

PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT,
LAND NORTH OF ASHWELL STREET,
ASHWELL

Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment

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REVISION	DATE	WRITTEN	CHECKED
001	05.07. 2022	BW	BW
002	18.07. 2022	JM	BW
003	14.10.2022	IC	BW
004	30.10.2022	IC	BW
005	11.11.2022	IC	BW
006	06.06.2024	AJ	BW
007	11.06.2024	AJ	BW

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. Aspect Landscape Planning Ltd has been appointed by Manor Oak Homes Ltd to undertake a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) and follows guidance relating to the GLVIA3 (Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3 Edition) published by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment in April 2013.
- 1.2. A detailed appraisal of the surrounding study area has been undertaken using Ordnance Survey data, historical map data, local policy and published character assessments. This has informed the on-site field analysis to identify key viewpoints, analyse the landscape character and visual environment of the local area, and determine the extent and significance of any potential landscape and visual effects.

2. LANDSCAPE RELATED POLICY

National Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (December 2023)

- 2.1. The revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in December 2023. The document sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied, and is a material consideration in planning decisions. The document places an emphasis on the promotion of sustainable growth whilst also protecting the environment.
- 2.2. Paragraph 7 states that: ***"The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development."***
- 2.3. Paragraph 8 states that: ***"Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (...)"*** including ***"an environmental objective – to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy."***
- 2.4. Paragraph 11 states that: ***"Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development."***

For plan-making this means that:

- a) all plans should promote a sustainable pattern of development that seeks to: meet the development needs of their area; align growth and infrastructure; improve the environment; mitigate climate change (including by making effective use of land in urban areas) and adapt to its effects;***
- b) strategic plans should, as a minimum, provide for objectively assessed needs for housing and other development, as well as any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas, unless:***

- i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for restricting the overall scale, type or distribution of development in the plan area; or*
- ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.*

For decision-taking this means:

c) approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or

d) where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:

- i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or***
- ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.”***

2.5. Design is dealt with in Chapter 12 which sets out the objectives for achieving “well-designed places”. Para 135 states that: ***“Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:***

- a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;***
- b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and effective landscaping;***
- c) respond 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);***
- d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive and distinctive places to live, work and visit;***

- e) optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and*
- f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.”*

2.6. Chapter 15 deals with the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment. In particular para 180 states that: ***“Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:***

- a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality);*
- b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;*
- c) maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it;*
- d) minimising impacts and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;*
- e) preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air quality; and*
- f) remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.”*

2.7. The NPPF also highlights the requirement for the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment in Chapter 16, with designated heritage assets being afforded a level of protection and conservation commensurate with its level of heritage significance. New development should take into the account the importance

of the historic feature, and paragraph 203 states that: ***“In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:***

- a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;***
- b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and***
- c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.”***

- 2.8. The NPPF has been of material consideration as part of our assessment of the site and its setting, and the proposals shall take on board the overall framework guidance and principles contained within the NPPF.

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

- 2.9. Those categories within the NPPG that are of relevance to landscape and visual matters in relation to this site are set out below.

Design: Process and Tools

- 2.10. The NPPG states that well-designed places can be achieved by taking a pro-active and collaborative approach at all stages of the planning process. The guidance sets out processes and tools that can be used through the planning system. The guidance is to be read alongside the National Design Guide.
- 2.11. As set out in paragraph 135 of the NPPF, permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions, taking into account any local design standards or style guides in plans or supplementary planning documents.

National Design Guide

- 2.12. The importance of design is a key focus within the guide as is the local and wider context and character of the site.

Green Infrastructure

- 2.13. The NPPG highlights the multifaceted benefits delivered through Green Infrastructure and recognises how it can be used to reinforce and enhance local landscape character and contribute to a sense of place.

Landscape

- 2.14. Finally, the NPPG refers to the NPPF and the recognition of the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and the provision of strategic policies to provide the conservation and enhancement of landscapes. Adverse landscape impacts are to be avoided and mitigation measures employed where necessary.
- 2.15. The NPPF and NPPG have been of material consideration as part of our assessment of the site and its setting, and the proposals shall take on board the overall framework guidance and principles contained within the NPPF.

Local Planning Policy

North Hertfordshire District Council Local Plan 2011-2031 (adopted Nov 2022)

- 2.16. The Local Plan 2011-2031 was adopted in November 2022 and replaces the policies of the 1996 North Hertfordshire District Local Plan No 2 (with Alterations). The Local Plan seeks to address the key issues facing North Hertfordshire and will set a strategic vision and spatial strategy for the District over the period 2011 to 2031.
- 2.17. The following landscape related policies deemed relevant to the Site are listed below:
- Policy SP9: Design and sustainability
 - Policy SP12: Green Infrastructure, biodiversity and landscape
 - Policy SP13: Historic environment
 - Policy D1: Sustainable design
 - Policy NE1: Strategic Green Infrastructure
 - Policy NE2: Landscape
 - Policy HE1: Designated Heritage Assets
- 2.18. Within Policy SP9: Design and Sustainability, it is stated that ***“the Council considers good design to be a key aspect of sustainable development. We will support new development where it is well designed and located and responds positively to its local context.”***

- 2.19. Policy SP12: Green Infrastructure, landscape and biodiversity states that ***“we will accommodate significant growth during the plan period whilst ensuring the natural environment is protected and enhanced. We will:***
- a) Protect, identify, manage and where possible enhance a strategic multi-functional network of green infrastructure;***
 - b) Consider and respect landscape character, scenic beauty and locally sensitive features, particularly in relation to the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.***
 - c) Protect, enhance and manage designated sites in accordance with the following hierarchy of designations and features:***
 - Internationally designated sites***
 - Nationally designated sites***
 - Locally designated sites.***
 - Non-designated sites that include important habitats and species***
 - d) Protect, enhance, and manage biodiversity networks including wildlife corridors, ancient woodlands and hedgerows, wetland and riverine habitats, Local Geological Sites, protected species, priority species and habitats, and non-designated sites of ecological value and ensure measurable net gains for biodiversity; and***
 - e) Protect other open spaces and support provision of new and improved open space.”***
- 2.20. Policy SP13: Historic environment states that ***“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 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:***
- a) Maintaining a strong presumption in favour of the retention, preservation and enhancement of heritage assets and their setting according to their significance;***
 - b) Identifying sites on the national register of Heritage at Risk or on the Council’s ‘At Risk’ register;***

- c) Periodic reviews of Conservation Areas and other locally designated assets; and**
- d) Publication of detailed guidance.”**

2.21. Policy D1: Sustainable design state that **“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. Optimize the potential of the site by incorporating Sustainable Drainage Schemes (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) ...**
- e) For residential schemes, meet or exceed the nationally described space standards and optional water efficiency standards.”**

2.22. Policy NE1: Strategic green infrastructure state that **“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.”**

- 2.23. Policy NE2: Landscape states that ***“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.”***
- 2.24. Policy HE1: Designated heritage assets states that ***“planning applications relating to designated heritage assets, or their setting shall be accompanied by a Heritage Assessment / Justification Statement that:***
- i. Assesses the significance of heritage assets, including their setting;***
 - ii. Justifies and details the impacts of any proposal upon the significance of the designated heritage asset(s); and***
 - iii. Informs any necessary measures to minimise or mitigate against any identified harms.***

Planning permission for development proposals affecting Designated Heritage Assets or their setting will be granted where they (as applicable):

- a. Enable the heritage asset to be used in a manner that secures its conservation and preserves its significance;***
- b. Incorporate a palette of materials that make a positive contribution to local character or distinctiveness, where it is appropriate and justified; and***
- 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.***

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.”

- 2.25. In addition, Policy SP2 – *Settlement Hierarchy* identifies the village of Ashwell as a ‘Category A’ village and determines general development will be permitted within the defined settlement boundaries of Category A villages. The proposals map indicates these settlement boundaries and that of Ashwell is proposed to be extended, which will accommodate the Site as part of its settlement boundary.

Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan (April 2022)

- 2.26. The Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan (ANP) was ‘made’ in April 2022, forming part of the development plan for the area along with the policies of the North Hertfordshire District Council Local Plan 2011-2031. It has been created in order to guide development and establish the aims and vision for the parish of Ashwell in the period up to 2031.
- 2.27. The ANP states that development within the settlement boundary development that complies with the relevant policies as well as the Ashwell Design Statement guidelines will usually be permitted. It contains a number of policies and those which are considered relevant to the Site are included as follows:
- Policy ASH1 – Location of Development
 - Policy ASH3 – Character of Development
 - Policy ASH4 – Design of Development
 - Policy ASH9 – Locally Significant Views
 - Policy ASH10 – Natural Landscape and Rural Character
 - Policy ASH11 – Natural Wildlife Assets, Wildlife Corridors and Green Infrastructure

- 2.28. Regarding Policy ASH1 – *Location of Development*, it is highlighted that: ***“Development in the ANP area will be focused within the proposed extension to the settlement boundary shown in Figure 5.1, subject to all relevant policies in the ANP, Emerging Local Plan and NPPF.”***

- 2.29. Policy ASH 2 – Housing Mix notes that ***“Proposals should include a high proportion of one, two and three bedroom dwellings...”***
- 2.30. Policy ASH 3 – Character of development notes ***“ The density of development should create a character that is appropriate to the site’s context, including the landscape in which it is set, whilst making best use of the land available.”***
- 2.31. Part B also notes ***“...local context and reflected the character and vernacular of the area,...”***
- 2.32. Policy ASH 8 – Protecting Historic Assets notes at paragraph 7.41 that ***“ New development should explore opportunities to create new views or vistas.”***
- 2.33. Policy ASH9 – Locally Significant Views identifies 21 locally significant views from in and around Ashwell and Figure 7.10 of the ANP maps these views. An extensive view (SV12) described as notes that part of the Site falls within SV12 to the north from Ashwell Street. ***“An important distant view through Hunts Close pasture land across Lucas Lane housing and beyond to open countryside in the North towards Wrestlingworth. The view projects a strong feeling of space and rural tranquility.”*** In addition, the view is considered to have an extensive view over 90 degrees.
- 2.34. Policy ASH9 states:
- A. ***“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 arc of the various views as shown on Figure 7.10 should be designed in a way that safeguards the locally-significant view or views concerned.***
 - B. ***Development proposals are required to ensure that they do not have a significantly detrimental impact on the locally significant views shown in Figure 7.9 and mapped in Figure 7.10 and the policy maps, Figure 16.1 and Figure 16.2.***

C. Development proposals are to comply with the findings and guidelines in Character Area Assessment 224 referred to in paras 7.44 to 7.47 of the ANP.”

2.35. Of particular relevance to this assessment is Policy ASH10 – *Natural Landscape and Rural Character*, which states under

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 enhance the rural character and setting of Ashwell.

B “Development proposals should demonstrate that they have addressed the following matters:

- (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***
- (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***
- (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.***

C As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, proposals should provide open space that:

- (i) Is in usable parcels of land and not fragmented; and***

- (ii) Is safe, easily accessible and not severed by any physical barrier; and***
- (iii) Is accessible to the general public; and***
- (iv) Creates a safe environment regarding 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 that provide for an appropriate legal agreement to ensure proper management of the open space over the lifetime of the development will be supported.”

2.36. Regarding policy ASH11 – *Natural Wildlife Assets, Wildlife Corridors and Green Infrastructure*, part of this policy is relevant to the Site in relation to landscape:

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 policy maps, Figure 16.1 and Figure 16.2 – 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 to:

- (i) Future development should aim to include features such as swift and owl nesting boxes wherever appropriate; and***

(ii) New development in the parish should include fruiting trees in their planting mixes wherever possible.”

North Hertfordshire District Council – Draft Sustainability Supplementary Planning Document (Nov 2023)

- 2.37. The North Hertfordshire Draft Sustainability Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) was produced by North Hertfordshire District Council in November 2023 and is currently undergoing review for adoption to comprise part of the Local Plan for North Hertfordshire to 2031. The core underlying principles of the document are to promote good design and sustainable development in order to improve standards and respect and complement the existing built character and natural environment of the District. The Draft Sustainability SPD also provides guidance for developers and applicants so that they can achieve and demonstrate high quality design proposals based on the relevant policies of the Local Plan.

Ashwell Village Design Statement – Supplementary Design Guidance (SPG18) (October 2000; subsequently revised August 2018 and forming Appendix E of the Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan)

- 2.38. The Ashwell Village Design Statement was adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance by North Hertfordshire District Council in 2000 and updated in 2018, forming Appendix E of the Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan. The Design Statement is intended to guide design and development proposals in Ashwell to complement the existing built form and protect the key characteristics of the village, while enhancing its setting and appearance. A set of guidelines are provided within the Design Statement and accompany a description of the existing character of the village to ensure any new development reflects and reinforces this.

Ashwell Conservation Area Character Statement (2019)

- 2.39. The Ashwell Conservation Area Character Statement was produced by Wood Environment & Infrastructure Solutions UK in April 2019 for North Hertfordshire District Council. The document is an appraisal of Ashwell Conservation Area (ACA) and identifies the key features and views within the conservation area as well as including a section on opportunities for improvement.

- 2.40. The Grade I listed Church of St Mary is identified as the main landmark within ACA and is described as being visible across the village as well as from outside the village and conservation area boundaries. The parallel nature of the High Street and Back Street / Silver Street along with the various roads and alleys connecting these is another key feature that enhances the coherence of the ACA.
- 2.41. The Conservation Area Map, included as Appendix A of the Ashwell Conservation Area Character Statement, provides a visual overview of the key features and views within the ACA. Regarding the Site, which lies within the southern edge of the ACA, there is a significant key view (KV23) that looks north across the Site towards Alder Cottage from Ashwell Street.

Ashwell Conservation Area – Character Appraisal and Management Plan (2023)

- 2.42. The Ashwell Conservation Area – Character Appraisal and Management Plan was produced by Place Services in February 2023 for North Hertfordshire District Council and serves as a reference point to guide future change, design and development while respecting the existing historic environment and character of the ACA.
- 2.43. The document includes a review of the present Ashwell Conservation Area boundary in line with the NPPF guidance on Conservation Areas. The outcome of this review is the proposal to amend the boundary in certain areas to reflect changing methodologies of good practice. One such area is land to the immediate south of Site, identified as *“Land to the south of Ashwell Street between Station Road and Kingsland Way”*. A description of the area is included below:

“This comprises a strip of open arable land, which falls just outside the settlement boundary and marks, along with the unpaved section of Ashwell Street, the distinct transition between the settlement boundary to the north and open rural countryside to the south. The land forms the northern part of an area that has considerable archaeological potential, including five Bronze Age ring ditches which are protected as Scheduled Monuments. The northernmost of these is proposed for inclusion within the Conservation Area boundary, along with a strip of land adjacent to Ashwell Street.”

- 2.44. The Character Appraisal describes the ACA as ‘coherent’ although it divides the area into four distinctive character areas based on the historic development of

Ashwell. The largest of these character areas is Character Area One – Ashwell's Historic Core which encompasses the majority of the village, including the Site. This area is described as ***“predominantly developed with commercial and residential buildings.”***

- 2.45. As per the Ashwell Conservation Area Character Statement (2019) and the Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan (2021), the Character Appraisal identifies an important view looking north / north-west across the Site from Hunt's Ridge, immediately south of Ashwell Street. A number of open spaces within the ACA boundary are described as being of 'archaeological significance' and allow key views to be appreciated, including the view north from higher ground across Site from Ashwell Street.
- 2.46. It is stated that any development proposals within the Conservation Area or its setting should consider the identified views from Figure 70 as well as any other views that may be relevant or affected by the proposals through a bespoke assessment.
- 2.47. Within the Management Proposals section of the document, specific reference to new development is made highlighting the need to respect the local character of the Conservation Area whilst providing sustainable proposals. As a core design aim, the development proposals within the ACA or its setting should aim to make a positive contribution to the Conservation Area by addressing the following points:
- ***“Relate to the geography and history of the place and the lie of the land,***
 - ***Sit happily in the pattern of existing development and routes through and around it (including public footpaths),***
 - ***Respect important views,***
 - ***Respect the scale of neighbouring buildings,***
 - ***Use materials and building methods which as high in quality of those used in existing buildings, and***
 - ***Create new views and juxtapositions which add to the variety and texture of their setting.”***
- 2.48. The document also states there are several 'opportunity sites' across the Ashwell Conservation Area that ***“if sensitively redeveloped, may enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area”*** and this reflects Policy ASH1 of the Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan, which focuses development within the defined

settlement boundary of the village, as well as Policy ASH3 that relates to the conservation and enhancement of the ACA through new development.

2.49. The Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan (ANP) was made in July 2021 with the key points being;

- Any growth must be undertaken sympathetically
- The village needs smaller homes
- Objective to conserve and enhance the historic character of the village and its rural setting.
- Objective to conserve and enhance the natural environment of the parish, its flora and its fauna.

3. BASELINE ASSESSMENT

- 3.1. The Application Site is situated in the eastern extents of the historic village of Ashwell. It is located approximately 5 miles west of Royston, 5 miles north-east of Letchworth Garden City and 5.5 miles south-east of Biggleswade. The largely rectangular parcel of land comprises approximately 1.1ha of undeveloped, pastoral land to the north of Ashwell Street and is surrounded to the north, east and west by development in the village. The Site lies within the parish boundary of Ashwell, and its location is shown on Plan ASP1.
- 3.2. The Site is generally well contained by boundary hedgerows and hedgerow trees though some limited views north across the Site from Ashwell Street to the south are afforded. The interior of the Site is open in nature give its pastoral usage. It is visually well-contained by the existing landform which slopes downwards to the north, as well as existing development and vegetation to the north, east and west and by boundary vegetation to the south.
- 3.3. To the north of Site, a row of properties is situated either side of Lucas Lane, which feeds into the High Street to the west, and the gardens of the properties on the southern side adjoin the northern Site boundary. Beyond Lucas Lane to the north-east, Ashwell Recreation Ground is located less than 100 metres away. Ashwell Springs, a 0.3ha Site of Special Scientific Interest, is situated less than 100 metres to the north-west of Site and forms a source of the River Cam. The wider landscape to the north is clearly visible from the Site due to the existing landform.
- 3.4. To the immediate east of the Site there are several large properties set in extensive grounds. The recent residential development at Townsend Meadow, which is located with the Ashwell CA, is located off Station Road in the eastern extents of the village.
- 3.5. To the south, the Site is bounded by Ashwell Street that runs along the entire length of the southern extents of the village. This is used as an access point to the residential development at Woodforde Close to the west of the Site and provides rear access to the existing properties that back onto it though it becomes a narrow track between the Site and Station Road to the east. Beyond Ashwell Street to the south, the landscape is characterised by enclosed arable fields of varying size, with the occasional pocket of woodland.

- 3.6. To the immediate west of Site lies several large properties adjacent to more recent residential development and beyond that, the village core. The Grade I listed Church of St Mary is the main landmark in the village and is visible from certain areas of the Site, mainly the south easter corner, and is situated approximately 420 metres to the north-west. The Site is illustrated within its immediate setting on Plan ASP2.
- 3.7. The Site is not covered by any qualitative landscape designations at a national or local level.
- 3.8. There are many listed buildings within Ashwell Conservation Area and a number of these are located in close proximity to the Site. Several properties along Lucas Lane to the north of Site are Grade II listed including 14 Lucas Lane, Alder Cottage (16 Lucas Lane) and 2 Spring Cottage, Springhead off Lucas Lane, all of which are located within 150 metres of the centre of Site. The Grade II listed Spring House situated to the north-west on the High Street is also less than 150 metres from the centre of Site and the Three Tuns Hotel Public House on the opposite side of the High Street is also Grade II listed. The Grade II listed Ashwell War Memorial is located approximately 250 metres north-east of Site where Lucas Lane meets Station Road. The main landmark in the village, the Grade I listed Church of St Mary, is situated roughly 420 metres north-west of Site off Mill Lane and is a prominent feature of the village and wider landscape context, and this is also visible from Site.
- 3.9. As well as the listed buildings mentioned above, there are several scheduled monuments in the area including a Roman Villa (1006876) roughly 1km to the north-east of Site and Arbury Banks Iron Age Hill Fort (1008981), approximately 1.42km from Site to the south-west. In the immediate context, the 'Crop Marks of five Ring Ditches' (1451703) are located in the fields to the south of Site. As per the North Hertfordshire District Council Local Plan No.2 with Alterations Saved Policies Key Diagram Map, the majority of the village including the Site and land immediately to the south of Site is classified as an 'Area of archaeological significance.
- 3.10. Although the Site lies within the Ashwell Conservation Area, it does not form part of any landscape designation. The Ashwell Bury is the only Registered Park and Garden in close proximity to Site and is situated approximately 500 metres to the north-west. The listed buildings, scheduled monuments and registered park and garden listed above are illustrated on Plan ASP1.

Vegetation Cover

- 3.11. The Site boundary vegetation is of varying quality although it provides a degree of vegetation cover on all of the boundaries. One of the adjacent properties to the west is clearly visible from within the Site as is the Grade I listed Church of St Mary. The line of properties south of Lucas Lane to the north of Site are generally well concealed behind the vegetation line although the eastern extents of Ashwell are visible further afield due to the Site being situated on higher ground. To the east, a mixture of hedgerow and hedgerow trees separate the Site from the large properties. A row of mature trees line the southern Site boundary along Ashwell Street on an elevated strip of land. The existing components of the site are illustrated on Plan ASP2.

Public Rights of Way

- 3.12. The Site itself is not publicly accessible but the Public Right of Way (PRoW) network is fairly extensive in the wider context around Ashwell, albeit limited to the south of the village. The section of Ashwell Street that bounds the Site to the south forms part of the PRoW network and is classified as Ashwell 016, a Byway Open to All Traffic. This later forms Ashwell 017 on the section of Ashwell Street to the east of Station Road before continuing into the open countryside to the east and connecting onto the wider Cambridgeshire PRoW network.
- 3.13. A number of short public footpaths are present within the village and serve to connect nearby streets. Examples near the Site are Ashwell 012, running off the High Street and passing behind the Three Tuns public house before connecting onto Hodwell Street to the north-west, and Ashwell 013 that cuts across the Ashwell Springs before joining onto Ashwell 012. The Site is not visible from these routes, however.
- 3.14. Public footpath Ashwell 018 is located to the north of Site and begins off Mill Street in the northern extents of the village before running north-east and joining onto the wider Cambridgeshire PRoW network. The Site is partially visible from this footpath given that it is situated on higher ground, though the intervening built form and extensive tree and vegetation coverage limits views of this.

- 3.15. The OS base on Plan ASP1 and ASP2 illustrates the extent of the Public Right of Way network within the wider setting of the Site and this has informed the visual assessment.

Topography

- 3.16. The village of Ashwell is mostly situated on gently sloping ground between 45-65 metres AOD. The topography of the Site ranges between approximately 55-65 metres AOD with its lowest point in the north-eastern corner and its highest point in the south-western corner. In general, the Site slopes downwards from its southern boundary, affording extensive views of the largely flat, wider landscape to the north of the village that lies between 40-50 metres AOD.
- 3.17. The wider topographical context around Ashwell is that of undulating higher ground to the south. The land gently rises south of the village to the localised high point of Claybush Hill, located roughly 1.1km to the south-west of the centre of Site and 100 metres AOD. The scheduled monument known as Arbury Banks Iron Age Hill Fort is located slightly to the west of Claybush Hill at 87 metres AOD and Newnham Hill lies at 84 metres AOD to the west of the village. East of Claybush Hill, the land rises and falls either side of Station Road before reaching a high point of 83 metres AOD north of the hamlet of Odsey. The localised and wider topography is illustrated on the OS base on Plan ASP1.

Cultural and Settlement Pattern

- 3.18. The historic, rural village of Ashwell is located within a river valley and is nucleated, with settlement traditionally developing around the springs which form the source of the River Rhee, one of the tributaries of the River Cam. The majority of the village including its historic core is covered by the Ashwell Conservation Area. Since the Second World War the number of properties in the village has more than doubled, with a mixture of housing types and developments taking place around the village.
- 3.19. The surrounding countryside is dominated by agricultural fields and the village itself is situated north-west of a shallow chalk escarpment. The area of higher ground to the south contains evidence of prehistoric activity and occupation. The landscape seen today is not dissimilar to that of the medieval landscape given that few new

hedgerows were planted during the Enclosure Movement. The rural nature of the village is an important aspect of its character, and the designated environmental and historic assets require preservation.

National Landscape Character

- 3.20. A landscape assessment of the local area has been carried out which seeks to identify broadly homogenous zones that can be categorised in terms of quality and character. Natural England have produced a countrywide landscape character assessment resulting in National Character Areas (NCAs). The Site lies in the south-western extents of the 'East Anglian Chalk' National Character Area (NCA) 87, which extends on a largely linear south-west / north-east axis from Letchworth Garden City in the south-west passing south and east of Cambridge and extending as far as Newmarket to the north-east. The nationwide map includes large tracks of countryside which have similar characteristics in terms of landform, geology, land use and other landscape elements.
- 3.21. A brief description of NCA 87 'East Anglian Chalk' is provided by Natural England which describes the area as being: ***“characterised by the narrow continuation of the chalk ridge that runs south-west-north-east across southern England [...] This creates a visually simple and uninterrupted landscape of smooth, rolling chalkland hills with large rectangular fields enclosed by low hawthorn hedges, with few trees, straight roads and expansive views to the north. The vast majority of its landscape is open countryside, under cereal production [...] Historically, sheep rearing and corn production have shaped the area, leading to the creation of botanically rich grasslands, which are now often small and fragmented. Large-scale cereal production dominates the predominantly agricultural landscape.”***
- 3.22. A set of key characteristics are also provided for NCA 87 'East Anglian Chalk' although these tend to be too broad. It is therefore considered more beneficial to include the key characteristics of the area that are presented in the local assessments as these are more accurate and reflect the localised landscape character.

District Landscape Character

North Hertfordshire and Stevenage Landscape Character Assessment (2004)

- 3.23. In 2002, North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC) and Stevenage Borough Council commissioned Babbie Group to carry out a landscape character assessment of the District and rural areas of Stevenage, which was later adopted by NHDC as the Landscape Character Assessment for the District in 2005.
- 3.24. While the village of Ashwell was not included as part of the assessment, the surrounding wider landscape setting was divided into three separate character areas – 224, 225, and 226 which are briefly summarised below.
- 3.25. Landscape Character Area (LCA 224) 'North Baldock Chalk Uplands' is considered to be the most relevant to this report given that it covers a large area of open land with dispersed farmsteads to the immediate south of Ashwell and the Site. This character area extends north-east from the market town of Baldock to the villages of Caldecote and Ashwell and contains long distance views from local vantage points. The key characteristics of LCA 224 are as follows with those relevant to Site highlighted in bold:
- ***“Rolling chalk landform***
 - *Small rounded chalk knolls*
 - ***Large rectilinear fields in arable***
 - *Large to medium regular geometric plantations*
 - ***Nucleated settlements”***
- 3.26. Along with the key characteristics of the LCA, the landscape was evaluated in terms of its condition and robustness and it was concluded LCA 224 has a 'Moderate' condition and a 'Strong' robustness. As a result of this, a set of guidelines and strategy for managing change in the character area were included with the aim to 'Conserve and Restore' the landscape and these are as follows:
- ***“Promote creation of new woodland and for existing woodlands encourage a diverse woodland flora***

- **Promote the creation of buffer zones between areas of intense 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.”**

3.27. LCA 225 ‘Hinxworth Lowlands’ covers the vast scale open landscape to the north-west of Ashwell and is described as a **“very gently rolling landform with predominantly large scale arable fields but with smaller paddocks and grazing land adjacent to settlements or watercourses.”** The key characteristics of LCA 225 are included below and those considered of most relevance to the Site are highlighted in bold:

- *“Low lying, gently undulating landform*
- ***Large arable fields with smaller parcels of grazing land adjacent to settlements***
- *Shelter belts*
- *Network of ditches and streams*
- *Winding lanes in the south, straight roads in the north”*

3.28. Regarding the evaluation of LCA 225, the landscape character assessment categorised it as having a ‘Poor’ condition with a ‘Moderate’ level of robustness. As such, the strategy was to ‘Improve and Restore’ the landscape through the following 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**
- **Encourage the planting of trees and other appropriate vegetation along watercourses.”**

3.29. LCA 226 ‘Steeple Morden’ covers land to the north and east of Ashwell and is described as having a **“gently rolling chalk landform with a strong pattern of geometrically ordered fields and lanes”** in a mostly homogenous landscape where there is a noticeable absence of settlements. The key characteristics are listed below with those relevant to Site in bold:

- *“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”***

3.30. As per LCA 225, the landscape character assessment classifies the landscape in LCA 226 as having a ‘Poor’ condition and a ‘Moderate’ level of robustness. Consequently, the strategy was to ‘Improve and Restore’ the landscape, following the same guidelines as those highlighted for LCA 225.

North Herts Landscape Study (Character, Sensitivity and Capacity) (2011)

3.31. The North Herts Landscape Study, produced by North Hertfordshire District Council in 2011, is based on the original Landscape Character Assessment of the District carried out by Babbie Group in 2004 as well as subsequent Sensitivity and Capacity Work realised by The Landscape Partnership in 2011. The later work added

landscape sensitivity and capacity to the evaluation of the identified character areas as well as provided additional guidelines relating to the built environment to complement the landscape management guidelines. It was agreed the North Herts Landscape Study would act as supporting background evidence for the LDF in 2011.

- 3.32. Landscape Character Area (LCA) 224 – ‘North Baldock Chalk Uplands’ is considered to be the most relevant LCA to this assessment as its extents border the Site to the south. In terms of sensitivity, the document lists a number of landscape character and visual sensitivities within the character area and concludes the area to be of ‘moderate sensitivity’, with a ‘moderate to high’ visual sensitivity as a result of open views and skylines throughout the character area. LCA 224 is also considered to be of ‘moderate landscape value’ as a result of ***“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.”***
- 3.33. In terms of the capacity to accommodate development for small urban extensions (<5ha) within the character area, this is considered to be ‘low to moderate’ and this is stated as likely to reduce the openness of the fringes of Ashwell. However, it should be emphasised the Site falls within the settlement boundary of Ashwell and to the immediate north of LCA 224 therefore this capacity study finding does not apply to the Site.
- 3.34. As well as the landscape management guidelines that were included as part of the original Landscape Character Assessment produced by Babbie Group, the document contains built development guidelines for LCA 224 to accompany these:
- ***“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.***

3.35. Both LCA 225 'Hinxworth Lowlands' and LCA 226 'Steeple Morden Plain' are also assessed in terms of sensitivity and capacity within the document. LCA 225 to the north-west of Ashwell is evaluated as being of 'moderate' landscape character and visual sensitivity with a 'moderate low landscape value'. LCA 226 to the north and east of the village is described as being of 'low to moderate' landscape character sensitivity, 'moderate' visual sensitivity and with a 'moderate low landscape value'.

3.36. It is not considered relevant to include the findings on capacity or list the built development guidelines that accompany LCA 225 and LCA 226 due to the village of Ashwell being situated between the Site and these areas.

Aspect Landscape Character Assessment

3.37. While the LCA provide a broad-brush approach and do not necessarily reflect the current qualities of the Site itself and its immediate localised setting.

3.38. In order to assess the effects on the landscape resource, the 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment', Third Edition, and Technical Note provides a number of definitions for landscape susceptibility, landscape value and finally landscape sensitivity, as follows:

- Landscape Susceptibility: *"the ability of a defined landscape to accommodate the specific proposed development without undue negative consequences";*
- Landscape Value: *"the relative value that is attached to different landscape by society. A landscape may be valued by different stakeholders for a whole variety of reasons"; and*
- Landscape Sensitivity: *"a term applied to specific receptors, combining judgements of the susceptibility of the receptor to the specific type of change or development proposed and the value related to that receptor."*

- 3.39. In terms of landscape sensitivity, there are a number of factors that both influence and affect the value of the landscape character of the site and its setting, and their susceptibility to change. The sensitivity of a particular landscape in relation to new development can be categorised as 'very high', 'high', 'medium', 'low' or 'negligible'. This takes into account the susceptibility of the receptor to the type of development proposed and the value attached to different landscapes by society.

Landscape Susceptibility

- 3.40. In terms of the susceptibility of the landscape resource to accommodate change of the type proposed, it is considered that the presence of the existing settlement on three boundaries reduces the susceptibility of the Site to change resulting from residential development. It is therefore considered that the landscape character of the Site has capacity to accommodate sensitively designed residential development. The susceptibility of the landscape resource to change of the type proposed is considered to be **moderate**.

Landscape Value

- 3.41. GLVIA3 sets out at Box 5.1 a range of factors that can help in the identification of valued landscapes. This has been reviewed and updated in the light of the Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 02/21 '*Assessing landscape value outside national designations*' (TGN 02/21) and the below considers the updated guidance. These factors include:

- **Natural heritage** (ecological, geological, geomorphological which contributes positively to landscape).
- **Cultural heritage** (archaeological, historical, or cultural which contributes positively to landscape).
- **Landscape condition** (physical condition and intactness of landscape elements / structure).
- **Associations** (landscape connected with notable people, events or with the arts).
- **Distinctiveness** (strong landscape character, features, contributing to sense of identity).
- **Recreational** (offering recreational opportunities where experience of landscape is important).

- **Perceptual** (Scenic) (visual quality / appeals to the senses).
- **Perceptual** (Wildness & tranquillity) (perceptual value of landscape, tranquillity, wildness, and remoteness).
- **Functional** (landscapes performing clearly identifiable functions).

3.42. Table 1 below seeks to assess the value of the Site (including the immediate adjoining localised landscape setting) based on the amended Box 5.1 & TGN 02/21 criteria.

Table 1: Assessment of Landscape Value of the Site

Criteria	Definition	Assessment of Value
Natural Heritage	Landscape with clear evidence of ecological, geological, geomorphological or physiographic interest which contribute positively to the landscape	Low – there are some boundary vegetation features which contribute positively to the settlement edge. Asides this, the site offers little ecological value as grazing / pastoral land and contains no landscape features of note. The site is not washed over by any qualitative landscape designations.
Cultural Heritage	Landscape with clear evidence of archaeological, historical or cultural interest which contribute positively to the landscape	Medium – The site lies within the Ashwell Conservation Area and while it does not contain any historic or listed structures, it is noted that there are some heritage assets in the localised landscape with some intervisibility with the site.
Landscape Condition	Landscape which is in a good physical state both with regard to individual elements and overall landscape structure	Low – there is little in terms of internal vegetation with the ground layer pastoral land, and some vegetation of varying quality comprising the boundaries.
Associations	Landscape which is connected with notable people, events and the arts	Low – There are no known literary or historic associations with the Site itself apart from a key view
Distinctiveness	Landscape that has a strong sense of identity	Low / None – The Site itself has no rare or particularly unusual features that contributes to local character or sense of identity.
Recreational	Landscape offering recreational opportunities where experience of	Low – The Site is not crossed by any Public Rights of Way, and is not publicly accessible, or used for any recreational use.

	landscape is important	
Perceptual (Scenic)	Landscape that appeals to the senses, primarily the visual sense	Medium / Low – the presence of built form to the north, east and west reduces the visual aesthetic of the site itself. The site itself is recognised as a key view within the adopted Neighbourhood Plan.
Perceptual (Wildness & Tranquillity)	Landscape with a strong perceptual value notably wildness, tranquillity and/or dark skies	Medium / Low – the presence of built form to the north, east and west reduces the sense of wildness and tranquillity relating to the site and its wider setting. It is acknowledged that tranquillity increases closer to the southern boundary.
Functional	Landscape which performs a clearly identifiable and valuable function, particularly in the healthy functioning of the landscape	Low – There is no internal vegetation of note and is a parcel of pastoral land abutting development on three sides. The site contains little in terms of internal vegetation and does not contribute notably to the wider landscape. The large undeveloped area has some drainage function.

3.43. It is considered that the site and its immediate setting do not represent a “valued landscape” within the context of para 180 (a) of the NPPF and that the landscape value of the Site and its immediate setting **medium**.

Landscape Sensitivity

3.44. Landscape Sensitivities are outlined below;

- Pastoral field in current use: Medium Sensitivity
- Character of the existing settlement edge: Medium Sensitivity
- Rising topography to the south: Low/Medium Sensitivity
- Relationship with open arable landscape to the north beyond Ashwell: Medium Sensitivity
- Character of small nucleated settlements in the surrounding area: Low/Medium Sensitivity
- Overall character of the Site: **Medium** Sensitivity
- Overall character of the wider landscape setting: **Medium** Sensitivity

3.45. The Site is considered to be consistent in terms of its land use, features and elements with that of the immediate surrounding area and is not remarkable nor does it include any features which elevate above ordinary landscape. The Site is not considered to represent a “valued landscape” in relation to the NPPF, and has been brought into the settlement framework under the policies of the North Hertfordshire

District Council Local Plan 2011-2031 (adopted Nov 2022), associating the land more closely with the village of Ashwell than the arable farmland to the south.

Visual Baseline Assessment

- 3.46. A number of viewpoints were identified in the LVIA, refer Appendix 3, informed by a thorough desk study and field assessment, in order to demonstrate the visibility of the Site within the localised and wider setting and this assessment has reviewed these and the findings in the appraisal. The views were taken from publicly accessible viewpoints and although are not exhaustive, are considered to provide a fair representation of the visual environment within which the Site is set. The visual analysis in the LVIA sought to identify the views that would, potentially, experience the greatest degree of change as a result of the proposals. The views in this assessment are those which have been assessed based on Aspect LVIA methodology attached, refer Appendix 2.
- 3.47. The visual assessment is included within Appendix 4 and the baseline studies have fully considered the various factors required, as detailed in Section 6 of the 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment', Third Edition (GLVIA3) published in April 2013 by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, and the Landscape Institute Technical Note 06/19.
- 3.48. The photographs for this LVIA were taken in September 2021 by Chartered Landscape Architects using a 35mm equivalent digital SLR camera at a 50mm focal length in line with LI Tech Note 06/19. The weather was overcast albeit with good visibility. The full assessment of effects upon the visual environment and each viewpoint is detailed in section 5 of this report and the table below provides a summary of the viewpoint assessment. Table 2 below identifies the locations of the identified viewpoints, together with the key receptors and considered sensitivity.

Table 2: Baseline Visual Assessment

Viewpoint	Location	Approx. Distance and Direction from centre of Application Site unless otherwise stated	Receptors	Sensitivity
1	Highway to Woodforde Close	30m south west	Walkers / Users of PRow	High
2	PRow Ashwell 016 BOAT	Adjacent to south-western Site boundary	Walkers / Users of PRow	High
3	PRow Ashwell 016 BOAT	Adjacent to southern Site boundary	Walkers / Users of PRow	High
4	PRow Ashwell 016 BOAT at junction with Station Road	150m east	Walkers / Users of PRow	High
5	PRow Ashwell 018#1	500m north-west	Walkers / Users of PRow	High
6 & 7	PRow Ashwell 018#2	800-850m north	Walkers / Users of PRow	High
8	PRow Ashwell 018#2	900m north	Walkers / Users of PRow	High
9 & 10	Lucas Lane	Adjacent to northern edge of Site	Walkers / Residents / Motorists	High

3.49. Views of the Site are relatively localised given the high degree of visual containment of Ashwell provided by surrounding mature vegetation and tree cover. This ensures that while the southern part of the Site lies on raised ground, the Site is not readily visible from most of the viewpoints identified in this LVIA. The line of mature trees along Ashwell Street to the south of Site along with the existing landform and topography of the Site ensure that views from the south are extremely well contained.

3.50. As an overview, apart from the views by residents into Site from adjacent properties, there are only limited views of the Site from the immediate setting which are perceived by higher sensitivity receptors (i.e. the users of PRow Ashwell 016 Byway Open to All Traffic (BOAT) along Ashwell Street adjacent to the southern Site

boundary. As illustrated by the photographic record in this LVIA opportunities for middle and longer distance views are significantly reduced by the existing vegetation structure in and around Ashwell, as well as the existing topography. In the wider context, glimpsed views of the Site are visible from PRow Ashwell 018 to the north-west of Site but otherwise, the Site is visually well-contained by its context.

4. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSALS

- 4.1. The proposed scheme consists of 14 dwellings, access into the Site from Ashwell Street as well as pedestrian access from Lucas Lane, and an area of open space that respects existing views from Ashwell Street to the south as well as creating a new publicly accessible views towards the Grade I listed Church of St Mary.
- 4.2. The previous planning application (ref: 22/03094/FP) layout provided for 14 dwellings, access from Ashwell Street and associated open space. Within the layout a viewing corridor was achieved to appreciate the view looking northwest towards the Grade I listed Church of St Mary. This builds upon the narrower undeveloped view corridor from the previous planning application (ref 20/00126/FP).
- 4.3. During the most recent application process, no landscape related comments were received, and as such, it is implied that the principle of development – from a landscape perspective – is accepted.
- 4.4. During the 2020 application process under ref 20/00126/FP, several landscape related comments were received.
- 4.5. The Principal Landscape and Urban Design Officer made the following comments on the original and amended plans copied below:

“The 1.1ha site lies on the south-east edge of Ashwell within the settlement boundary and the Conservation Area. It is also covered by an Archaeological Area designation. The site is currently grassland and slopes down towards Lucas Lane. It is bounded by residential development on its west, north and east sides and by Ashwell Street along its southern boundary. Ashwell Street is PROW Ashwell 016, a BOAT (Byway Open to All Traffic) which runs along Ashwell Street between Kingsland Way and Station Road. The fall across the site down towards Lucas Lane affords views to and from the north from the upper slopes and from gaps in the boundary vegetation along Ashwell Street.

There is an existing gated access off Ashwell Street which at this point is an unsurfaced, single track lane bordered by mature hedgerow trees and shrubs growing on banks lining the route. These features create a rural

character more akin to a country lane. Any change to the access into the site will impact on the rural character of this part of Ashwell Street.”

- 4.6. The Principal Landscape and Urban Design Officer reached the following conclusion considering the amended plans and information submitted:

“Conclusion:

The amendments do not fully address my concerns about the layout, and I am still particularly concerned about the access off Ashwell Street. There is still insufficient information provided on the changes to Ashwell Street to accommodate the new junction into the site to assess the full landscape and visual impact of creating a vehicular access off Ashwell Street. The information that has been submitted indicates that the development will have a detrimental effect on the character of Ashwell Street. Without an acceptable access into the site there can be no development.”

- 4.7. Further comments were received from the Parish Council summarised below;
- impact upon the rural character this part of Ashwell Street;
 - visual impact on the village being located on a slope;
 - Loss of view from the existing gate over the Cam Valley;
 - Loss of open space;
 - Density too high.
- 4.8. Comments from Historic England, 3rd September 2020, noted that “ ***The impact upon key view 23 would also be damaging as it would be completely lost. The view over the green space to Lucas Lane and countryside beyond would be dominated by housing and the provision of view corridors would not overcome this harm.***”
- 4.9. With regard to the North Hertfordshire District Council Building Conservation Officer dated April 2020, the officer notes the lost key view and the cumulative impact of consented residential properties in the locality.
- 4.10. Noting these concerns the proposed layout has been informed by ASP3 Landscape Opportunities and Constraints with the landscape proposals illustrated within its context on ASP4 Landscape Strategy plan.

- 4.11. Vehicular access will be from Ashwell Street to the south. This has been carefully designed in conjunction with the technical requirements set out within the Transport Assessment that accompanies this application. The extent of surfacing along Ashwell Street has been reduced with the access located further to the west resulting in a limited additional surfacing extending from Woodforde Close. The proposals also include new pedestrian access and links which will provide greater access to the wider countryside.
- 4.12. Surfacing will be detailed to ensure that the rural character of Ashwell Street is not harmed and appropriate planting will reinforce this characteristic
- 4.13. The significant improvements from the original number of dwellings has been reduced from 24 to 14 dwellings and include single and 1.5 storeys dwellings reducing the density and bulk of the proposals from the local and wider setting. Garages have also been removed, again, reducing the density of the site layout. Attention has been paid for the careful locating and heights of the properties in relation to the topography of the site to ensure that views in from the north will be entirely compatible within this village setting.
- 4.14. The obvious benefits of the reduction in dwelling number is that a far greater area can be enhanced and left open. The previous application viewing corridor has been reconfigured and, as the view will become publicly accessible, providing a public benefit from a previously private view of St Mary's church.
- 4.15. The introduction of an access road is not considered significant as any user of the BOAT will be aware of adjacent houses with current accesses onto the byway and is entirely in character. With reference to VP1 - 4, the user of the BOAT will have either walked through Woodforde Close and associated built form or would have passed the various residential access and associated fencing and gates.
- 4.16. In addition, the previous layout had built form located up to the western boundary which would reduce views to the valley landscape. The landscape-led proposals noted this and the heavily reduced density and number of dwellings ensures that the opportunities to view to the Cam Valley to the north is retained.

“An important distant view through Hunts Close pasture land across Lucas Lane housing and beyond to open countryside in the North towards

Wrestlingworth. The view projects a strong feeling of space and rural tranquillity.”

- 4.17. To ensure that the key view (KV23) is maintained the extent of open space has been significantly increased. The previous proposals had approximately 625m² (0.0625ha) whilst the proposals provide approximately 5530m² (0.55ha). The extensive open space will ensure that the characterful parcels of open land set within the village can be retained and enhanced. It is accepted that KV23 will be somewhat affected by the development proposals. See VP1 wireframe within Appendix 3.
- 4.18. These enhancements can also be appreciated by locals from the current private view. Proposals include native boundary planting reducing views into the site specifically along Ashwell Street. A community orchard will also be provided for local produce.
- 4.19. To ensure views are maintained from the key view, native tree planting proposed, adjacent to the view, will be specified as being low growing resulting in no change to the view.
- 4.20. With the retention of significant open space there are clear enhancements with 10% BNG improvements over the existing.

5. ASSESSMENT OF EFFECTS

- 5.1. To assess the nature of the change of the proposals, it is appropriate to appraise the impact of the proposed development upon the existing landscape character and visual environment within which the site is situated.
- 5.2. The baseline landscape character has been discussed in section 3 of this report and these characteristics are tested below in particular in relation to Policy ASH10 within the Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan.
- 5.3. In order to assess the effect of a development on the receiving environment, it is important to understand the quality and sensitivity of the landscape, the sensitivity of visual receptors, and the magnitude of change.
- 5.4. The assessment of effects have been derived from guidance provided within GLVIA3 (Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3 Edition) published by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment in April 2013. The methodology is contained within Appendix 2 of this document.

Effect upon Landscape Character

- 5.5. **Existing character of Ashwell Street** – Noting that the existing character of Ashwell Street (between Woodforde Close and Station Road length) is one of a tree lined BOAT with current access's taken onto the street from residential development along the majority of the length, the proposals do not significantly affect the current situation. Where there is tree removal, additional native trees will be planted to provide a net gain of native tree planting to the local setting.
- 5.6. The magnitude of change is Low / Medium resulting in a **Low / Moderate** significance of change.
- 5.7. **Pastoral field in current use** – Noting that the previous layout only provided a small area (625m²) of open space to the north east, the revised proposed and current proposal significantly exceeded this figure with approximately 5530m² retained as open space. This will ensure that the retained open space can be appreciated by the wider community being publicly accessible and appreciated as a

small open parcel of land characteristic to the area. In addition, the proposals have accommodated the important view to the landscape to the north (SV11 / KV23) which will be retained using suitable tree and hedge species retaining views to the north.

- 5.8. In addition, the proposed single and one and half storey heights, and two-storey dwellings in a farmstead-style appearance, will ensure that the change will be in character with the current built up boundaries on three sides of the site.
- 5.9. In terms of magnitude of change it is considered that with the retention of this open land and low density layout would be Medium with a significance of **Moderate**.
- 5.10. **Character of the existing settlement edge** – Noting that the proposals have respected the natural topography of the site, provides public access to this private setting, allows views towards the church and historic core of Ashwell, and provides biodiversity benefits the resulting magnitude of change is Low / Medium resulting in a **Low / Moderate** significance of change.
- 5.11. **Relationship with open arable landscape to the north beyond Ashwell** – Noting the extensive open space and viewing cones within the site will be retained or opened up from private appreciation it is considered that the magnitude of change Low resulting in a significance of **Low / Negligible** significance of change.
- 5.12. **Character of small nucleated settlements in the surrounding area** – With regard to the highly limited appreciation of the proposals from the northern settlements there would be a **Negligible to None Neutral** significance of change.
- 5.13. **Overall character of the site** – With the reduction of the number of dwellings / densities and the more extensive open space, it is considered that the magnitude of change is Medium with a **Moderate** significance of effect.
- 5.14. **Overall character of the wider landscape setting** – Noting the village setting with 3 sides enclosed by built form and that the site does not share key characteristics of the adjoining LCA's, the effect upon these large-scale areas will be highly limited with a **None / Negligible Neutral** effect.
- 5.15. It is clear that the established vegetation structure and mature treescape which exists within the locality in gardens provides positive landscape features, which also help to integrate the existing built form and settlement within the wider landscape.

This ensures that the proposals within the application site are not readily perceived and as a result will not have a significant impact upon the wider landscape character.

- 5.16. Furthermore, it is clear that the site itself is influenced far more greatly on three sides by a number of urbanising components associated with the village built character than the wider rural landscape setting to the north.

Effect upon the Visual Environment

- 5.17. As an overview, the Application Site is visually well contained due to the landscape setting, established vegetation structures associated with the Site boundaries and the localised setting of the Site. The landscape-led proposals have considered the concerns raised during the previous application and have responded positively to these to ensure the proposals can be accommodated.

Table 4: Effect upon the Visual Environment

Viewpoint(s)	Location	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change Year 1	Magnitude of Change Year 10	Significance of Effect at Year 1	Significance of Effect at Year 10
1	Woodforde Close	High	Negligible		Minor Adverse	
				Negligible		Negligible Neutral
NOTES: Taken from Woodforde Close / PRoW Ashwell 016 BOAT, approximately 15m from the south-west corner of Site. The existing built form to the left of the view is sensitively integrated with this view. The proposed development will include a very minor additional element within this view. The magnitude of change is considered to be Negligible in Year 1 resulting in a Minor adverse significance of effect. By year 10, the proposed boundary treatment would have matured with a result of very similar viewpoint to that is currently present and would result in a Negligible magnitude of change and an effect of Negligible Neutral.						
2	PRoW Ashwell 016 Byway Open to All Traffic	High	Medium / Low		Moderate Adverse	
				Low		Low Neutral
NOTES: Taken from PRoW Ashwell 016 BOAT, approximately 4m from the south-west corner of Site. The photograph illustrates the nature of the mature vegetation along the southern Site boundary as well as the view into Site from the existing access gate and the views of the wider landscape to the north. From this footpath and location, the users have views over the Site and the existing residential dwellings associated with Lucas Lane are glimpsed, particularly when walking east along the PRoW, beyond the open nature of the pastoral field that forms the Site. The revised layout of the Proposed Development has been carefully designed to largely retain the view which is classified as a key view (KV23) in the Ashwell Conservation Area Character Statement (2019). The plan ASP5, Access Strategy Plan, illustrates in detail the access proposals. Dwellings have been contained to the eastern and northern portions of the Site and the large area of open space to the west of the proposals seeks to retain and enhance the current Site character while offering publicly accessible views towards the Church and village core, with carefully selected tree specimens integrating the Site more into its immediate context while also preserving long distance views and views of the roofscape along Lucas Lane to the north. As such, the magnitude of change is considered to be Low/Medium in year 1 and applying professional judgement this would result in a Low / Moderate Adverse significance of effect. By year 10, the integration of the scheme into the local context would result in a Low magnitude and an effect of Low Neutral.						
3	PRoW Ashwell 016 Byway Open to All Traffic	High	Negligible		Moderate / Minor Adverse	
				Negligible		Minor Neutral
NOTES: Taken from PRoW Ashwell 016 BOAT directly south of Site, this view reflects the majority of the views of Site from along Ashwell Street. Mature vegetation structure is situated on an elevated bank and lines the PRoW corridor between this and Site. As a result of gaps in the vegetation, glimpsed views of existing residential properties along						

	Lucas Lane as well as glimpsed views of the wider landscape to the north are afforded from this location.					
	The proposals show that development will be set back from the southern edge, which will accommodate a landscaped buffer ensuring minimal impact upon visual amenity associated with the PRoW. Furthermore, the landscape proposals provide a row of native understorey hedgerow planting to reinforce this boundary and to sure up any gaps in the vegetation. This will further filter views to the north and north-west, while reinforcing the existing vegetation line. Therefore, the magnitude of change is initially considered to be Negligible, resulting in a Moderate / Minor Adverse effect at year 1. After year 10 the proposed native understorey planting along the southern Site boundary will have established and further filter / soften views of the Proposed Development, meaning the magnitude of change would remain Negligible but the effect would reduce to Minor Neutral .					
4	PRoW Ashwell 016 Byway Open to All Traffic	High	No Change		None	
				No Change		None
NOTES: Taken from the PRoW Ashwell 016 BOAT to the east, looking west towards Site. The Site is located approximately 200m along Ashwell Street but is not viewed from this location due to the existing intervening mature vegetation that lines the route.						
The magnitude of change in year 1 and year 10 is therefore None, resulting in a significance of effect of None at year 1 and 10.						
5	Sports pitches	Medium	Negligible / None		Negligible / None	
				Negligible / None		Negligible / None Neutral
NOTES: Taken from Sports pitches to the north of the Site, this view illustrates the village edge character being built form set within a verdant setting. The white rendering to the built form in the foreground draws the eye although being set in the vegetated setting sites well within this view.						
The proposals will be a very small additional to the roofscape but will not break the tree'd skyline. The magnitude of change is considered to be Negligible to None resulting in a Negligible / None effect at Year 1 and after Year 10 would remain Negligible / None with a Neutral effect.						
6, 7 & 8	PRoW Ashwell 018 #2 & #1	High	Negligible		Negligible / None Adverse	
				Negligible / None Change		Minor Neutral
NOTES: Taken from PRoW Ashwell 018#2 to the north of Site, the Viewpoints looks south towards the eastern extents of Ashwell. In views 6 and 7, the Site is discernible and glimpsed views of this and the wider village are afforded. There is substantial intervening vegetation structure that integrates Ashwell into the landscape and limits views of the built form and the Site.						
The users of this footpath would have glimpsed / partial views of the Proposed Development beyond the intervening mature vegetation but the south-western area of Site that is most visible from the PRoW is proposed to be retained as open space therefore views of the Site from these viewpoints would remain similar. Therefore, the magnitude of change is initially considered to be Negligible / None at most, resulting in a Minor Adverse effect at year 1. After year 10 the proposed planting would have						

	established, integrating the built form into its surroundings and the Public Open Space will remain largely unchanged, resulting in a magnitude of change of Negligible / No Change and the effect reducing to Minor Neutral given that the Site falls within the village setting and retains its existing character.				
	View 8 would result in No Change due to intervening vegetation and built form.				
9, 10	Lucas Lane, north of Site	High	Negligible / None		Negligible Neutral
				Negligible / None	Negligible Neutral
NOTES: Taken on the pavement along Lucas Lane, directly north of Site showing the current view of the location of the proposed footpath link that is heavily vegetated.					
The robust nature of the existing vegetation forms a green wedge in this section to the immediate south of Lucas Lane. The proposals seek to create a footpath link between the Site and Lucas Lane and the vegetation would need to be partially cleared in order to accommodate this. The landscape proposals illustrated on show that the retained existing vegetation will be reinforced with tree planting and ornamental evergreen shrub planting in order to soften the impact of this change. As such, the magnitude of change is initially considered to be Negligible / None for walkers and residents and None for motorists, resulting in a Minor Neutral effect at year 1. After year 10 the proposed structural planting will have integrated with the existing vegetation to further filter / soften views along the new pedestrian link, meaning the magnitude of change would reduce to Negligible Neutral for walkers and residents and None for motorists and the effect, applying professional judgement, is considered to be Negligible Neutral for walkers and residents over the longer term and None for motorists.					

- 5.18. Similarly, within Viewpoint A, although currently private, the location of development towards the northeastern corner and eastern edge, and retention of Public Open Space along the western edge maintains long views from within the Proposed Development towards the Church of St Mary, and will provide an enhanced and attractive view for the greater public benefit.
- 5.19. As identified by the visual assessment, views of the Site are highly localised as a result of a combination of existing mature vegetation structure and existing built up settlement which characterises the immediate and local setting of the Site.
- 5.20. The proposals would be visible from some short sections of public rights of way - specifically from along Ashwell Street and Lucas Lane - within the immediate setting, although many views will be glimpsed only. The proposals would be seen in the context of the existing settlement edge with the combination of intervening landform and mature vegetation structure reducing the intervisibility of the proposals from the local and wider more open setting.
- 5.21. The inclusion of limited residential built form will not be out of character from that which already exists in the immediate setting of the Site. Views of residential built

form are already a component of a number of localised views and therefore the change will not appear out of character or alien.

- 5.22. As distances increases from the site, the presence of intervening valley landscape creates a notable degree of visual containment ensuring that views towards Ashwell are contained. The proposals will not compromise this character and it is considered that the proposed development within the site would not be visible from the wider landscape setting.
- 5.23. In order to illustrate these effects further, a number of wireframes, refer Appendix 5, have been produced. Viewpoint 1 has been taken from the existing access gate to the south-west of the Site. It is clear that the openness of the Site largely remains intact and continues to perform as an open parcel of land within Ashwell, retaining most of the key view (KV23) over the Site and wider Cam valley landscape beyond. Careful specification regarding tree heights will ensure that this remains.
- 5.24. Viewpoint 5 as illustrated by VP2 in the wireframes found in **Appendix 3** will see a minor change, set within the context of the village and will not breaking the skyline which effectively integrates the change successfully.
- 5.25. Overall, it is considered that the proposals can be integrated within this context and would not give rise to significant long term adverse effects upon the localised or wider visual environment.
- 5.26. It is acknowledged that the proposals would change the visual environment within the immediate context of the Site. However, the proposals have been carefully developed to incorporate high quality design, landscaping and the built form is set back from the southern boundary with Ashwell Street to reflect that of the locality.
- 5.27. As the planting matures it would create a robust green edge and soften the built form within the immediate visual environment. The type of development proposed is not unusual in this landscape context, with residential built form present to the north characterising the localised setting and the village. The proposals would not be prominent over medium or long distances and would not harm the public's enjoyment of the countryside from the local or wider PRoW network. It is considered that the proposals can be integrated without significant long term adverse effects to the receiving visual environment and residential amenities.

Effect upon Landscape Related Policy

- 5.28. Both national and local policy guidance seeks to ensure that Proposed Development should promote good design which responds to the character of the setting ensuring that the proposals are integrated within their context. It is considered that the proposals have been carefully designed with their context in mind and, as such, a sympathetic and appropriate development will be achieved.
- 5.29. The Site is not covered by any qualitative landscape designations at a national or local level.
- 5.30. Furthermore, as set out within Section 2 of this LVIA, it is considered that neither the Site nor its immediate setting represent a “valued landscape” with reference to para 180(a) of the NPPF. It is considered that the high quality proposals respond positively to the localised landscape and settlement edge setting and recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.
- 5.31. It is considered that the Proposed Development complies with all development management policies and therefore impacts / effect are mitigated as far as considered reasonable by policy.
- 5.32. Paragraph 11 of the NPPF seeks to promote sustainable development unless any harm significantly and demonstrably outweighs the benefits of the proposals. It is acknowledged that the Proposed Development would result in a degree of change within the immediate context of the Site. However, this is not considered so great as to significantly or demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the scheme. Therefore, it is considered that the Proposed Development can be integrated without significant harm to the character or visual amenities of the receiving landscape.

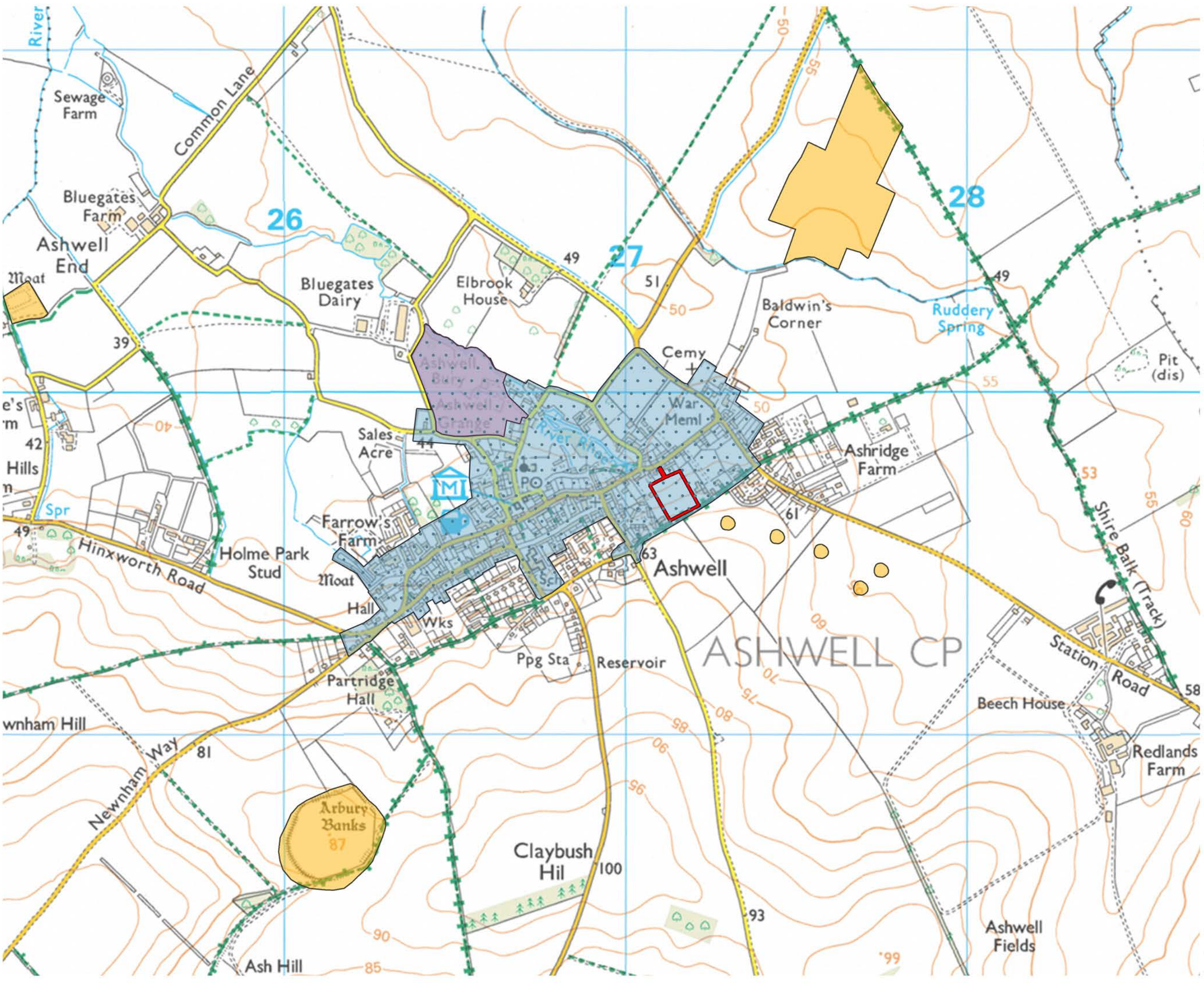
6. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1. Aspect Landscape Planning Ltd has been appointed by Manor Oak Homes Ltd to undertake a landscape and visual impact assessment (LVIA). The LVIA follows guidance relating to the GLVIA3 (Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3 Edition) published by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment in April 2013.
- 6.2. A detailed appraisal of the surrounding study area has been undertaken using Ordnance Survey data, historical map data, local policy and published character assessments. This has informed the on-site field analysis to identify key viewpoints, analyse the landscape character and visual environment of the local area, and determine the extent and significance of any potential landscape and visual effects.
- 6.3. The clear improvements in relation to density from the original number of dwellings has been reduced from 24 to 14 dwellings, to include single and 1.5 storeys dwellings among the two-storey dwellings in a farmstead-style appearance, reducing the bulk of the proposals from the local and wider setting.
- 6.4. The obvious benefits of the reduction in dwelling number is that a far greater area can be enhanced and left open maintaining the open character, in particular from Ashwell Street. Identified key views from within and across the site are maintained, and as the land will become publicly accessible, more localised views from the land towards the Church of St Mary and the historic core of Ashwell will provide a benefit to local residents.
- 6.5. The introduction of an access road is not considered significant as any user of the BOAT will be aware of adjacent houses with access onto the BOAT and is entirely in character.
- 6.6. There will be a degree of tree removal, but the quality of the trees is not significant and can be replaced with more appropriate native tree stock. The current view to the north can be retained and enhanced due to the revised proposals. Proposed hardstanding has been minimised and surface treatment will ensure the access road will be characteristic to this locality.
- 6.7. The previous layout had built form located up to the western boundary which would reduce views to the valley landscape. The landscape-led proposals noted this and

the heavily reduced density and number of dwellings ensures that the opportunities to view to the Cam Valley, as noted as a significant view (KV23, SV12) to the north is largely preserved.

- 6.8. The extensive open space will ensure that the characterful parcels of land set within the village can be retained and enhanced. These enhancements can also be appreciated by locals from the current private ownership. Proposals include native boundary planting reducing views into the site specifically along Ashwell Street. A community orchard will also provide local produce.
- 6.9. The Landscape Strategy Plan has been informed by the site constraints and opportunities, the recommendations from the ecologists to provide 10% BNG, and local policy objectives to ensure that an appropriate and high quality landscaped setting is achieved.
- 6.10. It is clear that the established vegetation structure and mature treescape which exists within the locality provides positive landscape features, which also help to integrate the existing built form and settlement within the wider landscape. This ensures that the proposals within the application site are not readily perceived and as a result will not have a significant impact upon the wider landscape character. Furthermore, being within the village conservation area, it is clear that the site itself is influenced far more greatly by a number of detracting or urban components associated than the wider rural landscape setting of the character area.
- 6.11. The application site is visually well contained, noting housing to three boundaries, in addition to the mature landscape setting, established vegetation structures associated with the site boundaries and the localised setting of the site. The landscape-led proposals have considered the concerns raised during the previous application and responded positively and one which can be accommodated.
- 6.12. It is considered that the application site and receiving environment have the capacity to accommodate the proposals. The proposals will not result in significant harm to the landscape character or visual environment and, as such, it is considered that the proposed development can be successfully integrated in this location and is supportable from a landscape and visual perspective.

ASPECT PLANS



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Key:

- Site Boundary
- Conservation Area
- Park and Garden
- Scheduled Monument

REV	DATE	NOTE	DRAWN	CHK'D

aspect landscape planning

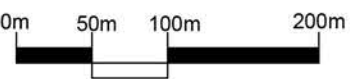
TITLE
Land North of Ashwell Street, Ashwell
Site Location Plan

CLIENT
Manor Oak Homes

SCALE 1:10,000@A3	DATE OCT 2022	DRAWN AS	CHK'D BW
DRAWING NUMBER 7615 / ASP1 / SLP		REVISION	



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Key:

- Site Boundary
- Public Rights of Way
- Listed Buildings
- Conservation Area
- Park and Garden
- Scheduled Monument

REV	DATE	NOTE	DRAWN	CHK'D

aspect landscape planning

TITLE
Land North of Ashwell Street, Ashwell
Site & Setting Plan

CLIENT
Manor Oak Homes

SCALE 1:5,000 @ A3	DATE OCT 2022	DRAWN AS	CHK'D BW
DRAWING NUMBER 7615 / ASP2 / SS	REVISION		

Ashwell Springs site of Special Scientific Interest to the north west of the site.

Possible views of the site available public footpaths to the north.

Removal of vegetation will open up views onto site from Lucas Lane but appropriate ornamental hedge planting will maintain visual enclosure.

Consideration should be given to the visual relationship between the Site and the Grade I Listed church of St Mary.

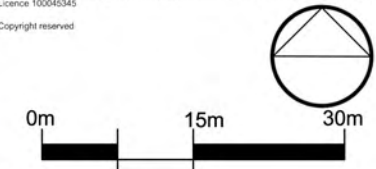
Boundary vegetation on site to be retained and where possible enhanced to help filter views from neighbouring properties.

Existing access on site southern boundary provides view onto site from Ashwell Street and the public right of way.

Trees to be retained where possible to filter views from rising land to the south.

Tall mature trees from skyline to ridge.

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- Key:
- Site Boundary
 - Retained/Existing Vegetation
 - Public right of Way Byway Open to all Traffic
 - Line of Sight from Grade I Listed Church of St Mary
 - Visual Relationship with Adjacent Property
 - Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
 - Boundary Vegetation
 - Ornamental Hedge Planting
 - Tall Mature Trees
 - Existing Access
 - Developable Area
 - Public Open Space Area

A	24.06.24	Updated to comments	AS	AJ
REV	DATE	NOTE	DRAWN	CHK'D
REVISIONS				

aspect landscape planning

TITLE
Ashwell Street, Ashwell
Opportunities and Constraints Plan

CLIENT
Manor Oak Homes

SCALE 1:750 @ A3	DATE JUL 2022	DRAWN SB	CHK'D BW
DRAWING NUMBER 7615 / ASP3 / OC		REVISION A	

Ornamental Hedge Planting
Carpinus betulus (Hornbeam)
Ligustrum ovalifolium (Privet)
Osmanthus x burkwoodii
Skimmia spp
Prunus spp
Escallonia spp
Mixed native species hedges
to site boundaries



Open Space & Native Boundary Trees
Acer campestre
Alnus glutinosa
Betula pendula
Carpinus betulus
Corylus avallana
Crateagus monogyna
Fagus sylvatica
Malus sylvestris
Prunus avium
Quercus robur
Salix alba
Sorbus aria
Sorbus aucuparia
Tilia cordata



Internal Ornamental & Street Trees
Acer campestre 'Streetwise'
Amelanchier arborea 'Robin Hill'
Betula pendula
Carpinus betulus 'Lucas'
Corylus columna
Malus trilobata
Prunus avium 'Plena'
Pyrus calleryana 'Chanticleer'
Sorbus aucuparia 'Sheerwater Seedling'
Tilia cordata 'Rancho'
Tilia tomentosa 'Brabant'
Ulmus 'New Horizon'



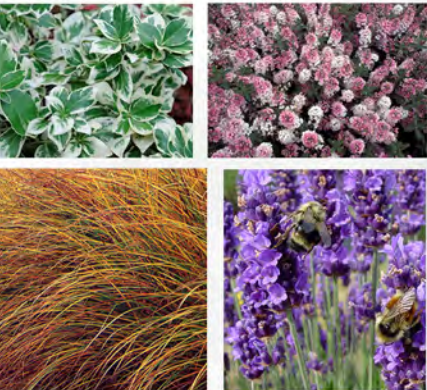
Flower Rich Grassland
Emorsgate EM6 mix for chalk soils



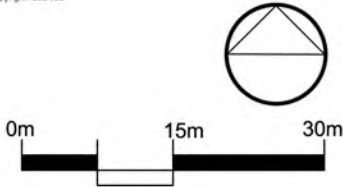
Orchard Fruiting Trees
Lady Hollendale
St Everard
Histon Favourite
Green Harvey
Murfitt's Seeding
Cambridge Seeding
Cambridge Gage
Wallis's Wonder



Ornamental Shrubs
Azalea 'Pleasant White', Cistus corbariensis,
Cornus sanguinea, Euonymus fortunei
'Silver Queen', Fatsia japonica, Hebe
'Nicola's Blush', Hebe rakaiensis, Viburnum
davidii



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Key:

	Site Boundary
	Proposed Road
	Proposed Path
	Proposed Street Trees
	Proposed Open Space Trees
	Proposed Orchard Trees
	Proposed Ornamental Shrubs
	Proposed Ornamental Hedge
	Proposed Flower Rich Grassland
	Proposed Native Understorey Hedgerow Planting
	Proposed Species rich hedgerow

G	23.10.24	Updated to latest layout	AS	AJ
F	20.08.24	Updated to latest layout	AS	BW
E	31.05.24	Updated to latest layout	AS	BW
D	22.05.23	Updated to client comments	AS	BW
C	09.05.23	Updated to comments	AS	BW
B	14.10.22	Updated to comments	BS	BW
A	01.08.22	Updated to comments	SB	BW
REV	DATE	NOTE	DRAWN	CHK'D
REVISIONS				

aspect landscape planning

TITLE			
Ashwell Street, Ashwell Landscape Strategy Plan			
CLIENT			
Manor Oak Homes			
SCALE	DATE	DRAWN	CHK'D
1:750 @ A3	JUL 2022	SB	BW
DRAWING NUMBER	REVISION		
7615 / LSP / ASP4	G		

APPENDIX 1

LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

- 1.1. The Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment have jointly published Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third Edition 2013 (GLVIA3) that gives guidance on carrying out a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA), either as a standalone appraisal or part of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). This methodology takes on board the above guidance.
- 1.2. When assessing character within an urban context, this methodology can be applied to Townscape Assessments and how the development will affect the elements that make up the townscape and its distinctive character.
- 1.3. The main stages of the LVIA process are outlined below. This process will identify and assess the potential effects of a development on the landscape resource and the visual environment.

1. Baseline study

Landscape

- Define the scope of the assessment.
- Outline the planning policy context, including any landscape designations.
- Establish the landscape baseline through a site visit and an assessment of published Landscape Character Assessments to identify the value and susceptibility of the landscape resource (receptor), at community, local, national or international levels where appropriate.

Visual

- Define the scope of the assessment.
- Identify the extent of visual receptors within the study area, with the use of Zones of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) where appropriate, and establish the number and sensitivity of the representative viewpoint and/or groups of people (receptors) within the study area whose views may be altered as a result of the proposals.

2. Project description

The baseline study highlights clear opportunities and constraints for the integration of the proposals into the receiving environment. The aspects of the scheme at each phase that will potentially give rise to effects on the landscape and visual amenity will need identifying. At this time, the proposals can be modified to ensure that further mitigation measures are incorporated into the design as a response to the local landscape and visual environment.

3. Description of Effects

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

This will identify whether the effects are:

Adverse or Beneficial - beneficial effects would typically occur where a development could positively contribute to the landscape character or view. Neutral effects would include changes that neither add nor detract from the quality and character of an area or view. Adverse effects would typically occur where there is loss of landscape elements, or the proposal detracts from the landscape quality and character of an area or view.

Direct or Indirect – A direct effect will be one where a development will affect a view or the character of an area, either beneficially or adversely. An indirect effect will occur as a result of associated development i.e. a development may result in an increase of traffic on a particular route.

Short, Medium or Long Term – this relates to the expected duration and magnitude of a development. Within this assessment the potential effects are assessed during the Construction Phase, then at Years 1 and 10, following completion of the development.

Reversible or Irreversible – can the resulting effect of a development be mitigated or not, and whether the result of the mitigation is beneficial or adverse.

4. Significance of Effects (EIA only)

A final judgment on whether the effect is likely to be significant, as required by the Regulations. The summary should draw out the key issues and outline the scope for reducing any negative / adverse effects. Mitigation measures need to be identified that may reduce the final judgement on the significance of any residual negative effects in the long term.

Assessing effects

Landscape Sensitivity

- 1.4. The sensitivity of a particular landscape in relation to new development is categorised as high, medium, low or negligible. This takes into account the susceptibility of the receptor to the type of development proposed and the value attached to different landscapes by society. The following table explains each threshold and the factors that make up the degree of sensitivity.

Table 1: Landscape Sensitivity Thresholds

Sensitivity	Definition
High	Landscape resource where there is a high susceptibility to change. Landscapes would be considered of high value, have a high degree of intimacy, strong landscape structure, relatively intact and contain features worthy of protection. Townscapes may include a high proportion of historic assets. Typical examples may be of National or County importance e.g. within the setting of National Parks, National Landscapes (AONB's), Conservation Areas etc.
Medium	Landscape resource where there is a medium susceptibility to change. Landscapes would be considered of medium value, good landscape structure, with some detracting features or evidence of recent change. Townscapes may include a proportion of historic assets or of cultural value locally. Typical examples may be designated for their value at District level.
Low	Landscape resource where there is a low susceptibility to change. Landscapes would be considered of low value, and contain evidence of previous landscape change.
Negligible	Landscape resource where there is little or no susceptibility to change. Typical landscapes are likely to be degraded, of weak landscape structure, intensive land uses, and require landscape restoration.

Visual Sensitivity

- 1.5. The sensitivity of the visual receptor will be assessed against the magnitude of visual change, and is categorised as high, medium, low or negligible. Each receptor should be assessed in terms of both their susceptibility to change in views and visual amenity and also the value attached to particular views.

Table 2: Visual Sensitivity Thresholds

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

Effect Magnitude

- 1.6. The magnitude of change relates to the degree in which proposed development alters the fabric of the landscape character or view. This change is categorised as high, medium, low, or negligible.

Table 3: Magnitude of Change

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

Significance Threshold

- 1.7. The magnitude of change is then considered against the sensitivity of the landscape resource as a receptor or the existing character of the panorama / view. In formulating the significance of effect, reasoned professional judgement is required which is explained within the assessment. This is carried out both in terms of the predicted effects on landscape character or on visual amenities. The significance thresholds are predicted as Major, Moderate, Minor, Negligible and None, and can be either beneficial or adverse. Unless otherwise stated, all effects are predicted in the winter months. The extent of mitigation measures should be clearly stated, and in the case of planting proposals, the contribution to reducing adverse effects should be demonstrated at different stages (construction stage, operational stage year 0, and year 10).

Table 4: Significance of Effect

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

- 1.8. The significance of the effect is measured on the ability of a landscape or view to accommodate the change. In assessing the significance of effects, the following matrix will be used to determine the significance thresholds, through determining the sensitivity of the receptor and the magnitude of change.
- 1.9. In terms of assessing whether the effects are significant or otherwise, it is noted that para 5.56 of GLVIA3 states that there are no “hard and fast rules” about what makes a significant effect. For the purposes of this assessment significant landscape or visual effects are those effects considered to be greater than moderate, shaded below in Table 5.

Table 5: Measuring Significance of Effect

	Sensitivity of Receptors				
		High	Medium	Low	Negligible
Magnitude of Change	High	Major	Major/ Moderate	Moderate	Moderate/ Minor
	Medium	Major/ Moderate	Moderate	Moderate/ Minor	Minor
	Low	Moderate	Moderate/ Minor	Minor	Negligible
	Negligible	Moderate/ Minor	Minor	Negligible	Negligible/ None

- 1.10. It should be noted that where there is no perceptible change in terms of the effect magnitude regardless of the sensitivity of the receptor, the significance of the effect on a landscape or view will be none.
- 1.11. A written statement summarising the significance of effects is provided, assisted by the tables and matrices. The final judgement relies on professional judgement that is reasonable, based on clear and transparent methods, suitable training and experience, and a detached and dispassionate view of the development in the final assessment.

Assessing cumulative effects

- 1.12. Cumulative effects are additional effects caused by a proposed development in conjunction with other similar developments. This can be cumulative landscape effects on the physical fabric or character of the landscape, or cumulative visual effects caused by two or more developments being visible from one viewpoint and/or sequence of views. The scope of cumulative effects should be agreed at the outset to establish what schemes are relevant to the assessment, and what planning stage is appropriate. It is generally considered that existing and consented developments and those for which planning applications have been submitted but not yet determined should be included.

APPENDIX 2



NOTES:
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- Key:
- Site Boundary
 - Public Rights of Way
 - Listed Buildings
 - Viewpoint Locations
 - Internal Viewpoint Location
 - Conservation Area
 - Park and Garden
 - Scheduled Monument

REV	DATE	NOTE	DRAWN	CHK'D

aspect landscape planning

TITLE
Land North of Ashwell Street, Ashwell
Viewpoint Location Plan

CLIENT
Manor Oak Homes

SCALE 1:5,000 @ A3	DATE OCT 2022	DRAWN AS	CHK'D BW
DRAWING NUMBER 7615 / ASP3 / VLP		REVISION	



Viewpoint 1 (Panorama Image for Context Only)



Viewpoint Coordinates: E 527107 N 239607

Date & time of photograph: 27/09/2022 09:07

AOD & Viewing height: c. 71m AOD 1.6m

Weather conditions: Clear, good visibility.

Viewpoint 1 (Annotated Panorama Image for Context Only)



Viewpoint 1 (Single Frame Image)



Viewpoint 2 (Panorama Image for Context Only)



Viewpoint Coordinates: E 527133 N 239624

Date & time of photograph: 27/09/2022 13:31

AOD & Viewing height: c. 65m AOD 1.6m

Weather conditions: Clear, good visibility.

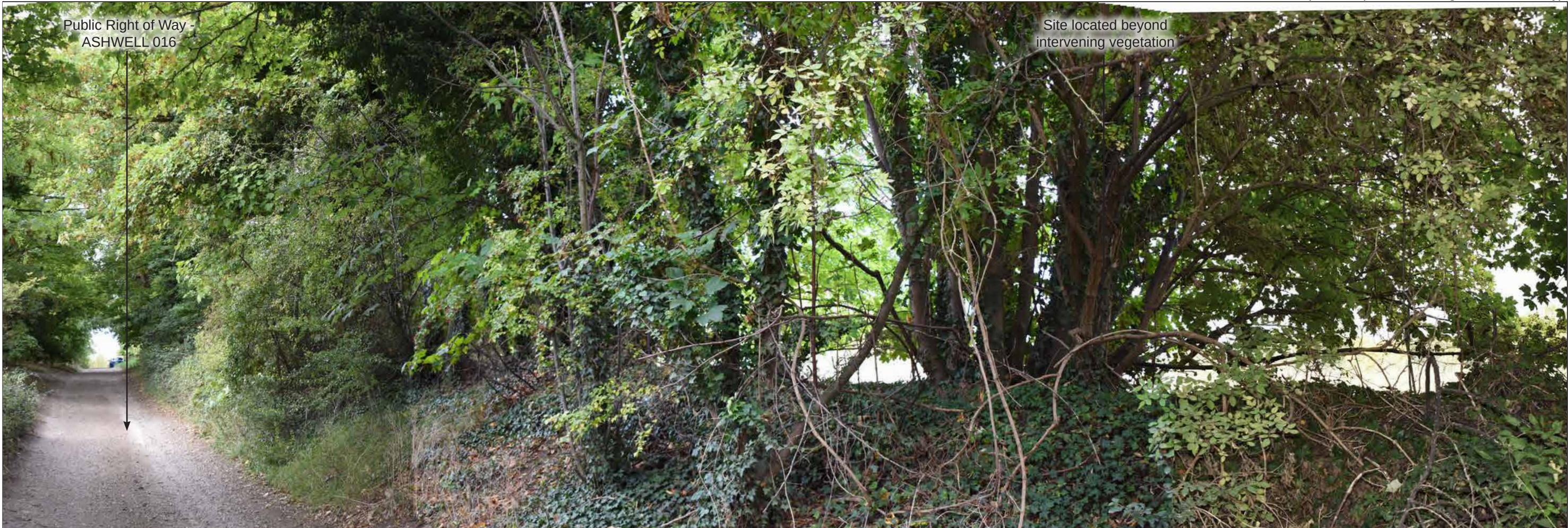
Viewpoint 2 (Annotated Panorama Image for Context Only)



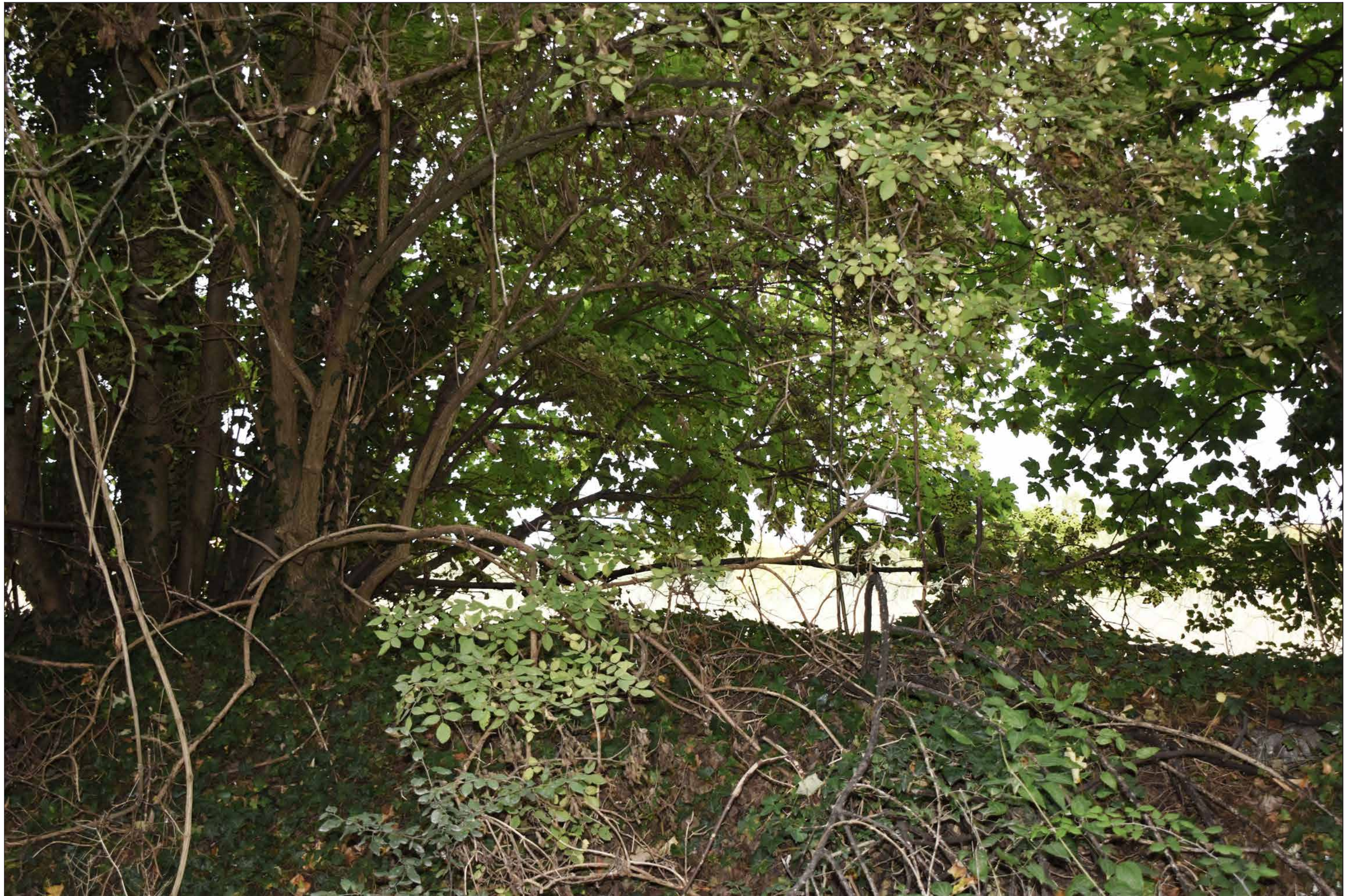
Viewpoint 2 (Single Frame Image)



Viewpoint 3 (Panorama Image for Context Only)



Viewpoint Coordinates: E 527133 N 239624 Date & time of photograph: 27/09/2022 13:31 AOD & Viewing height: c. 65m AOD 1.6m Weather conditions: Clear, good visibility. Viewpoint 3 (Annotated Panorama Image for Context Only)



Viewpoint 3 (Single Frame Image)



Viewpoint 4 (Panorama Image for Context Only)



Viewpoint Coordinates: E 527313 N 239742

Date & time of photograph: 27/09/2022 09:05

AOD & Viewing height: c. 62m AOD 1.6m

Weather conditions: Clear, good visibility.

Viewpoint 4 (Annotated Panorama Image for Context Only)



Viewpoint 4 (Single Frame Image)



Viewpoint 5 (Panorama Image for Context Only)



Viewpoint Coordinates: E 527138 N 239936 Date & time of photograph: 27/09/2022 13:23 AOD & Viewing height: c. 52m AOD 1.6m Weather conditions: Clear, good visibility. Viewpoint 5 (Annotated Panorama Image for Context Only)



Viewpoint 5 (Single Frame Image)



Viewpoint 6 (Panorama Image for Context Only)



Viewpoint Coordinates: E 526865 N 240181 Date & time of photograph: 27/09/2022 13:11 AOD & Viewing height: c. 50m AOD 1.6m Weather conditions: Clear, good visibility. Viewpoint 6 (Annotated Panorama Image for Context Only)



Viewpoint 6 (Single Frame Image)



Viewpoint 7 (Panorama Image for Context Only)



Viewpoint Coordinates: E 526903 N 240279 Date & time of photograph: 27/09/2022 10:33 AOD & Viewing height: c. 51m AOD 1.6m Weather conditions: Clear, good visibility. Viewpoint 7 (Annotated Panorama Image for Context Only)



Viewpoint 7 (Single Frame Image)



Viewpoint 8 (Panorama Image for Context Only)



Viewpoint Coordinates: E 526989 N 240427 Date & time of photograph: 27/09/2022 10:30 AOD & Viewing height: c. 49m AOD 1.6m Weather conditions: Clear, good visibility. Viewpoint 8 (Annotated Panorama Image for Context Only)



Viewpoint 8 (Single Frame Image)



Viewpoint 9 (Panorama Image for Context Only)



Viewpoint Coordinates: E 527037 N 239780

Date & time of photograph: 27/09/2022 13:19

AOD & Viewing height: c. 53m AOD 1.6m

Weather conditions: Clear, good visibility.

Viewpoint 10 (Annotated Panorama Image for Context Only)



Viewpoint 10 (Single Frame Image)



Viewpoint 10 (Panorama Image for Context Only)



Viewpoint Coordinates: E 527108 N 239802 Date & time of photograph: 27/09/2022 13:27 AOD & Viewing height: c. 55m AOD 1.6m Weather conditions: Clear, good visibility. Viewpoint 10 (Annotated Panorama Image for Context Only)



Viewpoint 10 (Single Frame Image)



Viewpoint A (Panorama Image for Context Only)



Viewpoint Coordinates: E 527207 N 239675 Date & time of photograph: 27/09/2022 13:33 AOD & Viewing height: c. 66m AOD 1.6m Weather conditions: Clear, good visibility. Viewpoint A (Annotated Panorama Image for Context Only)

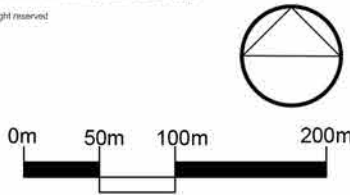


Viewpoint A (Single Frame Image)

APPENDIX 3



NOTES:
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- Key:
-  Site Boundary
 -  Viewpoint Location
 -  Public Rights of Way

A	30 05 24	Updated to latest layout	SB	BW
REV	DATE	NOTE	DRAWN	CHK'D
REVISIONS				

aspect landscape planning

TITLE
Land North of Ashwell Street, Ashwell
Viewpoint Location Plan

CLIENT
Manor Oak Homes

SCALE 1:5000 @ A3	DATE AUG 2022	DRAWN BS	CHK'D BW
DRAWING NUMBER 7615 / VLP		REVISION A	



Existing Viewpoint 1



Predicted Wireframe Viewpoint 1

Viewpoint Coordinates: E 527130, N 239634

Date & time of photograph: 11/11/2021 13:31

AOD & Viewing height: c. 65m AOD 1.6m

Weather conditions: Clear, good visibility.



Existing Viewpoint 2



Predicted Wireframe Viewpoint 2

Viewpoint Coordinates: E 527125, N 239894

Date & time of photograph: 11/11/2021 13:22

AOD & Viewing height: c. 52m AOD 1.6m

Weather conditions: Clear, good visibility.

landscape planning • ecology • arboriculture


aspect

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