



**Land South of Turnpike
Lane, Ickleford**

**Landscape, Visual and
Green Belt Appraisal**

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**The Environmental Dimension
Partnership Ltd**

On behalf of:
Hawridge Strategic Land Limited

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Section 1

Introduction, Purpose and Methodology

INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Environmental Dimension Partnership Ltd (EDP) has been commissioned by Hawridge Strategic Land Limited (hereafter referred to as 'the applicant') to undertake a Landscape, Visual and Green Belt Appraisal (LVGBA) of proposals to develop 100 residential units at Land South of Turnpike Lane, Ickleford (hereafter referred to as 'the site'). The site falls within the North Hertfordshire Local Planning Authority (LPA) area, extends to approximately 6.98 hectares (ha), and is briefly described in **Section 2** of this LVGBA. Full site details are given in the Design and Access Statement (DAS) accompanying the planning application. This LVGBA is part of a suite of documents accompanying an outline planning application for the proposed development summarised in **Section 5**.
- 1.2 EDP is an independent environmental planning consultancy with offices in Cirencester, Cardiff and Cheltenham. The practice provides advice to private and public sector clients throughout the UK in the fields of landscape, ecology, archaeology, cultural heritage, arboriculture, rights of way and masterplanning. Details of the practice can be obtained at our website (www.edp-uk.co.uk). EDP is a Registered Practice of the Landscape Institute¹ specialising in the assessment of the effects of proposed development on the landscape.
- 1.3 This LVGBA has been undertaken in accordance with best practice, detailed methodology is located at **Appendix EDP 1**.

THE SITE AND THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 1.4 **Plan EDP 1** illustrates the location of the site's boundaries and the study area for the LVGBA. The site is located on the southern edge of Ickleford, north of the market town of Hitchin in the North Hertfordshire district of Hertfordshire. The site's character and local context is illustrated on the aerial photograph contained as **Plan EDP 2** with an insert below at **Image EDP 1.1**.

¹ LI Practice Number 1010.



Image EDP 1.1: Site aerial (taken from Google Earth) with indicative red line boundary added by EDP.

- 1.5 The site comprises six field parcels, separated by post and wire fencing, between Turnpike Lane (northern boundary) and River Oughton (southern boundary). The site is currently used as a mixture of paddocks, self-colonising scrub and woodland blocks and edges. Development is present along all boundaries with newer development at Ickleford Manor to the west. Residential development is currently under construction at Lodge Court to the north-east and Bowmans Mill, a former flour mill along the River Oughton, directly to the east – which has been granted planting permission for 71 new homes (planning reference: 17/01955/1). In addition, a Cala Homes development is currently under construction (at the time of writing) to the west of the site at Burford Grange (Ansell Grange).
- 1.6 The vegetation at the boundaries comprises a mixture of woodland and mature tree belts with associated hedgerow and scrub, including the riparian corridor of the River Oughton to the south. The topography broadly falls towards this boundary from a height of 62m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) to the north at Turnpike Lane, to 58m aOD within the riverbed. The A600 and its associated linear structural woodland planting defines the westernmost boundary south of Ickleford Manor.
- 1.7 The proposed development is described as:

“Outline planning application for residential development including 50% affordable housing, with means of access from Turnpike Lane for consideration (all other matters reserved for subsequent approval), drainage, landscaping, car parking and all other ancillary and enabling works.”
- 1.8 The proposals are illustrated on the Concept Masterplan at **Appendix EDP 2**.

PURPOSE AND STRUCTURE OF THE LVGBA

- 1.9 The purpose of this LVGBA is to identify the baseline conditions of the site and surrounding area and to determine those landscape and visual characteristics that might inform the design of the development proposals, including recommendations for mitigation. It then provides an assessment of the landscape and visual effects predicted to arise from development on the site with reference to the baseline analysis.
- 1.10 In undertaking the assessment described in this LVGBA, EDP has:
- Undertaken a thorough data trawl of relevant designations and background documents, including planning policy and legislation where relevant for the assessment process, described in **Section 2**. Outcomes from the data trawl form a key component of the LVGBA and the findings inform the design and assessment process;
 - Assessed the existing (baseline) condition and character of the site and its setting, described in **Section 3**;
 - Assessed the existing visual (baseline) context, especially any key views to and from the site (**Section 4**). The establishment of baseline landscape and visual conditions, when evaluated against the proposed development, allow the identification and evaluation of landscape effects later in the LVGBA at **Section 6**;
 - Described the landscape aspects of the proposed development that may influence any landscape or visual effects (**Section 5**);
 - Identified opportunities and constraints from a landscape and visual perspective;
 - Provided a broad assessment of Green Belt matters (**Section 6**);
 - Set out design recommendations in the form of a concept landscape strategy which may then be developed further into an outline landscape strategy incorporating more detailed landscape mitigation measures as part of the iterative design process. In **Section 5**, assessed the landscape and visual effects in accordance with the approach described below; and
 - Provided an analysis of the likely landscape and visual effects of the proposed scheme, which is determined by combining the magnitude of the predicted change with the assessed sensitivity of the identified receptors. The nature of any predicted effects is also identified (i.e. positive/negative, permanent/reversible) (**Section 7**).

METHODOLOGY ADOPTED FOR THE ASSESSMENT

- 1.11 The proposed development assessed by this LVGBA is not subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). This LVGBA has, therefore, been undertaken in accordance with the principles embodied in the *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment – Third Edition* (LI/IEMA, 2013) (GLVIA3) and other best practice guidance insofar as it is relevant to non-EIA schemes.

- 1.12 **Familiarisation:** EDP's study has included reviews of aerial photographs, web searches, LPA publications and Landscape Character Assessments. EDP has also obtained, where possible, information about relevant landscape and other designations such as National Parks (NP), National Landscapes (NL) (formerly known as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs)), conservation areas, and gardens and parks listed on Historic England's *Register of Historic Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England* (RPG).
- 1.13 **Zone of Theoretical Visibility:** EDP has produced a Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) to help inform the extent of study area, based on a broad development type. See **Appendix EDP 1** for methodology and definitions.
- 1.14 **Field Assessment:** EDP has undertaken a comprehensive field assessment of local site circumstances, including a photographic survey of the character and fabric of the site and its surroundings, using photography from a number of representative viewpoints. The field assessment was undertaken by a qualified landscape architect in July 2025 in overcast but clear weather conditions.
- 1.15 **Acknowledgement of any Shortcomings:** Due to the timing of the project, the field assessment was undertaken in summer conditions, with the trees in full leaf. Whilst this naturally provides additional screening of views and limits the degree to which long range views (in particular) are available, the assessment has been undertaken based upon a 'worst case' scenario, informed by professional judgement.
- 1.16 **Design Inputs:** EDP's field assessment has informed a process whereby the development proposals have been refined to avoid, minimise or compensate for landscape effects. Such measures are summarised in **Section 5**.
- 1.17 **Assessment Methodology:** Predicted effects on the landscape resource and visual amenity arising from the proposed development (**Section 6**) have been determined in accordance with the principles embedded within published best practice guidance insofar as the assessment adopts the following well-established, structured approach:
- Likely effects on landscape character and visual amenity are dealt with separately;
 - The assessment of likely effects is reached using a structured methodology for defining sensitivity, magnitude and nature of effect (**Appendix EDP 1**). This framework is combined with professional judgement. Professional judgement is an important part of the assessment process; it is neither 'pro' nor 'anti' development but acknowledges that development may result in beneficial change as well as landscape harm;
 - As advised in GLVIA3, the appraisal takes into account the effects of any proposed mitigation; and
 - Typically, a 15-year time horizon is used as the basis for conclusions about the residual levels of effect. Fifteen years is a well-established and accepted compromise between assessing the shorter-term effects (which may often be rather 'raw' before any proposed mitigation has had time to take effect) and an excessively long time period.

STUDY AREA

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

- First, a broad 2km 'study area' was adopted, based mainly on desk-based study, allowing the geographical scope of the assessment to be defined based on the likely extent of views to/from the site, extent of landscape effects and the site's environmental planning context; and
- Second, following the production of a broad ZTV, initial analysis and subsequent fieldwork, the broad study area was refined down to the land that is most likely to experience landscape and visual effects. The extent of this detailed study area is 500m from the site boundary, although occasional reference may be made to features beyond this area where appropriate. This detailed study area is illustrated on **Plan EDP 1**.

Section 2

Findings of EDP Data Trawl

- 2.1 The findings of EDP's data trawl of relevant environmental and planning designations are illustrated on **Plan EDP 1** and summarised in this section with further detail provided in **Appendix EDP 3**.

BACKGROUND PUBLISHED EVIDENCE BASE DOCUMENTS

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

- National Character Area Profile 110: Chilterns (Natural England, 2013);
- Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment (Hertfordshire County Council, February 2000);
- North Hertfordshire and Stevenage Landscape Character Assessment (Babtie Group, 2004);
- North Hertfordshire Sensitivity Study (The Landscape Partnership, 2011);
- Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study (North Herts District Council (NHDC), 2006);
- North Hertfordshire District Green Infrastructure Plan (Land Use Consultants, 2009);
- The Design Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) (North Hertfordshire District Council, 2011);
- Ickleford Neighbourhood Plan (March 2024);
- Ickleford Design Codes (March 2023); and
- The Chilterns National Landscape Management Plan (June 2025).

FINDINGS OF EDP DATA TRAWL

Landscape-related Designations and Other Considerations

- 2.3 Landscape-related designations and policy considerations within 2km of the site are shown on **Plan EDP 1**. In summary:
- The Site does not lie within or adjacent to a locally or nationally designated landscape. The north-eastern boundary of Chilterns NL (formerly AONB) is approximately 2.35km to the south-west and has been reviewed for the purposes of this report; and

- The site lies within the Metropolitan Green Belt. Green Belt is a spatial planning tool and infers no elevated judgment of landscape quality or value. Refer to **Section 7** for further details.

Heritage Matters

- 2.4 Heritage assets can influence the visual character of the landscape and enrich its historic value. This LVGBA addresses heritage assets only insofar as they are historic components of the wider contemporary landscape – not in terms of their significance and value as heritage assets, which is a matter addressed by the separate Heritage assessment (prepared by Fiona Webb of FWA Heritage & Design).
- 2.5 Within the wider study area, the following heritage assets are components of the contemporary landscape:
- Ickleford Conservation Area (CA) lies approximately 70m to the north-east of the site at its closest point, however, there is little to no visual relationship;
 - Five listed buildings are located off-site to the north-west, clustered at the east end of Turnpike Lane. These heritage assets and their setting are considered in relation to the proposed development, including:
 - Waltham Cottage (Grade II);
 - The Clock House (Grade II);
 - Barn House (Grade II);
 - The Old Manor (Grade II); and
 - The Old Manor Cottage (Grade II).
 - Hitchin CA lies approximately 1.2km to the south with no intervisibility with the site due to the intervening settlement.

Arboricultural Matters

- 2.6 A separate Arboricultural Implications Assessment (prepared by Merewood Arboricultural Consultancy Services, MACS) considers the arboricultural assets on the site and within the study area. Their tree survey, carried out in April 2025, recorded 149 trees and five groups of trees. Of those, three are considered category 'A' plus one category 'A' group; 56 are category 'B' plus three category 'B' groups; 60 are category 'C' and 30 are category 'U' plus one category 'U' group.
- 2.7 It has been established at the time of the survey that trees along Turnpike Lane on the site are covered by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO ref. 1971 – Ickleford Manor).
- 2.8 No Ancient Woodland is present within or adjacent to the site and the site is not covered by a conservation area.

Public Access and Rights of Way

- 2.9 A review of the definitive map² reveals there are no Public Rights of Way (PRoW) or Open Access Land (OAL) on or adjacent to the site boundary. The closest of these designated footpaths includes a byway which runs along the southern edge of the River Oughton, beyond the A600 approximately 40m to the south-west (shown in red on **Image EDP 2.1**).

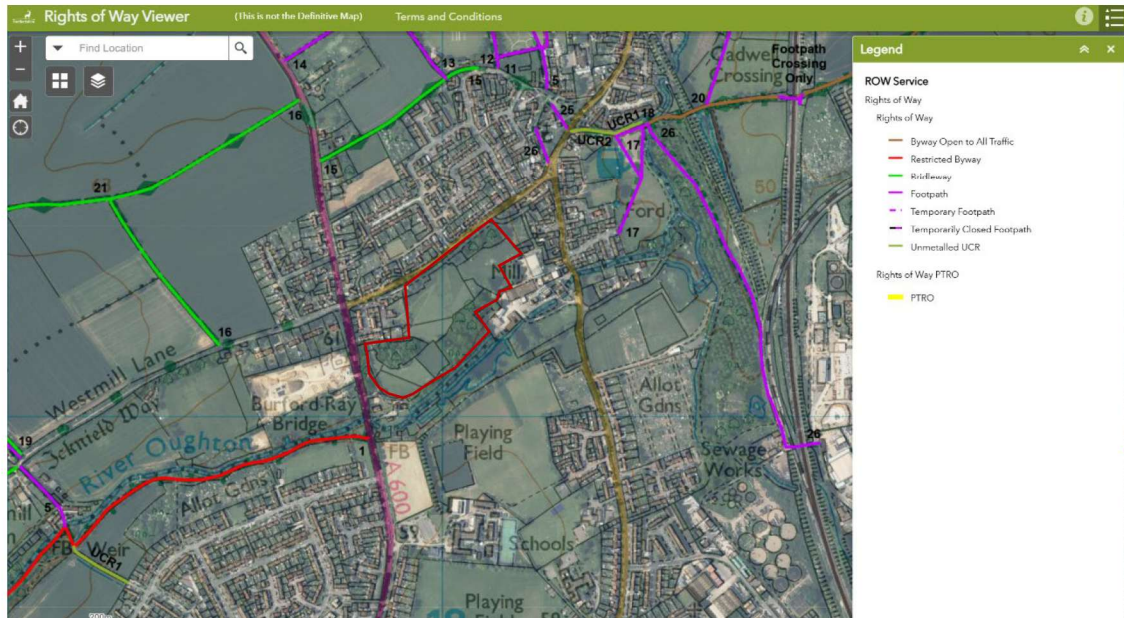


Image EDP 2.1: Hertfordshire Public Rights of Way Map – Relevant Extract with approximate red line boundary added by EDP.

Adopted Local Plan (Published)

- 2.10 The North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031 (adopted 08 November 2022) contains a number of key policies in relation to the site:
- Policy SP2: Settlement Hierarchy;
 - Policy SP5: Countryside and Green Belt;
 - Policy DP9: Design and Sustainability;
 - Policy SP12: Green infrastructure, landscape and biodiversity;
 - Policy D1: Sustainable Design; and
 - Policy NE2: Landscape.

² <https://webmaps.hertfordshire.gov.uk/row/row.htm>.

The Ickleford Neighbourhood Plan 2022-2035 (made 2024)

- 2.11 The Ickleford Neighbourhood Plan was voted in at a referendum on 14 March 2024 and 'made' on 21 March 2024. It now forms part of North Herts Council's statutory planning policy. The following policies are relevant to the site and proposed development, relating to landscape and visual issues:

Policy E1: Maintaining Separation

"Development proposals should respect the undeveloped gap between Ickleford and Hitchin".

Policy E2: Protecting the Landscape

"Development proposals should protect and, where practicable, enhance the historic and natural landscape and local character of the Parish, including the delicate chalk rivers and their valleys, field ponds, mature trees, and hedgerows. Such features should be protected and, where appropriate, incorporated into landscape design schemes.

Insofar as planning permission is required, the planting of hedgerows and trees, and the enhancement of the existing vegetation and the chalk stream ecosystem will be supported".

The Ickleford Design Code (AECOM, March 2023)

- 2.12 This document supports the Neighbourhood Plan policies that guide the assessment of future development proposals, encouraging high-quality design. They set out some design objectives aligned to both the objectives of the Local Plan and those of the Neighbourhood Plan. These are classified under the following topics: movement, nature, built form, identity, public space, uses, homes and buildings and energy and sustainability. Those of most relevance to the site and proposed development, relating to landscape character and visual issues, include:

"NA.01 Green Belt

- *Development will be resisted in Green Belt land, to safeguard sufficient land for agriculture, forestry and outdoor leisure.*
- *The site is currently not used for agricultural activities and not publicly accessible. The proposed development would seek to introduce a benefit to forestry through the introduction of large areas of new woodland as well as retaining the majority of woodland. Outdoor leisure activities would be promoted across the vast areas of public open space/parkland areas around the site, particularly the south alongside the river."*

"NA.02 Green Networks

- *Green spaces deliver a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits. Green networks cover everything from country parks to green roofs and street trees.*

- *The proposed development seeks to introduce a diverse network of existing green infrastructure enhanced with proposed links comprising woodland, hedgerows, trees (parkland and street trees)."*

"NA.03 Design with Water

- *Managing water is an important element of a site's response to climate. It can reduce flood risk and improve water quality while providing habitats and recreation.*
- *The site's location north of the River Oughton provides the opportunity to design with water through a beneficial, sustainable drainage system to alleviate flood risk. This includes large areas of attenuation as well as generous offsets to the river corridor from the built development comprising a parkland. This includes the retention of existing trees and the introduction of a diverse mixture of planting, most of which would be tolerant to a wet environment."*

"NA.07 Street Planting

- *Trees on streets provide habitat, shading, cooling, air quality improvements and carbon sequestration, as well as being a vital component of attractive places.*
- *A large and diverse number of climate-resilient street trees and other soft landscaping would be planted through the urban environment within the site to offer all those benefits outlined within this objective."*

"NA.08 Woodland

- *Woodland can help increase biodiversity, provide shelter, prevent soil erosion, and reduce flooding.*
- *A diverse mix of existing and proposed woodland would strengthen the existing landscape framework to satisfy this objective."*

Section 3

Existing (Baseline) Conditions: Landscape Character

- 3.1 This section provides an assessment of the ‘baseline’ conditions in respect of the character of the site and its landscape context. It summarises any relevant published landscape assessments that contribute to a better understanding of the landscape context. Such assessments provide a helpful understanding of the landscape context but rarely deliver sufficiently site-specific or up-to-date information to draw robust conclusions about the level of any change proposed by the development. Accordingly, EDP has undertaken its own assessment of the site itself which is included in this section.
- 3.2 **Plan EDP 3** illustrates the landscape character areas across the site and study area. **Appendix EDP 3** includes extracts of relevant published documents which have informed this baseline section.
- 3.3 Each relevant Landscape Character Area, the site and its context itself have been reviewed, with judgements on susceptibility to change, landscape value and landscape sensitivity all considered below. EDP have also carried out their own assessment of the site-specific landscape features and made a judgment on the landscape sensitivity of each of these landscape features, combining their value and susceptibility to change. Further details, including definitions, are provided within **Appendix EDP 1** (Methodology):
- **Landscape Value:** Landscape value is the inherent value of the landscape resource irrespective of the type of development proposed and, as such, is determined within the baseline;
 - **Susceptibility to Change:** The susceptibility of a landscape resource is defined as the ability of the receptor (whether the overall character, individual fabric elements or perceptual aspects) to accommodate the type of development proposed without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline situation; and
 - **Landscape Sensitivity:** The sensitivity of a landscape resource is the product of the inherent value attached to the landscape and its susceptibility to the type of development proposed in a particular location, as set out within GLVIA3.

REVIEW OF PUBLISHED LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENTS

National Landscape Character

- 3.4 At the national level, the character of England has been described and classified in the National Character Area (NCA) profiles published by Natural England³. The site and its surroundings fall within NCA 110: Chilterns, which stretches from the north-eastern edge

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-character-area-profiles-data-for-local-decision-making/national-character-area-profiles>.

of Newbury to Luton. The NCA identifies the following Statements of Environmental Opportunities (SEOs):

“SEO 1: Manage the wooded landscape, the woodlands (including internationally important Chilterns beechwoods), hedgerows, commons and parklands with the aims of conserving and enhancing biodiversity and the historic landscape and its significant features; maximising the potential for recreation; and securing sustainable production of biomass and timber.

SEO 2: In pockets of historic land use where natural and cultural heritage are both particularly rich, aim to restore and strengthen the historic landscape, ecological resilience and heterogeneity, and to conserve soils. Ensure that species-rich habitats are conserved and extended, including internationally important species-rich Chiltern downland. Secure environmentally and economically sustainable management to ensure conservation in the long term.

SEO 3: Conserve the Chilterns’ groundwater resource, River Thames and chalk streams by working in partnership to tackle inter-related issues at a catchment scale and also across the water supply network area. Seek to secure, now and in the future, sustainable water use and thriving flood plain landscapes that are valued by the public; and

SEO 4: Enhance local distinctiveness and create or enhance green infrastructure within existing settlements and through new development, particularly in relation to the urban fringe and growth areas such as Luton. Ensure that communities can enjoy good access to the countryside.”

- 3.5 For the scale of the development proposed on the site, it is considered that the description of landscape character undertaken at the sub-regional level is more relevant in establishing the landscape resource baseline. As such, of much greater use are the more localised assessments described in the following paragraphs.

Local Landscape Character

Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment, including North Hertfordshire and Stevenage Landscape Character Assessment (Relevant Extracts Provided in Appendix EDP 3)

- 3.6 The Hertfordshire County Council website includes a set of district and borough Landscape Character Assessment which identifies over 230 distinct local Landscape Character Areas. The site is included within the North Hertfordshire and Stevenage Landscape Character Assessment which is the source of baseline landscape character information for the study area. The majority of the site is located within Landscape Character Area (LCA) 217 ‘River Oughton and Purwell Valleys’⁴ as illustrated on **Plan EDP 3**. As shown on this plan, a

⁴ <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/media-library/documents/environment-and-planning/landscape/landscape-character-assessments/area217.pdf>.

small portion of the northern boundary containing the woodland belt along Turnpike Lane is located within LCA 218 'Pirton Lowlands'⁵.

LCA 217 River Oughton and Purwell Valleys

- 3.7 The LCA identifies LCA 217 'River Oughton and Purwell Valleys' exactly as the name suggests; being the valleys of the River Purwell and its tributary, the River Oughton.
- 3.8 Key Characteristics of this LCA, of most relevance to the site and proposed development, include:
- *"Grazed water meadow.*
 - *Meandering water course with associated ponds and water bodies.*
 - *Linear woodland belts following the watercourse."*
- 3.9 Distinctive Features of this LCA include:
- *"Public parkland at Ickleford.*
 - *Oughtonhead Common Nature Reserve."*
- 3.10 Strategy and Guidelines for Managing Change for this LCA include:
- *"Promote and encourage maintenance of existing pastureland within the river valley.*
 - *Promote the creation of new and retention of existing ditches connecting to the river.*
 - *Promote and encourage the biodiversity of locally native species.*
 - *Promote the planting of trees including appropriate protection within grazing areas.*
 - *Where appropriate promote and encourage public access to the river.*
 - *Avoid damage to the riverbanks as a result of agricultural or other practices.*
 - *Do not clear vegetation from river banks where evidence of use for perching and nesting."*
- 3.11 Its Landscape Condition is evaluated as 'Moderate' and Robustness is evaluated as 'Moderate', resulting in a strategy to Improve and Conserve according to the matrix on page 114 of the LCA.

⁵ <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/media-library/documents/environment-and-planning/landscape/landscape-character-assessments/area218.pdf>.

LCA 218 Pirton Lowlands

- 3.12 LCA 218 'Pirton Lowlands' is described as a *"lowland area to the north of the Chiltern scarp, extending from Barton le Clay in the west to the Purwell Valley in the east"*.
- 3.13 Key Characteristics of this LCA, of most relevance to the site and proposed development, include:
- *"Remnant hedgerows.*
 - *Woodland shelter around settlements."*
- 3.14 Strategy and Guidelines for Managing Change for this LCA include:
- *"Promote planting of new woodland to encourage a diverse woodland flora especially in relation to sub-urban fringe areas.*
 - *For existing woodlands, encourage diverse woodland management practice and replanting of conifer plantations with new deciduous woodlands.*
 - *Promote the creation of buffer-zones between intensive arable production and areas of semi-natural habitat and the creation of links between habitat areas.*
 - *Promote hedgerow restoration along the lines of historic field boundaries and for the creation of visual links between existing woodland areas.*
 - *Promote the use of traditional field hedgerows in place of post and wire enclosures to new grazing areas.*
 - *Protect and preserve the pattern of narrow winding lanes and associated hedge banks, sunken lanes, verges and hedges.*
 - *Promote the diversity of hedgerow species and the planting of standard hedgerow trees.*
 - *Maintain and extend the rights of way network.*
 - *Encourage the development of unimproved species-rich grassland habitats.*
 - *Promote the creation of new ponds and the retention of existing ponds for wildlife.*
 - *Encourage the planting of trees and other appropriate vegetation along watercourses."*
- 3.15 Its Landscape Condition is evaluated as 'Poor' and Robustness is evaluated as 'Weak', resulting in a strategy to Improve and Reconstruct according to the matrix on page 120 of the LCA.

- 3.16 As set out above, the LCA 217 'River Oughton and Purwell Valleys' is defined as being of 'Moderate' landscape condition resulting in a judgment of medium landscape sensitivity. The LCA covering the northern edge, LCA 218, is considered to have a 'Poor' or 'Weak' condition, resulting in a low sensitivity.
- 3.17 EDP would concur with the overall judgement for the area, where urban influences are present, which has been acknowledged by the LCA.
- 3.18 **Plan EDP 2** indicates the site within its immediate setting on an aerial image, where recent development on the southern fringes of Ickleford are shown, to the east, west and south of the site.

Relevant Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD)

- 3.19 The Design SPD produced by NHDC in 2011 provides additional commentary on the character and development history of Ickleford, including that:

"Ickleford originally grew up along the banks of the River Hiz around two greens and the church. Further development eventually linked these and consolidated the village into one settlement. 20th century development has extended the village westwards across the Bedford Road and also to the north and south around the junction with Turnpike Lane."

- 3.20 The SPD then provides a number of design principles, including to:

- *"Protect the trees through the centre of the village."*
- *Gateways into the village should be strengthened.*
- *Village centre should be strengthened."*

REVIEW OF LANDSCAPE DESIGNATIONS

- 3.21 The Chilterns National Landscape is located some 2.3km to the south-west (outside of the 2km study area). For the purposes of this report, a review of the NL Management Plan has been included below, specifically in regard to its setting. However, due to distance and lack of intervisibility, the site is not considered to be in the setting of this designation and is therefore not considered further beyond the baseline (not assessed as a landscape receptor).
- 3.22 The Chilterns NL Management Plan 2025-2030 (Schedule of Amendments document June 2025 alongside the Superseded Management Plan 2019-2024) has the following policies on setting:
- *"Policy DP4: In the setting of the AONB (NL), take full account of whether proposals harm the AONB (NL). For example, development of land visible in panoramic views from the Chilterns escarpment, or which generates traffic in or travelling across the AON, or which increase water abstraction from the chalk aquifer, thereby reducing flow in chalk streams."*

- *Policy DP5: Require a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment that meets the standard in the GLVIA3 latest edition developments in the AONB (NL) or affecting its setting.”*

3.23 The Position Statement on Development Affecting the Setting of the Chilterns AONB⁶ overarching vision states:

“The setting of the Chilterns is valued and protected by ensuring development adjacent to the AONB also respects its national importance.”

3.24 Examples of adverse impacts, of relevance to landscape character and visual amenity, includes:

- *“Blocking or interference of views out of the AONB particularly from public viewpoints or rights of way;*
- *Blocking or interference of views of the AONB from public viewpoints or rights of way outside the AONB;*
- *Introduction of significant or abrupt changes to landscape character, particularly where they are originally of a similar character to the AONB.”*

3.25 Given the lack of intervisibility and distance between the site and the designation, the proposed development would not introduce any of these adverse impacts on the setting or wider landscape designation.

EDP SITE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

3.26 EDP conducted an assessment of the site’s characteristics on 08 July 2025, in clear weather conditions. The individual elements of the site were noted, as were the differences in the composition and the character of the site’s physical components to the published assessment, and their value and ability to accommodate change (for definitions see **Appendix EDP 1**).

Topography

3.27 **Plan EDP 4** illustrates the topography of the site and wider study area.

3.28 At a site level, the topography has a very gentle slope from the northern boundary at Turnpike Lane to the River Oughton along the southern boundary.

3.29 The wider landscape within the 2km also has little variance in topography with no local high points. Beyond this, The Chilterns are present to the south-west, with Wilbury Hill to the east forming part of Letchworth.

⁶ <https://www.chilterns.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/CCBPositionStatementSetting2011.pdf>,

- 3.30 The topography of the site and surrounds are of little value and a low susceptibility to change, combining to a low overall sensitivity.

Land Cover

- 3.31 The land is currently a mixture of paddocks and unmanaged woodland, tree belts and other vegetation which is generally colonised and unkempt. Other land uses in the immediate vicinity are predominantly settlement and associated road corridors, with the mill to the east (soon to be residential development) alongside the riparian corridor of the River Oughton. Sports pitches forming part of Hitchin school and other facilities are located south of the river, with the town of Hitchin beyond this.
- 3.32 Paddocks surrounded by settlement do not hold any notable landscape value, although the riverbanks and associated vegetation do offer some valuable traits from a landscape perspective, as well as ecological and arboricultural value. The introduction of residential development upon the site would have a low susceptibility to change due to the surrounding settled context along all boundaries. The overall sensitivity of the land use associated with the site is considered to be low.

Trees, Woodland and Hedgerow

- 3.33 A tree survey was carried out in April 2025 by Merewood Arboricultural Consultancy Services, in accordance with BS 5837:2012. This is illustrated on the Plan of Tree Constraints at Appendix 3 of the Arboricultural Implications Assessment. This survey has found the site to have a wide mix of tree species ranging in maturity, size and condition.
- 3.34 From an arboricultural perspective, the majority of mature trees and woodland (approximately 39%) were are considered to be of low value, reflective of their condition. Three trees and one group of trees (approximately 3%) are considered high value. A large number (approximately 38%) are considered medium value (category 'B') and also a considerable number (approximately 20%) considered category 'U', which is defined in the MACS methodology as *"Trees in such a condition that they cannot realistically be retained as loving trees in the context of the current land use for longer than 10 years"*.
- 3.35 The existing tree cover does not wholly reflect their standing as landscape features surrounding the site and aesthetic qualities in the landscape. Therefore, the trees and woodland across the site are considered to be of medium landscape value. Hedgerows, of which there are not many across the site, hold less value as arboricultural/landscape features and are therefore considered to low value overall.
- 3.36 In terms of their susceptibility to change, mature trees and woodland are extremely difficult to replace in a short timeframe and therefore their susceptibility to change as a result of removal would be high. Hedgerows, being more easily replaceable over the short term (5-10 years), would be a medium susceptibility to change.
- 3.37 When combining judgments on landscape value and susceptibility to change, it is established that trees and woodland have a medium sensitivity to change, and hedgerows having a low sensitivity to change.

Waterbodies

- 3.38 The River Oughton defines the southern boundary with its riparian wooded corridor providing a defensible boundary between Ickleford and Hitchin to the south. There are no other waterbodies present on or near to the site. It is considered that this river corridor holds a high landscape value and would be highly susceptible to change. This gives rise to a high sensitivity.

Settlement

- 3.39 The settlement of Ickleford wraps around the edges of the site comprising old and new development, as well as future development under construction and approved with planning application. The settlement edge location with built form along all boundaries (existing and proposed) provides a settled context to the site from a visual and sensory perspective, which heavily influences the landscape character of the site. In this context, the settlement edge location is considered to have a low landscape value and a low susceptibility to change as the introduction of the proposed development would be similar in nature to the wider settlement of Ickleford and adhere to the Ickleford Design Code outlined above. The settlement is considered to have a low sensitivity.

SENSITIVITY OF THE LANDSCAPE RECEPTORS

- 3.40 The following paragraphs describe the sensitivity of the landscape receptors as assessed by EDP and within published documents. Value and susceptibility to change are considered independently, with consideration of the development proposed, in the assessment of overall 'sensitivity' of landscape receptors in accordance with best practice guidance and alongside the definitions included within **Appendix EDP 1**.

Published Landscape Character

- 3.41 The Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment defines the LCA (217: 'River Oughton and Purwell Valleys' to the south) being of moderate condition. EDP concurs with this judgement and would consider it to hold a medium value and medium susceptibility to change, although Ickleford has clearly expanded in size since the report was authored, and therefore the overall susceptibility may have decreased slightly. The findings of EDP's data gathering/interpretation and site walkover broadly agree with this sensitivity finding of **medium** overall.
- 3.42 LCA 218: 'Pirton Lowlands', covering the northern edge of the site and wider Ickleford urban areas, is considered to have a poor or weak landscape condition. EDP would consider this edge to have a low susceptibility to change given the presence of built form along the boundaries within the LCA. This, when coupled with a low landscape value, results in a **low** sensitivity for LCA 218.

The Site and its Context

- 3.43 Published landscape character assessments provide a helpful contextual understanding of the defining characteristics of the wider landscape and, in some respects, the site and its context are considered to be consistent with published landscape descriptions.
- 3.44 EDP's appraisal has found that much of the site is remarkably well contained, both physically and visually from its surroundings. Local topography, off-site and on-site mature trees, hedgerows and woodland are notable features, although there are many urbanising features being prominent within the local context, experienced from the site.
- 3.45 The susceptibility of the landscape resource is defined as the ability of the receptor (whether the overall character, individual fabric elements or perceptual aspects) to accommodate the proposed development without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline situation. On this basis, whilst there are some higher quality landscape elements at the site boundaries and within the detailed study area, the landscape context of the site is impacted by urbanising features within the urban context. As such, the susceptibility to change is considered to be low.
- 3.46 The main character and valuable fabric of the site is to be found along the well-treed boundaries, and within the more enclosed southern areas of the site adjacent to the river. From a sensory perspective, the site is consistent with its close context, being relatively unremarkable within the landscape at the edge of settlement. It does not form a prominent, or important, part of the appreciation of the wider landscape. In landscape terms, there is a very limited sense of association between the site and the wider setting outside of the settlement; being divorced both physically and visually from it.
- 3.47 Given the maturity of landscape features within the site, including an area of woodland cover, views are extremely limited beyond the immediate surroundings which contributes to an enclosed character, even between the multiple field parcels which are included within the site boundaries. This, in combination with the urbanising effect of adjacent residential development (existing and approved development), neighbouring road corridors and sport pitches in the vicinity, reduces the value of the site and its susceptibility to change. These are both considered to be medium in accordance with description factors set out in **Table EDP A1.1:** and **Table EDP A1.2: (Appendix EDP 1)**, developed in alignment with TGN 02-21: *Assessing Landscape Value Outside National Designations*.
- 3.48 The overall sensitivity of the site and its context is therefore considered to be medium.

SUMMARY OF BASELINE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

- 3.49 The landscape character receptors to be assessed within this LVGBA have been summarised here for convenience.

Table EDP 3.1: Landscape Character Receptor Summary

Receptor	Value	Susceptibility	Overall Sensitivity
The site and its context	Medium	Medium	Medium
Published LCA beyond the Site Context			
LCA 217: River Oughton and Purwell Valleys	Medium	Medium	Medium
LCA 218: Pirton Lowlands	Low	Low	Low

Section 4

Existing (Baseline) Conditions: Visual Amenity

INTRODUCTION

- 4.1 Visual amenity (as opposed to ‘visual character’ described in the previous section) is not about the visual appearance of the site, but has to do with the number, distribution and character of views towards, from or within the site. An analysis of visual amenity allows conclusions to be reached about who may experience visual change, from where and to what degree those views will be affected by the proposed development.
- 4.2 This section describes the existing views; changes to views wrought by the proposed development are analysed in **Section 6**. An analysis of existing views and the ‘receptors’ likely to experience visual change is conducted in a number of steps described in turn below.

OVERVIEW

- 4.3 The ZTV (produced at the outset to inform study areas) is refined by walking and driving local roads, rights of way and other publicly accessible viewpoints to arrive at a more accurate, ‘field-tested’ Zone of Primary Visibility (ZPV). The ZPV is where views of the proposed development would normally be close-ranging and open, whether in the public or private domain, on foot, cycling or in a vehicle. At this stage, the ZPV is based on the broad development type of medium density residential built form where a detailed assessment of the development proposals on the visual amenity is included at **Section 6**. In this instance, the field assessment was undertaken by a qualified landscape architect in July 2025 in overcast but clear weather conditions. Beyond the ZPV lies a zone of visibility that is less open, being either partly screened or filtered. Views from within this zone would include the proposal – it may not be immediately noticeable but once recognised would be a perceptible addition to the view.
- 4.4 **Plan EDP 5** illustrates the findings of the visual appraisal from which it can be seen that the ZPV extends as follows:
- To the north: Views from the north of the site are contained to receptors abutting the northern boundary, namely Turnpike Lane (**Photoviewpoint EDP 2** and **3**), which has very limited visibility into the site due to dense vegetation. Views further north are screened by intervening residential built form combined with the sloping topography and mature vegetation along Turnpike Lane;
 - To the east: Properties along the eastern boundary are currently being constructed at Lodge Court which provides a screen from any views in this direction, alongside the existing mature vegetation (**Photoviewpoint EDP 3**). Further east, intervening vegetation and residential built form restricts opportunities for intervisibility beyond receptors abutting the site boundary (**Photoviewpoint EDP 6**);

- To the south: The mature vegetation along the southern edge of the site along the corridor of the River Oughton heavily restricts intervisibility from the wider landscape to the south (**Photoviewpoint EDP 5**). Further south, intervening vegetation and topography restrict any further intervisibility from the edges of Hitchin settlements; and
- To the west: Views from the west are restricted to the office buildings at Ickleford Manor directly adjacent to the site. Views from beyond these buildings, including the Ickleford Mews residential development to the west (**Photoviewpoint EDP 1**), and the Burford Grange development beyond this to the west of Bedford Road (**Photoviewpoint EDP 4**) are screened by intervening built form and mature vegetation.

DEFINING RECEPTOR GROUPS

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

Rights of Way Users

- 4.6 There is a network of PRoW within the study area and wider landscape, that extends north from the settlement of Ickleford and follows the river valley. There are also a number of PRoW that extend west and south-west from the settlement edge of Hitchin and within the National Landscape. The site visit confirmed that there are no views towards the site from the PRoW within the study area and the wider study area. Therefore, the users of the PRoW are not considered further.

Road Users

Turnpike Lane

- 4.7 Views into the site from Turnpike Lane are generally restricted due to the intervening vegetation along the northern edge (**Photoviewpoint EDP 2** and **3**). This route runs through a generally urban landscape setting with development either side, and, as such, users are considered to be of medium sensitivity.

Residential Dwellings/Groups

- 4.8 Views from private residential properties, although likely to be of high to very high sensitivity to changes in the view, are not protected by national planning guidance or local planning policy. Accordingly, changes to the character, 'quality' and nature of private views are not a material planning consideration in the determination of a planning application. However, they remain relevant to this review of the predicted extent and nature of visual change, so are reviewed briefly below:
- Turnpike Lane: Dwellings along this lane to the north of the site do not benefit from open views or particularly attractive views due to the busyness of the road and the dense vegetation which forms the site's northern boundary. They are offset to

Turnpike Lane with relatively large front plots used for parking and landscaping which provides an additional filtering effect;

- Ickleford Manor: Due to the close proximity of these properties, most of which are not residential but form office blocks and commercial premises for the adjacent landscaping business (Refined Landscapes) some views into the site are available beyond the area of lawn to the east of the Ickleford Manor property. These are generally screened by the mature vegetation that defines the western boundary near to the property; and
- Lodge Court (currently under construction at the time of writing): Similar to the above, these properties abut the boundary of the site, with potential views into this edge of the site once the properties are constructed and occupied. Noting that views will be limited to the rear elevation and gardens of three properties based on the approved plans for this scheme.

DEFINING REPRESENTATIVE VIEWPOINTS

- 4.9 Within the ZPV, there are clearly many individual points at which views towards the site are gained. EDP has selected a number of viewpoints that are considered representative of the nature of the views from each of the relevant identified receptor groups. The selection of the representative viewpoints is based on the principle that the assessment needs to test the ‘worst case’ scenario, and in selecting these viewpoints, EDP has sought to include:
- A range of viewpoints from all points of the compass, north, south, east and west; and
 - Viewpoints from all the above receptor groups.
- 4.10 On this basis, six representative Photoviewpoints (PVPs) have been identified, and their location is illustrated on **Plan EDP 5**. Photographs from the selected viewpoints are contained in **Appendix EDP 4**. The purpose of these viewpoints is to aid assessment of a visual receptor(s). These viewpoints are not assessed separately.
- 4.11 The representative PVPs are listed in **Table EDP 4.1** together with an appraisal of their sensitivity. The sensitivity has been derived from the baseline knowledge of the viewpoints, the sensitivity of the visual receptors at these locations, a knowledge of the type of development proposed, and the criteria set out in the Methodology at **Appendix EDP 1**.

SUMMARY OF BASELINE VISUAL AMENITY

Table EDP 4.1: Summary of Representative Photoviewpoints

PVP Number	Location	Grid Reference	Distance and Direction of View	Receptor Type and Sensitivity
EDP 1	Ickleford Manor/Ickleford Mews to western boundary	5178534, 231258	10m; east	Road users/ Settlement edge – Medium Sensitivity
EDP 2	Turnpike Lane junction with Greenfield Avenue	518019, 231387	10m; south	Road users/ Settlement edge – Medium Sensitivity
EDP 3	Turnpike Lane near entrance to Lodge Court development	518114, 231461	10m; south	Road users/ Settlement edge – Medium Sensitivity
EDP 4	A600 Bedford Road junction with Ansell Grange (Burford Grange development)	517795, 231121	150m; east	Road users/ Settlement edge – Medium Sensitivity
EDP 5	A600 Bedford Road junction with Burford Way	517863, 230835	350m; north	Road users/ Settlement edge – Medium Sensitivity
EDP 6	Arlesey Road junction with Ickleford Bury	521560, 217492	140m; west	Road users/ Settlement edge – Medium Sensitivity

Section 5

The Proposed Development and Mitigation

- 5.1 This section reviews the proposed development and an assessment of the likely effects in landscape and visual terms is provided in **Section 6**.

THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 5.2 The proposed development is illustrated in **Appendix EDP 2**. The DAS supporting this application provides full details of the development proposals. To summarise, these comprise:

- Up to 100 dwellings (50% affordable, up to 51 dwellings) with a range of house types, sizes and tenures;
- In total, over 50% of the site area is to be provided as open space, including a large parkland area along the southern edges of the site and offsets to woodland. This open space would comprise a diverse mixture of native tree planting (parkland trees and woodland groups), species-rich wildflower grassland, amenity grassland, native scrub and native hedgerow alongside existing retained vegetation;
- The existing vegetation enveloping the site's boundaries is proposed to be broadly maintained and enhanced with additional planting, with built form restricted at the southern edge to allow a natural transition to the wider landscape south. Furthermore, the provision of street trees within the scheme would assist in filtering views of the housing from the site's edges;
- The formal area of open space is proposed to incorporate multifunctional Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), amenity space and a nearby Area of Play (AP); and
- Access via Turnpike Lane.

- 5.3 The Landscape Strategy is contained as **Plan EDP 6**.

REVIEW OF PUBLISHED LANDSCAPE GUIDELINES/RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.4 LCA 217 'River Oughton and Purwell Valleys' from the North Hertfordshire and Stevenage Landscape Character Assessment, which covers the majority of the site, sets out landscape guidelines that should be considered as part of the design process. Guidelines relevant to the site include:

- *"Promote and encourage maintenance of existing pastureland within the river valley."*
- *"Promote the creation of new and retention of existing ditches connecting to the river."*
- *"Promote and encourage the biodiversity of locally native species."*

- *“Promote the planting of trees including appropriate protection within grazing areas.”*
- *“Where appropriate promote and encourage public access to the river.”*
- *“Avoid damage to the riverbanks as a result of agricultural or other practices.”* and
- *“Do not clear vegetation from riverbanks where evidence of use for perching and nesting.”*

5.5 LCA 218 ‘Pirton Lowlands’ covers the Ickleford settlement and extends into the northern part of the site along Turnpike Lane. This also sets out landscape guidelines, with those relevant to the site and proposed development including:

- *“Promote planting of new woodland to encourage a diverse woodland flora especially in relation to sub-urban fringe areas.”*
- *“For existing woodlands, encourage diverse woodland management practice and replanting of conifer plantations with new deciduous woodlands.”*
- *“Promote hedgerow restoration along the lines of historic field boundaries and for the creation of visual links between existing woodland areas.”*
- *“Promote the use of traditional field hedgerows in place of post and wire enclosures to new grazing areas.”*
- *“Promote the diversity of hedgerow species and the planting of standard hedgerow trees.”*
- *“Maintain and extend the rights of way network.”*
- *“Encourage the development of unimproved species-rich grassland habitats.”*
- *“Promote the creation of new ponds and the retention of existing ponds for wildlife.”*
and
- *“Encourage the planting of trees and other appropriate vegetation along watercourses.”*

PROPOSED LANDSCAPE MITIGATION AND ENHANCEMENT

5.6 The Illustrative Landscape Strategy is contained as **Plan EDP 6**, which illustrates the broad arrangement of Green Infrastructure across the site.

5.7 Consistent with a landscape-led approach, the landscape strategy has evolved to avoid or minimise potential landscape and visual effects when considering the more detailed findings of the field assessment. Thus, the scheme proposals incorporate a degree of integrated mitigation to avoid or reduce potential landscape and visual effects.

- 5.8 At a macro level, the proposed Green Infrastructure would ensure that the proposed development is accessible, would be an attractive place to live, would manage surface water attenuation in a sustainable way and would facilitate improved opportunities for local wildlife.
- 5.9 With reference to **Plan EDP 6**, the key design considerations and inherent mitigation that informs the landscape strategy are as follows:
- Ensure all high-quality tree and hedgerow stock within the site is retained, and where possible, is enhanced/gapped up as required to restore a continuous landscape structure and visual screening;
 - Reinforce existing boundaries to the east and west to provide visual screening to the properties at these edges. These would comprise native planting, while also providing additional biodiversity corridors and overall connectivity;
 - Provide landscape and biodiversity enhancements to the site by including SuDS features (ditches, swales and basins) linking with habitats along the river corridor and the wider landscape character area, incorporating a native and locally appropriate mix of wet, species-rich grassland and scrub planting;
 - Incorporate large areas of Public Open Space (POS) at the southern edge towards the river. This serves multiple functions, including: reducing the coalescence between Ickleford and Hitchin, limiting landscape and visual impact of proposed settlement on the river corridor and surrounding receptors. providing beneficial elements to the river corridor through ecological, arboricultural and landscape enhancements; minimising residential amenity impact on the properties in the south-west corner; and providing a large area of parkland for recreational use by the local community and opportunities for forage and habitat creativity for wildlife. This would have multiple benefits in line with the published landscape resource which promotes and encourages public access to the river, as well as SEO3 of NCA 110 to *“protect the water resource”* and ensure *“thriving floodplains valued by the public”*. This would also seek to *“avoid damage to the riverbanks as a result of agricultural or other practices”*;
 - Retaining woodland habitat with a 10m minimum offset to be in accordance with Policy NE4 of the North Herts Local Plan and SEO1 of the NCA 110: Chilterns published guidance to *“manage the wooded landscape... with the aims of conserving and enhancing biodiversity and the historic landscape and its significant features; maximising the potential for recreation”*. The retained woodland buffers at the site boundaries would comprise a mixture of ecotone habitats such as additional native woodland, native scrub and species-rich wildflower grassland;
 - Additional native woodland blocks would be planted throughout the site to offset and compensate for any loss of woodland through the proposed development, such as for the access (15m section); and
 - Locate play area adjacent to other public spaces and near development blocks to allow easy access and natural surveillance.

Section 6

Assessment of Effects

INTRODUCTION

- 6.1 In this section, the predicted effects on landscape character and visual amenity are assessed. The assessment uses the thresholds for magnitude, sensitivity and significance defined at **Appendix EDP 1** as a guide, but moderated where appropriate with professional judgement. Professional judgement is an important part of the assessment process; it is neither 'pro' nor 'anti' development but acknowledges that development may result in beneficial change as well as landscape harm. The assessment also takes account of the likely effectiveness of any proposed mitigation.
- 6.2 Predicted effects on receptors are assessed at construction and upon the first year following completion (Year 1), these effects tend to represent the 'worst case'. Also provided is an assessment of effects at Year 15, once proposed landscape planting and mitigation has had time to mature and the proposals are settled in their context. Year 15 (and beyond) is the timeframe over which the proposed development should be judged for its acceptability, with landscape change properly measured over this longer-term horizon.

Construction Effects

- 6.3 Construction activities, movement of site traffic, lighting, and noise would be present during the construction period. This would be carefully controlled by a construction method statement through an appropriately worded planning condition. Recommendations for protection of retained trees and hedgerows, in accordance with relevant British Standards such as *BS 5837:2012* would be followed. This would ensure that trees are protected from any construction process and not adversely affected by the construction process, including above-ground and below-ground rooting areas of trees and hedgerows both on the site and at its perimeters.
- 6.4 As a result of the construction activities the magnitude of change on the site's landscape character would be **high**, albeit temporary (short-term). When combined with the site's medium landscape sensitivity, this would result in a **major/moderate** adverse effect. The effect would be temporary and extend only for the duration of the construction process and the effect would only be on the site and its immediate context.
- 6.5 Effects would extend marginally beyond the site boundary to the wider landscape context, principally in relation to perceptual aspects, including visibility of construction activities, lighting, noise and movement of materials to/from the site. The overall magnitude of change at the level of the LCA is considered to be **low** due to the relatively small geographical extent and temporary nature of the construction works. When combined with the **medium** sensitivity of the LCA, will result in a **moderate/minor** adverse effect.

- 6.6 This level of effect at construction is not uncommon on a greenfield site, and is not an indication of bad design, but an outcome based on the conversion of an edge of settlement greenfield site to a residential development. Where adverse effects are experienced (at a localised level), these will result in a short, temporary impact (approximately 3-4 years). The level of effects will also reduce throughout the construction phase, as more of the development is built out and less construction activity is required.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Operation Effects (Years 1 and 15)

Predicted Effects on the Character of the Site

- 6.7 Following construction of the development/establishment of the proposed landscape strategy (whichever is sooner), the predicted effects take into account suitable and appropriate management of existing and proposed landscape features, undertaken in accordance with a landscape management plan or similar.
- 6.8 It is a consequence of the nature of the development proposed that the visual and sensory character of the site would change substantially as a result of implementation. The magnitude of change is not an indication of bad design but is to be expected as the result of the change of use of any greenfield site to residential development.
- 6.9 The changes predicted to occur on the dimensions of the site character (in effect the inherent landscape elements that contribute to the landscape character of the site) are described below and evaluated overall.

Topography

- 6.10 There is a relatively subtle topographical variation within the site currently, and only limited earthworks would be necessary to accommodate much of the proposed development. The primary changes to the topography of the site would be in relation to the surface level adaptation to accommodate the foundations of buildings, construction of roads, and attenuation features such as the network of swales and basin. The ground around the perimeter of the site parcels would be free from any construction to conserve the rooting areas of the surrounding trees. The overall topographic profile of the site would remain with minimal change through engineering works.
- 6.11 The magnitude of change on the ground profile of the site would be **low** for Year 1 and Year 15. This, when coupled with a low sensitivity, results in a predicted effect of **minor adverse**.

Land Use

- 6.12 The inevitable consequence of building development on greenfield land would be the change of land use from pasture to residential use. The existing pasture would be removed and replaced by the proposed development, which would include areas of public open space comprising a wide range of planting, residential buildings, and the associated roads and pedestrian network. Whilst the construction phase would include clearance of the land cover, once the landscape proposals have been implemented, the operational phase would

have some beneficial effects in terms of green infrastructure. The proposed grassland mixes for the areas of public open space and attenuation would be species diverse and rich in flowering plants, which would not only be beneficial to biodiversity but would also have amenity value. In addition, the redevelopment of the site presents the opportunity for a cohesive and attractive hard landscape strategy which complements the proposed built form and local vernacular.

- 6.13 Whilst there would be some beneficial changes to land use with the high percentage of proposed green infrastructure, large areas of the site would comprise new built infrastructure resulting in an overall adverse effect relative to the baseline which is unavoidable for a development such as this. The magnitude of change on the land use of the site is assessed as **high** at Year 1 and Year 15. This, which when combined with a medium sensitivity, results in a predicted effect of **major/moderate** adverse.

Trees, Woodland and Hedgerow

- 6.14 The Tree Survey sets out a detailed assessment of the condition of trees and hedgerows within and adjoining the site. The boundary vegetation has been well-considered throughout the design process so that it is largely retained with the exception of puncture points through hedgerows for access. Sensitive construction methods would be used for pedestrian accesses to minimise impact on tree cover across the site. The proposed landscape strategy (see **Plan EDP 6**) illustrates the level of tree cover to be proposed across the scheme which is both high in quantity and variety.
- 6.15 For this reason, the magnitude of change on trees, woodland and hedgerow in the site would be **high** (beneficial) at Year 1 due to the high increase in canopy coverage across the site and the retention of the majority of trees including all moderate to high value tree cover. This includes offsets from the existing woodland at the boundaries of the site, and the inclusion of additional woodland buffers and large trees to reinforce local landscape character. The overall predicted effect is **major/moderate beneficial** for tree and woodland cover (medium sensitivity) and **moderate beneficial** for hedgerows (low sensitivity).
- 6.16 This has the potential to increase to **very high** (beneficial) at Year 15 once the trees and other proposed planting has established, resulting in a **major beneficial** predicted effects for tree and woodland, and **major/moderate beneficial** for hedgerows.

Waterbodies

- 6.17 A single waterbody is located to the south of the site comprising the River Oughton watercourse and its associated river corridor to the east leading to Ickleford and west to the Chilterns. This would remain present within the site and a substantial offset to the proposed built form has been included as part of the scheme, comprising a large parkland. A large attenuation basin has been introduced as part of a wider, well-considered, SuDS strategy, including a network of ponds and natural swales leading to this feature providing flood alleviation and other beneficial properties such as an increase in biodiversity.

- 6.18 The magnitude of change is considered to be **medium** (beneficial) relative to waterbodies at Year 1 and Year 15 due to the introduction of additional water retaining features. This, when coupled with a high sensitivity, results in a predicted effect of **major/moderate beneficial**.

Site Landscape Character

- 6.19 The sensitivity of the overall landscape character of the site and its immediate environs is medium. Impacts as a result of the proposed development would be medium scale, restricted to within the site boundary (though noted as visible from a very small envelope on the immediate surroundings of the site). The site's current use as horse paddocks heavily restricts any landscape value and habitat in the main field parcels, the proposed development brings the opportunity ensure the POS within the site is maintained to a high standard, improving the landscape fabric over the long-term. The magnitude of change would be long-term and permanent and is considered **high** in relation to the site, resulting in a **major/moderate adverse** predicted effect on the inherent landscape character of the site at Year 1. At Year 15, once the robust landscape proposals would have had time to mature, the magnitude of change has the opportunity to reduce to **medium**, resulting in a **moderate adverse** predicted level of effect on the inherent landscape character of the site.

Predicted Effects on LCA 217: Oughton and Purwell Valleys

- 6.20 The site sits on the boundary of two LCAs within Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment. LCA 217 covers the majority of the site in proximity to the River Oughton along the southern boundary.
- 6.21 The area immediately surrounding the site will be subject to the greatest change to the defined LCA and this is predicted to diminish due to distance, intervening landform and features. Effects on the immediate surroundings and the wider area are described below.
- 6.22 The visual character of the LCA would not be notably interrupted by the development due to the existing urbanising features on the periphery of the site and the very strong visual enclosure by the river corridor and surrounding woodland. The proposed development would not change the character of the landscape in the wider area of LCA 217 (beyond the immediate surroundings) due to lack of intervisibility and existing presence of similar development.
- 6.23 With the implementation of mitigation and enhancement measures outlined in **Section 5**, guided by the LCAs published landscape guidelines and recommendations, (including the retention of the mature landscape framework, additional proposed tree cover, and the encouragement of species diversity, protecting and enhancing the watercourse and the addition of additional native vegetation), it is expected that this would strengthen the contribution to the wider treed landscape along this watercourse associated with this LCA. This would be in accordance with its published key characteristics outlined in **Section 3**, and its associated guidelines.

- 6.24 The overall sensitivity of LCA 217 was judged to be medium. The overall magnitude of change would be **low**, which, when combined with a medium sensitivity, would yield a **minor adverse** predicted effect. This is limited to the defined site area and its immediate context, which is very small in proportion to the wider LCA.
- 6.25 At Year 15, once new vegetation within the site has established, this has the opportunity to make a more noticeable beneficial contribution to the local landscape character, reducing any adverse effects on the LCA to **negligible**.

Predicted Effects on LCA 218: Pirton Lowlands to the North

- 6.26 LCA covers the majority of Ickleford urban area which stretches along the southern edges of the site. Given the nature of the proposed development and the presence of Ickleford settlement covering the majority of this LCA within the immediate vicinity, the development would not have a discernible impact due to the site's location surrounded by existing and proposed built form.
- 6.27 With the implementation of the landscape strategy including the retention and enhancement of the majority of trees and woodland along Turnpike Lane (with the exception of the access puncture point), this LCA 218 in close proximity to the site would be respected and enhanced. The growth of proposed hedgerows and tree planting, ongoing management of existing vegetation and encouragement of species diversity within the proposed site planting, it is expected that this would strengthen the contribution to the wider treed landscape associated with the LCA.
- 6.28 The overall magnitude of change on LCA 218 would be low, which, when combined with the low sensitivity of the LCA, would yield a **minor adverse** effect. This is adverse in nature but limited to the defined site area, which is proposed to be built, which in effect would infill a gap in the settlement which would be surrounded by existing and new built form. This would be very small in proportion to the wider context including the wider LCA. There would be an incremental reduction in the level of effect as the proposed landscape features – mainly boundary hedgerows and trees - mature and make a more noticeable contribution to the local landscape character. This effect is likely to reduce in the long term to **negligible**.

VISUAL AMENITY

Operation Effects (Years 1 and 15)

Predicted Effects on Visual Receptors

- 6.29 Visual effects relate to changes that arise in the composition of available views as a result of changes to the landscape, to people's responses to the changes and to the overall effects with respect to visual amenity. Effects upon these receptors are derived through the changes to the viewer's experience and through this, the change to the overall visual amenity of the study area as brought about by the proposed development.

- 6.30 The visibility of the site is heavily restricted beyond the immediate surroundings by intervening vegetation, built form and the lack of topographical change across the study area. Therefore, views are considered to be contained to receptors within or abutting the site boundary.
- 6.31 At Year 1, the proposed development would appear as a new addition in the view to road users and residents of Turnpike Lane particularly where the proposed access is located. Beyond those receptors within or immediately adjacent to the site, there are no further areas of predicted visibility. No PRow users would be impacted.
- 6.32 The proposed development includes the provision of a large buffer to Turnpike Lane along the northern edge. Other buffers are established at all boundaries, particularly to the south adjacent to the river. This comprises open space with many trees, lengths of hedgerow including existing hedgerow enhancement, and scrub/shrub planting which, once matured, would further soften and integrate the development into its surroundings to reduce visibility even further. Taking into account this context, the assessment has considered the level and extent of effects to the identified local visual receptor groups, namely Turnpike Lane and adjacent development.

Road Users

Turnpike Lane

- 6.33 Users of this road will only perceive change while passing the northern edge of the site, with most change coming from the introduction of the access road. The existing vegetation would be retained within a large buffer and is proposed to be enhanced. The magnitude of change is predicted to be medium at Year 1, where the proposed development would form a new and recognisable element within the view for a very short stretch of this road, which is likely to be recognised by the receptor at close range. Views would be fleeting and glimpsed whilst travelling by vehicle. Combined with the route's medium sensitivity, this results in a **moderate adverse** level of effect. As the landscape strategy matures, the magnitude of change is anticipated to reduce to low at Year 15, resulting in a **moderate/minor adverse** effect.

A600 Bedford Road

- 6.34 This is a long distance 'A' road connecting Bedford in the north with Hitchin to the south. The route defines the western boundary of the site south of the new Ickleford Manor/Ickleford Mews development. **Photoviewpoint EDP 4** illustrates that this boundary is heavily wooded with a dense screen of vegetation between this road and the site. A potential pedestrian connection has been proposed along this boundary which would create a small gap between two trees at the lower sub-canopy level. Using sensitive construction methods and retaining the trees and their canopies, the majority of this existing vegetation would be retained as a visual barrier. The magnitude of change is predicted to be low at Year 1, with a minor change coming from the introduction of this footpath link. This is unlikely to be recognised by the receptor travelling by vehicle at speed. Combined with the route's low sensitivity, this results in a **minor adverse** level of effect. As the landscape strategy matures, the magnitude of change is anticipated to reduce to negligible at Year 15, resulting in a **negligible** effect.

Residential Dwellings/Groups

- 6.35 Views from private residential properties, although likely to be of high or very high sensitivity to any change in views or visual amenity, are not protected by national planning guidance or local planning policy. Accordingly, changes to the character, 'quality' and nature of private views are not a material planning consideration in the determination of a planning application and therefore, are not considered in detail in the LVGBA. However, they do remain relevant to this appraisal in terms of the predicted extent and nature of visual change, so are reviewed briefly below.

Turnpike Lane

- 6.36 Properties along Turnpike Lane are adjacent to the site and define the current settlement edge of Ickleford. As with the road users, due to their proximity to the proposed development a degree of change would be noticeable, particularly for those properties overlooking the access point, despite established vegetation being retained along the northern edge. There will be the need for some management and thinning of this vegetation as it is currently unmanaged with some trees in poor condition, which would mean, at least for a short time more intervisibility with the site. The magnitude of change would be **medium** leading to a **major/moderate** adverse level of effect. By Year 15, however, the effects of the landscape enhancements would reduce the magnitude of change to **low** leading to a **moderate** adverse level of effect.

Ickleford Manor/Ickleford Mews

- 6.37 Ickleford Manor directly to the west is represented by **Photoviewpoint EDP 1**. Due to its proximity to the proposed development, a degree of change would be noticeable from the main Ickleford Manor house. The landscape mitigation strategy involves the retention of trees along this western edge and an offset with open space comprising another layer of trees and hedgerow. With additional bolstering of trees, hedgerow and scrub, particularly where gaps have formed, the proposed development along this edge would be effectively screened.
- 6.38 The magnitude of change would be **medium** at Year 1 leading to a **major/moderate adverse** level of effect for this single property. By Year 15, however, the effects of the landscape enhancements would reduce the magnitude of change to **low** leading to a **moderate adverse** level of effect.

Section 7 Green Belt Matters

INTRODUCTION

7.1 The *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF, December 2024) states that:

“The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.”

7.2 The NPPF (paragraph 143) states that Green Belt serves five purposes:

- *“To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;*
- *To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;*
- *To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;*
- *To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and*
- *To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.”*

7.3 The purpose of this section is to review the site and its contribution in terms of ‘openness’ and towards the five purposes.

REVIEW AND APPRAISAL OF THE NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL (NHDC) GREEN BELT EVIDENCE BASE

7.4 Within the adopted North Hertfordshire Local Plan, the site lies entirely within the Metropolitan Green Belt as shown on the interactive proposals map⁷. However, the village of Ickleford itself does not lie within the Green Belt.

7.5 As part of the Local Plan, North Hertfordshire carried out a Green Belt Review in 2018 (NHGBR), which formed an update to the original document produced in 2017.

7.6 The site and its surrounding context to the south lies within ‘Parcel 13: Ickleford’, see **Image EDP 7.1**.

⁷ <https://maps.north-herts.gov.uk/Maps/map.aspx?mapname=LocalPlan>.

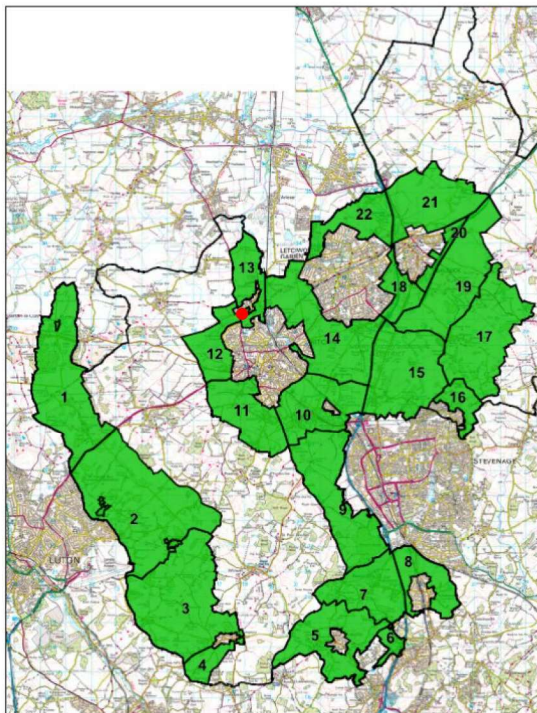


Image EDP 7.1: NHGBR Green Belt Parcels (approximate site location indicated by a red dot).

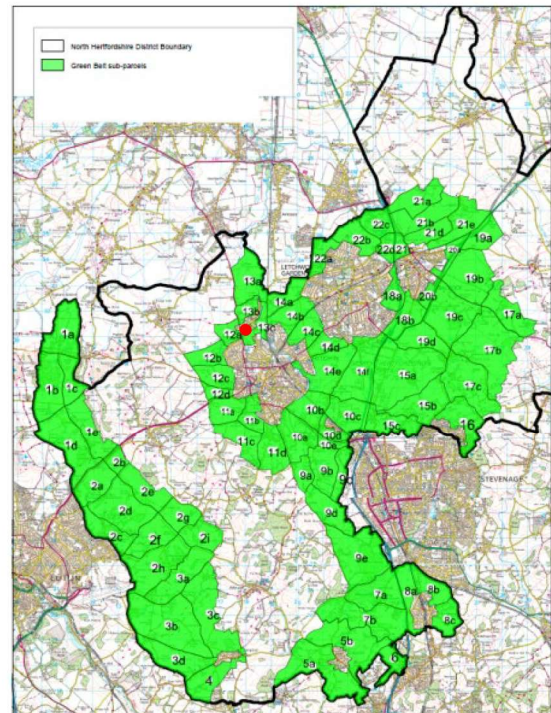


Image EDP 7.2: NHGBR Green Belt Sub-Parcels (approximate site location indicated by a red dot).

- 7.7 The NHGBR is split into two parts: Part 1 is a strategic level review of the current Green Belt and a more detailed assessment of potential development sites. The site is not included within the more detailed assessment; however, the adjacent Lodge Court (Parcel 328: 'Land at Ickleford Manor, Turnpike Lane') holds many similarities with the site in terms of its description and contribution to each of the purposes. An extract from this assessment is included at **Appendix EDP 3**. The location of Lodge Court is illustrated at **Image EDP 7.3**.

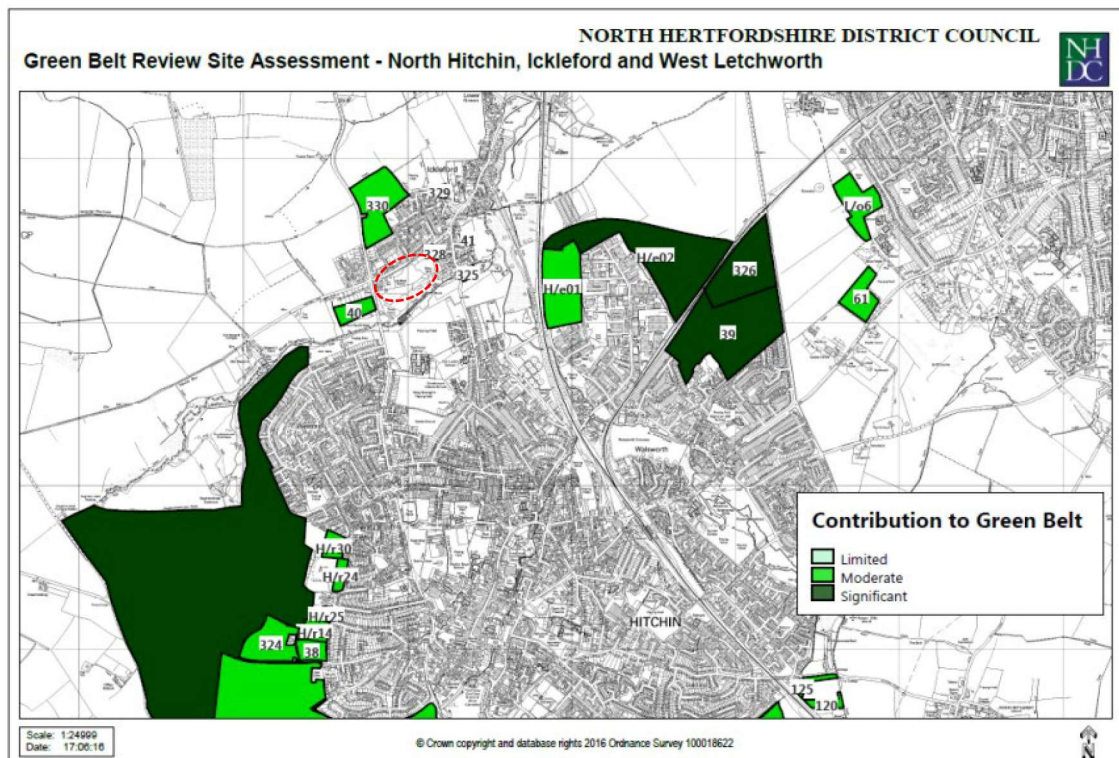


Image EDP 7.3: Extract from the NHGBR in relation to Parcels around Ickleford (green) with the site broadly indicated with a red dashed circle.

EDP'S GREEN BELT APPRAISAL

- 7.8 Green Belt is a spatial planning tool and infers no elevated judgement of landscape quality or value. Any development within the site would result in the permanent loss of Green Belt land to built development. The loss of openness can comprise both a spatial and visual dimension.
- 7.9 The site is abutted by residential built development and there is no noteworthy 'built form' within the site. As a result of the site's spatial position adjacent to the existing settlement, combined with the well-vegetated boundaries and surrounding built context, the site is afforded a degree of containment from the wider Green Belt. The proposed development includes additional, clearly defined areas of publicly accessible open space, and the housing set back from boundaries, more 'valued' landscape features and away from more 'open' portions of the site to the south-east. There is the opportunity for an appropriate landscape scheme (including retention and enhancement of existing vegetation) along the perimeters of the site to provide mitigation and ensure the ongoing containment of the site.
- 7.10 The Government has published updated *Planning Practice Guidance* (PPG) in 2025 in relation to assessment of Green Belt Land, specifically concerning the status of 'Grey Belt'.

- 7.11 The PPG tells us that when making judgements as to whether land is Grey Belt, we should consider the contribution that assessment areas make to Green Belt purposes a), b), and d). Judgements in relation to the site are set out below, following the assessment criteria from the PPG.

Purpose a): Check the Unrestricted Sprawl of Large Built-up Areas

- 7.12 The site is considered to make a 'weak to no' contribution, for the reasons outlined in **Table EDP 7.1**.
- 7.13 Ickleford is a village, not a town. There would be limited reduction in perceived openness as the land within the site is not widely visible to the public other than views from receptors either within or immediately adjacent to the site. The site is bordered by strong defensible boundaries on all sides, including a river along the southern edge, and development would not therefore increase susceptibility to unrestricted sprawl of any large built-up area (Town).

Table EDP 7.1: Assessment Criteria for Purpose a)

Assessment Criteria for Purpose a): Check the Unrestricted Sprawl of Large Built-up Areas	
Strong Contribution	<i>"Assessment areas that contribute strongly are likely to be free of existing development and lack physical feature(s) in reasonable proximity that could restrict and contain development.</i> <i>They are also likely to include all of the following features:</i> <i>• Be adjacent or near to a large built up area; and</i> <i>• If developed, result in an incongruous pattern of development (such as an extended 'finger' of development into the Green Belt)."</i>
Moderate Contribution	<i>"Assessment areas that contribute moderately are likely to be adjacent or near to a large built up area, but include one or more features that weaken the land's contribution to this purpose a, such as (but not limited to):</i> <i>• Having physical feature(s) in reasonable proximity that could restrict and contain development;</i> <i>• Be partially enclosed by existing development, such that new development would not result in an incongruous pattern of development;</i> <i>• Contain existing development; and</i> <i>• Being subject to other urbanising influences."</i>
Weak or No Contribution	<i>"Assessment areas that make only a weak or no contribution are likely to include those that:</i> <i>• Are not adjacent to or near to a large built-up area; and</i> <i>• Are adjacent to or near to a large built up area, but containing or being largely enclosed by significant existing development."</i>

Purpose b): Prevent Neighbouring Towns from Merging Into One Another

- 7.14 The site is considered to make 'Weak or No' Contribution, for the reasons outlined in **Table EDP 7.2**.

- 7.15 Development of the site would not bring the village of Ickleford closer to any town, as development is already beyond the village extents to the east, west and south. Therefore, the site would simply fill a gap in an area already surrounded by development. Furthermore, the sense of separation brought by further tree belts, river corridors, sport pitches and topography beyond to the south, are such that development of the site would in no way result in the merging of the settlements.

Table EDP 7.2: Assessment Criteria for Purpose b)

Assessment Criteria for Purpose b): Prevent Neighbouring Towns from Merging into One Another	
Strong Contribution	<i>“Assessment areas that contribute strongly are likely to be free of existing development and include all of the following features:</i> <i>• Forming a substantial part of a gap between towns; and</i> <i>• The development of which would be likely to result in the loss of visual separation of towns.”</i>
Moderate Contribution	<i>“Assessment areas that contribute moderately are likely to be located in a gap between towns, but include one or more features that weaken their contribution to this purpose, such as (but not limited to):</i> <i>• Forming a small part of the gap between towns; and</i> <i>• Being able to be developed without the loss of visual separation between towns. This could be (but is not limited to) due to the presence or the close proximity of structures, natural landscape elements or topography that preserve visual separation.”</i>
Weak or No Contribution	<i>“Assessment areas that contribute weakly are likely to include those that:</i> <i>• Do not form part of a gap between towns; or</i> <i>• Form part of a gap between towns, but only a very small part of this gap, without making a contribution to visual separation.”</i>

Purpose d): To Preserve the Setting and Special Character of Historic Towns

- 7.16 The site is considered to make a ‘Weak or No’ contribution, for the reasons outlined in **Table EDP 7.3**.
- 7.17 Due to the site’s existing containment and intervening development, topography and vegetation, development of the site will not alter the character or setting of the historic cores of any historic town in the locality. Ickleford is not a town; however, for the avoidance of doubt it is important to note that Ickleford Conservation Area is not adjacent to the site and there is no intervisibility between the conservation area and the site.

Table EDP 7.3: Assessment Criteria for Purpose d)

Assessment Criteria for Purpose d): Preserve the Setting and Special Character of Historic Towns	
Strong Contribution	<i>“Assessment areas that contribute strongly are likely be free of existing development and to include all of the following features:</i> <i>• Form part of the setting of the historic town; and</i> <i>• Make a considerable contribution to the special character of a historic town. This could be (but is not limited to) as a result of being within, adjacent to, or of significant visual importance to the historic aspects of the town.”</i>
Moderate Contribution	<i>“Assessment areas that perform moderately are likely to form part of the setting and/or contribute to the special character of a historic town but include one or more features that weaken their contribution to this purpose, such as (but not limited to):</i> <i>• Being separated to some extent from historic aspects of the town by existing development or topography;</i> <i>• Containing existing development; and</i> <i>• Not having an important visual, physical, or experiential relationship to historic aspects of the town.”</i>
Weak or No Contribution	<i>“Assessment areas that make no or only a weak contribution are likely to include those that:</i> <i>• <u>Do not form part of the setting of a historic town;</u> and</i> <i>• <u>Have no visual, physical, or experiential connection to the historic aspects of the town.”</u></i>

- 7.18 This section reviews the site against the NPPF (December 2024) Green Belt Purposes and the Green Belt PPG (2025), to determine whether the application of the revised Framework is likely to find development of the site ‘not inappropriate’.
- 7.19 Regarding visual change (and the visual dimension of Green Belt assessment), there will be localised and limited harm to visual receptors as would be expected, particularly adjacent to the site. However, such receptors already experience the existing settlement edge and larger built infrastructure (Ickleford Mill) as a tangible and visual feature. There is opportunity for appropriate mitigation to contain development.
- 7.20 As set out above, when making judgements as to whether land is Grey Belt, the Green Belt PPG 2025, indicates that authorities should consider the contribution that assessment areas make to Green Belt purposes.
- 7.21 In the context of Purpose a) – to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas:
- A contribution of ‘Weak to None’ includes those that, like the site, are not near to a large built-up area (town) and, like the site, are enclosed by significant existing development (built development). They are afforded a degree of enclosure (landform and vegetation) and would not be considered incongruous. Finally, like the site, it is influenced by adjacent urbanising elements.

7.22 In a similar manner to Purpose a), the PPG (2025) indicates that in relation to Purpose b); to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another. Villages and Hamlets are not considered large built-up areas:

- A contribution of 'Weak or None' includes those that, like the site, do not form part of a gap between towns and, like the site, make no contribution to visual separation.

7.23 Evidently the site is separated from the historic aspect of any town (Purpose d).

7.24 Therefore, in summary, the site makes no contribution to Green Belt Purposes a), b) and d). In which case, the site can be considered to be Grey Belt.

New Paragraph 155 and Footnote 7

7.25 Current paragraph 154 is replaced by new paragraph 155 (NPPF, 2024) which requires that:

"155. The development of homes, commercial and other development in the Green Belt should also not be regarded as inappropriate where:

- a. The development would utilise grey belt land and would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan."*

7.26 This is helpful in that while development on any undeveloped, open, Green Belt land would generally, by its nature, have a 'greater impact' on the openness of the Green Belt than exists on the site already it would not necessarily 'fundamentally undermine' the wider Green Belt.

7.27 In relation to the site and the surrounding landscape to the south, they are open in so far as they do not contain development of a scale, character or form that has a significant impact on Green Belt openness. However, while development of the site might be seen to have 'greater impact' on the openness of the Green Belt than exists on the site already it would not fundamentally undermine the performance of Green Belt land outside the site in part due to its relatively small scale in relation to the wider Green Belt, and because of its strong containment.

7.28 The PPG's second consideration is whether the policies in Footnote 7 of the NPPF provide a strong reason to refuse development - i.e., habitats sites (and those sites listed in paragraph 187) and/or designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI); Local Green Space; an AONB (NL), a National Park (or within the Broads Authority) or defined as Heritage Coast; irreplaceable habitats; designated heritage assets (and other heritage assets of archaeological interest referred to in footnote 72); and areas at risk of flooding or 'Grey Belt'. This matter is dealt with in the submitted Planning Statement.

GREY BELT APPRAISAL

- 7.29 Consideration of 'harm' is outlined at paragraph 009 of the PPG (2025), which makes clear that:
- The consideration is whether the site (not any larger area) strongly contributes to the Green Belt purposes a), b) or d); and
 - Whether development of the site would fundamentally undermine the purposes of the remaining Green Belt across the plan area.
- 7.30 The site does not 'strongly contribute' to the Green Belt and constitutes Grey Belt land.
- 7.31 The extent to which the development of the site would fundamentally undermine the purposes of the remaining Green Belt is largely concerned with impacts on visual openness, whereby openness is primarily the absence of built form. Openness can be considered as both spatial openness and visual openness. Consideration of the visual dimension does not diminish any harm to the spatial component.
- 7.32 It is considered that there would be some limited harm to the spatial openness of the Green Belt at this location. This harm would result from the loss of a small parcel of land for residential development.
- 7.33 As a result of the proposed development, the loss of visual openness beyond the immediate site will be limited. This potential reduction in visual openness constitutes a degree of harm. However, the visual effects of the proposed development are very localised, confined to the site and its immediate context. The introduction of residential development to existing views will be seen in the context of Ickleford, where residential development is already a frequent component of local views. Overall, the site is characterised by existing built form (immediately adjacent) and urbanising elements, as well the enclosure by mature vegetation. Therefore, there would likely be a limited level of localised harm or performance to the visual openness of the Green Belt.
- 7.34 The review of the site against the main purposes of Green Belt concludes that rather than being a high-functioning part of the Green Belt which contributes highly towards the main function of keeping land 'permanently open', the site is in fact enclosed, characterised by existing built form and urbanising elements, which is seen by relatively few receptors close to it. Therefore, the site does not fundamentally undermine the purposes of the remaining Green Belt across the plan area.
- 7.35 Furthermore, NPPF 2024 paragraph 156c (known as the 'Golden Rules', requires any sites in the Green Belt subject to a planning application to provide new, or improvements to existing, green spaces that are accessible to the public. Furthermore, at paragraph 159 there is a requirement that the green space improvements "*should contribute positively to the landscape setting of development, support nature recovery and meet local standards for green space provision where these exist in the development plan*". The site is currently in private ownership and accessible areas of green space will be provided as part of the development, illustrated on **Plan EDP 6**. There will be no loss of currently accessible green

space. There is sufficient provision of new green spaces that are accessible to existing and new residents, as well as landscape enhancements, such as additional tree and hedgerow planting to meet the requirements under paragraphs 156 and 159. Further details of the landscape strategy proposals and enhancements can be found at **Section 6** of this report.

SUMMARY OF GREEN BELT APPRAISAL

- 7.36 In summary, having followed the assessment criteria within the PPG 2025, the site is considered 'Grey Belt' as it does not strongly contribute to purposes a, b or d. It is also considered that the site is a lower functioning area of the Green Belt and does not fundamentally undermine the purposes of the remaining Green Belt across the plan area. Furthermore, the proposed development and associated landscape strategy contributes appropriately to the relevant Golden Rules.

Section 8 Summary and Conclusions

- 8.1 EDP is an independent environmental consultancy and Registered Practice of the Landscape Institute specialising the assessment of developments at all scales across the UK.
- 8.2 This report has summarised the findings of a comprehensive landscape data trawl and field appraisal (**Sections 2, 3 and 4**). In **Section 5**, the proposed development is described with any proposed mitigation. **Section 6** undertakes an assessment of the likely landscape and visual effects having regard to the above and based on a combination of the thresholds set out in **Appendix EDP 1** coupled with professional judgement. A consideration of the contribution the site makes to the Green Belt has been made in **Section 7**.
- 8.3 The visual and sensory character of the site would change notably as a result of the proposed development. This change is not an indication of bad design but is to be expected as the result of the change of use of any greenfield site to residential development. However, the site already has a settlement edge character and is influenced by the surrounding residential built form. Furthermore, the dominant landscape features on the site (existing trees and hedgerows around the site perimeter and its functional relationship to the river and river valley) will be retained and enhanced.

SUMMARY OF EFFECTS

- 8.4 Likely effects are summarised in **Table EDP 8.1**:

Table EDP 8.1: Summary of Predicted Effects

Receptor Group	Value	Susceptibility to Change	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change	Predicted Effect
Landscape Character of the Site					
Topography	Low	Low	Low	Year 1: Low	Year 1: Minor adverse
				Year 15: Low	Year 15: Minor adverse
Land Use	Medium	Medium	Medium	Year 1: High	Year 1: Major/- Moderate adverse
				Year 15: High	Year 15: Major/- Moderate adverse

Receptor Group	Value	Susceptibility to Change	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change	Predicted Effect
Trees and Woodland	Medium	Medium	Medium	Year 1: High	Year 1: Major/- Moderate beneficial
				Year 15: Very High	Year 15: Major beneficial
Hedgerow	Medium	Medium	Medium	Year 1: High	Year 1: Moderate beneficial
				Year 15: Very High	Year 15: Major/- Moderate beneficial
Waterbodies	High	High	High	Year 1: Medium	Year 1: Major/- moderate beneficial
				Year 15: Medium	Year 15: Major/- moderate beneficial
Overall Landscape Character of the Site and Context	Medium	Medium	Medium	Year 1: High	Year 1: Major/- moderate adverse
				Year 15: Medium	Year 15: Moderate adverse
Published Landscape Character Assessment (North Hertfordshire LCA)					
LCA 217: Oughton and Purwell Valley	Medium	Medium	Medium	Year 1: Low	Year 1: Minor/ moderate adverse
				Year 15: Negligible	Year 15: Negligible
LCA 218: Pirton Lowlands	Low	Low	Low	Year 1: Low	Year 1: Minor adverse
				Year 15: Negligible	Year 15: Negligible
Visual Receptors					
Road Users					
Turnpike Lane	Medium	Medium	Medium	Year 1: Medium	Year 1: Moderate adverse
				Year 15: Low	Year 15: Minor adverse

Receptor Group	Value	Susceptibility to Change	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change	Predicted Effect
A600 Bedford Road	Low	Low	Low	Year 1: Low	Year 1: Minor adverse
				Year 15: Negligible	Year 15: Negligible
Residential Dwellings/Groups					
Turnpike Lane	High	High	High	Year 1: Medium	Year 1: Major/- Moderate adverse
				Year 15: Low	Year 15: Moderate adverse
Ickleford Manor/ Ickleford Mews	High	High	High	Year 1: Medium	Year 1: Major/- Moderate adverse
				Year 15: Low	Year 15: Moderate adverse

- 8.5 The proposals respect and enhance the landscape character of the surrounding area and site, and public visual amenity through a landscape led design. The site represents a logical and easily assimilated infill development that does not give rise to coalescence between the settlements of Ickleford and Hitchin due to the substantial areas of public open space that respects the River Oughton. The proposed development does not extend the settlement of Ickleford any further south that is already present due to the surrounding development that exists, alongside the proposals under construction and approved in planning at the time of writing, to the east and west.
- 8.6 The proposed residential development represents a small-scale and visually discrete feature and the site is not subject to any landscape designations seeking to protect specific landscape value.
- 8.7 The proposed development would create only very limited and localised landscape and visual effects. By including additional mitigation around the site's boundaries, it can be further integrated into its surroundings. Overall, the proposed development in the round, would not constitute an unacceptable impact in landscape and visual terms.
- 8.8 The review of the site in relation to the purposes of the Green Belt and its openness concludes that the site does not play a fundamental role concerning the wider Metropolitan Green Belt, and if released/developed it would not harm the performance of the wider strategic Green Belt. Having followed the assessment criteria within the PPG 2025, the site is considered 'Grey Belt' as it does not strongly contribute to Purposes 1, 2 or 4.

- 8.9 Accordingly, this LVGBA concludes that there is no landscape or visual reason why the site should not be developed and would therefore not result in material harm to the character of the surrounding area.

Appendix EDP 1

EDP LVIA Methodology

INTRODUCTION

A1.1 This section provides a methodology for landscape and visual impact assessment.

BEST PRACTICE

A1.2 The assessment methodology for assessing landscape and visual effects is based on the following best practice guidance:

- *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment – Third Edition (GLVIA3)* (LI/IEMA, 2013);
- *Notes and Clarifications on Aspects of the Third Edition Guidelines on Landscape Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA3)* LITGN-2024-01 (LI, 2024);
- *An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment* (Natural England 2014);
- Scottish Natural Heritage & The Countryside Agency. *Landscape Character Assessment – Guidance for England and Scotland* (2002);
- Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note (TGN) 06/19: *Visual Representation of Development Proposals* (17 September 2019);
- Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note (TGN) TGN 02-21: *Assessing Landscape Value Outside National Designations*; and
- Landscape Institute: Technical Guidance Note LITGN-2024-01: *Notes and Clarifications on Aspects of Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third edition (GLVIA3)*.

A1.3 Other reference documents used to understand the baseline position in landscape terms comprise published landscape character assessments appropriate to the site's location and the nature of the proposed development.

A1.4 The nature of landscape and visual assessment requires both objective analysis and subjective professional judgement. Accordingly, the following assessment is based on the best practice guidance listed above, information and data analysis technique, it uses quantifiable factors wherever possible and subjective professional judgement where necessary, and is based on clearly defined terms.

DEFINING LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL ASSESSMENT

Landscape Assessment

- A1.5 Landscape effects derive from changes in the physical landscape fabric that may give rise to changes in its character and how this is experienced. These effects need to be considered in line with changes already occurring within the landscape and which help define the character of it.
- A1.6 Effects upon the wider landscape resource, i.e. the landscape surrounding the development, requires an assessment of visibility of the proposals from adjacent landscape character areas, but remains an assessment of landscape character and not visual amenity.

Visual Assessment

- A1.7 The assessment of effects on visual amenity draws on the predicted effects of the development, the landscape and visual context, and the visibility and viewpoint analyses. It considers the significance of the overall effects of the proposed development on the visual amenity of the main visual receptor types in the study area.

IDENTIFYING LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL RECEPTORS

- A1.8 The baseline study identifies the key landscape and visual receptors that may be affected by the changes proposed.
- A1.9 The identification of landscape receptors draws on the description of the existing landscape of the site and its context, the nature of the proposed development and on the visual appraisal. Landscape receptors for the proposed development may include, but not be limited to, the following:
- The landscape, fabric and perceptual characteristics, of the development site;
 - The key landscape characteristics of the local context;
 - The 'host' landscape character area that contains the proposed development;
 - The 'non-host' landscape character areas beyond the host character area that may be affected by the proposals (where relevant); and
 - Landscape designations on a national, regional or local level (where relevant).

A1.10 The locations and types of visual receptors are identified from Ordnance Survey maps and other published information (such as walking guides), from fieldwork observations and from local knowledge provided during the consultation process. They are also informed by the visual appraisal, including the computer-generated 'Zone of Theoretical Visibility' (ZTV). Examples of visual receptors may include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Settlements and private residences;
- Users of National Cycle Routes and National Trails;
- Users of local/regional cycle and walking routes;
- Those using local rights of way – walkers, horse riders, cyclists;
- Users of open spaces with public access;
- People using major (motorways, A and B) roads;
- People using minor roads; and
- People using railways.

A1.11 The ZTV is derived using either digital landform height data, which does not account for the screening effects of intervening buildings, structures or vegetation, or digital surface modelling which takes into account buildings, structures and vegetation. The output will depend on the available data. Both serve to give a prediction of the areas that, theoretically, may experience visual change.

ASSESSMENT OF LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL EFFECTS

A1.12 The assessment of effects on the landscape resource includes consideration of the potential changes to those key elements and components that contribute towards the existing landscape character and the quality of designated landscapes.

A1.13 The assessment of effects on visual amenity requires the consideration of the potential changes to the views and visual amenity of visual receptors that may be affected by the development.

A1.14 Following the identification of the landscape and visual receptors, the effect of the development on each of them is assessed through consideration of a combination of:

- Their overall sensitivity to the proposed form of development, which is informed by a combination of the value attached to the receptor and the susceptibility of the receptor to the change proposed; and
- The overall magnitude of change that will occur - based on the size and scale of the change, its duration and reversibility.

Defining Receptor Sensitivity

- A1.15 A number of factors influence professional judgement when assessing the degree to which a particular landscape or visual receptor can accommodate change arising from a particular development. Sensitivity is made up of judgements about the 'value' attached to the receptor, and the 'susceptibility' of the receptor.
- A1.16 Susceptibility indicates "*the ability of a defined landscape or visual receptor to accommodate the specific proposed development without undue negative consequences*"⁸. Susceptibility of visual receptors is primarily a function of the expectations and occupation or activity of the receptor. A degree of professional judgement applies in arriving at the susceptibility for both landscape and visual receptors and this is clearly set out in the technical appendices to this assessment.
- A1.17 Receptors at a location may have a different level of sensitivity according to their type/activity and any one receptor type may be accorded a different level of sensitivity at different locations.

Landscape Receptor Sensitivity

- A1.18 With reference to Box 5.1 within GLVIA3 (page 84), **Table EDP A1.1** provides an indication of the criteria by which the overall value of a landscape receptor may be judged. Within the assessment, further reference to the Landscape Institute's TGN 02-21: *Assessing Landscape Value Outside National Designations* may be applied where appropriate. **Table EDP A1.2** provides an indication of the criteria by which the overall susceptibility of the landscape in relation to the type of development proposed.

⁸ Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2013). *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition*. Page 158.

Table EDP A1.1: Assessment of Landscape Value

Landscape Character Area Value				
Very Low	Low	Medium	High	Very High
Undesignated countryside and landscape features; absence of distinctive landscape characteristics; despoiled/-degraded by the presence of many landscape detractors, with little or no evidence of being valued by the community.	Undesignated countryside and landscape features; few distinctive landscape characteristics; presence of landscape detractors with some evidence of being valued by the community.	Undesignated countryside and landscape features; some distinctive landscape characteristics; few landscape detractors. Considered an 'everyday' landscape which is appreciated by the local community.	Locally designated/valued countryside (e.g. Areas of High Landscape Value, Regional Scenic Areas) and landscape features; many distinctive landscape characteristics; very few landscape detractors.	Nationally/internationally designated/valued countryside and landscape features; strong/distinctive landscape characteristics; absence of landscape detractors.
Consideration of Other Value Criteria				
Natural Heritage				
A landscape with no or very limited ecological, geological, geomorphological or physiographic interest and/or nature conservation content.	A landscape with limited ecological, geological, geomorphological or physiographic interest and/or nature conservation content.	A landscape with some ecological, geological, geomorphological or physiographic interest and/or nature conservation content.	A landscape with rich ecological, geological, geomorphological or physiographic interest and/or nature conservation content.	A landscape with abundant ecological, geological, geomorphological or physiographic interest and/or nature conservation content.
Cultural Heritage				
A landscape with no or very limited archaeological, historical or cultural interest.	A landscape with limited archaeological, historical or cultural interest.	A landscape with some archaeological, historical or cultural interest.	A landscape with rich archaeological, historical or cultural interest.	A landscape with abundant archaeological, historical or cultural interest.
Landscape Condition				
A landscape with no or few areas intact and/or in poor physical condition.	A landscape with few areas that are intact and/or in a reasonable physical condition.	A landscape with some areas that are intact and/or in a reasonable physical condition.	A landscape with many areas that are intact and/or in a reasonable physical condition.	A landscape with most areas intact and/or in good physical condition.

Landscape Character Area Value				
Associations				
A landscape without recorded associations.	A landscape with few recorded associations.	A landscape with some and/or moderately valued associations.	A landscape with numerous and/or highly valued associations.	A landscape of rich and/or very highly valued associations.
Distinctiveness				
A landscape that does not contain rare or distinct landscape types or features.	A landscape that contains few distinct landscape types or features.	A landscape that contains distinct but not rare landscape types or features.	A landscape that contains one or more rare landscape types or features.	A landscape that is abundant in rare landscape types or features, that has a strong sense of identity.
Recreational				
A landscape with no or very limited contribution to recreational experience.	A landscape with no or limited contribution to recreational experience.	A landscape that provides some contribution to recreational experience.	A landscape that provides a good contribution to recreational experience.	A distinct landscape that forms a strong contribution to recreational experience.
Perceptual (Scenic)				
A landscape of little or no aesthetic appeal.	A landscape of low aesthetic appeal.	A landscape of some aesthetic appeal.	A landscape of high aesthetic appeal.	A landscape of very high aesthetic appeal.
Perceptual (Wildness and Tranquillity)				
A landscape with prominent detractors, probably part of the key characteristics.	A landscape with landscape detractors, and is not particularly wild, tranquil or unspoilt.	A landscape with few detractors that also retains some perceptual values.	A landscape with very few detractors that has a relatively wild, tranquil or unspoilt landscape.	A wild, tranquil or unspoilt landscape without noticeable detractors.
Functional				
A landscape with no or very limited identifiable or valuable function.	A landscape with no or limited identifiable or valuable function.	A landscape with some identifiable or valuable function.	A landscape that performs an identifiable and valuable function.	A landscape that clearly performs an identifiable and valuable function.

Landscape Character Area Value				
Overall Judgement of Landscape Value				
Very Low value – receptor largely reflects very low value criteria above.	Low value – receptor largely reflects low value criteria above.	Medium value – receptor largely reflects medium value criteria above.	High value – receptor largely reflects high value criteria above.	Very High value – receptor largely reflects very high value criteria above.

Table EDP A1.2: Assessment of Landscape Susceptibility

Very Low Susceptibility to Change	Low Susceptibility to Change	Medium Susceptibility to Change	High Susceptibility to Change	Very High Susceptibility to Change
Pattern, Complexity and Physical Susceptibility to Change to the Proposed Development				
A simple, monotonous and/or degraded landscape with common/indistinct features and minimal variation in landscape pattern.	A landscape with an occasionally intact pattern and/or with a low degree of complexity and with few features in reasonable condition.	A landscape with some intact pattern and/or with a degree of complexity and with features mostly in reasonable condition.	A landscape with mostly patterned/-textured or a simple but distinctive landscape and/or with high value features and essentially intact.	A strongly patterned/-textured or a simple but distinctive landscape and/or with high value features intact.
Visual Susceptibility to Change to the Proposed Development				
A very enclosed landscape that contains or strongly filters views, with an absence of visual landmarks and a lack of intervisibility with designated landscapes.	A predominantly enclosed landscape that contains or filters most views, with very few views of visual landmarks or intervisibility with designated landscapes.	A partially enclosed landscape with some visual containment and filtering, possible limited intervisibility with visual landmarks and designated landscapes.	An open landscape with intervisibility and limited visual filtering or enclosure. Prominent visual landmarks may be present, and/or intervisibility with designated landscapes may occur.	An open or exposed landscape with extensive intervisibility and no or very limited visual filtering or enclosure. Prominent visual landmarks are present, and/or intervisibility with designated landscapes occurs.

Very Low Susceptibility to Change	Low Susceptibility to Change	Medium Susceptibility to Change	High Susceptibility to Change	Very High Susceptibility to Change
Experiential Susceptibility to Change to the Proposed Development				
A landscape with prominent visual and/or aural intrusion and close relationship with large-scale built development/infrastructure. A landscape that contains many light sources and essentially suffers from widespread light pollution.	A busy landscape with frequent visual and/or aural intrusion and nearby relationship with large-scale built development/-infrastructure. A landscape that contains frequent light sources and suffers from light pollution.	A partially tranquil landscape with limited visual and/or aural intrusion, some relationship with built development/ infrastructure may be present. A landscape that contains some light sources.	A tranquil landscape with limited visual and/or aural intrusion, some relationship with built development/ -infrastructure may be present. A landscape that contains few light sources.	A very tranquil, wild or remote landscape with little or no sense of visual or aural intrusion. A landscape that contains very few light sources and provides dark skies.
Overall Judgement of Susceptibility to Change to the Proposed Development				
Very Low susceptibility – receptor largely reflects very low criteria above.	Low susceptibility – receptor largely reflects low criteria above.	Medium susceptibility – receptor largely reflects medium criteria above.	High susceptibility – receptor largely reflects high criteria above.	Very High susceptibility – receptor largely reflects very high criteria above.

A1.19 **Table EDP A1.3** provides an indication of how judgements about value and susceptibility combine to inform the overall sensitivity of the landscape resource, whereby value and susceptibility are considered independently.

Table EDP A1.3: Assessment of Landscape Sensitivity

		Susceptibility of Landscape Receptor				
		Very High	High	Medium	Low	Very Low
Receptor Value	Very High	Very High	Very High/- High	High	High/- Medium	Medium
	High	Very High/- High	High	High/- Medium	Medium	Medium/- Low
	Medium	High	High/- Medium	Medium	Medium/- Low	Low
	Low	High/- Medium	Medium	Medium/- Low	Low	Low/- Very Low
	Very Low	Medium	Medium/- Low	Low	Low/- Very Low	Very Low

Visual Receptor Sensitivity

A1.20 For visual receptors, judgements of susceptibility and value are closely interlinked. For example, the most valued views are those that people go and visit because of the available view, and it is at those viewpoints that their expectations will be highest and thus most susceptible to change.

A1.21 **Table EDP A1.4** provides an indication of the criteria by which the overall sensitivity of a visual receptor is judged and considers both value and susceptibility independently.

Table EDP A1.4: Visual Receptor Sensitivity

Category	Visual Receptor Criteria
Very High	Designed view (which may be to or from a recognised heritage asset or other important viewpoint), or where views of the surroundings are an important contributor to the experience. Key promoted viewpoint, e.g., interpretative signs. References in literature and art and/or guidebooks tourist maps. Protected view recognised in planning policy designation. Visual receptors with a very high susceptibility to change may include those with views from residential properties, especially from rooms normally occupied in waking or daylight hours; national public rights of way, e.g., National Trails and nationally designated countryside/landscape features with public access, which people might visit purely to experience the view; and visitors to heritage assets of national importance.
High	View of clear value but may not be formally recognised, e.g., framed view of high scenic value, or destination hill summits. It may also be inferred that the view is likely to have value, e.g., to local residents.

Category	Visual Receptor Criteria
	Visual receptors with a high susceptibility to change are considered to be those whose attention or interest is focussed on their surroundings and may include those with views from recreational receptors where there is some appreciation of the landscape, e.g., golf and fishing; local public rights of way, access land and National Trust land, also panoramic viewpoints marked on maps; road routes promoted in tourist guides for their scenic value.
Medium	View is not promoted or recorded in any published sources and may be typical of the views experienced from a given receptor. Visual receptors with a medium susceptibility to change may include people engaged in outdoor sport other than appreciation of the landscape, e.g., football and rugby, or road users on minor routes passing through rural or scenic areas.
Low	View of clearly lesser value than similar views experienced from nearby visual receptors that may be more accessible. Visual receptors with a low susceptibility to change may include road users on main road routes (motorways/A roads) and users of rail routes or people at their place of work (where the place of work may be in a sensitive location). Also views from commercial buildings where views of the surrounding landscape may have some limited importance.
Very Low	View affected by many landscape detractors and unlikely to be valued. Visual receptors with a very low susceptibility to change may include people at their place of work, indoor recreational or leisure facilities or other locations where views of the wider landscape have little or no importance.

A1.22 The tables above offer a template for assessing overall sensitivity of any landscape or visual receptor as determined by combining judgements of their susceptibility to the type of change or development proposed and the value attached to the receptor.

A1.23 However, the narrative may demonstrate that assessment of overall sensitivity can change on a case-by-case basis. For example, a high susceptibility to change and a low value may result in a medium overall sensitivity, unless it can be demonstrated that the receptor is unusually susceptible or is in some particular way more valuable. A degree of professional judgement applies in arriving at the overall sensitivity for both landscape and visual receptors.

Magnitude of Change

A1.24 The magnitude of any landscape or visual change is determined through judgements regarding a range of considerations particular to each receptor. As set out within GLVIA3 (page 39), the magnitude of change involves consideration of scale, geographical extent (or size), and duration and reversibility of change, as represented at **Figure EDP A1.1**.

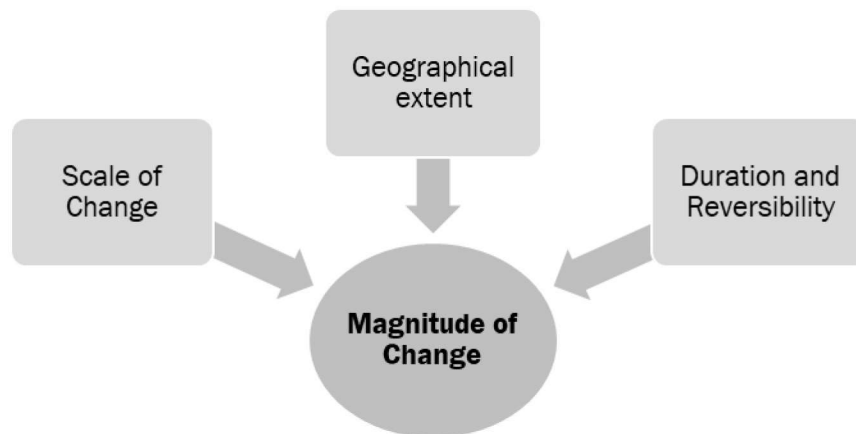


Figure EDP A1.1: Assessing the Magnitude of Change.

A1.25 With reference to the ZTV and site survey receptor locations from which views of the proposed development are not likely to occur will receive no change and therefore no effect. Assessment of the magnitude of change is defined for receptor locations from where visibility of the proposed development is predicted to occur.

A1.26 **Table EDP A1.5** provides an indication of the criteria by which the geographical extent and scale of change at a landscape or visual receptor is judged within this assessment.

Table EDP A1.5: Landscape and Visual Receptor Size/Scale of Change Criteria

Category	Landscape Receptor Criteria	Visual Receptor Criteria
Large Scale 	Total loss of or major alteration to key elements/features/characteristics of the baseline condition. Addition of elements which strongly conflict with the key characteristics of the existing landscape.	There would be a substantial change to the baseline, with the proposed development creating a new focus and having a defining influence on the view.
	Notable loss or alteration to one or more key elements/features/characteristics of the baseline condition. Addition of elements that are prominent and may conflict with the key characteristics of the existing landscape.	The proposed development will be clearly noticeable, and the view would be fundamentally altered by its presence.
	Partial loss or alteration to one or more key elements/features/characteristics of the baseline condition. Addition of elements that may be evident but do not necessarily conflict with the key characteristics of the existing landscape.	The proposed development will form a new and recognisable element within the view which is likely to be recognised by the receptor.
	Minor loss or alteration to one or more key elements/features/characteristics of the baseline landscape. Addition of elements that may not be uncharacteristic within the existing landscape.	The proposed development will form a minor constituent of the view being partially visible or at sufficient distance to be a small component.

Category	Landscape Receptor Criteria	Visual Receptor Criteria
Small Scale	Barely discernible loss or alteration to key elements/features/characteristics of the baseline landscape. Addition of elements not uncharacteristic within the existing landscape.	The proposed development will form a barely noticeable component of the view, and the view whilst slightly altered would be similar to the baseline situation.

A1.27 **Table EDP A1.6** provides an indication of the criteria by which the geographical extent of the area affected is judged within this assessment.

Table EDP A1.6: Geographical Extent Criteria

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

A1.28 The final factors, in determining the predicted magnitude of change are duration and reversibility. Duration and reversibility are separate but linked considerations. Duration is judged according to the defined terms set out below, whereas reversibility is a judgement about the prospects and practicality of the particular effect being reversed in, for example, a generation. The categories used in this assessment are set out below.

Duration

- Long-term (15 years+);
- Medium to long-term (10 to 15 years);
- Medium-term (5 to 10 years);
- Short-term (1 year to 5 years); or
- Temporary (less than 12 months).

Reversibility

- Permanent with unlikely restoration to original state, e.g., major road corridor, power station, urban extension, etc.;
- Permanent with possible conversion to original state, e.g., agricultural buildings, retail units;
- Partially reversible to a different state, e.g., mineral workings;
- Reversible after decommissioning to a similar original state, e.g., wind energy development; or
- Quickly reversible, e.g., temporary structures.

A1.29 With consideration of the judgements set out above, **Table EDP A1.7** combines these judgements to provide the overall criteria by which the magnitude of change may be judged. While not all of the criteria may apply, the size/geographical extent and scale criteria and the duration/reversibility of effects on receptors are taken together to form a reasoned assessment of the magnitude of change. The overall magnitude of change is derived using professional judgement.

Table EDP A1.7: The Assessment of the Overall Magnitude of Change

Category	Receptor Criteria
Very High	Total loss of, or major alteration to key elements/features/characteristics of the baseline condition. Addition of elements which strongly conflict with the key characteristics of the existing landscape. The proposed development would create a new focus and have a defining influence on the view. Landscape and visual effects are typically large in scale, resulting in a permanent and irreversible change, influencing several landscape types or character areas. Visual changes would be experienced in direct, close ranging views with changes over a wide horizontal and vertical extent.
High	Notable loss or alteration to one or more key elements/features/characteristics of the baseline condition. Addition of elements that are prominent and may conflict with the key characteristics of the existing landscape. The proposed development would be clearly noticeable, and the view would be fundamentally altered by its presence. Direct or oblique views at close range with changes over a notable horizontal and/or vertical extent. Notable landscape and visual effects may be experienced in the medium to long-term, with possible conversion to original state, at the scale of the landscape type or character area/s within which the proposal lies.
Medium	Partial loss or alteration to one or more key elements/features/characteristics of the baseline condition. Addition of elements that may be evident but do not necessarily conflict with the key characteristics of the existing landscape within the immediate setting of the site. The proposed development would form a new and recognisable element within the view which is likely to be recognised by the receptor.

Category	Receptor Criteria
	Visual change would be experienced in direct or oblique views at medium range with a moderate horizontal and/or vertical extent of the view affected. Effects may be partially reversible to a different state, being experienced in the medium term.
Low	Minor loss or alteration to one or more key elements/features/characteristics of the baseline landscape. Addition of elements, largely at the site level, that may not be uncharacteristic within the existing landscape. The proposed development would form a minor constituent of an oblique view, being partially visible or at sufficient distance to be a small component at medium or long range and with a small horizontal/vertical extent of the view affected. The duration of the change may be short-term, being reversible to a similar original state.
Very Low	Barely discernible loss or alteration to key elements/features/characteristics of the baseline landscape. Addition of elements, experienced on parts of the site at a very localised level, not uncharacteristic within the existing landscape. The proposed development would form a barely noticeable component of the view, often being seen as a small component in a long-range view where, although slightly altered, the change would be similar to the baseline situation. Effects may be temporary and quickly reversible to the original state of the baseline context.

SIGNIFICANCE OF EFFECT

A1.30 The purpose of the EIA process is to identify the significant environmental effects (both beneficial and adverse) of development proposals. Schedule 4 to the *EIA Regulations* specifies the information to be included in all environmental statements, stating:

“The description of the likely significant effects ...should cover the direct effects and any indirect, secondary, cumulative, transboundary, short-term, medium-term and long-term, permanent and temporary, positive and negative effects of the development.”

A1.31 In order to consider the likely significance of any effect, the sensitivity of each receptor is combined with the predicted magnitude of change to determine the significance of effect, with reference also made to the geographical extent, duration and reversibility of the effect within the assessment. Having taken such a wide range of factors into account when assessing sensitivity and magnitude at each receptor, the significance of effect can be derived by combining the sensitivity and magnitude in accordance with the matrix in **Table EDP A1.8**.

Table EDP A1.8: Level of Effects Matrix

Overall Sensitivity	Overall Magnitude of Change				
	Very High	High	Medium	Low	Very Low
Very High	Very Substantial	Substantial	Major	Major/- Moderate	Moderate
High	Substantial	Major	Major/- Moderate	Moderate	Moderate/- Minor
Medium	Major	Major/- Moderate	Moderate	Moderate/- Minor	Minor
Low	Major/- Moderate	Moderate	Moderate/- Minor	Minor	Minor/- Negligible
Very Low	Moderate	Moderate/- Minor	Minor	Minor/- Negligible	Negligible

A1.32 In certain cases, where additional factors may arise, a further degree of professional judgement may be applied when determining whether the overall change in the view will be significant or not. For example, in cases where a moderate effect is experienced by a high or very high sensitivity receptor, this may be considered to be significant. Similarly, where a moderate effect is experienced by a very low sensitivity receptor, this may not be considered significant. Where this occurs, further explanation is given within the assessment.

Definition of Effects

A1.33 Taking into account the levels of effect described above, and with regard to effects being either adverse or beneficial, the following table represents a description of the range of effects likely at any one receptor.

Table EDP A1.9: Definition of Effect

Category	Definition of Adverse Effects	Definition of Beneficial Effects
Very Substantial	Typically, the landscape or visual receptor is very highly sensitive with the proposals representing a very high adverse magnitude of change. The changes would be at complete variance with the landscape character and would permanently diminish the integrity of a valued landscape or view.	The removal of substantial existing incongruous landscape or visual elements and the introduction or restoration of highly valued landscape elements or built form which would reinforce local landscape character and substantially improve landscape condition and visual amenity.

Category	Definition of Adverse Effects	Definition of Beneficial Effects
Substantial	Typically, the landscape or visual receptor has a very high to high sensitivity with the proposals representing a very high to high adverse magnitude of change to the view or landscape resource. Changes would result in a fundamental change to the landscape resource or visual amenity.	The removal of existing incongruous landscape/visual elements and the introduction or restoration of some valued landscape or visual elements would complement landscape character and improve landscape condition and improve the local visual amenity.
Major	Typically, the landscape or visual receptor has a high to medium sensitivity with the proposals representing a high to medium magnitude of change. The proposals would represent a material but non-fundamental change to the landscape resource or visual amenity.	The removal of some existing incongruous landscape elements and/or the introduction or restoration of some potentially valued landscape elements which reflect landscape character and result in some improvements to landscape condition and/or visual amenity.
Moderate	Typically, the landscape or visual receptor has a medium sensitivity with the proposals representing a medium magnitude of change. The proposals would result in a slight but non-material change to the landscape resource or visual amenity.	Some potential removal of incongruous landscape features or visual amenity, although more likely the existing landscape and/or resource is complemented by new landscape features or built features compliant with the local landscape and published landscape character assessments.
Minor	Typically, the landscape or visual receptor has a low sensitivity with the proposals representing a low magnitude of change. There would be a detectable but non-material change to the landscape resource or visual amenity.	The proposals would result in minimal positive change to the landscape or visual resource, either through perceptual or physical change, and any change would not be readily apparent but would be coherent with ongoing change and process, and coherent with published landscape character assessments.
Negligible	Typically, the landscape receptor has a very low sensitivity with the proposals resulting in very limited loss or alteration to the landscape resource or change to the view. There would be a barely perceptible change to the landscape resource or visual amenity.	There would be a barely perceptible positive or negative change to the landscape resource or visual amenity.

- A1.34 Effects can be adverse (negative), beneficial (positive) or neutral. The landscape effects will be considered against the landscape baseline, which includes published landscape strategies or policies if they exist. Changes involving the addition of large-scale man-made objects are typically considered to be adverse as they are not usually actively promoted as part of published landscape strategies. Accordingly, the assessment of landscape effects as a result of these aspects of the proposed development will be assumed to be adverse, unless otherwise stated within the assessment.
- A1.35 Visual effects are more subjective as people's perception of development varies through the spectrum of negative, neutral and positive attitudes. In the assessment of visual effects, the assessor will exercise objective professional judgement in assessing the level of effects and, unless otherwise stated, will assume that all effects are adverse, thus representing the worst-case scenario.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Table EDP A1.10: Glossary of Terms

Term	Definition
Baseline	Total loss of, or major alteration to key elements/features/characteristics of the baseline condition. Addition of elements which strongly conflict with the key characteristics of the existing landscape. The proposed development would create a new focus and have a defining influence on the view. Landscape and visual effects are typically large in scale, resulting in a permanent and irreversible change, influencing several landscape types or character areas. Visual changes would be experienced in direct, close ranging views with changes over a wide horizontal and vertical extent.
Digital Terrain Model (DTM)	A three-dimensional digital model of the bare earth surface or terrain.
Digital Surface Model (DSM)	A three-dimensional digital model of the terrain including surface objects such as buildings, structures and vegetation, as well as the terrain surface.
Effects	A predicted change in the environmental baseline as a result of the proposed development. Effects can be positive or negative.
Field Pattern	The pattern of hedges and walls that define fields in farmed landscapes (LI/IEMA 2002).
Intervisibility	Two points on the ground or two features are described as "intervisible" when they are visible from each other.

Term	Definition
Landscape	Landscape results from the way that different aspects of our environment (physical, social, aesthetic and perceptual) interact together and are perceived by us: • Physical elements – e.g., geology, landform, soils, flora and fauna; • Social elements – e.g., land use, enclosure patterns, and the patterns, form and scale of settlements and other built development; • Aesthetic factors – e.g., colour, form, visual texture and pattern, sounds, smells and touch; and • Perceptual factors – e.g., memories, associations, stimuli and preferences.
Landscape Capacity	The degree to which a particular landscape character type or area is able to accommodate change without significant effects on its character. Capacity is likely to vary according to the type and nature of change being proposed.
Landscape Character	Landscape character arises from a distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of physical and social elements, aesthetic factors and perceptual aspects in the landscape.
Landscape Character Areas	Single unique areas that are discrete geographical areas containing one or more landscape types.
Landscape Character Types	Generic units of landscape that display a distinct, consistent and recognisable landscape character.
Landscape Condition	Description of the maintenance and condition of landscape elements and the degree to which landscape elements are representative of the landscape character area.
Landscape Element	A physical component (both natural and manmade) of the landscape.
Landscape Fabric	The elements and features that constitute the physical components of the landscape, including ground vegetation, hedgerows, trees, shrubs, walls, fences and vernacular structures.
Landscape Units	An umbrella term for landscape character areas and landscape character types.
Landscape Value	The importance or value of the landscape to society, usually based on landscape designations or policies as indicators of recognised value.
Mitigation	Measures, including any process, activity or design that will avoid, reduce, remedy or compensate for the predicted effects of a development on the environmental baseline.

Term	Definition
Public Access	Land with public access includes: • Definitive rights of way – public footpaths, bridleways, cycle routes, Byways Open to All Traffic (BOATS) and highways. Shown on Definitive Rights of Way maps held by the Local Authority; • Permissive paths and bridleways – routes where there is public access with the permission of the landowner. Such routes are usually closed at least one day a year to prevent establishment of a public right of way; • Public open space – areas designated for specified public uses, usually in the ownership of the Local Authority. Includes parks and recreation grounds. Shown on Local Development Plans; • Beaches – the public have permitted access to much of the foreshore (intertidal zone – between high and low tide marks) owned by the Crown Estate, and on land above high water mark owned by the Local Authority. Some beaches above high tide mark are privately owned and some beaches and foreshore have restricted access for military purposes; • Access land – land where public access is currently permitted with the permission of landowners. Includes land outlined in purple on the OS Explorer (1:25,000) sheets and with: • No symbol – land open to public with permission of owners; • White oak leaf in purple box – National Trust, always open; • Purple oak leaf in white box – National Trust limited access; • Tree symbols in purple box – Forestry Commission; • Single leaf in purple box – Woodland Trust; and • White “AL” in purple box – other access land. • Open access land – areas of mountains, moor, heath, down, common land and coastal foreshore that have been designated under Section 2 of the <i>Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000</i>. The right of access is for walkers only and does not extend to cycling, horse riding or driving a vehicle, nor does the right of access apply to developed land, gardens or cultivated land. Under the CROW Act 2000, there was a process of consultation that allowed the right of appeal for those with a legal interest in the land, and for sensitive ecological or archaeological sites to be excluded. Conclusive maps showing the areas designated as open access land (Registered Common Land and Open Country) are now available from Natural England (in England) and the Countryside Council for Wales (in Wales).
Viewing Distance	That distance that a viewpoint illustration should be held from the eye in order for the illustration to match the scale of the actual view when used in the field to identify the location and scale of the proposed development.

Term	Definition
Visibility	Visibility is a measure of the distance that can be seen by the human eye at any one time. Daylight visibility will depend on several factors, including: • Atmospheric transparency (governed by the solid and liquid particles held in suspension in the atmosphere); • Degree of contrast between an object and the background against which it is observed; • Position of the sun; and • Observer's visual acuity.
Visual Receptor(s)	An individual observer or group of observers who are capable of experiencing a change in the view.
Zone of Primary Visibility (ZPV)	The area from which views of the proposed development would normally be close-ranging and open, whether in the public or private domain, on foot, cycling or in a vehicle.
Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV)	A ZTV is a computer-generated image identifying the likely (or theoretical) extent of visibility of a development. The image is prepared by testing the elevation (or a set of elevations) of the development against a 3D digital terrain (DTM) or surface model (DSM). Through the use of these different models the ZTVs can consider two scenarios: 1. The DTM or 'bare ground' scenario where the ZTV represents the maximum theoretical visibility as limited only by topography. the worst-case situation. In reality, other components of the landscape such as vegetation, buildings, structure etc. will introduce screening effects which, coupled with distance and atmospheric conditions, will reduce this visibility, in some instances to a considerable extent as below; and 2. The DSM or 'bare ground' and surface elements scenario where the ZTV represents the theoretical visibility as limited by topography together with other surface components of the landscape such as vegetation, buildings, structure etc. This more limited visibility still excludes consideration of the effects of distance and atmospheric conditions which will reduce this visibility further, in some instances to a considerable extent.

Appendix EDP 2

Concept Masterplan



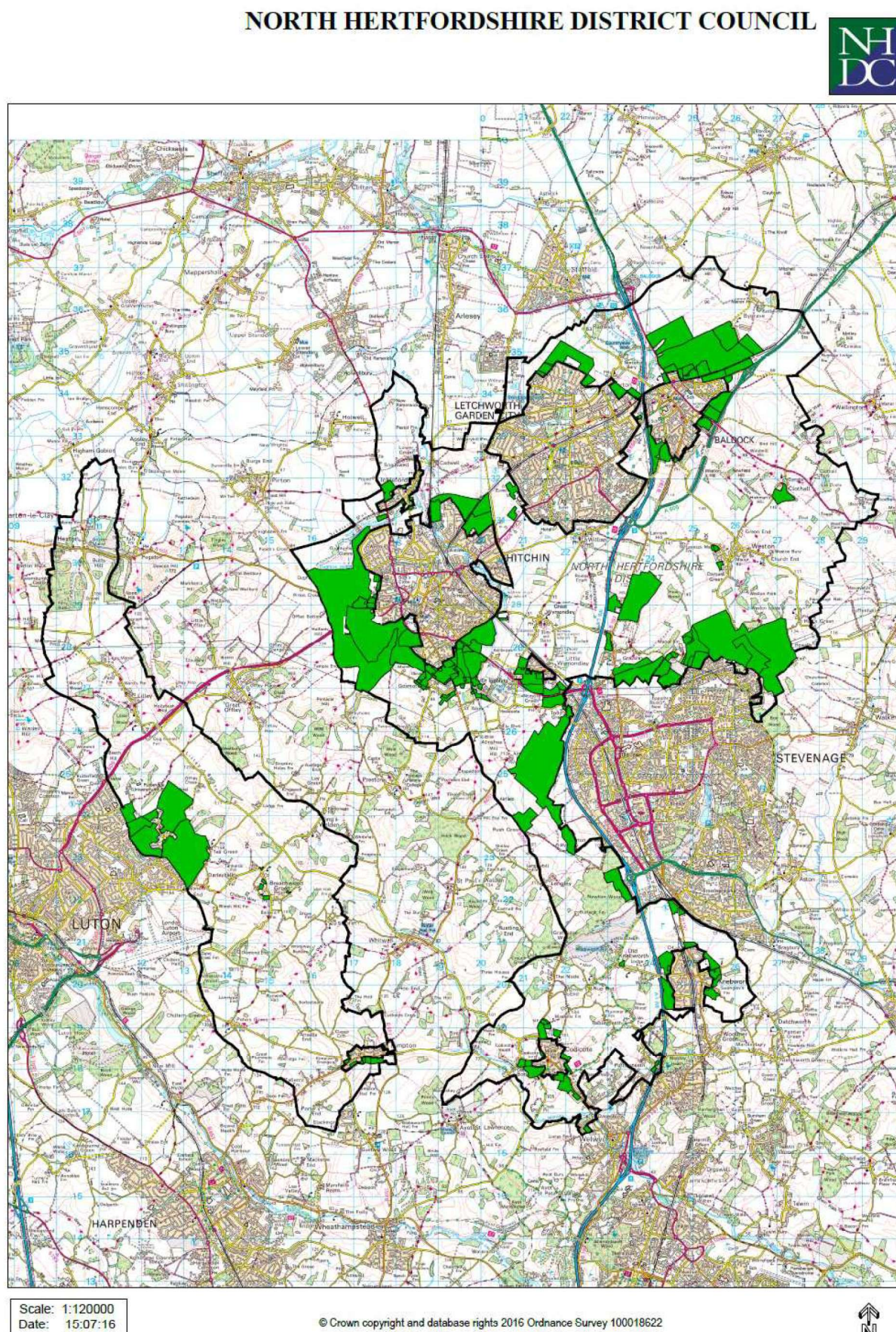
Rev	Description	Date	Au
R1	Preliminary Issue	02.05.25	MB
R2	Layout Amendments	25.06.25	MB
R3	Layout Amendments	26.06.25	MB
R4	Layout Amendments	23.07.25	MB
R5	Layout Amendments	13.08.25	MB

Project	Ickleford Manor, Ickleford		
Drawing	Concept Masterplan - 01		
Client	Hawridge Strategic Land		
Dwg no.	CMP-01	Rev.	R5
Project no.	HAWR.250207	Author	MB
Date	02.05.25	Scale	1:1000 @ A1

Appendix EDP 3

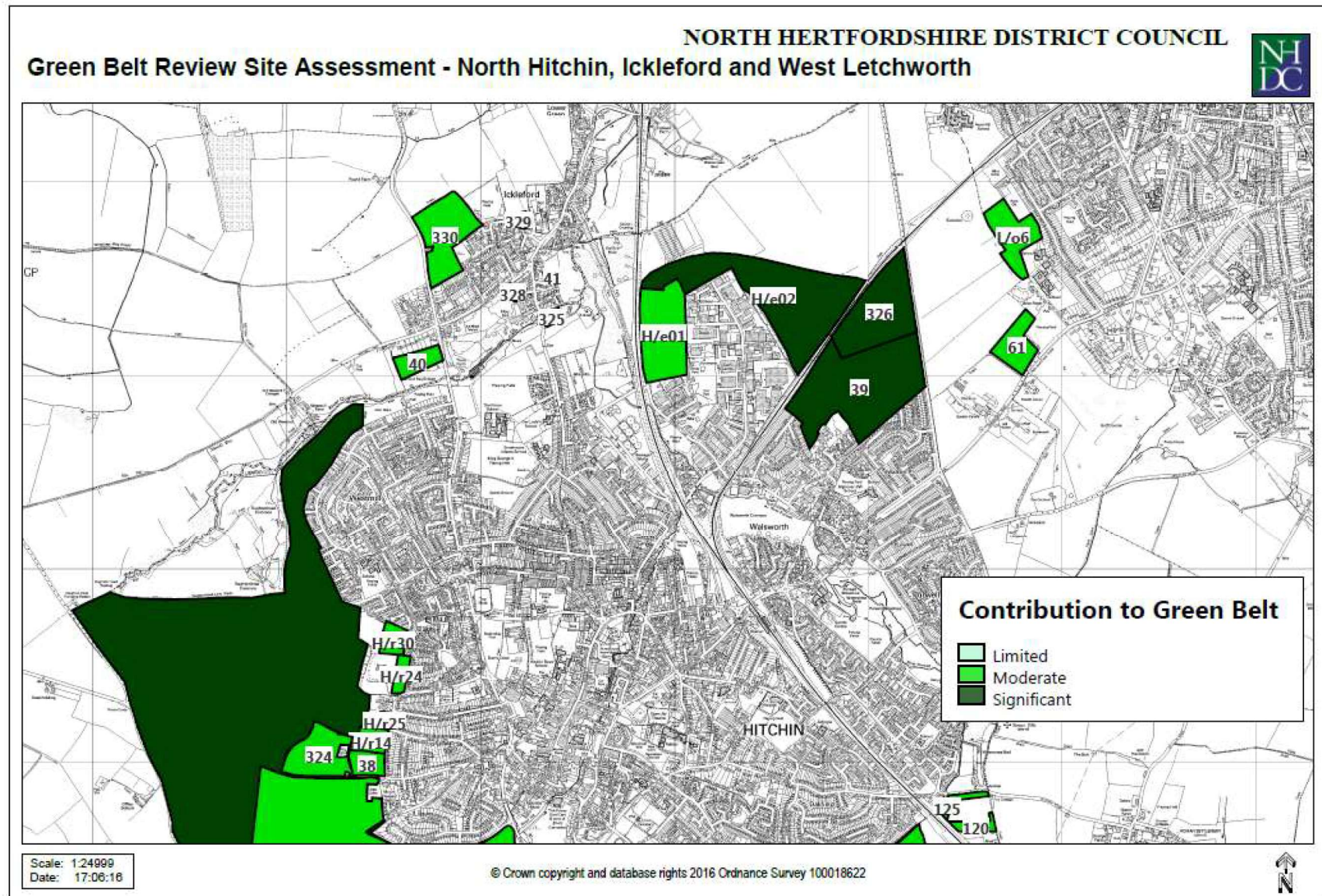
Findings of EDP Data Trawl

Figure 5.1: Potential Development Sites Considered in the Green Belt Review



Property description				Attributes		Green Belt Assessment				Contribution to Greenbelt	Boundary Detail
Ref	Address	Street	Settlement or parish	Urban / rural	Primary proposed use	Sprawl	Towns merging	Safeguarding countryside	Preserve setting of historic towns		
41	Land off	Duncots Close	Ickleford	rural	residential	2 - development on two sides the side	2- site within 2km of Hitchin	3 - outside settlement boundary	1 - not within conservation area of a historic town or affecting setting	The site makes a moderate contribution to Green Belt. The site is outside settlement boundaries although adjoins existing development on two sides. The site is close to Hitchin, however as Ickleford isn't a town, this isn't significant in Green Belt terms.	Fenced boundary exists along with hedgerow. Also adjoins existing residential area.
328	Land at Ickleford Manor, Turnpike Lane		Ickleford	Semi-rural	Residential	1 – development on three sides	2 – less than 2km to nearest settlement.	3 – Outside existing settlement boundary.	1 – adjacent to Ickleford conservation area but not a historic town.	The site makes a moderate contribution to Green Belt. The site is outside settlement boundaries although adjoins existing development on three sides. The site is close to Hitchin, however as Ickleford isn't a town, this isn't significant in Green Belt terms.	Turnpike Lane forms strong boundary to the north. Residential and commercial development to the south and east. Western boundary has trees and hedgerow.
329	Arnolds Farm, Chambers Lane		Ickleford	Rural	Residential	2 – development on two sides	2 – less than 2km to nearest village (Holwell).	3 – Outside existing settlement boundary.	1 – part of the site is within a conservation area of a historic town.	The site makes a moderate contribution to Green Belt. The site is outside settlement boundaries although adjoins existing development on two sides. The site is close to Holwell, however as neither Ickleford nor Holwell are towns, this isn't significant in Green Belt terms.	Chambers Lane forms strong boundary to the south. Strong wooded boundary to the north. Residential development to the east.
330	Land at Bedford Road		Ickleford	Rural	Residential	3 – development on one side	2 – less than 2km to nearest village (Holwell).	3 – Outside existing settlement boundary.	1 – not within or adjacent to a conservation area of a historic town.	The site makes a moderate contribution to Green Belt. The site is outside settlement boundaries although adjoins existing development on one side. The site is close to Holwell, however as neither Ickleford nor Holwell are towns, this isn't significant in Green Belt terms.	Bedford Road forms strong boundary to the west. Existing residential areas to the south. Other boundaries are open.
42	Land at	Hall Lane	Kimpton	rural	residential	2 - development on two sides of the side	2 - within 2km of Blackmore End	3 - outside settlement boundary	1 - not within conservation area of a historic town or affecting setting	The site makes a moderate contribution to Green Belt. The site is outside settlement boundaries although adjoins existing development on two sides. The site is close to Blackmore End, however as neither Kimpton nor Blackmore End are towns, this isn't significant in Green Belt terms. No impact on Historic towns.	Strong boundary located to the south of the site. Also adjoins existing residential area and Halls Lane.
43	Land east of	Hall Lane	Kimpton	rural	residential	3 - development on one side of the site	2 - within 2km of Blackmore End	3 - outside settlement boundary	1 –adjacent to conservation area but not that of a historic town	The site makes a moderate contribution to Green Belt. The site is outside settlement boundaries although adjoins existing development on one side. The site is close to Blackmore End, however as neither Kimpton nor Blackmore End are towns, this isn't significant in Green Belt terms.. No impact on Historic towns.	Strong boundary located to the south of the site. Adjoins existing school playing fields and allotments to the North.
44	Land west of	Hall Lane	Kimpton	rural	residential	2 - development on two sides of the side	2 - within 2km of Blackmore End	3 - outside settlement boundary	1 - not within conservation area of a historic town or affecting the setting	The site makes a moderate contribution to Green Belt. The site is outside settlement boundaries although adjoins existing development on one side. The site is close to Blackmore End, however as neither Kimpton nor Blackmore End are towns, this isn't significant in Green Belt terms. No impact on Historic towns.	Strong boundary located to the south of the site. Also adjoins existing residential area.
332	Land at Colemans Green		Kings Walden	Rural	Residential	1 – development on three sides.	2 – less than 2km to nearest settlement.	3 – No existing village boundary.	1 – Not within or adjacent to a	The site makes a moderate contribution to Green Belt. The site is outside settlement boundaries although adjoins existing development on three sides. Luton is	Colemans Road forms strong boundary to south and west. Existing

North Hitchin, Ickleford and West Letchworth



Appendix EDP 4 Representative Photoviewpoints (edp9241_d005b 08 September 2025 GYo/LSp)

Photoviewpoint EDP 1: Ickleford Manor/Ickleford Mews to western boundary

Photoviewpoint EDP 2: Turnpike Lane junction with Greenfield Avenue

Photoviewpoint EDP 3: Turnpike Land near entrance to Lodge Court development

Photoviewpoint EDP 4: A600 Bedford Road junction with Ansell Grange

Photoviewpoint EDP 5: A600 Bedford Road junction with Burford Way

Photoviewpoint EDP 6: Arlesey Road junction with Ickleford Bury

Photoviewpoint EDP 1: Ickleford Manor/Ickleford Mews to western boundary (Sheet 1 of 2)



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Grid Coordinates: 527963, 253258
Date and Time: 08 SEP 2025 @ 12:58
Projection: Cylindrical
Visualisation Type: 3
Horizontal Field of View: 90°
Height of Camera: 1.6m
Movie, Model, Sensor: Canon 6D Mark II, RF
Exposure Factor: 1/80, f/4.5, 4000
Direction of View: E
Distance: 50m
Altitude: 62m
Focal Length: 50mm

Date	08 SEPTEMBER 2025	Client	Horwath Strategic Land Limited
Drawing Number	edp2025_0005	Project Site	Land South of Tongue Lane, Ickleford
Drawn by	DS	Drawing Title	Photoviewpoint EDP 1 (Sheet 1 of 2)
QA	DS		



Photoviewpoint EDP 2: Turpik Lane Junction with Greenfield Avenue (Sheet 1 of 2)



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