

Landscape and Visual Appraisal

Land off Station Road, Ashwell,
Hertfordshire

For: Beck Homes

Ref: M3942-LVA-25.11-01-V4



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1.0 Introduction

1.1	Barnes Walker Ltd has prepared this Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) on behalf of Beck Homes Ltd, to accompany a full planning application for the construction of 36no. dwellings, including 14no. affordable homes, on Land off Station Road, Ashwell.	1.6	The report then goes on to describe the development proposals before ascertaining any potential landscape and visual effects which may result from the implementation of the proposals.		<i>spaces and how those will change. Views from houses and individual properties are a matter of private amenity, noting that it is an established planning principle that there is no right to a view. However, it may be helpful for an LVIA to comment on changes to views that will be experienced from groups of properties, or in some cases individual properties, if these changes are likely to be significant.'</i>
1.2	The application Site is located immediately to the east of the Senuna Park development which was granted planning permission for 28 dwellings in April 2022 following a planning appeal. The development at Senuna Park is currently under construction.	1.7	Anticipated landscape effects may be generated by the proposed development on the landscape resource, which include its physical features, character, fabric and the quality of the landscape. These could include direct, physical effects upon landscape elements, such as the loss of a tree or tangible effects to an existing landscape character.	1.10	This LVA therefore identifies all the visual receptors who experience a publicly accessible view of the Site and the private views of the Site, which are experienced by the residents of properties. However, in accordance with the aforementioned LI Technical Guidance Note, it fully assesses the public views only, whereas the likely effects upon private views are considered by way of an appropriately detailed narrative.
1.3	This LVA is based on the proposed design layout by Beck Homes Ltd and the Landscape Layout prepared by Barnes Walker.	1.8	Visual effects are the predicted changes to a view and the associated effect of those changes upon the relevant visual receptors. Typically, the various visual receptor groups may comprise the residents of properties, the users of Public Rights of Way (PRoW), the users of recreational facilities, pedestrians, and users of a variety of forms of transport such as road users.	1.11	This LVA has been undertaken with reference to, and using aspects of, the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (Third Edition 2013), by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment. The full methodology used for the LVA is set out in Appendix 1.
1.4	It has been undertaken by a Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute and its key objective is to ascertain potential landscape and visual effects associated with the proposed development, whilst concurrently informing the design process for the Site.			1.12	Factors determining the extent of the study area are set out below and within the methodology in Appendix 1.
1.5	In order to prepare this document, desk-top studies were undertaken prior to a site based survey and assessment exercise. A site visit was undertaken in April 2025. This work informed the preparation of the baseline report which confirmed the nature of the Site and the surrounding landscape, any relevant landscape character assessments, associated planning policy and heritage assets before ascertaining the key visual receptors.	1.9	This LVA fully assesses the views experienced from publicly accessible locations. The recent Technical Note by the Landscape Institute (LITGN-2024-01-GLVIA3- Notes and Clarifications on Aspects of GLVIA3) states in 6(1): <i>'An LVIA should consider views from local communities focusing on the way that a community currently experiences views from public locations such as streets and open</i>		

1.0 Introduction



Fig 1 Aerial Photograph - Site Location and Study Area

The Site Location and Extent of the Study Area

- 1.13 The Site location and study area are described by Figure 1. The Site is located on the eastern edge of Ashwell, adjacent to the Senuna Park development which is currently under construction. The study area comprises an irregular, loosely triangular area that incorporates the eastern settlement edge of Ashwell to the west of the Site and agricultural land to the north, east and south including some smaller areas of settlement and scattered farmsteads therein.
- 1.14 The study area incorporates the Site and the wider landscape/townscape. Its extents were determined through the consideration of the area that could be influenced by the development of the Site, combined with its visual prominence.
- 1.15 The field work identified that the Site and its features were not visually prominent beyond distances over circa 1.6km due to the adjacent settlement edge, the undulating nature of the agricultural landscape and intervening field boundary vegetation and small pockets of woodland.

2.0 Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework

2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) document represents relevant planning policy at a national level. The NPPF (December 2024) promotes a presumption in favour of sustainable development for both plan-making and decision-taking (Paragraph 11).

2.2 The following sections are considered to be of relevance and contain further detail to inform how those principles are to be delivered:

- Section 12: Achieving Well-Designed Places (paragraphs 131 and 135 - 137). Paragraph 135 requires development to: 'function well and add to the overall quality of the area', be 'visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping', be 'sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities)', 'establish or maintain a strong sense of place', 'optimise the potential of the site', 'create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users';
- Section 15: Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment (paragraph 187).

Local Planning Policy

North Herts Council

2.3 The North Hertfordshire Local Plan (adopted 8 November 2022) forms the development plan for North Hertfordshire up to 2031. Ashwell Conservation Area covers the majority of the settlement area of Ashwell. The application Site is situated outside of the settlement boundary of Ashwell, within the rural area beyond the Green Belt. The adopted Proposals Map does not show any other landscape quality designations within the Site or wider study area.

North Hertfordshire Local Plan Policies

2.4 The following key policies of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan are considered to be of relevance to this LVA and the landscape context of the application Site:

2.5 Policy SP1 - Sustainable Development in North Hertfordshire

'This Plan supports the principles of sustainable development within North Hertfordshire. We will:

a) Maintain the role of key settlements within and adjoining the District as the main focus for housing, employment and new development making use of previously developed land where possible;

b) Ensure the long-term vitality of the District's villages by supporting growth which provides opportunities for existing and new residents and sustains key facilities;

c) Grant planning permission for proposals that, individually or cumulatively:

i. deliver an appropriate mix of homes, jobs and facilities that contribute towards the targets and aspirations in this Plan;

ii. create high-quality developments that respect and improve their surroundings and provide opportunities for healthy lifestyle choices;

iii. provide the necessary infrastructure required to support an increasing population;

iv. protect key elements of North Hertfordshire's environment including biodiversity, important landscapes, heritage assets and green infrastructure (including the water environment); and

v. secure any necessary mitigation measures that reduce the impact of development, including on climate change; and

d) Support neighbourhood plans and other local planning initiatives where they are in general conformity with the strategic policies of this Local Plan.'

2.6 Policy SP5 -Countryside and Green Belt

'We support the principles of the Green Belt and recognise the intrinsic value of the

	<i>countryside. Green Belt and Rural Areas Beyond the Green Belt are shown on the Policies Map. We: ...</i> <i>d) Will operate a general policy of restraint in Rural Areas beyond the Green Belt through the application of our detailed policies.'</i>		<i>asset, great weight will be given to the asset's conservation and the management of its setting. We will pursue a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment through:</i> <i>a) Maintaining a strong presumption in favour of the retention, preservation and enhancement of heritage assets and their setting according to their significance...'</i>	2.11	Policy CGB2b – Community facilities, services and affordable housing in the Rural Areas Beyond the Green Belt Ashwell is identified as a Category A village in the Local Plan. <i>'Planning permission for community facilities, services or affordable housing in the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt</i> <i>• Adjoining Category A villages; or</i> <i>• Beyond the built core of Category B villages</i> <i>will be granted provided that the land identified for such development in a Neighbourhood Plan or:</i> <i>a) It meets a proven local need as identified through a parish survey or other relevant study;</i> <i>b) There are no reasonable alternate, suitable and available sites:</i> <i>i. within the defined boundaries of the relevant Category A settlement or the built core of the relevant Category B village; or</i> <i>ii. otherwise within a reasonable travelling distance (by various modes) of the location where the need has been identified;</i> <i>c) Any affordable housing would meet relevant criteria of Policy HS2, particularly in relation to need, affordability and retention of dwellings; North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031</i>
2.7	Policy SP9 – Design and Sustainability <i>'The Council considers good design to be a key aspect of sustainable development. We will:</i>	2.10	Policy CGB1 - Rural Areas beyond the Green Belt <i>'In the Rural Areas beyond the Green Belt, as shown on the Policies Map, planning permission will be granted provided that the development:</i> <i>a) Is infilling development which does not extend the built core of a Category B village;</i> <i>b) Meets a proven local need for community facilities, services or affordable housing in an appropriate location;</i> <i>c) Is strictly necessary for the needs of agriculture or forestry;</i> <i>d) Relates to an existing rural building;</i> <i>e) Is a modest proposal for rural economic development or diversification; or</i> <i>f) Would provide land or facilities for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation and cemeteries that respect the generally open nature of the rural area.</i>		
2.8	Policy SP12 – Green Infrastructure, landscape and biodiversity <i>'We will accommodate significant growth during the plan period whilst ensuring the natural environment is protected and enhanced. We will: ...</i> <i>b) Consider and respect landscape character, scenic beauty and locally sensitive features...'</i>				
2.9	Policy SP13 – Historic Environment <i>'The Council will balance the need for growth with the proper protection and enhancement of the historic environment. When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage</i>				

d) The proposed development would not have a substantial adverse impact on the openness or general policy aims of the Rural Area beyond the Green Belt; and
e) The public benefit of the proposal outweighs any harm that might arise against these aims.

Development permitted in Category C settlements in the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt under Policy SP2 will also need to meet criteria (a) to (e) above. The provision of limited market housing to cross-subsidise schemes under this policy will be granted planning permission in exceptional circumstances where it can be demonstrated that the level of market housing proposed is strictly necessary to make the required development deliverable and would accord with criteria (d) and (e) of this policy.'

2.12 Policy D1 – Sustainable Design
'Planning permission will be granted provided that development proposals:

a) Respond positively to the site's local context;
b) Take all reasonable opportunities, consistent with the nature and scale of the scheme, to: i. create or enhance public realm; ii. optimise the potential of the site by incorporating Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS); iii. reduce energy consumption

and waste; iv. retain existing vegetation and propose appropriate new planting; v. maximise accessibility, legibility and physical and social connectivity both internally and with neighbouring areas; vi. future proof for changes in technology and lifestyle; vii. design-out opportunities for crime and anti-social behaviour; and viii. minimise the visual impact of street furniture and parking provision;
c) Have regard to the Design SPD, and any other relevant guidance;
d) Within Letchworth Garden City have regard to the Letchworth Garden City Design Principles contained in Appendix 5; and
e) For residential schemes, meet or exceed the nationally described space standards and optional water efficiency standards'

2.13 Policy NE1 – Strategic Green Infrastructure
'Planning permission will be granted provided that development:

a) Protects, conserves and where possible enhances the strategic green infrastructure network;
b) Avoids the loss, fragmentation, severance or negative impact on the function of the strategic green infrastructure network;
c) Creates new strategic green infrastructure where appropriate and is accompanied by a plan for its long-term maintenance and management; and

d) Has suitable mitigation measures or appropriate replacement to satisfactorily address adverse impacts on the strategic green infrastructure network.'

2.14 Policy NE2 – Landscape

'Planning permission will be granted for development proposals that:

a) Respect the sensitivities of the relevant landscape character area and have regard to the guidelines identified for built development and landscape management;
b) Do not cause unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area or the landscape character area in which the site is located, taking account of any suitable mitigation measures necessary to achieve this;
c) Are designed and located to ensure the health and future retention of important landscape features; and
d) Have considered the long-term management and maintenance of any existing and proposed landscaping.

2.15 Policy NE6 – New and improved open space

'Planning permission will be granted for development proposals that make provision for new and/or improved open space which:

a) Meets the needs arising from the development having regard to the Council's

	<i>open space standards and other relevant guidance;</i> <i>b) Contributes towards improving the provision, quality and accessibility of open space; and</i> <i>c) Incorporate any necessary open space buffer(s) for landscape, visual, ecological or air quality reasons...</i>						
2.16	Policy HE1 – Designated heritage assets Policy HE1 refers to designated heritage assets including Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas and Registered Parks and Gardens. The policy states the following: <i>‘Planning applications relating to Designated heritage Assets or their setting shall be accompanied by a Heritage Assessment/ Justification Statement that:</i> <i>i. Assesses the significance of heritage assets, including their setting;</i> <i>ii. Justifies and details the impacts of any proposal upon the significance of the designated heritage asset(s); and</i> <i>iii. Informs any necessary measures to minimise or mitigate against any identified harms.</i> <i>Planning permission for development proposals affecting Designated Heritage Assets or their setting will be granted where</i>	<i>they (as applicable):</i> <i>a) Enable the heritage asset to be used in a manner that secures its conservation and preserves its significance;</i> <i>b) Incorporate a palette of materials that make a positive contribution to local character or distinctiveness, where it is appropriate and justified; and</i> <i>c) Will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of the designated heritage asset, and this harm is outweighed by the public benefits of the development, including securing the asset’s optimum viable use.</i> <i>Where substantial harm to, or loss of significance, of a designated heritage asset is proposed the Council shall refuse consent unless it can be demonstrated that the scheme is necessary to deliver considerable public benefits that outweigh the harm or loss.</i> <i>Designated heritage assets include Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas and Registered Parks and Gardens....’</i>	2.18	landmarks and views, massing and materials. The following supplementary planning guidance is considered to be relevant to design and landscape matters: SPG18 Ashwell Village Design Statement - guidelines designed to ensure that changes to the village are sympathetic to that character and help to maintain Ashwell as a diverse and thriving rural community. <u>Ashwell Parish Council</u>	2.19	The Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan (ANP) was made April 2022. The purpose of the ANP is to structure development within the parish and provide guidance to those wishing to submit planning applications for development within the parish. The ANP provides a local context, clarifying how policies at a national and district level can operate at a parish level. <u>Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan Policies</u>	
		2.17	The following supplementary planning documents are considered to be relevant to design and landscape matters: Design Supplementary Planning Document, July 2011, outlines a concise history of the village, discusses built form and layout,	2.20	The following policies of the Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan are considered to be of relevance to this LVA and the landscape context of the application Site:	2.21	Policy ASH1 - Location of Development The application Site is situated outside of the proposed extension to the settlement boundary as shown in Figure 4.1 of the ANP.

			<i>'...Development proposals outside the proposed extension to the settlement boundary shown in Figure 4.1 will not be supported unless:</i> <i>(i) They are in accordance with Saved Plan (1996) and Emerging Local Plan policies in respect of appropriate uses in the countryside; or the development preserves or enhances the character or appearance of the area...'</i>			<i>footpath approaches; and</i> <i>ii. not have a significantly detrimental impact on the local views as set out in POLICY ASH8 Locally significant views.</i> <i>d) Development proposals affecting designated and non-designated heritage assets (either directly or via a change in their settings), should respect, conserve, and enhance the significance of those assets.'</i>		<i>enhance the rural character and setting of Ashwell.</i> <i>b) Development proposals should demonstrate that they have addressed the following matters:</i> <i>i. respecting the natural topography of a site, preserving and sensitively incorporating existing natural features such as trees, hedgerows and ponds within the site; and</i> <i>ii. being integrated into the landscape according to native ecological principles and including new landscape buffers between existing development and the countryside adjacent to development sites, particularly when seen from the village boundary; and</i> <i>iii. ensuring adequate protection for trees and hedgerows during all phases of development to avoid damage, including activities causing soil compaction or severance of roots. Trees of arboreal significance should only be removed if diseased in which case they should be replaced with trees of a similar potential size and native species elsewhere on the site, unless this is clearly not possible.</i> <i>c) As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, proposals should provide open space that:</i> <i>i. Is in usable parcels of land and not fragmented; and</i> <i>ii. Is safe, easily accessible and not severed by any physical barrier; and</i> <i>iii. Is accessible to the general public; and</i> <i>iv. creates a safe environment regarding</i>
2.22	Policy ASH3 - Character of development		<i>'a) Development proposals should conserve and enhance the Conservation Area, the Character Areas V1 to V5 as shown in Figure 6.1, and key views and assets identified in the Conservation Area Character Statement 2019...</i> <i>b)The design of new development should demonstrate how it has taken account of the local context and reflected the character and vernacular of the area, using architectural variety in form and materials, in order to avoid building design that is inappropriate to the ANP area. However, innovation in design will be supported where this demonstrably enhances the quality of the built form in a character area.</i> <i>c) As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, development proposals should:</i> <i>i. make a positive contribution to the visual impact of the village from the highway and</i>	2.23	Policy ASH9 - Locally significant views	<i>'The Plan 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> See Figure 2 for the locations of significant views, as identified in the ANP, in relation to the application Site.		
		2.24	Policy ASH10 - Natural landscape and rural character			<i>'a) Development proposals should maintain and enhance the natural environment, and retain landscape features, in accordance with Natural England's Statements of Environmental Opportunity (SEO) for the East Anglian chalkland character area and</i>		

*lighting and layout; and
v. is complemented by landscaping.*

d) Landscaping associated with construction and open space designs should be along ecological principles where possible using native species, (wildflower meadows), rain gardens (SuDS) and community orchards, to encourage species like bees and seed eating birds. Open spaces should provide an educational opportunity for people interested in the natural environment.

e) Development proposals which incorporate open spaces should provide for an appropriate legal agreement to ensure proper management of the open space over the lifetime of the development.'

features such as swift and owl nesting boxes wherever appropriate; and

ii. New development should include fruiting trees in their planting mixes wherever possible.'

See Figure 3 for the green infrastructure network, as identified in the ANP, in relation to the application Site.

2.25 Policy ASH11 - Natural wildlife assets, wildlife corridors and green infrastructure

'... b) Proposals should be designed from inception to create, conserve, enhance and manage the network of green infrastructure – including the wildlife corridors shown on the 55 Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan Referendum version Dec 2021 policy maps, Figure 15.1 and Figure 15.2 - with the aim of delivering a net environmental benefit for local people and wildlife. Proposals that seek to improve the connectivity between wildlife areas and green spaces will be supported in order to enhance the green infrastructure of Ashwell parish. In addition:

i. Future development should aim to include

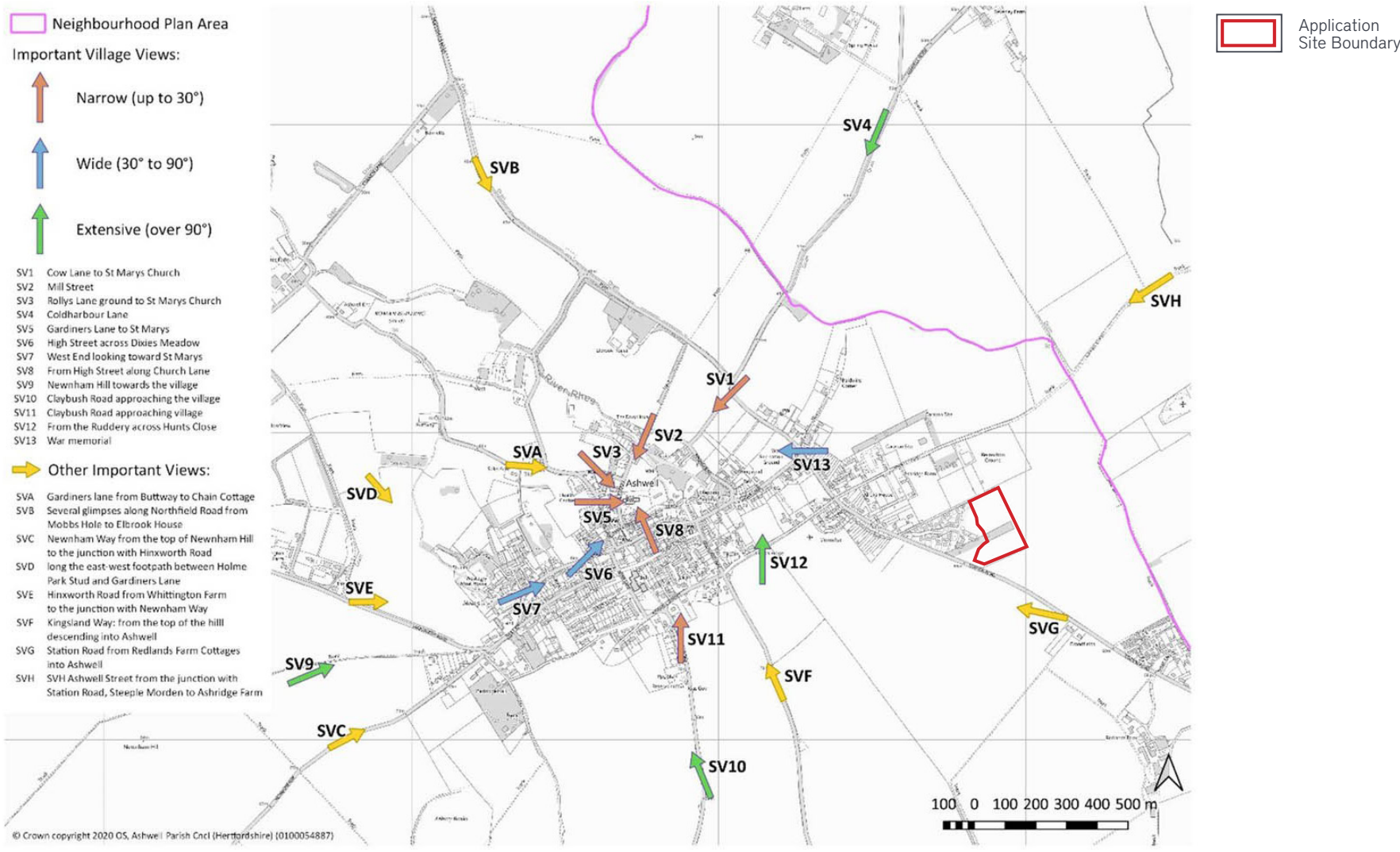


Fig 2 Extract from Figure 6.10 of Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan showing the location of significant views, with the application Site boundary added for context.

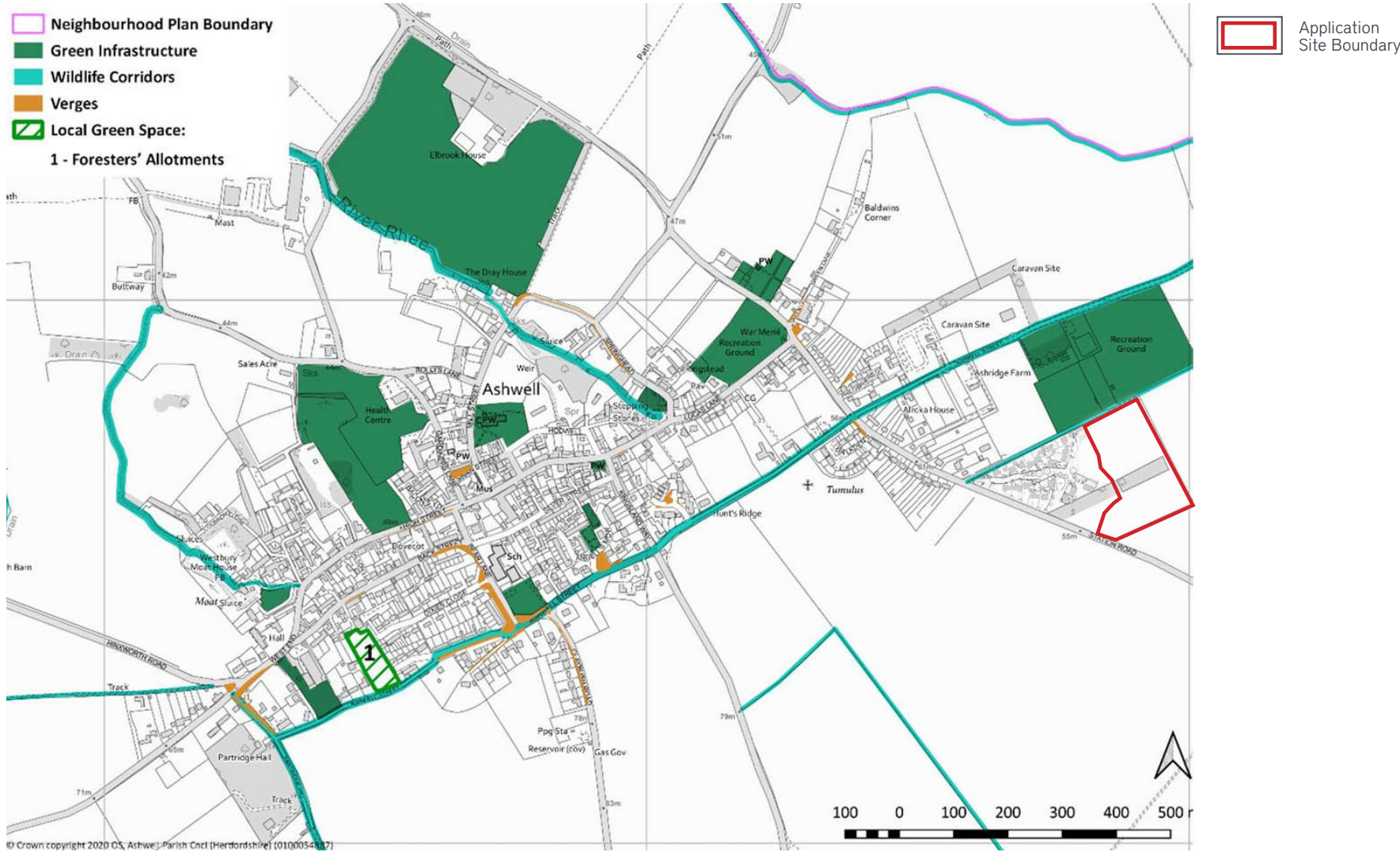


Fig 3

Extract from Figure 7.3 of Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan showing the green infrastructure network, with the adjacent Senuna Park development and the application Site boundary added for context.

3.0 Baseline Setting

The Application Site				
3.1	The application Site comprises two agricultural fields, separated by a woodland plantation, and covers an area of circa 3.18 hectares. For the purposes of this LVA, the land situated to the north of the plantation will be referred to as Site Field 1, and the land to the south as Site Field 2 (see Figure 4). The Site is located to the east of the settlement area of Ashwell on land off Station Road.		fields containing sports pitches, allotments, tennis courts and a cycling/running track. The boundary to the west connects with the adjacent Senuna Park development (which is currently under construction), and the boundaries to the east and south connect with the adjacent agricultural landscape.	convenient manageable boundaries rather than responding to local landscape quality or character.
		3.7	To the north, east and south the boundaries of the field are defined by native species hedgerows and hedgerow trees.	3.10 Compared with the open, expansive nature of the surrounding agricultural landscape to the north, east and west, the boundary vegetation and woodland on the Site provides some containment, particularly to Site Field 1.
3.2	Figure 4 shows the Site and its immediate context.	3.8	Fields 1 and 2 are separated by a centrally located rectilinear woodland plantation (known as Millennium Wood). The woodland comprises a mixture of 6 to 12m high native and non-native species deciduous and evergreen (conifer) trees and shrubs, contained by a post and wire stockproof fence. Species include Beech, Hawthorn and Field Maple, with a central line of pine trees forming a distinctive feature that assists in identifying the Site from distant viewpoints.	3.11 On approach to the village from the south-east on Station Road, the section of road adjacent to the west of the Senuna Park development generates an initial sense of arrival at the village. This perceived sense of arrival is induced by a number of elements, which includes:
3.3	Site Photographs A to H illustrate the features within and views from the Site. The locations from which the Site photographs were taken are also described by Figure 4.			• an appreciation of dwellings along the western side of Station Road (see VP10) • an appreciation of built form on elevated land within Ashwell (see VP9 & VP11) • an Ashwell Village sign • signage on the road surface and on posts defining a change in the speed limit to 30mph • a road narrowing sign warning of a subsequent chicane to reduce traffic speed • the presence of an adjacent footway that extends some 800m to the south-east of the application Site itself
3.4	A field gate at its south-western corner provides a point of access off Station Road, however the application Site is private land (with no Public Rights of Way), which currently comprises an area of open agricultural land.	3.9	Although tree planting is characteristic of our landscape and generally welcome therein, woodland plantations of this ilk often contain inappropriate species and form incongruous shapes that can be at odds with the character and appearance of the surrounding landscape. The plantation on the Site is no exception and is likely to have come about by virtue of available grant funding and	
3.5	From the highest point of 56m aOD at the application Site's eastern corner, the levels slope gently down towards the west of the Site with the lowest point being 52m aOD at the north-western part of the field.			
3.6	The northern boundary of the application Site connects with a series of smaller enclosed			

3.0 Baseline Setting

- a change in the road surfacing
- presence of street lighting columns

This arrival point marks the threshold between Ashwell village and its rural landscape setting.

3.12 A Tree Survey and Constraints Plan has been undertaken by Hayden's Arboricultural Consultants and this LVA should be read alongside its findings. The Tree Survey categorises the trees in line with the British Standard: Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction – Recommendations (BS 5837, 2012). There are a number of surveyed trees, either located to the perimeter of the Site or within Millennium Wood. The trees and hedgerows on the Site are classified as being either Category B (Trees of moderate quality with an estimated remaining life expectancy of at least 20 years) or Category C (Trees of low quality with an estimated remaining life expectancy of at least 10 years, or young trees with a stem diameter below 150 mm).

3.13 Millennium Wood is classified as Category B and includes species such as Pine, Beech, Hawthorn and Field Maple. The tree survey describes the wood as a *'young establishing woodland which has a mixture of species. Pine trees run through the feature. No significant defects at time of inspection. Hawthorn appears to be present mostly on the boundary edge.'*

3.14 The young hedgerows that form the Site's boundaries are a mix of species including Hazel, Hawthorn, Ash, Field Maple and Blackthorn classified as Category C. Occasional hedgerow trees include Field Maple, Lime, Beech, Ash, Silver Birch and Horse Chestnut of varying condition. Some are surveyed as having good growth potential whilst others are in poor condition and containing deadwood (T009, Ash) or surveyed as low value trees.

3.15 A line of mixed native species trees along the Site's north-eastern boundary includes Ash and multi-stemmed Sycamore. Small low level Hawthorn and Hazel make up the infill space between the larger trees. This boundary is classified as Category B.

3.0 Baseline Setting

Housing at Ashwell to the west of Station Road



Signage and chicane on Station Road upon arrival to Ashwell



Access to the Site from Station Road



-  Application Site Boundary
-  Site Photograph Locations

Fig 4

Site Context/Site Photograph Locations



Site Photo
A

View from the Site access from Small Gains Lane looking south-west across Site Field 1.



Site Photo
B

View from the north-western corner of the Site, adjacent to the Senuna Park development boundary, looking south-east across Site Field 1.

3.0 Baseline Setting

Senuna Park development boundary

Millennium Wood



Site Photo
C

View from the Site's western boundary, north of Millennium Wood and adjacent to the Senuna Park development boundary, looking north-east across Site Field 1.

Millennium Wood

Senuna Park under construction



Site Photo
D

View from the Site's eastern boundary, north of Millennium Wood, looking north-west across Site Field 1.



Site Photo
E

View from the Site's eastern boundary, south of Millennium Wood, looking south-west across Site Field 2.



Site Photo
F

View from the south-eastern corner of the Site looking north-west across Site Field 2.

3.0

Baseline Setting

Site Photo
G

View from the southernmost corner of the Site looking north across Site Field 2.

Site Photo
H

View from the westernmost corner of the Site looking north-east across Site Field 2.

3.0 Baseline Setting

Ashwell Village

- 3.16 Ashwell comprises a linear settlement with an east/west orientation centred around its primary vehicular route through the village (now known as West End, High Street and Lucas Lane) and two secondary, parallel routes known as Back Street and Silver Street to its immediate south.
- 3.17 St Mary's (Ashwell Parish) Church (14th Century) is located to the north of the centre of the village and with an impressive ornate tower of 54m high, forms a prominent feature within the views experienced from the village itself and from surrounding rural areas.



St Mary's Church

- 3.18 The High Street and to a lesser extent, West End and Lucas Lane contain numerous attractive period buildings which include cottages and town houses constructed between the 15th and 20th Centuries. As a result, the architectural style is quite varied with a plethora of finishes and materials used including plaster/render timber frames, stone and brick with thatched and tiled roofs.
- 3.19 Moving away from the village centre, the period buildings become increasingly interspersed with modern residential development that was built throughout the 20th Century.
- 3.20 The 1930's saw the initial extension of the village to the east and due to the junction



Pre-20th-century terraced cottages on Kingsland Way

between Lucas Lane and Station Road, development ceased to extend along the village's main historic axis and instead, extended to the south-east along Station Road. The 1930's white/pale rendered semi-detached houses are a prominent feature close to the Site and along Station road in general and they are now accompanied by further post 1930's residential development comprising brick built detached dwellings. More recent 21st Century development includes properties at Walkden's, which comprises apartments and houses, finished in a pale render with tiled roofs and those at Philosophers Gate, where the elevational materiality extends to a mix of brick, render and timber board cladding with tiled and slate roofs.



1930's housing along Station Road, north of the application Site



1950 Historic Map

3.0 Baseline Setting

3.21 The incremental development and redevelopment of existing plots, particularly to the rising land to the south side of the village took place during the latter half of the 20th Century. The majority of the development appears to have comprised small to medium extensions to the village, which include:

- circa 16no detached properties on Woodforde Close off Ashwell Street;
- circa 50no detached and linked detached properties on Angell's Meadow, also off Ashwell Street;
- circa 80 semi-detached and mews properties centred around Dixies Close, to the south of Back Street towards the

western end of the village;

- circa 12no semi-detached properties at Bacon's Yard to the north of the High Street, close to the village centre;
- 7no detached houses at Fordham Close;
- circa 8no properties on Walkden's off Station Road (more recently extended by circa 11no additional properties);
- circa 20no detached, semi-detached and mews properties located on Colbron Close and John Sale Close to the north of West End;
- 13no properties on Philosopher's Gate off Station Road;

and more recently:

- circa 30no properties on Claybush Hill Meadow off Claybush Road, south of Ashwell; and
- circa 9no properties at Townsend Meadow off Station Road, opposite Philosopher's Gate.

3.22 The more recent development in the village, including the Senuna Park development adjacent to the application Site, incorporates a wide variety of materials and finishes, which combined with the layout and the individual form and massing of the houses, reduces the repetition that is synonymous with



Housing at Philosophers Gate



Housing at Philosophers Gate



Recently constructed housing at the Senuna Park development

3.0 Baseline Setting

traditional estate developments. Materials include different brick finishes and colours, a variety of colour renders, timber board cladding (often stained black) and different roof coverings such as terracotta tiles and slate tiles;

3.23 At the eastern end of the village, beyond Station Road, Ashwell Street provides access to Ashridge Caravan and Motor home Club site. This large (circa 2.5ha) site comprises a park area with a clubhouse and facilities, with an adjacent, larger caravan storage area to the east. To the north and east the caravan site is contained by a linear 20m wide woodland plantation that provides high levels of screening however, it is not consistent with the wider landscape character in terms of species mix and form.

3.24 To the south side of the village, the land rises from circa 44m aOD in the village centre to 100m aOD at Claybush Hill, 1km to the south. A significant proportion of the 20th Century development has occurred on the lower slopes of this rising ground, thus creating an individual area of character within the village. By contrast areas to the north of the High Street are somewhat lower and relatively flat.

3.25 The land immediately to the west of the application Site forms the Senuna Park development which is currently under construction following a planning approval for the development of up to 28no dwellings.

The Surrounding Landscape

3.26 The village is surrounded by an open agricultural landscape predominantly comprising medium to large arable fields, which are sometimes contained by managed hedgerows with occasional hedgerow trees. Fields in proximity to the village, such as the application Site are for the most part, of a smaller scale and in general, the field sizes increase as the distance from the village edge increases. This is particularly evident within the fields located to the south-east, south, south-west and west.



Open agricultural land to the east of the application Site

3.27 Tree cover in the area is relatively sparse as it is limited to a number of narrow and sinuous tracts of trees located along watercourses to the north of the village and a small number of irregular woodland blocks within the wider landscape.

3.28 The landscape around the village gently undulates between 40m aOD and 100m aOD, although the landscape to the north is noticeably flatter, when compared to the rolling landscape to the south, which includes localised high points at Newham Hill (84m) to the west, Arbury Banks hillfort (87m) to the south-west, Claybush Hill (100m) to the south and a local ridge at circa 80m to the east of Station Road.



Open agricultural land to the south-west of the application Site

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3.29 Development within the surrounding landscape is generally dispersed and comprises individual or small clusters of residential properties and farmsteads. A number of farmsteads are scattered across the wider landscape which generally comprise a traditional farmhouse and a cluster of ancillary buildings, often set back from the road amongst mature tree cover and behind trees and hedgerows located along the boundary.

3.30 The gently undulating landscape combined with larger fields, dispersed built form and a relatively low level of tree cover creates an open, attractive landscape with a distinct rural character, where distant views are often



Farmstead at Hill Farm, Station Road circa 1.2km south-east of the Site

experienced, particularly from the more elevated locations to the southern side of the village. Views towards the village comprise elements of built form set amongst dense tree cover, with the church spire often visible, projecting above the level of the trees.

Landscape Character Assessments

3.31 The diverse characteristics of our broader landscape have, in most cases, been ascertained through the process of landscape character assessment (LCA). LCA is a technique used to develop a consistent and comprehensive understanding of what gives England's landscape its character. Assessments for the landscape in the vicinity



Farmstead at Redlands Farm, Station Road circa 750m south-east of the Site

of the application Site have been carried out at national and county scales as follows:

National

3.32 England has been divided into 8 regional volumes which comprise a total of 159 areas with similar landscape character, which are called National Character Areas (NCAs); previously known as Joint Character Areas (JCAs). The 'Character of England Landscape, Wildlife and Cultural Features Map' produced in 2005 by The Countryside Agency with support from English Heritage, was an update to a 1996 original. This map subdivides England into 159 NCAs providing a picture of the differences in landscape character at the national scale.

3.33 The Site falls within NCA 87 'East Anglian Chalk'. The size and scale of the areas encompassed by the National Character Areas are vast and often bear limited relevance to sites of the scale associated with this appraisal. As a result, smaller scale, more detailed assessments carried out by County Councils or Local Planning Authorities will often identify landscape characteristics which offer a better representation of those found within the vicinity of a particular site or surrounding area. Nonetheless the following key characteristics from the document have been set out below as they are considered

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	to be relevant to the application Site and its surroundings:		availability of a more detailed local landscape character assessment, the effects upon NCA 87 are not assessed within the LVA as they would not be significant.			• Medium to large arable fields; • Spring line feeds streams which flow northwards; • Flat, low lying to west; • Gently rolling landform to east; • Open, exposed character; and • Geometric pattern of rectilinear fields and roads.
	• 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; • Settlement is focused in small towns and in villages. There are a number of expanding commuter villages located generally within valleys. Letchworth Garden City is a nationally significant designed garden city; • 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.	3.35	Figure 5 shows the Landscape Character Areas within the study area.			
		3.36	Assessments for the landscape in the vicinity of the application Site have been carried out at regional scales as follows:			
			<u>Regional - North Hertfordshire County Council</u>		3.39	The distinctive features of the Steeple Morden Plain Area 226 are set out as follows: • Bounded to north by Steeple Morden settlement; • (Lower) Icknield Way long distance footpath • Lack of settlements to the east, beyond the boundary to the character area
		3.37	Within the 2011 North Herts Landscape Study (Character, Sensitivity and Capacity), the application Site and parts of the wider study area fall within Landscape Character Area Steeple Morden Plain Area 226 (the village is excluded from these character areas). In addition, the application Site is located close to the North Baldock Chalk Uplands Area 224 (Station Road forms the boundary between these two character areas in the vicinity of the application Site – see Figure 5), so parts of the study area are also located therein.		3.40	Within the 'Evaluation' section for Area 226, the study ascertains the following: • The landscape value is assessed as Moderate Low • The landscape sensitivity is assessed as Low to Moderate • The visual sensitivity is assessed as Moderate • Capacity to accommodate development of smaller urban extensions (<5ha): <i>'This type of development would not be appropriate within this Character Area, due to its rural and undeveloped</i>
3.34	The size and scale of the areas encompassed by the National Character Areas are vast and whilst the broad characteristics of the study area are consistent with those described for NCA 87, the complexities of the local landscape are better defined by the North Herts Landscape Study. Due to the limited scale of the proposed development, and the	3.38	The key characteristics of the Steeple Morden Plain Area 226 are set out as follows:			

	<i>character. The landscape capacity for small urban extensions is considered to be low.'</i> Incremental Small Scale Development – <i>'There may be some capacity for carefully located and designed small scale developments within the Character Area, particularly if they were of an agricultural character and in keeping with the rural character.'</i>				
3.41	The North Herts Landscape Study identifies the following Landscape Management Guidelines for Area 226: - Promote creation of new woodlands to encourage a diverse woodland flora; - Promote the creation of buffer zones between areas of intensive arable production and areas of semi-natural habitat and the creation of links between habitat areas; - Promote hedgerow restoration to create visual links between existing woodland 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;	3.42	The North Herts Landscape Study identifies the following Built Development Guidelines for Area 226: - Protect and preserve the pattern of rural roads and associated hedgerows and trees; - Encourage the planting of appropriate broadleaf woodland and vegetation to screen new development that could intrude into rural views; - Retain the rural character of Steeple Morden, ensuring that any new development is appropriately sited and of a scale, form and style appropriate to the Character Area; - Avoid the location of new development in visually intrusive locations, such as on higher ground; - Place new buildings in association with existing groups; - Ensure that new development does not necessitate the removal of existing vegetation or the loss of surviving hedgerows;	3.43	- Ensure that lighting necessitated by new development minimises the impact on the Character Area. The key characteristics of the North Baldock Chalk Uplands Area 224 are listed as follows: - Rolling chalk landform; - Small rounded chalk knolls; - Large rectilinear fields in arable; - Large to medium regular geometric plantations; - Nucleated settlements.
				3.44	The distinctive features of the North Baldock Chalk Uplands Area 224 are set out as follows: - A1(M), A505, railway; - Telecommunications masts (Lodge Farm) - Lower Icknield Way; - Abuts suburban edge of Baldock; - Pylons crossing the western edge; - Valley and moat at Newnham; - Ivel Valley
				3.45	Within the 'Evaluation' section for Area 224, the study ascertains the following: - The landscape value is assessed as Moderate - The landscape sensitivity is assessed as Moderate - The visual sensitivity is assessed as

- Moderate to High
- Capacity to accommodate development of smaller urban extensions (<5ha): *'This type of development would not be appropriate within much of this character area, due to its rural character in all areas, except potentially the eastern fringes of Baldock. It would introduce elements that would reduce the openness of the North Baldock Chalk Uplands in all other locations including the fringes of Ashwell. Increased housing development would be likely to affect the existing minor roads which could erode the character of the landscape. Some extension of Baldock, could possibly be accommodated but careful consideration of the landscape treatment to the edges of the development would be required in order to provide a more robust boundary than at present. The landscape capacity for small urban extensions is considered to be low to moderate.'*
 - Incremental Small Scale Development – *'There may be some capacity for carefully located and designed small scale developments within the Character Area, particularly if they were of an agricultural character and in keeping with the rural character. However, due to the existing openness any proposals would need clear justification to avoid the erosion of the character of the North Baldock Chalk Uplands. The landscape capacity for*
- incremental small scale developments is considered to be low to moderate.'*
- 3.46 The North Herts Landscape Study identifies the following Landscape Management Guidelines for Area 224:
- Promote creation of new woodlands and for existing woodlands, encourage a diverse woodland flora;
 - Promote the creation of buffer zones between areas of intensive arable production and areas of semi-natural habitat and the creation of links between habitat areas;
 - Promote hedgerow restoration to create visual links between existing woodland areas;
 - Promote hedgerow restoration to create visual links between existing woodland areas;
 - Promote the use of traditional field hedges in place of post and wire fencing 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.
- 3.47 The North Herts Landscape Study identifies the following Built Development Guidelines for Area 224:
- Maintain the open character of north Baldock Chalk Uplands;
 - Retain the rural character of Character Area ensuring that any new development is appropriately sited and of a scale, form and style appropriate to the Character Area;
 - Planting mitigation should be appropriate to local character and not necessarily fully enclose development;
 - Ensure that the development does not necessitate the removal of existing woodland blocks or hedgerows;
 - Protect and preserve the pattern of narrow open lanes and occasional rows or avenues of trees;
 - Ensure that lighting necessitated by new development minimises the impact on the Character Area;
 - Conserve the traditional character of Ashwell, particularly the approaches to the village from the south and west, ensuring that any development within or located on the edge of the village uses appropriate vernacular materials and features.
- 3.48 The Odsey-Royston Area 227 lies circa 360m to the east of the Site. The key characteristics of the Odsey-Royston Area 227 are listed as follows:
- Gently rolling chalk landform with chalk

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- knolls
- Strong pattern of rectilinear fields
 - Dominance of arable
 - Linear tree belts
 - Sparse settlement pattern
 - Long distance views along straight roads
- 3.49 The distinctive features of the Odsey-Royston Area 227 are set out as follows:
- A505 dual carriageway runs along southern boundary
 - Baldock to Royston railway running parallel to A505
 - Abuts suburban boundary to Royston
 - (Lower) Icknield Way (Ashwell Street track) runs along northern boundary
- 3.50 Within the 'Evaluation' section for Area 227, the study ascertains the following:
- The landscape value is assessed as Low
 - The landscape sensitivity is assessed as Low
 - The visual sensitivity is assessed as Moderate
 - Capacity to accommodate development of smaller urban extensions (<5ha): *'This type of development would be appropriate within this Character Area, due to its urban fringe location and the fact that it is already disturbed and influenced by built form and infrastructure. Careful*
- consideration of the landscape treatment to the edge of the development would be required and the effect on the setting of Therfield Heath. The landscape capacity for small urban extensions is considered to be moderate to high.'*
- Incremental Small Scale Development – *'Incremental small scale development could be in keeping with existing land uses adjacent to some parts of this character area. However, more intensive development of the character area may be more appropriate when surrounding land uses are taken into account. Careful consideration of the landscape treatment to the edge of the development would be required. The landscape capacity for incremental small scale developments is considered to be moderate.'*
- 3.51 The North Herts Landscape Study identifies the following Landscape Management Guidelines for Area 227:
- Promote creation of new woodlands and for existing woodlands, encourage a diverse woodland flora;
 - Promote the creation of buffer zones between areas of intensive arable production and areas of semi-natural habitat and the creation of links between habitat areas;
 - Promote hedgerow restoration to create visual links between existing woodland
- areas;
- Promote the use of traditional field hedges in place of post and wire fencing 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.
- 3.52 The North Herts Landscape Study identifies the following Built Development Guidelines for Area 227:
- Encourage the planting of appropriate broadleaved woodland and vegetation to screen new development that could intrude in rural views;
 - Avoid the location of new development in locations where it may intrude into the setting of Therfield Heath
 - Ensure that new development does not necessitate the removal of existing vegetation or the loss of surviving hedgerows and shelterbelts
 - Ensure that lighting associated with new development does not create additional urbanising influences on the wider Character Area or Therfield Heath
 - Promote the softening of the existing edge of Royston
 - Encourage enhanced integration of the transport corridors in the Character Area

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3.53	<u>Regional - Greater Cambridge Shared Planning (South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City Council)</u>		Townscape Character
	Greater Cambridge Landscape Character Assessment (Feb 2021) - see Appendix 3 for extract.	3.56	The historic core of Ashwell is centred around the main route through the village (formed by West End, the High Street and Lucas Lane) and incorporates numerous listed buildings. The qualities of this central townscape area are acknowledged by its designation as a conservation area - see Figure 6.
3.54	Within the Greater Cambridge Landscape Character Assessment the eastern edges of the wider study area fall within Area 8B: Morden to Duxford Lowland Chalklands.		
3.55	The following key, relevant characteristics have been extracted from the text describing the character of the Morden to Duxford Lowland Chalklands Character Area:	3.57	The village areas surrounding the conservation area comprise residential development with a variety of architectural styles as incremental growth of different scales has taken place throughout the 20th and 21st Centuries (the development of the village and the varied nature of the built form therein has been considered in further detail within the Baseline section of this appraisal, and in the accompanying Design and Access Statement).
	• Low hedges and few trees create a large-scale, open and simple landscape • Occasional copses of trees on high ground are a distinctive feature • Sparse settlement pattern with small villages elevated from the River Valleys on lower ground, interspersed with isolated farms and cottages • Long distance views across arable fields towards the rising chalk hills to the northeast and south • Historic linear features include roads, ancient trackways and earthworks		



Fig 5 Landscape Character Areas (North Herts Landscape Study and Cambridgeshire Landscape Character Assessment)

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Heritage Assets		Landscape Value
3.58 The majority of Ashwell village is contained within Ashwell Conservation Area, which terminates along Station Road and extends beyond Station Road only to include a small number of properties around Green Lane. The application Site is circa. 420m beyond the eastern boundary of the conservation area.	3.61 A Scheduled Monument, known as 'The Crop Marks of Five Ring Ditches', lies within the study area circa 150m to the west of the Site. In addition, a Scheduled Monument comprising a Roman Villa lies partially within the study area circa 650m to the north of the Site.	3.63 The Methodology sets out how various factors are considered to help determine and inform judgements associated with landscape value. These factors are consistent with GLVIA3 Box 5.1 and Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note TGN-02-21 Assessing landscape value outside national designations. The tables below provide narrative information associated with each individual factor, which when combined, inform an overall judgement regarding the value of the landscape associated with the parts of the study area that fall within land associated with the above landscape receptors. The landscape value of each of the landscape receptors is therefore judged as being Exceptional, High, Medium, Low or Very Low.
3.59 A significant number of Listed Buildings are within the village of Ashwell and particularly within the historic village core and along High Street, Lucas Street, Swan Street and West End however, none of which lie within the study area - see Figure 6. The Listed Buildings are mostly Grade II and predominantly comprise residential properties.	3.62 The Landscape and Townscape Receptors for this assessment comprise the following: • North Herts LCA 226 Steeple Morden Plain / Greater Cambridge LCA 8B Morden to Duxford Lowland Chalklands • North Herts LCA 224 North Baldock Chalk Uplands	
3.60 The closest Listed Buildings and structures to the application Site comprise Ashwell War Memorial (Grade II) circa. 550m to the northeast along Station Road, 34 Lucas Lane (Grade II) circa. 600m, and two Grade II Listed tombstones at the cemetery to the north of the application Site along Station Road (circa 650m). Ashwell Bury Park and Garden (Grade II Listed) is located north of the village.	• North Herts LCA 227 Odsey-Royston / Greater Cambridge LCA 8B Morden to Duxford Lowland Chalklands • The townscape of Ashwell village • The landscape features within the Site	

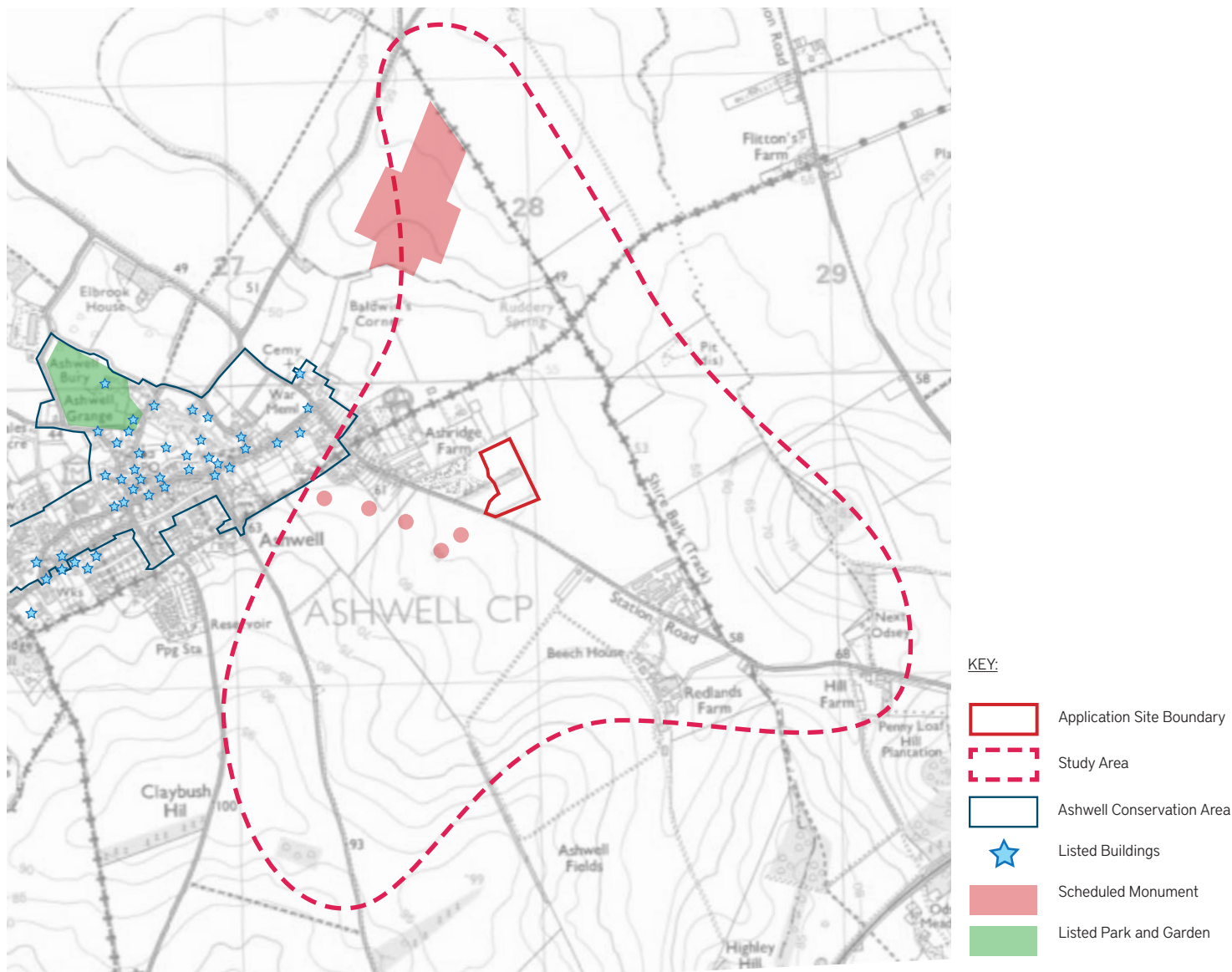


Fig 6 Conservation Area and Heritage Assets Plan

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Landscape Sensitivity

- 3.64 As described within the Methodology (Appendix 1), the sensitivity of the landscape is a combined judgement of value (as ascertained within the tables below) and susceptibility to change.
- 3.65 GLVIA3 defines susceptibility to change as 'the ability of the landscape to accommodate the proposed development without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline and/or landscape planning policy or strategy'. Susceptibility to change is graded on a scale of high, medium or low and will vary according to the nature of the development proposed, which in this instance, is residential development and associated green infrastructure.

Table 1a - Considerations associated with the value of North Herts LCA 226 Steeple Morden Plain /Greater Cambridge LCA 8B Morden to Duxford Lowland Chalk-lands within the study area	
Landscape Designations	There are no landscape quality designations, such as AONB or National Park, within the Site or study area.
Landscape condition	The landscape is generally of ordinary condition, displaying some characteristic landform patterns and features of conservation interest. However, the quality is diminished by some detracting elements such as the local road network and the intensive management of land for agriculture.
Distinctiveness	Large scale open agricultural landscape with scattered farmsteads characteristic of south Cambridgeshire.
Natural Heritage	There are no designated wildlife sites within this LCA. The LCA is of notable low ecological interest, dominated by large arable field systems. The field boundary hedgerows and occasional shelterbelts provide some improved levels of biodiversity.
Cultural Heritage	Approximately 650m to the north-east of the Site is an area of land identified as a Roman Villa and is a listed Scheduled Monument. There are no other historic or cultural designations within this LCA and the study area.
Recreational value	There are two PRoW within the LCA and the study area that connect to the wider PRoW network within the rural landscape to the east of Ashwell, including the Icknield Way long distance footpath. Other informal tracks are utilised by local people although this appears to be permissive access. Ashwell Tennis Club and Smallgains Playing Field are all located within this LCA and the study area.
Perceptual (scenic)	There are long distance view across the open, gently undulating landscape. Distant views of Ashwell include built form and St Mary's Church spire set amongst trees.
Perceptual (Wildness and Tranquillity)	Due to the agricultural nature of the landscape, levels of wildness are limited within the LCA and the study area. Levels of tranquillity are moderate, however this decreases in proximity to roads and areas of settlement.
Associations	There is no evidence that the Site or study area have any association with notable people, artists, writers, the arts or historical events.
Functional	The rural land within the study area functions primarily as agricultural land and has limited ecological value/natural function. The PRoWs provide an accessible recreational resource.
Overall Judgement of Landscape Value	The landscape which falls within the study area, is considered to be of a Low-Medium value.

Table 1b - Considerations associated with the value of North Herts LCA 224 Baldock Chalk Uplands within the study area	
Landscape Designations	There are no landscape quality designations, such as AONB or National Park, within study area.
Landscape condition	The overall condition of the landscape is considered to be moderate with a relatively intact rural character.
Distinctiveness	The landscape within the study area is consistent with some of the key characteristics of the Landscape Character Area.
Natural Heritage	There are no designated wildlife sites within the study area. The agricultural land has limited wildlife value. Small pockets of woodland and field boundary hedgerows provide improved levels of biodiversity.
Cultural Heritage	There are no cultural heritage designations within the study area, however, there are crop marks of five ring ditches west of Station Road that are listed as Scheduled Monuments for their likelihood of being visible remnants of a Bronze Age barrow cemetery.
Recreational value	There are a number of PROWs within the wider LCA to the south of Ashwell although none of which fall within the study area.
Perceptual (scenic)	The landscape has a pleasant rural character with long distance views over large scale open fields with dispersed farmsteads. Scattered built form, including that at Ashwell, is visible in distant views from the road network.
Perceptual (Wildness and Tranquillity)	Levels of wildness are limited due the managed nature of the farmland. Levels of tranquillity are moderate, however this decreases in proximity to roads.
Associations	There is no evidence that the Site or study area have any association with notable people, artists, writers, the arts or historical events.
Functional	The rural land within the study area functions primarily as agricultural land and has limited ecological value/natural function.
Overall Judgement of Landscape Value	The landscape which falls within the study area, is considered to be of a Medium value.

Table 1c - Considerations associated with the value of North Herts LCA 227 Odsey-Royston / Greater Cambridgeshire LCA 8B Morden to Duxford Lowland Chalklands within the study area	
Landscape Designations	There are no landscape quality designations, such as AONB or National Park, within the study area.
Landscape condition	The overall condition of the landscape is considered to be low. The landscape is largely dominated by intensively managed farmland, with few remaining areas of seminatural habitat. It has a strong pattern of rectilinear fields, linear tree belts and a sparse settlement pattern.
Distinctiveness	The landscape within the study area is consistent with some of the key characteristics of the Landscape Type and Character Area.
Natural Heritage	There are no designated wildlife sites within the study area. The agricultural land has limited wildlife value, however the woodland areas and field boundary hedgerows provide improved levels of biodiversity.
Cultural Heritage	There are no cultural heritage designations within the study area.
Recreational value	Two PRoW follow the edges of this LCA within the study area.
Perceptual (scenic)	The landscape has a pleasant rural character with long distance views across the open farmland broken up by pockets of woodland and scattered farmsteads.
Perceptual (Wildness and Tranquillity)	Levels of wildness are limited due the managed nature of the farmland. Levels of tranquillity are moderate, however this decreases in proximity to roads.
Associations	There is no evidence that the Site or study area have any association with notable people, artists, writers, the arts or historical events.
Functional	The rural land within the study area functions primarily as agricultural land and has limited ecological value/natural function. Field boundaries and woodland provide some levels of biodiversity.
Overall Judgement of Landscape Value	The landscape which falls within the study area, is considered to be of a Low-Medium value.

Table 1d - Considerations associated with the value of the townscape of Ashwell village within the study area	
Landscape Designations	There are no landscape quality designations, such as AONB or National Park, within the Site or study area. The historic core of the village is designated as a conservation area.
Landscape condition	The townscape has a well maintained and cared for appearance. Areas of open green space are well managed and the many historic buildings are in good condition.
Distinctiveness	The parts of the village located outside the conservation area also form attractive, well maintained residential areas, often with a visual and or physical connection to the village's rural setting, however, the built form is generally less distinctive and comparatively unremarkable.
Natural Heritage	The built village is of limited wildlife value. The private gardens, roadside hedgerows, scattered tree planting and areas of open green space provide some levels of biodiversity.
Cultural Heritage	The historic core of the village is designated as a conservation area due to its plethora of listed buildings and features, which include the Grade I Listed 14th Century St Mary's Church.
Recreational value	The village is moderately connected with the surrounding footpath network with a number of Public Rights of Way linking it with the surrounding rural landscape. The village also contains a tangible quantity of public open space, most notably Ashwell Recreation Ground close to the village centre, the open space located off the High Street and Springhead which is associated with the river Rhee and the Springs, Ashwell Smallgains Playing fields to the east of the village and Ashwell Bury Park and Gardens (Grade II listed) to the north of the village contains gardens which were remodelled by Gertrude Jekyll in 1908-09;
Perceptual (scenic)	Views within the historic village core are pleasant, along winding roads and including the many historic buildings. Some views include St Mary's church spire which towers high above the village. Outside of the main village core there are some visual connections to the village's rural setting.
Perceptual (Wildness and Tranquillity)	In general, the village forms a peaceful and relatively tranquil environment, particularly when located away from the main vehicular routes. Levels of wildness are low within the townscape.
Associations	There is no evidence that the Site or study area have any association with notable people, artists, writers, the arts or historical events, however, Ashwell Village Museum contains numerous pre-historic and Roman artefacts which have been found in the local area and these findings along with the presence of Arbury Banks Hill Fort and numerous Bronze Age burial barrows.
Functional	The village is primarily a residential settlement with some recreational use and has limited ecological value/natural function.
Overall Judgement of Landscape Value	The core village townscape which falls within the study area, is considered to be of a High value, and the rest of the village is considered to be of a Medium value resulting in an overall value of Medium-High.

Table 1e- Considerations associated with the value of the landscape features within the Site	
Landscape Designations	The landscape within the Site is not protected by national or local statutory landscape designations.
Landscape condition	The overall condition of the landscape is considered to be moderate. Field boundary hedgerows are intact. The woodland plantation on the Site is densely planted and lacking structure. Post and wire fencing surrounding the woodland block is broken in places.
Distinctiveness	Distinctive geometric woodland plantation. Linear rows of tree species is distinctive although somewhat incongruous in the wider open landscape.
Natural Heritage	There are no features designated for their natural heritage value. The Site is arable land and is of limited wildlife value. The boundary hedgerows and area of mature woodland on the Site provide improved levels of biodiversity.
Cultural Heritage	There are no heritage assets within the Site.
Recreational value	There are no PRoW within the Site. There is a well-used informal route just beyond the Site's eastern boundary connecting to PRoW Ashwell 017 along Ashwell Street to the north of the Site.
Functional	The landscape features within the Site have limited ecological value/natural function. The boundary hedgerows and woodland are of greater value providing shelter and containment. The Site largely functions as a small agricultural field wherein crops were historically grown.
Overall Judgement of Landscape Value	With the exception of the woodland and boundary vegetation (Medium value) the landscape features within the Site are considered to be of Low value.

Table 2 - Landscape Sensitivity			
Receptor	Value of the Landscape	Susceptibility to Change	Resulting Sensitivity
North Herts LCA 226 Steeple Morden Plain / Greater Cambridge LCA 8B Morden to Duxford Lowland Chalklands	Low-Medium (Table 1a)	Low-Medium – The Steeple Morden Plain Area 226 incorporates the application Site and would therefore be directly and physically affected by the development proposals. Whilst the landscape mostly has an open, rural character, there are areas of settlement within the study area, including housing at the Senuna Park development, adjacent to the application Site, and at Shire End Close, off Station Road. The landscape within the study area is influenced by the proximity to the settlement edge, and includes other urbanising features such as the caravan park, Smallgains Playing Field and Tennis Club at the eastern edge of Ashwell. Sunnymead Orchard Caravan Park is also within the LCA and the study area.	Low-Medium
North Herts LCA 224 North Baldock Chalk Uplands	Medium (Table 1b)	Medium – The landscape is characterised by intensively managed agricultural land, predominantly comprising large-scale field parcels with a generally flat and open character and scattered farmsteads. Within the study area are individual properties along Station Road and the farmstead at Redlands Farm. The LCA extends to the southern settlement edge of Ashwell, with Station Road defining its eastern boundary, where it abuts the Senuna Park development and the application Site. Whilst the Site is not located within this LCA, there is intervisibility between them due to the relatively flat topography and lack of intervening features. As a result, the development associated with the adjacent Senuna Park development has already introduced a level of change to this LCA within the study area. The susceptibility to the proposed change is therefore medium.	Medium
North Herts LCA 227 Odsey-Royston / Greater Cambridge LCA 8B Morden to Duxford Lowland Chalklands	Low-Medium (Table 1c)	Low-Medium – The landscape is largely dominated by intensively managed farmland, with few remaining areas of semi-natural habitat. It has a strong pattern of rectilinear fields, linear tree belts and sparse settlement pattern. The wider LCA is contiguous with the suburban edge of Royston and contains the Baldock to Royston railway which runs parallel to A505. Within the study area, land use is primarily agricultural, with occasional pockets of woodland and the farmstead at Hill Farm on Station Road. The western extent of the LCA abuts the housing development at Shire End Close, off Station Road, and is defined by footpath FP108/51, from which views of the Site are experienced in the context of properties on Station Road. Whilst the landscape is rural in character the introduction of residential development on the application Site would not appear entirely incongruous given the context of other built form within the LCA.	Low-Medium
The townscape of Ashwell village	Medium-High (Table 1d)	Medium – Ashwell Conservation Area could potentially be highly susceptible to change, however the application Site is located circa 420m from the easternmost/nearest part of the conservation area (at the junction between Ashwell Street and Station Road) and the existing intervening housing development along Station Road, including that at the adjacent Senuna Park development, ensures that there is no physical or visual connection between the Site and the conservation area. As a result, the susceptibility of the townscape of Ashwell to the proposed development of the application Site is considered to be medium.	Medium
Landscape features within the Site	Low (Table 1e)	Low – The landscape features within the Site are limited to its boundary vegetation and internally located woodland (Millennium Wood). For the most part the existing woodland and boundary hedgerows on the Site can be retained and enhanced. Furthermore, the redevelopment of the Site provides the opportunity to deliver a comprehensive landscape scheme which would increase the quantum and quality of the landscape features on the Site. The susceptibility to the proposed change is low.	Low

3.0 Baseline Setting

Visual Receptors

- 3.66 The identification of all potential visual receptors, which in the case of this appraisal, are predominantly people using PRoWs and road users, was undertaken by way of a desktop survey, followed by site-based survey work. Their identification was primarily determined by the topography of the surrounding area and the presence of screening trees and built form.
- 3.67 The survey work associated with this appraisal was undertaken during April 2025 when there was partial/variable leaf cover on the deciduous trees in the vicinity. Some identified views of the Site are filtered by vegetation and there would be seasonal changes to the visibility of the application Site, and the features contained therein.
- 3.68 Photographs of the application Site, the surrounding landscape and specific viewpoints were taken on the day when the survey was undertaken. Some of the views included wide panoramas and it was therefore considered beneficial to join some of the individual photographs together to produce panoramic views. All photographs were taken using a Canon EOS 6D Mark II Digital SLR camera and specific viewpoints were photographed using a 50mm lens.
- 3.69 The following groups or individual visual receptors have been identified as they experience a view of the application Site. The receptors identified and their associated viewpoint photographs are considered to be representative of the current visual prominence of the application Site.
- Public Views:
- People using PRoW Ashwell 017/Icknield Way
 - People using PRoW FP108/51
 - People using PRoW FP108/49
 - People using Station Road
 - People using Kingsland Way
 - People visiting Ashwell Smallgains Playing Fields and Allotments
- Private Views:
- Private residents along Station Road and at Sunnymead Orchard Park Homes
 - Future residents of Senuna Park
- 3.70 These visual receptors and associated viewpoint photograph locations are described by Figure 6.

3.0 Baseline Setting

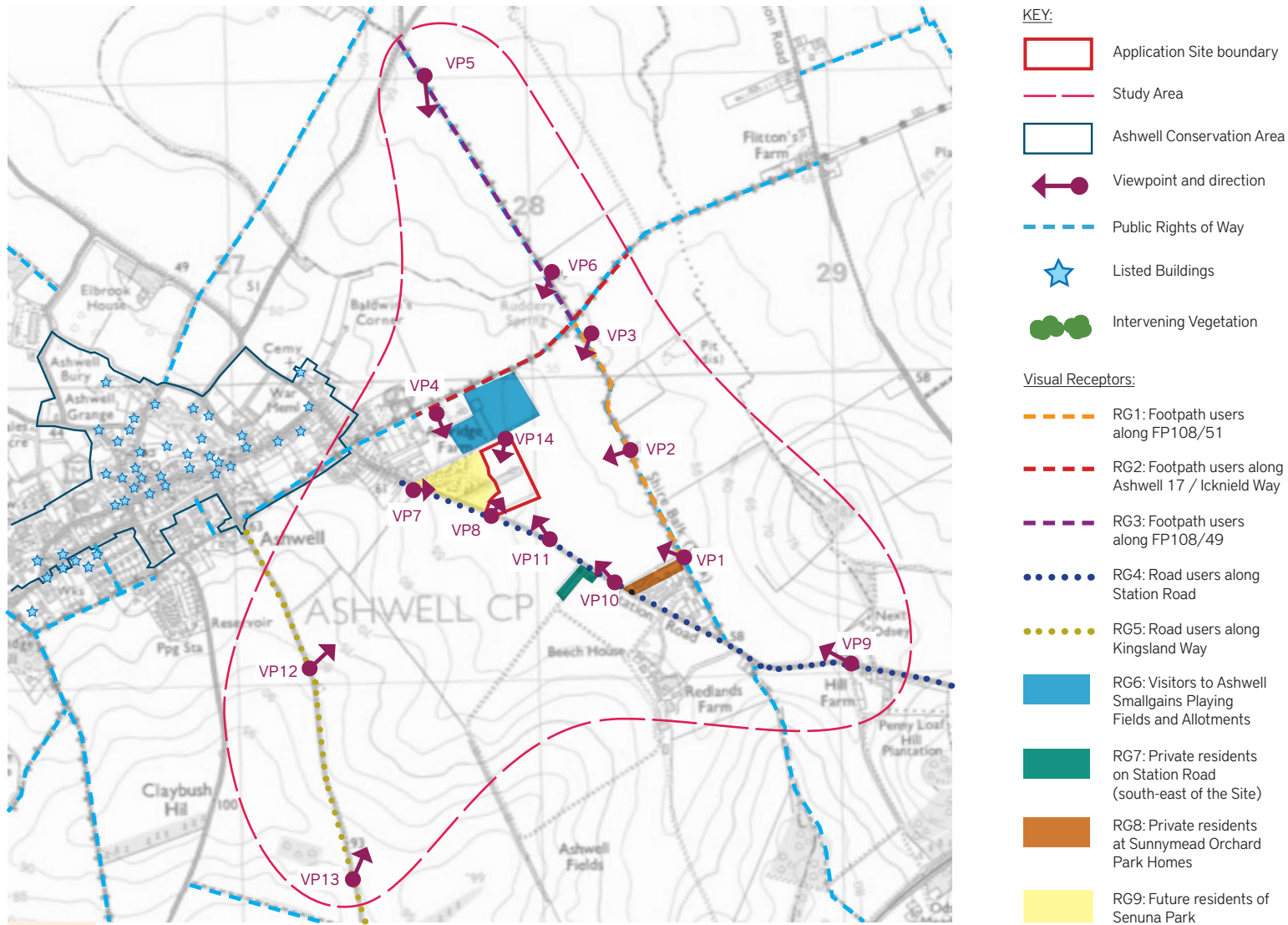


Fig 7 Viewpoint Location and Visual Receptor Plan

3.0 Baseline Setting

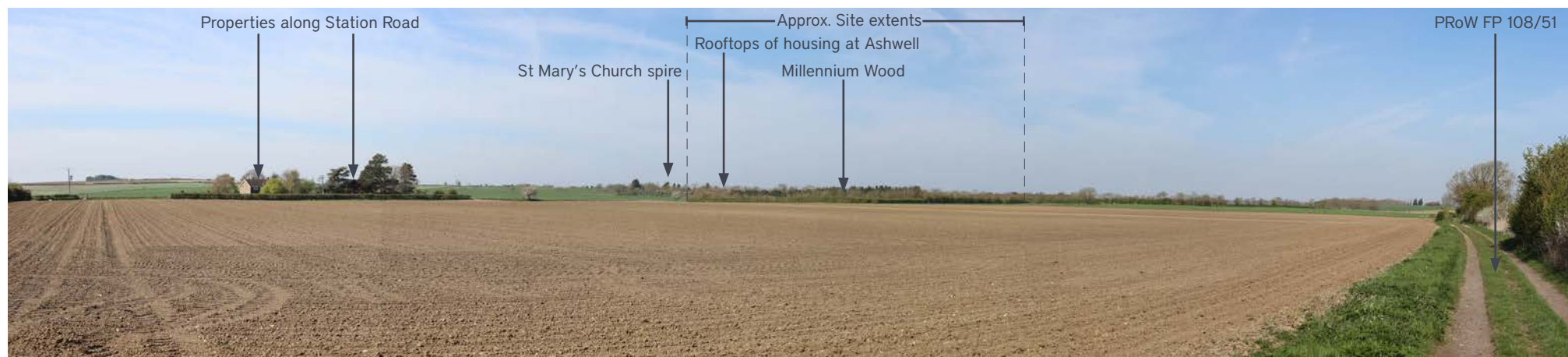
Public Views

People Using PRoWs

RG1 - People using the Public Footpath 108/51 - Viewpoint 1

- 3.71 When walking in a northerly direction, views of the Site are experienced from circa 500m across open ground. Footpath users experience views of the hedgerows and trees that define the eastern and southern boundaries of the application Site. These views are experienced from where the footpath passes Sunnymead Orchard Park Homes to the south-east of the application Site, up to the junction with footpaths 108/49, 108/50 and Ashwell 17 / Icknield

- 3.72 The Site is present in the mid-ground of views with open agricultural fields comprising the foreground and surrounding landscape. Individual properties along Station Road are visible to the south-east of the Site, set amongst tree cover. Ashwell village sits amongst the tree cover beyond the application Site and glimpses of rooftops and the St Mary's Church spire can be experienced within the views. It is expected that during the summer months, the screening effect of the vegetation would improve as the level of leaf cover increases.



VP1

View looking north-west from public footpath 108/51, adjacent to Sunnymead Orchard Park Homes, circa 500m from the Site

3.0 Baseline Setting

RG1 - People using the Public Footpath 108/51 - Viewpoint 2

- 3.73 Footpath users experience oblique views of the hedgerow that defines the eastern boundary of the application Site. Views of the Site are experienced from circa 340m across sparse and fragmented field boundary hedgerows and open agricultural ground.
- 3.74 To the west of the application Site, housing under construction at the Senuna Park development is barely perceptible through vegetation along the Site's eastern boundary. It is expected that during the summer months, the screening effect of the vegetation would improve as the level of leaf cover increases.



VP2

View looking east from public footpath 108/51, circa 340m from the Site

3.0 Baseline Setting

*RG1 - People using the Public Footpath
108/51 - Viewpoint 3*

- 3.75 Footpath users begin to experience very limited views of the application Site when approaching from the north-east at the junction of Public Rights of Way 108/49, 108/50 and 108/51 (Viewpoint 3). These views are experienced from circa 415m. Dense, mature hedgerows and trees located along the eastern and northern boundaries of the Site, and similar vegetation located along the east boundary of Ashwell Smallgains Playing Fields along with the slightly lower elevation of the Site, combine to significantly restrict any views of the application Site.

- 3.76 With rising ground visible in the background of the view to the south-west, the application Site is present in the mid-ground of views with open agricultural fields comprising the foreground and surrounding landscape. Built form to the south-east of the Site at Station Road and the caravan park at Sunnymead Orchard are partially visible in the distance, set amongst tree cover.



VP3

View looking south west at the junction of public footpaths Ashwell 17/Icknield Way, 108/49, 108/50 and 108/51 circa. 415m from the Site

3.0 Baseline Setting

*RG2 - People using the Public Footpath
Ashwell 17 / Icknield Way long distance route
- Viewpoint 4*

3.77 From this viewpoint, housing under construction at Senuna Park, located to the west of the application Site, is partially visible as views are heavily filtered by intervening vegetation along Small Gains Lane. Land at Ashridge Farm is visible in the foreground, glimpsed through a break in vegetation along its northern boundary / Ashwell Street.

3.78 Further west along the footpath, approaching the settlement edge of Ashwell, views towards the application Site become restricted due to the Site's lower elevation and the presence of mature boundary vegetation, comprising hedgerow and trees, along intervening fields and properties.



VP4

View looking south from Ashwell 17 / Icknield Way across Ashridge Farm, circa 200m

3.0 Baseline Setting

3.79 *RG3 - People using the public footpath
FP108/49 – Viewpoint 5*

3.80 This viewpoint is located circa 120m+ to the east of 'Important View' SV4 in the Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan. SV4 is the view from Coldharbour Lane looking south-west towards Ashwell. The Neighbourhood Plan describes SV4 as providing the valley context for Ashwell, which is visible in the mid-distance, amongst tree cover, with open countryside in both the foreground and background, which also includes Claybush Hill. The application Site is not visible from SV4 due to intervening topography and vegetation.

3.81 People walking south along this footpath experience long range views towards the application Site. The caravan park at Sunnymead Orchard is discernible to the south-east of the Site. The dense foliage of the conifers within Millennium Wood (on the Site) are just discernible above intervening vegetation at a distance of circa 1.3km. Expansive views include the open agricultural landscape in the foreground with the settlement area of Ashwell in the mid-ground, set amongst tree cover, to the west of the Site. The steeple of St Mary's Church punctuates the skyline within the historic core of Ashwell.



VP5

View looking south from public footpath 108/49, close to the junction with Ashwell Road, circa 1.3km from the Site

3.0 Baseline Setting

- 3.82 *RG3 - People using the public footpath FP108/49 – Viewpoint 6*
- 3.83 People walking south on footpath FP108/49 experience long range views towards the application Site from a distance of circa 580m. Claybush Hill is visible in the distance although filtered by intervening vegetation. A distinctive rooftop of a building within Ashwell and St Mary's Church steeple are discernible, on the periphery of the view, through intervening vegetation to the west of the Site. Otherwise, the settlement of Ashwell is not visible from this viewpoint due to intervening topography and vegetation.
- 3.84 In the distance, to the south-east of the Site, built form is perceptible on Station Road, at Redlands Farm and at Shire End Close. Sunnymead Orchard Caravan Park is just discernible at a distance of circa 1.8km.
- 3.85 The Site is not easily discernible from this viewpoint due to intervening vegetation along field boundaries to the north-east of the Site.



VP6

View looking south-west from public footpath 108/49, close to the junction with Ashwell 17/Icknield Way, 108/50 and 108/51, circa 580m from the Site

3.0 Baseline Setting

Road Users

RG4 - People using Station Road
- Viewpoint 7

Site) screens any potential views of Site Field 2.

3.86 People leaving Ashwell on Station Road experience partial views of the application Site as Station Road passes the entrance to the Senuna Park development site. Partial views into the application Site are framed by mature trees along Station Road and built form at Senuna Park. Millennium wood (on the

3.87 As road users pass Senuna Park and are travelling along the edge of the application Site, views become oblique and significantly filtered by the existing hedgerow and trees located along the Site's interface with Station Road.



VP7 View from Station Road, looking south-east across the Senuna Park development, circa 250m from the Site

3.0 Baseline Setting

- RG4 - People using Station Road
- Viewpoint 8

3.90

When leaving Ashwell and looking in the direction of travel, built form along Station Road, including that at Shire End Close, is partially visible in the distance.
- 3.88

People using Station Road adjacent to the Site's western boundary experience a glimpsed view of Site Field 2 through a gap in the Site's western boundary hedgerow. The bare, open agricultural land on Site Field 2 forms the foreground of the view set amongst the backdrop of Millennium Wood, which screens views to Site Field 1.
- 3.89

The industrial buildings of a quarry circa 1.7km to the east of the Site are discernible in the distance above the Site's eastern boundary hedgerow.



VP8 View looking south-east at the Site's western access off Station Road, circa 3m from the Site

3.0 Baseline Setting

*RG4 - People using Station Road
- Viewpoint 9*

- 3.91 People approaching the application Site from the south-east on Station Road experience a partial, distant view of the Site from circa 1.2km. The open, gently undulating, agricultural land forms the foreground of the view above clipped hedgerows that line Station Road. Built form at Shire End Close and individual properties on Station Road are partially visible in the middle ground of the view, set amongst surrounding vegetation.

- 3.92 Millennium Wood is discernible beyond housing at Shire End Close. The rooftop and white rendered gable end of a building within the Senuna Park development is just discernible above Millennium Wood. In the distance, St Mary's Church spire punctuates the skyline to the west of the Site.



VP9

View from Station Road looking north-west, circa 1.2km from the Site

3.0 Baseline Setting

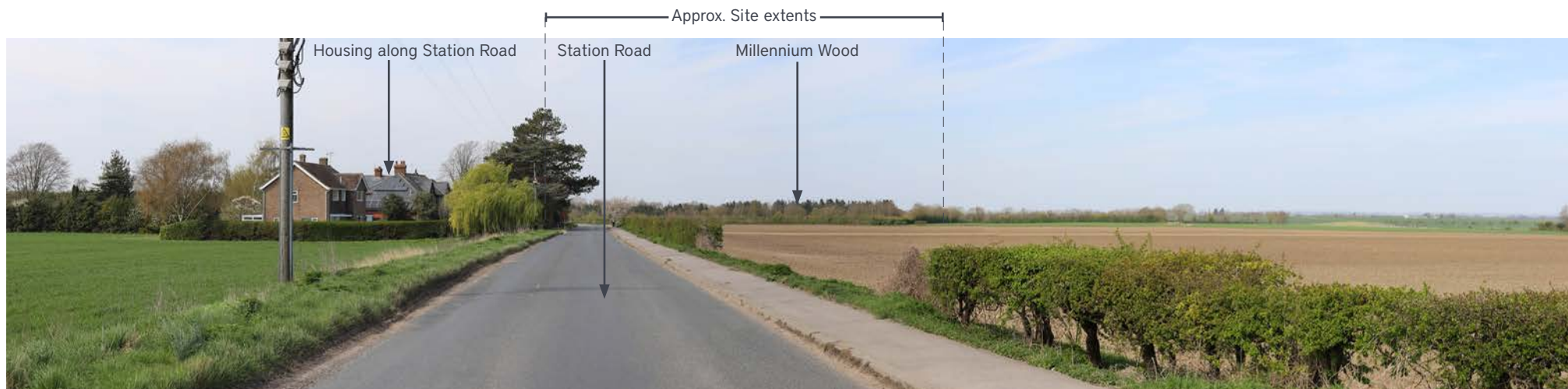
*RG4 - People using Station Road
- Viewpoint 10*

3.93 Upon passing the residential properties at Shire End Close and Sunnymead Orchard Caravan Park, people approaching the application Site from the south-east on Station Road, experience an unobstructed view of the Site above, and through gaps in, the clipped hedgerow that lines Station Road.

3.94 The Site's eastern boundary vegetation and Millennium Wood screens views towards Site Field 1 from this viewpoint. Individual properties along Station Road are visible in the middle ground of the view set amongst

boundary vegetation. Telegraph poles and overhead power lines run along the south-western side of Station Road and have an urbanising effect on the view.

3.95 There are long distance views across the relatively flat, open agricultural landscape to the Site Field 2 from this viewpoint.



VP10

View from Station Road looking north-west, circa 415m from the Site

3.0 Baseline Setting

*RG4 - People using Station Road
- Viewpoint 11*

- 3.96 Due to the relatively flat topography and a lack of intervening and roadside vegetation along Station Road, people approaching the application Site from the south-east have unobstructed views of Site Field 2, at a distance of circa 150m.
- 3.97 The open agricultural land to the south of the Site forms the foreground of the view. Millennium Wood is clearly visible over the Site's southern boundary vegetation. Millennium Wood screens views to Site Field 1 from this viewpoint.

- 3.98 In the distance, at the end of Station Road, there is a partial view of built form at Ashwell framed by roadside vegetation. Other built form at Ashwell is discernible, although heavily filtered by intervening vegetation, to the west of the Site.



VP11

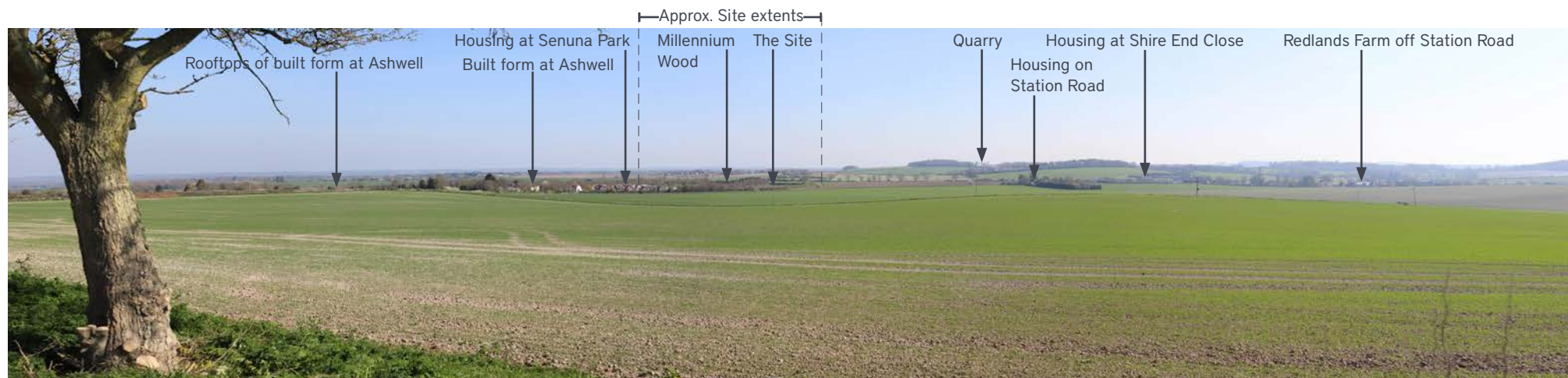
View from Station Road looking north-west, circa 150m from the Site

3.0 Baseline Setting

*RG5 - People using Kingsland Way
- Viewpoint 12*

- 3.99 These road users experience expansive long range, panoramic views of the agricultural landscape to the north, north-east and east from an elevated position (circa 85m AOD).
- 3.100 The Site is visible on both sides of Millennium Wood at a distance of circa 0.8km. Built form at the adjacent Senuna Park development is visible above it's western boundary hedgerow.
- 3.101 Rooftops of housing at Ashwell are also discernible on lower ground to the west of the application Site.

3.102 Various built form, scattered across the wider, gently undulating agricultural landscape to the east and south-east of the Site is discernible in the distance. Visible built form includes the Quarry on the horizon, individual properties along Station Road, housing at Shire End Close and the Farmstead at Redlands Farm.



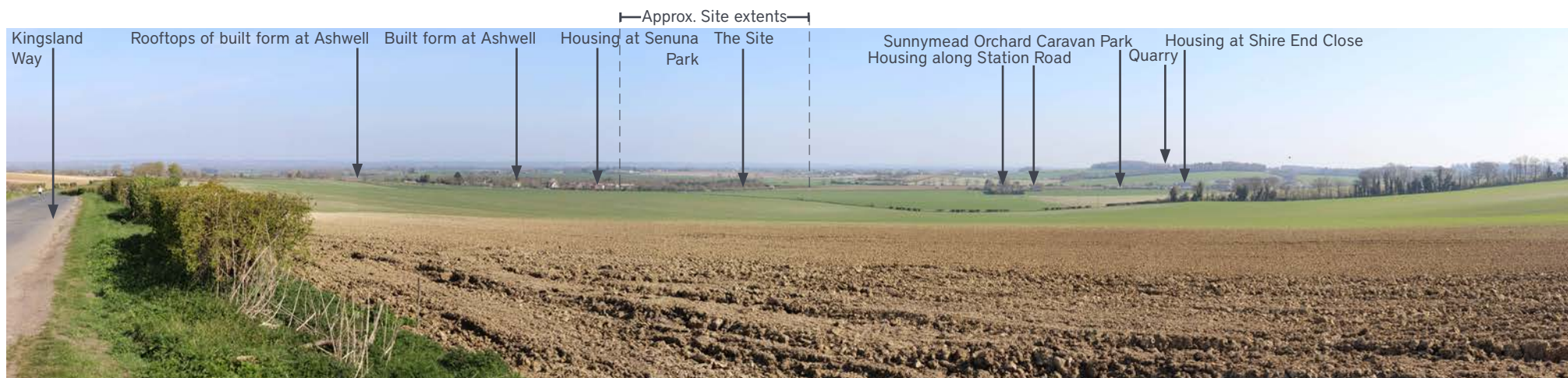
VP12

View from Kingsland Way looking north-east, circa 0.8km from the Site

3.0 Baseline Setting

*RG5 - People using Kingsland Way
- Viewpoint 13*

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>3.103 These road users experience expansive long range, panoramic views of the agricultural landscape to the north, north-east and east from an elevated position (circa 90m AOD).</p> <p>3.104 The Site is visible at a distance of circa 1.3km. To the west of the application Site, built form at the Senuna Park development is visible above it's western boundary hedgerow.</p> <p>3.105 Rooftops of housing at Ashwell are discernible on lower ground to the west of the application Site.</p> | <p>3.106 Various farmsteads and other built form, scattered across the wider, gently undulating agricultural landscape to the east and south-east of the Site is discernible in the distance. Visible built form includes the Quarry on the horizon, individual properties along Station Road, housing at Shire End Close and static caravans at Sunnymead Orchard Caravan Park.</p> <p>3.107 The Site is set on lower land and, due to the elevated nature of the view, there are expansive long range views over the application Site to the wider landscape beyond.</p> |
|---|--|



VP13

View from Kingsland Way looking north-east, circa 1.3km from the Site

3.0 Baseline Setting

*RG6 - People using Ashwell Smallgains
Playing Fields and Allotments
- Viewpoint 14*

3.108 People visiting and using the playing fields and allotments to the north may experience limited views of the application Site from close proximity. Viewpoint 14 is representative of the view experienced by people arriving and departing Ashwell Smallgains Playing Fields and Allotments via Small Gains Lane.

3.109 Views are limited by the mature hedgerow and hedgerow trees along the northern Site boundary which filter any views into the Site. There is a glimpsed view of Site Field 1 through a gap in its boundary vegetation at the location of a field gate.



VP14

View looking south-west from Small Gains Lane, at the Site's northern access, circa 5m from the Site

3.0 Baseline Setting

Private Views

Private residents of properties on Station Road - RG7

- 3.110 Residents of the small cluster of 3no. properties along Station Road (RG7), south-east of the Site, may experience an oblique view of the application Site from windows on the north facing elevations of their properties. Views would be experienced at a distance of circa 300m and are likely to contain the open agricultural landscape and Station Road in the foreground with the application Site in the mid-ground. Views towards Site Field 2 are likely to be filtered by the hedgerow and associated trees along the Site's southern boundary, as well as by vegetation within the front gardens of these private properties. Views to Site Field 1 are likely to be screened by the woodland (Millennium Wood) that bisects the Site.

3.111

Private residents at Sunnymead Orchard Park Homes - RG8

The residents of the properties located along the northern boundary of the Sunnymead Orchard Park Homes site are likely to experience views towards the application Site at a distance of circa 450m. Views would contain the open agricultural landscape in the foreground, with the application Site set in the mid-ground of the view. Site Field 1 is likely to be screened by Millennium Wood from viewpoints to the south of the application Site. Residents may experience a partial view of built form associated with the Senuna Park development, through the cleared area of Millennium Wood to the west of the Site.

Future Residents of Senuna Park - RG9

3.112

Future residents of the Senuna Park development, in proximity to the south-western boundary of the application Site, are likely to experience close-range views of the development Site. These views are expected to be limited to properties at the eastern end of the Senuna Park development and would be experienced in the context of neighbouring properties at Senuna Park. From these locations views would be of the proposed properties on Site Field 1, while proposed properties on Site Field 2 would be effectively screened by the Wood itself.

3.0 Baseline Setting

Sensitivity - Views

- 3.113 As set out within the Methodology (Appendix 1) and in GLVIA3, the sensitivity of visual receptors is derived from judgements made regarding the value attached to the view as indicated by planning designations, relationships to heritage assets, associations with art, recognition in guide books/ tourist maps or the provision of facilities for their enjoyment (such as parking, sign boards, interpretive material etc.), and the susceptibility of the visual receptor to change, which is indicated by their occupation or activity and the extent to which their attention is focussed on the view.
- 3.114 The value of the views experienced by visual receptors using the PRoW network are considered to be Medium. These are generally attractive, rural, yet relatively ordinary views across farmland that sometimes incorporate built form within the village or within the surrounding countryside. The views are not recognised or acknowledged and do not have any associations that may elevate their value.
- 3.115 The value of the views experienced by visual receptors using the road network is considered to be Low-Medium. The roads are predominantly rural however they are not recognised through planning designation or in relation to heritage assets and are not scenic trails.

- 3.116 As stated within the Methodology (Appendix 1), this assessment provides an informed prediction of the changes which the proposed development may have on the private views of residents. The views would obviously vary greatly depending on the outlook of the property and cannot be fully assessed without access to private land. The assessment groups

the residential views and provides a summary of the likely effects based on nearby publicly accessible viewpoints. The value of the views experienced by residents are considered to be medium as they are views over an ordinary landscape which is not recognised for its landscape value or for its association with heritage assets or art.

Table 3 - Summary of Visual Receptor Sensitivity

Visual Receptor	Value of the View	Susceptibility to Change	Resulting Sensitivity
People using PRoWs 108/51, 108/49 and Ashwell 17/ Icknield Way - RG1, RG2 & RG3	Medium	High – People using the routes for walking are engaged in outdoor recreation with a focus upon the enjoyment of the landscape.	Medium-High
Road Users of Station Road and Kingsland Way - RG4 & RG5	Low-Medium	Medium – The roads are rural with people using the routes primarily for access, rather than for their enjoyment of the views/landscape.	Medium
Other Public Receptors (visitors of Ashwell Smallgains Playing Fields and Allotments) - RG6	Medium	Low – People using the facilities are generally engaged in activity which does not involve or depend upon an appreciation of views of the landscape.	Low-Medium
Private Residents (residents of properties to the south and south-east of the Site on Station Road and Sunnymead Orchard Park Homes) - RG7 & RG8	Medium	High – Residents are generally susceptible to change.	Medium-High
Future Residents of Senuna Park - RG9	Medium	High – Residents are generally susceptible to change.	Medium-High

4.0 Development Proposals

Development Proposals

- 4.1 Proposals include the construction of 36 dwellings including apartments and a mix of terraced, semi-detached and detached properties. The proposed built forms are described by associated drawings prepared by Beck Homes Ltd. The landscape proposals are described by Barnes Walker drawing M3942-PA-01 - see Figure 8 below.
- 4.2 Access to the development is taken from Station Road, located along the south-western boundary of the Site. This would necessitate the removal of a short section of hedging classified as Category C (Low Quality) comprising Hawthorn, Ash and Field Maple. A short section of the northern boundary hedgerow would also be removed to allow for a pedestrian footpath connection to Small Gains Lane. This hedgerow is classified as Category C and comprises Blackthorn and Hawthorn - see Tree Survey / AIA by Hayden's Arboricultural Consultants. All other existing boundary hedgerows and trees would be retained and enhanced through supplementary planting and appropriate management works to create a soft edge between the proposed built form and the open farmland and PROWs to the east and to the south.
- 4.3 Proposed dwellings are set back from Station Road behind the existing hedgerow and proposed soft landscaping to soften the transition between the rural landscape to the south and the settlement edge. A gateway property at the entrance to the Site would evoke the character of a traditional farmhouse, set amongst linear rows of mews/terraced dwellings and garages which give reference to agricultural outbuildings. This implied farmstead setting is in-keeping with the rural vernacular on the approach to Ashwell via Station Road and other scattered farmsteads within the wider landscape.
- 4.4 Beyond the farmstead cluster at the Site entrance several pockets of housing are proposed each with their own distinct character, responding to the features of the Site and its surrounding landscape context.
- 4.5 The existing hedgerows along the eastern and southern boundaries would be enhanced and supplemented to create a more substantial, woodland-style edge where the Site meets the open countryside. Over time, as the planting matures, this green buffer would help soften views of the development from Public Rights of Way to the east and from the road network to the south and west. In addition to screening, the wooded edge would create an attractive, natural setting for adjacent properties. Footpaths would weave through this landscaped boundary, offering recreational routes and connecting the development to its wider setting.
- 4.6 Proposals incorporate extensive new tree and hedgerow planting throughout the application Site - individual trees located internally would comprise larger stock heavy standard trees in order to generate a tangible level of prominence from the day they are planted. The proposed trees would comprise native species, and carefully selected ornamental species for communal space within the streetscene and front garden areas.
- 4.7 A small section of Millennium Wood, classified as Category B (Moderate Quality), would be removed to allow for access between Fields 1 and 2. The majority of the woodland would be retained and enhanced through proposed management works that would involve the selected removal of undesirable species and general thinning works to promote its species diversity and its longer term success. Additional appropriate native species planting within the existing woodland would diversify the species mix, whilst extensions to the woodland plantation would create a more organic woodland form. Informal footpaths provide access to Millennium Wood and create connections to wider walking routes throughout the development including the adjacent Senuna Park development and into Ashwell.

4.0 Development Proposals

- 4.8 The northern part of the Site utilises an existing localised depression in the landform to establish a field pond within an area of open space that interlinks with POS at the adjacent Senuna Park development, creating one generous, cohesive open green space between the two areas of development. Native species trees and hedgerows would be planted along with wildflower meadow and aquatic species to establish an attractive and naturalistic area that is framed and overlooked to the east, south and west by both the proposed development and the adjacent Senuna Park development.
- 4.9 Further POS is positioned towards the south of the Site including a play space along the Site's southern boundary. This creates a break in the proposed built form to soften the developments southern interface with the rural landscape. A variety of incidental green spaces and landscaped amenity areas are thoughtfully integrated throughout the proposals, enhancing the character of the development and creating an attractive and high quality residential environment.



Fig 8

Landscape Layout prepared by Barnes Walker Ltd

5.0 Landscape Effects

- 5.1 Section 5.1 of the GLVIA 3rd Edition states '*An assessment of landscape effects deals with the effects of change and development on landscape as a resource.*'
- 5.2 In order to determine the potential landscape effects which may result from the development, the sensitivity of each of the landscape receptors has been established within the baseline of this appraisal. Table 4 below considers the magnitude of effect upon each of the landscape receptors and combines that judgement with the already defined sensitivity in order to determine the nature of the anticipated landscape effects, which may result from the implementation of the development proposals.

5.0 Landscape Effects

Table 4 Landscape Effects - Year 1				
Receptor	Sensitivity (Table 2)	Size and scale of change/geographic extent and duration	Magnitude	Landscape Effect - Year 1
North Herts LCA 226 Steeple Morden Plain / Greater Cambridge LCA 8B Morden to Duxford Lowland Chalklands	Low-Medium	The Site is situated within North Herts LCA 226 Steeple Morden Plain which is described as an open, exposed landscape with long distance views, limited tree cover and a sparse settlement pattern with nucleated villages. In terms of its capacity to accommodate development the North Herts Landscape Study (Character, Sensitivity and Capacity) states that <i>'there may be some capacity for carefully located and designed small scale developments within the Character Area, particularly if they were of an agricultural character and in-keeping with the rural character'</i>. The ongoing construction of the Senuna Park development has already brought a degree of change to the local landscape character through the introduction of built form at the settlement edge of Ashwell. The development proposals would result in a continuation of this change on the settlement edge. The proposals present a logical extension to the Senuna Park development, consolidating the evolving settlement edge in a manner that is consistent with the rural landscape character of the LCA. As a result the size, scale and geographic extent of the changes brought about by the proposed development upon the LCA are considered to be limited. The duration of the effect would be long term however, the establishment of the proposed planting would, over time, become increasingly effective in assimilating the proposed development into its rural setting and the wider landscape, reducing the effects to Minor Adverse/Negligible in the longer term.	Low & Adverse	Minor Adverse (Reducing to Minor Adverse/Negligible in the longer term as the landscape proposals become established)

5.0 Landscape Effects

Table 4 Landscape Effects - Year 1				
Receptor	Sensitivity (Table 2)	Size and scale of change/geographic extent and duration	Magnitude	Landscape Effect - Year 1
North Herts LCA 224 North Baldock Chalk Uplands	Medium	The Site lies in close proximity to this LCA but does not lie within it and as such there would be no direct effects upon it. However, there are extensive views across the open rolling landform, including glimpses of the settlement area of Ashwell. The ongoing construction of the Senuna Park development has already brought a degree of change to the local landscape character through the introduction of built form at the rural / settlement edge of Ashwell. The proposed development would represent a continuation of this change at the settlement edge. LCA 224 is already influenced by the presence of dispersed farmsteads and its proximity to Ashwell. The proposals have been designed to read as a farmstead cluster on the approach to the village, in keeping with local character and consistent with the North Herts Landscape Study Built Development Guidelines for LCA 224, which emphasise conserving the traditional character of Ashwell and ensuring edge-of-village development uses appropriate vernacular materials and features. As such, the level of landscape change resulting from the proposals is considered to be limited. The duration of the effect would be long term however, the establishment of the proposed planting would, over time, become increasingly effective in assimilating the proposed development into its rural setting and the wider landscape. This would moderate the level of adverse effect to Minor Adverse in the longer term.	Low & Adverse	Minor /Moderate Adverse (Reducing to Minor Adverse in the longer term as the landscape proposals become established)

Receptor	Sensitivity (Table 2)	Size and scale of change/geographic extent and duration	Magnitude	Landscape Effect - Year 1
North Herts LCA 227 Odsey-Royston / Greater Cambridge LCA 8B Morden to Duxford Lowland Chalklands	Low-Medium	The Site lies in proximity to this LCA but does not lie within it and as such there would be no direct effects upon it. However, there is some intervisibility between the LCA and Ashwell with St Mary's Church serving as a visible landmark from various points within LCA 227. The LCA is predominantly rural in character, however, it is influenced by scattered clusters of built form and dispersed farmsteads. Therefore the extent of changes brought about by the proposed development upon the LCA are considered to be limited. The establishment of the proposed planting would, over time, become increasingly effective in assimilating the proposed development into its rural setting and the wider landscape. This would moderate the level of adverse effect to Minor Adverse/Negligible in the longer term.	Low & Adverse	Minor Adverse (Reducing to Minor Adverse/Negligible in the longer term as the landscape proposals become established)

5.0 Landscape Effects

Table 4 Landscape Effects - Year 1				
Receptor	Sensitivity (Table 2)	Size and scale of change/geographic extent and duration	Magnitude	Landscape Effect - Year 1
The townscape of Ashwell village	Medium	Ashwell village contains numerous listed buildings and a variety of architectural styles as incremental growth of different scales has taken place throughout the 20th and 21st Centuries. The Senuna Park development has already brought a degree of change to the settlement edge of Ashwell however, the development is of a high quality and is considered to be appropriate to the character of the village. The development proposals in this instance would appear as a continuation of the changes associated with Senuna Park. The Site lies to the south-east of Ashwell, with no intervisibility to the historic core or conservation area due to intervening built form. While views are limited and localised, the proposals would represent a continuation of the settlement edge change introduced by the development at Senuna Park, influencing the rural fringe and the sense of arrival from Station Road. However, the nature of the development proposals in proximity to Station Road is consistent with the dispersed farmsteads on the approach to village settlements within the wider landscape. At year 1 the size, scale and geographic extent of the changes brought about by the proposed development upon the townscape character are considered to be Low & Adverse. The duration of the effect would be long term however, the establishment of the proposed planting would, over time, become increasingly effective in assimilating the proposed development into the townscape. This would moderate the level of adverse effect to Minor Adverse/ Negligible in the longer term.	Low & Adverse	Minor / Moderate Adverse (Reducing to Minor Adverse/Negligible in the longer term as the landscape proposals become established)

5.0 Landscape Effects

Table 4 Landscape Effects - Year 1				
Receptor	Sensitivity (Table 2)	Size and scale of change/geographic extent and duration	Magnitude	Landscape Effect - Year 1
Landscape features within the Site	Low	Other than Millennium Wood and the boundary vegetation - both largely retained with only limited removals required to accommodate access - the Site has limited merit in terms of landscape features. The development proposals provide the opportunity to introduce significant numbers of new trees, lengths of hedgerow and substantial areas of wildflower meadow. The existing woodland would be enhanced through management works and understorey planting. Proposed planting would be native, characteristic of the locality and would increase the quantum and quality of the landscape features of the Site. The landscape proposals would help to soften the appearance of the proposed built form and would enhance biodiversity. Additionally, the proposals would enable public access to Millennium Wood, which is currently inaccessible, and footpath connections through the proposed areas of public open space, thereby providing new recreational and amenity benefits. Although some removal of woodland and boundary vegetation is necessary to enable access, this would be offset by the significant overall increase in planting and landscape features. On balance, the landscape effects at Year 1 are assessed as Negligible. At Year 1 beneficial effects of the proposed landscape works would be somewhat limited by it's juvenile nature, however upon maturity, and taking into account the improved management works to existing vegetation, the effects upon the landscape features would be Minor Beneficial.	Negligible	Negligible (Minor Beneficial upon maturity of the planting)

6.0 Visual Effects

- 6.1 It has been ascertained that the key groups of people or individuals who experience a view of the application Site or part thereof, comprise those using footpaths and road users (public views).
- 6.2 The type of visual receptor, the nature of the various existing views of the application Site and the sensitivity of the visual receptors have been considered and ascertained within section 3 of this appraisal.
- 6.3 The objective of this section of the appraisal is to understand how those views may be affected, in order to ascertain the nature of any visual effects which may arise from the implementation of the development proposals. In line with the relevant guidance and the methodology (see Appendix 1), the sensitivity and the magnitude of effect was ascertained for each visual receptor, in order to inform the process of determining the likely levels of any visual effects at Year 1.
- 6.4 The assessment of the potential visual effects which may result from the implementation of the development proposals on the application Site, has been ascertained for each of the visual receptors within Table 5 – Visual Effects.

Table 5 – Visual Effect - Year 1				
Visual Receptor	Sensitivity (Table 3)	Size and scale of change/geographic extent and duration	Magnitude	Visual Effect - Year 1
RG1 People using PRoW FP108/51	Medium-High	VP1 - Viewpoint 1 represents the view from public footpath 108/51 when walking in a north-westerly direction looking towards the Site. Proposed built form would be visible set behind the Site's southern and eastern boundary hedgerows. Site Field 1 would be partially screened by Millennium Wood from this viewpoint. The Site occupies a small part of a wider panoramic view that includes properties along Station Road, set amongst tree planting and boundary hedgerows, in the middle ground. In the longer term, supplementary planting to the Site's eastern and southern boundaries and tree planting within the proposed development, would soften views of proposed built form and help to assimilate the development into its rural context. The resulting magnitude of change would be Low & Adverse at Year 1. The establishment of the proposed planting would, over time, become increasingly effective in filtering and softening views of built form. This would result in Minor Adverse effects on the view upon planting maturity.	VP1 Low & Adverse	VP1 Minor / Moderate Adverse (VP1 Minor adverse upon maturity of the planting)
		VP2 - Viewpoint 2 is located circa 400m to the north of VP1 and looks perpendicular to the direction of travel towards the Site's eastern boundary. The proposed development would be partially visible, filtered by boundary vegetation. The Site occupies a relatively small part of the wider panoramic view and is positioned on the periphery relative to the direction of travel. Supplementary planting to the Site's eastern boundary is proposed, including several trees and woodland, which would become increasingly effective at filtering and softening views of proposed built form as planting establishes. The resulting magnitude of change at Year 1 is Low & Adverse. Upon planting maturity, the adverse visual effects of the proposed development would be reduced to Minor Adverse.		VP2 Minor / Moderate Adverse (VP2 Minor adverse upon maturity of the planting)

Table 5 – Visual Effect - Year 1				
Visual Receptor	Sensitivity (Table 3)	Size and scale of change/geographic extent and duration	Magnitude	Visual Effect - Year 1
RG1 People using PRoW FP108/51	Medium-High	VP3 - Viewpoint 3 is representative of the view from FP108/51 close to the junction with PRoW Ashwell 017, when walking in a south-easterly direction, looking south-west towards the Site. Proposed built form would be partially visible, although heavily filtered by northern and eastern boundary vegetation at both Ashwell Playing Fields and the Site itself. The Site forms a small portion of the wider panoramic view which includes Sunnymead Orchard Caravan Park and properties along Station Road to the south-east. A number of trees, including pockets of woodland and supplementary planting to the east of Millennium Wood, would be introduced as a result of the development proposals which would help to soften and filter views of proposed built form from this viewpoint. The resulting magnitude of change at Year 1 would be Low & Adverse. The establishment of the proposed planting at the Site's eastern boundary would, over time, become increasingly effective in filtering and softening views of built form from this viewpoint. This would result in Minor Adverse effects on the view upon planting maturity.	VP3 Low & Adverse	VP3 Minor / Moderate Adverse (VP3 Minor Adverse upon maturity of the planting)
RG2 People using PRoW Ashwell 017	Medium-High	VP4 - Viewpoint 4 is representative of the view from footpath Ashwell 017 looking perpendicular to the direction of travel, across land at Ashridge Farm, towards the Senuna Park development and the Site's western boundary. There is a glimpsed, partial and heavily filtered view of the built form at Senuna Park through a gap in the boundary vegetation north of land at Ashridge Farm. Walkers may experience partial views of the new houses in Site Field 1. Views of the development would be limited as they would be substantially filtered by intervening vegetation and predominantly screened by built form associated with Senuna Park. The resulting magnitude of change at Year 1 is Negligible. Furthermore, recently planted planting at the Senuna Park development and proposed planting would, over time, become increasingly effective in assimilating built form into its rural context.	VP4 Negligible	VP4 Negligible

Table 5 – Visual Effect - Year 1				
Visual Receptor	Sensitivity (Table 3)	Size and scale of change/geographic extent and duration	Magnitude	Visual Effect - Year 1
RG3 People using PRoW FP108/49	Medium-High	VP5 - Viewpoint 5 describes the view looking south from footpath 108/49 at a distance of circa 1.3km from the Site. The view is expansive and includes the settlement area of Ashwell, set amongst tree cover, in the distance, including St Mary's Church spire which punctuates the skyline against the back drop of the distant hills. The upper canopy of Millennium Wood is just discernible above intervening vegetation. Built form associated with the adjacent Senuna Park development is effectively screened by intervening vegetation and the proposed built form would be similarly screened. As such, the magnitude of change at Year 1 would be Negligible.	VP5 Negligible	VP5 Negligible
		VP6 - Viewpoint 6 is representative of the view from footpath 108/49 at a distance of circa 580m and looking south-west towards the Site. The view is expansive and includes various scattered built form in the distance. The Site is not easily discernible from this viewpoint due to intervening vegetation which effectively screens built form associated with the Senuna Park development. Proposed built form would be similarly screened and as such, the magnitude of change at Year 1 would be Negligible.	VP6 Negligible	VP6 Negligible
RG4 People using Station Road	Medium	VP7 - Viewpoint 7 looks south-east from Station Road, across the Senuna Park development, towards the application Site. There is a partial glimpsed view of Site Field 1 from this viewpoint, framed by built form associated with Senuna Park. Site Field 2 is screened from view by Millennium Wood. Proposed built form within Site Field 1 would be partially visible, although filtered by proposed planting, and in the context of built form associated with Senuna Park in the foreground of the view. Proposed built form would be consistent with those in Senuna Park in terms of form, scale, layout and materiality. As a result, the magnitude of change at Year 1 is assessed as Negligible. In addition, recently planted trees within the adjacent Senuna Park development, along with proposed planting within the application Site, would be increasingly effective at filtering and softening views of built form over time from this viewpoint.	VP7 Negligible	VP7 Negligible

Table 5 – Visual Effect - Year 1				
Visual Receptor	Sensitivity (Table 3)	Size and scale of change/geographic extent and duration	Magnitude	Visual Effect - Year 1
RG4 People using Station Road	Medium	VP8 - Viewpoint 8 represents the view from Station Road, at the proposed entrance to the Site, looking south-east across the Site. From this viewpoint Site Field 1 is screened from view by Millennium Wood. There is a glimpsed view of Site Field 2 through a gap in the Site's south-western boundary vegetation and as such there would be a close-range, glimpsed view of proposed built form therein. The nature of the visual change is heightened by the introduction of built form at close proximity within the view and the juvenile nature of the proposed landscape works. However, this change would be moderated by the filtered and glimpsed nature of the view, as well as by the design of the proposed development in proximity to Station Road, which reflects the character of dispersed farmsteads within the surrounding landscape. On balance, the resulting magnitude of change at Year 1 would be Low & Adverse. In the longer term the nature of change would be moderated by the establishment of the proposed landscape works.	VP8 Low & Adverse	VP8 Minor / Moderate Adverse (VP8 Minor adverse upon maturity of the planting)
		VP9 - Viewpoint 9 is representative of the view on the approach to Ashwell via Station Road circa 1.17km to the south-east of the Site. Site Field 1 is screened by intervening trees of Millennium Wood. Site Field 2 is partially visible beyond built form at Shire End Close, which sits in the middle ground of the view amongst tree cover. As such, proposed built within Site Field 2 would be partially visible although filtered by the Site's southern boundary vegetation. Views are experienced at a long distance and in the context of other clusters of built form in the wider landscape. As a result, the magnitude of change at Year 1 would be Negligible. In time, the proposed planting at the Site's southern boundary and within the proposed development would become increasingly effective at assimilating the proposed built form into its rural setting.	VP9 Negligible	VP9 Negligible

Table 5 – Visual Effect - Year 1				
Visual Receptor	Sensitivity (Table 3)	Size and scale of change/geographic extent and duration	Magnitude	Visual Effect - Year 1
RG4 People using Station Road	Medium	VP10 - Viewpoint 10 is representative of the view experienced by road users approaching Ashwell via Station Road (circa 415m from the Site). Site Field 2 is visible amongst the backdrop of Millennium Wood, which screens Site Field 1 from view. Proposed built form within Site Field 2 would be partially visible, filtered by the Site's southern boundary vegetation and in the context of scattered built form along station Road. The development proposals include supplementary planting at the Site's southern boundary, including a number of trees and tracts of woodland, which would help to soften and filter views of proposed built form from this viewpoint. The resulting magnitude of change at Year 1 would be Low & Adverse. In time, the proposed planting along the Site's southern boundary and within the proposed development would become increasingly effective at assimilating the proposed built form into its rural setting. This would result in Minor Adverse effects on the view upon planting maturity.	VP10 Low & Adverse	VP10 Minor /Moderate Adverse (VP10 Minor Adverse upon maturity of the planting)
		VP11 - Viewpoint 11 looks north-west from Station Road towards the application Site at a distance of circa 150m. Site Field 2 is visible amongst the conspicuous backdrop of Millennium Wood, which screens Site Field 1 from view. Proposed built form within Site Field 2 would be visible, filtered by the Site's southern boundary vegetation. The arrangement of proposed built form has been designed to resemble a farmstead cluster on the approach to Ashwell, in keeping with the local context, and a proposed public open space along the southern boundary would break up views toward the built form, reinforcing the rural edge-of-settlement character. Due to the size and scale of the Site within the view, and the lack of other visually prominent built form, the resulting magnitude of change at Year 1 would be Medium & Adverse. However, a number of trees and pockets of woodland are proposed at the Site's southern boundary, which, together with the public open space, would help to soften and filter views of proposed built form from this viewpoint. In time, the proposed planting at the Site's southern boundary, and within the proposed development, would become increasingly effective at assimilating the proposed built form into its rural setting. This would result in Minor/Moderate Adverse effects on the view upon planting maturity.	VP11 Medium & Adverse	VP11 Moderate Adverse (VP11 Minor/Moderate Adverse upon maturity of the planting)



VP11

Visualisation - anticipated view at Year 1



VP11

Visualisation - anticipated view upon maturity of proposed planting

Table 5 – Visual Effect - Year 1				
Visual Receptor	Sensitivity (Table 3)	Size and scale of change/geographic extent and duration	Magnitude	Visual Effect - Year 1
RG5 People using Kingsland Way	Medium	VP12 & VP13 - Viewpoints 12 and 13 represent the views from Kingsland Way looking towards the Site, perpendicular to the direction of travel, at a distance of circa 0.8km-1.3km. The views are expansive and include scattered farmsteads and dispersed clusters of built form in the mid-long distance. The Site is partially visible amongst its boundary vegetation and Millennium Wood which partially screens Site Field 1. Built form at the adjacent Senuna Park development is discernible at the eastern edge of Ashwell and proposed built form would appear as a continuation of this, set amongst the backdrop of Millennium Wood and the Site's boundary vegetation. A number of additional trees and pockets of woodland are proposed along the Site's boundaries which would help to soften and filter views of proposed built form from these viewpoints. The Site is relatively distant and forms a small element within the expansive views. The development would form a limited, yet discernible eastern extension to the village, the effect of which would be moderated by existing and proposed hedgerows and trees. The resulting magnitude of change at Year 1 would be Low-Negligible & Adverse. In time, the proposed planting at the Site's southern boundary, and within the proposed development, would become increasingly effective at assimilating the proposed built form into its rural setting. This would result in Minor Adverse/Negligible effects on the views upon planting maturity.	VP12 & VP13 Low-Negligible & Adverse	VP12 & VP13 Minor Adverse (VP12 & VP13 Minor Adverse/ Negligible upon maturity of the planting)

Table 5 – Visual Effect - Year 1				
Visual Receptor	Sensitivity (Table 3)	Size and scale of change/geographic extent and duration	Magnitude	Visual Effect - Year 1
RG6 Visitors to Ashwell Smallgains Playing Fields and Allotments	Low- Medium	VP14 - Viewpoint 14 is a glimpsed view of Site Field 1, through a gap in it's northern boundary hedgerow, at the location of a field gate. It is representative of the view experienced by people arriving and departing Ashwell Smallgains Playing Fields and Allotments via Small Gains Lane. Proposals along the Site's eastern boundary include a linear green space incorporating a footpath route along with new individual tree planting, woodland planting and areas of wildflower meadow. This would be visible from this viewpoint, within the setting of the enhanced boundary planting and proposed housing to the eastern extents of the Site. At Year 1 the filtering effects of proposed planting would be limited by its juvenile nature but would become increasingly effective over time as planting reaches maturity. Whilst the development proposals would result in the introduction of built form, it would only occupy a very small proportion of the view. Combined with its glimpsed nature, this results in Minor Adverse effects at Year 1, reducing to Negligible as the proposed planting reaches maturity.	VP14 Low-Negligible	VP14 Minor Adverse (VP14 Negligible upon maturity of the planting)

3.117 Receptor Groups RG7, RG8 & RG9 comprise the residents of private properties on Station Road and at Sunnymead Orchard Park Homes, and future residents of properties at Senuna Park, who are likely to experience a view of the Site that may be affected by the development proposals. As described within the Introduction and Methodology (Appendix 1), this LVA only fully assesses the visual effects associated with publicly accessible views, whereas private views experienced by residents, and the users of the various facilities listed above, are considered by way of the following narratives:

Private residents on Station Road - RG7

3.118 Residents of the small cluster of properties along Station Road (to the south-east of the Site) may experience an oblique view towards the development proposals from north facing windows. Views would be experienced at a distance of circa 300m and would mostly contain the open agricultural landscape and Station Road in the foreground with the development proposals in the mid-ground. Views would only likely include the proposed dwellings within Site Field 2 and would be partial in that they would be filtered by vegetation within the front gardens of these private properties, as well as the Site's southern boundary hedgerow planting, which is to be supplemented with

trees and woodland planting as part of the development proposals. The filtering effects of the proposed planting would be limited at Year 1 due to its juvenile nature, however, over time as it becomes established, it would become increasingly effective in filtering and softening views of proposed built form. Views of the new houses located within Site Field 1 to the north, would be predominantly screened by the intervening Millennium Wood that transects the Site.

Private residents at Sunnymead Orchard Park Homes - RG8

3.119 Private residents at Sunnymead Orchard Park Homes, particularly the properties located on or close to its northern boundary, are likely to have a direct view towards the development proposals located within Site Field 2, from a distance of circa 450m. Views are likely to mostly contain the open agricultural landscape in the foreground with the development proposals set in the mid-ground, filtered by vegetation located along the Site's southern boundary. This boundary planting is to be supplemented by a number of trees and woodland planting as part of the development proposals and would, as it becomes established, be increasingly effective at filtering and softening the views of the new built form located within Site Field 2. Site Field 1 to the north would be screened from the view by Millennium Wood.

Future Residents of Senuna Park - RG9

3.120 Future residents of the Senuna Park development, in proximity to the south-western boundary of the application Site, are likely to experience views of proposed housing at the western extents of the development proposals, on Site Field 1 only. Due to the proposals including POS between the two areas of development, views of built form would be experienced at a distance of circa 80-90m across an area of landscaping, including meadows with tree and hedge planting and areas of woodland. Views would be experienced in the context of neighbouring properties at Senuna Park. The filtering effect of proposed intervening trees and woodland would be limited at Year 1 due to its juvenile nature, however, as the proposed planting reaches maturity it would become increasingly effective at filtering and softening views of proposed built form. Furthermore, the proposed architecture and materiality would compliment built form associated with Senuna Park which would temper the magnitude of visual effect. Future residents would be unlikely to experience views of the proposed dwelling within Site Field 2, due to screening provided by the intervening Millennium Wood.

Landscape Character

7.1 The Site lies within the North Herts Landscape Study LCA 226: Steeple Morden Plain and overlaps with the Greater Cambridge Landscape Character Assessment LCA 8B: Morden to Duxford Lowland Chalklands, both characterised by open arable landscapes with sparse settlement. Within the study area, this character is already influenced by Ashwell's settlement edge, which includes the immediately adjacent Senuna Park development. The proposals would form a perceived extension of Senuna Park, but new soft landscaping would assist in assimilation into the wider landscape. Overall, effects on both LCAs are assessed as **Minor Adverse** at Year 1, reducing to **Minor Adverse/Negligible** in the longer term (i.e. by Year 15).

7.2 The Site lies close to the boundary of the North Herts Landscape Study LCA 224: North Baldock Chalk Uplands, an open, gently undulating arable landscape. The LCA is influenced by Ashwell's southern settlement edge, including the Senuna Park development, and other scattered built form at Redlands Farm and individual properties along Station Road. The proposals would form a farmstead cluster as the first element on the approach to Ashwell, in keeping with local character and consistent with the North Herts Landscape Management Guidelines, which call for the

conservation of the traditional character of Ashwell and the approaches to the village from the south. Overall, effects on LCA 224 are assessed as **Minor/Moderate Adverse** at Year 1, reducing to **Minor Adverse** in the longer term as planting establishes.

7.3 The Site lies close to the boundary of the North Herts Landscape Study LCA 227: Odsey–Royston, overlapping with the Greater Cambridge LCA 8B: Morden to Duxford Lowland Chalklands. LCA 227 is defined by gently rolling landform, rectilinear fields, linear tree belts, sparse settlement, and long views, while LCA 8B is similarly large-scale, open, and sparsely settled with occasional copses and isolated farms. Within the study area, the landscape comprises arable fields, small woodland pockets and the farmstead at Hill Farm. In line with LCA 227 management guidelines—which promote broadleaved woodland planting, woodland enhancement, and screening of new development—the proposals include supplementary boundary planting and improvements to Millennium Wood. Effects are assessed as **Minor Adverse** at Year 1, reducing to **Minor Adverse/Negligible** in the longer term as planting establishes.

The Townscape of Ashwell Village

7.4 The Site lies to the south-east of Ashwell, with no intervisibility to the historic core or conservation area due to intervening built form. While views are limited and localised, the proposals would represent a continuation of the extension of the settlement initiated by the Senuna Park development. In combination, the introduction of new properties at Senuna Park and the application Site in this location is considered to be consistent with the settlement pattern. Given the scale of previous incremental development within Ashwell, this development would form a comparatively large extension to the village however, given the location of the Site and its landscape and townscape context, it is considered to remain appropriate in terms of its quality, scale and appearance. The resultant effect on townscape character is assessed as **Minor Adverse** at Year 1, reducing to **Minor Adverse/Negligible** in the longer term as mitigation establishes.

Landscape Features

- 7.5 The existing landscape features of the Site are limited to the centrally located Millennium Wood and the hedgerows and trees located along the boundaries, the majority of which would be retained and enhanced, with minimal vegetation removed for access. The proposals introduce a significant number of new native trees, hedgerows, wildflower meadows and woodland understorey enhancements to the existing woodland, improving landscape quality, biodiversity, and visual integration of built form. Public access to Millennium Wood and new footpaths would provide recreational benefits. Effects are assessed as **Negligible** at Year 1 due to the juvenile nature of the planting. This is expected to increase to **Minor Beneficial** at planting maturity.

Visual Effects

- 7.6 A total of 9 visual receptor groups were identified comprising individuals, or groups of individuals, who experience views of the application Site. These individual receptors include footpath users (RG1, RG2 & RG3), people using the local road network (RG4 & RG5), visitors to Ashwell Smallgains Playing Fields and Allotments (RG6), residents of properties (RG7 & RG8) and the future residents of the Senuna Park development (RG9). Views from the north are confined to the immediate area due to the topography,

the adjacent settlement area and existing mature trees and hedgerows. Views towards the Site from the south are generally more open across the agricultural landscape but generally include views of other scattered built form in the wider landscape.

- 7.7 The views experienced by people using the local footpath network are considered to be of a higher sensitivity, as it is assumed that they would have some level of appreciation of and focus upon, the surrounding landscape. Views of the Site from the footpaths are all oblique, i.e. not in the direction of travel and experienced in the context of other built form. The development proposals include supplementary planting to the Site's boundaries and a significant number of new trees and hedgerows within the Site itself. Whilst the filtering effects of proposed planting is limited at Year 1 due to the juvenile nature of the proposed planting, it would, over time, become increasingly effective at filtering and softening views of built form as planting establishes, which is demonstrated by the visualisations of Viewpoint 11. As a result, the assessed Year 1 visual effects associated with the PRoWs vary between **Negligible** and **Minor-Moderate Adverse** and in all instances, the establishment of the proposed landscape works would be expected to reduce Year 1 visual effects in the longer term. The longer term visual effects associated with the PRoWs varies between **Negligible** and **Minor Adverse**.

- 7.8 The views experienced by people using the local road network i.e. Station Road and Kingsland Way, are considered to be less sensitive as although there is an acknowledged appreciation of the rural landscape and the village townscape, road users are generally using the routes for access, rather than for their enjoyment of the views experienced.
- 7.9 Users of Station Road experience a sequence of views towards the Site on the approach to Ashwell from the south. Generally, the level of adverse visual effect increases in proximity to the Site as there are fewer intervening features and the clarity of the views experienced naturally increases as the distance reduces. Once past the Site, views become restricted by intervening vegetation and built form at Ashwell. Development proposals include supplementing the existing hedgerow and tree planting located along the southern boundary with a number of new trees and areas of woodland planting. Views from the south are broken up by areas of open green space at the southern boundary of the Site and the built form has been arranged to resemble a farmstead cluster on the approach to Ashwell, in keeping with the local settlement pattern. The assessed Year 1 visual effects associated with Station Road vary between **Negligible** and **Moderate Adverse** due to the juvenile nature of the proposed planting. The establishment of

7.0

Summary and Conclusion

	the proposed landscape works would be expected to reduce Year 1 visual effects in the longer term. The longer term visual effects associated with the approach via Station Road varies between Negligible and Minor Adverse .		effects. Over time, as planting matures, it would effectively assimilate the development into the landscape, reducing the effect to Negligible .	7.13	In all cases views of the development proposals are partially screened by Millennium Wood, and visual effects are expected to reduce over time as the proposed planting reaches maturity.
7.10	Oblique views of the Site are experienced from Kingsland Way at a distance of circa 0.8-1.3km, with the Site forming a small proportion of the much wider view, which incorporates scattered built form and the settlement edge of Ashwell, including the development at the Senuna Park development. The development proposals would appear as a continuation of Senuna Park and, at a distance of circa 0.8-1.3km, the assessed Year 1 visual effects associated with views from Kingsland Way vary between Negligible and Minor Adverse and in the longer term adverse effects are expected to reduce to Negligible .	7.12	Views of residents and future residents cannot be experienced first hand and therefore cannot be fully known however, the potential visual effects associated with the development proposals have been considered within the LVA. Future residents of the adjacent Senuna Park development are likely to experience a greater visual effect due to their proximity to the proposed development. Views from properties near the eastern boundary of Senuna Park are expected to be limited, primarily encompassing proposed dwellings to the west of the Site, viewed across circa 80-90m of public open space. Residents of properties on Station Road may experience oblique views of Site Field 2 from circa 300m, with views partially filtered by their existing front garden vegetation and the Site's southern boundary hedgerow. Residents at the northern edge of Sunnymead Orchard Homes may experience distant views (circa 450m) of the development proposals located in Site Field 2 to the south of Millennium Wood. Views are likely to be filtered by the Site's southern boundary and proposed planting.	7.14	This LVA assesses a range of Year 1 Landscape effects that vary between Negligible and Minor / Moderate Adverse . Upon establishment of the proposed planting, the range of landscape effects are anticipated to reduce to Negligible/Minor Adverse to Minor Beneficial .
7.11	Visitors to Ashwell Smallgains Playing Fields and Allotments via Small Gains Lane experience a glimpsed view of Site Field 1 through a gap in the boundary hedgerow. Proposed eastern boundary enhancements, including supplementary tree and woodland planting, a linear green space with a footpath, wildflower meadows, and housing at the Site's eastern edge, would be visible. At Year 1, the juvenile planting would provide limited filtering, resulting in Minor Adverse			7.15	Visual effects at Year 1 vary between Negligible and Moderate Adverse . In most instances these Year 1 effects are expected to be reduced by the establishment of the proposed landscape works. The range of visual effects are anticipated to reduce to Negligible to Minor Adverse in the longer term.
				7.16	As a result this LVA does not assess any unacceptably high levels of long term (residual) adverse landscape or visual effect.

Conclusion



Appendices

Introduction

The assessment of landscape and visual effects will be undertaken with reference to and using aspects of the guidance found within 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' 3rd Edition, published by the Landscape Institute (LI) and the Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment (IEMA) 2013 (termed GLVIA3 hereafter).

As stated within GLVIA3 paragraph 1.20, the guidelines are not prescriptive and the approach and methodology has been tailored to the specific requirements of the proposals.

GLVIA3 recommends the following five key stages in the assessment of landscape and visual effects:-

- Scope;
- Establishing the landscape and visual baseline;
- Describing the landscape and visual effects;
- Assessing the landscape and visual effects;
- Ascertaining the overall levels of landscape and visual effects

These five stages are applied separately to the landscape assessment and the subsequent visual assessment. GLVIA3 recognises that landscape and visual assessments are separate, although linked procedures.

Landscape effects are the predicted effects on the landscape as a resource in its own right. Landscape effects can be generated by a development's effect upon the physical landscape and or upon its character, fabric

and quality. These could include direct physical impacts upon landscape elements, but also includes aesthetic, perceptual and experiential aspects of a landscape which may contribute to an existing landscape character.

Visual effects are the predicted changes to a view and the related impact on the general visual amenity experienced by people (visual receptors). The various visual receptor groups comprise individuals or groups of people that experience a view of the application Site from a publicly accessible location. They will typically include the users of Public Rights of Way, users of recreational facilities, pedestrians and users of a variety of forms of transport such as the drivers and passengers of vehicles, cyclists or rail passengers.

The recent Technical Note by the Landscape Institute (LITGN-2024-01-GLVIA3 - Notes and Clarifications on Aspects of GLVIA3) states in 6(1): *'An LVIA should consider views from local communities focusing on the way that a community currently experiences views from public locations such as streets and open spaces and how those will change. Views from houses and individual properties are a matter of private amenity, noting that it is an established planning principle that there is no right to a view. However, it may be helpful for an LVIA to comment on changes to views that will be experienced from groups of properties, or in some cases individual properties, if these changes are likely to be significant.'*

This LVA therefore identifies all the visual receptors who experience a publicly accessible view of the Site and the private views of the Site, which are experienced by the residents of properties. However, in accordance

with the abovementioned LI Technical Guidance Note, it fully assesses the public views only, whereas the likely effects upon private views are considered by way of an appropriately detailed narrative.

Study Area

The overall study area for the landscape and visual assessment was established by undertaking a desk-based survey and refined by subsequent site-based survey work.

The site-based work was undertaken by a chartered member of the Landscape Institute with experience of landscape and visual assessment.

Site-based work involved a Site walk-over, travelling throughout the study area and walking the various footpaths from which views of the Site may be experienced.

The study area therefore includes the Site and the wider landscape which could be influenced by the development proposals and the extent of the area from which the development is potentially visible.

This desk and subsequent site-based work also established the representative viewpoints for the visual assessment.

Landscape Effects

GLVIA3 paragraph 5.1 states *'An assessment of landscape effects deals with the effects of change and development on landscape as a resource.'*

A.1

Appendix 1 - Methodology

The Landscape Baseline - Desk Based Assessment

The assessment will include a review of the relevant planning policy and other guidance and relevant information including:

- National Planning Policy;
- Local Planning Policy;
- Supplementary Planning Documents;
- National, district and local landscape character assessments;
- Ordnance Survey mapping;
- Historic Mapping;
- Defra (MAGIC) website;
- Online aerial mapping; and
- Published walking or cycling routes.

The Landscape Baseline – Site Based Assessment

Site assessment work initially entailed travelling around the confirmed study area by car and by foot to understand the landscape features within the Site and the surrounding area and to confirm the accuracy of the relevant published character assessments.

The landscape baseline will incorporate descriptions of the application Site and the surrounding landscape, before referencing all published landscape character assessments and ascertaining the presence of any designated heritage assets such as Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings and Scheduled Ancient Monuments.

GLVIA3 paragraph 5.33 states that the landscape baseline should map describe and illustrate the character of the landscape and its individual elements and aesthetic and perceptual aspects, emphasising any key characteristics that contribute to the distinctive character of the landscape. It also states that the condition of the landscape should be indicated with reference to elements therein, such as buildings, hedgerows or woodland.

Landscape Value

In accordance with paragraph 5.44 of GLVIA3, the Landscape Baseline will also consider the value of the landscape resource within the study area.

GLVIA3 paragraph 5.45 states *'the value of the landscape receptors will to some degree reflect landscape designations and the level of importance which they signify, although there should not be over reliance on designations as the sole indicator of value.'*

The fact a landscape is not subject to a designation, does not mean that it does not have any value. Where there is no evidence to indicate landscape value, the assessment will utilise an approach akin to the Box 5.1 assessment as set out within GLVIA3 paragraph 5.28 and Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note TGN-02-21, Assessing landscape value outside national designations, which draw on the factors that are generally agreed to influence value, which can be Exceptional, High, Medium, Low or Very Low. In addition to acknowledging the presence of any landscape designations, these factors comprise the following:

- Landscape Condition (Table 1 below to be utilised to

assist judgements on condition): A measure of the physical state of the landscape. It may include the extent to which typical character is represented in individual areas, the intactness of the landscape and the condition of individual elements.

- Distinctiveness: Consideration as to whether the landscape has a strong sense of identity through reference to relevant Landscape Character Assessments.
- Natural Heritage: Landscape with clear evidence of ecological, geological, geomorphological or physiographic interest which contribute positively to the landscape.
- Cultural Heritage: Landscape with clear evidence of archaeological, historical or cultural interest which contribute positively to the landscape.
- Recreational Value: Landscape offering recreational opportunities where experience of landscape is important.
- Perceptual (scenic): Landscape that appeals to the senses, primarily the visual sense.
- Perceptual (wildness and tranquillity): Landscape with a strong perceptual value notably wildness, tranquillity and/or dark skies.
- Associations: Landscape which is connected with notable people, events or the arts.
- Functional: Landscape which performs a clearly identifiable and valuable function, particularly in the healthy functioning of the landscape.

A.1

Appendix 1 - Methodology

Condition	Criteria
Exceptional	• Strong landscape structure, characteristics, patterns, balanced combination of landform and landcover; • Appropriate management for land use and landcover; • Distinct features worthy of conservation; • Strong sense of place; and • No detracting features.
High	• Robust landscape structure, characteristics, patterns and balanced combination of landform and landcover; • Appropriate management for land use and landcover with potential scope to improve; • Distinct features worthy of conservation; • Sense of place; and • Occasional detracting features;
Good	• Recognisable landscape structure, characteristic patterns and combinations of landform and landcover are still evident; • Scope to improve management for land use and land cover; • Some features worthy of conservation; and • Some detracting features.
Ordinary	• Distinguishable landscape structure, characteristic patterns of landform and landcover; • Scope to improve management of vegetation; • Some features worthy of conservation; and • Some detracting features.
Low	• Weak landscape structures, characteristic patterns of landform and landcover are often masked by land use; • Mixed land use evident; • Lack of management and intervention has resulted in degradation; and • Frequent detracting features.
Very Low	• Degraded landscape structure, characteristic patterns and combinations of landform and landcover are masked by land use; • Mixed land use dominates; • Lack of management/intervention has resulted in degradation; and • Extensive detracting features.
Damaged	• Damaged landscape structure; • Single land use dominates; • Disturbed or derelict land requires treatment; and • Detracting features dominate.

Table 1 – Landscape Condition

A.1

Appendix 1 - Methodology

Assessment of Landscape Effects

Having established the landscape baseline, the relevant landscape components or 'receptors' are identified and will normally comprise physical landscape features, such as trees, hedgerows, dry-stone walls etc. and identified landscape character areas within the study area.

Having ascertained the landscape receptors, the assessment will then identify interactions between those receptors and the development proposals at Year 1.

In order to determine the potential landscape effects which may result from the development, the sensitivity and the magnitude of effect of each of the landscape receptors must be established. The sensitivity and magnitude of effect can then be combined to ascertain the level of effect for the landscape receptors – see Table 4.

Landscape Sensitivity

Sensitivity determines the degree to which individual landscape receptors may be affected by a development proposal. In order to establish the sensitivity of the relevant landscape receptors, their susceptibility to specific change must be considered alongside a judgement on their respective value (the value, susceptibility and associated sensitivity of the landscape resource is established within the Landscape Baseline).

Susceptibility to change means the ability of the landscape receptor to accommodate the type of the proposed development (whether it be housing, warehouses, a wind farm etc.), without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline and/or the achievement of landscape planning policies and strategies. With reference to Table 2, a judgement on the susceptibility is graded on a scale of High, Medium or Low.

Combining the value and susceptibility judgements attributed to each landscape receptor then informs a judgement regarding their sensitivity, which is graded on a scale of High, Medium or Low.

Level of Susceptibility	Definition
Higher Susceptibility	- The landscape is of an open nature/ is large scale/has natural topographical variations and/or there is a negligible/low level of containment so is susceptible to the introduction of uncharacteristic elements/features; - The landscape is of a small, intimate scale that is susceptible to the introduction of uncharacteristic elements/features; - There are historic assets/features present, such as remnant parkland and semi-natural woodland; - There is an overriding rural character; - Many of the valued existing landscape characteristics and features would be difficult to replace or mitigate, although it may be possible to enhance/mitigate to some extent; - There are higher levels of wildness and tranquillity.
Lower Susceptibility	- There are limited variations in the topography; - There is a limited presence of natural landform; - The landscape is of a more enclosed nature that results from a strong woodland structure; - Predominantly agricultural land which is intensively farmed, leaving limited semi-natural habitat; - There is a perceived prominence and presence of human activity.

Table 2 – Indicators of Landscape Susceptibility Change

A.1

Appendix 1 - Methodology

Magnitude of Effect

GLVIA3 recommends that the magnitude of effect upon landscape receptors is assessed using three considerations as follows:

- The size or scale of the change to the landscape resulting from the implementation of the development proposals - Determining the size or scale of landscape effect takes account of landscape elements which are lost and those which are improved, the degree to which aesthetic or perceptual aspects of the landscape are altered and whether the effects change the key characteristics of the landscape;
- The geographical extent of the area influenced by the development proposals - this could comprise the Site only, its immediate setting or possibly the wider landscape at the scale of the landscape type or character area within which the development is located, or also at a larger scale where more than one landscape type or character area within the wider study area is influenced;
- The duration of the effect is judged on a scale of short term (0-6 years), medium term (7-15 years) and long term (15 years and beyond). Reversibility is a judgement about the prospects and the practicality of a particular effect being reversed and is judged on a scale of reversible, partially reversible and permanent. For example, housing can be considered permanent, whereas a wind turbine can be considered as reversible as they have a limited life and could be removed and the land reinstated.

The overall magnitude of effect is judged as High, Medium, Low or Negligible and this judgement can be adverse or beneficial. Table 3 describes the magnitude of effect criteria for the landscape assessment.

Magnitude of Effect	Typical Criteria
Higher (adverse or beneficial)	Major alteration to key features or characteristics in the existing landscape and or the introduction of elements considered totally uncharacteristic/characteristic. Typically, this would be where there would be a great scale of change to the character of the landscape for the long or medium-term.
Medium (adverse or beneficial)	Partial alteration to key features or characteristics of the existing landscape and or the introduction of prominent elements. Typically, this would be where there would be a notable scale of change to the character of the landscape for the medium and long- term; or where there would be a great scale of change on the landscape for the short-term.
Low (adverse or beneficial)	Minor alteration to key features and characteristics of the existing landscape and or the introduction of features which may already be present in the landscape. Typically, this would be where there is a notable or low scale of change to the character of the landscape for the short-term; or where there would be a low scale of change on the landscape in the medium or long-term.
Negligible (adverse or beneficial)	A very minor alteration to key features or characteristics of the existing landscape. Typically, this would be where in the short, medium or long term the scale of change on landscape character would be barely perceptible.

Table 3 – Criteria for the Assessment of the Magnitude of Effect of Landscape Character

A.1

Appendix 1 - Methodology

Landscape Effects

In order to draw conclusions about the nature of landscape effects, the separate judgements about the sensitivity of the landscape receptors and the magnitude of the landscape effects need to be combined to allow a final judgement to be made (see Table 4 below). The resulting effect may be Major, Moderate, Minor or Negligible and can be either beneficial or adverse. It must be noted that the table is a guide to aid the assessor in the decision-making process, therefore in some instances, the ascertained level of effect may not be consistent with the sensitivity/magnitude combinations given in Table 4.

Landscape Assessment Time frames

The landscape effects are considered at one point in time as follows:

Sensitivity	Magnitude				
		High	Medium	Low	Negligible
	Low	Moderate	Minor/ Moderate	Minor	Negligible
	Medium	Major/ Moderate	Moderate	Minor/ Moderate	Negligible
	High	Major	Major/ Moderate	Moderate	Negligible

Table 4 – Landscape Effects - Method for Assisting Decision Making When Determining Landscape Effects

Year 1 – Operational with additional commentary associated with longer term effects where appropriate.

Visual Effects

GLVIA3 paragraph 6.1 states '*An assessment of visual effects deals with the effects of change and development on the views available to people and their visual amenity.*'

The Visual Baseline - Desk and Site Based Assessment

The desktop studies undertaken, combined with site-based analysis will inform the visual baseline for the assessment. The site-based work will be undertaken by a chartered member of the Landscape Institute with experience of landscape and visual assessment.

Site-based work will initially involve travelling throughout the area surrounding the Site in order to ascertain levels of visibility on the ground (taking account of screening trees, hedgerows and built form), in order to inform and confirm the extent of the study area, the key relevant visual receptors (individuals or groups of people who experience a view of the application Site) and the associated representative viewpoints. This information will be set out within the assessment with descriptions of the views experienced.

Viewpoint photography will be 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 at it provides imagery akin to that of the human eye).

It is important to note that the visual receptors and in particular, the viewpoints are representative of the visual prominence of the application Site and will not necessarily form an exhaustive list of all receptors and associated viewpoints.

Assessment of Visual Effects

In order to determine the potential visual effects which may result from the development, the sensitivity and the magnitude of effect associated with each of the visual receptors must be established. The sensitivity and magnitude can then be combined to ascertain the nature of the anticipated visual effect for each individual visual receptor.

Receptor Sensitivity

Sensitivity determines the degree to which visual receptors will be affected by a development proposal. In order to establish the sensitivity of the visual receptors, their susceptibility to specific change in the views experienced, must be considered alongside a judgement on the respective value of those views. The resulting sensitivity is graded on a scale of High, Medium and Low.

Susceptibility – The susceptibility of different visual receptors to potential changes in views and visual amenity is subject to the occupation or activity of people experiencing a view and the extent to which their attention is focussed on the views (see Table 5).

A.1

Appendix 1 - Methodology

GLVIA3 paragraphs 6.32 to 6.35 provides general guidance upon the levels of susceptibility associated with different, yet common types of visual receptor. A level of Susceptibility to Change of High, Medium or Low will be attributed to each of the visual receptors.

Judgements associated with assigning a level of susceptibility to the visual receptors will not necessarily always accord with Table 5. As indicated with Road Users, the susceptibility may vary up or down from the values set out within Table 5 and instances where such variations occur, the basis for the judgement will be set out within the assessment.

Value of the View – The value of the views experienced is determined as High, Medium or Low, with reference to GLVIA3 paragraph 6.37, which states that the following should be taken account of:

- *recognition of the value attached to particular views, for example in relation to heritage assets, or through planning designations; and*
- *Indicators of the value attached to views by visitors, for example through reference to a view in a guidebook or on a tourist map, provision of facilities for their enjoyment (such as parking places, sign boards and interpretative material) and references to them in literature and art that indicates a highly valued view, which often can be experienced by many people.*

Receptor Sensitivity – The sensitivity of the visual receptors is ascertained by combining the judgements

associated with their susceptibility and the value of the views they experience, to inform a judgement regarding their sensitivity, which is graded on a scale of High, Medium or Low.

Magnitude of Effect

Each of the visual effects identified will be evaluated in terms of its size or scale, its geographical extent of the area influenced and its duration and reversibility. The resulting magnitude of effect is graded on a scale of High, Medium, Low or Negligible.

Visual Receptor	Susceptibility to Change
Users of Public Rights of Way and other recreational routes	High
Public Open Space and visitor attractions where views contribute to the experience	High
Road Users (drivers and passengers of vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians) – Susceptibility could be lower from main roads or higher from rural lanes/tourist routes	Varies
Rail Passengers	Medium/ Low
Golfers	Medium/ Low
Users of sports pitches	Low
Employees/workers in their workplace	Low

Table 5 – Susceptibility to Change

When considering the size or scale of the change in the view the following criteria are considered:

- loss or addition of features within the view including the proportion of the view occupied by the proposed development e.g. introducing housing into a view where housing is already present will represent a lower level of change than the introduction of housing into a view where there is no housing present;
- the degree of contrast or integration of any new features or changes in the landscape with the existing or remaining landscape elements and characteristics in terms of scale, mass, form, height and colour; and
- The nature of the view of the development proposal in terms of the length of time over which it will be experienced and whether the views will be full, partial or glimpses.

The geographical extent of a visual effect will vary with different viewpoints and is likely to be reflected by the following:

- The angle of view in relation to the main activity of the receptor – changes to direct views will generally be considered to be of greater importance than changes to oblique views;
- The distance of the viewpoint from the proposed development; and
- The extent of the area over which the changes would be visible.

A.1

Appendix 1 - Methodology

The duration of visual effects is judged on a scale of short term (0-6 years) to long term (15 years and beyond), taking account of the establishment of proposed planting. Reversibility is a judgement about the prospects and the practicality of a particular effect being reversed and is judged on a scale of reversible, partially reversible and permanent. For example, housing can be considered permanent, whereas a wind turbine can be considered as reversible, as they have a limited life and could be removed and the land reinstated.

The overall magnitude of effect is judged as High, Medium, Low or Negligible and this judgement can be adverse or beneficial. Table 6 below describes the magnitude of effect criteria for the visual assessment.

Visual Effects

In order to draw conclusions about the anticipated levels of visual effect, separate judgements about the sensitivity of the visual receptors and the magnitude of the visual effects need to be combined to allow a final judgement to be made (see Table 7). The resulting level of effect may be Major, Moderate, Minor or Negligible and can be either beneficial or adverse. It must be noted that the table is a guide to aid the assessor in the decision-making process, therefore in some instances, the ascertained level of visual effect may not be consistent with the sensitivity/magnitude combinations given in Table 7.

GLVIA3 paragraph 6.44 states '*In making a judgement about the significance of the visual effects, the following points should be noted:*

- *Effects on people who are particularly sensitive to changes in views and visual amenity are more likely to be significant;*
- *Effects on people at recognised and important viewpoints or from recognised scenic routes are more likely to be significant;*
- *Large-scale changes which introduce new, non-characteristic or discordant or intrusive elements into the view are more likely to be significant than small changes or changes involving features already present within the view.'*

Magnitude of Effect	Typical Criteria
High (adverse or beneficial)	Major alteration to the existing view and/or the introduction of elements considered totally uncharacteristic/characteristic. Typically, the development will be in close proximity to the receptor, with a large proportion of the view affected with little or no filtering. The scale of change would be great and would exist from the medium-term and beyond.
Medium (adverse or beneficial)	Partial alteration to the existing view and or the introduction of prominent elements in the view. Typically, the development would affect a moderate proportion of the view up to and beyond the medium term or the development would be seen in close proximity, with a large proportion of the view affected in the short term.
Low (adverse or beneficial)	Minor changes to the existing view and or the introduction of features that are already present within the view. Typically, this would result from a low scale of change to the existing view; where a moderate to low proportion of the view would be affected in the short term; where the development would be visible in distant views beyond the medium term; where only a small proportion of the view is affected beyond the medium term; or, where high degrees of screening/filtering reduce the effect beyond the medium term.
Negligible (adverse or beneficial)	A very minor alteration to the existing view. Typically, this would result where a development is barely perceptible at any point in time; where the change would be barely perceptible within a longer distance view; where a small proportion of the view is affected; or, where the scale of change from the existing view would be barely perceptible.

Table 6 – Criteria for the Assessment of the Magnitude of Effect on Views

A.1

Appendix 1 - Methodology

Sensitivity	Magnitude				
		High	Medium	Low	Negligible
	Low	Moderate	Minor/ Moderate	Minor	Negligible
	Medium	Major/ Moderate	Moderate	Minor/ Moderate	Negligible
	High	Major	Major/ Moderate	Moderate	Negligible

Table 7 – Visual Effects - Method for Assisting Decision Making when Determining Visual Effects

Visual Assessment Timeframes

The visual effects are considered at one point in time as follows:

Year 1 – Operational (additional narrative regarding longer term visual effects will be provided within the visual tables where appropriate).

location	assessment	evaluation	guidelines	NORTH BALDOCK CHALK UPLANDS	Area 224
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LOCATION



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LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

A large area to the northeast of Baldock, lying mainly to the east of the A1(M) but with a small parcel extending west to the River Ivel. (To the north east of Radwell village this lies outside of the District). The Character Area stretches southeast as far as the chalk scarp face and northwards to the villages of Caldecote and Ashwell.



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LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Rolling chalk landform, eroded by a complex network of shallow dry valleys. Small rounded chalk knolls common. Large scale arable fields often with remnant field boundaries, mainly well trimmed hawthorn hedges. The core has a pattern of regular rectilinear fields often with curving boundaries. Boundaries often based on older more organic pattern of lanes and primary boundaries. To the east of the Ashwell to Slip End Road and west of Newnham field patterns become more regular with stronger patterns of more rectilinear fields.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Rolling chalk landform
- Small rounded chalk knolls
- Large rectilinear fields in arable
- Large - medium regular geometric plantations
- Nucleated settlements

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- A1(M), A505, railway
- Telecommunications masts (Lodge Farm)
- Lower Icknield Way
- Abuts suburban edge of Baldock
- Pylons crossing the western edge
- Valley and moat at Newnham
- Ivel valley

location	assessment	evaluation	guidelines	NORTH BALDOCK CHALK UPLANDS	Area 224
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ASSESSMENT

PHYSICAL INFLUENCES

Geology & soils

Chalk overlain by free draining calcareous to neutral loamy brown soils. Thin drift deposits of Boulder Clay and glacial gravel on upper slopes.

Topography

Undulating – rolling plateau landform with small but distinctive chalk knolls. Land generally is falling in a north westerly direction.

Degree of slope

Varies 1:10 to 1:30.

Altitude range

50m to 100m.

Hydrology

Area is drained by a limited network of local streams and ditches. The only watercourse is the seasonal Cat Ditch. Springs and ponds are a distinctive local feature and moats at Bygrave.

Land cover and land use

Arable of very long standing having formerly been corn field strips with occasional plantations and tree belts.

Vegetation and wildlife

Character Area contains species-rich neutral grassland, such as Parkwood Meadow and ponds, which are notably uncommon in North Hertfordshire (0.29% of area). Old pastures and meadows with their diverse flora have largely disappeared since the 1940's and are now regarded as some of the most threatened habitats in the UK.

The most important semi-natural vegetation comprises vestiges of ancient grassland on road verges and some field banks, known to be of great age, such as Bygrave Road, Wallington Road and Newnham Hill. Remnants of more neutral grass pastures occur at Bygrave. Where underlying calcareous soil has been exposed, some important ecological communities have developed. Ashwell Quarry is an old chalk pit and a key calcareous grassland site within the county. Species present include horseshoe vetch, fragrant orchid and one of the county's largest colonies of pyramidal orchid.

Important area for declining farmland birds.

Open fields are important for corn bunting, brown hare and occasionally quail whilst in winter, passing golden plover and lapwings may be seen. Woodlands are secondary, eg Park Wood at Bygrave and plantations at Newnham. Spring-fed ponds at Bygrave are locally important for aquatic life.

HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES

In the northwest lies the medieval settlement of Newnham. The church of St Vincent, Newnham, dates to the 12th century and a moated site at Newnham Manor lies to the west of the church. The Medieval village of Caldecote lies to the north of Newnham. The church of St Mary Magdalene, Caldecote, dates to the 15th century.

The Character Area seems to have been well occupied in later prehistory with numerous enclosures, prehistoric ring ditches and linear ditches. Highley Hill Bowl Barrow lies to the northeast and two bowl barrows lie at Bygrave. Prehistoric ring ditches, enclosures, trackways Romano-British cemeteries and earthworks lie to the south. Arbury Banks Iron Age Hillfort lies to the south of Ashwell. Its internal features include hut circles, visible on aerial photographs.

Bygrave is one of the few parishes in Hertfordshire which was never enclosed therefore the landscape is essentially Saxon or earlier in origin. The medieval settlement of Bygrave dates from the 10th century. The church of St Margaret's, Bygrave, dates from the 12th century. Earthworks of a moated site manorial enclosure lie to the south of the village. Radwell Roman Villa lies towards the southwest of the area. Radwell itself is a medieval settlement. The Church of All Saints, Radwell, dates from the 13th century, added to and changed through the Middle Ages.

Baldock is a major historic centre, at least of medieval date. Archaeological remains of Late Iron Age and Roman date attest to the favoured location of Baldock for settlement. The parish church of St Mary, Baldock, dates from the 13th century.

location	assessment	evaluation	guidelines	NORTH BALDOCK CHALK UPLANDS	Area 224
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ASSESSMENT

The medieval settlement of Ashwell lies to the north of the area. The parish church of St Mary, Ashwell, dates to the 14th century. Finds date from the Anglo-Saxon period to the 14th century. To the south of Ashwell lie Prehistoric, Roman and Medieval earthworks.

Field Pattern

The historic agricultural landscape is composed of a mixture of 18th century and later enclosure, prairie fields with post-1950s boundary loss, pre-18th century unenclosed common arable, post-1950s enclosure, prairie fields with relict elements, ancient woodland, orchard and 19th-20th century plantation. Today the core area has a pattern of regular rectilinear fields often with curving boundaries. To the east of Ashwell to Slip End Road and west of Newnham the field patterns become more regular with stronger patterns of more rectilinear field boundaries & lines.

Transport Pattern

The Character Area is crossed by major transport corridors – A1(M) to the west and the A505 from southwest to northwest, parallel to railway.

Settlement and Built Form

The historic settlement pattern is characterised by nucleated settlements with a low level of dispersal. There are many fine traditional buildings particularly in and around the nucleated settlement of Ashwell. This village has more architecturally worthwhile houses than many others in the county. Nearly all are timber framed or gabled brick type and some are of medieval origin. The Domesday Survey records fourteen burgesses within the settlement. The British Queen Inn, a timber framed house with thatched roof, dates to the 15th century and was altered in the 17th century.

Traditional buildings can also be found in the villages of Radwell, Baldock, Caldecote and Newnham for example, Radwell Grange, 16th-17th century, with some brick mullioned windows and diagonally set chimneys.

location	assessment	evaluation	guidelines	NORTH BALDOCK CHALK UPLANDS	Area 224
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EVALUATION**VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION**

Large scale open landscapes with dispersed farmsteads. Long distance views from local vantage points. Overlooked from the scarp to the south.

Rarity & distinctiveness

This landscape type is relatively unusual in the district.

VISUAL IMPACT

Western side accommodates major road infrastructure and electricity pylons. To the south the railway runs across the open landscape. Telecommunications masts at Lodge Farm

ACCESSIBILITY

Crossed by two major transport corridors A1(M) to the west and the A505 Road and Rail corridor. The core area is accessed by a network of local roads radiating out from Ashwell. Extensive rights of way coverage.

COMMUNITY VIEWS

Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) have undertaken Tier B (Community of Place) consultations. Views of the local community have been sought and contributor's responses to each of the Character Areas will be analysed and a summary of the responses provided by HCC.

LANDSCAPE RELATED DESIGNATIONS

LC2 Landscape Conservation Area
SAM 105 Ring ditches and enclosure at Slip End: Ashwell
SAM 106 Triple ditches at Galley Hill
SAM 108 Ring ditch and enclosure: Newnham
SAM 20616 Highley Hill Bowl Barrow: Ashwell
SAM 20643 Two bowl barrows at Bygrave 65m east parkwood: Bygrave
SAM 20759 Arbury Banks Iron Age Hillfort: Ashwell
SAM 27908 Radwell Roman villa: Radwell
SAM 27913 Romano-British small town and Late Age settlement at Baldock: Baldock

A.2

Appendix 2 - Extract from The North Herts Landscape Study (2011) – LCA 224, 226 & 227

location	assessment	evaluation	guidelines	NORTH BALDOCK CHALK UPLANDS	Area 224
EVALUATION					

CONDITION

Land cover change:	Widespread
Age structure of tree cover:	Mixed
Extent of semi-natural habitat survival:	Scattered
Management of semi-natural habitat:	Poor
Survival of cultural pattern:	Interrupted
Impact of built development:	Low
Impact of land-use change:	Moderate

Matrix Score: **Moderate**

ROBUSTNESS

Impact of landform:	Prominent
Impact of land cover:	Prominent
Impact of historic pattern:	Prominent
Visibility from outside:	Widely visible
Sense of enclosure:	Partial
Visual unity:	Coherent
Distinctiveness/rarity:	Unusual

Matrix Score: **Strong**

CONDITION	GOOD	Strengthen and reinforce	Conserve and strengthen	Safeguard and manage
	MODERATE	Improve and reinforce	Improve and conserve	Conserve and restore
	POOR	Reconstruct	Improve and restore	Restore condition to maintain character
		WEAK	MODERATE	STRONG
ROBUSTNESS				

location	assessment	evaluation	guidelines	NORTH BALDOCK CHALK UPLANDS	Area 224
EVALUATION					

INHERENT LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY

Landscape Character Sensitivities

- The large scale open arable fields in combination with the rolling chalk landform are the most characteristic feature of the North Baldock Chalk Uplands and would be vulnerable to change.
- Hedgerows and woodland are limited within the North Baldock Chalk Uplands. The introduction of extensive planting or large numbers of new hedgerows would be uncharacteristic.
- Traditional materials of black weatherboarding, painted render or parquetry and thatch are distinctive features in buildings within villages within the Character Area.
- The southern edge of Ashwell is well contained and would be sensitive to further development.
- Settlement within the Character Area is generally small scale, with settlements isolated and nucleated.
- Baldock Services is one of the largest developments within the Character Area. Landform and planting have been used to integrate it into the landscape when viewed from most directions.
- Minor roads through the Character Area are generally open, with occasional rows or avenues of trees.
- Transport corridors such as the A1(M), A505 and the Baldock to Royston railway line have been imposed on the landscape, with limited vegetation screening in many locations.
- Electricity pylons stride through the western edge of the character area on a north – south axis and are an existing detractor to the character of the area.
- Telecommunications masts form prominent if incongruous elements in isolated locations within the Character Area, such as lodge Farm.

Overall North Baldock Chalk Uplands is considered to be of **moderate sensitivity**. The relatively intact landscape has been

influenced by built development around the edges of the Character Area but retains a largely rural character.

Visual Sensitivities

- Extensive views across the large scale open rolling landform
- Long distance views from localised high points
- Open views from most roads and lanes throughout the North Baldock Chalk Uplands
- Overlooked by scarp slope to the south, creating a strong visual relationship with the Baldock Gap and Wallington Scarp Slope Character Areas
- Open skylines would be sensitive to the introduction of prominent structures and incongruous elements
- St Mary's church in Ashwell forms a landmark feature in many views within the Character Area
- The built eastern edge of Baldock is prominent and intrusive and would benefit from additional mitigation. Piecemeal development on the edge of Baldock has had an adverse urbanising influence on the Character Area.

In visual terms, North Baldock Chalk Uplands is considered to be of **moderate to high sensitivity**. Open views and skylines throughout the Character Area are particularly sensitive to development.

LANDSCAPE VALUE

Overall North Baldock Chalk Uplands is considered to be of **moderate landscape value**. Aspects of particular value are the intactness of the landscape, the visual interest, the aesthetic qualities of the landscape, the sense of openness, the relative tranquillity and visible expressions of the local geology.

location	assessment	evaluation	guidelines	NORTH BALDOCK CHALK UPLANDS	Area 224
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EVALUATION

CAPACITY TO ACCOMMODATE DEVELOPMENT

Large urban extensions and new settlements (>5ha)

This type of development would not be appropriate within much of this Character Area, due to its rural character in all areas, except potentially to the eastern fringes of Baldock. It would introduce elements that would reduce the openness of the North Baldock Chalk Uplands. Increased housing development would be likely to affect the existing minor roads, which could erode the character of the landscape. The landscape capacity for major urban extensions or new settlements overall is considered to be low.

Smaller urban extensions (<5ha)

This type of development would not be appropriate within much of this Character Area, due to its rural character in all areas, except potentially to the eastern fringes of Baldock. It would introduce elements that would reduce the openness of the North Baldock Chalk Uplands in all other locations, including the fringes of Ashwell. Increased housing development would be likely to affect the existing minor roads, which could erode the character of the landscape. Some expansion of Baldock, could possibly be accommodated but careful consideration of the landscape treatment to the edges of the development would be required in order to provide a more robust boundary than at present. The landscape capacity for small urban extensions is considered to be low to moderate.

Major transport developments/improvements

This type of development would only be appropriate for improvements of the existing A1(M), A505 and the Baldock to Royston railway line within this Character Area. Improvements to these transport links could present the opportunity to improve their fit within the landscape and soften their appearance. Upgrading of existing minor roads could erode the character of the landscape. Additional traffic would also affect the peace and tranquillity of the Character Area. The landscape capacity for major transport developments/improvements is considered to be moderate to low.

Commercial/warehouse estates

This type of large scale development would not be appropriate in this character area. There are not currently any large scale developments of this type within the area. Existing minor roads would be inappropriate for any significant larger volumes of traffic and/or HGVs. Any upgrading of the existing network would cause damage to the landscape character. Extensive development would also disrupt the openness of the North Baldock Chalk Uplands. The landscape capacity for commercial/warehouse estates is considered to be low.

Individual large/bulky buildings

There may be some limited capacity for sympathetically located and designed individual large buildings, particularly if they were of a vernacular form and style and in keeping with the rural character. However, large buildings, if not carefully located, would erode the rural character and openness of the Character Area. The landscape capacity for individual large/bulky buildings is considered to be moderate to low.

Large scale open uses

The openness of the North Baldock Chalk Uplands would make it more difficult to accommodate large scale 'open' uses without significant visual impacts. This would not be in keeping with the rural character of the area and could introduce new elements that would conflict with the current open sweeping views. The landscape capacity for large scale 'open' uses is considered to be low.

Additional evaluation and guidelines North Herts & Stevenage LCA
The Landscape Partnership

location	assessment	evaluation	guidelines	NORTH BALDOCK CHALK UPLANDS	Area 224
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EVALUATION

Mineral extraction/waste disposal

This Character Area is currently relatively rural in appearance with small scale nucleated development. Whilst some small scale mineral extraction could be accommodated with careful design and mitigation measures, larger scale extraction or waste disposal would be likely to be highly visible within the North Baldock Chalk Uplands and from adjacent Character Areas. The minor roads would need considerable upgrading to be able to accept larger HGVs, which could further dilute the landscape character. For any consented schemes, restoration proposals should be mainly at grade and include for some limited planting in character with existing patterns. The landscape capacity for mineral extraction is considered to be low to moderate. Waste disposal would be a problem in all character areas due to the presence of aquifers.

Incremental small scale development

There may be some capacity for carefully located and designed small scale developments within the Character Area, particularly if they were of an agricultural nature and in keeping with the rural character. However, due to the existing openness any proposals would need clear justification to avoid the erosion of the character of the North Baldock Chalk Uplands. The landscape capacity for incremental small scale developments is considered to be low to moderate.

Utilities developments e.g. masts, pylons, wind turbines

There are currently a small number of detractors in the areas. These include existing telecommunications masts, which are visible in isolated locations. Further utilities developments or elements such as masts or wind turbines are likely to have a major impact on the rural character of North Baldock Chalk Uplands. Large scale tall elements such as these would be highly visible within the Character Area, as well as in surrounding Character Areas. The landscape capacity for utilities developments is considered to be low to moderate.

Additional evaluation and guidelines North Herts & Stevenage LCA
The Landscape Partnership

location	assessment	evaluation	guidelines	NORTH BALDOCK CHALK UPLANDS	Area 224
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GUIDELINES

STRATEGY AND GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING CHANGE

Strategy: Conserve and Restore

Landscape management guidelines

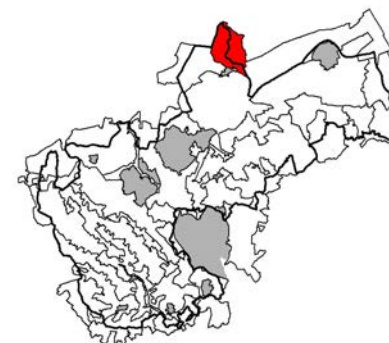
- Promote creation of new woodland and for existing woodlands encourage a diverse woodland flora
- Promote the creation of buffer zones between intensive arable production and areas of semi-natural habitat and the creation of links between habitat areas
- Promote hedgerow restoration to create visual links between existing woodland areas
- Promote the use of traditional field hedges in place of post and wire fencing 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

Built development guidelines

- Maintain the open character of North Baldock Chalk Uplands
- Retain the rural character of Character Area ensuring that any new development is appropriately sited and of a scale, form and style appropriate to the Character Area
- Planting mitigation should be appropriate to local character and not necessarily fully enclose development
- Ensure that new development does not necessitate the removal of existing woodland blocks or hedgerows
- Protect and preserve the pattern of narrow open lanes and occasional rows or avenues of trees
- Ensure that lighting necessitated by new development minimises the impact on the Character Area
- Conserve the traditional character of Ashwell, particularly the approaches to the village from the south and west, ensuring that any development within or located on the edge of the village uses appropriate vernacular materials and features

location	assessment	evaluation	guidelines	STEEPLE MORDEN PLAIN	Area 226
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LOCATION



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LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

The Character Area of Steeple Morden Plain lies to the north of Ashwell village. It is bounded by the River Rhee to the west and extends beyond the District boundary to the west of Steeple Morden village.



LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Steeple Morden is one of several nucleated settlements, extending eastwards, which run in a line (probably a spring line) parallel to the foot of the chalk scarp. Gently rolling chalk landform with a strong pattern of geometrically ordered fields and

lanes. Northfield Road to the north of Ashwell, runs on a slight rise across the landscape. The land falls away gently on each side of the road. Vast acreage of arable land on both sides of the road only interrupted by the recent tree planting along the road. Area is very exposed. Absence of settlements adds to the lack of variety and homogeneity of the landscape.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Medium to large arable fields
- Spring line feeds streams which flow northwards
- Flat, low lying to west
- Gently rolling landform to east
- Open, exposed character
- Geometric pattern of rectilinear fields and roads

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- Bounded to north by Steeple Morden settlement
- (Lower) Icknield Way long distance footpath
- Lack of settlement in the west with pattern of nucleated settlements to the east, beyond the boundary to the Character Area

location	assessment	evaluation	guidelines	STEEPLE MORDEN PLAIN	Area 226
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ASSESSMENT**PHYSICAL INFLUENCES****Geology & soils**

Soils tend to be partially waterlogged calcareous clays overlying Chalk Marl.

Topography

Very shallow crossfall over area to north of Ashwell rising to gently undulating further east.

Degree of slope

Typically 1:100 in the west rising to 1:30 in the east but with pockets of more level ground. Area falling gently from south to north.

Altitude range

35m to 55m.

Hydrology

Kirby Manor farmland drained by two broadly parallel streams running to east and west (river Rhee) of Northfield Road. The Cheney Water, which runs to the east of Steeple Morden, rises at Upper Gatley and flows through a series of weirs and ponds. Cheney Water is a characteristic chalk spring rising from the bottom of the scarp and draining northwards into the River Cam catchment.

Land cover and land use

Dominated by arable, large sized fields to the west, medium sized fields to the east adjacent to Steeple Morden.

Vegetation and wildlife

The Character Area, which falls partly outside the county boundary, contains no wildlife sites and is of notably low ecological interest. It is dominated by large arable field systems, with semi-natural vegetation restricted to watercourses, occasional shelter belts and neutral/calcareous grassland remnants on road verges and old field banks, eg Shire Baulk and Ashwell Street. Verges dominated in spring by cow parsley. Low hawthorn hedging is also common. The white willow lined eutrophic watercourses have some value for wildlife. Golden plover frequent the open fields in winter, whilst water voles inhabit some streams. Very important area for corn bunting. Dotterel occasionally occur in large arable fields on spring migration. Dung heaps (middens) from Bluegate Dairy are a very important food source (insects) for resident and migrant birds.

HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES

In the centre of the Character Area, a cropmark of a prehistoric ring ditch is known from an aerial photograph. Earthworks of a probable medieval moated site, a Roman Villa and Romano-British occupation material lies to the south. A medieval moated site of two concentric moats lie at Mobbs Hole in the north.

Most of the open farmland has been excavated in the past for coprolites and is therefore a secondary landscape.

Field Pattern

The historic agricultural enclosure pattern dates from the mid 19th century. The landscape of rectilinear fields retain some pre-enclosure features such as old moats, county boundary field baulks, etc. Informal Medieval parkland lies to the south with small pockets of 19th – 20th century plantation in the centre.

Transport Pattern

Northfield Road runs on a slight rise along the west and Ashwell Road runs parallel to it through the east of the Character Area.

Settlements and Built Form

The historic settlement pattern is characterised by sparse settlement consisting mainly of farmsteads.

location	assessment	evaluation	guidelines	STEEPLE MORDEN PLAIN	Area 226
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EVALUATION**VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION**

Vast scale open landscape in the west with dispersed farmsteads. Long distance views, long straight roads. More settlement pattern obvious to the east providing smaller scale landscape.

Rarity & distinctiveness

This landscape type is comparatively uncommon within the District but characteristic of south Cambridgeshire.

VISUAL IMPACT

Local pockets of linear development at Steeple Morden and Guilden Morden.

ACCESSIBILITY

Area to the west has limited rights of way access. Steeple Morden and Guilden Morden have extensive road and rights of way coverage.

COMMUNITY VIEWS

Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) have undertaken Tier B (Community of Place) consultations. Views of the local community have been sought and contributor's responses to each of the Character Areas will be analysed and a summary of the responses provided by HCC.

LANDSCAPE RELATED DESIGNATIONS

LC2 Landscape Conservation Area

A.2

Appendix 2 - Extract from The North Herts Landscape Study (2011) – LCA 224, 226 & 227

location	assessment	evaluation	guidelines	STEEPLE MORDEN PLAIN	Area 226
EVALUATION					

CONDITION

Land cover change:	Widespread
Age structure of tree cover:	Mixed
Extent of semi-natural habitat survival:	Relic
Management of semi-natural habitat:	Poor
Survival of cultural pattern:	Declining
Impact of built development:	Moderate
Impact of land-use change:	High

Matrix Score: **Poor**

ROBUSTNESS

Impact of landform:	Apparent
Impact of land cover:	Prominent
Impact of historic pattern:	Apparent
Visibility from outside:	Locally visible
Sense of enclosure:	Open
Visual unity:	Coherent
Distinctiveness/rarity:	Unusual

Matrix Score: **Moderate**

CONDITION	GOOD	Strengthen and reinforce	Conserve and strengthen	Safeguard and manage
	MODERATE	Improve and reinforce	Improve and conserve	Conserve and restore
	POOR	Reconstruct	Improve and restore	Restore condition to maintain character
		WEAK	MODERATE	STRONG
ROBUSTNESS				

location	assessment	evaluation	guidelines	STEEPLE MORDEN	Area 226
EVALUATION					

INHERENT LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY

Landscape Character Sensitivities

- A largely rural character throughout the Character Area, with an absence of both development and other detractors. Steeple Morden would be vulnerable to the addition of urbanizing features
- Gently rolling chalk landform, moving into clay with large geometric open fields, create an exposed landscape with a remote character
- The few roads crossing the area are defined by clipped hedgerows, new hedgerow planting and trees, including poplars. The roads are vulnerable to improvements or upgrading.
- The majority of vegetation in the character area is associated with the River Rhee and its tributary. The removal or inconsistent management of these corridors would be detrimental to the character area.
- The character area is not particularly intact and has lost elements of its typical character due to the extensive removal of fields boundaries and hedgerows. Remaining hedgerows are vulnerable to further loss.
- The built form in the area is characterised by small groupings or individual properties set amongst tree planting and boundary vegetation. The majority of these are farmsteads and agricultural buildings. These properties would be vulnerable to development or removal of associated boundary vegetation.
- There is very limited public access to the west of the character area. There is scope for improvement. However the Icknield Way does run through the south of the area

- The area is sparse, with a simple texture and limited diversity. The limited linear vegetation associated with the river and streams, which flow northwards, breaks up its predominantly horizontal form. The area is vulnerable to removal of further vegetation

Overall Steeple Morden is considered to be of **low to moderate sensitivity**. The relatively flat arable farmland creates an open, remote character with limited urban influence.

Visual Sensitivities

- Views towards the watercourses are an important feature of the Character Area
- Panoramic views are common from the higher ground to the east
- Long distance views along long straight roads

In visual terms, Steeple Morden is considered to be of **moderate sensitivity**. Views between the watercourses are relatively open and would be sensitive to the introduction of urbanizing features.

LANDSCAPE VALUE

Overall Steeple Morden is considered to be of **moderate low landscape value**. Aspects of particular value within Steeple Morden are the lack of incongruous elements, the remote rural character, the uninterrupted tracts of land with few built features, the sense of openness and the relative tranquillity.

location	assessment	evaluation	guidelines	STEEPLE MORDEN	Area 226
EVALUATION					

CAPACITY TO ACCOMMODATE DEVELOPMENT**Large urban extensions and new settlements (>5ha)**

This type of development would not be appropriate within this Character Area, due to its rural and undeveloped character. It would be of an inappropriate scale and would introduce elements that would urbanise the landscape, altering the character and removing the existing key characteristics. Increased housing development would be likely to affect the existing rural roads, which could erode the character of the landscape.

The landscape capacity for major urban extensions or new settlements is considered to be low.

Smaller urban extensions (<5ha)

This type of development would not be appropriate within this Character Area, due to its rural and undeveloped character.

The landscape capacity for small urban extensions is considered to be low.

Major transport developments/improvements

This type of development would not be appropriate within this Character Area, due to the largely rural character of the roads at present. Upgrading of existing rural roads could erode the character of the landscape. Additional traffic would also affect the peace and tranquillity of the Character Area.

The landscape capacity for major transport developments/improvements is considered to be low.

Commercial/warehouse estates

This type of large scale development would not be appropriate in this character area. There are not currently any large scale developments of this type within the area. Existing minor roads would be inappropriate for any significant larger volumes of traffic and/or HGVs. Any upgrading of the existing network would cause damage to the landscape character.

The landscape capacity for commercial/warehouse estates is considered to be low.

Individual large/bulky buildings

There may be some limited capacity for sympathetically located and designed individual large buildings, particularly if they were of an agricultural character and in keeping with the rural character. However, large buildings could be highly visible within the Character Area if not carefully located. Any building or group of building should be located strategically, preferably associated with existing building groups and with boundary planting and shelterbelts where necessary.

The landscape capacity for individual large/bulky buildings is considered to be moderate.

Large scale open uses

The rural character of Steeple Morden would make it difficult to accommodate large scale 'open' uses without significant impact. This would not be in keeping with the rural character of the area and likely to be very open to view and introduce new elements that would conflict with the existing characteristics. The minor roads are unlikely to have capacity to accommodate development or would need considerable upgrading to be able to accept larger volumes of traffic and/or HGVs, which would further dilute the landscape character.

The landscape capacity for large scale 'open' uses is considered to be low.

location	assessment	evaluation	guidelines	STEEPLE MORDEN	Area 226
EVALUATION					

Mineral extraction/waste disposal

Whilst some small scale mineral extraction could be accommodated with careful design and mitigation measures, larger scale extraction would not be in keeping with the character of Steeple Morden. The minor roads would need upgrading to be able to accept larger HGVs, which could further dilute the landscape character. Should any schemes be consented, restoration proposals should be mainly at grade and include for additional planting in character with existing patterns.

The landscape capacity for mineral extraction is considered to be moderate. Waste disposal would be a problem in all character areas due to the presence of aquifers.

Incremental small scale development

There may be some capacity for carefully located and designed small scale developments within the Character Area, particularly if they were of an agricultural character and in keeping with the rural character. Small scale isolated properties or small groups of buildings carefully designed and in keeping with the existing character of the area, could be accommodated. However, due to the existing open and undeveloped character any proposals would need clear justification to avoid the erosion of the rural character of Steeple Morden. Proposed buildings would normally be expected to relate to existing complexes.

The landscape capacity for incremental small scale developments is considered to be moderate.

Utilities developments e.g. masts, pylons, wind turbines

There are very few urbanising elements within this Character Area at present. There are currently few detractors in the areas. New utilities developments or structures would have a significant impact on the rural character of Steeple Morden. Large scale developments and tall elements would be highly visible within the Character Area, as well as potentially visible in surrounding Character Areas.

The landscape capacity for utilities developments is considered to be low.

location	assessment	evaluation	guidelines	STEEPLE MORDEN	Area 226
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GUIDELINES

STRATEGY AND GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING CHANGE

Strategy: Improve and Restore

Landscape management guidelines

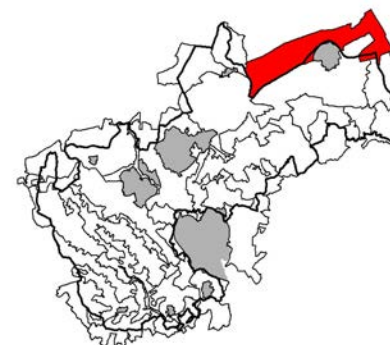
- Promote creation of new woodland and for existing woodlands encourage a diverse woodland flora
- Promote the creation of buffer zones between areas of intensive arable production and areas of semi-natural habitat and the creation of links between habitat areas
- Promote hedgerow restoration to create visual links between existing woodland areas
- Promote the use of traditional field hedges in place of post and wire fencing 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
- Encourage the planting of shelter belts and planting associated with built form
- Encourage the planting of trees and other appropriate vegetation along watercourses

Built development guidelines

- Protect and preserve the pattern of rural roads and associated hedgerows and trees
- Encourage the planting of appropriate broadleaved woodland and vegetation to screen new development that could intrude in rural views
- Retain the rural character of Steeple Morden, ensuring that any new development is appropriately sited and of a scale, form and style appropriate to the Character Area
- Avoid the location of new development in visual intrusive locations, such as on higher ground
- Place new buildings in association with existing groups
- Ensure that new development does not necessitate the removal of existing vegetation or the loss of surviving hedgerows
- Ensure that lighting necessitated by new development minimises the impact on the Character Area

location	assessment	evaluation	guidelines	ODSEY - ROYSTON	Area 227
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LOCATION



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LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

Odsey lies just outside the District adjacent to Ashwell and Morden Station. The area extends in a band north of and parallel to the A505 and continues eastwards past Royston. Only small parts (south of Odsey and adjacent to Royston) fall within the District. Southeast of Royston the Character Area extends into the chalk scarp landscape as a local valley feature which is occupied by the Wardington Bottom Drain. The northern boundary is to be determined by further studies undertaken by South Cambridgeshire District Council.



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LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Gently rolling landform with localised chalk knolls (outliers). Large scale arable fields set out in an ordered pattern of rectilinear fields and lanes with straight boundaries. Extensive plantations around Ashwell and Morden otherwise linear tree belts along field boundaries. Remnant field boundaries.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Gently rolling chalk landform with chalk knolls
- Strong pattern of rectilinear fields
- Dominance of arable
- Linear tree belts
- Sparse settlement pattern
- Long distance views along straight roads

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- A505 dual carriageway runs along southern boundary
- Baldock to Royston railway running parallel to A505
- Abuts suburban boundary to Royston
- (Lower) Icknield Way (Ashwell Street track) runs along northern boundary

location	assessment	evaluation	guidelines	ODSEY - ROYSTON	Area 227
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ASSESSMENT**PHYSICAL INFLUENCES****Geology & soils**

Chalk overlain by free draining loamy brown soils.

Topography

Low lying, gently rolling landform.

Degree of slope

Typically 1:60 but with localised undulations.

Altitude range

50m to 80m.

Hydrology

Network of local ditches draining generally northwards.

Land cover and land use

Predominantly arable.

Vegetation and wildlife

Ecological data is available only for the area within North Hertfordshire.

Remnants of chalk grassland on the A505 (Icknield Way) known to support purple milk vetch a rare chalk grassland species, are being lost to scrub. Road banks of the Royston Bypass include some secondary calcareous grassland and there are remnants of rough calcareous grassland on the edge of Royston with associated common lizard.

HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES

A number of archaeological sites have been revealed by aerial photographs to the west near Royston. A Bell Barrow lies 500m south of Morden Grange plantation in the southwest.

Field Pattern

The historic agricultural landscape pattern is comprised of 18th century and later enclosure and post 1950s enclosure. The 18th and 19th century enclosure incorporates some prehistoric boundary features like the Icknield Way and its associated trackways. A 20th century stud farm lies to the southeast of the area.

Transport Pattern

The A505 dual carriageway runs along the southern boundary and the Lower Icknield Way runs along the northern boundary. The railway line bisects the area running parallel to the A505.

Settlements and Built Form

The historic settlement pattern is characterised by sparse settlement consisting mainly of farmsteads.

location	assessment	evaluation	guidelines	ODSEY - ROYSTON	Area 227
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EVALUATION**VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION**

Vast scale open landscape with linear shelterbelts and dispersed farmsteads. Long distance views, long straight roads.

Rarity & distinctiveness

This landscape type is comparatively uncommon within the District.

VISUAL IMPACT

The A505 corridor and the parallel railway are the most notable features. Character Area abuts suburban fringe of Royston.

ACCESSIBILITY

Well served by regular pattern of roads and tracks. Comparatively low level of footpath coverage.

COMMUNITY VIEWS

Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) have undertaken Tier B (Community of Place) consultations. Views of the local community have been sought and contributor's responses to each of the Character Areas will be analysed and a summary of the responses provided by HCC.

LANDSCAPE RELATED DESIGNATIONS

LC2	Landscape Conservation Area
SAM CB99	Sites revealed by aerial photographs: Royston
SAM CB244	Mile Ditches: Royston
SAM 24419	Bell Barrow 500m South of Morden Grange Plantation (Cambs)
SAM 24420	Bowl Barrow on Goffers Knoll

A.2

Appendix 2 - Extract from The North Herts Landscape Study (2011) – LCA 224, 226 & 227

location	assessment	evaluation	guidelines	ODSEY - ROYSTON	Area 227
EVALUATION					

CONDITION

Land cover change:	Widespread
Age structure of tree cover:	Mixed
Extent of semi-natural habitat survival:	Relic
Management of semi-natural habitat:	Poor
Survival of cultural pattern:	Declining/Relic
Impact of built development:	Low
Impact of land-use change:	High

Matrix Score: **Poor**

ROBUSTNESS

Impact of landform:	Apparent
Impact of land cover:	Prominent
Impact of historic pattern:	Apparent
Visibility from outside:	Widely visible
Sense of enclosure:	Open
Visual unity:	Coherent
Distinctiveness/rarity:	Unusual

Matrix Score: **Moderate**

CONDITION	GOOD	Strengthen and reinforce	Conserve and strengthen	Safeguard and manage
	MODERATE	Improve and reinforce	Improve and conserve	Conserve and restore
	POOR	Reconstruct	Improve and restore	Restore condition to maintain character
		WEAK	MODERATE	STRONG
ROBUSTNESS				

location	assessment	evaluation	guidelines	ODSEY - ROYSTON	Area 227
EVALUATION					

INHERENT LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY

Landscape Character Sensitivities

- The Character Area as a whole is relatively flat to the east and more undulating to the west. However, the parcels of land within North Hertfordshire are generally relatively flat.
- Roadside shelterbelts and small blocks of woodland are characteristic of the wider Odsey - Royston Character Area and would be sensitive to removal. Some new woodland belts have been created in parts of the North Hertfordshire area.
- Hedgerows within the wider Character Area are generally intact and well managed. This is less the case within the parts of Odsey - Royston that are in North Hertfordshire, where less characteristic post and rail fences are more likely to form boundaries.
- Roads throughout the Character Area are generally open, allowing views across the Character Area. However, within North Hertfordshire this is less common, with tree belts along some roads.
- Land use within the Character Area is generally arable farmland. Smaller scale pasture and horsiculture has been introduced in some locations. Areas within North Hertfordshire have been left as rough grassland.
- Built form and business park/industrial development on the edges of Royston have a strong influence on the character of the areas within North Hertfordshire. The edges to these developments are generally intrusive and not softened by vegetation.
- The A505 and the Baldock to Royston railway line have disturbed and fragmented the parts of the Character Area within North Hertfordshire, particularly where the elevated A505 creates a physical barrier to the rest of the Character Area. These elements require more careful integration.

Overall the areas of Odsey - Royston within North Hertfordshire are considered to be of **low sensitivity**. The parcels of land that remain in North Hertfordshire are greatly influenced by the urban area of Royston and fragmented from the remainder of the Character Area.

Visual Sensitivities

- The Character Area as a whole provides the setting for the adjacent Therfield Heath, which is located within the Scarp Slopes South of Royston Landscape Character Area.
- Whilst there are open, long distance views within much of the Character Area, the parcels of land within North Hertfordshire are partially contained by vegetation or landform.
- The areas of land within North Hertfordshire are not visually linked to the rest of the Character Area.
- There are views into the North Hertfordshire parts of the Character Area from properties and developments on the edges of Royston.
- Elevated views from the A505 where it is on embankment.

In visual terms, the areas of Odsey - Royston is within North Hertfordshire are considered to be of **moderate sensitivity**. Views into these areas are more limited than into the Character Area as a whole but they still play a role in the setting of Therfield Heath.

LANDSCAPE VALUE

Overall Odsey - Royston is considered to be of **low landscape value**. Although there is a sense of openness within the Character Area, there is a lack of memorable views, the area is heavily influenced by significant habitation, there are high levels of human intervention in the landscape, a lack of distinctive landform and a lack of vernacular built form to contribute to a sense of place.

Additional evaluation and guidelines North Herts & Stevenage LCA
The Landscape Partnership

location	assessment	evaluation	guidelines	ODSEY - ROYSTON	Area 227
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EVALUATION

CAPACITY TO ACCOMMODATE DEVELOPMENT

Large urban extensions and new settlements (>5ha)

This type of development would be appropriate within this Character Area, due to its urban fringe location and the fact that it is already disturbed and influenced by built form and infrastructure. Careful consideration of the landscape treatment to the edges of the development would be required and the effect on the setting of Therfield Heath.

The landscape capacity for major urban extensions or new settlements is considered to be moderate to high.

Smaller urban extensions (<5ha)

This type of development would be appropriate within this Character Area, due to its urban fringe location and the fact that it is already disturbed and influenced by built form and infrastructure. Careful consideration of the landscape treatment to the edges of the development would be required and the effect on the setting of Therfield Heath.

The landscape capacity for small urban extensions is considered to be moderate to high.

Major transport developments/improvements

This type of development would not be relatively appropriate within this Character Area, due to the presence of both the A505 and the railway line at present. Improvements to these transport links could present the opportunity to improve their fit within the landscape and soften their appearance and the effect on the setting of Therfield Heath.

The landscape capacity for major transport developments/improvements is considered to be moderate to high.

Commercial/warehouse estates

This type of large scale development would be in keeping with existing land uses adjacent to some parts of this character area. Careful consideration of the landscape treatment to the edges of the development would be required and the effect on the setting of Therfield Heath.

The landscape capacity for commercial/warehouse estates is considered to be moderate to high.

Individual large/bulky buildings

This type of large scale development would be in keeping with existing land uses adjacent to some parts of this character area. However, more intensive development of the Character Area may be more appropriate when surrounding land uses are taken into account. Careful consideration of the landscape treatment to the edges of the development would be required and the effect on the setting of Therfield Heath.

The landscape capacity for individual large/bulky buildings is considered to be moderate.

Large scale open uses

It would be possible to accommodate large scale 'open' uses within this Character Area. However, this would be less in keeping with other surrounding land uses.

The landscape capacity for large scale 'open' uses is considered to be moderate.

Mineral extraction/waste disposal

Mineral extraction would not be appropriate in Odsey – Royston due to the close proximity to built up areas.

The landscape capacity for mineral extraction is considered to be low. Waste disposal would be a problem in all character areas due to the presence of aquifers.

Additional evaluation and guidelines North Herts & Stevenage LCA
The Landscape Partnership

location	assessment	evaluation	guidelines	ODSEY - ROYSTON	Area 227
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EVALUATION

Incremental small scale development

Incremental small scale development could be in keeping with existing land uses adjacent to some parts of this character area. However, more intensive development of the Character Area may be more appropriate when surrounding land uses are taken into account. Careful consideration of the landscape treatment to the edges of the development would be required.

The landscape capacity for incremental small scale developments is considered to be moderate.

Utilities developments e.g. masts, pylons, wind turbines

It may be possible to accommodate some forms of utilities developments in Odsey – Royston. However, due to the close proximity to built up areas many forms of utilities developments would not be appropriate.

The landscape capacity for utilities developments is considered to be low to moderate.

Additional evaluation and guidelines North Herts & Stevenage LCA
The Landscape Partnership

location	assessment	evaluation	guidelines	ODSEY - ROYSTON	Area 227
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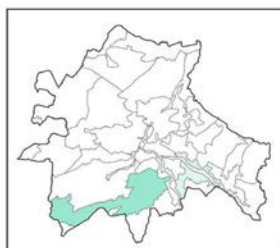
GUIDELINES**STRATEGY AND GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING CHANGE****Strategy: Improve and Restore****Landscape management guidelines**

- Promote creation of new woodland and for existing woodlands encourage a diverse woodland flora
- Promote the creation of buffer zones between areas of intensive arable production and areas of semi-natural habitat and the creation of links between habitat areas
- Promote hedgerow restoration to create visual links between existing woodland areas
- Promote the use of traditional field hedges in place of post and wire fencing 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

Built development guidelines

- Encourage the planting of appropriate broadleaved woodland and vegetation to screen new development that could intrude in rural views
- Avoid the location of new development in locations where it may intrude into the setting of Therfield Heath
- Ensure that new development does not necessitate the removal of existing vegetation or the loss of surviving hedgerows or shelterbelts
- Ensure that lighting associated with new development does not create additional urbanising influences on the wider Character Area or Therfield Heath
- Promote the softening of the existing edge of Royston
- Encourage enhanced integration of the transport corridors in the Character Area

**LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA 8B:
MORDEN TO DUXFORD LOWLAND CHALKLANDS**



8B: MORDEN TO DUXFORD LOWLAND CHALKLANDS LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

The Morden to Duxford Lowland Chalklands Landscape Character Area (LCA) is a large scale, open, arable landscape with historic villages at the edges of the River Valleys and distinctive linear features including roads, tracks and earthworks.

Description

Key Characteristics

- Low hedges and few trees create a large-scale, open and simple landscape
- Occasional copses of trees on high ground are a distinctive feature
- Sparse settlement pattern with small villages elevated from the River Valleys on lower ground, interspersed with isolated farms and cottages
- Long distance views across arable fields towards the rising chalk hills to the northeast and south
- Historic linear features include roads, ancient trackways and earthworks

Morden to Duxford LCA is a transitional, gently rolling landscape between the Lowland Farmlands and the smooth rolling Chalk Hills, that extends south into North Hertfordshire District. Within the Study Area, the landform is lowest in the northeast at c. 20m AOD and highest in the southwest at c. 80m AOD. Occasional small streams including Cheney Water and Hoffer Brook flow north towards the River Rhee valley.

This is a simple arable landscape of medium to large fields enclosed by a fragmented network of straight, low trimmed hedgerows, ditches and open boundaries. Fields are set in a generally ordered pattern of rectilinear fields and lanes with straight boundaries. Occasional linear tree belts along field boundaries and tree lines along roads or hedgerow trees combine to give a localised treed character, and provide localised visual enclosure within a large scale, open and spacious landscape. Certain high points have small beech copses, which form strong focal points, and there are occasional shelterbelts around settlements and a chalk pit in the southwest. This is not an ecologically rich LCA, however occasional pockets of deciduous woodland, orchards, floodplain grazing marsh, chalk grassland provide variety within the landscape. The golf course south of Fowlmere and solar farms north of Thriplow and north and east of Royston provide variation within the otherwise simple land use pattern. Views across arable fields are generally long, with smooth or treed distant horizons, and often feature the rolling Chalk Hills to the northeast and south.

Settlement comprises small villages, generally located on lower ground, elevated from the River Valleys, and separated by extensive tracts of countryside, with isolated farms and cottages are scattered in between. Villages include Foxton, Thriplow, Fowlmere, Guilden Morden and Steeple Morden. Generally, the villages have retained their small scale and historic, peaceful character, and can be glimpsed in the wider landscape. Soft edges comprising mature hedges and hedgerow trees, shelterbelts, small fields and paddocks provide a transition between villages and the wider chalk landscape. Church spires are often prominent landmarks. Occasional lines of poplars and telegraph poles are occasional features which interrupt the skyline.

Farm buildings tend to be large, but low and well-integrated into the landscape. The monumental aircraft hangars at Duxford Airfield, now part of the Imperial War Museum, are notable built features within the LCA, but not unsympathetic in the large scale open character of their setting. The strong rural character is locally disrupted by the A505 and M11 major roads which converge east of Duxford Airfield.

Historical and archaeological features including roads, ancient trackways and earthworks form distinctive linear features, including Ermine Street Roman Road, Bran or Heydon Ditch, and Ashwell Street track. The historic Icknield Way and the Harcamlow Way run through the LCA, providing a connection between historical and ecological features in neighbouring LCAs.

Evaluation

Specific Landscape Sensitivities

In addition to the generic landscape sensitivities for this landscape character type, the following sensitivities are specific to this character area:

- Limited vegetation, open skylines and long distance views

Specific Landscape Guidelines

In addition to the generic landscape guidelines for this landscape character type, the following guidelines are specific to this character area:

- Conserve the open, expansive landscape and long distance views through careful consideration for location of new development and particularly tall/vertical structures