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## **8.1 INTRODUCTION**

8.1.1 SLR Consulting (incorporating Cooper Partnership) was commissioned in June 2014 by Gallagher Estates Ltd to carry out a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) of land at Wykham Park Farm, Banbury, in support of an outline planning application for residential led development comprising up to 1,000 dwellings, a local centre, primary school, outdoor sports pitches, public open space and allotments.

8.1.2 This chapter comprises the findings of a desktop study, complemented by site survey work undertaken at the baseline in June and August 2014, and considers the following:

- the landscape character of the Site, and its relationship to its surroundings;
- landscape-related planning designations;
- views towards the Site; and
- a green infrastructure strategy for the Site.

8.1.3 Reference is made to the following documents, plans and appendices:

- Documents:

Tree Survey by Wardell Armstrong

Design and Access Statement by David Lock Associates

- Appendices:

Appendix 8.1: Plans:

- L1: Landscape Character and Planning Context
- L2: Topography
- L3: Zone of Theoretical Visibility: On Completion with Barriers
- L4: Green Infrastructure Strategy

Appendix 8.2: Site Photographs and Illustrations

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Appendix 8.3: Landscape Effects Table

Appendix 8.4: Visual Effects Table

Appendix 8.5: Published Documents

Appendix 8.6: Zone of Theoretical Visibility: On Completion Bare Earth Model

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**8.2 ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY****Introduction**

8.2.1 This methodology is based on experience and the Landscape Institute/Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (LI/IEMA) 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment', Third Edition, 2013 (GLVIA3). The assessment of landscape and visual effects aims to be as objective as possible, however, as the GLVIA3 explains:

*'Professional judgement is a very important part of LVIA. While there is some scope for quantitative measurement of some relatively objective matters, for example the number of trees lost to construction... much of the assessment must rely on qualitative judgements, for example about what effect the introduction of a new development or land use change may have on visual amenity, or about the significance of change in the character of the landscape and whether it is positive or negative.'* (para. 2.23, page 21)

**Scope**

8.2.2 The assessment considers landscape and visual matters as separate, but linked, issues. Landscape impact relates to physical changes to the landscape resource, including changes to landform, land use and trees, as well as to landscape character. Visual impact relates to the changes in the composition of existing views.

8.2.3 The Guidelines (GLVIA3) explain that:

*'The EU Directive covering EIA is clear that the emphasis is on the identification of likely significant environmental effects...'* (para.1.17, page 9)

8.2.4 The Guidelines also note in relation to Scope, at paragraph 6.2, page 98, that:

*'...The emphasis must be on a reasonable approach which is proportional to the scale and nature of the proposed development...'*

**Study Area**

8.2.5 The study area used for the LVIA includes the broad area shown on Figure L1: Landscape Character and Planning Context and Figure L2: Topography, at Appendix 8.1. Figure L3 defines the approximate zones of theoretical visibility for the

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development as described below.

*Zone of Theoretical Visibility*

- 8.2.6 Specialist computer software was used to identify the theoretical extent of the area from which the Proposed Development is likely to be visible, the Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV). Spot locations (target points) were used to simulate the development footprint, which were then given maximum heights Above Ordnance Datum (AOD), based on the proposed maximum ridge height of the residential properties.
- 8.2.7 A bare earth model has been included at Appendix 8.6. The bare earth ZTV shows the worst case, in that it only takes account of landform. Local visual barriers, such as settlement, vegetation blocks and hedgerows, for example, have not been incorporated into this model. Plan L3 shows the ZTV with barriers, on completion.
- 8.2.8 The theoretical visibility of the proposals was then further assessed on-site, and the ZTV was used as a guide in the selection of representative viewpoints.

**Temporal Scope**

- 8.2.9 This assessment considers adverse impacts and beneficial impacts (termed 'benefits', for brevity), as follows:
- Construction: a worst case period, in winter, during construction; the construction period is assumed to be up to ten years duration, phased, including demolition, temporary compounds, the storage of materials, vehicles movements and the erection of buildings;
  - Post Completion: on completion of the Proposed Development at Year 0, in winter, without the benefit of effective mitigation; and
  - Long term: Up to fifteen years after completion, in summer.<sup>1</sup>
- 8.2.10 In all cases, the assessment of impacts makes comparison with the baseline, June and August 2014, during which the survey work was carried out.

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<sup>1</sup> The phasing is to be decided in detailed discussions with the Council, but for the purpose of this assessment it has been assumed to take place over a 10 year period, with structural planting carried out from Year 1 winter. Thus, the long-term assessment assumes up to 25 plus years of tree growth, rather than the more normal 15 years used in LVIA. Tree planting assumes a height of 12-15m over this period, depending on species.

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**Data Sources**

**Published Sources of Information**

8.2.11 After establishment of the initial study area, a data trawl was undertaken to collect baseline information, including topography, landscape planning policy designations, published sources of landscape character and other relevant information.

8.2.12 The sources of baseline data or copyright details are acknowledged on relevant drawings.

**Photography**

8.2.13 Site visits were carried out in June and August 2014, and representative photographs of the Site taken.

8.2.14 Photographs were taken in RAW format using a Nikon D90 Digital SLR camera with Nikon 35mm DX (fixed focal length) lens. The time, date, altitude and grid coordinates for each frame were recorded from the dedicated Nikon GPS accessory.

8.2.15 Photographs were resampled to Jpeg files and stitched into photograph panoramas, contained in Appendix 8.2.

8.2.16 Photographs 13 and 16 were taken by Wardell Armstrong in September 2012 for a LVIA which formed part of the Environmental Assessment that supported the previous planning application.

**Consultations**

8.2.17 Consultations with Cherwell District Council (CDC) took place during the development of the proposals and a common approach agreed in relation to the form and layout of open space and the treatment of Salt Way. A copy of the LVIA approach and viewpoint locations were sent to Judith Ward, CDC landscape planning officer on 11 August 2014:

**Table 8.1: Summary of Scoping Report Responses**

Scoping Opinion Comment	Assessment Response
<p>Judith Ward, Landscape Planning Officer, Cherwell District Council, 12 June 2013.</p> <p>The following points have been drawn out from comments on a previous application for the site.</p> <p>The assessment should include:</p> <p>i) methodical process of identifying the likely effects of the development, proposals to mitigate the development, an estimate of the magnitude of the effects and an assessment of the significance of the effects.</p> <p>ii) viewpoints from footpaths adjacent to and within the site which run N-S, residential properties either on the edge of Banbury or Wykham Farm, Wykham Park Farm.</p> <p>iii) an assessment of the effects on Saltway.</p> <p>vi) The landscape should be considered at the start in order to make the most of the Site in terms of mitigation and providing an attractive and functional place to live.</p>	<p>i) The methodology for this assessment is in accordance with LI/IEMA GLVIA3. Identification of likely effects and mitigation measures are at Sections 8.5-8.7.</p> <p>ii) Views from these locations have been included as Viewpoints 2, 6 and 8.</p> <p>iii) The assessment of effects on Salt Way has been included from Viewpoints 1 and 2.</p> <p>vi) Mitigation measures have been designed from the outset as an integral part of the project design and are described at Section 8.6.</p>

### Assessment Approach

8.2.18 The assessment process has comprised:

- analysis of the baseline;
- identification of the nature of receptors (their sensitivity);
- identification of the nature and magnitude of potential effects likely to result from the Proposed Development, when compared with the baseline; and
- reporting of the landscape and visual effects.

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***Analysis of the Baseline Situation***

8.2.19 A review of the data sources described above has been carried out and is set out in Section 8.4.

***Nature of Receptors (Sensitivity)****Value*

8.2.20 Landscapes and views may be valued at community, local, national level or above, dependant on their rarity, popularity or location within a protected area such as a National Park. The criteria for assessing the baseline value of landscapes and views is described below.

*Susceptibility to Change*

8.2.21 The ability of a given landscape or visual receptor to accommodate the Proposed Development and/or change in land use without undue harm or adverse consequences is referred to as susceptibility to change. This is assessed against the baseline.

*Overall Sensitivity*

8.2.22 The assessment of overall receptor sensitivity combines judgements on the susceptibility of the receptor to the Proposed Development and the value attributed to that receptor.

***Landscape Receptors****Landscape Value*

8.2.23 Landscapes, including their character and features, may be valued at community, local, national level or above. Existing landscape designations have been taken as the starting point for the assessment of value, as shown on Table 8.2 below. However, the value of designated areas may locally vary across their geographic extent depending on their intactness, or proximity to detracting forms of development.

8.2.24 Table 8.2 sets out the relative importance and value of generic landscape designations and descriptions, identifying those designations applicable to the study area in the third column:



**Table 8.2: Landscape Designations**

Typical Designation	Description	Actual Designation for this Site	Importance (Value)
World Heritage Site.	Unique sites, features or areas of international importance with settings of very high quality.	None.	International (High).
National Park, AONBs, Registered Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest, Ancient Woodland, Conservation Areas, setting of Grade I and II Listed Building, or Scheduled Monument.	Sites, features or areas of national importance with settings of high quality.	Some Listed Buildings in the vicinity, the nearest being Grade II Wykham Park Farm (approx. 150m) and Tudor Hall School (Wykham Park) approx. 500m to the south.	National (High).
Special Landscape Areas, Areas of Great or High Landscape Value, long distance footpaths, Green Belt.	Sites, features or areas of regional importance with intact character.	The Site lies within an Area of High Landscape Value.	Regional (High/Medium).
Areas of Local Landscape Importance, Tree Preservation Orders (TPO).	Sites, features or areas of district importance.	None known within the Site.	District (Medium/Low).

8.2.25 Whilst the assessment of value is partly based on the importance of landscape-related planning designations, other criteria used to assess landscape value of the Site in more detail, including that of undesignated landscapes, are set out in Table 8.3 below:

**Table 8.3: Criteria for Assessing the Value of Non-designated Landscapes**

Attribute	Criteria
Landscape Quality	Intactness of the landscape/condition of individual elements.
Scenic Quality	General appeal of the landscape to the senses.
Rarity	Rarity of landscape character areas, types or features.
Representativeness	Particular characteristic/feature/element considered a particularly important example.
Cultural Interest	The presence of wildlife or cultural heritage interest which contributes positively to the landscape.
Recreation Value	Evidence that the landscape experience forms an important part of recreational activity, eg. as established in guidebooks.
Wildness/Tranquillity	Evidence that a landscape is valued for its wildness/tranquillity.
Associations	Relevant associations with notable figures, such as writers or artists, or events in history that contribute to landscape value.

8.2.26 An assessment of overall value has been made for each landscape receptor, and has been categorised in terms of high, medium and low value. For example, an intact landscape in good condition, where scenic quality, tranquillity, and/or cultural heritage features make a particular contribution to the landscape, or where there are important cultural or historical associations, is likely to be of high value. Conversely, a degraded landscape in poor condition, containing a number of detracting features, with no particular scenic qualities or cultural interest may be of low value.

8.2.27 Judgements on landscape susceptibility take into account the extent to which the attributes of the receiving landscape will be able to accommodate new development without demonstrable harm, adverse change, or loss of features to come to a balanced view. The following criteria have been used to determine landscape susceptibility:

- landform;
- sense of openness or enclosure;
- field pattern and scale;
- landcover;
- relationship of a given landscape area to any existing settlements or

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developments; and

- scenic or special qualities.

8.2.28 Not all criteria will be equally applicable or important within a given landscape, and where this is the case this is explained within the assessment. Landscape receptor susceptibility has been categorised into three main categories, as shown in Table 8.4 below:

**Table 8.4: Landscape Receptor Susceptibility to Change**

Susceptibility	Criteria
High	Little ability to accommodate the Proposed Development without undue harm.
Medium	Some ability to accommodate the Proposed Development without undue harm.
Low	Substantial ability to accommodate the Proposed Development without undue harm.

*Landscape Sensitivity*

8.2.29 The assessment of overall landscape sensitivity combines judgements on the susceptibility of the receptor to the Proposed Development and the value attributed to that receptor.

**Visual Receptors**

8.2.30 Visual receptors are people and the views they experience at particular places, for example users of public rights of way or other outdoor recreational facilities, and vehicle travellers, including people who may be visiting, living or working within the study area.

*Selection of Viewpoints*

8.2.31 A selection of viewpoints as a basis on which to undertake the visual impact assessment has been made on the basis of the following types of publicly accessible viewpoints:

- representative viewpoints (for example, representing views of users of a particular footpath);
- specific viewpoints (for example, a key view from a specific visitor attraction);

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- illustrative viewpoints (chosen to demonstrate a particular effect/specific issue); and
- any important sequential views (for example, along key transport routes).

8.2.32 No private viewpoints were assessed. However, where appropriate, typical viewpoints have been selected from publicly accessible locations within or on the edge of the main residential areas likely to be significantly affected by the Proposed Development, in order to provide an indication of the likely visual effects, and this is noted in the visual effects table, where appropriate.

8.2.33 The following terminology is used to describe the approximate distance between the viewer and the proposals:

- local: under 0.5km
- medium distant: 0.5-1km
- distant: over 1km

8.2.34 The type of view and the number of viewers are described in the following terms:

- Glimpsed (ie. in passing)/Filtered/Oblique/Framed/Open Views; and
- Few/Moderate/Many Viewers.

*Value of Views*

8.2.35 The value attached to views has regard to a number of factors, including:

- recognition through planning designations, supplementary planning documents, management plans for protected landscapes, or association with heritage assets;
- recorded in published documents such as guidebooks, or on Ordnance Survey maps as a viewing area, or acknowledged in literature or art, for example; and
- the popularity of the viewpoint.

8.2.36 The criteria used to assess the value of views are summarised in Table 8.5 below:

**Table 8.5: Value Attached to Views**

Value	Criteria
High	Views from landscapes/viewpoints of national importance, or highly popular visitor attractions where the view forms an important part of the experience, or with important cultural associations.
Medium	Views from landscapes/viewpoints of regional/district importance or moderately popular visitor attractions where the view forms part of the experience, or with local cultural associations.
Low	Views from landscapes/viewpoints with no designations, not particularly popular as a viewpoint and with minimal or no cultural associations.

*Susceptibility of Visual Receptors to Change*

8.2.37 The susceptibility of different types of people to changes in views is mainly a function of:

- the occupation or activity of the viewer at a given location; and
- the extent to which a person's attention or interest may therefore be focussed on a view and the visual amenity experienced at a given view.

8.2.38 The criteria used to assess the susceptibility of a visual receptor are summarised in Table 8.6 below:

**Table 8.6: Visual Receptor Susceptibility to Change**

Susceptibility	Type of Receptor
High	People with a proprietary or particular interest in a view, or with a prolonged viewing opportunity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Residents;</li> <li>- People engaged in outdoor recreation, including users of public rights of way, whose attention is likely to be focussed on the landscape, and on particular views, and their environment;</li> <li>- Visitors to heritage assets or other attractions where views of the surroundings are an important part of the experience;</li> <li>- Communities where views contribute to the landscape setting enjoyed by residents; and</li> <li>- Travellers along scenic routes.</li> </ul>

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Susceptibility	Type of Receptor
Medium	People with a moderate interest in the view and their surroundings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Travellers by road, rail or other mode of transport routes along scenic routes, where the appreciation of the view contributes to the enjoyment and quality of the journey; and</li> <li>- People engaged in outdoor recreation, where their appreciation of their surroundings and particular views is incidental to their enjoyment.</li> </ul>
Low	People with a momentary, or little, interest in the view and their surroundings as their focus is on other activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- People engaged in, and focused on, in outdoor sport or recreational activities;</li> <li>- People at their place of work, where the setting is not important to the quality of working life; and</li> <li>- Travellers, where the view is fleeting and incidental to the journey.</li> </ul>

8.2.39 GLVIA3 qualifies the above examples as follows:

*'This division is not black and white and in reality there will be a gradation in susceptibility to change. Each project needs to consider the nature of the groups of people who will be affected and the extent to which their attention is likely to be focussed on views and visual amenity.'* (para. 6.35, page 114)

*Sensitivity of Visual Receptors*

8.2.40 The overall sensitivity of visual receptors (assessment viewpoints) has been assessed and described as low, medium or high with reference to the following factors:

- value and rarity of the view;
- composition of the view;
- location, context and importance of a viewpoint;
- the expectations and activity of the viewer; and
- the number of people (observers) affected.

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**Significance Criteria**

***Magnitude of Effects***

8.2.41 The magnitude of a landscape or visual effect is assessed in terms of its size or scale, the geographical extent of the area influenced by that effect, and its duration and degree of reversibility.

*Size and Scale of Effects*

8.2.42 The size and/or scale of effects relates to the scale of changes in the landscape, such as the loss or addition of features and the scale of the change in views.

*Geographical Extent of Effects*

8.2.43 The geographical extent of effects relates to:

- the area over which landscape effects are likely to be experienced, i.e. this could be at the site level, the immediate setting of the Site, or landscape character type or area; and
- the area over which visual effects are likely to be visible.

*Duration*

8.2.44 Effects may be temporary or permanent. For example, visual effects arising from construction activities may be limited solely to the construction period and therefore only temporary, or they may be permanent, for example, where construction necessitates some clearance of existing vegetation.

*Reversibility*

8.2.45 Effects may be reversible, for example, restoration of a quarry following mineral extraction. The assessment therefore considers the practicality of effects being reversed with an approximate timeframe for reversibility.

*Nature of Effects*

8.2.46 The nature of effects may be positive or negative (beneficial or adverse) direct or indirect. Direct effects are those which result directly from a development itself, whereas indirect or secondary effects may arise as a consequential change resulting

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from development, for example, changes to downstream vegetation as a result of alterations to a drainage regime.

**Magnitude of Landscape Effects****Size and Scale of Effects**

8.2.47 The size and/or scale of change in the landscape takes into consideration the following factors:

- the extent/proportion of landscape elements lost or added;
- the contribution of that element to landscape character and the degree to which aesthetic/perceptual aspects are altered; and
- whether the effect is likely to change the key characteristics of the landscape, which are critical to its distinctive character.

8.2.48 The criteria used to assess the size and scale of landscape effects are based upon the amount of change that will occur as a result of the proposals, as described in Table 8.7, below:

**Table 8.7: Landscape Effects: Size/Scale of Change**

Category	Criteria
Major adverse landscape effect	The proposals will result in a total change in the key characteristics of landscape character; will introduce elements totally uncharacteristic to the attributes of the receiving landscape; and/or will result in a substantial or total loss, alteration or addition of key elements/features/characteristics.
Moderate adverse landscape effect	The proposals will result in a partial change in the key characteristics of landscape character; will introduce elements partially uncharacteristic to the attributes of the receiving landscape; and/or will result in partial loss, alteration or addition of key elements/features/characteristics.
Slight adverse landscape effect	The proposals will result in a small change in the key characteristics of landscape character; will introduce elements that are not uncharacteristic to the attributes of the receiving landscape; and/or will result in a minor loss, alteration or addition of elements/features/characteristics.
Negligible adverse landscape effect	The proposals will result in a just discernible change to landscape character/elements/features/characteristics.



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Category	Criteria
Neutral adverse landscape effect	There will be a change to the composition of the landscape, but the change will be in keeping with the landscape.
No change	The proposals will not cause any change to the landscape character/elements/features/characteristics.
Negligible landscape benefit	The proposals will result in a just discernible improvement to the landscape character/elements/features/characteristics.
Slight landscape benefit	The proposals will achieve a degree of fit with the landscape character/elements/features/characteristics and go some way towards improving the condition or character of the landscape.
Moderate landscape benefit	The proposals will achieve a good fit with the landscape character/elements/features/characteristics, or would noticeably improve the condition or character of the landscape.
Major landscape benefit	The proposals will totally accord with the landscape character/elements/features/characteristics, or would restore, recreate or permanently benefit the condition or character of the landscape.

**Visual Effects Magnitude**

8.2.49 The magnitude of a visual effect is assessed in terms of its size or scale, the geographical extent of the area influenced and its duration and degree of reversibility.

**Size and Scale of Effects**

8.2.50 The size or scale of change in the view relates to the degree of contrast or integration likely to result from the Proposed Development and is influenced by the relative time over which a view is experienced and whether it is a full, partial or glimpsed view.

8.2.51 The following criteria are used to assess the size and scale of visual effects, based on the degree of change to the view or composition:

**Table 8.8: Visual Effects: Size/Scale of Change**

Category	Criteria
Major adverse or beneficial visual effect	The proposals will cause a dominant or complete change or contrast to the view, resulting from the loss or addition of substantial features in the view and will substantially alter the appreciation of the view.
Moderate adverse or beneficial visual effect	The proposals will cause a clearly noticeable change or contrast to the view, which would have some affect on the composition, resulting from the loss or addition of features in the view and will noticeably alter the appreciation of the view.
Slight adverse or beneficial visual effect	The proposals will cause a perceptible change or contrast to the view, but which would not materially affect the composition or the appreciation of the view.
Negligible adverse or beneficial visual effect	The proposals will cause a barely perceptible change or contrast to the view, which would not affect the composition or the appreciation of the view.
No change	The proposals will cause no change to the view.
Neutral	There will be a change to the composition of the view, but the change will be in keeping with the existing elements of the view.

### Significance of Effects

8.2.52 The scale shown in Table 8.9, below, is used to guide the assessment of the significance of both landscape and visual effects, from a combination of the assessment of receptor sensitivity and the magnitude of effects:

**Table 8.9: Assessment of Landscape or Visual Significance**

Sensitivity of Receptor	Major Effect	Moderate Effect	Slight Effect	Negligible Effect	Neutral Effect
High	Significant	Significant	Moderately Significant	Not Significant	Not Significant
Medium	Significant	Moderately Significant	Not Significant	Not Significant	Not Significant
Low	Moderately Significant	Not Significant	Not Significant	Not Significant	Not Significant

8.2.53 The above table has regard to guidance in GLVIA3, at paragraph 5.56, page 92 (significance of landscape effects) and paragraph 6.44, page 116 (significance of visual effects).

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8.2.54 For the purposes of the LVIA, Moderately Significant effects are not considered to be Significant.

**Uncertainties and Limitations**

8.2.55 The assessment is based upon site surveys carried out in June and August 2014. Conditions for the visit were optimal, with clear visibility. The presence of broadleaved species foliage did not present the worst case scenario, but potential views in winter have also been considered where relevant.

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**8.3 POLICY**

**National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012)**

- 8.3.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) makes clear that the following Duty relates to the strategic priorities of Local Plans:

*'...climate change mitigation and adaptation, conservation and enhancement of the natural and historic environment, including landscape.'*

**Cherwell District Local Plan (1996)**

- 8.3.2 The Site is within the administrative area of Cherwell District Council (CDC). Planning policy at a local level is in part defined by the Saved Policies (Secretary of State Letter 2007) in Cherwell Local Plan (Adopted 1996).

- 8.3.3 Policies relating to landscape matters are set out below.

**Landscape Conservation**

- 8.3.4 Local Plan Saved Policy C7 states that:

*'Development will not normally be permitted if it would cause demonstrable harm to the topography and character of the landscape.'*

- 8.3.5 In the supporting text to Policy C7, it adds:

*'The Council will therefore require development to take account of changes in level or slope, not protrude above prominent ridges or skylines, not detract from important views and not expand out of any valley or depression which confines present development.'*

- 8.3.6 Local Plan Saved Policy C8 states that:

*'Sporadic development in the open countryside including developments in the vicinity of motorway or major road junctions will generally be resisted.'*

- 8.3.7 Local Plan Saved Policy C9 goes on to state that:

*'Beyond the existing and planned limits of the towns of Banbury... Development of a type, size or scale that is incompatible with a rural location will normally be resisted.'*

### **Areas of High Landscape Value (AHLV)**

8.3.8 The Site lies within Ironstone Downs AHLV, which covers the countryside surrounding Banbury. Local Plan Saved Policy C13 states that:

*'The Ironstone Downs... are designated areas of high landscape value within which the council will seek to conserve and enhance the environment.'*

8.3.9 The supporting text to Policy C13 adds that this will be achieved by controlling the type and scale of development as well as its siting and design.

8.3.10 Policies C28, C30 and C31 are overarching policies relating to design control for new development. The policies seek to prevent new development, particularly that which lies in designated landscape such as the AHLVs, from detracting from the local character of the prevailing settlement and to avoid unacceptable visual intrusion.

### **Landscape Enhancement**

8.3.11 Local Plan Saved Policy C17 states that:

*'The council will seek opportunities to secure the enhancement of the urban fringe through tree and woodland planting on land within its ownership and on other land by negotiation or in connection with new development.'*

8.3.12 In the supporting text to Policy C17, it adds:

*'Where new development is proposed... which will extend the built up limits of a town, the Council will seek, where appropriate, broad belts of woodland planting to be implemented as part of the development to ensure the satisfactory transition between town and country.'*

### **The Non-Statutory Cherwell District Local Plan (2011)**

8.3.13 The relevant countryside related policies from the 2011 Local Plan include:

- Policy EN31 states:

*'Beyond the existing and planned limits of the towns of Banbury and Bicester development of a type, size or scale that is incompatible with a rural location will*

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*be refused.'*

- Policy EN32 states:

*'The council will prevent the coalescence of settlements by refusing development that would reduce the openness of the land, that is important in distinguishing them.'*

- Policy EN34 states:

*'The Council will seek to conserve and enhance the character and appearance of the landscape through the control of development. 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;*
- *harm the setting of settlements, buildings, structures or other landmark features; or*
- *harm the historic value of the landscape'*

- Policy EN35 states:

*'The council will seek to retain woodlands, trees, hedges, ponds, walls and any other features which are important to the character or appearance of the local landscape as a result of their ecological, historic or amenity value. Proposals which would result in the loss of such features will not be permitted unless their loss can be justified by appropriate mitigation and/or compensatory measures to the satisfaction of the council.'*

**Draft Cherwell Local Plan (2014)**

8.3.14 Relevant information and policies from the submitted Local Plan (2014) are summarised below.

8.3.15 Policy SO12, one of the strategic objectives for ensuring sustainable development in the plan, is:

*'To focus development in Cherwell's sustainable locations, making efficient and effective use of land, conserving and enhancing the countryside and landscape*

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*and the setting of its towns and villages.'*

8.3.16 Policy ESD 13: Local Landscape Protection and Enhancement states:

*'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...'*

8.3.17 In the supporting text to paragraph B.245 it states:

*'The Cherwell Local Plan 1996 identified Areas of High Landscape Value... where the Council would seek to conserve and enhance the environment. This Local Plan adopts a character-based approach to seeks to conserve and enhance the countryside and landscape character of the whole district, and so specific local designations are Areas of High Landscape Value are not proposed to be retained.'*

8.3.18 The supporting text to paragraph B.249 it states:

*'One of the most important elements of the landscape which can add to the character and identity of an area are natural landscape features. Such features include... Crouch Hill... which all make those areas distinct and create a sense of place. Many form local landmarks valued by the local communities.'*

8.3.19 Policy ESD 16: The Character of the Built and Historic Environment states:

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*'Successful design is founded upon an understanding and respect for an area's unique built, natural and cultural context. New development will be expected to complement and enhance the character of its context through sensitive siting, layout and high quality design...*

*New development proposals should:*

- *...Contribute positively to an area's character and identity by creating or reinforcing local distinctiveness and respecting local topography and landscape features, including skylines, valley floors, significant trees, historic boundaries, landmarks, features or views, in particular within designated landscapes, within the Cherwell Valley and within conservation areas and their setting...'*

8.3.20 Chapter C sets out policies specific to Banbury. At paragraph C.104, it states:

*'Banbury faces topographic and historic landscape constraints important to the setting of the town including... an open aspect and village to the south beyond the Salt Way. These are all barriers to growth that have shaped how the town has grown and which will affect growth in the future.'*

8.3.21 Paragraph C.123 states:

*'The major environmental challenges at Banbury are managing growth in a way that will not unacceptably harm areas of sensitive landscape around the town; which will preserve and, where possible, enhance natural and historic assets; plus its green spaces to provide more wooded areas and to minimise the impact of new development on the natural environment...'*

**Consented Housing Development**

8.3.22 The field lying to the north-west of the Site, known as land east of Bloxham Road (indicated on Plan L1), has been given outline planning permission for up to 145 dwellings. The CDC planning reference number is 12/00080/OUT. Hereafter, this is referred to as 'the consented housing site'.



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**8.4 BASELINE****Site Description and Location**

8.4.1 The Site lies south of Banbury, east of Bloxham Road and north of Wykham Lane. It is outlined in red on Plan L1, and comprises six large and predominantly regular shaped fields defined by straight hedges and tree belts. It is bounded to:

- the north, by mature trees lining Salt Way/ National Cycle Route 5, beyond which lies playing fields, two schools and residential properties;
- the east, by hedgerow and trees, beyond which lies open fields on the edge of Banbury and Bodicote;
- the south, by a hedgerow and a tree belt, beyond which lies countryside with scattered individual properties; and
- the west, by mature trees and hedgerow lining the A361 Bloxham Road.

**Landscape Character**

8.4.2 Published sources describing landscape character at the national, county and district level are:

- Natural England's Landscape Character Profile NCA 95 (May 2014);
- Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study (OWLS) (2004);
- Cherwell District Landscape Character Assessment (November 1995); and
- Cherwell Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment (2010) and Assessment Addendum (August 2014).

8.4.3 Plan L1, illustrates the landscape character areas applicable to the Site and surrounding area. Relevant extracts from these documents describing landscape character are included at Appendix 8.5: Published Documents.

**National Landscape Character: Published Sources**

8.4.4 Natural England identifies the Site, and wider study area, as lying within the central eastern part of National Character Area (NCA) 95: Northamptonshire Uplands. NCA

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107: Cotswolds lies approximately 1km south of the Site. The key characteristics of these areas are described in the Landscape Effects Table, at Appendix 8.3.

**County Landscape Character: Published Sources**

8.4.5 The Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study defines 24 Landscape Character Types (LCTs) which are made up of landscape description units defined on the basis of similar pattern, geology, topography, land use and settlements.

8.4.6 The Site lies within the Upstanding Village Farmlands LCT. Key characteristics relevant to this area are set out in the Landscape Effects Table (in Appendix 8.3), and include:

- *'A steep-sided, undulating landform.*
- *A well-defined geometric pattern of medium-sized fields enclosed by prominent hedgerow.*
- *A strong settlement pattern of compact, nucleated villages of varying sizes with little dispersal in wider countryside.'*

8.4.7 It describes a landscape in which hedgerows give structure, but the lack of woodland and tree cover results in an open landscape. The study describes hedgerow trees as being generally sparse. It goes on to state that trees are concentrated, as here, along linear features such as paths, bridleways and parish boundaries.

8.4.8 In comparing the Site to these published descriptions, it is noted that although the fields to the east and west of the Site are more open to the countryside to the south, the Site itself is well enclosed by hedgerows and tree belts which effectively close off views to the surrounding rural areas. In addition, although the wider area surrounding the Site does contain nucleated villages, the Site is adjacent to and closely associated with the town of Banbury. It occupies fields of predominantly regular shape and size, typical of the surrounding area, which lie on a plateau falling gently south-eastwards.

8.4.9 The Site most closely resembles the Bodicote local character area which lies within the wider LCT. It shares similar landscape features to this character area: low hedges in good condition running across the Site, taller hedges bordering roads and lanes, with trees in hedges and in clumps close to farms.

8.4.10 The landscape strategy for the area is to:

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*'Conserve and enhance the strong pattern of hedgerows and hedgerow trees, and the nucleated settlement pattern and strong vernacular character of the villages.'*

8.4.11 The guidelines highlight the need to:

- *'Strengthen and enhance 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, particularly along roadsides.*
- *Conserve the surviving areas of permanent and ridge and furrow pasture on the steeper slopes and hillsides.'*

**District Landscape Character: Published Sources**

8.4.12 The Cherwell District Landscape Character Assessment (November 1995) identifies eight broadly defined Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) and seven more detailed LCTs.

8.4.13 The Site lies within the Ironstone Hills and Valleys LCT. Key characteristics relevant to this area are set out in the Landscape Effects Table (at Appendix 8.3), and include:

- *'Extremely complex topography*
- *Cut through by numerous small streams*
- *Landscape divided into very steeply sided, convoluted valleys with narrow valley bottoms and rolling, rounded hill lines*
- *Much of this area is in arable cultivation*
- *Medium and large arable fields surrounded by hedges and the boundaries marked by hedgerow trees*
- *Roadside verges sometimes include narrow stands of trees, which gives a well-treed impression, although the area lacks larger woodlands'*

8.4.14 The study also identifies a series of more detailed rural types. The Site largely lies within rural type R2b, described as a *'rolling arable landscape with strong field pattern, copses and small trees.'* The topography is described as variable and clearly defined, with trees and copses providing good structure and hedgerow trees in good

condition.

**Landscape Capacity and Sensitivity: Published Sources**

8.4.15 A sensitivity study of the Site was carried out by consultants Halcrow in September 2010 and updated by White Young Green in an Addendum August 2014. This study provides guidance as to which areas are sensitive to development; the Site is identified as part of Site 110 (formally Site G), and described in Section 4.10. The landscape sensitivity, visual sensitivity and value of the area are assessed as being Medium.

8.4.16 The study confirms Site 110 as having Medium capacity for residential and states:

*'As development is to be kept back from Wykham Lane proposed development would not appear as visually prominent within the Sor Brook valley.'*

8.4.17 There is a Medium capacity for woodland development as follows:

*'Although isolated areas of woodland development would be acceptable within the area, blanket development of woodland would be inappropriate due to the effects upon landscape character. Development of woodland and green infrastructure in association with recreational development would however be possible.'*

8.4.18 In relation to recreation it states:

*'In general there is a Low capacity for formal recreation in isolation of any other development as it would not be in keeping with the adjacent land uses however this could be incorporated into appropriately designed residential development. There is a medium capacity for informal recreation through the enhancement of the existing footpath network.'*

8.4.19 In terms of future management and maintenance the report confirms the need to retain Salt Way as a historic route and states:

*'If development occurs, consideration should be given to the implementation of structure planting to the south of the development to mitigate views across Sor Brook valley, and the development of a green infrastructure network should be considered.'*

***Landscape Character of the Site and Immediate Setting (Assessor's Comments)****Topography of the Site*

8.4.20 The topography of the Site and its setting is shown on Plan L2.

8.4.21 The Site lies at approximately 130-135m AOD within the Banbury plateau, which is approximately at grade with the southern settlement edge of Banbury. The fields within this area are flat or gently sloping to the south-east. Approximately 500m to the south of the Site, the land falls away sharply to 90-100m AOD.

8.4.22 The eastern area of Banbury is set within the River Cherwell valley where the boundary is now effectively formed by the M40 motorway. The northern, western and southern growth of the town has seen development which has spread onto the Banbury plateau. Crouch Hill forms a distinctive landmark approximately 500m to the north-west.

*Settlement Pattern*

8.4.23 The Site is orientated east-west along the urban edge area of Banbury, which is the largest settlement in the area. The existing settlement immediately to the north of the Site comprises a mix of primarily mid 20th Century two-storey red brick properties which introduce a distinctly urban feel to the Salt Way/National Cycle Route 5 to the north-east.

8.4.24 Individual dwellings in the vicinity of the Site include:

- to the south-east, Wykham Farm Cottage, Wykham Park Farm (Grade II Listed), The Great Barn and Georges Barn;
- to the south, Wykham Park Farm Cottage and Wykham Park Farm; and
- to the west, Wykham Park Lodge, Crouch Cottages and the Bungalow.

8.4.25 Tudor Hall School (Wykham Park) comprises a number of associated Grade II Listed Buildings and structures and lies approximately 500m to the south. The impressive entrance gateway and driveway to Wykham Park runs roughly north-south from Bloxham Road through parkland beyond the Site's south-west corner.

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8.4.26 There are a number of small/medium sized villages and individual properties dotted across the surrounding countryside.

*Conservation Areas*

8.4.27 No part of the Site lies within, or close to, a designated Conservation Area. The closest Conservation Area is Bodicote, as described at Chapter 10: Historic Environment. There is a lack of intervisibility between the Site and this Conservation Area due to intervening buildings and vegetation.

*Listed Parks and Gardens*

8.4.28 No part of the Site lies within, or close to, a park or garden listed on English Heritage's Register of Parks and Gardens of Historic Interest. The closest Registered Park and Garden is Broughton Castle, a Grade II listed mansion and gardens, located 2km to the south-west of the Site, as illustrated on Plan L1.

8.4.29 There is no intervisibility between the Site and the Registered Park and Garden due to the local landform and vegetation pattern, as demonstrated by the ZTVs at Appendices 8.1 and 8.6.

*Listed Buildings*

8.4.30 There are no listed buildings on the Site. There are some listed buildings and structures in the wider landscape, as shown on Plan L1 at Appendix 8.1 and described above at 'Settlement Pattern'. There is very limited intervisibility to the Site from the buildings and structures, as described further in the visual context section below.

*Public Rights of Way*

8.4.31 Public rights of way within the vicinity of the Site include:

- National Cycle Route 5 which runs along the northern site boundary, following Salt Way, a historic trading route which ran from Droitwich to London. Much of Salt Way is now enclosed by trees; however, development follows its length on the northern side between Bloxham Road and Bodicote, this includes private houses, two schools, floodlit sports courts and roads; these give the appearance of an urban green way to the north-east of the Site;

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- one public footpath and one bridleway which cross the eastern part of the Site, connecting Salt Way in the north to Wykham Lane in the south; and
- a public footpath which follows the western site boundary, in part, along Bloxham Road. The footpath was inaccessible at the point it crosses from Bloxham Road, through the western Site boundary hedgerow at the time of survey.

8.4.32 A network of public rights of way cross the agricultural land and urban areas around the Site, as shown on Plan L1. These include the Oxfordshire Canal Walk and Jurassic Way, approximately 2km to the north-east which have no intervisibility to the Site.

*Vegetation Pattern*

8.4.33 The Site is crossed by trimmed hedgerows predominantly running north-south between 1.8-3.0m high. It is well enclosed by tree belts and hedgerows on all boundaries which restrict views to the wider rural landscape.

8.4.34 A small, dense, triangular copse immediately to the north-west of the Site has a commanding presence and forms a tall screen against oblique views from Bloxham Road.

8.4.35 The vegetation on the Site has been subject to a tree survey. Hedgerows and trees generally comprise of Ash, Field Maple, Sycamore, Oak and Hawthorn. There are high quality (Category A) trees on the outer site boundaries in the western portion of the Site. Other hedgerows and trees elsewhere on the Site are predominantly of moderate quality (Category B).

8.4.36 The site is influenced by Historically Important Hedgerows including the south-east boundary hedgerow around Wykham Farm Cottage; the hedgerow running either side of the public bridleway to the east; and mature vegetation along Salt Way.

8.4.37 Much of the agricultural land around the Site comprises fields with both regular and irregular shape and patterns. Tree belts and small copses occur across the landscape, predominately along watercourse corridors, within parkland landscape associated with large houses and estates, or along hedgerow boundaries.

*Landscape Sensitivity*

8.4.38 Table 8.2 at Section 8.2, and the tables at Appendix 8.3, provide the assessment of

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landscape character, value, susceptibility to change and overall sensitivity to the Proposed Development for the Site and wider LCTs/LCAs potentially affected by the proposal; and is summarised below.

- 8.4.39 The Site lies within an Area of High Landscape Value (AHLV) that is a wide designation that covers much of Banbury as shown on Plan L1 and described at Table 8.2. This designation was referred to in the Saved Policies in the Cherwell Local Plan (adopted 1996) and in this regard, would have regional importance and high/medium value. However the AHLV designations are due to expire and are not carried forward in the emerging Local Plan (submitted 2014) and should therefore be afforded limited weight. There are no other landscape designations on the Site
- 8.4.40 The landscape quality of the Site and wider study area has been assessed as Medium due to the presence of intact hedgerows and tree belts which are predominantly in average - good condition. The Site is agricultural land influenced by the presence of adjoining roads, town and overhead cables on poles, therefore the scenic quality and the tranquillity is assessed as Low/Medium.
- 8.4.41 The cultural value of the wider landscape study area is assessed as Medium/High due to the presence of Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas, historic parkland and Scheduled Monuments, all shown on Plan L1. There are no cultural features on the Site and a general lack of intervisibility to cultural features in the surrounding area. However, the western portion of the Site influences the setting of the parkland, driveway and entrance gateway associated with Grade II listed Tudor Hall School (Wykham Park); and the northern edge of the Site influences the setting of Salt Way, a historic trading route. As these have been compromised in several places by the presence either of Banbury or by the busy Bloxham Road, and the cultural value of the Site itself has been assessed as Medium.
- 8.4.42 The recreational value of the Site and wider area has been assessed as Medium. The public footpath along the western site boundary is infrequently used due to being inaccessible from Bloxham Road. Public rights of way crossing the eastern area of the Site are more frequently used, but are of short length and of local importance. Salt Way/National Cycle Route 5 running parallel to the Site's northern boundary has more recreational value, but is still largely in use as a local greenway rather than a long distance footpath.
- 8.4.43 The presence of existing built development and landscape which already contains a number of detractors, leads to the opportunity to accommodate development without



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greatly affecting the key characteristics and the value of the landscape. Thus the susceptibility to change for residential development has been assessed as Medium, together with the wider LCAs and LCTs potentially affected by the proposal.

8.4.44 This results in the Site and study area having a Medium overall sensitivity to change.

**Visual Context**

8.4.45 The potential visibility of the Site was determined by a computer-generated ZTV. This ZTV is small in area, as shown on Plan L3, due to the screening presence of site hedgerows, tree belts and built development surrounding the Site.

8.4.46 Sixteen publicly accessible viewpoints (receptors) were selected to provide a representative sample and spread of typical views towards the Site. The viewpoint locations are largely the same as those previously agreed with CDC for the LVIA which formed part of the Environmental Assessment that supported the previous planning application.

8.4.47 Viewpoint locations are shown on Plan L3. Site photographs illustrating these views are contained in Appendix 8.2, and are described in the Visual Effects Table at Appendix 8.4.

**Local Views (up to 0.5km distance)**

8.4.48 Local views include those looking into or towards the Site from adjacent roads and public rights of way, in addition to an elevated view from Crouch Hill to the north-east. In many of these views, the Site is frequently enclosed by existing tree belts, hedgerows, other vegetation and buildings.

8.4.49 Typical local views include the following:

- Viewpoint 1 - taken from Salt Way/National Cycle Route 5 to the north-west, from where views of the Site are heavily filtered by mature trees and vegetation in the foreground along Salt Way; this has been assessed as being of Medium sensitivity;
- Viewpoint 2 - taken from Salt Way/National Cycle Route 5 to the north-east, where a public right of way leading south off Salt Way provides a gap in the trees

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and vegetation where slightly more of the Site can be seen; this has been assessed as being of Medium sensitivity. Viewpoint 2a (included for illustrative purposes only) shows the view on the public right of way where it crosses the Site. This demonstrates that maturing trees and hedgerow on the southern boundary effectively screen the majority of views beyond;

- Viewpoint 3 - lies on a public right of way to the east, from where the Site is seen enclosed by hedgerows and trees on its eastern boundary. The view has proprietary interest for the residents of existing housing within Easington. Visual detractors include housing and overhead cables on poles in the foreground to mid-ground. This has been assessed as being of Medium sensitivity;
- Viewpoint 5 - taken from the car park entrance to Bodicote cemetery, from a where a gap in the roadside hedge along Wykham Lane affords a glimpsed view of the eastern portion of the Site, in front of existing houses within Easington which puncture the skyline. The central and western portions of the Site are enclosed by tree belts in the mid-ground further left (west). This has been assessed as being of Low/Medium sensitivity;
- Viewpoint 6 - lies on a public right of way as it crosses through gap in the Site's southern boundary hedgerow, to the west of Wykham Farm Cottage, for which the view has proprietary interest. Overhead cable on poles can be seen crossing the Site, in front of the mature tree belt on the northern boundary (along Salt Way/Nation Cycle Route 5), forming the skyline. This has been assessed as being of Medium sensitivity. Viewpoint 6a (included for illustrative purposes only) demonstrates that further south, the hedgerow and mature trees on the southern boundary enclose the Site;
- Viewpoint 7 - taken from a gap in the roadside hedge along Wykham Lane, from where the Site is seen enclosed in the mid-ground by the maturing tree belt on its southern boundary. This has been assessed as being of Low sensitivity;
- Viewpoint 8 - lies on a public right of way to the south, from where the Site is seen immediately behind its southern boundary hedgerow, crossed by overhead cables on poles. The topography in the view rises sharply to obscure the Site to the right (east). This has been assessed as being of Medium sensitivity and has interest in terms of the parkland setting associated with Tudor Hall School (Grade II listed Wykham Park) further west;

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- Viewpoint 10 – Tudor Hall School (Wykham Park) with the gatehouse and piers visible beyond the busy A316 Bloxham Road in the foreground. The Site is enclosed by mature trees and hedgerow on its western boundary. This has been assessed as being of Low/Medium sensitivity;
- Viewpoint 11 - taken from a public right of way to the west, from where the Site is seen in the mid-ground to the right, screened by the mature woodland and hedgerow on its western boundary (along Bloxham Road). Houses on the consented housing site, land east of Bloxham Road (CDC Planning ref. 12/00080/OUT) will be glimpsed above the hedgerow in the mid-ground to the left of the view, and will contribute to enclose the Site beyond. This has been assessed as being of Medium sensitivity; and
- Viewpoint 12 - lies on a public right of way on Crouch Hill, from where an elevated view of part of the central portion and western edge of the Site is afforded, visible beyond existing housing in Banbury, woodland and vegetation along Salt Way. The consented housing site would also be glimpsed and will contribute to further future screening of the Site beyond. This has been assessed as being of Medium/High sensitivity.

8.4.50 Local views from north of the Site, beyond Salt Way, are enclosed by existing vegetation and buildings within Banbury.

**Medium Distance Views (0.5-2km)**

8.4.51 Medium distance views towards the Site include those from Bodicote, and from the opposite side of the valley to the south. In these views, the Site is enclosed by intervening field boundary vegetation and tree belts. Typical medium distance views include the following:

- Viewpoint 4 - taken from the recreation ground on the north-western edge of Bodicote, from where the Site is screened by a clubhouse building and intervening trees and vegetation. This has been assessed as being of Medium sensitivity and has proprietary interest for residents on the western edge of Bodicote;
- Viewpoint 9 - taken from a gap in the roadside hedge along Wykham Lane to the south-west, from where the Site lies in the mid-ground, screened by the mature tree belt on its western boundary along Bloxham Road. The Bungalow forms an

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existing visual detractor along with signage and lighting columns on Bloxham Road also in the mid-ground. This has been assessed as being of Low/Medium sensitivity; and

- Viewpoint 15 - lies on Bloxham Grove Road/Cycle Route 5 to the south, from where the Site is seen on the opposite side of the shallow valley, screened by mature hedgerow and trees on its southern boundary, beyond Wykham Park Farm and left (west) of existing housing within Easington. This has been assessed as being of Medium sensitivity.

**Distant Viewpoints (over 2km)**

8.4.52 As demonstrated by the ZTV (Plan L2), the opportunity for distant views is limited. The Site is enclosed by built development, hedgerows and trees, or by the intervening vegetation pattern and landform, all as illustrated by Viewpoints 13, 14 and 16.

**The Future Baseline**

8.4.53 Assuming no development, the Site is unlikely to change from the present, with continued arable usage and appropriate management of boundary vegetation and public rights of way. However, as vegetation matures further, particularly the maturing tree belt on the southern boundary, the Site will become more enclosed.

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**8.5 POTENTIAL EFFECTS**

8.5.1 The assessment of the proposals has been made with reference to the baseline year 2014, as described in Section 8.4 of this chapter. The effects are set out in the Landscape and Visual Effects Tables in Appendices 8.3 and 8.4. The methodology for the assessment of effects is given in Section 8.2.

8.5.2 Reference should be made to Chapter 2 of this ES for a description of the development. Those elements of particular relevance to this LVIA are as follows:

- the realignment of Bloxham Road and a new roundabout providing the site access via a tree planted internal spine road;
- up to 1,000 houses;
- a local centre;
- a primary school in its own grounds;
- Green Infrastructure proposals, including retention and enhancement of significant hedgerows and tree belts, proposed strategic open space, a parkland entrance, sports pitches, wetland, play areas, allotments and structure planting; and
- infrastructure including roads, footpaths, cycleways and planted sustainable drainage features, including ponds.

**Construction Stage*****Landscape Effects During Construction***

8.5.3 Actions affecting the landscape having the potential to give rise to landscape and visual effects during construction are listed below. Each phase will have its own construction cycle and individual operations may be phased, carried out concurrently or be repetitious. The duration of the changes are identified in brackets:

- movement of site plant and staff, including lighting and headlights during the hours of darkness (temporary);
- erection of protection and boundary security fencing (temporary);

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- public right of way closures or diversions for public safety (temporary);
- site clearance, including removal of sections of internal hedgerow and gaps formed in internal and boundary hedge vegetation (permanent);
- excavation and ground works for the new Bloxham Road alignment and roundabout, internal roads, balancing ponds, major service runs and development platforms (temporary);
- construction of the spine road and other infrastructure;
- landscape ground works, construction of play areas and sports pitches surfaces, seeding operations structure planting, and erection of boundary treatments and street furniture (permanent);
- use of mobile cranes and scaffolding (temporary);
- erection of buildings and structures (permanent); and
- occupation and operation lighting (permanent);

8.5.4 These changes could result in potential effects on:

- the land use;
- landscape feature including hedgerows and trees;
- the use of public rights of way; and
- tranquillity, as a result of construction activities.

8.5.5 The assessment finds there to be significant landscape effects due to changes in character and land use of the Site during construction. These will occur on any development site.

8.5.6 The changes would affect only small parts of the wider national, county and district character areas in which the site is located, which are not considered to be significantly harmful.

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**Visual Effects at Construction Stage**

8.5.7 Full details of visual effects are set out in the table at Appendix 8.4. Views of construction activities will be limited to locations close to the Site. The following provides a summary of the significant and moderately significant effects, together with the reasons for those effects.

8.5.8 Potential significant effects will occur from two local viewpoints including:-

- Viewpoint 6, a public footpath west of Wykham Farm Cottage adjacent to the Site, from where construction of a sports pitch and new housing would alter the appreciation of the view looking north as the footpath crosses through the Site's southern boundary hedgerow; and
- Viewpoint 12: The public footpath on Crouch Hill approximately 420m north-west of the Site, from where elevated views of housing construction activities in the central portion and western edges of the Site would be clearly noticeable beyond existing housing on the western edge of Banbury and vegetation along Salt Way.

8.5.9 Moderately significant effects will occur from two local viewpoints including:-

- Viewpoint 2: Salt Way/Cycle Route 5, from where construction of housing would be seen through a gap in the trees and vegetation lining the route looking south; and
- Viewpoint 10: The entrance gateway to Tudor Hall School (Grade II listed Wykham Park) off Bloxham Road, from where a gap will be formed in the western boundary hedgerow and trees, realignment of Bloxham Road and construction of a new roundabout and housing will change the view.

**Post Completion (Year 0)****Landscape Effects Post Completion**

8.5.10 The potential effects are as for the construction phase. It is anticipated that proposals could result in changes to:

- land use as a result of residential development on agricultural land;
- landscape features due to the removal of vegetation described above and new planting stock;

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- recreational value as a result of views of housing from existing enhanced footpaths, new public access routes and public open space; and
- tranquillity as a result of increased vehicle movements.

8.5.11 A programme of planting will be agreed with the Local Planning Authority, to include a program of advanced tree planting as appropriate. For the purpose of this assessment, it is assumed that none of this planting will be effective post completion (year 0) and the effects are judged to be the same as that assessed for during construction.

8.5.12 The residential development would alter the land use of the Site, but development is characteristic of the local area, where this is adjacent to the town. The Site is well enclosed by the strong boundary vegetation and the development lies within the original landscape pattern. The layout of the development has been landscape-led and designed to offset the effect of built development, especially when seen from landscape features such as the parkland of Tudor Hall School (Grade II listed Wykham Park).

**Visual Effects Post Completion**

8.5.13 The proposals will be enclosed in views from most potential viewpoints by existing development in Banbury, strong boundary vegetation, and the network of field hedgerows, trees and woodland, as described for construction effects.

8.5.14 The visual effects are judged to be the same as that assessed for during construction.



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**8.6 MITIGATION MEASURES**

8.6.1 The mitigation measures designed to offset or reduce the impact of the scheme upon the landscape are outlined below. They are an integral part of the project design and have been developed as a result of the landscape and visual assessments set out in this report.

**Green Infrastructure Strategy**

8.6.2 It is intended to create a strong green infrastructure framework (GIF), as shown on the Development Framework Plan (Appendix 2.1) to avoid, reduce and offset any significant adverse effects arising from the Proposed Development. Mitigation measures are illustrated on Plan L4: Green Infrastructure Strategy at Appendix 8.1, and illustrations at Appendix 8.2. This will provide compensatory landscape features, delivering long term recreational benefits, ecological enhancement and integration of the development into its surroundings to create an attractive environment for both the existing and new residents.

8.6.3 The provision and approach to GIF is in accordance with draft Cherwell Policy ESD18 which seeks to ensure that green infrastructure networks are integral to the planning of new development. It also accords with established guidance from Natural England and Sport England in terms of accessibility to greenspace for new communities and delivering multifunctional landscapes that offer recreation and biodiversity gains.

8.6.4 The Proposed Development has been guided by the natural assets within the Site, such as the existing north-south linear hedgerows, existing trees and copse planting and existing public rights of way. In addition to this, the Development Framework Plan has been carefully devised to take into account the local landscape context and setting of landscape features of importance to include parkland associated with Tudor Hall School (Grade II listed Wykham Park), Salt Way and Crouch Hill.

8.6.5 The Proposed Development seeks to minimise the inevitable impact on landscape character that would result as a consequence of new urban development on a greenfield site. The Green Infrastructure Strategy equates to some 18 ha or over 30% of the site and includes the following components:

- a green corridor, with new tree and shrub groups along the southern edge of Salt Way;

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- retention, or re-provision of three existing public rights of way crossing the Site and their location within a new setting;
- new gateway planting at entrance points from Bloxham Road and Salt Way to create a sense of arrival;
- creation of informal parkland to the south-west, thereby respecting the setting of the parkland, driveway and entrance gateway associated with Tudor Hall School (Wykham Park);
- tree planting to enclose views of the proposals from elevated viewpoints on Crouch Hill to the north-west including larger sized trees along the spine road and at the entrance to the Site;
- retention and protection, where possible, of the majority of the existing trees and hedgerows, and their incorporation into the new housing development, supplemented with new structure and infill planting comprising native species;
- public open spaces, comprising informal tree planting, scrub, meadow grassland, wetland SUDs ponds and informal seating areas;
- play areas (including two LEAPs, one NEAP), allotments and sports pitches;
- provision of walking, cycling and a new circular bridleway route through the Site, including links to Salt Way and other public rights of way; and
- a landscape management plan to be agreed with CDC.

**Built Form**

8.6.6 Design Principles are contained within the Design and Access Statement that accompanies the OPA. In terms of the built layout and urban form, the Proposed Development will follow a robust 'placemaking' approach of legible streets and spaces that are defined and enclosed by buildings.

8.6.7 Buildings will predominantly be two storeys and two and a half storey in height to reflect the surrounding local character. The maximum building height from ground level to ridge level excluding any point features will be 12.5m.

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- 8.6.8 It is anticipated that the built form and the use of materials, colours and finishes will respond and relate to the local context of Banbury and surrounding villages, to ensure the Proposed Development relates well to its setting.

## 8.7 RESIDUAL EFFECTS

8.7.1 For the purposes of the LVIA, residual impacts have been defined as those remaining 15 years after completion, when proposed planting will have had the benefit of up to 25 years growth. The height of planting after 25 years is 10-15m for heavy or extra heavy trees although this would vary according to species and conditions. Hedgerows would be managed at 3-4m. Some faster growing tree and shrub species would exceed these figures.

### ***Residual Landscape Effects***

8.7.2 15 years after completion, it is anticipated that proposals would result in potential changes to:

- land use as a result of the residential led development on agricultural land;
- landscape quality to due enhancement of existing vegetation and growth of new structure and infill planting;
- settlement pattern as a result of new residential led development with a strong relationship to existing town of Banbury;
- recreational value due to new increased use of enhanced existing public rights of way, new public open spaces, footpaths and cycleways; and
- tranquillity as a result of increased vehicle movement and public use of the Site.

8.7.3 The assessment finds that there will be no significant landscape effects 15 years after completion.

8.7.4 15 years after completion, effects upon the landscape character of the Site reduce to Moderately Significant due to enhancement delivered by new strategic planting, improved recreational value and management of the existing vegetation framework.

8.7.5 The improvements to landscape quality and recreational value will create benefit to the Site and parts of the wider national, county and district character areas in which the site is located, these will not be significant.

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**Residual Visual Effects**

- 8.7.6 15 years after completion, the summer views of the Proposed Development will be changed from year 0, with existing vegetation and established new planting softening the appearance of the Proposed Development.
- 8.7.7 The assessment finds that there will be no significant visual effects in the long term.
- 8.7.8 Moderately significant visual effects will occur from:
- Viewpoint 2: Salt Way/Cycle Route 5, from where the new housing would be filtered by a 5-10m new planted corridor along Salt Way;
  - Viewpoint 6: A public footpath adjacent to the Site west of Wykham Farm Cottage, from where there would be views of new housing beyond a new sports pitch, filtered by new tree planting;
  - Viewpoint 10: The entrance gateway to Tudor Hall School (Grade II Wykham Park) off Bloxham Road, from where there would be views of the new road alignment, roundabout and housing, set within new parkland landscape as shown by Illustration A at Appendix 8.2; and
  - Viewpoint 12: The public footpath on Crouch Hill, approximately 420m north-west of the Site, from where new housing would be enclosed and structured by new tree planting and reinforced hedgerows, in the context of views of existing houses as shown by Illustration B at Appendix 8.2.
- 8.7.9 All of the moderately significant visual effects will reduce further and would not be significant as the trees continue to mature.

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**8.8 CUMULATIVE EFFECTS**

8.8.1 A separate outline planning application has been made for 400 residential dwellings west of Bloxham Road and adjacent to Wykham Park Farm (14/01188/OUT).

8.8.2 The cumulative landscape and visual effects of housing on both sites would depend upon the timing of construction, the layout, form and mitigation proposed for the adjacent site. However, the following effects are predicted.

**Cumulative Landscape Effects**

8.8.3 Housing on both sites would result in a partial change in the key characteristics of landscape character, including:

- land use as a result of residential led development on agricultural land;
- landscape quality due to the removal of vegetation to accommodate development, particularly access points;
- scenic quality due to some views of development proposals as described below;
- recreational value as a result of views of development from existing footpaths; and
- tranquillity as a result of increased traffic and activity.

**Cumulative Visual Effects**

8.8.4 There will be cumulative visual effects on Viewpoints 9, 11 and 12 as a result of the housing on both sites, and the changes described below:

- Viewpoint 9 on Wykham Lane west of both sites. From here, it is likely that housing on the adjacent site would be visible beyond intervening vegetation to the right (east) of Crouch Farm and left (west) of the proposed Site. In combination with the Proposed Development, it is considered these changes would be perceptible, but would not materially affect the composition of the view;
- Viewpoint 11 on a public right of way to the west (leading off of Salt Way). From here, the new housing and access roundabout on the adjacent site would be dominant in the foreground of the view, further screening the proposed Site beyond. It is considered that this has the potential to alter the appreciation of the

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view, however, this would not be as a result of development on the Site; and

- Viewpoint 12 on a public footpath on Crouch Hill. From here, new housing on the central portion of the adjacent site would be noticeable beyond existing vegetation along Salt Way, to the right (east) of the proposed Site. In combination with the Proposed Development, it is considered this has the potential to have some effect on the appreciation of the view, depending upon the layout and level of mitigation on the adjacent Site.

## 8.9 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

### Introduction

- 8.9.1. This chapter provides a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) of land at Wykham Park Farm, Banbury, carried out in accordance with the 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment', Third Edition, 2013 (GLVIA3).
- 8.9.2. The LVIA supports an outline planning application for residential led development comprising up to 1,000 dwellings, a local centre, primary school, outdoor sports pitches, public open space and allotments.

### Baseline

- 8.9.3. The Site lies south of the town of Banbury, east of the A361 Bloxham Road and north of Wykham Lane (outlined in red on Plan L1). It comprises six large and predominantly regular shaped fields defined and enclosed by straight hedges and tree belts.
- 8.9.4. Other features include Salt Way/ National Cycle Route 5, a historic trading route, which runs parallel to the northern boundary; and three public rights crossing the eastern parts and western edge of the Site in a north-south orientation. Overhead power lines on poles cross the northern and western margins, running parallel to Salt Way and Bloxham Road.
- 8.9.5. The site lies on the Banbury plateau which is approximately at grade with the southern settlement edge of Banbury as shown on Plan L2. The fields within this area are flat or gently sloping to the south. Approximately 500m to the south of the Site, the land falls away sharply.
- 8.9.6. A number of published sources describe character of the Site and wider landscape and identify a series of landscape character areas or types on the basis on similar pattern, geology, topography, land use and settlement as shown on Plan L1. Key characteristics described include a complex topography; rolling medium or large arable fields surrounded by hedges and hedgerow trees; and roadside verges with narrow stands of trees giving a well-treed impression despite a lack of larger



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woodlands.

- 8.9.7. As a result of the local vegetation pattern, the built form of the Banbury and boundary vegetation, the Site is well enclosed as demonstrated by the Zone of Theoretical Visibility on Plan L3. Available views are mostly local (<0.5km), from adjacent roads and public rights of way, in addition to an elevated view from Crouch Hill to the north-east. In many of these views, the Site is frequently well enclosed and only partly visible. The opportunity for medium distance (0.5-2km) and distant (>2km) views is limited, where views are afforded the Site is barely perceivable.
- 8.9.8. The Site lies within an Area of High Landscape Value (AHLV) that is a wide designation that covers much of Banbury. This designation was referred to in the Saved Policies in the Cherwell Local Plan (adopted 1996) but is not however carried forward in the emerging Local Plan (submitted 2014) and therefore should be afforded limited weight. There are no other landscape designations on the Site; very limited inter-visibility from Listed Buildings; and a lack of inter-visibility from Conservation Areas and Registered Parks and Gardens in the wider landscape. It is recognised, however, that the western portion of the Site influences the setting of parkland, driveway and entrance gateway associated with Tudor Hall School (Grade II listed Wykham Park) which lies to the south-west; and its northern edge influences the setting of Salt Way although these features have been compromised in several places by the presence either of Banbury or by the busy Bloxham Road.
- 8.9.9. The presence of existing built development and landscape which already contains a number of detractors, leads to the opportunity to accommodate development without greatly affecting the key characteristics and the value of the landscape. Thus, the Site's sensitivity to change as a result of residential development has been assessed as Medium, together with the wider landscape potentially affected by the proposal. This accords with a published sensitivity study carried out by Halcrow in September 2010 and updated in 2014.

**Proposals**

- 8.9.10. Planning policies and landscape strategies from published sources seek to enhance the urban fringe; retain important landscape features; prevent unacceptable visual intrusion; conserve and protect landscape character; maintain important skylines in key views; and ensure that green infrastructure networks are integral to the planning of new development.

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8.9.11. The Proposed Development has been guided by the natural landscape assets within the Site and has been carefully devised to take into account the local landscape context and setting of landscape features of importance including parkland associated with Tudor Hall School (Wykham Park), Salt Way and Crouch Hill.

8.9.12. The Green Infrastructure Strategy for the Proposed Development equates to some 18 ha or over 30% of the site and seeks to:

- protect and enhance the existing vegetation framework;
- reflect the surrounding field boundary pattern;
- integrate the proposals into their surroundings;
- create green corridors and parkland designed to respect the setting of existing landscape features and public rights of way;
- enclose the proposals and maintain the skyline in key views for example, from Crouch Hill as demonstrated by Illustrations B at Appendix 8.2; and
- provide an attractive residential environment.

**Summary of Effects**

8.9.13. The potential changes as a result of the proposals, mitigation measures and effects are summarised in Table 8.9 below:

**Table 8.9: Summary of Effects**

Potential Change	Significance during Construction and Post Completion (Year 0)	Mitigation Measures	Residual Significance (15 years after completion)
<b>Landscape</b>			
<u>The Site and Immediate Surroundings</u>  Local change to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• land use as a result of</li> </ul>	<b>Up to Significant</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Retention of better quality trees and hedgerows;</li> <li>• Creation of green, planted corridor along Salt Way;</li> <li>• Retention and enhancement of</li> </ul>	<b>Moderately Significant</b>

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Potential Change	Significance during Construction and Post Completion (Year 0)	Mitigation Measures	Residual Significance (15 years after completion)
<p>residential led development on agricultural land;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• landscape quality due to the removal hedgerow, and limited mature trees;</li> <li>• scenic quality due to some views of construction activities/development proposals;</li> <li>• recreational value as a result of views of development from existing footpaths, new public access routes and public open space; and</li> <li>• tranquillity as a result of increased traffic and activity.</li> </ul>		<p>public access routes;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhancement of retained hedgerows and boundary vegetation leading to complementary reinforcement of the local vegetation pattern;</li> <li>• New boundary and structure planting will complement screening provided by existing hedgerows and trees;</li> <li>• New habitat creation, including wildflower meadow and wetland planting;</li> <li>• New community open space and parkland for informal recreational use; and</li> <li>• New housing designed to complement existing settlement character and setting.</li> </ul>	
<p><u>Wider Landscape</u></p> <p>Changes to small parts of wider NCAs/ LCTs/LCAs containing the Site as a result of residential led development on agricultural land, largely within the original landscape pattern, adjacent to the existing settlement of Banbury, well enclosed by existing vegetation and landform.</p>	<b>Not Significant</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Retention of better quality trees and hedgerows;</li> <li>• Green Infrastructure, including planted corridors, enhanced public access, open space, planting and habitat creation;</li> <li>• Enhancement of retained hedgerows and boundary vegetation leading to complementary reinforcement of the local vegetation pattern; and</li> <li>• New housing designed to complement existing settlement character.</li> </ul>	<b>Not Significant</b>
<b>Visual</b>			

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Potential Change	Significance during Construction and Post Completion (Year 0)	Mitigation Measures	Residual Significance (15 years after completion)
<p><u>Views directly overlooking the Site from adjacent public footpath near Wykham Farm Cottage (6) and elevated view from public footpath on Crouch Hill (12)</u></p> <p>Noticeable changes to the composition of views as a result of construction/ completion of built development, infrastructure and public open spaces on parts of the Site. In both cases, these views are obtained through gaps in Site boundary vegetation, therefore it should be noted that the overall sequential effects are reduced due to increased enclosure of the Site elsewhere along the routes.</p>	<b>Up to Significant</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Retention and management of existing trees and hedgerow;</li> <li>• New structure planting to enclose or filter views; and</li> <li>• Built development designed to complement existing settlement character and setting.</li> </ul>	<b>Up to Moderately Significant</b>
<p><u>Views overlooking the Site from adjacent Salt Way/National Cycle Route 5 (2) and Bloxham Road (10)</u></p> <p>Noticeable or perceptible changes to the composition of views as a result of construction/ completion of built development, infrastructure and public open spaces seen through gaps in boundary vegetation. It should be noted that the overall sequential effects are reduced due to increased enclosure of the Site elsewhere along the routes.</p>	<b>Moderately Significant</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Retention and management of existing trees and hedgerow;</li> <li>• New structure planting to enclose or filter views; and</li> <li>• Built development designed to complement existing settlement character and setting.</li> </ul>	<b>Up to Moderately Significant</b>
<p><u>Local (&lt;0.5km) and medium (0.5-2km) views looking towards the</u></p>	<b>Not Significant</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Retention and management of existing trees and hedgerow;</li> </ul>	<b>Not Significant</b>

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Potential Change	Significance during Construction and Post Completion (Year 0)	Mitigation Measures	Residual Significance (15 years after completion)
<p><u>Site from surrounding roads and public footpaths (Viewpoints 1, 3, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11 and 15)</u></p> <p>Barely perceptible or perceptible changes to views as a result of construction/completion of parts of the new housing, public open space, drainage ponds or allotments. Views are filtered by boundary vegetation or glimpsed through gaps in intervening field vegetation.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New structure planting to further enclose or filter views; and</li> <li>• Built development designed to complement existing settlement character and setting.</li> </ul>	
<p><u>Predominantly distant (&gt;2km) and sometimes elevated views looking towards the Site from public footpaths or recreation areas (Viewpoints 4, 13, 14 and 16)</u></p> <p>Longer range views where the construction/completed proposals are enclosed by boundary vegetation or screened by intervening field vegetation and unlikely to form component of view.</p>	<b>Not Significant</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Retention and management of existing trees and hedgerow.</li> </ul>	<b>Not Significant</b>

**Conclusion**

8.9.14. There are likely to be some significant temporary and short term adverse effects on the landscape character of the site and two local views overlooking the site from public footpaths immediately west of Wykham Farm Cottage and elevated on Crouch Hill. These are as a result of the inevitable changes as a consequence construction activities and development on a green field site, and would only be temporary.

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8.9.15. The Proposed Development incorporates a robust green infrastructure strategy that takes account of existing assets on the Site and the local landscape context in order to mitigate effects and deliver long term landscape, ecological and recreational benefits.

8.9.16. As a result, the Proposed Development will:

- be in keeping with the scale, form and appearance of the existing settlement of Banbury; and
- be integrated into its setting as new planting matures, enhancing the edge of Banbury and making a positive contribution to the local vegetation and landscape character in accordance with policy requirements and published landscape strategies.

8.9.17. Up to moderate adverse residual landscape effects are reported and up to moderate adverse residual visual effects are reported from viewpoints that are adjacent to the site and from Crouch Hill. In neither case are those effects so significant that they would cause an unacceptable level of harm in landscape and visual terms.