

8.0 Landscape and Visual Impact

8.1 Introduction

- 8.1.1 This chapter of the ES identifies and describes the nature and significance of the effects on landscape character and visual amenity as a result of the Proposed Development.
- 8.1.2 FPCR Environment and Design are instructed by Hallam Land Management Ltd to undertake a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) which is presented in this Chapter, as part of the ES submitted for the proposed development at North West Bicester.
- 8.1.3 The purpose of the LVIA is to review landscape character and visual amenity, and to assess the landscape and visual effects of the proposed development (i.e., that is presented by this application) on the receiving landscape receptors and visual receptors.

Competency

- 8.1.4 In accordance with the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Regulations (2017) the ES chapter has been carried out by competent experts, comprising Members of the Landscape Institute, and is in accordance with guidance of the professional institution, the 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment', third edition (GLVIA3), published by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, in 2013.
- 8.1.5 FPCR are a multi-disciplinary environmental and design consultancy with over 50 years' experience of architecture, landscape, ecology, urban design, masterplanning and environmental impact assessment. The practice is a member of the Landscape institute (LI), the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA), and the Urban Design Group and is frequently called upon to provide expert evidence at Public and Local Plan Inquiries. FPCR have experience and expertise of the EIA process.

8.2 Regulatory and Policy Context

Legislative Context

- 8.2.1 The 'EIA Regulations' control the need and procedure for the EIA process, which is addressed and explained through an ES. One of the environmental factors specified in the 'EIA Regulations' that is likely to be significantly affected by development is "landscape", and this factor has been scoped into the ES.

National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Practice Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework, 2021

- 8.2.2 The NPPF sets out Government planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. The NPPF seeks to conserve and enhance the natural environment.

"Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

- a) Protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identifies quality in the development plan)
- b) Recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services- including the economic other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland" (§ 174)

"Plans should: distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites; allocate land with the least environment or amenity value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework; take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure; and plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries." (§ 175)

National Planning Practice Guidance

- 8.2.3 The NPPG is an online planning resource which provides guidance on the NPPF. It is part of the Government's reforms to make the planning system more accessible, although the NPPF continues to be the primary document for decision making. Regarding landscape issues, the NPPG records within the Natural Environment chapter that:

"The National Planning Policy Framework is clear that plans should recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and that strategic policies should provide for the conservation and enhancement of landscapes. This can include nationally and locally-designated landscapes but also the wider countryside.

Where landscapes have a particular local value, it is important for policies to identify their special characteristics and be supported by proportionate evidence. Policies may set out criteria against which proposals for development affecting these areas will be assessed. Plans can also include policies to avoid adverse impacts on landscapes and to set out necessary mitigation measures, such as appropriate design principles and visual screening, where necessary. The cumulative impacts of development on the landscape need to be considered carefully." (036 Reference ID: 8-036-20190721. Revision date: 21 07 2019)

Local Policy

Cherwell Local Plan Part 1 2011-2031 (Adopted 2015)

8.2.4 Policies considered relevant to landscape matters, to varying degrees, comprise: Policy ESD 10: Protection and Enhancement of Biodiversity and the Natural Environment; Policy ESD13 Local Landscape Protection and Enhancement; Policy ESD15 The Character of the Built and Historic Environment; and Policy ESD17 Green Infrastructure:

8.2.5 Policy ESD13 is focussed on landscape matters and states the following:

“Policy ESD 13: Local Landscape Protection and Enhancement

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

Development will be expected to respect and enhance local landscape character, securing appropriate mitigation where damage to local landscape character cannot be avoided. Proposals will not be permitted if they would:

- Cause undue visual intrusion into the open countryside
- Cause undue harm to important natural landscape features and topography
- Be inconsistent with local character
- Impact on areas judged to have a high level of tranquillity
- Harm the setting of settlements, buildings, structures or other landmark features, or
- Harm the historic value of the landscape.

Development proposals should have regard to the information and advice contained in the Council's Countryside Design Summary Supplementary Planning Guidance, and the Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study (OWLS) and be accompanied by a landscape assessment where appropriate”

Policy Bicester 1: North-West Bicester

8.2.6 The Site includes a substantial part of the land that is allocated for development as part of Policy Bicester 1: North West Bicester Eco-Town. The Policy is not repeated in full, as it is covered earlier in the ES, but specific landscape related elements of the Policy, and within the preceding written explanation, are set out below.

8.2.7 Embedded within the Policy, and relating to green infrastructure, the policy states that:

“The Council will expect the Masterplan and applications for planning permission to meet the following requirements:

- Green infrastructure – 40% of the total gross site area will comprise green space of which at least half will be publicly accessible and consist of a network of well

managed, high quality green/open spaces which are linked to the open countryside. This should include sports pitches, parks and recreation areas, play spaces, allotments, the required burial ground (possibly a woodland cemetery) and SUDS

8.2.8 Under “key site-specific design and place shaping principles”, it refers to the following principles which are relevant or related to landscape matters.

- “A well designed approach to the urban edge, which relates development at the periphery to its rural setting and affords good access to the countryside, minimising the impact of development when viewed from the surrounding countryside
- Development that respects the landscape setting and that demonstrates enhancement, restoration or creation of wildlife corridors to achieve a net gain in biodiversity
- Consideration should be given to maintaining visual separation with outlying settlements. Connections with the wider landscape should be reinforced and opportunities for recreational use of the open countryside identified. Development proposals to be accompanied and influenced by a landscape/visual and heritage impact assessment
- Careful consideration of open space and structural planting around the site to achieve an overall improvement in the landscape and visual impact of the site
- Significant green infrastructure provision, including new footpaths and cycleways, enhancing green modal accessibility beyond the site to the town centre and Bicester Village Railway Station, and adjoining developments. Public open space to form a well connected network of green areas suitable for formal and informal recreation
- Preservation and enhancement of habitats and species on site, particularly protected species and habitats and creation and management of new habitats to achieve an overall net gain in biodiversity including the creation of a local nature reserve and linkages with existing BAP habitats Sensitive management of open space provision to secure recreation and health benefits alongside biodiversity gains.
- A Landscape and Habitats Management Plan to be provided to manage habitats on site and to ensure this is integral to wider landscape management.”

North West Bicester Supplementary Planning Document, SPD 2016

8.2.9 The North West Bicester SPD expands upon the Local Plan Policy and provides guidance for the allocation, and includes a masterplan. The SPD has been reviewed and analysed through the LVIA process and the wider iterative masterplanning process.

8.2.10 The section titled “Green Infrastructure” includes several “principles” and “requirements” under the sub-headings of “green infrastructure & landscape, tree planting, development edges, hedgerows and stream corridors, hedgerows, dark buffers and stream corridors,

sports pitches, and biodiversity". The SPD is not repeated in full here, but one of the salient points for the LVIA and the design process states that:

"The impact of development on the site should be minimised to avoid disturbance of existing natural features such as trees and hedges and retaining the links to the landscape and countryside beyond the masterplanning boundaries. Planting of trees should be used to reinforce existing trees and hedges and integrate development with the landscape" (para 4.175)

8.3 Assessment Methodology

Overview of Approach

- 8.3.1 The full methodology for this chapter is contained in Appendix 8A. The following provides a summary.
- 8.3.2 The Study Area has been defined through field work and desk-based assessment. The Study Area is where it is judged that within this landscape there could be degrees of impact (i.e., change) and therefore effect on landscape and visual receptors as a result of the proposed development. The Study Area broadly comprises a 3km radius from the Site and covers the mapping extents identified in the Site Location Plan (Figure 8.1).
- 8.3.3 The chapter evaluates the level of effects during the construction phase, on completion of the development (i.e., at year 1) and in the longer term (i.e., 15 years after completion of the development, when the landscape proposals have established and are maturing). Assumptions are that any proposed woodland and tree planting would be 9-10m in height after 15 years. The assessment combines sensitivity and the magnitude of effects with qualitative professional judgments.
- 8.3.4 Throughout these stages, consideration is given to the influence and impact of the ongoing and consented development within the immediate landscape. In particular, account is taken of the other committed and permitted proposals that form part of the North West Bicester Local Plan policy.

Methodology

- 8.3.5 The assessment methodology that has been used has been developed through the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition, GLVIA3 (2013); and Statement of Clarification 1/3 (2013). In addition, the chapter has followed the Landscape Institute's Technical Guidance Note 06/19, Visual representation of development proposals; and Technical Guidance Note 02/21, Assessing landscape value outside of national designations (2021).
- 8.3.6 GLVIA states that:

"Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA), is a tool used to identify and assess the significance of, and the effects of, change resulting from development on both landscape as an environmental resource in its own right and on people's views and visual amenity". (§ 1.1)

8.3.7 There are two components that are described separately within this chapter:

"Assessment of landscape effects; assessing effects on the landscape as a resource in its own right; and

Assessment of visual effects; assessing effects on specific views and on the general visual amenity experienced by people". (GLVIA 3, § 2.11)

8.3.8 The judgements that are made in respect of landscape and visual effects are a combination of the sensitivity of the receptors and the magnitude of the effect, alongside professional qualitative judgment which is a very important part of the LVIA process as expressed by GLVIA3.

Assessment of Landscape Effects

8.3.9 GLVIA3 states that: "An assessment of landscape effects deals with the effects of change and development on landscape as a resource". (§ 5.1)

8.3.10 The baseline landscape is described by reference to existing landscape character assessments and by a description of the site and its context. This provides an understanding of the area that may be affected.

8.3.11 Landscape receptors (i.e., landscape resources that have the potential to be affected) are assessed in terms of their sensitivity. This combines judgements on the susceptibility of the receptor to the type of change or development that is specifically proposed, and the value attached to the landscape receptor. A range of landscape effects can arise through development. These can include:

"Change or loss of elements, features, aesthetic or perceptual aspects that contribute to the character and distinctiveness of the landscape;

Addition of new elements that influence character and distinctiveness of the landscape; and

Combined effects of these changes."

8.3.12 Each effect on landscape receptors is assessed in terms of size or scale, geographical extent of the area influenced and its duration and reversibility. In terms of size or scale, the judgement takes account of the extent of the existing landscape elements that will be lost or changed, and the degree to which the aesthetic or perceptual aspects or key characteristics of the landscape will be altered by removal or by the addition of new elements.

Assessment of Visual Effects

- 8.3.13 The baseline visual study includes an understanding of the area in which the Proposed Development may be visible. It considers the groups of people who may experience views, the viewpoints where they may be affected, and the nature of these views.
- 8.3.14 The first stage in the assessment is to identify approximate visibility/visibility mapping. This is either done by a computerised Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV), which is a desk study exercise and treats the world as 'bare earth' (i.e., it does not take into account factors other than terrain that influence actual visibility, such as buildings, woodland and hedges), or by manual methods using map study and field evaluation to establish a Representative Visual Envelope (RVE). Both methods have been used in this LVIA.
- 8.3.15 An assessment of visual effects deals with the area in which the development may be visible and effects of change on these views to people and their visual amenity. Each of the visual effects is evaluated in terms of its size or scale, the geographical extent of the area influenced and its duration or reversibility. In terms of size or scale, the magnitude of visual effects takes account of:

"The scale of the change in the view with respect to the loss or addition of features in the view and changes in its composition, including proportion of the view occupied by the proposed development;

The degree of contrast or integration of any new features or changes in the landscape with the existing or remaining landscape elements and characteristics in terms of form, scale and mass, line height, colour and texture; and

The nature of the view of the proposed development, in terms of the relative amount of time over which it will be experienced and whether views will be full, partial or glimpses"

The geographical extent of the visual effect in each viewpoint is likely to reflect:

The angle of view in relation to the main activity of the receptor;

The distance of the viewpoint from the proposed development; and

The extent of the area over which the changes would be visible" (GLVIA3 § 6.39-6.40)

Scoping and Response

- 8.3.16 A Scoping Report was submitted to Cherwell District Council (CDC) on 2nd September 2021. The Scoping Report 'scoped in' Landscape, which is one on the environmental factors identified by the 'EIA Regulations' as part of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process.
- 8.3.17 A Scoping Opinion was issued by CDC on the 7th October 2021. With regard to Landscape matters and the process of the LVIA the Scoping Opinion states in summary the following:

"Landscape and Visual Effects

It is agreed that this should be scoped into the Environmental Statement.

The Council's Landscape Officer considers that the information contained within Section 8 is comprehensive and therefore the methodology is agreed for this topic...

The LVIA should assess direct and indirect effects (e.g. impact of HGV movements during construction) and take account of lighting and cumulative effects with other developments in the area"

- 8.3.17 As stated by the Scoping Opinion the methodology for the LVIA is agreed with CDC. Since the receipt of the Scoping Opinion, FPCR contacted the CDC's Landscape Officer (11th October 2021) to discuss the process of the LVIA, the initial baseline findings and wider design and masterplanning measures. The proposed location of viewpoints was issued to the Officer and this was agreed as being appropriate for the LVIA.

Method for Assessing Impacts and Magnitude and Significance of Effects

Significance Criteria -Overall Landscape and Visual Effects

- 8.3.18 Conclusions on the level of effects, and whether these are adverse or beneficial, are drawn from separate judgements on the sensitivity of the receptors and the magnitude of the effects alongside qualitative professional judgment. GLVIA3 observes that it is not essential to establish a series of thresholds for the different levels of effects, although the distinction between levels can be helpfully defined by using a word scale such as major, moderate, minor and negligible. The following descriptive thresholds have been used for this LVIA in terms of levels of significance.

Major: A Major landscape or visual effect based on an evaluation of the susceptibility and value of the receptor, combined with the magnitude of change.

Moderate: A Moderate landscape or visual effect based on an evaluation of the susceptibility and value of the receptor, combined with the magnitude of change.

Minor: A Minor landscape or visual effect based on an evaluation of the susceptibility and value of the receptor, combined with the magnitude of change.

Negligible: A Negligible landscape or visual effect based on an evaluation of the susceptibility and value of the receptor, combined with the magnitude of change.

- 8.3.19 Where it is determined that the assessment falls between or encompasses two of the defined thresholds then the judgement may be described as, for example, **Moderate-Minor**. This indicates that the effect is assessed to lie between the respective definitions or to encompass aspects of both.

Judging Overall Significance

- 8.3.20 GLVIA3 Statement of Clarification 1/13 (2013) makes it clear that:

"Concerning 'significance', it is for the assessor to define what the assessor considers significant...Depending on the means of judgment and terminology (which should be explicitly set out), effects of varying degrees of change (or levels of change), may be derived. The assessor should then establish (and it is for the assessor to decide and explain) the degree or level of change that is considered to be significant." (GLVIA Statement of Clarification, § 3).

8.3.21 With regard to significance, the EIA process does not discuss significance in absolute terms. Instead, the findings are shown through different *levels* of significance (e.g., major, moderate, minor etc.). Within the ES, therefore, the issue is one of *degree* and the *level* of significance.

8.3.22 In terms of what constitutes a 'significant' landscape effect, GLVIA3 is implicit in that:

"There are no hard and fast rules about what makes a significant effect, and there cannot be a standard approach since circumstances vary with the location and landscape context and with the type of proposals. At opposite ends of a spectrum it is reasonable to say that:

major loss or irreversible negative effects, over an extensive area, on elements and/or aesthetic and perceptual aspects that are key to the character of nationally valued landscapes are likely to be of the greatest significance;

reversible negative effects of short duration, over a restricted area, on elements and/or aesthetic and perceptual aspects that contribute to but are not key characteristics of the character of the landscapes of community value are likely to be of the least significance and may, depending on circumstances, be judged as not significant;

where assessments of significance place landscape effects between these extremes, judgements must be made about whether or not they are significant with full explanations of why these conclusions have been reached." (§5.56)

8.3.23 In relation to what constitutes a 'significant' visual effect, GLVIA3 states that:

"There are no hard and fast rules about what makes a significant effect, and there cannot be a standard approach since circumstances vary with the location and context and with the type of proposal. In making a judgment about the significance of visual effects the following points should be noted:

Effects on people who are particularly sensitive to changes in views and visual amenity are more likely to be significant.

Effects on people at recognised and important viewpoints or from recognised scenic routes are more likely to be significant.

Large-scale changes which introduce new, non-characteristic or discordant or intrusive elements into the view are more likely to be significant than small changes or changes already involving features already present within the view" (§ 6.4)

- 8.3.24 In accordance with the need for the author to explicitly identify effects that are 'significant', as required by GLVIA3 Statement of Clarification, those effects that are judged by the author to be 'significant' are effects that are **Major or Major-Moderate**.

Limitations and Assumptions

- 8.3.25 The assessment process considers the likely effects of the Proposed Development using the current knowledge of the site and its context; site surveys and investigation; and desktop analysis which includes publicly accessible information. Appropriate regard has been made to national and local planning policy, and relevant legislation, guidance and best practice current at the time of preparing the LVIA.
- 8.3.26 Every reasonable effort has been made to obtain baseline information and to accurately predict the effects of the Proposed Development.
- 8.3.27 The baseline fieldwork analysis was undertaken on the 23rd February 2021. Baseline Photographs from February 2021, (i.e., Type 1 Annotated Viewpoint Photographs as referred to in TGN 06/19,) are used within the LVIA. As these were taken during the winter months, the photographs demonstrate winter views when vegetation is not in full leaf, thus effectively representing a 'worst case' scenario where there is likely to be greater visibility across the landscape than would be the case during the summer months, when planting provides screening and containment.
- 8.3.28 Photographs were taken from publicly accessible locations to provide representative views for visual receptors. It was not possible to take photographs from properties (such as Hawkwell Farm cottages, for example) as these are private views. However, reasoned assumptions are made on visibility through the fieldwork and, where possible, through the use of photographs from nearby public locations to provide an understanding of visibility.

Future Baseline

- 8.3.29 The likely evolving and future baseline of the site - as can reasonably be expected - in the event that no development comes forward on the site has been evaluated. It is assessed that the site would continue to be farmed as agricultural land and would be subject to the influences of development on the edge of Bicester. As the site and the local landscape to the north and south is allocated for development and that principles of development within this landscape are accepted, it is likely that the site would be subject to future planning applications for development.

8.4 Baseline Conditions

Landscape Character

8.4.1 The baseline appraisal has been formulated through a review of landscape characterisation work, together with field surveys of the site and the surrounding landscape. This has included an understanding of the area of the landscape that may be affected and the area in which the proposed development may be visible.

8.4.2 There is a significant amount of information available in relation to the landscape character and visual amenity from the previously submitted ES for the substantial majority of the site (14/01384/OUT) (see section 1 of the ES). Whilst much of this information remains relevant to some extent, there have been changes to the environment, to include the development of Elmsbrook to the north of the site which has had an impact upon landscape character, and the present application site includes some additional land to the north of that previously applied for.

National Character

8.4.3 Landscape character is assessed by Natural England (NE) using National Character Area (NCA) Profiles. These provide a broad contextual understanding of the landscape at a national scale.

8.4.4 The wider landscape around Bicester is covered by three NCAs. The site and the landscape to the north lies in, and on the very edge of, the Cotswolds NCA (NCA 107). The landscape to the south, which encompasses Bicester, is located within The Upper Thames Clay Vales NCA (NCA 108), whilst the wider landscape to the east lies within the Bedfordshire & Cambridgeshire Claylands (NCA 88). (See Figure 8.4).

8.4.5 The key characteristics of the Cotswolds NCA are:

- “Defined by its underlying geology: a dramatic limestone scarp rising above adjacent lowlands with steep combs, and outliers illustrating the slow erosion of escarpments. The limestone geology has formed the scarp and dip slope of the landscape, which in turn has influenced drainage, soils, vegetation, land use and settlement.
- Open and expansive scarp and high wold dipping gently to the southeast, dissected by river valleys.
- Arable farming dominates the high wold and dip slope while permanent pasture prevails on the steep slopes of the scarp and river valleys with pockets of internationally important limestone grassland.
- Drystone walls define the pattern of fields of the high wold and dip slope. On the deeper soils and river valleys, hedgerows form the main field boundaries.

- Ancient beech hangers line stretches of the upper slopes of the scarp, while oak/ash woodlands are characteristic of the river valleys. Regular blocks of coniferous and mixed plantations are scattered across the open high wold and dip slope.
- Large areas of common land, important for unimproved calcareous grassland, are characteristic of the scarp and high wold around the Stroud valleys and along the crest of the scarp to Cleeve Hill.
- The majority of the principal rivers flow south-eastwards forming the headwaters of the Thames with the exception of rivers in the west which flow into the River Avon and then the Severn Estuary.
- Rich history from Neolithic barrows, iron-age hill forts and Roman roads and villas to deserted medieval villages, grand country houses, cloth mills and Second World War airfields. The field patterns largely reflect both the medieval open field system, with fossilised areas of ridge and furrow, and later planned enclosures.
- Locally quarried limestone brings a harmony to the built environment of scattered villages and drystone walls, giving the area a strong sense of unity for which the Cotswolds are renowned. Bath stone is also famous and has been used for building since Roman times, both locally in the principal buildings and streets of Bath and more widely, for example for Buckingham Palace in London. Parkland, gardens and historic designed landscapes are features particularly of the dip slope and broad lowland, such as Lawrence Johnston's garden at Hidcote, and Heather Muir's garden at Kiftsgate, parkland at Stanway, Chastleton and Blenheim Palace.
- Prominent natural and built features in the landscape include the City of Bath WHS, Brailes Hill, Broadway Tower, Cleeve Hill, the Tyndale monument, Freezing Hill, Kelston Round Hill and Blenheim Palace WHS"

Local Character- County

8.4.6 Landscape Character is assessed at County level by the Oxfordshire Wildlife Landscape Study (2004). Whilst now of some age, it continues to provide a background on landscape character, and is explicitly referred to within the Local Plan (Policy ESD13, Local Landscape Protection and Enhancement).

8.4.7 The site is located within the large Woodlands Estate Lands Landscape Type and the sub area of the Middleton Stoney Local Landscape Character Area. The Study, when examining landscape character, comes to the following conclusions:

"The area is dominated by large arable fields and localised improved grassland. There are smaller grass fields around villages, particularly Bletchington and Kirtlington. Woodland is a strong landscape element, and large woodland blocks are associated with the parklands and estates. It is mainly ancient semi-natural woodland, with species such as ash, oak, hazel, and field maple, as well as mixed plantations. Throughout the landscape, there are belts of young mixed and coniferous plantations next to roadside hedges and they often function as field

boundaries. Hedgerow trees such as ash, sycamore and occasionally oak are found in some roadside hedges, but they are sparser to the north where there is more intensive arable cropping. In parts there are dense corridors of willow and ash, belts of semi-natural woodland and poplar plantations bordering watercourses. Hedgerows vary from tall, thick species-rich hedges with shrubs such as wayfaring tree, dogwood, hazel, field maple, spindle and wild privet through to low, gappy internal field hedges. Parklands are a prominent feature throughout and they include Middleton, Bignell and Tusmore Parks in the north and Kirtlington and Bletchington Parks in the south”

8.4.8 The Study goes on to provide a Landscape Strategy and a series of guidelines, which are set out below.

“Safeguard and enhance the characteristic landscape of parklands, estates, woodlands, hedgerows and unspoilt villages.

Guidelines

- Conserve and maintain semi-natural and ancient semi-natural woodland. Where appropriate, replace non-native conifer species with native species such as oak and ash. Promote the establishment and management of medium to large-scale deciduous and mixed plantations in areas where the landscape structure is particularly weak.
- Strengthen the field pattern by planting up gappy hedges using locally characteristic species such as hawthorn and hedgerow trees such as oak and ash.
- Promote environmentally-sensitive maintenance of hedgerows, including coppicing and layering when necessary, to maintain a height and width appropriate to the landscape type.
- Conserve and sympathetically maintain species-rich hedgerows and, where appropriate, replant gappy hedges using species such as hawthorn, blackthorn, wayfaring tree, dogwood and spindle.
- Conserve parklands and their associated landscape features such as stone walls, lakes, mature trees and woods.
- Conserve the surviving areas of permanent pasture and promote arable reversion to grassland, particularly within parklands.
- Enhance and strengthen the character of tree-lined watercourses by planting willows and ash and where appropriate, pollarding willows.
- Minimise the visual impact of intrusive land uses such as quarries, landfill sites, airfields and large-scale development, such as new barns and industrial units, with the judicious planting of tree and shrub species characteristic of 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 is appropriate to this landscape type”

Landscape Character & Landscape Reports -District

Cherwell District Landscape Assessment 1995

8.4.10 At a District level, the Cherwell District Landscape Assessment (1995) identifies the site as within the Oxfordshire Estate Farmlands Character Area. This is broadly consistent with the characteristics of the Wooded Estatelands Landscape Character Type within which the site is located, as defined by the more recent Oxfordshire Wildlife & Landscape Study (2004).

Countryside Design Summary 1998 -SPG

8.4.11 The Countryside Design Summary is referenced within the Local Plan (Policy ESD13, Local Landscape Protection and Enhancement). The report subdivides the district into four areas, with the site and the wider landscape lying within the Ploughley Limestone Plateau Countryside Character Area. When considering “implication for new development” it states that

“Development should avoid exposed and prominent locations. The protection given by a valley location, existing buildings or woodland, should be used where this does not undermine the character of these existing landscape features”

ENV07 Bicester Green Buffers Report, 2013

8.4.12 The Bicester Green Buffers Report identifies potential “green buffers” between the edge of Bicester and new development areas. The report identifies “Bucknell Green Buffer 8” which encompasses the landscape between the village of Bucknell and the North West Bicester allocation. The report notes that:

“Whilst there is currently no approved masterplan available for the site, the Eco-town principles that are aspired to for the development require careful masterplanning that considers the urban edge and respects the landscape setting. Should development come forward, and if green infrastructure is provided on the northern edges of the scheme, the boundary of the Green Buffer may require review to ensure that any green infrastructure provision or other areas of land which perform a Green Buffer function are included within the Bucknell Green Buffer. This is particularly the case because the northern boundary of the Bicester 1 site is currently an arbitrary straight line. Any open space or green infrastructure in the vicinity of this boundary, or land that does not come forward as part of the development, could fulfil the criteria for inclusion within the Green Buffer, thus increasing the extent of the un-built gap between the future edge of Bicester and Bucknell”

8.4.13 No specific provision was included in the adopted Local Plan regarding a landscape buffer north of the allocation for Bicester 1.

Bicester Landscape Sensitivity & Capacity Assessment (2013).

8.4.14 Further, and more recent analysis has been provided through the Bicester Landscape Sensitivity & Capacity Assessment (2013). This explores the capacity for land within and around Bicester to accommodate development and sets out principles for mitigation.

8.4.15 The site falls within 'Bicester 1', which comprises a larger area of land to the north west of Bicester. Paragraphs 4.1.8-4.1.12 consider Landscape Sensitivity, which is summarised below.

"The site area is relatively generic in its composition of arable farmland, hedgerow boundaries, scattered farmsteads and field drainage ditches. Whilst this landscape possesses some ecological and wildlife value, the potential diversity is limited...The value of natural factors is considered to be medium – low.

Cultural references present within the area are of medium – low value. There is some coherence within the landscape but a lack of historical association is evident. There are records of prehistoric features within the site area although the remains are not of particular historic note.

There is a strong sense of enclosure within many areas of the site provided by the mature hedgerow boundaries and mature roadside vegetation along the external site boundaries of the B4030, A4095 and B4100. There are some sequential views across the site area from the surrounding roads when approaching Bicester which provides a transition from rural to urban landscape whilst maintaining the defined urban edge of the A4095. The site has a medium sensitivity for aesthetic factors.

The landscape condition is of medium quality being typically representative of the landscape to the north west of Bicester beyond the site area. The site and surrounding land is primarily arable with scattered farms which retain the rural characteristics of the local area...

The combined landscape sensitivity of the site is considered to be medium"

8.4.16 The report describes Visual Sensitivity at 4.1.13-4.1.16, as follows.

"The site has a medium general visual sensitivity and comprises a gently undulating topography dissected by the railway line, plantations providing visual barriers and scattered farms. There are views out of the site to the north west and south west from the Bridleway that passes through the site with views towards the designed parkland of Bignell Park possible.

Visibility of the site comprises sensitive and non sensitive receptors. The residential area to the south east has glimpsed views into the area through the existing structure planting along the residential area boundary and roadside verge of the

A4095 although these views are not prominent. The majority of viewers are users of the roads located on the site boundaries. These viewers receive intermittent sequential views through hedgerow vegetation and field gates over the arable land. The railway line enables elevated views from the route as it passes through the centre of the site with most of the site area visible. The site is of medium sensitivity to the surrounding population.

There is a high potential to provide mitigation within the site area with a low sensitivity to mitigation. The existing mature boundaries have the potential to become strengthened and the implementation of structure planting in the form of widened field boundary plantations could be possible”

8.4.17 Matters of Landscape Value are also considered in paragraphs 4.1.20- 4.1.22, as expressed below.

“Although there are cultural and ecological designations associated with the area, these are only of local importance and the site area does not contain any landscape designations. As a result of this, the site is considered to have a low value for designations.

The site is considered to have a medium importance for its scenic value as open countryside located on the urban fringe of Bicester. Whilst the site is of scenic value, the type of viewers is considered to primarily be users of the adjacent roads with some views obtainable from the adjacent residential area to the south east. The site is however highly visible from the elevated railway line with the site forming part of the sequential view experience upon arrival and departure from Bicester.

Although there is minimal access through the site along one Bridleway within the site, the site is considered to be of some value to the local community in providing the urban fringe to the town. It is considered the site is of medium – low value.

The combined landscape value of the site is medium – low”

8.4.18 In terms of capacity for “Residential Development” and “Employment Development” it states the following at 4.1.25-4.1.26.

“There is a medium – high capacity for residential development within the site area as the land use would be in keeping with the adjacent residential area to the south east and not significantly alter the overall landscape character of the wider area. Consideration should however be made to maintaining the visual separation with outlying satellite settlements such as Bucknell.

There is a medium – high capacity for commercial employment with the area as part of a mixed use development. The site should not however be developed solely for employment use as the development type would not be in keeping with the surrounding land uses. There is a medium potential for a limited amount of light

industry employment although this would be most suitable located adjacent to the railway corridor and provide a buffer between the railway line and residential uses.”

8.4.19 The concluding section explores “Future Management & Maintenance”.

“There are a number of areas for potential future management and maintenance to improve the existing site features; these include:

- The enhancement of the railway line as a wildlife corridor connecting through to the centre of Bicester;
- Development of improved structure planting along site boundaries to provide improved visual and noise screening from passing vehicles;
- Improvements to the water courses and introduction of native species planting into the channels for ecological benefit within the northern area of the site; and
- Improved access through the area creating a series of footpaths from the adjacent housing estate to the south east giving access to the urban fringe resource”

Site Character

8.4.20 The site is located on the northwestern edge of Bicester, around 2.5km from Bicester Town Centre (see Figure 8.1-8.2). To the north of the site are agricultural fields, Bainton Road and the village of Bucknell which is set within a framework of mature trees and woodland. The site is bound to the east by the built edge of Bicester which is defined by Elmsbrook - the recently constructed first phase of the North West Bicester development. Beyond Elmsbrook is the B4100 and the village of Caversfield. To the south of the site lies the residential area of Bicester which borders the A4095 (Lords Lane), and which lies adjacent to the site’s southern boundary. The site includes Bucknell Road-Bicester Road, and a little further to the west is defined by the embanked London to Birmingham railway line.

8.4.21 The site comprises primarily arable farmland with associated field margins, and a number of fields of species poor semi-improved and improved grassland which have been subject to grazing or silage production. Other habitats include hedgerows, tree cover and areas of dense and scattered scrub. Farm buildings at Hawkwell Farm and Lord’s Farm lie within the context of the site, but are not included within the application site.

8.4.22 The site’s fields are regular in their form and are sub-divided by hedgerows of varying quality and structure, together with field ditches. There are two narrow watercourses that flow through the site connecting with the River Bure that lies to the south within Bicester.

8.4.23 An Arboricultural Assessment has been produced to assess the condition and quality of the tree resource (see Appendix 8D). The site contains woodland belts and tree groups. This includes along the A4095, the railway line, which borders the site to the west, and along the site’s watercourses. There are also a number of mature trees that are mostly located within the site’s hedgerows. The majority of the tree resource is assessed to be of moderate to

low quality, although there are five trees (T1, T53, T70 and T115) that are judged to be of Grade A, High Quality from an arboricultural perspective. There are no 'veteran trees' within the site.

- 8.4.24 A Public Footpath (148/9/30) skirts the very western edge of the site, and then joins a further Public Footpath (148/7/20) through the northern part of the site. This provides a connection between the Bucknell Road- Bicester Road and the B4100. There are further Public Footpaths outside the site to west linking into Bucknell.

Landform

- 8.4.25 The surrounding landscape is shaped by the River Bure, whilst within the site the topography is defined by two watercourses. The site's landform ranges from 98m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) to 80m AOD on its eastern point close to the A4095 and subject to some subtle variations is more or less flat in its character (see Figure 8.3).

Landscape Value

- 8.4.26 Landscape value can apply to a landscape area, or to the individual elements, features and aesthetic or perceptual dimensions which contribute to the character of the landscape. In all landscapes, there will be variances in the level of landscape value depending on several factors.

- 8.4.27 When looking at value, GLVIA3 advises that in the first instance:

"A review of existing landscape designations is usually the starting point in understanding value..." § 5.19

- 8.4.28 The site and the surrounding landscape is not subject to any landscape quality designation at a national or local level. Whilst landscape designations are not an exclusive indicator of value and that the lack of a designation does not render a landscape as having no value, designated landscapes are widely acknowledged as being of particular importance and generally of high susceptibility to change.

- 8.4.29 When considering the wider issues of designations, the conclusions from the Bicester Landscape Sensitivity & Capacity Assessment was that "Although there are cultural and ecological designations associated with the area, these are only of local importance and the site area does not contain any landscape designations. As a result of this, the site is considered to have a low value for designations".

- 8.4.30 GLVIA3 describe those elements that are generally agreed to influence value as being: landscape quality (condition); scenic quality; rarity; representativeness; conservation interests; recreation value; perceptual aspects; and associations. Additional guidance on landscape value has been prepared by the Landscape Institute through; Assessing Landscape Value, A Technical Guidance Note, TGN 02/215. This sets out a range of factors that can be considered when identifying landscape value and these broadly represent the same factors within GLVIA3. These are considered below.

Natural Heritage

8.4.31 The site is not subject to any ecological designations. To the south, within the built up area of Bicester, is the Bure Local Nature Reserve, whilst to the northwest of the site is the Ardley Cutting and Quarry SSSI.

8.4.32 The site's hedgerows and trees, and the farmland character of this landscape is of varying quality and considered to be common elements within this landscape. The watercourses which run through the site provide habitats of local ecological and landscape value.

Cultural Heritage

8.4.33 Within the village of Bucknell, to the north, there are fourteen Listed Buildings/Structures which includes the Grade I Church of St Peter and the Grade II Listed, Trigger Pond Public House, and Bucknell Manor House. To the east, beyond development at Elmsbrook, there is a Grade II Listed building at Home Farmhouse, and the Grade II* listing of the Church of Saint Laurence sited on the B4100.

8.4.34 Middleton Grade II Registered Park & Garden lies some distance, approximately 3km at its closest point to the southwest of the site. As a consequence of distance and screening effects of the railway embankment and hedges and trees within the intervening landscape there is no relationship between the site and the Registered Park & Garden.

8.4.35 The site is not covered by any Scheduled Monuments, Conservation Areas or Listed Buildings.

Landscape Condition

8.4.36 When assessing the condition of 'Bicester 1' (within which the site falls), the Bicester Landscape Sensitivity & Capacity Assessment judged that the landscape condition to be of "medium quality" and one which was "typically representative of the landscape to the north west of Bicester beyond the site area".

8.4.37 The site's agricultural fields and the surrounding landscape show no significant signs of degradation or dereliction, although development in the landscape around the site (i.e., Elmsbrook) together with various agricultural practices, has inevitably resulted in some disruption in landscape character and some fragmentation in habitats. In general, it is considered that the landscape fabric of the site and local area is in a reasonable and moderate condition which accords with the position reached by the Bicester Landscape Sensitivity & Capacity Assessment.

Associations

8.4.38 The Site and the immediate landscape are not subject to any specific cultural associations such as notable people, events and arts, or prominent events in history.

Distinctiveness

8.4.39 The landscape of the site and its immediate area does not exude any strong sense of identity. It does not lie within a rare Landscape Character Area or Type at either a national or local

level, and nor does it contain any rare or unusual landscape features. The Site is considered to be representative of the Middleton Stoney Local Landscape Character Area.

8.4.40 The Bicester Landscape Sensitivity & Capacity Assessment concludes that the site (i.e., part of 'Bicester 1') is a landscape which was "typically representative of the landscape to the north west of Bicester beyond the site area".

8.4.41 As a consequence of mature trees and vegetation within the vicinity of Bucknell, that provide visual separation between the site and the village, and given that the site is influenced by adjacent housing at Elmsbrook, it is considered that that the site has a relationship with Elmsbrook and Bicester and does not make an important contribution to the settlement of Bucknell. Similarly, the site is not considered to play an important contribution to the settlement of Bicester, as it lies alongside Elmsbrook, and is effectively contained and largely screened from Bicester by mature tree cover beside the A4095.

Recreational

8.4.42 Given the site's location alongside the built-up area it provides some local value for the adjacent communities -as is often the case for any farmland/green fields on the edge of settlements. However, the site and the local landscape are not covered by any formal recreational facility and much of site is not publicly accessible. A Public Footpath follows the westernmost site boundary and connects with a Public Footpath that runs across the northern most field providing limited public access across the site. Aside from these, and footpaths that head into Bucknell, there are in fact few public rights of way within the local and surrounding landscape, which limits opportunities to publicly access and experience the landscape.

Perceptual (Scenic, Wildness and Tranquillity)

8.4.43 The site and its immediate context are influenced by nearby built elements (Elmsbrook and Bicester) and by the transport infrastructure of the A4095, B4100 and the London-Birmingham Railway Line. These have an urbanising influence to varying degrees on this landscape. Further transport infrastructure in the form of the consented NW Strategic Road will create a further urbanising element in this landscape.

8.4.44 Whilst there are some pleasant rural characteristics within the site and the local landscape which comprises mature trees, established hedges and the watercourses these are common agricultural elements, and much of the character of the site is made up of fairly ordinary, flat arable fields alongside the built edge. In conclusion, it is considered that the site and the local landscape does not display any pronounced sense of scenic quality, tranquillity or wildness such that it is 'out of the ordinary' or special in landscape terms.

Functional

8.4.45 Whilst the watercourses have value in terms of natural hydrology, for example, the site and local landscape comprises agricultural land of comparatively limited value. It is considered that the site and immediate area does not perform a clearly identifiable function.

Landscape Value: Summary

8.4.46 Whilst it has some value like all landscapes, the site and immediate area is not a designated landscape, and it has no pronounced sense of scenic quality, tranquillity, and distinctiveness such that it sets it apart. The site, itself, is not subject to any cultural or ecological designation, comprises fairly common place arable fields, and has very limited recreational value. Indeed, the Bicester Landscape Sensitivity & Capacity Appraisals concluded that the Site was “relatively generic in its composition” with arable farmland, hedgerow boundaries, scattered farmsteads and field drainage ditches.

8.4.47 It is judged that the site and the local area are in a moderate landscape condition. The natural habitats of the watercourses, and the site’s hedgerows and mature trees are of local landscape and ecological value, although hedges and trees vary in their quality. The site’s landscape character is influenced by the modern built edge of Bicester to the south and at Elmsbrook to the east. Additional on-going and consented developments in this landscape as part of the North-West Bicester allocation will create further urbanising influences on this landscape. Having examined the above factors and using a word scale of high, medium and low it is concluded that the Site and its immediate context is no more than of **medium landscape value**. The site is not considered to be of high landscape value, nor is it judged to be a “valued landscape” in the context of the NPPF

Visual Amenity

8.4.48 The baseline visual study includes an understanding of the area in which the Proposed Development may be visible, the groups of people who may experience views, the viewpoints where they may be affected and the nature of these views.

8.4.49 The first stage in the assessment is to identify approximate visibility/visibility mapping. This has been done by a computerised Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV), which is a desk study exercise and treats the world as 'bare earth' (i.e., it does not take into account factors other than terrain that influence actual visibility, such as buildings, woodland and hedges) (see Figure 8.5a and 8.5b). The ZTVs provide a useful starting point for the visual study, but the site (or the development’s) visibility can only be measured through field work and an understanding of elements within the landscape that determine visibility.

Visual Receptors

8.4.50 Visual receptors include residents; users of public rights of way, open spaces, and recreational facilities; highways users; and people at their place of work. In general, the first two categories (residents and rights of way users) are normally of higher susceptibility to change, although the surrounding context can, in some cases, have a bearing on

susceptibility. The availability of views for visual receptors and opportunities to experience the site from public vantage points are factored into the analysis. This has been undertaken in parallel with the baseline landscape study. This has determined those visual receptors within the landscape and the Study Area that have views of the Site, and consequently potential views of the Proposed Development. This takes into account elements within the landscape - such as landform, vegetation and buildings that determine the actual visibility of the site.

- 8.4.51 From this exercise a series of viewpoints have been selected to represent those visual receptors that have views of the site and, consequently, potential views of the proposed development. This has examined those receptors that are of high susceptibility to change such as residents and rights of way users. The receptors to be assessed and viewpoint locations are based upon the LVIA produced for the previous ES, and through discussions and agreement with CDC Landscape Officer (October 2021)

Residents

- 8.4.52 In combining susceptibility to change (high) and value of views (medium) alongside professional judgment it is concluded that residents and residential communities are judged to be of high sensitivity. It was not possible to obtain views from properties as they are private views, but wherever possible photographs are taken from publicly accessible locations to provide an understanding of their visual experience. Where this hasn't been possible, professional judgment on visibility is derived through the field work analysis.

Visual Receptors A: Hawkwell Farm – Lord's Farm

- 8.4.53 These are individual properties at Hawkwell Farm, Hawkwell Cottages (accessed from Bucknell Road) and at and around Lord's Farm, adjacent to the A4095. Consequently, these receptors have close range views of the site, and this includes views of the local landscape of agricultural fields, hedgerows and trees, in addition to views of varying degrees of built elements at Elmsbrook and Bicester, beyond the A4095. Visibility across the site and the local landscape varies depending on context and by screening and filtering effects of the structure of trees and hedgerows within the site and around these properties..

Visual Receptors B: Bicester (south of A4095)

The established built-up area of Bicester lies to the south of the site alongside the A4095. This comprises housing off Trefoil Drive, Purslane Drive, Lucerne Avenue, and Germander Way. There are belts of mature tree planting along the corridor of the A4095, which filters and restricts views from the edge of Bicester towards the site. Viewpoints (5a-5b, 6a-6b) provide representative views from the residential area and demonstrate that even in winter months the landscape structure of trees and hedgerows restrict views into the site. It is assessed that some of these receptors have some partial views of the site although as analysed by the fieldwork there are limited views for the majority of these receptors with

views obscured and filtered by the vegetation along the road and by the established hedgerows and trees along the southern boundary of the site.

Visual Receptors C: Elmsbrook, Bicester

8.4.54 The new development of Elmsbrook borders the site to the north with residential properties off Charlotte Avenue. For those residential properties on the western edge of Elmsbrook – together with receptors in Gagle Brook Primary School – there are close range views across the site, albeit visibility across the entire site is restricted to varying degrees by screening effects of intervening hedges and mature trees, which includes vegetation within the vicinity of the northern watercourse. Viewpoints (8a-8b, 9a, 9b) provide representative views from the edge of Elmsbrook looking across towards the site.

Visual Receptors D: Bucknell

8.4.55 The village of Bucknell lies to the northwest of the site with properties and farmsteads aligning Bainton Road. The centre of the village is focused on the Church of St Peter, near Bucknell Manor House, and at the crossroads of Ardley Road-Bainton Road-Bicester Road-Middleton Road. Visibility across the landscape towards the site and the edge of Bicester for residents (and other receptors within the village) is heavily restricted by mature vegetation within and around the southern edge of the settlement, which includes mature tree cover within Bucknell Manor House. The fields around the village in this location represented by pasture and a parkland character of large stature trees. There are further tall-established hedgerows within the intervening landscape between the village and Bucknell, and this includes a tall, mature and well-defined hedgerow along the site's western boundary where it follows the Public Footpath. This overlapping framework of mature trees and hedgerows creates considerable screening effects between the village and the site such that even in the winter months there are no clear views of the site or the edge of Bicester for residential receptors.

Public Rights of Way Users

8.4.56 Public Rights of Way Users are judged to be of high susceptibility to change with the value of views being medium. In combining these together with professional judgement these receptors are judged to be of high sensitivity as appreciation of the landscape is part of their overall experience.

8.4.57 There is very limited public access the site, and there are relatively few public rights of way within the local and surrounding landscape such that opportunities for views of the site for users of the landscape are limited.

Visual Receptors E: Public Footpath (north western edge of Site)

8.4.58 Public Footpaths (148/9/30 and 148/7/20) align the north western edge of the site and form a relatively short route connecting the Bicester Road and the B4100. As users head from Bicester Road the routes follows the line of a tall, mature hedgerow and tree belt, which forms the western site boundary and demarcates the transition between the arable

landscape of the site, and the parkland/pasture character to the west around the edge of Bucknell. Viewpoints (3a-3d) provide representative views for these receptors as they move across the landscape looking across the Site. There are close range views of the western parts of the site, with the experience including views of farmland, hedges and trees, and views of built elements at Elmsbrook. As the route heads northwest it passes across the northern watercourse and into an arable field within the northern part of the site, near to Elmsbrook which is visible. (Viewpoints 1a-1c, 2a-2b).

Visual Receptors F: Public Footpath: F (nr Lower Farm) and Visual Receptors G: Public Footpath G: (heading into Bucknell)

8.4.59 A Public Footpath (148/9/10) heads northwards towards Lower Farm, Bucknell, (see Viewpoint 4) and there are two further Footpaths heading west into Bucknell village. For the latter, clear views of the site are prevented and obscured by intervening mature trees and hedgerows to include the established hedgerow that forms the site's western boundary. Likewise, from the route near Lower Farm, hedgerows and the landform character restrict views of the site, albeit the boundary hedgerow is perceptible.

Visual Receptors H: Public Bridleway

8.4.60 A Public Bridleway (9148/4/10) lies to the southwest of the Site beyond the rail line. Viewpoint 13 provides a representative view. The extent of visibility across the landscape varies because of foreground hedges and trees, and by the embanked rail line. Views of the site are prevented and restricted by these characteristics.

Highway Users

8.4.61 These receptors are of lower sensitivity as they are travelling through the landscape at speed and experiences transient views of the landscape. These highway users are judged to be of medium susceptibility of change and of Medium-Low value. Overall sensitivity is judged to be Medium-Low.

Visual Receptors I: B4100

8.4.62 Highway users have transient and glimpsed views of the northernmost field of the site as represented by Viewpoint 10. The remainder of the site is effectively hidden by woodland off Bainton Road, intervening hedges and trees vegetation, and by the built-up area of Elmsbrook. The experience on the route includes views of farmland, hedges, trees and built elements at Elmsbrook.

Visual Receptors J: A4095

8.4.63 Mature trees and established hedgerows form the site's southernmost boundary alongside the A4095. This framework restricts and obscures views of the site for highway users travelling on the road. During the summer months, when vegetation is in full leaf, views of the site would be heavily restricted. There are some places, as illustrated by Viewpoints 5c-

5e, where there are views of the southern parts of the site, albeit these are glimpsed and transient in nature.

Visual Receptors K: Bucknell Road-Bicester Road

8.4.64 Views of the site for highway users travelling on the adjacent Bucknell Road-Bicester Road varies. When travelling south from Bucknell views across towards the site's fields to the north are prevented and obscured by a tall established roadside hedgerow, which contains a number of mature trees. As users reach the junction with the Public Footpath and then head southward there are clearer albeit transient views of the site's fields to the north and than those south of the road, together with views of Harkwell Farm and Harkwell Cottages and the railway embankment. At the very southern end there are views of the residential area of Bicester, as well as views of buildings in and around Lord's Farm and tree cover along the A4095 (see Viewpoints 7a-7c)

Visual Receptors L: Bainton Road

8.4.65 For highway users heading into Bucknell from the B4100 there are transient views of the site's northern most field, together with some filtered views of the edge of Elmsbrook. Much of the site is effectively beyond the northernmost field and is effectively hidden by the intervening network of nearby woodland, together with hedges and trees.

Other Receptors (Rail users)

8.4.66 These receptors are of lower sensitivity as they are travelling through the landscape at speed and experiences transient views of the landscape. These are judged to be of Low susceptibility of change with the value of views being low . Overall sensitivity is judged to be Low.

Visual Receptors M: Railway Line

8.4.67 The nature of the embanked railway line that rises gently above the landscape provides rail users with open and fleeting views of the site, agricultural farmland, hedges and mature trees and, depending on direction, the built up-area of Bicester.

Visual Amenity: Summary

8.4.68 When considering "visual character" of the Site's landscape and its immediate context the Bicester Landscape Sensitivity & Capacity Assessment concluded that:

"There is a strong sense of enclosure within many areas of the site provided by the mature hedgerow boundaries and mature roadside vegetation along the external site boundaries". And that, "The residential area to the south east has glimpsed views into the area through the existing structure planting along the residential area boundary and roadside verge of the A4095 although these views are not prominent" .

8.4.69 This is judged to be a reasoned and accurate assessment. From an examination of the site through the fieldwork it is evident that the mature trees and established well-defined hedgerows along the roadside boundaries prevent, obscure and filter views into the site-

even during the winter months. As an example, mature vegetation along the A4065 more or less acts a visual screen between the site and the edge of Bicester. A tall, established hedgerow along the site's western boundary, which follows the line of the Public Footpath, creates a strong landscape feature, and combined with mature trees and pockets of woodland in and around Bucknell prevents views of the site from the wider landscape to the north. The embanked and well-vegetated railway corridor contains the site from the wider landscape to the southwest. To the east, visibility of the site from the wider landscape is prevented by the screening effects of the built form of Elmsbrook such that there are no clear views of the site from within the vicinity of Caversfield.

8.4.70 Bicester Landscape Sensitivity & Capacity Assessment goes on to note

"The majority of viewers are users of the roads located on the site boundaries. These viewers receive intermittent sequential views through hedgerow vegetation and field gates over the arable land. The railway line enables elevated views from the route as it passes through the centre of the site with most of the site area visible".

8.4.71 Again, this is a reasoned and accurate description. There are some views gained from the roads around the site, but in the main these are intermittent in nature on account of the established character of boundary hedges and mature trees which filter and restrict views.

8.4.72 It is assessed that the site is visually contained within the surrounding and wider landscape such that it has a comparatively limited visual envelope, and which given the scale of the site is restricted to a relatively localised area around it. The network of established and well-treed hedgerows around the perimeter of the site, and vegetation within the surrounding local landscape restrict levels of visibility - even within the winter months.

8.4.73 Views of the site are broadly limited to a limited number of more sensitive visual receptors with the immediate vicinity, this being residents directly adjacent such as those at and close to Hawkwell Farm and Lord's Farm, residents on edge of Elmsbrook, and to a much lesser degree those in Bicester (along the A4095) where there are glimpsed views through the roadside vegetation. The Public Footpaths that run along the site's north western edge provides users with localised views of the site together with filtered views of buildings at Elmsbrook.

8.4.74 Despite its location, views of the site from Bucknell are prevented by mature vegetation around the village and by established hedgerows with the immediate landscape, which combine to provide a strong sense of separation between Bucknell and the site.

8.4.75 Receptors that are judged to have views of the site (and therefore Proposed Development upon it), which may be full, partial, glimpsed, are reasoned to be:

a) Residential receptors that are surrounded by the site at Hawkwell Farm, Hawkwell Farm Cottages and those at and around Lord's Farm.

b) Some residential receptors on the edge of Elmsbrook that border the site.

- b) Some residential receptors on the edge of Bicester (south of the A4095) although views are restricted by mature roadside vegetation.
- c) Public Footpath users heading along the western edge of the site and through the northernmost field.
- f) Highway users passing the site on Bainton Road, the B4100, the A4095 and Bucknell Road – Bicester Road
- g) Rail users as they pass the site.

8.4.42 For all these receptors the actual degree of visibility varies and so does the nature and context of the view. Highway users, for instance, are generally of lower sensitivity, and are travelling at comparative speed such that views are of a transient and fleeting in character

8.5 Potential Effects

8.5.1 In the absence of primary and secondary design and mitigation measures, development upon the site has the potential to result in a substantial impact (change) on landscape character and visual amenity. This is the potential for Major Adverse effects on landscape character, for example, during all stages of the project. Similar judgments may well be reached for some visual receptors. Equally the CDC assessments described above, indicate a medium – high capacity for residential and commercial development with the site development within the site area as the land use would be in keeping with the adjacent residential area to the south east and not significantly alter the overall landscape character of the wider area.

8.6 Design and Mitigation Measures

Embedded Mitigation in Proposed Development

- 8.6.1 Mitigation measures proposed in the ES are measures to avoid, prevent, reduce or, if possible, offset any identified adverse effects arising from the Proposed Development. Primary design and mitigation measures are adopted and embedded within the scheme as identified within Chapter 2 (Description of Proposed Development) and the Development Framework Plan (Appendix 2.1) that have been assessed.
- 8.6.2 Secondary mitigation measures are additional measures beyond that of the design and layout of e.g., standard construction practices for avoiding and/or minimising adverse environmental effects. Secondary measures are set out in this chapter and elsewhere in the ES. As part of the iterative EIA process, the baseline findings of the LVIA with the analysis of other environmental factor within the ES have shaped the proposed development in terms of its design and mitigation measures.

- 8.6.3 The LVIA and the iterative process of the EIA has sought to address the policies and guidance at national and local level. This includes responding to the North West Bicester SPD, and Cherwell Local Plan Policy BIC1 and ESD11 such that the proposed development through its design measures seeks to “secure the enhancement of the character and appearance of the landscape, particularly in urban fringe locations, through the restoration, management or enhancement of existing landscapes, features or habitats and where appropriate the creation of new ones, including the planting of woodlands, trees and hedgerows”

Mitigation of Construction Stages of the Development

Construction & Environment Management Plan

- 8.6.2 A Construction & Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) will be prepared and will be secured and agreed with CDC through a planning condition. This will set out the construction measures that will be put in place to minimise impacts on the environment. Appropriate mitigation and good practice procedures will take place during the construction phase to minimise impacts on landscape character and visual amenity. From a landscape and visual perspective, the CEMP will include methods in which to protect vegetation that is to be retained in accordance with the information contained within BS 5837 Trees in Relation to Construction. With regards to visual amenity mitigation measures will include the use of site hoardings and fencing to screen construction activities from sensitive local receptors. Appropriate locations for site huts and compounds will be located away from sensitive receptors.

Mitigation of Operational Stages of Development

Primary Mitigation

- 8.6.3 The masterplanning process, and the proposed development presented by the Development Framework Plan has evolved upon the iterative process of the LVIA (and the wider EIA process). It has also embraced and adopted the “key site-specific design and place shaping principles” encompassed within the Local Plan policies and the SPD, in addition to landscape guidance from the Bicester Landscape Sensitivity & Capacity Assessment (2013). The proposal meets various guidance for development within this landscape, for example, it delivers “significant green infrastructure provision”, that would provide “a well designed approach to the urban edge” and which would maintain “visual separation with outlying settlements”. Additionally, the inclusion of new perimeter structural planting would “reinforce existing site boundaries”.

Primary Mitigation- Green & Blue Infrastructure (GI)

- 8.6.4 The provision of green and blue infrastructure is an integral part of the Proposed Development and is a primary mitigation measure (i.e., actions undertaken by the EIA process to influence the design and layout of the Proposed Development) to minimise the

impact of the Proposed Development on landscape character and visual amenity (as well as impacts on other environmental factors).

- 8.6.5 In accordance with the Local Plan Policy in excess of 40% of the site is dedicated as green and blue infrastructure which will create a network of interconnected and varied habitats that will provide a substantial biodiversity and recreational resource. The green and blue infrastructure comprises retained and protected existing habitats (e.g., watercourses, mature trees and hedgerows) as identified on the Development Framework Plan, together with a variety of new features (e.g., new native woodland, copses, trees; woodland edge scrub/shrubs; species rich hedgerows; the creation of natural greenspace and varied grassland habitats; sport pitches as necessary and amenity open space; drainage features and SuDS). In accordance with best practice, this framework would be multifunctional in its design, so that it performs a range of functions that ensures benefits for biodiversity, local landscape character, visual amenity, recreation, health and well-being, and adaption to climate change.
- 8.6.6 Submitted with the application is North West Bicester –Green & Blue Infrastructure Principles Document (see Appendix 8E). This high level document identifies key landscape design principles and can be used as a guiding template for the detailed design.

Extent of Built Development

- 8.6.7 Through the fieldwork exercise it is evident that the northern boundary of the allocation in the Cherwell Local Plan is, in fact, arbitrarily drawn in landscape terms (following the local administrative boundary) and has no relationship with any identifiable features or boundaries on the ground. A design led approach has resulted in primarily green spaces north of the Local Plan allocation being brought into the application site, for several principal purposes. These being:
- a) to utilise the existing field boundaries and/or definable features within the western part of the site so that there is a logical, clear, and robust edge for the proposed development;
 - b) To accommodate additional primarily open green uses within the site and augment the benefits of development in terms of open space, healthy lifestyles, and habitat creation ; and
 - c) To provide an extensive and enduring area of green space and planting that provides an appropriate and sympathetic design response to address the transition between built development and the surrounding landscape, and to maintain and strengthen the visual separation that exists between the site and Bucknell.
- 8.6.8 The site’s westernmost boundary, which is defined by a tall (c10m in height) established hedgerow and tree belt is a logical and well-defined feature. It would be retained and strengthened with swathes of new broadleaved planting and areas of green space to form a substantial area of structural landscape that wraps around the western and northern part of

the site, with built development located to the east and south set well back from this area. This is part of the landscape led masterplanning approach, which retains and expands upon the existing landscape features of the site, delivers a scheme that is sensitive, responsive, and appropriate to its setting and its landscape features, and one in which new built development is located with an extensive green setting.

Design & Mitigation Measures

8.6.9 The following are the principal measures adopted and embedded within the proposed development. From a landscape perspective the design and mitigation measures have been developed to in order to minimise impacts and adverse effects landscape character and visual amenity.

Retained Landscape Features

- 1) **The conservation of landscape receptors of particular value within the site, such as mature tree groups and mature trees, established internal hedgerows and the watercourse corridors and their associated habitats.** These will be retained within areas of greenspace so that are suitably protected and form green linkages within and across the site. The retention of these habitats will provide an established framework within which built development can be located. The protection and retention of the majority of the site's hedgerows, both perimeter and internal, accords with one of the guidelines of the Middleton Stoney Landscape Character Area which is to "Conserve and sympathetically maintain species-rich hedgerows". These landscape features would be located in areas of greenspace with built development appropriately set back from them. The proposal includes the following measures:
 - a) retaining the tall established hedgerow and tree belt along the western boundary.
 - b) hedgerows and trees alongside Bucknell Road-Bicester Road to be reinforced by 'infill' and new hedgerow and tree planting.
 - c) hedges and trees beside the A4095 will be enhanced with 'infill' and new planting.
 - d) the retention of the roadside hedgerow on Bainton Road, which will be strengthened with hedgerow and tree planting.
 - e) some hedgerows are removed to deliver the Local Centre and Mixed Use Area and there will be the requirement for 'breaks' in hedgerows to deliver access, sustainable transport or place making benefits. Compensatory planting (see below) is provided for the limited losses in the hedgerow network.

Compensatory Planting

- 1) **Introducing compensatory native planting.** This includes new broadleaved woodland, copses, individual trees and species rich hedgerows to provide appropriate mitigation for the very limited loss of vegetation that will need be removed to accommodate the built development.

Structural Woodland & Green Space

- 1) **Mitigation measures will be adopted through the creation of variety of new habitats and landscape features as part of substantial network of multifunctional green and blue infrastructure.** New habitats can be created and managed to provide benefits for local landscape character as well as biodiversity.
- 2) **The development includes the planting of additional broadleaved woodland, trees and hedgerows and large areas of open space/green space as part of a structural landscape of new habitats.** This design response would visually integrate the built development into the landscape, and provide appropriate mitigation to filter and 'soften' views of built development for visual receptors. Furthermore, this structure of planting and green space would provide benefits for local landscape character in terms of, for example, increasing tree cover as well as providing benefits for biodiversity. The approach of delivering new woodland and trees, for example, accords with the one of the guidelines of the Middleton Stoney Landscape Character Area which is to "Minimise the visual impact of intrusive land uses such as ... large-scale development, ..., with the judicious planting of tree and shrub species characteristic of the area. This will help to screen the development and integrate it more successfully with its surrounding countryside".
- 3) **To integrate the development into the landscape and to maintain the visual separation that exists between the site and Bucknall.** This includes a proposed "community park", together with wider green uses created within the western/northern part of the site. The area would include the retention and strengthening of the boundary hedgerows and the establishment of new blocks of woodland, trees and hedgerows. The "community park" would also be designed with open areas of natural greenspace that can be designed and managed to maximise biodiversity, amenity and recreational benefits. This includes, for example, the creation of wildflower meadows, the use native tree planting and parkland type trees, and new recreational routes. In accordance with the Local Plan Policy the approach adopted by the masterplanning process creates "A well designed approach to the urban edge".
- 4) **Enhance the hedgerow along Bainton Road.** The existing hedgerow within the northernmost field which follows Bainton Road will be reinforced and strengthened with new hedgerow and tree planting to minimise views of the proposed development, specifically the proposed solar panels.
- 5) **Provide appropriate 'green buffers' and 'off-sets' between built development and sensitive visual receptors.** This includes the residential communities of Bucknell and Elmsbrook and individual residential receptors (e.g Hawkwell Farm Cottage, and Lord's Farm) and Public Footpath users. 'Green buffer'/offsets' and the use of new

planting would filter and 'soften' views of the development's built elements as part of a sympathetic design response that minimise adverse effects.

Watercourse Corridors & Blue Infrastructure

- 1) **To protect retain and enhance the site's watercourses (and their associated vegetation).** These would be located within wide corridors of grassland and will be enhanced with new native tree planting and scrub/shrub habitats to create broad swathes of natural greenspace for biodiversity and amenity benefits. This accords with the one of guiding principles of the "...introduction of native species planting into the channels for ecological benefit within the northern area of the site" as outlined in the Bicester Landscape Sensitivity & Capacity Assessment, and one of the guidelines of the Middleton Stoney Landscape Character Area which is to "Enhance and strengthen the character of tree-lined watercourses".

Green corridors

- 1) **The majority of the site's internal hedgerows are retained in order to create a 'green grid' of mature landscape features within the development.** These would be safeguarded within broad grassland corridors that would create, for example, connected wildlife corridors linking with surrounding habitats. Designed as integral elements of the layout they will provide opportunities for new tree and hedgerow planting that would strengthen their character and enhance their biodiversity value. They also provide opportunities for walking and cycling as part of car free green routes and allow space for 'doorstep' play. As part of a network of new recreational routes these 'green corridors will help meet the guiding principle of "Improved access through the area creating a series of footpaths from the adjacent housing estate to the southeast giving access to the urban fringe resource", as stated in the Bicester Landscape Sensitivity & Capacity Assessment.
- 2) **Sensitively integrate the development into the landscape by retaining and expanding upon the site's perimeter hedges and trees by strengthening these features through new structural planting around the development edge.** Vegetation around the site boundaries, such along the railway corridor, the Bucknell Road-Bicester Road, the A4095, and alongside Elmsbrook would be retained and be located within new 'green corridors', which would be enhanced with new woodland and tree planting. This will meet the principle of "improved structure planting along site boundaries...", as stated by the Bicester Landscape Sensitivity & Capacity Assessment.

8.6.10 Other design elements include children's play areas, a 'green hub', retained Public Footpaths and extensive new recreational routes. At the detailed stage it is expected that further landscape features will be embedded within the detailed plot and street layout, to include, for example, the use of street trees and native shrubs and hedges for front gardens that will

further enrich the development's landscape character. Whilst it is possible to accommodate sports pitches within the green and blue infrastructure, sports pitches for the North West Bicester strategic development are anticipated to be provided within the Himley Grange phase of the NW Bicester development.

8.7 Residual Effects

Assessment of Landscape Effects

8.7.1 The Landscape Effects Table (Appendix 8B) provides an assessment of the landscape effects on receptors as a result of the Proposed Development. The LVIA evaluates the level of effects during the construction phase, on completion of the development and in the longer term (15 years after completion of the development and with the GI established and maturing). The assessment considers the susceptibility to change, landscape value and the magnitude of effects. In accordance with GLVIA3 Statement of Clarification, those effects that are judged by the author to be 'significant' - which in this LVIA are judged to be effects that are Major or Major-Moderate - are identified in the following text.

8.7.2 The chapter considers the likely significant effect during the construction and operation phase *with mitigation in place*.

Landscape Susceptibility to Change

8.7.3 The susceptibility to change is the ability of the landscape to accommodate change arising from the specific development proposal. In all landscapes there will be variances in susceptibility to change depending on the type of change that is proposed and the receiving landscape in which the change would occur.

8.7.4 The principle of development in the site and the landscape is acknowledged by its allocation in the Local Plan, and within the wider allocation of 'Bicester 1', and the consent granted to the NW Bicester Strategic Link Road. Additionally, recent development has taken place in this landscape and ongoing and consented development through the North West Bicester Local Plan allocation will have an effect on this landscape with further development to the north which will extend the built area of Elmsbrook, and development to the south of the railway line. As a result of there will be further change within the landscape on the northwestern edge of Bicester.

8.7.5 It is concluded that this landscape is tolerant of change through a well-planned and well-designed development, and which incorporates various design and mitigation measures as shown by the Development Framework Plan, and as expressed through the LVIA. When considering change in this landscape the Bicester Landscape Sensitivity & Capacity assessment concluded that the site had capacity to accommodate development.

"There is a medium – high capacity for residential development within the site area (i.e., Bicester 1) as the land use would be in keeping with the adjacent residential

area to the southeast and not significantly alter the overall landscape character of the wider area”.

- 8.7.6 Through the baseline process and through an evaluation of the change that is proposed it is concluded that this landscape could absorb the proposed development -subject to appropriate design and mitigation measures- without giving rise to an unacceptable long term harm on landscape character. The majority of the site's existing landscape features are protected and retained and that mitigation would also include the framework of new landscape features (e.g woodland, trees, hedges, green space) as part of site wide green and blue infrastructure that cover at least 40% of the site, and which equates to some 80ha on the measure of green infrastructure in the Cherwell Local Plan and as set out on the Development Framework Plan.

Landscape Effects: Construction

- 8.7.6 The construction activities are expressed within the earlier chapters of the ES. To provide appropriate mitigation during the construction phase, all works would be carried out in accordance with good practice procedures to minimise impacts on landscape character and landscape features. This will include methods in which to protect vegetation that is to be retained in accordance with the information within BS 5837 Trees in Relation to Construction. A Construction & Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) will be submitted and agreed by CDC as part of a planning condition. The CEMP will set out various measures to ensure appropriate construction activities in relation to landscape character and the site's retained landscape features.
- 8.7.7 Whilst there would be some levels of adverse landscape effects on landscape character, effects would not be permanent.

National Character

- 8.7.8 The direct landscape impacts and effects during the construction phase on the landscape receptor of the Cotswolds NCA, and on the nearby Upper Thames Clay Vale NCA are assessed as being inconsequential and would result in **Negligible** level of effect and significance given the overall scale of these receptors, and that extensive areas of these landscapes would not be affected.

District-Local Character

- 8.7.9 Direct impacts on the Wooded Estate Lands Landscape Type- Middleton Stoney Landscape Character Area of the OWLS study (and indeed the Ploughley Ironstone Plateau Countryside Character Area) would be restricted to a comparatively small parts of these receptors. It is judged that constructing the development would lead to impacts on local character and landscape receptors, albeit these would be localised and limited in extent, with much of the site's landscape framework of existing features retained and protected. It is considered that the proposed development would lead to level effects and significance that would be **Minor Adverse** through the construction phase. These effects would not be permanent.

Site & Immediate Context

- 8.7.10 It is considered that a more marked direct effect would occur on the landscape receptor of the site and its immediate area, because of the High-Medium magnitude of change (impact) of the proposed development upon it. This would be tempered by the fact that the development would be located within the context of other development within this landscape such as Elmsbrook to the east and Bicester to the south, and in a landscape that is capable of accommodating change.
- 8.7.11 The CEMP will ensure that appropriate mechanisms are in place to protect landscape character and to limit landscape disruption. This includes suitable offsets and protection measures around the retained watercourses, woodland, hedgerows and mature trees during the construction. The construction phase will involve the removal/disruption of some vegetation to accommodate the built development, to include vehicular access into the site and necessary 'breaks' in the internal hedgerows structure to accommodate streets, built infrastructure etc. Mitigation for these losses and disruption to habitat includes compensatory planting and new habitats as part of the development's green and blue infrastructure.
- 8.7.12 The overall level of effects and significance at the construction stage on landscape character is judged to be **Major-Moderate Adverse**, which is considered by the author to be a 'significant'. Whilst there would be a level of harm - as there would be for the construction of development of this scale and type upon any green field site - this would be localised in extent given the well-contained nature of the site and the surrounding development of the remainder of the North West Bicester Local Plan allocation. Effects would not be permanent. Measures in place through the CEMP will ensure good practice protocols are agreed and secured by CDC to ensure suitable mechanisms will control and minimise effects on landscape character.

Landscape Effects: Operation. On Completion of the development (year 1) and in the longer term (15 years after completion)

- 8.7.13 The primary and secondary design and mitigation measures are explained above and within the preceding ES Chapters.
- 8.7.14 The design proposals follow the guidance for development within this landscape. This includes the retention of the vast majority of the site's established landscape habitats, such as the existing watercourse, perimeter and internal hedgerows, woodland and mature hedgerow trees. These are identified on the Development Framework Plan. To support and enhance these features, mitigation includes the planting of new broadleaved woodland, trees, shrubs and species rich hedgerows together with the creation of green space (varied grassland habitats), and drainage features. This green and blue infrastructure will provide benefits for local landscape character, biodiversity, amenity and recreation and adoption to climate change. Once fully established and maturing, there will, for example, be an increase in the amount woodland, tree cover and habitats within the site. These measures would

integrate the built development into the landscape as well as providing wider environmental and social benefits. The North West Bicester -Green & Blue Infrastructure, Principles Document (Appendix 8E) sets out the guiding aspirations for the proposed development which forms a basis for the detailed stage. The detailed landscape design, which includes the selection of species, will be developed and agreed by CDC through the reserved matters applications.

- 8.7.15 A secondary mitigation measure is the production of Landscape & Ecology Management Plan (LEMP) - similar to that of a Landscape & Habitat Management Plan as referred to in the Local Plan Policy. This will be prepared and will be agreed with CDC through a planning condition. The LEMP will ensure the establishment and the continued long-term management of the various landscape habitats within the site.

National Character

- 8.7.16 The landscape effects during the operation phase and in the longer terms on the substantial landscape receptors of the Costwolds NCA, and the Upper Thames Clay Valley NCA is assessed as being **Negligible** given the overall scale of these receptors, and that extensive areas of these landscapes would not be affected.

District-Local Character

- 8.7.17 Direct impacts would be restricted to a comparatively small part of the of the Wooded Estatelands Landscape Type -Middleton Stoney Local Landscape Character Area (and the Ploughley Ironstone Plateau Countryside Character Area). Whilst there would be a level of impact, this would be within a localised area and within that part of the landscape that is already influenced, to varying degrees, by existing and planned built development. The maturing landscape structure of the green and blue infrastructure of proposed new woodland, trees and hedgerows would be representative of local landscape character and would provide benefits through, for example, increased tree cover.
- 8.7.18 Given the disruption to the landscape and the loss of some existing features- albeit this is limited in extent-, together with the magnitude of change (impact) upon the receptor, it is judged that the Proposed Development would lead to effects and levels of significance that would be **Moderate -Minor Adverse** on the "limited/moderate" landscape character as it exists today, on completion. On account of the scheme's maturing landscape structure that would be providing benefits for local landscape character, the longer-term effects (at Year 15) on these receptors would reduce in degree and significance to **Minor Adverse**. These effects would be localised to a small part of these receptors. Equally the proposals, and the mitigation measures embedded, notably the green and blue infrastructure would, in isolation, be a major benefit of the proposals.

Site & Immediate Context

- 8.7.19 It is judged that the direct impacts on the landscape would be restricted to that of the site with some indirect effects on the immediate landscape around it.

- 8.7.20 The proposed development would result in disruption in the site's landscape fabric with modest changes in local landform to accommodate appropriate development platforms and levels for the building, parking and roads. There will be some disruption and some loss in vegetation to accommodate the proposed development, although much of the principal landscape features within the site (watercourses, woodland, hedges and high-quality mature trees) are retained forming part of the development's green and blue infrastructure. The proposed development will mean the loss of the site's agricultural fields, albeit these are judged to be comparatively limited landscape value.
- 8.7.21 These impacts in terms of their degree, together with the quality and value of these elements have been factored into the overall assessment. This process also takes into account the design and mitigation measures which comprises the conservation of features, compensatory planting and the delivering of extensive new habitats of woodland, trees, hedges and greenspace as part of the green and blue infrastructure. The influence and impact of the ongoing and consented development within the immediate landscape will also have an effect on landscape character
- 8.7.22 It is judged that at the outset and on the completion of the Proposed Development at year 1 the impact on the site's and its immediate surroundings would result in an effect and level of significance that would be **Major- Moderate Adverse**. This is as a consequence of the overall scale of the development and the disruption in landscape character on the site and the immediate area. This effect is considered by the author to be 'significant'. However, these effects would be limited to localised area of the landscape with no marked landscape effects on the wider landscape given the overall containment of the Site (and development upon it) within the surrounding landscape. The character that would be impacted upon is considered to be limited/moderate character. Furthermore, these effects would rapidly diminish as the extensive green and blue infrastructure becomes established. In the longer term, the green and blue infrastructure would be delivering a series of maturing habitats that would provide compensatory habitats to provide mitigation for the relatively limited loss of the landscape features to accommodate the development. Moreover, it would deliver wider environmental benefits in terms of new woodland, trees, hedgerows and natural greenspace that would provide benefits for local landscape character. The development would be set within this green framework of existing and new habitats such that it would be appropriately and sensitively integrated into the landscape. Furthermore, it would be observed within the context of the built-up area of Bicester and the ongoing and consented development expanding around the site as part of the wider North West Bicester allocation. It is assessed that in the longer term the level of landscape effects and significance would reduce to **Moderate-Minor Adverse** (15 years after completion) as a result of the establishing green and blue infrastructure which is a major benefit of the proposal. In the much long term, as the green and blue infrastructure becomes fully mature and established these effects would further reduce. In conclusion, a development of this scale, type and extent and on any greenfield site of this nature is likely to result in effects of this degree at the outset and it is

considered that whilst there would be levels of harm the proposed development is appropriate within this landscape and would not result in any unacceptable long-term landscape harm.

Assessment of Visual Effects

8.7.23 The Visual Effects Table (Appendix 8C) provides an assessment of the visual effects on receptors as a result of the Proposed Development. The LVIA evaluates the level of effects during the construction phase, on completion of the development and in the longer term (15 years after completion of the development and with green infrastructure established and maturing). The assessment considers the susceptibility to change, the value of views and the magnitude of effects. Judgments on the level of effects are based on the application plans which includes matters of layout, scale, and appearance.

Visibility Mapping

8.7.24 As a starting point, a Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) has been prepared. A ZTV is usually digitally produced, showing areas of land within which, a development is theoretically visible. The process only considers landform and doesn't take into account other potential screening elements within the landscape such as vegetation and buildings. The ZTVs (see Figures 8.5a-8.5b) show the theoretical visibility of 14m high development in the site as part of the mixed use-school areas, and the theoretical visibility of 12.5m high residential buildings. However, and as noted by GLVIA3 "In reality many factors other than terrain will influence visibility" and that "Site surveys are therefore essential to provide an accurate baseline assessment of visibility" (para 6.10). In essence, when undertaking the fieldwork and taking into account screening effects of the built-up area of Bicester, and that of woodland, hedgerows and trees within the local landscape, the actual 'visual envelope' of the site is substantially reduced in extent, such that views of the proposed development would be restricted to a comparatively localised area.

8.7.25 A representative Visual Envelope (VE) (Figure 8.5c) has been prepared through the fieldwork and provides a more accurate representation of the extent of visibility. This identifies the potential area of the landscape in which the proposed development is likely to be visible for those visual receptors that are within that area and is based upon an understanding of screening effects within the landscape which are created by landform variations, vegetation and built structures. It is recognised that some views may potentially occur outside the VE, although it is concluded that distance and intervening elements are likely to reduce the perceptibility and visibility of the proposed development, such that views would form a minor and rather inconsequential component of the wider view. Similarly, those receptors within the VE, such as Footpath users that have views of the proposed development, are likely to experience different degrees of visibility on account of localised screening from hedges and trees along their route. Additionally, for some receptors, such as highway users, the amount of time over which the proposed development will be seen may also vary.

Visual Receptors & Photographs

8.7.26 The Visual Amenity Plan (Figure 8.5c) identifies the visual receptors that have been assessed and the location of photograph viewpoints that are representative of the views for these receptors.

Visual Effects: Construction

8.7.27 Inevitably those visual receptors that have views, such as Footpath users within the site or residents at Hawkwell Farm, Lord's Farm and at Elmbrook, will experience views of construction activity given their immediate relationship with the site. This would vary in terms of construction activity, but would likely include construction vehicles and associated machinery, site compounds, earthworks and ground modelling.

8.7.28 It is expected that through the mechanism of the CEMP construction works would be carried out in accordance with best practice procedures to protect and to minimise, as far as practicable, adverse impacts on visual amenity during the construction phases. This is expected to incorporate the use of perimeter fencing and site hoardings and the sensitive location for compounds and site huts.

8.7.29 Effects on the various receptors during the construction phase are contained within the Visual Effects Tables (Appendix 8C). Whilst there are levels of harm on visual amenity for receptors during the construction phase these are limited to a comparatively localised area and would not be permanent.

Visual Effects - On completion of the development (year 1) & long term (15 years after completion)

8.7.30 The following summarises the key findings from the Visual Effects Table.

Residents

Visual Receptors A: Hawkwell Farm Lord's Farm

8.7.31 For these residents, together with those in Hawkwell Farm Cottages and in the immediate vicinity of Lord's Farm they would experience close range views of the proposed development to include views of new buildings and landscape features. These residents have, to some degree, existing filtered views of the built-up area of Bicester and Elmsbrook and the development would be observed within that context, although existing planting around these properties provides some degree of screening. The green infrastructure framework includes retained and new planting which will assist in assimilating development into the site as well as including 'green buffers' or offsets from these properties which is considered to be an appropriate and sympathetic design response.

8.7.32 In combining sensitivity and the magnitude of change alongside professional judgement, effects for these residents are judged to be ***Major-Moderate Adverse*** on completion, which is considered by the author to be a 'significant effect'. These effects would reduce to ***Moderate Adverse*** in the longer term (year 15) on account of the framework of planting that would be established and maturing, and which would assist in filtering and 'softening'

views of the proposed development. It is considered that the Proposed Development would result in change and effect on these receptors but would not result in an unacceptable long-term harm. Furthermore, these effects would be limited in extent to a small number of sensitive receptors.

Visual Receptors A: Bicester (south of A4095)

- 8.7.33 The established boundary hedgerows and tree cover that forms the site's southern boundary along the A4095 will be retained (other than to create a new access point), with new built development set back from this landscape edge. For existing residents that lie opposite the site, together with footway and cycle users, there would be some filtered views of the proposed development and for those properties in the vicinity of Germander Way, for example, they would experience views of the new access junction into the site. Once completed the NW Bicester Strategic Link Road will be an element within this visual context.
- 8.7.34 Views of the proposed development would be restricted and effectively filtered by a combination of established vegetation on the edge of the site and by the tree belts alongside the road close to the existing residential area, such that views would be obscured by intervening planting. In the summer months, visibility of the proposed development would be heavily restricted by the framework of tree planting along the road corridor. For some receptors there would be views of the new access junction into the site, and in these locations there will be views of the proposed housing.
- 8.7.35 In combining sensitivity and the magnitude of change alongside professional judgement, effects for these residents is judged to be **Moderate Adverse** on completion. These effects would reduce to **Moderate- Minor Adverse** in the longer term (year 15) on account of the framework of additional perimeter planting that would be established and maturing, and which would further assist in filtering views of the proposed development. This includes 'infill' and new planting along the southern parts of the site to strengthen the boundary hedgerows and roadside trees. It is considered that the Proposed Development would result in change and effect on these receptors but would not result in an unacceptable long-term harm.

Visual Receptors C: Elmsbrook, Bicester

- 8.7.36 For those residents that lie on the edge of Elmsbrook there will be close range views of the proposed development given their location directly adjacent to the site. Views will vary in extent but are expected to include views of new housing, streets, the school extension, and green and blue infrastructure. The site's boundary hedgerows, where they border Elmsbrook, are retained within green corridors, and will be supplemented with new planting to create a strong boundary edge to filter and 'soften' views. This connects with a broad area of green space that contains the northern watercourse and which will be designed with new woodland planting. This is considered to be an appropriate and sympathetic design response that would

'soften' and filter views of the proposed development for receptors within Elmsbrook and for those receptors that will ultimately occupy the development west of Elmsbrook as part of North West Bicester allocation.

- 8.7.37 In combining sensitivity and the magnitude of change alongside professional judgement, effects for these residents is judged to be **Major-Moderate Adverse** on completion, which is considered by the author to be 'significant'. These effects would reduce to **Moderate Adverse** in the longer term (year 15) on account of the framework of new and existing planting that would be established and maturing, and which would filter and 'soften' views of the Proposed Development.

Visual Receptors D: Bucknell

- 8.7.38 The primary design and mitigation measures embedded within the proposed development includes a substantial area of structural woodland and green space across the western part of the site, which includes proposed community park/green infrastructure. The proposed built development is set back some distance from this area. The design retains the site's hedgerows and trees within the western part of the site – to include the tall established hedgerow on the western boundary- and includes the provision of new woodland planting will reinforce this framework. This design measures and the location of built uses behind a broad area of greenspace and planting will maintain and, furthermore, strengthen the separation that currently exists between the site and Bucknell, as well as integrating the built form into the landscape. Through the baseline analysis there were no clear views identified of the site for residents in Bucknell -even in the winter months-, and it is judged that the exiting landscape fabric and the new green infrastructure would prevent and heavily restrict views of the built elements such that any views- if at all- are likely to be extremely limited and inconsequential in nature..
- 8.7.39 In combining sensitivity and the magnitude of change alongside professional judgement, effects for these residents is judged to be **Negligible** on completion and in the longer term (year 15) on account of the design and mitigation measures which includes the framework of retained and new planting within the western part of the site.

Rights of Way Users

Visual Receptors E: Public Footpaths (north western edge of Site)

- 8.7.40 Users of the Public Footpaths (148/9/30 and 148/7/20) will experience views of the new Solar Panels, and views of the structural landscape along the western part of the site as part of the proposed community park. Built elements of new housing would be observed and experienced alongside built elements in Elmsbrook. The built development is set back some distance from the route beyond areas of green space, existing hedgerows and new planting within the community park. As planting matures visibility of built development would lessen and would be filtered and 'softened' by intervening habitats.

8.7.41 Footpath users will be able to continue to walk through the site and connect with routes towards Bucknell. Whilst there would be a change in the nature of the route for these receptors with views of arable fields being replaced by views of solar panels, open space, recreation and new planting it is considered that this would form an interesting and pleasant experience for these receptors - albeit one which is very different to that currently experienced.

8.7.42 In combining sensitivity and the magnitude of change alongside professional judgement, effects for these receptors is judged to be **Moderate Adverse** on completion. It is judged that these effects would reduce to **Moderate-Minor Adverse** in the longer term (year 15) on account of the framework of planting that would be established and maturing. It is considered that the Proposed Development would result in change and effect on these receptors but would not result in an unacceptable long-term harm.

Visual Receptors F: Public Footpath (Lower Farm) and Visual Receptors G: Public Footpath (heading into Bucknell).

8.7.43 Users of these Footpaths will experience views of the tall established hedgerow on the western site boundary which is retained and would be strengthened by new areas of woodland and tree planting as part of the community park. It is considered that there would be no substantive change in the overall experience for these receptors.

8.7.44 In combining sensitivity and the magnitude of change alongside professional judgement, effects for these residents is judged to be **Negligible** on completion and in the longer term (year 15) on account of the design and mitigation measures which includes the framework of retained and new planting.

Visual Receptors H: Public Bridleway

8.7.46 Users of the Bridleway will experience limited views of the proposed development, and these would be restricted to some occasional and minor glimpsed views along the route, being filtered views of the upper and higher parts of the built development. Much of the Proposed Development would be effectively hidden and obscured by the intervening landscape framework, which includes the wooded railway embankment.

8.7.45 In combining sensitivity and the magnitude of change alongside professional judgement, effects for these receptors is judged to be **Minor Adverse -Negligible** on completion. It is judged that these effects would reduce to **Negligible** in the longer term (year 15) on account of the framework of planting that would be established and maturing within the site. It is considered that the Proposed Development would result in limited change and effect on these receptors but would not result in an unacceptable long-term harm.

Highway Users

Visual Receptors I: B4100

- 8.7.46 Highway users will experience some glimpsed filtered views of the proposed solar panels within the northern part of the site, albeit these will be over a short duration and experienced at speed. Receptors would also gain views of the edge of Elmsbrook (and in due course the remainder the allocation). Some partial fleeting views of the proposed development's housing would be likely, filtered by existing vegetation along the northern watercourse, and observed as a minor component of the view. The site's northern boundary hedgerow would be strengthened with additional planting to create a well-defined boundary edge, whilst new woodland and tree planting would be provided along the corridor of the northern watercourse.
- 8.7.47 In combining sensitivity and the magnitude of change alongside professional judgement, effects for these receptors is judged to be **Minor Adverse -Negligible** on completion. It is judged that these effects would reduce to **Negligible** in the longer term (year 15) on account of the green the framework of planting that would be established and maturing. It is considered that the Proposed Development would result in limited change and effect on these receptors but would not result in an unacceptable long-term harm.

Visual Receptors J: A650

- 8.7.48 Highway users currently experience filtered and transient views of the residential edge of Bicester with tree belts 'softening' and filtering views of the built-up area. Intermittent and glimpsed views of the proposed development's new housing would be experienced beyond the established hedgerow with visibility substantially reduced in the summer months. Additional new planting would be located along the southern boundary edge to provide further containment. Highway users will also experience views of the new junction along the A4095, that will provide access into the Site, and clearer views of the proposed development in these locations. It is concluded that whilst there will be some occasional views of the proposed development, as highway users pass by, their current experience is characterised by existing views of housing and the built edge, such that the proposed development would be observed in that context and would not result in a substantial change in their overall experience.
- 8.7.49 In combining sensitivity and the magnitude of change alongside professional judgement, effects for these receptors is judged to be **Minor Adverse** on completion. It is judged that these effects would reduce to **Negligible** in the longer term (year 15) on account of the framework of planting that would be established and maturing around the perimeter of the site.

Visual Receptors K: Bucknall Road-Bicester Road

- 8.7.50 For highway users that are travelling in either direction there will be views of the proposed development's housing, typically where there are breaks in the hedgerow network, as well as more open views of the employment, mixed use area and new school when receptors are on the southern parts of the road near the A4095 roundabout on the edge of Bicester. The roadside hedgerows – which already help to contain the site -would be retained within green

corridors. These will be supplemented with new hedgerow and tree planting to create a green setting for the development and to filter and 'soften' views of buildings.

- 8.7.51 In combining sensitivity and the magnitude of change alongside professional judgement, effects for these receptors is judged to be **Moderate-Minor Adverse** on completion. It is judged that these effects would reduce to **Minor Adverse** in the longer term (year 15) on account of the green and blue infrastructure and by the framework of additional planting that would be established and maturing along the roadside. These receptors are of limited sensitivity given that they are passing through the landscape at comparative speed and afford transient views of the landscape. It is considered that the Proposed Development would result in change and effect on these receptors but would not result in an unacceptable long-term harm.

Visual Receptors L: Bainton Road

- 8.7.52 There are some occasional breaks in the roadside hedgerow such that highway users will experience some glimpsed and transient views of the proposed solar panels within the northern part of the site. Receptors also gain views of the edge of Elmsbrook and would experience some partial glimpsed and distant views of the proposed development's new housing, albeit filtered by intervening hedges and trees and observed alongside housing at Elmsbrook. As users reach the block of mature woodland there would be no clear views of the development. The site's boundary hedgerow would be 'infilled' and strengthened with new hedgerow and tree planting to create a well-defined boundary edge along the northern part of the site, that would prevent and obscure views of the proposed development
- 8.7.53 In combining sensitivity and the magnitude of change alongside professional judgement, effects for these receptors is judged to be **Minor Adverse -Negligible** on completion. It is judged that these effects would reduce to **Negligible** in the longer term (year 15) on account of the green the framework of planting that would be established and maturing. These receptors are of limited sensitivity given that they are passing through the landscape at comparative speed and afford transient views of the landscape.

Visual Receptors M: Railway Line

- 8.7.54 Rail users would experience fleeting and close-range views of the proposed development as they pass the site. These would be observed at speed. Built uses would be observed within the context of the wider built-up area of Bicester that is visible, and would not be an uncharacteristic feature. The existing framework of mature trees and hedges would provide some filtering of the view, and this would increase in the longer term on account of the landscape framework of new planting.
- 8.7.55 In combining the limited levels of sensitivity and the magnitude of change alongside professional judgement, effects for these receptors is judged to be **Minor Adverse** on completion. It is judged that these effects would reduce to **Negligible** in the longer term

(year 15) on account of the green infrastructure and the framework of planting that would be established and maturing. These receptors are of limited sensitivity given that they are passing through the landscape at speed and afford transient views of the landscape.

8.8 Cumulative Effects

Inter-Factor Relationship Effects

- 8.8.25 The landscape chapter and the assessment process has considered the baseline studies and findings of the other ES factors such as Biodiversity and Cultural Heritage.
- 8.8.26 The list of schemes considered as part of the cumulative effects within the ES chapter are listed in section 1.
- 8.8.27 This section assesses the likely significant effects of the Proposed Development when considered in the context of other existing and/or approved projects as set out in section 1 of this ES.
- 8.8.28 All of these projects include measures in which to minimise impacts upon landscape character and visual amenity through primary mitigation measures, such as the careful siting of development and the introduction of landscape strategies to provide compensation, mitigation and/or enhancement.
- 8.8.29 With these projects and the Proposed Development in place there would be an additional level of change and effect on landscape character and visual receptors. For the most part, the combination of these projects would be experienced within a landscape context of existing built development. Overall, it is judged that the cumulative effects of the Proposed Development coming forward in conjunction with these additional projects would result in varying degrees of change and effects on differing landscape and visual receptors. Given the capacity of this landscape to absorb change, and that appropriate design and mitigation would be adopted for each project to minimise impacts, it is judged that the cumulative effects on landscape character and visual amenity are unlikely to result in any unacceptable long-term harm.

8.9 Night Time Effects

- 8.9.1 Whilst lighting emissions has been 'scoped out' of the EIA process, as agreed with CDC, . CDC's Landscape Officer refers to lighting being considered in the landscape chapter.
- 8.9.2 From a baseline perspective the site and the wider landscape is not subject to any 'dark sky' policies, as is the case with designated landscape National Parks and AONB's. In terms of the existing landscape character, the surrounding built edge of Bicester and Elmsbrook impart a level of lighting in this landscape, and the development would be observed within

that context. The proposed development would embrace good practice guidance on lighting installation to minimise sky glow, and to minimise any glare and light spill. Given the well-contained nature of the site, its context alongside the settlement edge (which is already lit) and through following appropriate and commonly used measures for lighting, it is concluded that the development would not result in any unacceptable effects on the night-time landscape.

8.10 Summary

8.10.1 The principle of development in the site and the landscape is acknowledged by its allocation in the Local Plan as part of Bicester 1.

8.10.2 The Bicester Landscape Sensitivity & Capacity Assessment (2013) makes the judgement that the landscape of Bicester 1 (within which the site falls) is no more than "medium" landscape sensitivity, "medium" visual sensitivity, and "medium-low" in terms of overall landscape value. It concludes that Bicester 1 has "a medium-high" capacity to accommodate residential and commercial development.

Landscape Character

8.10.3 The site and immediate area is not a designated landscape. It has no pronounced sense of scenic quality, tranquillity, and distinctiveness such that it sets it apart. The site is not subject to any cultural or ecological designations, and comprises common place arable fields with limited recreational value. The natural habitats of the site's watercourses, hedgerows and mature trees are of local landscape and ecological value.

8.10.4 The site's landscape character is influenced by the modern built edge of Bicester and Elmsbrook, and on-going and consented developments in this landscape as part of the North-West Bicester allocation will create further urbanising influences on this landscape.

Visual Amenity

8.10.5 It is assessed that the site is visually contained within the surrounding and wider landscape such that it has a comparatively limited visual envelope, and which given the scale of the site is restricted to a relatively localised area around it. The network of established and well-treed hedgerows around the perimeter of the site, and vegetation within the surrounding local landscape restrict levels of visibility.

Design & Mitigation

8.10.6 From a landscape perspective the design and mitigation measures have been developed in order to minimise impacts and adverse effects landscape character and visual amenity. This includes primary mitigation in the form of significant green infrastructure provision. This encompasses the retention of the majority of the site's habitats (watercourses, mature tree and hedgerows); compensatory habitats to provide mitigation for the relatively limited loss of the landscape features to accommodate the development; and the delivery of new

woodland, trees, hedgerows and greenspace. This would create a green framework of existing and new habitats to appropriately and sensitively integrate development into the landscape, as well as providing longer term environmental benefits for local landscape character, biodiversity and recreation.

Conclusions

- 8.10.7 Through the baseline process and through an evaluation of the change that is proposed it is concluded that this landscape could absorb the proposed development -subject to design and mitigation measures implemented by the development- without giving rise to an unacceptable long term harm on landscape character and visual amenity. The development provides significant green infrastructure provision, which will provide environmental benefits

Table 81: Assessment of Significance of Residual Landscape Effects. Table refer to the "main" level of effects. This is for the receptor of the Site and Immediate Area [refer to Appendix 8B for full set of Landscape Effects on landscape receptors]

Possible Effect	Duration	Significance Major/Moderate/ Minor/Negligible Beneficial/Adverse	International/ National/ Regional/ Local	Mitigation	Residual Effect
Construction					
Effect on the landscape receptor of site and immediate landscape.	Temporary	Without primary and secondary mitigation measures this would likely result in a Major Adverse effect and level of significance	Local	Primary design and mitigation measures embedded within the proposed development and the implementation of a CEMP to control and minimise effects during the construction phase	Major-Moderate Adverse
Operational Development					
Effect on the landscape receptor of the site and immediate landscape	Permanent	Without primary and secondary mitigation measures this would likely result in a Major Adverse effect and level of significance	Local	Primary design and mitigation measures embedded within the proposed development in the form of a blue and green infrastructure of retained and new habitats, and the implementation of a LEMP to ensure establishment and ongoing management of the site's green and blue infrastructure	Major-Moderate Adverse (year 1) Moderate – Minor Adverse (Year 15)

Table 8.2 Assessment of Significance of Residual Visual Effects. Table shows the "main" level of visual effects, which are judged to be on Receptors A and C . [Refer to Appendix 8C for full set of Visual Effects on visual receptors]

Possible Effect	Duration	Significance Major/Moderate/ Minor/Negligible Beneficial/Adverse	International/ National/ Regional/ Local	Mitigation	Residual Effect
Construction					
Receptor A (Hawkwell Farm, Hawkwell Cottages, Lord's Farm and associated properties. & Receptor C (Elmsbrook)	Temporary	Without primary and secondary mitigation measures this would likely result in a Major Adverse effect and level of significance	Local	Primary design and mitigation measures embedded within the proposed development and the implementation of a CEMP to control and minimise effects during the construction phase	Major -Moderate Adverse
Operational Development					
Receptor A (Hawkwell Farm, Hawkwell Cottages, Lord's	Permanent	Without primary and secondary mitigation measures this would likely result in a Major	Local	Primary design and mitigation measures embedded within the proposed development to include 'offsets/buffers' from receptors and retained and additional planting to 'soften'	Major-Moderate Adverse (year 1) Moderate

Farm and associated properties. Receptor C (Elmsbrook)		Adverse effect and level of significance		views of development, which would minimise effects.	Adverse (Year 15)
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