

# **Land West of Tring**

## **Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment**

Prepared on behalf of CALA Homes (South) Ltd.

August 2012

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## **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction and Methodology
- 2.0 Site Context
- 3.0 Site Appraisal
- 4.0 Visual Appraisal
- 5.0 Site's Contribution to Green Belt Purposes
- 6.0 Landscape Recommendations
- 7.0 Likely Landscape and Visual Effects
- 8.0 Summary and Conclusions

## **ILLUSTRATIVE MATERIAL**

- Figure 1: Site Context Plan at 1:10,000 @ A1
- Figure 2: Site Appraisal Plan at 1:2,500 @ A3
- Figure 3: Visual Appraisal Plan at 1:10,000 scale @ A1
- Figure 4: Landscape Development Principles Plan at 1:2,500 @ A3

Site Appraisal Photographs (A-I)

Site Context Photographs (1-22)

## **APPENDICES**

- Appendix 1:** Natural England, Countryside Character, Volume 7: South East & London Area 110: Chilterns
- Appendix 2:** Extracts from the Landscape Character Assessment for Dacorum
- Appendix 3:** Extracts from Aylesbury Vale Landscape Character Assessment
- Appendix 4:** Methodology for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment
- Appendix 5:** Visual Effects Table

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Barton Willmore Landscape Planning and Design (BWLPD) were commissioned by CALA Homes in May 2012 to undertake a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment for emerging proposals for the land to the west of Tring (hereafter referred to as 'the Site').

1.2 A landscape assessment is the systematic description and analysis of the features within the landscape, such as landform, vegetation cover, settlement and transport patterns and land use. A visual appraisal assesses visual amenity receptors, which are the viewers of the landscape, and includes locations from public buildings, public open space, public rights of way (PROW), residential or business properties.

1.3 In summary, the objectives of this Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment are:

- a) To assess the landscape character and quality of the Site as existing and its contribution to the setting of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) which extends into the western parts of the Site;
- b) To appraise the visibility of the Site as existing and its contribution towards the nature and quality of existing views from and towards the Chilterns AONB;
- c) To consider the Site's contribution to Green Belt purpose and to identify opportunities to define a more logical and defensible Green Belt boundary;
- d) To consider the Site's overall contribution to the setting of the Chiltern's AONB in terms of landscape character and views out from and in towards the AONB landscape;
- e) To identify landscape mitigation proposals which should be considered in developing a masterplan for the Site;
- f) To consider the likely landscape and visual effects which may result from development on the Site, based on the consideration of the landscape recommendations;
- g) To identify landscape opportunities and constraints which will guide the development of a masterplan for the land to the west of Tring and will ensure an appropriate landscape setting to future developments in the context of the adjacent landscape.

1.4 Information is presented on the following plans and photographs:

- **Figure 1:** Site Context Plan at 1:10,000 scale @ A1.
- **Figure 2:** Site Appraisal Plan at 1:2,500 scale @ A3.
- **Figure 3:** Visual Appraisal Plan at 1:10,000 scale @ A1
- **Figure 4:** Landscape Development Principles Plan at 1:2,500 @ A3

- **Site Appraisal Photographs (A-I).**
- **Site Context Photographs (1-22).**

## 2.0 SITE CONTEXT

### *Site location*

- 2.1 As illustrated on **Figure 1: Site Context Plan**, the Site is located immediately to the west of Tring, a small historic market town located between Aylesbury and Hemel Hempstead, to the north of the A41 and to the south of the GrandUnionCanal. The Site comprises 17.6 hectares of agricultural land and includes six fields, two of which are included within the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The B488 (Icknield Way) and the B4635 (Akeman Street / Aylesbury Road) bound the Site to the north and south respectively. The urban edge of Tring bounds the Site to the west and includes the Icknield Industrial Estate and the residential properties at Okeley Lane, Beaconsfield Road and LongfieldGardens. TringCemetery bounds the Site to the south east.
- 2.2 The Site is located within Green Belt, however the land to the west of Tring (including the Site) is currently allocated for housing, open space and extension to TringCemetery and Icknield Way Industrial Estate under Local Allocation LA5 of the Dacorum Core Strategy.

### *Topography*

- 2.3 The wider area of land in which the Site is located comprises an undulating landscape associated with the Chilterns AONB. The land drops away in a series of foothills and valleys from the Chiltern and Tring Scarps (at approximately 250m AOD) towards the gently undulating landscape associated with the Tring Reservoirs and the GrandUnionCanal (at approximately 90m AOD).
- 2.4 The A41 is a busy transport route which cuts through the lower slopes of the Wendover and Tring Foothills in an east west direction. It is predominantly in cutting as it passes the town of Tring.
- 2.5 The settlement area of Tring is located to the north of the A41 along the gentler south east facing slopes of one of the minor ridgelines or foothills associated with the outlier of the Chiltern Scarp. The Site itself is located along the upper south facing slopes of this gentle ridgeline and falls gently from approximately 165m AOD along its northern boundary with the B488 to approximately 155m AOD along the B4635.

### *Vegetation and Habitats*

- 2.6 Significant areas of woodland and tree belts are predominantly focussed to the upper slopes of the Chiltern and Tring Scarps and to the 'hanging woodlands' associated with the glacial valleys and sunken lanes weaving through the AONB landscape. Many of the woodlands to the south of the A41 are designated as Ancient Woodland (including Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland and replanted Ancient Woodland) and contain a wide variety of species, such as oak, holly, birch and hazel. To the north of the A41 the extent of substantial woodlands is reduced and vegetation is focused to smaller areas of woodland and tree belts associated with the reservoirs and the GrandUnionCanal.
- 2.7 Field boundary hedgerows are generally well established and help to define the small to large field patterns which vary in relation to the topography and the relationship with historic settlements.
- 2.8 Within the Site itself there are no areas of woodland. The field boundaries are defined by hedgerows and small tree belts of varying height and condition (described in more detail at Section 3). Significant tree belts in the vicinity of the Site include those associated with Drayton Holloway to the north of the B488 and linear tree belts to the south of the B4635 and along the A41 corridor.

### *Public Rights of Way*

- 2.9 There is a dense network of Public Rights of Way (PROW) within the study area, predominantly providing public access to the Chilterns AONB and the urban areas of Tring and Buckland.
- 2.10 Whilst the majority of public rights of way relate to the wooded ridgelines and the 'hanging valleys' which are characteristic of the Chilterns AONB, they occasionally cut through open arable fields, allowing for open views across the landscape.
- 2.11 The Ridgeway is a national trail which runs along the elevated parts of the Tring Scarp Slopes (as referred to in the Dacorum Landscape Character Assessment) and the Chiltern Scarp (as referred to in the Aylesbury Vale Landscape Character Assessment) to the south of the site. The Ridgeway heads from the south west towards the north east where it crosses the A41 and continues towards the east.

- 2.12 Within the Site itself there are two PROWs. Footpath TT048a connects from the western urban edge of Tring towards the B488 where it continues towards Drayton Beauchamp towards the north west. Footpath TT071 runs in a north south direction through the Site along the boundary of the AONB and connects the B488 with the B4635. It continues south to cross the A41 and continue towards Drayton Manor.
- 2.13 Other PROWs in the vicinity of the Site include the footpaths/ cycle ways associated with the B488 and the B4635 which connect Aston Clinton to Tring.

#### *Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas*

- 2.14 A number of Listed Buildings are located within the surrounding area, the locations of which are illustrated on **Figure 1: Site Context Plan**. These are generally concentrated within the Conservation Area of Tring to the east and within the settlement of Aston Clinton to the west.
- 2.15 There are no Listed Buildings within the Site or within 500 metres of the Site. However Listed Buildings within the vicinity of the Site which have been considered as receptors in this assessment include buildings at Drayton Manor and Dancers End Farm to the south of the A41 and the The Old Rectory at Drayton Beauchamp to the north.

#### **Landscape Policy Relevant to Site**

- 2.16 This section of the report summarises the key Policy Documents relevant to the Site at the National, Regional and Local levels, with a particular focus on policies relevant to the Chilterns AONB and the Green Belt. These policies apply to the Site and its surrounding landscape, and form part of the planning policy framework against which a proposal for development of land comprising the Site shall be considered.

#### **National Planning Policy**

##### *National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2012)*

- 2.17 The NPPF aims to provide one concise document which sets out the Government's planning policies for England by replacing previous Planning Policy Guidance (PPGs) and Planning Policy Statements (PPSs). It aims to provide a planning framework within which the local community and local authorities can produce distinctive local plans which respond to local needs and priorities.



- 2.18 The NPPF promotes a presumption in favour of sustainable development, defined as “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”, and providing it is in accordance with the relevant up-to-date Local Plan, and policies set out in the NPPF including those identifying restrictions with regard to designated areas.
- 2.19 The NPPF states that: **‘Local Plans should take account of climate change over the longer term, including factors such as flood risk, coastal change, water supply and changes to biodiversity and landscape. New development should be planned to avoid increased vulnerability to the range of impacts arising from climate change. When new development is brought forward in areas which are vulnerable, care should be taken to ensure that risks can be managed through suitable adaptation measures, including through the planning of green infrastructure.’**
- 2.20 The NPPF then identifies thirteen aspects which should be considered in developing local plans and reviewing planning applications. Those of relevance to the landscape and visual considerations of the Site and Proposed Development include Section 9: Protecting Green Belt land and Section 11: Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment.
- 2.21 Section 9 at paragraphs 79 to 92 provide guidance on Protecting Green Belt Land and advises that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.
- 2.22 The Green Belt serves five purposes:
- **“To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;**
  - **To prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another;**
  - **To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;**
  - **To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and**
  - **To assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.”**
- 2.23 Paragraph 83 provides guidance on Local Planning Authorities’ responsibility to establish Green Belt boundaries which set the framework for settlement policy. In exceptional

circumstances, where alteration to the Green Belt boundaries may need to be altered, the authorities should have regard to the intended permanence of the Green Belt in the long term. The Green Belt and its boundaries should be capable of enduring the plan period.

2.24 In accordance with paragraph 85 of the NPPF when defining boundaries for Green Belt land, 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.”**

2.25 In paragraph 114 of the NPPF, Local planning authorities are encouraged to **‘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’.**

2.26 In paragraph 115 of the NPPF, in regard to Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, it is stated that:

**“Great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the**

**highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty.”**

2.27 Paragraph 116 provides further guidance on development in designated areas:

**Planning permission should be refused for major developments in these designated areas except in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated they are in the public interest. Consideration of such applications should include an assessment of:**

- **the need for the development, including in terms of any national considerations, and the impact of permitting it, or refusing it, upon the local economy;**
- **the cost of, and scope for, developing elsewhere outside the designated area, or meeting the need for it in some other way; and**
- **any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated.**

*Regional Planning Policy*

2.28 The Government is aiming to abolish Regional Spatial Planning documents; however at present the East of England Plan provides regional planning policies which are relevant to the Site.

*The East of England Plan Regional Spatial Strategy to 2021 published May 2008*

2.29 POLICY ENV1: Green Infrastructure:

**“Areas and networks of green infrastructure should be identified, created, protected, enhanced and managed to ensure an improved and healthy environment is available for present and future communities. Green infrastructure should be developed so as to maximise its biodiversity value and, as part of a package of measures, contribute to**

**achieving carbon neutral development and flood attenuation. In developing green infrastructure opportunities should be taken to develop and enhance networks for walking, cycling and other non-motorised transport.”**

2.30 POLICY ENV5: Woodlands

**“In their plans, policies, programmes and proposals planning authorities and other agencies should seek to achieve an increase in woodland cover by protecting and achieving better management of existing woodland and promoting new planting where consistent with landscape character.”**

2.31 POLICY ENV7: Quality in the Built Environment

**“Local Development Documents should require new development to be of high quality which complements the distinctive character and best qualities of the local area and promotes urban renaissance and regeneration.”**

*GreenArc Strategic Green Infrastructure Plan, 2011*

2.32 The GreenArc Strategic Green Infrastructure Plan was prepared by Land Use Consultants in 2011. GreenArc is a partnership of authorities, organisations and interest groups concerned with a wide area of Home County countryside around North and East London within Hertfordshire and Essex. The Site is located at the western boundary of the area covered by the GreenArc Partnership.

2.33 The GreenArc Strategic GI Plan also recognises the two strategic links to the north and south of Tring, through Tring Park and along the Grand Union Canal.

*Green Infrastructure in Hertfordshire – a framework, 2009*

2.34 The Green Infrastructure in Hertfordshire – a framework was produced by Chris Blandford Associates in 2009.

2.35 Paragraph 3.1.2 sets out the key principles of GI planning, delivery and management in Hertfordshire:

- **“Wherever possible/desirable, promote GI assets that can provide multi-functional uses and benefits for people and wildlife;**
- **integrate green infrastructure into development schemes and existing developments;**
- **enhance green infrastructure where it is of low quality to realise its potential to meet**
- **existing and future needs; and**
- **create new green infrastructure where there is a deficiency in provision or opportunities to improve the network.**

*Towards a Vision for Green Infrastructure for Buckinghamshire – A Prospectus, 2006*

2.36 This summary document, produced by Chris Blandford Associates identifies three main GI Action Areas within Buckinghamshire, where the Site sits within the A2 – Aylesbury Environs Action Area. The areas identified are areas likely to experience growth related pressures over the next 20 years.

2.37 This document, like the Dacorum Borough Green Infrastructure Plan, identifies the two strategic links to the north and to the south of Tring, the Aylesbury to Tring Reservoirs Complex (via Grand Union Canal corridor) and Tring to Wendover Woods. The Grand Union Canal in particular is identified as being a location where there may be opportunities to create new or enhance existing green infrastructure. The Grand Union Canal Environmental Enhancement & Restoration Project is identified as one of the 13 strategic scale green infrastructure initiatives across the county.

*Chilterns AONB Management Plan 2008 – 2013 – A Framework for Action*

2.38 The Site is partly within the Chilterns AONB. The Management Plan sets out a vision for the Chilterns AONB, including guidance on developments. The following policies are of relevance to landscape and visual considerations:

2.39 Policy L3 states that new developments should be built to high environmental standards and respect the architectural traditions of the Chilterns:

**“L3: Resist developments which detract from the Chilterns' special character.”**

2.40 Policy L5 concerns visibility of development from the AONB:

**“L5: Ensure the impact of development adjacent to the AONB is sympathetic to the character of the Chilterns and maintains the quality of views from it and of it.**

**The impact of development adjacent to the AONB will be significant in many ways including its visibility from many popular sites. It is important that appropriate landscape and visual assessments are undertaken.”**

2.41 Policy D1 sets out the need to reinforce local distinctiveness and sense of place in new development:

**“D1: Conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Chilterns AONB, by reinforcing the local distinctiveness of the built environment**

2.42 Policy D7 states that:

**“D7 Pursue opportunities for landscape improvement and creation of greenspace (green infrastructure) when development is proposed in, or adjacent to, the boundaries of the AONB.**

2.43 Policy UE4 states that:

**“UE4 Develop environmentally sustainable access and recreational opportunities which strengthen links between town and country.”**

*Chilterns – Buildings Design Guide, 2010*

- 2.44 The Buildings Design Guide for the Chilterns was produced by the Chiltern’s Conservation Board and published in 2010. The document promotes good design in the Chilterns and provides detailed guidance on location and siting of new development, scale and form, landscape setting and materials.

*Local Planning Policy*

- 2.45 The site is located within Dacorum Borough, but lies immediately adjacent to the boundary with Aylesbury Vale Borough.

*Dacorum Borough Local Plan 1991 – 2011 Adopted 2004 (saved policies)*

- 2.46 Existing planning policy for Dacorum Borough is contained in the saved policies of the Local Plan adopted 2004. These are the policies used when making planning decisions. Of the saved policies, a number are of relevance to landscape and visual considerations and are set out below.
- 2.47 Policy 96 Landscape Strategy:

**“An attractive landscape character is sought throughout the Borough and measures to preserve and improve the landscape will therefore be promoted, secured and encouraged.**

**In all areas new development proposals will be expected to make a positive contribution to the landscape and bring forward specific improvements wherever needed.”**

- 2.48 Policy 97 Chilterns Area Of Outstanding Natural Beauty:

**“In the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty the prime planning consideration will be the conservation of the beauty of the area; the economic and social well-being of the area and its communities will also be taken into account. Any development proposal which would seriously detract from this will be refused. Wherever**

**development is permitted it will be on the basis of its satisfactory assimilation into the landscape.”**

2.49 Policy 98 Landscape Regions:

**“In considering proposals likely to have an impact on the visual or scenic quality of the Landscape Regions, the Council will take into account the degree to which the proposals protect and enhance the visual quality of the landscape by retaining, reinstating or managing desirable elements. Proposals should accord with the relevant strategy and guidelines approach for Landscape Character Areas contained in Supplementary Planning Guidance ‘Landscape Character Assessment for Dacorum’.”**

2.50 Policy 99 Preservation Of Trees, Hedgerows And Woodlands:

**“Encouragement will be given to the preservation of trees, hedgerows and woodlands (including old orchards) throughout the Borough. Where new development is proposed a high priority will be given to their retention and to their protection during development. Regard will also be paid to future management intentions.”**

*Dacorum Borough Local Planning Framework Core Strategy Pre-Submission October 2011*

2.51 The emerging Core Strategy and Local Development Framework will replace the existing Local Plan. The Local Development Framework provides policies and proposals for the development and use of the land in the Dacorum District for the period to 2031.

2.52 Paragraph 8.23 concerning the role of the countryside on the edge of towns states that:

**“The scale of the pressure upon the countryside varies across the borough, but it is particularly acute on the urban fringe. The key role of the countryside on the edge of the towns and large villages is summarised below:**



- **Tring – to provide the town with clearly defined boundaries, with Icknield Way in the north, the Pendley Estate to the east, the edge of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in the south. The countryside also provides a buffer between the town and new development around Aylesbury to the north west.”**

2.53 Paragraphs 8.27 to 8.34 deal with local Green Belt policy. Paragraph 8.27 states that:

**“A strategic review of Green Belt boundaries is not required, although some small-scale releases will be necessary to meet specific local needs or to correct minor anomalies. While these needs will often relate to housing, some sites will include proposals for employment, social and community and/or leisure uses.”**

2.54 Policy CS10: Quality of Settlement Design:

**The design of all new development will be expected to follow the ‘3 Step Approach to Successful Design’. At the broad settlement level, development should:**

- (a) respect defined countryside borders and the landscape character surrounding the town or village;**
- (b) reinforce the topography of natural landscapes and the existing soft edges of towns and villages;**
- (c) promote higher densities in and around town centres and local centres;**
- (d) protect and enhance significant views into and out of towns and villages;**
- (e) deliver landmark buildings at movement and pedestrian gateways and enhance focal points with high quality architecture;**
- (f) preserve and enhance green gateways; and**
- (g) protect and enhance wildlife corridors.**

2.55 Policy CS24: The Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

**“The special qualities of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty will be conserved. The scarp slope will be protected from development that would have a negative impact upon its skyline. Development will have regard to the policies and actions set out in the Chilterns Conservation Board’s Management Plan and support the principles set out within the Chilterns Buildings Design Guide and associated technical notes.”**

2.56 Policy CS25: Landscape Character

**“All development will help conserve and enhance Dacorum’s natural and historic landscape. Proposals will be assessed for their impact on landscape features to ensure that they conserve or improve the prevailing landscape quality, character and condition and take full account of the Dacorum Landscape Character Assessment, Historic Landscape Characterisation and advice contained within the Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record.”**

2.57 Policy CS26: Green Infrastructure

**“Development will be expected to:**

- (a) protect, extend and enhance the Green Infrastructure Network both within and outside settlements and at all spatial scales;**
- (b) support the long-term management, enhancement and restoration of wildlife habitats and strengthen biodiversity corridors; and**
- (c) meet any specific requirements set out within the Green Infrastructure SPD and associated Action Plan;**

**Open spaces will be managed in accordance with the Council’s Green Space Strategy.**

**National and local Biodiversity Action Plans will be supported through the conservation and management of important species and habitats, by protecting designated sites and by maximising opportunities to link these to the wider Green Infrastructure Network.”**

*Dacorum Borough Council Green Infrastructure – Background Note, 2010*

This document reviews the context for Green Infrastructure in Dacorum and identifies existing Green Infrastructure and assets, and potential areas for future development of the Green Infrastructure network.

2.58 In Section 4 Green Infrastructure Priorities, it is stated that:

**“Dacorum’s Core Strategy aims for new development in the Borough to maintain or improve the quality of life of Dacorum’s communities, and for development to be supported by appropriate infrastructure provision. This should include green infrastructure provision and improvements for both people and wildlife.”**

**“The connectivity between key assets through the establishment of linked and coherent networks and corridors of green spaces and sustainable transport links should also be improved. New development should contribute to the delivery of new green infrastructure and management of a linked green infrastructure network. It should not compromise the integrity of the existing network by causing fragmentation, damage to, or isolation of green infrastructure assets.”**

*Tring Place Strategy*

2.59 The Tring Place Strategy provides further detail on the vision for the town of Tring and the proposals for allocating development within the Site. The Vision Diagram indicates the general location of the Local Allocation relevant to the Site. Furthermore it indicates the potential for a wildlife corridor running north south through the Site and a Green Gateway to the west of the town.

*Dacorum Borough Green Infrastructure Plan 2011*

- 2.60 The Dacorum Green Infrastructure Plan was produced by Land Use Consultants and published in 2011. It is to be included as part of the evidence base for the LDF process.
- 2.61 There are no Green Infrastructure proposals that directly affect the site. There are, however, two strategic routes, which are also sites of proposed Green Infrastructure enhancement projects, located close to the site running east-west through Tring Park, south of Tring, and along the Grand Union Canal to the north of the town.

*Aylesbury Vale: Areas of Sensitive Landscape, 2008*

- 2.62 This report was commissioned jointly by Aylesbury Vale District Council (AVDC) and Buckinghamshire County Council (BCC) and prepared by Jacobs. The aim of the study was to undertake a thorough policy review of existing local landscape designations and provide recommendations for a new local landscape policy designation policy based on the Landscape Character Assessment of Aylesbury Vale.
- 2.63 The report concludes that, in the context of the Site, the Aylesbury Vale Landscape Character Assessment (which is considered in detail later on in this report) should be taken into account and given due weight in planning policy decisions.

**Summary of Landscape Policy**

- 2.64 The Site falls within the Green Belt and partly within the Chilterns AONB. The land contained within the AONB is also protected by an Article 4 Direction which controls the erection of structures connected with poultry production.
- 2.65 In order to ensure compliance with Landscape Planning Policy at a National and Local level proposals for the Site should:
- Conserve and enhance the natural environment by retaining high quality landscape features and enhancing the setting of the Chilterns AONB and provide a robust boundary to the Green Belt so as to accord with Section 9 and Section 11 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

- Consider the Green Infrastructure aspirations for the Site and its surrounds and develop proposals which will contribute to meeting the objectives of the strategies for Aylesbury Vale and Dacorum at a local scale and for Hertfordshire and Buckinghamshire at a County scale in accordance with the objectives of the NPPF and Policy CS26 of the Dacorum Core Strategy.
- Respond to the aspirations of the Tring Place Strategy by considering the enhancement of the Green Gateway to the west and the existing wildlife corridors on the Site
- Respond to the policies of the Chilterns AONB Management Plan and Policy 96 of Dacorum Borough Local Plan by developing proposals which respect the character, setting and views towards and from the AONB landscape.
- Ensure protection and enhancement of existing trees and habitats in accordance with Policy 99 of the Dacorum Borough Local Plan and emerging Local Development Framework.
- Provide a high quality design for the extension to the Tring urban edge, whilst ensuring a robust Green Belt boundary and enhanced setting to the Chilterns AONB in accordance with policies CS5 and CS 10 of the emerging Dacorum Borough Local Development Framework.
- Consider the management and design guidelines and aspirations set out within the Local Character Assessments of Aylesbury Vale and Dacorum in order to comply with Policy 98 of the Dacorum Borough Local Plan and Dacorum Borough Core Strategy CS25.

### **Landscape Character**

2.66 The Landscape Character Assessment approach is a descriptive approach which seeks to identify and define the distinct character of landscapes that make up the countryside of England. This approach recognises the intrinsic value of all landscapes, not just 'special' landscapes such as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The description of each landscape is used as a basis for evaluation in order to make judgements to guide, for example, landscape management or development. In line with this approach national landscape guidance is now moving from concentrating efforts on designating and protecting those areas of the countryside which are most important for landscape and wildlife (i.e. the quality approach) to a character approach, as a way of enriching the quality of the whole countryside whilst accommodating appropriate development. This approach complements the protection that designations may offer.

## ***National***

2.67 The Countryside Agency and English Nature (which have now been amalgamated to form Natural England) produced a countryside character map of England, which describes the different character areas that make up the country. Volume 7: South East & London includes the landscape character area which encompass the Site and its surroundings, the extents of which are illustrated on **Figure 1: Site Context Plan**. The Site is located within Character Area 110: Chilterns. Extracts of the Character Area assessment are included in **Appendix 1**.

2.68 The key characteristics of Character Area 110: Chilterns relevant to the Site are identified as follows:

- **“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 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;**
- **Scattered villages and farmsteads, 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 which links numerous archaeological sites and settlements; and**
- **Frequent grand country houses and designed landscapes occupying prominent positions on sloping valley sides.”**

2.69 Within 'The Changing Countryside' Natural England states that:

**"New commuter housing development and expansion of settlements by infilling leading to erosion of the traditional Chiltern's building style and adverse changes in the overall character of settlements. Recent developments on the edge of scarp-foot historic market towns are particularly intrusive. Suburbanisation through small scale but inappropriate development design."**

2.70 Within 'Shaping the Future' Natural England provides the following objectives relevant to the Site and this assessment:

- **"The character of the transitional landscape between town and countryside needs attention; and**
- **The design of future development should reflect and help restore and reinforce a typical Chilterns character."**

## **Local**

*Landscape Character Assessment for Dacorum, May 2004*

2.71 A study of the Landscape Character of Dacorum Borough was commissioned by the Chilterns Conservation Board, Dacorum Borough Council and Hertfordshire County Council from The Landscape Partnership in 2002. The Landscape Character Assessment for Dacorum contains an evaluation of the landscape and policy guidelines and was formally adopted as supplementary planning guidance to Dacorum Borough Local Plan 1991-2011 by Dacorum Borough Council on 5th May 2004 and is referenced in the Dacorum Core Strategy Policy CS25. Detailed extracts of this assessment are included in **Appendix 2**.

2.72 The site is located within Character Area 114: Tring Gap Foothills, which lies between the Chiltern escarpment to the south east and the Tring Reservoirs to the north west. The character area is described as a transitional landscape between the low lying Aylesbury Vale and the Chilterns. The landforms, based on the underlying chalk geology are generally gently undulating but with stronger local expressions, particularly at the interface with the elevated Chiltern escarpment.

2.73 Key characteristics relevant to the Site are:

- **“views to the Chilterns escarpment;**
- **framing and containment by wooded scarp slopes;**
- **arterial transport corridor including; west coast main line, A41, Grand Union Canal and Akeman Street;**
- **mixed open farmland;**
- **parkland landscapes at Tring Park and Pendley Manor;**
- **urban fringe influences around Tring including; residential, sports pitches and a garden centre; and**
- **recreational routes including the Grand Union Canal Walk and the Ridgeway.”**

2.74 Within the ‘Visual and Sensory Perception’ section, the character area is described as being widely visible from surrounding areas and in particular from the scarp slopes and plateau edge to the south. It is also noted that the A41 Tring Bypass, which passes close to the site, represents a major intrusion.

2.75 The evaluation of the character area is ‘Improve and Conserve’ based on an assessment of moderate condition and moderate strength of character. The following guidelines for future change set out in the ‘Strategy and Guidelines for Managing Change’ section that are relevant for the Site are:

- **“Promote the retention of the character of local minor roads by the management of hedgerows and verges. Where part of a hedge has been damaged or removed it should be replanted with a mix of indigenous species;**
- **promote the creation of buffer zones between intensive arable production and important semi-natural habitats and the creation of links between semi-natural habitats**
- **Strengthen the setting of the scarp slopes by enhancing the landscape structure of the foothills by**



**the promotion of the removal/screening of eyesores and the management/reintroduction of boundary features to reduce the scale and openness;**

- **support a strategy to limit the impact of built development including Tring on the area. Ensure that development both in the area or adjacent to it are integrated through the use of native tree and shrub species and the creation of hedging and/or planting to the perimeter;**
- **conserve and enhance the distinctive character of settlements and individual buildings by promoting the conservation of important buildings and 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**
- **encourage the retention of the existing pattern of hedges and to create new features to further enhance landscape and ecological links between and to woodlands, canal corridor and parklands. Use old field boundaries where possible;**
- **develop a strategy to mitigate the impact of the intrusive transport routes, and**
- **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"**

*Aylesbury Vale Landscape Character Assessment, May 2008*

2.76 The Aylesbury Vale district wide Landscape Character Assessment was commissioned jointly by Aylesbury Vale District Council & Buckinghamshire County Council and undertaken by

Jacobs. Two Landscape Character Areas are in proximity to the Site: LCA 10.4 Wendover Foothills to the north west of the Site and LCA 10.5 Drayton Manor Chalk Slopes to the south west. The detailed extracts of this assessment are included in **Appendix 3**.

*LCA 10.4 Wendover Foothills*

2.77 The Wendover Foothills character area lies adjacent to the Site, extending to the North West within the Chilterns AONB. The character area is an area of transition between the flat landscapes of the Aylesbury Vale, in which the Site is located, and the Chiltern Scarp, characterised by rising ground and mixed land uses widely seen from the north in association with the narrower Chiltern Scarp above. The area is open to the north but on the southern boundaries merges into a wooded landscape.

2.78 Key characteristics of the Wendover Foothills are:

- **“Gently sloping landform rising steeply to the south;**
- **Transition from open arable fields in the north to more wooded landscape in the south;**
- **Loss of field pattern and structure in the south;**
- **Extensive areas of development adjacent to Halton within woodland setting;**
- **Settlement of Wendover lies within a gap in the Chilterns and interrupts continuity of the area; and**
- **Village of Drayton Beauchamp.**

2.79 Generally the condition of the landscape is considered to be very good and overall the functional integrity is very strong. The aim is therefore to conserve and reinforce the landscape character.

2.80 Specific guidelines relevant for the Site are:

- **Screen the edges of existing and new development by planting new hedges and reinforcing existing belts of vegetation;**
- **Encourage landowners to improve ecological diversity through varied land management regimes; and**

- **Encourage the establishment of buffer zones consisting of semi-natural vegetation along the Grand Union Canal.**

*LCA 10.5 Drayton Manor Chalk Slopes*

2.81 The Drayton Manor Chalk Slopes character area lies to the south west of the site within the Chiltern AONB. The land rises steeply up the Chiltern scarp to the west from where there are views over Tring. The area is defined to the west and south by woodland on scarp slopes and the northern boundary is defined by the A41 Roman road and bypass junction.

2.82 Key characteristics of the Drayton Manor Chalk Slopes are:

- **“Sloping chalk downland;**
- **Narrow winding, sunken lanes;**
- **Dispersed farmsteads and settlements;**
- **Open area with views over Tring;**
- **Arable land use on the lower, shallower slopes;**
- **Grazing land on steeper slopes; and**
- **Ancient coaxial fields and lanes.**

2.83 Overall the condition of the landscape is considered to be good and the functional integrity is coherent although the Tring junction of the A41 is identified as an intrusive feature. The area has a distinctive character dominated by its steeply sloping landform. Overall the sense of place is considered to be moderate. The degree of visibility increases with elevation above the valley to the east. The area lacks tree cover and is more open than the heavily wooded scarp slope. Overall the degree of sensitivity is considered to be high.

2.84 Specific guidelines relevant for the Site are:

- **Conserve the extensive network of hedgerows and tree cover.**
- **Maintain connectivity of habitats.**
- **Conserve the existing field pattern.**
- **Conserve the character of narrow winding lanes.**
- **Preserve and manage rights of way to conserve pedestrian access and the extensive footpath network.**

2.85 A detailed Site Appraisal has been carried out in order to determine the extent to which the Site contributes to the existing landscape character areas described above and to ensure that guidelines are taken on board in working towards development proposals for the Site.

### 3.0 SITE APPRAISAL

- 3.1 **Figure 2: Site Appraisal Plan** illustrates the current landscape features and character of the Site. The Site is 17.6 hectares in size and comprises six fields, including one large paddock (Field F1), two small paddocks (Fields F2 and F6) and three medium sized arable fields (Fields F3, F4 and F5). Fields 1 to 5 have no built structures within them. Field F6 contains a small single storey storage building and a series of sheds and shelters associated with its paddock use.
- 3.2 A number of **Site Appraisal Photographs (A-I inclusive)** were taken from within the Site as illustrated on **Site Appraisal Plan:Figure 2**. These photographs are contained at the end of this report and serve to demonstrate the condition of the Site features, their contribution to the landscape character of the Site and the Site’s relationship with immediate areas adjacent to the Site as it currently exists.
- 3.3 Table 1 provides a summary of the site features, their landscape condition and their value in the context of the landscape character of the Site and surrounding landscape character areas. Furthermore landscape recommendations are provided which should be considered in developing proposals for the Site.

*Table 1: Site Appraisal and Landscape Recommendations*

Ref	Description	Landscape Condition	Contribution to Landscape Character	Landscape Recommendation
H1	1.5 to 2m high hedge, Ash, elder, dog thorn, hawthorn. Occasional trees (including Ash) up to 20m high	Good	Provides sense of enclosure to northern parts of Field F1 adjacent to the B488.	Retain and manage with appropriate landscape offsets.
H2	1 to 5m high hedge	Moderate to Good	Provides sense of enclosure to northern parts of Field F1 adjacent to the B488. Further south the condition deteriorates and has low contribution to landscape character due to its reduced	Retain and enhance by filling in gaps to southern half and reinforcing with native stock and tree planting.

Ref	Description	Landscape Condition	Contribution to Landscape Character	Landscape Recommendation
			height and gaps along its length.	
H3	Low gappy hedge with occasional trees and inconsistent low rear garden boundary fences	Poor to moderate	Allows for open views to urban edge of Tring which detracts from rural character of Field F1.	Opportunity to improve urban edge.
H4	3 to 5m high hedge.	Good	Provides sense of enclosure and strengthens field pattern between Fields F1 and F3.	Retain and manage with appropriate offsets.
H5	Low gappy hedgerow / scrub adjacent to concrete post and barbed wire fence	Low	Allows for open views to urban edge of Tring. Fencing and adjacent urban edge detract from rural character of Field F1.	Opportunity to improve existing urban edge.
H6	3 to 5m high hedge with occasional trees up to 20m height.	Good	Provides sense of enclosure and strengthens field pattern between Fields F3 and F4.	Retain and manage with appropriate offsets.
H7	3 to 5m high hedge with occasional trees up to 20m height.	Good	Provides sense of enclosure to Field F4 and strengthens field pattern between Fields F3 and F4. Filters views from public right of way towards B488 / B4009 roundabout.	Retain and manage with appropriate offsets. Enhance screening value with additional tree planting.
H8	1m high hedge with occasional trees adjacent to overgrown verge	Moderate	Has low contribution to landscape character of landscape within the AONB. Allows for views of traffic and telegraph poles along the B488 which detract from rural quality of Field F4.	Plant new native hedgerow with trees to improve sense of enclosure to Field F4, to reinforce field pattern and to improve landscape character of B488.
H9	1m high native hedge and	Moderate	Has low contribution to landscape character of Field	Retain and manage with appropriate offsets.

Ref	Description	Landscape Condition	Contribution to Landscape Character	Landscape Recommendation
	scrub adjacent to grass verge (V2).		F4. Allows for views of traffic and telegraph poles along the B488 which detract from rural quality of Field F4.	Reinforce with additional native tree planting within verge.
H10	1.2 to 1,5m high hedge newly planted with young ash trees (up to 4m in height).	Moderate	Has low contribution to landscape character of Field F5. Allows for views of traffic and telegraph poles along the B488 which detract from rural quality of Field F5.	Retain and manage with appropriate offsets. Reinforce with additional native tree planting within verge.
H11	Gappy 1 to 2m high hedgerow with occasional trees	Moderate	Has low contribution to field pattern but provides some sense of enclosure to Field F3.	Retain good condition trees. Replace hedgerow.
H12	1 to 2m high mixed native hedgerow with no trees.	Moderate	Provides limited sense of enclosure to Field F6 adjacent to B4635.	Enhance with additional trees and hedgerows planting to reflect mature hedgerow to south of B4635.
TB1	Small mature group of trees (including Ash 20m in height.)	Good	Provides limited sense of enclosure to Field F1 adjacent to the Icknield Way Industrial Estate.	Retain and enhance with additional tree planting along the urban edge.
TB2	Small tree belts to rear of Okeley Lane properties.	Moderate	Provide some sense of enclosure to Fields F1 and F2 adjacent to the Okeley Way housing.	Retain as mature elements to form framework for new hedgerow to rear of properties at Okeley Lane.
TB3	Native trees and shrubs, mainly 5m in height with occasional trees up to 10m.	Moderate	Provides sense of enclosure and strengthens field patterns between Fields F2 and F3.	Retain taller trees and hedgerows along western edge of tree belt.
TB4	Pine trees (over 20m height) to south of wall (up to 1.8m height) churchyard and cemetery	Good	Provides strong sense of enclosure to Field F2.	Outside of Site. Provide offset to allow for shading and to protect existing root systems. Maintain wall along Cemetery boundary.
TB5	Group of tall	Good	Provides strong sense of	Retain and extend to the

Ref	Description	Landscape Condition	Contribution to Landscape Character	Landscape Recommendation
	trees up to 20m height.		enclosure to B4635 as it approaches Tring from the west.	west to enhance sense of enclosure adjacent to B4635.
TB6	Belt of trees ranging in height from 10 to 20m	Good	Provides strong sense of enclosure to Cemetery Site and to eastern edge of Fields F3 and F6.	Retain and provide buffer as necessary to protect existing root systems. Maintain wall along Cemetery boundary.
V1	Grassed verge, generally low lying overgrown with brambles and tall grasses	Poor	Has low contribution to landscape character of Field F5. Allows for views of traffic and telegraph poles along the B488 which detract from rural quality of Field F4.	Plant with native trees to enhance sense of enclosure of Field F5 and to reflect tree belts to the north of the B488.
V2	Grassed bank up to 2m high with wildflower and grass species.	Moderate	Bank adjacent to footpath and road provides some sense of enclosure to B4635.	Plant with native trees to enhance sense of enclosure of Field F5 and to reflect tree belts to the south of B4635, thereby establishing sunken lane character. Increase width of planting within western corner of Field F5 to B4009 / B488 / B4635 roundabout so as to provide additional screening of highways elements which detract from landscape character and to strengthen the proposed Green Gateway proposed within the Tring Place Strategy.

### Summary of Site Appraisal

- 3.4 Within Fields F1 and F2 there is a varied sense of enclosure and a moderately established field pattern by nature of the condition of the field boundaries. The varied condition of the boundary hedgerows and tree belts adjacent to the western urban edge of Tring allows for a direct relationship between the urban edge and the adjacent open fields. Large scale buildings at Icknield Way Industrial Estate, the rear garden boundaries of properties at Okeley Way and the traffic along the B488 are detractors in the landscape. Fields F1 and F2



are not included within the AONB and are assessed as having a medium to low landscape character sensitivity in the context of the adjacent urban edge.

- 3.5 In contrast, Field F3 is fairly well enclosed by mature boundary hedgerows and has limited views towards the urban edge and associated landscape detractors. The field pattern is well established, however the noise of traffic along the A41 reduces a sense of tranquillity. Field F3 is not included within the AONB and is assessed as having a medium landscape character sensitivity.
- 3.6 Fields F4 and F5 have moderate to well established boundary hedgerows and a varied sense of enclosure. The noise of traffic along the B488 and the A41 is notable in the landscape and the high number of street lighting columns and street signage associated with the B488 / B4635 / B4009 roundabouts are detractors in the landscape. However, the tree belts to the north of the B488 and to the south of Aylesbury Road provide some sense of enclosure to the AONB landscape and the direct views across the open landscape towards the wooded scarps associated with the AONB to the south of the A41 have a positive effect on the landscape character. Fields F4 and F5 are designated as AONB and are therefore assessed as having a high landscape character sensitivity.
- 3.7 Field F6 has various elements of poor quality and condition, a poor hedgerow pattern and a moderate to poor sense of enclosure adjacent to the B4635. Field F6 is assessed as having a low landscape character sensitivity in comparison to the adjacent AONB landscape.
- 3.8 In conclusion, in the context of the national and local landscape character assessments landscape features or characteristics within the Site which contribute positively to the landscape character of the Chilterns, the Tring Gap Foothills and the Wendover Foothills include the good condition hedgerows and tree belts which provide an established field pattern and visual connections towards the wooded Chiltern and Tring scarps to the south.
- 3.9 The landscape character of the Site is generally adversely affected by the detracting elements associated with the B488 / B4009 roundabout, the traffic and elements along the B488 and the B4635 and the existing hard urban edge of Tring. Moving west from the edge of Tring there is not a significant difference in landscape character or the condition of landscape features between the fields contained within the AONB and the fields excluded. However due to the designation of Fields F4 and F5 their landscape character sensitivity is assessed as high.
- 3.10 A summary of the Landscape Character Sensitivity of the Site and its surrounds is provided below, taking account of the landscape character assessments carried out at a National to Local scale:

<b>Landscape Area</b>	<b>Character Area</b>	<b>Landscape Value</b>	<b>Landscape Condition</b>	<b>Landscape Sensitivity</b>	<b>Character Area</b>
National 110: <b>The Chilterns</b>		High exceptional (includes AONB)	to Good		High
Dacorum LCA Area 114: <b>Tring Foothills</b>	Borough Council	Moderate high (partly within AONB)	to Moderate		Moderate to High
The Site: Fields F1, F2 and F6		Low		Moderate	Low
The Site: Field F3		Low		Good	Moderate
The Site: Fields F4 and F5		High (included within AONB)		Moderate to Good	High

3.11 The following key recommendations should be considered in order to ensure an enhancement to the condition of, and setting to, the Chilterns AONB:

- Maintain Fields F4 and F5 as open space so as to maintain and improve the existing AONB landscape character within the Site;
- Retain and enhance all field boundary hedgerows and provide additional native tree planting to hedgerows along the B488 (Icknield Way) and the B4635 (Aylesbury Road); Enhance hedgerow H2 with additional native hedgerow shrub and tree species to provide a more established boundary to the AONB;
- Provide an improved landscape setting (through the implementation of native tree and wildflower planting) in the vicinity of the B488 / B4009 roundabout to filter views towards the detracting features of the roundabout and to improve the wildlife links across the Site;
- Enhance the sense of enclosure along the B4635 by retaining existing tree belts and providing additional native tree planting;
- Consider opportunities to improve the existing urban edge where it backs onto the Site by considering new development adjacent to the existing urban edge which will extend into the Site and provide a positive frontage onto the adjacent AONB landscape.

## 4.0 VISUAL APPRAISAL

- 4.1 An assessment of the potential visibility of the Site and consideration of its contribution to the setting of the Chilterns AONB was carried out. A series of panoramic photographs were taken from public vantage points, including public roads and footpaths in the area surrounding the Site.
- 4.2 There is, in most visual appraisals, a continuum of degrees of visibility ranging from no view of the Site to full, open views. To indicate the degree of visibility of the Site from public buildings, public open space, public rights of way, residential or business properties, three categories of visibility have been used in this assessment;
- a) Truncated / No View: Views towards the Site are curtailed by visual barriers, such as vegetation or built forms;
  - b) Partial View: A view of part of the Site or a filtered view of the Site, or a distant view in which the Site is perceived as a small part of the view; and
  - c) Open View: A clear view of a significant proportion of the Site within the wider landscape.
- 4.3 As part of determining the visual sensitivity of the Site a number of Site Context Photographs (1-22 inclusive) have been taken from the adjacent landscape. These photographs were selected on the ability to gain views towards the vicinity of the Site and serve to illustrate its visibility in association with the wider Green Belt and countryside setting and the Chilterns AONB. In addition to establishing the extent to which the Site is visible, the Site Context photographs also aim to establish the extent to which the Site and its features contribute to the setting of the AONB as viewed from local receptors. The locations of the photographic viewpoints are indicated on **Figure 3: Visual Appraisal Plan**. Views available in each instance have been described in detail below. The views are representative of visual receptors in the landscape. A summary table has been provided at the end of this Section and has been used to inform the Visual Effects Table which is included at Appendix 5 of this report.

*Near Distance Views (0-500 metres)*

- 4.4 **Site Context Photograph 1** is taken from the footpath and cycleway crossing over the A41 and B488 junction looking east towards the Site and is representative of views from the B488 and the public rights of way associated with the A41 corridor. Partial views of Field F5 and its boundary hedgerows are possible across the landscape associated with the B488 / B4635 roundabout. Glimpses of the urban edge of Tring (including the sheds at the existing employment area) are possible moving north along the footpath cycleway.

- 4.5 **Site Context Photograph 2** is taken from the footpath cycleway at Aylesbury Road and is representative of the long views along Aylesbury Road towards Tring to the east. The grass verge adjacent to the B4635 is visible in the view and filters views into the site. The young trees within hedgerow H10 are visible on the skyline, with the tree belts at Drayton Holloway and south of the B4635 visible to the left and right respectively.
- 4.6 **Site Context Photograph 3** is taken from the public right of way to the south of Aylesbury Road looking north-east towards the Site. Partial views of Field F4 and its boundary features are possible. Tree Belt TB5 is central to the view and reinforces the enclosed character of Aylesbury Road as it approaches Tring.
- 4.7 **Site Context Photograph 4** is taken from the footbridge over the A41 which leads towards Drayton Manor (a Listed Building 0.5 kilometres to the south of the Site). The A41 corridor, with its planted embankments and the flyover of the B4009 / B488, is visible in the left of the view. Lodge Cottage and the telegraph poles along the B488 are visible, with Field F5 and Hedgerow H9 partially visible in the view. The intervening tree belts associated with the B4635 and the public right of way leading to Drayton Manor Lodge obstruct views towards Fields F1, F2, F3 and F4.
- 4.8 **Site Context Photograph 5** is taken from the public right of way (TT 048A) looking west and is representative of views from properties at Okeley Lane which back onto the Site. There are open views of Field F1 and its boundary vegetation with the B488. Hedgerow H2 is visible beyond Field F1 with the trees associated with Hedgerow H7 visible beyond. Tree belts to the north of the B488 and to the south of Aylesbury Road form the skyline to the views to the right of the elevated distant AONB landscape associated with the Chilterns and Wendvoer foothills.
- 4.9 **Site Context Photograph 6** is taken from public right of way TT 071, looking west across Field F4 towards the elevated Chilterns landscape to the south of the A41. There are limited views towards the A41; however the extensive lighting columns and street signage are detractors in the views towards the AONB. Traffic along the B488 is visible in the right of the view.
- 4.10 **Site Context Photograph 7** is taken from the B488 (Icknield Way) looking east on the approach to Tring. Glimpses of the existing urban edge are possible but are filtered by the roadside hedgerows and hedgerows within the Site.

- 4.11 **Site Context Photograph 8** is taken from the B488 (Icknield Way) looking west heading out of Tring adjacent to the Icknield Way Industrial Estate. The large scale sheds and warehouses are dominant features in the view. The hedgerows and trees adjacent to Icknield Way are visible in the centre of the view and obstruct views towards the Site.
- 4.12 **Site Context Photograph 9** is taken from public right of way DEB/17/1 to the north of Beeches Farm, looking south towards the B488 and the Site beyond. The Site is partially visible along the ridgeline beyond the B488. Tree Belts associated with Beeches Farm, the B4635 and Drayton Holloway are landscape elements visible on the skyline moving left to right in the view. Hedgerows H7 and H9 within the Site and adjacent to the B488 are glimpsed in the centre of the view. There are limited views towards the AONB landscape due to the extent to which the land drops away to the north and south.

*Middle Distance Views (500 – 1000 metres)*

- 4.13 **Site Context Photograph 10** is taken from the public right of way at Buckland Hoo as it approaches Dancers End Lane along the exposed elevated north facing slopes of the Chiltern Scarp. The view is representative of the views across the arable land and narrow sunken winding lanes associated with the Drayton Manor Chalk slopes. There are partial views of the Site beyond the tree belts associated with the A41 and to the front of the Icknield Way Industrial Estate. The topography of the Site allows for views of the majority of Field F4 with Fields F1 and F2 glimpsed beyond adjacent to the tree belts and hedgerows along the Tring urban edge. Tree Belt TB1 filters views towards the Icknield Way Industrial Estate. Field F5 is not visible in the view due to the nature of intervening vegetation associated with the A41.
- 4.14 **Site Context Photograph 11** is taken from Bottom Road as it rises up towards Dancers End Lane. The Site is not visible due to the nature of the intervening topography and vegetation associated with Drayton Manor and the A41. The photograph is representative of the lack of views towards the Site from the low lying gentler slopes of the Drayton Manor Chalk Slopes.

*Long Distance Views (over 1000 metres)*

- 4.15 **Site Context Photograph 12** is taken from the edge of the wooded Chiltern Scarp at Pavis and Grove Woods. The elevation of the viewpoint allows for partial views of the Icknield Way Industrial Estate and Beeches Farm. The upper slopes of Fields F4 and F5 are visible to the front of Beeches Farm.
- 4.16 **Site Context Photograph 13** is taken from the elevated exposed public right of way (TT 026) running along the north facing Tring scarp slopes associated with Hastoe Hill. The wooded scarp slopes are visible in the left of the view as they drop away to the A41 corridor and the built up area of Tring. Icknield Way Industrial Estate is visible in the centre of the view with the Site visible to the left. Partial views of Fields F1, F4 and F5 are possible and are filtered by the intervening vegetation and the hedgerows within the Site. The tree belts and individual farmsteads to the north of Icknield Way are visible behind the Site.
- 4.17 **Site Context Photograph 14** is taken from the Ridgeway to the south of the Tring Scarp, looking North West towards the Site from the Ashlyns and Wiggington Plateau. The Site is not visible. Intervening woodland along the Tring Scarp and along the edge of the plateau blocks views from the Ridgeway.
- 4.18 **Site Context Photograph 15** is taken from further west along the Ashlyns and Wiggington Plateau, from PROW TT 066 looking north across the Tring Scarp towards the landscape to the west of Tring. Distant partial views of the Site are possible to the left of the Icknield Industrial Estate.
- 4.19 **Site Context Photograph 16** is taken from PROW BLD/19/2 from within the valley landscape associated with the Chiltern Scarp looking north. The Site is not visible due to the undulating nature of the scarp foothills. Dancers End Farm is visible in the left of the view. The minor ridgeline associated with Bottom Road screens views towards Tring and the Site.

- 4.20 **Site Context Photograph 17** is taken from alongside St Leonard's Road along the Chiltern Scarp looking north east towards the Site. The minor ridgeline associated with Buckland Hoo obscures views towards Tring and the Site.
- 4.21 Moving north, **Site Context Photograph 18** is taken from the east facing slopes of the Wendover Foothills, within the Chiltern Forest Golf Club, looking east towards the Site. The minor ridgeline and woodland associated with Icknield House obstruct views towards the Site.
- 4.22 **Site Context Photograph 19** is taken from the footpath leading down to the towpath associated with the Wendover Arm of the Grand Union Canal, adjacent to Stablebridge Road, looking east towards the Site. The minor ridgeline associated with Tring Hill obstructs views towards Tring and the Site.
- 4.23 **Site Context Photograph 20** is taken from further east along the towpath associated with the Wendover Arm of the Grand Union Canal at Buckland Wharf. The roadside vegetation and topography associated with Tring Hill obstructs views towards the Site from the canal towpath.
- 4.24 **Site Context Photograph 21** is taken from public right of way DBE/5/3 to the south of the village of Drayton Beauchamp looking south towards the Site. The minor ridgeline and tree belts associated with the Holloway and Green Path obstructs views towards the Site. The Wendover Arm of Grand Union Canal is visible in the minor valley beyond Upper Farm.
- 4.25 **Site Context Photograph 22** is taken from the exposed footpath along the wall of the Wilstone Reservoir, within the Southern Aylesbury Vale, looking south towards the Site. The Site is difficult to perceive within the landscape, however distant glimpses of the Icknield Way Industrial Estate are possible along the minor ridgeline associated with the B488. Views are filtered substantially by intervening field boundary hedgerows and tree belts. The wooded Chiltern Scarp forms the backdrop to the view.
- 4.26 The following table provides a summary of the Site Context Photographs and the visual receptors which they represent, alongside landscape recommendations which should be considered in developing the proposals for the Site. These recommendations respond to the visibility of the Site and the contribution it makes to the setting of the Chilterns AONB

within views from the receptors and their location within the Aylesbury Vale and Dacorum Landscape Character Areas.

- 4.27 The visual receptors listed below have been included within the Visual Effects Table at **Appendix 5** in order to form the baseline for an initial assessment of the visual effects of the proposed development of the Site.

*Table 2: Contribution of the Site to setting of AONB in the views:*

<b>Ref</b>	<b>Visual Receptors (Landscape Character Area)</b>	<b>Contribution Site makes to setting of AONB within the view</b>	<b>Landscape Recommendations</b>
1	Drayton Holloway; B488 (Icknield Way); B4009 <i>(Wendover Foothills)</i>	Field F5 and Hedgerow H7 are visible set between the mature tree belts at Drayton Holloway and south of Aylesbury Road.  Lighting columns and roads leading to Tring detract from AONB character.	Use native planting to reinforce existing tree belts to the north and south of the Site.
2	B4635 (Aylesbury Road); <i>(Wendover Foothills)</i>	Limited views to mature landscape features within the Site.  Limited views towards Tring urban edge.	Enhance the grass bank / verge (V1) with native tree planting to enhance the sense of enclosure along the B4635. Retain Tree Belt TB5 as a backdrop to views along B4635. Enhance hedgerow H12 with additional tree planting to enhance character of B4635.
3	Drayton Manor Lodge; B4635 (Aylesbury Road); PROW TT 071 <i>(Tring Gap Foothills)</i>	Enclosed nature of road is typical of the AONB landscape.	Retain Tree Belt TB5 and extend with additional tree planting to reinforce road character. Enhance hedgerows H10 and H12 to provide sense of enclosure along B4635.
4	PROW TT 036; Drayton Manor	Tree belts at Aylesbury Road, Field F5 and Hedgerow	Retain Hedgerow H9 and enhance with additional



<b>Ref</b>	<b>Visual Receptors (Landscape Character Area)</b>	<b>Contribution Site makes to setting of AONB within the view</b>	<b>Landscape Recommendations</b>
	<i>(Tring Gap Foothills)</i>	H9 contribute to setting of AONB. Traffic and elements associated with A41 corridor and telegraph poles along B488 are detractors in the view.	tree planting to improved skyline views.
5	PROW TT 048A; Properties at Okeley Way; Icknield Way Industrial Estate <i>(Tring Gap Foothills)</i>	Hedgerow H4 and H2 are visible with distant AONB landscape (including Buckland Hoo) visible beyond. To the right the features associated with the B488 form the skyline with occasional detractors, such as traffic and telegraph poles.	Retain Hedgerow H4. Enhance Hedgerow H2 with tree planting to enhance skyline views towards the B488.
6	PROW TT 071; <i>(Tring Gap Foothills)</i>	Site forms main element of views of AONB with distant Chilterns Scarp (including Buckland Hoo) visible in the background. To the right Hedgerow H7 and the tree belts at the B488 form the skyline view.	Enhance Hedgerow H7 with additional tree planting to enhance the skyline views and to screen detracting elements associated with the B488 / B4009 roundabout.
7, 8	B488 (Icknield Way); Icknield Way Industrial Estate	Existing hedgerows and trees filter views towards the Site from Icknield Way.	Maintain hedgerows and trees along Icknield Way.
9	PROW DEB/17/1; Beeches Farm; Rye Hill Farm; Drayton Holloway. <i>(Wendover Foothills)</i>	Boundary hedgerows to Field F4 and F5 visible. Tree belts and telegraph poles along B488 form skyline views with wooded Chilterns Scarp visible beyond.	Avoid development within Fields F4 and F5 so as to maintain views towards wooded scarp. Maintain and enhance hedgerows along Site's northern boundary with B488. Provide additional tree planting so as to improve skyline views of B488 road elements.

Ref	Visual Receptors (Landscape Character Area)	Contribution Site makes to setting of AONB within the view	Landscape Recommendations
10	PROW BLD/17/1 (Chiltern Scarp)	Arable rolling fields and sunken wooded lanes form main feature in view. The Site and features make a low contribution to the setting of the AONB. Icknield Way Industrial Estate is visible with Site visible in front.	Retain and enhance all hedgerows within the Site to maintain field pattern.  Retain existing tree belts and hedgerows in order to filter long distance views towards large scale buildings within the employment area and to improve views to urban edge.
11	Bottom Road; Dancers End Farm; Properties at Dancers End (Drayton Manor Chalk Slopes)	The Site is not visible and makes no contribution to the setting of the AONB in this view.	N/a
12	PROWs at Deacons Hill Wood (Tring Scarp slopes)	Fields F4 and F5 are visible adjacent to the Icknield Way Industrial Estate. Tree belts along B488 are visible. Fields F1, F2 and F3 are obstructed by intervening hedgerows and hedgerows within the Site.	Avoid development within Fields F4 and F5. Enhance hedgerows along B488 with native hedgerow and tree planting so as to enhance skyline views. Retain and enhance hedgerows within the Site to maintain filtering effect towards Fields F1 and F2.
13	PROW TT 026 (Tring Scarp Slopes)	Site is visible adjacent to Icknield Way Industrial Estate. Tree belts along B488 form intermediate skyline view.	Avoid development within Fields F4 and F5 so as to maintain setting of AONB adjacent to Tring built up area. Limit height of development (to match existing adjacent urban areas) within Field F1 as

<b>Ref</b>	<b>Visual Receptors (Landscape Character Area)</b>	<b>Contribution Site makes to setting of AONB within the view</b>	<b>Landscape Recommendations</b>
			to maintain views towards intermediate treed skyline. Enhance with additional tree planting along B488 to the north of Fields F4 and F5.
14	The Ridgeway National Trail	The Site is not visible and makes no contribution to the setting of the AONB in views from the Ridgeway.	N/a
15	PROWs at Hastoe Hill (Ashlyns & Wigginton Plateau)	Site is visible adjacent to Icknield Way Industrial Estate which forms a hard urban edge and a detractor in views.	Avoid development within Fields F4 and F5 so as to maintain visual connections to AONB adjacent to Tring built up area. Retain hedgerows within the Site and enhance with tree planting to soften the urban edge.
16	PROWs at Spencers Green; Properties at Spencers Green	The Site is not visible and makes no contribution to the setting of the AONB in views from the Ridgeway.	N/a
17, 18	Aston Hill; PROWs at Aston Hill; St Leonard's Road; Chiltern Forest Golf Club; PROW ACL/12/1	The Site is not visible and makes no contribution to the setting of the AONB in the views.	N/a
19 and 20	Stablebridge Road; GUC Towpath Wendover Arm; Properties at Buckland; Properties at Aston Clinton	The Site is not visible and makes no contribution to the setting of the AONB in views from the Grand Union Canal.	N/a
21	PROWs and Properties at Drayton Beauchamp	The Site is not visible and makes no contribution to the setting of the AONB in the view.	N/a

<b>Ref</b>	<b>Visual Receptors (Landscape Character Area)</b>	<b>Contribution Site makes to setting of AONB within the view</b>	<b>Landscape Recommendations</b>
22	PROW TR 045; Wilstone Reservoir; Wilstone	The Site is barely visible. There are limited views to Tring with only distant transient glimpses of the Icknield Way Industrial Estate.	Enhance planting along B488 so as to ensure filtering of views towards any extension to the Tring built up area.

### **Summary of Visual Appraisal**

- 4.28 In summary, open and partial near distance views of the Site are possible from the urban edge of Tring and from the public rights of ways and roads which abut the Site boundaries and pass through the Site.
- 4.29 Within westward views from the urban edge of Tring and from the public rights of way within the Site, the Site forms the foreground element of the view and the Chiltern and Tring scarps form the backdrop. Lighting columns, street signage and traffic associated with the B488 and its junction with the B4009 are detracting elements in the middle ground of the view in the context of the AONB landscape. There exists an opportunity to enhance the existing hedgerows with additional native tree planting and to provide structural landscaping to filter views towards the detractors in the AONB landscape.
- 4.30 In views towards Tring from the B488 and B4635 the open nature of the Site and its less mature western boundary hedgerows provides a gap in the tree belts at Drayton Holloway and south of the B4635. There is an opportunity to provide native tree planting within the existing verges so as to continue the existing tree line and, in time to provide a more consistent skyline when approaching Tring from the west. Views towards an extended, enhanced urban edge should be considered from the roundabout so as to enhance the setting of the Green Gateway at the western approach to Tring.
- 4.31 Within the wider AONB landscape south of the A41 the land rises up across the Wendover and Tring Gap Foothills and Drayton Manor Chalk Slopes towards the Chiltern and Tring Scarps. Views towards the Site are limited and are mainly obtained from the upper north facing exposed scarp slopes where the elevation allows for views across the undulating wooded landscape and the vegetation associated with the A41 corridor towards Tring and the Site. There are limited middle distance views from the lower slopes due to the nature of

the intervening wooded foothills, sunken wooded lanes and tree belts along the A41 corridor and Aylesbury Road.

- 4.32 From the landscape to the north of the B488 views are limited due to the effect of the land dropping away towards the Southern Vale and the Tring Reservoirs. However, the Site abuts the B488 which runs along the top of a minor ridgeline and glimpses of the Site features along the B488 are possible from distant exposed viewpoints, including from the Wilstone Reservoir footpath.
- 4.33 In conclusion, the overall visual sensitivity of the Site is assessed as moderate due to the extent of its visibility in the context of the wider undulating wooded landscape associated with the AONB, the number of receptors which are afforded views and the scope for mitigating the potential visual impacts on these receptors.
- 4.34 Landscape recommendations which should be considered in developing proposals for the Site in order to reduce the significance of effects on visual receptors include the following:
- Retain existing tree belts along the Site's eastern boundary and recognise the opportunity to improve the existing urban edge by extending the built area and fronting new development onto the adjacent AONB landscape;
  - Retain and manage Hedgerow H1 as an effective visual screen in views from the B488 and identify the opportunity to extend and soften the urban edge of Tring behind Hedgerow H1, within Field F1;
  - Identify the opportunity to improve the views from the B488 / B4009 roundabout when approaching Tring from the west;
  - Enhance the existing hedgerows (H8, H9, H10 and H12) adjacent to the B488 and the B4635 with native woodland planting so as to screen views of highways elements from within the Site. Identify opportunities to maintain and enhance views towards the AONB landscape as it rises up towards the Chiltern and Tring Scarps from within the existing and extended urban edge;
  - Retain existing hedgerows within the Site so as to filter long distance views towards the urban edge of Tring from the Chiltern and Tring Scarps to the south.
  - Retain Fields F4 and F5 as open space and enhance the hedgerows along the B488 with tree planting so as to protect and improve long distance skyline views from the landscape associated with the Tring Reservoirs.

## 5.0 SITE'S CONTRIBUTION TO GREEN BELT PURPOSES

- 5.1 As described above the Site is contained entirely within the Green Belt to the west of Tring.
- 5.2 The Site is allocated within the Dacorum Core Strategy for development under Local Area Policy LA5. The Policy stipulates that ***'The layout, design, density and landscaping must create a soft edge and transition with the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and secure a definitive long term Green Belt Boundary.'***
- 5.3 In assessing the contribution of the Site to the purpose of the Green Belt, the assessment makes direct reference to the five purposes of including land within the Green Belt as identified in the National Planning Policy Framework. When evaluating the overall contribution of the Site against the purposes of including land within the Green Belt, a series of levels or categories, indicating a spectrum from high to low is used. Such thresholds are clearly defined, using simple, readily understood language in accordance with the Guidance for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment. The assessment categories are set out in the table below:

*Table 3: Site's Contribution to Green Belt Purposes*

### **Purposes of the Assessment of Site's Contribution to Green Belt Purposes Green Belt**

To check unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas	Tring is a compact market town and its built up area is confined by the A41 corridor and the Chilterns AONB. Controlled development on the Site would not lead to unrestricted sprawl of the built up area which is small in relation to the larger built up areas of Aylesbury and Luton to the west and north east respectively.
To prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another	Development within Fields F1, F2 and F3 would slightly reduce the gap between Tring and Buckland which is already affected by the developments associated with the A41 corridor. Fields F4 and F5 are designated as AONB are proposed to be maintained as open space which will help maintain the perceived gap between the settlements.
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	Development within Fields F1, F2 and F3 would result in a minor loss of countryside in the context of the wider landscape surrounding Tring. The countryside to the south and west of Tring (including Fields 4 and 5 within the Site) is protected by the Chilterns AONB landscape designation.

To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns

To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land

Development of the Site would have no direct effect on the setting and special character of the Tring Conservation Area and Registered Tring Park. Development of the Site would have no effect on Listed Buildings in the vicinity of the Site

The Site is allocated within the Core Strategy for housing and open space etc.(Policy LA5) and will help provide for the needs of the town of Tring

- 5.4 It is recommended that, in order to maintain any contribution the Site makes to Green Belt purpose, the development of Fields F4 and F5 should be restricted to development appropriate to Green Belt land which would maintain a sense of openness in the landscape, in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework. Furthermore landscape mitigation proposals could be considered within the Site which would reduce the intervisibility between the urban edge of Tring and the urbanising elements associated with the A41 corridor and B488 / B4009 roundabout.
- 5.5 As part of this assessment, and in response to the requirements of Policy LA5, the existing site features have been considered for their potential as a revised Green Belt boundary. In accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, Green Belt boundaries should be defined clearly, using physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent. The Site Appraisal identifies hedgerows H2 and H6 as being of moderate to good landscape condition. The hedgerows run adjacent to a Public Right of Way and form the eastern boundary to the Chilterns AONB and Fields F4 and F5 which can still contribute to Green Belt purposes. Hedgerows H2 and H6 are therefore assessed as being the most appropriate features to form a revised Green Belt boundary within the Site.

## 6.0 LANDSCAPE RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Following on from the landscape and visual appraisal carried out above, the following key landscape recommendations should be considered when developing a masterplan and landscape strategy for the Site. Development proposals for the Site should:

**a) Respond to the opportunity to redefine and improve the western urban edge of Tring by extending the existing settlement boundary into Fields F1, F2, F3 and providing a positive development frontage onto the adjacent retained landscape features forming the boundary with the Chilterns AONB.**

Reasons:

- *to reduce the effects on existing high sensitivity visual receptors along the Tring urban edge in accordance with the visual appraisal;*
- *to improve long distance views towards the edge of Tring from occasional elevated viewpoints within the Chilterns AONB;*
- *to respond to the objectives of Policy CS10 of the emerging Dacorum Local Development Framework.*

**b) Respond to the opportunity to soften the existing western urban edge of Tring which is currently defined by large scale industrial buildings and poorly established rear garden boundaries to residential properties along Okeley Lane.**

Reasons:

- *To improve the setting of the Chilterns AONB in accordance with the objectives of the Chilterns AONB management in accordance with Chilterns AONB Management Plan and National and Local Landscape Character Guidance.*
- *to improve long distance views towards the edge of Tring from occasional elevated viewpoints within the Chilterns AONB;*
- *to respond to the objectives of Policy CS10 of the emerging Dacorum Local Development Framework.*

**c) Enhance hedgerows H2 and H6 as a boundary to the Green Belt and the AONB landscape. Provide an appropriate open space offset and positive frontage onto the hedgerows from the extended urban edge.**



Reasons:

- *to respond to the National Planning Policy Framework and Dacorum Local Development Framework Policies on Green Belt;*
- *to protect existing features of good landscape quality within the Site as identified in the Site Appraisal;*
- *to filter views towards the edge of Tring from the elevated Chiltern and Tring Scarps to the south of the A41 in accordance with the visual assessment and local landscape character guidance.*

**d) Retain and manage existing tree belts and hedgerows (in accordance with Table 1) which provide the basis for a strong field pattern and Green Infrastructure network within the Site.**

Reasons:

- *to protect existing features of good landscape quality within the Site as identified in the Site Appraisal and to respond to Policies ENV1 or the East of England Plan, Policy 99 of the Dacorum Borough Local Plan and emerging policies of the Dacorum Local Development Framework;*
- *to filter views towards the edge of Tring from the elevated Chiltern and Tring Scarps to the south of the A41 and to improve skyline views towards the Site from the landscape to the north in accordance with the visual appraisal and the Chilterns AONB Management Plan and National and Local Landscape Character Guidance;*

**e) Provide native tree planting along the Site's boundaries with the B488 and B4635 within the existing graded verges and within the western most corner of Field F5 so as to enhance the character of the local roads and to improve the landscape setting of the Green Gateway to the west of the Site.**

Reasons:

- *to protect existing features of good landscape quality within the Site as identified in the Site Appraisal;*
- *to enhance the setting of the Green Gateway proposed within the Spatial Plan included within the Tring Place Strategy;*
- *to retain and enhance the character of local roads and to encourage the retention of the existing hedgerow patterns in accordance with the management guidelines for the Tring Gap Foothills identified in the Landscape Character Assessment for Dacorum ;*
- *to filter views towards the edge of Tring from the elevated Chiltern and Tring Scarps to the south of the A41 in accordance with the visual appraisal and Policy L5 of the Chilterns AONB Management Plan and National and Local Landscape Character Guidance.*

**f) Identify opportunities to improve the sense of arrival in approaching the Site from the West and to provide additional multi-functional green corridors with native planting for wildlife benefit through the Site.**

Reasons:

- *To enhance the Green Infrastructure value of the Site in the wider landscape in accordance with the policies of the Dacorum Borough Council Green Infrastructure Background Note and the vision of the Dacorum Borough Green Infrastructure Plan;*
- *To improve views of the AONB when approaching Tring from the B4009, B488 and B4653.*

**g) Provide a range of habitats throughout the open space areas and appropriate wildlife buffers adjacent to existing retained landscape features.**

Reasons:

- *To enhance the Green Infrastructure value of the Site in the wider landscape in accordance with the policies of the Dacorum Borough Council Green Infrastructure Background Note and the vision of the Dacorum Borough Green Infrastructure Plan;*
- *To respond to the objectives of Dacorum Borough Council's Urban Nature Conservation Study.*

- *To retain and enhance the existing wildlife corridors within the Site and to provide an urban wildlife corridor as per the Spatial Diagram of the Tring Place Strategy.*

**h) Identify opportunities for maintaining key views out from the Site (from the existing and extended urban edge and the proposed open space) towards the Chilterns Scarp to the south of the A41.**

*Reasons:*

- *To promote awareness and consideration of the setting of the AONB, and views to and from it in accordance with the guidelines set out in the Landscape Character Assessment of Dacorum;*

## **7.0 LIKELY LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL EFFECTS**

- 7.1 An initial assessment of the likely landscape and visual effects has been carried out and takes account of the landscape recommendations provided above. The assessment of effects should be reviewed and finalised once a masterplan and detailed landscape strategy for the Site have been developed. However the descriptions below provide a guideline of the significance of anticipated effects assuming that the above landscape recommendations are followed.
- 7.2 The methodology used by Barton Willmore Landscape Planning and Design to assess the significance of the effects on site features, landscape character and visual receptors is included at **Appendix 4** of this report and takes account of the Aylesbury Vale District Council (AVDC) Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Guidance Notes and incorporates the AVDC Significance of Effects Tables.

### ***Effects on Site Features***

- 7.3 During construction all Site features to be retained as per the recommendations at Table 1 would be protected in accordance with the latest British Standard BS:5837:2012 Trees in Relation to Construction. Access to the Site will be based on detailed recommendations from the landscape architect so as to reduce the extent of hedgerow removal. However there will inevitably be a minor loss of existing features in order to gain access to the Site and to establish appropriate access through field boundaries. There will be a slight adverse change to the high sensitivity features and a resultant medium adverse significance of effect on site features during the construction period.
- 7.4 At year 1 the proposed landscape mitigation measures will be implemented resulting in a substantial increase in native tree and hedgerow planting and appropriate open space buffers to encourage biodiversity within the Site. Proposals for the Site are predicted to result in, at worst, a slight benefit to the high sensitivity features within the Site and a resultant medium beneficial significance of impact on site features.
- 7.5 At year 25 the proposed landscape mitigation measures will have matured resulting in an improved network of native tree belts and hedgerows and an enhanced overall contribution to the Green Infrastructure of West Tring. Proposals for the Site are predicted to result in a moderate beneficial change to the high sensitivity features within the Site and a resultant high / medium beneficial significance of effect on Site Features.

### ***Effects on Landscape Character***

- 7.6 During construction there will be a major adverse change in landscape character to Fields F1, F2, F3 and F6 (medium to low landscape character sensitivity) as a result of the loss of greenfield land and the construction operations on the Site. Existing hedgerows along the AONB boundary will be retained during construction so as to minimise any effects on the adjacent AONB landscape within Fields F4 and F5.
- 7.7 At year 1 landscape mitigation proposals will be implemented to compliment the new built form and to respond to the landscape recommendations for improving the setting of the AONB landscape. The proposals will seek to soften the new urban edge of Tring and to provide an enhanced Green Infrastructure network within the Site and connecting to the wider landscape. In our view the Proposed Development would have a moderate adverse impact on Fields F1, F2, F3 and F6 due to a permanent loss of greenfield land with a moderate to low landscape character sensitivity. The significance of the effects on this part of the Site would be medium to low adverse. However, Fields F5 and F6 would see moderate benefit to the landscape character as a result of the proposed enhancement of the site features and landscape character of the sensitive AONB landscape. The significance of the effect on Fields F5 and F6 would be medium to high beneficial.
- 7.8 On maturity of the landscape mitigation proposals it is predicted that the Proposed Development will result in a substantially improved sense of enclosure and field pattern within the AONB landscape and an improved relationship with the extended urban edge of Tring. Structural planting along the boundaries of Field F4 and F5 will screen views towards detracting urban elements resulting in an enhancement of the landscape character of the fields within the AONB and an enhanced sense of enclosure to the adjacent roads within the AONB landscape. In our view, and in the context of the wider landscape, the Proposed Development will result in a long term slight benefit to the Tring Gap Foothills through the enhancement of the Tring urban edge and its setting within the AONB landscape.
- 7.9 The following table provides a summary of the potential effects on landscape character at a National to Local scale, based on the Tables 4.1 – 4.3 provided within the Methodology at Appendix 4:

<b>Landscape Character Area</b>	<b>Landscape Character Sensitivity</b>	<b>Magnitude of Impact on Landscape Character</b>	<b>Significance of Impact on Landscape Character</b>
National Character Area 110: <b>The Chilterns</b>	High	Slight benefit	Medium Beneficial Significance
Dacorum Borough Council LCA Area 114: <b>Tring Gap Foothills</b>	Medium to High	Slight adverse	Medium to Low Beneficial Significance
The Site: Fields F1, F2 and F6	Low	Moderate adverse	Low Adverse Significance
The Site: Field F3	Moderate	Moderate adverse	Medium Adverse Significance
The Site: Fields F4 and F5	High	Moderate benefit	High / Medium beneficial significance

### ***Visual Effects***

- 7.10 An assessment of the predicted effects for the visual receptors is provided at Appendix B of this report. Significant visual effects have been summarised below.

#### *Visual Effects on Near Distance High Sensitivity Receptors*

- 7.11 Receptors which currently have near distance views of the site are likely to experience a deterioration in their views where greenfield land will be replaced by the extended urban edge of Tring. At Year 1, before landscape mitigation proposals have matured, there will inevitably be a major adverse change in views from high sensitivity receptors. In time the effects on the views will be reduced by the maturing of landscape proposals within the proposed offsets along the Site's eastern boundary.
- 7.12 In views from public rights of way crossing the Site there will be a deterioration in views across Fields F1, F2, F3 and F6 where the Proposed Development replaces greenfield land. In views from public rights of way within the Site, looking west across Fields F4 and F5 there will be an improvement in the views as a result of the landscape proposals for the AONB landscape and the enhancement of field boundary hedgerows and screening of the detracting elements associated with the B488 and B488 / B4009 roundabout.

- 7.13 In views from the B488 and B4635 there will be a moderate adverse change in the view as a result of the extended urban edge and potential vehicular access arrangements . These effects will be reduced once the landscape mitigation proposals for the Site boundaries have matured.

*Visual Effects on Middle to Long Distance High Sensitivity Receptors*

- 7.14 During construction and at year 1 before mitigation proposals have matured there will be slight adverse to neutral change in long distance views from the elevated Chiltern and Tring Scarps due to the extension of the Tring urban edge. The significance of any impacts on long distance views will be medium adverse due to the sensitivity of the receptors. As the landscape proposals mature the views towards Tring will be improved by the enhanced hedgerows and improved urban edge. The significance of these slight visual benefits will be moderate beneficial due to the sensitivity of the receptors.

**Residual Effects**

- 7.15 The long term residual effects have been considered and are summarised in the Visual Effects Table. These take account of the mitigation proposals and the maturing of the proposed landscape strategy.

## **8.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

- 8.1 Due to the Site's relationship with the existing hard urban edge of Tring and the effect of detracting urban elements on the existing landscape character, the landscape and visual appraisal identifies that the Site has the capacity to accommodate an appropriate amount of change in the context of the adjacent urban edge with the potential to improve the condition and setting of the Chilterns AONB landscape.
- 8.2 The Site and its features present opportunities to improve the western urban edge of Tring and to screen detractors in the AONB landscape in views towards and out from the AONB..
- 8.3 When developing a greenfield Site adjacent to an existing urban edge there will inevitably be adverse effects on local receptors. The proposals for the Site should respond to the landscape recommendations above in order to ensure that the significance of effects on site features, landscape character and visual receptors is reduced and that relevant national and local planning policies and objectives are adhered to. The assessment of effects should be reviewed once a detailed masterplan for the Site has been developed.
- 8.4 An initial Landscape Development Principles Plan (Figure 4) has been prepared to summarise the landscape opportunities and constraints within the Site and to inform the a masterplan for the Site.



## **9.0 NEXT STEPS**

9.1 As part of the iterative process of assessing the effects of the Proposed Development, this Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment should be reviewed in detail once a masterplan for the Site has been developed in accordance with the Landscape Development Principles set out above.

9.2 The revised Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment will provide the following additional detail to ensure that all potential landscape and visual impacts are considered within the assessment process:

- Generation of a Zone of Theoretical Visibility based on the proposed built form and building heights in order to establish any additional visual receptors which may need to be considered;
- Preparation of a night time lighting assessment in accordance with the methodology set out in Appendix 4;
- Consideration of the visual effects associated with the style of the new development, taking account of compliance with the Chilterns Building Design Guide and potential visual effects of photovoltaics and other sustainable energy features proposed within the masterplan;
- Preparation of a detailed Landscape Strategy to ensure that the Proposed Development provides an enhanced landscape setting to the extended urban edge of Tring and provides long term benefit to wildlife and residents through an established Green Infrastructure network. The landscape strategy should provide management and biodiversity recommendations which would ensure that the residual effects are monitored and managed and that the public realm and biodiversity value of the Site is maintained and monitored in the context of the Green Infrastructure strategy for the wider landscape.

## **ILLUSTRATIVE MATERIAL**

Figure 1: Site Context Plan at 1:10,000 scale @ A1

Figure 2: Site Appraisal Plan at 1:2,500 @ A3

Figure 3: Visual Appraisal Plan at 1:10,000 scale @ A1

Figure 4: Landscape Development Principles Plan at 1:2,500 @ A3

Site Appraisal Photographs (A-I)

Site Context Photographs (1-22)

**APPENDIX 1:**

Natural England, Countryside Character, Volume 7: South East & London  
Area 110: Chilterns

**APPENDIX 2:**

Extracts from the Landscape Character Assessment for Dacorum

**APPENDIX 3:**

Extracts from Aylesbury Vale Landscape Character Assessment

**APPENDIX 4:**

Methodology for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

**Appendix 5:** Visual Effects Table