

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

Newmarket Road, Royston

On behalf of Vistry Partnerships Ltd

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INTRODUCTION

1.1.1

Liz Lake Associates has been commissioned by Vistry Partnerships Ltd to prepare a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) for Newmarket Road, Royston, to be referred to hereafter as 'the Site'. The report is in consideration for the;

"Hybrid application for residential development of up to 325 dwellings comprising: (a) full planning application for Phase 1 comprising 102 dwellings and associated infrastructure including access from Newmarket Road, emergency and pedestrian/cycle access from Burloes Hall Drive, internal highways, public open space, landscaping and drainage and (b) outline application for up to 223 dwellings and associated infrastructure with all matters reserved apart from primary means of access and emergency and pedestrian/cycle access from Burloes Hall Drive."

1.1.2

This report has been prepared on the benefit of the Client and the contents should not be relied upon by others without the express written authority of Liz Lake Associates. If any unauthorised third party makes use of this report they do so at their own risk and Liz Lake Associates owe them no duty of care or skill.

1.1.3

The report considers the existing baseline conditions and seeks to identify the relevant landscape and visual issues applicable to the Site. A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) has been undertaken to assess the likely effects upon the landscape resource, specific views and visual amenity.

1.1.4

A Site visit was undertaken in March 2024 to appraise the character and condition of the Site and the landscape context, and to identify the key visual receptors. Once the scheme had been sufficiently developed, the assessment was undertaken by an experienced Chartered Landscape Architect. The weather was bright with some clouds and visibility was good for the duration of the visit.

1.1.5

All photographs were taken with a digital camera, a Canon EOS 6D (a Full Frame Sensor camera) with a 50mm Focal Length prime lens in accordance with the guidance contained within LI Technical Guidance Note 06/19. Photo locations were

agreed in advance with the LPA, although not all agreed views were able to be captured due to appropriate stopping locations, speed of traffic and high traffic volumes, deeming it unsafe to capture some views from the A505.

1.1.6

Liz Lake Associates is a multi-disciplinary environmental and design consultancy with over 30 years' experience of master planning, landscape, ecology, urban design, heritage, and environmental impact assessment. The company is a registered practice of the Landscape Institute.

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METHODOLOGY

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- 2.1.1 An LVIA of the Site and the development proposals has been prepared encompassing the 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' (GLVIA), 3rd edition (published by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment 2013), and 'Landscape Character Assessment: Guidance for England and Scotland' (published by the Countryside Agency and Scottish National Heritage 2002, and the updated 'Approach to Landscape Character Assessment' (published by Natural England, 2014). In summary, the approach combines information and desktop reviews with on-site surveys and appraisal.
- 2.1.2 The Site based assessment involves the recording of both objective description and subjective impressions of the landscape, as well as details of the existing landscape condition. It includes an assessment of the extent and nature of views to and from the Site and they type of receptors that experience these views.
- 2.1.3 The following relevant studies and documents have been considered as part of the desk-based review and subsequent assessment:
- Natural England – National Character Areas (2014)
 - East of England Landscape Framework – Landscape East (2010)
 - Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment (2010)
- 2.1.4 The LVIA of the proposed development has been based upon the proposals illustrated on drawings prepared by McBains Architects and shown on the Landscape Masterplan prepared by Liz Lake Associates.
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3 EXISTING SITUATION

3.1 Context

- 3.1.1 The Site lies within the jurisdiction of the Hertfordshire County. The Site currently occupies a broadly rectangular agricultural field and extends to 14ha in size. Structural vegetation surrounds the Site on the eastern, southern and western boundaries, with smaller and less dense field boundary vegetation to the northern boundary. To the immediate north of the Site is Newmarket Road, to the southeast is Burloes Hall and to the west of the Site is residential development within Royston. The extent of the Site is shown on **Figure 1: Site Location** in **Appendix A**.
- 3.1.2 There are a number of small settlements scattered throughout the wider agricultural landscape to the north, east and south of the Site, along with the occasional woodland block. The settlement edge of Cambridge is located approximately 20km to the north east of the Site.
- 3.1.3 The topography of the surrounding landscape is rolling with higher land located to the south of the Site. Whilst rolling, land falls in a generally north easterly direction towards Cambridge. The topography of the Site itself falls rapidly in a northerly direction from c. 109m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) at the southern boundary of the Site to c.79m AOD in the centre of the northern boundary. There is a slight hollow feature in the centre of the Site.

3.2 Published Landscape Character Assessments

- 3.2.1 A summary of the published landscape character assessments in the context of the Site is detailed below.

National: Character Area

- 3.2.2 The Site is situated within National Character Area (NCA) Profile 87: East Anglian Chalk. The East Anglian Chalk National Character Area (NCA) is characterised by the narrow continuation of the chalk ridge that runs south-west–north-east across

southern England. The underlying geology is Upper Cretaceous Chalk, which is covered in a surface deposit of ice and river-deposited material laid down during the last ice age. This creates a visually simple and uninterrupted landscape of smooth, rolling chalkland hills with large regular fields enclosed by low hawthorn hedges, with few trees, straight roads and expansive views to the north.

3.2.3

The Key Characteristics of NCA 87 of relevance to the Site include:

- *“The rolling downland, mostly in arable production, has sparse tree cover but distinctive beech belts along long, straight roads. Certain high points have small beech copses or ‘hanger’, which are prominent and characteristic features in the open landscape. In the east there are pine belts.*
- *Remnant chalk grassland, including road verges, supports chalkland flora and vestigial populations of invertebrates, such as great pignut and the chalkhill blue butterfly.*
- *Brick and ‘clunch’ (building chalk) under thatched roofs were the traditional building materials, with some earlier survival of timber frame. Isolated farmhouses built of grey or yellowish brick have a bleached appearance.*
- *Settlement is focused in small towns and in villages.*
- *The NCA is traversed by the Icknield Way, an ancient route that is now a public right of way. Roads and lanes strike across the downs perpendicularly and follow historical tracks that originally brought livestock to their summer grazing. Today major roads and railways are prominent landscape characteristics of the NCA.”¹*

Regional: East of England Landscape Framework (Landscape East)

3.2.4

The East of England Landscape Framework (Landscape East) identifies a series of landscape typologies within the east of England region. The Landscape East Assessment identifies the Site as being situated within the Chalk Hills and Scarps Landscape Type (LT). It describes the area as *“Prominent chalk hills, in places*

¹ Natural England National Character Area 87 (2015). Pg 6

forming a distinct edge, elsewhere incised by dry valleys to create a rounded rolling landform. Often well wooded with long distance views, this is a large scale landscape with an ordered pattern of fields and woodlands."

- 3.2.5 Calcareous grassland is found in this Chalk Hills and Scarps landscape, especially on shallow soils on steeper scarp and valley slopes (e.g. Warden and Galley Hills). Lowland mixed woodland (often ancient comprising ash/beech/hazel) is also a predominant habitat type. The primary land use is predominately arable land use, with permanent pasture and woodland on steeper slopes. With ancient semi-natural beech, lime and sycamore woods on summits and slopes, with more recent woodland blocks and shelterbelts around Newmarket. The Landscape East Assessment also notes that tranquillity in the rural landscape can feel empty and unpopulated in places, and that the LT has a simple, open landscape, affording long distance, panoramic views.

County: Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment

- 3.2.6 The Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment identifies the Site as lying within Landscape Character Area (LCA) Scarp Slopes South of Royston: Area 228. It is described as:

"An extensive area running parallel and to the south of the A505. The scarp extends from the Cat Ditch Valley in the west to the Wardlington Bottom Drain in the east. The area extends southwards, rising to meet the break of slope with the plateau landscape. To the east of Royston a small chalk outlier extends northwards, ending at Goffers Knoll.

*Chalk scarp slope incised by dry water cut valleys. Undulating landform with steeper slopes towards the upper plateau edge. Large scale arable fields with ordered pattern of rectilinear field boundaries and lanes with straight boundaries. Occasional farmsteads. Small tree plantations set out in discrete coverts. Individual tree belts."*²

² Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment

3.2.7 The key characteristics of LCA 228 of relevance to the Site include:

- *“Incised chalk scarp slope;*
- *Large scale pattern of rectilinear fields;*
- *Long straight roads, open and without hedge boundaries, climbing the face of the scarp; and*
- *Absence of larger settlements.”³*

3.2.8 Distinctive features of the LCA are also noted as:

- *“Area abuts suburban boundary to Royston;*
- *Therfield Heath, to the southwest of Royston - an area of uncultivated land designated as a SSSI;*
- *Coombe Road sits within a deeply incised valley;*
- *The A10, Roman road;*
- *Historic earthworks; and*
- *Newsells Park.”⁴*

3.2.9 The Hertfordshire LCA evaluates the visual and sensory perception of the LCA, with them noted as:

“Visual and Sensory Perception: Expansive open area with long distance views to the north.

*Rarity & distinctiveness * Chalk scarps are a rare landscape type within the region.*

³ Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment

⁴ Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment

3.2.10 The Visual Impact of the LCA notes;

“Scarp provides a vantage point for views over Royston to the north.”⁵

3.2.11 The Condition and Robustness of LCA 228 are stated as:

*“Condition – **Poor***

Land cover change: Insignificant

Age structure of tree cover: Over mature

Extent of semi-natural habitat survival: Relic

Management of semi-natural habitat: Poor

Survival of cultural pattern: Declining/Relic

Impact of built development: Moderate

Impact of land-use change: Low

*Robustness – **Strong***

Impact of landform: Prominent

Impact of land cover: Prominent

Impact of historic pattern: Apparent

Visibility from outside: Widely visible

Sense of enclosure: Open

Visual unity: Unified

Distinctiveness/rarity: Frequent”

⁵ Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment

- 3.2.12 The landscape condition and strength of character is therefore in *'Restore condition to maintain character.'*⁶
- 3.2.13 The Hertfordshire LCA combines the condition and robustness of LCA 228 to result in an overall strategy and guidelines for managing change in the LCA. These are to:
- *"Maintain the general open character of the area and in particular the long distance views over the lowland landscape to the north;*
 - *Promote management of woodland to encourage a diverse woodland flora;*
 - *Promote the creation of buffer zones between intensive arable production and areas of seminatural habitat and the creation of links between habitat areas; and*
 - *Maintain and extend the rights of way network."*⁷
- 3.2.14 The documents outlined above, together with the Site appraisal, have been utilised to establish the baseline conditions for the Site and its surroundings in order to complete this assessment.

3.3 Statutory Designations

- 3.3.1 **Conservation Areas:** The Site is not located within any Conservation Area; however the *Royston Conservation Area* is located approximately 850m to the west of the Site. The Conservation Area is located just to the south of the railway line and focuses on the historic core of Royston. (Refer to **Figure 3: Landscape and Heritage Designations with Public Rights of Way**).
- 3.3.2 **Scheduled Monuments:** There are no scheduled monuments within the Site, however there are a number within 3km of the Site. The closest Scheduled Monument is *Royston Cave* (List Entry Number: 1015594), located approximately 1km west of

⁶ Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment

⁷ Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment

the Site, located within Royston Conservation Area. (Refer to **Figure 3: Landscape and Heritage Designations with Public Rights of Way**).

- 3.3.3 **Listed Buildings:** There are no Listed Buildings within the Site. The closest Listed Building is Grade II Listed *Eagle House*, (List Entry Number: 1102057), located approximately 850m south of the Site. There are also a number of other Grade I, II* and II Listed Buildings located between 1km and 2km to the west of the Site, the majority of which are focused within the Royston Conservation Area. (Refer to **Figure 3: Landscape and Heritage Designations with Public Rights of Way**).
- 3.3.4 **Registered Parks and Gardens:** The Site is not covered by any Registered Parks or Gardens. There are no Registered Parks and Gardens within 3km of the Site. (Refer to **Figure 3: Landscape and Heritage Designations with Public Rights of Way**).
- 3.3.5 **RAMSAR:** The Site is not covered by a RAMSAR designations.
- 3.3.6 **Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI):** The Site is not covered by a SSSI, however *Therfield Heath SSSI* is located approximately 1.5km to the west of the Site. (Refer **Figure 2: Statutory Designations**).
- 3.3.7 **Special Protection Area (SPA):** The Site is not covered by any SPA.
- 3.3.8 **Special Areas of Conservation (SAC):** The Site is not covered by any SAC.
- 3.3.9 **National Nature Reserve (NNR):** The Site is not covered by any NNR.
- 3.3.10 **Local Nature Reserve (LNR):** The Site is not covered by any LNRs, however *Therfield Heath LNR* is located approximately 1.5km to the west of the Site. (Refer **Figure 2: Statutory Designations**).
- 3.3.11 **Environmental Designations:** There are no Environmental Designations across the Site, however deciduous woodland blocks are scattered about the area, including to the boundaries of the Site, alongside lowland calcareous grassland and lowland meadows. (Refer to **Figure 5: Environmental Designations**).
- 3.3.12 **Public Rights of Way:** There are no Public Rights of Way (PRoW) that cross the Site. The Icknield Way recreational route passes to the north of the Site in an east west

direction along Newmarket Road, turning southwards and crossing through Therfield Heath.

The Hertfordshire Way passes along the eastern edge of Therfield Heath and travels c. 700m along Newmarket Road before turning in a southerly direction at the A10 / Newmarket Road roundabout and crosses the landscape to the south east of the Site.

Public footpath Royston 008, which connects to Royston 016 passes further to the east of the Site in a north south direction within the existing residential development of the southeast of Royston.

There is also a Permissive Route to the south of the Site following along the field boundary and the B1029. (Refer to **Figure 3: Landscape and Heritage Designations with Public Rights of Way**).

3.4 Landscape Resource and Contribution of the Site to Landscape Character

3.4.1 The Site is not covered by any designations for landscape character or quality. It comprises a broadly rectangular shaped agricultural field. Mature structural vegetation surrounds the Site on all boundaries. Vegetation on the northern boundary of the Site is thinner than the vegetation on the other boundaries of the Site, however, it provides a degree of containment to the Site from the north. Vegetation on the eastern and southern boundaries provides a substantial visual and physical barrier between the Site and Burloes Hall. Similarly, vegetation on the western boundary serves as a substantial buffer to existing residential development. The Site is not publicly accessible, the Icknield Way long distance walking route passes to the immediate north of the Site on Newmarket Road, although the Site and the walking route are separated by the vegetation on the northern boundary of the Site.

3.4.2 The scale of the arable field in which the Site is located is similar to those present within the surrounding landscape, although its high degree of containment is unusual. The topography of the Site rapidly falls from the southern boundary to the north, there is a slight dip in the centre of the Site. The topography of the Site is

typical of the surrounding landscape. There is an overhead powerline crossing the Site from the south western corner through to the eastern part of the northern boundary. Overall, the Site is considered to contribute in a positive way to the local landscape character, since the land exhibits some attribute representative of the local landscape character and some incongruous elements, but the Site does not detract from the local landscape character.

- 3.4.3 The Site contains no features or attributes of rarity and there appear to be no associations connecting the Site with notable people, historical events or the art. Overall, the Site could not be considered remote, secluded or tranquil due to its proximity to the A505 and Newmarket Road, which have an audible presence over the Site. The Site does not form part of a valued landscape for the purposes of NPPF, taking into account the value attributes of the Site features on the land, the Site islet has some landscape value which is overall, considered to be medium.

3.5 Visual Resource

- 3.5.1 The visual amenity experience by people (visual receptors) in the locality of the Site differs according to many factors. Visual receptors of higher sensitivity with a greater susceptibility to change include residents at home (private viewpoints), people engaged in outdoor recreation (including the use of PROWs), visitors to heritage assets and other attractions, travellers on recognised scenic routes (public viewpoints) and people at their workplace where views are an important contributor to the setting and quality of their working life. Travellers on road, rail or other transport routes are considered less sensitive to changes in visual amenity.
- 3.5.2 A number of specific, representative and illustrative photographs selected for inclusion in the report and to illustrate the visual effects of the proposed scheme range from receptors including, local roads, public rights of way and representative private views are shown on **Figure 8: Photo Location Plan** and photographs are shown on **Figure 10: Photographic Sheets**. The visual receptors are considered to illustrate a fair representation of receptor groups with varying sensitivity/susceptibility to change in their visual amenity.

3.5.3

Initial consideration of the study area, via desk research, covered a broad sphere of 2-3km; however, this has been refined through field survey to review and appraise the extent of visibility of the Site in the landscape as follows;

- Burloes Cottages inset into the northern boundary of the Site are afforded the greatest extent of close proximity views with rear windows looking over the low hedgerow on the property curtilage across the rolling topography the Site to the tree belt on the Sites southern boundary. Close proximity views from the north, towards the Site, are afforded from Newmarket Road, where Site boundary vegetation is thinner. There are also middle distance views from the north towards the Site, (from the eastern edge of Royston, the A505 and neighbouring fields), where there is minimal intervening vegetation. Longer distance views of the Site are screened by intervening vegetation and built form within Royston.
 - Views towards the Site from the east, south and west, both locally and further afield, are screened due to mature intervening vegetation along the Site boundaries. Residential development to the west of the Site also screens views into the Site from the west.
-

4 THE PROPOSALS

4.1 General Principles

4.1.1 This section of the report considers the results of the initial baseline work in the context of future residential development at the Site.

4.1.2 The design of the proposed development should be well-integrated into the fabric of the landscape surrounding Royston. To assist the design process, the following general opportunities have been applied to the emerging proposals. These are based upon Site investigations, published landscape character assessments and visual effects considerations.

4.1.3 The Hertfordshire LCA provides an overall strategy and guidelines for managing change in the LCA (228). Those relevant to the scheme are:

- *“Maintain the general open character of the area and in particular the long distance views over the lowland landscape to the north;*
- *Promote management of woodland to encourage a diverse woodland flora;*
- *Promote the creation of buffer zones between intensive arable production and areas of seminatural habitat and the creation of links between habitat areas;*
- *Maintain and extend the rights of way network.”⁸*

4.1.4 By taking on board and implementing these points as part of the emerging layout and strategy for the Site, it would provide beneficial opportunities for the land and integration into the wider area, having the potential to deliver benefits for landscape enhancement and green infrastructure in keeping with local landscape character for the area.

⁸ Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment

4.2 Proposed Development & Approach to Mitigation

4.2.1 The proposed development consists of the erection of;

“Hybrid application for residential development of up to 325 dwellings comprising: (a) full planning application for Phase 1 comprising 102 dwellings and associated infrastructure including access from Newmarket Road, emergency and pedestrian/cycle access from Burloes Hall Drive, internal highways, public open space, landscaping and drainage and (b) outline application for up to 223 dwellings and associated infrastructure with all matters reserved apart from primary means of access and emergency and pedestrian/cycle access from Burloes Hall Drive.”

4.2.2 The proposed development will be finished in a materials palette to reflect the surrounding vernacular of existing developments in Royston. Vegetation on the Sites boundaries will be retained, protected and enhanced as part of the proposed development. There will be some loss of trees and hedgerow to the northern boundary of the Site to facilitate access into the Site.

4.2.3 The following principles have been applied to the emerging proposals. These are based upon Site investigations, published landscape character assessments and visual effects considerations. The proposals are shown on the Landscape Masterplan prepared by Liz Lake Associates (**Appendix C**) and comprise the following main elements;

- Central village greens creating strong focal points within the scheme and creating opportunities to retain existing on Site vegetation;
- All new planting to plot frontages and landscapes verges will be mixed native, including some evergreen to ensure a good screen and enhance the biodiversity of the Site and a connection to existing landscape features;
- Setting the proposed dwellings back from the edges of the Site to allow existing boundary vegetation to be retained and enhanced with new planting to public open spaces;

- Building finishes to reflect the adjacent residential developments to allow for there to be no visual distinction drawn between the consented and proposed developments;
- Opportunities for new tree planting along road frontages throughout the scheme, providing an increase in canopy cover across the Site. Trees shall be planted at varying sizes and species (of local provenance) to allow for a range in height and diversity in tree stock.
- Enhancement of wooded edges to the Site with new shrub and tree planting, where utilities easements allow, enhancing green infrastructure within the Site.

4.2.4

In consideration of the landscape and visual issues relevant to the Site this approach to the mitigation of the proposed development has been considered, incorporating the principles outlined above. The mitigation strategy has been developed to avoid, reduce and as far as possible remedy the identified landscape and visual effects. The recommendations have been incorporated into the proposals which aim to mitigate potential adverse landscape and visual effects and help to integrate the proposed development into the surrounding landscape.

5 ASSESSMENT OF LANDSCAPE EFFECTS

This section of the report considers the results of the initial baseline work in the context of future potential development at the Site. The landscape effects are the changes to the Site, quantitative or qualitative, compared with a scenario without the Proposals. Effects can be adverse or beneficial, direct, indirect, or cumulative.

The following assessment of landscape effect should be read in conjunction with the approach to mitigation (refer Chapter 4).

5.1 Identifying the Landscape Effects

- 5.1.1 The effect of the proposed changes to the Site, specifically on the identified landscape receptors (attributes) has been reviewed including consideration of changes to the existing landscape resource, the introduction of new elements within the landscape and changes to local perceptions of the Site.

5.2 Sensitivity and Susceptibility

- 5.2.1 An important element in identifying the effects of a Proposal is to assess the ability (the susceptibility) of the existing landscape to accommodate the specific proposed changes with regard to the consequences on the local landscape character.
- 5.2.2 The Site (landscape resource) has been deemed to be of **medium susceptibility** to accommodate the proposed development, since it is an established landscape where change of an appropriate nature could be absorbed without loss of key characteristics, individual elements or features and specific aesthetic or perceptual aspects or overall character.
- 5.2.3 Accordingly, the sensitivity of the Site is considered to be **medium** when value (**medium**) and susceptibility (**medium**) are combined.
-

5.3 Significance of Landscape Effects

- 5.3.1 Effects can be adverse or beneficial. Where the Proposals are judged to cause deterioration to the landscape resource / local landscape character this is described as an adverse effect. Where the Proposals are judged to increase the value of the Site to the landscape resource / local landscape character this is described as a beneficial effect.
- 5.3.2 There will be a direct and permanent change to the resource of the land in the proposed change of the Site from an agricultural field to one of residential properties with associated infrastructure and landscape planting. The proposed development brings new built elements into an undeveloped part of the landscape resource (at the site) which will inevitably change the character of the Site; however, the proposed elements are of a type, design, colour, scale, height, mass and footprint that are comparable with the adjacent land uses to the west, which have already influenced the character of the surroundings locally. The landscape resource of the Site itself will be improved and enhanced through the planting of new features, including new trees, hedgerows and scrub. These new elements will provide a positive contribution to character and have a beneficial effect on the resource of the Site itself.
- 5.3.3 Overall, the scale and degree of change on part of the landscape would be recognised, but alongside existing features that have already influenced the landscape locally. Accordingly, the overall significance of the landscape effect with regard to the proposed scheme is considered to represent a **Slight Adverse to Negligible Effect**.
- 5.3.4 Once an appropriate landscape management scheme has established, the significance of the landscape effects in the long term will change and is considered to represent a **Negligible Effect** on landscape character, as the proposed development will assimilate into its setting and will be absorbed by the landscape framework in the longer term.
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6 ASSESSMENT OF VISUAL EFFECTS

The visual effects are the changes to the Site, quantitative or qualitative, compared with a scenario without the Proposals. Effects can be adverse or beneficial, direct, indirect, or cumulative. The assessment involves a systematic identification and description of the visual effects, supported by plans and photographs.

6.1 Identifying the Visual Effects

6.1.1 The likely value places upon views by people, or the visual amenity if the locality is evaluated to help assess the effects of the proposed development.

6.1.2 The assessment has been carried out to make informed judgements applicable to visual amenity throughout the year, including the winter months as it is recognised that deciduous planting may increase the degree of visibility in some locations.

6.1.3 An important element in identifying the visual effects of a Proposal is to assess the existing visual receptors (people who see the view) and their susceptibility to changes in views and visual amenity. The susceptibility of different visual receptors to changes in views and visual amenity is mainly a function of:

- *“The occupation of activity of people experiencing the view at particular locations; and*
 - *The extent to which their attention or interest may therefore be focused on the views and the visual amenity they experience at particular locations.”⁹*
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⁹ Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd Edition, Para 6.32 (2013)

6.2 Significance of Visual Effects

Assessment of the significance of visual effects relating to the proposed development is considered with regard to the sensitivity of the visual receptor, the value attached to the views or visual amenity and the magnitude of change in view. The magnitude of change in view is considered in light of:

- The sensitivity of the visual receptor (the viewer);
- The value attached to the views or visual amenity;
- The size and scale of the development;
- The geographical extent of the area influenced;
- Duration; and
- Reversibility.

6.2.1 For the identified viewpoints the degree of change which the Proposals will engender is described and assessed. The following section identifies the primary viewpoints and people or visual receptors within the area that are likely to be affected by the change in views and visual amenity resulting from the proposed scheme. The significance of the visual effect has been assessed upon completion of the scheme and once established (i.e. 15 years plus), although it is acknowledged that new woodland and tree planting will continue growing to maturity over a longer period of time beyond the establishment period.

6.3 Identification of Visual Effects

6.3.1 The following section identifies a range of typical receptors within the area which are likely to be affected by the change in views and visual amenity resulting from the proposed development.

6.3.2 It should be noted that for some views the effects are considered to be short lived, largely because they occur on transient routes – e.g. local roads– in these locations, views are often short lived or periodic glimpses whilst moving along a route.

Private Receptors

Views from Burloes Cottages inset into the northern Site boundary (refer to contextual panoramas A, C, D & E) - High Sensitivity

6.3.3 Views of the proposed development will be afforded from rear windows of Burloes Cottages. Receptors will look over a small area of public open space to new residential properties within the eastern and central part of the Site, facing Burloes Cottages. Once established new tree planting along the access road and within the public open space will soften views of built form in the foreground. Upper portions of proposed development in the southern part of the Site will be visible behind new properties in the foreground of the view as landform raises to the south. Street tree planting along internal roads, once established, will break up the massing of new properties in the south of the Site.

- Scheme completion (year 1 winter): Substantial Adverse Effect
- Established scheme (year 15 summer): Moderate Adverse to Substantial Effect

Views from Burloes Hall to the south east of the Site - High Sensitivity

6.3.4 The proposed development is screened in views from Burloes Hall by the substantial woodland belt, Burloes Plantation, encasing the southern and eastern sides of the Site.

- Scheme completion (year 1 winter): No Change
- Established scheme (year 15 summer): No Change

Views from residential properties to the immediate west of the Site on Foxglove Bank, Saffron Street, Brampton Road, Haycock Road and Goodwood Road - High Sensitivity

6.3.5 The majority of properties to the west of the Site have side elevations of the properties facing the Site, although a handful are orientated to face towards the Site. The depth of the woodland belt varies in places, allowing for a greater extent of the

Site to be visible through the northern end of the belt between tree trunks. Where gaps in the vegetation allow, new dwellings on the western edge of the Site will be visible set back from the edge of the Site behind a linear strip of public open space extending the length of the boundary. New tree planting will combine with the existing woodland belt to heavily filter views of the proposed development.

- Scheme completion (year 1 winter): Moderate to Slight Adverse
- Established Scheme (year 15 summer): Slight Adverse

Views from residential properties on Newman Avenue to the north east of the Site - High Sensitivity

6.3.6 Only residential properties on the eastern end of the Newman Avenue area directly opposite the Site. The substantial vegetation on either side of Newmarket Road screens the Site from view.

- Scheme completion (year 1 winter): No Change
- Established scheme (year 15 summer): No Change

Views from residential properties on Redwing Rise to the north of the Site - High Sensitivity

6.3.7 Residential properties on the southern edge of Redwing Rise look across open space, intervening vegetation and existing residential properties within Royston in a southerly direction towards the Site. Views from first floor windows are likely to be afforded views of upper portions of the proposed development are likely to be barely discernible against the context of existing residential development on the eastern edge of Royston.

- Scheme completion (year 1 winter): Negligible Effect
- Established scheme (year 15 summer): Negligible Effect

Recreational Receptors

Views from the Icknield Way immediately north of the Site (refer to photo locations 1, 2a, 2b, 3 and 4) - High Sensitivity

6.3.8

The proposed development in the northern part of the Site is visible through gaps between tree trunks within the mature tree line on the northern Site boundary along Newmarket Road. Once established, new structural native planting and tree planting along the Site boundary and within the strip of open space on the northern edge of the Site will combine with existing vegetation on the northern boundary and soften views of the proposed development. Upper portions of new dwellings will be visible on the higher slopes of the Site, new tree planting within the internal streets will filter the massing of proposed built form and help to assimilate the proposed development into its wooded setting. Views further west from the Icknield Way, along Newmarket Road, are screened by existing built form and intervening vegetation. Views further east on the Hertfordshire Way are screened by woodland vegetation within Burloes Plantation.

- Scheme completion (year 1 winter): Moderate Adverse Effect
- Established scheme (year 15 summer): Slight Adverse Effect

Views from the Hertfordshire Way (bridleway Royston 010) to the south west of the Site (refer to photo location 13) - High Sensitivity

The majority of this section of the Hertfordshire Way is enclosed by built form, hedgerow and tree vegetation on either side right of way. There are some gaps in vegetation which allows for views across the foreground landscape contained by trees and woodland belts. The proposed development will be screened by existing intervening landform and vegetation from this section of the Hertfordshire Way.

- Scheme completion (year 1 winter): No Change
- Established scheme (year 15 summer): No Change

Views from Stile Plantation (public footpath Royston 008) to the west of the Site (refer to photo location 10) - High Sensitivity

6.3.9 Views of the Site and the proposed development are screened in views from Stile Plantation by intervening vegetation and existing built form.

- Scheme completion (year 1 winter): No Change
- Established scheme (year 15 summer): No Change

Views from the permissive paths to the south of the Site (refer photo locations 11 and 12) - High Sensitivity

6.3.10 Views of the Site and the proposed development are screened by the substantial woodland belt, Burloes Plantation, to the immediate south of the Site.

- Scheme completion (year 1 winter): No Change
- Established scheme (year 15 summer): No Change

Views from Redwing Rise recreation ground to the north of the Site (refer photo location 6) - Medium Sensitivity

6.3.11 Views from within the recreation ground look towards a mature hedgerow on the southern edge of the recreation ground. Existing residential properties within Royston are visible above the hedgerow. The proposed development is screened from view by the intervening vegetation and existing built form within Royston.

- Scheme completion (year 1 winter): No Change
- Established scheme (year 15 summer): No Change

Views from byway 159/11 to the north of the Site (refer photo location 7) - High Sensitivity

6.3.12 Views from byway 159/11 look across rolling arable fields to the built edge of Royston in the distance set against a wooded backdrop. Existing built form within Royston is visible amongst intervening vegetation and against the wooded backdrop to Royston. Street lighting along the A505 protrudes above vegetation in

the middle of the view whilst overhead powerlines cross the agricultural landscape in the foreground of the view. The undulating ground plane of the Site is visible within the wooded setting of Royston.

- 6.3.13 The proposed development would be seen in the gap against the wooded backdrop of Royston. Tree planting throughout the proposed development will assist with softening built form and break up the massing of built form, assimilating the proposed development into the existing landscape setting.

- Scheme completion (year 1 winter): Moderate Adverse Effect
- Established scheme (year 15 summer): Slight Adverse Effect

Views from byway 159/10 to the north of the Site (refer photo location 8) - High Sensitivity

- 6.3.14 Views from byway 159/10 look across rolling arable fields towards the built edge of Royston, where gaps in vegetation allow. The Site and the proposed development is screened from view by intervening vegetation and existing built form.

- Scheme completion (year 1 winter): No Change
- Established scheme (year 15 summer): No Change

Transport Receptors

Views from Newmarket Road to the immediate north of the Site (refer photo locations 1, 2a, 2b and 3) - Medium Sensitivity

- 6.3.15 Views from experienced from Newmarket Road are similar to those experienced when travelling along the Hertfordshire Way, immediately north of the Site. Although views experienced will be fleeting and glimpsed as receptors move in vehicles quickly along the road and receptor focus is on the direction of travel, rather than the Site itself.

- 6.3.16 The proposed development in the northern part of the Site is visible through gaps between tree trunks within the mature tree line on the northern Site boundary along Newmarket Road. Once established, new structural native planting and tree planting along the Site boundary and within the strip of open space on the northern edge of

the Site will combine with existing vegetation on the northern boundary and soften views of the proposed development. Upper portions of new dwellings will be visible on the higher slopes of the Site, new tree planting within the internal streets will filter the massing of proposed built form and help to assimilate the proposed development into its wooded setting.

- Scheme completion (year 1 winter): Slight Adverse Effect
- Established scheme (year 15 summer): Negligible Effect

***Views from the A505 to the north and east of the Site (refer photo location 9) -
Medium Sensitivity***

6.3.17

The majority of the A505 to the north and east of the Site is in a heavily vegetated cutting, preventing any views of the Site and the proposed development. Where the A505 is not in a cutting, there is substantial vegetation and intervening built form screening views of the Site and the proposed development.

- Scheme completion (year 1 winter): No Change
 - Established scheme (year 15 summer): No Change
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7

CONCLUSION

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- 7.1.1 The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment has reviewed the existing landscape and visual resource of Newmarket Road, Royston (the Site) in consideration for the proposed development of up to 325 new residential dwellings with associated infrastructure, landscaping and public open space.
- 7.1.2 The Site currently occupies an irregularly shaped agricultural field and extends to 14ha in size. Structural vegetation surrounds the Site on all boundaries, with vegetation to the east and south providing mitigation from Burloes Hall, the west from residential development and from the north from Newmarket Road.
- 7.1.3 The Site is not covered by any designations for landscape character or quality and the Site does not have any public access. Overall, the Site is considered to contribute in a positive way to the local landscape character, since the land exhibits some attribute representative of the local landscape character and some incongruous elements, but the Site does not detract from the local landscape character. The Site contains no features or attributes of rarity and there appear to be no associations connecting the Site with notable people, historical events or the art. The Site could not be considered remote or tranquil due to its proximity to the A505, and Newmarket Road. which have an audible presence over the Site. The Site also does not form part of a valued landscape within the NPPF.
- 7.1.4 There will be a direct and permanent change to the resource of the land in the proposed change of the Site from an agricultural field to an area containing residential properties with associated infrastructure and landscape planting. The proposed development brings new built elements into an undeveloped part of the landscape resource (at the site) which will inevitably change the character of the Site; however, the proposed elements are of a type, design, colour, scale, height, mass and footprint that are comparable with the adjacent land uses to the west, which have already influenced the character of the surroundings locally. The landscape

resource of the Site itself will be improved and enhanced through the planting of new features, including new trees and hedgerows. These new elements will provide a positive contribution to character and have a beneficial effect on the resource of the Site itself.

- 7.1.5 Overall, the scale and degree of change on part of the landscape would be recognised, but alongside existing features that have already influenced the landscape locally. Accordingly, the overall significance of the landscape effect with regard to the proposed scheme is considered to represent a **Slight Adverse to Negligible Effect**.
- 7.1.6 Once an appropriate landscape management scheme has established, the significance of the landscape effects in the long term will change and is considered to represent a **Negligible Effect** on landscape character, as the proposed development will be assimilating into its setting in the longer term.
- 7.1.7 The visual effects range from generally **Substantial Adverse and Moderate Adverse** through to **Negligible** and **No Change** effects, although it is recognised that users closest to the Site, residents of Burloes Cottages and receptors along Newmarket Road / the Hertfordshire Way, will experience the most apparent effects on views and visual amenity; both during construction and immediately following implementation when drivers, cyclists and walkers are particularly close to the Site, albeit seen in the local context of an area which has existing development and transport infrastructure; however, the effects (where experienced) are recognised as diminishing quickly with distance. For most receptors there will be limited visibility of the proposed development due to intervening vegetation and topography.
- 7.1.8 It should be noted that for some views the effects are considered to be short lived, largely because they occur on transient routes, in these locations the views are often periodic views experienced whilst moving along a route. As such, the change experienced is not always the focus of the view.
- 7.1.9 In light of the above findings and conclusions, the Site is capable of accommodating development in line with that shown on the Illustrative Framework Plan prepared by

McBains and Landscape Masterplan prepared by Liz Lake Associates, which takes on board the proposals set out in this document without causing material harm to the local landscape character or views and visual amenity of the area.

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