



**Town and Country Planning (Inquiries Procedure) (England)
Rules 2000**

Call In Appeal
Six 56 Warrington

On behalf of Langtree PP and Panattone

Called-In planning application for the Land to the west of Junction 20 of the M6
Motorway and Junction 9 of the M56 Motorway and south of Grappenhall Lane and Cliff
Lane, Grappenhall, Warrington

LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY APPLICATION REFERENCE: 2019/34799

SECRETARY OF STATE'S REFERENCE: PCU/CONS/H4315/3244681
PLANNING INSPECTORATE'S REFERENCE: APP/M0655/V/22/3311877

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Landscape and Visual Impacts together with Design Matters
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Qualifications & Experience

My name is Carl Taylor. I hold a Bachelor of Arts degree with Honours in Landscape Architecture and a Graduate Diploma in Landscape Architecture. I am a Member of the Landscape Institute and a Chartered Landscape Architect. I have approximately 23 years experience as a practicing landscape architect within both Public and Private organisations. I have provided evidence at Inquiry previously for both Local Authorities, Mineral Authorities and Private Developers assessing the impacts of a broad range of projects which have included Industrial and commercial development and warehousing, residential developments, wind farms, and biomass power generation.

Most recently I have given evidence at the call in Inquiry for Parkside Colliery, a similar type of development in scale and purpose, where commercial distribution proposals were approved within a Green Belt location.

I am currently a Director of TPM Landscape, Chartered Landscape Architects and have experience in the field of landscape and visual assessment.

Whilst I am instructed by Langtree PP and Panattone I recognise that in providing evidence to an inquiry my duty is to provide my impartial professional view to the inquiry irrespective of by whom I am instructed.

TPM Landscape has worked over many years designing landscapes for commercial and industrial development and have worked with many large developers across the whole of the UK. I have been a Director of the firm from its establishment in 2001 and have led the development of both landscape and visual assessment and residential Masterplanning during this time. See Appendix 1 for further information.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 TPM Landscape was commissioned by Langtree PP and Panattone to review a landscape and visual assessment and ES in respect of the appeal and prepare a landscape proof of evidence. We were initially approached by the clients agents in December 2022 and given details of the case to review, having done this I determined that I was able to support the position of the previous LVIA / ES consultants and the client with regard to matters of landscape and visual amenity connection with the call in appeal.
- 1.2 My evidence will address landscape matters relating to the appeal; the submitted landscape proposals and assessment for the Site; and the reporting and determination by the Council.
- 1.3 I have considered the proposals independently but will seek to compare my finding with that of the LVIA / ES and discuss any differences or divergence to this original report. My evidence will discuss and seek to support both planning and heritage evidence to the Inquiry but it will be restricted to matters of landscape and visual amenity.

DUTY TO THE INQUIRY

- 1.4 I understand my duty to the Inquiry and have complied with, and will continue to comply with, that duty. I confirm that this evidence identifies all facts which I regard as being relevant to the opinions that I have expressed and that the Inspector's attention has been drawn to any matter which would affect the validity of those opinions. I believe that the facts stated within this evidence are true and that the opinions expressed are correct.

THE PROPOSALS AND THEIR WIDER CONTEXT WITHIN GREEN BELT

THE APPLICATION PROPOSAL

- 1.5 The application description is as follows:

The outline application (all matters reserved except for means of access) comprises the construction of up to 287,909m² (3,099,025ft²) (gross internal) of employment floorspace (Use Class B8 and B1(a) offices) demolition of existing agricultural buildings and associated servicing and infrastructure including car parking and vehicle and pedestrian circulation, alteration of existing access road into Site including works to the M6 J20 dumbbell roundabouts and realignment of the existing A50 junction, noise mitigation, earthworks to create development

platforms and bunds, landscaping including buffers, creation of drainage features, electrical substation, pumping station, and ecological works

- 1.6 The application is made in outline form and reserves all matters except Means of Access. Details of the “*parameters*” which will control the nature of the Application proposals are set out in the SoCG (paras 3.1 to 3.5)
- 1.7 The Secretary of State called in the Application proposals by letter dated 22nd November 2022.

OTHER EMPLOYMENT SITES (CD 4.128-4.132)

- 1.8 This proposal sits alongside a series of similar applications for employment land within Green Belt in the north west of England and along the M6 corridor. The Inspector will hear evidence that this proposal represents a continuing need for such Sites to come forward to support the ongoing health and growth of the North West economy.
- 1.9 The scale and nature of such Sites, (typically requiring large square footage warehousing and access to the motorway network) limits the number of available Sites, often with those suitable being found within areas of existing Green Belt.
- 1.10 During 2020/21, The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, gave direction on five planning applications for industrial and logistics development proposals, which were referred to him, instead of being dealt with by local planning authorities
- 1.11 These five Sites that the SoS considered were: **Land at Junction 25** of the M6 Motorway, Wigan; **Land to West of Wingates Industrial Estate**, Bolton; **Omega**, St Helens; **Former Parkside Colliery** Newton Le Willows; and **Haydock Point**, St Helens.
- 1.12 All of these Sites are located within Green Belt, and all but one of these Sites were approved, demonstrating that when considering such development within the wider Regional economic and environmental landscape the inevitable landscape and visual harms that follow from large scale logistics and employment development can be overcome.
- 1.13 In considering the openness of Green Belt, the SoS found that all of the considered developments would lead to an impact on openness that creates Substantial weight.

- 1.14 This harm was characterised in the SoS decisions by reference and language referring back to the landscape and visual assessments for the developments. All of these Sites considered by the SoS are located within Green Belt.

Land at Junction 25

- 1.15 The SoS found harm to the openness of the Green Belt, which would be localised and moderate upon completion and that structural landscaping would mitigate the impact on openness in the medium-long term. This carried substantial weight in the final planning balance.

Land to West of Wingates Industrial Estate

- 1.16 The SoS found Moderate-significant harm which carried substantial negative weight in the final planning balance.

Land at Omega

- 1.17 The SoS found significant harm to openness that would conflict with some of the purposes of including land in the Green Belt. These harms carried substantial negative weight in the final planning balance.

Former Parkside Colliery including Link Road

- 1.18 The SoS found harm to the openness of the Green Belt, but that the harm was reduced by the characteristics of the Site, including its urbanised legacy. The harm to openness would be significant but fairly localised in its extent and that structural landscaping would help to mitigate the impact such that the harm would reduce to moderate in the medium to long-term.
- 1.19 Concluded moderate harm to Openness and Green Belt purpose and that these harms carried substantial weight in the overall Green Belt balance.

Haydock Point

- 1.20 The SoS found a very significant impact on the openness of the Green Belt. The loss of the essential and fundamental openness of the Green Belt carried substantial weight against the appeal.
- 1.21 Development was found to cause a significant measure of harm to the purpose of the Green Belt to prevent urban sprawl and would also compromise, to some

extent, the purpose of the preventing neighbouring towns from merging. The built development would encroach blatantly into the countryside of rural St Helens, in further contravention of the purposes of including land in the Green Belt.

Conclusion of Other Call In Sites and SoS decisions

- 1.22 The SoS approved all of the above developments apart from Haydock Point. All of these developments were found to bring some aspect of harm to the openness of the Green Belt and in some circumstances impacts on the purposes of Green Belt.
- 1.23 Haydock point stands out as being the only one of these decisions which found harm to a number of Green Belt purposes as well as the openness of the Green Belt. Noticeably harm to the purposes 1 and 2 (to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas; to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another) as well as purpose 3 (encroachment) which is commonly a purpose that is compromised across all of the proposed development discussed above due to the nature and scale of the developments.
- 1.24 I will be offering evidence to the Inspector in this appeal to demonstrate that this development proposal does create some harm to the openness of the Green Belt but that this is limited to within 1km from the centre of the Proposal Site and corresponds broadly with a zone of influence that is assessed as experiencing significant visual effects. I believe this is no greater a level of harm than that considered acceptable for the other approved logistics Sites listed above.
- 1.25 I have worked alongside and offered supporting information by way of landscape and visual assessment to Mr David Rolinson who concludes that the proposed development will only affect one of the purposes of Green Belt (purpose 3 Encroachment). I concur with his assessment on this matter.

OTHER APPLICATIONS SITES CONSIDERED FOR CUMULATIVE EFFECTS

- 1.26 The original LVIA / ES considered a number of other application Sites for potential cumulative effects. These were agreed with the LPA as [art of a wider list of potential cumulative developments. I consider these in section 6.6.

SCOPE OF EVIDENCE

- 1.27 As part of the preparation of this proof of evidence I have examined relevant application documents and the comments and observations made to date .
- 1.28 In support of this process I have visited the Site and carried out my own assessment of both the landscape of the Appeal Site and the surrounding area, and visited and recorded views from receptors
- 1.29 In this proof I intend to briefly summarise the key aspects of relevant landscape-related policies with which the proposals should align.
- 1.30 I then set out my analysis of the landscape and visual baseline against which any landscape change and change to views and visual amenity are to be judged,
- 1.31 My evidence will include an analysis of the landscape and visual assessment work to date and the apparent design rationale demonstrated in the proposed layout and Masterplan offered. I will also consider the observations and reports of the Local Authority officers on the relevant planning applications and any comments and representations of local people and groups as well as offering my own opinion.
- 1.32 My evidence will also consider the Green Belt and matters relating to the appropriateness of development over the Site including the developments impact upon openness.
- 1.33 Finally I will consider the potential cumulative effects off the appeal proposal as combined with other neighbouring proposed developments.

2.0 THE PROPOSAL SITE

- 2.1 The application Site is 98ha, the majority of which is located within the borough of Warrington, (92.16ha) with a small area of 5.93ha located in the borough of Cheshire East. Cheshire East Council granted planning permission for the development of the part of the Site within its boundary on 19 May 2022
- 2.2 The Site lies north of the M56 motorway and west of the M6 motorway. Beyond the Site's western boundary is the existing Appleton Thorn Trading Estate.

Beyond the northern boundary of the application Site are a number of scattered residential properties.

- 2.3 The Site and its immediate surroundings are relatively rural in character and is predominantly farmland with a medium sized field structure. There is a dense hedgerow structure and occasional woodland blocks or copses are regular and consistent features in the landscape giving it a coherent structure and appearance. There are wooded areas within the Site including Bradley Gorse and Wrights Covert in the south-eastern portion of the Site.
- 2.4 Bradley Farm, located off Cliff Lane, comprises two houses (Bradley Hall farmhouse and the Bungalow) and farm buildings. Bradley Hall itself is a moated Site and a Scheduled Ancient Monument. The application Site excludes Bradley Hall Cottages and Bradley View, which are to the north of Bradley Hall farmhouse and on the west side of the existing access road from Cliff Lane
- 2.6 To the north, the land slopes gently towards Grappenhall and is attractive rural countryside, which from certain locations offers longer distance views towards the north and east. Vegetation associated with highways infrastructure limits views both into and out from the Site. Views south are similarly rural in nature but are largely screened from extending beyond the M56 Motorway. Views east are also generally contained by vegetation associated with the M6 Motorway and the woodland blocks within the Site.
- 2.7 Views from south of the M56 Motorway are generally not available due to the density of hedgerow vegetation, woodland blocks and copses, as well as mature vegetation along the M56 Motorway.
- 2.8 to the north of the Site, the land is generally farmland with few properties until Grappenhall and has far fewer roads crossing the area than to the south. Existing large scale buildings associated with adjacent industrial parks and dense vegetation around the M6 and M56 motorways to the west and east of the Site provide visual containment.

HISTORIC LANDSCAPE

- 2.15 Bradley Hall moated Site is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM) located within the Site boundary, to the eastern part of the Site, adjacent to the farm buildings. It comprises the buried and earthwork remains of a medieval moated Site for a

medieval manor house, which is to be retained. The moated island is partly occupied by the farm house associated with Bradley Hall Farm, which is excluded from the Scheduling, but will be retained and subject of a separate change of use application

- 2.16 A development offset of 30m around the Scheduled Ancient Monument has been installed to protect the setting of the monument itself and the sense of openness to allow appreciation of the monument.

3.0 THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT (CD 4.16-4.44)

- 3.1 The proposals are for the creation of a large area of employment warehousing and offices with supporting infrastructure which includes roadways, parking and landscaping. The proposals have been developed around a set of parameters. These parameters Plans respond to specific, key elements of the schemes proposals. Many of the parameters Plans have evolved through iterative development.

- 3.2 The arrangement of the Site has been heavily influenced by the presence of the Scheduled Ancient Monument on Site, the neighbouring land uses, including the sensitive residential receptors, the strong transport links and facilities that establish a series of hard boundary conditions, Site topography and geological features, and substantial landscape features including Bradley Gorse and Bradley Brook to the immediate South East of the Development Site.

- 3.3 The proposed parameters are grouped into a series of key themes and are identified across the suite of Parameter Plans, These themes are as follows:

- Development Cells – Developable areas across the Site and associated Site areas. The developable areas exclude constraints and safeguarded areas.
- Disposition – Land use and disposition of uses across the Site, number of units, building heights, finished floor levels, floor space and car parking provision.
- Green Infrastructure – strategic landscaping, open green corridor, ecological mitigation, buffers and bunds, retained vegetation.

- Access and Circulation – points of access into the Site, improvements to A50 junction and M6 J20 dumbbell roundabouts including existing, proposed and diverted footpaths and cycleways and areas safeguarded for potential highway improvements.
- Drainage – including details proposed drainage strategy
- Noise – including areas identified for noise mitigation
- Building Heights – zonal areas identifying maximum building heights across the Site
- Heritage – buffers to Heritage Asset
- Demolition – buildings proposed for demolition

3.4 The proposed parameter and Site masterplan are found in Appendix_3.3 and the ES.

3.5 Across the Site, built form will range from 12.5m to 26.5m to haunch and 16m to 30m to ridge. The upper range of building heights will be located to the east and south of the Site and the lower range to the north and west of the Site where the building heights impact is at its least. Zone A will have a maximum of 12.5m (to haunch above FFL). In Zone C and the northern part of Zone B there will be a maximum of 15m (to haunch) above FFL. In the southern part of Zone B there will be buildings ranging from a maximum of 26.5m to 18.5m (to haunch) above FFL and in Zone D a maximum of 18.5m (to haunch) above FFL.

4.0 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

4.1 Planning matters are dealt with by Mr David Rolinson. I set out the planning background that I consider relevant to the development and assessment of the Appeal Site and proposals.

4.2 I believe the relevant planning policies with regard to landscape and visual matters are: Chapter 15 of the NPPF (21), policies CC2, QE3 and QE7 of the Core Strategy/ Local Plan and policies AT-D1 and AT-D2 of the Neighbourhood Plan . Chapter 13 of the NPPF deals with Green Belt matters.

National Planning Policy Framework (2019)

4.3 National Planning Policy Framework ('NPPF' or 'the Framework') sets out the Government's economic, environmental and social planning policies for England to support sustainable development and sets out how its priorities are expected to be applied.

- 4.4 The original 2012 Framework was comprehensively updated in 2018 and revised in 2019 and again in 2021. Though the term “golden thread” is no longer present, the Framework continues to expect decisions to apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Chapter 13 Protecting Green Belt land

- 4.5 Central to the appeal is the consideration of the impact of development on the Green Belt. Paragraph 137 states;

‘The Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristic of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.’

- 4.6 Paragraph 147 tell us that;

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

- 4.7 Paragraph 149 opens;

‘A local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt.’

Chapter 15 Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

- 4.8 Paragraph 174 states;

‘Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

- a) Protecting and enhancing valued landscapes ... (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);*
- b) Recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, ...*
- d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;*
- f) remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated land and unstable land, where appropriate.’*

LOCAL PLANNING POLICY

- 4.9 Policy CC2 of the Core Strategy states that development proposals in the countryside which accord with Green Belt policies will be supported subject to a number of factors including that they respect local landscape character.
- 4.10 Policy QE3 of the Core Strategy sets out the focus for the assessment of applications in relation to green infrastructure, including protecting and improving access to and connectivity between existing and planned provision to develop a continuous greenway network.
- 4.11 Policy QE7 of the Core Strategy states that the Council will look positively upon proposals that are designed to maintain and respect the landscape character and, where appropriate, distinctiveness of the surrounding countryside.
- 4.12 Policies AT-D1 and AT-D2 of the Neighbourhood Plan. AT-D1 states that development will be expected to take account of factors including respecting local settings and landscaping and ensuring landscape design is appropriate.
- 4.13 Policy AT-D2 sets out design principles including seeking to preserve and enhance the character of the village and surrounding scattered rural settlements and farmsteads; conserve and enhance important local landscape features and retain mature and established trees where possible; and preserve the settings of open landscapes, avoiding where possible the siting of development in highly visible and intrusive positions or where it is unrelated to existing built development or landscaper features.
- 4.14 The Proposal Site has until recently benefited by being part of an allocated employment area which was originally part of the Warrington Garden Suburb Development Framework which more recently has been referred to as the South East Urban Extension (formerly the Garden Suburb). Changes to this and its relationship with the Local Plan (currently under review in regard to both housing and employment land) have led the Council to remove this allocation from the extant proposals plan.

GREEN BELT

- 4.15 There have been several Green Belt assessments prepared to support development proposals and the emerging local plan that have considered the Green Belt of and surrounding the Proposal Site. The evolution of the Warrington Green Belt and how it was considered within the evidence base documents for

the draft versions of the Warrington Local Plan. Is considered in detail in Mr David Rolinson in his Appendix DR11.

- 4.16 In these previous assessments the general area of the Green Belt within which the Application Site sits was classified as making a “*weak*” contribution to Green Belt overall, one of only two areas to be categorised as such. It was at this time proposed for release from the Green Belt and allocation for employment purposes in the Publication Draft Local Plan.
- 4.17 Within subsequent updated Green Belt Assessments (2021 CD 4.54&4.99), the Proposal Site was classified as making a “*moderate*” overall contribution to the Green Belt which is a lesser impact than the adjacent parcel (Liberty Site, which was the subject of a Secretary of State decision in November 2020) and which has a “*strong*” overall contribution to the Green Belt. The 2021 Assessment concluded that the release of the wider employment Site would result in some encroachment into the countryside but that it would not represent unrestricted sprawl; would have no impact on preventing neighbouring towns from merging; and have no impact on historic towns. It is concluded that the Site is reasonably well contained and that removal of the draft allocation area from the Green Belt “*will not harm the overall function and integrity of the Warrington Green Belt*”.
- 4.18 I briefly review this assessment of the proposals potential effect over the Green Belt in section 7 and also consider the effect on the openness of the Green Belt.

5.0 LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL ASSESSMENT - BASELINE

- 5.1 The Site and proposals have been subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment that included Landscape and Visual Assessment supporting planning application (CD 4.5). I have considered this documentation in preparing this proof of evidence and have broadly followed the same approach and methodology adopted by the previous assessors.
- 5.2 In the following sections I will describe the characteristics of the Site and its surroundings and by extension the study area considered appropriate for the EA LVIA work. I will then seek to consider my own view as to the susceptibility and value of both the landscape and visual amenity before coming to a conclusion as to the sensitivity of these receptors and to the change proposed. Finally I will consider the impact and effects of the proposals and offer a comparison between my assessment and that of the application LVIA where there are differences.

SITE CONTEXT – LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT

- 5.3 Within the National Character Area (NCA) classification the Site falls within NCA 60: Mersey Valley (October 2013) and sits immediately adjacent to NCA 61: Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain.

SUMMARY OF NCA 60 (CD4.49)

- 5.4 The Mersey Valley National Character Area (NCA) consists of a wide, low-lying river valley landscape focusing on the River Mersey, its estuary, associated tributaries and waterways. It is a varied landscape that extends from the mosslands near the Manchester Conurbation NCA in the east, to the Merseyside Conurbation NCA and the wide estuary with intertidal mudflats/sand flats and salt marsh in the west. The River Mersey is tidal from Howley Weir in Warrington.
- 5.5 The area encompasses a complex mix of extensive industrial development and urban areas, with high-quality farmland in between. Farmland in the north of the Mersey Valley NCA is predominantly arable, while in the south there is a mix of arable and pasture. Field pattern is regular and large scale, often defined by degraded hedgerows with isolated hedgerow trees. In the east, open, flat farmland is found on the rich, dark peaty soils of the former mosses, with a complex network of drainage ditches. Urban and industrial developments line the banks of the River Mersey. Industrial infrastructure is often prominent, with large-scale, highly visible development including chemical works and oil refineries.
- 5.6 The Manchester Ship Canal links the estuary to the heart of Manchester, perpetuating the industrial development of the area. There is a dense communication network of major roads, railways, canals and transmission lines. The urban and suburban areas provide housing for those working in neighbouring conurbations, as well as in the industries of the Mersey Valley
- 5.7 Key challenges include integrating the development pressures associated with the towns, industry and transport, with the protection and enhancement of the landscape and the internationally significant habitats. Understanding, planning for and adapting to climate change.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF NOTE

- 5.8 The following characteristics are included:

- The landscape is low-lying, focusing on the broad linear valley of the River Mersey; it is estuarine in the west and has extensive areas of reclaimed mossland in the east.
- The River Mersey flows from east to west, joined by associated tributaries, although the Mersey itself is often obscured from view.
- Trees and woodland are mainly associated with settlements, occasional parkland and isolated woodland blocks; and in recent years new community woodlands have been planted.
- Large-scale, open, predominantly flat, high-quality farmland occurs between developments, with primarily arable farming to the north of the valley and a mixture of arable and dairying to the south.
- The field pattern is regular and large scale, often defined by hedgerows with isolated hedgerow trees; many hedgerows are intermittent and have been replaced by post-and-wire fencing, while field boundaries on the mosses are marked by ditches.
- A range of important wetland habitats remain, including estuarine mudflats/sand flats and fringing salt marshes in the west, remnants of semi-natural mosslands and pockets of basin peats in the east, with the broad river valley in between.
- The predominant building material is red brick though some sandstone construction remains, and some survival of earlier timber frame.
- There are densely populated urban and suburban areas, with major towns particularly at the river crossings, including Runcorn, Widnes and Warrington.
- There is large-scale, highly visible industrial development, with docks, chemical works and oil refineries.
- The river valley has a dense communication network with motorways, roads, railways and canals running east–west, and power lines are also prominent.

KEY ISSUES FROM SEO's (Statement of Environmental Opportunities)

- 5.9 SEO1: Conserve and enhance the Mersey Valleys rivers, tributaries and estuary for example by: optimising design and implementation of future flood storage areas to create new wetlands, maintaining and enhancing semi-natural grassland, flood meadows and wet grasslands associated with river flood plains, and managing and enhancing habitats such as wetlands and grasslands to capture sediments and contaminants before they enter water courses.
- 5.10 SEO2: Promote the Mersey Valleys' historic environment and landscape character and positively integrate the environmental resource with industry and development, providing green space within development for example by: integrating green infrastructure into industrial development, developing networks

of linear habitats to link with the wider countryside, creating new woodlands to help assimilate new infrastructure and by developing SUDS in new development.

- 5.11 SOE3: Manage the arable and mixed farmland along the valley, create semi-natural habitats, woodlands and ecological networks to protect soils and water, enhance biodiversity, increase connectivity and improve the character of the landscape for example by: connecting fragmented habitats into a more cohesive whole, restoring and enhancing hedgerows, boundary trees field margins, protecting woodlands and encouraging opportunities to improve, maintain and expand habitats such as woodlands, grasslands and wetlands.

SUMMARY OF NCA61 (CD 4.50)

- 5.12 A small area of the Site and a larger part of the study area fall within this NCA that lies to the south. The Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain National Character Area (NCA) comprises most of the county of Cheshire, the northern half of Shropshire and a large part of north-west Staffordshire. This is an expanse of flat or gently undulating, lush, pastoral farmland, which is bounded by the Mersey Valley NCA in the north, with its urban and industrial development, and extending to the rural Shropshire Hills NCA in the south.
- 5.13 The NCA is important for food production. Throughout the plain, the water retention and fertility of the clay soils support lush pastures for grazing dairy cattle. There are a number of dairy processors making a range of dairy products that include ice cream and Cheshire cheese. The lighter soils in Staffordshire and parts of Shropshire support more mixed farms, combinable crops and potatoes in rotation.
- 5.14 The presence of large conurbations and the dense network of roads mean that development pressures are likely to continue. These pressures have the potential to further fragment habitats and change settlement patterns and the vernacular, but can also provide opportunities to create a high-quality built environment with multifunctional greenspace with links to the rural area.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF NOTE

5.15 the characteristics include:

- Extensive, gently undulating plain, dominated by thick glacial till from the late Pleistocene Period, producing productive, clay soils and exemplifying

characteristic glacial landforms including eskers, glacial fans, kettle holes, moraines and a landscape of meres and mosses.

- Few woodlands, confined to the area around Northwich and to estates, cloughs and deciduous and mixed woods on the steeper slopes of the wind-swept sandstone ridges. Locally extensive tracts of coniferous woodland and locally distinctive orchards scattered throughout.
- Strong field patterns with generally well-maintained boundaries, predominantly hedgerows, with dense, mature hedgerow trees. Sandstone walls occur on the ridges and estate walls and Cheshire-style (curved topped) metal railing fences occur locally on estates in Cheshire.
- Dairy farming dominates on the plain, with patches of mixed farming and arable in the north and large areas in the south-east.
- Diversity of wetland habitats includes internationally important meres and mosses comprising lowland raised bog, fen, wet woodland, reedbed and standing water, supporting populations of a host of rare wildlife, including some species of national and international importance.
- Rich archaeological evidence of iron-age hill forts concentrated on the sandstone ridges and the Weald Moors. Remnant ridge and furrow and moated houses are features of the plain. The Roman road, Watling Street, crosses the plain linking London to Wales via Wroxeter. Chester was an important Roman settlement.
- Regularly spaced, large farmsteads, dispersed hamlets, market towns and many other settlements including Macclesfield and Telford. Timber-frame buildings are a distinctive feature of the plain, often highly decorated in Cheshire, for example, the moated Little Moreton Hall. The historic towns including Stafford, Shrewsbury and the city of Chester have a wealth of 17th- and 18th-century half-timber, brick and red sandstone buildings.
- Parklands and gardens associated with estates such as Chillington, Trentham, Tatton and Attingham; country houses such as Gawsworth Hall, Arley Hall and Adlington Hall; and fortified manor houses and castles such as at Shrewsbury, Stafford, Beeston, Acton Burnell and Cholmondeley.

KEY ISSUES FROM SEO

- 5.16 SEO 2: Protect the landscape of the plain, recognising its importance to food production and incorporating well-maintained hedgerows, ponds and lowland grassland margins within agricultural systems, to secure resource protection and maintain productivity, while reducing fragmentation of semi-natural habitats to benefit a wide range of services, such as landscape character, sense of place, water quality and biodiversity.

- 5.17 SEO 3: Manage and restore lowland heathland and ancient and plantation woodland, support partnerships to plan appropriately scaled new woodland cover, particularly where this will link and extend existing woodlands, restore and reinstate traditional orchards and increase biomass provision to mitigate the impact of climate change, where this will benefit biodiversity, landscape character and enhance the experiential qualities of the area

LOCAL / REGIONAL LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENTS

A LANDSCAPE CHARACTER APPRAISAL OF WARRINGTON 2007 (CD 4.51)

- 5.18 A more detailed character study is provided by Warrington: A Landscape Character Assessment undertaken by Agathoclis Beckmann Landscape Architects (2007). The Site lies wholly within landscape type 1 Undulating Enclosed Farmland sub-type 1B Appleton Thorn. It is bounded to the north by landscape type 4 Level Areas of Farmland and Former Airfields sub-types 3A Appleton Park and Grappenhall and 3B Massey Brook.
- 5.19 A small portion of the Site lies outside Warrington BC and within Cheshire East Councils boundary, (see Appendix 3.5). The landscape character study for Cheshire East, Cheshire East Landscape Character Assessment LUC (May 2018 CD 4.52 & 4.54) identifies this area as being within Landscape Type Lower Wooded Farmland 7a: Arley. The overall type covers a wide area extending from Arley in the north and as far south as Audlem. It is described as a gently rolling landscape with concentrations of woodland and nucleated hamlets and villages. Forces for change include: continued pressure for development and the loss of historic field pattern. Landscape management guidance for such a wide area is varied but of note are: avoiding development in visually prominent locations; protecting the overall wooded character of the type; and retaining the overall sense of enclosure, screening the visual and audible effects of existing and new intrusive features within the landscape where possible.

UNDULATING ENCLOSED FARMLAND – 1B APPLETON THORN

- 5.20 This is the largest area of landscape type within the Borough. It includes a large arc of land between Burtonwood and Glazebrook to the north and north-east, a further large area of land to the south combining the areas of Hatton and Stretton, (south of the Red Sandstone Escarpment) and a smaller area of land to the west, in Penketh.
- 5.21 This landscape type is characterised almost entirely by arable farming with medium to large fields divided by hawthorn hedges. Many hedges and hedgerow

trees have been lost in recent historic times as farmers have sought to produce more economically viable fields. Without stock, the need to maintain the hedgerows has been lost, often resulting in fragmented remnant hedge lines. The need for hedgerow trees has also been lost (as a source of shelter and firewood) and trees are notably fewer than in other areas.

5.22 The gently undulating ground can often be seen over a single or a group of fields, forming a subtle but characteristic 'wave' to views of cropped or ploughed landscape. There are often superb views out from these areas, particularly to the Pennines to the east and to the Red Sandstone Escarpment to the south.

LCA 1B APPELTON THORNE

5.23 The Site lies wholly within this landscape character area apart from very small sections of land to the north (within Appleton and Grapenhall) and to the south (within LFW3 Arley character area)

5.24 The area contains a larger scale of landscape relative to the adjoining Hatton area. To the north lies the gentle crest of the Red Sandstone Escarpment, with the land notably falling back to the south. In common with the adjoining Hatton area, it is split into two halves by the M56, running in an east-west direction.

5.25 Farmland is generally undulating and slopes down to reasonably level areas of mosslands known as Appleton and Stretton Moss. Agriculture is mainly arable and is characteristically composed of very large fields with a sparsity of hedgerows.

5.26 Settlement is mainly represented by the attractive village centre of Appleton Thorn, highlighted by its church tower set on the ridgeline and by the 'village extension' of Appleton Thorn Trading Estate. Farm complexes tend to be larger than those found on surrounding areas, possibly reflecting the improved agricultural production related to the mosslands.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF NOTE

5.27 the characteristics include:

- Broad expansive agricultural landscape lacking hedgerows
- Strong visual and audible effect of M56
- Noticeably gently sloping land to the south
- Views of Pennine skyline to the east

- Skyline imposition of commercial development on ridgeline at Appleton Thorn
- Ridgeline feature of Appleton Thorn church tower

5.28 To the east of the village is the large Barleycastle Trading Estate, based on land which was formerly part of the Stretton Airfield, having been cut off from the rest of the airfield through the construction of the M56 motorway. This is a large mixed use Trading Estate with large, metal clad units and with secure yards. There is a considerable volume of large articulated tractor units using this estate, but the bulk of such traffic exits to the north and then onto the M6 / M56 junction.

5.29 North of the Barleycastle Trading Estate is the Appleton Thorn Trading Estate, a smaller mixed use Trading Estate. This estate does have a major visual impact on the area, being located directly on the ridgeline of the escarpment.

5.30 Key cultural elements in the landscape:

- The Thorn Tree and 'The Thorn' public house
- St Cross Church
- The M56 motorway
- The M6 motorway
- Appleton Thorn prison, formerly accommodation for Stretton Airfield
- Barleycastle Trading Estate and Appleton Thorn Trading Estate
- Bradley Hall Farm

CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL RESOURCE

5.31 Appleton is an ancient village forming part of the parish of Great Budworth. It appears in the Domesday Book as 'Epeltune' – the tun of the apples. It belonged to Geoffrey Dutton during the reign of Henry II but much later passed, together with Budworth, to Sir Peter Warburton. The village continued its association with the Egerton Warburton family into recent times, their seat being at Arley Hall, some three miles to the south. It was known as the Higher Town of Appleton to distinguish it from Appleton Lower Town, but has since come to be known as Appleton Thorn.

5.32 Running through Appleton from east-west was the road running along the ridgeline from Lymm to Chester, now the B5356. The Arley Road from the south and Lumb Brook Road from the north met in the centre of the village. In the C18th, to the north-west of this junction was 'The Thorn' public house with two smithies on the opposite corners.

- 5.33 Bradley Hall, an attractive group of farm buildings is Sited on the summit of the escarpment. An ancient moated Site lies in the grounds. The Site is very similar to that at the nearby Reddish Hall. Moss Hall, another attractive farmstead lies in the south of this area, on the western side of Stretton Moss.

LANDSCAPE VALUE

- 5.34 The landscape value is not discussed within the published landscape character assessment but is considered within the ES, generally for the Site and also as part of the landscape resource assessed. The ES comments as follows:

The Site is not within a designated landscape and the only designation within the study area is the Scheduled Ancient Monument of Bradley Hall moated Site, (see Appendix _3.2) The Site itself is currently within Green Belt within the Local Plan Core Strategy (July 2014) and saved proposals Map. The Site, however, forms part of a wider area identified for future growth within the emerging new Local Plan (Preferred Options Consultation – July 2017) as a Site for employment and a future Site of possible development.

In terms of local, undesignated value, the Site is currently farmland, which is accessible via PROW. The Site is also visible from the roads around the Site, particularly to the north and east where views into and across the Site can be glimpsed. In view of the above, Landscape Value is considered to be Medium. (CD 4.5 Ref-ES paragraph 7.4)

- 5.35 I would concur with this view and would consider the landscape value for the Site and the landscape character area 1B Appleton Thorne to be Moderate (as TPM Methodology Appendix _4) being a landscape of local importance with some visual character but also with detracting and degraded features.

SUSCEPTIBILITY ANND SENSITIVITY TO CHANGE

- 5.36 Although not stating a level or grade of sensitivity the report does outline a number of factors and key elements that define the sensitivity of the landscape. These are summarised below:

The Stretton and Appleton areas present a broader scale, more open landscape in comparison to the adjoining Hatton area. Dividing field boundaries have been lost to form larger fields and more extensive field patterns. More recent, starkly intrusive development has also taken place on the skyline crest. The original,

attractive village centre of Appleton Thorn has greatly expanded to include new housing estates, whilst an expansive industrial and warehousing estate has also been amalgamated with the old village centre to the south.

The original focal point and landmark of Appleton Thorn Church has now been joined by both new housing and large warehouse blocks which break the skyline crest

Agricultural use is mainly arable with multi-gapped or poorly managed hedgerows with few remaining hedgerow trees. Whilst the farmland is well tended, the overall quality of the landscape has declined. The M56 motorway again splits the area into two halves and, with little or no associated screen planting, forms a dominant visual feature.

Many of the key elements of sensitivity outlined in the Hatton area have already been lost or degraded.

KEY ELEMENTS OF LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY

5.37 elements of sensitivity include:

- *Skyline location*
- *Remaining hedgerows*
- *Remaining views of Appleton Thorn Church on skyline*
- *Marl pit ponds*

5.38 The sensitivity of the landscape character is considered within the ES in section 7 as the sensitivity of various elements of the landscape and landscape resource. The Site and character areas are considered together in this regard in the landscape effects tables (ref ES table 4.12) where the sensitivity and change to aspects of the landscape resource, both at National, Local and Site level are considered.

5.39 The susceptibility of LCA 1B Appleton Thorn to the change proposed is Medium with elements of High susceptibility and value associated with the SAM at Bradley Hall Farm. The landscape resource is one where it retains some valued characteristics and elements while clearly demonstrating large scale change and degradation through development and industrialisation to sections of the landscape.

- 5.40 The landscape is of medium scale with settlement and urban landscapes forming a clear presence within the LCA and offering a variety of differing influences from cultural and historical aspects of Appleton Thorne to more modern and detracting influences such as the industrial estates and development and the motorway network.
- 5.41 The LCA includes much open and pleasant agricultural land but this is not a remote and tranquil landscape.
- 5.42 Visually aspects of the LCA are contained through hedgerow and woodland groups but some longer distance views are possible over the relatively flat topography.
- 5.43 The sensitivity of LCA 1B Appleton Thorne is Medium and the value Moderate leading to a **sensitivity of Medium**. I believe this is aligned with the assessment of the original ES, all-be-it arrived at by utilising a slightly different process and methodology.

LANDSCAPE OPPORTUNITIES

- 5.44 The report sets out landscape opportunities under the heading of opportunities and management. The relevant commentary can be summarised as follows:

Although much of the original agricultural landscape of the area has been lost to development and agricultural 'modernisation', a basic framework of field patterns can still be improved and restored to improve the landscape quality. The restoration and management of hedgerows, together with the re-introduction of hedgerow trees, would greatly strengthen the landscape structure and improve the visual appearance of the area.

A strong control of the type, quality and location of new development should aim to reassert the village centre and prevent further skyline intrusions to the crest line. The emphasis for the landscape management of the area should therefore be one of restoration and enhancement.

Native woodland screen planting should also be considered for the more obtrusive aspects of the industrial estate.

- *Reintroduce hedgerow trees to the hedgerows*
- *Conserve and manage remaining hedgerows*

- *Consider additional native woodland planting as a screen. Particularly in connection with obtrusive skyline views*
- *Support opportunities to increase bio-diversity by native woodland planting to field corners*

RED SANDSTONE ESCARPMENT – LCA 3A APPLETON PARK AND GRAPPENHALL

5.45 The landscape character of these areas comprises of strongly sloping land to the north, affording sweeping long distance views, occasionally restricted by the presence of linear deciduous woodlands, coverts and tree groups.

5.46 The Proposal Site lies to the south of this area with a small section falling within this LCA at the north east corner of the red line boundary.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF NOTE

5.47 Key characteristics include:

- Sweeping northerly views
- Strongly sloping land to the north
- Incised stream valleys running in a northerly direction
- Exposed red sandstone in outcrops, walls and older buildings
- Gorse in hedgerows and sandy banks
- Numerous small ponds in the farmland
- Linear woodlands, coverts and tree clumps
- Raised knolls
- Sparsity of hedgerow trees (mainly oak)
- Hedges running along contour lines or at right angles to them
- 'Advanced' landscaping and 'entrance' features relating to proposed housing development

LANDSCAPE VALUE

5.48 The landscape value appears Moderate being a landscape of local importance, within Green Belt but otherwise not including any other landscape designations of note.

SUSCEPTIBILITY ANND SENSITIVITY TO CHANGE

- 5.49 Although not stating a level or grade of sensitivity the report does outline a number of factors and key elements that define the sensitivity of the landscape. These are summarised below:

In a borough-wide context, these areas are reasonably well-wooded with a diversity of features in the landscape, including small ponds, ridges, knolls and incised stream valleys. The agricultural landscape including hedgerows appears generally well-maintained and the area presents an attractive rural quality. Both these areas however are particularly sensitive to further building development.

The crest line of the escarpment is particularly important as this forms the main horizon to views south from the northern half of the Borough. The traditional isolated focal points of church towers along the crest are slowly being occluded by development.

KEY ELEMENTS OF LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY

- 5.50 Elements of sensitivity include:

- *Building development on the crest/skyline*
- *Loss of agricultural landscape for housing development*

- 5.51 The sensitivity of the landscape character is considered within the ES in section 7 as the sensitivity of various elements of the landscape and landscape resource. The Site and character areas are considered together in this regard in the landscape effects tables (ref ES table 4.12) where the sensitivity and change to aspects of the landscape resource, both at National, Local and Site level are considered.

- 5.52 The susceptibility of LCA 3A Appleton Park and Grappenhall to the change proposed is Medium. The landscape resource is one where it retains valued characteristics and elements while clearly demonstrating development change over time.

- 5.53 The landscape is of medium scale with settlement and urban landscapes forming a clear presence within the LCA but with an overriding agricultural character within the study area.

- 5.54 The LCA includes much open and pleasant agricultural land but this is not an especially remote and tranquil landscape with large scale transport networks either passing through or close to it.

- 5.55 Visually aspects of the LCA are contained through hedgerow and woodland groups but some longer distance views are possible over the relatively flat or rolling topography.
- 5.56 The susceptibility of LCA 3A Appleton Park and Grappenhall is Medium and the value Moderate leading to a **sensitivity of Medium**. I believe this is aligned with the assessment of the original ES, all-be-it arrived at by utilising a slightly different process and methodology.

LANDSCAPE OPPORTUNITIES

- 5.57 The report sets out landscape opportunities under the heading of opportunities and management. The relevant commentary can be summarised as follows:

The main objective for these areas should be to aspire to retain their present status as a well-managed agricultural landscape. Development in particular on the escarpment crest lines and knolls should be prevented or screened by woodland planting. The remaining landscape will require a continuance of good agricultural management practices, together with the encouragement of enhancement works such as replacement of hedgerow trees and the restoration of marl pit ponds.

Wherever possible new planting should connect to existing areas of woodland or hedges to encourage wildlife.

- *Encourage hedgerow retention and restoration*
- *Encourage the replacement of new hedgerow trees*
- *Encourage the restoration of marl pit ponds*

CHESHIRE EAST LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT LOWER WOODED FARMLAND 7A ARLEY

- 5.58 To the south of the Proposal Site the landscape at a local level is assessed through the Cheshire East Landscape Character Assessment (LUC) 2018. A small proportion of the Site itself, together with the landscapes to the south all fall within the Lower Wooded Farmland landscape Type. This is further divided into landscape character areas (LCA) with the relevant LCA being 7A Arley.

5.59 The character type covers a large area and is divided into seven character areas extending from High Leigh and Arley in the north, east to Poynton and Congleton and as far south as Audlem. This very gently rolling landscape type has many similarities with the Cheshire plain, yet it has a greater concentration of woodland and a slightly higher settlement density with more nucleated hamlets and villages. Land use is a mix of arable and pasture, while settlement largely retains its dispersed pattern. The landscape is very rural, although has been impacted in places by the presence of major transport routes and nearby large urban areas.

KEY CHARACTERTERISTICS OF NOTE

5.60 Key characteristics include:

- Topography, geology and drainage- Mostly low lying, gently rolling topography although steep slopes are found occasionally throughout the landscape, often associated with watercourses.
- Woodland cover- Compared with much of the Borough, this type has a relatively high density of coniferous, mixed and deciduous woodland found in blocks, coverts and along streams and rivers. Mature trees (often oak, beech and sycamore) within fields and within hedgerows also contribute to the wooded character of the landscape.
- Land use and field patterns -A mix of arable and pasture land, divided into medium-scale fields of medieval and post-medieval origin. Fields are primarily divided by hedgerows with frequent mature trees, although in some places boundary loss has led to the formation of larger fields. In some areas hedgerows have been replaced by post and wore or wooden fencing.
- Semi-natural habitats- The landscape contains a number of wetland habitats including nationally important Sites such as
- Archaeology and cultural heritage -A landscape, with some designated as Scheduled Monuments. Historic estate landscapes are occasional features and include a number of Registered Parks and Gardens.
- Settlement, road pattern and rights of way- Medium settlement density with a mix of dispersed farms and nucleated hamlets/villages,

- Roads are a mix of major arterial routes including the A50/A500 and winding narrow lanes. The M6 motorway also crosses through a number of the areas within this type.
- An intact network of rights of way provides access to the countryside.
- Views and perceptual qualities -This type is generally very rural although is sometimes influenced by the presence of adjacent urban areas. Major infrastructure including the M6 motorway and Manchester Airport has a visual impact and introduces traffic noise.
- Perceptual qualities are varied, woodland/trees which provide a strong sense of enclosure and limit views.

.LANDSCAPE VALUE

5.61 The report includes a section on valued landscape features which includes the following of note:

- The wooded character of the landscape, with some areas of ancient woodland which provide biodiversity, recreational and scenic value within the landscape.
- Valued semi-natural habitats including meres, mosses, unimproved grasslands scenic interest.
- Historic field patterns delineated by hedgerows with numerous mature trees which contribute to the distinct wooded character of the landscape, habitats provided by hedgerows and hedgerow trees.
- Important archaeological features
- Picturesque designed estate parklands
- The sense of enclosure and tranquillity as a result of the frequent trees and woodland,
- The strongly rural character and naturalistic qualities experienced within the landscape, contrasting with and providing an escape from nearby urban areas.

5.62 Land condition is considered varied throughout. Whilst some parts are well-managed and in good condition, other parts of the landscape have seen deterioration.

5.63 I assess the landscape character area to have a Moderate level of value with aspects of good value across the estate park lands and gardens.

SUSCEPTIBILITY AND SENSITIVITY TO CHANGE

- 5.64 The report does not consider directly landscape susceptibility or sensitivity but does highlight pressures for change from development; changes in farming practice; and other direct landscape changes.
- 5.65 The ES does not explicitly consider the sensitivity of this LCA and includes the assessment of this within an overall assessment of the proposals over all of the character areas including those that hold sections of the Proposal Site.
- 5.66 The LCA is not a designated landscape but does include historic estate parkland and gardens. It has moderate access and some characteristics and elements of local value. It has medium scale with some enclosure brought about through woodland and field boundaries. The topography is generally flat or gently rolling and settlement and development is present without dominating. The motorway network forms the largest and most prominent urban feature through the landscape. The LCA has some aspects of tranquillity with a strongly rural character.
- 5.67 I assess the susceptibility of this landscape area to the change proposed as Medium-High. The value of the landscape is assessed as Moderate. The **sensitivity to change for this LCA is assessed as Medium to Medium-High** recognising its more rural and less degraded and urbanised overall character.

LANDSCAPE OPPORTUNITIES

- 5.68 The LCA description includes a section outlining landscape guidance. The following are judged most relevant and likely to have potential to be delivered through the proposed development:
- Avoid development (both buildings and other structures) on steep slopes or in visually prominent locations.
 - Protect the overall wooded character of the area through appropriate management of the areas of deciduous woodland (including ancient woodland) and mature in-field and hedgerow trees.
 - Retain historic field patterns and restore the hedgerows and walls forming field and estate boundaries where they have been lost, degraded or replaced with fences. Conserve the existing hedgerow network which provides valued linkages between other habitats.

- Protect and manage the valued wetland habitats of the meres and mosses for the benefit of flood alleviation, biodiversity and recreation purposes.
- Unimproved grassland and remnant heathland habitats are conserved and enhanced, with new linkages between habitats created where possible.
- Ensure new and changing land uses do not degrade from the traditional rural character of the area.
- Retain the sense of enclosure and high levels of tranquillity with the landscape and screen the visual and audible effects of existing and new intrusive features within the landscape where possible/appropriate.

OTHER SURROUNDING LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

5.69 The three previously described character types and areas all have elements of the Proposal Site within their boundaries and can expect landscape change from the development proposals to have a potentially direct effect.

5.70 A further three landscape character areas surround the Proposal Site and fall within the study area defined within the ES. These will not experience direct change as a result of the development proposals but may potentially experience visual change which can have an effect over the character of a landscape.

5.71 A brief summary of these areas (identified in Appendix_3.5) follows below:

LCA 4C FORMER STRETTON AIRPORT.

5.72 This LCA is held within the landscape type Areas of Farmland and Former Airfields. The former Stretton Airport lies to the immediate south west of the Proposal Site at a distance of approximately 0.5km. The LCA straddles the M56 motorway and is adjacent to the existing the Appleton Thorne industrial estate.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

5.73 key characteristics :

- Level ground
- Visual and audible dominance of M56 motorway
- Very large scale, open area of largely grassland with few trees
- Absence of agricultural heritage

The area is visually somewhat isolated with no public footpaths running through it or public roads overlooking the area.

In terms of the area's visual isolation and featureless grassland character, the area would appear to have a low level of landscape sensitivity.

VALUE, SUSCEPTIBILITY AND SENSITIVITY

5.74 The susceptibility to landscape change appears low due to the existing nature of the landscape and the existing visual detractors of motorway and industrial development. The value is low-moderate recognising the historic value of the airfield. **The sensitivity is assessed as low.**

LCA 3B MASSEY BROOK

5.75 The LCA falls within the landscape character type Red Sandstone Escarpment and lies to the immediate north east of the Proposal Site, meeting the Site boundary at junction 20 of the M6. It follows the M6 north of the Site following the escarpment.

The area is bisected and visually dominated by the M6 motorway running north/south between the Thelwall Viaduct and the M6 Stretton interchange at Junction 9.

The landscape has broad open views both internally and to the north and east. The area appears more exposed than the adjoining Areas 3.A and 3.C with fewer hedgerow trees present. Agriculture is mainly arable with gapped hedgerows. A narrow linear band of deciduous woodland is associated with Massey Brook.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF NOTE

5.76 Key characteristics include:

- Open views internally and to the north and east
- Domination of M6 motorway
- Gapped hedgerows with few hedgerow trees
- Mainly arable landscape

LANDSCAPE VALUE, SUSCEPTIBILITY

5.77 *The area's landform and lack of woodland on higher ground reinforces the open views into the basin area. Any structure or development would therefore be exposed to views.*

5.78 *The landscape of the Massey Brook basin is therefore essentially visually exposed, rural and agricultural, with few buildings in the landscape. It is also, however, visually dominated by the M6 motorway.*

5.79 The value of the landscape is Moderate- Low with little of distinction other than available footpath access. The susceptibility to change appears Medium-High on account of the visual sensitivity and the proximity of the Proposal Site. **The sensitivity is assessed as Medium** as judgement combining value and susceptibility.

LCA 3C LYMM

5.80 The LCA falls within the landscape character type Red Sandstone Escarpment and lies to the immediate west of the Proposal Site.

The area's topography creates an intimate landscape, often self-enclosed by woodlands and hedgerow trees. Views from the area are therefore less extensive with few internal views of note.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

5.81 characteristics include:

- Smaller scale, more intimate rural landscape
- Luxuriant hedgerow trees with diverse range of species
- Rolling landscape
- Restricted views
- Strong feeling of high landscape quality

LANDSCAPE VALUE, SUSCEPTIBILITY AND SENSITIVITY

5.82 *The nature of the landscape, with its luxuriance of hedgerows and hedgerow trees and more intimate landform, creates a less sensitive environment in which to absorb small scale development. The recent housing expansion of Lymm however into greenfield Sites has fundamentally altered and reduced the rural character of the area for which it is renowned.*

5.83 The value of the landscape is assessed as Moderate-Good reflecting the intimate nature of LCA and its extensive heritage and historic character. The susceptibility to change is Medium-Low reflecting the enclosed and less open landscape of this LCA and the major influence of transport networks over this area. **The sensitivity is judged as Medium.**

HERITAGE AND CULTURAL RESOURCE

5.84 Bradley Hall moated Site is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM) located within the Site boundary, to the eastern part of the Site, adjacent to the farm buildings. It comprises the buried and earthwork remains of a medieval moated Site for a medieval manor house, which is to be retained. The moated island is partly occupied by the farm house associated with Bradley Hall Farm, which is excluded from the Scheduling, but will be retained and subject of a separate change of use application.

5.85 The value of this Site is assessed as high and the sensitivity of the SAM is also assessed as high reflecting its designated status.

SUMMARY OF LANDSCAPE CHARACTER SENSITIVITY

TABLE 1

Hierarchy of Importance	Landscape Character Area	Sensitivity
National	60 Mersey Valley	Medium
National	61 Shropshire Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain	Medium
Local Landscape Character Warrington		
Local	1B Appleton Thorne	Medium
Local	3A Appleton Park and Grapenhall	Medium

Local	3B Massey Brook	Medium
Local	3C Lymm	Medium
Local	4C Stretton Airfield	Low
Cheshire East landscape Character Assessment	7A Arley Character Area	Medium-Medium/High
Heritage and Cultural Assets	Moated Bradley Hall Farm SAM	High

VISUAL BASELINE AND SELECTED VIEWS

- 5.86 In considering the possible landscape and visual effects of the appeal schemes before the Inquiry I have considered both the landscape baseline and the visual baseline.
- 5.87 I have assessed the potential visual effects of the appeal proposals through Site visit and photographic survey and reference to the application LVIA and ES where view locations and montages had been previously agreed with the Local Planning Authority. (which is reproduced in Appendix _2)
- 5.88 For the reasons above I have largely kept to the view locations originally used within the application LVIA and ES.
- 5.89 As part of the ES a total of 27 viewpoints were selected and agreed with WBC as being representative viewpoints of the Site from within the study area. Of these viewpoints 9 were prepared as wireframe photomontages : 6, 7, 9, 15, 16, 18, 20, 22 and 24 .
- 5.90 The Wireframe models are of the proposed building units only and do not included landscape proposals such as planting or other external infrastructure. These are found in the ES (CD 4.5)
- 5.91 Baseline viewpoint descriptions are provided in Table 4.11 of the ES. A summary of this baseline is outlined below.

Residential Receptors

- 5.92 View 1 Barleycastle Lane: Located by a field gate close to Tan House Cottage at southern end of the lane. The view northwards across agricultural fields towards the southern boundary of the Site. *1B Appleton Thorne*
- 5.93 View 2 Barleycastle Lane: Adjacent to Birchels Gorse residential property the location marks the junction of the PROW with Barleycastle Lane, the former which runs north towards Bradley Farm. The property screens views westwards and views are focused northwards to the southern boundary of the Site and Bradley Brook. *1B Appleton Thorne*
- 5.94 View 6: View from Bradley House . Eastern views are open towards the boundary of the Site with Howshoots Farm visible and Bradley Gorse further to the south boundary vegetation along A50 Cliff Lane generally screens views beyond. *1B Appleton Thorne*
- 5.95 View 7 view from Manor Farm and a number of properties along the Cartridge lane: The northern boundary hedgerow to the Site is just visible across dense hedgerows either side of a narrow field situated between Cartridge Lane and the B5356 Grappenhall Lane. Views of the Site itself are not possible due to the dense hedgerows and the view is restricted. *1B Appleton Thorne*

Pedestrian Receptors

- 5.96 View point 1 Located by a field gate close to Tan House Cottage. *1B Appleton Thorne*
- 5.97 Viewpoint 2 PROW Appleton FP23. *1B Appleton Thorne*
- 5.98 Viewpoint 3 PROW Appleton FP23: The viewpoint is where the PROW crosses Bradley Brook, which is crossed via a narrow footbridge. The location is close to the centre of the Site and shows a large field structure with hedgerows but relatively limited tree cover, particularly along the hedgerows. The view is pleasantly rural with the exception of low industrial units on the eastern edge of the trading estate but which are not overly dominant. *1B Appleton Thorne*
- 5.99 Viewpoint 4 PROW Appleton FP23: The view is just to the south of Bradley Hall, which is approximately at the centre of the Site. Bradley Gorse forms the south eastern boundary of the view with the eastern boundary hedgerow being clearly

visible across open fields and maturing vegetation along the M6 Motorway forming the horizon. *1B Appleton Thorne*

- 5.100 Viewpoint 5 PROW Appleton FP28: Footpath located to the north of Bradley Hall and adjacent to Bradley Hall Cottages. A combination of farm outbuildings and dense hedgerows contain views to the east and south. To the west longer views are possible across the Site towards the tops of unit roofs within the Trading Estate. *1B Appleton Thorne*
- 5.101 Viewpoint 6 PROW Appleton FP23/Bradley View: Eastern views are open towards the boundary of the Site with Howshoots Farm visible and Bradley Gorse further to the south boundary vegetation along A50 Cliff Lane generally screens views beyond. *1B Appleton Thorne*
- 5.102 Viewpoint 8 PROW Grappenhall and Thelwell FP05: Properties and hedgerows running along Cartridge Lane, which forms the horizon due to the ground rising gently, restrict views south towards the Site. *3A Appleton Park and Grapenhall*
- 5.103 Viewpoint 9 PROW Grappenhall and Thelwell FP17/Cinder Lane: The viewpoint is located due north of the Site where the PROW connects with Cinder Lane. The view towards the Site is across farmland where the topography drops into a shallow valley and then rises to up to B5356 Grappenhall Lane with A50 Cliff Lane Farm and its outbuildings forming the centre horizon. *3A Appleton Park and Grapenhall*
- 5.104 Viewpoint 11 PROW Appleton FP17: The viewpoint looks towards the Appleton Thorn Trading Estate but due to the topography sloping north, from this location relatively little of the units with it are visible with the near horizon formed by hedgerows along the B5356 Grappenhall Lane. Woodland strips running along New Lane to the south and west contain the view towards Appleton Thorn, which is not visible. *3A Appleton Park and Grapenhall*
- 5.106 Viewpoint 16 PROW Antrobus FP32: Located with level topography to the south of the Site, open fields surround the viewpoint with views generally contained to the middle ground with dense wooded blocks preventing more distant views. Only a few properties are visible, and the view is a rural one. The Site is not visible from this location. *7A Arley Character Area*
- 5.107 Viewpoint 17 Woolston New Cut: Due to distance and topography the Site is not visible from this location and is scoped out of further assessment.

- 5.108 Viewpoint 18 PROW Grappenhall and Thelwall FP05/Barry's Covert: The viewpoint is located to the west of Viewpoint 9. Hedgerow vegetation in the foreground screens views to the south towards the Site. The Site is not visible.
- 5.109 Viewpoint 19 PROW Lymm FP02: Located close and east of the M6 Motorway, the view is dominated visually and audibly by the M6 Motorway. Vegetation around the M6 Motorway/Lymm Service station roundabouts screens views to the Site. *3B Massey Brook*
- 5.110 Viewpoint 21 PROW Appleton FP36/Arley Road: Located where the PROW joins Arley Road views north towards the Site are heavily screened by dense vegetation along the M56 Motorway. *1B Appleton Thorne*
- 5.111 Viewpoint 22 PROW Grappenhall and Thelwall FP05: The viewpoint is located south of Viewpoint 18 and along the same PROW but occupies a lower position within a shallow valley. A combination of the topography and dense woodland blocks effectively screens views in all directions to the near or middle ground. *3A Appleton Park and Grapenhall*
- 5.112 Viewpoint 23 PROW Lymm FP02: Located on the same PROW as Viewpoint 19 but further north of the Site dense hedgerows and poplar plantations screen views south and west. *3B Massey Brook*
- 5.113 Viewpoint 24 PROW Appleton 24: Located at the end of properties along Yew Tree Lane, which turns into the PROW. The view is across agricultural fields with dense hedgerow and tree planting restricting views beyond the middle ground. The Site is not visible from this location. *1B Appleton Thorne*
- 5.114 Viewpoint 25 A50 Cliff Lane: The view is comprised of the existing trees along A50 Cliff Lane. The A50 Cliff Lane roundabout is visible in the middle ground of the view. The main developable area within the Six56 boundary is visible in the background of the view.

Vehicular Receptors

- 5.115 Viewpoint 1 Barleycastle Lane

- 5.116 Viewpoint 2 PROW Appleton FP23/Barleycastle Lane: Adjacent to Birchels Gorse residential property the location marks the junction of the PROW with Barleycastle Lane
- 5.117 Viewpoint 7 Cartridge Lane. *1B Appleton Thorne*
- 5.118 Viewpoint 9 PROW Grappenhall and Thelwell FP17/Cinder Lane. *3A Appleton Park and Grapenhall*
- 5.119 Viewpoint 10 Broad Lane/Yew Tree Farm: Located north-west of the Site the lane follows the topography in sloping gently north towards Grappenhall. Residential properties set back off Broad Lane to the south of the viewpoint are visible in the middle ground, which forms the near horizon. Due to the sloping topography and dense hedgerow structure, the Site is not visible. *3A Appleton Park and Grapenhall*
- 5.120 Viewpoint 12 B5158 Cherry Lane: Located north and east of the M6 Motorway, views of the Site are prevented by a combination of dense vegetation running along the western side of the lane and dense vegetation as well as buildings associated with residential properties along Cherry Corner and Lymm Fire Station. *3C Lymm*
- 5.121 Viewpoint 13 Swineyard Lane/Sworton Heath Farm: The viewpoint is located south of the M56 Motorway and east of the M6 Motorway near where PROW High Legh FP11 enters the lane from the south. The topography is relatively flat with dense hedgerows lining either side of the lane. Views west are to the middle horizon with Jones's Covert off Fanner's Lane forming a dense vegetative screen. *7A Arley Character Area*
- 5.122 Viewpoint 14 Moss Lane/Hobbs Lane Hill: The viewpoint is surrounded large agricultural fields with scattered hedgerows and trees. The topography is reasonably flat and visual containment is quite high due to overlapping vegetation and denser woodland blocks. Views north-west towards the Site are screened by dense vegetation running north-south along Crowley Brook and the M6 Motorway with the result that the Site is not visible. *7A Arley Character Area*
- 5.123 Viewpoint 15 Pennypleck Lane: The view north towards the Site is relatively contained due to dense and overlapping hedgerow vegetation with the Site not visible. *7A Arley Character Area*

- 5.124 Viewpoint 20 Wither's Lane: Dense vegetation lines Bradley Brook with runs to the south of Lymm Service station. Outbuildings to Ivyhouse Farm are visible in the near middle ground and a combination of topography and dense vegetation screens views west and towards the Site
- 5.125 Viewpoint 21 PROW Appleton FP36/Arley Road: Located where the PROW joins Arley Road views north towards the Site are heavily screened by dense vegetation along the M56 Motorway. *1B Appleton Thorne*
- 5.126 Viewpoint 25 A50 Cliff Lane: Located along A50 Cliff Lane facing south towards the Site boundary.
- 5.127 Viewpoint 26 A50 Cliff Lane Roundabout: : Located in the centre of the A50 Cliff Lane roundabout facing west towards the B5356 Grappenhall Lane. The view consists of the A50 Cliff Lane roundabout. The main developable area of the Site is visible in the centre of the view.
- 5.128 Viewpoint 27 Junction of Cartridge Lane and the B5356 Grappenhall Lane: Located on the junction of Cartridge Lane and B5356 Grappenhall Lane facing east towards the A50 Cliff Lane Roundabout. The main developable area of the Site is visible to the right of the view.

VISUAL QUALITY AND VALUE

- 5.129 The views available across the Appeal Site and the study area generally demonstrate an Ordinary level of visual quality and value. Typically views extend over field boundaries to middle distances with managed hedgerows and trees providing some filtering. North of the Proposal Site the topography allows for long distance views north. To the south the visual character is much more contained and intimate with woodland blocks and motorway routes providing substantial visual screening. A large proportion of the view includes warehousing development up to the skyline within the Appleton Thorn Estate. This view of industrial scale buildings continues to the west with buildings and cranes within the Barley Castle industrial area.
- 5.130 The visual character is often rural but always includes large scale detracting elements such as warehousing, motorway infrastructure and agricultural buildings.

SUMMARY OF LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL BASELINE

- 5.131 The Site and its immediate surroundings are relatively rural in character and is predominantly farmland with a medium sized field structure. There is a dense hedgerow structure and occasional woodland blocks or copses are regular and consistent features in the landscape giving it a coherent structure and appearance.
- 5.132 Built form in the local area is characterised predominantly by large scale industrial development, particularly to the west and south of the Site boundary. Large scale warehouse buildings are visible, contain views and reduce the openness and visual amenity of the greenbelt.
- 5.133 To the north, the land slopes gently towards Grappenhall and is attractive rural countryside, which from certain locations offers longer distance views towards the north and east. Vegetation associated with highways infrastructure limits views both into and out from the Site. Views south are similarly rural in nature but are largely screened from extending beyond the M56 Motorway. Views east are also generally contained by vegetation associated with the M6 Motorway and the woodland blocks within the Site.
- 5.134 To the north, the land slopes gently towards Grappenhall and is attractive rural countryside, which from certain locations offers longer distance views towards the north and east. Vegetation associated with highways infrastructure limits views both into and out from the Site. Views south are similarly rural in nature but are largely screened from extending beyond the M56 Motorway. Views east are also generally contained by vegetation associated with the M6 Motorway and the woodland blocks within the Site.
- 5.135 Views from south of the M56 Motorway are generally not available due to the density of hedgerow vegetation, woodland blocks and copses, as well as mature vegetation along the M56 Motorway.
- 5.136 Existing large scale buildings associated with adjacent industrial parks and dense vegetation around the M6 and M56 motorways to the west and east of the Site provide visual containment and limit visual effects beyond these Site boundaries.

6.0 LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL EFFECTS AND PROPOSED DESIGN RESPONSES

POTENTIAL EFFECTS

6.1 The ES LVIA identifies a number of potential effects which the proposals may bring to the landscape and visual baseline throughout the construction and operational phases of the project. These are outlined at 5.55 (of the ES LVIA chapter) and are reproduced below:

- *Construction Site establishment works including access creation, vegetation clearance ,particularly of mature scrub and trees;*
- *The introduction of construction activity and vehicular/personnel movements around the Site and local roads including reflections and hazard lighting;*
- *Establishment of Site cabins and compound with security fencing and lighting;*
- *The disturbance of landform resulting from large-scale earthworks;*
- *The construction of hard standings and large-scale building units with associated construction plant such as cranes as well as scaffolding;*
- *Loss or disturbance of existing landscape features including mature vegetation;*
- *Changes to the boundary of the Site, in particular to mature trees and existing landform;*
- *Changes to existing landscape character;*
- *Demolition of existing buildings e.g. Bradley Hall Farm;*
- *Changes to the landscape setting of a Scheduled Ancient Monument, Bradley Hall Farm;*
- *Changes to the visual setting of Bradley Hall Cottages and Bradley Hall View, which are properties adjacent to the Site;*
- *Changes in view which for some receptors are likely to be substantial in terms of size, scale and duration;*
- *Introduction of major new features e.g. buildings and infrastructure, the latter including access roads, external storage, lighting structures; and*
- *Diversion of a PROW and the loss of recreational route through the Site.*

6.2 The ES LVIA (5.56 of the ES LVIA chapter) further identifies key aspects of the visual baseline that are particularly sensitive to change as a result of the proposed development, these are recorded as:

- *Residential receptors including Bradley View, Bradley Hall Cottages, Bradley Hall, properties along Barleycastle Lane, Cartridge Lane and the A50 Cliff Lane;*
- *Users of the Public Right of Way Appleton FP23, Grappenhall and Thelwall FP05, Grappenhall and Thelwall FP17;*
- *The Scheduled Ancient Monument of the Bradley Hall moated Site.*

6.3 I agree with this analysis of locations within or within the immediate vicinity of the Site. I also agree with the initial analysis of potential effects that helped identify early mitigation responses that became embedded in the design of the development. (5.59 of the ES LVIA chapter)

6.4 The ES records these primary mitigation measures that became part of the iterative design development of the proposals, becoming part of the final development plans. These are:

- Retention of boundary vegetation wherever possible (in particular around the SAM and the southern boundary to limit impacts on the SAM and listed building on Barleycastle Lane);
- Lowering existing ground levels to reduce the visible height of proposed buildings;
- Lowering building heights surrounding the scheduled ancient monument and creating sense of openness around the SAM; including reduction of the maximum building height in Zone B2 from 43.5m to ridge (40m clear internal height) to 30m to ridge (26.5m clear internal height), which relates to Plot 4 of the Illustrative Masterplan and Zone D1 and D2 from 24.5m to ridge (21m clear internal height) to 22m to ridge (18.5m clear internal height), which relates to Plots 2 and 3 of the Illustrative Masterplan.
- Careful selection of building cladding and roofing materials using muted colours and non-reflective surfaces;
- Extensive perimeter bunding and screen planting to soften the visibility of new building structures. This respects the 30m no development offset and is designed so that that open space between the SAM and Bradley Hall Cottages is not severed by the bund, which in turn strengthens the sense of openness around the heritage asset.
- Incorporation of reinforced slopes within the bund on the side of the proposed unit in order to reduce the impact of the bunds visually from residential receptors, which could be overshadowed by these elements;
- The incorporation of extensive areas of new landscape throughout the development including planting and habitat creation features;
- Encouraging habitat movement throughout the Site, leading to the Ecological Mitigation area in the south east corner of the Site;
- Avoidance of light pollution through careful lighting design.

IMPACT ON HERITAGE ASSETS

- 6.5 A development offset of 30M around the Scheduled Ancient Monument has been installed to protect the setting of the monument itself and the sense of openness to allow appreciation of the monument. In order to bring visitors into contact with scheduled ancient monument the existing PROW Appleton FP23 will be moved to the west to bring users closer to the monument. Building heights within close proximity have been reduced to protect the setting of the monuments.
- 6.6 The proposed car parking provisions within Plot 3 and lorry parking provision to the west of the proposed unit within Plot 2, are sunken in comparison to the residential receptors of Bradley View Cottages and Bradley Hall, further helping to limit the impact of the proposed units for these receptors.

IMPACT ON ECOLOGICAL ASSETS

- 6.7 The area to the south-east of the Site has been left untouched by built form in order to preserve the existing mature vegetation within Bradley Gorse and create an ecological mitigation area to help offset the effects of the development on the rest of the Site. Hedgerow planting has been incorporated throughout the Site to provide a safer movement route for species such as great crested newts, throughout the Site.

LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL EFFECTS

- 6.8 The ES LVIA considers the potential effects of the proposed development with the above described embedded mitigation measures in place. Additionally consideration of how the landscape proposals and mitigation will develop over time is considered as part of the visual effects, with assessment of visual change at year 1 and then year 15 when planted mitigation is expected to reach a level of maturity aligned with the design and mitigation intent.
- 6.9 I have followed as closely as possible the ES format for assessment but have altered the landscape assessment to include analysis of the landscape character areas that include and surround the Site. I have used my own methodology, which is largely in line with that of the ES, but differs in certain respects with regard to terminology and the approach to determining the sensitivity of receptors. In this regard I believe I follow more closely the latest guidance offered by the Landscape Institute as set out in GLVIA3.
- 6.10 I have considered all of the views assessed originally within the ES and have added a column of notes to highlight any differences in my own assessment for both the landscape and visual effects as compared to that of the ES LVIA.

6.11 LANDSCAPE EFFECTS – CONSTRUCTION

- 6.11.1 Landscape effects during the Construction Phase will vary depending on the operations taking place and the scale and extent development that has been undertaken or is in progress. The Es LVIA assesses the Site as being: *of medium value with a Medium Sensitivity to change within the context of the local character unit within which the large majority of the Site lies as well as the wider setting, which in the landscape character studies reviewed and supported by Site assessments, is an area with large infrastructure already exists and is visible.* (7.15 of the ES LVIA chapter)
- 6.11.2 As can be seen from the extract the ES chooses to consider the impacts over a collected view of the landscape character areas and the Site together. I have chosen to look at this more closely, considering the impact of development on each of the different landscape character areas that both include and surround the Site within the study area. I do however concur with the collective assessment of the landscape being of Medium value and Medium sensitivity.

Landscape Character Areas

- 6.11.3 Landscape effects during the Construction Phase will vary depending on the operations taking place and the scale and extent development that has been undertaken or is in progress.
- 6.11.4 The magnitude of change will increase as works commence with Site clearance, particularly around the perimeters of the Site where it is associated with the construction of the new roundabout off A50 Cliff Lane. Earthworks and associated plant operations/vehicle movements will result in change including the construction of temporary storage stockpiles, which will change the appearance of the landscape from the agricultural fields, which currently occupy the Site. Changes associated with the initial construction works will directly affect the Site and those LCA's that contain the Site. Other more remote LCA's will experience change to varying degrees depending on the visibility of operations with the landscapes to the north, held within LCA 3A Appleton Park and Grappenhall, being the most susceptible to this visual change.
- 6.11.5 The introduction of large, tall building units within the Site (the largest being possibly 30m high with the other proposed buildings reaching 26.5m

or less), will result in the greatest and permanent change in landscape character as this will introduce new features into the landscape which will be visible to a wider area, particularly as buildings become more elevated and construction plant such as cranes are utilised. Construction traffic movement and temporary lighting for construction will also be introduced which will also result in more construction activities being visible.

NATIONAL CHARACTER AREAS

- 6.11.6 At a National level the change potentially affects NCA 60 and 61. Of these only NCA 60 will experience direct change as the boundary between the two character areas follows the M56 (east/west) with NCA 61 falling to the south of this and the Proposal Site.
- 6.11.7 The change will be notable but small within NCA 60, with the nature of change being familiar both in terms of the wider character area description but also in terms of the local landscape that includes other substantial industrial development and transport infrastructure. The change is assessed as low adverse.
- 6.11.8 Change to NCA 61 will be much less pronounced with no physical change occurring within this NCA. Visual change and effects are recorded as being much less pronounced to the south and especially south of the motorway corridor, this forming a physical and visual barrier between the NCA and the proposals. The change is assessed as negligible.

LOCAL CHARACTER AREAS

- 6.11.9 The change to the local character areas are divided between those LCA's that will experience direct change within their boundaries to features, elements and characteristics, through built change; and those LCA's that will only experience indirect change through visual effects.
- 6.11.10 Direct effects will be experienced across LCA 1B Appleton Thorne; 3A Appleton Park and Grappenhall; and 7A Arley.
- 6.11.11 The vast majority of direct change will affect LCA 1B Appleton Thorne. The Proposal Site covers a large proportion of this character area at its eastern boundary, extending along the natural sandstone ridgeline and bounded by the M56 and M6 to the south and east. It is a character area that includes

the Appleton Thorne Industrial Park and Barleycastle Trading Centre and surrounds the former Stretton Airfield.

- 6.11.12 Of the key characteristics noted the detracting aspects, namely: *the strong visual and audible effect of the M56 and the skyline imposition of commercial development*, will remain. The proposals will form an extension to this existing commercial and industrial part of the LCA and this aspect of change will not be incongruous within the context of this LCA. Construction effects will begin with large scale Site clearance and demolition with mound sand structures gradually appearing over time.
- 6.11.13 The scale of the proposed development will necessitate the removal of trees and hedgerows from the landscape and will represent a loss of open agricultural land.
- 6.11.14 The cultural characteristics of the LCA will not be altered as these are primarily centred around the village of Appleton Thorne. Bradley Hall, its moated site and its associated farm building, (which are noted as attractive) will undergo substantial change with all but the house and SAM being removed for development. Other nearby housing and cottages are retained but will be within the main body of the development Site. Bradley Hall and the SAM are retained within a large area of open and landscaped space with the mature trees surrounding the SAM retained. The change to these characteristics will never the less be large in scale affecting both the visual and landscape character from one which is largely agricultural towards one which will be dominated by commercial and industrial development. The Construction phase is likely to offer the most adverse effects with large scale physical and visual change, movements and activity throughout.
- 6.11.15 The ES appears to consider the change to this LCA as large leading to a Moderate/Major level of adverse effect. My own assessment concurs with this with a Medium level of sensitivity combined with a large change leading to a **Moderate/Substantial adverse** effect.
- 6.11.16 Construction effects over LCA's 3A Appleton Park and Grappenhall; and 7A Arley. Are less pronounced.
- 6.11.17 Construction effects over 3A Appleton Park and Grappenhall will physically effect only a small portion of the Site adjacent to the boundary along Grappenhall Lane. This area of the Site includes the new roundabout and

access and this, and the tree and hedgerow loss required to facilitate this, are the primary physical changes to the LCA.

- 6.11.18 Visually the landscape to the north is more open and topographically falls away towards the lower plains of the Mersey. Views to the north are more open and the proposed development is potentially visible from locations within this LCA, typically at lower elevation looking up towards the Site. The Site boundaries along the north include for screen mounding which will form part of the Construction effects that become notable as they are introduced and may screen other activities within the Site.
- 6.11.19 View effects include two that are assessed as Substantial-Moderate/Substantial (V8&9) with other effects range from Moderate – None.
- 6.11.20 The landscape change is notable but small in scale including the road improvements, tree and hedgerow loss and some adverse visual change from locations within 1km of the Site boundaries. The change is assessed as low-medium. Combined with a medium level of sensitivity this leads to a landscape effect of **Slight/Moderate adverse**.
- 6.11.21 Construction effects over the LCA 7A Arley landscape physically effect an area of land to the south of the Proposal Site which is not developed but put aside for ecological mitigation. There will be little physical change during construction with the development of this ecological mitigation zone likely to be primarily an area that develops from the Operational phase. The LCA falls within Cheshire East and has the benefit of planning approval.
- 6.11.22 Visually the landscape to the south is less open with both topography and vegetation and field boundaries leading to a more enclosed and less open experience. Views assessed from within this LCA experience effects that range from Slight/Moderate-Slight adverse to None. Generally, although the LCA abuts the Site boundary in places the visual change is limited to areas very close to the Site with the visibility of structures quickly becoming screened by the motorway network and/or layers of vegetation.
- 6.11.23 The landscape change will be noticeable but not all adverse as the primary physical change is for agricultural land to move towards a more ecologically rich landscaped area. Visually the construction effects will most likely only become notable once structures are raised over the Site

and these are for the most part at a low or negligible level. The change is assessed as low with some beneficial aspects. Combined with a medium/high sensitivity the landscape effects is **Slight Moderate adverse with beneficial elements.**

- 6.11.24 The other LCA areas (3b Massey Brook; 3C Lymm; and 4C Stretton Airfield) are all remote from the Proposal Site and will experience only potential visual change.
- 6.11.25 From these LCA's visual effects range from moderate adverse to none with some visual change likely close to the Site boundaries. No change will occur to key characteristics and the landscape change for all is assessed as low-negligible. This combined with medium sensitivity leads to a **Slight-Negligible adverse** effect.

Cultural and Historical Resource

- 6.11.26 With regard to the Scheduled Monument of Bradley Hall moated Site, the Site itself is not directly affected by the development with the ES LVIA assessing the construction effects as: *Moderate magnitude of change, Moderate/Major Adverse significance and nature of effects which are permanent due to the close proximity of development* (7.19 of the ES LVIA chapter). I agree with this assessment as the change is visual change to the setting and surrounding with the core of the heritage asset remaining intact and held within a 30m buffer of non developed landscape space.
- 6.11.27 Using my own methodology this is a medium level of change to a High sensitivity receptors leading to a **Moderate/Substantial adverse effect.**

6.12 LANDSCAPE EFFECT - OPERATION

Landscape Character Areas

- 6.12.1 Landscape effects during the Operation Phase are fixed and permanent but will become affected by the mitigation proposals through a time period that varies depending on the measures proposed.
- 6.12.2 The proposed development units, road networks, landscape and mitigation measures including boundary bunds will be in place and from operation will begin to exert their influence on potential landscape and visual effects:

either immediately in the case of bunding and topographical level changes; or over time in the case of tree and shrub planting.

NATIONAL CHARACTER AREAS

- 6.12.3 As for construction direct change potentially affects only NCA 60.
- 6.12.4 The change will be notable but small within NCA 60, with the nature of change being familiar both in terms of the wider character area description but also in terms of the local landscape that includes other substantial industrial development and transport infrastructure. The change is assessed as low adverse leading to a **Slight-Moderate adverse effect**
- 6.12.5 Change to NCA 61 will be much less pronounced with no physical change occurring within this NCA. Visual change and effects are recorded as being much less pronounced to the south and especially south of the motorway corridor, this forming a physical and visual barrier between the NCA and the proposals. The change is assessed as negligible and **Negligible landscape effect.**

LOCAL CHARACTER AREAS

- 6.12.6 As with construction direct effects will be experienced across LCA 1B Appleton Thorne; 3A Appleton Park and Grappenhall; and 7A Arley.
- 6.12.7 The majority of direct change will affect LCA 1B Appleton Thorne. It is a character area that includes the Appleton Thorne Industrial Park and Barleycastle Trading Centre and surrounds the former Stretton Airfield.
- 6.12.8 Of the key characteristics noted the detracting aspects, namely: *the strong visual and audible effect of the M56 and the skyline imposition of commercial development*, will remain. The operational proposals will introduce some skyline change along the lines of the existing industrial units and farm buildings that are within this landscape and LCA.
- 6.12.9 The operational change will see the introduction of industrial units, road infrastructure and landscaping, including screen mounding and woodland planting to reduce the visibility of the units.
- 6.12.10 Bradley Hall, its moated Site and its associated farm building, (which are noted as attractive) will undergo substantial change with all but the house

and SAM being replaced with an open landscape area surrounded by the wider commercial proposals of the Site. Other nearby housing and cottages are retained and within an undeveloped corridor of land. Bradley Hall and the SAM are retained within a large area of open and landscaped space with the mature trees surrounding the SAM retained. This will be landscaped to include additional tree planting and wildflower meadow. The change to these characteristics will never the less be large in scale affecting both the visual and landscape character. The Operational phase is likely to create adverse effects with large scale physical and visual change, movements and activity. It will also include for beneficial aspects through the retention and protection of the SAM and its setting within a protected and separate landscape zone with public access via the re-routed ProW.

- 6.12.11 The ES appears to consider the change to this LCA as large leading to a Moderate/Major level of adverse effect. My own assessment concurs with this with a Medium level of sensitivity combined with a large change leading to a **Moderate/Substantial adverse** effect.
- 6.12.12 Operational effects over LCA's 3A Appleton Park and Grappenhall; and 7A Arley. Are less pronounced
- 6.12.13 Operational effects over 3A Appleton Park and Grappenhall will physically effect only a small portion of the LCA adjacent to the boundary along Grappenhall Lane. This area of the Site includes the new roundabout and access which will be landscaped and integrated into the existing landscape and road corridor.
- 6.12.14 Views to the north are more open and the proposed development is potentially visible from locations within this LCA. The Site boundaries along the north include for screen mounding which will be planted with woodland and trees forming an increasing visual screen to the proposed units. The upper portions of units 1,2,5 and 7 may be visible from locations within this LCA.
- 6.12.15 View effects include one that is assessed as Substantial (V8) with other effects ranging from Moderate – None.
- 6.12.16 The landscape change is notable but small in scale including the road improvements, tree and hedgerow planting and landscaping and some adverse visual change from locations within 1km of the Site boundaries.

The change is assessed as low-medium. Combined with a medium level of sensitivity this leads to a landscape effect of **Slight/Moderate adverse**.

- 6.12.17 Operational effects over the LCA 7A Arley landscape physically effect an area of land to the south of the Proposal Site put aside for ecological mitigation. There will be a change from farmland to an area of ecological mitigation that will include scrub and woodland planting and wildflower meadow. The area will increase screening of the commercial elements of the proposals over time and bring ecological and habitat benefits. The LCA falls within Cheshire East and has the benefit of planning approval.
- 6.12.18 Visually the landscape to the south is less open with both topography and vegetation and field boundaries leading to a more enclosed and less open experience. Views assessed from within this LCA experience effects that range from Slight/Moderate-Slight adverse to None. Generally, although the LCA abuts the Site boundary in places the visual change is limited to areas very close to the Site with the visibility of structures quickly becoming screened by the motorway network and/or layers of vegetation. Mitigation planting will increase this screening over time.
- 6.12.19 The landscape change will be noticeable but not all adverse as the primary physical change is for agricultural land to move towards a more ecologically rich landscaped area. Visually the operational effects have a low level of impact. The change is assessed as low with some beneficial aspects. Combined with a medium/high sensitivity the landscape effects is **Slight Moderate adverse with beneficial elements**.
- 6.12.20 The other LCA areas (3b Massey Brook; 3C Lymm; and 4C Stretton Airfield) are all remote from the Proposal Site and will experience only potential visual change.
- 6.12.21 From these LCA's visual effects range from slight/moderate adverse to none with some visual change likely close to the Site boundaries. No change will occur to key characteristics and the landscape change for all is assessed as low-negligible. This combined with medium sensitivity leads to a **Slight-Negligible adverse** effect.

Cultural and Historical Resource

- 6.12.22 With regard to the Scheduled Monument of Bradley Hall moated Site, the Site itself is not directly affected by the development with the ES LVIA

assessing the operational effects as: *Moderate magnitude of change, Moderate/Major Adverse significance and nature of effects which are permanent due to the close proximity of development* (7.19 of the ES LVIA chapter). I agree with this assessment as the change is visual change to the setting and surrounding with the core of the heritage asset remaining intact and held within a 30m buffer of non developed landscaped space.

6.12.23 Using my own methodology this is a medium level of change to a High sensitivity receptors leading to a **Moderate/Substantial adverse effect**.

PROPOSED MITIGATION

6.12.24 The mitigation measures employed by the proposed development, its design and layout have been developed through an iterative process which have seen embedded mitigation measures, that include the arrangement, layout and height of buildings, introduced into the final design proposals. The setting back of units 1,2,5,6 and 7 back from Grappenhall Road and the arrangement of height and massing have been developed to reduce potential landscape and visual impacts.

6.12.25 Across the Site, built form will range from 12.5m to 26.5m to haunch and 16m to 30m to ridge. The upper range of building heights will be located to the east and south of the Site and the lower range to the north and west of the Site where the building heights impact is at its least. Zone A will have a maximum of 12.5m (to haunch above FFL). In Zone C and the northern part of Zone B there will be a maximum of 15m (to haunch) above FFL. In the southern part of Zone B there will be buildings ranging from a maximum of 26.5m to 18.5m (to haunch) above FFL and in Zone D a maximum of 18.5m (to haunch) above FFL.

6.12.26 In addition the creation of a landscape bund along the northern boundary will create a physical screen within a (up to) 62M wide landscape buffer.

6.12.27 Additional Mitigation is brought through the landscape proposals which are illustrated in (Appendix 3.3 and 3.7). These provide detail to the landscape parameters plan showing areas of woodland planting, woodland scrub and wildflower meadow.

6.12.28 Strategic landscaping is provided around the boundary of the Site. This will also enable the retention of existing trees and vegetation to the outer Site boundaries. Bradley Gorse and Wrights Covert to the south eastern extent

of the Site are retained, as are the trees within and around the Bradley Hall moated Site to the centre of the Application Site.

- 6.12.29 The two access corridors into the Site from the B5356 Grappenhall Lane will sit within the proposed strategic landscaping areas. A Green Corridor will be provided from north to south within the Site to retain an open corridor around the Bradley Hall moated Site and through the Site.
- 6.12.30 A 15m standoff from built development will be retained to Bradley Brook, which runs east to west along the southern boundary of the Site. An area of ecological mitigation is to be provided to the south of Bradley Brook, around Wrights Covert.
- 6.12.31 All of the above landscape mitigation responses go towards responding to the landscape opportunities and guidance offered within the landscape character assessments.
- 6.12.32 The restoration and management of hedgerows and the re-introduction of hedgerow trees can be achieved through their introduction within the green corridors provided within the green infrastructure parameters of the proposals.
- 6.12.33 Native woodland planting is proposed as screening alongside bunding and as part of the wider ecological and green infrastructure proposals.
- 6.12.34 Woodland copses and trees are retained and protected within the layout of the Proposal Site.
- 6.12.35 The ecological mitigation areas will be specifically designed to create new habitat areas and to increase bio-diversity.
- 6.12.36 The layout includes a number of new designated wetland/ pond areas including the provision to create ecological wetland areas from attenuation ponds.

TABLE 2
LANDSCAPE EFFECTS

Hierarchy of Importance	Landscape Receptor	Sensitivity	Change to Landscape (Impact)	Landscape Effect Construction	Landscape Effect Operation	Landscape Effect Operation
				pre-mitigation	Year 1 with mitigation	Year 15
National	60 Mersey Valley	Medium	Low	Slight-Moderate adverse	Slight-Moderate adverse	Slight-Moderate adverse
National	61 Shropshire Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain	Medium	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible
Local Landscape Character Warrington						
Local	1B Appleton Thorne	Medium	Large	Moderate/Substantial adverse	Moderate/Substantial adverse	Moderate/Substantial adverse

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Local	3A Appleton Park and Grapenhall	Medium	Low-Medium	Slight-Moderate adverse	Slight-Moderate adverse	Slight-Moderate adverse
Cheshire East landscape Character Assessment	7A Arley	Medium-High	Low	Slight-Moderate adverse/beneficial	Slight-Moderate adverse/beneficial	Slight-Moderate adverse/beneficial
Local	3B Massey Brook	Medium	Low-Medium	Slight-Moderate adverse	Slight-Negligible adverse	Slight-Negligible adverse
Local	3C Lymn	Medium	Low-Negligible	Slight-Negligible adverse	Slight-Negligible adverse	Slight-Negligible adverse
Local	4C Stretton Airfield	Low	Low-Negligible	Slight-Negligible adverse	Slight-Negligible adverse	Slight-Negligible adverse
Heritage and Cultural Assets	Moated Bradley Hall Farm SAM	High	Medium	Moderate/Substantial adverse	Moderate/Substantial adverse	Moderate/Substantial adverse

6.3 VISUAL EFFECTS

6.3.1 I have assessed the potential visual effects of the proposals through Site visit and photographic survey. A summary of the findings are recorded in table 3.

RESIDENTIAL RECEPTORS

Site and Immediate Surroundings

6.3.2 View locations from or close to residential properties within the Site are considered from Views 4,5 and 6. Properties close to the southern boundaries of the Site are considered from views 1 and 2(a) Views from properties north of the Site are considered from view 7.

6.3.3 The proposals are visible from these locations, often dominating the view and bringing a large change to the existing visual amenity. Screen mounding and landscaping to the northern boundaries will reduce some visibility of lower level activities for properties along Cartridge Lane. Lighting impacts were assessed as part of the ES and this was also noted as a change to the view with lighting of the Proposal Site affecting the current relatively dark landscape.

6.3.4 View change from properties to the south along Barley Castle Lane (Birchels Gorse, Tan Farm and Barley Castle Farm) will also experience large visual change with the proposed units appearing above the skyline and vegetation along Bradley Brook.

6.3.5 Properties around Bradley Hall and Bradley Cottages (views 3,4 and 5) will see view change that is dominated by the proposed development. Night time light assessment suggests that lighting within the proposed Site will lead to a large change in visible light within the landscape.

6.3.6 Visual effects range from Moderate/Substantial to Substantial adverse and for this small group of properties the visual change will be large with mitigation only having a partial effect in reducing these.

Residential Properties in the Wider Landscape

6.3.7 The wider landscape does not have large numbers of residential receptors with the village of Appleton Thorn lying to the west at about 1.5km from the Site and sitting behind both the Barley Castle Trading Estate and the Young Offender Institution.

- 6.3.8 Other farmsteads and single or small groups of dwellings lie to the north and south but have views screened by layered field boundaries or motorway vegetation.

PEDESTRIAN RECEPTORS

Site and Immediate Surroundings

- 6.3.9 The Site has two/three public rights of way that run across it FP 31, 23 and 28. Footpath 28 runs east-west across the Site from Footpath 23 and 31, to the north of the Bradley Hall cottages, across the fields, before terminating at the field boundary to the western extent of the Site. Footpath 28 will be diverted as part of the Proposed Development. Its diverted route will run along the northern boundary of the Site, parallel with the B5356 Grappenhall Lane at the point of the proposed eastern access point. It will then re-enter the Site alongside an internal estate road and rejoin Footpath 23.
- 6.3.10 Views from locations along these routes will be substantially altered through the introduction of the proposed development and the diversion of the path. Views 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 are from locations along these routes and experience Moderate/Substantial to Substantial adverse effects. Night time views through what is currently a largely dark landscape will undergo substantial change.
- 6.3.11 Views from ProW location north of the Site are considered through View 8, 9, 18, 22. Effects range from Substantial and Moderate/Substantial adverse for locations close to the Site (8&9) through to Moderate-None (18,22)
- 6.3.12 Views from the south are assessed from view 21 and further afield at 16, these do not have views of the proposals.
- 6.3.13 Other path routes with views of the proposals are located to the east (view 19 moderate adverse effect) but these are intermittent with transport infrastructure and vegetation providing screening.

In the Wider Landscape

- 6.3.14 At greater distances over 2km views of the Site are not possible due to the layering of vegetation and other buildings.

VEHICULAR RECEPTORS

- 6.3.15 Views from vehicular receptors are assessed across the study area. Effects range from Moderate-Negligible adverse and are typically larger effects within 1km of the Site boundaries.

SUMMARY OF VISUAL EFFECTS
TABLE 3 VISUAL EFFECTS

View	Description	Receptor	Sensitivity	Change to view	Visual Effect	Visual Effect	Visual Effect	Notes
					Construction	Year 1 Operation	Year 15 with mitigation	
1	Tan House, Barley Castle Lane.	Residential Pedestrian Vehicular	High High Low	Large	Substantial-Moderate	Substantial-Moderate	Substantial-Moderate	Lower effects for vehicular users 1B Appleton Thorne LCA
2	Appleton FP23, Birchels Gorse	Residential Pedestrian	High High	Large	Substantial adverse	Substantial adverse	Substantial adverse	1B Appleton Thorne LCA
3	Appleton FP23	Pedestrian	High	Large	Substantial adverse	Substantial adverse	Substantial adverse	1B Appleton Thorne LCA
4	Appleton FP23	Pedestrian	High	Large	Substantial adverse	Substantial adverse	Substantial adverse	1B Appleton Thorne LCA
5	Appleton FP28	Pedestrian	High	Large	Substantial adverse	Substantial adverse	Substantial adverse	1B Appleton Thorne LCA
6	Bradley House	Residential	High	Large	Substantial	Substantial	Substantial	1B Appleton Thorne

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	Appleton FP 23	Pedestrian	High		adverse	adverse	adverse	LCA
7	Cartridge Lane	Residential Vehicular	High Low	Large	Substantial-Moderate	Substantial-Moderate	Substantial-Moderate	1B Appleton Thorne LCA
8	Grappenhall and Thelwall FP05	Pedestrian	High	Large	Substantial	Substantial	Substantial	LCA 3A Appleton Park&G
9	Grappenhall and Thelwall FP17	Pedestrian	High	Medium-High	Moderate/Substantial	Moderate/Substantial	Moderate	Screen mounding and planting will reduce effects once mature with visible units appearing as other development in the wider landscape. LCA 3A Appleton Park&G
10	Broad Lane	Vehicular	Medium-Low	Medium	Moderate-Slight/Moderate	Moderate-Slight/Moderate	Moderate-Slight	Moderate sensitivity only for cyclists or equestrian. Screen mounding and planting will reduce effects once mature with visible units appearing as other development in the wider landscape. LCA 3A Appleton Park&G
11	Appleton FP17	Pedestrian	High	Medium	Moderate/Substantial	Moderate/Substantial	Moderate	Screen mounding and planting will reduce effects once mature with visible units appearing as other development in the wider landscape. LCA 3A Appleton Park&G
12	B5158 Cherry Lane	Vehicular	Low-Medium	Low-Medium	Slight	Slight	Slight	Moderate sensitivity only for cyclists or equestrian. LCA 3A

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								Appleton Park&G
13	Swineyard Lane	Vehicular	Low-Medium	Low	Slight	Slight	Slight	LCA 7A Arley
14	Moss Lane	Vehicular	Low-Medium	Low-negligible	Slight	Slight-Negligible	Slight-Negligible	LCA 7A Arley
15	Pennypeck Lane	Vehicular	Low-Medium	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	LCA 7A Arley
16	Antrobus FP32	Pedestrian	High	None	None	None	None	LCA 7A Arley
17	Woolston New cut-Paddington Meadows	Pedestrian	High	None	None	None	None	
18	Grappenhall and Thelwall FP05	Pedestrian	High	Low	Moderate	Moderate	Slight/Moderate	
19	Lymm FP02	Pedestrian	High	Medium	Moderate	Moderate	Slight/Moderate	New boundary landscaping and an already heavily transport influenced view will reduce the effect. LCA 3A Appleton Park&G
20	Wither's Lane	Vehicular	Low-Medium	Low	Slight/Moderate-Slight	Slight/Moderate-Slight	Slight	Summer views are almost completely screened with winter filtered views offering a low level of effect. LCA 7A Arley
21	Appleton FP 36	Pedestrian	High	None	None	None	None	1B Appleton Thorne LCA
22	Grappenhall and Thelwall FP02	Pedestrian	High	None	None	None	None	LCA 3A Appleton Park&G
23	Lymm FP02	Pedestrian	High	None	None	None	None	LCA 3A Appleton Park&G
24	Appleton FP24	Pedestrian	High	Low-Negligible	Slight/Moderate	Slight/Moderate	Slight	Vegetation will mature around the

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				le				development further lessening the effects.
25	Cliff Lane	Vehicular	Low-Medium	Large	Moderate/Substantial	Moderate/Substantial	Moderate	The new roundabout will be re-landscaped and integrated into the view
26	Cliff Lane	Vehicular	Low-Medium	Large	Moderate/Substantial	Moderate/Substantial	Moderate	The new roundabout will be re-landscaped and integrated into the view
27	Catridge Lane	Vehicular	Low-Medium	Large	Moderate/Substantial	Moderate/Substantial	Moderate	The new roundabout will be re-landscaped and integrated into the view

- 6.3.16 The visual effects are illustrated in my Appendix_2.4 with the level of effect and location overlain on an OS base with distance markers.
- 6.3.17 The plan shows clearly that visual effects are most pronounced within the Proposal Site boundaries and within 0.5km of the boundaries. This is typical of any development of scale and particularly typical of large distribution infrastructure and employment sites. Mitigation measures from these locations have a limited ability to reduce levels of visual effect which remain around Moderate/Substantial to Substantial adverse.
- 6.3.18 Effects of Moderate/Substantial and above do extend beyond 0.5km in locations to the north and west but the majority of effects over 0.5km distance from the centre of the Site are moderate adverse or below.
- 6.3.19 Beyond 1km from the Site centre the visual effects reduce to negligible or none and this is true from locations to the south where the landscape is notably more enclosed, as well as from the north where views are to distance due to the elevated position over sloping topography.
- 6.3.20 Views from the east and west between 1 and 2km from the centre of the Site demonstrate Moderate/Slight -Slight adverse effects with buildings typically visible above intervening vegetation.
- 6.3.21 Other view locations between 1 and 2km distance from the Site return negligible or no effects. A further location tested at greater distances from the north (V17) also demonstrates no change to the view.
- 6.3.22 Although this is a proposed development of 98ha that is designed to accommodate buildings of up to 40m in height, visual effects that remain significant are restricted to within 1km distant from the Site with the majority of these impacts being recorded within or at the boundaries where such impacts would be considered inevitable.
- 6.3.23 Beyond 1km, although the proposed buildings are occasionally visible above the existing vegetation, the level of visual change is reduced leading to moderate or lower visual effects that would be expected to gradually reduce as both existing and proposed landscape and vegetation continue to mature.
- 6.3.24 For locations surveyed over 2km the proposals are not visible or have only a negligible level of effect.

- 6.3.25 For all the scale, massing and height of the proposed development, the actual area of visual influence is very local with significant effects retained within an area of 0.5-1km from the centre of the Site.

PROPOSED MITIGATION

- 6.3.26 As with landscape mitigation measures, the design and layout have been developed through an iterative process which have seen embedded mitigation measures designed to reduce visual effects. The setting back of units 1,2,5,6 and 7 back from Grappenhall Road and the arrangement of height and massing have been developed to reduce impacts. Alongside this bunding along the northern boundary will also reduce the visibility of proposed development.
- 6.3.27 Additional Mitigation is brought through the landscape proposals which are illustrated in (Appendix 3.3 and 3.7). These provide detail to the landscape parameters plan showing areas of woodland planting, woodland scrub and wildflower meadow. Woodland and woodland scrub areas, particularly where arranged along the northern and southern boundaries and within the ecological mitigation zone to the south, will create visual screening which will become functional within 10-15 years of planting.
- 6.3.28 The retention of existing trees and vegetation within the Site and to the outer Site boundaries will maintain screening. This is most notable for: Bradley Gorse and Wrights Covert to the south east; and the trees within and around the Bradley Hall moated Site to the centre of the Application Site.
- 6.2.29 In line with ecological mitigation and landscape character guidelines, the restoration and management of hedgerows and the re-introduction of hedgerow trees can be achieved within the green corridors of the proposals and add to the layered screening of proposed planting.
- 6.3.30 Native woodland planting is proposed as screening alongside bunding and as part of the wider ecological and green infrastructure proposals.

6.4 CUMULATIVE EFFECTS

6.4.1 The developments that are likely to have a cumulative impact when considered with the Proposed Development were scoped with the Local Authority and Key Consultees. These are considered within section 10 of the landscape chapter of the ES.

6.4.2 The ES considers a number of potential cumulative developments which are identified as having potential to generate additive effects either directly or sequentially. These are described within a table on page 128 and lists the following:

- Land North of Barleycastle Lane, Liberty Properties Development Ltd & Eddie Stobart;
- Former Stretton Airfield, Proposed construction of subterranean car storage facility;
- Warrington Garden Suburb (The Warrington Garden Suburb was identified as a Preferred Development Option in the July 2017) and Submission Version of the Local Plan (March 2019) subsequently removed from the proposed Local Plan but remaining as assessed as a cumulative project as likely phases (phases 1 and 2) of development that coincide with the projected six-56 development.

6.4.3 An additional cumulative project has been requested by the Local Authority for inclusion. This is Lymm Services, an existing services and truck stop that has proposals submitted to change the site to a full motorway services and extend the site to the east. The services are located to the east of the Site and the eastern side of the junction 20 of the M6.

6.4.4 The potential for cumulative effects both landscape and visual is highlighted for all of these projects apart from phases 3 and 4 of the larger Urban extension site. I have considered Lymm services within this report as an additional site to those listed in the ES.

6.4.5 The ES assessment for the Stretton Airfield site is there are no cumulative impacts due to the landscape separation between sites and the low level of visual intervisibility. This is a conclusion my own assessment supports.

6.4.6 The proposed Liberty Properties Developments and Eddie Stobart Distribution Centre on land north of Barleycastle Lane Stretton was refused planning permission in 2018 a subsequent appeal (called in) was also dismissed. The industrial park development is of a similar nature to the Proposed Development

within the Site, which incorporates large industrial units and due to its location it would have a direct and visible relationship in particular with Unit 4.

6.4.7 The ES concludes that: *The construction of this scheme will consolidate the presence of large-scale industrial development in this area and the resulting permanent change to local landscape character. It is assessed, therefore, that the cumulative effects would not increase as a result of this development. (ES 10.10)*

I agree that due to the already large scale effects on the local landscape assessed as part of the proposed development, the Liberty Site will not bring any additional cumulative effects.

6.4.8 Visually the ES comes to a similar conclusion. Although cumulative visual effects are identified, particularly sequential views from Barleycastle Lane and the footpath network running across the Site, the overall conclusion is that these are not significant effects.

6.4.9 Residential properties along Barleycastle Lane are also likely to experience adverse cumulative visual effects, particularly as this will bring visible development closer to them, in particular Barley Castle Farm which is closest to the proposed distribution centre, but also Birchels Gorse which lies further to the east. Adverse cumulative visual effects are considered greatest with the former due to its closer proximity.

6.4.10 Lymm services is an existing services Site and the proposals seek to largely re-fashion the existing development, parking and landscaping to accommodate the running of the site as a full motorway service area. There is a proposed extension to this site to the east to increase parking capacity. The nearby viewpoint of V20, from a more open location, identified Moderate/Slight visual effects from the proposals. There is no intervisibility with the existing Lymm services Site and none expected to be created through the combination of the proposals at the Site. There is a low possibility of construction cranes and other high level construction features becoming visible between sites but the existing vegetation around the services should provide full screen cover at the operational stages of both projects. The landscape effects of the proposed Lymm services appear low as this is largely an existing developed Site. I assess the cumulative effects to be Negligible-None.

6.4.11 I consider that there will be both landscape and visual cumulative effects that are adverse and that are focused around receptors close to the boundaries of both the proposed Site and the Liberty Site. These are mitigated by the proximity of the existing industrial estate and proposed bunding and landscaping. The effects

will not be significant in ES terms but will be, in my assessment a slight-moderate adverse level of cumulative effects over a local area and group of receptors.

6.4.12 The South East Warrington Urban extension is assessed by the ES as a worst case scale of development even though the most recent proposals have seen the scale of this development scaled back significantly. Two phases (1 and 2) are assessed for cumulative effects. The ES offers a general summary of the likely cumulative effects:

A major settlement expansion of this nature would have a significant and likely adverse landscape and visual effects essentially extending the edge of urban settlement to the M56 Motorway and M6 Motorway corridors. The PDO South East Warrington Urban Extension would remove parts of the area of Green Belt separating the development from Grappenhall and would significantly impact upon the homogeneity of the local landscape character areas, within which the Site lies and the adjacent areas to the north. Visual amenity would also be similarly significantly impacted for viewpoints and the wider area as a whole to the north of the Proposed Development Site.

6.4.13 The ES continues the assessment by reference to the phases of this development: Phase 1 comprising the industrial development which includes the Proposal Site itself and the Liberty Site as well as 406 residential units; Phase 2 2610 residential units and the remainder of the employment land that includes the Proposal Site and the Liberty Site.

6.4.14 The ES concludes that the previous cumulative assessment for the Liberty land development covers the most prominent of the potential cumulative effects that will follow from development phases. I believe that further sequential impacts are inevitable travelling through this landscape with large scale residential development occurring in both these phases.

7.0 EFFECTS ON THE GREEN BELT

GREEN BELT OPENESS

7.1 The 2019 Framework does not specify a precise definition of “openness” and this is not evident in any associated guidance, I understand it to mean the absence and/or the degree of absence of built development.

7.2 The Court of Appeal case “*Turner v Secretary of State for Communities and local Government and East Dorset Council [2016] EWCA Civ 466*” considered the

question of “openness” of the Green Belt. Lord Justice Sales confirmed in paragraph 13 that “*the true interpretation of the NPPF [2012] is a matter for the court*” and in paragraph 14 that “*the concept of openness of the Green Belt is not narrowly limited to the volumetric approach suggested by Mr Rudd. The word “openness” is open-textured and a number of factors are capable of being relevant when it comes to applying it to the particular facts of a specific case. Prominent among these will be factors relevant to how built up the Green Belt is now and how built up it would be if redevelopment occurs (in the context of which, volumetric matters may be a material concern, but are by no means the only one) and factors relevant to the visual impact on the aspect of openness which the Green Belt presents*”.

- 7.3 Lord Justice Sales then confirmed in paragraph 15 that “*the question of visual impact is implicitly part of the concept of “openness of the Green Belt” as a matter of the natural meaning of the language used in para. 89 of the NPPF [2012]*”. He similarly re-affirmed that there is an “*important visual dimension*” to the “*purposes*” of Green Belt including “*openness of aspect*”, wherein he indicates that “*the openness of the Green Belt has a spatial aspect as well as a visual aspect.*”
- 7.4 Lord Justice Sales was also clear that whilst there may be harm to visual amenity for neighbouring properties arising from a development, this has no bearing on the visual aspects of Green Belt and hence that such visual harm would be categorised separately from Green Belt harm.
- 7.5 Further case law confirms that openness in the Green Belt is both a visual and spatial matter and that the concept is concerned with the whole of the Green Belt rather than just constituent parts.
- 7.6 The Application Site is largely devoid of development being predominantly rural in character and consisting of a number of medium-sized agricultural fields. The Site also contains Bradley Hall farm which consists of farm house and a series of outbuildings. The wider landscape includes the neighbouring industrial parks to the west (located outside the Green Belt) which have a strong visual influence on the character of the Site. In addition, the M56 and M6 motorways are strongly defining man made features in this area, which also detract from the rural character.
- 7.7 In “*spatial*” terms, I agree with Mr Rolinson that the introduction of the built elements of the proposals will have a “*significant*” adverse impact upon the

“*spatial*” aspect of “*openness*” of the Green Belt in this location. This is a somewhat inevitable consequence of the scale of the proposals in this location.

- 7.8 Visually the openness of the Green Belt will be affected through the introduction of the proposals but the extent to which this may be considered as having potential to harm openness is a judgement that can be assisted through reference to the findings of the visual assessment of representative receptors.
- 7.9 This work concluded that visual effects are most pronounced within the Proposal Site boundaries and within 0.5km of the boundaries and that effects of Moderate/Substantial and above do not extend beyond 1km.
- 7.10 Beyond 1km from the Site centre the visual effects reduce to levels of Moderate through to negligible or none and this is true from locations to the south where the landscape is notably more enclosed, as well as from the north where views are to distance due to the elevated position over sloping topography.
- 7.11 Other view locations between 1 and 2km distance from the Site return negligible or no effects.
- 7.12 Although this is a proposed development of 98ha that is designed to accommodate buildings of up to 30m in height, visual effects that remain significant are restricted to within 1km distant from the Site with the majority of these impacts being recorded within or at the boundaries where such impacts would be considered inevitable.
- 7.13 Beyond 1km, although the proposed buildings are occasionally visible above the existing vegetation, the level of visual change is reduced leading to moderate or lower visual effects that would be expected to gradually reduce as both existing and proposed landscape and vegetation continue to mature.
- 7.14 For locations surveyed over 2km the proposals are not visible or have only a negligible level of effect.
- 7.15 For all the scale, massing and height of the proposed development, the actual area of visual influence is very local with only view locations in the immediate vicinity of this large Site likely to experience significant effects. The Openness of the Green Belt will be harmed but this will be over a local area with the majority of the Green Belt remaining unaffected or else only experiencing visual change that is below Moderate adverse and typically between Slight and Negligible-None.

8.0 LOCAL AUTHORITY OFFICER REPORT

8.1 The application for development was heard by committee on the 18th March 2022 and approved subject to conditions. The application and decision was subsequently called in by the Secretary of State.

8.2 The committee report considers the matter of Green Belt openness at 10.12:

In terms of the visual dimensions of openness, it is clear that the proposed development would significantly alter this currently largely undeveloped and relatively open and undulating Site into one which would accommodate a number of tall, large buildings. This would result in a significant change to views into the application Site from the surrounding area.

Whilst the impact on the visual dimension of openness in some areas would be likely to reduce over time as new landscaping matures, given the size and scale of the proposed development, a significant adverse impact on the visual dimension of openness would remain.

In view of the above, the proposed development is considered to result in significant harm to the openness of the Green Belt.

8.3 On Green Belt purposes the committee summarises their position from 10.15. This references the Green Belt assessment reports and agrees with the assessment of Mr David Rolinson and myself on the contribution the Proposal Site makes to the purposes of Green Belt, notably that it makes a notable contribution to purpose c (encroachment) and a moderate contribution to purpose e (urban regeneration).

8.4 The proposal is concluded as inappropriate development in the Green Belt and would result in significant encroachment into the countryside.

8.5 The report considers landscape and visual impact from 10.121. The Council commissioned outside consultants Ramboll to assess the LVIA and ES. The comments led to changes to the scheme and the submission of additional information. The report records that Ramboll considered there was *a degree of consensus reached about the extent of the significant landscape and visual effects (that they would be significant) and that the proposed perimeter landscaping and attenuation bunding are not expected to be particularly effective*

in overcoming the significant landscape and visual effects. (paragraph10.143). Ramboll further advised that is the application was approved then other information should be requested to support the proposals. Those matters were deemed appropriate to be controlled by condition.

8.6 At 10.147 the report begins to summarise the position with regard to landscape, visual and arboricultural matters. It states: *Given the scale and nature of the proposed development and the existing character of the area, it cannot be said to accord with the relevant criteria of Local Plan Policy CC2 relating to respecting local landscape character, given the significant adverse landscape effects that have been identified.*

8.7 The proposals are found not to fully comply with policy AT-D1 of the Neighbourhood Plan and does not comply with AT-D2 of the same, as it: *would not preserve the settings of open landscapes and it would involve the siting of development where it would be unrelated to the majority of the existing built development in the area or landscape features. (10.147)* Similarly the construction of large warehousing facilities and landscape bunds are described as anomalous in the landscape and would *not considered to comply with Local Plan Policy QE7 in respect of maintaining and respecting the landscape character of the surrounding countryside. (10.147)* These conflicts with policy are noted as being taken into the overall planning balance.

8.8 The conclusions of the report identify harm to the Green Belt and Green Belt openness; harm to the character of the area; ;harm to landscape and views; some cumulative effects; and adverse impacts to residential amenity all be it not any that are considered unacceptable. (10.366)

8.9 Landscape and visual impacts are considered to be significant and there would be a loss of agricultural lane. A balancing exercise is then undertaken and the final outcome is one which sees the proposals recommended for approval.

. 9.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

9.1 TPM Landscape was commissioned by Langtree PP and Panattone to review a landscape and visual assessment and ES in respect of the appeal and prepare a landscape proof of evidence.

The Proposal Site

- 9.2 The application Site is 98ha, the majority of which is located within the borough of Warrington, (92.16ha) with a small area of 5.93ha located in the borough of Cheshire East.
- 9.3 The Site lies north of the M56 motorway and west of the M6 motorway. Beyond the Site's western boundary is the existing Appleton Thorn Trading Estate. Beyond the northern boundary of the application Site are a number of scattered residential properties.
- 9.4 The Site and its immediate surroundings are relatively rural in character and is predominantly farmland with a medium sized field structure. There is a dense hedgerow structure and occasional woodland blocks or copses are regular and consistent features in the landscape
- 9.5 The Site includes Bradley Farm, located off Cliff Lane, comprising two houses (Bradley Hall farmhouse and the Bungalow) and farm buildings. Bradley Hall itself is a moated Site and a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

The Proposed Development

- 9.6 The proposals are for the creation of a large area of employment warehousing and offices with supporting infrastructure which includes roadways, parking and landscaping. The proposals have been developed around a set of parameters.
- 9.7 The arrangement of the Site has been heavily influenced by the presence of the Scheduled Ancient Monument on Site, the neighbouring land uses, including the sensitive residential receptors, the strong transport links, Site topography and geological features, and substantial landscape features including Bradley Gorse and Bradley Brook to the immediate South East of the Development Site.

Planning

- 9.8 I believe the relevant planning policies with regard to landscape and visual matters are: Chapter 15 of the NPPF (21), policies CC2, QE3 and QE7 of the Core Strategy and policies AT-D1 and AT-D2 of the Neighbourhood Plan address. Chapter 13 of the NPPF deals with Green Belt matters

Green Belt

9.9 There have been several Green Belt assessments prepared to support development proposals and the emerging local plan that have considered the Green Belt of and surrounding the Proposal Site. The Proposal Site has variously been described as making a *weak* and *moderate* contribution to the Green Belt purposes. The most recent reports considering the Site conclude that the release of the wider employment Site would result in some encroachment into the countryside but that it would not represent unrestricted sprawl.

Landscape Character and Assessment

9.10 The Site and proposals have been subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment that included Landscape and Visual Assessment supporting the original planning application.

National Landscapes

9.11 Within the National Character Area (NCA) classification the Site falls within NCA 60: Mersey Valley and sits immediately adjacent to NCA 61: Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain.

9.12 The Mersey Valley National Character Area (NCA 60) consists of a wide, low-lying river valley landscape focusing on the River Mersey, its estuary, associated tributaries and waterways. It is a varied landscape that extends from the mosslands near the Manchester Conurbation NCA in the east, to the Merseyside Conurbation NCA

9.13 A small area of the Site and a larger part of the study area fall within NCA 61 that lies to the south. The Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain National Character Area (NCA) comprises most of the county of Cheshire, the northern half of Shropshire and a large part of north-west Staffordshire. This is an expanse of flat or gently undulating, lush, pastoral farmland, which is bounded by the Mersey Valley NCA in the north, with its urban and industrial development, and extending to the rural Shropshire Hills NCA in the south

Landscape Effects

9.14 At a National level the change potentially affects NCA 60 and 61. Of these only NCA 60 will experience direct change as the boundary between the two character

areas follows the M56 (east/west) with NCA 61 falling to the south of this and the Proposal Site.

- 9.15 The change will be notable but small within NCA 60, with the nature of change being familiar both in terms of the wider character area description but also in terms of the local landscape that include other substantial industrial development and transport infrastructure. The change is assessed as low adverse.
- 9.16 Change to NCA 61 will be much less pronounced with no physical change occurring within this NCA.. The change is assessed as negligible

Local Character Assessment

- 9.17 A more detailed character study is provided by Warrington: The Site lies wholly within landscape type 1 Undulating Enclosed Farmland sub-type1B Appleton Thorn. It is bounded to the north by landscape type 4 Level Areas of Farmland and Former Airfields sub-types 3A Appleton Park and Grappenhall and 3B Massey Brook.

Landscape Value and Sensitivity

- 9.18 The sensitivity of LCA 1B Appleton Thorne is assessed as Medium and the value Moderate leading to a sensitivity of Medium.
- 9.19 The susceptibility of LCA 3A Appleton Park and Grappenhall is assessed as Medium and the value Moderate leading to a sensitivity of Medium.
- 9.20 I assess the susceptibility of LCA 7A Arley to the change proposed as Medium-High. The value of the landscape is assessed as Moderate. The sensitivity to change for this LCA is assessed as Medium to Medium-High.
- 9.21 The susceptibility of LCA 4C Stretton Airport to landscape change appears low due to the existing nature of the landscape and the existing visual detractors of motorway and industrial development. The value is low-moderate recognising the historic value of the airfield. The sensitivity is assessed as low.
- 9.22 The value of LCA 3B Massey Brook is Moderate- Low with little of distinction other than available footpath access. The susceptibility to change appears Medium-High on account of the visual sensitivity and the proximity of the Proposal Site. The sensitivity is assessed as Medium as judgement combining value and susceptibility.

9.23 The value of LCA 3C Lymm is assessed as Moderate-Good reflecting the intimate nature of LCA and its extensive heritage and historic character. The susceptibility to change is Medium-Low reflecting the enclosed and less open landscape of this LCA and the major influence of transport networks over this area. The sensitivity is judged as Medium.

Heritage and Cultural Assets

9.24 Bradley Hall moated Site is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM) located within the Site boundary, to the eastern part of the Site, adjacent to the farm buildings. The value of this Site is assessed as high and the sensitivity of the SAM is also assessed as high reflecting its designated status.

Landscape Effects

9.25 The majority of direct change will affect LCA 1B Appleton Thorne. It is a character area that includes the Appleton Thorne Industrial Park and Barleycastle Trading Centre and surrounds the former Stretton Airfield.

9.26 The change to the LCA characteristics will never the less be large in scale affecting both the visual and landscape character. The Operational phase is likely to create adverse effects with large scale physical and visual change, movements and activity. It will also include for beneficial aspects through the retention and protection of the SAM and its setting within a protected and separate landscape zone with public access via a re-routed ProW; screen landscape bunding and woodland planting; the retention of woodland areas; and landscape planting throughout including the creation of an ecological and habitat area.

9.27 The change to the LCA is assessed as large change leading to a Moderate/Substantial adverse effect.

9.28 Effects over LCA's 3A Appleton Park and Grappenhall; and 7A Arley. Are less pronounced. Operational effects over 3A Appleton Park and Grappenhall will physically effect only a small portion of the LCA adjacent to the boundary along Grappenhall Lane. This area of the Site includes the new roundabout and access which will be landscaped and integrated into the existing landscape and road corridor.

- 9.29 Effects over the LCA 7A Arley landscape physically effect an area of land to the south of the Proposal Site put aside for ecological mitigation. There will be a change from farmland to an area of ecological mitigation that will include scrub and woodland planting and wildflower meadow.
- 9.30 The landscape change will be noticeable but not all adverse as the primary physical change is for agricultural land to move towards a more ecologically rich landscaped area. Visually the operational effects have a low level of impact on the. The change is assessed as low with some beneficial aspects. The landscape effect is assessed as Slight Moderate adverse with beneficial elements.
- 9.31 The other LCA areas (3b Massey Brook; 3C Lymm; and 4C Stretton Airfield) are all remote from the Proposal Site and will experience only potential visual change.
- 9.32 From these LCA's visual effects range from slight/moderate adverse to none with some visual change likely close to the Site boundaries. No change will occur to key characteristics and the landscape change for all is assessed as low-negligible. This combined with medium sensitivity leads to a Slight-Negligible adverse effect
- 9.33 With regard to the Scheduled Monument of Bradley Hall moated Site, the Site itself is not directly affected by the development with the ES LVIA assessing the operational effects as: *Moderate magnitude of change, Moderate/Major Adverse significance and nature of effects which are permanent due to the close proximity of development* (7.19 of the ES LVIA chapter). I agree with this assessment as the change is visual change to the setting and surrounding with the core of the heritage asset remaining intact and held within a 30m buffer of non developed landscaped space.
- 9.34 I assess this is as a medium level of change to a High sensitivity receptors leading to a Moderate/Substantial adverse effect.

Views and Visual Amenity

- 9.35 Views have been selected as representative of receptors and visual amenity within and around the Appeal Site.

- 9.36 The views have been assessed through Site work and digital modelling to determine the extent to which the proposals will be visible and contribute to visual impacts through construction and operation and a projection is made as to the effectiveness of mitigation measures will be after 15 years when trees and other landscaping might expect to have matured.
- 9.37 Residential properties within the Proposal Site boundaries and within 0.5km of the Site experience Substantial/Moderate to Substantial effects. These are only partially mitigated through landscape bunding and planting.
- 9.38 View from public rights of way vary from those that travel through the Site itself, to those at greater distances. The visual effects vary accordingly but generally the greatest effects are for those locations running through the Site or within 1km of the Site centre.
- 9.39 Although there is a marked difference in the visual character of the landscape from north to south (north of the Site dropping away topographically allowing long distance views), this does not translate to a great difference in the level of visibility. Beyond 0.5-1km from all positions of the compass, the proposed development becomes screened by a combination of topography, vegetation and other development leading to a lowering of effects that gradually move from Moderate- Negligible -none.
- 9.40 Vehicular effects follow a similar pattern but are typically of lower magnitude due to their lower sensitivity to change.
- 9.41 Although this is a proposed development of up to 98 ha that is designed to accommodate buildings of up to 30m in height, visual effects that remain significant are restricted to within 1km distant from the Site with the majority of these impacts being recorded within or at the boundaries where such impacts would be considered inevitable.
- 9.42 Beyond 1km, although the proposed buildings are occasionally visible above the existing vegetation, the level of visual change is reduced leading to moderate or lower visual effects that would be expected to gradually reduce as both existing and proposed landscape and vegetation continue to mature.

9.43 For locations surveyed over 2km the proposals are not visible or have only a negligible level of effect.

9.44 For all the scale, massing and height of the proposed development, the actual area of visual influence is very local with significant effects retained within an area of 0.5-1km from the centre of the Site.

Mitigation

9.45 The proposals have been developed following an iterative process where assessment and consultation have brought forward design which have sought to reduce identified landscape and visual effects.

9.46 Mitigation measures employed include:

- Trees along bunds to screen views of the relocated Cliff Lane roundabout;
- Planting within internal link roads and on screen bunding;
- The erection of boundary screens during construction;
- The retention and enhancement of Bradley Gorse and surrounding grassland and tree planting around Bradley Brook;
- The implementation of a lighting strategy to reduce light spill;
- The positioning of units 20m from exterior boundaries;
- New landscape and ecological planting;
- Creation of new habitats including hedgerows and new ponds;
- Public footpath 23 retained and adjusted to bring the route closer to the SAM.

Effects on Green Belt

9.47 In “*spatial*” terms, the introduction of the built elements of the proposals will have a “*significant*” adverse impact upon the “*spatial*” aspect of “*openness*” of the Green Belt in this location. This is a some-what inevitable consequence of the scale of the proposals in this location.

9.48 The area of visual influence is very local with only view locations in the immediate vicinity of this large Site likely to experience significant effects. The Openness of the Green Belt will be harmed but this will be over a local area with the majority of the Green Belt remaining unaffected or else only experiencing visual change that is below Moderate adverse and typically between Slight and Negligible-None

Compliance with Landscape Aspects of Policy

- 9.49 It is acknowledged that aspects of Policy CC2 (Core Strategy) relating to *respecting local landscape character* cannot be said to be complied with given the nature and scale of the proposals and the assessment of local landscape and visual harm.
- 9.50 Policy QE3 sets out the Council's approach to protecting and enhancing existing Green Infrastructure. Through the extensive mitigation planting works proposed I believe the proposed landscape scheme provides the necessary landscape measures to comply with this policy of the Local Plan.
- 9.51 The main principle of policy QE7 is to secure high-quality places. The policy states that the Council will "*look positively*" at proposals designed to meet eight criteria but it does not indicate that applications will be refused where they do not fully meet all criteria. As the Application is in outline form then several criteria identified within policy QE7 can only be fully satisfied through Reserved Matters applications. The submitted Design and Access Statement addresses and my evidence answer some of the criteria and I believe full compliance with the majority policy is possible with the full development of the scheme to detail. Aspects relating to respecting the landscape character (bullet 6) are not met for the reasons set out above for policy CC2 (9.49).
- 9.52 For the same reasons the proposals, although complying with the majority of policy AT-D1 of the Neighbourhood Plan, fall short when considering *respecting the local setting*. The proposals do bring landscape and ecological benefits but there will remain harm to the local landscape setting.
- 9.53 The aim of Policy AT-D2 is to protect and enhance local landscape character and views. Consistent with the conclusions relative to policy CC2, I accept some non-compliance with respect to preserving open landscapes. Other aspects of the policy, including landscape proposals and green infrastructure are compliant.

CONCLUSION

- 9.54 This proposal sits alongside a series of similar applications for employment land within Green Belt in the north west of England and along the M6 corridor. The Inspector will hear evidence that this proposal represents a continuing need for such Sites to come forward to support the ongoing health and growth of the North West economy.

- 9.55 The SoS has previously approved other developments within this M6 corridor of a similar scale, mass and for employment/logistics use. All of these developments were found to bring some aspect of harm to the openness of the Green Belt and in some circumstances impacts on the purposes of Green Belt.
- 9.56 I believe my evidence demonstrates that this development proposal does create some harm to the openness of the Green Belt but that this is limited to within 1km from the centre of the Proposal Site and corresponds broadly with a zone of influence that is assessed as experiencing significant visual effects (within the ES). I believe this is no greater a level of harm than that considered acceptable for the other approved logistics Sites listed above.
- 9.57 As a development team we conclude that the proposed development will only adversely affect one of the purposes of Green Belt (purpose 3 Encroachment). My work on landscape and visual assessment supports this view.
- 9.58 Landscape effects are greatest for the landscape character area that holds the majority of the Proposal Site and will lead to a change to this LCA and a Moderate/Substantial adverse effect. There will be landscape effects over the other adjoining landscape character areas, particularly those that experience direct change through holding a portion of the Proposal Site within the boundaries of the LCA, but these effects are not assessed as significant ranging from Slight-Moderate adverse to Slight-Negligible adverse.
- 9.59 The landscape effects over the SAM heritage asset at Bradley Hall are assessed as Moderate/Substantial adverse and are a reflection of the large scale change proposed immediately adjacent to and around this Site. A 30m buffer zone of undeveloped land around this as well as a re-routed public path and landscape planting are proposed as part of the mitigation strategy.
- 9.60 Mitigation measures to visually screen the proposals have been proposed in the way of landscape bunds and woodland planting but these are not expected to completely remove views of the development from affected receptors.
- 9.61 Landscape and ecological mitigation are extensive and include new ponds, wildflower meadow and grassland, hedgerow and woodland and scrub planting. This is alongside the retention of large areas of existing woodland and some hedgerow and individual trees. Overall the scheme is able to demonstrate a biodiversity net gain which is a beneficial aspect of the proposals to be balanced alongside the adverse effects.

- 9.62 No scheme of this scale and nature could expect to come forward without creating some adverse effects over the receiving landscape and visual resource. This proposal is no different, but the effects are clearly constrained to a local area of influence and are part of a wider and long existing plan to create urban extension and employment land within this part of Warrington.
- 9.63 The proposed development will create significant adverse landscape effects over just one of the landscape character areas and will create significant adverse visual change over a relatively small and local area of up to 1km distant from the Site, but with many locations experiencing visual change only around the immediate boundaries of the Site.