

# NICHOLSONS

## Landscape and Visual and Green Belt Proof of Evidence

**M Scott Properties Ltd**

Land West of Watling Street, Park Street, St Albans

**Version:** 1

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### Author Details

- 1.1 My name is Ian Dudley and I work for Nicholsons, an environmental consultancy and Landscape Institute Registered Practice with its headquarters in Oxfordshire.
- 1.2 I hold a Bachelor of Science honours degree in Forestry from Bangor University. I am a Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute, a Chartered Member of the Institute of Chartered Foresters, and a Chartered Member of the Society for the Environment.
- 1.3 I am the Principal of the Landscape Architecture division within Nicholsons, which provides professional advice in the areas of landscape architecture, garden design, green infrastructure, natural capital and environmental planning.
- 1.4 My professional experience over the last 25 years has included land management, management planning, green infrastructure planning and assessment, landscape and visual impact assessment, landscape character assessment, landscape design and landscape planning. I have contributed to the landscape sector at regional and national levels, sitting on panels and committees for the Landscape Institute, Natural England and Defra. I have previously served as Chair of the Royal Forestry Society for England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and I currently serve as Vice Chair of the Landscape Institute's East Midlands Branch.
- 1.5 I am an experienced landscape witness, having acted on behalf of both public and private sector bodies for a number of years and for a range of development types including residential, leisure and industrial developments. I am familiar with the landscape in question, having been involved in the landscape assessment work from the outset and most recently undertaken a field survey in February 2024.

### Project Involvement

- 1.6 Nicholsons (then trading as Lockhart Garratt) was originally appointed in June 2018 to undertake a desktop Green Belt Appraisal of a previous iteration of a proposed residential development upon land to the west of Watling Street, Park Street, St Albans (hereinafter referred to as the 'Site'). I have since undertaken a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (CD1.22), prepared a Landscape Design Strategy (CD2.7) and submitted further analysis of the impact upon the Green Belt (CD2.15).
- 1.7 Following the refusal of planning permission for the development in January 2024, the Appellant has submitted an Appeal against this decision, and I have been instructed to submit evidence in support of the Appeal. It is notable that in their Statement of Case (CD10.1) dated June 2024, the Council has stated that they have resolved not to defend this Appeal.

### Site Location

- 1.8 The Site is located to the west of Watling Street on the western settlement edge of the village of Park Street, to the south of St Albans. The Site central grid reference is TL 14555 04483 and the Site occupies an approximate area of 4.34 hectares.

## 2. SCOPE OF EVIDENCE

### Planning Context

- 2.1 This Proof of Evidence has been prepared to inform the Appeal by M Scott Properties Ltd against the refusal of outline planning permission by St Albans City and District Council for the erection of up to 95 dwellings, including 40% affordable dwellings and 5% self-build and custom build dwellings, public open space, landscaping and associated infrastructure.

### Scope of Evidence

- 2.2 This Statement of Evidence covers matters relating to the anticipated landscape and visual, and Green Belt impacts of the proposed development upon the Site.
- 2.3 It covers the information gathered and analysis undertaken as part of the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments undertaken in January (superseded) and May 2022 (CD1.22) and our subsequent correspondence with the Appellant and Local Planning Authority in response to consultation comments.
- 2.4 Considering this evidence, it then responds from a professional perspective to the single reason for refusal, which reads as follows:

*The proposed development comprises inappropriate development, for which permission can only be granted in very special circumstances. There is harm to the Green Belt (harm in principle) and other harm to coalescence which is not clearly outweighed by other considerations (paragraphs 142, 152 and 153 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2023). We do not consider that the benefits outweigh the harm caused by this proposed development due to the harm to the Green Belt openness, coalescence and merging of towns, lack of social housing and a failure to demonstrate that the proposal would not exceed the capacity within the highway network. The proposal is therefore contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework 2023 and Policy 1 and 8 of the St Albans District Local Plan Review 1994.*

- 2.5 In preparing my response I have also had regard of the Officer Committee Report (CD3.3), which recommended that conditional outline planning permission be granted, partly based upon advice that the Council received from external expert witnesses.

### Relevant Planning Policy

#### **National Planning Policy Framework**

- 2.6 The relevant paragraphs within the National Planning Policy Framework (CD5.3), which are cited above, read as follows.

#### *Paragraph 142*

*The government attaches great importance to Green Belts. 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.*

#### *Paragraph 152*

*Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.*

*Paragraph 153*

*When considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.*

**St Albans District Local Plan Review 1994**

- 2.7 Policy 1 of the Local Plan (CD5.1) relates to the Metropolitan Green Belt. It acknowledges that the whole of the District outside of established settlements lies within the Green Belt, and that 'very special circumstances' will be required to achieve planning permission in the Green Belt for inappropriate uses, consistent with the approach taken within national planning policy. It also includes the following statement:

*"New development within the Green Belt shall integrate with the existing landscape. Siting, design and external appearance are particularly important and additional landscaping will normally be required. Significant harm to the ecological value of the countryside must be avoided."*

- 2.8 Policy 8 of the Local Plan relates to the provision of affordable housing within the Metropolitan Green Belt. It sets out a number of criteria for development to comply with, including the following:

*iii. Sites shall be within the reasonable physical limits of Green Belt settlements (see Policy 2), in locations dominated by buildings rather than open countryside.*

*v. Proposals must not detract from the character and setting of the settlement or harm the ecology, natural beauty and amenity of the countryside. Substantial landscaping will normally be required.*

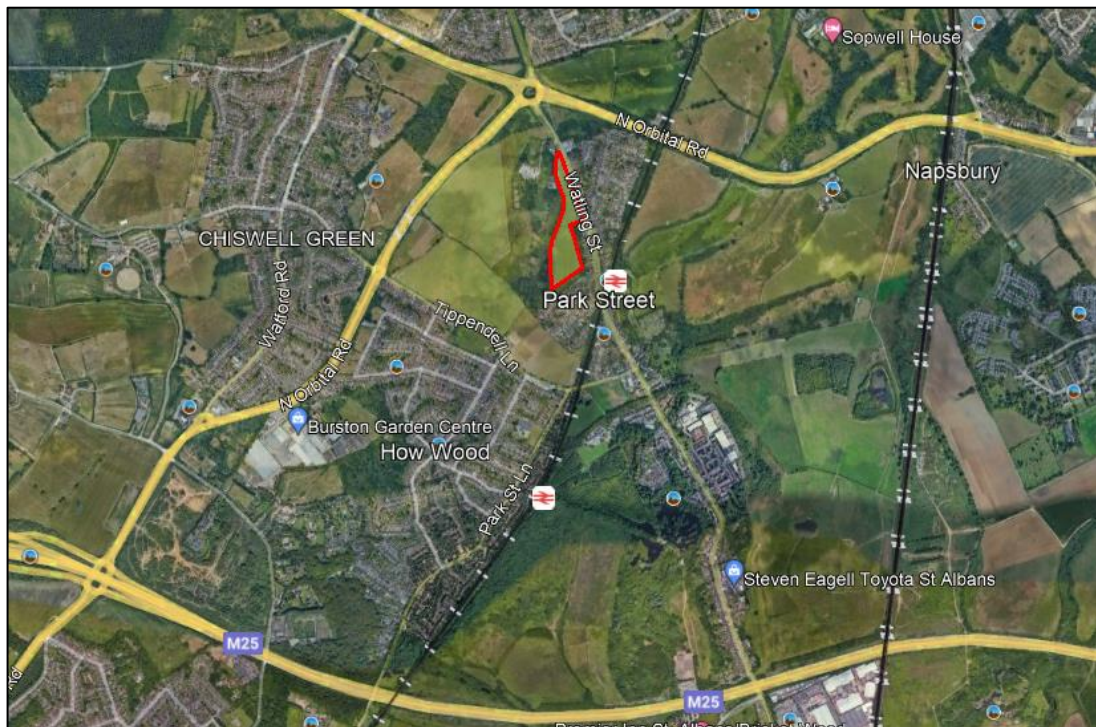
### 3. EFFECTS OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT UPON LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

#### Introduction

- 3.1 In order to fully assess the impact of the proposed development upon the character of the receiving landscape, Nicholsons has undertaken a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (CD1.22), in line with the guidance set out in Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third Edition (Landscape Institute and Institute for Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013) (CD9.18).
- 3.2 This document is reproduced in full at **Appendix 1**, and the following sections are a summary of the findings of these documents.
- 3.3 The assessment was based upon an outline application for the erection of up to 95 dwellings and associated infrastructure, and it was informed by comprehensive surveys of the Site and its setting.

#### Landscape Baseline

Figure 1: Google Earth image of the Site within its landscape and settlement context



- 3.4 The landscape impact assessment drew upon a combination of desktop and site information to make a professional judgement of the anticipated effects of the proposed development within the Site.
- 3.5 The desktop information considered a 2.5km study area around the Site, which was considered appropriate given the size of the development and its village edge location. It included the following sources:
- Natural England’s National Character Assessment.
  - Hertfordshire County Council Landscape Character Assessment (2002).

- Ordnance Survey mapping and topographical data, including historic mapping.
  - Aerial photography.
  - Hertfordshire illustrative Rights of Way mapping.
  - Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) online mapping.
- 3.6 The desktop assessment identified the Site to be located within the Northern Thames Basin National Character Area (CD9.19). At a more local level, the Hertfordshire county assessment (CD9.20) placed it within the St Stephens Plateau Landscape Character Area.
- 3.7 The field information was collected by visiting the Site and walking public routes in its vicinity, noting key characterising information, including internal features and land use, boundary treatments, settlement pattern, key views and any particular features or characteristics that displayed congruity or incongruity with existing landscape character description or local distinctiveness.
- 3.8 The baseline appraisal concluded that the Site represents a single arable field, lying adjacent to Watling Street on the western settlement edge of the village of Park Street. It displays a narrow irregular shape at its northern end, widening out into a triangular shape towards the southern extent of the field.
- 3.9 The existing Site boundaries are variable in composition and condition, with sections of mature hedgerow and boundary trees along the Site's western boundary. These sections of vegetation largely consist of mature broadleaved trees, although a section of mature Scots pine is located along the central section of this boundary, with large gaps between the trees.
- 3.10 The Site's eastern boundary consists of a scrubby, low earth bank towards its northern extent, supporting ruderal vegetation such as nettles and brambles. Towards the central and southern sections of this boundary, a number of large, mature trees serve to restrict views into the Site. At the very southern extent of this boundary, the rear gardens of several residential dwellings along Watling Street adjoin the Site, with boundary treatments comprising timber garden fences, sections of low hedgerow and mature trees.
- 3.11 The Site's southern boundary adjoins a corridor of unmanaged land, supporting scrubby vegetation and some mature trees, above which clear views are available residential dwellings to the south of the Site.
- 3.12 The Site displays a varied landform, displaying a relatively flat topography in the northern section, with a pronounced fall in topography within the southern section from the eastern boundary down to the western boundary. As a result, whilst views of the Site are available from Watling Street, only partial sections of the Site are visible as a result of the varied topography.
- 3.13 The presence of the existing settlement edge can be experienced along both the eastern and southern boundaries of the Site, where boundary vegetation is low or devoid.
- 3.14 The wider context of the Site is largely defined by settlement activity, with dwellings associated with Park Street forming a clear visual backdrop to the east and south, a filling station to the north on the eastern side of Watling Street, the Park Street Roundabout further to the north and a caravan site and electricity substation to the north-west. To the



west and south-west, however, the Site adjoins a wide strip of unmanaged land at the base of a minor valley that currently supports trees, scrub and ruderal vegetation, beyond which lies a combination of pastoral and arable fields on rising land separating Park Street from the nearby settlements of Chiswell Green and How Wood.

- 3.15 As a result of the immediate presence of the urban edge of Park Street and the Site's separation from the wider countryside by a belt of trees and ruderal vegetation, the Site displays a transitional sub-urban character and feels more connected to the settlement edge than to the arable land to the west, particularly in the northern and southern sections of the Site.
- 3.16 With regard to the published landscape character, the Site and its setting have been found to be only slightly representative of the Thames Basin National Character Area and St Stephen's Plateau Landscape Character Area.
- 3.17 In addition to the overall character of the Site and its setting, the baseline appraisal concluded that the following characteristics are relevant landscape receptors for the purposes of the Landscape Impact Assessment:
- Current use of the Site as an arable field;
  - Mixed composition of boundaries;
  - Mature trees along sections of the Site boundaries;
  - Presence of settlement edge along southern and eastern boundary;
  - Overall character of the Site; and
  - Overall character of the setting of the Site.

### **Embodied Mitigation**

- 3.18 Whilst it should be noted that the detailed design of the scheme is a reserved matter, the illustrative design of the proposed development has been informed by the results of our Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (CD1.22) and the Illustrative Landscape Design Strategy (CD2.7) that I prepared.
- 3.19 In particular, the following measures have been incorporated within the Landscape Design Strategy to reduce the development's landscape and visual impact, and to create a positive residential environment:
- Retention and enhancement of all existing boundary vegetation where possible to preserve the degree of visual containment to the Site, and to ensure that the proposals are set within established green infrastructure.
  - Creation of new hedgerows and tree planting along the southern boundary, and sections of the eastern and western boundaries.
  - Creation of pedestrian and cycle links to connect the development to Watling Street to the east.

- Creation of a wide landscape buffer along most of the Site’s western boundary, retaining the existing boundary trees, planting new areas of trees and wildflower meadows, and creating two areas for sustainable drainage features.
- Creation of two areas of informal planting and grassland within the northern and central sections of the Site, and an area of amenity grassland in the south, to create visual interest and to create open space for residents’ use.
- Creation of a Local Equipped Area for Play, with additional tree planting within the southern developed part of the Site, close to the greatest number of dwellings and facilitating natural surveillance.
- Addition of landscape planting and street trees within and between the built form, and within the street scene, to break up the solid structures, promote wildlife and create visual interest.

**Landscape Impacts**

3.20 The results of the Landscape Impact Assessment, which is detailed at **Appendix 2**, are set out in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Summary of Landscape Impacts**

Landscape Receptor	Susceptibility to Change	Value	Overall Sensitivity	Magnitude of Impact	Overall Impact Significance
Current use of the Site as an arable field	Low	Low	Low	Medium	Moderate/Minor adverse
Mixed composition of boundaries	Low	Low	Low	Low	Minor beneficial
Mature trees along sections of the Site boundaries	Medium	Medium	Medium	Low	Moderate/Minor beneficial
Presence of settlement edge along southern and eastern boundary	Low	Low	Low	Low	Minor adverse
Overall character of the Site	Low	Low	Low	Low	Minor adverse
Overall character of the setting of the Site	Low	Low	Low	Low	Minor adverse

**Landscape Impacts Conclusion**

- 3.21 Table 1 concludes that the urban edge location of the Site and the embodied mitigation measures have been sufficient to ensure that the Appeal Scheme will not result in any significant adverse impacts, and none greater than Moderate/Minor significance. The greatest adverse impact was upon the use of the Site as an intensive arable field. Furthermore, the positive reinforcement of the Site's boundary vegetation as part of the overall landscape strategy would result in beneficial impacts.

**Hertfordshire County Council Landscape Advice**

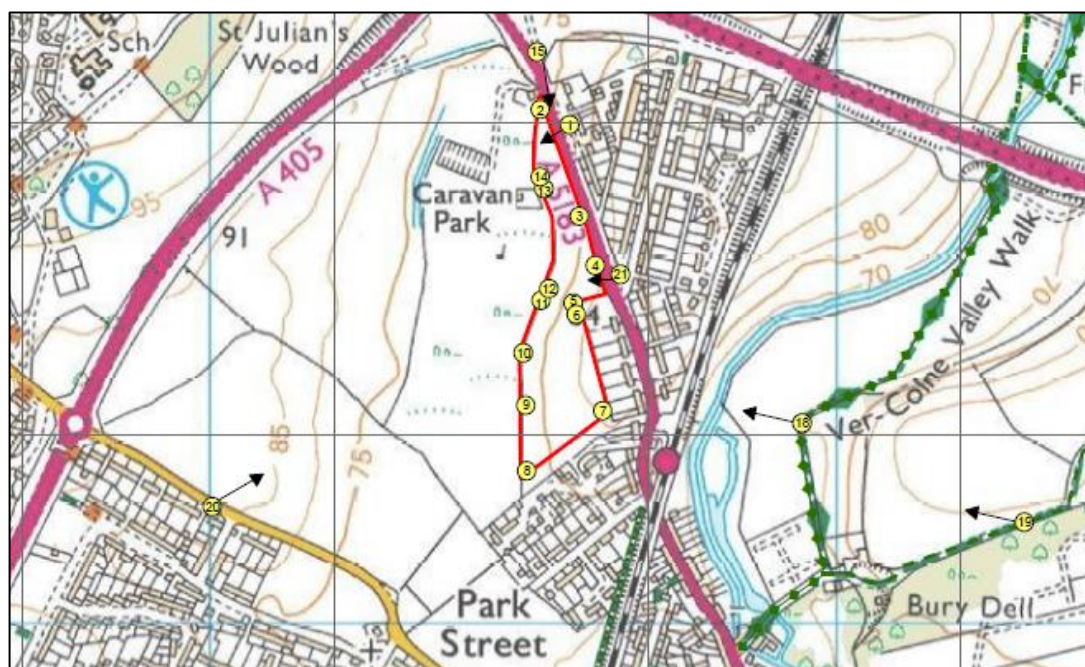
- 3.22 An earlier version of our Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment was subject to a review in April 2022 by Hertfordshire County Council's landscape service (CD4.2).
- 3.23 This stated that the findings of our assessment were broadly supported, but it recommended that the mitigation measures be enhanced through a range of measures, including a firmer commitment to tree planting on the western boundary, the inclusion of street trees throughout the scheme, and the relocation of the equipped play area from the edge of the developed area to a central location.
- 3.24 In response to this feedback, the development design was revised to incorporate these elements, and a second consultation response was received by the Council on 6<sup>th</sup> July 2022 (CD4.3), which acknowledged that the revised design has sought to address landscape concerns and particularly welcomed the indication of a more robust tree planting strategy on the western boundary of the scheme.
- 3.25 These responses are included within paragraphs 6.14.1 to 6.14.45 and discussed within paragraphs 8.5.11 to 8.5.15 of the original Officer Report dated 14<sup>th</sup> August 2023 (CD3.2), which concluded in paragraph 8.5.19 that "*the landscape and visual impact of the proposed development is considered acceptable, subject to the imposition of conditions.*"

## 4. EFFECTS OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT UPON VISUAL AMENITY

### Introduction

- 4.1 In order to assess fully the impact of the proposed development upon the visual amenity of those who would see it, Nicholsons undertook a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (CD1.22) in line with the guidance set out in Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third Edition (Landscape Institute and Institute for Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013) (CD9.18).
- 4.2 This document is reproduced in full at **Appendix 1**, and the following sections are a summary of the findings of these documents.
- 4.3 The assessment was based upon an outline application for the erection of up to 95 dwellings and associated infrastructure, and it was informed by comprehensive surveys of the Site and its setting.

Figure 2: Extract of Viewpoint Location Plan



### Visual Baseline

- 4.4 In addition to the desktop study identified in Section 3 above, topographic information was used to determine a likely Zone of Theoretical Visibility around the Site, which represents the total area from which the proposed development is likely to be significantly visible.
- 4.5 The field assessment was then used to scope out the candidate visual receptors that were identified within the Zone of Theoretical Visibility. Given the location of the Site and its settlement edge context, these included the residents of private dwellings and users of public highways. The proposed development was not found to be visible from any Public Rights of Way or other sensitive recreational receptors.
- 4.6 In terms of the Site's visual character, the assessment found that views of the Site are predominantly confined to the immediate context of residents along Watling Street to the east directly opposite the northern section of the Site's eastern boundary and, to a lesser

extent, residents from Mount Drive, along with residents along Old Orchard to the south. There is also the possibility for some longer distance filtered views from residents along Hawfield Gardens to the south and Tippendell Lane to the south-west of the Site.

4.7 The field assessment therefore confirmed the relevant visual receptors to be restricted to the following:

- Residents along Watling Street.
- Residents along Mount Drive.
- Pedestrian users of Watling Street.
- Road users of Watling Street.
- Residents along Old Orchard.
- Residents along Hawfield Gardens.
- Residents along Tippendell Lane.

**Visual Impacts**

4.8 The results of the Visual Impact Assessment, which is detailed at **Appendix 1**, are set out in Table 2 below.

**Table 2: Summary of Visual Impacts**

Visual Receptor	Susceptibility to Change	Value	Overall Sensitivity	Magnitude of Impact	Overall Impact Significance
Residents along Watling Street	Medium	Medium	Medium	Low	Moderate/ Minor adverse reducing to Minor adverse
Residents along Mount Drive	Medium	Medium	Medium	Low	Moderate/ Minor adverse reducing to Minor adverse
Pedestrian users of Watling Street	Medium	Medium	Medium	Low	Moderate/ Minor adverse
Road users of Watling Street	Low	Low	Low	Low	Minor adverse
Residents along Old Orchard	High	High	High	Low	Moderate adverse
Residents along Hawfield Gardens	Low	Low	Low	Low	Minor adverse
Residents along Tippendell Lane	Low	Low	Low	Low	Minor adverse

**Visual Impacts Conclusion**

- 4.9 Table 2 concludes that the proposed development will not result in any significant impacts upon the identified receptors, with the greatest impact being upon the residents of the existing dwellings on Old Orchard, who are anticipated to experience an adverse impact of Moderate significance in the long term. In the case of those receptors to the east, the proposed planting associated with the scheme is anticipated to reduce the overall significance of impact to no greater than Minor adverse when mature.

## 5. EFFECTS OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT ON THE GREEN BELT

### Introduction

- 5.1 This section will consider the effects of the Appeal Scheme upon the Metropolitan Green Belt, which covers over 81% of the district according to the adopted Local Plan. The only areas that are not included within the Green Belt are existing towns and large villages. It therefore stands to reason that any development that is not infill or brownfield development to meet the district's housing requirements will occur on land that is currently within the Green Belt.
- 5.2 The existing planning context and published evidence base will be summarised, as will our submissions as part of the planning process. The three aspects of the Green Belt that are in dispute will then be discussed, which are as follows:
- Openness of the Green Belt.
  - Coalescence of settlements.
  - Encroachment into the countryside.

### Planning Context

- 5.3 The Council's single Reason for Refusal in its Decision Notice of 19<sup>th</sup> January 2024 (CD3.1), which it has now elected not to defend in this Appeal, recognised that the proposed development comprises inappropriate development, as defined by the National Planning Policy Framework (CD5.3), and that permission can only be granted in very special circumstances. It stated that the benefits of the Appeal Scheme did not outweigh the harm caused to the openness of the Green Belt, and that it would cause coalescence and the merging of towns.
- 5.4 In the Officer Report of the same date (CD3.3) that was presented to the Planning Committee, it was recommended that the development be granted conditional outline planning permission. This same recommendation was also made to the Planning Committee in an Officer Report dated 14<sup>th</sup> August 2023 (CD3.2), when the Committee elected to defer the decision to seek the advice of expert witnesses in respect of the (then) Reasons for Refusal, which included traffic impact. It is notable that in the August 2023 Officer Report with specific regard to the Green Belt, the Council's Spatial Planning Team in paragraph 6.31.25 of the Report took a neutral stance in relation to the Green Belt, which does not differ from their initial opinion on 4<sup>th</sup> July 2022 as reported in paragraph 6.31.1 of the Report.
- 5.5 The Officer Report of 19<sup>th</sup> January (CD3.1) reports on the advice the Council sought in paragraphs 8.3.1-8.3.12. The Council sought the advice of three expert witnesses, one of whom declined to respond. Of the two responses sought, one advised of a potential conflict of interest and therefore only one response was considered to be valid, and this is repeated verbatim in paragraph 8.3.2 of the Report.
- 5.6 The expert witness identified that the Council does not have a five year housing land supply, and that its Housing Delivery Target Score is well below 75%. It further described the Affordable Housing delivery position to be "acute" and that Custom Self Build completions are well below demand. They further identified the Site to be an emerging allocation within



the draft Regulation 18 Local Plan and therefore presumed it to be preferable to other sites not included. Based upon this context, the expert witness advised the Council that they would not be able to defend a Reason for Refusal relating to the Green Belt, and they commented that the Site has “*more favourable features*” than the site that was subject to the Bullens Green Decision (CD8.2).

- 5.7 Paragraph 8.5.1 of the Officer Report (CD3.1) draws the following conclusion (with my emphasis):

*“Officers have considered the additional information, the responses from expert witnesses following the previous deferral, the updated NPPF and the public and consultee comments received as noted above. Whilst these changes have all been taken into account, the officer recommendation on this application remains unchanged. **It is still considered that very special circumstances exist in this case which would outweigh the harm identified, such that planning permission should be granted.**”*

- 5.8 In spite of the repeated advice of its own officers, and that of an independent expert witness, the Council elected to refuse planning permission, and as noted above, it has now elected not to defend this Appeal against this decision.

#### **Published Evidence Base**

- 5.9 The most recent evidence base document relating to the Site is the St Albans Stage 2 Green Belt Review completed by Ove Arup and Partners in June 2023 (CD6.4). This document was commissioned to assess the performance of specific land parcels against the Green Belt purposes, as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (CD5.3).
- 5.10 This document places the Site within parcel SA-108, and it scores its contribution to the first four purposes of the Green Belt as follows:
- Purpose 1: 0 out of 5
  - Purpose 2: 1 out of 5
  - Purpose 3: 5 out of 5 (result disputed by Nicholsons – see below)
  - Purpose 4: 0 out of 5
- 5.11 The Review concluded in Section 5.9 that the overall performance of parcel SA-108 was ‘strong’, but that it made a ‘less important’ strategic contribution to the Green Belt. The Review therefore recommended that it be subject to further consideration for removal from the Green Belt and that this would be “*unlikely to result in harm to the wider Green Belt*”.
- 5.12 Subsequent to this, the Site has been brought forward as a draft allocation (Reference L2) within the emerging Regulation 18 Local Plan (CD6.1), indicating that the Council is in agreement with the findings of its review document.

**Nicholsons Submissions to Date**

- 5.13 Nicholsons has made two submissions during the application process for the Appeal Scheme in relation to Green Belt matters:
- Green Belt Appraisal Ref. 18-0603, dated 20<sup>th</sup> December 2021 (CD1.21)
  - Letter of Recommendation, dated 8<sup>th</sup> August 2023 (CD2.22)
- 5.14 The Green Belt Appraisal (CD1.21) considered the Site's contribution to the five purposes of the Green Belt, and the implications of its release on the wider Green Belt. It concluded that the Site represented a narrow strip of land that relates more closely to the adjacent settlement than the countryside to the west, from which it is separated by a band of trees. It therefore found that the Site could be released for development without substantial harm to the wider Green Belt, and that the western vegetation could be enhanced as part of any development scheme to form a permanent and defensible boundary.
- 5.15 The Letter of Recommendation (CD2.22) was issued at the request of the Appellant in response to the release of the Stage 2 Green Belt Review. Nicholsons was requested to review the findings of the document and to give our own opinion on its results. In general, I support the findings of the Review, which broadly aligned with our own Green Infrastructure Appraisal, although I challenged the Site scoring 5 out of 5 in relation to the third purpose of the Green Belt, i.e. assisting in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.
- 5.16 Based upon the field evidence collected as part of our Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (CD1.22) and Green Belt Appraisal (CD1.21), it is our opinion that whilst the Site contains less than 3% built development, being a single arable field, it does not meet the 'strong unspoilt rural character' requirement to justify this score. Our own more detailed assessments determined the Site to be heavily influenced by the adjacent settlement and A5183 Watling Street, which exert visual and auditory disturbance upon its character. Furthermore, I found that the strong vegetation on the Site's western boundary serves to perceptively associate the Site with the adjacent settlement and isolate it from the surrounding countryside.
- 5.17 It was our opinion, based upon the stated methodology for the Review, that parcel SA-108 should be scored 3 out of 5 for the third purpose, based upon it possessing a 'semi-urban character', which is consistent with the findings of our Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment. This would adjust the overall performance of the parcel against the Green Belt purposes to 'Weak', whilst maintaining its 'less important' strategic contribution to the Green Belt.

**Effects upon the Openness of the Green Belt**

- 5.18 The concept of openness of the Green Belt is addressed within paragraph 142 of the National Planning Policy Framework (CD5.3), which states that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open, and that the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.
- 5.19 The matter of openness is definitively dealt with by the Supreme Court in the Judgement of Lord Carnwath (with whom Lady Hale, Lord Hodge, Lord Kitchen and Lord Sales agree) in *R (on the application of Samuel Smith Old Brewery (Tadcaster) and others) v North Yorkshire*

*County Council (Appellant)* [2020] UKSC 3 (CD8.21), in which at paragraph 22 openness is identified as a “*broad policy concept*”. It is described broadly as the “*counterpart of urban sprawl*”, and it is identified as being “*linked to the purposes to be served by the Green Belt.*”

- 5.20 It is also important to consider the approach taken by *Sales LJ in Turner v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government* [2016] EWCA Civ 466 (paragraph 14) (CD8.22), who states:

*“The concept of ‘openness of the Green Belt’ is not narrowly limited to the volumetric approach suggested by [counsel]. The word ‘openness’ is open-textured and a number of factors are capable of being relevant when it comes to applying it to the particular facts of a specific case. Prominent among these will be factors relevant to how built up the Green Belt is now and how built up it would be if redevelopment occurs...and factors relevant to the visual impact on the aspect of openness which the Green Belt preserves.”*

#### **Loss of physical openness**

- 5.21 As noted above, there is very little developable area within the district that is not covered by the Green Belt and it is therefore inevitable that there will be some loss of physical openness in order to maintain a sustainable supply of housing within the district. In this context, the Council’s Stage 2 Green Belt Review (CD6.4) has assessed the Site and found that its removal would be unlikely to cause any more than localised harm to the Green Belt.
- 5.22 Our own assessments of the Site have determined that it makes a limited contribution to the purposes of the Green Belt, and that it is surrounded by settlement to the east and south, with the presence of the gypsy and traveller site to the north-west. It therefore occupies an urbanised context, and the form of the Site is such that its development is likely to be perceived as a ‘rounding off’ of the existing settlement, contained within the existing tree belt.
- 5.23 It is recognised that there will be a degree of harm arising from the Appeal Scheme as a result of the introduction of built mass into an area where it does not currently exist. The development design has sought to mitigate this through the sensitive arrangement of urban form and the incorporation of open space into the scheme, but it is nevertheless the case that a loss of physical openness will occur, albeit local to the Site. Given the quantum of development, the level of harm to physical openness is considered to be significant.

#### **Loss of Visual Openness**

- 5.24 In terms of the visual aspects of openness, our comprehensive Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (CD1.22) has concluded that views of the Site are highly localised due to the presence of built development and mature vegetation on its boundaries. There are no views of the Site from Public Rights or Way or publicly accessible spaces and the vegetation on the western Site boundary serves to filter inward views from the surrounding countryside. The enhancement of the western boundary, which forms part of the landscape design for the scheme, will ensure that this effect is maintained and enhanced.
- 5.25 It is therefore the case that the Site’s visual relationship with the wider Green Belt is limited, whilst it shares a strong visual relationship with the adjacent urban area, and therefore any

notable effects upon the visual openness of the Green Belt are anticipated to be limited to the Site itself.

#### **Effects upon the Separation of Towns**

- 5.26 The effects of the Appeal Scheme upon the separation of towns is comprehensively examined by the Council's planning officers in Section 8.3 of the original Officer Report (CD3.2). Specifically in paragraph 8.3.17 it is recognised that the scheme would *"essentially 'round-off' the settlement of Park Street, and is not considered to result in new development being closer to St Albans or Chiswell Green than existing forms of development."* The officers further state that that it is not considered that the development of the Site would result in coalescence, and that they do not consider there to be harm to the second Green Belt purpose.
- 5.27 This is consistent with our own observations, that there is existing development on the eastern side of Watling Street that extends beyond the proposed built limits of the Appeal Scheme, and that the Old Orchard development extends the settlement further to the west than the Site's western extent.
- 5.28 It is equally important to note that the second purpose of the Green Belt is to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another, not any form of settlement. In this respect, the nearest relevant town to St Albans is Watford, which is contained by the M1 and M25 corridors. Whilst the Site occurs in the space between these towns, there is already existing development extending through this space and the location of the Site is such that it will not in effect bring these towns closer together.
- 5.29 Whilst it recognised that the development of the Site will result in the presence of development on both sides of Watling Street for part of the length of the Site, this is already a highly urbanised context with a filling station opposite the Site and street lighting and signage and a bus stop on the western side of the highway. It is also the case that the new dwellings are proposed to be set back behind a strip of public open space that will reduce the impact and reflect the existing development to the east. As such, the Appeal Scheme will not result in a narrowing of the gap between Park Street and St Albans.
- 5.30 The Appeal Scheme will inevitably result in a reduction in the overall separation between Park Street and Chiswell Green, although as the Council has identified, it will not bring the settlements closer together at their narrowest point. The presence of the strong vegetation on the western side of the Site will also serve to reduce the perception of coalescence by filtering views between the settlement areas, and the Appeal Scheme is anticipated to enhance this effect through its landscape design.
- 5.31 It is therefore the consistent position between Nicholsons and the Council's planning officers that there will be no harm to the Green Belt in terms of coalescence.

**Encroachment into the Countryside**

- 5.32 As noted above, all land outside of towns and large villages within the district falls within the Green Belt. It is therefore inevitable that settlements will need to encroach into the countryside to some extent in order for the district to meet its housing demand.
- 5.33 The Council's Stage 2 Green Belt Review (CD6.4) has scored the Site highly against this Green Belt purpose, although as noted above I have challenged this result on the basis that I do not consider the Site to possess a 'strong and unspoilt rural character' based upon our own field observations of the Site's urban context. Whilst I agree that there are limited views to the wider countryside from the Site, I do not agree that the urbanising influences are limited. Specifically, the Review references occasional views to dwellings along Old Orchard, but it omits the clear views to the existing dwellings on Watling Street. It is also questionable that the Review describes the Site as 'open arable fields' when it comprises a single arable unit.
- 5.34 The Council's planning officers address the matter of encroachment in paragraph 8.3.17 of the original Officer Report (CD3.2). They recognise that the development would lead to the loss of an existing arable field, although they also acknowledge that a strong defensible boundary can be provided on the western Site boundary, and that the development would not extend beyond existing built development limits. The officers conclude that the effects of the Appeal Scheme upon the Green Belt would be localised, but that there would nevertheless be a moderate to high level of conflict with the third purpose of the Green Belt.
- 5.35 This is again broadly consistent with our findings, and specifically the judgement in our Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (CD1.22) that the greatest adverse landscape impact would be on its current use as an arable field. I acknowledge that there will be some encroachment into the countryside, although as reported in paragraphs 7.12 to 7.13 of our Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (CD1.22), the Site is more closely associated with the adjacent settlement in character terms and the enhancement of the Site's boundary vegetation would mean that it could relate positively to its setting. It is certainly the case that the retention and enhancement of the Site's western boundary vegetation would reduce any perceived encroachment from the wider countryside in this direction.
- 5.36 This view is supported by the pre-application consultation response received from Hertfordshire County Council (CD4.2), which includes the following statement:
- "It is acknowledged that the proposed development will change the landscape character from an open arable field to residential housing. However the significance of this is reduced due to the strong containment of the development within the field pattern, defined by existing vegetation that provides an opportunity to deliver mitigation and enhancements for the benefit of visual amenity and biodiversity."*
- 5.37 For these reasons, I do not agree that the conflict with the third purpose of the Green Belt would be moderate to high, but low to moderate which is consistent with the effects of the loss of arable land in our landscape impact assessment.

## 6. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

### Introduction

- 6.1 Nicholsons, a Landscape Institute Registered Practice, has been involved in this project from its early stages, providing professional landscape planning and design advice. Our landscape design and planning input has facilitated an iterative design process in collaboration with the Council's planning and landscape officers that resulted in a scheme that was recommended for approval in spite of its location within the Green Belt, and it was taken forward as a draft allocation in the recent Regulation 18 Local Plan (CD6.1).

### Landscape Impact

- 6.2 The Landscape Impact Assessment summarised in Table 1 concluded that the Site represents a single arable field located on the western edge of Park Street. It is closely associated with the settlement with residential dwellings to the east and south, and a filling station and caravan site to the north. The western boundary adjoins open countryside, although a belt of trees and other vegetation serves to filter views.
- 6.3 The illustrative landscape design (CD2.7) has responded positively to this, in consultation with the Council, by including a belt of open space with tree planting along the Site's western boundary, a belt of public open space along Watling Street to the north to reflect the prevailing character of the highway, and including street trees throughout the design to break up the urban form.
- 6.4 The assessment identified four landscape receptors derived from key physical and perceptual characteristics of the Site and its interaction with its setting. In addition to these, the overall character of the Site and its setting were assessed as receptors in their own right. The assessment concluded that no adverse effects of greater than Moderate significance are anticipated on any of these receptors, and that two receptors would experience beneficial effects of Moderate/Minor and Minor significance as a result of the proposed green infrastructure associated with the illustrative scheme, particularly on the boundaries of the Site.

### Visual Impact

- 6.5 The Visual Impact Assessment in Table 2 found that the Site occupies a restricted visual envelope on account of its settlement edge location and the vegetation on its western boundary, to the extent that all but one visual receptor are in the immediate vicinity of its boundaries. No views were identified towards the Site from Public Rights of Way or other highly sensitive public receptors. Of the seven visual receptors identified, five of these are the occupants of private dwellings. No adverse impact of greater than Moderate significance was found, and the greatest impact was identified to be upon the occupants of the private dwellings on Old Orchard.

**Green Belt**

- 6.6 With regard to the effects upon the Green Belt, this was examined through the separate issues of openness, coalescence of settlements and encroachment upon the countryside.
- 6.7 In considering these matters, I have drawn upon both ours and the Council's evidence base, and the advice of an expert witness sought by the Council. Whilst there are minor differences, the conclusions of these qualified studies are unanimous in that the Site can be released from the Green Belt without anything more than localised effects upon the Green Belt.
- 6.8 The limited effect of the development of the Site upon the Green Belt is because of the shape and location of the Site, which means that it would 'round off' the settlement and not extend the settlement closer to any neighbouring settlements in any particular direction. Whilst it is acknowledged that there would be a physical loss of openness and the loss of arable land, these effects are inevitable to achieve the delivery of an appropriate supply of housing in a district in which 81% of the land area falls within the Green Belt and the remainder is existing settlement. In specific examination of the Site itself, our own studies are consistent with those of the Council that this land can be developed without adverse strategic effects upon the Green Belt. It is likely for this reason that the Council has included the Site as a draft allocation within its recent Regulation 18 Local Plan consultation, implying that it is supportive of the principle of development in this location.

**Conclusion**

- 6.9 It is my overall conclusion, supported in evidence, that the Appeal Scheme can be delivered without significant adverse effects upon the prevailing landscape character, the visual environment, and the Metropolitan Green Belt. As such, I consider the scheme to be acceptable on landscape, visual and Green Belt grounds. It is notable that the Council's planning and landscape officers, and external advisors agree with these findings, and that the Council has elected not to defend this Appeal.

**7. APPENDICES**



**Appendix 1: Nicholsons Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment**

Ref: 21-0781

## Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

M Scott Properties Ltd

Trudie Sutton

Tracy Good

Wayne Hughes

Justin Hughes

Land to the west of Watling Street, Park Street, St Albans

**Ref:** 21-0781  
**Version:** 4  
**Date:** 24/05/2022



Arboriculture

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## Executive Summary

Lockhart Garratt Ltd was appointed by M Scott Properties Ltd and others to prepare a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment in respect of a proposed residential development on land to the west of Watling Street, Park Street, St Albans.

The landscape impact assessment concluded that the Site displays a transitional sub-urban character and feels more connected to the settlement edge than to the arable land to the west, particularly in the northern and southern sections of the Site.

### ***Summary of Landscape Impacts***

No adverse landscape impacts of Moderate or greater significance are anticipated.

Adverse landscape impacts of Moderate/Minor significance were identified upon the current use of the Site as an arable field. These impacts are not considered to be significant.

All other adverse landscape impacts were judged to be of a Minor significance. In addition, the mixed condition of boundaries and the mature trees along sections of the boundaries were judged to experience a beneficial impact of Minor significance as a result of the landscape planting mitigation measures identified within the proposals.

### ***Summary of Visual Impacts***

The visual impact assessment concluded that the Site is relatively well contained from views to the north and west, and to a lesser extent from the east as a result of the existing settlement edge and vegetation within the immediate setting of the Site.

Adverse visual impacts of Moderate significance were identified upon the residents of Old Orchard, largely as a result of the weak boundary structure adjacent to these dwellings. The inclusion of a new hedgerow with additional tree planting will serve to filter these views, which are not considered to be significant, and in all cases the magnitude of change has been judged to be Low.

All other visual receptors were judged to experience adverse impacts of Moderate/Minor or Minor significance, which are not considered to be unacceptable in visual terms.

### ***Conclusions***

It is the conclusion of this Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment that the proposed development is acceptable on both landscape and visual grounds, provided that the landscape strategy is implemented in order to protect views from the south and east and to help settle the proposed development into the existing landscape setting.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### Instruction

- 1.1. This Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) has been prepared by Lockhart Garratt Ltd on behalf of M Scott Properties Ltd and others in respect of a proposed residential development on land to the west of Watling Street, Park Street, St Albans.

### Scope

- 1.2. The assessment was undertaken using an established methodology, derived from the Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment jointly published Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third Edition (GLVIA3).
- 1.3. A copy of this assessment methodology is included within **Appendix 2** of this report.
- 1.4. The purposes of this report are as follows:
  - To assess the baseline landscape and visual characteristics of the Site, including desk survey information and first-hand field evidence;
  - To assess the proposals, and where appropriate, provide recommendations in relation to key landscape and visual mitigation requirements; and
  - To identify and assess the potential landscape and visual impact of the proposed development upon the established baseline.
- 1.5. A number of plans and photographs have been prepared to illustrate the character and visual environment of the site and its context, and these are appended to this report.
- 1.6. This report should be read in conjunction with all other information submitted in support of the planning application.

### Site Location

- 1.7. The Site is located to the west of Watling Street on the western settlement edge of the village of Park Street, to the south of St Albans. The Site central grid reference is TL 14555, 04483 and the Site occupies an approximate area of 4.34 hectares. The planning application boundary is presented on the Baseline Information Map ref. 20-3933 within **Appendix 1**.

## 2. PLANNING POLICY BACKGROUND

### National Planning Policy Background

#### *National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)*

- 2.1. The latest version of the NPPF was published in July 2021, replacing a previous version of this document. It sets out the Government's planning policies for England, and how these should be applied, as well as setting out a framework for the production of locally prepared housing and development plans.
- 2.2. Chapter 8 of the NPPF relates to the promotion of healthy and safe communities. It states at Paragraph 92 that planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places that promote social interaction, are safe and accessible, and enable and support healthy lifestyles. Measures to achieve these objectives include street layouts enabling easy pedestrian and cycle connections, active street frontages, clear and legible pedestrian and cycle routes, high quality public spaces that encourage active and continual use, and the provision of safe and accessible green infrastructure.
- 2.3. Paragraph 98 recognises the importance of access to a network of high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity for the health and well-being of communities.
- 2.4. Paragraph 100 states that planning policies and decisions should protect and enhance Public Rights of Way and access, including taking opportunities to improve users' facilities and to create additional connections to existing networks.
- 2.5. Chapter 12 of the NPPF relates to the achievement of well-designed places. In particular, it recognises that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps to make development acceptable to communities, and it establishes the creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable places as a fundamental goal of the planning and development process.
- 2.6. Paragraph 130 sets out a number of positive design criteria that planning policies and decisions should ensure. These include contributing to the overall character of an area in the long term, being visually attractive, being sympathetic to local character and history, establishing or maintaining a strong sense of place, and creating safe, inclusive and accessible places that promote health and well-being.
- 2.7. Paragraph 131 recognises the importance of trees in creating high quality places, and contributing to climate change adaptation and mitigation. It recommends that planning policies and decisions ensure that new streets are tree-lined unless there are clear, justifiable and compelling reasons why this is not appropriate, and also promotes the incorporation of trees elsewhere in developments. To ensure the sustainability of these benefits, it recommends that appropriate measures should be in place to secure the long-term maintenance of newly-planted trees, and that existing trees are retained wherever possible.
- 2.8. Paragraph 134 states that development that is not well designed should be refused, and it attributes significant weight to development that is in compliance with local design guidance, and/or which is outstanding or innovative, promoting high levels of sustainability.



- 2.9. Chapter 13 of the NPPF relates to the protection of Green Belt land. Paragraph 137 states that The Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. 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.
- 2.10. Paragraph 138 lists the five purposes of the Green Belt as:
- 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.
- 2.11. Chapter 15 of the NPPF relates to the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment. Paragraph 174 states that planning policies should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by a range of measures including protecting and enhancing valued landscapes (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan) and recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.
- 2.12. Paragraph 176 places great weight upon the conservation and enhancement of landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and it identifies these areas as having the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. It states that development within these areas should be limited, and also that development within their setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas.

#### ***National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)***

- 2.1. Paragraph 034, Reference ID: 8-034-20190721 of the PPG presents the national guidance for landscape and planning. It states that:

*“The National Planning Policy Framework is clear that plans should recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and that strategic policies should provide for the conservation and enhancement of landscapes. This can include nationally and locally-designated landscapes but also the wider countryside.*

*Where landscapes have a particular local value, it is important for policies to identify their special characteristics and be supported by proportionate evidence. Policies may set out criteria against which proposals for development affecting these areas will be assessed. Plans can also include policies to avoid adverse impacts on landscapes and to set out necessary mitigation measures, such as appropriate design principles and visual screening, where necessary. The cumulative impacts of development on the landscape need to be considered carefully.”*

- 2.2. Paragraph 041, Reference ID 8-041-20190721 of the PPG specifically addresses the approach to development within National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It states that:

*“The National Planning Policy Framework makes clear that the scale and extent of development in these areas should be limited, in view of the importance of conserving and enhancing their landscapes and scenic beauty. Its policies for protecting these areas may mean that it is not possible to meet objectively assessed needs for development in full through the plan-making process, and they are unlikely to be suitable areas for accommodating unmet needs from adjoining (non-designated) areas. Effective joint working between planning authorities covering designated and adjoining areas, through the preparation and maintenance of statements of common ground, is particularly important in helping to identify how housing and other needs can best be accommodated.*

*All development in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Beauty will need to be located and designed in a way that reflects their status as landscapes of the highest quality. Where applications for major development come forward, paragraph 172 of the Framework sets out a number of particular considerations that should apply when deciding whether permission should be granted.”*

- 2.3. Paragraph 042, Reference ID 8-042-20190721 of the PPG recognises the importance of the setting of National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It states that:

*“Land within the setting of these areas often makes an important contribution to maintaining their natural beauty, and where poorly located or designed development can do significant harm. This is especially the case where long views from or to the designated landscape are identified as important, or where the landscape character of land within and adjoining the designated area is complementary. Development within the settings of these areas will therefore need sensitive handling that takes these potential impacts into account.”*

- 2.4. Under the heading Light Pollution, paragraph 001 (Ref ID: 31-001-20140306), PPG refers to the risk of artificial lighting undermining enjoyment of the night sky in the countryside and, in paragraph 2, considers the potential effect on protected areas of dark skies or intrinsically dark landscapes. PPG then provides guidance for mitigation-by-design of artificial lighting, including location, timing and extent of lighting.

### **Local Planning Policy Background**

#### ***City and District of St Albans District Local Plan Review (Saved Policies)***

- 2.5. City and District of St Albans District Local Plan Review was originally adopted in 1994 and contains the current Local Plan for the District. In 2007, following updated national guidance a number of policies have now been deleted, however those saved policies not removed will remain in effect until such time as the new Local Plan is adopted.
- 2.6. Of those saved policies the following are considered to be of particular relevance to the Site:

### **Policy 2 – Settlement Strategy**

*“The District Council will seek to protect and enhance the essential character of existing settlements. Proposals contrary to the policies in the design and environment and the conservation and historic buildings chapters of this Plan (chapters 8 and 9) will not normally be permitted. The Council will have regard not only to the impact of individual*

*developments but also to the cumulative effect. In particular, the Council will seek to safeguard:*

- (i) The character of specified settlements and Green Belt settlements (see Policies 5 and 6);*
- (ii) Green spaces within settlements (Policy 75);*
- (iii) Conservation areas (Policy 85).*

*The nature and intensity of development acceptable in particular locations will reflect the following settlement hierarchy (see figure 4) and statement of policy. More detailed policy guidance is provided in the remainder of this Plan.*

### **1. TOWNS**

*The following settlements are classified as towns and are excluded from the Green Belt:*

*St. Albans;  
Harpenden.*

*Development will generally be concentrated in towns, but proposals should not detract from their essential character particularly in respect of (i)-(iii) above.*

### **2. SPECIFIED SETTLEMENTS**

*The following large villages are classified as Specified Settlements and are excluded from the Green Belt:*

*Bricket Wood;  
Chiswell Green;  
How Wood;  
London Colney;  
Park Street/Frogmore;  
Redbourn; and  
Wheathampstead.*

*Residential densities on development sites within existing housing areas will generally be lower than in towns (see Policy 5). Proposals in specified settlements must be compatible with the maintenance and enhancement of their character and Green Belt boundaries. In particular, infill housing development will be permitted only where consistent with this approach.*

### **3. GREEN BELT SETTLEMENTS**

*The following smaller villages are located within the Green Belt and are classified as Green Belt settlements:*

*Annables, Kinsbourne Green;  
Colney Heath ;  
Folly Fields;  
Gustard Wood;  
Lea Valley Estate;  
Radlett Road, Frogmore;  
Sandridge;  
Sleapshyde; and  
Smallford.*

*Apart from the exceptions in Policy 1, development will not normally be permitted except:*

- a) the local housing needs described;*
- b) the local facilities and service needs of the settlement in which the development is proposed.*

*Development must not detract from the character and setting of these settlements within the Green Belt.”*

#### **2.7. Policy 69 - General Design and Layout**

*“All development shall have an adequately high standard of design taking into account the following factors:*

- I. Context - The scale and character of its surroundings in terms of height, size, scale, density or plot to floor space ratio;*
- II. Materials - Shall normally relate to adjoining buildings. Large isolated buildings in rural or settlement edge settings shall be clad in materials that take account of the general colour and tonal value of their background; and*
- III. Other policies - Applicants shall take into account all relevant policies and requirements.”*

#### **2.8. Policy 70 - Design and Layout of New Housing**

*“The design of new housing development should have regard to its setting and the character of its surroundings and meet the objectives set out in (i) to (xii) below:*

- (i) Design and layout - massing and siting of buildings shall create safe, attractive spaces of human scale;*
- (ii) Dwelling mix - to cater for a range of needs and provide a variety of layout and appearance, a mix of housing types and sizes will be negotiated on large schemes. Large concentrations of small dwellings should be designed in a manner that avoids domination of public spaces by overbearing hard surfaces and vehicles, and by lack of privacy for ground floor flats;*
- (iii) Roads and footpaths - Policy 34 shall be complied with in a manner that minimises pedestrian/ vehicular conflict and is visually attractive;*

- (iv) *Parking and garaging - the parking/ garaging requirements set out in Policies 40 and 43 shall be met without allowing the motor car to dominate public areas (see second sentence of (ii) above);*
- (v) *Landscape - proposals shall comply with Policy 74; and*
- (vi) *Privacy between dwellings - a tolerable level of visual privacy in habitable rooms and, to a lesser extent in private gardens, should be provided. This objective will normally be deemed to have been achieved if the following distances between facing windows to the rear of the dwellings have been achieved:*

*Window to window distance 27 metres*

*Permanent rear boundary screen 1.8 metres high*

*A reduced window to window distance of 18 metres may be permitted if the proposed dwelling has no overlooking rear windows on upper floors and will not be overlooked by neighbouring dwellings with such windows.*

*Alternative methods of achieving a tolerable level of visual privacy, through such factors as screening and the disposition of land uses, will normally be acceptable.*

*Suitably increased distances will be required where:*

- a) a feature of the character of the area is greater space between buildings;*
- b) dwellings contain living rooms rather than bedrooms at second storey or above (e.g. blocks of flats); and*
- c) relative levels would increase the extent of overlooking.*

*Balconies and first floor conservatories shall not be permitted if privacy of existing adjoining dwellings and private gardens would be prejudiced.*

*Where dwellings are permitted, a condition removing permitted development rights for extensions or for the insertion of new windows will be imposed in locations where overlooking problems might occur;*

- (vii) *Privacy between dwelling and rear boundary - so that further development of adjoining land is not compromised if the application site abuts existing residential land or land with potential for residential development, a minimum of half the above distances in (vi) shall normally be attained. Account should be taken of (vi), items a), b) and c) and the fact that there may be alternative methods of achieving privacy objectives;*
- (viii) *Orientation - sunlight and daylight requirements as set out in the Building Research Establishment Report "Site Layout and Planning for Daylight and Sunlight, A Guide to Good Practice" shall normally be achieved;*
- (ix) *Amenity space around dwellings - the size of a private garden should reflect the number of persons for which the dwelling has been designed, their likely range of activities and also local residential character. Gardens may be smaller where there is public open space nearby. In the case of flats, it will normally be appropriate to*

*provide communally shared amenity space, although ground floor flats may benefit from private space adjacent to the dwelling.*

- (x) *Defensible space - to provide a tolerable level of security and privacy, land adjacent to windows of habitable rooms at ground floor level shall normally be a minimum of 3 metres from areas to which the public has access (see also, second sentence of (ii) above). Exceptions may be made where it is necessary to accord with local character (see Policy 85, Development in Conservation Areas). Defensible space is considered to contribute to useful private amenity space (see (ix) above and proposed Design Advice Leaflet No. 1);*
- (xi) *(xi) Open space - developments with more than 30 dwellings each with 2 or more bedrooms shall normally be provided with toddlers play areas (3) on the basis of 3 sq. metres for every 5 such dwellings. In addition, developments of more than 100 dwellings shall normally be provided with appropriate public open space including children's playground(s) on the basis of 1.2 hectares ( ) per 1,000 persons, e.g. 100 dwellings x 2.5 (average persons per dwellings) = 250 persons = 25% of 1.2 ha. = 0.3 ha. of public open space; and*
- (xii) *(xii) Materials - shall be durable and compatible with their location."*

## **2.9. Policy 74 - Landscaping and Tree Preservation**

*"The Council will take account of the following landscaping factors when considering planning applications:*

*(i) Retention of existing landscaping:*

- a) significant healthy trees and other important landscape features, such as hedgerows, ponds and watercourses shall normally be retained unless it can be shown that retention is incompatible with overall design quality and/or economic use of the site;*
- b) on sites with significant existing landscaping, planning applications shall be supported by a full tree survey indicating all landscape features, tree species, canopy spread, trunk diameter and levels at the base of each tree;*
- c) trees shall not normally be severely topped or lopped, or endangered by construction work or underground services. In addition, buildings shall not be sited where they are likely to justify future requests for tree felling or surgery for reasons of safety, excessive shading, nuisance or structural damage; and*
- d) the Council will make tree preservation orders and/or attach appropriate landscaping conditions to planning permissions to safeguard existing trees and ensure that new planting is established and-protected;*

*(ii) Provision of new landscaping:*

- a) where appropriate, adequate space and depth of soil for planting must be allowed within developments. In particular, screen planting including large trees will normally be required at the edge of settlements;*
- b) detailed landscaping schemes will normally be required as part of full planning applications. Amongst other things they must indicate existing trees and shrubs to be retained; trees to be felled; the planting of new trees, shrubs and grass; and screening and paving. Preference should be given to the use of native trees and shrubs; and*

*c) wildlife corridors shall be established in accordance with Policy 75, wherever opportunities occur.”*

#### **2.10. Policy 75 - Green Space Within Settlements**

*“In determining planning applications for development of green space within towns and specified settlements as defined in Policy 2, the Council will consider whether:*

- (i) the land should be retained in open use or suitable replacement land and facilities can be provided elsewhere, because there is or would be a deficiency of open space in the area. If replacement sports pitches are to be provided, they must be laid out and playable before the existing site is vacated;*
- (ii) the proposed development would destroy the character of any remaining urban green space, or the environment of the surrounding area, or the strategic function of any open land with which the site is associated;*
- (iii) wildlife conservation has been provided for in the design and landscaping of the proposed development; and*
- (iv) the integrity and value of green chains such as watercourses and disused railway lines are maintained and whether there are opportunities to strengthen such chains.”*

#### **2.11. Policy 102 - Loss of Agricultural Land**

*“Development which would result in the loss of agricultural land will be assessed against the following criteria:*

- (i) Land Quality: development resulting in the loss of high quality agricultural land, classified by the Ministry of Agriculture as being of Grade 1, 2 or 3a, will normally be refused. An exception to the policy may be made if there is an overriding need for the development and there is no alternative land of a lower quality which could reasonably be used; and*
- (ii) Farm Economics and Management: where appropriate, the loss of agricultural land will be assessed against its effect on the integrity and viability of a farm holding. Planning applications for the development of agricultural land must be accompanied by an assessment of the agricultural gradings of the land made by the Ministry of Agriculture, or an independent expert approved by the Council.”*

#### **2.12. Policy 106 - Nature Conservation**

*“The Council will take account of ecological factors when considering planning applications and will refuse proposals which could adversely affect:*

- (i) Sites of Special Scientific Interest: Bricket Wood Common and Moor Mill Quarry;*
- (ii) Nature Reserves: Marshalls Heath, Wheathampstead and Broad Colney Lakes, London Colney;*
- (iii) Other sites of wildlife, geological or geomorphological importance;*
- (iv) Any site supporting species protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981; and*

- (v) *The natural regime of either surface or ground waters in river valleys and their wetlands.*

*If planning permission is granted for development which could affect a site of conservation interest, it will normally be subject to conditions aimed at protecting the special features of the site. The Council will also seek a Section 106 Agreement to ensure the appropriate management of the site.”*

***Emerging St Albans City & District Local Plan 2020-2038***

- 2.13. Following updated national guidance, St Albans City and District Council are currently in the process of preparing a new Local Plan for the period 2020 to 2038. Until such time as the new Local Plan is adopted, those saved policies contained within the previous Local Plan will remain in effect.



### 3. BASELINE ASSESSMENT

#### Study Area

- 3.1. For the purpose of this assessment, a study area with a radius of 2.5km, centred on the Site, was considered to be appropriate given the nature of the development (small scale residential) proposed. It is judged that beyond this distance any impact upon the character of the landscape or existing views is unlikely to be significant.

#### Site Overview

- 3.2. The Site is located to the west of Watling Street, on the western settlement edge of the village of Park Street, and to the immediate south of the city of St Albans.
- 3.3. The Site displays an irregular shape, with a strong taper towards the north and it occupies an approximate area of 4.34 hectares. The Site is comprised of a single, arable field.
- 3.4. Vehicular access is possible through the Site's western boundary, connecting to the adjacent field. Public access into the Site is not currently permitted and there are no Public Rights of Way (PRoW) within or immediately adjacent to the Site.
- 3.5. The Site's northern boundary is very small, with the overall Site area tapering to a point.
- 3.6. The northern part of the Site's eastern boundary consists of a section of low scrub and nettles lying on a small earth bank, running parallel to the footway and Watling Street, allowing for clear views of a section of the road and settlement beyond. Further south along this boundary lie a series of mature trees of mixed broadleaf species, which serve to restrict some of the views to the east.
- 3.7. The southern section of the Site's eastern boundary lies parallel to a series of rear gardens and it is separated from them by sections of good condition, wooden garden fences with some mature trees. However, gaps between the trees allow for some views of these properties and to a lesser extent their rear gardens.
- 3.8. The Site's southern boundary lies parallel to an area of overgrown grass and scrub, which separates the Site from the rear elevations of residential properties and their gardens along Old Orchard and Hawfield Gardens.
- 3.9. The Site's western boundary is comprised of a row of mature broadleaf trees along the southern section, which serve to restrict many of the views to the adjacent field to the west. The central section of the western boundary is comprised of a row of distinctive mature Scots pine trees, with spaces between these trees allowing for some views west into open countryside. The northern section of this boundary is comprised of an overgrown hedgerow and mature row of broadleaf trees, which serve to restrict views west beyond the Site.

#### The Site Context

- 3.10. The Site lies within a peri-urban setting on the north-western edge of the small village of Park Street, St Albans.
- 3.11. Park Street is a small settlement that lies along the route of the old Roman road known as Watling Street and displays a linear settlement pattern. The Site lies very close to the large city of St Albans to the north, however is separated from it by the A414 major trunk road.

- 3.12. To the immediate north of the Site lies Watling Street, which adjoins the A414 via a large roundabout junction. This major road corridor lies within an area of small pasture and arable fields, and creates a clear separation between the settlements of Park Street and St Albans.
- 3.13. Further north, the city of St Albans lies beyond the A414 and continues north beyond the Study Area boundary. St Albans is an historic Roman city that displays a nucleated settlement pattern and has seen major growth and expansion over the last few centuries.
- 3.14. To the east of the Site lies Watling Street, associated with an old Roman road that connects the city of St Albans to the north with the city of London to the south. The northern section of the settlement of Park Street lies to the east of Watling Street and consists largely of post-war residential dwellings and a petrol filling station and convenience store.
- 3.15. Further east, the Abbey Line railway marks the eastern extent of the settlement of Park Street, and connects St Albans to Watford Junction. The A414 continues east, cutting through an area of small pasture fields and blocks of woodland, which serve to separate the settlements of St Albans and London Colney from Park Street.
- 3.16. Beyond the settlement of Park Street lies the River Ver within a shallow valley to the east, continuing north towards St Albans and south towards the southern settlement edge of Park Street and the M25 road corridor. At the very eastern extent of the Study Area, an additional railway line heads north to south, with the modern settlement of Napsbury Park lying at the Study Area edge.
- 3.17. To the immediate south of the Site lies a relatively modern residential area, located along Hawfield Gardens, Old Orchard and Magnolia Close. To the south beyond these properties lies a small area of pasture field and paddocks, which separate Park Street from the nearby settlement of How Wood, which lies to the west of the Abbey railway line.
- 3.18. Further south the village continues along Watling Street in a linear pattern before terminating at the M25 motorway. An area of flooded gravel pits, now used as fishing lakes lies to the south of the Site between Watling Street and How Wood, with numerous walking and cycle trails, and is known locally as Frogmore Lakes.
- 3.19. At the very southern edge of the Study Area lies the M25 major road corridor, which serves as a definitive boundary to the area of Greater London beyond.
- 3.20. To the immediate west of the Site lies a narrow strip of pasture with numerous trees and areas of scrub. A small caravan park lies within a wooded area within this field, along with an electricity substation and residential dwelling. These buildings are all separated from the Site by a mature row of trees and hedgerow and they were not perceptible from within the Site.
- 3.21. Further west lie a series of small arable and pasture fields, which lie separated from the A405 by a narrow belt of mature trees. This road corridor separates the settlement of Chiswell Green to the west from Park Street to the east and How Green to the south and connects to the A414 to the north.
- 3.22. Further west the settlement of Chiswell Green lies along the B4630, connecting to the city of St Albans to the north, and merging with the settlement of How Green to the south. Beyond Chiswell Green, at the western extent of the Study Area lie a series of small pasture fields and paddocks, along with some large areas of woodland, notably Park Wood.

### **Topography & Landform**

- 3.23. The Site lies at between 75m-84m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD), with the land displaying a notable slope from east to west across the Site.
- 3.24. Beyond the Site boundary to the west, the land rises steadily towards Chiswell Green, with the western edge of the village sitting at approximately 105m AOD, before sloping away once again towards Potters Crouch to the north-west.
- 3.25. To the north, the land remains relatively flat towards the roundabout junction within the A414 and the A405 before rising towards St Julian's on the southern edge of St Albans, sitting at approximately 100m AOD at St Stephens before falling away once again towards the River Ver.
- 3.26. To the east, the land slopes gradually towards the River Ver, which lies at approximately 70m AOD and bounds the eastern edge of Park Street. Beyond the river, the land rises to approximately 85m AOD and then continues to undulate gradually toward London Colney, which lies at approximately 80m AOD on its western edge.
- 3.27. To the south, the landscape slopes gradually towards the River Ver and River Colne, which lie at approximately 65m AOD. Beyond these rivers, the landscape begins to rise once more along Oakridge Lane to a height of 101m AOD to the north of the sewage works, to the west of Radlett.

### **Public Rights of Way**

- 3.28. There are no PRoW within the Site and the Site is not publicly accessible. A number of PRoW pass through the Study Area that may be affected as a result of the Site's development and these are listed below:
  - PRoW St Alban's City 43 (Footpath) to the north of the Site;
  - PRoW St Alban's City 44 (Footpath) to the north of the Site;
  - PRoW St Alban's City 45 (Footpath) to the north of the Site;
  - PRoW St Alban's City 48 (Footpath) to the north-east of the Site;
  - PRoW St Alban's City 60 (Footpath) to the north-east of the Site;
  - PRoW St Alban's City 50, Ver Colne Valley Way (Long Distance Recreation Route) to the north-east of the Site;
  - PRoW St Stephen's 84, Ver Colne Valley Way (Long Distance Recreation Route) to the east of the Site;
  - PRoW St Stephen's 85 (Bridleway) to the east of the Site;
  - PRoW St Stephen's 14 (Footpath) to the south-east of the Site;
  - PRoW St Stephen's 89, Ver Colne Valley Way (Long Distance Recreation Route) to the south-east of the Site;
  - PRoW St Stephen's 16 (Footpath) to the south-east of the Site;
  - PRoW St Stephen's 87 (Footpath) to the south of the Site;
  - PRoW St Stephen's 91 (Footpath) to the south of the Site;
  - PRoW St Stephen's 19 (Footpath) to the south of the Site;
  - PRoW St Stephen's 33A (Footpath) to the south of the Site;
  - PRoW St Stephen's 33 (Footpath) to the south of the Site;
  - PRoW St Stephen's 94 (Byway) to the south of the Site;

- PRoW St Stephen's 35A, Ver Colne Valley Way (Long Distance Recreation Route) to the south of the Site;
- PRoW St Stephen's 17 (Footpath) to the south of the Site;
- PRoW St Stephen's 003 (Bridleway) to the south-west of the Site;
- PRoW St Stephen's 18 (Footpath) to the south-west of the Site;
- PRoW St Stephen's 44 (Footpath) to the west of the Site;
- PRoW St Stephen's 28 (Footpath) to the west of the Site;
- PRoW St Stephen's 21 (Footpath) to the west of the Site;
- PRoW St Stephen's 80 (Footpath) to the west of the Site;
- PRoW St Stephen's 81 (Footpath) to the west of the Site;
- PRoW St Alban's City 41 (Footpath) to the north-west of the Site;
- PRoW St Michael's 10 (Footpath) to the north-west of the Site;
- PRoW St Michael's 008 (Footpath) to the north-west of the Site; and
- PRoW St Alban's City 34 (Footpath) to the north-west of the Site.

3.29. The above list is not exhaustive and there are numerous PRoW that although unlikely to be directly affected should the development of the Site take place, should rightly be considered as part of the application process.

3.30. Consideration will be given to the effect of the proposals upon the character and visual quality of these Rights of Way.

### **Designations**

#### ***Listed Buildings***

3.31. There are no Listed Buildings within the Site, although there are a number of Listed Buildings that lie within the Study Area. Those heritage assets closest to the Site are listed below:

- Grade II Listed '52 Park Street', located 356m to the south of the Site;
- Grade II Listed '61 and 63 Park Street', located 363m to the south of the Site;
- Grade II Listed '65 and 67 Park Street', located 373m to the south of the Site;
- Grade II Listed '68 Park Street', located 420m to the south of the Site;
- Grade II Listed 'Watermill at corner of Bury Dell Lane', 420m to the south of the Site;

3.32. The heritage assets listed above lie separated from the Site by built form along Park Street and Hawfield Gardens, as well as the railway line. Therefore, it is considered that the Site does not form a part of the setting of these heritage assets and they are unlikely to be affected as a result of the proposed development.

3.33. A number of additional Listed Buildings lie further south along Park Street, as well as within the wider Study Area. Given the distance from Site and the intervening built form, it is considered that the Site does not form a part of the setting of these heritage assets and therefore they are unlikely to be affected as a result of the proposed development.

#### ***Watling Chase Community Forest***

3.34. The Site lies within the Watling Chase Community Forest, close to its north-western extent.

3.35. The purpose of the Watling Chase Community Forest is described within the St Albans District Local Plan review 1994 (Saved and deleted Policies version 2020) as follows. "*The long-term*

*vision for the forest is for widespread landscape improvement to provide a mosaic of land uses of predominantly broadleaved woodland, retained farmland and water features with increased opportunities for nature conservation, leisure and recreation.”*

- 3.36. It is considered that whilst the Site is currently in agricultural use, its settlement edge location, with built form lying along two of its three boundaries somewhat diminishes this agricultural character, creating a transitional sub-urban character.
- 3.37. The Site is read as part of the built form along Park Street, and it shares less of a relationship to the open countryside and Watling Chase Community Forest to the west of the Site. It is also the case that there are no existing assets in the immediate vicinity of the Site that currently contribute to the core purposes of the Community Forest.

#### ***Conservation Area***

- 3.38. The Site does not lie within the Park Street Conservation Area, and it is separated from it by the railway line and the intervening built form of the settlement itself. As a result, it is considered that the Site does not form a part of the setting of the Conservation Area and therefore it is unlikely to be affected as a result of the proposed development.

#### ***Scheduled Ancient Monuments***

- 3.39. A number of Scheduled Ancient Monuments lie within the wider Study Area, located within the centre of the city of St Albans. It is considered that the Site does not form a part of the setting of these Scheduled Ancient Monuments, given the distance from Site and the intervening built form of St Albans, therefore they are unlikely to be affected as a result of the proposed development.

## 4. LANDSCAPE BASELINE

### Overview

- 4.1. In order to accurately define the quality and character of the receiving landscape, it is important to identify and assess those landscape receptors and/or features that form part of the landscape and help to characterise it.
- 4.2. The identification of these features will be informed through:
  - Review of Ordnance Survey mapping, historical map data and aerial and other remote sensing imagery where appropriate;
  - Review of relevant published landscape character assessment at national, regional and local levels as appropriate;
  - Identification of landscape-based designations;
  - Identification and description of individual elements, features, aesthetic and perceptual aspects of the landscape which contribute to its character;
  - Assessment of the general condition of the receiving landscape;
  - Assessment of the relative value of the receiving landscape; and
  - Judgement of the susceptibility of the receiving landscape to a change of the type proposed.

### Review of Published Landscape Character Assessments

#### *National Level Assessment*

- 4.3. Natural England (Countryside Agency) produced a countrywide landscape character assessment resulting in the published Character Map of England. The map includes large tracts of countryside that have similar characteristics in terms of landform, geology, land use and other landscape elements.
- 4.4. Within the Natural England Character Map of England document, the Site is located within National Character Area (NCA) 111 – Northern Thames Basin, the key characteristics of which are identified as follows, with those elements representative of the Site and its setting highlighted in bold text:
  - The landform is varied with a wide plateau divided by river valleys. The prominent hills and ridges of the ‘Bagshot Hills’ are notable to the northwest and extensive tracts of flat land are found in the south.
  - Characteristic of the area is a layer of thick clay producing heavy, acidic soils, resulting in retention of considerable areas of ancient woodland.
  - Areas capped by glacial sands and gravels have resulted in nutrient-poor, free-draining soils which support remnant lowland heathlands, although these are now small. Areas that have alluvial deposits present are well drained and fertile.
  - The water bearing underlying Chalk beds are a main source of recharge for the principal London Basin Chalk aquifer.
  - **A diverse landscape with a series of broad valleys containing the major rivers Ver, Colne and Lea**, and slightly steeper valleys of the rivers Stour, Colne and Roman. Numerous springs rise at the base of the Bagshot Beds and several reservoirs are dotted throughout the area

- The pattern of woodlands is varied across the area and includes considerable ancient semi-natural woodland. Hertfordshire is heavily wooded in some areas as are parts of Essex, while other areas within Essex are more open in character. Significant areas of wood pasture and pollarded veteran trees are also present.
  - The field pattern is very varied across the basin reflecting historical activity. Informal patterns of 18<sup>th</sup>-century or earlier enclosure reflect medieval colonisation of the heaths. Regular planned enclosures dating from the Romano-British period are a subtle but nationally important feature on the flat land to the south-east of the area. In the Essex heathlands 18<sup>th</sup>- and 19<sup>th</sup>-century enclosure of heathlands and commons followed by extensive 20<sup>th</sup>-century field enlargement is dominant.
  - **Mixed farming, with arable land predominating in the Hertfordshire plateaux**, parts of the London Clay lowlands and Essex heathlands. Grasslands are characteristic of the river valleys throughout. Horticulture and market gardening are found on the light, sandy soils of former heaths in Essex, particularly around Colchester, along with orchards, meadow pasture and leys following numerous narrow rivers and streams.
  - The diverse range of semi-natural habitats include ancient woodland, lowland heath and floodplain grazing marsh and provide important habitats for a wide range of species including great crested newt, water vole, dormouse and otter.
  - **Rich archaeology including sites related to Roman occupation, with the Roman capital at Colchester and City of St Albans (Verulamium) and links to London.** Landscape parklands surrounding 16<sup>th</sup>- and 17<sup>th</sup>-century rural estates and country houses built for London merchants are a particular feature in Hertfordshire.
  - The medieval pattern of small villages and dispersed farming settlement remains central to the character of parts of Hertfordshire and Essex. **Market towns have expanded over time as have the London suburbs and commuter settlements**, with the creation of new settlements such as the pioneering garden city at Welwyn and the planned town at Basildon.
  - Brick-built dwellings are characteristic from the late 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Prior to this dwellings and farm buildings tended to be timber built with weatherboarding, now mainly painted white but traditionally black or tarred, and whitewashed plaster walls.
- 4.5. Based upon the above appraisal, it can be concluded that the urban context of the Site is such that it only represents the character of the Thames Basin Heaths to a limited extent.

### **County Level Assessment**

#### ***Hertfordshire County Council Landscape Character Assessment – 2002***

- 4.6. In February 2000, Hertfordshire County Council commissioned The Landscape Partnership to produce a Landscape Character Assessment and evaluation of the southern part of the county in accordance with the most current version of national guidance. The aim of the assessment was to provide a classification for all the landscape types and areas within this part of the county to support future development plans and to provide a framework for future planning applications within the area.
- 4.7. In 2001 an extension to the Landscape Character Assessment was carried out to give full coverage within St. Albans District, with a further assessment undertaken in 2003 to include Dacorum Borough.

- 4.8. Within the assessment, the Site is located within Landscape Character Area (LCA) 010 – St Stephens Plateau, see plan ref. 21-1837 within **Appendix 1**. The landscape character of this area is described as follows:

*“A working farmed landscape of predominantly open arable fields which slopes from north-west to south-east. To the north several large mixed woodlands create a local sense of enclosure. Elsewhere hedgerows are sparse with few individual field trees. The settlement pattern is dispersed, connected by a series of narrow winding lanes. The historic land-use pattern is overlaid by a strong network of motorways and junctions. Wooded horizons are common to the north, west and south, whilst to the east the built edge of St Albans and Chiswell Green is prominent.”*

- 4.9. They key characteristics of LCA 010 are noted as follows, with those considered to be relevant to the Site and its setting highlighted in bold text:

- **Undulating plateau to north, gently sloping to south east;**
- **Medium/large open arable fields throughout;**
- Visually interlocking mixed woodlands to north;
- Significant extent of motorways and interchanges with associated earthworks, lights and traffic;
- Narrow winding lanes with sparse clipped hedgerows;
- **Built edge of urban settlements to east;** and
- Dispersed settlement with scattered farmsteads.

- 4.10. Under the heading Visual and Sensory Perception the assessment notes:

*“The area is widely visible from outside, including open views from the urban areas to the east. The scale of the landscape is medium to large. From within the area there are extensive views from the motorways, particularly the M1 and M10, but also from some of the narrow lanes on the arable landscape to the south. To the north the woodland provides a stronger sense of enclosure. The noise of the motorways is relentless and discordant. This landscape type is relatively common in the county. The most distinctive feature is the wooded farmland to the north on the plateau.”*

- 4.11. Under the heading Visual Impact the assessment notes:

*“The motorways present a strong built element in the landscape. The M1 is generally poorly integrated with little in the way of screen planting and a locally dominant influence of vehicles and lighting gantries. The M25 and the interchange with the M1 are better integrated. Despite their size, considerable earthworks and new planting reduce the scale of the feature and its visual impact. There has been some localised movement towards new recreational uses, such as the golf course at Potters Crouch west of the M1, although steep perimeter bunding to the M1 has done little to integrate the change of land use. The raw built edges of Chiswell Green and How Wood represent significant suburban impact.”*

- 4.12. The evaluation of the landscape character area’s condition is considered to be moderate, and its robustness is considered to be weak. It is also noted that the impact of built development within the landscape is considered to be high.



- 4.13. Under Strategy and Guidelines for managing change, the assessment notes that supporting the Watling Chase Community Forest through woodland and hedgerow creation and management is an objective for this landscape character area. It is acknowledged that hedgerow retention, creation and enhancement are important factors within this scheme, particularly with regards to *'visually integrating the intrusive motorways and existing urban fringe development'*.
- 4.14. It is however considered that due to the settlement edge setting of the Site, it is considered to be only partially representative of the St Stephens Plateau Landscape Character Area.

#### **Lockhart Garratt Landscape Character Assessment**

- 4.15. As described in section 3 above, the Site is comprised of a single arable field, lying adjacent to Watling Street on the western settlement edge of the village of Park Street.
- 4.16. The Site displays a narrow irregular shape at its northern end, widening out into a triangular shape towards the southern extent of the field.
- 4.17. The existing Site boundaries are variable in composition and condition, with sections of mature hedgerow and boundary trees along the Site's western boundary. These sections of vegetation largely consist of mature broadleaf trees, however a section of mature Scots pine is located along the central section of this boundary, with large gaps between the trees.
- 4.18. The Site's eastern boundary consists of a scrubby, low earth bank towards its northern extent, and this is largely comprised of nettles and brambles. Towards the central and southern sections of this boundary, lie a number of large, mature trees that serve to restrict views into the Site. At the very southern extent of this boundary, the rear gardens of a number of residential dwellings along Watling Street join onto the Site, and they are comprised of some good condition, wooden garden fences, sections of low hedgerow and mature trees.
- 4.19. The Site's southern boundary largely consists of a wide, overgrown grass corridor, with scrubby vegetation and some mature trees, and clear views of some residential dwellings to the south of the Site.
- 4.20. The Site displays a varied landform, displaying a relatively flat topography in the northern section, with a pronounced fall in topography within the southern section from the eastern boundary down to the western boundary. As a result, whilst views of the Site are available from Watling Street, only partial sections of the Site are visible as a result of the varied topography.
- 4.21. The presence of the existing settlement edge can be experienced along both the eastern and southern boundaries of the Site, where boundary vegetation is low or devoid.
- 4.22. As a result, the Site displays a transitional sub-urban character and feels more connected to the settlement edge than to the arable land to the west, particularly in the northern and southern sections of the Site.

4.23. For the purposes of this assessment, the following are considered to be relevant receptors in terms of landscape character:

- Current use of the Site as an arable field;
- Mixed composition of boundaries;
- Mature trees along sections of the Site boundaries;
- Presence of settlement edge along southern and eastern boundary;
- Overall character of the Site; and
- Overall character of the setting of the Site.

## 5. VISUAL BASELINE

### Overview

- 5.1. The visual baseline is identified through the use of LSS Elite 3D terrain modelling software to generate a Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV), which shows the 'bare earth' visibility of potential structures on the Site based upon local topography, i.e. devoid of structures and vegetation. The extent of the visual envelope is then defined and tested through field investigation. The ZTV is shown on Plan ref. 20-3934 at **Appendix 1**.
- 5.2. On the basis of the baseline assessment and field survey analysis, visual receptors are identified. This will involve the identification of the visual receptors through:
- Identification of the area in which development may be visible (the visual envelope);
  - Identification of publicly accessible, representative viewpoints where views will be affected and the nature of those views;
  - Identification of any recognised viewpoints (i.e. known viewpoints from a key landmark or local feature);
  - Identification of those views which can be considered characteristic of the landscape character areas; and
  - Identification of the different groups of people who may experience views of the development.

### Description of Representative Views

- 5.3. The following sections will describe the view for each potential visual receptor that has been confirmed through the field assessment, as well as a number of 'negative views' that confirm a lack of visibility, and a number of illustrative views of the Site. A series of summer views are described below and presented at **Appendix 3**, shown on plan Ref. 20-3935. A series of additional views were requested by the Local Authority, which were taken during the winter months, and these are also described below, from viewpoint 23 to 28. All winter viewpoints are shown on plan Ref. 21-1902. All of these views are classified as Type 1 Visualisations, as described within the Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note TGN 06-19 'Visual Representation of Development Proposals'.
- 5.4. A series of winter views were also requested by the Council in late 2021, and these are presented within **Appendix 4**.

### Summer Views

#### ***Viewpoint 1: View from Watling Street, looking west***

*Grid Reference: TL 14574, 04796*

*Distance from Site: 30m*

*Nature of Receptor: Residents along Watling Street, Road users of Watling Street*

- 5.5. The view looks west towards the Site's eastern boundary, and it illustrates the Site's close proximity to the road.

- 5.6. In the foreground, Watling Street is visible, running parallel to the Site's eastern boundary, with a wide grass verge to the east of the road, and a narrower grass verge to the west of the road. A number of street furniture items are visible along the road corridor.
- 5.7. In the centre of the view, the Site's eastern boundary is visible, comprised of a small earth bank with nettles and low shrubs, allowing for clear views west into the Site.
- 5.8. Beyond the Site, it is possible to view the Site's western boundary, comprised of a row of mature, mixed species trees, which create a strong, green barrier to views further west beyond the settlement.
- 5.9. With regard to road users of Watling Street, it is considered that traffic moving along this road will have clear views into the northern section of the Site, where the boundary vegetation is low. However, traffic will be moving along this road at approximately 30 mph, and road users are likely to have their attention focused on the road. They will already be influenced by the presence of built form to the east of the road.

***Viewpoint 2: View from within Site, looking south***

*Grid Reference: TL 14527 04821*

*Distance from Site: N/A – within Site*

*Nature of Receptor: Residents along Old Orchard*

- 5.10. The view looks south across the Site, from the Site's northernmost tip, and illustrates the long, narrow form of the northern section of the field.
- 5.11. In the foreground, the recently ploughed arable field extends south, displaying a gradual rise in topography towards the eastern boundary.
- 5.12. To the right of the view, the Site's western boundary is clearly visible, comprised of a mature hedgerow and belt of mature trees, which serve to restrict views west into the adjacent field from this viewpoint.
- 5.13. To the left of the view, the Site's eastern boundary is visible, comprised of a shallow earth bank with nettles and low scrubby vegetation.
- 5.14. In the middle distance, the Site's eastern boundary protrudes into the field, bound by a line of mature trees, which create a strong feature within the view and serve to filter any views beyond these trees. The Site is seen to extend beyond this small woodland area to the south and west, although views become more restricted.
- 5.15. In the far distance, it is possible to see the Site's southern boundary, along with a small number of residential dwellings that lie adjacent to the Site's boundary, along Old Orchard.
- 5.16. These dwellings have some rear and upper floor windows that face towards the Site, and therefore it is considered that views of the Site from these properties is likely.

***Viewpoint 3: View from within Site, looking west***

*Grid Reference: TL 14590 04650*

*Distance from Site: N/A – within Site*

*Nature of Receptor: For illustrative purposes only*

- 5.17. The view looks west across the Site from the Site's eastern boundary and illustrates the narrow form of the northern section of the field.
- 5.18. In the foreground, the arable field demonstrates a flat topographic form from this viewpoint, with an area of ruderal vegetation along the field margin.
- 5.19. In the centre of the view, the Site's western boundary is comprised of a mature, overgrown hedgerow, with numerous large, mature trees lying beyond the hedgerow. As a result, views west beyond the Site are limited to views of the very tops of the trees within the adjacent field.

***Viewpoint 4: View from within Site, looking west***

*Grid Reference: TL 14615 04570*

*Distance from Site: N/A – within Site*

*Nature of Receptor: For illustrative purposes only*

- 5.20. The view looks west across the Site, from further south along the Site's eastern boundary, and illustrates the differing composition of the Site's western boundary along its length.
- 5.21. In the foreground the arable field slopes down towards the western boundary, which itself is comprised of a row of mature conifers, with large gaps between each tree.
- 5.22. To the right of the view, the end of the mature hedgerow is visible, which stops at the point of the row of conifer trees.
- 5.23. Gaps between these boundary trees allows for filtered views west into the adjacent field, which rises gradually towards the A405. This road is not however perceptible from this viewpoint.

***Viewpoint 5: View from within Site, looking north***

*Grid Reference: TL 14580 04510*

*Distance from Site: N/A – within Site*

*Nature of Receptor: Residents along Watling Street*

- 5.24. The view looks north across the Site and illustrates the weaker sections within the Site's eastern boundary.
- 5.25. In the foreground, the arable field displays a gradual rise in topography towards the Site's eastern boundary. The boundary itself is comprised of a low earth bank, with low, scrubby vegetation. There are some large, trees along this boundary, however the trees are widely spaced and views through these gaps are available.
- 5.26. Beyond the Site boundary, it is possible to view the street furniture associated with Watling Street in the centre of the view. Beyond this, it is also possible to view glimpses of rooftops of residential dwellings along the eastern side of the road. These dwellings face towards the Site.
- 5.27. To the left of the view, a petrol filling station is visible along Watling Street. Beyond the immediate views of the road and built form associated with Watling Street, views further east are limited as a result of number of mature trees along the road corridor and within front and rear gardens.

- 5.28. With regard to residents along Watling Street, these dwellings face towards the Site, particularly where the Site's boundary vegetation displays many gaps.

***Viewpoint 6: View from within Site, looking south-west***

*Grid Reference: TL 14580 04510*

*Distance from Site: N/A – within Site*

*Nature of Receptor: Residents along Tippendell Lane*

- 5.29. The view looks south-west across the Site, towards the Site's western boundary, and illustrates the rising landform beyond the Site to the west.
- 5.30. In the foreground, the arable field displays a falling topography towards this section of the western boundary.
- 5.31. Within the centre of the view, the Site's western boundary is clearly visible, and is comprised of a mature section of hedgerow to the right of the view, and a mature section of hedgerow with a row of large, mature trees to the left of the view.
- 5.32. Beyond the Site boundary lies an adjacent arable field, which rises towards the south and west. As a result of the lower section of hedgerow and rising land, it is possible to view a number of residential dwellings that lie along the southern edge of Tippendell Lane, on the northern settlement edge of How Wood.
- 5.33. These properties face north-east and it is considered likely that some views of part of the Site may be possible from these properties. However, views are distant, and likely to be partial and filtered by the intervening boundary vegetation.

***Viewpoint 7: View from within Site, looking north-west***

*Grid Reference: TL 14502 04239*

*Distance from Site: N/A – within Site*

*Nature of Receptor: For illustrative purposes only*

- 5.34. The view looks north-west across the Site from the Site's eastern boundary and illustrates the fall in topography from the east to the west across the field.
- 5.35. In the foreground and centre of the view, the arable field can be seen falling away towards the Site's western boundary, which is comprised of a mature hedgerow, with some large hedgerow trees, particularly to the left of the view.
- 5.36. In the middle distance, beyond the Site boundary it is possible to view the adjacent arable field, which rises up from a shallow valley along the Site's western boundary.
- 5.37. The adjacent field is bound by a mature hedgerow and a line of large, mature trees, which serve to restrict views further north and west beyond this adjacent field.

***Viewpoint 8: View from within Site, looking east***

*Grid Reference: TL 14503 04309*

*Distance from Site: N/A – within Site*

*Nature of Receptor: Residents along Old Orchard*

- 5.38. The view looks east across the Site from the Site's south-western corner, and illustrates the rise in topography across the Site from west to east.
- 5.39. In the foreground, a narrow strip of ruderal vegetation is visible along the field margin. To the right of the view, a wide strip of overgrown grassland, with patches of scrub and nettles is visible, separating the Site from the residential area to the south.
- 5.40. In the centre of the view, it is just possible to view a line of garden fences and boundaries, marking the rear boundaries of properties along Watling Street. A line of large, mature trees lies along sections of this boundary and serves to filter views of these properties and gardens from this viewpoint.
- 5.41. To the right of centre, it is possible to view the rooftops of a number of residential dwellings that lie along Old Orchard. A number of these dwellings have their rear elevations facing towards the Site, along with their rear gardens.

***Viewpoint 9: View from within Site, looking north-east***

*Grid Reference: TL 14503 04309*

*Distance from Site: N/A – within Site*

*Nature of Receptor: Residents along Watling Street*

- 5.42. The view looks north-east across the Site towards Watling Street, and illustrates the rise in landform across the Site from west to east.
- 5.43. In the centre of the view, the Site's eastern boundary is comprised of a series of wooden garden fences and sections of low hedgerow, along with a number of large, mature trees. Views through this vegetation are possible, allowing for partial glimpsed views of the rear elevations of residential dwellings along Watling Street.
- 5.44. A number of large, mature trees lie within the rear gardens of these properties, which serve to further filter views towards these properties, however views of some ground floor and upper floor windows are visible.
- 5.45. As a result of the rising topography and boundary vegetation and built form, views further east beyond the immediate context of Watling Street are not possible.

***Viewpoint 10: View from within Site, looking south-east***

*Grid Reference: TL 14501 04432*

*Distance from Site: N/A – within Site*

*Nature of Receptor: Residents along old Orchard*

- 5.46. The view looks south-east across the Site towards the Site's southern boundary and illustrates the visual interaction between the Site and the adjacent built form to the south.

- 5.47. In the foreground, the arable field falls away gradually to the west, to the left of the view. Beyond the field edge lies a narrow margin of ruderal vegetation.
- 5.48. In the centre of the view lies a wide strip of tall grass and scrub, with a small number of mature and semi-mature trees. Beyond this area lie the rear gardens and residential dwellings along Old Orchard.
- 5.49. These dwellings have either their rear or side elevations facing towards the Site, with some clear views of ground and upper floor windows. Views beyond the immediate setting of these properties are limited on account of the falling landform to the south beyond the Site.

***Viewpoint 11: View from within Site, looking east***

*Grid Reference: TL 14528 04515*

*Distance from Site: N/A – within Site*

*Nature of Receptor: Residents along Watling Street*

- 5.50. The view looks east across the Site towards Watling Street, and illustrates the interaction between the Site and the residential properties along Watling Street.
- 5.51. In the foreground, the landform shows a gradual rise towards the eastern boundary. The site boundary is comprised of a series of wooden garden fences, particularly within the centre and to the right of the view. Views over these garden fences towards the rear aspects of some of these dwellings are possible.
- 5.52. To the left of centre lies a small area of woodland of mixed species associated with the rear garden of a residential property along Watling Street, which serves to restrict views further east.
- 5.53. A number of mature trees lie along the boundary, and within some of the rear gardens, at the very right of the view. The rising landform and presence of mature vegetation along this boundary result in views generally being restricted to the immediate setting of Watling Street.

***Viewpoint 12: View from within Site, looking south***

*Grid Reference: TL 14528 04515*

*Distance from Site: N/A – within Site*

*Nature of Receptor: Residents along Old Orchard*

- 5.54. The view looks south across the Site towards Old Orchard, and illustrates the rise in landform towards the southern end of the field and across the field from west to east.
- 5.55. Whilst the landform undulations are relatively slight across the Site, they serve to contain many of the views to the south, east and west.
- 5.56. To the right of the view, a row of mature trees is visible along the Site's western boundary, creating a strong green backdrop to this section of the Site.
- 5.57. To the left of the view a section of wooden garden fences are visible, along with a row of mature trees, which lie along the boundary and within some of the rear gardens of properties along Watling Street.



- 5.58. In the middle distance, within the centre of the view, a number of residential dwellings are visible along Old Orchard to the south of the Site. Views of these dwellings are largely restricted to rooftop views from this viewpoint, on account of the undulating landform of the Site.

***Viewpoint 13: View from within Site, looking north-east***

*Grid Reference: TL 14534 04694*

*Distance from Site: N/A – within Site*

*Nature of Receptor: Residents along Watling Street, Residents along Mount Drive*

- 5.59. The view looks north-east across the Site towards Watling Street, and illustrates the interaction between the road and the Site.
- 5.60. In the foreground, the Site is composed of arable land, with a slight fall in topography towards the north and west.
- 5.61. In the centre of the view, the Site's eastern boundary is visible, comprised of a small earth bank with some grass and scrub vegetation. Street furniture associated with Watling Street is clearly visible beyond the Site boundary.
- 5.62. To the left of the view, a small clump of mature trees creates a stronger boundary along the road edge, and serves to screen some of the views to the east, however some very filtered views of dwellings along Watling Street are possible between the trees.
- 5.63. In the centre of the view, beyond the Site, views of some residential dwellings along Mount Drive are visible, with some views of upper floor windows. These dwellings lie at an oblique angle to the Site, separated from Watling Street by their rear gardens.

***Viewpoint 14: View from within Site, looking east***

*Grid Reference: TL 14534 04694*

*Distance from Site: N/A – within Site*

*Nature of Receptor: Residents along Watling Street*

- 5.64. The view looks east across the Site from the northern end of the field, and illustrates the strong interaction between the Site and the built form along Watling Street.
- 5.65. In the foreground, the arable field displays a relatively flat topography within this northern section of the field.
- 5.66. In the centre of the view, the Site's eastern boundary is visible, comprised of a low earth bank with grass and scrub vegetation. A number of street lamps are visible along the road.
- 5.67. Beyond the Site boundary, clear views of a number of residential dwellings along Watling Street are available, including views of ground and upper floor windows. A large number of these properties have their front elevations facing towards the road and the Site.
- 5.68. To the far left of the view, the petrol filling station that lies along Watling Street is also visible, along with road signage and street furniture.

***Viewpoint 15: View from Watling Street, looking south***

*Grid Reference: TL 14534 04694*

*Distance from Site: 73m*

*Nature of Receptor: Residents along Old Orchard, Road users of Watling Street, Pedestrian users of Watling Street*

- 5.69. The view looks south towards the Site from the pedestrian footway that runs parallel to Watling Street.
- 5.70. In the foreground, the road can be seen heading south, with mature vegetation along sections of both sides of the road.
- 5.71. To the right of the view, a residential dwelling faces south towards the road, surrounded by mature trees.
- 5.72. In the centre of the view, the Site is visible as a result of the low section of the Site's eastern boundary. Views of the Site are partial, but the Site's southern boundary is visible, along with the existing residential dwellings along Old Orchard.
- 5.73. The mature woodland trees along the southern section of the Site's eastern boundary are clearly visible within the centre of the view.
- 5.74. With regard to road users travelling south along Watling Street, it is considered that the Site is visible, particularly the northern section of the Site. However, users would have fleeting glimpses of the Site whilst travelling along this road at 30mph, and are anticipated to have the majority of their attention focused on the road ahead. Influence from the existing built form along Watling Street and to a lesser extent Old Orchard, are also anticipated.
- 5.75. With regard to pedestrian users, it is considered that more attention is likely to be focused on the view ahead, including the presence of the Site to the west of the road.

***Viewpoint 16: View from Public Footpath St Stephen's 33A, looking north***

*Grid Reference: TL 14656 03510*

*Distance from Site: 739m*

*Nature of Receptor: Users of St Stephen's 33A*

- 5.76. The view looks north towards the Site from Public Footpath St Stephen's 33A, which lies within the Frogmore Lakes, an area of forested nature trails and fishing lakes.
- 5.77. In the foreground, an overgrown hedgerow runs parallel with the public footpath. Beyond the hedgerow lies Park Street Primary School, which is only visible as a series of rooftop views.
- 5.78. Beyond the school lies a wide tree belt, marking the route of an old railway branch line. This tree belt is comprised of mature mixed tree species, which serve to restrict any further views north beyond these trees.
- 5.79. As a result, the Site is not perceptible from this viewpoint.

**Viewpoint 17: View from Long Distance Recreation Route St Stephen's Way 35A (Ver – Colne Valley Way), looking north**

*Grid Reference: TL 14969 03189*

*Distance from Site: 1138m*

*Nature of Receptor: Users of Long Distance Recreational Route St Stephen's Way 35A (Ver – Colne Valley Way)*

- 5.80. The view looks north towards the Site from the Ver Colne Valley Way, which lies within the Frogmore Lakes, an area of forested nature trails and fishing lakes.
- 5.81. This PRoW heads south through the lakes area, visible at the far right hand side of the view, before taking a dog-leg route to the west and then south again, appearing at the far left hand side of the view.
- 5.82. In the centre of the view, an area of mature and somewhat overgrown woodland is visible, which serves to restrict any views further north beyond this viewpoint.
- 5.83. As a result, the Site is not perceptible from this viewpoint.

**Viewpoint 18: View from Long Distance Recreation Route St Stephen's Way 84 (Ver Colne Way), looking west**

*Grid Reference: TL 14947 04320*

*Distance from Site: 309m*

*Nature of Receptor: Users of Long Distance Recreational Route St Stephen's Way 84 (Ver – Colne Valley Way)*

- 5.84. The view looks west towards the Site from the Ver – Colne Valley Way, which lies to the east of Watling Street and the River Ver.
- 5.85. In the foreground, the River Ver is just visible, lying within an area of flooded pasture. A hedgerow is visible beyond the field, separating the field from eastern settlement edge of Park Street and the railway line.
- 5.86. Beyond the hedgerow lies a mature tree belt, which serves to restrict any views further west towards the settlement of Park Street.
- 5.87. As a result, the Site is not perceptible from this viewpoint.

**Viewpoint 19: View from Public bridleway St Stephen's 85, looking north-west**

*Grid Reference: TL 15301 04161*

*Distance from Site: 688m*

*Nature of Receptor: Users of Public Bridleway St Stephen's 85*

- 5.88. The view looks north-west towards the Site from Public Bridleway St Stephen's 85, which extends east away from the settlement of Park Street towards the A414.
- 5.89. In the foreground, the pasture field displays a gradual rise in topography towards the west and the settlement of Park Street.

- 5.90. In the centre of the view, a line of mature trees marks the site of a small area of mature woodland along Burydell Lane, along with a row of trees along the field boundary.
- 5.91. As a result of the rising landform and intervening vegetation, neither Park Street nor the Site are perceptible from this viewpoint.

***Viewpoint 20: View from Tippendell Lane, looking north-east***

*Grid Reference: TL 14004 04187*

*Distance from Site: 519m*

*Nature of Receptor: Residents along Tippendell Lane*

- 5.92. The view looks north-east towards the Site from Tippendell Lane, which lies on the northern settlement edge of How Wood.
- 5.93. In the foreground, the road heads south-east towards the right hand side of the view. The road is bound by a low scrubby hedgerow and post and wire fence, allowing for some views over the hedgerow into the adjacent arable field.
- 5.94. To the right of the view, some larger hedgerow trees are visible.
- 5.95. Beyond the adjacent field, glimpsed views of mature trees lying along the field boundary are possible, which may include some views of the Site's western boundary trees.
- 5.96. As a result of the intervening vegetation, views are considered to be limited but cannot be completely dismissed.
- 5.97. With regard to residents along Tippendell Lane, it is considered that any potential views of the Site would be distant and filtered by the intervening roadside hedgerow and field boundary vegetation.

***Viewpoint 21: View from the junction of Mount Drive with Watling Street, looking west***

*Grid Reference: TL 14655 04557*

*Distance from Site: 26m*

*Nature of Receptor: Residents along Watling Street, Road users of Watling Street, Pedestrian users of Watling Street*

- 5.98. The view looks west towards the Site from the junction of Mount Drive with Watling Street.
- 5.99. In the foreground, the road displays a gradual fall in topography towards the north, with a wide grass verge and pedestrian footway to the east of Watling Street, and a narrower grass verge to the west of Watling Street. A small section of pedestrian footway and a bus shelter lie along the western side of the road, to the left of the view.
- 5.100. The Site's eastern boundary is visible beyond the road, comprised of a section of low hedgerow and scrubby vegetation, allowing some clear views into the Site. A number of large, mature trees lie either side of this low vegetation and serve to screen some views of the Site.
- 5.101. Views of the Site from this viewpoint consist of the narrower section of the northern end of the field. Views of the Site's western boundary are also available, consisting of a thick, mature

hedgerow and hedgerow trees, creating a strong green backdrop to the Site, and preventing views further west beyond the Site.

**Viewpoint 22: View from Public Footpath St Stephen's 44, looking south**

*Grid Reference: TL 14755 05253*

*Distance from Site: 479m*

*Nature of Receptor: Users of St Stephen's 44*

5.102. The view looks south towards the Site from Public Footpath St Stephen's 44, which connects the city of St Albans to the town of Park Street.

5.103. In the foreground, a large arable field extends across the view, displaying a relatively flat landform. An area of mature woodland lies within the centre of the view creating a dominant feature on the skyline and serving to restrict many of the views of the settlement of Park Street.

5.104. Some glimpsed views of a rooftop belonging to a residential dwelling along Mount Drive are possible, but the remaining settlement lies largely hidden behind the woodland.

5.105. The Site itself lies at the western settlement edge, and is not perceptible from this viewpoint.

**Additional Views requested by the Local Authority (Winter views)**

**Viewpoint 23: View from Public Footpath St Albans City 048, looking south-west**

*Grid reference: TL 15214, 05048*

*Distance from Site: 735m*

*Nature of Receptor: Users of Public Footpath St Albans City 048*

5.106. The view looks south-west towards the Site from Public Footpath St Alban's City 048, which lies to the north of the A414 and connects St Albans to the Ver Colne Valley Walk.

5.107. In the foreground lies a pasture field, divided by a remnant mature hedgerow. Beyond the hedgerow lies further mature vegetation, all of which serve to screen views of the Site from this viewpoint, and therefore the Site is not perceptible.

**Viewpoint 24: View from Public Bridleway St Stephen's 085, looking west**

*Grid reference: TL 15650, 04558*

*Distance from Site: 1033m*

*Nature of Receptor: Users of Public Bridleway St Stephen's 085*

5.108. The view looks west towards the Site from Public Bridleway St Stephen's 085, which lies to the east of the Site and the settlement of Park Street, along the western slope of the Ver Colne Valley.

5.109. In the foreground lies a large pasture field that slopes down towards the River Ver within the valley bottom.

5.110. Beyond the river the landform rises towards the settlement of Park Street which is visible within the centre of the view.

5.111. The eastern settlement edge is largely bound by mature vegetation, which serves to filter views of the settlement edge.

5.112. As a result of the distance from Site and the intervening vegetation, the Site is not perceptible from this viewpoint.

**Viewpoint 25: View from Hawfield Gardens, looking north**

*Grid reference: TL 14650, 04158*

*Distance from Site: 152m*

*Nature of Receptor: Residents of Hawfield Gardens*

5.113. The view looks north towards the Site from Hawfield Gardens, which lies to the south of the Site and the residential street of Old Orchard.

5.114. In the foreground, Old Orchard road extends north towards the Site's southern boundary, with two storey residential dwellings lying along both sides of the road, as well as at the northern end of the road.

5.115. There are gaps between some of these dwellings which could allow glimpsed views through to the proposed development, although the vast majority of the Site is screened by the presence of two storey buildings within the view.

**Viewpoint 26: View from Old Orchard, looking north**

*Grid reference: TL 14522, 04201*

*Distance from Site: 43m*

*Nature of Receptor: Residents of Old Orchard*

5.116. The view looks north towards the Site from Old Orchard, a residential street to the south of the Site.

5.117. In the foreground lies a mature hedgerow that runs along the length of Old Orchard road as it lies adjacent to an area of overgrown scrub to the south of the Site.

5.118. There are some minor gaps within the hedgerow which allow for some very filtered views into the adjacent scrub area, and potentially further north into the Site, however views are likely to be heavily filtered by the intervening vegetation.

**Viewpoint 27: View from Mount Drive, looking west**

*Grid reference: TL 14717, 04718*

*Distance from Site: 136m*

*Nature of Receptor: Residents of Mount Drive*

5.119. The view looks west towards the Site from Mount Drive, which lies at a slightly elevated position to the east of the Site.

5.120. In the foreground lie two storey residential dwellings and their front gardens, which serve to filter many of the views of the Site.

5.121. A gap between two of the dwellings allows for some views west towards the Site, and largely consist of views of a section of the Site's western boundary vegetation, as well as the adjacent field beyond the Site.

5.122. With regard to residents of Mount Drive, it is considered that some filtered views of the Site are available from this viewpoint.

**Viewpoint 28: View from the car park adjacent to Tippendell Lane, looking east**

*Grid reference: TL 13712, 04484*

*Distance from Site: 789m*

*Nature of Receptor: Residents along Tippendell Lane*

5.123. The view looks east towards the Site from a car park to the east of Tippendell Lane, which lies along the settlement edge of Chiswell Green.

5.124. In the foreground lies a children's play area to the right of the view, and an area of outdoor tennis courts to the left of the view.

5.125. Within the middle distance lies a mature hedgerow and line of mature trees which lie parallel to the North Orbital Road.

5.126. The Site lies beyond the road, and as a result of the distance from Site and the intervening vegetation, the Site is not perceptible from this viewpoint.

**Visual Summary**

5.127. The visual baseline assessment confirmed that views of the Site are predominantly confined to the immediate context of residents along Watling Street to the east directly opposite the northern section of the Site's eastern boundary and, to a lesser extent, residents from Mount Drive, along with residents along Old Orchard to the south. There is also the possibility for some longer distance filtered views from residents along Hawfield Gardens to the south and Tippendell Lane to the south-west of the Site.

5.128. The potential for longer distance views is noted, although the extent of visibility of the Site is more restricted than the ZTV indicated in the initial baseline assessment, due to the screening effects of structures and vegetation within the landscape. Any views from this distance are therefore seen within the context of any existing built form and the surrounding treescape.

5.129. Further detail in respect of the baseline visual assessment is included within **Appendix 3**.

## 6. THE PROPOSALS

### Overview

- 6.1. As an overview, the proposals comprise the construction of a small-scale residential development of up to 95 dwellings, on land to the west of Watling Street, on the western settlement edge of Park Street.
- 6.2. Vehicular access into the Site will be taken via the Site's eastern boundary, from Watling Street.
- 6.3. It is considered that the main area of development will lie within the larger, southern section of the Site, however with some development to the north where space allows.

### Design Development

- 6.4. The layout of the development has been informed by this appraisal of constraints and opportunities in a landscape-led approach. A map of known Site constraints and opportunities is also provided within the Design and Access Statement. The design will seek to balance the opportunity to create a range of new homes and associated uses in a sustainable location within the settlement of Park Street, whilst taking into account the Site's transitional sub-urban, settlement edge location.
- 6.5. The Strategy and Guidelines for Managing Change within the St Stephen's Landscape Character Assessment have also been material considerations within the design process, including the retention and creation of new hedgerows, creating ecological habitats and links and helping to create a visually improved settlement edge.

### Landscape Design Strategy

- 6.6. The proposed illustrative landscape design strategy for this scheme is presented on drawing Ref. 22-0160.
- 6.7. The main developable area is located within the centre of the Site as a result of the existing Site constraints, including topography, the narrow shape of the Site and the presence of an easement along the western edge of the Site that restricts planting opportunities. The main concentration of dwellings will lie within the southern section of the Site, owing to the narrower shape of the northern section.
- 6.8. The proposed dwellings are to be of 1 and 2 storeys in height, with two small blocks of flats proposed to be 2.5 storeys in height. However, these tallest buildings lie within the larger, central area of the Site, and therefore do not lie close to the Site's boundaries and the existing adjacent dwellings, ensuring that visual impacts can be reduced, as a result of the built form that will surround them. A line of trees is proposed along the rear gardens of these slightly taller dwellings, in order to provide visual screening between these properties and those to the west, as well as to act as tiered screening when viewing the proposed development from the wider landscape context to the west in response to the sloping nature of the ground.
- 6.9. It is proposed to retain all boundary vegetation where possible. The Site's western boundary hedgerow will be retained and enhanced with additional tree planting, including the use of some native conifer species, for example yew, as well as native broadleaf species, to tie in with the existing Scots pine that lie along sections of this boundary.



- 6.10. It is also proposed to create small areas of minor tree and shrub planting taking into account the existing easement along this boundary, including for example rowan, field maple and whitebeam, to provide additional screening, as well as to create areas of visual and ecological interest along the western green infrastructure corridor. Additional tree planting will also be provided around the SUDs basin.
- 6.11. An area of wildflower meadow is also proposed along this western boundary, at the junction of the primary access road, along with a central feature tree to create visual interest when travelling south through the Site and to create a more legible settlement area.
- 6.12. A new hedgerow with tree planting is proposed for the sections of the Site's eastern boundary that are currently open, in order to extend the visual and habitat corridors around the Site, and to tie in with the existing trees that lie further south along this boundary.
- 6.13. A new hedgerow with tree planting is also proposed along the Site's southern boundary, to help filter views and to connect the Site's eastern and western boundary vegetation.
- 6.14. A children's play area will be located within the centre of the southern section of the Site, closest to the majority of dwellings. It will also be enclosed along the roadside by tree planting, to create areas of shade and protection from the road.
- 6.15. Street tree planting will also be provided, to create visual interest along the roadside, to create a sense of street identity, and to continue the green infrastructure links through the proposed development.
- 6.16. New pedestrian and cycle links will connect the proposed development to Watling Street and the existing settlement.
- 6.17. Two new areas of informal grassland with bulb planting are proposed within the Site, to create visual and ecological interest, as well as to provide outdoor spaces for residents to walk and relax.
- 6.18. The south-western corner of the Site is to remain as open space, largely as a result of the existing easement and the inclusion of drainage structures underneath the ground. As a result, tree planting will be limited, however it is proposed to create a circular path around the area, retaining large parts of it as amenity grassland for informal sports and recreation, with drifts of wildflower meadow planting along the path to create visual and ecological interest.

### **Mitigation Measures**

- Retention and enhancement of all existing boundary vegetation where possible to preserve the degree of visual containment to the Site, and to ensure that the proposals are set within an established green infrastructure;
- Creation of new hedgerows and tree planting along the southern boundary, and sections of the eastern and western boundaries;
- Creation of pedestrian and cycle links to connect the development to Watling Street to the east;
- Creation of a wide landscape buffer along the Site's western boundary, retaining the existing boundary trees, planting new areas of trees and wildflower meadows, and creating two areas for SUDs;

- Creation of two small areas of informal planting and grassland within the northern and central sections of the Site, to create visual interest and to create open space for residents' use;
- Creation of a Local Equipped Area for Play, with additional tree planting within the central section of the Site, close to the greatest number of dwellings; and
- Addition of landscape planting within and between the built form, and within the street scene, to break up the solid structures, promote wildlife and create visual interest.

6.19. The mitigation measures outlined above will ensure that the proposals relate positively to the character of the Site and its setting and do not appear incongruous when viewed from the wider landscape.

## 7. ASSESSMENT OF EFFECTS – LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

### Overview

- 7.1. This Section will assess the anticipated effects upon the baseline landscape character as identified in section 4 above.
- 7.2. For each of the identified landscape receptors, the inherent value of the receptor and its susceptibility to the type of change proposed will be combined to derive an overall sensitivity score. The effect of the proposed development will be described, and its magnitude determined in line with the methodology at **Appendix 2**. This will then be combined with the sensitivity of the receptor to give an overall judgement of the significance of impact.
- 7.3. The relevant baseline characteristics of the Site, which form the landscape receptors for the purposes of this assessment, are as follows:
- Current use of the Site as an arable field;
  - Mixed condition of boundaries;
  - Mature trees along sections of the Site boundaries;
  - Presence of settlement edge along southern and eastern boundary;
  - Overall character of the Site; and
  - Overall character of the setting of the Site.

### *Assessment of Landscape Value*

- 7.4. In absence of external measures of landscape value, for example designations, the value of the Site has been assessed in relation to a number of suggested indicators of value within Box 5.1 of the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third Edition (GLVIA3), considering each of the following factors:
- Landscape Quality (condition);
  - Scenic Quality;
  - Rarity;
  - Representativeness;
  - Conservation Interest;
  - Recreation Value;
  - Perceptual Aspects; and
  - Associations.
- 7.5. The Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note TGN 02-21 ‘Assessing Landscape Value Outside National Designations’ has been used to interpret valued landscapes, with the TGN giving the definition of a valued landscape as ‘*an area identified as having sufficient landscape qualities to elevate it above other more everyday landscapes*’. It is however acknowledged that ‘everyday’ landscapes may still have value to some people.
- 7.6. The TGN 02-21 has also been used to further inform the value of the identified landscape receptors, considering each of the following factors:
- Natural Heritage;
  - Cultural Heritage;

- Landscape Condition;
- Associations;
- Distinctiveness;
- Recreational;
- Perceptual (Scenic);
- Perceptual (Wildness and Tranquillity); and
- Functional.

### **Assessment of Effects in Relation to Identified Receptors**

#### ***Current use of the Site as an arable field***

- 7.7. With regard to the value of this receptor, the Site is currently in use as an arable field and is not publicly accessible. It is acknowledged that the field itself could offer some functional landscape value, however this is limited as a result of the presence of built form to the immediate east and south of the Site, and the presence of Watling Street that runs along the entire eastern Site boundary and is audibly and visually experienced within the Site and its setting. The Site feels less connected to the arable fields to the west of the Site, as a result of the strong vegetation along much of the Site's western boundary. Taking all of these factors into consideration, this receptor is judged to be of **Low** value.
- 7.8. The influence of built form along the Site's eastern and southern boundaries results in the Site displaying a transitional sub-urban characteristic. As a result, this receptor is judged to be of **Low** susceptibility to the type of change proposed.
- 7.9. The overall sensitivity of this receptor is therefore judged to be **Low**.
- 7.10. It is acknowledged that the proposed development of the Site would alter the character and function of the Site, however its influence is limited as a result of the immediately adjacent settlement edge.
- 7.11. It is proposed that the main access into the development would be along the Site's eastern boundary, close to the junction of Mount Drive, with an existing agricultural access along the western boundary to be closed and planted with hedgerow trees.
- 7.12. The Site is bound along two of its three sides by built form and road infrastructure, with open countryside lying along the Site's western boundary. However, the Site feels less connected to the surrounding open countryside as a result of the falling topography across the Site from east to west, and the mature hedgerow and line of trees along this boundary, which serve to separate the Site from the adjacent field. Therefore, the effects of the overall loss of an arable field within this landscape would be limited.
- 7.13. It is considered that the retention and enhancement of the Site's western and eastern hedgerows, along with the creation of a new hedgerow along the Site's southern boundary would mean that the proposed development could relate positively to its setting, through sensitive and robust landscape planting, incorporating a number of existing mature trees that lie along sections of both the eastern and western boundaries, as well as the initial approach to Park Street from the northern end of Watling Street.

7.14. Taking all of these factors into consideration, the magnitude of change upon this receptor is judged to be **Medium**.

7.15. The overall impact upon this receptor is therefore judged to be an adverse effect of **Moderate/Minor** significance.

***Mixed condition of boundaries***

7.16. With regard to the value of this receptor, the Site displays a varied composition of boundary features, including low scrub sections of nettles and brambles, garden fences and long stretches of mature trees. As a result, where the boundary vegetation is dense and mature, the Site feels contained to views into the existing settlement or the immediate open countryside, for example along stretches of the Site's western boundary. However, sections of the eastern boundary display poor or little vegetation cover and look unsightly in comparison to the mature hedgerow trees that exist further south along this boundary.

7.17. These low sections also allow for a connection between the Site and the settlement of Park Street and the built form along Watling Street. Taking all of these factors into consideration, this receptor is judged to be of **Low** value.

7.18. With regard to the susceptibility of this receptor, the Site's varied boundary structure displays both poor and weak sections of vegetation, along with strong belts of mature broadleaf and conifer trees. These mature sections of vegetation, in particular along the Site's western boundary create a strong visual landscape feature and serve to contain the Site from the open countryside to the west.

7.19. Weaker sections of the boundaries allow the Site to feel connected to the existing built form, and they look overgrown and unsightly in comparison to the mature trees. It is proposed that these weaker sections of vegetation would be improved through the proposed development scheme, and existing vegetation should be retained in order to maintain the robust boundary of the Site from the open countryside to the west.

7.20. This directly reflects one of the five year targets detailed within the Watling Chase Forest Plan Review 2001, "*Securing landscape, heritage and biodiversity benefits in the non-wooded parts of Watling Chase where opportunities are presented by new development or on agricultural or reclaimed land, including hedgerow restoration*".

7.21. Therefore, taking all of these factors into consideration, this receptor is judged to be of **Low** susceptibility to change.

7.22. The overall sensitivity of this receptor is therefore judged to be **Low**.

7.23. As a result of a lack of vegetation along the northern section of the eastern boundary, the northern section of the Site shares a relationship to Watling Street and the built form that lies along the eastern side of this road. Some views south into the Site towards the existing dwellings to the south are also possible as a result of the weak vegetation.

7.24. The proposed development seeks to retain all existing boundary vegetation where possible, and to enhance weaker sections with further planting. It is anticipated that the Site's eastern boundary will be enhanced along its length with a new hedgerow, with the exception of a vehicular access gap and two smaller pedestrian and cycle gaps, to create a green edge to the Site when viewed from the approach to the settlement from the north.

- 7.25. A new hedgerow is also proposed along the Site's southern boundary, which is currently comprised of an overgrown strip of scrub and nettles. A new hedgerow boundary along this edge would create a more cohesive boundary to the development and would look visually more attractive. It would also create a better ecological corridor, connecting to the existing hedgerows and trees to the east and west.
- 7.26. The Site's western boundary hedgerow is mature with a number of large, non-native trees which add visual interest within the landscape. It is considered that these trees would be retained, assuming safety permits, to retain this characteristic feature within the landscape. Any weak sections along the western boundary would be gapped up with additional trees and shrubs.
- 7.27. It is anticipated that the strengthening of all boundary vegetation will create a more robust boundary feature than that which currently exists.
- 7.28. Taking all of these factors into consideration, the magnitude of change upon this receptor is judged to be **Low** and beneficial in nature.
- 7.29. The overall impact upon this receptor is therefore judged to be a beneficial effect of **Minor** significance.

***Mature trees along sections of the Site boundaries***

- 7.30. With regard to the value of this receptor, much of the Site's western boundary and sections of the eastern boundary display numerous large, mature trees of varying species. Whilst the majority of these trees are broadleaves, some large conifers exist along the western boundary and add interest within the landscape. These boundary trees are also likely to serve as wildlife habitats and corridors to a number of species. When travelling south or north along Watling Street, the presence of these boundary trees create a strong feature within the view, and also serve to separate the Site from the immediate open countryside to the west. Taking all of these factors into consideration, this receptor is judged to be of **Medium** value.
- 7.31. With regard to the susceptibility of this receptor, the Site's western boundary, and sections of the Site's eastern boundary display a variety of mature broadleaf and conifer tree species, which create a visually interesting landscape feature when travelling north and in particular south along Watling Street, and serve to create a strong green boundary to the settlement edge to the west. It is judged that this receptor is of **Medium** susceptibility to change.
- 7.32. The overall sensitivity of this receptor is therefore judged to be **Medium**.
- 7.33. When travelling south or north along Watling Street, the presence of these boundary trees creates a strong feature within the view, and also serves to separate the Site from the immediate open countryside to the west. These boundary trees are also likely to serve as wildlife habitats and corridors to a number of species.
- 7.34. It is proposed that all of the existing boundary vegetation is to be retained where possible, and it is anticipated that vegetation in particular along the western boundary and the southern section of the eastern boundary would be retained and enhanced where gaps exist.
- 7.35. This retention and enhancement of vegetation, along with the creation of new hedgerows to the north-east and south, would serve to improve the condition and habitat potential of these wildlife corridors, whilst also retaining the sense of enclosure within the Site.

- 7.36. Taking all of these factors into consideration, the magnitude of change upon this receptor is judged to be **Low** and beneficial in nature.
- 7.37. The overall impact upon this receptor is therefore judged to be a beneficial effect of **Moderate/Minor** significance.

***Presence of settlement edge along southern and eastern boundary***

- 7.38. With regard to the value of this receptor, the existing settlement edge of Park Street is currently experienced along the Site's eastern and southern boundaries, through clear views of Watling Street and numerous residential dwellings, which either face towards the Site or have their rear gardens abutting the Site. As a result, the Site feels connected to the settlement, particularly to the north, south and east, with only some partial views into open countryside to the west. The presence of built form along both sides of Watling Street, which runs parallel to the Site, means that the Site feels connected to the settlement pattern of Park Street. Taking these factors into consideration, this receptor is judged to be of **Low** value.
- 7.39. With regard to the susceptibility of this receptor, the Site is bound to the east and south by the presence of the existing settlement edge, experienced through the visual connection of Watling Street and its associated street furniture and signage, residential dwellings along Old Orchard and residential dwellings and rear gardens along Watling Street. As a result, the Site displays a transitional sub-urban character and feels more connected to the settlement than the adjacent arable fields to the west. Therefore, this receptor is judged to be of **Low** susceptibility.
- 7.40. The overall sensitivity of this receptor is therefore judged to be **Low**.
- 7.41. Weak vegetation along the Site's northern section of the eastern boundary allows for a clear connection between the northern section of the Site and the existing built form and road to the east. A lack of boundary structure along the southern edge of the Site, allows for a clear connection with the existing built form to the immediate south.
- 7.42. Any proposed development within the Site would not appear entirely incongruous within this context, and would feel contained by the existing mature vegetation along the Site's western boundary.
- 7.43. Taking all of these factors into consideration, the magnitude of change upon this receptor is judged to be **Low**.
- 7.44. The overall impact upon this receptor is therefore judged to be an adverse effect of **Minor** significance.

***Overall character of the Site***

- 7.45. With regard to the value of this receptor, the Site represents a single, arable field, displaying a relatively varied topography. Influence of existing built form is strongly experienced within the northern section of the Site and at the very southern end of the Site, with clear views of Watling Street and numerous residential dwellings. Clear views into the Site are possible on account of the weak boundary vegetation to the north-east of the Site, allowing the Site to feel connected to the existing settlement edge. Existing built form along both the Site's eastern and southern boundaries, along with the tapered form of the northern boundary, mean that the Site's influence is relatively limited and results in the Site feeling connected to Park Street and Watling Street. The presence of mature, varied species of trees along sections of the boundaries creates

a strong landscape feature, and therefore taking all of these factors into consideration, this receptor is judged to be of **Low** value.

- 7.46. With regard to the susceptibility of this receptor, the Site represents a single arable field, bound along two of its three boundaries by existing built form, with open countryside to the west. The lack of boundary vegetation along large sections of the Site's eastern and southern boundaries creates a strong visual connection between the settlement edge and the Site. The presence of Watling Street is strongly felt, particularly within the northern section of the Site. As a result, the Site feels more connected to the modern settlement edge and therefore this receptor is judged to be of **Low** susceptibility to the type of change proposed.
- 7.47. The overall sensitivity of this receptor is therefore judged to be **Low**.
- 7.48. It is acknowledged that the proposed development will result in the loss of an arable field, resulting in a change to the overall character and function of the Site through the introduction of a residential development. However, the relative containment of the Site through the surrounding settlement edge and existing vegetation means that its loss within the wider agricultural setting is likely to be limited.
- 7.49. It is anticipated that all existing boundary vegetation would be retained and enhanced where possible, along with the creation of new boundary hedgerows along the Site's southern and part of the eastern boundaries, to help contain the Site from wider views. Along with tree planting and wildflower meadow creation within the Site, this will help to create a strong green infrastructure around and through the Site, connecting to the existing on-site and offsite vegetation.
- 7.50. The presence of built form is already experienced within the immediate setting of the Site, in particular to the north, east and south, and therefore the presence of built form within the Site would not appear incongruous within this setting.
- 7.51. Taking all of these factors into consideration, the magnitude of change upon these receptors is judged to be **Low**.
- 7.52. The overall impact upon this receptor is therefore judged to be an adverse effect of **Minor** significance.

***Overall character of the setting of the Site***

- 7.53. With regard to the value of this receptor, the Site and its setting lie within the Hertfordshire County Council Landscape Character Assessment St Stephen's Plateau LCA, which is described as being of moderate condition and weak robustness. The Site and its setting also lie within the north-western corner of the Watling Chase Community Forest. However, the Site lies within a settlement edge setting, with built form surrounding the Site's northern, eastern and southern boundaries. Whilst open countryside extends to the immediate west of the Site in the form of agricultural fields, the wider landscape setting is influenced by built form to the south at How Wood, to the west at Chiswell Green and to the north at the City of St Albans. A busy network of public highways also criss-crosses the wider landscape setting, creating a sub-urban characteristic within the wider setting of the Site. Taking all of these factors into consideration, this receptor is judged to be of **Low** value.



- 7.54. With regard to the susceptibility of this receptor, the Site lies at the north-western settlement edge of Park Street, bound to the south and east by the village and Watling Street. Whilst open countryside extends to the west of the Site, the influence of this open countryside is limited as a result of the undulating topography and strong vegetation along the Site's western boundary.
- 7.55. The wider setting of the Site is influenced by existing built form and major road infrastructure, in what is a heavily built up area sandwiched between the M25 motorway and the city of St Albans. Taking all of these factors into consideration, this receptor is judged to be of **Low** susceptibility to change.
- 7.56. The overall sensitivity of this receptor is therefore judged to be **Low**.
- 7.57. The Site lies within a wedge-shaped area of land that sits within the north-western corner of the existing settlement, and it could be considered to be a rounding off of the village of Park Street.
- 7.58. Whilst the central section of the Site feels slightly more contained to the wider setting as a result of the mature trees along the western boundary, and the presence of garden fences and some trees along the southern section of the eastern boundary, the northern and southern sections of the Site are strongly influenced by the presence of built form and road infrastructure.
- 7.59. As a result of the strong presence of the existing settlement edge, and the close proximity of adjacent settlements at How Wood, St Albans, Frogmore and Chiswell Green and associated road infrastructure, the setting of the Site cannot be considered to be tranquil and undisturbed.
- 7.60. The area of open fields to the west of the Site does act to prevent the coalescence of settlements, however as a result of the mature vegetation along the Site's western boundary, the Site shares less of a relationship to this small area of open fields. The development of the Site would not result in the loss of the ability of this area of fields to prevent the coalescence of Park Street with Chiswell Green or How Wood, representing a logical rounding-off of the existing settlement.
- 7.61. The retention and addition of new planting along the Site's boundaries and within and between the built form on Site, will create green connections to the existing offsite vegetation, providing additional habitats and wildlife corridors.
- 7.62. Taking all of these factors into consideration, the magnitude of change upon this receptor is judged to be **Low**.
- 7.63. The overall impact upon this receptor is therefore judged to be an adverse effect of **Minor** significance.

## 8. ASSESSMENT OF EFFECTS – VISUAL ASSESSMENT

### Overview

- 8.1. This section will assess the anticipated effects of the proposed development upon the visual receptors identified in Section 5 above.
- 8.2. For ease of assessment, the various viewpoints will be grouped into the following visual receptors which they represent:
  - Residents along Watling Street;
  - Residents along Mount Drive;
  - Pedestrian users of Watling Street;
  - Road users of Watling Street;
  - Residents along Old Orchard;
  - Residents along Hawfield Gardens; and
  - Residents along Tippendell Lane.
- 8.3. For each receptor, an assessment will be made of its value and susceptibility to change and the anticipated magnitude of change upon the current visual amenity of the receptor. These judgements will then be combined to determine the overall significance of the anticipated impact as set out within the methodology in **Appendix 2**.

### Visual Assessment

#### *Residents along Watling Street – Viewpoints 1, 5, 9, 11, 13, 14, 21*

- 8.4. With regard to inward views from Watling Street, a small number of dwellings face towards the northern section of the Site along its eastern boundary, with the potential for partial views of the Site from ground floor and upper floor windows.
- 8.5. A number of large existing trees lie along this boundary, although the very northern section of the eastern boundary is devoid of vegetation.
- 8.6. With regard to the value of this receptor, as a result of the low eastern Site boundary with clear views of the intervening busy road and Site beyond, it is judged that this receptor is of **Medium** value.
- 8.7. With regard to the susceptibility of this receptor, these views are partial with the busy road in the foreground, although the open countryside is currently visible beyond the road. Taking these factors into account, the susceptibility is judged to be **Medium**.
- 8.8. The overall sensitivity of this receptor is judged to be **Medium**.
- 8.9. The proposals include the creation of a new hedgerow along the entire length of this boundary, with the exception of a gap for vehicular access, and smaller gaps for pedestrian and cycle access. Views through these access gaps from these visual receptors is considered to be limited and partial, as a result of the existing and proposed new vegetation along the boundary.
- 8.10. Once the new hedgerow has matured, views of the proposed new development will be limited to partial upper floor and rooftop views. The addition of individual trees along this boundary, which will be allowed to grow taller than the hedgerow, will serve to further filter any potential

views. The very northern tip of the Site will also remain undeveloped and be landscaped as an area of informal open space.

- 8.11. It is also considered that existing views from these receptors currently include views of traffic moving along Watling Street, and therefore cannot be considered to be tranquil and unspoilt. The addition of partial views of development within views from these receptors would not appear entirely incongruous.
- 8.12. Taking all of this into account, the magnitude of change upon this receptor is judged to be **Low**.
- 8.13. Therefore the overall initial impact upon this receptor is judged to be an adverse effect of **Moderate/Minor** significance. However, once the new planting has matured (post-completion at year 15), this impact has the potential to be reduced to **Minor** significance.

***Residents along Mount Drive – Viewpoint 13, 27***

- 8.14. With regard to inward views from Mount Drive, it is considered that a small number of dwellings along this road will have oblique, partial views of the northern section of the Site, as a result of a slight rise in topography to the east and the weak boundary vegetation along the northern section of the Site's eastern boundary.
- 8.15. These dwellings lie at an oblique angle to the Site, and are separated from it by their rear gardens, wooden garden fences and Watling Street.
- 8.16. With regard to the value of this receptor, as a result of the oblique angle views, it is judged that this receptor is of **Medium** value.
- 8.17. With regard to the susceptibility of this receptor, views are oblique, partial and influenced by the existing road, however the open countryside is currently visible beyond the road. Taking these factors into account, the susceptibility is judged to be **Medium**.
- 8.18. The overall sensitivity of this receptor is judged to be **Medium**.
- 8.19. It is considered that views over the road towards development within the narrow northern section of the Site could be possible. However, the development proposals include the creation of a new hedgerow with additional tree planting along this weaker section of the eastern boundary, which will over time as the planting matures, serve to filter many of the views of the new development, potentially restricting views to filtered rooftop views.
- 8.20. It is also considered that existing views from these receptors currently include views of traffic moving along Watling Street as well as potential views of the existing dwellings along Watling Street, and therefore cannot be considered to be tranquil and unspoilt. The addition of partial views of development within views from these receptors would not appear entirely incongruous.
- 8.21. Taking all of this into account, the magnitude of change upon this receptor is judged to be **Low**.
- 8.22. Therefore the overall impact upon this receptor is judged to be an adverse effect of **Moderate/Minor** significance.
- 8.23. However, once the new planting has matured (post-completion at year 15), this impact has the potential to be reduced to **Minor** significance.

***Pedestrian users of Watling Street – Viewpoints 15, 21***

- 8.24. With regard to pedestrian users travelling south along Watling Street, it is considered that the Site is visible, particularly the northern section of the Site. However, influence from the existing built form along Watling Street and to a lesser extent Old Orchard, are also anticipated in these views.
- 8.25. Pedestrians travelling north along Watling Street, have some filtered views into the northern section of the Site, as well as influence from the existing built form along Watling Street.
- 8.26. With regard to the value of this receptor, as a result of partial views of the Site and the influence of existing built form, this receptor is judged to be of **Medium** value.
- 8.27. With regard to the susceptibility of this receptor, views are partial, and filtered by some existing vegetation along sections of the eastern boundary. Influence from the existing built form along Old Orchard and Watling Street, as well as the presence of a busy road result in this receptor being judged to be of **Medium** susceptibility to change.
- 8.28. The overall sensitivity of this receptor is judged to be **Medium**.
- 8.29. With regard to inward views from pedestrians moving along Watling Street from the south to the north, views of the proposed development would not become available until pedestrians are close to the new access point into the Site, as a result of the existing dwellings and mature vegetation along the southern section of the Site's eastern boundary.
- 8.30. Any potential views would only be available of the narrow northern section of the Site. It is proposed to plant a new hedgerow with additional tree planting along this open section of the boundary, and therefore views would be restricted to potentially upper floor and rooftops only, once the planting has matured.
- 8.31. Pedestrians already experience built form within the view along both sides of the road for part of the route, and then along the eastern side of the road at the northern extent of the Site. Therefore, the addition of built form along a small section of the western side of this road would not appear incongruous within this landscape.
- 8.32. With regard to inward views from pedestrians moving along Watling Street from the north to the south, views into the Site are more available, with views available into both the northern and central section of the Site.
- 8.33. However, it is proposed to plant a new hedgerow with additional tree planting along this open section of the eastern boundary, and therefore views would be restricted to potentially upper floor and rooftop views only, once the planting has matured. The very northern tip of the Site will also remain undeveloped and be landscaped as an area of informal open space in order to further reduce views of built form. The presence of development within the northern section of the Site would prevent views further into the central and southern sections of the Site.
- 8.34. Pedestrians already experience views of built form along the eastern side of the road, as well as distant views of built form along Old Orchard, and therefore the presence of filtered views of development along the eastern side of Watling Street would not appear entirely incongruous within this street scene.

- 8.35. Taking all of these factors into consideration, the magnitude of change upon this receptor is judged to be **Low**.
- 8.36. Therefore the overall impact upon this receptor is judged to be an adverse effect of **Moderate/Minor** significance.

***Road users of Watling Street – Viewpoints 1, 15, 21***

- 8.37. With regard to inward views of road users travelling along Watling Street, it is considered that views when travelling south will be fleeting and limited to the northern section of the Site only, however when heading south, views of more of the Site could be available. Influence from the existing built form along Watling Street and to a lesser extent Old Orchard, are also anticipated in these views.
- 8.38. With regard to the value of this receptor, views are considered to be fleeting as the traffic moves along at approximately 30mph. It is considered that road users are likely to be focused on the road ahead, and therefore this receptor is judged to be of **Low** value.
- 8.39. With regard to the susceptibility of this receptor, views are already influenced by existing built form along Watling Street and Old Orchard, and therefore this receptor is judged to be of **Low** susceptibility to change.
- 8.40. The overall sensitivity of this receptor is judged to be **Low**.
- 8.41. With regard to inward views of road users towards the proposed development, traffic is moving along this road at 30mph, and it is considered that road users will have their attention focussed on the road ahead, particularly as there is a fuel station along this road with traffic pulling into and out of the forecourt on a regular basis, along with residential driveways, a bus stop and traffic lights at the junction of Mount Drive.
- 8.42. The proposals also include the planting of a new hedgerow with additional tree planting along this open section of the eastern boundary, and therefore views would be restricted to potentially upper floor and rooftop views only, once the planting has matured. The very northern tip of the Site will also remain undeveloped and be landscaped as an area of informal open space to reduce views of built form.
- 8.43. Road users already experience views of built form along the eastern side of the road, as well as distant views of built form along Old Orchard, and therefore the presence of filtered views of development along the eastern side of Watling Street would not appear entirely incongruous within this street scene.
- 8.44. Taking all of these factors into consideration, the magnitude of change upon this receptor is judged to be **Low**.
- 8.45. Therefore the overall impact upon this receptor is judged to be an adverse effect of **Minor** significance.

***Residents along Old Orchard – viewpoints 2, 8, 10, 12, 15, 26***

- 8.46. These dwellings have some rear and upper floor windows that face towards the Site, and therefore it is considered that views of the Site from these properties is likely.
- 8.47. With regard to residents of Old Orchard, this receptor is therefore judged to be of **High** value.

- 8.48. With regard to the susceptibility of this receptor, it is considered that some partial views of built form along Watling Street, as well as the road itself could be visible from some of these properties, however views are largely of an arable field, and therefore this receptor is judged to be of **High** susceptibility to change.
- 8.49. The overall sensitivity of this receptor is judged to be **High**.
- 8.50. With regard to inward views from Old Orchard, some residents are anticipated to experience filtered views of the development potentially from ground floor and upper floor windows.
- 8.51. However, there are a small number of existing trees that lie along the boundaries of these existing gardens, which serve to filter some of the views.
- 8.52. It is proposed to create a new hedgerow with hedgerow trees along this southern boundary where none currently exists, which over time as the planting matures, will serve to further filter views of the proposed development from these properties.
- 8.53. The wide buffer of overgrown grass and scrub that lies parallel to the Site's southern boundary will also remain undeveloped, outside of the proposed development area, and therefore will provide a wide offset from the development Site and the existing dwellings.
- 8.54. It is considered that existing views from Old Orchard have limited views of the wider open countryside beyond the Site to the west, as a result of the mature trees along the Site's western boundary, which are anticipated to remain visible above the proposed development, owing to their height.
- 8.55. Taking all of these factors into account, the magnitude of change upon this receptor is judged to be **Low**.
- 8.56. Therefore, the overall impact upon this receptor is judged to be an adverse effect of **Moderate** significance.

***Residents along Tippendell Lane – Viewpoints 6, 20, 28***

- 8.57. With regard to residents along Tippendell Lane, these properties face north-east looking across arable fields towards the settlement of Park Street, and it is considered likely that some views of part of the Site may be possible from these properties. However, views are distant, and likely to be partial and filtered by the intervening boundary vegetation.
- 8.58. Therefore, this receptor is judged to be of **Low** value.
- 8.59. With regard to the susceptibility of this receptor, it is considered that any views from this distance would be filtered by the existing vegetation to the west of the Site. It is considered that some views of the existing built form along Watling Street could also be visible, and therefore this receptor is judged to be of **Low** susceptibility to change.
- 8.60. The overall sensitivity of this receptor is judged to be **Low**.
- 8.61. With regard to inward views from Tippendell Lane, it is judged that distant views of rooftops of the proposed development could be available, as a result of the undulating landform to the south-west.

- 8.62. However, views from these receptors would be limited to partial views of the central and northern sections of the Site, in particular the eastern half of the Site which lies at a higher level in the landscape than the western half.
- 8.63. It is proposed to incorporate landscape planting within and between the built form of the proposed development along the slope, creating a tiered screening effect, which will soften the views of the proposed dwellings. It is also considered that the enhancement of the Site's western boundary vegetation will, over time as the planting matures, close any gaps within the vegetation and further filter any views of the Site.
- 8.64. It is considered that any remaining views will be very distant and filtered and viewed within the context of the existing dwellings along Watling Street, and therefore the magnitude of change upon this receptor is judged to be **Low**.
- 8.65. Therefore the overall impact upon this receptor is judged to be an adverse effect of **Minor** significance.

***Residents along Hawfield Gardens – View 25***

- 8.66. With regard to residents along Hawfield Gardens, these properties face towards the southern boundary of the Site, but lie separated from it by residential dwellings along Old Orchard.
- 8.67. Some gaps between the residential dwellings along Old Orchard could allow for some potential views of the Site, although these views are already characterised by the immediate presence of existing built form and road infrastructure.
- 8.68. Therefore, this receptor is judged to be of **Low** value.
- 8.69. With regard to the susceptibility of this receptor, it is considered that any views from these dwellings would be influenced by existing built form and road infrastructure and would be extremely limited as a result, and therefore this receptor is judged to be of **Low** susceptibility to change.
- 8.70. The overall sensitivity of this receptor is judged to be **Low**.
- 8.71. With regard to inward views of the proposed development from Hawfield Gardens, it is judged that distant views of rooftops of the proposed development could be available, although these would be extremely limited as a result of the intervening built form.
- 8.72. It is proposed to plant a new hedgerow and additional trees along the Site's southern boundary, along with tree planting between the built form, which will serve to further break up the views of built form from these existing dwellings, and therefore the magnitude of change upon this receptor is judged to be **Low**.
- 8.73. Therefore, the overall impact upon this receptor is judged to be an adverse effect of **Minor** significance.

## 9. SUMMARY & CONCLUSIONS

### *Summary of Landscape Impacts*

- 9.1. A Landscape Design Strategy is included within **Appendix 1** to illustrate the mitigation measures proposed across the Site, including the retention and strengthening of boundary vegetation, and small areas of informal open space.
- 9.2. No adverse landscape impacts of Moderate or greater significance are anticipated.
- 9.3. Adverse landscape impacts of Moderate/Minor significance were identified upon the current use of the Site as an arable field. These impacts are not considered to be significant.
- 9.4. All other adverse landscape impacts were judged to be of a Minor significance.
- 9.5. In addition, the mixed condition of boundaries and the mature trees along sections of the boundaries were judged to experience a beneficial impact of Minor significance as a result of the landscape planting mitigation measures identified within the proposals.

### *Summary of Visual Impacts*

- 9.6. The visual impact assessment concluded that the Site is relatively well contained from views to the north and west, and to a lesser extent from the east as a result of the existing settlement edge and vegetation within the immediate setting of the Site.
- 9.7. Adverse visual impacts of Moderate significance were identified upon the residents of Old Orchard, largely as a result of the weak southern boundary structure adjacent to these dwellings. The inclusion of a new hedgerow with additional tree planting will serve to filter these views, which are not considered to be significant and in any case, the magnitude of change has been judged to be Low.
- 9.8. All other visual receptors were judged to be an adverse impact of Moderate/Minor or Minor significance, which are not considered significant within the planning balance.

### *Conclusions*

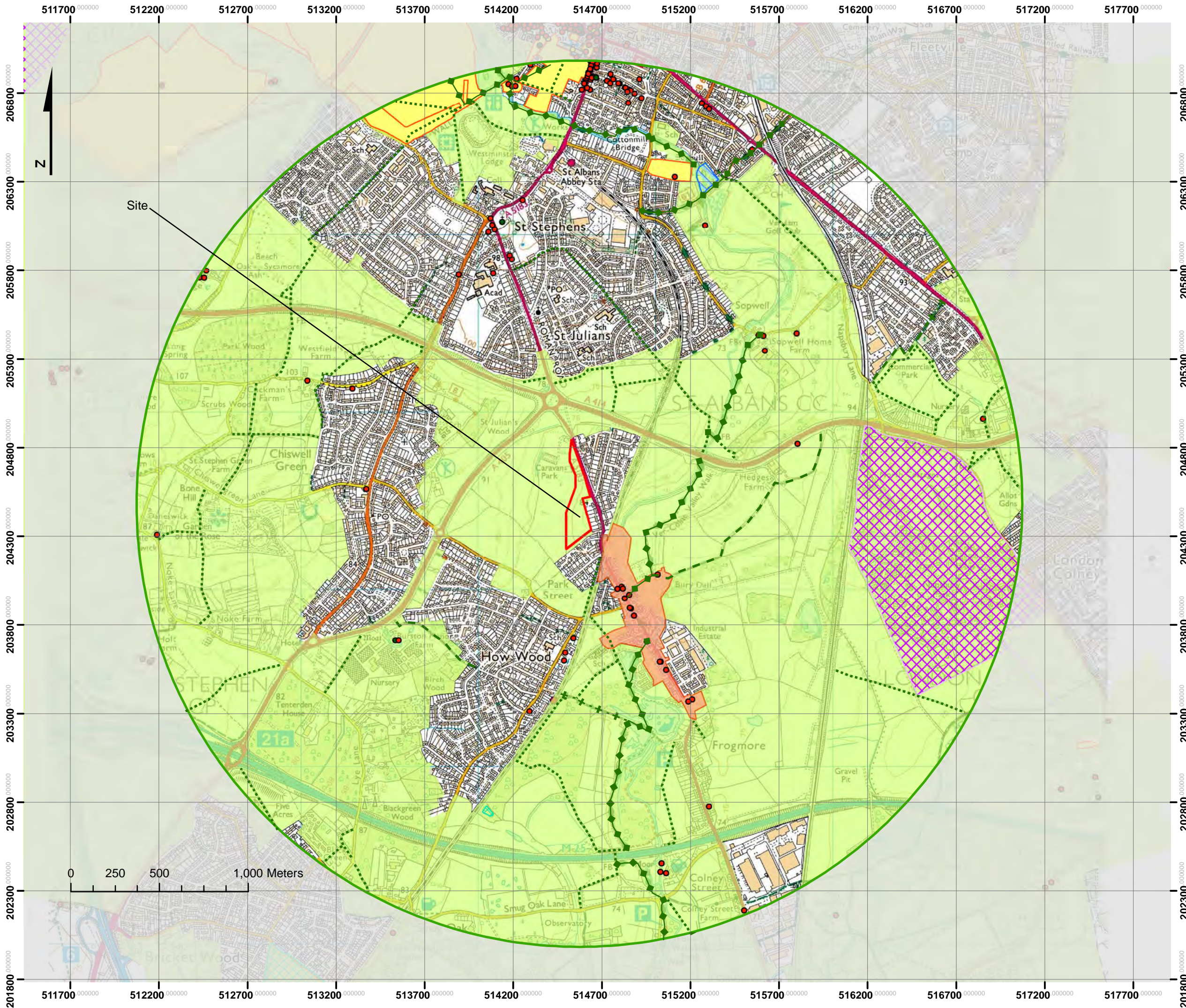
- 9.9. It is the conclusion of this Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment that the proposed development is acceptable on both landscape and visual grounds, provided that the landscape strategy is implemented in order to protect views from the south and east and to help settle the proposed development into the existing landscape setting.





## 10. APPENDICES

### Appendix 1: Supporting Plans




References:	Baseline Information Map:	20-3933
	Zone of Theoretical Visibility:	20-3934
	Illustrative Landscape Design strategy:	22-0160
	Layout Drawing:	SCOT210806 IL-01 C












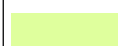
### Legend


-  Study Area
-  Site Boundary

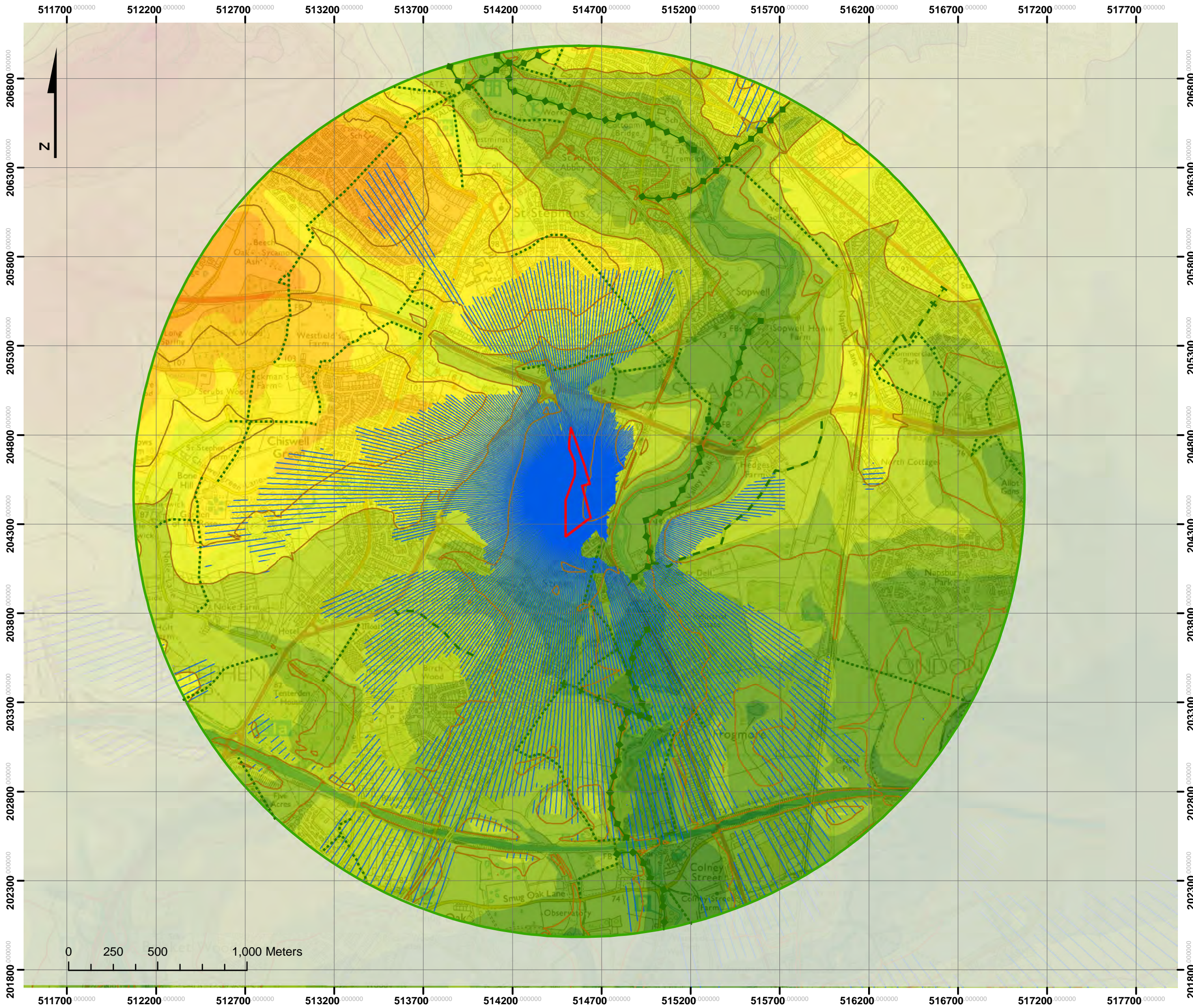
**Listed Buildings:**

-  Grade I
-  Grade II
-  Grade II\*

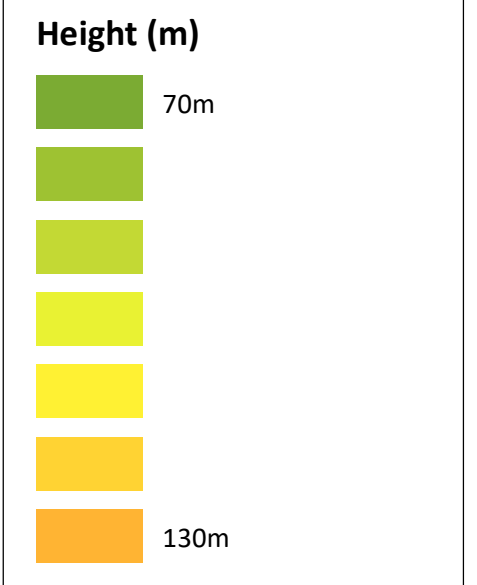
-  Byway Open to All Traffic
-  Public Bridleway
-  Public Footpath
-  Long Distance Recreation Route

-  Conservation Area
-  Sites of Special Scientific Interest
-  Local Nature Reserves
-  Registered Parks & Gardens
-  Scheduled Ancient Monument
-  Metropolitan Green Belt

REVISIONS:		
DATE:	VERSION:	INITIALS:
		
TITLE: Baseline Information Map		
Land to the west of Watling Street, Park Street		
CLIENT: M Scott Properties Ltd		
MAP REF: 20-3933		
VERSION: 1		
DATE: 27/08/2020	SCALE: 1:20,000@A3	
APPROVED BY: ID	PRODUCED BY: ACB	
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<small>7 - 8 Melbourne House Corbygate Business Park Weldon, Corby Northamptonshire NN17 5JG 01536 408840</small>		<small>Greystones House Burford Road Chipping Norton Oxfordshire OX7 5UY 01608 656167</small>
<a href="http://www.lockhart-garratt.co.uk">www.lockhart-garratt.co.uk</a>		



- ### Legend
- Study Area
  - Site Boundary
  - + + + + Byway open to All Traffic
  - - - - Public Bridleway
  - . . . . . Public Footpath
  - ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ Long Distance Recreation Route
  - — — — Line of Sight (1.5m)
  - — — — Contours (10m)



REVISIONS:		
DATE:	VERSION:	INITIALS:



TITLE: **Zone of Theoretical Visibility**

PROJECT/SITE: **Park Street, St Albans**

CLIENT: **M Scott Properties Ltd**

MAP REF: **20-3934**

VERSION: **1**

DATE: **05/10/2020** SCALE: **1:20,000@A3**

APPROVED BY: **ID** PRODUCED BY: **ACB**

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7 - 8 Melbourne House Corbygate Business Park Weldon, Corby Northamptonshire NN17 5JG 01536 408840	Greystones House Burford Road Chipping Norton Oxfordshire OX7 5UY 01608 656167
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**Key:**

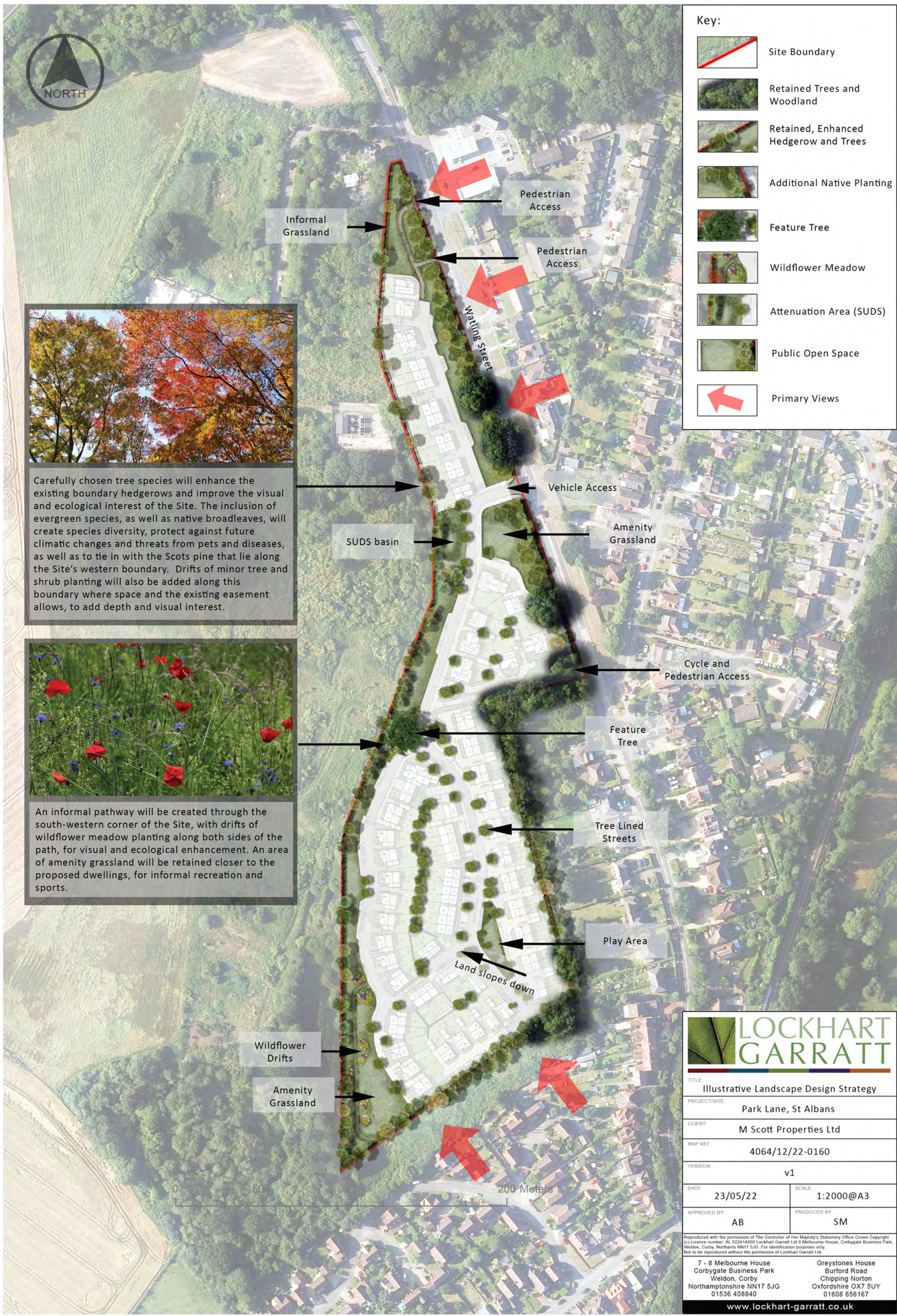
	Site Boundary
	Retained Trees and Woodland
	Retained, Enhanced Hedgerow and Trees
	Additional Native Planting
	Feature Tree
	Wildflower Meadow
	Attenuation Area (SUDS)
	Public Open Space
	Primary Views



Carefully chosen tree species will enhance the existing boundary hedgerows and improve the visual and ecological interest of the Site. The inclusion of evergreen species, as well as native broadleaves, will create species diversity, protect against future climatic changes and threats from pests and diseases, as well as to tie in with the Scots pine that lie along the Site's western boundary. Drifts of minor tree and shrub planting will also be added along this boundary where space and the existing easement allows, to add depth and visual interest.



An informal pathway will be created through the south-western corner of the Site, with drifts of wildflower meadow planting along both sides of the path, for visual and ecological enhancement. An area of amenity grassland will be retained closer to the proposed dwellings, for informal recreation and sports.



**LOCKHART GARRATT**

TITLE: Illustrative Landscape Design Strategy

PROJECT/SITE: Park Lane, St Albans

CLIENT: M Scott Properties Ltd

MAP REF: 4064/12/22-0160

VERSION: v1

DATE: 23/05/22      SCALE: 1:2000@A3

APPROVED BY: AB      PRODUCED BY: SM

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