physical connection

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## **Section 3**

### **Findings of EDP Data Trawl**

3.1 The findings of EDP's data trawl of relevant environmental and planning designations are illustrated on **Figure 8.3** and summarised in this section.

#### **Background Published Evidence Base Documents**

3.2 The following documents are relevant and will be discussed as appropriate later in this report:

- National Character Area 108: Upper Thames Clay Vales (2014);
- Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study (OWLS) (2004); and
- Cherwell District Council Landscape Character Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment (June 2017).

#### **Findings of EDP Data Trawl**

##### ***Landscape Related Designations and Other Considerations***

3.3 Landscape related designations and policy considerations within 3km of the area are illustrated on **Figure 8.3**. As is shown, the site does not lie within a nationally or locally designated landscape.

##### ***Heritage Matters***

3.4 Heritage assets can influence the visual character of the landscape and enrich its historic value. This LVIA addresses heritage assets only insofar as they are components of the wider contemporary landscape – not in terms of their significance and value as heritage assets, which is a matter addressed by the separate Archaeological and Heritage Assessment (prepared by EDP, report ref: edp0124\_r043).

3.5 Within the wider study area, the following heritage assets are components of the contemporary landscape:

- Bicester Conservation Area lies approximately 425m to the south-east and contains a number of Listed Buildings, however, it is considered that it does not have a physical or visual connection with the site;
- Wretchwick deserted medieval settlement, a Scheduled Monument lies approximately 375m south, but again this is not considered to have a physical or visual connection with the site; and

- A further group of Listed Buildings lie within the village of Launton approximately 700m east. Intervening vegetation and around the existing byway results in no visual or physical connection between the site and the Listed Building.

### ***Ecology Matters***

- 3.6 A separate Ecology Assessment (prepared by EDP, report ref: edp0124\_r045) considers the ecological assets on the site and within the study area. The site does not lie within or adjacent to a nationally or internationally designated site, however the site itself is designated as 'Gavray Drive Meadows' Local Wildlife Site (LWS).

### ***Arboricultural Matters***

- 3.7 A separate Arboricultural Assessment (prepared by EDP, report ref: edp0124\_r055) considers the arboricultural assets on the site and within the study area. In summary, the site contains a small number of Category A and B trees and Category B tree groups, a number of which are covered by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO).

### ***Public Access and Rights of Way***

- 3.8 A review of the Definitive Map reveals the following public rights of way and open access land within the Study Area (see also **Figure 8.3**):
- Bicester Footpath 3 enters the site at the north-western corner and runs north along the line of a hedgerow towards the railway line. The footpath crosses the newer railway line over a footbridge, before running under the main line further north. It then continues north-east along the route of the railway line into Bicester Distribution Park;
  - Bicester Footpath 4 runs east to west generally along the line of Gavray Drive, entering the site adjacent to Langford Brook on the southern boundary and heads east towards the A4421;
  - Launton Footpath 4 heads east from the A4421 adjacent to the site's south-eastern corner and towards the landscape to the east, however the crossing over the railway appears to be closed, truncating this PRow;
  - Launton Footpath 3 runs broadly north to south further east, approximately 700m east of the site, connecting the village of Launton to the north with the A41 to the south. The route runs under the railway line, which has resulted in an informal route connecting this footpath with Launton Footpath 4 above. To the north of the railway, the footpath connects to Launton and a small network of PRowS on the southern edge of the village;
  - Island Pond Wood, an area of open access land, lies on the southern edge of Launton approximately 775m east of the site;



- A small network of footpaths traverses the landscape immediately south of the village of Launton, including Launton Footpaths 5, 6, 7 and 8;
- Ambrosden Footpath 4 heads south from the A4221 adjacent to the site's south-eastern corner, providing access to the Wretchwick deserted medieval settlement Scheduled Monument approximately 375m south of the site. Continuing past Middle Wretchwick Farm, this footpath runs parallel to the A4421 and connects to the A41 approximately 1km south of the site;
- From Middle Wretchwick Farm, Ambrosden Footpath 5 heads south-easterly connecting to Launton Footpath 3 approximately 1.1km south of the site;
- Further east, Blackthorn Bridleway 9 traverses the slightly elevated landscape around Blackthorn Hill adjacent to Mill house Farm, approximately 1.6km south-east of the site; and
- To the south, Bicester Footpath 5 runs broadly east to west through the centre of Langford Village crossing the linear open space central to the village, approximately 600m to the south of the site.

***Adopted Local Plan (Published)***

3.9 The Adopted Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 includes over-arching general development policies, against which the development proposals will be tested. The Local Plan is split into five parts, including a vision for the district as a whole, policies for development as a whole and site-specific policies. Policies that are specific to the site in landscape and visual terms are:

- Policy BSC 10: Open space, Outdoor Sport and Recreation Provision – Sufficient quantity and quality of open space, sport and recreation is considered with appropriate access;
- Policy BSC 11: Local Standards of Provision – Development will contribute to the provision of open space, sport and recreation, together with secure arrangements for its management and maintenance;
- Policy ESD 10: Protection and Enhancement of Biodiversity and the Natural Environment – This will be achieved through a number of measures including a net gain in biodiversity, protecting and planting additional trees and the requirement of a monitoring and management plan to ensure long term management is protected;
- Policy ESD 13: Local Landscape Protection and Enhancement – Secure the enhancement of the character and appearance of the landscape, particularly in urban fringe locations. This will be achieved through restoration, management or enhancement of existing features;

- Policy ESD 17: Green Infrastructure (GI) – Maintain and enhance the district’s Green Infrastructure network, through protecting and enhancing existing features and ensuring GI forms an integral component in the planning of new development; and
- Policy Bicester 13: Gavray Drive (re-adopted) – Housing site of 23ha for 300 dwellings and 30% affordable.

## **Section 4**

### **Existing (Baseline) Conditions: Landscape Character**

- 4.1 This section provides an assessment of the ‘baseline’ (existing) conditions in respect of the character of the site and its landscape context. It summarises any relevant published landscape assessments that contribute to a better understanding of the landscape context. Such assessments provide a helpful understanding of the landscape context, but rarely deliver sufficiently site-specific or up-to-date information to draw robust conclusions about the significance of any change proposed by the development. Accordingly, EDP has undertaken its own assessment of the site itself, which is included in this section.

#### **National Character Assessment**

- 4.2 At the national level, the character of England has been described and classified in the National Character Area (NCA) profiles published by Natural England<sup>2</sup>. The site and its surroundings fall within NCA 108: Upper Thames Clay Vales, which is a broad belt of open, gently undulating lowland farmland extending from Cricklade in the west to Aylesbury to the east. The area encompasses NCA 109 and contains over 5,000ha of land within the North Wessex Downs AONB.
- 4.3 While the NCA is broadly representative of the site’s landscape context, it is far too generic to reliably inform an assessment of the suitability of the proposals in landscape terms. Of much greater use are the more localised, district and County-specific assessments described below.

#### **Local Landscape Character Assessments (Relevant Extracts Provided in Annex EDP 3)**

- 4.4 Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study (OWLS) was produced in 2004 and provides a county-wide assessment of the landscape character, separating the county into 24 Landscape Types (LT). Areas of the same LT share some common characteristics, whilst each individual member of the same LT is also described in terms of its unique qualities. These unique units are known as Local Character Areas (LoCA).
- 4.5 The application does not fall within any of these rural LTs, but instead sits within the urban area of Bicester, although clearly comprising land that has never been developed. Occupying an urban edge location, its eastern edge abuts Gavray Drive which is adjacent to the Clay Vale LT (and the UT/55 LoCA), to which the character of the application site can be directly related; its character is much less affected by other LTs to the north, south and west due to the developed nature of intervening land.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-character-area-profiles-data-for-local-decision-making/national-character-area-profiles>

- 4.6 Whilst the character of the application site is discussed in further detail below, surrounding development has an impact on the appreciation of the application site's character and would equally limit potential effects of the proposed development on local LTs. This is an important point to bear in mind, as the urban setting is as significant a feature of the application site's landscape context (if not more so) than the rural setting described by the Clay Vale LT.
- 4.7 The key characteristics of the Clay Vale LT are (those relevant to the site underlined):
- A flat, low-lying landform;
  - Mixed land uses, dominated by pastureland, with small to medium-sized hedged fields;
  - Many mature oak, ash and willow hedgerow trees;
  - Dense, tree-lined streams and ditches dominated by pollarded willows and poplars; and
  - Small to medium-sized nucleated villages.
- 4.8 UT/55 is described as an *“area... largely dominated by medium-sized semi-improved grass fields. They are enclosed by hawthorn hedges, which in some places are also adjacent to ditches. Mature ash, oak and sycamore hedgerow trees are scattered throughout the area. Pollarded crack willows also border small streams and grow in hedges next to ditches. A dense corridor of ash trees borders the railway line. Hedges are often gappy and fragmented in the northern part of the area.”*
- 4.9 The study also highlights the forces for change, states the landscape strategy and provides a number of guidelines for the Clay Valley LT. Forces for change that are considered relevant to the site and proposed development are:
- This is a low-lying vale landscape associated with small pasture fields, many watercourses and hedgerow trees and well-defined nucleated villages; and
  - The hedgerow network is generally in good condition, except where arable farming is dominant, and the hedges are either gappy or absent altogether. Hedgerow trees are also sparser in these arable areas.
- 4.10 The landscape strategy is to:
- *“Conserve the intimate, tranquil and small-scale pastoral character of the landscape; and*
  - *Conserve and enhance the well-defined pattern of hedgerows, hedgerow trees and tree-lined watercourses.”*

4.11 The guidelines considered relevant to the site and proposed development are:

- Strengthen the small-scale field pattern by planting up gappy hedges using locally characteristic species such as hawthorn, and hedgerow trees such as oak and ash particularly within roadside hedges;
- Promote environmentally-sensitive maintenance of hedgerows, including coppicing and layering when necessary, to maintain a height and width appropriate to the landscape type;
- Enhance and strengthen the character of tree-lined watercourses by planting willows and ash and, where appropriate, pollarding willows;
- Promote small-scale planting of deciduous woodland blocks using locally characteristic species such as oak and ash;
- Minimise the visual impact of intrusive land uses at the fringes of towns, villages and farms with the judicious planting of tree and shrub species characteristic to the area. This will help to screen the development and integrate it more successfully with its surrounding countryside; and
- Maintain the nucleated pattern of settlements and promote the use of building materials and a scale of development that are appropriate to this landscape type.

4.12 The published landscape character assessments do not make any specific comment on the value or sensitivity of landscape character areas/types. However, it is important to be able to ascribe a sensitivity to landscape receptors in order to be able to attribute a level of effect resulting from the proposed development, as per the Methodology at **Annex EDP 1**.

4.13 Having taken into account information provided in the published sources, and with reference to EDP's own landscape character assessment (below), the sensitivity of the wider local landscape character area is regarded to be medium – reflecting the coherence and generally good condition, though undesignated nature, of the local landscape context.

4.14 However, the sensitivity of the landscape type within which the application site is located is adversely affected by proximity to existing development, including industrial uses, and transport corridors. For that reason, the host LT is considered to have a low to medium sensitivity.

### **Landscape Designations**

4.15 Landscapes are designated at national, regional or local level, to reflect their acknowledged value. National level designations identify those landscapes of outstanding or highest quality and value, with regional or local designations reflecting a hierarchy of

importance below this. All landscapes are different and all are valued to some degree, particularly by those who live, work and relax within them. The differing levels of designation, be it on a national, regional or local level, will have an intrinsic effect upon the inherent sensitivity of them to the development type proposed.

- 4.16 The application site is not within, or in close proximity to, any landscapes designated at a national level, such as AONBs or National Parks. Landscape and related heritage designations (i.e. Historic Parks and Gardens, and Conservation Areas) within proximity to the application site (up to c.3km distance) are those defined within the planning policy documentation identified previously. These are illustrated at **Figure 8.3**.

### **EDP Site Assessment**

- 4.17 A site-specific, detailed, assessment of the landscape circumstances of the local context has been undertaken by an appropriately experienced Landscape Architect. This study has included a review of aerial photography, mapping and field assessments to enable EDP to prepare a description of the local landscape character, from which the following key points can be drawn. The viewpoint sheets provided should also be referenced, as they illustrate the character of the site and surrounding area.
- 4.18 The site can be generally split by land use. To the west are two arable fields, separated by a north-south aligned hedgerow with trees. These fields are bounded by hedgerow and wet ditch to the east, a hedgerow to the south, adjacent to Gavray Drive, with the embankment of the London-Birmingham railway forming its northern perimeter. The western boundary is also formed by the recently constructed Bicester-London line, separated to the site by a security fence.
- 4.19 The eastern section comprises a mixture of large areas of heathland, scrub, woodland and grassland in varying conditions. The northern boundary to the railway embankment has been cleared recently to allow for the construction of the additional rail link, with the eastern boundary formed by a mature tree belt running alongside the A4421. Gavray Drive, running along the southern boundary is separated from the site by a number of groups of mature trees, interspersed with two bell mouth road junctions and a number of informal pedestrian accesses.
- 4.20 The site forms part of a broadly rectangular wedge of undeveloped open space between a large area of residential development to the south and the railway and industrial/commercial land uses to the north. To the east lies the A4421, forming part of the ring road, which girdles Bicester. To the east of this main road is open countryside. To the west of the site, the network of railway routes, marks a division between the undeveloped wedge of land and the rest of Bicester, initially comprising industrial/commercial units. The application site is therefore very well contained, both visually and in landscape terms.
- 4.21 Perceptually, as the western section of the site is internally open (other than the dividing hedgerow), it is strongly influenced by the London-Birmingham railway to the north and Bicester-London line to the west. Gavray Drive, at this point, forms a dead-end, but traffic

using it to gain access to or from local residential areas to the south is audible, if not always visible.

- 4.22 A sensitivity of low/medium is attributed to the application site, arising from a combination of its simplicity of landscape structure to the west, its urban fringe location adjacent to existing development and railway lines and the mosaic of habitats found within the eastern parcels of the site, including the Local Wildlife Designation.

#### **Interim Conclusions: Landscape Character**

- 4.23 The published landscape character assessments, and EDP's own site assessment, provide an understanding of the characteristics and features of the landscape which have been identified as being defining elements of the nested character areas at different levels.
- 4.24 While the national level description (for NCA 108) concentrates on the general character of the landscape, it is unable to portray any useful level of detail in respect of the peculiarities of the local landscape setting of the application site. For that reason, it is necessary to pay particular attention to the sub-regional landscape character assessment, and to consider the site-specific assessment undertaken by EDP.
- 4.25 The published description of the character areas and types covering the study area are largely accurate and reflect the description of the landscape features and elements present within the application site and its immediate context presented in EDP's own site assessment. The application site, whilst being of an urban fringe character, has been given a low/medium sensitivity, which reflects its unusual complexity of landscape structure within a generally urbanised landscape. Immediately beyond the site area, the urban fringe character, strongly influenced by suburban and industrial/commercial development and proximity to major transport corridors, is considered to have a lower sensitivity, whilst the more distant, undesignated, rural landscape is considered to have a medium sensitivity.
- 4.26 A common theme regarding landscape strategy is the need to restore and enhance landscapes that have either lost their structure or have been degraded, while new development, which should reflect local styles and methods of construction, should be contained within a strong landscape framework.

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## **Section 5**

### **Existing (Baseline) Conditions: Visual Amenity**

#### **Introduction**

- 5.1 Visual amenity (as opposed to ‘visual character’ described in the previous section) is not about the visual appearance of the site, but has to do with the number, distribution and character of views towards, from or within the site. An analysis of visual amenity allows conclusions to be reached about who may experience visual change, from where and to what degree those views will be affected by the proposed development.
- 5.2 This section describes the existing views. An analysis of existing views and the ‘receptors’ likely to experience visual change is conducted in three steps described in turn below.

#### **Step One: Defining Zones of Theoretical and Primary Visibility**

- 5.3 The starting point for an assessment of visual amenity is a computer-generated ‘zone of theoretical visibility’ (ZTV). The ZTV is derived using digital landform height data only and therefore it does not account for the screening effects of intervening buildings, structures or vegetation, but it does give a prediction of the areas that, theoretically, may be able to experience visual change; it thus provides the basis for more detailed field assessment.
- 5.4 The ZTV is then refined by walking and driving local roads, rights of way and other publicly accessible viewpoints to arrive at a more accurate, ‘field-tested’ zone of primary visibility (ZPV). The ZPV is where views of the proposed development would normally be close-ranging and open, whether in the public or private domain, on foot, cycling or in a vehicle. In this instance, the field assessment was undertaken by a chartered member of the landscape institute in early June in clear weather conditions and therefore confidently predicts the extent of summertime/wintertime views of the proposed development.
- 5.5 Beyond the ZPV lies a zone of visibility that is less open, being either partly screened or filtered. Views from within this zone would include the proposal – it may not be immediately noticeable, but once recognised would be a perceptible addition to the view.
- 5.6 **Figure 8.4** illustrates the findings of the visual appraisal from which it can be seen. This shows that the ZPV is heavily influenced by the surrounding vegetation and the site’s location sitting on a generally flat vale.

#### **Step Two: Defining Receptor Groups**

- 5.7 Within the ZPV and wider area, the people (‘receptors’) likely to experience visual change can be considered as falling into a number of discernible groups.

### **Rights of Way Users**

5.8 Public Rights of Way are generally limited to the landscape to the east of the site, with a small number found within or adjacent to the site itself. The following routes have been considered as part of this assessment:

- Open views are afforded from the southern section of Bicester Footpath 3 as it enters the site from Gavray Drive (**Photoviewpoint EDP 1**) and heads towards the footbridge over the Bicester-London railway line (**Photoviewpoints EDP 2 and 3**). As the footpath continues north beyond the London-Birmingham line, views are screened by the landform and vegetation associated with the elevated railway line;
- Running along the northern extent of Gavray Drive, Bicester Footpath 4 is afforded glimpsed views towards the 2 arable fields at the northern end of the site through boundary vegetation (**Photoviewpoint EDP 4**), with an incidental open view afforded where vegetation stops adjacent to Langford Brook (**Photoviewpoint EDP 5**). As the footpath enters the site, vegetation helps to create a sense of enclosure, truncating experiences to the wider site and landscape;
- To the north, Launton Footpath 8 traverses the landscape to the south of the village of Launton, however views towards the site are screened by intervening built form and vegetation (**Photoviewpoint EDP 6**). The upper extent of large industrial units at Bicester Distribution Park can be identified in the winter view;
- East of the A4421, a single view is afforded from the western extent of Launton Footpath 4, where the mature vegetation along the site's eastern boundary screens views further into the site (**Photoviewpoint EDP 7**). As the footpath continues east, views from this receptor and Launton Footpath 3 are further restricted by intervening vegetation (**Photoviewpoint EDP 8**);
- Further east, views from the elevated Blackthorn Bridleway 9 are screened by the mature vegetation surrounding the site, with the large industrial units north of the site identifiable in the overall view (**Photoviewpoint EDP 9**);
- To the south, views from Ambrosden Footpath 5 as it heads south-easterly connecting to Launton Footpath 3, approximately 1.1km south of the site, are screened by intervening built form and vegetation with the large industrial units at Bicester Distribution Park to the north identifiable in the background (**Photoviewpoint EDP 10**); and
- Views from Bicester Footpath 5 as it runs through the open space corridor at Langford Village are screened by intervening vegetation, built form and the generally flat topography (**Photoviewpoint EDP 11**).

### **Road Users**

- 5.9 The application site sits to the north of the western end Gavray Drive, a local distributor road, from which the proposed development would be accessed. Development to the south of this road comprises residential dwellings and a linear open space. Views from the road itself are generally well filtered by boundary vegetation (**Photoviewpoint EDP 5**), however occasional transient glimpses are afforded where boundary planting is gappy (**Photoviewpoint EDP 4**).
- 5.10 The A4421 forms the eastern arc of the Bicester ring road, feeding the major radial routes emanating from Bicester. Bicester is neatly contained by this and the other routes forming the ring road (A4095, A41 and B4030), such that there is a clear distinction between urban development on the 'inside' of the ring, and a largely rural landscape on the 'outside'. Views from this receptor are generally well screened by vegetation along the site's eastern boundary (**Photoviewpoint EDP 7**).
- 5.11 The A41 links the M40 (to the south-west of Bicester) with London, via Aylesbury to the east, following the Roman Road known as Akeman Street. Intervening vegetation and built form screen any potential views from this route.
- 5.12 Mallards Way lies directly south of the site and forms a local road off Gavray Drive where users of the road approaching Gavray Drive are afforded a single view towards the southern boundary, where the arable fields in the site's eastern extent can be identified in the winter view (**Photoviewpoint EDP 12**).
- 5.13 To the west, Launton Road forms a busy local route providing access to amenities in the south-eastern extent of Bicester. Views from this route are screened by intervening built form (**Photoviewpoint EDP 13**).
- 5.14 Unclassified or minor B-class rural roads have a generally medium sensitivity, due to the typical nature of rural views that can be enjoyed on such routes. A-class roads and motorways have a generally low sensitivity because of the general purpose and speed of travel. Local suburban roads also have a low sensitivity due to the nature of the local environment and the purpose of use.
- 5.15 However, roads are usually assessed individually, as lower class roads can be found in urban environments, and higher class (A and motorway) roads often traverse through open countryside. The key to the sensitivity is the landscape and visual context through which a road passes, and any designation it may possess, such as promoted tourist route status. None of the routes through the detailed study area are officially designated as tourist routes.

### **Residential Dwellings/Groups**

- 5.16 Being a potential urban extension development, it is inevitable that there are a number of areas of existing settlement, or individual residences, in proximity. The site survey revealed a number of areas where the interrelationship between existing dwellings and the application site are notable, and these are described below. It is important to note

that views are predicated at ground level and from public locations. It is, therefore, not possible to ascertain with a high degree of certainty the nature of views from individual residences. Views from upper storeys are generally likely to include more of the site than from ground level, although it is not possible to verify this 'rule of thumb'.

5.17 Existing settlements can be grouped as follows, see **Figure 8.4**:

- Group A – Residential areas to the south of Gavray Drive;
- Group B – Residential areas immediately west of the railway extension;
- Group C – The remainder of residential areas within Bicester;
- Group D – Satellite villages surrounding Bicester;
- Group E – Isolated individual or small groups of dwellings outside Bicester; and
- Group F – Development at Graven Hill.

*Group A – Residential Areas to the South of Gavray Drive*

5.18 This group comprises those properties with views towards the application site, across Gavray Drive. Most ground floor views are screened by garden boundary vegetation (trees lining the southern side of Gavray Drive), and the site's own vegetated boundary. There are upper storey views into the interior of the site from those houses adjacent to Gavray Drive, subject to some filtering by the site boundary. Views tend to be either direct (rear) or side-on. Views of the site from properties behind those immediately adjacent to Gavray Drive are unlikely due to screening by neighbouring buildings, although glimpsed upper storey views between buildings may be possible from some properties.

*Group B - Residential Areas immediately West of the Railway Extension*

5.19 Despite their close proximity to the application site, views from houses in this group are unlikely to include the site due to intervening development and vegetation. Although upper storey glimpses may be possible, they are unlikely to be notable.

*Group C - The Remainder of Residential Areas within Bicester*

5.20 Views of the application site from this group are highly unlikely, and in the vast majority of cases certainly non-existent, due to screening by intervening development.

*Group D - Satellite Villages Surrounding Bicester*

5.21 This group comprises the principal villages that surround Bicester. Within the detailed study area, however, it is unlikely that any, even Launton, would have views of the site due to screening by local scrub woodland, the well-wooded parcel of land to the

immediate east of the site, the London-Birmingham railway embankment to the north and commercial buildings to the north-east of the site.

*Group E - Isolated Individual or Small Groups of Dwellings outside Bicester*

- 5.22 There are individual properties/farms to the east of the site that could potentially experience views of the application site. However, screening by hedgerows and trees in the wider landscape, the well-wooded parcel of land to the east of the site, and other urban development, would result in little, if any, intervisibility of the site.

*Group F - Development at Gravel Hill*

- 5.23 Approximately 1.2km south of the site lies a new residential development site located at Graven Hill. Despite the elevated nature of the property group, views from this area are screened by intervening built form and vegetation (**Photoviewpoint EDP 14**).

**Other Receptors**

*Garth Park*

- 5.24 Accessed via Launton Road to the west of the site, Garth Park contains a number of play areas for different age groups, alongside a general park and coffee shop. Although a popular area for local residents, views towards the site from this receptor are screened by the intervening built form and vegetation associated with the railway line (**Photoviewpoint EDP 15**).

*Railway Users*

- 5.25 There are two railway lines that pass through the general study area, and both within close proximity of the application site. The Bicester-London line takes a north-south route through the town and passes to the west of the site. The London-Birmingham line passes to the north of the site, forming its northern boundary. Both lines are bordered by dense scrubby vegetation and trees. Both lines immediately north of the site, however, sit on an embankment with views down into and across the site. Views from the new Bicester-London line to the west are generally screened by intervening vegetation and built form (**Photoviewpoint EDP 16**).
- 5.26 Railway receptors (passengers, generally) have a low sensitivity, primarily due to the speed and purpose of travel.

**Step Three: Defining Representative Viewpoints**

- 5.27 Within the ZPV, there are clearly many individual points at which views towards the site are gained. EDP has selected a number of viewpoints that are considered representative of the nature of the views from each of the receptor groups. The selection of the representative viewpoints is based on the principle that the assessment needs to test the 'worst case' scenario, and in selecting these viewpoints EDP has sought to include:

- A range of viewpoints from all points of the compass, north, south, east and west;
- A range of viewpoints from distances at close quarters to the site boundary and up to distant viewpoints at 1.7km from the site; and
- Viewpoints from all the above receptor groups.

5.28 The representation of views is supported by 16 photoviewpoints (PVPs), the number and location of which has been agreed with the LPA<sup>3</sup>. Photographs from the selected viewpoints are contained at the rear of this report, with locations shown on **Figure 8.5**. The purpose of these viewpoints is to aid assessment of a visual receptor(s). These viewpoints are not assessed separately.

**Table EDP 5.1:** Summary of Representative Photoviewpoints

<b>PVP No.</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Grid Reference</b>	<b>Distance and Direction from Site</b>	<b>Reason(s) for Selection and Sensitivity of Receptor</b>
1	Bicester Footpath 3 at site's north-eastern corner	459279, 222478	Within site	PRoW users <b>High sensitivity</b>
2	Bicester Footpath 3 along site's northern boundary	459342, 222547	Within site	PRoW users <b>High sensitivity</b>
3	Bicester Footpath 3 over railway footbridge	459357, 222596	15m; North	PRoW users <b>High sensitivity</b>
4	Bicester Footpath 4 running along the foot/cycleway along Gavray Drive	459400, 222332	25m; South-west	PRoW users <b>Medium sensitivity</b>  Road users <b>Low sensitivity</b>
5	Bicester Footpath 4 running along the foot/cycleway along Gavray Drive	459570, 222235	30m; South-west	PRoW users <b>Medium sensitivity</b>  Road users <b>Low sensitivity</b>
6	Launton Footpath 8 at southern edge of village	460340, 222755	585m; North-east	PRoW users <b>High sensitivity</b>
7	Western extent of Launton Footpath 4 on A4421	460066, 221940	20m; East	PRoW users <b>High sensitivity</b>  Road users <b>Low sensitivity</b>
8	Launton Footpath 3 and 4 on southern side of railway line	460558, 221965	490m; East	PRoW users <b>High sensitivity</b>

<sup>3</sup> Email correspondence with Tim Screen Landscape Officer dated 07 July 2020

<b>PVP No.</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Grid Reference</b>	<b>Distance and Direction from Site</b>	<b>Reason(s) for Selection and Sensitivity of Receptor</b>
9	Blackthorn bridleway 9 on Blackthorn Hill	461211, 220772	1.7km; South-east	PRoW users <b>High sensitivity</b>
10	Ambrosden Footpath 5 south of Scheduled Monument	459739, 221158	875m; South	PRoW users <b>High sensitivity</b>
11	Bicester Footpath 5 through Langford Village Public Open Space	459116, 221873	575m; South-west	PRoW users <b>High sensitivity</b>
12	Mallard Way	459294, 222321	90m; South-west	Road users <b>Low sensitivity</b>
13	Launton Road	459173, 222625	110m; North-west	Road users <b>Low sensitivity</b>
14	Ongoing development at Graven Hill	458882, 220699	1.7km; South-west	Road users <b>Low sensitivity</b>
15	Garth Park	458892, 222342	400m; South-west	Public Open Space <b>Medium sensitivity</b>
16	Bicester Footpath 3 on footbridge over railway line	459034, 222447	200m; South-west	PRoW users <b>Medium sensitivity</b>

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## **Section 6**

### **The Proposed Development and Mitigation**

6.1 Having defined the baseline conditions in the previous two sections, this report now reviews the proposed development alongside identified mitigation and enhancement principles within the overall masterplan.

#### **The Proposed Development**

6.2 The proposal comprises a planning application for outline planning permission for residential development of up to 250 dwellings, including means of access into the site (not internal roads), parking and associated works, with all other matters (relating to appearance, landscaping, scale and layout) reserved.

#### **Proposed Landscape Mitigation**

6.3 The landscape and visual sensitivities of the site have influenced the masterplan through an iterative process. Thus, the scheme proposals incorporate a degree of integral (or embedded) mitigation designed to avoid or reduce potential landscape and visual effects. These measures are illustrated on the Landscape Strategy (**Figure 8.6**) and can be summarised as follows:

- The retention and enhancement (where possible) of existing trees and hedgerows to the site perimeter with preference for those of greatest value;
- Detailed masterplanning of the site to retain and integrate existing hedgerows and trees succinctly into the residential and/or public open space area with preference for those of greatest value and connectivity;
- The design of the proposed development to reflect the current topography of the site to ensure that any new built form is either screened or filtered by the existing mature landscape setting as far as practicable;
- The design of the masterplan to establish 3-storey dwellings along the northern boundary, with 2.5-storey dwellings within the core of the site and 2-storey dwellings around the outer edge and the southern parcel of the proposed development; the lower height of new built form to the outer edge of the site would be afforded visual filtering / screening by the mature landscape features around the boundary (and / or earthworks to the northern area) effectively reducing the opportunity to see new built form over and above these elements;
- Formation of green corridors along main arterial routes from Gavray Drive with ancillary and buffer planting;

- Utility of existing access points used for main vehicular routes into the site negating the need to remove existing tree groups and hedgerows to the southern site boundary (retaining mitigation and mature landscape setting);
- Ensure built form is set back from existing tree groups and vegetation along the southern site boundary to protect and retain;
- Provision of access to new dwellings from access routes running inside the existing southern boundary to reduce the need for installing new access points within the existing tree groups and vegetation (retaining mitigation and mature landscape setting);
- Provision of sight lines from Gavray Drive to focus on new public open space within the proposed development with ancillary and mitigation planting;
- The establishment of new landscape mitigation planting which would become expediently established over the initial 15 years of the proposed development.; and
- Landscape planting including buffer shrub and tree planting to the northern site boundary where applicable to further filter and eventually screen views from the adjacent railway line.

6.4 It is recognised that some limited sections of hedgerow, as well as some trees, would be lost as a result of the development of the site. However, it should be noted that those areas that contribute to the wider landscape character and are identified as the most important by the ecology, arboricultural, and landscape assessments, would be retained. In addition, development of the site would provide the opportunity, secured at the Reserved Matters stage, for this resource to be enhanced through appropriate management and species enrichment; opened up to public access, where currently there is only a short section of PRoW; and brought into better long-term management. The sustainable urban drainage scheme (SuDS) across the site would also be designed to contribute further to amenity and wildlife value.

6.5 In adopting the above mitigation measures, the proposed scheme design serves to reduce the magnitude of potential landscape and visual effects on the identified baseline receptors. The scheme also seeks to retain and improve the key areas of existing vegetation and compensate for loss of areas assessed as less important in landscape, ecological and arboricultural terms.

### **Proposed Landscape Enhancement**

6.6 In addition to these extensive mitigation measures, which are inherent in the land choice and within the proposals as shown on the illustrative plans, the proposal would provide significant benefits for the local community including: the provision of housing to meet the needs of the Cherwell District; new areas of attractive, accessible, linked public open space across a site that previously had no formal public access, which would be

enhanced by sympathetic management of retained vegetation and SuDS features. The detailed design of these areas, secured through Reserved Matters, would be crucial to maximising their value for informal recreation, visual and wildlife amenity.

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## Annex EDP 1

# Methodology for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

A1.1 Landscape and Visual Assessments are separate, though linked procedures. Landscape effects derive from changes in the physical landscape fabric which may give rise to changes in its character and how this is experienced. Visual effects relate to changes that arise in the composition of available views as a result of changes to the perception of the landscape, to people’s responses to the changes and to the overall effects with respect to visual amenity.

**Table EDP A1.1:** Defining the Sensitivity of the Landscape Baseline

EDP assessment terminology and definitions	
Landscape Baseline - Overall Sensitivity	
<b>Very High</b>	<b>Value:</b> Nationally/internationally designated/valued countryside and landscape features; strong/distinctive landscape characteristics; absence of landscape detractors.
	<b>Susceptibility:</b> Strong/distinctive landscape elements/aesthetic/perceptual aspects; absence of landscape detractors; landscape receptors in excellent condition. Landscapes with clear and widely recognised cultural value. Landscapes with a high level of tranquillity.
<b>High</b>	<b>Value:</b> Locally designated/valued countryside (e.g. Areas of High Landscape Value, Regional Scenic Areas) and landscape features; many distinctive landscape characteristics; very few landscape detractors.
	<b>Susceptibility:</b> Many distinctive landscape elements/aesthetic/perceptual aspects; very few landscape detractors; landscape receptors in good condition. The landscape has a low capacity for change as a result of potential changes to defining character.
<b>Medium</b>	<b>Value:</b> Undesignated countryside and landscape features; some distinctive landscape characteristics; few landscape detractors.
	<b>Susceptibility:</b> Some distinctive landscape elements/aesthetic/perceptual aspects; few landscape detractors; landscape receptors in fair condition. Landscape is able to accommodate some change as a result.
<b>Low</b>	<b>Value:</b> Undesignated countryside and landscape features; few distinctive landscape characteristics; presence of landscape detractors.
	<b>Susceptibility:</b> Few distinctive landscape elements/aesthetic/perceptual aspects; presence of landscape detractors; landscape receptors in poor condition. Landscape is able to accommodate large amounts of change without changing these characteristics fundamentally.
<b>Very Low</b>	<b>Value:</b> Undesignated countryside and landscape features; absence of distinctive landscape characteristics; despoiled/degraded by the presence of many landscape detractors.
	<b>Susceptibility:</b> Absence of distinctive landscape elements/aesthetic/perceptual aspects; presence of many landscape detractors; landscape receptors in very poor condition. As such landscape is able to accommodate considerable change.

**Table EDP A1.2:** Defining the Sensitivity of the Visual Baseline

Visual Baseline - Overall Sensitivity	
<b>Very High</b>	<p><b>Value/Susceptibility:</b> View is designed/has intentional association with surroundings; recorded in published material; from a publicly accessible heritage asset/designated/promoted viewpoint; nationally/internationally designated right of way; protected/recognised in planning policy designation.</p> <p><b>Examples:</b> May include views from residential properties; National Trails; promoted holiday road routes; designated countryside/landscape features with public access; visitors to heritage assets of national importance; Open Access Land.</p>
<b>High</b>	<p><b>Value/Susceptibility:</b> View of clear value but may not be formally recognised e.g. framed view of scenic value or destination/summit views; inferred that it may have value for local residents; locally promoted route or PRoW.</p> <p><b>Examples:</b> May include from recreational locations where there is some appreciation of the visual context/landscape e.g. golf, fishing; themed rights of way with a local association; National Trust land; panoramic viewpoints marked on OS maps; road routes promoted in tourist guides and/or for their scenic value.</p>
<b>Medium</b>	<p><b>Value/Susceptibility:</b> View is not widely promoted or recorded in published sources; may be typical of those experienced by an identified receptor; minor road routes through rural/scenic areas.</p> <p><b>Examples:</b> May include people engaged in outdoor sport not especially influenced by an appreciation of the wider landscape e.g. pitch sports; views from minor road routes passing through rural or scenic areas.</p>
<b>Low</b>	<p><b>Value/Susceptibility:</b> View of clearly lesser value than similar views from nearby visual receptors that may be more accessible.</p> <p><b>Examples:</b> May include major road routes; rail routes; receptor is at a place of work but visual surroundings have limited relevance.</p>
<b>Very Low</b>	<p><b>Value/Susceptibility:</b> View may be affected by many landscape detractors and unlikely to be valued.</p> <p><b>Examples:</b> May include people at their place of work, indoor recreational or leisure facilities or other locations where views of the wider landscape have little of no importance.</p>

### Magnitude of Change

A1.2 The magnitude of any landscape or visual change is determined through a range of considerations particular to each receptor. The three attributes considered in defining the magnitude are:

- Scale of change;
- Geographical extent; and
- Duration and reversibility/proportion.

A1.3 **Table A1.3** below provides an indication of the criteria by which the geographical extent of the area will be affected within this assessment.

**Table A1.3:** Geographical Extent Criteria

Landscape Receptors	Visual Receptor Criteria
Large scale effects influencing several landscape types or character areas	Direct views at close range with changes over a wide horizontal and vertical extent.
Effects at the scale of the landscape type or character areas within which the proposal lies	Direct or oblique views at close range with changes over a notable horizontal and/or vertical extent
Effects within the immediate landscape setting of the site	Direct or oblique views at medium range with a moderate horizontal and/or vertical extent of the view affected.
Effects at the site level (within the development site itself)	Oblique views at medium or long range with a small horizontal/vertical extent of the view affected.
Effects only experienced on parts of the site at a very localised level	Long range views with a negligible part of the view affected.

A1.4 The third, and final, factor, in determining the predicted magnitude of change is duration and reversibility. Duration and reversibility are separate but linked considerations. Duration is judged according to the defined terms set out below, whereas reversibility is a judgement about the prospects and practicality of the particular effect being reversed in, for example, a generation. The categories used in this assessment are set out in **Table EDP A1.4** below.

**Table EDP A1.4:** Factors Influencing Judgements on Magnitude of Change

Duration	Reversibility
Long Term (20+ years)	Permanent with unlikely restoration to original state e.g. major road corridor, power station, urban extension, hydrocarbons
Medium to long term (10 to 20 years)	Permanent with possible conversion to original state e.g. agricultural buildings, retail units;
Medium term (5 to 10 years)	Partially reversible to a different state e.g. mineral workings;
Short term (1 – 5 years)	Reversible after decommissioning to a similar original state e.g. renewable energy development;
Temporary (less than 12 months)	Quickly reversible e.g. temporary structures.

**Table EDP A1.5:** Defining the Magnitude of Change to the Landscape and Visual Baseline

Magnitude of Change	
(Considers Scale of Proposal/Geographical Extent/Duration and Reversibility/Proportion)	
<b>Very High</b>	<p><b>Landscape:</b> Total loss/major alteration to key receptors/characteristics of the baseline; addition of elements that strongly conflict or integrate with the baseline.</p> <p><b>Visual:</b> Substantial change to the baseline, forming a new, defining focus and having a defining influence on the view.</p>
<b>High</b>	<p><b>Landscape:</b> Notable loss/alteration/addition to one or more key receptors/-characteristics of the baseline; or addition of prominent conflicting elements.</p> <p><b>Visual:</b> Additions are clearly noticeable and part of the view would be fundamentally altered.</p>

Magnitude of Change	
<b>Medium</b>	<b>Landscape:</b> Partial loss/alteration to one or more key receptors/characteristics; addition of elements that are evident but do not necessarily conflict with the key characteristics of the existing landscape.
<b>Low</b>	<b>Landscape:</b> Minor loss or alteration to one or more key landscape receptors/-characteristics; additional elements may not be uncharacteristic within existing landscape.
	<b>Visual:</b> Proposed development will form a minor constituent of the view being partially visible or at sufficient distance to be a small component.
<b>Very Low</b>	<b>Landscape:</b> Barely discernible loss or alteration to key components; addition of elements not uncharacteristic within the existing landscape.
	<b>Visual:</b> Proposed development will form a barely noticeable component of the view, and the view whilst slightly altered would be similar to the baseline.
<b>Imperceptible</b>	<i>In some circumstances, changes at representative viewpoints or receptors will be lower than 'Very Low' and changes will be described as 'Imperceptible'. This will lead to negligible effects.</i>

### Predicted Effects

A1.5 In order to consider the likely level of any effect, the sensitivity of each receptor is combined with the predicted magnitude of change to determine the level of effect, with reference also made to the geographical extent, duration and reversibility of the effect within the assessment. Having taken such a wide range of factors into account when assessing sensitivity and magnitude at each receptor, the level of effect can be derived by combining the sensitivity and magnitude in accordance with the matrix in **Table A1.6**.

**Table EDP A1.6:** Determining the Predicted Levels of Effects to the Landscape and Visual Baseline

Overall Sensitivity	Overall Magnitude of Change				
	Very High	High	Medium	Low	Very Low
<b>Very High</b>	Substantial	Major	Major/- Moderate	Moderate	Moderate/- Minor
<b>High</b>	Major	Major/- Moderate	Moderate	Moderate/- Minor	Minor
<b>Medium</b>	Major/- Moderate	Moderate	Moderate/- Minor	Minor	Minor/- Negligible
<b>Low</b>	Moderate	Moderate/- Minor	Minor	Minor/- Negligible	Negligible
<b>Very Low</b>	Moderate/- Minor	Minor	Minor/- Negligible	Negligible	Negligible/- None

**Table EDP A1.7:** Definition of Effects

Definition of Effects	
<b>Substantial</b>	Effects that are in complete variance to the baseline landscape resource or visual amenity.
<b>Major or Major/Moderate</b>	Effects that result in noticeable alterations to much ( <i>Major effect</i> ) or some ( <i>Moderate/Major effect</i> ) of the key characteristics of the landscape resource or aspects of visual amenity.



Definition of Effects	
<b>Moderate</b>	Effects that result in noticeable alterations to a few of the key characteristics of the baseline landscape resource or aspects of visual amenity.
<b>Minor or Minor/Negligible</b>	Effects that result in slight alterations to some ( <i>Minor effect</i> ) or a few ( <i>Minor/Negligible</i> ) of the key characteristics of the landscape resource or aspects of visual amenity.
<b>Negligible or Negligible/None</b>	Effects that result in barely perceptible alterations to a few ( <i>Negligible effect</i> ) or some ( <i>Negligible/None effect</i> ) of the key characteristics of the landscape resource or aspects of visual amenity.
<b>None</b>	No detectable alteration to the key characteristics of the landscape resource or aspects of visual amenity.

- A1.6 Effects can be adverse (negative), beneficial (positive) or neutral. The landscape effects will be considered against the landscape baseline, which includes published landscape strategies or policies if they exist. Changes involving the addition of large-scale man-made objects are typically considered to be adverse, unless otherwise stated, as they are not usually actively promoted as part of published landscape strategies.
- A1.7 Visual effects are more subjective as peoples' perception of development varies through the spectrum of negative, neutral and positive attitudes. In the assessment of visual effects the assessor will exercise objective professional judgement in assessing the level of effects and, unless otherwise stated, will assume that all effects are adverse, thus representing the worst-case scenario. Effects can be moderated by maturation of landscape strategies.
- A1.8 The timescale of each effect is also important, and effects are generally assessed at time stamps in the whole development life cycle: temporary (at a mid-point in construction), short-term (completion at year 1), medium-term (typically 15 years), medium- to long-term (15+ years). In some cases, the operational phase of a scheme could be considered 'temporary'.

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## Annex EDP 2 Glossary of LVIA Terms

<b>TERM AND DEFINITION</b>
<b>Baseline</b>
The existing (pre-development) landscape and visual context of a study area, including landscape fabric, landscape character and existing views. The landscape baseline is not static and may be changing for various reasons. The landscape baseline can also consider such factors and describe the likely future landscape character of the landscape, without the proposed development.
<b>Effects</b>
A predicted change in the environmental baseline as a result of the proposed development. Effects can be positive or negative.
<b>Field Pattern</b>
The pattern of hedges and walls that define fields in farmed landscapes (LI/IEMA 2002).
<b>Intervisibility</b>
Two points on the ground or two features are described as “intervisible” when they are visible from each other.
<b>Landscape</b>
Landscape results from the way that different aspects of our environment (physical, social, aesthetic and perceptual) interact together and are perceived by us: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical elements – e.g. geology, landform, soils, flora and fauna;</li> <li>• Social elements – e.g. land use, enclosure patterns, and the patterns, form and scale of settlements and other built development;</li> <li>• Aesthetic factors – e.g. colour, form, visual texture and pattern, sounds, smells and touch; and</li> <li>• Perceptual factors – e.g. memories, associations, stimuli and preferences.</li> </ul>
<b>Landscape Capacity</b>
The degree to which a particular landscape character type or area is able to accommodate change without significant effects on its character. Capacity is likely to vary according to the type and nature of change being proposed.
<b>Landscape Character</b>
Landscape character arises from a distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of physical and social elements, aesthetic factors and perceptual aspects in the landscape.
<b>Landscape Character Areas (LCAs)</b>
Single unique areas that are discrete geographical areas containing one or more landscape types.
<b>Landscape Character Types (LCTs)</b>
Generic units of landscape that display a distinct, consistent and recognisable landscape character.
<b>Landscape Condition</b>
Description of the maintenance and condition of landscape elements and the degree to which landscape elements are representative of the landscape character area.
<b>Landscape Element</b>
A physical component (both natural and manmade) of the landscape.
<b>Landscape Fabric</b>
The elements and features that constitute the physical components of the landscape, including ground vegetation, hedgerows, trees, shrubs, walls, fences and vernacular structures.
<b>Landscape Units</b>
An umbrella term for landscape character areas and landscape character types.
<b>Landscape Value</b>

<b>TERM AND DEFINITION</b>
The importance or value of the landscape to society, usually based on landscape designations or policies as indicators of recognised value.
<b>Mitigation</b>
Measures, including any process, activity or design that will avoid, reduce, remedy or compensate for the predicted effects of a development on the environmental baseline.
<b>Public Access</b>
<p>Land with public access includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Definitive rights of way</b> – public footpaths, bridleways, cycle routes, Byways Open to All Traffic (BOATS) and highways. Shown on Definitive Rights of Way maps held by the Local Authority;</li> <li>• <b>Permissive paths and bridleways</b> – routes where there is public access with the permission of the landowner. Such routes are usually closed at least one day a year to prevent establishment of a public right of way;</li> <li>• <b>Public open space</b> – areas designated for specified public uses, usually in the ownership of the Local Authority. Includes parks and recreation grounds. Shown on Local Development Plans;</li> <li>• <b>Beaches</b> – the public have permitted access to much of the foreshore (intertidal zone – between high and low tide marks) owned by the Crown Estate, and on land above high water mark owned by the Local Authority. Some beaches above high tide mark are privately owned and some beaches and foreshore have restricted access for military purposes;</li> <li>• <b>Access land</b> – land where public access is currently permitted with the permission of landowners. Includes land outlined in purple on the OS Explorer (1:25,000) sheets and with:       <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ No symbol – land open to public with permission of owners;</li> <li>○ White oak leaf in purple box – National Trust, always open;</li> <li>○ Purple oak leaf in white box – National Trust limited access;</li> <li>○ Tree symbols in purple box – Forestry Commission;</li> <li>○ Single leaf in purple box – Woodland Trust; and</li> <li>○ White “AL” in purple box – other access land.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Open access land</b> – areas of mountains, moor, heath, down, common land and coastal foreshore that have been designated under Section 2 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. The right of access is for walkers only and does not extend to cycling, horse riding or driving a vehicle, nor does the right of access apply to developed land, gardens or cultivated land. Under the CRoW Act 2000, there was a process of consultation that allowed the right of appeal for those with a legal interest in the land, and for sensitive ecological or archaeological sites to be excluded. Conclusive maps showing the areas designated as open access land (Registered Common Land and Open Country) are now available from Natural England (in England) and the Countryside Council for Wales (in Wales).</li> </ul>

<b>TERM AND DEFINITION</b>
<b>Viewing Distance</b>
That distance that a viewpoint illustration should be held from the eye in order for the illustration to match the scale of the actual view when used in the field to identify the location and scale of the proposed development.
<b>Visibility</b>
Visibility is a measure of the distance that can be seen by the human eye at any one time. Daylight visibility will depend on several factors, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Atmospheric transparency (governed by the solid and liquid particles held in suspension in the atmosphere);</li><li>• Degree of contrast between an object and the background against which it is observed;</li><li>• Position of the sun; and</li><li>• Observer's visual acuity.</li></ul>
<b>Visual Receptor(s)</b>
An individual observer or group of observers who are capable of experiencing a change in the view.
<b>Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV)</b>
The ZTVs consider the 'bareground' situation and assume excellent visibility with no atmospheric attenuation. The ZTVs therefore represent the maximum potential, theoretical visibility i.e. the worst-case situation. In reality, other components of the landscape such as forestry, trees, buildings etc. will introduce screening effects which, coupled with the atmospheric conditions, will reduce this visibility, in some instances to a considerable extent.

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**Annex EDP 3**  
**Landscape Character Assessments Extracts**

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# Landscape Types:

## Clay Vale Introduction



### 3. CLAY VALE

#### Regional character areas

Northamptonshire Uplands, Cotswolds, Upper Thames Vale, Vale of Aylesbury and Vale of White Horse.

#### Location

This landscape type extends from the vale landscapes adjacent to the northern part of the River Cherwell to the Upper Thames area south of Bicester. It also occupies a large part of the Vale of White Horse to the north-east of Wantage and borders part of the River Thame and its tributaries.

#### Overview

This is a low-lying vale landscape associated with small pasture fields, many watercourses and hedgerow trees and well defined nucleated villages.

#### Key characteristics

- A flat, low-lying landform.
- Mixed land uses, dominated by pastureland, with small to medium-sized hedged fields.
- Many mature oak, ash and willow hedgerow trees.
- Dense, tree-lined streams and ditches dominated by pollarded willows and poplars.
- Small to medium-sized nucleated villages.

## Landscape Types:

### Clay Vale



### 3. CLAY VALE

#### Regional Character Areas

Northamptonshire Uplands, Cotswolds, Upper Thames Vale, Vale of Aylesbury and Vale of White Horse.

#### Location

The landscape type extends from the vale landscapes adjacent to the northern part of the river Cherwell to the Upper Thames area south of Bicester. It also occupies a large part of the Vale of White Horse to the northeast of Wantage and borders part of the river Thame and its tributaries.

#### Overview

This is a low lying vale landscape associated with small pasture fields, many watercourse and hedgerow trees and well-defined nucleated villages.

#### Key Characteristics

- A flat, low-lying landform.
- Mixed land uses, dominated by pastureland, with small to medium-sized hedged fields.
- Many mature oak, ash and willow hedgerow trees;
- Dense, tree-lined streams and ditches dominated by pollarded willows and poplars.
- Small to medium-sized nucleated villages.

#### Geology and landform

The geology is associated with a range of different clay beds which vary according to locality. The Ironstone area and the Cotswolds are underlain by the clays of the Lower Lias series, whilst beds of Oxford Clay dominate the geology in the Upper Thames area. In the Vale of White Horse and Vale of Aylesbury, the heavy blue grey Gault Clay dominates. The clay beds give rise to a low-lying, almost completely flat landform with heavy, poorly-drained soils.

#### Land use and vegetation

There is a mixed pattern of land uses, but the landscape is dominated by improved and semi-improved grassland, which is often located around settlements and adjacent to small streams and watercourses. Arable farming is more prevalent in the Vale of White Horse and Vale of

Aylesbury. Notable features throughout much of the area are the linear strips of pollarded willows, poplar and ash bordering a number of streams and ditches particularly in the Vale of White Horse and Vale of Aylesbury. Woodland cover is also a locally prominent landscape element in both these Vales and around places such as Weston-on-the Green. There are a number of small willow and poplar plantations in the more poorly drained areas, as well as deciduous plantations of oak, ash and field maple. There are a few remaining blocks of ancient semi-natural woodland.

### **Cultural pattern**

The field pattern is largely characterised by small to medium-sized fields, with larger arable fields around Chalgrove and Little Milton and improved grassland around Nether Worton. It is enclosed by a well-defined network of intact hedges dominated by hawthorn and elm. In some areas, there are significant drainage ditches adjacent to hedges. Characteristic landscape elements throughout are the mature, densely scattered hedgerow trees of oak, ash with some willow and field maple. Trees are more prominent within hedges bordering roadsides and ditches. The tree cover associated with hedgerows and watercourses imparts a wooded appearance to the landscape, filters views and creates a sense of enclosure.

The heavy clay soils have traditionally made settlement difficult and there are still significant areas which are sparsely settled including, for example, the land to the north of Chalgrove. The settlement pattern is characterised by a well-defined pattern of small to medium-sized nucleated villages and sparsely dispersed farmhouses located mainly within the farming units rather than bordering roadsides. The vernacular character is quite prominent in most of the villages, especially in Weston-on-the Green, Blackthorn, Little Milton and Little Haseley. In the Vale of White Horse, the traditional vernacular character is particularly prominent in Shellingford, Baulking, Goosey, Uffington and Woolstone. The building materials vary depending on the locality. In the Ironstone area, they consist of ironstone and stone tiles, whereas they are mainly limestone and stone tiles within the Upper Thames area. In the Vale of Aylesbury, houses are built of either brick or stone, with bricks around the windows, and clay tiles. In the Vale of White Horse, the main materials are stone, with bricks around the windows, and clay or stone tiles or thatch. In villages such as Uffington and Baulking, houses are often built of clunch, a type of chalk, along with bricks with clay tiles or thatched roofs.

## **BIODIVERSITY**

### **Overview**

A low-lying, gently rolling landform characterised by woodlands, small fields, hedges and tree-lined watercourses with a number of important habitats including ancient semi-natural woodland, species-rich hedges with trees and parkland.

### **Key characteristics**

- Predominantly low-medium to medium bioscores/biobands.
- It supports a range of locally important habitats including deciduous woodlands, plantations, semi-improved grassland and species-poor hedges with trees. Priority habitats include species-rich hedgerows and watercourses, neutral grassland and reedswamp.

### **General description**

This is a large landscape type, occupying around 8.6% of the rural county. It supports a wide range of locally important habitats such as deciduous woodland, plantations, scrub, semi-improved grassland and tree-lined watercourses. Other important habitats include ancient semi-natural woodland, parkland, wet grassland and species-poor watercourses. There are a range of priority habitats including species-rich hedgerows with trees, neutral grassland and dry meadows, fen, reedswamp and species-rich watercourses. A number of the ancient woods are over 10 ha and in favourable condition. The unimproved grassland and meadows are around 5-6 ha, with the largest being Fernham meadows in the Vale of White horse at just over 18 ha, and they are not always in favourable condition and management. Within such a large landscape type, many of these key sites are relatively small and isolated. The majority of the local character areas have low-medium to medium bioscores.

## **LOCAL CHARACTER AREAS**

### **A. Cropredy (NU/29, NU/31, NU/33)**

**Landscape Character**

This is a pastoral landscape dominated by small-sized, regular fields of semi-improved grassland with a distinctive pattern of ridge and furrow in some areas. Some of the pasture close to the river Cherwell includes neutral and wet grassland habitats. Mature oak and ash hedgerow trees are a notable feature, although they become sparser to the west of the river Cherwell. The hedgerow network is well-defined with intact hedges of hawthorn and elm. They are rather low, but are noticeably taller to the west of the river. Occasionally, where hedges are bordered by ditches the trees are denser and include pollarded willows. A small number of poplar plantations add to the tree cover.

**Biodiversity**

Bioscores/biobands: 43/M; 31/M; 37/M

Locally important habitats include deciduous woodlands and plantations, semi-improved grassland, species-poor hedges with trees, tree-lined and species-poor watercourses. Priority habitats include a neutral grassland site within the Cherwell valley and some species-rich watercourses.

**B. Nether Worton (NU/1)****Landscape character**

The area has mixed land uses, but is dominated by large geometric fields of improved pasture. Mature oak and ash hedgerow trees are thinly scattered throughout. The dense tree corridor of white willow, alder and ash that borders a tributary of the river Cherwell is a locally prominent feature. There are also a few small poplar plantations as well as some mixed plantations of oak, ash and conifer species. Field boundaries are often a combination of hawthorn hedges and ditches. They are generally in good condition but are sometimes low or removed altogether, particularly in the eastern area where arable farming is dominant.

**Biodiversity**

Bioscore/bioband: 61/M

This area supports quite a wide range of locally important habitats including deciduous woodlands and plantations, semi-improved grassland, scrub, species-poor hedges with trees and tree-lined species-poor watercourses. It includes a little bit of ancient semi-natural woodland.

**C. Grange Farm (East) (CW/50)****Landscape character**

Semi-improved grassland is the dominant land use. Small scale fields are enclosed by low, intact hawthorn hedges. Tree cover is limited to a few sparsely scattered hedgerow trees of ash and sycamore.

**Biodiversity**

Bioscore/bioband: 13/L

The only locally important habitats recorded are some semi-improved grassland and species-poor hedges with trees.

**D. Foscott (CW/24)****Landscape character**

There is a pattern of small fields with both arable farming and extensive sheep-grazed pasture. The fields are enclosed by tall, thick well maintained hawthorn and elm hedges. Mature oak, ash and dead elm hedgerow trees are thinly scattered throughout. Pollarded willows also fringe some of the ditches.

**Biodiversity**

Bioscore/bioband: 35/LM

Locally important habitats include deciduous woodlands and plantations, semi-improved grassland, scrub, and species-poor hedges with trees. The only other key habitat recorded is parts of the river Evenlode which are species-rich.

## **E. Weston-on-the-Green (UT/38)**

### **Landscape character**

The area has mixed land uses, small to medium-sized fields, with arable farming dominating to the east of the A34. The landscape is comparatively well wooded in relation to the rest of the landscape type. There are small deciduous oak and ash plantations, as well as medium-sized secondary and ancient woods with oak standards and some ash and hazel coppice scattered throughout the area. Densely scattered hedgerow trees of oak, ash and field maple, particularly in roadside hedges, add to the overall tree cover. Hedges are generally tall, thick, in good condition and occasionally species-rich. The exception is where they border arable fields and, in this situation, they are low and gappy.

### **Biodiversity**

Bioscore/bioband: 125/H

This area supports a wide range of locally important habitats including deciduous woodlands and plantations, semi-improved grassland, scrub, species-poor hedges with trees and tree-lined species-poor watercourses. It also includes wet species-poor grassland and lakes. There are a number of ancient semi-natural woodlands including Weston Wood near Weston-on-the-Green and Black Leys Wood near Bletchingdon. They are between 13 and 20 ha and in reasonable condition and management. There are also a number of species-rich hedgerows with trees.

## **F. Launton (UT/55)**

### **Landscape Character**

The area is largely dominated by medium-sized semi-improved grass fields. They are enclosed by hawthorn hedges, which in some places are also adjacent to ditches. Mature ash, oak and sycamore hedgerow trees are scattered throughout the area. Pollarded crack willows also border small streams and grow in hedges next to ditches. A dense corridor of ash trees borders the railway line. Hedges are often gappy and fragmented in the northern part of the area.

### **Biodiversity**

Bioscore/bioband: 75/M

This area supports a range of locally important habitats including deciduous woodland, scrub, semi-improved grassland, species-poor hedges with trees, and tree-lined species-poor watercourses. There are also isolated examples of wet grassland and reedswamp as well as a flooded pit used for angling at the southern end of Stratton Audley quarry.

## **G. Waterperry (VA/12)**

### **Landscape character**

The landscape is characterised by small to medium-sized fields with both arable farming and pasture. Grassland is more typical near Horton Brook and around Waterperry. Mature oak, ash and field maple are a prominent feature, particularly within roadside hedges. There is a strong network of hawthorn and blackthorn hedges. Some roadside hedges are species-rich and include trees and shrubs such as dog rose, guelder rose, dogwood, hazel, ash and field maple. A few of the internal field boundaries are gappy. There are a few small blocks of semi-natural woodland with species such as oak, ash and field maple and deciduous plantations including oak, ash and cherry.

### **Biodiversity**

Bioscore/bioband: 46/LM

Locally important habitats include deciduous woodland, semi-improved grassland, species-poor

hedges with trees and tree-lined species-poor watercourses. The only recorded priority habitat is species-rich hedges with trees.

## H. Uffington (WH/24)

### Landscape character

There is a mix of medium to large-sized fields with both arable land and pasture. The grassland is largely confined to the smaller fields close to the river Ock and its tributaries. Large arable fields occupy the land to the west of Grove. Fields are enclosed by hawthorn and elm hedges which, in turn, are often adjacent to ditches. Dense linear strips of willow, ash, field maple and oak border watercourses and are a prominent visual feature which give structure to an otherwise flat low-lying landscape. Densely scattered hedgerow trees of ash, oak, willow and dead elm, particularly within roadside hedges, add to the tree cover. Ash and willow trees in hedges next to ditches are particularly prominent. There are small to medium-sized blocks of ancient and semi-natural oak and ash woodland, as well as deciduous plantations of oak, ash, willow and poplar, scattered throughout the area. Hedges are generally in good condition but some of the internal field hedges are gappy. To the west of Grove they have been removed, resulting in a very open landscape.

### Biodiversity

Bioscore/bioband: 144/H

This very large area supports a wide range of locally important habitats including deciduous woodland, plantations, scrub, semi-improved grassland, species-poor hedges with trees, species-poor rivers and streams and tree-lined species-poor watercourses. It also has a number of ancient semi-natural woodlands such as Long Spinney Copse and isolated areas of neutral and dry meadow grassland including Fernham Meadows which is over 18 ha in size. There is also parkland, with its associated mature trees and lakes and reedswamp, in and around the military college at Watchfield.

## I. Chalgrove (VA/4, VA/7)

### Landscape character

Small to large-sized fields with a mix of arable farming and pasture dominate the area. The larger arable fields are mainly concentrated around Chalgrove, Little Milton and Little Haseley. The smaller grass fields are mostly found to the east, which is a rolling landform drained by small streams. The landscape is characterised by a large number of small and medium-sized poplar and willow plantations. There are also some mixed oak, ash and conifer plantations. Dense corridors of pollarded willows and poplars bordering watercourses are a prominent visual feature. Fields are bounded by woods, riparian tree corridors, hawthorn and elm hedges and sparsely scattered trees of ash, oak, willow and dead elm. The hedges are generally overgrown and gappy. Where arable farming dominates they are often absent or fragmented. The parkland at Little Haseley is also mainly arable.

### Biodiversity

Bioscore/bioband: 85/M; 37/LM

This area supports a number of locally important habitats including deciduous woodland, plantations, semi-improved grassland, species-poor hedges with trees and tree-lined species-poor watercourses. It also includes a few isolated blocks of ancient semi-natural woodlands and some species-rich hedgerows with trees and parkland at Little Haseley with its associated habitats. There is also an important area of fen near Great Haseley.

## FORCES FOR CHANGE

- The hedgerow network is generally in good condition, except where arable farming is dominant and the hedges are either gappy or absent altogether. Hedgerow trees are also sparser in these arable areas.
- The impact of residential development is generally low. There is some development, but it usually integrates with the existing village pattern. By contrast, industrial, commercial and residential development on the fringes of larger settlements such as north Banbury and Chalgrove can be visually intrusive. Grove Technology Park, to the west of Grove, stands out in

otherwise flat open landscape. The weak hedgerow structure is unable to mitigate the visual impact of the Park and the abrupt edges of the town.

- The M40, and its associated infrastructure, has had an impact on the otherwise tranquil pastoral landscape. A row of pylons crossing the area to the north of Waterperry is highly visible and locally intrusive.
- Chalgrove airfield and its associated buildings impact on the surrounding flat open landscape.
- Occasionally, the large agricultural buildings in the more intensively farmed areas appear out of character.

## Landscape Strategy

**Conserve the intimate, tranquil and small-scale pastoral character of the landscape. Conserve and enhance the well-defined pattern of hedgerows, hedgerow trees and tree-lined watercourses.**

### Guidelines

- Strengthen the small-scale field pattern by planting up gappy hedges using locally characteristic species such as hawthorn, and hedgerow trees such as oak and ash particularly within roadside hedges.
- Promote environmentally-sensitive maintenance of hedgerows, including coppicing and layering when necessary, to maintain a height and width appropriate to the landscape type.
- Enhance and strengthen the character of tree-lined watercourses by planting willows and ash and, where appropriate, pollarding willows.
- Promote small-scale planting of deciduous woodland blocks using locally characteristic species such as oak and ash.
- Conserve the surviving areas of permanent pasture, particularly ridge and furrow, and promote arable reversion to grassland particularly on land adjacent to watercourses.
- Minimise the visual impact of intrusive land uses at the fringes of towns, villages and farms with the judicious planting of tree and shrub species characteristic to the area. This will help to screen the development and integrate it more successfully with its surrounding countryside.
- Maintain the nucleated pattern of settlements, and promote the use of building materials and a scale of development and that are appropriate to this landscape type. Local building materials should be used, such as ironstone and stone tiles in the Ironstone area, limestone and stone tiles in the Upper Thames area, and bricks, or stone with bricks, and clay or stone tiles in the Vale of Aylesbury and Vale of White Horse.

## Biodiversity Strategy

**Ensure that all surviving priority habitats are safeguarded, in favourable condition and management, and enhanced to satisfy the actions and targets identified within the relevant habitat and species action plans. Safeguard, maintain and enhance all locally important habitats in a way which is appropriate to the landscape character of the area. Promote agri-environment schemes which will benefit biodiversity in general and protected species and farmland birds in particular.**

### Guidelines

- Priority habitats in this landscape type are relatively small and isolated. They include some species-rich neutral and dry meadow grassland, fen, reedswamp and species-rich hedgerows.
- The species-rich dry meadow grassland and fen sites are S.S.S.I.s and the priority is to ensure that they are in suitable condition and management through formal agreement between the landowner and English Nature. Opportunities for successfully expanding this habitat type throughout the landscape type are limited.
- Species-rich hedgerows with trees are distributed throughout different parts of the landscape type. Priority should be given to safeguarding, maintaining and expanding this resource using species such as oak, ash, field maple and hazel particularly in those local character areas where they remain a significant feature
- There are a number of ancient semi-natural woodlands scattered throughout this landscape type. The priority must be to ensure that all these sites are in favourable condition and management.
- Tree-lined watercourses are a feature throughout the landscape type. They should be safeguarded and enhanced by planting species such as ash and willow, pollarding willows where

appropriate, and establishing buffer strips/field margins to potentially benefit small mammals, invertebrates and birds. Although the majority of watercourses are species-poor there are some which remain species-rich and these should be kept in favourable condition and management to encourage the spread and colonisation of aquatic plants and animals to adjacent watercourses.

- Opportunities for the establishment of other locally important habitats, such as semi-improved grassland and small deciduous woodlands, should be promoted in a way to strengthen wildlife corridors and enhance the local landscape character.
- Promote the use of agri-environment schemes such as conservation headlands, over-wintered stubbles, and winter-sown crops to benefit farmland birds such as skylarks and yellowhammers.

### **Key Recommendations**

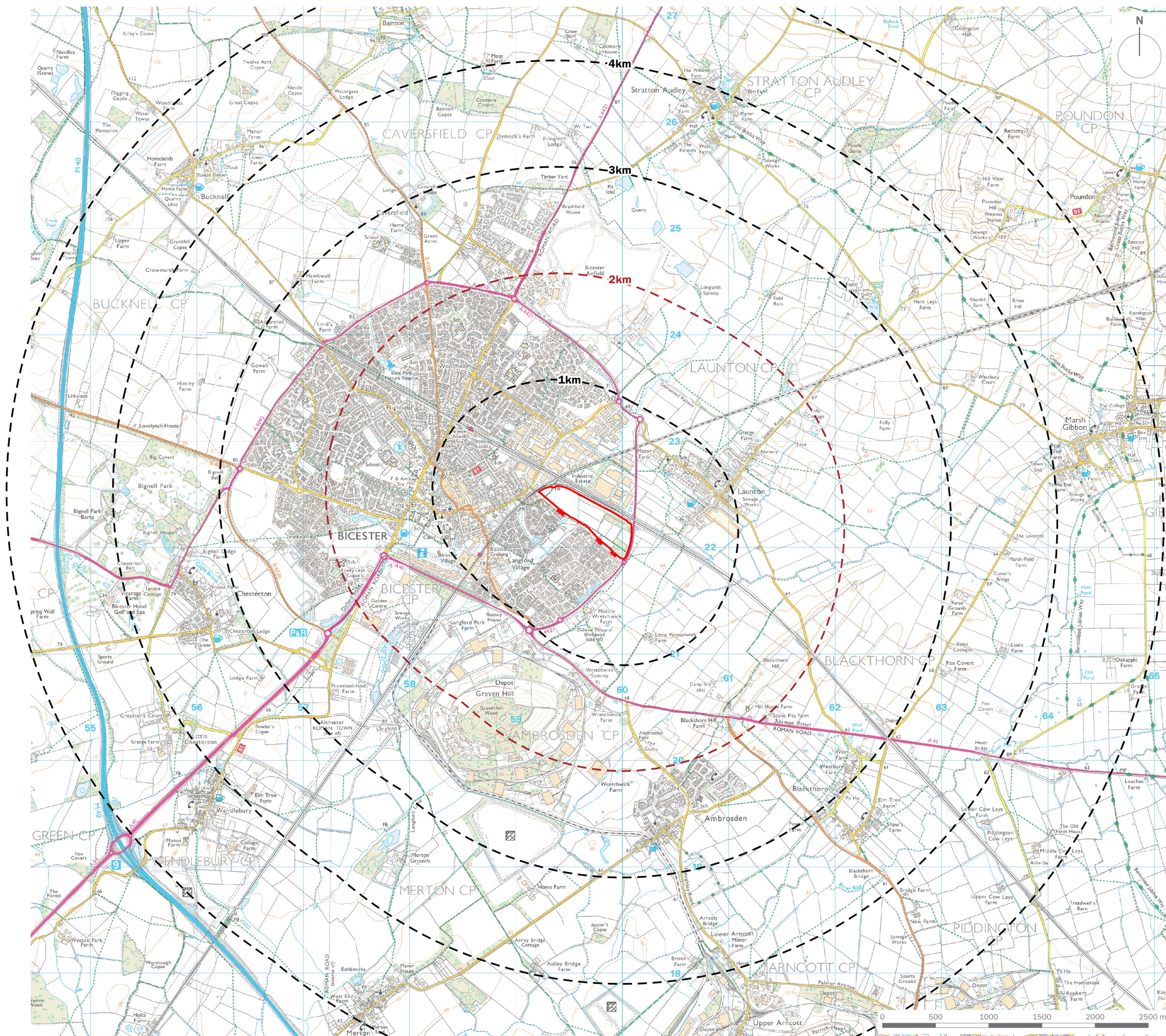
- **Safeguard and enhance the tranquil, small-scale pastoral character of the area with its well defined pattern of hedgerows and hedgerow trees, woodlands and tree-lined watercourses.**
- **Ensure that all surviving priority habitats are in favourable condition and management.**



## Figures

- Figure 8.1** Site Location and Site Boundaries  
(edp0124\_d161a 14 July 2021 AH/CJM)
- Figure 8.2** Site Character and Local Context  
(edp0124\_d163a 14 July 2021 AH/CJM)
- Figure 8.3** Relevant Planning Designations and Considerations  
(edp0124\_d162a 14 July 2021 AH/CJM)
- Figure 8.4** Findings of EDP's Visual Appraisal  
(edp0124\_d165a 14 July 2021 AH/CJM)
- Figure 8.5** Photoviewpoint Locations  
(edp0124\_d166a 14 July 2021 AH/CJM)
- Figure 8.6** Landscape Strategy  
(edp0124\_d167a 14 July 2021 AH/CJM)

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- Site Boundary
- Range Rings (at 1km intervals)
- 2km Detailed Study Area

client  
**L&Q Estates Ltd**

project title  
**Land North of Gavray Drive, Bicester**

drawing title  
**Figure 8.1: Site Location and site Boundaries**

date	<b>14 JULY 2021</b>	drawn by	<b>AH</b>
drawing number	<b>edp0124_d161a</b>	checked	<b>CJM</b>
scale	<b>1:35,000 @ A3</b>	QA	<b>RB</b>



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