



## Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment

CALA Homes Ltd

Land at Fewcott Road, Fritwell

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## **1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1.1. Lockhart Garratt Ltd was appointed by CALA Homes (Chiltern) Ltd to undertake a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment of the proposal for the construction of 34 residential dwellings and associated uses on the land off Fewcott Road, Fritwell, Oxfordshire.
- 1.1.2. The Landscape Impact Assessment found that the proposed development is anticipated to have no significant adverse impacts upon the local landscape character, but adverse impacts of Moderate significance upon the presence of semi-improved grassland on the edge of the village and the overall village form.
- 1.1.3. The Visual Impact Assessment found that the proposed development is anticipated to have a significant adverse impact of Major/Moderate upon the visual amenity of the residents of the existing dwellings on Hodgson Close and non-significant impacts upon a number of local Public Rights of Way through the addition of new dwellings into views into the village.
- 1.1.4. It is therefore the conclusion of this Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment that the only substantial effect anticipated to result from the proposed development is an adverse visual effect of Major/Moderate significance upon the residents of the existing modern dwellings on Hodgson Close and that this should be considered within the planning balance against the relative merits of the development.

## 2. INTRODUCTION

### 2.1. Purpose of Report

- 2.1.1. This is a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment relating to a detailed planning application for 34 residential dwellings and associated uses on the land off Fewcott Road, Fritwell.
- 2.1.2. This assessment has been prepared in accordance with Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third Edition<sup>1</sup>, which is the nationally accepted guidance for the consideration of landscape and visual effects.
- 2.1.3. The terms of reference of this assessment are as follows:
- To assess the baseline landscape and visual characteristics of the application site, including desk survey information and first hand field evidence.
  - To identify and assess the potential landscape and visual impacts of the proposed development upon the established baseline.
  - To propose, where possible, suitable mitigation measures to reduce adverse impacts to an acceptable level.

### 2.2. Site Location

- 2.2.1. The application site (hereinafter referred to as the 'Site') is located on the south-eastern edge of the village of Fritwell in Oxfordshire. The Site occupies an approximate area of 1.3 hectares and the Site centroid is SP 52935 29055. The planning application boundary is presented on the Site Location Plan at **Appendix 1**.

### 2.3. Development Description

- 2.3.1. The proposed development comprises 34 new residential dwellings and associated uses arranged around a circular access road which connects to Fewcott Road in the north-eastern corner of the Site.
- 2.3.2. The proposed Site layout is reproduced at **Appendix 1**.

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<sup>1</sup> Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013

### 3. PLANNING POLICY BACKGROUND

#### 3.1. National Planning Policy Background

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

- 3.1.1. Paragraph 17 of the NPPF sets out the 12 core land-use planning principles that should underpin both plan-making and decision-taking.
- 3.1.2. Principle 4 states that planning should:  
*“Always seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings.”*
- 3.1.3. Principle 5 states that planning should:  
*“Take account of the different roles and character of different areas, promoting the vitality of our main urban areas, protecting the Green Belts around them, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and supporting thriving rural communities within it.”*
- 3.1.4. Principle 7 states that planning should:  
*“Contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural environment and reducing pollution. Allocations of land for development should prefer land of lesser environmental value, where consistent with other policies within this Framework.”*
- 3.1.5. Under the heading of ‘Conserving and enhancing the natural environment’, Paragraph 109 requires the planning system to contribute to and enhance the natural environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes.
- 3.1.6. Under the heading of ‘Plan-making’, Paragraphs 156-157 require local planning authorities to provide strategic policies to deliver the conservation and enhancement of, and to contain a clear strategy for the enhancement of, the natural and historic environment, including landscape.

##### ***National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)***

- 3.1.7. Paragraph 001, Reference ID: 8-001-20140306 of the NPPG presents the national guidance for landscape and planning. It states that:  
*“One of the core principles in the National Planning Policy Framework is that planning should recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. Local plans should include strategic policies for the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment, including landscape. This includes designated landscapes but also the wider countryside.”*

#### 3.2. Local Planning Policy Background

##### ***The Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 (Part 1)***

- 3.2.1. The Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 forms the current adopted local planning policy within Cherwell District. It was adopted by Cherwell District Council on 20<sup>th</sup> July 2015.
- 3.2.2. Section A of the Local Plan sets out the overall vision for the District during the plan period, which includes the following statement in relation to the natural environment:  
*“We will cherish protect and enhance our distinctive natural and built environment and our rich historic heritage. Cherwell will maintain its rural character where its landscapes, its vast range of natural and built heritage and its market towns define its distinctiveness.”*
- 3.2.3. Local Plan **Policy ESD13** relates to the protection and enhancement of the local landscape and reads as follows:

*“Opportunities will be sought to secure the enhancement of the character and appearance of the landscape, particularly in urban fringe locations, through the restoration, management or enhancement of existing landscapes, features or habitats and where appropriate the creation of new ones, including the planting of woodlands, trees and hedgerows. Development will be expected to respect and enhance local landscape character, securing appropriate mitigation where damage to local landscape character cannot be avoided. Proposals will not be permitted if they would:*

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

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

3.2.4. Local Plan Policy ESD15 relates to the character of the built and historic environment. Its headline statement reads as follows:

*“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. All new development will be required to meet high design standards. Where development is in the vicinity of any of the District’s distinctive natural or historic assets, delivering high quality design that complements the asset will be essential.”*

3.2.5. The Policy then sets out a number of requirements for new development proposals to meet this aspiration. Those that are relevant to this assessment are as follows:

- New development proposals should be designed to deliver high quality safe, attractive, durable and healthy places to live and work in. Development of all scales should be designed to improve the quality and appearance of an area and the way it functions.
- 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 settings.
- New development proposals should reflect or, in a contemporary design response, re-interpret local distinctiveness, including elements of construction, elevational detailing, windows and doors, building and surfacing materials, mass, scale and colour palette.
- New development proposals should consider the amenity of both existing and future development, including matters of privacy, outlook, natural lighting, ventilation, and indoor and outdoor space.
- New development proposals should integrate and enhance green infrastructure and incorporate biodiversity enhancement features where possible (see Policy ESD10: Protection and Enhancement of Biodiversity and the Natural Environment and Policy ESD17: Green Infrastructure). Well designed landscape schemes should be an integral part of development



proposals to support improvements to biodiversity, the microclimate, and air pollution and provide attractive places that improve people's health and sense of vitality.

#### ***The Cherwell Local Plan 1996***

3.2.6. The Cherwell Local Plan 1996 includes a number of saved policies that have not yet been superseded by policies within the emerging Part 2 of The Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031.

3.2.7. Of these saved policies, **Policy C7** relates to landscape conservation and reads as follows:

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

3.2.8. The explanatory text of this Policy goes on to state that the Council will *“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.”*

#### ***Emerging Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 Part 2***

3.2.9. Part 2 of the Local Plan will set out non-strategic site allocations and development management policies.

3.2.10. This is currently at Issues Consultation stage, with the consultation running from 29<sup>th</sup> January to 11<sup>th</sup> March 2016 and it is therefore considered that this policy document is not sufficiently advanced to influence this assessment.

## **4. BASELINE ASSESSMENT**

### **4.1. Site Overview**

- 4.1.1. The Site is approximately 1.3 hectares in area and is approximately square in shape. The predominant land use is paddocks, divided by a combination of post and rail and white ribbon electric fencing.
- 4.1.2. The Site is accessed from Fewcott Road via a gateway in its eastern corner, which leads into a stable yard. This is an area of hardstanding supporting two stable buildings of breeze block construction with pitched corrugated metal roofs along with a number of other smaller timber sheds.
- 4.1.3. An area of loose aggregate hardstanding within a timber fence with lighting on poles sits adjacent to the south-eastern boundary of the Site, and this is presumed to be an equestrian exercise area.
- 4.1.4. The individual paddock areas comprise open grassland, which was largely ungrazed at the time of inspection, along with the typical equipment for keeping horses.
- 4.1.5. The boundaries of the Site comprise well developed native shrub hedgerows at approximately 3m height with ash, sycamore and willow trees.

### **4.2. The Site Context**

- 4.2.1. The Site is located adjacent to the existing eastern edge of the village of Fritwell.
- 4.2.2. The north-western Site boundary abuts the rear gardens of existing two-storey dwellings on Hodgson Close, although this is separated by a strip of semi-mature trees to the north.
- 4.2.3. To the south-west of the Site are two pastoral fields, and beyond these are the structures associated with Lodge Farm. A public footpath (219/96) runs between the pastoral fields and Site boundary, with a pedestrian gateway near to the western corner of the Site. Beyond Lodge Farm, arable land gently falls to a minor watercourse before rising to the boundary of the former Upper Heyford airbase. An active railway line within a cutting is also present within this landscape context.
- 4.2.4. To the north-east of the Site an area of land populated with ruderal vegetation lies between the Site and Fewcott Road. Beyond Fewcott Road lies open arable land with well managed hedgerows extending to the M40 motorway corridor.
- 4.2.5. To the south-east of the Site lies relatively level open arable land with well-maintained hedgerows between the edge of Fritwell and the nearby village of Fewcott.
- 4.2.6. The context of the Site may be summarised as a village edge location addressing relatively level, medium-scale open arable land with tall and well-maintained hedgerows. This countryside has a rural and productive character, although this is impacted upon by the presence of major national infrastructure in the form of the M40 motorway, railway line and former Upper Heyford airbase.

### **4.3. Topography & Landform**

- 4.3.1. The Site is gently sloping with a generally uniform south-easterly aspect. Topographic survey data has revealed the highest point of the Site to be in the northern corner at 128m and the lowest point on the south-eastern boundary at 125m.

#### 4.4. Public Rights of Way

- 4.4.1. There are no Public Rights of Way within the Site.
- 4.4.2. Public Footpath 219/96 runs outside of the Site directly adjacent to its south-western boundary, connecting East Street with Fewcott Road.
- 4.4.3. All Public Rights of Way identified within the Study Area are shown on Plan Ref. M16-0502 at **Appendix 1**.

#### 4.5. Designations

##### ***Statutory***

- 4.5.1. The only statutory designations in the vicinity of the Site are the following Grade II Listed Buildings on East Street:
  - 39/41, East Street
  - The Hollies
  - St Olave's
  - 88, East Street
  - The Limes
  - One Hundred
- 4.5.2. In addition to the above, a number of other Listed Buildings were identified within the Study Area as shown on Plan Ref. M16-0502 at **Appendix 1**, although these clearly do not have the potential to share a landscape relationship with the Site due to distance and intervening features.
- 4.5.3. Two Scheduled Monuments are also present within the wider Study Area. These are:
  - Ardley Wood moated ringwork, located 1.85km south-east of the Site; and
  - Cold War structures at the former Upper Heyford Airbase, located 1.67km south of the Site.

##### ***Non-Statutory***

- 4.5.4. The boundary of Fritwell Conservation Area lies to the west of the Site as shown on Plan Ref. M16-0502 at **Appendix 1**.
- 4.5.5. Much of the Conservation Area is screened by the existing residential dwellings on Hodgson Close, although there is likely to be an interaction between the proposed development and the stretch of the boundary which lies to the east of East Street and encompasses Lodge Farm.

## 5. LANDSCAPE BASELINE

### 5.1. Overview

5.1.1. In order to accurately define the quality and character of the receiving landscaping it is important to identify and assess those landscape receptors and/or features that form part of the landscape and help to characterise it.

5.1.2. The identification of these features will be informed through:

- Review of Ordnance Survey mapping, historical map data and aerial and other remote sensing imagery where appropriate;
- Review of relevant published landscape character assessment at national, regional and local levels as appropriate;
- Identification of landscape-based designations;
- Identification and description of individual elements, features, aesthetic and perceptual aspects of the landscape which contribute to its character;
- Assessment of the general condition of the receiving landscape;
- Assessment of the relative value of the receiving landscape; and
- Judgement of the susceptibility of the receiving landscape to a change of the type proposed.

### 5.2. Review of Published Landscape Character Assessments

#### ***National Level Assessment***

5.2.1. Natural England's National Character Assessment places the Site within the Cotswolds National Character Area (NCA).

5.2.2. This is broadly described as a steep scarp crowned with a high, open wold and with a long and rolling dip slope cut by a series of increasingly wooded valleys. This is a highly valued landscape, with 65% of the total area of the NCA designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and is recognised as the 'quintessential English landscape'. In terms of settlement, the historic settlements of Cheltenham, Gloucester, Stroud and Bath sit below the scarp, with smaller towns and villages located at the foot of the scarp slope, in the valley bottoms and on gentler valley slopes at springlines. Agricultural land use is variable, with arable farming on the thin high wold soils and pasture predominant in the valleys.

5.2.3. The key characteristics of this National Character Area are as follows, with those relevant to the Site highlighted in bold text:

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

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

#### ***District Level Assessment: Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study***

- 5.2.4. In 2004 Oxfordshire County Council, working in partnership with Natural England and the Earth Trust, completed a three year landscape and biodiversity project entitled **Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study (OWLS)**.
- 5.2.5. The main purpose of the study was to investigate the landscape character and biodiversity resource of the county, and to use the results to help to safeguard, maintain and enhance this resource.
- 5.2.6. OWLS divides the county into 24 Landscape Types. These are areas of common characteristics of geology, landform, topography, vegetation, land use and settlement pattern that represent local variation and form a framework for landscape characterisation at local level.
- 5.2.7. The study places the Site within the Farmland Plateau Landscape Type. The key characteristics of this Landscape Type are listed as follows, with those relevant to the Site highlighted in bold text:
- Level or gently rolling open ridges dissected by narrow valleys and broader vales.
  - Large, regular arable fields enclosed by low thorn hedges and limestone walls.
  - Rectilinear plantations and shelterbelts.
  - Sparsely settled landscape with a few nucleated settlements.
  - Long, straight roads running along the ridge summits.

5.2.8. The overall landscape strategy for this Landscape Type is to “Conserve to open and remote character of the landscape, and maintain the large-scale field pattern.”

5.2.9. The area expressing the characteristics of this Landscape Type is further sub-divided into a number of geographically specific Local Character Areas. The character of the Fritwell Landscape Character Area is described as follows:

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

### **5.3. Appraisal of Site Character and Local Representation**

5.3.1. As described in Section 4 above, the Site occupies a village edge location adjacent to open, gently rolling countryside.

5.3.2. The Site comprises semi-improved grassland adjacent to the village, and the fields within the setting of the Site are generally regular in shape with tall and species-rich hedgerows and the local roads are distinctly straight in character. Fritwell is a relatively nucleated village, although its form has been influenced by the presence of springs in the area between North Street and East Street giving the village a slightly polyfocal form.

5.3.3. The Site and its setting are therefore considered to be representative of the Farmland Plateau Landscape Type and Fritwell Local Character Area, although there is very little substantial woodland within this area. The setting of the Site is also heavily influenced by the presence of the M40 motorway, railway line and the tall structures associated with the former Upper Heyford airbase, all of which reduce the tranquillity of this rural area.

5.3.4. For the purposes of this assessment, the following are considered to be relevant receptors in terms of landscape character:

- Level or gently rolling open ridges dissected by narrow valleys and broader vales.
- Large, regular arable fields enclosed by low thorn hedges and limestone walls.
- Sparsely settled landscape with a few nucleated settlements.
- Long, straight roads running along the ridge summits.
- Small fields of semi-improved grassland surrounding villages.
- Tall and species-rich hedgerows around Fritwell and Ardley.
- M40 motorway, railway line and tall structures associated with the former Upper Heyford airbase reducing local tranquillity.

## 5.4. Assessment of Baseline Landscape Sensitivity

### *Assessment of Landscape Susceptibility*

- 5.4.1. The landscape in which the Site is located is relatively intact with sensitive village edge development on Hodgson Close and a rural hinterland which is characteristic of the local landscape type. This is balanced, however, by the presence of the urbanising features of the M40 motorway and railway line, both of which generate local noise, and the former Upper Heyford airbase which is visible for a considerable distance by virtue of its elevated position and tall structures.
- 5.4.2. With regard to the individual landscape receptors outlined above, the susceptibility of each characteristic to the type of development proposed is judged to be as follows:
- Level or gently rolling open ridges dissected by narrow valleys and broader vales: Medium susceptibility.
  - Large, regular arable fields enclosed by low thorn hedges and limestone walls: Medium susceptibility.
  - Sparsely settled landscape with a few nucleated settlements: Medium susceptibility.
  - Long, straight roads running along the ridge summits: Medium susceptibility.
  - Small fields of semi-improved grassland surrounding villages: Medium susceptibility.
  - Tall and species-rich hedgerows around Fritwell and Ardley: Medium susceptibility.
  - M40 motorway, railway line and tall structures associated with the former Upper Heyford airbase reducing local tranquillity: Negligible susceptibility.
- 5.4.3. Taking these factors into account, the landscape in which the Site is located is therefore deemed to be of overall **Medium** susceptibility to the type of development proposed.

### *Assessment of Landscape Value*

- 5.4.4. The landscape in which the Site is set does not hold any particular national or local designation, and it is noted that the district contains both the Cotswolds AONB and locally designated Areas of High Landscape Value<sup>2</sup>.
- 5.4.5. With regard to the individual landscape receptors outlined above, the value of each characteristic is judged to be as follows:
- Level or gently rolling open ridges dissected by narrow valleys and broader vales: Medium value.
  - Large, regular arable fields enclosed by low thorn hedges and limestone walls: Medium value.
  - Sparsely settled landscape with a few nucleated settlements: Medium value.
  - Long, straight roads running along the ridge summits: Medium value.
  - Small fields of semi-improved grassland surrounding villages: Medium value.
  - Tall and species-rich hedgerows around Fritwell and Ardley: Medium value.
  - M40 motorway, railway line and tall structures associated with the former Upper Heyford airbase reducing local tranquillity: Very low value.
- 5.4.6. Taking these factors into account, the landscape in which the Site is located is therefore deemed to be of overall **Medium** value.

<sup>2</sup> Designated under the Cherwell Local Plan 1996.

### ***Defining Landscape Sensitivity***

5.4.7. Based upon the matrix set out in Table 3 of the methodology at **Appendix 2**, the overall sensitivity of the individual landscape receptors to the type of development proposed is as follows:

- Level or gently rolling open ridges dissected by narrow valleys and broader vales: **Medium sensitivity.**
- Large, regular arable fields enclosed by low thorn hedges and limestone walls: **Medium sensitivity.**
- Sparsely settled landscape with a few nucleated settlements: **Medium sensitivity.**
- Long, straight roads running along the ridge summits: **Medium sensitivity.**
- Small fields of semi-improved grassland surrounding villages: **Medium sensitivity.**
- Tall and species-rich hedgerows around Fritwell and Ardley: **Medium sensitivity.**
- M40 motorway, railway line and tall structures associated with the former Upper Heyford airbase reducing local tranquillity: **Negligible sensitivity.**

## **5.5. Assessment of Relevant Designations**

### ***Scheduled Monuments***

5.5.1. Section 4.5 above identified two Scheduled Monuments within the study area as potential landscape receptors.

5.5.2. The field assessment has revealed that the distance from the Site and the strength of local field boundary vegetation prevent these designated sites from having a landscape relationship with the Site and therefore they do not warrant further consideration as landscape receptors.

### ***Grade II Listed Buildings***

5.5.3. Section 4.5 above identified six Grade II Listed Buildings on East Street that have the potential to be impacted upon by the proposed development.

5.5.4. The field survey revealed that all of these Listed Buildings are separated from the Site by existing structures and therefore there is no potential for impact upon their setting.

### ***Fritwell Conservation Area***

5.5.5. The boundary of Fritwell Conservation Area runs to the west of the Site boundary at approximately 20 metres at its closest point.

5.5.6. The majority of the Site is screened from this boundary by the existing Hodgson Close development, although the stretch which runs through the pastoral fields to the west of the Site will receive the proposed development in its setting.

5.5.7. With regard to the susceptibility of the Conservation Area to change, it has experienced a high degree of modern residential development in recent years, although this has been undertaken sensitively with local materials. The field inspection also revealed that the Conservation Area does not address the setting of the village, but rather presents the rears of inward facing properties. It is therefore concluded that whilst a Conservation Area would ordinarily be of high susceptibility to change, these considerations in this instance reduce the susceptibility score to medium susceptibility.

5.5.8. With regard to the value of the Conservation Area, it is considered that this is a designation of local to regional importance and therefore it is of high value.



- 5.5.9. Based upon the matrix set out in Table 3 of the methodology at **Appendix 2**, the overall sensitivity of Fritwell Conservation Area to the type of development proposed is considered to be **Medium/High Sensitivity**.

## 6. VISUAL BASELINE

### 6.1. Overview

6.1.1. The visual baseline is identified through a process of desk study to generate a Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) and the extent of the visual envelope is then defined and tested through field assessment. The ZTV is shown on Plan Ref. M15-3778 at **Appendix 1**.

6.1.2. On the basis of the baseline assessment and field survey analysis, visual receptors are identified and classified as to their sensitivity to change. This will involve the identification of the visual receptors through:

- Identification of the area in which the development may be visible (the visual envelope);
- Identification of publicly accessible, representative, viewpoints where views will be affected and the nature of those views;
- Identification of any recognised viewpoints (i.e. known viewpoints from a key landmark or local feature);
- Identification of those views which can be considered characteristic of the landscape character area; and
- Identification of the different groups of people who may experience views of the development.

### 6.2. Description of Representative Views

6.2.1. The following sections will describe the view from each visual receptor which has been confirmed through the field assessment.

6.2.2. This description will then be used to assess the sensitivity of each receptor, in line with the criteria presented within Table 6 at **Appendix 2**.

### 6.3. Viewpoint 1: Within Site looking north-west

*Grid reference: SP 52971 29026*

*Distance from Site: N/A – within Site*

*Nature of receptor: Occupants of residential dwellings*

6.3.1. This view illustrates the level of intervisibility between the Site and the existing dwellings on Hodgson Close.

6.3.2. Taking into account the summer nature of the photographs and the broadleaved nature of the intervening vegetation, it is likely that a number of the properties in this view will experience relatively uninterrupted views into the Site in winter months from both ground floor and upper storey windows.

6.3.3. These are residential properties and the current nature of the view is open countryside, therefore the sensitivity of this receptor is deemed to be **High**.

#### 6.4. Viewpoint 2: Within Site looking north-east

*Grid reference: SP 52926 29039*

*Distance from Site: N/A – within Site*

*Nature of receptor: Public bridleway users, motorists*

- 6.4.1. This view illustrates the relationship between the Site and the countryside to the east.
- 6.4.2. The permeability of the north-eastern boundary allows views to the M40 motorway and the open countryside in between, and this visibility will be greater in winter months.
- 6.4.3. With regard to the users of the public bridleways, these routes are being used for the enjoyment of the countryside and therefore these users are deemed to be of **High** sensitivity.
- 6.4.4. With regard to the users of Fewcott Road, this route runs through open countryside between the villages of Fritwell and Fewcott but the primary use is getting from one place to another and therefore these users are deemed to be of **Medium** sensitivity.

#### 6.5. Viewpoint 3: Within Site looking south-west

*Grid reference: SP 52996 29076*

*Distance from Site: N/A – within Site*

*Nature of receptor: Occupants of residential dwellings, public footpath users*

- 6.5.1. This view illustrates the level of intervisibility between the Site and the residents of Hodgson Close and the users of Public Footpath 219/6.
- 6.5.2. The level of screening that is currently provided to the public footpath users by the Site boundary hedgerow is likely to be diminished in winter months and filtered views are likely to be permitted into the Site.
- 6.5.3. With regard to the occupants of the dwellings on Hodgson Close, Section 6.3 above has identified these to be of **High** sensitivity.
- 6.5.4. With regard to the users of Public Footpath 219/6, these will be seeking the enjoyment of the countryside and therefore they are deemed to be of **High** sensitivity.

#### 6.6. Viewpoint 4: Within Site looking south-east

*Grid reference: SP 52891 29074*

*Distance from Site: N/A – within Site*

*Nature of receptor: Public bridleway and footpath users, motorists*

- 6.6.1. This view illustrates the level of intervisibility between the Site and the countryside to the south and east. It is likely that filtered views will be available in winter months.
- 6.6.2. With regard to the users of Public Rights of Way, these will be seeking the enjoyment of the countryside and therefore they are deemed to be of **High** sensitivity.
- 6.6.3. With regard to the users of Fewcott Road, these are likely to be using this route through open countryside for access between villages and therefore they are deemed to be of **Medium** sensitivity.

## 6.7. Viewpoint 5: Within Site looking north-east

*Grid reference: SP 52906 29064*

*Distance from Site: N/A – within Site*

*Nature of receptor: Public bridleway users, motorists*

- 6.7.1. This view illustrates the interaction of the Site with the area of land between it and Fewcott Road, and the open countryside beyond. It is likely that filtered views will be available in winter months.
- 6.7.2. Section 6.4 above has identified the public bridleway users to be of **High** sensitivity and the users of Fewcott Road to be of **Medium** sensitivity.

## 6.8. Viewpoint 6: Public Bridleway 291/11 on approach to Fritwell

*Grid reference: SP 53278 29406*

*Distance from Site: 392m*

*Nature of receptor: Public bridleway users*

- 6.8.1. This view represents the outlook from this route as it approaches the village.
- 6.8.2. There are a number of existing residential dwellings present within this view, in particular the dwellings on Fewcott View, although these are typical of the approach to a rural village. The structures at Lodge Farm are also distantly visible with the Site in the foreground.
- 6.8.3. Filtered views of the Site are available from this route, and these will be more apparent in winter months.
- 6.8.4. As identified in Section 6.4 above, this route is being used for the recreational enjoyment of the countryside and therefore users are deemed to be of **High** sensitivity.

## 6.9. Viewpoint 7: Public Bridleway 109/2 adjacent to M40 motorway

*Grid reference: SP 53541 29481*

*Distance from Site: 652m*

*Nature of receptor: Public bridleway users*

- 6.9.1. This view represents the outlook from this route at the point at which it turns towards Fritwell.
- 6.9.2. Views towards the village are filtered in this location by field boundary vegetation but dwellings are nonetheless visible as indicated by the presence of the existing dwellings on Fewcott View. The broadleaved nature of the screening vegetation means that these dwellings will be more apparent in winter months.
- 6.9.3. As identified in Section 6.4 above, this route is being used for the recreational enjoyment of the countryside and therefore users are deemed to be of **High** sensitivity.

## 6.10. Viewpoint 8: Public Bridleway 109/2 adjacent to M40 motorway

*Grid reference: SP 53946 29154*

*Distance from Site: 920m*

*Nature of receptor: Public bridleway users*

- 6.10.1. This view represents the outlook from this route as it runs alongside the M40 motorway.
- 6.10.2. Distant filtered views of the rooftops of the existing dwellings on Fewcott View are available at this point, although much of the village is screened by local topography and field boundary vegetation.
- 6.10.3. As identified in Section 6.6 above, this route is being used for the recreational enjoyment of the countryside and therefore users are deemed to be of **High** sensitivity.

#### **6.11. Viewpoint 9: Public Footpath 109/3**

*Grid reference: SP 54008 28994*

*Distance from Site: 970m*

*Nature of receptor: Public footpath users*

- 6.11.1. This view represents the oblique outlook from the short stretch of this route between the M40 motorway and junction with Public Footpath 109/4 from which views of the Site are available.
- 6.11.2. Distant filtered views are available of the existing dwellings on Fewcott View and the structures at Lodge Farm, with the Site in between these.
- 6.11.3. As identified in Section 6.6 above, this route is being used for the recreational enjoyment of the countryside and therefore users are deemed to be of **High** sensitivity.

#### **6.12. Viewpoint 10: Public Footpath 109/4**

*Grid reference: SP 53768 28635*

*Distance from Site: 872m*

*Nature of receptor: Public footpath users*

- 6.12.1. This view represents the oblique outlook from this route as it passes along an agricultural track through paddocks towards Manor Farm.
- 6.12.2. Distant filtered views are available of the existing dwellings on Fewcott View and the Site is visible to the left of these in the view. Dense hedgerows and mature trees provide a reasonable level of screening, although this effect will be reduced in winter months.
- 6.12.3. As identified in Section 6.6 above, this route is being used for the recreational enjoyment of the countryside and therefore users are deemed to be of **High** sensitivity.

#### **6.13. Viewpoint 11: Fewcott Road at Site entrance**

*Grid reference: SP 53053 29092*

*Distance from Site: 6m*

*Nature of receptor: Motorists and cyclists*

- 6.13.1. This view represents the fleeting view that is experienced of the Site entrance whilst passing along Fewcott Road. The Site is clearly visible through the gateway, but is screened by hedgerows along the remainder of this route.
- 6.13.2. As identified in Section 6.4 above, users of this public highway are deemed to be of **Medium** sensitivity.

#### **6.14. Viewpoint 12: Fewcott Road at entrance to adjacent land**

*Grid reference: SP 53019 29120*

*Distance from Site: 45m*

*Nature of receptor: Motorists and cyclists*

- 6.14.1. This view represents the outlook from Fewcott Road in the direction of the Site when leaving Fritwell village.
- 6.14.2. The Site is well screened in this location by the well-established hedgerows which surround the area of land which sits between the Site and Fewcott Road.
- 6.14.3. As identified in Section 6.4 above, users of this public highway are deemed to be of **Medium** sensitivity.

#### **6.15. Viewpoint 13: Public Footpath 219/6 to south-east of Site**

*Grid reference: SP 53074 28940*

*Distance from Site: 45m*

*Nature of receptor: Public footpath users*

- 6.15.1. This view represents the outlook from this route as it passes from Fewcott Road towards Fritwell village.
- 6.15.2. Filtered views of the Site are available through its south-eastern boundary hedgerow and this intervisibility will be clearer in winter months. Beyond the Site the existing dwellings on Hodgson Close are visible and the existing structures at Lodge Farm are present to the left of the Site in this view, presenting a typical approach to a rural village.
- 6.15.3. As identified in Section 6.5 above, users of this route are seeking the enjoyment of the countryside and therefore they are deemed to be of **High** sensitivity.

#### **6.16. Viewpoint 14: Public Footpath 219/6 at south-western Site boundary**

*Grid reference: SP 52881 29036*

*Distance from Site: 0m (adjacent to Site boundary)*

*Nature of receptor: Public footpath users*

- 6.16.1. This view represents the glimpsed views of the Site through a gap in the south-western hedgerow, which is the only available view of this nature along the Site boundary and occurs at its western end at a remnant gateway.
- 6.16.2. Whilst the overall structure of the hedgerow is intact, it is likely that filtered views through the hedgerow will be available to the Site in winter months on account of its broadleaved composition. The existing dwellings on the village edge are also visible to the receptor directly in the line of view along this stretch of the public footpath as it approaches East Street.
- 6.16.3. As identified in Section 6.5 above, users of this route are seeking the enjoyment of the countryside and therefore they are deemed to be of **High** sensitivity.

#### **6.17. Viewpoint 15: Public Footpath 349/14 north of railway line crossing**

*Grid reference: SP 52234 28364*

*Distance from Site: 121m*

*Nature of receptor: Public footpath users*

- 6.17.1. This view represents the outlook from this route as it approaches Fritwell village having crossed the footbridge over the railway line. From this point the footpath descends towards the village before emerging on Raghouse Lane.
- 6.17.2. The purpose of this view is to illustrate the lack of intervisibility between the Site and the countryside to the south of Fritwell, on account of the intervening topography and heavy vegetation associated with Lodge Farm which is likely to screen views even in winter months.
- 6.17.3. Users of this route are seeking the enjoyment of the countryside and therefore they are deemed to be of **High** sensitivity, however the field assessment has revealed no intervisibility with the Site and therefore this receptor will not be considered further within this assessment.

## **6.18. Summary of Visual Environment**

- 6.18.1. The visual environment of the Site is heavily influenced by its village edge location and as such, all relevant views beyond the immediate vicinity of the Site are to the east and south.
- 6.18.2. The presence of the dwellings on Hodgson Close acts to contain visibility to the north and west and the structures and woodland at Lodge Farm contain views to the south. The dwellings on Hodgson Close also screen the Site from the historic village centre.
- 6.18.3. The Site addresses gently rolling open arable land to the east, where occasional long views are available from Public Rights of Way, although these are filtered by well-developed field boundary vegetation and viewed in the context of the existing village. These long views generally occur within the area contained by the landscaping associated with the M40 motorway to the east, Fewcott village to the south-east and the railway line to the south.

## 7. THE PROPOSALS

### 7.1. Overview

- 7.1.1. The proposed development comprises 34 two storey residential dwellings arranged around a circular access road as shown on the proposed layout drawing at **Appendix 1**.
- 7.1.2. The development proposals include a landscaped entrance onto Fewcott Road and a central area of public open space including a Local Area for Play, as well as internal street tree planting in incidental open space areas.

### 7.2. Design Development and Mitigation Measures

- 7.2.1. The design development process identified the principal landscape constraints to be the effects upon the existing dwellings on Hodgson Close, Public Footpath 219/6 and inward views from a number of Public Rights of Way within the surrounding countryside.
- 7.2.2. The proposed development layout has responded to its setting through the setting back of the dwellings from the Site boundary, which in particular reduces the effect upon the existing dwellings on Hodgson Close.
- 7.2.3. The development design has considered inward views in the retention of all existing field boundary vegetation. In addition to this, further planting will be introduced as part of the landscaping scheme to supplement the south-western and south-eastern boundary hedgerows. Where dwellings are visible, these will be constructed of local materials to ensure that they are in keeping with the existing village.
- 7.2.4. With regard to the development entrance, this has been designed as open amenity grassland with occasional trees framing an inward view to the public open space area.
- 7.2.5. The setting of Public Footpath 219/6 will be protected as far as is possible through the retention and strengthening of the field boundary hedgerow and the use of post and rail fencing as opposed to a taller and more urban solution in the garden boundaries.

### 7.3. Summary

- 7.3.1. The design of the proposed development has considered the potential landscape and visual constraints and has encompassed the following positive design measures to address these constraints:
- Setting back dwellings from development boundary;
  - Retention and strengthening of boundary vegetation;
  - Sensitive use of garden boundary materials;
  - Use of attractive stone in construction; and
  - Open space around Site entrance framing inward views to further public open space.



## 8. ASSESSMENT OF EFFECTS – LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

### 8.1. Overview & Summary of Baseline Character

- 8.1.1. This section will assess the anticipated effects upon the baseline landscape character as identified in Section 5 above.
- 8.1.2. For each of the identified landscape receptors, the effect of the proposed development will be described and its magnitude determined in line with the methodology at **Appendix 2**. This will then be combined with the sensitivity of the receptor as stated in Section 5 above to give an overall assessment of the significance of the impact.
- 8.1.3. The relevant baseline characteristics of the Site, which form the landscape receptors for the purposes of this assessment, are as follows:
- Level or gently rolling open ridges dissected by narrow valleys and broader vales.
  - Large, regular arable fields enclosed by low thorn hedges and limestone walls.
  - Sparsely settled landscape with a few nucleated settlements.
  - Long, straight roads running along the ridge summits.
  - Small fields of semi-improved grassland surrounding villages.
  - Tall and species-rich hedgerows around Fritwell and Ardley.
  - M40 motorway, railway line and tall structures associated with the former Upper Heyford airbase reducing local tranquillity.

### 8.2. Assessment of Effects in Relation to Identified Receptors

#### ***Level or gently rolling open ridges dissected by narrow valleys and broader vales.***

- 8.2.1. The baseline assessment in Section 5 above has identified this receptor to be of **Medium** sensitivity.
- 8.2.2. The proposed development is situated in a village edge location and will have no effect upon the overall local topography, therefore the magnitude of change upon this receptor is judged to be **Negligible**.
- 8.2.3. The overall impact upon this receptor is therefore judged to be an adverse impact of **Minor** significance.

#### ***Large, regular arable fields enclosed by low thorn hedges and limestone walls.***

- 8.2.4. The baseline assessment in Section 5 above has identified this receptor to be of **Medium** sensitivity.
- 8.2.5. Whilst fields of similar character occur within the setting of the Site, the Site itself comprises paddocks enclosed by tall mixed broadleaf hedges and therefore its reflection of this characteristic is limited. The proposed development will also retain and supplement all existing field boundary vegetation and therefore the magnitude of change upon this receptor is judged to be **Negligible**.
- 8.2.6. The overall impact upon this receptor is therefore judged to be an adverse impact of **Minor** significance.

***Sparsely settled landscape with a few nucleated settlements.***

- 8.2.7. The baseline assessment in Section 5 above has identified this receptor to be of **Medium** sensitivity.
- 8.2.8. The landscape surrounding the Site is generally sparsely settled and the villages within this landscape tend to be nucleated in character, although Fritwell itself is slightly polyfocal in form due to the historic separation of North Street and East Street by rising springs.
- 8.2.9. The proposed development is likely to slightly emphasise this polyfocal form through extending the village along Fewcott Road, although this will only constitute a minor change in the overall village form and therefore the magnitude of the effect is judged to be **Low**.
- 8.2.10. The overall impact upon this receptor is therefore judged to be an adverse impact of **Moderate/Minor** significance.

***Long, straight roads running along the ridge summits.***

- 8.2.11. The baseline assessment in Section 5 above has identified this receptor to be of **Medium** sensitivity.
- 8.2.12. Fewcott Road is representative of this characteristic, although the proposed development will have no impact upon this highway beyond the development of an existing access and therefore the magnitude of effect upon this receptor is judged to be **Negligible**.
- 8.2.13. The overall impact upon this receptor is therefore judged to be an adverse impact of **Minor** significance.

***Small fields of semi-improved grassland surrounding villages.***

- 8.2.14. The baseline assessment in Section 5 above has identified this receptor to be of **Medium** sensitivity.
- 8.2.15. The Site currently contributes to this characteristic in that it is a small area of paddock on the edge of the village, with similar areas present to the south-west.
- 8.2.16. The proposed development will result in the loss of this area of grassland and the deterioration of this characteristic and therefore the magnitude of change upon this characteristic is judged to be **Medium**.
- 8.2.17. The overall impact upon this receptor is therefore judged to be an adverse impact of **Moderate** significance.

***Tall and species-rich hedgerows around Fritwell and Ardley.***

- 8.2.18. The baseline assessment in Section 5 above has identified this receptor to be of **Medium** sensitivity.
- 8.2.19. The Site is strongly representative of this characteristic in that it is bounded by tall and species-rich hedgerows and is located on the edge of Fritwell. The proposed development will retain and enhance these hedgerows through supplementary planting and therefore the magnitude of change upon this receptor is judged to be **Low**.
- 8.2.20. The overall impact upon this receptor is therefore judged to be a beneficial impact of **Minor** significance.

***M40 motorway, railway line and tall structures associated with the former Upper Heyford airbase reducing local tranquillity.***

- 8.2.21. The baseline assessment in Section 5 above has identified this receptor to be of **Negligible** sensitivity.
- 8.2.22. The proposed development is sufficiently distant from these features that any interaction is unlikely and therefore the magnitude of change upon this receptor is judged to be **Negligible**.
- 8.2.23. The overall impact upon this receptor is therefore judged to be of **Negligible** significance.

**8.3. Assessment of Effects upon the Character of Identified Designations (where applicable)**

***Conservation Area (setting of)***

- 8.3.1. The baseline assessment in Section 5 above has identified this receptor to be of **Medium/High** sensitivity.
- 8.3.2. The proposed development would occur in the setting of a limited stretch of the Conservation Area boundary, to the south of Hodgson Close and north of Lodge Farm. The village in this area does not positively address the surrounding countryside, but presents the rears of properties.
- 8.3.3. The proposed development would result in the change of the setting of this limited stretch from paddock through the existing boundary hedgerow to visible rooftops set back from the boundary and filtered ground floor views of rear gardens. The magnitude of change upon this receptor is therefore judged to be **Low**.
- 8.3.4. The overall impact upon this receptor is therefore judged to be an adverse impact of **Moderate** significance, applying the precautionary principle of the high sensitivity score.

## 9. ASSESSMENT OF EFFECTS – VISUAL ASSESSMENT

### 9.1. Overview

- 9.1.1. This section will assess the anticipated effects of the proposed development upon the visual receptors identified in Section 6 above.
- 9.1.2. For ease of assessment, the various viewpoints will be grouped into the following visual receptors which they represent:
- Residents of dwellings on Hodgson Close;
  - Residents of dwellings on Fewcott View;
  - Users of Public Bridleways 219/11 and 109/2;
  - Users of Public Footpath 219/6
  - Users of Public Footpaths 109/3 and 109/4; and
  - Users of Fewcott Road.
- 9.1.3. For each receptor an assessment will be made of the anticipated magnitude of change upon the current visual amenity of the receptor. This will then be combined with the sensitivity of each receptor to determine the overall significance of the anticipated impact as set out in the methodology in **Appendix 2**.

### 9.2. Visual Assessment

#### *Residents of dwellings on Hodgson Close – Viewpoint 1*

- 9.2.1. The proposed development will be clearly visible in primary views from those dwellings on the southern side of Hodgson Close, particularly in winter months.
- 9.2.2. These dwellings currently experience outward views across the Site and open countryside beyond, and this view will be replaced with the rear aspects of plots 24-34, which are set back from the retained Site boundary hedgerow and will be constructed of similar materials to the existing dwellings. Taking these factors into account, the magnitude of change upon this receptor is judged to be **Medium**.
- 9.2.3. As identified in Section 6 above, this is a **High** sensitivity receptor and therefore the overall impact upon this receptor is judged to be an adverse impact of **Major/Moderate** significance.

#### *Residents of dwellings on Fewcott View – Viewpoint 5*

- 9.2.4. It is likely that in winter months the eastern parts of the proposed development will be partially visible in oblique views from the rear elevations of the southernmost dwellings on this street.
- 9.2.5. The nature of these existing views is currently across the ruderal vegetation to the north of the Site and encompasses the run down structures on this land.
- 9.2.6. The proposed development will introduce filtered views of the new dwellings, which will be experienced through the retained boundary vegetation and proposed new tree planting. The proposed dwellings are also set back from the Site boundary in this location. Taking these factors into account the overall magnitude of change upon this receptor is anticipated to be **Low**.
- 9.2.7. As identified in Section 6 above, this is a **High** sensitivity receptor and therefore the overall impact upon this receptor is judged to be an adverse impact of **Moderate** significance.

### ***Users of Public Bridleways 219/11 and 109/2 – Viewpoints 2, 6, 7 and 8***

- 9.2.8. Users of these routes currently experience filtered views of the Site across gently rolling open countryside as they approach the village from the east. The existing dwellings on Fewcott Road, Fewcott View and Hodgson Close are already present within this view and identify the village within the landscape.
- 9.2.9. The proposed development will introduce additional residential development of local character into these views and therefore the effect will be to increase the overall presence of the village. The views to the proposed dwellings will be filtered by the retained boundary vegetation and the dwellings will be set back from the boundary with new tree planting in rear gardens. Taking these factors into account the overall magnitude of change upon these recreational users will be **Low**.
- 9.2.10. As identified in Section 6 above, this is a **High** sensitivity receptor and therefore the overall impact upon this receptor is judged to be an adverse impact of **Moderate** significance.

### ***Users of Public Footpath 219/6 – Viewpoints 3, 4, 13 and 14***

- 9.2.11. Users of this route approaching Fritwell currently experience filtered views of the Site through the south-eastern boundary hedgerow with the existing dwellings on Hodgson Close in the background and the existing structures at Lodge Farm to the west.
- 9.2.12. Upon arrival at the Site boundary users cross the access track to Lodge Farm and proceed along a narrow track which follows the Site's south-western boundary. At this point users experience direct views of the rears of the properties on East Street and oblique filtered views into the Site through the dense boundary hedgerow.
- 9.2.13. With regard to the southern part of this route, the proposed development will introduce the rear elevations of plots 1-7 into these filtered views, which will obscure the current view to Hodgson Close. The overall impression will be of a sooner arrival at the village, although the dwellings will be set back from the boundary and of local character and the boundary vegetation will be supplemented.
- 9.2.14. With regard to the northern part of this route, the oblique filtered views into the existing Site will be replaced with filtered views into the rear gardens of plots 7-10 and 34. The dwellings have been set back from this boundary and the hedgerow will be strengthened, and post and rail fencing will be used for garden boundary delineation to avoid an overly urbanising effect.
- 9.2.15. Taking all of these factors into account, the magnitude of change upon this receptor is judged to be **Low**.
- 9.2.16. As identified in Section 6 above, this is a **High** sensitivity receptor and therefore the overall impact upon this receptor is judged to be an adverse impact of **Moderate** significance.

### ***Users of Public Footpaths 109/3 and 109/4 – Viewpoints 4, 9 and 10***

- 9.2.17. Users of these routes currently experience oblique and distant filtered views of the Site, which is viewed in the context of the existing dwellings on Fewcott View.
- 9.2.18. The proposed development will introduce additional rooftops to this view, which will increase the presence of the village within these inward views. These views will be filtered by the retained and strengthened boundary vegetation, and the dwellings will be set back from the boundary. Taking these factors into account, the magnitude of change upon this receptor is judged to be **Negligible**.
- 9.2.19. As identified in Section 6 above, this is a **High** sensitivity receptor and therefore the overall impact upon this receptor is judged to be an adverse impact of **Moderate/Minor** significance.

***Users of Fewcott Road – Viewpoints 2, 4, 5 and 11***

- 9.2.20. Users of this public highway currently experience filtered views of the Site through the boundary hedgerows as they approach and leave Fritwell, with the existing dwellings on Hodgson Close and Fewcott View apparent in the approach from the south.
- 9.2.21. The proposed development will introduce filtered views of new dwellings into this view and therefore a sense of more immediate arrival into the village. The dwellings will be largely set back from the boundaries and will be local in character, and boundary hedgerows will be retained and strengthened. The development entrance will be retained as open space, with framed inward views to further open space. Taking these factors into account the magnitude of change upon this receptor is judged to be **Low**.
- 9.2.22. As identified in Section 6 above, this is a **Medium** sensitivity receptor and therefore the overall impact upon this receptor is judged to be an adverse impact of **Moderate/Minor** significance.

## 10. SUMMARY & CONCLUSIONS

### 10.1. Summary of Landscape Impacts

10.1.1. The landscape impact assessment concluded that the effects of the proposed development would largely be restricted to its close setting and that the only adverse effects of any notable significance were as follows:

- Loss of characteristic semi-improved grassland on village edge: Moderate significance.
- Reduction of nucleated village form: Moderate/Minor significance.
- Setting of Fritwell Conservation Area: Moderate significance.

10.1.2. It is also notable that the proposed development will result in a beneficial impact of Minor significance arising from the reinforcement of the tall mixed-species hedgerows surrounding the Site.

### 10.2. Summary of Visual Impacts

10.2.1. The visual impact assessment concluded that the proposed development would have the following adverse effects upon visual receptors:

- Residents of dwellings on Hodgson Close: Major/Moderate significance.
- Residents of dwellings on Fewcott View: Moderate significance.
- Users of Public Bridleways 219/11 and 109/2: Moderate significance.
- Users of Public Footpath 219/6: Moderate significance.
- Users of Public Footpaths 109/3 and 109/4: Moderate/Minor significance.
- Users of Fewcott Road: Moderate/Minor significance.

### 10.3. Conclusion

10.3.1. It is the conclusion of this Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment that the only substantial effect anticipated to result from the proposed development is an adverse visual effect of Major/Moderate significance upon the residents of the existing modern dwellings on Hodgson Close and that this should be considered within the planning balance against the relative merits of the development.

## Appendix 1: Supporting Plans

Reference: M16-0502 Baseline Information Map  
M16-0503 ZTV Map





- Legend:**
- ▲ Listed buildings
  - - - Public bridleway
  - . . . . . Public footpath
  - ▨ Site of Special Scientific Interest
  - Scheduled Ancient Monument
  - ▧ Ancient Semi Natural Woodland
  - Site boundary
  - Study area
  - ▨ Conservation Area

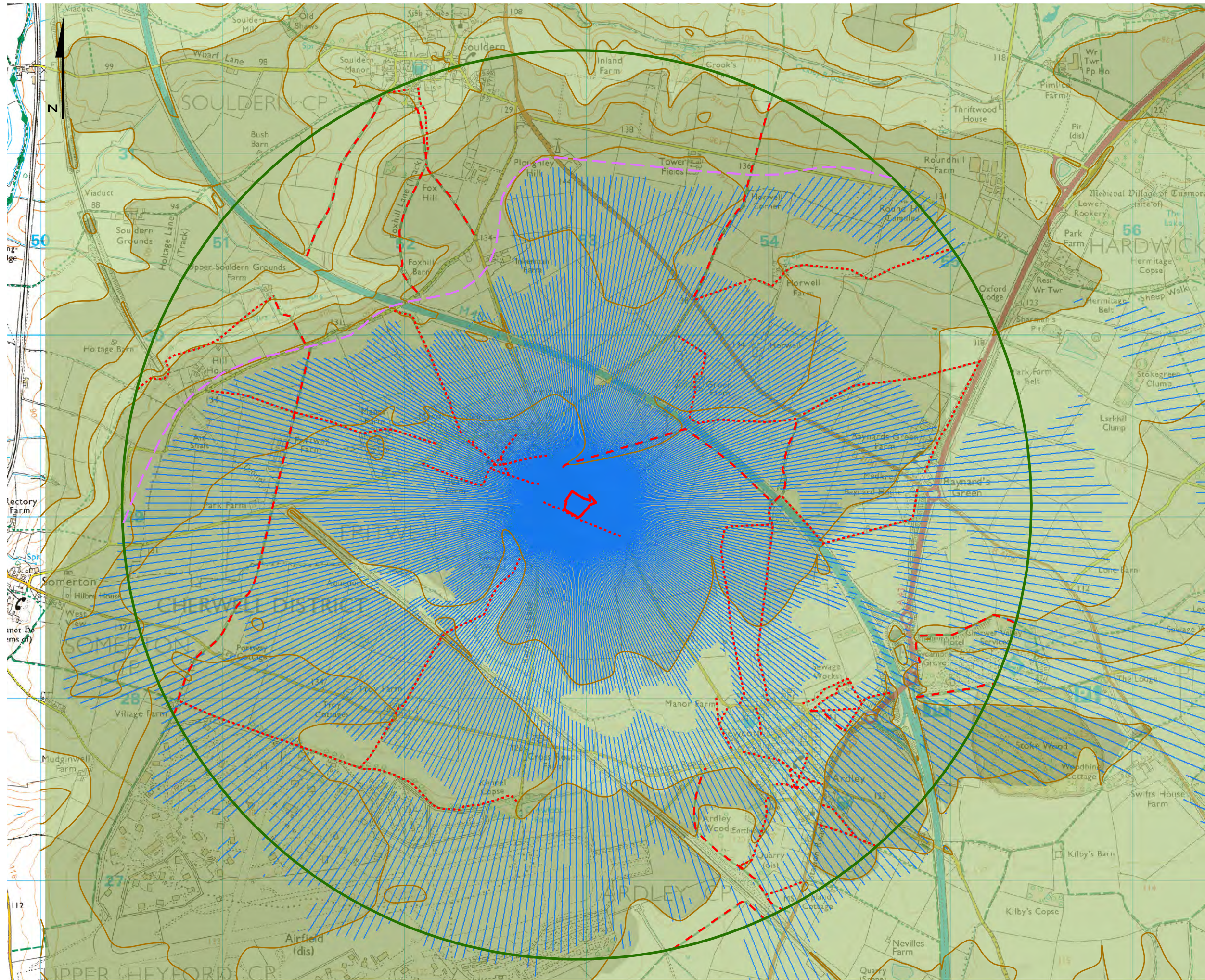


TITLE: Baseline Information	
PROJECT/SITE: Fritwell	
CLIENT: Cala Homes Ltd	
MAP REF: M16-0502	
VERSION: 1	
DATE: 14/06/16	SCALE: 1:20,000 @A3
APPROVED BY: ID	PRODUCED BY: ACB
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7 - 8 Melbourn House Corbygate Business Park Weldon, Corby Northamptonshire NN17 5JG 01536 408840	7 Astley House Cromwell Business Park Chipping Norton Oxfordshire OX7 5SR 01608 648657

Cold War structures at the former Upper Heyford Airbase

Ardley Cutting & Quarry SSSI

Ardley Wood moated ringwork



**Legend:**

- Site Boundary
- Study Area (2km Buffer)

**Height (Mts)**

150  
↑  
110

- 10m Contours
- Line of sight (eye height 1.5m)
- Zone of Theoretical Visibility

**Public Right of Way:**

- Bridleway
- Footpath



TITLE:	ZTV Map	
PROJECT/SITE:	Fritwell	
CLIENT:	Cala Homes Ltd	
MAP REF:	M16-0503	
VERSION:	1	
DATE:	14/06/16	SCALE: 1:20,000@A3
APPROVED BY:	BY	PRODUCED BY: FOR

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## Appendix 2: Lockhart Garratt Assessment Methodology



Landscape & Visual  
Impact Assessment

Methodology

2016

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1.1 This methodology is derived from the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third Edition (2013) (GLVIA 3), jointly published by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment. This publication gives guidance on carrying out a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA), either as a standalone appraisal or part of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).
- 1.1.2 In the context of this methodology, the term “landscape” should be taken to include townscape and seascape considerations where relevant.

## **2. DEFINING THE STUDY AREA**

- 2.1.1 Prior to any assessment being undertaken, it is important to consider the scope and extent of the study area. Typically the study area will be defined through the preparation and assessment of a Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) and/ or desk based study and site assessment. This process will allow the identification of a delimited visual envelope, one which is defined by the prevailing topography, vegetation and built form.
- 2.1.2 A landscape study may extend beyond a relatively confined visual envelope, where there is clear evidence that the site is part of, or intrinsically linked to a wider character area. The detail of such studies will be appropriate to the scale of the development, for instance where tall structures such as wind turbines may have an influence over a larger distance, the assessment will take this into account.

### **3. DESCRIPTION OF EFFECTS**

3.1.1 The level of effect on both landscape and visual receptors should be identified in respect of the different components of the proposed development. In order to assess the significance of the effect upon a receiving environment, it is necessary to consider the effect magnitude, i.e. the degree of change, together with the sensitivity of the receptor.

3.1.2 This assessment will identify whether the effects are:

- Adverse, Beneficial or Neutral - Adverse effects would typically occur where there is loss of landscape elements, or the proposal detracts from the recognised landscape quality and character of an area or view. Neutral effects would include changes that neither add to nor detract from the quality and character of an area or view, but which nonetheless result in an identifiable change. Beneficial effects would typically occur where a development could positively contribute to the landscape character or view, for example through the replacement of incongruous elements with more appropriate uses.
- Direct or Indirect – A direct effect will be one where a development will affect a view or the character of an area, either beneficially or adversely. An indirect effect will occur as a result of associated development i.e. a development may result in an increase of traffic on a particular route.
- Short, Medium or Long Term – this relates to the expected duration and magnitude of a development. Within this assessment the potential effects are assessed during the Construction Phase, then at Years 1 and 10, of the Operational Phase.
- Reversible or Irreversible – this is the assessment of whether the resulting effect of a development can be mitigated or not, and the effectiveness of the proposed mitigation at reducing the effect.

### **3.2 Significance of Effects (EIA only)**

3.2.1 A final judgment is then made as to whether the identified effect is likely to be significant, as required by the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations 2011. In summarising the effects consideration should be given to the key issues, and an identification of the scope for reducing any negative/adverse effects will be undertaken. Mitigation measures should be identified in order to reduce, where possible, the final judgement on the significance of any residual adverse effects in the long term.



## 4. METHODOLOGY FOR ASSESSING LANDSCAPE EFFECTS

### 4.1 Identifying and Assessing the Landscape Baseline

4.1.1 In order to accurately define the quality and character of the receiving landscaping it is important to identify and assess those landscape receptors and/or features that form part of the landscape and help to characterise it.

4.1.2 The identification of these features will be informed through:

- Review of Ordnance Survey mapping, historical map data and aerial and other remote sensing imagery where appropriate;
- Review of relevant published landscape character assessment at national, regional and local levels as appropriate;
- Identification of landscape-based designations;
- Identification and description of individual elements, features, aesthetic and perceptual aspects of the landscape which contribute to its character;
- Assessment of the general condition of the receiving landscape;
- Assessment of the relative value of the receiving landscape (see below);
- Judgement of the susceptibility of the receiving landscape to a change of the type proposed (see below).

4.1.3 Where appropriate, and where the published character assessments do not reflect the specific characteristics of the receiving environment at a relevant scale, the LVIA will identify local landscape character areas for assessment. These character areas are determined through the site assessment, and will make reference to published landscape character assessments and the application of sound professional judgement based upon the evidence at hand.

4.1.4 Criteria for the selection of local landscape character areas within the likely study area include:

- Proximity and influence on the site;
- Physical connections with the site (for example public rights of way, roads, vegetation and vegetation belts); and
- Visual connection with the site (particularly where the view is a key characteristic of the local area).

### 4.2 Assessing Landscape Sensitivity

4.2.1 The sensitivity of the landscape is determined by combining the value of the landscape with its susceptibility to change.

4.2.2 **Susceptibility** is defined as the inherent sensitivity of the landscape and its ability to accommodate a particular change, and can apply to specific landscape features, the character of the site as a whole, or the character of the surrounding landscape, and other Landscape Character Areas defined within the published assessments or similar.

**Table 1: Landscape Susceptibility to Change**

Susceptibility	Assessment Criteria
Very High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No or few detracting features;</li> <li>Townscapes may include a high proportion of historic assets;</li> <li>Typical examples may be nationally designated e.g. World Heritage Sites, National Parks, Heritage Coasts, AONB's etc.</li> </ul>
High	<p>Landscape resource where there is a high susceptibility to change.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Landscapes would be considered of high value, have a high degree of intimacy, generally strong landscape structure, relatively intact and contain features worthy of protection;</li> <li>Few detracting features;</li> <li>Townscapes may include a high proportion of historic assets;</li> <li>Typical examples may be of Regional or County importance e.g. within the setting of National Parks, AONB's, Conservation Areas etc.</li> </ul>
Medium	<p>Landscape resource where there is a medium susceptibility to change.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Landscapes would be considered of medium value, good landscape structure, with some detracting features or evidence of recent change.</li> <li>Townscapes may include a proportion of historic assets or of cultural value locally.</li> <li>Typical examples may be designated for their value at District level.</li> </ul>
Low	<p>Landscape resource where there is a low susceptibility to change.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Landscapes would be considered of low value, and contain evidence of previous landscape change;</li> <li>Degraded landscape structure, characteristic patterns and combinations of landform and land cover are compromised by land use.</li> </ul>
Negligible	<p>Landscape resource where there is little or no susceptibility to change.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Typical landscapes are likely to be heavily degraded, of weak landscape structure, support intensive land uses, and require landscape restoration.</li> </ul>

### 4.3 Landscape Value

- 4.3.1 The value of a landscape is derived from the value or importance given to the area by society, statutory bodies, local and national government, local communities and society at large. National designations include National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. At a local level Local Authorities are likely to have local landscape designations in their Local Plans. However, GLVIA 3 notes that the fact that an area is not covered by such a designation does not mean that it is not valued and in this case reference should be made to published character assessments, local planning policies and guidance. GLVIA 3 also notes that there should not be an over-reliance on designations, favouring a process of assessment and the application of sound, evidence-based professional judgement.
- 4.3.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) however, places greater weight on the importance of National level designations such as AONB's and National Parks. At a local level, any assessment of local value should be supported by a prescriptive, criteria based, NPPF compliant assessment (NPPF para 109). In the absence of such an assessment it is the role of the professional as part of the LVIA process to objectively assess the value of the receiving landscape in relation to box 5.9 of GLVIA 3.

**Table 2: Landscape Value**

Value	Typical Criteria	Typical Scale	Examples
Very High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Landscape is recognised as an area of great importance or quality and rarity.</li> <li>Demonstrates limited capacity to accommodate change.</li> </ul>	International National	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>World Heritage Sites</li> <li>National Parks</li> <li>Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty</li> </ul>
High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Landscape is recognised as being of high quality or importance and rarity.</li> <li>Has some potential to accommodate change which is in keeping with the character of the area.</li> </ul>	Regional Local	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Often identified through Local Landscape Designations</li> <li>May be undesignated but value may be expressed through published assessments or cultural celebration, e.g. art or literature</li> </ul>
Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Landscape is recognised as being of medium quality or importance or rarity.</li> <li>Demonstrates some potential to accommodate change through appropriate mitigation.</li> </ul>	Regional Local	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Typically undesignated but value may be expressed through published assessment</li> </ul>
Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Landscape is of low quality or importance or rarity.</li> <li>Typically degraded with detracting feature and in poor condition.</li> </ul>	Local	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Typically identified as having some redeeming features and demonstrating potential for restoration or improvement</li> </ul>
Very Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Landscape is of very low quality or importance or rarity.</li> <li>Typically degraded with many detracting features, and poorly managed.</li> </ul>	Local	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Typically an area identified for improvement through development and/or management of existing features</li> </ul>

**Table 3: Overall Landscape Sensitivity**

Vs.		Identified Landscape Value				
		Very High Value	High Value	Medium Value	Low Value	Very Low Value
Identified Susceptibility	Very High Susceptibility	Very High	High	High / Medium	X	X
	High Susceptibility	High	High	Medium / High	Medium / Low	X
	Medium Susceptibility	High / Medium	Medium / High	Medium	Low / Medium	Low
	Low Susceptibility	X	Medium / Low	Low / Medium	Low	Low / Negligible
	Negligible Susceptibility	X	X	Low	Low / Negligible	Negligible
		Sensitivity				

#### 4.4 Landscape Magnitude of Change

4.4.1 The magnitude of change relates to the degree in which proposed development alters the fabric of the receiving landscape. This change is characterised as high, medium, low, negligible or none.

**Table 4: Magnitude to Change to Landscape Receptors**

Magnitude	Definition
High	Change resulting in a high degree of deterioration or improvement, or introduction of prominent new elements that are considered to fundamentally change the character of a landscape.
Medium	Change resulting in a moderate degree of deterioration or improvement, or constitutes a perceptible change within a landscape.
Low	Change resulting in a low degree of deterioration or improvement to a landscape or view, or constitutes only a minor component within a landscape.
Negligible	Change resulting in a barely perceptible degree of deterioration or improvement to a landscape.

4.4.2 When assessing the magnitude of change consideration will be given to:

- **The size or scale of the development:** the extent of the change to existing landscape receptors is considered, with weight given to the proportion of the total extent of the site that this represents and the contribution that the receptor makes to the overall character of the landscape;
- **The extent of the development –** consideration is given to the geographical area within which the landscape effects may be perceived. This is assessed at:
  - Site level;
  - Immediate setting;
  - At the scale of the local landscape character area; and
  - On a larger scale affecting a number of local landscape areas or National Character Areas (if required).
- **The permanency of the development:** consideration is given to whether the proposals will result in a long term or short term effect; whether the development is reversible or changes the status of the site (for example to previously developed land); and whether for example restoration to baseline conditions is envisaged at the end of this term;
- **The change to the key characteristics of the receiving landscape:** taking into account:
  - Changes to the appearance of the site;
  - Changes to identified landscape features;
  - Changes to key or special qualities or characteristics of the landscape; and
  - Changes in the landscape setting of heritage assets and landscape-related designations.

- **The proposed mitigation:** consideration should be given to the extent to which the development effects can be mitigated, through positive design, the provision of replacement or enhanced landscape features, or limiting effects on the wider landscape.

#### 4.5 Significance of Landscape Effect

4.5.1 The level of effect upon the receptor should be identified in respect of the different components of the proposed development. In order to assess the significance of the effect on the receiving environment, it is necessary to consider the magnitude, i.e. the degree of change, together with the sensitivity of each identified receptor.

4.5.2 This will identify whether the effects are:

- **Adverse or Beneficial** - beneficial effects would typically occur where a development could positively contribute to the landscape character. Neutral effects would include changes that neither add nor detract from the quality and character of an area or view. Adverse effects would typically occur where there is loss of characteristic landscape elements, or the proposal detracts from the landscape quality and character of an area or view;
- **Direct or Indirect** – A direct effect is where a development will affect the character of an area either beneficially or adversely. An indirect effect would be *associated* with a development, i.e. an increase of traffic on a particular route.
- **Short, Medium or Long Term** – this relates to the expected duration and magnitude of a development. Within this assessment the potential effects are assessed during the construction phase, then at years 1 and 10 following completion of the development.
- **Reversible or Irreversible** – This is the judgement of whether the resulting effect of a development can be mitigated or not, and whether the result of the mitigation is beneficial.

4.5.3 The significance of landscape effect is determined by cross-referencing the sensitivity of the receptor with the magnitude of change expected as a result of the development. Table 5 below outlines how the assessment of significance is undertaken.

**Table 5: Landscape Significance of Effect\***

Vs.		Sensitivity of Landscape Receptor				
		Very High	High	Medium	Low	Negligible
Magnitude of Change	High	Substantial	Major	Major / Moderate	Moderate	Moderate / Minor
	Medium	Major	Major / Moderate	Moderate	Moderate / Minor	Minor
	Low	Major / Moderate	Moderate	Moderate / Minor	Minor	Negligible
	Negligible	Moderate	Moderate / Minor	Minor	Negligible	Negligible / None

\* To be read in conjunction with Table 9 below.

## 5. METHODOLOGY FOR THE ASSESSMENT OF VISUAL EFFECTS

5.1.1 As set out within section 2 above, the visual baseline is identified through a process of desk study, Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV), the extent of the visual envelope is then defined and tested through field assessment.

5.1.2 On the basis of the baseline assessment and field survey analysis, visual receptors are identified and classified as to their sensitivity to change. This will involve the identification of the visual receptors through:

- Identification of the area in which the development may be visible (the visual envelope);
- Identification of publicly accessible, representative, viewpoints where views will be affected and the nature of those views;
- Identification of any recognised viewpoints (i.e. known viewpoints from a key landmark or local feature);
- Identification of those views which can be considered characteristic of the landscape character area;
- Identification of the different groups of people who may experience views of the development.

### 5.2 Sensitivity of Visual Receptors

5.2.1 The sensitivity of a visual receptor should be established. This sensitivity will be dependent on the value attached to the view and the susceptibility of the visual receptor(s) to a change of the type proposed. This may be linked to the type of activity that the person is engaged in – for example someone walking in the countryside would be more sensitive to a change to the view than a person working in an office.

**Table 6: Visual Sensitivity Thresholds**

Visual Sensitivity	Threshold Definition
Very High	Viewers on public rights of way or accessible land whose prime focus is on the high quality of the surrounding landscape, and who are often very aware of its value. Examples include viewers within nationally designated landscapes such as National Parks or AONB's and users of National Trails.
High	Viewers on public rights of way whose prime focus is on the landscape around, or occupiers of residential properties with primary views affected by the development. Examples include viewers within regional/local landscape designations, users of Long Distance Routes or Sustrans cycle routes, or the setting of a listed building.
Medium	Viewers engaged in outdoor recreation with some appreciation of the landscape, occupiers of residential properties with oblique views affected by the development, and users of rural lanes and roads. Examples include viewers within moderate quality landscapes, local recreation grounds, and outdoor pursuits.
Low	Viewers engaged in outdoor sport or recreation whose prime focus is on their activity, or people passing through the area on main transport routes whose attention is focused away from an appreciation of the landscape.
Negligible	Viewers whose attention is focused on their work or activity and not susceptible to changes in the surrounding landscape.

### 5.3 Magnitude of Change of Visual Receptors

5.3.1 The following definitions are used to assess the magnitude of change to visual receptors. As with the assessment of the magnitude of change for landscape receptors, consideration is given to:

- **The size or scale of the development:** taking into account:
  - The mass and scale of the development visible and the change experienced from an identified location; and
  - The loss or addition of features within the view and the changes to the view's composition (including the proportion of the view occupied by the proposed development and the degree of contrast or integration of the proposed development within the context of the existing landscape elements) and the nature of the view in terms of duration and degree of visibility.
- **The extent of the development** – the extent of the development will vary between each identified viewpoint and will likely reflect the extent of the development visible in the view alongside the distance of the viewpoint from the proposed development.
- **The permanency of the development:** considering whether:
  - The proposals will result in a long term or short term effect;
  - The development is reversible or changes the status of the site (for example to previously developed land); and
  - Restoration to baseline conditions is envisaged at the end of this term.
- **The proposed mitigation:** Judging the extent to which the landscape proposals will be able to mitigate the visual effects of the development by screening, or through design of the development (e.g. siting, use of visually recessive colours and materials and location of open space).

**Table 7: Magnitude of Change to Visual Receptors**

Magnitude	Definition
High	Change resulting in a high degree of deterioration or improvement, or introduction of prominent new elements that are considered to make a major alteration to a view.
Medium	Change resulting in a moderate degree of deterioration or improvement, or constitutes a perceptible change within a view.
Low	Change resulting in a low degree of deterioration or improvement to a landscape or view, or constitutes only a minor component within a landscape.
Negligible	Change resulting in a barely perceptible degree of deterioration or improvement to a view.
No Change	It is also possible for a view to experience no change due to it being totally compatible with the character of the visual environment or not visible due to intervening structures or vegetation.

## 5.4 Significance of Visual Effect

5.4.1 The significance of visual effect is determined by cross referencing the sensitivity of the receptor with the magnitude of change expected as a result of the development. Table 8 below outlines how the assessment of significance is undertaken.

**Table 8: Visual Significance of Effect**

Vs.		Sensitivity of Visual Receptor				
		Very High	High	Medium	Low	Negligible
Magnitude of Change	High	Substantial	Major	Major / Moderate	Moderate	Moderate / Minor
	Medium	Major	Major / Moderate	Moderate	Moderate / Minor	Minor
	Low	Major / Moderate	Moderate	Moderate / Minor	Minor	Negligible
	Negligible	Moderate	Moderate / Minor	Minor	Negligible	Negligible / None
	No Change	None	None	None	None	None
	Significance of Landscape Effect					

\* To be read in conjunction with Table 9 below.



## 6. UNDERSTANDING SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS

- 6.1.1 For the purposes of the impact assessment beneficial or adverse effects of substantial, major and major/moderate effects are considered to be significant and to be of key importance in decision making. Moderate adverse effects should also be taken into account when considering the overall effects of the development in decision making.
- 6.1.2 It is important to consider that change does not necessarily result in an adverse effect or harm to a particular landscape or visual environment.
- 6.1.3 The landscape assessor, in determining the significance of effect, will apply a defined assessment methodology, in combination with sound professional judgement upon which the identification of significant effects should be based.

### 6.2 Definition of Significance Thresholds

**Table 9: Significance Thresholds**

Significance	Threshold Definition
Substantial	A very high magnitude of change that materially affects a landscape or view of national / international importance that has little or no ability to accommodate change.
Major	A high magnitude of change that materially affects a landscape or view that has limited ability to accommodate change.
Moderate	A medium magnitude of change that materially affects a landscape or view that may have the ability to accommodate change. Positive effects will typically occur in a lower quality landscape.
Minor	A low magnitude of change that materially affects a landscape that has the ability to accommodate change. Positive effects will typically occur in a lower quality landscape or view.
Negligible	A negligible magnitude of change that has little effect on a landscape that has the ability to accommodate change.
None	It is also possible for a magnitude of change to occur that results in an effect of neutral significance due to the change being compatible with local character or not visible.

## Appendix 3: Visual Assessment – Photographic Record

Reference: 16-0524