

location	assessment	evaluation	guidelines	SCARP SLOPES SOUTH OF ROYSTON	Area 228*
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EVALUATION

VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION

Expansive open area with long distance views to the north.

Rarity & distinctiveness

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

VISUAL IMPACT

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

ACCESSIBILITY

Pattern of roads and footpaths runs up and down the scarp face. Connections radiate out from Royston. Icknield Way and Hertfordshire Way long distance paths cross the Character Area.

COMMUNITY VIEWS

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

LANDSCAPE RELATED DESIGNATIONS

LC2	Landscape Conservation Area
SSSI	Therfield Heath
SAM 106	Triple ditches at Galley Hill: Sandon
SAM 20622	Gallows Hill Barrow: Kelshall
SAM 20630	Earls Hill Barrow part of the Round Barrow Cemetery on Therfield Heath: Therfield
SAM 20631	Two Bowl Barrows part of the Round Barrow Cemetery on Therfield Heath: Therfield
SAM 20632	Five Bowl Barrows part of the Round Barrow Cemetery on Therfield Heath: Therfield
SAM 20633	Bowl Barrow one or two Round Barrows on Penhills: Therfield
SAM 20634	Bowl Barrow one of two Round Barrows on Penhills: Therfield
SAM 20635	Long Barrow on Therfield Heath: Therfield
SAM 20640	Bell Barrow part of the Round Barrow Cemetery on Therfield Heath: Therfield
SAM 20641	Bowl Barrow part of the Round Barrow Cemetery on Therfield Heath: Therfield
SAM 20664	Bowl Barrow 1km south-west of Heath Farm: part of the Round Barrow Cemetery on Deadmans Hill: Sandon
SAM 29389/01 and 02	Springfield style enclosure tree bowl barrows and two pond barrows on Whiteley Hill: Barkway
SAM 33374	Prehistoric Barrow Cemetery and Cross Dyke in Five Hill Field, 290m SW of Heath Farm: Sandon
SAM HT 125	Mile Ditches: Therfield Heath

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EVALUATION

CONDITION

Land cover change:	Insignificant
Age structure of tree cover:	Over mature
Extent of semi-natural habitat survival:	Relic
Management of semi-natural habitat:	Poor
Survival of cultural pattern:	Declining/Relic
Impact of built development:	Moderate
Impact of land-use change:	Low
Matrix Score:	Poor

ROBUSTNESS

Impact of landform:	Prominent
Impact of land cover:	Prominent
Impact of historic pattern:	Apparent
Visibility from outside:	Widely visible
Sense of enclosure:	Open
Visual unity:	Unified
Distinctiveness/rarity:	Frequent
Matrix Score:	Strong

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

GUIDELINES

STRATEGY AND GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING CHANGE:

Restore Condition to Maintain Character

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

A7. ILLUSTRATIVE LANDSCAPE STRATEGY



□ The Site

Existing

▨ Bridleway (Royston BR13+14)

▨ Public footpath

▨ Trees

▨ Vegetation to be removed

▨ Hedgerow

▨ Ponds

Proposed

▨ Trees

▨ Native thicket

▨ Native mixed hedgerow

▨ Marginal planting

▨ Meadow

▨ Amenity grass

▨ Drainage features

▨ Timber bench

▨ Made path

CLIENT
Gladman Developments Ltd

PROJECT
Land off Echo Hill, Royston

TITLE
Illustrative Landscape Strategy Plan

DRAWING NO.
537_DL05

SCALE @ A4
NTS

DRAWN BY
CW

REVISION
-

DATE
June 2025

CHECKED BY
SG

ICENI PROJECTS LIMITED
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A8. LVIA METHODOLOGY AND SUMMARY EFFECTS TABLES

LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment has been undertaken with reference to best practice, as outlined in the following published guidance:

- Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (3rd Edition, 2013) - Landscape Institute/Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment;
- Assessing landscape value outside national designations (2021) – Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 02/21;
- Visual representation of development proposals (2019) - Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 06/19;
- Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland (2002) - Countryside Agency/Scottish Natural Heritage; and
- An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment (2014) - Natural England.

1.2 GLVIA3 states within paragraph 1.1 that '*Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) is a tool used to identify and assess the significance of and the effects of change resulting from development on both the landscape as an environmental resource in its own right and on people's views and visual amenity.*'

1.3 It also states that when identifying landscape and visual effects there is a '*need for an approach that is in proportion to the scale of the project that is being assessed and the nature of the likely effects. Judgement needs to be exercised at all stages in terms of the scale of investigation that is appropriate and proportional.*'

1.4 GLVIA3 recognises within paragraph 2.23 that professional judgement is at the core of LVIA, and that while some change can be quantified (for example the number of trees which may be lost), '*much of the assessment must rely on qualitative judgements*'. The Landscape Institute's Technical Committee has advised that the 2013 revision of the GLVIA '*places greater emphasis on professional judgement and less emphasis on a formulaic approach*'.

2. LANDSCAPE/TOWNSCAPE EFFECTS

- 2.1 Landscape/townscape effects are assessed by considering a combination of the landscape's sensitivity, and the magnitude of change it will experience.

Landscape/Townscape Sensitivity

- 2.2 Sensitivity is determined by a combination of the value that is attached to a landscape element, and the susceptibility of the landscape element to changes that would arise as a result of the proposals. The determination of sensitivity takes into account the below elements:

Landscape/Townscape Quality

- 2.2.1 A combination of desk study and field work has been undertaken to identify and record the character of the landscape, as well as its condition. The landscape character and quality of the area was established through consideration of the landscape elements, features, and aesthetic and perceptual factors. This subjective judgement is often informed by national or local designations made upon the landscape in respect of its quality, e.g. Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Landscape quality is judged with reference to Table L1. Quality feeds into the assessment of Value, as below.

Landscape/Townscape Value

- 2.2.2 Landscape value is also considered in order to avoid consideration only of how scenically attractive an area may be, and thus to avoid undervaluing areas of strong character but little scenic beauty. It is defined in the glossary of the GLVIA as: *'The relative value that is attached to different landscapes by society. A landscape may be valued by different stakeholders for a whole variety of reasons.'*
- 2.2.3 Paragraph 187 of the current NPPF outlines that planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes *'...in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan'*. Valued landscapes therefore usually include nationally designated landscapes, such as National Parks or National Landscapes. Locally or regionally designated landscapes, as well as areas where documentary evidence, and/or site observation (in accordance with Box 5.1 of GLVIA3 and LI TGN 02/21) indicates as being more valued than the surrounding area, can often also be considered to be valued landscapes.
- 2.2.4 Landscape value is judged on site by an experienced assessor, with reference to Table L2.

Susceptibility

- 2.2.5 Susceptibility indicates the ability of a landscape or visual receptor to accommodate the proposed development 'without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline situation and/or the achievement of landscape planning policies and strategies.' (GLVIA3, para. 5.40).
- 2.2.6 Susceptibility is judged in accordance with the criteria set out in Table L3.
- 2.3 The judgement as to sensitivity combines judgements on susceptibility and value. A landscape of high sensitivity will tend be one with a low ability to accommodate change and a high value, and vice versa. Landscape sensitivity was judged according to the criteria set out in Table L4.

Magnitude of Change

- 2.4 The magnitude of change is the scale, extent and duration of change to a landscape arising from the proposed development, and was assessed using the criteria in Table L5.

Landscape/Townscape Effects

- 2.5 The landscape effect is judged by combines judgements on sensitivity and magnitude of change.
- 2.6 The landscape effects can be either beneficial, adverse or neutral. Landscape effects can be direct (i.e. impact on physical features, e.g. landform, vegetation, watercourses etc.), or indirect (i.e. impact on landscape character as a result of the introduction of new elements within the landscape).
- 2.7 Landscapes of higher sensitivity, when subjected to a higher magnitude of change, are likely to experience high landscape effects, which can be either beneficial or adverse. Similarly, landscapes of low sensitivity, when subject to a low magnitude of change, are likely to experience lower landscape effects.
- 2.8 It is also important to consider the area over which the effects may be felt, and to note that effects will generally tend to decline with distance from the development in question (as the magnitude of change is likely to reduce).
- 2.9 Changes can also be beneficial, including through the creation of new landscape features, introduction of beneficial management practices, or improving public or recreational access. Therefore, landscape effects have been considered at completion (Year 0), as well as at Year 15, as landscape effects can reduce as new planting or mitigation becomes established and effective.
- 2.10 Table L6 sets out a general description/examples of the levels of landscape effects.

3. VISUAL EFFECTS

- 3.1 Visual effects are concerned with people's views of the landscape and the change that will occur.
- 3.2 A site visit has been undertaken to ascertain and record the baseline visual condition of the site and surroundings, noting the receptors (i.e. the people who experience the view and where they area/what they are doing), and the nature of the existing views. Factors taken into consideration in considering the baseline include the activity people undertake when experiencing the view (e.g. walking in the countryside, working in the office); the nature, composition and character of the views; elements which may interrupt or otherwise influence the views; and the extent and proportion of the view.
- 3.3 GLVIA3 recognises that it is not always possible to view the site during both the winter and summer months. Visibility is likely to be greatest during the winter months when vegetation is out of leaf. However, even if the site is only visited during the summer months, the assessment of visual effects is undertaken by a professional, who is experienced in considering what the visual effect will be when the intervening vegetation is out of leaf. As such, the assessment of visual effects takes into consideration both summer and winter views, and assesses the worst case scenario.
- 3.4 The following terms are often used to describe the extent, content, duration, or character of the view:
- No view – the site or development are not visible from the receptor.
 - Glimpsed view – a limited view of the site or development, or a small part of it, or a transient view when moving.
 - Partial – only a part of the site or development is clearly visible.
 - Filtered – views are partially screened by intervening vegetation, the extent of which may change with the seasons.
 - Screened – a view hidden by intervening vegetation, topography, built form or similar.
 - Open – a clear view.

Visual Sensitivity

- 3.5 The sensitivity of the visual receptor is affected by several factors, including its susceptibility to change, and the value of the view. The susceptibility to change of a visual receptor often relates to the activity they are undertaking and/or the duration of their view. Views of higher value would include those from recognised beauty spots or viewpoints, while views of lower value may include those along a main road within a town.

- 3.6 The sensitivity of the receptor is assessed with reference to Table V1.

Magnitude of Visual Change

- 3.7 A professional judgement is made to determine the magnitude of change on visual receptors, with reference to Table V2. It takes into consideration factors such as the extent of the change (in terms of character and geography), the scale of the proposal, the duration of the change, the reversibility, and the proportion of the change. The magnitude of change will generally decrease with distance from its source, until a point is reached where there is no discernible change.

Visual Effects

- 3.8 The Visual Effect is judged based on a combination of the sensitivity of the receptor, and the magnitude of change, and is judged with reference to Table V3. As with Landscape Effects, the Visual Effects are considered at completion of the project (Year 0), as well as at Year 15, acknowledging that mitigation measures such as new landscaping, may reduce visual effects over time.
- 3.9 Visual effects can either be beneficial, adverse, or neutral. Visual effect are usually expected to be higher when there is a higher magnitude of change experienced by a higher sensitivity receptor, and vice-versa.

4. VISUALISATION AND PHOTOGRAPHY

- 4.1 The photographs and visualisations within this report have been prepared in general conformance with the Landscape Institute's Technical Guidance Note 06/19. The 'types', as set out within the Guidance, comprise the following:
- Type 1 - annotated viewpoint photographs;
 - Type 2 - 3D wireline/model;
 - Type 3 - photomontage/photowire;
 - Type 4 - photomontage/photowire (survey/scale verifiable).
- 4.2 The baseline photographs within this report include a combination of context photographs (showing the character of the site and surroundings), as well as Type 1 photographs (which are displayed at a recognised scale and angle of view, as per the guidelines).
- 4.3 Photographs were taken with a digital camera with a lens that approximates to 50mm, to give a similar depth of view to the human eye. In some cases images have been joined together to form a panorama. The prevailing weather, and any effects on visibility are noted. Images are displayed at

the most appropriate size, taking into account the published guidance, legibility at A3 paper size, and context (which is often shown for illustrative purposes only), and allows for enlarged scale printing if required.

- 4.4 The Guidance Note advocates a proportionate and reasonable approach, which includes professional judgement, in order to aid informed decision making. While effort is made to include Type 2 or 3 visualisations, this is not always possible due to project constraints.

TABLE L1 - LANDSCAPE/TOWNSCAPE QUALITY	
	Typical criteria
Very High	Nationally designated landscapes, such as National Landscapes, National Parks or World Heritage Sites. Generally landscapes in very good condition, with intact and distinctive features. It may be that within nationally designated areas, some parts may be of lower quality due to detractors.
High	Often locally designated landscapes, such as Special Landscape Areas or Conservation Areas. Attractive with a strong sense of character, place, and distinction. Will generally be in a good condition, with intact and distinctive features.
Medium	Pleasant, ordinary landscapes with some detractors, and with no particular distinctive qualities. Will generally be in a medium condition, with some intact features.
Low	Degraded or unattractive landscape, affected by many detractors. Will generally be in poor condition, with few intact elements.

TABLE L2 - LANDSCAPE/TOWNSCAPE VALUE	
	Typical criteria
Very High	Nationally designated landscapes, such as National Landscapes, National Parks or World Heritage Sites. Generally landscapes in very good condition, with intact and distinctive features. May have elevated levels of tranquillity, or appear wild. May contain very rare features, and may be of particular historic or ecological interest and value. May have substantial recreational value.
High	Often locally designated landscapes, and usually with high landscape quality and in a good condition. May have higher than average recreational value, or ecological or historical interest. May be considered particularly scenic, or allow for particularly scenic public views from within the landscape. May have well-known cultural associations. May be identified as a particularly good example of a characteristic landscape, or contain particularly good examples of characteristic landscape elements.
Medium	Pleasant, ordinary landscapes. May have localised scenic qualities, with limited recreational value. May have undesignated heritage or ecological value at a local level.
Low	Degraded landscape. May have limited public accessibility or views. May have many features which detract from the scenic quality or tranquillity. May have little ecological or cultural interest.

TABLE L3 - LANDSCAPE/TOWNSCAPE SUSCEPTIBILITY	
	Typical criteria
High	Landscapes with a poor capacity to accommodate change, owing to the interaction of the proposed development with the topography, vegetation cover, built form, etc. Landscapes with little or no ability to absorb change, as change would conflict or be out of context with the character of the surroundings. Landscapes where there is little or no screening possible, and where development would be readily visible, and out of character.
Medium	Landscapes with a good capacity to accommodate change. The change would be reflective of the scale and character of parts of the surrounding landscape. Some landscape elements may be lost due to development, but this could be mitigated.
Low	A landscape with a very good capacity to accommodate change, with proposed development comprising a small part of the wider landscape, or being in-keeping with the overarching character of the surroundings. Development may be very well screened, or may complement or enhance the local character.

TABLE L4 - LANDSCAPE/TOWNSCAPE SENSITIVITY	
	Typical criteria
Very High	A landscape that is typically of higher value, and with a high susceptibility to change. May include nationally designated landscapes, or landscapes of very high quality or value.
High	A landscape with a limited ability to accommodate change, of higher to medium landscape value. Often landscapes of higher quality, and may be locally designated.
Medium	Landscapes with a good capacity to accommodate change, where change would not lead to major loss or damage to landscape elements or character. Often landscapes of medium value and quality.
Low	A landscape with a very good ability to accommodate change, where change would not lead to major loss of key or important elements. Often lower value or quality landscapes.

TABLE L5 - LANDSCAPE/TOWNSCAPE MAGNITUDE OF CHANGE	
	Typical criteria
High	Total loss or major alteration to key receptors, characteristics or features of the baseline.
Medium	Partial loss or damage to key receptors, characteristics or features, or partial improvement, restoration or addition to these features.
Low	Minor loss or alteration, or minor improvement to key receptors, characteristics or features.
Negligible	Very limited loss or alteration, or limited improvement to key receptors, characteristics or features.
Neutral	No identifiable change.

TABLE L6 - LANDSCAPE/TOWNSCAPE EFFECT	
	Typical criteria
Major	Effects are in complete variance to the baseline landscape. Proposals may have a substantial detrimental or beneficial effect on the landscape resource or character.
Moderate	Effects result in fundamental alterations to the landscape resource or character, which may not be fully mitigated. Effects may result in clearly identifiable benefits.
Minor	Effects result in slight alterations to the landscape resource or character, with mitigation being effective. There may be some beneficial effects.
Negligible	Effects would barely perceptible on the landscape resource or character, either beneficial or adverse.
Neutral	No identifiable effect.

Note: Effects may be judged to be either adverse or beneficial.

TABLE V1 - SENSITIVITY OF VISUAL RECEPTOR	
	Typical criteria
High	Users of Public Rights of Way with generally open or unspoilt views. Users of outdoor recreational facilities where the purpose of the recreation is the enjoyment of the countryside, and with open views, such as visitors to National Landscapes, National Parks, Country Parks, Heritage assets (such as National Trust properties, Conservation Areas) etc. Non-motorised users of unclassified or minor roads where there are unspoilt views/lack of intrusive features. Residential properties with predominantly open views from ground and first floor windows, or gardens.
Medium	Views with moderate scenic value within undesignated landscapes. Users of Public Rights of Way with restricted views in less sensitive areas, or where there are intrusive features. Users of outdoor recreational facilities where views are not key to the purpose of the recreation, e.g. sports pitches, golf courses. Motorised users of unclassified or minor roads, or non-motorised users where there are some intrusive features. Residential properties with partial views from windows or gardens, or oblique views, or where views are partially obstructed. Users of institutional buildings and their grounds, such as schools.
Low	Views with many detracting features. Users of outdoor recreational facilities where the view is restricted or incidental to the activity. Users of main transport routes, including roads and rail (motorised or not). People at their place of work.

TABLE V2 - MAGNITUDE OF VISUAL CHANGE	
	Typical criteria
High	A dominant change in view which would be obviously discordant and out of context. Changes would occupy the majority of the view.
Medium	An obvious visual change which may be discordant, or not discordant but clearly visible over a large proportion of the view.
Low	Small changes to views that would be noticeable. Changes may be discordant over a small proportion of the view, or not discordant over a larger proportion of the view.
Negligible	The change will be discernible, but the character of the view will not materially change, or the change may not be discordant.
Neutral	No identifiable change.

TABLE V3 - VISUAL EFFECT	
	Typical criteria
Major	The proposals would be clearly visible and dominant, and would cause a substantial deterioration or improvement to a view from a more sensitive receptor.
Moderate	The proposal would be readily identifiable/visible, and would cause some deterioration or improvement to a view from a more sensitive receptor, or a greater deterioration or improvement to a view from a less sensitive receptor.
Minor	The proposal would be noticeable, and would cause limited deterioration or improvement to a view from a more sensitive receptor, or some deterioration or improvement from a less sensitive receptor.
Negligible	The proposal would not substantially change the view, but would be discernible.
Neutral	No change in view.

Note: Effects may be judged to be either adverse or beneficial.

DIRECT EFFECTS ON LANDSCAPE FEATURES		
Trees and Hedgerows		
Sensitivity	Existing Condition	
Medium	The Site is bound by managed hedgerows, and also include a managed internal field boundary hedge. Large, mature trees occur to the east of the Site, outside of the Site boundary.	
	Impact and Mitigation	
	Short sections of the internal hedgerow require removal to facilitate movement and connection within the Site, and small sections of hedgerow may be removed in the south east of the Site to create a connection to the adjoining bridleway. The remainder of the structural vegetation on the Site is capable of being retained and accommodated within the development, with 12m of complimentary landscaping retained alongside the hedgerows. The ornamental vegetation within the garden on No.24 Echo Hill will be removed. The Illustrative Landscape Strategy shows how new native hedgerow, woodland, tree, and thicket planting is proposed to be incorporated into the development, and this new structural planting will more than compensate for the small losses of hedgerow to accommodate access and movement.	
Magnitude of Change		Effect Year 15
Medium		Minor to Moderate Beneficial
Land use on the Site (i.e. grassland and residential property)		
Sensitivity	Existing Condition	
Medium	The Site comprises two fields of grassland and a residential property. The grassland is ordinary, and does not appear to be grazed. The house is not of architectural or historical value.	
	Impact and Mitigation	
	The grassland at the Site will largely be lost and replaced with new residential development, and new landscaping. However, parts of the Site would remain grassland or meadows, and these can be designed to be of higher ecological value than the current grasses. The residential property will be lost, but up to 84 new dwellings will be built in replacement.	
Magnitude of Change		Effect Year 15
High to Medium		Moderate Adverse
Public Rights of Way and Access		
Sensitivity	Existing Condition	
N/A	There are no Public Rights of Way on Site, and it is not publicly accessible.	
	Impact and Mitigation	
	There will be no direct effects to public rights of way on the Site, although new recreational routes will be created which would connect to the bridleways adjoining the Site.	
Magnitude of Change		Effect Year 15
N/A		N/A
Heritage Assets		
Sensitivity	Existing Condition	
N/A	There are no known heritage assets on the Site, although there may be buried archaeological artefacts.	
	Impact and Mitigation	
	n/a	
Magnitude of Change		Effect Year 15
N/A		N/A

INDIRECT EFFECTS ON LANDSCAPE/TOWNSCAPE CHARACTER			
Landscape/Townscape Character of Site			
Landscape/Townscape Quality	Landscape/Townscape Value	Landscape/Townscape Susceptibility	Landscape/Townscape Sensitivity
Medium	Medium	High to Medium	High to Medium
Existing Condition			
The Site is not covered by any statutory or non-statutory designations for landscape or heritage quality or value. It comprises two ordinary grassland fields bound by hedgerows, and an ordinary, modern residential property. The Site is not publicly accessible, and has no particular recreational value, although two bridleways adjoin it. The Site is not of heritage or ecological interest, nor is it tranquil or wild. It is not particularly distinctive, but it is located on the continuation of the ridge near the ecologically important Therfield Heath. There are views over the Cambridgeshire Plain from the Site, however, the Site is not of scenic value in itself. There are no known associations which would elevate the value of the Site. While the Site lies near Therfield Heath, it is separated from it by intervening development at Wicker Hall/Heath Farm which does not reflect the character of the Heath. It is also separated from the vast majority of the Heath due to the topography, with the ridge west of Briary Lane containing most of the Heath from the landscape/townscape to the east, with only the small area north of Wicker Hall/Heath Farm and south of the houses on Stake Piece Road located on the east-facing slope, and therefore facing towards the Site. Overall, the Site is assessed as being of medium landscape value, and it does not form part of a valued landscape. The Site is capable of accommodating residential development on the lower areas, whilst retaining the higher parts of the Site as open space. The existing hedgerows are capable of being retained for the most parts, with limited losses required for movement and access routes.			
Impact and Mitigation			
The character of the Site will change from grassland fields to a residential development with associated open space and infrastructure. The character of No.24 Echo Hill will change, with the existing house lost and the plot serving to accommodate the new access street into the development. The vast majority of structural vegetation will be retained, strengthened with new planting, and managed to ensure its longevity and health. Only short sections of hedgerow require removal to facilitate access and movement within the Site. The proposed development includes new areas of native tree and thicket planting, as well as areas of wildflower meadows and water-tolerant planting within the SuDS. It also includes new recreational walking routes, street trees, and areas of amenity grass to provide an area for more active recreation. While the effects are assessed as adverse due to the loss of the open fields, this does not mean that the development will be inappropriate or unattractive. Instead, as set out within the Design and Access Statement, the new homes and spaces will be designed to reflect the vernacular of the area, and to maintain the higher, more open parts of the Site undeveloped in order to retain views from the Site towards the wider landscape to the north. The Site is well related to the adjacent settlement, being bound by modern housing to the north and east. This housing is also located on the rising and undulating ground which marks the Site, and the houses at the Site will continue the characteristic of residential development on the north-facing slopes of Royston. By limiting the development height to 2 storeys or lower, and keeping the built development below the 111m AOD contour, long views from the proposed open space within the Site will be maintained over the new houses towards the north. While these views are not currently publicly accessible, they will become so once the development is in place, and will provide an additional landscape and recreational feature in terms of the opening up of this view to the public. Further recreational paths within the open space will offer additional walking and recreational opportunities.			
Magnitude of Change	Effect Year 1	Effect Year 15	
High to Medium	Major to Moderate Adverse	Moderate Adverse As the proposed landscaping matures and the homes become assimilated into their location	

Landscape/Townscape Character of Immediate Surroundings			
Landscape/Townscape Quality	Landscape/Townscape Value	Landscape/Townscape Susceptibility	Landscape/Townscape Sensitivity
Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium
Existing Condition			
The residential edge adjoining the Site is not of architectural or heritage value, and is modern and suburban in character. The fields south of the Site are ordinary in character. The land and intervening properties at Wicker Hall/Heath Farm are also ordinary. A small south eastern part of Therfield Heath lies near to the Site and is intervisible with it, however, overall, the landscape and townscape immediately adjoining the Site are not of particular value or sensitivity.			
Impact and Mitigation			
The Site is well related to the adjacent settlement, being bound by modern housing to the north and east. This housing is also located on the rising and undulating ground which marks the Site, and the houses at the Site will continue the characteristic of residential development on the north-facing slopes of Royston. There will be a limited effect on the townscape character of the immediate settlement adjoining the Site to the north and east. While one residential property will be demolished, the new access road in its place will be perceived within the context of the existing street and houses, and the new streets and homes will not appear out of character. Appropriate set-backs can be incorporated within the layout between the new and existing houses, to maintain their privacy and amenity. The proposed development will remain separate from the open landscape on the south-facing slope south of the Site, due to the intervening topography and vegetation, and there will be no material effect on the landscape character to the south.			
Magnitude of Change	Effect Year 1	Effect Year 15	
Medium	Moderate Adverse	Minor Adverse	
		As the proposed planting matures and the homes become assimilated into the immediate surroundings.	
Landscape/Townscape Character of Wider Surroundings			
Landscape/Townscape Quality	Landscape/Townscape Value	Landscape/Townscape Susceptibility	Landscape/Townscape Sensitivity
Medium	Medium	High to Medium	High to Medium
Existing Condition			
The wider town of Royston comprises mostly modern development, with the Conservation Area covering the central, older parts of the town. The settlement is of medium sensitivity. The wider landscape around the Site is undulating and mostly in arable use, and is of medium to higher value and sensitivity. However, Therfield Heath beyond Wicker Hall/Heath Farm to the north west of the Site, is of high landscape, ecological, historical, and recreational value.			
Impact and Mitigation			
The proposed development, being well contained from the wider countryside, and well related to the existing settlement, will not have a material effect on the wider landscape character beyond the immediate setting, nor on the wider character of Royston.			
Magnitude of Change	Effect Year 1	Effect Year 15	
Low to Negligible	Moderate to Minor Adverse	Minor to Negligible Adverse	
None to the wider landscape to the south	Neutral to the wider landscape to the south	As the proposed planting matures and the homes become assimilated into the immediate surroundings. Neutral to the wider landscape to the south	

Landscape Character of Therfield Heath			
Landscape/Townscape Quality	Landscape/Townscape Value	Landscape/Townscape Susceptibility	Landscape/Townscape Sensitivity
High	High	High	High
Existing Condition			
Therfield Heath is of high landscape, ecological, historical, and recreational value, and is a valued landscape in relation to the NPPF paragraph 187a. A small south eastern part of Therfield Heath lies near to the Site and is intervisible with it, but it is physically separated from the Site by intervening development at Wicker Hall/Heath Farm and Briary Lane. There is very limited intervisibility between the remainder of the Heath and the Site.			
Impact and Mitigation			
There will be a limited effect on the character of Therfield Heath, with the impacts limited to views of the new development from a small part of the Heath which lies on the east-facing slope north west of the Site, with the new homes seen within the context of the existing settlement which is also visible from here. From this part of the Heath, the existing town is already readily evident, and the proposed development will not change the setting or character surrounding the Heath materially. The development will not materially affect a valued landscape.			
Magnitude of Change	Effect Year 1	Effect Year 15	
Low to Negligible	Moderate to Minor Adverse	Minor to Negligible Adverse	
		As the proposed planting matures and the homes become assimilated into the immediate surroundings.	
Heritage Assets			
Landscape/Townscape Quality	Landscape/Townscape Value	Landscape/Townscape Susceptibility	Landscape/Townscape Sensitivity
Very High to High	Very High to High	High to Medium	Very High to High
Existing Condition			
There are several Scheduled Monuments west of the Site at Therfield Heath. Numerous Listed Buildings are located within Royston town centre and Royston Conservation Area, with the closest to the Site located approximately 270m to the east of the Site. The Conservation Area encompasses much of the town centre focused around High Street and King Street, and extends southwards to London Road, terminating at the junction of The Warren, approximately 300m north east of the Site. The Conservation Area is separated from the Site by intervening modern housing, resulting in no intervisibility. Fox Farm House and Milestone, both Grade II Listed, are located on London Road, respectively 750m and 1km to the south of the Site.			
Impact and Mitigation			
The Site is located away from these heritage assets, with modern development occurring between the Site and the Conservation Area and Listed Buildings to the north. To the south and west, the Site is separated from the heritage assets due to the intervening topography. The proposed development will not materially affect the landscape character of the surroundings of these assets.			
Magnitude of Change	Effect Year 1	Effect Year 15	
Negligible to None	Negligible Adverse to None	Negligible Adverse to None	

OTHER EFFECTS
Cumulative impacts We are not aware of any permitted or allocated development within the vicinity of the Site which would affect this assessment.
Lighting The Site is currently unlit, although the adjoining residential areas are lit, as are the properties to the west. The proposed development will include lighting ordinarily associated with residential developments, and the lighting will be perceived as a small increase on the current lighting character of the landscape/townscape at Royston. No significant lighting effects are expected. The lighting can be designed to minimise spill and ecological concerns.
Construction Phase There will be temporary effects on the landscape/townscape and visual character of the Site and surroundings during the construction of the scheme, due to things such as ground moving, heavy vehicle movements, temporary fencing, storage of materials. It is anticipated that the extent of effects will be controlled through a Construction Management Plan, and that there will be no specific landscape/visual effects above those usually associated with the development of this nature.

VISUAL EFFECTS		
Views from Bridleway Royston 13		Photographs 3, 5, 9, 10, 14
Sensitivity	Existing Condition	
High to Medium	The interior of the Site is mostly screened in views from Bridleway Royston 013 which bounds it to the west, due to the hedgerow along this lane. There is a view available through the field access gate into the northern parts of the Site, from the lane adjacent to the north western corner of the Site. During the winter months, there are more filtered views of the western field of the Site, with the existing houses north of the Site partially visible in filtered views behind the Site. Views from the lane adjacent to the reservoir are prevented by the intervening vegetation at the reservoir site. From north of the Site along this bridleway, there are very limited, partial views of the Site, seen between the existing development and intervening vegetation. From further south of the Site along this bridleway, views of the Site are prevented by the intervening topography, hedgerows adjoining the bridleway, and the vegetation and buildings at the reservoir.	
	Impact and Mitigation The proposed homes in the western field and northern parts of the Site will be partially visible from Bridleway Royston 13 alongside the Site, seen over the intervening hedgerow. The existing houses north of the Site are partially visible from this route, and the proposed houses will therefore form a continuation of this character. As the proposed planting within the west of the Site matures, the views will become heavily filtered in the summer and filtered in the winter. The development will remain screened from beyond the Site to the south along this path. There will be limited views from the bridleway north of the Site of the new homes, seen within the context of the existing houses north of the Site.	
Magnitude of Change		Effect Year 15
Medium		Major to Moderate Adverse Moderate to Minor Adverse As the proposed planting matures and the homes become assimilated into their surroundings
Views from Bridleway Royston 14		Photographs 11, 12, 13
Sensitivity	Existing Condition	
High to Medium	Views of the interior of the Site from Bridleway Royston 14 along the southern Site boundary are mostly prevented by the intervening hedgerow along the Site boundary. There is, however, a view across parts of the Site through the field access gate in the south western corner of the Site. In these views, the existing houses north and east of the Site are partially visible behind the Site, with the wider landscape within the lower-lying Cambridgeshire Plain visible in the long distance. Views from further east along this bridleway are prevented by the intervening houses on the rising ground.	
	Impact and Mitigation The proposed houses within the south east of the Site will be partially visible over the intervening hedgerow, in views from Bridleway Royston 14 adjacent to the Site. The new homes will become filtered by the proposed planting, and will be seen within the context of the existing houses east of the Site which are already visible from the route. There will be limited opportunities for views of the new homes through gaps between the existing houses east of the Site, from the bridleway east beyond the Site. Long distance views through the field access gate in the south west of the Site from along the bridleway, will remain available over the proposed development, with the houses partially visible in these views, in a similar manner to the existing houses north of the Site which are already visible from here.	
Magnitude of Change		Effect Year 15
Low		Moderate to Minor Adverse Minor to Negligible Adverse As the proposed planting matures

Views from Echo Hill		Photograph 2
Sensitivity	Existing Condition	
Medium	The house at No. 24 Echo Hill is visible from the street adjoining it. Views towards the interior of the Site from Echo Hill are, however, limited to very narrow views towards the northern Site boundary, seen through the gaps between the detached houses along the street.	
	Impact and Mitigation Views into the Site will be available from Echo Hill opposite, and through, the new Site entrance. The new homes will be seen within the context of the existing settlement, and will not appear out of character. There will also be limited opportunities for views of the new homes through the narrow gaps between the existing houses on the road, from Echo Hill.	
Magnitude of Change		Effect Year 15
Low to Negligible		Minor to Negligible Adverse
Views from Therfield Heath (parcel north of Wicker Hall/Heath Farm)		Photograph 18
Sensitivity	Existing Condition	
High to Medium	Near to middle distance views towards the Site are available from the higher, south western parts of Therfield Heath in the vicinity of Wicker Hall/Heath Farm, and the public rights of way in that area (footpaths 9, 10, and 11). In views from the Heath north of Wicker Hall/Heath Farm, the Site is partially visible over the intervening hedgerows along the lane and at Wicker Hall/Heath Farm, and over the intervening built form. The existing houses north of the Site are also partially visible in these views, seen adjacent to the Site. From further south of this part of the Heath from along public footpath 11, views towards the Site become screened by the intervening vegetation between the path and the Site, as well as due to the falling topography.	
	Impact and Mitigation In middle distance views from the east-facing section of Therfield Heath to the north west of the Site, the new homes will be visible over the intervening vegetation and built form, seen within the context of the existing houses which adjoining the Site on Echo Hill. The proposed layout has been designed to maintain the highest parts of the Site free from built form, in these views. There may also initially be views of the tops of the houses within the south east of the Site from this part of the Heath, however, these houses will become screened as the proposed woodland planting within the higher parts of the Site matures. The proposed woodland will also form a vegetated skyline which will be seen behind the houses in the north of the Site, reflecting the current treed character of the ridgeline as evident over the south of the Site. The existing settlement is already visible from the Heath, the proposed development will not appear out of character or incongruous.	
Magnitude of Change		Effect Year 15
Medium		Moderate Adverse
		As the proposed planting within the Site matures
Views from lower lying land at Therfield Heath		Photograph 17
Sensitivity	Existing Condition	
High	Moving north west from Briary Lane into the Heath west of the local ridge, on public footpath 7, views of the Site become screened due to the intervening topography, with the path falling towards the north west. In middle to long distance views from the area around the junction of public footpaths 6 and 7, around the facilities and parking area within the centre of the Heath, views towards the Site are available over the rising intervening ground. In these views, the residential edge of Royston to the east and south of the Heath, along its edges, is visible. The Site is screened behind the intervening topography and tree belt west of Wicker Hall/Heath Farm.	
	Impact and Mitigation The proposed development will remain screened from lower down and westwards within the Heath, including from the lower parts of public footpaths 6 and 7, as well as from the recreational grounds, due to the intervening topography.	
Magnitude of Change		Effect Year 15
Neutral		Neutral

Views from higher parts of Therfield Heath		Photographs 15, 16
Sensitivity	Existing Condition	
High	From along some of the higher areas within the Heath, views are available towards the Site over the intervening topography. In these views, the existing settlement edge adjoining the Heath north west of the Site is partially visible in filtered views through the trees adjoining the houses, with most of the Site screened in views by the intervening vegetation west of Briary Lane. There is however a view of the northernmost part of the Site, seen adjacent to the houses on Echo Hill, with the remainder of the Site southwards screened by intervening vegetation west of Briary Lane. Views from the Hertfordshire Way long distance walking route along the southern edge of the Heath, are mostly prevented by the intervening woodland, with the route running within the woodland on the higher slopes here.	
	Impact and Mitigation From the higher points within Therfield Heath to the west, the proposed development within the north of the Site will be partially visible adjoining the existing houses on Echo Hill, with the majority of houses within the Site screened in summer views by the intervening vegetation west of Briary Lane, and heavily filtered in the winter. The new woodland planting within the Site will further minimise winter views.	
Magnitude of Change		Effect Year 15
Low to Negligible		Effect Year 1 Minor Adverse Negligible Adverse As the proposed planting matures and the houses become assimilated into their surroundings
Long distance views from the north		Photographs 15, 16
Sensitivity	Existing Condition	
Medium to Low	While there are open views northwards from the Site, the Site is barely discernible in long distance views back towards the Site from the north. In views from The Causeway in Kneesworth north of Royston, the Site is partially visible, but not readily discernible, with the Town and the Heath partially visible in between the trees on the north-facing slope, and the existing industrial area in Royston partially visible in the foreground. Views from Byway 21/15 at South End, south of Bassingbourn and north of Royston, are similar. There are likely to be further instances of views from the north, however, considering the distances involved, views of the Site is expected to be similar in these instances.	
	Impact and Mitigation In long distance views from the north, the proposed development may initially be discernible due to the brightness of the new building materials. However, as the buildings become more weathered, and the proposed planting matures, the development will not be discernible in long distance views, and will instead be seen as part of the existing settlement which rises up the hill. The proposed development will not impact on long distance views towards Therfield Heath, and the Heath will remain open and identifiable in these views. The proposed woodland planting within the Site will aid in screening the new homes in the south of the Site, and form a backdrop to the homes in the north east of the Site	
Magnitude of Change		Effect Year 15
Negligible		Effect Year 1 Minor to Negligible Adverse Negligible Adverse to None
RESIDENTIAL VIEWS		
Views from houses on Echo Hill		Photographs 4, 6, 8
Sensitivity	Existing Condition	
High	Further near distance views are available from the properties which adjoin the Site. The houses which back onto the northern boundary have views of parts of the Site from rear windows and some gardens.	
	Impact and Mitigation The proposed development will be visible from the houses which adjoin it, and some further properties along Echo Hill. The proposed built form has been set back from the Site boundaries in order to maintain an area of open space between the new and existing houses. This space can be planted up with vegetation to limit views from the Site into the rear gardens of the houses which bound it to the north, thereby also mitigating some of the visual effects from the existing properties.	
Magnitude of Change		Effect Year 15
High		Effect Year 1 Major Adverse Major to Moderate Adverse As the proposed planting matures

Views from houses on Royse Grove		Photograph 2
Sensitivity	Existing Condition	
High	The houses east of the Site have views of parts of the Site from mostly rear windows and gardens.	
	Impact and Mitigation The proposed development will be visible from the houses which adjoin it. The proposed built form has been set back from the Site boundaries in order to maintain an area of open space between the new and existing houses. This space can be planted up with vegetation to limit views from the Site into the rear gardens of the houses which bound it to the north, thereby also mitigating some of the visual effects from the existing properties.	
Magnitude of Change		Effect Year 15
High		Major to Moderate Adverse
Views from Wicker Hall/Heath Farm		Photograph 4
Sensitivity	Existing Condition	
High	There are views of the Site from Wicker Hall/Heath Farm west of Briary Lane (Bridleway Royston 14), including from the house and grounds, over the intervening lane and hedgerows.	
	Impact and Mitigation The proposed housing will be partially visible from the properties at Wicker Hall/Heath Farm over the intervening vegetation. As the proposed planting matures, the new homes will become assimilated in the existing settlement in these views, and will become filtered.	
Magnitude of Change		Effect Year 15
High to Medium		Moderate Adverse