

Appendix A

LAND SOUTH OF HEYFORD GRANGE, LETCHMERE FARM, UPPER HEYFORD

Landscape & Visual Appraisal

October 2021

10215L.LVA.002



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LETCHMERE FARM,
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PLANS

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SCP.002	Site Context Plan
LSP.003	Illustrative Landscape Strategy Plan

APPENDICES

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

- 1.1.1. ES Landscape Planning Ltd was instructed by Pye Homes Ltd to review the potential landscape and visual effects arising from their development at land south of Heyford Grange, Letchmere Farm, Upper Heyford. The sites location is illustrated on Plan SLP.001.
- 1.1.2. The purpose of this appraisal is to introduce the proposed development and assess any potential notable landscape or visual effects arising from the development of up to 31 dwellings on the site. This is an outline application with all matters, save for means of access, reserved.
- 1.1.3. For reference, ES Landscape Planning worked on the proposed development, immediately to the south of this site (Planning ref: 15/01357/F), and have formed part of the design team from the outset of this scheme, ensuring that the proposals have adopted a landscape-led approach and form a logical and natural addition to the adjoining development.
- 1.1.4. While this LVA does not represent a full LVIA, the assessment within this document has been undertaken by chartered landscape architects in accordance with an established methodology that has been developed in line with the guidance set out in GLVIA3. The assessment methodology is included in Appendix 1 for reference.

1.2. Approach

- 1.2.1. This LVA will take the following format:
 - Introduce the site within its current landscape and visual baseline context;
 - Introduce the proposed development, including the proposed landscape strategy;
 - Assess any potential landscape and visual effects and make reference to landscape related planning policy; and
 - The conclusions of the assessment will be set out.
- 1.2.2. This assessment forms part of the suite of documents submitted as part of the planning application and should be reviewed alongside the other submissions that accompany the application.

2. BASELINE ASSESSMENT

2.1. The Site

- 2.1.1. The site lies immediately to the east of the former Upper Heyford Air Base, approximately 5km to the north west of Bicester, refer Site Location Plan (SLP.001).
- 2.1.2. The site currently comprises approximately 0.9467ha of improved grassland, used for the grazing of horses, which lies to the east of the former RAF Upper Heyford and south of Heyford Grange, which is associated with the Letchmere Farm complex. The site lies immediately to the north of a scheme of 90 units (planning ref: 15/01357/F). Letchmere Farm, to the north, separates the site from the former runway and associated buildings of RAF Upper Heyford, which are now used for a variety of commercial enterprises. A localised watercourse defines the eastern boundary, separating the site from a larger arable field which lies to the west of Chilgrove Drive. The site is illustrated in its localised context on Figure 1 below and on the Site Context Plan (SCP.002)



Figure 1: Site Context Plan

- 2.1.3. The site forms part of a wider masterplan for the former Upper Heyford air base, which has outline consent for 761 dwellings. The site would form part of the south eastern extent of the wider development, with new residential development extending

[illegible]

2.2. Landscape Related Policy Background

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- 2.2.5. It is also noted that that site is covered by the Mid-Cherwell Neighbourhood Plan, which covers a number of parishes to the west of Bicester, and was Made by CDC in May 2019. It is noted that the Plan includes a “zone of non-coalescence” which lies to the west of RAF Upper Heyford, to maintain separation between the air base and the village of Upper Heyford to the west. The site is not covered by any similar designations and would not give rise to the coalescence of Heyford Park with any surrounding settlements in any event. The site is also located away from the protected skylines and church spires, identified on Figure 8 of the Neighbourhood Plan, and is not located within the context of any key views or vistas, identified within the Neighbourhood Plan or the RAF Upper Heyford Conservation Area Appraisal (2006).
- 2.2.6. A detailed appraisal of relevant planning policy is included within the planning statement prepared by Terence O’ Rourke that accompanies the planning application.

2.3. Landscape Character

- 2.3.1. The European Landscape Convention (ELC) defines landscape as “...**an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and / or human factors**”.
- 2.3.2. As set out within “An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment” (Christine Tudor, Natural England; October 2014) “**landscape character may be defined as a distinct and recognisable pattern of elements, or characteristics, in the landscape that make one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse. Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) is the process of identifying and describing variation in the character of the landscape. It seeks to identify and explain the unique combination of elements and features (characteristics) that make landscapes distinctive.**”
- 2.3.3. As part of the baseline assessment, published landscape character assessments have been identified and reviewed and these form the basis of the assessment of the landscape character of the site.

Regional Landscape Character Assessment

- 2.3.4. Natural England have prepared the Character Map of England which provides a broad assessment of landscape character at a regional level. The site lies within the “Cotswolds” national character area (NCA 107). An extract of the assessment is included within Appendix 2. It must be noted that this national character area does not relate solely to the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty but also the wider setting. The site lies towards the edge of the NCA and over 11km to the north east of the AONB and is not considered to be located within the landscape setting of the designation. The published assessment identifies a series of key characteristics associated with the NCA and these are set out in Appendix 2.

County Landscape Character Assessment

- 2.3.5. At a more local level, the site lies within the “Farmland Plateau” landscape type (LT) as identified by the Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study (OWLS). An extract from the OWLS study is included in Appendix 4 for reference. The assessment identifies a series of key characteristics associated with this area, which include:

- **Level or gently rolling open ridges dissected by narrow valleys and broader vales.**
- **Large, regular arable fields enclosed by low thorn hedges and limestone walls.**
- **Rectilinear plantations and shelterbelts.**
- **Sparsely settled landscape with a few nucleated settlements.**
- **Long, straight roads running along the ridge summits.**

- 2.3.6. The OWLS assessment notes that the site and wider former RAF site lie within the “Fritwell” landscape character area (LCA). This LCA is described as:

“This area is characterised by large, regularly-shaped arable fields and medium-sized mixed plantations. There are small fields of semi-improved grassland surrounding villages. There are also a few large blocks of ancient semi-natural woodland, including Stoke Wood and Stoke Little Wood, which add to the wooded character of the area. The field boundaries are dominated by hawthorn and blackthorn hedges with scattered hedgerow trees, although the latter are almost totally absent to the south of Upper Heyford airfield. Hedges are generally low in height, except around Fritwell and Ardley where they are taller and more species-rich.”

- 2.3.7. It is noted that the OWLS assessment does not undertake an assessment of susceptibility, value or sensitivity.

ESLP Landscape Character Assessment

- 2.3.8. ESLP has also undertaken an assessment of the localised landscape character, and this has been informed by the published assessments prepared by Natural England and Oxfordshire County Council.
- 2.3.9. The site comprises a paddock, which has been used for grazing horses until recently, that lies immediately adjacent to RAF Upper Heyford and the farmstead of Letchmere Farm. There are few internal features of landscape or ecological note associated with the site, which largely comprises improved grassland. The eastern edge of the site is defined by a mature hedgerow which forms a softened edge between the site and the arable landscape to the east.
- 2.3.10. As part of the landscape character assessment, there is a need to assess the susceptibility, value and overall sensitivity of the landscape resource. These assessments will inform the objective assessment of effects within Section 4.2 and ensure that a transparent and objective approach to the assessment is achieved. GLVIA3 defines landscape susceptibility, landscape value and landscape sensitivity, as follows:

“Susceptibility: the ability of a defined landscape to accommodate the specific proposed development without undue negative consequences;

Landscape Value: the relative value that is attached to different landscape by society. A landscape may be valued by different stakeholders for a whole variety of reasons;

Sensitivity: a term applied to specific receptors, combining judgements of the susceptibility of the receptor to the specific type of change or development proposed and the value related to that receptor.”

Landscape Susceptibility

- 2.3.11. In terms of the susceptibility of the localised landscape receptor, it is considered that the sites location immediately adjacent to the wider Heyford Park development and

inclusion within the overarching masterplan for residential development, reduces the sites susceptibility to change.

- 2.3.12. The site is influenced by the development of the air base, set within a larger scale, fragmented landscape. The perception of a rural character increases with distance, however, the proximity of the site to the air base means that the buildings and boundary features of the neighbouring air base are prominent, forming an ever present backdrop.
- 2.3.13. The development to the west is now primarily residential and varies in height and appearance. This part of Upper Heyford has experienced a significant degree of change over the past 80 years and the principle of large scale redevelopment is accepted given the approval of the wider masterplan.
- 2.3.14. The site is not immediately apparent from the wider landscape setting and does not contain any internal landscape features of note. There is some mature vegetation associated with the eastern boundary which contributes to the landscaped setting of the site and creates a green corridor along the watercourse. Should the development to the south be approved, this would extend built form around three sides of the site.
- 2.3.15. It is concluded that the susceptibility of the landscape, in which the site is set, to change of the type proposed is Medium - Low.

Landscape Value

- 2.3.16. In terms of value, Box 5.1 within GLVIA3 identifies a series of eight criteria which are generally accepted as being appropriate indicators of landscape value. Table 1, below, assesses the value of the landscape in which the site is set against each of the eight criteria set out in Box 5.1.

Table 1: Baseline Analysis of Landscape Value

Value Criteria	Assessment
<i>Landscape Quality (Condition)</i>	Medium – The site comprises a paddock which appears to have been partitioned off from a larger field in the past and is characterised by post and rail fencing associated with equine uses. The immediate setting of the site has changed significantly over the past 80 years with the development of the airfield dominating the

	landscape to the north and west. The presence of more recent residential developments within the immediate setting further influences the character of the sites setting. The site and its immediate setting have therefore been subject to a degree of change within the recent past which has influenced the landscape quality of the area.
<i>Scenic Quality</i>	Medium / Low – As illustrated within the visual assessment within this LVA, views of the site are limited as a result of the limited public access and localised vegetation structure.
<i>Rarity</i>	Low – There are no rare elements or features associated with the site or its landscape setting that do not exist elsewhere within the wider landscape context.
<i>Representativeness</i>	Low – There are no characteristics or features associated with the site or its setting that are considered particularly important examples within the context of the “Farmland Plateau” LT.
<i>Conservation Interests</i>	Medium / Low – The site has some ecological value as a result of the native boundary hedgerows, although for the most part the site comprises improved grassland. There are no heritage assets associated with the site.
<i>Recreation Value</i>	None – The site is not publicly accessible and does not form the immediate setting of any public rights of way.
<i>Perceptual Aspects</i>	Low – The presence of the former airfield with its associated built form and activities, together with the other residential developments to the south and south west, reduces the perceived tranquility of the site.
<i>Associations</i>	None – There are no known associations with the site or its immediate landscape setting.

- 2.3.17. As an overview, it is considered that the overall value of the site, when assessed against the criteria of Box 5.1, is Medium – Low due to the presence of the former airbase and the significant influence this has had on its immediate setting, which includes the site. It is considered that the site and its immediate setting do not represent a “valued landscape” with reference to para 174a of the NPPF.

Landscape Sensitivity

- 2.3.18. Overall, in terms of sensitivity, when the judgements of susceptibility and value are considered, it is concluded that the sensitivity of the site and its immediate setting is

Medium – Low, with the ability to accommodate some change arising from a sensitively designed layout.

2.4. The Visual Environment

- 2.4.1. As part of the initial desk study and the subsequent site visit, a number of key views have been identified which are taken from publicly accessible locations showing the site in its localised and wider landscape context. The viewpoints seek to reflect the views of the site by more sensitive receptors, such as walkers on the local public right of way network, however, the viewpoints are considered representative and not exhaustive.
- 2.4.2. The viewpoints are illustrated on the Viewpoint Location Plan within Appendix 4. The photographs were taken in April 2021. The day was clear with good visibility. While the site visit was undertaken during the spring, much of the localised vegetation was yet to come into leaf and, as such, closely reflect winter views.
- 2.4.3. The photographs were taken with a Canon 35mm equivalent digital SLR. The camera is a cropped sensor model so, in line with Landscape Institute TGN 06/19 – Visual Representation of Development Proposals, the photographs were taken at 35mm. The photographs are presented in Appendix 4 at a scale whereby they can be viewed at a distance of 260mm to represent the view from the particular location. The extent of the site is indicated on the photographs to assist the viewer's understanding of where the site sits within the context of the view. It must be noted that the photographs are illustrative and do not replace visiting the viewpoints in person. Table 2, below, sets out the viewpoint locations, key receptors and assessed sensitivity.

Table 2: Baseline Viewpoints

Viewpoint	Location	Key Receptors	Receptor Sensitivity
1	Drive to Letchmere Farm, approximately 20m to the north of the site (not a public viewpoint)	Residents	Medium - High

2	Larsen Road, next to the former Officer's Quarters Houses within the former air base, approximately 75m to the south west of the site (not a public viewpoint)	Residents	Medium - High
3	Southern side of Camp Road, approximately 205m to the south of the site	Residents and motorists	Medium – High
4	Southern side of Camp Road, approximately 220m to the south of the site	Motorists	Low
5	Camp Road, approximately 270m to the south east of the site	Motorists	Low
6	Camp Road, at the junction with the B430, approximately 300m to the south east of the site	Motorists	Low
7	Chilgrove Drive, approximately 240m to the east of the site	Walkers	Low
8	B430 approximately 510m to the south east of the site	Motorists	Low
9	Bridleway 109/28/10, approximately 530m to the east of the site	Walkers and riders	Medium - High
10	Bridleway 109/28/10, approximately 675m to the east of the site	Walkers and riders	Medium - High
11	Bridleway 109/28/10, approximately 840m to the east of the site	Walkers and riders	Medium - High
12	Bridleway 388/7/10, approximately 390m to the south east of the site	Walkers and riders	Medium - High

2.4.4. As illustrated by the Photographic Record and Table 2, views of the site are highly localised as a result of the built form associated with the air base, limited public access and vegetation cover that characterises the immediate setting of the site. Section 4.3 of this LVA assesses the potential effects of the proposals upon these views.

3. THE PROPOSALS

- 3.1. This is an outline application for up to 31 dwelling with all matters, except access, reserved. The project architects, Coleman Hicks Partnership, have developed a layout which illustrates how the site could be developed to accommodate 31 dwellings. The proposed layout is included below at Figure 3.



Figure 3: CHP Architect's Proposed Layout

- 3.2. As illustrated on Figure 3, the proposals have been designed to appear as a logical addition to the development that is proposed immediately to the south (Planning ref: 15/01357/F). The proposals would be accessed via the estate road associated with the development to the south and provide a loop rather than a cul-de-sac.
- 3.3. The network of swales that characterise the scheme to the south would be extended into this development providing SUDS features that would be seeded with a species-rich wet grassland mix. The swales would also create a more spacious streetscene, setting built form back from the estate road.

- 3.4. The scheme would incorporate a Local Area of Play (LAP) in accordance with the requirements of the Cherwell Local Plan. This would be located so that it is easily accessible by the residents of this and the neighbouring scheme. Sensory planting would define the edge of the space, creating separation from the pavements and creating an interactive feature on the edge of the playspace.
- 3.5. The mature hedgerow on the eastern boundary would be retained and set within a green corridor, with development set back from the watercourse. A shade tolerant, species-rich grass mix would be established along this edge creating a high quality, diverse interface between the development and the wider setting to the east.
- 3.6. A mixed native hedgerow would be established along the northern boundary, replacing the existing post and rail fence and extending the green corridors around the site.
- 3.7. Street trees and a mix of native and ornamental planting would be established through the development, breaking up the built environment and creating a high quality environment in which to live. The emerging landscape strategy is illustrated on Plan LSP.003.
- 3.8. The potential effects of the proposals upon the character and appearance of the landscape are dealt with in further detail in Section 4 of this Landscape and Visual Appraisal.

4. ASSESSMENT OF LANDSCAPE & VISUAL EFFECTS

4.1. Background

- 4.1.1. In line with the guidance in GLVIA3, it is appropriate to assess the effect of the proposed development upon the baseline landscape character and visual environment as identified in Section 2 of the LVA.

4.2. Effect upon Landscape Character

Regional Landscape Character Assessment

- 4.2.1. With regard to the effect of the proposals upon the “Cotswolds” national character area (NCA 107), it is noted that this published assessment does not provide an assessment of sensitivity. The proposals represent a small scale development which would be perceived within the context of the wider redevelopment of RAF Upper Heyford, most notably the proposed development immediately to the south of the site. The proposals would not introduce any features into this landscape setting that cannot be integrated, nor would they compromise any of the existing positive characteristics or features. The proposals would not compromise any of the identified statements of environmental opportunity identified within the assessment. It is considered that the proposals would give rise to an effect of **None** within the context of the regional character area.

Local Landscape Character Assessment

- 4.2.2. As noted within Section 2, the site is located within the “Farmland Plateau” LT as identified by the OWLS assessment. It is noted that the OWLS assessment does not provide an assessment of sensitivity.
- 4.2.3. The proposals would not affect any of the key characteristics of this Landscape Type. The site gently falls to the east, towards a localised watercourse. The proposals would not require any significant ground remodelling that would affect the perception of the gently rolling ridges dissected by narrow valleys and broader vales that characterise the “Farmland Plateau”. The site currently comprises an area of improved, species poor grassland, which is influenced by the air base to the west and the watercourse to the east. The development of the site for residential uses would change the character of the site internally but would not affect the perception

of large scale arable fields that characterise the wider landscape type. There are no shelter belts associated with the site and the proposals would not affect the perception of long straight roads extending out from the settlement. The OWLS assessment notes that this is a sparsely settled landscape, however, the proposals would be located immediately adjacent to the established settlement edge which extends east, up to the watercourse, to the south of the site and influences the immediate landscape setting to the west. The proposals would not affect the perception of a sparsely settled landscape beyond the nucleated settlements associated with the “Farmland Plateau”.

- 4.2.4. The OWLS assessment sets out a series of Landscape Guidelines which seek to conserve the character of the “Farmland Plateau”. The proposals would avoid any tree planting on the characteristic ridgelines of the LT, instead focusing new planting around the edges of the development to ensure its integration into the localised setting and soften the perceived built edge of the air base. The eastern boundary would be reinforced with new planting where gaps exist and new hedgerows would be incorporated along the northern and western boundaries, reinforcing the perceived field pattern. The proposals also present the opportunity to enhance the management of the existing eastern boundary hedgerow, establishing an appropriate management regime for this feature. There are no stone walls or quarries associated with the site or its setting that would be affected by the proposals.
- 4.2.5. The guidelines seek to conserve all remaining areas of semi-improved grassland. Clearly the proposals would result in the loss of much of the grassland currently associated with the site, however, this habitat is not considered rare or representative of this landscape type and is of limited ecological value. This land use is not identified as a key characteristic of the “Farmland Plateau”. This land use is also typical of land immediately adjacent to existing settlements, and it is considered that the proposals would not result in significant adverse effects upon the character of the wider landscape. The proposals would be located immediately adjacent to the settlement edge of Heyford Park and would not affect the perception of a sparsely settled landscape beyond the established settlements within the landscape type. There are also opportunities for including a sensitive palette of materials that reflect the local vernacular, ensuring that the proposals complement the more established parts of Upper Heyford and this part of the District.

- 4.2.6. It is considered that the proposals would give rise to a negligible magnitude of change within the immediate setting of the site, however, the proposals would not affect the key characteristics that define the “Farmland Plateau” landscape type.

ESLP Landscape Character Assessment

- 4.2.7. As set out within Section 2 of this LVA, ESLP has also undertaken an assessment of the localised landscape character, and this has been informed by the published assessments prepared by Natural England and Oxfordshire County Council. The assessment within Section 2 concludes that the overall sensitivity of the landscape receptor in which the site is set is Medium – Low.
- 4.2.8. It is acknowledged that the proposals would change the character of the site from a field to a residential development, however, the geographical extent to which this would be perceived would be small as a result of the built environment of the air base and natural features to the east and south of the site. It is acknowledged that some change would be perceived from the public realm to the east, but this would reduce in time as a result of the proposed mitigation associated with the eastern boundary. The location of the site immediately adjacent to the air base present the opportunity to create a more sympathetic edge between the settlement and the wider landscape to the east. The presence of the proposed development immediately to the south of the site, which is currently in planning, also significantly influences the character of the site and would further reduce the potential effects arising from the introduction of up to 31 dwellings.
- 4.2.9. It is considered that the proposals would give rise to a Medium – Low magnitude of change, as the proposals would represent a perceptible change within the context of the site, but would constitute only a minor component within the localised setting given the presence of Heyford Park and the proposed scheme immediately to the south. It is considered that, when the sensitivity of the landscape receptor is taken into account, the proposals would give rise to an effect of **Moderate / Minor Adverse** significance upon the character of the site at Year One. This is not considered notable, and it is considered that the landscape receptor has the ability to accommodate sensitively designed development which would incorporate a comprehensive scheme of landscaping. As this planting matures it would reduce the perceived change arising from the proposed development, ensuring less than **Minor Adverse** effects by Year Ten.

- 4.2.10. In conclusion, the site and its localised setting are significantly influenced by the existing air base, and its current redevelopment, and the proposals present the opportunity to introduce a high quality residential development, that contributes to housing provision within Cherwell, and would create an appropriate transition between the higher density development of Heyford Park and the wider landscape to the east, forming a logical addition to the proposed development to the south and rounding off the residential areas on the eastern side of Heyford Park.
- 4.2.11. While it is acknowledged that the proposals would result in the loss of an area of species-poor grassland, this landcover is not considered rare or ecologically valuable, and any greenfield development, no matter the scale, would result in some perceived change. However, the National Planning Policy Framework does not protect green fields for their own sake. Furthermore, the site is located immediately adjacent to the settlement edge, forming part of the wider approved Heyford Park masterplan which identifies the site as a location for future residential development. The proposed development would not affect the key characteristics of the wider “Farmland Plateau” landscape type, as identified by the OWLS assessment, and could be integrated into the localised landscape without giving rise to any significant adverse effects upon the receiving landscape character.

4.3. Effect upon the Visual Environment

- 4.3.1. Table 3, below, assesses the effect of the proposed development upon the identified key views which are included within Appendix 4.
- 4.3.2. The assessment also considers the potential visual effects arising from the proposals if the development of 89 dwellings, which is currently being considered by Cherwell DC, were to be approved and built out as per the masterplan that accompanies that application (Planning ref: 15/01357/F). The development of the site immediately to the south would affect the visibility of the proposals from a number of viewpoints, as well as changing character and appearance of the immediate setting of the site. Where the magnitude of change and overall effect differ from those identified in relation to the baseline views, as a result of the introduction of the 89 unit scheme, these are shown in green text.

Table 3: Assessment of Visual Effects

Viewpoint	Location	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change	Overall Effect
1	Drive to Letchmere Farm, approximately 20m to the north of the site (not a public viewpoint)	Medium - High	Medium – High Medium	Year One – Moderate / Major
				Moderate
				Year Ten – Moderate Moderate / Minor
<p><i>Assessment:</i> The proposals would introduce residential built form into the foreground of this view, representing a notable degree of change. However, this is not a public view and the built form associated with the air base lies immediately to the right of this view and the caravan park forms a backdrop ensuring that residential scale development is not uncommon. This is not a distinctly rural landscape, and it has capacity to accommodate the type of change being proposed. As the landscape proposals to the northern boundary mature, the perceived built edge would be softened and an appropriate transition achieved.</p> <p>If the 89 unit scheme were to come forward, this would change the backdrop to the site, extending residential development to the left of the lane. The proposals would extend development towards the viewpoint, however, residential scale built form would already form a component in the centre of the view and, as such, the perceived magnitude of change, and overall effect, would be reduced.</p>				
2	Larsen Road, next to the former Officer’s Quarters Houses within the former air base, approximately 75m to the south west of the site (not a public viewpoint)	Medium - High	Low	Year One – Moderate / Minor
				Year Ten – Minor
<p><i>Assessment:</i> It is acknowledged that the proposals would be visible, albeit heavily filtered by the intervening boundary vegetation, from this location. However, the proposals would be set back from the boundary ensuring that they do not appear prominent or overbearing and would be perceived within the context of the wider redevelopment at Heyford Park which lies to the left of the view. By Year Ten it is considered that the proposed planting along the western boundary would have matured further assisting the integration of the proposed built form and reducing the overall perceived effect.</p>				

It is considered that if the 89 unit scheme were to come forward, this would contain views of the eastern extent of the proposals and significantly change the immediate setting of the site, extending development to the east. However, the western edge of the development would be visible and would extend the perceived built edge marginally to the north.				
3	Southern side of Camp Road, approximately 205m to the south of the site	Medium - High	Medium No Change	Year One – Moderate None
				Year Ten – Moderate / Minor None
<p><i>Assessment:</i> The proposals would extend built development to the right of the lane in the middle ground of this view, with the post and rail fence forming the southern edge of the development. This would represent a noticeable change to the current situation although the proposals are set well back from Camp Road and would not appear prominent or overbearing.</p> <p>However, if the 89 unit scheme is approved, this would contain views of the proposals from this location, and there would be no change as a result of the introduction of an additional 31 units.</p>				
4	Southern side of Camp Road, approximately 220m to the south of the site	Low	Medium - Low No Change	Year One – Moderate / Minor None
				Year Ten – Minor None
<p><i>Assessment:</i> This is a fleeting view and, as such, the sensitivity of the receptors is reduced. The proposals would be set well back from the road corridor ensuring that they would not appear prominent. The proposals would be glimpsed in the middle ground of this view. This would represent a change to the current situation, but the proposals would only appear as a minor component.</p> <p>However, if the 89 unit scheme is approved, this would contain views of the proposals from this location, and there would be no change as a result of the introduction of an additional 31 units.</p>				
5	Camp Road, approximately 270m to the south east of the site	Low	Medium – Low Negligible	Year One – Moderate / Minor Negligible

				Year Ten – Minor Negligible / None
<p><i>Assessment:</i> From this viewpoint the intervening roadside hedgerow and planting associated with the watercourse, to the east of the site, would assist in containing views of the proposals, even during the winter. Some glimpsed views of the proposals would be possible, but they would be seen within the wider context of Heyford Park and the air base, forming a backdrop to the site.</p> <p>If the 89 unit scheme were to come forward, this would extend the presence of residential built form to the left of the site and contain views of the built form within the southern and western parts of the site, further reducing the perceived magnitude of change within the context of this fleeting view.</p>				
6	Camp Road, at the junction with the B430, approximately 300m to the south east of the site	Low	Medium – Low Negligible	Year One – Moderate / Minor Negligible
				Year Ten – Minor Negligible / None
<p><i>Assessment:</i> As with Viewpoint 5, the intervening vegetation structure, to the east of the site, would assist in containing views of the proposals, even during the winter. Some views of the proposals would be possible but they would be seen within the wider context of Heyford Park and the air base, forming a backdrop to the site and would not introduce any new or alien components into the view.</p> <p>Again, if the 89 unit scheme were to come forward, this would extend the presence of residential built form to the left of the site and contain views of the built form within the southern and western parts of the site, further reducing the perceived magnitude of change within the context of this fleeting view.</p>				
7	Chilgrove Drive, approximately 240m to the east of the site	Low	Medium – Low Low	Year One – Moderate / Minor Minor
				Year Ten – Minor Negligible
<p><i>Assessment:</i> Views of the proposals from Chilgrove Drive would be limited due to the established and dense nature of the hedgerow which lines the western side of the streetscene. Where views are possible, the proposals would be seen in the context of the wider Heyford Park development to the west, which forms a backdrop to the site. As the proposed planting along the eastern boundary, and</p>				

within the site, matures it would further integrate the proposed built form and the overall effect would reduce.				
If the 89 unit scheme were to come forward, this would extend the presence of residential built form to the left of the site further reducing the perceived magnitude of change within the context of this view, with the proposals appearing as a natural addition to the larger development to the south.				
8	B430 approximately 510m to the south east of the site	Low	Negligible	Year One – Negligible
				Year Ten – Negligible / None
<i>Assessment:</i> From this location the intervening distance and vegetation structure to the east of the site would contain views of much of the proposed development. Some glimpsed views of the proposed roofscape may be possible during the winter, however, the proposals would not break the skyline and would be seen against the wider backdrop of Heyford Park. As the proposed planting on the eastern boundary matures this would reinforce the landscaped setting of the site and the separation between the proposals and this viewpoint.				
9	Bridleway 109/28/10, approximately 530m to the east of the site	Medium - High	Negligible	Year One – Moderate / Minor
				Year Ten – Minor
<i>Assessment:</i> As with Viewpoint 8, the intervening distance and vegetation structure to the east of the site would contain views of much of the proposed development from this location. Some glimpsed views of the proposed roofscape may be possible during the winter, however, the proposals would not break the skyline and would be seen against the wider backdrop of Heyford Park. As the proposed planting on the eastern boundary matures this would reinforce the landscaped setting of the site and the separation between the proposals and this viewpoint. The proposed development would not harm the public's enjoyment of this route.				
10	Bridleway 109/28/10, approximately 675m to the east of the site	Medium - High	No Change	None
<i>Assessment:</i> The intervening topography would contain views of the proposals from this location.				
11	Bridleway 109/28/10, approximately 840m to the east of the site	Medium - High	Negligible	Year One – Minor
				Year Ten – Negligible

<p><i>Assessment:</i> Given the intervening distance and vegetation structure, together with the backdrop of Heyford Park to the west, it is considered that the proposals would not materially affect this view. While there may be some glimpsed views of the proposed roofscape during the winter, the proposals would not break the vegetated skyline and would be barely perceived. As the proposed planting on the eastern boundary matures, this would further break up the perceived built edge. The proposed development would not harm the public's enjoyment of this route.</p>				
12	Bridleway 388/7/10, approximately 390m to the south east of the site	Medium - High	Low No Change	Year One – Moderate / Minor
				None
				Year Ten – Minor None
<p><i>Assessment:</i> The intervening mature hedgerows associated with Camp Road, to the east and south of the site, would assist in containing views of the proposals, even during the winter. Some glimpsed views of the proposals would be possible, but they would be seen within the wider context of Heyford Park and the air base, forming a backdrop to the site.</p> <p>The introduction of the 89 unit scheme between this viewpoint and the proposals would largely contain views of the proposed built form, with the retained and reinforced planting to the eastern boundary further integrating the proposals ensuring that there was no perceived change.</p>				

4.3.3. As an overview, there would be some moderate / major effects upon the visual environment at Year One immediately to the north. However, these are highly localised viewpoints, located immediately adjacent to the site and largely not accessible to the public. It is considered that the perceived affects would be reduced as the proposed landscaping matures and the proposals could be integrated without any long term, significant adverse effects. The perceived overall effect would reduce with distance from the site as intervening topography and vegetation cover break up views of the proposals. Views of the site are already highly localised as a result of the topography, built form, vegetation structure and limited public access that characterises the sites setting.

4.3.4. In addition, when the proposed 89 unit development, immediately to the south, is taken into account, views of the proposed development would be further reduced. If the larger development, that would extend to the south of the site, is approved by Cherwell DC it would contain views of the proposals from Camp Road and the localised landscape to the south east and south west as well as changing the

character and appearance of the immediate setting, extending the settlement edge out to the east. The assessment concludes that the presence of this development would ensure that the proposed development resulted in a neutral effect upon views from the south.

- 4.3.5. It is considered that the proposals can be integrated without giving rise to any long term, significant adverse visual effects.

4.4. Effect upon Landscape Related Policy

- 4.4.1. In terms of the effect upon national and local landscape related policy, the site and its setting are not covered by any qualitative landscape designations.
- 4.4.2. As set out in Section 2, it is considered that the site and its setting do not represent a “valued landscape” in the context of Para 174a of the NPPF.
- 4.4.3. Para 174b of the NPPF requires development to recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. As set out within this assessment, it is considered that the proposals can be integrated without long term adverse effects upon those landscape receptors which characterise the site and its wider landscape setting. It is concluded that the proposals would not harm the intrinsic character or beauty of the countryside in which the site is set.
- 4.4.4. Policy ESD 13 of the adopted Local Plan seeks to protect and enhance the landscape of the District. The policy states that:

“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.”

- 4.4.5. As set out earlier in this section, the proposals have been assessed in terms of their potential effect upon the receiving landscape character and the visual environment. The assessment identifies that, while there would be some change within the immediate site, the proposals have been carefully designed to respect the characteristic treescape and hedgerows and present the opportunity to enhance features like the hedgerows through additional planting and improved management.
- 4.4.6. Policy ESD 13 makes reference to proposals that would give rise to undue harm or intrusion upon the countryside would not be appropriate. Undue is defined as being unwarranted or inappropriate because it is excessive or disproportionate. As is set out in this assessment, the proposals would not give rise to *undue* visual intrusion, nor would they cause *undue* harm to important natural landscape features of topography or vegetation cover. The proposals would not be at odds with the identified characteristics of the local landscape, as identified by the OWLS assessment, and would not affect the tranquillity of the area, located in a settlement fringe landscape. The proposals would not affect the settled character of the landscape, nor would they adversely affect the setting of Heyford Park or Upper Heyford or any heritage assets and would not give rise to the coalescence of Heyford Park and any neighbouring settlements. It is considered that the proposals comply with Policy ESD 13.
- 4.4.7. Policy PD3 of the Made Mid Cherwell Neighbourhood Plan relates to development adjacent to Heyford Park and identifies that any new development should avoid the coalescence of Heyford Park and Upper Heyford or any other neighbouring settlements. As noted above, the location of the site immediately to the east of Heyford Park would ensure that the proposals do not result in any coalescence or merging of settlements. It is noted that para 3.2.20 relates to Policy PD3 and states that:

“The aspects of landscape character that could be adversely affected by the encroachment of further development extending the current boundary of Heyford Park include the following:

- visual intrusion into the open countryside**
- loss of tranquillity**
- harm to the historic and archaeological context of the countryside**
- loss of access to the countryside for the inhabitants of the settlements (an issue that would grow in importance as a result of an expanded development). In particular, threat to the retention of local public footpaths (some of which provide walks with excellent views across the Cherwell Valley of its open landscape character, or of the Upland topography of the landscape to the north of the strategic site).**
- harm to the setting and rural character of the settlements, including adverse impact on Conservation Areas and listed buildings. Some areas of settlement close to Heyford Park do not benefit from being located in village Conservation Areas.”**

4.4.8. It is considered that the proposed development of the site would not compromise the landscape setting of Upper Heyford or Heyford Park and would not give rise to the perception of development extending into the open countryside or the loss of tranquillity. There are no heritage assets associated with the site and the proposals would not affect the public’s ability to access the countryside. It is concluded that the proposals comply with the aims and objectives of the Made Mid Cherwell Neighbourhood Plan.

4.4.9. National and local policy seek to achieve high quality and sustainable development. It is considered that the proposals would comply with the aims and objectives set out within the national and local planning policy framework from a landscape and visual perspective.

5. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1. ES Landscape Planning Ltd was instructed by Pye Homes Ltd to review the potential landscape and visual effects arising from an outline application for up to 31 dwellings at land south of Heyford Grange, Letchmere Farm, Upper Heyford.
- 5.2. The site lies immediately to the east of the former Upper Heyford Air Base, approximately 5km to the north west of Bicester.
- 5.3. The site currently comprises approximately 0.9467ha of improved grassland, used for the grazing of horses, which lies to the east of RAF Upper Heyford and south of Heyford Grange. The site lies immediately to the north of a scheme of 90 units (planning ref: 15/01357/F). Heyford Grange forms part of Letchmere Farm, to the north, and separates the site from the former runway and associated buildings of RAF Upper Heyford, which are now used for a variety of commercial enterprises. A localised watercourse defines the eastern boundary, separating the site from a larger arable field which lies to the west of Chilgrove Drive.
- 5.4. The site forms part of a wider masterplan for the former Upper Heyford air base, which has outline consent for 761 dwellings. The site would form part of the south eastern extent of the wider development, with new residential development extending north and west across the former air base.
- 5.5. The site is not subject to any qualitative landscape designations within either the Adopted Cherwell Local Plan or the Made Mid Cherwell Neighbourhood Plan.
- 5.6. From a character perspective, the site lies within the “Cotswolds” NCA at the regional level and the “Farmland Plateau” LT at a county level. It is considered that the site, nor its immediate setting, represent a “valued landscape” with reference to para 174a of the NPPF.
- 5.7. The visual assessment identifies that views of the site are highly localised as a result of the built form associated with the air base, limited public access and vegetation cover that characterises the immediate setting of the site.
- 5.8. In terms of the effect of the proposals upon the character of the area, the site and its localised setting are significantly influenced by the existing air base, and its current redevelopment, and the proposals present the opportunity to introduce a high quality

residential development, that contributes to housing provision within Cherwell, and would create an appropriate transition between the higher density development of Heyford Park and the wider landscape to the east, forming a logical addition to the proposed development to the south and rounding off the residential areas on the eastern side of Heyford Park.

- 5.9. While it is acknowledged that the proposals would result in the loss of an area of species-poor grassland, this landcover is not considered rare or ecologically valuable, and any greenfield development, no matter the scale, would result in some perceived change. However, the National Planning Policy Framework does not protect green fields for their own sake. Furthermore, the site is located immediately adjacent to the settlement edge, forming part of the wider approved Heyford Park masterplan which identifies the site as a location for future residential development. The proposed development would not affect the key characteristics of the wider “Farmland Plateau” landscape type, as identified by the OWLS assessment, and could be integrated into the localised landscape without giving rise to any significant adverse effects upon the receiving landscape character.
- 5.10. In terms of the potential effects upon the appearance of the area, there would be some notable effects upon the visual environment at Year One. However, these are highly localised viewpoints, located immediately adjacent to the site and largely not accessible to the public. It is considered that the perceived affects would be reduced as the proposed landscaping matures and the proposals could be integrated without any long term, significant adverse effects. The perceived overall effect would reduce with distance from the site as intervening topography and vegetation cover break up views of the proposals. Views of the site are already highly localised as a result of the topography, built form, vegetation structure and limited public access that characterises the sites setting.
- 5.11. In addition, when the proposed 89 unit development, immediately to the south, is taken into account, views of the proposed development would be further reduced. If the larger development, that would extend to the south of the site, is approved by Cherwell DC it would contain views of the proposals from Camp Road and the localised landscape to the south east and south west as well as changing the character and appearance of the immediate setting, extending the settlement edge out to the east. The assessment concludes that the presence of this development would ensure that the proposed development resulted in a neutral effect upon views from the south.
- 5.12. It is considered that the proposals can be integrated without giving rise to any long term, significant adverse visual effects.

- 5.13. National and local policy seek to achieve high quality and sustainable development. It is considered that the proposed development of the site would not compromise the landscape setting of Upper Heyford or Heyford Park and would not give rise to the perception of development extending into the open countryside or the loss of tranquillity. There are no heritage assets associated with the site and the proposals would not affect the public's ability to access the countryside. It is concluded that the proposals comply with the aims and objectives of the NPPF, Adopted Local Plan and Made Mid Cherwell Neighbourhood Plan.
- 5.14. In conclusion, as set out within this Landscape and Visual Appraisal, it is considered that the proposals could be integrated in this location without any notable adverse effects upon the receiving landscape character and visual environment. It is concluded that the proposed development of up to 31 dwellings as part of the wider Heyford Park masterplan would be acceptable from a landscape and visual perspective.

PLANS



Not to Scale

Key

- Site Boundary
- Public Right of Way



Land south of Heyford Grange,
Letchmere Farm, Upper Heyford

Site Context Plan

Drawing Ref: 10215L.SCP.002
Date: Oct 2021 Drawn: AM Checked: AM



Mixed native hedge with scattered tree planting introduced to define the northern and western boundaries and extend the green corridors around the site

Swales extend the SUDS provision through the development and reinforce the landscaped character of the streetscene

Proposed Local Area of Play (LAP) provides accessible play opportunities for younger residents. Sensory planting defines the space and contributes to the interactive nature of the greenspace.

Green corridor defines the eastern boundary forming a buffer to the watercourse as well as a sympathetic transition between the proposals and the landscape to the east.

Suggested Species Palette

Native Scrub:

- Hawthorn
- Field Maple
- Hazel
- Dog Rose
- Wayfaring Tree
- Dogwood

Species-rich Grassland:

Species rich wildflower mix such as Landlife Wildflower's LWXM Dual Purpose 70/30 Wildflower Meadow Mix (or similar).

This mix contains over 27 native wildflowers and grasses to create permanent meadow and first year impact. It comprises 70% grass and 30% wildflowers and flowers from May to October. This mix is identified by the RHS as being 'Perfect for Pollinators'.



Key

- Existing Trees/Vegetation Retained
- Proposed Tree Planting
- Proposed Mixed Native Hedge Transplants/Structure Planting
- Proposed Single Species Native Hedge Planting

- Proposed Shrub Planting
- Proposed Grass - LWXM Dual Purpose Wildflower Mix
- Proposed Grassland - Swales - Meadow Mixture for Seasonally Wet Wetlands EM8
- Proposed Grassland - Hedgerows - Hedgerow Mixture EH1



Not to Scale



Land south of Heyford Grange,
Letchmere Farm, Upper Heyford

Illustrative Landscape Strategy

Drawing Ref: 10215L.LSP.003
Date: Oct 2021 Drawn: AM Checked: AM