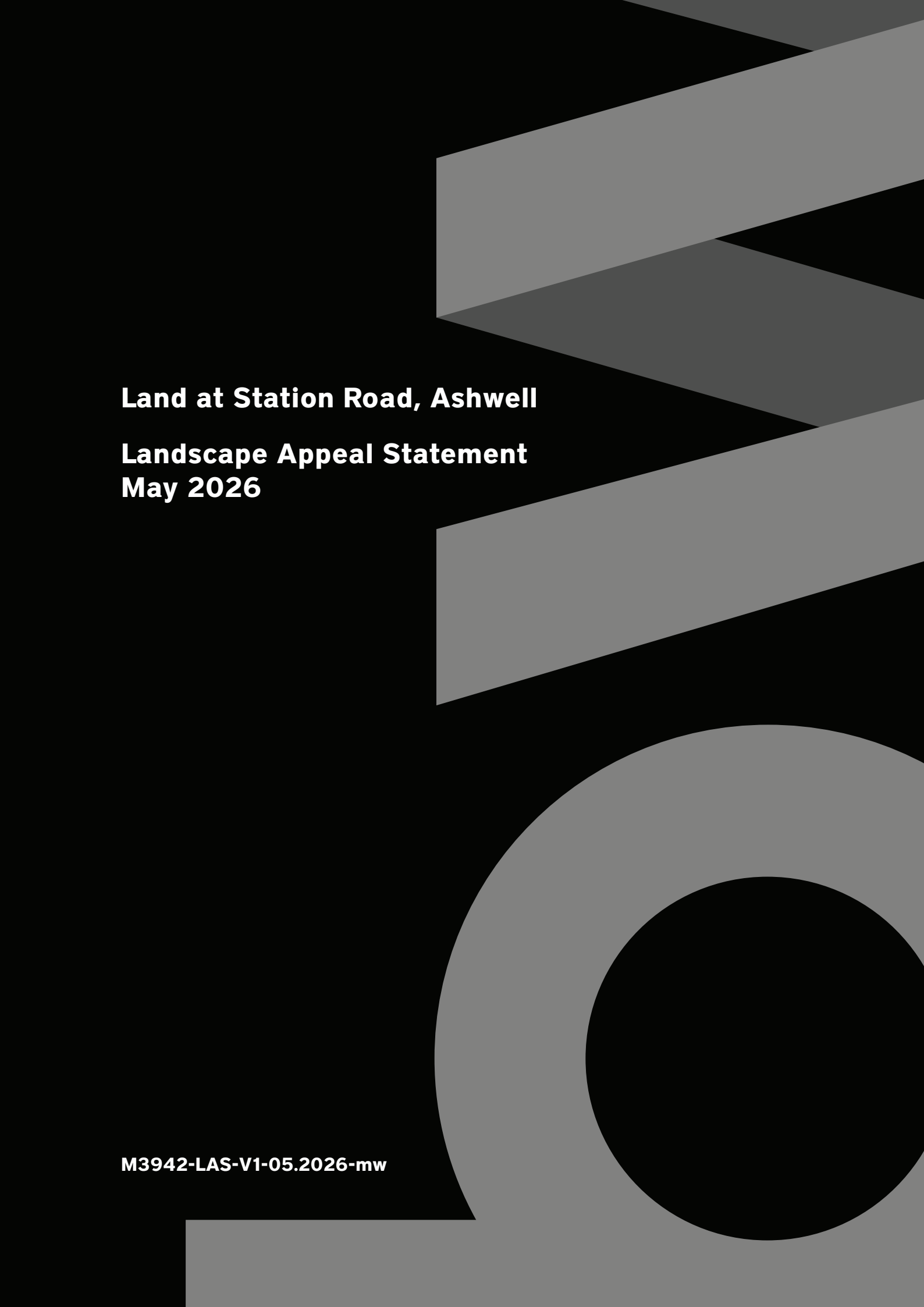




Land at Station Road, Ashwell

**Landscape Appeal Statement
May 2026**

M3942-LAS-V1-05.2026-mw

Landscape Appeal Statement

1. This Landscape Appeal Statement is provided as an appendix to the overall planning appeal statement against the refusal of North Hertfordshire (North Herts) District Council to grant planning permission for application number 25/02547/FP, for *“Residential development of 36 no. dwellings including creation of vehicular access off Station Road, associated parking, drainage, amenity space and landscaping.”*
2. Barnes Walker Ltd is a registered practice with the Landscape Institute and produced the submitted Landscape and Visual Appraisal document, along with the Design and Access Statement for the proposed development. Barnes Walker led the design approach to the site, an approach that was informed by a comprehensive landscape and settlement character appraisal process. Furthermore, Barnes Walker previously led on the landscape design and layout for the ‘Phase 1’ development, now called ‘Senuna Park’ development, immediately adjacent to the application site to the north-western parcel of the wider conjoined field area, which was allowed at appeal in April 2022 and is now nearing completion on site.
3. The planning application subject of this appeal was accompanied by a robust Design and Access Statement, a Landscape and Visual Appraisal and a Landscape Masterplan. Those documents collectively set out the thorough analysis that underpinned the design approach to the site, both in terms of the landscape-led approach, and also in terms of the form and arrangement of the built form on site. For the purpose of this appeal, it is not intended to repeat the narrative or the visual arguments and justification contained therein, other than where it is considered important to signpost an Appeal Inspector to a particular argument, justification or design approach that relates to the thrust of this appeal statement.
4. This statement will summarise the landscape and setting matters upon which the local authority’s appointed landscape/design consultants and professional officers agree with / support the appellants submission and conclusions, and where they differ / do not.
5. The application was recommended for approval by the local authority planning department, and the decision to overturn that recommendation was reached by Members of the planning committee at their meeting on 16th April 2026.
6. Of particular relevance to this statement is Reason for Refusal 2 (RfR 2), which reads as follows:

The proposal would have an urbanising effect on this open field beyond the village edge, and line of trees, contrary and harmful to the rural character and appearance of [the] area thereby failing to comply with the design aims of Local Plan Policy D1 and the design aspirations of paragraph 135 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

7. This statement intends to deal primarily with RfR 2.
8. For the purpose of this appeal statement:
 - The submitted Design and Access Statement (ref. M3942-DAS-25.11-01-V3) is hereinafter referred to as “DAS”
 - The submitted Landscape and Visual Appraisal document (ref. M3942-LVA-25.11-01-V4) is hereinafter referred to as “LVA”
 - The adjacent development at Senuna Park, now under construction is hereinafter referred to as the “Phase 1” scheme. That Phase 1 scheme was allowed at appeal under appeal reference (APP/X1925/W/17/3192151) in April 2022.
 - The scheme subject of this current planning appeal is hereinafter referred to as the “Phase 2” scheme.
 - Hereinafter, reference to the “Case Officer”, is a direct reference to the North Herts Local Planning Authority Case Officer who authored the report to Committee for the application subject of this appeal and who also presented the scheme and positive recommendation to the Planning Committee meeting on 16th April 2026.
 - The North Herts Council Planning Report to Committee is hereinafter referred to as “Committee report”.
 - North Hants Council Planning department engaged an external Landscape Consultant (Place Services – Essex County Council) who provided professional feedback on landscape and landscape design matters throughout the planning application. That external consultant is hereinafter referred to as the “Landscape Consultant”.
9. This Phase 2 scheme has been submitted following a comprehensive assessment of the landscape and visual character of the area, an appraisal of the settlement characteristics, a deep understanding of the 3-dimensional physical constraints and attributes of the site and a wholesale recognition of, and positive response to, the observations of the planning inspector’s report from the previous Phase 1 appeal (APP/X1925/W/17/3192151). Furthermore, a direct summary response to the relevant sections of the Phase 1 Planning Inspectors appeal report is set out at Appendix 1 of the submitted DAS. I do not intend to repeat the information contained

therein, but would like to draw attention to it and will refer to any specific points as relevant hereinafter.

10. During the course of the planning submission, positive dialogue was entered in to with the Local Planning Authority Case Officer. In January 2026, the scheme was presented to the Case Officer and the narrative/story of the site from a landscape and settlement character perspective was presented during an online meeting. As part of that meeting, the DAS and LVA were routinely referred to as both documents clearly set out the landscape and settlement approach to the Phase 2 development with reasoned justification for the design approach taken.
11. Following that meeting, positive landscape/layout adjustments were undertaken to the scheme which reflected the professional feedback of the Case Officer and their design colleagues and their appointed Landscape Consultant. As a result of the amendments, it was collectively agreed that the scheme was enhanced in design and setting terms. At this point, the Case Officer confirmed that they were satisfied that, on balance, the scheme should be supported in their recommendation report to planning committee.
12. Of particular note, the local authority has considered the submitted Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) document, and I now refer to the response received from the appointed Landscape Consultant who acted on behalf of North Hertfordshire Council. The table at Appendix 1 summarises the response of Place Services to the LVA.
13. It can be confidently concluded that the Landscape Consultant confirms the validity of the LVA Methodology, the identified Study Area and the identified Landscape Receptors. Furthermore, with the exception of some argument over whether an additional Visual Receptor (between VP10 and VP11) should have been identified and considered separately, they confirm that *“Overall, we judge that the 13no. viewpoint receptors identified are representative of potential views into the application site.”*
14. With regards to the Landscape Effects, although the Landscape Consultant feels that the effect on the Townscape of Ashwell Village was *“assessed as Minor / Moderate adverse and consider this could be higher”*, they also conclude that *“Generally, we agree with the assessment of landscape effects”*.
15. With regards to Visual Effects, the landscape consultant believes that the Significant View G (SVG) identified within the Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan (ANP) should have been considered. It is a view

north-west towards the village of Ashwell from Station Road, located between viewpoint 10 and viewpoint 11 of the LVA. However, SVG is oriented to look out further west across the open fields on the western side of Station Road towards the rising land and on to the historic village roofscape of Ashwell (largely screened by vegetation and topography). We believe that, by identifying and assessing both viewpoint 10 and viewpoint 11, this view has been effectively covered/considered. Furthermore, the actual location of the SVG identified within the ANP was recorded during our site visit in April 2025 - see Viewpoint 15 now included at Appendix 2 of this appeal statement. Viewpoint 15 (SVG) was **not used** in the LVA because, from that location, roadside hedgerow and trees actually serve to noticeably obscure any wider (north-westerly) views towards Ashwell and also towards the appeal site. On the other hand, Viewpoint 11, which we selected as a representative viewpoint, is much more open (including towards the open fields to the west and in terms of views to the site on the eastern side of Station Road). Hence, viewpoint 11 was chosen as being more representative of the intended experience from SVG when producing the Year 1 and Year 15 viewpoint photomontage visuals. It is worth noting that in their response to the submitted visualisations from Viewpoint 11 dated 17th March 2026 (ref. 11275), the Landscape Consultant confirmed as follows: *“The submission of Visualisations for Viewpoint 11 is welcomed, demonstrating the view of the new edge of Ashwell and the proposed mitigation to reduce the visual effects for users on Station Road.”*

16. There was no objection to the development proposals from the appointed Landscape Consultant. Furthermore, their response of 18th November 2025 (prior to preparation of amended plans that reduced the mass of built form south of the woodland block), indicated that *“...the LVA demonstrates that there is some capacity for an extension to the recent [Phase 1] development”*, although they did identify some layout concerns (most of which were addressed through amended plans/information), covering loss of a small portion of the central woodland, the nature of the proposed Public Open Space and limited pedestrian and cycle routes.
17. In addition, although we stand by our conclusions on Landscape and Visual Effects set out within the LVA, it can be confidently stated that if the LVA had concluded that the Landscape Effect on RG4 (Townscape of Ashwell Village) and the Visual Effect from VP10 should be higher (i.e. Moderate Adverse at Year 1), this would not have altered the overall conclusion as set out at paragraphs 7.14 to 7.16 of the LVA. There has been no challenge to the overall anticipated level of Landscape and Visual Effects reported. The LVA conclusion reached confirmed that *“As a result, this LVA does not assess any unacceptably high levels of long term (residual) adverse landscape or visual effect.”*

18. With reference to the submitted LVA, it has been confirmed within the Case Officer's Committee Report at para. 4.3.20 that *"This assessment has been reviewed by the Place Services Landscape team **who agree with and support these conclusions and recommend no objection to the application on the basis of impact in the landscape**, subject to conditions regarding hard and soft landscaping and boundary treatments and a Landscape Management Plan."* [Our emphasis]. The Committee Report further confirms that the landscape proposals are in accordance with the aims of Local Plan Policy NE2 (para. 4.3.21) and also comply with the aims of Local policies NE1, NE2 and ANHPO Policy ASH 8 (para. 4.3.23).

19. The other landscape, layout and setting comments received from the appointed Landscape Consultant that were not addressed by the amended plans submitted in March 2026 covered the following points. Our response is in *italicised* text:

- Pressure to prune Millennium Wood - *The woodland lies entirely outside of the garden boundaries and sufficient distance is retained between.*
- Concern over boundary fences in certain locations – *Details can be agreed by condition.*
- Access gate details – *Where these don't conflict with ecological protected habitat areas, details of any gates to public spaces can be agreed by condition.*
- Play Area lacking details of equipment and some concern over passive surveillance – *Details can be agreed by condition.*

20. Turning to matters detailed within Reason for Refusal 2, RfR 2, states the following:

"The proposal would have an urbanising effect on this open field beyond the village edge, and line of trees, contrary and harmful to the rural character and appearance of [the] area thereby failing to comply with the design aims of Local Plan Policy D1 and the design aspirations of paragraph 135 of the National Planning Policy Framework".

21. By its very nature, the construction of any type of residential development on land that was previously undeveloped, would lead to a level of unavoidable "urbanising effect". Indeed, the Planning Inspector in the previous successful Phase 1 Appeal noted that *"the proposal's introduction of built form to the site, with consequent reduction in openness and verdancy, would modestly extend the built-up area of the village in a south-easterly direction, with associated urbanising impact"*. Nonetheless, that previous Planning Inspector also referenced the woodland block, the boundary hedgerow and trees, topography, the depth of development from Station Road, along with the generous levels of green open space within the development when

concluding that these would all serve to ameliorate any visual concerns and would lead to a less cramped form of development, appropriate to the edge of settlement location.

22. Furthermore, the Planning Inspector noted the fact that the development *“would adjoin a stretch of Station Road that contains the village entrance sign, lighting columns on one side, and a combination of speed calming measures in the form of chicane road layout, speed signs and road markings”*. As a result of that, they concluded that those elements combined, *“to some extent dilute the rural character of this part of the south-eastern approach to the village, and result in a somewhat transitional feel between the village edge and the wider countryside beyond.”* We contend that this, coupled with the now established Phase 1 development (nearing completion) further impart a transitional character on this same approach.
23. In terms of the design approach taken to the development on site, we have clearly set out within the DAS and LVA that the decision to introduce a typical farmstead arrangement towards the site frontage (south of the woodland) along with the lower density housing to the south-eastern (and north-eastern) part of the site, separated by, and interwoven with, the generous levels of green open space is a justified and positive response. Furthermore, the existing and proposed vegetation in those green open spaces and around the built form south of the woodland block, would serve to successfully negotiate this transitional, edge of settlement site. We argue and are confident that the deliberate decision to introduce lower density housing at the south-eastern quadrant of the site, along with copious amounts of green space therein and with generous perimeter planting buffers, would lead to the introduction of a successful and filtered step between the urban development to the north of Phase 1 and the open countryside to the south and east of the appeal site.
24. The LVA concluded that the development would not lead to *“any unacceptably high levels of long term (residual) adverse landscape or visual effect.”* By the very nature of this conclusion, which has not been challenged by the Council’s appointed professional Landscape Consultant, it would naturally follow that there would be no significant level of harm to the rural character and appearance of the area as a result of the proposals being implemented.
25. As demonstrated above and within the DAS, LVA and Landscape Masterplan submitted with the planning application, we do not agree that the proposed scheme, if implemented, would have a significant *“urbanising effect on this open field beyond the village edge, and line of trees, contrary and harmful to the rural character and appearance of [the] area”*.

Appendix 1

Landscape Contribution Table

Appendix 1 – Summary of Response of Place Services (Landscape Consultant) to the submitted LVA

Aspect of the submitted LVA referenced	Comments (summarised) from Consultation response from Place Services, (ref: 11275, dated 18 th November 2025)	Supportive of the LVA Section/Item (Y/N)	Response to the Place Services Consultation response
Methodology	<i>"Overall, we are satisfied with the included methodology for assessing landscape and visuals effects"</i>	Y	Methodology is sound
On the Landscape Character Areas covered by the LVA	<i>"The LVA also reviews the Landscape Character Area of North Baldock Chalk Uplands Area 226 which is welcomed"</i>	Y	Landscape Receptors are agreed
Landscape Sensitivity (p. 40 LVA)	<i>"We agree with the judgements"</i>	Y	Landscape sensitivity judgements agreed
Landscape Effects on Landscape Receptors (p.62 - p66 LVA):			
North Herts LCA 226 Steeple Morden Plain / Greater Cambridge LCA 8B Morden to Duxford Lowland Chalklands	<i>"Generally, we agree with the assessment of landscape effects"</i>	Y	The Landscape Consultant agrees with the findings of the LVA.
North Herts LCA 224 North Baldock Chalk Uplands	<i>"Generally, we agree with the assessment of landscape effects"</i>	Y	The Landscape Consultant agrees with the findings of the LVA.
North Herts LCA 227 Odsey-Royston /	<i>"Generally, we agree with the assessment of landscape effects"</i>	Y	The Landscape Consultant agrees with the findings of the LVA.

Greater Cambridge LCA 8B Morden to Duxford Lowland Chalklands			
The townscape of Ashwell village	<i>"We have some concerns on the assessment of the Landscape Effects at Year 1 on the townscape of Ashwell Village assessed as Minor / Moderate adverse and consider this could be higher"</i>	N	We stand by our conclusion for the reasons set out in the table at p.65 of the LVA. The Landscape Consultant is not arguing the findings should be significantly higher, just <i>"could be higher"</i> . In any event, the overall conclusion on Landscape Effects would not be different, even if there had been found to be a Moderate Adverse Landscape Effect on the Townscape of Ashwell as a result of the proposals at Year 1. Furthermore, by year 15, we also stand by our conclusion that the Landscape Effect would be Minor Adverse / Negligible as the planting establishes. This conclusion has not been challenged, and we can therefore assume it is accepted.
Landscape Features within the Site	<i>"Generally, we agree with the assessment of landscape effects"</i>	Y	Landscape effects for this Receptor are agreed

Viewpoint Location and Visual Receptor Plan	<i>“Overall, we judge that the 13no. viewpoint receptors identified are representative of potential views into the application site.</i> <i>We would have liked to have seen Significant Viewpoint G of the Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan assessed and consider there may be some impact on this viewpoint by the development proposals. This viewpoint location is considered as viewpoint 10 with the LVA, however the impact upon SVG is not considered”</i>	Predominantly Y – see comments	Significant Viewpoint G is referenced in the LVA at p.9 and p.11 of the LVA. Furthermore, the significant view SVG primarily contains the open fields to the west and perhaps some rooftop views of the historic core of Ashwell including the imposing church spire of the St Mary’s Church. Furthermore, another reason for not using the VP photo we took in April 2025 from the location of SVG was the fact that much of the view was actually screened by hedgerow and/or roadside trees. This view is described by the photo described now as VP15 and contained at Appendix 2 of this statement. This VP15 photo was not used in the original LVA and is just attached for completeness. SVG is actually represented by viewpoint 11 and viewpoint 10, although the SVG itself is indicated (generally) somewhere between Viewpoint 10 and viewpoint 11 of the LVA. Nonetheless, a visualisation was created from VP11 (this was a little closer to the site than SVG and thus likely to increase the visual effects discernible within the viewpoint photomontage when compared with both the SVG and VP10 which were further away. The further away the viewpoint is, the wider the scope of the view and the greater the appreciation of the rooftops of Ashwell itself becomes. Hence, we believe that we have
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			presented a balanced consideration of the anticipated view from SVG. The Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan “<i>identifies twenty-one locally significant views, described and mapped in Figures 6.9 and 6.10. As appropriate to their scale and nature, development proposals within the arcs of the various views as shown on Figure 6.10 should be designed in a way that safeguards the locally significant view or views concerned.</i>” By assessing Viewpoint 10 and Viewpoint 11, we believe that this is fully representative of the nature of the view described by SVG in the Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan. Furthermore, by producing visuals from Viewpoint 11 (VP11 - Year 1 and Year 15), we would argue that this view was comprehensively considered as part of the overall LVA process.
Visual Effects upon Visual Receptors:			
Receptor Group 1 (RG1) - People using PRow FP108/51 VP1 – VP3	<i>“We do however judge that all other viewpoints have been appropriately assessed”</i>	Y	The Landscape Consultant agrees with the findings of the LVA.
Receptor Group 2 (RG2) - People using PRow Ashwell 017 VP4 – VP6	<i>“We do however judge that all other viewpoints have been appropriately assessed”</i>	Y	The Landscape Consultant agrees with the findings of the LVA.

Receptor Group 3 (RG3) - People using Station Road VP7 – VP9	<i>“We do however judge that all other viewpoints have been appropriately assessed”</i>	Y	The Landscape Consultant agrees with the findings of the LVA.
Receptor Group 3 (RG3) - People using Station Road VP10	<i>“We would have liked to have seen Significant Viewpoint G of the Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan assessed and consider there may be some impact on this viewpoint by the development proposals. This viewpoint location is considered as viewpoint 10 with the LVA, however the impact upon SVG is not considered.</i> <i>As a result, we consider the effects of viewpoint 10 and this receptor group could be assessed higher as Moderate Adverse.</i> <i>Due to the imposing nature of Millenium Wood in the centre of the site, the hedgerow to the north of the site, the flat nature of the landscape, and the recently constructed development at Senuna Park, the site is generally visually contained. There is a hedgerow to the eastern site boundary and the sensitivity of the view from PRow FP108/51 is considered Medium-High, which we are in agreement with. The Visual Effect at Year 1 is considered as Minor / Moderate Adverse, which we consider low.”</i>	N	As described above, we consider that the SVG set out within the Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan is actually between VP10 and VP11 (see below). Our LVA produced a photomontage visualisation from VP11 at both Year 1 and Year 15, which we believe is representative of SVG in a ‘worst case scenario’ as VP11 is slightly closer to the site (thus accentuating the visual effect) and was actually directed more towards the application site, whereas the direction of the arrow describing SVG in the Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan is clearly angled towards the main heart of Ashwell across the open fields to the west of Station Road (not the application site which is on the eastern side). It is likely that the significant view primarily contains the open fields to the west and perhaps some rooftop views of the historic core of Ashwell including the imposing church spire of the St Mary’s Church. Furthermore, another reason for not using the VP photo we took in April 2025 from the location of SVG was the fact that much of the view was actually screened by hedgerow and/or roadside trees. This view is described by the photo described now as VP15 and contained at Appendix 2 of this statement. This

			VP15 photo was not used in the original LVA and is just attached for completeness. For the reasons set out in the LVA and given the nature of VP10 with the housing and vegetation in the foreground of the view, we do not believe that the effect should be assessed as Moderate Adverse and stand by our original finding of Minor/Moderate Adverse.
Receptor Group 3 (RG3) - People using Station Road VP11	<i>"We do however judge that all other viewpoints have been appropriately assessed"</i>	Y	This VP was assessed as Moderate Adverse (see comments above regarding VP10). We would argue that this viewpoint reflects SVG and was taken from a location that was clearer and closer to the proposed new development, thus increasing the potential effect of the proposals in the view. The Landscape Consultant agrees with the findings of the LVA
Receptor Group 5 (RG5) - People using Kingsland Way VP12 – VP13	<i>"We do however judge that all other viewpoints have been appropriately assessed"</i>	Y	The Landscape Consultant agrees with the findings of the LVA.
Receptor Group 6 (RG6) - Visitors to Ashwell Smallgains Playing Fields and Allotments VP14	<i>"We do however judge that all other viewpoints have been appropriately assessed"</i>	Y	The Landscape Consultant agrees with the findings of the LVA.

Appendix 2

Viewpoint 15 (SGV)

Appendix 2 – Viewpoint 15 – View from the Significant View G (SVG) – Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan

This viewpoint photograph (VP15) was taken in April 2025 at the same time as the other viewpoint photographs that were taken and thereafter used within the submitted LVA. As set out in the Methodology at Appendix 1 of the submitted LVA (p.86), all viewpoint photography was undertaken in accordance with Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 06/19 – Visual Representation of Development Proposals, using a digital single lens reflex camera (Canon EOS 6D MKII) with a 50mm F/1.4 USM lens (guidance recommends the use of a 50mm lens as it provides imagery akin to that of the human eye).

VP15 was not ultimately used in the LVA because of the screening created by the roadside hedgerow and tree situated between the view and the appeal site. Furthermore, it was considered that VP10 and VP11 provided similar viewpoint photographs and were thus representative and, VP11 was taken from closer to the appeal site and presented a clearer view. VP15 is now presented here for completeness.



Viewpoint 15 (VP15) – The view from SVG (Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan) from Station Road, looking north and north-west towards Ashwell and the appeal site. The view is partially screened by roadside vegetation.



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