

Land off School Road, Elmswell, Suffolk

LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

On behalf of Christchurch Land & Estates (Elmswell South) Ltd.

Date: November 2023 | Pegasus Ref: P22-1167

Author: KMSE





Document Management.

Version	Date	Author	Checked/ Approved by:	Reason for revision
0	23.05.2023	KMSE	JWA	First Draft
1	23.11.2023	KMSE		Revised layout
2	28.11.2023	KMSE		Devt. Plan update



Contents.

1. INTRODUCTION	1
Terms of Reference.....	1
Site Context and Overview	2
2. ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY	3
Overview.....	3
Level of Assessment	3
Approach	4
Scope of Assessment.....	4
Collating Baseline Information	5
Consideration of Effects.....	5
3. LANDSCAPE POLICY BACKGROUND	6
European Landscape Convention.....	6
National Planning Policy Framework	6
Planning Practice Guidance Documents	7
Local Planning Policy	7
Adopted Policy	7
Heritage and Settlement Sensitivity Assessment (2018).....	8
Elmswell Neighbourhood Plan.....	9
Summary of landscape policy guidance	10
Designations	10
4. LANDSCAPE & VISUAL BASELINE	12
Physical Landscape Resources.....	12
The Site and its immediate context	12
The Landscape Context.....	13
Landscape Character	14
National Landscape Character	14
County Landscape Character	16
District Landscape Character.....	17
Landscape Summary	19
Visual Baseline.....	20
Overview	20
Zone of Theoretical Visibility	20
Visual Envelope.....	21
Representative viewpoints and visual receptors	22
5. THE DEVELOPMENT'S LANDSCAPE STRATEGY	24
Overview.....	24
Likely Causes of Impacts	24
Causes of temporary impacts during construction	24
Causes of impacts at completion.....	25
Landscape and Visual Analysis.....	25



Constraints and Opportunities	26
Landscape and Visual Strategy	27
6. ASSESSMENT OF LANDSCAPE EFFECTS.....	30
Overview of Landscape Effects.....	30
Landscape Sensitivity	30
Landscape Value	30
Landscape Susceptibility.....	33
Overall Landscape Sensitivity.....	34
Landscape Impacts.....	35
Impacts on Physical Landscape Resources	35
Landscape Character Effects	36
7. ASSESSMENT OF VISUAL EFFECTS.....	39
Overview of Visual Sensitivity	39
Visual Impacts	39
Visual Effects.....	40
8. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS.....	45
Introduction.....	45
Site Context	45
Policy and Designations	45
The Landscape Strategy.....	46
Landscape Character	47
Visual Resources.....	48
Conclusion.....	49

Appendices.

Appendix A	LVIA Methodology
Appendix B	Site Plan as Proposed (dwg. Ref: 1661-CAM-XX-XX-DR-A-PL07 revD)
Appendix C	Photomontages
Appendix D	Visual Effects Assessment

1. INTRODUCTION

Terms of Reference

- 1.1. Pegasus Group has been instructed by Christchurch Land & Estates (Elmswell South) Limited (the applicant) to undertake a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) in relation to the Proposed Development of land to the west of School Road, Elmswell, Suffolk (hereafter referred to as the 'Site').
- 1.2. The report appraises the potential landscape and visual effects related to an outline application for a proposed residential care and assisted living scheme on this Site (referred to as the 'Proposed Development')
- 1.3. This LVIA will consider existing landscape and visual receptors in the study area. These include:
 - Physical landscape resources;
 - Landscape character; and
 - Views and visual amenity experienced by residents, recreational users (including visitors and tourists) and road users.
- 1.4. Landscape character assessment is the systematic description and analysis of the landscape resource, including physical features and elements of the landscape, of how their composition forms distinct areas of character, appraisal of quality and sensitivity, and the potential effect of the Proposed Development on the landscape. These elements include topography and landform, vegetation pattern, land use, hydrology, development and transport patterns and public access.
- 1.5. Visual assessment is the description and analysis of the views experienced by receptors from residential properties, public buildings, public open spaces, public rights of way, open access areas, transport corridors and places of work, and the potential effect of the Proposed Development on these receptors.
- 1.6. The LVIA aims to identify and describe the effects that are likely to occur including whether they are adverse or beneficial. It aims to assess the likely significance of the effects identified; and it includes proposals for measures designed to avoid, prevent or reduce any significant adverse effects.
- 1.7. Principles and good practice for undertaking landscape and visual impact assessment are set out in the 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment', Third Edition (2013)¹, published by the Landscape Institute (LI) and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA).
- 1.8. The detailed methodology used for this LVIA is included in **Appendix A**.

¹ Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3rd Edition (April, 2013)

Site Context and Overview

- 1.9. The Site consists of 11.5 hectares (Ha) of land situated on the western edge of Elmswell, a village in mid-Suffolk to the north of the A14 corridor between Bury St Edmunds to the west and Stowmarket to the south-east.
- 1.10. It occupies a single agricultural field currently under arable cultivation. To the east and south, the Site is defined by the existing settled edge of Elmswell and to the north by the embankment to the Bury St Edmunds to Ipswich railway line, with a local train station at Elmswell approximately 600m to the east of the Site. Land to the west is in arable cultivation.
- 1.11. The surrounding landscape context of the Site is influenced by the transition between the settlement edge of Elmswell and the wider landscape primarily to the west and to a degree the north-west. On its western edge Elmswell is characterised by the sloping nature of the land towards a field ditch (ultimately feeding into the Black Bourn to the west) before rising again to more elevated ground around Elmswell New Hall and Norton Wood, and is influenced by the presence of St John's Church near locally high ground to the south of the Site.
- 1.12. The scheme (referred to as 'the Proposed Development') comprises an outline application, with all matters reserved except for access, for the development of a 66-bed care home together with 40 assisted-living dwelling, with associated internal vehicular routes and pedestrian links, parking, open space, and a scheme of strategic landscaping / green infrastructure including an area of publicly accessible meadow. A single vehicular access is to be taken off School Lane relatively centrally along the eastern boundary of the Site. The 'Site Plan as Proposed' is included at Appendix B.
- 1.13. Additional information and a more detailed description of the physical components, landscape character and visual amenity of the Site and study area are set out in later sections of this LVIA.

2. ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

Overview

- 2.1. The approach and methodology used for this report has been developed using best practice guidance, as set out in the following documents:
- Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2013) Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd Edition;
 - Natural England (2014) An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment;
 - Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 06/19, Visual Representation of Development Proposals; and
 - Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 02/21: Assessing Landscape Value Outside National Designations.
- 2.2. Use has also been made of additional sources of data and information, such as published character assessments, aerial imagery and Ordnance Survey (OS) base mapping. These are referenced in the relevant sections of the baseline information. Supporting plans and figures have also been produced as part of this LVIA and are included as Figures 1 to 8.

Level of Assessment

- 2.3. Principles and good practice for undertaking landscape and visual impact assessment are set out in the Landscape Institute (LI) and the Institute of Environmental Management (IEMA) Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition (2013)² ("GLVIA3").
- 2.4. The GLVIA3 acknowledges that landscape and visual impact assessment (LVIA) can be carried out either as a standalone assessment or as part of a broader EIA. GLVIA3 notes that the overall principles and core steps in the process are the same but that there are specific procedures in EIA with which an LVIA that sits within an EIA must comply.
- 2.5. This assessment addresses matters of individual resources, character areas and representative viewpoints. The LVIA also considers the interaction between landscape character and views in relation to physical components of the landscape. The LVIA draws on professional judgement in relation to sensitivity of receptors (both landscape and visual), the nature of impacts and consequential likely effects. This process informs judgements on a landscape mitigation strategy which will avoid, reduce, or remedy adverse impacts.
- 2.6. Landscape features and elements provide the physical environment for flora and fauna and the associated importance of biodiversity assets. This LVIA does not consider the value, susceptibility or importance on ecology and biodiversity, nor does it consider impacts from an ecological stance.

² Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3rd Edition (April 2013).

Approach

- 2.7. The overall approach to the identification, evaluation and assessment of landscape and visual effects is summarised as follows:
- Determine the scope of the assessment;
 - Collate baseline information for landscape and visual receptors, including completing desk study research and undertaking field-based survey work;
 - Review the type of development proposed, identify and describe the likely impacts (enabling judgments to be made on sensitivity of landscape and visual receptors);
 - Establish the sensitivity of landscape and visual receptors (balancing judgments on value and susceptibility);
 - Determine the magnitude of impacts (balancing judgments on size / scale, duration and reversibility);
 - The assessment of the significance of likely landscape and visual effects through a balanced approach and clear description of professional judgments on sensitivity and magnitude; and
 - The identification of measures to avoid or remedy impacts and the subsequent re-assessment of likely effects.

Scope of Assessment

- 2.8. The spatial scope (or study area) for the LVIA is initially determined by reference to the area of landscape that may be affected and from which the Proposed Development may be visible. Preliminary study area extents were refined following survey work on site and examination of Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) mapping produced from the Proposed Development. That is not to say that the Proposed Development may have some influence on landscape character or visual amenity beyond this distance, but any effects are judged to be minimal, if and where evident.
- 2.9. This LVIA considers landscape and visual effects in the short term; at completion; but also in the longer term after fifteen years when mitigation measures (such as planting) will have matured and are likely to perform the intended function (e.g., screening or enhancement of landscape features or structure).
- 2.10. Landscape features and elements provide the physical environment for biodiversity assets, however this LVIA does not consider the value, susceptibility or importance on ecology and biodiversity, nor does it consider impacts from an ecological stance.
- 2.11. Heritage assets such as Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas all contribute to the overall present-day landscape character, context and setting of an area. These aspects have been given consideration in the LVIA in terms of physical landscape resources and landscape character. However, this LVIA does not address the historic significance, importance or potential impacts on heritage assets and designations; these assets are assessed in the context of landscape and visual matters only.

Collating Baseline Information

- 2.12. To capture a comprehensive description of the baseline position for landscape and visual receptors, information has been collated using a process of desk study and field survey work.
- 2.13. The desk study includes reference to published landscape character studies and other published policy documents relevant to landscape and visual matters, such as OS 1:25,000 base mapping and aerial imagery.
- 2.14. Field survey work was completed in January 2023. A series of representative photographs were taken with a full-frame digital SLR camera with a 50mm fixed focal length lens at approximately 1.6 metres Above Ground Level (AGL). These are presented as a series of viewpoints and have been used to inform both the landscape and, separately, visual appraisal work (included as Figure 6, Viewpoint Photographs 1 to 14).
- 2.15. As the viewpoint photography were undertaken during the winter season when the majority of deciduous vegetation had least leaf cover and thus provides the least levels of screening. Consequently, the viewpoints illustrate a 'worst-case scenario' in terms of lack of screening and potential visibility of the Site and the Proposed Development.

Consideration of Effects

- 2.16. Having established the relevant baseline position, the LVIA process then considers landscape receptors and visual receptors, specifically in response to the nature of the Proposed Development, assesses their sensitivity specifically in response to the nature of the Proposed Development, identifies the nature and magnitude of potential impacts, and consequently the likely scale of effect that would arise from the Proposed Development on the identified landscape and visual receptors.
- 2.17. For both landscape effects and visual effects, the final conclusions on significance are based on professional judgements combining the specific analysis of the sensitivity of receptors and predictions on the magnitude of change (or impact). GLVIA3 advocates a balanced justification of these issues using professional judgement rather than formulaic matrices.
- 2.18. The detailed methodology is provided at **Appendix A**.

3. LANDSCAPE POLICY BACKGROUND

- 3.1. This section sets out a review of national and local policy relevant to landscape and visual matters and provides a summary of those policies pertaining to the Proposed Development.

European Landscape Convention

- 3.2. The European Landscape Convention (ELC) promotes the protection, management and planning of European landscapes. The convention was adopted on 20 October 2000 and came into force on 1 March 2004. The ELC is designed to achieve improved approaches to the planning, management and protection of landscapes and organises cooperation on landscape issues. The convention defines landscape as:

"...an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors)"

- 3.3. The importance of this definition is that it focuses on landscape as a resource in its own right, moving beyond the idea that landscapes are only a matter of aesthetics and visual amenity.

National Planning Policy Framework

- 3.4. The revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) published in September 2023, sets out the Government's planning policies for England, providing a framework within which local and neighbourhood plans are produced, and is a material consideration in planning decisions³.
- 3.5. The NPPF sets out three dimensions to achieving sustainable development that include economic, social and environmental considerations. It places an onus on the planning system to perform a role in relation to the environment that 'contributes to the protection and enhancement of our natural, built and historic environment...' going on to note that sustainable solutions should take account of local circumstances and reflect the character of each area. This underpins the strategic guidance set out in the NPPF in relation to landscape and visual matters.
- 3.6. Section 12; 'Achieving well-designed places'; aims to ensure that developments are 'visually attractive', are sympathetic to local character (including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting) and establish and maintain a strong sense of place⁴.
- 3.7. Section 15; states that policies and decisions should contribute to the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment' by 'protecting and enhancing valued landscapes (noting that this should be commensurate with a statutory status or identified quality in a development plan) and recognising the 'intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside'⁵.
- 3.8. NPPF (para. 132) also notes the importance that designs 'evolve' in response to local issues and to the views of the community.

³ Para 2, Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities, NPPF (September 2023)

⁴ Para 130, Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities, NPPF (September 2023)

⁵ Section 15 and para 174, Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government, NPPF (July 2021)

Planning Practice Guidance Documents

- 3.9. The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) is a web-based resource prepared by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). The PPG sets out guidance across various topics and effectively supersedes previous guidance on many aspects of planning; topics are updated as required.
- 3.10. The PPG for the 'Natural Environment' (updated July 2019) addresses agricultural land, green infrastructure, biodiversity and landscape. In relation to green infrastructure (GI) the PPG acknowledges how a 'range of spaces and assets' can provide 'environmental and wider benefits'. The PPG states that GI can include⁶:
- "...parks, playing fields, other areas of open space, woodland, allotments, private gardens, sustainable drainage features, green roofs and walls, street trees and 'blue infrastructure' such as streams, ponds, canals and other water bodies."*
- 3.11. The PPG goes on to recognise how GI can help achieve well designed spaces, and conservation and enhancement of the natural environment. The PPG also recognises the benefit of considering GI 'at the earliest stage of development proposals, as an integral part of development and infrastructure provision, and taking into account existing natural assets'.
- 3.12. In relation to landscape, the PPG reiterates the requirements of the NPPF in terms of 'recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside'. The PPG states that⁷:
- "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."*
- 3.13. The PPG also notes the relevance of landscape character assessment, landscape sensitivity / capacity assessment and landscape and visual impact assessment. However, whilst recognising these different aspects of landscape analysis, the PPG does not reflect the subtle variations in these and potential overlap between their different uses and requirements.

Local Planning Policy

Adopted Policy

- 3.14. The Site is located within the administrative area of Mid Suffolk. The development plan now comprises the new Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan – Part 1 2018–2037, adopted by Mid Suffolk District on 20th November 2023. Those policies relevant to landscape and visual matters are set out in **Table 1** below.

⁶ PPG, Paragraph: 004 Reference ID: 8-004-20190721 (21 July 2019)

⁷ PPG, Paragraph: 036 Reference ID: 8-036-20190721 (21 July 2019)

Table 1: Adopted policies relevant to landscape and visual matters

Policy reference	Summary
Policy SP09: Enhancement and Management of the Environment	<p>This policy states that the Council will:</p> <p><i>"...require development to support and contribute to the conservation, enhancement and management of the natural and local environment and networks of green infrastructure, including: landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity and the historic environment and historic landscapes."</i></p>
Policy LP17: Landscape	<p>This policy states that:</p> <p><i>"To conserve and enhance landscape character development must:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>• Integrate with the existing landscape character of the area and reinforce the local distinctiveness and identity of individual settlements;</i> <i>• b. be sensitive to the natural and built landscape and visual amenity impacts (including on dark skies and tranquil areas); and</i> <i>• c. Consider the topographical cumulative impact on landscape sensitivity."</i> <p>The policy notes the requirement of an LVIA for larger development proposals.</p>
Policy LP24: Design and Residential Amenity	<p>This policy states that proposed developments must be of a high-quality design and be suitable in terms of scale, mass, form and nature relative to the surrounding area. The policy sets out numerous requirements which development proposals must meet, including responding to and safeguarding the existing character/context of the site and important natural features such as trees and hedgerows. It also requires that proposals shall:</p> <p><i>"respond to the wider townscape / landscapes and safeguard the historic assets / environmental and natural built features of merit"; and</i></p> <p><i>"Incorporate high levels of soft landscaping, trees and public open space that creates, and connects to, green infrastructure networks".</i></p>

Heritage and Settlement Sensitivity Assessment (2018)

3.15. The Heritage and Settlement Sensitivity Assessment for Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils (HSSA) was published in March 2018, and forms part of the current evidence base for the emerging Joint Local Plan. This document has been prepared to analyse the susceptibility of historic settlements identified in the document to new development, and to assess the value, susceptibility and capacity of each settlement to accommodate change.

3.16. The document notes that the majority of the village of Elmswell is of 'low' value, however overall the sensitivity assessment identifies this settlement as having a 'Medium' value, 'High' susceptibility, a 'Medium/High' overall assessment, noting the following:

"Although the majority of the settlement can be identified as being of low value the church and its setting on the southern boundary of the settlement is of high value and sensitivity. The church is viewed from long distances and stands in a prominent position within a largely agricultural landscape. The group of historic farm complexes to the north is also considered to be of high value, and is the last surviving evidence of an historic green".

3.17. The conclusion / discussion (section 6) notes that:

"[surviving church and hall complexes are] frequently placed on the edge of the settlement, or set away from the settlement completely. This was a deliberate decision made by the lord of the manor to reinforce his social position and to distance themselves from the lower social orders. It is also important to note that these church/hall complexes often form part of settlements which are of lower value overall... One example is the highly significant church and hall complex, with associated buildings in Elmswell. Whilst large areas of the remainder of the settlement to the north are of low value, the church and hall complex and its wider setting are high significance...."

Many of the higher status assets, particularly churches have been sited on high points in the landscape, and were deliberately intended to be visible in long views throughout the wider landscape."

3.18. Included in HSSA's Appendix 2 Assessment Sheets, the following is noted regarding Elmswell:

- The prominence of St John's Church (Grade II* Listed) in views towards the village;
- No conservation areas, scheduled monuments or relevant landscape designations;
- Notable historic built form includes the church, Elmswell Hall and the Almshouses occupying "highly visible promontory land" which have strong intervisibility;
- A prevailing modern character across the majority of the settlement;
- Key positive features or qualities of the surrounding landscape relate to the south of Elmswell, climbing from the west to the plateau on which the church is situated, and to the north of the village encompassing a series of historic farmsteads;
- Key views towards, through, across and away from Elmswell include to St John's Church from the A14 bridge, views from Parnell Lane towards the Church, intervisibility (and historic association) between Elmswell Hall and the Church, and extensive views from the church except to the east, highlighting its prominent position;
- The settlement as a whole is considered to be of "low value", although the group of historic buildings mentioned above are considered to be of "high value from an historic, architectural and aesthetic viewpoint"; and
- In relation to identified receptors, the position, perceived isolation and visibility of the church is considered to make a "*considerable contribution to its significance*"
- There are not considered to be any areas that could be potentially improved or enhanced.

Elmswell Neighbourhood Plan

3.19. Following independent examination of the submission draft Elmswell Neighbourhood Plan (ENP) in Summer 2023, a referendum version 'The Elmswell Neighbourhood Plan 2022-2037 October 2023' has been prepared. The EMP was made on 24th November 2023. Policies within the ENP of relevance to landscape matters are included below.

3.20. This consists of 'Policy ELM2 – Protection of Important Views' which states:

"Important views from public vantage points either within the built-up area or into or out of the surrounding countryside are identified on the Policies Map. Any proposed development should not have a detrimental visual impact on the key landscape and built development features of those views..."

3.21. The ENP identifies 7 views, described in the supporting document the 'Neighbourhood Plan Assessment of Important Views' (January 2023). Those potentially applicable to the Site and Proposed Development comprise Views 1, 2 and 4. Details of each are included below.

- View 1 – *"View east from near A1088: The parish church, which commands the surrounding landscape, is the key feature of this view. Further unscreened development on the edge of the village, especially along School Road, would have a significant detrimental impact on this view".*
- View 2 – *"View from A1088 roundabout towards the village. The church is a commanding gateway to the village from this main access road. Development in the foreground would have a significant detrimental impact on this view."*
- View 4 – *"View north School Lane south-east towards Woolpit and beyond. An outstandingly important view that demonstrates the prominence of the church looking out across the valley. Development in the foreground and in the distance could have a significant detrimental impact on this view".*

Summary of landscape policy guidance

3.22. This LVIA includes reference to published landscape character assessments which have been prepared at a range of scales and detail. Reference has also been made to the local landscape character by reference to the key characteristics of the Site and its immediate context, including existing, enhanced and potentially new green infrastructure. Therefore, this LVIA responds fully to the requirement of the PPG.

3.23. The Core Strategy Policy CS5 and Saved Policies GP1, H7, H13 and H15 note the need for development proposals, to retain the local distinctiveness and overall character of an area (including responding to the existing settlement pattern and a site's features, setting and surroundings), and protect and enhance the landscape as a whole, while also protecting the district's most important assets.

3.24. Policy CS6 and Saved Policy RT12 seeks to safeguard the public right of way network and support proposals to secure its improvement and deliver other improvements to assets such as green infrastructure, open space and pedestrian and cycle routes.

3.25. Proposals should take account of the direction, scope, nature of and focuses or features within the three relevant Important Views identified in the Elmswell Neighbourhood Plan.

Designations

3.26. The Site itself is not located within any statutory or non-statutory designated areas of relevance to landscape or visual matters, such as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs), National Parks (NP), Registered Parks and Gardens (RPGs) or Conservation Areas.

- 3.27. As identified in Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils' Heritage and Settlement Sensitivity Assessment (as referenced above), there are several listed buildings in the vicinity of the Site, comprising St John's Church and the adjacent Alms houses just outside the southern boundary of the Site, and Elmswell Hall (at a distance of circa 150m to the north of the railway).
- 3.28. The current proposals map identifies a number of Special Landscape Areas (SLAs). The two in closest proximity to Elmswell lie to the west and south-east of the village at a distance of at least 1km from the Site.
- 3.29. Relevant policy areas and designations within and around Elmswell and across the Site's landscape context are illustrated on Figure 2 'Planning Designations'.

4. LANDSCAPE & VISUAL BASELINE

- 4.1. The following section describes the individual components of the physical landscape that are present in the study area. These have been described to establish an understanding of the specific landscape baseline, including individual elements and more distinctive features which together contribute to landscape character.
- 4.2. In terms of the definition of the study area, guidance is provided by GLVIA 3 on the area of landscape that needs to be covered in assessing landscape effects (i.e. the 'Study Area') as follows:

"The Study Area should include the site itself and the full extent of the wider landscape around it which the proposed development may influence in a significant manner. This will usually be based on the extent of Landscape Character Areas likely to be significantly affected either directly or indirectly. However, it may also be based on the extent of the area from which the development is potentially visible, defined as the Zone of Theoretical Visibility, or a combination of the two." (GLVIA 3, para 5.2, page 70)
- 4.3. The preliminary study area for the LVS was set at a radius of approximately 3km from the Site and refined through a combination of desk study analysis together with on-site survey information, the visual appraisal and ZTV mapping. The scale of the Proposed Development, together with its location adjacent to the settlement edge and on sloping ground relative to surrounding by higher ground, were also considered.
- 4.4. In response to the Site's setting, visual and landscape receptors that may be potentially impacted by the scheme, the analysis presented in this report focuses on an area extending approximately 2-3km to the west/south-west and north. Due to the lack of intervisibility (largely as a result of topography or settlement), relative distance and intervening features in the landscape such as the railway, large woodland blocks and the A14 corridor, the study area typically extends to no greater than 1km to the east, south and north-west.

Physical Landscape Resources

The Site and its immediate context

- 4.5. The Site occupies a single agricultural field parcel adjoining the settled edge of Elmswell, with a strip of rough ground and vegetation within the northern-most extents. While generally under arable cultivation, the north-eastern corner of the field currently houses the constructor's compound for the adjacent residential scheme under development. A public right of way (PRoW) crosses the north of the Site east-west (Definitive ref. FP14). There is no other public use or access to the Site.
- 4.6. The eastern boundary of the Site is defined by School Road and Parnell Lane. The northern extents are defined by the embankment to the railway passing the Site boundary, with a ditch between the adjacent field and the field in which the Site is situated forming the western boundary. To the south the Site meets Church Lane or the churchyard of St John's and curtilages of the Almshouses.
- 4.7. The Site's immediate context comprises existing dwellings and under-construction residential development to the east beyond Parnell Lane and School Road, respectively, the railway line and Elmswell Hall beyond to the north, and arable land to the north and west. To

the south; beyond the church and Church Lane; is a mix of settlement, farmland and infrastructure to the south including a cemetery, large single dwellings, allotments and the A1088 junction with the A14.

- 4.8. Vegetation within and adjoining the Site is limited and comprises an avenue of trees along Purcell Lane to the north-east boundary, and woodland cover extending into the north-west corner of the Site along and abutting the railway embankment. There are two single mature specimen oaks; one along the eastern boundary with School Road and another along the ditch towards the south-western corner of the Site. Where the southern boundary adjoins St John's churchyard, the boundary is relatively well vegetated, including established trees.
- 4.9. The Site is sloping in a broadly east to west direction, although internally the ground slopes in a south-westerly direction from the north-east at around 62m above ordnance data (AOD) along the ditch, and north-westerly from the south-east (at around 69m AOD) creating a slight depression east-west towards the ditch defining the western boundary that lies at circa 50m AOD.

The Landscape Context

- 4.10. The Site is influenced by the immediately adjacent settlement edge of Elmswell to the east which is both physically proximate and has direct intervisibility with the Site. The wider context is largely agricultural with field parcels being predominantly arable, punctuated by scattered strings of villages and hamlets along local roads, including Norton Little Green, Norton, Tostock and Woolpit. There are also the notable features of the A14 and its junction with the A1088 to the south of the Site, and the railway line passing immediately north.
- 4.11. The topography of the study area is variable, undulating and relatively low-lying, in general falling between 40 and 70m AOD. The general pattern of the local landform is primarily influenced by the Black Bourn valley and small tributaries feeding into it. This includes the minor valley within which the Site sits, on its broadly east-west slope. Elmswell sits on an arc of locally high ground largely between 65 and 70m AOD encompassing land to the east, Norton Little Green and the edge of Norton Wood. Other highest ground is found around Tostock and Woolpit at circa 65m AOD. Lowest-lying local ground is at between 40 and 50m AOD along the Black Bourn from north-west to south.
- 4.12. The Black Bourn commences to the south-west of the Site, passing between Tostock and Woolpit towards the A1088 / A14 junction before extending north-west along the A1088 corridor to the west of Norton. A number of small watercourses feed into the Black Bourn, including the field ditch defining the western boundary of the Site. There are no identified waterbodies in the vicinity of the Site.
- 4.13. Structural vegetation within the landscape is focused upon blocks of woodland of varying size and tree belts along the railway line and some road corridors. Around the east of Tostock and west of Woolpit (to the north and south of the A14) there is a higher incidence of tree lines, wooded clusters and hedgerows with frequent trees. To the east of Elmswell there is some parkland and avenue tree planting at Haughley Park.
- 4.14. There is formal public access across the Site via a public footpath within northern-most extents of the Site from Parnell Lane past Elmswell New Hall and onwards to the A1088 near Tostock. There is also a footpath extending east from Parnell Lane into Elmswell along the railway line. The local network of public rights of way in the vicinity is focused to the north of the railway line extending away from Elmswell and linking with Norton and Norton Little Green.

Landscape Character

- 4.15. To provide context to the landscape character of the Site and the wider study area, reference has been made to relevant published guidance for the area. These are illustrated on Landscape Character Figure 4 and described below.
- 4.16. The following character publications are of relevance to this Study:
- National level – NCA 83: 'South Norfolk and High Suffolk Claylands';
 - County level – Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment 'Ancient Plateau Claylands' LCT and 'Rolling valley farmlands & furze' LCT; and
 - District level – Joint Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Landscape Guidance 'Ancient Plateau Claylands' LCT and 'Rolling valley farmlands & furze' LCT
- 4.17. A summary of the characteristics contained in published guidance is set out below.

National Landscape Character

- 4.18. At a national level, the Site is situated within the south-western fringes of the National Character Area (NCA) 83: South Norfolk and High Suffolk Claylands (published by National England in March 2014), a large area of Central East Anglia comprising an elevated and predominantly flat clay plateau bound to the north by the Norfolk Broads, to the east by the coastal sandy heathlands and to the south by the undulating South Suffolk Claylands.
- 4.19. Whilst the key characteristics of the NCA tend to be more generalised across the wider area many descriptors are relevant to the Site and study area. These comprise the following, with those of particular relevance to the Site highlighted in **bold**:
- *"Large plateau area of chalky glacial till that is **generally flat or only gently undulating, but can be locally concave. The edges of the plateau have been dissected by watercourses that form greater slopes**, especially along the tributaries of the Waveney.*
 - ***Views are frequently open, only sometimes confined by hedges and trees, with some woodland present. The small valleys support quite confined landscapes with intimate views.***
 - ***Scattered areas of ancient woodland, game copses, shelterbelts**, valley floor plantation and carr woodland as well as hedgerow trees provide a treed landscape character, despite much boundary loss.*
 - *A mix of remnant medieval ancient countryside, some of it with a decidedly coaxial character, although irregular field patterns and large modern amalgamated open fields dominate.*
 - ***Sinuuous field boundaries are formed by deep ditches, some with hedgerows and hedgerow trees.***
 - ***Extensive areas of arable land** dominated by cereals with break-cropping of sugar beet and oilseed rape, and some pastures along valley floors. Intensive pig and poultry production is common.*

- *Remnant parkland, ancient woodlands, commons and greens with a diverse grassland flora. River valleys support areas of ecologically rich unenclosed 'semi-wild' fenland and remnant dry heaths dominated by poor dry grassland.*
- *Small slow-flowing rivers and streams and the River Waveney drain the clay plateau. The River Waveney has a relatively large-scale open valley landscape compared with the other river valleys which have narrow valley bottoms. High density of isolated farm ponds in the southern half of the NCA.*
- *A **dispersed settlement pattern of small nucleated market towns** with architectural variety and colour, **loosely clustered villages and scattered hamlets**. Settlement is often focused around large medieval greens. Many ... towns have modern extensions.*
- ***Some major transport links including the Norwich to London main rail line but infrastructure routes are predominantly an extensive network of narrow lanes and byroads**".*

4.20. Given the scale of the NCA and the diversity of the key characteristics, the landscape components that define the character at this level are represented across the wider regional context of the NCA. Consequently, changes occurring at a Site scale in the context of the NCA as a whole will be small-scale and not likely to impact upon landscape character as defined at a National level. The NCA guidance does however give an indication of key characteristics relevant to the wider landscape context and also some useful opportunities which can be taken forward to inform the design.

4.21. The NCA guidance includes 'statements of environmental opportunity' (SEOs) which are intended to bring together environmental information for the character area and offer suggestions where action can be targeted to conserve and improve the natural environment.

4.22. SEOs relevant to the Site and the landscape surrounding Elmswell include 'SEO 2'. This relates to the conservation and enhancement of characteristic historic settlement patterns including notable village commons and greens, and historic features such as moated farmsteads and windmills. The NCA sets out examples of how this may be achieved, including:

- *"Conserving and appropriately managing the built environment and the area's traditional settlement patterns, and planning for well-designed new development inspired by local character...;*
- *Maintaining the distinctive character, settlement form and building materials of the villages and market towns. Improve their setting and settlement fringes through the allocation of new greenspace and woodland planting;*
- *Encouraging the retention and enhancement of historic features and heritage assets including their setting in the farmed landscape; and*
- *Conserving the distinctive medieval churches... ensuring that their setting and visual presence in the landscape are retained for their contribution to sense of place".*

4.23. SEO 4 addresses the protection and enhancement of ancient semi-natural woodlands, copses, boundaries and other green infrastructure assets. It notes the contribution of the management and creation of new woods and hedgerows to benefit biodiversity, landscape character and habitat connectivity. Examples of how this may physically translate include:

- *“Creating and managing new small-to-medium-sized woods..., including to those to screen new development and provide habitat and green infrastructure benefits;*
- *Restoring hedgerows on significant previously hedged field boundaries (including by traditional coppicing, which will also be a source of wood fuel) and managing existing/restored hedgerows to aid reduction of soil erosion and provide biodiversity networks and for their contribution to sense of place and history in the agricultural landscape; and*
- *Extending and linking woodland sites through the expansion and enhancement of semi-natural linear features such as hedgebanks, hedged lanes, grass verges and wooded shelterbelts, enhancing biodiversity and landscape character.”*

4.24. An additional opportunity identified for the NCA seeks to improved access, enjoyment and understanding of rural and historic landscape assets, for example by creating new access links within and between local communities and amenities and natural public greenspace.

County Landscape Character

4.25. At county level, the landscape is described by the Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment (SLCA) updated in 2011. The assessment work for the SLCA identified a series of different landscape character types (LCTs) occurring variously across the County.

4.26. The Site and the majority of its surrounding context are defined as being within the ‘Ancient Plateau Claylands’ LCT. Land to the south of Church Lane and the A1088 together with the urban / rural fringes of Elmswell extend into the ‘Rolling Valley Farmlands and Furze’ LCT.

4.27. The key characteristics of the ‘Ancient Plateau Claylands’ LCT, relevant to the Site and study area, are described by the guidance as:

- *“Flat or gently rolling arable landscape of clay soils dissected by small river valleys;*
- *Field pattern of ancient enclosure – random patterns in the south but often co-axial in the north. Small patches of straight-edged fields associated with the late enclosure of woods and greens;*
- *Dispersed settlement pattern of loosely clustered villages, hamlets and isolated farmsteads of medieval origin;*
- *Scattered ancient woodland parcels containing a mix of oak, lime, cherry, hazel, hornbeam, ash and holly;*
- *Hedges of hawthorn and elm with oak, ash and field maple as hedgerow trees; and*
- *Network of winding lanes and paths often associated with hedges create visual intimacy.”*

4.28. The visual experience associated with this LCT states:

“On the more extensive plateau areas to the north of the Gipping the views are frequently open, though with some woodland present in the views. Occasionally there can even be a feeling of exposure. To the south there is a stronger feeling of enclosure with big hedges supplementing the ancient woods to give the landscape a distinctly ‘woodland’ feel.”

4.29. The key characteristics of the 'Rolling Valley Farmlands and Furze' LCT, relevant to the Site and study area, are described by the guidance as:

- *Valleys with prominent river terraces of sandy soil;*
- *Small areas of gorse heathland in a clayland setting;*
- *Straight boundaries associated with late enclosure and also co-axial field systems;*
- *Mixed hedgerows of hawthorn, dogwood and blackthorn with oak, ash and field maple;*
- *Fragmentary cover of woodland;*
- *Sand and gravel extraction; and*
- *Focus for larger settlements.*

4.30. The visual experience associated with this LCT states:

"This landscape can form rather bleak vales such as at Barnby or to the east of Hopton. However within them there are some intimate small valleys"

4.31. Along with the analysis of each LCT, the SLCA also includes a series of guidance notes for each LCT..

District Landscape Character

4.32. At a District level, landscape character is described within the Joint Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council Landscape Guidance (2015). The assessment of the landscape as detailed within this document is based upon the LCTs defined by Suffolk County Council in the SLCA, with descriptions and guidance for each of the character types (referred to as 'landscape typologies', or LTs for the purposes of this report).

4.33. These LTs were further refined to specifically reflect the landscape of Mid-Suffolk District, the Site and much of its immediate context lie within the 'Ancient Plateau Claylands' LT.

4.34. Consequently, this comprises both the most recent guidance, and is considered to present the most appropriate scale of established baseline for the purposes of assessment of impacts upon the landscape considered within this LVIA.

4.35. The 'Ancient Plateau Claylands' LT within Mid-Suffolk are described as *"gently rolling heavy clay plateaux with ancient woodland"*. The key components of landscape character, relevant to the Site and study area include the following:

- The top of the plateau is generally flat or only gently undulating, with attractive small valleys. Towards the edges it is more dissected with greater more complex slopes;
- Ancient and plantation woodlands;
- Some areas have experienced large losses of hedgerow due to changing agricultural practices resulting in the creation of open arable "prairie" landscapes;

- Land cover is predominantly arable farmland retaining much of the older field patterns of irregular partitions along with numerous areas of pasture land with substantial blocks of woodland and established hedgerows;
- Many areas of poor draining clay plateaux are covered with former greens and commons ranging in size, some recognised in names with 'Green' or 'Tye'; and
- Unlike the 'Plateau Clayland' landscape blocks of ancient woodland are visibly present in the landscape.

4.36. Settlement character is noted as being scattered, ranging from farmsteads, clustered development of varying size to ribbon development, with soft landscaping ensuring *"settlements are well screened and do not have a negative visual impact on this flat landscape character"*.

4.37. The guidance also notes that the aim for this area is to *'retain, enhance and restore the distinctive landscape and settlement character'*. The guidance draws attention to the need to strengthen green infrastructure to reinforce and enhance existing field boundaries and also to safeguard the plantation and ancient woodland areas.

4.38. The LT's design principles note that the landscape is 'quite open' and to avoid development being visually intrusive, appropriate landscape design and screening will be needed.

4.39. The southern extents of the Site meet the boundary with the adjoining LCT, the 'Rolling Valley Farmlands and Furze' which encompasses land to the south of Church Lane and the A1088, the southern Elmswell fringes and a portion of the landscape beyond to the south around Woolpit and Drinkstone. For this LCT, the components of landscape character, relevant to the Site and study area, include:

- That the valleys form relatively narrow bands of well-drained terraces and slopes above the valley floors;
- Small valley areas such as at Thelnetham provide intimate pockets of landscape;
- Due to the geological background there are frequent occurrences of dry heaths, such as at Woolpit Heath;
- The river terrace heaths were exploited as commons as a source of grazing and the gathering of gorse for cattle fodder. Some of these areas are retained as unimproved open areas whereas others were enclosed and converted;
- The landscape has good tree cover and a few fragmented woodlands and hedgerows of multiple species including oak, ash, field maple and hawthorn; and
- The Gipping valley and the Woolpit Heath area are particular areas of change within this landscape character.

4.40. The 'settlement character' notes the formation of numerous villages and hamlets, with villages tending to cluster more tightly than is common for the north of Suffolk. Larger settlements, such as Woolpit, are situated on the river terraces.

- 4.41. The guidance states that the aim for this area is to 'retain, enhance and restore the distinctive landscape and settlement character'. The guidance draws attention to the need to strengthen the rolling valley landscape with appropriate planting and safeguarding the existing settlement pattern clusters. In order to achieve this, objectives include (but are not limited to) the need to minimise visual intrusion on the landscape including impacts upon the skylines, and to safeguard and increase the woodland, tree and hedgerow cover.
- 4.42. The design principles for the LCT note that woodlands, trees and hedgerows are to be protected and maintained and that roofscapes are to be in keeping with existing development within this visually sensitive landscape.

Landscape Summary

- 4.43. The key characteristics of the NCAs present useful background information to contextualise a site and inform development proposals. However, as they address landscape character at a large scale across the wider region, in order to complete a more detailed appraisal of potential landscape and visual issues, published landscape character assessments prepared at the finest grain underpin the assessment presented in Section 6.
- 4.44. From the detailed evaluation undertaken for this LVIA, the Site and its immediate context exhibit some of the characteristics identified in the various landscape character assessments described above. Aspects of the character of the Site and its immediate context which are considered to be consistent with published guidance (particularly at the District level) are identified below:
- Flat or gently undulating arable landscape of clay soils;
 - Frequently open views with some confinement by hedges and trees with some scattered woodland including ancient woodland, although the small valleys;
 - Some more visually intimate routes where hedges enclose winding lanes and paths, which contrast with more open areas – occasionally with a feeling of exposure – due to hedgerow losses through changes in agricultural practices;
 - A fragmentary woodland cover, including scattered ancient woodland parcels;
 - Dispersed settlement pattern of loosely clustered villages and hamlets; and
 - Some major transport links (i.e., A14).
- 4.45. The landscape immediately south of the Site transitions from the 'Ancient Plateau Claylands' to the 'Rolling Valley Farmlands and Furze' LCT, which around Woolpit Heath is described as an 'area of change'. This LCT also includes clustered settlement (such as at Woolpit), good tree cover, fragmented woodlands.
- 4.46. Matters identified in the landscape character assessment which can influence the design are considered in the landscape strategy for the Proposed Development, as described later in this LVIA at Section 5.

Visual Baseline

Overview

- 4.47. This section provides a visual appraisal exploring the nature of the existing visual amenity of the area, seeking to establish the approximate visibility from surrounding locations and receptors. It describes the nature and extent of the existing visibility from, towards and between the Site and the surrounding area. It also includes reference to specific locations that will potentially be subject to impacts as a result of the Proposed Development.
- 4.48. Prior to the site visit an initial desk study was undertaken. This examined topography, vegetation cover, settlement, recreational facilities and footpaths to establish the potential visual receptors or broad areas from which views might be possible (the 'visual envelope'). More specifically, the visual envelope is the area of landscape from which a site or Proposed Development will potentially be visible. It accounts for general judgements on the theoretical visibility of a site or proposed development and sets a broad context for the study area within which to address landscape and visual impacts. The extent of a visual envelope will be influenced by the physical landscape components of an area, such as hedgerows, woodlands or buildings and can also be influenced by distance from a site.
- 4.49. Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) mapping was also produced to understand the maximum predicted extents of the Proposed Development's visibility.

Zone of Theoretical Visibility

- 4.50. To support desk study work and field survey observations, the visibility of the Proposed Development was tested utilising a computer-generated Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) illustrated in Figure 5.
- 4.51. Digital information inputs into the ZTV map include:
- Input from OS mapping and LIDAR data for topography and blocks of vegetation; and
 - The proposed panel heights (defined at a maximum height parameter of 12.6m for the proposed Care Home building and up to 5.5m for the proposed bungalows).
- 4.52. The ZTV has been generated upon a screened model scenario which adds existing buildings and existing blocks of vegetation, as identified by OS mapping and LIDAR data.
- 4.53. A ZTV is not a conclusive product in terms of determining the visibility of a given development proposal; nor does a ZTV define the degree of change or impact. Instead, the ZTV is used as a tool that provides an indication of 'potential' visibility, which then guides the spatial extent of a study, informs the nature and location of potential receptors and contributes to an understanding of scale of impacts (in terms of area covered).
- 4.54. It should be noted that GLVIA3 acknowledges that ZTV is the desk study component of the visibility analysis and that several landscape components that effect visibility may be difficult to add to digital models accurately. Input to ZTVs for existing vegetation includes only data quantified in LIDAR and OS data; therefore, only larger blocks of woodland are included as input to the model, whilst hedgerow trees and linear tree belts tend to be excluded.
- 4.55. This initial appraisal of theoretical visibility has then been used to inform the field work.

Visual Envelope

- 4.56. The visual envelope is the area of landscape from which a site or proposed development will potentially be visible. It accounts for general judgements on the theoretical visibility of a site or proposed development and sets a broad context for the study area within which to address landscape and visual impacts.
- 4.57. The envelope's extent is influenced by the physical landscape components of an area, such as hedgerows, woodlands or buildings and can also be influenced by distance from a site.
- 4.58. The visual envelope for this project is a broad reflection of the study area extents, identified above at paragraphs 4.3 and 4.4. It takes into consideration the ZTV generated for the Proposed Development and was verified and refined during the field survey.
- 4.59. Consequently, for the Site, the visual envelope can be summarised as follows:
- At short distance, the Site benefits from enclosure from existing settlement at Elmswell most notably to the east, but also to the south where St John's Church is situated towards an area of locally highest ground in the village. There is some degree of containment provided by the railway embankment immediately passing to the north.
 - Beyond existing built form, the extents and distribution of visibility to the north, west and south is primarily governed by the local topography. The Site is situated sloping into a minor valley extending to the south-south-west, which controls the extent of visibility beyond mid-distance to the west.
 - Potential longer distance views from locally high ground to the west and from the south-west are limited by the distribution of both local and intervening field boundary vegetation and canopy cover.
 - From the south, there are short-distance views from the village fringes, and some limited opportunities from rising ground where local high ground around the church and vegetation around the Woolpit Interchange allows.
 - Views from the east are limited to local roads and open space where highway alignment, and intervening vegetation or residences allow.
 - Views from the north were possible from short up to long distance, controlled to varying degrees by the railway embankment. These may be most likely to the north-east from most elevated ground at long distance to the north of Elmswell. Views are intermittently limited by field boundary vegetation.
 - In summary, views are likely to extend to (and encompass) the settled edge of Elmswell to the east, land around the Woolpit Interchange to the south, areas of elevated agricultural land to the west of Drinkstone to the south-west, paddocks and grazing around Tostock to the west, and gently rising arable land to the north and north-east towards Norton Little Green and Ashfield Road, respectively.
- 4.60. Within this overall visual envelope there are variations in the degree of intervisibility between areas and in the nature and extent of views, which are tested further through the detailed field work and the subsequent assessment of visual impacts.

4.61. Potential visual receptors are summarised as follows:

- Residents and road users along School Road;
- New residents to the north of School Road and to the east of Parnell Lane;
- Residents along Pightle Close (to the east of School Road);
- Recreational receptors within open space to the north of Church Road;
- PRoW users flanking the railway embankment approaching and crossing the Site;
- Visitors to St John's Church;
- Residents at the Almshouses, Church Road;
- Users along Church Lane;
- Road users around the Woolpit Interchange (A1088 / A14 junction);
- Recreational and residential receptors on the northern edge of Woolpit;
- Road users and select residents along Park Road to the west of Drinkstone;
- PRoW users around Tostock;
- Travelers using the railway line between Thurston and Elmswell;
- Residents at Elmswell Hall;
- PRoW users across rising agricultural land between Elmswell Hall and Norton Little Green;
- PRoW users across relatively elevated agricultural land to the west of Ashfield Road; and
- Residents off St Edmund's Drive (on the western edge of Elmswell to the north of the railway)

Representative viewpoints and visual receptors

4.62. The potential visual receptors identified above were considered in further detail during the site survey. This visual analysis informed the selection of a series of photographs illustrating the visual context looking towards the Site within the surrounding area, which are included to support the assessment of visual effects and represent key receptors or view locations.

4.63. These representative viewpoints provide an understanding of the nature of views in terms of distance, angle of view, and seasonal constraints associated with specific visual receptors, and illustrate a view from a specific vantage point or demonstrate a representative view for receptors that are moving through the landscape, e.g., rights of way and road users and have potential views towards the Proposed Development.

4.64. The identification of key sensitive receptors and links to the representative viewpoints are carried forward to the assessment process (refer to **Figure 6: Viewpoint Photographs**).

- 4.65. A detailed description for each of the locations identified as receptors for this LVIA, including judgements on overall sensitivity of visual receptors, is included in later sections of this report under the assessment of visual effects.
- 4.66. Taking into consideration the observations made during the visual survey for the Site within the surrounding landscape, the key receptors are therefore identified as follows:
- Residents and road users along School Road;
 - New residents to the north of School Road fronting towards the Site;
 - Select residents along Pightle Close;
 - Recreational receptors within open space to the north of Church Road;
 - PRow users crossing the Site and approaching from the west;
 - Visitors to St John's Church;
 - Residents at the Almshouses, Church Road;
 - Users along Church Lane;
 - Travelers using the railway line between Thurston and Elmswell; and
 - PRow users on elevated farmland south of Harding's Farm and the west of Ashfield Road.

5. THE DEVELOPMENT'S LANDSCAPE STRATEGY

Overview

- 5.1. The landscape components, character, relevant policy and visual context identified in the baseline are evaluated as constraints and opportunities in relation to the Site.
- 5.2. This section considers the type of development proposed and the nature of the impacts that are likely to occur, thereafter drawing the landscape and visual baseline information together and summarising the key constraints and opportunities in the existing landscape.
- 5.3. The design evolution for the proposed scheme is then able to respond appropriately to the context of the local landscape character and visual considerations. Furthermore, where appropriate, the layout design can incorporate measures which respond to the more specific guidance set out by published landscape character assessments.
- 5.4. In summary the Proposed Development comprises an outline application, with all matters reserved except for access, for the development of a care home of up to 66-beds together with 40 assisted living dwellings, associated vehicular and pedestrian accesses and links, infrastructure, incidental open space, landscaping, community orchard and growing space, community bee hives and a publicly accessible meadow.

Likely Causes of Impacts

- 5.5. Although any landscape has some intrinsic sensitivity, different landscapes contain a range of components that respond differently to change, subject to the type of the development proposed. In order to inform the analysis of impacts, judgements should be made with reference to the specific changes arising from the type of development being considered.
- 5.6. The following section sets out the likely causes of impacts which would occur in relation to the specific type of development proposed (i.e., residential led development).

Causes of temporary impacts during construction

- 5.7. The temporary construction works which may give rise to impacts on landscape and visual receptors are listed as follows:
 - Site clearance (such as soil stripping) and accommodation works;
 - movement and presence of associated construction vehicles and plant;
 - presence of a construction compounds, site office and welfare facilities;
 - earthworks and construction of internal road infrastructure and practical development platforms in the north of the Site;
 - highways and junction improvements and formation of visibility splays for construction and operational site access; and
 - emerging built form of proposed buildings in the north of the Site.

Causes of impacts at completion

- 5.8. The permanent components of the Proposed Development which may give rise to impacts on landscape and visual receptors are listed as follows:
- The built form of residential development in the north of the Site;
 - Highways infrastructure; and
 - landscape mitigation integrated into the scheme including retained vegetation, new planting and attenuation areas, and the creation of wildflower meadow in the south.

Landscape and Visual Analysis

- 5.9. In the context of the likely impacts, the following analysis summarises the Site's character and its of the Site within the local landscape (illustrated on **Figure 7, Landscape and Visual Analysis**), which gives rise to a series of identified constraints and opportunities.
- 5.10. The Site and contextual landscape and visual analysis can be summarised as follows:
- The Site comprises a single field parcel with no internal features, with any landscape elements confined to the perimeters;
 - The Site adjoins Elmswell's western settled edge, which is residential and includes the most recent development to the opposite the Site to the east of Parnell Lane and north of School Road. As a consequence, the Site and its immediate context display both settlement / urban edge influences and rural characteristics;
 - In broad terms the Site is surrounded in most directions by higher ground. Even to the north and south-west along the valley in which the Site sits, there is a railway embankment immediately to the north, and roads around the Woolpit interchange and nearby landscape to the south-west is fairly well vegetated;
 - In close proximity to the Site, the existing PRow network to the south of the railway includes a single footpath route passing the northern edge of the Site from Elmswell village to Elmswell New Hall and the A1088 beyond;
 - The Site is more open in nature along the western boundary, which is defined by a ditch;
 - Tree cover is varied, including woodland blocks, linear tree belts along infrastructure routes, scattered tree groups and variable frequencies of hedgerow standards;
 - The wider landscape to the north is reasonably open due to hedgerow loss through agricultural intensification, ditches defined by field parcels and limited woodland cover;
 - Elements such as the highway infrastructure (including the A14 corridor) and the railway line and embankment / cutting are detractors in the landscape; and
 - The HSSA identifies the settlement edge of Elmswell in general to be of low value. Positive landscape features are considered to be to the north and around the south. The setting of St John's Church is considered to be prominent "isolated" and of high value, with key views including intervisibility between the church from Elmswell Hall and Parnell Lane.

Constraints and Opportunities

- 5.11. Together the causes of impacts at construction and operation inform the landscape and visual analysis and identification of constraints and opportunities.
- 5.12. The following section sets out the key constraints and opportunities that have been identified as part of an analysis of the landscape and visual baseline including reference to field work, desk study, and review of landscape character guidance.
- 5.13. These are subsequently used to inform an understanding of the Proposed Development and the role and function of any mitigation that is included as part of the masterplan.
- 5.14. Overall, by taking an approach that addresses landscape and landscape character in the context of the masterplan design, helps to deliver good design that relates to local character, landscape components and green infrastructure.
- 5.15. Landscape and visual constraints associated with the Site are summarised as follows:
- The physical constraint of the existing PRow crossing the northern extents of the Site;
 - The open western boundary (ditch) allowing direct views into the Site from the west;
 - An avenue of trees along the north-eastern boundary to Parnell Lane;
 - The Site sits on a gentle slope which rises from the western ditch up to the east and consequently the north-eastern and south-eastern portions may be more prominent from relatively elevated parts of the surrounding landscape;
 - The open agricultural setting to St John's Church as a contribution to its heritage value;
 - Views from and potential impacts upon adjacent publicly accessible locations and receptors at near distance and concentrated around the Site, particularly public footpaths and some private residences facing towards the Site to the east of Purnell Lane and School Road; and
 - intervisibility / lines of sight between Elmswell Hall and the Church, and the Important Views looking across or including the Site from the west, south and north-east looking towards the Church.
- 5.16. The opportunities for the Site are considered to be:
- That neither the Site nor the surrounding local landscape context are subject to any statutory or non-statutory landscape related planning designations;
 - Immediate and short-distance visual and physical enclosure of the Site provided by Elmswell, the railway embankment, and high ground and vegetation upon which St John's Church and almshouses are situated, with further relative high ground and woodland at mid-distance to the west;
 - the existing settlement edge of Elmswell that is adjacent to the Site and which has an influence on the Site, providing a context for residential development which will ultimately reduce the magnitude of impact;

- The nature of the topography and vegetation in the wider landscape, in combination with development and infrastructure features limiting the visual envelope;
- Few existing landscape features within and along the Site boundaries, providing the opportunity to deliver new habitat and links between existing landscape features in the Site's immediate context;
- The implementation of a robust green infrastructure providing a well landscaped framework for new development, and screening / softening of built form within the Site and beyond on the edge of Elmswell;
- The provision of publicly accessible greenspace with biodiversity benefits by way of newly-created wildflower meadow in the south of the Site, bound by new species-rich native hedgerows and tree planting.

Landscape and Visual Strategy

- 5.17. Whilst this LVIA assesses the Illustrative Masterplan submitted with the outline application, it is clear from review of the layout that landscape and visual matters have had a strong influence on the design.
- 5.18. The strategy for that mitigation has defined the spatial extent of the potential development envelope (i.e., where built form would be located) as well as proposals for key green infrastructure and associated open spaces.
- 5.19. In response to the constraints, opportunities and the likely impacts identified, the following components of the landscape strategy that have been incorporated into the initial design of the Proposed Development are summarised in the following table (refer also to **Figure 8, the Illustrative Landscape Masterplan**).
- 5.20. The table also includes reference to guidance set out in the published landscape character assessments, so as to demonstrate how and where the Proposed Development contributes to this.

Table 3: Summary of integrated landscape and visual mitigation

Strategy component	Key points	Published landscape character guidance, policy or evidence base documents
Development envelope	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restricted to the northern portion of the Site, with containment from the immediate physical features of the railway embankment and existing residential development,, together with local topographical patterns. • The development envelope is well related to the existing settlement edge: it is situated directly adjacent to Elmswell which comprises both established and recent residential development that is currently relatively apparent in existing views the Site, where possible. • The development envelope integrates structural landscaping and incidental open space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain the historic dispersed settlement pattern

Strategy component	Key points	Published landscape character guidance, policy or evidence base documents
	<p>throughout, serving different functions such as visual amenity and recreational opportunities for occupants, providing a landscaped setting to residences, softening views of build form, or offsetting from existing trees along Purnell Lane</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alignment of proposed built form to retain visual relationship between St John's Church and Elmswell Hall • Omission of development form, and inclusion of open space in the eastern corner to preserve the 'Important View' from the village identified in the Elmswell Neighbourhood Plan • Open space in the southern half of the Site, together with a modest area of woodland planting, to provide an undeveloped and sympathetic setting to St John's Church, reinforcement of existing trees around the churchyard and additional habitat opportunities. 	
Existing vegetation and Site features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integration of the existing avenue of trees into a green corridor along Parnell Lane forming an 'outward-looking' landscaped frontage along the north-eastern boundary. • Retain existing tree specimens along the Site boundaries; adjacent to the ditch towards the south-west and along School Road to the east. • Continuation and reinforcement of existing rail embankment structural vegetation with new woodland planting directly north of the PRoW. • New woodland planting adjacent to existing established trees around St John's churchyard 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain the tree cover character of hedgerow oaks, and enhance the age structure of the hedgerow oak population. • Seek opportunities to enhance tree cover along highways and other non-farmed locations. • Conserve and restore the pattern and composition of the hedgerow structure (including hedgerow oaks) through appropriate management, and new planting/replanting.
Proposed landscape strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New hedgerows define and contain the southern edge of built development, and connect with further new hedge lines along the western and eastern boundaries to reinforce the existing field pattern and implement a series of linear features across the Site providing wildlife corridors. The 'sub-division' of the Site by hedgerows is reflective of the historic field pattern within the Site, which formerly comprised several fields • The alignment of the new surface water runoff ditch is integrated into the proposed green infrastructure framework along the southern edge of the development envelope • New footpath link from north to south through the Site, connecting onto the existing PRoW to the north and Church Lane to the south • Additional publicly accessible green space in the south of the Site, to incorporate wildflower meadow creation to provide informal public recreation opportunities as well as biodiversity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancement of the existing field boundary treatments and pattern through the integration of new hedgerows • Strengthening of woodland by extending structural landscape planting along and in close proximity to the railway embankment • Green infrastructure design seeks to provide softening and screening of Proposed Development within views

Strategy component	Key points	Published landscape character guidance, policy or evidence base documents
	<p>enhancements, together with new community orchard and growing space for residents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considered placement of new trees and hedgerows to 'frame' sightlines of Neighbourhood important views • 	
Detailed Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notwithstanding the outline nature of the application, built form is indicated as 'outward-facing' around the development envelope fringes. • Taller (two-storey) built form situated towards areas of the development envelope at lower elevation to reduce visibility of the scheme within the wider landscape • .Given the large proportion of green infrastructure there are opportunities to design and create a landscaped setting to built form and publicly accessible open space of high-quality at the detailed stage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Layout seeks to minimise the potential visibility of the scheme within what the district guidance describes as "quite an open landscape". This has been carefully planning in conjunction with the form and distribution of new and proposed landscape planting.

- 5.21. The landscape strategy provides an appropriate framework for the Proposed Development on the Site that reflect an immediate landscape structure, subsequently supported by additional and enhanced landscape proposals.
- 5.22. This will enable the Proposed Development to integrate into the local landscape context from the outset, and further mitigate potential impacts as mitigation becomes established.
- 5.23. The assessment of landscape and visual impacts proceeds on the basis of these measures forming an inherent part of the Proposed Development and judgements on impact and effect are considered on that basis.

6. ASSESSMENT OF LANDSCAPE EFFECTS

Overview of Landscape Effects

- 6.1. Landscape sensitivity is a term applied to specific receptors, combining judgements on the value related to a landscape (i.e. the receptor) with the susceptibility of the landscape to the specific type of change proposed. Receptors can include specific landscape elements or features or may be judged at a wider scale and include landscape character parcels, types or areas.
- 6.2. As advocated in the GLVIA3, professional judgement is used to balance analysis of value and susceptibility in order to determine sensitivity. Each of these aspects of the analysis will vary subject to the scale and detail of the assessment.
- 6.3. The landscape character of the study area is documented at national and regional levels. The findings of these studies represent a generally consistent analysis of landscape character and this has been supported by an analysis of the local landscape character of the Site in the context of the settlement.
- 6.4. This assessment of landscape effects focuses on the areas of landscape character which are defined by the WCC LCA as the Principal Timbered Farmlands LT.
- 6.5. The assessment of landscape effects is then also applied at a more refined level to consider judgements based on the landscape character of 'the Site and its immediate context'.

Landscape Sensitivity

- 6.6. In order to inform judgements on value and susceptibility the following section refers to the baseline information (Section 3) and additional consideration of the local character in relation to the Site and its immediate context. These judgements are then carried through to the analysis of landscape sensitivity.

Landscape Value

- 6.7. In LVIA, landscape value is the value attached to a potentially affected landscape. It is relative in relation to the different stakeholders and different parts of society that use or experience a landscape.
- 6.8. Landscape value is not solely indicated by the presence of formal designations and a range of factors influence landscape value.
- 6.9. The GLVIA3 sets out a range of factors that can help in the identification of landscape value⁸ and these concepts have been expanded in the later LI TGN 02/21⁹.

⁸ Box 5.1, Page 84, Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3rd Edition (April, 2013)

⁹ Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 02/21: Assessing Landscape Value Outside National Designations

- 6.10. Whilst these have become commonly accepted, it is important to place them in the relevant context that the GLVIA3 is guidance and that its principles have to be adopted into a formal methodology by practitioners. The criteria for determining landscape value as set out in the methodology (Appendix A) accord with those presented in the GLVIA3 and LI TGN 02/21.
- 6.11. Landscape value will vary in response to the specific landscape that is being considered, even where a landscape is included in the boundaries of a formal designation.
- 6.12. This section determines the value of the defined LT (and local landscape context) relevant to the Site and study area. The considerations and professional judgements used in determining value are summarised in the following tables (with reference to GLVIA3, page 84, Box 5.1 and to LI TGN 02/21).

Table 4: Determining Landscape Value

Considerations	Ancient Plateau Claylands LT	Rolling Valley Farmlands & Furze LCT	Site and Immediate Landscape context
Formal landscape or landscape related designations	No statutory landscape designations apply.	No statutory landscape designations apply.	No statutory landscape designations apply.
Natural and cultural heritage interests (i.e. ecological, geological or heritage matters)	At a local level parts of the LCT are designated as a SLA, including the area at Norton Wood which (north of the railway) is also a SSSI. Occasional pockets of ancient woodland.	A tract of the landscape is designated as a SLA; passing to the west of Norton, between Tostock and Norton Wood and down to Woolpit and Drinkstone. The core of Woolpit is a Conservation Area.	Limited natural interests due to the very limited vegetation to the Site's boundaries and no internal features. There are some listed buildings to the south of the Site including St John's Church.
Landscape condition of individual elements or overall structure	Largely intact farmland with some larger parcels due to intensification of field patterns. Hedgerow field boundaries vary in condition.	Varied scale landscape generally in good condition with the field pattern defined by mature hedgerows and frequent mature trees. Absence of hedgerow infrastructure apparent in some locations. The A14 is a notable feature and has redefined the field pattern along its course.	No internal features. Proximate farmland to the west and north includes larger irregularly shaped fields. Field boundary vegetation within the Site itself is predominantly absent. There are some gappy hedges and evidence of hedgerow loss in the local context.
Landscape associations	No known associations related to the LCT with people or events in history.	No known associations.	No known associations.

Distinctiveness and sense of place	Relatively few rare or distinctive features although copses and ancient woodland blocks contribute to character.	There are some areas of remnant heath, although these occurrences are limited in the study area to around Woolpit Heath. Woodland cover is often fragmentary, such as to the west of Woolpit.	No distinctive features within the Site itself. The rising landform and position of the Church upon it is a locally distinctive feature (as identified in the HSSA). The Site contributes to the Church's locally visual prominence.
Recreational opportunities in the landscape context	Several PRoWs link Elmswell to the wider countryside. No long-distance paths or recreational routes/country parks.	Several PRoWs link Elmswell to the wider countryside. No long distance paths or recreational routes/country parks.	A PRoW crosses the north of the Site, otherwise the Site more widely does not provide a recreational function.
Perceptual aspects (in respect of scenic/visual quality)	Views and visual corridors vary; more enclosed around the west of the Elmswell across undulating farmland with mature vegetation; to the south-west of the settlement with views towards the locally prominent St. John's Church. Extensive views from the Church across countryside to the north and west.	A number of open views across the undulating agricultural landscape, particularly where hedgerows have been removed. A14 corridor a visually discordant element. Views towards the southern edge of Elmswell.	Limited scenic value given the few landscape features even to its boundaries, however of notable influence are the existing dwellings along School Road and forming part of the new development to the north-east. The Site contributes to three 'important views' approaching or towards the church from the edge of Elmswell.
Perceptual aspects (in respect of wildness and tranquillity)	A generally local road network with isolated properties promotes a sense of isolation in some areas, becoming less so closer to the south of the LCT near the railway and main settlements such as Elmswell.	Seclusion in this area is influenced by the major highway corridor of the A14 and associated junctions. Larger-scale development and quarrying in the LT are also detracting features.	The Site in its immediate context is neither wild nor tranquil given the proximity and influence of the settlement and the local road network. There is some sense of relative tranquillity when moving away from the village.
Landscape function	Predominantly arable farmland that largely retains its established field pattern with some substantial woodlands. There are large losses of hedgerows leading to more open landscape in places.	Variable tree cover, although this is more evident along watercourses and the A14 corridor. The A14 itself 'severs' the connectivity of the overall landscape of this LT north-south.	Limited functional contribution due to the Site comprising an arable land parcel directly adjacent to the settlement edge with little vegetation or boundary features with the exception of the ditch along the west.

6.13. On balance – taking into consideration also the findings of the HSSA – the landscapes above were determined to be of the following value in landscape terms:

- ‘Ancient Plateau Claylands’ LCT is considered to be of medium value.
- ‘Rolling Valley Farmlands and Furze’ LCT is also considered to be of medium value.
- The Site and its immediate context is considered to be of medium value.

Landscape Susceptibility

6.14. In LVIA, landscape susceptibility is the ability of a landscape to accommodate change without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline situation.

6.15. Different types of development can affect landscapes in different ways and consequently landscape susceptibility is specific to the type of development proposed (i.e. commercial).

6.16. This section determines the susceptibility with the considerations and professional judgements used summarised in the following tables.

Table 5: Determining Landscape Susceptibility

Considerations	Ancient Plateau Claylands LT	Rolling Valley Farmlands & Furze LCT	Local landscape character
Scale of enclosure	Generally open landscape with infrequent mature vegetation, undulating topography and some intensification of land use which reduces vegetative cover. A slightly elevated plateau in relation to the wider landscape. More vegetated to the south-west of Elmswell.	More rolling, quite open topography with some longer distance views primarily contained to the LT although the landscape is more intimate in scale along the more vegetated small valleys. A number of mature woodland blocks east of Woolpit.	Varied scale landscape and field pattern. Lack of field boundary vegetation creates a sense of openness in the immediate landscape, but gentle variations in topography, settlement and the railway line provide enclosure at a local level around the western urban / rural edge of the village.
Nature of land use	Predominantly arable farmland, with a dispersed settlement pattern and scattered ancient woodland.	Mixed farmland, with increasing arable cultivation. Some limited remnant heath.	Arable on Site. Settlement to the east, and further arable to west, beyond which are numerous pastoral field parcels around Elmswell New Hall. Site also currently houses a compound associated with the construction of houses to the north-east of Parnell Lane as well as materials storage.

Nature of existing elements and features	Settlements – linked by local roads and lanes – have been subject to more recent housing development. Some farming intensification leading to loss of hedgerows, and also some over management of often older hedgerows with numerous trees. Medieval churches and manorial halls on valley sides.	Major highway corridor passes through this area, which is a detracting feature, likewise the mineral extraction area. Otherwise there are a mix of features, including and fragmentary woodland, some limited remnant heathland and scattered frequent settlements that are often clustered and situated on valley sides or terraces. Greater tree cover (including small-scale woodland and tree lines) along valley bottoms / watercourses.	Vegetation on the Site is limited to very select tree specimens on the boundary, but are generally beyond the boundary (including trees around the church yard, bordering the railway line and along Parnell Lane).
--	--	---	---

- 6.17. On balance the wider landscape context of the ‘Ancient Plateau Claylands’ LCT is considered to be of **medium susceptibility** in landscape terms and the ‘Rolling Valley Farmlands and Furze’ LCT is considered to be of **medium susceptibility** in landscape terms.
- 6.18. The Site contributes to the Church’s immediate setting to the north (in reference to the HSSA), however, given the distinct lack of an existing landscape framework within and around the Site boundaries, there are also notable opportunities for creation and enhancement of new green infrastructure and landscape planting which would be beneficial to the local landscape character.
- 6.19. In the context of the settlement edge and in relation to the matters described above therefore, the Site and its immediate setting is considered to be of **medium susceptibility** in landscape terms.

Overall Landscape Sensitivity

- 6.20. The following conclusions on sensitivity are based on the detailed description and justification presented in the previous sections, balancing the professional judgements on value and susceptibility.
- 6.21. In drawing together judgements on landscape value and susceptibility in respect of landscape sensitivity, higher levels of landscape sensitivity will occur where landscape value and landscape susceptibility are toward the upper end of the scale.
- 6.22. Lower levels of sensitivity will occur where value and susceptibility are toward the lower end of the scale.

- 6.23. More central levels of sensitivity will occur where one component is toward the higher end of the scale whilst one is toward the lower.
- 6.24. It is important to note that there are graduations within the process which are not clear cut, and professional judgment is used to balance these and determine an overall judgement on sensitivity.

Table 6: Determining Landscape Sensitivity

Landscape character	Value	Susceptibility	Judgement on sensitivity
Ancient Plateau Claylands LT	Medium	Medium	Medium
Rolling Valley Farmlands & Furze LCT	Medium	Medium	Medium
Site and its immediate context	Medium	Medium	Medium

- 6.25. Following a review of the types of impact on physical landscape resources, the conclusions on landscape sensitivity are then taken forward to address the impact and effect on landscape character.

Landscape Impacts

- 6.26. The following section describes the predicted changes to the physical landscape elements and features on the Site that will give rise to the subsequent perceived changes in landscape character.

Impacts on Physical Landscape Resources

- 6.27. Construction impacts will include initial ground clearance, and earthworks including the creation of built form platforms, some retaining walls to the west, and the new ditch line. These would be focused in the northern half of the Site
- 6.28. Construction impacts will also include the implementation of temporary measures such as site hoardings, temporary fencing, installation of a site office and welfare facilities, and vegetation/tree protection measures. These impacts will be temporary.
- 6.29. Impacts at completion are concerned with the long-term alteration in the landscape from the currently undeveloped context of the Site to the future scenario of the Proposed Development. The built form of the Proposed Development would be complete and would be a permanent component in the landscape.
- 6.30. At completion, and based on the proposed landscape strategy, the Proposed Development will comprise the built elements of the scheme in the north of the Site set within a framework of retained vegetation and new planting, together with the newly sown wildflower meadow and other peripheral structural landscape planting implemented as part of Proposed Development in the south of the Site, all to become fully established.

- 6.31. In the long term, impacts will be associated with the influence of mitigation measures on landscape character. This establishes the changes to landscape character as a result of built development but with proposed mitigation measures fully established and performing their intended function. The impacts are considered to be long term and not reversible.
- 6.32. In this context, physical landscape impacts are generally considered to be limited to changes within the Site, or on the immediate boundaries of the Site.
- 6.33. Some discreet localised earthworks related to the creation of practical development platforms and for the drainage will be required, however the overall profile of the landform will remain apparent.
- 6.34. Impacts will also be generated by the change in land use in the northern half from the current agricultural field to the residentially led development. However, this affects only part of the Site, with a large proportion to comprise wildflower meadow or retained as green infrastructure (including new additional landscape planting) which, notwithstanding potential changes in management, remain open and undeveloped.
- 6.35. Overall, the physical landscape impacts are considered to be direct, which would be limited to the extents of the Site and will form only a very small proportion of the wider Ancient Plateau Claylands LT.
- 6.36. These judgements are specific to the individual physical components of the landscape. The overall judgement of landscape impacts subsequently relates to how these components function together, and how they contribute to the character and appearance of the area, which is addressed in terms of the effects on landscape character.

Landscape Character Effects

- 6.37. In the context of the physical impacts considered above, the following sections set out an assessment of the likely landscape effects on the relevant landscape type and on the Site and its immediate context.

Appraisal of Landscape Character Effects

- 6.38. The likely landscape impacts described above will be concerned with the physical changes to the Site and the loss, or potential loss, of physical elements and features. Aside from the physical changes to land use, the landscape impacts would also be concerned with the perception of these changes and subsequent impact on the character and appearance of the landscape.
- 6.39. There will be very limited change to the underlying topography of the Site, restricted to the development envelope and Site access, with most of the Site retained as green infrastructure and remaining as per current levels. Overall, the landform will continue to read as part of the gently rising slope broadly to the western boundary.
- 6.40. The development envelope is located entirely within a single field compartment and therefore the scale and pattern of the landscape remains intact; furthermore, the proposals include for new hedgerow planting to define the Site's boundaries to the east and west, as well as between the proposed meadow and care development to define the retained open space and separate from the built form.

- 6.41. Whilst the physical changes would be limited to the Site area only, the perception of change in terms of landscape character will extend a very limited distance beyond the Site area. However, given the containment (physically and visually) by the existing settlement edge, the rising topography to the north, west and south, the perception of any change in character will be restricted and highly localised. This limits the magnitude of impact in terms of spatial area and scale.
- 6.42. Change to the character include the extension of the settlement edge into the current agricultural context in this small parcel of the wider Site area. However, such a change would be experienced against the backdrop of the existing and more elevated settlement edge. This settlement edge forms part of the baseline against which the impacts on the Site are set and consequently contributes to limiting the overall degree, or magnitude, of impact.
- 6.43. Open space, green infrastructure and landscape structure planting proposed as an inherent part of the Proposed Development will contribute to the mitigation of impacts of the built components of the Proposed Development.
- 6.44. In terms of mitigation inherent in the Proposed Development, additional benefits to existing landscape elements would be achieved through meadow creation and new planting to reflect local character as appropriate (including use of native species). The implementation of long-term management and maintenance plans would ensure that both existing and proposed landscape components continue to establish and mature to form additional screening and filtering around and within the Site. This filtering and layering of the landscape are current characteristics identified in published guidance.
- 6.45. With regard to the response of the scheme to the character of the Ancient Plateau Claylands LT, the Proposed Development responds to the gently undulating topography, strengthens woodland addresses and the large losses of hedgerows that the published guidance notes has occurred within the landscape. The landscape proposals seek to retain existing boundary landscape features, incorporating these into a reinforced and re-established hedged field pattern providing structure to the Site and definition to the development envelope. It also incorporates new woodland block planting that would connect into existing tree belts along the railway line.
- 6.46. The aims for the Ancient Plateau Claylands LT as set out in the published guidance are to retain, enhance and restore the distinctive landscape character, highlighting the need to strengthen green infrastructure, reinforce and enhance existing field boundaries and safeguard and plant existing and new woodland. The landscape strategy responds to all of these through the retention of existing ditches and vegetative features, implementation of new field boundary hedgerows, provision of a strong native structurally landscaped setting to built development, and new woodland planting connecting to existing tree belts.

Significance of Landscape Character Effects

- 6.47. Taken as a whole, and notwithstanding the outline nature of the application, the iterative design process followed and the resulting masterplan for the Proposed Development has sought to adopt a positive approach in landscape and visual terms.
- 6.48. The loss of part of a single agricultural field parcel to care accommodation built form; with remainder retained and enhanced as wildflower meadow together with some structural landscape planting; set against the existing backdrop of residential dwellings is largely the

main cause of impacts, both adverse and beneficial, respectively. There is also the creation of a new vehicular access onto School Road, however this would not necessitate the removal of any existing vegetation since the eastern boundary to the road is already open.

- 6.49. Adverse impacts are balanced by the beneficial effects arising within the scheme, including response to the pattern of the landscape and its scale, as well as to the characteristics of the landscape, including those recognised in published guidance. Where these are referenced, mitigation adopts an approach of retention and/or enhancement.
- 6.50. Notable positive impacts; more specifically comprising the creation of meadow grassland, implementation of new field boundary hedgerows and woodland creation to the north and south, as well as the structural landscaping and development planting throughout the development envelope and bordering it, particularly to the west and south.
- 6.51. The overall assessment of effects on landscape character is set out in the following table.
- 6.52. This accounts for the significance of effect at completion of the Proposed Development, and also a separate assessment of the Proposed Development after 15 years, when the mitigation proposals are likely to be fully established and performing their intended function (e.g. new landscape planting, seeding and habitat creation).

Table 7: Assessment of Landscape Effects

Landscape character	Sensitivity	Magnitude of impact		Significance of effect
Ancient Plateau Claylands LT	Medium	Completion	Negligible to Low	Minor Adverse
		Year 15	Negligible to Low	Negligible Adverse
Rolling Valley Farmlands & Furze LCT	Medium	Completion	None to Negligible	Negligible Adverse
		Year 15	None to Negligible	Neutral
Site and its immediate context	Medium	Completion	Medium	Moderate adverse
		Year 15	Medium	Minor adverse

- 6.53. The significance of effects reported above reflect an overall level of effect, i.e., being a balance of adverse and beneficial impacts considered likely to arise as a result of the Proposed Development.

7. ASSESSMENT OF VISUAL EFFECTS

Overview of Visual Sensitivity

- 7.1. The sensitivity of a visual receptor is a function of the value attached to a particular view balanced with the susceptibility of the visual receptor to changes in a view and/or visual amenity.
- 7.2. The criteria for the sensitivity of visual receptors are set out in the detailed methodology (**Appendix A**).

Visual Impacts

- 7.3. Visual impacts are considered separately to landscape impacts. For landscape impacts it is necessary to understand the combination of direct and indirect impacts on the landscape resources potentially affected by a proposed development and therefore it is possible to provide a description and overview of the key impacts that are likely to affect the study area.
- 7.4. However, for visual receptors it is necessary to understand the specific, direct impacts on each view. Therefore, the causes of impact are considered on the basis of individual receptors and are set out in the following sections as an integral part of the assessment of visual effects.
- 7.5. The visual receptors initially identified through desk study and the ZTV as potentially subject to experiencing change to their views as a result of the scheme were noted in the baseline section as primarily including:
 - Residents and road users along School Road;
 - New residents to the north of School Road and to the east of Parnell Lane;
 - Residents along Pightle Close (to the east of School Road);
 - Recreational receptors within open space to the north of Church Road;
 - PRoW users flanking the railway embankment approaching and crossing the Site;
 - Visitors to St John's Church;
 - Residents at the Almshouses, Church Road;
 - Users along Church Lane;
 - Road users around the Woolpit Interchange (A1088 / A14 junction);
 - Recreational and residential receptors on the northern edge of Woolpit;
 - Road users and select residents along Park Road to the west of Drinkstone;
 - PRoW users around Tostock;

- Travelers using the railway line between Thurston and Elmswell;
- Residents at Elmswell Hall;
- PRow users across farmland between Elmswell Hall and Norton Little Green;
- PRow users across relatively elevated farmland to the west of Ashfield Road; and
- Residents of Elmswell off St Edmund's Drive (to the north of the railway)

7.6. Following site survey work, the key receptors are considered to comprise:

- Residents and road users along School Road;
- New residents west of Parnell Lane fronting towards the Site;
- Select residents along Pightle Close;
- Recreational receptors within open space to the north of Church Road;
- PRow users crossing the Site and approaching from the west;
- Visitors to St John's Church;
- Residents at the Almshouses, Church Road; and
- Users along Church Lane.

7.7. Travellers on the railway line would have direct views of the Site. However, due to existing screening along the railway to the west, the fleeting experience of the Site within the view and the presence of close-range settlement adjoining the line within Elmswell already, it is considered that Proposed Development is unlikely to result in a material change to these transient views, particularly in the long-term when proposed woodland becomes established and screens views looking south as is already the case directly west of the Site.

7.8. There may also be some marginal and episodic views from PRow's across farmland at mid to long distance to the north, although visibility of the Proposed Development would be largely obscured by the railway embankment, the nature of the topography or intervening field boundary hedgerows and vegetation.

Visual Effects

7.9. The following section sets out the main visual impacts which are likely to be generated by the Proposed Development. This includes reference to the likely scale of effect on specific visual receptors.

7.10. Detailed assessment is set out in respect of individual viewpoint locations within the visual effects tables on the viewpoint photograph sheets (**Figure 6: Viewpoint Photographs**). These viewpoints represent a selection of potential visual receptors in the local landscape context, including where views are potentially available (with reference to the ZTV) and to address a range of receptor types and locations. The assessment is also supported by a number of verified views (photomontages) included at Appendix C).

7.11. The table below summarises the judgements on impacts and effect, with additional discussion on visual effects from broader groups of receptors set out in the following section (i.e. placing these specific viewpoint locations in context).

Table 8: Summary of visual effects

Viewpoint	Receptor(s) Sensitivity	Year 1		Year 15	
		Magnitude	Significance	Magnitude	Significance
1. View from Parnell Lane looking south-west from the north-east boundary of the Site	High (residential)	Medium / High	Moderate / Major Adverse	Medium / High	Moderate Adverse
	Medium (road)	Low / Medium to Medium / High	Minor Adverse to Moderate / Major Adverse	Low to Medium / High	Negligible / Minor Adverse to Moderate Adverse
2. View from definitive PRoW 'Elmswell 14' at short distance to the west of the Site, looking south-east	High	Medium	Moderate / Major Adverse	Medium	Minor Adverse
3. View from definitive PRoW 'Elmswell 14' at mid-distance to the west of the Site, looking south-east	High	Low / Medium	Moderate Adverse	Medium	Minor Adverse
4. View looking north from near St John's Church and almshouses immediately south of the Site	Medium (visitor)	Low	Minor Adverse	Low	Minor Adverse
	High (residents)	Medium	Moderate Adverse	Medium	Minor / Moderate Adverse
5. View looking north-east from Church Lane	Medium	Low / Medium	Moderate Adverse	Low / Medium	Minor Adverse
6. View from Heath Road at Junction 47 (Woolpit Interchange) of the A14, looking north-east	Medium	Low	Minor Adverse	Negligible / Low	Negligible Adverse

7. View looking north-northeast from unnamed lane near 'The Meade' on north of Drinkstone	Medium	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
8. View looking east from definitive PRoW 'Tostock 1' near Tostock	High	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
9. View looking south from definitive PRoW 'Norton 7' to the north-west of Elmswell Hall	High	Negligible to Low	Minor adverse	Negligible	Neutral / Negligible Adverse
10. View looking south-west from definitive PRoW 'Elmswell 1' west of Green Farm and Willow Farm	High	Negligible	Negligible Adverse	Negligible	Neutral / Negligible Adverse
11. View looking south-west from Definitive PRoW 'Elmswell 3' just west of Ashfield Road	High	Nil / Negligible	Nil / Negligible Adverse	Nil / Negligible	Neutral
12. View looking south from definitive PRoW 'Norton 35' to the east of The Grove (wood)	High	Negligible	Negligible Adverse	Negligible	Neutral
13. View looking south from definitive PRoW 'Norton 30' to the south of Norton Little Green	High	Negligible	Negligible Adverse	Negligible	Neutral
14. View looking north-west from public open space to the rear of School Road / Pightle Close	Medium (recreational)	Negligible to Low	Minor adverse	Negligible to Low	Negligible to Minor Adverse
	High (Residential)	Negligible to Low	Minor to Moderate Adverse	Negligible to Low	Minor Adverse

7.12. The likely notable visual impacts associated with the Proposed Development will therefore be limited to a restricted range of receptors in the immediate and local context of the Site. These primarily comprise:

- Existing residential receptors located immediately east of the Site: these comprise both the residents east of Parnell Lane and those further south along School Road.

The visual assessment for residents east of Parnell Lane are detailed at Viewpoint 1, whereby the built form would be visible at short-range, filtered by some open space and existing trees. In the long-term, proposed planting within open space in the north-east of the Site would be established and further soften views of the built form. There are judged to be only residences along School Road itself with potential direct views into the Site: these front onto the proposed wildflower meadow bound by new field hedgerows. Given the proposed built form would only be seen obliquely and the nature of the direct views remain open and agricultural with the positive impacts of new boundary planting, the magnitude of change would be Low with effects at completion of a Negligible Adverse significance on balance, increasing to a magnitude of Low to Medium and a Minor Beneficial level of significance in the long term as hedgerows become established and provide structure to the field directly in view.

- Road users approaching and passing the Site along School Road: taking into consideration the journey along this road passing the Site, the nature of the view and the associated impacts as a result of the Proposed Development would change depending upon the direction of travel and position along the road. Greatest adverse impacts of up to Moderate to Major significance would be experienced around and approaching the junction with Parnell Lane where built form would occupy and foreshorten the majority of the view, seen in the context of existing new dwellings opposite to the east. Conversely, travelling south, receptors would observe newly created wildflower meadow and field boundary hedgerows. While these may curtail views across the adjoining farmland over time, these would deliver structure locally within the landscape and represent positive change. Effects within these views are considered to be beneficial and of Minor significance.
- POS users off Church Road and adjoining select residents at Pightle Close: Glimpsed views through perimeter vegetation and dwellings would be possible for a small number of residents and open space users, largely looking towards the proposed meadow portion of the Site (to the west), but with partial views of the southern edge of the development envelope specifically to the north-west. These views already have a developed context, given the open space's enclosure by existing residences.
- PRoW users west of the Site: there is a single public footpath with direct views of the Site. As the path is perpendicular to the boundary, the Proposed Development would not alter the nature of views travelling west but would become increasingly apparent on the easterly approach. Impacts are represented by Viewpoints 2 and 3 and are considered to be up to Moderate to Major Adverse on completion, reducing to no greater than Minor Adverse in the long term: this is a reflection of the introduction of new built form seen in the context of the existing residential edge of the village on higher ground and defining the horizon, balanced against the positive impacts of informal green infrastructure proposals softening the built form over time and new hedgerows to the meadow field boundaries.
- PRoW users crossing the Site: Change to views would be of high magnitude at close-range to both sides of the path, and constituting development with foreground planting to the south, and new woodland planting to the north. On balance at completion the significance of effects on these views over a short distance would be up to Moderate to Major Adverse. As the planting to both the north and south of the path establishes; filtering views of development, brief Adverse effects would reduce to effects of up to Moderate significance, or less where passing through woodland.

- St John's Church and alms houses: the church grounds themselves are at least partially enclosed by perimeter existing trees and vegetation which notably filter views of the Site. The primary element of the Proposed Development comprises the wildflower meadow; change to views as a consequence of this being minimal. There may be some perception of proposals including the built form in the north of the Site. Effects are considered to be of Minor Adverse significance at the greatest, considering both the built form and positive contribution for new hedgerows and the wider framework of green infrastructure. This applies equally to residents' views from the alms houses, albeit their views are likely to be less obscured. From here, new planting within the south of the Site as well as more informal structural planting providing the framework for (and assimilation of) new build form) would be apparent, set beyond the wildflower meadow bound by hedgerows and trees. Effects on balance would therefore be Minor to Moderate Adverse.
- Receptors along Church Lane: from a section of this route where views unobstructed by earth banks up to the adjacent field, views of the Proposed Development would be direct. Beyond foreground fields would be the new meadow bound by hedgerows with new built form would sit in front of existing development and below the horizon.

- 7.13. The visual assessment has also considered the Important Views identified within the Elmswell Neighbourhood Plan (ENP) of relevance to the Site and Proposed Development. Views 1 and 2 are directly represented by Photomontages 1 and 2 in Appendix C, with a detailed analysis of change within views and anticipated impacts upon receptors at Viewpoint 4 included within the visual assessment and represented by Viewpoint 1. At the time of the site visit it was not possible to achieve viewpoint photography from IV4's exact location due to notable visual disruption by fencing and equipment associated with the constructor's compound for the new development east of Parnell Lane. As such Viewpoint 1 illustrates the closest representation of the view possible at the time.
- 7.14. The visual appraisal together with the photomontages show that the Proposed Development would not be discernible due to intervening vegetation and topography, even during the winter months in IVs 1 and 2. From IV4, the direction of view identified within the ENP has been preserved, with a careful approach to the built arrangement on the corner of School Road and a considered strategy of structural landscape and open space planning. The church would remain visible, together with its open agricultural setting enhanced with some woodland, hedgerow planting and wildflower meadow seeding.
- 7.15. In terms of the context for views and implications for judging the degree of change, the geographical extent of potential views of the Proposed Development is very limited and, in the majority of those locations, the existing residential edge is a prominent component.
- 7.16. This is demonstrated by reference to the representative viewpoints, where those assessed as having the highest significance of effect are effectively from the high sensitivity receptor groups of the public footpath approaching and crossing the Site and nearby residents. Elsewhere, beyond the short to middle distance visual effects are no greater than Negligible, or indeed, the Proposed Development is not visible or will be barely perceptible.
- 7.17. Furthermore, the visual assessment demonstrates the positive influence of mitigation that is inherent in the Proposed Development, with the assessment at Year 1 and Year 15 demonstrating a reduction in impact and effect. The ability to successfully mitigate potential impacts is a key consideration in respect of potential visual effects.

8. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

- 8.1. Pegasus Group has been instructed by Christchurch Land & Estates (Elmswell South) Limited (the applicant) to undertake a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) in relation to the Proposed Development of land to the west of School Road, Elmswell, Suffolk (hereafter referred to as the 'Site').
- 8.2. The LVIA has been prepared to address the potential landscape and visual impacts of an outline application, with all matters reserved except for access, for the development of a 66-bed care home together with 40 assisted-living dwelling, with associated internal vehicular routes and pedestrian links, parking, open space, and a scheme of strategic landscaping / green infrastructure including an area of publicly accessible meadow. Vehicular access is to be taken off School Lane relatively centrally along the eastern boundary of the Site.

Site Context

- 8.3. The Site consists of 11.5 hectares (Ha) of land situated on the western edge of Elmswell, a village in mid-Suffolk to the north of the A14 corridor between Bury St Edmunds to the west and Stowmarket to the south-east.
- 8.4. It occupies a single agricultural field currently under arable cultivation. To the east and south, the Site is defined by the existing settled edge of Elmswell and to the north by the embankment to the Bury St Edmunds to Ipswich railway line, with a local train station at Elmswell approximately 600m to the east of the Site. Land to the west is in arable cultivation.
- 8.5. The surrounding landscape context of the Site is influenced by the transition between the settlement edge of Elmswell and the wider landscape primarily to the west and to a degree the north-west. On its western edge Elmswell is characterised by the sloping nature of the land towards a field ditch (ultimately feeding into the Black Bourn to the west) before rising again to more elevated ground around Elmswell New Hall and Norton Wood, and is influenced by the presence of St John's Church near locally high ground to the south of the Site.

Policy and Designations

- 8.6. The Site itself is not subject to any formal landscape and visual designations. There are several listed buildings in the vicinity, comprising St John's Church and the adjacent Almshouses to the south, and Elmswell Hall just to the north of the railway line.
- 8.7. This LVIA includes reference to published landscape character assessments, and to the local landscape character by reference to the key characteristics of the Site and its immediate context, including existing, enhanced and potentially new green infrastructure. Therefore, this LVIA responds fully to the requirement of the PPG.
- 8.8. In response to relevant identified Core Strategy and Saved Policies G and as demonstrated through the consideration of landscape character and the landscape strategy, the proposals have sought to retain the local distinctiveness and character of the area and protect and enhance the landscape as a whole by responding to the Site's features, setting and surroundings, incorporating and reinforcing features that reflect its character and pattern.

- 8.9. The layout also safeguards the existing public right of way crossing the Site, delivers extensive new green infrastructure within the Site including public open space, and provides both formal and informal new pedestrian and cycle routes.
- 8.10. Proposals take careful account of the direction, scope, nature of and focuses or features within the three relevant Important Views (IVs) identified in the Elmswell Neighbourhood Plan. This has included retention of the open aspect of views looking south/south-west across the Site from School Road at identified Important View 4. This LVIA presents assessment of the impacts upon receptors at and in close proximity to IV4, and this report is also supported by photomontages generated from the locations of IV 1 and 2 to illustrate the impacts.

The Landscape Strategy

- 8.11. In response to the constraints, opportunities and likely impacts identified in the accompanying LVIA, the following components of the landscape strategy have been incorporated into the Proposed Development:
- Built form is restricted to the northern portion of the Site where it is well related to the existing settlement edge, and is broadly contained by the physical features of the railway embankment and existing residential development and topographical patterns.
 - built form is indicated as 'outward-facing' around the development envelope fringes, seeking to present a positive address to the landscape to the west and south, retain the existing avenue of trees along Parnell Lane and reflect the landscaped frontage of the new development opposite.
 - The development envelope integrates structural landscaping and incidental open space throughout, serving different functions such as the appropriate distribution of informal and formal planting and green space relative to the Site's context, visual amenity and recreational opportunities for occupants, and the softening of views towards the Proposed Development.
 - Omission of built development from the eastern corner to preserve the 'Important View' from the village, identified in the Elmswell Neighbourhood Plan. This is supported by the landscape proposals through the creation of open space with considered placement of new trees and hedgerows to 'frame' these sightlines.
 - Key structural landscape enhancements including the retention of tree specimens along the Site boundaries to be reinforced with new hedgerow planting, a continuation of the tree belt along the railway embankment within the north of the Site, and new woodland planting adjacent to existing established trees around St John's churchyard.
 - Further internal hedgerows would define and contain the southern edge of built development, and connect with perimeter hedge lines along the western and eastern boundaries to reinforce the existing field pattern and provide wildlife corridors. The 'sub-division' of the Site by hedgerows is also reflective of the historic field pattern within the Site, which formerly comprised several fields.
 - The alignment of the new surface water runoff ditch is integrated into the proposed green infrastructure framework along the southern edge of the development envelope.

- A new footpath link from north to south through the Site along the western boundary, connecting the existing PRoW to the north and Church Lane to the south.

8.12. Open space in the southern half of the Site delivering biodiversity enhancements, opportunities for informal public recreation, and an undeveloped and sympathetic setting to St John's Church, linking with green infrastructure along the north-western and north-eastern edges of the Site to the north. Proposals in the south comprise wildflower meadow creation with a series of mown paths, together with new community orchard, bee keeping and growing space for residents situated close to the new development.

Landscape Character

8.13. The LVIA has considered the published landscape character guidance applicable to the Site from National to Local level as part of the analysis of the context of the Site and the study area. The evaluation identified that the Site's immediate context shares a number of characteristics common across the referenced publications at their most detailed levels.

8.14. The key characteristics of the NCAs present useful background information to contextualise a Site and inform development proposals. However, as they address landscape character at a large scale across the wider region, in order to complete a more detailed appraisal of potential landscape and visual issues, published landscape character assessments prepared at the finest grain underpin the assessment.

8.15. At a District level, landscape character is described within the Joint Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council Landscape Guidance (2015). This provides descriptions and guidance for each character types (referred to as 'landscape typologies', or LTs). The Site and much of its immediate context lie within the 'Ancient Plateau Claylands' LT. Within Mid Suffolk, these are described as "gently rolling heavy clay plateaux with ancient woodland". The guidance also notes that the aim for this area of retention, enhancement and restoration of the distinctive landscape character, and draws attention to the need to strengthen green infrastructure, reinforce and enhance existing field boundaries and safeguard woodland areas.

8.16. The landscape immediately south of the Site transitions to the 'Rolling Valley Farmlands and Furze' LCT, which around Woolpit Heath is described as an 'area of change'. This LCT also includes clustered settlement (such as at Woolpit), good tree cover, fragmented woodlands.

8.17. Further detailed evaluation noted the characteristics identified in relevant landscape guidance exhibited by the Site and its immediate context:

- Flat or gently undulating arable landscape of clay soils;
- Frequently open views with some confinement by hedges and trees with some scattered woodland including ancient woodland, although the small valleys;
- Some more visually intimate routes where hedges enclose winding lanes and paths, contrasting with more open occasionally 'exposed' areas due to hedgerow losses;
- A fragmentary woodland cover, including scattered ancient woodland parcels;
- Dispersed settlement pattern of loosely clustered villages and hamlets; and
- Some major transport links (i.e., A14).

- 8.18. Overall, the scheme seeks to respond to and a degree restore and strengthen the apparent grain and pattern of the landscape through the implementation of a series of new boundary hedgerows in particular, as well as to the characteristics of the landscape at the most detailed level in published guidance.
- 8.19. Changes to the physical landscape resource would primarily comprise the loss of some agricultural land to accommodate the introduction of new care accommodation, public open space, additional structural landscape planting, sustainable drainage, habitat creation and community orchard planting and growing areas.
- 8.20. The character of the Site and its immediate context would alter from settlement fringe agricultural to a partially residential one with green space and structural landscaping, noting that just over half the Site would be remain agricultural albeit as publicly accessible meadow. It would retain and strengthen key characteristic features such as the inherent sloping / undulating topography, scattered boundary trees, and the boundary ditch with new hedgerows and blocks of woodland planting amongst other structural landscaping proposals.
- 8.21. The perception of change in landscape character terms would extend only a very limited distance beyond the Site due to both physical and visual containment of the Site within the local landscape.
- 8.22. Consequently, it is considered that development proposals within the Site would not result in a long-term impact significance upon the Ancient Plateau Claylands LT any greater than Negligible Adverse. The significance of effects would also reduce over time upon the Site and its immediate context as the landscape framework has established and matures: these effects would be of no greater than Minor Adverse significance on balance.

Visual Resources

- 8.23. Site work including photography was undertaken during winter months when screening from foliage was at its lowest, representing a 'worst-case scenario'. A series of viewpoints have been included to support the analysis of visual change that are representative of key visual receptors in the area (Figure 6: Viewpoint Photographs).
- 8.24. The extents of visibility of the Site are notably influenced by the enclosing nature of the topography together with the settlement edge and pattern of woodland. Views from the east and immediate south are generally limited to locations along the village's fringes, and to the north there may be some sporadic partial views of the Site which are generally otherwise screened by the railway embankment and intervening vegetation. Views from the west and south-west are limited by more subtle variations in landform combined with frequent scattered vegetation and blocks of woodland and typically within the Site's local context.
- 8.25. Consequently, views of the Site would be largely limited to the small valley in which the Site sits. To the east and south these would be restricted to locations along the fringes of the village, and to the west from local high ground on the opposite valley side near Elmswell New Hall. To the south-west views are focused along Church Road and roads around the Woolpit Interchange onto the A14. From the north there may be some select opportunities for partial views on locally highest ground where not screened by intervening vegetation.

8.26. Key receptors are identified as follows:

- Residents and road users along School Road;
- New residents west of Parnell Lane fronting towards the Site;
- Select residents along Pightle Close;
- Recreational receptors within open space to the north of Church Road;
- PRow users crossing the Site and approaching from the west;
- Visitors to St John's Church;
- Residents at the Almshouses, Church Road; and
- Church Lane users.

8.27. There may also be some marginal and episodic or brief views from PRowWs across farmland at mid to long distance to the north or from along the railway, although visibility of the Proposed Development would be largely obscured by the railway embankment, the nature of the topography or intervening field boundary hedgerows and vegetation and in the long term by proposed woodland planting.

8.28. Receptors experiencing greatest change to their views would comprise road users along School Road approaching and passing the Site, PRow users cross the Site and approaching from the west, and residents east of Parnell Lane and at the alms houses. In the longer terms, the significance of effects on these receptors is considered to be no greater than Moderate Adverse for a select number of residents orientated directly towards the Site or PRow users briefly crossing the Site, and Minor Adverse for road and PRow users approaching and passing the Site.

8.29. All other identified receptors would experience no, partial and / or oblique visibility of the Proposed Development, have views at long distance and impeded by intervening vegetation and other landscape elements, or would view the built form beyond new enhanced open space and structural landscape planting; in some instances, serving to soften the existing settled edge within views with Proposed Development sitting below the level of existing houses that define the horizon. either in terms of a portion of the built form, or primarily comprising the roofline. From these locations, effects would be Nil, Neutral or at greatest Minor Adverse.

Conclusion

8.30. Overall, it is considered that the Illustrative Layout for the Proposed Development incorporates a robust and extensive landscape mitigation strategy included as an inherent and well-integrated part of the scheme. This will avoid and minimise potential adverse effects. Furthermore, in the context of the limited and highly localised landscape and visual effects and the carefully designed and responsive landscape strategy, it is considered that the Proposed Development could be successfully integrated into the Site and its surrounding landscape.

Figures 1 to 8



Appendices

Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)
Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004

Birmingham (Sutton Coldfield)
5 The Priory, Old London Road, Canwell,
Sutton Coldfield B75 5SH
T 0121 308 9570
E Birmingham@pegasusgroup.co.uk
Offices throughout the UK & Ireland

Expertly Done.

DESIGN | ECONOMICS | ENVIRONMENT | HERITAGE | LAND & PROPERTY | PLANNING | TRANSPORT & INFRASTRUCTURE



All paper sources from sustainably managed forests

Pegasus Group is a trading name of Pegasus Planning Group Limited (07277000) registered in England and Wales.

Registered office: Querns Business Centre, Whitworth Road, Cirencester, Gloucestershire, GL7 1RT
We are ISO certified 9001, 14001, 45001



[Pegasus_Group](#)



[pegasusgroup](#)



[Pegasus_Group](#)

PEGASUSGROUP.CO.UK