



**Land South of Cowards
Lane, Codicote**

**Landscape and Visual
Green Belt Appraisal**

Prepared by:
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On behalf of:
Hawridge Strategic Land Limited

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Section 1

Introduction, Purpose and Methodology

INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Environmental Dimension Partnership Ltd (EDP) has been commissioned by Hawridge Strategic Land Limited (hereafter referred to as 'the applicant') to undertake a Landscape and Visual Green Belt Appraisal (LVGBA) of proposals to develop 30 residential units at Land South of Cowards Lane, Codicote (hereafter referred to as 'the site'). The site falls within the North Hertfordshire Local Planning Authority (LPA) area, extends to approximately 1.4 hectares (ha), and is briefly described in **Section 2** of this Landscape and Visual Green Belt Appraisal (LVGBA). Full site details are given in the Design and Access Statement (DAS) accompanying the planning application. This LVGBA is part of a suite of documents accompanying an outline planning application for the proposed development summarised in **Section 6** of this LVGBA.
- 1.2 EDP is an independent environmental planning consultancy with offices in Cirencester, Cheltenham and Cardiff. The practice provides advice to private and public sector clients throughout the UK in the fields of landscape, ecology, archaeology, cultural heritage, arboriculture, rights of way and masterplanning. Details of the practice can be obtained at our website (www.edp-uk.co.uk). EDP is a Registered Practice of the Landscape Institute¹ specialising in the assessment of the effects of proposed development on the landscape.
- 1.3 This LVGBA has been undertaken in accordance with best practice, detailed methodology is located at **Appendix EDP 1**.

THE SITE AND THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 1.4 **Plan EDP 1** illustrates the location of the site's boundaries and the study area for the LVGBA. The site is located on the southern edge of Codicote, within the county of Hertfordshire. The site's character and local context is illustrated on the aerial photograph contained as **Plan EDP 2**.
- 1.5 The site comprises one broadly triangular field parcel with a Public Right of Way (PRoW) running north to south through the centre, connecting Cowards Lane to the north with the wider agricultural landscape to the south and St Albans Road. The site is currently used as paddocks, with a small stable at the western edge.
- 1.6 The south-western and south-eastern field boundaries comprise a mature tree belt with associated hedgerow and scrub, whereas the north-western and north-eastern boundaries abut the existing built form of Caldicote, specifically backing on to rear gardens of properties along St Albans Road (north-west) and The Riddy (north-east).

¹ LI Practice Number 1010

- 1.7 The proposed development is for residential development with means of access for consideration and all other matters reserved for subsequent approval; demolition of all existing structures; associated landscaping, drainage, car parking; infrastructure and all ancillary and enabling works. The proposals are illustrated on the Concept Masterplan at **Appendix EDP 2**.

PURPOSE AND STRUCTURE OF THE LVGBA

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

METHODOLOGY ADOPTED FOR THE ASSESSMENT

- 1.10 The proposed development assessed by this LVGBA is not subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). This LVGBA has, therefore, been undertaken in accordance with the principles embodied in the 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment – Third Edition (LI/IEMA, 2013)' (GLVIA3) and other best practice guidance insofar as it is relevant to non-EIA schemes.
- 1.11 **Familiarisation:** EDP's study has included reviews of aerial photographs, web searches, LPA publications and Landscape Character Assessments. EDP has also obtained, where possible, information about relevant landscape and other designations such as National Parks (NP), National Landscapes ((NL) formerly known as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs)), conservation areas, and gardens and parks listed on Historic England's 'Register of Historic Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England' (RPG).
- 1.12 **Zone of Theoretical Visibility:** EDP has produced a Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) to help inform the extent of study area, based on a broad development type. See **Appendix EDP 1** for methodology and definitions.
- 1.13 **Field Assessment:** EDP has undertaken a comprehensive field assessment of local site circumstances, including a photographic survey of the character and fabric of the site and its surroundings, using photography from a number of representative viewpoints. The field assessment was undertaken by a qualified landscape architect in June 2025 in overcast but clear weather conditions.
- 1.14 **Acknowledgement of any shortcomings:** Due to the timing of the project, the field assessment was undertaken in summer conditions, with the trees in full leaf. Whilst this naturally provides additional screening of views and limits the degree to which long range views (in particular) are available, the assessment has been undertaken based upon a 'worst case' scenario, informed by professional judgement.
- 1.15 **Design Inputs:** EDP's field assessment has informed a process whereby the development proposals have been refined to avoid, minimise or compensate for landscape effects. Such measures are summarised in **Section 5**.
- 1.16 **Assessment Methodology:** Predicted effects on the landscape resource and visual amenity arising from the proposed development (**Section 6**) have been determined in accordance with the principles embedded within published best practice guidance insofar as the assessment adopts the following well-established, structured approach:
- Likely effects on landscape character and visual amenity are dealt with separately;
 - The assessment of likely effects is reached using a structured methodology for defining sensitivity, magnitude and nature of effect (**Appendix EDP 1**). This framework is combined with professional judgement. Professional judgement is an important part of the assessment process; it is neither 'pro' nor 'anti' development but acknowledges that development may result in beneficial change as well as landscape harm;

- As advised in GLVIA3, the appraisal takes into account the effects of any proposed mitigation; and
- Typically, a 15-year time horizon is used as the basis for conclusions about the residual levels of effect. Fifteen years is a well-established and accepted compromise between assessing the shorter-term effects (which may often be rather ‘raw’ before any proposed mitigation has had time to take effect) and an excessively long time period.

STUDY AREA

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

- First, a broad 3km ‘study area’ was adopted, based mainly on desk-based study, allowing the geographical scope of the assessment to be defined based on the likely extent of views to/from the site, extent of landscape effects and the site’s environmental planning context; and
- Second, following the production of a broad ZTV, initial analysis and subsequent fieldwork, the broad study area was refined down to the land that is most likely to experience landscape effects. The extent of this detailed study area is 500m from the site boundary, although occasional reference may be made to features beyond this area where appropriate. This detailed study area is illustrated on **Plan EDP 1**.

Section 2

Findings of EDP Data Trawl

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

BACKGROUND PUBLISHED EVIDENCE BASE DOCUMENTS

- 2.2 The following documents are relevant and will be discussed as appropriate later in this report:
- National Character Area Profile 110: Chilterns (Natural England, 2013);
 - North Hertfordshire and Stevenage Landscape Character Assessment (Babtie Group, 2004);
 - North Hertfordshire Sensitivity Study (The Landscape Partnership, 2011);
 - Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study (NHDC, 2006);
 - North Hertfordshire District Green Infrastructure Plan (Land Use Consultants, 2009); and
 - The Design Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) (North Hertfordshire District Council, 2011).

FINDINGS OF EDP DATA TRAWL

Landscape-related Designations and Other Considerations

- 2.3 Landscape-related designations and policy considerations within 2km of the are shown on **Plan EDP 1**. In summary:
- The Site does not lie within or adjacent to a locally or nationally designated landscape; and
 - The Site lies within the Metropolitan Green Belt. Green Belt is a spatial planning tool and infers no elevated judgment of landscape quality or value. Refer to **Section 7** for further details.

Heritage Matters

- 2.4 Heritage assets can influence the visual character of the landscape and enrich its historic value. This LVGBA addresses heritage assets only insofar as they are historic components of the wider contemporary landscape – not in terms of their significance and value as

heritage assets, which is a matter addressed by the separate Heritage assessment (prepared by Fiona Webb).

2.5 Within the wider study area, the following heritage assets are components of the contemporary landscape:

- Codicote Conservation Area (CA) lies approximately 170m to the north of the site, however there is little visual relationship. The CA also contains a number of Grade II Listed Buildings;
- Two further Grade II Listed Buildings lie broadly north-east of the site along the High Street, approximately 200m from the site boundary;
- Ayot House, a Grade II Registered Park and Garden (RPG) lies approximately 800m to the west of the site at its nearest point. This RPG also contains Ayot St Lawrence CA which is 2km to the west at its nearest point, the CA contains a number of Grade II and Grade II* Listed Buildings;
- A small number of Grade II Listed Buildings lie within the landscape to the west around Codicote Bottom between 700 and 900m to the west; and
- Welwyn CA lies approximately 1.8km to the south-east of the Site, which contains a number of Grade II and Grade II* Listed Buildings.

Ecology Matters

2.6 A separate Ecology Assessment (prepared by Clarkson Woods Ltd) considers the ecological assets on the site and within the study area. The following matters are relevant to the scope of this LVGBA:

- The site forms part of the Meadow North-West of First Spring Local Wildlife Site (LWS), which covers the field parcel within the site and the field immediately to the west. This has been designed for the presence of indicators for semi-improved/damp grassland;
- Two field parcel immediately south-east of the site are also designated as a LWS (Hollards Farm Meadow). This area has been designated for the presence of grassland and woodland indicator species. Both LWS are discussed further within the Ecological Assessment; and
- Danesbury Park and Singlers Marsh Local Nature Reserves (LNR) lie approximately 1.3km to the south-east of the site.

Arboricultural Matters

2.7 A separate Arboricultural Assessment (prepared by Merewood Arboricultural Consultancy Services) considers the arboricultural assets on the site and within the study area. There are no Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) or Ancient Woodland within or adjacent to the site.

Public Access and Rights of Way

2.8 A review of the definitive map² reveals the following Public Rights of Way (PRoW) and Open Access Land (OAL) within the study area:

- Codicote Footpath 023 runs through the site, connecting Cowards Lane to the north with St Albans Road, approximately 250m to the south;
- A number of Footpaths run internally to Codicote, including Footpaths 014, 015 and 022. Restricted Byway Codicote 047 forms a small route connecting Cowards Lane to the High Street;
- Codicote Footpath 036 runs within the landscape to the south and south-east, connecting St Albans Road (560m to the south) with the B656 (430m to the east);
- Ayot St Lawrence Footpath 003 forms a long, elevated route between Ayot St Lawrence (2.1km to the south-west) and Codicote Bottom along Kimpton Road (860m to the west). Adjacent to Brimstone Road along this route, Ayot St Lawrence Footpath 009 heads south and connects to Lord Mead Lane approximately 1.75km to the west of the site;
- To the south, Ayot St Peter Footpath 001 rises in elevation between Codicote Road (1.3km south of the site) and Ryefield Farm, where forms the northern arm of a PRoW crossroads, Ayot St Peter Footpath 004 heads west, Ayot St Peter Footpath 006 heads south and Ayot St Peter Footpath 002 heads east;
- Ayot St Lawrence Bridleway 001 runs along elevated land between Hill Farm Lane and Codicote Road approximately 2km to the south-west of the site;
- National Cycle Network (NCN) Route 12 runs broadly north-east to south-west through Codicote, running along Cowards Lane to the north of the site at its nearest point. This route stretches almost 200km between north London and Peterborough;
- A number of PRoW routes runs within the landscape to the north-east of Codicote, providing pedestrian connections between the village and Rableyheath further north-east. These include Codicote Footpath 005, 006, 007 and 008. Codicote Footpath 033 connects Rabley Heath Road with Pottersheath to the east; and
- There are no areas of OAL within the site or study area.

Adopted Local Plan (Published)

2.9 The North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031 (adopted 08 November 2022) contains three key policies in relation to the site:

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

- Policy SP2: Settlement Hierarchy;
- Policy SP5: Countryside and Green Belt;
- Policy DP9: Design and Sustainability;
- Policy SP12: Green infrastructure, landscape and biodiversity;
- Policy D1: Sustainable Design; and
- Policy NE2: Landscape.

Section 3

Baseline: Landscape

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

REVIEW OF PUBLISHED LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENTS

National Landscape Character

- 3.3 At the national level, the character of England has been described and classified in the National Character Area (NCA) profiles published by Natural England³. The site and its surroundings fall within NCA 110: Chilterns, which stretches from the north-eastern edge of Newbury to Luton. The NCA identifies the following Statements of Environmental Opportunities (SEOs):

“SEO 1: Manage the wooded landscape, the woodlands (including internationally important Chilterns beechwoods), hedgerows, commons and parklands with the aims of conserving and enhancing biodiversity and the historic landscape and its significant features;

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

maximising the potential for recreation; and securing sustainable production of biomass and timber.

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

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

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

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

Local Landscape Character

Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment (Relevant Extracts Provided in Appendix EDP 3)

- 3.5 The Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment is the source of baseline information for the landscape character of the study area. The Landscape Character Area (LCA) containing the site is LCA 205 'Codicote Plateau' as illustrated on **Plan EDP 3**.
- 3.6 The LCA identifies this as a rolling upland landscape plateau defined to the south and west by the River Mimram. The assessment establishes that the 'Codicote Plateau' LCA is of moderate to high sensitivity in terms of landscape character because the "*gently rolling upland plateau, historic character and woodland blocks create a rural character with limited urban influence*".
- 3.7 These conclusions go on to assign the value of the Codicote Plateau LCA as being of moderate landscape value, stating that "*aspects of particular value within the Codicote Plateau are the historic character, a recognisable sense of place, and the relatively tranquil character*". The landscape strategy of the Codicote Plateau LCA is defined as 'Improve and conserve'.
- 3.8 In terms of visual sensitivity, the LCA states that the "*Codicote Plateau is considered to be of moderate sensitivity. Views within the plateau and towards the adjacent countryside are*

relatively open, or framed by woodland, both of which would be sensitive to the introduction of additional development or urbanizing features”.

3.9 The LCA lists a number of landscape character sensitivities, with those of relevance to the site and its context including (inter alia):

- *“A gently rolling upland, landscape plateau, incised by smaller valleys and of rural character. The character area would be vulnerable to further urbanizing features;*
- *Scattered deciduous woodland blocks some of which are historic including ancient coppiced hornbeam with bluebell covered woodland floor. The woodland is vulnerable to lack of management or to removal;*
- *The character area merges into Knebworth to the north, which creates an extended area of significant parkland character in areas of Codicote Plateau for example the area surrounding The Node. This character could be at risk from development pressure and inconsistent management;*
- *Codicote Plateau is characterised by large scale, regular shaped arable fields but with small paddocks and grazing land adjacent to settlements. The area would be vulnerable to the removal of hedgerows and boundary vegetation;*
- *The character area includes a significant presence of horsiculture, including Laundry Cottage Stud. Such areas are characterised by post and rail fences and the removal of boundary vegetation. This practice is detrimental to the landscape character of Codicote Plateau. The character area is vulnerable to further horsiculture activity and any associated removal of boundary vegetation;*
- *Apart from the B656 Codicote Plateau is a tranquil area, with the remaining roads being narrow and winding. These rural roads are enclosed by hedgerows and hedgebanks often with bluebells in the verges. However some of the hedgerows are becoming gappy, with over mature trees and grown out woodland hedgebanks. They would be vulnerable to improvements/upgrading of the roads;*
- *Existing pockets of acid heathland habitat are vulnerable to loss;*
- *The A1 abuts the east of the character area and is a detract or to the character of Codicote Plateau; and*
- *Good public access through numerous rights of way, particularly around Codicote.”*

3.10 With regard to the capacity for new development, although the LCA states that smaller urban extensions *“would not be entirely appropriate within this character area”*, in relation to incremental small-scale development, the LCA states that *“there may be some limited capacity for carefully located and designed small scale developments within the Character Area, particularly if they were to the periphery of Codicote village and of rural character”*. Further, the LCA states that *“the landscape capacity for incremental small scale development is considered to be low to moderate”*.

3.11 As set out above, the Codicote Plateau LCA is defined as being of moderate landscape value, with a **moderate to high sensitivity**. EDP would concur with the overall judgement for the area, where little urban influences exist beyond the urban edge of Codicote, which has been acknowledged by the LCA. The following landscape management guidelines are considered relevant to the Site and its development potential:

- *“Promote other woodland planting and where historically appropriate, link up small remnants of Ancient Woodland”;*
- *“Promote the creation of buffer zones between intensive arable production and areas of semi-natural habitat and the creation of links between habitat areas”;*
- *“Promote hedgerow restoration along the lines of historic field boundaries and the creation of visual links between existing woodland areas”;*
- *“Promote the diversity of hedgerow species and the planting of standard hedgerow tree”;* and
- *“Maintain and extent the rights of way network.”*

3.12 In terms of built development principles, the following are considered relevant to the site and its development potential:

- *“Retain the rural and historic character of Codicote Plateau, ensuring that any new development is appropriately sited and of a scale, form and style appropriate to the Character Area”;*
- *“Encourage the planting of appropriate broadleaved woodland and vegetation to screen new development that could intrude in expansive rural views”;* and
- *“Use the opportunity of any new developments to create new accessible green infrastructure.”*

3.13 **Plan EDP 2** indicates the site within its immediate setting on an aerial image, where recent development on the fringes of Codicote are annotated, to the east and west of the site, alongside a small extension to the north of the village.

3.14 As indicated at **Plan EDP 3**, additional LCAs are located surrounding the village of Codicote and within the study area. Although these are considered ‘non host’ LCAs, they form an important factor in the understanding of the site and its context and have been reviewed below.

3.15 Immediately south and east of the site lies 133: Danesbury Rabley Heath LCA. This area straddles two districts, the northern portion lying within North Hertfordshire LPA, whereas the southern portion lies within Welywyn Hatfield (WH) LPA. WH have produced their own version of the landscape character assessment, which refers to this LCA as 133a Danesbury Settled Slopes. The areas are broadly the same, however this report will focus on 133. This is described as *“an area of south west facing slopes between Codicote and Danesbury. The A1(M) corridor and dense urban settlement forms the area's south eastern*

boundary". The LCA summaries that *"in visual terms, Dansbury-Radley Heath is considered to be of moderate sensitivity. Views within the Character Area are relatively enclosed. However, some important cross valley views to the south are also possible"*. The following built development guidelines are considered relevant to the site and its context:

- *"Retain existing cross and along valley views, including those from gaps in dense roadside vegetation"; and*
- *"Encourage the planting of appropriate broadleaved woodland and vegetation to mitigate new development, particularly along the frontage of new development to retain the wooded character and mature setting."*

3.16 Further LCAs lie within or adjacent to the study area, however following a site walkover have been scoped out of the assessment due to lack of intervisibility. For clarity these include:

- 132: Codicote Bottom Arable Valley; and
- 204: River Mimram.

Relevant Supplementary Planning Documents

3.17 The Design SPD produced by NHDC in 2011 provides additional commentary on the character of Codicote, including that *"The village has expanded either side of the main road with newer development filling in between the road and the church in the east part of the village and between Heath Lane and St Albans Road in the west"*.

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

- *"Strong building lines within the village centre along the High Street should be retained.*
- *Green character along the northern end of High Street should be retained.*
- *Enhance the public realm through streetscape improvements."*

EDP Landscape Character Assessment

3.19 EDP conducted an assessment of the Site's characteristics on 09 June 2025, in overcast but clear weather conditions. The individual elements of the site were noted, as were the differences in the composition and the character of the site's physical components to the published assessment, and their value and ability to accommodate change (for definitions see **Appendix EDP 1**).

3.20 The site forms a broadly triangle field parcel on the southern edge of Codicote, accessed to the north via a shared driveway from Cowards Lane. Codicote Footpath 023 runs north to south through the centre of the site, along the shared access and through the wider landscape to the south of the site.

- 3.21 In terms of topography, the northern tip of the site forms the most elevated section at approximately 98m above Ordnance Datum (aOD), the landform slopes gently and consistently towards the southern boundary at 92m aOD. The site does not contain any hydrological features, albeit noting that the site's topography is generally influenced by the River Mimram corridor located approximately 1km to the south of the site (**Plan EDP 4**).
- 3.22 The northern portion of the site is a narrow channel approximately 10m in width, which provides access to the field parcel. Both Marlin and Field House use this route for vehicular access and the corridor is defined at the north and the south by a field gate (**Image EDP 3.1**). The land use of this strip is broadly split equally between concrete to the north and grass to the south, however due to the existing use of both houses, the western and eastern edges are not currently defined on the ground.



Image EDP 3.1: View south from Cowards Lane, looking into the northern corridor of the site running between Marling and Field House.

- 3.23 The main field parcel is currently grassland, used as a paddock, where landscape fabric is therefore restricted to the peripheries, most notably a nature tree belt along the entirety of the site's south-eastern and south-western boundaries (**Image EDP 3.2**). The tree survey identified this boundary to mostly comprise Category B items comprising native hedgerow. A single Category A Oak tree lies at the western tip of the site.



Image EDP 3.2: View towards the tree belt along the southern boundary from the centre of the site.

- 3.24 The northern boundary of the field parcel (either side of the access route) comprises post and rail fencing, separating the site from the southern extent of both Marlin and Field House. The north-eastern edge, adjacent to Field House, currently has an additional boundary in place relating to a narrow strip of land delineated by post and wire fencing (**Image EDP 3.3**). This area remains within the red line boundary.



Image EDP 3.3: View along north-eastern boundary to Field House, showing both post and rail fencing at site boundary and post and wire within the site.

- 3.25 The western boundary of the v abuts the rear gardens of a number of properties along St Albans Road. The boundary itself comprises the same post and rail fence, however this is overgrown in places with vegetation within the garden boundaries. The western edge of the site contains a small stable structure, forming the only building within the red line (**Image EDP 3.4**).



Image EDP 3.4: View from centre of the site across to the western edge, where built form along St Albans Road can be glimpsed (central) alongside the stable to the left of the image.

- 3.26 Codicote Footpath 023 runs through the centre of the site, connecting Cowards Lane to the north with the wider agricultural landscape to the south, with a small section abutting the southern edge running through dense woodland/scrub. The route passes through a narrow gap at the southern site boundary (**Image EDP 3.5**) and appears to be a well-used local route. Historical mapping suggests that the field parcel has previously been more geometric in shape (**Image EDP 3.6**), with Field House and Marlin added in the 1970s, both properties rear gardens have expanded since (**Image EDP 3.7**).



Image EDP 3.5: Small gap in vegetation along southern Site boundary showing the route of Codicote Footpath 023.



Image EDP 3.6: Extract from historic OS mapping (1892-1914).



Image EDP 3.7: Extract from historic OS Mapping (1948-1974).

- 3.27 From a visual and sensory perspective, the site retains a sense of rurality due to the verdant surroundings and village edge setting where audible detractors are limited, although the surrounding built form to the north at an elevated location to the site exerts an urban edge feeling to the field parcel. The use of the land as a paddock reinforces this settlement edge character, where users moving south through the site reach a more rural and natural landscape immediately south of the site, with far reaching views towards the wider agricultural landscape south.
- 3.28 The gently sloping topography, combined with the mature landscape setting surrounding the site (both internally at the south-western and south-eastern edges and within abutting residential curtilages) results in a relatively enclosed natured site, where visual and physical connections with the wider landscape are restricted, albeit in the winter scene filtered views outward to the south may become available from the elevated northern edge of the site.

SENSITIVITY OF THE LANDSCAPE RECEPTORS

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

Published Landscape Character

- 3.30 The Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment defines the host LCA (205: Codicote Plateau) being of moderate to high sensitivity, due to the areas "*gently rolling upland plateau, historic character and woodland blocks create a rural character with limited urban influence*". Although Codicote has clearly expanded in size since the report was authored and therefore the overall susceptibility may have decreased slightly, the findings of EDP's data gathering/interpretation and site walkover broadly agree with this sensitivity finding.

The Site and it's Context

- 3.31 Published landscape character assessments provide a helpful contextual understanding of the defining characteristics of the wider landscape and, in some respects, the site and its context are considered to be consistent with published landscape descriptions.
- 3.32 EDP's appraisal has found that much of the site is remarkably well contained. Local topography, off-site and on-site mature trees, hedgerows and woodland are notable features, although there are a small number of urbanising features being prominent within the local context, experienced from the site.
- 3.33 The susceptibility of the landscape resource is defined as the ability of the receptor (whether the overall character, individual fabric elements or perceptual aspects) to accommodate the proposed development without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline situation. On the basis of the above consideration of susceptibility factors, whilst there are some higher quality landscape elements at the site boundaries and within the detailed study area, the landscape context of the site is partly impacted by urbanising features within the urban context. As such, the susceptibility to change is considered to be low.
- 3.34 The main character and valuable fabric of the site is to be found along the well-treed boundaries, and within the more enclosed southern areas of the site, which includes one mature Oak tree. As above, from a sensory perspective, the site is consistent with its near, and more distant, context, being relatively unremarkable within the landscape. It does not form a prominent, or important, part of the appreciation of the wider landscape. In landscape terms, there is a very limited sense of association between the site and the wider setting to the south; being divorced both physically and visually from it by mature vegetation. The landscape sensitivity of the Site is considered to be medium, relating to the character of the site itself and also the immediate surroundings or settlement edge.

Overall Conclusions: Landscape Character

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

Table EDP 3.1: Landscape Character Receptor Summary

Receptor	Value	Susceptibility	Overall Sensitivity
The site and its Context	Medium	Low	Medium
Host LCA beyond the site context (205: Codicote Plateau)	High	Medium	Medium to High

Section 4

Baseline: Visual Amenity

INTRODUCTION

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

OVERVIEW

- 4.3 The ZTV (produced at the outset to inform study areas) is refined by walking and driving local roads, rights of way and other publicly accessible viewpoints to arrive at a more accurate, ‘field-tested’ Zone of Primary Visibility (ZPV). The ZPV is where views of the proposed development would normally be close-ranging and open, whether in the public or private domain, on foot, cycling or in a vehicle. At this stage, the ZPV is based on the broad development type of medium density residential built form where a detailed assessment of the development proposals on the visual amenity is included at **Section 6**. In this instance, the field assessment was undertaken by a qualified landscape architect in June 2025 overcast but clear weather conditions. Beyond the ZPV lies a zone of visibility that is less open, being either partly-screened or filtered. Views from within this zone would include the proposal – it may not be immediately noticeable, but once recognised would be a perceptible addition to the view.
- 4.4 **Plan EDP 5** illustrates the findings of the visual appraisal from which it can be seen that the ZPV extends as follows:
- To the north: Views from the north of the site are contained to receptors abutting the northern boundary, namely Marlin and Field House, as well as a small section of Cowards Lane which abuts the northern tip of the site boundary (**Photoviewpoint EDP 1**). Views further north are screened by intervening residential built form combined with the sloping topography and mature vegetation along Cowards Lane. Users of the Recreation Park along the northern edge of Cowards Lane may have heavily filtered views into the northern parts of the site during winter months (**Photoviewpoint EDP 5**);
 - To the east: Properties along the western side of The Riddy have rear garden/elevation views into the site, however this is largely restricted to three properties. Further east, intervening vegetation and residential built form restricts opportunities for intervisibility beyond receptors abutting the site boundary;

- To the south: The mature vegetation along the southern edge of the site heavily restricts intervisibility from the wider agricultural landscape to the south. Codicote Footpath 023 joins St Albans Road approximately 250m to the south of the site, sitting slightly elevated to the site, users are afforded glimpses towards the field parcel, seen within the context of the rooftops of existing residential built form associated with Codicote (**Photoviewpoint EDP 6**). Further south, intervening vegetation and topography restrict any further intervisibility from the PRoW/road network (**Photoviewpoints EDP 7 and 8**); and
- To the west: Views from the west are restricted to the rear gardens/elevations of approximately 8 properties along the southern side of St Albans Road. Boundaries with the site vary between post and rail and dense vegetation, however views further east of these properties are screened by intervening built form, vegetation and topography (**Photoviewpoints EDP 10 and 11**).

DEFINING RECEPTOR GROUPS

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

Rights of Way Users

- 4.6 PRoW are typically given a high sensitivity due to their use as recreational routes. The site visit confirmed that views towards the site from the PRoW set out in **Section 2** are limited. This includes the following routes:
- Codicote Footpath 23 runs through the centre of the site and connects to St Albans Road approximately 250m to the south of the site. Open views across the field parcel are naturally afforded as it passes through the site (**Photoviewpoints EDP 1, 2 and 3**), however the mature vegetation along the southern edge helps to filter views as the route exits the site. The southern edge of the route is slightly elevated in nature, where built form within Codicote can be glimpsed, alongside areas of paddock within the site boundary. It is anticipated views will become more available, through boundary vegetation, in winter months (**Photoviewpoint EDP 6**);
 - Codicote Footpath 022 runs along the northern edge of the Recreation Ground immediately north of Cowards Lane. Views towards the site from this location are generally well screened, however seasonal glimpses may be afforded during winter months (**Photoviewpoint EDP 5**);
 - NCN Route 12 runs along Cowards Lane immediately north of the site, users have glimpsed and transient views into the site from a small section of the route as it passed directly past the site boundary (**Photoviewpoint EDP 1**). Views from elsewhere on the route are screened by intervening built form and vegetation (**Photoviewpoint EDP 4**);
 - The landscape to the south and west is heavily influenced by the River Mimram corridor running through the landscape. Although there is a good network of PRoW

within this landscape, the intervention vegetation and topography screen any intervisibility with the site (**Photoviewpoints EDP 7, 8, 10 and 11**); and

- The landscape to the north-east of Codicote is elevated in nature and contains a good network of PRow, however the site is screened by intervening built form, vegetation and topography as indicated at **Photoviewpoint EDP 9**.

Road Users

Cowards Lane

- 4.7 As with NCN 12, views into the site from Cowards Lane are generally restricted to a small section which immediately abuts the northern edge (**Photoviewpoint EDP 1**). Within the view, Field House and its front elevation form the focus of the view, however a field gate can be identified in the middle distance, providing access to the field parcel within the site. The backdrop to the centre of the view is the mature vegetation along the southern edge of the site, due to the channelled nature of the view, much of the site is screened from view. Elsewhere on the road, views are screened by intervening vegetation and built form (**Photoviewpoint EDP 4**). This route runs through a generally rural landscape along the current village edge, as such, users are considered to be of medium sensitivity.

St Albans Road

- 4.8 This route runs within a well vegetated corridor, where views into the site are generally well screened by intervening vegetation. There may be heavily filtered views into the site from the road during winter months, however it is anticipated any views towards the site will be seen within the context of the exiting-built form adjacent to the site boundary. This route runs through a generally rural landscape along the current village edge, as such, users are considered to be of medium sensitivity.

The Riddy

- 4.9 A small road providing access to approximately eight dwellings, users of the road may have glimpses into the site through gaps in intervening built form. This route is generally rural in nature and situated at the village edge, therefore users are considered to be of medium sensitivity.

Residential Dwellings/Groups

- 4.10 Views from private residential properties, although likely to be of high to very high sensitivity to changes in the view, are not protected by national planning guidance or local planning policy. Accordingly, changes to the character, 'quality' and nature of private views are not a material planning consideration in the determination of a planning application. However, they remain relevant to this review of the predicted extent and nature of visual change, so are reviewed briefly below:
- 27-43 St Albans Road (odd only): Views from these locations are generally restricted to the rear gardens/elevations, where due to the slightly elevated location relative to the site, are afforded mostly open views into the field parcel element of the site. Boundary treatments vary from post and rail fencing to dense vegetation, where other

properties along the road are generally screened by intervening built form and vegetation;

- Marlin and Field House: Due to the close proximity of these properties, open views are afforded into the northern corridor of the site and the wider field parcel, where boundary treatments are generally post and rail fencing; and
- 1-3 The Riddy: Similar to the above, these properties abut the eastern edge of the field parcel within the site, with open views into this element of the site. Noting that views will include the existing properties at St Albans Road in the middle distance.

Recreation Ground

- 4.11 Views into the site from this location are generally restricted (**Photoviewpoint EDP 5**), however during winter months it may be possible to glimpse Field House and Marlin through intervening dense vegetation. It is anticipated that these properties will help to provide screened for views towards the main field parcel of the site. Users are likely to be using the grounds to focus on recreational purposes rather than for the enjoyment of their landscape context and as such, their sensitivity is considered to be low.

DEFINING REPRESENTATIVE VIEWPOINTS

- 4.12 Within the ZPV, there are clearly many individual points at which views towards the site are gained. EDP has selected a number of viewpoints that are considered representative of the nature of the views from each of the receptor groups. The selection of the representative viewpoints is based on the principle that the assessment needs to test the 'worst case' scenario, and in selecting these viewpoints, EDP has sought to include:
- A range of viewpoints from all points of the compass, north, south, east and west;
 - A range of viewpoints from distances at close quarters at the site boundary and up to distant viewpoints at 2km and more from the site; and
 - Viewpoints from all the above receptor groups.
- 4.13 The representation of views is supported by 11 photoviewpoints (PVPs). Their location is illustrated on **Plan EDP 5**. Photographs from the selected viewpoints are contained in **Appendix EDP 4**. The purpose of these viewpoints is to aid assessment of a visual receptor(s). These viewpoints are not assessed separately.
- 4.14 The representative photoviewpoints are listed in **Table EDP 4.1** together with an appraisal of their sensitivity. The sensitivity has been derived from the baseline knowledge of the viewpoints, a knowledge of the type of development proposed, and the criteria set out in the methodology at **Appendix EDP 1**. The appraisal of sensitivity has been included in the baseline, rather than in the assessment, to maintain flow and avoid repetition.

Table EDP 4.1: Summary of Representative Photoviewpoints

PVP No.	Location	Grid Reference	Distance and Direction of View	Receptor Type and Sensitivity
1	View south towards Site from Cowards Lane along National Cycle Route 12	521614, 217917	0m; S	PRoW Users – High Sensitivity NCN and Local Road Users – Medium Sensitivity
2	View south from northern edge of the Site along PRoW	521606, 217861	0m; S	PRoW Users – High Sensitivity
3	View north towards Codicote from southern tip of Site along PRoW	521577, 217747	0m; N	PRoW Users – High Sensitivity
4	View towards the Site entrance from the junction of St Albans Road and Cowards Lane	521574, 217984	90m; SE	NCN and Local Road Users – Medium Sensitivity
5	View south from PRoW within the Open Space along the northern edge of Cowards Lane	521633, 217992	95m; S	PRoW Users – High Sensitivity Recreation Ground Users – Low Sensitivity
6	View north towards the Site from junction of PRoW with St Albans Road/NCN 12	521560, 217492	240m; N	PRoW Users – High Sensitivity
7	Long distance elevated view from PRoW to the west of Welwyn	521139, 216306	1.5km; N	PRoW Users – High Sensitivity
8	Long distance elevated view from PRoW to the west of Welwyn	522168, 216388	1.5km; N	PRoW Users – High Sensitivity
9	Elevated view from PRoW to the north-east of Codicote	522715, 218647	1.3km; SW	PRoW Users – High Sensitivity
10	View towards the Site from the Hertfordshire Way/Local PRoW	520488, 217568	1.05km; E	PRoW Users – High Sensitivity
11	Long distance elevated view east towards Codicote from local road	519769, 217597	1.8km; E	Local Road Users – Medium Sensitivity

Section 5

The Proposed Development and Mitigation

- 5.1 Having defined the baseline conditions in the previous two sections, this report now reviews the proposed development and (in the next section) undertakes an assessment of the likely effects in landscape terms.

THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 5.2 The proposed development is illustrated in **Appendix EDP 2**. The DAS supporting this application provides full details of the development proposals. To summarise, these comprise:
- Up to 30 dwellings (50% affordable) across a proposed net developable area of 0.88ha;
 - The existing vegetation enveloping the site's boundaries is proposed to be broadly maintained and enhanced with additional planting, with built form restricted at the southern edge to allow a natural transition to the wider landscape south. Furthermore, the provision of street trees within the scheme would assist in filtering views of the housing from the site's edges;
 - In total, some 0.49ha of open space is to be provided, including tree planting, wildflower grassland, scrub and hedgerow alongside existing retained vegetation;
 - The formal area of open space is proposed to incorporate multifunctional Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), amenity space and a nearby Area of Play (AP); and
 - Access via Cowards Lane.
- 5.3 The Landscape Strategy is contained as **Plan EDP 6**.

PROPOSED LANDSCAPE MITIGATION AND ENHANCEMENT

- 5.4 Consistent with a landscape-led approach, EDP's landscape team have provided continuous feedback from the early stages, recommending layout responses to avoid or minimise potential landscape and visual effects when considering the more detailed findings of our field assessment. Thus, the scheme proposals incorporate a degree of integrated mitigation as discussed, to avoid or reduce potential landscape and visual effects.
- 5.5 With reference to **Plan EDP 6**, the key elements that inform the landscape strategy are as follows:

- Ensure all high-quality tree and hedgerow stock within the site is retained and where possible enhanced/gapped up as required to restore continuous landscape structure and visual screening;
- Reinforce existing boundaries to the north, north-east and north-west to provide visual screening to the properties at these edges with native planting, while also providing additional biodiversity corridors and overall connectivity. Suggested species for the proposed native hedgerows include hazel, dogwood, spindle, guelder rose, blackthorn and hawthorn;
- Provide landscape and biodiversity enhancements to the site at the SuDS feature, incorporating a native and locally appropriate mix of grassland and scrub planting;
- Incorporate existing PRow route into the built form and POS at the southern edge; and
- Locate play area adjacent to the existing PRow to allow easy access and natural surveillance.

Section 6

Assessment of Effects

INTRODUCTION

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

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Construction Effects

- 6.3 Construction activities, movement of site traffic, lighting, noise and sounds will be ever-present during the construction process. This is not unusual and will be carefully controlled by a conditioned construction method statement. Recommendations for protection of retained trees and hedgerows, in accordance with relevant British Standards such as BS 5837, will ensure that the rooting areas of trees and hedgerows are not adversely affected by the construction process. The magnitude of change will, however, be very high (on both the site itself and immediate context) and when combined with the medium sensitivity of the site, will result in a **major/moderate** adverse level of effect. The effect will, however, be temporary and extend only for the duration of the construction process.

Operation Effects (Years 1 and 15)

Predicted Effects on the Character of the site

- 6.4 Following construction/establishment of the landscape strategy (whichever is sooner), the predicted effects take into account suitable and appropriate management of existing and proposed landscape features, undertaken in accordance with a landscape management plan or similar.
- 6.5 It is a consequence of the nature of the development proposed that visual and sensory character of the site would change substantially as a result of implementation. The

magnitude of change is not an indication of bad design but is to be expected as the result of the change of use of any green field site to residential development.

6.6 The changes predicted to occur on the dimensions that contribute to the character of the site are described below and evaluated overall:

- The Physical Landscape: The primary changes to the topography of the site would be in relation to the provision of SuDS basin and excavations for residential development and associated infrastructure. As such, the proposed development would yield minimal change to the hydrological, topographical and geological structure of the site; and
- Landscape fabric and habitats: The proposals are compatible with retention of field boundary vegetation on the site, except for access. Whilst most of the grassland would be lost, or disturbed during construction, some areas would be retained and others re-seeded. Further, the proposals offer the opportunity to secure the enhancement of these resources for wildlife and amenity. Hedgerows can be enhanced through species and age diversity, and by structure through additional planting and management while grassland can be enhanced using species-rich seed mixes.

6.7 The sensitivity of the site and its immediate environs is medium. Impacts would be of medium scale, restricted to within the site (though also visible within the immediate context), long-term and permanent. The magnitude of change on the site is therefore assessed as high, resulting in a **major/moderate** adverse effect at Year 1, where at Year 15 once the landscape strategy has matured, the magnitude of change will reduce further to medium, resulting in a long-term **moderate** adverse level of effect.

Predicted Effects on Landscape Character Area 205: Codicote Plateau

6.8 The area immediately surrounding the site will be subject to the greatest change to the defined LCA and this is predicted to diminish quickly due to distance and intervening landform and features. Effects on the immediate surroundings and the wider area are described below. The overall sensitivity of the LCA examined in the baseline was judged to be medium to high.

6.9 The visual character of the host LCA would not be notably interrupted by the development due to the existing semi-urban site context and strong visual enclosure. The proposed development would not change the character of the landscape in the wider area of the host LCA, so there would be no loss of the perception of the wider setting.

6.10 The impacts on the adjacent non-host LCAs would likely be imperceptible due to the site being screened by existing landscape features beyond the immediate site boundary. The nature of the proposed development would also have a discernible impact due to the site's location and with the enhanced mitigation planting proposed as part of the scheme, further filtering of views from the non-host LCA would be experienced by local receptor groups.

6.11 With the growth of proposed hedgerows and tree planting, ongoing management of existing vegetation and encouragement of species diversity within the internal planting palette, it is

expected that this would strengthen the contribution to the wider treed landscape associated with the LCA.

- 6.12 The overall magnitude of change on the host LCA would be very low, which, when combined with the medium to high sensitivity of the LCA, would yield a **moderate/minor to minor** adverse effect. This is adverse in nature but limited to the defined site area, which is very small in proportion to the wider context. There would be an incremental reduction in the level of effect as the proposed landscape features – mainly boundary hedgerows and trees - mature and make a more noticeable contribution to the local landscape character. This effect is likely to reduce in the long term to **minor to minor/negligible** adverse.

PREDICTED EFFECTS ON VISUAL AMENITY

- 6.13 Examination of the visibility to the site has found that existing built form, topography, and intervening vegetation screen the site from the wider landscape, where views are generally contained to receptors within or abutting the site boundary. At Year 1, the proposed development would be a new addition in the view to road users, NCN users, PRow users and residential receptors. Beyond those receptors within or immediately abutting the site, the only further predicted visibility relates to Codicote Footpath 023 as it exits the site and continues south.
- 6.14 The proposed development includes the provision of trees, hedgerows and shrub planting which, once matured, would filter, soften and integrate the development into its surroundings and help to make it less visible. Based on this context, the assessment below considers the level and extent of effects to local visual receptor groups identified in the baseline section of this report.
- 6.15 The site's current use as horse paddocks heavily restricts any landscape value and habitat in the main field parcel, the proposed development brings the opportunity ensure the POS within the site is maintained to a high degree improving the landscape fabric.

Public Rights of Way Users

Codicote Footpath 023

- 6.16 Users of Codicote Footpath 023 would experience visual change across the northern half of the route as it runs directly through the centre of the site. As it heads south from Cowards Lane, the access road will run centrally to the corridor replacing concrete/grassland. The horse paddock will be replaced with residential built form with associated tree and shrub planting; however, the change of experience will be at close range and create a new focus and have a defining influence on the view. The magnitude of change to users of the PRow within the Site (**Photoviewpoints EDP 1, 2 and 3**) will be very high across Year 1 and Year 15, resulting in an overall **substantial** adverse effect which is permanent.
- 6.17 As indicated at **Photoviewpoint EDP 6**, effects will reduce quickly as users move out of the site boundary and continue south towards St Albans Road. At this location, approximately 250m to the south of the site, it is anticipated that at Year 1 the proposed built form will be

identifiable in the middle distance, partially filtered by intervening vegetation at the southern edge of the site. The Proposed Development would form a new and recognisable element within the view which is likely to be recognised by the receptor, however this will be seen against the backdrop of existing built form at the southern edge of Codicote, so will not be a new feature in the overall view. Therefore, at Year 1, the magnitude of change is predicted to be medium, combined with the high sensitivity of the receptor results in a **major/moderate** adverse level of effect. As the landscape strategy matures and the existing vegetation is managed, the magnitude of change is predicted to reduce further to low and Year 15, resulting in a long term **moderate** adverse level of effect which is permanent.

Codicote Footpath 022

- 6.18 There are no views into the site from this route during summer months (**Photoviewpoint EDP 5**), however as leaves fall from the trees it may be possible to identify the Proposed Development through intervening vegetation. Field House and Marlin will sit within the foreground of any available view, where topography drops gently away from the receptor to further restrict potential visibility. It is anticipated that at both Year 1 and Year 15 the Proposed Development will be imperceptible during winter months, resulting in a **negligible** adverse effect.

NCN Route 12

- 6.19 Users of this route will only perceive change while passing the northern tip of the site along a short stretch of Cowards Lane. The access road will run centrally to the corridor replacing concrete/grassland along the northern corridor, there will also be glimpses into the proposed built form to the south, seen within the context of Field House in the foreground. The magnitude of change is predicted to be medium at Year 1, where the proposed development would form a new and recognisable element within the view, which is likely to be recognised by the receptor, however at a medium range. Combined with the routes medium sensitivity, this results in a **moderate** adverse level of effect. As the landscape strategy matures, the magnitude of change is anticipated to reduce to low at Year 15, resulting in a long-term **moderate/minor** adverse effect which is permanent.

Road Users

Cowards Lane

- 6.20 Users of this road will only perceive change while passing the northern tip of the site along a short stretch of the lane. The access road will run centrally to the corridor replacing concrete/grassland along the northern corridor, there will also be glimpses into the proposed built form to the south, seen within the context of Field House in the foreground. The magnitude of change is predicted to be medium at Year 1, where the proposed development would form a new and recognisable element within the view, which is likely to be recognised by the receptor, however at a medium range. Combined with the routes medium sensitivity, this results in a **moderate** adverse level of effect. As the landscape strategy matures, the magnitude of change is anticipated to reduce to low at Year 15, resulting in a long-term **moderate/minor** adverse effect which is permanent.

St Albans Road

- 6.21 There are no views into the site from this road during summer months, however as leaves fall from the trees it may be possible to identify the Proposed Development through intervening vegetation. It is anticipated that at both Year 1 and Year 15 the Proposed Development will be imperceptible during winter months, resulting in a **negligible** adverse effect.

The Riddy

- 6.22 Users of this road are likely to have glimpses towards the Proposed Development through gaps in existing built form along the road. The main focus of the road is existing built form, therefore at both year 1 and year 15 it is anticipated that the Proposed Development will form a minor component of the view at medium range, resulting in a low magnitude of change. Combined with the roads medium sensitivity, this results in a worst case **moderate/minor** adverse effect.

Residential Dwellings/Groups

27-43 St Albans Road (odd only)

- 6.23 Properties along St Albans Road are adjacent to the site. Due to their proximity to the proposed development the magnitude of change will be high at Year 1 despite some established vegetation along the north-western site boundary. There will inevitably be the need for some management and thinning of this vegetation, which will mean, at least for a short time more intervisibility with the site. Therefore, the magnitude of change will be high leading to a **major** adverse level of effect. By Year 15, however, the effects of the landscape enhancements will reduce the magnitude of change to medium leading to a **major/moderate** adverse level of effect.

Marlin and Field House

- 6.24 These properties will have uninterrupted foreground views of the Proposed Development, given its immediate proximity. While a vegetated edge is proposed to create separation between the rear curtilages of proposed properties the magnitude of change will still be high at Year 1 and combined with the high sensitivity of the properties results in a **major** adverse level of effect at year one. By Year 15, however, the effects of the landscape enhancements will reduce the magnitude of change to medium leading to a **major/moderate** adverse level of effect.

1-3 The Riddy

- 6.25 Due to the proximity of these properties to the eastern edge of the site, the Proposed Development will form a new and recognisable feature within the view, where properties at St Albans Road will already form part of the view, albeit in the middle distance. The Proposed Development has evolved to create a small landscape buffer between built form at the eastern edge adjacent to The Riddy and retain existing landscape features, the magnitude of change at Year 1 is predicted to be medium, resulting in a **major/moderate** adverse level of effect. At Year 15, as the landscape strategy matures and views become filtered, the magnitude of change to these properties is predicted to reduce to low, resulting in a long-term **moderate** adverse effect which is permanent.

Recreation Ground

- 6.26 There are no views into the site from this receptor during summer months, however as leaves fall from the trees it may be possible to identify the Proposed Development through intervening vegetation. Field House and Marlin will sit within the foreground of any available view, where topography drops gently away from the receptor to further restrict potential visibility. It is anticipated that at both Year 1 and Year 15 the Proposed Development will be imperceptible during winter months, resulting in a **negligible** adverse effect.

Section 7 Green Belt Matters

INTRODUCTION

- 7.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2024) states that: *“The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence”*.
- 7.2 The NPPF (paragraph 143) states that Green Belt serves five purposes:
- To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
 - To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
 - To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
 - To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
 - To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.
- 7.3 Within the adopted North Hertfordshire Local Plan, the NPPF lies entirely within the London Green Belt as shown on the interactive proposals map⁴, however the village of Codicote itself does not lie within the Green Belt.
- 7.4 As part of the Local Plan, North Hertfordshire carried out a Green Belt Review in 2018 (NHGBR), which formed an update to the original document produced in 2017. The site and its surrounding context to the south lies within ‘Parcel 5a – Codicote’, see **Image EDP 7.1**.

⁴ <https://maps.north-herts.gov.uk/Maps/map.aspx?mapname=LocalPlan>



Image EDP 7.1: Extract from the NHGBR in relation to Parcel 5a (green) with the site broadly indicated with a red dot.

- 7.5 The 2017 report was not available at the time of writing, it would appear that this report assessed each parcel against the five purposes of Green Belt. The 2018 review was carried out to address the openness of the Green Belt (both in visual and physical terms) alongside an update review of Purpose C.
- 7.6 The following table shows the findings of the 2018 review.

Table EDP 7.1: Parcel 5a 2018 review outcomes

Criteria	Findings
Visual Openness	<i>"Mixed – sloping sides of the Mimram Valley limits longer range views into and out of the parcel to higher ground. Scattered small blocks of woodland."</i>
Physical Openness	<i>"Mixed – abuts settlement edge of Codicote with scattered agricultural buildings and some urban influences in the south-east where parcel abuts Welwyn."</i>

Criteria	Findings
Purpose C	<i>"Moderate Contribution: Generally mixed levels of visual and physical openness due to topography and proximity to neighbouring development to southeast. Immediately adjoins and helps to retain the rural setting to Codicote."</i>
Overall GB Contribution	<i>"Moderate Contribution: Parcel is part of the wider countryside to the west of the A1(M) and makes a moderate contribution to Green Belt purposes."</i>

EDP'S GREEN BELT APPRAISAL

- 7.7 Green Belt is a spatial planning tool and infers no elevated judgement of landscape quality or value. Any development within the site would result in the permanent loss of Green Belt land to built development. The loss of openness can comprise both a spatial and visual dimension.
- 7.8 The site is abutted by residential built development there is no noteworthy 'built form' within the site. As a result of the site's spatial position adjacent to the existing settlement, combined with the well-vegetated topography and surrounding built context, the site is afforded a degree of containment from the wider Green Belt. The development proposal includes areas of additional, clearly defined areas of publicly accessible open space, and the housing set back from boundaries, more 'valued' landscape features and away from more 'open' portions of the site to the south-east, with the opportunity for an appropriate landscaping scheme (retention and enhancement) along the perimeters of the site to provide mitigation and further emphasise the containment of the site.
- 7.9 The Government has published updated Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) in 2025 in relation to assessment of Green Belt Land, specifically concerning the status of 'Grey Belt'.
- 7.10 The PPG tells us that when making judgements as to whether land is grey belt, we should consider the contribution that assessment areas make to Green Belt purposes a, b, and d. Judgements in relation to the site are set out below, following the assessment criteria from the PPG.

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

- 7.11 The site is not considered to make a contribution to this purpose, defined as a 'weak or none' contribution in the PPG, for the reasons outlined in **Table EDP 7.2**.
- 7.12 Codicote is a village, not a town, there would be limited reduction in perceived openness as the open land within the site is not widely visible to the public other than views from receptors either within or immediately adjacent to the site. The site is bordered by strong defensible boundaries on all sides and development would not therefore increase susceptibility to unrestricted sprawl of any large built-up area (Town).

Table EDP 7.2: Assessment Criteria for Purpose A

Assessment Criteria for Purpose a: Check the Unrestricted Sprawl of Large Built-up Areas	
Strong Contribution	Assessment areas that contribute strongly are likely to be free of existing development and lack physical feature(s) in reasonable proximity that could restrict and contain development. They are also likely to include all of the following features: • “Be adjacent or near to a large built up area; and • If developed, result in an incongruous pattern of development (such as an extended ‘finger’ of development into the Green Belt).”
Moderate Contribution	Assessment areas that contribute moderately are likely to be adjacent or near to a large built up area, but include one or more features that weaken the land’s contribution to this purpose a, such as (but not limited to): • Having physical feature(s) in reasonable proximity that could restrict and contain development; • Be partially enclosed by existing development, such that new development would not result in an incongruous pattern of development; • Contain existing development; and • Being subject to other urbanising influences.
Weak or None Contribution	Assessment areas that make only a weak or no contribution are likely to include those that: • <u>Are not adjacent to or near to a large built-up area; and</u> • Are adjacent to or near to a large built up area, but containing or being largely enclosed by significant existing development.

Purpose b: Prevent Neighbouring Towns from Merging Into One Another

- 7.13 The site is not considered to make a contribution to this purpose, defined as a ‘weak or none’ contribution in the PPG, for the reasons outlined in **Table EDP 7.3**.
- 7.14 Development of the site would not bring the village of Codicote closer to any town. Furthermore, the sense of separation brought by further tree belts and topography beyond to the south, are such that development of the site would in no way result in the merging of the settlements.

Table EDP 7.3: Assessment Criteria for Purpose b

Assessment Criteria for Purpose b: Prevent Neighbouring Towns from Merging into One Another	
Strong Contribution	Assessment areas that contribute strongly are likely to be free of existing development and include all of the following features: • Forming a substantial part of a gap between towns; and • The development of which would be likely to result in the loss of visual separation of towns.

Assessment Criteria for Purpose b: Prevent Neighbouring Towns from Merging into One Another	
Moderate Contribution	Assessment areas that contribute moderately are likely to be located in a gap between towns, but include one or more features that weaken their contribution to this purpose, such as (but not limited to): • Forming a small part of the gap between towns; and • Being able to be developed without the loss of visual separation between towns. This could be (but is not limited to) due to the presence or the close proximity of structures, natural landscape elements or topography that preserve visual separation.
Weak or None Contribution	Assessment areas that contribute weakly are likely to include those that: • <u>Do not form part of a gap between towns;</u> or • Form part of a gap between towns, but only a very small part of this gap, without making a contribution to visual separation.

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

- 7.15 The site is not considered to make a contribution to this purpose, defined as a ‘weak or none’ contribution in the PPG , for the reasons outlined in **Table EDP 7.4**.
- 7.16 Due to the site’s existing containment and intervening development, topography and vegetation, development of the site will not alter the character or setting of the historic cores of any of any historic town in the locality.

Table EDP 7.4: Assessment Criteria for Purpose d

Assessment Criteria for Purpose d: Preserve the Setting and Special Character of Historic Towns	
Strong Contribution	Assessment areas that contribute strongly are likely be free of existing development and to include all of the following features: • Form part of the setting of the historic town; and • Make a considerable contribution to the special character of a historic town. This could be (but is not limited to) as a result of being within, adjacent to, or of significant visual importance to the historic aspects of the town.
Moderate Contribution	Assessment areas that perform moderately are likely to form part of the setting and/or contribute to the special character of a historic town but include one or more features that weaken their contribution to this purpose, such as (but not limited to): • Being separated to some extent from historic aspects of the town by existing development or topography; • Containing existing development; and • Not having an important visual, physical, or experiential relationship to historic aspects of the town.

Assessment Criteria for Purpose d: Preserve the Setting and Special Character of Historic Towns	
Weak or None Contribution	Assessment areas that make no or only a weak contribution are likely to include those that: • <u>Do not form part of the setting of a historic town;</u> and • <u>Have no visual, physical, or experiential connection to the historic aspects of the town.</u>

‘GREY BELT’

- 7.17 This section reviews the site against the NPPF (December 2024) Green Belt Purposes and the Green Belt PPG (2025), to determine whether the application of the revised Framework is likely to find development of the site 'not inappropriate'.
- 7.18 Regarding visual change (and the visual dimension of Green Belt assessment), there will be localised and limited harm to visual receptors as would be expected, particularly adjacent to the site, however, such receptors already experience the existing settlement edge and large infrastructure as a tangible and visual feature. There is opportunity for appropriate mitigation to contain development.
- 7.19 Any harm to open and rural character is an unavoidable result of development or change. This harm needs to be weighed against the benefits of the proposals in other respects. The degree of loss of openness of the Green Belt and therefore the associated conflict could be moderated to a degree by the appropriateness of the site for development which results from its intrinsic character, immediate context and assumedly, the considered nature of any proposals.
- 7.20 As set out above, when making judgements as to whether land is grey belt, the Green Belt PPG 2025, indicates that authorities should consider the contribution that assessment areas make to Green Belt purposes.
- 7.21 In the context of Purpose A – to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas:
- A contribution of ‘Weak to None’ includes those that, like the site, are not near to a large built-up area (town) and, like the Site, are enclosed by significant existing development (built development). Are afforded a degree of enclosure (landform and vegetation) and would not be considered incongruous. Finally, like the site, is influenced by adjacent urbanising elements.
- 7.22 In a similar manner to Purpose a, the PPG (2025) indicates that in relation to Purpose b; to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another. Villages and Hamlets are not considered large built-up areas:
- A contribution of ‘Weak or None’ includes those that, like the site, do not form part of a gap between towns and, like the site, make no contribution to visual separation.

- 7.23 Evidently the site is separated from the historic aspect of any town (Purpose d). As detailed above, the site makes no contribution to Green Belt Purposes a, b and d.

New Paragraph 155

- 7.24 This paragraph of the NPPF requires that:

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

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

- 7.25 This is helpful in that while development on any undeveloped, open, Green Belt land would generally, by its nature, have a ‘greater impact’ on the openness of the Green Belt than exists on the site already it would not necessarily ‘fundamentally undermine’ the wider Green Belt.
- 7.26 In relation to the site and the surrounding landscape to the south, they are open in so far as they do not contain development of a scale, character or form that has a significant impact on Green Belt openness. However, while development of the site might be seen to have ‘greater impact’ on the openness of the Green Belt than exists on the site already it would not fundamentally undermine the performance of Green Belt land outside the site in part due to its relatively small scale in relation to the wider Green Belt, and because of its strong containment.

Grey Belt Assessment

- 7.27 Having determined that the site is considered to be ‘Grey Belt’ as it does not strongly contribute to purposes a, b or d (discussed above). The PPG’s second consideration is whether the policies in Footnote 7 of the NPPF provide a strong reason to refuse development - i.e., habitats sites (and those sites listed in paragraph 187) and/or designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI); Local Green Space; an AONB (NL), a National Park (or within the Broads Authority) or defined as Heritage Coast; irreplaceable habitats; designated heritage assets (and other heritage assets of archaeological interest referred to in footnote 72); and areas at risk of flooding or ‘Grey Belt’.
- 7.28 In landscape and visual terms, the Site is not considered to constitute land or or contain assets listed in Footnote 7, further considerations of Footnote 7 are set out within the Planning Statement.
- 7.29 As detailed above, the site does not ‘strongly contribute’ and constitutes grey belt land. It should be noted that the PPG is clear, the question is whether *“the site strongly contributes to the Green Belt purposes a, b or d”*, not any wider notional parcel within which it sits. Consideration of ‘harm’ is outlined at paragraph 009 of the PPG (2025), which makes clear that:

- The consideration is whether the site (not any larger area) strongly contributes to the Green Belt purposes a, b or d; and
 - Whether development of the **Site** would fundamentally undermine the purposes of the remaining Green Belt across the plan area.
- 7.30 Openness is primarily the absence of built form, with consideration of the above matters, there would be harm to the spatial openness of the Green Belt at this location. This harm would relate to the loss of the land for residential development, this spatial harm, would be experienced across the portions of the site where built form is proposed. Consideration of the visual dimension does not diminish any harm to the spatial component.
- 7.31 Based on the development proposed, there will be a limited loss of visual openness beyond the immediate site. This reduction in visual openness constitutes a degree of harm. As noted above, the visual effects of a proposal are localised, and expected to be additions to baseline views where residential development within Codicote is already a frequent component.
- 7.32 In terms of visual openness, rather than being a high-functioning part of the Green Belt which contributes highly towards the main function of keeping land ‘permanently open’, overall, the site is characterised by existing built form (immediately adjacent) and urbanising elements. With consideration of the above matters, there would likely be a limited level of localised harm or performance to the visual openness of the Green Belt.
- 7.33 What this review of the Site in terms of the main purposes of Green Belt shows is that, rather than being a high-functioning part of the Green Belt which contributes highly towards the main function of keeping land ‘permanently open’, overall, it is an enclosed site, characterised by existing built form and urbanising elements, which is seen by relatively few receptors close to it.
- 7.34 Furthermore, in terms of ‘Golden Rules’, NPPF 2024 paragraph 156c, any development proposals should be accompanied by an open space strategy detailing the various landscape typologies that contribute to the overall Green Infrastructure network.
- 7.35 The site is currently in private ownership, additional accessible areas of green space will be provided because of development. There will be no loss of currently publicly accessible green space. In terms of satisfying the ‘**Golden Rules**’ (NPPF 156c), **Plan EDP 6** appended to this LVGBA detail the sites open space strategy. This demonstrates that there is sufficient provision of new green spaces that are accessible to existing and new residents, as well as landscape enhancements, such as additional tree and hedgerow planting. Further details of the landscape strategy proposals and enhancements can be found at **Section 6** of this report.
- 7.36 The findings of EDP’s assessment are summarised in **Tables EDP 7.2 to 7.4**. When the findings of EDP’s review and assessment are tested against the NPPF (2024) and PPG (2025), EDP finds that the site is a lower functioning area of the Green Belt.

- 7.37 Having followed the assessment criteria within the PPG 2025, the site is 'Grey Belt' as it does not strongly contribute to purposes a, b or d (detailed above). Furthermore, considered development retains, protects and buffers the existing boundary vegetation and would have only a limited or localised impact on landscape character and visual amenity. Although not part of the grey belt assessment, the mature landscape feature forming the southern boundary of the site helps to form a strong boundary to built form, ensuring there is no encroachment on the wider countryside as part of the development (purpose c).

Section 8

Summary and Conclusions

- 8.1 EDP is an independent environmental consultancy and Registered Practice of the Landscape Institute specialising the assessment of developments at all scales across the UK.
- 8.2 This report has summarised the findings of a comprehensive landscape data trawl and field appraisal undertaken by EDP's landscape team (**Sections 2, 3 and 4**). In **Section 5**, the proposed development is described with any proposed mitigation. **Section 6** undertakes an assessment of the likely landscape and visual effects having regard to the above and based on a combination of the thresholds set out in **Appendix EDP 1** coupled with professional judgement.
- 8.3 The visual and sensory character of the site would change notably because of implementation of the proposals. This magnitude of change is not an indication of bad design but is to be expected as the result of the change of use of any partially developed largely green site to residential development. However, the scale of change would be reduced by the fact that the site is already degraded to some degree, due to the settlement edge character of horse paddocks and the influence of the surrounding residential built form, as well as the fact that the physical elements of the landscape around the site perimeter will remain largely intact and will be enhanced.
- 8.4 The following effects are likely:
- The effects on the character of the site itself and to a lesser degree the host LCA (205: Codicote Plateau); and
 - Effects on visual amenity, including views from the PRoW route running through the site and nearby residential receptors.
- 8.5 The following long-term effects are likely:
- Moderate adverse level of effect on the character of the site itself;
 - Minor effects to the host LCA 205: Codicote Plateau, diminishing quickly with distance from the site due to intervening built form, vegetation and topography;
 - Substantial adverse level of effect on Codicote Footpath 023 as it runs through the site. This reduces as users move outside of the site boundary to moderate at the southern extent of the PRoW;
 - Users of Cowards Lane and the National Cycle Route will have moderate/minor adverse level of effect in the long-term. This is restricted to the part of the route abutting the site's northern boundary, there are not anticipated to be any effects on the routes beyond this area due to the screening of built form and dense vegetation; and

- The effects experienced by residential receptors are likely to be greatest at Merlin, Field House and a small group of properties along St Albans Road to the west. At Year 15 landscape enhancements will reduce the overall level of effect to major/moderate.
- 8.6 The findings confirm that the proposals respect and enhance the landscape character of the surrounding area and site, and public visual amenity through a landscape lead design. The findings confirm that the site represents a logical and easily assimilated development.
- 8.7 For the reasons outlined within the report, the proposed residential development represents a small-scale and visually discrete feature and would not result in any material landscape or policy contraventions, and the site is not subject to any landscape designations seeking to protect specific landscape value.
- 8.8 The proposed development would create only very limited and localised landscape and visual effects. By including additional mitigation around the site's boundaries, it can be further integrated into its surroundings. Overall, the proposed development in the round, would not constitute an unacceptable impact in landscape and visual terms.
- 8.9 Accordingly, this LVGBA concludes that there is no landscape or visual reason why the site should not be developed and would therefore not result in material harm to the character of the surrounding area.