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**BARRATT HOMES NORTH LONDON,  
TAYLOR WIMPEY UK LTD AND  
HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**LAND AT POUCHEN END,  
WEST HEMEL HEMPSTEAD,  
HERTFORDSHIRE**

**REPORT ON LANDSCAPE  
AND VISUAL MATTERS**

JULY 2012



David Williams  
**Landscape**  
Consultancy

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TAYLOR WIMPEY UK LTD AND  
HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**LAND AT WEST HEMEL HEMPSTEAD,  
HERTFORDSHIRE (LA3)**

**LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL  
ISSUES REPORT**

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 David Williams Landscape Consultancy (DWLC) were instructed jointly by Barratt Homes North London, Taylor Wimpey UK Ltd and Hertfordshire County Council – Property Department (the clients) to undertake a preliminary landscape and visual assessment of land at West Hemel Hempstead and surrounding area, and to advise on the landscape and visual issues which might affect the possible future development of the area for a mixed use residential development. The majority of the Study Area is owned or controlled by Barratt Homes North London, Taylor Wimpey UK Ltd and Hertfordshire County Council – Property Department although the Study Area as shown on Drawing No.0092/L1 – Landscape Context Plan (contained at the rear of this report) includes additional areas of land.
- 1.2 The aim of the appraisal is twofold, firstly to assess the landscape of the Study Area and its surroundings and to consider the suitability of the Study Area for residential development, infrastructure and open space, including identifying appropriate landscape mitigation measures (landscape strategy) to minimize the landscape and visual effects on the surrounding area. The second aim of the appraisal is to undertake a landscape and visual impact assessment of the development proposals to identify the potential landscape and visual effects and their significance.
- 1.3 The purpose of the report is to form part of the evidence base for, and highlight the landscape and visual issues that would need to be addressed as part of, the evolving development proposals for the Study Area. The report would inform the process of policy formulation by Dacorum Borough Council.
- 1.4 More specifically, the brief was as follows:
- To review background documentation including landscape planning designations affecting the Study Area;
  - To carry out a landscape and visual appraisal of the Study Area in order to assess its visibility and its relationship with the surrounding area;
  - To summarize the key issues with regard to the potential development of the Study Area;
  - To provide advice to guide the layout, scale, form, massing and general land use arrangements on the Study Area and assimilate the development into the wider landscape and create appropriate green infrastructure links;
  - To form conclusions on the suitability of the Study Area and development proposals and advise on suitable mitigation proposals that needs to be incorporated into the scheme;

- 1.5 The report represents the results of the landscape and visual assessment of the Study Area and its surroundings carried out in April 2012. However, parts of the Study Area have been previously assessed and reports prepared by Barton Willmore Environmental in November 2007 and also in May 2011 by Jon Etchells Consulting. These previous reports have been reviewed as part of the assessment of the Study Area and used as background information to inform this landscape and visual issues report.
- 1.6 This report should be read in conjunction with the Joint Statement prepared by Rapleys / Vincent and Gorbing and other technical reports prepared by the Consultant team.
- 1.7 This report is set out under the following headings:
- Landscape context
  - Study Area Description and Visual Appraisal
  - Consideration of Development Opportunities/Constraints and Advice
  - Summary and Conclusions
- 1.8 Information is presented on the following plans:
- Drawing No. 0092/L1 – Landscape Context Plan
  - Drawing No. 0092/L2 – Public Rights of Way Plan
  - Drawing No. 0092/L3 – Study Area Appraisal Plan
  - Drawing No. 0092/L4 – Study Area Visual Appraisal Plan
  - Drawing No. 0092/L5 – Wider Area Visual Assessment Plan
  - Drawing No. 0092/L6 – Landscape Opportunities and Constraints Plan
  - Drawing No. 0092/L7 – Landscape Strategy Plan
- 1.9 In addition, a number of photographs have been selected to illustrate the Study Area's visibility from key viewpoints, (and also the Study Area's landscape and visual characteristics), and these have been included in the photographic appendices at the rear of this report.

## 2.0 LANDSCAPE CONTEXT

### Location

- 2.1 The Study Area is located approximately 2.4 kilometres from Hemel Hempstead town centre and is situated on the western edge of the town immediately west of the existing housing area of Warners End and Chaulden and north of the River Bulbourne valley. To the west of the Study Area lies the small hamlet of Pouchen End whilst to the south west is the hamlet of Winkwell on the Grand Union Canal with the village of Bourne End located beyond on the A4251. To the east of the Study Area are areas of the residential development extending towards Gadebridge, Counters End, Green End and the River Gade valley, and also towards the centre of the town. These residential areas occupy rising ground on the northern flanks of the River Bulbourne and western slopes of the River Gade.
- 2.2 The location of the Study Area and surrounding landscape context is shown on Drawing No.0092/L1 – Landscape Context Plan contained at the rear of this report.
- 2.3 The Study Area forms a roughly rectangular-shaped area of land bounded to the east by housing at Warners End, Long Chaulden Road, Musk Hill and Public Footpath No 21, and to the west by existing field hedgerows and a section of Pouchen End Lane. To the north, the Study Area's boundary is defined by a section of Pouchen End Lane and a belt of young trees whilst, to the south the boundary is defined by a section of Chaulden Lane and adjoining hedgerows.
- 2.4 The Landscape Context Plan also shows the landscape context of the Study Area, including the main topographical features in the area, the existing built areas of Hemel Hempstead, and the River Bulbourne and Grand Union Canal situated to the south of the Study Area. The Study Area forms part of the open countryside lying on the edge of Hemel Hempstead and comprises a number of large, open agricultural fields predominantly in arable use, subdivided by hedgerows, hedgerow trees and fences.
- 2.5 The boundaries to the Study Area are formed, to the east, by existing hedgerows lying either side of the Public Footpath No.20 and the rear gardens of properties served off Newlands Road, The Meadows and Squirrel Close within Warners End, by the grass verge to a short section of Long Chaulden Road and by the existing vegetation/fence line to the rear gardens to properties served off Middle Hill, Honeycross Road, Musk Hill, Lindlings and Campion Furze Road. The southern boundary is formed by the existing hedgerows following Chaulden Lane, whilst the western boundary of the Study Area follows an existing field hedgerow and trees which extends northwards from Chaulden Lane, around Pouchen End Farm and continues to follow Pouchen End Lane to the north of Public

Footpath No.91. The northern boundary of the Study Area is formed by the existing hedgerow adjacent to Pouchen End Lane and a belt of trees extending eastwards from the lane to connect to the built up area in the north-eastern corner of the Study Area.

### **Topography**

- 2.6 The Study Area occupies the northern slopes of the valley of the River Bulbourne which includes a dry valley located within the north eastern parts of the Study Area. This dry valley extends north-west through the Study Area from Shrub Hill Common situated within the built up areas of the town. The land occupying the floor / slopes of the River Bulbourne valley within the Study Area lies at an elevation of between 95 and 155 metres AOD, with the land continuing to rise to an elevation of 165 metres AOD to the north of the Study Area around Boxted Farm.
- 2.7 To the north and west of the Study Area, the landform is formed by a number of shallow dry valleys and low ridges creating a gently undulating landscape between 110 and 170 metres AOD around Potten End, some 2.0 kilometres to the north of the Study Area, and extending westwards up to the edge of Berkhamsted, approximately 2.5 kilometres from the Study Area.
- 2.8 To the south of the Study Area, the southern slope of the River Bulbourne is formed by a number of dry valleys and low ridges, which extend south towards Bovingdon approximately 3.5 kilometres from the Study Area. To the east of the Study Area, the elevated undulating landform between 90 and 135 metres AOD, continues east up to the River Gade valley, which forms a distinctive feature within the built up area of the town. To the east of the River Gade, the undulating landform continues to a broad ridge at about 130 to 135 metres AOD which runs eastwards from Adeyfield and Jarman's Park towards Leverstock Green and the industrial areas of Hemel Hempstead near the M1 motorway.

### **Surrounding Area**

- 2.9 The countryside on the western edge of Hemel Hempstead between the River Bulbourne valley, to the south, and Potten End, to the north, comprises primarily agricultural farmland consisting of a number of pasture and arable fields divided by hedgerows and hedgerow trees, fences and sunken minor roads and lanes with a limited amount of woodland cover in the vicinity of the Study Area and Pouchen End.
- 2.10 To the north and west of the Study Area, the extent of woodland cover increases with a number of substantial woodland blocks situated around Potten End and Frithsden, including Bulbeggar's Wood, Little Heath and Gutteridge Wood. To the south and south-west of the Study Area and Pouchen End, tree cover is limited on the slopes of the River

Bulbourne valley but within the floor of the valley there are a number of trees lying adjacent to the Grand Union Canal and River Bulbourne, and these assist in containing and restricting views northwards from low lying areas. The existing strong framework of tall robust hedgerows and good tree cover within the wider area together with the gently undulating landform provide a high degree of visual containment within the landscape and restrict / curtails views towards and into the Study Area, especially from Little Heath, Bourne End / Winkwell and the eastern edge of Berkhamsted.

## **Landscape Character**

### *National Level Landscape Character Assessment*

2.11 The broad landscape character of the wider landscape surrounding Hemel Hempstead is defined in the Character Map of England (published in 1997) and Countryside Character Volume 7: South East and London published by the Countryside Agency (now Natural England) in 1999. The Study Area and surrounding landscape, to the west of Hemel Hempstead, is identified lying within the Chilterns Character Area No.110. This landscape character area covers an extensive area stretching from the River Thames in Oxfordshire across Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire to Bedfordshire. Whilst the Countryside Character Assessment is a generalised overview of the character of England, the assessment identifies the Chilterns as having the following characteristics:-

- ***Chalk hills and plateau with a prominent escarpment in many places, and extensive dip slope with numerous dry valleys.***
- ***Remnants of chalk downland on the escarpment and valley sides. Extensive areas of downland invaded by the scrub.***
- ***The most extensive areas of beech woodland in the country on the plateau, and 'hanging' woodlands in the valleys.***
- ***Enclosed and intimate landscapes of the valleys contrasting with the more open plateau top and extensive views from the scarp to the clay vale below.***
- ***Small fields and dense network of ancient hedges, often on steep ground. The agricultural landscape often dominated by hedges, trees and small woodlands.***
- ***Many surviving areas of semi-open common land on the plateau.***
- ***Scattered villages and farmstead, some of medieval origin, displaying consistent use of traditional building materials including flint, brick and clay tiles.***
- ***Network of ancient green lanes and tracks including the Ridgeway that links numerous archaeological sites and settlements.***
- ***Frequent grand country houses and designed landscapes occupying prominent positions on sloping valley sides.***

- 2.12 A copy of the description of Character Area No.110 is contained in Appendix A to this report.
- 2.13 The landscape character descriptions listed above provide a broad overview of the characteristics of the area of countryside to the west of Hemel Hempstead. The Study Area contains a number of the above characteristics and is generally typical of the open Chilterns landscape. However, in the vicinity of the Study Area the landscape is open reflecting the loss of hedgerows and enlargement of arable fields due to changes in farming practices in recent decades.

*County Level Landscape Character Assessment*

- 2.14 Hertfordshire County Council commenced with a landscape character assessment of Hertfordshire and published a document entitled "A Landscape Strategy for Hertfordshire, Volume 1: Background Information" in 1997 to support the then Hertfordshire Structure Plan 1998. The Landscape Strategy aims to provide the background for the development of a strategy for the management of change in the landscape of Hertfordshire and the report sets out the first stage of the work, including an explanation of main landscape regions, major threats and future actions. The report identifies the five national character areas within Hertfordshire including Character Area No.110, the Chilterns and identified five landscapes regions within the county.

*District Level Landscape Character Assessment*

- 2.15 The 1997 landscape strategy and character assessment has been superseded by more recent work carried out by the County, District Council and The Landscape Partnership. The Landscape Partnership was commissioned to undertake the preparation of a 'local authority scale' landscape character assessment and evaluation of the southern part of the county. A number of extensions to the County landscape character assessment have subsequently been completed with the Dacorum Borough area being commenced in February 2002.
- 2.16 In May 2004, the Landscape Character Assessment for Dacorum was published as Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG). The Study Area and land in the vicinity of the Study Area is covered by two Landscape Character Areas (LCA's), Area 118 – Lower Bulbourne Valley to the south and west and Area 120 – Little Heath Uplands to the north and west.
- 2.17 The landscape character of the Lower Bulbourne Valley LCA is described as:
- "The area occupies a relatively steep sided valley, strongly influenced by the major settlements of Hemel Hempstead and Berkhamsted at either end, which spread up the slopes and onto the adjacent plateau. The***

***narrow congested valley floor combines areas of wet meadow with important corridors for canal, road and rail. At its eastern end the area flows unto Hemel Hempstead at Boxmoor where the meadows create a relaxed rural approach to the town. On the valley slopes open large scale arable farming is characteristic while elsewhere there are distinctive chalk landscapes associated with Roughdown and Sheethanger Commons"***

2.18 The key characteristics of the Lower Bulbourne Valley LCA are identified as follows:

- ***"Narrow valley floor dominated by arterial transport routes including the London to Glasgow West Coast Main Line, Grand Union Canal and the A41;***
- ***Steeply sloping valley sides with views to major settlements and associated "landmark" buildings;***
- ***Wetland meadows and pollarded willows associated with River Bulbourne;***
- ***Canal basins, locks, barges, and architecture;***
- ***Influence of the Boxmoor Trust at Boxmoor Common, Roughdown Common and Sheethanger Common;***
- ***Large arable fields and few hedgerows to valley slopes;***
- ***Minor roads running up the valley slopes in sunken lanes with hedgebanks."***

2.19 The distinctive features within the LCA are considered to be:

- ***"Rare breads on Boxmoor Trust Land;***
- ***A41 bypass and Roughdown Common cutting;***
- ***Roughdown Common and Sheethanger Common chalk downland and scrub;***
- ***Railway embankments, bridges and gantries;***
- ***Winkwell Docks and canal settlement;***
- ***Sewage works;***
- ***Disused watercress beds at Old Fishery Lane;***
- ***Winkwell heavy plant depot and disused gravel pits (fishing lakes)."***

2.20 The overall evaluation of the Lower Bourne Valley LCA is as follows:

<b>CONDITION</b>	
Land cover change:	localised
Age structure of tree cover:	mixed
Extent of semi-natural habitat survival:	scattered
Management of semi-natural habitat:	good
Survival of cultural pattern:	declining

Impact of built development:	high
Impact of land-use change:	moderate

<b>STRENGTH OF CHARACTER</b>	
Impact of landform:	prominent
Impact of land cover:	apparent
Impact of historic pattern:	apparent
Visibility from outside:	locally visible
Sense of enclosure:	partial
Visual unity:	incoherent
Distinctiveness/rarity	frequent

2.21 The evaluation of the condition and strength of character matrix indicates that the Lower Bulbourne Valley (LCA 118) landscape strategy, and guidelines for managing change, is "Improve and Conserve". Of the fifteen bullet points setting out the strategy, six are relevant to the Study Area and development proposals. These are:

- ***"Promote awareness and consideration of the setting of the AONB, and views to and from it, when considering development and land use change proposals on sites adjacent to the AONB;***
- ***Develop a strategy to limit built development within the area and mitigate the impact of existing development either within or adjacent to the area on the edges of Berkhamsted and Hemel Hempstead;***
- ***Encourage the retention of the existing pattern of hedges and to create new features arable landscapes to the valley sides. Use the line of old field boundaries and/or rights of way where possible;***
- ***Promote the creation of buffer zones between intensive arable production and important semi-natural habitats;***
- ***Promote the retention of the character of local minor roads by the management of hedgerows and sunken lanes up the valley sides. Where part of a hedge has been damaged or removed it should be replanted with a mix of indigenous species;***
- ***Ensure that local highway improvements are sympathetic to the scale, pattern and character of the existing road network."***

2.22 The landscape character of the Little Heath LCA is described as follows:

***"The character of this area is influenced by the residential fringes of Hemel Hempstead, creating an urban edge quality to the plateau. The land is predominantly farmed for arable crops with horse paddocks clustered around the farms and houses. The upland gently undulates and the irregular and sub regular field patterns are intermittently visible. The effect of the landscape management on the character of this area contrasts with the neighbouring Ashridge Estate to the west. For example there is evidence of the loss of field boundaries as fields have increased in size for the intensification of agricultural use on the plateau. Little Heath to the south of Potten End is a remote part of the Ashridge Estate. Here the character becomes more intimate with narrow country lanes and wooded dells."***

2.23 The key characteristics of the Little Heath Uplands LCA are identified as follows:

- ***Urban fringe influence;***
- ***Arable farming;***
- ***Isolated farms and pasture fields;***
- ***Contained views.***

2.24 The distinctive features within the LCA are considered to be:

- ***Covered reservoir;***
- ***Bingham's Park and former rare breed centre;***
- ***Late medieval cottages;***
- ***Little Heath Pit- geological SSSI***

2.25 The overall evaluation of the Little Heath LCA is as follows:

<b>CONDITION</b>	
Land cover change:	localised
Age structure of tree cover:	mature
Extent of semi-natural habitat survival:	scattered
Management of semi-natural habitat:	good
Survival of cultural pattern:	interrupted
Impact of built development:	moderate
Impact of land-use change:	low

<b>STRENGTH OF CHARACTER</b>	
Impact of landform:	insignificant
Impact of land cover:	apparent
Impact of historic pattern:	apparent
Visibility from outside:	locally visible
Sense of enclosure:	partial
Visual unity:	incoherent
Distinctiveness/rarity	frequent

2.26 The evaluation of the condition and strength of character matrix indicates that the Little Heath Uplands (LCA 120) landscape strategy, and guidelines for managing change, is "Improve and Conserve". Of the nineteen bullet points setting out the strategy, twelve are relevant to the Study Area and development proposals. These are:

- ***"Utilise ancient hedge and field boundaries for the most appropriate location for woodland restoration and expansion;***
- ***Promote the creation of buffer zones between intensive arable production and important semi-natural habitats and the creation of links between semi-natural habitats;***
- ***Promote hedgerow restoration and creation throughout the areas to provide visual and ecological links between existing and proposed woodland areas. Pattern to follow historic field boundaries where possible. Restoration measures to include; coppicing, laying, replanting and gapping up;***

- ***Where hedgerow removal is deemed to be unavoidable, replacement planting should use locally native species of local provenance to maintain local distinctiveness;***
- ***Conserve and enhance the distinctive character of traditional settlements and individual buildings by promoting the conservation of important building sand high standards of new building or alterations to existing properties, all with the consistent use of locally traditional materials and designed to reflect the traditional character of the area;***
- ***Maintain and develop the traditional pattern of roadside verges as a local feature and a wildlife resource. Where development is likely to affect verges and damage is unavoidable, development should include details of protection of the remaining verge and replacement of its nature conversation value within the proposed scheme;***
- ***The planting and pollarding of trees adjacent to highways should be encouraged;***
- ***Promote awareness and consideration of the setting of the AONB, and views to and from it, when considering development and land use to change proposals on sites adjacent to the AONB;***
- ***A co-ordinated approach to the provision of access and recreation opportunities, car parking, land management, site interpretation etc should be encouraged between neighbouring communities. To include Little Heath;***
- ***Encourage the restoration of open heathland and heathland planting where possible on the plateau;***
- ***Support a strategy to limit built development within area and visual impact of development that may affect the area from outside, including Hemel Hempstead.***

2.27 A copy of the relevant extracts, taken from the Dacorum Landscape Character Assessment, is contained in Appendix B to this report.

### **Public Rights of Way**

2.28 The Public Rights of Way in the locally have been marked on Drawing No.0092/L2 – Public Rights of Way Plan. This demonstrates that there are a limited number of public footpaths found in the vicinity of the Study Area, the majority of which are located immediately adjacent to the Study Area’s boundaries. These include:

- Public Footpath No.20, which forms part of the Chilterns Way long recreational path and the Grand Union Canal Circular Walk around Hemel Hempstead. This footpath runs from Long Chaulden northwards, following the edge of the built up area, to connect to Fields End Lane to the north of the Study Area.

- Public Footpath No.21 which follows the northern boundary within the Study Area and extends from Pouchen End Lane eastwards to connect to Public Footpath No.20 at the north-eastern corner of the Study Area.
- Public Footpath No.91 which extends westwards from the built up edge to connect to Pouchen End Lane to the north of Pouchen End Farm.

2.29 In addition, within the wider landscape to the north of the Study Area, there are a limited number of Public Rights of Way, and these are mainly situated near Boxted Farm. To the south of the River Bulbourne, there are a number of Public Footpaths and Bridleways lying on the rising ground, including the Hertfordshire Way, south of Bourne End and the A41, and Public Rights of Way crossing Box Moor Westbrook Hay estate land and Sheethanger Common including a further section of the Chilterns Way.



### **3.0 LANDSCAPE PLANNING CONTEXT**

- 3.1 In terms of the planning context of the Study Area and surrounding area, the relevant Planning Policy Documents and Statutory Plans for the area are as follows:
- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) March 2012;
  - The East of England Plan May 2008;
  - The Adopted Dacorum Borough Local Plan 1991 – 2011 dated April 2004 and its 'saved' policies;
  - The Dacorum Borough Pre-Submission Core Strategy October 2011.
- 3.2 As a consequence of changes to the planning system – the majority of planning policies of the Dacorum Borough Local Plan were 'saved' following a direction from the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government under Schedule 8 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act on the 26<sup>th</sup> September 2007. The Council embarked upon the production of the Local Planning Framework (LPF) in 2005 and finalised the Core Strategy for submission to the Government for examination in June 2012.
- 3.3 In July 2010, it was announced, as part of the reform measures introduced by the Coalition Government that the Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS's) were to be revoked, with immediate effect. However, following a High Court challenge by CALA Homes, Regional Spatial Strategies and their associated policies were retained in November 2010. The Regional Spatial Strategy for the East of England (The East of England Plan 2008) thus currently forms part of the Development Plan and must be given due weight in the shaping and determination of planning applications.
- 3.4 The Coalition Government's Decentralisation and Localism Bill provides the context for removal of Regional Spatial Strategies. The Bill has recently received 'Royal Assent' but other processes need to be put in place before the government can formally revoke the RRSs which is anticipated to take place sometime during 2012. The aim of the Bill is to ensure that the planning system both works for sustainable growth and is responsive to the needs of local communities.

#### **National Planning Policy Framework March 2012**

- 3.5 The policies in the National Planning Policy Framework apply from the 27<sup>th</sup> March 2012 and therefore it is a material consideration in preparing development plan documents and making decisions on planning applications. The Framework supersedes previous PPG and PPS guidance and sets out the Government's vision of sustainable development, which should be interpreted and applied locally to meet local aspirations. It provides a framework within which local people and their 'accountable' councils can produce their own distinctive local and neighbourhood plans, which reflect the needs and priorities of

their communities (Paragraph 1). It also states that the Framework should be read and interpreted as a whole (Paragraph 6).

3.6 Section two of the Framework provides a definition of what is meant by delivering sustainable development and sets out three components of what this means for the planning system. The three components are planning for prosperity (the economic role), planning for people (a social role) and planning for places (an environmental role). Throughout the Framework document it emphasises that at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development and requires policies in Local plans to follow this approach (Paragraphs 14 and 15 of the Framework).

3.7 The Framework goes on to state, in paragraph 15, the following:

***"All plans should be based upon and reflect the presumption in favour of sustainable development, with clear policies that will guide how presumption should be applied locally."***

3.8 At paragraph 17 of the Framework it sets out a set of twelve core land-use planning principles which should underpin both the plan-making and decision-taking. In relation to landscape issues, 6 bullet points are relevant. These are:

- ***"not simply be about scrutiny, but instead be a creative exercise in finding ways to enhance and improve the places in which people live their lives;"***
- ***Always seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings;***
- ***Take account of different roles and character of different areas, promoting the vitality of our main urban areas, protecting the Green Belts around them, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and supporting thriving rural communities within it;***
- ***Contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural environment and reducing pollution. Allocations of land for development should prefer land of lesser environmental value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework;***
- ***Promote mixed use developments, and encourage multiple benefits from the use of land in urban and rural areas, recognising that some open land can perform many functions (such as for wildlife, recreation, flood risk mitigation, carbon storage, or food production);***
- ***Conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations."***

3.9 In Section 6 'Delivering a wide choice of high quality homes', the Framework sets out the requirements for local planning authorities 'to boost significantly the supply of housing' and goes on to provide guidance on how local planning authorities should deal with

housing supply, housing quality and housing mix, size, type, tenure and range of housing that is required in particular locations reflecting local demand. In Section 7 'Requiring good design', the Framework emphasises the Government importance that it attaches to the design of the built environment and goes on to state that: **'Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people'**.

3.10 At paragraph 58, it states that:

**"Planning policies and decisions should aim to ensure that developments:**

- **will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;**
- **establish a strong sense of place, using streetscapes and buildings to create attractive and comfortable places to live, work and visit;**
- **optimise the potential of the site to accommodate development, create and sustain an appropriate mix of uses (including incorporation of green and other public space as part of developments) and support local facilities and transport networks;**
- **respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation;**
- **create safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine quality of life or community cohesion; and**
- **are visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping."**

3.11 In Section 9 'Protecting Green Belt land', the Framework provides guidance on the Green Belt land surrounding settlements to which the Government attaches 'great importance'. Paragraph 79 of the Framework sets out the fundamental aim of Green Belt Policy which is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristic of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.

3.12 Paragraph 80 of the Framework sets out the five purposes of the Green Belt whilst Paragraph 81 goes on to state:

**"Once Green Belts have been defined, local planning authorities should plan positively to enhance the beneficial use of the Green Belt, such as looking for opportunities to provide access; to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation; to retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity; or to improve damaged and derelict land."**

3.13 Paragraph 82 of the Framework provides guidance on the establishment of new Green Belts whilst Paragraph 83 and 84 go on to deal with Green Belt boundaries and development. Paragraph 83 states that:

**"Local planning authorities with Green Belts in their area should establish Green Belt boundaries in their Local Plans which set the framework for Green Belt and settlement policy. Once established, Green Belt boundaries should only be altered in exceptional circumstances, through the preparation or review of the Local Plan. At that time, authorities should consider the Green Belt boundaries having regard to their intended permanence in the long term, so that they should be capable of enduring beyond the plan period."**

3.14 Whilst, Paragraph 84 states:

**"When drawing up or reviewing Green Belt boundaries local planning authorities should take account of the need to promote sustainable patterns of development. They should consider the consequences for sustainable development of channelling development towards urban areas inside the Green Belt boundary, towards towns and villages inset within the Green Belt or towards locations beyond the outer Green Belt boundary."**

3.15 Paragraph 85 provides advice to Local Planning Authorities when defining Green Belt boundaries and states that, local planning authorities should:

- **ensure consistency with the Local Plan strategy for meeting identified requirements for sustainable development;**
- **not include land which it is unnecessary to keep permanently open;**
- **where necessary, identify in their plans areas of 'safeguarded land' between the urban area and the Green Belt, in order to meet longer-term development needs stretching well beyond the plan period;**
- **make clear that the safeguarded land is not allocated for development at the present time. Planning permission for the permanent development of safeguarded land should only be granted following a Local Plan review which proposes the development;**
- **satisfy themselves that Green Belt boundaries will not need to be altered at the end of the development plan period; and**
- **define boundaries clearly, using physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent.**

3.16 In Section 11 'Conserving and enhancing the natural environment', the Framework provides guidance on the natural and local environment and, in paragraph 109, it goes on to state that:

**"The planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:**

- **protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, geological conservation interests and soils;**
- **recognising the wider benefits of ecosystem services;**

- ***minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity where possible, contributing to the Government's commitment to halt the overall decline in biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;***
- ***preventing both new and existing development from contributing to or being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability; and***
- ***remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate."***

3.17 Whilst, Paragraph 110 goes on to state:

***"In preparing plans to meet development needs, the aim should be to minimise pollution and other adverse effects on the local and natural environment. Plans should allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework."***

3.18 Paragraph 113 of the Framework also requires local planning authorities to:

***".....set criteria based policies against which proposals for any development on or affecting protected wildlife or geodiversity sites or landscape areas will be judged. Distinctions should be made between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites, so that protection is commensurate with their status and gives appropriate weight to their importance and the contribution that they make to wider ecological networks."***

3.19 Whilst paragraph 114 requires that Local planning authorities should:

- ***"set out a strategic approach in their Local Plans, planning positively for the creation, protection, enhancement and management of networks of biodiversity and green infrastructure; and***
- ***maintain the character of the undeveloped coast, protecting and enhancing its distinctive landscapes, particularly in areas defined as Heritage Coast, and improve public access to and enjoyment of the coast."***

3.20 The NPPF, at paragraph 115, provides guidance on the protection of valued landscape and 'great weight' should be given to protecting the landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Although this is not of relevance to the assessment of the Study Area as it is not located within a designated landscape such as AONB, Special Landscape Area or Area of Great Landscape Value, nor is it visible from the Chiltern AONB, the boundary of which is situated approximately 1.0 kilometre to the west.

3.21 Annex 1 of the Framework sets out the implementation of the Framework and states that:

***"The policies in this Framework apply from the day of publication"***

3.22 Whilst paragraph 211 goes on to state that:

***"For the purposes of decision-taking, the policies in the Local Plan (and the London Plan) should not be considered out-of-date simply because they were adopted prior to the publication of this Framework"***

3.23 Paragraph 212 to paragraph 216 of the Framework provides guidance on the weight to be given to relevant policies. Of particular relevance to the Study Area and development proposals, in this instance, is paragraph 215 which states that:

***"In other cases and following this 12-month period, due weight should be given to relevant policies in existing plans according to their degree of consistency with this framework (the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given."***

3.24 Whilst paragraph 216 goes on to state:

***"From the day of publication, decision-takers may also give weight<sup>40</sup> to relevant policies in emerging plans according to:***

- ***the stage of preparation of the emerging plan (the more advanced the preparation, the greater the weight that may be given);***
- ***the extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant policies (the less significant the unresolved objections, the greater the weight that may be given); and***
- ***the degree of consistency of the relevant policies in the emerging plan to the policies in this Framework (the closer the policies in the emerging plan to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given).***

### **The East of England Plan May 2008**

3.25 The key policies of the East of England Plan, which is still part of the development plan at this stage, provides landscape guidance of relevance to the Study Area (and the proposed development) are as follows:

- **Policy SS1:** 'Achieving Sustainable Development';
- **Policy SS2:** 'Overall Spatial Strategy';
- **Policy SS3:** 'Key Centres for Development and Change' – Hemel Hempstead amongst other settlements is identified as a location where new development should be concentrated;
- **Policy SS7:** 'Green Belt';
- **Policy SS8:** 'The Urban Fringe';
- **Policy ENV1:** 'Green Infrastructure';
- **Policy ENV2:** 'Landscape Conservation';
- **Policy ENV5:** 'Woodlands';

- **Policy ENV7:** 'Quality of the Built Environment';

3.26 The above policies relate to the promotion of sustainable development and quality design whilst respecting, and where appropriate enhancing the character and distinctiveness of settlements and landscapes, including the positive, high quality management of the countryside.

#### **Adopted Dacorum Borough Local Plan April 2004 and its 'saved' policies**

3.27 The Dacorum Borough Local Plan will be replaced by a Local Planning Framework including the emerging Dacorum Borough Core Strategy. At present, all but one policy of the Local Plan policies have been 'saved' until the Core Strategy has been adopted.

3.28 The Proposals Map of the adopted Dacorum Borough Local Plan shows the Study Area as lying outside the built up area boundary of Hemel Hempstead with the Study Area and land to the north, west and south of the Study Area as lying within the Metropolitan Green Belt - Policy 4 of the Local Plan. In addition to the Green Belt, the Study Area and surrounding area is subject to Policy 96 of the Local Plan which seeks to protect and enhance the landscape character of the Borough and refers to the Dacorum Landscape Character Assessment which has been adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance. The Proposals Map of the Local Plan also identifies the land to the west of the Study Area as lying within the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty situated between Hemel Hempstead and Berkhamsted, which is subject to Policy 97 of the plan.

3.29 Policy 98 of the Local Plan is also relevant to the Study Area as this policy seeks to protect and enhance the visual quality of the landscape and refers to the Landscape Character Assessment SPG, which identifies the key features of the area.

3.30 The land to the south-east of the Study Area is, identified on the Hemel Hempstead Open Land Strategy diagram (the land between Chaulden and Warners End) as "Open Land/Green Wedge" which forms part of the urban structure/open land strategy for Hemel Hempstead. This area is subject to Policies 9 and 116 of the Local Plan.

3.31 The concept of "green wedges" of open land within Hemel Hempstead originates from the masterplan for the New Town as illustrated on the 1949 Outline Plan contained in Appendix C. The plan for the New Town shows that as an important feature of the town and as part of the design and layout of the settlement, extensive areas of open space and playing fields were provided to separate individual neighbourhoods and to create pleasant "green" approaches to the centre of the town thereby creating the perception of existing countryside into the centre of Hemel Hempstead and emphasising the "Garden City" aspect of the New Town.

- 3.32 In addition to the open land designation covering the land to the south east of the Study Area, the land is also identified as a 'Local Nature Reserve' known as Shrub Hill Common which was Dacorum's first Local Nature Reserve and comprises some 10.78 hectares of land consisting of areas of unimproved neutral grassland, unimproved calcareous grassland, woodland and hedgerows. Details of the Shrub Hill Common Local Nature Reserve are contained in Appendix D to this report.
- 3.33 In addition to the above designations, there are a number of Tree Preservation Orders covering trees in the locality. There is a 'Woodland' Tree Preservation Order (TPO Ref:453) covering trees along the eastern boundary of the Study Area from Long Chaulden to 11 Squirrel Chase with a number of hedgerow trees, mainly Oak trees, individually plotted.

#### **The Dacorum Borough Pre-Submission Core Strategy October 2011**

- 3.34 The Local Planning Framework (LPF) for Dacorum will replace the existing Local Plan in due course. The LPF will set out policies and proposals for the development and use of land in the district for the period to 2031. The emerging LPF has already completed a number of key stages in the process since July 2005 and the Council published and consulted upon the Pre – Submission Core Strategy during November – December 2011. The key diagram of the emerging Core Strategy identifies the general locations of new housing development which includes an area to the west of Hemel Hempstead under reference LA3 – West Hemel Hempstead for up to 900 new homes, community facilities and strategic landscaping.
- 3.35 In relation to landscape issues and the Study Area, the relevant Core Strategy Policies are as follows:
- **Policy CS1** – Distribution of Development: this policy sets out the settlement hierarchy and decisions for the locations of new development in the Borough to met the Councils overall vision. Hemel Hempstead is identified as the main centre for development and change.
  - **Policy CS2** – Selection of Development Sites: this policy relates to the location and management of development and sets out the sequence and priorities to be applied to the selection of sites for development.
  - **Policy CS3** – Managing Selected Development Sites: This policy seeks to ensure that local allocations are reserved and managed as countryside until they are needed.
  - **Policy CS5** – Green Belt: this policy seeks to protect the Green Belt from inappropriate development in accordance with national policy. The explanatory

text to the policy states that a strategic review of the Green Belt is not required but some small scale releases will be necessary to meet local needs necessitating a change in Green Belt boundaries.

- **Policy CS25** – Landscape Character: this policy seeks to ensure that all development assist in conserving and enhancing Dacorum’s natural and historical landscape and refers to the Dacorum Landscape Character Assessment and other documents.
- **Policy CS26** – Green Infrastructure: this policy seeks to protect, extend and enhance the existing green infrastructure network within the Borough and has been informed by a number of studies and strategies undertaken by the County Council and Dacorum Borough Council.

### **Previous Local Plan Inspectors Comments**

3.36 The northern parts of the Study Area were promoted by Dacorum Borough Council for residential development at the last Local Plan review in October 1998. The Local Plan Inspector considered the Study Area and proposals during a Public Local Inquiry held between March 2000 and May 2001 and reported his finding in September 2002. At that time, the Inspector made the following comments (paragraphs 7.33.18 to 7.33.22), relating to the Study Area, its visual impact and effect on countryside:

***"There is no doubt that development of the land at West Hemel Hempstead would have a visual impact, both locally and from more distant viewpoints. The question, therefore, is whether this visually impact would have harmful consequences. Turning first to the local impact, I accept that views from the houses on the Fields End Estate are limited due to the dense vegetation along the eastern boundary of H34. However, there are attractive views across the land from Long Chaulden and from the housing to the south. There are also significant views across the open rolling landscape from FP21, which runs along the northern boundary and FP91 that passes the southern edge of the area. In addition there are pleasant intermittent views of the fields from FP20 where it abuts the eastern boundary.***

***The proposed deletion of Phase III (H54) would reduce the visual impact from FP91, particularly if planting were undertaken along the southern edge of H51. However, in my view, the development of Phase I and II would still have a substantial impact on attractive views of the countryside that are currently enjoyed by people using the other footpaths.***

***Longer distance views of the area are obtainable from a number of locations on the southern side of the Bulbourne Valley, including from Sheethanger Common, the Hertfordshire Way at Westbrook Hay and Featherbed Lane. I accept that from these viewpoints it is the area allocated for Phase III (H54) that is the most visually prominent owing to its location on the sloping valley side. However, although H34 and H51 would be located on the flatter slopes at the top of the valley, I consider that the housing on H51 would still be visible from most of these viewpoints, particularly Sheethanger Common. While I***

***accept that the proposed planting along the southern boundary would eventually reduce the visual impact this would take some time to become established. Moreover, the loss of openness would still, in my view, impinge on the attractive views of the rural area that lies to the west of Hemel Hempstead.***

***In conclusion, I find that the development of all three phases would have a significant effect on the countryside and would clearly have a detrimental impact on local views. In terms of longer distance views, I consider that Phase III would have substantial visual impact. Subject to additional planting the development of Phases I and II would be less prominent. Nevertheless, I find these phases, particularly H51, would still have a detrimental impact on the outlook from the viewpoints to the south, owing to the length of time it would take to establish the planting and to the general loss of openness that would occur.***

***In reaching this conclusion, I have noted the suggestion of some objectors that since both the land at West Hemel Hempstead and land within the Chilterns AONB can be seen from Sheethanger Common the development of the former would have harmful effect on the latter. However I am not persuaded that development of the land at West Hemel Hempstead would have a damaging impact on either the AONB or its setting, owing to the distance between them. Similarly I consider that the development would have very limited impact on the adjoining Landscape Conservation Area in view of the intervening hedgerows along Pouchen End Lane and local topography”***

3.37 The Inspectors recommendation in paragraphs 7.33.98 and 7.33.99 was:

**“The Council seriously reconsiders the allocation of land at West Hemel Hempstead for housing. Unless no other suitable land can be identified to accommodate the required housing then Housing Proposal Site H34 should be deleted from the Plan.**

**If H34 is retained in the Plan I recommend that the requirements be amended as.....”**

3.38 Whilst the Inspector suggested the deletion of H34 at that time, it was for the Local Planning Authority to find more acceptable sites in order to omit the H34 from the Plan which they did.

3.39 There is now, however, an opportunity to reconsider the Study Area and its development potential, while addressing the Inspector’s comments to integrate the development into the landscape. This is because more housing is needed and key policies in the Local Plan are to be updated and replaced in the near future by the Dacorum Core Strategy.

## **4.0 STUDY AREA DESCRIPTION AND VISUAL APPRASIAL**

### **Study Area Appraisal**

- 4.1 The existing layout and features of the Study Area are shown on Drawing No.0092/L3 – Study Area Appraisal Plan. The drawing shows the existing land uses, open areas, existing trees and hedgerows within and adjacent to the Study Area and adjacent land uses.
- 4.2 The Study Area forms a roughly rectangular-shaped area of land of some 53.39 hectares (131.92 acres) and comprises a number of open arable, pasture fields, and two small paddocks, subdivided by tall hedgerows and trees and / or post and wire fencing, lying in open countryside adjacent to the western built up edge of Warners End and Chaulden. The fields and existing hedgerows within the Study Area have been labelled (F1 to F10 and H1 to H10) on the Study Area Appraisal Plan, drawing No.0092/L3 for ease of reference.

### **Boundaries**

- 4.3 The boundaries to the Study Area are defined to the north by the existing hedgerow adjacent to a short section of Pouchen End Lane and a belt of mature trees defining the north eastern section of this boundary. The boundary to the east is formed by an existing hedgerows lying to the west side of Public Footpath No.20 / Chiltern Way and the rear gardens of properties served off Newlands road, The Meadows and Squirrel Close within Warners End, the grass verge to a short section of Long Chaulden within the central portion of the eastern boundary and by existing vegetation/fence lines to the rear gardens to properties served of Middle Hill, Honeycross Road, Musk Hill, Lindlings and Campion Furze Road to the southern section of this boundary.
- 4.4 The southern boundary is formed by the existing hedgerow and bank along Chaulden Lane. Whilst, the western boundary of the Study Area follows the existing embankment, mature trees and hedgerow on Pouchen End Lane before extending around Pouchen End Farm and continues northwards following Pouchen End Lane to the north of Public Footpath No.91. The northern boundary of the Study Area is formed by the existing hedgerow adjacent to Pouchen End Lane and a belt of trees extending eastwards from the lane to connect to the built up area in the north-eastern corner of the Study Area.

### **Topography**

- 4.5 The Study Area lies at an elevation of between 95 and 150 metres AOD, with the land falling from the northern boundary in a southerly direction towards Pouchen End and Chaulden Lane. Within the Study Area, the topography varies with a low ridgeline situated

in the western portion of the Study Area, and this extends southwards from Fields End Farm and roughly follows the existing field boundary towards Pouchen End Farm.

- 4.6 Within the eastern part of the Study Area there is a shallow valley which extends from the northern parts of the Study Area towards Long Chaulden and continues south-east into Shrub Hill Common and built up area of the town. The lowest point on the Study Area, however, is below 95 metres AOD, located on the southern boundary adjacent to Chaulden Lane with southern parts of the Study Area facing south.

### **Existing Vegetation**

- 4.7 In terms of existing vegetation, the eastern section of the northern boundary is formed by a belt of trees some 15 metres in width and comprises a mix of deciduous and coniferous tree and shrub species. This belt of trees curtails views into and out of the Study Area along this edge. The western section of the northern boundary is formed by a trimmed hedgerow, some 1.8 metres in height, consisting of predominantly hawthorn species with a number of individual Oak and Ash trees located within the hedge.
- 4.8 The northern section of the western boundary follows Pouchen End Lane and the existing tall, robust hedgerow on the east side of the lane. The hedge is located on a low bank and consists of hawthorn, blackthorn, and elder and wild rose species. In the middle section of the western boundary, the boundary skirts around Pouchen End Farm where it is defined by wooden post and rail fencing and garden vegetation/hedges before continuing south to follow the robust hedgerow and mature trees along Pouchen End Lane up to the southern boundary. The southern section of this boundary lies on a steep bank up to 5 metres in height and consists of hawthorn, blackthorn, elder and wild rose species with Oak and Ash tree species. Immediately to the south west of the Study Area is the mainline railway which lies on a high embankment with Pouchen End Lane passing under the railway in a narrow tunnel. The mature trees / hedgerows forming the south western boundary to the Study Area together with the high railway embankment effectively curtail intervisibility between Pouchen End and hamlet of Winkwell on the south side of the railway.
- 4.9 The southern boundary of the Study Area follows Chaulden Lane and is defined at its western end by chain link fencing and trimmed hedgerows including some conifer trees to the north side of the lane. At this point the hedge is on bank up to 4 metres in height which gradually decreases in height in an easterly direction. In the middle and eastern section of the southern boundary, a post and wire fencing forms the boundary together with a trimmed hedgerow about 1.8 m in height. The hedgerow to section is intermittent with several gaps in the hedge allowing views into the Study Area at this point.

- 4.10 The eastern boundary follows an irregular alignment following the built up edge of Hemel Hempstead. The southern section of the eastern boundary is formed by existing hedgerows and fences to properties served off Campions, Furze Road and Musk Hill. To the north of Musk Hill, the boundary turns east, to follow Public Footpath No.91 and is defined by rear garden fences and line of mature Horse Chestnut trees. The middle section of the eastern boundary is formed by existing undergrowth and line of mature trees comprising predominantly hawthorn, hazel and blackthorn species with Oak, Ash and Horse Chestnut tree species. Adjacent to Long Chaulden, the eastern boundary of the Study Area is formed by a timber post and wire fence, which allows views into and out of the Study Area in this locality. Located on this boundary, to the rear of properties on Middle Hill, is small rectangular area of woodland lying on sloping ground and consisting of Ash, Oak and elder species. The woodland extends into Study Area and partially screens views west from Long Chaulden into and across the Study Area.
- 4.11 The remainder of the eastern boundary to the Study Area is formed by an existing tall, double hedgerow and mature trees which are situated either side of Public Footpath No.20 / Chiltern Way. The hedgerow and trees consists of predominantly hawthorn, hazel and holly species, and included within these hedgerows are a number of individual Oak and Ash trees some of which are covered by TPO 453. These hedges effectively screen views into the Study Area from the adjoining properties; however views are possible through gaps in the western hedgerow from the public footpath.
- 4.12 In terms of vegetation within the Study Area, this generally consists of tall hedgerows and mature trees located within the central and northern parts of the Study Area. These hedgerows have been labelled H1 to H10 on the Study Area Appraisal Plan drawing No.0092/L3 for ease of reference.
- 4.13 Within the main parts of the Study Area, there are four discontinuous hedgerows and groups of trees (hedges H1 to H4), two of which are aligned north to south (hedges H2 and H3), sub-dividing the open fields. In addition to these hedgerows, there is a well maintained hedgerow (hedge H5) enclosing the small horse paddock situated within the south eastern parts of the Study Area. The species within the hedgerows generally consists of hawthorn, blackthorn, wild rose and hazel, with groups Oak and Ash trees.
- 4.14 To the east of the western hedgerow (hedge H3) within the Study Area is an area of new tree and shrub planting approximately 25 metres in width, which strengthens the hedgerow. Species within this planting belt include Ash, Elm, Goat Willow, Field Maple, Rowan, Birch and Oak with the southern portion of this planting (following hedge H5) also including Viburnum and Eucalyptus species.

- 4.15 Within the south western parts of the Study Area, following a north – south alignment, is a line of mature tall Poplar trees and block of young conifer trees (H7) which are about 1.5 to 2 metres in height. The belt of conifer trees (the majority of which are non-native species) is approximately 30m in width and will effectively curtail views east to west and vice versa across the lower parts of the Study Area in the future.
- 4.16 Within the southern central parts of the Study Area running east – west, adjacent to Public Footpath No.91, is a tall hedgerow with Oak and Cherry tree species (hedge H6) and a section of young hedgerow (over 10 years old) consisting of hawthorn, blackthorn, hazel and elder species with a number of young trees within the line of hedge including Oak, Ash and Rowan tree species. To the north of this section of hedge is a 10 metre belt of recently planted mixed species trees and shrubs approximately 1 to 1.5 metres in height. Situated midway along Public Footpath No.91 is a radio mast and small enclosed compound. Due to nature of the hedgerow and adjoining vegetation (and rising undulating topography within the Study Area) the hedgerows / trees tend to partially screen views into the north eastern parts of the Study Area.
- 4.17 In addition to the above, although entirely below ground, there is a high pressure gas pipeline and 70m easement zone which extends across the Study Area roughly along the alignment of Public Footpath No.91 and down the south eastern boundary of the Study Area.
- 4.18 A number of Study Area Appraisal Photographs were taken within the Study Area, Photographs A to Q inclusive, and these are included in the first part of the Photographic Appendices, 0092/P01 contained at the rear of this report. The locations from where these photographs were taken are shown on drawing No.0092/L4 – Study Area Visual Appraisal Plan and were taken in early April 2012 before the vegetation came into leaf and therefore maximum visibility is possible.
- 4.19 The Study Area Appraisal Photographs serve to demonstrate the character, condition and visual appearance of the Study Area as existing and also the nature and extent of the views across and out of the Study Area, especially to the south.

### **Landscape and Visual Appraisal**

- 4.20 An assessment of the visibility of the Study Area within its surroundings was undertaken in early April 2012, by walking and travelling along the network of local roads, footpath, bridleways and other paths within the area surrounding the Study Area. This indicated that the likely zone of visual influence (ZVI) of the Study Area is relatively limited for such a large area of land. The ZVI is defined to the north by area of woodland and tree belts following the northern boundary of the Study Area, by the hedgerow / trees and built up

edge of Hemel Hempstead to the east and by the hedgerow and trees adjoining Pouchen End Lane to the north of Pouchen End. To the south the ZVI extends across the River Bulbourne and is contained by high ground and areas of woodland roughly following a line east – west between Sheethanger Common / built up area of Felden to the east and Hanging Wood to the west.

- 4.21 Within this area views towards the Study Area can be obtained from a number of vantage points in the immediate vicinity of the Study Area and a limited number of longer distance views to the south and south east. The assessment identified that the trees and hedgerows along Pouchen End Lane (western boundary of the Study Area) are perceived in some views to the south west and west on the edge of the Chiltern AONB but the open parts of the Study Area are not seen and distance of the views (in excessive of 3.0 kilometres) meant that changes on Study Area due to development (assumed to be 2 storey dwellings) are unlikely to be perceived.
- 4.22 The visual appraisal also demonstrated that there are a number of key representative views of the Study Area from public vantage points and these are mainly near distance views of the Study Area from public footpaths and roads surrounding the Study Area and a limited number of longer distant views from the high ground on the south side of the River Bulbourne valley. From these distance vantage points the upper central / northern parts of the Study Area are just perceived but the central lower parts of the Study Area are visible and development within these parts of the Study Area would be clearly evident. However, from distant viewpoints to the south and south west, the Study Area is seen in the context of the existing built up areas of Hemel Hempstead (Chaulden and Warners End).
- 4.23 On the basis of the above, the assessment therefore concentrated on key views towards the Study Area and a second set of photographs were taken from points with public access. These photographs are included in the second part of the Photographic Appendices 0092/P02. The locations from where these photographs were taken are shown on the Drawing No 0092/L5 – Wider Area Visual Assessment Plan whilst Drawing No.0092/L4 – Study Area Visual Appraisal Plan illustrates the types of views possible into and out of the Study Area.
- 4.24 The photographs consists primarily of near distance views, where large parts of the Study Area are seen, and they serve to demonstrates its visibility as existing, its relationship with the built up area and the character of the areas surrounding the Study Area. As part of the visual assessment consideration was given to the following:

- The contribution that the Study Area makes to the wider landscape (including views in and out of the Study Area);
- The suitability of the Study Area to accommodate residential development, associated infrastructure and open space;
- The identification of those parts of the Study Area where landscape mitigation measures would be required to minimise the effects of the development on the locality and surrounding area.

4.25 Based on the survey visits, the following viewpoints with views towards the Study Area were identified:

- a) Local open views from Long Chaulden road looking north westwards (**Photograph No.1**);
- b) Local restricted views from Public Footpath No.20 / Chiltern Way looking westwards through gaps in the boundary hedgerow and from the built up area of Warners End on Newlands Road and The Avenue looking west (**Photograph No's.2, 3, 4, 5 and 6**);
- c) Local open views from Public Footpath No.21 looking southwards and distance views (**Photograph No's.7, 8 and 9**);
- d) Local restricted views from section of Pouchen End Lane looking south and eastwards (**Photograph No's.10, 11, 12, 13 and 17**);
- e) Local open views from Public Footpath No.91 mainly looking south across the Study Area and River Bulbourne valley (**Photograph No's 14, 15 and 16**);
- f) Local restricted views from a short section of Chaulden Lane looking northwards into the southern parts of the Study Area (**Photograph no's.18 and 19**);
- g) Local restricted views from the built up area of Chaulden on Lindlings road looking west towards the southern parts of the Study Area (**Photograph No.20**);
- h) Middle distance views towards the Study Area from short section of London Road (A4251) and the Boxmoor Trust car park (**Photograph No.21**);
- i) Distant views towards the Study Area from the access drive to Westbrook Hay Prep School looking north across the River Bulbourne valley (**Photograph No.22**);
- j) Distant views towards the Study Area from a section of the Hertfordshire Way as it crosses Little Hay Golf Course looking northwards towards the Study Area (**Photograph No.23**);
- k) Distant restricted views from a short section of Felden Lane looking north westwards (**Photograph No.24**), and;
- l) Distant views towards the Study Area from a section of Chiltern Way and Sheethanger Common (Open Access Land under CRow Act) looking north westwards towards the Study Area (**Photograph No.25**).

### Near Distance Views

- 4.26 There are a number of locations in close proximity to the Study Area where near distance views into and across the Study Area can be obtained. These include a short section of Long Chaulden, glimpsed and open views from sections of Public Footpath No. 20 / Chiltern Way to the east, open sections of Public Footpath No.21 to the north, open sections of Public Footpath No.91 within the Study Area looking north and south, and a long stretch of Pouchen End Lane to the north and west where glimpsed and partial views into the Study Area are possible.
- 4.27 The first in the sequence of near distance views is **Photograph No.1** and a view is taken from Long Chaulden looking in a northerly direction. The photograph illustrates the open nature of the view, the extent of the views across the Study Area (fields F1, F2 and F3) and undulating nature of the topography in the central northern portion of the Study Area. To the right hand side of the view is seen the existing built up area of Warners End with the mature trees and hedgerow (hedge H1) adjacent to Public Footpath No.20 and the urban edge effectively screening views towards the housing and containing this edge of the Study Area. To the left hand side of the view is the small woodland copse lying within the Study Area (southern parts of hedge H2), and to the left of this is seen the built up area of Chaulden and the housing fronting Long Chaulden.
- 4.28 In the centre of the view is seen the open parts of the Study Area with the view extending in a north-westwards direction across the Study Area to the hedgerow (Hedge H2 and H3) which separates the northern parts of the Study Area from the central area of the Study Area. The rising landform contains the view directly northwards and forms the visual horizon within the Study Area. From this vantage point the Study Area is seen as forming an area of open countryside and immediate setting to the edge of the settlement.
- 4.29 Moving northwards the next in the sequence is **Photograph No.2**. The photograph is taken from Public Bridleway No.20 at a point along the eastern boundary of the Study Area looking in a westerly direction. The photograph was taken through one of many gaps in the boundary hedgerow and illustrates the extent and nature of the views across the Study Area from the footpath, the open nature of the Study Area and gently sloping topography of the land. To the right and left side of the view is seen shallow valley landform within the northern parts of Study Area and the discontinuous hedgerow and trees (hedge H2) which extend right to left across the view and define the edge of the large, elongated arable field (field F3) situated in the eastern portion of the Study Area. Beyond this hedgerow, it is just possible to perceive the second discontinuous hedgerow (hedge H3) situated on a low ridge located in the western part of the Study Area with the hedgerow and trees on Pouchen End Lane forming the visual horizon to the view. The

lower lying southern portions of the Study Area are not seen in this view. From this vantage point, the Study Area is perceived as an area of open countryside.

- 4.30 Moving eastwards, **Photograph No.3** is a view taken from Newlands Road looking westwards towards the Study Area. The photograph illustrates the nature and extent of the views towards the Study Area with the majority of the Study Area screened from view by the robust hedgerows and mature trees situated either side of Public Footpath No.20. The open parts of the Study Area are not evident however views are possible between trees to the canopies of trees located within the Study Area (hedge H1) which form the visual horizon. From this vantage point, the existing housing have a strong influence on the view with Study Area and hedgerows (hedge H1) adjoining Public Footpath No.20 providing a contrast to the visual scene. The eastern boundary of the Study Area forms the main component of the view contributing to the visual scene with the main open parts of the Study Area contributing in a limited way to the character and visual appearance of the area.
- 4.31 Moving northwards, **Photograph No.4** is a view taken from the western end of The Avenue looking west towards the Study Area. The photograph illustrates the nature and extent of the views into Study Area from this road, with the view curtailed by the adjoining houses to the north and south. To the left of the view is seen the housing on The Meadows and behind these houses is seen the existing hedgerow and trees which defined the eastern boundary of the Study Area. To the right hand side of the view is seen the rear of the properties on Squirrel Chase and behind these houses, to the north, is just seen the hedgerow and trees on the Study Area's eastern boundary (hedge H1). In the centre of the view, the photograph shows the nature and extent of the view into the Study Area (at the existing field access) with the view framed by the hedgerow. Through the gap in the hedge the view extends across the gently undulating land to the low ridgeline situated in the western part of the Study Area (field F3), with the visual horizon formed by the hedgerow and trees (hedge H2 / H3) located on the ridge. The northern and southern portions of the Study Area are not visible. The existing housing has a strong influence on the view of the Study Area with Study Area and hedgerows adjoining Public Footpath No.20 providing a contrast to the visual scene.
- 4.32 **Photograph No.5** and **No.6** are views taken from Public Bridleway No.20, at a point along the eastern boundary of the Study Area, looking in a westerly direction. The photographs are taken through one of many gaps in the boundary hedgerow and illustrate nature and extent of the views across the Study Area from the footpath, the open nature of the Study Area and gently sloping topography of the land.

- 4.33 **Photograph No.5** is the view looking in a south westerly direction and in the centre left of the view is seen the discontinuous hedgerow and trees (hedge H2) which extend right to left across the view and defines the edge of the large, elongated arable field (field F3) situated in the eastern portion of the Study Area, beyond this hedgerow, the view extends up to the second hedgerow and trees (hedge H3) and also trees on Pouchen End Lane (hedge H4) forming the horizon. In this view, the Study Area is perceived as an area open countryside contained by hedgerows and trees.
- 4.34 **Photograph No.6** is a similar view to Photograph No.5 but looking in a north westerly direction. The photograph illustrates nature and extent of the views across the Study Area from the footpath, the open nature of the Study Area and gently rising topography of the land with the view extending up to the northern boundary of the Study Area. In the centre right of the view is seen the discontinuous hedgerow and trees (hedge H2) which extend right to left across the view and define the edge of the large, elongated arable field (field F3), beyond this hedgerow, the view extends up to the second hedgerow and trees (hedge H3) and trees on Pouchen End Lane form the horizon to the west; whilst the belt of trees along the northern boundary define to visual horizon to the north. In this view the Study Area is perceived as an area open countryside contained by hedgerows and trees.
- 4.35 **Photograph No.7** is taken from Public Footpath No.21 at the north eastern corner of the Study Area and is the view looking south west across the northern parts of the Study Area (field F3 and F4). The photograph illustrates the open nature and character of the Study Area, the extent of the long distance views across the Study Area to the high ground to the south west, with the existing discontinuous hedgerows and trees and within the Study Area (hedges H2 and H5) curtailing low level views across the western parts of the Study Area. In this view the Study Area is perceived as open agricultural countryside, contained by the hedgerows to the east and north, whilst the discontinuous hedgerow(s) and landform within the Study Area to the south and west curtailing views towards the lower lying southern parts of the Study Area.
- 4.36 Moving westwards, **Photograph No.8**, is a view taken from Public Footpath No.21 at a midway point on the northern boundary of the Study Area (east of Photograph No.7) and is the view looking south across the open, eastern portion of the Study Area. The photograph illustrates the open nature and character of the Study Area, the extent of the views across the Study Area to the high ground to the south, with existing housing at Warners End partially screened behind the double hedgerow on the eastern boundary of the Study Area. In this view the Study Area is perceived as open agricultural countryside, contained by the hedgerows to the east (hedge H1), whilst the discontinuous hedgerow(s) within the Study Area to the south and west (hedges H2 and H5) allow partial distance

views. As with photograph No.7, the southern lower lying parts of the Study Area are not perceived but the roof tops of the adjoining housing are just seen and have a minor influence on the character of the Study Area.

- 4.37 Moving westwards **Photograph No.9** is taken from Public Footpath No.21 at a midway point on the northern boundary of the Study Area and is the view looking south across the open, central portion of the Study Area towards the higher southern slopes of the Bulbourne valley. The photograph illustrates the open nature and character of the Study Area, the extent of the views across the Study Area to the high ground to the south west, with containment within the Study Area provided by existing discontinuous hedgerows and trees (hedges H2, and H3) running north – south framing the views southwards. In this view, the Study Area is perceived as open agricultural countryside, contained by the hedgerows to east and west, whilst the discontinuous hedgerow (hedge H5) within the Study Area to the south allow partial distance views. The southern lower lying parts of the Study Area are screened from view to by the landform and hedgerow.
- 4.38 Moving westwards, the next in the sequence of near distance views is **Photograph No.10**. The photograph is taken from Pouchen End Lane on the northern boundary of the Study Area and is a transient view looking south eastwards. The photograph is taken at an elevation of approximately 157 metres AOD and demonstrates the extent and nature of the view from this viewpoint across the open parts of the Study Area (field F4 and F3) and towards the River Bulbourne valley. The photograph also shows the open character and appearance of the Study Area and the gently sloping land across the northern plateau, which is seen to the centre of the view (field F4). The hedgerow adjoining Pouchen End Lane is clearly evident and this partially screens views from the lane with a view possible over lower sections of the hedgerow. Within this part of the Study Area, adjoining the northern boundary is a belt of young trees and shrubs, (seen above the hedge) and this vegetation will ultimately screen views south from the lane and create an enclosed character to the lane. In this view, the Study Area is perceived as an open area of farmland, with a rural character and appearance. However this perception will change once the tree planting within the Study Area has established and matures in the longer term.
- 4.39 Moving westwards, **Photograph No.11** is a transient view taken from Pouchen End Lane near the north western corner of the Study Area looking south eastwards. The photograph illustrates the nature and extent of the views over the existing hedge on the corner of the lane with views controlled by hedgerows (hedge H4) and trees along the lane eastwards and southwards. There is a partial view into the Study Area at this point with the north western corner of the Study Area is seen in the foreground, although the lower lying south and eastern parts of the Study Area are not perceived and therefore do

not contribute to the landscape and visual appearance of the area when seen from this vantage point.

- 4.40 Moving southwards, **Photograph No.12** is a transient view taken looking eastwards from Pouchen End Lane at a point midway along the northern section of the western boundary where there is a bend in the lane. The photograph illustrates the nature and extent of the views, the partial screen formed by the lane side hedgerow and the gently sloping topography of the Study Area with the land rising slightly eastwards towards hedge H3 and falling southwards (right hand side of the photograph). The view extends across the open sloping field (field F5) up to the north – south aligned hedgerow and trees occupying a slight ridge (hedge H3) and the rising topography and hedgerow effectively curtail views into the central and eastern parts of the Study Area whilst the lane side hedgerow screens views southwards across the River Bulbourne valley. In this view, the western parts of Study Area are perceived as open agricultural countryside, contained by the hedgerows and trees and landform within the Study Area.
- 4.41 Moving southwards, the next in the sequence of near distance views is **Photograph No.13** and is a transient panoramic view looking eastwards taken from Public Footpath No.91 as its western end adjacent to Pouchen End Lane. The photograph illustrates the extent and nature of the views into the Study Area from this section of Pouchen End Lane with the hedgerows either side effectively curtailing views north and south. In the centre of the view is seen the view along Public Footpath No 91 with views obtained to the north westwards across the northern plateau parts of the Study Area (field F5) and views possible south eastwards across the central southern sloping parts of the Study Area (field F7) to the built up area of Chaulden and eastern boundary of the Study Area.
- 4.42 To the north the existing hedgerow and trees (hedge H3) effectively curtails views in to the central eastern parts of the Study Area (fields F4, F6 and F2 / F1) and forms the visual horizon. Whilst to the south east, open view are possible across the Study Area with backdrop and context to the view and the Study Area formed by the built up area of Hemel Hempstead which contain and enclosure this edge of the Study Area. From this vantage point the Study Area is seen as forming an area of open countryside and contributing to immediate setting to the edge of the settlement.
- 4.43 **Photographs No.14** and **No.15** are views taken from the middle section of Public Footpath No.91 within the Study Area looking southwards. The two photographs were taken at an elevation at about 125 m AOD and they overlap slightly. The photographs illustrate the nature and extent of the views looking southwards across the Study Area and River Bulbourne valley to the built up area of the town, including Felden, and open valley

sides surrounding Westbrook Hay Prep School and Little Heath Golf course seen in the distance to the west.

- 4.44 **Photograph No.14** shows the nature of the views looking south eastwards from the footpath and illustrates the views down and across the southern sloping parts of the Study Area (field F7 / F8 in foreground) towards the southern Chaulden Lane boundary seen in the middle distance. To the left hand side of the view is seen the built up area of Chaulden which influences the landscape character and visual appearance of the eastern parts of the Study Area and forms its visual context. Whilst in the centre of the photograph is seen open views across the low lying parts of the Study Area with the distant visual horizon formed by rising ground and woodland areas to the south of Westbrook Hay Prep School. To the right hand side of the photograph is seen the existing trees / hedgerows forming part of hamlet of Pouchen End and belt of tall Poplar trees and conifers (hedge H7) extending south up to Chaulden Lane, and this vegetation effectively contains the south western parts of the Study Area and curtails views south westwards across the valley.
- 4.45 **Photograph No.15** illustrates the view looking in a south easterly direction from Public Footpath No.91 and shows similar characteristics in the views across the Study Area and River Bulbourne valley with the hamlet of Pouchen End and hedgerows / trees adjoining Pouchen End Lane curtailing views westwards and providing containment and enclosure to the Study Area along the edge.
- 4.46 From viewpoints No's 14 and 15, the southern parts of the Study Area appear as single large field, forming an area of open countryside adjoining the built up area of Hemel Hempstead. The built up area of the town forms the visual context of this parts of the Study Area especially when looking south eastwards and east.
- 4.47 Moving eastwards, **Photograph No.16** is a view taken from Public Footpath No.91 near the built up edge of Hemel Hempstead and housing on Musk Hill looking south eastwards. As with Photograph No's.14 and 15, photograph No.16 illustrates the undulating topography within this part of the Study Area and the nature and extent of views across the Study Area, with views extending across the River Bulbourne valley. To the right hand side of the view is seen the existing hedgerow (hedge H6) adjoining the footpath at this point and this screens views northwards in to central parts of the Study Area with the radio mast clearly evident in the view in a slightly elevated position forming a notable feature within this part of the Study Area
- 4.48 The next in the sequence of near distance views is **Photograph No.17** and is a transient restricted view obtained from a short section of Pouchen End Lane near Pouchen End Farm

looking north eastwards. The photograph illustrate the restricted nature of the views towards the southern sloping parts of the Study Area with the view extending over the open pasture field to the built up area of Chaulden and housing served off Lindlings and Musk Hill. From this vantage point the open southern parts of the Study Area, adjoining Chaulden Lane, and the northern parts of the Study Area are not perceived and therefore these areas do not contribute to the visual appearance and character of the view. As consequence the Study Area, when seen from this section of Pouchen End Lane, contributes in a limited way to the character and visual appearance of the surrounding area.

4.49 Moving southwards, **Photograph No.18** and **No.19** are views taken from Chaulden Lane at an elevation at about 90 metres AOD and are the views looking northwards. They illustrate the changing nature and extent of the views from the lane across the low lying southern parts of the Study Area, the contribution that the hedgerows make to containing and curtailing views and the urban influence of the existing housing in Chaulden have on the landscape. In the view northwards from the western parts of the lane (**Photograph No.18**) the views are restricted by the high lane side bank whilst from the eastern section of the lane (**Photograph No.19**) the views are intermittent and open where sections of lane side hedgerow are missing. To the left hand side of **Photograph No.19** is seen the view extending across the open paddock to the hedgerow surrounding the field (hedge H9). This hedgerow curtails low level view towards Pouchen End Farm and the south western parts of the Study Area. To the right side of the view is seen the built up edge of Hemel Hempstead and housing in Chaulden which forms a prominent feature extending up the rising ground. In the centre view is seen the radio mast adjoining Public Footpath No.91 which form a notable feature within this part of the Study Area and also seen is the existing tall hedgerows (hedge H6 and H9) effectively contain views northwards to the elevated northern parts of the Study Area.

4.50 Moving northwards the last in the sequence of near distance views is **Photograph No.20** and is a transient view taken from Lindlings / Honeycross Road. The photograph was taken from an elevation at about 110 metres AOD and shows the views looking westwards from the junction of the two roads. The photograph illustrates the contained nature of the views looking westwards across the central southern parts of the Study Area, the sloping topography of the Study Area and containment of the Study Area by the hedgerow and trees along Pouchen End Lane which forms the visual horizon to the west. From this vantage point, the existing housing have a strong influence on the view of the Study Area with Study Area and eastern boundary hedgerow and trees providing a contrast to the visual scene. The eastern boundary of the Study Area and adjoining urban features (houses, garages and hard surfaced areas) forming the main components of the view

contributing to the visual scene with the southern open parts of the Study Area contributing in a limited way to the character and visual appearance of the area.

### **Middle Distance Views**

- 4.51 Consideration was also given to middle distance views towards the Study Area (i.e. views within 300 to 600 metres of the Study Area); however this exercise demonstrated that there are very few middle distance views of the Study Area, primarily due to the lack of public vantage points within the landscape surrounding the Study Area and the containment of the Study Area by the undulating landform. However, views are obtained from a short section of the London Road (A4251) to the south of the Study Area and the Boxmoor Trust car park where publicly accessible views can be obtained.
- 4.52 The first middle distance view is **Photograph No.21**. The photograph was taken from the Boxmoor Trust car park, at an elevation at about 90 metres AOD on the south side of the River Bulbourne valley, looking north towards the Study Area. The photograph illustrates the nature and extent of views across the valley towards the Study Area and the existing built up areas of Hemel Hempstead / Chaulden perceived to the right side of the view. The viewpoint is some 500 metres from the southern boundary of the Study Area and in the centre of the photograph is seen the south facing slope within the central southern parts of the Study Area, (field F7 to the south of Public Footpath No.91). However, the elevated northern plateau areas and low lying southern parts of the Study Area are screen by topography and the vegetation within and adjoining the Study Area. In this view, the Study Area from a relatively small portion of the view with prominent features seen being the A4351 London Road, extensive tree cover within the surrounding area and Bulbourne valley together with the existing housing areas of Hemel Hempstead occupying the gently rising land to the east.
- 4.53 Moving westwards, the next middle distance view, **Photograph No.22**, is a view taken from the London Road A4251 at the bridge over the A41, looking north eastwards towards the Study Area. The photograph illustrates the nature and extent of the views from this transient vantage point, the rising landform to the north of the River Bulbourne valley and the visual horizon formed by the break in slope between the valley side and elevated plateau. To the right side of the view is seen the built up areas of Hemel Hempstead and strong structure of trees on the edge of and within the settlement. To the left hand side of the view is seen open rising countryside occupying the south facing slopes of the River Bulbourne valley situated to the west of the Study Area and Pouchen End, and north west of Bourne End. In the centre of the view is seen the small hamlet of Pouchen End and Pouchen End Farm surrounded by trees with central sloping parts of the Study Area (field F7 and part of field F6) seen to the east.

- 4.54 From this vantage point, the low lying southern parts of the Study Area are relatively well screened by the vegetation adjoining the A4251 / London Road and this screen would improve during the spring to summer months. However, the elevated northern parts of the Study Area (fields F4 and F5) are not visible due to the topography and existing hedgerows within the Study Area and as a consequence these parts of the Study Area do not contribute to the character and visual appearance of the landscape.

### **Long Distance Views**

- 4.55 Long distance views (i.e. views over 600 metres towards the Study Area), from public rights of way and roads in the wider landscape surrounding the Study Area were also considered as part of the assessment of the Study Area. This exercise showed that there are a number of distant views towards the Study Area, primarily obtained from the rising land to the south of the River Bulbourne valley. The assessment identified that distant views are possible from a section of the Hertfordshire Way crossing Little Heath Golf Course, the driveway to Westbrook Hay Prep School, and a restricted transient view from Felden Lane adjoining Sheethanger Common. In addition, there are partial / restricted views from several open areas (Open Access Land) on Sheethanger Common including a short section of the Chiltern Way as it crosses the Common.
- 4.56 The first in the sequence of long distance views is **Photograph No.23**, and is a view taken from the driveway to Westbrook Hay Prep School travelling northwards down the slope towards the A4251 entrance. The photograph was taken from a passing place on the drive at an elevation at about 130 metres AOD and shows the views looking northwards from this viewpoint. The photograph illustrates the open nature and extent of the views over the River Bulbourne valley, the character and appearance of the Study Area and landscape situated on the western edge of Hemel Hempstead, the undulating topography and south facing slope of the valley side, the built up areas of Chaulden and Hemel Hempstead (occupying the undulating landform to the east of the Study Area) and the relationship of the hamlet of Pouchen End and the Study Area.
- 4.57 In the view from this short section of driveway, the southern parts of the Study Area (fields F7, F8 and parts of field F5 and F6) are seen occupying the south facing slopes with the visual horizon seen beyond formed by the trees within the Study Area (hedge H2, and H3) and northern and eastern boundaries and built up areas of the settlement to the east. The existing strong vegetative edge to the built up area (Chaulden) is also seen and the central southern parts of the Study Area is perceived as an open, extensive area of land forming the open agricultural countryside setting to the edge of Hemel Hempstead.

- 4.58 Moving south westwards the next in the sequence is **Photograph No.24** and is a view taken from the Hertfordshire Way looking north. The photograph was taken at an elevation of approximately 145 metres AOD, approximately 1.0 kilometre to the south west of the Study Area and illustrates the character and appearance of the landscape surrounding the western edge of Hemel Hempstead. The photograph also shows the built up area of the town (occupying the undulating land to the east of the Study Area), the relationship of the built up area to Pouchen End and the Study Area, and the nature and extent of the views north eastwards towards the Study Area. In the views from this section of the Hertfordshire Way, the Study Area is seen as a number of fields occupying the rising and higher ground to the east and north of Pouchen End (fields F5, F6, F7 and F8), with the visual horizon beyond formed by trees within the Study Area (mainly hedge H2 and H3) and to the north with existing residential development to the east of the Study Area forming the visual context. The existing strong vegetative edge to the built up area is also seen and the southern sloping parts of the Study Area is perceived as an open, extensive area of land forming the open agricultural countryside setting to the edge of Hemel Hempstead.
- 4.59 **Photograph No.25** is a restricted transient view taken from a short section of Felden Lane on the edge of Sheethanger Common, approximately 1.3 kilometres from the Study Area. The photograph shows the glimpsed nature of the view through a gap in the road side hedges and over the existing houses in the village, which form the foreground visual context to the views. The photograph illustrates the nature and extent of the views from this transient vantage point with the built up areas of Felden and western Hemel Hempstead forming the prominent features in the view. The majority of the Study Area area (parts fields F3, F4, F5, F6 and F7) is perceived as open fields lying on the edge of the settlement with the visual horizon formed by elevated ground and trees beyond the northern edge of the Study Area. Pouchen End Farm is just visible as is the strong hedgerows following Pouchen End Lane (hedge H4) forming a notable feature in the landscape with areas of open countryside and wooded areas around Potten End seen beyond the western edge of the Study Area and forming the distant horizon. The low lying southern parts of the Study Area (fields F8 and F9) are screened from the view when seen from this vantage point.
- 4.60 The last long distance view is **Photograph No.26** and is view taken from the open access land within Sheethanger Common looking in a north-westerly direction. As with photograph No.25, this photograph is taken from an elevation at about 140 metres AOD, some 1.4 kilometres to the south east of the Study Area. The photograph illustrates the wooded character of the landscape surrounding Sheethanger Common, the nature and extent of the views towards the Study Area from this public vantage point and the extent

of the built up area of Hemel Hempstead visible in the views. A portion of the central and upper parts of the Study Area (parts of field F4, F5, F6 and F7) are seen in the centre of the photograph as open fields subdivided by the north – south aligned hedgerows and trees. The Study Area lies on the high ground, north west of Chaulden, and is seen as open land situated adjacent to the built up area, extending westwards up to Pouchen End Lane with open countryside and woodland beyond to the west. To the north of the Study Area, the barns at Field End Farm and the wooded area to the north of Pouchen End Lane, are just perceived and form the visible horizon containing the distant views.

### **Summary of Landscape and Visual Appraisal**

4.61 In general, it can be concluded from the landscape and visual assessment of the Study Area and surrounding area the following:

- That the boundaries of the Study Area are well defined by existing hedgerows, trees and other vegetation and roads which together with the adjoining hedgerows and trees contain and enclose the Study Area;
- That within the Study Area some of the existing hedgerows contain a number of gaps and allow partial views across the Study Area in some views;
- That the Study Area is not designated as having any national or local landscape designations for landscape quality;
- That the hedgerows and a number of trees within the hedgerows defining the eastern boundary of the Study Area are protected by a Tree Preservation Order;
- That, views into the Study Area are obtained from a number of local vantage points, mainly from the public rights of way to the north, west and east of the Study Area and from Public Footpath No.91 within the Study Area itself;
- That there are relatively few middle and long distance views of the Study Area and these are possible from the Hertfordshire way, Westbrook Hay and Sheethanger Common to the south and south east of the Study Area;
- That the Study Area appears as open land, apart from the central eastern and southern most portions of the Study Area where the topography and existing vegetation provide some containment to the views within the Study Area;
- That the central eastern part of the Study Area relates closely to the valley landform and Shrub Hill Common to the south of Long Chaulden.
- That the Study Area is located on the urban edge of Warners End and Chaulden;
- That the existing tall hedgerow and trees defining the eastern boundary, in places physically and visually separate the Study Area from the existing built up area and limiting the effects of the adjoining housing in influencing the character of the Study Area; although this influence increases within the southern parts of the Study Area where the boundary hedgerows and trees are not so strong;

- That in the local near distance views, the majority of the Study Area is perceived as open undulating farmland immediately adjoining the western edge of Hemel Hempstead;
- That in the middle and long distance views towards the Study Area from viewpoint to the south, the Study Area is seen as occupying sloping and elevated ground north of Chaulden and Pouchen End;
- That in the majority of middle and longer distance views towards the Study Area, the southern low lying parts of the Study Area tend to be screened from view with the central portions and some parts of the northern areas of the Study Area being perceived;
- That in the middle and longer distance views, the Study Area is seen as an area of open farmland, lying adjacent to the built up area of the settlement and in part forming the countryside setting to the western edge of Hemel Hempstead.

4.62 On the basis of the above landscape and visual assessment and using the definitions set out in the Landscape and Visual Assessment Methodology, (Appendix E) it can be concluded that the landscape condition (quality) of the majority of the Study Area is 'medium' as the land:

- is in a good condition with a recognisable structure of open fields and strong hedgerows;
- is reasonably pleasant but undistinguished and it is not degraded or despoiled land although the areas used as horse paddocks are of poorer (low) condition (quality);
- is not designated as having any particular landscape value, such as AONB or Special Landscape qualities, nor does it contain areas of land or features which create additional landscape value, apart some of the wooded areas on the Study Area;
- parts of the Study Area are crossed by Public Footpaths and therefore some 'visual amenity' value is gained from these routes for local walkers;
- the Study Area does, however, form part of the setting of Hemel Hempstead which give the area some 'local' value but this would apply to virtually all greenfield sites around the settlement.

4.63 However, the land is not of a high / outstanding condition (quality) and of uniform character and visual appearance similar to the Chiltern AONB near Berkhamsted, some distance to the west of the Study Area. In addition, the land does not form part of the setting of the Chiltern AONB as there is good physical and visual separation between the two areas of land. The Study Area does lie, however, within two landscape character areas (Lower Bulbourne Valley LCA 118 and Little Heath Uplands LCA 120) both of which

are identified as areas where the management strategy is to 'improve and conserve' the landscape character of the area.

### **Landscape Capacity and Sensitivity**

4.64 Landscape capacity and sensitivity is a new and rapidly developing area of landscape assessments and the latest guidance on this issue is contained in "Topic Paper 6: Techniques and Criteria for Judging Capacity and Sensitivity" published The Countryside Agency (now Natural England) and Scottish Natural Heritage. The terms sensitivity and capacity are often used more or less interchangeably although they are not the same and are not necessarily directly related. There are three definitions of landscape sensitivity and capacity as follows:

- i) 'Overall landscape sensitivity' – which relates to primarily the inherent sensitivity of the landscape itself, irrespective of the type of change that may be under consideration and is normally used to undertake strategic level of landscape character assessment work;
- ii) 'Landscape sensitivity to a specific type of change' – which used to assess the sensitivity of the landscape to a particular type of change or development e.g. housing development. It relates to the interactions between the landscape itself, the way that it is perceived and the particular nature of the type of change or development in question;
- iii) 'Landscape capacity' – which relates to the ability of a landscape to accommodate different amounts of change or development of specific type. In addition to the type of change other factors that are relevance to the landscape capacity include:
  - Landscape Character sensitivity
  - Visual sensitivity
  - Landscape value

4.65 The next section of this report considers the landscape issues relating to the Study Area and surrounding area, and development opportunities and constraints.



## 5.0 DEVELOPMENT CONSTRAINTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

- 5.1 In this section of the report consideration is given to the landscape and visual constraints and opportunities of the Study Area and developing it for residential development and associated infrastructure and open space uses.
- 5.2 There are three landscape and visual issues (landscape character, existing trees, and visibility and public views) which have been identified as forming constraints or opportunities to developing the Study Area. In addition, the Study Area is designated Metropolitan Green Belt and in order to enable the Study Area to come forward for development a new Green Belt boundary will need to be identified. These issues are considered below.

### Landscape Character

- 5.3 The landscape and visual appraisal of the Study Area indicated that the Study Area is predominantly open farmland on the edge of Hemel Hempstead which mainly comprises:
- a) A series of arable and pasture fields, hedgerows and trees;
  - b) An elevated northern plateau area;
  - c) A contained and enclosed central eastern valley;
  - d) A central eastern field /edge, south facing central slope and;
  - e) Low lying southern parts of the Study Area.
- 5.4 The overall character of the Study Area is similar and reflects the landscape character areas described in the Dacorum Landscape Study (see paragraphs 2.11 to 2.27 earlier). However, the appraisal indicates that the central eastern portions of the Study Area to the north and west of housing on Middlehill are well contained and enclosed. In addition, the low lying southern parts of southern parts of the Study Area, have a good degree of visual containment and the character of this part of the Study Area is influenced by the adjoining housing in Chaulden.
- 5.5 The central south facing slope within the Study Area, due to its aspects and open character is visually prominent in most views and is considered to have the least degree of containment. The remainder of the Study Area forms a series of semi-enclosed compartments mainly in arable use with existing hedgerows and trees and topography providing a moderate degree of containment.
- 5.6 Development of the Study Area for housing will result in the noticeable change / loss of the open fields and thereby a change to landscape character, which is unavoidable. The impact of the proposals on local character will however be perceived from a relatively small area within the wider landscape, mainly to the south, but the existing development

to the east and strong framework of vegetation to the north, east and west would ensure that the effects are localised in these directions. However, this is invariably the case with a 'greenfield' development site located immediately adjacent to the urban / countryside edge of a settlement. In addition, the effects on character can be minimised, with appropriate mitigation measures used to assimilate the development into the landscape surrounding the Study Area such as the retention of existing landscape features and introduction of new areas of open space and planting within the development.

### **Existing Trees**

- 5.7 The Study Area contains numerous mature trees and hedgerows as well as areas of young planting (about 10+ years old) which subdivided the Study Area into a series of semi-enclosed compartments. The majority of trees are located on the boundaries to the Study Area, a small area of woodland near Long Chaulden and those trees situated in the hedgerows within the northern and central parts of the Study Area.
- 5.8 The most visually significant of these features are as follows:
- a) the small woodland near Long Chaulden;
  - b) the hedgerows along Pouchen End Lane;
  - c) the hedgerow(s) and trees forming the Study Area's eastern boundary, and;
  - d) the hedgerow and line of trees following Public Footpath No.91 west to east across the Study Area.
- 5.9 The proximity of these trees and hedgerows would constrain the location and extent of built development due to the protection distances required to retain and protect the trees as well as minimising the effects of overshadowing and loss of daylight. The use of the land close to retained trees should preferably be for open use such as rear gardens or as open space uses where the long term management of the trees can be secured.
- 5.10 A number of the hedgerows, trees and areas of young planting within the central, northern and eastern parts of the Study Area have already been assessed and their condition / value and root protection zones identified in July 2011 by *tree: fabrik*, Arboricultural Consultants from Alton, Hampshire.
- 5.11 A detailed tree condition survey and report would need to be prepared for the remaining parts of the Site, at a later stage, which identifies the value and worth of the individual trees within the Study Area and immediately adjoining the boundaries of the Study Area and this would inform the layout and design of individual parcels of housing and alignment of roads.

### **Visibility and Public Views of the Study Area**

- 5.12 As previously mentioned, the visual assessment of the Study Area indicated that there are a limited number of views towards the Study Area. The views are identified as being mainly local near distance views and middle to long distance views; in particular from the south west, south and south east, with no middle or long distance views from the west, north and east, due undulating topography and / or extent of vegetation (hedgerows / trees and woodland blocks) curtailing views from these areas.
- 5.13 The visual assessment also concluded that:
- the Study Area appears as open land, apart from the central eastern and southern most portions of the Study Area where the topography and existing vegetation provide some containment to the views within the Study Area;
  - the central eastern part of the Study Area relates closely to the valley landform continuing into Shrub Hill Common to the south of Long Chaulden.
  - the Study Area is located on the urban edge of Warners End and Chaulden;
  - in places the existing tall hedgerow and trees defining the eastern boundary, physically and visually separate the Study Area from the existing built up area and thereby limiting the urbanizing effects of the adjoining housing on the character of the Study Area;
  - the urbanizing influence of the adjoining urban area increases within the southern parts of the Study Area where the boundary hedgerows and trees are so strong;
  - within the Study Area, (Public Footpath No.21 and No.91) there are a number of views southwards across parts of the Study Area and River Bulbourne valley.
  - in the local near distance views, the majority of the Study Area is perceived as open undulating farmland immediately adjoining the western edge of Hemel Hempstead;
  - in the middle and long distance views towards the Study Area from viewpoint to the south west, south and south east, the Study Area is seen as occupying sloping and elevated ground north of Chaulden and Pouchen End;
  - in the majority of middle and longer distance views towards the Study Area, the southern low lying parts of the Study Area tend to be screened from view with the central portions and some parts of the northern areas of the Study Area being perceived;
  - the treed skyline is an important landscape / visual feature assisting in providing containment to the Study Area and forming a backdrop in views from the south west, south and south east.
- 5.14 On the basis of the visual appraisal it is possible to identify the relative visibility of various parts of the Study Area and these are shown on the Landscape Opportunities and

Constraints Plan drawing No.0092/L6. Three categories of visibility are shown on the plan; although in reality the visibility of various areas of land is ranked on a sliding scale from visually contained areas though to visually exposed areas. Three categories have been used:

- **Visually Contained Areas (A):** These areas of the Study Area are generally well contained in the views from the wider landscape and although there may be some local views into these areas;
- **Moderately Contained Areas (B):** These areas generally are only visible in a number of views, but tend to be contained by the existing strong framework of vegetation and topography;
- **Least Contained Areas (C):** These areas are visible in the majority of middle and long distance views to the southwest, south, south east and in local views from locations within or immediately adjoining the Study Area.

- 5.15 However, it should be noted that the visual assessment is based on the perception of the Study Area as existing (i.e. not developed) and also based on views from publicly accessible areas, although it is recognised that a number of residential properties within the surrounding area would obtain private views across the adjoining land.
- 5.16 The area of land with the highest degree of visual containment, which is considered most suitable from accommodating new development, comprises the central eastern parts of the Study Area adjoining Long Chaulden (parts of field F1, F2, F3 and F4) and north of housing on Musk Hill (part of field F6) as well as the low lying southern and south eastern corner of the Study Area (field F8) although the south eastern corner is visually contained this area (field F8) helps create separation from Winkwell. These areas of the Study Area are generally well contained in the views from the wider landscape and whilst there are local views into these areas, the introduction of new houses, together with the incorporation of appropriate mitigation measures, will have limited visual effect.
- 5.17 The area of land with a moderate degree of visual containment are the elevated northern plateau areas of the Study Area (fields F3, F4 and F5) and a small area of the southern parts of the Study Area (parts of field F7, F9 and F10) as the ground gradually rises. These areas, whilst only visible in a number of views, are generally contained by a strong framework of vegetation on Pouchen End Lane and within the Study Area and by topography in relation to the southern parcel of land. These areas are seen as being separated from the existing built up and urban edge of Hemel Hempstead with the land within the south west corner forming part of the visual separation of Pouchen End from Winkwell and land to the south.

- 5.18 Apart from the land within the south west corner of the Study Area, it is considered that, whilst these areas are generally contained, development in these locations would be acceptable with the introduction of appropriate mitigation measures to integrate the development into the Study Area and to enable the development to be perceived as a logical and natural extension to Hemel Hempstead.
- 5.19 The area of land with the least degree of visual containment comprises the south facing sloping land (parts of field F7) within the southern parts of the Study Area and small portion of the elevated northern plateau (parts of field F5) to the west above Pouchen End and east north of the housing on Musk Hill (parts of field F4). These areas are visible in the majority of middle and long distance views to the southwest, south, south east and local views from Public Footpath No.91 and sections of Pouchen End Lane.
- 5.20 Development within this part of the Study Area would be very visible from areas to the south west, south and south east and the Public Footpath across the Study Area. Therefore the layout, scale, massing and height, particularly the roofscape of the development, would need to be carefully considered and the building platforms within this part of the Study Area set into the slope, where possible, to reduce ridgeline heights of building.
- 5.21 In addition, the development would need to be set back from Pouchen End Lane and the break in slope along Public Footpath No.91 and areas of landscape planting and buffers provide within the Study Area following and strengthening the existing structure / pattern of hedgerows and trees. This would help to screen some views and break up the perceived mass and scale of the development. Development on the south facing slope immediately south of Public Footpath No.91 (within the Study Area) is not considered appropriate due to its visibility and this area should be retained in open space uses retaining some views southwards over the River Bulbourne valley.

### **Consideration of new Green Belt Boundary**

- 5.22 The starting point for the definition of a new Green Belt boundary is the advice set out at paragraph 85 of the NPPF (see paragraph 3.15 earlier) which states that local planning authorities should:
- ***ensure consistency with the Local Plan strategy for meeting identified requirements for sustainable development;***
  - ***not include land which it is unnecessary to keep permanently open;***
  - ***where necessary, identify in their plans areas of 'safeguarded land' between the urban area and the Green Belt, in order to***

***meet longer-term development needs stretching well beyond the plan period;***

- ***make clear that the safeguarded land is not allocated for development at the present time. Planning permission for the permanent development of safeguarded land should only be granted following a Local Plan review which proposes the development;***
- ***satisfy themselves that Green Belt boundaries will not need to be altered at the end of the development plan period; and***
- ***define boundaries clearly, using physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent.***

5.23 The objective of the realignment of the Green Belt boundary is to provide sufficient land for housing in this part of the Borough and by realigning the boundary to the west of Hemel Hempstead; this would enable the area to accommodate additional built development.

5.24 The last bullet point of paragraph 85 is of particular relevance to defining a new Green Belt boundary and the consideration of the Study Area and its surrounding landscape features. The landscape and visual assessment of the Study Area showed that there are a number of landscape features, such as hedgerows / trees and roads within and adjoining the Study Area which could form a suitable alignment for a new Green Belt boundary thereby enabling the release of the land to accommodate some of the housing needs of the Borough.

5.25 The existing hedgerows and trees which are aligned north – south through the Study Area between Pouchen End Lane and Chaulden Lane could form Green Belt boundaries. However, the strongest physical and visual feature in the locality is Pouchen End Lane and the existing hedgerows and trees either side of lane.

### **Proposed Landscape Strategy**

5.26 In order to satisfactorily integrate housing development into the Study Area and the surrounding landscape, the Landscape Strategy Plan drawing No.0092/L7, contained at the rear of this report, illustrates the broad components of a landscape strategy for the Study Area.

5.27 The broad landscape principles for the Study Area should take the following form:

- a) The retention and strengthening of the existing belts of trees, individual trees and shrub/hedge planting within and immediately adjoining the Study Area. This is to maintain the existing excellent screens provided by these features and retain the treed skyline. However, the retention of some of the non native landscape

features, such as the belt of conifers within the south western parts of the Study Area, are not desirable and should be replaced ;

- b) The provision of a substantial belt of tree and shrub planting along the Pouchen End Lane and Chaulden Lane boundaries to the Study Area, in order to strengthen the existing hedgerows, minimize the impact of housing development on views from the lane, retain the existing character of the lanes and form an appropriate long term edge to the Study Area;
- c) The provision of a belt of tree and shrub planting running west to east across the Study Area to the north of Footpath No.91, in order to strength the existing hedgerows and planting, assist in retaining a treed skyline and minimize the impact of housing development when seen in views from the south and south east;
- d) The retention of the south facing slope within the southern portion of the Study Area as open land free from development and restricting built development in the south of the Study Area to the areas below the 110 metre (ADD) contour. The majority of the slope lies within the easement zone for the high pressure gas pipeline (see paragraph 4.17) and therefore is constrained from some forms of built development in any event;
- e) The introduction of areas of new 'Green Infrastructure' as 'fingers' of multi-functional open space/ planting following the existing structure of hedgerows / trees north – south (hedge H2 and H3) including the small woodland and part of shallow valley within the central eastern part of the Study Area and hedgerows (hedge H5) west across the Study Area. This would continue a "wedge" of open land extending from Shrub Hill Common into the Study Area and connect to Pouchen End Lane to the north and west. The creation of this new 'Green Infrastructure' would provide the opportunities for circular walks, ecological enhancements and areas of new planting within the development as well as breaking up the roofscape and extent of housing when viewed from locations to the south and south east;
- f) The introduction of views / vista across the Study Area, especially some southward views, through aligning roads north – south to create viewing opportunities, where possible;
- g) The introduction a range of housing densities across the Study Area reflecting the adjoining land uses to the north, west and south and creating a series of housing parcels separated by roads, pedestrian routes, street planting and open spaces

which would assist in reducing the extent of housing perceived when viewed from the surrounding area;

- h) The provision of a comprehensive landscape scheme within each development area to create an appropriate entrance feature to each housing area and an attractive living environment and setting.

5.28 The provision of the above landscape areas would reduce the landscape and visual effects of the development, retain and enhance the existing landscape features on the Study Area and would create a logical extension of housing to Warners End and Chaulden with Pouchen End Lane to the north and west and Chaulden Lane to the south forming the defensible and sustainable boundaries to the Study Area and Hemel Hempstead.